

THE 'EPIC' OF MARTIAL

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the composition and arrangement of Martial's twelve-book series, the *Epigrams*. I investigate the way in which key themes combine to create a pseudo-narrative for the reader to follow which connects not only individual books but the series as a whole. This twelve-book series creates an 'anti-epic', something which is meant to be considered as a whole and read, and reread, as such. In the course of investigating the inter- and intratextual links within the *Epigrams*, we see how Martial's corpus instructs its reader on how (and even where) to read the text. In doing so Martial is engaging with a literary discourse at the end of the first century on different patterns of reading.

The key themes explored, oral sex and *os impurum*, food and dining, and a literary theme comprised of reading and writing, all form part of this programmatic literary instruction to the reader. I have identified the importance of 'orality' within the *Epigrams* as part of the defined method of reading. Applying concepts from Reader-Response theory, and thinking about the way readers read, we can see that Martial's books of epigrams are more than the sum of their parts.

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Chapter 1

The Importance of Themes in Martial's *Epigrams*.

Martial's twelve books of epigrams have, over the years, been excerpted, selected, censored, and reorganised according to each editor's particular whims and view of Martial's poetry.¹ This has, to some extent, been encouraged by the view of the *Epigrams* as occasional poetry, written for specific occasions and/or to elicit patronage, and the books themselves as simply a place for Martial to collect together whatever material he happened to have lying about.

However, in the last twenty years scholars have begun to think again about the *Epigrams*, recognising that the books are not simply haphazard concatenations, but structured literary works, with a variety of methods employed by the author in order to connect and interlink the poems within each book. Much has been published looking at cycles and themes within individual books, but no one has, so far, looked in depth at the twelve numbered books of the *Epigrams* as a 'dodecapartite whole' as suggested by Holzberg and

¹This analysis does not include the *Liber de Spectaculis*, *Xenia*, or *Apophoreta* which are previously written works and not part of the twelve-book project which Martial set himself. Martial himself dismisses these earlier books as *juvenilia* near the end of Book 1; 1.113 — 'quaecumque lusi iuvenis et puer quondam' (*whatever verses I scribbled as a young man and child*).

Lorenz.²

In this thesis I explore the way in which the *Epigrams* are purposefully structured and interlinked by the author, not just within the individual books, but as a twelve-book series.³ In exploring the way themes are used within the series to connect poems and books, I also investigate how intertextuality, especially with Latin epic poetry, creates an understanding of the type of work the reader has in front of them and suggests methods of reading. In doing this Martial makes a critical intervention in a discourse of reading at the end of the first century AD of how literary works are to be read and appreciated by their readers. Through this 'anti-epic' he suggests that his genre of Latin epigram requires a different approach on the part of the reader.

1.1 Themes and Reading: Aims Of This Study

This study poses one central question about Martial's work, namely, how does Martial connect the twelve books of the *Epigrams* as a literary series which is meant to be read, and reread, as such?⁴ In order to answer this, the study focuses on the materiality of the book and the role of the reader in appreciating the author's work. A general and pervasive theme of orality is identified as occurring throughout the twelve books, a focus on the reader's mouth and what they are, and are not, using it for as relevant to the act of reading. The first three chapters explore the three main themes which combine to produce this pervasive atmosphere of orality.

Chapter One looks at the general literary theme which can be seen in the *Epigrams*, composed of poems on writing, reading, poetry, and other authors. After looking at ways

²Holzberg 2002, Holzberg 2004: 209, Lorenz 2004: 279.

³Throughout the analysis the term 'link' is frequently used in this regard. I use this terminology in its most general sense to describe where a connection can be drawn between individual poems and books.

⁴It should be noted that throughout this thesis when referring to 'Martial' I am looking at the persona the poet presents through his poems, and I make no assumptions about the 'real' person behind this persona.

of reading in the ancient world, the analysis confines itself to one of the books of the series, Book 7, to provide an example of how this literary theme interacts with other topics and themes in an individual book and provides a structure for the reader to follow.

Chapters Two and Three focus on following the main part of the orality of the *Epigrams*, that of oral sex and *os impurum*, through the twelve-book series. Chapter Two focuses on a 'first-time' reading of each book of the series in order, showing how topics and characters become associated with the theme and provide connections within and between books. Chapter Three takes Martial's own suggestion from the preface of Book 1, and rereads the series as the *lector studiosus*, exploring how new poems retrospectively become part of the theme due to associations with poems from later books, and how the series can be better appreciated by the reader on rereading.

Chapter Four looks at the final of the the three themes under consideration, that of food and dining. By following the intratextual invitation poems and exploring the cycles created around them through the interaction of the other two themes, the chapter shows how under appreciated the layers inherent in Martial's books have been by previous scholars by not considering the way in which themes and books interact, especially for the 'careful' reader of the *Epigrams*.

The final chapter takes this interaction of the three themes which together provide a sense of orality in the series further, providing a summing up of the themes previously explored. The chapter looks at the explicit connections of the themes through a series of examples. Further, possible links between the *Epigrams* and Latin epic, specifically Vergil's *Aeneid* are explored, looking at one of the thematic links the reader may have picked up on, questioning whether the *Epigrams* can be seen as a new form in the epic genre, or even some kind of 'anti-epic'.

1.2 View From The Past: The History of Epigram And Its Scholarship

1.2.1 What Is Epigram? Where Did It Come From?

Epigram originates from ancient Greek sepulchral, commemorative, or dedicatory inscriptions — the Greek, ἐπίγραμμα, meaning a ‘metrical inscription’.⁵ Epigram developed from an inscriptional form, and it has been argued by Cameron that by the fourth century BC the main context for the performance of epigrammatic works was the symposium.⁶ However, as noted by Harder in her review of Cameron’s book, while poetry, particularly elegy and epigram, may have been performed orally, the sophistication of many of the texts produced, the ‘intertextual and structural subtleties’ suggests that ‘full appreciation of such texts...depend[s] on their being read for or by a select group of learned listeners or readers.’⁷ Nevertheless, it is true that these texts did at least present the fiction of orality, a sense that even if they were read individually or by smaller groups than at the symposium, the text itself suggests a larger gathering. Greek epigram can be seen as sympotic, part of the atmosphere of the symposium, and Cameron’s argument about the oral performance of poetry can be emphasised while still recognising that these texts may have been read in other contexts.

The Hellenistic era saw epigram develop into a separate literary form, with authors beginning to produce written collections, and epigram beginning to acquire all the requirements of an autonomous literary form and genre.⁸ These were later gathered into antholo-

⁵Baumbach, Petrovic, and Petrovic 2010: 6n29.

⁶I am here passing over much of the scholarship on inscriptional epigram (on which see in particular Baumbach, Petrovic, and Petrovic (eds) 2010), as their place as a literary genre or otherwise does not have a direct effect on the epigrams Martial writes.

On how the tropes of inscriptionality are developed in literary epigram, see Bruss 2005. On the performative nature of Greek epigram, see Cameron 1995: 71ff.

⁷Harder 2002: 600.

⁸On the literary development of literary epigram, see Gutzwiller 1998.

gies, such as the first-century BC *Garland* of Meleager, and the later *Garland* of Philip. Modern knowledge of Greek epigram comes from the *Greek Anthology* (*AP*), an anthology originally compiled by Constantine Cephalas in the mid-tenth century, with additional poems in modern editions provided by the fourteenth-century rearranged and bowdlerised redaction of the anthology of Planudes (*APL*). Additional epigrams have been taken from papyri found at Oxyrhynchus, citations in other works, and inscriptional epigrams.⁹

In Latin epigram, while there are some examples in authors such as Catullus, the main Latin epigrammatist recognised by history has been Martial.¹⁰

1.2.2 View From The Past: The Reception of Martial

In the *Epigrams*, the persona of the poet often hopes that his poems will continue to be known and read after his death, and despite Pliny's assertion otherwise, Martial's corpus has continued to be popular and read from especially after the fourth century to the modern day.¹¹ The books themselves have continued to be in circulation, and Martial's poems have been quoted by authors, as well as the epigrams themselves influencing later authors. Sullivan, in what is still the only full length book looking at Martial's corpus in its entirety, dedicates a significant portion to describing the reception of Martial after his death.¹² However, in terms of the ideas discussed in this thesis, it is worth a closer look at eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglophone interpretations of Martial as they continued to influence scholarship on Martial up to the end of the twentieth century, and some of these views are still espoused by academics today.

Interest in Martial reached its peak in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth cen-

⁹On the history of the *Greek Anthology*, the most recent summary can be found in Livingstone & Nisbet 2010: 5-21.

¹⁰On earlier Latin epigram, see Kay 1985: 9 and Sullivan 1991: 93-100. Livingstone and Nisbet 2010: 99-105 include a summary of some of the pre-Martial Latin epigram before moving on to Martial's debt to his Greek models.

¹¹Appendix B — Pliny *Ep.* 3.21.

¹²Sullivan 1991: 253-312.

turies, but his reputation decreased significantly in later centuries. This lack of esteem from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries is due to the view of his poems as obscene and obsequious.¹³ This decrease can be seen through the abrupt stop in publications of Martial's works; after Elphinston's 1782 edition, the next translation of Martial is not published until over seventy years later with Amos' 1858 publication, *Martial and the Moderns*. The English translations of Martial's epigrams in the eighteenth century were relatively few. There were five publications of the epigrams (or selections of them), though some epigrams were also published within other texts.¹⁴ The more obvious obscenity of Martial's writings affected its popularity with translators, as well as the work not fitting into moralistic education in the same way as they viewed satire. Even though Martial was translated, and perhaps *more* so because it was translated (who are translations *for?*), the translators felt more need to 'apologise' for their work; for example, in the preface to his translation Hay admits that he has not translated all of the epigrams as 'that would be unpardonable' as 'many are full of obscenity, beneath a man: others of adulation, unbecoming a Roman.'¹⁵ Also, Martial's *untranslatability* can almost be seen as convenient, given the sheer number of poems contained in the books. A full translation of the entire corpus was not actually attempted until the late twentieth century.

Martial was used by eighteenth-century translators, showing the life of a poor poet in Rome and the dependence on patronage that entailed, and epigrams that were used to build up a picture of the topography of Rome.¹⁶ The epigrams chosen by the translators on the whole concentrate on historical and social ideas of Rome, and especially ones in which 'Martial' describes his books or writing career.¹⁷ Further, epigrams which contain any form of obscenity are only chosen if they can be expurgated to the extent that some kind of

¹³Sullivan and Boyle 1996: xvi.

¹⁴Cf. Watson 1971.

¹⁵Hay 1755.

¹⁶For example, Killigrew's translations of 5.69 (historical), and 9.14 and 11.52 (dinners and patronage in Imperial Rome).

¹⁷For example, Killigrew's translation of 1.1 and 12.94 which are both about Martial's writing.

'message' or informative picture can still be imparted. Translators also tried to make the epigrams part of a moralistic literature, using satire as their model, and it is through the process of making Martial 'moral', that obscene epigrams were sometimes translated.

Nineteenth-century published receptions of Martial focused less on his poems as a model for the genre of epigram, and instead increasingly began to use Martial solely for historical and cultural information about Imperial Rome. Moreover, the intended readership of publications began to move from the general educated reader, to more specifically, the school-boy/university student. However, this change from general to educational meant that even more than previously, editors and translators felt the need to apologise for what was seen as the less savoury side of Martial's work – his flattery of the emperor and the obscenity of the epigrams.¹⁸ Even though most editors would not include these poems, the use of Martial needed to be justified, his good points seen to be outweighing any bad ones.

In the late nineteenth century Martial's popularity reappeared, with several editions published in the space of thirty years, perhaps spurred on by the renewed interest in Greek epigrams with the publications of selections from the *AP*.¹⁹ However, this sudden popularity was not without its problems, and the question of legitimation was an ever-present issue for the editors and translators of Martial.

The first translation of Martial published in the nineteenth century was *Martial and the Moderns* in 1858. Amos argues that the object of the book is to discover 'how much a classical author, whose works have fallen into neglect, may have contributed to forming the character and advancing the progress of English literature.'²⁰ He accompanies many of the epigrams with either previous translations or examples of English poems. As previously,

¹⁸As Livingstone and Nisbet (2010: 109) point out: '...Nero and Domitian were conventionally deprecated as "bad" Emperors, and the literature of their era...was viewed as a sad symptom of moral collapse.'

¹⁹Livingstone and Nisbet describe this as when 'Greek epigram, previously the playground of a small educated elite, first impacted on the new literate mass culture of industrialised Britain' (2010: 141). They focus on John Addington Symonds' *Studies of the Greek Poets*, and the conservative reaction to Symonds' liberal interpretation of the *AP* such as Mackail 1890. Cf. Nisbet (forthcoming), which looks at Greek epigram and the *AP* in British print culture from 1805 to 1929.

²⁰Amos 1858: iii.

Amos did not attempt to publish all of Martial's works, but instead resorted to selection. Amos also arranged the poems differently from, for example, eighteenth-century editors, and instead of publishing his selections in the same order as they appeared in Martial's books, he arranged his chosen poems under different headings, using the epigrams as evidence for different aspects of Roman life, culture, and society.²¹ Not that this was an uncommon use of Martial's works - books on both the history and topography of ancient Rome often used Martial's epigrams as evidence of what it was 'really' like. Burn, for example, has a hundred references to Martial in his topography of ancient Rome, and writers such as Friedländer use Martial as evidence for Roman history and culture.²²

However, while still claiming Martial as evidence for Roman life, later editors did not follow Amos' model of arranging the epigrams under appropriate headings, continuing to publish within the schema of the original works. Bohn's text in 1860, as part of his *Classical Library* series, included all the epigrams from Martial's books, providing the Latin, a translation (for most of them), and often a translation from Elphinston's eighteenth-century edition.²³ Bohn manages to justify translating all but a minority of the poems; for those which he has decided are unsuitable for his readers, due to the actions or ideas contained within them, he provides the Latin and an Italian translation — perhaps deciding that those who cannot read Latin will also be unable to read Italian, or that any Gentleman able to read Italian is a man of wide culture and so will not be corrupted by such material. Webb's 1879 edition is very much a selection of the epigrams, as he has only chosen a few poems from each book to translate, and provides a parallel text.

The three later editions of Martial's epigrams in the nineteenth century all reproduce

²¹Amos' section heading were: Public Shows, Literature, General Life, Roman Life, Roman History, Mythology, Topography, and Moveables.

²²Burn 1871, Friedländer 1862-7.

²³Bohn's edition is much like that of Friedländer (1886). Friedländer's highly influential edition of the epigrams includes the poems in Latin with an introduction and commentary in German. He includes all the poems, and much like English editors, makes much apology for Martial's obscenity and obsequiousness to the Emperor (cf. pp. 3-26).

the text in Latin, with English introductions and commentary. These were obviously aimed towards a different readership than the earlier editions, and had a much stronger educational aim, as seen by the title of Sellar and Ramsey's 1884 edition — *Extracts from Martial: for the use of the humanity classes in the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow* — and Paley and Stone in 1880, who, in the preface to their edition, state that one of their aims is to 'bring Martial into the series of Roman poets usually read in our schools.'²⁴ The question of legitimation — making Martial an acceptable poet to be read, especially in schools — was never far from their minds. None of the nineteenth-century editors attempt to pretend the 'problematical aspects' are not present in Martial's works; Amos admits that Martial's 'odious vices...render his books unfit to be placed in the hands of youth.'²⁵ Likewise, Bohn refers to Martial's 'reputation of an obscene poet', and Paley and Stone argue that, 'there is this valid ground of objection...that not less than a fourth part of them is exceedingly gross, and quite unfit for reading.'²⁶

However, these late nineteenth-century editions of Martial also wish to redeem him, and so seek to explain and lessen the impact of his 'vices'. Bohn, in his preface, seems to almost see Martial as a Juvenal-type figure.²⁷ Stephenson, taking a slightly different view, argues that the poems do not show that Martial participated in any of the obscene practices he writes of and is rather guilty of 'laughing at that which ought to have roused in him shame and indignation and of making literary capital out of other men's vices.'²⁸ He further argues for an historical perspective when viewing Martial's works, as the standards of the time in which he was writing were different from those of contemporary Victorian Britain. Perhaps the most persuasive argument used in the task of legitimising the reading and use of Martial, especially in education, is the praise of Martial's Latinity, and Bohn

²⁴Paley and Stone 1880: vi.

²⁵Amos 1858: iv.

²⁶Bohn 1860: iii; Paley and Stone 1880: iv. However, the Delphin edition of Martial only considered about one hundred and fifty epigrams obscene enough to warrant being moved to an appendix.

²⁷Bohn 1860: iii.

²⁸Stephenson ?: xiv.

states that he stands pre-eminent, not only as an epigrammatist, but as 'one of the purest Latin writers of his age.'²⁹

Bohn's comment raises another issue which could have caused problems for nineteenth-century editors, and that is the time when Martial writes. For the Victorians, the best period of Latin writing, the apex in their model of rise and decline, was the Augustan age — the so-called 'Golden Age' of Latin literature. Literature written after this was seen as declining in worth, the so-called 'Silver Age', culminating in the utter decline of Latin literature by the second century AD. Sellar and Ramsey comment that 'as a literary artist...Martial has no equal among the poets of 'the silver age'', and Paley and Stone argue that even though 'he lived and wrote in what is called the Silver Age of Roman literature, the purity of the Latinity is...remarkable.'³⁰ However, Amos' claim that Martial's writing is not as pure as that of the writers of the Augustan period, reminds us of the barriers set up in the nineteenth century which these editors had to circumvent to show the worth of reading Martial.³¹

Martial's *Epigrams* were increasingly used in the nineteenth century for education purposes. The universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh and Glasgow all included Martial within their degree examinations, and the publication of selections of the Epigrams reflected this. For example, the Classical Tripos included translation questions in 1882 (9.59), 1899 (9.23 and 9.94), and 1900 (3.7 and 12.6). One paper in 1899 also included an emendation question on a passage of Martial (2.14). The passages chosen are mostly ones which, out of the context of the book, could be seen to contain historical information of the life and culture of ancient Rome. The epigrams chosen in 1900 both seem to look at aspects of patriotism and patronage, while those chosen in 1899 have literary information and topographical/historical 'evidence.' The epigram chosen in 1882 could seem to be about aspects

²⁹Bohn 1860: x.

³⁰Sellar and Ramsey 1884: v; Paley and Stone 1881: xix.

³¹Amos 1858: v.

of Roman luxury; however, the beginning of the poem has the protagonist of the poem 'using' slave boys —

hic ubi Roma suas aurea vexat opes,
 inspexit molles pueros oculisque comedit,
 non hos quos primae prostituere casae,
 sed quos arcanae servant tabulata catastae
 et quos non populos nec mea turba videt.

It would have been interesting to know how this section of the epigram would have been justified by the students' tutors and the Examination Board. Part of the reason for an increased interest in Martial within education was the change within the teaching of classics; 'ancient authors were no longer studied only as models of style, and more attention was paid to their subject matter and historical background.'³² In the nineteenth century, especially in public schools, classics 'formed the largest single category of curriculum content.'³³ The authors of the Clarendon Report (1864) stated that 'we are of the opinion that the classical languages and literature should continue to hold, as they do now, the principal place in education' and were 'convinced that the best materials for studies...are furnished by the languages and literature of Greece and Rome.'³⁴

Martial was still regarded as an accurate source of information for Roman life and culture, and individual epigrams could be used as examples for Roman activities. For example, Amos includes two of the Hare and Lion cycle poems from Book 1 of the *Epigrams* within his book, under the heading of 'Public Shows', as evidence for what happened in the amphitheatre, and his book is laid out so as to give evidence for different aspects of Roman life and culture, using epigrams of Martial as evidence and examples.³⁵ Friedländer's

³²Clarke 1959: 76.

³³Stray 1998: 185.

³⁴The Clarendon Report 1864: 30, 28. Cf. the Taunton Report (1868), which looked at grammar schools and secondary education more widely.

³⁵On the Hare and Lion cycle, see Sullivan 1991.

Roman Life and Manners discusses not only Martial and his poetry in particular (Volume III), but also uses epigrams as evidence for different aspects of Roman life, culture, and language.³⁶ Similarly, Gow's *Companion to School Classics* uses evidence taken from the *Epigrams* to explain the process of making and selling books in Rome.

However, despite this increased use of Martial within books on the history and culture of ancient Rome, and the mass of publications in the latter part of the century, the Clarendon Report of 1864 shows that Martial was still not used much within public schools as a text for translation in the late 1850s and early 1860s. In fact, out of nine public schools, only Shrewsbury included Martial in the texts used, and even then he was only in the Sixth Form.³⁷ Given that many of the publications of Martial are later than the Clarendon Report, the reading of Martial increased in schools by the end of the century, but it seems that despite the supposed 'usefulness' of Martial, the ease with which his works can be excerpted, and the low level of difficulty of his epigrams, schools in the nineteenth century were still reluctant to include an author on the syllabus who was accused of the vices that Martial was.

The change in the way in which Classics was taught in the final decades of the nineteenth century created the impetus for the publication of new editions, specifically based towards a school and university audience.³⁸ The use of parallel texts ran in conjunction with the 'spread of annotated editions' of classical texts, which was another marked feature of changes within education in the latter part of the century.³⁹

³⁶For example, Friedländer 1862-7: 16.

³⁷The schools looked at by the Clarendon Report were Eton, Winchester, Westminster, Charterhouse, Rugby, Harrow, Shrewsbury, St. Paul's, and Merchant Taylor's, all of which were major centres of work on Greek epigram.

³⁸One of the major changes being the new system for the Classical Tripos at the University of Cambridge. Cf. Stray 1999 and Markby 1866.

³⁹Clarke 1959: 93.

1.2.3 Scholarship on Martial: The Twentieth Century And Onwards

For a long time the main epigrammatist read by later scholars was the late first-century poet Martial. For many, Martial was the 'heir and...the culmination of the long tradition of Greek and Roman epigram writing.'⁴⁰ However, scholars have, while praising Martial's wit and style, been wary of what has been thought of as the very sexual and obscene nature of the books of epigrams, especially in the twelve books which are seen as the central core of his publications. Further problems have been caused by the very time in which Martial was writing; authors who thrived under the reign of Domitian, especially those who seem to flatter him within their writings, have in later years been mistrusted.⁴¹ Moreover, due to the genre Martial was writing in, the poems of the *Epigrams* were seen as 'trifles', *nugae*, little poems which were witty and satiric, but ultimately of little importance, and certainly not 'Literature'. As Sullivan has noted,

It was the nineteenth-century opinion that presented him as a fragmented, if not fundamentally incoherent, poet at the mercy of his personal wants and random prejudices...This superficial reading was partly due to the selective disaccording, or ignoring, by different critics of areas of Martial's work which seemed to them offensive, boring, trivial or incomprehensible.⁴²

Martial's works have been split up, rearranged, and selected such that those epigrams which were thought to follow a particular theme were read, or not read.

The arrangement and purpose of Martial's epigrams had not, until recently, been given much thought. The epigrams were, apart from really the Bohn and Loeb editions, published

⁴⁰Sullivan 1991: 78.

⁴¹Even in modern publications some still feel the need to explore the relationship between Martial and Domitian, such as in Howell's (2010) recent book on Martial for the *Ancients In Action* series, in which he devotes a whole chapter to this topic.

⁴²Sullivan 1991: 115.

as selections, each editor choosing those which fitted his idea of who Martial was and the purpose of the epigrams, with a mind to avoid what was seen as the overt obscenity and sexuality of many of the poems. White's highly influential 1974 article further cemented the view of the individual books as minimally, and even carelessly, edited collections; White's argument was that Martial originally published or delivered his epigrams in small *libelli* to garner the attention and support of individual patrons, and concludes that 'one must allow for the possibility that the poet simply gathered and published whatever he had to hand' when constructing the books.⁴³ The *libellus* theory of White presents Martial's books as a copy-and-paste construction; the poems we now find in the *Epigrams*, according to this theory, *used* to belong in the context of the patron-directed *libellus*, though White does not suggest possible *libelli* arrangements. More recently, Nauta has continued the idea of *libelli* as it fits into his theory that the main purpose of the epigrams is to obtain patronage.⁴⁴

Since the 1990s, analysis of the *Epigrams* has begun to look at the individual books and explore the possibility that they have been purposefully constructed; these are not just haphazardly arranged collections, but carefully constructed books with linking themes and cycles of poems. Garthwaite has summarised that the result of this recent attention is a 'growing recognition of the intricate designs Martial created out of his varied themes and of their importance in helping us to understand the literary purpose of the books.'⁴⁵ Important in this new reading of Martial is the theory of *intratextuality*, 'looking at the text from different directions (backwards as well as forwards)...constructing and expanding its boundaries both within the *opus* and outside it.'⁴⁶ As early as 1958, Barwick noticed

⁴³White 1974: 48.

⁴⁴Nauta seems to be working in isolation among modern scholars when it comes to analysis of the arrangement of the *Epigrams*. The main issue is with Nauta's dividing of the addressees into real people and fictional characters (a task he spends considerable space explaining). This leads to a situation where, as noted by reviewers, Nauta's analysis moves towards treating the *Epigrams* as documentary evidence for patronage rather than as literary texts. See Gibson (2002) and Doody (2003).

⁴⁵Garthwaite 2001: 46.

⁴⁶Sharrock 2000: 5.

and analysed some of the cycles within the *Epigrams*.⁴⁷ Moreover, Garthwaite has argued that the cycles of epigrams on a particular theme are the main structuring device for the reader within individual books.⁴⁸

One of the most influential explorations of the books of epigram is Fowler's 'Martial and the Book'.⁴⁹ He argues that whereas the so-called *libellus*-theory seeks to take the epigrams out of the context of the book, the rationale being that the books are not the originally intended publication context (*libelli*) and so can be dumped without losing anything, this is in fact detrimental to an understanding of the poems and the books themselves: 'it is the published books that are central.'⁵⁰ Further to this, Fowler argues that the books should be seen as a direct encouragement for the reader to re-read the epigrams. Influenced by reader-response's naïve and model readers, Fowler sees this encouragement of rereading as the difference between the roll and codex reader.⁵¹ Fowler argues that poems such as 1.1 are later additions, added to the books when published as codices. So, while the implied reader of the books is the roll reader looking at the poems for the first time, Martial is also speaking to the codex reader, the *lector studiosus*, who 'already knows and appreciates Martial.'⁵² However, it can be argued that this feature of re-reading is already present in a book roll and, as does not require the selecting of individual epigrams as supposed 'later additions' to explain it. The way in which many of the themes and cycles interact and the importance of juxtaposition invite readers to re-read no matter the form in which the book is presented to them; in many cases the way in which individual poems interact may

⁴⁷The definition of 'cycles' within poetry can be very complicated. Perhaps one of the best views is that of Lorenz who uses the term broadly, so that it is applied to 'all groups of epigrams, adjacent poems, or scattered pieces that display a common theme or motif, common use of language, or common structural features. Martial's cycles would then rely on the connecting similarities between single epigrams — all conceivable similarities that prompt readers to remember an earlier poem and compare it with the present one' (Lorenz 2004: 257).

⁴⁸Garthwaite 1993: 78.

⁴⁹Fowler 1995.

⁵⁰Fowler 1995: 37.

⁵¹On reader-response, see Iser (1980). Reader-response theory will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

⁵²Fowler 1995: 34.

only become apparent on a second reading, and the poems directly encourage the reader to do so.⁵³

Themes and cycles in individual books have been discussed by Greenwood, Sullivan, and Garthwaite, while Rimell claims to look at themes which can be seen in several of the books of the series and connects individual books.⁵⁴ Moreover, recent commentaries on Martial's epigrams have discussed the importance of the primacy of the book. One of the most important articles in this area is by Lorenz (2004); while expanding upon the water cycle identified by Greenwood, indicating that the water cycle has a greater role in Book 4 than Greenwood's analysis suggests, he also shows the way in which this theme and the associated cycle in Book 4 interact both with the preceding and subsequent book. This, along with his assertion that the twelve books need to be considered as a whole, have given rise to the idea that perhaps it is not just each individual book which connects internally through intratextual cross-referencing and patterning as a literary whole, but that these themes and cycles interweave through the twelve-book series, creating an *intratextuality* that is simultaneously *intertextuality* by referring outside the discrete book to a later or earlier book in the same series; if we accept this as a twelve-book series, this intertextuality becomes intratextuality. Therefore, the books connect and need to be read with this in mind — in order to understand Book 12 you must have read Books 1-11, and perhaps even to fully understand Book 1 you need to have read Books 2-12.

⁵³On juxtaposition in Martial, cf. Fitzgerald 2007.

⁵⁴On some of the issues with Rimell's analysis, see Sapsford 2009.

1.3 Readers and Reading: Methodological Considerations

As shown by Fowler, the ideas associated with reader-response theory are a rewarding way of examining the *Epigrams*. Reader-response emerged in the late 1960s from poststructuralist moves away from authorial intention towards the study of texts (and 'text') as a system of signs. The semiotic turn was given its classic formulation in Roland Barthes' 1968 essay 'The Death of the Author.' In this essay, Barthes rejects the traditional approach of seeing the author, and the author's intent, as the origin for meaning in a text and as the authority for interpretation. Thus the act of reading is no longer a process of discovering what the author intended, but readers are free to enter the text from any direction, to open and close the text's signifying process without recourse to the signified, and thus are open to connect with systems of meaning.⁵⁵ This idea of the 'death' of the author was expanded upon by other branches of literary theory, especially the emerging Reader-Response criticism. Although the death of author was never completely fulfilled within reader-response, the move to a more reader-orientated theory, without completely ignoring the world outside the text as in New Criticism, proved popular. These ideas were influential for literary theorists such as Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser and Umberto Eco.

Reader-response theories substitute 'the structure of the reader's experience for the formal structures of the text.'⁵⁶ Fish argued that it was only at the point of reception — the actual process of reading — that a work of literature entered reality for the critic; the meaning of a work was encountered in the experience of reading it and literature was therefore a process, not a product. The result is, in the words of Fish, 'the replacing of

⁵⁵Lurking in the background here is a 'semiotic' model of reading — the text as a complex system of signs; the influence of de Saussure, and the essentially arbitrary connection between signifier and signified, is clear.

⁵⁶Fish 1980: 2.

one question — what does this mean? — by another — what does this do?’⁵⁷

Parallel to this exploration of reader-orientated theories in the U.S., critics such as Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, part of the so-called Constance School, also explored ideas of reader-orientated criticism. Influenced by the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer, these critics took the reader-orientated approach while continuing to see the reader as part of a process initiated by the author. Iser’s use of the idea of an ‘implied reader’ became especially important in following reader-response approaches to literature. In one of his key works, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978), which itself builds on his earlier work, *The Implied Reader* (1974), Iser sees the text as having a potential which is ‘concretised’ by the reader; there is an opposition set up between the power the text has to control the way in which it is read and the ‘concretisation’ of the text by the reader in terms of their own experiences, experiences which are themselves changed through the act of reading. Iser argues that it is not the critic’s task to explain the text as an object, but rather to elucidate the effects of a text on a reader and explore the possible readings. The term ‘reader’ is divided into the ‘implied reader’, the reader whom the text creates for itself and is a series of ‘response-inviting structures’ predisposing the text to be read in certain ways, and the ‘actual reader’, whose reception of these structures is coloured by their own experiences.

On similar lines, Fish explores the idea of the ‘informed reader’ who is part of an interpretative community, looking at socially *real* readerships. This idea of the interpretative community is important when looking at the response of the ‘informed’ reader, or in fact any reader, as the membership determines, to a large extent, the response to the text. Fish argues that these communities are ‘made up of those who share interpretative strategies...for writing texts’; therefore, ‘these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and...determine the shape of what is read.’⁵⁸ In terms of the informed reader the mem-

⁵⁷Fish 1980: 3.

⁵⁸Fish 1980: 14.

bership of an interpretative community provides three components: firstly that they are a competent speaker of the language in which the text is written, secondly that they have a full semantic knowledge, and finally that they have a literary competence.⁵⁹

This notion of the implied/informed reader, or, as has been posited by others, the 'model' and 'naïve' readers, is a useful way of looking at the Epigrams of Martial; Martial himself indicates that there are two readers of his works — the first-time reader and the *lector studiosus* (1.1.4). Fowler used this idea to argue that in Martial the implied reader is the book-roll reader, whereas the *lector studiosus* reads the codex; the book-roll reader is seeing the books for the first time, whereas the codex-reader is the re-reader, someone who 'already knows and appreciates Martial.'⁶⁰ The importance here is placed on the re-reading of the texts; as Fowler argues, 'in explicitly introducing both of his readers into the text, Martial dramatizes a familiar feature of reception (even in the primary cultural setting) that is more usually only implicit, that of *re-reading*.'⁶¹ If we look at this from a reader-response viewpoint, the reader constructs the text through reading, gives meaning to each of the small poems through their own experiences, yet, at the same time, the author structures their progress through a concentration of aspects of books and dramatising reading, encouraging re-reading through the explicit programmatic promise that the text gives more to the reader if they are a *lector studiosus*, a *rereader*. From this we can add a potential fourth category to Fish's components of the informed reader, as applied to the works of Martial, and say that the final component is that the informed reader is the rereader.

The concept of the rereader is important to any kind of text which structures the way in which it is read. Calinescu's *Rereading*, provides helpful insights into the importance of distinguishing between reading and rereading, the importance of reflection, like reading or

⁵⁹Cf. Fish, 1980: 44-48.

⁶⁰Fowler 1995: 202.

⁶¹Fowler 1995: 202.

rereading, a process that unfolds over time, and how readers re-experience and rediscover texts. However, the notion of rereading rests on a paradox, as the text must at the same time be both familiar and unfamiliar — one 'knows' it from an initial reading but also is surprised to find new things on re-reading — to use the terms of the Formalist theory of *ostranenie* (defamiliarisation). While the aim of every text is to ensure that it is read, the paradox continues: as the text needs to be understandable in order for it to be read (familiar), and yet, at the same time, 'it is in the text's interest to slow down the process of comprehension by the reader so as to ensure its own survival', and so include elements of the unfamiliar.⁶²

The reader-orientated approach associated with reader-response and theories of rereading means that the text comes to life through the reader's act of reading. This type of approach allows for multiple interpretations of the text, as each reader may well approach the text in a different way and produce different meanings.⁶³ For Fish, influenced by Jauss, this comes from the idea of interpretive communities where 'meanings come already calculated...because language is always perceived...within a structure of [social] norms.'⁶⁴ Iser, looking more at how language works rather than the knowledge the reader brings to the text, posits the idea of gaps, blanks and negations as ways in which the text interacts with the reader and controls the process of interaction. Readers are encouraged by the text to fill in the gaps, to 'supply what is meant from what is not said', so that 'what *is* said only appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not said.' This means that the gaps become the focus of the communication between the text and its reader. Similarly, blanks also control the process of communication between the text and reader; they 'leave open the connections between perspectives in the text' and so invite the reader to connect these perspectives themselves. One obvious illustration of the way in which gaps and blanks can

⁶²Rimmon-Kernan 1983: 123.

⁶³Fish 1980: 16.

⁶⁴Fish 1980: 318

be important for the reader's communication with the text can be found in comic books. McCloud has demonstrated the importance of the gutters between panels and how, within the graphic narrative, much of the story is intuitively realised by the reader within these gaps. In the *Epigrams* we can see the gutter as the space between each individual poem in the book, the reader 'filling in' the connections through their knowledge of Martial's books and the themes within the books, but also the gaps between poems within the main themes, the other poems leading the reader through to the next part of the main narrative. Using these different facets of reader-response theory it is possible to look at the *Epigrams*



Figure 1.1: The use of the gutter in comics.
McCloud 1999: 68

of Martial in a new and different way.⁶⁵ By exploring the way in which it is possible for the reader to create patterns and linking devices within and between the twelve books of the *Epigrams*, the way in which themes interact to provide structure, and the importance of rereading and reflection in creating meaning for the reader, we can begin to investigate how, far from being random poems or even disconnected books, the *Epigrams* is a twelve-book series which benefits from being read, and reread, as such.

1.4 The 'Epic' of Martial

In this thesis I explore a new reading on Martial's *Epigrams*, looking at the way in which three main themes, all part of an overall idea of orality, connect together the poems of individual books and the twelve-book series. These three themes not only instruct the reader *how* and *where* to read the books in front of them, but, as I will show through an application of Iser's theory of blanks and gaps, provide a programmatic structure, leading the reader through each book roll and the series as a whole.

⁶⁵A useful text here is Ronen 1994.

Chapter 2

Literary Connections in Book 7

2.1 Introduction

There are a multitude of different themes which can be, and have been, identified within the *Epigrams*, some more prevalent than others, and the themes interact in different ways with each other.¹ However, while the investigation of particular themes can be useful in terms of how they function within an individual book or through Martial's oeuvre, it can lead us to ignore the context in which these epigrams are found: the epigrams are placed within books with other poems on a myriad of topics, and yet connect together to produce a kind of serial narrative for the reader to follow.²

Within the *Epigrams*, the role of the book and the reader is emphasised repeatedly, and by looking at how the twelve books suggest to the reader how to read and understand the books and series we enter into the modern active debate on how books were written and read in ancient Rome. The issues raised by the debate are crucial to the understanding of

¹For identification of some of the themes within the *Epigrams*, see Sullivan 1991, Fitzgerald 2007. Although problematic, Rimell 2008 does show some of the interaction between themes in Martial's books.

²Despite their belief in the planned nature of the books, both Lorenz and Garthwaite have focused on particular themes, to the detriment of the understanding of the use of the themes in the books as a whole. For example, Garthwaite 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2001; Lorenz 2004.

how Martial uses a literary theme, emphasising the book itself, poetry, reading and writing, within his twelve books of epigrams.³ Before exploring the way in which Martial uses the literary theme, I will first look at what we know of book production and distribution, before turning to the way in which these books were read, and by whom.

2.1.1 Book Production and Distribution

We must first consider the format which was used for literary composition. As readers in the twenty-first century, our experience of reading books is either using a printed codex format, or on the computer screen, with most e-books (and e-readers) adhering to the conventions of the modern printed book. This was not the case for Romans in the first century, where the bookroll was the dominant format for literary texts. This was a papyrus scroll, a *volumen*, held by the reader in the right hand and unrolled with the left as it was read.⁴ Despite Martial's mention of a parchment version of his book in 1.2 — 'artat bebibus membrana tabellis:/scrinia da magnis, me manus una capit' (*[this]parchment compresses in small pages: give book boxes to the great, one hand grasps me*, 1.2.3-4) — the codex format was not the most commonly produced format until around the third century.⁵ The handwritten papyrus bookroll was, for all intents and purposes, the format in which texts were produced; this immediately highlights major differences between book production in the first century and that in the following centuries with the rise of the codex as the dominant format, particularly after the invention of printing, and the major differences between first century book production and modern book production.

Modern scholarship tends to stress the social nature of textual circulation in antiquity. For instance, Starr has argued that it is possible to determine quite a bit about book

³I use the term 'literary' to describe the theme which encompasses poems about writing, reading and poetry in general.

⁴Cavallo 1999: 71.

⁵Though it must be noted that commentators have tended to assume that 1.2 refers to an edition of the book specially produced for reading while travelling, e.g. Howell 1980.

distribution and circulation in Rome. He claims that books were distributed to readers ‘in a series of widening concentric circles determined primarily by friendship.’⁶ In Starr’s view of book distribution, authors sent gift copies of finished books to their friends and peers which meant ‘the effective release of the work from the authors’ control.’⁷ These friends then have copies made for their friends, who then had copies made themselves, and so the book could be said to have been made public once people unknown to the author could acquire copies of the work. Further evidence of the distribution of literary works can be seen through evidence from the Oxyrhynchus Papyri and the trend for collecting which emerges. This can be seen most obviously in *P.Oxy XVIII 2912*, which is a letter requesting copies of certain texts, and suggests people who may have copies of other texts.⁸ Iddeng adds further stages to the distribution of works, including copies made from recitations of the finished (or unfinished work), drawing mainly from evidence presented in Pliny’s letters.⁹ However, there is still a tendency within modern scholarship for the vocabulary of modern book production and publishing to be applied to that of ancient Rome. This is in some ways understandable — it allows for the descriptions of ancient production and publishing to be easily understood by a modern audience. However, as Winsbury has shown, the predominance of theories originating with nineteenth-century German scholars tends to result in a ‘distortion of what happened at Rome’, especially when modern publishing terminology is brought into play.¹⁰

Winsbury argues that one of the key concepts which needs to be considered when looking at the Roman book is the ‘subtle and complex relationship and interplay in the Roman world between the written and the spoken...the oral presentation...underpinned

⁶Starr 1987: 213.

⁷Starr 1987:215.

⁸Livingstone and Nisbet 2010: 17ff.

⁹Iddeng 2006. See below for further discussion of Pliny’s letters and how his implied model of distribution contrasts with that of Martial.

¹⁰Winsbury 2009: 10.

both the creation of the text and its subsequent “reading”¹¹ I would argue that this oral presentation was not necessarily real — Dupont refers to it as a ‘fiction that fools nobody and does not seek to’ — but it remains the case that the *idea* of the text as oral performance influenced the production, distribution and interpretation of texts.¹²

This idea of oral performance as a literary *topos* can best be seen by the connection between, on the one hand, the *recitatio*, and on the other, the elite and luxurious nature of the bookroll itself. This has one of its best expressions in Lucian’s *Ignorant Book Collector*, a diatribe in which Lucian seems to delight in making fun of a moderately wealthy Syrian who collects luxury editions of bookrolls and reads them out at dinner parties. The ridicule is not at the collecting of books, nor the reading of these books at dinner parties (again, a standard practice, or at least presented as so), but rather the elite culture he aspires to with these things and yet spectacularly fails to mimic, as he is not one of οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι, those who are both educated and cultured.¹³ However much reading and the distribution of books had increased in the early empire, most writers were members of the elite writing for other members of the elite; while the fiction of the primacy of the oral performance was still dominated by written texts, it was also understood that literature was not only to be found within an oral context.¹⁴ Leading on from this, an exploration of the ways in which ancient Romans read books becomes important.

2.1.2 Reading

The evidence for how the Romans read books is relatively scant; most of the time we are making (educated) guesses based on descriptions of reading at dinner parties, references

¹¹Winsbury 2009: 10. While Winsbury is a useful book for this topic, his methods and analysis are not without problems; cf. reviews by Kraft 2010 and Sapsford 2011.

¹²Dupont 2009: 147.

¹³*Adv. Indoct.* 7, 22, 24, 28. On the *pepaideumenoī* (those who are well-bred) see Anderson 1976 and 1993.

¹⁴Cavallo 1999: 76.

in letters, and the way in which ancient texts were written. There is no ancient treatise on reading from which we can definitively answer the question “how did Romans read books?”, and even if there were, there would not be one single answer. One of the most commonly used sources when looking at reading in the ancient world is Cicero. In his letters, especially those to Atticus, Cicero presents a world where listening to someone else read, whether by an *anagnostes* (a Greek term used to describe a slave who was trained to read aloud) in a private setting, or at a more formal recitation, was a significant mode of reception and common in at least Cicero’s lifetime. The various letters suggest that Cicero made use of an *anagnostes* — ‘nam puer festivus anagnostes noster Sositheus decesserat meque plus quam servi mors debere videbatur commoverat’ (*for a most delightful youth, my reader Sosthenes, has just died, and his death affected me more than that of a slave should, I think, do. Att. 1.12.4*) — and that Atticus had several; this method of being read to was common in at least two, albeit closely connected, households.¹⁵ Further evidence in Cicero’s letters points to recitation, especially at dinner parties, as another common way for the elite to “read” various texts, and for authors to gain comments on new works (this can be seen especially with Pliny below).¹⁶

As well as the use of trained readers and dinner-party recitations, elegiac poetry suggests that there were also informal readings between two people, as well as public recitations for both prose and poetry.¹⁷ Behind most Roman reading practices, according to Hutchinson,

¹⁵See also *Fam.* 5.9.2; *Nep. Att.* 13.1.

¹⁶For example, *Att.* 16.3.1 — ‘hunc tu tralatum in macrocollum lege arcane convivis tuis sed, si me amas, hilaris et bene acceptis, ne in me stomachum erumpant cum sint tibi irati’ (*Will you transfer this onto folio paper and read it privately to your dinner guests? If you do, I beg that you see to it that they are in a cheerful state of mind with a good meal inside of them, else if they are cross with you they may take out their irritation on me.*)

¹⁷Informal readings: *Tr.* 3.7.23 — ‘dum licuit, tua saepe mihi, tibi nostra legebam’ (*Whilst I could, I would often read your verse to myself and mine to you*); *Tr.* 4.10.44–46 — ‘quaeque necet serpens, quae iuuet herba, Macer/saepe suos solitus recitare Propertius ignes/iure sodalicii, quo mihi iunctus erat’ (*Often, Macer, already old, read to me of the birds he loved, of noxious snakes and healing plants. And Propertius would often declaim his fiery verse by right of the comradeship that joined him to me*); Cf. *Pont.* 3.5.39–42, *AA* 3.333–346; *Prop.* 2.33b.36–8. Public recitations for poetry and prose: *Tr.* 2.519–20; *Pont.* 1.5.57–8. Horace implies many times that public recitations of poetry were popular, for example,

we can see the impact of Greek reading culture, both in the importance of reading for elite Romans, and the ‘keen, close and accurate approach to reading which formed at least one possibility for the Romans.’¹⁸ Various ancient sources, as noted above, suggest (though perhaps with their own agendas) reading aloud or being read to by a subordinate were the most common ways to read.

This has been interpreted by some scholars to mean that silent reading did not occur in ancient Rome.¹⁹ In the case of Martial’s *Epigrams* and the way themes interact, this is an important point to consider. Martial, clearly influenced by Ovid, very carefully addresses an anonymous reader within his texts.²⁰ The scenario constructed by the text is not face-to-face reading, but circulation as a written text which is then read by the private individual; further, this anonymous reader has not in any way been determined by the author and is not from within Martial’s circle of friends and peers — the reader can be anyone from anywhere from anytime. This is emphasised by Martial claiming that his books are read all over the world while he remains at Rome (or, in the case of Book 12, are read at Rome while he is stuck in rural Spain).²¹ Martial also scripts scenarios in which his poems are read by an individual person on his or her own and not within any form of recitation.

The way Martial envisages his book being read is emphasised through the interaction of the key three themes identified — literary (the theme of the book both as a structured text and as a material object); oral sex and *os impurum*; and food and dining. In all three of these themes the function of the mouth is given importance. The literary theme and

Sat. 1.4.21–5, 10.37–9, *Epist.* 1.19.33–45, 2.1.223. However, this self-representation of himself as a public singer can also be seen as part of his self-fashioning as Rome’s great lyric poet in the archaic Greek style.

¹⁸Hutchinson 2008: 40.

¹⁹For more on the silent reading debate see below.

²⁰The ‘reader’ as represented by the text is, to some degree, also a literary *topos*. Larash notes that the development of the character of the anonymous reader in Ovid’s *Tristia* (the openings of books 1, 2, 4, and 5, as well as the autobiographical 4.10) comes to a point where by the latter appearances Ovid’s anonymous reader is structurally very similar to that of Martial.

²¹For example, the claim made in 1.1.

the book itself are emphasised through the juxtaposition of the other two themes: reading about dinner parties rather than being at a dinner party and hearing these epigrams, and the crude suggestions of what one might have to do to keep the mouth occupied rather than reading aloud. Martial emphasises that his epigrams are read with the eyes rather than delivered or listened to orally. Perhaps here we can see a literary reference to the traditional Greek reception of epigram which was through the symposium, and which Martial suggests ‘inferior’ Latin epigrammatists still mimic. If this reading were correct, it would not work, or certainly it would create a very curious dissonant effect, if Martial’s books of epigrams were read aloud, especially if read aloud to the main recipient by someone else and/or in company with others.

However, the position that readers in ancient Rome were incapable of reading silently continues to be put forward.²² This view has dominated classical scholarship since the beginning of the twentieth century, despite the fact that many have argued the opposite convincingly. The most detailed, and cited, argument for reading aloud being the only way books were read is Balogh’s article. The view was widespread in German scholarship, with scholars such as Lamer, Eisenhut, and Rhode following a similar interpretation.²³ The first major scholar who suggested that this view may be erroneous was Knox, who argued that the reason why there are not many sources describing silent reading is because it was not anything extraordinary, and so did not need to be commented on.²⁴ However, his formulation was relatively guarded and sceptical, and continued to be overshadowed by Balogh’s claims. It was not until the late 1990s that the theory of silent reading in antiquity gained supporters. Gavrilov (and Burnyeat’s postscript to the article) took the evidence of Knox and expanded upon it, both with a new analysis of the ancient sources,

²²For example, Saenger 1997 argues that reading silently did not happen until the 7th century AD with the evolution of word separation as opposed to the *script continua* found in earlier texts. Cf. also Thomas 1992, especially p. 91 — ‘The written word in the ancient world, particularly the written word of literature, was meant to be heard rather than read silently.’

²³Balogh 1927; Lamer 1933; Eisenhut 1976; Rhode 1963.

²⁴Knox 1968.

and by applying cognitive psychological theory in interpreting the act of reading itself.²⁵

One of the major contributions of Gavrilov's article is that he shows how the passages of Augustine's *Confessions*, often used as evidence that silent reading was almost unknown in the ancient world, in fact shows nothing of the sort. The commonly cited passage is *Confessions* 6.3. In this passage, Augustine describes Ambrose silently reading to himself — 'sed cum, legebat, oculi ducebantur per paginas et cor intellectum rimabantur, vox autem et lingua quiescebant' (*Now, as he read, his eyes glanced over the pages and his heart searched out the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent*) — traditionally, scholars have interpreted Augustine's tone to mean that silent reading was uncommon in the ancient world, and that Augustine was surprised by this. However, Gavrilov argues convincingly that Augustine was not so much surprised by Ambrose silently reading to himself, as upset and annoyed that he was doing so. As a student, Augustine would not have had much access to books, and one of the roles of the teacher was to read books to his students and provide commentary on the texts, particularly scripture. By reading silently Ambrose is denying Augustine and his fellow pupils an opportunity to learn and to 'read' the text. Gavrilov also makes clear that there are many ancient sources which either show silent reading or imply it.

