

MARTIAL ON PATRONAGE AND LITERATURE

Martial wrote about himself and his participation in the everyday life of Rome more than any other extant poet of the post-Augustan Principate. More particularly, dozens of his epigrams describe the life of the ordinary client and his treatment by great and often arrogant patrons. Unfortunately for social and literary historians, however, Martial was writing satirical epigrams, not autobiography. Consequently, his poetry cannot be taken at face value as a direct reflection of Roman life. With regard to literary patronage, the difficulties of interpretation have allowed modern scholars to reach diametrically opposed conclusions. One editor and commentator baldly labelled Martial 'a chronic beggar' who 'despite his numerous friends and the many *patroni* to whom he paid court, . . . dragged on a hand-to-mouth existence'.¹ In a recent and more detailed study, on the other hand, Martial is portrayed as a man of independent means, who looked to his powerful *amici* not for financial support so much as for help in publicizing his work and for protection in literary squabbles.²

My aim in this essay is, first, to consider what criteria can be established for assessing the historical validity of the evidence in the epigrams. Once the criteria are established, it will be possible to sift the material in order to arrive at a consistent idea of what Martial wanted from his patrons and what he actually received. In fact, Martial's hopes and disappointments were fairly common, and are found repeated by other poets of the post-Augustan Principate. The question then arises whether the literary patron-client relationship changed over the three generations from Seneca to Juvenal, as Martial and others believed. Finally, I wish to consider whether the relationship between Martial and his great friends can properly be called 'patronage'.

For most of his poems Martial took as his subject matter the real world around him, but not with the purpose of giving it a realistic treatment. That, of course, would have bored his audience. To provide entertainment, Martial chose stereotypical characters and situations, which were familiar to a wide audience, and exaggerated, distorted, and poked fun at them. Obviously, it was not of much concern to the poet that the contents of his verses correspond closely with the real world, nor even with his own beliefs. Indeed, Martial explicitly disavowed the morality to be found in his lewd poems, maintaining that the obscenity was appropriate to the occasion of the Saturnalia (11. 15). In addition, the characters whom the satirical epigrams poked fun at were said to be make-believe, not real people.³ They are in most cases stereotypes – the legacy-hunter, the vulgar freedman, the pauper, and so on. If Martial's poems were to be laughed at, the stereotypes must have been immediately recognizable to his listeners and readers, which is not to say that they directly reflected reality.⁴ Some of the stereotypes and material were drawn from the literary tradition rather than from the poet's own experience (though the two need not be mutually exclusive). For instance, the minute farm of 11. 18 – so small that a cucumber could not lie out straight in it – appears to be based on a Greek antecedent.⁵ There are a number of reasons,

¹ E. Post, *Selected Epigrams of Martial* (1908, reprinted Norman, Oklahoma, 1967), xiii.

² P. White, 'Amicitia and the profession of poetry in early imperial Rome', *JRS* 68 (1978), 74–92. This is the most extensive study of literary patronage in the late first and early second centuries, and my essay is in part a response to it.

³ 1. pr.; 5. 15.

⁴ G. W. Allport in his classic study, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), ch. 12, demonstrated the unreliable nature of stereotypes.

then, why the epigrams might not be a faithful representation of the world of the Flavian emperors.

Given Martial's diverse methods of dealing with his subject matter and his lack of strict concern for truth, it is not surprising that at times the information in the poems can seem contradictory. One case in point is of special interest here – the productivity of the poet's suburban estate at Nomentum, given to him by a patron. The estate is portrayed in 7. 31 as so small and poor that it produced nothing but Martial himself, who had then to buy his food at the market. In 10. 48, however, fresh produce and wine from the estate were supplied by the *vilica* for a modest dinner for very important friends, including the senator L. Arruntius Stella.⁶ It is not easy to draw a consistent picture of Martial's financial well-being from these data.

Can any trustworthy information about the poet's position vis-à-vis his patrons be salvaged from such contradictory and distorted poems? There are several methods of proceeding. Consideration should be given to the tone of the epigrams. Some, such as 7. 31 above, obviously derive their humour from exaggeration, and from these the historian must be wary of drawing information. By contrast, others resemble 10. 48, which is sober and unlikely to mislead. Fortunately, many of the poems addressed to patrons are serious works in which Martial speaks for himself and addresses historical figures. In addition, some of the books of poems are prefaced by straightforward letters, which give what looks like reliable information about the poet's life.⁷ The plausibility of some epigrams can be checked against both these letters and information from external sources about literary patronage.

What support Martial received from his patrons during his thirty-four years in Rome is not easy to specify precisely, since nowhere is a complete inventory offered. What Martial hoped to receive, on the other hand, is clear, because he repeatedly described his ideal mode of life from his earliest to his latest surviving epigrams. Basically, it was his hope that his patron would be another Maecenas.⁸ The ideal entailed several forms of support. As P. White stressed, the poet needed encouragement, publicity, protection, and criticism for his literary efforts.⁹ In a world of free and unrestrained reproduction of works, poems falsely attributed to Martial were circulated. When these took the form of libellous attacks on powerful men, they could cause considerable embarrassment and discomfort to Martial, who turned to his friends for help. In verses addressed to Paulus, Martial asked emphatically:

si quisquam mea dixerit malignus
atro carmina quae madent veneno,
ut vocem mihi commodos patronam
et quantam poteris, sed usque, clames
'Non scripsit meus ista Martialis'.

