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The Concept of SAL in Latin Poetry and in Martial's Epigrams

This paper examines the usage of the literary term *sal*, its usage in context and the particular connotation, in the Latin poetry and in Martial's Epigrams, starting from the time it first appeared and continuing on through the Latin poets in chronological order. Sometimes the paper looks at the usage of term in prose authors such as Quintilian and Pliny, specifically when the context was literary-critical.

Also the disclaimers of malice that often occurring in Latin satire and epigram in association with the use of wit, are considered along with the term *sal*. These disclaimers are especially important because they often reveal a poet's rationale for his writing.

The term *sal* has the original sense of "salt", and also a figurative sense of "that which gives life or character to something".⁽¹⁾ Used in connection with speech or writing *sal* is rendered as "wit" (or its product), sometimes simply for the purpose of humor and sometimes for invective, a distinction Cicero makes.⁽²⁾

Sal is first found in a literary-critical context among the Latin poets in Catullus. In 16, Catullus' famous disclaimer that the poet's verses do not necessarily reflect his life, Catullus says in definition of his *versiculi*:

(1) E.g. Ter. Eun. 3. 1. 10; Catull. 86. 4; Lucr. 4. 1162; Pliny HN 31. 88 (Cf. OLD, s.v. *sal*).

(2) Cf. Cicero at Orat. 26. 87 where he says that a speech should be sprinkled with *sales*, and then subdivides *sales* into two types: *facetiae*, "humor", used "in narrando aliquid venuste", and *dicacitas*, "wit", used in *iaciendo mittendoque ridiculo*". Also cf. Quint. 6. 3. 18 - 19: "Salsum in consuetudine pro ridiculo tantum accipimus: natura non utique hoc est, quamquam et ridicula esse oporteat salsa. Salsum igitur erit, quod non erit insulsum, uelut quoddam simplex orationis condimentum, quod sentitur latente iudicio uelut palato, excitatque et a taedio defendit orationem.

Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex versiculis meis putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.
nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, versiculos nihil necessest;
qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem,
si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici
et quod pruriat incitare possunt.

Catull. 16. 1 - 9.

Catullus, accused of shameful sexual conduct because of his verse, disassociates himself from the *impius* content of his *versiculi*, verse, which he goes on to say, contains *sal* and *lepos*.⁽¹⁾ From the context here *sal* takes on the sense of “piquancy” through use of sexual material, further defined by its juxtaposition with *lepos*, “charm”, or “humor”. In his other non-literary-critical usage of *sal*, *salsus* and *insulsus* Catullus indicates by context that the “piquancy” of *sal* comes through the use of mental facility and hence *sal* is here best construed as “wit”.⁽²⁾

Catullus' claim here in poem 16, that his poetry does not reflect his character, becomes a commonplace plea, is also used by Martial, and is thus worth of note.⁽³⁾ A poet who used an autobiographic form in his verse claimed poetic license in order to protect himself from charges of

(1) Τρομάας (2001) at Catull. 16. 7 comments: “salem et leporem: είναι όροι για κατάδειξη του πνευματώδους και της κομπόητας της νεωτερικής ποίησης”.

(2) Cf. at 13. 5 where the dinner guest is asked to bring a girl, wine, *sal* and laughter; at 12. 4 the napkin-stealer thinks his action is *salsum*; at 14. 16 Calvus is addressed as *salse* because he jokingly sent bad verse to Catullus; at 10. 33 Varus' mistress is called an *insulsa male* for exposing Catullus' lying boast. Cf. Swann (1994) 62. For exactly how *sal* creates piquancy cf. Cicero *De Or.* 2. 255 who says in definition of jest: “Quod si admixtum est etiam ambiguum, fit salsius”. Also cf. *De Or.* 2. 260, and 2. 278: “Salsa sunt etiam quae habent suspicionem ridiculi absconditam”,...

(3) Cf., e.g. Ovid. *Trist.* 1. 9. 59, 2. 353 – 54, *Pont.* 2. 7. 47, 4. 8. 19; Pliny *Ep.* 4. 14. 5; *Apul. Apol.* 11; *Mart.* 1. 4. 8: “lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba”.

indecenty: his persona and his actual person were not the same thing.⁽¹⁾ Catullus nowhere in his poems, however, disclaims malevolence in his use of *sal*, "wit", although his poems certainly contain invective and attacks of a sexual nature.⁽²⁾

Two literary-critical uses of *sal* can be found in the *Catalepton*. Both references have to do with Attic wit, which is usually construed as similar to Latin *sal*, only more refined and milder—that is, "dry wit" and with less or no sexual context.⁽³⁾ In *Catal.* 9, addressed to Messala, the poet says:

pauca tua in nostras uenerunt carmina chartas,
carmina cum lingua tum sale Cecropia.
Catal. 9. 13 - 14

The author of the poem has turned some Greek verses of Messalla's into Latin, verses containing Attic wit. Later in the same poem the author says of his own poetic aspirations:

si adire Cyrenas,
si patrio Graios carmine adire sales
possumus, optatis plus iam procedimus ipsis.
Catal. 9. 61 - 63

(1) Cf. Williams (1962) 40.

