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MARTIAL'S FICTION: DOMITIUS MARSUS AND MAECENAS

In keeping with his *persona* of a mendicant poet preoccupied with poverty,[1] Martial appropriated themes regarding Maecenas' patronage that had begun to take shape in the previous generation. Poets on the periphery of Nero's court were in large part responsible for creating the image of Maecenas as the ideal patron, that is, as a man of substance who not only recognized poetic talent, but who also rewarded poets with gifts and support that allowed them to pursue a literary calling without the distractions of poverty.[2] Calpurnius Siculus claimed that Virgil was fortunate because he caught Maecenas' eye, received from him relief from poverty, and at his encouragement abandoned lowly pastoral poetry for lofty epic.[3] The anonymous author of the *Laus Pisonis*, who may be the same Calpurnius Siculus,[4] also noted that Maecenas rescued a poverty-stricken Virgil from obscurity, and did the same for Varius, Horace, and many others, all of whom might never have become famous had the great man not opened his door to them and protected them from poverty (*Laus Pis.* 230–48).[5] And so Martial singles out Virgil, Varius, and Horace as recipients of

[1] For the tradition of this *persona* and Martial's use of it, see Alex Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae: Poets, Patrons and Epideixis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Liverpool, 1983), 30–6 and 54–5; see also R. Saller, 'Martial on patronage and literature', *CQ* 33 (1983), 246–57. Saller's article, which attempts to correct some of the statements on literary patronage put forth by P. White, '*Amicitia* and the profession of poetry in early imperial Rome', *JRS* 68 (1978), 74–92, makes an apt comparison between Martial's constant claims to poverty and college teachers today: 'That is to say, the picture contains an element of truth, but is certainly not the literal truth. College teachers today earn only a fraction of what lawyers with comparable years of education earn and so complain about not being able to make ends meet; at the same time, they clearly do make a living wage' (249).

[2] See F. Bellandi, 'L'immagine di Mecenate protettore delle lettere', *Atene e Roma* 40 (1995), 78–101; and Shannon N. Byrne, 'Poets and Maecenas: the making of a patron', *JAC* 15 (2000), 1–12. The gratitude Augustan poets felt for Maecenas' patronage of course inspired Neronian poets. For example, Horace frequently refers to Maecenas' friendship and support (*Carm.* 1.12, 2.17.3–4) and does not hide the fact that he was a client of Maecenas (*Sat.* 2.6.29–31, 2.7.32–5) and obtained reward for it (*Epod.* 1.23–30; *Epist.* 7.37–9; cf. *Sat.* 2.6.32–9 for a glimpse of services rendered). Roman patronage at this time, however, did not include poetry in the exchange of obligations and benefits to the extent that it does in the first century A.D., and Horace never calls attention to the fact that his poetry was responsible for the benefits he received as Maecenas' client. On the contrary, Horace was acutely aware that a client who offered his patron poetry or mere entertainment ran the risk of being labelled a parasite, no better than fawning Greek poets who were always willing to flatter a patron with poetry; see C. Damon, *Mask of the Parasite* (Ann Arbor), 105–45; and G. Williams, 'Phases in political patronage of literature in Rome', in B. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (Austin, 1982), 3–27.

[3] *Ecl.* 4.158–163: *Fer, Meliboee, deo mea carmina nam tibi fas est / sacra Palatini penetralia visere Phoebi. / tum mihi talis eris, qualis qui dulce sonantem / Tityron e silvis dominam deduxit in urbem / ostenditque deos et 'spreto' dixit, 'ovili, / Tityre, rura prius, sed post cantabimus arma'.* For the identification of the 'qualis qui' with Maecenas and not another patron, such as Asinius Pollio, see B. Schröder, *Carmina non quae nemorale resultent: Ein Kommentar zur 4. Ekloge des Calpurnius Siculus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), 213.

[4] For the identity of the author of the *Laus Pisonis* as the young Calpurnius Siculus, see Bellandi (n. 2), 87–8; see also 84, n. 14 for relevant bibliography. For a more detailed discussion on the date of Calpurnius Siculus, which ultimately settles on a period later than that of Nero, see N. Horsfall, 'Criteria for the dating of Calpurnius Siculus', *RFIC* 125 (1997), 166–96.

[5] See *Laus Pis.* 230–48, esp. 236–42: *qui tamen haut uni patefecit limina vati / nec sua Vergilio*

Maecenas' generosity, but he adds Domitius Marsus to the list of fortunate clients. In fact, no other evidence connects Domitius Marsus to Maecenas, though it comes as no surprise that Martial would fabricate a relationship between the most distinguished patron of Roman literary talent and an early pioneer of Latin epigram.

