

## Martial's poetics of plagiarism

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# Martial's poetics of plagiarism

*nostris uersibus esse te poetam,  
Fidentine, putas cupisque credi?  
sic dentata sibi uidetur Aegle  
emptis ossibus Indicoque cornu;  
sic, quae nigrior est cadente moro,  
cerussata sibi placet Lycoris.  
hac et tu ratione qua poeta es,  
caluus cum fueris, eris comatus.* (Martial 1.72)

Do you tell yourself you're a poet, Fidentinus? Do you want people to think it's true, when the lines you're using are mine? Just so does Aegle reckon she has teeth, because she's bought ones made of bone and Indian ivory; and Lycoris, who's blacker than a windfall mulberry, loves how she looks in white lead. Just so, and by the same rationale that makes you a poet, you'll have a full head of hair when you go bald.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Accept no imitations: the plagiarism motif, authorial self-fashioning, and epigram's long haul

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own. I take this opportunity to thank the anonymous readers for their useful feedback.

### Martial and Plagiarism

The Latin epigrammatist Martial has gifted to posterity two technical terms for improper uses of the hand: masturbation, and plagiarism.<sup>2</sup> Non-normative uses of sexual pleasure constitute a major theme of his corpus; so too do non-normative uses of the corpus itself. His readers find him singularly vexed by two species of jealous rival: plagiarists, and imitators. The former steal from Martial's text in the hope that they may thereby pass themselves off as good poets; the latter try to interpolate their own inferior material into his ever-expanding corpus under Martial's own name, whether through misplaced emulation or in attempts to blacken his name by associating it with scurrilous trash. According to Martial, both types are easily caught out. They can never match up to Latin epigram's great master, and their jealousy only amplifies that poet's own glory — or so says [theat](#) poet [himselff\[?\]](#).<sup>3</sup>

The threats of textual theft and contamination are ever-present realities in the boisterous universe of Martial's poems. No other Latin author raises plagiarism as a concern nearly so often.<sup>4</sup> Outside the text, in quotidian reality, we need not imagine that plagiarism actually affected him significantly more than it did other ancient poets, which was not much at all. There is no obvious means by which plagiarism *per se* could harm his material interests, in a world with neither copyright law nor a system of royalties for authors, and in which literary pursuits were predominantly a leisure activity of the wealthy. Martial had received an advanced education and been granted equestrian status; we may take him to have been financially secure. He often complains that he is living from hand to mouth, but

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<sup>2</sup> On Martial's innovation in using *plagiarius* (kidnapper) at 1.52.9 of a literary plagiarist, see Citroni 1975 and Seo 2009: 572-6; on its introduction into English, McGill 2012: 9 n.28. On *masturbor*, see Adams 1982: 209-11. Rimell 2008: 109-11 gives a lively discussion of masturbation as a motif in Martial's corpus.

<sup>3</sup> Sullivan 1991: 109n.53. In prose genres at least, intent to deceive was fundamental to Roman understanding of literary plagiarism: the plagiarising author did not merely omit to name his sources, but [also tried](#) actively ~~tried~~ to conceal that he had taken from them, and thereby attempted to steal honor that properly belonged to another: McGill 2012: 41, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Spahlinger 2004: 473.

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to plead poverty was an old poetic commonplace: he adopts the pose ironically, and from time to time deliberately undermines it.<sup>5</sup> At most, plagiarists or forgers might harm his reputation, but any author ran the same risk — and many readers then and now might feel that, with his frequent recourse to shocking obscenity, Martial was doing a good enough job ruining it all by himself.<sup>6</sup> Why, then, does he create such drama around what is unlikely to have been a significant issue in his social world?

The scholarship on Martial has already moved beyond straightforwardly biographical responses to questions of this kind. It recognises that his poems on plagiarists and imitators are not so much reports on real-life experience as responses to a well-known literary trope, just as much as are those on his putative indigence. Various Latin authors find it advantageous to evoke plagiarism as a motif, at least in part as a convenient means for each to establish the particular parameters of his own inimitability. Nonetheless, Martial's repeated emphasis upon it is an original departure for Latin poetry as a whole, as well as within his chosen genre.<sup>7</sup>

The epigrams that allege plagiarism and related phenomena may now be viewed not as an angry indictment of a genuinely prevalent literary offence, but as constituting one or more thematic 'cycles' that perform literary functions within the text. The study of such cycles is by now well established: considerable scholarship is devoted to identifying and analysing

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<sup>5</sup> Thus Williams 1982, on the Republican poets; Tennant 2000 suggests Martial at least *felt* himself to be poorly off, compared to some people he knew. Roman 2001: 113-6 sums up with nuance in relation to poetic persona. Martial declares symptoms of poverty at, e.g., 2.16 (threadbare sheets) and 6.82 (worn-out clothes), among many others. Commenting on Martial's claim at 2.43 to be unable to afford delicacies, Williams 2004: 157 notes that the poet has pre-emptively given it the lie half a dozen poems earlier: 'In 2.37, by contrast, Martial depicts himself as hosting a fairly elaborate banquet that includes among its delicacies the mullet fish that he here portrays himself as unable to afford!'

<sup>6</sup> For an attentive study of Martial's literary interest in obscenity, see Watson 2002: 223-31.

<sup>7</sup> McGill 2012: 76-7 wonders whether Martial may have had precedents now lost to us, but in any case [he](#) finds Martial's development of the theme consciously original, as had Seo 2009: 573; cf. Fitzgerald 2007: 91-7.

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the workings of these groupings of poems that are connected by (most usually) recurring characters and names, themes, and imagery. The new consensus is that the complex interaction of many such cycles is how Martial weaves thematic unities within and between the twelve numbered volumes of Martial's *magnum opus*, as well as creating extra interest for the sequential reader of his complex serial fiction. Concentrations of thematically connected poems have also been noted as lending characteristic flavor to individual books within the dodecalogy. Book 9, for instance, is unified and made distinctive by its concentrated flattery of Domitian and other, lesser patrons; Book 4, by strands of water- and color-imagery.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, by far the largest concentration of poems about plagiarism is encountered in Book 1, where the cycle has benefited from substantial studies in recent years (my own remarks will be correspondingly brief).<sup>9</sup> The imposter 'Fidentinus', introduced in the epigram that forms this article's epigraph, occupies an especially important position within the book. He first appears at 1.29, and (probably) five times more in the book — at 1.38, 1.53, 1.72 (quoted above), and by strong implication as the unnamed plagiarist of 1.52 (making a pair with 1.53) and 1.66. His poems constitute a cycle-within-a-cycle that is concentrated in, and helps unify, Book 1.<sup>10</sup> Many of Martial's recurring character names

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<sup>8</sup> Henriksén 1999: xvi-xx, discussing book 9, concisely shows how concentrations of cycles particularise the constituent *libelli* of the dodecalogy. On Book 4 see Lorenz 2004, an important article that sets a contemporary agenda for through-reading Martial's corpus as a megatext; its ideas are taken further by Sapsford 2012. Influential on all these are Garthwaite 1993 and 1998, developing through-readings of (respectively) books 9 and 5 in which Martial conveys additional meaning by embedding intratextual connections. We may reasonably reserve judgement on whether Martial always intended a dodecalogy *per se* and on the extent to which his plan for the work evolved along the way, but that he set out on and stuck with the idea of a numbered series is incontrovertible.

