Theatre Sports and Martial's Literary Programme in *Epigrams*, Book One

In spite of their amorphous appearance Martial's books of epigrams are carefully crafted, especially at the beginning of the volumes where the poet typically sets the scene and outlines ideas to be expanded in the body of the collection.[1] Any analysis of the opening of Book 1, however, is complicated by the likelihood that the surviving text is a revised version (subsequently published as part of a codex edition of two or more books), the original having been released on its own in traditional roll form.[2] So, among others, 1.1 and 1.2 are generally considered to be later additions, written for the compendium, leaving 1.3 as the first epigram and intended introduction of the original book.[3] Regardless of the date of the first two epigrams, 1.3 does seem in both tone and content to perform a prefatory role, as Citroni especially has argued.[4] But I believe that the ways in which it forecasts (along with the epigrams immediately following) the major themes of the volume, can be further elucidated. In particular, 1.3 can help us to analyse the book's most prominent series of epigrams, on the spectacle of the lion and the hare in the arena, whose purpose is still a matter of contention.[5] I will argue further that, as a whole, these introductory epigrams and the lion-hare cycle show Martial creating, with more complexity than has been recognised hitherto, an intricate analogy between several theatres, that of his epigrams on one hand, and those of the mime and the arena on the other. Thus he establishes his literary

An earlier version of this paper was presented in the Classics Dept. of the University of Newcastle on Tyne. I would like to thank the members of the Department especially Professors John Moles and Jerry Paterson for their helpful comments. My thanks also to the anonymous referees of *Antichthon* for their perceptive criticism.

1 Cf. N. Holzberg, *Martial* (Heidelberg 1988) 34-42; N.Kay, *Martial Book XI: A Commentary* (London 1985) 5-6; D. Fowler, 'Martial and the Book', *Ramus* 24 (1995) 31 ff.; J. Scherf 'Zur Komposition von Martials Gedichtbüchern 1-12' in F. Grewing (ed.), *Toto Notus in Orbe: Perspektiven der Martial-Interpretation* (Stuttgart 1998) 119-138. All references in this article to the text of the epigrams are from the Loeb edition of D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Martial* (Cambridge Mass. 1993).

2 For a survey of the issue cf. M. Citroni *M. Val. Martialis epigrammaton liber primus* (Florence 1975) ix-xxi.

3 Note also Lindsay's suggestion that the omission of 1.1 and 1.2 in one manuscript and displacement in another are perhaps due to their being placed outside the body of the text (*extra ordinem paginarum*) in the ancient editions (W. M. Lindsay [ed.] *M.Val. Martialis Epigrammata* [Oxford 1969] *ad. loc.*).

4 M. Citroni, 'Un Proemio di Marziale' in *Studia Florentina Alexandro Ronconi Oblata* (Rome 1970) 81 ff.

5 The allegorical possibilities of the lion-hare cycle were suggested briefly by F.M Ahl, 'Politics and Power in Augustan Poetry', *ANRW* 32.1 (1984) 85-6, and endorsed by Holzberg (n.1) 76 ff. But this interpretation has since been rejected, most recently by F. Römer, 'Mode und Methode in der Deutung panegyrischer Dichtung der nachaugusteischen Zeit', *Hermes* 122 (1994) 108-9.

Antichthon 35 (2001) 70-83

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

programme and tries to justify the potentially offensive impudence of his poetic persona. But before exploring these issues I should note that, unlike some commentators, I see no good reason to group the prose preface along with any later additions and remove it also from the original manifesto of Book 1.[6] Indeed, I think that in many ways it sets the stage for the ideas raised in 1.3 and the following epigrams.

Admittedly, Martial does use the past tense at the outset of this epistle, as well as the plural *libelli*, when speaking of the moderation he has followed in writing his 'books' (*me secutum in libellis meis tale temperamentum, pref.* 1) so as to protect himself against any charge of wanton slander or of attacking living people. The books to which he refers could hardly be the earlier *Liber Spectaculorum* or the two collections on gift-giving, *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*, none of which contains subject matter which could be deemed as even remotely scandalous. But Martial typically uses the term *libelli* quite flexibly, referring both to entire volumes and also, as the equivalent of *versus* or *epigrammata*, to individual poems.[7] And since several individual later books also have a prose preface, there seems no reason to assign the present letter to an enlarged collection rather than to the original first book.

A disavowal of malicious intent is to be expected of a poet writing in the area of topical satire.[8] Martial elaborates on this by insisting that cleverness (*ingenium*, *pref.* 7) is not a quality for which he seeks recognition; his humour, so he claims, is uncomplicated and not to be interpreted perversely, for it is wrong to be clever at the expense of someone else's work (*improbe facit qui in alieno libro ingeniosus est*, *pref.* 9-10). [9] And in turning next to a defence of the obscenity of his epigrams Martial reminds the reader of the long accepted frankness of the Roman epigrammatic tradition, boldly placing himself, as he does often in later books, into the sequence of the genre's greatest exponents, Catullus, Marsus, Pedo and Gaetulicus. [10]

Throughout this preface Martial portrays his possible opposition in terms of a single individual, a spiteful critic (*malignus interpres*, *pref.* 8), but one whose hostility he brands as fraudulent and self-serving by characterising him as ostentatiously stern (*ambitiose tristis*, *pref.* 14). The phrase anticipates the reference to Cato (*pref.* 18) in Martial's version of the famous story of how the censor walked out of the theatre during the Floralia so as not to inhibit by his presence the traditional obscenity of the mimic performance.[11] But Martial adds his own slant by accusing Cato of having entered

6 Cf. Citroni (n.2) 4-7.

7 Cf. W. Erb, *Zu Komposition und Aufbau im Ersten Buch Martials* (Frankfurt am Main 1981) 9. Note also P. White, 'The Presentation and Dedication of the *Silvae* and *Epigrams*', *JRS* 64 (1974) 40-61.

