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**THE DULL EPIGRAMMATIST
AND HIS NOT TOO LEARNED PUBLIC.**

SOME NOTES ON LUXORIUS'S¹ INTRODUCTORY POEMS

(287-290 Riese² = IV, 441-444 Bährens = pp. 110-113 Rosenblum =
282-285 Shackleton Bailey = pp. 10-14 Happ = pp. 72-77 Dal Corobbo)²

This paper is devoted to the four poems opening the book of epigrams by Luxorius, the Carthaginian Martial as he is often named, an author active in Carthage during the last decade(s?)³ of the Vandal occupa-

¹ In choosing the form of the name 'Luxorius', instead of 'Luxurius' as proposed and strongly defeated by Happ (1962: 243-257; I 1986: 142-158), I follow the approach of Dal Corobbo (2006: 37): "Tenendo conto...della quasi totalità degli editori di Lusorio, compresi Rosenblum e Shackleton Bailey, i due più recenti, se si eccettua Happ, nell'impossibilità di fornire altri elementi risolutivi, è bene conservare la paradosi". Indeed, except for Happ, all other editors seem to subscribe to what has already been said by Riese: "Nihil itaque ad pristinam formam restituendam hinc redundat luci" (I quote after Rosenblum 1961: 37).

² I provide the numeration proposed in the most 'influential' editions of Luxorius's *liber epigrammaton*: Riese² Fasc. I (quoted simply as Riese 1894); Bährens (quoted simply as Bährens IV 1882); Rosenblum 1961; Shackleton Bailey 1982; Happ 1986. The most recent edition with the Italian translation and commentary by Dal Corobbo (2006) is for the most part concordant with the Latin text of Luxorius to be found in Happ (which is indeed, as Dal Corobbo states, the most important edition up to date; see also Dal Corobbo's notes on the tradition of Luxorius's text, pp. 55-66). What is particularly valuable in Dal Corobbo's work, except for a very substantial presentation of the *status quaestionis*, is the accurate Italian translation, which makes a truly good complement to Happ's volumes and does corroborate many of his editorial choices. Interpreting Luxorius's poems, one must be aware, however, that the reading of many passages is still a matter of debate. Thought-provoking, even if not rarely difficult to accept without doubts, are the conjectures proposed by Shackleton Bailey. Indeed, sometimes Luxorius as read by Shackleton Bailey seems quite a different, though not less interesting poet.

³ Luxorius's *floruit* is usually dated to the age of the king Hilderic (523-530). Probably the main part of the *libellus* was indeed composed during the times of Hild-

tion of North Africa in the sixth century. This little cycle of four inter-related texts makes a kind of introduction to the whole *liber epigrammaton*, providing a general presentation of the poet and – what is in fact more important – a definition of his literary goals and expectations. The arrangement of the poems is very logical: at the beginning a text addressed to the ‘first critic’, Faustus, next an epigram directed to the reader, in the third place a kind of *adlocutio ad libellum* – an address to the poet’s book, and finally five distichs advertizing the *brevitas*, typical of the epigrammatic genre. Significant seems also the fact that the four pieces are composed each in a different meter: the Phalaecean, the Senarius (Iambic Trimeter Acatalectic), the Lesser Asclepiad, and the elegiac couplets. Apparently, the cycle is to be a sample of the poet’s technical mastery; indeed, it is worth noting that in his ninety poems Luxorius employs thirteen different meters, which – if compared with Martial’s use of eight meters in 1,561 epigrams – does prove his versatility and willingness to try various metrical forms⁴. At the same time, it is not irrelevant that within this opening section one can find precisely the ‘Catullan’ Phalaecean, evoked by Martial in his own I 1, and the elegiac distich – the very meter of the epigrammatic genre as practiced by the Greeks and, in fact, the dominant meter in Martial, despite his (relative) polymetrics⁵. Actually, also in Luxorius the main meter turns out to be the elegiac distich and the second most frequently used – again like in Martial – the Phalaecean⁶. Thus, as Mario Citroni has noted, our

eric, some poems however, as emphasized by Dal Corobbo (2006: 38, 41, 239-240), were written later, during the reign of Gelimer (530-534). Fassina (2006: 144-145) on the other hand argues that the literary activity of Luxorius can be dated not only to Hilderic’s reign, but starts earlier, still in the times of Thrasamund (496-523).

⁴ Rosenblum 1961: 70-71. Dal Corobbo (2006: 161) notes that all the meters used by Luxorius can be found in the first 23 poems of the book; in this context it could be added that the four opening poems make part of a larger unit, the aim of which is to exhibit the poet’s technical competence. Afterwards, the dominant meter becomes the elegiac distich, the elegiacs being also the meter in which the African poet feels most at home.

⁵ Citroni (2003: 20-21) has shown the difference between Martial’s polymetrics and the, ostensibly similar, Catullus’s use of various meters. It was already Catullus, as later Martial, to ‘establish’ as the main meters of his *carmina minora* the elegiac distich, the Phalaecean and the scazon, yet in different proportion. Among Catullus’s minor poems, we find 48 elegiacs, 44 Phalaeceans and 8 choliambics. In Martial the prevalence of the elegiac distich is indisputable (73,1% of all epigrams); the Phalaecean occupies 19,4% and the scazon – 6%. What is more, this proportion is very steady in all of his 12 books.

⁶ In Luxorius the percentage is of course different from the one to be found in Martial, yet the dominance of the elegiac distich is not less clear: 49 poems of 90; 10

sixth century Carthaginian is probably the first ancient poet to continue or even to return to the well-organized and disciplined variety typical of Martial's books of epigrams⁷.

In what follows, I will give a few comments on each of the introductory texts, emphasizing in particular their autothematic character. Luxorius, as one soon discovers, is a very self-conscious (and quite self-assured) poet, yet – what can hardly seem surprising in an epigrammatist – he is rarely wholly serious and rarely should be taken at face value. But this is of course what makes reading him all the more interesting.

1. METRO PHALAECIO AD FAUSTUM

(287 Riese² = IV,441 Bährens = pp. 110-111 Rosenblum = 282 Shackleton Bailey = pp. 10-11 Happ = pp. 72-75 Dal Corobbo)

The opening poem brings some information not only about the author and his *liber*, but also about the person who is supposed to be the first reader and, apparently, the most competent critic of Luxorius's epigrammatic oeuvre, a certain Faustus.

The poet, as we soon learn, is – or at least wants to be known – as a gentleman⁸, already advanced in his years, who now collects into one little book the verses he composed once as a young man (*puer*)⁹. Yet,

poems are written in the Phalaecean. Interestingly however, Luxorius has not left any poem composed in scazons (Rosenblum 1961: 71; Happ 1986: 93); his third meter is the dactylic hexameter (9 poems), which Martial himself defended in his VI 65 as a meter apt also for epigrams (even though, in effect, he has left only 2 epigrams in hexameters and 2 more hexametric monostichs).

⁷ Citroni in his very important paper (2003) demonstrates the differences between Martial's epigrams and the *carmina minora*, the multi-form short poems, practiced by many of his contemporaries (informative is here especially the testimony of Plinius), but also by the later poets, the *poetae novelli*, Ausonius and Claudian. What he emphasizes as the main difference, apart from terminology on which below (n. 16), is precisely the approach to metrics: generally speaking, Plinius and many other poets of his milieu are much more liberal in this respect than Martial. Indeed, such *carmina minora* had no defined metrical profile whatsoever. Of particular relevance in Citroni's article is the stress put on the fact that Martial's notion of the epigram, which turned out to be so influential in shaping our modern thinking of what this genre should be like, is not at all akin to the one (if not the *ones*, actually) of other literati of his age.

