

Martin Meets Maximus : The Meaning of a Late Roman Banquet

Sulpicius Severus, the biographer of Saint Martin of Tours, records a banquet given by the Gallic usurper Maximus, probably in 385 or 386, and attended by the saint (*V. M.* 20. 1-7)¹. While his fellow Gallic bishops had courted the new emperor, Martin had long resisted Maximus' invitations. Maximus, Sulpicius tells us, was delighted that he had finally persuaded the saint to share his table. At the banquet the emperor bid his attendant reverse normal protocol and hand the drinking cup first to Martin. He wanted, Sulpicius says, to receive the cup from Martin's own hand. But the saint, preferring spiritual to secular status, passed the cup next to his priest, who had accompanied him to the feast. All were struck with admiration at Martin's display of independence. The event only served to strengthen his reputation.

The purpose of this paper is not primarily to discuss Sulpicius Severus' account of the banquet, but rather to examine two later versions of the story in the verse Lives of Martin written by Paulinus of Périgueux (third quarter of the fifth century) and Venantius Fortunatus (the *Life of Martin* dates to 574-76 C. E.). Both elaborate with some freedom on Sulpicius Severus' account, their base text. The appeal of the episode depends in large part on its location at a banquet. For the Romans the banquet had long been, in Michel Jeanneret's words, «a model through which society, symbolically, fixes both its priorities and its contradictions²». It was a place where competing schemes of values

1. For Sulpicius Severus' characterization of Maximus see Jacques FONTAINE, «Hagiographie et politique de Sulpice Sévère à Venance Fortunat», *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 62 (1976) pp. 118-19. Fontaine comments on this passage : «la scène du souper de Martin chez l'empereur Maxime est une sorte de parabole de l'humiliation du pouvoir temporel devant le pouvoir spirituel qui le juge». For the likely date of this episode see FONTAINE, *Sulpice Sévère : Vie de Saint Martin*, 3 vols. (Paris 1966-69), vol. 3, pp. 911-12.

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2. Michel JEANNERET, *Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance*, trans., Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (Chicago 1987) p. 3. Jeanneret is writing of the Renaissance, but his theoretical remarks are equally applicable to ancient Rome.

could be negotiated. Martin's dramatization of ecclesiastical independence and his comparative evaluation of spiritual and secular status take on exemplary force when staged at an imperial banquet.

In writing of this event, Paulinus and Fortunatus reformulate Sulpicius' account in accordance with their own conceptions of a bishop's role and his relationship to secular authorities (see especially Paulinus 3. 20-25), but they also call upon a longstanding tradition for the representation of the banquet. The symbolic language of the *cena* depends on a system of signs that had developed over a number of centuries. The idiom our poets use to describe the feast given by Maximus depends on this continuous tradition, but it also reflects the changed circumstances, both religious and secular, of late antiquity.

Writing on the Roman *convivium* in the classical period, John D'Arms distinguishes between public and private feasts³. In the former category he concentrates on the feasts given by the emperor Domitian in the amphitheatre and *domus Flavia*, as recorded by the court poets Statius (*Silv.* 1. 6 and 4. 2) and Martial (8. 50). Such occasions were spectacular demonstrations of the social order and of the majesty of the emperor on whom that order depended. Architectural setting served to emphasize the person of the emperor ; «the *convivium* [became] a performance to be staged, ... an official show or state ceremonial⁴». While public banquets served ideally to communicate a stable model of social order, united under and dependent on the emperor, in private banquets status was more precarious and contingent. The host could vary the treatment shown his guests according to the various calibrations of Roman *amicitia* and *clientela* relationships. But a host, too, could be subject to criticism or social degradation for ill-judged or over-ambitious entertainment⁵.

Even in public banquets, excessive ostentation could be judged critically. In the case of Trajan, Pliny speaks of the emperor's sociability, which did not rely on gold, silver, and exotic refinement to make an impression. So, in the fourth century, Mamertinus praises Julian for his simple meals ; the emperor did not need to rely on extravagant display (*magnitudo sumptuum*, *Pan. Lat.* 3. 11. 1) to impress his subjects. Theodosius, on the other hand, at the end of the century, set an example for his subjects by the frugality of his dining habits (Pacatus, *Pan. Lat.* 2. 13. 3-14. 4). Finally, Ambrose speaks of the young Valentinian II maintaining his fast, while his court enjoyed a public banquet

3. John D'ARMS, «The Roman *Convivium* and the Idea of Equality», *Symptica : A Symposium on the Symposion*, ed. Oswyn Murray (Oxford 1990) pp. 308-11.

4. The quotation is from Lisa BEK, «*Questiones Convivales* : The Idea of the Triclinium and the Staging of Convivial Ceremony from Rome to Byzantium», *Analecta Romana* 12 (1983) p. 91 ; see also D'ARMS, «The Roman *Convivium*», p. 311.

5. For instance, Nasidienus, in Horace, *Sat.* 2.8. It is possible to read Juvenal, *Sat.* 5, too, as critical of Virro, the host, while Trimalchio transcends all categories as the *reductio ad absurdum* of ostentatious dining. See also Martial, 3.60 and John D'ARMS, «Control, Companionship, and Clientela : Some Social Functions of the Roman Communal Meal», *EMC* 28 (1984) p. 346. Though social status is clearly at stake in the satirical *convivium*, the relative rank of the participants is often ambiguous, and some onus falls on the reader to evaluate the social and moral standing of the banqueters.

(*De obitu Valentiniani*, 16). Although elaborate finery impressed an audience or reader with the majesty of an emperor or high public official and with his more-than-mortal status⁶, there were competing social and moral values that allowed a more critical interpretation of such finery, that stressed an emperor's approachability rather than distance from ordinary humanity, and that saw moderation in diet and in the trappings of power as ethically exemplary⁷. Christianity, then, contributed further possibilities of signification to dining practices.

In their accounts of Maximus' banquet for Martin Paulinus of Périgueux and Venantius Fortunatus continue the tradition of employing the *convivium* as a setting for the negotiation of competing values and for the exemplary representation of social and moral ideals. In what follows, I will emphasize two aspects of these texts : their exploration of patterns of patronage and dependence between Maximus, the other bishops, and Martin – a feature especially emphasized by Paulinus ; and the elaboration of the setting, and costly materials and foodstuffs at the feast, which goes far beyond anything in the prose original.

Sulpicius, followed by Paulinus and Fortunatus, draws attention to the issue of status in Maximus' banquet by contrasting Martin's attitude to the emperor to that of his fellow bishops. They, despite their standing as bishops, allow themselves to be reduced to clients of the king (*regiae clientelae sacerdotalis dignitas subdidisset*, Sulpicius, *V. M.* 20. 1). In Paulinus' version the «sacred authority of the holy fathers descends to the demeaning flattery of courtiers», and the bishops show «the degrading self-seeking of clients, grovelling before the commands of an arrogant patron» (3. 27-31)⁸. Fortunatus is briefer, but still makes the essential distinction between clerical flattery (*pontificum... adulatio*, 2. 61) and the primacy of the secular ruler (*principis et nutu*, 2. 62). The bishops behave like lowly clients or subservient courtiers, the kind of figures that in the satirical tradition can expect only humiliation from their patrons, if invited to dine. Martin's behavior reverses the expectations of such a meal. Far from accepting an invitation with pathetic eagerness, Martin for a long time steadfastly refuses to come. Maximus' joy, when he eventually acquiesces, is sufficient evidence that the usual relationship between host and guest has been reversed ; that it is the latter, the guest, who bestows a favor in this case⁹.

Paulinus, alone of our authors, sees a further index of Martin's status in the attitude to him of the serving attendants. In the first century we hear of slaves who keep watch over the behavior of humble guests or view them with

6. Cf. Statius, *Silv.* 4.2.10-11. Sallust, *Hist. fr.* 2.70 (REYNOLDS), cited by Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.13.6-9, describes a banquet given for Metellus Pius in Spain that celebrated him as more than mortal (*ultra mortalium morem*, 7).