Martial often comments that he has fame as a poet,[6] but he also notes that if his financial circumstances were improved, his poetic achievements would be even greater.[7] Martial first expresses this thought in 1.107: Lucius Julius accuses him of being lazy because he writes nothing great, to which Martial retorts that he would write something great indeed if he had the sort of *otium* that Maecenas gave Virgil and Horace:

> otia da nobis, sed qualia fecerat olim
> Maecenas Flacco Vergilioque suo:
> condere victuras temptem per saecula curas
> et nomen flammis eripuisse meum. (1.107.3–6)

Give me leisure, I mean such leisure as Maecenas once made for his Flaccus and his Virgil. Then I would try to write works that would live through the centuries and snatch my name from the funeral fires.[8]

Martial mentions Maecenas' patronage and association with poets five times,[9] and he even claims to have found such a patron, when he retired to Spain in the last years of his life, in the form of one Terentius Priscus,[10] whom Martial praises with sentiments originally made famous by Augustan poets:

> Quod Flacco Varioque fuit summoque Maroni
> Maecenas, atavis regibus ortus eques,[11]
> gentibus et populis hoc te mihi, Prisce Terenti,
> fama fuisse loquax chartaque dicet anus. (12.3[4].1–4)

What Maecenas, knight sprung from ancient kings, was to Flaccus and Varius and Maro the Supreme, this, Priscus Terentius, loquacious fame and paper grown old shall declare to all races and peoples that you were to me.

That Virgil, Varius, and Horace were named together in the *Laus Pisonis*[12] and again by Martial comes as no surprise, as they are found mentioned or discussed together in various surviving ancient lives and commentaries.[13] More importantly, Horace

permisit numina soli / Maecenas tragico quatientem pulpita gestu / erexit Varium, Maecenas alta tonantis / eruit et populis ostendit nomina Graiis. / carmina Romanis etiam resonantia chordis, / Ausoniamque chelyn gracilis patefecit Horati.

[6] Cf. 1.1, 8.3.3–4, 9 pref. 5–9, 5.16 mentions his poverty-stricken state despite his fame.

[7] Cf. the wish of Corydon in Calpurnius Siculus *Ecl.* 4.152–55: *o mihi quae tereti decurrunt carmina versu / tunc, Meliboee, sonent si quando montibus istis / dicar habere Larem, si quando nostra videre / pascua contingat!* Cf. also *Laus. Pis.* 253–5: *tu nanti protende manum: tu, Piso, latentem / exsere. nos humilis domus, at sincera, parentum / et tenuis fortuna sua caligine celat.*

[8] For the text and translations of Martial in this paper, as well as the numeration of the poems, see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Martial I–III* (Boston, MA and London, 1993).

[9] 1.107.3–6, 7.29.7–8, 8.55(56), 11.3.9–10, 12.3(4).1–4.

[10] Hardie (n. 1), 56, suggests that Martial may have purposely avoided hailing anyone as his personal Maecenas while at Rome: 'Only after he left Rome, and his friends there, could he risk singling out one man for this highest of compliments.'

[11] Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.1.1 *Maecenas atavis edite regibus*; Prop. 3.9.1 *Maecenas, eques Etrusco de sanguine regum.*

[12] See n. 5 above.

[13] For example, for Virgil and Horace, see Jer. *Ol.* 189.2, Serv. *Ecl.* 3.90, *Georg.* 2.41, *Aen.* 8.310;

himself often mentions his friendship with Varius and Virgil in his poems,[14] and he credits his admittance into the circle of Maecenas to the kind words of support that Varius and Virgil gave on his behalf.[15] Martial therefore naturally names these poets together, not only because they had already been used to demonstrate what the right type of patronage (Maecenas') could inspire, but also because they were known to have been close friends.

In 8.55(56) Martial notes that while the Rome of his day has surpassed any period that has gone before, nevertheless, in the area of poetry, no contemporary can match the genius of Virgil (1–4) 'Let there be Maecenases, and Virgils, Flaccus, will not be lacking' (*sint Maecenates, non deerunt, Flacce, Marones*, 5). Martial goes on to describe how Maecenas came upon Virgil at a time when the poet was dabbling in the rustic themes of the *Eclogues*:

> iugera perdiderat miserae vicina Cremonae
> flebat et abductas Tityrus aeger oves:
> risit Tuscus eques paupertatemque malignam
> reppulit et celeri iussit abire fuga.
> 'accipe divitias et vatum maximus esto . . .' (8.55[56].7–11)

Grieving Tityrus had lost his acres close to hapless Cremona and was bemoaning his ravished sheep: the Tuscan knight smiled and drove back malignant Poverty, telling her be off and quickly. 'Take riches and be greatest of poets . . .'

Just as described by Calpurnius Siculus in his fourth *Eclogue*, Maecenas removed the threat of poverty and set the poet on the path to the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*.

> excidit attonito pinguis Galatea poetae,
> Thestylis et rubras messibus usta genas;
> protinus Italiam concepit et 'arma virumque',
> qui modo vix Culicem fleverat ore rudi. (8.55[56].17–20)

The astonished poet forgot buxom Galatea and Thestylis with her red cheeks tanned by the harvests. Forthwith he conceived Italy and 'Arms and the man', though his prentice lips had but lately with difficulty mourned the Gnat.