(7. 72. 12–16)

Another consequence of the lack of developed institutions for publishing and selling books was that the range of circulation depended in part on the initiative of the author and his friends. Martial's request that Faustinus forward his *libellus* (book 7) to Marcellinus on the Dacian frontier was one of several attempting to extend his readership.¹⁰ Whether these requests were motivated by hope of material gain from the new reader is something that cannot be answered from the poems. If the *libellus*

⁵ L. Friedlaender, *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Liber* (Leipzig, 1886), ii. 179.

⁶ Also compare 10. 94, where Martial's gift of apples is bought at market, with 13. 42, where they come from his Nomentum farm.

⁷ See the prefaces to books 1, 8, 9 and especially 12.

⁸ 1. 107; 8. 56; 11. 3; 12. 4.

⁹ White (above, note 2), pp. 85 f.

¹⁰ 7. 80; also 7. 52.

was being forwarded to the emperor, however, hope of profit is almost certain. Some of Martial's most valuable friends and connections were imperial freedmen secretaries, such as Parthenius, who delivered books of poems to Domitian, preferably at propitious moments, besides acting as patrons in their own right.¹¹ The poems included flattery of the emperor and outright requests for privileges and money.¹² We know that Martial was granted an honorary equestrian tribunate, the *ius trium liberorum*, and citizenship for clients.¹³ The refusal of Martial's request for money did not seem to dampen his enthusiasm for asking.

Though Martial has little to say about it, other authors of his period make much of the patron's responsibility to publicize a client's work by organizing and financing public readings. Pliny devoted a letter to the praise of the equestrian Titinius Capito as the age's 'Litterarum iam senescentium reductor ac reformatore' (8. 12). One of the virtues singled out by Pliny was Capito's willingness to open his house for recitations and his assiduous attendance at readings elsewhere (a sometimes tedious *officium* which Pliny felt obliged to return).

At a more elevated level, Martial looked to his supporters for criticism of his work so that he could revise and improve it. Severus is asked in 5. 80 to sacrifice an hour of his holiday to read Martial's poems and make suggestions for revisions. His and Secundus' censorious marks promise considerable improvement. It was no doubt partly such criticism that prompted Martial to publish a heavily revised version of book 10.

These non-material forms of support were undoubtedly important to the poet's activity. After his return to Spain and a life of leisure on his estate, Martial's productivity declined sharply. The first reason given for this in the prefatory letter to book 12 is the lack of the sort of appreciative audience Martial enjoyed at Rome. The question remains, however, whether it was this help or material support that Martial and other poets most eagerly sought from their patrons. Perhaps a definitive answer cannot be given, since Martial never addressed the question in this form. But in my view an implicit answer is offered: every time Martial mentions Maecenas as an ideal patron, the reason is that his support gave Horace and Virgil *otium* in the form of an estate large enough to provide an adequate income.¹⁴ Not only is the fact of material support of primary concern to the poet, but also the means. One of the features that P. White takes in his study to be essential to 'patronage', properly speaking, is 'continuing' support as opposed to momentary intervention.¹⁵ *Continuing* support for *otium* is precisely what an adequate estate offered and what Martial wanted. Indeed, it was *the* means for providing such support in a world without stock portfolios, and was used to endow charities.¹⁶

Martial was not alone among poets in his hope of material support. The three ways that an immigrant to the city of Rome might hope to earn a living were by composing verses, by pleading in the courts, and by performing the *officia clientium* for the great houses (3. 38). Martial claims that none of these is adequate, and that the immigrant will live only *casu*. Regardless of the truth of the conclusion, the poem would lack point if no poet ever moved to Rome in the expectation of making a living. Juvenal's *Seventh Satire*, stressed by White, is similarly pessimistic about the poet's receiving a

¹¹ 5. 6; also 12. 11. For a similar request of Sextus, see 5. 5.

¹² Flattery: 5. 1, 3, 19 and so on. Requests: 6. 10, 87; 8. 24; 9. 8.

¹³ 3. 95. On Martial's *ius trium liberorum*, see D. Daube, 'Martial, father of three', *AJAH* 1 (1976), 145-7; see also H. Szelest, 'Domitian und Martial', *Eos* 62 (1974), 105-14.

¹⁴ See references in note 8.

¹⁵ White (above, note 2), p. 75.