⁸ The superscription of *liber epigrammaton* says: 'Viri clarissimi Luxori et spectabilis'; similarly in the superscription of *epithalamium Fridi* we can read: 'a Luxorio viro clarissimo <et> spectabili'. For the possible explanations of the attribution of such title see Rosenblum 1961: 39-43; Dal Corobbo 2006: 41-43.

⁹ Rosenblum (1961: 174) notes justly: "In its strictest sense, *puer* means a boy up

as can be easily noticed, he strives quite hard not to be taken for someone just too openly concerned about his very self and his own literary production. Rather, what strikes in the opinion he gives about these juvenilia is a clear tone of self-irony, if not self-depreciation¹⁰. He defines himself as *poeta insulsus*, even: as a poet of frozen wit (*ingenium frigens*), composing for sheer joy and without effort:

quos olim puer in foro paravi
versus – ex variis locis¹¹ deductos –
(illos scilicet, unde me poetam
insulsum puto quam magis legendum),
nostri temporis ut amavit¹² aetas,
in parvum conditos libellum (5-10)

Nec me paeniteat iocos secutum
quos verbis epigrammaton facietis
diverso et¹³ facili pudore lusit
frigens ingenium, laboris experts. (21-24)

to the age of sixteen or seventeen but it was also used of young men older than that." Happ (1986: 194), as if taking at face value the poet's statement, argued that the *liber epigrammaton* contained indeed only Luxorius's juvenilia Dal Corobbo (2006: 38, 41, 293) objects to this opinion, arguing that at least some poems must have been composed after 533, when the poet was probably in his forties: Dal Corobbo (following Schubert 1875) supposes that Luxorius was probably born in the times of Guntamund (484-496).

¹⁰ Interestingly, as a very careful reader of late antique poets may notice, a similar motif can be found in Sidonius Apollinaris's *Carm* IX, to Felix: Sidonius also asks his addressee why he insists upon the book publication of his 'worthless' juvenilia:

quid nugas temerarias amici,
sparsit quas tenerae iocus iuventae,
in formam redigi iubet libelli,
ingentem simul et repente fascem
conflari invidiae et perire chartam? (9-13)

The similarity (noticed, to my knowledge, only by Tandoi 1970: 38) shows that Luxorius's *olim puer* should be, indeed, seen rather as a topos than as an exact age indication.

¹¹ On the reason why prefer the lection *locis* to *iocis* see below.

¹² On the reason why prefer *ut amavit* to *autumavit* see n. 30 below.

¹³ The lection *diverso et*, transmitted in the A (the siglum assigned to the Codex Salmasianus by Riese 1894: XII), was emended by Bärens (IV 1882: 387) to *diversos* (and earlier by Mähly in his recension to Riese¹). Similarly *diversos* in Riese² (1894: 248), Rosenblum (1961: 110) and Shackleton Bailey (1982: 236). Happ (1986: 11) and after Happ Dal Corobbo (2006: 74) propose anew *diverso et*. I find the arguments given by Dal Corobbo (2006: 175) for the lection worth considering.

A reader familiar with the epigrammatic vocabulary will immediately recognize the intertextual value of these statements. As has already been suggested, the very meter, the Phalaecean, together with the diminutive *libellum* point ultimately to Catullus, the archetypic model of the Roman poetry of the *nugae*, the 'not serious' works, avoiding grand themes. At the same time, however, the direct reference for Luxorius's text is not (only) Catullus, but rather Martial, who employing the Phalaecean in his own opening poem of Book I declares himself a follower of Catullus¹⁴. An additional hint that *Ad Faustum* should be associated with Martial's I 1 is given in line 21: the phrase *verbis epigrammaton facetis* echoes Martial's *argutis epigrammaton libellis* (I 1, 3)¹⁵. As a matter of fact, what is worthy of notice here is not only the allusion as such. Martial, as has been justly emphasized in recent studies, defining his poetry, uses precisely the word *epigramma* and not the Catullan expressions like *lusus*, *ineptiae*, *ioci*, which he employs merely to connote and not to denote the literary genre¹⁶. Indeed, he consciously turns the word *epigramma* into a generic label¹⁷. In this context, it seems quite significant that the African follower of Martial, classifying his own poetry, repeats the very technical term of his predecessor.

Equally important as the reuse of the 'official' denotation of the genre proposed by his model, is the allusion to another notion that for Martial was essential to the Roman understanding of the epigram, namely the *sal*. It was precisely the *sal* that Martial pointed out as the fundamental marker of the Roman *epigramma*, opposing it to *lepos*, typical of the Greek counterpart of the genre¹⁸. Yet, as we have seen, the very use

¹⁴ The use of the Phalaecean in Martial's I 1 is a kind of complement to what has been said right above in the prose preface to Book I (cap. 4), where Martial *expressis verbis* names Catullus as one of his literary predecessors: 'Lascivam verborum veritatem, id est epigrammaton linguam, excussarem, si meum esset exemplum: sic scribit Catullus, sic Marsus, sic Pedo, sic Gaetulicus, sic quicumque perlegitur'.

¹⁵ See in particular Giovini (2004: 7), but the association was already noted by Happ in his commentary (I 1986: 31).

¹⁶ See Citroni 2003: 15-16. As Citroni shows, Martial's contemporary Plinius never employs the word *epigramma* in a similar context.

¹⁷ See Puelma 1997: 207-208.

¹⁸ See IV 23. Swann (1994: 61) emphasizes that Martial seems to be well aware of the differences between the Greek and the Latin epigrammatic traditions as he separates *sal*, typical of the Roman epigram, from *lepos*, peculiar of the Greek one. Citroni (2003: 9-13), who also points out the same sharp distinction drawn by Martial, notes besides that the definition of the Roman epigram has often been blurred by philologists who tried just too hard to demonstrate its dependence upon the Greek model.

of the word reveals Luxorius's contrariness: the opening text declares that the poet we are about to read is an antonym of what an epigrammatist should be: instead of being *salsus*, he is *insulsus* – insipid, dull¹⁹. In addition, a few lines later the expression *ingenium frigans* is used, and *frigidus* – if referred to qualities of style – is, indeed, employed as a synonym of *insulsus*²⁰.

It is quite clear that this whole figure of self-depreciation should be interpreted as a kind of *captatio benevolentiae*²¹: a poet having doubts about his work, ready to joke at his own expense all the more easily wins the sympathy of his audience. What might be added though – and here particularly informative turns out the very adjective *insulsus* – is that a 'programmatic' statement of this sort can be seen as a reversal of the topos of emulation: the epigrammatist we are reading does not advertize himself as a 'new' Martial, willing to compete with the predecessor, but rather as a 'bungler'²². Epigrammatic jest as it is, is also an excellent example of 'affektierte Bescheidenheit', idiosyncratic of the late antique style. It is in this context that the very opening lines (1-2) of the poem should be reconsidered. Rosenblum, Happ, and Dal Corobbo²³ read in the first verse *Ausus post veteres*²⁴, emphasizing Luxorius's reference to the 'poets of old'²⁵, whereas Shackleton Bailey proposes a completely different conjecture: *Lusus hos veteres*:

¹⁹ *Insulsus* of course derives from *salsus* (in + *salsus*) *OLD* – "unsalted"; (of actions, style etc.) "unattractive, dull, boring, stupid". Martial himself, as Giovini also notes (2004: 16), uses the adjective, commenting on the epigrams of Sabellus, yet in litotes. He praises the addressee for writing, indeed, not without a wit, '*non insulse scribis*', the quatrains and distichs. However, as he adds, "it is easy to write epigrams nicely, but to write a book is hard." (Book VII, 85).

