INTRODUCTION

> As it is, I live right next door to the Tiburtine Column, where rustic Flora looks on ancient Jupiter, so I have to scale the steep stair of the road up from the Subura. The cobbles are dirty, the steps are never dry; it's next to impossible to cut past the long mule-trains, and the marble blocks you see being dragged with lots of ropes . . . (5.22)

MARCUS VALERIUS MARTIALIS, the poet we call 'Martial', is the ultimate tour guide to Imperial Rome. He brings the sights, sounds, and smells of the city vividly to life in his witty, often rude, little poems. He cultivated a genre—the epigram—and made it his own.

Marcus Valerius Martialis

We know very little about Martial's life. Our only independent source is a letter of Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 3.21) noting his death, some time in the first few years of the second century AD. For the rest, we are reliant on what he says about himself in his own books, much of which cannot be taken at face-value. Nonetheless, from amongst these scattered hints and allusions we can assemble the bare bones of a plausible-enough life story.

By Martial's own account, working backwards from statements of his age in books to which we can assign approximate dates, he was born some time around AD 40. Although we do not know the exact year of his birth, his given name or *cognomen*, Martialis, suggests he was born on 1 March, named after Mars, god of war. His home town was Augusta Bilbilis in the hinterland of Hispania Tarraconensis, one of the three provinces into which Spain was divided under the emperors. Bilbilis had city (*municipium*) status and its inhabitants were Roman citizens; its imposing ruins, near the modern town of Calatayud, reflect the wealth it must have enjoyed in Martial's day. Spain did well under Rome, exporting wine and olive-oil in vast quantities (7.53) and exploiting its considerable mineral resources (12.57); it was already becoming known for its intellectual and political heavyweights (Lucan and the two Senecas, whom Martial puffs at e.g. 1.61), and Martial would end his days under an emperor, Trajan, who was a fellow countryman.

Martial's family must have been people of substance: they could afford to give him an advanced education in rhetoric, and probably expected he would pursue a career in law or public service. By Book 5 he is claiming equestrian status (5.13), and though he still asserts poverty (cf. 5.18) this social rank ordinarily came with a very substantial wealth qualification (400,000 sesterces), some of which is likely to have been family money. His parents' names were probably Fronto and Flaccilla (5.34). Their son left Spain for Rome some time around AD 64, and they may never have seen him again: he did not come home until he was about sixty.

In between, and for a little while after, he wrote epigrams—hundreds and hundreds of them—and made his way in the metropolis as a client of wealthy and powerful patrons. His first publication was a version of the book we call *Liber Spectaculorum* (*Book of Shows*), celebrating the gladiatorial shows and beast-fights that inaugurated the newly built Colosseum (AD 80). Next came two books with Greek titles: the *Xenia* (*Party Favours*) and *Apophoreta* (*Doggy-bags*), both consisting of gift-tag poems that are humorously proposed as substitutes for the gifts they describe, traditionally sent to friends at the December festival of Saturnalia (a custom that continues to this day as part of Christmas). Then, a fresh start: Martial began to publish a series of numbered books, at the rate of about one a year from the mid-80s to late 90s. There are twelve numbered books in all, a total that, whether by accident or design, puts Martial's epigrammatic *magnum opus* on a par with Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Martial's Genre: Epigram

An epigram is a short poem, most often of two or four lines. Its typical metre is the elegiac couplet, which is also the metre of Roman love poetry (elegy) and the hallmark of Ovid. In antiquity it was a distinctively Greek literary form: Roman writers were never comfortable in it as they were in other imported genres, such as epic and elegy. When they dabbled in epigram they often used Greek to do so. Martial's decision to write books of Latin epigrams, *and nothing else*, is thus a very significant departure.

Epigram had emerged as a literary force to be reckoned with in the Hellenistic age, in the centuries after the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC). Its roots were inscriptional—ever since the archaic period, epitaphs and such had occasionally been composed in verse—but it took a library-based culture of scholarship to collate these older texts and turn them into models for literary imitation. Epigram quickly found a home in the Greek symposium, the traditional after-dinner drinking party at which guests ('symposiasts') were expected to contribute a party turn to the evening's entertainment. It soon diversified: poetic epitaphs and praises of athletes (imitating the inscriptions found on the bases of statues of victors at games such as the Olympics) were joined by love-poems, descriptions of works of art ('ekphrases'), mock dedications, and poems about the symposium itself. Epigram bred epigram: from the beginning the genre encouraged proliferation, with 'families' of poems ringing the changes on favourite themes. This is a feature that carries through into epigram as practised by Martial: the reader will see that there are certain topics he keeps coming back to, each time with a slightly different spin.

When Rome subsumed the Hellenistic kingdoms into its growing empire, the literary culture that it encountered—and that so astounded and intimidated it—was one in which epigram was just hitting its peak. Philodemus of Gadara (first century BC), the Epicurean friend of Piso whose literary criticism inspired Horace's *Art of Poetry*, was a witty poet of love epigrams, many of which survive. Around the same time, Philodemus' fellow Gadarene Meleager was composing his own love-poems to boys and girls and assembling the ancient world's first significant anthology of verse: the *Garland*. This inaugurated a tradition that was to culminate in the *Anthologia Palatina*, the Byzantine-era 'Greek Anthology' that is our main source of ancient literary epigram.

Even before Meleager, Romans had begun paying attention to Hellenistic epigram and making home-grown versions. The early epicist Ennius (239–169 BC) is known to have composed several, and the late second and early first centuries saw a noted trio of epigrammatists: Valerius Aedituus, Porcius Licinus, and Lutatius Catulus (with one 'L'). They composed in elegiac couplets, the traditional Greek metre for epigram, and adapted Hellenistic models. Several of their poems have come down to us, the major source being Aulus Gellius' collection of supposed after-dinner conversations, *Attic Nights* (19.9.10).

The most important Latin epigrammatist before Martial, though,

is Catullus (with two 'L's). Martial refers back to him frequently as his major model and as a justification for his choices—for instance, the use of strong language, pre-emptively excused in the preface to Book 1: '. . . but that's how Catullus writes, and Marsus, and Pedo, and Gaetulicus, and everyone who gets read all the way through'.

Martial mentions one or other of the Augustan poets M. Domitius Marsus and Albinovanus Pedo a dozen times in his oeuvre (e.g. 2.77); they are pretexts rather than influences for his own style of epigram. The more frequently cited of the pair, Marsus, composed his epigrams in Greek, as did the slightly later Gaetulicus (adduced only here by Martial but known through the Greek Anthology). Catullus, though, is a much more lively presence in Martial. For modern readers of the classics he is one of ancient Rome's most important poets, second perhaps only to Virgil; he was probably read less widely in the first century AD than he is today (he had died nearly a hundred years before Martial was born), but his name still had power, and Martial wields it in almost every book:

If ever I read out a few of my own couplets, you immediately recite some Marsus or Catullus. (2.71)

Just so, perhaps, did tender Catullus dare send his *Sparrow* to great Maro. (4.14)

Please find room for my little books on whatever shelf Pedo, Marsus, and Catullus share. (5.5)

The names of the poet and his notorious mistress, Lesbia, appear often in Martial, although they cannot always point to *that* Catullus and *that* Lesbia, or not straightforwardly (see pp. xiii–xiv on the Lesbia cycle).

Catullus is a genuinely important predecessor for Martial's 'gossipy little books', which he describes in pointedly similar ways. He follows Catullus closely in detailing the qualities of his *libelli* as material objects and in envisaging the squalid uses that may be found for book-rolls that fail to find an appreciative readership (see note on 3.2). When Martial composes in hendecasyllables (a line of eleven syllables), as he does frequently, he is being self-consciously Catullan. Catullus wrote elegiac epigrams as well, but hendecasyllables are his trademark metre: 'Calling all hendecasyllables, wherever you are! . . .' (Catullus 42.1–2). Martial's other significant Latin prototype is

the witty and risqué master of Roman elegy, Ovid. Like Catullus, Ovid develops the presence of the author as a raffish character in his own books, and turns his own activity as a poet (particularly his choice of metre and thus of genre) into a heavily ironic serial drama. Martial elaborates on the template he has established. In the instance below we can see him playing with internal organization to create a piquant twist: Ovid had set out his stall at the outset, but Martial holds back until the last of the twelve numbered books is nearly over:

Arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam
edere, materia conueniente modis.
par erat inferior uersus—risisse Cupido
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.

I started working on a war poem once—bloody battles set to a solemn beat, a subject that did the metre justice. Line two was the same length—but then Cupid (they tell me) laughed and stole one of its feet. (Ovid, *Amores* 1.1.1–4)

I tried to write an epic once. You started writing one; so I stopped, so my poetry wouldn't compete with yours. Then my Muse redirected herself to the thigh-boots of Tragedy. You tried on the trailing robe yourself . . . I dare Satire; you throw yourself into becoming Lucilius. I unwind with some light elegies; you copy me and unwind just the same. How low *won't* you go? (Martial 12.94)

As well as justification of his choice of genre, Ovid's work also includes explicit editorial comment that talks the reader through the changes he has implemented in revising his poems for a second edition, and Martial adopts his practice at least once and perhaps twice. The second edition of Book 10, and the poet's own commentary on it, are unmistakable Ovidian gestures:

Before, we were five books of Ovid; now we are three. The author preferred this version to the other. You may not enjoy reading us at all, but with two books gone, it'll hurt less. (Ovid, *Amores* 1 epigrammatic preface)

I was in a hurry, before; I didn't pay attention; and my tenth little book wriggled out of my grasp. It was work in progress, and now it's been recalled. You will read some poems you know, but smoothed by fresh revisions; the majority are new. Reader, look kindly on both—reader, in whom I prosper. (Martial 10.2)

Martial shouts Catullus' name; Ovid's he merely whispers. He mentions him very infrequently and never as a model for his own practice, preferring to slip him into lists of well-known authors (1.61, 5.10). It would perhaps have been unwise to advertise indebtedness to Ovid when courting the patronage of a morally minded emperor and Censor (1.4, 6.4) such as Domitian, given that the Augustan poet's naughtiness (on the page and perhaps also in real life) had got him exiled for life to the remote Black Sea.

If Martial is sometimes disingenuous in how he reports his relation to his Latin predecessors, he is silent on his most immediate and substantial models, Lucillius (with two 'L's) and Nicarchus, who were contemporary or near-contemporary Greeks working in Rome. Greek epigram was still very much a living tradition in their time—indeed, the early centuries AD were its heyday—and had recently taken a turn towards a style we would call satirical (the Greek term is 'skoptic'). Roman audiences were aware of their work, and Martial was not their only imitator. We know these poets of the mid-first century AD only through the successive stages of selection that culminated in the *Anthologia Palatina*, so the exact extent of the debt can never be pinned down, but it is clear that they were prolific (hundreds of poems survived the anthologists' winnowing) and that Martial leant on them often. The remaining work of Lucillius in particular is demonstrably the source of many of Martial's pet topics and comic routines.

The skoptic poets profoundly influenced Martial's technique. It was they who refocused epigram as a vehicle for punch-lines and plays on words, and who suggested to Martial the use of stock and made-up names that helped him stay out of trouble:

> You think I'm using Athenagoras' real name. Callistratus, I'm damned if I know who Athenagoras is. But suppose I *was* using his real name: I'm not the villain here, it's your friend Athenagoras. (9.95b)

Martial did nonetheless innovate very significantly within his genre. His biggest change was organizational. The standard practice for compiling a book of epigrams in the Greek tradition, whether an anthology or an authored book by a single hand, had always been to arrange the poems by theme under headed categories. Martial rejects this, and instead brings in a characteristically Latin literary principle of organization: variety (*uariatio*), a carefully judged mix of poems

that keeps surprising the reader while also allowing the poet to weave unity through the apparent chaos. He experiments with poem length, blurring the division between epigram and elegy (and even epic) in a way that no previous epigrammatist had attempted, allegedly to the annoyance of his more hidebound readers:

> Cosconius, you think my epigrams are 'too long'. You're so thick they could use you for axle-grease. By the same reckoning you'd decide the Colossus was 'too tall' . . . (2.77, cf. 6.65)

Martial demands a smarter and harder-working reader who understands that his books are meant as works of literature. Greek epigram had always had a strong performative character from its use as entertainment at symposia, but Martial will have none of that: he deprecates performing poems to an invited audience (who are typically only there for a free meal, e.g. 3.50). In its place he promotes attentive private reading by individuals whose circumstances are often solitary, perhaps even furtive (e.g. 11.3). The very first poem of Book 1 addresses his reader as a *lector studiosus*, the 'Avid Fan' who has Martial's previous work at his fingertips and will read the new material from start to finish (e.g. 3.68).

Having cast aside the straitjacket of thematic categories, Martial finds other ways to guide his readers through the bewildering variety of his books. They have clear beginnings, often with instructions on how to read them, and definite endings. What is more, certain themes (e.g. plagiarism) and characters (or names; the characterizations are not always the same) keep reappearing.[1] These 'cycles' of poems are lifelines for the reader, who is always wondering when and in what guise, for example, Rufus, Postumus, or Lesbia will next make an appearance. The cycles weave through individual books, but also through the twelve-book cycle as a whole, offering the reader a choice of narrative threads to follow from start to finish.

For instance, in the Lesbia cycle the reader is invited to track Martial's relationship with Catullus, whose poetry made her (or her prototype) famous. Whether Martial's Lesbia is Catullus' Lesbia or inhabits the notional here-and-now of Martial's own corpus, the

[1] J. Garthwaite, 'Reevaluating Epigrammatic Cycles in Martial, Book Two', *Ramus*, 52 (2001), 46–55; on names, J. Booth and R. Maltby (eds.), *What's in a Name? The Significance of Proper Names in Classical Latin Literature* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006).

name always points back to Catullus as a model. The kisses (*basiae*) of 6.34 are a conscious verbal echo of him as well:

Always with the doors open and no lookout posted, Lesbia: that's how you sin . . . (1.34)

I don't want however many [kisses] Lesbia gave tuneful Catullus, when he finally wore her down . . . (6.34, cf. 2.23)

Fair Nemesis brought fame to clear-voiced Tibullus; and *you*, bookish Catullus, took dictation from Lesbia . . . (8.73)

Every time you get up from your chair—and I've noticed it a lot, Lesbia . . . (11.99)

Catullus is also his model for another kind of unifying strand—the frequent use of a personal voice, or perhaps better, voices, that maintain a strong authorial presence. One of the two main characters in Martial's work is Martial himself.

Martial thinks big in his little genre—bigger than any writer of epigrams before or since. His books really are *books*, designed to be read from start to finish, and the twelve numbered books also add up to something larger than the sum of its parts.

Martial's Rome

If Martial's books are an attempt to scale epigram up to epic size, part of the reason must be the vast scope of the subject that they obsessively narrate: the city of Rome itself. The Imperial capital is Martial's stalking-ground *and* his other main character. No other author brings it so vividly to life:

If he's taken his leave of there, is he pacing the temple portico or ambling along the colonnaded walks of the Argonauts? Or maybe he sits or strolls among box-trees warmed by delightful Europa's afternoon sun, free from stinging cares? Or is he washing in the Baths of Titus, Agrippa, or shameless Tigellinus? Or partying at the country villa of Tullus and Lucanus? Or rushing off to that sweet place of Pollio's at the fourth milestone? (3.20)

Rome is the centre of Martial's world, and he finds time in between social engagements to enjoy its superabundance of beautiful free amenities, but it is not an easy city in which to live. It is smelly—a city of industrial pollution and body odour (e.g. 4.4)—and its streets are

an obstacle course (7.61). There is the ever-present danger of fire—the city had been devastated by fire, perhaps started deliberately, late in Nero's reign and was again badly damaged in AD 80 under Titus, taking years to rebuild (5.7). It is noisy:

The crested cockerels have not yet shattered the silence, and you're already laying down a backbeat of furious mutters and smacks . . . We, your neighbours, ask for some sleep—not a full night's worth, lying awake in the dark is no big deal, but being kept up all night is . . . (9.68)

The only ones who get a good night's sleep are the super-rich whose hilltop villas soar above the hubbub, like the Janiculan eyrie of Martial's best friend, the suspiciously named Julius Martial (4.64). Most of all, the city's chaotic streets teem with people he loves to hate: hypocrites, informers, parasites, perverts, false friends, unwelcome guests, inept hosts, legacy hunters, and a seemingly endless parade of social climbers—all easy targets for his pen. As a satirist, Martial is unabashedly conservative: he attacks people who do not know their proper place in his world. Martial is proud of his citizen birthright and resentful of queue-jumpers, especially ex-slaves who have made a fortune in trade and now propose to lord it over their betters:

The cobbler Cerdo threw games for you, fertile Bologna; a fuller funded games in Modena; where will a barkeep throw the next ones? (3.59)

Rufus, do you see that man who always gets a front-row seat, whose sardonyx-studded hand sparkles even from here? . . . Do you not know what he is? Peel off those plasters and you can read the answer. (2.29)

Martial himself has found advancement in Rome, having received lavish gifts (e.g. 7.36) and favours from the emperors themselves, but that is different; he is the 'right' kind of person, and a discriminating patron knows as much (e.g. 7.84), although really good patrons are a dying breed themselves. The system, Martial complains, is not what it was in the good old days:

That this age boasts no Pylades, no Orestes—Marcus, do you wonder why? Pylades always got the same wine, and Orestes never got served better bread or a bigger thrush; the pair of them shared the same menu. But *you* gobble down Lucrine oysters while I get by on big, soggy mussels, though my taste-buds are every bit as free-born as your own . . . (6.11)

Martial's cultivation of wealthy sponsors has attracted plenty of hostile comment in modern times, and certainly he does not believe in what we would call working for a living. Instead he favours the conventional ideal of *amicitia*, a transactional friendship founded in reciprocity. Ancient Roman friendships are often asymmetrical, but that is what makes them useful to both parties: a well-connected friend can pull strings, a well-resourced friend can give generous presents, but a humbler friend can help out at election time—or maybe write a flattering poem. Romans typically used the terminology of *amicitia* to describe the phenomenon we call patronage, and Martial is no exception (e.g. 6.11), although occasionally he brings out the lopsidedness of the relationship more explicitly and writes of serving a 'master' (2.32).

At the top of the patronage pyramid was the emperor. Martial lived under seven emperors and wrote under four. His early life in Spain was spent under the later Julio-Claudians—Caligula, Claudius, and the infamous Nero—but the Rome he knew at first hand was ruled by the shorter Flavian dynasty: Vespasian (AD 69–79), the canny veteran of the war in Judaea who led Rome out of the chaos of civil war in the 'year of the four emperors'; his elder son and military colleague Titus, who ruled only briefly (79–81) before succumbing to fever, a common hazard; and Domitian, the autocratic and widely disliked younger son, who ruled Rome for longer than any emperor since Augustus' heir Tiberius (81–96) before falling victim to a palace coup. The Senate immediately replaced him with Nerva (96–8), an elderly and unassuming civil servant whose placeholder reign lasted just long enough to appoint an efficient and popular successor, the professional soldier Trajan (98–117), under whom the empire was to reach its widest extent.

By far the largest part of Martial's literary career (twelve or more of his fifteen books) was under Domitian, whom he praises extensively (though not groundlessly) as an effective defender of the empire from external threats and as the imperial builder par excellence (e.g. 5.7, 8.65, 8.80)—much of the grandeur of the ancient Rome experienced by visitors today is Domitianic in origin, including the splendid remains of his palace on the Palatine (8.36, 39). His personal treasury funded the 'bread and circuses' (*panem et circenses*, Juvenal 10.81) that kept the people entertained, and he bankrolled the workfare

construction projects that created the splendid amenities which made Romans feel their city was the only place to be:

> Going out for a drive, some plays, some little books, the Campus, the portico, a bit of shade, the Virgo, the baths. That's where we'd be . . . (5.20)

After Domitian's fall Martial was careful to distance himself from his former benefactor and begin ingratiating himself with Domitian's successors (e.g. 10.72, 11.5).

We will never know how heavily Martial really relied on particular patrons, or on patronage generally. The text suggests he viewed his gains as *quid pro quo* rather than dependency: he sent people copies of his books, and it would have been rude of them not to send something in return. Numerous wealthy friends or potential friends—for example, in Book 1 alone Stella (1.7 and 44), Quintianus (1.52), Proculus (1.70), and more besides—receive flattering write-ups that in the transactional language of Roman friendship might constitute *beneficia* (favours advanced), *officia* (gifts or services due in return), or both. Titus and Domitian clearly noticed Martial and did him at least one substantial good turn which he is careful to repay with good publicity (as e.g. at 2.92), but nothing in his books suggests he was close to the centre of power. Martial often presents himself as living hand to mouth, but poetic declarations of poverty were a familiar trope:

> And then he said: 'Are you him? Are you that Martial, whose dirty jokes anyone knows who doesn't have the ear of a Dutchman?' I flashed him a self-deprecating smile and with a discreet nod of the head conceded that he'd got his man. 'If that's so,' he asked, 'why do you wear such rotten coats?' 'Because I'm a rotten poet,' I replied . . . (6.82)

There is next to no evidence that any ancient author wrote for (in our terms) a living, and it is hard to see how they could in a world with no concept of enforceable copyright (although actual plagiarism was recognized and deprecated, 1.52) and in which every book-roll was a handmade copy from a similarly hand-copied exemplar.

When Martial claims he is bedevilled by plagiarists and imitators, he is at least exaggerating for humorous effect; these characters are perhaps not so much a real-life problem as a thematic pretext for advertising the significance of his contribution to epigram. In other

words, we may think of the plagiarism poems as a 'cycle', a literary device. No other ancient poet complains about plagiarism or imitation the way Martial does:

> Idiot! Why do you mingle your verses with mine? Wretch! What use to you is a book at odds with itself? Why are you trying to slip foxes into a pride of lions, and make little owls resemble eagles? Moron! . . . (10.100)

There is no obvious reason why cheats should have singled him out, nor do any traces of such imitators survive to corroborate his story. What is more, the theme must carry some irony for the Avid Fan (1.1) who knows how heavily Martial himself relies on unacknowledged sources, in a genre where close adaptation had always been fair game. Significantly, the large majority of these claims fall in his very first numbered book (e.g. 1.38, 1.52), where jealous would-be poets are presented as counterfeiting a literary giant who is already 'famous all round the world' (1.1)—quite a large claim to make in the very first poem of a career that, in the closing sequence of Book 1 (1.113), he insists we should regard as having just now begun again from a blank slate, with his earlier works now comprehensively disowned as juvenilia: 'the hick stuff, the junk, the ones I don't even recognize these days.'

Martial and Roman Satire

These incongruities are not careless accidents, or signs of a ruined text: they are part of Martial's technique. Although Martial's genre is epigram, his individual style as an epigrammatist has much in common with satire (*satura*), a literary form that Romans reasonably considered their distinctive contribution to ancient literature, and in particular satire as practised by his younger contemporary and friend, Juvenal (late first and early second century AD). *Satura* was written in hexameters, the metre more usually associated with heroic and didactic epic, but it was far from heroic and it probably taught nothing. It claimed to castigate social evils, but was carnivalesque in spirit—rude, indignant, and frequently obscene.[2] Its defining features were miscellany and

[2] The Romans certainly did have a concept of the obscene; the sexual and scatological language of Martial and of the satirists (excluding Horace) was meant to be humorously outrageous and would have been unacceptable in more serious literary genres: see A. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

excess: *satur* in Latin means 'stuffed full', and a *satura lanx* was a platter brimming with assorted foods. Accordingly, the moods and topics of satire are inconstant: its first-person narrators seem determined always to cram more in, at the expense of linear argument and good taste.

Juvenal was heir to a tradition stretching back to Lucilius (with one 'L'), of whose work only fragments survive. Since Lucilius' time (second century BC), the tradition had been perpetuated and refined by Horace (first century BC) and Persius (first century AD). Juvenal himself only began writing satire as Martial's own literary career drew to a close, but he displayed such mastery that his work defined the genre for all posterity: if he had not imitated Martial so closely and so often, we would not perhaps see Martial's epigrams as 'satirical' in anything like the same degree. Martial is obviously not a satirist in the strict sense of the term, and knows he is not (12.94): his poems are far too short, and he does not write in hexameters, a metre alien to epigram, except as an isolated experiment (6.65). What is more, his own genre offers salient Greek models (Lucillius and Nicarchus) for satire-esque poems that have no organic connection to the Roman tradition of *satura*. These skoptic epigrammatists teach him techniques not available to Roman satirists proper—most notably, the brevity of epigram enables Martial to sting the reader with a sententious punch-line many times on each page.

However, the spirit of Martial's epigrams is unmistakably aligned with that of satire in the hands of Juvenal. A defining feature of the latter's style is the crafting of a humorously inconsistent poetic self-characterization, or *persona*. The Juvenal of the *Satires* is a bravura performance of the role of 'the satirist': he overreacts, loses his temper and the thread of his argument, and contradicts himself.[3] The same can be said of the Martial of the *Epigrams*. If anything, the role-playing counts for more in his work than in Juvenal's, because Martial performs on a much larger stage. Juvenal wrote fifteen satires; Martial, over 1,500 epigrams. The deliberately ramshackle quality of *satura* is perhaps what motivated Martial's radical departure from the traditional, highly orderly Greek arrangement of epigram-books by thematic category, in favour of Roman poetic miscellany: each of his myriad poems has the potential to present a new and different

[3] S. H. Braund (ed.), *Satire and Society in Ancient Rome* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1989).

'Martial', opening up unheard-of opportunities for comic incongruity. This has made Martial a frustrating author for scholars who wish to use him as a repository of facts about daily life in ancient Rome, a role to which he superficially seems ideally suited:

> Few writers of equal ability show in their work such a total absence of character, such indifference to all ideas or enthusiasms; yet this very quality makes Martial a more perfect mirror of the external aspects of Roman life. The 'candour' noted in him by Pliny is simply that of a sheet of paper which is indifferent to what is written upon it, fair or foul.[4]

This view of Martial notices the dodecalogy's lack of an overriding ethical agenda, implicitly in contrast to a morally outraged Juvenal (in whom modern scholarship no longer really believes), but reads it as evidence of a real-life character flaw rather than a literary performance. However, it is not really possible to extract an actual, flesh-and-blood Martial from the *Epigrams* and interrogate him on his convictions. The Martial of the text can be made to express consistent views on some topics, in keeping with epigram's fondness for variations on a theme, but he is also deliberately inconsistent and shows himself up. For instance, whipping a slave for cooking a bad dinner is monstrous behaviour in an acquaintance (3.94, not in this selection), but fine when Martial does it himself (8.23). Even some quite basic 'facts' of Martial's life are subject to circumstance: most obviously, he shifts from married to single and back again to fit whatever scenario he has conjured up for a particular poem.

The basic problem is that Martial is mostly in the joke business, and whatever they may reveal about broader social attitudes, jokes throw at best an intermittent light on the opinions and experiences of their tellers. They are also a far-from-ideal source of historical facts. Martial's Rome *seems* very real—the bustling variety of the twelve numbered books delivers a visceral impression of the bustling variety of Rome's crowded streets, and the *Book of Shows* puts us in a front-row seat in the newly built Colosseum—but any complex work of literature fashions its own 'reality', and Martial's dodecalogy is increasingly recognized as just such a work.[5]

[4] J. W. Mackail, *Latin Literature* (London: Murray, 1895), 194.