(2) Catullus' attacks on Caesar are famous (cf. Suet. Iul. 73 where Caesar is given to have said that Catullus' verses about Mamurra [Catull. 29 and 57] inflicted "perpetua stigmata" on his name). Catullus himself speaks of his *iambi* (not. iambic meter but invective, usually in hendecasyllabics) in three poems referring to past or future personal attacks (36. 4-5, 40. 1-2, and 54. 6-7), and at least half of his fifty short elegiac poems are invective in tone (cf. Quinn [1970] 38, who says in specific reference to over half of the Catullan elegiacs: "The short elegiac poem was a recognized genre used to abuse a person addressed or as the vehicle for satirical comment on a person spoken of. It was compounded of wit, ingenuity and savage elegance of expression, rather than quality of imagery, complexity of diction, emotional depth or other more specially poetic qualities").

(3) See Cic., Orat. 26. 90, who says in speaking of wit in oratory: "Hanc ego iudico formam summissi oratoris sed magni tamen et germane Attici; quoniam quicquid est salsum aut salubre in oratione id proprium Atticorum est". Also see Cic. Fam. 9. 15. 2 where Cicero in praising the attributes of his friend Paetus says: "Accedunt non Attici, sed salsiores, quam illi Atticorum, Romani veteres atque urbani sales". Cf. Cic. De Or. 2. 217.

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The author will go beyond his hopes if he can approach Cyrene—that is, Callimachus, and Greek witticisms with his own *carmina*. In both passage Attic wit of Callimachean poetry shows its influence over the use of *sal* in Latin Poetry.

Horace uses *sal* several times in a literary-critical context. In a most general sense in a section in the *Ars Poetica* on iambic meter Horace says in regard to Plautus' meter and wit:

at vestri proavi Plautinos et numeros et
laudavere sales, nimium patienter utrumque,
ne dicam stulte, mirati, si modo ego et vos
scimus inurbanum lepido seponere dicto
legitimumque sonum digitis callemus et aure.

Hor. Ars P. 270 - 74

Plautus' *sales*, "witticisms", are too much admired by those who are unable to distinguish the *inurbanum dictum* from the *lepido dictum*, the "coarse joke" from the "elegant joke".⁽¹⁾ Here Menander's *sal* seems to be used strictly for humor though it may involve sexual innuendo also.

Horace quite often uses *sal* to connote wit where the context indicates it is used specifically for the purpose of invective. For instance, in *Satire* 1. 10 Horace recalls how in satire 1. 4 he not only criticized Lucilius for his meter, but praised him because he "sale multo / urbem defricuit" (sat. 1. 10. 3). Here *sal* is wit used for the purpose of invective. It may be noted also that Horace at *Satire* 1. 4. 7-8 terms Lucilius as *facetis*, "witty", and *emunctae naris*, "keen-scented" in discovering the weaknesses of others.⁽²⁾

(1) For *dictum* as "joke" compare *Ars P.* 247 "ignominiosa dicta" as jokes from a satyr play. Note Cicero *Off.* 1. 104 for a differing view of Plautus' *sales*:

Duplex omnino est iocandi genus, unum inliberale, petulans, flagitiosum, obscenum, alterum elegans, urbanum, ingeniosum, facetum, quo genere non modo Plautus noster et Atticorum antiqua comoedia, sed etiam philosophorum Socraticorum libri referti sunt,....

(2) Cf. Rudd (1966) 97-98, who substantiates Horace's criticism of Lucilius as being too coarse and abusive in light of the fragments of Lucilius.

Horace once more uses *sal* as wit, again with the context indicating it is for the purpose of invective. In speaking of choosing a genre Horace says of his own reader's tastes:

denique non omnes eadem mirantur amanti-
carmine tu gaudes, hic delectatur iambis,
ille Bioneis sermonibus et sale nigro.

Hor. Ep. 2. 2. 58 - 60

One reader likes lyric poetry (Horace's Odes), another is pleased by iambs (the Epodes), a third by sermons (the Satires) in the style of Bion, the third century B.C. philosopher noted for his caustic satire, and by *niger sal*, "coarse wit", referring to the less refined invective of Horace's own earlier satires.⁽¹⁾

Horace's defense for his own use of wit is very informative. In *satire* 2. 1. 39-40 he says that he (unlike Lucilius, as is the implication) will never "petet ultro quemquam animantem", though he goes on to say he will attack if provoked. And in *Epistle* 1. 19 he says:

Parios ego primus iambos
ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus
Archilochi, non res et agentia verba Lycamben.

Hor. Ep. 1. 19. 23 - 25

He imitates Archilochus in meter (the iambs of the Epodes) and spirit, but not in his subject-matter (*res*) and attacking words (against Lycambes). He further defines the abusive invective of Archilochus a few lines later in a comparison of Alcaeus (and himself indirectly) with Archilochus:

temperat Alcaeus, sed rebus et ordine dispar,
nec socerum quaerit, quem versibus oblinat atris,
nec sponsae laqueum famoso carmine nectit.

Hor. Ep. 1. 19. 29 - 31

(1) For *niger sal* as coarse salt cf. Sat. 2. 4. 74 (see Mueke [1993] ad loc.). For the overall interpretation of this passage cf. Brink (1982) at Hor. Ep. 2. 2. 58 - 60

Alcaeus (and Horace) does not, like Archilochus,⁽¹⁾ "smear with black verses", and weave a snare with a *famosum carmen*. Then, in *Satire* 1. 4 Horace protests strongly against the charge, " ' Laedere gaudes / et hoc studio pravus facis ' " (78-79), by saying that no one living can accuse him—that is. He attacks no one who is alive. He then strongly berates the type of person "solutos / qui captat risus hominum famamque dicacis" (Sat. 1. 4. 82-83). He goes on to condemn others who, though perceived by some to be *comes*, *urbani* and *liberi* (line 90), actually abuse their friends and acquaintances. He ends by saying:

quod vitium procul afore chartis,
atque animo prius, ut siquid promittere de me
possum aliud vere, promitto.

