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The *festinatio* in Flavian poetry: a clarification\*

In the occasional and celebratory poetry of the Flavian age a frequent motif is that of the *festinatio*: the rapid drafting of a text that is *Zeitgedicht*, required to respond quickly to the expectations or requests of patrons and the promptings of topical events. The poet claims to have composed a single poem or an entire book with great rapidity, infringing a principle rooted in Callimachean and Horatian tradition: the slow, laborious process of *emendatio*.

As it often appears in Statius' prefaces, the *festinatio* 'of the poets' (a necessary qualification, in that the motif can also be found in prose genres, where its value is wholly or partly different)<sup>1</sup> has often been identified with the examples of it in the *Silvae*: nevertheless, this is a significant and distinctive variant, and it would be reductive to describe all of the facets of this phenomenon in 'Statian' terms. It is actually much more varied, as it is, so to speak, a modern topos, which is unburdened by a rigid, normative tradition.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this paper includes examples from Ovid's

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\* This work follows up and takes further some suggestions in Merli 2013, on the contrasting complementary motif of *lima* and *emendatio* in Flavian poetry. My thanks to Maria Luisa Catoni, Mario Citroni, Franca Ela Consolino and Gianpiero Rosati for their careful reading and detailed comments.

<sup>1</sup> Particularly in the epistolary genre, of which we shall see some examples, and in genres aiming at synthesis and the *utile*, such as treatises (see Sen. *nat. 3.praef.4*; Plin. *Nat. 3.42*), the biography and historiography of Cornelius Nepos (*vit. praef. 8*) and Velleius Paterculus (1.16.1; 2.41.1; 108.2; 124.1). The role of *festinatio* in Velleius is much discussed: see, among others, Woodman 1975 and Lobur 2007.

<sup>2</sup> On the *festinatio* in the *Silvae* see Rosati 2014. For many useful comments in studies on Statius' *praefationes*, see Johannsen 2006 (especially 245-8; 263 and 267; 316-22); Newlands 2009; Pagàn 2010. On the poetics of the *impromptu* and *celeritas* in the *praefatio* to the first book, see also Hardie 1983, 78-85. Laurens 1965, 325 recognizes the topos as common to Statius, Martial and Greek epigram.

poetry of exile and the epigrams of Antipater and, above all, Martial.

This study starts from Ovid's elegy from Tomis, where the *festinatio* is closely linked to the epistolary genre; then, its presence in epigrams will be analysed, in order to trace a specific relation with the professional writers of panegyric poetry; Statius' text, particularly the preface to the first book of the *Silvae*, will cast light on the complexity of the *topos*, which varies according to whether it has a private setting or is written for a wider public; finally, one original version of it can be seen in Martial's last books. My overall aim is to remove the interpretation of the *festinatio* from the usual alternatives of seeing it either as a rhetorical gesture of *deminutio* similar to Catullus' *sprezzatura*, or the fearful concern at how an inadequately polished text will be received; instead, I shall try to analyze it in the context of celebratory poetry in the Flavian age and its specific 'imperial' features, bearing in mind the aspects that the *topos* takes on in the individual authors and the different situations of communication and diffusion of a literary text.

The strongly communicative orientation in Ovid's late elegies introduces into Latin poetry innovative features that derive from the contingent situation, but are not limited to that: one of these is the *festinatio*. In a literature that is also *officium*, a celebratory poem is less effective if it arrives too late for the event it eulogizes. For example, by the time Ovid's panegyric verses reached Rome, even though they were *carmina properata* (*Pont.* 3.4.59),<sup>3</sup> Tiberius' triumph over Illyricum would already have been celebrated for some time: a poem would attract little attention and have limited success without the ingredient of *novitas* (*Pont.* 3.4.51-2). The text uses for openly encomiastic purposes a typical feature of letter-writing: the writer has to bear in mind the distance of space and, so, of time, in relation to the recipient. Thus, Cicero, at the outset of *Fam.* 2.7, congratulates Curio on being elected tribune of the *plebs*: inevitably, his congratulations arrive late, but the writer seems unworried, as *sera gratulatio reprehendi non solet... longe enim absum, audio sero*. In writing to someone of the same social level, the untimeliness does not particularly bother the speaker (although he thematizes it), unlike the elegy of exile, where the motif takes on urgency and assumes a clearly adulatory orientation.

The problem of *tempestivitas* is not only raised in relation to public ceremonies and members of the Augustan house. In *Pont.* 4.11 the poet offers Gallio his condolences on losing his wife, but, rather than eulogizing the deceased, he expresses embarrassment for his delay in writing, which nullifies the desired function of a *consolatio*. Only now, in fact, has Ovid received news of the loss his friend has suffered and his reply can only reach Rome about a year later. The risks inherent in

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<sup>3</sup> In the same way, in *Pont.* 4.8, begging Germanicus to mitigate the conditions of his *relegatio*, Ovid presents as an argument in his favor the fact that, if he is transferred closer to Rome, he will be able to celebrate the deeds of his patron *quam minima mora* (v. 88).

the operation are obvious: a *consolatio intempestiva* may reawaken a grief that had now been assuaged rather than attenuate it (vv. 17-20); but this consideration, which we also find in Statius' reflections,<sup>4</sup> is combined with another: the recipient might have remarried in the meantime, and a poem of consolation regarding the previous spouse might seem somewhat out of place. On this cheerful note the epistle ends (vv. 21-2):

Adde, quod - atque utinam verum mihi venerit omen! -  
coniugio felix iam potes esse novo.

