

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS META-LITERATURE: EPIGRAPHY AND LITERATURE, FROM ANCIENT TO MEDIEVAL LATIN TIMES*

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyse latin auto-epitaphs written by learned people, mostly poets, from the pre-Classical times to the Middle Ages. I will emphasise their reading as autobiographical and meta-literary texts, that is, texts that contribute information about poet's life but, at the same time, about their literary «wills» and statements. I will also try to analyse whether there is continuity, or not, or what kind of it, between the Ancient and the Medieval world.

Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo es el análisis de los autoepitafios escritos en latín por gente de cultura, casi siempre poetas, desde los tiempos preclásicos hasta la Edad Media. Voy a intentar poner el énfasis en su lectura como textos autobiográficos, pero también metaliterarios, es decir, textos que aportan información sobre la vida del poeta, pero al mismo tiempo también sobre su «testamento» y consideraciones literarias. Voy a intentar analizar también si hay continuidad, o no o de qué tipo, entre el mundo antiguo y la Edad Media.

INTRODUCTION

During the last few years, I have been studying the relations between Latin texts that were passed on by means of epigraphic support and Latin «high» literature. One of the main differences between the two is the fact that the former almost always have an anonymous author, whereas the latter have a «signature» and a known, usually acknowledged, author. A specific aspect that I have dealt with in this field is the interrelation between these two «parcels of literary creation», which belong to the same world and environment: what Nicholas Horsfall called «reverse view»¹, applied both to classical and late Latin texts. I think I have proved² that there is not only an influential field of the highbrow, acknowledged literature towards the epigraphic, but also another field, where the epigraphic texts put the educated author under their weight. My research area has always been poetry and, in this sense, my ultimate worry has been extending my studies to Medieval Latin production, and trying to show how this field does not present any breach: each age has its own circumstances, but the same relations that can be established between both types of

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¹ N. Horsfall, «Virgil and the Latin Inscriptions: A Reverse View», *LCM* 11 1986 44-45.

² Among other articles in «Otros ecos en la Eneida de Virgilio: la «evidencia» de los Carmina Latina Epigraphica», *Helmantica* 44 1993 267-280; «Aspectos epigráficos de la poesía latina», *Epigraphica* 55 1996 129-158 and «Horacio y la Musa Epigraphica», *Euphrosyne* 22 1994 63-80.

texts in the 1st century B.C. can also be seen in the 7th or 11th centuries A.D. At the same time, because of the subjects, the used topics and the vocabulary, the Medieval texts show a clear continuity in relation to the late and the classical texts.³

The studies of biographic texts have gained importance in the last few years. It is also true that one of the fields where biographic data are especially important is that of the epigraphic texts. This is so because more than 90% of these texts are funeral, and funeral inscriptions usually account for their protagonists' *res gestae* (among other things).⁴

In this essay I want try to join the different fields in which I have been working, to apply my analysis to a type of texts that have not met, as far as I know, a specific interest.⁵ I am referring here to epitaphs from learned people, mostly poets, which are usually conceived (but not always!) in the first person (they write their own funeral text), and which are written both by authors with an acknowledged prestige and «high cultural awareness», and by authors who were not so lucky and ended up entrusting the stone with their immortality. I intend to analyse these texts and their tradition from the pre-Classical and late-ancient times to the Middle Ages. Moreover, I will emphasise their reading as autobiographical and meta-literary texts, that is, texts that contribute information about the poets' life, but that at the same time almost turn into literary «wills» and statements, because they also provide data about the author's work. To sum up, these texts also help the casual future reader to know more about the dead person's *res gestae*. Since the dead person is a learned man (in our paper, almost always a poet), his work becomes the main legacy and his auto-epitaph tries to clearly show it. I will also try to analyse whether there is continuity (or there is not, or what kind of continuity there is) between the Ancient and the Medieval world in this specific field.

In the present analysis, I will purposely mix up epigraphs which have really existed (be them preserved or not), with «epigraphs» that have just existed in literature and in manuscripts. In addition to this, I will include some literary «epitaphs» with a doubtful authorship (probably invented after the author's death). These epitaphs will help me account for the existence of a real auto-epitaph tradition as meta-literature, almost since the beginning of literature in Rome. My hypothesis is that both type of texts should be analysed from the same perspective, since they both

³ Vid., for instance, our articles «Los Carmina Latina Epigraphica, precursores de la primera hagiografía latina medieval», *RCCM* 38 1996 261-287; «La tradición medieval de los Carmina Latina Epigraphica», in C. Leonardi (ed.), *Gli Umanesimi Medievali*, Firenze, 1998, pp. 171-189 and «Eleventh's Century Carmina Latina Epigraphica: the Reception of an Old Tradition», *Publications of The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 5/1 2002, 353-383.

⁴ Vid. M. Beard, «Vita Inscripta», in W.W. Ehlers (ed.), *La biographie antique*, Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt, n. 44, Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1998, pp. 83-118.

⁵ M. Hereswitha Hengstl, *Totenklage und Nachruf in der mittellateinischen Literatur seit dem Ausgang der Antike*, Würzburg, 1936, pp. 26-29 and 151 quotes some of our mediaeval autoepitaphs (Hrabanus Maurus, Willeramus, Adam of Saint Victor); J.A. Sánchez Marín, *Biografía de poetas latinos. Estudio retórico literario*, Madrid, 1991; M.-F. Baslez-Ph. Hoffman-L. Pernot (edd.), *L'invention de l'autobiographie d'Hésiode à Saint*

Augustin, Paris, 1993, especially in the introduction (pp. 7-10) and in the last chapter, «À la découverte de l'autobiographie», pp. 325-328, by Simone Follet; M.J. Edwards-S. Swain (edd.), *Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1997; W.W. Ehlers (ed.), *La biographie antique*, *supra cit.*, in the introduction, pp. 1-5; AA.VV., *L'Autobiografia nel Medioevo*, Spoleto, 1998; M.E. Assís de Rojo (ed.), *Biografía y Sociedad en la Roma antigua*, San Miguel de Tucumán, 2000; and the last paper known to us, D. Estefanía, «La autobiografía poética: un subgénero épico poco estudiado. Comienzos y final», *CFC.Élat* 18 2000 115-132. Cf., also, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Bd.I, s.u. «Autobiographie», an article by A. Sizoo, Stuttgart, 1950, cols.1050-1055. For the Middle Ages, it is vital to read W. Berschin's study, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, Bd.I-III, Stuttgart, 1986-1991. All these works comment on autobiographical texts, but I have been not able to find in them my paper's point of view.

convey the same type of message. I will also try to display the material in a chronological order, because I would like to prove the existence of a succession of messages about literature, written by different authors (or attributed to them: I consider the tradition and the model to be the same, since without the existence of real auto-epitaphs, the apocryphal ones would have had a difficult justification). This chronology comprises the period from the 2nd century BC to the 13th century AD, without taking into account whether these epitaphs were cut and preserved or whether they were a simple literary fiction. In any case, I consider them to be epigraphs with the same type of data. Thus, by means of this succession and a brief comment on it, I intend to show the existence of a continuity line from pre-classical times to the low Middle Ages. I also want to show how this continuity is tightly related to the concept of «literary immortality», and how the latter is, at the same time, linked to a first visualisation of the recipient —not by reading the author's work, but through the auto-epitaph («first» immortality, thus, through epigraphy). Finally, I will explain how each period, each historical and thought circumstance assigns specific characteristics to the auto-epitaphs at the time.

