

Aly Hassan Abdel Gayed Mohamed

Prose Epistulae in Martial

Prose prefaces are attested for prose works in Greek from the fourth century rhetoricians onwards, and the epistolary form emerges in the Hellenistic period.⁽¹⁾ The introductory sections to single works of poetry such as epic are contained within the poem itself.⁽²⁾ In a collection the opening poem can serve as an introduction, i.e. the poems of the anthologies of Meleager, Philip mention by the name a sample of the contributors to their *Garland*, equating each with a flower or vegetable, and Agathias describes the contents of his *Garland* by categories.⁽³⁾ Frequently the introductory poem which now heads a collection was originally intended for a smaller selection.⁽⁴⁾

Sometimes a poem was preceded by a verse preface in a less grand style.⁽⁵⁾ Martial and Statius are the first extant Latin poets to affix epistolary prose prefaces to collections of poetry.

Prose *epistulae* are affixed to *Books* 1, 2, 8, 9 and 12 of Martial's epigrams, and each has its own relationship to the book which it prefaces. 1 *praef.* and 9 *praef.* both quote a sample epigram. At 9 *praef.* the letter does not introduce the book which follows but refers solely to the epigram which contains. Of Martial's prefaces only 1 *praef.* is directed to the anonymous public, but it is still described as an *epistula* despite the absence of an epistolary form, only 8 *praef.* is a dedication to Domitian. The dominant theme is *apologia* for apparently damaging and

(1) Janson (1964: 16ff., 20ff.)

(2) Cf. Hom. Il. 1. 1-7, Virg. A. 1. 1-11.

(3) Cf. Anth. Pal. 4. 1-3

(4) Cat. 1.

(5) Cf. Cat. 65-6, 67-8, Persius, prologue in scazons, the elegiac preface to Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae*. See Viljamaa, (1968: 68ff.), Cameron, (1970: 119-29).

Prose Epistulae in Martial

risqué verse⁽¹⁾ or hasty composition.⁽²⁾ White has demonstrated that the *praefatio* to book 12 originally accompanied a small selection for Priscus in the form of a *libellus*.⁽³⁾ It was customary to send a covering letter when a *libellus* was submitted to a friend for criticism before revision and publication.⁽⁴⁾ Hence the epistolary preface develops as a vehicle to dedicate the work.⁽⁵⁾

Martial questions and critiques the Latin prose prefaces which he inherits, his five prefaces provide a range of responses to the literary tradition.⁽⁶⁾ His prefaces (especially those to *book 1* and *2*) respond to earlier prefatory models but also need to be read in the context of contemporary practice. Martial's experimentation with the prose preface was among the things which ensured its survival.

In the preface to *book 8* Martial informs us about the compilation of the book:

*Minus itaque ingenio laborandum fuit, in cuius locum
materia successerat: quam quidem subinde aliqua ioco-
rum mixtura variare temptavimus.*

(Mart. 8 *praef.* 5-8)

I have struggled less with talent, since contents have
taken its place. However, I've tried to vary some of it by
mixing in jokes...

Variare describes Martial's approach to *book 8* but could equally apply to the style of each of his prefaces, all have different addressees, different contexts, and different applications to the prefaced book. The

(1) Mart. 1 *praef.*, 8 *praef.*

(2) Mart. 12 *praef.*

(3) White (1974: 45f.)

(4) Cf. Plin. *Epist.* 1.2, 8, 3.10, 4.14, 5.12, 7.12, 8.19, 9. 29.

(5) Janson (1964: 107)

(6) Janson (1964: 107) that the 'normal' function of an epistolary preface was to dedicate the work to someone but Martial's first preface, which is epistolary (*epistola*, 1 *praef.* 17), has no specific addressee. This contrasts with Statius' epistolary prefaces in the *Silvae*, each of which has a specific addressee.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

level of experimentation seen in Martial's prefaces explodes the potential of the preface, a potential which is further explored by Martial's Flavian contemporaries and successors who preface their work (such as Statius, Quintilian, and Tacitus). Martial redefines the content and function of a literary form which was in danger of becoming confined to rhetorical principles and banal conventions.⁽¹⁾ He has the freedom to adapt the conventions of his predecessors to his own purpose because he is not writing within a genre which has a tradition of prose prefaces.⁽²⁾

In this paper I attempt to read Martial's prefaces in the context of Flavian Rome.⁽³⁾ For particular focus here are the prefaces which adopt and critique the literary tradition (*Books 1 and 2*) and those which have an impact on contemporary practice (*Books 2 and 8*).

Martial and the Earlier Prefatory Models

In the preface to *Book 2*, Martial draws on different previous literary models to establish the relationship between author, reader and text. The *topoi* established in Martial's first prose prefaces are comparable

-
- (1) Martial's first prose preface is clearly indebted to the tradition of Latin prose prefaces, but it is the differences, such as the fact that Martial is the first to preface poetry with prose, which invite us to reevaluate the purpose of this preface. Cf. Ogilvie (1967: 23) on Livy, who remarks that it is the novelties in Livy's preface which 'tell us most about his intentions.'
- (2) The prefaces of the *Garland of Meleager* and the *Garland of Philip* were known to Martial (see, for example, the first epigram of *De Spectaculis* which rewrites Antipater of Thessalonica *AP* 9.58), see Sullivan (1993: 84-93). For the history of Greek epigram, see Cameron (1993).
- (3) Janson (1964: 112) gives three reasons for the popularity of prose prefaces to collections of verse in the Flavian period: 1) the poet's necessity to praise the emperor, 2) the poet's necessity to distinguish himself from his work, and 3) its being a general trend. The first two reasons, though valid, do not help to explain why a prose preface facilitates such needs or why the trend is so popular in this period. Many poets manage to praise the emperor and distinguish themselves from their work in verse as does Horace, for example, in *Serm.* 2.1. That the prose preface became a trend is surely an unsatisfactory explanation in itself-the trend did not come out of nowhere. Martial, in essence, creates this trend.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

with those of historical works, which have well-defined prefatorial *topoi*.⁽¹⁾ For Sallust, Livy and Pliny the Elder, the preface functions as a pre-text, a point at which the author is able to define his authorial position, his readership and his subject matter. Sallust makes it clear that his introduction is separate from the body of the text:

