

Domitian, the Rhinoceros, and the Date of Martial's *Liber De Spectaculis*

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I

The orthodox view is that the *Liber de Spectaculis* (hereafter *Sp.*) is to be dated to A.D. 80, and that it was written to celebrate the One-Hundred-Day games held by Titus to inaugurate the Flavian Amphitheatre. It thus appears as the earliest, or at least the earliest preserved, of the works of Martial, and is unique in his Flavian career in directing its attention to Titus rather than Domitian. Today this attribution in date and purpose is usually presented as historical fact, known with such certainty as not to require further examination or even reference to the sources. Thus Sullivan, 'Martial's sudden break from obscurity comes with the publication, late in the year 80, of the book of epigrams commonly known as *Liber de Spectaculis*. . . . In June of that year Titus had given an elaborate series of games to celebrate formally the opening of the still unfinished Flavian amphitheatre'.¹ Save for the rare assertion that the occasional epigram in *Sp.* might refer to Domitian, this position is the *opinio communis* of the scholars of Martial studies and the handbook authors who rely on them. Indeed it is now set in concrete in the sacred pages of Pauly-Wissowa.²

One can see that the attribution is attractive. Augustus' secular games are enlivened in our imagination by the confluence of the separate historical and epigraphical sources, along with Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*. Similarly, the survival of both the magnificent Flavian Amphitheatre and the historians' accounts of the initial games held in it can only be enhanced by finding in *Sp.* Martial's own account of those very celebrations.

Yet what is strange about the virtual unanimity of the scholarship is that the briefest glance at *Sp.* reveals that, while praising the Flavian Amphitheatre beyond mere Wonders

¹ J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic* (1991), 6 (where 'late in the year' is gratuitous). Sullivan, as is usual in the literature, refers to the book as a unity, although the derivation of our text from a variety of *florilegia* does raise the question, to what extent our text might be disorderly or incomplete. The problem is reviewed most recently by Kathleen Coleman, *Liber Spectaculorum* (2006), xix, xxi–xxv; with speculations on the possibility that it might be a compendium created by Martial himself (lix–lxiv) (see below). Coleman's new edition of *Sp.* appeared after this paper was already completed, and has therefore been given less consideration here than it merits.

² PW s.v. Flavian amphitheatrum, col. 2516, '... 80 n. Chr mit hunderttägigen Spieler eingeweiht (Cass. Dio 66.25; Martial de spect. 1 und 2)'; s.v. Valerius Martialis, col. 60, 'zur Einweihung des Flavischen Amphitheaters im J. 80 ...'. So too now *Der Neue Pauly* s.v. Martialis [1], col. 957; Schanz-Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* II (1935), 547; etc. So too the translations and studies of every nation, e.g. Martial, *Epigrams* (Loeb, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (1993)) vol. 1, 2, 'In 80 he published his Book on Shows ... on the spectacles presented by the Emperor Titus in the recently completed Colosseum'; M. von Albrecht, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (1992), II, 822, 'Der *Liber spectaculorum* ist dem Kaiser Titus anlässlich der Eröffnung des flavischen Amphitheaters im Jahr 80 gewidmet'; U. Carratello, M. Valerii Martialis *Epigrammaton Liber* (1980), 11, 'Il libro degli spettacoli fu edito da Marziale nell' 80 d. Cr., in occasione del giochi offerti da Tito per l'inaugurazione dell' anfiteatro Flavio'; F. Fortuny Previ, *Marcial. Libro de Espectáculos* (1983), 15, 'La obra literaria de Marcial se inicia con la publicación del *Epigrammaton Liber* o *Liber Spectaculorum* en el año 80, con motivo de los juegos ofrecidos por Tito para celebrar la inauguración del Anfiteatro Flavio'; H. H. Janssen, *Latijnse Letterkunde* (1979), 249, 'Zijn eerste grote verzenbundel was het z.g. "boek van de spelen" ... naar aanleiding van de grootscheeps opgezette spelen bij gelegenheid van de inwijding van het gerestaureerde amphitheater door Titus in het jaar 80'. It is everywhere. Apparently a knowledge of imperial chronology is not required: 'L'oeuvre de Martial commence, pour nous, avec le livre «des spectacles», célébrant l'inauguration, par Domitien [*sic*], du Colisée, en 80' (P. Grimal, *La Littérature Latine* (1994), 455).

of the World (1–2), (a) it does not allude even incidentally to the most significant features of the unprecedented games of A.D. 80 — that they were extraordinary, held specifically to inaugurate this magnificent building, and that they were held over the unprecedented length of one hundred days — and (b) it never mentions Titus. The emperor is addressed throughout simply as ‘Caesar’, which is no help to his identification since it is appropriate as an address for any reigning emperor. Nor is there any other source to certify that Martial was writing for Titus on that or any occasion.

How did this notion arise? It were wearisome to trace its appearance backwards through the decades in the editions and translations of Martial, but its origins can be placed at least as far back as the fifteenth century. The identification of ‘Caesar’ was even then in question. Calderini (1447–1478) was uncertain.³ For Perotti (1430–1480) there was no doubt that ‘Caesar’ was Domitian.⁴ In his preliminary *Vita* of Martial he locates the poet: ‘Floruit temporibus Domitiani, Neruae et Traiani’ (ch. 3 (vol. 1, p. 18)); and in his annotations to the opening line of *Sp.* he explains, ‘BARBARA PYRAMIDUM: blanditur Domitiano quod Amphitheatrum eius ...’ (p. 20).⁵

A century later, however, we find, perhaps for the first time, the *obiter dictum* of Justus Lipsius which not only asserts the identification of Titus with ‘Caesar’ as secure, but goes beyond, to the claim that *Sp.* was actually composed for the inaugural games in the Flavian Amphitheatre: ‘... totum Epigrammatum primum libellum in Titum convenire & eius ludos; quos in dedicatione huius Amphitheatri exhibuit per dies paene centum.’⁶ To support this confident historical assertion Lipsius offers no evidence at all. Yet this account has been with us for nigh on five and a quarter centuries as one philologist after another — not all, but most — accepted Lipsius’ baseless claim uncritically. It appears generally in the studies and handbooks today, its origins long since forgotten and its validity largely untested, though the unsupporting text lay there to be read.