THE «BEGINNING» OF THE TRADITION IN ROME

Although transmitted by Aulus Gellius (1, 24) and the critique (cf. Courtney, *infra cit.*, p. 49) questions the authenticity of some of the first Roman writers' epitaphs, it is obvious that the historians at the time attributed authenticity to them (Varro and Aulus Gellius). In any case, for us, these epitaphs constitute the first step of the tradition that we want to analyse in this paper: Gellius considers them auto-epitaphs and states that their authors *ipsi fecerunt et incidendo sepulchro suo reliquerunt*.⁶

*Immortales mortales si foret fas flere
Flerent diuiae Camenae Naeuium poetam
Itaque postquam est Orci traditus thesauro,
Obliti sunt Romae loquier lingua Latina.*

By using the antithesis / contrast technique,⁷ so frequent in poetry, the two first words of Naevius's auto-epitaph stand out at the Roman beginning of this tradition: mortals who are devoted to poetry, such as Naevius, can «achieve» immortality thanks to their main ability, the word. In this way, Naevius becomes «immortal» (if they could, the Immortals mourned for him, because he would be identified as «one of theirs») and, after his loss, the capacity of expression in Latin is also lost in Rome (at least, in fictional literature). There are two other important meta-literary concepts, namely the association of the word *poet* to what Naevius does (opposed to *uates*, which is posterior) and the election of the *Camenae* inspirers / protectors, against other possible choices.

*Postquam est mortem aptus Plautus, Comoedia luget
Scaena est deserta; dein Risus Ludus Iocusque,
Et Numeri innumeri simul omnes conlacrimarunt.*

⁶ We can find them in the edition and comment by E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets. Edited with Commentary by*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 47-50. Cf. as well as J. Blänsdorf's bibliography and notes, *Fragmenta Poeta-*

rum Latinorum Epicorum et Lyricorum praeter Ennium et Lucilium, Stuttgartiae et Lipsiae, 1995³, pp. 72-75.

⁷ G. Maurach, *Lateinische Dichtersprache*, Darmstadt, 1995, p. 192.

The least «epigraphic» of the three epitaphs is Plautus's, passed on by Gellius. However, in his epitaph, the meta-literary message is much stronger than in the other two: immortality is not explicitly mentioned, but it is associated to successfully keeping up a literary genre. Plautus's epitaph also explains where his literature was developed, what his main objective is, and it gives us one of its most important characteristics, namely its metrical value.

*Adulescens, tametsi properas, hoc te saxulum
Rogat ut se aspicias, deinde quod scriptum est legas.
Hic sunt poetae Pacuui Marci sita
Ossa. Hoc uolebam nescius ne esses. Vale.*

On the contrary, Pacuuius's epitaph is the most «epigraphic» of the three Gelian epitaphs. Courtney (supra cit., p. 49) relies on preserved epigraphic parallels to prove the validity of a correction of the text, conveyed through the manuscripts (*saxulum* against *saxum*). The appearance of some stylems, frequent in this type of texts, thus prove it: «Du-Rede»; asking the reader's attention through the inscription itself (*saxulum rogat*); linking the immortality of the dead to the fact of reading the inscription and to polite greeting, as if it were an *in absentia* dialogue. This leads us to the importance and symbol of the last verse of this «auto-epitaph»: we must bear in mind what we are reading in a funerary inscription, and that we are doing it out loud, so that its value has an effect. The dead overcomes physical death and goes on to a first immortality *status*, because living travellers remember him.⁸ Regarding learned men, the second step, which is the overcoming of forgetfulness, that is, being remembered forever goes together with the perpetuity and the reading of the work, not just of the epitaph. In other «auto-epitaphs» included in this paper, this message is heightened to a greater extent than here, where we just find the word *poeta* denoting the dead person's work.

It is also worth mentioning how none of these three first «auto-epitaphs» uses the first person singular to refer to the poet's work or life; the three of them use the third person to «talk» about themselves.

AUGUSTAN CULTURE

In the present paper, we could not leave out a comment on Virgil's «auto-epitaph», which has not overcome the barrier of «authenticity» (Courtney supra cit., p.258). It is tightly linked to the most ancient biographical tradition about the Mantuan poet:⁹

*Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc
Parthenope; cecini pascua, rura, duces.*

Although Virgil probably did not compose his own epitaph, the anonymous poet might have taken some models, which were not far away in time from Mantuan's death. It is also probable that the epitaph was carved on his grave (Courtney, opus cit., p. 258, citing Seruius, *Vita Verg. in fine*:

⁸ Posid., *Vita Augustini*, 33, *Vivere post obitum uatem uis nosse uiator? Quod legis, ecce loquor: uox tua nempe mea est.*

⁹ A. Traina-M. Bini's edition, *Supplementum Morelianum*, Bologna, 1986, pp. 22-23. Cf., also, Courtney, supra cit., pp. 257-258 and Blänsdorf, supra cit., pp. 260-261.

sepultus est autem Neapoli, in cuius tumulo ab ipso compositum est tale distichon; Donatus, *Vita Verg.*, 36, etc.). We are interested in highlighting two aspects of Virgil's epitaph, which masterly applies the most pure technique to write epigrams, namely that of the unique distich¹⁰. Firstly, it is worth mentioning the biographical synthesis, which is extreme, but covers all the essential points of the poet's physical and intellectual life, and which is typical of epigraphic works. Secondly, there is another similarly extreme, but effective, synthesis, namely literary: the work of one of the most important poets in our humanity has hardly ever been so accurately described in so a few words.

