

material that comes before it, in which Statius frequently alludes to Callimachean aetiologies. So instead of a wandering first half of the epic and a fighting second half in the manner of the *Aeneid*, M. divides the *Thebaid* into a Callimachean, aetiological half and an anti-Callimachean, martial half. There is some truth to this interesting and novel perspective, though I think it is not always so easy to disentangle the Callimachean from its opposite in epic. Ever since Apollonius, epic had learned to accommodate the aesthetics and preoccupations of Callimachus, and Virgil and Ovid were masters of the art.

M. illustrates the anti-Callimachean pedigree of the story of the Seven against Thebes mainly by means of references to Propertius, but there is a danger in relying on a writer with such an anti-epic poetic agenda for an account of the relationship between Callimacheanism and epic; it was not in Propertius' interest to underscore the detente between epic and Alexandrian poetics. It is true that the Thebes story had a reputation as belonging to quintessentially bad epic; but Virgil had already taken major steps down this road in rehabilitating some of the equally reviled subject matter of cyclic epic. In this connection, I think M. underestimates the importance of Antimachus of Colophon. It is true that we only have direct evidence for Callimachus' distaste for his *Lyde*, but it seems certain that Catullus, Propertius, and Horace all considered that his disdain extended to the *Thebaid*, whether or not this was true. In that light, Statius' *Thebaid* is in its essence paradoxical, as a Callimachean revision of an epic he was thought to have hated. M.'s division of the poem into two halves tends to obscure this essential contradiction.

To give a concrete example of the difficulty in disentangling the two sides of that paradox, let us take the necklace of Harmonia. It is one of the major achievements of M.'s book that he establishes the fundamental programmatic importance of this epiphora. He shows that this artifact made by Vulcan, the Cyclopes and the Telchines is every bit as important to the epic as the shield of Aeneas is to the *Aeneid*. M. mainly interprets the necklace as anti-Callimachean on account of the Telchines' involvement in its creation and the way it is instrumental in bringing about the war. But this does not do full justice to both sides of its nature: it is a tiny work of exquisite craftsmanship produced by the massive enemies of Callimachus. This paradox of scale is Virgilian: his description of the Cyclopes making the shield of Aeneas repeats the language of a simile in the *Georgics* describing the microscopic work of the bees. To see the necklace of Harmonia as a true 'synecdoche for the larger narrative' (75) would entail seeing that larger narrative not as bifurcated but as a product of continuous tension between the poles represented by Antimachus and Callimachus: a work of sprawling and potentially uncontrollable evil, but with the details exquisitely rendered.

Durham University

PETER J. HESLIN

W. FITZGERALD, *MARTIAL: THE WORLD OF THE EPIGRAM*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Pp. ix + 258. ISBN 978-0-226-25253-7. £20.00.

'How does one *read* an epigrammatist?' (1). If this were not such a vexing question we might not have had to wait so long for a new book on Martial, but it has been worth the wait. Sixteen years have passed since the late J. P. Sullivan, in an ambitious literary survey, urged us to reconsider Martial as an 'Unexpected Classic'. William Fitzgerald's *Martial: The World of the Epigram* is the first major study in English on the Latin epigrammatist since Sullivan, and will re-energize the scholarship on this important author. It also richly deserves a wider readership among and beyond the classics community. As we might expect from the author of *Catullan Provocations* (1995), the book is sharply written and rich in ideas. Asked for a back-cover quote, Erik Gunderson (*Staging Masculinity*) volunteered that 'hardly a page goes by without a notable observation or insight', and he is not fibbing. Classicists, academics, writers and readers who share Fitzgerald's fascination with how literary texts meet and create their 'world' will come away from this handsome and very affordable book challenged, charmed, and fired up to read more Martial, by readings that zoom between small details and large contexts to exhilarating effect.

F.'s acknowledgements (ix) locate the genesis of *Martial: the World of the Epigram* in a post-graduate seminar he taught at Berkeley in 2000. Aspects of the book reflect this declared origin in collaborative learning — and make us wish we had been there. Productively relevant areas of contemporary critical theory are introduced with a light touch, challenging us to follow up on the leads that intrigue us. Thus, *persona* and *flânerie* are covered in less than two pages (8–9), Debord and pretty much everyone else on spectacle in three (35–7), and the relation of literary form to the

technology and economics of print in just a paragraph (11). Recent scholarship on Martial is reported concisely and sympathetically; F. is concerned to offer a useful overview, not to score points of detail. In much the same vein, and courting critique, he prioritizes open-endedness over doctrinal rigour in proposing at the outset a supple and multifaceted working model of what might be said to constitute a poet's 'world'. We are already juggling four different, if perhaps complementary ideas of 'world' by the middle of page two — system, interface, environment and perspective — and the effect is a little dizzying, like Carroll's six impossible things before breakfast.