8 Cf. M. Dickie, 'The Disavowal of *Invidia* in Roman Iamb and Satire', *PLLS* 3 (1981) 183-208; and N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge 1966) 128 ff.

9 The sincerity of Martial's plea may be doubted, and even some of his contemporaries might have found it unconvincing as they read the epigrams; for in his obituary of the poet, the first word that springs to Pliny's mind in assessing Martial's talents is that he was a clever man (*erat homo ingeniosus*, *Epist.* 3.21.2).

10 E.g. 2.71.3-4; 2.77.7-8; 4.14.13-14; 5.5.5-6; 7.99.7.

11 For another version of the story cf. Val. Max. 2.10.8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the theatre solely for the opportunity to make a grand exit. Such a man, he insists, should not read beyond this preface. Instead, the epigrams are written for those actually used to watching the Floralia. This festival, full of revelry and merrymaking, was notable for its temporary suspension of normal social conventions, being granted the same kind of censorial exemption that the mimes customarily enjoyed within the theatre.[12] At the same time, the actual performances of mime which were a major part of the festivities were allowed even more bawdiness than usual. Martial's focus here is clearly on the sexual frankness of the mimes as a defence for the content of his epigrams (an analogy raised again in 1.35). Nevertheless, there are other aspects of the Floralia and the mime with which Martial's audience would have been thoroughly familiar, and which are worth bearing in mind for the thematic development of Book 1; in particular, these entertainments shared a preoccupation with comic inversion and reversal of normal roles and status. This is evidenced in the Floralia, for example, in the way hares were chased and netted in a comic parody of the lion hunts usually staged in the circus, as Ovid notes at *Fasti*, 5.371 ff.[13] Similarly, Juvenal (*Sat.* 6.605-9) takes mime as the obvious exemplar of bizarre reversals of status when he describes as Fortune's private mime (*secretum ... mimum*, 608) her habit of transplanting foundlings from the gutter into the houses of the rich.[14] Indeed, Martial himself, rather than leaving his poems linked to only a single aspect of the mime, concludes by assimilating its entire milieu; for to read his books, he claims, is to enter his theatre (*theatrum meum, pref.* 18).

Martial likewise declares in the preface that his epigrams are merely games and jokes (*ludant, pref.* 4; *iocorum nostrorum, pref.* 7-8)—terms (along with *nugae*) by which he will later most commonly characterise the apparently innocuous and artless nature of his work; and these are also paralleled in his description of the rites of jocular Flora (*iocosae....Florae, pref.* 22) and her festive games (*festosque lusus, pref.* 23).[15] But this terminology is deceptively self-effacing and equivocal, for this is also how Catullus had defined the character of his own poetry. And he, as Newman has shown, uses both *ludi* and *ioci* to acknowledge his literary link with more than just the obscenity of the mime; he employs the terms no less to define the spirit of sarcastic repartee, social subversiveness and mockery of individuals and

[12] On the Floralia cf. *RE* 6.2749-52 (Wissowa). On mime cf. *RE* 15.2.1727-64 (Wüst); E. Fantham, 'Mime, the missing link in Roman literary history', *CW* 82 (1988) 153-63; R.C Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (London 1991) 129-40. For the influence of mime on literature see especially J.C. McKeown, 'The Augustan Elegy and Mime' *PCPS* 25 (1979) 71-84 and C. Panayotakis, *Theatrum Arbitri: Theatrical Elements in the Satyrica of Petronius* (Leiden 1995).

[13] Cf. also Martial, 8.67.4.

[14] Note also Cicero's portrayal of Antony as the personification of a character from mime, at one moment destitute then suddenly rich (*persona de mimo, modo egens, repente dives*, *Phil.* 2.65). For the reversal of status typical of the adultery mime, see the sources listed below, n.31.

[15] For *ludi* and *ioci* e.g. 1.35.13; 4.49.2; 5.15.1. For *nugae* e.g. 1.113.6; 2.1.6; 2.86.9; 3.55.3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

types that he also shares with it.[16] So Martial too, while pleading the crude but simple and ingenuous frankness of his epigrams, still places himself in a sophisticated tradition of mimic laughter and Catullan literary gamesmanship.