In this the scholarship seems to have worked backwards. We normally gather the evidence, consider it critically, and come to a conclusion. In this case the conclusion, that the games of *Sp.* were those of A.D. 80, was first proposed as a fact by Lipsius, and succeeding generations have attempted to piece together evidence to justify it, relying primarily on Suetonius, *Titus* 7.3, and Dio 66.25. So Friedlaender, ‘Die Annahme ... gründet sich auf die fielfache Uebereinstimmung ihres Inhalt mit den Berichten Suetons und Cassius Dios über diese Schauspiele.’⁷ Both ancient authors recall the inaugural games, including details suggestive of the games described in *Sp.*

For example, Martial praises ‘Caesar’ for having exposed *delatores* at the games and condemned them to exile (*Sp.* 4), and Suetonius says that Titus had done just that at the inaugural games (*Titus* 8.5) — i.e. it follows that *Sp.* must refer to the inaugural games. I have not attempted to discover the original source of this observation, but it is an easy one and is proffered by Friedlaender. It is of no evidential value, for the public display and even execution of malefactors at other games is well-established.⁸ Under Trajan, on the exhibition specifically of *delatores* see Pliny, *Panegyric.* 33–4: ‘... Visum est spectaculum ... At tu Caesar, quam pulchrum spectaculum ... Videmus delatorum agmen inductum, quasi

³ Domenico Calderini, [*Martial. Epigrammaton*] (1510). On *Sp.* 1 he would like to opt for Titus, but at *Sp.* 2.11 he glosses ‘reddita Roma sibi est’ with ‘quia non sua erat: sed Neronis nunc a domitiano est sibi reddita & romanis’ (IIIv–IIIr.).

⁴ Niccolò Perotti, *Cornu Copiae* (1489) (ed. J.-L. Charlet and M. Furno (1989–)).

⁵ So too in the two rhinoceros epigrams, *Sp.* 11(9) and 26(22) (of which more below), ‘Blanditur Domitiano de pugna rhinocerotis’ (vol. 5, p. 21), ‘Rursus blanditur Domitiano de rhinocerote’ (vol. 6, p. 45). (Numeration of the epigrams varies. I follow here the scheme of Shackleton Bailey, op. cit. (n. 2).)

⁶ *De Amphitheatro Liber* (1584), 28–9.

⁷ L. Friedlaender, *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Libri* (1886), 134. In this he has been followed almost universally, e.g. of many instances, Carratello, op. cit. (n. 2), 11–12, who collects the parallel passages from Suet., *Titus* and Dio 66. Similarly F. della Corte, ‘*Gli Spettacoli di Marziale*’ (1986), 5–6, who finds in them ‘persuasive corrispondenze’; and now Coleman (see below).

⁸ R. Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games* (1972), *passim*.

grassatorum quasi latronum...'⁹ That is, the similarity in this detail between *Sp.* and the sources which refer to Titus' inaugural games is of no significance unless and until it is shown that those games were peculiar in this particular regard, which no-one has ever done or even attempted to do.

Again, Friedlaender is impressed that both Martial, writing of 'Caesar' (23(20)), and Suetonius, of Titus (8.2), refer to the emperor's personal response to the desires of the audience during the course of the games — i.e. it follows again that *Sp.* must refer to the inaugural games. But there is nothing particular about this: it is a standard trope. One can also cite *Domit.* 4.1, where the crowd can ask Domitian for any pair of his gladiators. Or again, Pliny says the same thing (*Pan.* 33): 'Impetratum est quod postulabatur, oblatum quod non postulabatur. Institit ultro et ut concupisceremus admonuit.' (Radice (Loeb), 'Requests were granted, unspoken wishes were anticipated, and [Trajan] did not hesitate to press us urgently to make fresh demands.') That is, it was customary for the emperor who produced the games and who was presiding over them, and bolstering his reputation by means of them (just as the Republican magistrates had done), to banter with the crowd and adjust the event to popular demand.¹⁰ In this detail too there is nothing to associate *Sp.* specifically with Titus.

Again, Martial refers to the *naumachia* and to the other aquatic exercises conducted on the occasion celebrated by *Sp.* (27(24)–30(26)). This in fact does not co-ordinate with Suetonius, for this part of Martial's event took place in the Amphitheatre — at least that is the usual understanding of the text — while Suetonius says that the naval battle of the inaugural games was held 'in vetere naumachia', i.e. Augustus' *stagnum* (if that is in fact what he says: see below). Dio contrarily tells us that during the One-Hundred-Day celebrations Titus conducted two *naumachiae*, first in the Flavian Amphitheatre, then in Augustus' *stagnum* (66.25). Whether or not this is correct, Suetonius reports that the Flavian Amphitheatre was also used by Domitian for at least one *naumachia* (*Domit.* 4.1).¹¹ So again, the parallel cannot be used to tie *Sp.* 27(24)–30(26), where no emperor is named, firmly to Titus.

All in all there is nothing in any of this accumulation of parallels that identifies the games of *Sp.* specifically as the inaugural games for the Flavian Amphitheatre. We might more profitably look to what is *not* parallel: for example, the Battle of Cranes, which is the very first example of the inaugural *θαύματα* listed by Dio, and therefore presumably one of the most memorable, but which is not mentioned in Martial. Conversely, one item that springs to the eye in Martial lies, or rather does not lie, in the detailed list of events provided by Dio: the performance of the most horrendous animal of them all, the rhinoceros (see below). That Dio's rich survey of the inaugural programme could have omitted the most remarkable animal event in it is difficult to believe. And the most striking instance of the parallels failing is Dio's account of the games that were presented specifically to inaugurate the Flavian Amphitheatre — that was their whole purpose — as against Martial's complete silence on that point.

These do not fit. The descriptions of displays and combats at the inaugural games drawn from Suetonius and Dio, regularly adduced by the modern students of Martial, do not establish the chronology of *Sp.*, because the alleged parallels actually omit some significant elements, while Martial's own descriptions will fit one or another of any substantial games. Coleman is the most recent to mark the parallels which she finds between

⁹ I owe this reference to Professor Erich Woytek, Vienna.