7. Cf. Pacatus, *Pan. Lat.* 2.14.4.

8. «Paulatim adsensu trepido subiecta tumentis / sancta patrum gravitas nimium vilescere coepit, / dedita blanditiis, non quas dependere suerat / prisca sacerdotum gravitas, sed foeda clientium / ambitio, ad nutum tumidi deiecta patroni» (27-31).

9. Sulpicius 20.2-3 ; Paulinus 3.39-69 ; Fortunatus 2.64-66.

contempt (Sen., *Ep.* 47. 8 ; Juvenal 5. 40-41, 60-65). In the case of Martin, the servants rejoice and vie with each other to serve him. Such is their attention to the saint that even the king receives less notice (Paulinus 3. 85-88). Again, Martin's situation is thrown into relief by comparison with the treatment given clients in the literary tradition.

In Paulinus' version, when Maximus bids his cupbearer offer Martin a drink before himself he is only conforming to the reversal of the social order (*ordine verso*, 3. 115) that his servants have already been observing¹⁰. But when the saint passes the cup to his priest rather than back to Maximus, as the emperor had hoped, the gesture takes on a broader significance. In the historical context, Martin may have wanted to avoid granting the usurper the recognition that sharing a drink with him would imply¹¹. But the action, from the first, carried implications about the relative importance of spiritual and secular power. While Fortunatus repeats the neutral phrase of Sulpicius, that Martin deemed his priest "more worthy" (*dignior*, Sulpicius, 20. 6 ; Fortunatus 2. 105), Paulinus, who is always more ready to generalize and explain the actions he describes is clear about Martin's motives : «he handed the cup to the priest, weighing status by faith. The virtue of the heart, not royal purple was victorious. The princely diadem yielded precedence to faith» (122-24)¹². All three versions depend for their signifying power on the inherited model of the dinner invitation as focus of patron-client relations. But Martin's gesture of handing his cup to his priest, rather than back to the emperor, transcends questions of social relations between individuals and generalizes the competition to one between spiritual and secular power. Our authors, most explicitly Paulinus, reuse inherited cultural forms but transvalue them by the enhanced significance given individual actions.

The imperial banquet typically enacts a pageant of social consensus, with the ruler at its apex. For both Paulinus and Fortunatus Martin's challenge to that order takes on special resonance because it is set at just such a ceremonial occasion. Sulpicius tells the reader little or nothing of the setting of Maximus' *convivium*. The poets expend much effort on describing the brilliance of the palace dining arrangements, as an index of Maximus' royal status and an appropriate location for symbolic action.

In describing the scene, Paulinus and Fortunatus are the latest in a long series of poets and prose authors who compose accounts of elaborate banquets. Livy (39. 6) attributes the introduction of luxury in dining to the aftermath of the war with Antiochus (186 B. C. E.), and Macrobius (*Sat.* 3. 13) records notorious instances and individuals from the Republican period¹³. Both Lucullus (Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus* 40-41) and Antony (Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.

10. The cupbearer in question is described as hesitating (*dubitantem*, 114), presumably already uncertain whether to take the drink to Martin or Maximus first.

11. So FONTAINE, *Sulpice Sévère*, vol. 3, pp. 936-37.

12. «Tradidit ille suo, fidei meritum honorem, / presbytero. Meritum cordis, non purpura regis / vicit. Praelatae cessit diadema fidei».

13. Notably Hortensius and Metellus Pius, on whom see below. For a catalogue of sumptuary legislation under the Republic, see *Sat.* 3.17.

17) were notorious for the extravagance and indulgence of their banquets. Romans typically associated such excess with their Eastern provinces. So much so that Valerius Maximus expresses surprise that Metellus Pius, commander in the war against Sertorius in Spain and one of Macrobius' examples of un-Roman indulgence, staged his banquet in that «uncouth and warlike province» rather than in Greece or Asia, «by whose luxury austerity itself could be corrupted» (9. 1. 5)¹⁴. At the end of the first century B. C. E., Cleopatra was particularly associated with elaborate feasting. Griffin has argued that her reputation influenced Virgil's account of the meal given by Dido for Aeneas in *Aeneid* 1. 697-747¹⁵. In the next century Lucan's account of the banquet given by the Egyptian queen for Caesar (10. 108-71) is a classic verse *convivium*. By the fifth century the feasts of Cleopatra were a byword for Sidonius (*dapes Cleopatricas*, *Ep.* 8. 12. 8). Beyond that, the costly meal, as demonstration of an individual's power and wealth, becomes a cultural norm. Apuleius describes the dinner given by the rich Byrrhaena for his hero Lucius in Hypata (*Met.* 2. 19). Mamertinus and Pacatus are able to play off expectations in their panegyrics of Julian and Theodosius, by detailing the luxuries that each emperor disdains (*Pan. Lat.* 3. 11. 3-4 and 2. 14. 1; see also Claudian, *Stil.* 2. 139-45). Sidonius then calls upon panegyric tradition in his account of the moderate table of the Visigothic king Theoderic (*Ep.* 1. 2. 6)¹⁶. In a verse letter of invitation to the *vir clarissimus* Ommatius (C. 17), Sidonius uses the same strategy, detailing the splendors the guest cannot expect to enjoy if he accepts the poet's invitation, for the poet offers only a modest board. Finally, Avitus (*S. H. G.* 3. 231-32) turns to the literary tradition of the extravagant banquet to describe the dining habits of the rich man of Luke's Gospel (Lk 16:19-31), from whose table Lazarus begged scraps. Avitus' text shows the influence of Sidonius' letter on Theoderic, and of the same writer's description of the banquet set before Damocles by the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius I (*Ep.* 2. 13. 6-7)¹⁷.

In describing Maximus' banquet, Paulinus and Fortunatus can call upon a rich literary tradition that was especially vigorous in late Roman Gaul. The delight in abundant, often visual, detail and in the correspondingly rich lexicon of the banquet is typically late antique, as is the tendency to represent human activity as staged against an elaborately delimited backdrop. The development is apparent when Sidonius' version of the banquet of Damocles (*Ep.* 2. 13. 6-7) is compared with its ultimate inspiration in Cicero's *Tusculans* (5. 21. 61-62)¹⁸. Both writers describe the golden couches and their coverings, and

14. «Et ubi ista [convivia] ? Non in Graecia neque in Asia, quarum luxuria severitas ipsa corrumpi poterat, sed in horrida et bellicosa provincia».

15. Jasper GRIFFIN, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (Chapel Hill 1986) pp. 187 and 194.

16. Isabella GUALANDRI, *Furtiva Lectio : Studi su Sidonio Apollinare* (Milan 1979) 70-72.

17. The parallels are recorded by Rudolf PEIPER in his edition of Avitus' works (*MGH. AA* 6.2 :304) ; for the topos of the servant burdened by the dishes he must carry, compare also Sidonius, *Ep.* 9.13.5, vs. 54-59.

18. Sidonius does not mention Cicero by name, but presupposes a familiar written account

Cicero even includes details not recorded by Sidonius, when he speaks of the sideboards (*abaci*) with their gold and silver tableware, and of the serving-boys of surpassing beauty. But the banquet itself is described briefly in only nine words by the earlier author : «Perfumes and garlands were provided ; incense was lit ; tables were set with the most refined fare» (*Aderant unguenta, coronae ; incendebantur odores ; mensae conquisitissimis epulis exstruebantur*, 5. 21. 62). Sidonius' version is five times longer. It is possible to see Cicero's abbreviated summary underlying the later version; perfumes, wreathes, incense, and exquisitely served food all feature in Sidonius' account, along with the finest bread and bumpers of Falernian. But the richness of the language, in part inspired by Lucan's treatment of Cleopatra's banquet for Caesar, now matches the richness of the fare¹⁹.

Both Paulinus and Fortunatus share Sidonius' taste for lexical abundance. I shall discuss their descriptions of the dinner party given by Maximus under three broad headings : «Seating and Setting», «Furniture and Fittings», and «Food and Drink».