Let us turn, then, to 1.3 which, unlike 1.1 and 1.2 which address the reader, pictures Martial speaking to the book itself. The latter, as in Horace *Epist.* 1.20 on which 1.3 is principally modelled, is portrayed as a fugitive young slave, eager to escape from its master's protective custody to the bookshops and wider audience of the city.[17] And, as Horace had done, so Martial gloomily predicts a wretched fate in store for the young runaway at the hands of a fickle public. Martial's address to his book will become a familiar feature of his work, especially in the introductory poems of the volumes, as will the expression of concern about its reception by the public; but he will also make it clear that such doubt is actually feigned, convinced as he is of his work's immortality.[18] And, despite this being the first of the numbered books, there is perhaps also a deliberate irony in 1.3 in the contrast between the hesitant poet and his humble book on the one hand and the exalted company of Horace and his work with which he links himself by analogy.

Martial's more apparent concern in 1.3, however, is with his book's reception by the public. In a facetiously histrionic tone (*nescis, heu, nescis*, 1.3.3) he warns the book of the 'arrogance of mistress Rome' (*dominae fastidia Romae*, 1.3.3) and the presumptuous cleverness of the crowd of Mars' descendants (*Martia turba*, 1.3.4); nowhere else, he continues, are there louder snorts of criticism (*maiores nusquam rhonchi*, 1.3.5). The use of the Greek *rhonchi*, along with *sophos* at 1.3.7, to characterise the reactions of an audience otherwise defined in such strong Roman terms as the race of Mars, perhaps highlights its affectations and contrasts with Martial's determination to write 'blunt Latin' (*latine loqui*, *pref.* 15) in the native Roman tradition of satire and mime. With *rhonchi* Martial also anticipates the comical description of men young and old (and even young boys) having the nose of a rhinoceros (*nasum rhinocerotis*, 1.3.6). 'The nose was the organ of criticism', to borrow Howell's phrase, as we can see from *Xenia* 13.2 where Martial warns a potential critic that he may have a nose too big even for Atlas to bear, but he can say no more against Martial's poems than the author himself has already said.[19] But this reference to the rhinoceros also seems intended to transport the book from one theatre to another, from that of the

16 Cf. Catullus 50.1-6; 68.17 for the poems as *ludi* and *ioci*, and 1.4 as *nugae*. J.K. Newman, *Roman Catullus and the Modification of Alexandrian Sensibility* (Hildesheim 1990) 7-42, shows how these terms were identified initially with the vituperative and socially subversive elements of Roman comedy and mime, and were adopted by Catullus in particular to characterise his topical, satirical poetry.

17 On parallels with Horace (and Ovid) cf. Citroni (n.2) 23 ff.

18 For epigrams in which Martial addresses his book cf. P. Howell, *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial* (London 1980) 110. On the poet's concern for his reputation cf. especially 2.1 and 3.2; and on his certainty of immortality 1.61; 7.84; 8.3; 10.2.

19 Cf. Howell (n.18) 111.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

public *recitatio* to the world of the arena, and to make it part of one of the latter's more exotic spectacles, first depicted by Martial in *Liber Spectaculorum* 11. Here the poet had described how a rhinoceros was goaded into tossing a bull with as much ease as the bull itself might throw a straw dummy. The scene had obviously impressed him for he returned to the theme again in *Spect.* 26 to recount at greater length how the trainers incited the rhinoceros to throw a bear just as a bull throws a straw dummy to the stars (*iactat ut impositas taurus in astra pilas*, *Spect.* 26.6). This image is specifically recalled in 1.3, with the dummy's fate now awaiting the book; for even as it acknowledges the bravos at its recital, and theatrically blows (Catullan) kisses (*audieris cum grande sophos, dum basia iactas*, 1.3.7), the book will find itself likewise hurled to the stars (*missus in astra*, 1.3.8), here tossed suddenly and ignominiously from a woollen blanket. Thus, in a combination of images, the setting of the *recitatio* is blended with a scene from the amphitheatre as both audience and book fleetingly become creatures of the arena, mirroring the spectacle of the rhinoceros and its victim.[20] The metaphor also anticipates the most prominent cycle of epigrams in Book 1, likewise set in the arena, on the miraculous relationship between the mighty lion and the tiny hare.[21] And perhaps it forecasts that this series, too, will have an element of metaphor, involving the book and its audience.

At the conclusion of 1.3 Martial returns to the relationship between himself and his book; here again, the book is personified as a would-be fugitive, eager to escape its master's constant erasures and the stern pen which tries to censure its pranks:

> sed tu ne totiens domini patiare lituras
> neve notet lusus tristis harundo tuos,
> aetherias, lascive, cupis volitare per auras (1.3.9-11)

Martial pictures himself fleetingly in line 9 as a poet of the Alexandrian tradition, holding on to his work in order to polish it with constant corrections. But he admits in the next that his motives are more mundane for, actually, he is simply trying to act as censor, to erase the jokes of this lascivious little book. His 'stern pen' recalls the stern, Cato-like censor of the preface, his own attempt now claimed to be equally foolhardy. In dissociating himself ironically from his own creation, asserting his inability to impose restrictions on his poems, he anticipates the following epigram in which he distinguishes between his personal decency and the crudeness of his work. And this repeated assertion of the futility of censorship also pre-

20 The depiction of the book's performance in 1.3, brief though it is, seems to borrow the imagery of the mime as well as that of the amphitheatre. For the book's sudden change of fortune from people's favourite to ignominious victim is reminiscent of the violent reversals which typified the comic stage; while the portrayal of a character tossed in a blanket, imitating what seems to have been a popular form of ridicule at the time (cf. Suetonius, *Otho* 2), also recalls the roughly physical humour of the mimic performance.

