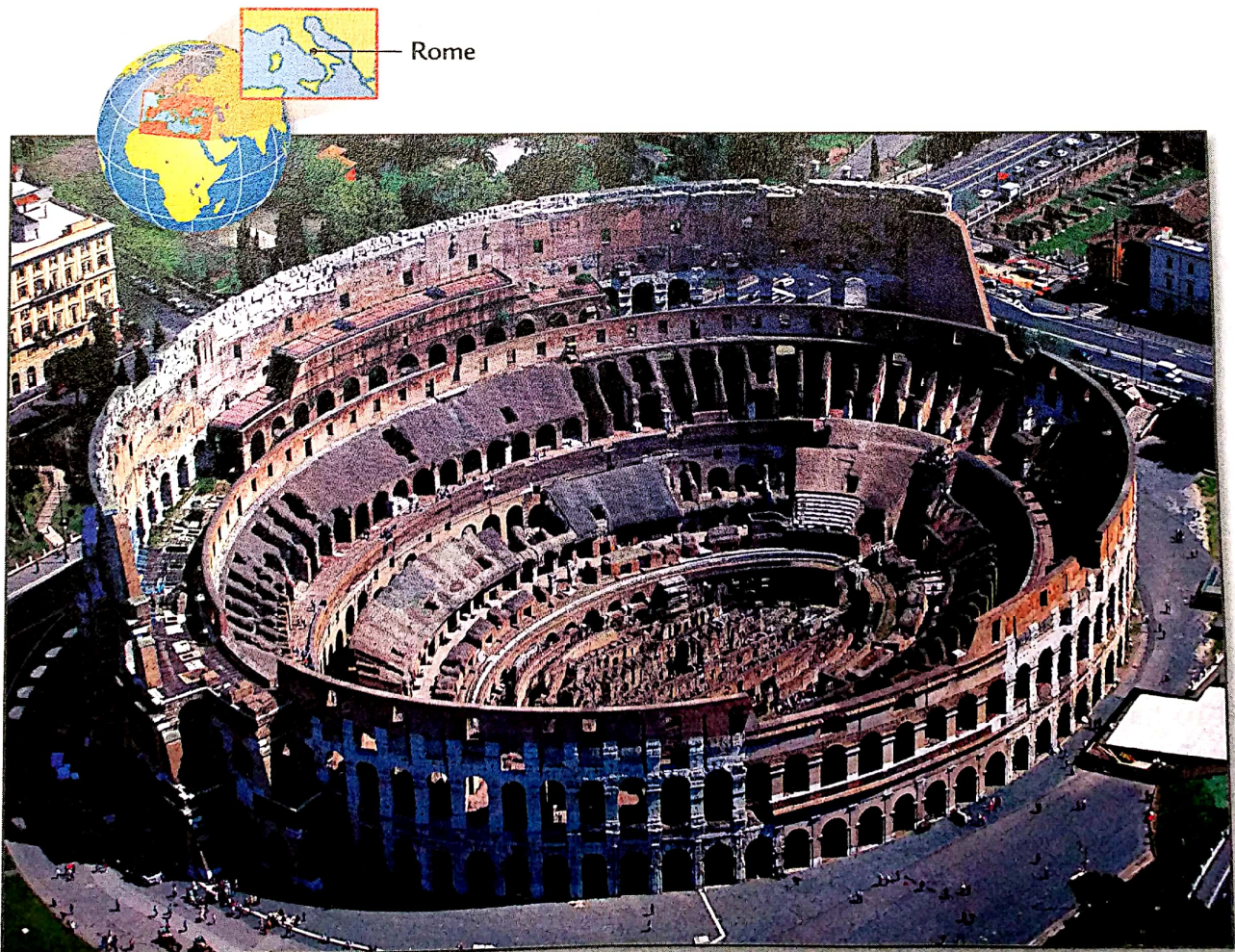


CIRCUS AND ARENA

The Romans did not have regular sporting events as we have on weekends or organized entertainment available every day as we have in the theater or movies. Instead, to celebrate religious festivals, commemorate great national victories, or honor the emperor, there were public holidays. These lasted a varying number of days, during which entertainments were presented in the circus and the arena. The number of these festivals increased as time went on until, by the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41–54), 159 days of the year were holidays.

Admission to the shows was free, and all the emperors made sure there was plenty of entertainment. According to Fronto:

Trajan sensibly always paid attention to the idols of the theater, the circus, or the arena because he knew that the entertainment of the people was very



An aerial view of the Colosseum
Rome

important to the government; doling out corn or money might keep individuals quiet, but shows were necessary to keep the mob happy.

Fronto, *Preamble to History* 17

Juvenal, too, refers to the demand of the Roman mob for **pānem et circēnsēs**—the bread-dole and games in the circus.