The poem ends with an idea similar to that found in the *Laus Pisonis* 230–48, where Maecenas rescues Virgil, Varius, and Horace from a pitiful old age in poverty. It is at this point Martial introduces a new poet among those rescued by Maecenas' generosity. Instead of Virgil, Varius, and Horace, as found together in the *Laus Pisonis*, we find Virgil, Varius, and Domitius Marsus:

> quid Varios Marsosque loquar ditataque vatum
> nomina, magnus erit quos numerare labor?
> ergo ego Vergilius, si munera Maecenatis
> des mihi? Vergilius non ero, Marsus ero. (8.55[56].21–4)

for Virgil and Varius, see *Vita Donati* 34–41, *Vita Probiana* 12; for Virgil, Horace, and Varius, see Jer. *Ol.* 190.4, Serv. *Ecl.* 9.35.

[14] For example, for Virgil, see *Carm.* 1.3, 1.24.10; for Varius, see *Sat.* 1.9.23, 2.8.21; *Carm.* 1.6; for Virgil and Varius, see *Sat.* 1.5.40, 1.10.44–5; *Epist.* 2.1.247; *Ars Poet.* 55.

[15] *Sat.* 1.6.54–5: *nulla etenim mihi te fors obtulit; optimus olim / Vergilius, post hunc Varius, dixere quid essem.*

Why should I speak of Varius and Marsus and other names of poets made rich, whom it would be great labor to enumerate? Well then, shall I be a Virgil if you were to give me the gifts of a Maecenas? I shall not be a Virgil, I shall be a Marsus.

Martial builds on the ideas already expressed by Calpurnius Siculus in the fourth *Eclogue* and the *Laus Pisonis*, but adds a component appropriate to the genre of poetry in which he is engaged, that is, he includes the name of his predecessor in the area of epigram.

Domitius Marsus was a contemporary of Augustan poets whom, along with Catullus, Martial holds up as a model for his own poetry.[16] Domitius Marsus is assumed to have been a member of Maecenas' circle,[17] though in fact nothing connects him to Maecenas except for two statements in Martial's poems, one of which is seen above in 8.55[56].21–4. Martial again links Domitius Marsus to Maecenas in 7.29, where the slave of Voconius Victor is encouraged to put aside his master's learned books while Martial recites some of his *parva carmina*:

et Maecenati, Maro cum cantaret Alexin,
nota tamen Marsi fusca Melaenis erat. (7.29.7–8)

Even to Maecenas, when Maro sang of Alexis, still was Marsus' dusky Malaenis familiar.

Very little is known about the life and writings of Domitius Marsus, starting with when he was born and how long he lived. Ovid mentions him in *Pont.* 4.16.5, at the beginning of the long list of poets whose fame overlapped with his own. This could mean that Domitius Marsus was still alive in A.D. 8, the year Ovid ceased to live in Rome. If this is true, Domitius Marsus would have been quite an old man at his death,[18] since certain fragments of his poetry indicate that he was close in age to Horace and Virgil. These fragments include: (i) an elegiac couplet composed as an epitaph for Atia, the mother of Octavian, which may have been written at the time of her death in 43 B.C.;[19] (ii) two lines of another poem, whose full length is unknown, in which Atia is seen to ponder the immortality of her son, suggesting to some that Domitius Marsus was actively involved in defending Octavian against slurs from his distractors;[20] (iii) a complete epigram which mocks the bad poet Bavius, whom Virgil had criticized (*Ecl.* 3.90), and who Jerome says died in 35 B.C. in Cappadocia (*Chron. ad Ol.* 182.2).[21] This poem, which attacks Bavius and his brother, is found in a collec-

[16] See Martial 1 pref.12, 2.71, 2.77, 4.29, 5.5, 7.29. 7.99. 8.55(56).

[17] See, for example, Bellandi (n. 2), 93; J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic* (Cambridge, 1990), 97; E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (Oxford, 1993), 300; J. Bramble in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature II: Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 1982), 477–8; D. Fogazza, *Domiti Marsi: Testimonia et Fragmenta* (Rome, 1981), 17–25; J.-M. André, *Mécène. Essai de biographie spirituelle* (Paris, 1967), 117; Ricardo Avallone, *Mecenate* (Naples, 1962), 185–8.

[18] Most scholars accept that Domitius Marsus probably died sometime before Ovid's exile; see Fogazza (n. 17), 16 and n. 5; Sullivan (n. 17), 97 and 314.

[19] Fogazza 4 = Courtney 9. For a discussion of the date and composition of this poem as an epitaph, see Fogazza (n. 17), 16 and 25–7. On the other hand, Courtney (n. 17), 305, is not convinced this is a real epitaph, but suggests rather it was a literary exercise.

[20] Fogazza 5 = Courtney 8. See Fogazza (n. 17), 25 for recent arguments that support the participation of Domitius Marsus in pro-Octavian propaganda.