Regarding a totally different type of text, but still looking at the same register, we want to call attention on a similar analysis of the poem with which Hor. originally concluded his collection of lyric poetry. We are talking about Hor., *Carm.*, 3, 30:¹¹

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius
Regalique situ pyramidum altius,
Quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens
Possit diruere aut innumerabilis
Annorum series et fuga temporum.
Non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei
uitabit Libitinam: usque ego postera
crescam laude recens, dum Capitolium
scandet cum tacita uirgine pontifex.
Dicar, qua uiolens obstrepit Aufidus
Et qua pauper aquae Daunus agrestium
Regnauit populorum, ex humili potens
Princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos
Deduxisse modos. Sume superbiam
Quaesitam meritis et mihi Delphica
Lauro cinge uolens, Melpomene, comam.*

We rely on the bibliography cited in note 11 to confirm that in this poem Horace «constructs» his strictly literary auto-epitaph. If he refused in 2, 20 the honours which are at any mortal's reach (graves and *neniae*), in 3, 30 he requests those other honours characteristic of his dignity and literary achievements, namely the honours of immortality, which cannot be purchased. While the literary ornament is that of a «sphragis», those for the real world are the epigraphic ones, which are mixed together with meta-literary elements about his own concept of poet and poetry. The construction that opens his poem (*exegi...*) is epigraphic-funeral, and so are the allusion to the *monumentum* and his role as preserver of the first memory of the dead; the relation between the importance of a work and the base where it is kept (bronze); the comparison with the most important funerary monuments

¹⁰ M. Lausberg, *Das Einzeldistichon. Studien zum antiken Epigramm*, München, 1982, pp. 481-511.

¹¹ We read this poem by Hor. in E. Wickham-H.W. Garrod, *Q. Horati Flacci Opera*, Oxonii, 1957. A general analysis of the bibliography about this poem can be found in E. Doblhofer, *Horaz in der Forschung nach 1957*, Darmstadt, 1992, pp. 111-115 and 178-179. We have devoted some pages to the analysis of these verses, following the perspective of Horsfall's «reverse

view»: J. Gómez Pallarès, «Horacio y la *Musa Epigraphica*», *Euphrosyne* 22 1994, pp. 72-74 and Idem, «La relación entre Ov., Tr. y Hor., *Carm.*, a través de la poesía epigráfica latina», in C. Fernández (ed.), *La literatura latina: un corpus abierto*, Sevilla, 1999, pp. 99-115. In the same volume, it is also worth reading the work by D. López-Cañete Quiles, «*Carm.* 3, 30: *Res Gestae Horati*», pp. 107-128.

of the time (pyramids) and autobiographical data (*dicar, qua uiolens obstreperit Aufidus... ex humili potens*), which culminate in the last verse, as if it were the last line of the «deceased» citizen's *cursus honorum*. The citizen is Horace and the death is not real, but literary and virtual. In this way, the poet introduces, in the poem itself, those data that help him show the reader that the merits coming out from the written lyric work should provide his literary immortality (*dicar, qua...*). The allusions to the sacred character of his poetry (vv.8-9 in relation to his concept of poet)¹² are meta-literary, and so are those allusions to the need of having a recognised and recited work all over the Roman world at the time (vv.10, 12) in order to achieve immortality; and the fact that he considers himself to be the first person who adapted Greek lyric poetry to the Italic mode (vv.12-14: and not only from a metrical point of view!). At the end of the poem, as a culmination of these reflections, we can find the main idea, which gives sense to the whole of Horace's poetry: we go from ivy and Bacchus in 1, 1, together with the desire of being included in the canon of lyric poets at the time, to the reality of laurel and Apollo in 3, 30 (the poet uses the imperative on v.14 in 3, 30).

We interpret Horace's poetry as including the key elements found, in one way or another, in all the auto-epitaphs that can be analysed: information about the biography, together with the work itself, in a context which is related to the author's death by means of some epigraphic-funeral elements. Such a union helps the poet better introduce the reader to the concept of claimed immortality, since the language that he (the reader) better identifies to be talked about death comes precisely from the epigraphs, which avoid *prima mors*.

Another poet from Augustan times who introduces an auto-epitaph in his work is Tib., in 1, 3, 53-56:¹³

*Quod si fatales iam nunc expleuimus annos,
Fac lapis inscriptis stet super ossa notis.
'hic iacet immitti consumptus morte Tibullus,
Messallam terra dum sequiturque mari.'*

In this case, the context of the poem and of these verses in the Tibullus's work show us that the author's intention in his auto-epitaph is completely different from what we have just analysed. Although the language and the introduction to the «funeral» distich are eminently epigraphic (even more than those in other texts mentioned in this paper), the meta-literary message seems to be missing here, unless we interpret it, as Cairns does in *supra cit.*, p. 46, as a message that takes roots in its position within the whole of poem 3. In fact, these verses have a nuclear role, since the whole poem is based on them. If we relate Cairns' hint to the value of the auto-epitaph, to Della Corte's hint, *supra cit.*, p.158, which relates the adjective that Tibullus applies to himself, *immitis*,

¹² Cf. J.K. Newman, *The Concept of Vates in Augustan Poetry*, Bruxelles, 1967, especially pp. 43-50, «Vates in Horace's Satires and Odes I-III» and R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Horace behind the Public Poetry*, New Haven-London, 1995, pp. 184-185. We are writing a paper called «Reservando un pasaje para la eternidad: Hor., *Carm.*, 2, 19-2, 20 y la visión del poeta de sí mismo» which will analyse this subject from the perspective of ekphrasis in Horace (to be published in *CFC.Elat*).

¹³ G. Luck's edition, *Albi Tibulli aliorumque carmina*, Stuttgartiae, 1988. In this case, we also devote some

pages to analyse this fragment, prior to: J. Gómez Pallarès, «Poetas latinos como "escritores" de *carmina latina epigraphica*», *CFC (Lat.)* 2 1992 224. Vid. also F. della Corte, *Tibullo. Le elegie*, Milano, 1990³, p. 158, about verse 54, with other literary parallels, which imitate epigraphic language; F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome*, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 46-47; M.C.J. Putnam, *Tibullus: A Commentary*, Norman, 1973, p. 82 and Ph.Lee-Stecum, *Powerplay in Tibullus. Reading Elegies Book One*, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 134-135 and 144-145.

through semantic transfer with the noun *mors*, to the previous verse 48 in 1, 3 (*immiti saeuus duxerat arte faber*), we might have found the meta-literary key, which can be put together with the epigraphic one. The death that hits Tibullus is *immitis*, the *faber* that opposes Tibullus is *immitis* (also through transfer with *ars*), and, by contrast, a *mitis* poet, as *mitis* is his inspiring Venus, is defined in his auto-epitaph, in a central position of his poetry (cf. 1, 10, 66; 2, 3, 72). The position of the verses with respect to the auto-epitaph, together with the opposition between *immitis* and Tibullus, will lead us to a meta-literary reading. The epigraphic-biographical one is much clearer (including the reference to Mesalla).