Hor. Sat. 1. 4. 101 - 103

After this disclaimer of malice ⁽²⁾ Horace immediately continues with this justification for his own satire:

possum aliud vere, promitto. liberius si
dixero quid, si forte iocosius, hoc mihi iuris
cum venia dabis: insuevit pater optimus hoc me,
ut fugerem exemplis vitiorum quaeque notando.

Hor. Sat. 1. 4. 103 - 106

Horace asks indulgence for his forthright manner of speaking and his jokes. Thus did his father point out the faults of others as a lesson to him. Horace, then, defends his satire by calling it moralistic and instructional.⁽³⁾

Propertius uses *sal* just once, in the sense of wit for the purpose of humor. In 3. 21, where Propertius meditates a trip to Athens in order to forget his Cynthia, he says that when there he shall study at Plato's Academy or in the gardens of Epirus. He continues:

(1) Cf. Bramble (1974) 196-97, who says: "Horatian iambs are divided against themselves. At Epod. 4. 13-14, Horace likens himself to the savage Archilochus and Hipponax, yet later, in the theoretical Ep. 1. 19. 23ff., he follows Lucilius and Calimachus in disowning malevolence.

(2) Cf. Brown (1993) 136.

(3) Cf. William (1962) 45-46, for a summation of Horace's unique position "among Augustan poets in giving explicit support to Augustus's programme of moral reform".

persequar aut studium linguae, Demosthenis arma,
libaboque tuos, culte Menandre, sales.
Prop. 3. 21. 27 - 28

He shall also study the *sales*, "witticisms", of the books of Menander.

Ovid uses *sal* only once in a literary-critical context. In his *Tristia* he says of his past works:

non ego mordaci destrinxi carmine quemquam,
nec meus ullius crimina versus habet.
candidus a salibus suffusus felle refugi:
nulla venenato littera tincta ioco est.
Ovid. Trist. 2. 563 - 66

Ovid disclaims use of witticisms suffused with gall, and has not mixed his verse with poisoned jests. *Sales suffusi felle* would be the most abusive witticisms used for invective, and *venenatus iocus* an abusive joke or broad humor likewise used in invective.⁽¹⁾

Phaedrus uses the term *sal* only once, not in a literary-critical context, in defining a *scurra* who was "notus urbano sale" (5. 5. 8), noted for his "urbane wit". Important in Phaedrus is his disclaimer of malice: it is remarkably similar to what Martial, more than fifty years later, gives as his own, and shows well the continuity of the tradition of disclaimers.⁽²⁾ Phaedrus' defense for his use of wit and the satiric nature of many of his fables runs as follows. First, Phaedrus explains that the genre of fable (*fabula*) was invented so that slaves could speak their personal sentiments by telling stories and making up jokes (*ficti ioci*) without fear of repercussions. After noting that his own jokes incurred the wrath of Sejanus, Phaedrus continues thus:

Suspicionem si quis errabit sua
Et rapiet ad se quod erit commune omnium,

(1) Cf. Owen (1967) ad loc. for the distinction between *sal*, "wit", and *iocus*, "broad humor".

(2) See below at 1 *praef.* 1-6 and 10. 33. 5-10.

Stulte nudabit animi conscientiam.
Huic excusatum me velim nihilo minus:
Neque enim notare singulos mens est mihi,
Verum ipsam vitam et mores hominum ostendere.

Phaedrus 3 prol. 45 - 50

Phaedrus claims, just as Martial will claim, that those who have a good conscience need not fear his poems. Moreover Phaedrus says, again just as Martial will, that he speaks not of individuals, but of life and human nature in general.⁽¹⁾ In other words, he puts his satire on a social and moral plane: he shows life and mankind as it really is for his reader's benefit.

Persius, though he does not use the term *sal* in a literary-critical context, also, like Horace and Phaedrus, disclaims malevolence in his use of wit and humor in his poetry.⁽²⁾ For instance, he has his interlocutor ask in *Satire* 1:

'sed quid opus teneras mordaci radere uero
auriculas? uide sis ne maiorum tibi forte
limina frigescant: ...'

Persius 1. 107 - 109

Writing satire could lose Persius friends. Persius in reply cites the practice of Lucilius and Horace:

secuit Lucilius urbem,
te Lupe, te Muci, et genuinum fregit in illis.
omne uafēr uitium ridenti Flaccus amico
tangit et admissus circum praecordia ludit,
callidus excusso populum suspendere naso.

Persius 1. 114 - 118

Lucilius flayed the city, even made personal attacks, and Horace in a more congenial way pointed up the faults of his friends.⁽¹⁾ Persius goes on to

(1) For this sentiment cf. at Mart. 8. 3. 19-20: "at tu Romano lepidos sale tinge libellos: /adgnoscat mores vita legatque suos". Also cf. 10. 4. 10-12: "hominem pagina nostra sapit. / sed non vis, Mamurra, tuos cognoscere mores / nec te scire".

