P. Schenk: Pollmann, Statius, Thebaid 12
fers a less clear intertextual signal: ab, obwohl sie dort (S. 55) überzeugend die Passage Val. Fl. 5,429–432 als intertextuellen Bezug angeführt hatte, der genau den gewünschten Bezug bietet: tremidum…m annem (5,430). 601–05: Wenn P. mit Blick auf andere Stier-gleichnisse ausführt «The imagery does not only link the Theban past with the Theban present, but also integrates Theseus into the circle of Theban furor he cannot escape eventu-ally», ist anzumerken, daß die genannten Gleichnisse deutliche Unterschiede zeigen: In dem Eteokles gewidmeten Gleichnis (6,691–4) liegt der Fokus eindeutig nicht auf dem Jungstier(!), sondern auf dem Wolf, in den anderen (1,131–6; 2,123–30; 11,251–6) sind Zweitracht und Zorn die Vergleichsgegenstände, die in dem Lösung für Theseus keine Rolle spielen; hier ist die wiederverwachte Kampfkraft nach der vorangehenden Erschöpfung das Thema. Insofern wäre allenfalls 1,330–15 zu vergleichen, doch ist dort im weiteren Verlauf vom Haß, den Tydeus sät, die Rede – auch dies eine Differenz zur Beschreibung des The-sus. Ebensowenig zwingend ist die Auffassung, vom Haß, den Tydeus sät, die Rede – auch dies eine Differenz zur Beschreibung des The-


Gesamtergebnis: Der ausgezeichnete Kommentar stellt für jeden, der sich mit der Thebais beschäftigt, ein unverzichtbares Hilfsmittel dar und sei deshalb mit Nachdruck empfohlen.

Köln

Peter Schenk


In this demanding and provocative study of Martial’s ‘Epigrams’, Sven Lorenz (hereafter L.) interrogates the scholarly controversy over the panegyric tone adopted towards the emperor, and argues that there is a third way to negotiate the apparent impasse between interpreting it as base flattery or hidden criticism: Martial’s deliberately outrageous stance is designed to appeal to the emperor’s sense of humour by constructing a persona for him as well. Underpinning L.’s reading is the belief that the twelve numbered books, and the individual epigrams within each book, were arranged to be read in linear sequence. Echoes or adaptations of earlier motifs in later epigrams or books are therefore deliberate allusions, to be interpreted as intertextual resonances drawing attention to correspondences and dissonances in content or context. Similar convictions inform the study by L.’s doctoral supervisor, Niklas Holzberg, published in the same year (‘Martial und das antike Epigramm’ [Darmstadt 2002]), although L.’s dissertation is an entirely independent work, concentrating on the ‘imperial’ epigrams, and focussing much more closely on the three books that formed prolegomena to the numbered books, i.e. the Liber spectaculorum, Xenia (‘Book 13’), and Apophora (‘Book 14’); L. also offers a different solution to the major obstacle standing in the way of a linear reading of the twelve numbered books, namely Martial’s
L.'s book is divided into five parts. The first, ‘Noch ein Neuansatz zu einer Martial-
interpretation’, draws an eloquent distinction between the authorial ‘I’ of the epigrams and
the person, C. Valerius Martialis, who wrote them, demonstrating that the authorial per-
sonebefitting the epigrammatic genre accommodates attitudes – most obviously sexual
permissiveness and obscenity – that run counter to the official morality promoted by the
contemporary regime. L. contends that apparent contradictions in the authorial persona
emphasize that the characterization is a fiction. Another way of looking at this would be
to expect Martial to adopt different personae according to the topic, mood, occasion, or
addressee, thereby rendering the criterion of ‘consistency’ irrelevant, but such eclecticism
does not square with L.’s insistence on the internal coherence of each book as a carefully
crafted and integral whole.

The second of L.’s five parts, ‘Epigrammatische Vorübungen?’, begins with a welcome
analysis of the Liber spectaculorum, frequently neglected in contemporary scholarship. In
a book about Martial’s treatment of the emperor, the author might have become bogged
down in the question whether the ‘Caesar’ of Spect. is Titus or Domitian; while L. is admir-
ably sceptical about the modern assumption that the entire work has to celebrate the
opening of the Colosseum in AD 80, he demonstrates (82) that themes and topoi deter-
mine Martial’s treatment of the spectacles described in the book, and that such treatment
would remain predictable, no matter the identity of the individual emperor. L.’s analysis of
Spect. is doubly welcome, in that it treats poems in this puzzling work that are seldom dis-
cussed, such as Spect. 18 Lindsay (= 21 Shackleton Bailey), on the tiger that bit the hand
that trained it (Lambere secum dextram consueta magistri / tigris . . . saeva ferum rabido
lævervit dente leonem, 1–5). Martial’s conclusion, that human contact has made the beast
more savage (postquam inter nos est, plus feritatis habet, 6), is at odds with the tenor of the
work, which regularly stresses the emperor’s magical ability to tame and soothe nature;
but L. argues cogently that this epigram conveys the emperor’s might in a different way by
implying that, however savage their behaviour, the beasts are no match for man’s capacity
to subdue them (82).