Moreover - and may the omen I speak become true - you may already be happy through a new marriage! [tr. Wheeler, slightly modified]

Significantly, it is the only consolatory text to be found in the collection, and is also the shortest of the *epistulae* from Pontus (11 distichs): the *brevitas*, which is typical of the epistolary *festinatio* and often referred to by Cicero,<sup>5</sup> is here also due to the specific choice not to develop *topoi* that might be inappropriate, and to foreground the difficulty of identifying the subject of the poem; the epistle closes with an unexpected and insouciant twist that is almost double-faced, as if to be ready for a possible development in events that has taken place in the meantime.<sup>6</sup>

In other letters from Pontus, the *festinatio* is inflected as a 'pure' adherence to the epistolary modes: these poems are extraneous to the celebration of a specific event and express the haste to re-establish or revive contact with a distant friend and with the Roman public. For example, the end of *Tr.* 1.1, vv. 123-4, is directed to the *liber* that is about to head for the capital:

plura quidem mandare tibi, si quaeris, habebam,  
sed vereor tardae causa fuisse viae.

more directions for you, if you ask me, I have been keeping,  
but I fear to be the cause of lingering delay. [tr. Wheeler]

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<sup>4</sup> Affinities between *Pont.* 4.11 and Statius' *consolationes* are noted by Lechi 1978, 14; for Statius see *infra* n. 20.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Cic. *Fam.* 12.22a.2 *plura scripsissem nisi tui festinarent*; 15.18.1-2 *longior epistula fuisset... sed flagitat tabellarius*; *Att.* 5.17.2 *nunc propero, perscribam ad te paucis diebus omnia*.

<sup>6</sup> For Claassen 1999, 24 and 121, it is a jocular reference to Augustus' measures against those who remarried too soon.

There is a similar opening to *Tr.* 3.7.1-2, *vade salutatum subito perarata Perillae / littera*, and *Pont.* 2.11.1-2, which sends Rufus a *brevi properatum tempore... opus* (this certainly refers to a single epistle, but its placing at the end of the book as a kind of farewell may also suggest the book as a whole). These three cases do not refer to a *kairos*, where timing is essential; nonetheless the suggestion is given that the text was written quickly so as to reach the recipient as soon as possible.

What we have seen so far is enough to show the limitations of explaining *festinatio* or *celeritas* in Ovid in terms of ‘*sprezzatura*’, a dissimulated elegance, which would ultimately go back to the reassuring (and awkward) shadow of Callimachus.<sup>7</sup> We should instead bear in mind that it was the specific, innovative situation of the distance from Rome that introduced the motif of *festinatio* to Latin poetry; in some cases it was due to the very nature of letter-writing (the need for haste, often without *plura mandare*, so as to shorten the time of long-distance communication), in others to the need for celebratory pieces not to arrive too late for the occasion, if they are to obtain the desired appreciation and effect.

A few decades later, the conventions of long-distance writing (a mixture of intensity and prudence) developed by the banished poet, would be transferred to long-distance writing for reasons of deference and convention, as part of the social hierarchy and its literary representations. The poetry of the Flavian age written in Rome produced more examples of the panegyric *festinatio*, linked to a specific *kairos*, than epistolary ones (of which there are traces in the twelfth Book of Martial, composed in Bilbilis, from where it was sent to Rome), and it became an expression of the professional poet’s pride in being able to quickly compose fine poems of a certain length. We should therefore separate the two concepts of *festinatio* and *brevitas*, so often brought together in letter-writing (and also in the *consolatio* to Gallio), and recognize that something like the opposite is the case: a poet’s *festinatio*, to be worthy of mention, has to be applied to sufficiently long texts, for the speed of composition to be regarded as displaying virtuosity. In short, if in letters the *festinatio* conditions the formal aspects of the text, particularly determining their brevity, in panegyric poetry it is a mode of composition that should not leave a trace on the finished work, and of which we would know nothing if it were not explicitly referred to by the author.

In various cases the fact is introduced without any external reason, almost like a free variant:

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Helzle 2003 *ad Pont.* 2.11.1-2, where the scholar adds: “vor Martial halte ich dieses Motiv für affektiert, denn schnelle Komposition wurde v.a. von der kallimacheischen Dichtungstheorie verworfen”. This fails to take into account letter-writing conventions (identified in the texts from Pontus since Froesch 1968, 158-9) and can be taken as an example of what Denis Feeney acutely describes as a “pan-Callimachean tendency” in modern criticism (Feeney 2002, 245 n. 28).

that is to say, the *kairos* that is the subject of the text is predictable and expected, and the poet could well have written the verses celebrating it unhurriedly. One example is offered by a Greek epigram from the late Augustan age: the note with which Antipater of Thessalonica sends L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi a birthday present of a small book that he has laboriously produced in a single night (presumably, though it is not certain, the one before the happy day), asking him to appreciate the humble gift (*AP* 9.93.1-2 = *GPh* 31.1-2):

Ἀντίπατρος Πείσωνι γενέθλιον ὄπασε βιβλὸν  
μικρὴν ἐν δὲ μιῇ νυκτὶ πονησάμενος.