Seating and Setting

I begin with seating because this is the only physical detail of the banquet provided by Sulpicius. In addition to Maximus himself, the pretorian prefect and consul Evodius, and the emperor's brother and uncle attend the feast. Martin's priest reclines among them, but Martin himself sits on a small seat (*sellula*) placed next to the king. As Fontaine observes²⁰, the detail that the saint is seated rather than reclining with the rest of the company is significant. By sitting apart, Martin demonstrates his independence. His position reminds us that the saint's attitudes are different from those of civil society and thereby anticipates the conflict of values that is to be enacted as the meal progresses. At the same time, the act is one of humility. In Roman banquets normally only women or social inferiors would be seated to the side in this way. Martin's action both exploits the significance of such seating arrangements and challenges the social order that they encode²¹.

(*ut legimus*, *Ep.* 2.13.6), and follows closely the outline, if not the precise wording, of Cicero's text.

19. The Sidonian passage runs as follows : «cumque pransuro Sardanapallicum in morem panis daretur e Leontina segete confectus, insuper dapes cultae ferculis cultioribus apponerentur, spumarent Falerno gemmae capaces inque crystallis calerent unguenta glacialibus, huc suffita cinnamo ac ture cenatio spargeret peregrinos naribus odores et madescentes nardo capillos circumfusa florum sarta sicarent, coepit super tergum . . . vibrari mucro (*Ep.* 2.13.7). Compare Lucan 10.122-24 and especially 159-67 ; GUALANDRI, *Furtiva Lectio*, pp. 73-74. For the tendency to literary mannerism in such banquet descriptions, as true of late antiquity as of the Renaissance, see JEANNERET, *Banquets and Table Talk*, p. 46.

20. FONTAINE, *Sulpice Sévère*, vol. 3, p. 934.

21. See Katherine M. DUNBABIN, «*Triclinium and Stibadium*», William J. SLATER, ed., *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor 1991) 136 : «Sitting at table had long been the normal

Fortunatus adds little to the prose original. Only the detail that Martin sits in a “narrow seat” (*sella... arata*, 2. 98) hints at what Sulpicius may have intended to imply by the diminutive *sellula*, i. e., that the saint’s choice of seating is evidence of his asceticism²². Both poets omit the specific identities of the officials who attend the banquet – of no interest to fifth- and sixth-century readers – and substitute general phrases or lists of offices²³. But Paulinus has visualized the seating arrangements in Maximus’ palace more fully. The diners recline on the curved *stibadium* or *sigma*, so called because of its shape, like a lunate sigma (3. 75-76)²⁴. Martin’s priest must recline in the middle of the guests, in the innermost curve of the *stibadium* (*qua sigma flectitur orbe*, 75). We are to imagine Maximus in the place of honor on the right side of the couch. Martin, then, sits to the right of the emperor (*ad dextram regis*, 3. 79)²⁵. In Paulinus’ account the relative positions of Martin and Maximus compound further the uncertainty about the status of the two figures.

Sulpicius makes no mention of the location of the banquet or of the building in which it was held. Fortunatus speaks of a palace, a location of earthly power (*terrena... aula*, 2. 68 ; *palatia*, 2. 108) ; presumably the imperial palace at Trier²⁶. Paulinus does not identify the building, but does describe the physical backdrop for the banquet : «curtains swell and tremble upon the proud threshold, and the moving barrier of drapery sways at the doorway; everything shines with multicolored splendor above and below, the high walls with paintings, the floor with marble, and the roof with gilding²⁷». There is no

practice for those of inferior social position», and Jeremy ROSSITER, «*Convivium* and Villa in Late Antiquity», *Dining in a Classical Context*, p. 206, citing among other texts Gregory of Tours, *GM* 79.

22. FONTAINE, *Sulpice Sévère*, vol. 3, p. 934, already suggests this without reference to Fortunatus. *Sellula* is the word Sulpicius normally uses of Martin’s monastic practice (*Dial.* 2.1.3-4).

23. Paulinus 3.71-74, 76-77 ; Fortunatus 2.69, 96, 106.

24. Servius (*ad Aen.* 1.698) must remind late Roman readers of Dido’s banquet in the *Aeneid* that the poet has in mind a *triclinium*, not the *stibadium* familiar when he is writing. A miniature in the *Vergilius Romanus* has Dido and Aeneas dining on just such a *sigma*-couch ; Kurt WEITZMANN, ed., *Age of Spirituality : Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York 1979), p. 228. For the history of the *stibadium*, see DUNBABIN, «*Triclinium* and *Stibadium*», pp. 121-48 and ROSSITER, «*Convivium* and Villa», pp. 205-9. It is intriguing that the middle position on the *sigma*-couch, where Martin’s priest sits, had formerly been the place of honor. There is, according to DUNBABIN (pp. 135 and 147, n.99), ample evidence for this earlier usage on numerous monuments of the third and fourth century. Sulpicius, though probably not Paulinus, could have known of this usage.

25. For the order of places in the *stibadium* see DAREMBERG-SAGLIO, 1 : 1278-79, s.v. «cena». Compare Sidonius, *Ep.* 1.11.10, of a banquet given by the emperor Majorian. The emperor himself reclines at the right extremity of the *stibadium* (*marginē in dextro*), his guest of honor on the left extremity (*cornu sinistro*). Sidonius himself occupies the position of lowest status, on the emperor’s left (*qua purpurati latus laevum . . . porrigebatur*).

26. Paulinus also uses the word *aula*, but as metonymy for the members of the emperor’s court.

27. «*Liminiibus distenta tremunt aulaeae superbis, / nutat et in foribus velorum mobile*

reason to think that Paulinus knows the palace at Trier, or indeed has any specific palace in mind. He follows standard techniques of representation, transmitted by the rhetorical exercise of description / ecphrasis : divide the subject to be described into its constituent parts; then enumerate those parts with lexical abundance²⁸. In the present case the body of the dining hall is analyzed vertically (*sursum atque deorsum*, 3. 97) into three zones, floor, walls, and ceiling (*edita... sola... tecta...* , 3. 98). The hangings (*aulaea*) demarcate one limit of the banquet space (3. 95-96). Because the poet emphasizes that they are in the doorway (*liminibus; in foribus*) and move in the wind (*distenta tremunt; nutat mobile*), we are presumably to imagine doors to the dining hall situated at the opposite end to the banqueting couch and hung with curtains. Paulinus achieves lexical abundance by two different means : functionally synonymous parallel clauses (95-96 – the figure of *interpretatio*), and, more typically of description, brief paratactic cola with antithesis (98 – *leptologia*).

Paulinus' description owes much to traditional schemes for conceiving space. The use of curtains to organize a ceremonial setting is common in late antiquity²⁹. Paulinus had probably seen them so used. But the language of line 95 calls also upon the literary tradition. Paulinus speaks of "curtains" and "proud thresholds" (*liminibus... aulaea superbis*) ; Virgil's Dido had dined beneath "proud curtains" (*aulaeis... superbis*, *Aen.* 1. 697). In Epode 2. 7-8, Horace's moneylender Alfius denounces as among the troubles of the city «the proud thresholds of over-powerful citizens» (*superba civium / potentiorum limina*). *Limina* in this context refers to the morning *salutatio*, when clients must dance attendance at their patrons' doors. By using the same language as Horace, Paulinus invests the dining hall of Maximus with some of the invidious connotations of the halls of the great and of the relations between patrons and clients in Roman ethical thought (notably in Virgil, *G.* 2. 461-62 and 504)³⁰. Such explicitly evaluative language is unique in Paulinus' description of the banquet. Otherwise, the rich decor is subjected to no moral censure.

Furniture and Fittings

claustrum. / Cuncta nitent vario cultu sursum atque deorsum, / edita pigmentis, sola marmore, tecta metallis».

28. See Michael ROBERTS, *The Jeweled Style* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1989), especially pp. 38-47, and Philippe HAMON, *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptif* (Paris, 1981).