<sup>9</sup> Barwick 1956 is the fundamental study on cycles in Martial generally. On the plagiarism cycle in Book 1, see Merli 1998; Rimell 2000: 109-16, reworked at 2008: 25-31; Seo 2009; McGill 2012: 74-111; more briefly, Anderson 2006, and cf. in passing Sullivan 1991: 22. Spahlinger 2004 differs in reading the cycle as biographically grounded.

<sup>10</sup> I concur with Spahlinger's view of 1.29 (2004: 474-5 and 481) insofar as he recognises its importance in inaugurating a cyclic drama that enacts literary gamesmanship of some kind. Spahlinger is useful to a point on 1.52-3, 2004: 475-7, while professing perplexity at Martial's

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are chosen for their piquancy in particular thematic contexts, and 'Fidentinus' is typical of this practice: his name declares the good faith (*fides*) that his behaviour contradicts.<sup>11</sup> The unnamed imitator of 1.52 and 1.66 aside, Book 1 contains (by the likeliest reading of the poem in question) one further plagiarist, the 'Celer' of 1.63, who presses Martial for a recitation so that he can jot epigrams down and pass them off as his own. His 'Fast' name marks this jealous imitator as both a fast copyist, and a merely transient annoyance.<sup>12</sup> We may compare the carping rival of 1.110, whose name, 'Velox' ('Speedy') likewise marks him out as unsuited to the long haul of turning epigrams into books — and still less fitted to the unique task Martial has set himself, of turning those epigram-books into instalments of serialised literature on an epic scale.<sup>13</sup>

All this onomastic play will further alert readers to the literary gamesmanship of the plagiarism 'cycle' within Book 1, where it is at its most concentrated (faithless Fidentinus is

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choice to develop a quasi-legal line of argument in 1.52, 2004: 482-4. Following Sullivan (1991: 11), McGill 2012: 74 recognises Book 1's 'Fidentinus cycle' but does not consider the plagiarism theme as a linking device between books, discounting contemporary understandings of intratextuality (as formulated by the contributors to Sharrock and Morales (eds.) 2000) and declaring all such connections inadvertent on Martial's part: 2012: 96. Seo 2014: n.p. [2] is enthusiastic about McGill's overall project but finds his rhetorical focus too narrowly reductive, 'too blunt a hermeneutic instrument for poetry where metaphors and imagery develop and communicate on multiple registers', when applied even to a single poetry-book; all the more so, I would suggest, across a twelve-book poetic megatext.

<sup>11</sup> Thus Rimell 2008: 44 and McGill 2012: 75, *contra* Spahlinger 2004: 481. As recent scholarship fruitfully demonstrates, there is nothing fanciful in digging for meaning in Martial's nomenclature, and perhaps also in his sources (*one anonymous reader for the journal Reader-A* suggests that the 'Nicylla' of AP 11.68, a poem imitated by Lucilius and discussed later in this article, hints at her 'victory'). Maltby 2006 gives a clear account of proper names as a linking device in Martial's corpus, and of word-plays between those names and themes in the sequential development of the corpus. Some of these word-plays are bilingual: Vallat 2006. Spahlinger 2004 discusses 1.38 in passing (474-5, 481) and takes the poem's first line as its title.

<sup>12</sup> By contrast, Howell 1980: 257-8 chooses not to see Celer as a plagiarist, and is followed by McGill 2012: 74-5n.4. Rimell (2000: 110; more briefly, 2009: 63) reads 1.63 as a variation on the Fidentinus cycle's 1.29. On Martial's strongly professed preference for the circulated book over publication by public recital, see Sapsford 2012.

<sup>13</sup> *Scribere me quereris, Velox, epigrammata longa.  
ipse nihil scribis: tu breuiora facis?*

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

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never heard from thereafter). Renouncing his early works — the *Liber Spectaculorum* (which perhaps then took a different form), the *Xenia*, and the *Apophoreta* — as mere juvenilia, Martial recreates himself in this necessarily programmatic volume as the mastermind of an entirely new mode of epigrammatic publication and, as such, a hard man to imitate.<sup>14</sup> One of the dodecalogy's most distinctive features will turn out to be the reflexive fascination of its constituent books with *being* books within a series. These sequential texts, and the physical media that carry them, possess exchange-value but are vulnerable to unauthorised intervention once they leave the author's hands.<sup>15</sup> The motif develops out of a similar but less pronounced emphasis in Catullus, whom Martial repeatedly declares (perhaps speciously) as his principal literary model.<sup>16</sup> Book 1's explicitly programmatic epistolary preface sets the tone. Martial warns off would-be editors who might seek to twist his meaning by interpolating explanatory paratext in the form of poem-headings (such headings were a common feature of ancient epigram-books, including Martial's own recent *Xenia* and *Aphophoreta*):

*absit a iocorum nostrorum simplicitate malignus interpret nec epigrammata mea  
inscribat: improbe facit qui in alieno libro ingeniosus est.*

I hope the malignant critic keeps away from the artless candour of my jokes and doesn't impose headings on my epigrams; it's criminal to parade your cleverness in someone else's book.

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<sup>14</sup> In its present form the *Liber Spectaculorum* is a mere stub of 34 poems. It is likely to have been extracted from a regularly sized book, or perhaps even from two. Coleman in the introduction to her 2006 commentary discusses the difficulties in assigning a unitary date to its contents.

<sup>15</sup> Roman 2001, an important article; Fowler 1995 is still valuable. The recent scholarship (see again n.8) has done much to draw out Martial's interest in giving individual books their own distinctive flavors, thereby making each memorable as an episode within a larger whole.

<sup>16</sup> Swann 1994 is the major study; briefly, Livingstone and Nisbet 2010: 114-16.

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This stern injunction to the meddlesome copyist or jumped-up amateur *littérateur* stands in pointed contrast to Martial's generous advice to his general readership, again in the preface. Customers are entitled to consume their purchase however they wish, and if they find they are not enjoying Book 1, they can take whatever short-cuts they like:

*si quis tamen tam ambitiose tristis est ut apud illum in nulla pagina latine loqui fas sit, potest epistola uel potius titulo contentus esse...*

However, if there's anyone with such a determinedly long face that not a page of plain speaking is allowed in his company, he may content himself with this epistle, or even better, with my title...<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, selective consumption must never be allowed to shade into reproduction or material alteration; no plagiarist or interpolator may compromise the textual and physical wholeness of the *libellus*. Fidentinus' attempts to adulterate Martial's own book with his own material (1.53),<sup>18</sup> and to pass that book off as his own, are the most obvious manifestations of this motif in Book 1, but we may also invoke Martial's rebuke to Cornelius, who is pressuring him to remove its risqué content:

*Nec castrare uelis meos libellos,  
gallo turpius est nihil Priapo.*

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<sup>17</sup> For Martial's established, 'attentive' readership, the ironic invitation to the prudish reader caps a sequence already in motion at *Xenia* 3.7-8 (skip individual poems if you dislike the headings) and *Apophoreta* 2.3-4 (if you dislike the poems, read the headings instead). These collections of gift-tag poems are among the early works published prior to the numbered books.

<sup>18</sup> On 1.53, see interestingly Seo 2009: 585-8, detecting subtle Theognidean and Horatian echoes that, like the effects I investigate here, allusively weave a meta-poetic stance.