21 For the lion-hare epigrams as a 'cycle' cf. K. Barwick, 'Zyklen bei Martial und in den kleinen Gedichten des Catull', *Philol.* 102 (1958) 291-3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

empts the theme of 1.4 by implying that the third censor we will meet there, the emperor himself, can sensibly only grant a similar dismissal. The book's licentiousness and love of pranks (1.3.10-11) identify it again with the jocular and playful mimes of the Floralia (*pref.* 24) and, along with its personification as a defiant runaway, build up its portrayal as a cheeky young slave, like Horace's brazen little book (*Epist.*1.20)—an image Martial will use again to characterise subsequent books as 'home-bred volumes'.[22] This depiction suits the poet's desire to present his work as something of menial and nugatory status. But the wayward little book also gains another feature from its association with these pet slaves, or *vernae*. For such individuals were notoriously indulged, being allowed an impertinence toward their superiors denied to all others of the household.[23] Indeed, the tolerance of their effrontery can be compared to the exceptional freedom given to mime within the world of the theatre.

The book's pretensions to soar through the airs of heaven (1.3.11) are voiced in suitably epic language, echoing the words with which Vergil had predicted his own poetry's immortality—a humorous contrast to Martial's recent warning of the brief and humiliating flight in store for his volume at the hands of a fickle public.[24] But paradoxically Martial will go on to suggest that the book will actually realise its lofty ambition—through its association with, and protection by, the emperor. For at the beginning of the series on the lion and the hare—which is, I will argue, demonstrably an allegorical representation of the emperor and the book—he uses the same image to compare the immortalisation of Ganymede, carried through the airs of heaven in the safe talons of Jupiter's eagle (*Aetherias aquila puerum portante per auras*, 1.6.1), with the glory attained by the hare in its playful but safe relationship with Caesar's lion.

Finally, again following Horace (*Epist.* 1.20.5), Martial dismisses his book (*i, fuge*, 1.3.12), allowing it to run off to the bookshops, and symbolically granting it its freedom. But this raises another issue which will occupy the author in the rest of Book 1, that of plagiarism and claims by others to ownership of his poems.[25] The absence of copyright and of any protection against the appropriation of his work, once released or even publicly recited, must have especially troubled a poet like Martial, as yet little published and perhaps little known before the initial publication of Book 1.[26] Hence,

22 E.g. *libellos vernulas*, 5.18.4; cf. also 3.1.6.

23 For the permitted insolence of *vernae* cf. Horace, *Sat.* 2.6.66; Seneca, *Const. Sap.* 11.3; Martial, 1.41.2; 10.3.1. Cf. further, Howell (n.18) 193. On *vernae* in general cf. B. Rawson (ed.), *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (London, Sydney 1986) 186-200.

24 Cf. Vergil, *Georg.* 3.9; for the additional echoes of Ennius cf. Citroni (n.2) 29.

25 On the plagiarism (or Fidentinus) cycle of Book 1 cf. Barwick, (n.21) 308-9. To Barwick's list (1.29, 38, 52, 53, 66, 72) we can also add 1.63.

26 Of course, Martial does proclaim at 1.1.2 that he is 'known throughout the world' (*toto notus in orbe*) though, as I noted earlier, this epigram may well have been written considerably later than the original Book 1. It does seem unlikely that *Liber Spectaculorum*, *Xenia* and *Apophoreta* would have been sufficient to give Martial such universal acclaim before the publication of Book 1; nor would any private, pre-publication circulation of selections (*libelli*) as argued by P. White (n.7) 40 ff. It is worth

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

perhaps, his recurring references to plagiarism in this volume (though the subject is seldom mentioned thereafter, when his fame was more established).[27] So in 1.52, for example, he calls on Quintianus to help him stop an anonymous poet (probably the ironically named Fidentinus of 1.53) reciting the epigrams as his own. When the latter claims himself as their master, Quintianus is asked to assert that they are Martial's and have been manumitted by him (1.52.6-7).

Thus 1.3 anticipates the themes of the two most prominent series of epigrams in the volume and employs a combination of images drawn from the *recitatio*, the amphitheatre, the mime, as well as the figure of the pet slave, to establish a context for the behaviour of Martial's little book. And this continues in 1.4 as the poet exploits more aspects of contemporary literary and social life to illustrate and sanction the spirit of his creation.