(2) The interlocutor warns him of a social disadvantages involved in writing satire. The warning is inspired by Hor. Sat. 2. 1. 60-2, (see Harvey [1981] 47).

say that he too will speak the truth freely in his satire (lines 119-123), but for a discerning audience. Specifically, he says his audience must be able to appreciate the writers of Greek old Comedy in order to be worthy of his more refined (*decoctius*) writing (lines 123-25). His satire is not intended for the crude person (*sordidus*), one who laughs at foreign dress or physical deformity, nor for one who feels overly self-important or shows disrespect for learning (lines 127-34). Persius' implied defense in these several lines is that he is part of a tradition, visible also in Horace, wherein proper use of humor and wit for satire is a constructive assault on vice.⁽²⁾

Similarly in *Satire 5*, Persius connects himself with the same tradition of the proper use of humor and wit for constructive purposes. There the interlocutor says in description of Persius' satire:

pallentis radere mores
doctus et ingenuo culpam defigere ludo.
Persius 5. 15 - 16

With the phrase *ingenuo ... ludo*, "with a liberal [i.e., "honorable"] wit", Persius connects himself with a longstanding tradition (back to Plato and Aristotle) that disowns bitterness and malevolence in its use of humor in satire.⁽³⁾

Statius uses *sal* once in a literary-critical context. At 1. 6. 6 in his account of the entertainment given by the Emperor to the people during the Saturnalia he says:

Saturnus mihi compede exsoluta

(1) Note that Lucilius, though having acquired a reputation for abusive invective, "regarded it as his duty, and the essential function of his work, to expose quite freely whatever he deemed harmful to Roman society" (Van Rooy [1966] 54).

(2) See Bramble (1974) 132-42, for the interpretation of this passage and the nature of Persius' defense, and at 190-191 for a short exposition of the history of the tradition of refined or "liberal", as he terms it, as opposed to illiberal humor.

(3) Cf. Aristotle. *Eth. Nic.* 4. 8. 1128a 20 draws attention to the difference between the humor of a gentleman and that of a servile person. It is the mean of *ἐντραπελία* "wit or refined humor" between *βαμολοχία* "buffoonery or scurrility" and *ἀγροικία* "boorishness" (Lee and Barr [1987] 132, Fiske [1966] 118).

et multo gravidus mero December
et ridens Iocus et Sales protervi
adsint, dum refero diem beatum
laeti Caesaris ebriamque parcen.
Statius Silv.1. 6. 4 - 8

The recounting of the Saturnalian festivities calls for the presence of laughing mirth, *ridens Iocus*, and bold or wanton witticisms, *sales protervi*. Note the association of wantonness with *sal*, so common in Martial, as will be seen.

Quintilian's use of *sal* in a literary-critical context should be mentioned. In book 10 he says of Lucilius: "Nam eruditio in eo mira et libertas atque inde acerbitas et abunde salis" (10. 1. 94). Lucilius' *sal*, "wit" used for satire along with his *acerbitas* are components of his *libertas*, "freedom (of speech)".

Pliny uses *sal* twice, once in his eulogy for Martial, who was gifted, sharp and perceptive, in whose writings there was most of all wit and pungency as well as candor:

Audio Valerium Martialem decessisse et moleste
fero. Erat homo ingeniosus acutus acer, et qui
plurimum in scribendo et salis haberet et fellis, nec
candoris minus.

Pliny Ep. 3. 21. 1

Martial's writing was said to have had most of all *sal* and *fel*, "wit" and "bite". *Fel* obviously refers to the element of invective. *Sal* is here either wit variously used for invective, for the purpose of humor, or wit that is sexually risqué. Pliny's other use of *sal* comes within one of his own poems, which he quotes in Epistle 7. 4:

Cum libros Galli legerem, quibus ille parenti
ausus de Cicerone dare est palmamque decusque,
lascium inueni lusum Ciceronis et illo
spectandum ingenio, quo seria condidit et quo
humanis salibus multo uarioque lepore
magnorum ostendit mentes gaudere uirorum.

Pliny Ep. 7. 4. 6

Pliny, speaking of an epigram of Cicero's that he has read, discovered that Cicero could lay aside his serious endeavors and delight the minds of great men with his *humani sales*, "refined witticisms", and *multus varius lepos*, his "much varied charm". *Sal* here appears to be "wit" for the purpose of coarse humor, as it needs the refinement of *humanus* and is given in contrast to *lepos*.

Sal in Martial

Martial like the other Latin poets, uses *sal* to connote humorous or piquant wit in general, oftentimes in a sexual context, and very often for the purpose of satire or personal criticism. In the most general sense of wit Martial uses *sal* in comparison or connection with Attic *lepos*. First, in epigram 4. 23 he says of the Greek epigrammatist Brutianus:

Qui si Cecropio satur lepore
Romanae sale luserit Minervae,
Illi me facias, precor, secundum.
Martial. 4. 23. 6 - 8

Here Martial parallels *Romanae sale Minervae* with *Cecropio lepore*, Attic wit, a milder form of Latin *sal* (as noted above at Catal. 9. 13), with both standing by metonymy for Latin epigram and Greek epigram respectively. Note also the use of *ludo* for writing witty epigram. The other epigram linking *sal* with Attic *lepos* is 3. 20, a playful poem addressed to Martial's friend and fellow-poet, Canius Rufus. The epigram begins by asking the Muse what Canius is doing: Is he writing history, naughty jests, wanton elegy, severe heroics or tragedy? It continues thus:

An otiosus in schola poetarum
Lepore tinctos Attico sales narrat?
Martial. 3. 20. 8-9.

