

# THE REPRESENTATION OF LITERARY MATERIALITY IN MARTIAL'S *EPIGRAMS*

By LUKE ROMAN

Around the world, covers have become advertisements for their books. The dignity that characterizes something self-contained, lasting, hermetic — something that absorbs the reader and closes the lid over him, as it were, the way the cover of the book closes on the text — has been set aside as inappropriate to the times. The book sidles up to the reader; it no longer presents itself as existing in itself, but rather as existing for something other, and for this very reason the reader feels cheated of what is best in it. Theodor Adorno<sup>1</sup>

In his last book, at the end of a successful, literary career, Martial asks in regard to his own genre of epigram: 'quid minus esse potest?' ('What can be humbler?'), 12.95.<sup>2</sup> Such self-disparagement is not necessarily surprising, since there is no reason to imagine that Martial's success as an epigrammatist would alter his genre's place in the traditional hierarchy of literary seriousness. Martial's denigration of his own *oeuvre*, however, goes beyond consciousness of epigram's status as a low genre. The epigrammatist not only registers his genre's formal rank, he develops fully articulated fictional scenarios depicting the nature of his writing and its role in society. According to the most salient and pervasive fiction characterizing Martial's work, epigram is an ephemeral form of literature embedded in specific, social contexts, and dedicated to immediate uses. Integral to this fiction is the vivid representation of the physical book of epigrams: the concretely imagined, individual copy confirms the impression of specific social deployment of the book, as opposed to its materially indeterminate (and presumably immortal) existence as a work above and beyond individual use-contexts and physical manifestations. The explicit, as opposed to metaphorical, description of the book's material existence, and the association with immediate usefulness, can be understood as generic features, but Martial's representation of literary materiality, both in its relentlessness, and in its participation in broader fictional scenarios, exceeds the dictates of genre narrowly conceived: it is a representation that defines a particular conception of literary endeavour, one for which Martial found epigram to be a suitable arena, but which is not circumscribed in its significance by the conventions of epigram. Martial is both the inheritor of epigrammatic conventions, and an interpreter of their potential for the articulation of a distinct conception of literary activity.

The central, hermeneutic problem posed by Martial's conception of literary activity relates to its aspect of self-denigration.<sup>3</sup> One interpretative impulse is represented by scholars who choose to take the poet literally, and simply ascribe to Martial's writings the ephemeral usefulness ostensibly claimed by them. Opposed to this literalist reading is a revisionist tendency in Martial scholarship, which interprets Martial's fiction of concrete usefulness as an instance of sophisticated literary irony. These two interpretative attitudes are also represented in the specific area of literary materiality. Whereas White understands Martial's published work to be a by-product of *libelli* (little books)

<sup>1</sup> Theodor Adorno, 'Bibliographical Musings', in *Notes to Literature* (1974), trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, vol. 2, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Translations of Martial and other Latin writers are my own, but I have borrowed freely from the translations in D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Martial: Epigrams* (1993). The Latin text is taken from Bailey's 1990 Teubner edition. This article owes a great deal to the anonymous referees for *JRS*, whose comments and insights have been incorporated *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> A good introduction to, and subtle treatment of, this topic can be found in J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: the Unexpected Classic: A Literary and Historical Study* (1991), 56–77. H. O. Kröner, 'Das literarische Selbstverständnis Martials', in A. B. Pajares *et. al.* (eds), *Athlon: Satura Grammatica in Honorem F. R. Adrados* (1987), vol. 2, 469–84, addresses this topic via an examination of the changes in how Martial identifies his literary predecessors, and thus also his level of literary ambition.

primarily oriented toward pleasing individual patrons, Fowler reads Martial's indications of his work's fragmentation into disparate uses as part of a subtle literary game.<sup>4</sup> I agree more with Fowler's reading of book-imagery in Martial than with White's. Fowler, however, tends to favour latent effects of literariness over the 'patent fiction' of Martial's *fingierte Mündlichkeit*.<sup>5</sup> I will place more emphasis on mapping out the implications of Martial's conception of a use-directed mode of writing grounded in the concrete *libellus*, on the assumption that such fictions, even if they cannot be taken literally, remain poetically meaningful. One element of their meaning resides in a contrastive or tensional effect. Such tension derives, first of all, from their subversion of the reader's expectation of a mode of literary endeavour defined in terms of aesthetic and ethical integrity, an expectation largely established by the Roman tradition of first-person poetry in which Martial participates; and second, from the existence of other, more positive self-representational expressions in Martial's own *oeuvre*. Because Martial's representation of his literary endeavour is grounded in concrete images of his existence as a writer, it will be helpful, in approaching the larger issue of self-denigration, to examine some of the tensions inherent in the poet's persona.

#### EPIGRAMMATIC PERSONAE

The tradition of scholarship on Martial offers two diverging accounts of his existence as a writer. According to a literalist reading, Martial is an impoverished writer who lives under degrading social conditions: clients grovel in order to obtain gifts and dinners, and patrons, no longer concerned with the traditional ideals of *amicitia* (friendship), are stingy and illiberal in their attitude toward social inferiors.<sup>6</sup> This social dynamic has consequences for the conception of literary endeavour: the integrity of the literary work is undermined by its author's need to ingratiate himself. There are, however, notable problems with this account. First, poetic avowals of poverty do not necessarily correspond to reality,<sup>7</sup> and second, there are other poems and themes in Martial's *oeuvre* that indicate a more positive ideology of *amicitia*. For these reasons, a counter-image of Martial has been constructed in recent scholarship. Martial's representation of the patron-client relationship as degraded, and literature as tainted by this subservience, is interpreted as part of epigram's fictive world. By contrast, in poems directed to actual friends and patrons of the poet, rather than to fictitious strawmen, we are able to discern the traditional ideals of *amicitia* as an unquantifiable exchange; the value-system of literary autarky grounded in the detachment afforded by a rustic estate; and a role for the poet which is more dignified than that of the lowly, urban *saluator*

<sup>4</sup> D. P. Fowler, 'Martial and the book', in A. J. Boyle (ed.), *Roman Literature and Ideology: Ramus Essays for J. P. Sullivan* (1995), 199–226, is the central work on the topic, and decisively establishes the importance and literary interest of the book in Martial. See also E. Merli, 'Ordinamento degli Epigrammi e strategie cortigiane negli esordi dei Libri I–XII', *Maia* n.s. 45 (1993), 229–56, for a discussion of the structuring of Martial's books in terms of content and addressees; and M. Citroni, 'Publicazione e dediche dei libri in Marziale', *Maia* 40 (1988), 3–39. P. White, 'The presentation and dedication of the *Silvae* and the *Epigrams*', *JRS* 64 (1974), 40–61, persuasively argues for their existence on the basis of references in Martial and Statius. White further asserts, however, that these *libelli* constituted the primary context for the poetry's reception, and that the published book was something of a by-product. I follow Merli, Citroni, and Fowler in insisting on the importance of publication, not just for the literary

significance of the collection and its ordering, but for the significance of publication as a literary/social/propagandistic event. See Merli, 245, n. 43; Citroni, 3. White develops further these theses regarding literary culture in the early Empire in 'The friends of Martial, Statius and Pliny, and the dispersal of patronage', *HSCP* 79 (1975), 265–300; and '*Amicitia* and the profession of poetry in early imperial Rome', *JRS* 68 (1978), 74 ff.

<sup>5</sup> For the history of this term, and its relevance to Martial, see Fowler, op. cit. (n. 4), 206.

<sup>6</sup> A good example of this line of interpretation can be found in R. Marache, 'La revendication sociale chez Martial et Juvénal', *RCCM* 3 (1961), 30–67. Note, for instance: 'les relations humaines de jadis ont fait place à un automatisme impitoyable', 45; 'sous l'ironie et les plaisanteries éclatent le désespoir et la révolte', 57.

<sup>7</sup> P. White, *Promised Verse: Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome* (1993).

(morning-caller).<sup>8</sup> In the epigrams addressed to real patrons, the revisionist reading suggests, Martial allows us to see the distinguished author behind the mask of the cynical jester.<sup>9</sup> This trend in Martial criticism follows the contours of a broader critical trend in the study of silver Latin literature. If previously scholars tended to take silver writers literally when they represented their literary activity as degraded, inferior, and subordinated to sordid social aims, now scholars interpret such expressions of inferiority as conceits or playful self-deprecation which the reader knows not to take seriously. This revisionist trend relies on the fact that most writers in all likelihood consider their own work to be of high quality, and see their chosen vocation in terms of integrity rather than degradation. For this reason, we are able to separate playful conceit from the presumed reality of the author's actual values and conceptions.

Yet there are problems with this view also. First of all, there is no way to draw a hard and fast line between the world of the degraded, satiric persona and that of the distinguished author and his friends. The implications contained in a poem of satiric criticism could be applied to the supposedly less sordid social relations between the poet and his *amici* (friends). Moreover, even if we were to accept this schematic division, we would have to admit that the dignified, authorial figure, who conforms closely to Roman ideals of *amicitia*, does not represent a more authentic voice by contrast with the degraded epigrammatic persona, but is himself simply another persona. Despite the impression of an authorial confidence afforded to the knowing reader, a persona it remains, and an equally suspect persona, insofar as Martial would be apt to present his 'real' thoughts about patronage and literature in a positive light in order to indulge the patron's pretensions of liberality. The nature of Martial's persona, and, in particular, that aspect of his persona relating to patronage, is important in the larger context of my argument because it has implications for our understanding of the nature of Martial's literary activity.<sup>10</sup> The relationship of patron and client, or *amicus maior* and *amicus minor* (greater and lesser friend), involves an exchange which is based on the understanding that one party will support the other when such support is needed. If the *amicus minor* is a writer, one likely benefit he could offer is the benefit of inserting his friend's *nomen* (name) in a published work. The writer's mention of a friend confers cultural capital, fame, and potential immortalization of his *nomen*. How we view the exchange between writer and patron affects how we view the nature of the writer's gift, i.e. his work. While the ancient Roman ideology of gift-exchange does require that friends remunerate each other with alternating acts of generosity,<sup>11</sup> the issue of literary remuneration is more complicated. The literary work, if it hews to the pattern of ordinary gift-exchange, risks becoming associated with ephemeral, social motivations and rewards. Thus if we take a more cynical perspective, we will see the exchange between writer and patron as a *quid pro quo*, and the writer's work as designed to elicit gifts or money from the patron, rather than rigorously constructed according to criteria of literary value. For the Roman writer, gifts from patrons are potentially compromising, and the expression of gratitude correspondingly problematic.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A. L. Spisak, 'Gift-giving in Martial', in F. Grewing (ed.), *Toto Notus in Orbe: Perspektiven in Martial-Interpretation* (1998), 243–55, observes that, since even motifs of *amicitia* can be read cynically in terms of the idea of 'gifts as hooks', some external standard is required; Spisak chooses the sociological model of gift-exchange as a means of resolving the dilemma (248). Yet this seems to beg the question, and, further, does not address the distinct nature of the writer's *munus*. See U. Walter, 'Soziale Normen in den Epigrammen Martials', in Grewing, 221–41, esp. 225, on the rhetorical nature of Martial's motifs of social degradation.

<sup>9</sup> C. Damon, *The Mask of the Parasite: A Pathology of Roman Patronage* (1997), establishes a distinction between poems with real addressees and those with anonymous, satirical targets (see also P. Saggese, 'Lo scurra in Marziale', *Maia* 46 (1994), 53 ff., on this

distinction). The more positive indications of the former set of poems reveal the limitations of the literalist reading of Martial as parasite. My reading seeks only to add the qualification that poems with named contemporaries do not necessarily represent Martial's authentic opinions any more than poems directed at fictitious targets.

<sup>10</sup> White, op. cit. (n. 4, 1975; 1978), and R. Saller, 'Martial on patronage and literature', *CQ* 33 (1983), 246–57, are the important works on this topic in Martial's case. Note also Sullivan, op. cit. (n. 3), 115 ff., and 155 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Spisak, op. cit. (n. 8), 248 ff.

<sup>12</sup> E. Oliensis, *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority* (1998), 48 ff., provides an insightful analysis of Horace's evasion of open gratitude to Maecenas for his gift of the farm; see also 161–2, 164–5.

At stake is the autonomy of literary ends.<sup>13</sup> The central criterion of literary autonomy is the work's orientation toward posterity, by contrast with an orientation toward immediate social uses in the present *saeculum* (age). The work's enduring relevance for future readers is understood as being proportional to its dissociation from immediate social and financial motivations in the author's own lifetime. It thus makes sense that, in the Roman tradition of first-person poetry, the work's posthumous orientation is closely connected to the representation of authorial persona. Specifically, the integrity of the small domain of Callimachean, literary rigour corresponds to the avowal of ethical traits appropriate to a humble or 'slender' (*tenuis/leptos*) existence. The figure of the poet becomes associated with *paupertas* (poverty), orientation toward private life rather than the pursuit of wealth and status, and an autarkic existence grounded in the detachment of the rustic retreat, or in the self-sufficiency of a fully absorbing, private sphere. Each of these traits of the poet's persona supports the conception of a work, which, rather than being directed toward immediate rewards within present society (wealth, status, popularity), adheres to the standards of inherent literary value and success with posterity. To be *tenuis* ethically (poor, apolitical, humble) suggests that the work's circumscribed sphere of aesthetic control takes precedence over any 'wider' social ambitions. Augustan writers typically lay claim to this circumscribed, aesthetic sphere in the motif of the *recusatio* (disavowal): in disavowing the grand, and staking out instead a modest, Callimachean domain, the writer implicitly suggests the literary rigour and enduring value of his work. The writer's devotion to posthumous glory, then, contains a simultaneous implication of the autonomy of literary ends, both because it is difficult to construe the work's posthumous celebrity as 'profiting' its author in any ordinary sense, and because the enduring quality of the work was associated with its author's integrity as a writer.

The criterion of posthumous, temporal endurance, while recognized as important by earlier writers, was decisively established in the Roman tradition by Catullus. The clearest expression of this criterion occurs in *C.* 95, which at the same time establishes the distinction between parochial and geographically expansive reception — an idea which was clearly important to Martial, who, in insisting on the value of his epigrams, claims that he is 'toto notus in orbe' ('known throughout the whole world').<sup>14</sup> The full complexity of Martial's position in regard to poetic immortality and the autonomy of literary ends, however, needs to be appreciated. On the one hand, Martial echoes the language of earlier poets, such as Catullus, Propertius, Ovid, and Horace, in his claims to poetic immortality. On the other hand, he also engages in a more equivocal mode of self-representation in poems that express a preference for literary fame during one's own lifetime, as distinguished from posthumous reputation, which comes too late to be enjoyed: 'si post fata venit gloria, non propero' ('if glory comes after death, I'm in no hurry', 5.10.12).<sup>15</sup> This motif does not rule out posthumous glory, and often a hint of such glory is incorporated into the claim to contemporary reputation, but Martial's emphasis subverts the traditional link between the autonomy of literary ends and the work's posthumous, literary orientation.<sup>16</sup> There is no inherent reason why a writer could not court celebrity in his own times, and also attain literary immortality, or why a writer could not receive gifts from patrons, and still achieve success with future readers. Yet rhetorical emphasis on one as opposed to another constitutes a significant declaration within the aesthetic code of Roman poetry: contemporary motives, and in particular financial motives, are understood to undermine the work's literary integrity. It is true

<sup>13</sup> The relevance of the concept of literary autonomy to Roman literature is argued by J. Zetzel, 'Roman Romanticism and other fables', in K. Galinsky (ed.), *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?* (1992), 41–97. The objection that the concern with autonomy is anachronistically imported from Romantic aesthetics is based on the assumption that 'autonomy' could only be articulated in its Romantic form. But works such as P. Bürger, *The Decline of Modernism* (1992) and *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1984) suggest that the concept of aesthetic

autonomy is not limited in its significance to the Romantic period.

<sup>14</sup> 1.1.2; 3.3.3–4; 5.13.3; 5.60.5; 6.82; 7.17.10; 7.88; 11.3; 12.2. See Sullivan, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 58–9.

<sup>15</sup> Note also 1.1.4–6; 8.69.