The epigram is addressed to the emperor, though Martial does not actually count on it being seen by him, for it is only by chance that it may come into his hands (1.4.1). But if it does, the poet asks him to set aside the frown that rules the world (*terrarum dominum pone supercilium*, 1.4.2). The phrase refers to the censorial authority that the emperor had assumed in A.D. 85, shortly before the initial publication of Book 1.[28] Thus Domitian is the third in a series of possible censors, though the efforts of the previous two, the would-be Cato of the preface and even the author himself, have already been discredited. And in seeking further parallels to justify and protect his poetic freedom, Martial turns appropriately to a circumstance in which the emperor personally allowed not merely general licence but even mockery of himself, namely in the staging of a triumph. The notorious taunts once directed at Caesar during at his Gallic triumph were not at all unique, and neither, apparently, was Caesar's tolerance of them.[29] For Martial now reminds Domitian that he too had shown no displeasure in being the butt of jokes at his own triumphs, no doubt recalling his very recent triumph over the Chatti in A.D. 83:[30]

noting that Martial does not boast again of world-wide popularity until 5.13, after which the claim becomes more frequent (e.g. 6.64.25; 8.61.3; 10.9.3-4). And when he does speak between Books 1 and 5 of the extent of his fame, his claim is much less ambitious; at 3.95.7 he says only that he is 'known throughout the towns' (*notumque per oppida nomen*), Book 3 having been published from Cisalpine Gaul (cf. 3.1).

27 Elsewhere e.g. 10.100; 12.63.

28 On the date cf. Citroni (n.2) x, n.2. It is worth noting that Martial does not use *supercilium* elsewhere in a positive sense but, especially joined with *triste*, with the uncomplimentary notion of misguided or even hypocritical censorship. At 1.24.2, for instance, he points out the grim frown (*triste supercilium*) of the censoriously Stoic Decianus who has just married—as a bride. Cf. also 11.2.1-2 where he banishes the grim frown and stern looks of an inflexible Cato (*Triste supercilium durique severa Catonis/ frons*) from the licence of his Saturnalian verse.

29 Cf. Suetonius, *Iul.* 49.4. Commenting on the same triumph, Dio reveals (43.20) that the mockery of the *triumphator* involved political as well as sexual jests. Newman (n.16) 38 & 83, notes that *triumphalis licentia* is associated with mime in both Catullus and Horace.

30 Note Martial's reference at 7.8.7-9 to Domitian's tolerance of the soldiers' 'light-hearted insults' (*festa convicia*) and their 'jests and flippant verses' (*iocos levioraque carmina*) at his triumph (in this case that of A.D. 89). In '*Achilleae Comae*: Hair and Heroism Accor-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

> Consuevere iocos vestri quoque ferre triumphi,
> materiam dictis nec pudet esse ducem. (1.4.3-4)

And the emperor's liberality remains the focus as Martial returns in the next lines to the world of the mime, asking Domitian to read the epigrams with the same indulgence with which he watches the performances of Thymele and the jester Latinus:

> Qua Thymelen spectas derisoremque Latinum,
> Illa fronte precor carmina nostra legas. (1.4.5-6)

Again, of course, it is the obscenity of the mime that comes first to mind in this comparison with the intended tone of the epigrams. And Martial closes by insisting not only that his poetic games are harmless, but that while his themes are salacious his own life is pure (1.4.7-8)—a plea that anticipates the contrast he makes between Latinus' professional and personal life in his later tribute to the performer (9.28.5-6). But the description of Latinus as *derisor* (1.4.5) inserts a further element, namely the mime's licence to ridicule authority, exemplified by Latinus' famous role as the impudent trickster, outsmarting and, as the word implies, deriding the slow-witted husband or patriarch.[31] I have already likened this unconventional freedom in the world of the theatre to that enjoyed by the *verna* within the household. And both can be compared to the exception granted to the common soldier in the triumphs just mentioned. Thus, if we take these analogies wholly as attempts to excuse the use of obscene language we overlook another shared dimension. For each also draws on a circumstance in which, by a special concession, roles are reversed, with the underling claiming ascendancy and the licence to make sport of the powerful.[32]

Moreover, Latinus' relationship with Domitian may well have been one to which Martial himself aspired, at least in the fanciful world of his poetry. For despite (or possibly because of) his profession, the actor enjoyed a privi-

---

ding to Domitian', *CQ* 47 (1997) 209-14, L. Morgan argues for Domitian's willingness (at least in the earlier part of his reign) to make and share a self-deprecating joke.

31 For Latinus as *derisor* elsewhere in Martial cf. 13.2.3; 2.72.2-4; 3.86.3; 5.61.11-12. Also Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.44. Ovid, *Trist.* 2.497-520, notes how Augustus allowed an exemption from the rules of censorship for adultery mimes, despite their blatant obscenity and the way they subverted the social order by having the husband deceived and the crafty lover, or *derisor*, triumphantly acclaimed. In particular *Trist.* 2.505-6:

> Cumque fefellit amans aliqua novitate maritum,
> plauditur et magno palma favore datur.

Cf. also Cicero, *pro Caelio* 65. R.W. Reynolds, 'The Adultery Mime' *CQ* 40 (1946) 77-84, pieces together the popular, anti-authority role of the *derisor* typified by Latinus.

32 Cf. Newman's comment (n.16) 101-2: 'Martial often draws an analogy between his nugatory poetry and the mime. *This should not be taken only as excusing obscenity*.... It also presupposes dialogue, the discovery of a truth among the participants that even so slips between their grasping fingers, the revelation that inspires laughter, the publicised confidence that loses its shame and threat....' (my italics).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

leged intimacy with the emperor.[33] So it is perhaps no coincidence that the words which Martial puts into Domitian's mouth in the next epigram (1.5) portray the emperor calling the poet by his *praenomen* as if addressing a dear friend. The couplet is presented as the emperor's reply to Martial's plea in the previous epigram:

> Do tibi naumachiam, tu das epigrammata nobis:
> Vis, puto, cum libro, Marce, natare tuo.