29. Ramsay MACMULLEN, «Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus», *ABull* 46 (1964) p. 437.

30. Virgil, *G.* 2.458 and 461-62 : «O fortunatos nimium . . . , si non ingentem *foribus* domus alta *superbis* / mane salutantum totis vomit aedibus undam» and 504 «[alii] penetrant aulas et *limina regum*». Compare too Virgil, *Aen.* 8.720-22 «ipse [Augustus] sedens niveo candentis *limine* Phoebi / dona recognoscit populorum aptatque *superbis* / *postibus*». The gifts, not specified, are those of conquered peoples ; compare the topos of «exports of various provinces» (below, n. 46 and context). I owe this reference to Professor James O'Hara.

Three items of furniture are mentioned in our texts : couches, with their coverings, tables, and, in Fortunatus, a sideboard (*abacus*, 2. 86). Paulinus, though, only mentions the tables in passing, as laden with “royal dishes³¹”, and they make no contribution to the decor of the banquet. Instead, the couches and their coverings communicate most fully the power and wealth of the emperor. Each poet describes an impressive catalogue of luxury items : the coverings are dyed purple, are of silk, and have gold threads interwoven in the cloth ; Fortunatus adds that the spreads are also decorated with jewels. The descriptions go beyond anything in the literary tradition (at least in the texts I have examined) : Dido possessed “embroidered couches” (*toris... pictis*, *Aen.* 1. 708) and purple coverlets (*stratoque super discumbitur ostro*, *Aen.* 1. 700) ; Lucan’s Cleopatra had couches that gleamed with jewels (10. 122) and threads of purple, scarlet, and gold (10. 123-26)³². It is not till Sidonius’ account of the meal set before Damocles that we hear of silk coverings (*Ep.* 2. 13. 6). Dido’s banquet has helped to shape both poets’ accounts of the dinner in Trier ; both poets show traces of Virgil’s language. But they have both outdone the classical poet in the detail of their accounts. Their versions reflect a characteristically late antique responsiveness to insistent visual stimuli, especially as the setting for ceremonial. Such splendid “stage-sets” are described in the history of the period, depicted in its art, and presumably present in the world of late Roman Gaul³³. The Martin-poets combine literary tradition and the conceptual world of late antiquity in a new synthesis. If Virgil’s Dido is the model to which both poets look for ultimate inspiration, the aesthetic of their descriptions is closer to that of Lucan. Like Lucan, they emphasize color and especially brilliance³⁴. Virgil refers only in passing to the rich couches at Dido’s banquet ; he focusses always on the human participants³⁵. This is not true of Lucan. The verbs are descriptive rather than involving action. This tendency to separate scene from action is still more marked in the late Roman poets. Paulinus makes no mention of a human actor for nineteen lines (3. 90-108) ; Fortunatus for seventeen lines (2. 74-90). In both cases the setting is conceived as a backdrop before which action takes place. In style Paulinus prefers *interpretatio* (theme and variation) ; Fortunatus a more fragmented, enumerative sequence. The latter accommodates as part of its ornamented verbal decor turns of phrase used by earlier poets. For instance, the combination *serica purpureis* finds a parallel in Paulinus of Nola’s Christian epithalamium (*purpureis serica mixta*, *C.* 25. 74). Paulinus is warning the bride against luxurious clothing. It is not surprising that similar language should recur in another account of the trappings of luxury.

31. «Stipant subiectas regalia fercula mensas» (3.90).

32. Compare Thetis’ bridal bed in Catullus 64.47-49, which is of ivory, with an embroidered purple coverlet. The context is one of regal splendor.

33. See MACMULLEN, «Some Pictures», pp. 435-55.

34. Lucan : *fulget* (122), *micant* (123), *nitent* (124), *igneae* (124) ; Paulinus : *splendescit* (91), *rutilat* (93) ; Fortunatus : *intermicat* (89), *radiant* (90).

35. Virgil tells first of the Trojans, then of the Carthaginians entering the banqueting hall and reclining on the couches (*Aen.* 1. 699-700 and 707-708).

The phrase *aurumque intermicat ostro* presents a more interesting case. Commentators compare Claudian, *Rapt.* 1. 185 *rutilum squamis intermicat aurum*, of the dragons that pull Ceres' aerial chariot. But a passage from Fortunatus' own writing, a description of the bride in the epithalamium for Brunhild and Sigibert, provides a clearer parallel : «even if gold should shine among purple (*aurum si intermicet ostro*), it would never equal the beauty of the bride's countenance» (C. 6. 1. 108-9). Brunhild's features are compared with the most luxurious of commodities. That a human being's face can be spoken of in these terms demonstrates that such language is intended to convey not a sense of the specific lineaments of a person or object, but his, her, or its majesty or splendor and hence the wealth and status of an individual described or of the person who owns or is associated with an object or setting³⁶.

In a final case, Fortunatus' language evokes a specific context in his source text. Maximus' banquet hall contains a sideboard (*abacus*), decorated with a linen covering embroidered with flowers (*picto bombycina flore*, 2. 86) ; it is a work "refined by art" (*arte laborata*), worthy of the mythical weaver Arachne (*vel qualia pensat Aragne*, 2. 87). Virgil similarly describes the fabrics at Dido's banquet as "of refined art" (*arte laboratae vestes*, *Aen.* 1. 639). In Fortunatus, as in Paulinus, the preeminent example of royal festivities in the *Aeneid* furnishes a model for the celebrations given by the emperor Maximus. As for Arachne, she primarily figures as the mythological exemplar of a supremely gifted weaver³⁷. But if we remember that in the *Metamorphoses* (6. 5-145) her tapestry portrays a human challenge to divine order, it is at least possible for the reader to perceive a more direct relevance to Maximus' banquet, in which the emperor in his finery, like Arachne with her weaving, confronts and is bested by a representative of the divine.

Food and Drink

Specific items of food and drink play no role in either banquet description. Poets writing in the satirical tradition will include menu details, but such material was apparently thought unsuitable for panegyric and related texts³⁸. Instead, Paulinus speaks more generally of «the fruits of the air and forest,

36. Fortunatus earlier describes Brunhild's appearance in terms used by Virgil of expensive luxury objects, fleeces dyed in Tyrian purple : «Her milky face shines, tinged with red (*incocta rubore coruscat*), lilies mixed with roses» (C. 6.1.107-8). Compare Virgil, *G.* 3.307 *Tyrios incocta rubores*. Men's appearance, too, can be described as a luxury item. Ennodius uses similar language of Theoderic (*Panegyric of Theoderic* 89) : «Sed nec formae tuae decus inter postrema numerandum est, quando regii vultus purpura ostrum dignitatis inradiat».

37. Daedalus is similarly cited by Fortunatus in his Radegund and Agnes poems as an exemplary craftsman (C. 11.11.17 and 11.14.4) For Arachne in late Roman poetry, compare Sidonius' account of Araneola (C. 15.145-84) in his epithalamium for her marriage to Polemius.

38. For the inappropriateness of descriptions of food to the more elevated genres and their suitability to satire, iambic, and comedy, see Emily GOWERS, *The Loaded Table : Representations of Food in Roman Literature* (Oxford 1993), pp. 22-23 and 227-28.

land and sea» (*aeris et nemoris fructus terraeque marisque*, 3. 108). He is here employing a topos of the banquet description – produce of the whole world – that goes back to Lucan’s account of Cleopatra’s luxurious fare: she served «what the land, air, sea, and Nile produce» (10. 155-56) ; her extravagance «ranged over the whole world» (*toto quaesivit in orbe*, 10. 157). Similarly, in Avitus’ biblical epic the rich man seeks for his table «the produce of the whole world» (*epulae totus quas porrigit orbis*, *S. H. G.* 3. 225) and «what sea and earth create, what the rivers bring forth» (*quod pelagus, quod terra creat, quod flumina gignunt*, 3. 230). The topos is sufficiently well established that Sedulius gives it a metaphorical turn. In the preface to the *Paschale carmen* he compares the meager fare of his own poetry – vegetables from a humble garden – with the rich nourishment served up by the Church fathers (*docti*) : «there you will find to eat whatever the earth creates, whatever the sea nourishes, whatever flies to the stars» (*P. C.*, *pr.* 11-12)³⁹. The banquet, literally described, is a symbolic representation of the wealth and status of its rich and powerful host. The whole world, represented in the standard tricolon of earth, sea, and sky, or some easily recognizable variant thereof, showers its bounty on him⁴⁰. Lambert Schneider has detected an analogous situation in fourth-century art, especially mosaics. Artists represent the property of the land-owning aristocracy as a self-contained domain that is a whole world in miniature. In particular, such estates enjoy the produce of earth, sea, and sky, that are portrayed, variously encoded, on mosaics, some of which were laid in villa triclinia⁴¹.