The last poet of the time that we want to mention is Ovid, who finds in his work in the exile multiple occasions to introduce the Roman language of death, as well as the epigraphic and the meta-literary ones.¹⁴ We have chosen the auto-epitaph dedicated in 3, 3, 71-78, which we slightly expand, since not only those verses of the epitaph, but also the previous and posterior ones are important for us:¹⁵

*Quosque legat uersus oculo properante uiator,
Grandibus in tumuli marmore caede notis:
HIC . EGO . QVI . IACEO . TENERORVM . LVSOR . AMORVM
INGENIO . PERI . NASO . POETA . MEO
AT . TIBI . QVI . TRANSIS . NE . SIT . GRAVE . SI QUID . AMASTI
DICERE . NASONIS . MOLLITER . OSSA . CVBENT
Hoc satis in titulo est: etenim maiora libelli
Et diuturna magis sunt monumenta mihi;*

The two introductory verses explain how important it is for the deceased to have his text read. Therefore, the more this reading is «facilitated», the better it is for both protagonists, namely the dead and the reader: it is important the allusion to the traveller who comes near as quickly as he can go away, as well as the allusion to a size of the letters that facilitates the reading, so that the traveller need not stop. The «epigraph» has all the important elements, including some epigraphic stylems (since the initial *Hic ego qui iaceo...*), which help these texts be real biographical exercises (in our cases, autobiographical): the positive identification of the «dead»; his occupation; a direct reference to the cause of his misfortune and posterior death (v.2 of the epigraph directly related to the first one). The latter is less common in epitaphs, but it is not surprising, since we need to contextualize this «epitaph» by relating it to where, by whom and when it was written. Another element is the allusion to the traveller, to call his attention and the final prayer in order to pronounce a ritual formula for the dead (we will see later how this type of formula is retaken by

¹⁴ Cf. J. Gómez Pallarès, «Ovidius Epigraphicus: Tristia, lib.1, con excursus a 3, 3 y 4, 10», in W. Schubert (ed.), *Ovid. Werk und Wirkung*, Frankfurt a.Main, 1998, pp.755-773, and all the bibliography and passages cited and commented there. Cf., also M. von Albrecht, «La investigación sobre Ovidio: algunas tendencias y perspectivas», in M.A. Sánchez Manzano (coord.), *Gramática y Comentario de autores en la tradición latina*, León, 2000, pp. 17-30; cf., also, chapter 2 by G.D. Williams, *Banished Voices. Readings in Ovid's Exile Poetry*, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 50-99 and chapter 1 by J. González Vázquez, *La*

poética ovidiana del destierro, Granada, 1998, pp. 15-35. The last work by J.-M. Claassen, *Displaced Persons. The Literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius*, London, 1999, devotes a specific section to analyse Ovid's literary «ego» in exile (6.4, «Ovid: the self before exile», pp. 173-181, especially pp. 174-175), but she never approaches his explanation from an autobiographical, a epigraphic or a meta-literary perspective, which is what we are trying to do in this paper.

¹⁵ We read Ovidio, Tr., in J.B. Hall, *P.Ouidi Nasonis Tristia*, Stuttgartiae et Lipsiae, 1995.

Christian auto-epitaphs). These epigraphic and biographical elements are joined by fundamental, meta-literary data, whose understanding will have to be completed with those verses that are immediate to the auto-epitaph: the poet's death results from having been ingenious in his narration, in the versification of love games. Verses 77-78 directly link Ovid's claims with Horace's claims and achievements in his lyric work, and offer us the exact measure of auto-epitaphs by these famous poets: they would be useful for the first memory of the deceased, but not for much more (*hoc satis in titulo*). The authentic immortality, which Ovid postulates in this text, will be achieved only if his work is preserved and read, and only if that work actually becomes his funerary *monumentum*, overcoming and enlarging the «horizons», objectives and expectations of an inscribed funerary stone.

FLAVIAN TIMES AND LATE ANTIQUITY

We want to start this section with a brief reference to one of Martial's texts, which, as we see it, clearly follows the steps of Hor., 3, 30, and of Ov., Tr., 3, 3, 71-78. It is Mart., 9, *Introd.*, when the poet «displays» his access to immortality to the reader (compared to Virg. and Hor., he repeatedly claimed for it in the improvement of his genre)¹⁶ in the shape of a «library». The best way of preserving an author's work is by keeping it in a library. If we talk about homage, by Stertinius, with a bust in his library, which obviously supposed the acknowledgement of that right to preservation, this naturally leads the poet to the construction of his auto-epitaph, since he is actually conceiving a *post mortem* homage:¹⁷

*Epigramma, quod extra ordinem paginarum est, ad Stertinium clarissimum uirum scripsimus, qui imaginem meam ponere in bibliotheca sua uoluit...
... Ille ego sum nulli nugarum laude secundus,
quem non miraris sed puto, lector, amas.
Maiores maiora sonent: mihi parua locuto
Sufficit in uestras saepe redire manus.'*

Some outstanding epigraphic characteristics (beginning of verses 1 and 2 in the epitaph) are joined by some of Mart.'s meta-literary reflections, which are recurrent in his texts. He works on a literary genre that prefers to be frequently beloved and read, rather than to be cautiously admired and venerated. Moreover, he considers this genre to be «minor», compared to others (*maiores maiora sonent*). However, the poet does not abandon his immortality (and the epitaph and the whole introduction to book 9 prove this), thanks to the improvement and later acknowledgement of his «minor» genre.

In the epigraphic collection gathered and commented by F. Bücheler and E. Lommatzsch,¹⁸ we can find some epitaphs that are interesting for our argumentation. The first one, which is from the

¹⁶ An extended development of this idea can be found in J. Gómez Pallarès, «Cuestiones en torno al *otium* en Marcial», *RPL* 18 1995 61-89.