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Don't figure on castrating my little books. There's nothing more embarrassing than a dickless Priapus. (1.35.14-15)

In the context of this readerly advice, the concentration of poems in Book 1 about the production and consumption of books, and dramatising Book 1 *as Book 1*, is straightforwardly and sensibly read as a function of Martial's renewed self-representation at the launch of the major literary project that will elevate his standing as an author and define the rest of his career. Book 1's plagiarists and imitators constitute a major but by no means the sole expression of this overarching introductory theme, heightening the volume's programmatic character as the first installment in a planned series. Indeed, one function of the Fidentinus cycle is to confirm to readers that sequels will soon follow, unless Martial gets a lucrative offer first:

*sed pumicata fronte si quis est nondum  
nec umbilicis cultus atque membrana,  
mercare: tales habeo; nec sciet quisquam.*

But if there's a book with its brow not yet pumiced smooth, not yet dressed up with knobs and a jacket, buy it. I have some like that — no-one will ever know. (1.66.10-12)

Martial's mercenary twist advertises a wittily urbane refusal to take his own *nugae* too seriously, and marks out the author of this new dodecalogy as a disreputable operator in whom readers should not put too much trust.<sup>19</sup> The epigram has been interpreted as part

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 1.113, near the end of the book, where Martial disowns all his earlier works as pitiful *juvenilia* — while in the same breath telling his enthusiasts where they can buy copies of these books that have made him *toto notus in orbe* (1.1.2). Seo 2009: 576-7 is good on Martial's creative choice to

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of Martial's characteristic and unique emphasis on the materiality of his *libelli* in the marketplace of culture, a prosaic deconstruction of poetic posturing and the patronage game.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, by one reading Martial here is putting his books *on the game, prostituting* their tender young bodies and promising his customers a discreet service: their unusual sexual-literary proclivities will never become public knowledge.<sup>21</sup> At the *very* least, Book 1's recurring emphasis on plagiarism deliberately marks its author out as a poet of peculiarly unpoetic and mundane concerns. To articulate one's own authorial originality with reference to derivative rivals is a programmatic trope familiar not from fellow poets but from the prefaces of prose authors, who may deploy it to raise the profile of their genre, dignify their position within it, and attract the 'right' kind of patron.<sup>22</sup>

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With its programmatic function now discharged, the theme of malicious or misguided interference in Martial's text will not become prominent again until Book 10, where Martial must once again position himself carefully in the light of his previous output.<sup>23</sup> In its present

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'debase the metaphorical language' of poetic patronage. Martial's self-characterisation as a maker of *nugae*, 'trifles', is consciously Catullan: Henriksen 2012: 9-10.

<sup>20</sup> 'Sarcastic, pseudodidactic': Rimell 2000: 108, reprised at 2009: 32. Spahlinger 2004 initially concedes 'spöttischer Ironie' (482) but settles on a biographical reading strategy, presuming Martial's overture to have been essentially genuine and motivated by financial need (487); likewise that, whether or not Fidentinus existed, the danger he represented was real enough (489, cf. 493). On materiality, see Seo 2009: 567-9, 574-6, drawing on Roman 2001 and effectively drawing out just how unique Martial is in this aspect of his self-representation.

<sup>21</sup> This suggestion I owe to the anonymous reader who sees *pumicata fronte... nondum* as building on the depilated *liber... pumice mundus* of Horace, *Epistle* 1.20.1-2; and who further suggests connecting that passage to *Epistle* 1.3's figuration of plagiarism as borrowed plumage (to which I later refer), as part of a discourse of the embodied and sexualised book that will subsequently pull in Ovid and Martial. That would be a whole other article, and I hope someone will write it.

<sup>22</sup> McGill 2012: 34; 42-5 (Vitruvius); 48-9 (Pliny the Elder). Since a preface is the standard place to make or rebut an allegation of plagiarism, Martial's choice to begin Book 1 with a substantial prose epistolary preface, but *not to place any of his allegations there, makes his posture on plagiarism all the more idiosyncratic.*

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<sup>23</sup> Spahlinger 2004: 489 remarks on this long hiatus between Books 1 and 10, noting only 2.20 (which I discuss immediately below), but follows Kroner 1987 in seeing Martial's departure from the plagiarism theme in terms of a biographically conceived journey into literary maturity, through which Martial comes to know himself as a fully fledged poetic voice (the 'literarische Selbstverständnis' of Kroner's title). This account explains the reappearance of the plagiarism/imposture cycle in Book 10 through imaginative biography: —with the fall of Domitian,

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form, Book 10 comes to us explicitly as a second edition, re-issued as such subsequent to the publication of Book 11, and substantially rewritten by Martial to put distance between himself and the recently assassinated Domitian, whom he had repeatedly flattered as a living god, and under whom the first edition had come out. The editorialising declaration of revision in the opening sequence (10.2) evokes the spirit and literary reputation of that great maker of second editions, Ovid; denunciations of vindictive imitators immediately follow (10.3, 10.5), rounding out the poet's disavowal of his own (no longer extant) first edition by emphasising that not everything labelled 'Martial' is in fact authorised by our poet.<sup>24</sup> This concentration in the opening sequence is matched at the book's close, mocking a deluded adulterator of Martial's text (10.100) and a detected plagiarist who tries and fails to pass himself off as a poet (10.102).

There is more than one level of ring-composition operative here: each of these last two poems will remind attentive through-readers of the dodecalogy of specific accusations against Fidentinus (1.53 and 1.72 respectively), closing the loop with Book 1. The revival of the plagiarism cycle in Book 10's second edition thus delivers final closure on the whole of the mature Martial's literary production at Rome (he shortly thereafter retires to Spain, where he composes and does not long outlive Book 12, AD 102/3), just as its inception in Book 1 inaugurated that production.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Better living through plagiarism: the Paulus cycle

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Martial's position was weakened and he saw the vultures circling, precipitating his retreat to Spain (2004: 489-90).

<sup>24</sup> On Ovidianism in 10.2 see Damschen and Heil 2004: 41-4; on defamation by false attribution in 10.3, Hardie 2012: 329.

<sup>25</sup> In book 12, the plagiarism motif returns one last time, and with an ironic twist (12.63): a bad Cordoban poet is reciting the *libelli* without paying for them; Martial wishes the man was a better poet, so that he could plagiarise him back.

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If literary theft and imposture are (among other things) a framing device for Martial's poetic output at Rome, opening it in Book 1 and closing it down in the revised Book 10, then what is happening *within* that frame, in the body of his serial narrative (Books 2-11)? The remainder of this article proposes two interpretative slices [\[the right word?\]](#) through the corpus. The first is a character-driven cycle, ranging across the majority of the twelve numbered books; the second, with which it momentarily interacts, is a thematic cycle within a single book (Book 6). This is treated in the article's third part. I neither claim nor intend a definitive account of Martial's use of the plagiarism theme; an important part of what drives this article is the conviction that the poet fashions his dodecalogy as a complex serial fiction that deliberately denies his readers any such easy answers. The diversity of responses to the plagiarism motif in the modern scholarship bears witness to the polysemy of the corpus: no one interpretative strategy can pin Martial down for long, and we should celebrate that he always has more to give.

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Twelve poems in the dodecalogy feature a 'Paulus'.<sup>26</sup> As Martial's readers come to know well, the reuse of a name within the corpus does not guarantee that every new instance will refer to the same individual, nor do I discuss all the Paulus poems here. It is in any case a common enough name. Nonetheless, in many instances the reuse of a name comes with enough repetition of similar traits that readers may feel they are getting to know a recurring character, that a 'cycle' is emerging. Instances include the plagiarist 'Fidentinus', the barber 'Cinnamus', the pathic 'Postumus', and Martial's close friends, 'Rufus' and the suggestively named 'Julius Martial'.<sup>27</sup> 'Paulus' is one such.