Fortunatus employs the same topos, but at much greater length.

*Augusti obsequiis fremit undique concitus orbis,
divitias pariter producens deliciasque
quas habet Indus, Arabs, Geta, Thrax, Persa, Afer, Hiberus,
quod fert meridiēs, arctos, occasus et ortus,
quod Boreas, Aquilo, Libs, Circius, Auster et Euris,
quod Geon et Phison, Tigris Eufratesque redundant,
Rhenus, Atax, Rhodanus, Tibris, Padus, Hister, Orontes,
quod mare, terra, polus pisce, alite, fruge ministrat.*

The whole world on every side hastens to do the emperor’s bidding, supplying the riches and delights that the Indian, Arabian, Goth, Thracian, Persian, African, and Spaniard

39. «Illic invenies quidquid mare nutrit edendum, / quidquid terra creat [compare Avitus’ *quod terra creat*] , quidquid ad astra volat». Pacatus refers to the same topos when he contrasts Theodosius’ frugality with the appetite of his predecessors, which even the whole world could not satisfy (*horum gulae angustus erat noster orbis*, *Pan Lat.* 2.14.2).

40. Compare Kurt SMOLAK, «Der dreifache Zusammenklang (Prud. *Apoth.* 147-54) : Vorstudien zu einem Kommentar zur *Apotheosis* II», *WS* 84 (1971), pp. 180-94. The tricolon earth, sea, and sky is especially common in descriptions of Paradise or the Creation, and in hymnic passages extolling the universal power of God.

41. Lambert SCHNEIDER, *Die Domäne als Weltbild : Wirkungsstrukturen der spätantiken Bildersprache* (Wiesbaden 1983), especially pp. 124-38 and 158-74.

possess, that south, north, west, and east provide, and north, northeast, west-southwest, west-northwest, south, and east winds, that Geon, Phison, Tigris, and Euphrates abound in, and the Rhine, Aude, Rhone, Tiber, Po, Danube, and Orontes, that sea, earth, and sky furnish in fish, fowl, and grain.

It is an astonishing performance. The passage begins with a reference to the whole world (*undique concitus orbis*) ; it ends with the traditional tricolon (*mare, terra, polus*), corresponding to the three foodstuffs fish, fowl, and grain⁴². In between, each of the three areas into which the world is divided is subject to minute specification. Line 76 – the winds--corresponds to *polus*; lines 77-78 – the rivers – fall into the general category of waters, produce fish, and are metonymically associated with the sea ; lines 74-75, then, correspond to the earth, although the wording could refer to all exports of the regions mentioned, whatever their natural provenance. The minute specification conforms with Quintilian's advice for achieving visual immediacy (*enargeia*), to describe a subject (*res*) not as a whole, but in parts (*nec universa, sed per partis*, 9. 2. 40)⁴³. But here Fortunatus does not appeal to the reader's powers of visualization. The passage corresponds better to Hamon's characterization of description as the "declension of a lexical stock"⁴⁴. It serves as an inventory of verbal resources, embodying a luxuriance of language that corresponds to the luxurious fare at Maximus' banquet. At the same time, the reference to the four rivers of Paradise (Gen. 2:11-14), Geon and Phison (= Nile and Ganges), Tigris and Euphrates, recalls a time when the abundance of the whole world was available to a human couple, before the Fall (cf. Dracontius, *L. D.* 1. 412-13).

Finally, the categories by which Fortunatus exemplifies the threefold division of the cosmos are entirely conventional in the tradition of Roman poetry : non-Roman tribes (74), the four compass points (75), the winds (76), and catalogues of rivers (77-78)⁴⁵. Fortunatus is distinguished by his lexical richness, and the impression of exhaustiveness he creates, in part by the

42. For *mare, terra, polus* compare Paulinus of Nola, *C.* 32.171 *mare, terras, aëra, caelum*, Sidonius, *C.* 7.22 *mare, terra vel aer*, and Fortunatus, *C.* 11.16.13 *quidquid mare, terra ministrat* ; for *pisce, alite, fruge ministrat*, compare Fortunatus, *C.* 7.4.12 *alite, pisce, rate* and 10.18.3-4 *Delicias domini quas tempora, vota ministrant / undique conveniunt flumine, fruge, polo*.

43. Compare 8.3.69 *minus est tamen totum dicere quam omnia*. For the aesthetics of this passage in Fortunatus' poem, see ROBERTS, *The Jeweled Style*, especially pp. 138-39. This style is most marked in late antiquity in the poetry of Sidonius, Dracontius, and Fortunatus.

44. HAMON, *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptif*, especially pp. 43-45 ; he also speaks of the verbal luxuriance ("luxe") of such passages, pp. 47-48.

45. Because of the extreme abbreviation of Fortunatus' account, there are few close verbal parallels with earlier authors. Sven BLOMGREN, «De locis Ovidii a Venantio Fortunato expressis», *Eranos* 79 (1981), p. 84, notes that Ovid, *Met.* 1.354 has the clausula *occusus et ortus*. We might add Prudentius, *A.* 202-3 «Iudaea, Roma et Graecia, / Aegypte, Thrax, Persa, Scyta». Sidonius, *C.* 5, has a similar asyndetic list of rivers, in his case of Gaul, including three (the Rhine, Rhone, and Aude) that Fortunatus also mentions (compare especially *Rhenus, Arar, Rhodanus*, *C.* 5.208 with Fortunatus' *Rhenus, Atax, Rhodanus*, 2.78).

extreme spareness of his syntax. Apart from the framing polyptoton and anaphora of the relative, all the words but three verbs and three connectives (one enclitic) are nouns. Fortunatus evokes, too, the topos of «exports of various provinces» that derives from Virgil, *G.* 1. 56-59. For Statius not only the various regions of the empire, but also the north, east, and south winds bring produce to the imperial treasury overseen by Claudius Etruscus, the subject of his poem (*Silv.* 3. 3. 89-98). Finally, Sidonius restages the topos in the terms of late antique ceremonial, when the provinces bring their produce in person before the enthroned goddess *Roma* (*C.* 5. 40-53)⁴⁶.

From food, Fortunatus' passage continues with a further itemization of the realia of a banquet : «inlay, jewels, precious stones, coverlets, and incense». The sequence continues without a break, listing choice vintages of wine : «Falemian and Gazan, Cretan, Samian, Cypriot, Colophonian, and Seraptian». With the exception of *Falerna*, the archetypal choice vintage and normally the only one mentioned in such banquet descriptions, all the other wines are signified by metonymy ; the place where they are produced stands for the wine : *Gazaque, Creta, Samus, Cypros, Colofonta, Seraptis*⁴⁷. The emphasis on geography recalls the immediately preceding section with its geographical catalogue and reinforces the sense of Maximus as the recipient of all the world's bounty. Fortunatus is here inspired by an invitation poem of Sidonius, who can offer Ommatius, his guest, «no Gazan, Chian, or Falemian wine, nor the product of the Seraptian vine» (*vina mihi non sunt Gazetica, Chia, Falerna, / quaeque Sareptino palmite missa bibas, C.* 17. 15-16). The combination of Gaza and Sarepta is especially distinctive. Both are biblical wine-growing regions. Their occurrence in an inventory of otherwise Roman and Greek wines lends a biblical turn to the passage, in the same way as the inclusion of the biblical rivers of Paradise in the catalogue of rivers that precedes⁴⁸. Sidonius' verses enjoyed a posthumous success. Part of his poem, including the lines here in question, was incorporated into an epigram of Martin of Braga that was inscribed in a monastic refectory, probably of Martin's monastery of Dumium⁴⁹.