This is not to say that previous analyses of how the ancients read were wrong, but rather the evidence shows that reading was practiced in a variety of manners, depending on the individual reader, the type of text, and the reader's environment. The evidence collected by Gavrilov and Burnyeat, and later Johnson, suggests that it was not uncommon in the ancient world for people to read books alone and/or silently.²⁶ It is within this environment of different reading styles that Martial's *Epigrams* are placed, and where it is made clear that the reader is envisaged to be reading alone and silently to themselves.

²⁵Gavrilov 1997, Burnyeat 1997.

²⁶Johnson 2000.

2.1.3 Martial's *Lector*

Martial opens the first book of the *Epigrams* with a direct address to the person reading it:

hic est quem legis ille, quem requiris
 toto notus in orbe Martialis
 argutis epigrammaton libellis
 cui, lector studiose, quod dedisti
 viventi decus atque sentienti,
 rari post cineres habent poetae.

Here he is, the one you ask for, the one you read: Martial, known all over the world for his witty books of epigrams. Dedicated reader, the recognition you have given him while alive and able to know it, few poets have even after death

1.1

From the very beginning of his oeuvre, Martial emphasises the status of his model reader — an anonymous reader who could be anyone. He communicates with this reader through the text itself, rather than through a (pseudo-fictional) transcript of a speech act as we find in, for example, the epigrams of the *AP*.²⁷ Throughout the *Epigrams* Martial presents a model reader who is, ‘on the surface, a self-contained abstraction that is constructed entirely by the text and the act of reading.’²⁸ The reader as an explicitly articulated reading position is not a new thing in Latin poetry — although one could argue, and I follow reader-response theory in this regard, that *any* text contains within itself its own model reader. The innovation for Martial and his models is the dramatising of the text’s relationship with its envisaged reader. For example, Catullus, advertised by Martial as

²⁷Cf. Quinn 1982.

²⁸Larash 2004: vii.

an important model, shows an awareness of (or plays around with the *topos* of) a general reading public for his poems.²⁹ In reaction against the Catullan text-world, in Martial we see a shift from a concentration on traditional elite values to a wider readership, one which takes precedence over the previous tradition of the primacy of personal friends and patrons within poetry. Martial creates an inclusive society within his books, where all readers, whether part of elite society or not, become part of the “in-crowd”; the *lector*, regardless of social status, through the anonymisation of the addressee, becomes part of the world Martial creates throughout the course of his books of epigrams. The importance of the anonymous reader creates, to use Fitzgerald’s term, a “society of the book” which is ‘composed of multiple interlocking relationships.’³⁰

This is not to claim that Martial does not have named addressees in his epigrams — he blatantly does. Typically, these are ‘speaking names’ whom the reader is not expected to take seriously as real people; rather the reader is cued up to read them as humorous or semi-comic types, just as in the skoptic epigrams of the *AP*. However, the creation of a fictional reader’s persona through the idea of the anonymous reader allows an individual reading of the poems interpreted through each reader’s viewpoint. The named addressees take on an additional role in the *Epigrams*; they become a set of characters within the “Martialverse” with a role to play.³¹ Whether they are meant to be real people from the real Rome ceases to matter — in the world created through the *Epigrams* they are real characters, they exist and interact with each other and the reader within the Martialverse of Rome, not the real Rome.³² Martial’s main influence in constructing his anonymous

²⁹Cf. Citroni 1995.

³⁰Fitzgerald 2007: 139.

³¹Here I am co-opting the term used by fans of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to refer to the world created by Martial within his books and to indicate the similarities and differences for the reader from the real world. The “Buffyverse” is ‘a term coined by fans of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* to refer to the fictional universe in which they are set as created by Joss Whedon...The Buffyverse is set in a universe exactly like ours in terms of geography, history, and pop culture but with...[some] notable differences’ (emphasis mine), <http://buffy.wikia.com/wiki/Buffyverse>.

³²This is despite the extended criteria Nauta 2002 creates in order to decide which named people in the *Epigrams* are real people and which ones are fictional characters. This is a discussion I find more or less

reader appears to be Ovid's *lector* on his letters from exile.³³ The main difference comes in the wide readership Martial sees for his books — the identity of the reader in Martial is created by the text, whereas in Ovid the author sets out to create a more personal relationship with a more narrowly defined readership defined by the minimal availability of the text.³⁴

This availability of the text is key: Ovid is writing at a distance from Rome, sending “letters” back to the city to be read by friends and members of his previous social circle. Conversely, except for Book 12, Martial is a poet of and for the *urbs*, and invites members of the city and those outside it to join in his literary version of Rome — he both invokes and defines himself in opposition to Ovid's world. The very act of Martial addressing the reader as ‘*lector*’ explicitly or implicitly creates a particular role for that reader.³⁵ The address to the *general* reader is not only descriptive, in that the reader is invited to act in a certain way in relation to the text.³⁶ As Larash notes: ‘it is universally applicable — anyone who reads epigram 1.1 by definition becomes the referent of the vocative in line 4, ‘dedicated reader’ (*lector studiose*).³⁷

2.2 *Epigrams Book 7*

As Fowler, Holzberg, and Lorenz have shown, the structures of the individual books of the *Epigrams* indicate that the poet saw them as *books* of epigrams, rather than the collections of poems suggested by the *libellus* theory. Taking this further, Holzberg finds indications in

pointless; with the *Epigrams* a world is created which has links with reality but need not map perfectly onto it.

³³Larash 2006 has argued convincingly for this interpretation.

³⁴Despite the anonymous reader of Ovid's letters, there is a suggestion (whether fictional or not) that there is one specific person who will be reading this letter.

³⁵Addresses to the reader: 1.*praef.*, 1.1, 1.2, 1.113, 2.8, 3.1, 3.68, 4.55, 5.2, 5.16, 7.12, 8.29, 9.*praef.*, 10.1, 10.2, 10.9, 10.45, 10.59, 11.2, 11.3, 11.6, 11.16, 11.108.

³⁶This is more of less Althusser's concept of interpellation. For more on the application of this theory in Martial, cf. Larash 2004: 3ff.

³⁷Larash 2004: 5.

the thematic structuring of the epigrams — both within the individual books, and across the twelve books as a whole — that Martial ‘wanted readers to look upon the twelve-book complex as one organised structure.’³⁸ Holzberg calls this a ‘dodecalogy’ and argues that Ovid’s exile poetry is the model for the connected book.³⁹

One of the three themes which Martial uses as part of the stress on orality in the *Epigrams* is literary — poems on books, reading, and writing, and about his epigrams themselves. Roman’s analysis of the materiality of Martial’s epigrams, and the ‘poetics of books’, shows how the influence and subversion of Catullus, Ovid, and Horace can be seen throughout the first-person poems.⁴⁰ Holzberg takes the literary theme further suggesting that the ‘metapoetical comments on the nature of *libri* of epigrams’ act to connect the twelve parts of the series.⁴¹ This literary theme is particularly prevalent in Book 7 of the *Epigrams*, where it accounts for 23% of the poems in the book. This is not surprising; Book 7 introduces the second half of the series, where the connectedness of the books needs to be emphasised, and the important themes are once again given prominence.

The restating and reenergising of the themes is again expected if we think about Martial’s predecessors and models; the ultimate twelve-book series for Roman readers was Vergil’s *Aeneid*, where there is a clear division between books 1-6 (Aeneas’ ‘Odyssean’ journey to Latium in Italy) and books 7-12 (the ‘Illiadic’ war in Latium).⁴² By creating reader expectation based on both following and subverting earlier Latin authors of different genres, Martial creates a literary theme not just within the individual books themselves, but across the overall series.

Within Book 7, the literary theme encompasses four main sub-themes: the circulation of Martial’s work; poems which directly address the book; poems about other writers; and

³⁸Holzberg 2004: 209. Cf. also Fowler 1995, Holzberg 2002 and Lorenz 2004

³⁹Holzberg 2004: 211.

⁴⁰Roman 2001: 120.

⁴¹Holzberg 2004: 212.

⁴²See also the recap at the beginning of the third book of the *Georgics* for the way in which Latin poetry envisages books read in order by readers.

poems defending against criticism and appealing for protection. As can be seen in the diagram below, the poems are concentrated at the beginning and end of the book. This cements in the reader's mind the importance of the theme, connects the current book with the previous one, and anticipates those following. The use of *variatio* within this theme

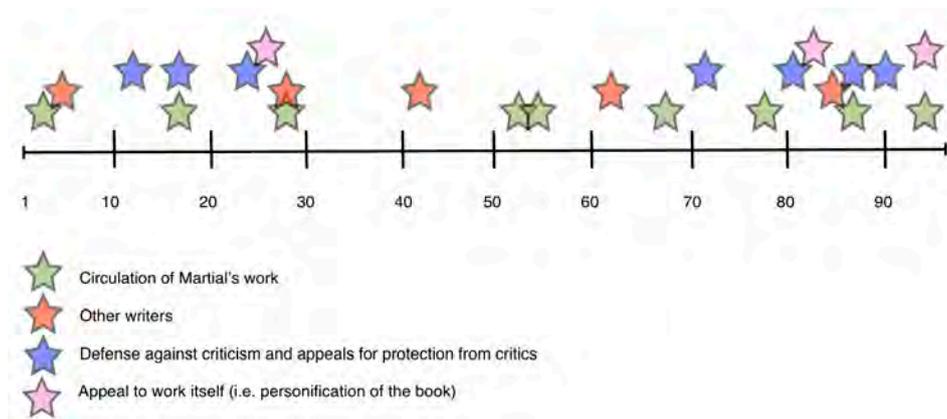


Figure 2.1: Literary epigrams in Book 7
The poems in the literary theme in Book 7, showing the four sub-themes.

relates to the variety of types of poems within the books of epigrams; Martial uses a number of metres, lengths of poems, and themes within each book.⁴³ The lack of homogeneity helps makes the books so readable, but also encourages careful reading, thus allowing the reader to see the way in which connections are made and how to read the books.

Book 7 opens with poems addressed and dedicated to the emperor Domitian. After having played a fairly insignificant role in the first three books of the *Epigrams*, the emperor becomes more frequently referenced through Books 4-6, and plays a significant role in Book 7. The emperor's qualities as a military leader are particularly emphasised in the book, and there are a number of epigrams directed towards the character of the emperor within the Martialverse. The opening two poems begin a cycle, praising Domitian's military prowess and praying for his safe return to Rome. The importance of the literary theme within the

⁴³Martial replies to criticism regarding the variety found in his books in 7.90, arguing that it is the variety found within his books that makes them good and that a homogeneous book is not: 'aequalis liber est...qui malus est' (7.90.4).

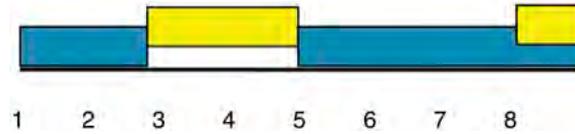


Figure 2.2: Emperor Cycle and Literary Theme, 7.1–8.
How the literary theme intersects and interacts with the emperor cycle at the beginning of Book 7.

book is shown through both its use as a delaying tactic for this particular cycle, building up anticipation of Domitian’s arrival within the Martialverse’s Rome, and the way it is used in the closing poem.

The poems from the literary theme in and between the two halves of this opening cycle also introduce three of the main sub-themes in book 7. By examining the use of these sub-themes we can see how the literary theme is used within the book, and the way in which the reader is brought into active engagement with the importance of literary matters when reading Book 7 and the 12-book series as a whole.

2.2.1 Circulation of Martial’s Poems and Address to the Book.

cur non mitto meos tibi, Pontiliane, libellos?

ne mihi tu mittas, Pontiliane, tuos.

Why don’t I send you my little books, Pontilianus?

I’m scared you might send me yours, Pontilianus.

7.3 introduces a break in tone in the opening of Book 7. After two poems adulating the emperor, we now have a joke on the exchange of poems, a well-established literary practice and a familiar (meta-) literary trope in Roman poetry.⁴⁴ While this humorous epigram breaks the panegyric and (seemingly) quasi-programmatic tone of the preceding epigrams, it also reminds the reader of Martial’s theories concerning the proper format for his works,

⁴⁴White 1974: 40-61; Citroni 1988: 3-39. Martial mentions the practice again in 11.107, and Statius, a contemporary of Martial, references the practice in *Silv.* 4.9.

they are to be read in full through the bookroll. By interweaving this with the emperor cycle, he emphasises the importance of the underlying message of the poem — Martial's epigrams are to be read in books in the format and order he has designed, not picked out and randomly exchanged with others or recited as entertainment at dinner parties. Martial makes very clear that his poems are not a medium of social exchange; the relationship he envisages and prefers is between his books and an individual reader, not between two or more readers reading to each other.

The circulation of his epigrams, and criticisms of *recitatio*, are important topics for Martial within the *Epigrams*. Martial often asks that his poems not be taken out of the context of the book (and the series) by being randomly read out at dinner parties or individual poems or groups of poems taken out of the context of the book and passed around individually between friends.⁴⁵ When discussing the circulation of his poems, it is always in the context of a book which collects poems together and is presented as a single unit. This motif of presentation of the book (or books) is used repeatedly in Book 7 — the gift of books 1-7 for Iulius Martialis in 7.17; the trading and plagiarising of books in 7.77; and the address to the book before it is sent to a friend (or patron) in 7.26 and 7.84.

This constant reference back to the format his poems are presented in serves two purposes: firstly, to engage the reader with what they are reading and how they are reading it. The image presented of the individual reader silently reading a book of poems continues to emphasise the narrative qualities of the *Epigrams*, the way themes and cycles combine and interact, and the story which emerges as one reads the book from one end of the roll to the other. Secondly, the emphasis on the book and criticism of *recitatio* serves to engage in a dialogue with other authors at the end of the first century about the proper presentation and methods of reception for written works, in particular, Pliny the Younger. Pliny the Younger's *Epistles* have no direct connection with Martial or his oeuvre — how can a

⁴⁵See later in this chapter for further examples.

collection of prose letters have anything to do with a series of books containing epigrams? However, it has long been noted that the *Epistles* have much in common with the works of Latin poets. As far back as 1929, Guillemin argued that Pliny's letters should be compared with Horace and Martial rather than the more obvious genre comparison with Cicero.⁴⁶

As Marchesi argues, the poetic allusions within Pliny's letters structure the books such that they 'achieve the coherence of a unitary work that should be read and preserved from cover to cover (or from the first to the last roll).⁴⁷ Martial's quasi-epistolary poems and literary themes do the same for the twelve books of the *Epigrams*, both as stand-alone units and in sequence as a multi-volume serial work — this is exactly what Marchesi finds in Pliny's collected correspondence. Pliny and Martial were contemporaries, moved in similar social circles, and were acquaintances, as noted by the letter in which Pliny writes of Martial's death.⁴⁸ Both authors produced carefully constructed works which pushed the boundaries of their respective genres, and both acknowledged this with a focus on the ways in which their world was both presented on the page and received after publication.

In this way, we can see a discourse, a sustained literary conversation, at the end of the first century between Martial and Pliny through their work, in which presentation and reception are given prominence. While Martial scorns *recitatio* for his poems and encourages his books to be read by the eye rather than the mouth, Pliny stresses in his books that the oral performance of his work is an important stage, and one which is vital in his literary world. Both Martial and Pliny are creating a literary world within their books which, while resembling reality, in fact self-fashions the world as they wish it to be. For Pliny, the *recitatio* 'forms part of an intricate web of interlinked social functions', a world where personal validation is provided through one's peer group from the oral performance of worthy literary compositions.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Guillemin 1929, especially chapter 3.

⁴⁷Marchesi 2008: ix.

⁴⁸See Appendix B

⁴⁹Johnson 2010: 55.

Martial's distaste for the seemingly endless monotony of *recitationes* is given emphasis in 7.51. Here Martial ironically pictures a dinner where admirers of his work are tempted to publicise his epigrams to a wider audience. Simultaneously, Martial shows that the proper reception of his poems is through the book. He highlights the hypocrisy of those who are more than happy to listen to his epigrams, but too ashamed to actually buy the books:

mercari nostras si te piget, Urbice, nugas
 et lasciva tamen carmina nosse libet,
 Pompeium quares — et nosti fortisan — Auctum;

*If it annoys you to buy my trifles, Urbicus, but you nonetheless wish to know
 my wanton verses, you will seek out —
 and perhaps you know him — Pompeius Auctus.*

7.51.1-3.

The following epigram, 7.52, continues this theme, this time addressing the character who so likes to recite Martial's works, Pompeius Auctus, an obvious speaking name with links to Pompey's theatre.

gratum est quod Celeri nostros legis, Aucte, libellos,
 si tamen et Celerem quod legis, Aucte, iuvat.
 ille meas gentes, Celtas et rexit Hiberos,
 nec fuit in nostro certior orbe fides.
 maior me tanto reverentia turbat, et aures
 non auditoris, iudicis esse puto.

*I am thankful, Auctus, that you read my little books to Celer,
 that is, if Celer likes what you're reading to him.
 He governed my peoples, the Celts and Iberians,*

*nor in our world was good faith ever more certain.
 This greater awe upsets me so much,
 and I think his ears to be not a listener's but a judge's.*

The juxtaposition of these two, with the continuation of the character of Auctus once again reading Martial's poems (this time to Celer whose only other appearance in the series is in 1.63), emphasises the statement that Auctus 'non lector meus hic...sed liber est' (7.51.6). This line, along with the focus on reading the poems, presents a situation where Auctus is not just a character, but almost a personification of the book itself (the word made flesh, as it were); the book is being read to Urbicus and Celer through them reading it.

These poems also serve to emphasise the world Martial has created in his books, a Rome that is not quite Rome. Urbicus ('of the city') seeks out the book where it sits at the entrance to the temple of Mars, a name with obvious connection to the poet's own name.

The hope that the book will please the listener in 7.52 is picked up again in 7.68, as well as a request for restraint when recommending his work. The epigram, which is placed after a particularly obscene poem (7.62), and in the middle of a cycle based around sodomy and oral sex (7.62, 67, 70), is a common type where the poet highlights the lascivious nature of his books while at the same time advising that they are not suitable for all readers. Of course, these poems are often placed far enough into the book that the reader will have already read the majority of the unsuitable epigrams before reaching the *apologia*.⁵⁰

7.97 presents a similar theme to 7.52; the book is being commended to a particular person with the book itself personified. This personification of the book is more obvious in 7.97, with the book addressed directly and given instructions on how to find a particular reader. This is a common *topos* within Martial's *Epigrams*, and a device which was used

⁵⁰One of the most obvious examples of this can be found in Book 3 (3.68 and 3.86), where two *apologiae* are found nearly two-thirds into the book, as well as enclosing a cycle of sexually themed epigrams. On *apologiae*, see Richlin 1992: 2-13.

by previous authors, particularly Ovid, in a similar fashion.⁵¹ 7.97 also relates back to the previous poems in this sub-theme through the focus on the urban reception of Martial's books. In 7.52 the books were disseminated through a constant *recitatio* by Auctus — the book was in the centre of the city and a man of the city was encouraged to seek him (it) out; in 7.97 the book is told how it will be read throughout another city due to the enthusiasm of Caesius, such that 'uni mitteris, omnibus legeris' (*you are sent to one, you will be read to all*, 7.97.13.)

The final poem in Book 7 to focus on the sub-theme of the circulation of Martial's books is also the last poem of the book itself. The epigram is an entreaty for his books to be favoured by the emperor, and addressed to Crispinus, presumably someone with status at court and access to Domitian.⁵² Crispinus is described as a 'lector candidus' (*honest reader*, 7.99.5), an Ovidian expression, the intertextuality of which adds to the impression Martial tries to set of his works being equal to that of great poets from the past, especially Marsus and Catullus (l. 7). However, the use of *candidus* also provides a subtle link for the rereader who has recognised Martial's use of interlinking themes, as we could translate this as 'pale reader'.⁵³

The epigram can also be seen to link directly with the opening cycle of poems to the emperor, as the poem asks Crispinus to recommend Martial's books to him. As we have seen, the interaction of the opening emperor cycle and literary theme serves to highlight the importance of the method of reception of the books. By echoing this once again in the book's final poem, Martial emphasises the importance of the way in which his poems are read, for this book and for the following books. This is emphasised by the juxtaposition of dedications to the emperor; for the later reader who continues on to Book 8 immediately

⁵¹On the personification of the book see 1.2, 1.70, 4.86, 10.20(19), 11.1, and 12.2(3). This device is also seen in Catullus 35, Horace *Epist.* 1.20, and the exile poetry of Ovid (*Tristia* 1.1, 3.7).

⁵²Crispinus is also seen in 8.48. Further, the character of Crispinus, a member of the imperial court, appears in Juvenal 1.26-29, 4.1-33, and 4.108-109.

⁵³See Chapter Three for more on the connection between pallor and oral sex.

after having read Book 7 the entreaty to the emperor in 7.99 and the dedication of the opening prose preface in Book 8 presents a sense of continuity, further evidence for the connections between the individual books of the series and the consecutiveness of the books for the reader.

2.2.2 Other Writers

esset, Castrice, cum mali coloris,
versus scribere coepit Oppianus.

*Because he had a bad colour, Castricus,
Oppianus started to write poems.*

The importance of the literary theme and its interaction with other themes is continued in the next poem in the linking section between the two halves of the opening emperor cycle, 7.4, where Martial explains that Oppianus became a writer because ‘esset...mali coloris’ (*he had a bad colour*), rather than having become pale because he was writing indoors all day.⁵⁴ The poem comes immediately after a poem mentioning another author, one which focuses on the circulation of Martial’s poetry but also creates a tension between Martial and other poets. In the beginning of Book 7, programmatically setting the parameters for the literary theme within the book, the first two poems contrast directly with the emperor cycle it links to — the poems of the emperor cycle are positive and these two epigrams are scathing and negative. This complete shift in tone acts to emphasise the way the literary theme is important to the book as a whole. Additionally, 7.4 emphasises the importance of orality, and shows, through its pivotal position at the start of Book 7, that it will continue to be a strong binding theme within the twelve books (see later on *os impurum* and oral

⁵⁴We can see a parallel here with the *leptoi* seen especially in the satiric epigrams of *AP* 11 and Celsus’ description of the debilitation caused by excessive academic activity. On the literary construction of the bookworm and physical debilitation, see Nisbet 2003.

sex for an explanation of how multiple themes combine in the twelve books to give focus to the idea of orality, and how this feeds back to the literary theme).

Another writer is mentioned in 7.29, which presents a completely different tone to the first two poems within this sub-theme. In this poem, Martial offers indirect praise to Voconius Victor and highlights the quality of his work. The epigram is addressed to a *puer delicatus*, to whom Martial offers his own poems as an alternative to the more serious work his master writes. The adulatory tone is reminiscent of the opening emperor cycle, providing intratextual references to previous poems in the book, and especially from this sub-theme and the way in which Martial has emphasised the place of the literary theme within the book.

The literary theme and the way in which Martial's books are connected are further integrated within this poem through the Vergilian references throughout. The rereader of Martial's books will remember having encountered the *puer delicatus*, Thestylus, in association with Viconius Victor in 8.63; further, Thestylus is compared with Vergil's *puer* Alexis in an imperfect analogy in the final two lines of the epigram where Marsus corresponds to Martial, and Thestylus to Alexis — 'et Maecenati, Maro cum cantaret Alexin,/ nota tamen Marsi fusca Melaenis erat' (*even to Maecenas, when Maro sang of Alexis, still was Marsus' dusky Melanis familiar*, 7.29.7-8). The name Thestylus also brings in a Vergilian intertextuality through *Ecl.* 2.10 and 43, where 'Thestylis' is the name of a female slave of Corydon, and it is Corydon who sings the song of love to Alexis which Martial refers to in l. 7.

The *topos* of gift exchange, referenced briefly in 7.3, is seen again in 7.42, which also continues 7.29's sub-theme of reference to other writers. Martial contrasts the tone of the later poems within the sub-theme from the opening two poems. In 7.3, Martial humorously refused to send his books to Pontilianus in case he received poems in return (the idea being that Pontilianus is a poor poet). 7.42 again uses humour in association with the theme of

exchanging work with other poets, but this time apologises to Castricus, as he is unable to offer anything in return for the poems he has received as gifts: his poems are far inferior compared to those he has received; he does not want to offend his patron by sending these *mala...carmina* (l. 5). In this poem Martial continues the recurring *topos*, used throughout the twelve books, that his poetry is inferior, as well as too obscene, and needs apologising for. Of course, this is in complete contrast to the opening of Book 1, and should be seen as insincere and actually a way of highlighting the differences between Martial and other authors. It is this difference which Martial highlights and uses as a way of constantly reminding the reader that these are not inferior books of poetry, but rather a new and exciting genre within Latin literature. However, the poem also interacts with the sub-theme of the circulation of Martial's books and continues the focus on Martial keeping control of the reception of his poems.

In 7.63 there is a return to the readers of other authors, and a further reference to epic poetry, a reference which continues to remind the reader the way in book in front of him should be read. The poem addresses the (anonymous) readers of Silius Italicus, and praises his works through comparison to Vergil and Cicero (using this to praise both his literary and political career). Silius Italicus frequently appears in Martial's work, both as a reminder of the 'epic' nature of the *Epigrams*, but also as a contemporary patron and benefactor, to whom Martial often submits his poems for literary criticism.⁵⁵ Thus, the reference to Silius Italicus continues the interaction of the two sub-themes of the circulation of Martial's work and other authors. This continues the contrast within this sub-theme through the poet's willingness to share his work with Silius Italicus, whereas he was reluctant to do so with Castricus in 7.42. The comparison of Silius Italicus and Vergil is a common device within the *Epigrams*. While this might be dismissed as simply praise for a patron, the reference to epic poetry in connection with Martial's own work is potentially more important; it forces

⁵⁵For other appearances of the character, see Appendix A.

the reader to focus on the similarities, as well as the differences, between the *Epigrams* and epic poetry, and consider the way in which to read these books of poems.

The sub-theme ends in 7.85, where Martial criticises another poet for not writing very much. We have here an illustration of the differences between writing ‘epigrams’ and writing a *liber*, a book of substance. This is emphasised by the use of technical poetic terms *tetrasticha* (from the Greek τετραστιχος) and *disticha* (from the Greek διστιχον), focusing the reader on the poetic skill Martial employs in his poems, a skill which is then shown in the chiasmic arrangement in the final two lines. Combined with this is a further reminder to the reader of the book they are holding and reading, its content, and way it should be read. Martial once again uses this sub-theme to emphasise the fact that his poems are produced in books, but also obliquely refers to epic poetry (or at least the status associated with the genre) as it is emphasised that while writing the odd poem is easy, ‘librum scribere difficile est’ (l. 4).

2.2.3 Defence Against Criticism and Appeals For Protection

7.6, the final poem of the opening cycle, confirms the connection between the emperor cycle and the literary theme, and defines the importance of these two ideas for the second half of the series. After appeals for Domitian’s safe return in previous poems within the cycle, 7.8 announces that the emperor will return to Rome soon.

nunc hilares, si quando, mihi, nunc ludite, Musae:

victor ab Odrysio redditur orbe deus.

certa facis populi tu primus vota, December:

iam licet ingenti dicere voce ‘venit.’

felix sorte tua! poteras non cedere Iano,

gaudia si nobis quae dabis ille dares.

festā coronatus ludet convicia miles.

inter laugiosos cum comes ibit eqos.

fas audire iocos leviorque carmina, Caesar,

et tibi, si lusus ipse triumphus amat.

Now if ever make sport for me merrily, Muses.

The god is restored victorious from the Odrysian world.

You are first to make sure of the people's prayers, December.

Now we can cry with one great voice 'He is coming!'

Happy in your lot! You might not yield to Janus,

if you were giving us the happiness that he will give.

The garlanded soldiers will sport festive insults

as they accompany the laurel-bearing horses.

Even for you, Caesar, it is lawful to hear jests and lighter poems,

if the triumph itself loves playfulness.

Martial celebrates the month through references to the Saturnalia, and anticipates the triumph. By using both of these festive periods, he returns to a trope seen previously in the series, whereby he begs the reader or a named character (in this case, the emperor) to allow his poems by way of *licentia*. The poem programmatically inaugurates the rest of the book, and the second half of the series, and promises a return to lighter matters after this opening cycle, while continuing to concentrate on the main topic at hand — Martial's poems and his books.

The appeal to the emperor and an appeal claiming for the inoffensiveness of his epigrams continues in 7.12 where Martial, addressing Faustinus, claims that other poets are writing aggressive works and assigning them to Martial. The epigram claims that Martial doesn't want to gain notoriety for offensive poems — 'mihi de nullo fama rubore placet' (*nor do I desire fame from anyone's blush*) — a claim which is obviously false, and patently

humorous, given the nature of many of the epigrams in the previous six books. However, the reference to the emperor in the first line recalls for the reader the last poem of the opening cycle and first poem of this sub-theme (7.8), where Martial employs the trope of asking for allowances for his poems due to their witty nature.

fas audire iocos levioraque carmina, Caesar,

et tibi, si lusus ipse triumphus amat.

*It is allowed, even for you, Caesar, to hear jokes
and lighter poems, if the triumph itself loves jollity. 7.8.9-10*

sic me fronte legat dominus, Faustine, serena

excipiatque meos qua solet aure iocos,

ut mea nec iuste quos odit pagina laesit

et mihi de nullo fama rubore placet.

*So that our lord can read my work with unfurrowed
brow, Faustinus, and catch my jokes with his attentive ear,
as my page has never harmed even those it hates,
and I don't want to be famous from someone's blush. 7.12.1-4*

The poem also emphasises the differences between how Martial's poems are received and those of the impostors, through the contrast between reading from the page ('sic me...legat', *so may...read me*; 'mea...pagina', *my page*), and the pleas of the poet which are read by the emperor. In reading these, the emperor is both the object and the subject of the poem, and his role is changed through the very act of reading. At the beginning of the epigram Martial addresses Faustinus hoping that the emperor will favour his poems, but then goes on to expand why he may not — others are using his name for poems of which the emperor will not approve. However, the plea at the end of the poem, where Martial swears that he would not write such poems, is directed to 'lector in humana a liber ab

invidia' (*a reader free from heartless jealousy*), and this reader is described as a divinity (i.e. the emperor).

The next poem in the theme, 7.17, moves to an appeal for protection, expressing Martial's hope that the books of epigrams shall be preserved, the book imagined as an enduring, durable object. In this epigram, Martial donates the seven books written so far to the library of Julius Martialis, and in doing so directs his address to the library itself (rather than to the owner of the library). As seen in previous sub-themes, there is again a contrast of *rus* and *urbs*; these books of the city are sent to the 'ruris bibliotheca delicati' (*library of an elegant country house*), but one from which the reader will see a city when looking at the books, both within the books themselves but also because the villa overlooks a local town ('vicinam videt unde lector urbem').⁵⁶ Martial also contrasts the refined works the library already has against his own, but by using Thalia, the Muse of poetry (especially of lesser genres), he reminds the reader of other authors his books should be associated with, such as the *Eclogues* of Vergil (*Ecl.* 6.2) and Ovid's elegiac works (*Ars.* 1.264). *Lascivus* is often used by Martial as an epithet for his work (cf. 1.4.8, 3.86.1, 4.14.12, 5.2.5, 7.68.3); in this context, where he modestly asks for his books to share space with similar but better books ('inter carmina sanctiora si quis,/ lascivae fuerit locus Thaliae' — *if there be space for lascivious Thalia among poems of a higher tone*, 7.17.3-4), however, it contributes to the sense of the other authors he should share space with, as it is frequently used by elegiac poets (Tib. 1.10.57; Prop. 2.29.7; Ov. *Am.* 3.1.43; *Ars.* 1.497, 1.523, 2.715, 3.331).⁵⁷ The request for protection for the oeuvre from the library itself takes a quasi- or mock-religious tone in line 9, with the use of *dedicata* 'as a play on ritual expressions permitting Martial to consecrate his friend's library, as if it were a temple, for a particular mission: that of conserving and defending his work.'⁵⁸

⁵⁶Cf. 7.52 and 7.97.

⁵⁷Cf. also Statius 2.114-116; 5.3.98

⁵⁸Galan Vioque 2002: 141-142.

Martial continues to defend the quality of his work in 7.25. The epigram is addressed to an unnamed rival who, Martial contends, produces bland, inoffensive poems, as compared to his own biting epigrams. The further into the book, the further away from his own claims of inoffensiveness Martial gets (7.12.13-14: ‘ut mea nec iuste quod odit pagina laesit/et mihi de nullo fama rubore placet’ (*as my page has never harmed anyone he justly hates, nor do I desire renown from anyone’s blush*)), claims which the reader would have been unlikely to believe anyway given the previous six books in the series.⁵⁹ With 7.25 Martial reassures his readers that the whole tone of his books has not suddenly changed, and yet at the same time he can be seen to be distancing himself from, and vitriolic towards, his earlier persona within the emperor cycle and the connected 7.12.

dulcia cum tantum scribas epigrammata semper
 et cerussata candidiora cute,
 nullaque mica salis nec amari fellis in illis
 gutta sit, o demens, vis tamen illa legi!
 nec cibus ipse iuvat morsu fraudatus aceti,
 nec grata est facies cui gelasinus abest.
 infanti melimela dato fatuasque mariscas:
 nam mihi, quae novit pungere, Chia sapit.

*You always write pleasant epigrams
 but they are whiter than white-leaded skin,
 without a grain of salt in the, nor a drop of bitter gall,
 and yet, you crazy man, you want people to read them!
 There is no relish even in food deprived of vinegar’s bite,
 and a face without a dimple fails to please.*

⁵⁹The believability of Martial’s claims in 7.12 would have been fairly small anyway given 7.10 and its opening ‘pedicatur Eros, fellat Linus’ (*Eros is ass-fucked, Linus sucks*).

*Give apples and insipid figs to a baby:
for me, I prefer the taste of Chian that knows how to sting.*

7.25

Contrasts with the the sub-themes of the literary theme have become a defining characteristic of Book 7. While one naive reading could see this as a sign of a haphazard collection, the contrasting tones actually have a connecting role; the constant shift focuses the reader on what it is that they are reading (the object of the book as well as the individual poems), the persona of the poet, and the reader's immersion within the Martialverse as opposed to the world of the reader (i.e. The world outside of the text). 7.25 also connects with other sub-themes and the emperor cycle itself through the description of the epigrams as 'creussata candidiora cute' (*whiter than white-leaded skin*), which links back to 7.4 and Oppianus' pallor.

The sub-theme of defence is not seen again until near the end of the book, with 7.72. The poem presents as a request to a patron to defend Martial's works from criticism, and asks for protection from other writers who present their own poems as having been written by him (an obvious link in subject with 7.12). However, the links between this poem and the previous epigrams in the sub-theme are made in such a way as to be clear to the model reader, the *lector studiosus*. 7.72 opens with a hope that the patron's month should be to his liking, and the mention of December connects with the first poem in this sub-theme and the final epigram of the opening emperor cycle, 7.8. The month of December also gives connotations of celebration and allowances through the Saturnalia, a reminder of the witty and sometimes obscene tone of Martial's books. 7.72 then continues with references to dining and food, connecting to the food metaphors seen previously in 7.25. This focus on food also connects to the epigrams 7.72 follows, especially those featuring Lesbia, Philaenis

and Sappho, as I will discuss later.⁶⁰

The final direct link with the previous epigrams in this sub-theme can be seen in lines 12-13:

si quisquam mea dixerit malignus
atro carmina quae madent veneno
*If any malicious person attributes to me
verses dripping with black venom*

These lines directly recall 7.12.7–8:

viperumque vomat nostro sub nomine virus
qui Phoebi radios ferre diemque negat?
*and some creature, who refuses to bear Phoebus' name
and the light of day, vomits his snake venom under my name?*

The use of the image of the venom of a snake, and the malicious nature of this venom, connects the two poems within the sub-theme and encourages a reading of the book *as* a book — earlier poems affect the understanding and interpretation of later ones *and* vice-versa, connecting the act of reading the book.

The next two poems within this sub-theme, 7.81 and 7.88, continue the defence of the worth of Martial's poems, but, more importantly, remind the reader of the Vergilian influence in the construction of the series through the character of Lausus, further emphasised intratextually by the use of the character of Faustinus earlier in the sub-theme (7.12):

'triginta toto mala sunt epigrammata libro.'
si totidem bona sunt, Lause, bonus liber est.

⁶⁰On Sappho in Martial's *Epigrams*, see Nisbet (forthcoming). On other appearances of the characters Lesbia, Philaenis, and Sappho, see Appendix A.

'There are 30 bad epigrams in the whole book.'

If there are as many good ones, Lausus, it's a good book.

7.81

Fertur habere meos, si vera est fama, libellos

inter delicatas pulchra Vienna suas.

me legit omnis ibi senior iuvenisque puerque

et coram tetrico casta puella viro.

hoc ego maluerim quam si mea carmina cantent

qui Nilum ex ipso protinus ore bibunt;

quam meus Hispanio si me Tagus impleat auro,

pascat et Hybla meas, pascat Hymettos apes.

non nihil ergo sumus nec blandae munere linguae

decipimur: credam iam, puto, Lause, tibi.

Fair Vienna, if reports hold true, is said to

hold my books in good favour.

Everybody there reads me — old man, young man, boy and virtuous

young woman in front of her straight-laced husband.

This makes me happier than if drinkers of the Nile

from its very fount were to recite my verses,

or my own Tagus load me with Spanish gold,

or Hybla or Hymettus feed my bees.

So I am not nothing, not deceived by the bounty of a flattering

tongue: I think I shall believe you Lausus.

7.88

This Vergilian reference can be linked with the name of Faustinus through Sperlonga and specifically the so-called *Pasquino* group. Weis has shown that rather than being a reference to Menelaus, this statue actually depicts Aeneas and Lausus at the moment of Lausus' death.⁶¹ There is also at Sperlonga an epigram inscribed on a white marble plaque set into the rear wall of the cave which is full of intertextual references to Virgil and was written by a poet called Faustinus. Further, the *Pasquino* group is the only statue *not* referred to in Faustinus' epigram, which brings further attention to it and its subject matter. Despite scholars so far being unable to accurately date the addition of the epigram, Martial's intratextual use of Lausus and Faustinus suggests that the inscription had been added to the grotto at Sperlonga by the end of the first century AD, and that the arrangement of decoration within the dining-space was known by his readers, at least by hearsay if not personal experience, especially as the *Pasquino* group was the most copied group from the cave.⁶²

The final epigram in this sub-theme is 7.90. Martial returns to the character of Matho, given prominence in 7.10, who this time is criticising Martial's book for being uneven.⁶³ Martial counters that in fact, by saying this, 'laudat carmina nostra Matho' (*Matho praises my poems*) (7.90.2). Martial is the only Flavian author to defend variety as a virtue of literary books, whereas most authors felt that homogeneity in their compositions was the highest quality.⁶⁴ In the final line of the epigram Martial names the addressee of the poem, Creticus, a name which emphasises the importance to him of *variatio* in his books of poems, as *creticus* is the name of an unequal metrical foot. This epigram, near the end of the book and connecting through 81 and 88 to the same sub-theme, acts as a reminder to the reader near the end of the roll of the quality of what they have read

⁶¹Weis 1998. Lausus' death is depicted in *Aeneid* 10.814-832.

⁶²Conticello 1974.

⁶³On Matho's role in Book 7, see later.

⁶⁴Cf. *Rhet. Her.* 4.12.18; *Cic. de Orat.* 2.64, 3.45; *Quint.* 3.8.60, 10.154, 10.186-87; *Tac. Dial.* 31. Matho is addressed later in 10.46 with the same defence of *inequalitas*.



Figure 2.3: The *Pasquino* Group reconstruction at Loggia dei Lanzi

already, and how while it may seem to have been 90 different poems so far, there is a connecting narrative the *lector studiosus* should have been able to discern.

2.3 The Literary Theme in Book 7

In Book 7 Martial brings the literary theme to the forefront. The theme encompasses nearly a quarter of the poems of the book, yet it is not just the amount of poems that makes it so important; the interaction of the literary theme with the opening emperor cycle immediately highlights the importance of the theme to the pseudo-narrative of the book, and the references back to those opening poems throughout the course of the theme continue to indicate to the reader the multiplicity of possible readings and ways of reading. The literary theme in Book 7 is how Martial modulates his relationship with the emperor of the Martialverse. By turning Domitian into his ideal reader, Martial is turned into the ideal poet, at least within the world ruled by *this* Domitian.

Of course, the reader is already aware of how important this theme is within Martial's work. The book-as-slave motif in Book 1 has already indicated to the reader the importance of the object they are holding and how they are reading it, and throughout the other books leading up to Book 7, the literary theme has continued to play a key role within the poems.⁶⁵ In Book 7 we see an continued emphasis on the way in which these books of poems are to be read — individually and silently — and how this is used by Martial to make himself not only stand out from those he sees as his predecessors, but also to make *Latin* epigram something new and different. His criticisms of other Latin poets who continue to see their main reception as being through recitation can be seen to be an argument against coopting the reception of Greek poetry, and especially Greek epigram, in this 'new' genre. The argument against recitation also involves the reader in a discourse about how Latin authors should be read, where Martial places himself in the opposing corner to writers such as Pliny. In this he highlights the importance of the reader to the interpretation of the texts and their individual response to what they are reading (a response he obviously feels will be lost or diminished were they to "read" his works within a group setting).

⁶⁵On the book-as-slave see Fitzgerald 2007, esp. 97–105.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, one of the problems with scholarship on Martial is the way that the epigrams are taken out of the context of the book, and series, in which they are contained. While the analysis above tries to show how the literary theme in Book 7 continually provides links back to the opening cycle of poems, it could still be held guilty of this charge; however, one of the reasons for this is the sheer complicatedness of the way in which Martial connects themes across and between books. The literary theme is obviously important, not just as a theme used within several of the poems, but also for the way it connects for the reader what they are reading with how they are reading it. It is this underlying purpose of engaging with how books are read which is taken beyond the literary theme and integrated even more fully into the series. Martial connects several themes together to emphasise how to read, what to read, and even what to get out of it, and in doing so creates something which is greater than the sum of its parts. As I will now go on to show, there are two main themes connected with the literary theme across the twelve books which serve to focus the reader on the act of reading. These themes, firstly oral sex and *os impurum*, and secondly food and dining, along with the primary literary theme, concentrate on orality, what the reader is doing with their mouth rather than reciting epigrams, as well as fully bringing the reader into a *Latin* context, reading about rather than attending the Greek context of the symposium.

Chapter 3

Following A Theme Through the *Epigrams.*

3.1 Introduction: Smells and Odour in Antiquity

. Starting from Homer, smells and odours were an important part of ancient literature. Traditionally, sweet smells we emphasised, and with Greek epic the gods ‘were imagined to be fragrant themselves’, up to and including their breath.¹ Tragedy continues this emphasis on the sweet smell of the body, as does Old Comedy. Erotic connotations of sweet smells appear in the *Anacreontea*, where the use of perfumes is mentioned in the description of symposia; the use of perfumes is also described as an aphrodisiac.² Aroma and sex are represented as typically being consumed together, implicitly at the symposium.³ The erotic context of sweet scents and perfumes is also seen in the epigrams of the *AP*, for example in 5.305 where a girl’s kiss is praised and her breath compared to nectar, or 12.123 where despite the fact the the boy’s face has been bloodied in a boxing match, his kiss is still

¹Lilja 1972: 30.

²11, 10f. Bergk.

³This association between sweet smells and the symposium can also be seen in the name of the epigram collections of Meleager and Philip — ‘garland’.

σμύρνης...μελιχρότερον to the poet.⁴ Further examples can be seen particularly in books 5 and 12, and many of the erotic poems in these books are characterised by fragrance.⁵ Similarly, Horace and Catullus praise the sweetness of kisses; Lydia's lips are described by Horace as 'oscula quae Venus quinta parte sui nectaris imbuit', while Catullus calls a kiss 'saviolum dulci dulcius ambrosia.'⁶ With this we see a continuation of the importance of fragrant breath for kisses from ancient Greek texts through to Hellenistic epigram, elegy and lyric, and, finally, into Roman poetry.

However, while sweet-smelling bodies and fragrant breath were held up as divine and the ideal, this was not the only way smells and odours were described in antiquity.⁷ Aeschylus, when describing the breath of the Eumenides, claims it is ῥέουκουσι δ' οὐ πλατοῖσι φουσιάμασι (53), and in the *Cyclops*, Euripides describes the evil-smelling breath of the Cyclops when he belches after having eaten two of Odysseus' companions — the bad breath is here a consequence of barbarism; the Cyclops, having been a bad host and ignoring the rules of Greek hospitality, is un-Greek and therefore uncivilised. Bad breath and bodily odour associated with certain foods are seen in Old and New Comedy.⁸ Later, Latin satirical writing also includes descriptions of bad breath. Horace shows two extreme types of bad breath; firstly in 1.2.27 where he claims that 'pastillos Rufillus olet, Gargonis hircum' (*Rufillus smells of lozenges, and Gargonis of goat*, 1.2.27 and 1.4.92). The use of lozenges was a common way to sweeten one's breath, and the goat a symbol of perversion and foulness. Again, the focus is on the smell caused by certain food and drinks; Horace writes of the bad breath caused by drinking wine in the *Epistles*, and the harmful effects of kiss-

⁴Presumably because he has demonstrated manly ἀπετρία appropriate to his elite status within the context of the gymnasium.

⁵For example, 5.16, 5.18, 5.90, 5.91, 5.199, 5.200, 12.4, 12.7, 12.195, 12.256. One could also include poems with an allusion to the sweet smell of flowers, though flowers are used variously within the *AP*, both in erotic and non-erotic contexts.

⁶Horace *Odes* 1.13.15ff.; Catullus 99.2.

⁷For this ideal of pleasant odour, cf. Ovid *Ars* 1.519 and 3.277.

⁸For examples, see Lilja 1972.

ing someone who has been eating garlic.⁹ Catullus also complains about the bad breath of Aemilius, where he claims that ‘non...quicquam referre putavi, utrumne os an culum olfacerem Aemilio’ (*I thought it did not matter whether I smelt Aemilius’ head/mouth or his ass*, 97.1-2). Catullus also mentions bad breath in 99.7-8 where a young boy washes his lips after a kiss so as to remove the contagion. Bad breath, especially in the invective poems against women, is seen in the Greek epigram writers in the *AP*, especially smell and objection in Lucilius and Nicarchus.¹⁰ Finally, in the satirical writings of Persius and Juvenal we find people being criticised for the extravagant and excessive use of perfumes (presumably trying to hide a bad smell with a good one).

While Persius and Juvenal attack the excessive use of perfumes and luxurious smells from a moral point of view, claiming that it is a sign of effeminacy and the possibility of sexual deviation, Martial’s use of smells within his poetry is more varied.¹¹ While there are several epigrams in which the smell of someone’s breath is associated with having drunk too much wine or bad tasting food, one of the main uses of odour within the *Epigrams* is associated with the theme of oral sex, and specifically the consequence of having performed oral sex — *os impurum* (impure mouth).

Lilja, in a very naive reading, claims that Martial’s negative view of perfumes was because he ‘disliked strong odours’; however, the evidence from the poems, as I show, is not that Martial had a delicate sense of smell, but rather the assumption is that anyone who smells strongly of perfumes or other sweet-smells is using these fragrances to cover a bad smell, and this most commonly associated with the stench of *os impurum*.¹² This is shown most clearly in the cycle of epigrams about Postumus in Book 2, whom Martial

⁹*Ep.* 1.19 and 3.21.ff.

¹⁰For example, 11.241, 11.242, 11.395 (Nicarchus); 11.427 (Lucilius). Cf. Nisbet 2003.

¹¹Persius and Juvenal’s objections to perfumes have a racial bias — it is not simply the use of perfumes, but their association with eastern countries and their ‘otherness’. Perfume can either form an image of aristocratic ἀπετή and form social togetherness (the symposium), or connote eastern effeminacy (the ‘bad’ type of Greek or, even worse, Egyptian), or be used to mask some form of vice — it’s up to the *reader* to determine the meaning on any particular occasion.

¹²Lilja 1972: 80.

accuses of having performed oral sex; he claims that Postumus attempts to hide this the foulness of *os impurum* by using perfumes, and he therefore refuses to kiss him so he will not become infected himself.¹³

This focus on the smells associated with and the masking of *os impurum* shows another of the ideas which Martial has developed from previous poets, specifically Catullus, a focus on the mouth — of the characters, the author and the reader(s). Many of Catullus' poems focus on the mouth, and Roman obscenity in general plays with the idea of oral purity. Fitzgerald argues that this is because 'the word of a Roman is sacred, and the place from which it issues must be kept pure by members of the community of speakers.'¹⁴ This focus on the mouth in Roman obscenity is used by Catullus, to an extent, to look at the differences between pure and impure speakers, speech and silence, and, according to Fitzgerald, 'between the body of the poem and the bodies of the poet and reader.'¹⁵ Consequently, this focus in Roman society on the purity, or impurity, of the mouth makes it an important topic for poets, especially Catullus, as it ties in with their literary concerns of the poetic act. Martial develops previous figurations of the mouth in Roman poetry, making it a major concentration throughout the *Epigrams*. The focus becomes what the reader's mouth is doing, or not doing, in life and in the act of reading the books of poems in front of them, as well as what their mouth should be doing instead of reciting as they read the books silently to themselves.

In this chapter I will focus on a new reading of the *Epigrams*, looking at the way in which the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* connects together the poems of individual books and the twelve-book series. This theme is important given its oral focus and connects not only with the literary theme already explored, but also, as I will show later, a theme concerned with dinner parties, food, eating and drinking. By using a reading of the theme of oral

¹³This cycle is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

¹⁴Fitzgerald 1995: 10-11.

¹⁵Fitzgerald 1995:11.

sex and *os impurum* I show how this creates a kind of narrative, providing a structure for the reader. I will show how this particular theme is important for an understanding of the *Epigrams* as a whole. I begin by following the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* through the twelve books as a first-time, naive reader. I will later explore how the model reader, the rereader, gains a greater appreciation of the importance of this theme.

