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Slices of Cake (Martial 7, 20, 8)

- Nihil est miserius neque gulosius Santra.
rectam vocatus cum cucurrit ad cenam,
quam tot diebus noctibus captavit,
ter poscit apri glandulas, quater lubum,
5 et utramque coxam leporis et duos armos,
nec erubescit peierare de turdo
et ostreorum rapere lividos cirros:
buccis placentae sordidam linit mappam.
illic et uvae collocantur ollares
10 et Punicorum pauca grana malorum
et excavatae pellis indecens vulvae
et lippa ficus debilisque boletus.
13 sed mappa cum iam mille rumpitur furtis ...
21 ... seque obserata clusit anxius cella
gulosus ille, postero die vendit.*

Santra was one among many guests in Martial who abused their invitations to dinner to make off with more than they ate, presumably like Caecilianus, so that they could dine for two days from one invitation (2, 37). The napkins (*linthea*) which could evoke the threat of 300 hendecasyllables in Catullus 12 because they were purloined by Asinius Marrucinus became in Martial a subject for invective because Santra's napkin (*mappa*) was filled surreptitiously and then taken home for resale¹. His *mappa* eventually burst

¹ Cf. 12, 29 on the theft of *mappae* by Hermogenes. *Linit* (here 'fill' rather than 'line' as in adding a protective layer) in line 8 would seem to be equivalent in sense to *implevimus* of Satyricon 60, a passage in the *Cena* which appears to have had some influence on Martial 2, 37 and 7, 20.

(*rumpitur*, 13) under the weight of boar, hare, thrush, and oysters (4–7), all delicacies².

There follows line 8. The manuscript readings³ of *buccis plangentem* β, *dulcis placenta* γ, *buccis placente* Q, and *pappam* of the corrector of C do not make sense, nor does Niccolò Perotti's *dulci placenta* offer any improvement⁴. All three of the major modern editions of Martial, those of Friedländer, Lindsay, and Shackleton Bailey⁵, print Scriverius's *buccis placenta*⁶, which, however, must still be rejected. The punctuation of Lindsay and Shackleton Bailey, a period after *cirros* and a semi-colon after *mappam*, if traditional, must also be abandoned. *Illic et* commonly starts a new sentence and very strongly indicates the beginning of a new section of a poem, for which 7, 7, 7 in Martial provides a parallel.

One must further resist the great temptation to transpose line 8 after line 5 so that the positive statements of 4, 5, and 8 would be grouped together, rather than bracketing lines 6/7, which are introduced by *nec*. Two considerations prevent such a tampering with the text: first, it would be natural given Martial's normal phrasing to continue to take *glandulas* and *lubum* with *poscit*, but to transfer its other objects, *coxam* and *armos*, to *linit*, the

² The poem has four sections: 1–8 introduction of Santra and his first group of thefts (meats + cake); 9–12 second group of thefts (fruits + vegetable); 13–19 theft of remnants from banquet; 20–22 surprise ending.

³ For the current authoritative dating of the major manuscripts and their relationship, see M. D. Reeve, in: *Texts and Transmission*, ed. L. D. Reynolds, Oxford 1983, 239–244, and Ugo Carratello, *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton liber*, Rome 1981, 20–27, and his article *L'Epigrammaton liber di Marziale nella tradizione tardo-medievale e umanistica*, GIF 26 (1974), 1–17. — The main manuscripts of the β archetype are Lucensis, nunc Berolin. (fol. 612), s. xii, Palatinus Vaticanus (1696), s. xv, and Q (= Arondell Mus. Brit. [136]), s. xv. The main manuscript of the γ archetype is Edinburgh bibl. Fac. Advocat., s. x, to which are also added A (= Vossianus Leidensis primus [Q56]), s. xi, X (= Puteaneus Paris. [lat. 8067]), s. x, and Vaticanus (3294), s. x/xi. C (= Vossianus Leidensis tertius [F89]), s. xiv, provides some interesting readings but is among the 'deteriores'. This poem is not preserved in the α archetype.