This conclusion is consistent with L.’s method throughout the book, which is to seek
interpretations of individual epigrams that combine a panegyric attitude towards the em-
peror with a witty or paradoxical edge. This interpretative strategy avoids both the Scylla
of base flattery and the Charybdis of ‘Herrscherkritik’; in the rest of the book the picture
of a Domitian who has a sense of humour may strain the credulity of some, but it will
come as no surprise to those familiar with the sleights of hand performed by Statius in the
poem about the opening of the Via Domitiana (Silv. 4.3),1 and it amply illustrates L.’s
contention that Spect. is not a juvenile prelude to the numbered books but a work worthy
to stand alongside them as a representative of the genre – and the only surviving ancient
poetry-book devoted to contemporary spectacles. The coda to this part of L.’s book dis-
usses Xenia and Apophoreta, in which the ostensible format of gift-tags invites fewer ref-
ences to the emperor than arena spectacles; but L. shows that Domitian – perhaps we
should use inverted commas, ‘Domitian’, since by L.’s definition he is essentially a literary
construct – nevertheless informs both these collections, and that the same humorous asso-
ciations align these books with Spect. and with the tone of the numbered books.

The third part, ‘Epigrammatische persona und pudicus princeps’, discusses the nine
numbered books that were published in the reign of Domitian, and is accordingly the
longest section (98 pages). From internal references to these books by number, L. infers
(111) that Martial is making clear to his readers that the books are both independent enti-
ties and part of a connected whole (comprising, eventually, twelve books), and he identi-

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1 See most recently J. J. L. Smolenaars, Ideology and poetics along the Via Domitiana,
270; Brill 2006), 223–44.
fies the emperor as one of the motifs that bind the separate parts together. Accordingly, he reads the ‘imperial’ poems in linear sequence to trace the characterization of Domitian, first in a study of Books 1–4, ‘Der Kaiser als Leser und Wohltäter’ (111–42), then in 5–6, ‘Obszönität und Panegyrik’ (142–62), in 7–8, ‘Krieg und Triumph’ (163–87), and finally in Book 9, ‘Der Abschied von Domitian’ (187–208). L. emphasizes that, at the outset, the emperor is portrayed as a traditional pudicus princeps, in stark contrast to the tenor of the epigrams that are entrusted to his oversight. Martial resolves the contradiction not by compromising on obscenity, but instead by characterizing Domitian as an ideal reader who recognizes epigrammatic conventions and enters into the spirit of the genre (119). By Book 5, however, he claims to forego the obscene out of respect for the emperor, thereby emphasizing that obscenity is the default characteristic of his epigrams and, at the same time, playing with the reader’s expectations, although in Book 6 he reverts to type, sprinkling the book with outrageous epigrams, despite (or because of) the emperor’s topical efforts to revive the Augustan Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis. Scholars have been much exercised by this incongruity; L. finds a new way out of the impasse by arguing that, like the emperor himself, Martial’s Lex Iulia is a fictionalized construct that has little to do with Domitian’s actual legislation and instead plays with various stock themes of epigram (161–2). Hence, he can envisage Domitian entertained – rather than either grossly flattered or equally grossly insulted – by the treatment of his morality laws in the ‘Epigrams’.

A further interpretive conundrum is resolved by deft application of the concept of typisch epigrammatische Huldigungen (171), whereby L. demonstrates that, although the preface to Book 8 announces that pars libri et maior ad maiorem ad maestatem sacri nominis tui alligata [est], the greater focus on the emperor in the book does not entail a departure from the characteristically humorous tenor of epigram; rather than interpreting the new focus on the emperor as Martial’s response to an increasingly tyrannical and paranoid atmosphere, L. reads it as a purely literary move constituting the ‘naïve’ poet’s attempt to blend panegyric with the essentially irreverent spirit of the epigrammatic genre. Domitian’s appreciation of the parameters of epigram therefore enables him to take in the spirit in which they are offered poems that might otherwise seem tasteless, not to say subservive. An example is the sequence about the emperor’s eunuch Earinus, which L. characterizes as operating simultaneously as imperial flattery and «Unterhaltungsliteratur für die breite Leserschaft» (198). The glue that binds the treatment of imperial themes within all nine books is the persona of the poet, who simultaneously deploys naïve compliments and observes the conventions of erotic epigram, a mixture – so L. argues – with considerable potential as public entertainment.