[5] W. Fitzgerald, *Martial: The World of the Epigram* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 7.

What is more, Martial's urban factoids are inevitably bite-sized: the brevity of individual epigrams makes for a cityscape of soundbites, of hints and allusions that, in the absence of corroboration, can be maddeningly elliptical. An example is 1.70, where Martial's book is told to go and perform client service for him. Martial's directions steer it through the iconic city-centre, past the gigantic statue (erected by Nero) that will later give its name to the Colosseum:

> And please don't linger at the sun-rayed Colossus, that gigantic wonder which delights in surpassing the masterwork at Rhodes. Veer off at the spot where that old soak Bacchus has his dwelling, and where Cybele's rotunda stands with its painted Corybant . . . (1.70)

The standard reference works list this round temple (*tholos*) of Cybele, note its decorative frescos, and locate it at the top of the Sacred Way, somewhere near the Arch of Titus—but the temple hardly exists outside of this one poem by Martial (the archaeology is silent). The 'painted Corybant' (a priest of Cybele) is not *explicitly* a figure in a fresco—perhaps he is even an actual priest, with tattooed or painted skin. The best we can do is make educated guesses about the merely-real Rome of Domitian—and relish the vibrant street scene in the hyper-real Rome of Martial.

A close parallel is instructive: we now know from studies of Roman erotic elegy that those moments when a poem seems most in touch with the real stuff of human intimacy are often its most artificial. Where past generations of scholars took the lovers' Rome of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid largely on faith as a prettified version of real ancient life and customs (getting quite hot under the collar at the pagan frolics they unearthed), and saw the points of similarity between the love-poets as confirmation of truth, we now see a network of writers playing with the possibilities of a shared universe—not reality but reality-effect, an elaborate serial fiction. Ovid makes sweet love not (or not primarily) to a flesh-and-blood girlfriend but to the texts of Propertius and Tibullus, his immediate literary predecessors.[6]

This insight has important consequences for Martial. Poem by poem and book by book, he is a relentlessly serial author, forever writing sequels that invite us to reconsider what has gone before

[6] P. Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry, and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); M. Wyke, 'Mistress and Metaphor in Augustan Elegy', *Helios*, 16 (1989), 25–47.

(with the provocative difference that the author he is rewriting is himself). Book by book and poem by poem, he is building up an elaborate literary universe (what Francesca Sapsford has dubbed the 'Martialverse') in which the reader quickly comes to feel at home, an impression confirmed by Juvenal's decision to play in the same literary world.[7] Cycles play an important role in crafting this reality-effect by generating continuity and letting us track characters and situations through time: in the Martialverse, what goes around comes around. The more hyper-real it all seems, though, the more it is actually just commenting on and caught up in itself—*probably*. Martial's books are always teasing us with the hint that bits and pieces *might* be true, if only perhaps by accidental coincidence.

They know they can get away with it. Already in their author's lifetime, Martial's books imagined a far-off readership that depended on him for its fix of the urban action:

> My recondite Muse does not beguile just Rome's spare time, nor do these poems reach only the ears of the leisured; no, my book is reread by the tough centurion beside the battle-standard amid Getic frosts. Even Britain is said to have our poems by heart. (11.3)

Cheap flights make it physically easier for modern provincials to drop in on the *Urbs*, but its ancient remains are deaf to our questions. And so our sense of 'what it was really like' remains in Martial's dispensation.

Martial's Books

Fifteen books by Martial survive, or perhaps more accurately, fourteen-and-a-bit: *Liber Spectaculorum*, the *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*, and the series of twelve numbered books, of which one (Book 10) declares itself to be a second edition. A typical book of Martial has around a hundred poems in it, some more, some less—ancient book-rolls were of a fairly uniform length, and books where the poems are longer can fit fewer of them in. The longest is the *Apophoreta*, which at 223 poems is twice as long as usual. At the other end of the scale, the *De Spectaculis* or *Liber Spectaculorum* stands at a mere thirty-four poems and is clearly not a complete book. In all, the books contain 1,559

[7] F. Sapsford, 'The "Epic" of Martial', Ph.D thesis, Birmingham University (2012), 40.

poems, or 1,562 if one counts the epigrams that conclude a couple of the prose prefaces (one in Book 1 and two in Book 9, the second nested within the first).

The traditional ordering of the books places the *Liber Spectaculorum* first (in those manuscripts that have it: see the Note on the Text); then Books 1–12; then the *Xenia* ('Book 13'), and finally the *Apophoreta* ('Book 14'). This arrangement is clearly not right: the *Xenia* and *Apophoreta* were written before the twelve numbered books (i.e. they and the *Liber Spectaculorum* are the 'gossipy little books' that Martial alleges in 1.1 are 'famous all round the world'). However, it has been preserved here as the sequence transmitted in the manuscripts and familiar to generations of readers.

Martial's typical term for his books is *libellus* (plural *libelli*), a diminutive form: 'little book'. A regular book is a *liber* (plural *libri*), but Martial only occasionally calls his books *libri*, and then typically when he is talking about them as physical objects. There will have been nothing materially 'small' about the *libelli* when compared to other books that were in circulation; their author took up much the same amount of papyrus as anyone else. So why does Martial call them 'little'?

There is an older theory, not now given much credence, that Martial meant *libellus* quite literally. Martial's 'little books', the story went, were not the books of Martial as we have them, but pamphlets written to please particular patrons. Once a pamphlet had achieved its purpose in the gift-economy of *amicitia* it became redundant, but the Martial of the '*libellus* theory' hated waste: whenever he had collected several such leftover *libelli* he blended their content into a bigger book, a *liber*, for the reading public at large. This process of auto-plagiarism from multiple sources was also believed to explain the apparent miscellaneity of the surviving books.

Anyone who invested in this theory (which for much of the twentieth century went unquestioned) had to accept that the number, content, individual internal arrangement, and collective chronological sequence of Martial's actual 'little books' (the pamphlets for patrons) were thus forever lost to posterity; effectively, he could not be read as a literary author. Practically all he was good for was as raw material for source-books, a role to which, as we have seen, he is not ideally suited.

The likely explanation is less convoluted. As with so much in Martial, '*libellus*' is a self-conscious allusion to Catullus, who inspires

Martial's practice of making his books talk about themselves, both as works of literature and as smartly presented gifts for friends:

To whom am I giving my smart new *libellus*, freshly buffed up with dry pumice? (Catullus 1.1–2)

Whose present, little book, do you wish to be? (3.2)

I entrust my little books to your care, Quintilianus—if I can still call them mine . . . (1.52)

The one significant difference, playing into his humorous self-deprecation as a poet inferior to his high-living Republican model, is that Martial also admits to writing with an eye on the market:

For five denarii, out of the first or second book-case, smoothed down with pumice and elegant in purple . . . (1.117)

Martial's little books make their literary ambition explicit. They begin elaborately, with programmatic prefaces, opening sequences, or both:

Sure, you could have borne three hundred epigrams, but then who would bear *you*, book-roll, and read you from start to finish? It's time you learned what's good about a concise little book. First: I waste less paper . . . (2.1)

They have definite endings:

A little book this long *could* satisfy your appetite, reader, but still you ask me for a few couplets more; but Lupus wants his interest, and my boys, their rations. Reader, clear my slate. Nothing to say? Pretending you're deaf? Get lost. (11.108)

In between there is marvellous variety, but variety was the characteristic strength of Latin poetry-books. Twice in Book 3 Martial talks explicitly about structure for the supposed benefit of a particular kind of reader:

Up to this point, Madam, this little book has been written for you. You want to know for whom the bits further in were written? For me . . . (3.68)

I warned you in advance, bashful lady. I told you: there's part of my naughty little book you shouldn't read. But look, you're reading it . . . (3.86)

Martial's miscellaneity is, then, a carefully planned effect rather than

true randomness. We have seen that he creates connections between poems through recurring themes and phraseology, or the appearance of familiar names—the repertoire of techniques that underpin his 'cycles'. He also puts care into juxtaposition and sequencing. The position of an individual epigram within its book affects how it is read. Martial knows that we are never looking at just *one* epigram: the reader's gaze simultaneously takes in a swarm of others on the same page and facing page (for us, reading the poems in a codex). Most of his original readers will have met the epigrams in a papyrus book-roll, where their peripheral vision will have taken in adjoining columns (forward *and* back); and every reader, then and now, retains recent poems in memory.

Consider, for instance, a sequence late in Book 3 that opens with intimations of oral sexual service, a practice that Romans claimed to consider demeaning to the person giving pleasure (see note on 2.12):

You don't whine about anyone, don't speak ill of anyone; all the same, Apicius, rumour has it you're bad-mouthing. (3.80)

Poem 3.81 continues the theme, and it reappears at the climax of 3.82, an extraordinarily long epigram even by Martial's standards (thirty-three lines of hendecasyllables):

. . . That's the kind of ill-treatment we put up with from the vicious bastard, and we can't pay him back, Rufus: he *likes* the taste of cock. (3.81.32–3)

The immediate sequel to this very long poem is a couplet that comments metapoetically on poem size, while also developing the oral-sex theme (Chione the fellatrix is a figure known to Martial's readers, cf. 1.34):

You urge me to make my epigrams more concise, Cordus. 'Do me like Chione does': I can't get more concise than that. (3.82)

Martial keeps up the pressure: 3.84 perpetuates the theme of oral sex, and 3.87–8 circle back round to it. In the meantime (3.86), the joke has been on a particular kind of reader: Martial has told off the prudish Roman matron who ignored his earlier warning (3.68) and now finds herself hemmed in by perverts. Sequencing matters, by design.

It remains possible that Martial sometimes sent shorter collections of poems to friends he wanted to impress as part of the give-and-take of *amicitia*, effectively anthologizing himself—but we have no

way of knowing what such collections were like, if they ever existed. Martial's books are Martial's books; they are how he wanted to be read, and they are what made him (if anything did at the time) 'famous all round the world'.

Martial from Then to Now

Pliny the Younger, our only contemporary witness to Martial's life and death, mourned his passing (Martial had written kindly about him in lines he can quote from memory, 10.20) but was unconvinced his little books would stand the test of time: '. . . because he gave me everything he could, and would have given more, if he'd been able. Then again, what greater gift can a man give than glory and praise and eternity? "But they won't last forever, the things he wrote." Perhaps they won't, but he wrote them as if they would' (*Letters* 3.21).

The two centuries after Martial's death appeared to ratify Pliny's scepticism: we have next to no evidence that the epigrams were being read at all. When Hadrian's adoptive heir Aelius Verus (AD 101–38) called Martial 'his Virgil',[8] he declared himself as an attentive reader of the dodecalogy and was perhaps trying to outrage respectable opinion. No one else we know of was paying Martial any heed. When Latin authors (principally Ausonius) do finally engage with epigram again, it is in a very different world—the North Africa of the third and fourth centuries AD; they know Martial's work, but feel no obligation to imitate it extensively. Instead their understanding of epigram is predicated on the standard Greek models of the Hellenistic world, to the extent that Ausonius' poetry sometimes switches into Greek (the Greek epigrammatic tradition flourished in the early centuries AD as never before). Martial may have been Aelius Verus' Virgil, but he was no one else's.

Afterwards, the heartbeat of the *libelli* is weak and erratic for a millennium and more. They are a gold-mine of pithy adages for the Christian authors of late antiquity, but descend through the Middle Ages in near-silence.[9] Only with the Renaissance did Martial really find the readership he had always laid claim to. At long last, the self-advertisement

[8] *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Life of Aelius Verus 5.9, adding that the pleasure-loving heir-apparent (praised as a man of wide reading) kept copies of Apicius and Ovid's *Amores* next to his bed.

[9] M. T. Crane and J. Goodrich, 'Martial', in A. Grafton, G. W. Most, and S. Settis (eds.), *The Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 565.

of the preface to Book 1 came true: he really *was* 'famous all round the world' (or enough of it to count) 'for his gossipy little books of epigrams'. The European Baroque world of letters became Martial's Avid Fan: any self-respecting Humanist could and did issue endless epigrams and quasi-epigrams inspired by Martial's wit and concision (though not his obscenity), in letters of friendship and recommendation, book-dedications, and anywhere else they could be squeezed in.[10]

The ubiquity of epigram after the manner of Martial in the cosmopolitan literary culture of Baroque Europe grew out of his omnipresence in an educational pattern common across the continent, Britain included. Schooling meant Latin, and Latin very often meant epigram, certainly as fodder for exercise-books: Martial's brevity (when he *was* being brief) made his poems ideal teaching texts and models for verse composition, although of course many poems had to be avoided because of unacceptable phrasing and content. (Much the same was happening on the Greek side, for the minority-within-a-minority who acquired that language as well; selections from the Greek Anthology were a mainstay of the more prestigious private schools.) However, Martial's convenience as a pedagogic tool bore no relation to his standing in the world of art and morals. His literary influence fell away in the last decades of the eighteenth century, eclipsed by the manly moralist Juvenal.[11]

Foul-mouthed, a flatterer of an odious tyrant, and at the last (Book 12) a fading gigolo battening onto a country widow: new readerships did not like the cut of Martial's jib. Byron called him 'nauseous'.[12] The final nail in the coffin was driven in by, of all people, Napoleon.

[10] This part of Martial's story is simply too big to tell here, but is treated with great erudition by J. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and more recently in S. de Beer, K. A. E. Enenkel, and D. Rijser (eds.), *The Neo-Latin Epigram: A Learned and Witty Genre* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009). For numerous period instances of Martial in English translation and adaptation, see J. P. Sullivan and A. J. Boyle (eds.), *Martial in English* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

[11] D. Hopkins, 'Roman Satire and Epigram', in S. Gillespie and D. Hopkins (eds.), *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*. Volume 3: *1660–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 236; G. Nisbet, 'Revoicing Imperial Satire', in S. Braund and J. Osgood (eds.), *A Companion to Persius and Juvenal* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2013), 486–512.

[12] J. Talbot, 'Latin Poetry', in P. France and K. Haynes (eds.), *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*. Volume 4: *1790–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 196.

Martial's style of epigram, always striving for point and effect, made him a favourite author of the French—or at least, the British convinced themselves it did. Britain therefore allied itself with Martial's rivals, the Greek epigrammatists, who were Wordsworthian Romantics long before the fact—or at least, the British now convinced themselves they had been. The French, they decided, were incapable of apprehending the divine simplicity and 'serenity' of Greek epigram; their preference for Greek epigram's Latin imitator betrayed a flaw in national character.[13]

Although the French threat receded, Martial remained an unwelcome interloper in the canon: too foul-mouthed, too obsequious, too lightweight, too late, too short (the poems), too long (the corpus). Readers continued to enjoy him privately, in his own Latin (with the naughty bits) or in winnowed translations, but his stock as a poet stayed low, and until the 1990s he was not considered a viable candidate for serious academic study. Traces of this old attitude still linger: a new wave of scholarship takes Martial seriously as a literary author, but he is still largely absent from university syllabuses—'he is probably the last of the post-Augustan poets to remain "trash" ', and some of that trashy reputation is likely always to stick.[14]

All to the good: that reputation was hard-earned, and we would do Martial a disservice by conferring respectability on the epicist of smut and snark. Martial himself embraces the label of trashiness; he reclaims trash for art (2.1, 4.10, 4.72). When a devoted benefactor proposes to place a portrait of the poet in his new library, Martial proposes the following epigram as its subtitle, to fix his reputation for posterity:

> 'It is I, second to none in my reputation for trash; you're not impressed by me but, reader, I think you love me. Let greater poets pour forth greater themes; I speak of small ones, and am content to come back often into your hands.' (Book 9 prologue)

In a cosmopolitan and multicultural world of disposable culture and streamed media, in a blogosphere that runs on celebrity gossip and sound-bites, Martial's epigrams seem as fresh and alive today as when he wrote them, nearly two thousand years ago.

[13] G. Nisbet, *Greek Epigram in Reception: J. A. Symonds, Oscar Wilde, and the Invention of Desire, 1805–1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26–7, 44.

[14] V. Rimell, *Martial's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

NOTE ON THE TEXT AND TRANSLATION

THE Latin text of Martial's books is securely attested, much more so than that of some more famous ancient authors (prominent among them Martial's declared literary model, Catullus). Three families of manuscripts survive, all deriving from a single ancient source. The text presented facing the translation is based on sources in the public domain; it is peculiar to the present volume, but will present no surprises to readers of Martial's Latin in any modern edition. I follow the numbering used in the Loeb edition by Shackleton Bailey, since this is the version to which readers of Martial are overwhelmingly likely to refer. Where alternative numbers appear in brackets, these are the previously accepted numbers.

The only significant textual riddle is the 'Book of Shows', which survives in only one of the three manuscript families. It comes down without a distinctive title—*De Spectaculis* and *Liber Spectaculorum* are merely reasonable guesses at what Martial or his readers may originally have called a publication of this kind—and its content appears uneven in date, suggesting that it may be the remains of a second edition, or perhaps a posthumous assemblage. The introduction to Coleman's commentary (2006: xxi–xxv) sets out what can be known of its textual history.

The Martial of this little book is *my* Martial—the Martial I hear when I read his Latin. He is frank about what he wants and swears shockingly. This is the Martial we can reflect honestly in the twenty-first century. My translation occasionally borrows a doggerel verse rhythm but is in prose, because Martial is conversational rather than poetic (though he has moments of elegiac tenderness), because I am not a poet, and because attempts to put Martial into verse typically blunt his concision and point. Translators often want to make Martial rhyme, and the results can be very enjoyable, but they lose too much of his devilish detail and struggle to convey his deft comic timing.

Anthologization began with ancient epigram, and modern readerships invariably meet Martial through a selection; the present volume is no different. Martial himself ironically licensed the impatient reader to skim or cut as he or she saw fit: 'If short ones are your thing, just read the two-liners . . .' (6.65).

BOOK OF SHOWS

1

Let savage Memphis speak not of the Wonders* that are her Pyramids; let Assyrian labour glory not in its Babylon; let the soft Ionians win no praise for their Temple of the Crossroads Goddess;* let the close-packed altar of antlers lure no crowds to Delos;* let not the Carians' immoderate praises elevate their Mausoleum, swaying in empty air, unto the stars. Each labour resigns its title in favour of the Amphitheatre of the Caesars, and Fame shall speak of one marvel in place of all.

2

Here, where the Colossus of the Sun* views the stars close at hand and towering cranes rise up in mid-street, the hateful halls of a bestial king once dazzled, when in all Rome stood just one house. Here, where the spectacular Amphitheatre's hallowed bulk is being raised up, was Nero's lake. Here, where we marvel at the baths—gifts to the people,* swift in coming—a regal estate had robbed the poor of their homes. Where the Claudian Portico spreads out generous shade, ended the palace's most distant wing. Rome is given back to herself, Caesar, and under your guardianship her former master's pleasures belong to her people.

3

What tribe is so remote, so savage, Caesar, that it sends no sightseer to your city? A Rhodopean field-tiller has come, from Orpheus' Haemus;* a Sarmatian* has come, who subsists by quaffing horse-blood; one who drinks from the stream where the Nile is first discerned, and one on whom crashes the wave of farthest Tethys.* An Arab has rushed here, the Sabaeans too, and here Cilicians have been drenched in their native mists.* Sygambrians have come, with their hair curled

into a knot, and Ethiopians with their hair curled differently. The voice of the peoples sounds diverse, and yet it speaks as one, when you are hailed true Father of the Fatherland.

6 (5)

Believe that Pasiphae was coupled with the Dictaean bull; we have seen it, the ancient tale* has now been proved. Nor, Caesar, should fusty antiquity give itself airs: whatever Fame sings of, the arena tenders to you.

8

Highborn Fame formerly sang of the lion brought down in Nemea's broad valley, a deed of Hercules. Let ancient proof fall silent: for after your shows, Caesar, we have now seen these things achieved at a woman's hand.*

9 (7)

Just as Prometheus, bound fast to the Scythian cliff, nourished the constant bird with a glut of his stomach, just so did Laureolus, hanging from a cross that was no stage-prop, offer up his uncovered entrails to a Caledonian bear.* His torn joints carried on living as his limbs dripped, and in all his flesh, no flesh remained. At long last he met the punishment he deserved: he was a thug who'd thrust a sword through his father's or his master's throat, or a lunatic who'd stripped a temple of its hidden gold or set barbarous torches to you, O Rome. This wicked man had outstripped the crimes of ancient fame, and in him, what had been a tale became an expiation.

12 (10)

A malcontent lion had wounded its master with ungrateful mouth, and dared to defile the hands it knew so well; but it paid the penalty

it deserved for such a crime, and the beast that had not tolerated blows now bore javelins. What morals ought men adopt under such a leader,* at whose command wild beasts grow tamer?

15 (13)

Struck by a weighty javelin and pierced through by her wound, a mother boar gave up life and gave life in equal degree. How sure was the hand when it balanced the steel! This hand I believe belonged to Lucina. In death, she proved the power of both Dianas: by one brought to term as a mother, by the other brought down as a beast.

20 (17)

That the pious elephant* kneels and reveres you, Caesar, that of late filled the bull with dread—he does not do it under compulsion, nor at any trainer's coaching. Trust me, he is moved by the same divinity as are we.

24 (21)

Whatever sights Rhodope is said to have seen in Orpheus' theatre,* the arena, Caesar, has displayed for you. Rocky crags have skittered and a miraculous forest has galloped by, just like the legendary grove of the Hesperides. Every kind of wild beast was there, mingled with the tame, and above the poet-seer circled many a bird. But he himself lay dead, mangled by a malcontent bear. Only this one deed went against the script.*

27 (24)

If you have come here from far-off shores, a late-arriving sightseer, and this has been your first day at the sacred Games, let this sea-battle not fool you with its ships, nor the water churning like straits; lately this was dry land. You don't trust me? Keep watching, until the waters calm the God of War: a short delay, and you'll be saying: 'Lately this was sea.'

30 (26)

A well-coached team of Nereids frisked across the calm surface, and their shifting formation gave colour to the waters. The trident* threatened us with straight tooth, the anchor with curved; a mast, a ship, we took for real; the star of the Spartan boys,* the sailors' friend, seemed really to shine, and sails to swell in a gauzy curve. Who devised such techniques amid the limpid waters? Either Thetis* taught him these ploys, or she was his pupil.

32 (28; 27)

If those primordial eons, Caesar, had brought forth a Carpophorus, the untamed Earth would not have feared Porthaon's beast,* nor Marathon her Bull, leafy Nemea her Lion, nor Arcadia the Maenalian Boar. If *he* had armed for the brawl, the Hydra would have died but once, and the whole Chimaera would have taken a single blow. *He* could yoke the fire-bearing bulls without the Colchian woman's aid, *he* could conquer both of Pasiphae's beasts.* If the old legend of sea-monsters were brought back to life, *he* would free Hesione and Andromeda* all by himself. Let the glory of Herculean honours be tallied: to have vanquished a score of beasts at once counts for more.

34 (30; 28)

It was once Augustus' labour to command the clash of fleets, and stir the straits with the trumpet of sea-battle.* Of our own Caesar, how small a part is this! Thetis, and Galatea too, saw in the waters beasts formerly unknown; Triton saw chariots seething in the water's dust and reckoned his own lord's horses had passed by; as Nereus plotted wild mêlées for ferocious ships, he was shocked to find himself walking on foot amid the limpid waters. Whatever sights are seen in the Circus and Amphitheatre alike, Caesar, the abundant water has displayed for you. Let Fucinus and dread Nero fall silent; let the eons know this sea-battle alone.

BOOK 1

[*Epistolary Preface*] I hope the formula I've aimed at in my little books is such that no self-respecting person has grounds to complain about them. Even when they joke about the basest of characters, they never lose their sense of decorum—something so lacking in writers of old that they exploited not just real names, but great ones at that. I aim to hold fame cheap; when people praise me, the last thing they should say is, 'He's clever'. I hope the malignant critic keeps away from the artless candour of my jokes and doesn't assign headings* to my epigrams; it's criminal to parade your cleverness in someone else's book.

If it was up to me, I would dispense with naughty words that are true to life—that is to say, the natural idiom of epigrams; but that's how Catullus writes, and Marsus, and Pedo, and Gaetulicus, and everyone who gets read all the way through. However, if there's anyone with such a professionally long face that nobody's book is allowed to speak plain Latin when he's around, he may content himself with my letter, or even better, my title. Epigrams are written for people who enjoy being spectators at Flora's Games. Cato can stay out* of this theatre of mine—or he can come in and enjoy the show.

I think I'm within my rights if I close my letter with a poem:

Since you knew about the pleasurable rite of playful Flora, the holiday high-jinks when the crowd sheds its inhibitions, why did you come to the show, censorious Cato? Or did you only make an entrance so that you could storm out again?

I

The man you read, the man you want—here he is: *Martial*, famous all round the world for his gossipy little books of epigrams. While he still lives and breathes, Avid Fan, you have conferred on him distinction such as few poets achieve when dead and gone.

2

Want my little books with you all the time? Fancy them as travelling-companions on a long trip? Then purchase *these* ones: parchment binds them between narrow boards.* Boxed sets are for the Greats; me, you can hold in one hand. But to be sure you know where I'm to be found for sale and don't wander lost all over the city, I'll steer you right: seek out Secundus, freedman of erudite Lucensis, past the threshold of Peace and the Forum of Pallas.*

4

If you should happen to pick up my little books, Caesar, lay aside that stern look that masters the world. Taking a joke is the done thing at triumphs—your own included—and there's no shame in a Commander generating punch-lines. That face you wear when you're watching Thymele and Latinus* the stand-up comic? Wear it, please, as you read these poems of mine. As Censor,* you can exercise discretion: my jokes hurt no one; let them be. My page may be dirty, but my life is clean.*

6

Though the eagle carried the boy through the airy vault of the heavens,* the nervous grasp of its talons did not harm him; and now the entreaties of their prey persuade Caesar's lions to let the hare play safely in their huge maws. Which of these wonders do you think the greater? An almighty author inaugurates each: the latter is Caesar's work, the former, Jupiter's.

7

I tell you, Maximus—and I don't care if Verona hears it—my Stella's darling *Dove* sees off Catullus' *Sparrow*.* My Stella is as much better than that Catullus of yours as a dove is bigger than a sparrow.

16

You're reading good poems here, Avitus—and a few that are so-so, and a lot that are bad; a book doesn't happen any other way.

22

Why, hare, do you now run away from the dire maws of the docile lions? They never learned to munch such tiny game. Those claws of theirs are kept for massive necks, nor can a mere trickle of blood sate a thirst as strong as theirs. A hare is dogs' prey, it does not make a mouthful for a monster; a Dacian boy would not fear Caesar's arms.*

25

Publish your little books at long last, Faustinus, and let the public see the masterpiece you've been mulling over so donnishly. Pandion's Cecropian citadel* would not cast it out, nor our own elders pass it over in silence. Do you hesitate to let Fame in when she's standing on your doorstep? Don't you want to collect the prize you've worked so hard for? Those pages that are destined to live on after you, should also begin living *through* you. The glory that comes when you are dead and gone, comes too late.*

27

Last night, Procillus, after the wine ladle had gone around I think fifty times, I said you should come for dinner at mine today. Right off the mark you decided it was a done deal, and you jotted down my less-than-sober words. A transcript is a very dangerous thing: I loathe, Procillus, a recollective guest.*

30

Diaulus used to be a surgeon, now he's a bargain-rate undertaker.* He's started making house-calls that put his skills to work.