*De cuius hominis moribus pauca prius explananda
sunt, quam initium narrandi faciam.*

(Sall. Bell. Cat. 4.5)

I must explain a few things about the man's
character before I begin my narrative.⁽²⁾

In the prefaces to Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* and the first book of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* the authors identify themselves in the first person singular and define the genre in which they have chosen to write.⁽³⁾ Having given up a public career,⁽⁴⁾ Sallust justifies his decision to write history and discusses its difficulties:

-
- (1) The 'usual' themes of the preface in Latin literature are outlined by Janson in her discussion of the prefaces to rhetorical, historical, and agricultural works. Janson (1964: 66-7) divides the *topoi* of historical works into three broad categories: 1) the *laudatio historiae*, in which the author praises his subject and asserts the excellence of history, 2) the reason for choosing this subject and a description of the particular field for consideration, and 3) the historian's attitude to his work and assertion of his impartiality. It is not so much these categories that are important but that common themes are dealt with by the historian before beginning the subject of the work. Martial, defining his relationship with his reader, text and context, establishes similar themes to illustrate his purpose: to imitate and to innovate.
- (2) Sallust's introduction to his first work, *Bellum Catilinae*, was published sometime between the death of Caesar and 40 BCE. On the problem of dating the work, see Rolfe (1947: xii-iii).
- (3) In the first four chapters Sallust refers to himself sixteen times (*mihi*, 1.3, *aestumo*, 2.8, *mihi*, 3.2, *ego*, *latus sum*, 3.3, *me*, *dissentirem*, 3.5, *mihi*, *decrevi*, 4.1, *statui*, *mihi*, 4.2, *potero*, *absolvam*, 4.3, *ego*, *existimo*, 4.4, *faciam*, 4.5), in his preface Livy refers to himself eighteen times (twelve first person verbs, six first person personal adjectives or pronouns).
- (4) In discussing his reasons for writing history, Sallust details his rejection of a political career at the beginning of the *Bellum Catilinae* (*Bell. Cat.* 4) and the *Bellum Jugurthinum* (*Bell. Jug.* 3-4). Sallust started his political career as tribune in 52 BCE. On Sallust's career, see Syme (1964: 29-42).

Prose Epistulae in Martial

*Ac mihi quidem, tametsi haud quaquam
par gloria sequitur scriptorem et auctorem rerum,
tamen in primis arduum videtur res gestas scribere.*

(Sall. *Bell. Cat.* 3.2)

And so for me, although the same glory is not
attached to the writer as to the doer, yet the writing
of history seems to be one of the most difficult tasks

Livy is similarly self-conscious of his decision to write history, he defines himself as an inheritor of the historical tradition,⁽¹⁾ is specific about the area in which he will write and the purpose of that writing. Livy struggles to attain the audience's attention (*animadversa*),⁽²⁾ for fear of readers who will have no interest in non-contemporary subject matter.⁽³⁾ Sallust, Livy and Martial are more interested in defining their position in relation to a wide readership than in eulogizing an addressee.⁽⁴⁾

In contrast, Pliny the Elder attempts to create a balance between self-definition and praise for the addressee. The preface to his first book of the *Naturalis Historia*, published in 77CE and dedicated to Titus, begins thus:

Libros Naturalis Historiae, novicium Camenis

(1) Livius *Ab Urbe Condita* 1 *praef.* 2

(2) Livius *Ab Urbe Condita* 1 *praef.* 8

(3) Livius *Ab Urbe Condita* 1 *praef.* 4

(4) This contrasts with many prefaces where the addressee is the author's primary concern. For example, the preface of Vitruvius' first book (*de arch.* 1 *praef.* 1) is a dedication to and eulogy of Augustus: *Cum divina tua mens et numen, imperator Caesar, imperio potiretur orbis terrarum invictaque virtute cunctis hostibus stratis triumpho victoriaque tua cives gloriarentur et gentes omnes subactae tuum spectarent nutum...*, "When your divine mind and spirit, emperor Caesar, acquired control of the world, all the people gloried in your triumph and victory-enemies were crushed by your unconquerable virtue. Everybody obeyed you..."

There is little self-definition in Vitruvius' preface, he is eager rather to praise the achievements and benevolence of the emperor. The shift of emphasis from the author to the addressee is evident from the twelve second person singular personal adjectives or pronouns.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

*Quiritium tuorum opus, natos apud me proxima fetura
licentiore epistula narrare constitui tibi, iucundissime Im-
perator; sit enim haec tui praefatio, verissima, dum ma-
xim*i* consenescit in patre. “namque tu solebas nugas
esse aliquid meas putare,”*

(Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 1)

These books of Natural History, a new task for your Roman Muses, born from my last brood, I have decided to recount to you, most wonderful emperor (let this address be yours, a most true one, while 'The Greatest' grows old with your father) in a rather licentious letter, For you were accustomed to think my trifles to be something.

