

# A MAN OF LETTERS

Algeria

D M S

HISCE LOCIS FLORI REQUIESCV  
NT OSSA SEPVLTA ꝫ AETATIS  
PRIMAE MISERENDO FVNE  
5 RE RAPTO DITIS AD INFER  
NAS SEDES LVCOsqVE PIORVM  
QVEM DOCTA STVDIIS ORNARAT  
DIVA THALIA QVI PROPE VI  
CENOS BIS IAM SVPLEVERAT  
10 NNOS NI LACHESIS BREVIA RVPIS  
SE STAMINA FVSOꝫPRO DOLOR VI  
NULLI DECRETA RVMFERE FAS EST  
PARCARVM DIVA DVROsqVE EVA  
DERE CASVS ꝫ H S E

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM).

HISCE LOCIS FLORI REQUIESCUNT OSSA SEPULTA  
AETATIS PRIMAE MISERANDO FUNERE RAPT[ ]  
DITIS AD INFERNAS SEDES LUCOSQUE PIORUM.  
QUEM DOCTA STUDIIS ORNARAT DIVA THALIA,  
QUI PROPE VICENOS BIS IAM SUPLEVERAT ANNOS,  
NI LACHESIS BREVIA RUPISSET STAMINA FUSO.  
PRO DOLOR VI NULLI DECRETA RUMPERE FAS EST  
PARCARUM DIVA DUROSQUE EVADERE CASUS.  
H(IC) S(ITUS) E(ST).

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Sacred to the shades of the departed  
The bones of Florus lie buried in this place.  
Florus, who was carried off in youth with  
Sad funeral rites  
To shadowed home of Pluto  
and the graves of the virtuous.

The learned muse, Thalia  
Graced him with talents.  
He had completed  
Almost two score years on earth  
When Lachesis cut short  
His brief thread of life  
On her spindle.

O sorrow!  
No force on earth  
Can abridge the divine decrees  
Of the fates  
Or escape  
What must befall.

Here he is buried.

*CIL* 8,8870

The text of this inscription is intact and poses no particular problems with regard to vocabulary or syntax. Of special note is the implication that although Florus was almost forty years old, hardly young by Roman standards, his death was regarded as untimely. The *fusus* was a customary attribute of the Fates, and is mentioned by Vergil and Ovid. The final line, *Parcarum . . . casus*, filled with harsh *cs* and *ss* and long vowels, seemed to call for a somber, even stark, ending. The last three lines of the translation, although their line breaks bear no resemblance to the original, are an attempt to provide this.

## AN ACTOR'S GRAVE

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Near Rome

QUISQUIS FLAMINIAM TERIS, VIATOR,  
NOLI NOBILE PRAETERIRE MARMOR.  
URBIS DELICIAE SALESQUE NILI,

ARS ET GRATIA, LUSUS ET VOLUPTAS,  
ROMANI DECUS ET DOLOR THEATRI                    5  
ATQUE OMNES VENERES CUPIDINESQUE  
HOC SUNT CONDITA, QUO PARIS, SEPULCRO.

Martial 11.13

Whoever you are, traveller,  
Trudging along the Via Flaminia,  
Do not overlook this  
Monument of noble marble.  
The delight of Rome,  
The wit of Egypt,  
Artistry and grace,  
The ornament and now the sorrow  
Of the Roman theatre  
And all the loves and cupids  
Are buried there.  
Which is to say  
This is the tomb of  
Paris.

This poem posed the special problem of conveying some of the terse diction of Martial while preserving the richness of his evocative vocabulary. I did not keep the division between the two Latin stanzas, since in my translation the second stanza would have been so long as to upset the unity of the poem. In the end it seemed impossible to render the poem in anything close to its set of line breaks; hence this is a particularly free translation. Ending the poem with the final line "Paris" is an attempt to reflect the finality and isolation of the lone word *sepulcro*.