<sup>16</sup> A similar reversal of traditional aesthetic priorities occurs in the motif of immediate publication, by contrast with the long period of compositional *labor limae* recommended by Horace and Catullus: e.g. *Epigrams* 1.25.

that, on one level, Martial's literary apologetics are a continuation, and even an intensification, of Augustan *recusationes*: he lays claim not only to a small domain, but to the tiny compass of the epigrammatic distich. Yet Martial's *recusatio*, beyond rejecting grand subject matter, is applied to the very qualities that were considered to be inherent in the small, Callimachean domain of literary rigour in the first place. Martial's rhetoric of ephemeral usefulness, and expressions of preference for immediate applause over the *labor limae* (the work of the file), render his relation to the Callimachean rhetoric of the *recusatio* problematic.

Martial's un-Callimachean recommendation of contemporary celebrity is jocular and appropriate to the fluent, occasional mode of composition associated with epigram,<sup>17</sup> but at the same time forms part of the deeper tension in Martial's work regarding literary autonomy. The nature of this tension can be appreciated in a rare opportunity for insight into the contemporary reception of Martial's epigrams. Pliny, in *Ep.* 3.21, expresses his sadness at Martial's death, and quotes a poem Martial wrote for him. He suggests that this was the greatest gift Martial could have given him ('dedit enim mihi quantum maximum potuit'), since he gave the gift of glory and immortality ('gloria et laus et aeternitas'). But then Pliny pulls himself back a little, and entertains the possibility that Martial's writings may not be immortal after all: 'at non erunt aeterna quae scripsit'. This does not undermine the gift, however, because Martial wrote them *as if* they would be: 'ille tamen scripsit tamquam essent futura'. Whether or not Pliny means to cast doubt on Martial's motives as a writer, the terms in which he expresses his hesitation do provide a new perspective from which we may scrutinize those motives. One possible inference to be drawn is that Martial's claim to literary immortality maintains the value of his literary gift in the eyes of contemporaries, and thus, rather than indicating a commitment to his work's autonomous validity, serves an ephemeral use in furnishing a necessary ingredient between poet and patron. Perhaps, then, Martial was a realist who sought to guarantee his poetry's immediate usefulness, instead of aiming for an intangible, posthumous reward. This possibility receives some confirmation in Pliny's remark that Martial accepted the gift of a *viaticum* for his return to Spain in return for this complimentary poem.

Needless to say, such an interpretation would be reductive in its own way, since it is possible for the motif of poetic immortality to serve more than one aim at once. My point in invoking Pliny is to demonstrate, not the truth of one particular attempt to discern the final truth regarding Martial's literary aims, but rather that there is no easy way to resolve, by means of such an extra-textual assumption, the tensions built into Martial's literary self-representation, e.g. by concluding that literary self-confidence is the reality, and self-denigration merely an amusing conceit. One consequence of such a conclusion would establish a clear distinction between the work's true literary ambitions and the epigrammatic fiction of occasion-bound composition. This fails to recognize, however, the extent to which Martial establishes epigram as the site of conflicting literary tendencies, as both the subversion, and paradoxical continuation, of the aesthetic criteria informing the tradition of first-person poetry from Catullus to Ovid. A reading which divides Martial's self-representation neatly into fiction and reality renders this pervasive ambiguity hermeneutically inert. In interpreting Martial's literary persona in this essay, therefore, I will attempt to avoid a narrowly selective reading of the motifs of self-representation available in his *oeuvre*. Both the image of the degraded poet-journeyman, whose parasitical existence undermines his work's integrity, and that of the dignified author, who enjoys the friendship of literary patrons in a spirit of polite urbanity, derive from irreducible aspects of Martial's complex self-representation.

A further weakness in the attempt to establish a clear division between serious and fictive, authentic and playful, in Martial's self-representation is the implicit suggestion that motifs of literary self-denigration can simply be discarded on the grounds that they are conceits or jokes. 'Joking' is inherent in the very structure of epigram, with its rhetorical emphasis on the witty *pointe* at the poem's close, and its reliance on the lexicon and ludic tonality of Catullan 'wit' — *lepos, facetiae, sal, lusus*. Most statements

<sup>17</sup> Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 199–200.

made within epigram fall within the category of joking to some degree, but this does not mean that these jokes cannot also have serious content.<sup>18</sup> Take, for instance, the motif of the book's erasure in water: 1.5, 4.10, 3.100, and 9.58 all revolve around the notion of erasure by water as an appropriate fate for Martial's writings, presumably with the expectation that the book can be recycled. This motif is itself obviously a joke, given that Martial probably does not really expect recipients of his *libellus* to scrub it clean with a sponge or otherwise allow it to be erased in water. Yet the conceit none the less presents structural similarities to the Catullan and Horatian *topos* of the recycling of the literary work of low quality in the form of wrapping for incense or fish, a conceit ostensibly facetious, but also serious insofar as it distinguishes the immortal work, defined by its transcendence of a limited, physical existence, from the ephemeral work, that ends its short life devoted to a sordid, and purely material, function.<sup>19</sup> The rhetoric of playful joking in Martial presents the reader with scenarios that cannot be taken literally, but cannot be disregarded either. Another good example of this is the degrading notion of 'writing for money'. *Epigrams* 1.117, 4.72, 9.73, and 11.108 present scenarios in which the author seeks payment from the reader, avoids sending a copy *gratis* by directing the potential reader to the bookseller, or regrets that the occupation of poetry is not sufficiently profitable. This is clearly, on some level, a joke, but the joke of 'poetry for hire' is one that Martial makes throughout his *Epigrams* in many different forms, with the effect that it imprints itself onto the pattern of his self-representation as a writer.

Yet even if we choose to take such jokes seriously, and confer on them a metaliterary significance beyond that of a transparently disingenuous conceit, we face a deeper problem: the lexicon of literary concepts on which such jokes or conceits are based derives from the standards set by classical literary aesthetics. In the case of 'writing for money', the joke very precisely subverts the aesthetic criterion of the literary work's inexhaustibility as an object of the reader's interest, i.e. its distinctness from other commodities that are 'used up' in their ephemeral function and thus can be assigned a finite, monetary value.<sup>20</sup> The criteria of literary quality and the writer's integrity as established by Catullus and the Augustan poets — the immortality of the work, the writer's ethical autarky, eschewal of motives of financial enrichment, avoidance of the appearance of dependence on the patron, and disdain for recitation — are precisely those which silver writers, such as Juvenal and Martial, often consciously invert in the construction of their own literary personae. Thus Juvenal presents himself as a reciter, obsessed with the material success of others, undermined ethically by his *ira*, who, far from achieving rustic autarky, writes his satires under direct pressure from the sordid, urban reality of contemporary Rome. Martial meanwhile produces a self-avowedly ephemeral work that is ideal for recitation at dinner parties, typically located within the sphere of urban sociability, and compromised by the author's ingratiating attitude toward patrons. These subtle inversions of the Augustan rhetoric of autonomy, however, do not define literary activity on a totally new basis: rather, the terms of denigration themselves function as an implicit continuation of the aesthetic standards they appear to undermine. Martial disavows the autonomy of the work, depicting instead a mode of writing subordinated to social uses, yet his disavowal so precisely traces out the contours of the Augustan aesthetic as to invoke it by negative image. Thus Martial's claim that his epigrams are sub-literary, use-directed, and bounded by specific material modes — i.e. not autonomous, not Augustan — must be seen as a rhetorical move made *from within* the assumptions of literary autonomy, not as a means of departure from them.

<sup>18</sup> C. W. Macleod, 'The poet, the critic, and the moralist: Horace *Epistles* 1.19', *CQ* ns 27 (1977), 359–76, demonstrates the importance of not simply aligning the jocular with whimsical irrelevance: 'we should beware of making "serious" mean the same as "factual", or "funny" the same as "imaginary": for on that criterion Attic tragedy would be far funnier than Attic comedy. And a poem represents a unitary world: to distinguish real from invented elements

within it is to sift what the poet has deliberately blended', 360.

<sup>19</sup> Catullus *C.* 95.8; Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.269–70.

<sup>20</sup> Oliensis, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 197, observes the presence of this criterion in Horace's evocation of 'exchanges that are finished when they are transacted, exchanges that leave no saving remainder' at the close of *Epistles* 2.1.

By the same token, we need to recognize that writers such as Horace, Virgil, and the elegists were placing rhetorical emphasis on the independence of literary activity and the orientation of the work toward posterity, rather than specific social uses in the *saeculum*, at the precise moment when the ideological pressures of an autocratic political system threatened to undermine their autonomy. It is one of the inherent paradoxes of Augustan classicism that the strongest formulation of the idea of the literary text as monumental, general in significance, and immortal was created when the contemporary need for literature's ideological function was at its most urgent and profound. The project of establishing a new set of cultural and civic values for imperial society, and of redefining *Romanitas*, both on the level of personal ethics, and in terms of a broader conception of history, so as to accommodate Augustus and the Principate, required the complicity and even active cooperation of writers, who in turn strove to fashion a rhetoric of independence. When I refer in this essay to the Augustan literary aesthetic and Martial's post-classical response, I do not mean to suggest a rigid contrast between Augustan autonomy and the post-Augustan degradation of this standard, but rather a more complex and unstable set of relations. From a certain perspective, the concern with autonomy is consistent throughout the early Empire, and both an Augustan writer such as Horace and a post-Augustan writer such as Martial approach it in distinct, yet comparable, ways. Both are concerned with the writer's relation to the patron; both struggle with the difficulty of writing about, and occasionally addressing, the emperor; and both are interested in questions of the social uses of literature and the autonomy of the work. It is important to resist an essentializing view whereby a given writer's work *is* autonomous and another's *is* socially determined. There is no way to make this kind of judgement. There are, however, important differences between modes of literary self-representation. This essay will concern itself with such representations, and, in particular, Martial's images of the material book and their relation to classical standards of literary integrity.

#### BOOKS AND GENRE

My characterization of Martial's tensional metaliterary attitude toward classical standards depends on the assumption that he participates in a broader debate regarding the nature of literary activity with his predecessors in first-person poetry such as Catullus and Horace, rather than simply playing out inherent reflexes of the epigrammatic genre. It is in the lower genres with a realist orientation that one usually sees reference made to writing and books in explicit, material terms, as opposed to metaphorical expressions, and, even more specifically, epigram's focus on simple or everyday objects constitutes one of the most established aspects of its theory and tradition.<sup>21</sup> If these generic features are seen as determining Martial's poetics of the book, then it becomes harder to argue that Martial's images of literary materiality afford a particularly striking conception of literature, and, further, that they can be read as part of post-classical literary aesthetics. Yet the argument from genre cuts both ways. According to another reading of the same set of facts, Martial's choice to write epigram in the first place, and continue to write it, stems from his interest in creating a form of literature that is based on the notion of ephemeral usefulness, and vividly advertises the concrete aspects of its production, circulation, reception, and use. We thus need to appreciate both the extent to which Martial's work is informed by generic conventions, and also how, by controlling the selection of generic traits to be foregrounded, expanded, modified, or marginalized, Martial reinvents epigram in order to construct a particular conception of literature.<sup>22</sup> One of the most important, but least examined, ways in which

<sup>21</sup> See C. Salemmé, *Marziale e la 'poetica' degli oggetti: Struttura dell'epigramma di Marziale* (1976), and A. La Penna, 'L'oggetto come moltiplicatore delle immagini', *Maia* 44 (1992), 7-44.

<sup>22</sup> I am grateful both to Mario Citroni, who gener-

ously responded to a draft of this essay, and to the anonymous referees for *JRS*, for urging me to pursue the question of genre in greater depth, and for suggesting modes of approach.

Martial transforms epigram in his combination of features of form and content proper to epigram with the sustained representation of authorial persona. Such authorial self-representation is not unprecedented in epigram, but what is unprecedented is the extent and depth of this self-representation. Martial has not simply written epigrams, but has, interestingly, imagined in detail the sort of person who would write epigrams. In doing so, he aligns his epigrammatic *oeuvre* with the tradition of first-person poetry more broadly conceived.

The conceptual fabric within which Martial establishes his poetics of the book derives largely from this tradition. There is precedent for description of aspects of the material book in the epigrammatic tradition, but the particular lineage of Martial's language and image-repertoire for describing the *libellus* is, as has been demonstrated in the scholarship on Martial's literary references, primarily Catullan, Ovidian, and Horatian.<sup>23</sup> The very notion of advertising a *libellus* of playful verses is derived primarily from Catullus in his role, not as epigrammatist, but more broadly as writer of polymetric *nugae* (trifles).<sup>24</sup> One of the issues that informs the Roman tradition of first-person poetry is the question of the work's participation in the present *saeculum* vs. the work's literary orientation toward posterity. Catullus gives expression to this distinction not only in *C.* 95, but also in *C.* 1, where, after offering the freshly polished *libellus* to Cornelius Nepos, he expresses the hope that his work will last more than one *saeculum*. *C.* 1, however, is more complicated than a simple claim to literary immortality. The poem's initial gesture appears to offer the book to a contemporary patron, Cornelius Nepos: 'cui dono lepidum novum libellum / arido modo pumice expolitum? / Corneli, tibi . . .' ('To whom do I give [this] charming, new little book, freshly polished by dry pumice? To you, Cornelius . . .'). The abrupt immediacy of the question, matched by the concretely evoked physical book, creates the impression of a spontaneous act in the here and now, rather than a freeze-frame destined for posterity. Yet, as Zetzel and Fitzgerald have observed, Martial swerves away from the initial impression of immediacy, and turns instead toward posterity ('plus uno maneat perenne saeclo', 'may it last more than one *saeculum*', 10).<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, the Muse displaces the patron in the syntactically striking phrase 'O patrona uirgo' ('O patron Muse'). The doubleness of Catullus' gesture, which looks simultaneously toward the Muse and toward the patron, toward social relations in the here and now, and toward a posthumous perspective which obliterates the relevance of the author's social connections and motives, is echoed in the ambiguous symbolism of the 'freshly pumiced' book. It is 'freshly' made ('novum . . . arido modo pumice expolitum', 'new . . . freshly polished by dry pumice'), i.e. a finite

<sup>23</sup> R. Paukstadt's elegant *libellus*, *De Martiale Catulli Imitatore* (1876), treats Martial's references to Catullus; see esp. pp. 10–13 on the book. Note also J. Ferguson, 'Catullus and Martial', *PACA* 6 (1963), 3–15. E. Wagner, *De M. Valerio Martiale Poetarum Augustae Aetatis Imitatore* (1880), less incisively than Paukstadt, but still usefully, covers Martial's references to the Augustan poets. A. Zingerle, *Martial's Ovid-Studien* (1877) deals with allusions to Ovid, while E. Siedschlag, 'Ovidisches bei Martial', *RIFC* 100 (1972), 156–61, picks up some possible echoes missed by Zingerle. A more synthetic discussion can be found in R. Pitcher, 'Martial's debt to Ovid', in Grewing, op. cit. (n. 8), 59–76. L. Friedlander (ed.), *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Libri* (1967), offers many useful parallels ad loc. Sullivan, op. cit. (n. 3), provides a general account of Martial's literary influences. The central work on Martial's relation to the tradition of Greek epigram is P. Laurens, *L'abeille dans l'ambre: Célébration de l'épigramme de l'époque alexandrine à la fin de la Renaissance* (1989).

<sup>24</sup> Martial never, *pace* Swann, identifies Catullus as an epigrammatist. B. Swann, 'Sic scribit Catullus: the importance of Catullus for Martial's Epigrams', in Grewing, op. cit. (n. 8), 48–58, and *Martial's Catullus: The Reception of an Epigrammatic Rival* (1994), makes this inference on the basis of Martial's consist-

ent advertisement of Catullus' role as his primary literary predecessor, and his own role as the main heir to Catullus' legacy. That Martial allied himself with Catullus is, of course, quite true, but rather than interpreting this advertisement of literary inheritance as a sign that Martial saw Catullus as a writer of epigrams, it is more in the spirit of Martial's own language to read it as proclaiming that Martial is Catullus' heir in the domain of playful, nugatory first-person poetry at Rome. Epigram describes Martial's particular identity and ambition within this domain. Swann, in order to support his thesis, has to assume that a poet who asserts a strong identification with a predecessor's work is claiming that their work is exactly the same in regard to generic criteria. But Martial, as Swann's research powerfully demonstrates, adheres to the Catullan vocabulary of playful literary composition (*sal, ludere, ioci, nugae*, etc.) *except* in the case of the word *epigrammata*, which was his own, conscious addition. The conclusions of Laurens, op. cit. (n. 23), 183 ff., are sensible.