34

Always with the doors open and no lookout posted, Lesbia:* that's how you sin. You don't hide your stolen pleasures; you enjoy an audience more than you do an illicit lover, and your orgasms are incomplete unless they're attracting attention. A real whore uses a curtain and a bolt to shoo off the voyeurs; Summemmius' brothel doesn't have many peepholes. If you've nothing else to learn from Chione* and Ias, learn discretion; for *professional* cock-sucking bitches,* even tombs can lend privacy. Do you feel my ruling is too harsh? I'm banning you from getting caught, Lesbia, not getting fucked.

38

That little book you're reciting is one of mine, Fidentinus; but you're reciting it so badly, it's turning into one of yours.

44

My page, both large and small,* brings you frolicking hares and playful lions.* If it's too much for you that I do the same thing twice, Stella, you can always dish up hare for me twice at dinner.

47

Until recently Diaulus was a doctor, now he's a bargain-rate undertaker; what he does as an undertaker, he used to do as a doctor.

52

I entrust my little books to your care,* Quintianus—if I can still call them mine, that your pet poet keeps reciting. If they wail about their intolerable servitude, please be their public defender and stand bail for them; and, when he declares himself their master, please testify that they were mine and I have set them free. Proclaim this loudly three or four times and you'll shame the plagiarist* into keeping quiet.

53

In my little books, Fidentinus, there's just one page that's your own—but one that's branded with the unmistakable style of its master, which exposes your poems to public disgrace as blatant plagiarism. A Lingonian kaftan* hung alongside double-dyed city purples dirties them with its greasy tufts—just like this; if a black raven promenades along the banks of the Cayster amidst Leda's swans it attracts mockery—just like this; when a sacred grove swarms with Philomela's birds,* the harmonious nightingales, the dastardly magpie clashes with their Cecropian lullabies—just like this. My books have no need of an informer or a judge: your own page takes the stand against you and tells you, 'You're a thief'.

61

Verona loves its learned poet's hendecasyllables; Mantua is blessed with Maro;* Aponus' land is rated for its Livy—and no less for Stella* and Flaccus; the brimming Nile applauds Apollodorus; the Paelignians* chant Naso's name; the two Senecas and the one and only Lucan are the talk of eloquent Cordoba; gay Cadiz* rejoices in its Canius, and Emerita in my Decianus; and our own Bilbilis will preen itself on you, Licinianus. Nor will it be silent about me.

70

Go stand in for me at the morning greeting, book: that's an order. Head for the gleaming house of Proculus and fulfil my obligations as his client. You want to know the way, I'll tell you. Go past the temple of Castor that's next door to grey-haired Vesta and the house of the Virgins; from there, make for the holy Palatine by way of the Sacred Way, where glistens many a portrait of our Commander-in-Chief. And please don't linger at the sun-rayed Colossus, that gigantic wonder which delights in surpassing the masterwork at Rhodes. Veer off

at the spot where that old soak Bacchus has his dwelling, and where Cybele's rotunda stands with its painted Corybant.*

Immediately on the left is a house with a noble frontage: the reception halls of this exalted home are where you're bound. Make for this house, and you needn't fear arrogance and a scornful threshold; no other door throws itself more widely open, nor is there another that Phoebus and the learned sisters* love better. If it asks, 'But why doesn't he come in person?', you may justify my absence as follows: 'Because no matter how readable or unreadable these poems may be, a client who showed up for you in the morning could never have written them.'

72

Do you tell yourself you're a poet, Fidentinus? Do you want people to think it's true, when the lines you're using are mine? Just so does Aegle reckon she has teeth, because she's bought ones made of bone and Indian ivory; and Lycoris, who's blacker than a windfall mulberry,* loves how she looks in white lead. Just so, and by the same rationale that makes you a poet, you'll have a full head of hair when you go bald.

77

Charinus is in great shape—and still he's pale.
Charinus watches his drinking—and still he's pale.
Charinus's digestion is good—and still he's pale.
Charinus gets enough sun—and he's still pale.
Charinus wears a fake tan—and still he's pale.
Charinus licks cunt—and still he's pale.*

101

In times past the trusted agent of my studies, a blessing to his owner and familiar to the Caesars, Demetrius was young when he forsook his salad days; a fourth harvest had just been added to three five-year spans. But I didn't want him to go down to the darkness of Styx still a servant. As the vicious plague held him in its burning grasp, I took care of it: I remitted all right of ownership. He should have got better.

He deserved to enjoy my gift to him. As he faded, he knew what he had earned: he called me 'patron'. He was free. And then he was gone, down to the river of the dead.

104

That the leopard endures a yoke hitched to its spotted neck, and monstrous tigers concede submission to the whip; that stags bite on toothed bits, fashioned in gold; that Libyan bears are broken to the reins, and a boar, big as Calydon's in legend,* yields to a purple halter; that ugly bison haul war-chariots, and that the behemoth, commanded to show off his graceful dancing, does not disappoint his black trainer: who would not think these are the gods' own shows?

But whoever sees the lions humbled in their hunting, worn out by the swift skittishness of the hares, skims those other sights and reckons them sideshows. They let them go, they chase them down again, and dote upon them once caught; their prey is safer in their mouths than out. The lions enjoy holding their jaws agape, anxiously restraining their bite so the hares can hop in and out. To munch such thin pickings would embarrass them, since they have just come from bringing down bullocks. This forbearance is not a trick they have been taught; the lions know whom they serve.

107

You often tell me, my dearest Lucius Julius: 'Write something big; you're such a slacker.' Well, give me leisure—the kind that Maecenas used to lay on for his Flaccus and his Virgil*—and I'll try to compose works that will live on through the centuries, and to rescue my name from the bonfire. Oxen won't wear the yoke on barren fields; a rich soil wearies them, but that toil brings joy.

109

Issa is saucier than Catullus's *Sparrow*,
Issa is purer than a *Dove*'s kiss,
Issa is smoother-tongued than all the girls,
Issa is dearer than pearls from India,
Issa is Publius' darling . . . puppy.

If she whimpers, you'd think she was talking; she can tell when people are sad or happy. She stretches with her head on his neck and has her nap, and you can't feel her sighing little breaths; and when she needs to give in to her tummy's demands not a single dribble dismays the bedsheets—instead she pokes him awake with a winsome paw, lets him know to set her down, and asks to be picked up when she's done. This chaste puppy is so naturally modest, she knows not the Goddess of Love, and we can find no husband worthy of such a tender maid. That the end of her days may not rob him of her completely, Publius is painting her portrait in miniature;* in it you will see a likeness of Issa more like to her than she is herself. Indeed, put Issa next to the picture and either:

1. you'll think them both real, or
2. you'll think them both paintings.

110

Swifty,* you moan that I write long epigrams. You aren't writing anything yourself; is that you making shorter ones?

113

All the poems I used to scribble as a young man, a boy even—the hick stuff,* the junk, the ones I don't even recognize these days—if you're set on turning good hours into a bad investment and carry a grudge against your own leisure time, reader, you can get them from Valerianus Pollius Quintus, who simply will not let my juvenilia die.

114

The suburban villa next door to you, Faustinus, with its little farm and water-meadows, is Faenius Telesphorus' place. Here he interred the ashes of his daughter and declared sacred the name you read,* Antulla's. He deserved that his own name should be there in her stead. It would have been natural justice if the father had gone to the ghosts along the Styx; since that was not permitted him, may he live, to revere her bones.

117

Every time you run into me, Lupercus, you immediately say: 'How about I send a boy over to pick up one of your little books of epigrams? I'll get it straight back to you once I've read it.' Lupercus, you've no cause to trouble the lad. It's a long way, if he's wanting the Pear Tree,* and I live up three flights of stairs—tall ones. It's alright to look closer to home for what you're after. I'm sure you're always popping down to the Argiletum;* opposite Caesar's Forum there's a shop with its doorposts entirely covered in writing, front and back, so you can quickly skim through all the poets. Look for me there. If you ask for Atrectus*—that's the name the shop's owner bears—then for five denarii, out of the first or second book-case, smoothed down with pumice* and elegant in purple, he'll give you: *Martial*. 'You're not worth that,' you say? Lupercus, you're wising up.

118

The person who reads a hundred epigrams and still wants more, Caedicianus—now *that's* a glutton for punishment.

BOOK 2

1

Sure, you could have borne three hundred epigrams, but then who would bear *you*, book-roll,* and read you from start to finish? It's time you learned what's good about a concise little book. First: I waste less paper. Second: the copyist is done with it in just an hour, so he doesn't have to slave for ages over my trashy poems. The third thing: if you happen to get read to someone, you can be as bad as you like and still won't outstay your welcome. The party-goer will read you when his fifth ladle of wine has been mixed, but before the cup he's put down has started going lukewarm.* Do you think being so short makes you safe? Alas, how many readers will find you long even as you are!

5

I swear on my health, Decianus, that given the choice I'd spend all day and night in your company. But there are two miles keeping us apart; and they become four, when I go only to come back again. Often you're not in—and when you are, your people often tell me you're out; or else you only have time for your cases, or for yourself. I have no problem going two miles to see you, mind; I *do* have a problem going four miles *not* to see you.

12

How am I supposed to call it when your kisses smell of myrrh and you never have an odour that's not splashed on? That you smell good all the time, Postumus,* strikes me as suspect. Postumus, a man who smells good all the time, smells fishy.

23

I'm not going to say, no matter how many times you all ask, who 'Postumus' is in my little book. I'm not going to say. What would make me provoke kisses* that can wreak such effective vengeance?

29

Rufus, do you see that man who always gets a front-row seat, whose sardonyx-studded hand sparkles even from here? See his cloaks,* that time and again have drunk vats of Tyrian purple dry; and his toga, which he has commanded must surpass virgin snows? You can smell his pomaded hair right across the Theatre of Marcellus. His exfoliated arms gleam—he's had them plucked—and his shoe with its half-moon badge has a new strap today; his foot gets no blisters, though the carmine kid-leather is staining it with cochineal, and numerous beauty-spots are plastered on his glittering brow. Do you not know what he is? Peel off those plasters and you can read the answer.*

32

I'm suing Balbus, but you don't want to get on Balbus' bad side, Ponticus. I'm suing Licinus too; no, he's an important man as well. My neighbour Patrobas keeps encroaching on my little patch of farm, but you're nervous about proceeding against a freedman of Caesar's. Laronia hangs onto my slave and won't give him back, but 'she's childless, she's rich, she's elderly, she's a widow'.* Believe me, no good comes from offering service to a friend who's servile; the man who wants to be my master, let him first be free.

37

Every dish that comes to table, you sweep them all up, left and right: teats from a sow's udder, pig's ear, a heath-cock meant for two to share, half a mullet and a whole pike, a lamprey fillet, a chicken leg, a wood-pigeon oozing into the couscous it came with. When you've folded them away in a soggy napkin, you pass them to your boy to

take home;* and all the rest of us just lie there twiddling our thumbs. If you have any sense of shame, put our dinner back: Caecilianus, I didn't invite you for tomorrow.

38

You're wondering what the yield is from my farm at Nomentum, Linus? Here's the yield from my farm: Linus, I don't have to look at *you*.

48

An innkeeper, a butcher, and a bathhouse; a barber, and a board and pieces for draughts; just a few books—provided I get to pick them; a solitary friend who's not a complete bumpkin; a well-hung boy who'll stay beardless a long while, and a girl dear to that boy of mine. Set me up with these, Rufus, even in Butuntum,* and you can keep your Baths of Nero.

51

Although you often have just one denarius in your big strongbox, Hyllus, and one rubbed smoother than your arse at that, the baker won't rob you of it and nor will your innkeeper; instead you'll lose it to whoever has an oversized hard-on. Your poor belly looks on as your arse feasts; the one is sick with hunger, the other swallows whole.

53

You want to become a free man? You're lying, Maximus, you don't; but if you really want to, this is how. You'll be a free man if, Maximus, you have no desire to dine out; if Veii's grape subdues your thirst; if you can laugh at poor Cinna's gold-inlaid dinner service;* if you can

be content to wear one of *my* togas; if the Lower Pleasures* will go with you for two copper pennies; if you can't get into your lodgings standing upright. If you can cope with all that, if you've got what it takes, you can live freer than the king of Parthia.*

57

That man you see ambling nowhere in particular, cutting across the middle of the Saepta,* his hand studded with amethysts;* whom my own Publius doesn't outdo in cloaks, nor Cordus himself, who's *numero uno* in woollen mantles; trailed by a flock in togas and long hair,* and a sedan-chair newly fitted with curtains and strapping: only just now at Cladus' stall he pawned a ring for scarcely eight pennies, to pay for his dinner.

58

Dressed in fine new wool, Zoilus, you poke fun at my worn old clothes. They may be worn, Zoilus, but at least I own them.

65

Why is Saleianus looking a bit down? Nothing serious, we hope? 'I've buried my wife.' What a cruel blow of fate! What an awful thing to happen! She is dead, that same Secundilla who had all that money and who came with a million in dowry?* I wish this hadn't happened to *you*, Saleianus.

71

No one has a disposition sunnier than yours, Caecilianus. I've noticed that, if ever I read out a few of my own couplets, you immediately recite some Marsus or Catullus. Are you doing this to humour me, as though what you're reading isn't as good, so people like my stuff more in comparison? I'm sure you are; all the same, I'd rather you recited work *you'd* written.*

75

A lion that had always put up with the blows of his unworried trainer, and patiently allowed a hand to be put in his mouth,* unlearned his peaceful ways, suddenly reverting to a savagery that his Libyan mountain ranges ought never to have known. Out of the gang of young lads who were refreshing the bloody sand with rakes, this furious bane snatched two boyish forms in his frenzied fangs. The martial sand* has seen no act more monstrous. I want to shout: 'You cruel and treacherous predator! Learn from our she-wolf* to spare the lives of boys!'

77

Cosconius, you think my epigrams are 'too long'. You're so thick they could use you for axle-grease. By the same reckoning you'd decide the Colossus was 'too tall', and call Brutus' *Boy** 'too short'. Do your homework: a single poem by Marsus or scholarly Pedo often takes up two columns. Things aren't 'too long' if there's no fat you can trim from them. But you, Cosconius? You write two-liners that are 'too long'.

87

Sextus, you say their passion for you sets the pretty girls on fire—you who have the face of a man swimming under water.

88

You don't read out any of your work, Mamercus, and still you want people to think you're a poet. Please be whatever you like, just as long as you don't read out any of your work.

89

That you love to prolong the night with too much wine, this I can forgive, Gaurus: this vice of yours was Cato's. That you write poems that Apollo and the Muses disown, entitles you to praise: this vice was

Cicero's.* That you throw up: Antony's;* that you indulge to excess: Apicius'. That you suck cock, though: tell me, whose vice is that?

90

Quintilian, unequalled teacher* of the feckless young; Quintilian, glory of Rome's civic affairs: although a poor man and not incapacitated by old age, I'm keen to live to the full. Don't judge me harshly; no one can be keen enough on life. The man who schemes to outdo his father's fortune, and jams his reception rooms with an overload of artworks—he can put it off if he likes. But what *I* like is a seat by the fire, a roof that doesn't mind dark smoke, a freshly flowing spring, and unmown grass. Give me a plump, home-grown slave; a wife who's not too smart; a good night's sleep, and a day without squabbles.

91

Caesar, sure salvation of our fortunes and glory of the earth, we believe the gods to be great so long as they keep you safe and well. I've bombarded you with my little books; if you've read them over and over, if my poems have held your attention, then allow me the form of what fate does not permit in reality, and let me be rated as the father of three children. If I have caused offence, let *them* be my consolation; if I have found favour, let *them* be my reward.

92

At my request* he granted me the Right of Three Children, recompense for my Muses—he, the only one who could. So long, wife! My master's* gift should not go to waste.

93

'So where's Book One,' you ask, 'if this one is Book Two?' What can I do about it if that one's shyer? But if you'd like this to be Book One, Regulus, you can always take one 'i' off the title.*

BOOK 3

1

This book—such as it is—from far-off shores does Gaul send you, that is named for the Roman toga.* Perhaps you are reading it and already preferring my last one; whichever set of poems you think is better, that's the one that's mine. Well may the book please that had its birth in the Empress of Cities; a home-raised book ought to see off a Gaul.

2

Whose present, little book, do you wish to be? Sort yourself out with an owner quickly, or you might be snatched off to some soot-blackened kitchen,* to clothe whitebait in your soggy papyrus or make a conical wrap for frankincense or pepper. Are you making a run for Faustinus' lap? Smart move. Now you'll be at liberty to stroll about, slicked back with cedar-oil; nicely turned out with both borders prettified, you will exult in your painted finials, and voluptuous purple will clothe you, and your haughty title will blush with carmine. With him as your owner, you need not fear even Probus.

5

You're all set to run off to the city without me, little book.* Would you prefer to be commended to the care of many, or will one do? One *will* do, believe me, and you won't be a stranger to him: Julius,* a name that's constantly on my lips. Search for him right away just where the Covered Way begins; the house where Daphnis used to live is where he lives now. He has a wife, who'll take you in her hands and into her lap, even if you're dusty from the journey. Whether you see them both at once, or her first, or him, just say 'Marcus says hi' and it's done. Let a letter commend others to a guardian's care;

he causes offence who reckons he needs commending to his own family.

8

Quintus loves Thais. Which Thais? Thais the half-blind. Thais is missing one eye; he's missing both.

9

They say Cinna* is writing epigrams and I'm his target. He's not 'writing' if no one's reading him.

10

Philomusus, your father gave you an allowance of two thousand a month and paid it all his days. Bankruptcy was never more than a day away, nipping at the heels of your party lifestyle, and your vices depended on daily handouts. He's dead now, and he's left you every penny. Philomusus, your father has left you penniless.*

11

If your girl isn't called Thais and isn't half-blind, Quintus, why do you think my two-liner was targeted at you? 'But there's a certain resemblance.' Did I say Thais when I meant Lais? Tell me, how are Thais and Hermione alike? But you *are* Quintus, all the same, so let's change the lover's name: if Quintus doesn't want her, let's have Sextus* be Thais' boyfriend.

12

The perfume you gave your guests last night was good, I admit it, but you didn't carve us any meat. How chic, to smell lovely and be starving. The man who gets no food but gets anointed, Fabullus, it seems to me he's really stiffed.*

19

A Bear is being exhibited near the Hundred Columns, where moulded beasts adorn the grove of planes. As pretty Hylas* played at teasing its gaping jaws, he plunged his delicate hand into its mouth. But a vicious viper lurked within the hollow bronze, animating the beast with a soul more wicked than its own. The boy did not notice its treachery until he had been bitten and was dying. What an outrage, that the bear was not true!*

20

Say, Muse, what is my Canius Rufus* up to? Is he immortalizing on paper the noteworthy deeds of Claudian history? Or is he matching himself against the works a lying author has ascribed to Nero, or the *Fables* of that reprobate Phaedrus?* Is he being saucy in elegiacs, rugged in hexameters, hair-raising in Sophoclean buskins? Or does he take his ease in the School of the Poets and tell witty stories tinged with Attic charm? If he's taken his leave of there, is he pacing the temple portico or ambling along the colonnaded walks of the Argonauts? Or maybe he sits or strolls among box-trees warmed by delightful Europa's* afternoon sun, free from stinging cares? Or is he washing in the Baths of Titus, Agrippa, or shameless Tigellinus?* Or partying at the country villa of Tullus and Lucanus? Or rushing off to that sweet place of Pollio's at the fourth milestone? Or has he already made it to sweltering Baiae, and is now rowing his little boat on Lake Lucrinus?* 'You want to know what your Canius is up to? He's laughing at you.'

22

You had sacrificed twice-three million to your stomach, Apicius,* and there was still an ample million left over for *you*. You found this

burden as heavy as hunger and thirst, and threw it off: you knocked back poison as your final cocktail. Never, Apicius, had you lived higher than that.

23

Seeing as you're passing all the savouries to your slaves behind you, why isn't the table set next to your feet?*

26

You're the only man who has estates, Candidus,* the only man with money;
the only man with gold plate, the only man with murrine-ware;*
the only man with Massic, the only man with Opimius' Caecuban;*
the only man with a brain, the only man who has talent.
You're the only man who has everything—don't think I'm saying you aren't;
but, Candidus, the whole city has your wife.

27

I often invite you to dinner, and you come, but you never return the invitation. I can forgive you, Gallus, provided you're not inviting anybody. But you are. We're both at fault. 'What fault?' you say. I have no sense, Gallus, and you have no shame.

28

You wonder why Marius' ear smells bad. You're making it smell, Nestor:* you keep talking shit into it.

29

These chains with twin leg-irons, Saturn, does Zoilus dedicate to you; they're his old set of rings.*

30

The dole is cancelled; you're attending dinners out of kindness. Tell me, Gargilianus, what are you doing in Rome? How can you afford your wretched toga, and the rent on your gloomy bedsit? How can you afford a quarter for the baths? How can you afford to be Chione's boyfriend? You say you live by careful accounting; but there's no accounting for you being alive.

32

Can I do a granny, Matrinia? You want to know? Well, I can; but you're not a granny, you're a corpse. I can do Hecuba, I can do Niobe,* Matrinia, but only if Hecuba's not yet a bitch and Niobe's not yet a stone.

36

The services a new and freshly-minted friend performs for you, Fabianus, are the ones you demand of me: that I come and pay my respects first thing every morning, shivering with cold; that I trail after your sedan-chair through the deep mud; that at the tenth hour or even later I follow you into the Baths of Agrippa, although I myself scrub up at Titus'. Is this what I have earned, Fabianus, by my thirty Decembers? Must I always be an entry-level friend? Is this what I deserve, Fabianus, with my worn old toga that I paid for myself, that you don't yet think I've earned my wooden sword?*

38

What opportunity brings you to Rome, Sextus? What's making you so confident? What do you expect here, what are you after? Give us the details. 'Cases!' you say. 'I'll argue them better than Cicero himself, and no one in the three Fora will be my equal.' Atestinus used to argue cases, so did Civis—you knew them both—but it didn't cover their rent. 'If that doesn't go anywhere, we shall write poems. When you hear them, you'll say it's Maro's work.' Lunatic. See that lot in the ice-matted overcoats? Every last man of them is a Naso* or

Virgil. 'I shall cultivate the halls of the great.' That old trick used to feed three or four at most; the rest of the gang goes pale with hunger. 'So tell me what I should be doing, because I'm living in Rome and that's that.' If you're a good man, Sextus, you can live here—live hand to mouth.

39

Faustinus, that half-blind Lycoris'* boyfriend is the spitting image of the Trojan cup-bearer.* What a good eye she has!

43

You counterfeit youth with hair-dye, Laetinus: all of a sudden you're a raven, when just now you were a swan. You don't fool everyone: Proserpina* knows you are grey; she will drag the mask from your head.

46

You extort from me no end of toga-work;* well, I'm not going. I'm sending my freedman instead. 'It's not the same thing,' you say. It's actually much better, and I'll prove it. I can hardly keep up with your litter; he'll carry it. If you run into a crowd, he'll elbow them aside (I have the weak ribs of a freeborn man). Spinning some story in court? I won't say a thing, but he'll bellow three rounds of 'Hear, hear!' Suing someone? He'll hurl abuse at the top of his voice; my sense of shame has forbidden me strong language. 'Are you saying you'll do nothing for me as a friend?' you ask. Candidus, what I'll do for you is what a freedman never could.

47

Where the Capena Gate rains with swollen drips, where the Almo washes the Phrygian steel of the Mother Goddess, where the hallowed field of the Horatii sprouts green and where the shrine of the Small

Hercules* swarms with visitors: there, Faustinus, was Bassus on his way in a fully loaded wagon, lugging all the bounty of a fruitful farm. There you'd have seen brassicas with splendid sprouts on them, both kinds of leek, spreading lettuces, and beets—just the thing for a lazy bowel; there, too, a hoop heavy with fat thrushes, a hare bearing the tooth-marks of a Gaulish hound, and a suckling-pig that had not yet munched a bean. The runner in front of the carriage wasn't getting a holiday either; he was carrying eggs* swaddled in hay. Was Bassus on his way into town? Quite the opposite:* he was heading for his place in the country.

50

You have just one reason for inviting people to dinner, Ligurinus: so you can recite your little poems. As soon as I've taken my sandals off, we're served lettuce* with fish vinaigrette and an enormous . . . book; a second gets read from start to finish while the main course plays for time; a third, and no sign of the dessert; and then you recite a fourth book, and finally a fifth. If it had been that many helpings of boar you'd served up, it'd still be a rotten business. But if you don't donate your wretched poems to the mackerel,* Ligurinus, you'll be eating at home alone from now on.

52

You'd arranged to buy a house, Tongilianus, for two-hundred thousand; but an accident, all too common in the city, robbed you of it. The payout's a million. I ask you, Tongilianus: mightn't people think you've torched your own house?

57

A sneaky innkeeper pulled a fast one on me at Ravenna recently. I asked for my wine watered; he served it neat.*

58

Our Faustinus' villa at Baiae, Bassus, does not hog tracts of the wide plain with plantations of useless myrtle, sterile plane-trees, and box topiary; it's a proper, scruffy farm,* and a prosperous one. Here close-packed grain is squeezed into every corner, and many a clay jug carries the odour of ancient harvests; here with November gone and winter looming the unkempt pruner brings in the late grapes. Fierce bulls bellow in the deep valley, and the bull-calf with his weaponless brow itches for battle. The whole flock forages in the kitchen-garden—the shrill goose, the jewelled peacocks, the one that owes its name to its red plumage, the painted partridge, the speckled Numidians, and the pheasant of the depraved Colchians;* proud cockerels mount their Rhodian females, and the dovecotes echo with the wing-beats of fowl: here a wood-pigeon coos, there a pale turtle-dove. The greedy pigs follow the apron of the overseer's wife and the tender lamb waits for its plump mother. The unweaned slave-children form a circle round the cheery hearth and plenty of wood blazes up to the merry household gods. The lazy barkeep does not turn sallow with pale inactivity, the slippery wrestling-coach wastes no oil; instead he stretches a crafty net for the greedy thrushes or draws in a hooked fish on a quivering line or brings home a doe caught in a snare. The fruitful kitchen-garden gives these cheerful townies a workout, and the effete eunuch is happy to get stuck in.

Nor does the country client come to pay his respects empty-handed. This one brings pale honey with its comb, and a pyramid-shaped cheese of milk from the woods of Sassina; this one passes you dozy dormice; that one, the bleating kid of a shaggy mother; another, capons, constrained to be celibate; and the big-boned daughters of honest tenant farmers present their mothers' gifts in wicker baskets. When work is over a delighted neighbour is asked to dinner, and the table's no miser, keeping back a banquet for the next day; everyone eats their fill, and it never occurs to the stuffed servant to envy the tipsy diner.

You, though, in your suburban villa, are lord and master of an elegant famine: from your high tower you look out over a sea of laurel, without a care (your Priapus* fears no scrumper). You feed your vine-dresser on grits from town and, with nothing better to do, you ship to your frescoed villa greens, eggs, chicks, apples, cheese, and new-made

wine. Should this be called a place in the country, or a town-house far from town?

59

The cobbler Cerdo* threw games for you, fertile Bologna; a fuller funded games in Modena; where will a barkeep throw the next ones?