For the rest of his description of the wine and its serving, Fortunatus emphasizes the visual, amplifying, I suspect, a detail of Paulinus. Paulinus makes two points about the drinking cups, their transparency (99-101) and their costliness (102-4). Each occupies three lines and each ends in a *sententia*.

46. The Virgil passage is cited by Jerome *In Ezech.* 27 :7 (PL 25.249C-D).

47. The whole sequence runs : *emblema, gemma, lapis, toreumata, tura, Falerna, / Gazaque, Creta, Samus, Cypros, Colofona, Seraptis*. It is tempting to see a pun in *Gaza* on the meaning "treasure". For *Falerna* in banquet descriptions, see Lucan 10.163, *Pan.Lat.* 2.14.1, Sidonius, *Ep.* 2.13.7 and 9.13.5 (vs. 50), and Corippus, *In laudem Iustini II* 3.97.

48. The passage is also imitated by Corippus, *In laudem Iustini II* 3.88. Corippus goes on to apply the topos of «the produce of the whole world» and «of every province» exclusively to wines (3.103-4). But despite the wealth of food and drink at his table, Justin is restrained in partaking of it (105-8).

49. For the text, see *Martini Episcopi Bracaraensis Opera Omnia*, ed. Claude W. BARLOW (New Haven 1950), p. 283.

To begin with the one not taken up by Fortunatus :

*Pocula funduntur gemmis gemmisque bibuntur,
electri molis fulvum discriminat aurum.*

Ars erat in pretio, pretium pretiosius arte est. (3. 102-4)

Their draughts are poured from jewels and drunk from jewels ; inlays of amber stud the tawny gold. Art was displayed in the rich finery, which was all the richer for its art.

The finery Paulinus describes is matched by the finery of his writing : the repetition and chiasmus of line 102, and the studied polyptoton and antithetical expression of 104. The aesthetic is that of *variatio*, as implied by the word *discriminat* (103 ; cf. *aurum intermicat ostro*, in Fortunatus, 2. 94). Variation applies to the object described – with jewels, amber, and gold – and to the language used to describe that object. Paulinus emphasizes the play between the costly materials of which the cups are made, not a synoptic view of the entire objects. The effect is impressionistic ; the impression that of wealth. Golden and jewelled cups, or jewels as cups, are referred to often in descriptions of extravagant banquets ; amber is more unusual, though Juvenal's Virro has amber-encrusted cups (5. 38) and Apuleius (*Met.* 2. 19) mentions cups made of amber⁵⁰. As for the relation between *ars* and *pretium*, Paulinus here shares a favorite conceit of Sidonius. When the latter invites Ommatius to a modest meal, he confesses that the smallness of his serving plates is not even compensated for by their artistry (*C.* 17. 11-12)⁵¹ ; the Visigothic king Theoderic demonstrates his discriminating tastes by meals that please by art, not wealth (*cibi arte, non pretio placent*, *Ep.* 1. 2. 6). In Maximus' case, his lofty eminence is unambiguously indexed by the unqualified costliness of his drinking cups. Sidonius offers neither wealth nor art, Theoderic art, but not wealth, Maximus both wealth and art, the former quality enhanced by the latter.

Paulinus describes the transparency of Maximus' drinking cups as follows :

*Sustenant vitreas crystallas capacia lymphas,
cumque ipsa et conchae species videatur et undae
nec cohibere putei susceptum claustra liquorem.* (3. 99-101)

Large crystal goblets enclose liquid clear as glass ; the cup and the drink within it have the same appearance, and you would think the enclosing vessel could not contain the draught within.

Crystal cups frequently epitomize rich serving ware. Lucan's Cleopatra serves water in crystal, but wine in *gemmae capaces* (10. 160-61). Paulinus has

50. Jeweled and golden cups are well documented luxury items in the Roman world. For their representation in art, see those beside the figure of Trier in the Calendar of 354 ; Michele Renee SALZMAN, *On Roman Time : The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 1990) pp. 27-28 and fig. 5.

51. «Fercula sunt nobis mediocria, non ita facta / mensurae ut grandis suppleat ars pretium».

combined the two phrases⁵². By throwing the words *vitreas* and *crystalla* together in the line, Paulinus draws attention to the theme he will develop in the next two lines. *Vitreas* means “translucent” or “glistening”. Although the adjective describes the drink in the glass, it could equally well be used of the cups that contain that drink, for they are made of crystal and therefore possess both properties. Paulinus then makes the hint explicit in the next line, glass and liquid are indistinguishable, and finally reformulates the idea with paradoxical point ; the categories of container and contained are confused.

This fascination with ambiguities of perception, particularly of sight, is typical of late Latin descriptive poetry. Ausonius’ *Mosella* contains a number of examples, in describing the effects of reflection and echo and in speaking of objects viewed through water⁵³. In *Peristephanon* 12 Prudentius describes the Vatican baptistery in which mosaic-covered ceiling and water in the baptismal pool are indistinguishable to the observer because of their mutually reflecting surfaces (*Pe.* 12. 39-42). Prudentius, like Paulinus, exploits the ambiguity of the word *vitreas*, which, though literally used of the waters in the basin, is equally appropriate in sense to the glass *tesserae* of the mosaic above. Prudentius concludes : «you would believe (*credas*) that the ceiling moved on/was lapped by the waters». *Credas* plays the role of *putes* in Paulinus. It points to an optical illusion⁵⁴.

Fortunatus has Paulinus’ version in mind as he continues to describe the wine at Maximus’ banquet.

*lucida perspicuis certantia vina lapillis,
vix discernendis crystallina pocula potis.* (2. 82-83)

Bright wine vying with translucent gems, crystal goblets with
the draughts they contain that can scarcely be distinguished from them.

The second line reformulates’ Paulinus’ point, that drink and crystal goblets are indistinguishable. The first amplifies the confusion of wine and drinking cups : they vie with each other in brilliant translucency. The words *lucida perspicuis*, thrown into prominence at the beginning of the line, set the theme for the development. Either word could be used of wine or jeweled cups. Although Fortunatus does not explain why crystal goblets and the draughts

52. *Gemmae capaces* and *crystalla* also occur together in Sidonius’ account of the feast of Damocles (*Ep.* 2.13.7). For *gemmae capaces* alone, see Pacatus, *Pan.Lat.* 2.14.1.

53. For this aspect of the *Mosella*, see Michael ROBERTS, «The *Mosella* of Ausonius : An Interpretation», *TAPA* 114 (1984), pp. 343-53, reprinted in Manfred Joachim LOSSAU, ed., *Ausonius*, Wege der Forschung 652 (Darmstadt, 1991), pp. 250-64. For other examples from Statius, Claudian, and Sidonius, see ROBERTS, *The Jeweled Style*, pp. 73-75, to which I can now add Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo* 1.93-96. Paulinus goes on to speak of another perceptual illusion, involving both sight and touch ; he speaks of «vessels that are rough in appearance, but smooth to the touch» (106).

54. On this passage of Prudentius see Michael ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs : The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor 1993), pp. 175-77.

they contain are scarcely distinguishable, the emphasis given to the adjectives *lucida perspicuis* in the previous line will persuade the reader that in this case too clarity and brightness are the properties in common. The paronomasia *pocula potis* then extends this equivalence to the verbal level ; in language, too, the two objects are scarcely distinguishable.

Fortunatus goes on to extend Paulinus' conceit to effects of color created by the refraction and dispersion of light.

*Inde calix niveus variat per vina colores,
hinc mentita bibunt patera fucante Falerna.* (2. 84-85)

On one hand a snow-white glass diffuses colors through the wine, on another guests drink counterfeit Falernian, dyed the color of its bowl.

The poet imagines two effects of light. Light passing through the drinking cups is refracted into various hues that color the wine they contain ; the dark shade of the drinking bowl (*patera*) makes its contents look like Falernian. Again, the emphasis is on visual illusion and confusion. Fortunatus is concerned to create an impressionistic verbal image that communicates the special world of the imperial banquet in its transcendence of normal experience. He is not primarily concerned with realistic consistency. Thus, he can list Falernian among the wines at the banquet (80), but then speak of counterfeit Falernian five lines later (85)⁵⁵. The two passages are not strictly contradictory, but they are awkward in such close proximity. In each the poet strives to maximize the pointed expression by lexical means. Each is treated as a separate compositional unit, the significance of which depends not on reference to some external reality, but on the pattern of language created by the poet.