Pliny begins by naming his work and claims to be writing something novel (*novicum*).⁽¹⁾ He is keen to locate his genre within a Roman tradition and claims to be inspired by the Camenae (*Camenis Quiritum tuorum*).⁽²⁾ Pliny is modest about the standard of his work, which, written in a 'lighter vein' (*quod levioris operae*),⁽³⁾ shows limited talent (*nam nec ingenii sunt capaces*).⁽⁴⁾ This mock-modesty is reinforced by Catullus quote in which he labels his work as 'trifles' (*nugae*).⁽⁵⁾ Much of this prefigures Martial, who directly associates himself with the Roman literary tradition,⁽⁶⁾ and discusses the extent of his poetic talent

(1) Cf. Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 14 where Pliny claims to be walking an “unbeaten path”.

(2) Cf. Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 1.

(3) Cf. Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 12.

(4) Cf. Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 12.

(5) The term '*nugae*' is first found in a literary context in Catullus' opening and first programmatic poem.

(6) Martial directly associates himself with four writers of Latin epigram, Catullus, Marsus, Pedo, and Gaetulicus. Domitius Marsus wrote an epigram on the deaths of Virgil and Tibullus as well as an epic *Amazonis*, which Martial mentions at 4.29, a *Melaenis*, *Fabellae* and a prose work *De Urbanitate*. Maecenas was his patron and Ovid speaks of him as a contemporary (*Ex P.* 4.16.5). Albinovanus Pedo wrote an epic on Germanicus'

Prose Epistulae in Martial

(*ingenium*).⁽¹⁾ Both Pliny and Martial use analogies for their work, for Martial, the Games of the Floralia are metaphor for the epigrams themselves (*iocus, ludus*),⁽²⁾ for Pliny, the production of the books is compared to childbearing and the *Natural History* is his latest baby. Pliny's mock-modesty is comparable with Martial's self-deprecating value-terms (and adoption of Catullan vocabulary). However, in Martial these terms become integrated into a network of descriptive labels which the author uses to define his work throughout.

Pliny's preface is a formal dedication to Titus and one which he claims (however ironically) is not intended for mass publication⁽³⁾. He acknowledges that his readers will not find his work pleasurable (*neque...legentibus blanda*),⁽⁴⁾ and does nothing to persuade them otherwise. At the end of the preface, he informs us that he has appended his preface with a table of contents so that the reader, should he wish, does not have to read the entire work:

*quia occupationibus tuis publico bono parcendum erat,
quid singulis contineretur libris, huic epistulae subiunxi
summaque cura, ne legendos eos haberes, operam dedi.
tu per hoc et aliis praestabis ne perlegant, sed, ut quisque
desiderabit aliquid, id tantum quaerat et sciat quo loco
inveniat. hoc ante me fecit in litteris nostris Valerius
Soranus in libris, quos ἑποπτίδων inscripsit.*

(Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 33)

campaign of which twenty three hexameters survive. Martial mentions him in 2.77, 5.5, 10.20.10 and Seneca calls him *fabulator elegantissimus* (*Ep.* 122.15). Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus may be the Gaetulicus in the Greek Anthology (see Gow and Page (1968: xlvi)). He is mentioned by Pliny at *Ep.* 5.3 as an erotic poet and three hexameters of *De Britannis* are preserved by Probus. He may have written an historical work (Suet. *Cal.* 8.1). For other Martial epigrams in which these authors are mentioned, see Citroni (1975: 10).

(1) Mart. 1 praef. 6.

(2) Martial defines his verse as a *iocus* at 1 praef. 15 and compares his epigrams with Floralia again at 1.35.8, see Howell (1980: 100-101).

(3) Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 6, 12.

(4) Plin. Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 13.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

For the public good and not to be taxing on your time, I have added to this letter a list of what is in each book and I have taken the utmost pains so that you don't have to read them. By doing this, you will make it possible for others not to have to read them right through, so that each person has only to look for what he wants, and knows where he can find it. Valerius Soranus did this before me in our literature, in the books which he called 'Initiates'.

Though the book is dedicated to Titus, Pliny has the public good (*publico bono*) in mind and intends his book to be accessible to a wide audience. Pliny's directions to the reader are here the opposite of Martial's, Pliny intends his History as a reference work—the reader can check the table of contents at the beginning and then flick to the appropriate page. By drawing attention to the contents' page:

*quid singulis contineretur libris huic epistulae
subiunxi.*

(Nat. Hist. 1 praef. 33)

I have appended what is in each book to this letter.

Pliny provides the reader with the freedom to select whatever material he wishes and to read discretely. The reader does not have to be Martial's *lector studiosus*⁽¹⁾ nor does he have to read all the way through (*ne perlegant*),⁽²⁾ Martial's semiotic preface, unlike Pliny's thematically categorized preface, requires the reader to engage with the text and to make connections.

Just as Martial experiments with the conventions of the epigrammatic tradition, so too he experiments with the formulae of prose prefaces. His experimentation with prefatorial conventions is best seen in the prefaces to *Books 1* and *2*, which, published at the same

(1) Mart. 1.1.4.

(2) Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 1 praef. 33.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

time,⁽¹⁾ are the antithesis of each other. The first, steeped in the conventions of Latin prose prefaces, provides a framework for understanding the relationship between author, reader, and text, whereas the second rejects the convention of a preface as tedious and redundant. These opposite approaches are a reaction to an increased trend in prefaces either to eulogize the emperor or patron or to compile a tedious list of a book's contents. Martial does neither in the prefaces to *Books 1* or *2*.