¹⁰ For interplay with the audience, see further Suet., *Claudius* 21. In that regard, the audience's annoyance at Caesar's concentrating on official paperwork during the performance of the games (Suet., *Aug.* 45.1) must have been owing to his lack of attention, not to the spectacles, but to *them*.

¹¹ How this was done is another matter. 'Lo svolgimento di naumachie in età flavia costituisce tuttora problema aperto: l'analisi delle fonti contemporanee e le ridotte dimensioni dell'arena sembrano escludere un suo utilizzo in tal senso.' (R. Rea in E. M. Steinby, *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* vol. 1 (1993), s.v. Amphitheatrum, 34.) For the most recent view of the locus, L. C. Lancaster, 'The process of building the Colosseum', *JRA* 18 (2005), 61.

the description of the games of *Sp.* and those of the inaugural games of Titus as mentioned in Suetonius and Dio, so that taking these all to describe the same event ‘is a reasonable inference’.¹² But what is missing, as has always been missing from this argument, is the evidence from other games demonstrating that the three accounts concern a single subject so uniquely remarkable in itself. The common elements found between *Sp.* and the authors — the *venationes*, the animal fights, the performances by trained animals, the gladiatorial exhibitions — are simply *grosso modo* the common elements of any elaborate *Ludi*, and so, unless one can adduce some specific evidence to the contrary (and no-one has), they add nothing to the argument that *Sp.* describes specifically Titus’ inaugural games.

When the connection of *Sp.* with the games of A.D. 80 has apparently been confirmed on the basis of these filmy comparisons, not only is it seen as ‘a glorification of Titus’,¹³ but there is then room for additional speculation: the emperor Titus himself must have acted as sponsor for *Sp.*, ‘which was perhaps published with the direct encouragement and gratitude of the emperor Titus himself...’¹⁴ For this fancy there is of course no evidence at all.

Beyond the parallels in general are questions concerning the attributions of individual epigrams. To take the most obvious example from Friedlaender, he accepts that some of the epigrams in *Sp.* might refer to Domitian rather than to Titus, noting particularly 11(9) and 26(22) with respect to Domitian’s rhinoceros coinage (pp. 135–6). But he was so wedded (like everyone else) to what was by then the conventional attribution of *Sp.* to Titus that he was not able to assign the rest of it to Domitian too, suggesting rather, as have others, that the text of *Sp.* in its present state is the result of contamination; or perhaps it represents a second edition, a later, Domitianic, series of Martial’s epigrams on the arena having been mixed into the original one attributed traditionally to Titus (p. 137).¹⁵ This, of course, rather spoils the point that *Sp.* was intended to celebrate one particular event. Note well: the view that *Sp.* is a mixture does not arise from anything in its structure, which can easily be taken to be a unity (even if incomplete); it is a device of modern criticism intended to accommodate the conflicting Titus/Domitian attributions of individual epigrams.

There certainly are problems. *Sp.* 34(30; 28).1, where *hic* indicates a change of scene from the Amphitheatre, seems to be supported by Suetonius’ report that the *naumachia* of the inaugural games did not take place in the Amphitheatre but ‘in veteri naumachia’ (*Titus* 7.3). But the epigram can be taken to say that ‘Caesar’ has already previously celebrated water-games in the Amphitheatre and the Circus (*sc.* Flaminius),¹⁶ and it therefore might not refer to Titus, and cannot refer to his inaugural games.¹⁷

Dio, writing much later, contradicts Suetonius, claiming that two *naumachiae* took place during the inaugural games, of which one was held in the Amphitheatre, the other in Augustus’ *stagnum*. One way to solve this contradiction is to re-evaluate Suetonius’ text: ‘... nemini ante se [*sc.* Titum] munificentia minor, amphiteatro dedicato thermisque iuxta celebriter extractis munus edidit apparatusissimum largissimumque; dedit et navale

¹² Coleman, *op. cit.* (n. 1), xlvii, xlix.

¹³ Sullivan, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 9.

¹⁴ Sullivan, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 6. Cf. J.-L. Hennig, *Martial* (2003), 69–70, ‘probablement l’ouvrage est-il né d’une sollicitation du prince ou de son entourage’.

¹⁵ Perhaps, it has been suggested, a considered re-editing by the author himself. The *locus classicus*, post-Friedlaender, is A. Dau, *De M. Valerii Martialis libellorum ratione temporibusque* (1887). Coleman, *op. cit.* (n. 1), lix–lxiv, now considers the problem, leaving the solution open.

¹⁶ While the term Circus Flaminius may likely refer to an area rather than a building, there is evidence that water events could be held there: in A.D. 2 Augustus presented a crocodile hunt in a flooded area (Dio 55.10.8). There appears to be no evidence for aquatic activity in the Circus Maximus. See Steinby, *op. cit.* (n. 11), s.vv. Circus.

¹⁷ The reading of the text is clear; its meaning is not. Coleman, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 249 prints ‘in circo spectatur et amphiteatro’ (i.e. *an* amphitheatre), but notes, ‘Some editors print *circo* and *amphitheatro* with a capital letter, perhaps rightly (i.e. the Circus Maximus and the Flavian Amphitheatre). But the more inclusive the repertoire that is replicated in the *stagnum*, the more imperial the compliment’ (256). That is of course a matter of judgement.

proelium in veteri naumachia . . .'. This is usually taken to mean that the naval part of the One-Hundred-Day celebrations was held not in the Amphitheatre but in the *stagnum*; but that reading may be for us retrospective, with *Sp.* already in view. Suetonius' text is ambiguous. It is a statement not about games but about Titus' generosity to the people. That is, if Suetonius is accumulating examples of Titus' expenditures intended to enlarge public happiness, he might have meant to cite four separate instances: the Amphitheatre, the Baths, the *munus* (= the inaugural games, *edidit*) and a (not *the*) naval battle (*dedit et*).¹⁸ In that case Suetonius is talking about four different things, he is not a source for any naval battles connected with the inaugural games, there is no contradiction, and we can accept Dio's account of two *naumachiae*.