65

The scent of an apple as a young girl bites into it; the aroma that comes from Corycian saffron;* the bloom from a dewy vineyard as it begins to fruit; the way grass smells when a sheep has just grazed it; the smell of myrtle, an Arabian reaper,* buffed amber, a fire yellow-green with Eastern incense; cut turf with a light sprinkling of summer rain, or a garland resting on hair slick with spikenard.* That, Diadumenus,* is how your kisses smell, you cruel boy. What if you gave me all of them, without holding back?

68

Up to this point, Madam,* this little book has been written for you. You want to know for whom the bits further in were written? For me. The gym, baths, and running-track are in this district: take your leave, I'm stripping for action; spare yourself the sight of men in the buff.

From here on in, with her modesty set aside after the wine and roses, Terpsichore gets wobbly and doesn't know what she's saying; with no vague figures of speech, she frankly calls by name that thing* which proud Venus accepts in the sixth month, which the farm steward sets up as a guardian in the middle of the kitchen-garden, and which a well-brought-up girl looks at with her hand in front of her eyes. If I know you well, you were tired of this too-long little book by now and were just putting it down—but now you'll read the whole of it avidly.*

76

You get it up for old women, Bassus, but are turned off by girls; a pretty woman isn't your type, you want one who's knocking on death's door. I ask you—isn't this madness? Is your cock out of its mind? You can do Hecabe, but not Andromache?

80

You don't whine about anyone, don't speak ill of anyone; all the same, Apicius,* rumour has it you're bad-mouthing.

82

Up for an evening with Zoilus? Why not try dining among Summemmius' 'brides', or drinking (but not too much) from Leda's broken wine-jug? You'll have a nicer time, guaranteed, and you won't come away feeling as dirty. He flops in his green suit* on a crowded couch, elbowing his neighbours on each side, and props himself up on purple coverlets and little silk cushions. A strapping young fellow stands at attention and passes him red feathers and mastic-wood toothpicks when he belches, and a jumped-up concubine wafts a cool breeze at him with a leek-green fan when he starts sweating; a boy shoos the flies away with a switch of myrtle. A masseuse works him over with quick, skilled moves, pattering her trained hands over every part of his body; a eunuch notes when he snaps his fingers and teases out the shy urine, steering his tipsy penis even as their master continues drinking.

He himself, meanwhile, twists round towards the crowd at his feet; surrounded by lapdogs that are licking at goose-livers, he portions

out goujons of boar to his wrestling-coaches and treats his boy-toy to the rumps of turtle-doves. While *we* are served up the rocks of Liguria or unaged wines scorched in the smoke-rooms of Marseilles,* *he* toasts his home-born slaves with Opimian nectar served in crystal and murrine glasses. His own complexion is darkened out of Cosmus' little bottles,* but he doesn't blush as he issues us—from a gilded murex-shell!—the hair-oil of a slutty pauper. Then, wasted from all those half-pints of wine, he starts snoring; and we lie there on our couches, under orders to hush when he snorts, and toast each other with nods of the head. That's the kind of ill-treatment we put up with from the vicious bastard, and we can't pay him back, Rufus: he *likes* the taste of cock.

83

You urge me to make my epigrams more concise, Cordus. 'Do me like Chione does':* I can't get more concise than that.

86

I warned you in advance, bashful lady. I told you: there's part of my naughty little book you shouldn't read. But look, you're reading it. But if you watch Panniculus and Latinus, bashful lady—well, my poems are no wickeder than the mimes.* So, carry on reading.

87

The gossip says, Chione, you've never been fucked, that there's nothing squeakier-clean than your cunt. But when you go to the baths, you don't cover the part you should. If you've any shame, put your knickers on your face.

98

Want to know how skinny your arse is, Sabellus? It's so skinny you can fuck people in the arse with it.

99

oughtn't to get angry with my little book, Cerdo. Your trade has
en a hit from my poem, but not your life. Allow some harmless
sing. Why shouldn't I get away with a joke, when you got away
h murder?*

100

ent your courier back to you at midday, Rufus, and I bet he was
aked through when he delivered you my poems; the sky was falling*
us just then, the rain was unbelievable. It was exactly the reception
at book deserved.

BOOK 4

1

Life-giving day of Caesar,* a day more holy than that dawn when Ida conspired to bear Dictaean Jupiter: I pray you, come. Last long; outdo the span of Nestor's years. Beam on us always, with your current face or an even better one. May *he* honour Minerva many a time in Alban gold, and may countless oak-wreaths* pass through his mighty hands; may *he* honour the ages, as the centuries complete their cycle, and honour the rites that Romulus' own Tarentos* keeps. We ask no small favours of you, gods above, but the earth is owed them; for on behalf of a divinity so great as *he*, what prayer counts as more than is due?

4

The stench of a marsh when its pond dries up;
The fumes that rise from the polluted Tiber;*
The stale whiff of a salt-water fish-farm;
A lazy he-goat mounting its nanny;
A weary veteran's boot;
A fleece twice dyed with murex;
The fast-days of Jewish women keeping the Sabbath;
The exhalations of wretched defendants;
The guttering lamp of Leda the slut;
Wrestlers out of the scum of the Sabines;
A fox on the run, a viper's den:
I'd rather smell any of them, Bassa, than what you smell of.*

5

A good man (a poor man), true in word and heart: Fabianus, what are you thinking, relocating to Rome? You can't cut it as a pimp or party animal, or put on a scary voice to subpoena terrified defendants, or ruin your best friend's wife, or get it up for frosty old biddies, or tout vapourware* around the Palace, or clap for Canus, or clap for Glaphyrus; you poor man, how will you make a living? 'A staunch

fellow, a steadfast friend . . .'—that counts for nothing: you'll never be a Philomelus* talking like that.

7

What yesterday you gave me, today you refuse: Hyllus, my boy,* why? Why are you suddenly stony-faced, when lately you were soft and yielding? But now you plead your beard, your age, your hair.* Last night was such a long one—all by itself, it has turned me into an old man.* Why are you making fun of me? Yesterday, Hyllus, you were a boy; explain to me how come you're a man today.

8

The first hour and the second* grind down the clients paying their respects; the third keeps hoarse-voiced barristers on their toes; Rome stretches out her various jobs into the fifth; the sixth will bring siesta to the weary, the seventh will end it; the eighth running into the ninth does for the oil-slicked wrestling-schools; the ninth commands us to hit the dining-couches piled with cushions. The tenth, Euphemus,* is the hour for my little books, when your diligence makes the ambrosial feast run smoothly, and good Caesar unwinds with heavenly nectar, a little cup clutched in his mighty hand. Then, let in my jokes: my Muse is frightened to saunter saucily up to our Jupiter before the sun is over the yardarm.

9

Labulla, daughter of Dr Saver,* you've dumped your husband to chase after Clytus—showering him with presents, constantly on heat. You're quite unsavoury.

10

While my little book is brand new and its ends not yet trimmed,* while its page is still not quite dry and fears to be touched, go, boy, and fetch it as a token gift to my dear friend. He deserves to get my trashy poems before anyone else. Hurry, but take everything you

need: a Punic sponge* should go with the book—it's the ideal accompaniment to gifts from me. Many erasures can't fix my jokes,* Faustinus; but one erasure can.

13

Rufus, you know Claudia? Claudia Peregrina? She's marrying my friend Pudens.* Their union brings honour on the God of Weddings: a union as perfect as when a handful of cinnamon-twigs is blended with just the right nard-oil, or Massic wines with Theseus' honeycombs.* No more aptly are elms paired with young vine-shoots; no more does the lotus love water, or the myrtle the sea-coast. Fair Harmony, dwell ever in their bed, and may Venus always look kindly on such a partnership of equals. May she love him even when he's old; and may he, though she be old as well, not find her so.

14

Silius, pride of the Castalian sisterhood,* your mighty voice harries the broken oaths of the ravening barbarian and Hannibal's deceitful strategies; you make fickle Carthaginians yield to the mighty Scipios.* Yet put aside your gravity for a moment. While December does his rounds, tempting us to gamble and making the dice-boxes rattle with anticipation at every turn, and taking his turn to roll a loaded knucklebone,* lend your leisure hours to my own Muses. And don't frown but smooth your brow as you read my little books, sauced as they are with naughty jokes. Just so, perhaps, did tender Catullus dare send his *Sparrow* to great Maro.*

17

You urge me, Paulus, to write poems with Lycisca* as their target: poems she'll blush to read, that'll make her angry. Paulus, you bastard—you want her blow-jobs all to yourself.

18

Where the gate drips with rain next to Agrippa's portico and the stone is slippery-wet* from the constant runoff, a water-flow heavy with winter ice fell upon the neck of a boy who was passing under the dripping roofs; and when it had performed its brutal execution on the poor child, the fragile dagger melted away in the still-warm wound. Does Fortune place no limit on her own cruelty? What place is safe from Death, when waters turn cutthroat?

22

She'd made it through her first night with her husband, but had yet to give him what he *really* wanted; and now Cleopatra had sunk herself deep in the glittering waters,* hiding from his embraces. But the water gave up its fugitive: though quite submerged, still she caught the light. Just so can lilies in a clear vase still be counted; just so does thin crystal forbid roses to lie unseen. I leapt in, dived deep, and snatched squirming kisses: the waters were too clear to allow me more.

23

You've been spending far too long trying to decide which of the Greeks in epigram's muster-roll you'd rank in first or second place. Meanwhile, Muse, Callimachus* has taken the initiative: he has personally awarded first prize to Bruttianus.* But if *he* ever loses his appetite for Attic charm and tries his hand at the wit of Roman Minerva, please let me be runner-up to *him*.

24

Every girlfriend she's had, Fabianus: Lycoris has buried them all. I hope she makes friends with my wife.

25

You coast at Altinum,* that rival the villas of Baiae; you woods, that witnessed Phaethon's pyre; you maiden Sola, most beautiful of the Dryads, who married Antenor's Faunus beside the lakes of Euganus; and you, Aquileia, who delight in Leda's Timavus, here where Cyllarus drank sevenfold waters: you will be the quiet harbour of my old age, if my free time is free then to decide.

26

I haven't caught you at home of a morning all year, Postumus.* Do you want to know how much it has cost me? Sixty, I guess, or maybe thirty. Sorry, Postumus, but I pay more than that for my stupid toga.

27

You keep saying nice things about my little books, Augustus; but look, some envious type is saying you don't. Does that make you say them any less? And what about this: you didn't just honour me in words; the presents you gave me,* no one else could. Look, he's jealous; he's biting his dirty nails again. Give me more next time, Caesar. Let's make him squirm.

29

What gets in the way of my little books, dear Pudens, is my little books: they crowd each other out. They're published so often, they wear my Reader out. He's glutted. People like what they can't get much of. The earliest apples are the most delicious; roses command a premium in winter; the fact she's finicky makes a gold-digging mistress irresistible (young men won't linger by a door that's always open). Same with literature: Persius gets more hits with just one book than silly Marsus* in his whole *Amazonid*. So if you're rereading one of those little books of mine, tell yourself it's the only one there is: it'll mean more to you that way.

32

Vased in Phaethon's drop* is a bee. She lies unseen, yet catches the light, as though casked in her own nectar.* This bee has won a prize worthy of her tireless labours; one may believe she chose this death herself.

38

Galla, tell me 'No': love stales unless its joys bring pain. But, Galla, don't say 'No' for very long.

40

When the mansion of the Pisos still stood, and visitors saw a family tree as-yet undocked; and the house of learned Seneca as well, a house thrice noteworthy:* *then*, there was one man more important to me than lords and masters so exalted, and one alone. Postumus, it was you. You were a poor man, a knight, but to me you were a consul. With you I counted thirty winters, Postumus; we had just the one couch, and we shared it. *Now*, you can afford to give it away, to throw it away; you're loaded with honours, rolling in wealth: and there's me waiting, Postumus, to see what you do. But you do nothing—and I've left it too late to line up another patron. How do you like that, Fortune? 'Postumus is an imposter.'

42

If some friend of mine happened to be in a position to fulfil a request—Flaccus, are you taking notes? I'd like a boy, as follows. First, let this boy have been born on the banks of the Nile: no nation knows better how to put out, in really dirty ways. Let him be whiter than snow, because in dusky Mareotis that colour is all the more beautiful for being so rare. Let his eyes rival the stars, and let his long, soft hair whip against his neck (I don't like curly hair, Flaccus). Let his forehead be low, and his nose just a little bit hooked. Let his lips blush as red as Paestum's roses. May he often make me do it when I'm saying 'No',* and say 'No' himself when it's my turn to want it—let him take greater liberties than his master half the time. Let him beware of

the boys,* let him often spurn the girls' attentions: he can be a man to the rest, if he's a boy to me (and me alone). 'I get it now, you're not fooling me—that's the real deal you're describing, and I should know. That', you say, 'was an exact description of my own boy Amazonicus.'

44

Here is Vesuvius, that till recently was green with shady vines. Here did the noble grape load the vats with juice; here was the ridge that Bacchus loved more than the hills of Nysa; on this peak, not long ago, Satyrs held their dances. Here was Venus' seat, that she favoured over Sparta; this spot was famous for its Herculean name.* All lie sunk in flames and dismal ash. The gods themselves must have wished this was not in their power.

46

Saturnalia has made Sabellus rich. He can swell with self-importance and tell himself, and the rest of us, that no fellow barrister is doing better for himself. And what gives Sabellus such self-regarding airs? Half a peck of emmer and bean-meal, and three half-pounds of incense and pepper, and Lucanian sausages and a Faliscan haggis,* and a flask of black grape-syrup from Syria, and a sticky fig out of a jar from Libya—and don't forget the onions and the snails and the cheese. What's more, a client at Picenum has sent a little box that couldn't hold a handful of olives, and a seven-piece table setting smoothed by the crude graving-tool of a Saguntine potter; some cheap-and-nasty earthenware thrown on a wheel in Spain; and a napkin titivated with a broad stripe.* Saturnalia hasn't paid off so well for Sabellus in ten years.

48

You love taking it in the arse, Papylus, but when it's over, you cry. You want it to happen, Papylus, so why are you upset once it's done? You're sorry you're turned on by something dirty? Or do you cry *because* it's over, Papylus?

49

Trust me, Flaccus, anyone who says it's just 'ditties' and 'jokes'* doesn't know what epigram is. The real joker is the poet who describes the feast of cruel Tereus, or the dinner that gave Thyestes indigestion, or Daedalus strapping melting wings to his son, or Polyphemus pasturing his Sicilian sheep. No puffery gets near *my* little books; *my* Muse doesn't swell and strut in the trailing robe of Tragedy.* 'But that stuff gets all the applause, the awe, the worship.' I can't deny it: that stuff does get the applause. But *my* stuff gets read.

56

You send presents to old folks and widows, Gargilianus, and for that you want me to call you a big benefactor? They don't come grubbier or cheaper than you: no one but you could set a snare and call it a 'gift'. This is how the deceitful hook lures in the hungry fishes; this is how the cleverly laid bait fools the dumb beasts. If you don't know what it is to be generous, what it is to really *give*, I can teach you. Gargilianus, give your presents to me.

62

Dusky Lycoris* has moved to Herculean Tivoli. She thinks everything turns white there.*

64

The few acres of Julius Martial, more blissful than the gardens of the Hesperides, sit on the long escarpment of the Janiculan. His eyrie

looms above the hills, and its flat summit, set on a low mound, enjoys a serener sky. When mist veils the winding valleys, it gleams by itself in its own private sunshine; on clear nights, the dainty finials of its lofty villa reach toward the stars. From here, on the one side, you can see the seven imperious hills and take in all of Rome—the Alban hills too, and the Tusculans, and every cool spot* in the city's orbit; and ancient Fidenae, and little Rubrae, and the fruitful orchard of Anna Perenna that delights in virgins' blood.* On the other side, the driver on the Flaminian and Salarian Way lies in plain sight, although his car is hushed, so its wheels don't disturb a sleep so tranquil that bosuns' calls and shouting barge-haulers could not rouse you from it—no matter that the Milvian Bridge is so close by, and the shipping that scuds down holy Tiber.

What makes this country seat stand out—or perhaps we should call it a townhouse instead?—is its owner. You will think the place is yours, he's so unstinting, so open-handed, so free with his tasteful hospitality. You'd believe you were in Alcinous' god-fearing home, or Molorchus'*—a Molorchus who'd just come into money. You modern types for whom nothing is expensive enough can farm chilly Tivoli or Praeneste into submission with a hundred mattocks and make over lofty Setia* to a single tenant, so long as they rank higher in *my* esteem—those few acres of Julius Martial.

66

The life you've led, Linus, has always been small-town: as cheap as it gets. You've dusted off your piddling toga for the Ides and occasional

Kalends, and a single set of party clothes has lasted you ten summers. The wooded hills have sent you boar, and the plains, hare, and not a penny spent; the beaten forest has gifted you plump thrushes. A fish has come, hooked from the river rapids; an earthenware jug has poured out untravelled wine. Nor did some slip of a pageboy sent from the Argive race stand duty, but the homespun gang of a rugged hearth. The wife of your estate-manager or of some rough tenant took your weight, whenever strong wine got your man-parts tipsy and excited. Fire did not damage your house, nor the dog-star your fields; you lost no ship at sea—you had none to lose. In your world the die was never substituted for the alluring knucklebone; *your* only dice were a handful of nuts. Tell me where the million is, that your penny-pinching mother's left you. It's gone. It wasn't easy, Linus, but you pulled it off.*

71

I've looked and looked, Safronius Rufus, all over town, for a girl who says 'No'; but not one girl says 'No'. It's as if it was a sin, as if it was disgraceful to say it, as if it was against the law—not one girl says 'No'. Are virgins extinct? There are a thousand virgins. What does a virgin *do*, then? She doesn't put out—but she doesn't say 'No'.

72

You keep pestering me to give you my little books, Quintus. I don't have them, but Tryphon the bookseller has them in stock. 'You expect me to *pay* for that trash? To *buy* your poetry, and me in my right mind? I'm not doing something so stupid', you say. Me neither.

81

Fabulla had read my epigram where I complain that none of the girls say 'No'. Her lover asked her once, twice, three times, and she ignored his begging. Now though, Fabulla, tell him you will. I said to say 'No', not to *keep* saying 'No'.

87

That Bassa of yours, Fabullus, always has a baby beside her on the couch, and calls it 'her darling' and 'her pet'. What makes you all the more surprised is, she's not one of those women who's into babies. So what's her deal? Bassa can't stop farting.

BOOK 5

2

Housewives, boys, and maidens: to you is my page dedicated. As for *you*, that take immoderate pleasure in edgier naughtiness and in jokes stripped bare, read my four sexy little books; the fifth book shares its jokes with our Lord. Germanicus may read it without blushing, in company with his girl.*

3

Degis, dweller on a riverbank* that now belongs to us, who has come to you from the servile waters of the lower Danube, glad and astonished after having just seen the world's ruler, is said to have made this speech to his companions: 'How much better is my luck than my brother's, since I was allowed to see so close at hand the one he worships as a god.'

5

Sextus, eloquent worshipper of Palatine Minerva, you enjoy our God's genius closer at hand—you have the opportunity to spot our Lord's concerns as they emerge, and to know the secrets of our Master's heart. Please find room for my little books on whatever shelf Pedo, Marsus, and Catullus share. Next to the heavenly poem of the Capitoline War* place the masterpiece of tragic Maro.

7

Just as fires renew the Assyrian nests, each time the immortal Phoenix has lived ten aeons—just so has new Rome sloughed her former skin,* and assumed the very face of her ruler. And now I pray you,

forget your well-known grudge,*Vulcan: spare us; we are Mars' tribe, but Venus' too; spare us, father: and may your sexy wife forgive your Lemnian chains and love you patiently.

8

The edict of our Lord and God makes the seating clearer and ensures the knights get their rows to themselves. Just the other day, Phasis* was in the theatre and praising it—Phasis, ablush in his purple cloak. With a self-confident look, he disdainfully boasted: '*Finally* one is seated properly; we equestrians have our dignity back; we're not hemmed in and dirtied by the mob.' As he slouched there, holding forth in terms like these, Leitus* ordered that arrogant purple cloak to vacate its seat.

10

'Fame is denied to the living, and it's a rare reader loves his own times—what's that about?' There's no doubt these are Envy's habits, Regulus: she always ranks classics above moderns. Just so do we ingrates seek out Pompey's ancient portico for shade; just so do the elderly praise Catulus' excuse for a temple.* While Maro was alive, Rome, you read Ennius; Homer himself, they laughed at in his time; not many audiences clapped Menander or saw him win prizes; none but Corinna* recognized her Ovid. You though, you little books of mine, don't be impatient. If glory follows death—I'm in no rush.*

11

Sardonyxes, emeralds, diamonds, jaspers:* Severus, my friend Stella twiddles them all on just one finger-joint. You'll find many gems on

his digits, but more in his poetry: *that*, I reckon, is what makes his hand sparkle.

12

That proud Masclion can balance tottering weights on a pole on his forehead; that hefty Ninus can flex his pecs and lift seven or even eight boys: that doesn't strike me as hard to pull off,* when with just one finger—this one, or that—my friend Stella can carry ten girls.*

13

Yes, I'm poor, Callistratus,* and I don't deny it. I always have been; but I'm not a nobody. I'm a knight, of no mean reputation; indeed, I'm widely read all round the world.* 'Here he is,' people say. What the pyre has given to few, my lifetime has given me. *Your* roof squats atop a hundred columns, and your strongbox whisks up a freedman's wealth, and a huge chunk of Syene on the Nile is slaving for your benefit, and Gaulish Parma* shears your numberless flocks. That's what we are, you and I: but what I am, you're not capable of being; what you are, any fool could be.

18

It's December, when gifts speed to and fro—napkins, slender spoons, wax tapers, writing-paper, a tapering jar of wrinkly damsons;* and I've sent nothing but my little home-grown books. So perhaps I seem mean; devoid of human feeling. I *hate* the sly and wicked ploys of present-giving. Gifts are like hooks: everyone knows the greedy parrot-wrasse* is duped by the fly he's swallowed. Any time a poor man *doesn't* give a present to his rich friend, Quintianus, he's being generous.

20

If I could spend my days with you, dear Martial,* days free from care; if we could arrange our leisure as we wished and free up both our time for really living, we'd know nothing of the entrance-halls and mansions of powerful men, of frowning lawsuits and the gloomy Forum, of haughty ancestor-masks.* Instead—going out for a drive, some plays, some little books, the Campus, the portico, a bit of shade, the Virgo, the baths. That's where we'd be, that's what we'd work at. As it is now, neither of us lives for his own benefit; each of us can feel his best days slipping away and leaving us behind. They're gone, they've been debited from our account.* What kind of person knows how to live, but keeps putting it off?

22

If I wasn't keen to catch you at home this morning, and if I hadn't earned it—well, Paulus, then let your place on the Esquiline be even farther from mine than now. As it is, I live right next door to the Tiburtine Column, where rustic Flora looks on ancient Jupiter,* so I have to scale the steep stair of the road up from the Subura. The cobbles are dirty, the steps are never dry; it's next to impossible to cut past the long mule-trains, and the marble blocks you see being dragged with lots of ropes. But there's something even worse, Paulus: after these thousand labours, your doorman tells me you're not at home. And I'm exhausted! This is what I get for my wasted effort and my drenched toga. It'd hardly have been worth all that if I *had* caught you in. The dutiful, respectful man always gets friends with no human feeling;* you can't be my patron unless you sleep in.

24

Hermes, martial darling of the age;
Hermes, learned in all arms;
Hermes, gladiator and trainer in one;

Hermes, storm and earthquake of his school;
Hermes, whom alone Helius fears;
Hermes, to whom alone Advolans falls;
Hermes, skilled in winning without wounding;
Hermes, stand-in to his own self;
Hermes, who makes the ticket-touts rich;
Hermes, whom the fan-girls love and fret for;
Hermes, standing proud with the battle-spear;
Hermes, looming with the sea-trident;
Hermes, casting terror in his drooping helmet;
Hermes, glory of Mars in all his aspects;
Hermes, all things in one and thrice unique.

29

Whenever you send me a hare, Gellia, you say: 'Marcus, you'll be handsome for seven days.' If you're not poking fun, if you're telling the truth: Gellia, darling, you've never eaten hare.*

34

This girl, father Fronto and mother Flaccilla,* I commit to your care, so that little Erotion, my pet and darling, may not tremble at the dark shades and at the monstrous mouths of the hound of Tartarus. She would have just seen out the frosts of her sixth midwinter, had her life not fallen that many days short. I hope she plays and skips now* in her former patrons' keeping; I hope her hare-lip mumbles my name. Please let the turf that covers her bones not be hard, and, earth, be not heavy upon her; she was no weight on you.

35

As scarlet-dyed Euclides was braying about how he gets two-hundred thousand from his farms at Patras—more, from his place in the Corinth suburbs—and can trace his family tree all the way back to

beautiful Leda . . . all while struggling with Leitus, who was *ejecting him from his seat* . . . Well, from out of the folded toga of this haughty, noble, wealthy knight there fell a big key. Fabullus, there's never been a naughtier key.*

36

A certain fellow who was praised in my little book is turning a deaf ear, Faustinus, as if he doesn't owe me anything; he's a fraud.*

37

A girl more sweetly voiced than ageing swans,* softer than a lamb of Phalantine Galaesus,* and more delicate than a shell from Lake Lucrinus; a girl you'd pick over Erythraean pearls, new-polished Indian ivory, the first snowfall, and the untouched lily; a girl whose hair outdid fleeces of Baetica, and braids of the Rhine,* and the golden dormouse; a girl who breathed as sweet as Paestum's rose-beds, or Attic combs' first honey, or a nugget of amber snatched from the hand; a girl who made the peacock look ugly, the squirrel unlovable, and the Phoenix commonplace: Erotion lies still warm, her pyre still fresh. The bitter law of the vile Fates killed her in her sixth winter; she didn't even get to see it through. She was my love, my joy. The games we played! And Paetus tells me* I'm not allowed to grieve. He beats his breast and tears his hair: 'Aren't you ashamed to be sobbing over the death of some little slave? I have buried my wife!' he says, 'And still I carry on; and she was somebody! She had pride! Good breeding! Wealth!'

Stiff upper lip? You've nothing on our Paetus: comes into twenty million, and somehow he *makes himself go on*.

42

Savings—the cunning thief will crack your safe and steal them; ancestral home—the fires don't care, they'll trash it; the guy who owes you money—won't pay the interest, won't pay at all. Your field—it's barren, sow seed and you'll get no return; your girlfriend—she'll con your accountant and leave you penniless; your shipping line—the waves will swamp your stacks of cargo. But whatever you give to friends is out of fortune's reach. The wealth you give away is the only wealth you'll never lose.

43

Thais' teeth are black; Laecania's, snowy-white. How come? Laecania bought hers; Thais' are her own.*

46

I only want struggling kisses*—kisses I've seized; I get more of a kick out of your bad temper than your good looks. I want to beg you often, Diadumenus, so I beat you often. Result: you're not afraid of me *or* in love with me.

56

You've been worried for ages, Lupus, and you keep asking—begging me, really—to tell you where to send your son to school. My advice is, steer clear of all the teachers of literature and rhetoric: let him have nothing to do with the books of Cicero and Maro, let him leave Tutilius* to enjoy his fame in peace; and if he starts writing poetry, write him out of your will. Want him to learn a trade that pays? Get him trained as a guitarist* or a flautist; or if you think he's thick, turn him into an auctioneer. Or an architect.