[21] Fogazza 1 = Courtney 1.

tion entitled *Cicuta* (*Hemlock*), which suggests that these were satirical poems of a poisonous nature, like the plant.[22]

Further evidence for the *floruit* of Domitius Marsus may be deduced from Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.1.18, where he states that Apollodorus of Pergamum, the instructor of Octavian at Apollonia, was not accustomed to writing out his doctrines; Quintilian proves this point by referring to a letter that Apollodorus had written to Domitius: *Nam ipsius sola videtur ars edita ad Matium, quia ceteras missa ad Domitium epistula non agnoscit* ('The only published textbook of his own is the one addressed to Matius, for the letter to Domitius acknowledges no other').[23] It seems likely that the Domitius here is the poet.[24] Based on this letter and especially on the poems concerning Atia, it has been suggested that Domitius Marsus was with Apollodorus and therefore Octavian in 45 B.C. in Apollonia, making him a friend and supporter of the future *princeps* long before either Virgil or Horace ever met him.[25] His connection to a young Octavian seems to find support, but not a connection to Maecenas along the lines enjoyed by Virgil and Horace.

It is easy to understand why Martial would include Domitius Marsus among those enriched by the greatest of all patrons: Martial is not writing anything of the

[22] See Fogazza (n. 17), 18–19, and Courtney (n. 17), 300. The title is passed down by Philargyrius in his commentary on Virgil's *Eclogues*: *Bavius curator <fratris> fuit; de quibus Domitius in Cicuta refert*; see A. Rostagni, *Suetonio* De poetis *e biografi minori* (Turin, 1944; repr. New York, 1979), 125–6. The manuscript is badly damaged in places, and different readings greatly affect how the poem is interpreted. Here is how the poem appears in Fogazza:

Omnia cum Bavio communia frater habebat,
  unanimi fratres sicut habere solent,
rura domum nummos atque omnia: denique, ut aiunt,
  corporibus geminis spiritus unus erat.
Sed postquam alterius mulier †concubitum† 5
  novit, deposuit alter amicitiam:
[et] omnia tunc ira, tunc omnia desolata
  <et> nova regna duos accipiunt <dominos>.

Courtney reconstructs lines 5–7 as follows:

sed postquam alterius mulier <sibi> concubitum <ire>
  non uult, deposuit alter amicitiam.
[et] omnia tunc ira, tunc omnia lite soluta,

Depending on how the text is reconstructed, either Bavius and his brother shared everything until one bedded the other's wife, which caused the brothers to quarrel, or until the wife of one refused to bed the other, again causing strife between the brothers. A. Pangallo, 'Domizio Marso contro Bavio', *Maia* 28 (1976), 29–33, offers the following reading for lines 5 and 6:

Sed postquam alterius mulier <vix> concubitum <unum>
  novit, deposuit alter amicitiam.

Pangallo suggests that Domitius Marsus implies a homosexual relationship between the two Bavii: they hoped to include the wife of one, and her refusal to participate ultimately severed their fraternal bonds. In any case, the poem is insulting and it, too, has been seen as pro-Octavian propaganda, inasmuch as Bavius was a follower of Antony; see Fogazza, 29–30, Pangallo, 29–33, and Rostagni, 124.

[23] For the text and translation of Quintilian in this paper, see D. Russell, *Quintilian I–VI* (Boston, MA and London, 2001).

[24] Fogazza (n. 17), 15; Courtney (n. 17), 300. The connection was originally made by G. L. Spalding, *De Institutione Oratoria I* (Leipzig, 1798), 433.

[25] Fogazza (n. 17), 28–9; S. Mariotti, 'Intorno a Domizio Marso', in *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in memoria di Augusto Rostagni* (Turin, 1963), 597–8.

magnitude of an *Aeneid*,[26] yet a wise patron will recognize the value of his epigrams, as Maecenas, according to Martial, recognized the value of Domitius Marsus. Hence, if enriched by a patron of Maecenas' ilk, Martial would opt to be a Marsus, not a Virgil. Martial is setting the tone and working out a unique programme for epigram in Latin, elevating it and imbuing it with a distinctly Roman flavour, and bestowing upon it credibility and respect as a genre suitable for poetic expression.[27] This is why Martial often refers to Domitius Marsus and Catullus as his predecessors in the genre. We can see the connection to Catullus, who had done much to develop the characteristics that would distinguish epigram from other short poems, though he by no means conceived of defining it as a genre separate from lyric. Some of Catullus' poems show the trademark 'sting in the tail', though again he did not find this element crucial to his poems. Domitius Marsus wrote epigrams, some of which at least had a sting, as seen in the epigram about Bavius in the collection called *Cicuta*. More importantly, he wrote a prose work entitled *De Urbanitate*, which Quintilian cites (*Inst.* 6.3.102–12) for its definition of *urbanitas*. According to Quintilian, Domitius Marsus wrote *diligentissime* on the subject, and defined *urbanitas* as follows:

urbanitas est virtus quaedam in breve dictum coacta et apta ad delectandos movendosque homines in omnem adfectum animi, maxime idonea ad resistendum vel lacessendum, prout quaeque res ac persona desiderat. (*Inst.* 6.3.104)

Urbanity is a virtue of language concentrated in a brief saying, and adapted to delight men and move them to any kind of emotion, but especially suitable for resisting or challenging according to the needs of individual circumstances or persons.