But the problem remains, does *Sp.* 34(30; 28) have to do with Titus? The very fact that the ancient authors refer specifically to emperors' *naumachiae* and other water activities indicates that those were remarkable events, large and costly, requiring as they did even the excavation of entire lakes for the purpose, followed by the presentation of whole sea-battles.¹⁹ To assign *Sp.* 34(30; 28) to Titus we would have to cram at least three and perhaps four different instances of these most difficult and expensive aquatic activities into the less than two years of Titus' reign: (1–2) on Dio's testimony, the original sea-battles of the One-Hundred-Day Games, held both in the Amphitheatre and in Augustus' *stagnum*; (3) the Circus event mentioned in epigram 34(30; 28).9; and possibly (4) depending on whether Suetonius' report refers to a *naumachia* as part of, or not part of, the inaugural games — and all this when Titus also had to cope with a number of calamities — both a widely destructive fire and the plague at Rome, and the Campanian disaster of Vesuvius (*Titus* 8.3).

Obviously something is wrong: the extreme possibilities are that Dio is inaccurate, Suetonius' text is misread, and Martial's is misattributed. In any case there is nothing in *Sp.* 34 that points specifically to Titus, nothing to discourage its attribution to Domitian.

Similar problems with the attribution of single epigrams found expression in the nineteenth century; the literature today rather tends in general to ignore the difficulties and to attribute the whole of *Sp.* to Titus in A.D. 80, *tout court*,²⁰ without regard to the fact that in over five centuries of intense study and dispute no-one has ever been able to tie a single one of its epigrams to Titus unequivocally, or, *a fortiori*, specifically to the inaugural games of A.D. 80. It is only recently that Lorenz has actually taken the trouble to examine the text and the argument critically, and to point out that they will not sustain the certainty with which the Titus attribution of *Sp.* is customarily asserted. Coleman now leaves the question in the air.²¹

¹⁸ J. C. Rolfe's translation nicely illustrates the ambiguity of Suetonius' text: 'At the dedication of his amphitheatre and of the baths which were hastily built near it he gave a most magnificent and costly gladiatorial show. He presented a sham sea-fight too [*et*] in the old naumachia.' Does 'too' attach to the show, indicating that the sea-fight was part of the dedicatory games, or to the general idea of Titus' expenditure as emperor, in which the *naumachia* was a spectacle additional to and other than the celebration for the amphitheatre and the baths? (*Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (1913–14)).

¹⁹ Steinby, *op. cit.* (n. 11), vol. 3 (1996), s.vv. Naumachia. Although some of the ancient references are uncertain, *naumachiae* seem to have been excavated at least by Caesar, Augustus, Domitian, Trajan, and Philip (for the millennial games); and the existing ones were used by subsequent emperors. Augustus' gigantic *stagnum*, covering almost 200,000 square metres, required its own aqueduct and took (it is estimated) two weeks to fill. It was used as well by Tiberius, Nero, and Titus. For the events see K. M. Coleman, 'Launching into history: aquatic displays in the early Empire', *JRS* 83 (1993), 48–74, greatly detailed.

²⁰ Doubt is suppressed. Compare the direct attribution to Titus by Sullivan, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 6, cited above, with his p. 8 n. 18, 'The case made out for the emperor being addressed being Domitian is weak'. That is, the case for Titus is arguable, whether successfully or not, but he does not bother to argue it.

²¹ S. Lorenz, *Erotik & Panegyrik. Martials epigrammatische Kaiser* (2002), 57–9, 82; Coleman, *op. cit.* (n. 1), xlv–lxiv, suggesting at the end that *Sp.* could be a composite work, or the remains of a work, compiled by Martial himself from earlier materials, possibly involving both Titus and Domitian, or even not deliberately referring to any particular emperor — 'an idealized abstraction' (lxiv). 'The "Caesar" of most of the epigrams must remain a tantalizing puzzle.'

A final line of approach to the attribution to Titus has been based not on the text of *Sp.* but the tone. ‘The opening triad of epigrams, celebrating the triumph of the Flavian amphitheatre, makes it sound brand-new, which would be an obstacle to a Domitianic dating for the whole collection.’²² Whether ‘Caesar’ is Titus or Domitian — for he cannot be anyone else — the emperor’s minstrel is obviously going to provide the most flattering address. The Amphitheatre, an astonishing building, was produced by the administration in which both Titus and Domitian served under Vespasian, and Domitian again under Titus (e.g. COS VI and VII); and it was a building owed to the Flavian family. The wondrous contrast between it and the more pedestrian Wonders of the World (*Sp.* 1) is apposite at any time, as is the contrast between Neronian greed and Flavian generosity (*Sp.* 2). A building does not have to be new to be marvellous,²³ and anyhow the text does not say that this building was new.

Moreover, if novelty is required for the occasion, there is evidence that the Amphitheatre was not completed under Titus anyway, though he was the first to hold games in it, but under Domitian who went on with the building ‘usque ad clypea’.²⁴ Praise of the building is entirely suitable for epigrams proffered to Domitian, and there is nothing in *Sp.* 1–2 that requires attribution to Titus.

II

To disentangle this problem let us turn to more palpable evidence — the rhinoceros, celebrated by Martial twice, in *Sp.* 11(9) and 26(22). Martial, and Domitian as we will see, both make a lot out of the rhinoceros; yet, to repeat, it is not so much as mentioned by Dio in his account of the inaugural festivities of the Flavian Amphitheatre.

Consider the rhinoceros as an element of the games.²⁵ First, it is enormous, the largest of all land animals save the elephant. The adult rhinoceros can weigh as much as three or four tons. Next, it is funny-looking. Apparently clothed in metal plates, it looks as if it has sprung fully-armed from the brow of Nature. It has two horns,²⁶ but unlike those borne by any of the self-respecting *Bovidae* they sprout not from the temples but from the middle of its face.²⁷

Now while the rhinoceros is entertaining to observe, when undisturbed it is naturally diffident, and seems to be a disappointing animal for the games. A strict vegetarian, in nature it attacks no other animal for food but is content to munch the placid shrub. This is not very promising for the arena (‘non promisit proelia’, *Sp.* 11(9).2). But the unexpected aspect of this preposterous quadruped is its explosive anger and incredible power when annoyed. Its temper is uncertain: you might have to work at disturbing it (‘sollicitant ... desperabantur promissi proelia Martis’, *Sp.* 26(22).1–3), but when sufficiently provoked it attacks ferociously (‘terribilis in iras’), propelling its tonnage at 30 miles per hour (48 kph), an attack which hardly anything in nature can withstand, while bellowing a variety of frightening noises.²⁸ The expectant Roman audience could rely on the usual lion or bull or

²² I owe thanks to the anonymous reader.