So, how *does* one read an epigrammatist? We begin with some outstanding remarks on the tensions of a genre which is both endemically closural — 'Since the epigram is the most closed of forms, the notion of a *book* of epigrams is paradoxical' (2) — and endlessly concise; epigrammatic brevity is uneasily poised between monumental permanence and improvisational evanescence (3). We then get stuck straight in with F.'s best trick: working with the grain of these tensions to read Martial's juxtapositions attentively and creatively. F. earnestly suggests that the quasi- or pseudo-random jostle within Martial's books makes him the ultimate poet of the Urbs, then and now (7) — and perhaps the last word in satire too. 'Juxtaposition is what we might call the zero degree of authorship; maintaining an attitude of deadpan, it is always deniable ... the reader's decision to relate is not authorized, and the nature of the connection may be an optical illusion or an operation of chance' (5–6); nonetheless, 'once a spark has jumped between two opposed but juxtaposed registers, the reader will be on the alert for more' (106). F.'s Martial masters his world by exploiting epigram's facility for slicing it into manageable chunks; epigram is emphatically 'the art of survival' in the naked city (12).

This approach generates a particularly exciting redemptive account of Martial's earliest publication, the *Liber Spectaculorum*, in F.'s second chapter (34–67). The *Liber* is too often under-read as a reservoir of arena-history factoids; F. delivers a timely joined-up reading. His early Martial is busily positioning epigram as the defining genre of a disposable culture predicated on mediation: the *Liber* represents and substitutes for a spectacle which is itself already a global *simulacrum*. This bold big picture is elegantly supported by attentive close reading. I was quickly won over by the doubled sense teased out of 2.11 *reddita* and 3.6 *suis* (39–41), and by the sparkling erudition with which F. unpacks and situates *Epigram* 5: 'isn't Aeneas ... also the most famous *delator* in history?' (44).

F.'s third chapter (68–105) explores the structural and figurative poetics of Martial's first book — 'the traffic between poems' (104), and, piggy-backing on that traffic, the unfolding dialogue between the epigram-book and its world. Again the quality of ideas is high, with valuable insights on how Martial models his readership (76–7) and develops analogies for different aspects of his literary enterprise (90–1, 95–7). F. continues to deliver the goods on Martial's sequencing, unpacking nuance in the book's opening sequence ('a history that we read in reverse' (74)) and presenting a strong politicizing reading of recurring patterns of juxtaposition (84–8, and cf. 73, 'poetic exorcism of the spirit of Cato'). As with 'world', it is discombobulating (and very seminar-like) to be launched into these clever and exciting interpretations without up-front definition of either 'Martial' — narrating *persona*, biographical author, bits of both? — or 'reader'. I was repeatedly left uncertain (e.g., 94–5 and 98–9) as to which ones F. meant, or, to put it another way, which of his four worlds we were in at that particular moment.

The ambiguity may be part of F.'s design, but some readers will find it a recurring difficulty in the book generally, as at, e.g., p. 29 'Martial hoped (in vain)', or p. 52 'Martial had dynasties on his mind'. There are moments where the balancing act appears to disambiguate into old-fashioned biographical criticism, derived from ancient authors who are conveniently transparent in their accounts of their own lives and procedures (e.g. p. 12 on Martial and the *ius trium liberorum*, p. 14 on Attalus' 'biographical trajectory'). In particular, the excursus on epigram's function within elite Roman social networks (25–33) seems only to work if not just Martial but also Suetonius and Lucilius are telling us the truth, which in my view is rather a lot to ask of scopic epigram. I am wholly in sympathy with F.'s inclination to put epigram to work doing cultural studies; nonetheless, I worry that by reading the genre as 'embedded' in day-to-day elite interaction (3), he might be buying too uncritically into Martial's literary game of epigram-as-reportage.