Domitius Marsus in the *De Urbanitate*, after citing Cato's definition of the *urbanus homo*,[29] divided the types of urbane *dicta* into three categories: serious, humorous, and intermediate, with further subdivision of the serious *dicta* into honorific, derogatory, and neutral, for which he supplied examples from Cicero. Quintilian, while approving of the divisions of humour that Domitius made, is somewhat underwhelmed by his general definition of *urbanitas*, inasmuch as Quintilian felt it covered all the virtues of oratory, with the exception of the emphasis on brevity.[30] Yet brevity seems to have been a crucial feature for Domitius. Edwin Ramage, who analyses

[26] Cf. his description of the book he sends to Pliny (10.20[19].1–2): *nec doctum satis et parum severum / sed non rusticulum tamen libellum*. Cf. also the sort of place he desires for his book in the Palatine library (5.5.5–8): *sit locus et nostris aliqua tibi parte libellis, / qua Pedo, qua Marsus quaque Catullus erit. / ad Capitolini caelestia carmina belli / grande cothurnati pone Maronis opus*.

[27] For Martial's originality and contribution to Latin epigram, see Sullivan (n. 17), 56–77. For the development of epigram from its Greek origins and Martial's aspiration to make it a legitimate genre of Latin poetry, see M. Puelma, 'Epigramma: osservazioni sulla storia di un termine greco-latino', *Maia* 49 (1997), 189–213, esp. 207–13; the same article appears as '*Ἐπίγραμμα*—epigramma: Aspekte einer Wortgeschichte', *MH* 53 (1996), 123–39. Domitian, who was partial to Greek enterprises, encouraged Romans to participate in areas of literature that until then had been dominated by Greeks, and Martial's talent in epigram is one of the reasons that Greek epigrammatists, who had flourished under Nero, are not as prominent during the reign of Domitian; see Hardie (n. 1), 47, who also notes that Statius was the 'Latin exponent of Greek epideixis'.

[28] For Catullus and Latin epigram, see Clarence W. Mendell, 'Martial and the satiric epigram', *CP* 17 (1922), 1–20.

[29] Which Cato he quoted is uncertain. Most assume it was Cato the Elder, as Pliny himself seems to believe, but G. I. Hendrickson has suggested that Valerius Cato is a more suitable source for *dicta urbana*; see 'Horace and Valerius Cato II', *CP* 12 (1917), 77–92, esp. 88–92.

[30] Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.104: *Cui si brevitatis exceptionem detraxeris, omnis orationis virtutes complexa sit.*

Quintilian's discussion of Domitius Marsus' *De Urbanitate*, notes that the examples of different types of humour display the characteristics of *sententiae*, and he concludes that the work 'appears to have been a well-organized and exhaustive study of that rather elusive literary quality which we may call "sententious point" '.[31] Ramage explains that Domitius Marsus would have been interested in rhetorical point because of his interest in epigram, which eventually comes to be distinguished from other short poems especially by the 'point' or 'sting in the tail'. The term *urbanitas* is important because it denotes a type of refinement and wit in speech entirely Roman in nature. Hence, the *De Urbanitate*

> stands out as the first systematic attempt to isolate and to discuss what proved to be one of the essential characteristics of the developed epigram, the brief, witty, carefully expressed dictum containing the 'point' of the poem.[32]

By Martial's time, the 'sting in the tail' is what separates Latin epigram from all other literary forms. Therefore, the *De Urbanitate* of Domitius Marsus seems to have contributed greatly to the definition of Latin epigram, distinguishing it not only from Greek epigram by means of Roman *urbanitas*, but also from all other short poems. This demonstrates not only the importance of Domitius Marsus in the development of the genre, but also why Martial would identify himself with him and not with Virgil as a protégé of Maecenas. The question remains, however: did Domitius Marsus receive the benefit of Maecenas' patronage?

As already noted, the only indication that Domitius Marsus was a protégé of Maecenas comes from two references in Martial. There is no hint of such a relationship elsewhere, including the works of his contemporaries. For instance, he is not mentioned among the dozen or so literary sophisticates whose praise would please Horace in *Sat.* 1.10.81–8, a list that includes both humble authors like Virgil and Varius and noted political figures such as Maecenas, Messalla, and Asinius Pollio. Nor is he among the travellers with whom Horace happily passes time on the journey to Brundisium (*Sat.* 1.5), though again Virgil, Varius, and Maecenas are present. Domitius Marsus does not appear as a narrator or character in any of the satires, odes, or epistles, where we find many other shadowy literary contemporaries with whom Horace was on friendly terms, such as the dramatist Aristius Fuscus (*Sat.* 1.9.60ff., 1.10; *Carm.* 1.22; *Epist.* 1.10), the writer of comedies Fundanius (*Sat.* 1.10.42, 2.8), and the satirist Julius Florus (*Epist.* 1.3, 2.2). In fact, Horace does not refer to Domitius Marsus in any of his poems, with the possible exception of a slight against him in *Carm.* 4.4, an encomiastic poem in honour of Drusus and the Claudian family. After a sixteen-line simile comparing Drusus to an eagle and a young lion in his victory over the Vindelici, Horace notes in a Pindaric digression that whatever inspired the Vindelici to pick up the custom of arming their right hands with Amazonian axes is not something that is going to concern him.[33] We know from Martial 4.29.7–8 that Domitius Marsus wrote a work entitled *Amazonis*. In this poem Martial acknowledges the drawback of too many verses, and notes that Persius 'wins credit'[34] more often in