²⁰ *OLD*: *frigeo* – (of words) "to have no effect, fall flat"; *frigidus* – (of arguments etc.) "failing to produce the effect intended, making no appeal, feeble, flat, lame, frigid"; (of subjects, tasks) "unimportant, dull, tedious". The best example is provided by Quintilian quoting Cicero's critics, XII, 10, 12: *in salibus frigidum*. Giovini (2004: 22) focuses on another interesting passage in Cicero's *De oratore* II 260, where indeed *frigidus* seems to be used as an antonym of *salsus*: Cicero, analyzing a kind of joke depending on language, when one pretends to understand an expression literally and not in the sense intended, states that "haec aut *frigida* sunt, aut tum *salsa*, cum aliud est expectatum".

²¹ Dal Corobbo 2006: 174; Giovini 2004: 10.

²² I quote the word proposed by Rosenblum (1961: 111) in his translation.

²³ Riese (1894: 247) and Bährens (IV 1882: 386) read similarly: '*Ausus post veteres tuis, amice, / Etsi iam temere est, placere iussis*'.

²⁴ As transmitted in the A.

²⁵ As translated by Rosenblum 1961: 111. *Post veteres* can be interpreted in this context as *post veterum praeclara carmina* (Dal Corobbo 2006: 174). Rosenblum pro-

Happ and Dal Corobbo:	Rosenblum:	Shackleton Bailey:
Ausus post veteres tuis,	Ausus post veteres, tuis,	Lusus hos veteres, tuis,
amice,	amice,	amice,
etsi iam temere est,	Etsi iam temere est,	etsi iam temere est,
placere iussis,	placere iussis,	placere iussis,

Shackleton Bailey's proposal is based on a notion which has, indeed, an important place in Luxorius's poetics: the Carthaginian Martial does stress the unserious, 'ludic' character of his writings (in the very *Ad Faustum* we have: *iocos* in l. 21, *verbis facietis* in l. 22, *lusit* in l. 23, finally *ridiculum*²⁶ in l. 26)²⁷. But the prevailing lection *Ausus post veteres*, especially if read – and translated – carefully²⁸, makes a good complement to the figure of affected modesty. What we obtain is a quite

vides examples from Martial referring to the poets of old as *veteres* (VIII 69, 1-2; X 78, 14; XI 90, 7). Giovini (2004: 13) however – being himself enthusiastic about Shackleton Bailey's conjecture – emphasizes that in all these passages the adjective is never substantivated, but always concords with *poeta*. But Luxorius's substantivated *veteres* could be taken as an example of the brachylogic style, which he sometimes likes using (see Dal Corobbo 2006: 175).

²⁶ Shackleton Bailey proposes for the final lines (25-26): 'causam, carminis unde sit voluptas / edit *ridiculi* sequens poema', which makes *ridiculi* concord with *carminis*, all the other editors leave *ridiculum*, which thus concords with *poema*.

²⁷ Giovini (2004: 13), as said above, accepts wholly the conjecture. Hunt (1988: 334), similarly positive about the proposal, draws attention to an interesting point: "Lusus hos ... augurs well for the editing, brilliant in the fulfillment of this collection, Not only, in its place, does it remove the supremely unsatisfactory *Ausus post*: it obviates the transposition, mooted by Riese ("fort. recte" Bährens), of lines 5 and 6 below, obviates making lines 7-8 a parenthesis (Riese, Bährens), and allows, in a poem characterized by verbal echoes, ring composition (~23 *lusit*, 25-26 *carminis...ridiculi*)".

²⁸ Rosenblum in his main text proposes a rather 'linear' translation, which indeed – as he himself acknowledges in the commentary – "offers some difficulty": "Daring, after the poets of old, to obey your orders, even if it is now a rash act..." (Rosenblum 1961: 111, 173 – the commentary). It could have been better, if the editor had decided for the version he had suggested in the commentary (Rosenblum 1961: 174), rendering *post veteres* as "inferior to": "though inferior to". But the problem is also due to the punctuation. Rosenblum (unlike Riese (!) he follows for the most part) puts the comma after *veteres*, which shows that he does read *Ausus post veteres* as a separate unit. Riese, Bährens, Happ and Dal Corobbo do not; therefore, Dal Corobbo's translation, based on a better punctuation, sounds, indeed, clearer. The Italian translator begins from *etsi* and emphasizes that *post veteres* should be read in this context: "Anche se il farlo dopo i poeti antichi è cosa da pazzi, osando obbedire ai tuoi comandi...". Another reason why Dal Corobbo's understanding of the text seems fuller may be accepting the lection *iam temere est* (as proposed by Happ, see above), instead of *iam* (present already in Riese and Bährens, see n. 18): *iam* may imply the sense 'now' and be seen as opposed to *post* (see in fact Rosenblum 1961: 173).

typical pose of the late antique *literator* who, just too willingly, acknowledges his inferiority to the masters of old and – even if follows the examples they set – has no emulative pretensions whatsoever²⁹. It might be in fact because of this lack of ‘emulative pretensions’ – or, if one prefers, a reluctance to put them forward openly – that Luxorius, eventually, does not name any specific models (even though his Martialian inspirations are quite clear for a well-trained reader).

If in the opening verses the old poets were alluded to, in line 9 Luxorius’s contemporary literary culture is mentioned. Our epigrammatist states that he once wrote verses *nostri temporis ut amavit*³⁰ *aetas*. Rosenblum renders the whole passage as follows: “They [the poems] appealed to the tastes of our generation, but actually they are such as to make me think of myself as a bungler rather than as a poet worth being read”³¹. The translation, however slightly imprecise, is not unacceptable, yet it all the more highlights Luxorius’s contrariness: he is pre-

²⁹ A certain parallel can be found in another text by a Latin poet of Vandal Africa, Dracontius, who in the introduction to his *De raptu Helenae* calls himself a *vilis vates* and uses the simile of foxes hoping to snatch whatever remains after the lions’ feast. The simile could be seen as a metaphoric vision of the contemporary culture, ruminating the past, even if without the ambition to equal the classical models.

³⁰ Here Shackleton Bailey proposes another major conjecture: *autumavit* instead of *ut amavit* (see the collation of the passage in the four editions below), which indeed (as emphasized by Hunt 1988: 334), together with the initial *Lusus hos veteres*, obviates making lines 7-8 a parenthesis, but it also completely changes the sense of the whole statement. In this version it is the present generation to have judged Luxorius as *poeta insulsus* (maybe preferring the old poets). Such reading however, interesting, even amusing as it is, seems less convincing if we take into consideration the intratextual perspective: in the very next poem Luxorius asks his (contemporary, as it appears) reader why he reads him having at his disposal the books by old poets.