The fourth part, ‘Das Schlussequenz’ (the title, in striking bold-face, illustrates the usefulness of the late lamented ‘scharfes s’), deals with the treatment of Nerva and Trajan in Book 11, the second edition of Book 10, and Book 12. L. argues that it is the Saturnalian context of Book 11, and not the proclivities of Nerva himself, that determines his lewd portrayal, which coheres with the innuendoes in Martial’s treatment of Nero, Numa, and Augustus in the same book (219). The new edition of Book 10 under Trajan, supplanting the first edition under Domitian, poses a challenge for a reading in which the literary construct trumps the historical circumstances. The lack of a dedication to Trajan within the first five epigrams gives L. the impression that the poet is withdrawing from literary and social life at Rome (224). This does not seem persuasive, given that in the second poem Martial advertises the fact that this is a second edition, thereby acknowledging the Domitianic origins of the book; it might well have seemed tactless to give Trajan overt responsibility for a book indisputably associated with his notorious predecessor, however sanitized in its fresh incarnation. L., however, is very reluctant to admit that Book 10 survives in a second edition at all, at least a second edition issued to supplant Domitianic associations in the original; rather, building upon an observation by Walter Allen, jr. (CJ 65, 1970, 345–57), he assumes that Book 10, with its notice of Martial’s pending retirement (10.104.13), was reissued between the publication of Books 11 and 12 in order to create a closing sequence that would not violate the canonical (epic) number of twelve books by adding one more. He argues that Book 9 is a fitting climax to the sequence flattering Domitian, and by a deft sleight of hand interprets Book 10 as a demonstration that Martial is not ashamed to
issue his Domitianic poems under Trajan, since they attest literary worth rather than historical circumstances. The conclusion to this part of L.’s study, while acknowledging the confluence of attitudes towards Trajan shared by Book 12 and Pliny’s Panegyricus, underlines the programme of a cohesive twelve-book work, controlled by an epigrammatic persona whose attitude towards the emperor is a mixture of naiveté, ambition, and sexual preoccupations.

The book comprises very detailed exposition, with dense footnotes and copious annotation. Readers whose German is not fluent might best start with the fifth part, ‘Schlussbemerkung: Historische Kaiser und literarische Panegyrik’, which offers a lucid summary of everything that precedes. L. follows the numbering of the epigrams in Lindsay’s Oxford Classical Text (2nd edition, 1929), rather than the numeration of Shackleton Bailey’s Teubner (1990), replicated in his Loeb edition (1993). The differences are slight, except in the case of the Liber spectaculorum, where readers with Shackleton Bailey’s editions at their elbow need to be alert. L. appends a translation of all the epigrams he quotes. Scholars who automatically consult the standard commentaries will do well to have L.’s book at their elbow also, since there is much profit to be derived from his shrewd treatment of individual epigrams, made readily accessible by the ample Stellenindex, which contains 23 columns of entries for Martial alone. The bibliography (over 500 items) shows considerable enterprise, quoting twelve unpublished dissertations from institutions in Britain and the United States, and several unpublished papers in both German and English.¹

‘Erotik und Panegyrik’ is the product of a vigorous and original mind. L.’s emphasis on a literary, rather than historicist, approach, avoids pitfalls such as a moralizing reading of the obscene poems, which are surely to be located rather in the epigrammatic tradition than in a moral crusade. But it does seem somewhat extreme to claim (49) that Martial’s readers would have known almost as little about his relations with the emperor as we do; they would at least have understood the norms of contemporary society, and been able to imagine the emperor’s attitudes and behaviour in the context of those norms. Indeed, it verges upon a counsel of despair to ignore what we know of the historical context just because we cannot know everything about it. L. is surely right, however, to argue that the confluence of the imperial and the obscene must have been intended to appeal to an emperor who was a literary connoisseur. If it is less easy to conceive of the ‘Epigrams’ as a twelve-book project determined by exclusively literary considerations, rather than as a series of opportunistic reactions to changing circumstances, L.’s thesis nevertheless highlights one of the most intriguing paradoxes of Martial’s oeuvre: the chess-game of negotiating contemporary social and political reality is played with the pieces of a highly stylized literary genre. Martial’s moves, as charted by L., demonstrate the brilliance of his game; if it turns out that L. has not correctly inferred his intentions, that will only serve to demonstrate that Martial always remains one step ahead of even his most feisty readers.

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¹ Slips are very few: note «Boatwright», «Catharine (Edwards)», <on> in Courtney’s title, «Literacy» in Harris’ title.