57

When I call you 'Boss', Cinna, don't be so pleased with yourself; I often reply that way when your slave says hello, even.

58

'Tomorrow I'll start living', you say, Postumus: always tomorrow. Tell me, that 'tomorrow', Postumus, when's it coming? How far off is that 'tomorrow'? Where is it? Where should we look for it? Is it under cover among the Parthians and Armenians? That 'tomorrow' is already as old as Priam or Nestor. That 'tomorrow'—tell me, how much would it cost to buy? You'll 'start living tomorrow'? Start living *today* already, Postumus, you're running out of time.* Anyone with sense started living yesterday.

65

His stepmother tried to stop him, but the stars and sky were Hercules' reward for the Terror of Nemea and the Arcadian boar; the pummelled dirt of the Libyan wrestling-ring;* massive Eryx, laid out flat in the dust of Sicily; and Cacus, the forests' bogeyman, the underhanded rustler who stocked his cave with stolen cattle. But what fraction is this of the show in *your* arena, Caesar? Each new morning brings us mightier battles. How many behemoths topple, weightier than the Nemean prodigy! How many Maenalian swine* does your spear lay low! If the threefold duel of the Spanish herdsman were to recur—well, you have a man who could defeat Geryon.* The monster of Grecian Lerna has an impressive head-count, sure, but what can the vicious Hydra achieve against the wildlife of the Nile? As his due for deeds as great as these, Augustus, the gods gave Hercules heaven. They gave it swiftly; but may they be late in giving it to you.

69

Antony, you can cast no aspersions on Alexandrian Pothinus; your list* makes you a murderer, and Cicero compounds your guilt. Lunatic, why do you draw your sword against the mouthpiece of Rome? This crime, even Catiline* would never have committed. The thuggish soldier is bribed with monstrous gold, and all that loot buys you one silenced voice. A holy tongue, stilled so expensively—and what's the use? All will begin to speak in Cicero's stead.

74

Pompey's sons lie beneath Asia and Europe, but he, beneath the soil of Libya—if at all. And if he's strewn around the world,* what of it? So great a wreck could not lie in just one spot.

76

By taking regular draughts of poison, King Mithridates built up immunity against deadly toxins. You too have taken precautions: by always dining so wretchedly, Cinna, you've made yourself immune against ever starving to death.

78

If single-serving meals at home* are getting you down, Toranius, you can come be hungry with me. If you tend towards an *aperitivo*, you won't be short of cheap Cappadocian lettuces and stinky leeks; potted tunny will lurk in halved eggs.* Green broccoli that's just come from the icy kitchen-garden will be served up on a black plate—grab it with oily fingers—and a small sausage resting on snowy-white porridge, and pale beans with red pancetta. If you're up for an ample dessert, you'll be offered shrivelling grapes and pears that bear the name of Syrians, and a dish clever Naples invented: chestnuts, roasted over a slow fire. The wine, you'll make good by drinking it. After all this, if Bacchus happens to provoke an appetite—he often does—noble olives will rush to your aid (branches at Picenum* recently bore them), and simmering chickpeas and warm lupins.

It's a poor little dinner—no one could say otherwise—but you won't have to fake anything, or listen to fakes: you can kick back, relax, and wear your own face. There'll be no patron reading out his big stupid book, no endlessly horny girls from sinful Gades shaking their frisky loins in a deft wiggle. Instead, little Condylus' flute will play something light and sensitive. That's our little dinner. You'll go next to Claudia. What girl do you want to go next to me?*

81

You'll always be poor, if you're poor, Aemilianus. Only rich people get handouts these days.

83

You chase me, I run; you run, I chase: that's how I'm wired. I don't want you to want me, Dindymus; I want you not to.

84

Now the gloomy schoolboy leaves his nuts, summoned back by his yelling teacher, and the gambler, shabbily betrayed by the lure of his dice-box, has just been dragged drunk out of some shady tavern and is pleading with the aedile.* Saturnalia is utterly over, and you've not sent me any little presents, Galla; not even littler ones than you used to. So much for *my* December. But I'm sure you know your own Saturnalia's coming, the first of March:* then, Galla, I'll repay your generosity.

BOOK 6

1

This sixth book is dedicated to you, Martial, the man I love the most. You are my expert listener: buff it up, and it won't shake so much with stage-fright as it enters Caesar's mighty grasp.

2

Once it was 'sport' to betray the sanctity of marriage, 'sport' to castrate innocent males. You are putting a stop to both, Caesar, and safeguarding future generations; your law makes their births legitimate. There will be no eunuchs now, no adulterers—not on your watch. Before, we had sunk so low that even eunuchs committed adultery.*

3

Come to birth, you earnest pledged to Dardan Iulus,* of the true divine lineage; come to birth, great boy, that your father may after long ages pass on the reins of everlasting power; that you may rule the world as an old man alongside one older. With her snow-white finger, Julia herself will draw out golden threads for you,* spinning them from the whole of Phrixus' fleece.

4

Censor-in-Chief, Lord of Lords: Rome has you to thank for countless triumphs; countless temples newly founded or refounded; countless games, gods, cities—but most of all because her morals are clean.

5

I've bought a country estate; a really expensive one.* 'Caecilianus,' I'm asking, 'could you lend me a hundred thousand?' Silence in return. 'You won't pay it back,' I bet you're saying under your breath. Caecilianus, that's exactly why I'm asking.

7

Less than thirty days have passed, Faustina—not more than that, surely?—since the Julian Law was newly reinstated and Morality ordered into our homes . . . and already Telesilla* is marrying her tenth husband. A woman who gets married that often isn't getting married—she's a state-licensed slut. Good old-fashioned adultery offends me less.

10

I was recently asking Jupiter to send me a few thousand cash, and he said: 'He will give, who has given me temples.' And yes, he had; but he didn't give me my thousands. I'm so ashamed I asked Jupiter for just a few! But he *so* didn't scowl, or cloud over with rage—he looked *so* calm and peaceful as he read my petition, just like when he granted crowns to those submissive Dacians,* or when he takes the road to the Capitol and back.* 'Tell me, I beseech you, Virgin with whom our Thunderer shares his secrets: if that's how he looks when he says "No,"* how does he look when it's a "Yes"?' I ask, and Pallas, her aegis set aside, keeps her answer short: 'Moron! Just because he hasn't said "Yes" yet, you think it's a "No"?'

11

That this age boasts no Pylades, no Orestes*—Marcus, do you want to know why? Pylades always got the same wine, and Orestes never got served better bread or a bigger thrush; the pair of them shared the same menu. But *you* gobble down Lucrine oysters while I get by on big, soggy mussels, though my taste-buds are every bit as free-born as your own. Cadmus' Tyre clothes you; me, shaggy Gaul. Marcus, do

You expect me to be your 'best mate' when you're in purple and I'm in an itchy blanket? If I'm to be a proper Pylades, someone needs to make like Orestes. Saying it doesn't make it happen, Marcus. Want me to be your best mate? Start being mine.

12

Fabulla swears that hair is hers—the hair she bought; tell me, Paulus, is she lying?*

16

You who terrify men with your pruning-hook and queers with your cock, watch over my quiet little patch* of dirt. In return, may no old thieves enter your orchards, but a boy or a long-haired, pretty girl.

17

You tell us to call you 'Cinna', Cinnamus.* But, 'Cinna', isn't that a barbarous way with words?* If your name had been Furius before, by this reckoning you'd now be 'Fur'.*

19

It's not over assault or manslaughter or poisoning that I'm pressing charges, but my three little goats:* they're gone, and I'm charging my neighbour with stealing them. The judge demands proof—but you're holding forth on Carrhae and the Mithridatic War and the treacherous Punic Menace, and Sullas and Mariuses and Muciuses, at the top of your lungs and with all the gestures. Postumus, can we get to the bit about my three little goats?

20

I asked you for a loan of a hundred thousand,* Phoebus, when you'd already said to me, 'Well, is there anything you need?' And now you

very the details, you're 'not sure', you keep putting it off—you've ft me hanging for thirty days, and yourself too. Please, Phoebus, st say no already.

22

The way you're marrying your toy-boy, and making your former adulterer your husband, so the Julian Law can't make an example of you—Proculina, you're not getting married; you're signing your confession.

28

That well-known freedman of Melior's, whose death made all Rome grieve, briefly the darling of his fond benefactor: Glaucias lies buried here, beneath this marble tomb on the Flaminian Way. His behaviour was chaste, his morals pure, his wit swift, his good looks a blessing. To twice-six harvests not long completed was the boy just now adding one more year. Weep for all this, wayfarer, that you may have nothing to weep for.

32

Though the madness of civil war hung in the balance, and perhaps he could have won, Otho* the 'sissy' passed sentence on a conflict that only great bloodshed could otherwise resolve: he ran himself through. His hand was steady. In how he lived, let Cato* by all means be ranked greater than Caesar; tell me though, in how he died, was he greater than Otho?

33

Matho, you have never seen anything more wretched than that poof Sabellus, though once he was the happiest creature on earth. Burglaries, slaves running or dying off, fires, deaths in the family—his life's a mess. It's got so bad, he's even fucking girls.

34

Give me kisses, Diadumenus,* kisses thick and fast. 'How many,' you ask? You're telling me to count the waves of Ocean, and the seashells scattered along the beaches of the Aegean, and every bee that waggles on the Cecropian mountain,* and every voice that cheers and hand that claps in the packed theatre when Caesar makes a surprise appearance. I don't want however many Lesbia gave tuneful Catullus, when he finally wore her down; he who can number his kisses wants only a few.

53

He came to the baths with us, he was a blast at dinner—and that same Andragoras turned up dead this morning. You wonder what could cause such a sudden death, Faustinus? In his dreams, he caught sight of Dr Hermocrates.*

65

'You're making an epigram out of hexameters.'* I know that's what Tucca's saying. Lots of people do that, Tucca, and you know what? It's not against the law. 'All the same, this one is long.' Lots of people do that *too*, Tucca, and it's not against the law either. If short ones are your thing, just read the two-liners. Tucca, let's make a deal: you can keep skipping the long epigrams, and I can keep writing them.

67

Don't you know why all Caelia's slaves are eunuchs, Pannychis?* Caelia wants to get screwed, not knocked up.

68

Weep, Naiads, at your crime; fill Lake Lucrinus with your tears, and let Thetis herself hear your lamentation. A boy is dead, pulled into the undertow at Baiae—sweet Eutychos, who, Castricus, was your inseparable friend.* He was your companion through bad times, your welcome distraction; he was your love; he was the Alexis of our bard.*

Tell me, boy, did some lust-struck nymph see you unclothed beneath the glassy waters, and send Hercules back his Hylas?* Or does the goddess have no time for unmanly Hermaphroditus, now she melts in the embrace of a youth who's all man? Whatever the truth, whatever the reason you were taken so suddenly, I pray that the earth may rest gently on you, and the water too.

71

Adept in sexy moves to an Andalusian soundtrack and writhing to Cadiz* beats, Telethusa could tease a hard-on from decrepit old Pelias, or from Hecuba's husband* at Hector's own funeral. Now she inflames and tortures her former master. He sold her as his slave; he's buying her back as his mistress.*

72

Cilix,* thief and notorious kleptomaniac, decided to burgle a garden. The garden was huge, Fabullus, but all it had in it was a marble Priapus.* Since he didn't want to come away empty-handed, Cilix made off with that same Priapus.

76

That bodyguard of the sacred person, of Mars when he wears the toga, to whom the barracks* of our Commander-in-Chief were entrusted: here Fuscus lies. This much, Fortune, we may affirm: that his gravestone apprehends no threats from our enemies. The Dacian is tamed;* his neck once more bows under our mighty yoke. A victorious ghost holds the servile grove.

82

Some guy was checking me out recently, Rufus—really closely, as if he was going to purchase me or train me as a gladiator. He was frowning, twitching his fingers; taking mental notes. And then he said: 'Are

you him? Are you that Martial, whose dirty jokes anyone knows who doesn't have the ear of a Dutchman?' I flashed him a self-deprecating smile and with a discreet nod of the head conceded that he'd got his man. 'If that's so,' he asked, 'why do you wear such rotten coats?'* 'Because I'm a rotten poet,' I replied. This needn't happen to a poet, Rufus, not so often: just send me some decent coats.

85

Look, my sixth book is out, Rufus Camonius; but you are not here to see it,* my friend, and it cannot hope for you as its reader. Cappadocia, a cruel land you were unlucky to lay eyes on, returns your ashes and bones to your father. Gush with tears, Bononia, at the loss of your Rufus, and let lamentation resound along the whole Aemilian Way. Alas! What a good son he was! Alas! How short a lifespan has fallen into darkness! He had just now seen Alpheus' prizes* for the fifth time. You used to recite my jokes from memory, Rufus; you had them all by heart. Take now this short poem, and the tears of a sorrowful friend. I was not there: reckon this the incense I should have burned.

BOOK 7

5

If, Caesar, you are mindful of what the people and Senate miss, and what will make the citizens of Rome* truly happy, answer the prayers of your petitioners: give us back our god. Rome is jealous of her enemy, though many a laurel comes; he sees the Lord of the earth close at hand. Your face fills the savage with terror—and delight.

6

Has Caesar about-faced from Polar lands towards us? Is he now readying to travel Ausonian* roads? There is no sure witness, but every voice proclaims it. I believe in you: you tend, Rumour, to speak the truth. Letters reporting victory call forth public happiness; the spears of Mars are green, their points twined with laurel. Once again Rome shouts 'Hurrah!' at your mighty triumphs, Caesar, and you are hailed as 'the Invincible' in your own city. But now make our rejoicing all the more confident by coming in person to proclaim your own Sarmatian victory.

8

Now skip and be cheerful, my Muses, now if ever: our god is returned to us victorious from the land of Thrace. December, you bring first confirmation of the people's prayers: now we may shout at the top of our voice, 'He is coming!' Happy in your lot, you might not give way to Janus,* if you were giving us the happiness that he will give. The infantry, crowned with garlands, will enjoy their carnival banter as they mingle with the laurel-decked cavalry.* It's fine for you too, Caesar, to hear jokes and silly songs, if the Triumph itself loves fun.

13

Hearing that the ivory of an antique tusk turns white in the sun at Tivoli, dark-skinned Lycoris journeyed to Hercules' hills. What power resides in the air of high Tivoli!* Not long after, she came home black.

16

I've not a penny in the house. There's nothing else for it, Regulus: I'm going to have to sell the presents you sent. I don't suppose you're buying?

17

You library of a gracious country villa, from where the reader can see the city close by: might you squeeze in my naughty Muse, between your more respectable poems? Those seven little books I've sent you, you're welcome to stick in a nook, even a really obscure one. They're annotated by their author's pen: these corrections add value. Graced by this little gift, your fame will be sung all round the world.* Watch over this token of my affection, you library of Julius Martial.

23

Come, Phoebus, but as you were when you presented the second plectrum of the Latin lyre to the one who thundered forth Wars.* What prayer should I offer for the coming of so great a light?* May you, Polla, always cherish your husband's memory, and may he know himself cherished.

24

You're trying to start a fight between me and my dear Juvenal;* traitorous tongue, what *don't* you have the brass cheek to say? The horrid

es you spin would have made Orestes hate Pylades, made Pirithous rsake his love for Theseus; you could have broken up the Sicilian rothers and (a greater name) the Atreides and Leda's brood.* I call his curse upon you, tongue—your brazen deeds have earned it: may you do that thing* I'm pretty sure you do . . .

27

He had ravaged Tuscan acorns and grown sluggish from many holm-oaks, that boar; he ranked second in fame to the Beast of Aetolia.* My friend Dexter ran him through with his gleaming spear-point, and now he lies at my hearth. What enviable loot! May the gods of my household rejoice and grow fat on his juicy aroma, and may my kitchen strip the ridge-line to set a holiday blaze. But my cook will waste a huge heap of pepper, and Falernian mixed with his special stash of fish sauce*. . . Go back to your master, please, my oven won't take you. Boar? You're a white elephant. I'm better off going hungry.

31

Cackling kitchen-garden poultry, and eggs from their mothers; Chian figs tawny from middling heat; the young litter of a bleating nanny-goat; olives that are no longer a match for cold weather, and greens blanched by icy frosts:* do you really think they come from my 'country estate'? Oh, Regulus, you couldn't be more wrong! My little patch* yields nothing but myself. All that stuff you get sent by your Umbrian estate-manager, or your tenant-farmer, or the country estate you've got on your books at the third milestone, or that lot in Tuscany or Tusculum—for me its *terroir* is the broad Subura.*

36

When my tumbledown villa refused to see out the showers sent by rainy Jupiter* and was awash with winter downpours, a big shipment

roof-tiles arrived to shed sudden rainstorms—you'd sent them a present. But listen! December bristles with thunder; the North Wind is howling. Stella, you clothe my farm, but not its farmer.*

50

The mistress' fountain, queen of the place in which Ianthis* delights, glory and indulgence of a distinguished house: since your margin is embellished with so many snowy-white serving-boys, and your water glows with a parade of Ganymedes, what is Hercules up to, receiving cult in yonder wood? Why does the god dwell in a grotto so near at hand? Is he on the watch for the loves he knows nymphs feel, to stop so many Hylases* being snatched away at once?

53

At the Saturnalia, Umber, you sent me all the presents* that five days had raked in: twelve three-leaved notepads, and seven toothpicks. Further, a complementary sponge; one napkin; one cup; a gallon of dry beans, with a basket of Picene olives and a smoke-blackened flagon of Laletanian grape syrup.* These came with a small Syrian fig, some wrinkly prunes, and a clay pot carrying a heavy load of Libyan figs. These presents I'd put at thirty sesterces the lot, tops—but eight giant Syrians carried them. How much more conveniently, with no bother, could one boy have popped round with five pounds of silverware!

61

The rude street vendor had taken our whole city away from us: no shop entrance stayed in its own doorway. Germanicus, you have commanded the narrow lanes to widen, and what was recently an alley is now a street. No column is ringed with chained flagons; the praetor is not compelled to track through the mud; the razor is not drawn

indiscriminately amid a packed crowd, nor does the smoke-blackened cantina* take over whole streets. Barber, innkeeper, cook, and butcher keep to their own doorways. Now it is Rome; not long ago it was one huge stall.

64

You used to be a barber, the most famous in the whole city, until your mistress arranged for you to get a knighthood; and now you have headed for the cities of Sicily and estates near Etna, Cinnamus, a fugitive from the Forum's stern laws.* But how will you occupy yourself, you useless man, and endure the dragging years? What good is 'the quiet life' with no useful outlet, and warrants outstanding? You don't have the makings of a speaker, a scholar, a teacher, or a Cynic—and no way a Stoic; and you can't sell your voice and your applause in *Sicilian* theatres.* Only one thing for it, Cinnamus: you'll be a barber again.

67

Butch Philaenis* fucks boys in the arse. Rougher than a husband's hard-on, she sticks it to eleven girls a day. She tucks up her skirt and plays handball, gets covered in the wrestlers' yellow sand, and easily arm-curls weights that queer *guys* would find heavy. Smeared with the dust of the wrestling-ring, she gets worked over hard by her oiled-up trainer; and she won't eat dinner or recline at table before she's thrown up a good six pints* of unmixed wine—which she thinks it's alright to come back to, once she's wolfed down sixteen rib-eyes.* When she's done with all this, she sates her lust. She doesn't suck cock—that's not macho enough for her; instead she absolutely gobbles up girls' middles. May the gods bring you to your senses, Philaenis, for thinking it macho to lick cunt.

68

Please, Istantius Rufus, lay off recommending my Muses to your father-in-law; chances are he likes them serious. But if someone like him can find house-room for my naughty little books, I might even read them to Curius and Fabricius.*

69

This is the girl who was promised to you, Canius—Theophila, whose breast drips with a Cecropian* dowry. The Attic garden of wonderful old Epicurus might lawfully claim her for its own, and the hubbub of the Stoics would want her for themselves every bit as much. Whatever work you broadcast through these ears of hers will endure: she's such a scholar, not like a woman or the man in the street. Your own Pantaenis* would not rank herself too far ahead of her, however well known she herself is to the Pierian chorus. Sappho the woman-lover* would praise her versification: *this* girl is the purer of the two, and *that* one was not the more learned.

81

'There are thirty bad epigrams in this book.' If there are thirty good ones, Lausus, it's a good book.

84

While my portrait is being taken for Caecilius Secundus, and the painted board is coming to life under the artist's fast-moving hand, go, little book, to Getic Peucē* and the sluggish Danube: these regions and their vanquished tribes he rules. Small, but sweet, are the gifts you will give my dear and close friend: a more faithful likeness will be found in my verse.* This portrait fate and time can never erase; it still shall live when the work of Apelles* dies.

85

You can write a four-liner that shows promise, Sabellus, and you're coming up with a few neat couplets. I congratulate you; but I'm not impressed. Writing neat epigrams is easy. Writing a book is hard.

90

Matho is crowing that I've 'made an inconsistent book'. If he's right, he's actually praising my poems. Calvinus and Umber write 'consistent' books; if a book's 'consistent', Creticus,* it's consistently bad.

91

Eloquent Juvenal, see what I'm sending you from my little farm: nuts for Saturnalia. Horny girls possess its other crops, gifts from the lustful prick of its guardian god.

BOOK 8

TO THE EMPEROR DOMITIAN CAESAR AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS* DACICUS, VALERIUS MARTIAL, GREETINGS.

[*Preface*] All my books, Lord, or all those to which you have given fame—which is to say, life—are your humble petitioners; and, I think, this has secured their readership in posterity. But this one, which is enrolled as the eighth of my opus, takes more frequent advantage of the opportunity to pay its respects. This meant there was less work to be done in the line of clever ideas; real substance took their place. Now and then, though, I have tried to lend variety to that substance by adulterating it with a little humour, so that not every line gushes its own praises for your heavenly modesty—praises which would be more likely to wear you out than satisfy our enthusiasm. On the other hand, and although men of the sternest morals and highest station have written epigrams that make them look as though they are striving for the verbal licence accorded to stage-farce, I have not allowed *these* poems to speak as naughtily as is their wont. Since the larger and better part of the book is laid under obligation to the majesty of your sacred name, let it remember that pilgrims should never approach the shrine before they have been ritually cleansed. So that prospective readers know I will be observing this rule, I have decided to declare it frankly, right on the threshold of this little book, in an epigram of extreme brevity:

I

Book, who are about to enter the laurel-decked home of our Lord, learn to speak more chastely from a modest mouth. Nude Venus, retire; this little book is not yours. But come you to me, come, Caesarian Pallas.*

4

Hurrah! What a global convention enters upon and discharges its oaths at Latin altars in its Leader's name!* Not only mortals,

Germanicus, share these joys; the gods themselves, I think, make sacrifice.

13

He was advertised as a fool; I paid twenty thousand for him. I want a refund, Gargilianus: he's got sense.

23

You think I'm a monster, Rusticus, that I'm obsessed with fine dining, because I'm beating my cook on account of that dinner. If you think that's a flimsy excuse for a whipping, what *ought* a cook to get a hiding for?

24

If I happen to ask for some boon in this poor, timid little book, and if my page has not been shameless, say 'Yes'; and even if you don't say 'Yes', Caesar, put up with me asking. Incense and prayers are never hateful to Jupiter. He who shapes sacred visages in gold or marble does not make gods; he makes them who entreats.

27

Whoever gives you presents, you being so old and rich—Gaurus, if you've your wits about you, you'll know they're saying: 'Die!'

29

Whoever writes couplets wants to please by concision, I suppose. But what's the good of concision when they're a book?*

30

What now is spectacle in Caesar's arena, in Brutus' times was utmost glory.* You see how the steadfast hand clutches the flames, revels in its punishment, and masters the astonished fire! Its owner stands there,

an audience to his own show; he delights in the noble end afforded to his right hand, which gluts itself on every stage of its funeral. Had the means of punishment not been snatched away against its victim's will, his raging left hand was readying to enter the exhausted pyre. After such an edifying display, I prefer not to know what that hand had done before; I am content to know it as I saw it.

31

You're admitting something about yourself, Dento, when you seek the perks of fatherhood,* having only just married; I'm not sure what, but it's not pretty. Stop pestering our Lord already with your wheedling petitions;* get out of town, finally, and go back where you came from. It's far away your wife is, and long neglected while you've sought your Three Children; you'll find you have four.

32

A cooing dove flew down through the silent air and settled right in Aretulla's lap. It could have been chance playing tricks—but, left to its own devices, there it stayed. It was free to go, but did not wish to fly. If it is lawful for a devoted sister to wish for better things, and if prayers have power to sway the Lord of Mankind, perhaps this bird came to you as a messenger from Sardinia's exile shore, and your brother is about to return.

36

Scoff, Caesar, at the kingly Wonders of the Pyramids;* barbarous Memphis no longer speaks of the works of Dawn.* What fraction of the Parrhasian palace does the labour of Mareotis* equal? The sun sees nothing more resplendent in the whole world. You would think the seven hills were rising as one; Ossa bore Thessalian Pelion* and was less tall. It so pierces the heavens that, hidden in the gleaming stars, its fair summit thunders above the clouds; and it takes its fill of Phoebus' mystic light before Circe sees her father's dawning face.

And yet, Augustus, this House, this star-scraper, though equal to heaven, is unequal to its Lord.

39

Before, there was no venue that could accommodate the Palatine's guest dinners and ambrosial feasts; but here, Germanicus, you may properly quaff the sacred nectar and wine-cups mixed by Ganymede's hand. I pray you may choose long to postpone dining with the Thunderer; but if *you* are impatient, Jupiter, come yourself.

40

Guardian not of a garden or a prosperous vineyard, but of a scant woodland, from which, Priapus, you were born—and could be reborn: I caution you to fend off thieving hands, and keep the copse safe for its master's hearth. If it runs out, you too are made of wood . . .

50 (51)

Whose craft informs this cup? Clever Mys', or Myron's? Is this Mentor's hand—or yours, Polyclitus?* It bears no dark bruise from soot, nor has any cloudy mass rebuffed the furnace's prying flames; works of genuine electrum do not gleam so yellow-gold, and its stippled silver* exquisitely outshines snowy ivory. The workmanship does not take second place to the material: thus does the moon put a bracelet to her disc, when she shines brightest with her full splendour. A goat stands here, clothed in the Aeolian fleece of Theban Phrixus,* whose sister would have preferred him for her voyage; this goat no Cinyphian shearer* would have despoiled, and you yourself, Bacchus, would happily let him feast on your vine. A golden Amor straddles the beast; he has a pair of wings, and Pallas' lotus* echoes from his dainty mouth: just so did the dolphin delight in Methymnaean Arion* as he carried his voluble cargo across the languid sea.

The hand that first fills for me this noble gift with the nectar it deserves—let it not come from your master's rank-and-file, Cestus, but be your own. Cestus, you jewel of the dining-table, mix Setine: the boy and the goat themselves look to us thirsty. Let the letters ISTANTI RUFI lend their number to the refills,* for he is the origin of this great gift. If Telethusa comes and brings her promised delights, Rufus, I shall conserve myself for my mistress by sticking to your four; if she can't make up her mind, I'll pass the time with the seven; if she lets her lover down, I'll murder my cares and drink both your names.