<sup>25</sup> W. Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations* (1995), 41 ff. J. Zetzel includes Catullus in his discussion of the phenomenon of the 'displaced patron' in 'The poetics of patronage in the late first century BC', in B. K. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (1982), 87–102.



object of immediate, sensual appeal, but also hermeneutically 'fresh', continually available for future reading, insofar as any such putative *libellus* that Catullus might have held in his hands will, centuries later, no doubt have moldered away and fallen prey to bookworms, yet the reader still sees it in its untarnished form in Catullus' poem.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the terms Catullus uses to describe his work waver between the triviality of nugatory verse (*hoc quicquid libelli, quaecumque, nugas*) and a discretely intimated sense of aesthetic importance (*aliquid, perenne*). The diminutive form *libellus* itself, with its simultaneous implication of light charm (*lepidum*) and aesthetic rigour and density (*expolitum*, polished), fits within the broader pattern of this metaliterary tension.

Falling within the same set of concerns, but at the opposite extreme of rhetorical emphasis, is the Horatian concept of the *monumentum*, of which the *aere perennius* motif in *C.* 3.30 provides the classic expression: 'exegi monumentum aere perennius / regalique situ pyramidum altius, / quod non imber edax, non Aquilo potens / possit diruere aut innumerabilis / annorum series et fuga temporum' ('I have built a monument, more enduring than bronze, and higher than the royal site of the pyramids, which neither eating rain nor the furious North wind could destroy, nor the numberless series of years, nor the flight of time', 1–5). Horace, in claiming that his work is not circumscribed by the limits of mere physical durability and physical measurements (*altius*) of greatness, cannot be referring to the physical book-scroll *per se*, but rather to the broader entity of the work that is somehow greater than the sum of its individual copies. The classic work transcends medium, physical format, and ordinary notions of physical extent, just as the ephemeral work, according to the *topos* sustained from Catullus through Ovid to Martial, is ultimately reduced to a purely physical, and minutely circumscribed, function, such as wrapping for fish. Horace, like Catullus in *C.* 1, alludes to his work's inexhaustible 'freshness' in the eyes of future readers, but does so, not with reference to the specific tactile qualities of the book, but through the metaphor of 'growth': 'usque ego postera / crescam laude recens' ('I shall ever continue to grow, fresh with the praise of posterity', 7–8). The many metaphors that inform Horace's claims to literary immortality, such as 'life and death' ('non omnis moriar', 'I shall not completely die', 6), building (*exegi*), and, in *C.* 2.20, flight over distant lands, are typical of a more elevated mode of poetry, by contrast with Catullus' lower and more realistic generic identity. Yet in the case of Horace, the relatively unsurprising generic tendency toward metaphoric expression, and the corresponding avoidance of explicit, physical description of book-format, converge with his particular literary interest in the work's irreducibility to specific medium as expressed in the *aere perennius* ('more enduring than bronze') concept. Horace not only avoids language that would link his work to a specific material format, he actively disavows such a link.

At issue in this construction is the status of the literary classic, which, if it is to transcend the bounds of the *saeculum*, must achieve a general relevance not limited to a specific social occasion. It is thus part of the rhetoric of the classic work to avoid giving priority to any particular physical manifestation of itself, whether *libellus*, public recitation, or private reading, such as might link the work with some specific context of performance, dedication, or presentation. The individualized, and concretely imagined, *libellus* in Catullus *C.* 1.1 creates an impression of immediacy, while drawing the reader into the specificity of the social relationship and moment of literary exchange between Catullus and Nepos. The criterion of endurance over time articulated in the poem's closing lines, however, complicates this picture. Moreover, Catullus' evocation of the tactile urgency of the material copy and its role in an act of social exchange is just as partial and rhetorical, in its own way, as Horace's suppression of these same elements in *C.* 3.30. Yet as I have argued throughout, such fictions and rhetorical emphases matter. Horace's self-standing *monumentum aere perennius*, disengaged from the patron and confident of the reader's praise, represents, in comparison with Catullus' playful and ambiguous *maneant perenne* ('may it last . . .'), a rhetorical re-orientation toward a more unapologetic conception of the classic. Horace chose to achieve this heightened literary

<sup>26</sup> Fitzgerald, *op. cit.* (n. 25), 41.

classicism in the lyric genre, but lyric *per se* does not determine the full nature of Horace's attitude toward literary materiality. Pindar's references to song as architecture provide a point of contact, but not a sustainable parallel, for Horace's conception of the literary work.<sup>27</sup> In Catullus' case, the low position of his *nugae* in the hierarchy of literary seriousness and formality allows explicit, physical description of the material aspects of literary production, but there is no fixed generic prescription which drives Catullus' interest in the symbolic dimension of the literary book. The freshly pumiced *libellus*, at once destined for the hands of a named contemporary and for the appreciation of posterity, stands at the centre of an integral conception of literary activity.

Martial inherited from the tradition of first-person poetry this flexible approach to genre, insofar as he, like Catullus, Horace, and Ovid before him, combines traditional generic features with new elements to create a distinct poetics, in which images of literary materiality play an integral part. Martial's most salient image relating to the physical book takes the form of a Catullan 'commendation' of the *libellus* to a patron.<sup>28</sup> The patron, who like Catullus' Nepos can vouch that his poems *esse aliquid* ('are something'), plays the role of *vindex* (protector), both in socially supporting, disseminating and vouching for the quality of the book, and in guaranteeing its quality through emendation. These poems are Catullan not only in the way they depict a *libellus* of nugatory *versiculi* commended to a patron in a vividly imagined moment of social exchange, but, in many cases, they recall details of Catullan phrasing.<sup>29</sup> Catullus' tentative and somewhat deprecatory attitude toward his 'little book', the impression of a playful social gesture, and the work's link with the patron all become part of Martial's literary self-representation.

There are importance differences, however. Martial does not usually choose to express his expectation of immortality in these particular poems, and, if not simply self-disparaging, tends to focus on the patron's confirmation of the work's value and its contemporary circulation, as opposed to its inherent value and posthumous glory. Another important difference, so obvious that it may escape notice, lies in the very fact that Martial dedicates his *libellus* frequently throughout his *oeuvre*, often many times within a given book, and to many different patrons. Martial, by comparison with Catullus, both intensifies the emphasis on his book's social function, and defines that function as iterable, applicable to diverse situations and patrons: the reader is given the impression of a work that, rather than having one, discrete moment of dedication placed liminally at its opening, is continually and everywhere permeable to such uses and social applications. In 4.10, Martial goes as far as to literalize this permeability, inverting Catullus' 'arida modo pumice exolitum' ('[my little book] just now polished with dry pumice') with the image of a book *novus*, but not yet trimmed and still damp ('nec adhuc rasa mihi fronte libellus, / pagina dum tangi non bene sicca timet', '[while] my little book's edges are not yet trimmed, while its page, not properly dry, is afraid to be touched . . .', 1–2), to be sent to his patron Faustinus. The Catullan tonality, which includes the term *nugae* and the book being sent as a *munus* (gift), is unmistakable, but so is Martial's ingenious subversion of Catullus' neat, trimmed, and integral Callimachean *libellus*. The book, already damp, is, of course, ready for erasure with a sponge (5–6). In general, Martial accepts Catullus' neoteric programme only selectively,<sup>30</sup> and where Catullus achieves a delicate balance between the rhetoric of occasionality and the work's orientation toward posterity, in Martial the emphasis on ephemeral usefulness has become so insistent and pervasive as to convert this balance into paradox and polarity. Martial's tensional metaliterary attitude does relate to his participation in a

<sup>27</sup> M. Lowrie, *Horace's Narrative Odes* (1997), 72 ff., provides an excellent discussion of the differences between Horace's and Pindar's building metaphors. The complex issue of writing and song in the *Odes* is examined by Lowrie, 49–76; and by D. C. Feeney, 'Horace and the Greek lyric poets', in N. Rudd (ed.), *Horace 2000: A Celebration, Essays for the Bimillennium* (1993), 41–63, at 55.

<sup>28</sup> See M. Citroni, 'Le raccomandazioni del poeta: apostrofe al libro e contatto col destinatario', *Maia* 40

(1986), 111–46, and op. cit. (n. 4); White, op. cit. (n. 4, 1974).

<sup>29</sup> For examples, see Paukstadt, op. cit. (n. 23), 10–11.

<sup>30</sup> For Martial's resistance to certain elements of the neoteric programme and Callimachean aesthetics, see M. Citroni, 'Motivi di polemica letteraria negli epigrammi di Marziale', *DiArch* 2 (1968), 259–301, esp. 280 ff.; and K. Preston, 'Martial and formal literary criticism', *CP* 15 (1920), 340–51, esp. 342.

nugatory aesthetic on the model of Catullus, but cannot be understood exclusively as a factor internal to this model: whereas Catullus characterizes the inferior work as fatally occasion-bound, use-oriented, and destined to be recycled, Martial fails to resolve the tension between Callimachean rigour and ephemeral entertainment consistently in favour of the former, often placing his own work in the compromised position of the Catullan foil.

In general, Martial develops Augustan motifs of Callimachean humility, but in such a way as to undermine the implicit criterion of aesthetic rigour which typically accompanies such motifs. I mentioned above the rhetorical structure known as the *recusatio*, whereby the poet disavows expansive, poetic ambitions, sometimes on the grounds of a lack of poetic capacity, in order to claim for himself instead the 'slender' (*tenuis*) domain of Callimachean rigour. This *topos*, ostensibly self-deprecating, but only barely concealing a claim to superior aesthetic control with a narrowed domain, is crucial to the poetics of Horace, Virgil of the *Eclogues*, and the elegists. Catullus, while he does not follow the Callimachean blueprint in its particular details, none the less balances an intense consciousness of the triviality of his work with a commitment to aesthetic rigour. Martial, then, in his own disavowal of grand ambitions for the micro-domain of epigram, can be seen as the inheritor of an element of Catullan and Augustan literary rhetoric. Yet there are differences of tone and emphasis in Martial's epigrammatic *recusationes*, and in his corresponding avowal of the values proper to Callimachean aesthetics. Take, for instance, the Callimachean criterion of the poet's association with poverty: Martial applies this ethical trait to his own persona, but instead of an idealized, Epicurean poverty, we have, in Martial's case, harsh, urban poverty, which, according to a recurring joke in the *Epigrams*, does not signify the writer's autarky, so much as render him dependent on patrons for the basic comforts of life. Another example can be found in Martial's translation of Callimachus' *mega biblion mega kakon* ('big book, big nuisance') into epigram: the concern with *brevitas* becomes associated, not with the work's aesthetic density, but with the need to fend off the reader's boredom, and the financial constraints of book-production.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the *otium* (leisure) of Catullus and the Augustan poets becomes, in Martial's epigrammatic translation, *pigritia* (laziness). In each case, a motif of rigour and integrity in the small genres is literalized, pushed to extremes, and, in the process, undermined in its basic premise.

Yet as I have argued above, even Martial's subversions of his predecessors' expressions of literary quality and integrity reveal a consciousness of the criteria inherent in such expressions, and his own role in their perpetuation via ironic inversion. This applies not only to his subversion of the *recusatio*, but to his relation with Horace more generally. Martial's representation of a fragmented, divisible, permeable, and nugatory *libellus*, that both mimics, and surpasses in triviality and sociability, the Catullus *libellus*, in many ways inverts the Horatian concept of the monumental work that is integral, immortal, and located within the fabric of Roman culture as a general entity, rather than subordinated to particular uses. At the same time, Martial continues the broader pattern of Horatian literary aesthetics in more positive ways. Martial arguably displays a deeper functional affinity, in the general conception of his role as a writer, with Horace and other imperial poets than with Catullus: he depicts various moments in a private citizen's life of *otium*; integrates motifs of imperial propaganda within the fabric of his small, first-person genre; avoids satirizing named contemporaries; writes of himself as a *vates*; and pursues Horace's identification of writing with rustic autarky in poems describing villas and the country.<sup>32</sup> In the specific area of book-format, it is significant that Martial not only writes epigrams, but a monumental *oeuvre* of epigrams, organized in numbered books. Martial fuses a more architectonic, formal, and structural technique of book-organization with the Catullan rhetoric of elegant

<sup>31</sup> *Epigrams* 2.1, 1.118. M. Citroni, *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Liber Primus* (1975), xxxviii, on 1.118: 'una brillante e originale versione epigrammatica del principio callimacheo'.

<sup>32</sup> L. Duret, 'Martial et la deuxième Epode d'Horace: quelques réflexions sur l'imitation', *REL* 55 (1977),

173 ff., demonstrates Martial's extensive use of Horace's second epode in his descriptions of villas and the country, and also addresses the issue of the relative scarcity of scholarly attention applied to Martial's relation with Horace. Note also G. Donini, 'Martial 1.49: Horatius in Martiale', *AJP* 85 (1964), 56 ff.

*neglegentia* and (ostensibly) informal linking-devices such as the cycle;<sup>33</sup> i.e. he combines the structural tendencies of the *libellus* with those of the *monumentum*. Finally, Martial does make claims for the immortality of his *oeuvre*, in some cases echoing the *aere perennius topus*, and in one case, using the term *monumentum*.<sup>34</sup>

It is also important to realize that Martial's adaptation of Horace's idea of the literary monument incorporates Ovid's reading, and rewriting, of the Horatian motif. As he makes clear in the *Tristia*, Ovid stakes his hopes for posthumous reputation on his literary masterpiece, the work of 'changed forms'. Within the autobiographical framework of the exile poetry,<sup>35</sup> the work not only attests to its author's literary achievement, but also contains a portrait of the writer: 'sed carmina maior imago / sunt mea' ('But my poetry provides a superior likeness', 1.7.11). Martial was similarly conscious of his work's function as bearer of its author's self-portrait to future ages. In 7.84, echoing Ovid's *maior imago*, he compares a painted portrait of himself with the image contained in his own poems, which, he says, will live longer than any visual or plastic art work: 'certior in nostro carmine vultus erit; / casibus hic nullis, nullis debilibus annis / vivet, Apelleum cum morietur opus' ('my features will be more accurately depicted in my poetry; it will not be destroyed by any accidents or the passage of time, and will live, when Apelles' work shall die', 6–8). This insertion of the idea of the work as bearer of the author's image into the *aere perennius topus*, while Ovidian in its specific phrasing and conception, is none the less not irreconcilable with broadly similar ideas in Horace.<sup>36</sup> More contentious is Martial's choice to follow Ovid in his orientation toward a broad, contemporary audience in contradiction of the Callimachean position and Horace's ethical rephrasing of this position in terms of 'contentment'.<sup>37</sup> Martial's various claims to being known throughout the world ('toto notus in orbe') recall Ovidian language ('in toto plurimus orbe legor', 'I am read most of all throughout the world', *Tr.* 4.10.128; 'in toto semper ut orbe canar', 'that I might always be sung throughout the world', *Am.* 1.15.8). Moreover, the motif of fame in one's own lifetime vs. posthumous glory is developed from a passage in Ovid's *Epistulae ex Ponto* (4.16.3).<sup>38</sup> In general, Martial adapts motifs formed in the context of 'poetry in exile', and rewrites them in terms of 'poetry as usual'. For instance, in 2.8, Martial echoes the Ovidian anxiety that his book, sent from a foreign land, will not be written in proper Latin ('si qua videbuntur casu non dicta latine', 'If by chance any of my expressions will not seem Latin . . .'), but in Martial's case, the faulty language arises because of normal conditions of literary production, i.e. a careless copyist ('si qua videbuntur chartis tibi, lector, in istis / sive obscura nimis sive latina parum', 'If any expression in these pages, reader, will seem to you either too obscure or insufficiently Latin . . .', 1–2).<sup>39</sup> While it has been suggested that these references to the exile poetry may be Martial's way of demonstrating through contrast the happy circumstances under which *he* writes, as a poet favoured by Domitian,<sup>40</sup> we need also to appreciate how Martial re-interprets Ovid's exilic imagery of the book in terms of its more universal literary significance, or rather how he draws attention to the significance that was already there concealed beneath the explicit programme of situationally constituted poetics ('carmine temporibus conveniente suis',

<sup>33</sup> The central work on this topic remains K. Barwick, 'Zyklen bei Martial und in den kleinen Gedichten des Catull', *Philologus* 87 (1932), 63–79.