The cost of the public games was met by the state. Often, magistrates added to the grant from their own pockets in order to increase their popularity and the chance of success in their careers. To do this they even ran into debt:

Julius Caesar spent money so recklessly that many thought he was paying a high price to create a short-lived sensation, but really he was buying very cheaply the most powerful position in the world. Before entering politics he was thirteen hundred talents in debt. As aedile he staged games with 320 pairs of gladiators fighting in single combat. In this and his other extravagance in presenting theatrical performances, processions, and public banquets, he completely outdid all previous efforts to obtain publicity in this way.

Plutarch, *Caesar* 5

The Colosseum

When the family of Cornelius returned to Rome, the great building of the Colosseum was nearing completion. Until this time, Rome's amphitheaters had usually been temporary wooden structures, and these caused some frightful disasters, as at Fidenae near Rome in A.D. 27, when a wooden amphitheater collapsed, killing or maiming 50,000 people. Wooden structures continued to be built even after the completion of the magnificent architectural monument known to its contemporaries as the **Amphitheātrum Flāvium** but familiar to us as the Colosseum, so named from the nearby colossal statue of Nero, converted by Vespasian into a statue of the sun-god.

Begun by Vespasian, the Colosseum was dedicated in A.D. 80 by his son Titus, who, to speed up its construction, had used Jewish prisoners taken in the capture of Jerusalem ten years before. The massive elliptical building rose in four tiers and measured overall 620 x 512 feet or 189 x 156 meters. With seating space estimated at 45,000, it could be covered over by a massive awning in excessive heat or rain—though Gaius Caligula is said to have taken delight in opening such awnings of earlier wooden amphitheaters in times of extreme heat and forbidding anyone to leave! It took 1,000 sailors of the Imperial fleet to raise the awning over the Colosseum.

Admission was free and open to men, women, and children, slave or free, so long as places were available. Women were confined to the topmost area, and their view must certainly have been restricted.

The floor of the Colosseum was of timber, strewn with sand, and had numerous trapdoors. Under the arena, and extending beyond it, was a vast complex of subterranean cells and passages, which now lie open and exposed to view. Remains can be seen of lifts and machinery (worked by counterweights) used to raise, at various points in the arena, caged animals, scenery, and other apparatus needed for wild beast hunts.

On the occasion of the dedication of the Colosseum, Titus held a festival for 100 days and during the celebrations staged a very lavish gladiatorial show.

For more than 1900 years, the Colosseum has stood as the most imposing monument in the city of Rome and has been almost synonymous with the city itself. A medieval writer, the Venerable Bede (c. A.D. 673–735), quoted the following pilgrims' proverb or prophecy linking the fate of the Colosseum with that of Rome and of the world:

Quam diū stat Colyssaeus, stābit et Rōma.
Quandō cadet Colyssaeus, cadet et Rōma.
Quandō cadet Rōma, cadet et mundus.

*While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;
And when Rome falls—the World.*