He may be in the company of poets telling *sales*, "witticisms", tinged with Attic charm, or *sales* simply as "jokes", with *lepos* as "wit".

In the next several usages *sal* is still wit used in epigram, but further qualified by the context as wit involving sexual matter. For example, at 5. 2, a prefatory epigram for the book, Martial says:

Matronae puerique virginesque,
Vobis pagina nostra dedicatur.
Tu, quem nequitiae procaciores
Delectant nimium salesque nudi,
Lascivos lege quattuor libellos.

Martial. 5. 2. 1 - 5

The *sales* are *nudi*, "unveiled" or "unsoftened", in the sense of "graphic" made coordinate with *nequitiae procaciores*, "more shameless wantonness", and further defined by *lascivos libellos*, "wanton books".⁽¹⁾ Also at 12. 95, a playful epigram addressed to Martial's friend, Istantius Rufus, the context indicates that *sal* involves sexual matter:

Musseti pathicissimos libellos,
Qui certant Sybariticis libellis,
Et tinctas sale pruriente chartas
Instanti lege Rufe;

Martial. 12. 95. 1 - 4

Pruriente gives immediate definition to *sale*, and the context is otherwise blatantly sexual.⁽²⁾

In the next five usages of *sal* in Martial the context indicates that *sal* is wit used for satire or invective. First, at 10. 9 Martial says in speaking of his own renown:

Undenis pedibusque syllabisque

(1) For *nudus* with the sense of "unsoftened" in respect to language cf. OLD, s.v. *nudus*, 14.b. On *nequitia* (*nequam*) with an erotic sense cf. at epigrams 2. 4. 4, 3. 69. 5, 10. 35. 11 and 11. 15. 4 (Citroni [1975] and Howell [1980] at 1. 109 .1f, Aly Hassan [2003] at 10. 35. 11).

(2) Cf. Ker (1927) ad loc. on *sybariticis libellis*: these are works by "Hemitheon, 'a Sybarite of the vilest character,' and author of an obscene work, a text-book of vice, probably called *Sybaritis* (the name of a lascivious poem, cf. Ov. Tr. 2, 417 [LS, s.v. *Sybaritis*]).

Et multo sale nec tamen protervo
Notus gentibus ille Martialis.

Martial. 10. 9. 1 - 3

Martial's elegiacs and hendecasyllabics have much wit, but not *protervus sal*, impudent or shameless wit. *Protervus sal* would presumably be overly-abusive satire, perhaps of a sexual nature, that might ruin reputations.⁽¹⁾

Another slightly more definitive usage of *sal* for wit used in satire comes in epigram 7. 25. Martial there says to a rival epigrammatist:

Dulcia cum tantum scribas epigrammata semper
Et cerussata candidiora cute,
Nullaque mica salis nec amari fellis in illis
Gutta sit, o demens, vis tamen illa legi!

Martial. 7. 25. 1 - 4

Martial's rival, whose works are *dulcia* and more pale than whitened skin, lacks *sal*, "wit" and *amarus fel*, "bitter gall". According to the context *sal* is satiric wit, since it is coordinated with *fel*, that adds interest to otherwise insipid epigrams.⁽²⁾

An even more definite example of *sal* as wit used for satire comes in epigram 3. 99. Here Martial says in defense of a specific satiric epigram of his, probably 3. 16, on a cobbler:

Irasci nostro non debes, Cerdo, libello.
Ars tua, non vita est carmine laesa meo.
Innocuos permitte sales. Cur ludere nobis
Non liceat, licuit si iugulare tibi?

Martial. 3. 99

Sales here are the witty jokes Martial employed against the cobbler. If 3. 16, an epigram where Martial ridicules a cobbler for putting on a

(1) Aly Hassan (2003) ad loc. *Protervus* at 11. 54. 5 is used of a thief's hands; it is used by Statius of *sales* (*sales* personified) appropriate for the Saturnalia (Silv. 1. 6. 6) and by Horace of satyrs (Ars P. 233).

(2) Cf. Vioque (2002) 185- 188.

gladiatorial show, is the satiric poem against which the cobbler protests, the *sales* there take the form of puns and allusions used in ridiculing the cobbler for his presumptuous enterprise. Note also Martial's use of *ludere* for writing invective which employed *sal*.

A final example of *sal* as wit used for satire or invective comes in epigram 1. 41, where Martial attacks Caecilius for his pretensions at wit. He begins the poem saying: "Urbanus tibi, Caecili, videris. / non es, crede mihi" (1. 41. 1-2). He continues by equating Caecilius with various street-trader types. He then says:

Quare desine iam tibi videri,
Quod soli tibi, Caecili, videris,
Qui Gabbam salibus tuis et ipsum
Posses vincere Tettium Caballum.
Non cuicumque datum est habere nasum:
Ludit qui stolidi procacitate,
Non est Tettius ille, sed caballus.

Martial. 1. 41. 14 – 20

Caecilius sees himself as surpassing Gabba, Augustus' well-known court jester, with his witticisms.⁽¹⁾ Yet Caecilius lacks the critic's nose, and writes, *ludit*, with a stupid (i.e., pointless) impudence.⁽²⁾ Martial implies here with the context that *sal* was regularly used for criticizing others—that is, for satire or invective. He also indicates, as did Persius, that the successful poet must be discerning and tasteful in his use of his wit.