Having expounded the relationship between author, reader, and text in the preface to *Book 1*,⁽²⁾ in *Book 2* Martial critiques and responds to the tradition he inherits. By undercutting the importance of the preface in *Book 2*, Martial derides the phenomenon of the prose preface as a tedious obstacle to the work itself. He explicitly questions the purpose of a preface:

Valerius Martialis Deciano Suo Sal.

'Quid nobis' inquis 'cum epistula? parum enim tibi praestamus, si legimus epigrammata? quid hic porro dicturus es, quod non possis versibus dicere? Video quare tragoedia aut comoedia epistulam accipiant, quibus pro se loqui non licet: epigrammata curione non egent et contenta sunt sua, id est mala, lingua: in quacumque pagina visum est, epistulam faciunt. Noli ergo, si tibi videtur, rem facere ridiculam et in toga saltantis inducere personam. Denique videris, an te delectet contra retiarium ferula. Ego inter illos sedeo qui protinus reclamant.'
Puto me hercules, Deciane, verum dicis. Quid si scias, cum qua et quam longa epistula negotium fueris habiturus? Itaque quod exigis fiat. Debebunt tibi si qui in hunc librum inciderint, quod ad primam paginam non lassi pervenient.

(Mart. 2 praef.)

(1) Citroni (1975: ix), in accordance with Friedlaender (1968: 298) at the chronology of Martial's books, dates the simultaneous publication of *Books 1* and *2* between the end of 85 and the beginning of 86CE.

(2) For a commentary on preface to book 1 see Howell (1980: 95-101).

VALERIUS MARTTALIS TO HIS FRIEND
DECIANUS GREETINGS.

"What's it to us with this letter?" you say, "Do we give you too little, if we read the epigrams? And what are you going to say here that you're unable to say in verse? I can see why tragedy and comedy get a letter (i.e. preface), for they can't speak for themselves: epigrams don't need a crier - they are content with their own tongue, that's to say a bad tongue: they add a letter on whatever page seems right to them. So if you don't mind, don't be ridiculous by bringing on stage the figure of a dancer in a gown. Does it really please you to bring a stick against a Netsman.⁽¹⁾ I am sat amongst people who are protesting immediately." By Hercules, Decianus, I think you speak the truth. What if you knew what sort and how long a letter you would have had to deal with? So, it is as you wish. Any who come across this book will owe it to you that they don't arrive at the first page tired out.

This critique of prefaces within the preface results in a metapreface. Martial addresses the purpose of a preface (*Quid nobis...cum epistula?*)⁽²⁾ and questions whether it provides the author with an opportunity to say what he is unable to say in the body of the text (*quid hic porro dicturus es quod non possis versibus dicere?*).⁽³⁾ The inclusion of a preface is associated with the genre of the work (*video quare tragoedia aut comoedia epistulam accipiant...*),⁽⁴⁾ and the interlocutor says that prefaces are not needed in epigram because they

(1) A gladiator armed with net and trident (*retiarius*). He was opposed by *secutor* or *murmillo*, armed with sword and shield.

(2) Mart. 2 *Praef.* 1.

(3) Mart. 2 *Praef.* 2-3.

(4) Mart. 2 *Praef.* 4.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

speak with their 'own tongue'. A similar blurring between the pre-text and text has been seen in *book 1* where Martial ends the preface with four lines of verse to smooth the transition from the preface to *Epig.* 1.1. In the preface to *Book 2* the interlocutor explicitly states that in epigram there is no distinction between the preface and the text (*in quacumque pagina visum est, epistulam faciunt*).⁽¹⁾ Martial agrees with Decianus and cuts the preface short.

But Martial's response to Decianus' criticism can be read not just against Martial's own approach to prefaces but against Latin prose prefaces in general. The imagined situation is one in which Martial has announced his decision to write a preface and the crowd has protested (*protinus reclamant*).⁽²⁾ The reader is surely not reacting to the prospect of another Martial preface but to an increased trend to preface a work. Martial is elusive about the content of such prefaces but is clear about their length (*quid si scias cum qua et quam longa epistula negotium fueris habiturus?*).⁽³⁾ For example, Pliny the Elder's preface consists of ten pages which list the contents of the book. It is left to our imaginations how tedious Martial's preface would be, and how tired the readers (*lassi*), if he chose to list the contents of a book consisting of ninety three epigrams.

The impact of Martial's metapreface is well illustrated at the opening of the *Institutio Oratoria* where Quintilian prefaces the preface. The preface, in which Quintilian dedicates the book and outlines its contents, is preceded by a letter to Trypho, his bookseller.⁽⁴⁾ The letter enables Quintilian to express anxiety about the publication of the text at the same time as promoting it:

(1) Mart. 2 *Praef.* 6-7.

(2) Mart. 2 *Praef.* 10.

(3) Mart. 2 *Praef.* 11-13.

(4) It is surely no coincidence that Martial mentions a bookseller Tryphon in a prefatory position at 13.3.4 and addresses booksellers at the beginning (*Secundus* 1.2.7) and end (*Atrectus*, 1.117.13) of *Book 1*. Tryphon is also mentioned at 4.72.2 where Quintus is told to go to the bookseller, not Martial, for a copy of his book.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

M. Fabius Quintilianus Tryphoni suo salutem. Efflagitasti cotidiano conuicio ut libros quos ad Marcellum meum de institutione oratoria scripseram iam emittere inciperem. Nam ipse eos nondum opinabar satis maturuisse, quibus componendis, ut scis, paulo plus quam biennium tot alioqui negotiis districtus inpendi: quod tempus non tam stilo quam inquisitioni operis prope infiniti et legendis auctoribus, qui sunt innumerabiles, datum est. Vsus deinde Horati consilio.