¹⁶ A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (London, 1968), pp. 108 f.

livelihood from his patron.¹⁷ And yet the satire shows at the very least that poets looked to their patrons for basic material support. The author of the *Laus Pisonis* emphasizes that his appeal for backing is prompted not by 'divitis auri imperiosa fames' but by 'laudis amor' (219 ff.). We may be somewhat suspicious, since he makes a point of saying that he comes from a 'humilis domus', precisely the sort of person the patron generously supports with 'subito censu' (254, 109 ff.). In any case, there would be little reason to stress non-material motives, if that were the norm among poets.

Thirst and hope for gold must have been raised by stories of lavish gifts to poets, especially from emperors. The tragedian Varius was said to have received one million sesterces from the generous Augustus, and nearly a century later Saleius Bassus was given half that amount by the miserly Vespasian.¹⁸ For most poets, however, hard reality must have dashed high hopes. It was these disappointed hopes that produced the common theme in Martial's work: there is no money in poetry, go into law (a sentiment not infrequently paraphrased by academics today).¹⁹ Or, to put the theme in Martial's poetic imagery:

Romanum propius divitiusque forum est.
illic aera sonant: at circum pulpita nostra
et steriles cathedras basia sola crepant. (1. 76. 12-14)

The same idea is expressed by Aper in Tacitus' *Dialogus* (6-9) in his argument that oratory in the law courts is far more profitable than the composition of poetry in the quiet of retirement. The effective orator attracts a *clientela* of men from all ranks dependent on him for protection, while the poet suffers the abuse of a negligent patron who cannot be persuaded even to pay for the rental of benches for a recitation. This latter theme is echoed in Juvenal's *Seventh Satire*, a bitter tirade against the wealthy patron who refuses to provide the poet a livelihood with the excuse that he himself is writing verses second only to Homer's (and that concession is made only because of seniority).²⁰

Are these dire pictures of the poet's plight to be taken seriously? In my view they should be taken as seriously as the contemporary comment that 'there is no money in college teaching'. That is to say, the picture contains an element of truth, but is certainly not the literal truth. College teachers today earn only a fraction of what lawyers with comparable years of education earn and so complain about not being able to make ends meet; at the same time, they clearly do make a living wage. Perhaps because of a similar circumstance of oversupply, poets in the post-Augustan Principate were unable to secure the level of support they thought their due.²¹ But the reports of Martial, Tacitus, and Juvenal cannot be taken as literal truth if for no other reason than the contradictions within and between their works. Martial's statement in 1. 76 that money is to be made in the law court rather than in writing poetry clearly contradicts his advice to the immigrant in 3. 38 that a living cannot

¹⁷ *Sat.* 7. 1-97; used as evidence by White (above, note 2), pp. 82 f. Echoes of Martial's poems in this satire are discussed by R. E. Colton, 'Juvenal and the suffering poets. Some echoes of Martial in the Seventh Satire', *CB* 55 (1978), 17-20.

¹⁸ Gifts from emperors are listed and discussed by L. Friedlaender, *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, transl. J. H. Freese (New York, 1908-13), iii. 52 ff.

¹⁹ 1. 76; 2. 30; 5. 16. For a similar theme, Calpurnius Siculus, *Ecl.* 4. 23 ff.

²⁰ Lines 36 ff. For an analysis of the echo see N. Rudd, *Lines of Enquiry: Studies in Latin Poetry* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 107.

²¹ Friedlaender (above, note 18), p. 51. Rudd (above, note 20), pp. 116-18, offers some general observations and reaches a similar conclusion: 'the picture of the poet-patron relationship in [Juvenal's] satire seven is neither an accurate portrait nor a piece of grotesque fantasy. Like many other Juvenalian sketches it is best described as a faithful caricature.'

be earned by the advocate, poet, or client. Despite the handsome earnings attributed to advocates in some poems, in another he advises a father to allow his son to pursue neither the art of Virgil nor that of Cicero; rather 'make him be trained as a harpist or flutist; and if he seems to be a boy of mediocre talent, make him an auctioneer or architect' (5. 56). Obviously, Martial was capable of altering and manipulating the 'there is no money in...' theme to suit his purpose of the moment. So, too, were Juvenal and Tacitus. While Aper in the *Dialogus* argues that there is more worldly success to be won in the courts than in poetry (as I have no doubt there usually was), Juvenal claims there is no money in either except for the lucky.²² Both passages are tendentious and exaggerated, and neither should be taken at face value.