The next usage of *sal* is not strictly speaking in a literary-critical context, yet is relevant in defining *sal* in epigram. Martial uses *sal* in reference to social conversation, which is very close to the *sal* of epigram. The usage of *sal* comes in epigram 6. 44, written against a Callidorus who has pretensions at wit. Martial says to him:

(1) On Gabba see Mart. 10. 101, Juv. 5. 3-4, see Howell (1980) 197-98, Colton (1991) 166-167. For examples of his wit see Plut. Mor. 759f-760a; Quint. 6. 3. 62, 64, 66, 80, 90; Quintilian describes his humor as *lascivum et hilare* (6. 3. 27).

(2) For the nose as the organ of criticism cf. 1. 3. 6 (Howell [1980] ad loc.), 12.37, 12. 88, 13. 2. 2; also cf. Hor. Sat. 1. 4. 8, 1. 3. 29-30; Ep. 1. 19. 45; and Pers. 1. 40-42 (Harvey [1981] ad loc.).

Festive credis te, Calliodore, iocari
Et solum multo permaduisse sale.
Omnibus adrides, dicteria dicis in omnis;
Sic te convivam posse placere putas.
Martial. 6. 44. 1 - 4

Callidorus believes he is a pleasing quest because he drips with *multo sale*. Line 3 tells how he uses his wit: he derides and makes jokes against all. In other words, Martial, against reminiscent of Persius' viewpoint, believes Callidorus misuses his talent by indiscriminate jesting.

As the last five examples of *sal* used for invective show, wit, joking and humor in Martial are generally for the purpose of satire or invective.⁽¹⁾ Martial furthermore several times explicitly indicates that *sal* is a necessary element of epigram. For instance, he says at 7. 85 to another epigrammatist:

Quod non insulse scribis tetrasticha quaedam,
Disticha quod belle pauca, Sabelle, facis,
Laudo, nec admiror.

Martial. 7. 85. 1 - 3

Sabellus writes quatrains and distchs not without *sal*, "wit". The implication is that epigrams are expected to contain wit. Similarly at 13. 1, one of the *Xenia*, poem written to be attached to gifts given at the Saturnalia, Martial says in justification of his latest book: "postulat ecce novos ebria bruma sales" (13. 1. 4). *Ebria bruma* of course refers to the

(1) Other terms that are ancillary to wit and humor in Martial substantiate this. For example, the foul and insulting *dicta* being passed off as Martial's at 10. 3. 1 are witticisms in epigram that bring *nigra fama* to their author. That is, the *dicta* are abusive. *Dicta* at 1. 4. 4 are *ioci* such as are heard in triumphs. *Ioci* also is used for satiric jokes at 1 *praef.* 6 where Martial says abusive *ioci* are not in his books, at 7. 8. 9 as playfully abusive jokes in a triumph, at 7. 12. 2 where Martial says his page has not wounded even those it justly hates with its jokes.

season of the Saturnalia, where drinking formed part of the festivities.⁽¹⁾ *sales* refers to the general and varied wit of the *Xenia*.⁽²⁾

Then in epigram 8. 3 Martial indicates, most emphatically, that *sal* is a vital ingredient of his own epigram. There Martial's Muse tells him to leave epic and tragic themes to men who are "graves nimium nimiumque severi", who labor into the night at their wretched toil and whose works bore school children (lines 15-18). She continues with this instruction to Martial:

At tu Romano lepidos sale tinge libellos:
Agnoscat mores vita legatque suos.
Angusta cantare licet videaris avena,
Dum tua multorum vincat avena tubas.'
Martial. 8. 3. 19 - 22

Martial's epigrams are to be tinged with *lepidus sal*, "charming wit", probably as opposed to caustic and uncultivated wit (cf. on 1. 41 and 6. 44 above). More importantly, the lines also indicate that *sal* along with realism are vital to Martial's work and that through their use he will be able to overcome the writers of epic and tragedy, presumably because of popular appeal wit would garner.⁽³⁾

Even more informative than the way Martial uses the term *sal* is his rationale for employing it in his poetry. So many of Martial's epigrams are critical or satirical that he feels obligated, either for his own safety or for ethical reasons, to explain in a programmatic preface his own use of wit for satire:⁽⁴⁾

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- (1) See Kay (1985) at 11. 6. 1.
(2) Though the *Xenia* are poems written to accompany gifts given during the Saturnalia they themselves are not characteristically Saturnalian in tone, see Leary (2001) 1ff.
(3) Earlier in this epigram (8. 3) Martial touted the popularity of his work ("teritur noster ibique liber", line 4); also note the contrast of the schoolmaster boring his students by dictating epic or tragedy.
(4) Cf. Coffey (1976), 136-37 for the dangers of attacks on contemporaries. But cf. Bramble (1974) 194: "Following Callimachus, Roman satirists, iambists and epigrammatists profess innocence, inhibited more by the ethical and rhetorical dictation

Spero me secutum in libellis meis tale temperamen-
tum, ut de illis queri non possit quisquis de se bene
senserit, cum salva infimarum quoque personarum re-
verentia ludant; quae adeo antiquis auctoribus defuit, ut
nominibus non tantum veris abusi sint, sed et magnis.
Mihi fama vilius constet et probetur in me novissimum
ingenium. Absit a iocorum nostrorum simplicitate ma-
lignus interpres nec epigrammata mea scribat: inprobe
facit qui in alieno libro ingeniosus est.