¹⁷ We read Mart. in W.M. Lindsay, *M. Val. Martialis Epigrammata*, Oxonii, 1929. You can also consult J. Gómez Pallarès, «Poetas latinos como...», *opus supra cit.*, pp. 206-207 and 216; J.P. Sullivan, *Martial: The*

Unexpected Classic. A Literary and Historical Study, Cambridge, 1991, p. 59 and L. Friedländer, *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Libri, mit erklärenden Anmerkungen*, zweiter Bd., Leipzig, 1886, p. 49.

¹⁸ F. Bücheler-E. Lommatzsch, *Anthologia Latina*, 3 vols., Lipsiae, 1896-1926 (= Stuttgartiae et Lipsiae, 1982, Bd.2.1-2.3).

Flavian-Trajan times (CLE 1111), says the following (we have selected from these CLE only the most interesting verses, most of which are quite long):¹⁹

- Tu quicumque mei ueheris prope limina busti,
Suprime festinum quaeso uiator iter.
Perlege...
Inuenies titulo nomina fixa meo.*
- 5 *Roma mihi patria est...*
- 11 *quondam ego Pierio uatum monumenta canore
doctus cynnis enumerare modis,
doctus Maeonio spirantia carmina uersu
dicere, Caesareo carmina nota foro*
- 15 *nunc amor et nomen superest de corpore toto.*
- ...

This is Tiberius Claudius Tiberinus's preserved epitaph, which compiles some of the already mentioned elements in epitaphs, which were purely literary. If we analyse it with our arguments, there is no doubt (which was raised by Cugusi, *supra cit.*, p. 100) that it is a poet's auto-epitaph (v.1). On the one hand, we can find the indispensable biographical elements in an epigraph preserved for the identification of the deceased, as in the allusion to v.5 (in these cases, the most important genealogical and biographical information can be found in the *praescriptum* and *postscriptum*, when present, in prose). On the other hand, there are also allusions to his practice of lyric poetry (v.13) and to the fact that he obtained fame and, consequently, immortality (vv.14-15) thanks to this poetry, as well as to the epitaph: the consolidation of his name comes immediately after the affirmation of his poetry and how much it was known where the majority of people circulated in Rome.

CLE 97²⁰ presents a very interesting text, M. Pomponius Bassulus's auto-epitaph, from the Trajan-Adrian times:

- Ne more pecoris otio transfungere[r]
Menandri paucas uorti scitas fabulas
Et ipsus etiam sedulo finxi nouas...*
- 8 *optatam mortem sum pot[itu]s. Ea mihi
suo de more cuncta [dat] leuamina.*
- 10 *uos in sepulcro hoc elogium incidite,
quod sit documento post fo...*

It is a shame that the last part of the text was lost, since it was there where the poet reflected on the preservation of his work, in the same way as the previous verses (10-11) stated how the epigraph served as a «lesson», as a «warning» (in the etymological sense) for the reader about the

¹⁹ Cf. also J. Cholodniak, *Carmina sepulcralia latina epigraphica*, Saint Petersburg, 1904,² n. 396; *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VI 10097 and P. Cugusi, *Aspetti letterari dei Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, Bologna, 1996,² pp. 100-101.

²⁰ Cf. also H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae selectae*, Berlin, 1892-1916, n. 7785; Cholodniak, *supra cit.*, n. 1150; CIL IX 1164; Cugusi, *supra cit.*, pp. 102-104 and 322-323 and L. Alfonsi, «Un protrettico epigrafico di età imperiale», *Epigraphica* 26 1964 59-67.

protagonist's actions. In this way, the most «epigraphic» information was found at the end of the text, whereas the literary one was at the beginning, probably in a pre-eminent order. In the last part, Pomponius Bassulus admits being a promoter of Menander in Rome, since he not only adapted his comedies, but also wrote new comedies following the same style. Such a definition, according to Cugusi, *supra cit.*, p.102, would place Pomponius as a follower of Terentius, and, at the same time, the reader would be faced with what the author wants to explain about himself, with meaningful words, from a meta-literary perspective, such as *uorti*, in v.2, or *nouas*, in v.3.²¹

We did not want to forget what can be considered to be one of the first Christian auto-epitaphs, which was composed by Pope Damasus, bishop of Rome between 366 and 384 (date of his death). This work was preserved at the time in the Church of San Lorenzo, where Damasus was buried (we know the epigraph through manuscript transmission).²²

*Hinc pater, exceptor, lector, leuita, sacerdos,
Creuerat hinc meritis quoniam melioribus actis;
Hinc mihi prouecto Christus cui summa potestas,
Sedis apostolicae uoluit concedere honorem.
Archiuus, fateor, uolui noua condere tecta,
Addere praeterea dextra laeuaque columnas,
Quae Damasi teneant proprium per saecula nomen.*

There is not any direct reference to the written work, to his epigrams, in what could be considered to be Damasus's auto-epitaph (we would not call it that if it had been found in a different church, since we would have thought that it was a simple aedile dedication inscription). However, it is true that we cannot analyse this text just as an aedile inscription, and that the Christian auto-epitaphs always minimise (uid. *infra*) the quest of honour's «intellectual» job, in the interests of his pastoral work *lato sensu*. The autobiographical data goes beyond the traditional contents of this type of inscriptions: Damasus prepared a list of his priestly *cursus honorum* from the ordination itself to the maximal granted honour, namely that of the Roman bishopric and the papal see (vv.1, 4). Apart from this, of course, he dedicates the building where he is buried (vv.5-6), but the final «reflection» returns to one of the other characteristics that we have been encountering up to now, the association of the deceased's immortality to the work done. It is obvious that in a Christian atmosphere it makes no sense asking for immortality and having it granted by the pagan gods. Immortality is now achieved through the verification of other merits, which are not only literary: comments in v.2. When we mention immortality in relation to the work itself, Damasus would rather talk about *noua tecta*, but notice that here the value of *noua* is strictly parallel to that one included, for instance, in Pomponius Bassulus's epitaph (CLE, 97, v.3), cited *supra*: as a literary subject, the author emphasises those «paths» that he opens for the first time (Cat., 1; or Hor., *Carm.*, 3, 30, for example). By reading the rest of Christian auto-epitaphs included in this paper, you will realise that one of their formal characteristics is that

²¹ Following L. Alfonsi, *supra cit.*, pp.62-64, *nouas* of v.3, also remember *Vita Terenti* by Suetonius and Terentius's forewords.

²² A. Ferrúa's edition, *Epigrammata Damasiana*, Roma, 1942, n. 57. The previous edition, by M. Ihm,

Damasi Epigrammata, Lipsiae, 1895, n. 57, also offers an interesting comment. Cf., also, E. Dekkers-Ae. Gaar, *Clauis Patrum Latinorum*, Steenbrugge, 1995,³ n. 1635 (p. 526).

they devote most autobiographical data to talk about the guest of honour's personal experience as Christians.