What was the hard reality that poets faced? The question cannot be asked in its simple form, because poets' circumstances varied so greatly.²³ At one end of the spectrum were men such as Lucan and Silius Italicus who possessed senatorial fortunes and needed no financial backing. Also included in this group should be wealthy equestrians, notably Titinius Capito, secretary of a Palatine bureau and rich enough to be a supporter of others. He needed *amici* such as Pliny to attend his recitations, but not to share their wealth (*Ep.* 8. 12). At the other end of the spectrum were humble men for whom this non-material support was simply not sufficient. As Juvenal notes (7. 79–81), 'let Lucan recline in his statue-filled garden, satisfied with his fame. But what will any amount of glory mean to Serranus or humble Saleius, if glory is all there is?' Juvenal also includes Statius in his list of humble poets who had to earn their sustenance from their verses, and we can add the author of the *Laus Pisonis* and Calpurnius Siculus, both of whom indicate that their patrons supplied their material needs.²⁴

The argument has been advanced by P. White that many of the poets known from the first and second centuries after Christ (Martial, Statius, etc.) were *equites Romani*, and hence by definition men of independent means.²⁵ Now if the equestrian census of four hundred thousand sesterces had initially been set in the Republic as the sum required to live without working, it certainly would not have been adequate to meet the rising living costs and living standards of Rome of the emperors. Certainly none of the evidence cited by White shows that it was.²⁶ A close look at Martial's

²² *Dial.* 6–9; Juvenal, *Sat.* 7. 105 ff. For Juvenal's manipulation of themes, see Rudd (above, note 20), p. 95.

²³ G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 44 f.

²⁴ *Laus Pisonis* 109 ff. with 254 imply this; Calpurnius Siculus, *Ecl.* 4. 33 ff. For the Neronian date of Calpurnius' poems, I accept the arguments of G. B. Townend, 'Calpurnius Siculus and the *Munus Neronis*', *JRS* 70 (1980), 166–74, and in the same volume R. Mayer, 'Calpurnius Siculus: technique and date', 175–6. Both are a reaction to E. Champlin's third-century date in 'The life and times of Calpurnius Siculus', *JRS* 68 (1978), 95–110.

²⁵ White (above, note 2), pp. 88 f.

²⁶ White cites Juvenal, *Sat.* 14. 322–4 and 9. 139–40; Martial 3. 10; and the salary of a *sesternis tribunatus*. The first passage from Juvenal is taken out of context: the lines cited do not say that a man of leisure could live an aristocratic life in Rome on a minimum equestrian census, and the following lines (325 ff.) indicate that Juvenal does not expect his readers to find this sum satisfactory. Juvenal, *Sat.* 9. 139–40 is taken out of context and misread by White: it says nothing of an annual income of 20,000 sesterces; rather, the 20,000 is the amount out on secured loans and is only part of Naevolus' assets. Moreover, Naevolus regards himself as close to beggary, not living an aristocratic life. The 2,000 sesterces per month allowance for the *filius familias* in Martial, *Epig.* 3. 10 is of no relevance to the question under consideration, since there is no reason to think that the son was intended to support a full, independent household on this allowance, which in any case proved inadequate to his wants. Finally, the 25,000 sesterces salary of the equestrian tribune, if it was intended to be the amount needed to support a household at Rome (for which there is no evidence), was for a six-month tour of duty, and so at an annual rate the

circumstances provides some indication of what it meant to be an *eques Romanus*.

Martial's financial condition at the time he migrated from Spain to Rome in the early 60s after Christ is not certain. In particular, we do not know whether he arrived in Rome already in possession of the equestrian census. It is doubtful that he left any considerable family estate behind, for when he returned to his native land at the end of his career he lived on estates newly acquired from two patrons.²⁷ The fact that Martial received an education suggests that his family was moderately well off,²⁸ but the implication of 12. 4 (discussed below) is that Martial's personal share of the family estate was not enough to support him even while living in Spain, much less in Rome.

Martial arrived in Rome hoping to find another Maecenas to provide him with an estate and the leisure to write poetry. Early on he was in fact given a farm at Nomentum. Seneca is known to have possessed an estate there, and it may be, as Friedlaender argues, that it was from this estate that Martial received his farm from Seneca or his heirs.²⁹ The farm was welcome, but not everything the poet had hoped for. It is the possession which figures most prominently in his epigrams and perhaps allowed him to achieve the equestrian census. As a symbol of patronal support Martial boasted of it along with his honours from the emperor and his *parva domus* in town. It was a large enough estate to require a slave staff and to provide food for Martial in Rome.³⁰ On the other hand, the farm did not produce enough surplus to satisfy all the poet's needs: he required help not only in his literary battles, but also in supporting his lifestyle.³¹

Thus the Nomentum estate did not provide the long-hoped-for *otium*, freedom from the drudgery of the *officia clientium* (especially attendance at morning salutations). Why, asks Martial's friend, does he not write more poetry, verses of the quality of Virgil's? Martial's answer:

otia da nobis, sed qualia fecerat olim
Maecenas Flacco Vergilioque suo:
condere victuras temptem per saecula curas
et nomen flammis eripuisse meum.
in steriles nolunt campos iuga ferre iuveni:
pingue solum lassat, sed iuvat ipse labor.

(1. 107. 3–8)

The Nomentum farm offered a restful retreat, but to supplement his income Martial was compelled to engage in the busy social life in Rome, where a continuous exchange went on. The poor presented humble gifts and, more important, their deference to the great and wealthy in the hope of securing dinners, gifts of more substantial value, or food in return.³² The primary means of showing deference was of course an appearance early in the morning at the great houses to greet the patron with titles of respect such

salary would amount to 50,000 sesterces. The fact is that we do not know what it cost to live in Rome in a style appropriate to a gentleman, but if Martial had an adequate independent income, it is hard to believe that he would have endured the social obligations of the Roman client (referred to in the preface to book 12, as well as in the epigrams, see note 35). White's notion (p. 85) that 'poets attached themselves to the houses of the great in the first place because there was nowhere else for them to go' seems a bit lame.