Ch. 4 (106–38), a heady treat, explores two types of juxtaposition — thematic (panegyric and scopic) and social (emperors and slaves). The emerging tensions in the epigram-book train

Martial's reader in how to read suspiciously. 'One of the consequences of Martial's juxtapositions is that praise and blame, or panegyric and invective, can seem to be two versions of the same thing' (114); F. backs this up with a virtuoso reading of the sequence of epigrams at 6.12–18 (115–21). Slaves and emperors become versions of each other too, through shared mythological baggage — F. productively reads Martial's Romanized 'Joves and Ganymedes' against Newlands on Statius (131–3). Ch. 5 (144–66), 'The Society of the Book', explores how the book construes overlapping constituencies of readers; there are valuable insights on how the author plays with gender construction (148) and on the awkwardly asymmetric relations between author, patron, reader and emperor (153–62). Here and in ch. 6 (167–96), an admirably clear study of Martial in reception, Ovid is a recurring intertext. This latter chapter moves from an insightful reading of Martial's figurative, 'banalizing' use of his generic predecessor Catullus to respectful modification of F.'s own generic predecessor, Sullivan, through consideration of a bizarre, poem-for-poem parody of the corpus in the seventeenth century, redeeming Martial as a sacred text.

A concise and bracing conclusion (197–9) rounds off the book's strong structure — F. is as keen on echoes and patterning as is his Martial, without any of the latter's self-imposed problems of closure. Here he comes full circle with a workable response to the question which opened the book and this review; *one* can't read an epigrammatist, or not when that epigrammatist is Martial, but a Society of the Book can. Perhaps there is a lesson here, too, for any one reviewer of F.'s own witty and stimulating book.

*Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham*

GIDEON NISBET

K. COLEMAN, *M. VALERII MARTIALIS LIBER SPECTACULORUM: TEXT, TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. lxxxvi + 322, 32 pls. ISBN 978-0-19-814481-6. £63.00.

Martial has been getting a lot of attention lately: new interpretive studies and commentaries have been coming out at a steady pace. At the same time, Roman spectacle — at all times popular — is the object of especially intense current fascination. Coleman's commentary on Martial's *Liber Spectaculorum* is thus on at least two counts a timely contribution to our knowledge of the epigrammatist and the spectacles he commemorates. The commentary includes an introduction, Latin text, English translation, bibliography, concordances, indices, and an appendix on ancient inquiry into the source of the Nile.

A brief, early, and incomplete book of Martial might seem an unlikely subject for a monumental commentary. Yet imperial spectacle is a longstanding area of study for C., and one that is especially well-chosen as a vehicle for her distinctive combination of archaeological, philological, and, in several instances, scientific erudition. A commentary, according to the traditions of classical philology, is a serious thing, and might even be termed a status symbol: it serves as a monument both to the text it elucidates and to an accomplished scholar's store of knowledge. The commentary can also open doors to new lines of research. On all these accounts, C.'s commentary on the *Liber Spectaculorum* succeeds.

C. observes in the preface: 'I have gone into more detail than is perhaps usual in a commentary' (vii). No doubt this approach makes sense given the rich sociological, historical, and archaeological contexts of these epigrams, and their 'important and interesting difficulties' (vii). Nonetheless one cannot help suspecting a deeper ambition, to which the special praises reserved for the humanist scholar Niccolò Perotti in the introduction's final section affords a key. Perotti's *Cornu Copiae* took the form of a commentary on the *Liber Spectaculorum*, yet amounted to 'an encyclopedia of the Latin language' (lxxxv): it was, as C. notes, 'a monument to humanist learning, its scope a fitting analogue to the massive building celebrated in the book from which it takes its cue' (lxxxvi). The same could be said *mutatis mutandis* for C.'s commentary on the *Liber Spectaculorum*, which includes, but goes well beyond, lexicographical erudition. Embedded within the commentary on individual epigrams and passages are mini-essays on, for example, the latest research into the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (6–7), *delatio* and its spectacular punishment (54–7), the characteristics of the different species of rhinoceros (101–2), the qualities of ancient birdlime (121–3), and the history of the demonstrative pronoun in modern Romance languages (155). Commentators perennially face the question of what to include. C.'s bold answer is, 'everything'.

The restless curiosity at work in this commentary matches, and is continually rewarded by, Martial's relentless focus on the particular, the material, the explicit, and the irreducibly concrete