Antipater has given Piso a book for his birthday,  
a little one, the labour of a single night. [tr. Gow – Page]

What would today sound like a *gaffe* if attributed to a book of poetry was clearly welcome to Piso and added something to the value of the gift. The speed with which a work is produced is neither a potential source of stylistic faults nor a sign of negligence, but demonstrates technical competence in the service of the eulogy. The concentration in the pentameter of concepts like *agrypnia*, *pònos* and *mikrà rhesis* guarantees the quality of the collection, even by Callimachean standards, but it is a level that is paradoxically reached through an effort that is concentrated in time.<sup>8</sup> This text is typical of Greek epigram in Rome, whose authors were urgently aware of the problem of their relation with the previous Hellenistic poets, and is part of the internal dynamics of the dialogue between the two *Garlands*;<sup>9</sup> but it is also useful in various ways for understanding the motif in Latin literature: the *festinatio* is part of a new poetry that can achieve excellence without following the principle of *lima*; it has a role in both poetics and social relations, as part of a homage and a dialogue that is not between equals; it has positive connotations, to the point that it is thematized even when it would be possible not to do so; those using it are professionals of the panegyric and the *Zeitgedicht*, which

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<sup>8</sup> It is not clear if we have to understand that he actually composed all the texts in a single night or simply put the book together in that time, using at least in part epigrams already available: in the first case it must have been a rather short collection, in the second it may have been more extensive (see Nauta 2002, 106). The occasional and timely nature of the composition in the *Garland of Philip* is brought out by Argentieri 2007, 161.

<sup>9</sup> The poetics of the *Garland of Philip* has yet to be satisfactorily explored. The insistent and original contrast with Hellenistic epigram may explain the choice of *oligostichia*, announced in the proem (*AP* 4.2.6-7 = Philip 1 *GPh*, with Lausberg 1982, 37-42) and the polemical attitude to the slavish admirers of Callimachus (called ‘Supercallimachi’ by Phil. *AP* 11.347 = 6 *GPh*; see, too, *AP* 11.321 = Phil. 60 *GPh* and *AP* 11.322 = Antiphanes 9 *GPh*).

requires a text of a certain length and substance (in this case, it is a book, although a ‘small’ one); the general reference to haste that we find in letter-writing is sometimes replaced by a precise time reference (here ‘just one night’, from a few hours to one or two days in the case of Statius’ pieces, as we shall see). This last feature serves to overturn the principle of ‘length of time’ characteristic of *labor limae* (one need only think of the nine years of Cinna’s *Zmyrna* in Catul. 95), arousing the reader’s admiration.<sup>10</sup>

This leads to a significant corollary: *festinatio* is not identical with *impromptu*. They are similar, in that both are linked to the figure and technical experience of the professional poet, but they are not wholly overlapping:<sup>11</sup> improvising on a subject that has just been suggested or on an ongoing event is different from composing a text quickly but in the course of a few hours or days. Another difference between the two lies in the fact that, while even amateurs tried to impress by composing a few lines on the spot (there is, for example, Trimalchio’s epigram in Petron. 55.2-4), the *festinatio*, which is found in texts of a certain length, was for the professional poet alone.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, while pretty well anyone felt able to improvise or toss off a few distichs, a whole book, however short, or a long piece well over a hundred lines required a skilled poet: Martial himself reminded his readers of this, putting in his place the author of a few well-turned epigrams with the words *facile est epigrammata belle / scribere, sed librum scribere difficile est* (7.85.3-4). On this, Alex Hardie reminds us that, in a period of widespread literary dabbling, the professionals needed

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<sup>10</sup> We can use these factors to clarify the substantial difference between *festinatio* in celebratory poetry and the motif of haste in Catull. 50, where the language of *festinatio* is absent and the original variation of *agrypnia* and the rapid composition of the poem are not part of a dialogue between two *amici inaequales*; in addition, in the case of Catullus it is a single poem, where in Antipater and Martial they are whole books, fairly hefty texts that show their author’s professional capacity.

<sup>11</sup> For improvisation as part of a professional poet’s equipment, see Hardie 1983, 22; 76-85 and 145. The subtle distinction between improvisation and *festinatio* is noted by Nauta 2002, 251. There is a similar distinction in rhetoric: Quintilian appreciates a poet’s capacity to improvise and recommends it as an example to orators (10.7.19), but disapproves of haste in writing the text, as, even if the first version is revised and corrected, *manet in rebus temere congestis quae fuit levitas* (10.3.17).

