

## What is the First Poem in Martial, Book I?

My title asks a simple question, but it has four different possible answers, and they are not ‘1, 2, 3, and 4’, but ‘0, 1, 2, and 3’. Taking them in numerical order:

**0.** Like Books II, VIII, IX, and XII, Book I of Martial begins with an introductory epistle in prose, and like the one in Book IX, this one ends with a poem, four sczons beginning *Nosses iocosae*. These are the first lines of verse in Book I in all the editions of Martial I have seen, but are not assigned a number in modern editons, since they are an integral part of the epistle. Editors refer to them by the line-numbers of the epistle, but that means a different designation in different editions, even when the editor is the same: they are 1.*Ep.*18-21 in Shackleton Bailey’s Teubner, 22-25 in his Loeb. It seems to me that a whole poem needs a more convenient and stable reference. Not wishing to renumber the whole book, and not wishing to imply that they are in any real sense the first epigram in the book, I will call these lines epigram **0** in my on-line edition.

**1.** Many editors have thought that the epigram numbered **1** in all our editions, six lines of hendecasyllables beginning *Hic est quem legis ille, quem requiris*, was written for a ‘Collected Works’ including much more than just Book I. The poem assumes a fame that he could not have gotten before publishing at least Book I, and probably a few more. It would, of course, have kept its value as an introduction even as Martial’s *Opera Omnia* increased in size from year to year. I find this argument compelling, and do not consider 1.1 part of Book I, though it will naturally be printed with Book I, like the quatrain introducing the three-book edition (the only one that survives) of Ovid’s *Amores*.

**2.** Epigram **2**, 8 elegiac lines, was certainly written for a codex edition, again presumably of much more than just Book I. Martial says (14.186) that a single codex could hold the entire *Aeneid*, so it is hard to see why anyone would waste a whole codex on a single book. Whether the codex edition would also have included **1** is impossible to say. I lean towards yes, if **1** was already written when Martial’s bookseller started experimenting with codex publication.

Since I am convinced that **1** and **2** were both written after the first publication of Book I, I plan to print both of them before the epistle in my on-line edition.<sup>1</sup> The apparatus will say ‘**1-2** *huc transtuli, praeunte Lindsay*’. His note *ad loc.* reads “I-II *om. B<sup>A</sup>: ante Epist. 18 exhibet C<sup>A</sup>. Fort. steteran extra ordinem paginarum (cf. IX Epist. 2) in recensionibus antiquis.*”<sup>2</sup> That is not entirely perspicuous (neither is the passage in IX *Epist.*), but seems to imply what I have in mind, that these poems were printed in a separate column before the rest of Book I, that the book title and epistle were at the top of the next column, and that **1-2** should therefore be printed above the epistle in an unpaginated on-line text, with a horizontal bar to separate them from Book I proper.

Is this a bold emendation? Not at all. Everyone transposes the lines, and my transposition is more likely than the usual one. They are in fact transmitted in the  $\gamma$  manuscripts (the only family that contains them) between the prose and verse portions of the epistle. Shackleton Bailey’s note in the Teubner says “*ante epist. v. 18 habet  $\gamma$* ”, but that is, as I have already argued, too vague. The close rhetorical connection across the prose-verse boundary in the epistle makes this impossible – Martial speaks of Cato in the prose and addresses him in the verse –, so they must be moved elsewhere. Everyone else moves them four lines later, after what I call **0**, but no one explains how they ever would have been misplaced if Martial had put them there. I believe that he put them before the epistle, probably in a separate column, to show that they introduced a larger collection, not just Book I, and that decades or centuries later an officious scribe moved them. The scribe seems to have followed two principles: that a prose preface or epistle should always come first (as it does elsewhere in Martial and in Statius’ *Silvae*), and that any passage that must be moved should be moved the minimum possible distance. Following these two plausible – but in this case misleading – principles, he moved them to the first slot available after the prose of the prefatory epistle, making hash of the Cato references in the process. Modern scholars then moved them four lines further down, to the first slot

<sup>1</sup> Before everything else, in fact. It seemt to me that the *Liber Spectaculorum* should be printed together with the other early works, the *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*, all three either before or after I-XII. I prefer to respect Martial’s numbering of his (relatively) major works by putting all three after.

<sup>2</sup> Lindsay calls the manuscript families A<sup>A</sup>, B<sup>A</sup>, and C<sup>A</sup> where others use  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\gamma$ .

that would not interrupt the argument of the epistle. My hypothesis neatly explains their position in the manuscripts that contain them, as the usual transposition does not.

**3.** There are further advantages to my transposition – if I can call it mine when Lindsay suggested it, though he did not follow through. If **1** and **2** are part of the collected edition,<sup>3</sup> but not conceptually part of Book I, and **'0'** is part of the Epistle, not a separate epigram, that leaves **3**, *Argiletanas mavis habitare tabernas*, as the opening poem of the book, a role it fills more than adequately. It is a substantial poem in Martial's favorite meter (12 lines of elegiacs), modeled on the last poem in Horace's *Epistulae* (1.20), metapoetically addressed to his book as a young slave eager to see the world, and referring in its first word to the place where it could be bought. All this makes an excellent opening for a book that Martial obviously meant to impress, in which he began to stake out his claim for poetic immortality – his first numbered book.

Another small advantage of this arrangement is that putting **3** first gives the emperor second place in Book I, since **4** is addressed to him and **5** seems to put words of reply in his mouth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Or rather, **1** and **2**, or perhaps just **2**, in the parchment codex edition, likely only **1** in papyrus *volumina* of Book I copied after he had written enough to become *toto notus in orbe* (1.1.2) and had written the epigram saying so, whenever that was.

<sup>4</sup> I will argue elsewhere that **4-5** should be printed as a single poem, but that does not affect my point here.