²³ e.g., King’s Chapel, Cambridge, ‘one of the great masterpieces of English Gothic’ (*Encyclopedia of World Art* (1962), vol. 6, 761 — four and a half centuries after the building’s completion).

²⁴ Among many other building works: *Chronogr.* a. 354, p. 146.

²⁵ On animals in the games, G. Jennison, *Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome* (1937); on the games in general, R. C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (1999); on the rhinoceros in the Roman context, J. M. C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (1973), who dedicates ch. VIII to the rhinoceros, 125–7.

²⁶ Anyhow the African ones do.

²⁷ H. Belloc, *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*, in *Cautionary Verses* (1940). ‘You have a horn where other brutes have none: / Rhinoceros, you are an ugly beast.’

²⁸ ‘The most ferocious beast in existence.’ (Mr Mulliner, in ‘The Ordeal of Osbert Mulliner’, P. G. Wodehouse, *Mr. Mulliner Speaking* (n.d.), 109.) On the Biblical bravery of the rhinoceros, see the Clementine Vulgate, *Numbers* 23.22 = 24.8, ‘[Iacob] cuius fortitudo similis est rhinocerotis’. (But the animal here may be a creation of Jerome: it is found in neither the Hebrew text (‘wild-ox’) nor the LXX, the latter identifying it only by the adjective μονοκέρατος (*KJV*, ‘an unicorn’)).

bear to maul, dismember, and (save for the bull) devour its helpless victim, man or beast, with gratifying savagery. But the lion fled in terror from the rhinoceros, and the bear it tossed in the air like a bundle of straw (*Sp.* 26(22).11; 11(9).4; xiv.53). No wonder that Martial rebukes the impatient audience (*Sp.* 26(22).12): the rhinoceros has to be provoked, but once that is achieved nothing can withstand it and it puts on a wonderful show.²⁹

It is clear too from Martial's vocabulary that the triumph of the rhinoceros is emphatic: the animal 'praestitit proelia' (*Sp.* 11(9)). In the setting of the games, where every kind of wild beast, and men equipped with every kind of weapon, attacked each other in every kind of permutation and mauled and killed each other by the hundreds, one could have expected *proelium*, a word for 'battle', to occur regularly. But for Martial the word must have meant an attack so powerful as to be suggestive of actual warfare, for in fact throughout *Sp.* it is found only three times. At 34(30; 28).7 it stands for an entire sea-battle: Nereus 'parat saevis ratibus fera proelia'. Otherwise Martial uses it just twice, on both occasions of the rhinoceros's attack (11(9).2; 26(22).3). 'Overwhelming ferocity' might convey the right tone.

Similarly, *praestitit* is a pregnant term (compare the relatively flat sense of *affero*, *defero*, *offero*). *Praesto* is not 'offer'. When intransitive the verb conveys immediate importance: 'to stand out, be eminent, be superior'. The transitive verb continues the notion: 'to surpass in . . ., to excel in . . ., to be responsible for . . ., to be the one who . . .', where the emphasis is placed on the actor rather than the agendum.³⁰ Render 'Praestitit proelia' as, 'unlike any other of the beasts in the arena the rhinoceros was responsible for creating sheer war'. It was a phenomenon in itself.

III

The rhinoceros was also rare, and had seldom been seen in the city before. It had been included in the assortment of weird and wonderful animals exhibited at the inauguration of the Theatre of Pompey in 55 B.C., and several decades later Augustus exhibited one in the Saepta. But it was always unfamiliar — Augustus exhibited 'quid invisitatum dignumque cognitu [erat]' — and no doubt expensive.³¹ The latest reference to the beast at Rome prior to *Sp.* is its appearance in the games three-quarters of a century earlier, games held in the name of Germanicus, A.D. 8 (Dio 55.33.4). After *Sp.* there is only a single textual reference to a rhinoceros appearing in the Flavian Amphitheatre, under Antoninus Pius. In the third century, when the art of supplying the games with animals by the thousands had long been well developed, the millenarian games presented by Philip in A.D. 248 included no fewer than sixty lions, thirty-two elephants, but just one rhinoceros.³²

²⁹ Martial's rhinoceros also tossed two steers, while the buffalo and the bison just ran away (26(22).9–10). That the rhinoceros was impressive and memorable is shown by its inclusion, in spite of its rarity, among the animal reliefs of the Templum Divi Vespasiani (E. Rodríguez-Almeida, 'Marziale in Marmo', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 106 (1994), 202, fig. 2).

³⁰ *Sp.* 34 (30; 28).9–10, 'quidquid et in Circo spectatur et Amphitheatro, id dives, Caesar, praestitit unda tibi' ('Whatever is viewed . . . the wealth of your water has afforded you', trans. Shackleton Bailey, op. cit. (n. 2)) — that is, it was precisely the wealth of water that made these successes possible. Cf. 1.12.5, 'hic rudis aestivas praestabat porticus umbras' ('Here a crumbling colonnade used to offer summer shade', trans. Shackleton Bailey, op. cit. (n. 2)) — that is, it was precisely the presence of the colonnade that created the welcome shade. Ironically in Lucan 2.228–9: 'nec plus Victoria Sullae praestitit invisas penitus quam tollere partes' — that is, that Victory, than which nothing can produce more glorious results, brought Sulla no more than the slaughter of his enemies.

³¹ Pliny, *NH* 8.29.71, mentions the rhinoceros at the games of Pompey, and another, undated, which had been seen to attack an elephant. On Augustus' exhibit, Suet., *Aug.* 43.4. Dio 51.22.5 has a rhinoceros killed in the games of 29 B.C., 'seen at Rome for the first time', wrongly.