⁴ The 1473 Rome *incunabulum* of Nicolò Perotti is assigned the letter O by Friedländer (90) and p by Schneidewin, which is followed by Carratello (supra n. 3, 13); cp. F.-R. Hausman, *Martial in Italien*, Studi medievali 17 (1976), 200–206.

⁵ Ludwig Friedländer, *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Libri*, Amsterdam (1886) 1967; W. M. Lindsay, *M. Val. Martialis Epigrammata*, Oxford 21903; D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Martialis Epigrammata*, Stuttgart 1990.

⁶ From his 1619 edition which accepts the reading of Q, substituting *placenta* for the mediaeval spelling *placente*.

verb of the succeeding clause. Since *lino* is normally construed with a direct object followed by an instrumental ablative (i. e. ,to fill x with y') such an exchange would require that *coxam* and *armos* be converted to *coxa* and *armis* since *mappam* is already the direct object of *linit*, that is, that Santra fills the napkin with the hindquarter and forequarters of a hare. Further, this construction cannot be allowed on metrical grounds because the disyllabic *duos* would have to be changed to *duobus* and *coxam* would be lengthened to *coxa*. Second, the order of the thefts (*mille ... furtis*, 13) by Santra in lines 4 through 12 follows closely the order in which various foods and drinks are discussed in Apicius, Book 1, and so presumably follows the order of courses at a formal (cp. *rectam*, 2) dinner⁷.

Since single line sentences in Martial are virtually non-existent⁸ outside of Books 13 and 14, the proper resolution is to place a colon after *cirros*. This is not merely replacing one modern grammatical convention with another, but it recognises a pattern seen elsewhere in Martial whereby a protasis with *nec* is followed by an apodosis without an adversative conjunction where one is clearly meant⁹. The reader is meant to infer the presence of 'but even' so that the sense for lines 6–8 would be:

nor does he blush to lie about a [missing] thrush
and to steal the blue-black beards of oysters;
[but] he [even] fills his smeared napkin
with pieces of cake.

The clause after the colon expresses in mock horror the extent to which the person was willing to go in his bad behaviour. Confirmation is not hard to find: the formula of *nec ... erubesco* + apodosis occurs with the same force at 8, 59, 11/12 (of a thief so lost to shame that he would rob a slave at night even with a lamp alight) and 11, 15, 5–7 (of Martial's new book of poems which does not blush to reek of Cosmian perfume but even plays¹⁰ with

⁷ Stealing scraps off the floor and from dogs (13–19) is used by Martial to demonstrate just how shameless Santra is. The reference in line 17 to the *analecta* and to *canes* indicates that the action of this section takes place after the banquet has ended.

⁸ Rhetorical questions, exclamations, and final line *sententiae* provide almost all of the exceptions to this observation.

⁹ In this regard the construction is approximate to *nec ... sed*, one which is found frequently in Martial; cp. 3, 47, 13/14; 3, 58, 25/26; 4, 66, 9/10; 5, 20, 5–8; 5, 78, 25–29; 6, 11, 3/4; 6, 39, 3/4; 6, 64, 2/4; 6, 73, 6/7, et passim.

¹⁰ For the obscene usage of *ludo*, see J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, Baltimore 1982, 162f.

young boys and loves young girls). A similar, although not perfectly parallel, usage of the formula *nec* ... verb + [implied adversative] occurs at 9, 26, 7–10, where *nam* rather than *sed* should logically be implied. More to the point is 3, 77, a poem addressed to Bassus on his peculiar food choices. After four lines describing the gourmet dishes he rejects, each beginning with *nec*, line 5 has an implied ‘but rather’ and then lists the peasant fare he preferred.