(Quint. Epistula 1.1)

QUINTILIAN TO HIS BOOKSELLER TRYPHO
GREETINGS

Every day you demand that I start to publish the books which I have written for Marcellus on 'Educating the Orator.' I myself feel that they are not yet ready, I have only been putting them together for a little over two years, during which time I've been distracted by much other business. This time has been devoted not so much to writing as to the research of an almost endless task and to the reading of countless authors.

Quintilian detaches from the preface and the book itself all information about composition, publication and the title of the work. Yet the letter reads like one of Martial's prefatory epigrams, Quintilian names the publisher⁽¹⁾ and the title of the work,⁽²⁾ and establishes the work within the context of his literary predecessors. Quintilian marginalizes further material which Martial (and Statius) place in a prefatory position. This is obviously not a personal letter to the publisher, it serves as an introduction for the general reader, as a dedication for Marcellus, and as an *apologia* ('The work was completed faster than I wanted it to be'). What looks like a flippant 'tag', akin to one of Martial's *Xenia* or *Apophoreta*, is actually an innovative device to preface the work before the preface begins.

(1) Cf., Mart. 1.2.7 (*Secundus*), 13.3.4 (*Tryphon*).

(2) Cf., Mart. 13.3.1 (*Xeniorum*).

Prose Epistulae in Martial and Statius

Martial's relationship to his contemporary Statius merits particular attention because both authors, who were writing prose prefaces to collections of verse in the mid 90sCE, use the literary form to explore the relationship between author, text and power. Statius' *Silvae*, published at least five years after the publication of *Books 1* and *2*, are more consistent than Martial's prefaces. Each book of the *Silvae* has a prose preface which reads like an abbreviated Pliny preface, each has a specific addressee and outlines the subject of each poem in the book. *Silvae 1, 2, and 3* were probably published together after the publication of *Books 1* and *2* and the preface to *Silvae 4* was published at the end of 94/beginning of 95CE between publication of Martial's *Books 8* and *9*.⁽¹⁾ Statius' preoccupation with the form and content of his text in the preface to *Silvae 1* is similar to Martial's first preface whereas the prefaces to *Book 8* and *Silvae 4* comment more sharply on the interrelation of poetry and power in Domitian's Rome of 94/5CE.

In the preface to *Silvae 2*, Statius establishes his authorial pose and justifies his decision to write the *Silvae*. He refers to himself extensively (eight first person singular verbs, nine personal pronouns) in a preface which reads like an *apologia*, he justifies his reason for writing 'occasional' poetry by defining himself primarily as an epic poet and by citing the *Thebaid*. The *Silvae*, which give the poet the opportunity to write in a lighter vein (*stilo remissore praeluserit*),⁽²⁾ are mentioned in conjunction with minor works (*Culex, Batrachomachia*) of the two exemplary epic poets, Virgil and Homer. Statius assures the reader that the *Silvae* fit with his persona as an epic poet, but this comparison is ironic: Virgil and Homer wrote their minor works *before* they wrote epics. Statius sets up a code in which he claims to be following in the footsteps of his predecessors, only to invert it. Readers cannot help but read Statius as an epic poet just as they cannot read the *Silvae* without reading them through the *Thebaid*.⁽³⁾ The lucidity of Statius' prefatorial

(1) On the publication of Martial and Statius, see Fleadlaender (1968: 298ff).

(2) Stat. Silv. 1 *praef.* 11.

(3) On Statius' evaluation and critique of the *Thebaid* within the *Silvae*, see Malamud

Prose Epistulae in Martial

approach is captured by *praeluserit*: authorial 'prefacing' and 'playing' are collapsed into one.

In justifying their choice of genre, both Martial and Statius exploit the tension between the fact that these poems are short and yet are part of an organized collection. Statius claims to be scared (*timeo*)⁽¹⁾ about the publication of pieces which were composed so hastily:

*Diu multumque dubitavi, Stella iuvenis optime et in
studiis nostris eminentissime, qua parte evolvisti, an hos
libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate
fluxerunt, cum singuli de sinu meo pro [. . . .] con-
gregatos ipse dimitterem.*

(Stat. Silv. 1 *praef.* 1-5)

I have debated long and hard, Stella--you excellent man and outstanding in your preferred area of our hobby--about these *libelli*, which were produced in a sudden fervour and joy in hurrying, whether I should send them out as a collection, since I've already sent them forth one by one from my breast.

Statius posits a similar irony to Martial, he tells us that these are impromptu pieces, none of which took more than two days to write (*nullum enim ex illis biduo longius tractum*),⁽²⁾ yet he is gathering them together to be published as a collection which is well-contemplated (*Diu multumque dubitavit*) and which puts the author under pressure (*onerari*). The irony is further maintained in the second half of the preface where Statius lists the contents of each poem in the book. This is, as Hardie⁽³⁾ and Coleman⁽⁴⁾ have noted, more of a ploy for Statius to advertise himself than to give us a two lined synopsis of each poem. For whose benefit is this preface? Statius uses the preface to capitalize on the

(1995: 169-98).

(1) Stat. Silv. 1 *praef.* 8.

(2) Stat. Silv. 1 *praef.* 16.

(3) Hardie (1983: 65).

(4) Coleman (1988: 53-55).