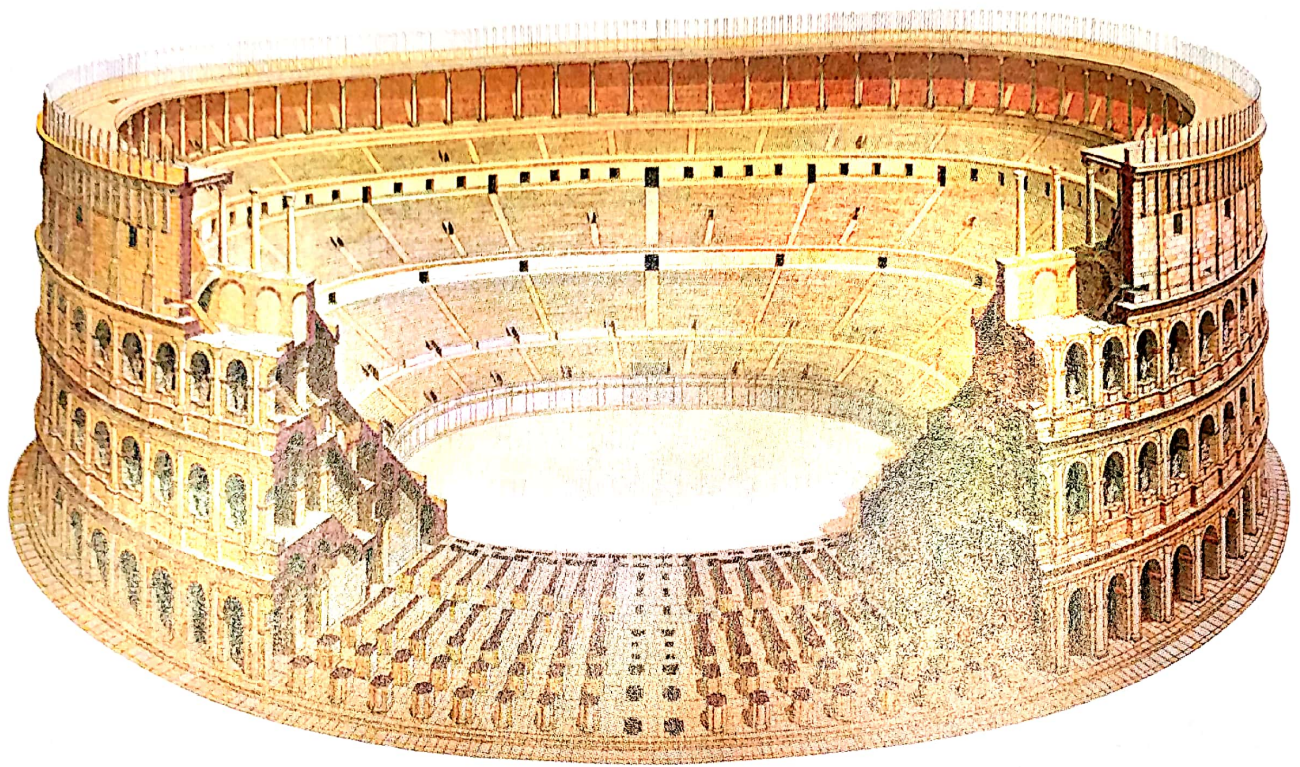
translated by Lord Byron

Martial's Epigrams

Born in Bilbilis, Spain, about A.D. 40, Martial went to Rome in A.D. 64, the year of the Great Fire, when Nero was emperor. His fame as a keen observer of life in the city and as a composer of biting, satirical epigrams (**epigrammata**) rests on poems he published in great numbers between A.D. 86 and 98. In A.D. 80, the year in which the Flavian Amphitheater was dedicated, Martial wrote a group of epigrams that he published under the title *De spectaculis*, in which he describes many of the memorable combats that took place in the arena that year. Translations of the first three poems in the collection are given below. In the first, Martial tries to assess the importance of the Amphitheater as an architectural monument. In the second he describes the joy of the Roman people in the building program of Vespasian and Titus that replaced the hated **Domus Aurea** of Nero with structures of more use to the people. In the third he pictures the influx of people from all over the Roman world who came to the dedication ceremonies.

(I)

Let barbarian Memphis be silent about the wonders of her pyramids; let the Assyrians not boast about their Babylonian achievement; let the slack Ionians not gain praise for their temple of Trivian Diana; let the altar made of densely



Reconstruction of the Colosseum

Watercolor, twentieth century, the French School

packed horns keep Delos unnoticed; let the Carians not praise to the skies the Mausoleum suspended on empty air. Each of these feats yields pride of place to Caesar's amphitheater. Fame will speak of this one work that replaces all the others.

(II)

Here, where the Colossus, with his radiate head, gazes on the stars, and in the middle of the road the lofty scaffolds rise, there glittered the hated palace of a brutal king, and in all the city there stood but a single House. Here, where the venerable mass of the eye-catching Amphitheater rises up, was Nero's lake. Here, where we marvel at the gift of the baths so speedily built, his arrogant estate had stolen from the poor their humble homes. Where Claudius's portico spreads its extensive shade the furthest part of the palace came to an end. Rome is now given back to herself, and with you as its ruler, Caesar, the pleasure of the people is now what had been the pleasure of their oppressor.

(III)

What nation is so far distant, what people so barbarous, Caesar, that a spectator has not come from one of them to your city? A farmer of Rhodope has come from Orphic Haemus; a Sarmatian fed on draughts of horses' blood has come; and he who drinks at its source the stream of first-found Nile, and he whose shore the wave of farthest Tethys beats; the Arab has hurried here, Sabaeans have hurried, and Cilicians have here been drenched in their own saffron dew. With hair twined in a knot Sygambrians have come, and Aethiopians with their locks twined in other ways. The languages of the peoples are varied, yet they are one when you are acclaimed your country's true father.

1. What thought does each quotation express about the Colosseum and its games?
2. Why was the Colosseum such a remarkable architectural achievement?
3. How does Martial in praising the Colosseum manage to glorify the emperor?

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The Irregular Verb *mālō, mälle, mālui*

The verb **mālō** is a compound of the adverb **magis** and the irregular verb **volō**, and it means *to wish more, wish rather, or prefer*. It has no imperative. In the story at the beginning of this chapter, you saw:

Aurēlia domī manēre **māvult**. (47:16)

Aurelia prefers to stay at home.

The forms of this verb in the present, imperfect, and future tenses are as follows:

		Present	Imperfect	Future
Singular	1	mālō	mālēbam	mālam
	2	māvīs	mālēbās	mālēs
	3	māvult	mālēbat	mālet
Plural	1	mālumus	mālēbāmus	mālēmus
	2	māvultis	mālēbātis	mālētis
	3	mālunt	mālēbant	mālent

Learn the above forms thoroughly.

Like *volō*, *mālō* is often followed by a complementary infinitive, as in the