3.2 Oral Sex and *os impurum* in the *Epigrams*.

3.2.1 Book 1

To start a first-time reading following the use of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Martial's *Epigrams* is to begin at the preface to Book 1. In the preface, Martial states what he wants the reader to believe is the outlook for the coming book.¹⁶ He says that he seeks to have balance within his works, such that no one with a good conscience will be able to complain about the content. The *libellus* is the focus of the preface, rather than the poet himself; *libellus* is the fourth word read, and the focus of the preface as a whole is the material object the reader is holding and reading. The preface also indicates to the reader that the epigrams within this book may not be as straightforward as he claims; by stating that he is not looking for his cleverness to be praised, and focusing on the interpretation of the reader, Martial indicates to the reader the way the way his books should be read.¹⁷

¹⁶This can also be read as the pseudo-outlook for the twelve-book series, but is reliant on the naive, first-time reader realising that this *is* a series. For the first-time reader of Book 1, reading the book when the book is first released, it is unlikely that they will envisage an epigrammatic series; however, a first-time reader who does not read Book 1 until after all twelve books have been released may have suspicions that the books are connected in some way.

¹⁷We can see here the influence of earlier Greek epigrammatists in the opening to Book 2, especially Lucilius. One of Lucilius' epigrams, now found in Book 9 of the *AP* (9.572) appears to be the opening poem of a second book of poetry which is dedicated to Nero. Nisbet has argued that the ideas presented in this poem not only prepare the reader for the rest of the book, but also provide clues to the reader of Lucilius' first book. This offers the reader 'the special treat of both resuming...the role of the model reader *and* watching the process of misdirection by which the naive reader will be thoroughly disorientated' (Nisbet 2003: 41).

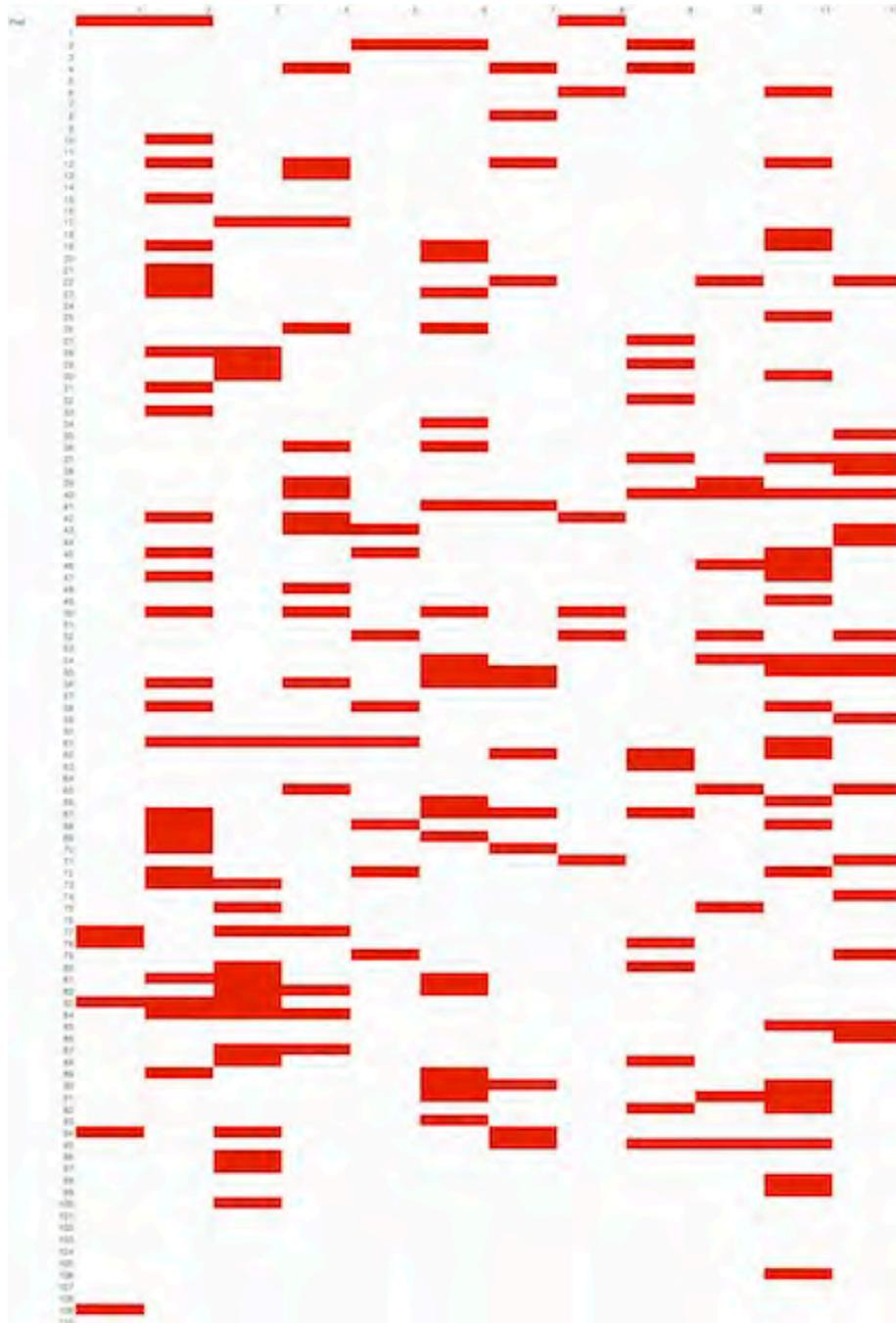


Figure 3.1: Poems in the theme of oral Sex and *os impurum* on a first-time reading of the *Epigrams*.

Further, this direction to the reader and the denials contained within the preface, indicate that there is more to this book than a surface reading may indicate. Martial suggests that his books should be read through, and compares the reading process of his books to that of Vergil and Catullus. This reference to Vergil at the very beginning of the *Epigrams* emphasises the message that this is not just a random collection of poems, but something which requires careful reading in the order presented; further, the Vergilian reference suggests that there will be some kind of narrative for the reader to follow in order to read through the book, and cues up the prospect of a series developing on the release of further books. Finally, the reader is made aware of the potentially obscene material ahead of them. Martial states that he shall not shy away from the blunt and lascivious language of epigram — something hinted at with the mention of Catullus in the next line. The juxtaposition of *epigrammaton* and *linguam* contains a number of clues for the careful reader of this preface; the Greek and Latin terms hint at some of the models Martial will be following, but also that he will not name them directly and sees himself very much within a *Latin* model of writing. Perhaps more importantly is the use of *linguam* and its focus on the tongue and so the mouth. From the opening of the *Epigrams* Martial focuses the reader's attention on their mouth. If reading in the way Martial obviously hopes they will be, he focuses their attention to the fact that they are using their eyes to read rather than their tongue (and lips and mouth). This focus continues throughout the twelve books, and Martial continues to draw the reader's attention to the fact that they are not currently using their mouths to read. The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* not only draws the reader's attention to their mouth, but brings a humour to the following books with the suggestion that just because they are not currently using their mouths for reading, does not mean they should consider this as an alternative activity.

After setting up reader's expectations that there will be something different to this book than suggested on the surface, and the clear focus on orality, it is not actually until

1.77 that the reader is presented with the first epigram explicitly on the topic of oral sex. However, it immediately proves the lies of the preface, as along with many of the preceding epigrams, it is direct and blunt in its subject matter. 1.77 introduces Charinus, the name of a stock character in Greek comedy, who is pale (*pallet*) no matter what he does.¹⁸ The structure of the epigram is derived from Catullus, continuing the association from the preface of Martial's work and Catullus' epigrams, as well as the obscenity the reader should expect. In the poem, each line describes the various ways how, despite his apparent health and happiness, Charinus is still pale.

pulchre valet Charinus et tamen pallet.

parce bibit Charinus et tamen pallet.

bene conocquit Charinus et tamen pallet.

sole utitur Charinus et tamen pallet.

tingit cutem Charinus et tamen pallet.

cunnum Charinus lingit et tamen pallet.

Charinus is in the pink, and yet he's pale.

Charinus drinks sparingly, and yet he's pale.

Charinus has a good digestion, and yet he's pale.

Charinus goes out in the sun, and yet he's pale.

Charinus wears make-up, and yet he's pale.

Charinus licks a cunt, and so he is pale.

As is common in Martial's epigrams, and those of his Greek predecessors, the reason for this is delayed until the last line — Charinus is pale because he has been performing cunnilingus, and has thus been infected by *os impurum* and the associated sickness.¹⁹

¹⁸This use of a Greek name known from Greek literature in the first explicit poem in the theme in Book 1 immediately sets up this vice as culturally 'Other', something non-Roman and not to be done by good Romans.

¹⁹Nisbet 2003 on skoptic epigram's delaying tactics.

The poem's importance within the theme and the way the book is structured are indicated by the preceding and following poems. 1.76 ends with the subject of kissing (*basia*), again evoking Catullus and emphasising the orality of the theme contained next poem, while 1.78's subject, which is bluntly stated in the first line, is a wasting disease which has infected Festus' throat. While there is no indication that the disease has been caused by any untoward sexual practices, and in fact it is emphasised that he has not poisoned his mouth intentionally ('nec...obscuro pia polluit ora veneno' *he did not defile his innocent lips/mouth with posion*, 1.78.5), the juxtaposition of these two poems stresses the combination of oral sex and its consequences, namely *os impurum*.²⁰

The theme appears again six poems later in 1.83. Again, this is a blunt epigram, implying its subject matter clearly, leaving the reader in no doubt as to what the poem is talking about. In a short two-line poem, Martial describes why he is no longer surprised dogs eat excrement, given that Manneia's dog licks her mouth. The implication here is that Manneia is a *fellatrix* and so suffers from *os impurum*; Citroni explains that performing fellatio means that her *os et labra* have been turned into *merdae*.²¹ Judith Hallett has suggested another interpretation, which in isolation may seem convincing, but can be shown to be incorrect when the epigram is considered as part of the wider theme in the book and series. Hallett's interpretation centres around medical writers' use of both *os* and *labra* to refer to female genitalia.²² She argues that rather than accusing Manneia of being a *fellatrix*, the poem is actually describing Manneia *receiving* cunnilingus from her (male) dog. Thus, her *os et labra* 'are naturally *merdae* by virtue of their proximity to

²⁰To some extent the juxtaposition of 1.77 and 1.78 adds to the theme of *os impurum* in 1.77; it is made clear that Festus has not intentionally taken a substance specifically designed for the purpose of poisoning him, but there is no such assertion that he has not taken in something which is bad and he should not have taken. This clear distinction between poison and *os impurum* emphasises voluntary nature of the infection and it's unnaturalness — they have chosen to become infected by using an object for something other than its specifically designed purpose.

²¹Citroni 1975: 261-262.

²²There are of course immediate problems as this dual use seems not to be attested outside of medical writing and Hallett here ignores the fact that different genres may use different vocabulary.

her anus.²³ She refers to a Pompeian inscription which, she argues, shows that Martial's contemporaries 'considered *cunnilingus* a characteristically canine endeavour.'²⁴ Even with the tenuous basis of this interpretation based on one lone inscription, Hallett's analysis of the epigram ignores the importance of *os impurum*, which has already been emphasised in relation to poems about oral sex in this book. Further, her assertion that 'Martial does not depict female *fellatio* as a physically degrading, and literally disfiguring, act elsewhere' is misinformed.²⁵

There is then a break of eleven poems until the theme appears explicitly again in 1.94. The protagonist is a prostitute called Aegle, who, in her working days was a bad singer.²⁶ However, she now sings well and the poem asserts that she is not to be kissed. The poem leads on from 1.83, once again bringing in this theme of oral sex and *os impurum* and so the reason she is not to be kissed is because she has been performing fellatio. Howell says that there was a belief at this time that women's voices changed when they lost their virginity, and Citroni states that prostitutes were meant to be able to sing well, presumably to provide additional entertainment, especially if we think of something resembling the Greek symposium.²⁷ If this is the case, then the epigram produces an interesting reversal of the usual idea that a woman's voice deteriorates as she grows older.²⁸ Simultaneously, the poem uses the idea of an older woman who has to resort to fellatio now that she is no longer sexually attractive, as seen in, for example, *AP* 5.38 (Nicarchus), where an old woman who was much in demand when younger is now submissive and will do anything just for the sexual pleasure. Therefore, in this epigram Aegle no longer has intercourse and so her voice has returned to a virginal state. However, she is still sexually active but

²³Hallett 1977: 253.

²⁴Hallett 1977: 253; C.I.L IV8898.

²⁵Hallett 1977: 252.

²⁶Howell suggests that Aegle is probably meant to be thought of as a prostitute, though he does not give his reasoning for this assertion.

²⁷Howell 1980: 304; Citroni 1975.

²⁸Cf. Hor. *Od.* 4.13.5f.; 3.15.13f.

is only able to perform fellatio as she is no longer sexually attractive, and so suffers from *os impurum*.

The final poem explicitly within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 1 is 1.109. The poem is about Issa, the pet dog of Publius, and so links back directly with 1.83 and Manneia's dog, although this time the dog is female. There are also direct links to the way Martial uses (and will continue to use) the readers' knowledge of Catullus, and the first suggestion of how one of Catullus' most famous characters will be subverted by Martial. From the first line we see the intertextuality with Catullus 2 as 'Issa est passere nequior Catulli' and further Catullan techniques can be seen with the repetition of 'Issa est' in lines 1-5, as well as the use of similar lines next to each other, as in lines 19-20 and 22-23. Having another epigram on the subject of a dog immediately creates a link for the reader and suggests that this poem is also part of the theme, even if the subject is not explicitly explored. The reader has also seen a similar opening of a pet being praised as greater than Catullus' sparrow in 1.7, and the link between the two poems is enhanced with line 2 where the dog is said to be purer than a dove. One of the main links between this poem and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, other than the canine link, is the use of *nequior* in the first line.²⁹ While this link may be clearer to the rereader than the first-time reader of the *Epigrams*, there is an erotic undertone to the poem.³⁰

At the end of Book 1 the reader is likely to have noticed this handful of connected poems and the way in which, combined with the literary theme, there are the beginnings of a focus on orality, on what the reader is doing with their mouths instead of reading aloud while holding the book and reading with their eyes. This theme continues to be important within the series, and it is in the next two books that its place within the reading narrative is highlighted.

²⁹Adams 1982.

³⁰On the further appreciation for the rereader, see the next chapter.

3.2.2 Books 2 and 3 — Determining The Importance Of The Theme

Book 2

Book 2 reaffirms the use of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within the *Epigrams*, opening with a play on the grand tradition of *recusatio*.³¹ Martial announces in a prose preface that he is not going to do a prose preface. A similarly misleading opening which breaks the rule it introduces can be seen in the opening epigram of Ovid's *Amores*; Martial engages with a ludic discourse of authorial Latinity with the misleading opening to his books, which the reader of the series has already seen in the opening to Book 1. One of the key points of this opening, especially in regards to the theme, is cleverly placed in the mouth of the supposed addressee, Decianus, who emphasises that epigram has an *mala lingua* (evil tongue).³² From the beginning of the book the reader knows that it is a *book of epigrams* that they are reading, and so should expect poems which are clear, blunt and, potentially, obscene.³³ The opening emphasis on the obscene nature of epigram, or at least Martial's epigrams, prepares the reader for what is to come; the use of *lingua* specifically introduces the focus on the mouth within this theme, one which the model reader would recognise as continuing from Book 1.³⁴

The reader does not have long to wait for the continuation of this theme; 2.10 introduces one of the ideas which constitutes the Latin literary discourse of *os impurum* — repulsive kisses. This poem also begins a cycle within the book commonly called the 'Postumus

³¹Cf. Nauta 2006.

³²Cf. 1.praef.11 — 'epigrammatin linguam' (*the language/tongue of epigram*).

³³For the careful/model reader who has already read Book 1, this would surely link to the opening preface where Martial makes no excuse for the lascivious nature of epigram (1.praef.10-13).

³⁴Fitzgerald (1995: 63) has argued that within Roman poetry obscene poems are usually focused on the impure mouth. The mouth was the primary contact with the social world and so needed to be seen as pure. Richlin (1983: 26-29) says that given Roman preoccupation with cleanliness and smells, it is not surprising that the strongest invective was used against the impure mouth and that the pathetic act of oral sex was consistently associated with foul smells and the anus.

Cycle'.³⁵

basia dimidio quod das mihi, Postume, labro,

laudo: licet demas hinc quoque dimidium.

vis dare maius adhuc et inenarrabile munus?

hoc tibi habe totum, Postume, dimidium.

You give me kisses with half your lips, Postumus,

fine. You can take away half from that too.

Do you want to do me an even greater favour, one beyond description?

Keep the entire half for yourself, Postumus.

The epigram introduces the character of Postumus, who is portrayed as a slave (or perhaps newly manumitted freedman). The name is an obvious speaking name, derived from *posterus*, indicating from the first line that perhaps this person and his kisses are the *last* thing Martial, or anyone else, wants.³⁶ While the opening poem of this cycle does not make explicitly clear *why* Martial is repulsed by Postumus' *basia dimidio...labro* (*half kisses*, 2.10.1), readers of Book 1, and Latin invective generally, are likely to understand that this unwillingness to kiss Postumus is due to *os impurum* — the interpretation being that Postumus has been performing oral sex, a practice which was thought to pollute the mouths of those who engaged in it.³⁷ The cycle continues in 2.12, and emphasises that there is something wrong with the way Postumus smells. Martial conjectures that if Postumus is covering himself in myrrh it must be to hide a more offensive smell — 'Postume, non bene olet qui bene semper olet' (*Postumus, a man does not smell good who smells good all the time*, 2.12.4). Again, the idea that those who perform oral sex become diseased or infected by it is emphasised — the pollution of *os impurum* has caused the odour Postumus

³⁵Cf. Williams 2004: 54-55, 63-64, 93, 94-5, and 96.

³⁶Vallet 2008 suggests a link with the character 'Postumus' in Horace *Odes* 2.14 (386). Cf. Vallet 2008: 398-399, 500.

³⁷Cf. Richlin 1983: 26-29, 69, 99; Fitzgerald 1995: 63ff.

is trying to hide.³⁸ After a brief interlude of two poems, Martial continues the theme in 2.15; Hormus' refusal to pass on the cup (presumably at some kind of sympotic occasion) is seen as the narrator as a blessing rather than a curse as Hormus has infected the cup by drinking from it. The continuity with the polluted mouth from 2.10 and 2.12 gives the reader the 'back-story' on why Martial does not wish to drink from the same cup as Hormus.³⁹

The 'Postumus Cycle', and the theme of *os impurum* caused by performing oral sex, continues in 2.21, and introduces a cluster of three poems all focused on Martial's attempts to refuse Postumus' diseased kisses. Despite kissing as a greeting being common at this time, Martial states 'malo manum' — he would rather greeted by a handshake than to endure the kisses (and potential infection) from this *fellator* or *cunnilingus*.⁴⁰ This cluster of poems continues in 2.22, the link between this poem and the previous one made clear not only through the continuation of the theme but also emphasised through the continued use of elegiac couplets, creating almost a 'part two' to 2.21. This continuity of theme and metre also links 2.19 to this series, and a character called Zoilus.⁴¹ 2.22 gives the invective presented an amusing twist, with the use of Ovidian intertextuality in the self-pitying opening statement. Martial indirectly draws a parallel between his own suffering caused by Postumus' kisses, and Ovid's punishment by Augustus; in the opening of the epigram he asks 'quid mihi vobiscum est, o Phoebe novemque sorores?' (*what do I want*

³⁸Richlin 1983: 26 — 'a person accused of having a bad-smelling, decaying, stained, or suspiciously clean mouth may also be accused of indulgence in oral sex as the cause.'

³⁹This continuation with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is strengthened by Williams' suggestion that the name 'Hormus' is in fact a variant of 'Postumus', and presumably one which would have been picked up by an educated reader (Williams 2004: 76).

⁴⁰Given the sexual thematic of this theme of *os impurum*, there is a possibility that Martial is stating his sexual preferences when it comes to Postumus — he would rather be masturbated than have Postumus' mouth touch him.

⁴¹Martial here, through a similarity in metre, is able to mention a character, first seen three poems previously, who will become significant later of in the progress of this theme within Books 2 and 3. The model reader may also have noticed the inclusion of 2.19 within the chiasmic sequence, and begin to associate the new character with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and thus remember this association when reading later poems.

with you, o Phoebus and Sisters Nine, 2.22.1), which is similar to the opening of *Tristia* 2: ‘Quid mihi vobiscum est, influx cura, libelli / ingenio perri qui miser ipse meo?’ (*what are you to me, my books, unhappy labour, me, a wretch, ruined by my own talent?*). In lines 3-4 there is also a direct reference back to 2.10: Postumus used to kiss Martial with half his lips, but he is now using both.

This particular cluster of poems ends at 2.23, though this is neither the end of the cycle itself, nor of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within the book as a whole. The theme and the cycle are combined with the literary theme (foreshadowed by the Ovidian address to his books in the previous poem), as Martial refuses to ‘name’ Postumus, suggesting that this has been a pseudonym all along. The repulsion and possible infection caused by Postumus’ kisses is highlighted as Martial asks ‘has offendere basiationes / quae se tam bene vindicare possunt?’ (*what call have I to offend these kisses which can so well take their revenge?*). The suggestion is that Postumus now realises his *os impurum* and will kiss Martial in punishment were he to reveal his name. This does not indicate that Postumus is really meant to be a pseudonym for a real person, he is a character in the Martialverse. Rather it creates a conclusion to a cluster of poems that tells a story — Postumus is a *fellator* and has now come to the realisation of the consequences of performing this act, but does not wish for anyone else to find out his mouth has become impure.

The theme of *os impurum* as a consequence and ‘sign’ of having performed oral sex returns with a bang, as it were, in 2.28. This is the first epigram of the book to use explicit obscenities, and it is significant that this is part of one of the major overarching themes of the series as a whole. It again uses a speaking name for the main character — Sextillus — linked to the number of sexual possibilities in the epigram. The poem is also the first glimpse of conceptual mechanisms of classification in the *Epigrams* — there is a hierarchy of sexual practices within the Martialverse.

rideto multum qui te, Sextille, cinaedum

dixerit et digitum porrigito medium.
 sed nec pedico es nec tu, Sextille, fututor,
 calda Vetustinae nec tibi bucca placet.
 ex istis nihil es, fateor, Sextille: quid ergo es?
 nescio, sed tu scis res superesse duas.

*Laugh loudly, Sextillus, when someone calls you a cinaedus
 and stick your middle finger up at them.*

*But you are not a sodomite nor fucker either, Sextillus,
 nor does Vetustina's hot mouth take your fancy.*

You are none of these, Sextillus, I admit. But what are you?

I don't know, but you know that there are two options.

The epigram begins by defending Sextilius against the accusation that he is a *cinaedus*.⁴² However, if he is neither a *cinaedus*, not a *paedico*, nor a *fututor*, nor an *irrumator*, then, Martial implies, there are only two possibilities for what Sextilius is — a *fellator* or *cunnilingus*, or both.⁴³ Martial's systematic working-through of all the sexual roles available to Sextilius means that an epigram which begins by defending the addressee's masculinity through a denial of the charge of *cinaedus*, ends by purposefully removing and destroying his masculine sexual identity. This epigram also highlights the combination of the ideas of oral sex and silence with the narrator's control of the narrative and lack of explanation from Sextilius himself. Obermayer has argued that the way that oral sex is presented in this epigram suggests that it is the 'unspeakable act', as well as the act which prevents you from speaking.⁴⁴

⁴² [*cinaedus*] originally referred to an effeminate eastern dancer, but was also used as an insult referring to an effeminate man who most likely, but not necessarily always, played the receptive role in anal intercourse. No attempts at translation...have been successful, either because they are insufficiently precise, or because they rely on categories alien to Roman ideas regarding sexuality' (Williams 2004: 110).

⁴³ For uses of *paedico* ('buggerer'), *fututor* ('fucker'), and *irrumator* ('mouth-fucker'), cf. Adams 1982: 182-185, 118-122, 125-130.

⁴⁴ Obermayer 1998: 244-245.

This combination of oral sex and silence is seen again in 2.31, manifesting through the double meaning of *supra* in the second line.⁴⁵ Using the basic meaning of *supra*, the epigram declares that sex with this girl is the best that there can be. However, this phrase is playing with the spatial meaning of *supra*; the girl is unable to go any ‘higher up’ because her mouth is already being put to use — she is performing fellatio.⁴⁶ Martial’s *urbanitas* constructs his model reader who is able to ‘get’ the double meaning, while at the same time the need to not explicitly spell it out. This adds weight to Obermayer’s interpretation of the unspeakable nature of and importance of silence with regard to oral sex in the *Epigrams*.

The reader is given a break of only one poem before the theme appears again, with an epigram which states its part in the theme throughout a continuation of the language and sexual *topoi* of 2.28 and 2.31, as well as returning to the invective mode and focus on kissing seen in the poems of the Postumus Cycle. The poem introduces the character of Philaenis, whose physical appearance is insulted through a series of explanations to the question ‘cur non basio te, Philaeni?’ (*Why don’t I kiss you, Philaenis?*). The final lines of the poem bring up again infectious nature of *os impurum* and the general focus in the book so far on fellatio with the assertion that only a fellator would kiss her, with the idea of fellatio emphasised through the description of Philaenis as ‘one-eyed’. The use of the name ‘Philaenis’ is particularly significant; readers would have associated the name with the supposed author of a third-century sex manual titled *περὶ σχημάτων συνουσίας*⁴⁷ The next epigram explicitly within the theme does not appear until 2.42. The significance of the linking of 2.19 (featuring the character of Zoilus) with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* becomes all the more clear here, with a blunt distich within the invective tone previously seen in 2.33. There are no hints here, the point is brutally made — Zoilus’

⁴⁵For the combination of word play and oral sex in one of Martial’s predecessors, see *AP* 11.223.

⁴⁶Cf. Joepgen 1967: 87 and Siedschlag 1977: 86-87.

⁴⁷A fragment of this ‘sex manual’ has been found at Oxyrhynchus; cf. *POxy.* XXIX.2891.

mouth is even dirtier than his anus. There is also a further insinuation that he has also been sodomised, thus continuing Martial's hierarchy of sexual practices whereby the *fellator* is even more repulsive than the *pathicus*.⁴⁸

2.47 intersects the theme of oral sex with the *topos* of adultery, one which Martial uses in a variety of epigrams throughout the twelve books.⁴⁹

subdola famosae moneo fuge retia moechae,

levior o conchis, Galle, Cytheriacis.

confidis natibus? Non est pedico maritus:

quae faciat duo sunt: irrumat aut futuit.

Gallus, smoother than Cytherea's shells, I warn you

flee the crafty nets of the notorious adulteress.

Do you trust in your ass? The husband is no sodomite.

There are two things he does: he fucks a mouth or fucks an ass.

Here we have an ironic commentary on the consequences of an adulterer being caught. Gallus, an effeminate man, is the adulterer, a name which immediately emphasises the sexual role he is likely to take.⁵⁰ He is happy to run the risk of being punished by the husband should he be caught, as he expects that it will be the *puerile supplicium*, i.e. the husband will sodomise him. However, Martial warns that the husband only does two things: oral penetration and vaginal penetration. The list of sexual roles recalls 2.28, with the conclusion that should Gallus be caught, rather than being sodomised by the husband, he will be forced to perform fellatio, a punishment even more demeaning and disgusting than the *puerile supplicium*.

⁴⁸Cf. Obermayer 1998: 200.

⁴⁹The reader will have already seen this *topos* in, for example, 1.74 and 2.39, and will soon see it again in 2.56.

⁵⁰A *gallus* was an eunuch priest of Cybele. There are also possible intertextual references to Catullus 63 and Gallus the founder of erotic elegy.

After the exposure of the *moecha* Telesina in 2.49, we return to *os impurum* in 2.50, turning this time to the sexual practices of a woman. The protagonist of this poem, Lesbia, carries immediate Catullan overtones, and the link between the name and the Greek verb for fellatio, λεσβιάζειν, makes the name even more appropriate in the context of this epigram.⁵¹ There is a link with 2.42, with both Zoilus and Lesbia bathing, presumably after a sexual encounter.⁵² As in the previous bathing poem, there is a strong idea here that practicing oral sex pollutes the mouth, which thus becomes the dirtiest part of the body. Zoilus appears again in 2.58, though the epigram is not explicitly on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. However, the use of a character which has increasingly become linked with the theme in this book continues to remind the reader of the importance of the theme — Zoilus has become a ‘shorthand’ for the theme.

Two-thirds of the way through the book, where the theme is increasingly being voiced in stronger terms, there is a surprising shift in tone. In 2.60 we are introduced to Hyllus, a Greek name associated by the reader with a famous youthful male. The opening line contains direct obscenity (*futuis*), adultery, and the threat of castration, whereas 2.61, the next poem in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, opens with a gentle statement of a boy’s youthful beauty (obviously meant to refer back to the *puer* Hyllus). However, this bluntly moves to the fact that this boy has been a fellator which, as Williams comments, ‘complements Hyllus’ predilection for being anally penetrated.’⁵³ The ironic twist of this epigram is that while he may have defiled his mouth as a boy by being a *fellator*, his mouth is actually more diseased now he is a grown man not because he has continued this practice, but because he indiscriminately speaks badly of others. This is one of the very few times within the *Epigrams* that anything is even considered as being worse than oral

⁵¹This is only Lesbia’s second appearance in the *Epigrams*, having been used previously as a character name in 1.34. See later in this chapter for the significance of this name within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.

⁵²The phrase *summis aquam* can be used to refer to drinking, but it can also be used to describe washing after a sexual act, as in Ovid *Am.* 3.7.84, *Priap.* 30.3; cf. also Cicero *Cael.* 34.

⁵³Williams 2004: 203.

sex, or that anything could pollute one's mouth more than performing oral sex.

After an epigram addressed to Postumus in 2.67, a link back which clearly prepares the reader for the reintroduction of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, we return to coarse sexual themes and verbal obscenity in 2.70.

Non vis in solio prius lavari
 quemquam, Cotile: causa quae, nisi haec est,
 undis ne fovearis irrumatis?
 primus te licet abluas, necesse est
 ante hic mentula quam caput lavetur.

*You don't like anyone to use the bath before you do,
 Cotilus. What reason do you have except you
 would rather not wash with irrumated water?
 But though you are first in the bath, it is necessary
 for you to wash your cock before your head.*

The epigram immediately links itself with 2.42 and 2.50 through the protagonist bathing, and the idea of polluting the water and thus spreading the contagion to others. The opening suggests that Cotilus does not wish to bathe in irrumated water, i.e. water than has been fouled by other men's penises. The twist is that even if he is the first to bathe he cannot avoid the problem, as his penis will enter the water before his head. This seems a rather weak joke, but the double meaning of *necesse est* provides the link to the theme and a twist of Cotilus' bathing. Not only will his penis necessarily be washed before his head, he *should* wash his penis first — he is *irrumatus*, and so his head (specifically his mouth) is dirtier. The poem gives further emphasis to the protagonist's mouth through his name; this is a speaking name, with the Greek meaning 'chattering' or 'babbling', which Martial uses to focus his reader's attention on the importance of the mouth to this particular theme

and the connection of poems and books within the series.

In 2.72 we shift to a dinner party and the first epigram to explicitly link the *cena* topos and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.⁵⁴ This poem is also the delayed ending to the ‘Postumus Cycle’, and forms a continuum with the way Postumus was used to introduce the theme in 2.67. The epigram is an elaborate verbal joke and continues the theme through the double meaning of the phrases *os percisum* (l. 3) and *habet testes* (l. 8).

os tibi percisum quanto non ipse Latinus

vilia Panniculi percutit ora sono

your ears were boxed with a louder smack than

when Latinus himself slaps Panniculus’ sorry face

2.72.3-4

(trans. Shackleton Bailey)

While a surface translation, as above, has Postumus being hit by Caecilius in the face. There is still a link to the theme through the use of Postumus and the continued emphasis on the face (and so the mouth), but there is a secondary meaning which provides a stronger link. If the metaphorical use of *percidere* is used, the description becomes that of Postumus being sexually penetrated in the face (mouth) by Caecilius.⁵⁵

Therefore, we have both ‘slapped in the face’ and ‘fucked in the mouth’, combined with the emphasis on Caecilius’ masculinity through the double meaning of *habet testes*. It implies not only that Caecilius had witnesses to the event described, but that he also ‘has balls’ and thus is a ‘real man’, unlike Postumus who takes the passive role. This kind of double use of *testes* is also seen in the contemporary *Priapea*.⁵⁶ In the epigram the secondary meaning is emphasised through the sound-play between *rumor* and *irrumatio*.⁵⁷

⁵⁴I will return to this link in a later chapter.

⁵⁵The OLD also references Seneca using this secondary meaning of *percidere*, though it is mostly attested in Martial.

⁵⁶Cf. Lloyd-Jones 1991: 60ff.

⁵⁷Adams 1982: 212n3.

Following immediately afterwards, 2.73 shows the way cycles and themes intersect with a two-line epigram combining water and fellatio. In the poem the narrator bluntly tells the character of Lyris that she performs fellatio when drunk. The juxtaposition of the two epigrams emphasises the effeminacy of Postumus and his role as a *fellator* throughout the cycle; the use of a female character and blunt statement of oral sex in a poem directly after one featuring Postumus suggests to the reader that Lyris and Postumus have been doing the same thing (and perhaps a sneaky way of Martial keeping his promise from 2.23 of not directly telling people who Postumus is and what he does). 2.73 provides problems for modern scholars as all extant manuscripts present this as only one line — ‘quid faciat vult scire Lyris? quod sobria: fellat’ — though most editors argue that there is a missing line and have attempted reconstructions.⁵⁸ Whatever the missing line may have been, the meaning of the poem is clear and builds on Martial’s Greek skoptic models — Lyris is both a drunk and a *fellatrix*.

After a substantial gap, the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is again reintroduced to the reader through a non-sexual epigram featuring a character associated with the theme, this time Zoilus in 2.80. The sexual theme and obscene language returns in 2.83, and the *topos* of adultery as associated with the theme also makes an appearance. Again adultery and oral sex are associated through oral sex as either the punishment or consequence of punishment. In addition, there are strong intertextual links with the *Aeneid* with the punishment of Deiphobus, encouraged through the mythological allusions in the following poem.⁵⁹ In 2.83 Martial reprimands the husband, saying that while he may have mutilated the adulterer’s face, ‘iste potest et irrumare’ (*he’s still able to suck*, 1.5). Therefore, the adulterer can still perform cunnilingus on the husband’s wife; there is also a suggestion that the adulterer may exact revenge on the husband by irrumating him. The crude language continues in 2.84 and there is also a return to the ranking of sexual practices seen

⁵⁸Cf. Williams 2004: 231-232.

⁵⁹*Aen.* 6.497. On the way Martial uses intertextuality with Latin epic, see Chapter 6.

earlier in the book. Through a joking allusion to traditional mythology, Martial suggests that Sartorius' habit of performing oral sex means that he must have received an extremely harsh punishment, one even harsher than the one Philoctetes received from Venus for killing Paris.⁶⁰ This heroic-epic subtext encourages the reevaluation of the preceding poem, and emphasises the possible reference to Deiphobus. The last epigram explicitly within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 2 is also the last piece of invective in the book. Again using a list technique, Martial insults Garus through the ticking-off of vices, and provides an intratextual link to Sextillus in 2.28. The poem leads the naive reader to believe that most of these vices can be forgiven, and to do this Martial provides the example of a prominent Roman associated with each vice. However, the final question suggests that he can offer no such excuse for Garus' predilection for fellatio, a conclusion the model reader will have seen coming.

Book 3

The first epigram to explicitly use the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 3 is 3.17.

circumlata diu mensis scribilita secundus
 urebat nimio saeva calore manus;
 sed magis ardebate Sabidi gula: protinus ergo
 sufflavit buccis terque quaterque suis.
 illa quidem tepuit digitosque admittere visa est,
 sed nemo potuit tangere: merda fuit.

*A tart, passed around at the end of the meal, cruelly
 burnt our hands with its excessive heat;
 But Sabidius' greed was even greater than the heat:
 so he blew on it three or four times.*

⁶⁰Philoctetes was made a *pathicus* by Venus as revenge for the killing of Paris.

*And so the tart cooled down, and seemed ready to hold,
but nobody wanted to touch it: it was filth.*

Here we have a link back to 2.15, and the similarity of the placement in their respective books is unlikely to just be a coincidence, but rather an indication of the continuing importance of this theme in the upcoming book and the links between the two books and series as a whole. By blowing on the tart, Sabidius has made it inedible for anyone else; the implication is that he has infected it due to his *os impurum*. If there was any doubt in the reader's interpretation of 2.15 when they originally read it, this poem in the following book with a similar placing and an almost identical topic — the idea of food or drink becoming infected by someone's mouth — will cement the earlier poem's place in the theme, and create an anticipation in the reader for a similar use of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 3 as in the preceding book.

However, this anticipation is played with and the theme does not explicitly appear again until after a gap of eleven poems. Moreover, the epigram links directly to 3.17 through the idea of *os impurum* being a communicable infection, though this time it is someone's ear which has become foul due to the *fellator's* breath. Nestor's 'chattering' may well remind the reader of Cotilus in 2.70, and also provides a link to the related literary theme — oral performance is linked to *os impurum*, reminding the reader that they should be reading *this* book with their eyes, not their mouth. This is immediately followed by a short epigram featuring Zoilus. While 2.29 is not explicitly on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, the character of Zoilus was increasingly associated with the theme throughout the course of Book 2. This juxtaposition emphasises the role of the theme in 2.28 for the reader, making it clear that the cause of Nestor's foul breath was *os impurum* from performing oral sex.

The reader may now expect a series of epigrams on oral sex, given the way the theme was used in Book 2. However, Martial again plays with the anticipation and expectation of the first-time naive reader, and while there are other obscene and sexually explicit epigrams

in Book 3, the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is not explicitly used again until the final third of the book, thirty-two poems later. 3.61 has the same use of *nego* previously seen in 2.25. Cinna asks for nothing, and Martial replies that if it is truly nothing he is asking for, then ‘nil tibi...nego.’ Given the erotic connotations of the word and the previous use of it within this theme, an obvious interpretation is that Cinna is asking to be fellated; however, Martial, in line with the characterisation of the persona presented throughout the *Epigrams* as the dominant sexual partner, refuses. Even with this, 3.61 is a tease, reminding the reader of the theme and the importance of the intratextuality between books, but then leaving a sizeable gap before the appearance of the theme once more.

3.73 begins a closely connected cycle of poems on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, one which dominates this last part of the book. 3.73 and 3.75 are both on the subject of male impotence, where Martial puts forward the theory that the cure for this is oral sex. In 3.73 the protagonist is said to sleep with *pueris mutuniatis* (well-endowed boys), an act which would make him a *pathicus*.⁶¹ However, Phoebus (an obvious speaking name — Apollo, the pretty god) is in fact impotent. Martial’s response to this is:

mollem credere te virum volebam
sed rumor negat esse te cinaedum

*I wanted to believe that you were an effeminate,
but rumour says you are no cinaedus*

3.73.4-5

The implication here, given Phoebus’ impotence, is that he fellates these young boys he sleeps with. The use of *rumor* again emphasises that oral sex is involved given the similarity in sound and that it has been used in this connection previously in Book 2, as well as it being *oral* speech. 3.75’s protagonist, Lupercus, has been impotent for some time, and has

⁶¹ *Mutuniatus* is only attested in Martial and the *Priapea* and may well have been made-up originally by Martial.

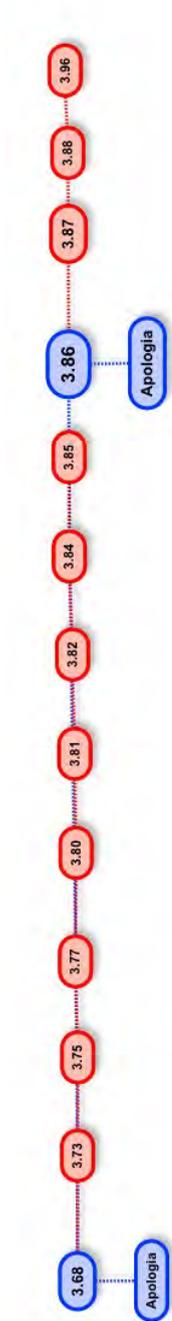


Figure 3.2: Oral Sex and *os impurum* cycle at the end of Book 3, framed by *apologiae*.

resorted to paying prostitutes to fellate him. The satire comes thick and fast in this poem, the connection of the protagonist's name to the Lupercalia, a fertility-festival, being just the first. Secondly, as the poem develops the reader discovers that despite the prostitutes, Lupercus is still impotent; this is connected with the dual use of *stare* (to stand) in the final line: his penis *non stare* (does not stand for him), but still *magno stare* (costs a lot).

These two poems combining impotence and oral sex introduce the main cycle of poems starting at 3.77. The protagonist of this epigram is Baeticus, described as someone who rejects good food and only eats disgusting food, which is ironic given the name's association with quality (Baetican oil). The poem may seem out of place after a series of obscene and sexually explicit poems (3.69-76), but the last line makes it clear that it is part of this sequence of explicit poems and a continuation of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*:

ut quid enim, Baetice, σαπροφαγεις
for why else, Baeticus, do you eat filth?
 3.77.10

There is a secondary meaning in the last word of this line that implies that Baeticus 'eats' the *cunnus* (i.e. performs cunnilingus).⁶² Therefore, he needs pungent, disgusting foods in order to hide the smell from his *os impurum*.⁶³

The theme continues shortly afterwards in 3.80, a two-line poem which is likely to remind the reader of the opening of Book 2 and epigram's *mala lingua* though this time the phrase is applied to the addressee, Apicius.

de nullo loqueris, nulli maledicis, Apici:
 rumor ait linguae te tamen esse malae.

You talk of no one, Apicius, speak badly of nobody;

⁶² σαπροφαγεις, meaning to eat putrid things, is found only in Martial (L&S), though seems to have been derived from σαπρός (*rotten, putrid; decaying in such a way as to produce a bad smell*).

⁶³Cf. Adams 1982: 139.

yet rumour says you have an evil tongue.

Connotations of oral sex are implied not only through the implication of *os impurum*, but also through the use of *rumor* and its links with *irrumatio*.

Baeticus reappears in 3.81 and again the association of the name brings in the idea of *luxuria* and oral pleasure. The tongue and mouth are used to show the sexual habits of Martial's characters in many of the poems of this cycle. The shortness of 3.80 leading almost directly from 'linguae...malae' to 'haec debet medios lambere lingua viros' (*this tongue of yours should be licking men's middles*) immediately connects these two epigrams. The idea of *os impurum* is further emphasised in 3.81 through 'femineo...barathro' (*the feminine abyss*), and acts to confirm the suspicions in 3.77 — Baeticus is indeed a cunnilingus.⁶⁴

3.82 sees the return of oral sex and the *cena*, as well as the important characters of Zoilus and Rufus. Readers of Book 2, seeing the combination of these two, and given the preceding two epigrams, will expect this epigram to continue the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* — and Martial does not disappoint. However, he makes the reader wait for it, with *fellat* as the very last word of the poem.⁶⁵ The classification of sexual roles, seen repeatedly in Book 2, is continued here. The suggestion is that Zoilus should be punished for being such a bad host.

hos malchionis patimur improbi fastus,
nec vindicari, Rufe, possumus: fellat.

*This insolence of an outrageous cad we suffer and
cannot retaliate, Rufus: he is a fellator.*

3.82.32-33

⁶⁴*barathrum*, meaning a chasm or abyss. It seems that this is the only attested example of the word being applied to the human body (OLD).

⁶⁵This comic timing is a common device in the *Epigrams* and can also be seen in Lucilius' poems; the language is such that you can have not just a punchline but a *punchword*. Nisbet 2003.

However, the plan for the guests' retribution (or at least that of Martial and Rufus) is abandoned when they realise what the reader already knows — Zoilus is a *fellator*, something which is much more shameful than being forced to be a *pathicus*. The character of Rufus was introduced in Book 1 and he is a common addressee for Martial's poems.⁶⁶ While not explicitly associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Books 1 and 2, there is an association to be made. It is likely that Roman readers would pick up on the Catullan reference — 'Rufa Rufulum fellat' — a similarity in names which would be noticed.⁶⁷ It is also significant that this is Catullus' only use of the verb *fello*, making the association even more prominent.⁶⁸ Rufus' main role in Book 2 was within epigrams about food and dinner parties, which is itself an oblique link to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.

The cycle of epigrams in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* at the end of Book 3 continues with two short epigrams linked through the theme of adultery and the use of mythological characters, also used in Book 2 in a similar position within the book. 3.84 emphasises the theme through the focus on *lingua*, while 3.85's use of the name of Deiphobus, recalls the use of mythology as part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in 2.83 and 84 and the mutilation of the adulterer.⁶⁹

We then come to 3.86, and the naive reader may think that the cycle is over; the poem is an *apologia*, a call to *matronae* not to read the book (though in order to read this poem they have to have read the rest of the book). However, this is in fact part of a framing device in order to emphasise the importance of the poems contained within it. 3.68 is also an *apologia* and the symmetry of the number of this second *apologia* may not make this

⁶⁶1.68 and 1.106.

⁶⁷Catullus 59.

⁶⁸On *fello* ('to suck'), see Adams 1982: 130-134.

⁶⁹See previous section. Deiphobus is a character in the *Iliad*. As the son of Priam and Hecuba, he was second only to Hector and was a highly skilled and successful soldier. After the death of Paris he was given Helen as a wife, acknowledging his courage and successes during the Trojan war. During the sack of Troy he was killed (either by Menelaus or Odysseus, though other accounts claim that it was Helen who killed him), and his body was mutilated.

obvious for the naive reader, but certainly would be noticed by the model reader. This framing highlights the importance of the concentration of poems on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within it, and the juxtaposition of another poem in the theme immediately following shows how the theme will continue to be used and central to the end of the book.

3.87 not only continues the theme, but also encourages the reader to reevaluate earlier poems based on later ones, in this instance 3.83. In 3.87 the *topos* of bathing is once again used in combination with the theme, this time with a *fellatrix* bathing, and again the suggestion that her head/mouth is dirtier than her genitals.

Narrat te rumor, Chione, numquam esse fututam
atque nihil cunno purius esse tuo.

tecta tamen non hac, qua debes, parte lavis:

si pudor est, transfer subligar in faciem.

*Rumour has it, Chione, that you have never been fucked
and that nothing is purer than your cunt.*

*And yet you cover the wrong part when you take a bath:
for shame, move your panties to your face.*

Again there is the use of *rumor*, seen repeatedly through books 2 and 3 in connection with *irrumatio*; Chione is said to be pure (as suggested by her name — ‘Snow White’), but Martial argues that when she is bathing she should cover her face rather than her genitals, indicating that she should cover the dirtiest and most obscene part of her body. This in turn explains 3.83: to ‘fac mihi Chione’ is to fellate someone, in this case the poet. The use of later poems to explain earlier ones is a common feature of the *Epigrams*, both within and between books. It is this idea of rereading in order to be able to reevaluate earlier poems in light of later ones which is one of the main differences between the naive and model reader of Martial’s poetry.

There is a break of one poem before we come to the end of the main set of poems in this cluster, though not the end of the cycle itself. 3.88 is a short two-line poem, summing up the entire sequence by encompassing both fellatio and cunnilingus. There is a return here to several ideas first introduced in Book 2, including the hierarchical classification of sexual acts, the two options in oral sex, and the idea of this being the ‘unspeakable act’. The poet asks which brother is worse: the one who performs fellatio, or the one who performs cunnilingus? While there is no definitive judgment presented in the epigram itself, the reader will understand from the preceding epigrams in this book, and the previous two books in the series that for Martial the brother who performs fellatio is more foul.

The cycle completes just four poems from the end of the book at 3.96.

Lingis, non futuis meam puellam
 et garris quasi moechus et fututor.
 si te prendero, Gargili, tacebis.

*You don't fuck my girl, you lick her
 and you chatter like a whore and a fucker.
 If I catch you, Gargilius, you'll shut up.*

We return to the threat of punishment for adulterers associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* — if Gargilius continues to perform cunnilingus on this girl, then Martial will make sure that in the future he will be unable to do so.⁷⁰ The suggestion is that Martial will punish him by irrumating him, thus keeping Gargilius’ mouth too busy to perform oral sex on the girl. This implied threat to Gargilius, that in some way his mouth will be closed or filled or mutilated so that he can no longer perform oral sex (on the girl, not necessarily at all) also brings in another idea connected with the theme — silence. This is a major point in this cycle, and Martial has emphasised noise (or the lack of

⁷⁰On the speaking name ‘Gargilius’, see Vallet 2008: 589.

it), and specifically speech, throughout. Though talking and direct address are a common device within epigram to introduce a character or situation, it is less common to see it used with such regularity, to the extent that of the eight poems within this cycle, six have direct reference to some sort of speech.⁷¹

Finally, there are two epigrams at the end of the book which, while not part of the main structural cycle, do interact with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* seen within Books 1-3, and prepare the reader for the use of the theme in the following books. 3.97 is a joking plea, asking Rufus make sure that Chione does not read the book. Of course, it is probably too late by this point, but the poem also provides a connection back to the Postumus cycle at the beginning of Book 2 and the increasing use of the idea of oral sex as punishment. Martial says, in reference to Chione, ‘*carmine laesa meo est: laedere et illa potest*’ (*she has been hurt by my verse, and she can also hurt [me]*, 3.96.2). The careful/model reader will here be reminded of the threat Postumus made to Martial if he were to reveal Postumus’ ‘true’ name, and Martial reveals here his fear that Chione will infect him with her *os impurum* were she to read what he has written about her. This poem also once again connects Rufus with the theme, and this connection is important when considering the final poem in the book. 3.100 reads as a dedication of the book to Rufus, and like the *apologiae* of 3.68 and 86, as well as the warning to not allow Chione to read the book, it is a comically inappropriate place for it to be — surely all of these should be at the beginning? However, this dedication in connection with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, Rufus’ appearances in Book 2, and the Catullan link with 59.1, cements the connection between Rufus and the theme for the naive/first-time reader of the *Epigrams*. It encourages rereading of earlier books with a new understanding of the importance of this character as well as focusing the reader on this connection when reading later books.

⁷¹*loqueris* (3.80), *mones* (3.83), *narrat* (3.84), *dixi* (3.84), *praedixi et monui* (3.86), *narrat (rumor)* (3.87), *dicite* (3.88).