CLE 1516 passes on to us Sidonius Apollinaris's epitaph, which critics have not considered as an auto-epitaph.²³

*Sanctis contiguus sacroque patri
uiuuit sic meritis Apollinaris,
illustris titulis, potens honore.
Rector militiae forique iudex,*

5 *Mundi inter tumidas quietus undas,
causarum moderans subinde motus
leges barbarico dedit furori,
discordantibus inter arma regnis
pacem consilio reduxit amplo.*

10 *Haec inter tamen et philosophando
scripsit perpetuis habenda saeculis.
Et post talia dona Gratiarum
Summi pontificis sedens cathedram
Mundanos soboli refudit actus.*

15 *Quisque hic cum lacrimis deum rogabis,
dextrum funde preces super sepulcrum:
nulli incognitus et legendus orbi
illic Sidonius tibi inuocetur.*

The *elogium* dedicated to Sidonius Apollinaris has never been thought to belong to his own work. However, some details, pointed out by Cugusi, *supra cit.*, p.112, bring this possibility to light. The fact that it is written in 3rd person, and not in 1st person, is not an obstacle for such an identification. Traditional data in an epitaph, with a biographical nature (vv.1-9), are combined here with the request of immortality (vv.10-11), with such a tone and in a manner that lead us to the tradition of the author's request, described in the present paper. Sidonius's poetical and political activity would obviously let such a request be possible. Another detail supporting our theory is the fact that the poem is written in Falcean hendecasyllables, since in *Épist.*, 9, 16, vv.37-38, he states that he *nunc per undenas equitare suetus / syllabas*. As mentioned by Cugusi, *supra cit.*, p.113, some verses directly written by Sidonius include expressions, which are very similar to those found in this paper. Finally, Sidonius addresses to the reader—despite the use of 3rd person—at the end of the poem, in order to be read. This is the only obvious formula used by writers to access immortality, as we have already seen in previous auto-epitaphs. All these details have made us choose this epitaph by Sidonius for a paper devoted to auto-epitaphs, although still taking into account and being conscious of the use of these arguments to defend the authorship of an author, who perfectly knows Sidonius's work, but who is not Sidonius himself. In this sense, the main meta-literary information, as the author himself would indicate

²³ Cf. E. Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*, Berlin-Dublin-Zürich, 1925-1967, n. 1067; E. Le Blant, *Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures au VIII siècle*, Paris, 1856-1865, n. 562; M. Schanz-C. Hosius-

G. Krüger, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, Bd.IV.2, München, 1920, pp. 43-54; F.E. Consolino, «L'appello al lettore nell'epitaffio della tarda latinità», *Maia* 28 1976 141 and Cugusi, *supra cit.*, 111-113 and 323-324.

(if we are right), should be related to the quest of honour's political and public activity, which extends throughout most of the text.²⁴

THE MIDDLE AGES

The first auto-epitaph selected from the Middle Ages was written by the bishop Eugenius of Toledo²⁵, whose text is the following:²⁶

Eugenii Toletani Episcopi Epitaphion proprium
Excipe, Christe potens, discretam corpore menteM,
Vt possim picei poenam uitare barathrI.
Grandis inest culpa, sed tu pietate redundaS.
Elue probra, pater, et uitae crimina tolle,
 5 *Non sim pro meritis sanctorum coetibus exuL,*
Iudice te prosit sanctorum uidisse tribunaL.
Vis, lector, uno qui sim dinoscere uersV,
Signa priora lege, mox ultima nosse ualebiS.

Eugenius's epitaph is a prodigy of continence, since his convictions thus dictate it to him, and he subordinates everything to Christ's generosity and to Whoever has to ultimately judge him, as it also happens in almost all the other Christian auto-epitaphs to be here analysed. However, he does not deprive himself of a couple of comments for the future reader: on the one hand, a direct reference to the «reader», intimately joined to the meaningful *qui sim* in v.7 (that is the most outstanding auto-biographical trait that he allows himself). On the other hand, related to that interrogation, the acrostic and the telestic, with which he plays around. The poet goes back to an old tradition²⁷ and, through the acrostic, he tells us who he is and he achieves the first objective of the epitaph; that is, he lets us know the name of the deceased. In turn, by means of the telestic, he contributes an adjective that, applied to him, helps him achieve God's forgiveness; that is, a renewed «immortality» for ever and ever, without a closing date when the time comes to receive it. With this game, we can

²⁴ Following the same perspective of analysis, we could read CLE 1368 (Diehl, *supra* cit., n.1046; CIL V 6464; Dessau, *supra* cit., n. 2952), an epitaph written in 521, dedicated to Ennodius (cf. Schanz-Hosius-Krüger, *supra* cit., Bd. IV.2, pp. 131-147). Cugusi, *supra* cit., pp. 113-115 and 324, states the parallels between Ennodius's work and this epitaph, and its content is very parallel to Sidonius's, briefly commented. It is a poem which can be analysed like an auto-epitaph, in the light of the quest of honour's biography and works.

²⁵ Cf. M. Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, Bd.I-III, München, 1911 (= München, 1965), Bd.I, pp. 194-197; J.M. Díaz de Bustamante-M.E. Lage Cotos-J.E. López Pereira, *Bibliografía de Latín Medieval en España (1950-1992)*, Spoleto, 1994, nn. 676, 679, 2238, 3133, 3244, 3494, 3495, 3496; A. González Oviés, *Poesía funeraria latina*

(*Renacimiento Carolingio*), Oviedo, 1995, pp. 384-385 and S.Catelli Berarducci, «Bibliografía della letteratura mediolatina», in G. Cavallo-C. Leonardi-E. Menestò, *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo. 1. Il medioevo latino. Vol. V, Cronologia e Bibliografia della letteratura mediolatina*, Roma, 1998, p. 381. Although it does not talk specifically about this poem, it is really important to know some of the «epigraphic production» by Eugenius, art. by P.F. Alberto, «Notes on Eugenius of Toledo», *CQ* 49.1 1999 304-314, about numbers 70, 21, 14, 14b and 15 of the edition by Vollmer, *infra* cit.

²⁶ F. Vollmer's edition, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi*, vol. XV, Berolini, 1905, p. 246.

²⁷ J.W. Zarker, «Acrostic Carmina Latina Epigraphica», *Orpheus* 13 1966 125-151.

see how the requests to read out loud in the first epitaphs start to become, in this context, also requests, but they are used to obtain mercy for the deceased and, *infra*, requests to pray for him.