<sup>34</sup> *Epigrams* 10.2. It is interesting to note, however, that in Martial's *monumentum* poem he is openly and touchingly grateful to his readers ('lectores, opes nostrae', 'readers, my wealth'), by contrast with Horace's unflinching confidence ('usque ego postera / crescam laude recens', 'I shall ever continue to grow, fresh with the praise of posterity'), and retracting slightly from the Horatian image of the indestructible monolith, he follows Propertius in employing the plural, *monumenta*.

<sup>35</sup> On Ovid's reconsideration of his *oeuvre* from the perspective of the exile poetry, see S. Hinds, 'Booking the return trip: Ovid and *Tristia* 1', *PCPS* 31 (1985), 13–32.

<sup>36</sup> *Epistles* 1.17; *Odes* 3.30, 10 ff.

<sup>37</sup> *Satires* 1.10.74: 'contentus paucis lectoribus'. On Catullus, Callimachus, and the 'anxiety of publication', see Fitzgerald, *op. cit.* (n. 25), 44 ff.

<sup>38</sup> For these and other references, see Zingerle, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 28.

<sup>39</sup> *Tristia* 3.1.17. Many of the Ovidian images of the book going to Rome without its author are concentrated in Martial's third book (3.1, 4, 5), when he was away from Rome for not particularly exilic reasons. A similar echo in 12.2.3, written after his departure to Spain following Domitian's assassination, may have darker connotations. See Pitcher, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 60 ff; on the book in Ovid, Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 35); and on the theme in ancient poetry more generally, R. D. Williams, 'Representations of the book-roll in Latin poetry: Ovid *Tr.* 1.1.3–14 and related texts', *Mnemosyne* 45 (1992), 178–89.

<sup>40</sup> Pitcher, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 61.

'the nature of my song corresponds to its circumstances', 3.1.10). The dramatic geographical break between author and *oeuvre* in Ovid's case may not be different in essence from the effect of publication generally; and the urgency of Ovid's need to keep an image of himself as writer before his public while in exile is not incomparable to the ways in which the literary work ordinarily functions as a purveyor of its author's contemporary and posthumous reputation.

The relations between author and book, examined so insistently by Ovid and Martial, form part of the broader dynamic of literary self-representation in first-person poetry at Rome. The poet's relationship with the patron, the degree of his immersion in or detachment from specific social occasions, and his attitude toward wealth affect the reader's impression of the sort of work he produces. Yet the very connection that exists between author and work, understood as one of 'paternity' to cite Ovid's Platonic metaphor, or even identity (the *Metamorphoses* are described as the poet's own *viscera*),<sup>41</sup> is none the less problematic, insofar as the ultimate criterion of the work's enduring value is its endurance beyond the writer's lifetime, and thus also beyond the sphere of his immediate concerns and motives. The book represents the author, yet, paradoxically, in order to best serve the author's reputation, must establish itself as independently valid in the eyes of future readers. This tensional relationship between author and work, that informs the Roman tradition of first-person poetry at least from the time of Catullus, becomes a central component of Martial's literary inheritance. His references to literary materiality display an understanding of the intricate code and protocols that belong to this tradition, even as they activate a potential already present within the epigrammatic genre. For Martial, epigram does not so much determine as allow his striking materialist vision of literature, affording him a unique position from which he can carve out a niche for himself within the Roman literary landscape. His poetics of the book reflects on, develops, and ultimately caps the already significant tradition of metaliterary interest in the physical book from Catullus to Ovid.

Martial positions himself at the culmination of such metaliterary interest, not only by combining elements of the literary programme of Catullus, Horace, and Ovid in his own distinct formulation, but in the sheer relentlessness of his materialist vision.<sup>42</sup> Horace's *Epistles* and *Satires*, Ovid's *Tristia* and *Heroides*, and first-person love elegy, all make use of the vocabulary of writing, books, and reading, and, along with other works of the Augustan period, also reflect on reading and writing in more broadly figurative ways, yet a distinction still needs to be made: none of these works manifests a conception of literature and of genre that involves the relentlessly materialist vision of literary activity available in Martial. All of the various details regarding writing and book-format occur in writers other than Martial, but in Martial we find them all together, consistently repeated, so as to create a fully articulated poetics of the physical book. We could simply ascribe this to the factor of genre, but Martial's interest in the metaliterary dimension of such *Realien* cannot be viewed as unproblematically and solely *determined* by genre. There are many ways to write 'epigram' in Rome, from Catullus' concentrated distichs, to the inventive epigrams written in Greek by the Neronian Lucilius. Martial chooses not only to represent a world composed of physical reality and sordid objects, but chooses to situate his own activity as a writer, and his books' existence, within the same potentially degrading framework. Martial's perspective, which retrieves the elegant Catullan *libellus* only to refigure it as the product of the arbitrary errors of copyists, the merchandise of a bookseller, and the object of financial calculation, applies epigram's predilection for realistic description to the continual scrutiny and inversion of classical literary standards.

<sup>41</sup> *Tristia* 1.7.20. For the relation of paternity, *Tristia* 1.1.107.

<sup>42</sup> Fowler, op. cit. (n. 4), 199.

THE *LIBELLUS* AT THE BOOKSHOP

The depth and persistence of Martial's materialist vision of literature affects not just the quantity of references to books and writing, but their content, the way in which literary activity is represented. Many genres allow physical description of the book, but Martial makes epigram into a literary domain in which the book's existence as a material object takes on a qualitatively distinct aspect. Like Horace in the *Satires*, Martial feels free to represent the materiality of his text because of his low-style genre, but there is a relentlessness in his representation of the material conditions of book production absent even from Horace's hexametric compositions. One of the main models of Horatian *sermo* (speech), after all, is that of refined conversation among elite *amici* (friends): the publication of his book is viewed with reluctance and concern<sup>43</sup> rather than — as in Martial — an incontestable fact providing opportunity for endless ironic manipulation.

Qui tecum cupis esse meos ubicumque libellos  
 et comites longae quaeris habere viae,  
 hos eme, quos artat brevibus membrana tabellis:  
 scrinia da magnis, me manus una capit.  
 ne tamen ignores ubi sim venalis et erres  
 urbe vagus tota, me duce certus eris:  
 libertum docti Lucensis quaere Secundum  
 limina post Pacis Palladiumque forum. (1.2)

You who want to have my little books with you wherever you go, and have them as companions for a long trip, buy these, which parchment compresses in compact tablets. Give book boxes to the great,<sup>44</sup> one hand takes hold of me. So that you may know where I am for sale, and not stray wandering over the whole city, you will be sure of your way under my guidance: seek Secundus, freedman of learned Lucensis, behind the entrance of the Temple of Peace and Pallas' forum.

Horace, in *Epistles* 1.20, manifested concern that his book, like a slave who leaves his master's farm to go to the city, would end up prostituting itself. No such worries here: the second poem of Martial's first book — in sharp contrast to Horace's melancholic epilogue — immediately proclaims itself for sale (*venalis*). Thus the notion of the work as a physical object of specifiable monetary value, sold at a specific location within the city like any other commodity, is brought to the fore in this introductory poem, whereas in Horace, the book's self-prostitution is presented as the regrettable after-effect of writing, not its opening guise. The other metaphor implicit in Horace's epistle, besides prostitution, is that of manumittance: the freedman, like the book, is liberated from the hand of his *dominus* (master) and sent out into the world to make his fortune. Horace, by contrast with Martial, seems almost ponderously metaphorical in his meditation on the 'liberation' of his manuscript. The epigrammatist does not appear to concern himself with such metaphors of liberation, but does mention an actual *libertus* (freedman) — the one in charge of selling his book.

By presenting his book as an object for sale, and even going so far as to mention the precise address at which it might be bought, Martial effectively discourages the notion of his poetry as transcendent and autonomous of its material conditions of production.

<sup>43</sup> This reluctance is explicit in *Epistles* 1.20, but seems already to be implied in *Satires* 1.10, in which the speaker offers up his polished *libellus*: he is 'contentus paucis lectoribus' ('content with few readers', 74), including Maecenas, Virgil, Pollio, etc., but must envisage the possibility of wider circulation ('vilibus in ludis', 'in common schools', 75). On this epistle and Horace's treatment of the topic of publication, see E. Oliensis, 'Horace on publication', *Arethusa* 28 (1995), 209–24.

<sup>44</sup> P. Howell, *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial* (1980), ad loc., suggests as a meaning for *magnis*, 'great authors', which is tempting, as it would fit Martial's interest, as manifested in his *Apophoreta*, in the harmony, or dissonance, between the 'size' of a genre and the size of a book; on which, see below.

At the same time, the status of this gesture as a joke, and the joke's dependence, in turn, on the classical notion of the work's transcendence of mere physicality, render Martial's literary position here complex. Martial displays his awareness of, and concern with, this criterion even as he subverts it. There is a similar dynamic of irony, inversion, and paradoxical continuity in the contrast between his own and the Horatian treatment of the topic of the book's publication and existence beyond the sphere of authorial control. On one level, Martial deprecates the seriousness of his poetic discourse: epigram is involved with candidly practical concerns (where to buy Martial's book), not complex, metaphorical reflections. Yet this stance of self-deprecation is partly disingenuous: the reference to the freedman Secundus does subtly gesture in the direction of Horace's metaphor of manumittance, even as it presents itself as mere information.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the main piece of 'information' communicated by the epigram — that Martial's book can be obtained in codex form — is not without programmatic meaning. The advertisement of the codex format first of all gives an impression of portability and hence mobility: a book which can accompany its owner on a journey more resembles a practical instrument of casual entertainment — a way to beguile the long hours of travel with easy reading — than a serious text designed to engage the reader's deepest powers of concentration. The lightness and portability of the text, according to this reading, corresponds to the triviality of its content: the text does not demand the consecration of the reader to its depths of meaning, but is easily adapted to whatever the reader is doing.

This idea of the book as completely adapted to the various circumstances of its use and social circulation can be seen as a failure in regard to autonomy. This impression of the book's lack of independence recurs in the final lines, where we see it for sale in the shadow of one of Domitian's building projects.<sup>46</sup> Yet at the same time, another possibility remains implicit in the language of the book's description: 'hos eme, quos artat brevibus membrana tabellis . . . me manus una capit' ('buy these, which parchment compresses in compact tablets . . . one hand grasps me', 3–4). The language describing the book's portability also hints at its physical self-containment ('me manus una capit', 'one hand encompasses me') and restricted domain (*artat*, 'compresses'). The delimited sphere of Martial's *Gedichtsbuch* recalls the confined spaces of Augustan literary discourse: the Horatian *angulus* (corner, nook), the *angustus lectus* (narrow bed) of elegy.<sup>47</sup> Even this brief description of the physical book, then, carries larger literary meanings: it points simultaneously toward the outward movement of the book in circulation (*longae viae*, long journey) and the inwardness and self-limitation of poetic discourse (*brevibus tabellis*, compact tablets).

If the relevance of Horace *Epistles* 1.20 to 1.2 seemed at all tangential, *Epigrams* 1.3 provides confirmation of its status as a crucial intertext. In this poem, Martial addresses his book, eager to leave its author's *scrinia* (book containers) for the book shops of the Argiletum, and warns it of the severe literary judgement it will face in Rome.

maiores nusquam ronchi: iuvenesque senesque  
 et pueri nasum rhinocerotis habent.  
 audieris cum grande sophos, dum basia iactas,  
 ibis ab excusso missus in astra sago.  
 sed tu, ne totiens domini patiare lituras  
 neve notet lusus tristis harundo tuos,

<sup>45</sup> This could be read as information *tout court*, a realistic detail typical of epigram, with no bearing on the Horatian theme. Yet readers of the epistle, who have been taught by Horace to relate the sphere of the freed with literary publication, and the circulation of books with social mobility, and are aware of the *liber/liber* pun, might remark on the association of a freedman and a published book. Such an allusion, if it can be classed as one, would fit under S. Hinds' rubric of limit cases, where it becomes hard to distinguish authorial intention from the intertextual dimension of shared language (*Allusion and Intertext in Latin Literature* (1998), 17 ff.)

<sup>46</sup> As Sullivan, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 149, remarks, Martial's description of the Forum Transitorium as the Forum Palladium is 'a specific compliment to Domitian', since the emperor was building a 'Temple of Pallas there. K. M. Coleman, '*The liber spectaculorum*: perpetuating the ephemeral', in Grewing, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 15–36, esp. 31 ff., examines Martial's relation to the Flavian amphitheatre.

<sup>47</sup> Propertius 1.8.33; on Horace and the *angulus*, see R. Ferri, *I dispiaceri di un epicureo* (1993).

aetherias, lascive, cupis volitare per auras:  
i, fuge; sed poteris tutior esse domi. (5–12)

Nowhere are there greater sniffs of disdain: young men, old men, and boys have the noses of rhinoceri. When you have heard a great 'bravo', when you are throwing kisses, you will be hurled from a shaken blanket to the stars. But for fear that you will suffer your master's multiple erasures, and that his severe pen will mark your games, you wish, playful one, to flit through the airs of heaven. Go if you must — but you could have been safer at home.

Horace's epistle, by contrast with this terse composition, achieves a subtle movement of ambiguity. In the first eighteen lines, Horace lists the various humiliations the book will undergo, apparently in order to dissuade it from departing, even as he slyly makes pretence of relinquishing his authority: 'fuge quo descendere gestis' ('go where you yearn to go', 5). Yet in the last ten lines, Horace's description of the book's message, and indeed its fate, comes to converge with his own biography: 'me libertino natum patre et in tenui re / maiores pennas nido extendisse loqueris . . .' ('you will say that, though born of a freedman father and in straitened circumstances, I extended my wings out further than my nest', 20–1). The poem closes on a *diminuendo*, quietly recording the poet's age at the time of composition — a final touch which, hinting at the poet's mortality against the background of the immortality of his work, softens the tone of the epistle to the point that the initial voice of brusque admonishment fades entirely. In contrast with the subtle gradations of tone and attitude which emerge from the reading and rereading of Horace's ambiguous epistle, Martial's epigram starkly juxtaposes the two attitudes of reluctance and release in order to achieve a neat *pointe*: 'i fuge; sed poteris tutior esse domi' ('Go if you must — but you could have been safer at home', 12). It is almost as if Martial set out to compose a facetious, compact version of Horace's meditative epistle, an epigrammatic reduction. Yet Martial's version, while compactly summarizing the contents of Horace's poem, achieves a completely different effect: whereas Horace added his thoughts on publication as an epilogue, implying that the reader had been somehow present during the process of the book's composition and could now survey its publication along with the author, Martial places the corresponding epigram at the beginning of his book, immediately after a poem advertising its place of sale. Horace envisages the dislocation of the book from the author's milieu with a heaviness of heart closely linked with consciousness of his own mortality, while Martial's book is flung unapologetically into the public sphere,<sup>48</sup> and, with its complaint that Romans young and old have gigantic 'noses' responsible for 'snorts' (*rhonchi*)<sup>49</sup> of critical judgement, presents itself, not so much as a reflective *diminuendo*, as spirited literary jest.

Yet it is a jest which carefully defines itself against the Horatian model. Lines 7–8 offer an image of the book in the midst of literary success being tossed from a coarse military blanket (*sagus*) to the stars (*in astra*), an image which parodies the famous ending of Horace *C. 1.1*: 'quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres, sublimi feriam sidera vertice' ('but if you insert me among the lyric poets, I will strike the stars with my exalted head').<sup>50</sup> The imagined literary success of Martial's book consists in receiving the bravos and kisses of the crowd, rather than canonization as a lyric poet in Augustus' Palatine library, and seeks confirmation of its merits not in the discrete approbation of Maecenas, but in the judgement of a vast reading public. Horace similarly lays claim to a vast reading public in *C. 2.20* and *3.30*, but there is a difference in the rhetoric of self-presentation: Horace's emphasis is on posthumous fame, rather than contemporary celebrity and the immediate availability of the individual copy. The Horatian pastiche is continued in lines 9–11: ll. 9 and 10 recall the censorious, erasure-prone writer of the *Satires* and *Ars Poetica*, while l. 11 evokes the idea of literary fame as flight developed in

<sup>48</sup> For a good commentary on these opening poems of Martial and their relation to Martial's conception of audience, see Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 31), *ad loc.*; and for a general treatment of the 'go, little book' motif, Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 28).