53 (55)

Like the rumbling heard in Africa's trackless wastes, when the forest is seething with innumerable lions, and the herdsman, pale with fright, calls back to his Punic kraal* his frantic cattle and panicked sheep: so loudly did Terror recently roar in the Ausonian arena. Who would not have thought him a pride? He was just one, but one at whose laws the lions themselves would tremble as we did; one whom Numidia, famed for its variegated marble, would crown as king. Oh, what majesty, what glory did the golden shadow of his crescent mane cast across his neck as he made his stand! How nobly his broad chest met the tall hunting-spears! What delight he found in a mighty death! Where, Libya, did your forests find so propitious a glory? Had he come, perhaps, from Cybele's chariot-team? Or, Germanicus, was it rather from Hercules' star* that your brother, or your father even, sent you this beast?

55 (56)

Since our grandparents' generation is giving way to our own times, and Rome has grown in grandeur alongside her Leader, you express surprise that we lack the genius of a holy Maro; that none sounds forth wars from so fine a horn as his. Let there be Maecenases, Flaccus, and you will not want for Maros: your own country estate,

perhaps, will give you a Virgil. His acres lost—too close to poor Cremona—a sorrowful Tityrus* was weeping for his stolen sheep; but his Tuscan knight smiled and thrust back malignant Poverty, ordering her to begone in hurried exile. 'Accept these riches and become the greatest of bards; you may even', he said, 'make love to my Alexis.' That boy, a drop-dead beauty, was standing by his master's table, his marble-white hand pouring the black Falernian; he offered wine-cups touched by rosy lips that could have aroused Jupiter himself.

Sleek Galatea; Thestylis, her cheeks tanned ruddy from harvesting—they vanished from the mind of the smitten poet. There and then he conceived of Italy and 'Arms and the man', though only just before he had sung mournfully and with unpractised tongue of the *Gnat*.* Why should I speak of Variuses and Marsuses, all those poets granted wealth? To list their names would be a mighty labour! Will I become a Virgil, then, if you give me presents worthy of a Maecenas? I won't be a Virgil; I'll be a Marsus.*

56 (54)

Though you bestow noble gifts so often, and will give nobler yet—you conqueror of kings, and more, of your own self—you are not the people's favourite because of your bounties, Caesar. The people love your bounties, Caesar, because they're from you.

61

Charinus is jealous. He's gutted, he's incensed, he's actually crying. He's looking for high branches to hang himself from. Not because my poems are sung and read all around the world—not this time; and not because, smartened up with knobs and cedar-oil,* I am broadcast throughout all the nations that Rome rules. No, it's because I have a summer place just outside town, and commute by mule (and they're not rentals like before). What curse, Severus, shall I call down on this jealous man? I wish him this: may he have mules, and a place just outside town.*

63

Aulus loves Thestylus but is every bit as hot for Alexis,* and now I think he's fallen for my own Hyacinthus. Go ahead and doubt that he cares for actual poets, when my Aulus is so keen on the poets' younger boyfriends.

65

Here, where the shining temple of Fortune of Homecomings gleams from afar, was until recently a promising and vacant lot. Here, handsome in the dust of Arctic war, stood Caesar, with brilliant radiance beaming from his face. Here, her hair crowned with laurel and clothed in white, Rome welcomed her Leader with cheering and applause. Other gifts witness the site's noble worth: a sacred Arch* stands in triumph over the conquered tribes. Here, twin chariots muster a host of elephants; he, in gold, handles their massive teams. This, Germanicus, is an entrance worthy of your triumphs: such portals befit the city of Mars.

70

Gentle Nerva* is as eloquent as he is unassuming; but modesty keeps his vigour and talent in check. Though he could have drunk sacred Permessis dry in a single gulp, he has preferred to keep his thirst within modest limits, content to wreath his Pierian brow* with a slender garland and not crowd sail on his reputation. All the same, he who recalls the poems of bookish Nero knows him the Tibullus of our age.

73

Istantius, no one is reckoned purer of heart than you; none outdoes you in snow-white innocence. If you wish to lend vigour and passion to my Muse, and you desire poems that will live on, give my love an object. Cynthia made *you* a bard, saucy Propertius; pretty Lycoris

s Gallus' inspiration; fair Nemesis brought fame to clear-voiced ibullus; and *you*, bookish Catullus, took dictation from Lesbia.* ither Paelignians nor Mantua* will spurn me as a poet, if I can just t a Corinna or an Alexis.

80

You restore to us the marvels of our pious ancestors, nor, Caesar, do you permit that hoary antiquity should pass away, when the ancient rites of the Latin arena are renewed and courage fights bare-handed. Thus is the charm of olden temples preserved under your stewardship, and the Hut retains its sanctity under so revered a Jupiter;* thus as you build the future do you, Augustus, recall what came before. Present and past alike are in your debt.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used:

AP *Anthologia Palatina*, the 'Greek Anthology' (see Introduction, pp. ix and xiii)

SB Shackleton Bailey's Loeb edition of Martial (see Note on the Text, p. xxix)

Often a note will direct the interested reader to further scholarship, most frequently the English-language commentaries on individual books of Martial. These references take the form 'Name (date: page(s))' and refer to items listed in the Select Bibliography. The numbers in the left-hand column are the book and epigram number, or the epigram number only in the case of the three unnumbered books.

LIBER SPECTACULORUM/BOOK OF SHOWS

1 *the Wonders*: as noted by Coleman (2006: 3), this poem responds to a Greek model by Antipater (*AP* 9.58) that praised the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Martial is not the first Roman poet to slight the Pyramids; cf. the famous opening to Horace, *Odes* 3.30, 'I have erected a monument more enduring than bronze, and loftier than the Pyramids' royal tomb'. Martial again flatteringly contrasts the Pyramids to Roman engineering achievements at 8.36.

the Crossroads Goddess: Artemis, worshipped at her world-famous temple at Ephesus. She was goddess of the hunt, but also had a connection to the underworld; crossroads were associated with witchcraft and the supernatural.

to Delos: the island of Delos was the great cult centre of Apollo; in his sanctuary was a famous altar made of animal horns. Legend said the god himself had built it from the horns of animals hunted by his sister, Artemis. It is only sometimes included in lists of the Seven Wonders.

2 *Colossus of the Sun*: erected by Nero, this giant statue originally stood beside the lake in his Golden House complex. After his fall the Flavians built an amphitheatre on the lake's site; the amphitheatre subsequently became known as the Colosseum because the statue was still an identifying landmark. In this poem it is 'close' to the stars both physically (like the Mausoleum in poem 1, it is very tall) and by virtue of family relationship (sun and stars).

gifts to the people: the Latin is *munera*, which means both public benefactions and shows (including arena entertainments)—the baths are spectacular as well as useful.

3 *Orpheus' Haemus*: a mountain range in Thrace, where the legendary musician mourned his lost wife Eurydice; cf. *Book of Shows* 24.

a Sarmatian: these Scythian nomads were increasingly seen as a military threat (Coleman 2006: 44), and later books celebrate Domitian's victory over them.

farthest Tethys: Tethys is partnered with Oceanus in myth, and Coleman (2006: 46) points to Martial's use of her name to signal the seas off Scotland at 10.44.1–2.

the Sabaeans too . . . drenched in their native mists: the Sabaeans are the inhabitants of Arabia Felix; Cilicia is where Rome got its saffron, prized for its scent as much as its flavour (3.65). A saffron-perfumed mist of water droplets could be used to cool the crowd at public events.

6 (5) *the ancient tale*: Roman arena entertainments sometimes reproduced scenes from myth and ancient history (see Coleman 1990), and a re-enactment of the myth of Pasiphae is attested under Nero (Suetonius, *Nero* 12.2). The offspring of her mythical coupling with the bull was the Minotaur; cf. *Book of Shows* 32. Coleman's own commentary on this poem (2006: 64–5) speculates that one of the Flavian emperors restaged the myth in an attempt to outdo Nero's version, and supplies gruesome physiological detail.

8 *a woman's hand*: the Latin, *manus*, evokes personal courage in close combat. The word used for shows, *munera*, recalls the public baths given as an amenity in poem 2.

9 (7) *a Caledonian bear*: this is another fatal charade, as in poem 6; the Scottish bear is another visitor from the far North (cf. poem 3). Latin authors were showing increasing interest in Scotland in the later first century AD: see Coleman (2006: 90).

12 (10) *under such a leader*: the Latin word is *princeps*, 'first citizen', a title of the emperors since Augustus.

20 *the pious elephant*: Imperial authors were fascinated by elephants: see Coleman (2006: 156–7), citing Plutarch and Pliny the Elder.

24 (21) *Rhodope . . . in Orpheus' theatre*: Latin poets habitually associated the legendary musician with this Thracian (now Bulgarian) mountain region, e.g. Virgil, *Georgics* 4.461, *flerunt Rhodopeiae arces*, 'the heights of Rhodope wept'.

against the script: Martial goes into Greek here, παρ' ἱστορίαν, echoing Lucillius, *AP* 11.254, which ends with the same words in the same position.

30 (26) *trident*: the trident's usual role in the arena is as the weapon of the net-man, the *retiarius*; here it is the customary attribute of Neptune.

the Spartan boys: Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, demigod brothers of Helen and traditional protectors of sailors. Coleman (2006: 212–14) is fascinatingly informative on ancient aquatic displays, a type of show that drove the moralists of the early Church to paroxysms of outrage.

30 (26) *Thetis*: a Nereid (sea-nymph) and the mother of Achilles. Catullus 64 takes her marriage to the human Peleus as its theme.

32 (28; 27) *Porthaon's beast*: Porthaon was a legendary king of Calydon, where roamed the Calydonian Boar, slain by Meleager.

He could yoke . . . Pasiphae's beasts: Carpophorus the *bestiarius* (a professional fighter of wild animals in the arena) outdoes all the heroes of myth, including Hercules and Jason (the 'Colchian woman' is Medea, cf. e.g. 10.35). 'Pasiphae's beasts' are the bull that mounted her and the Minotaur to which she subsequently gave birth; cf. poem 6.

Hesione and Andromeda: mythical princesses rescued from sea-monsters by Hercules and Perseus respectively.

34 (30; 28) *the trumpet of sea-battle*: Augustus did lay on mock sea-battles in Rome in a specially built pool (the *Stagnum*), which Titus reused (Suetonius, *Titus* 7.3); but these opening lines might also make readers think of Actium, the real sea-battle that secured his rule.

BOOK 1

PREFACE

and doesn't assign headings: surviving copies of ancient epigram-books sometimes preface each poem with a descriptive title (called a *lemma* or *titulus*); whether such headings formed part of the author's original design is usually a matter of guesswork. Many modern translators insert suppositious titles when working with ancient collections of short poems, and one may note that Martial's term for 'critic', *interpres*, can also mean 'translator'.

spectators at Flora's Games. Cato can stay out: this immediately ties Book 1 to Martial's earlier *Book of Shows*. Flora's Games, the *Floralia*, were an ancient Roman tradition and offered spectacular and naughty entertainment. The name 'Cato' is shorthand for stern patrician conservatism, conjuring up not one but two famous holders: 'the Elder' (234–149 BC, opponent of Hellenization) and his great-grandson 'the Younger' (95–46 BC, renowned Stoic and opponent of Caesarianism).

1.2 *parchment binds them between narrow boards*: the special travel-sized copies described in the poem are parchment codices: they have spines, covers, and pages, like the books of today. Codices did not catch on as a mainstream way of publishing literature for centuries after Martial's time, so his typical ancient reader will have read this poem in a book-roll—a scroll made of papyrus.

the threshold of Peace and the Forum of Pallas: Vespasian's temple of AD 75 celebrated the end of the Jewish revolt and looked out over a colonnaded garden. The relatively narrow urban corridor between the Temple of Peace complex (sometimes called the 'Forum of Peace') and the Forum of Augustus was subsequently turned into the Forum of Nerva, which takes its name from Domitian's short-lived successor. However, the project was begun under Domitian and included a temple of his favourite goddess, Minerva.

1.4 *Thymele and Latinus*: this knockabout double-act reappears at Juvenal 1.36.

As Censor: one of Domitian's offices, making him guardian of public morals.

but my life is clean: a Catullan pose, cf. *Carmen* 16.5–6, *Nam castum esse decet pium poetam | ipsum, uersiculos nihil necesse est*, 'You see, a reverend bard ought to be chaste, but that's just him—his ditties needn't be.'

1.6 *Though the eagle . . . the heavens*: the boy is Ganymede, Zeus' favourite; Martial often alludes to his myth. Martial's description of the eagle carrying him off through the 'airy vault of the heavens' (*aetherias . . . auras*) adds pseudo-epic grandeur by echoing Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.545–6, *aurā | aetheriā*.

1.7 *if Verona hears it . . . Catullus' Sparrow*: Verona was Catullus' birthplace, cf. 1.61, where again Stella's poem is preferred to Martial's allegedly revered poetic predecessor. Two poems by Catullus (*Carmina* 2 and 3 in the transmitted text) take as their topic the death of Lesbia's pet sparrow; here Martial appears to take *Sparrow* to be the title of a Catullan book.

1.22 *a Dacian boy would not fear Caesar's arms*: Rome went to war with Dacia in AD 85, and Books 1 and 2 are traditionally dated to the following year. 'Arms' is the first word of the *Aeneid* (*arma uirumque cano*), so is appropriately applied to Domitian as a late heir to Aeneas' mission. It is no coincidence that this poem invokes the *Aeneid* while praising Domitian's mercy to non-combatants: Virgil's epic famously assigns Rome a divine mandate 'to be merciful to the surrendered and crush the proud in war', *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* (6.853).

1.25 *Pandion's Cecropian citadel*: 'Cecropian' as a synonym for 'Athenian' recurs several times in Martial. Cecrops is the mythical king under whose rule Athens *became* Athens, by securing Athena's patronage. Pandion was another of the city's legendary kings, and father of Procne and Philomela (1.53).

The glory . . . comes too late: the contrast between living and posthumous fame is picked up from 1.1, with similar wording.

1.27 *I loathe . . . a recollective guest*: the sententious final line is an old saying, presented by Martial in its original Greek.

1.30 *Diaulus used to be a surgeon . . . undertaker*: a *uispillo* is an undertaker who buries paupers; a *clinicus* is a doctor who visits patients in bed. This is one of many poems in which Martial borrows from skoptic epigram, where comically bad doctors are a favourite topic (*AP* 11.112–26). Martial draws attention to his appropriation of the Greek motif by returning to it not long after, at 1.47, and again at 6.53. Doctoring was a Greek trade in antiquity, and much of its technical vocabulary is still Greek-derived.

1.34 *Lesbia*: a name-*cum*-characterization appropriated from Catullus and made even more publicly promiscuous than in his *Carmen* 58.

Chione: another recurring figure whose poems (e.g. 3.82) can be called a 'cycle'. Her name is humorously inappropriate: 'Snow White'.

professional cock-sucking bitches: Adams (1982: 199) finds that in Martial, *purus* implies avoidance of oral sex; its opposite, *spurcus*, would thus imply habitual and frequent oral sex. *Lupa*, 'she-wolf', is specifically used of low-end prostitution.

1.44 *both large and small*: when *libellus*-theory reigned (Introduction, pp. xxiii–xxvi), this was read as a reference to the distinction between Martial's supposed pamphlets for patrons (the *libelli*) and his larger and more miscellaneous *libri*, but already at 1.2 Martial's reader has been encouraged to purchase extra copies of his books in travel-sized codex editions.

frolicking hares and playful lions: this recalls 1.22 but also the *Book of Shows*. Hare was a particular delicacy (cf. 5.29, *Xenia* 92).

1.52 *I entrust my little books to your care*: a close echo of Catullus, *Carmen* 1.1–3; see p. xxiv.

the plagiarist: Martial plays on a word's historic meaning here. *Plagiarius* carried the literal meaning of 'kidnapper' before it came to mean 'plagiarist' by metaphorical extension. The relationship between a text and its putative author is again mapped on to that between slave and master in the immediately following poem, 1.53; this is an Ovidian gesture, cf. *Tristia* 1.1.2, 3.7.2.

1.53 *a Lingonian kaftan*: the Lingones were a Celtic people; effectively Martial just means 'Gaulish'. The *bardocucullus* (a rare word in Latin and an obvious barbarism) was a long, hooded cloak in coarse wool that muffled its wearer against the foul northern weather; Martial speaks slightingly of it again at *Apophoreta* 128.

if a black raven . . . Philomela's birds: the river Cayster in Lydia (modern Turkey) was renowned for its swans; cf. Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.11. Philomela is here identified by allusion as 'the Attic woman' (*Atthis*), but at 5.67 the exact same paraphrase identifies her sister Procne, who turns not into a nightingale but a swallow.

1.61 *Verona . . . blessed with Maro*: Verona was Catullus' home town; Mantua, Virgil's. As very often in Martial, Virgil is identified by his short and metrically easy third name or *cognomen*; cf. 'Naso' for Ovid.

Aponus' land . . . and no less for Stella: Aponus, a god of health-giving springs, had his main sanctuary near Livy's home town of Patavium (modern Padua). Stella's *Dove* has already been singled out for praise at 1.7.

the Paelignians: the Paeligni were a people of Abruzzo; Ovid was from their capital, Sulmo.

gay Cadiz: famous for its sexy dancing girls; see note on 6.71. At 11.6, introducing a book we are told will be saucy, Martial warns the prudish reader that it will shake its castanets 'Cadiz-style'.

1.70 *its painted Corybant*: a Corybant was a dancing priest of Cybele. The reference is generally understood as meaning that this round temple (*tholos*) was painted with frescos depicting worship, although it could instead mean that the priest himself was 'painted', e.g. tattooed; cf. the Moorish cavalry of 10.6, where again some guesswork is required. See the Introduction, p. xxi.

Phoebus and the learned sisters: Apollo, god of poetry, and the Muses.

1.72 *a windfall mulberry*: the mulberry is proverbial for blackness at e.g. Horace, *Satires* 2.4.22.

1.77 *Charinus licks cunt—and still he's pale*: the Latin word (*cunnus*) is meant to be shocking; outside Martial, it appears mostly in graffiti. Adams (1983: 80–1) has a useful note. The joke of the poem hinges on two different senses of the Latin verb *palleo*: to grow pale, because one is sick or is doing something that makes one feel sick; and to be pale, despite doing something that ought to make anyone blush with shame.

1.104 *big as Calydon's in legend*: the legendary Calydonian boar was slain by Meleager; the hunt makes a well-known episode in the eighth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

1.107 *his Flaccus and his Virgil*: Maecenas was patron to a circle of on-message poets in the early years of the Augustan regime. 'Flaccus' is Quintus Horatius Flaccus, the poet known to modern readers as Horace, and Martial's conditional offer of undying verse looks back to his *Epistles* 2.1 and *Odes* 3.30.

1.109 *her portrait in miniature*: as at 7.84, the small-scale portrait is painted on a piece of board (*tabella*). Numerous examples of such portraits survive from the Fayum in Egypt, where Graeco-Roman portraiture was combined with Egyptian mummification.

1.110 *Swifty*: this is an example of Martial's use of so-called 'speaking names': comically appropriate or inappropriate names that deliver a quick laugh and some instant characterization. His source for the technique is Lucillius.

1.113 *the hick stuff*: the Latin has *apinas*. Apina was a small town in Apulia, proverbial for pointlessness and triviality.

1.114 *the name you read*: the implied context is a roadside tomb, but 'you read' also recalls the reception Martial anticipates from the Avid Fan reading his little books in 1.1.

1.117 *if he's wanting the Pear Tree*: a spot on the Quirinal.

popping down to the Argiletum: an area known for its shopping.

If you ask for Atrectus: the transmitted text begins *Nec*, 'And don't ask . . .'. This seems to make no sense, and I follow SB in marking the Latin as probably corrupt.

1.117 *smoothed down with pumice*: at the end of the book, as at its start, Martial pays literary homage to Catullus, *Carmen* 1; like Catullus' *libellus*, his little book has been buffed with pumice. Cf. the specified absence of pumice at Ovid, *Tristia* 1.1.11, a book sent (putatively) to Rome from barbarous Tomis with neither literal nor metaphorical polish.

BOOK 2

2.1 *book-roll*: Martial addresses the papyrus scroll (a *liber*) onto which book 2 (a *libellus* of epigrams) is copied; cf. the similarly introductory 11.1.

going lukewarm: wine could be served hot in winter, and this is the likely context here. In summer, the wealthy might enjoy it chilled with snow.

2.12 *Postumus*: this name-*cum*-characterization appears frequently in Martial (e.g. 6.19), leading critics to identify his poems as a 'cycle', particularly here in Book 2. As well as 2.12 and 2.23, he is encountered at 2.10 and 2.21 (not in this selection). Postumus' typical motif is *os impurum*, the 'impure mouth' dirtied by oral sex, which Romans viewed as demeaning to the person giving pleasure.

2.23 *kisses*: Postumus' kisses are *basationes*, a mock-grandiose term that evokes Catullus, *Carmen* 7.

2.29 *See his cloaks*: cloaks (*lacernae*) were worn in the theatre when the weather was bad; cf. 6.82.

Peel off . . . the answer: this senatorially dressed theatregoer (the purple-striped toga, the badged shoe—cf. Juvenal 7.191, Statius, *Silvae* 5.2.27–8) has a past: he was once a slave, recaptured after running away and branded on the forehead. Martial repeatedly revisits the theme of the social-climbing freedman: compare e.g. 2.29 (now he wears the iron ring of the *eques*; formerly he wore iron shackles), and 11.54 (a former runaway slave who is still a compulsive petty thief). Martial comes back to the allocation of seating in the Theatre of Marcellus in Book 5, where he praises Domitian for introducing strict segregation between social classes and rooting out fraudulent claimants of equestrian status (5.8, 5.35).

2.32 *she's a widow*: Ponticus keeps refusing to speak on Martial's behalf in lawsuits because he hopes for favours from the parties Martial is suing. The theme of the legacy-hunter, currying favour with wealthy old men and women in the hope of being remembered in their wills, is a favourite of Roman satirical authors: cf. e.g. Juvenal 12.93–130 and the Croton episode in Petronius' *Satyrica*, fr. 116. Martial returns to it often, as e.g. at 4.56 and 9.8 (9). As a widow, Laronia is legally entitled to manage her own finances.

2.37 *you pass them . . . to take home*: i.e. to the slave who has accompanied him from home as his attendant and now stands behind him as he reclines to dine. Martial gets the idea for this poem from Lucillius, but his version

is more elaborate: cf. *AP* 11.205 and 207. He comes back to the same topic at 3.23.

2.48 *even in Butuntum*: an insignificant inland city of Apulia, in the far south of Italy; Martial uses it again as an exemplar of provincial dullness at 4.55 (not in this selection).

2.53 *gold-inlaid dinner service*: *chrysēndeta*, a quite rare and technical term taken from the Greek, as was so much of the terminology of the good life in Rome; Martial uses it twice in quick succession, at 2.43 (not in this selection) and here, and it recurs as an expensive gift at *Apophoreta* 97.

the Lower Pleasures: technically, a cultic distinction: Venus Plebeia as opposed to Venus Pronuba.

freer than the king of Parthia: this could be an otherwise lost saying, but Williams (2004: 186) notes that Parthian and Persian kings referred to themselves by the title 'King of Kings'; such a title assigns total freedom to its holder (and none to anyone else).

2.57 *the Saepta*: the Saepta Julia in the Campus Martius had begun a century earlier as a voting enclosure but was now an upmarket shopping-centre.

his hand studded with amethysts: as in 2.53, Martial uses a rarefied term with a Greek root (*amethystinatus*); his attentive reader will spot a connection back to 2.29, where the social climber's hand is described with an identically formed adjective, *sardonychata*.

long hair: likely to indicate youthful male attendants, like the 'gorgeous hunks' who swarm in Domitian's palace at 9.36; cf. 4.7.

2.65 *came with a million in dowry*: the theme of the widower who has inherited a fortune from his wealthy wife, and whose grief fails to convince, is revisited at 5.37.

2.71 *work you'd written*: the apparent compliment at the end is nicely double-edged: is Martial encouraging Caecilianus to display his own talent, or insinuating that his own poetry would look even better when placed against Caecilianus' rubbish?

2.75 *a hand to be put in his mouth*: this poem subverts the reader's memory of tame and gentle lions in Book 1 (1.22, 44, 104).

The martial sand: the sandy floor of the Colosseum. The Latin for 'sand' (*harena*) is synonymous with the arena, and persists (minus its 'h') into modern English.

our she-wolf: a she-wolf (*lupa*) legendarily nursed Romulus and Remus, but note that the term has already been used in Book 1, where its meaning is much seedier (1.34).

2.77 *Brutus' Boy*: a statuette owned by Brutus and taking its name from him (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.82).

2.89 *this vice was Cicero's*: the Late Republican orator wrote a famously bad epic about his own consulship (Quintilian 11.1.24).

2.89 *That you throw up, Antony's*: Cicero, in his second *Philippic* (2.63), excoriated Antony for being so hung over he vomited while presiding over an official meeting; 'Martial's brief allusion suggests that the incident became famous' (Williams 2004: 268–9).

2.90 *Quintilian, unequalled teacher*: this is the famous author of the *Institutio oratoria*, a manual of Roman rhetoric; his students included the younger Pliny.

2.92 *At my request*: this and the preceding poem are clearly meant to be enjoyed as a pair, and the juxtaposition flatters Domitian as an ideally or even impossibly attentive patron, with no passage of time (marked by intervening poems) between request and gift.

My master's: Martial must mean Domitian. Fathering three children earned legal perks (cf. 4.27). On hearing he has been granted them for 'fathering' little books instead (2.91), Martial immediately divorces his wife on the comic pretext that it would be a snub to Domitian if he then went and had three children anyway. Since Domitian is Censor (1.4) in charge of public morals, this is clearly not a poem intended to be taken seriously as a statement about Martial's domestic arrangements.

2.93 *you can always take one 'i' off the title*: this turns the Roman numeral for 2 (II) into the numeral for 1 (I).

BOOK 3

3.1 *named for the Roman toga*: Martial sends his book to Rome from 'Togaed Gaul' (*Gallia Togata*), another name for Cisalpine Gaul in northern Italy; the toga is the emblem of Roman citizenship.

3.2 *some soot-blackened kitchen*: the culinary uses of papyrus are real, but also a literary echo of Catullus, *Carmen* 95, where the poet anticipates that Volusius' *Annals* are destined to 'often provide loose jackets for mackerel'. Martial closely echoes this line of Catullus later in the book, at 3.50; and cf. *Xenia* 1, where some of Martial's own books are used to cover whitebait. The poem again echoes *Carmen* 1 (see p. x).

3.5 *little book*: the word (*paruus*) is used not just of physical size but of maturity (the book is childish), and of value and importance (the book is inconsequential).

Julius: this poem is part of the Julius Martial cycle (Introduction, pp. xiii and xv).

3.9 *Cinna*: Martial's epigrammatic rival shares a name with (although obviously cannot be) the Late Republican 'Cinna the poet' of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, author of the epyllion *Zmyrna* (Catullus, *Carmen* 95); much later (6.17), he will turn out to have been a lower-class rogue.

3.10 *left you penniless*: because he will quickly squander it and there will be no more handouts; cf., with a piquantly different scenario, 4.66.

3.11 *Sextus*: Quintus and Sextus are both common Roman forenames; the joke is that Quintus means 'fifth' and Sextus means 'sixth'.