<sup>12</sup> It is worth mentioning briefly that we can also establish a difference between the performance of professionals and amateurs in the case of improvisation. We need only recall the virtuoso nature of Archias’ verbal acrobatics (Cic. *Arch.* 18: *quotiens ego tunc Archiam vidi... cum litteram scripsisset nullam, magnum numerum optimorum versuum de ipsis rebus, quae tum agerentur, dicere ex tempore! quotiens revocatum eandem rem dicere commutatis verbis atque sententiis!*), or Antipater of Sidon (Cic. *de Orat.* 3.194), or the case of the boy prodigy Sulpicius Maximus, as illustrated by Hardie 1983, 83-4, as part of an account of professional poets who provided these kinds of firework displays; there are some thoughtful suggestions on the manner and dignity of ‘professional’ improvisations in Rome in Gentili 1985, writing about the phenomenon in eighteenth-century Italy.

strategies to distinguish themselves from the amateurs, to mark out the value of their ‘product’.<sup>13</sup> This is indirectly confirmed by the fact that there is no trace of the *topos* in Pliny’s letters, where the problem of finding the time to give to poetry has different connotations, being linked, as we know, to the question of the ruling class’s *otium*.<sup>14</sup>

The inclusion of the motif as a free variant is also to be found in Martial. The last epigram of the *Xenia* gives Domitian crowns of roses (13.127):

Dat festinatas, Caesar, tibi bruma coronas:  
quondam veris erat, nunc tua facta rosa est.

Winter gives you hurried garlands, Caesar.  
The rose used to be spring’s, now it has become yours. [tr. Shackleton Bailey, slightly modified]

The locution *festinatas coronas* indicates crowns of blooming roses on the eve of the Saturnalia, the festival during which the *Xenia* are explicitly placed (see 13.1): in honour of the emperor, the roses have bloomed without awaiting the spring. *Festinatas coronas* has often been seen as containing a meta-literary suggestion:<sup>15</sup> although poetological interpretations, taken to excess, can easily become banal – we must resign ourselves to the fact that a drop of water is sometimes a drop of water, and a rose is a rose – in this case I am inclined to go down this road, mainly because the couplet comes at the end of the book, a prominent position that Martial often used to include declarations and cues for poetics and dialogue with his readers. In this particular distich the motif is not linked to possible defects in the *libellus* due to its being rushed, but is a guarantee of quality: just as the rose, although it has blossomed out of season, has no faults, so Martial’s collection of poems, though prepared in haste, shows no signs of weakness; on the contrary, the *festinatio* increases the value of both objects.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hardie 1983, 49.

<sup>14</sup> The most significant passage is *Ep.* 4.14, on the subject of hendecasyllables, *quibus in vehiculo, in balineo, inter cenam oblectamus otium temporis*. The attitude towards poetry-writing is typical of the upper class: note, for example, that, of Pliny’s poetry-writing friends, only Caninius Rufus was an epic poet, writing in a demanding, large-scale genre that could not be produced in one’s spare time.

<sup>15</sup> See Fowler 1995, 55 and also Barchiesi 2005, 325, who links him to the “hasty” poetics of Martial’s books of epigrams.

<sup>16</sup> Flowering out of season is a mark of distinction and value much appreciated in the Flavian age, as is shown by Fabbrini 2007, 253-5. By contrast, for Leary 2001 *ad loc.*: “The word [*festinatas*] has, nonetheless, also to refer

As another example, in epigram 2.91,<sup>17</sup> Martial begs Domitian to renew his *ius trium liberorum* conceded by Titus, and reminds the emperor, as a sign of merit, that he has often dedicated and donated books of epigrams in the past; they were probably collections now lost containing nothing but panegyrics, such as the *Liber de spectaculis* (also a *festinata* collection, see the epigram 31 [35])<sup>18</sup> or the *libellus* on the game of hares and lions, which later became part of the first collection of varied epigrams (see 1.6 with Citroni 1975 *ad loc.*). Here below I quote the beginning of Mart. 2.91 (vv. 1-4):

Rerum certa salus, terrarum gloria, Caesar,  
sospite quo magnos credimus esse deos,  
si festinatis totiens tibi lecta libellis<sup>19</sup>  
detinuere oculos carmina nostra tuos ...

Caesar, the world's sure salvation, glory of the earth,  
whose safety is our assurance that the great gods exist,  
if my poems, so often read by you in hurried little volumes,  
have detained your eyes... [tr. Shackleton Bailey, slightly modified]

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negatively to M.'s book, allegedly rushed to be in time for the Saturnalia". An interesting possible comparison is offered by Crinagoras, *AP* 6.346 = 6 *GPh*, where, sending winter roses to a beautiful lady (Antonia Minor?), the poet notes in the final distich that the flowers could not wait (*mimnein*) for the spring sun: they were in a hurry.

<sup>17</sup> The passage is debated: as well as the survey of interpretations in Williams 2004 *ad loc.* see also Holzberg 2004, 251 and Hinds 2007. The dating is fixed by Daube 1976, followed by Nauta 2002, 336-7, in the year 82, when, on coming to the throne, Domitian confirmed all the honours distributed by his brother Titus, including the concession of the *ius trium liberorum* to Martial.

<sup>18</sup> It may be a fragment, or the final epigram in the collection. Coleman 2006 *ad loc.* sums up the discussion; see also Weinreich 1928, 24-8 (who suggests it is the conclusion of the final epigram).