²⁷ 12. 4, 31.

²⁸ Note that Romatius Firmus with a family estate worth only 100,000 sesterces was educated with Pliny (*Ep.* 1. 19).

²⁹ (Above, note 18), 4, 650 (note to p. 61, line 18).

³⁰ 9. 97; 10. 48.

³¹ 5. 16 indicates the need for support if Martial is not to have to turn to other, less elevated means of making a living.

³² R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 127 ff.

as *dominus* or *rex*.³³ For the client's efforts he traditionally received a small sum of money (one hundred *quadrantes*) or food.³⁴ Presumably it was more substantial benefits which drew better-off men such as Martial to the *salutatio*. Despite a frequently expressed distaste for attending, Martial felt compelled to put in appearances at salutations (or at least to make his excuses) in order to stay in the good graces of patrons.³⁵ The implication of his references to Maecenas and *otium* is that he would not have done so had need not forced him.

Several occasions were thought especially appropriate for the exchange of gifts: Martial mentions the Saturnalia and birthdays most often. While many clients gave their patrons gifts as 'hooks', to use Martial's word, the poet distinguished himself from the ordinary crowd by sending a *libellus* of poems.³⁶ Special honour could be bestowed on a patron or friend by mentioning his name in verse. As Martial wrote to Domitian:

gaudet honorato sed multus nomine lector,
cui victura meo munere fama datur. (5. 15. 3-4)

Though in the next couplet reference is made to the poet's lack of concern for a return from this, other epigrams leave no doubt that the failure to reciprocate irritated and disappointed the poet. This feeling is succinctly expressed in a one-couplet poem:

Laudatus nostro quidam, Faustine, libello
dissimulat, quasi nil debeat: inposuit. (5. 36)

The fact of gift-exchange can hardly be doubted; the disagreement arises over the value of the gifts. Were they of such a value as to contribute noticeably to Martial's standard of living? Or were they, as White argues, 'modest' tokens of esteem, sporadically given, which the poet could not count on for his livelihood?³⁷ Without an inventory of gifts precise answers to these questions are not possible, but several responses to White's arguments may be useful. White minimizes the importance of the gifts because they were irregular and non-monetary³⁸ – reasons which reflect the bias of a modern accustomed to thinking of income in terms of a monthly cheque. Few men in antiquity enjoyed regular, predictable incomes, and it is improper to conclude from the irregularity of the gifts that Martial did not depend on them for his livelihood.

The argument that many of the gifts were not in the form of money is of equally little consequence for two reasons. First, some of these gifts were of quite considerable value, and a few were in fact as good as a continuing income. The three estates given to Martial over his lifetime fit into the latter category, and so does the *parva domus* in the city, which saved him the expense of paying rent quarterly for a less well appointed apartment.³⁹ When dinners, foodstuffs, clothing, and tiles to repair a roof – all mentioned in sober poems – are added to the gifts of housing, it is clear that Martial could have lived off such gifts.⁴⁰ Silver plate is another item often mentioned

³³ The *salutatio* is alluded to frequently throughout Martial's books (for references, see the word index in Friedlaender's edition of Martial under *salutabat* and *salutator*); for titles of deference, *Epig.* 2. 68.

³⁴ 1. 59; 3. 7 and others. For a discussion of Domitian's prohibition of a monetary dole, see Saller (above, note 32), p. 128, note 58.

³⁵ 1. 70, 108; 5. 20; 10. 70, 74, 82; 11. 24; 12. 18, 68. In most of these Martial is clearly speaking for himself, especially in 12. 68, where morning salutations are credited with driving Martial out of Rome.

³⁶ Hook: 5. 18; poems as a gift: 4. 10 among others.

³⁷ White (above, note 2), p. 87.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ 9. 97; 12. 4, 31.

⁴⁰ 7. 36; 8. 28; 10. 73; 12. 24, 36.

as a gift, sometimes in quantities as large as several pounds.⁴¹ In the Roman world this silver was directly translatable into money, as several of Martial's epigrams make clear.⁴² In fact, Juvenal includes in Naevolus' assets for retirement his silver plate, a form of usable savings (9. 141). In short, it seems to me to be a mistake to depreciate the value of non-monetary gifts in general because some were modest. Calpurnius Siculus indicates in his *Fourth Eclogue* (33 ff.) that his patron saved him from want with sustenance and other aid, things which were probably supplied in kind to some extent.