[31] E. Ramage, 'The *De Urbanitate* of Domitius Marsus', *CP* 54 (1959), 250–5.

[32] Ibid. 252–4.

[33] *Carm.* 4.4.18–22: . . . *quibus / mos unde deductus per omne / tempus Amazonia securi / dextras obarmet, quaerere distuli, / nec scire fas est omnia*. . .

[34] Martial uses the word *numeratur*, 'be counted' or 'be reckoned'. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, 'More corrections and explanations of Martial', *AJP* 110 (1989), 131–50 at 135, explains that in this context it must mean something like 'wins credit', possibly from a use of the word as 'a gaming term, corresponding to "scores a point" '.

one book than 'light Marsus' (*levis Marsus*) in his whole *Amazonis*.[35] We do not know what type of work the *Amazonis* was: possibly it was a neoteric epyllion concerning Penthesilea, or an epic, or perhaps a collection of light poems dedicated to a girl whom Domitius Marsus nicknamed Amazonis.[36] The fact that Martial here calls Domitius Marsus *levis* leads some to believe that whatever the *Amazonis* was, it was not well received.[37] It has also been suggested that Horace's disdain for obscure knowledge regarding the custom of the Vindelici and their Amazonian axes is a slight against both the *Amazonis* and its author.[38] Why Horace might have been less than fond of Domitius Marsus is beyond the scope of this paper, though it is worth noting that his total silence on the poet Propertius has prompted the opinion that he was skilled at 'the gentle art of slaying one's enemies (or antipathies) by silence'.[39] Yet Horace is not alone in his silence on Domitius Marsus: none of the poets associated and contemporary with Maecenas mentions Domitius Marsus in their surviving poems.[40]

On the other hand, Domitius Marsus mentions Virgil in an epigram addressed to Tibullus on the occasion of the latter's death:

> te quoque Vergilio comitem non aequa, Tibulle,
> mors iuuenem campos misit ad Elysios,

[35] Martial 4.29.7–8: *saepius in libro numeratur Persius uno / quam levis in tota Marsus Amazonide*.

[36] For a discussion of the different theories regarding the nature of this work, see Fogazza (n. 17), 22–4.

[37] See, for example, Courtney (n. 17), 300; Sullivan (n. 17), 98. This argument makes sense especially if the *Amazonis* was an epic, an endeavour to which Domitius Marsus was apparently unsuited; see H. Bardon, *La littérature latine inconnue II: l'époque impériale* (Paris, 1956), 177–8. Fogazza (n. 17), doubts that the work was an epic, but admits that its length was off-putting for the public at large, though not for Martial, who found the work 'pleasant' (*levis*): 'Marso sta a significare proprio che la diffidenza del pubblico per il *μέγα βιβλίον* rischia di privare di fortuna opere che la meriterebbero'; see 22–4 and n. 37 for supporting bibliography.

[38] For the idea that *Carm.* 4.4.18–22 contain a slight against Domitius Marsus and his *Amazonis*, see M. Haupt, *Opuscula* 3 (Leipzig, 1876), 332–3, who discusses this passage in the light of Martial's comment and the scholia. Some scholars have continued to raise the possibility, e.g. G. L. Hendrickson, 'Horace and Valerius Cato I', *CP* 11 (1916), 249–69 at 264 n. 2; Bramble (n. 17), 477. On the other hand, others have rejected outright any intentional animosity on Horace's part, e.g. Bardon (n. 37), 177, and Fogazza (n. 17), 23.

[39] Hendrickson (n. 38), 264, n. 2; on Horace and Propertius, see also C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: Prolegomena to the Literary Epistles* (Cambridge, 1963), 186, n. 1, and J. P. Sullivan, 'Horace and Propertius—another literary feud?', *StudClas* 18 (1979), 82–92. It is interesting to note that while Propertius mentions Maecenas in two poems, 2.1 and 3.9, little indicates that they had a close relationship. Like Virgil and Horace, the younger Propertius was affected by the civil wars, but unlike them he does not seem to have needed patronage in order to regain his lost fortune and status; see L. Richardson, *Propertius, Elegies I–IV* (Norman, 1977), 11; W. Camps, *Elegies Book II* (Cambridge, 1967), 68. Later authors are completely silent regarding Propertius and Maecenas, and poets do not claim Propertius as a recipient of Maecenas' generosity as they do Virgil, Varius, and Horace. This is not to say that Propertius was unacquainted with Maecenas' circle and contemporary literary trends: he clearly borrowed imagery from Virgil and Horace in his poems to Maecenas (e.g. Prop. 2.1.73–74 and *Georg.* 2.40; Prop. 3.9.52 and *Georg.* 3.41; Prop. 3.9.1–4 and *Carm.* 1.1.1, 1.20.5), and by echoing works of popular poets he could hope for greater success for his own poetry. Among the imagery he borrowed may be the theme of Maecenas' friendship.