Happ and Dal Corobbo:	Rosenblum:	Shackleton Bailey:
quos olim puer in foro	Quos olim puer in foro	quos olim puer in foro
paravi	paravi	pa<ra>vi,
versus – ex variis locis	Versus ex variis locis	versus ex variis iocis
deductos –	deductos	deductos,
(illos scilicet, unde me	(Illos scilicet unde me	illos scilicet unde me
poetam	poetam	poetam
insulsum puto quam magis	Insulsum puto quam magis	insulsum, puto, quam
legendum),	legendum),	magis legendum
nostri temporis ut amavit	Nostri temporis ut amavit	nostri temporis <a>
aetas,	aetas,	utumavit aetas,

³¹ See Rosenblum 1961: 111. *Nostri temporis... aetas* in the sense of ‘our generation’ can be compared to Ausonius’s *aetas recentis temporis*, *Com. prof. Burd.* II 6, as noted by Rosenblum (1961: 175) and Giovini (2004: 16).

sented as someone who, on the one hand, expresses his low opinion on his own writings and, on the other hand, does not shrink from noting that he was so popular an author. Much simpler would be just to leave the phrase as it is and conclude that Luxorius says ‘only’ that he once composed verses ‘as his generation loved’. This in fact, as I think, opens up the possibility of two interpretations. We may understand *olim... paravi versus...nostri temporis ut amavit aetas* as “I once...composed verses...suiing the tastes of our generation”³², but also as “I once... composed verses...as our generation loved (doing)”. If so, it could be inferred that Luxorius intends to define himself, indeed, in the context of the literary preferences of his age, but also – as a representative of a certain milieu.

Two more important qualities of Luxorius’s epigrams are emphasized in the quoted above passages of *Ad Faustum*. As we remember, our poet reveals that he wrote his verses *in foro* (l. 5). A literal translation, like the one by Rosenblum: *in the Forum*³³, secure as it often may be, in this context might also turn out rather misleading³⁴ as the word *forum* as used here seems to point not just to the place, but also to the people that can be met in this very place³⁵, or even more generally – to the everyday life of the Carthaginian *forum*. Luxorius’s *in foro*, as Giovini convincingly argues³⁶, stresses a particular aspect of his poetics, in fact an aspect indicated also by Martial as essential to the poetics of *epigramma*, namely the realism³⁷, the realism in portraying a mad teacher,

³² As proposed by Dal Corobbo (2006: 73): “i versi che un tempo – quand’ero giovane – ho scritto in mezzo alla gente, ricavandoli da occasioni diverse e *adeguandomi ai gusti* della nostra generazione”.

³³ Rosenblum 1961: 111. The American editor explains in the prefatory part of his edition (Rosenblum 1961: 44): “At first glance, the mention of the Forum would seem to indicate that Luxorius engaged in public life when young, ... but [he] nowhere hints about his public career. *In foro*... refers only to his activities as a student and teacher.” It should be remembered though that in classical Latin *forum* and *schola* are often opposed, as *ThLL* VI 1, 1205, 22 ff. shows: Sen. *Contr.* 13: ‘scholam quasi ludum esse, forum harenam’; *ibid.* 9 praef. 5 ‘e scholis in forum transeuntes’ etc.

³⁴ See the ironic remarks in Giovini 2004: 11.

³⁵ OLD gives the sense: “the people in the street”. *Il dizionario della lingua latina* provides an interesting example explaining the expression *in foro* as *in pubblico*: Cic., *fin.* 3. 4: ‘arripere verba de foro’, “cogliere parole dalla folla”. Cicero, describing the language of philosophy, argues that “philosophy is the science of life, and cannot be discussed in *language taken at random from the street*”.

³⁶ See Giovini 2004: 11-12, but also his further remarks on Luxorius’s realism and its limits (esp. pp. 161-164 and 338-340) with which I fully agree.

³⁷ Martial openly declares: ‘Non hic Centauros, non Gorgonas Harpyasque / Inve-

an angry dice player, a drunken woman, and so many others³⁸. Therefore, I would say that in the following line (6) sounds more logical the lection *locis*, transmitted in the A, than *iocis*, proposed by Bärens³⁹ and accepted only by Shackleton Bailey:

Happ and Dal Corobbo:	Rosenblum:	Shackleton Bailey:
quos olim puer in foro	Quos olim puer in foro	quos olim puer in foro
paravi	paravi	pa<ra>vi,
versus – ex variis locis	Versus ex variis locis de-	versus ex variis iocis de-
ductos –	ductos	ductos,

As has been noted before, the jocular tone of Luxorius's poetry is hardly questionable (which might be an argument for *iocis*). On the other hand, however, the phrase 'versus ex variis *locis* deductos', understood as "taken from various occasions", "inspired by various occasions"⁴⁰, seems to emphasize the above mentioned sense of *in foro*.

Finally, as the closing part of the poem announces, Luxorius's verses are also to be marked by *facilis pudor* (l. 23), the light morality⁴¹. And indeed, a reader who seeks this kind of amusement should not be disappointed. An effeminate lawyer, a royal eunuch who put on a *mitella*, an aged virgin getting married, an impotent doctor marrying a woman thrice a widow, a husband who made his wife prostitute herself for the sake of having sons, a blind man who knew beautiful women by touch are just a few types to be found in the unusual world of Luxorius's epigram⁴².

It is time now to focus on the other protagonist of the poem, its addressee Faustus. His task, as has already been mentioned, is quite unique. Faustus – if we should believe the testimony of his 'compeer' – a great teacher of *ars grammatica*, is not only a 'mere' dedicatee of the *liber epigrammaton*. Cast in the role of a literary *patronus* – as clearly

nies: *hominem pagina nostra sapit*' (X 4, 9-10), opposing the epigram, treating everyday life, to grand poetry, exploiting mythological themes.

³⁸ For the examples I provide only the numeration in Riese²: 294, 333, 363.

³⁹ Bärens IV 1882: 386.

⁴⁰ As proposed by Dal Corobbo (2006: 73) in his translation: "i versi che un tempo – quand' ero giovane – ho scritto in mezzo alla gente, ricavandoli *da occasioni diverse*".

⁴¹ On the nexus *facilis pudor* see in particular Giovini 2004: 21-22. On Faustus see generally Kaster 1997: 283-284.

⁴² In Riese²: 295, 298, 301, 309, 322, 357.

indicated by the double use of the word *iussa* (l. 2: *placere iussis*; l. 19: *duriora iussa*), so well-known from the *recusationes* composed by the Augustan poets – he is indeed made corresponsable for the book to be published. Not only – as a distinguished specialist⁴³ – is he supposed to be the first reader and critic of Luxorius's juvenilia, he is also expected to choose a certain number of other readers among whom individual poems⁴⁴ should be circulated⁴⁵:

Ausus post veteres tuis, amice,
etsi tam temere est, placere iussis,
nostro Fauste animo probate conpar,
tantus grammaticae magister artis, (3-4)
[versus]
in parvum tibi conditos libellum
transmisi memori tuo probandos
primum pectore; deinde, si libebit,
discretos titulis, quibus tenentur,
per nostri similes dato sodales. (10-14)

As we can see, the 'next readers', selected by Faustus, are to be friends, or even *sodales*, similar to the poet and his addressee. In classical Latin poetry the word *sodalis*, belonging to the so-called 'language of *amicitia*', was often exploited by authors wanting to emphasize their relationship with a particular literary – and social – circle⁴⁶. This exclu-

⁴³ See the thorough analysis of the nexus *memor pectus* by Giovini (2004: 17-19).