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<sup>26</sup> 2.20, 4.17, 5.4, 5.22, 5.28, 6.12, 7.72, 8.33, 8.26, 9.85, 10.10, 12.69.

<sup>27</sup> It would be otiose to give full references for all of these; their appearances may be tracked using the index of names in the Loeb. I do not share its editor's positivistic confidence that real-life and fictional 'Pauli' (etc.) may be told apart by the critic's expert eye. On Nauta 2002, who shares Shackleton Bailey's optimism, McGill merely notes, 'I leave open the possibility that the reality was a bit messier' (2012: 76 n.12).

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Paulus is first encountered in book 2, as a plagiarist:

*Carmina Paulus emit, recitat sua carmina Paulus:*

*nam quod emas possis iure uocare tuum.*

Paulus buys poems, and recites them as his — for what you buy, you can technically call your own. (2.20)

The poet's ironic concession in the second line seems to ridicule Paulus' culpable failure to distinguish ownership from authorship; but the through-reader who takes the book purchased by Paulus to be one of Martial's own (the most natural reading in the light of Book 1's repeated complaints) will additionally recall the ludic self-deprecation and mercenary posture of 1.66, discussed above, and especially of 1.29, which is similarly heavy on the personal pronouns. We have already overheard that this poet's 'mine' (*mea*) could be 'yours' (*tua*) if the money and circumstances are right, making Paulus' claim of authorship potentially more than just a technicality — perhaps he does have as much right (*ius*) as Martial does to declare that the poems are his.<sup>28</sup>

We next meet Paulus as a sly reader on familiar social terms with Martial at 4.17, where he incites the poet to write vile epigrams against a female target so that Paulus may have no rivals for her sexual favours: *o Paule, malus es* (4.17.3), retorts Martial, wise to his game. His request may not get him those poems, but at least it gets him this one. At 5.22 he is a patron with a desirable address on the Esquiline, where his domestic staff keep

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<sup>28</sup> *si mea uis dici, gratis tibi carmina mittam; | si dici tua uis, hoc eme, ne mea sint*, 1.29.3-4. 'These days authorship is up for sale': thus Rimell 2008: 22, centering her own account of Martial's response to Fidentinus in the radical 'penetrability' that, in her reading, lends the corpus its particular character. McGill 2012: 82-3 presents an attractive reading of the lines as ironic condemnation of Paulus.

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telling Martial their master is not at home to receive visitors; his faked illness at 9.85 suggests a habit of dodging his poorer clients, among whose number Martial has clearly been enlisted. The pretend illness further develops the theme of Paulus' propensity to dissemble.

In his final appearance at 12.69, the swan-song book completed after our author's retirement to Spain, the tables are turned. Paulus concludes his character arc as a wealthy connoisseur who ought to know better:

*Sic tamquam tabulas scyphosque, Paule,  
omnes archetypos habes amicos.*

You're convinced your paintings and plate are the real deal, Paulus. You're convinced your friends are, too.

The cycle thus ends much as it began, exploring how the line between genuine and counterfeit becomes blurred, albeit this time with Paulus as the victim rather than the perpetrator of imposition. Across the span of the dodecalogy, though, much has changed. Martial may have shamed him at first appearance, but being outed as a plagiarist has clearly done Paulus no social harm.

Indeed, in a striking reversal, Martial himself has in the meantime resorted to Paulus as a man of wealth and taste — more, of public influence and credibility — for protection of his own public reputation as a legitimate poet. At 7.72, and writing as Paulus' humble client, Martial fears that an anonymous malefactor may [be circulating](#) scurrilous epigrams under Martial's name— *atro carmina quae madent ueneno*, 'poems that ooze black poison'. The

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poet now appeals to Paulus, opening with an elaborate catalogue of good wishes (lines 1-11) as a preamble to his request that he help police the boundaries of Martial's own corpus:

*ut uocem mihi commodes patronam*

*et quantum poteris, sed usque, clames:*

*'non scripsit meus ista Martialis.'* (7.72.14-16)

So may you lend me your patron voice and declare as loud as you can, 'My Martial did not write that stuff.'

In an ironic turnabout, Martial now begs Paulus to disavow Martial's authorship of a series of poems — the very act for which he castigated him five books earlier. As noted earlier, Martial's fears do eventually come true — true, that is, within the world generated by the corpus — in the revised edition of Book 10, which develops an imposture cycle (10.3, 10.5, 10.33) as part of its repositioning of the poet post-Domitian. Here in Book 7, though, the inimitable poet proposes to forestall this fate by entrusting the integrity of his corpus to the critical acumen and authority of one of his former plagiarists. Client to patron, he entreats Paulus to make an authoritative declaration that will safeguard his legacy as an author by securing the integrity of the vulnerable books in his care: *My Martial did not write that stuff.*

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For the attentive reader or re-reader, 12.69 then adds the further and retrospective twist that the confidence Martial here expresses in his patron's unerring critical eye is likely to have been overly optimistic. By the end, Paulus has no idea what is real and what is fake; but he is so rich, he does not need to care. Long-term readers looking back on his

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glittering career in the borderlands between authority and imposture may find parallels with Martial's own.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. The plagiarism theme and Lucillian echoes in Book 6

We now turn to Book 6, at the half-way point between Book 1 and the reissued Book 10. Previous discussions of the plagiarism theme in Martial have passed it by because plagiarism is never mentioned there. Nonetheless, I will argue here that Book 6 evokes the theme. Further, it develops the plagiarism cycle in an inventive new direction, delivering sophisticated pleasures of recognition and insight for Martial's studious reader.

Context requires that we begin by revisiting 2.20, where the poet first caught Paulus in the act of plagiarism:

*Carmina Paulus emit, recitat sua carmina Paulus  
nam quod emas possis iure uocare sua.*

Paulus buys poems, and recites them as his — for what you buy, you can technically call your own. (2.20)

Compare now this epigram about a wig, early in Book 6:

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<sup>29</sup> I am indebted to the anonymous reader [for the journal](#) who encouraged me to make this last point explicit: as they frame it, Paulus is open to being read as 'a knowing patronal double of the poet... What Paulus does with money and patronal authority, Martial does with poetry.' The same reader suggests connecting the deliberate double sense of *habes* at 12.69.2 — Paulus 'reckons' his friends/clients and his artworks to be genuine, but also 'owns' the artworks because he has paid good money for them (and perhaps feels the same way about the friends/clients) — to the ambiguity of *emit...emas* at Paulus' first appearance, 2.20. This attractive interpretation sets up an element of ring-composition that coheres nicely with my remarks later in this article on how the revived plagiarism cycle of Book 10 closes the loop on Book 1.



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*lurat capillos esse, quos emit, suos*

*Fabulla: ¶numquid, Paule, peierat?¶* (6.12)<sup>30</sup>

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

That the joke is essentially identical is emphasised through verbal echoing (*emit / emit, sua...sua / suos*), but its second iteration comes with a twist: Martial turns Paulus, the shameless target of 2.20, into the expert adjudicator of 6.12. This adds a layer of irony for the astute reader's enjoyment: poachers, as the saying goes, make the best gamekeepers (and as we have seen, Paulus is on his way up, a trajectory he will continue to follow through the remainder of the dodecalogy). Be they the putative contemporary fans anticipating the release of each approximately annual installment, or subsequent binge-readers of the completed dodecalogy, sequential readers of Martial's corpus are meant to pick up on the connection between these two poems. Plagiarism, then, is potentially in the frame.

