

It's Always in the Last Place You Look: Martial 7.17.2

Martial 7.17, praising the suburban library of his friend Julius Martialis, begins:¹

Ruris bibliotheca delicati,
vicinam videt unde lector urbem,
.....

This is generally presumed to be the villa on the Janiculum which Martial (Marcus, I mean) describes in detail in 4.64, beginning and ending *Iuli iugera pauca Martialis*. The identification is hard to avoid, since that epigram has much more on the villa's view of all seven hills and of Alba Longa and Tusculum and other places, too (11-14):

hinc septem dominos videre montis
et totam licet aestimare Romam,
Albanos quoque Tusculosque colles
et quodcumque iacet sub urbe frigus,
.....

Having a library with a view of a nearby city is not all that impressive. The point is that this library has a view (not just a glimpse) of Rome, and that such views were extraordinarily expensive. Checking the two dozen or so texts of Martial on my shelves that include this poem, I find that the only one that capitalizes *Urbem*, 'the City', in 7.17.2 is the earliest, and one of the least respected, edited by 'quinque Parisiensis Academiae professores' and published by Lemaire in 1825.² Their orthography is unlikely to be original, since they claim none for their text: "Nos textum Scriverii, a Shrevelio recognitum, recepimus, denuo collatum a nobis cum Raderiano et Farnabiano" (lxxxi). Was *Urbem* the 18th-century and earlier vulgate? I suspect so, but the point is hardly important enough to justify a trip to the Rare Book Room. I will certainly capitalize the word in my web-text when I come to Book VII. Interestingly, the five French professors do not capitalize *urbe* in 4.64.14, quoted above. Should I?

¹ Text from Shackleton Bailey's Teubner (1990).

² I wonder whether the names of the professors are known: I have not found them in the front matter, though I haven't read all of it. Perhaps they did not wish to be associated with their explanations of some of the filthier passages.