3.2.3 The Second Triad: Books 4-6

Book 4

Given that the book begins with a dedication to the emperor, readers of Book 4 may believe that the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* has finished, and so is confined to the first three books of the series. This combined with the previous book being the end of a triad, and, for the reader who knows there are twelve books, a quarter of the way through the series, creates an assumption that this is a logical place for a thematic shift or change of generic register.⁷² However, this is shown to be another way Martial plays with reader expectation; 4.4 reintroduces the theme through a graphic explanation of the foulness of the smell of *os impurum*.

Quod sicca redolet palus lacuna,
 crudarum nebulae quod Abularum,
 piscinae vetus aura quod marinae,
 quod pressa piger hircus in capella,
 lassi vardaicus quod evocati,
 quod bis murice vellus inquinatum,
 quod ieiunia sabbatariarum,
 maestorum quod anhelitus reorum,
 quod spurcae moriens lucerna Ledaе,
 quod ceromata faece de Sabina,
 quod vulpis fuga, viperae cubile,
 mallet quam quod oles olere, Bassa.

*The odour given off from the dry bed of the marsh,
 or the vapours of raw Albulare,*

⁷²On the idea that the *Epigrams* can be split into four sets of three, see Holzberg 2004: 209.

or the stale reek of a salt-water fishpond,
or a sluggish billy-goat mounting his nanny,
or the boot of a heavy veteran,
or a twice-stained wiith purple dye fleece,
or Jewish women's Sabbath fastings,
or the sighs of unhappy men on trial,
or the spluttering lamp of dirty Leda,
or wrestlers' mud from Sabine dregs,
or a fox in flight, or a viper's lair,
I would rather smell any of these than you, Bassa.

The poem is addressed to Bassa, a character described as having sex with other women in 1.90, and again uses the list technique leading up to a punchline, as seen repeatedly in books 2 and 3. These images of things which smell foul are all centred around ideas from the verb *redolet*; images of bad-smelling water, the smell of a billy goat, then the smell caused from the shellfish used to dye cloth purple, human examples of bad breath, and finally a return to the animal imagery of line 4, before the punch line that Bassa smells worse than any of these. The sexual theme of the poem is emphasised through the example of the billy goat; the image corresponds to the contemporary idea of goats' excessive sexual activity, and so suggests that there is some form of sexual deviation associated with the addressee.⁷³ Martial has already used the idea that those who perform oral sex give off a foul smell, and in this epigram he proves just how bad this stench is. The theme of *os impurum* is emphasised through the use of *tragus*; while usually used to refer to underarm smell, there is precedence for it being used to refer to bad breath.⁷⁴

⁷³Cf. Horace *Epodes* 10.23.

⁷⁴Cf. Horace *Satires* 1.2.27 and 1.4.92. The association has a certain logic to it — armpits have wiry hair, like a goat's, and smell bad, like a goat. Therefore, *tragus* might well be wholly appropriate for bad breath picked up by putting one's mouth somewhere armpit-like, i.e. performing oral sex.

The next occurrence of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is seen at 4.12. A prostitute, Thais (a stock name for a prostitute), refuses nobody and refuses nothing, and it is this use of *negare nihil* which makes the epigram part of the theme: Martial is here saying that Thais will have sex with anyone and perform any sexual act, even performing fellatio, continuing ideas from Book 2 of a hierarchy of sexual practices.⁷⁵ The crudeness of this poem is contrasted in 4.13, but the importance of the theme is still emphasised. The epigram, which is a *epithalamium*, is a rarity in Martial as it presents an image of ideal love, certainly not something one would expect of Martial, and especially not after the previous poem. However, perhaps things are not as idyllic as it appears: the addressee of this poem is Rufus, a name which has been strongly associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* throughout the previous three books, and especially in Book 3.

This is followed, five poems later in 4.17, by a short epigram which confirms the nexus of the common topics within Martial's books, including the function of epigram, its social repercussions, literary patronage, and oral sex.

facere in Lyciscam, Paule, me iubes versus,
 quibus illa lectis rubeat et sit irata.
 o Paule, malus es: irrumare vis solus.

*You tell me to make up verses against Lycisca, Paulus,
 such that when she reads them she'll be angry and blush.*

Paulus you're evil: you want to fuck her mouth all on your own.

As noted by Soldevila, the epigram is based on a *praeteritio*; Martial uses the joke of accusing Paulus of malice to in fact denounce Lycisca for performing fellatio.⁷⁶ However, the reader of the previous three books will suspect the erotic nature of this epigram from the first line. *Facio* is often used by Latin authors to express intercourse (for example

⁷⁵On *negare nihil* as an euphemism for fellatio, see Adams 1982: 127; 1982: 213.

⁷⁶Soldevila 2006: 195. See also Cameron 1983: 46.

in Martial 1.46), and this combined with the name ‘Lycisca’, with its derivation from *λύκος* and the Roman connotations of *lupa* and prostitutes, immediately signposts for the reader the sexual nature of the epigram. There are strong links with previous epigrams in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*; for those reading through the books in order, this poem will remind readers of the characters of Chione and Postumus in that for both these characters and Lycisca there are a poems in which the poet manages to announce they are fellators, while claiming to not want to anger them and face their wrath.⁷⁷

While the theme is not explicitly seen again until 4.36, Martial continues to make a narrative for the reader to follow in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* with the appearance again of Postumus in 4.26. The poem itself does not explicitly mention oral sex, but reminds the reader of the previous poem in the theme in Book 4, as well as the importance of the character within the theme in the previous books. On the surface 4.36 is a satirical epigram about the use of hair dye; the protagonist tries to hide how old he is by dyeing his hair, but is unable to dye his beard and so the exercise is pointless.⁷⁸ Following Lorenz, this poem can be interpreted in light of Catullus 27 and 39, indicating that the protagonist is unable to dye his beard because it will just turn white again when he performs fellatio.⁷⁹ The obscene implications of this epigram, and its continuation of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is reinforced by the name of the protagonist — Olus; this uncommon variant of the name *Aulus* is very similar to *olet* (smelling of something) and seems to have speaking-name connotations and could be used as a sexual metaphor.⁸⁰ Only three poems later the theme appears again in an epigram based around the cataloguing of the character’s silver collection, though it turns into an attack on his sexual behaviours. The poem presents a multi-layered attack on Charinus where Martial makes fun of the

⁷⁷On Chione see pp. 94 and 96, and on Postumus see pp. 76-78, 81, 84-85. See also Appendix A.

⁷⁸The repetition of *potes* within each hemistich suggests that the protagonist is literally unable to dye his beard, and would have done so if he was able.

⁷⁹Lorenz 2004: 271.

⁸⁰As, for example, in Catullus 94. Cf. Adams 1982: 29.

way Charinus speaks, raises doubts about the genuineness of the silver collection, suggests that Charinus has obtained the pieces from shady businesses, and disparages Charinus' opulence by seeming to refuse any invitation. Additionally, the delaying of the name to the final line adds to the emphasis of the double entendre around the opposites of *argentum caelatum* and *argentum purum*. This creates sexual connotations of *(im)purus* as applied to oral sex; Charinus does not have *argentum purum*: his silverware is not authentic and contaminated by cheaper alloys, and it has also been polluted by his mouth (and perhaps the mouths of his friends) because he is a fellator.⁸¹ The following poem confirms 4.39's place within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, through the appearance of Postumus. Again, while the poem is not explicitly sexual, Postumus' role within the theme in Books 2 and 3 creates an association for the reader between the character and the theme.

There is a brief gap in the poems on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and then in 4.43 there is a poem closely related to 2.28, where Martial seemed to be defending Sextilius against the charge of being a *cinaedus*, but then went on to actually accuse him of being a fellator. In 4.43 Martial denies the rumour that he has accused Coracinus of being a *cinaedus* claiming that he would not do so for he does not tell lies; however, he goes on to accuse him of something much worse — performing cunnilingus.

non dixi, Coracine, te cinaedum:
 non sum tam temerarius nec audax
 nec mendacia qui loquar libenter.
 si dixi, Coracine, te cinaedum,
 iratum mihi Pontiae lagoenam,
 iratum calicem mihi Metili:
 iuro per Syrios tibi tumores,
 iuro per Berecyntios furores.

⁸¹Cf. Obermayer 1998: 216-218.

quid dixi tamen? quod et ipse non negabis:

dixi te, Coracine, cunnilingum.

I never said you were a cinaedus, Coracinus.

I'm not so rash or brave,

nor am I in the habit of telling lies.

If I said you were a cinaedus, Coracinus,

may I incur the wrath of Pontia's flask,

the anger of Metilius' wine cup.

I swear to you by Syrian tumours,

I swear to you by Bercynthian frenzies.

But what did I say? Something trivial and unimportant,

a well-known fact, something you yourself will not deny:

I said you are a cunt-licker, Coracinus.

The juxtaposition with the previous poem, a description of a *puer delicatus* in which all the sexual references were indirect, creates a strong contrast. It also emphasises the hierarchy in sexual practices, delineating what is acceptable for young slaves and for older free men: taking a submissive position is never acceptable for free male Roman male citizens. The poem is carefully structured, with the main point and attack again delayed until the final line, and there is a careful modulation of the transition between the initial denial and the final attack. One of the ways this is done is through the repetition and parallelism throughout the poem; the denial of the rumour is the first three lines of the poem, emphasised with the repetition of negative words, and the important concepts in the first three lines is emphasised through the relevant words being at the end of each line (*cinaedum, audax, libenter*). The conditional clause in line 4 then begins to undermine the denial from lines 1-3 with repetitions of *iratum* and *iuro* reinforcing the final insult. The final insult, like the initial denial, comprises of three lines. The theme of oral sex

and *os impurum* is used both implicitly and explicitly in this epigram. The name of the protagonist, Coracinus, used in the first line, indicates to the reader that this epigram is part of the theme; the name is based on the Greek κοπιχ, and there was a popular belief that crows copulated through their mouths, as well as appearing in Juvenal as a paradigm of obscenity.⁸² The name and its connection to the theme is also emphasised through the use of alliteration. Readers are already cued up through the idea of a rumour and its connection in Martial with *irrumatio*, and the further alliteration of *Coracinus*, *cinaedus*, *cunnilingus* emphasises this. Finally, there is the phrase *Syrios tumores*, which, along with the basic meaning of ‘swelling’, the phrase can also suggest some kind of disease affecting the mouth or throat, an alleged consequence of oral sex caused by *os impurum*, with the idea of cunnilingus further suggested by the fact that Syrians were popularly regarded as cunnilingi.⁸³ In 4.48 Martial suggests the other side of oral sex — fellatio. The epigram is an invective against a *pathicus* who cries after sex because he wants it to continue. However, the use of *percidere* also suggests an aspect of oral sex, as seen in 2.72, along with the use of the name *Pamphile*, which is a stock name for a prostitute and often associated with deviant sexual practices.⁸⁴

There is then a break of one poem for the reader to catch their breath before the theme appears again in 4.50, with the second poem in the book addressed to Thais, the fellatrix of 4.12. The name itself is a stock name for a prostitute and links with Pamphile in 4.48 through this, providing an immediate double link to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. Martial here plays with the idea that fellatio was the only cure for impotence, and so is able to assert his masculinity through his defence, and threatens her with *irrumatio*, meaning that he is able to emphasise her sexual specialisation. We again see the idea of oral sex as a punishment with the use of the explicit *irrumare*. Further, the repetition of the name

⁸²Pliny *Natural History* 10.33; Juvenal 2.63.

⁸³Cf. Adams 1982: 99-100, Obermayer 1998: 127n150. We can also see a connection in sound between tumor and rumor, and can then link this with irrumo.

⁸⁴Obermayer 1998: 175-176

Thais within the theme indicates to the reader that we may well see this character again, in a similar way to the link between the theme and other repeating characters such as Chione, Rufus and Postumus. The punishment aspect of this epigram and the emphasis of the distaste the poet has for those who take the passive role is emphasised two poems later in 4.52, where the sodomite Hedylus is criticised for his sexual practices based on the double meaning of *ficus*.⁸⁵

After a break of ten poems, the theme is seen once again in 4.61, the restart signposted by the name ‘Gargilianus’ in 4.56, a name which the reader of the previous books is likely to associate with the character of Gargilius in 3.96. 4.61 completes a cycle within Book 4 on boastfulness (4.37, 4.39, 4.46, 4.61), as well as continuing the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within the book and series. The theme is subtly used here, interacting with the main topic of the theme to show the way in which Martial combines the individual cycles structuring the books and the overall general themes which connect the twelve-book series.

donasse amicum tibi ducenta, Mancine,
 nuper superbo laetus ore iactasti.
 quartus dies est, in Schola Poetarum
 dum fabulamur, milibus decem dixti
 emptas lacernas munus esse Pompullae,
 sardonycha verum lineisque ter cinctum
 duasque similes fluctibus maris gemmas
 dedisse Bassam Caeliamque iurasti.
 here de theatro, Pollione cantante,
 cum subito abires, dum fugis, loquebaris,
 hereditatis tibi trecenta venisse,
 et mane centum, et post meridie centum.

⁸⁵Adams 1982: 15n1, 113. Cf. *Priapus* 41.4, 50.2 for similar uses of the term.

quid tibi sodales fecimus mali tantrum?
 miserere iam crudelis et sile tandem.
 aut, si tacere lingua non potest ista,
 aliquando narra quod velimus audire.

Macinus, you recently boasted proudly and joyfully that a friend had given you two hundred thousand. Three days ago, while we were chatting in the Poets' Club, you said that a cloak costing ten thousand was a present from Pompulla and swore that Bassa and Caelia had given you a genuine sardonyx girdled with three lines and two gems like sea waves. Yesterday, when you abruptly left the theatre while Polio was singing, you were telling us as you fled that you had come into a legacy of three hundred thousand, and another hundred thousand this morning and another this afternoon. What great harm have we your friends done to you? Take pity on us, cruel fellow, and at long last shut up. Or if that tongue of yours can't be still, finally tell us something we would like to hear.

(Trans. Shakleton Bailey).

The first indication of the interaction of this epigram, and the cycle as a whole, with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is the censure of Mancinus' talkativeness; the reader of the series will remember previous poems within the theme, especially in Book 3, in which Martial uses the combination of *os impurum* and silence, and its converse, to indicate the inclusion of a poem within the theme. There is a further subtle suggestion of 'immoral' sexual practices through the idea that the benefits Mancinus receives have been gained in immoral ways. Further, the gifts which he receives could be interpreted as payment for services rendered, as Martial has used in previous poems with a sexual theme.⁸⁶ The idea of talkativeness and silence is brought in again in the final section of the poem, where

⁸⁶Cf. 4.28, 4.39.

Martial tells him to either be quiet or use his tongue to say something they (the audience or the reader?) actually want to hear. After the sexual implications seen within the poem, and the emphasis on *lingua*, there is a subtle suggestion that Martial is giving Mancinus the same choices he gave Gargilius in 3.96 — if Mancinus performs *fellatio* then Martial will *irrumate* him in order to shut him up. There has already been a link back to Gargilius earlier in the book, and the reader who is going through the books in order is by this point well on their way to becoming the model reader, the *lector studiosus* of the preface in Book 1.

Five epigrams later the theme continues in a short couplet addressed to Philaenis, a name associated with sex and prostitution and last seen in 2.33. Again we have a reference back to a character associated with the theme in a previous book, and yet another name indicating sex and prostitution, which has been a common association in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* throughout Book 4.

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is not seen again explicitly until 4.84, but Martial continues to remind the reader of the theme and its structuring elements throughout the epigrams featuring characters associated with the theme in previous books; hence we find Zoilus in 4.77 and Rufus again in 4.82. The explicit epigram is also placed within a grouping of epigrams within the literary theme and also poems based around food and dining (4.81, 4.82, 4.83, 4.85, 4.86). 4.84 is the final attack on the *fellatrix* Thais, seen previously in 4.12 and 4.50. Again Martial draws a parallel with epigrams in Book 3, with the claim that while Thais has never had sexual intercourse, she is not as pure as this claim may suggest as she actually performs *fellatio*. The reader will be reminded of 3.87 with Chione, who has never had sex and whose name suggests purity, who is shown to actually have engaged in deviant sexual acts and whose mouth has become dirty through performing *fellatio*.

There is another reminder of the beginning of Book 4 four poems later, and just three poems before the end of the book, with the reappearance of Bassa, the foul-smelling pro-

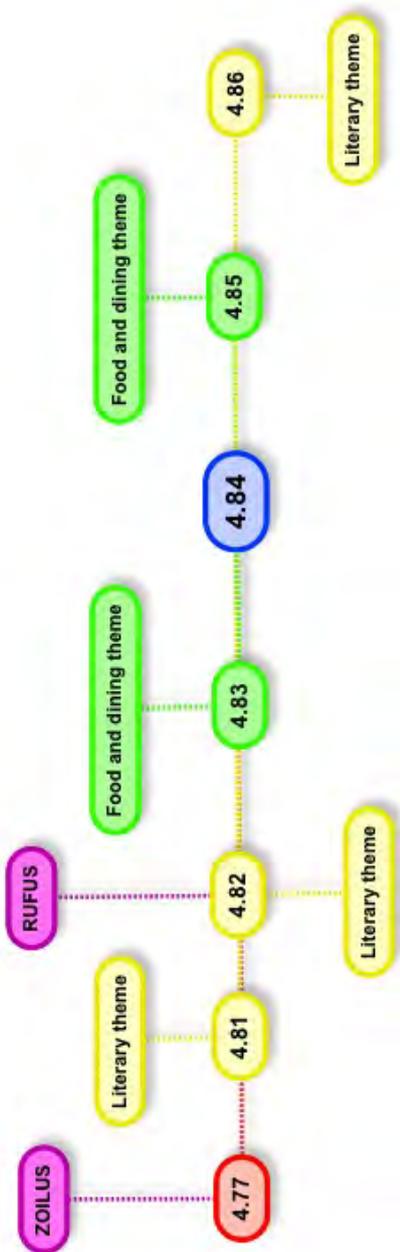


Figure 3.3: Framing and thematic links with 4.84.

tagonist of 4.4. While the epigram focuses on the common satiric theme of flatulence, the poem acts to remind the reader of the smell and disease associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. Further, the reuse of the character of Bassa in the opening and closing of Book 4 keys the reader to expect that they will find the character again, and probably associated with this theme.

Book 5

Upon opening (or, to be more precise, *unrolling*) Book 5, the opening dedicatory poem may suggest to the reader that the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is unlikely to appear in this book. 5.1 is a dedicatory poem to the emperor Domitian, and 5.2 appears to dedicate the book to ‘matronae puerique virginesque’ (*matrons, boys, and virgins*, 5.2.1). 5.2 takes this appearance further by claiming that those readers who wish for the ‘naughtiness’ they have come to expect from Martial should read the previous book, because in this book the poet will ensure that Domitian’s patroness, the chaste Pallas, will not blush at his words. However, the reader of the series who is already well on the way to becoming the model reader is likely to doubt Martial’s words here; in Book 3 Martial includes two *apologiae* to *matronae*, urging them not to read his unsuitable books of poems, both after a considerable number of obscene poems — in other words, he warns them not to read his books after they have already read them. Readers will see this as a continuation of Martial’s humorous problematisation of *apologiae* and so part of the joke; thus, contrary to what is presented in the first two epigrams of Book 5, the attentive reader of the series will expect to see elements of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in this book, a point emphasised by Martial’s reminder to the reader — ‘lascivos lege quattuor libellos’ (*read my four wanton little books*, 5.2.5) — to read the previous volumes before starting Book 5. This doubt is reinforced by 5.4 which, while not explicitly about oral sex and *os impurum*, focuses on someone’s bad smell. In this epigram it is the bad breath of a woman who tries to disguise

her smell by chewing laurel leaves. Not only does this poem serve to remind the reader early on of the importance of the mouth in Martial's books, but the reader of the previous four books is likely to associate an alcoholic woman with bad breath with oral sex, as the *topos* of the old prostitute who enthusiastically performs oral sex is a common one, and has been used extensively previously.⁸⁷

The theme is then non-existent until halfway through the book, playing with reader expectations and creating a larger impact when it does finally appear with an oblique reference to *os impurum* at 5.43. In a short couplet, Martial describes the teeth of two prostitutes — Thais (previously seen within the context of this theme in 4.12, 4.50, and 4.84), and Laecania. The implication here is that their teeth have become black and diseased through performing fellatio, though Laecania has attempted to hide her diseased mouth by buying false teeth. The use of *niveos* may well also cause the reader to think of previous poems in Book 3 in relation to the theme featuring Chione, as well as the man's beard which is turned white by performing oral sex in 4.36. After a break of one poem, the theme continues through the use of a name from the previous book — Bassa.⁸⁸ The poem is linked to 5.43 through the idea of prostitutes trying to improve and/or emphasise their beauty; the use of the name Bassa, seen in Book 4 in relation to the theme, and the connection to 5.43, a poem more explicitly linked to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, allows the reader to see the way in which the theme continues to structure Martial's books. Further, it plays with the naive reader who has not followed the direction to read the previous four books to believe that Martial is keeping the promises he made in the opening two poems of Book 5.⁸⁹

The use of names connected to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* from previous books as a linking device continues in 5.52 and 5.58 with the reappearance of Postumus.

⁸⁷For example, Aegele in 1.94. This is an obvious 'borrowing' from Greek skeptic epigram.

⁸⁸Who appeared in 4.4 and 4.87 in the context of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.

⁸⁹As we can already see, in Book 5 the thematic nexus of orality appears purely at the level of subtext, perhaps hidden to the first-time reader, but obvious to Martial's *lector studiosus*.

While neither of these poems are explicitly about oral sex, the recurrence of the name will remind the reader of the series of his previous appearances, specifically the cycle in Book 2.⁹⁰ The place of 5.52 in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is further shown by Martial's statement that 'si vis ut loquar, ipse tace' (*if you want me to speak, you must be silent*, 5.52.6). This use of the *topos* of silence and the focus on the mouth provides a direct link to the theme, this link emphasised by the use of the character of Postumus who has become, by this stage in the series, synonymous with the theme. This *topos* of silence is part of a larger idea within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* which Martial often uses to refer to the consequences or punishment associated with oral sex, as seen with the focus on talking and silence in the cycle of poems within the theme at the end of Book 3.

The theme continues in 5.61 in a complicated poem which combines the theme of adultery with that of oral sex and *os impurum*, a combination which readers have previously seen in Book 3.

crispulus iste quis est, uxori semper adhaeret
 qui, Mariane, tuae? crispulus iste quis est,
 nescio quid dominae teneram qui garrit in aurem
 et sellam cubito dexteriore premit?
 per cuius digitos currit levis anulus omnis,
 crura gerit nullo qui violata pilo?
 nil mihi respondes? 'uxoris res agit' inquis
 'iste maea.' sane certus et asper homo est,
 procuratorem vultu qui praeferat ipso:
 acrior hoc Chius non erit Aufidius.
 o quam dignus eras alapis, Mariane, Latini:
 te successurum credo ego Panniculo.

⁹⁰This is Postumus' tenth appearance in the *Epigrams*.

res uxoris agit? res ullas crispulus iste?

res non uxoris, res agit iste tuas.

*Who is that curlylocks who is always next to your
wife, Marianus? Who is that curlylocks who is always
chattering something into the lady's tender ear
and pressing her chair with his right elbow,
round all his fingers runs a light ring,
whose legs are not violated by hair?*

*Have you nothing to say to me? 'He sees to my wife's
business' you say. Certainly, he is a dependable
and gruff man whose very face proclaims this:*

Aufidius Chius will not be sharper than this one.

O how much you deserve a slap from Latinus, Marianus:

I do believe you will be Panniculus' successor.

Sees to your wife's business, does he? Business, that curlylocks?

It's not your wife's business he sees to, it's yours.

In this epigram, Martial suggests to the addressee that his wife is having an affair with her *procurator*. However, Martial then precedes to describe the wife's legal agent in terms which increasingly suggest effeminacy and passivity. The derogative repetition of *crispulus* to describe the man suggests effeminacy through his curly, wavy hair, which is obviously a defining feature. Further, the idea of him 'chattering' in her ear will remind the attentive reader of Cotilus in 2.70, an explicit poem within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* whose name can be translated as 'chattering', and also Nestor in 3.28 of whom Martial says 'garris, Nestor, in auriculam' (*you chatter in his ear, Nestor, 3.28.2*), and it is this which has made Marius' ear smell. Finally, the use of *domina* in line 3 confirms that

this affair involves the *procurator* taking the passive role and performing oral sex.⁹¹The complications in unravelling this poem and its connection to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* suggest that Martial is signposting the way for readers of his previous books, using the theme as one way of navigating through the epigrams, while simultaneously presenting poems which on the surface are not obscene for the new, naive readers, who, having ignored the direction at the beginning of the book, do not as yet understand how the books are structured, the themes involved, and the methodology of reading Martial is presenting.

Once again there is a more implicit epigram on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* between more explicit ones, a framing technique Martial's attentive serial readers will be familiar with by this stage. In 5.68 the poem is addressed to Lesbia, a name familiar to readers from Catullus and Martial's corruption of the character in previous books where she has been presented as a fellatrix. This connection to the theme is emphasised here with the description of her dyed yellow hair — her hair has been excessively dyed, perhaps to try and appear younger than she really is, but it also marks the character as a prostitute.

The final two poems in Book 5 within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* are seen at 5.72 and 5.79, and again the use of names previously associated with the theme allows for the reader of the previous books to understand the connections. The link to the use of the theme in books 2 and 3 is clearly seen by the reappearance of Rufus and Zoilus, and gives the reader the expectation that this theme will continue to play an important part in the following books, just as it has in the preceding ones.

⁹¹While it could be seen as a reference to the possible previous relationship between the two, where the freedman was previously the wife's slave, *domina* can also be used when describing lovers, and furthermore, a husband might address his wife as such. OLD *domina*, 3.

Book 6

Book 6, much like Book 5, opens with dedicatory poems to Domitian, suggesting to the naive reader that this book will not deal with any obscene topics. This is emphasised by the context in which Domitian is mentioned in 6.2 with the praise for the recent edict which forbids castration. However, the last line of this epigram begins to suggest that despite the address to Domitian, this book will continue to use the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*; the statement ‘et spado moechus erat’ clearly links back to the *topos* of there being two options for oral sex — fellatio or cunnilingus — given the suggestion previously that this is the only way in which eunuchs are able to be adulterers. For the model reader who has read the previous 5 books, not only are they unlikely to infer that this book will not be obscene, but will see a direct link between this opening and the literary theme. In 1.35 *castro* has been used to characterise censorship of his *libelli* — Domitian is here being enlisted to defend unexpurgated versions of Martial’s books. The final line of the epigram adds to this idea of castration and bowdlerisation, suggesting that a castrated *libellus* can still be morally unsound, and actually more unsound than an unexpurgated one (the castrated *libellus* is oral sex which is dirtier than normal sexual intercourse).

There is then no reference to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* until 6.19 with an epigram which with its last line addresses itself to Postumus. While the epigram itself is not obscene or explicitly about the theme, the appearance of Postumus is a clear sign by this point in the series for the model reader that the theme will explicitly appear soon in this book. This proves to be the case with the last line of the following poem, 6.20. The poem is addressed to a character called Phoebus, who has asked Martial if he needs anything. Martial replies that he needs money but by the end of the epigram seems to be hoping that Phoebus will deny him the loan. The link to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is through the use of the two negatives — ‘nihil’ at the end of line 2 and ‘nega’ at the end of line 4. The suggestion is that what Martial really wants is for Phoebus to

fellate him.⁹²

Lesbia makes a reappearance as part of the theme in 6.23, in an epigram which once again explores the link between oral sex and impotence. The joke of the poem is that Lesbia is so ugly the poet is unable to become erect no matter what she says or does. Again, a poem that is implicitly part of the theme bridges the gap between two more explicit epigrams, showing the reader that the theme is once again prominent in the structuring of the book, with 6.26.

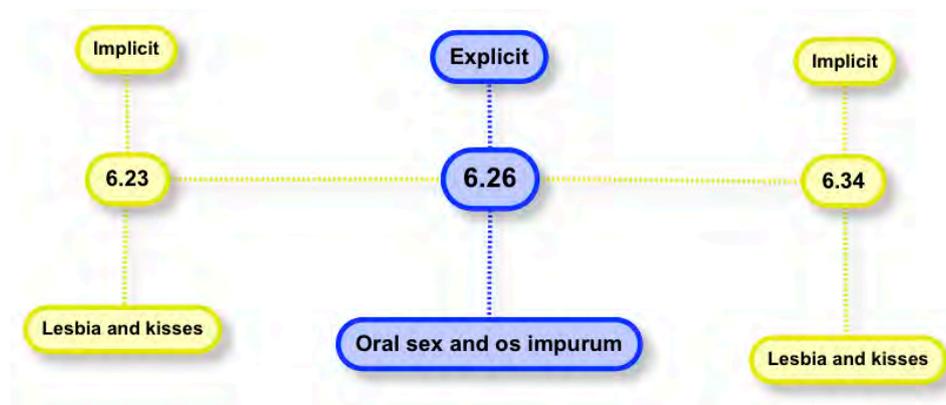


Figure 3.4: The explicit 6.26 framed by two poems which are implicitly part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* through the use of Lesbia and kisses.

periclitatur capite Sotades noster.

reum putatis esse Sotaden? non est.

arrigere desit posse Sotades: lingit.

Our friend Sotades' head is in danger.

You think Sotades is on trial? That's not it.

Sotades can't get erect anymore: he licks instead.

Sotades' head is in danger, which would normally mean that he was facing a capital charge, but the end of the poem shows why his head is really in danger — he is a cunnilingus. The

⁹²On *negare nihil* as an euphemism for fellatio, see Adams 1982: 127; 1982: 213. For previous uses of this see Books 2 and 4.

epigram suggests that the infection and pollution caused by performing oral sex, reminding readers of earlier poems where it was suggested that characters should wash their head in order to clean this impurity off themselves. The explicit charge of *lingit* emphasises the orality of the theme, as well as the obscenity. Martial's model reader will expect this poem to be part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, or at least obscene, from the first line, with the speaking name of Sotades with its metapoetic aspects.⁹³ The next poem in the theme links back to 6.23 through the association of kisses. In 6.34 the poet asks Diadumenus for kisses, but 'nolo quot arguto dedit exorata Catullo Lesbia' (*I don't want the number that Lesbia gave in answer to clear-voiced Catullus' prayer*, 6.34.6-7). A further potential link is provided through the name of Diadumenus; the name Diadoumenos is the name of a type of canonical statue by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos, which was copied extensively by Roman sculptors. The connection is made for the attentive reader through the image of the young athlete, perhaps suggesting a youth similar to other characters in the theme, specifically Postumus. The sexual nature of the epigram is further emphasised through the contemporary theory of the highly sexual nature of athletes.

The emphasis on the two types of oral sex set up at the beginning of the book continues with the next poem in the theme; 6.36 introduces a character called Papyrus, whose penis is so large he can sniff it when he is erect.⁹⁴

mentula tam magna est, tantus tibi, Papyle, nasus,

ut possis, quotiens arrigis, olfacere.

Your cock is so large, Papyrus, and your nose so long,

that you can sniff it whenever you get hard.

The interlinking of smells and *os impurum* is used here, and there is also a suggestion of self-fellatio. The poem acts as a structuring element, not only continuing the theme

⁹³Sotades was a third century BC poet who wrote obscene poems called *kinaidoi*, of which only a few fragments have survived.

⁹⁴We can perhaps see here a link with the Greek epigrammatist Nicarchus; for example, *AP* 4.406.

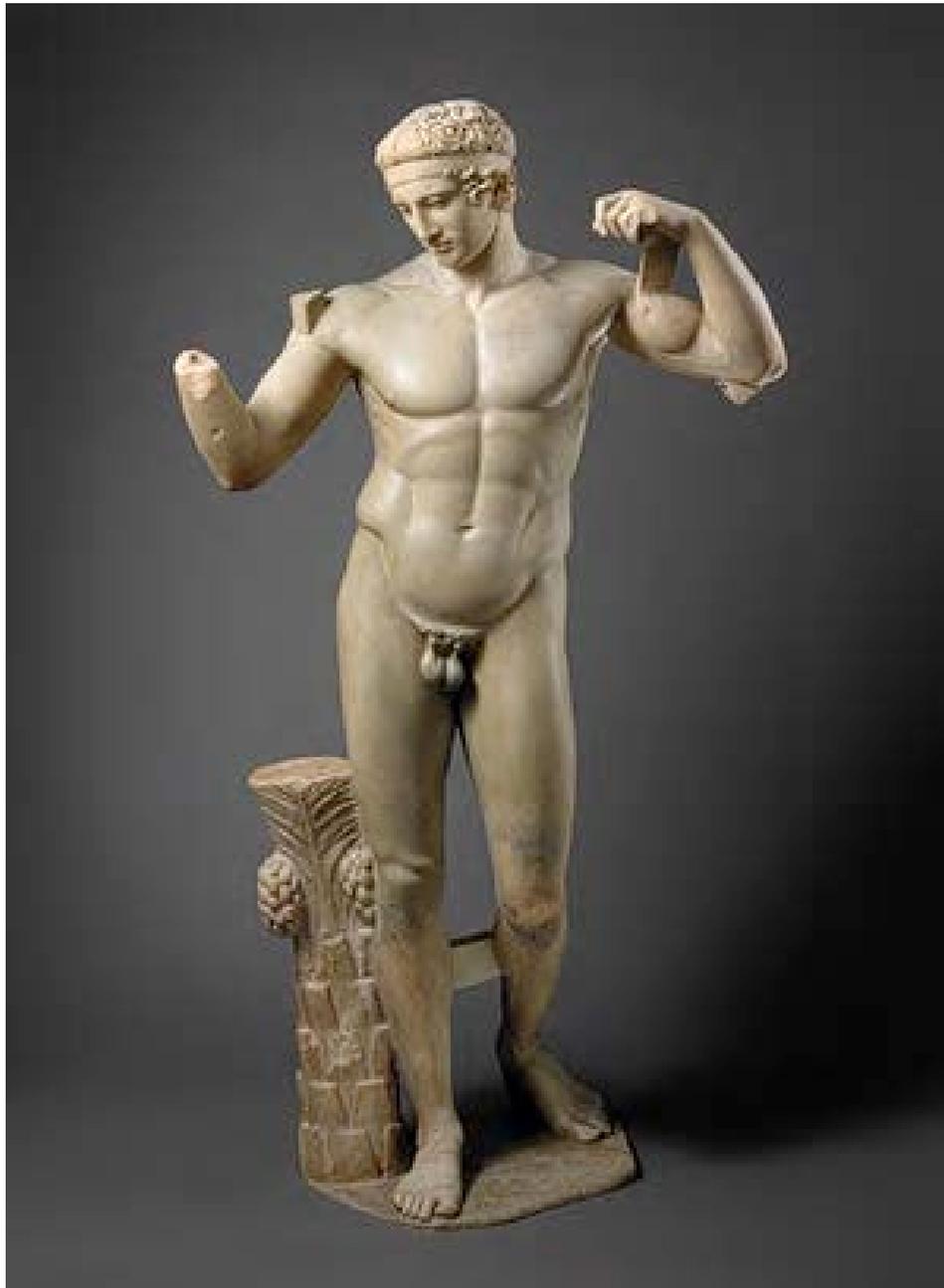


Figure 3.5: "Statue of Diadoumenos [Roman copy of a Greek bronze statue by Polykleitos] (25.78.56)". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/25.78.56> (October 2006).

within the book, but directly linking the poem itself and the theme with the preceding and following epigrams. 6.26 used the image of Sotades' head, linking it with previous

poems within the theme which emphasised the importance of bathing and the way in which the *os impurum* of these people infected and polluted water; the emphasis on water, the character's head, and drinking in 6.35 links with this part of the theme, and adds for the reader the place of 6.36 in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, thanks in large part to the reminders of some of the key elements of the theme in 6.35. 6.37 features a *cinaedus*, again linking back to Sotades through the subject matter of his poems, and is also explicit, which emphasises the sexual nature of the previous poem.

Five poems later the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* continues in 6.41, though the epigram focuses more on the consequences of performing oral sex rather than the act itself.

qui recitat lana fauces et colla revinctus,
hic se posse loqui, posse tacere negat.

*He who recites with his throat and neck wrapped in wool
tells us he can't speak and can't hold his tongue.*

The epigram, while seemingly about a man with a throat infection who wishes to recite, encompasses various aspects of the theme which have been highlighted and explored over the course of the previous five books. One of the consequences of *os impurum* is infection; the implication in this poem, emphasised through the focus in the second line on speaking and silence, is that this man has been performing oral sex. His inability to recite (presumably poetry thus making him one of the inferior epigrammatists who recite their poems) is due to this infection and yet he is simultaneously unable to hold his tongue, which strongly suggests he has been performing cunnilingus. The sexual nature of this poem and its place within the theme is emphasised by the following poem's on bathing and water.⁹⁵

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* continues in 6.50, in a poem which seems to suggest that someone *should* perform fellatio, contradicting the invective Martial has directed towards those who perform oral sex in the previous five books.

⁹⁵The link between these themes will be explored more in depth in a later chapter.

cum coleret puros pauper Telesinus amicos,
 errabat gelida sordidus in togula:
 obscenos ex quo coepit curare cinaedos,
 argentum, mensas, praedia solus emit.
 vis fieri dives, Bithynice? conscius esto.
 nil tibi vel minimum basia pura dabunt.

*When Telesinus was a poor man he cultivated clean-living
 friends and went about shabby in a chilly gown.
 But since he began to care for obscene queens,
 there's no one like him for buying plate, tables and estates.
 Do you want to get rich, Bithynicus? I'll share a secret.
 Chaste kisses will get you nothing, not a penny.*

The epigram is about a character called Telesinus, who previously was very poor but is now extremely rich. Martial goes on to explain that his finances improved now that he ‘cares’ for *obscenos cinaedos*. The advice to the addressee of the poem, Bithynicus, is that if he wishes to get rich quickly then his kisses will need to be less chaste — an implicit way to say that he will need to become a fellator. Thus, while the poem on the surface seems to approve this course of action, the emphasis on Telesinus’ previous pure friends (and so also the inverse of *purus, impurus*), and the underlying suggestion that the wealth is not worth the moral cost, the epigram becomes a clear attack against the fellator Telesinus.⁹⁶

After a gap of three poems, 6.54 introduces a triad of epigrams on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. 6.54 is a witty attack against Sextilianus, playing on the meanings of *tantos* and *tantas*. It is preceded by a poem which features both bathing and a dinner, which by this point in a linear reading of the *Epigrams* suggests that a continuation of the

⁹⁶A further connection can be seen between the character of Telesinus and Telesina from 2.49. While Telesina was not explicitly part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, 2.49 was a signpost towards the continuation of the theme in Book 2.

theme of oral sex and *os impurum* will shortly be seen. Shackleton Bailey suggests that with *tantas* we should understand *mentulas*, and the meaning of the poem becomes clear. Martial here combines an inability to speak (a *topos* seen regularly within the theme, and giving a direct link between this epigram and 6.50), with the joking suggestion that the only two words Sextilianus will speak are the only things he loves — Sextilianus loves big penises. Further, the use of *tantos* is associated with the *cinaedos* in Martial (e.g. 2.48), and it is this association, combined with the focus on a loss of speech, which provides the punchline — Sextilianus is a fellator.⁹⁷

The theme is continued in 6.55, focussing again on the effects of performing oral sex. Martial returns to the idea that a fellator will have to hide the smell associated with *os impurum*; Coracinus (a character previously seen in 4.43) laughs at those who smell of nothing as he uses large amounts of perfume and other scents. Martial implies that this ‘good’ smell is actually being used to hide something foul, and that he would rather smell of nothing rather than how Coracinus smells. Following on from the previous poem, and its focus on smells, the poem implicitly suggests that this Coracinus has been performing oral sex — he smells good, and emphasises how good he smells — in order to hide his deviant sexual acts.

The triad finishes with 6.56, and again emphasises speech and returns to the familiar hierarchy of sexual acts seen through the previous books within this theme.

quod tibi crura regent saetis et pectora villis,

verba putas famae te, Charideme, dare?

extirpa, mihi crede, pilos de corpore toto

teque pilare tuas testificare natis.

‘quae ratio est?’ inquis. scis multos dicere multa :

⁹⁷As with the previous epigram in the theme, the name of the character here provides a further link to the theme and a connection with the character of ‘Sextilius’ from earlier in the theme.

fac pedicari te, Charideme, putent.

Do you really think you cheat the gossip, Charidemus,

because of your hairy legs and chest?

Take my advice, completely destroy all the hair from your body,

and take an oath that you depilate your arse.

‘What for?’ you say. You know that lots of people say many things.

Make them think you are sodomised, Charidemus.

Martial attacks Charidemus, saying that even though he is hairy, the gossip continues about his sexual practices. The subject of hair, or lack thereof, suggests at the beginning that Charidemus is a *cinaedus*, as the common idea is that males who depilate do so because they take the passive role in homosexual sex. However, it becomes clear that being thought of as a *pathicus* is the least of Charidemus’ problems: Martial says that Charidemus should remove all his body hair and play up to the role of the *pathicus*, lest the gossips realise what it is he actually does. This combination of rumours and stratification of sexual acts builds up to the realisation that Charidemus is actually a fellator.⁹⁸ Of course, given the two previous poems, the reader is likely to have expected something of this nature, but the delayed punchline, ‘fac pedicari te, Charideme, putent’ (*make them think you are sodomised, Charidemus, 6.56.6*), creates a feeling of anticipation, as Martial plays with the reader’s expectation of the continuation of the theme. The importance of this triad of poems is emphasised by 6.57 with an obvious ending to this part of the theme; the poem’s focus on washing the head, but without any suggestion of oral sex despite the previous links between washing one’s head and having performed oral sex, leaves the reader realising that the theme has finished for the time being and eagerly anticipating the next appearance.

The reader does not have long to wait. Ten poems later the theme appears again, concentrating on the effects of performing oral sex. The poem tells the story of a slave girl

⁹⁸The idea of rumour adds to the suggestion that Charidemus performs oral sex.

who was being sold at auction. In order to prove that she was pure, the auctioneer kissed her. This is an obvious reference to *os impurum*: the auctioneer proves to those assembled that she does not suffer from *os impurum* and is not a fellatrix as he is prepared to kiss her. The punchline to this poem is that the auctioneer's action leads to one of the bidders withdrawing — the bidder actually wanted a fellatrix. Of course, another interpretation which could be made is that the girl may well have been pure, but that the auctioneer was not; as he 'bis terque quaterque basiavit' (*kissed her twice, three times, four times*, 6.66.7), he has infected her with his own *os impurum* and so the bidder has withdrawn as he does not wish to purchase an infected girl. It is likely that this ambiguity is deliberate on the part of the poet, though the repeated use of *nego* and the character of the auctioneer (rather than, for example, an elite dominant male) suggests that the second interpretation is the one the model reader is meant to prefer. Either way, the concentration on the effects of performing oral sex connects this poem with the previous triad, and the reader will now be expecting further poems on the theme, especially given the closeness of the previous four poems on the theme.

The reader is not disappointed, as 6.67 also features oral sex, though this time the character featured is not criticised for the after effects, but rather for having oral sex performed upon her.

cur tantum eunuchos habeat tua Caelia quaeris,

Pannyche? vult futui Caelia nec parere.

Do you ask why your Caelia only has eunuchs, Pannychus?

She want to get fucked but not get pregnant.

The addressee of the poem, Pannychus, is supposed to question why this woman only has eunuchs as her slaves. The name of the addressee, Pannychus ('all-nighter') immediately suggests that his wife does not have sex with her husband, and the second line implies

that the way she prevents pregnancy is by having her eunuch slaves perform cunnilingus on her. In the previous books eunuchs are usually depicted as performing oral sex and thus impotent.

After a break of one poem, and one which links within the theme with the *topos* of water and its link to bathing, the theme continues in 6.69 with a less explicit epigram when compared to some of the previous poems on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in the book. Martial draws on references to Catullus (and so, implicitly, also on Lesbia and the connection of her to the theme Martial has previously made as well as the Greek meaning of the name), and the character of Bassa, who was associated with the theme in previous books of the *Epigrams*, especially Book 4.⁹⁹ The poem is addressed to Catullus and ‘his’ Bassa, perhaps suggesting that Martial’s fellatrix is Lesbia. The poet is not surprised that Bassa drinks water — she is obviously trying to purge the after-effects of performing fellatio. The main point of the epigram is that Martial *is* surprised that Bassa’s daughter drinks water; the suggestion being that the daughter has followed in the footsteps of her mother and is also a fellatrix, with an added suggestion that it is Catullus who is receiving her attentions.

The theme moves into the background of the book for eleven poems and then continues again in 6.81. We return to bathing and the pollution of water by fellators who wash their heads, and the poet’s quip to the addressee that ‘*inguina malo laves*’ (*I’d rather you washed your groin*, 6.81.4). The addressee of the poem is Charidemus, already familiar to the reader from 6.31 and 6.56, and previously depicted as a fellator and possible *pathicus*. The emphasis of the theme is continued in the following poem and its addressee, Rufus, who has been obliquely linked with the theme since Book 2. Rufus appears again in 6.89, in a poem about someone drinking to excess. The poem anticipates the continuation of the theme, and the reappearance of Rufus, who followed the last poem in the theme, and

⁹⁹4.4, 4.61, 4.87.

prepares the reader for its next appearance. This occurs in 6.90:

moechum Gellia non habet nisi unum.

turpe est hoc magis: uxor est duorum.

Gellia does not have more than one lover.

That makes it even worse: she's a wife to two.

While the meaning may seem unclear, given the juxtaposition of the epigram with the character of Rufus, I suggest that the reason Gellia is a bigamist despite the fact that she only has one partner is that she not only engages in intercourse with him, but is also a fellatrix. This is followed by another poem within this theme in 6.91, which features the character of Zoilus, who has also been associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* since Book 2. The epigram recalls the beginning of the book, especially 6.7, and also aspects of Book 5 where Martial mentions the edict banning adultery (5.75). Here, the earlier associations of Zoilus with the theme makes sense of the poem; the new law does not affect Zoilus — he doesn't have sex, he performs oral sex. There is then a gap of one poem, mirroring 6.90 with its focus on wine, and then we are presented with the final poem in the book on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and in fact the penultimate poem of the book as a whole. The epigram reintroduces the prostitute Thais, who has been seen previously in poems within the theme, who, in this epigram, is described as having a foul smell like a goat (an animal also previously used within this theme), but tries to hide it with even worse smells.¹⁰⁰ The poem suggests that Thais is so desperate to hide the smell associated with *os impurum* she is willing to increase her stench in order to hide the original cause of her foul smell. However, Martial shows that while she may think that this has worked, 'Thaida Thais olet' (*Thais smells of Thais*, 6.93.12) — she is unable to hide the stench caused by the *os impurum* she has been infected with by performing oral

¹⁰⁰Thais has also been seen in 3.8, 3.11, 4.12, 4.50, 4.84, and 5.43. The smell of the billy goat was applied to Bassa previously in 4.4.

sex.

By the end of Book 6, the reader is now half-way through the twelve book series, and the importance of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* has been firmly cemented in their mind. While the number of poems dedicated to the theme is less in books 4-6 than in books 2 and 3, it is obvious to the careful reader how it adds a structuring element to the books, as well as really focussing attention on the reader's mouth. The reader will now move on to the next book, wondering how the theme will be continued and if the pattern and structuring will change or be the same.

3.2.4 Books 7-9: Sex and the Emperor

Book 7

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* appears relatively early in Book 7, reminding the reader of the importance of the theme to the individual books and the links between the books, as well as confirming to the reader that the theme will continue to be important in the second half of the series. The theme opens in 7.4, where Martial claims that the reason Oppianus started to write poetry was because of his pallor. The implication is that rather than Oppianus having a 'malus color' due to being a writer and thus closeted indoors all the time, he has started writing to hide the real cause — the sickly pallor has been caused by *os impurum* from performing oral sex.¹⁰¹ 7.10 sees the reappearance of the character of Olu, last seen in 4.36, with an epigram condemning the universal vice of being too concerned with the business of other people but neglecting one's own affairs.

pedicatur **Eros**, fellat **Linus**: **Ole**, quid ad te

de cute quid faciant ille vel ille sua?

centenis futuit **Matho** milibus: **Ole**, quid ad te?

¹⁰¹A similar idea can be seen with the comic inversion of the *leptos* motif, on which see Nisbet 2003.

non tu propterea, sed Matho pauper erit.
 in lucem cenat **Sertorius**: Ole, quid ad te?
 cum liceat tota stertere nocte tibi?
 septingenta **Tito** debet **Lupus**: Ole, quid ad te?
 assem ne dederis crediderivse Lupo.
 illud dissimulas ad te quod pertinet, Ole,
 quodque magis curae convenit esse tuae:
 pro togula debes. hoc ad te pertinet, Ole.
 quadrantem nemo iam tibi credit: et hoc
 uxor moecha tibi est: hoc ad te pertinet, Ole.
 poscit iam dotem filia grandis: et hoc.
 dicere quindecies poteram quod pertinet ad te:
 sed quid agas ad me pertinet, Ole, nihil.

Eros is fucked in the ass, Linus is fucked in the mouth. What's it to you, Olus, what either one does with their own skin?

Matho fucks for a hundred thousand. What's it to you, Olus?

You won't be a pauper because of this, Matho will.

Sertorius dines until dawn. What's it to you, Olus, when you are able to snore all night?

Lupus owes Titus seven hundred thousand. What's it to you, Olus?

Just don't lend a penny to Lupus.

However, what does have to do with you, Olus, what ought to rather concern you, you pretend not to know.

You owe for your gown: this is your concern, Olus.

Nobody will lend you any money any more: this is also your concern.

Your wife has a lover: this is your concern, Olus.

Your daughter is of age and asking for a dowry: this too.

I could mention fifteen things that are your concern.

But your doings, Olus, have nothing to do with me.