<sup>19</sup> The reading found in all the manuscripts, *tibi lecta*, went unquestioned till Shackleton Bailey 1978, who suggested *collecta*, a conjecture later included in his editions for Teubner and Loeb. His main argument is that *tibi lecta* would be a repetition of *detinuere oculos* in the following line. Citroni 1988, 5, followed by Williams 2004 *ad loc.*, defends the original text while admitting the suggested correction is attractive: *lecta* and *detinuere oculos* would be a climax, in that the second expression indicates the reader's intense attention. But a difficulty remains: cautious expressions as *si contigeris... libellos* (1.4.1) and *tu tantumque accipias: ego te legisse putabo* (5.1.5), used in offering the book to Domitian, make it a little doubtful that *totiens tibi lecta* captures the right tone. The solution of the problem may be linked to the difference between the gift to the emperor of an essentially celebratory private book and that of a wide-ranging collection of epigrams marked by *varietas* and humour.



In a lofty, formal context Martial calls his booklets *festinati*: this means it was a characteristic invulnerable to criticism and rooted in strategies of eulogy that were part of a dialogue between two *inaequales*. A nuance of modesty can certainly be noted in the passages analysed, but to me it seems linked more to the poetics of the epigram, a minor genre *par excellence*, than to the hasty composition: indeed, this last feature has the function of increasing the merit of the humble poetic object and underlining both the author's virtuosity and his solicitude for its powerful recipient.

In Statius the concept appears in a more complex form. The references to the *celeritas* of his father as a poet confirm that it was a merit and ability of professionals. Statius *pater* had completed a piece on the destruction of the Capitol before the fire was wholly put out, more quickly than the flames themselves, *multum facibus velocior ipsis* (*Silv.* 5.3.201). That *tempestivitas*, considered a value for the panegyric and occasional poetry, emerges also clearly from Statius' rebuke to Julius Menecrates for failing to inform him of the birth of his son: Statius came to hear of the happy event *vulgari fama* instead of in a letter sent *protinus*, meaning that, inevitably, his celebration of it is now both late and ineffective, *tardus inersque* (*Silv.* 4.8.32-42); we might also recall the reflections on the delicate question of the best timing of a *consolatio*.<sup>20</sup>

However, *celeritas* seems ambivalent in the text in which it is presented most extensively and systematically – the *praefatio* to the first book of the *Silvae*. Statius' evident pride at composing hundreds of lines in a very short time (*biduo; singulis diebus; uno die; intra moram cenae*), his claim that many will not believe him, and his invitation to some of the patrons eulogised (Stella, Vopiscus, Etruscus) to bear witness in his favour, have a corrective in the fear that the hurried lines might have traces of the absence of *lima* (*Silv.* 1.*praef.* 1-7 and 11-5):

Diu multumque dubitavi, Stella iuvenis optime... an hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt,... congregatos ipse dimitterem. quid enim [...] quoque auctoritate editionis onerari, quo adhuc pro Thebaide mea, quamvis me reliquerit, timeo? ... sed apud ceteros necesse est multum illis pereat ex venia, cum amiserint quam solam habuerunt gratiam celeritatis. nullum enim ex illis biduo longius tractum, quaedam et in singulis diebus effusa. quam timeo ne verum istuc versus quoque ipsi de se probent!

Much and long have I hesitated, my excellent Stella... whether I should assemble these little pieces, which

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<sup>20</sup> *Silv.* 2.*praef.* 7-9 and 1.1-8 presents the question of the *festinatio* in the case of a consolatory text, underlining its potentially counterproductive results (v. 8 *intempesta cano*), but observing at the same time *cum paene supervacua sint tarda solacia* (*praef.* 11-2); by contrast, the *consolatio* to Abascantus on the death of his wife Priscilla (*Silv.* 5.1) arrived after a year, when his grief was no longer so strong as to inhibit the function of a poetic gift, but still sufficiently alive to give it a meaning (vv. 16-32, with Gibson 2006 *ad loc.*).

streamed from my pen in the heat of the moment... For why [should they too] be burdened with the authority of publication, at a time, when I am still anxious for my *Thebaid*, although it has left my hands?... But with the general public they must necessarily forfeit much of its indulgence since they have lost their only commendation, that of celerity. For none of them took longer than a couple of days to compose, some were turned out in a single day. How I fear that the verses themselves will testify on their own behalf to the truth of what I say! [tr. Shackleton Bailey]

This clear contrast between ostentation of one's capacities and fear of negative criticism (which has no exact parallel in the *festinatio* of Ovid, Antipater and Martial) has been seen variously as a *topos* of modesty, a proud declaration, and an ambiguous hovering between self-promotion and anxiety.<sup>21</sup> Actually, these contrasting views can be united and the ambiguity clarified, if we bear in mind the two stages in the diffusion of the *Silvae*: first, immediate, private circulation through performance or the gift of individual pieces to the recipient of each, and, later, publication in a larger collection of poems intended for the generic reader.