⁴⁴ As can be inferred from *discretos titulis, quibus tenentur* (l. 9). On the question of the authenticity of the titles of Luxorius's poems (generally rather doubtful, as it seems) see in particular Rosenblum 1961: 65-69 and recently Dal Corobbo 2006: 159-161, but also some interesting additional notes in Zurli 2002 (1): 58-60. One might be tempted to wonder if the author of the titles could not have been Faustus: in such case his corresponsibility for the *liber* would be even fuller. Yet it cannot really be conjectured from the statement made by the poet in l. 9.

⁴⁵ An interesting parallel can be found in Statius's prose preface to *Silvae* II: Statius finishes the letter to his friend Melior with a request regarding his poems: "Haec qualiacumque sunt, Melior carissime, si tibi non displicuerint, a te publicum accipiant; si minus, ad me revertantur".

⁴⁶ Therefore the word can be found in Catullus, always in reference to persons he defines as his 'closest friends'. Interestingly, the term *sodalis* / *sodales* is used quite often by the exiled Ovid who is very systematic in emphasizing that, despite his physical absence, he is still bound by the ties of friendship with many representatives of the socio-cultural elite of Augustus's Rome. In Martial the presence of the word is also

siveness, as we can see, is also stressed in Luxorius's text: the *sodales* he thinks of are presumably other *grammatici*, like himself and Faustus⁴⁷. Most probably another common denominator would be the age: as it seems, Luxorius, Faustus, and their *sodales* are all representatives of that "our generation" who shared similar pastimes, in the first place verse writing, and / or had similar literary tastes.

At the same time however, one interesting reservation is being made: the readers to whom Faustus will present Luxorius's epigrams should not be *doctiloqui nimisque magni*. The addressee is in fact being blackmailed by our poet: since the *index*⁴⁸ of the little book will contain both names, of its author and of the dedicatee and the 'first critic'⁴⁹, Faustus might be equally derided, should he recommend it to the 'speaking learnedly' and the eminent:

Nam si doctiloquis nimisque magnis
haec tu credideris viris legenda,
culpa nos socios notabit index:
tam te, talia qui bonis⁵⁰ recenses,

noticeable [for the precise statistics see the excellent resources on: <http://www.intratext.com/LATINA/>].

⁴⁷ Kaster (1997: 415-416) in his prosopography lists Luxorius in the category of "Dubii, Falsi, Varii". As he argues, we have no decisive proofs whatsoever to be sure that Luxorius was really a professional *grammaticus* and the expressions *compar* and *nostri similes*... *sodales* indicate only that he and Faustus were friends and not co-professionals. I do not find wholly convincing Kaster's arguments, especially those concerning the letter addressed to Luxorius by Coronatus which, as it seems, does give certain clues that Luxorius might have been not just a *grammaticus*, but even *sophista* (see also Happ 1986: 85; Dal Corobbo 2006: 42). In particular however, I would not find problematic the fact that the 'conventional' understanding of *nostri similes*... *sodales* in *Ad Faustum* would "imply that Luxorius had requested his poems be circulated among his fellow grammarians". Rather, as Zurli (2002 (2): 229) has emphasized, "questo liber – si rammenti sempre – è opera di un 'grammatico' (Luxorius, appunto), pubblicato a cura di un grammatico (l'amico Fausto), concepito per una cerchia di amici letterati". Indeed, it seems that at least some late antique poets, especially those cultivating the classical forms and themes, were 'professional' poets, composing mainly for their fellows (I think of Ausonius in the first place).

⁴⁸ On the playful use of the legal vocabulary in l. 17 (*index* means "the title", but also "a witness", which is complemented by *culpa socios*, accomplices) Rosenblum 1961: 175.

⁴⁹ Happ (1986: 27) reconstructs the 'title' of the book as follows: "Luxuri viri clarissimi et spectabilis ad Faustum liber epigrammaton".

⁵⁰ Bärens (1982: 387) and after him Shackleton Bailey propose *bonus*, which, instead of qualifying the poems as good, emphasizes rather the favorable approach of the addressee.

quam me, qui tua duriora iussa
feci nescius, inmemor futuri. (15-20)

A reader as contrary as Luxorius loves being could comment here that it is, indeed, hardly surprising that a dull epigrammatist does not even aspire to please too learned a public. More seriously speaking (if it is fair to speak seriously about jokes), the Carthaginian Martial is obviously joking again; in fact, in the very next poem, announced as the one revealing the source of pleasure to be found in his verses, he may be saying quite antithetically (also here the interpretations vary) that the *docti* do not wholly dislike his *nugae*. Besides, addressing a public of not too refined taste is commonplace of the epigrammatic genre. Luxorius's concern about the reaction of the *doctiloqui* can be juxtaposed to what Martial states about the *malignus interpres* and the *ambitiose tristis*, always ready to criticize someone else's work⁵¹. Different from Martial – at least from what Martial declares in the very opening lines of his epigrammatic oeuvre, where he presents himself directly to the anonymous *lector* as 'toto notus in orbe Martialis' (I 1)⁵² – is rather the whole concept of addressing the general public as if through, by means of the figure of the first reader and critic, Faustus. In this respect Luxorius's approach is indeed more 'Catullan' than 'Martalian'.

2. IAMBICI AD LECTOREM OPERIS SUI

(288 Riese² = IV, 442 Bährens = pp. 112-113 Rosenblum =
283 Shackleton Bailey = p. 12 Happ = pp. 74-75 Dal Corobbo)

It is only in the subsequent poem that our late antique epigrammatist turns to his own unnamed *lector*. As has been specified in the final two lines of *Ad Faustum* (ll. 25-26), the main subject of *Iambics to the reader* is to be the source of pleasure to be found in Luxorius's poetry: 'Causam, carminis unde sit voluptas, / Edit ridiculum sequens poema'. Yet before this topic is taken up, the poet – as if developing the motif

⁵¹ See the prose preface to Book I (cap. 3; 5-6): '3. Absit a iocorum nostrorum simplicitate malignus interpres nec epigrammata mea scribat: inprobe facit qui in alieno libro ingeniosus est. Si quis tamen tam ambitiose tristis est ut apud illum in nulla pagina latine loqui fas sit, potest epistola vel potius titulo contentus esse. Epigrammata illis scribuntur qui solent spectare Florales'.