The poem's opening line makes clear the sexual nature of the poem with 'pedicatur Eros, fellat Linus' (*Eros is fucked in the ass, Linus is fucked in the mouth*, 7.10.1), in a line reminiscent of Catullus 16.¹⁰² The use of Eros, who was associated with male love in antiquity, emphasises the same-sex practices assigned to the characters, and the nature of the sexual practices to be discussed is shown through the specific use of *pedicatur* and *fellat*, in that the people mentioned are taking the passive role.¹⁰³ The use of *fellat* with the character of Linus, though he has not previously been associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, suggests that this is a character which will be seen again (and may well have been used previously in this context, though the reader will not have realised this on a linear first-time reading of the series). The use of mythological characters (or characters named after mythological figures) as the first two whom Olus is paying attention to rather than his own affairs, suggests a generality to Olus' preferences, especially sexual, in that he is interested in all male sexual affairs rather than those of a specific person. However, Martial then moves on to other characters — Matho, Sertorius, Lupus and Titus — only one of whom has previously been explicitly associated with the theme in the previous six books, though all of them apart from Titus have appeared in the *Epigrams* previously. The opening associations suggest that all these characters engage in male-male sexual relations, with a further suggestion that all these men take the passive role, which is emphasised by the use of *nihil* in the final line of the poem. In 7.14 we have a continuation of the association of Catullus, Lesbia and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. The *topos* is used in a similar way as in the previous books, with an implicit poem, which is

¹⁰²'Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo' (*I will fuck you in the ass and fuck you in the mouth*, 16.1.)

¹⁰³'In the world of men, Eros functions particularly in its pederastic manifestations', Zeitlin 1999: xv.

nonetheless associated by the reader with the theme due to the use of this famous poet and the character of Lesbia.

The theme is not seen again until 7.41, in a short couplet which plays on the double meaning of the word *cosmicus*. The word is of Greek origin and adapted by Martial and means ‘cosmopolitan’.¹⁰⁴ However, it is etymologically related to *Cosmus* who was a famous perfumer; therefore, *cosmicus*, when applied to a person, refers to wearing perfume.¹⁰⁵ The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* links with this epigram through the wearing of perfume, a common *topos* within the theme as applied to someone trying to hide the smell caused by having been infected with *os impurum* from performing oral sex.¹⁰⁶

The theme is then again delayed until 7.55, and appears in an epigram which starts in such a way as to seem just to be a part of the subject of the exchange of gifts, a common topic within the epigrams generally.

nulli munera, Chreste, si remittis,
 nec nobis dederis remiserisque:
 credam te satis esse liberalem.
 sed si reddis Apicio Lupoque
 et Gallo Titioque Caesioque,
 linges non mihi — nam proba et pusilla est —
 sed quae de Solymis venit perustis
 damnatam modo mentulam tributis.

*If you don't give presents in return, Chrestus,
 then don't give any to me or send any in return for mine;
 I will think you sufficiently generous.*

¹⁰⁴This is a borrowing from the Greek κοσμητικός, and is otherwise unattested in Latin. The usual word for ‘cosmopolitan’ was *mundanus*.

¹⁰⁵Galàn Vioque 2002: 270.

¹⁰⁶On the use of perfumes to hide smells in the ancient world, see the introduction to this chapter.

*But if you will make a return to Apicius and Lupus
and Gallus and Titius and Caesius,
then you will lick not mine, which is well-behaved and diminutive,
but a cock which comes from burned-out Jerusalem,
one which is lately doomed to pay tribute.*

The listing of names reminds the reader of 7.10, linking back to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* even before the use of *linges* in line 6 and *mentulam* in line 9. The use of names in this epigram integrates it further into the theme; Apicius appeared early in the explicit cycle of Book 3, Lupus was seen as part of the theme in 7.10 (though, as noted above, he had appeared previously in other contexts), the name Titius is extremely similar to the Titus seen in 7.10, while the name Gallus has obvious sexual overtones.¹⁰⁷ This clear link to the first poem within the theme in Book 7, and the appearance of Apicius as the first name in the list with its reminders of Book 3, may well suggest to the reader that Martial is once again using this theme within a structured cycle in the book, rather than as a general structuring device.¹⁰⁸ However, within a linear reading, it can only be a suggestion at this point of the book. The sexual nature of this poem is announced from the opening line with the name of the addressee, Chrestus; Martial is here making fun of the etymological meaning of the Greek origins of the name.¹⁰⁹ Chrestus is revealed to be a fellator in line 6 with ‘*linges non mihi*’ being an abridged form for ‘*linges non mentulam meam*’, which is in turn another way of saying *te irrumabo*. The use of *lingere* is specific to Martial and functions as a euphemism for *fellare*, allowing the object of the oral stimulation to be specified.¹¹⁰ As seen in previous books, though especially in Book

¹⁰⁷Gallus is a emasculated priests of Cybele; OLD *Gallus*³.

¹⁰⁸See earlier discussion of Book 3.

¹⁰⁹‘Useful’, ‘good of its kind’, and ‘serviceable’ are all possible meaning of the name, which adds to the eventual revelation of the character as a *fellator*; LSJ *χρησῶς* II.1 and II.5.

¹¹⁰It is attested thirteen times in Martial, though Catullus also uses the term twice. According to Adams, the use of the verb in an obscene sense is attested only in inscription and epigram; the *CIL* has twenty-five examples of the verb, and it is also seen in Catullus 97 and 98 (Adams 1982: 134-135).

3, *irrumatio* is often used as a threat of punishment, and within the epigram this threat is heightened with the reference to the Jews; Martial plays with the ambiguity of the term *Solymus* which, while it can refer to the city (i.e. Jerusalem), it can also act as an ethnic adjective which produces an erotic tone alluding to the commonly held views at the time of the ardent sexuality of the Jews, who were assumed to be *bene mentulati*.¹¹¹ After a gap of seven poems, the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* appears again in 7.62, with an epigram addressed to Hamillus.¹¹² There is a similarity with 6.56, though this time the character is taking the *topos* of sexual hierarchies even further as he sodomises big youths openly.¹¹³ The censure comes from the fact that Hamillus is doing this openly with no shame, whereas exhibitionism was not encouraged.¹¹⁴ The model reader will have begun to realise from the first line that this poem is part of the theme, and that this censure is merely a set up for revealing Hamillus' even worse act. This is further confirmed with the 'chattering' of the people in Hamillus' father's household revealing Hamillus' actual sexual preferences — his sexual preferences don't require testicles because he uses his mouth, i.e. he is a fellator.

The theme continues in 7.67, but we move from male fellators to female practitioners of oral sex. The use of the character of Philaenis brings an automatic realisation that this is again part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, given previous uses and the sexual manual associated with this name.¹¹⁵ Philaenis is, in this epigram, a butch woman who sodomises young males and penetrates young girls, exercises like an athlete, and, finally, is a cunnilingus. The poem states in increasingly vivid terms how Philaenis is acting *contra*

¹¹¹For a brief, but useful, explanation of stereotypes attributed to Jews, see Galàn Vioque 2002: 332-333.

¹¹²Shackleton Bailey argues that this 'Hamillus' is a real person, identifiable with the pederastic school-master seen in Juvenal 10.224. He argues that verification of this comes from examples in Pompeian graffiti, where the name is significantly spelled backwards, and so identifies him as a contemporary celebrity. Whether a real person or not does not alter its use in the theme, and does not seem significant given the fictional status of the other characters in the theme, particularly in this book.

¹¹³Given the later implications of the poem, and the previous use of *percidere* to mean *irrumare* in 2.72; the 'big' likely refers to the size of the penises of the youths, rather than their overall size.

¹¹⁴Cf. Ovid's suggestion that lovers seek privacy for their trysts; Ars. 2.617-620, Am. 3.14.

¹¹⁵Philaenis has been seen previously in 2.33 and 4.65.

naturam; the image of the female as the penetrating partner during sex, Philaenis as the athlete, Philaenis' theory that males are not virile enough to perform fellatio and finally the act of cunnilingus.¹¹⁶ The ridiculing of a phallic woman is not unique to Martial, Petronius in particular features such women, but it is a topic that Martial seems to relish.¹¹⁷

The two following poems continue this connected cycle within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 7 with the characters of Istantius Rufus and Canius (Rufus). The use of the *praenomen* here does not provide a direct link to the character of 'Rufus' in previous books, as in 7.68 the character is referred to explicitly as '*Istantius Rufus*', and the character in 1.69 is referred to as 'Canius' (though Lorenz has suggested a biographical reading and identified him as 'Canius Rufus').¹¹⁸ However, the name does suggest a connecting factor, especially as it creates the link in this small cycle between 7.67 and the next explicit use of the theme in 7.70.¹¹⁹ 7.70 again features Philaenis. Here, Martial humorously points to Philaenis' taking of the male (or dominant) role in her relationships through the double meaning of *amica*, which can mean 'friend' but also 'mistress'. Her sexual appetite is again emphasised as she is '*ipsarum tribadum tribas*' (*tribad of the very tribad*', 7.70.1) leading to her to act in the male/dominant role in her relationships.¹²⁰

There is then a significant gap of twenty poems before the theme appears again, and in a short epigram Martial dramatises for the reader the inter-connectedness of his books and the way in which he uses intersecting themes to structure them and create a path for

¹¹⁶On female same-sex relations in the ancient world, see Booten 1996 and Rabinowitz & Avanger (eds.) 2001.

¹¹⁷In Petronius, especially the character of Circe. See also Juvenal 6.

¹¹⁸Lorenz 2006: 315-328.

¹¹⁹This linking between the two explicit poems within the theme is here emphasised by the appearance of Sappho in 7.69: '*carmina fingentem Sappho laudarit amatrix*' (*Sappho would love her and praise her verse-making*, 7.69.9).

¹²⁰In modern use, '[t]he first [technique of lesbian intercourse], known as 'tribadism', consists in one woman lying on top of the other and simulating the movements of heterosexual intercourse in such a way as to stimulate the clitoris of each' (Oxford English Dictionary). However, given the use of the same character within such a short sequence (and the description of Philaenis' activities in the previous epigram in the theme), the previous appearances of Philaenis within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in the series as a whole, and the linking device of Rufus, the reader is meant to associate the sexual activity with oral sex in this poem.

the reader through his serial narrative.

iactat inaequalem Matho me fecisse libellum:

si verum est, laudat carmina nostra Matho.

aequales scribit libros Calvinus et Umber:

aequalis liber est, Cretice, qui malus est.

Matho spreads the word that I have made an uneven book.

if so, Matho praises my poems.

Calvinus and Umber write even books.

An even book, Creticus, is a bad book.

7.90

The link to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in 7.90 is clear from the first line — the addressee of the poem is Matho, last seen in the opening poem of this developing cycle, 7.10. Here Martial connects the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* with the literary theme explored in Chapter Two; observant readers will have noticed the juxtaposition of poems on these two themes, as well as poems which encompass both themes at the same time.¹²¹ This is one of the ways in which Martial encourages his reader to *reread* his books — by waiting until just nine poems from the end of the book to explicitly link the two themes again (as seen previously in 7.4), he suggests that the reader will need to go back to the beginning and read the book (and the series) again to see all the links he has used.

7.94 continues the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, creating surety for the reader that this is a linked cycle on this theme in Book 7. The poem concentrates on the consequences of oral sex through reference to both perfume and the way in which *os impurum* infects anything the person comes into contact with. The use of perfume in this epigram links back to 7.41, and the association of perfume with those who practice oral sex; the contagion

¹²¹The poems which are part of the literary theme in Book 7 are: 7.3, 11, 12, 17, 26, 29, 42, 51, 52, 68, 77, 81, 84, 85, 88, 90, 97, and 99.

aspect provides links back to the cycle of poems on this theme in Book 3, specifically 3.17 where the act of a fellator blowing on a cake infects it such that Martial refuses to eat it, and 3.38 where a mouth whispering in someone's ear makes the ear smell disgusting. This creates connections for the reader back to previous poems in the book and further back to the previous cycle of poems in Book 3, and further emphasises the cyclic nature of the epigrams in this book.

The final epigram in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 7 is 7.95, and if there was any doubt in the reader's mind previously that the poems on the theme in the book are being used to create a structured cycle, this epigram creates a sense of finality to the book through the reappearance of the character of Linus from the opening epigram of the theme in the book in the third and penultimate lines of this poem.

bruma est et riget horridus December,
 audes tu tamen osculo nivali
 omnes obvius hinc et hinc tenere
 et totam, Line, basiare Romam.
 quid posses graviusque saeviusque
 percussus facere atque verberatus?
 hoc me frigore basiet nec uxor
 blandis filia nec rudis labellis.
 sed tu dulcior elegantiorque,
 cuius livida naribus caninis
 dependet glacies rigetque barba,
 qualem forcibus metit supinis
 tonsor Cinyphio Cilix marito.
 centum occurrere malo cunnilingis
 et gallum timeo minus recentem.

quare si tibi sensus est pudorque,
 hibernas, Line, basiationes
 in mensem rogo differas Aprilem.

*It is winter and harsh December stiffens, yet you dare to hold up
 everyone you meet,
 wherever they come from, with your frosty salute, Linus, and kiss all of Rome.
 what could you do more grave and cruel if you had been stabbed and flogged?
 In this cold I would not have my wife kiss me nor my innocent daughter with
 her
 blushed lips. But you are sweeter and more elegant than them, with a livid icicle
 hanging from your canine nostrils and a beard as stiff as a Cilician clipper with
 upturned shears from a Cinyphian husband. I would rather fall in with
 a hundred cunt-lickers, a fresh priest of Cybele scares me less. So if
 you have any feeling and shame, please stop
 your winter kissing, Linus, until the month of April.*

Martial here is satirising a *basiator*, someone who is a little enthusiastic in their greetings. The suggestion in the poem is that Linus' kisses are rejected because he has been infected with *os impurum* and the narrator of the epigram does not wish for himself, or others, to become infected. The suggestion that Linus has been performing oral sex is heavily suggested through the use of the name — we are told at the beginning of this cycle of poems that 'fellat Linus' (*Linus sucks*, 7.10.1), and the insinuation is further emphasised by the comparison of Linus' frozen beard with the beard of a billy-goat, an animal noted for its foul smell and hyper-libido. The model reader will here pick up on links back to epigrams within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in previous books which have focused on men's beards and included similes with goats. The poem creates several intratextual references, the first being the description of Linus' 'frosty moustache' and the use of 'nivalis'

and its links to the purity of the snowy white Chione, a character synonymous with the theme since Book 3. The terrible smell and libido of goats has been seen previously in 4.4 and 6.93, while white beards have been claimed as a symptom of *os impurum* in 4.36.

Book 8

Book 8 of the *Epigrams* opens with a prose preface clearly dedicating the volume to Domitian, with obvious parallels to the other prose prefaces Martial has used. The tone of the letter is particularly obsequious, claiming that ‘omnes quidem libelli mei, domine...tibi supplicanti’ (*all my little books, lord...are your suppliants*, 8.praef..1-2), but adds that this one, ‘qui operis nostri octavus inscribitur’ (*which is inscribed as the eighth of my works*, 8.praef..3-4), has been especially written in devotion to Domitian. In a passage reminiscent of the Preface of Book 1, Martial explains that even though epigrams have been written by extremely moral men, in light of its dedicatee, Martial has ‘illis non permisi tam lascive loqui quam solent’ (*not allowed these [poems] to be as dirty as they usually are*, 8.praef..13-14).¹²² Given this, the naive reader, especially one who has not read the previous seven books, is encouraged from the outset to believe that this book will not be very obscene and have a more obsequious tone; the model reader, however, will believe this to be a joke given previous similar assertions which have proved to be false. Surprisingly, given previous broken promises, Martial follows the intentions of his preface, and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* can only be seen in the background, continuing as a subtext rather than explicitly *in* the text. The theme therefore acts as a connection between previous (and subsequent) books rather than as a formal structuring device in the book itself.

The first poem connected to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 8 is 8.6. The epigram is linked to the theme through its similarity to 4.39, and the by now familiar use of a pun associated with oral sex in the final line of the poem. 8.6 describes a series of

¹²²See earlier for the discussion of Book 1 and the opening preface.

cups and drinking bowls which depict mythical scenes and ends with the narrator claiming ‘bibes’ (*you will drink*, 8.6.16). The use of dining implements and the use of terms of eating and drinking as applied to oral sex have been seen in previous books and, along with the similarity to 4.39, these suggest to the reader that while it may be hidden in subtext, for the model reader the theme is implicit within this poem and continues to play a part in this book. The remaining five epigrams connected to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within Book 8 are spread out and rely on reading of the previous volumes in order to identify their purpose. All five poems are either addressed to or feature characters previously linked explicitly with the theme. These include Gargilianus in 8.13, Matho in 8.42, Rufus in 8.50 and Postumianus in 8.71 (an obvious similarity with the Postumus first associated with the theme in Book 2 as well as linked to Gargilianus through the -ianus ending).¹²³

Book 9

Much like Book 7, Book 9 again uses the imperial theme as a structural device.¹²⁴ There is a clearly defined beginning (1, 3, 5, and 7) with the poems arranged at an interval of one poem to inaugurate this imperial theme, which is continued throughout the book with a series of several distinct cycles. In addition, Martial continues to use the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within the book itself, linking it to the previous books of the series. Looking at the first line of the preface Martial calls Torianus his ‘frater carissime’, his ‘most beloved brother’.¹²⁵ Given the nature of Roman ideas of dominance and submission, to use the closest modern terms, within sexual relationships, as well as the poet of the Martialverse’s conviction throughout the series that he does not take the passive role, it suggests that Torianus is a *pathicus* and likely to have performed fellatio on his sexual

¹²³For appearances of these characters in previous books, see Appendix One.

¹²⁴See Chapter Two.

¹²⁵There are similarities here with Petronius *Satyrica* 78 where a male-male sexual relationship is implied by Giton with the use of ‘frater carissime’ to describe Encoius (Cf. Courtney 2001: 150).

partner.¹²⁶ The implicit use of theme is continued in 9.2, with an epigram addressed to Lupus, a character associated with the theme previously in 7.10 and 7.55.

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is picked up again in the fourth poem of the book. In a poem reminiscent of Philodemus (*AP* 5.126), Martial asks what service it is that Galla is performing such that Aeschylus is prepared to pay five times the going rate of two aureoli.¹²⁷

Aureolis futui cum possit Galla duobus
 et plus quam futui, si totidem addideris
 aureolos a te cur accipit, Aeschyle, denos?
 non fellat tanti Galla. quid ergo? tacet.

*Since it's possible to fuck Galla for two aureoli
 and more than fucked for a few coins more,
 why does she get ten from you, Aeschylus?
 Galla sucks for less. What then? Her silence.*

The use of the speaking name, Galla, with its obvious closeness to Gallus (a name used previously in the theme), combined with the name 'Galla' having been used in previous books of a prostitute, indicates to the reader from the first line of this epigram of its place in the theme.¹²⁸ The name 'Aeschylus' is in some ways a speaking name as well, playing on the reputation of the Athenian playwright Aeschylus in the ancient biographical tradition where he was presented as a paragon of old-fashioned virtue. It is this play of names that makes the last line so forceful as Aeschylus, a paragon of virtue, is a hypocrite and necessitates his buying of the prostitute's silence. The implication of silence cements in the

¹²⁶On the issues of describing ancient sexual relations and the use of modern terminology see Halperin 2004, especially Chapter 4.

¹²⁷Even this is a ridiculously high price; in other Martial poems we see prostitutes in brothels charging between two and sixteen asses (2 aureoli = 50 denari or 800 asses), suggesting something special about Galla before we even get to the punchline of the poem.

¹²⁸See Appendix One.

reader's mind that this poem is about oral sex, and there is a further implication that it is not Galla sucking Aeschylus, but the other way around. Friedländer has pointed out that if the diphthong 'ae' was pronounced as 'e', 'aes' would be heard as 'E's', and in the second half of the name Aeschylus, the 'h' would be silent, while the 'y' would sound about the same as 'u', which could give a pronunciation similar to *culus*.¹²⁹ This would generate a pronunciation which might have been heard as *esculus*, 'you eat ass'. These factors combined bring a second use of the name of Aeschylus, which suggests that rather than paying for Galla to perform fellatio on him, he is paying to perform oral sex on her (or even an act such as rimming), and the high price is needed lest it be revealed that he takes the passive role.

After a heavily front-loaded opening sequence the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is not seen again until twenty-three poems later in 9.27. The epigram is clearly modelled on one of Lucilius' epigrams (11.155). Attacks on sham philosophers are common throughout Martial's corpus, again drawing on the influence of Lucilius, and Martial often associates these pretend moralists with depraved vices and effeminacy. The association of the poem with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is seen both through the use of the character of Chrestus and the phrase 'cana labra' (*frosty moustache*, 9.27.5). The reappearance of white facial hair emphasises the link with the theme through the association of the idea that those who perform oral sex have a sickly pallor. Interestingly, this plucked philosopher has a Greek name ('useful'), but endlessly cites hairy Roman moral exempla, with a censorious and, as revealed by line 14, hypocritical 'Catoniana lingua' (*Catonian tongue*). This hypocrisy evokes Martial's presented Roman sense of shame at inappropriate behaviour ('pudet', line 14).

Another important link with the theme is the use of *draucus*, a rare word which is nonetheless used more than once by Martial; the word is Gaulish in origin and this is

¹²⁹Friedländer 1862-1867: 21 n1.

usually used of an athlete who performs in public, but also refers to the supposed sexual ability of athletes, thought to be enhanced because they wore a *fibula*.¹³⁰ While some



Figure 3.6: ‘Red-figured wine-cooler (*psykter*), signed by Douris as painter. British Museum, GR 1868.6-16.7 (Vases E 768).

have thought this piercing to be what is called today an infibulation (where there are two piercings in the foreskin of the penis with a ring used as a locking device), it is more correct to refer to the *fibula* as ligaturing, sometimes called a *kynodesme* (dog-leash) and first alluded to in a satyr play by Aeschylus.¹³¹ Examples of this type of chastity device can also be seen on ancient pots, such as those below. The *fibula* was used to preserve the

¹³⁰Cf. Henriksen 1998: 148-149; OLD *fibula* 3.

¹³¹*Theoroi* or *Isthmiastai*, frg. 78a Radt, lines 28-31. Cf. Osborne 2004:10ff. for a basic introduction to ligaturing.



Figure 3.7: Calyx crater by Euphronios: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, F2180.

young male athletes' strength, and so it was thought that when it was removed, the males would be more sexually vigorous.

The next epigram within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, 9.29, also begins a triad of epigrams on Philaenis. Philaenis, the name ascribed to the author of an ancient sex manual, has been seen previously within the corpus, and has been heavily associated with the theme.¹³² In 9.29 she is presented as a hyperbolically aged prostitute, a theme Martial draws from Lucilius but 'Latinises' by including Ovidian tropes such as malicious witchery (line 9) and presenting her as a procuress (line 10).¹³³ Martial also presents an

¹³²See Appendix One.

¹³³Philaenis is presented as a practitioner of love magic, and Thessaly was thought to be the home of witchcraft (Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 2.1). By mentioning Thessaly and love magic Martial suggests the rite of pulling down the moon which is often mentioned in association with Thessaly and an important element

absurd aspect by using Philaenis in an obituary epigram. The epigram contains many tropes associated with funerary poems and inscriptions: the opening is a reference to Nestor, a common example of old age; this is followed by ‘*rapta tam cito*’, which was used of those who had suffered a premature death; this is followed in line 5 with the type of exclamation used for a great orator, and the mock-serious tone is continued in lines 9 and 10; finally, the epigram closes with a parody of the common funerary formula ‘*sit tibi terra lexis*’, a motif parodied by other satirical and skoptic epigrams. The connection to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is emphasised not just by the use of the name Philaenis, but also through the subtext seen in the exclamation in line 5 with its focus on the tongue and silence through the juxtaposition of these two key terms (‘*heu quae lingua silet!*’ *Ah, what a tongue is silent!*).¹³⁴

Only three epigrams later the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* continues in 9.32, with a poem on a familiar theme, that of the poet’s preferences in sexual partner (and given line 3, this probably means his taste in prostitutes).

hanc volo quae facilis, quae palliolata vagatur,
 hanc volo quae puero iam dedit ante meo,
 hanc volo quam redimit totam denarius alter,
 hanc volo quae pariter sufficit una tribus.
 poscentem nummos et grandia verba sonantem
 possideat crassae mentula Burdigalae.

I want an easy girl, who walks about in a mantle,

I want one who has had my boy before me,

I want one who gives everything for a couple of denarii,

of love magic (Aristophanes *Clouds* 749-755, Plato *Georgias* 513). Latin poetry also uses references to this rite as part of love magic (Vergil *Eclogues* 8.68ff.; Propertius 1.1, 2.28; Ovid *Amores* 2.1, *Metamorphoses* 12.263).

¹³⁴Cf. *tacet* as the final punchline earlier in the book in 9.4.

*I want one who will have three at the same time.
That girl who talks big and demands money,
let dull Burdigala's cock have her.*

The epigram explicitly connects with 1.57 and 5.83, as here he claims to want a girl who is modest, easy, cheap, and also able to satisfy three men at the same time. There is an explicit link to 9.4 with both poems featuring prostitutes who require at least double the price to do more than have intercourse with a client. The implication in this poem is that if she is satisfying three men at the same time it will be through triple penetration and thus is performing fellatio on one of the men. Henriksen notes that there are parallels with this epigram to a (now lost) epigram of Philodemus, which is known to us through Horace and Propertius, as well as with Nicarchus' epic parody in *AP* 11.328.¹³⁵

We return to the Philaenis cycle of poems in 9.40. In a slightly surprising epigram, given previous associations of the name with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, Philaenis, a 'puella simplex' (*innocent girl*, 9.40.4), vows that if her husband, Diadorus, returns safely to Egypt from the Captoline Games she will fellate him. There is a subversion here of the standard trope of 'good' wifely behaviour to make an offering for her husband's safe journey. The punchline to this is that Diadorus is shipwrecked and swims back home in order to collect on her vow. Martial comments that if someone had made the same vow to him, he would have never left in the first place. The use of the name of Philaenis creates comic incongruity; the virtuous Roman *uxor* is given the name previously assigned to a prostitute and the writer of a sex manual. There is an implication that the innocent girl has turned to her namesake's book in order to learn how to please her husband, but more strongly suggested is that this Philaenis is not innocent at all, she is not the Roman wife either, but rather an Egyptian Greek from infamous Alexandria and so it is not surprising at all that she should offer 'what even chaste Sabine women love.'

¹³⁵Cf. Henriksen 1998: 169. On Nicarchus 11.328, see Nisbet 2003: 80-85.

The Philaenis cycle ends more than twenty poems later and is the next occurrence of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. The use of the cycle to link not just these three poems but also the structure of the theme is commonplace to the reader by this point in the series. In 9.62 Martial returns to the smell associated with those who perform oral sex. The use of the name Philaenis immediately suggests this poem's part in the theme, as does the fact that she is wearing purple clothes. Martial has previously mentioned the smell associated with purple-dyed garments, and here it is used to suggest that Philaenis is trying to cover up one smell (from *os impurum*) with an even worse smell (her cloth).¹³⁶

The use of the theme and the ending of the Philaenis cycle are emphasised by the juxtaposition of 9.63 and the reappearance of the character of Phoebus.¹³⁷

ad cenam invitant omnes te, Phoebae, cinaedi.

mentula quem pascit, non, puto, purus homo est.

All the cinaedi ask you to dinner, Phoebus.

I think a man fed by cock is not a pure man.

Moving from the female character and female-male sexual relations to the male character of Phoebus and implied male-male sexual relations provides a clear ending to the cycle through the use of a different aspect of the use of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 9. The poet comments that all the *cinaedi* invite Phoebus to dinner, and the poem uses the metaphor of food to suggest that Phoebus is not a 'purus homo' (*pure man*, 9.63.2); it is unclear whether Phoebus performs fellatio or has fellatio performed on him. The fact that it is *cinaedi* that invite him to dinner would suggest that Phoebus takes the active role; however, that he is not a pure man and is 'fed by the cock' suggests that it is in fact Phoebus who is performing fellatio on the men inviting him to dinner.

The theme continues just four poems later in 9.67, again using the sex of the protagonist

¹³⁶The smell associated with purple-dyed clothes has been seen previously in 4.4.

¹³⁷Seen previously within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. See Appendix One.

as a way of indicating the sporadic use of the theme in this book, rather than a smooth linking of topics.

lascivam tota possedi nocte puellam,
 cuius nequitias vincere nemo potest.
 fessus mille modis illud puerile poposci:
 ante preces totum primaque verba dedit.
 improbius quiddam ridensque rubensque rogavi:
 pollicita est nulla luxuriosa mora.
 sed mihi pura fuit; tibi non erit, Aeschyle, si vis
 accipere hoc munus condicione mala.

*All night long I enjoyed a slutty girl,
 whose kinkiness no man can exhaust.
 tired by a thousand different positions, I asked for the boy routine,
 and before I begged or started to beg she gave it to me.
 Laughing and blushing I asked for something even more kinky,
 and the lustful girl promised without hesitating.
 But to me she was undefiled. She won't be for you, Aeshylus,
 if you want to accept this service with your bad condition.*

In this poem the narrator is describing a night of great sexual pleasure where he engaged in vaginal, anal, and oral sex with a girl (by implication, a prostitute). The poem reintroduces the idea of a hierarchy of sexual acts, with vaginal sex presented as the most socially acceptable, anal sex less acceptable and allowed by women less, and finally oral sex at the bottom of the list and the least socially acceptable. We are presented with a typology of sexual pleasures, each of which is successively more desirable to receive (though not necessarily to give), expensive, and hard-to-get than the last.¹³⁸

¹³⁸Cf. Panciera 2000: 191 on the hierarchy of sexual acts in Martial.

This poem, and particularly the last two lines, has led to a number of interpretations by modern commentators.¹³⁹ Panciera (following Housman) interprets this to mean that while the prostitute agreed to fellate Martial, he refuses because she demands cunnilingus in return, but Aeschylus will receive fellatio from her because he will have no problem with this *quid pro quo*, as indicated earlier by 9.4 and 9.32.¹⁴⁰ Watson and Watson, however, interpret this poem slightly differently; in their interpretation, Martial is fellated by the girl, but demands cunnilingus from Aeschylus for the same service. In doing so, Aeschylus infects her with his *os impurum* from his performing similar on previous sexual partners, his ‘condicione male’.¹⁴¹ Finally, Obermayer argues that Aeschylus infects his sexual partners because he is *impurus* from having previously performed oral sex. However, the poem, according to his interpretation, does not say that Aeschylus performed oral sex on the girl in the poem, but rather the ‘mala condicio’ is Aeschylus’ general enjoyment of performing cunnilingus.¹⁴² The best interpretation of this poem can be found through a combination of Watson and Watson and Obermayer’s analyses. The narrator receives fellatio from the girl with no need to provide anything in return; however, if Aeschylus were to visit the girl she would no longer be *purus* because she will be polluted by Aeschylus who has *os impurum* from performing oral sex. this poem demands the model reader’s *active participation* in constructing its meaning through inter- and intratextual reading — the poem makes little or no sense in isolation from other poems within the theme.

The next poem in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, 9.78, links directly with 9.67 through a shared connection to 9.4. While the epigram is not explicitly about oral sex, it features the character of Galla, both a speaking name connected to the theme and previously associated with Aeschylus in 9.4.

A similar type of connection continues in 9.80, with the use of a feeding metaphor

¹³⁹Cf. Lorenz 2004 in his review of Watson and Watson 2003.

¹⁴⁰Panciera 2000: 24-26; Housman 1907: 247-8.

¹⁴¹Watson & Watson 2003: 242-244.

¹⁴²Obermayer 1998: 223ff.

as seen previously in 9.63; Gellius, a poor man, has married a rich woman. Shackleton Bailey suggests that the metaphor is used to suggest that Gellius irrumates his wife as well as having sex with her, and so the poem looks back to *pascit* in 9.63. The *topos* of the sexually aggressive old woman is familiar from Lucilius, as is the ridicule of them. A humorous paradox is also seen where the formally poor and hungry Gellius now ‘feeds’ his wife by providing for her age-inappropriate sexual urges. This plays on the use of *pasco* in a domestic context; the word is usually used of discharging one’s duty of provision towards dependents and friends and so the incongruity of ‘uxorem pascit’ is what indicates to the model reader the double sense being used here.¹⁴³

9.92 is a poem in which the narrator contrasts the misfortunes of being a slave with the life of the free and rich, but which ends up being an attack against the excessive lifestyle of Gaius and the destructive and deviant aspects of his life, ending with a by now familiar punchline involving oral sex.

quae mala sint domini, quae servi commoda, nescis,

Condyle, qui servum te gemis esse diu.

dat tibi securos vilis tegeticula somnos,

pervigil in pluma Gaius ecce iacet.

Gaius a prima tremebundus luce salutatur

tot dominos, at tu, Condyle, nec dominum.

‘quod debes, Gai, redde’ inquit Phoebus et illunc

Cinnamus: hoc dicit, Condyle, nemo tibi.

tortorem metuis? podagra cheragraque secatur

Gaius et mallet verbera mille pati.

quod nec mane vomis nec cunnum, Condyle, lingis,

non mavis quam ter Gaius esse tuus?

¹⁴³Cf. OLD *pasco* 1, 2, & 5a.

*You don't know the advantages of being a slave and the disadvantages of being
a master, Condylus, when you complain you've been a slave so long.
A cheap little mat gives you a secure night's sleep,
when Gaius lies awake all night on a feather bed.
From sunrise to sunset Gaius, trembling, greets
so many masters, while you, Condylus, don't greet your own.
'Gaius, pay me what you owe' says Phoebus, and that Cinnamus
says that the same: nobody says that to you Condylus.
You fear the torturer? Gaius is cut by gout in his hand and foot
but would rather suffer a thousand lashes.
You don't throw up in the morning, Condylus, or lick a cunt,
isn't that three times better than being Gaius?*

The model reader of the *Epigrams* who has read the previous books in the series, will have been expecting a poem explicitly on the theme since 9.88 which features the character of Rufus, who has been linked with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* since Book 3. Further, the appearance of Phoebus in line 7, previously associated with the theme in 9.63, will cue the reader up for a punchline related to oral sex.¹⁴⁴ This continues the way the theme, and in particular characters associated with the theme, create a pseudo-narrative or path for the readers to follow throughout the corpus, and a structuring element which creates cohesion. There is a further connection here with the focus on licking and the tongue, 'cunnum...lingis' which links back to the focus on cunnilingus in 9.67 and creates a sense of continuity in the theme in Book 9.

The final poems within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 9 are 9.95 and 9.95b. In the surviving manuscripts these were joined together as one poem, presumably

¹⁴⁴A further link between the use of characters here connects 9.88 and 9.92 together with the role shift of Rufus and Phoebus — Rufus is now a legacy-hunter, while Phoebus, previously a serial fellator, is now a loan-shark.

taken to be one poem because they are both about the same character, Athenagoras. However, the poems were first separated by Peter Schrijver, and have continued to be recognised as two separate poems.¹⁴⁵ There have been two main ways of interpreting this poem, an alphabetical explanation and an etymological explanation. The alphabetical explanation is based on seeing a play on the Greek letters alpha and omega in the poem where an Alphius, previously in a relationship with Athenagoras, becomes an Olfius once he is married.¹⁴⁶ The etymological explanation sees a pun based on the Greek models for the two names, and common to this view is the argument that there is only one character in the epigram — Alphius Athenagoras — who becomes ‘Olfius’ after he is married, though the final point of these explanations is often less than convincing.¹⁴⁷ It seems more likely that these epigrams are about two people, and it begins to make sense when considered as part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, especially if combined with the suggestion in the footnote of Shackleton Bailey’s edition. The Greek meaning of Alphius is ‘white’, and if we follow Mussehl’s suggestion that Alphius and Athenagoras were lovers, then it is implied that Alphius is pale because he has been performing oral sex on Athenagoras.¹⁴⁸ However, now that he is married the symptoms of his *os impurum* have become much worse and he has turned from pale to smelly, obviously caused by now performing oral sex on his wife, the smell suggested by the similarity of Olfius and olfacere. 9.95b again features Athenagoras, and plays with the use of pseudonyms in the *Epigrams*. Callistratus (a pseudonym) knows someone called Athenagoras who he thinks was the focus of the attack in the previous epigram. Martial argues that it is not the case as he does not know anyone called Athenagoras, and even if he had unintentionally used the name of a real person he

¹⁴⁵As Henriksen has pointed out, there is a precedent for this kind of subject matter and arrangement with 2.21-23 where a character is mocked, but then in the final poem of the sequence the narrator replies to a person asking for the real identity of the character.

¹⁴⁶There is an obvious connection to the character of ‘Olus’, who has been associated with the theme in previous books (see Appendix A).

¹⁴⁷For a more detailed explanation of the various interpretations of this poem, see Henriksen 1999: 145ff.

¹⁴⁸For example, Oppianus in 7.4.

is still not at fault; rather, the 'real' Athenagoras is for being so easily identified as the previous partner of the fellator and cunnilingus of the preceding epigram.

3.3 Books 10-12

3.3.1 Book 10 or Book 11? The Problem of the Second Edition.

If following the original published order of the books of the *Epigrams*, the next book would be Book 10. However, as agreed by most scholars, the version of Book 10 which has survived from antiquity is a second edition, which was published after Book 11.¹⁴⁹ There is a possibility that this idea of a second edition could be seen as another way that Martial is playing with the reader, an Ovidian trope used to place the poet and his works more firmly as part of a Latin elegiac tradition.¹⁵⁰ However, it is likely that while the mention of a second edition is a nod to Ovid, the current Book 10 we have was published after Book 11, shown by the emperor mentioned in Book 10 (Trajan) being chronologically later than Nerva, the emperor referred to in Book 11.¹⁵¹ Therefore, in reading through the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and given we are unable to be certain which epigrams are from the first edition and which have been added for the second edition (as well as being unable to recover those poems removed for the second edition), the next book for the first-time reader who is reading after the twelve-book series has been completed, is Book 11 rather than Book 10.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹Although not entirely relevant to the current discussion, the dating for the entirety of the corpus has been comprehensively covered by many scholars, based on Friedländer's suggestions: Friedländer 1886: 61ff.; Sullivan 1991: 6-55; Citroni 1989: 201-226; Vioque 2002: 1-9. On the most recent argument for Book 10 as a second edition, see Francis 2006: 1-4.

¹⁵⁰The opening epigram states that the *Amores* were originally arranged in five books but for the second edition this was changed to three ('qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli,/ tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus — *We who were once five books are now three, the author preferred it this way, Amores* 1.ep).

¹⁵¹Cf. Francis 2006: 1. I must also thank John Garthwaite for helping me to formulate a position on this tricky subject.

¹⁵²Sullivan claims that over half the epigrams in the edition of Book 10 we have are new and that a large proportion of epigrams from the first edition, especially those which mention Domitian, were removed.

This brings up interesting effects for the contemporary reader, a difference between the reader who reads each book as it is published (who will have read the first edition of Book 10, then Book 11, and then presumably the second edition of Book 10), and the reader who reads the series once all 12 books have been published, especially when considering rereading. It seems likely that on rereading once all 12 books have been published that the reader will read Book 10 before Book 11, despite the publishing order. Modern parallels can be used to show how a reader's understanding and perhaps enjoyment can change when appreciating a work in the creator's intended order with the 2002 US TV show *Firefly*. Created for FOX by Joss Whedon, the studio executives were unhappy with the original pilot episode and preceded to show the episodes in a different order than originally intended (The broadcast order was 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 4, 5, 9, 10, 14, with episodes 11-13 unaired). This changing of the order was cited by many fans as a reason for the low ratings which led FOX to cancel *Firefly* mid-season. However, for the DVD release and the later 2005 screening on SyFy, the originally intended episode order was maintained which, according to DVD sales and the bloggersphere, not only changed appreciation of the show by the original audience, but also brought in a new following which added to its cult-TV status. Another parallel can be seen in *The Chronicles of Narnia* books of C. S. Lewis, where the book first published (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*) is numbered as the second book in modern editions after *The Magician's Nephew* which is set earlier according to the series' internal chronological order.¹⁵³

Sullivan 1991: 44ff.

¹⁵³This change in the numbering of the series came about at the suggestion of C. S. Lewis' stepson when Harper Collins gained the rights to publish the series in the US in 1994, and which publishers in other countries followed.

3.3.2 Book 11

Book 11 is one of the most obviously ‘arranged’ of the books in the *Epigrams*, and has a clearly defined beginning and end as well as a general skoptic and satirical theme.¹⁵⁴ Kay has observed that Book 11, in contrast to some of the preceding books is openly obscene — ‘the idea of bawdiness...forms the backbone of the book: over half of the skoptic epigrams are of an obscene nature’ — and shows that these are spread throughout the book.¹⁵⁵

Book 11 opens with an extended cycle of poems on the obscene nature of the book ‘which dominates the opening...and proclaims its preoccupation with non-euphemistic obscenity.’¹⁵⁶ The cycle is an extended *apologia* for the obscene content of the book, a trope which the model reader will by this point see as more an introduction to obscenity rather than an apology for it, especially given the way Martial interacts his apologies for the obscene content his reader’s are about to read and poems on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. The opening cycle of *apologiae* follows a familiar pattern for the model reader of the *Epigrams*, which also acts to create its own (metapoetic) structuring effect for the attentive reader; this pattern is reinforced by the way in which the open cycle interacts with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, a theme already familiar and whose importance to the series is recognised by the reader. This interaction recalls Book 3 where a cycle of poems in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* were framed by *apologiae* to *matrona* to not read Martial’s obscene poems (though at a point in the book where they were already two-thirds of the way through).¹⁵⁷ The difference here is the fact that it is at the beginning of a book — a point where prudish readers could just roll up the book and put it away.

By using these opposing ideas Martial reasserts the importance of orality in his books and highlights this through the first appearance of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*

¹⁵⁴See Kay 1985: 5-6 on some of the ways in which Book 11 is arranged.

¹⁵⁵Kay 1985: 5.

¹⁵⁶Kay 1985: 57. The extended cycle includes 11.2, 11.6, 11.15, 11.16, 11.17, and 11.20.

¹⁵⁷3.68 and 3.86. See earlier in this chapter for a more in-depth analysis of this framed cycle.



Figure 3.8: Interaction of the opening *apologiae* and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* (Opening cycle poems: 2, 6, 15, 16, 17, 20; oral sex and *os impurum* poems: 6, 8, 12, 18, 19).

in Book 11 which directly combines with the *apologiae* of the opening cycle in 11.6. The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is highlighted in this poem through the intertextual reference to Catullus, kisses, and the *passer* of his Lesbia poems:

da nunc basia, sed Catulliana
 quae si tot fuerint quot ille dixit,
 donabo tibi Passerem Catulli.
now give me kisses like those of Catullus
and if you give me as many as he describes,
I will give you Catullus' Sparrow.

These lines allow for more than one interpretation, paralleling with the interpretations of the gift he will give Dindymus, the addressee of the poem. The name of the recipient is important; Dindymus has previously been described as a eunuch in 6.39 and the object of homosexual affection in 5.83. The name is also found in Catullus 63 in the context of the Cybele cult, so the reader will not only associate him with the eunuch of 6.39, but will intertextually associate the name with a eunuch through the Catullus poem, a point emphasised through the direct reference to Catullus in the poem itself. The gift itself can be interpreted in three ways: firstly in a literal way in that Martial is giving Dindymus a sparrow as a gift (which would suggest that the capitalisation of *passer* is a modern editorial choice); secondly as a poem written in honour of Dindymus which uses the Lesbia of Catullus' poems as its explicit model; and thirdly the poem can be seen to be more sexually explicit if *passer Catulli* is taken as a euphemism for *mentula*. This brings up the question of whether *passer* in Catullus was used as a euphemism for *mentula*. This was first implicitly suggested as an interpretation in the fifteenth century by Angelo Poliziano and explicitly stated by Isaac Voss in the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸Poliziano's interpretation appears in the first collection of his *Miscellanea*, see Poliziano 1536: 520. Voss 1684: 5-9.

This interpretation was, however, never really accepted until the 1970s with Genovese and Giangrande's restatement of the suggestion.¹⁵⁹ This was countered by Jocelyn who, in an extremely detailed account refuted the idea that *passer* meant anything other than 'sparrow'.¹⁶⁰ However, in 1985 Hooper once again suggested an obscene subtext within Catullus' Lesbia poems. Scholars have since responded to this (such as Ward Jones 1998), but the possible obscene interpretation cannot be escaped. Of course, whatever Catullus originally meant, the question when looking at Martial's use of a possible obscene *passer* is not so much 'did Catullus use *passer* as a euphemism for *mentula*?', but 'does Martial find mileage in adding or recoding it as such?'. The third possible interpretation of this poem suggests that this is a reading which Martial wished to suggest to his readers.

Of course, one reading does not necessarily exclude the others from operating at the same time, and the model reader of Martial would by this point in the series be experienced enough in interpreting the epigrams to expect multiple ideas within the same poem. For the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* it is this third interpretation which indicates that this epigram is the beginning of the use of this theme in the book. References to Catullus have been used in previous books as part of the theme, and so while the interpretation can be seen to suggest anal intercourse, the combination of this with the description of kisses suggests that the gift Martial will actually give Dindymus is the opportunity for Dindymus to fellate him.

After the combination of the opening *apologiae* cycle and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in 11.6 the *apologiae* cycle does not appear until 11.15. However, the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is used in the gap to juxtapose these two structuring motifs, starting with 11.8. The poem focuses on sweet smells and perfumes, which, as Kay has pointed out, follows a tradition of the combination of pleasant smells and eroticism from Homer

¹⁵⁹Genovese 1974; Giangrande 1975-6.

¹⁶⁰Jocelyn 1980.

to Latin poets such as Catullus and Horace.¹⁶¹ However, the model reader of Martial's books will by this point in the series understand the subtext the idea of perfumes creates given previous poems where sweet smells have been used to hide the stench caused by *os impurum*. The next epigram in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, 11.12, continues this bridge between 11.6 and the next poem in the opening *apologiae* cycle. The name of Zoilus creates the obvious link with the theme, and continues Martial's use of characters as focal points for his use of this theme as a structuring device in his books.¹⁶² After the continuation of the *apologiae* cycle in 11.15, 11.16, and 11.17, this use of characters associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is continued in 11.18 with an epigram addressed to Lupus, a character first associated with the theme in Book 7 and since used as a reminder of the theme rather than explicitly linked with it.

The final juxtaposition of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* and the opening *apologiae* cycle comes in 11.19, creating a continuation all the way from 11.15 to the final epigram in the opening cycle, 11.20.

quaeris cur nolim te ducere, Galla? diserta es.

saepe soloecismum mentula nostra facit.

You ask me why I don't want to marry you, Galla?

You are so literate. My cock often commits a solecism.

The name Galla was associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 9, and has obvious links with Gallus and eunuchs, previously highlighted in this book in 11.6. Kay's sophisticated analysis of the poem states that:

'mentula' governs 'soloecismum' and is a *paraprodokian* for 'lingua'; therefore

'soloecismum' has a sexual sense — ineptness in intercourse; so it refers back

¹⁶¹Kay 1985: 82. See also the introduction to this chapter on the use of smells in Greek and Latin writings.

¹⁶²This structuring is further emphasised through this being the first poem in a cycle of poems featuring the character of Zoilus in Book 11: 11.12, 11.30, 11.37, 11.54, 11.85, 11.92.

to 'diserta', which then describes Galla's sexual eloquence. M.'s ways in bed will not meet the demands of Galla's expertise.¹⁶³

I would take this a step further and argue that rather than Martial being sexually inept in the context of this poem, given Galla's previous association with the theme, it is Galla's demand for cunnilingus that Martial refuses to meet.

The theme continues away from the opening cycle in 11.25, in a poem which also brings up again the connection between oral sex and impotence. However, in this epigram the connection comes through Linus' abnormal sexual practices now that he is impotent, more specifically, that he is performing cunnilingus. The use of *salax* suggests that this impotence has come about because Linus has been overly sexually active, and so he will now have to use his tongue instead of his penis.¹⁶⁴ The character of Linus is also a recurring character with associations of Greekness and so effeminacy.

Five epigrams later the theme continues in the second poem of the Zoilus cycle with 11.30.

os male causicis et dices olere poetis.

sed fellatori, Zoile, peius olet.

You say that barrister's and poet's mouths smell bad.

But a fellator's mouth smells even worse, Zoilus.

This time the connection between the character and the theme is more explicit where it is insinuated that Zoilus' accusations of other lawyers having bad breath are ironic given his own *os impurum* (as readers will know given his identification as a fellator in previous books).

The Zoilus cycle continues in 11.37, this time focusing on the character's wealthy vulgarity and his usurpation of status. The poem is a subtle continuation of the theme,

¹⁶³Kay 1985: 110.

¹⁶⁴The term *salax* is used frequently by Varro of animals mounting; cf. Lucretius 4.100, Ovid *Ars.* 2.485.

combining the structural device of the Zoilus cycle in Book 11 with the overall theme of oral sex and *os impurum* which connects the books within an overall series. The epigram also acts as an implicit reminder of the theme between two explicit poems, the second of these being 11.40. In the epigram, Lupercus complains that he has not had sex in over a month because, as the reader discovers with the final word, Glycera has a toothache. This open confession that *fututio* is in fact *irrumatio* brings out a further contrast in terms of acceptance of different types of oral sex between the two characters: Zoilus performs deviant sexual acts because he is a fellator, whereas Lupercus' act is perfectly acceptable because he is the receiver of oral sex rather than the one performing it. Explicitly, the *right* kind of sexual power is displayed by Lupercus as 'solus tenet imperatque solus' (*he is her sole possessor and master*, 11.40.2). This contrast between the 'right' type of oral sex, between the dominant and passive, is emphasised by the name of Lupercus; the name evokes old Roman mores — the Lupercalia — and places the character as a member in good standing of Rome's traditional social elite as compared to Zoilus' usurpation of status. However, Martial continues to leave clues for the model reader with the similarity between the names of Lupercus and Lupus (last seen in 11.18).

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is picked up again in 11.45 in a poem which focuses on the secretive aspects of oral sex, and a reappearance of the silence motif seen in previous books.

intrasti quotiens inscriptae limina cellae
 seu puer arrisit sive puella tibi
 contentus non es foribus veloque seraque,
 secretumque iubes grandius esse tibi:
 oblinitur minimae si qua est suspicio rimae
 punctaque lasciva quae terebrantur acu.
 nemo est tam teneri tam sollicitique pudoris

qui vel pedicat, Canthare, vel futuit.