³² On the Flavian Amphitheatre, D. Augenti, *Spettacoli del Colosseo nelle cronache degli antichi* (2001), 140 (Antoninus Pius, *SHA* 10.9). The rhinoceros could, of course, have appeared elsewhere, and Dio tells us that Commodus himself was a rhinoceroticide (72(73 Loeb).10.3), and that Caracalla rejoiced in their slaughter (77(78 Loeb).6.2). Pausanias saw one in Rome at some time during the second half of the second century (9.21.2). It is otherwise not mentioned until Philip (*SHA Gordians* 33.1–2).

But against the expense, and apparently the difficulty of acquiring one, the rhinoceros had an advantage over other beasts, not mentioned by Martial but perhaps to be inferred from him: it was re-usable. The poet remarks on the bloody fate of many an animal in the arena (*Sp.* 12(10)–17(15), 21(18)–22(19)), and the Roman audience was so jaded that it expected beasts in any set of games to be slaughtered by the score;³³ but nothing is said in *Sp.* of hunting the rhinoceros. Since the animal was such a good show, whether simply on exhibit or when fighting in the arena, we could well expect it to have been preserved to be produced publicly on more than one occasion.

IV

Now it is well-known, at least to numismatists, that Domitian struck a small copper coin, a quadrans, with the image of a rhinoceros (Fig. 1).³⁴ Friedlaender was aware of it, without understanding its implications, but it is usually not referred to at all by the philologists; and even if they do nod briefly in its direction, they are not concerned to investigate it, it being simply another forgettable fragment of the physical *débris* of ancient Rome.³⁵ Over more than five centuries swarms of philologists have agonized over the date and the identification of ‘Caesar’ in the various epigrams of *Sp.*, yet not one of them has ever looked seriously at the numismatic evidence. In fact, that issue of coin was a notable phenomenon in itself, and is essential to the argument here.

A brief history of Roman numismatic typology: under the Republic the types of the coinage — the images on both faces of the coin — originally celebrated the protective deities of the city and the coin itself was labelled with the name ROMA. But in the second century B.C., by a process which we do not understand, the civic types of the standard silver denomination, the denarius, were converted by the annual moneyers into publicity for themselves and their families, celebrating victories won by their ancestors, festivals initiated, public buildings raised; and the very label ROMA was replaced by the moneyers’ own signatures. In the ensuing civil wars, the generals who produced their own coin did the same, most notably Caesar and the Triumviri R.P.C. There being no longer any fixed national types for them to follow, they created their own personal types, often including their own portraits, and they signed the coins themselves. It is not surprising then that during the reign of Augustus virtually all coin of whatever metal and denomination came to celebrate the emperor. Thereafter the imperial portrait, with name and titles, normally appeared on the obverse, with reference to the emperor’s virtues and accomplishments on the reverse.

It is difficult for us to appreciate how remote the emperor was from the ordinary Roman in the absence of any means of communicating instantly and widely. The coinage filled that gap to an extent which to us, in our own culture, might seem limited, but the types and legends of the coins communicate, and they reveal what those in power believed to be important to communicate. Thus the coinage was the primary means by which the emperor’s portrait was made available, the affirmation not just of his presence but of his power. The reverse types too all pointed to him, suggesting his many accomplishments on behalf of the *res publica*. Even the old favourites were gathered under his aegis: the Republican Concordia was now CONCORDIA AVGVSTI; Pax was no longer simply the Republican spirit but had become PAX AVGVSTA, initiated by and maintained under the patronage of the emperor; and so on.

³³ e.g., as early as the games celebrating the opening of Pompey’s theatre in 55 B.C., 500 lions were killed (Dio 39.38). Suetonius claims that 5,000 animals were despatched in just one of Titus’ games (*Titus* 7.3). And so it went in general.

³⁴ H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, vol. 2 (1930), 411 nos 496–500. On the basis of the coin Mattingly implies the attribution of *Sp.* to Domitian, I believe correctly (p. xcv).

³⁵ e.g. della Corte, *op. cit.* (n. 7), who both adverts to the coin, and dismisses it, in a single sentence (p. 6).



FIG. 1. Quadrans of Domitian featuring the image of a rhinoceros (obverse and reverse). Twice actual size.

The whole of the coinage of the Empire had become typologically a political instrument, evolving richly under the Flavians. Vespasian, consolidating his power in A.D. 71, his first full calendar year back in Rome, announced on his brass sestertii alone no fewer than forty types recording his accomplishments — *IVDAEA CAPTA*, *LIBERTAS RESTITVTA*, *ROMA RESVRGE[N]S*, and on and on — with yet others on the dupondii and the copper asses — these the metals most widely found in everyday use. Every coin bore a type which was a message, encouraging not just your understanding but your grateful and enthusiastic acceptance of the emperor. The richness of the types on the Flavian *aes* was continued under Titus, then under Domitian, the variety in number being enhanced too by further innovation, and all bearing on the emperor.

As to Domitian's rhinoceros quadrantes, the point cannot be made too strongly that such a type was completely unprecedented on the coinage of Imperial Rome. The only possible analogy is the famous denarius of Octavian struck (not at Rome) a century earlier than Domitian's coin, bearing the image of a crocodile and the legend *AEGYPTO CAPTA*, where the animal is not just an animal but represents its captured country.³⁶ Similarly, it is wrong to write off the rhinoceros of Domitian's coin casually, as if the coin were a picture postcard from the zoo: 'This is a rhinoceros'. No, coin types are pointed. Everything has to do with imperial advertisement and with its importance at the moment of issue: 'This is *my* rhinoceros'. Domitian's rhinoceros, in its supremacy in the arena, might well stand as a metaphor for the invincible success of the emperor himself, the all-conquering general who had recently assumed the historically-weighted title of *Germanicus*. It was that beast which was chosen to represent on the coins the whole of the games in which it appeared so predominantly, and indeed to represent the power behind the games.³⁷

There is more here than just the introduction of an unprecedented type: its appearance is sudden and unique in time. For years the smallest denominations in circulation had been the semis and quadrans, fractions of the as. Those produced by Domitian bore a limited variety of obverse types running regularly through the fifteen years of his reign: early on his portrait, then mostly Minerva and Ceres, then Apollo.³⁸ The one exception was the

³⁶ Mattingly, *op. cit.* (n. 34), vol. 1 (1923), 106, nos 650–4, 28 B.C. The crocodile captured (= Egypt subdued) is most vividly represented chained to a palm tree on the well-known bronze of Nemausus (C. H. V. Sutherland, *Roman Imperial Coinage* vol. 1² (1984), 51–2, nos 154–61, beginning *c.* 20 B.C.).

