

Lutum es: Human Care in Persius and Hyginus

Persius' third satire opens with the poet's persona groggily waking up and hurrying to work after being chastised by a fellow student for sleeping in. As he chides himself for his grumbling, he addresses himself thus (Clausen: 1992):

... tibi luditur. effluis amens,
contemnere. sonat vitium percussa, maligne
responede viridi non cocta fidelia limo.
udum et mole lutum es, nunc nunc properandus et acri
fingendus sine fine rota. sed rure paterno
est tibi far modicum, purum et sine labe salinum
(quid metuas?) cultrixque foci segura patella (3.20–6)

Harvey (1981:84) highlights how the traditional allegory about shoddy pottery creates an “incongruous picture” of the poet's need for personal development, but this passage concentrates many aspects of Persius' Stoic and satirical poetics. As Cucchiarelli (2005:62–80) highlights, the use of *cocta* recalls the programmatic *decoctius* at 1.125, a distillation of both philosophical wisdom as well as Persius' compressed style (investigated by Bellandi:1996), and Bartsch (2015:146) connects the image of the *acri rota* to Persius' programmatic *iunctura acri* of colloquial speech at 5.14. Delving deeper into the ceramic metaphor, Freudenberg (2018) demonstrates how Persius' imagery highlights the Stoic virtue of *continentia* and shows how Persius uses *lutum* and its cognates later in the poem to mark the failures of imagined incontinent individuals. Hooley (1997: 202–29) places the whole satire in conversation with Horace,

Sermones 2.3 to highlight Persius poetic innovations, but the above passage is missing in terms of his intertextual analysis.

I argue that the metaphor of mud shifts from Horatian intertext to an allusion to the traditional Roman myth of Care, as preserved in Hyginus' *Fabulae* 220, which details how Cura created (*finxit*) humans and possesses them up to death. The opening of the myth has strong lexical resonance with Persius' personification of the pot, as Cura first "*vidit cretosum lutum, sustulit cogitabunda et coepit fingere hominem*" (Marshall, 1993, emphasis added). As both Guidorizzi (2000) and Smith & Trzaskoma (2007) agree, the myth hinges on specific Latin wordplay, marking it as uniquely Roman, and it also displays Stoically inclined cosmology, and both facts dovetail neatly with Persius' poetic program. Persius also shows concern for *cura*, for he begins the first satire with the exclamation *o curas hominum!* (1.1), and he also connects *cura* and ceramics shortly after the muddy metaphor quoted above, where the speaker imagines their home and the *patella* that is "a worshipper of the hearth, free from care."

In this paper, I will build on the analyses mentioned above to trace how Persius' satire deploys the work of Cura shaping human beings and applies it to the self-fashioning of Persius' persona and the indictment of the moral failures: Persius' groggy student imagines themselves as the lump of clay still needing the work of care to make them into a full human, a completed work like the *secura patella*, while the muddy jaundice (*lutea pellis*) of the luxuriant at 3.95 and final mark with mud on the bier at 3.104 (*lutatus*) indicates the absence of care leading to a muddy reversion. The moral trajectory becomes complicated, however, for while Hyginus' myth shows the endpoint of Cura's work and the endpoint of human life, Persius' satire calls for the speaker to be fashioned "without end" (*sine fine*) on potter's wheel. Connected to Persius' call for

iunctura acris, the work of Care on the poet's wheel cycles between Stoic moral progress from mud to human and the constant self-fashioning and shifting of the poet in and of his work.

Selected Works Cited

- Apollodorus, and Hyginus. *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*. Translated by R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma. 1st Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub Co, 2007.
- Bartsch, Shadi. *Persius: A Study in Food, Philosophy, and the Figural*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Bellandi, Franco. *Persio. Dai "Verba Togae" al Solipsismo Stilistico*. 2nd ed. Bologna, 1996.
- Cucchiarelli, Andrea. "Speaking from Silence: The Stoic Paradoxes of Persius." In *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*, edited by Kirk Freudenburg, 1st ed., 62–80. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Freudenburg, Kirk. "The Po(e)ts and Pens of Persius' Third Satire (The Waters of Roman Satire, Part 2)." In *Antike Erzähl- Und Deutungsmuster*, edited by Simone Finkmann, Anja Behrendt, and Anke Walter, 267–84. De Gruyter, 2018.
- Guidorizzi, Giulio, trans. *Igino: Miti*. Biblioteca Adelphi 398. Milano: Adelphi, 2000.
- Harvey, R. A. *A Commentary on Persius*. Mnemosyne, Bibliotheca Classica Batava. Supplementum 64. Leiden: Brill, 1981.
- Hooley, Daniel. *The Knotted Thong: Structures of Mimesis in Persius*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Hyginus. *Fabulae*. Edited by P.K. Marshall. Leipzig: Teubner, 1993.
- Persius and Juvenal. *A. Persi Flacci et D. Iuni Iuvenalis Saturae*, edited by W.V. Clausen. Rev. ed. Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis. Oxonii : New York: E Typographeo Clarendoniano ; Oxford University Press, 1992.