Prose Epistulae in Martial

size and format of his collection,⁽¹⁾ he, like Martial, has already published individual pieces, or *libelli* comprised of a selection of poems, and utilizes the preface to advertise his poetry and to expand his audience by reiterating its contents. The contents list not only draws attention to his poetry as a self-contained collection but also gives the addressee of each poem pride of place in the preface. For example, at least one poem of each of the *Silvae* concerns the emperor (*Silv.* 1.1 on Domitian's equestrian statue, *Silv.* 2.5 on Domitian's tame lion, *Silv.* 3.4 on Domitian's boy, Earinus, *Silv.* 4.1 on Domitian's seventeenth consulship, *Silv.* 3.2 on Domitian's banquet, *Silv.* 3.3 on Domitian's new road) but the poem is not the first of the collection in each case. The preface, however, enables Statius to acknowledge the emperor at the beginning of each book without dedicating every poem or every preface to him. This intention is made clear at the beginning of the preface to *Silvae 4* when Statius reflects:

*Reor equidem aliter quam invocato numine
maximi imperatoris nullum opusculum meum coepisse.*

(Stat. *Silv.* 4 *praef.* 2-4)

I am aware that none of my little works have begun
in any way other than with an invocation of
the divinity of our greatest emperor.

Silvae 4, published in 95CE,⁽²⁾ and *Book 8*, published in December 94CE, and *Book 9*, published in the beginning of 95CE,⁽³⁾ are remarkable for their extensive treatment of the emperor. It has been presumed that Statius' treatment of the emperor in *Silvae 4* is because the poet "once again found himself the recipient of Domitian's favour".⁽⁴⁾ Though *Silv.* 4.2 thanks the emperor for a specific invitation to dinner, I would argue that the series of poems to Domitian (*Silv.* 4.1-3) reflects Statius'

(1) This is unique to Statius' collections, Martial could not have possibly attempted to give a synopsis of about one hundred epigrams.

(2) On the publication of *Silvae 4*, see Hardie (1983: 65), Coleman (1988:xx).

(3) On the publication of *Books 8* and *9*, see Sullivan (1991:40-42).

(4) Hardie (1983: 65).

Prose Epistulae in Martial

increased anxiety about maintaining connections with the emperor after his move to Naples. When read in conjunction with *Book 8, Silvae 4* reflects a poet's growing concern with poetry's worth under an autocrat. The preface to *Book 8* is the only preface which is a formal dedication and is Martial's most extensive address to the emperor. However, in both Martial and Statius' case, the treatment of the emperor is inextricably bound up with the poet's concern for his work. The beginning and end of the preface to *Book 8* illustrate my point:

*Imperatori Domitiano Caesari Augusto Germanico
Dacico Valerius Martialis S.*

Omnes quidem libelli mei, domine, quibus tu famam, id est vitam, dedisti, tibi supplicat; et, puto, propter hoc legentur. Hic tamen, qui operis nostri octavus inscribitur, occasione pietatis frequentius fruitur.

.....
.....*Cum pars libri et maior et melior ad maiestatem sacri nominis tui alligata sit, meminerit non nisi religiosa purificatione lustratos accedere ad templa debere. Quod ut custoditurum me lecturi sciant, in ipso libelli huius limine profiteri brevissimo placuit epigrammate.*

(Mart. 8 *praef.* 1-4, 13-18)

TO THE EMPEROR DOMITIANUS CAESAR
AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS DACICUS,
VALERIUS MARTIALIS SENDS GREETINGS.

All of my *libelli*, master, to which you have given fame, that is to say life, supplicate you, because of this I think they'll be read. But this one, which is entitled the eighth of my works more frequently enjoys the opportunity for reverence...Since the greater and better part of the book is bound up with the majesty of your sacred name, remember that no-one should approach temples unless they're cleansed by religious purification. So that prospective readers know that I'll observe this, I thought it best to

Prose Epistulae in Martial

announce it on the threshold of the *libellus* in the shortest of epigrams.

The juxtaposition of the emperor and Martial's poetry occurs at strategic points of the preface, Domitian's title is next to Martial's name in the dedication, and the concern with emperor and text is evident in the framing of the whole preface (it begins with *IMPERATORI*, it ends with *epigrammate*). In the first line of the preface the emperor and Martial's text are juxtaposed (*libelli mei, domine*) and this positioning is maintained in the first line of the first epigram of the book (*domini, liber*)⁽¹⁾. Martial's concern for the book's reception is made evident in his general address to prospective readers (*lecturi*), this preface is clearly an attempt to sustain his readership. An imprecation to one may facilitate the other, the books supplicate Domitian, and in turn will be read (*legentur*) by Martial's readers. Several epigrams in *Book 8* sustain the theme of imperial patronage and epigram's worth: in 8.24, Martial, requests that at least the emperor let a favour be asked of him, in 8.55, he complains that there is no longer the patronage that existed in Virgil's day, this is followed in 8.56 by an address to Domitian in his capacity as a giver (*magna...tribuas*).⁽²⁾ The intimate relationship between emperor and text

*Dante tibi turba querulos, Auguste, libellos,
Nos quoque quod domino carmina parva damus.*
(Mart. 8.82.1-2)

While the crowd gives you plaintive petitions, Augustus, we also give small poems to our master.

The focus on giving (*dante, damus*) underlines the reciprocity which Martial urges of the emperor and is again reinforced by the juxtaposition of Domitian and Martial's poetry (*domino carmina*).

A similar juxtaposition of emperor and text is evident in the preface to *Silvae 4*. The beginning and end of the preface reveal a similar preoccupation with emperor and text as we have seen in Martial's

(1) Mart. 8. 1. 1.