Alcuinus of York offers us another text full of interest for different reasons:²⁸

*Hic, rogo, pauxillum ueniens subsiste uiator
Et mea scrutare pectore dicta tuo*

...

- 5 *quod nunc es fueram, famosus in orbe, uiator,
et quod nunc ego sum, tuque futurus eris.*
17 *tu mihi redde uicem, lector, rogo, carminis huius
et dic: «da ueniam, Christe, tuo famulo.»*
21 *Qui iaces in tumulo, terrea de puluere surge,
magnis adest iudex milibus innumeris.
Alchuine nomen erat sophiam mihi semper amanti.
Pro quo funde preces mente, legens titulum.*

Apart from being convinced of Christian faith and believing the idea that only through the Supreme Judge's forgiveness redemption of sins, and consequently «immortality», will be obtained, Alcuinus re-establishes the importance that the inscription has in the whole process, which we were able to follow up to the Late Antiquity: references to the traveller and to how essential reading epigraphic texts is; the allusion to the quest of honour's name at the end (although, in this case, as it is usual in Christian epitaphs by notable people, rather than substituting the *curriculum*, it is complemented with reflections like those included in vv.5-6), allusion, in v.24, *funde preces*, to the non-christian epitaph's formula *funderere lacrimas, uina*,²⁹ and the reference to the mound. Moreover, the author makes a clear meta-literary allusion when, in the final distich and next to his name, he introduces in the inscription the only mention of his intellectual work. It is quite clear that, from the Middle Ages onwards, those auto-epitaphs that can be analysed reduce all the meta-literary information to the minimum expression, and promote those elements, which are related to the quest of honour's faith, and those biographical elements that better relate to that information.

Hrabanus Maurus has also left an auto-epitaph for us:³⁰

*Lector honeste, meam si uis cognoscere uitam
Tempore mortali, discere sic poteris.
Urbe quidem hac genitus sum ac sacro fonte renatus,
In Fulda post haec dogma sacrum didici:
5 quo monachus factus seniorum iussa sequebar
...
poscentes fungi praesulis officius
in quo nec meritum uitae nec dogma repertum est,*

²⁸ Cf. Manitius, *supra cit.*, Bd.I, pp. 273-288 and S. Cantelli Berarducci, *supra cit.*, pp. 413-417. The text that we are using is E. Dümmeler's for MGH, *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, Vol. I, Berlin, 1881, p. 350, n. CXXIII.

²⁹ Cf., for instance, CIL II 4315, v.13, *fudimus insonti lacrimas, nunc uina*, and E. Courtney's commentary, in

Musa Lapidaria. A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions, Atlanta (GA), 1995, pp. 321-322.

³⁰ E. Dümmeler's edition, in MGH, PLAC, vol. II, Berlin, 1884, pp. 243-244. Cf., also, Manitius, *supra cit.*, Bd.I, pp. 288-302 and S. Cantelli Berarducci, *supra cit.*, pp. 443-447.

- 17 *nunc rogo te ex tumulo, frater dilecte, iuuando
commendes Christo me ut precibus domino:
iudicis aeterni me ut gratia saluet in aeuum,*
20 *non meritum aspiciens, sed pietatis opus.
Hraban nempe mihi nomen, et lectio dulcis
Diuinae legis semper ubique fuit.
Cui Deus omnipotens tribuas caelestia regna,
Et ueram requiem semper in arce poli.*

The abbot of Fulda's auto-epitaph is paradoxical, since, despite the importance of his work, the text does not even dedicate a verse to the subject. This auto-epitaph is a «debtor» of the epigraphic-biographical tradition, since it includes and refers both to the anonymous reader and to the fact that an epitaph should mention, apart from the name, the most important actions of the quest of honour. In this case, all the exemplified points correspond to the ecclesiastical career of the deceased. When we would expect an allusion to the work, related to immortality (v.17, referring to the mound), the request to the traveller (common topic of funeral epigraphs) takes the shape of a prayer to Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. In this way, we can find in Hrabanus's epitaph how the request for reading the stone goes together with a request to the traveller for praying and a commendation for «immortality», which is no longer related to the work, but to the mercy of the eternal judge. In the earlier tradition, this request for reading the stone supposed avoiding the first death, the physical one, and used to go together with the poet's formulation of immortality, tightly linked to the reading of the work. Perhaps v.20, *non meritum aspiciens, sed pietatis opus*, could be interpreted as the unique auto-reference to his intellectual work (*meritum*).

After overcoming the barrier of the 10th century, we would like to present the auto-epitaph by Williram, abbot of Ebersberg:³¹

- Epitaphium Willeram Abb.*
*Fuldensi monachus Wilram de Fonte uocatus,
Hic licet indignus pastor eram positus.*
Nominis officium corrumpit fictio morum.
Qui sibi nempe malus, cui ualet esse bonus?*
5 *Verus peccator, falsusque boni simulator,
Nil ego praeterii quidquid erat uitii.
Correxi libros, neglexi moribus illos:
Iusti supplici conscius ipse mihi.
Sed quia deliqui, tua Christe flagella cupiui.*
10 *Tē tamen hoc det mihi propicium.
In nonis Jani mortis decreta subiui,
Quae uiuens nemo praeterit ullo modo.
Compatiendo mihi uso ullo poscite Viui,
Mitiget ut poenam, detque reo ueniam.*

³¹ Manitius, *supra cit.*, Bd.II, München, 1923, pp. 595 and 598; S. Cantelli Berarducci, *supra cit.*, pp. 520-521. This epitaph is included in J. Schilter, *Thesaurus Anti-*

quitatum Teutonicarum, Vlmae, 1726, *Annotatio de Willeramo, Paraphraseos Cantica canticorum Auctore*, p. 2.

Williram of Ebersberg's auto-epitaph closely follows Hrabanus Maurus's pattern. We can find some biographical indications combined with typically epigraphic data (the name of the deceased, his origin, the deictic reference to the place where he is buried, the encounter with death—a detail that is not very common in Christian epitaphs—³²). The author quickly starts thinking about his condition of sinner and about the punishment that he will have to suffer to redeem his sins. As it previously happened, we can only find a brief reference to his intellectual activity (*correxī libros*).