Secondly, it should be said that monetary gifts are not as uncommon as White suggests. In a dozen epigrams Martial mentions money, in the form of either outright gifts or loans (the two, as Martial indicates, were not firmly distinguished). The worth of the gifts was sometimes considerable, varying from six thousand sesterces to several hundred thousand (a written-off loan).⁴³ Although we need not believe that all these gifts were real, the fact that monetary gifts occur more frequently than any other single type outside books 13 and 14 (the *xenia* books) shows that they were common in the poet's experience and within his expectation. Moreover, Martial, like Statius, wrote poems for wealthy aristocrats, particularly for special occasions such as an official promotion, the birth of a child, a wedding, or a death.⁴⁴ It is true, as White points out, that no fee was set in advance for these poems, but that does not mean that a return was not expected and usually given.⁴⁵ In this respect, the poet's position was no different from what the advocate's was supposed to be. Quintilian wrote that 'not even a poor orator (i.e. advocate) will accept compensation as if it were pay; but he will enjoy a mutual generosity (*mutua benivolentia*) in the knowledge that his generosity has exceeded his compensation. Nor ought his service (*beneficium*) to come to nothing because it ought not to be sold'.⁴⁶ The situations of the advocate and poet were similar because of the stigma attached to paid labour. Nevertheless, (not altogether predictable) incomes could be earned from advocacy, and so too monetary gifts could be expected by the poet. Indeed, Pliny says explicitly that *pecunia* along with *honores* was a traditional reward for singing the praises of cities and individuals (*Ep.* 3. 21). We know that emperors paid out *honoraria* to poets for their work. Tiberius' gift to C. Clutorius Priscus for his verses in honour of Germanicus on his death spurred him on to write the unfortunately premature poem mourning the death of Drusus.⁴⁷ There is no reason to believe that great aristocrats rewarded similar poems written for them any differently. Martial gives no direct testimony about this, but his silence cannot be taken as evidence that money was not given. We know from Pliny's letter about Martial's death that Pliny rewarded a poem about himself with a *viaticum* to cover the expenses of Martial's return to Spain in the late 90s, and yet there is no hint of this gift in the epigrams themselves. Because poets received reciprocal gifts only after they presented their verses, it should be expected that references to them in the *libelli* would be rare.

⁴¹ 8. 33, 51, 71; 10. 57; 12. 36.

⁴² 3. 62; 4. 15.

⁴³ Requests for money: 4. 37; 10. 14; receipt: 4. 76; 6. 30; 9. 102; 12. 36. Monetary gift for another: 4. 61, 67; 6. 18; 8. 37; 9. 9. Request of the emperor: 6. 10.

⁴⁴ 1. 31; 6. 3, 21, 38, 52, 68, 76, 85; 7. 8, 96; 8. 66; 10. 63, 71; 11. 13. Many of these poems and the people for whom they were written are discussed by P. White, 'The friends of Martial, Statius and Pliny, and the dispersal of patronage', *HSPH* 79 (1975), 265–300.

⁴⁵ White (above, note 2), p. 86.

⁴⁶ *Inst.* 12. 7. 12. The advocate's services were of more concrete value than the poet's, and so some at least were able to demand fees, but that does not alter the point here.

⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Ann.* 3. 49.

Perhaps a word should be added about the etiquette of gift-exchanges. A passage from a letter of Fronto to Appian discusses the issue, and it is important to understand it properly. Appian the historian sent two slaves to Fronto, his social and probably financial better. The gift caused Fronto some embarrassment and he sent the slaves back. In his letter he explained that 'a man ought not to accept gifts which leave the sender poorer and the recipient richer'.⁴⁸ Fronto objected to the sort of large gifts that squander a man's fortune and put the recipient in the uncomfortable position of either not reciprocating or having to spend a large sum to do so. It is clear why Appian's two slaves would have put Fronto in an awkward position, had he accepted. These objections, however, would not have precluded the gift of a comfortable estate or a town house or several hundred thousand sesterces by a wealthy senator to a poet in return for his verses. Both parties were giving what they had in large supply: the donation of a Sabine farm to Horace or the Nomentum estate to Martial did not significantly diminish the fortunes of Maecenas or Seneca (or his senatorial friends), worth tens or even hundreds of millions. In any case, whatever his own personal code of etiquette, Fronto admitted that large gifts were not uncommon.⁴⁹ We know that Pliny not only gave his protégé Romatius Firmus three hundred thousand sesterces, but advertised the fact through the publication of his letters (1. 19).

In addition to direct gifts, Pliny names *honores* as a reward for poets. Appointment to offices amounted to an indirect means of support, with salaries for equestrian posts ranging from twenty-five thousand sesterces for a *tribunatus semestris* to two hundred thousand sesterces for a senior procuratorship. Sophists and other rhetoricians are known to have held these posts, but little is known about the appointment of poets.⁵⁰ Domitian bestowed on Martial an equestrian tribunate, usually assumed to have been honorary (3. 95; 9. 97). If it was honorary, it is uncertain whether he received a salary, as some senatorial governors who excused themselves from serving did.⁵¹ Other poets may have been supported temporarily by serving in offices, as Pliny suggests, but because they were minor posts no record has survived.