Martial. 1. Praef. 1 - 9

Martial makes it clear with the first sentence that he is going to be writing poems that could be construed as invective. With his poems, however, Martial says he hopes to achieve a balance, a *temperamentum* (line 1),⁽¹⁾ in his treatment of even the lowest persons such that anyone with self-respect or a good conscience (*quisquis de se bene senserit*, line 2) has no cause for complaint.⁽²⁾ Martial further says in definition of his satire that he, unlike ancient authors, will preserve a *reverentia* for people and abuse neither real people nor the great. He says he wishes his fame to be established more cheaply and his *ingenium*, "acumen" or "wit", to be the last thing to bring him approval. Martial ends the passage with the wish that no malicious interpreter rewrite his epigrams thereby destroying the *simplicitas*, the "open nature" or "(moral) simplicity" of his *ioci*.⁽³⁾ He who is *ingeniosus*, "who employs his talent (at another's expense)", in someone else's book, he says, acts improperly. Martial, continuing in the tradition of other Roman satirists, strives here to elevate his satire above abusive

of charity and humanity in matters appertaining to the comic, than by legal considerations".

(1) Adams (1975) 17.

(2) Cf. Phaedrus 3 prol. 74, on which see above.

(3) Howell (1980) ad loc. Comments at *scribat*: "the somewhat unsatisfactory balance and rhythm suggest that something may have dropped out before *scribat*. If the text is right, *scribat* here must have the sense of 'rewrite'. Even if Martial did not have real people in mind, it was quite possible for others to substitute real names for his fictitious ones".

attacks. His defense is that he will exercise a moral restraint with his use of *ingenium*.

In several others epigrams directed specifically against forgers (i.e., poets who circulate their own work under Martial's name) or libelous editors Martial likewise reveals his stance on the use and abuse of wit. For example, the whole of epigram 10. 5 is a general and vehement curse upon any forger of Martial's work.⁽¹⁾ It begins:

Quisquis stolaeve purpuraeve contemptor,
Quos colere debet, laesit impio versu.
Martial. 10. 5. 1 - 2

The forger targets noble ladies or senators and wounds with *impius versus*. In epigram 10. 3 Martial says after describing the practices of libelers and forgers:

Procul a libellis nigra sit meis fama,
Quos rumor alba gemmeus vehit pinna.
Martial. 10. 3. 9 - 10

May his pure verse be free of *nigra fama*.⁽²⁾ Similarly in epigram 7. 72 Martial, again in protest of forgers, condemns abusive wit. There Martial calls a friend to his aid:

Si quisquam mea dixerit malignus
Atro carmina quae madent veneno,
Ut vocem mihi commodos patronam
Et quantum poteris, sed usque, clames:
'Non scripsit meus ista Martialis.'
Martial. 7. 72. 12 - 16

Note the image of *carmina* wet with *ater venenum*. Once again in protest of forgers Martial in 7. 72 declares:

Sic me fronte legat dominus, Faustine, serena

(1) Howell (1995) 80-81.

(2) Aly Hassan (2003) at 10. 3. 9.

Excipiatque meos, qua solet aure, iocos,
Ut mea nec, iuste quos odit, pagina laesit,
Et mihi de nullo fama rubore placet.
Quid prodest, cupiant cum quidam nostra videri,
Si qua Lycambeo sanguine tela madent,
Vipereumque vomat nostro sub nomine virus,
Qui Phoebi radios ferre diemque negat?
Ludimus innocui: scis hoc bene: iuro potentis
Per genium Famae Castaliumque gregem
Perque tuas aures, magni mihi numinis instar,
Lector inhumana liber ab invidia.

Martial. 7. 12

Martial has not wounded with his verse even those he justly hates, nor does he wish fame at the expense of another's reputation. he disowns personal attacks such as Archilochus made, protesting that "ludimus innocui" (line 9).

Martial, though he indicates in these several passages just cited that he intends no malice and will exercise a judicious restraint in his use of wit, has not specifically justified his own use of wit in his poems. Such a justification, as abbreviated as it is, comes in epigram 10. 33, where Martial sums up his position on the use of wit. He begins with the conditional wish that a friend's daughter may enjoy a successful marriage, and then continues with other half of the condition:

Ut tu, si viridi tinctos aerugine versus
Forte malus livor dixerit esse meos,
Ut facis, a nobis abigas, nec scribere quemquam
Talia contendas carmina, qui legitur.
Hunc servare modum nostri novere libelli,
Parcere personis, dicere de vitiis.

