

Martial: Liber Spectaculorum. With introduction, translation and commentary. Edited by KATHLEEN M. COLEMAN. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. lxxxvi + 322. Cloth, \$110.00. ISBN 0-19-814481-4.

Modern commentaries on authors such as Ovid and Martial, who until quite recently were more avoided than studied in the halls of traditional philology, cannot be greeted enthusiastically enough. Not many, however, are compiled with the diligence C. has devoted to the *Liber Spectaculorum*; the only English commentary written lately and comparable in quality is, to my knowledge, Roy Gibson's work on *Ars Amatoria* 3 (Cambridge, 2003). One contributing factor could be that both Gibson and C. chose not to confine themselves, as is increasingly the rule, to scholarship penned in English, but take in the entire international spectrum. Anyone out to tell C. that she has missed important literature will find significant omissions only in the peripheral areas where specialists dwell. Considering the "scope and characteristics" of the *Liber Spectaculorum* (pp. xxxiii–xlvi), she looks, for example, at Rufinus' epigrams (which, like the *Liber*, may have been part of a "thematically unified collection," p. xxxiii), but does not mention Regina Höschle's book on Rufinus.¹ Existing scholarship on what is perhaps the most difficult of Martial's poetic *libri* is discussed in a comprehensive "General Introduction" (pp. xix–lxxxvi); the most important literature on single epigrams, moreover, are named in the commentary. Each text and translation is followed there by a customized introduction which ends with relevant references; hotly debated questions are discussed as they arise.

The surviving *Liber Spectaculorum*—the manuscripts show no title, but C. argues convincingly in favor of this one (pp. xxv–xxviii)—is probably only an epitome, which makes it difficult to appraise as a book. We may reasonably assume that excerptors kept to the original order of the poems. This was common practice, as we can see in Phaedrus' *Liber Fabularum*. (The two genres being related, C.'s study might have benefited from a comparison). Like Martial's greater collection of epigrams, the *Liber Spectaculorum* includes poems that are closely linked by their content, and in some cases it seems likely that a sequence found in the epitome also formed part of the original book. C. puts forward good reasons for supposing that—to name one example—Poems 1–3 (her numbering is that of Shackleton Bailey) form an introductory sequence (pp. xxxvi, 37). She could have substantiated her findings by asking here and in other sequences within the *Liber* whether Martial is using, as he often does elsewhere, the

¹ *Verrückt nach Frauen: Der Epigrammatiker Rufin* (Tübingen, 2006); at any rate, press times allowed only a narrow window for C. to have considered Höschle's work.

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principle of verbal *concatenatio* (illustrated most recently by Robert Maltby²). Thus the word *astra* of 1.7 is picked up in 2.1, as are 1.7 *amphitheatro* in 2.5 *amphitheatri*, and 2.4 *in urbe* in 3.2; people (2.12 *populi*; 3.1 *gens*; 3.12 *populorum*) link 2 to 3, as does the final word in each (2.12 *domini*; 3.12 *pater*). This omission is unfortunate, since C. usually shows a lively interest in Martial's use of words. She offers a number of excellent observations on style, and these, together with her notes on textual criticism, usage, meter and intertextuality, will more than satisfy the needs of her more philologically orientated readers.

It goes without saying that the *Liber*, one of our few sources on games in the Flavian amphitheater, calls for a commentary packed with the relevant history, especially as Martial himself, writing for an audience familiar with "the technical and ideological scope" of the arena, was every bit as elliptical as the genre conventionally demanded (pp. xliv–xlv). C. is at pains to fill in the gaps but, unlike some of her predecessors, resists the temptation to turn her *Realien* section (pp. lxxv–lxxii) into a full-blown treatise. Everything she says (e.g., about the *hypogeum*) is actually crucial for our understanding of the poems. Her judicious handling of all matters historical is also evident when she discusses the identity of the texts' unspecified Flavian *Caesar* (pp. xlv–lxiv). The *communis opinio* being that the *Liber* was written to mark the inauguration of the amphitheater, Titus is generally the favorite. Following Sven Lorenz,³ C. shows that Domitian is just as likely to have been the *Caesar*. However, she plumps in Poems 9 and 26 for Domitian because of the rhinoceros mentioned there (and shown on a coin dating from 83–5 CE); she then turns back to Peter White's *libellus* theory⁴ and hypothesizes about *chartae minores* published under both emperors and eventually combined to form one *liber*. But in the end she does come round to the view that "Martial's 'Caesar' starts to look almost like an idealized abstraction, above identification": as such he makes a good "epigrammatic you" to the *Liber's* speaker, who himself never says "I" and thus appears as "part of a collective audience witnessing Caesar's marvels" (p. lxxxii).

When it comes to Martial's persona, C. goes too far, seeing a clear distinction between the *Liber's* speaker and that of the twelve-book collection. True, the latter does visibly find the world he caricatures amusing, while the former is full of praise and wonderment. But must that mean that he does not want to amuse as well? Our own abhorrence of arena brutality blinds us to the possibility that Mar-

² "Proper names as a linking device in Martial 5.43–8," in J. Booth and R. Maltby, eds., *What's in a name?* (Swansea, 2006) 159–68.

³ *Erotik und Panegyrik: Martials epigrammatische Kaiser* (Tübingen, 2002).

⁴ "The presentation and dedication of the *Silvae* and the *Epigrams*," *JRS* 64 (1974) 40–61.

tial's contemporaries may have thought it entertaining, even witty to see a bear not listening enraptured to "Orpheus," but mauling him to death (*sp.* 24). Why? Because for the Romans "Orpheus" in the arena was obviously a criminal deserving of punishment. C. simply avoids this thorny theme—one of the very few sins of omission in her commentary. Another is her failure to provide an *Index locorum*; the iambic Catullus appears nowhere in the *Index nominum et rerum*, so that the reader's attention is only drawn on p. 155 to the nice allusion in 19.1 to Catullus 101.1. But since anyone really interested in Roman poetry will have to read this first-class commentary from cover to cover, no index at all would have been fine too.

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