The question is part of the larger one of whether and how much it is appropriate to collect and publish texts, which were originally dedicated to a patron and linked to a specific occasion: if a poem that is by its very nature ephemeral and rushed has enough prestige and dignity to be a worthy item of a *Gedichtbuch* that is written to last.<sup>22</sup> Statius was proud of his virtuosity as a celebratory poet, but he displayed great caution towards the later, not obvious, channel of circulation for those texts: for, the further removed they are from both the event that suggested them and their original context, the less effective is the *gratia celeritatis* and the text as *Zeigedicht*; on this point the poet expects negative criticism, to which he replies brusquely in the preface to the fourth book (the first in which the motif of the *festinatio* does not appear).<sup>23</sup> Pliny was faced with a partly similar problem

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<sup>21</sup> Hence the reasonable but partial judgments of Newlands 2002, 33-4 (affinity between Statius' *celeritas* and Catullus' *sprezzatura*) and Rühl 2006, 111 (expression of pride); Johannsen 2006, especially 246-8 and 254 sees an alternation and ambivalence between pride and concern, the latter caused by the lack of *lima*. Previously Dams 1970, 152 had claim "das lyrische Gedicht ist nicht mehr die Frucht durchgearbeiteter Nächte, sondern wird mehr oder weniger nachlässig hingeworfen": but the *festinatio* does not seem to me to contain a significant degree of *Nachlässigkeit*.

<sup>22</sup> Less than a century earlier Ovid has handled these cases quite differently, not including in the books for the general public the *epicedium* for Messalla and the *epithalamium* for Fabius Maximus. He himself tells us of these works in *Pont.* 1.7,29-30; 2.129-32, *i.e.* in a period of his career when public and private were no longer clearly distinguished (see Citroni 1995, 459-63).

<sup>23</sup> Statius makes a point of fearing the public's judgment in the preface to the first book of the *Silvae*, while he ostentatiously ignores it in the preface to the fourth book. The relation between the two texts is dealt with by Johannsen 2006, 294-6; on the dual readership of the *Silvae* see Rosati 2015.

a few years later, hoping that his letters when collected for publication would gain the interest of readers *quamvis iam gratiam novitatis exuerint* (*Ep.* 1.2.6).

*Celeritas* allows the immediate, effective celebration of an event and therefore arouses wonder and admiration in the context of the performance, but it raises a basic question when the hurried pieces are part of a *Gedichtbuch*: a collection of poems which aspires to the condition of literature and not just brilliant *divertissements* should not usually be rushed; on the contrary, one would expect it to be clearly connected with the poetics of *labor limae*.<sup>24</sup> Pliny once again provides a partial comparison when he claims to have chosen for publication the letters written with most care (*Ep.* 1.1.1: ...*epistulas, si quas paulo curatius scripsissem*).

The motif of *celeritas* in Statius' first *praefatio* therefore performs various functions: it promotes the work, displays the author's technical mastery, and acts as a 'lightning conductor' for the decision to publish the items in the book.<sup>25</sup> Insisting on the hasty character of many *silvae* and specifying the details of the time of composition, Statius tells the generic reader something he would otherwise be unaware of, displays his technical talent, and safeguards himself from any criticism either of the operation in itself or of lack of a proper revision of the text.

Finally, let us note that the poet insists on the lack of a long *emendatio* as being due to the essential conditions of a piece of homage and a deliberate choice to follow them, and not to any incapacity or idleness on his part. When pieces composed in accordance with the dictates of *celeritas* are published in volume form, he does not fail to recall that he is the author of epic poems composed with *labor limae*, and, from the very first *praefatio*, emphasizes the *Thebaid* as his most authentic and committed work. More generally, there are frequent references both to the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid* in the course of the *Silvae*:<sup>26</sup> in a poetry which does not require, and by nature barely tolerates, corrections, Statius contrives to present himself as a careful craftsman, as the author of epic poems contrasting with or complementing the *Silvae*, the significance of the *festinatio* in his work overall being limited.

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<sup>24</sup> A stimulating account is offered by Gentili 1985: apropos of eighteenth-century improvisations, the scholar notes the absurdity of judging this kind of poetry by parameters that are normally used for evaluating written poetry (384). However, these parameters are perfectly legitimate when, as in Statius' *Silvae*, the text of the performance becomes part of a *Gedichtbuch*. Rühl 2006, 128-35 has some good observations on the distance between a 'spoken' and a 'written' text.

<sup>25</sup> These functions are recognized by Gérard Genette to the "préface originale" (Genette 1987, 183-94). Johannsen 2006 verifies the applicability of the concept of 'paratext' to Statius prefatory epistles; on the "Roman paratext" see now Jansen 2014.

<sup>26</sup> See *Silv.* 4.4.87-100; 7.7-8 and 21-4; 5.5.36-7; to the *Achilleid* alone in *Silv.* 5.2.162, and to the *Thebaid* in *Silv.* 5.3.233-4. Some useful points are in Johannsen 2006, 307-13 and Newlands 2009.