*Whenever you cross the threshold of a cell with a price list,
whether it's a boy or a girl who smiles at you, you aren't content
with the doors, a curtain, a bolt, but demand greater secrecy for yourself.
The slightest hint of a crack is blocked up, as are the peep-holes punched
by a lascivious needle. No one is of such a modest and refined sensitivity
who either buggers or fucks, Cantharus.*

The implication of the poem is that Cantharus, whose name is not revealed until the last line of the poem, pays these prostitutes for oral sex, and perhaps even that he takes the passive role. There is the idea of a hierarchy of sexual acts from previous books, with the added implication that some acts are just too shameful and obscene to name (which emphasises the idea that it is Cantharus who takes the passive role in these meetings). The idea of having to hide one's enjoyment of oral sex, whether receiving or giving, has been seen repeatedly throughout the previous books, though the suggestion here is that Cantharus' acts are so shameful that he not only needs to hide them from other customers, but also from other prostitutes within the brothel. The theme of *os impurum* is brought in through the name of Cantharus, as the meaning of the Greek word is 'dung beetle', bringing in an association of defilement and emphasises to the reader in the final line that he takes the passive role in these interactions. Interestingly the character seems not to have a preference whether he pays for a boy or girl which is not usually seen in epigrams in this theme, especially when the addressee is giver rather than the recipient of oral sex.

The next poem, 11.46, continues the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* and returns to the association between oral sex and impotence, though in a more traditional manner than seen earlier in the book. Martial here again proposes the claim that oral sex can be a cure for impotence, saying to Mevius that if he cannot sustain an erection when 'miseros frustra cunnos culosque laccessis' (*you vainly pester unfortunate cunts and arses*, 11.46.5), then he

should instead try penetrating mouths to cure the problem.¹⁶⁵ Again there is a hierarchy of pleasures; ‘summa’ is used not only in a physical sense (higher up on the body), but also figuratively with receiving oral sex as the highest pleasure. There is a further link to previous Greek epigram, specifically Nicarchus (for example, *AP* 5.38) with the use of *anus* which has been used previously in an oral sex context as ‘old woman’ in 9.80, and brings in the suggestion that performing fellatio is a forte of old women, as Nicarchus has claimed.

This concentration of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* continues in 11.47, with a return to the invective seen in previous books against those who perform oral sex, creating a parallel with 11.45.

omnia femineis quare dilecta catervis
 balnea devitat Lattara? ne futuat.
 cur nec Pompeia lentus spatiat in umbra
 nec petit Inachidos limina? ne futuat.
 cur Lacedaemonio lutem ceromate corpus
 perfundit gelida Virgine? ne futuat.
 cum sic feminei generis contagia vitet,
 cur lingit cunnum Lattara? ne futuat.

Why does Lattara avoid all the baths the female hordes like? So he needn't fuck.

*Why doesn't he slowly stroll in Pompey's shade or make for the threshold
 of Inachus' daughter? So he needn't fuck.*

*Why does he plunge his body, muddied by Spartan mud, in the chilly Virgo?
 So he needn't fuck.*

*Since he tries so hard to avoid contact with females, why does Lattara lick
 cunts?*

¹⁶⁵Martial has previously suggested oral sex as a cure for impotence in 3.75 and 4.50.

So he needn't fuck.

The structure of this poem heightens its effect, with each pentameter ending with the same phrase, with it taking on a different significance in the final line of the poem. The phrase also echoes the ending of 11.45, 'vel futuit?', with a further link to 11.45 provided through the repetition of *limina*, the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* breaching thresholds (and perhaps ones which should not be). In the first three pentameters Martial suggests places where Lattara could pick up women were he interested in intercourse, with references to Ovid's elegiac city landscape emphasising Lattara's disinterest in normal male-female sexual relations¹⁶⁶. As the final pentameter makes clear, however, the reason for Lattara's avoidance of these places is that he does not have intercourse with women, but performs oral sex on them. There is a further connection to 11.45 through their spatial closeness in the book and the reader is likely to conclude that Lattara, just like Cantharus, has to visit brothels in order to be able to perform this shameful act.

The final epigram in this group of epigrams, 11.49(50), connects closely with 11.46 with a return to fellatio and thus closes a cycle of interlinking epigrams on the theme. The main character of the poem, Phyllis, is the traditional avaricious woman who fleeces her men, taking everything they have.¹⁶⁷ Phyllis has previously been seen in 11.29, presented as an old woman, as well as being a common name for a prostitute.¹⁶⁸ The reference to an old woman links with 11.46 where *anus* was used to suggest that it would be one of these over-sexed and horny old women who would perform fellatio on Mevius. This idea of fellatio is emphasised by the repeated use of *negare* in the final line, where the character

¹⁶⁶There has been extensive interest in Ovid's cityscape. See, for example, Newlands 2004 for how Ovid and Statius differ in their depictions of the landscape of Rome, and for a more one-dimensional approach, Boyle 2003.

¹⁶⁷This theme can be seen throughout Latin literature: for example, Plautus *Truc.* 52ff.; Tibullus 1.8, 2.4, 3.1; Ovid *Amores* 1.8, 1.10; *Ars.* 1.417ff., 2.261ff., 3.850ff.; Horace *Epodes* 1.17.55ff. The same theme can also be seen later in Martial in 12.55 and 12.79.

¹⁶⁸For example, Propertius 4.8 and Horace *Carm.* 4.11, as well as being seen frequently in the index of *CIL* 6.

of the poet obviously feels that as he has allowed this woman to take whatever she wants, she should at least provide him something he wants in return.¹⁶⁹ This links again to 11.46 where oral sex was presented as the highest of pleasures, and the suggestion in 11.49(50) is that the poet deserves something more than the normal given everything Phyllis has taken from him.

The Zoilus cycle once again acts as a bridge between more explicit poems in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. In 11.54 he is presented as a runaway slave and thief who steals sweet-smelling items from corpses, and the *topos* of smells, and the contrast between good and bad smelling items, emphasises to the reader the place of this poem in the theme. This bridge continues in 11.55 with another recurring character, Lupus. Again it is not just the name which is used to remind the reader of the theme, but also another of the symptoms caused by *os impurum* is presented, though with no explicit suggestion that the symptom and the link to the theme are directly linked. In 11.55 the poet suggests that when Lupus thinks he has been thwarted in his attempts at legacy-hunting he will become pale, a symptom which has often been connected to *os impurum* in previous books.

The explicit poems continue in 11.58 with an epigram about a young boy who teases his older partner. The poem focuses on the character of Telesphorus, who appeared within a pederastic-themed epigram earlier in the book (11.26). Unlike a prostitute, where the exchange of money for services was expected, a boy within a pederastic relationship could only legitimately ask for small presents, or merely accept what he was given; to ask for large and/or expensive gifts was seen as shameful. The use of a Greek name for the boy and the rare excursion into actual Greek script in the final line of the poem flags up for the reader Greek social codes (or a Roman readership's *idea* of Greek social codes) for these types of relationships as seen in Aristophanes, as well as Roman examples such as Petronius and Tibullus. Strato, writing in Greek but after Martial, explicitly states that a

¹⁶⁹Martial has previously used *negare* (usually with *nihil*) as a euphemism for oral sex; for example, 4.12 and 6.20. See Adams 1982: 127.

boy may ask for small gifts but must never ask for money.¹⁷⁰ In this poem Telesphorus is not only demanding bigger and more expensive gifts, but waits until he and the poet are having sex to demand them. Telesphorus is using his buttocks as a weapon to extort gifts, much as a barber might use his razor to demand money from his customers; the parallel Martial draws is that in both instances he is at his most vulnerable and that Telesphorus deserves punishment for his crime. This brings back the idea of being made to perform oral sex as a punishment seen previously in the series, most obviously in Book 2. The punchline of the poem is that not only will Martial fuck his face to punish Telesphorus, made clear with the Greek verb *λαϊκάζειν*, indicating a sense that Telesphorus' mercenary behaviour as a Graeculus means that the appropriate behaviour is to humiliate him Greek-style, but also that he will no longer acquiesce to these demands; thus the final line contains the threat of punishment as well as saying to Telesphorus that he can 'tell your greedy avarice to fuck off'.

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* continues in 11.61, the theme anticipated by the reappearance of the character of Chione in 11.60. 11.61 explicitly attacks a cunnilingus and also once again combines the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* with the *topos* of impotence.

lingua maritus, moechus ore Nanneius,
 Summemmianis inquinatior buccis,
 quem cum fenestra vidit a Suburana
 obscena nudum Leda, fornicem cludit
 mediumque mavult basiare quam summum,
 modo qui per omnes viscerum tubos ibat
 et voce certa consciaque dicebat
 puer an puella matris esset in ventre,

¹⁷⁰Aristophanes *Wealth* 153ff.; *Satyrical* 85ff.; Tibullus 1.4; Strato *AP* 12.212.

— gaudete cunni; vestra namque res acta est —

arrigere linguam non potest fututricem.

nam dum tumentis mersus haeret in vulva

et vagiantes intus audit infantes,

partem gulosam solvit indecens morbus.

nec purus esse nunc potest nec impurus.

Nanneius, married with his tongue, adulterer with his mouth,

filthier than the lips of Summemmianis prostitutes,

when foul Leda sees him naked from her Surburan window

she closes the brothel and prefers to kiss his middle rather than his face.

recently he used to work up through all the inner tubes and say,

in a certain voice, whether it was a boy or a girl in the mother's womb.

But rejoice you cunts, this is to your advantage — he cannot erect his

tongue that fucks. For while he was stuck deep in a swelling womb

and was listening to the wailing infant inside, a revolting disease

paralysed his greedy part. Now he can neither be pure nor impure.

The opening word, *lingua*, will suggest to the model reader of Martial that this epigram will be part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, though it is doubtful that they expect such an explicit poem based around cunnilingus, which is usually referred to much more obliquely than fellatio. The poem opening makes clear that Nanneius is a cunnilingus, and the shame of performing such an act, as well as the shame of the women receiving it, is made clear with the actions of the prostitute Leda. When she sees him in the street she closes her establishment so that no one will realise that she has him as a customer. This section of the epigram also begins the association which will give the poem its punchline; Nanneius is described as walking naked in the street, however, it is not that he is literally naked but rather that in the poem his tongue is a substitute for his penis and so it is

when Leda sees him walking about with his face uncovered that she prepares to receive him. The infection associated with those who perform oral sex is also emphasised in this section, where Leda would rather perform fellatio on him than kiss his (infected) mouth, which also emphasises that even within the act of oral sex there is a hierarchy, and so Leda is less foul and infected than Nanneius.

The second section of the epigram describes Nanneius' abilities when performing oral sex with the only use of *tubus* with an anatomical meaning, and the section itself says that Nanneius' tongue is able to explore the vulva, vagina and uterus of those women he performs oral sex upon. The poem describes Nanneius' explorations as so detailed that he is able to determine the sex of the child if the woman is pregnant. However, his detailed explorations have infected him with something worse than *os impurum*, a disease so foul that Martial feels the need to be ambiguous about naming it in a poem where avoidance of obscenity does not seem to be an issue. The disease is so strong that Nanneius can no longer continue to perform oral sex as his tongue has become paralysed, the association of his tongue as his main sexual organ rather than his penis is emphasised here with a description that equates the effects of this disease with impotence. The view is usually that Nanneius has become infected due to the contact of his tongue with menstrual blood through the eating associations of *gulosam* in line 13 (though the poem, with the exception of Leda, only mentions him performing this act on pregnant women). That this was a practice thought to happen can be seen in Galen's revulsion for contact with menstrual blood and those who practice cunnilingus:

καί μείζόν γε ὄνειδος ἔστιν ἀθπονουντι σωφρονουτι κοπροφάγον ἀκούειν
ἢ αἰσχπουπγὸν ἢ κίναιδον. ἀλλὰ καί των αἰσχπουπγῶν μᾶλλον βδελυττόμεθα τοὺς
φοινικίζοντας τῶν λεσβιαζόντων, ὧι φαίνεται υοι παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχειν ὁ καί
καταμηγίου πίνων.

It is a bigger disgrace for a right-thinking man to be known as a

*coprophage than as a practicer of oral sex or a passive homosexual.
But of those who practice oral sex we condemn the cunnilingi more
than the fellators; I think the cunnilingus is similar to the man who
drinks menstrual blood.*

(12 p 249 Kühn)

Finally we have the common connection of *purus* with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*: Nanneius can not be seen as *purus* as he has been infected by not only *os impurum* but also this even worse disease, but he cannot be described as *impurus* as he is no longer able to perform cunnilingus as he is impotent.

The place of this poem in the theme is emphasised by the preceding and following epigrams; as noted above, the preceding epigram featured the character of Chione, while the following epigram, 11.62, features Lesbia, associated throughout the corpus with the theme through the use of the name for a prostitute who performs and/or receives oral sex.

After the explicit and complicated nature of 11.61, the theme continues in 11.66 in a poem which associates performing oral sex with other activities which are represented in the Martialverse as disreputable. Vacerra, a stock character name for someone who is stupid, is described as a political informer, a legal informer, an embezzler, a petty trader, a fellator, and a gladiatorial trainer, and yet is so stupid that he is unable to make any money out of these numerous activities.¹⁷¹ The catalogue effect of this poem is emphasised with the first three lines having a metrical equivalence, perhaps also suggesting the increasing disreputableness of the activities (which the model reader of Martial would expect given previous similar cataloguing epigrams in the series). Surprisingly, fellatio is not the worst of these practices, which one would expect given Martial's common emphasis of the activity through its final placing. Instead, the worst practice is that of being a gladiatorial trainer,

¹⁷¹For the association of the name with stupidity, see Suetonius *Augustus* 87.2. We can perhaps also see a later intertextual reference between Vacerra's jobs and the despicable wealth creation in Juvenal *Satires*.

a profession which seems to have been despised in Roman society despite their love of gladiatorial shows; indeed, Seneca uses the fact that gladiatorial trainers become wealthy to support his argument that wealth is a deterrent to achieving a good and moral life:

quod contemptissimo cuique contingere ac turpissimo potest, bonus non est.

opes autem et lenoni et lanistae contingunt. ergo non sunt bona.

*That which can fall to the lot of any man, no matter how despised
he may be, is not a good. But wealth falls to the lot of the pander and
the trainer of gladiators; therefore, wealth is not a good.*

Seneca *Epistles* 87.15.

After the previous epigram in the theme, the reader would expect that it would be cunilingus, not being a gladiatorial trainer, which could be the only thing worse than fellatio. However, the connection to gladiators, and by association athletic practice, leads in to the next poem in the theme, 11.72, which returns to the practice of ligaturing athletes' penises previously seen in 9.27, and it is this that links the idea of the athlete performing or receiving oral sex. The association of the sexual prowess of the *drauci* is contrasted with the child's descriptive term for a penis, *pipinna*, an adjective complementing *mentula*, which would have originally had the meaning 'small'.¹⁷² It is used here to create the joke that the pet name for this athlete's penis is completely wrong such that if his penis can be described as little, then Priapus, the god usually depicted as well endowed, should be described as castrated. As is becoming the pattern within this book, these two explicit epigrams are connected together for the reader with an implicit epigram (though the pattern has usually been implicit-explicit-implicit). The connecting poem here is 11.68 with its link to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* made clear through the character of Matho.

There is then a larger gap after 11.72 until the theme continues in 11.85. The epigram again uses the character of Zoilus, who by this point is synonymous with the theme of oral

¹⁷²Adams 1982: 217.

sex and *os impurum*. The humour in this poem comes from the fact that the cunnilingus (an idea coming from the use of *lingua* suggesting licking rather than sucking) is now forced to perform normal intercourse due to a sudden paralysis of his tongue. There is an obvious link back to Nanneius in 11.61, though the two characters inability to perform oral sex are due to opposing problems. Zoilus inability has a divine cause — the phrase *sidere percussa* follows the belief that the cause of paralysis was often thunderbolts from other planets — the implication being that his tongue is stuck, whereas Nanneius' tongue has become impotent.¹⁷³ The combination of these two poems also links directly back to the literary theme where the direction is for the reader to read the books with their eyes rather than their mouth, and these two poems that feature a non-moving tongue feed directly into the reader's awareness of the fact that they too are not moving their tongue or mouth.

The theme resumes in 11.90 with a poem which is not obviously part of the theme until the last line. The poem on the surface is a continuation of the concentration on literary topics within the twelve books, with Martial complaining that Chrestillus, a name similar to that of the character Chrestus seen in 7.55 and 9.27, does not like any of his poems because he does not write like the 'veteres...poetas' (*old poets*, 11.90.7), a point emphasised by the fact the beginning of the poem is a criticism of those who write in an archaising style. The punchline of the poem claims of Chrestillus, 'dispeream ni scis mentula quid sapiat' (*I'll be damned if you don't know the flavour of cock*, 11.90.8) which gives a dual meaning: firstly, following the theme of archaising style, the line suggests that Chrestillus prefers the virile style of the old poets (probably using a translation along the lines of 'I'll be damned if you don't know the virile flavour of their verse'); the second meaning is the one which suggests that Chrestillus is a fellator and that this is why he prefers the old poets (Kay claims that it is common for Martial to suggest a link between sexual abnormality

¹⁷³On the idea of paralysis being caused by thunderbolts from other planets, see Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 2.82, 2.191.

and an approval of old Rome).¹⁷⁴ The focus on the second meaning of this final line is emphasised by the following poem (11.91) where the cause of death of a young girl was a mutilating disease which infected her mouth before she died. Though there is no direct reference to this being caused by *os impurum*, previous descriptions of the infection, and the next poem featuring the character suggest that this is another linked group of three poems on the theme in the book.

11.95 continues this focus on *os impurum* and returns to the problems associated with the kisses of those who perform oral sex. Flaccus, a character seen previously in the book (though not explicitly linked with this theme), is told that when kissed by a fellator to imagine plunging his head in the bath. This poem is the first in a series of four clearly connected through bathing and intertextual Catullan references. In 11.95 the use of *basia* links with the kisses of 11.98 and the use of the character of Lesbia in 11.99, while the repeated use of the bathing *topos* in 11.96 (followed by 11.97 and its repetition of the number four) emphasises the links.

The importance of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within Book 11 is emphasised by the mention of Lupus in the final epigram which is clearly closural. In a short 4 line poem which Martial addresses to his twice-mentioned reader(s), he also comments on the length of the book as well as reluctantly refusing requests for more as he needs the money to pay Lupus, presumably a money-lender. The connection with the theme comes from the use of the name of Lupus, a name previously associated with the theme, as well as the obvious jest in the poem as the author-reader relationship in Martial's time was not one of direct financial transaction. This is rather a direct way of closing the book while still managing to emphasise the continuing importance of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* for the reader if the series.

¹⁷⁴Kay 1985: 252.

3.3.3 Book 10 — The Second Edition

Following Book 11 we come to the second edition of Book 10. Readers, or at least *some* readers, will already be familiar with a large number of the epigrams within the book, though it is almost impossible to tell which poems are from the first edition and whether they appear in the same order in the second edition as they did in the first. Therefore, it is probably best to take the book at face value as part of the corpus and a continuing of structured themes, rather than trying to reconstruct the original Book 10 from the book that we have. However, at the same time we cannot read this book without an awareness that there had been an earlier version which was different. This was presumably the case for many of Martial's ancient readers as well — like modern readers they will have been wondering throughout the book what has changed and why. This creates an inferential walk through the serial text, adding another layer of interest for the reader.¹⁷⁵

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* does not appear in Book 10 until 10.22, and shows the importance of the combination of themes through an intertextuality with Catullus, an aspect of whose style Martial has questioned in the preceding epigram (10.21). The Catullan influence is shown through the use of a scazonic metre, as well as the form of the poem — a question used to open the dialogue — which is common in Catullan poems and also Greek epigram.¹⁷⁶ The poem also echoes Catullus in the use of this form for an invective or satirical poem which is concerned with morality. The epigram also picks up where the last explicit poems in the theme in Book 11 left off with the *topos* of kissing. The addressee of the epigram is Philinis (or Philaenis depending which manuscript you follow), a name which has an obvious closeness to the female character of Philaenis associated with the theme throughout the preceding ten books.¹⁷⁷ However, while the character here is

¹⁷⁵On the idea of an inferential walk through a serial text see Eco 1995.

¹⁷⁶Catullus 30, 40, 88, 104.

¹⁷⁷There is some dispute on the sex of the character due to differing forms in the manuscript tradition. I am inclined to follow Francis and take the name as given in the γ manuscript (Francis 2006: 191).

almost certainly male, the poem continues the name's association with the theme through Martial's clear statement to Philinis, 'basiare te nolo' (*I don't want to kiss you*, 10.22.3). The reader is already expecting some reference to kissing given the similarity to the female Philaenis of previous books and the strong Catullan references leading up to this epigram as well as in the poem itself. The implication of the poem is that Philinis suffers from *os impurum* caused by performing oral sex, and Martial does not wish to become infected from Philinis kissing him.

The theme continues in 10.39, a poem which is more implicitly part of the theme and prepares the reader for a full continuation of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in the following epigram. 10.39 features Lesbia, a recurring character in the theme, and continues the strong Catullan intertextuality found previously in the book. 10.40 is the first of a group of poems in the book which involve the character of Polla and uses the theme of marriage. The epigram also features Lupus, seen particularly associated with the theme in books 7 and 11, as well as the association of oral sex and rumour (and thus its opposite, silence). The use of these associations strengthens the idea that the *cinaedus* that Martial catches Polla with is no *cinaedus* as Polla is fellating him (rather than the sodomy which might otherwise be expected). Shackleton Bailey has argued, following Housman, that this is not a reference to oral sex but heterosexual intercourse, an interpretation that might be strengthened with reference to the Greek prosimetric novel *Iolaus*, where a character learns how to pretend to be a *gallus* in order to gain access to married women. However, while the interpretation may be convincing based purely on the idea that this *cinaedus* is not what he seems, the additional associations of Lupus and rumour (and silence), as well as the preceding poem featuring the character of Lesbia, suggests that this poem *is* about fellatio.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸The association of the name of Lupus with silence comes not just from its apposition with rumour, but also the fact that there was a belief in ancient Italy that if a wolf saw a man before the man saw the wolf then the man would lose his voice (OLD 'Lupus' 2e).

Five poems later we have a group of epigrams with a similar structuring device to groups seen in Book 11 where an explicit poem within in the theme is framed by two implicitly related epigrams. 10.46 bridges this short break in the theme with the use of the character of Matho, first associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 7, and then the theme is used explicitly again in 10.52.

Thelyn viderat in toga spadonem.

damnata Numae dixit esse moecham.

Numa saw Thelys in an eunuch's gown.

He said he was a convicted adulteress.

In this epigram the eunuch Thelys is accused of being an adulteress because of his effeminate appearance, and the poem depends on the play of Thelys' name ('woman') and that women who were convicted of adultery had to wear the toga (as prostitutes did). Given that he is a eunuch, the only way he could have engaged in sex would have been through oral sex; even though the poem plays on the appearance of Thelys rather than a specific sexual act, the emphasis that he is a eunuch and a *moechus* would bring to mind oral sex. The closing poem of this group comes two poems later with the character of Olus, again a repeating character previously associated with the theme.

The performing of oral sex and effeminacy as seen in 10.52 continues in 10.65. Martial criticises the Greek Charmention by comparing him with the poet's own Spanish features, especially his hairiness and unkempt appearance.

cum te municipem Corinthiorum

iactes, Charmention, negante nullo,

cur frater tibi dicor, ex Hiberis

et Celtis genitus Tagique civis?

an vultu similes videmur esse?

tu flexa nitidus coma vagaris,
 Hispanis ego contumax capillis;
 levis dropace tu cotidiano,
 hirsutis ego cruribus genisque;
 os blaesum tibi debilisque lingua est,
 nobis filia fortius loquentur:
 tam dispar aquilae columba non est
 nec dorcas rigido fugax leoni.
 quare desine me vocare fratrem,
 ne te, Charmenion, vocem sororem.

*Since you boast yourself a fellow townsman of Corinthian bronzes
 with none to deny you, Charmenion, why do you call me brother, born
 as I am of Iberians and Celts, a countryman of Tagus? Is it that we look
 alike? You go around looking smart with your hair in curls, mine is
 stubborn and Spanish. You are smooth with daily depilatory, my shins and
 cheeks are hairy. Your mouth lisps and your tongue is feeble, while only Silia
 speak more loudly than I. A dove is not so different from an eagle or a
 fugitive doe from a stark lion. So stop calling me brother, Charmenion,
 in case I call you sister.*

The poem highlights the effeminacy of Charmenion with his styled hair and depilated body, something normally (at least normally in Martial) associated with *cinaedi*. This is further emphasised by the description of Charmenion's 'feeble tongue'. This focus on the tongue, especially in combination with the use of the negative with *negare*, changes the implication of Charmenion the *cinaedus* to Charmenion the fellator. This is further suggested by the connection to love elegy through the the use of name and animal similes, especially given that the dove is a common epithet in elegy because of its associations with kissing, as well

as being the bird of Venus and so typifying romantic love. This idea of kissing associated with the dove strengthens the connection between this epigram and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, especially in regards to fellatio, as Martial describes himself as the ‘rigidus leo’, using an adjective which has elsewhere referred to an erect penis (cf. 9.46). Finally the use of *frater* and *soror* suggest a sexual relationship between the two as the terms are often used to refer to one’s boyfriend and girlfriend, either for same-sex or male-female relationships. The connection with love elegy also provides a connection back to the other poems within the theme in this book, as well as the earlier Catullan-inspired cycle.

Ten poems later the theme is seen again in 10.75, featuring the character of Galla, another name which has previously been associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.¹⁷⁹ The epigram fits the pattern of poems featuring this character, in which the language is associated with willingness, demands, and rejections, and directly links back to 9.4, where Galla was paid an absurd price for her services, but mostly for her silence as to what those services were. The structure of the poem is also reminiscent of 8.71, where Postumianus’ gifts over the years steadily decreased. Here Galla slowly offers her services to Martial for less and less, until she offers herself for free; however, Martial declines. The use of *negare*, as well as the connection with the theme in Book 9, suggests that she is offering oral sex, which Martial seemingly does not want. The suggestion, given the use of *negare* and Galla’s previous role, is that she is asking Martial to perform cunnilingus, and, as would be expected given the tone taken against those who perform cunnilingus previously in the series, he refuses.¹⁸⁰

The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* ends in Book 10 with three closely connected poems: 10.92, 10.93, and 10.95. The first of the triad is also the final poem in the cycle of poems mentioning Polla, all of which are concerned with the subject of marriage and sexual

¹⁷⁹5.126, 9.4, 9.37, 9.78.

¹⁸⁰Perhaps Galla has misjudged her customer, thinking him more like Nanneius in 11.61. This reference produces different kinds of intratextuality depending on the reading order of the books by each individual reader.

misconduct (10.40, 10.69). In this poem there are two reasons given for Polla's inability to conceive: firstly that all the men in her house are eunuchs, and secondly that her husband is impotent. The poem echoes Polla's penchant for *cinaedi* in 10.40, and strengthens the suggestion that those in the household perform oral sex (though the implication in this poem is that the eunuchs perform cunnilingus on her rather than the fellatio suggested in 10.40). This also links into the strong Catullan intertextuality in regards to this theme within Book 10 with a household-of-perverts motif. Her husband's suggested impotence also links with the theme through previous associations.

The second of the closely situated poems within the theme is 10.93, where Martial sends out a newly prepared papyrus roll of his book to Sabina. Once again there is a combination of the literary theme with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and the obscene connection is emphasised when Martial claims that 'ut rosa delectat metitur quae pollice primo, / sic nova nec mento sordida charta iuvat' (*as a rose delights us freshly plucked, so pleases a new sheet unsoiled by the chin*, 10.93.5-6). The comparison of the new papyrus roll to a rose brings to mind the comparison of young boys and roses within the *Greek Anthology*, particularly the pederastic poems of Books 5 and 12.¹⁸¹ The phallic nature of the bookroll and the fact that it becomes soiled through the reading process when held under the chin, in combination with the pederastic relationships between young boys and the poets in the *Greek Anthology* and its placing within Martial's book, suggests concepts related to *os impurum*. The connection to the theme is emphasised by the blatantly Catullan connection through the book roll topos (Catullus 1).

The themes seen within 10.91 are again discussed in 10.95, the final poem in this small cycle and the last epigram on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 10. In this poem, both Galla's husband and her lover deny that they are the father of her child. The use of the name Galla immediately places this poem within the theme, and the suggestion

¹⁸¹On the comparison of young boys and roses, see Richlin 1992: 34-44.

is that neither her husband nor her lover can be the father of her child as they have not had vaginal intercourse with her — they have only engaged in oral sex. This is emphasised by the use of *nego* in the final line of the poem, connecting strongly with the previous poem featuring Galls in this book, where she was also denied.

3.3.4 Book 12

As in Book 10, the opening poem on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 12 is the twenty-second poem in the book. 12.22 features the character of Philaenis, and so, given the use of the name in the rest of the series, the poem encourages the reader to fill in the gaps between the pseudo-narrative of the poems explicitly part of the theme, even though the poem is not explicitly on the topic of oral sex. The first explicit poem in the book is 12.35 where Callistratus boasts that he has been sodomised on several occasions. However, the poet counters that the reason that Callistratus is so open about this sexual activity is to hide his even more abnormal ones — ‘nam quisquis narrat talia, plura tacet’ (*when a man tells such things, there are more he’s silent about*, 12.35.4). The implication here, emphasised by the use of *taceo*, is that Callistratus is trying to hide the fact that he performs oral sex.

The next poem in the theme is 12.38 which features a man who murmurs in women’s ears all day long; however, Martial says that Candidus should not be concerned that this man is having an affair with his wife as ‘non futuit’ (*he doesn’t fuck*, 10.38.6). The epigram is similar to ones in previous books where murmuring has been associated with the theme, whether with the person who performs oral sex murmuring in their partner’s ear, or through an association of a fellator or cunnilingus murmuring in someone’s ear and infecting them due to *os impurum*.¹⁸²

After a break of just one poem the theme continues in 12.40, in an epigram reminiscent

¹⁸²E.g. 3.17 and 5.61.

of previous epigrams where Martial has come up with excuses disreputable or disgusting activities, but cannot do so for oral sex. He Martial gives a list of Pontilianus' faults that he ignores, except for one which he remains silent about — 'taceo'. Given the proximity with 12.38 and the emphasis on silence and thus the juxtaposition of rumour (previously associated with murmuring) and silence, the suggestion is that this unspeakable vice is oral sex. This small cluster of explicit poems on the theme closes with 12.43, where Martial exclaims that Sabellus (previously mentioned in 12.39, an epigram which will then become linked with this theme by the reader) does not have the poetic skill to make up for the filth his poems contain — an ironic statement given the content of many of Martial's own poems and the small cluster this poem is itself part of. The main link with the theme again comes through the idea of silence; it is claimed that Sabellus describes acts which are 'praestent et taceant quid exoleti' (*what male prostitutes provide and keep quiet about*, 12.43.7).

The book continues the theme in two poems in close proximity, 12.52 and 12.54, which are not explicitly part of the theme, but feature the characters of Rufus and Zoilus, synonymous with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* since Books 2-3, and these prepare the reader for the next poem which is explicitly part of the theme, 12.55.

gratis qui dare vos iubet, puellae,
 insulsissimus improbissimusque est.
 gratis ne date, basiate gratis.
 hoc Aegele negat, hoc avara vendit.
 sed vendat : bene basiare quantum est !
 hoc vendit quoque nec levi rapina
 — aut libram petit illa Cosmiani
 aut binos quater a nova moneta — ,
 ne sint basia muta, ne maligna,

ne cluis aditum neget labellis.

humane tamen hoc facit, sed unum:

gratis quae dare basium recusat,

gratis lingere non recusat Aegle.

*Anyone who tells you to give for nothing, girls,
is an impudent jackass.*

Don't give for nothing, kiss for nothing.

Aegle refuses to do this, this the greedy girl sells.

But let her sell: a good kiss is a wonderful thing!

*She even sells — and not for a small amount but
asks for a pound of Cosmus' scent or eight fresh
gold pieces — her kisses not to be silent or grudging,
nor does she bar entrance with closed lips.*

But there's just one thing she is nice about:

*Aegle, who refuses to give a kiss for nothing,
does not refuse to lick for nothing.*

Aegle, a prostitute, does the opposite of what she should when she sells her kisses. The repetition of *basiare* provides Catullan links as well as suggesting from early in the poem that these are not innocent mouth-to-mouth kisses given the way Catullan intertextuality has been used in the previous books of the series. This is emphasised by the idea of silence ('muta', 12.55.9), oral sex again being described as the unspeakable act, which suggests that these kisses which she charges for are actually fellatio. The punchline is that she is happy to 'gratis lingere' (*lick for free*, 10.55.13), in other words that she will perform cunnilingus, described throughout the previous books as the more disgusting act, for free. There is also a meta-literary connection in this poem; by playing with previous opinions of cunnilingus and highlighting the silence, there is a joking suggestion that when the reader

has early reached the end of the twelve-book series Martial has changed his mind. Are we, as readers, now being told that actually silent reading is *not* the correct way for these books to be read and that we have done it wrong for the past eleven and half books? No. The model reader will realise this is Martial playing with the reader, creating doubt at the eleventh hour, but actually use this turnabout to emphasise how the books were meant to be read, and reminding the rereader to read silently to himself when he goes back to Book 1.

The Catullan intertextuality continues in the next epigram in the theme, 12.59, where Martial claims that the people of Rome give more kisses to the nameless addressee than Lesbia ever gave to Catullus. However, the joke is that the whole of Rome is infected with *os impurum* and so their kisses are unwelcome; the kisses are described as like those from a goat, from people who are ill, and finally explicitly from fellators and cunnilingi.

There is then a break of twelve poems until the theme resumes in 12.71. The poem plays on the connections previously made between oral sex and the use of verb *nego* — Lygdu now refuses Martial everything whereas in the past he would refuse Martial nothing, this change being explained as due to the fact in the past it was sexual favours, whereas now it is monetary ones. The theme continues in 12.74 and uses the character of Flaccus, previously associated with the theme in 11.95. Flaccus is planning on buying some expensive cups, but Martial suggests that he should also buy some cheap ones as they will be better when he has to destroy them. This advice, combined with the previous use of Flaccus in the theme and the idea in previous books that crockery can become infected with *os impurum*, makes clear that Flaccus performs oral sex and sures from *os impurum*.

12.79 sees the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* explicitly used again, and is a poem which makes abundantly clear Martial's use of *nego* throughout the previous eleven books and its meaning associated with oral sex:

donavi tibi multa quae rogasti;

donavi tibi plura quam rogasti:
 non cessas tamen usque me rogare.
 quisquis nil negat, Atticilla, fellat.

I have given you much that you have asked for.

I have given you more than you asked for.

Yet you go on and on asking me.

Whoever refuses nothing, Atticilla, sucks cock.

After a gap of five poems, the theme is seen in both 12.85 and 12.86 and brings the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* within the *Epigrams* to a close with the topoi of odour and impotence. In 12.85 Fabullus asserts that sodomites suffer from *os impurum*, to which Martial then asks if this is really the case, where do cunnilingi smell? The point of the poem is that while Fabullus claims that it is sodomy that causes *os impurum*, he is saying this to hide the fact that he has become infected due to performing oral sex, a common strategy in the books where a fellator or cunnilingus will admit to one deviant sexual act to hide the fact they are performing oral sex, the most deviant sexual act. 12.86 is an address to a nameless character who has sixty slave boys and girls and yet is impotent; obviously all that oral sex has yet to provide him with a cure.

3.4 It Sucks To Create A Series

By looking in depth at the way one theme appears throughout the twelve books, creating links between poems both within individual books and across the corpus, we can see the way in which Martial encourages the reader to see this as an interconnected series which need to be read as such. The use of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* combines with the instructions to the reader given through the literary theme that these books are to be read with the eyes and not the mouth. The combination creates its own model reader who

understands *how* to read the books and *what* they are reading; the concentration of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, especially in Books 2 and 3, encourages the reader to see this as a pseudo-narrative for the series, giving them a path to follow through the text.

The series also encourages rereading through this theme. As shown, one of the main ways Martial keeps his reader focused on the path is through the use of certain characters who become associated with the theme. As the reader gets further through the series they start to recognise the importance of these recurring characters, and also encourages them to return to earlier books in the series to see the links they missed on their first read through.

Chapter 4

Orality For The *Lector Studiosus*.

As already seen, there is a deliberate and structural intratextuality within the individual books of epigrams, where later poems often refer to earlier poems in the book. Additionally, the later poem often changes or clarifies the interpretation of the earlier one, inviting a rereading of the book as a whole. For the rereader, poems from later in individual books, or from subsequent books in the series, retrospectively activate ‘sleeper’ poems found earlier, where the rereader unpacks meanings which had lain dormant on a first-time reading. Additionally, later poems are retrospectively revealed as being the setup for earlier poems. One obvious example of this can be seen in Book 3 where the meaning of Chione’s first appearance in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is made clear with her second:

ut faciam breviora mones epigrammata Corde.

‘fac mihi quod Chione’: non potui brevius.

You tell me to make my epigrams shorter, Cordus.

‘Do for me what Chione does’: I can’t be briefer than that.

3.83

narrat te, Chione, rumor numquam esse fututam

atque nihil cunno purius esse tuo.

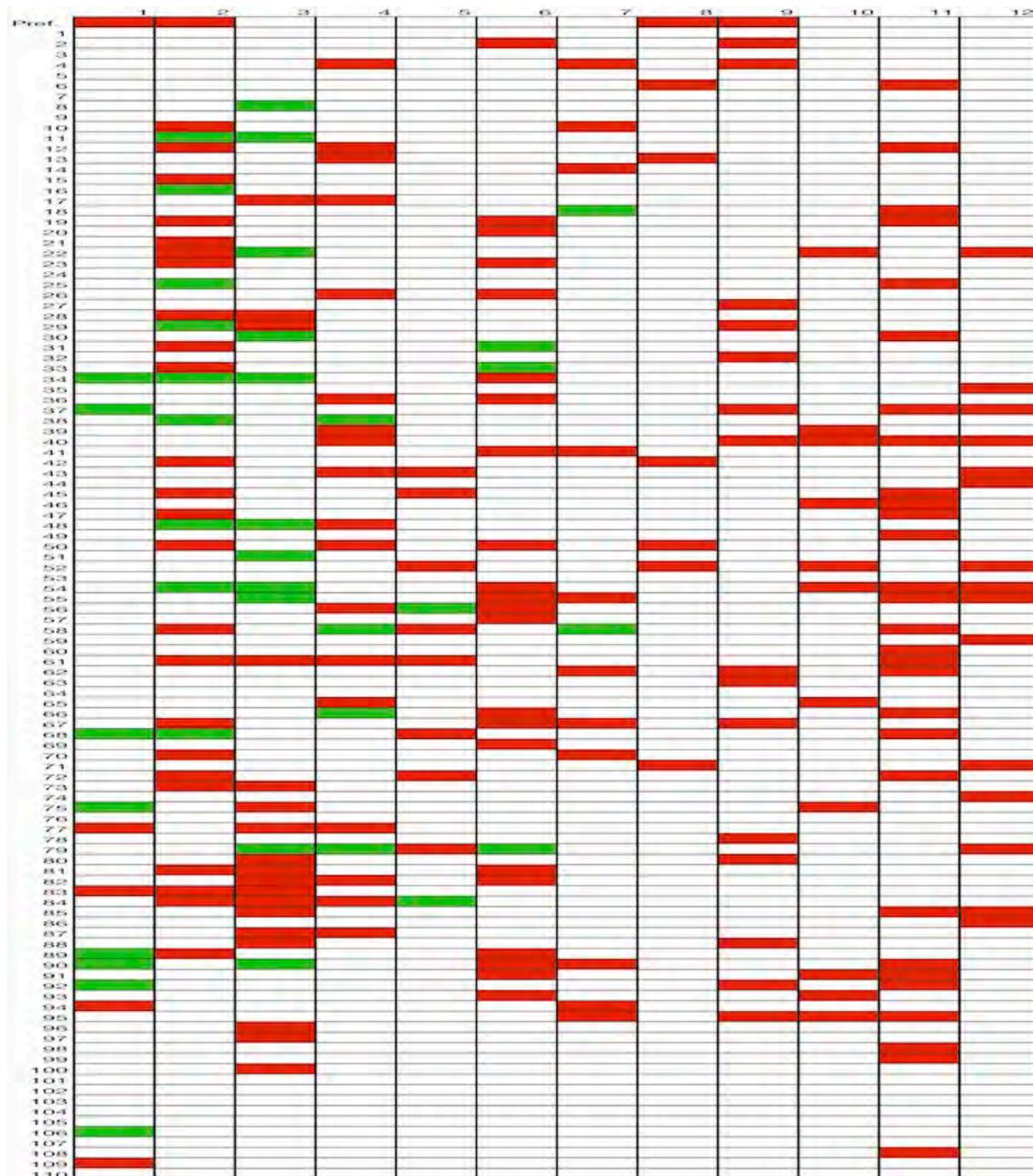


Figure 4.1: Poems in the theme of Oral Sex and *os impurum* on a First-Time Reading and Rereading of the *Epigrams*. The red boxes show the poems which are part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* for the first-time reader, while the green boxes are the poems retrospectively added to the theme for the rereader.

tecta tamen non hac, qua debes, parte lavaris:

si pudor est, transfer subligar in faciem.

*Rumour says that you, Chione, have never had sex with a man,
and that nothing is purer than you.*

Yet you bathe covered up, but not covering the right part.

If you have any decency, cover your face!

3.87

However, the *Epigrams* encourage rereading of the whole series, and one of the ways this can be seen is by focussing on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* as we reread the books. The act of rereading adds a further dimension to the theme within the *Epigrams*, as additional poems interact with the theme as a whole and become part of the theme due to links with epigrams in later books in the series.

One interesting aspect of the rereading of the *Epigrams* as a whole is the place of Book 10. If we accept that the version of Book 10 which has come down to us from antiquity is the second edition, then, as has been followed above, in a first-time reading of the series the order of the last three books is 11–10–12. However, when rereading, it would be expected that one would read the book numbered ‘10’ before the one numbered ‘11’.¹ While this does not change the interpretation of any of the poems within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, this change in reading order means that the reading experience is changed between the contemporary first-time reader and the later reader of the series, and between the first-time reader and rereader.

¹There are actually a number of possible reading orders for the first-time reader and rereader, most of which are dependent on whether the reader is contemporary with Martial or not. The four obvious sequential readings are:

9–10(first edition)–11–12

9–10(second edition)–11–10(first edition)–12

9–11–10(second edition)–12

9–10(second edition)–11–12

This chapter explores how the rereader's experience of the *Epigrams* changes and is enhanced by the way in which additional poems are added to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in the first six books of the series. The analysis shows how the most 'new' poems in the theme are found in the first three books, which is not surprising given that these act as the 'set-up' for the subsequent books, and how additional poems in the theme are added for the rereader up to the end of Book 6. The way these poems are added to the theme, and the way in which previously unassociated epigrams become part of the theme, shows how a reader's understanding and enjoyment can be enhanced by rereading the series.

4.1 Rereading Books 1-6

The rereading of the *Epigrams* adds many poems to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* for the model reader; these poems are not explicitly part of the theme and allow for a greater enjoyment on the part of the rereader, as the reader becomes a collaborator with Martial in 'dirtying' the corpus, creating new readings by filling in some of the gaps. This creates an even more comprehensive structuring of both the individual books and the series as a whole.² The main way in which additional epigrams are incorporated into these new readings, adding to those already explicitly part of the theme, is through the use of characters who, due to their repetitive association, have by later books become synonymous with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in the mind of the reader. This has been seen throughout the series in relation to characters from earlier books who were not associated with the theme on the first-time reading whose presence in later books within epigrams explicitly part of the theme invite a reevaluation of their role in those earlier poems.

However, on a rereading of the whole series, this effect is increased and epigrams are added to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* throughout the first six books. Through

²See Figure 4.1.

this retrospective addition of poems to the theme there is also an intellectual payoff for Martial's *lector studiosus*, which lies not just in 'recruiting' more poems into the theme, but also engaging with the hermeneutic challenge provided by the poet of deciding when to stop — will each additional reading add 'new' poems to the theme?³ Each reader has to decide when interpretation turns to over interpretation, and this may need to constantly re-negotiated as the *lector studiosus* works their way through the corpus.⁴

4.1.1 Books 1-3

On a rereading of Book 1, several epigrams can be identified as part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. Given that on a first-time reading the number of poems in the theme within the book is fairly small, this is not surprising. However, the epigrams added to the theme on rereading do suggest that, even if a twelve-book interconnected series was not planned from the start, later books purposefully used characters and ideas used in Book 1; later books were written with earlier books in mind, and rereading of the series was encouraged.

The first four epigrams which reveal themselves (or are retrospectively recruited by the reader) as part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 1 help to fill the gap caused on a first read-through between the preface and 1.77, the first explicit epigram on oral sex in the *Epigrams*. The first poem that becomes part of the theme is 1.34, addressed to Lesbia. After having read the twelve books of the *Epigrams* before, the use of this name in the first line will bring an immediate association to the reader. The name, insofar as we can separate the uses of character names, has been associated with the theme in two ways: firstly in the use of the Catullus and Lesbia relationship in poems in the theme, and secondly in the way in which the name has been linked with a prostitute who

³Related to this is Rimell's view of Martial as obsessed with numbers and metrics, to which she devotes a chapter in her most recent book, Rimell 2008:94-139.

⁴On the problems of interpretation and overinterpretation see Eco 1992.

engages in oral sex. The focus on sex in public reminds the reader of epigrams in the theme where characters practice deviant sexual behaviour openly in order to hide the fact that they actually carry out even more deviant practices (i.e. oral sex) in private. Finally, the use of the character of Chione further cements this epigram as part of the theme; Chione is a character formally introduced as part of the theme in Book 3, and provides a personification of the public/private aspect of the theme. This is achieved through the associations provided by the name presenting an image of purity, yet the practices she must engage in to have been associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* suggest that she is not as pure in private as her public persona would suggest.

Following a familiar pattern with gaps in the theme, Two poems later in 1.37 the rereader finds another poem which they will associate with this theme, though they would not have on a first read-through the book. The association here is made through the use of the name of Bassa, who later in the series is an often used name for a prostitute who performs oral sex, as well as featuring in poems about the associated smells.⁵

In 1.68 there is the first appearance of Rufus, a character increasingly associated with the theme throughout Books 2 and 3. Here he is to be found to be so besotted with a girl, Naevia, that even when writing to his father he begins as though he were addressing her with lover's endearments. The fourth poem associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* the reader on rereading encounters before the explicit 1.77 is 1.75. The placing will remind the reader that what they thought of as the first poem on this topic on a first-time reading is coming up, as well as continuing to emphasise the interconnectedness of these books. This is achieved through the use of the character of Linus, who is first associated with the theme explicitly in Book 7 (7.10). Further associations with the theme can be seen through the focus on *dimidium*, and the later play on the use of this word when referring to the kisses the poet receives from Postumus (2.10). The two poems originally

⁵Bassa also appears in 1.90, 4.4, 4.61, 4.87, 5.45, and 6.69.

associated with the theme on the first-time read-through follow on from this (1.77 and 1.83), and then the gap between 1.83 and the next explicit poem in the theme, 1.94, is now connected through two poems which have become associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* through the rereading of the series. The two poems are set against each other, each featuring characters used elsewhere in the theme and featuring different aspects of the theme. 1.89 uses the topos of chattering:

garris in aurem semper omnibus, Cinna,
 garrire et illud teste quod licet turba.
 rides in aurem, quereris, arguis, ploras,
 cantas in aurem, iudicas, taces, clamas,
 aedoque penitus sedit hic tibi morbus,
 ut saepe in aurem, Cinna, Caesarem laudes.

*You are always chattering in everybody's ear,
 Cinna, even what could safely be chattered in front
 of a crowd. You laugh in an ear, complain, accuse, weep;
 you sing in an ear, judge, keep silent, shout.
 And so deep-seated is this sickness of yours, Cinna,
 that you often praise Caesar in an ear.*

Chattering is used in later books in association with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, especially with people becoming ‘infected’ by someone who engages in oral sex chattering in their ear.⁶ This is followed by another epigram featuring Bassa (1.90), who is this time portrayed as a lesbian whom the poet chastises: ‘inter se geminos audes committere cunnos mentiturque virum prodigiosa Venus’ (*you dare to join two cunts and your monstrous clitoris feigns masculinity*, 1.90.7-8). The final poem to be added to the theme for the

⁶For example, 2.70, 3.28, 5.61, 7.62.

rereader in this book is 1.106, and connects with 1.68 as it features both Rufus and Naevia again.

Book 2 contains the largest number of epigrams in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and a large number of these are apparent on a first read-through of the series (though not necessarily on the first-time read of the individual book, as seen with, for example, the Postumus cycle). However, there are still a number of poems within Book 2 which may not be seen as part of the theme on the reader's first read-through of the series, and again these include, to a large extent, the use of characters later explicitly linked with the theme as a way of adding to the overall impact for the reader. Between the first two epigrams of the Postumus cycle (and, after the preface, the next two epigrams on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*), there is an epigram addressed to Rufus. The connection between Rufus and the theme in this part of the book is emphasised by 2.9 which features the character of Naevia; the connection of Rufus and Naevia was shown in Book 1, and for the rereader of the series, who knows of the later associations between Rufus and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and has just reread Book 1 (and so 1.68 and 1.106), these four poems take on a significance which they would not have had when first encountered.

A similar effect is produced by the two 'new' epigrams in the theme which appear between 2.15 and 2.21; between the effects of *os impurum* in 2.15 and the poet's refusal of Postumus' kisses in 2.21 there are two epigrams addressed to Zoilus. The character of Zoilus becomes associated explicitly with this theme in the course of this book and through Book 3, but there are additional aspects of these two epigrams which will remind the rereader of the importance of the name within the theme, as well as the general importance of the theme for the structuring of Book 2. This is seen especially in 2.16 and Zoilus' bedsheets, one set of which are described as having a foul smell — 'Sidone tinctus olenti' (*dyed with stinking Sidonian purple*, 1.3); the smell associated with the dyeing process for inferior

purple cloth is associated with this theme in later epigrams.⁷ The connection of the theme in 2.19 with the *cena* brings a further dimension to the way the *Epigrams* are read and, as I will show in the following chapter, the appearance of dining and food leads the reader to anticipate either some combination of this with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, or for the to be a connected poem nearby.