The verse has aroused comment mostly for the familiarity that Martial perhaps cheekily asserts between himself and Domitian.[34] But equally noteworthy is the fact that the emperor is also represented as altogether ignoring the point of the poet's petition, which pleaded for indulgence toward the tone of the volume; whereas Domitian concentrates instead on the vast sea battles he stages as entertainment, only to be given in return a disgracefully paltry gift of epigrams.[35] It is not, as the poet presents it, the content of the offering but rather its size that the emperor finds offensive, and for which he jokingly threatens Martial and his book with participation in the imperial water show;[36] so Martial craftily portrays himself as gaining Domitian's tacit consent, at least for the content of his work. In fact, the implication is that the epigrams are simply too insignificant to merit serious consideration—a case, to anticipate the ensuing series of poems, not unlike that of the tiny hare which is far too small for the mighty lion to bother with.

In 1.3 Martial personified his book as an impertinent young slave, playfully escaping his master, and also brought the volume metaphorically into the arena to risk a throw on the rhinoceros horn of public opinion. The cycle of poems on the lion and hare which begins in 1.6 continues these ideas, first describing the flight of Jupiter's young cup-bearer, Ganymede, through the heavens in the talons of his master's eagle in the words used at 1.3.11 of the book's lofty attempt to achieve poetic immortality:

> Aetherias aquila puerum portante per auras
> Illaesum timidis unguibus haesit onus (1.6.1-2)

And Ganymede's safe flight in the eagle's claws in turn provides the analogy for the hare that plays without harm in the jaws of Caesar's lions (1.6.3-4) in

33 In *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans* (Princeton 1996) 107-8 and 137-44, Carlin Barton catalogues a long tradition of *derisores* like Latinus, installed as imperial favourites and given the role of what might be called the court jester, being allowed to indulge in a personal humour, even ridicule, forbidden to others. Their privileged status within the court may also be compared to that, in lesser households, of the *verna* whose impudence Martial has just compared to the spirit of his book.

34 Cf. Howell (n.18) 116; and 118 for the familiarity of the use of the *praenomen*.

35 Interestingly, the only other time when Martial puts a reply into the emperor's mouth (5.15.5), he similarly portrays him as ignoring the point of the poet's remarks; cf. my essay 'Putting a Price on Praise: Martial's Debate with Domitian in Book 5' in Grewing (n.1) 166.

36 The notion that the book is fit only to be submerged or burned, or used as food-wrapping, becomes a common joke in Martial e.g. 14.196; 3.2; 3.100; 4.10; 5.53; 9.58.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the arena. Just as the lions, like the eagle, are the miraculous incarnation of their master's virtues, so the hare is imbued with the spirit of the book, playing games (*ludit*, 1.6.4) with its adversary.[37] In the next poem of the series, then, we would expect the 'delights, games and jokes' which Martial says he has witnessed in the arena to apply to the hare though here they seem to belong rather to the lions (*Delicias, Caesar, lususque iocosque leonum/ vidimus*, 1.14.1-2).[38] But as the rest of the poem makes clear, the game must involve not merely one of the animals. The playful participation of both hare and lions is required to stage this daring entertainment, just as in 1.5 the emperor himself had been portrayed as entering into the jocular repartee of the epigrams.

Martial had closed 1.6 by comparing the emperor and Jupiter as equally authoritative sponsors of a miraculously gentle animal. And he ends 1.14 by insisting that the greedy lion's sparing of the hare is due to the fact that the beast is Caesar's, the animal once again embodying its master's character. But in the next epigram of the cycle, 1.22, panegyrical artifice gives way to a rather less fanciful and more mundane explanation. Why, Martial asks the hare, does it bother to flee the jaws of this lion which have not learned how to crush so small a prey (*frangere tam parvas non didicere feras*, 1.22.2)? These claws are reserved for much larger necks, and such a powerful thirst could hardly be satisfied with the meagre blood of a hare (3-4). The hare is a natural prey for dogs, not for huge jaws like these; the Dacian boy has no need to fear Caesar's weapons (5-6). This closing remark, implying that it is, rather, the greater adversary, the Dacian warrior, who should fear the emperor just as only a larger animal need fear the lion, reinforces the equation of lion and Caesar. In *Liber Spectaculorum*, however, Martial had repeatedly stressed, as a feature of the miraculous nature of the events in the arena, animals *unlearning* their natural instincts to act in an extraordinarily novel way.[39] In contrast, by arguing in 1.22 that the hare is spared precisely because the lion has not changed its nature, he takes the latter's behaviour out of the realm of the miraculous, and so seems to undercut the premise of the two previous poems in the cycle.