⁵² See also 'me manus omnis habet' (VI 60).

already suggested in the previous text, where imitating the masters of old has been called a “rash act” – asks his reader quite openly: “why do you turn the pages⁵³ of my book, if you could find enjoyment in reading old authors?” Furthermore, Luxorius stresses what makes the difference so sharp: whereas the works by the *prisci* were admirable for their excellent harmonies, his little book contains only trifles, composed by a ‘novice’, a boy indeed (as stated in *Ad Faustum: olim puer*, l. 9)⁵⁴. As we can see, the reader is treated here almost as Faustus was before, as an accomplice of the author (in *Ad Faustum* it is said *expressis verbis*: ‘*culpa nos socios notabit index*’, l. 17), corresponsable for the fact that such frivolities are publicly known:

Priscos cum haberes, quos probares, indices,
lector, placere qui bonis possent modis
nostri libelli cur retexis paginam
nugis refertam frivolisque sensibus
et quam tenello tiro lusi viscere? (1-5)

The second part of the epigram provides the answer to this, provocative of course, question. Besides – as most editors agree reading in line 6: ‘et forte doctis *si illa*⁵⁵ cara est versibus’ – it also, like the previ-

⁵³ On the sense of *retexis* as used here see Rosenblum 1961: 176; Happ II 1986: 35.

⁵⁴ Giovini (2004: 26) notes justly that a good parallel can be found in Martial’s I 113, where the poet also addresses a reader willing to waste his time reading his juvenilia. Interestingly, also these trifles – as we learn – will be saved thanks to the poet’s friend and editor:

Quaecumque lusi iuvenis et puer quodam
apinasque nostras, quas nec ipse iam novi,
male conlocare si bonas voles horas
et invidetis otio tuo, lector,
a Valeriano Pollio petes Quinto,
per quem perire non licet meis nugis. (I 113)

⁵⁵ The A transmits *si illa* and it is followed by Bährens (IV 1882: 387), Happ (I, 1986: 12), Dal Corobbo (2006: 74). *Si* is deleted by Riese in both his editions (see 1894: 248) and Rosenblum (1961: 112), which consequently changes the sense: *doctis* is treated now as an adjective of *versibus*. Besides, Riese, followed by Rosenblum, proposes *an* against *et* transmitted in the A, which stresses the interrogatory sense. Giovini (2004: 32) finds the reading *doctis versibus* unacceptable as it strongly discords with the figure of *captatio benevolentiae*, employed throughout the poem. It is true, but on the other hand the adjective *doctus* if referred to *verses* could be understood as ironic (Dal Corobbo 2006: 176) and, as we already have seen quite many times, Luxorius loves

ous text, treats of Luxorius's relationship with the sophisticated audience. Since the interpretations of lines 6-8 proposed by different editors vary quite significantly, it is best to collate the main variants:

Happ and Dal Corobbo:	Rosenblum:	Shackleton Bailey:
et forte doctis si illa cara	An forte doctis illa cara	Et forte doctis [si] illa
est versibus,	est versibus,	cara est versibus
sonat pusilli quae	Sonat pusillo quae	sona<nt> pusilli qui
laboris schemate,	laboris schemate,	laboris <s>commata,
nulla decoris, ambitus	Nulla decoris, ambitus,	nulli decoris, ambitus,
sententia –	sententiae?	sententiae?

According to Rosenblum, Luxorius's poetry (*pagina* to be exact) is characterized by a small form (*pusillo...laboris schemate*)⁵⁶. Happ (followed by Dal Corobbo) and Shackleton Bailey correct *pusillo* to *pusilli*⁵⁷, but that is where the similarities between the German and the American philologist end. Let us examine Happ's reading first. In his opinion, what is being defined here is not the structure, the form of the poems, but rather their stylistic, or even rhetorical quality⁵⁸ (and once again, like in the previous text, we hear about the 'little effort': *pusilli laboris* evokes *laboris expers*). In such context, it seems logical indeed to emend *nullo*, transmitted in the Codex Salmasianus, as Happ did. What he proposes is *nulla...sententia* with two genitives of quality used in place of adjectives. In Happ's version, Luxorius actually acknowledges that his epigrams appeal to the readers, also to the learned ones (as the dash⁵⁹ instead of the question mark clearly indicates), because of

being contrary. Shackleton Bailey (1982: 236) obviates *si*, but emphasizes in the apparatus: "doctis datus est".

⁵⁶ As in Rosenblum 1961: 113: "book...whose structure is limited", see also his comments on p. 177. Riese (1894: 248) renders l. 7 as 'Sonat pusillo quae laboris †schemate', Rosenblum only removes the *crux*.

⁵⁷ Already in Bährens (IV 1882: 387): 'Sonat pusillique e...'.

⁵⁸ *Schema* in rhetoric is used as an equivalent of "a figure of speech". Giovini (2004: 33-34) takes this lection into consideration, but he also notes: "Può darsi pure che Lussorio abbia inteso affermare...che i suoi *versus* (o la sua *libelli...pagina*) risuonino di *sententiarum orationisque formae*...frutto di scarsa fatica oppure d'una scrittura figurata e per metafore di modesto impegno e di nessuna eleganza, ma non mi sembra che questa sia una peculiarità stilistica distintiva del *dicendi genus* del poeta africano: Lussorio sminuisce i propri meriti ma non si attribuisce caratteristiche di demerito che gli sono estranee".

⁵⁹ Dal Corobbo, who reads the passage exactly like Happ, places the comma here, like Bährens (IV 1882: 387). The question mark is used by Riese 1894: 248.

their 'simplicity', in particular because of lack of (exaggerated) poetic embellishment and 'ostentation'⁶⁰.

Shackleton Bailey highlights a different aspect. First of all, he is convinced that the poet once again, as in *Ad Faustum*, does not address the *docti* as his potential public, but rather those of plainer taste. Besides, he conjectures *comute* of the Codex Salmasianus not to *schemate* (as Riese), but to *scommata*⁶¹. In the following line he proposes genitive qualifiers of the noun *versi*. As a result, the peculiarities of Luxorius's poetry are, in his version, "teasing, taunting expressions" (that cost no effort), lack of *decor* and *ambitus*, and – lack of *sententia*, a (moral) judgment⁶². The last, as we remember, has been already mentioned in *Ad Faustum*, where the poet has emphasized his *facilis pudor*. All these features are indeed markers of the epigrammatic genre, stressed also by Martial⁶³.

The poem closes with another important remark concerning the nature of Luxorius's epigrams (ll. 9-10). They do attract the readers – here presumably the average public is taken into consideration⁶⁴ – for their

⁶⁰ See Happ II 1986: 42-44; Dal Corobbo 2006: 176. *Ambitus* – "pompousness", "ostentation" (the translation proposed by Rosenblum 1961: 113).

⁶¹ Bährens (IV 1882: 387) already proposed *scommate*, which actually seemed acceptable to Happ (II 1986: 41, as he puts it: "Bährens' *scommate* ist hübsch"), only that, as he emphasized, the word probably did not exist in Latin in Luxorius's times. Giovini (2004: 35-36) is inclined to believe that Luxorius may be using the term *scommata* in the sense close to the one proposed by Macrobius in his *Saturnalia* VII 3, 2-3: "*scommata* enim paene dixerim morsum figuratum, quia saepe fraude vel urbanitate tegitur et aliud sonet, aliud intellegas".

⁶² Rosenblum (1961: 113) interprets somewhat similarly: "with not a whit of elegance, ostentation or serious thought".

⁶³ As emphasized by Giovini (2004: 25-29), who concludes justly: "il carne, che può apparire una sorta di mea culpa autoreferenziale dell'autore, consapevole dei limiti tecnici, delle mende strutturali, dell'atrofia stilistica, nonché della generale frivolezza della sua libelli pagina, costituisce invece, sulla base dei nessi intertestuali con i modelli ripresi e contraffatti, in testa Marziale, una dissimulata e abile rivendicazione di consapevole appartenenza a una tradizione e a una scuola di poesia che risale appunto al grande poeta spagnolo e nel cui solco fecondo Lussorio vuole inserirsi con orgoglio, seppure quale tardo epigono".