Despite many gifts from patrons and friends, Martial never found his ideal in Rome: a Maecenas who would bestow on him a large enough estate to allow complete *otium*. Instead, to make ends meet he had to waste time and endure the humiliations of a client until he sold his Nomentum farm and returned to Spain.⁵² There, two patrons, Terentius Priscus and Marcella, gave him what he had always wanted. In 12. 31 a delightful picture is drawn of the *domus* and *parva regna* given to the poet by Marcella. The verses about Priscus liken him to Maecenas and explicitly indicate that the ideal has finally been fulfilled.

Quod Flacco Varioque fuit summoque Maroni
Maecenas, atavis regibus ortus eques,
gentibus et populis hoc te mihi, Prisce Terenti,
fama fuisse loquax chartaque dicet anus.
tu facis ingenium, tu, si quid posse videmur;
tu das ingenuae ius mihi pigritiae.

(12. 4)

These three couplets clearly outline what the poet hoped his exchange with his patron and benefactor would entail: the patron would enjoy immortal *fama*, while he gave

⁴⁸ pp. 230–2 of the van den Hout edition. White's other evidence (above, note 2, p. 87) about the modest value of gifts is no more persuasive. Cicero, *Off.* 2. 54 says only that a man should not ruin his estate through large gifts, while Seneca, *Ben.* 1. 11 indicates that money is to be valued after the gifts of life and freedom (the association of the three suggests that gifts of money were highly valued).

⁴⁹ p. 229 of the van den Hout edition.

⁵⁰ Saller (above, note 32), p. 63.

⁵¹ Tacitus, *Agricola* 42.

⁵² See note 44 above; 10. 92.

the poet encouragement and the *ius ingenuae pigrityae*. The placement of *pigrityae* as the final word of the epigram leaves no doubt that Martial considered the gift of leisure to be of paramount importance.

Martial and Pliny shared the view that support of writers underwent a decline in their age. The distribution of *honores et pecunia*, customary in the past says Pliny, went out of fashion along with other fine practices (*Ep.* 3. 21). Martial's plea was 'Give me back the Pisos, Senecas, and Memmiiuses', beside whom contemporary patrons with their offerings of a few pounds of silver plate or a toga or a little money looked cheap (3. 36). The idea of decline fits in with Tacitus' belief in a general decline in patronal generosity after the Neronian age, and it is accepted by Friedlaender but rejected by White.⁵³

We have no very solid basis for evaluating the idea. Decline was such a common motif in Roman writing that it must always be treated with suspicion. Did Pliny really know how much money had been given to poets in earlier times, or even in his own age for that matter? Impressionistic notions about trends are notoriously unreliable, especially when affected by standard motifs and in this case Pliny's desire to highlight his own gift to Martial as unusually generous. Pliny and Martial could certainly have known that their age had no patron comparable to Maecenas, Seneca, or Piso. It would have been easy to take these isolated examples of exceptionally wealthy and generous patrons and magnify them into a Golden Age. The evidence simply is not adequate to prove or disprove that literary supporters before the Flavian Age were as a rule more beneficent.

There are perhaps a few reasons for scepticism about a decline. Despite his comment about *pecunia*, Pliny and others are known to have given money to poets. Moreover, if we compare Calpurnius Siculus and Juvenal, the same theme about the poet's poverty can be discovered, before and after the supposed decline. Both write of the emperor (Nero and Hadrian, respectively) as being the great hope of the poor poet.⁵⁴ Calpurnius (*Ecl.* 4. 334) acknowledges some support received from his private patron, while Juvenal will not admit to this much aid. This difference could easily be explained by difference of genre and purpose: in Juvenal's satires everything must be unrelievedly bad for effect. The point is that even in the Neronian Age poets were not satisfied with private patrons and looked to the emperor for more lavish gifts. Emperors must have varied in their propensity to fund poets. Augustus' open-handedness towards Virgil contrasts with Domitian's rejections of Martial's undignified requests. But here too there is no clear evidence of a trend.

To conclude, it may be asked whether the practices described in this paper can properly be called 'literary patronage'. If a literary patron is defined as 'a wealthy or influential supporter of... (a) writer',⁵⁵ the answer, with the proper qualifications, is clearly yes.

At the outset, a red herring must be eliminated from the discussion. It has been pointed out that *patronus* was not used in the early empire of supporters of writers, nor more generally of 'the lordly man who receives the respectful attentions of lesser men and who dispenses favours and rewards to them'.⁵⁶ The latter statement is in fact

⁵³ Tacitus, *Ann.* 3. 55; Friedlaender (above, note 18), iii. 58; White (above, note 2), 77, briefly suggests a view similar to the one argued here.

⁵⁴ Calpurnius Siculus, *Ecl.* 4. 23 ff.; Juvenal, *Sat.* 7. 1 ff. J. Cousin, *Études sur la poésie latine* (Paris, 1945), 217 f. notes the decline of imperial patronage of poets after Hadrian.