[40] The first we hear of him is in Ov. *Pont.* 4.16.5, where Domitius Marsus is named in a list of poets whose fame in Rome coincided with Ovid's own. Marsus' name comes first, followed by Rabirius, Macer, and Pedo. Interestingly, Ovid does not mention Domitius Marsus in his autobiographical poem, *Tr.* 4.10.41ff, while relating the list of poets he admired and heard as a youth: Aemilius Macer, Propertius, Ponticus, Bassus, Horace, Virgil, and Tibullus—the last two of whom had died before Ovid had a chance to know them personally.

ne foret aut elegis molles qui fleret amores
aut caneret forti regia bella pede

and death unjust also sent you, Tibullus, still young, to the Elysian fields as a companion for Virgil, so there would be no one to weep over soft loves in elegy, or sing of kingly wars in epic.[41]

This poem is of great interest to scholars because it provides the only evidence for the dating of Tibullus' death.[42] Yet the fact that it is a eulogy to Tibullus could rather suggest an affiliation with Messalla, not Maecenas. Virgil had been hailed as a great epic poet before the *Aeneid* was published, as witnessed by Propertius' praise of it in the mid-20s.[43] It is unclear, therefore, whether Domitius Marsus is complimenting Virgil or merely acknowledging a well-known author to make his praise of Tibullus more meaningful. Suetonius may provide a clue in his discussion of Epirota, a freedman of Atticus. Atticus' daughter was the wife of Marcus Agrippa, and Suetonius relates that Agrippa had dismissed Epirota on the suspicion of an adulterous affair with his wife. At this time Epirota sought refuge with Cornelius Gallus and remained with him until Gallus' death around 27 B.C. Thereupon Epirota returned to Rome and opened a school for select students. An innovation Epirota introduced at his school was the use of works of recent poets such as Virgil as textbooks, a fact that Suetonius supports by citing Domitius Marsus, who wrote in a poem that Epirota was 'the little nurse of tender poets'.[44] Epirota's association with Cornelius Gallus and his use of Virgil would indicate for him friendly relations with Virgil, and possibly, by extension, Maecenas.[45] Rather than flattering Epirota, however, Domitius Marsus' verse seems to contain a slight against him, and so, by extension, Virgil and the other 'new' poets he used in his school, which would go along with the idea that there was no friendship between Domitius Marsus and the circle of Maecenas.[46]

A survey of the above information, scant though it is, would leave us with the impression that although he may have sided with the young Octavian, Domitius Marsus, whose literary tastes were similar to those of Catullus, was not on friendly terms with poets associated with Maecenas.[47] Nor is there proof that he was a recipient

[41] Fogazza 5 = Courtney 7.

[42] For this poem and discussions concerning it, see Fogazza (n. 17), 33–6.

[43] Prop. 2.34.61–66, esp. 65–66: *cedite, Romani scriptores, cedite, Grai! / nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.*

[44] Suet. *Gram.* 16: *primusque Vergilium et alios poetas novos praelegere coepisse, quod etiam Domitii Marsi versiculus indicat: Epirota tenellorum nutricula vatum.*

[45] The antipathy between Agrippa and Epirota, in view of the latter's association with Cornelius Gallus and his use of Virgil and other new poets, is one of many factors contributing to the idea that there was palpable conflict between Maecenas and Agrippa; see F. della Corte, 'Agrippa e Mecenate: due politiche culturali a confronto', *Opuscula* 13 (1992), 119–35, esp. 135.

[46] Cf. Courtney (n. 17), 302, who notes that while Epirota's innovation was great, 'the two diminutives and the four-word line in "neoteric" style . . . suggest that Domitius is being ironical about him'. Courtney cites as possible proof that Domitius was being unkind Cic. *Vat.* 4: *Gellius nutricula seditiosorum omnium*; see also Fogazza (n. 17), 55–6.