Comparison with Martial yields further elements, if we accept the equation by which one of his booklets (from the hypothetical one dedicated to the game of hares and lions – about sixty lines in all – to the single-theme collections of *Xenia* or *De spectaculis* – between 200 and 300 lines) corresponds, in length and, partly, in function, to a single *silva*, and, similarly, a book of various epigrams corresponds to a book of *Silvae*. Here I draw on an important study by Mario Citroni: up to a certain point in his career Martial kept the two spheres of homage and entertainment separate, while, from the first book of epigrams of various nature onwards, he mixed tones and themes, speaking above all to the generic reader.<sup>27</sup> Now, the first three cases of *festinatio* in Martial (the probable conclusion of the *De spectaculis*, that of the *Xenia* and the reference to the *libelli* in 2.91) are all addressed to a *princeps* and are in single-theme collections. Of these, the *Liber de spectaculis* and the *libelli* for Domitian are eulogistic, while the *Xenia* are part of the occasional poetry dedicated to the Saturnalia and all things concerning them (games, food and diversion). From the first book of epigrams of various nature onwards, the motif of the author's haste or impatience in writing the work and as part of a homage disappears, while an attitude partly similar is attributed, in different circumstances and for different reasons, to the book itself (which in 1.3 is raring to be put on the market, taking as a model Horace's *liber-puer*, *Ep.* 1.20) or to the *librarius* (whose *properare* causes errors in the text put on sale, see 2.8): in short, the time in question is no longer that of writing but of publishing (*haec una peragit librarius hora*, 2.1.5; 8.4) a volume destined to face the public (1.3; 2.1). If a *libellus* like *De spectaculis* could be composed quickly, its *festinatio* even giving it a sort of added value, the later choice of publishing larger collections intended for different kinds of readers, indicate that Martial was explicitly laying claim to the lofty, dignified literary character of his poetry, which was now removed from the practical, ephemeral dimension of the *Zeitgedicht* and, therefore, from the need to write in haste or display that fact. In Martial, then, the motif of the *festinatio* emerges very clearly indeed before the poet's artistic advance in the books of various epigrams, in which he took his texts outside of the exclusive ambit of occasional and 'entertainment' poetry.

Both Martial and Statius claim to be able to write in haste, in accordance with a modern, useful and even necessary principle whose aim is to manage to communicate with friends who are *inaequales* and powerful; both, however, set off a strategy aimed at not reducing the representation of their talent and literary commitment to a superficially impressive gift. Their works are sharply divided into two categories, Martial's essentially diachronically (in the context of a 'career' devoted

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<sup>27</sup> Citroni 1988, 5-6. For the *Xenia* see the contribution on the literature for the Saturnalia by the same author, Citroni 1992.

to the genre of the epigram yet also with fairly distinct phases), Statius synchronically, his poetry being divided into two literary genres at the antipodes from each other (following a lofty model, traceable in the first *praefatio* to Homer and Virgil, no less). In this way each author circumscribes the place of the hurried elements in his poetry, displaying his capacity for that kind of writing while at the same time identifying it as only one aspect of his literary commitment.

On the margins of the general picture are the two cases in which Martial again takes the motif as his subject at the end of his career, in a collection of varied epigrams for the generic public: the second edition of the tenth book and the twelfth book. And so, to conclude, let us look at these (apparent) exceptions to the tendency that links the *festinatio* to private or occasional verses. Epigram 10.2 is the proem to the second edition of the book, which was published in 99, probably with the principle aim of expunging and replacing the items in honour of Domitian that abounded in the first edition of 95. It therefore documents a delicate transition in the poet's career (vv. 1-4):

Festinata prius, decimi mihi cura libelli  
elapsum manibus nunc revocavit opus.  
Nota leges quaedam sed lima rasa recenti;  
pars nova maior erit: lector, utrique fave ...

In composing my tenth little book, too hastily issued earlier,  
I have now recalled the work that then lippe from my hands.  
Some of the pieces you will read are already known, but polished with a recent file,  
the greater part will be new. Reader, wish well to both... [tr. Shackleton Bailey]

This is the only instance in which the *festinatio* is found in a text aimed directly at the generic reader, disengaged from the function of homage; and it is the only one in which it is presented as negative, requiring later correction. What made the *cura* of the previous edition so hasty is not clarified: the image of the book slipping from his hands is presented as accidental rather than a deliberate choice of the poet's, giving a curiously reduced impression of Martial's control over his work and his responsibility for it. If we accept the conjecture that the first edition of the tenth book was strongly marked by court eulogy, it is fairly easy to read between the lines (as has been suggested)<sup>28</sup> the idea of a *festinatio* deriving from the desire to please the emperor: *festinata cura* would allude to his adulation of Domitian, a characteristic that could be noted as needing revision, particularly with the advent of Trajan. Martial refers the *festinatio* here, for the first time, to a book

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<sup>28</sup> See Citroni 1988, 6; Buongiovanni 2009, 520-1. I have dealt at greater length with this text in Merli 2013, 176-8.

of varied epigrams, but with the aim of denying its appropriateness in that context.

It is worth dwelling longer on the introductory epistle to the twelfth book, written after Martial's return to Spain. After complaining about the boredom of provincial life, the author claims to have prepared the collection *paucissimis diebus* as a welcoming gift to his patron Terentius Priscus; the text ends with a request to the recipient to *diligenter aestimare et excutere* the epigrams so as to send to Rome a book originating in Spain (*Hispaniensis*) but not of Spanish race (*Hispanus*), and so worthy of the demanding readers of the capital.