Martial's studious reader will not stop there. Those contemporaries who enjoyed broader familiarity with the genre of epigram in their own time are likely to have spotted a further level of available irony, this time with Martial as his own target. That Martial imitated and adapted epigrams by [the](#) popular and near-contemporary Greek satirical (or 'scoptic') epigrammatists, Lucilius and Nicarchus, is well known,<sup>31</sup> and many readers then and since will have been in a position to observe that 6.12 bears a close relation to a Lucillian original, *AP* 11.68:

<sup>30</sup> As transmitted, the second line of the Latin text of 6.12 is two syllables short, though it is clear enough what the gist must have been. Eden (2001: 320) notes past efforts at supplementation; his own suggestion is the attractively straightforward *Fabulla: numquid, Paule, peierat <suos>*.

<sup>31</sup> On Lucilius, see Burnikel 1980; on both, Nisbet 2003.

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Τὰς τρίχας, ὃ Νίκυλλα, τινὲς βάπτειν σε λέγουσιν,  
ἄς σὸν μελαινοτάτας ἐξ ἀγορᾶς ἐπρίω.

Nicylla, some people say you dye your hair — the raven-black hair you bought at the market.

The joke is of course not completely identical, but close similarities of detail (*capillos...quos emit*, τρίχας...ἄς σὸν... ἐπρίω) actively invite the reader to match Martial's version against its Lucillian original. What is more, the attentive serial reader's recognition that Martial 6.12 is out of Lucilius AP 11.68, coupled with the connection that the reappearance of Paulus establishes for such a reader between 2.20 and 6.12, will now invite them to weigh up the possibility that 2.20 had also taken inspiration from Lucilius AP 11.68, though loosely enough that they will have had no suspicion of it at first reading.

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With 6.12, I therefore argue, Martial inaugurates a concentrated phase of the plagiarism cycle. We saw that the first such concentration, the 'Fidentinus cycle', lent distinctive flavor to Book 1. Here, too, it will help define the individual character of its book as an installment within the dodecalogy, but the emphasis this time will be quite different.

The next poem in the cycle is 6.19:

*Non de ui neque caede nec ueneno,  
sed lis est mihi de tribus capellis:  
uicini queror has abesse furto.  
hoc iudex sibi postulat probari:*

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*tu Carrhas*<sup>32</sup> *Mithridaticumque bellum*

*et periuria Punici furoris*

*et Sullas Mariosque Muciosque*

*magna uoce sonas manuque tota.*

*iam dic, Postume, de tribus capellis.*

My case isn't about assault or murder or poisoning, it's about three nanny-goats. I'm taking my neighbour to court for stealing them. The judge wants proof. But you — you turn up the volume, strike a pose, and sound off about Carrhae and the Mithridatic War; the treaty-breaking Carthaginian Menace; the Sullas and the Mariuses and the Muciuses. Enough already, Postumus; tell him about my three nanny-goats.

6.19 is clearly a reworking of Lucilius AP 11.141:

Χοιρίδιον καὶ βοῦν ἀπολώλεκα καὶ μίαν αἴγα,  
ὧν χάριν εἴληφας μισθάριον, Μενέκλεις·  
οὔτε δέ μοι κοινόν τι πρὸς Ὀθρυάδα γεγένηται,  
οὔτ' ἀπάγω κλέπτας τοὺς ἀπὸ Θερμοπυλῶν·  
ἀλλὰ πρὸς Εὐτυχίδην ἔχομεν κρίσιν· ὥστε τί ποιεῖ  
ἐνθάδε μοι Ξέρξης καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι;  
πλὴν κάμοῦ μνήσθητι νόμου χάριν, ἢ μέγα κράζω·  
Ἄλλα λέγει Μενεκλῆς, ἄλλα τὸ χοιρίδιον.”

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<sup>32</sup> In some MSS, *Cannas*; the point of the epigram is hardly affected either way.

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I've been robbed of a piglet, an ox, and one goat, Meneclis, and you accepted your honorarium on their account. There's no connection between me and Othryades, and I'm not saying the Three Hundred at Thermopylae did it. It's Eutyichides I'm taking to court. So what use are Xerxes and the Spartans right now? Drop my name in somewhere, if only for form's sake — or I'll loudly heckle: 'That's Meneclis' story, but the piglet's testimony contradicts it.'

The close similarity is uncontroversially observed by Martial's modern critics.<sup>33</sup> Martial's version condenses aspects of the original (the types of animal stolen) to free up space for a fuller comic treatment of his lawyer's self-regarding performance. Like Meneclis, this grandiloquent orator (*magna uoce sonas* / μέγα κράζω) is distracted from the task at hand by his own elaborate exempla and tropes, though these are now out of a Roman rather than a Greek rhetorician's repertoire; and like Lucilius, Martial tells his hired lawyer to get to the point of what the neighbor has actually stolen. Again, close echoes of phrasing, including the repetition that frames the joke (*tribus capellis...tribus capellis* / χοιρίδιον...χοιρίδιον), admit and even advertise Martial's borrowing.

This concentrated burst of Lucillian imitation will catch the attention of the studious reader (even if they were napping during 6.12), and will suggest to them that Book 6 is attempting something new and peculiar. These poems on apparently disparate themes (on the one hand, cosmetic disguise; on the other, theft of property) will only offer up their meaningful interconnection to the sharpest of readers at this point in a first through-reading of Book 6, but subsequent poems in the cycle will reinforce and clarify the intended drift.

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<sup>33</sup> Sullivan 1991: 86-7 takes the pair as paradigmatic of Martial's relation to Lucillian models. Shackleton Bailey, who downplays Lucilius' importance to Martial, nonetheless labels 6.19 "a copy", 1993: l.15n.; with Schneider 2000, I see a nuanced adaptation in dialogue with its original.

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Let us follow along with the more bewildered ordinary reader and see the cycle begin to take its more definite shape. We must wait some time for the next instance, which comes late in its book:

*Fur notae nimium rapacitatis  
compilare Cilix uolebat hortum,  
ingenti sed erat, Fabulle, in horto  
praeter marmoreum nihil Priapum.  
dum non uult uacua manu redire,  
ipsum surripuit Cilix Priapum. (6.72)*

A thief well known for his excessive rapacity, Cilix by name, planned to clean out a garden. But in that huge garden, Fabullus, there was nothing except a marble Priapus. Since he didn't want to go away empty-handed, Cilix made off with that Priapus.

Like 6.19, and at least one other epigram in the book, this poem on a theft will have reminded readers strongly of Lucillius, who specialised in poems on the peculiarly narrow topic of thieves who make off with statues of gods; four such epigrams survive in the Greek Anthology (AP 11.174-7).<sup>34</sup> None of them is an exact model for Martial 6.72, but the Anthology transmits Lucillius only partially, and this type of poem is one of his personal trademarks; there can be no doubt ~~but~~ that Martial's readers will have recognised 6.72 as 'Lucillian'. In the extant epigrams, Lucillius' thieves steal an Aphrodite (11.174); a Hermes, god of thieves (11.176); an Apollo, detector of thieves (11.177); and an unnamed "god"

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<sup>34</sup> 6.53 is clearly modelled on Lucillius AP 11.257, on a bad doctor.