Adam of Saint Victor, who died in 1192, provides us another interesting text:³³

Aliud Epitaphium quod ipse de se composuit

*Haeres peccati, natura filius irae,
Exsiliisque reus nascitur omnis homo.
Vnde superbit (sic!) homo? Cujus conceptio culpa,
Nasci poena, labor uita, necesse mori.*

5 *Vana salus hominis, uanus decor, omnia uana:
Inter uana nihil uanius est homine.
Dum magis alludit praesentis gloria uitae,
Praeterit, imo fugit; non fugit, imo perit.
Post hominem uermis, post uermem fit cinis, heu, heu!*

10 *Sic redit in cinerem Gloria nostra simul.
Hic ego qui jaceo miser et miserabilis Adam,
Vnum pro summo munere posco precem.
Peccaui, fateor, ueniam peto, parce fatenti,
Parce Pater, fratres parcite, parce Deus.*

We find ourselves facing the maximal distillation of the process, which we began to describe with the auto-epitaphs by Plautus, Naeuius and Pacuuius. Adam of Saint Victor dedicates the minimum to the canons of the «sub-genre» (only a verse, number 11, with deictic allusions to the place where he is and to his identification), in order to devote most of his auto-epitaph to reflect on man's sinful origins, on his useless escape, and on the only possibility of salvation, that is, immortality, after physical death and worms: God forgives his sins. There is no reference to the written work, unless we could interpret under this point of view vv.6, *inter uana*, and 10, *gloria nostra*.

Alanus ab Insulis, Alain of Lille, who died in 1203, presents a curious story to end, at the very beginning of the 13th century of our era, so that we can look through Latin auto-epitaphs by men of letters:³⁴

³² We think that it is not strange that in v.11 the author, if the interpretation as auto-epitaph is accepted, refers to the date of his own death. On the one hand, it is obvious that Williram would not carve his own epitaph, so it is normal that he would leave his text written, with an empty space (which had to be filled in) for the death's date, before it arrived. On the other hand, it is not unusual to find in epigraphic poetry references to living people who supervised his grave or his text, and they thus show it, after the death, on the text that they ordered: CLE 137, 1, *feci quod uolui uiuus monumentum*

mihī...; or CLE 1269, 1, uiuus mi feci, ne post me lentius heres...

³³ It can be found in *Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus, accurante J.-P. Migne*, vol. 196, col. 1422 c. Cf., also, Manitius, *supra cit.*, Bd.I, p. 1002 and note 4 and S. Cantelli Berarducci, *supra cit.*, pp. 603-604.

³⁴ R. Favreau and J. Michaud's edition, *Corpus des Inscriptions de la France Médiévale*. Vol. 20: Côte-d'Or, Paris, 1999, n. 99. Cf., as well as Manitius, *supra cit.*, Bd.I, p. 794 and S. Cantelli Berarducci, *supra cit.*, pp. 616-618.

*ALANVM BREVIS HORA BREVI TUMULO SEPELIVIT
QVI DVO QVI SEPTEM QVI TOTVM SCIBILE SCIVIT*

In 1961, M. Lebeau found in Cîteaux a small grave, which was built in 1482 in honour of Alain of Lille, and where the epitaph dedicated to him was carved. This epitaph was extracted from a manuscript of the 13th century, passed on by the *Anticlaudianus* of our author. In a quite crude representation of Alain's grave, the ms. indicated that *hic tumulatus est Alanus hujus libri actor (sic!) qui in uita sua composuit ipsos duos uersos et jubssit (sic!) ut post mortem ejus sculperentur in sepulcro suo*. This is how it happened, although not at the time when Alain of Lille died, but in 1482, when another grave, where these two verses were carved, was built for him. If we trust in the truth of ms. with Alain's work, we need to conclude that it is his auto-epitaph, and that it can be analysed as such. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the allusion made to an important epigraphic-funeral subject, namely the smallness of the mound, in relation to the nobility and importance that he had when he was alive (v.1).³⁵

The second verse includes, at least, a clear meta-literary reference: without exactly knowing what *duo* refers to (Favreau proposes an allusion to the Old and New Testament), I think that *septem* must be referring to the *Anticlaudianus*, since this is a piece of work that encyclopaedically compiled (*totum scibile!*) the seven liberal arts. Although it cannot be considered a paradigm of its time—due to its difference from the other medieval analysed epitaphs—Alain of Lille's epigraph is a good ending for our trip, thanks to its contents and to its own story.

CONCLUSION

Immortality is «achieved» through written work, which is preserved and read, but it is requested through the epigraph, which can be either real or «virtual». Our paper has tried to show the intimate relation between both concepts, by means of the presentation and brief comment of what we have called meaningful «auto-epitaphs» of learned men: if the epitaph, written by the author himself, contributes the first key element, namely the autobiographical one, meta-literary reference contributes the second one, which is the reflection, the declaration of the work. Both elements produce a final conclusion about the access to the «quest of honour's» immortality in the inscription, no matter what type it is. In addition, we have tried to show this by picturing a tradition which can be continuously traced since the 2nd century BC to the 13th century AD, in spoken and written Latin «world», going through different literary genres, periods, places, and often-distant literary and personal conceptions. After reading and commenting on the selected epigraphs from the different stages of Latinity presented in this paper, it is obvious that the request for immortality is not the same in the 1st century BC as in the 11th century AD. While in early chronologies the authors relate this immortality to the survival of the work and the memory of the deceased, at the same time that religious «presence» is minor, in Christian auto-epitaphs the idea that «real» access to immortality is provided by God gains ground, as chronology goes ahead. Although authors are conscious of that new religious reality, the use of the epigraph to keep their

³⁵ Cf. Luc., 8, 789-795, about Pompeius Magnus's mound, and its commentary in J. Gómez Pallarès, «Poetas latinos como...», *supra cit.*, pp. 212-213, and note 28.

memories alive (the deceased is the one who has written his epitaph) through autobiographical data, as well as the presence —although minimal— of some reference to cultural and literary activities of the quests of honour, continues to be alive and present throughout all the selected texts.

The literate man, the poet, always found, in different proportions, a balance between his «voice» as a man (gathered in the most biographical part of his epitaphs) and his «voice» as a poet (gathered in the most literary part of them). He used both of them to ask for a place in immortality, since both looked for, and usually found, a reader's echo, which still had not arrived: *uiuere post obitum uatem uis nosse, uiator? Quod legis, ecce loquor: uox tua nempe mea est*. Both of them have been analysed in this paper and they have helped us show how literate men's epigraphic autobiographies are also useful to help their authors think about their written work, and to prove that this type of texts represents an exchange place (another one!) between Epigraphy and Literature in the Antiquity and in the Middle Ages.

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