(2) Mart. 8. 56. 1.

eighth preface:

STATIVS MARCELLO SVO SALVTEM

*Inveni librum, Marcelle carissime, quem pietati tuae
dedicarem. reor equidem aliter quam invocato numine
maximi imperatoris nullum opusculum meum coepisse;
sed hic liber tres habet [. . .]⁽¹⁾ se quam quod quarta ad ho-
norem tuum pertinet. primo autem septimum decimum
Germanici nostri consulatum adoravi; secundo gratias egi
sacratissimis eius epulis honoratus; tertio viam Domitia-
nam miratus sum qua gravissimam harenarum moram
exemit:
..... quare ergo plura in quarto Silvarum quam in
prioribus? ne se putent aliquid egisse, qui reprehenderunt,
ut audio, quod hoc stili genus edidissem. primum super-
vacuum est dissuadere rem factam; deinde multa ex illis
iam domino Caesari dederam, et quanto hoc plus est quam
edere! exercere autem ioco non licet? 'secreto' inquit.
sed et sphaeromachias spectamus et palaris lusio admittit.
novissime: quisquis ex meis invitus aliquid legit, statim
se profiteatur adversum. ita quare consilio eius accedam?
in summam, nempe ego sum qui traducor: taceat et
gaudeat. hunc tamen librum tu, Marcelle, defendes. et, si
videtur, hactenus, sin minus, reprehendemur. vale.*

(Stat. Silv. 4 praef. 1-9, 26-37)

I have found a book, dearest Marcellus, that I can dedicate in your honour. I am aware that none of my little works have begun in any way other than with an invocation of the divinity of our greatest emperor. But this book has three...and it is the fourth which does you honour. In the first I have honoured the seventeenth consulship of our Germanicus, in the second I have given thanks for the honour of his most sacred banquet, in

(1) There is a lacuna recognized by Hahn here, though it is not in the MSS. See Mozley (1928: 202), Coleman (1988: 2 n.4).

the third I have marvelled at the Domitian Road, by which he has ended the terrible delay on the sandy path.....
...Why then do I have more in the fourth book of *Silvae* than in those before? So that they who have criticized me, so I hear, for producing this kind of verse, may think that they have achieved nothing. Firstly, it is pointless to dissuade a done deed, secondly, I had already given many of them to master Caesar, and how much more important is that than publishing?! Is it not permitted to write playfully? "Secretly," he says. But we watch ball games and fencing-matches let people in. Finally, whoever reads anything of mine unwillingly, at once proclaims himself an enemy. So why should I take his advice? In the end, it's only me who is abused: let him be silent and rejoice. But you, Marcellus, will defend this book if it seems right, if not I must be criticized. Farewell.

Stattius is the first to tell us that this book treats Domitian more extensively than any other. Both Martial and Stattius are reflective about the nature and extent of their work, as they had been in the prefaces to *book 1* and *Silvae 1*, but here, at the almost simultaneous publication of *book 8* and *Silvae 4*, both authors make a sharper connection between their work and the emperor. Stattius tells the reader that this is the fourth book of his *Silvae* (*quarto silvarum*) and that it's the longest and Martial, in the preface to *Book 8*, tells the reader that this is his eighth book (*operis nostri octavus*)⁽¹⁾ and one more reverent than the others. In his last preface,⁽²⁾ Stattius evaluates himself as both an epic poet (he mentions the publication of the *Thebaid* and a letter which prefaced it: *epistola, quam ad ilium de editione Thebaidos meae*

(1) Mart. 8 *praef.* 3.

(2) The preface to *Silv. 5* is only a preface to the first poem of the book. Most of the poems in *Silv. 5* were posthumously edited into the present book. See Bright (1980: 52).

Prose Epistulae in Martial

publicavi),⁽¹⁾ and an 'occasional' poet, as he had done at the outset of the *Silvae*. He defines his work as playful (*ioco*),⁽²⁾ and defends his choice of genre (*stili genus*),⁽³⁾ as he had in his first preface (*stilo remissore*).⁽⁴⁾ Maintaining the level of self-referentiality, Statius names the title of his work (*silvarum*),⁽⁵⁾ defines its context (*Saturnalibus*),⁽⁶⁾ and specifies metres (*hendecasyllabos*).⁽⁷⁾ These comments not only recycle Statius' definition of his work in his first preface (the language of *ioco* recalls *praeluserit*, *Silv. 1 praef.* 11) but align the type of poetry he is writing with Martial's.⁽⁸⁾ The title of the work, *silvae*, derived from the Greek ὕλη,⁽⁹⁾ draws our attention to the collection as a mass, the title further exploits the tension between these books as heaps of material and yet systematically structured collections. The definition of poetry as a *iocus*, the festive setting, the hendecasyllabic metre all recall Martial's 'programmatic unit'.⁽¹⁰⁾ In defending his choice of

(1) Stat. *Silv. 4 praef.* 18-19.

(2) Stat. *Silv. 4 praef.* 36.

(3) Stat. *Silv. 4 praef.* 32.

(4) Stat. *Silv. 1 praef.* 11.

(5) Stat. *Silv. 4 praef.* 30, also in the preface at *Silv. 3.1*.

(6) Stat. *Silv. 4 praef.* 28.

(7) Stat. *Silv. 4 praef.* 28.

(8) Martial and Statius never mention each other. Rivalry between the two seems likely from Statius' comment in the preface to *Silv. 2* that a few of his shorter, 'lighter' poems are like epigrams: *In arborem certe tuam, Melior, et psittacum scis a me leves libellos quasi epigrammatis loco scriptos* (*Silv. 2 praef.* 17-9), "Certainly you know that the lighter poems on your tree, Melior, and the parrot, were written in place of an epigram."