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who may be a Roman emperor (11.175). They also comment more or less wittily on their hauls, a feature Martial chooses to omit, much as he selectively condensed his model in 6.19. For instance, Lucilius' Aulus (11.176) justifies his theft of a statue of Hermes by telling it that "Students often outstrip their teachers", while the criminal making off with the "god" of 11.175 remarks that "There's no way I can swear by *you*" — the statue's susceptibility to theft proves the impotence of the god to intervene, and thus that any oaths sworn by him will have no force.

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The statue in Martial 6.72 is instead of Priapus, who is the subject of three other epigrams in this book: 6.16, 6.49, and the immediately succeeding poem, 6.73, a conventional priapeum. The garden god who wards off petty theft thus claims his own cycle within the book, which at 6.72 intersects with the cycle of thefts proper.<sup>35</sup> 6.72's particular contribution to the Priapus cycle is to undermine the god's distinctive claim to defend against thieves (reversing the dynamic of Lucilius 11.176, where the stolen deity was the patron *of* thieves). Priapus' unreliability as guardian of the orchard and kitchen garden will echo in the sequel volumes at 7.91 and 8.40.

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The sequential pairing of 6.72 with 6.73 creates a straightforward context for the poet's choice to make Priapus the stolen deity in his own variation on the Lucillian template, embedding it within Book 6's cluster of poems on Priapus: these in turn situate themselves within a larger 'Priapus cycle' extending across multiple books.<sup>36</sup> However, Martial's choice of addressee, 'Fabullus', additionally recalls the 'Fabulla' of 6.12, which in turn of course

<sup>35</sup> On Priapea in Martial see Willenberg 1973, including detailed discussions of 6.21 (327-34), 6.49 (334-8), and 6.72-3 (338-45). Willenberg takes the latter very much as an interacting pair.

<sup>36</sup> Fitzgerald 2007: 115-21 is suggestive on the effects of pairing and sequencing in Martial's *libelli*.

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declared itself the intratextual double of 2.20 through its echoing of 'Paulus' in an identical joke format.<sup>37</sup>

Admittedly Martial uses the names 'Fabullus' and 'Fabulla' several times in the corpus; they are metrically convenient but suggest no distinctive personal traits as did, for instance, 'Celer' and 'Velox', [and](#) so no distinctive characterisations emerge.<sup>38</sup> However, this is not to say that significant patterns and effects do not develop from the contexts in which these repetitions occur. Fabulla tells a tall tale (6.12), in a version of Lucillius' Nicylla poem; later in the same book (6.72), Fabullus hears one. This by itself could well be happenstance were it not that, late in the corpus, Fabullus will make his final appearance (12.22) right before [a second version of that same Lucillian poem, AP 11.68,](#) on Nicylla (12.23).

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## 4. A plagiaristic mise-en-abîme?

For the attentive serial reader and re-reader — Martial's hoped-for *lector studiosus* (1.1.4) — this pair of epigrams in the closing volume of the dodecalogy may well provoke a re-evaluation of Book 6's Fabulla and Fabullus. The poems in which they appeared, 6.12 and 6.72, already shared one trait that many readers will have noted on first reading: an origin in Lucillius. The subjects of their poems, though, might appear unlikely to yield a further connection. What can a woman pretending her wig is her real hair, and a burglar making off with a statue, possibly have in common?

The answer is actually simple: cosmetic disguise and theft are the two stock figurative images used by [ancient authors who identify and condemn literary plagiarists.](#) The figure

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<sup>37</sup> The connection is noted by Grewing 1997: 134-6.

<sup>38</sup> Fabulla, six times; Fabullus, nine; again, the Index of Names in the standard Loeb has all the details.

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of the plagiarist as thief is all but ubiquitous, with a rich vocabulary already developing in Greek from Old Comedy onward: indeed, accusations of textual poaching acquired a distinctly comic edge that continued into Roman comedy. Martial's friend Pliny helped refine it, introducing the language of Roman law.<sup>39</sup> The trope of plagiarism as cosmetic disguise is more elusive, though we find it in Horace (*Epistles* 1.3.15-20), and Martial could have heard an elaboration of it very recently in one of Epictetus' lectures at Rome.<sup>40</sup>

Strikingly, Epictetus combined the figures of theft *and* disguise when he declared that plagiarists are clothes-thieves, who have stolen the mode and matter of legitimate authors just as petty thieves steal the unattended clothes of bathers (or, in a more sinister reading of the key term, just as tomb-robbers strip corpses of the clothes in which they have been buried):

καὶ περιθέμενοι σχῆμα ἀλλότριον περιπατεῖτε κλέπται καὶ λωποδύται τούτων τῶν οὐδεν  
προσηκόντων ὀνομάτων καὶ πραγμάτων.

You have dressed yourselves up in someone else's clothing, but you stand revealed as thieves — yes, clothes-thieves of those terms and topics that don't belong to you at all.<sup>41</sup>

The ancient literary author who does most to develop the trope of plagiarism as cosmetic disguise, however, is Martial himself, notably in the plagiarism cycle of the programmatic Book 1, where he delivered striking formulations that the readers of Book 6 are bound now to recall. The Fidentinus poem with which we opened, 1.72, is the crucial text here:

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<sup>39</sup> McGill 2012: 7-9, noting the Latin comic poets as the likely introducers into Latin literature of the Greek terminology of literary theft; on Pliny and *deprehendere in furto*, McGill 2012: 49-50, and cf. Seo 2009: 572-3.

<sup>40</sup> The renowned Stoic was teaching in Rome till AD 89; Martial published Book 6 in 91.

<sup>41</sup> Arr. *Epict.* 2.19.28.

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...Just so does Aegle reckon she has teeth, because she's bought ones made of bone and Indian ivory; and Lycoris, who's blacker than a windfall mulberry, loves how she looks in white lead. Just so, and by the same rationale that makes you a poet, you'll have a full head of hair when you go bald.

Fidentinus deludes himself [that](#) he can pass for a poet by taking from Martial's text — for which he has at least, like 2.20's Paulus, paid the bookseller his asking price; but (says Martial here) readers who know the genuine article cannot be fooled.<sup>42</sup> Then again, as Martial will ironically concede in 2.20 when Paulus tries the same trick, 'what you buy, you [can technically call your own](#)'; just as in 6.12, he will admit [that](#) it makes a kind of sense for Fabulla to swear her full head of hair is her own ('you tell me, Paulus, [is she lying?](#)'), since she has paid for it.

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What is more, Martial has already signalled an ironic willingness to play along with the imposture, if only for the fun he can have [in](#) toying with the notion, for a readership that he has already told us knows his style inside out and could never actually be fooled: *quem legis ille, quem requiris* (1.1.1). At 1.29 he offers to pull Book 1 from circulation, and thus enable Fidentinus to pass its content off as his own without fear of detection, if the money is right.<sup>43</sup> Later in the book, as we have seen, he affects to have realised belatedly that

<sup>42</sup> Spahlinger 2004: 478-9 discusses 1.72 and observes that the cosmetic parallels raise the issue of putting on a false appearance, but he sees the actual poem as unconnected with any 'literarischen *furtum*' (479) and does not seem to note the linkage between literary plagiarism and cosmetic disguise.

<sup>43</sup> Martial thereby proposes to confound the two categories identified by McGill 2012: 11 as distinguishing ancient from modern plagiarism: 'ownership [of a literary work] as a category of legal and commercial property rights and ownership as a symbolic and moral category'; see as well Seo 2009: 579-80. I follow Citroni 1975: 98 in understanding *hoc* (1.29.4) as referring most naturally to Book 1 as a unit, and I take it that Martial's readers will have straightforwardly taken *libellos* (1.29.1) to mean the volumes of juvenilia that were already in circulation. For astute comment on 1.29's mercenary ethos see Rimell 2000: 110, reprised summarily at 2009: 43.