³⁷ Even the way the type is laid out on the coin is significant. The almost invariable figuration on the obverse of the gold, silver, and larger *aes* coins of Domitian was of course the portrait of the emperor himself; on the fractions of the as, the head of Domitian, or of a divinity — or in this case the rhinoceros. In the numismatic catalogues the rhinoceros is conventionally taken to be the reverse type, but the traditional reverse legend *S[enatus] C[onsulto]* falls on the other face so that the rhinoceros must be taken to appear on the obverse, where you could expect the imperial portrait.

³⁸ Mattingly, *op. cit.* (n. 34): (A) for pre-*Germanicus*, A.D. 81–83: 409, nos 481, 485–6; (B) for *Germanicus*, A.D. 83–85: 409–411, nos 482–4, 487–500; (C) with consular dating, A.D. 85–96: 367–8, nos 318–22; 379, nos 369–70; 391, no. 418; 401, nos 453–7; 405†; 409*. To be revised and enlarged in I. Carradice and T. V. Buttrey, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 2.1 (2nd edn, Flavians), in progress.

rhinoceros issue, which broke into this sequence. It can be dated fairly narrowly, to within the years A.D. 83–85. It bears the legend IMP DOMIT AVG GERM, and so was struck after the assumption of the title *Germanicus* in late 83.³⁹ In A.D. 85 the mint revised the imperial legend on the fractional coinage by adding the consular date, IMP DOMIT AVG GERM COS XI, etc., to the end of the reign. So the rhinoceros quadrans falls between.⁴⁰

Finally, not only was this issue produced out of series, and just once, it was struck in enormous numbers: of all the issues of the fractions of the as coined during the whole of Domitian's fifteen-year reign, this is the most common today, surviving in twice the number of even the next most common of Domitian's fractions.⁴¹ And since the quadrans was the smallest denomination in circulation, it could be produced most cheaply in huge quantities and would be sure to circulate everywhere. One can imagine them being showered upon the crowds, as Martial attests was done under Domitian on other occasions.⁴² The quadrans was intended for the crowd, not for those who would never have handled such small change.⁴³

Domitian's coin was the objective correlative, one might say, of the appearance of his rhinoceros in his games. Everyone had the opportunity to see the rhinoceros, everyone could have a reminder of it in a coin which was likely to circulate most widely at the lowest level of the currency. Just as the games were the supreme expression of popular entertainment, the rhinoceros quadrans was their permanent record through the image of the spectacular beast provided by the emperor. It is true that on the coin at this small size, about 18 mm, the rhinoceros can appear to be a kind of amiable bug, but coins and their images come in all sizes and there would have been no difficulty in understanding the reality. In fact on some dies the rhinoceros is shown with head down, poised in readiness to toss another bear in the air.

There is yet further evidence that the issue of the rhinoceros quadrans was of major importance, viz. the general rarity of any reference to any games upon the coinage at all. In A.D. 80 Titus memorialized the One-Hundred-Day Games — but only these — with a coinage in gold and silver bearing on the reverse the figure of an elephant.⁴⁴ Domitian presented innumerable rich and wonderful games and other celebrations (Suet., *Domit.*

³⁹ In the past some have preferred A.D. 84 (e.g. Friedlaender, op. cit. (n. 7), 51), but the numismatic evidence for A.D. 83 is certain, the essential coin, an aureus in Glasgow, having been struck between 14 September and the end of the year (A. S. Robertson, *Roman Imperial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet, University of Glasgow*, vol. 1 (1962), 284 no. 13). See T. V. Buttrey, *Documentary Evidence for the Chronology of the Flavian Titulature* (1980) (= *Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie* 112), 54–6.

⁴⁰ This on the basis of the legend, although there is some reason to suppose that the Rome mint might not have been striking bronze in A.D. 83 (see Carradice and Buttrey, op. cit. (n. 38)).

⁴¹ In a sample survey of Domitian's fractions, of 337 specimens found in published catalogues and representing a random spread from the whole of his rule, the rhinoceros quadrans totalled 74, against which,

(A): the pre-*Germanicus* types, A.D. 81–83, produced: Domitian/cornucopiae (12 pieces); Domitian/ship (1); Minerva/wreath (17);

(B): *Germanicus*, A.D. 83–85, produced: Ceres/grain (18); Ceres/modius (36); Ceres/ship (2); Ceres/SC (1); Minerva/olive (34); Minerva/owl (25); Minerva/SC (4); Minerva/wreath (38); trophy/olive (7);

(C): with consular dating, A.D. 85–96, produced: Apollo/raven COS XI (10); COX XV (34); COS XVI (8); Minerva/owl COS XII (11); COS XIII (5).

In an unpublished accumulation of bronze find coins from the Caelian, in the Museo Capitolino, Rome, half of the fractions of the as from the whole of Domitian's reign are of the single rhinoceros quadrans issue.

⁴² viii.78.9. The coins or tokens there are described as 'lascivia nomismata', which some editors have taken to mean 'obscene', and therefore to involve the so-called *spintriae*, most of which actually appear to have been produced under the Julio-Claudians. The adjective first means simply 'playful', in this case describing the coins as they fall haphazardly through the air, and is used by Martial elsewhere in that sense. For the references and discussion see T. V. Buttrey, 'The *spintriae* as a historical source', *Numismatic Chronicle* (1973), 56. See also the scattering of tesserae in Suet., *Domit.* 4.5: 'pars maior intra popularia deciderat.'