Another poem is added to the theme for the rereader in 2.25. Here we have an epigram featuring Galla, a character who becomes particularly associated with the theme in Book 9, as well as the use of the verb *nego* which is used throughout the twelve books in association with oral sex.⁸ The ‘new’ epigram is further connected with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* through the linking of 2.25 and 2.28, the next epigram in the theme and one which was apparent as so for the first-time reader.⁹ By featuring Naevia in 2.26 and Selius in 2.27, characters both associated with Rufus, there is a progression from the two epigrams in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. The structure of the book leads the reader to understand the importance of each of the epigrams in the theme, as well as highlighting the need to read the poems in the ‘gaps’, aiding and enhancing the understanding and enjoyment of the books. This is further emphasised through the addressing of 2.29 to Rufus. After the two explicit epigrams on the topic of fellatio seen in 2.31 and 2.33, Galla makes a reappearance in 2.34.¹⁰ The use of the name Phileros continues the cycle of 2.33-36 which present a series of names beginning in P- and Ph-, and invective directed against women provides a continuation from the preceding poem.

The next poem within the theme in this book is also one which would only be apparent to someone who has already read the twelve-book series. On first reading this seems to just

⁷See 4.4 and 9.62. Inferior purple cloth was that which had only been dyed once in the incredibly smelly dye produced by leaving molluscs in vats to decompose in the sun. The most prized shad of purple cloth was one which had been dyed once in this indigo concoction, and then dyed again in the purple-red dye produced by a different type of marine snail.

⁸For example, 3.61, 6.66, 10.95, 12.71, 12.79.

⁹See discussion on pp. 80-81.

¹⁰On 2.31 and 2.33 see pp. 81-82.

be a couplet offering an ironic commentary on the stereotype of the annoying friend and is juxtaposed with 2.39 which is a similar satirical poem but with a female adulteress.¹¹ However, for the reader who has already worked their way through the entirety of the *Epigrams*, the poem takes on a secondary purpose within the book. The use of the character of Linus, who is explicitly linked with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 7, keeps the use of this theme in the rereader's mind, bridging the gap between the more explicit poems in the theme at this point in the book. After 2.47, the character of Rufus is used again in 2.48; the juxtaposition with an explicit poem in the theme emphasises his importance in the theme, which is further seen through the topos of bathing in 2.48, one which is used extensively in many of the explicit poems.¹²

Another poem which holds a secondary meaning for the rereader is 2.54. The poem is only the second satirical epigram on marital relations in the twelve-book series.¹³

quid de te, Line, suspicetur uxor
 et qua parte velit pudiciorem,
 certis indiciis satis probavit,
 custodem tibi quae dedit spadonem.
 nil nasutius hac maligniusque.

*What your wife suspects about you, Linus,
 and in which part she wants you to be more modest,
 she has proved enough by certain signs¹⁴:
 she has given you a eunuch to guard you.
 She is as sharp and malicious as they come.*

¹¹Cf. Williams 2004: 141-144.

¹²For example, 2.70, 3.87, 6.26, 6.42, 6.53, 6.68, 6.81, 11.95, and 11.96.

¹³This theme can also be seen in 1.73, 4.69, 8.12, 8.35, 8.43, 9.15, 9.78, 9.80, 10.16, 10.41, 10.43, 10.63, 11.23, 11.71, 12.91, 12.96, and 12.97.

¹⁴Or has been proved by a *rereading* of the series and Linus' association with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in later books.

The wife suspects that her husband is in fact a *pathicus* and so, in a reversal of the usual practice of eunuchs acting as guardians of wives, sets a castrated slave to watch over him. The added joke for the rereader is the name given to the character of the husband, Linus, and the associations the rereader will have. In later books the name is associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, and so the reader will realise that the wife has actually got it wrong — Linus likes to be irrumated, not sodomised.¹⁵ The use of the castrated *custos* means that he will not be able to engage in this practice. The poem shows particularly clearly the way in which the rereader of the series is able to derive additional meanings from earlier epigrams — whether that was the author’s ‘intent’ or not, the associations are in the text.

The final addition to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 2 is 2.68 and features the character of Olus, who is first associated explicitly with the theme in 7.10. However, given the concentration on the importance of odours, the name of this particular character gives an obvious link to the overall theme within the series. The rereader will also find a large number of poems in Book 3 which become part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* after already having read the entire series through. The difference with Book 3 is the way in which they bring a focus back on the theme in a way that is absent from the cycle as seen by the first-time reader.

For the rereader, the first appearance of the theme in Book 3 appears nine poems earlier than it would on a first-time read-through, in 3.8.

Thaida Quintus amat. ‘quam Thaida?’ Thaida luscam.

unam oculum Thais non habet, ille duos.

Quintus loves Thais. ‘Which Thais?’ One-eyed Thais.

Thais lacks one eye, he lacks both.

¹⁵For other appearances of this character see pp. 125-128 (7.10), 133-135 (7.95), 155 (11.25) and 184-185 (1.68).

This short epigram interacts with the theme in two ways: firstly through the use of the character of Thais, a name commonly given to a prostitute associated with oral sex later in the series, and secondly through the description of her as ‘Thaida luscam’ (*one-eyed Thais*, 1.1). This provides a direct link back to the description of Philaenis as ‘lusca’ (*one-eyed*, 2.33). The rereader sees yet another poem added to the theme in Book 3 in 3.11. This is the complement to 3.8, featuring once again Thais and Quintus.

si tua nec Thais nec lusca est, Quinte, puella,
 cur in te factum distichon esse putas?
 sed simile est aliquid: pro Laide Thaida dixi.
 dic mihi, quid simile est Thais et Hermione?
 tu tamen es Quintus: mutemus nomen amantis:
 si non vult Quintus, Thaida Sextus amat.

*If your girl is neither Thais nor one-eyed, Quintus,
 why do you think my couplet was aimed at you?
 But there is something similar: I said Thais instead of Laïs.
 Tell me, what is similar between Thais and Hermione?
 However, you are Quintus. Let us change the lover's name:
 if Quintus does not want to, Sextus loves Thais.*

Just three poems after the first Quintus/Thais epigram we have what is styled as a reply to comments the poet has received about 3.8. Obviously this is a literary construct — how can Quintus have commented on 3.8 *and* Martial constructed a reply by 3.11? It is in 3.11 that Martial explains some of the significance of 3.8, as well as continuing the topos of secrecy when it comes to oral sex. The poem creates a series of reasons why 3.8 did not actually refer to *that* Quintus, nor his girl. However, the way that the final couplet is formulated allows for an alternative interpretation concerning Quintus' activities. This

comes in part from the two names used, Quintus and Sextus, this latter character being particularly significant for the rereader who has come fresh from a sequential first-time reading of Books 1-12.¹⁶ While common Roman names, the connection and progression in the names ('number five' and 'number six'), and the connection of the name of Thais with a prostitute, means that this can also be read as 'if Quintus doesn't want Thais' services, then the next man will'. The underlying meaning for the rereader is that Quintus has been paying Thais for oral sex but doesn't wish his girl, Hermione, to know. The use of a Greek name for this other girl allows for the possibility that she too is a prostitute who would refuse Quintus if she knew what he had done with others.

The next poem which may not have been seen as part of the theme on a first reading, but will be by the rereader, is 3.22. The place of the poem in the theme is apparent to the rereader of the individual book as well as the series, as it features the character of Apicius who plays a role in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in the cycle at the end of Book 3. This connection is further emphasised through the focus on his mouth as he swallows the poison. Further intratextuality is seen in 3.30, where there is again a link to the cycle at the end of the book. The poem features Chione and a character called Gargilianus; Gargilianus is also seen in Book 4 in 4.56, and the name is extremely similar to that of one used within the cycle at the end of Book 3, Gargilius (3.96).

Chione appears again at 3.34, in a poem which emphasises for the rereader the part she takes in the theme. The epigram explains that her name both describes her but also does not.

digna tuo cur indignaque nomine, dicam.

frigida es et nigra es: non es et es Chione.

I'll tell you why your name does and doesn't suit you.

¹⁶The reader will be reminded of the similarity in name between the characters of Sextus, Sextilianus, and Sextilius. See previous chapter and Appendix A.

You are cold and dusky. You are, and are not, Chione.

The name ‘Chione’ has allusions to purity as it is derived from χιών, meaning ‘snow’, and Martial says ‘frigida es et nigra es’ (*you are cold and dusky*, 3.34.2); the suggestion is that Chione refuses the poet in some way, but also does not live up to the purity suggested by her name. Further, she *is not* Chione because of her dark skin, but at the same time she *is* Chione by being sexually ‘cold’ towards the poet. The allusion to refusal also links in with the theme in the way the word *nego* has been used in connection with the practice of fellatio.

In the middle of this section separating the two parts of the theme as observed by the first-time reader, the rereader again sees the additional use of the theme through the character of Olus in 3.48.¹⁷ This type of association continues in 3.51 and 3.54 with the use of the character of Galla again.¹⁸ A similar use of the name of a character which will later be associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is seen at the beginning of the main cycle in 3.79. First-time readers will have already seen 3.75 and 3.77 as part of the theme, but will then think there is a gap until 3.80. The rereader will see the interconnectedness of this cycle of poems at the end of the book in the way in which the name Sertorius in 3.79 connects the theme in this book to Book 7, specifically 7.10, as well as introducing a group of five juxtaposed epigrams which are explicitly part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.

The final addition to the theme in Book 3 for the rereader is 3.90, with the character of Galla appearing once again and providing a continuation from the explicitness of 3.87 and 3.88 to the reappearance of Rufus (who has by now been explicitly linked with the theme) in 3.94.¹⁹

¹⁷On the character of Olus see pp. 101-102 (4.36), 126-128 (7.4), 171 (10.58), and 189 (2.68).

¹⁸Also seen in 2.25, 2.34, 3.90, 4.38, 4.58, 5.84, 7.18, 7.58, 9.4, 9.37, 9.78, 10.75, 10.95, and 11.19.

¹⁹See pp. 95ff.

4.1.2 Books 4-6

From Book 4 onwards the number of ‘new’ epigrams incorporated by the rereader into their reading of the theme in the series decreases dramatically; this is because Books 2 and 3 are the two books in which Martial sets up the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, with large numbers of both explicit and implicit poems on the theme. Books 2 and 3 are also where the characters which are continually associated with the theme are, for the main part, introduced to the reader.

Four additional epigrams become part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* for the rereader in Book 4 — 4.38, 4.58, 4.66, and 4.79. The first two of these use the character of Galla, who has a much larger role in the theme for the rereader than the first-time reader of the *Epigrams*. The first of these, 4.38, may have been noticed by the attentive first-time reader through the repetitive use of *nego*, though the full significance of its place in the theme would have been missed. The second ‘new’ epigram in the theme, 4.58, simply uses the character name again as a way of emphasising to the reader the place of the theme in the structural unity of the book (and series), reminding us of the character’s later role and participation in the theme. The other two ‘new’ poems introduced in Book 4 use characters which were originally placed with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in Book 7, with Linus in 4.66 and Matho in 4.79.

Only two epigrams in Book 5 are incorporated into the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* on the rereading of the series. Like the majority of those in Book 4, 5.56 simply uses the name of a character which later in the series becomes explicitly linked with the theme, here with the character of Lupus. The second, 5.84, and the final epigram in the book, uses the character of Galla again, in a poem which for the rereader is the only time which the poet suggests that he himself might perform fellatio.

iam tristis nucibus puer relictus

clamoso revocatur a magistro,
 et blando male proditus fritillo,
 arcana modo raptus e popina,
 aedilem rogat udus aleator.
 Saturnalia transiere tota,
 nec munuscula parva, nec minora
 misisti mihi, Galla, quam solebas.
 sane sic abeat meus December:
 scis certe, puto, vestra iam venire
 Saturnalia, Martias Kalendas;
 tunc reddam tibi, Galla, quod dedisti.

*Now the schoolboy sadly leaves his nuts, recalled by the shouting master,
 and the drunken gambler, betrayed by an all too alluring dice box and just
 hauled out of a secret tavern, is pleading with the aedile. The Saturnalia are
 over and done with, and you sent me no small presents, Galla, not even
 smaller ones than you used to send. Ok then, so pass away my December.
 I think you know that your Saturnalia are coming soon, the Kalends of
 March. Then I'll return to you, Galla, what you gave me.*

The poem is set around a Saturnalian theme, with the poet complaining that he received no presents from her. Given the association of Galla with the theme in the series, this accusation could be read as Galla not performing fellatio on the poet the one time he asked for it. The poem goes on to say that on the Kalends of March, the date when presents were given to women, he shall give her what she gave him. In the context of present giving, this implies that she too will receive nothing. However, the combination of the Saturnalian theme, a day when traditional rules are reversed, and the idea of giving and receiving, provides an undertone to this poem suggesting that had Galla had given

the poet what he wanted, he would have reciprocated.

Book 6 is the final book which adds new epigrams into the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* for the rereader of the series; on rereading Book 7's structural role as indicating the half-way mark of the series shown by the introduction of new characters explicitly associated with the theme, and the realisation that previous poems featuring them can be incorporated differently into their readings of the poems, individual books, and series as a whole. There are only three epigrams in Book 6 which are added to the theme for the rereader, the first two of which are explicitly obscene but only implicitly imply their place within the theme through the characters who are now retrospectively associated with it. In 6.31 this is Charidemus, who at this point in Book 6 is not associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, but will be by the end of the book (and so encompasses both the rereader of the individual book and the series in the way reading and understanding of the poems change).²⁰ 6.33 is addressed to Matho and 6.79, while not obscene, is addressed to the character of Lupus.²¹

4.2 The reader, the rereader and the theme.

From the very beginning of the series, Martial indicates that there are two readers of his work, the first-time reader, and the *lector studiosus* (1.1.4). In terms of reader-response, these are our naive and model readers, where the model reader is the *rereader*, not just of the individual books, but of the series as a whole. By rereading the *Epigrams*, the reader is drawn further into the Martialverse, understanding in greater detail the way in which themes are used and are interconnected, and the way in which these themes create a kind of narrative which leads them through the series. The main way this is done, as shown by

²⁰Charidemus is explicitly linked with the theme in 6.56 and 6.82. See previous chapter.

²¹For previous appearances of these characters linked with the theme for the first-time reader, see previous chapter and Appendix A.

the example of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, is through the use of characters who appear in both explicit and implicit poems in the theme. However, one of the main ways in which rereading is encouraged is that these characters often appear in implicit poems before they are explicitly linked with a theme. This is especially true for those characters who are not explicitly linked with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* until Book 7 or later, emphasised by the ‘mock-epic’ split in the series (Books 1-6 and Books 7-12), whereby new characters are explicitly linked with the theme from the start of Book 7 and it is only on a rereading that one appreciates their use in the first half of the *Epigrams*. It is for this reason that there are no new epigrams to be incorporated into the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* for the rereader in the second half of the series — by the start of Book 7 recurring characters within the first six books have either been linked explicitly with the theme such that their reappearance in the second half of the series automatically links those poems with the theme, or are explicitly linked with the series on their appearance from Book 7 onwards such that the rereader recognises this link when they return to the beginning of the series.

Through the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, Martial creates a highly recognisable topic for the reader and rereader, one which helps to structure the books and creates a path for them to follow.²² However, the theme is not just a structural device, but also serves as an important part of Martial’s instructions to his reading community about when and how to read his books. The focus on the mouth necessarily brought about by this theme continually reminds the reader of what they are *not* (or should not be) using to read the *Epigrams*; a constant reminder that they are not using their mouth to read, that their mouth is not moving and their voice is silent. The obscene nature of the theme also provides a slight link to the traditional place of reception for the Greek epigram, the symposium. While the symposium was an all-male affair in terms of invited guests, it was

²²As suggested earlier, an inferential walk. Cf. Eco 1995.

common for prostitutes to attend and offer their services to the guests. So, while guests were listening to others recite epigrams, they may also have been receiving oral sex — or, at least, this is the implication through the Roman narrative of ‘decadent’ Greeks, probably not helped by the kind of images found on ancient Greek pots which were commonly used at the symposium.²³ It is this link to the symposium which brings in a third theme used to lead the reader through the books as well as provide a constant reminder of where and how, and when and how *not*, the reader is reading these books — epigrams related to the symposium, to food and drink and dining.

²³Luxury and moral decline are intimately linked in elite Roman thought, and more often than not, it is the importation of luxury from elsewhere which is blamed by Roman moralists’, Evans 2011: 1. On the erotic images found on Greek pots and vases, see Clarke 1998.

Chapter 5

The Subversion of the Symposium

Ceremonial eating and drinking are a conspicuous feature of ancient society... Large or small, these displays of commensality or collective consumption carried significance well beyond the nutritional function of the meal that was consumed.¹

Commensality was an important feature of Roman society. The main Roman meal of the day, the *cena*, was taken in the late afternoon/evening and could take various forms, from a solitary meal for one, to a banquet for up to a hundred people.² Dining with friends and dependents was an established social institution, held in the domestic dining room (*triclinium*), where the host and up to nine guests would dine together as well as watch and listen to various entertainments.

The importance of dining is shown through the way it pervades much of Roman literature, as it did in Greek, but these literary (and visual) representations also highlight the differences between Greek and Roman dining practices.

¹Garnsey 1999: 128.

²Bradley 1998: 37.

5.0.1 Greek and Roman Dinner-Parties



Figure 5.1: Pompeii, House of the Chaste Lovers. Fresco depicting two couple reclining on couches. (Photo from www.pompeiiinpictures.com)

The Greek symposium was less about food and more about drinking, conversation, and entertainment. It was the stage of the banquet after the eating, and a male-only environment, at least in terms of the guests.³ Entertainments at this male-only drinking party included recitations, music, dancing, conversation and sex. Food, dining and sex had close connections within the Greek symposium. Many of the vessels used depicted scenes of a sexual nature.⁴ Even if these were not echoed in reality at the symposium, there was obviously some kind of sexual atmosphere, and perhaps a relaxed sexual licence. While women were not a part of the formal symposium, prostitutes (of both genders) might

³We can perhaps loosely compare this to Victorian dinner parties where the men would retire to a different room from the women for after-dinner liqueur and cigars.

⁴See Clarke 1998 for some examples and also on the issue of problematising the equation of depicted scenes with behaviour.

have been provided by the host or other guests for the participants' enjoyment.⁵ The combination of this literary and sexual atmosphere adds weight to Cameron's argument that non-inscriptional Greek epigram was a performative genre, and that this performance happened at the symposium.⁶ Nisbet follows this line, arguing that while it may not be right to label all Greek epigram as 'symptotic', the skoptic epigrams, especially those of Book 11, contain topics and a general jokey theme which makes them an obvious fit for the atmosphere of the symposium.⁷

The *cena* or *convivium* was the Roman cultural equivalent of the Greek symposium, and there were many continuities between the two. However, there were also significant differences. The Roman *cena* was actually a dinner-party, rather than just the after-dinner entertainment, with food as an important part of the cultural institution; and both women and men attended these functions. The dinner-party was still a place for literary recitation and sexual licence, a relaxed atmosphere after the business of the day.

Ancient literature and visual arts paint a vivid picture of how classical antiquity ate, drank, and partied; as a consequence, much of the evidence scholars have used for the Greek symposium and the Roman dinner-party come from literary sources, such as Plato, Xenophon and Plutarch for Greek symposia, and Cicero, Seneca, Pliny and Tacitus for Roman *convivia*. However, if we step back from this material we must realise that while there seems to have been a cultural change from the symposium to the *convivium* or *cena*. This may well be due to a change in symptotic literature rather than necessarily a change in actual practices.⁸ We should probably approach these within a literary world — looking at the differences between the *literary cena* and the *literary* symposium, rather than trying to extrapolate from these literary texts to the 'reality' of ancient dining practices.

For the link between food and sex within a literary dinner-party, an obvious place to

⁵On the Greek symposium, see Henderson 2000.

⁶Cameron 1995.

⁷Nisbet 2003: 19-35.

⁸As has been argued convincingly by Garnsey 1990: 136.

look is Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, a sprawling multi-book work which covers in intricate detail the literary Greek symposium as imagined by an author within the Second Sophistic. Of particular interest in terms of the links between food and sex is Book 13, where it is bluntly shown that 'woman is but one of the categories of objects to be enjoyed at the symposium.'⁹ However, while this provides a link between sex and food at the symposium, food metaphors related to sex were nothing new and can be seen throughout Greek and Roman literature.¹⁰

As Gowers has noted, there is often an 'analogy between food and literature itself...the Greeks and Romans could describe the whole process of creating, presenting, and consuming a literary text in alimentary terms.'¹¹ As with sex, metaphors related to food were often used to describe aspects of literary production and consumption, and the discourse of recitation at dinner-parties encourages this link between the two, a link which Martial seems to relish subverting.

5.1 Catullus 13

Before looking at the way in which Martial uses dinner parties and food within the *Epigrams*, and specifically how this theme interacts with the two themes already explored, it is important to look at Martial's predecessors. Catullus is obviously a major influence for Martial, not only as a writer of Latin epigram, but through the intertextual references which can be seen throughout the *Epigrams*. When looking at the interaction of food and reading and oral sex, Catullus 13 is an obvious place to start.

Cenabis bene, mi Fabulle, apud me

paucis, si tibi di favent, diebus,

⁹Henry 2000: 504.

¹⁰For Greek food metaphors, cf. Henderson 1991: 47-48, 60-61, 142-144, 174, 177-78. For Latin sexual metaphors, cf. Adams 1982, especially on eating metaphors pp.138-141.

¹¹Gowers 1993: 29, 41.

si tecum attuleris bonam atque magnam
 cenam, non sine candida puella
 et vino et sale et omnibus cachinnis.
 Haec si, inquam, attuleris, venuste noster,
 cenabis bene; nam tui Catulli
 plenus sacculus est aranearum.
 Sed contra accipies meros amores,
 seu quid suavius elegantiusve est:
 nam unguentum dabo, quod meae puellae
 donarunt Veneres Cupidinesque;
 quod tu cum olfacies, deos rogabis
 totum ut te faciant, Fabulle, nasum.

*My dear Fabullus, you will dine well at my house
 in a few days if the gods favour you,
 and if you bring with you a great and good dinner,
 not without a pure girl
 and wine and salt and all the jokes.
 If you bring these, I say, our charming one,
 you will dine well—for your Catullus's
 purse is full of cobwebs.*

*But in return you will receive pure love
 or that which is sweeter and more elegant:
 for I will give perfume, which the Loves
 and Charms gave to my girl,
 and when you smell it, you will ask the gods
 that they make you, oh Fabullus, all nose.*

Poem 13 seems to be part of the invitational genre, a simple invitation from Catullus to share an evening meal with him.¹² The more one reads, however, the more obvious it becomes that this is far from a normal dinner invitation. For a start, it is a paradoxical invitation: while Fabullus is invited to Catullus' for dinner, it is the guest who must provide the food and the entertainment. In fact, the only thing which the host says he will provide is his own company, the company of his mistress, and some perfume. It has been speculated that Catullus' lack of generosity is because we are meant to understand that Fabullus has invited himself to dinner; Cicero uses the same formulation of 'cenabo apud te' to describe a situation where someone invites himself/herself to dinner at a friend's house, and Quinn supports this kind of interpretation, claiming that the opening lines 'read more like a procrastination than an invitation' (*R1*).¹³ Fordyce, on the other hand, argues that the poem was written to welcome Fabullus' return to Rome from Spain, contrasting Catullus' modest wealth with the fortune with which Fabullus would be returning (*R2*).¹⁴ To a large extent, trying to discuss the 'real world' behind the poem is as fruitless as it is with Martial. A more rewarding interpretation investigates what else is going on in the poem, looking deeper and discovering, as Buchheit pointed out, that the fictional situations created in Catullus' poetry often conceal a more important intent.¹⁵ Looking more closely at Poem 13 reveals an interesting combination of themes, one which is especially important when considering what Martial does with these same (or extremely similar) three themes.

Just like his later imitator, Catullus manages to combine several readings within his small poems, and part of the problem with the scholarly discourse on Catullus 13 is the inability of some scholars to see the potential for multiple, simultaneous readings, instead pushing hard for the 'one true reading' they have chosen. Of course, this is not the case for

¹²On Roman invitation poems and the differences between literary and real-life invitations, see Gowers 1993: 220ff.

¹³Cicero *de Or.* 2.246. Quinn 1973. Cf. Thomson 2003: 242.

¹⁴Fordyce 1961.

¹⁵Buchheit 1975. We can perhaps see this interpretation as effectively arguing for a 'Catullusverse'.

all, but is a pattern which tends to obscure the sheer *complicatedness* of Catullus' poems.¹⁶

Metaphorical readings are the place where the brilliance of Poem 13 shines through, starting with a message to his intended audience (*R3*). In this reading the focus is on the way the poem can be seen as a metaphorical direction to the reader, an invitation to enjoy these witty, simple and elegant poems. Bernstein has explored this reading in particular, and shows how throughout the poem there are metaphors related to poetic style, which, he argues, 'fit into a cohesive program which could easily describe Catullus' poetry: plain, witty, and amorous.'¹⁷

A more controversial reading was proposed by Littman in the late 1970s, who argued that rather than reading *unguentum* literally as perfume, as the majority of commentators do, we should remove our prudish blinkers and see it for what it really refers to — 'Lesbia's vaginal secretions which sexual excitement causes to flow' (*R4*).¹⁸ Further, Littman sees this as a reference to oral sex through the idea that Fabullus 'will become all nose', and that the contemporary reader of Catullus (and especially the later reader who has also read Martial) 'more familiar with and open about cunnilingus and fellatio would readily interpret the poem in this way.'¹⁹ Hallett added to this discussion the following year, arguing that the ointment was in fact a tube of lubricant 'which has aided anal congress with his *puella*', but the reasoning behind this interpretation does not hold up and seems an unlikely reading.²⁰

Littman's reading of Catullus 13 was widely criticised, with Witke forming twelve arguments against the interpretation of Littman (and Hallett), while Richlin said that the pervading attitude towards oral sex in Latin literature was one of disgust, and given that

¹⁶Gowers 1993 is notable for her understanding of the interaction and interweaving of different themes in this poem, see especially p. 242, while Nappa 1998 wants to attempt this kind of interpretation but draws back from a fully interconnectedness of readings.

¹⁷Bernstein 1985: 128-129.

¹⁸Littman 1977: 123.

¹⁹Littman 1977: 123-124.

²⁰Hallett 1978: 748.

Catullus barely mentions cunnilingus anywhere else in his corpus, she argued that this meant that the ointment and the image which concludes the poem should be read literally rather than having any undertones of oral sex.²¹ However, as Gowers has pointed out, Witke's criticism in particular 'underplays the specifically *sexual* associations of perfume.'²² As noted previously in the introduction to Chapter 2, perfume and smells often had sexual connotations in ancient literature, and it is not a stretch to continue that association with Catullus 13.

The final reading (*R5*) to consider concerns the common link between food and sex,

‘the “maculate” genres of comedy, satire, and epigram [which] stimulate the atmosphere of licence, candour and obscenity found in their social equivalents, the dinner-party and the festival.’²³

Gowers argues that the connections between food and sex found elsewhere in Catullus mean that the opening words can be read as an invitation for sex as well as an invitation to dinner, and that the setting of the dinner-party reinforces this idea. The poem becomes an instruction to the reader on how to enjoy the full possibilities of Catullus' poetry; the reader must be a pleasure-seeker, a person who happily indulges in the opening catalogue of wine, women, wit and laughter.

5.1.1 *R1 + R2 + R3 + R4 + R5 = Martial?*

As we have already seen, Martial makes use of interconnected themes to lead his (re)reader through the text, promoting a way of (re)reading and highlighting the type of (re)reader one needs to be to appreciate his text to the full. The theme of food and dining completes this pseudo-narrative we have followed through his literary theme and that of oral sex

²¹Witke 1980; Richlin 1983: 249n18.

²²Gowers 1993: 236.

²³Gowers 1993: 239.

and *os impurum*, and just as the reader of Catullus anticipates a sexual theme when presented with the image of food and dining, so the reader of Martial sees this as part of the programmatic instruction to the reader.

This idea becomes even more clear if we think of Catullus and Martial in terms of retroactive intertextuality, an idea made clear by T. S. Eliot and explored by later scholars in depth.²⁴ Indeed, it is this approach that Hallett used for her analysis of Catullus 13, reading the poem in light of Martial 3.12. However, the analysis fails due to an over-sexualisation and cultural misreading of Martial's poem, and leads to an unconvincing interpretation of the use for the Catullus' ointment. Rather than reading one poem in light of another, I suggest that Martial's combination of food, oral sex, and literary themes as a way of creating a pseudo-narrative and programmatic instruction for the reader makes clear the multiple readings within Catullus 13. The varied readings outlined above can be seen to combine, such that simultaneously we can see these three key themes of Martial within one Catullan poem. This combination and retroactive intertextuality also serves to support Littman's assertion that the type of sex alluded to in Catullus 13 is oral sex (or, becomes so after Martial intertextually references it) — the combination of perfume, Fabullus's nose and Lesbia's sexual secretions suggest that Catullus is offering his guest the opportunity to perform cunnilingus on his mistress. But why would he offer something which is so often treated with disgust, especially in Martial? The answer to this comes from *R1* with its intertextual links to Cicero and thus the argument that Fabullus has invited himself to dinner. The poem, therefore, becomes a biting invective — Fabullus may come to dinner, but he will have to bring everything with him, and Catullus will make sure he is suitably punished for inflicting his presence. We see here a link between oral sex and punishment, a common feature of the use of the theme in Martial, and one which would be obvious to the reader of Martial's *Epigrams*.

²⁴Eliot 1919. See especially Edmunds 2001: 159ff.

5.1.2 Catullus and Martial

In Catullus 13 we have an invitation poem which combines the three key themes Martial uses to direct his reader: reading and writing, oral sex, and food and dining. The use of the sub-genre of invitational poems in Catullus 13 is also used by Martial, and serves to highlight the importance of food and dining in his pseudo-narrative. This is highlighted by the three invitational poems within the *Epigrams*, and the way the three themes are used to create obvious clusters, or cycles, of poems, stressing the importance of orality to the corpus as a whole. In the next section these three clusters will be explored to show how the reader of Martial is constantly reminded of the importance of orality (and/or lack of orality) in the *Epigrams*, and how these clusters are therefore intertextually (or retroactively intertextually) connected in the mind of the reader with Catullus, and especially Catullus 13.

5.2 Invitation Poems, Reading, Oral Sex and Food.

5.2.1 Invitation Poem One: 5.78.

The first epigram of Martial which can be definitively placed in the invitational sub-genre is 5.78. The cycle starts with 5.76 and a reference to one of the Roman Republic's most successful enemies — Mithridates VI, king of Pontus and Armenia Minor. After the death of his father, Mithridates is said to have lived in the wilderness for seven years, and during this time, and after his accession, he cultivated an immunity to poisons by ingesting small doses of them. He is also said to have invented a universal antidote to poisons, versions of which are described by Aulus Cornelius Celsus and Pliny the Elder.²⁵ Martial then moves to use this as a comparison for Cinna, who in the same way has cultivated an immunity

²⁵*De Medicina* 5.23.3; Pliny *Natural History*. See also the recent colourful biography of Mithridates by Mayor 2009.



Figure 5.2: The cycle involving the three themes based around the invitational poem, 5.78.

to dying of hunger by dining badly (i.e. he eats small amounts of food). The link between two of the themes, oral sex and *os impurum* and food and dining, is highlighted through the character of Cinna, previously seen as part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in 1.89 and 3.61.

This is followed by 5.77, a short two-line epigram sandwiched between two poems on the theme of food and dining.

narratur belle quidam dixisse, Marulle,
qui te ferre oleum dixit in auricula.

*Someone is said to have made a nice comment, Marullus:
he said that you carry oil in your ear.*

Shackleton Bailey notes that the epigram is accusing Marullus of being a flatterer, a man who will say pleasant and complementary things to whatever he hears.²⁶ However, the continuing focus on the ear, given Cinna's appearance in the previous poem and his association with 'chattering' in 1.89, means that a different reading is possible.²⁷ Moreover, the use of oil in the poem, often associated with smells and perfumes (as well as the unguent

²⁶Shackleton Bailey 1993: 418-419nc.

²⁷On Cinna and 'chattering' see previous chapter's discussion of 1.89.

of Lesbia in Catullus 13) used to hide the stench caused by *os impurum*, provides a further link to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.²⁸ The juxtaposition of this poem with 5.76 emphasises this link with the theme as, while it focuses on the theme of food and dining, it has an implied link to the oral sex theme through the character of Cinna.

We then come to the first of Martial's invitational poems.

si tristi domicenio laboras,
 Torani, potes esurire mecum.
 non deerunt tibi, si soles προπίνειν
 viles Cappadocae gravesque porri,
 divisis cybium latebit ovis.
 ponetur digitis tenendus unctis
 nigra coliculus uirens patella,
 argentem modo qui reliquit hortum,
 et pultem niueam premens botellus,
 et pallens faba cum rubente lardo.
 mensae munera si uoles secundae,
 marcentes tibi porrigentur uuae
 et nomen pira quae ferunt Syrorum,
 et quas docta Neapolis creauit,
 lento castaneae uapore tostae:
 uinum tu facies bonum bibendo.
 Post haec omnia forte si mouebit
 Bacchus quam solet esuritionem,
 succurrent tibi nobiles oliuae,

²⁸This connection to the oral sex theme through oil, and also the character of *Olus*, is discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Picens modo quas tulere rami,
 et feruens cicer et tepens lupinus.
 Parua est cenula—quis potest negare?—
 Sed finges nihil audiesue fictum
 et uoltu placidus tuo recumbes;
 nec crassum dominus leget uolumen
 nec de Gadibus improbis puellae
 uibrabunt sine fine prurientes
 lasciuos docili tremore lumbos;
 sed quod nec graue sit nec infacetum,
 parui tibia Condylī sonabit.
 Haec est cenula. Claudiam sequeris.
 Quam nobis cupis esse tu priorem?

If you are troubled by the prospect of a cheerless dinner at home, Toranius, you may fare modestly with me. You will not lack, if you are accustomed to an appetizer, cheap Cappadocian lettuces and strong-smelling leeks; a piece of tunny will lie hid in sliced eggs. There will be served — to be handled with scorched fingers — on a black-ware dish light green broccoli, which has just left the cool garden, and a sausage lying on white pease-pudding, and pale beans with ruddy bacon. If you wish for what a dessert can give, grapes past their prime shall be offered you, and pears that bear the name of Syrian, and chestnuts which learned Naples has grown, roasted in a slow heat; the wine you will make good by drinking it. After all this spread, if—as may be—Bacchus rouses a usual appetite, choice olives which Picenian branches have but lately borne will relieve you, and hot chick-peas and warm lupines. My poor dinner is a small one —

who can deny it? — but you will say no word insincere nor hear one, and, wearing your natural face, will recline at ease; nor will your host read a bulky volume, nor will girls from wanton Gades with endless prurience swing lascivious loins in practiced writings; but the pipe of little Condylus shall play something not too solemn nor unlively. Such is your little dinner. You will follow Claudia. What girl do you desire to meet before me?

That the first invitation poem is delayed until Book 5 may seem surprising, but by this point the way the three themes are being used in combination is known to the reader (and is a major way of interpreting the series for the rereader), and so the placing of the invitational poem within this cycle is appreciated more and the linking of the three themes makes it more powerful. Martial invokes a Catullan framework in this epigram through its ‘urbane gestures of apology’, while the *varietas* of Martial’s own books is echoed through the variety on offer in the meal, the good and bad elements combined in the same way Martial claims that any bad poems in his books are redeemed by the good ones.²⁹ However, while this is poem is part of the genre of invitational poems, it has clear links to the previous two poems in this cycle with its sexual thematic and references to aspects of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in previous books. The link between food and sex is obvious in this poem; the rejection of the solitary dinner encourages the reading of innuendo and double entendres into many of the dishes described — this is not the simple peasant dinner a surface reading may suggest. It is instead a statement near the end of the book, after the reader has read the tongue-in-cheek *apologiae* to matrons and children as well as seeing the Saturnalian references, which indicate the continuation of the sexual themes. It also emphasises that these epigrams are *not* being recited at a symposium-like dinner-party, instead the reader is silently reading alone *about* a dinner-party.

To turn to the sexual innuendos contained within the description of the dishes, as well as

²⁹Gowers 1993: 250.

containing general sexual themes, there are also subtle links to topoi which have appeared within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* throughout the series. The phallic metaphor of *coliculus* (broccoli or maybe just ‘cabbage stalk’), which is *virens*, becomes more sexual to the reader when they are invited to handle it, and so the next dish is suggestive with the sausage which presses onto the porridge.³⁰ The description of the porridge as ‘niveus’, meaning white but also with an implication of purity, links back to Chione and particularly her role in Book 3. The third dish, ‘pallens faba cum rubente lardo’, emphasises the link to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* through the description of the beans as ‘pale’, a common symptom of *os impurum* being a pale face, combined with the blush of the bacon from seeing this sexual meal unfold.

The second course continues the variety of this sexual *cena*, with fruits and nuts and wine. However, there will be no recitation at this *cenula*, nor will girls be provided to complement the sexual nature of the meal. How then will this sexual tension be released, and how will Toranius repay Martial for this meal? The answer is given in line 22, before the reader is told that there will be no readings or whores, hidden away in a throwaway question — ‘parva est cenula, — quis potest negare?’ — Toranius will pay by performing oral sex. This makes the question at the end of the poem even more poignant — who will Toranius invite to see his shame?

The links in the invitation poem to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* are emphasised through the appearance of Zoilus in the following poem, a character synonymous with the theme.³¹ 5.79 heightens the link between these two themes as it also focuses on food and dinner-parties. The final link between the themes in this cycle formed around the Catullan invitational poem is seen in 5.80 which focuses on the reading and writing of Martial’s epigrams. The poem reminds the reader that while they have been reading of

³⁰*Premere* is often used by Martial to describes male sexual embraces, e.g. 3.58, 4.4, 12.96. On *coliculus*, see Adams 1982: 26.

³¹See Appendix A for Zoilus’ appearances in the twelve-book series, and especially Chapter 3.2.2.

dinner-parties and focusing on orality, they are actually reading this book themselves, not hearing a recitation nor enjoying a social *convivium*.

5.2.2 Invitation Poem Two: 10.48.

The second epigram of Martial in the invitational sub-genre is 10.48, and again there is a carefully constructed cycle of epigrams around the invitation which highlights the combination and importance of the three themes we have focused on. This time, the cycle



Figure 5.3: The cycle involving the three themes based around the invitational poem, 10.48

focused around an invitational poem immediately makes clear the connection between two of the main themes as it combines a literary topic with food metaphors. In 10.45 Martial once again provides a defence of his poetry, this time against someone who just wants to skip to the satirical poems and not bother with any of the the others.

si quid lene mei dicunt et dulce libelli,
 si quid honorificum pagina blanda sonat,
 hoc tu pingue putas et costam rodere mavis,
 ilia Laurentis cum tibi demus apri.

Vaticana bibas, si delectaris aceto:

non facit ad stomachum nostra lagona tuum.

*If my little books say something smooth and sweet,
 if a flattering page has a complimentary sound to it,
 you think this a greasy meal and prefer to gnaw on
 a rib when I serve loin of Laurentine boar.
 Drink Vatican wine if you like vinegar;
 my flagon doesn't suit your stomach.*

The defence emphasises the programmatic reading method which is partly by necessity (reading the book on a book roll), but also suggested as the best way to read the *Epigrams* — reading each poem in the order it appears in the individual book and reading (and rereading) the books of the series in order. That this appears in Book 10 causes some problems due to this being a second edition; however, it shows that this was not a simple cut and paste job but that the book was still carefully constructed, an example of this being this cycle of which the epigram is the first poem. The use of food metaphors to describe different types of literature is fairly common in Martial's predecessors, and here it is used to defend the variety in his work, both in style but also quality.³² This *varietas* was important in the previous cycle, and is being set up as an important component of the way the three themes combine within the *Epigrams* — the variety inherent in a combination of three major themes combines to give something greater than its constituent parts for the model reader.

The anonymous addressee of this poem claims that the non-satirical epigrams Martial writes are 'pinguis', the fatty part of the meat, and a metaphor for literature which is turgid.³³ There is also a weak link with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* through the image of the addressee preferring a bone to chew on like a dog — the extremely careful reader may be reminded of Manneius' dog in 1.83 and the pair this poem formed with the

³²Bramble 1972: 42-59.

³³Cf. 1.107; Horace *Sat.* 2.2.21. *OLD* s.v. 1b.

Catullan inspired 1.109. The addressee of the poem is finally dismissed by Martial who claims that his criticisms are baseless as he has low taste. Again a culinary metaphor is used to describe this; Vatican wine is not mentioned outside of Martial, but he describes it elsewhere as cheap, nasty and vinegary.³⁴ The metaphor here shows that the addressee of the poem is not able to digest the complicated themes and variety of Martial's books, emphasised by the use of 'stomachum' within its chiasmic phrase.

This defence of variety and its importance in books of poetry is continued in the following epigram, 10.46. The poem looks back to Book 7, firstly through the use of the character of Matho, associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* in that book, and secondly as it is a response to, or a continuation of, 7.90 which also addressed Matho, as he had criticised the unevenness of Martial's book.³⁵ In this epigram Martial confirms the links for the reader between the literary theme and the oral sex and *os impurum* nexus. The juxtaposition with 10.45 with its similar topos and use of food metaphors brings together these three themes and stresses their importance when used in combination, a use which is emphasised by the the next poem in the cycle — the invitation epigram of 10.48.

nuntiat octavam Phariae sua turba iuvencae,
 et pilata redit iamque subitque cohors.
 temperat haec thermas, nimios prior hora vapores
 halat, et immodico sexta Nerone calet.
 Stella, Nepos, Cani, Cerialis, Flacce, venitis?
 septem sigma capit, sex summus, adde Lupum.
 exoneraturas ventrem mihi vilica malvas
 attulit et varias quas habet hortus opes.
 in quibus est lactuca sedens et tonsile porrum,

³⁴1.18, 6.92, 12.48.

³⁵For previous discussion of 7.90 see p. 62.

nec deest ructatrix mentha nec herba salax;
 secta coronabunt rutatos ova lacertos
 et madidum thynni de sale sumen erit.
 gustus in his; una ponetur cenula mensa:
 haedus inhumani raptus ab ore lupi,
 et quae non egeant ferro structoris ofellae
 et faba fabrorum prototomique rudes;
 pullus ad haec cenisque tribus iam perna superstes
 addetur. saturis mitia poma dabo,
 de Nomentana vinum sine faece lagona,
 quae bis Frontino consule trima fuit.
 accedent sine felle ioci nec mane timenda
 libertas et nil quod tacuisse velis:
 de prasino conviva menus Scorpoque loquantur,
 nec faciant quemquam pocula nostra reum.

*Her votaries announce the eighth hour to the Pharian heifer
 and the pike-carrying cohort return to camp as another comes on duty.
 This hour cooks the warm baths, the one before pants out immoderate
 heat, and the sixth hour glows with Nero's excess.
 Stella, Nepos, Canius, Cerialis, Flaccus, are you coming?
 The sigma takes seven, we are six, so add Lupus.
 The bailiff's wife has brought me mallows to soothe the stomach
 and the garden's various wealth.
 There is sessile lettuce, clipped leeks,
 belching mint is not to seek nor the salacious herb.
 Slices of egg will top rue-flavoured mackerel*

and there will be a sow's udder wet from tunny's brine.
So much for the starters. The little dinner will be served in one course:
a kid, snatched from the jaws of a savage wolf,
and morsels requiring no carver's knife
and workmen's beans and early greens.
To these add a chicken and a ham that have already survived three
dinner. When my guests have had enough,
I will offer ripe fruit and leesless wine from a Nomentan flagon
six years old in Frontinus' consulship.
Additionally, there will be jokes free of malice, frank speech which gives no
fear the next day, nothing you would wish you hadn't said.
Let my guest speak of Scorpis and the Green,
let my cups get no man put on trial.

This time, rather than an invitation to one person, Martial invites a crowd of people to dinner, implicitly characterised as contemporary poets and patrons.³⁶ The invitation continues the idea of variety seen in the previous two poems in the cycle as it is 'a series of jokes on the theme of excess and distortions of scale.'³⁷ The variety of the food described matches the *varietas* encouraged previously in the cycle, as does the choice of guests.

Again we see the way in which the three themes are combined, enhancing the active reader's understanding and enjoyment of this poem, the cycle, the book, and the series as a whole. The literary theme is brought to the forefront through the choice of guests and the way in which literary ideas are seen throughout the epigram. This is contrasted with the fact that the reader is *reading* about this literary dinner-party within a cycle about poems and food, and in an epigram where despite the poets in attendance the

³⁶Cf. Gowers 1993: 255; Francis 2006.

³⁷Gowers 1993: 256.

suggested dinner conversation is chariot-racing (10.48.23-24). The theme of oral sex and *os impurum* also makes an appearance through the character of Lupus, a name which was first associated explicitly with the theme in Book 7, in the same poem in which Matho, who has also appeared in the previous poem of the cycle, was first associated with the theme.³⁸ The sexual atmosphere of the epigram is again emphasised through the menu, such as the *herba salax* (rocket), which was noted for its aphrodisiac properties, properties enhanced by the use of the adjective *salax*, which often is used to describe excessive sexual behaviour.³⁹ There is also an oblique reference back to Greek epigrammatic tradition and the association of Greek epigram and the symposium. This is through the complicated alphabetic and arithmetical games within the epigram, which may remind the reader of isopephic Greek epigrams, such as the alleged graffito quoted by Suetonius:

νεόψηφρον: Νέρων ἰδίαν μητέρα ἀπέκτεινε

A calculation new. Nero his mother slew.

Suetonius *Life of Nero*, 39.2.

The trick to this line comes from the way in which numbers were assigned to the letters of the Greek alphabet, such that the numerical value of Νέρων and the numerical value of ἰδίαν μητέρα ἀπέκτεινε are the same.⁴⁰ Thus the ‘new’ calculation is a proof that Nero committed matricide.⁴¹

The cycle continues in the following poem, 10.49, continuing the food and dining theme, and presenting a contrast with the simplicity of the meal in the previous poem with the luxury and extravagance of Cotta’s amethyst and gold cups combined with the stinginess shown because of the undrinkable wine he serves.

³⁸7.10.

³⁹Gowers 1993:259.

⁴⁰The numerical value of Νέρων (Nero) is 1005, which is the same value as ἰδίαν μητέρα ἀπέκτεινε (he killed his own mother).

⁴¹For further examples of isopephy in Greek epigrams, cf. Page 1981: 504-5, 508-10.

The final two poems in this cycle make explicit the implicit links between the three themes shown previously in the cycle with two epigrams which feature the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. In 10.52, the eunuch Thelys is accused of being an adulteress because of his effeminate appearance, and the poem depends on the play of Thelys' name ('woman') and that women who were convicted of adultery had to wear the toga (as prostitutes did). Given that he is a eunuch, the only way he could have engaged in sex would have been through oral sex; even though the poem plays on the appearance of Thelys rather than a specific sexual act, the emphasis that he is a eunuch and a *moechus* would bring to mind oral sex. The closing poem of this cycle, 10.54, comes two poems later with the character of Olus, again a repeating character previously associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.

5.2.3 Invitation Poem Three: 11.52.

The third epigram in the series which is part of the invitational sub-genre is 11.52. Again, a cycle of poems around this reminds the reader of the way in which the three themes combine within the series as well as providing a focus on the traditional orality of epigram, contrasted with the lack of it for the reader of the *Epigrams*. The cycle in Book 11 is framed on either side by epigrams which combine both the literary and food themes. 11.42 features the character of Caecilianus: he has frequent appearances throughout the series, but this is the only one where he is associated with one of these three themes.⁴² It has been suggested that either Caecilianus has commissioned some poems or is asking for Martial to deliver/write an impromptu piece.⁴³ This relies on the *libelli* view of the construction of Martial's books if taken literally, though it works within the literary world of the Martialverse. If we take it this way, the poem embodies many previously seen topoi

⁴²The character Caecilianus also appears in 1.20, 2.37, 2.71, 2.78, 4.51, 6.5, 6.35, 6.88, 7.59, 8.67.

⁴³Kay 1985: 160.

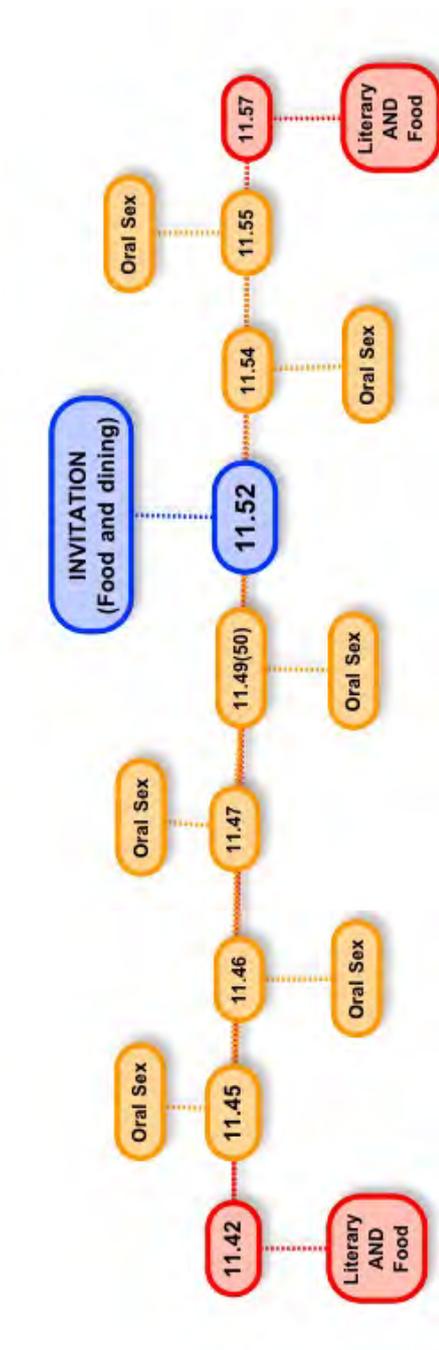


Figure 5.4: The cycle involving the three themes based around the invitational poem, 11.52.

and interacts with the later invitational poem through a variety of literary references.

vivida cum poscas epigrammata, mortua ponis
 lemmata. qui fieri, Caeciliane, potest?
 mella iubes Hyblaea tibi vel Hymettia nasci,
 et thyma Cecropiae Corscia ponis api!