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such a scheme will not work: *mutare dominum non potest liber notus*, 'a book can't change its master once it's out' (1.66.9). Instead the would-be imposter poet really needs to buy the rights to *Book 2 and its sequels* before the public can become aware that Martial has them in readiness as sequels (*tales habeo*, 'I have some books like that', 1.66.12).

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Fidentinus (most readers will naturally assume the addressee to be him) can thus enjoy his turn in the spotlight, *toto notus in orbe* (1.1.2), and Martial will have a job for life as his ghostwriter — except of course that by publishing this poem in Book 1, Martial has mock-accidentally advertised the proposed transaction to his own devoted public, and thus made it impossible to transact. There will be no big payday: our poet will have to settle for worldwide fame instead.<sup>44</sup> However, that fame will always be compromised by his programmatic 'slip', his tacit confession that really very little separates the supposedly inimitable Martial from his mediocre imitator.<sup>45</sup>

When Martial reactivates the plagiarism cycle in Book 6, he takes it in a new direction that further compromises his own authority as the dodecalogy's narrator and protagonist. In dedicating himself to a life in epigram, Martial had turned himself into Rome's great (though as he ironically concedes, not *so* great) specialist in the most Greek of ancient literary genres. Latin forebears were far to seek: from the trinity of M. Domitius Marsus, Albinovanus Pedo, and Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus, named as pretexts in the

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<sup>44</sup> McGill 2012: 84 finds a separate route to irony in the poem: 'Martial plays on how he no longer has a claim on his material text when he buys it by suggesting that the exchange of ownership might extend to authorship. This notion so blatantly inverts cultural assumptions to confound commonsense ideas and create ambiguity that it compels a reader to understand the opposite, i.e., that Martial by rights remains the acknowledged author of his *carmina* after Fidentinus buys them.' Ultimately, though, like Spahlinger 2004, McGill takes the Fidentinus cycle as true or true enough, 2012: 94-5.

<sup>45</sup> Rimell 2000: 112-13 (cf. 2009: 45-6) is fascinating on this point, and compare her 2000: 108 (reprinted at 2009: 42), also with reference to 1.66: 'A book of epigrams is so apparently fragmented and repetitive: who would notice if a poem was missing from a collection, if another author paraphrased one of them, or pinched some lines from different poems and put them together to make a new one? Isn't this precisely what Martial himself is doing?'

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epistolary preface to Book 1 and sporadically thereafter, no Latin epigram survives.<sup>46</sup>

Martial learned more from Catullus, the latter part of whose transmitted corpus is genuinely epigrammatic and whose favored meter, the hendecasyllable, Martial makes his own; he names him frequently as an inspiration, alongside (a looser parallel) Ovid, the racy elegist: modern scholarship has explored his very real debts to both. We may note in passing that without Ovid, who fully developed the conceit that an author's books are his dependants, Martial would never have called a literary thief a *plagiarius* and thereby gifted us the term we use today (the word meant simply 'kidnapper').<sup>47</sup> For detailed models, though, Martial turned to recent Greek poets — whom he never names, in marked contrast to his noisy advertisement of kinship to authors in Latin. Suddenly in Book 6, and pointedly undercutting the protestations of moral outrage in Book 1, he makes sophisticated entertainment out of what he now implies to have been his own sharp practice in handling sources.

Does any of this make Martial a plagiarist, and thereby a hypocrite as rotten as any of the lecherous moralists he loved to expose? Hardly; ancient authors always looked to models, rarely named them, and only rote reproduction or the active attempt to hide one's source incurred opprobrium. Rote reproduction is exactly the charge Martial levels at his putative would-be rivals, but, as stated at the outset, there is no reason to suppose he was any more plagued by such plagiarists *stricto sensu* than was any other ancient poet — which is to say, very little (I am hardly the first reader to wonder if he made Fidentinus up).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> On Marsus, Pedo, and Gaetulicus see concisely Sullivan 1991: 93-100. *AP* 11.409 is an epigram in Greek by a 'Gaetulicus'; Citroni 1975: 10 balks at identifying its author with Martial's Gaetulicus. What little can be said about Latin epigram before Martial is in Morelli 2000.

<sup>47</sup> On Martial's reanimation of Ovid see notably Hinds 2007 and Pitcher 2008; on Catullus, as earlier, Swann 1994. 'With Martial, the exiled Ovid comes home and writes the poetry conceived in, but prevented by, his exile': Fitzgerald 2007: 187. On *plagiarius*, see McGill 2012: 8-9, including his n.28, and on Fidentinus' role in helping Martial push the terminology forward, 88.

<sup>48</sup> Thus e.g. McGill 2012: 76 n.13, and implicitly in discussions such as Rimell 2008: 25-31 that consider Fidentinus only as a rhetorical foil; the speaking name naturally pushes in that direction.

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Declaring themselves the victims of plagiarism was one way authors could assert the integrity and significance of their own texts and lives; accordingly there was probably more smoke than fire, and there was little enough smoke (such accusations could easily backfire).<sup>49</sup> In particular, for a poet to level a charge of plagiarism was very uncommon.

That oddity was Martial's opportunity, and not merely for simple self-promotion as poetry's Next Big Thing.<sup>50</sup> In the Paulus cycle, and in his 'meta-plagiaristic' choices of Lucillian model in Book 6, he puts the theme of plagiarism to work in crafting a distinctive voice and point of view. As we have seen in his dealings with Fidentinus, this point of view is imbued with the spirit of Roman satire: it embraces what we now term cognitive dissonance, because the result is funny and involving for its readers. Scholarship on Latin satire has long since established how Martial's friend Juvenal, the heir to Martial's written Rome of hard knocks and foul characters, turns himself (that is to say, the first-person voice of the *Satires*) into his own best comic material by crafting a profoundly flawed and self-contradictory persona, so enraged at the world (at least in the early *Satires*) that he attempts to critique it reduce him to near-incoherence, but at the same time often motivated by banal self-interest.<sup>51</sup> Martial was at this game before him, lambasting Fidentinus for mixing (Martial's) good with (Fidentinus' own) bad epigrams to make a book (1.53) even though he had frankly admitted to doing the exact same thing himself (1.18).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> McGill 2012: 28-9: 'In ancient Rome, accusations... distinguish[ed] how [the accusers] operated as authors from how the plagiarists operated and, in the process, show[ed] that they had authorial (and personal) virtues that the plagiarists lacked... To be a victim of *furtum* in such cases was thus to have ones literary worth and achievement confirmed.' Difficulty of making charges stick: 29-30.

<sup>50</sup> Watson and Watson 2003: 75: 'In protesting loudly about literary theft at this early stage in his publishing career... the clear implication is that his epigrams are considered worth stealing.'

<sup>51</sup> Classic treatments of the self-undermining persona in Latin satire include Braund 1989. 'Martial, opportunistic rather than anxious, has no interest in maintaining a persona' (Fitzgerald 2007: 198, with Pliny as foil). —one might well go further and say he has an interest in *not* maintaining anything quite so coherent.

<sup>52</sup> McGill 2012: 94-5.