This text has a place to itself in our survey as it takes up the motifs of 'writing from afar' and nostalgia for Rome, typical of the Ovid of Tomis. The *festinatio* is introduced in relation to a patron and a private, *impromptu* occasion (the arrival of Priscus), but is grafted onto the opening of a collection for a wider public (the end of the epistle, like that of epigram 2, leaves no doubt as to that):<sup>29</sup> the personal gesture, an expression of affection and private homage, is inextricably linked to the long-distance dialogue with the Roman public. It is the only case in which the motif has no negative connotations in a collection of varied epigrams, creating an original and specific variant that combines and synthesizes aspects of the epistolary *festinatio* and panegyric poetry.

In this case the *festinatio* is partly connected with the Roman reader. It certainly suggests a private communication to Terentius Priscus, hastening to meet his requests, but Martial also succeeds at last in sending a new book to the Roman public (it is not clear whether by exploiting his patron's return or through some other means). In addition, linked as it is to the figure of the professional able to respond to the promptings of the *kairos*, the *festinatio* indicates here that the poet can still do his job despite the rather unstimulating cultural context in which he lives:<sup>30</sup> in short, the motif reassures both Priscus and Roman readers who had had no news of Martial for three years. This is very unlike both the *topos* of modesty and the fear that haste has made the verses weak: note that in the request for corrections, any defects in the *liber* would not derive from the *festinatio*, but from the dull Spanish environment (a provincial book is by nature inferior to one

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<sup>29</sup> A vexed question in Martial philology is whether the *libellus* for Terentius Priscus substantially coincides with the book designed for publication in Rome: the general tendency for some years has been in favour of the idea, see Nauta 2002, 115-6 and 125-6; Lorenz 2002, 234-8; Johannsen 2006, 107-8; however, the thorny question remains open as to whether the *liber* is identical with the twelfth book in the form it has reached us or whether some epigrams were added by a publisher after Martial's death (as conjectured first by Lehmann 1931, 48-52).

<sup>30</sup> It is not, then, a motif that indicates "potentielle Qualitätsmängel" of the book, or a "stereotype Herabssetzung des eigenen Werkes" on Martial's part (see Johannsen 2006, 189), but rather of the "typical boast of a professional author" (Bowie 1988, 27). Martial does not really seem worried that the book might be poorly received, but is confident that a few verses will be enough for readers to recognize it as really his: *versus duos tresve legantur, / clamabunt omnes te, liber, esse meum* (12.2.17-8).

originating in Rome, as Martial had already declared in the proem to the third book, composed in Cisalpine Gaul). Ovid similarly downplayed the texts from Pontus as weak or inferior to his previous ones, not because written in haste, but because they were uprooted from the cultural and intellectual *humus* of the capital (see, e.g., the declarations in *Tr.* 3.14 and 4.1 and in *Pont.* 1.5).

More generally, while Titus and Domitian were the recipients of the *festinatio* in early Martial, in the last two books of various epigrams the *festinatio* itself is placed, directly or indirectly, in relation to the anonymous ‘devoted reader’: in the tenth book the *amicus lector* and in the twelfth, through Priscus, the demanding Roman public, which, in the prefatory epistle, takes on the personal character of a distant and much-missed friend in whom we must recognize the real recipient of the Spanish collection. Martial uses the motif freely, no longer fearing his work may be confused with ephemeral poetry, trusting to his capacity and his readers’ affection.

### *Conclusions.*

The earliest examples of the *festinatio* ‘of the poets’ in Latin are in the Ovid of Tomis, where it is grafted onto the geographical distance and letter-writing conventions; the motif is then transferred to texts composed in Rome as a communication between *inaequales*. Without exception they are fairly extended pieces: no longer single letters, but *libelli* of epigrams or poems in hexameters of several hundred lines; sometimes the time of writing is specified, with a display of the author’s virtuosity: he is able to compose good verse in defiance of the principle of *labor limae*. Yet technical pride is not enough to neutralize the sense of the restrictions of a celebratory poem or a ‘*divertissement*’: significantly, in Martial’s epigram the *topos* refers to single-theme *libelli* and is abandoned with the first book of various epigrams. Statius’ decision to publish overtly *festinati* pieces, that he had already used in a private context, in books for the generic reader seems a daring innovation: he was the first to thematize the *topos* in large collections for the Roman public, and the ambiguity and uncertainty of the concept in his work derive from this peculiar situation.

We are faced with a specific, characteristic feature of imperial celebratory poetry: contrasting with *labor limae* but not to be subsumed in actual improvisation, both a compliment to the recipient and a demonstration of skill by authors who refused to be merely professional virtuosi, it was a delicate and awkward choice, in that pieces written in haste were unlikely to be granted the full dignity of art. Both Martial and Statius practised – sometimes ostentatiously – the *festinatio* in their writing, yet at the same time brought other strategies into play to distinguish themselves and their poetry from this fashion, which could only be one of the features of their artistry and their ambition to become future classics.

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