One last point in Fortunatus' description. I have taken the adjective *niveus* (84) of the color of the wine-cup (*calix*), which refracts the light that passes through it. But the word probably alludes, too, to the habit in luxurious dinners of chilling the glasses with ice. The rich man of Luke's Gospel, in Avitus' account, drinks wine from "chilled crystal glasses" (*crystallo argente*, *S. H. G.* 3. 227). Pacatus talks of gourmands who demand ice in summer to cool their drinks, a refinement shunned by the subject of his panegyric, Theodosius (*Pan. Lat.* 2. 14. 1). When the Falernian is poured into the cups it cracks and breaks the ice. It is no surprise that Paulinus attributes this refinement to Maximus. Attendants bring in «ice and snowy water contained in gold [i. e. , in gold cups]» (*inclusas auro glacies lymphasque nivales*, 3. 111)⁵⁶. Fortunatus probably had this passage of Paulinus in mind in choosing the epithet *niveus*, though a reader need only know the association of chilled drinking cups with luxurious banquets to understand the allusion.

55. I should note that the parallel with *vina* in line 84 suggests the possibility of taking *Falerna* as a metonymy for wine in general in 85.

56. For ice-cold water at such banquets, see also Sidonius, *Ep.* 2.2.12. Pliny the Elder mentions drinking melted snow or ice as the height of luxury (*N.H.* 19.19.55) ; for wine served with snow, see Martial 5.64.2 and 9.22.8.

Food and drink form the last category of the luxurious banquet. I have lingered over the descriptions of Maximus' dinner in Paulinus and Fortunatus because both passages play a prominent role in the poetic accounts of this occasion and both are free amplifications, with no equivalents in Sulpicius Severus' prose text⁵⁷. Both poetic versions combine narrative – the actions of Martin, Maximus, and their subordinates – and description – the setting, furnishings, and food and drink at the banquet. I have treated these two aspects of the accounts separately. In the narrative sections, and particularly in Paulinus' version, satirical traditions of the *cena* as a setting for the negotiation and enactment of social status play a prominent role. The affiliations of this section are rather with the private than the public banquet, with patron-client and *amicitia* relationships rather than with the relation between ruler and ruled. In the descriptive sections circumstances are different. The generic affiliations are with panegyric and the praise of a king or emperor. Such passages traditionally emphasize the gulf in power and status between the ruler and the ruled. These results can be represented schematically as follows :

narrative	description
action	scene
satire	panegyric
private	public

The two aspects of banquet accounts coexist in our poets. But in Fortunatus the balance noticeably shifts to the right-hand column of my scheme. In his version the descriptive section occupies a significantly higher proportion of the whole passage than in Paulinus' case (roughly 30% to 18%). Moreover, not only is the brilliance and quasi-exhaustiveness of his language more pronounced than Paulinus' but the contrast is all the more marked with the simple style of the narrative portions of the banquet. Paulinus' tone remains more even throughout, with frequent use of "poetic" adjectives, periphrases, *interpretatio* (theme and variation), and interpretative expansions. By comparison, in his narrative sections Fortunatus usually stays close to his prose source, avoids for the most part the overloading of language created by *interpretatio*, and shows a good deal of lexical austerity⁵⁸. Various explanations

57. The passage occupies roughly 23 out of 126 lines in Paulinus' text, 19 out of 64 in Fortunatus'. But a simple line count is not sufficient to communicate the impression the descriptive interlude makes in each poet. The description stands apart because it is a static scene that interrupts the narrative progression ; it is set apart by its lexical overloading and brilliant display of language.

58. For the simplicity of Fortunatus' narrative style in the *V.M.*, see Jacques FONTAINE, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien : Esquisse d'une histoire de la poésie latine chrétienne du III^e au VI^e siècle* (Paris 1981) pp. 270-71. A good example of the difference in styles is provided by their treatment of the moment when Maximus orders the cup to be passed to Martin before himself. Here are the texts :

Sulpicius Severus (*V.M.* 20.5) : «ille [sc. rex] sancto admodum episcopo potius dari iubet, expectans atque ambiens ut ab illius dextera poculum sumeret».

Paulinus of Périgueux (*V.M.* 3.114-18)

can be hazarded for the difference between Paulinus and Fortunatus. It is possible that by the sixth century the satirical tradition and the social conditions it presupposes had lost their immediacy. This is not the case in the fifth century, for Sidonius, Paulinus' contemporary, shows himself sensitive to the charged social context of the formal banquet⁵⁹. But the personal inclinations of Fortunatus as a poet, too, need to be taken into account. Many of his poems are written for royalty or the Merovingian court⁶⁰. He is a well trained practitioner of panegyric, for whom the techniques of elaborate description came readily to hand when praising a man or woman of distinction.

Aesthetic and generic preferences, as well as changed social conditions, may well have contributed to the special qualities of Fortunatus' account of Maximus' banquet. A further distinction between the two poets is in the amount of moral commentary they include. Paulinus presents the episode under the heading of "ambition confused" (*devicta... ambitio*, 9-10), and attributes *ambitio* both to Martin's fellow bishops (31) and to Maximus himself (40 ; cf. 53), when he attempts to persuade the saint to share his table⁶¹. By comparison, Martin displays a free spirit (*libertas*, 12) and firm resolve (*constantia*, 32, 36, 126 ; cf. *firmum*, 131). The language underlines Paulinus' interpretation of the episode as a drama of status and self-assertion. The reader of Fortunatus receives little such interpretative direction and no overall evaluation of the moral of the story. The only abstract noun for a moral quality in the passage (*adulatio*, 62, of Martin's fellow bishops) is taken directly from Sulpicius Severus (20. 1).

*Tum rex Martino dubitantem offerre ministrum
imperat officio cedens, simul ordine verso
tam sanctae ardentem cupiens succedere dextrae,
ut patera ad tactu tanti pretiosior oris
infusum inficeret caelesti rore liquorem.*

Fortunatus (V.M. 2.100-1)

*qui [rex] sancto iubet ante dari, quo possit ab ipso
Augustus calicem excipere et potare secundus.*

59. *Ep.* 1.11.10-16. Although Sidonius here describes a banquet given by the Emperor Majorian, the occasion is treated as a private affair in which the participants enjoy an unusual freedom of expression. Much is at stake in the banter and give-and-take of the dinner ; Sidonius, who has been accused of writing a malicious satire, enjoys a hard-won moral and social triumph over his accuser, Paeonius.

60. For this aspect of Fortunatus' poetic career, see Wilhelm MEYER, *Der Gelegenheitsdichter Venantius Fortunatus*, Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist. Klasse, N.F. 4.5 (Berlin 1901) pp. 42-47 ; Peter GODMAN, *Poets and Emperors : Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry* (Oxford 1987) pp. 5-37, and Judith W. GEORGE, *A Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford 1992) pp. 35-84.

61. This aspect of Paulinus' treatment of the banquet is stressed by Gerald MALSBARY, «The Epic Hagiography of Paulinus of Périgueux» (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1987) pp. 158-208. See also FONTAINE, «Hagiographie», p. 123.