<sup>49</sup> Howell, *op. cit.* (n. 44), *ad loc.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, *ad loc.*, on the practice of *sagatio*.



Horace C. 2.20. Line 11 whimsically modulates the hyperbolic 'flight' of the book *in astra* to actual flight (*volitare per auras*), thereby interweaving two different images of literary circulation and fame, each with its own Horatian (not to mention Ennian) pedigree. Thus even as Martial disavows the Horatian model, and devalues his own poetic production by comparison, he constructs his own stance, in programmatic poems such as 1.3, out of a complex fabric of Horatian intertexts — a construction which wavers uneasily between brilliant poetic self-definition and witty pastiche.

This wavering between light and serious, trivial and programmatic, is characteristic of Martial,<sup>51</sup> and can be seen clearly if we consider poem 1.2 again in this light. The entire premise of the epigram rests on the idea of a practical use: an announcement of publication. The intrusion of metaphorical meaning into this apparently informational context would prevent the poem from being reduced to mere practical instrumentality.<sup>52</sup> Yet the carefully achieved rhetoric of utility deployed by the poem stands in the way of any such metaphorical reading: the ending, for instance, rather than making some synthetic statement about, or claim for, Martial's book, simply lists an address. Thus the reader who would champion the literary value of Martial's text must go against the grain of the author's explicit meaning, even to the point of denying the carefully achieved clarity of his language. The epigrammatist's refusal of the sort of dense, figurative meaning associated with the literary is pursued to the level of diction, phrase, and syntax. Martial's accessible, lucid Latin, untangled syntactic units, conversational tone, and 'frankness' of expression give the impression of ordinary, sub-literary discourse, with no murky depths of hidden meanings or ambiguities. Yet if we admit, as we must, that 1.2 has little if anything to do with the actual function of advertising Martial's latest book, then we are left with the problem of what it does have to do with. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, if the poem cannot be simply a transcription of an advertisement posted on the streets of Rome, it represents Martial's book, and the activity of epigram in general, in some way which is not merely informational.

With these reflections, we arrive at a central paradox: Martial's representation of his poetry in terms of utility, discardability, transparency of meaning, and proximity to the sub-literary is itself a carefully devised strategy of literary self-definition. The role of literary materiality in this larger strategy is particularly important: the discussion of the literary work itself takes the form of the vivid representation of the book as physical object in the particular contexts of its production, use, sale, and enjoyment. I have been suggesting that this materialist viewpoint on literary activity is itself part of Martial's strategy of self-denigration and identification with an ephemeral mode of writing dedicated to immediate social uses: the book is merely an object, and, as such, can be used and discarded. Moreover, insofar as the book is relentlessly viewed as a material phenomenon, it is difficult to imagine it as a *monumentum* that transcends mere physical durability and the bounds of the *saeculum*. Yet the relentlessness of Martial's presentation of the book as a material object for sale at the bookshop may also have the effect, paradoxically, of bringing the book's literary qualities more insistently to the fore. The reader, if she has access to 1.2 and 1.3, already owns Martial's book, and needs no directions to the bookshop.<sup>53</sup> For such a reader, these (belated) details regarding the book's availability for sale and physical attributes only serve to focus attention on the fictional nature of the representation. The relentlessness of Martial's materialist fiction thus creates the basis for a striking polarization of hermeneutic options: the reader must either accept the problematic fiction afforded by the text's literal account of itself, or assume a literariness the text persistently disavows.

<sup>51</sup> See Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 31), 264, for this wavering of tone between light and serious and its implication for Martial's attitude toward the seriousness of his own *versus*.

<sup>52</sup> Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 201–2.

<sup>53</sup> See *ibid.*, 202 ff., for a discussion of such ironies, and, in particular, the question of codex vs. book-roll.

THE SATURNALIAN *LIBELLUS*

My reading of literary materiality in Martial has so far suggested that his metaliterary attitude is characterized by a simultaneous affirmation and negation of his work's literary status and importance. In order to gauge the extent to which this polarity informs Martial's *oeuvre*, it will be helpful to focus on a major self-representational motif in the *Epigrams*: the motif of Saturnalian entertainment. The idea of Saturnalian entertainment defines two of Martial's earliest collections of verse, the *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*. Citroni, in his article on Saturnalian literature, has convincingly argued for the existence of a type of light, entertaining verse circulated during the Saturnalia.<sup>54</sup> He has further demonstrated that Martial's *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*, which consist for the most part of distichs describing the sort of gifts one might receive during the Saturnalia, model themselves explicitly on collections of entertaining verse of this sort.<sup>55</sup> Martial's representation of epigrammatic activity in Saturnalian terms, however, persists throughout his *oeuvre*, as does the denigratory conception of epigram as light entertainment. Examination of the early, explicitly Saturnalian collections will allow us to see in a particularly clear form the implications of this model, and, specifically, how they envision a link between poetry and occasion.

A book devoted exclusively to a single occasion is by definition ephemeral, and corresponds, as a single, concrete object, to the individual occasion on which it is used, in this case the exchange of gifts on the Saturnalia. This one-time deployment of the individual book in an act of gift-exchange undermines the more expansive notion of the literary work that does not reside in any single copy or performance, and outlives the occasions with which it is associated. The basic dimensions of this idea can be found already in Catullus: his *C.* 14 concerns a book dedicated to an ephemeral use on the Saturnalia. Here, as in *C.* 1, we have a *libellus*, but this time a bad one ('horribilem et sacrum libellum', 'a dreadful and execrable little book', 12), which Catullus' friend Calvus, in sending it to him on the Saturnalia, maliciously identifies with the ephemeral chapbooks traditionally enjoyed as a holiday diversion and then discarded. The poets who make up this book are significantly described, in the final line, as *incommoda saeculi* (23), i.e. as burdens on *their own* age, rather than poets who produce a legacy for future ages. In the meanwhile, the occasional and ostensibly situation-specific nature of Catullus' own poem enters into the equation. On the one hand, Catullus presents a poem narrowly focused on an ephemeral act of joking between friends: the oblique irony and whimsy of Calvus' valueless gift, and Catullus' mock-irate, poetic 'remuneration', bear witness to a closely familiar, even conspiratorial, sensibility shared between the two men. The poem occurs, moreover, within a tightly circumscribed occasional time-frame, the day, and immediate aftermath, of the Saturnalia, *optimo dierum* ('best of days', 15). On the other hand, Catullus' choice to preserve this otherwise ephemeral joking in his poetry-book makes available a set of implicit aesthetic criteria for the contemplation of future readers. Even as Catullus and Calvus construct the failed *libellus* as limited in its relevance to the secular, seasonal, and occasional, Catullus' own *libellus* wavers between trivial occasions in the present *saeculum* and a broader perspective extending beyond it.

Martial inherits this set of issues regarding occasion, ephemerality, and the *libellus*, but, rather than looking on the Saturnalian *libellus* as a foil to his own *libellus*, the epigrammatist chooses to associate his own work with a Saturnalian model and inhabit a fully elaborated literary world based on this model. Just as Martial exceeds Catullan self-denigration in inhabiting, rather than rejecting, the Saturnalian *libellus*, he applies,

<sup>54</sup> M. Citroni, 'Marziale e la letteratura per i Saturnali (poetica dell'intrattenimento e cronologia della pubblicazione dei libri)', *ICS* 14 (1989), 201–26. See also T. J. Leary, 'Martial's early Saturnalian verse',

in Grewing, op. cit. (n. 8), 37–47, and Swann, op. cit. (n. 24), 23 ff.

<sup>55</sup> Citroni, op. cit. (n. 54), 206–12.

in the opening poem of the *Xenia*, the Catullan image of the recycled work not to a foil-figure such as Catullus' Volusius, but to himself.

Ne toga cordylis et paenula desit olivis  
 aut inopem metuat sordida blatta famem,  
 perдите Niliacas, Musae, mea damna, papyros:  
 postulat ecce novos ebria bruma sales.  
 non mea magnanimo depugnat tessera talo,  
 senio nec nostrum cum cane quassat ebur:  
 haec mihi charta nuces, haec est mihi charta fritillus:  
 alea nec damnum nec facit ista lucrum. (13.1)

That tuna may not lack a toga, olives a coat, or the filthy bookworm fear poverty and hunger, waste some Nilotic papyrus, Muses — the loss is mine. See, the drunken winter season demands new jokes. My dice do not contend with great-hearted knucklebones, nor does my ivory rattle with six and ace. This page is my nuts, this page my dice box: such gambling does not bring loss or gain.

The tone of self-disparagement here is particularly strong: Martial enlists the help of his nugatory Muse for the purpose of wasting paper, and describes his writing as 'his own loss' (*mea damna*) — presumably a monetary loss incurred by the purchase of paper — thereby subjecting his verse to a degrading financial calculation. Moreover, it is not his poetic vocation which leads Martial to write poetry, but his poetry follows as the effect, as it were, of the holiday season itself: 'postulat ecce novos ebria bruma sales' ('See, the drunken winter season demands new jokes'). This line, along with the reference to his poetry as a form of Saturnalian gambling, establishes a close link between book and ephemeral occasion. Yet Martial does indicate one important difference between his writing and Saturnalian festivity: 'haec mihi charta nuces, haec est mihi charta fritillus: / alea nec damnum nec facit ista lucrum' ('this page is my nuts, this page my dice box: such gambling does not bring loss or gain'). Martial's book of distichs offers itself as a *substitute* for actual festive activities.<sup>56</sup> This substitute is defined by its operation within the same cultural space as Saturnalian gambling, yet does not share the literal reality of its consequences: 'alea nec damnum nec facit ista lucrum' ('such gambling does not bring loss or gain').

The final line of 13.1 both identifies Martial's verse compositions with festive activity, and marks a crucial difference: his *Xenia* are a form of textual, not actual, game-playing. The distance, made palpable in this final line, between the material reality of Saturnalian games and the mimetic pleasures of Martial's textual *lusus* (play) is sustained throughout the remaining poems — for the most part descriptions of the various components of a *cena* (dinner). Each food item is specified by a lemma and more fully evoked by an elegiac couplet — an unvarying procedure of physical description which brings to the fore all the more starkly the absence of any actual edibles to the collection's reader. Martial makes this point explicit in 13.3, where he suggests that the reader, suffering from poverty, may wish to send his book as a gift instead of actual food items (5–6). The impression is confirmed in 13.2 and 3, where the reception of Martial's collection is described in culinary terms: a potential critic is warded off by the remark 'you need meat, if you want to be full' (i.e. since Martial so effectively criticizes himself, the critic has nothing to sink his teeth into),<sup>57</sup> 13.2.6; and the reader is asked to pass over any poems that are not 'to his taste' (*ad stomachum*). Just as the physical descriptions of food in verse substitute for real food, so in the reader's experience the exercise of literary 'taste' substitutes for culinary enjoyment. The status of the book as substitute is an important literary idea: in advertising its capacity to create and sustain an involving discourse through the mimesis of a sphere of reality, in this case the Saturnalia, without requiring any of the material objects or incurring any of the material consequences of that reality, the literary text vaunts its autonomy. The work of literature, through its status as substitute, is able to engage the pleasures of mimesis without adhering to the

<sup>56</sup> Citroni, op. cit. (n. 54), 209, 212 ff.

<sup>57</sup> Shackleton Bailey, op. cit. (n. 2), ad loc.

particular game rules of the reality it evokes and re-invents. The motif of the text's 'poverty', by this reading, conceals a boast of radical self-sufficiency.<sup>58</sup>

Thus Martial's Saturnalian premise both affords the image of a book devoted to a particular festive occasion, and, at the same time, implicitly suggests an independent sphere of mimetic play that cannot be circumscribed in its validity by the bounds of the occasion. This equivocal stance extends to Martial's use of the temporal demarcation of the holiday itself. Citroni has demonstrated that Martial locates the consumption of his literary product within the cultural space of the Saturnalia, arguing further that the *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*, along with others of Martial's books of epigrams, were actually published during this period: 'inserendo così i suoi epigrammi nella produzione leggera che à Roma si diffondeva nel periodi dei Saturnali'.<sup>59</sup> Citroni's reading of the last epigram of Book 14, entitled *Adipata* ('Pastries'), reinforces the idea of a convergence between the duration of the festival and the duration of the reader's enjoyment of Martial's book.<sup>60</sup>

Surgite: iam vendit pueris ientacula pistor  
cristataeque sonant undique lucis aves. (14.223)

Arise: already the baker is selling boys their breakfast, and the crested birds of daybreak sound out from all sides.

The moment of daybreak, marking the resumption of an everyday, non-holiday schedule, also marks the ending of the collection, and hence of the reader's Saturnalian experience. This synchronization of the period of the festival with the duration of the book's consumption<sup>61</sup> implies that the book, as the denigratory opening poem announces, will not last long after the festive occasion which provides the excuse for it. The poem takes on further closural associations, however, through its allusion to the ending of Virgil's *Eclogues*: 'surgamus: solet esse gravis cantantibus umbra . . . ite domum saturae, venit Hesperus, ite capellae' ('let us rise: shade tends to be harmful to singers . . . go home well fed — evening is coming on — go home, goats', 10.75ff.).<sup>62</sup> This allusion to Virgil's pastoral closure is more suggestive of the demarcation of literary space than the temporal bounds of an actual festival: every time we read the *Eclogues*, we enter its literary world irrespective of actual time or location. Such a deft series of compositions as Martial's *Apophoreta* might not be discarded after all, in which case the evocation of a Saturnalian setting calls into play a literary, not an actual, duration. The demarcation of a special calendar space, during which normal conventions and protocols are systematically overturned, offers a suggestive metaphor for the demarcation of textual space, the creation of a special sphere of signification where the ordinary relations of language and reality are in some way skewed or altered, as, for example, in the way the reader is invited to enjoy the 'taste' of a series of food items which are in no way literally available to her palate.<sup>63</sup> Yet the parallel with the *Eclogues*

<sup>58</sup> Poverty, an important concept in the articulation of Roman aesthetics, goes back to a Callimachean precedent: in *Iamb.* 3 there seems to be a connection between poetry and poverty, and also in *AP* 12.148; for a discussion of the relation between poverty and Callimachus' aesthetic ideas, see A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (1995), 139 n. 18. Catullus' reference to his financial circumstances in his polymetrics (e.g. in 10, 13, 22, 44) can be read in terms of a poetics of *paupertas*. Horace develops poverty into an explicit, programmatic theme in his *Odes*, and Tibullus and Propertius take the *dives amator* (rich lover) as a foil-figure. This particular scenario in Martial recalls in its general structure Catullus' poem to Fabullus, *C.* 13: Catullus has no money; hence his guest/reader must supply everything for the *convivium* (party). For a discussion of poetic poverty, its structural parallelism with the figure of Apollo in the Augustan poets and Calpurnius, and the self-conscious travesty of these ideas in Juvenal and Martial,

see W. Wimmel, 'Apollo-Paupertas: zur Symbolik von Burufungsvorgängen bei Properz, Horaz, und Calpurnius', in W. Wimmel (ed.), *Forschungen zur römischen Literatur* (1970), 291–7.

<sup>59</sup> Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 54), 229; on questions of chronology, see 214 ff.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 210–12. Note also the remarks of Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 223–4.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 211–12.

<sup>62</sup> There is a further parallel for this coincidence of mimetic and formal closure in the ending of elegiac love affairs, as in the case of Propertius 3.24, 25.

<sup>63</sup> The sense of a comic world, created here by the special setting of the Saturnalia, is continued in Martial's later collections. P. Laurens, 'Martial et l'épigramme grecque du 1er siècle après J.C.', *REL* 43 (1965), 315–41, at 341, remarks that Martial's iterated use of pseudonyms works to 'créer l'illusion d'un petit monde comique'.

is not perfect: whereas Virgil allows his pastoral to dissolve elegantly into its own *umbra* (shade), thereby laying emphasis on the integrity of his fictional domain, Martial breaks with the Saturnalian frame to evoke the resumption of an everyday reality which holds no place for his occasion-bound book. Yet this idea too is susceptible of a recuperating reading, if we recall that the transition from the festive occasion of the Saturnalia to a post-holiday reality is represented *within the text*. The text absorbs into its fiction even aspects of reality that should properly lie outside its bounds, thus achieving a more subtle and profound mimetic self-sufficiency: the text's demarcation of its literary realm no longer coincides with, and depends on, the festival and its occasion-specific inversion of norms.