[47] While little suggests that Domitius Marsus enjoyed Maecenas' patronage, they did share similar traits as poets. Maecenas composed poems in a variety of metres, including hexameters, hendecasyllables, galliambics, and iambics. One fragment (Courtney 3) is a direct imitation of Catullus 14; Maecenas wrote a poem concerning Cybele (Courtney 5–6), as did Catullus (Catull. 63) and his friend Caecilius (Catull. 35). Many of the fragments of Domitius Marsus are humorous and satirical in nature, and recent analyses of the fragments of Maecenas' poems indicate he too was fond of humour and satire; see J. Makowski, '*Iocosus Maecenas*: patron as writer', *SyllClass* 3 (1991), 25–35; and D. West, '*Cur me Querelis* (Horace, *Odes* 2.17)', *AJP* 112 (1991), 45–52. The intensely personal poetry of Catullus, however, and neoteric fondness for

of Maecenas' patronage. Indeed, if it were not for Martial's testimony, it is unlikely anyone ever would have made such a connection. As mentioned above, however, we can understand why Martial would want to include Domitius among those enriched by the world's greatest patron: Martial is solidifying a new respectability for the genre of epigram, elevating it and making it Roman as distinct from Greek, often with a sententious point or 'sting in the tail' as signature. He takes great care in defending the genre as a vehicle for his poetic talent and display,[48] at times lashing out against critics, as in the case of poem 6.64, which comprises a thirty-two-line attack in hexameters against a poet who had dared to criticize Martial's *nugae*. The unnamed poet may have been Martial's contemporary Statius, with whom Martial does not seem to have been on good terms, though this issue cannot long detain us here. The total silence each preserves about the other, as well as possible allusions to each other's works, are suggestive of a lack of friendship. Moreover, Statius seems to downgrade the genre of epigram in the preface to his second book of *Silvae* (pref. 2.16ff.), where he observes somewhat apologetically that he has composed a few poems in the manner of epigrams.[49] Regardless of the identity of the object of Martial's wrath in 6.64, it is clear that he had his detractors.

As Hardie observes, when Martial stresses the *otium* that Maecenas provided for poets and the financial benefits they reaped—about which they themselves say next to nothing—he presents a caricature of the relations he has with patrons and provides

obscurity did not appeal to Augustan poets, who advanced the range and quality of Latin poetry through experimentation in genre and technique. As a man of wealth and a member of the inner circle of power at least through the late 20s B.C., there is no reason to assume that Maecenas took his talent as a poet seriously or imagined himself to be a great writer, and he certainly did not depend on his own literary talent to enlarge his fortune. A common observation among modern critics is the apparent 'paradox' that a man so totally lacking in talent and initiative is best known for his associations with the leading literary talents of his day; see, for example, Brink (n. 39), 532, n. 2; and M. Billerbeck, 'Philology at the imperial court', *G&R* 37 (1990), 191–203 at 192. It should come as no surprise, however, that Maecenas' poetry echoes the Alexandrian affectations of Catullus, focuses on amusing, light themes, and lacks reference to the new regime: there were others, career poets, from whom social commentary could be expected, while Maecenas sailed 'in the wake of the masters whom he admired when he was young' (E. Fraenkel, *Horace* [Oxford 1957], 17) and dabbled in playful themes as was appropriate to men of his class. It is possible that Domitius Marsus' taste for light, personal, or satiric poems made him unsuitable for capturing the spirit of hope and stability of Augustus' Rome, despite his apparent support for the young Octavian in the early years of his struggle for supremacy.

[48] See Sullivan (n. 17), 56–77, esp. 62–3, where he notes that one of Martial's tasks was to invent a reader: 'Such an attempt to deconstruct the established hierarchy of literary genres must strike the modern critical theorist as a not unfamiliar strategy, but the ancient audience had to be gently seduced into accepting the epigram as anything other than a marginal form of poetry.'

[49] References in Martial and Statius that support the question of animosity have been thoroughly listed and analysed by H. Heuvel, 'De inimicitiarum, quae inter Martialem et Statium fuisse dicuntur, indiciis', *Mnemos.* 4 (1936–7), 299–330; Heuvel acknowledges that, while it cannot be proven conclusively that they disliked each other, the signs of animosity are more easily detected than friendship. Likewise Hardie (n. 1), 57, admits that an outright feud cannot be proved, but after analysing the contents of Martial 6.64 feels that it could very well be aimed at Statius. H-J. Van Dam, *Silvae Book II: A Commentary* (Leiden, 1984), 59, points out that it was the subject matter that caused Statius in the preface of his second book to refer to poems 2.3 and 2.4 (on Adetius Melior's tree and parrot respectively) as 'trifles'. However, while discussing Statius 2.72–5 in light of Martial 4.29, Van Dam writes: 'That the two poets in their poems ignore each other on purpose (rather than being open enemies) is clear. . . . The general opinion seems to be that most parallels arise from a similar situation and literary training . . . but this verse suggests to me rather that one poet forestalled the other, though I am not able to say who was first' (110). Van Dam concludes by stating that more work is needed in this field.

a defence of his poetry, 'the humble epigram, which was all he could write in his "straitened circumstances"'.[50] The value of the humble epigram rises significantly when it is thought that Maecenas himself patronized a pioneer in the field, which, I suggest, is why Martial claims Maecenas supported Domitius Marsus when nothing else does. There is no evidence regarding a relationship between Domitius Marsus and Maecenas, but Martial's poetry gained prestige by the suggestion that such a relationship had existed. In view of these facts, we are justified in not taking Martial at his word and leaving the matter in doubt.[51]

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[50] Hardie (n. 1), 55.

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