When the topic is resumed in 1.48 there is a further shift in emphasis, for now the hare becomes the marvel and assumes features of the lion itself, as it passes unharmed through those jaws from which the trainers have been unable to free huge bulls (1-2); even more amazing (*magis mirum*, 3), it gains still greater speed from its adversary and comes away also with something of the lion's own nobility (*nec nihil a tanta nobilitate refert*, 4). It

[37] Holzberg (n.1) 77-8 points out that in 1.7 Martial continues to use animals to represent a book of poetry, characterising the poems of Stella and Catullus as a dove and sparrow respectively.

[38] Martial, however, most often uses *deliciae* and *lusus*, both separately and together, to describe a small pet, either animal or child, such as the lapdog Issa who is her master's delight (*Issa est deliciae catella Publi*, 1.109.5), or the infant whom Bassa calls her plaything and delight (*lusus deliciasque vocat*, 4.87.2). For other examples cf. 5.34.2; 6.28.3; 7.14.2; 8.26.4; 8.82.6. Certainly, on this basis, the image would suit the tiny hare, the elusive pet of the lions, rather than the great beasts themselves.

[39] E.g. *Spect*. 12.5-6; 20; 33.3-4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

could be no safer if running in a deserted arena (*tutior in sola non est cum currit harena*, 5), or hidden in a cage, than it is in the lion's mouth. Indeed, if it seeks a place of safety from the jaws of the hounds (its natural enemies, as noted at 1.22.5), it has the lion's mouth as a refuge (*ad quae confugias ora leonis habes*, 8). This concern for safety and refuge recalls 1.3 in which Martial had reluctantly granted freedom to his fugitive volume, noting that it would have been safer at home (*I, fuge; sed poteras tutior esse domi*, 1.3.12). For it was about to face a dangerous adversary, the fickle Roman public, not coincidentally characterised as having the nose of a rhinoceros, an image lifted from the arena. So the notion in 1.48 that the hare can find not merely safe haven but even enhanced stature in the custody of a noble protector might also be suggestive analogously of the poet's hopes for his book. The idea will be strengthened in 1.60 when the lion assumes more explicitly the role of patron.

In spite of the lion's benevolence, however, Martial notes in 1.51 that this will be a challenging relationship, as the hare, full of bravado, tests the limits of the lion's tolerance. Only the foremost of necks, he says, can be prey for savage lions; so why does the hare, now ironically described as ambitious, actually put itself in the way of these teeth:

> Non facit ad saevos cervix, nisi prima, leones.
> Quid petis hos dentes, ambitiose lepus? (1.51.1-2)

It can hardly expect the lions to turn from the necks of great bulls to a throat they can barely see (3-4); the hare must stop hoping for a glorious death (*desperanda tibi est ingentis gloria fati*, 5), for such a tiny prey can not fall victim to so mighty a foe (6). This impudent but unpunished challenge to a dangerously powerful guardian is not unlike the earlier image of the soldiers cheekily teasing their imperial commander at the triumph (1.4.3-4) or even the defiant mockery of the *derisor* on the comic stage (1.4.5-6). But, in particular, the hare's ludicrous pretensions in seeking glorious immortality (thereby proving its greatness) by dying in the lion's jaws mirror the little book's equally laughable craving for literary immortality, expressed earlier in similarly ironic and pompous epic language (1.3.11).[40]

In 1.60 Martial continues to emphasise the insignificance of the hare compared to the size of the lion's normal prey (1.60.3-4), again portraying the little animal as tiresomely teasing the lord of the forests (*quid frustra nemorum dominum regemque fatigas*?, 1.60.5) in hopes of becoming a noble victim– all in vain, for the lion feeds only on game of his own choosing

[40] The hare's desire for a glorious self-sacrifice is also ironically reminiscent of the ostentatious martyrdoms of the imperial regime's Stoic opponents, exemplified by Cato and Thrasea. Martial mocks their self-serving suicides earlier in the book (1.8) when he praises Decianus for practising Stoic virtues without feeling the need to offer himself as an easy victim (*pectore nec nudo strictos incurris in ensis*, 8.3). Martial has no time for the man who buys fame cheaply with his blood (8.5), preferring one who wins praise without dying (*hunc volo, laudari qui sine morte potest*, 8.6). Similarly, perhaps, the hare (and by implication the book) is advised to follow the lead of Martial's friend (on whom cf. also 1.24; 39; 61) in adopting a laudable independence but not a suicidal rashness.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

(1.60.6). But here, in describing him as 'master and king' (*dominum regemque*), Martial leaves little doubt of the lion's function in the metaphor, clarifying his role as protector. For this is the phrase which he most often reserves for addressing patrons.[41] Thus the poem is now also linked with the search for the protection of patronage evident elsewhere in the book. As noted above, for example, Martial had entrusted his little volumes to Quintianus in 1.52, asking him to stand as their champion (*adsertor*, 1.52.5), and to defend their freedom against those who would claim them as their own. But it is, of course, imperial patronage which the poet will habitually seek above all, and the emperor, as has been noted recently of another epigram in Book 1, 'is the real object of the book's (and therefore the poet's) quest'.[42]