It is not surprising that this conflict between the demands of occasion and literary integrity occurs at the close of the collection: beginnings and endings of books in the Roman tradition offer privileged moments for reflection on the nature of the work. In the ending of the *Xenia*, the reader encounters a similar set of issues and a similar closural ambiguity, but with the addition of an explicit element of imperial ideology absent from the ending of the *Apophoreta*. The closing poem of the *Apophoreta* marks itself as different from the preceding poems in its movement beyond the Saturnalian frame by the fact that its lemma, *Adipata*, refers to an item which is not really the sort of thing one would receive as a gift at a banquet;<sup>64</sup> similarly, the garlands of roses of 13.127, are not, as it turns out, garlands received in a banquet context, but roses requisitioned from Egypt by Caesar in the middle of the winter:

*Coronae Roseae*

Dat festinatas, Caesar, tibi bruma coronas:  
quondam veris erat, nunc tua facta rosa est.

*Garlands of Roses:*

Winter gives you forced [lit. 'hurried'] roses: the rose, once the property of spring, has now been made yours.

The atmosphere of convivial gift-exchange suggested by the poem's title and first word, *dat* (gives), vanishes with the second and third words, *festinatas*, *Caesar* ('made to come early, Caesar'). This reversal of expectations marks the difference between Caesar's coercive power, publicly displayed, and Martial's discourse of private refinement and *politesse*. The closure of Martial's literary discourse coincides with a nod to imperial ideology. An element of lexical play in Martial's use of the word *coronae* (garlands), however, points in another direction: collections of Hellenistic epigrams were sometimes closed by a poem entitled *Coronis*, the Greek word for the curved mark indicating the end of a work. Bing observes that this word carries a secondary sense of 'garland', the closed circuit of which provides a suggestive metaphor for the completion of a literary text.<sup>65</sup> Thus the title of Martial's poem, *Coronae Roseae*, already activates a discourse of closural metapoetics inherited from Greek epigram, emphasizing the self-containment of the literary artifact.

The meaning of Martial's distich is even further complicated by its relation to the closure of another book of Roman poetry, Horace C.1.38:

Persicos odi, puer, adparatus,  
displicent nexae philyra coronae,  
mitte sectari, rosa quo locorum  
sera moretur. (1-4)

I hate Persian pomp, boy; garlands bound with the inner bark of the Linden tree displease me; leave off hunting after the location where the late rose lingers.

<sup>64</sup> Citroni, op. cit. (n. 54), 210.

<sup>65</sup> See P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse: Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (1988), 34. Bing refers to a fragment of Stesichorus' *Helen*,

*PMG* 187.3, for this meaning of the word. His discussion occurs in relation to *AP* 12.257, where the idea of 'garland' is reinforced by the poem's closure of Meleager's collection, 'The Garland' (*stephanos*).

Here, as in Martial 13.127, there is a question of *coronae* and *rosae*, and a reference to roses being obtained out of season.<sup>66</sup> Yet whereas the context of Horace's poem can be described as convivial, in Martial the expectation of a convivial context is used as a foil to mark the intrusion of imperial discourse. Horace, moreover, appears to disapprove of *festinatas rosas*, preferring modest, private pleasures, while Martial's courtly conceit gives Caesar credit for a brilliant appropriation: 'quondam veris erat, nunc tua facta rosa est' ('the rose, once the property of spring, has now been made yours'). Horace, bringing his first collection of odes to an end, explicitly insists on the autonomy of his private lyric sphere of simplicity: in strong contrast to the nearly bombastic rhetoric of Augustan ideology put on display in 1.37, 1.38 offers the image of the poet resisting the allures of public display of *luxuria* in favour of a modest Epicurean atarky. Of course, the dialectical relation of the closing poem to the preceding Cleopatra ode ultimately demands a more subtle interpretation than my summary allows;<sup>67</sup> the explicit programme professed by 1.38, however, emphasizes the poet's independence, in his modest private sphere, from the weighty structures of imperial propaganda. Martial's closure, by contrast, makes an explicit break from the preceding convivial discourse in order to accommodate a motif of imperial propaganda. The very poem which evokes, in an allusion to Greek epigram, a symbol of the completion and self-containment of the literary work, dramatizes the subordination of literary to imperial discourse: 'nunc tua facta rosa est' ('the rose has now been made yours').<sup>68</sup> The final poems of the *Xenia* and the *Apophoreta*, then, are characterized by a similar closural ambiguity. They both, moreover, invite comparison with, while defining themselves against, the closing poems of famous Augustan poetry books, Book 1 of the *Odes* and Virgil's *Eclogues*. Martial, in referring to each of these classic closures, subverts the defining emphasis, in such a way as to open up his work to some outside frame of reference or discourse. Yet in each case, the failure of Martial's text to sustain its own, self-sufficient fictional domain at its close is phrased with reference to Augustan motifs of closural integrity.<sup>69</sup>

Martial not only implicitly invites comparison with classic works of literature in his closural motifs, he vividly depicts them among the hospitality gifts listed in Book 14. The works are described more in terms of their physical format than their literary qualities, but there are none the less, embedded in these descriptions, elegant metaliterary observations, often revolving around issues of the large and the small, the trivial and the ambitious. Thus in 14.183–6, four poems on works by Homer and Virgil form a neat, interlocking structure: nugatory Homer (*Batrachomyomachia*); serious Homer (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*); nugatory Virgil (*Culex*); serious Virgil (complete works). In the second distich of each pair, the vastness of the work, both in length and literary ambition, is contrasted with its compact codex format.<sup>70</sup> Thus on Homer: 'Ilias et Priami regnis inimicus Ulixes / multiplici pariter condita pelle latent' ('The *Iliad* and Ulysses, enemy of Priam's realm, both lie hidden in multiple folds of skin', 14.184). And on Virgil: 'Quam brevis immensum cepit membrana Maronem! / ipsius vultus prima tabella gerit' ('How small the parchment which has encompassed vast Maro! The first page has his portrait on it', 14.186). Not only, then, does Martial choose light works of literature for his gift list, he reduces great works by the same authors to a compact

<sup>66</sup> Fowler, op. cit. (n. 4), 223; Fowler also points out the potential metaliterary significance of *festinatas* (hurried) in the light of epigram's associations with rapid composition.

<sup>67</sup> Lowrie, op. cit. (n. 27), 164 ff., in a thoughtful discussion of 1.38, examines its position at the 'fold', or border, not only between two books, but between different modes of discourse; in particular, she explores its relation to the previous ode, and at the same time to the following ode (2.1), also characterized by a generically transgressive inclusion of serious, political subject matter.

<sup>68</sup> My reading of Martial's propagandistic poetry does not focus on dissonance and irony; but see J. Garthwaite, 'The panegyrics of Domitian in Martial Book 9', *Ramus* 22 (1992), 79–102, on Martial's interest in awkward aspects of Domitian's moral

programme; and 'Putting a price on praise: Martial's debate with Domitian in Book 5', in Grewing, op. cit. (n. 8), 157–72, esp. 167–71, on tensions surrounding the question of praise and patronage.

<sup>69</sup> Fowler, op. cit. (n. 4), 223–4, notes the 'intertextual richness' of both of these poems.

<sup>70</sup> This alternation of light and serious is interestingly juxtaposed with the collection's central motif of alternation between poor and rich gifts ('divitis alternas et pauperis ... sortes', 14.1.5). Literary weight and seriousness may be reduced to the scope of a modest codex, while a relatively trivial work may be granted the honour of a deluxe edition. On the question of the worth of books in Martial's *Apophoreta*, see T. Birt, *Das antike Buchwesen in seinem Verhältniss zur Litteratur* (1882), 71 ff.

format — he epigrammatically compresses them (*artat*, 14.190). Virgil and Homer do indeed form part of Martial's text, but the complex texture of meaning of these classic works has been reduced to the compass of a gift tag, set alongside distichs about monkeys and lapdogs. Further, the presence of Virgil in Martial's text does not consist in the incorporation of Virgilian themes, language, and motifs into the fabric of the poetry, but in a two-line description of Virgil's text as a physical object. 'Virgil', in Martial's epigrammatic materialism, becomes a gathering of animal skins, not a repertory of figures and poetic structures.

By now it is beginning to become clear that the metaphorical meaning we detected in 1.2, in which Martial describes the codex format of his own book, far from being an isolated instance, is a continuation of his already strong interest in the metaliterary possibilities of the physical book. Already in his earlier works Martial was using the radical denial of literary meaning as a means of producing literary meaning. The reduction of literary discourse to the mechanics of book-format paradoxically attests to the ineradicability of literary meaning where there exists literary expectation. The shorter and the more starkly denotative a poem Martial composes on a given author, the more closely we might be tempted to scrutinize it for metaphorical connotations, given the metaliterary commentary he is capable of and sometimes makes explicit. What, for instance, of the description of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in codex form: 'haec tibi multiplici quae structa est massa tabella, / carmina Nasonis quinque decemque gerit' ('This mass that has been constructed for you from many layers of pages bears the fifteen poetry books of Naso', 14.192)? It is hard not to wonder at least for a moment whether the codex structure, described as the gathering of interwoven leaves, might not refer to the multi-layered structuring of Ovid's poem with its interwoven narratives; in which case it would not be coincidental that a similar phrase — *multiplici pella* — is used for the similarly multi-layered Homeric narratives, the *Odyssey* in particular with its extended internal narration.<sup>71</sup> Thus the codex format, as I suggested in the case of 1.2, has more complex metaliterary associations than at first appears: on the one hand, its compact size and portability suggest light entertainment and the promotion of use-value over literary seriousness; at the same time, its interwoven, multi-layered structure provides a rich metaphor for the dense interconnection of components in a literary discourse.

It is not only the codex format that sustains metaliterary scrutiny, but the very fact that Martial evokes the classics of the Latin literature as concretely imagined copies, rather than as materially indeterminate works enjoying an existence larger than any single copy. One of the defining fictions of the *Apophoreta*, as I suggested above, is the exchange of holiday joke-books: Martial's book, according to this fiction, takes the form of an individual copy handed from one person to another, like the *libellus* given to Catullus by Calvus. The general reader, however, does not encounter Martial's *Apophoreta* as a gift-book donated by Martial on some determinate occasion, but as a literary work available in any number of copies or material formats. The tension, then, between the occasional deployment of a specific, material copy, and the work's existence in a broader, less materially circumscribed mode, informs not only the series of epigrams devoted to classics in codex format, but Martial's Saturnalian poetry as a whole. The work as a general entity exists above and beyond particular social contexts in which it might be used, whereas in Martial's fiction of the concrete gift-book, that general entity is fragmented into individual copies and use-contexts. Martial's Saturnalian *libellus*, if we take this fiction literally, is itself just one more concrete gift-item like those represented in his poetry; conversely, if we view this fiction sceptically (as, to a certain degree, we must), Martial's 'book' becomes the materially indeterminate, mimetic space within which such gift-items are playfully evoked.

Within this larger fiction of the work's fragmentation into gift-copies, there is yet another fiction at work, namely the internal scenario whereby Martial's distichs function

<sup>71</sup> Not to mention the language of hiding: 'multiplici pariter condita pelle latent'. Ulysses was a master of hiding, and it is ironic that the poem named after the city he destroyed, *Iliad*, lies in hiding together (*pariter*) with 'Priami regnis inimicus Ulixes' ('Ulysses, enemy

to Priam's realm'): his 'latency' in the Trojan horse was the final cause of Troy's downfall. There may also be a reference to Ulysses' Greek epithet *polutropos*, as one of the anonymous readers has pointed out to me, in the word *multiplex*.

as tags for various gifts (including books): these objects will be ‘carried away’ (*apophoreta*) by the various guests. Within the book itself, then, the notion that each individual distich, or object, can be sundered from the collection and put to separate use, suggests an internal fragmentation of subject matter comparable to the fracturing of the work into individual copies.

Quo vis cumque loco potes hunc finire libellum:  
versibus explicitum est omne duobus opus.  
lemmata si quaeris cur sint adscripta, docebo:  
ut, si malueris, lemmata sola legas. (14.2)

You can finish this little book wherever you like. Each piece is completed in two lines. If you want to know why headings are added, I will tell you: so that, if you prefer, you may read only the headings.

Not only is the reader excused from the obligation of confronting Martial’s poetic discourse as a coherent totality, he may even limit his experience of it to the bare denotative lemmata themselves: ‘lemmata sola legas’.<sup>72</sup> The reader of epigram, then, hardly need enter its discursive world at all, since it is possible to experience it in terms of pure denotation, pure referentiality. This is an unsparing refusal of literary meaning, and should give some sense of how Martial’s *poetica degli oggetti* and the issues of occasion and literariness are closely interconnected. At the furthest horizon of literary materialism, the work is no longer a fabric of interconnected motifs available to the synthetic understanding of a general reader, but a collection of disparate items, each applied to their own, occasional use.

Of course, it is impossible to take this fiction literally: indeed, as Fowler notes, the fact that ‘these objects have no existence outside Martial’s poetry’ undermines the notion of anyone physically carrying them off.<sup>73</sup> It goes almost without saying, moreover, that only the most literal-minded reader will actually follow the instructions given by Martial in 14.2, and pay no attention to the structuring of his poetic discourse. It does not take long before the reader begins to think about the relations among the various objects, the meanings which emerge in the course of the collection as a result of accumulating impressions and motifs.<sup>74</sup> Not only would a conventional understanding of literariness prevent 14.2 from being taken literally, there is a specific precedent for such literary irony. The epigram introducing Ovid’s *Amores* offers an intertext which, if recognized by the reader, will alert him to the fact that Martial is engaging in a literary game. In Ovid’s claim that he has truncated his work so as not to bore the reader (‘at levior demptis poena duobus erit’, ‘with the removal of two books the pain will be lighter’, 4), there is a similar attitude of ironic insouciance, and an equal show of disregard for his work’s literary integrity. In this case, the poet is playing with the reader’s expectation of a work driven by desire for a particular object (e.g. Propertius’ Cynthia), offering instead a work structured by editorial whim and brought into existence by a humorously arbitrary metrical truncation. Ovid’s conceit is, of course, a joke, but a significant joke, insofar as it establishes an ironic sense of the arbitrariness of literary production in place of the expected poetics of erotic compulsion. Martial’s idea of the text’s fragmentation into disparate objects is similarly a jocular, but poetically meaningful, fiction. By countering the reader’s expectation of a literary work defined as an object of sustained, hermeneutic scrutiny and integral discourse, Martial obliges the reader to read constantly against the grain of the work’s own directives.

<sup>72</sup> There is a strikingly similar motif of the non-integrity of the book in the Elder Pliny. In the preface to his *Naturalis Historia*, he introduces his work with the vocabulary of nugatory triviality so common in Martial, and in *praef.* 33 points out to Titus how the table of contents allows his reader to read certain parts of his work and skip others. On this correspondence, see Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 10. The same idea may be implied by Pliny’s claim that he put together his

collection of epistles ‘ut quaeque in manus venerat’ (‘as each one came to hand’, 1.1.1); i.e. there is no integral structure.

<sup>73</sup> Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 223.

<sup>74</sup> Leary, *op. cit.* (n. 54), esp. 41–2, discusses the artistic principles of selection, and skill in arrangement, which lie behind the ostensible form of the miscellany.