(9) Both *Silvae* and ὕλη commonly mean 'trees' or 'forest', but both words can more generally mean 'mass' or 'matter'.

(10) The Saturnalia is the setting for the prefaces of *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*, the Floralia is the context for the preface to *Book 1*. Martial defines his verse as a *iocus* at *1 praef.* 7, 1.4.3. The first epigram of *Book 2* is in hendecasyllables and Martial defines himself as a writer of hendecasyllables at 10.9.1.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

poetry (*exercere autem ioco non licet?*)⁽¹⁾ Statius is concerned with what he is permitted to write. Despite his statement that the emperor has already read the poems addressed to him, Statius' defense and justification of his verse coincides with his excessive praise⁽²⁾ of the emperor's achievements (his seventeenth consulship, his banquet, his new road) at the opening of the preface. The address to Marcellus at the beginning and end⁽³⁾ not only frames the preface but binds Statius' justification of his verse at the end of the preface to the treatment of the emperor at the beginning.

Martial's prefaces to *Books 1* and *2* exploit the possibilities for a preface to mean. The preface to *Book 8* exposes the relationship between text and political power. The prefaces to *Books 9* and *12* are different again, the preface to *Book 9* sets up a model for the ideal relationship between image and text, a theme which is played out through the book. The preface to *Book 12* details the changed relationship between Martial and his book, after the move to Spain, Martial is regretful that Bilbilis does not provide the same subject matter as Rome. Martial's experimentation with the way a preface connects with a work opened up the potential for authors to adapt a preface to their own purposes. It is no accident that the relationship between author, text and political power, is stated explicitly in the preface to Tacitus' *Agricola* after the assassination of Domitian. The preface integrates the customary themes of prefaces to historical works within a personal and political context.⁽⁴⁾ Tacitus' preface, which celebrates the intellectual freedom absent from Domitian's reign,⁽⁵⁾ differentiates clearly between present liberality and former tyranny:

(1) Stat. 4 *praef.* 31.

(2) Stat Silv. 4 *praef.* 7: *adoravi*, 4 *praef.* 7: *gratias egi*, 4 *praef.* 9: *miratus sum*.

(3) Stat Silv. 4 *praef.* 1, 42.

(4) For a commentary on the preface to the *Agricola*, see Ogilvie and Richmond (1987: 125-40).

(5) The preface to the *Historiae* is different again, here, Tacitus gives us a synopsis of his his book's contents but does not categorize the material (as Pliny had done), but rather provides the reader with a general introduction.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

Exilium acta, ne quid usquam honestum occurreret. dedimus profecto grande patientiae documentum; et sicut vetus aetas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in servitute, adempto per inquisitiones etiam loquendi audientique commercio. memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdidissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset oblivisci quam tacere.

Nunc demum redit animus.

(Tacitus, *Ag.* 2.3-3.1)

Certainly we have a given great proof of submissiveness, and just as the olden age saw extreme liberty, so we see extreme slavery, deprived even, through espionage, of the intercourse of speech and hearing. We would have lost memory as well as voice, if forgetfulness was in our power as much as silence.

Now finally spirit returns...

The transition from Martial and Statius' comments on the emperor in the prefaces to *Book 8* and *Silvae 4* to Tacitus' comments on the same emperor in the preface to the *Agricola* would take just over a year.

Bibliography

- Bright, D.F. (1980). “*Elaborate Disarray, the Nature of Statius' Silvae*”, (Beitrage zur Klassischen Philologie 108) Meisenheim am Glan, 20-49.
- Cameron, Alan. (1970). “PAP. ANT. III. 115 and the Iambic Prologue in Late Greek Poetry”, CQ ns 20, 119 -29.
- Cameron, Alan. 1980. “*The Garland of Philip*,” GRBS 21: 43-62.
- Cameron, Alan. (1993). *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes*. Oxford.
- Citroni, Mario. (1975). *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Liber Primus*. Firenze.
- Coleman, KM. (ed.) (1988). *Statius Silvae 4*. Oxford.
- Friedlaender, Ludwig. (1968). *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, v.4, translated by A.B. Gough. London.
- Gow, A.S.F., and Page, D.L. (eds.) (1968). *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams*. Cambridge.
- Hardie, A. (1983). *Statius and the Silvae: poets, patrons and epideixis in the Graeco-Roman world*. Liverpool.
- Howell, P. (1980). *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial*. London.
- Janson, Tore. (1964). *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions*. Stockholm.
- Malamud, Martha A. (1995). “*Happy Birthday, Dead Lucan: (P)raising the Dead in Silvae 2.7*” in A.J. Boyle ed. *Roman Literature and Ideology: Ramus Essays in Honor of J.P. Sullivan*. Aureal Publications, Victoria, (1995).
- Mozley, J.H. (1928). *Statius (Vol. 1)*. Cambridge.
- Ogilvie, R.M. and Richmond, I. (1967). *Cornelii Taciti De Vita Agricola*. Oxford.
- Rolfe, J.C. (1931). *Sallust*. Cambridge.

Prose Epistulae in Martial

- Sullivan, J.P. (1991). *Martial: The Unexpected Classic*. Cambridge.
- Sullivan, J.P. (ed.) (1993). *The Classical Heritage: Martial*. New York.
- Syme, R. (1964). *Sallust*. Cambridge.
- Viljamaa, T. (1968). *Studies in Greek encomiastic Poetry of the early Byzantine Period*, Helsinki.
- White, P. (1974). "*The Presentation and dedication of the Silvae and the epigrams*". *JRS* 64. 40- 61.