L'étude approfondie des réalités doit nécessairement précéder le jugement esthétique: sans elle il n'est point d'interprétation littérale.

L. Robert

Hermes Martia saeculi voluptas,
Hermes omnibus eruditus armis,
Hermes et gladiator et magister,
Hermes turba sui tremorque ludi,
Hermes quem timet Helius sed unum,
Hermes cui cadit Advolans sed uni,
Hermes vincere nec ferire doctus,
Hermes subpositicius sibi ipse,
Hermes divitiae locariorum,
Hermes cura laborque ludiarum,
Hermes belligera superbus basta,
Hermes aequoreo minax tridente,
Hermes casside languida timendus,
Hermes gloria Martis universi,
Hermes omnia solus et ter unus.

One glance suffices to recognize the exceptional nature of this poem within Martial's works. A similar continuous anaphora does not occur anywhere else in Martial. The concluding line with its cryptic formulas is also unique. Both features unmistakably point to hymnic style and, more especially, to aretalogy. It is curious that this relation has never been pointed out in any of the well-known editions of Martial. Nor is there to

1 Naturally, anaphora is a common phenomenon in Martial. Kruuse 1941, 278, gives numerous examples. They all differ from that of 5, 24 in that the latter is maintained consistently throughout the epigram.

2 I have consulted the following editions, translations and commentaries, which will be henceforth referred to by author's name and date: H. J. Izaac, Martial. Épigrammes (Paris 1930); R. Helm, Martial. Epigramme (Zürich 1957); F. A. Paley and W. H. Stone, Martialis. Select Epigrams (London 1868); J. A. Pott and F. A. Wright, Martial. The Twelve Books of Epigrams (London 1920); W. C. A. Ker, Martial (Loeb Library 1930); Stephenson, Selected Epigrams of Martial (London 1880); A. Berg, Die Epigramme des M. Val. Martialis (Stuttgart 1865); H. G. Bohn, The Epigrams of Martial (London 1884); L. Friedländer, M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Libri (Leipzig 1886); all the seventeenth century editions preserved
my knowledge a separate treatment of this interesting poem\(^3\). In an article on the meaning of *ludia*\(^4\), P. Piernavieja quotes the epigram and remarks: "L’épigramme a l’allure d’une sorte de ritournelle magique: il suffit de lire la base de ces phaléciens pour s’en rendre compte". That is all I was able to find in the literature on Martial. One has to turn to special studies of hymns, Hermes Trismegistos, the number three, etc. in order to find some very disparate and mostly casual remarks on Martial’s poem.

Nor do these remarks lead to an unequivocal interpretation; particularly the final line remains problematic. The great importance of a correct interpretation, especially of the clause *ter unus*, for the history of religions is only one of several considerations that justify a treatment of the epigram as a whole.

The poem consists of fifteen hendecasyllabi. Each line opens with the name of the celebrated gladiator Hermes, followed in each case by one of his qualities, added in apposition or in a relative clause. The first line contains a general laudatory statement, which is elaborated and specified in the twelve lines that follow. The fourteenth line rounds off this series and refers back to the opening line, after which the poem ends with a summary in the fifteenth line.

Gladiators rarely adopted names of gods. L. Robert has collected the names of gladiators in Asia Minor\(^5\) and found that—understandably—many names of heroes occur. He does not discuss the names of gods in particular, apparently since they are so rare. Out of all the names collected, only two are those of real gods, and curiously enough these are the same ones that appear in our poem. Robert mentions one inscription with the name Helios\(^6\) and three with the name Hermes\(^7\). In a later study\(^8\) he adds one more. Moreover, the name Hermes for gladiators also occurs in

in the Leiden University Library. This leaves the astonished reader with the impression that practically every commentator copies his predecessor(s), though carefully making sure that the really good comments, preferably those by the giants of the seventeenth century, are omitted.

\(^3\) The only exception seems to be Kleinknecht 1937, 199 ff. Following Weinreich, he recognized the hymnic character of the poem. However, his discussion is superficial and needs drastic corrections and supplements on crucial points. *Ter unus*, the climax of the poem, receives no more comment than: "Damit ist ohne Zweifel auf den Ερμῆς Τριμήγιατος angespielt".

\(^4\) Piernavieja 1972, esp. 1039.

\(^5\) Robert 1940, 297 ff. and index.

\(^6\) O. c. 298 n.5.

\(^7\) O. c. nos. 67, 109, 162. On no. 67 see also L. Robert, *Hellenica* III, 124 and 140-2. This inscription, ‘Ερμῆς ὁ πάν Φῶς, like others (e.g. ILS 5137), proves that the name was sometimes deliberately chosen by gladiators. On ‘Spitznamen’ or ‘noms de guerre’ of gladiators see also: H. Solin, *Arcos* 8 (1979) 165 f.; Ville 1981, 308 f.

\(^8\) *Hellenica* V, 79 no. 316: four gladiators ‘Ερμῆς, Κύρος, Κινάδος, Τροφόνιος. ‘‘Hermes est un nom banal...’’