3.12 *Fabullus . . . he's really stiffed*: Fabullus appears often enough (e.g. 4.87, 5.35, 9.66) that his appearances can be called a 'cycle'. Sweet-smelling ointment made dinner parties more pleasant, but was also used to anoint the dead.

3.19 *pretty Hylas*: Hercules' young boyfriend in myth (Martial alludes to him often), making 'Hylas' an obvious name to give a pretty slave-boy.

not true: in two senses: it is not a real bear (just a statue), and it is deceptive (a nasty surprise lurks inside).

3.20 *Canius Rufus*: like Postumus and Fabullus, Rufus appears often in the dodecalogy.

that reprobate Phaedrus: a Greek freedman of the first century BC who introduced Aesop's fables to Roman readers by composing versions in Latin verse. These got him into trouble with the emperor Tiberius because of supposed political allusions.

delightful Europa: the Porticus of Europa (cf. 11.1) is mentioned only in Martial, a slender basis indeed for attempts at reconstruction.

shameless Tigellinus: the Praetorian prefect who famously abetted Nero's worst crimes.

rowing his little boat on Lake Lucrinus: this saltwater lagoon, famous for its farmed shellfish—Martial often praises its oysters (e.g. 6.11)—was an easy outing from the upscale coastal resort of nearby Baiae (1.62, 6.68). When Rufus 'rows his little boat' there, he does so in a Latin verb, *nauculor*, that is only attested in this poem.

3.22 *Apicius*: this legendary gourmet first appeared at 2.89. This and the immediately following poem, 3.23, are thematically paired.

3.23 *next to your feet*: because Romans reclined on couches to dine, facing inwards around the dining-room, and their attending slaves stood behind them by the walls. See note on 2.37. Lucillius, *AP* 11.207, complains of a greedy diner who passes 'everything' he cannot eat to a slave standing 'behind him', 'at his feet' (πάντα δίδως ὀπίσω . . . πρὸς πόδας), and this is surely Martial's immediate source.

3.26 *Candidus*: this speaking name, 'Shiny', recurs at 3.46.

murrine-ware: very expensive tableware, imported from Parthia; Dalby (2000: 188–9) identifies it as fluorspar. Martial's reader encounters it again at 3.82, again as a sign of flashy wealth.

Opimius' Caecuban: the year of Lucius Opimius' consulship (121 BC), a proverbially excellent vintage for any and all wines, takes us back to the Republic (Gaius Gracchus was killed that same year); see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 14.55. Massic was a full-bodied Campanian wine that improved with ageing (Dalby 2000: 47, 141).

3.28 *Nestor*: a comically inappropriate name, since the Homeric Nestor is famous for sage advice.

3.29 *his old set of rings*: Zoilus passes himself off as an equestrian, a status marked by an iron ring, but he used to wear iron rings of a very different kind—the shackles of a slave.

3.32 *I can do Hecuba, I can do Niobe*: Hecuba (Greek Hecabe) was a standard exemplar of extreme old age, as e.g. at Lucian, *AP* 11.408. She illustrates the same theme later in the book (3.76). Invective against and mockery of old women (especially if they are sexually active) is frequent in skoptic epigram, as e.g. at *AP* 11.71–4, 256, 417. Niobe, daughter of Tantalus, doubted the gods and was turned to stone after they killed her children in punishment; Martial may have got her myth from Lucillius, *AP* 11.253–5.

3.36 *my wooden sword*: the symbol of a gladiator's manumission and retirement from the ring. Gladiators were typically slaves, and Martial may be hinting that the 'toga-work' of clientage (3.46) is degrading for a free citizen.

3.38 *a Naso*: on 'Maro' and 'Naso' for Virgil and Ovid, see note on 1.61.

3.39 *half-blind Lycoris*: the second one-eyed girlfriend in this book—the first is Thais (3.8 and 3.11).

the Trojan cup-bearer: Ganymede.

3.43 *Proserpina*: queen of the Underworld; no matter who else he fools, Laetinus cannot fool nature and fate.

3.46 *toga-work*: a client attending on his patron had to put on formal wear and be clean and presentable. Martial revisits this detail frequently (e.g. 4.26), often putting the toga into a diminutive form (*togula*—'stupid toga', 'wretched toga') to indicate his distaste for the whole social ritual.

3.47 *the Small Hercules*: a Roman cult of this name is attested in a couple of inscriptions.

he was carrying eggs: on foot, because otherwise they would arrive broken. Roman carts had no suspension.

Quite the opposite: Roman satire conventionally contrasts the vice-ridden metropolis with the virtuous self-sufficiency of country life; here though, as repeatedly in Martial, the productive countryside is overwritten by the consumer lifestyles of wealthy commuters.

3.50 *we're served lettuce*: as an appetizer, lettuce was thought to help the digestion; cf. 5.78, 11.52, *Xenia* 14. It could be served as a salad or a purée (Apicius 3.15.3, 4.2.3).

donate . . . to the mackerel: on the culinary uses of papyrus, see note on 3.2.

3.57 *he served it neat*: the wine is unbelievably bad; cf. e.g. Lucillius, *AP* 11.396, where the wine is so acidic it would be best used to make a vinaigrette for lettuce, just as in Martial 3.50.

3.58 *a proper, scruffy farm*: Faustinus' villa is at Baiae, where one might expect an estate given over to leisure and ostentatious display of wealth; instead Martial presents a vivid picture of a working farm. On the scenography and ethical meanings of the elite villa garden, see usefully Spencer (2010).

the pheasant of the depraved Colchians: the pheasant is so named after its place of origin in Roman eyes, Phasis in Colchis—Medea country (cf. 10.35 and *Xenia* 32).

your Priapus: the rustic god whose images, like scarecrows, guarded Italian orchards, warning off thieves with his sickle and erect phallus.

3.59 *The cobbler Cerdo*: probably a speaking name, but in any case passable as a working name: it is a Greek loan-word meaning 'artisan'.

3.65 *Corycian saffron*: reckoned the best.

an Arabian reaper: Arabia was called *Arabia Felix*, Happy or Fortunate Arabia, because it was the source or intermediary for so many precious spices and perfumes (4.13, and see Dalby 2000: 167, 182–4).

slick with spikenard: this crushed root of a plant of the Valerian family was an expensive aromatic, used to make nard oil (cf. 4.13). It also had culinary uses: Apicius includes a delicious recipe for an 'extraordinary' spiced wine (1.1) made with spikenard, pepper, and saffron.

Diadumenus: this beautiful young slave, named after a famous Greek statue by Polyclitus, reappears at 5.46 and 6.34.

3.68 *Up to this point, Madam*: Martial addresses the respectable female reader of Book 3 again at poem 86: 'I warned you in advance, bashful lady. I told you . . .'. These ironic disclaimers count on the book-roll format: a codex might fall open at any page, but a papyrus scroll can only be read sequentially, and its reader has only him- or herself to blame if s/he ignores the author's warnings and goes 'further in'.

that thing: no one seems to know what the custom or ritual is whereby Venus gets given a phallus; cf. 4.64.

avidly: Martial's wording (*studiosa*) evokes the *lector studiosus* ('Avid Fan') of 1.1.

3.80 *Apicius*: met as a speaking name at 3.22, and here given a different spin: the addressee is a glutton, like his famous namesake, but not for food. The *os impurum* motif is implied here (see note on 2.12).

3.82 *in his green suit*: the colour green (cf. the 'leek-green fan') was thought to connote effeminacy, in much the same way that yellow (as, for instance, in the title of the self-consciously avant-garde periodical, the *Yellow Book*) suggested Decadence in the Victorian *fin de siècle*.

the smoke-rooms of Marseilles: the city's stinky smokeries also feature at 10.36 and *Apophoreta* 14.118 (neither poem included in this selection).

Cosmus' little bottles: Cosmus is *the* maker of unguents in Roman satire: cf. Juvenal 8.86. Martial (cf. 12.55, 11.15) typically alludes to his

products using adjectival forms that turn his name into a designer brand.

3.83 *'Do me like Chione does'*: the ultra-concise (half-line) epigram with which Martial imagines putting Cordus in his place, i.e. 'suck my cock'.

3.86 *the mimes*: Roman mime (*mimus*) was popular entertainment, less scripted and more physical than comedy. Men and women performed in it, without masks, and the content was often sexually explicit.

3.99 *Cerdo . . . you got away with murder*: Book 3's reader will immediately think of Cerdo, the cobbler of 3.59 who sponsored gladiatorial games in an attempt to improve his social standing.

3.100 *the sky was falling*: quite a downpour. 'The sky is falling' was used proverbially of anything very improbable.

BOOK 4

4.1 *Life-giving day of Caesar*: the book opens with praise of Domitian under the pretext of his approaching birthday, 24 October.

honour Minerva . . . countless oak-wreaths: wreaths of oak-leaves were the prizes awarded at the Capitoline Games, refounded by Domitian; the stadium built for the athletic contests is now the Piazza Navona, and there was an *odeum* (conservatory) next door for musical events. Domitian also founded a poetry contest in honour of Minerva.

Romulus' own Tarentos: cf. 10.63, 'Roman Tarentos', part of the Campus Martius. The Secular Games were held here, once every *saeculum* (110 years). It was called 'Roman Tarentos' to distinguish it from the Calabrian town of the same name.

4.4 *Tiber*: Albula was the ancient name for the Tiber.

than what you smell of: the poem is another variation on a theme by Lucillius, *AP* 11.239.

4.5 *tout vapourware*: in Latin, to 'sell smoke' (*fumum uendere*) is idiomatic for taking money for something that's never delivered.

Philomelus: a Greek name that Martial's readers will recognize from 3.31 as a *nouveau-riche*.

4.7 *Hyllus, my boy*: like that of Hylas, Hyllus' name is taken from the myth of Hercules, suggesting he is a slave; cf. 2.51. The characters have different roles in Hercules' story but the close similarity of the names is suggestive.

your hair: previously the long hair of adolescence, now cut short as a sign of entry into manhood; cf. 12.18 and Persius 4.5.

it has turned me into an old man: the Latin is ambiguous: does Hyllus become the 'old man', or is it Martial? Probably the latter: in ancient poetry one of the very worst things about becoming old is that young people will find you sexually repulsive and spurn your advances, as Hyllus is spurning Martial's here (cf. e.g. Mimnermus, fragment 1).

4.8 *The first hour and the second*: on the hours of the Roman day, see note on 11.52.

Euphemus: a Greek name, placing the addressee as one of the Imperial freedman who ran things for Domitian.

4.9 *Dr Saver*: the doctor's name, Sōtas, relates to the Greek for saving lives; on medicine as a Greek trade, see note on 1.9. His daughter has a Latin name but dissolutely (ἀσώτως) chases a Greek lover.

4.10 *my little book is . . . not yet trimmed*: Martial again echoes the famous opening of Catullus, *Carmen* 1, *Cui dono lepidum nouum libellum . . .?* The word for 'trim' also means 'shave', so there may be a play on the idea of the book's immaturity; either way, it is not yet ready for circulation.

a Punic sponge: a sponge could work as an eraser while the ink was still wet (Martial is sending Faustinus his work the instant he's finished writing it), but Romans also used sponges on sticks to wipe after going to the toilet. Martial self-deprecatingly suggests that it will be easier to wipe the book-roll clean and start again than try and fix what's there.

fix my jokes: Martial's terminology of correction (*emendare*) consciously nods to Ovid's (Galán Vioque 2002: 103 on 7.11.2).

4.13 *Pudens*: the name means 'modest' or 'bashful'.

Massic wines with Theseus' honeycombs: the honey of Attica (Theseus was a legendary king of Athens) was acknowledged to be the best (6.34); on Massic wine, see note on 3.26. Moreno Soldevila (2006: 171) points out that honeyed wine, *mulsum*, had a reputation as an aphrodisiac; and that nard was a fragrance for men (with sympotic associations), cinnamon for women. *Mulsum* is a choice Saturnalia gift at *Xenia* 108.

4.14 *the Castalian sisterhood*: Apollo turned the nymph Castalia into a spring and dedicated it to the Muses; it was a literal fount of inspiration for poets.

the mighty Scipios: Silius Italicus' *Punica*, an epic on the wars against Carthage, does not in fact include both the Scipiones Africani, just the elder. Perhaps the plan of his work was not yet clear, or Martial's vagueness is deliberate exaggeration to make the in-progress poem sound grander. Martial praises the *Punica* again at 7.63 (not in this selection).

a loaded knucklebone: Martial's word, *tropa*, transliterates a Greek term for a game played with knucklebones. The word is vanishingly rare in either language, and dictionary-makers on both sides are in the dark as to how the game was played. The *Sparrow* as a presumptive title for the (or a) book of Catullus first appeared at 1.7, and again at 1.109; it recurs at 11.6, in a dirty *double entendre*.

Just so, perhaps . . . to great Maro: SB points out that Virgil was a child

when Catullus was writing; Martial must know this, and that his readers (presumably including the real Silius) will know it too.

4.17 *Lycisca*: a Greek name—'Little Wolf'—that stereotypes her as a prostitute; see note on 1.34.

4.18 *Where the gate drips with rain . . . and the stone is slippery-wet*: the scenario envisaged by SB is that the icicle formed under a leaky aqueduct, 'perhaps the Aqua Virgo'. Moreno Soldevila (2006: 201) notes the mourning associations of the opening lines: the 'stone' (*lapis*) could as well be a tombstone, and is 'wet' (*madet*) as though soaked with tears.

4.22 *her husband . . . in the glittering waters*: is the husband Martial, or is Martial in this poem an opportunistic interloper? Is the encounter in a bath-house, or in some secluded lake? These deliberate ambiguities help create an atmosphere of fantasy, and the waters are muddied further when the 'real' Cleopatra shows up at 4.59 (not in this selection). One could even read this poem as an add-on to the Julius Martial cycle: Martial awards himself a Cleopatra to go with his Caesarian pretensions.

4.23 *Callimachus*: the most famous of the Hellenistic poets, Callimachus wrote in the early third century BC. He was an influential literary propagandist for concise, bookish poetry and was among the pioneers of epigram as a poetic genre. He was also the inventor of library cataloguing. He is thus ideally qualified to rank epigrammatists. Martial invokes him again as the *ne plus ultra* of ivory-tower poets at 10.4 (see note).

Bruttianus: not otherwise attested, and perhaps invented for this poem; since his name is not Greek, presumably Martial's reader is meant to think of him as a Roman writing epigrams in Greek after the manner of Gaetulicus. The theme of contest under Minerva's patronage may make readers think of 4.1 (see note), and Domitian's literary festival in the goddess's honour.

4.25 *Altinum*: an ancient coastal town in the north-east of Italy; its remains now lie a little inland. After its sack by Attila the Hun in 452, its inhabitants, the Veneti, relocated to islands in the lagoon where their descendants would one day build Venice.

4.26 *all year, Postumus*: the addressee has stopped rewarding Martial's service as a client with the expected gifts and invitations, but he was so mean to begin with that the loss is not great—Martial was already running at a deficit, merely by incurring the expense of having his toga cleaned so he could visit and pay his respects. Martial returns to Postumus' failure as a patron in 4.40.

4.27 *the presents you gave me*: these must be the *ius trium liberorum*, the legally privileged status that came with having fathered three children; see 2.91–2. At 8.31 Martial, having secured it for himself, mocks another petitioner who keeps trying to do the same.

4.29 *silly Marsus*: Domitius Marsus is an unlikely epic poet here; see note on 8.55 (56). Roses in winter: cf. *Xenia* 127.

4.32 *Phaethon's drop*: in myth, Phaethon's sisters were turned into trees and their tears at his death became nuggets of amber. Martial and his readers know the story best from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.340–66.

She lies unseen . . . casked in her own nectar: the bee is encased in a lump of amber. There are close verbal echoes here of the reluctant Cleopatra whom Martial ambushes while bathing at 4.22: *latere*, *lucere*, *conditus*.

4.40 *When the mansion of the Pisos still stood . . . a house thrice noteworthy*: the opening lines backdate Postumus' patronage of Martial to the reign of Nero, when the failure of a conspiracy by Gaius Calpurnius Piso (AD 65) brought down many famous names. The house of Seneca is 'thrice noteworthy' for the two Senecas, Elder and Younger, and for Lucan (see note on 7.23), all famous authors; the latter two were implicated in Piso's plot and were left with no choice but suicide.

4.42 *when I'm saying 'No'*: cf. 4.38 (Galla), 71, and 81 (Galla again). Martial returns to the theme of stealing kisses from a pretty boy at 5.46.

Let him beware of the boys: as up-and-coming rivals for his master's affection, since an adolescent male's period of peak attractiveness was held to be so short.

4.44 *Here was Venus' seat . . . famous for its Herculean name*: Venus was the divine patron of Pompeii, Hercules of Herculaneum, which was named after him.

4.46 *a Faliscan haggis*: made with a pig's stomach and not necessarily from Faleria, any more than every 'Lucanian sausage' came from Lucania (Varro, *On the Latin Language* 5.111). Lucanian sausages are a Saturnalia gift at *Xenia* 35.

and a napkin titivated with a broad stripe: a comic *reductio ad absurdum* of the senatorial toga, likewise distinguished by a broad stripe (*latus clauus*). This list shares many items with the list of Saturnalia gifts passed on to Martial by Umber at 7.53.

4.49 *'ditties' and 'jokes'*: Martial here disallows a characterization of epigrams that elsewhere he happily endorses.

the trailing robe of Tragedy: the *syrma* (the letter *y* flags up the word's Greek origin), a long robe with a train, worn especially by tragic actors. Martial recycles it at 12.94, and Juvenal too uses it as a shorthand for the pretensions of tragedy at 15.30.

4.62 *Lycoris*: Martial introduced a one-eyed Lycoris at 3.39 (cf. Thais at 3.8), but this dark-skinned Lycoris recurs at 7.13, a variant on 4.62. Her famous namesake, the 'pretty Lycoris' who inspired the elegies of Cornelius Gallus, is introduced as part of a catalogue of examples justifying Martial's argument (the scholarly term for such a catalogue is 'priamel') at 8.73. The equation of pale skin with feminine beauty

was standard in antiquity; and cf. 4.42, where Martial's ideal toy-boy is also pale-skinned.

4.62 *everything turns white there*: Tivoli itself (Latin Tibur), where Hercules Victor had a major cult centre, is a hill-town; but the sulphur springs on the plain below can still be smelled from the train that takes you there from Roma Tiburtina station, stopping at Tivoli Bagni (spa) on the way.

4.64 *every cool spot*: cooled by water or shade and thus pleasant in the heat of summer.

that delights in virgin's blood: the reference is obscure. There have been various attempts to emend the text or to explain it as it stands (an atavistic and otherwise unattested outdoor-sex custom? Something to do with pomegranates?); none of them are wholly persuasive.

Alcinous' godfearing home, or Molorchus': two examples of legendarily considerate hosts. Alcinous was king of the Phaeacians in Homer's *Odyssey*; Molorchus, the peasant with whom Hercules stayed the night (cf. 9.43) before his first labour, the slaying of the Nemean Lion.

lofty Setia: an ancient town of old Latium (the Latium of the Latin League, back in the day before Rome took over). It was an out-of-the-way place: at one point Rome stashed Carthaginian hostages there for that reason.

4.66 *Linus . . . you pulled it off*: Linus has gone on a spree and spent the lot, because his simple country upbringing has left him with no idea how to manage money; this poem makes an ironic pair with 3.10, where a dissolute city upbringing has the exact same effect. Linus' name is comically inappropriate for his bumpkin persona; the Linus of myth, son of Apollo and one of the Muses, was the inventor of music and teacher of Orpheus.

BOOK 5

5.2 *Germanicus . . . in company with his girl*: the reference is to Domitian's special relationship with the virgin goddess Minerva; cf. 6.10, 8.1. Domitian adopted the title 'Germanicus' in 84: Galán Vioque (2002: 356) on 7.61.3 summarizes the sources and bibliography.

5.3 *Degis, dweller on a riverbank*: the river is the Danube; Degis was the brother of Decebalus, king of the Dacians, with whom Domitian made a deal that was then glossed as conquest.

5.5 *the heavenly poem of the Capitoline War*: flattery of Domitian as a poet. Martial stands to Catullus as Virgil ('Maro') stands to the emperor's juvenilia (a detail extorted by SB from Suetonius, *Domitian* 2.2).

5.7 *sloughed her former skin*: for the idiom, compare Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 8.111. The presumptive context is recent fire-damage to Rome, followed by rebuilding; Howell makes this the fire of AD 80, described by

Cassius Dio 66.24, which caused widespread destruction in the Campus Martius.

your well-known grudge: Vulcan was, of course, the god of fire; the mythological reference is to his chaining of his wife Venus and Mars when he caught them in adultery, a punishment that famously backfired. Lemnos was the centre of his cult. Martial anticipates further fires at 5.42.

5.8 *Phasis*: the name suggests a servile origin in the semi-Hellenized East, at the far end of the Black Sea (where the pheasants come from, 3.58).

Leitus: this theatre usher reappears at 5.35. The poem is all one sentence in the Latin.

5.10 *Pompey's ancient portico . . . Catulus' excuse for a temple*: dating from 55 BC and 69 BC respectively. Howell 1995: 86–7 gives useful background on both. It is worth noting that the approximate date for Book 5 is AD 89–90, and that Domitian had rebuilt Catulus' temple of Capitoline Jupiter, sparing no expense, in the early 80s. The old men (*senes*) are thus praising the temple as they remember it from younger days.

none but Corinna: the beloved of Ovid's *Amores*.

I'm in no rush: this poem contradicts Martial's assertions (e.g. in 1.1) that his *libelli* have already made him a legend in his own lifetime. Three poems later (5.13) the contradiction is contradicted.

5.11 *Sardonyxes . . . jaspers*: see note on 4.32 (poetic gems). The poem makes an obvious pair with 5.12.

5.12 *hard to pull off*: identical phrasing to 4.66, where Linus got through his mother's million.

Stella can carry ten girls: the intended meaning is obscure; one explanation is the nine Muses plus Minerva. Stella appears often in Martial; see note on 1.61.

5.13 *Callistratus*: his Greek name immediately stereotypes him as a freedman made good.

all round the world: Martial's self-description here directly and obviously samples his self-introduction back in 1.1.

Gaulish Parma: so called because it lies in Cisalpine Gaul (see note on 3.1).

5.18 *damsons*: Latin *Damascenos*. They came from, and were named after, Damascus; cf. *Xenia* 29.

the greedy parrot-wrasse: on the *scarus* (parrot-wrasse), a delicacy of a fish, see SB's note on 13.84.

5.20 *dear Martial*: this poem is part of the Julius Martial cycle (Introduction, pp. xiii and xv).

haughty ancestor-masks: displayed in the atrium of a patrician townhouse (*domus*) to illustrate the family tree (*stemma*).

5.20 *They're gone, they've been debited from our account*: Howell (1995: 101) adds the fascinating aside that this Latin tag (*pereunt et imputantur*) has since been adopted as a motto for inscription on sundials.

5.22 *where rustic Flora looks on ancient Jupiter*: the temple of Flora and the Capitolium Vetus both stood on the Quirinal. On the Subura, see note on 7.31.

no human feeling: at 5.18, a few poems previously this was the charge against Martial himself for being a Scrooge at Saturnalia.

5.29 *you've never eaten hare*: on the superstition that eating hare made one pretty, see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 28.260; the belief is likely to have arisen because 'hare' and 'charm' are the same word in Latin, *lepos*, *leporis*, and 'decline identically, apart from the scansion' (Howell 1995: 113).

5.34 *father Fronto and mother Flaccilla*: although the Latin is not explicit, it makes more sense to take Fronto and Flaccilla as Martial's parents (at least for the purposes of this poem) than Erotion's—they have respectable Roman names and she is a slave-girl. Alternatively, Fronto and Flaccilla could be the deceased former *paterfamilias* and *materfamilias* of the household (*familia*) to which Erotion belonged.

she plays and skips now: the translation follows SB in preferring *iam*, 'now [she plays]', to the not very satisfactory *tam* 'so very [old]' of the manuscript tradition. Martial returns to Erotion's death a few poems later (5.37) and again at 10.61.

5.35 *a naughtier key*: if Euclides really had the status he pretends to, he would not need to carry possessions around (he would have staff for that), and certainly not his front-door key (he would have a doorman at home). Ancient keys were large, and dropping one would be very noticeable. As so often in Martial, the ambitious and pretentious social climber wears a Greek name.

5.36 *turning a deaf ear . . . he's a fraud*: this poem closes identically to 4.40 (the last word is *imposuit*; cf. *Postumus imposuit*, 'Postumus is an imposter'), but looks forward as well as back: 'turning a deaf ear' (*dissimulat*) will be echoed at 11.108, 'pretending you're deaf'.

5.37 *ageing swans*: swans legendarily sang just before they died, hence 'swan-song'; cf. *Xenia* 77.

Phalantine Galaesus: 'Phalantine' is a poetic equivalent for Tarentine, referring to Tarentos in Calabria (4.1). The little river Galaesus flowed into the gulf of Tarentum. Virgil mentions it in *Georgics* 4 and subsequently has 'Galaesus' as one of the first casualties of the Italian war in the *Aeneid* (7.535): see Putnam (1998: 111–12).

fleeces of Baetica, and braids of the Rhine: Baetica's sheep were proverbially golden-fleeced: cf. 9.61. The Suebi and Sygambri (*Liber Spectaculorum* 3.9) wore their hair up in a knot: cf. Juvenal 13.164, Tacitus, *Germania* 38.

And Paetus tells me: the name is chosen because it is aristocratic, with distinct Stoic overtones. Two of its famous first-century bearers set noble examples of principled resistance to the tyranny of 'bad' emperors: A. Caecina Paetus committed suicide in AD 42 after falling under suspicion of conspiracy against Claudius, and his son-in-law P. Clodius Thrasea Paetus in AD 66 under Nero (Tacitus' incomplete *Annals* end with the latter's showily philosophical suicide). Martial's Paetus thus has a lot to live up to, and is instead revealed as a self-justifying hypocrite.

5.43 *Laecania bought hers; Thais' are her own*: the basic joke is out of Lucillius, probably *AP* 11.68, a poem that Martial imitates more closely at 6.12. Thais' name immediately stereotypes the women as prostitutes.

5.46 *struggling kisses*: a close allusion to Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.358; Martial's scenario looks back to Catullus, *Carmen* 99 (kisses stolen from Juventius).

5.56 *Tutilius*: a teacher of rhetoric; Quintilian, the addressee of 2.90, married his daughter (Pliny, *Letters* 6.32).

a guitarist: a *citharoedus* sang while playing the *cithara*, a multi-stringed variant on the lyre, played with a plectrum; the instrument's name lives on in our 'guitar'.

5.58 *you're running out of time*: it is ironic that Martial preaches to Postumus about the importance of living for today, when at 5.20 he has admitted that he and Julius Martial never get around to it themselves.

5.65 *the Libyan wrestling-ring*: Libya was where Hercules defeated the giant Antaeus. 'His stepmother' is Juno; the 'Terror of Nemea' is the Nemean Lion, his first labour.

Maenalian swine: the mention of Mt Maenalus in Arcadia aligns Domitian's beast-hunts with Hercules' labour of the slaying of the Erymanthean Boar.

a man who could defeat Geryon: usually read as meaning Carpophorus, the phenomenal beast-fighter from *Liber Spectaculorum* 32. The 'herdsman' is Geryon, who owned magnificent cattle; Hercules' tenth labour was to defeat him and capture them. The duel is 'threefold' because Geryon had, depending on the tradition one followed, either three heads or three bodies.