⁵⁵ The definition from Webster's *Third International Dictionary*, used by White (above, note 2), p. 75.

⁵⁶ White (above, note 2), 79. In a discussion of patronage during the late Republic S. Treggiari noted the pattern of usage, but recognized the element of dependence and so continued to use the label 'patron' in her paper ('Intellectuals, poets and their patrons in the first century B.C.', *Échos du monde classique* 21 (1977), 24).

not true,⁵⁷ though it is true that in our texts poets are not called *clientes* and their supporters are not referred to as *patroni*. Rather, the language of *amicitia* is used. But it would be wrong to conclude that the modern scholar must therefore restrict himself to the vocabulary of friendship in his analysis and avoid the word 'patronage'. The historian never confines himself to the language and categories of the subjects of his study, though they must be taken into account; he always organizes and analyses his material in terms of his own questions, interests, and categories.⁵⁸

The relevant questions seem to me to be: does the relationship described in this paper qualify as patronage, as we define it today; and was it 'literary' in some special way? Patronage can be briefly defined as 'a continuing reciprocal but asymmetrical exchange relationship between men of unequal social status'.⁵⁹ Under this definition, not all of the men for whom Martial composed verses were patrons. Some – for instance, the high-ranking centurion of l. 31 – were friends of more or less equal station; they could be treated as *amici pares* and were probably not looked to for continuing support. Even though Martial might also have called his great aristocratic acquaintances *amici*, the code of behaviour towards them was quite different, and recognized as such by the Romans.⁶⁰ The *amicus superior* and the *amicus inferior* were distinguished by the goods and services that each offered in the exchange. For his part Martial offered his verses and displays of deference, such as appearance at the *salutatio* and the use of respectful terms of address; his *amicus superior* was to provide protection and substantial support, including (it was hoped) an estate large enough to ensure the poet's leisure. The roles were not interchangeable: the *amicus superior* might become irritated if not shown due deference, while the poet was not happy when a wealthy friend sent his own verses in place of a more substantial gift (2. 68; 7. 46) – a quite different relationship from the friendship of Pliny and Titinius Capito, whose exchange was symmetrical in the sense that each politely attended the other's readings. In short, the type of relationship of concern in this paper meets all the criteria to qualify as 'patronage': it is reciprocal, asymmetrical and continuing. Martial's poems often do not offer enough information to classify his acquaintances as patrons or equal friends, but clearly the donor of the Nomentum estate, Marcella and Terentius Priscus, his Maecenas, qualify as patrons.

In what way, finally, was the relationship peculiarly 'literary'? In many respects Martial's relationship with his supporters resembled that of a patron and any ordinary client. Attendance at the salutation, invitations to dinner, exchange of Saturnalia gifts, these are traditional features of the patron-client relationship at Rome. On the other hand, there were certain expectations that set literary patronage apart from the rest. It was thought to be within the poet's power to confer immortal fame on his patron through his work. The poet could give something that the ordinary client could not, and in turn he expected kinds of support that others did not need: publicity, a place to hold readings, protection against plagiarists, and so on. Other clients sought material support, but the poet had a special argument: he needed a country estate adequate to give him the *otium* necessary to write his poetry and glorify his patron. Not all patrons fully appreciated the poet's calling. Some apparently were not willing to sacrifice the poet's show of deference at the *salutatio* in order to give him more time

⁵⁷ In inscriptions *patronus* is used not infrequently with this meaning; see Saller (above, note 32, p. 10).

⁵⁸ This issue raises serious philosophical questions, on which I think E. Gellner, *Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences* (London, 1973), ch. 2, is persuasive. The use of a direct translation of *amicitia* as 'friendship' would seem to me to be misleading to the modern reader as a description of Martial's relationship with his great aristocratic supporters at Rome.

⁵⁹ For the problem of definition see Saller (above, note 32), p. 1.

⁶⁰ Pliny, *Ep.* 7. 3. 2; Seneca, *Ep. ad Luc.* 94. 14.

to devote to his work.⁶¹ Others, however, certainly saw their role as supporter of the arts: hence Titinius Capito took special care to protect and promote writers, earning the title of 'reductor ac reformatior' of literature.⁶²

The focus of this paper has been Martial. Other writers' circumstances were different, and so too their relationships with friends and supporters. In no respect, however, was Martial unique. Other men of modest means migrated to Rome in the hope of achieving fame and fortune by writing verse; others sought a Maecenas to support them and, best of all, to introduce them to the emperor. There were few Maecenases to be found and emperors could not be generous to all poets; as a result, many, like Martial, must have been disappointed at least for a time. Their disappointment cannot disguise the fact that some received modest and sometimes considerable material support, which under the usual definition should be called literary patronage.⁶³

Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania

R. P. SALLER

⁶¹ Martial, 12. 68.

⁶² Pliny, *Ep.* 8. 12.

⁶³ I should like to thank William Harris, Helen North, and Martin Ostwald for reading and discussing this paper with me.