⁴³ cf. the immensely wealthy Nubar Gulbenkian, who purchased a London taxicab as his limousine: 'It can turn on a sixpence, whatever that is'.

⁴⁴ Mattingly, op. cit. (n. 34), 231, nos 42–8. The Amphitheatre itself, as against the games held in it, was figured on an issue of brass sestertii (Mattingly, 262, nos 190–1). But their issue was surprisingly small, and few survive today.

4.1),⁴⁵ but they were not memorialized by special coin issues save for two exceptional occasions. In A.D. 88, on the celebration of the incomparable Secular Games, he produced gold and silver coinage with special types; but he also inserted into the regular run of established *aes* types a large and special issue of sestertii, dupondii, and asses reading LVD SAEC FEC, and illustrating not simply the events — indeed not the games proper at all — but the emperor's role in creating and sustaining the *ludi*: of about a dozen different scenes figured on the *aes* coinage all but one display Domitian himself prominently engaged in some act of piety or generosity.⁴⁶

On only one other occasion did Domitian call public attention to his games by means of the coinage, by the issue of the rhinoceros quadrantes at some point in A.D. 83–85, not just memorializing the games but employing the single most striking image to recall them all. In making such a fuss about his rhinoceros, he interrupted the regular series of copper fractions to produce a one-off issue of Imperial coins with this unexampled type, striking them in very large quantities calculated to circulate everywhere. Titus' celebratory issue in A.D. 80 had consisted only of gold and silver; Domitian's copper rhinoceros quadrantes, struck in far greater numbers, were for everyone.

V

To recapitulate, the association of Titus with the *Liber de spectaculis* was never a good idea. It was just a guess, which came to be promoted imperceptibly to a historical fact. Today practically the whole of the discipline seems to be locked into this position, although no-one has ever been able to link a single one of its epigrams with certainty to Titus. As to the games described by Martial in *Sp.*, he is extravagant in praising their locus, the Flavian Amphitheatre, but there is no getting around the fact that in delineating the games which are his subject he makes no mention of the most prominent features of those that were celebrated in A.D. 80, features that make them unique, viz. that they were special in celebrating the inauguration of the great building, and that they were of unprecedented length in extending for over three months. Nothing of this in Martial; by contrast compare Horace, *Carmen Saeculare* 21–4, composed for a special occasion, where you learn from the poet exactly what is going on. The attribution of *Sp.* to the inaugural games of A.D. 80 was a fantasy of Lipsius, taken as proved throughout almost all the subsequent philological tradition, stated today uncritically as fact, or imaginatively inferred from apparent parallels in the literature. Lorenz is right: on the philological evidence alone the case cannot be made.

Coleman now goes further, in effect deconstructing *Sp.* altogether. Faced with several epigrams which 'point to the inauguration of the Flavian amphitheatre under Titus', and the rhinoceros epigrams which 'point to a date under Domitian', she elaborates the possibility alluded to above (see n. 1), viz. that the original work might itself have been a *mélange* of Martial's own making, combining *varia* composed earlier, and for either of the emperors, yet at the same time composing 'a work thematically united and arranged broadly according to categories'.

One could not say that this is impossible, but it is unnecessary. Nothing compels us to attribute anything in *Sp.* to Titus save the long tradition of doing so. To repeat, for all that one might wish it not to be the case, none of the epigrams of *Sp.* can be tied to Titus or to the inaugural games. This has all been wishful thinking, depending ultimately on supposed tone and fragile parallels. Contrarily, there are (1) the specific references in *Sp.* to the spectacular rhinoceros, about which we hear nothing in any other ancient source with respect

⁴⁵ Nor should we forget the festivities surrounding the triumphal parades occasioned by the emperor's acclamation as *Imperator*, an honour which he awarded to himself no fewer than 22 times in the years A.D. 81–92. They all added up. Later Nerva had to cut back on the expenses of the games that he inherited from Domitian (Dio 68.2.3).

⁴⁶ Mattingly, *op. cit.* (n. 34), 392–7, nos 419–38A.

to Titus or the inaugural games, and (2) the specific promotion of the rhinoceros by Domitian on his coinage. In *Sp.* Martial emphasized its remarkable superiority to all the other animals in these games ('praestitit proelia'), while Domitian publicized it precisely as the image of games which he himself provided, calling attention to his spectacular contribution with a gigantic numismatic monument that survives plentifully even today.⁴⁷

The coins and the texts taken together make the point. There is no good reason to conclude that *Sp.* is other than a unity, no good reason — no hard evidence — to assign it or any part of it to Titus. It is to the years 83–85, and to the occasion of games held by Domitian in the Flavian Amphitheatre, that the whole of the *Liber de spectaculis* should be assigned.

To which games cannot be said. Coleman objects that it is 'perverse to postulate an entirely unattested ceremony under Domitian as the occasion celebrated in [*Sp.*].'⁴⁸ It is well-known that elaborate games (under Domitian, particularly elaborate) were celebrated in Imperial Rome again and again during the year, and repeatedly over the years — the Ludi Apollinares, Cereales, Florales, Megalenses, Plebeii, Romani survived from the Republic, the Augustales and Martiales were added under Augustus, Domitian himself instituted the Agon Capitolinus and, of course, held his own Saeculares. These were not all, and even privately-held games were possible. And a single Ludus could last several days. In this abundance of celebrations, that one of Domitian's is otherwise unattested is what you would expect; you would be surprised if it were not. Nothing is 'postulated': virtually *all* of the hundreds of specific celebrations of all emperors are today 'entirely unattested'. That is the nature of the evidence. There were games aplenty. We need have no fear in attributing the whole of the *Liber de Spectaculis* to one of Domitian's, in the period A.D. 83–85, as the salient figure of the rhinoceros testifies.

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⁴⁷ Note too the rhinoceros relief in the Templum Divi Vespasiani (see n. 29 above), a building whose ruins bear no overt date but which was attributed by the ancient chronographers to Domitian (S. De Angeli in Steinby, op. cit. (n. 11), vol. 4 (1999), s.v. Vespasianus, Divus, Templum, 124).

⁴⁸ Coleman, op. cit. (n. 1), lix.