

The Ephemeral Gone Anecdote: Epigram as Memory Machine in Martial's *Liber Spectaculorum*

Reading Martial's epigrams as literary texts rather than as evidence for cultural history is a shift in scholarship that has only recently occurred and has been initiated by Sullivan (1991), Fowler (1995), and Holzberg (2002) among others. Coleman (2006) followed this approach in her commentary on Martial's *Liber Spectaculorum*. While her work provides an insight- and careful study of the major themes of the *Liber Spectaculorum* it leaves plenty of room for more detailed investigations of the individual epigrams. An essential gap in modern scholarship is an investigation of the relationship between the subject matter of the *Liber Spectaculorum*, spectacle which is ephemeral by nature, and its medium, epigram. Something that is ἐφήμερος, literally lasts only one day, while epigrams are inherently perpetual as they refer to something that is inscribed into a medium.

My paper is aiming to address this issue in two steps: The first part of my paper examines Martial's poetology through four aesthetic categories, which the second part then recognizes as formally related to anecdotes. An investigation of the applicability of this analogy follows by way of three case studies.

In the first part, I am suggesting four main aesthetic categories for Martial's poetology: Delight in graphic imagery, reduction and distillation of scales, frank engagement with a construed audience, and a fondness for puns. In the second part, my paper suggests that the aesthetic categories set up in the first part, link Martial's epigrams closely to the realm of anecdotal accounts. Anecdotes, namely, operate under similar aesthetic preconditions and facilitate repetition and recollection of their subject matter. Three case studies follow to prove my point.

I argue that Martial's epigrams of the *Liber Spectaculorum* subvert the tensions between ephemerality and sustainability by their mode of display as anecdotes. In conclusion, my paper, by closely examining the interplay of form and content of select epigrams within the *Liber Spectaculorum* highlights its function as a memory-machine and ultimately contributes to a fuller appreciation of Martial's poetry.

Bibliography:

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