Martial. 10. 33. 5 - 10

Martial's verse is not tinged with *viridis aerugo*, "poisonous malice" (literally, "sea-green verdigris")⁽¹⁾. Rather he, similar to Phaedrus, follows this *modum*: criticize not individuals, but bad behavior, a moral defense.⁽²⁾

In effect, Martial, continuing in the direction Horace took and in accordance with Phaedrus and Persius, has taken the personally abusive invective of Lucilius and Catullus to a social and moralistic criticism of human vices. His avowed concern is not to attack any specific individuals, alive or dead, but to point up general character faults presumably in order to enlighten his reader. Thus he would have us believe that strung throughout the epigrams are fictitious names that stand for character types.⁽³⁾ Indeed, some names Martial uses are obviously fictitious, chosen as they are to fit the context of the epigram. For example, the name Lesbia is used for a *meretrix* who is castigated for her sexual activities numerous times (e.g., 1. 34, 2. 50, 6. 23).⁽⁴⁾ In other cases Martial uses names that are very common and hence have no particular connotation in themselves (e.g., Paulus and Paula). Of course, Martial may be in some cases just protecting himself with his disclaimer while actually using thinly disguised renditions of names of real persons.⁽⁵⁾ Overall, however, Martial seems to have fulfilled the intent

(1) For *viridis aerugo* see Aly Hassan (2003) at 10. 33. 5.

(2) Cf. Phaedrus 3 prol. 49-50.

(3) Compare for example epigram at 2. 23. 1-3: Non dicam, licet usque me rogetis, / Qui sit Postumus in meo libello, /b Non dicam; also compare at 9. 95b. 1-2 where Martial says: Nomen Athenagorae credis, Callistrate, verum. / Si scio, dispeream, qui sit Athenagoras. Editors of Martial by and large have taken him at his word on this matter (e.g., Kay (1985) at 11. 7. 1 who as a general rule of thumb takes the attacked personages of the satiric pieces as unreal, and those of poems which have non barb as real; Howell [1980] at 1 praef. 1-9 never questions at all that Martial uses anything other than fictitious names in his invective).

(4) Cf. also Charinus, a Greek name (and stock figure of Doric Comedy) suggesting a freedman, which is found eight times in various satiric contexts (e.g., in 4. 39 as a *cunnilingus*, in 6. 37 as a *cinaedus*, in 11. 59 as an ostentatiously wealthy man), and Fidentanus, "Mr. Faithful", which is ironically used of plagiarizers (1. 29, 38, 53, 72).

(5) Cf. Speath (1929) 362: Martial tells us "it was his purpose to spare the individual while he discussed faults. As an earnest of this endeavor he makes use of assumed names to conceal-rather ineffectively, we imagine-real persons".

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he expressed in his preface to his first book and at epigram 10. 35. 10: to make attacks not on specific persons but on vices or faults.

It might be added that Martial's avowed efforts in his preface to Book 1 at attaining a balance, a *temperamentum*, in the treatment of persons, are manifested further by the many epigrams wherein Martial extolls and brings renown to others.⁽¹⁾ An epigram which articulates this balance between criticism and praise that Martial seeks is 5. 15:

Quintus nostrorum liber est, Auguste, iocorum,
Et queritur laesus carmine nemo meo,
Gaudet honorato sed multus nomine lector,
Cui victura meo munere fama datur.
Martial. 5. 15. 1 - 4

Martial's poems not only cause no complaint, but many are even brought fame by his mention of them. In other words, Martial does not neglect to represent the better side of human character in his writing, as self-serving as the practice may be sometimes, in order to achieve that *temperamentum* he institutes as his goal in the preface to Book 1. Thus, incidentally, he further promotes his popular appeal.

(1) E.g. Mart. 1. 13, 3. 58, 5. 34, etc.

Conclusion

Sal is used by the Latin poets to connote "wit" or its product. This wit can be used for humor, oftentimes in an unrefined and sexual context, and even more often is associated with satire and invective. Horace, Phaedrus, Ovid and Persius disclaim malevolence in their poetry, and all but Ovid further claim, or imply in Persius' case, that their use of wit for satire serves a social and moralistic purpose.

Martial uses *sal*, as do the other Latin poets, to connote piquant wit used for humor, oftentimes involving sexual matter, and most often for the purpose of satire or invective. In this he shows himself very much part of satiric literary tradition. Moreover, like Horace and Persius, he shows concern to exercise discernment in his use of wit. Martial, however, goes further than the satirists in declaring *sal* be a vital ingredient of his own poetry. It is his distinctive type of *ingenium*, an acumen and perspicuity into human nature that is key to his poetry.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, Martial's *sal*, the product of his critical discernment into human character, is the very element which occasions his entry into and connection with the literary social milieu of his day.⁽²⁾ Simply put, his unique acumen, his insight into character and the urbane and sophisticated life of the city have gained him a popular appeal among the upper classes that formed the literary coterie of his day.

Also Martial through his disclaimers of malice shows that he operates within a standing tradition among writers of satire. This satiric tradition first qualifies that it employs wit tastefully and judiciously, and then justifies its use of wit on social and moral grounds: the reader will benefit by example

(1) Indeed, wit is key to epigrammatic "point", the brief, clever concluding remark or word that informs and often completely upsets the apparent sense of what preceded in the poem, and sets epigram off from all other literary forms (see Ramage [1959] 253 for *sal* or wit as key to "point," and 254 where Ramage says: "... by Martial's time point had become the most important feature of epigram". See also Ramage (1973) 100-105 for a discussion of the development of 'point' in epigram.

(2) Cf. Starr (1987) 223: "For newer writers such as Martial, arriving in Rome from abroad, lacking the ties of politics and the other elements of aristocratic friendship, literature provided a point of access to the aristocracy, a way of making contact with elite". Also see Hopkins (1991), 143-44.

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from the poet's satiric castigation of his subject. Martial, further, however, declares that he will seek *temperamentum* in his treatment of human subjects in his poetry in order to balance his use of wit for castigation.

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