5.69 *Pothinus; your list*: Pothinus was the politically influential eunuch who in 48 BC arranged for Pompey to be murdered on his arrival in Egypt, and presented his head to Julius Caesar; the scene is an important moment in the civil-war epic of Martial's fellow Spaniard, Lucan. Five years later Marc Antony had Cicero proscribed as an enemy of the state ('your list') and murdered. Cicero had become Antony's bitter political enemy in the aftermath of Caesar's assassination, and denounced him in the speeches he called the *Philippics*. Martial comes back to Pompey in 5.74.

5.69 *even Catiline*: the great villain of Late Republican history, against whom Cicero had fearlessly spoken out and prevailed, only to be semi-judicially murdered when he tried the same trick on Antony: see note on 10.70.

5.74 *around the world*: Pompey's presumptively scattered remains replicate the readership distribution of Martial's *libelli*, as reported in 1.1.

5.78 *single-serving meals at home*: the Latin word, *domicenium*, seems to be Martial's own coinage. He only uses it twice.

potted tunny will lurk in halved eggs: *cybium*, chopped and salted pieces of young tunny-fish. Tunny is again combined with eggs at 11.52, where the eggs disguise a fish that is past its best.

branches at Picenum: the olives of Picenum, first encountered in the list of Saturnalia presents at 4.46 and recurring in the overlapping list at 7.53, are praised at *Xenia* 36; cf. 11.52.

You'll go . . . next to me?: the closing lines propose a seating (or rather reclining) plan for the couches at dinner, with two diners on each couch.

5.84 *pleading with the aedile*: the aedile enforces the law that forbids gambling except at Saturnalia: cf. *Apophoreta* 1.3.

the first of March: the Matronalia, when women expect to receive gifts, but also Martial's own birthday.

BOOK 6

6.2 *even eunuchs committed adultery*: the theme is picked up again at 6.67.

6.3 *Come to birth, you earnest pledged to Dardan Iulus*: the tone and content of this poem echo Virgil, *Eclogue* 4, the famous 'Messianic Eclogue'. Iulus, son of Aeneas of Troy ('Dardan') and mythic progenitor of the Julian *gens*, is familiar from Virgil's epic of Roman origins, the *Aeneid*. 'Earnest': the Latin *nomen*, 'name', sometimes has the figurative sense of a debt, a sum offered as guarantee, or an entry in a ledger; the anticipated child is owed to the Imperial line by Fate.

Julia herself will draw out golden threads for you: the deified niece of Domitian, but her name also reminds readers of the Julian Law against adultery, established by Augustus in 17 BC and revived by Domitian, and to which the surrounding poems (6.2, 6.4, and cf. 6.7 and 6.22) allude. Mentioning her also helps prop up the 'Julian' pedigree optimistically trailed in line 1 (the Flavians were of modest country stock, with no blood connection to the great patrician families). The three Fates or Parcae legendarily spun threads that measured out the lifespan of each mortal; here the dead Julia assumes their role, spinning a special thread for the expected Imperial heir from the Golden Fleece of legend.

6.5 *a really expensive one*: Martial's cash-flow crisis continues at 6.10 and 6.20.

6.7 *Telesilla*: the name derives from a famous female poet of Argos, but Martial's immediate source is probably Lucillius, *AP* 11.239; see note on 11.97.

6.10 *those submissive Dacians*: the Domitianic phase of the Dacian conflict concluded in a truce following Roman victory in the Battle of Tapae, AD 88.

to the Capitol and back: Domitian is ascending the Capitoline on the Via Triumphalis as a *triumphator*, but of course the road also takes him to the temple of the Capitoline Triad, home of his particular confidante, Minerva (5.2, 8.1).

when he says "No": Martial's phrasing makes Domitian echo the girls who ought to say 'No'—but not *keep* saying 'No'—to sex at 4.71 and 81.

6.11 *no Pylades, no Orestes*: Martial again presents the mythic Greek comrades as an ideal of mutuality in friendship at 7.24 and 10.11. Pylades was the childhood friend who, when Orestes returned from exile to avenge the murder of his father Agamemnon, shared in the deed and in his subsequent wanderings.

6.12 *is she lying?*: this epigram is closely modelled on Lucillius, *AP* 11.68. Several epigrams in this book (e.g. 6.19) denounce theft or disguise, but turn out on closer inspection to be the product of literary theft or disguise on Martial's part; his attentive reader must be meant to find deliberate irony in this. The name Martial has chosen for his target here, Fabulla, is very close to the Latin *fabula*, 'tale'.

6.16 *little patch*: a few *iugera*, says Martial. A *iuger* is a little over half an acre. The addressee is of course Priapus, the rustic god who guards orchards from thieves; Book 6 comes back to him several times.

6.17 *You tell us to call you 'Cinna', Cinnamus*: Cinnamus (the name is Greek and immediately suggests servile origin) is told off for shortening his name in an attempt to pass himself off as old money. 'Cinna' is a fine Roman name with a proud history. Cinnamus reappears at 6.64 (not in this selection) as a make-up artist, at 7.64 as a barber, and at 9.92 (not in this selection) as a loan-shark. A 'Cinna' featured as a would-be rival poet at 3.9, as a slave to his expensive possessions at 2.53, and as a haughty patron and miserly diner at 5.57 and 76 respectively.

a barbarous way with words: Martial's 'barbarism', *barbarismus*, is a word imported (like Cinnamus himself) from the Greek world.

you'd now be 'Fur': *fur* is Latin for 'thief'.

6.19 *my three little goats*: the direct model for this poem in the Postumus cycle is Lucillius, *AP* 11.141.

6.20 *a loan of a hundred thousand*: Martial is still after the money he wanted in 6.5.

6.32 *Otho*: briefly ruled during the 'year of the four emperors' following

Nero's downfall. The year ended with Vespasian as Rome's ruler and founder of a new dynasty, the Flavians (see Chronology).

6.32 *Cato*: his Stoic indifference to defeat, and heroic suicide, were major themes of Lucan's epic on the civil war; cf. 5.74 and see note on 7.23.

6.34 *Give me kisses, Diadumenus*: the Diadumenus cycle continues, this time riffing obviously on Catullus, *Carmen* 7.

the Cecropian mountain: Hymettus in Attica, famed for its honey (cf. 4.13).

6.53 *Dr Hermocrates*: as always in Martial, the doctor's name is Greek, and there may be a bit of a joke in it—'Power of Hermes', when one of Hermes' main roles is to convey the souls of the dead to the Underworld. Terrible doctors are a staple of Greek skoptic epigram; see note on 1.30. The most immediate model here is Lucillius, *AP* 11.257.

6.65 *an epigram out of hexameters*: this immediately follows 6.64, a long poem (thirty-two lines) uncharacteristically written in hexameters as a literary experiment; sequencing is important.

6.67 *eunuchs, Pannychis*: this poem picks up on the adultery/fertility theme in the book's opening sequence. Pannychis means 'All-nighter', and is clearly a working name. It is Greek, as naughty things so often were; Lucian's *Dialogues of Courtesans* (second century AD) has a hetaira called Pannychis.

6.68 *Eutychos . . . Castricus . . . inseparable friend*: the poet is otherwise untested and perhaps only ever existed in this poem. The Greek name of his beloved marked the boy as a slave, and now carries bitter irony—it means 'Lucky'.

the Alexis of our bard: a name out of Virgil's *Eclogues*, which respond closely to Theocritean pastoral. Elsewhere (8.55 (56)), Martial affects to read the 'Corydon' of *Eclogue* 2 as Virgil himself in poetic disguise, and 'Alexis' as a pretty male slave of Maecenas with whom Virgil was infatuated.

send Hercules back his Hylas: Hercules' love for Hylas is a Hellenistic poetic theme; it features in Apollonius' *Argonautica* and is the subject of Theocritus' thirteenth *Idyll*, and Martial comes back to it at e.g. 7.50 and 11.43.

6.71 *Cadiz*: Gades, 'gay Cadiz' (1.61, and cf. 11.6), was a famous exporter of female slaves trained to dance provocatively to the accompaniment of seductive music. Compare Statius, *Silvae* 1.6.67–9 and especially Juvenal 11.162-4, skewering the prurience of a stereotypical Roman dinner-guest who expects to see such girls 'shaking their booty down to the floor' (*ad terram tremulo descendant clunae puellae*, 164); Martial too (5.78) suggests they were something of a cliché. Martial proposes such a girl as an extravagant Saturnalia gift at *Apophoreta* 203.

Hecuba's husband: Priam; imitating Lucillius, Martial repeatedly uses Hecuba as a byword for extreme old age (see note on 3.32).

his mistress: a *domina* is, in the word's most technical sense, the mistress of a household; but she is also the harsh 'mistress' who turns Roman erotic elegists (especially Tibullus) into slaves for love. Martial's word choices have already highlighted this connection for his attentive reader: the 'adept' girl (*docta puella*) is an elegiac staple, and 'tortures' (*excruciat*) recalls Catullus' famous *Carmen* 85, 'I love and I hate, and I am in torment' (*Odi et amo . . . et excrucior*).

6.72 *Cilix*: 'the Cilician', a likely slave-name that points to an origin in what is now southern Turkey, an area formerly notorious for piracy (put down by Pompey in 67 BC).

a marble Priapus: the scenario of this epigram is straight out of Lucilius (*AP* 11.174–9, cf. 11.184) but with a Roman twist in the identity of the god whose statue is being stolen, delivering bathetic closure on the book's Priapus/orchards cycle that began at 6.16. At 8.40 Martial will threaten to burn his Priapus for failing in its duties.

6.76 *the barracks*: the *Castra* were the barracks of the Praetorian Guard and a significant landmark; modern Rome still calls a metro station after them.

The Dacian is tamed: Commodus' Dacian wars were a running theme in Book 5; this poem, an imaginary epitaph on a far-away grave, supplies a quiet coda.

6.82 *such rotten coats*: the *lacerna* was a military-style cloak worn over the toga in foul weather; to wear one at all was a bit of an embarrassment. Cf. 6.11, 'in an itchy blanket' (Latin *sagatus*), where likewise Martial complains of having to wear a type of rough wool cloak (the *sagum*) typical of soldiers and barbarians.

6.85 *but you are not here to see it*: Rufus is dead—or *a* Rufus is, since it's business as usual with Martial's 'Rufus' (cf. 6.82) four poems later at 6.89. The tone of the poem recalls Catullus, *Carmen* 101.

Alpheus' prizes: he had seen out five Olympiads; SB notes that in Martial these typically indicate a five-year span rather than four.

BOOK 7

7.5 *citizens of Rome*: literally 'the Latin toga'. The *toga* is the emblem of and a synonym for civilian life, as at 6.76.

7.6 *Ausonian*: a poetic equivalent for 'Italian', familiar from Virgil's *Aeneid*; cf. e.g. *Apophoreta* 53. A Virgilian mood is also evoked by summoning Rumour, *Fama* (cf. *Aeneid* 4.173–97).

7.8 *Janus*: patron god of the month of January.

laurel-decked cavalry: Martial's language in this poem, and in the opening sequence of which it is a part, is celebratory (an emphasis on play: *ludo*, *lusus*) but also solemnizes Domitian's Sarmatian victories with a gloss of religiosity. The 'laurel-decked' cavalry recall the spears 'twined with laurel' of 7.6—the Latin word, *laurigerus*, is the same.

7.13 *the air of high Tivoli*: this poem is a variant on 4.62.

7.17 *all round the world*: as at 5.74, this samples Martial 1.1; now his namesake's library will share his fame, by virtue of Martial's dedicatory poem.

7.23 *the second plectrum . . . who thundered forth Wars*: this poem ends a three-poem sequence (7.21–3) that, like Statius, *Silvae* 2.7, posthumously celebrates the birthday of the poet Lucan, a fellow countryman of Martial (cf. 5.74). Galán Vioque (2002: 168) suggests they were written at the request of his widow, Argentaria Polla. Lucan was 'second' to Virgil in date and importance, and 'Wars' is the first word of his epic, *Pharsalia* or *Bellum Civile*. Identifying a poem by its first few words (its *incipit*) was commonplace, and Martial boils the practice down further. Compare 1.22, where Virgil's *Aeneid* is identified by its very first word 'Arms', *arma*, instead of the usual *arma uirumque cano*.

so great a light: Martial's phrasing supports more than one reading at once. Phoebus Apollo is the god of the sun whose rise inaugurates Lucan's birthday, but a brilliant person can be a 'light' too, and Lucan was brilliant.

7.24 *my dear Juvenal*: one of several poems addressing in friendly terms the younger contemporary who was later to become Rome's most famous satirist; another comes shortly afterward, at 7.31, and cf. 7.91.

the Sicilian brothers . . . and Leda's brood: Amphinomus and Anapius were 'models of fraternal love and filial piety' (SB); the Atreides (ordinarily not names to conjure with) are Agamemnon and Menelaus; Leda's sons are the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux.

may you do that thing: the final line hints accusingly at *os impurum* (see note on 2.12).

7.27 *many holm-oaks . . . the Beast of Aetolia*: compare *Apophoreta* 70 (not in this selection), a pig fat on holm-oak acorns. Acorns were a foraged food of the rural poor. The 'Beast of Aetolia' is the Calydonian boar (cf. e.g. 1.104); this is its second appearance in book 7 (7.2, not in this selection).

Pepper . . . Falernian . . . fish sauce: pepper came all the way from India; it was a bankable commodity (Dalby 2000: 195), is ubiquitous in the recipes of Apicius, and reappears as a regrettably expensive cooking-spice at *Apophoreta* 13. Falernian was a strong Campanian wine, highly rated by connoisseurs and 'ubiquitous in Roman poetry . . . the single word that proves it was a good wine and a good party' (Dalby 2000: 49); Galán Vioque (2002: 200–1) has a thorough note, and compare 12.57 and *Xenia* 108 and 111. At 8.55 (56) Martial imagines Maecenas impressing Virgil by serving Falernian. *Garum* is the fish sauce without which no Roman kitchen could operate, like *nam pla* in Thai cooking (and this Thai fish sauce is reckoned a fair substitute for garum by re-creators of Roman recipes). It came in several different grades: see notes on *Xenia* 102–3.

7.31 *Chian figs . . . blanched by icy frosts*: small, tender Chian figs were prized ('Chian' identifies the variety rather than where a particular fig happened to be grown; Chians recur in a sexual *double entendre* at 12.96). But these ones are not properly ripened, the olives should have been harvested earlier in the autumn to be at their best, and greens (*holus*) in satire are proverbially cheap fodder, even when they are not late-season: Martial cannot afford to eat well (Galán Vioque 2002: 221).

My little patch: presumably Martial's reader is meant to read this pitiful estate as the one the poet overextended himself to purchase in 6.5.

the broad Subura: Martial 'harvests' his 'crops' in the busy commercial and residential district next to the Fora. It had good shopping and other services, including a lot of prostitution. Martial's route to visit a patron at 5.22 takes it in; cf. 9.37 (on which Henriksén 2012: 164–5 has a useful note), 10.20 (19), and 11.78. At 12.18 Martial, from his quiet retirement in Spain, imagines Juvenal (who was perhaps just then beginning his famous *Satires*, see Chronology) still slogging through 'the yelling Subura' on his way to pay his respects to a patron.

7.36 *rainy Jupiter*: in his aspect of rain-god, Pluvius, as for instance at Tibullus 1.7.26.

clothe . . . its farmer: to dress a person or to cover an object is the same word in Latin, *tego* (and roof-tiles are 'little covers', *tegula*).

7.50 *Ianthis*: a Greek name. Ianthis is a minor recurring character (6.21), married to Stella the poet.

so many Hylases: Hercules and Hylas recur from 6.68.

7.53 *all the presents*: this list of cheap presents closely echoes the list at 4.46 (see note).

Picene olives . . . Laletanian grape syrup: Picenum, now Ancona, was known for its fruit and olive oil; see note on 5.78, and cf. 11.52, *Xenia* 36. Laletania in Hispania Tarraconensis (also found as e.g. *Laiet-*) was known for cheap wine in bulk: Martial at 1.26 (not in this selection) refers contemptuously to *faex Laletana*, 'Latetanian dregs'.

7.61 *Flagons . . . razor . . . smoke-blackened cantina*: verbal echoes tie this poem to 7.53: the flagon (*lago*), and the black colour (*niger*) of the smoky cantina. (A *popina* was an inexpensive neighbourhood bar or trattoria: on *popinae*, *cauponae*, and the like see Grant 1999: 84–92.) There are connections forward as well as back: the dangerous barber anticipates Cinnamus/Cinna in 7.64 (cf. the barkeeps that make a pair of 3.58 and 59).

7.64 *the Forum's stern laws*: Martial leaves the details vague, but Cinnamus is by now a familiar figure and readers will be unsurprised that he has got into trouble.

in Sicilian theatres: this implies that one *can* make money by hiring out as a flatterer in *Roman* theatres, as at 4.5.

7.67 *Butch Philaenis*: this sexually dominant lesbian (*tribas*) is revisited at 7.70. Her name speaks volumes: Philaenis of Samos was the supposed female author of an ancient sex manual of which, alas, only a small and uninformative fragment survives. It can be no coincidence that one of Martial's very few mentions of the famous Lesbian poet Sappho, notionally respectful enough (7.69), is sandwiched between Book 7's two Philaenis poems. The name is re-purposed for a loving and sexually obliging wife at 9.40.

a good six pints: as often, Martial's sums take some puzzling out. Philaenis drinks seven *deunces*. A *deunx* is eleven *cyathi*; a *cyathus* is one-twelfth of a *sextarius*; a *sextarius* is 546 ml. By Martial's reckoning, Philaenis therefore drinks and sicks up 3.5035 litres of unmixed wine; just over six pints, or three-quarters of a gallon. Taking wine neat was the sign of a problem drinker (cf. 6.89, not in this selection), and cheap wine was nasty that way (3.57).

sixteen rib-eyes: the exact cut is guesswork; the Latin is *coloephium*, a Greek-derived term (κωλώφιον). It was especially associated with the red-meat diet of athletes in training, so is likely to have been a cut of beef. At 11.52 Martial ironically promises a friend *coloephia* if he comes to dinner, while making it clear he cannot actually afford to buy them in. Juvenal's use of the term at 2.53 may well come out of Martial.

7.68 *Curius and Fabricius*: Manius Curius Dentatus, tribune of the plebs some time in the 290s BC and consul in 290, was a frugal and incorruptible hero of wars against Pyrrhus of Epirus and various Italian tribes; when the Samnites sent envoys with lavish gifts they famously found him roasting turnips. Gaius Fabricius Luscinus was similarly legendary for his austerity and integrity. Cicero often name-checks them as paired *exempla* of old-fashioned virtues. Martial revisits the cliché at 11.16.

7.69 *Cecropian*: a synonym for 'Attic' or 'Athenian' much favoured by Martial; see note on 1.25.

Your own Pantaenis: a Greek-flavoured female name, otherwise unattested.

woman-lover: Latin *amatrix*, a strikingly rare word.

7.84 *Getic Peucē*: 'Getic' is used poetically as a synonym for Thracian; it properly refers to an area on the Danube, bordering on Dacia. Domitian campaigned there as well as in Sarmatia; see e.g. 7.2. Peucē is an island in the delta of the Danube; the river's Latin name is *Hister*.

a more faithful likeness will be found in my verse: the conceit is Ovidian; cf. *Tristia* 1.7.11–14.

the work of Apelles: this Greek painter was a byword for great art in Roman connoisseurship.

7.90 *Creticus*: perhaps a speaking name, cueing up the epigram's reflection on poetics: cretics were a category of metre.

BOOK 8

PREFACE

GERMANICUS: Domitian had awarded himself this title in AD 83, when Martial was just starting out as an author, after victories against the Chatti, a Germanic tribe described by Tacitus (*Germania* 30). Martial's frequent use of this title in Book 8 (8.4, 26, 39, 53 (55), 65, and cf. 9.1) emphasizes his emperor's record of success as a military leader (Latin *dux*—8.4.2, 56 (54).2) as he celebrates his new triumph over the Dacians.

8.1 *Caesarian Pallas*: Pallas Minerva, Domitian's favourite deity (5.2, 6.10); the cult name is reused later in the book, at 8.50 (51). The adjective 'Caesarian' is surprisingly rare in Latin authors.

8.4 *in its Leader's name*: SB dates the occasion to 3 January, when vows for the emperor were taken and discharged (Suetonius, *Nero* 46.2).

8.29 *when they're a book*: the physical form of the papyrus roll meant that ancient books tended to be pretty uniform in length. Martial's term here, *liber*, tends to apply either to other authors' works or to his own when viewed as material objects.

8.30 *utmost glory*: Gaius Mucius (early sixth century BC) is one of the historical *exempla*, of no clear relevance to his legal case, about which Martial complains at 6.19. Apprehended while trying to assassinate Lars Porsena, king of Clusium, Mucius thrust his hand into a sacrificial fire to prove the indifference of Romans to pain; Porsena sued for peace. Mucius gained the *cognomen* 'Scaevola' (Southpaw) for his deed. The re-enactment of the Mucius story as a not-quite-fatal charade in the arena (see note on *Liber Spectaculorum* 6) is ironically revisited at 10.25.

8.31 *the perks of fatherhood*: Martial gloated at having secured the *ius trium liberorum* for himself at 4.27.

wheedling petitions: the Latin for petition (cf. 11.1) is *libellus*, which is of course also Martial's own word for his own books of epigrams, when considered as texts rather than material objects. Martial's *libelli* won Domitian's favour; Dento's have not. Dento's name may be intended to shade his characterization: *dens* ('tooth') was used figuratively of jealous resentment (see note on 10.3).

8.36 *the Pyramids*: see note on *Liber Spectaculorum* 1.

the works of Dawn: Memphis had many temples and statues, well known to Greek and Roman authors, but this vague reference also suggests the singing Colossus of Memnon, son of the Dawn, at Egyptian Thebes.

the Parrhasian palace . . . the labour of Mareotis: 'Parrhasian' is a poetic equivalent for Arcadian; the Palatine is Arcadian because Evander came from Arcadia to settle there (Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.51–5). The recondite synonym emphasizes the hill's very ancient mythic associations. The brackish

Lake Mareotis abuts Alexandria, the site of another ancient wonder, the Pharos.

8.36 *Ossa bore Thessalian Pelion*: two mountains in Thessaly; in myth, the giants piled Pelion on Ossa in an attempt to storm Olympus.

8.50 (51) *or yours, Polyclitus?*: the epigram begins with a display of connoisseurship, name-checking famous Greek artists.

stippled silver: very pure silverware was called 'stippled' (*pustulatus*), 'because of the ridges which appear on the surface during the process of purification' (Galán Vioque 2002: 462 on 7.86.7, citing Suetonius, *Nero* 44.2).

Theban Phrixus: Phrixus and Helle escaped their stepmother Ino on a golden-fleeced ram that took them across the Dardanelles (Aeolia is roughly speaking north-western Asia Minor); Helle fell off and drowned (hence Hellespont), but Phrixus was taken in by Aietes of Colchis. The ram's Golden Fleece was the object of Jason's quest. The conceit or paradox here is that the cup is pseudo-electrum, so *any* goat it shows is going to have a 'golden fleece' and can thus be subsumed into, or serve as a pretext for, mythic footling.

Cinyphian shearer: Cinyphus was a vaguely defined African location known for its long-haired goats; cf. Virgil, *Georgics* 3.311. Dalby (2000: 110) has a note on the uses to which their harvested hair was put.

Pallas' lotus: a flute, because lotus-wood was used to make flutes; cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.190.

Methymnaean Arion: the legendary musician Arion was from Methymna, a prosperous city of Lesbos.

lend their number to the refills: the name of the giver, Istantius Rufus, is inscribed on the cup in the genitive case to indicate his ownership: *ISTANTI RUFI*—seven letters and four letters respectively.

8.53 (55) *Punic kraal*: Martial's term is *mapalia*, a Punic loan-word used to refer to African huts or temporary, portable dwellings; he reuses it at 10.13 (20).

from Hercules' star: the Nemean Lion, slain as Hercules' first labour, became the constellation Leo. Hercules is presented as Domitian's brother because they share a father, Jupiter. Domitian is again 'Germanicus' the conquering hero, as at 5.2.

8.55 (56) *a sorrowful Tityrus*: Tityrus' expulsion from his smallholding, 'too close to poor Cremona', is straight out of Virgil, *Eclogue* 1; Maecenas here assumes the role of that poem's unnamed 'god', who is usually interpreted as the young Octavian. On Tityrus-as-Virgil, see note on 6.68.

'Arms and the man' . . . the Gnat: referring to a poem by quoting its opening or 'incipit' (here, the first three words of Virgil's instantly recognizable *Aeneid*) was common practice in epigram: see note on 7.23.

The *Gnat* is a parodic mini-epic of unknown authorship, proposed as light reading at *Apophoreta* 185; ancient readers reckoned it among Virgil's juvenilia.

I'll be a Marsus: Domitius Marsus, a friend of Virgil and Tibullus, wrote a book of epigrams, the *Cicuta* ('Hemlock'), elegies, and other works; from the prose preface to Book 1 onwards, Martial cites him from time to time as an important predecessor. A handful of fragments survive, all in elegiac couplets.

8.61 *knobs and cedar-oil*: Martial identifies himself with the physical form of his books, in luxury copies.

may he have . . . a place just outside town: 'with all their worries' (SB) and associated expenditure, or just because Martial's mules and suburban villa are really bad ones?

8.63 *Aulus . . . hot for Alexis*: Thestylus is the toy-boy of the poet Voconius Victor at 7.29 (not in this selection); 'Alexis too must be (or at least be thought of as) a living boy, not Virgil's favourite' (SB), but Virgil's Alexis is fresh in the reader's mind from 8.55 (56). In that poem, too, Alexis' female rival for Virgil's attention wore the feminine form of Thestylus' name—*Thestylis*. Their identities blur intriguingly.

8.65 *a sacred Arch*: sacred because it is dedicated to a divinity, viz, Domitian himself.

8.70 *Gentle Nerva*: the future emperor, although of course Martial has no way of knowing that.

Permessis . . . Pierian brow: the Permessis was a river sacred to Apollo and the Muses; like the Pierian Spring near Mt Olympus, and the Castalian Spring (4.14), its waters inspired poets. The Muses are sometimes called *Pierides*, daughter of Pieria.

8.73 *Cynthia . . . from Lesbia*: this poem name-checks the immortalized beloveds of Rome's greatest love-poets as justification for why Martial should be given one too; see note on 4.62. Catullus is 'bookish' or learned (*doctus*), but so three poems earlier (8.70) was Nero.

Neither Paelignians nor Mantua: see note on 1.61.

8.80 *the Hut . . . so revered a Jupiter*: Domitian is a god on earth; cf. for instance 9.18. The 'Hut' is the Hut of Romulus, a frequently restored ancient monument on the Palatine.

BOOK 9

PREFACE

a portrait of me: like the library-bound portrait of 7.84, painted on board for Caecilius Secundus.

this brief poem: the preface takes the form of a poem, within a poem, within a letter, and proposed as a caption (*titulus*) to be inscribed below a painting.