The idea of the book as a collection of detachable, individual units rather than an autonomous discourse to be encountered as a totality, far from being limited to the *Apophoreta*, recurs throughout Martial's later work. In 10.1, Martial advises the reader to whom his book seems long to 'make' it short by choosing to read only a few poems: 'fac tibi me quam cupis ipse brevem' ('make me as short as you like', 4). Such a motif, although clearly facetious, is based on the premise that the *Epigrams* provide a repertory of entertainment pieces, not an integral fabric of poetic meaning. One of the most important ways in which Martial's book gives the appearance of fragmentation, and dispersal over various social occasions, is the fiction of its performance of social duties. In 3.5, the book departs to perambulate the city on its own in an Ovidian manner, 'sine me cursurus in urbem' ('off to the city without me', 1), but the author, fearing for his book, confers on it a social procedure which will secure it hospitality at the house of Julius Martialis and his wife: 'hos tu seu pariter sive hunc illamve priorem / videris, hoc dices: "Marcus havere iubet"' ('whether you see them together or him or her first, say this: "Marcus sends his greetings"', 9-10). Other poems similarly emphasize the book's need of a *vindex* (champion).<sup>75</sup> These epigrams, as discussed above, fragment the work into multiple, social applications, with each patron allotted his own dedicatory poem. Other poems depict how the book, after making its entry into society as the *protégé* of a literary patron, ranges freely among the various dinner parties, colonnades, and crossroads of the city, or is otherwise recited in an urban setting.<sup>76</sup> In yet others, the book as surrogate client performs *officia* on Martial's behalf.<sup>77</sup>

Thus the way in which Martial stages the fragmentation of his book into various social situations — its performance of the duty of *salutatio* (morning greeting), its use as repertory of entertaining *mugae* (trifles) in a convivial context, its quotability in casual conversation — suggests that his book is always disintegrating into multiple use-functions. The insistent quality of this fiction, however, is matched by discrete, but none the less important, expressions of Martial's concern with the book's existence as an integral entity: thus in 7.85, he writes: 'facile est epigrammata belle / scribere, sed librum scribere difficile est' ('it is easy to write epigrams prettily, but it is hard to write a book'). This epigram, with analytic precision, brings out the difference between epigrams produced singly, and a book that is somehow more than the sum of its contents.<sup>78</sup> The same distinction is expressed from a more jocular and negative perspective in 1.16, in which Martial admits that his book has its share of good, mediocre, and bad poems, but that this is in the nature of the thing: 'aliter non fit, Avite, liber' ('in no other way, Avitus, does a book get made'). In other words, the emphasis must fall on the book's success as a whole, not on the success or failure of individual pieces.<sup>79</sup> This insistence counters, and is meant as response to, the conventional idea of epigram as the quintessential one-off piece. There was something provocative and novel in the project of creating a monumental *oeuvre* of epigrams endowed with continuity by a sustained authorial persona. Martial was aware of the challenge to convention this presented, and was careful to answer potential criticism that might arise from it. The fact, then, that Martial not only structured his *oeuvre* around the book as a unit of organization, and paid careful attention to the internal structuring of individual books, but also dedicated programmatic epigrams to this particular topic, reveals the depth of his concern with the book as an integral entity.

We have once again arrived at a hermeneutic dilemma created by diverging tendencies of self-representation in Martial's work. The overt fiction of fragmentation, dispersal, and discardability at work in the Saturnalian poetry conflicts with the work's potential to be understood in a traditionally literary manner, as a coherent, mimetic domain, to be read and reread for its literary interest, rather than discarded as a holiday diversion linked to a specific occasion. It is not, however, simply a matter of disregarding

<sup>75</sup> *Ep.* 3.2, 4.86, 7.26, 7.97, 8.72.

<sup>76</sup> *Ep.* 5.16, 7.97, 7.51.

<sup>77</sup> *Ep.* 1.107, 1.108, 3.5, 10.58.

<sup>78</sup> This epigram and Martial's conception of the *liber* are discussed by Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 30), 272 ff.; also, Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> Note also 7.81: "triginta toto mala sunt epigrammata libro." / si totidem bona sunt, Lause, bonus liber est' ("There are thirty bad epigrams in the whole book." If there are as many good ones, Lausus, it is a good book'.).

such fictions and re-instating the reality, because such fictions, even if not taken literally, none the less do relate in some broader way to Martial's definition of his poetics. This latter point applies not to Martial alone, but to many works in the tradition of Roman poetry. Particular to Martial is the manner in which the fictional premises governing his work's self-representation are constructed so as to disavow, not only the grand, but literary status and importance *per se*. In order to be considered literary, a work must possess a relevance broader than that of an ephemeral occasion, transcend mere usefulness, and have the potential to endure over time, and yet Martial's epigrammatic fictions continually emphasize the occasional, the useful, and the ephemeral. At the furthest point of its development, Martial's disavowal of the autonomous, integral work thus approaches the category of the subliterate. I have argued throughout that such denigratory conceits do not constitute the only self-representational ideas available in his work, and, furthermore, perpetuate the very criteria they appear to discard. But while both the negative and positive tendencies in Martial's literary self-representation need to be appreciated, I have none the less chosen to place more emphasis on the negative, not because I consider this tendency to be more true, but because I believe it to be more unexpected, interesting, and ultimately more decisive in establishing Martial's place in the tradition. While we might expect a writer of epigrams to rate his writings low on the scale of literary seriousness and ambition, we do not necessarily expect him to construct pervasive and insistent fictional scenarios that systematically undermine his work's very status as literature. For Martial, epigram was the ideal genre in which to develop his most characteristic and absorbing fiction: a subliterate conception of literary activity.<sup>80</sup>

#### EPIGRAM, PATRONAGE, AND DECLINE

I have argued that the negative fictions defining Martial's work, while they cannot be taken literally, are none the less significant in that they constitute a carefully articulated position in relation to the tradition of first-person poetry at Rome. Martial's inversion of the criteria inherent in that tradition constitutes a disavowal, not only of grand subject matter, but of his work's literary status and importance. I have yet to examine the ways in which Martial's disavowal of literariness relates to the social conditions under which he lived and wrote. One reason why a writer's self-representational fictions should not simply be discarded is that these fictions play an important role in situating the work socially and ideologically. Martial's representations of the various uses of his work, while they cannot be taken as transparent reflections of reality, none the less in some broader sense model his work's role in society, and constitute a response to the ideological tensions of his times. I argued above that even the Augustan notion of the work as a timeless monument in its own way responded to immediate, social needs, and that the concept of literary autonomy itself played a part in the emerging ideology of empire. Is there similarly a social meaning in Martial's fiction of an ephemerally useful mode of writing? The importance of this issue is underlined by Fowler, who observes that, once we have examined how elements of literary sophistication complicate Martial's premise of occasion-bound poetry, 'the next step . . . is to try to integrate Martial's ideology of the book with the wider ideologies of his world'.<sup>81</sup>

The most explicit staging of the work's insertion into the social realm can be found in the frequent gesture of the commendation of the book to the patron. The question of the social meaning of the commendation poem brings us back to the opposition with which we started: White's thesis of patron-oriented *libelli*, and Fowler's insistence on the literary importance of the published book. While I am persuaded by Fowler's argument, I will none the less spend some time examining the particular contours of Martial's representation of his work's role in society, more for its symbolic, than its

<sup>80</sup> Note Salemme, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 123: 'la "non-poesia" funzionale'.

<sup>81</sup> Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 224.

literal, significance. The commendation poem follows a recognizable syntax, which may include any of the following: the characterization of the book as timid and waiting for the appropriate moment to disturb the patron; the description of the book's itinerary through Rome toward the patron's house; the playful disparagement of its quality; an expression of admiration for the patron's learning and literary taste; the association of the book with late-night drinking and/or Saturnalian festivity; and an appreciation of the patron's ability to emend, protect, and circulate the *libellus*.<sup>82</sup> There is much in this poetic 'grammar' of commendation that might inspire a reading of Martial's epigrams as primarily oriented toward pleasing individual patrons. Specifically, motifs of deference, marginality, and timidity before the patron reverse the expectations built into the aesthetic code of first-person poetry. According to this code, the work, if it is to attain independent validity in the eyes of future readers, must maintain its own literary values in its confrontation with the patron; otherwise it risks adapting itself to the patron's wishes and thereby undermining its integrity and universal literary relevance. Often this confrontation is phrased as an encounter between poverty and wealth: the poet must resist the temptation to compromise the poverty of his Callimachean literary domain by admitting the 'rich' poetry of praise associated with the patron, a concession which might, in turn, enrich the poet. The danger of corruption by the patron's wealth underlies, for example, Catullus' narration of the loss of literary integrity and its subsequent recovery in *C.* 44: out of a desire for *sumptuosas cenas* (expensive dinners), he praised the patron's frigid composition, but later recuperated from the resulting cold at his humble, self-sufficient farm.

Martial's reversal of such strictures is too systematic to be accidental. In 3.2, Martial commends the book to the protection of his patron, Faustinus:

Cuius vis fieri, libelle, munus?  
 festina tibi vindicem parare,  
 ne nigram cito raptus in culinam  
 cordylas madida tegas papyro  
 vel turis piperisve sis cucullus.  
 Faustini fugis in sinum? sapisti.  
 cedro nunc licet ambules perunctus  
 et frontis gemino decens honore  
 pictis luxurieris umbilicis,  
 et te purpura delicata velet  
 et cocco rubeat superbus index.  
 illo vindice nec Probum timeto.

Whose gift do you wish to be, little book? Quickly find yourself a protector, lest you are rushed off to a sooty kitchen and wrap tuna with your damp papyrus, or become a hood for incense or pepper. You flee to Faustinus' embrace? You are wise. Now you may walk about anointed with cedar, handsomely adorned on both brows, and luxuriating in your painted bosses, you may clothe yourself in delicate purple, and your proud title may blush with scarlet. With his protection, have no fear even of Probus.

The epigram's opening phrase recalls Catullus' similarly rhetorical question: 'cui dono novum lepidum libellum . . .?' ('To whom do I give this new, charming, little book . . .?'). More interesting, however, is the reference to the closing lines of Horace *Epistles* 2.1: 'deferar in vicum vendentem tus et odores / et piper et quidquid chartis amicitur ineptis' ('. . . [lest] I am carried into the quarter where incense and perfumes are for sale, and pepper, and whatever is wrapped in inferior sheets', 269–70). Horace's evocation of the failed work, in which, he says, he would not wish to find himself entombed because of the inept praise of an inferior poet, occurs within the context of a larger argument, which itself has the function of disavowal or *recusatio*. Horace, in an unprecedented situation, discusses at length his own role as poet directly with Augustus,

<sup>82</sup> *Epigrams* 1.52, 1.70, 3.2, 3.5, 4.10, 4.82, 4.86, 5.5, 5.6, 5.80, 7.26, 7.97, 7.99, 8.72, 9.99, 10.20, 10.93, 12.1, 12.2, 12.11.

rather than through the mediation of Maecenas, and struggles to articulate grounds for the poet's independence. In this particular section of the argument (250 ff.), Horace is suggesting that a patron should not wish for inept praise, because it will not serve him well, and so, in Horace's case, Augustus should allow him to remain within the lowly domain of his *sermone*s (conversations), rather than oblige him to sing the emperor's *res gestae* (deeds). Implicitly, of course, Horace is also concerned that, if the integrity of his small Callimachean domain were compromised, his own work would not last beyond its ephemeral use as praise-poetry. Thus the image of the failed work recycled as wrapping for incense, in the larger context of Horace's epistle, acts as a warning against the danger presented by forced praise of the patron. Martial, in adapting this image, interestingly reverses the emphasis: rather than evoking the spectre of the failed work in order to pry the work free from obligation to the patron, he suggests that the work's immortality depends directly on the patron's protection. Martial, then, not only flatters the patron, he alerts the reader, through an unmistakable literary allusion, to the way in which this flattery reverses the aesthetic principle implicit in an Augustan *recusatio*.

Martial similarly displays consciousness of the aesthetic code informing the relation between patron and poet in his treatment of the theme of the *cena*. Horace, in *C.* 1.20, renders the literary implications of the *cena* explicit in his insistence that if his patron Maecenas visits him, it will be on the poet's terms: Maecenas will drink inexpensive wine ('vile potabis modicis Sabinum cantharis', 'you will drink cheap Sabine in ordinary tankards', 1–2). Martial, in 10.45, shows himself acutely aware of the metaliterary significance of Horace's discourse on vintages, even as he reverses its priorities. Addressing an *adversarius* who finds Martial's poetry too 'rich' (*pingue*) in flattery and panegyric ('si quid lene mei dicunt et dulce libelli, si quid honorificum pagina blanda sonat', 'If my little books say anything smooth and pleasing, if my flattering page rings out with anything complimentary'), he advises him: 'vaticana bibas, si delectaris aceto' ('drink Vatican, if you delight in vinegar').<sup>83</sup> Whereas 10.45 refers only to the general scenario of the *cena*, epigrams overtly characterized as dinner-invitations similarly define Martial's position contrastively in relation to Callimachean expectations. 11.52, a poem which evokes Catullus in the opening phrase (*cenabis belle*), closes, not with an affirmation of the poet's own literary values, but with the promise that he will refrain from reciting at the dinner in order to allow his invitee to recite his *Gigantomachy*.<sup>84</sup> The reversal of aesthetic priorities could not be clearer: the patron will introduce into Martial's literary *cena* the very mode of poetry singled out as anathema by the Callimachean tradition. Martial, then, builds into representations of his relationship with patrons an implicit comparison with his literary predecessors. In other poems, Martial goes beyond implicit comparison, and directly addresses the issue of broader historical changes in the structure of literary patronage. In 1.107, Martial offers a *recusatio* to his friend Julius Martialis, but whereas Augustan poets disavowed the grand in favour of their own slender style, Martial disavows the grandeur of the Augustans themselves.<sup>85</sup>

Saepe mihi dicis, Luci carissime Iuli,  
 'scribe aliquid magnum: desidiosus homo es'.  
 otia da nobis, sed qualia fecerat olim  
 Maecenas Flacco Vergilioque suo:  
 condere victuras temptem per saecula curas  
 et nomen flammis eripuisse meum.

<sup>83</sup> Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 30), 266, discusses this poem in terms of Martial's avoidance of personal attack; this may be implied in the contrast between *aceto* (vinegar) and *lene et dulce* (smooth and pleasing), but *honorificum* (complimentary) and *blanda* (flattering) suggest that more is at stake than an absence of defamatory content.

<sup>84</sup> On Martial's treatment of the Catullan *cena*, see Ferguson, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 13; Paukstadt, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 21. Paukstadt's remark is to the point: 'sed

argumentum huius carminis valde aliud est, nam Catullus, quanquam poemation, quo invitat, venustissimum est, parvam et tenuem, Martialis autem cenam magnam et lautam promittit' ('but the theme of this poem is rather different; for Catullus, although his little poem of invitation is most charming, promises a small, meagre dinner, whereas Martial promises a large, splendid one').

<sup>85</sup> On this form of *recusatio* in Martial, see Citroni, *op. cit.* (n. 30), 287 ff.

in steriles nolunt campos iuga ferre iuveni:  
pingue solum lassat, sed iuvat ipse labor.

Often you say to me, dearest Lucius Julius: 'Write something big. You are a lazy man.' Give me leisure of the sort that Maecenas once made for his Flaccus and his Virgil. I would try to fashion works that would live through the ages and snatch my name from the flames. Oxen are not willing to bear the yoke into barren fields. A rich soil is tiring, but the very labour is enjoyable.

According to this poem, Martial might be capable of producing a more ambitious work, destined for immortality, if he enjoyed patronage of the sort provided by Maecenas to Horace and Virgil. The putative motive for producing *aliquid magnum* (something big) is represented, at least in part, as financial. The great patron would provide the poet with a level of remuneration that would in turn inspire a higher level of work, insofar as the poet, thus honoured, would not feel that he was ploughing a 'sterile' field (*steriles campos*). Yet the issue here is not exclusively financial. A *Maecenas redivivus* would also, by some means not specified, alter the quality of the poet's literary *otium* (*otia . . . qualia*), freeing him to devote himself to a deeper, more exhausting, and ultimately more rewarding poetic labour, reminiscent, as the agricultural metaphor implies, of the poetic *labor* of Virgil's own *Georgics*.