Some form of *placenta* must be correct, given the evidence of Apicius. Cakes seem to have followed the meats and fish and preceded fruits and nuts. No other foodstuff has been found in the ancient sources which (1) follows oysters or precedes candied grapes, (2) satisfies the meter, and (3) can also be explained paleographically. The grammar further requires either a noun plus adjective in the ablative or one noun in the ablative with a genitive of material. *Plangentem* of the β -archetype is transparently a corruption of *placente* and so can be dismissed. The nominative *dulcis placenta* of the γ -archetype does not accord with Martial’s usage of *lino*, nor is it consistent with the reference of all of the other verbs of lines 1 through 8 to Santra. *Dulci placenta*, although consonant with Apicius’s reference to honey cake as *dulcia* (so 1, 11, 16 et passim), is not grammatically correct and is inappropriate to this particular poem. Honey cakes in Martial are restricted in sense to ritual offerings, as in 5, 39, 3, or to comfort food for the ailing, as in 11, 86, 3.

Buccis can also be rejected as incorrect. In the text of Martial this word, which indicates the inside of the cheeks (*genae* for the outside), is generally found in sexual contexts. In 1, 41, 13 Caecilius is compared unflatteringly to an elderly sodomite (*bucca est vetuli dicax cinaedi*) and the cheeks of Vetustina in 2, 28, 4 are apparently used in *fellatio* as are those of the Summemmians than whom Nanneius is even worse (11, 61, 2). Lupercus is said to be engaged in defiling young boys: *coepisti puras opibus corrumpere buccas* (3, 75, 5). This sentiment is similar to the double entendre applied to flute girls in 14, 63 (64): *ebria nos madidis rumpit tibicina buccis*. Two other contexts (3, 17, 4 and 10, 5, 5) involve food but in both instances the food is befouled, one by the sufflation of Sabidus and the other by being spoiled scraps. They are thus very different from the spirit and meaning of this poem¹¹.

There remains the attractive possibility of interpreting *buccis* as equivalent in sense to *bucellis*. In 6, 75 Martial referred to a gift of a piece of cake (*quadramve placenta*, 1) which Pontia, its donor, styled her ‘little mouthfuls’ (*bucellas*, 3). Even though a potential model can be identified

¹¹ *Bucca* occurs one other time; in 12, 24, 5 *in buccam = in mentem*.

in Petronius 44, 2 (*non mehercules hodie buccam panis invenire potui*), Martial nowhere else used *bucca* in an even vaguely similar sense and the context of this poem is different enough from the Satyricon that its adaptation would seem unlikely. More importantly, the scope of the thefts of Santra would seem to require that his napkin be filled with more than ‚mouthfuls‘ of ‚titbits‘ of cake. Something larger and more substantial is needed to balance an entire thrush, the haunches of a hare and several pieces of boar.

The solution, suggested by 6, 75, 1, is to read *quadris*, a term which can mean ‚piece‘ or ‚slice‘. This noun is paired with *placenta* two more times in Martial in similar contexts: Baeticus, with whom other foods mentioned in 7, 20 find no favour, is similarly ill-disposed to a slice of cake (*sectae quadra placenta*, 3, 77, 3) and at 9, 90, 18 a piece of cake is to be offered at altars in thanksgiving upon the safe return of Flaccus: *secta plurima quadra de placenta*.

It is immediately apparent on the basis of the preceding discussion how *quadris* could be mistaken for *dulcis* and also for *buccis*. *Dulcis*, especially as it often modified *placenta* for one special type of cake, might easily and naturally have been substituted for the fairly rare and unfamiliar *quadris*. The pair *quadris placenta* is further attractive since the boar, hare, and oysters of lines 4–7 all also appear as genitives of material following nouns for body parts and pieces, as do some of the other food items in the later sections of the poem. The plural *quadris*, instead of the singular which is found elsewhere in Martial, is easy to explain. Since Santra intended to sell his thefts he had to have all courses represented and in great quantity. Thus he had to demand the *glandulas* of boar three times (4) and its *lumbum* four times (4) and just to make sure, the height of the horror of his depredations, he needed more than one slice of cake.