

Martial's Allusive Clay Tableware in *Epigrams* 8.6 and 14.108

In *Epigram* 8.6 Martial mocks the supposedly valuable cups of Euctus, a man who claims an ancient, epic pedigree for his tableware during a dinner party. This poem is part of Martial's ongoing humorous depiction of art connoisseurship in Rome as well as one of his repeated references to forgeries (Schöffel, 2002; Henriksén, 2012). In particular Watson (1998) highlights how Euctus misremembers key epic moments in his descriptions of the tableware, thus revealing himself to be a fraud and his antique cups to be of little worth. One line in the poem has been overlooked in scholarship; however, it is the key for understanding Martial's larger self-representation in this epigram. In line two Martial contrasts his own personal taste for clay cups with Euctus' expensive originals. This paper considers the metapoetic and allusive potential of this line and shows that, in addition to mocking Euctus and his tableware, Martial uses the juxtaposition of cheap and expensive cups to engage in discussions of poetic genre.

I begin by highlighting the underlying Saturnalian framework of *Epigram* 8.6 and compare the list of tableware to Martial's lists of Saturnalian gifts (4.46, 7.53, *Xenia*, *Apophoreta*). Beyond the broad structure of the poem, Martial explicitly connects it to his earlier Saturnalian poetry through an internal allusion in line two (*Ficta Saguntino cymbia malo luto*, 8.6.2) to a distich about Saguntine cups in the *Apophoreta* (*Sume Saguntino pocula facta luto*, 14.108.2). Citroni (1989) has shown Martial to be a fundamentally Saturnalian poet, and I argue that the clay cups are not only a physical symbol of his Saturnalian poetry but also of his poetry at large. As a self-referential marker of Martial's poetry, the clay cups are a boastful representation of the epigrammatic genre in contrast to the satirical denigration of epic poetry as symbolized by Euctus' original silver cups. The allusion to Saguntine cups also engages

Martial's disavowal of the high genres of epic and tragedy by directing the reader to his collection, the *Apophoreta*, which opens with a refusal to write about epic themes (14.1).

Additionally, this talk addresses how the internal allusion to the *Apophoreta* participates in ongoing etymological debates about the adjective *fictilis* (earthen) as derived from either *facio* (to make) or *tingo* (to fashion). I draw from the explication of this debate in Tibullus 1.1 (Cairns, 1979) to show that Martial similarly partakes in learned etymologizing within his poetry through the switch from *facta* in 14.108 to *facta* in 8.6. In conjunction with Euctus' incorrect quotations and retellings of epic poetry, the shift between *facta* and *facta* as well as the transformation of *pocula* (cups) in 14.108 into *cymbia* (cups) in 8.6 presents a humorous reflection on the recollection of one's own poetry and the revision of ideas over time.

Ultimately, this talk analyzes how Martial expresses pride in the epigrammatic genre (specifically Saturnalian epigram) through allusive, metaliterary descriptions of clay tableware. More broadly, *Epigram* 8.6 shows how Martial grapples with issues of the status and social value of his writing both through the symbolic connection between commercial objects and poetry and the description of crafts generally.

Bibliography

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