*You call for lively epigrams, but propose themes
 of death. How is it to be done, Caecilianus?*

*You demand Hyblaeian or Hymettian honey be produced
 for you, and propose Corsican thyme to the Cecropian bee.*

The naive reading presents Martial as declining Caecilianus' request for an epigram as the themes he suggests are not of high enough quality for the poems Martial would compose. The food references are used as metaphors for the quality of the poems: Martial's epigrams are compared to the superior Hyblaeian honey, while the themes Caecilianus' suggests are compared to the inferior Corsican honey.⁴⁴ There is also an obvious reference to Vergil's *Georgics* 4 and the multiple references to bees and honey within that book, reminding the reader of the literary nature of the object they are holding and its skilful intertextuality, compared to the less skilful poems he might have composed for Caecilianus.⁴⁵ However, there is a further interaction with the theme of food and dining if we take this request as being for an impromptu recitation. This interpretation is emphasised by the reference to Greek epigram, and its traditional reception at the symposium, through the dual meaning of *mortuum* — 'mortua lemmata' can be read as themes of death, but also in reference to a dead style of epigram, here meaning the *Greek* style, both in form but also in its method of reception. Further, *lemmata* can refer not only to the topic, but also literally

⁴⁴We can read this as referring to the subject-matter as well: Martial is a good 'bee', but he only makes good 'honey' if Caecilianus gives him good 'flowers' to work with.

⁴⁵Cf. Haarhoff 1960.

its title or heading in the papyrus column. Greek-epigram books, as seen with the Milan Posidippus papyrus, had titles for each of the poems.⁴⁶ This implies that the individual poem is the unit of the symposium, whereas for Martial's reading scenario it is the book. We can, therefore, imagine a situation where, in the Martialverse, the poet declines to recite epigrams at a symposium-like dinner party because the 'new' Latin epigrams are not to be received in that way.

Before we come to the invitation poem, there is a cluster of four poems which are part of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* — 11.45, 11.46, 11.47, and 11.49(50). These poems have been discussed in a previous chapter, but it is worth noting how the references to crossing the threshold and bathing in 11.45 and 11.47 anticipate the dinner-party of 11.52, though in reverse order, as guests would bathe before crossing the threshold of their host's home and attending the dinner-party.

The next poem in this cycle is the invitation poem, 11.52. It is different again from the previous two invitation poems in that it combines two of the features of the previous invitations as it is to a single guest (as in 5.78), and from a poet to a poet (as with some of the guests in 10.48). The reverse order of bathing and crossing the threshold seen within the previous cluster of poems in the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* preceding this invitation poem are directly referenced through the suggestion that Martial and his guest will be able to bathe nearby before dining — 'lavabimur una: scis quam sint Stephani balnea iuncta mihi' (*we'll bathe together: you know how near I am to Stephanus' baths*, 11.52,3-4).⁴⁷

From the first line, the poem reminds the reader of the importance of the links between the cycles in Books 5, 10, and 11, and Catullus 13, opening as it does with 'cenabis belle', echoing Catullus' opening of Poem 13 and also showing the ironic nature of this epigram

⁴⁶Bastianini *et al.* 2001.

⁴⁷See also the reference to bathing before dinner in 10.48.3-4.

with the use of ‘belle’.⁴⁸ There are further links back to the previous invitation poem: the addressee, Cerealis, is very similar to Cerialis, one of the characters in 10.48; Martial will be ready for his guest at the eighth hour (‘octavam poteris servare’) in 11.52, and also in 10.48 (‘nuntiat octavam Phariae sua turba iuvencae’).

The literary link comes through particularly strongly with the multiple themes linking food and papyrus. One of these is the cliché, and an inescapably Catullan cliché, of the fate of failed poems to end up as fish-wrapping (i.e. papers used to wrap take-away food or used for cooking). This is complemented by the descriptions of the food Martial will offer his guest which is typical of take-away food such as lettuce, eggs and sardines, the discreetly covered *cordyla* linking directly back to this cliché.⁴⁹ Aspects of the feast are lifted from previous Latin poets: the variety of dishes involving eggs which echoes Ovid’s feast for Baucis and Philemon, the cheese combines pastoral ideas from Ovid and Virgil, while the limits on the appetisers echo Horace and Vergil.⁵⁰ As the poem comes closer to the end of the meal Martial reveals himself more clearly in that this food he is promising is not real, it is merely an invention on paper (paper that will later be used to wrap up a take-away meal) — we have a literary invention within the literary invention of the Martialverse, a meta-fictional *mise-en-scène*. The final section of the poem refers to the entertainment which will be provided at this imaginary meal. Appropriately, the entertainments will be provided by the guest rather than the host; Martial will not read any of *his* poems, but says he will listen to Cerealis recite his own mythological epic. Given Martial’s distaste for this genre elsewhere in the *Epigrams*, this adds to the ironically counterfeited nature of this dinner. The poem ends with another reference to Vergil, emphasising the epic nature of Martial’s books and the way in which the three themes aid the reader in their understanding and interpretation of this epigrammatic epic. Martial suggests that should Cerealis not wish to

⁴⁸Gowers 1993: 264.

⁴⁹In 12.19 Martial lists these as foods typically sold at the baths.

⁵⁰Ovid *Met.* 8.667; Ovid *Met.* 8.666, Vergil *Ecl.* 1.81; Horace *Sat.* 1.1, Vergil *Ecl.* 1.

recite from his epic, he can choose instead his pastoral poems, which, Martial obsequiously adds, ‘aeterno proxima Vergilio’ (*rank next to immortal Vergil*, 11.52.19).

The two poems following the invitational epigram, 11.54 and 11.55, return to the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. Both of these poems are implicitly part of the theme as they use characters associated with the theme rather than explicitly mentioning oral sex. However, the references to unguents in 11.54 echo Catullus 13, as well as providing a link back to the invitation through the idea of smells — the smell of food and the smell of perfumes both being pleasant, though one could also read this as the reverse with take-away food not smelling pleasant and the smell of *os impurum* which perfumes are often used to hide.

The final poem in this final invitational cycle, 11.57, returns to the themes in the first poem in the cycle, 11.42, and creates a frame for the links of food, oral sex, and literature. The poem directly links with the previous invitational poem, and the three cycles in general, as it presents a situation where Martial has sent Severus, the addressee of the poem, an invitation epigram. The imaginary nature of the poem within the imaginary world of the Martialverse, given that this invitation poem does not appear within the *Epigrams*, links back to the imaginary meal in the imaginary Martialverse in the invitational poem of 11.52. There are further links back to previous invitational poems with the poetic modesty and simple fare it is suggested Martial will provide.

5.3 Reading About Reading, Food, and Sex

The use of the invitational sub-genre by Martial makes the understanding of the intertextuality and intratextuality vital to the reading of the *Epigrams* for the active rereader, not only for enhancing interpretations of individual poems, but also for identifying cycles and appreciating the structuring techniques used by the author in individual books and the series as a whole. The intratextual elements force the reader to reevaluate what they

have read before in the series, and make rereading central to the process of producing sophisticated readings of the series. It further enhances the nature of the books and series, potentially redeeming them from their lowly genre and placing them next to the ‘greats’ of Latin literature on library shelves.

The intertextuality with Catullus 13 enhances the use of the three themes in the cycles centred around the invitation epigrams, emphasising the importance of their interaction for the *lector studiosus*. The very act of constructing these cycles around an invitation to a dinner-party continues to confront the reader with the differences between their reality and the world of the Martialverse: the reader sits alone silently reading about dinner-parties, whose importance in the book and the series is emphasised by surrounding poems featuring constant reminders of the lack of orality in their situation as compared to the ultra-orality of the Martialverse.

Of course, these are not the only poems to feature food and dining within the corpus; sexual metaphors based around food and drink, eating and drinking, and dinner-parties are a pervasive theme within the *Epigrams* in general. These poems act as a structural feature as well as a subtle reminder of the dichotomy between the two epigrammatic genres; there is a contrast between the sympotic recitation of Greek epigram as compared to the silent reading of Martial’s *Latin* genre. As the diagram above shows, there are constant and subtle reminders that the reader is *not* hearing these poems recited at a dinner-party, but are working their way through the book rolls one poem at a time, one book at a time, reading each epigram to themselves in order. The use of food and dining also adds to the atmosphere created by the corpus, a Saturnalian, sympotic context where anything goes and no topic is forbidden.

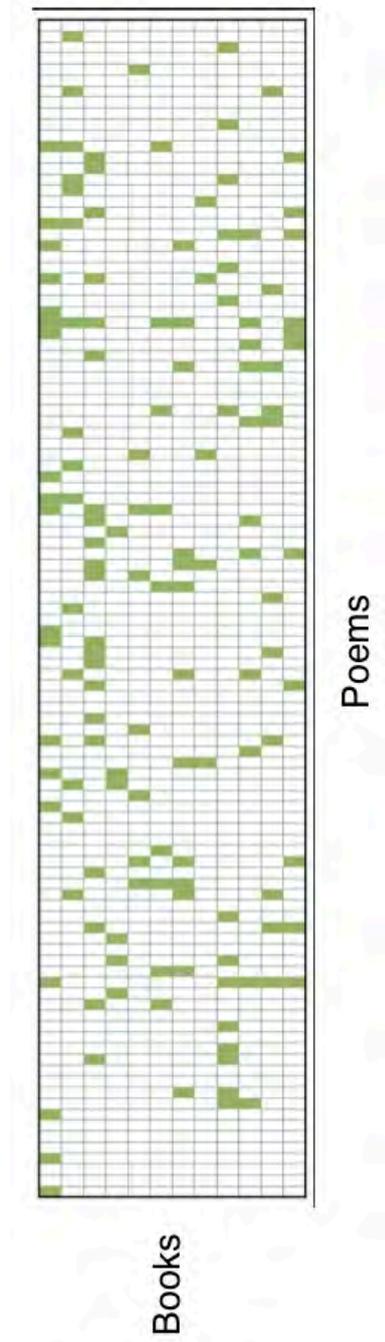


Figure 5.5: The distribution of the epigrams within the theme of food and dining in the 12 books of the *Epigrams*.

Chapter 6

The Epic Of Martial

Readers of Martial's *Epigrams* are presented with a complicated work. This is not some concatenation of random poems haphazardly put together on a book roll, but a carefully arranged, multi-book corpus, which not only showcases Martial's poetic skill, but also engages within a discourse of reading and methods of reading at the end of the first century within Latin literature. The detailed intertextual references within the series dictate that the model reader is a well-read intellectual, a member of the élite, with plenty of *otium* to dedicate to reading their favourite books. The model reader of Martial has read the greats of Latin poetry — Vergil, Catullus, Ovid, Propertius — as well as having knowledge of past and contemporary Greek literature. The series concerns itself with the way it is read by its readers, and imagines a self-conscious reader who in reading, and *rereading*, the series understands the inter- and intratextual references contained within it. Further, the reader approaches the *Epigrams* in the same way they might read any other multi-book work, with special reference to Vergil's epic.

The combination of the three themes of oral sex and *os impurum*, food and dining, and reading and writing, brings this programmatic instruction on the type of reader and method of reading envisioned by the author to the forefront. As can be seen from Figure

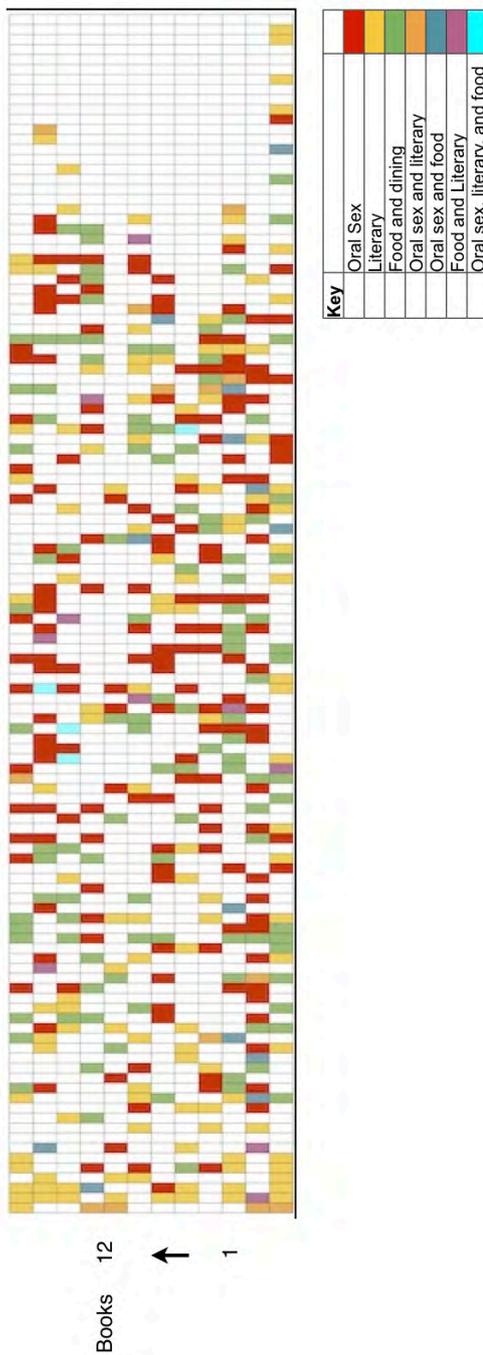


Figure 6.1: The distribution of the three themes — literary, oral sex and *os impurum*, and food and dining — in the 12 books of the *Epigrams*.

6.1, the distribution of these three themes play a key role across the series, not only as individual themes creating a path for the reader to follow, but also in the the way the themes interact with each other. We have examined numerous instances throughout the twelve books where the juxtaposition of themed epigrams continues to remind the reader of the importance of these three themes in interaction for their reading and understanding of this ‘anti-epic’.

6.1 The interaction of the three themes in the *Epigrams* — a few examples

The three themes interact throughout the series in a variety of different ways. However, I will use three examples to show how this juxtaposition of themed poems emphasises the importance of orality within the series as a whole and act as signposts and reminders for the reader and rereader. The first selection of epigrams we will look at is 1.43-45, a small grouping in the middle of the first book of the *Epigrams*. This group of three poems shows

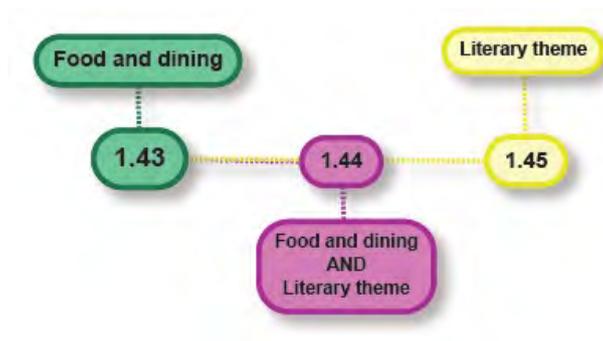


Figure 6.2: Interaction of themes in 1.43-45.

the importance of the combination of the literary theme with that of food and dining. This type of combination draws attention to the fact that the reader is *reading* the book in front of him rather than listening to a recital at a dinner-party. The instruction that

Martial's epigrams are not meant to be recited is highlighted in Book 1 with the cycle of poems featuring the character of Fidentinus.¹ This instruction conveyed through the witty epigrams to Fidentinus is emphasised in 1.66 — this is a book to be read by the reader within a reader-author relationship, not recited within a setting of commensality.

Erras, meorum fur avare librorum,
 fieri poetam posse qui putas tanti,
 scriptura quanti constet et tomus vilis:
 non sex paratur aut decem sophos nummis.
 secreta quaere carmina et rudes curas
 quas novit unus scrinioque signatas
 custodit ipse virginis pater chartae,
 quae trita duro non inhorruit mento.
 mutare dominum non potest liber notus.
 sed pumicata fronte si quis est nondum
 nec umbilicis cultus atque membrana,
 mercare: tales habeo; nec sciet quisquam.
 aliena quisquis recitat et petit famam,
 non emere librum, sed silentium debet.

*You're wrong, greedy stealer of my books,
 in thinking that it costs no more to become a poet
 than the price of copying and a cheap bit of papyrus.
 Applause is not to be had for six or ten sesterces.
 You must look for private, unpublished work, poems
 known only to the guardian of the virgin sheet, which
 he keeps sealed up in his book-box, work not rubbed*

¹1.29, 38, 53, 66, and 72.

*rough by hard chins. A well-known book can't change author.
But if you find one whose face isn't smoothed yet by the pumice
stone, one not yet embellished with bosses and parchment cover,
buy it. I have such and nobody will be the wiser. Whoever recites
other people's works and seeks fame through them ought to buy,
not a book, but silence.*

1.66

Intertextual references to Catullus — ‘cui dono lepidum novum libellum/ arida modo pumice exolitum?’ (*To whom do I give this charming little book, freshly polished with dry-pumice?*, 1.1-2) — the ‘cui dono’ illusion highlights the literary theme within the poem and *materiality* of the book in the reader’s hands, a recurring topos for Martial. It also emphasises the concluding joke of the poem: if Fidentius can find a book which is yet to be dedicated, his listeners will not realise he is reciting someone else’s work. The importance of orality in 1.66 is further emphasised by the polarity of orality and silence in the final two lines. The combination of the plagiarism topos associated with the Fidentinus cycle and the literary theme through the focus on the object the reader is holding, brings attention to the physical act of reading Martial’s poems from the very first book of the series.

The small grouping in Book 1 starts with an epigram on the theme of food and dining, using the topos of the dinner host who does not provide his guests with good food and drink, with a threat in the final two lines:

ponatur tibi nullus aper post talia facta,
sed tu ponaris cui Charidemus apro.

*After such a kind of behaviour, I hope you will never be served boar,
but that you will be served to the same boar as Charidemus.*

1.43.13-14.

Shackleton Bailey suggests in a footnote to this epigram that Charidemus is the name of a criminal who faced a boar in the arena. However, the rereader may remember Book 6 and the description of Charidemus as a fellator, with the model reader realising the possible illusion to pubic hair with the use of a boar² In this case we can perhaps see this not just as part of the theme of food and dining, as the naive reader will, but also part of, and indeed a riff on, the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, the use of a character creating associations for the model reader, while also reminding them of the importance of orality and the intersection of these three themes throughout the book.

This is followed by a poem which continues the theme of food and dining, and completes the interaction of the the three themes with the use of the literary theme. 1.44 is also a part of a cycle of poems within Book 1, referred to as the ‘Hare and Lion’ cycle by several commentators since the nineteenth century, which for the rereader highlights the interconnectedness of the poems within the books and the series, and the way themes and cycles combine.³ Finally, the small group ends with 1.45, a short epigram which is part of the literary theme, and one of a small number of epigrams which includes Greek text. The poem adds a joking self-deprecation after the complicated connections between themes and other books in the series displayed by the previous two poems. The Homeric formula is emphasised on the page through the use of Greek text and highlights the connections between Martial’s series of epigram books and epic poetry. Through this epic reference, Martial reminds the reader, and especially the rereader, that these poems, and this book, are part of a greater series.

For the reader, and especially the rereader, the grouping of 1.43-45, emphasising the traditional relationship between food and epigram which is *not* to be found in this new series by Martial, declares from the first book that there is something different in this

²6.56. Cf. 6.81. Parallels to this illusion to pubic hair can be seen in *AP* 11.

³Amos 1858 refers to this cycle as the ‘Hare and Lion’ and this has been followed by later scholars up to and including Sullivan 1991.

author's work, something to which the reader needs to pay special attention.

Another example of the way these three themes emphasise the idea of orality in the series comes from Book 4. This collection of poems at the end of Book 4 shows the reader how important the interaction of these three themes is for the structuring, reading and understanding of the book, as well as emphasising this importance as the reader moves onto Book 5, suggesting that this interaction will continue to be important throughout the series. The group of poems at the end of Book 4 are framed by the literary theme. The first poem in this group, 4.81, focuses on the act of reading Martial's books of epigrams, but for the model reader adds a hint of the intersection of the reading of Martial's poems and the focus on the mouth through the use of *negare* in the last line of the poem, which, as noted previously, is often used by Martial to suggest fellatio.⁴ The link between reading and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* is emphasised by the following poem, 4.82, which features the character of Rufus, who, even for the first-time reader of the series, is synonymous with the theme by this point in the series. The use of the character of Rufus with another poem about reading Martial's books of epigrams emphasises the focus on orality created by the intersection of these themes. This focus on the mouth continues in the next three poems in the group (4.83, 4.84, 4.85), which focus on various aspects of the food and dining and oral sex and *os impurum* themes.

The next poem, 4.86, returns to the literary theme and the reading of the poems. However, the poem contains subtle links to the other two themes which the model reader will appreciate; the poem focuses on the ears and the lips of the supposed hearer of a recitation of the poems in this address to the book itself. Throughout the series Martial instructs the reader that these books are to be read rather than recited, and so this poem is a reminder to the reader that they are *not* listening to a recitation, focusing on the book they are holding and reading. The mention of lips in association with the literary theme

⁴Cf. Adams 1982: 213.

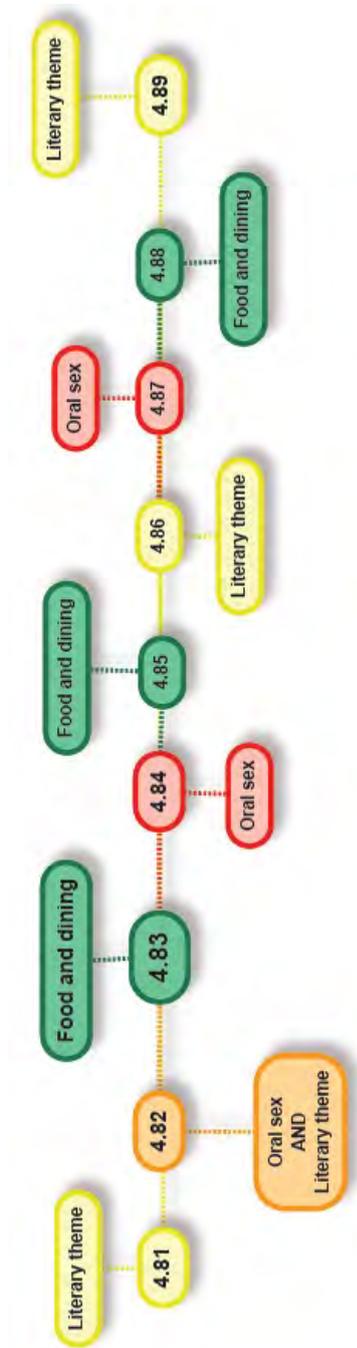


Figure 6.3: Interaction of themes in 4.81-89.

brings in connotations of the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*. The theme of food and dining is also subtly brought into play through the suggestion of Martial's book being used as take-away food wrapping or in cooking. This implied use of all three themes within one poem will be especially obvious to the rereader, who is primed to understand and appreciate the interdependence of these three themes. The connections are emphasised by the following two poems. 4.87 features Bassa, a character associated with the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*.⁵ 4.88, part of the food and dining theme, mentions a variety of foods as part of a complaint on the part of the poet for not having received return gifts from an anonymous addressee.

The final poem in the group, which is also the final epigram of the book, returns to the literary theme. Ending the book with an epigram which focuses the reader on what they are reading serves not only to emphasise the importance of reading and the reader in the individual book, but also highlights the importance of the continuation with the next book in the series, especially for the rereader of the series. 4.89 is another epigram addressed to the book itself, a book which is said to want to keep going, but the author reins in its desire with a self-deprecating statement that the reader will have had enough by this point. This is again a joke with the reader, especially one who is reading the series in order, as this is the shortest book so far. It builds the anticipation of the next book, as well as acting to highlight the object the reader is holding and has just read all the way through.

For a final example of the intersection of the three themes within the *Epigrams* we may turn to Book 12. As in the example from Book 1, this is just a small group of poems near the end of the series which serve to remind the reader of the importance of the interaction of these three themes for the structure of the series, and encourage rereading of the series as a whole. This group also instructs the reader on the way they should approach the book

⁵For previous discussion of the character of Bassa, see pp. 100, 108-110, 123.

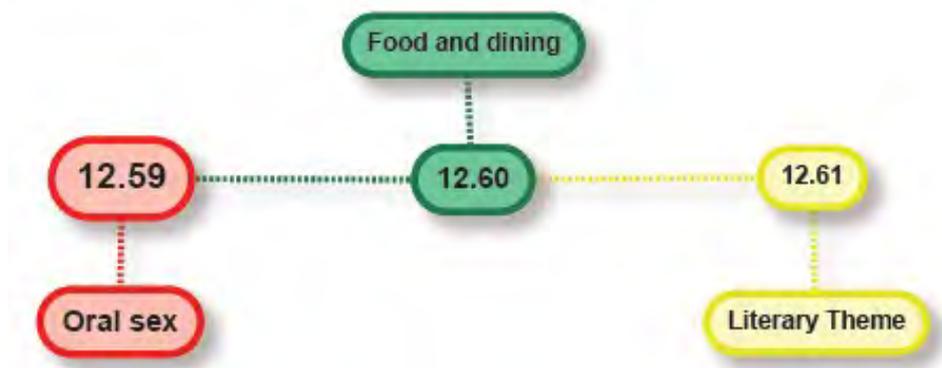


Figure 6.4: Interaction of themes in 12.59-61

and the series, as well as connecting themes. The group starts with an explicit epigram on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, addressed to an anonymous recipient (perhaps even the book itself?), focusing the reader not only on the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, but also on the urbanity of the *Epigrams*.

tantum dat tibi Roma basiorum
 post annos modo quindecim reverso
 quantum Lesbia non dedit Catullo.
 te vicinia tota, te pilosus
 hircoso premit osculo colonus;
 hinc instat tibi textor, inde fullo,
 hinc sutor modo pelle basiata,
 hinc menti dominus periculosi,
 hinc dexiocholus, inde lippus
 fellatorque recensque cunnilingus.
 iam tanti tibi non fuit redire.

*Now you have come back after fifteen years,
 Rome gives you so many kisses,*

more than Lesbia ever gave Catullus.

The whole neighbourhood is all over you,

the hairy farmer crushes you with a kiss like a billy-goat,

the weaver on you from one side, the fuller on the other,

the cobbler who has just kissed his leather,

and the owner of a rather dangerous chin,

and the man with the gammy right leg, the man with the infected eye,

and the sucker and licker fresh from their perversions.

It wasn't really worth your while coming home.

The anonymous addressee returns to Rome and receives kisses from everyone to welcome him/it back. However, this has a downside, as the anonymous addressee becomes infected by *os impurum* when kissed by ‘fellatorque recensque cunnilingus’ (12.59.10). The urbanity and intertextuality of this epigram is highlighted from the beginning of the poem, as the anonymous addressee receives more kisses than Catullus gave Lesbia, suggesting to the reader of the series through the use of kisses, Lesbia, and Catullus that this is an epigram within the theme of oral sex and *os impurum*, a suggestion which becomes explicit by the end of the poem. The use of Catullus also reminds the reader of the link between the literary theme and the theme of oral sex and *os impurum* through the focus on another poet, emphasising the poems the reader is currently reading, which is especially true if we see the anonymous addressee being the book itself who becomes infected by other people’s dirty mouths.

This is followed by a poem on the theme of food and dining, but also focusing on the poet himself, providing a link between the book of the previous poem and the author of that book in this one.

Martis alumne dies, roseam quo lampada primum

magnaue siderei vidimus ora dei,

si te rure coli viridisque pudebit ad aras,
 qui fueras Latia cultus in urbe mihi:
 da veniam servire meis quod nolo Kalendis
 et qua sum genitus vivere luce volo.
 natali pallere suo, ne calda Sabello
 desit, et, ut liquidum potet Alauda merum,
 turbida sollicito transmittere Caecuba sacco,
 atque inter mensas ire redire suas,
 excipere hos illos, et tota surgere cena
 marmora calcantem frigidiora gelu?
 quae ratio est haec sponte sua perferre patique,
 quae te si iubeat rex dominusque, negas?

*Day, child of Mars, on which I first saw the rosy lamp
 and the mighty face of the starry god,
 if you are ashamed to be celebrated in the country and at green altars
 whom I used to worship in Latinum's city:
 pardon me if I do not choose to be a servant on my one birthday
 and wish to live on the day that I was born.
 I am to turn pale on my birthday, fearing Sabellus won't get
 enough hot water, and filter turbid Caecuban through an anxious bag
 so that Alauda can drink clear wine?
 Am I to go back and forth between my tables,
 receiving this guest and that, getting to my feet throughout
 the meal and walking on marble colder than ice?
 Where is the sense in enduring and suffering all this voluntarily,
 things you would refuse if ordered by your patron and lord?*

The first word of the epigram, ‘Martis’, suggests the author’s name, a fact emphasised by the focus of the poem on his birthday celebration. Urbanity is again highlighted with the uncommon derision of the countryside, where readers of Latin poetry might expect adulation of the countryside such as found in Latin pastoral poetry.⁶ The theme of food and dining comes through the mention of wine and a dinner-party, which Martial feels will be a substandard birthday celebration if it is held in the countryside.

The final poem in this small grouping focuses on the literary theme, showing how the explicit themes of the previous two poems require this third theme to create the ideal reading experience. Given the literary connotations in the first poem of the group, it also creates a framing for the set of poems, a small reminder to the reader of the series of how the juxtaposition and combination of these three themes is important for the reading experience of the reader and rereader. The programmatic instruction on the way in which these poems and books should be read is emphasised by the final poem in the group, 12.61, as it is addressed to someone who does not appreciate Martial’s poems, someone who doesn’t read them properly or understand what is going on, and so is not worthy to become a character within the series. Of course, this is an ironic censure, as the addressee, Ligurra, has now become part of the Martialverse, a fully-fledged character within the world of the book and series.

6.2 The ‘Epic’ of Martial?

Can we really talk about the *Epigrams* as an epic, or anti-epic? Strictly speaking, the answer to this question should be ‘no’; the *Epigrams* are not written in dactylic hexameter like the epics of Homer and Vergil, and continued as the meter for epics by Flavian authors such as Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, and Statius, nor is there a clear plot and story

⁶I am thinking here particularly of Virgil’s *Eclogues* and perhaps also aspects of the *Georgics*.

followed through the twelve books, nor do the books focus on a mythological story of gods and men some time in the past (though epic need not be mythological, the main sources Martial would have been looking to were).

However, we cannot discount the fact that this series is composed of *twelve* books, just like the *Aeneid*, and surely a number which would cause the reader to think of specifically Latin epic. At the same time, while the main intertextual references within the series are to Martial's immediate predecessors, such as Catullus and Ovid, there are references to both Vergil the author and Vergilian works, keeping that 'pinnacle' of Latin literature in the forefront of the reader's mind. The way that the books are structured encourages reading, and rereading, and the intratextual references suggest that the series needs to be read, and reread, in order and carefully to be able to fully appreciate the material. This need to read all the way through creates its own kind of narrative for the reader to follow, made especially clear by the use of cycles and themes.

6.2.1 A Discourse of Power in Book 9 of the *Epigrams*

One other way in which Martial focuses the reader on a comparison between the ultimate Latin epic of Vergil and his own work is by echoing themes from the *Aeneid* within his own works, in a way where the model reader will grasp the allusions woven throughout. One example of this can be seen in Book 9 of the *Epigrams* in the Earinus cycle (9.11-13, 16, 17, and 36). One possible reading of Book 9 focuses on the cycles which explore power dynamics within the Martialverse, contrasting imperial power with slavery. As Fitzgerald has shown, Martial's model reader will not simply see this as an exploration of power and position within society, but will understand that 'poems on slaves...can be synecdochic for Martial's genre, and [that] the social status of slaves is analogous to the generic position of epigram.'⁷ Therefore, the cycles of poems on slavery within Book 9 can be read as also part

⁷Fitzgerald 2007: 103.

of the literary theme, the power dynamic between epic and epigram rather than emperor and slaves. This power dynamic is highlighted by the cycle of poems on slavery and its intersection with the Earinus cycle, as well as the resulting allusions to Book 9 of the *Aeneid*. The juxtaposition in Book 9 used to explore power dynamics is two-fold: imperial power and the power of the gods.⁸ The use of the imperial theme is not, however, about the praise or criticism of any specific emperor, but is instead an obvious contemporary symbol of power, emphasised by the parallel of the power of the gods, which is used within the book as the example of ultimate power, as juxtaposed with the impotence, literally and metaphorically, of the slave.⁹

It is this impotence of slaves which is used by Martial in the two opening cycles of Book 9, along with the theme of castration. Perhaps the best known cycle from this book is the one which focuses on Earinus. Earinus was, according to Martial and Statius, Domitian's cup-bearer and a eunuch.¹⁰ Within these works there is a connection made between Earinus and Ganymede, a 'figure which appears throughout Roman literature as the archetype of the beautiful, sexually desirable male slave.'¹¹ Roman literature assumed a sexual relationship between Jupiter and Ganymede, and this allusion was applied to Domitian and his 'favourite' slave.¹² The castration of Earinus is an important link between the Earinus

⁸The poems focusing on the three themes of power within Book 9 are: 1. Imperial Power: 9.1, 3, 5(6), 7(8), 12(13), 18, 20, 23, 24, 26, 31, 34, 36, 39, 42, 61, 65, 66, 70, 72, 79, 83, 84, 86, 91, 93, 97, 101; 2. Slavery: 9.2, 5(6), 7(8), 11, 12(13), 13(12), 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 32, 36, 41, 59, 67, 73, 74, 76, 87, 92, 93, 103; 3. Gods: 9.1, 3, 11, 16, 17, 20, 24, 28, 31, 34, 35, 36, 39, 42, 51, 56, 61, 65, 86, 90, 91, 101, 103.

⁹Cf. Szelest 1974.

¹⁰*Silvae* 3.4. It should be noted that Martial and Statius are the only contemporary writers to refer to Earinus, cf. Vout 2007: 173-174.

¹¹Williams 1999: 56-57. Despite the mythological tradition that Ganymede was a Trojan prince, he was represented within Roman literature as not only non-Roman, but also a slave; this served to 'make him compatible with the standard sexual paradigm (a Roman man and his slave) and to differentiate as much as possible the relationship between Jupiter and Ganymede from the problematic paradigm of stuprum' (Williams 1999: 59).

¹²On the sexual relationship between Jupiter and Ganymede: Cicero Tusc. 4.71, Priapus 3.5-6. The idea is used repeatedly within Martial's epigrams. Ganymede also serves as the origin of the word catamite; as Williams notes, 'the figure of Ganymede as an archetype of the agelessly beautiful young man literally swept of his feet by an older male lover seems to have caught on fairly early among Romans: at some point before the late third century B.C. his name underwent a transformation (mediated by the influence of the

cycle and the first cycle of epigrams looking at this power dynamic. While Martial does not specifically address Earinus' castration, it is important to the understanding of the cycles in Book 9. However, Statius does address the castration in *Silvae* 3.4, Statius mythologizes the event:

olim etiam, ne prima genas lanugo nitentes
 carperet et pulchrae fuscaret gratia formae,
 ipse deus patriae celsam trans aequora liquit
 Pergamon. haud ulli puerum mollire potestas
 credita, sed tacita iuvenis Phoebus arte
 leniter haud ullo concussum vulnere corpus
 de sexu transire iubet.

*Once, so that the first beard might not mar his cheeks
 nor darken that fair face, the god of his native land came over
 the seas from Pergamus. No other was tasked with taking away his
 manhood, but only Phoebus, he of the gentle hand and quiet skill,
 with neither a wound nor pain unsexed him.*

Silvae 3.4.65-71.

The use of softness (*mollire*) within this passage emphasises the now complete impotence of Earinus.¹³ It is this lack of masculinity which Martial uses within the cycles in Book 9 as the counterpoint to imperial power in his discourse of power; in this analogy, imperial power represents ultimate 'masculinity'.

The earliest cycle which uses slaves and slavery as part of this discourse of power in Book 9 includes the poems 5(6), 7(8), 16, 22, 25, and 36. This cycle acts as the introduction

Etruscans, who called him Catmite) from Ganymedes to Catamitus' (Williams 1999: 56).

¹³There is an assumption in ancient literature that softness is the direct opposite of masculinity, Williams 1999: 128.

to the exploration of power within the book, and also intersects with the Earinus cycle. By using the theme of slavery these poems are not just fulfilling expectations of genre, as

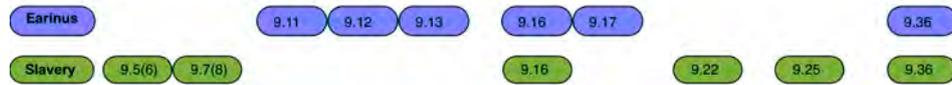


Figure 6.5: Intersection of two cycles in Book 9

suggested by Fitzgerald, but also serve to emphasise the work’s connectedness, which can only really be appreciated with *rereading*. This is particularly shown in cycles involving issues of power, as their sequentiality is emphasised by the reading method. Martial’s discourse of power is shown at the beginning of the first poem of the cycle, 9.5(6), with the use of *domitor*. As Henriksen has noted, while this word had been used of victorious commanders, its use in poetry was extremely rare. The use of *domitor* therefore anticipates later allusions between Domitian and Jupiter through the more common usage as ‘an epithet of gods and major mythological figures.’¹⁴ This combines with the use of *parens* (5(6)) and *pater* (7(8)) to set up a scene with the power at the top (in society and, in the case of *domitor* and *parens*, at the top of the poem) and slavery at the bottom. The use of a divine epithet with the title *pater patriae* compares Domitian with Jupiter as *parens mundi*, again anticipating later themes within the cycle and also the Earinus cycle. The opening of this first slavery cycle, which will act as introduction to the Earinus cycle, uses the surface softness with the hidden threat of violence to link with the theme of Ganymede — a soft, beautiful boy who in the past was violently castrated. 7(8) further emphasises this link with Earinus through a contrast with Statius. The *lector studiosus* of Book 9 would have contrasted the ‘soft’, easy capture of Earinus in *Silvae* 3.4.32-46 with 7(8).3-4: ‘ut ab ubere raptus sordida vagitu posceret aera puer’ (*so that the boy snatched from his mother’s breast wailed for dirty coppers*).

The opening slavery cycle intersects directly with the Earinus cycle in 9.16.

¹⁴Henriksen 1998: 78.

consilium formae, speculum, dulcesque capillos

Pergameo posuit dono sacrata deo

ille puer tota domino gratissimus aula,

nomine qui signat tempora verna suo

felix, qua tali censetur munere tellus!

nec Ganymedeas mallet habere comas.

*A mirror advising his beauty and a sweet-smelling lock
of hair - these are the presents set up as sacred
to Pergamum's god by the palace-slave his master loves
most, the boy whose name signifies "springtime".
The land counting among its treasure such a gift
is blessed, and needn't yearn for Ganymede's hair.*

The poem connects these two cycles and also explicitly introduces the theme of Ganymede. With this use of Jupiter's eunuch, Martial is obviously influenced by Greek epigram, or invokes a model reader with knowledge of Greek epigram, as it is in common in the *Greek Anthology* for erotic poems to liken boys to Ganymede or refer to Jupiter's relationship to him.¹⁵ The intersection of the Earinus cycle points out the contradictions within the cycle begun at 9.5. It begins with Domitian's edicts against the castration of slave boys, and here we have an epigram about Domitian's own castrated slave boy. The ceremony of manhood alluded to here, Earinus dedicating his newly shorn hair to Asclepius, is important for the cycle as a whole and Martial's exploration of power. The reference to Ganymede shows this as a pseudo-ceremony – Earinus can never be a 'proper' man as he has been castrated, much like Ganymede who will eternally be a boy.

¹⁵Henriksen 1998: 96. References to Ganymede within the *AP* can be seen at 5.56, 12.37, 12.68, 12.69, 12.70, 12.133, 12.194, and 12.221.

6.2.2 *Epigrams* Book 9 and *Aeneid* 9

Figure 6.6: Sebastiaen Vrancx, *Euryalus and Nisus(?)*. Drawing from Wood Ruby 1990.

Understanding how this discourse of power is explored in Book 9, both within the reality of the Martialverse and as a metaphor for the difference between literary genres, we can then turn to the parallels the model reader is meant to see with the *Aeneid*. Statius provides a clue to this link, when in the same poem where he describes Earinus' castration he uses a mythological references to Nisus (and, by implication, Euryalus), and it is the castration which provides the crucial link. In Book 9 both of the *Aeneid* and of the *Epigrams* there is a focus on either the loss of manhood or the inability to achieve manhood. This can be seen especially in the quest for *fama* (9.195), which is later described by Jupiter as the point of manhood, 'famam extendere factis/ hoc virtutis opus' (*the task of manhood is enlarge fame by deeds*, 10.468-469).¹⁶ We can see this as a joking allegory on the part of Martial — his little epigrams will never achieve the heights of the greatness of epic. However,

¹⁶Cf. Boyle 1986:163ff.

there are also two more direct references to be considered — Apollo’s divine command that Ascanius cannot become a man (9.653-656), and Euryalus’ death which prevents him ever achieving manhood (182-234). Despite the fact that Martial presents his epigrams as the slaves to Vergil’s emperor, the intertextual thematic link serves to encourage the reader to reexamine the *Epigrams* in a new light.

The focus on the three themes identified in this thesis and the resultant pervasive concentration on orality serves to make the *Epigrams* a kind of anti-epic; it may be in the wrong meter, with the wrong characters, read in the wrong way (silently rather than recited), but the idea of a twelve-book series gives Martial’s work an epic atmosphere, one which he plays with by using Vergilian references throughout, and especially through the contrast of the ‘low’ genre of epigram and the ‘high’ genre of epic.

Appendix A

Characters in the Three Themes

Aegle	1.72, 1.94, 11.81, 12.55
Aeschylus	11.4, 11.67
Apicius	3.80, 7.55
Baeticus	3.77, 3.81
Bassa	1.37, 1.90, 4.4, 4.61, 4.87, 5.45, 6.69
Bithynicus	2.26, 6.50, 9.8, 12.78
Caecilius	1.41, 2.72, 11.31
Caelia	4.61, 6.67, 7.30, 11.75
Caesius	7.55
Calvinus	7.90
Canius Rufus	1.61, 1.69, 3.20, 3.64, 7.69, 10.45
Castricus	6.43, 6.68, 7.4, 7.37, 7.42
Celer	1.63, 7.32
Charidemus	6.31, 6.56, 6.81, 11.39, 11.87
Charinus	1.77, 4.39, 5.39, 6.37, 7.34, 8.61, 11.59, 12.89
Chione	1.34, 1.92, 3.30, 3.34, 3.83, 3.87, 3.97, 11.60

Chrestus	7.55, 9.27
Cinna	1.89, 2.53, 3.9, 3.61, 5.57, 5.76, 6.39, 7.33, 7.43, 8.7, 8.19, 12.27, 12.64
Coracinus	4.43, 9.98
Cotilus	2.70, 3.63
Creticus	8.90
Crispinus	7.99, 8.48
Decianus	1.8, 1.24, 1.39, 1.61, 2. <i>prae</i> f., 2.5
Deiphobus	3.85
Diadumenus	3.65, 5.46, 6.34
Eros	7.10, 10.56, 10.80
Faustinus	1.25, 1.114, 3.2, 3.25, 3.39, 3.47, 3.58, 4.10, 4.57, 5.32, 5.36, 5.71, 6.7, 6.53, 6.61, 7.12, 7.80, 8.41, 10.51
Festus	1.78
Gaius	2.30, 5.14, 10.17, 9.92
Galla	2.25, 2.34, 3.51, 3.54, 3.90, 4.38, 4.58, 5.84, 7.18, 7.58, 9.4, 9.37, 9.78, 10.75, 10.95, 11.19
Gallus	1.108, 2.47, 2.56, 3.27, 3.92, 4.16, 7.55, 10.56, 10.82, 12.47
Gargilanus	3.30, 3.74, 4.56, 7.65, 8.13
Gargilius	3.96
Gaurus	2.89, 4.67, 5.82, 8.27, 9.50
Gellia	1.33, 3.55, 4.20, 5.17, 5.29, 6.90, 8.81
Gellianus	6.66
Hamillus	7.62
Hedylus	1.46, 4.52, 9.57
Hormus (=Postumus)	2.15
Hyllus	2.51, 2.60, 4.7, 9.25

Istantius Rufus	7.68, 8.50, 8.73, 12.95, 12.98
Julius Martialis	4.64, 5.20, 6.1, 7.17, 10.47, 11.80
Laecania	5.43, 7.35
Lesbia	1.34, 2.50, 4.34, 5.68, 6.23, 7.14, 8.73, 10.39, 11.62, 11.99, 12.44, 12.59
Linus	1.75, 2.38, 2.54, 4.66, 7.10, 7.95, 11.25, 12.49
Lupercus	1.117, 3.75, 4.28, 6.6, 6.51, 7.83, 9.87, 9.40, 12.47
Lupus	5.56, 6.79, 7.10, 7.55, 9.2, 10.40, 11.18, 11.55, 11.88, 11.108
Lycisca	7.17
Lyris	2.73
Manneia	1.83
Marianus	2.31, 5.61, 6.63
Matho	4.79, 6.33, 7.10, 7.90, 8.42, 10.46, 11.68
Nestor	3.28, 11.32
Olus	2.68, 3.48, 4.36, 7.10, 10.54
Oppianus	6.42, 6.62, 7.4, 8.25
Pamphile	4.48
Pannychus	2.36, 4.39, 4.67, 9.47, 12.72
Papylus	4.48, 4.69, 6.36, 7.78, 7.94
Paulus	2.20, 4.17, 5.4, 5.22, 5.28, 6.12, 8.33, 9.85, 10.10, 12.69
Philaenis	2.33, 4.65, 7.67, 7.70, 9.29, 9.40, 9.62, 10.22, 12.22
Phoebus	1.58, 2.35, 2.44, 3.73, 3.89, 6.20, 6.57, 9.63, 9.92, 9.102, 12.45
Pompeius Auctus	7.51, 7.52, 9.21, 12.13
Pontilianus	5.66, 7.3, 12.40
Postumus	2.10, 2.12, 2.21, 2.22, 2.23, 2.67, 2.72, 4.26, 4.40, 5.52, 5.58, 6.19
Publius	1.109, 2.57, 7.72, 7.87, 10.98

Rufus	1.68, 1.106, 2.11, 2.29, 2.48, 2.84, 3.82, 3.94, 3.97, 3.100, 4.13, 4.82, 5.51, 5.72, 6.82, 6.89, 8.52, 9.88
Sabidius	1.32, 3.17
Sartorius	2.84
Sertorius	2.84, 3.79, 7.10
Sextilianus	1.11, 1.26, 6.54, 10.29
Sextilius	2.28
Silius Italicus	4.14, 6.64, 7.63, 8.66, 9.86, 11.48, 11.50
Sotades	2.86, 6.26
Telesina	2.49
Telesinus	3.41, 6.50, 12.25
Thais	3.8, 3.11, 4.12, 4.50, 4.84, 5.43, 6.93, 11.101
Thestylus	7.29, 8.63
Titius	4.37, 7.55, 9.51
Titus	7.10
Torianus	5.78, 11. <i>praef.</i>
Umber	7.53, 7.90, 12.81
Urbicus	7.51, 11.55
Voconius Victor	7.29
Zoilus	2.16, 2.19, 2.42, 2.58, 2.81, 3.29, 3.82, 4.77, 5.79, 6.91, 9.12, 9.30, 9.37, 9.54, 9.85, 9.92, 12.54

Appendix B

Pliny's letter on Martial's death

C. Plinius Cornelio Prisco Suo S.

Audio Valerium Martialem decississe et molesto fero. Erat homo ingeniosus acutus acer, et qui plurimum in scribendo et salis haberet et fellis, nec candoris minus. Prosecutus eram uiatico secedentem; dederam hoc amicitiae, dederam etiam, uersiculis quis de me composuit. Fuit moris antiqui, eos qui uel singulorum laudes uel urbium scripserant, aut honoribus aut pecunia ornare; nostris uero temporibus ut alia speciosa et egregia, ita hoc in primis exoleuit. Nam postquam desimus facere laudanda, laudari quoque ineptum putamus. Quaeris, qui sint uersiculi quibus gratiam rettuli? Remitterem te ad ipsum uolumen, nisi quosdam tenerem; tu, si placuerint hi, certo in libro requires. Adloquitur Musam, mandat ut domum meam Esquilis quaerat, adeat reuerenter:

(10.19.12ff.)

Meritone eum qui haec de me scripsit et tunc dimisi amicissime et nunc ut amicissimum defunctum esse doleo? Dedit enim mihi

quantum maximum potuit, daturus amplicus si potuisset? Tametsi quid homini potest dari maius, quam gloria et laus et aeternitas? At non erunt aeterna quae scripsit: non erunt fortasse, ille tamen scripsit tamquam essent futura. Vale.

Dear Cornelius Priscus,

I hear Valerius Martial is dead and I am very upset. He was talented, penetrating, and sharp, a man who, in his writings, displayed a great deal of both wit and sarcasm, but just as much desire to please.

I presented him with his travelling expenses when he was going into retirement; this was a recognition of our friendship, but also a recognition of the unassuming verses he composed about me. It was customary in the old days to honour those who had written eulogies of either individuals or cities with official posts or money. In our times, however, of all the fine and noteworthy practices, this was the first to go out of fashion. Now that we don't do anything praiseworthy, we think receiving praise is gauche also. Do you want to know what we're the little verses for which I showed my gratitude? I would refer you to the volume itself, if I had not memorised some of them; if you like these, you'll look up the rest in the book. He is addressing the Muse, instructing her to find her way to my house on the Esquiline and approach it respectfully:

(10.19.12ff.)

Surely the author of these lines merited then the friendliest of farewells when I sent him off and merits now my grief for the loss of a very dear friend. He gave me the best he could and he would have given more if he could have. And yet what greater gifts can be given a man than glory,

praise, and immortality? It may be said that his writings will not be immortal: perhaps not, but he wrote them as though they would be.

Appendix C

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