⁶⁴ The interpretation of the whole passage depends on the reading of the previous three lines. If we agree with Shackleton Bailey that the poet ironizes the approach of the *docti* to his verses, what he is saying sounds as: "my poems are despised by the learned, but you, 'normal' reader, do love them". If we accept Happ's interpretation, it can be paraphrased as Dal Corobbo (2006: 176) did "se i critici... apprezzano questa silloge poetica per il suo carattere non problematico, allora – e nel dirlo Lussorio mostra un certo autocompiacimento – anche il lettore normale può accostarla con animo sereno".

similarity to ‘funny’ theatrical spectacles. The allusion to the poet’s contemporary culture is quite obvious: the theatrical, especially mimic and pantomimic performances were extremely popular in Vandal Carthage and had their impact on authors practicing more ‘literary’ genres, as the example of Dracontius clearly indicates. The comparison with *iocosa theatra* is besides a one more hint how important factor in Luxorius’s epigrams is the realistic, often parodistic, imitation of life. And only a competent reader will notice that speaking of epigrams as theatrical performances is a literary topos itself⁶⁵:

Dal Corobbo:	Happ:	Rosenblum and Shackleton Bailey:
hanc iure quaeris et libenter inchoas, velut iocosa si theatra pervoles!	hanc iure quaeris et libenter inchoas, velut iocosa si theatra pernotes! ⁶⁶	Hanc tu requiris et libenter inchoas, Velut iocosa si theatra pervoles.

3. ASCLEPIADEI AD LIBRUM SUUM

(289 Riese² = IV, 443 Bährens = pp. 112-113 Rosenblum =
284 Shackleton Bailey = p. 13 Happ = pp. 74-75 Dal Corobbo)

In the third of his introductory poems Luxorius addresses his very book. The associations with earlier *adlocutiones ad libellum* by Horace (*Epist.* I 20) and Martial (I 3) are immediate and are indeed what the poet expects from us. Luxorius’s *Ad librum* must be read together with Martial’s I 3, and it is so not just because the African epigrammatist re-uses the motif already exploited by his predecessor, but rather because the way in which he does it defines his attitude to the model. Luxorius, as if reversing the situation described by Martial, speaks in a tone that we know so well from his previous poems, of an ostentatious irony, or

⁶⁵ See again Martial’s prose preface to Book I, cap. 6-8 (quoted also by Giovini 2004: 29-30): ‘Epigrammata illis scribuntur qui solent spectare Florales. Non intret Cato theatrum meum, aut si intraverit, spectet. Videor mihi meo iure facturus si epistolam versibus clusero:

Nosses iocosae dulce cum sacrum Florae
festosque lusus et licentiam volgi,
cur in theatrum, Cato severe, venisti?
an ideo tantum veneras, ut exires?’

⁶⁶ Happ maintains the lection *pernotes* of the Codex Salmasianus.

even depreciation of his literary productions. At the same time, his reinterpretation of the theme can be seen as a kind of – playful and light, but quite clear – acknowledgement of his inferiority to the predecessor: the Carthaginian author in a certain sense implies that his own book, and his own versifying, does not deserve a similar attention to Martial's.

In Martial the *parvus liber* prefers to go away and dwell in the bookshops of the quarter named *Argiletum*, although the poet's bookcase stands empty for it; similarly in Horace's *Epist.* I 20 the poet tells his book-slave: 'paucis ostendi gemis et communia laudas, / *non ita nutritus*' (ll. 4-5). In Luxorius the little book hurries to reach the homes of the great and the bookshelves of the stately Forum, escaping the poverty of his master at whose place it lay in a tiny nook covered with dust and almost completely devoured by bookworms. In Martial the *liber* flees as it cannot stand the author's constant erasures (also in Horace's *Epist.* I 20 the book is *pumice mundus*, l. 2). In Luxorius there is not even a mention of this, which concords with the pose of negligence he assumes throughout his work:

Martial, I 3

Argiletanas mavis habitare tabernas,
cum tibi, parve liber, scrinia nostra vacant. (1-2)

Sed tu ne totiens domini patiare lituras
neve notet lusus tristis harundo tuos,
aetherias, lascive, cupis volitare per auras. (9-11)

Luxorius

Parvus nobilium cum liber ad domos
pomposique fori scrinia publica
cinctus multifido veneris agmine
nostri diffugiens pauperiem laris,
quo dudum modico *sordidus* angulo
squalebas, *tineis* iam prope deditus: (1-6)

Luxorius's book at his master's home lies covered with dust and falls prey to worms. A careful reader will recall now precisely Horace's *adlocutio ad libellum* in *Epist.* I 20. Horace addressing his *liber* disguised as a rebel slave prophesies:

carus eris Romae donec te deserat aetas;
contrectatus ubi manibus *sordescere* volgi
coeperis, aut *tineas* pasces taciturnus inertis
aut fugies Vticam aut vinctus mitteris Ilerdam.
(Hor., *Epist.* I 20, 10-14)

It is worth noting that Luxorius in his epigram also speaks of a multitude of readers that may look down upon the runaway: ‘si te dispiciet⁶⁷ turba legentium’ (l. 7); in addition he uses the adjective *sordidus* (in Horace *sordescere*). Nevertheless, as it was with motifs taken from Martial, also here the late antique poet generates a sense practically opposed to the one to be found in Horace. Horace warns the book about the miserable fate of one who chooses a life in public, despising the safe refuge offered by the master. In Luxorius the book suffers poverty precisely staying at home, where it is exposed to dirt and worms. It could be argued that what we have in Luxorius is a kind of ironic reinterpretation of the Horatian-Martialian topos. The late antique epigrammatist derides the attitude of a poet-admirer of his own work whose *amor proprius* is inextricably intertwined with a certain mistrust, if not a sense of superiority towards the wider public. Horace, in addition to what has been cited above, portrays the ‘prospective’ reader of his book as a sated and languid lover (‘cum plenus languet amator’, l. 8) or as a stammering old elementary school teacher in the city’s outskirts (‘Hoc quoque te manet, ut pueros elementa docentem / occupet extremis in vicis balba senectus’, ll. 17-18). Martial, on the other hand, emphasizes the squeamishness of the Roman literary public (‘nescis dominae fastidia Romae’, l. 3)⁶⁸. Luxorius, who before expressed his doubts about the *doctiloqui*, also now acknowledges the possibility that his book may be simply disdained or at least disregarded⁶⁹, yet does not really ironize (at least not overtly) about its readers, diverse as they may be ‘inter Romulidas et Tyrias manus’ (l. 8)⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ Happ II 1986: 50-51 and Dal Corobbo 2006: 177 propose to maintain the traditional *dispiciet* transmitted in the A.

⁶⁸ Not less symptomatic what Martial says in the following lines of his poem:

crede mihi, nimium Martia turba sapit.

Maiores nusquam rhonchi: iuvenesque senesque

et pueri nasum rhinocerotis habent.