Martial keeps the longest epigram of the series for the last. And he ends the cycle, as he had begun it, by describing the events of the arena, and the relationship between lion and hare, as miraculous.[43] Powerful, fierce beasts submit meekly to the yoke or the rein; tigers endure the whip, bisons pull chariots, the mighty elephant performs a dainty dance at the bidding of its African trainer (1.104.1-10). Who would not consider these as spectacles of the gods (*quis spectacula non putet deorum?*, 11). Yet even these pale in comparison with the antics of the lions and the hares, the former hunting a prey unworthy of them, yet teased and tired by the timorous speed of the hares:

> Haec transit tamen, ut minora, quisquis
> venatus humiles videt leonum,
> quos velox leporum timor fatigat. (12-14)

For their part, the lions feel affectionately protective towards their tiny playmates, while the hares are again described as having no safer place of refuge than in these normally deadly jaws—for the lions are ashamed to crush such a tender creature, having only just come from slaughtering huge steers (15-20). This is not a clemency, Martial concludes, that they have had to acquire by training, for they gain it instinctively from the master they serve, that is, the emperor:

> Haec clementia non paratur arte,
> sed norunt cui serviant leones. (21-22)

The closing panegyric is perhaps not as wholly transparent as generally thought. Admittedly, it would not have been considered at all unmerciful to kill the powerful while sparing the weak—any more than to destroy the warrior race of Dacians while sparing their young. But Martial seems to have

41 E.g. 1.112.1; 2.68.2; 4.83.5; 10.10.5.

42 J. Geyssen, 'Sending a Book to the Palatine: Martial 1.70 and Ovid' *Mnemosyne* 52 (1999) 729. N. Holzberg, 'Neuansatz zu einer Martial-Interpretation', *WJA* 12 (1986) 210 also interprets the protection afforded to the hare by the lion as representing Martial's hopes for imperial sponsorship.

43 O. Weinreich, *Studien zu Martial* (Stuttgart 1928) 98-103 analyses 1.104 as a review of the whole series.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

clouded the picture by repeatedly undercutting the magnanimity of the lion's gesture, in suggesting less noble or miraculous explanations for the sparing of the hare—it is, he has said, not the natural prey of the lion, being simply too puny and insignificant for the great beast to bother with. Indeed, in his view, the lion would actually have to be trained to attack the hare. And, in any case, as he has just emphasised yet again, it has only just finished sating itself on the blood of far mightier victims. Moreover, though *saevus* (1.22.1; 1.51.1) is a natural and common epithet for lions, it can hardly be reckoned among human virtues, even those of a triumphant commander.[44]

Granted, the points of reference in this allegorical interpretation of the lion-hare series do not coincide in every detail. Martial switches, for example, from one lion to several, and likewise with the hare; while in the conclusion he distinguishes between the lions and the emperor as between, respectively, servants and master. Nevertheless, the book has been presented to us right at the outset of the volume, in 1.3, both in the setting of the *recitatio* and also, less predictably, in the metaphorical context of the arena. So we must surely envisage its continuing presence there, in some form, in the following series of epigrams from the amphitheatre, especially when the terms that define its spirit in the preface are those later used to characterise the behaviour of the animals in the arena.

Martial's initial comparison between the theatre of his epigrams and that of the mime is used most obviously to justify the blunt obscenity of his verse. But that should not hinder us from observing other features common to all the analogies the poet calls on in his introductory epigrams to illustrate and condone the tone of his work, in particular their penchant for social subversion and flouting of power. In the sanctioned freedom of the triumph, for instance, even the lowly soldier could make his imperial commander the butt of ribald satire; while, as the *derisor* or sleek trickster, Latinus exemplifies not simply the bawdiness of mime but its love of mockery and defiance of authority. And the notion of the underling impudently teasing the powerful with apparent impunity, even benign indulgence, in a setting where normal rules and expectations are suspended, is then pursued through the rest of the book in the theme drawn from the amphitheatre. For, as Martial had stressed throughout the *Liber Spectaculorum*, the arena itself is a magical theatre where the natural order can be reversed and conventions overturned.[45] Thus, Martial insists that his book, like the common soldier at the triumph, the mimic actor and the hare, lays claim to a similar freedom from censorial regulation and everyday constraints. It will be, to extend the poet's metaphor, no servile and fawning lap-dog but a nimble, ambitious and intrepid creature, bent on amusing and amazing with its cheeky effrontery. And what preserves the book above all, allowing it this licence, is its diminutive stature.[46] For in spite of its Vergilian pretensions, it remains a

44 For *saevus* used of lions, e.g. Lucretius, *Rer. Nat.* 3.306; Ovid, *Met.* 4.102.

45 Cf. the comments of J. Sullivan, *Martial: the unexpected classic* (Cambridge 1991) 10-11; K. Coleman, 'The *liber spectaculorum*: perpetuating the ephemeral' in Grewing (n.1) 17-23.

46 Cf. Holzberg's ideas (n.1) 88 ff. on the relative freedom enjoyed by writers in the minor genres such as epigram and satire to criticise authority by means of realistic character

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press

lowly home-bred slave, both insolent and indulged; in both scale and genre, it is surely too humble and insignificant to crush.

University of Otago JOHN GARTHWAITE

portrayal and use of topical issues. Holzberg (n.42) 212-3 similarly relates the possible insignificance of a minor genre like epigram to the immunity given to the hare compared to the lion's regular victims.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006647740000126X Published online by Cambridge University Press