Paulinus' overt moralizing is confined to the narrative sections of the banquet account. With the exception of the epithet *superbis* (95) already discussed, there is no evaluative language in the description of Maximus' table. Both poets are content to let the luxury of the scene stand for itself, without commentary. This is all the more surprising, since the extravagant banquet was not an unambiguous image. The authorized interpretation of such a scene was as an index of the power and majesty of the giver of the banquet. But panegyrists could also play off against this prevailing reading to praise emperors – Trajan, Julian, and Theodosius – for scorning such elaborate show. For a Christian ascetic such luxurious display was doctrinally offensive; Paulinus of Nola's epithalamium for the Christian couple Julian and Titia (C. 25) is a good example of such suspicion of *luxuria* in all its aspects⁶². Martin's behavior at the banquet, then, can be seen as a rejection of such worldly show for the values of Christian asceticism. In this reading, the narrative of the passage would criticize and undercut the imperial propaganda implicit in such a banquet. Martin's actions elevate the ecclesiastical hierarchy over imperial power; it is a small step to see a similar triumph for Christian asceticism over secular indulgence and display. But the latter point is not explicitly made⁶³. Although such a reading is certainly available, it should not be over-emphasized. The poets depend upon their readers being impressed by the awesome display put on by the emperor Maximus. By elevating the emperor's power, they make the reversal of status achieved by Martin all the more impressive. Far from denouncing such worldly show, they play on their readers' susceptibility to it. This is the late Roman language of power, verbal and visual, and Christian attitudes to it were decidedly ambiguous. Elsewhere in the *Life of Martin* the saint is able to detect the devil masquerading as a false Christ because of his reliance on the external trappings of majesty. But Martin's own hand is seen «clad in rich jewels and gleaming with purple light» – both attributes of kingly power – when he administers the Eucharist⁶⁴. A Christian can interpret material display positively or negatively as a symbolic system, depending on the nature of the power it represents. It is tempting to see the reference to the rivers of Paradise in Fortunatus' banquet scene (2. 77) as a reminder of the rich realm of Paradise, surpassing all earthly magnificence, to which a holy man like Martin could aspire⁶⁵. The saint,

62. I.e., sexual, material, and verbal; cf. Michael ROBERTS, «The Use of Myth in Latin Epithalamia from Statius to Venantius Fortunatus», *TAPA* 119 (1989), pp. 337-38, with the further literature cited there.

63. Though the epithet *arta* (Fortunatus 2.98) and the saint's moderate drinking (Paulinus 3.119-20; Fortunatus 2.102) point to his asceticism. The closest to an explicit statement is Paulinus' metonymic substitution of *purpura* and *diadema* for the kingship that must yield to faith and inner merit (3.123-24). But again spiritual standing rather than sumptuary practices are at stake. MALSBARY, «Epic Hagiography», pp. 188-91 and 201, makes the case for a critical reading of such worldly pomp.

64. The passages are Sulpicius, *V.M.* 24.4-8, Paulinus, *V.M.* 3.363-410, and Fortunatus, *V.M.* 2.278-357; Sulpicius, *Dial.* 3.10.6, Paulinus, *V.M.* 5.695-708, Fortunatus, *V.M.* 4.305-50. See ROBERTS, *The Jeweled Style*, p. 143.

65. Paradise for Fortunatus regularly conjures up the image of a banquet (*paradisiacas*

Fortunatus reminds us (2. 68), is a “banqueter in heaven” (*convivam caeli*), whom the emperor rejoices to receive in his “earthly palace” (*terrena... aula*). Paulinus likens Martin’s countenance, as he seats himself to dine, to the brilliant face of Moses when he descended from speaking with god on Mt. Sinai (Exod. 34: 29-35). Panegyrist might praise secular rulers, too, for their more than mortal brilliance of face, which prevented ordinary men and women from looking at them directly⁶⁶. Paulinus chooses the comparison not only as an expression of Martin’s unusual holiness, but also to demonstrate that spiritual power can be praised in the terms of secular authority, which it outdoes and transvalues.

When Sidonius wrote, round about 476, to Tonantius Ferreolus, a distinguished Gallo-Roman of noble family who had recently taken holy orders, he used the language of the banquet to express the relation between his correspondent’s former and present status in life : «just as, when a banquet accompanies a public celebration, the last guest at the first table is superior to the person who is first at the second table, so unquestionably in the opinion of the best people (*secundum bonorum sententiam*) the humblest cleric outranks the highest dignitary» (*Ep.* 7. 12. 4)⁶⁷. The story of Martin and Maximus dramatizes this principle in the encounter of the saint and the emperor. As represented by Paulinus and Fortunatus, Martin’s act of self-assertion (*libertas*) takes place before an elaborate backdrop. The stage set of the imperial banquet provides an appropriate location for symbolic action. Martin’s assertion of ecclesiastical rights takes on a ritualized quality in this setting, transcending the

epulas, C. 4.7.21, 8.3.29 and 115 ; cf. 11.11.16). Christian wall paintings and sarcophagi depict banquets that can be interpreted as located in the idyllic setting of Paradise ; see Josef ENGEMANN, «Der Ehrenplatz beim antiken Sigmamahl», in *Jenseitsvorstellungen in Antike und Christentum : Gedenkschrift für Alfred Stuiber*, JbAC. Ergänzungsband 9 (Münster Westfalen 1982), pp. 248-50 and DUNBABIN, «*Triclinium* and *Stibadium*», pp. 132-33. For sigma-banquets on Christian sarcophagi see N. HIMMELMANN, *Typologische Untersuchungen an römischen Sarkophagreliefs des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Mainz am Rhein 1973) pp. 25-26, and for a catalogue of such scenes HIMMELMANN 57-58. Such scenes represented an ideal of blissful existence for both pagans and Christians. For a pagan example, see the Hypogaeum of Vibia in Rome (second half of the fourth century ; Elisabeth JASTRZEBOWSKA, «Les scènes de banquet dans les peintures et sculptures chrétiennes des III^e et IV^e siècles», *RecAug* 14 (1979) pp. 38-39 and 66-67). It is characteristic of Fortunatus to incorporate biblical topoi into secular panegyric. The practice is already common in Sidonius.

66. E.g., *Pan.Lat.* 4.5.1 ; Constantine’s face dazzles like the sun.

67. Sidonius has in mind a banquet with multiple *stibadia*. For such multi-table banquets, see Statius, *Silv.* 4.2.32-35 and Eusebius, *V.Const.* 15 ; BEK, «*Questiones Convivales*» pp. 101-2. Triple *stibadia* were especially common. The triconch *triclinium*, frequent in Roman provincial architecture from the fourth century on, accommodated such an arrangement. See Simon P. ELLIS, «Power, Architecture, and Decor : How the Late Roman Aristocrat Appeared to His Guests», in Elaine K. GAZDA and Anne E. HAECKL, eds., *Roman Art in the Private Sphere : New Perspectives on the Architecture and Decor of the Domus, Villa, and Insula* (Ann Arbor 1991) pp. 119-20.

particular historical moment. Our poets provide a detailed image that calls up and fixes in the memory the symbolic actions of Martin and their significance.

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ABSTRACT : This paper discusses the poetic treatments by Paulinus of Périgueux and Venantius Fortunatus of a famous episode in Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Saint Martin*, the saint's banquet with the Gallic usurper Maximus. Both amplify their original freely, calling upon the traditions of the classical banquet description. Paulinus exploits the satirical tradition of the *cena* as a setting for the negotiation of social status and the relations between patrons and clients. Both poets call upon panegyric models for the royal and imperial banquet, amplifying extensively on the setting, furniture, food and serving vessels of Maximus' table. In their accounts the imperial banquet is enacted before an elaborate backdrop, which provides an appropriate location for Martin's symbolic action and his assertion of ecclesiastical rights.

RÉSUMÉ : Cette étude traite des réponses poétiques apportées par Paulin de Périgueux et Venantius Fortunat à un passage très célèbre de la *Vie de Saint Martin* composée par Sulpice Sévère, à savoir sa description du banquet du saint avec l'empereur Maximus. Chacun des poètes amplifie la version de Sulpice sur la base des traditions littéraires du banquet trouvées dans des textes antiques. Paulin exploite la tradition satirique de la *cena* comme mise en scène pour la négociation du statut social et pour celle des relations entre patrons et clients. Chaque poète se réfère aux modèles du banquet royal et impérial qui se trouvent dans les panégyriques et développe les détails de la salle, des meubles, de la nourriture et du service de table. Dans leurs récits, le banquet impérial se déroule dans une mise en scène élaborée, et fournit un cadre approprié à l'action symbolique de saint Martin et à sa revendication des prérogatives ecclésiastiques.