We need not take this idea literally, any more than we take Augustan *recusationes* literally.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, in 8.56, the idea is rephrased, but in a more openly jocular manner: Martial, if enriched by a Maecenas, will become, not a Virgil, but a Marsus ('Vergilius non ero, Marsus ero', 24). Here, Martial is happy to undermine the ordinary pattern of the *recusatio*, suggesting that, if circumstances were different, he would in fact remain the same old epigrammatist.<sup>87</sup> The motif remains significant, however, for the manner in which it connects Martial's nugatory genre of epigram (defined as not *aliquid magnum*) with a representation of contemporary patronage as somehow inferior to Maecenas' patronage of the Augustan poets. 5.19 develops this scenario with even greater specificity. The poet complains that Domitian's age is marred by one flaw alone, the fact that patronage has been degraded ('colit ingratas pauper amicitias', 'the poor man cultivates thankless friendships', 8); therefore he suggests that Domitian himself assume the role of *amicus*.<sup>88</sup> If we combine the picture presented by this epigram with 1.107 and 7.55, and with other poems in which Martial represents himself as being forced to beg various patrons for small-scale gifts and in general suffer their ingratitude,<sup>89</sup> a broader picture begins to emerge: the writer, because he lacks the shelter provided by a long-term patron such as Maecenas provided for Augustan poets, becomes a sort of journeyman who must peddle his poetic compositions to various minor patrons. He would be able to dedicate himself to the continuous labour involved in producing a literary masterpiece, instead of fragmenting his work into disparate, occasion-bound epigrams, if he were no longer required to serve the needs of multiple patrons. We have, then, in 1.107 an explicit connection made by Martial between patronage, epigram, and the decline from classical standards of literary depth and autonomy. The depth and integrity of the Augustan work is aligned with the issue of autonomy: if the poet were afforded the shelter of a grand patron, i.e. if he enjoyed a measure of independence by virtue of high-level generosity, he would be able to focus on an ambitious, integral work, rather than continuously pursuing many smaller gifts.

<sup>86</sup> S. d'Elia, 'Appunti su Marziale e la civiltà letteraria dell'età flavia', in *Letterature comparate: problemi e metodo: studi in onore di Ettore Paratore* (1981), vol. 2, 647–66, argues, on the basis of such indications in Martial, that patronage went into decline because *arrivistes* from the provinces did not know how to patronize in the grand old style: 'In un mondo "borgesizzato" il distacco fra "letteratura aristocratica" e "subletteratura popolare" si è attenuato in nome della "massificazione della cultura"', 652. But as White, op. cit. (n. 4), points out: 'We should not

assume that, a century before Martial, the roles and rules of literary and social life were so differently arranged that the rewards of poets were generally more abundant', 77.

<sup>87</sup> On the significance of this identification, see Kröner, op. cit. (n. 3), 476.

<sup>88</sup> The ideological dimension of this poem is discussed in Walter, op. cit. (n. 8), 225–6; see also Sullivan, op. cit. (n. 3), 119 ff.

<sup>89</sup> On Martial's treatment of the *ingratus*, see Sullivan, op. cit. (n. 3), 118.

What is at stake ideologically can be understood most clearly in the contrast between this model, and the outlines of a new model drawn in Martial's own poetry after the fall of Domitian. Much of Martial's post-Domitianic writing is a continuation of his old manner of writing, as Sullivan notes,<sup>90</sup> but sometimes with a new twist: for example, the element of Saturnalian *libertas* and obscenity already inherent in his work is re-framed to fit the theme of Nerva's tolerance of such *libertas*. Sometimes Martial seems defensive, as in the case of his testy reference to honorific verse in 10.45, and in general some of his strongest articulations of the defence of his epigrammatic aesthetic, and his proudest affirmations of his popularity with a general readership, occur in his final books, and Book 10 in particular, which was revised to take account of the change of regime. The defence of his work in its usual form, however, is combined, in a manner that is not always coherent, with a less pervasive, but significant, attempt to accommodate some motifs of the new propaganda. With the tolerance and 'cauta potestas' ('cautious exercise of power', 12.6.3) of Nerva, figured as a civilized ruler on the model of Numa, comes a new model of liberality. In 11.3, Martial pursues a familiar, jocular argument, namely that he would write great works if he derived substantial financial benefit, but here expresses the wish that a new Maecenas might follow on Nerva's restoration of the Augustan age ('cum pia reddiderint Augustum numina terris / et Maecenatem si tibi, Roma, darent!' 9–10). In 12.6, developing this idea further, Martial effects a pointed contrast with Domitian in his praise of Nerva's tolerance of generosity: 'largiri, praestare, breves extendere census / et dare quae faciles vix tribuere dei / nunc licet et fas' ('to be generous, to provide, to broaden narrow means and to give what agreeable gods have scarcely bestowed is now allowed and lawful', 9–11).

In 12.4, Martial reverses his own 'there is no Maecenas' motif, claiming instead, in one of his most emphatic allusions to Horace, that his friend Terentius Priscus has been playing precisely that role for him all along:

Quod Flacco Varioque fuit summoque Maroni  
Maecenas, atavis regibus ortus eques,  
gentibus et populis hoc te mihi, Prisce Terenti,  
fama fuisse loquax chartaque dicet anus.  
tu facis ingenium, tu, si quid posse videmur;  
tu das ingenuae ius mihi pigritiae.

What Maecenas, descended from kings, was to Flaccus, Varius, and greatest Virgil, this, Priscus Terentius, talkative fame and my page in its old age will say to peoples and nations that you were to me. You make my talent, you make it, if I seem to have any ability; you give me the right to liberal idleness.

This epigram is dense with allusions to Martial's predecessors: besides the citation of Horace *Odes* 1.1 in l. 2, there is the allusion to Catullus' expression of gratitude to a friend in l. 4, a glance at Propertius in his 'tu facis ingenium' ('you make my talent'), and Catullus again, this time *C.* 1, is evoked in 'si quid posse videmur' ('if we seem to have any ability').<sup>91</sup> The strong foregrounding of the poetic tradition is significant here, because Martial is stating that Priscus Terentius was a patron to him according to the ideals posited by that tradition, someone who gives the poet the right to a life of leisure dedicated to liberal studies (*ingenuae pigritiae*, 'liberal idleness'). One of the implications of this belated declaration, especially given its proximity to the '*nunc licet et fas*' of 12.6 ('now it is allowed and lawful'), is that Martial would not have been able to make such a declaration under Domitian. Martial takes the opportunity provided by a new, more tolerant regime to record for posterity his gratitude to his long-time patron. The unstated understanding is that anyone who set themselves up, and was advertised in Martial's poetry, as a major patron on the scale of Maecenas would have attracted the emperor's *invidia*. Closely connected, then, to Martial's persistent complaints regarding the absence of a Maecenas, and his suggestion that the emperor himself absorb this role, is Domitian's probable desire to dominate a field without any notable competitors.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, 46 ff.

<sup>91</sup> Catullus 58.6; 1.3–4, 8–9; Propertius 2.1.4.

There is more at work here, however, than Domitian's vanity alone, namely a deeper structural feature of the relation between literature and power in the early Empire. The figure of Maecenas, who stands at the centre of Martial's reflections on the historical changes in the patronage relationship, was notable not only for the substantial gifts he was capable of offering poets, but because he constituted an intermediary figure between the writer and the emperor.<sup>92</sup> Maecenas at once relieved the writer of the need to court many minor patrons by granting permanent *otium*, or, to cite Martial's phrase, *ingenua pigritia*, and at the same time shielded him from the potentially compromising situation of having to address the emperor directly as patron. This does not mean that poets were somehow essentially more independent under Augustus than under later emperors, but rather that the intermediary status of Maecenas, who was defined in his own way by a stance of humility and retreat as an *eques* (knight), allowed poets a loophole whereby they could construct a rhetoric of independence in their poetry. Horace's warning to his friend Maecenas, 'you will drink cheap wine . . .' ('vile potabis'), would have been completely inappropriate in the case of Augustus. In many ways, no doubt, Horace's literary activity was shaped by the fact of Augustus' power, and he may well have incurred the *gratia* of various elite *amici* by including them as named addressees in his poetry. The rhetorical shelter provided by Maecenas, however, allowed a writer such as Horace to balance his poetry's undeniable ideological and social commitments with motifs of ethical autonomy appropriate to the circumscribed Callimachean domain of a small genre: poverty, rustic autarky, *otium*, and a focus on the quality of private life rather than political affairs and the outward symbols of social status.<sup>93</sup>

The organizing idea behind these various strategies of rhetorical retreat, shelter, and mediation is that of autonomy. The Augustan fiction of the literary work as timeless monument, removed from the urgency of immediate, social needs, paradoxically responds to the contemporary demand for a literature capable of integrating Augustus into the fabric of Roman thought, history, and experience, and at the same time, capable of conveying the impression that he was always somehow inherent to that fabric, rather than forcibly attached to it in 30 B.C.: the monumental work's transhistorical scope, in the case of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Horace's *Odes*, and Livy's history, corresponds to the vision of a synchronic unity of culture, with Augustus incidentally located at its heart. The autonomy of the Augustan work, constructed as a *ktēma eis aei* (eternal possession) rather than as *ad hoc* panegyric, serves to guarantee the status of this vision as enduring and authentic. Maecenas' high-level, long-term patronage, represented as freeing the poet from social obligations and allowing him to dedicate himself full-time to the production of a timeless masterpiece, forms part of this larger ideology of autonomy. The idea of literary *otium* as a space of permanent withdrawal, the writer's autarky, and the role of Maecenas are thus combined within a larger model, which in its own way serves an immediate, social use in guaranteeing, not only the quality of the work, but the authenticity of the poet's praise of the new order. Yet this model outlived its usefulness once the central, literary *monumenta* had been erected, and, at the same time, presented a possible danger in its tolerance of poetic *libertas*: if taken literally, the creed of autonomy could serve other ends than praise. The implications of the eclipse, later in Augustus' reign, of the model of imperial patronage of literature based on Maecenas' role as mediator emerge both in Horace's struggle to sustain the idea of the poet's autonomy when addressing the emperor directly in *Epistles* 2.1, and in the figuring of the emperor in Ovid's *Tristia* as a Jove-like figure — terrifying, arbitrary, and remote from the sphere of ordinary personal relations — at a moment when, in Ovid's case, the fiction of the writer's autonomy has become patently unsustainable.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> On Maecenas' role as mediator and the consequences of the later obsolescence of this role, see M. Citroni, *Produzione letteraria e forme del potere. Gli scrittori latini del I secolo dell'impero*, in A. Schiavone (ed.), *Storia di Roma, II, 3, La cultura e l'impero* (1992), 385.

<sup>93</sup> A. La Penna, *Orazio e l'ideologia del principato* (1963) and D. Fowler, 'Horace and the aesthetics of

politics', in S. Harrison (ed.), *Homage to Horace: A Bimillenary Celebration* (1995), 248–66, examine the tensional relation between imperial ideology and Horace's small Callimachean domain of lyric.

<sup>94</sup> Feeney, op. cit. (n. 27), 54–5, discusses the difficulties Horace encountered in addressing the princeps directly: 'talking to the great remained at the very limits of the tractable until the end', 55.

The new set of issues surrounding direct address of the emperor, and the resulting limits placed on the writer's ability to construct a rhetoric of personal autonomy, have an effect on post-Augustan literature generally, but are particularly decisive in the case of first-person poetry, where the writer's persona is central. We have seen how Martial's epigrammatic self-representation continues the Augustan concerns with poverty, autarky, and *otium*, but in each case subverts the dominant emphasis, establishing in place of the expected elements a sordid, urban poverty, a rhetoric of dependence on the patron, and an *otium* fragmented into multiple social occasions. The epigrammatist's materialist vision of literature contributes a crucial aspect to this post-classical aesthetics: Martial represents his work's individual, concretely imagined copies fragmented into disparate contexts of social use. Yet at the same time, as I have argued throughout this essay, a different set of motifs and hermeneutic possibilities simultaneously align his work with the standards of literary autonomy as established by the tradition of first-person poetry.

The existence of polarized and irreconcilable aesthetic tendencies in Martial's work relates to his place in a tradition defined by standards of autonomy which he cannot fully and explicitly avow. Martial found it ideologically advantageous to create a conception of literature dedicated to immediate uses and affirmed by contemporary celebrity, rather than grounded in a rhetoric of autonomy: the claim of autonomy implies, among other things, that the work is not ultimately to be held answerable to the contemporary social order, an implication not tolerable under the early imperial organization of literary culture. Yet Martial could not simply re-invent the standards of evaluation built into Roman literary culture. Even as he attempted to redefine literary success in terms of contemporary celebrity, popularity, and the immediate pleasure afforded by his *oeuvre conviviale*,<sup>95</sup> he was unable to do so without an ironic consciousness of the impossibility of replacing the very standards his emphasis subverts. This difficulty applies not only to Martial's own conceptualization of his work, but also to its social and ideological value: the patrons and emperors who may hope to benefit from Martial's mention of their virtues and achievements similarly rely on his work's integrity and enduring importance. These simultaneous pressures place the poet in a double bind: if he wishes to maintain the idea of his work's inherent value, both for literary and social reasons, he must do so within the constraints of a post-Augustan model defined by the absence of a sheltered space for the rhetorical construction of autonomy.

The specific nature of Martial's response to these ideological constraints was not necessary or pre-determined. In certain ways, his choice of epigram was inspired. Epigram had associations with entertainment, usefulness, and the ephemeral, and, at the same time, contained the potential for an elite aesthetic of refinement, as in the case of Hellenistic epigram, Lutatius Catulus, and the neoterics.<sup>96</sup> Martial chose to develop both of these aspects of the epigrammatic tradition simultaneously, so as to convert this latent tension in the tradition into a central thematic element of his *oeuvre*. In this way, he was able to sustain the potential for an aesthetics of autonomy even while promoting the rhetoric of the social embeddedness of literary activity. Yet while the particular contours of Martial's response belong to him alone, the challenges he faced apply more generally to first-person genres in the early Empire. In Statius' *Silvae*, Juvenal, and Pliny's self-representational letters we can discern a similar opposition between the implicit continuity of classical, literary criteria, and an overt rhetoric of the social determination of literary activity, whether in the courtliness and sociability of Statius and Pliny, or in Juvenal's representation of his literary activity as determined by the social conditions of the metropolis. In other genres, such as epic, in which authorial self-representation has a more marginal status, we would not expect precisely the same ideological challenges and strategies of literary response to be in evidence, although here also the problem of direct praise of the emperor does arise. It is thus possible to discern in Martial's *Epigrams* a reflection, in microcosm, of a broader set of issues manifested

<sup>95</sup> Laurens, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 219 ff. elegantly characterizes Martial's poetic of sociability.

<sup>96</sup> On the various forms epigram took in Rome, and

their sociological implications, see B. Luiselli, 'Sul significato socio-culturale dell'epigramma latino', *Studi Romani* 21 (1973), 441 ff.



differently in other texts, including literary autonomy, the status of first-person poetry in the early Empire, and the rhetoric of decline.

In my examination of Martial's literary self-deprecation I have not placed particular emphasis on the problematic term 'decline'. It is easier to discuss the specific ways in which Martial subverts the criteria of Augustan aesthetics, and to place 'decline' in quotation marks, than to risk the sort of sociological diagnosis typical of older scholarship. Decline, in this older usage, which in turn echoes the accounts of Roman prose writers, implies some pervasive deterioration of civic, moral, and so also cultural values, whether because of the servility of empire, the vulgarization of culture, the numbing effect of luxury, or some combination of these. In more recent, revisionist accounts, by contrast, motifs of decline are not to be taken seriously, but rather interpreted in terms of 'a formalism whose only values are sophistication and ingenuity'.<sup>97</sup> One reductive mode of argument has been replaced with another: now Roman literature becomes an endless, undifferentiated expanse of ironic play, regardless of any shifts that occur in self-representational rhetoric.<sup>98</sup> It may be worthwhile attempting to recuperate the social dimension inherent in the older concept of decline, yet without foregoing the rigour of the text's continual play of irony. In Martial's case, this would mean understanding that his representations of the material book are precisely that, representations, but at the same time recognizing the extent to which these representations structure his work's place within society. As Adorno observes, a book may indeed judge itself by its cover:

The autonomy of the work, to which the writer must devote all his energies, is disavowed by the physical form of the work. If the book no longer has the courage of its own form, then the power that could justify that form is attacked within the book itself.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 224.

<sup>98</sup> Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 45), examines the distinction between decline and 'decline', 83 ff., and warns of 'the dangers of too facile a postmodern revisionism', 90.

<sup>99</sup> Adorno, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 21.