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### Martial and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is from this point of view merely one among many themes that, running through the dodecalogy, construct a performance of engaging authorial fallibility — fallibility predicated partly on a mercenary interest in material gain so keen that it often risks defeating its object (aligning the Fidentinus poems with Martial's perennially optimistic begging-letters to patrons); and partly on a comically exaggerated *amour-propre* that confronts readers from the very start of Book 1, and that the Martial of the later corpus will wryly debunk. The Martial of Book 1, convinced he is assailed by plagiarists because he is world-famous even as he reboots his career and disowns his scant prior productions, strikes a notional pose of self-promotion — but overdoes and contaminates that pose, thereby making a ridiculous and self-contradictory spectacle of himself for the entertainment of his readers.

Perhaps especially as re-evaluated through the lens of the re-issued Book 10, and thereby as a half-way landmark, Book 6 takes the plagiarism cycle in a different and novel direction. Here Martial selectively imitates precisely those Lucillian epigrams that, in combination, will take on a new, figurative meaning that the originals in isolation surely never possessed, thereby constructing a running subtext that paradoxically draws attention to, and dramatises, his selective silence about his literary models when they come to him from the Greek. The Martial who began his rebooted career by denouncing literary theft and fraud, now constructs an allusive and subtly intratextual *tour de force* that turns upon his own self-advertised hypocrisy — a hypocrisy that is less 'real' than ~~it is~~ an artfully crafted facet of a satiric persona forever finding new ways to problematise and compromise itself, and thereby to engage and entertain a readership that has committed to see the dodecalogy through.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Though the underlying idea here goes back to (most importantly) Braund 1989, compare fruitfully Rimell 2008: 50 (discussing Book 1): 'the interplay of ideas, poems, imagery, and vocabulary in Martial often fails to add up to a comforting sense of wholeness and artistic rationale'. Though our

## 5. Conclusion

Martial's decision to foreground plagiarism as a motif is highly unusual. Charges of plagiarism were rare among ancient authors, for good reason, particularly among poets; and they were vanishingly rare among epigrammatists, who chose to operate in a genre that all but elided the figure of the author as a serious model for sustained emulation.<sup>54</sup> Epigram flourished in performance and thrived on excerption; more than any other ancient genre, it proceeded by ringing artful and often minor changes on a fairly limited repertoire of themes and tropes, over and over, so many times that the reader of epigram *en masse* cannot help but lose count. Accusations of plagiarism counted for practically nothing in the ordinary business of epigram, and Martial must have known that his readers would understand this. By insisting that plagiarism and imposture somehow count for more in his case, Martial is making a case for treating his corpus and its readers as extraordinary.<sup>55</sup>

To suggest that Martial's complaints of literary theft are consciously self-aggrandising is in no sense controversial, and sits comfortably within traditional literary-critical approaches.<sup>56</sup> Further, we have seen that important groundwork has already been laid, notably by Rimell (2000, 2008), for appreciating plagiarism as a motif chosen by Martial specifically for its

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exact emphases differ, I absolutely concur with Rimell that this studied and persistent 'failure' to deliver ethical and creative self-consistency is part of what makes the corpus so endlessly interesting.

<sup>54</sup> On the invisibility of plagiarism as a theme in Greek epigram before and after Martial, see in passing McGill 2012: 77n.15, noting the second-century Greek scopic poet Pollianus as a token exception; Seo 2009: 569 and 573 is more emphatic on the 'anomalousness' of Martial's emphasis. Spahlinger 2004: 485 finds one Hellenistic instance, Theodoridas *AP* 13.21.

<sup>55</sup> Outlining 'the pragmatics of plagiarism', McGill 2012: 5 notes programmatically that 'individuals constructed plagiarism through acts of reception, particularly in the form of accusations and denials, in order to do things practically and rhetorically with it... [we must] identify ways that individuals used it to project ideas about themselves'. But as Seo 2014 noted, we probably also need a *poetics* of plagiarism.

<sup>56</sup> Watson and Watson 2003: 75 are already basically there, for instance; they are among the critics whom McGill 2012: 78n.32 takes to task for not pushing further.

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rich potential in meta-poetic commentary. His habit of calling out plagiarists, and the moments in which he ironically entertains the idea of complicity in their activities, create a literary space in which Martial and his readers can derive pleasure from demystifying the poet's material practice. The discourse on plagiarism within the corpus helps cut down to size the ethical stance of its narrating persona (as indeed does that on masturbation, mentioned at the outset).<sup>57</sup>

What we may now begin to see, further to these established insights, is how the motif's remit in the dodecalogy extends intratextually as a structuring device, and on more than one level. Martial thereby generates additional value for his attentive reader who approaches the numbered books as planned installments in a grand and complex serial narrative. In Book 1 and the revised Book 10, the motif generates an overarching frame for the Roman books. Within that frame, the Paulus cycle weaves a distinct narrative strand, one of many such that invite the attentive reader and re-reader to find connections across and between overlapping subsets of its constituent books (in this case, Books 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). At the mid-point of the overarching frame (Book 6), and in meaningful intersection with the ongoing Paulus cycle, a concentrated cycle of imitations of Lucilius dramatises the issue of authorial good faith in relation to poetic models.

Martial is *not* plagiarising Lucilius in this cycle-within-a-cycle: his versions of 6.12, 6.19, and the rest are very much his own, and he invites our admiration for having made them so (what is more, they sit within a book that is almost certainly quite unlike anything Lucilius ever published). However, by choosing in Book 6 to imitate (to the best of our present knowledge) *only* Lucilian models about theft and cosmetic disguise, the two

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<sup>57</sup> Though we would differ in emphasis, Henriksen 2012: 176-7 is invaluable in drawing attention to Martial's deliberate self-inconsistency about masturbation in the context of his 'parodic, quasi-philosophical' denunciation at 9.41.

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distinct figurative registers to which classical authors had recourse if they wished to allege it (and one of which, disguise, Martial himself had done a great deal to promote earlier in the dodecalogy), he goes out of his way to raise the specter of plagiarism and thereby to artificially problematise the genre on which he has staked his entire literary career. This 'meta-plagiaristic' gesture is, paradoxically given its thematic referent, a sophisticated and highly original creative departure.

This article has found more nuance in Martial's poetics of plagiarism than ever before. In so doing, it throws new light on the wider experience of Martial's contemporary through-readers as they navigated an intricate serial fiction that was without precedent in its genre (perhaps in any genre) — navigated it, too, with increasing skill and confidence. But to cast light is also to create shadows. I strongly suspect that the subtle ironies of the plagiarism cycle's metapoetic commentary will have been only one of many pleasurable potentialities waiting for Martial's contemporaries within his generous polysemic megatext. How many, it is impossible to say. Even if we could somehow determine that Lucilius was the only (and not just the most important) Greek model against whom Martial was positioning himself with self-referential complexity, we only have whatever of Lucilius' output the Greek Anthology happens to transmit, leaving us no clear sense of how much has been lost or of what it was like to read him through. How many books did he publish? Did individual books, like those of Martial, find ways of establishing distinctive flavors for themselves; and did they consciously build, book by book, into something bigger? How did Lucilius engage his own readers' sympathy and suspicion as they progressed from Book One, through Book Two, and on into whatever followed?<sup>58</sup> These imponderables make it impossible to

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<sup>58</sup> We know that he did include such patterning to some extent, and that Martial noticed him doing it: to Martial 2.93 (self-referentially *closing his Book Two*), compare Lucilius AP 9.572 (self-referentially *opening his Book Two*).

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set a limit on the ironic games that may yet lie hidden in Martial's dodecalogy, awaiting an impossible *lector studiosus* armed with intertexts forever lost to us.

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