Audieris cum grande sophos, dum basia iactas,

ibis ab excusso missus in astra sago. (4-8)

⁶⁹ Happ II 1986: 51 emphasizes that *dispiciet* should be understood here not that much as ‘despised’, but rather as ‘disregarded’, ‘ignored’, even ‘missed’.

⁷⁰ Giovini (2004: 45) argues that Luxorius’s somewhat pompous *Romulidae* may have a slight negative connotation, especially if read as an allusion to Persius’s *sat.* I, an ironic picture of the Roman ‘golden youth’ ready to listen to poetry when sated: ‘ecce inter pocula quaerunt / *Romulidae* saturi quid dia poemata narrent’ (ll. 30-31). I wonder, however, if we can really speak of a conscious allusion here. On the other hand, interesting is the very description of Luxorius’s literary public as given here: the homes of

The whole poem closes with a distich which is to be the book's epigraph in case it fails to please the audience and 'ends its days'. Almost all editors accept in line 11 *facile est*, as transmitted in the Codex Salmasianus, but, as the wrong translation by Rosenblum exemplifies, the passage can be quite easily misunderstood. The motto does not concern those "who easily endure their envy of fame"⁷¹, nor those "who do not mind being grudged their fame"⁷². The point is that, as Vincenzo Tandoi emphasizes, *facile est* should be interpreted here as "it is probable" (that...)⁷³. So – as literally as possible – the two lines could be rendered as: "content to stay at home should be the one for whom it is probable to suffer the envy of (his) fame". What is essential is the fact that the distich must be seen as a moral, a warning indeed, given by one who has tried hard and experienced the failure. In other words, in Luxorius it is the book to say *expressis verbis* what in Martial or in Horace the author only implied with his 'non ita nutritus' (Hor., *Epist.* I 20, 5) or 'sed poteras tutior esse domi' (Mart. I 3, 12). Is it too pessimistic (or too seriously pessimistic) to make a good motto?⁷⁴ Pessimistic as it is, it should not probably be given more credence than the statement that what we are reading are juvenile trifles of a dull epigrammatist:

the great, but also the public bookshelves of the Forum, the Romans, the Carthaginians – a multicultural Romano-Barbaric Carthage indeed. On *Romulidae* as Carthaginians of Roman descent Rosenblum 1961: 179.

⁷¹ Rosenblum 1961: 113, 179-180 (commentary). Interestingly, Rosenblum in his commentary notices the association with Phaedrus's I 3, 13, emphasized also by Tandoi (1970: 38) as essential for understanding Luxorius's concept.

⁷² The correction proposed by R. Browning (I quote after Tandoi 1970: 39).

⁷³ Tandoi 1970: 39. The *Latin dictionary* by Lewis and Short gives the example of Terentius's *Andr.* 720, quoted also by Tandoi, suggesting the sense: "certainly", "unquestionably". So the translation could also sound somewhat stronger: "content to stay at home should be one for whom it is *certain* to suffer the envy of (his) fame" This, I believe, is the general idea behind Dal Corobbo's version (this time much more an interpretation than a translation): "È necessario che si contenti di stare a casa propria chi sa già in partenza che non avrà successo". Tandoi, on his part, proposes the following translation: "Deve sapersi contentare del proprio stato chi acquistando fama può facilmente esporsi all'invidia altrui".

⁷⁴ Giovini (2004: 47), himself an enthusiast of Shackleton Bailey's proposals, seems to think so.

isto pro exequiis claudere disticho:
contentos propriis esse debet locis⁷⁵,
quos laudis facile est invidiam pati. (9-11)

Nevertheless, Shackleton Bailey, evidently too disappointed with the lection to leave it like this, proposes here one of his most controversial conjectures:

‘Contentos propriis esse decet focis
quos laudis *pigitum* est invidiam pati’.

What we obtain is a beautiful moral, a *sententia* that can be easily detached from its original context and used separately as true ‘winged words’, an excellent closure of the whole poem and, indeed, words of approval addressed to the ‘bold’ book by its author: “content to stay at home should be (only) the one whom troubles being exposed to the envy of fame”. Were it only more acceptable paleographically...

4. EPIGRAMMATA PARVA QUOD IN HOC LIBRO SCRIPSERIT

(290 Riese² = IV, 444 Bährens = pp. 112-113 Rosenblum =
285 Shackleton Bailey = pp. 13-14 Happ = pp. 76-77 Dal Corobbo)

The last of Luxorius’s introductory poems, if compared with the previous three, may seem somewhat plainer. However, also here our poet does not really give up his ostentatious contrariness. The whole text is built upon a motif canonical of the epigrammatic genre: the defense of *brevitas*. A well-trained reader will soon notice echoes of Martial’s II 1⁷⁶, yet of all merits of a concise book named by the predecessor, Luxorius keeps only the third and last one: the shorter it is, the less boring it turns out for its audience. Quite logically, the fewer faults it also contains:

⁷⁵ On *debet*, preferred by Happ against *decet*, see Dal Corobbo 2006: 177. Instead of *locis*, Riese (1894: 249) proposed *iocis*, which however is rarely used in figurative sense. *Locus* besides can also mean “social rank” and the sense seems also applicable to the Luxorian phrase, as Dal Corobbo admits (similarly earlier Tandoi 1970: 39).

⁷⁶ See also Giovini’s observations (2004: 49-51).

⁷⁷ I quote the text as edited by Happ (I 1986: 13-14) and Dal Corobbo (2006: 76 and the comments on pp. 178-179). †*vel vitio*† Happ leaves as *nondum sanatum*. Rosen-

tertia res haec est, quod si cui forte
legeris,
sis licet usque malus, non odiosus eris.
(7-8)

Hic mea concinno si pagina displicet
actu,
finito citius carmine clausa silet.
Nam si constaret libris longissima
multis,
fastidita forent plurima †vel vitio†.
(7-10)⁷⁷

Martial throughout his poem provides similar ‘advantages’ of a *liber exiguus*: he speaks also of wasting less paper and saving the copyist’s time and effort (ll. 3-6). The African author, strangely enough, is more ‘serious’. As if answering those who would be ready to belittle his talent, he points out brevity as positive quality per se. As he argues, the year is composed of short months, brief are the days both of the winter and the spring, great use is found in small things. The conclusion sounds even more straightforward: “no pleasure is given beyond measure”:

si quis hoc nostro detrahit ingenio,
attendat modicis condi <de> mensibus annum,
et faciles hiemis, veris et esse dies;
noverit <in> brevibus magnum deprendier usum.
Ultra mensuram gratia nulla datur. (2-6)⁷⁸

A reader who has got used to Luxorius’s pose of ‘affected modesty’ might be surprised indeed, first because what we hear quite clearly is that the poet’s talent should not be ‘belittled’ (in *Ad Faustum* the *ingenium frigens* has been emphasized) and second because our epigrammatist seems to challenge the value of all the ‘grand’ literature as such, which Martial actually never did⁷⁹. Certainly, there were before Luxorius poets stating without hesitation ‘a big book is a big nuisance’, yet who would have expected Callimachean bravery from an author defining himself first as ‘poeta insulsus quam magis legendus’?

blum and Shackleton Bailey propose *vel vitia* and remove the *cruces*.

⁷⁸ Also here I quote Happ’s edition. On Shackleton Bailey’s conjectures see Giovini 2004: 54-58.

⁷⁹ See also Giovini 2004: 51-53.

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