

BOOK REVIEW

Martials epigrammatischer Kanon. By NINA MINDT. München: C.H. Beck, 2013. Pp. 318. Paper, €78.00. ISBN 978-3-406-65544-9.

This is a difficult book, and perhaps inevitably so; it is also a very fine book, and not necessarily so. At its most foundational *stratum* of concern, Mindt's monograph is an attempt to interpret the epigrammatist Martial in light of the preceding Latin literary tradition, and with admirable comprehensiveness: not only Catullus and Virgil (especially the *Eclogues*), but also Cicero (occasioned in part by the mention of the orator in several epigrams), Ovid, Lucan and Silius; also the *Laus Pisonis* and the eclogues of Calpurnius. On a more superficial level, it redeems Martial for those in whose judgment the poet needed such redemption; it contributes mightily to the elevation of Martial into the canon, as it were, of serious intertextual verse. Prose authors, too, are not neglected, though they are understandably enough given comparatively brief consideration. The most readily ostensible criterion for the inclusion of certain epigrams of Martial and not others is the lengthy list of those poems that actually name a poetic or prose author from the Latin literary tradition. Minor literary figures who are known mostly if not exclusively through mention in this or that epigram are also considered.

In an important sense, Mindt has written something of a history of Latin poetry, and a book that one might well be tempted to assign to graduate students in surveys of Latin literature. One acquires a refined sense of the dictates of writing verse under different political systems, and of the challenges inherent to poetic composition under what might strike a lesser artistic mind as impossible to overcome. There is a dazzling array of parallels and sub-parallels here, of allusions and echoes that sound with increasing clarity, paradoxically, as one adds more and more auditory treats to the mix. By the end of the book, one might well be forgiven for having at one and the same time a clearer and more obscure vision of what constitutes a book of Latin poetry, let alone a "canon" for the composition of epigrammatic verse.

Mindt's study is an investigation into not only how a Flavian poet responds to a veritable *catena* of poetic references back through the centuries, but also why

this or that reference is important at a particular juncture in the epigrammatic corpus. Needless to say, those who find intertextual references an inevitable (not to say mere) consequence of the poet's extreme familiarity with his predecessors will find less appeal in all this. But even the harshest critics of metapoetic reflection will appreciate Mindt's careful analysis of the many places where Martial names his predecessors and forces his reader to engage with a rich panoply of other authors and genres. By the end of the book, one acquires a newfound respect for Martial as a deeply sensitive master of engagement with the dizzying quantity of diverse material that he inherited as a Latin author. This respect may well come, too, with less certainty over just what constitutes a "book" of Latin verse.

The material Mindt assembles and explicates is arranged into five chapters. The first is concerned mostly with Cicero and Virgil (though one will encounter Sallust, Livy, and even Frontinus as well). The second focuses on Catullus, with an excursus on the *Priapea*. The third, on the so-called "hidden" canon, treats Horace alongside Persius, Juvenal, Petronius and the two Senecas. The fourth deals with Lucan and Silius, along with some attention to figures as seemingly minor and obscure as Canius Rufus, the Spanish poet-addressee of *ep.* 3.20. The fifth and final chapter is devoted to the "reevaluation" of the classical canon in light of Martial's poetic achievement. The present study should be supplemented with the author's 2013 and 2014 articles on the presence of Greek authors/Cicero and Seneca in Martial.¹ The bibliography is an especially rich listing of editions, commentaries, monographs, and articles on the poet, and would be a good starting point for research on any aspect of his work. All Latin is translated.

In the end, Mindt's book is more about the standards or rules for intertextual *hommage* than about the demands of Domitianic Rome or the conventions of a sometimes seemingly inherently obscene genre. The method of investigation is close textual analysis and careful, precise observation of linguistic parallels; devotees of literary theory will not be satisfied with this *Habilitationsschrift*, though they will find support for a wide range of metapoetic speculations from perusal of its riches.

Scholars and lovers of Martial have good reason to be pleased with the increasing stream of secondary literature on this challenging poet. Among the in-

¹ "Griechische Autoren in den Epigrammen Martials," in *Millenium Jahrbuch* 2013, 501–516; "Cicero und Seneca in den Epigrammen Martials," in *Gymnasium* 121.1 (2014), 69–89.

terpretive material at one's disposal for an investigation of the riches of Martial's epigrammatic collection, Mindt's monograph may well merit first place.

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