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Satire and the poet: the body as self-referential symbol

The satiric gaze: the physician, the body, and the mirror

Roman satirists are experts at reading the body's signs. The satirist's eye, like that of a physician or an expert in physiognomy, is keen at detecting indications of sickness or health, virtue or vice.[1] That the satirist is able to "read past" the body for the condition of the soul is an idea solidly attested already in Lucilius at fr. 678W: "we see that one who is mentally ill gives an indication of this through his body."

The principal object of the satirist's gaze is the world of contemporary social experiences: he catalogues his society's distortions, sometimes aggressively, sometimes with an ironic smile, but always respecting the body's symbolic potentials as an index of moral values and internal states. This cognitive tension, by analogy, intrudes upon language by literalizing images or metaphors and reducing abstract concepts to their real or corporeal referents, thereby extracting from them a moral significance. An illuminating example is Lucilius fr. 904–5W, where through a process of steady intensification, the satirist underscores the hard, physical aspects of flattery: "when that man sees me he fawns all over me, he pats me down lightly, scratches my head and picks out the lice."

But what happens when the satirist turns that same, deeply seeing eye towards poetry itself? When his ability to see things doubly, the soul through the body's signs, becomes metarepresentational and thus aware of its own poetic identity? That is to say, what happens when the poet describes, and thereby reflects on, himself, and his body, in satire?[2]

[1] See Bramble (1974) 35–8. For the body in satire, see esp. Braund and Gold (1998). For further observations on Roman "corporeal" culture, see Moreau (2002).

[2] Satire shares this "reflective" character especially with New Comedy. For comedy as a *speculum uitae* ("mirror of life") in ancient thought, see Brink (1982) 211, on Horace, *Epistles* 2.2.168.

By its own admission, satire is a "marginal" genre, to be ranked among Roman poetry's "minor" works. Reckoning his efforts more akin to prose than to poetry (*Musa pedestris*, "a walking muse") Horace leaves the impression that he arrived late on the literary scene, and that he thus chose to write satire only because all of the other, "better" genres had been taken by others (Horace, *Sermones* 1.10, esp. 46–8). But, in addition to these gestures of self-deprecation, satire allows us to label it as marginal because it does not present itself as a fixed and separate literary form. Rather, it thrives on producing analogies with other literary forms, such as with the grand texts of epic and tragedy. As if positioned alongside those texts, satire works "in the margins" like a set of scholarly notes or a commentary. From this particular position satire enjoys ample freedom of movement. It can mimic the text it stands alongside, or parody it. Or, in some cases, it can put to it direct questions of literary criticism, as Lucilius once did and, to a lesser degree, Horace. The possession of such an "external" view, detached and critical, produces among its effects a distinct urge for the satirist to define his work in poetic as well as social terms. For just as he needs to give proof of his moral integrity in criticizing the moral vices of others, the satirist must demonstrate his authority as a poet, even in those styles that he judges critically. It is as a result of this dynamic that Persius cannot commence his praise of Cornutus, a dear teacher and friend, without first distancing himself from the epic-encomiastic commonplace of the "hundred mouths" at Persius 5.1: "inspired poets have the habit of demanding one hundred voices" (*Vatibus hic mos est, centum sibi poscere uoces*). Once set apart from that commonplace, Persius can proceed to redeploy it in a varied form: "here I myself would dare ask for throats by the hundreds" (verse 26, with *fauces* replacing *uoces* in verse 1, both at the verse end, and *poscere* made more emphatic in *deposcere*). It seems that the satirist is precluded from delivering the commonplace without first establishing a critical distance from it. To use it, and thereby to avail himself of epic's elevated tone, he must first regard it with a commentator's eye, noting: "the trope is typical of epic, panegyric, and other 'inspired' forms." Conversely, if he wishes to parody epic, he need only go straight at it by showing that he has the competence to do it well.

When the satirist's external, "critical" view of poetry is conflated with a "clinical" view of the body, the full analogical experience of X (bodily sign) referring to Y (mental state), and thus also to Z (larger poetic/social values), is short-circuited, so that the satirist cannot avoid conflating his own moral nature with that of his body and his poetry. The comic principle stipulating a direct correspondence between what a poet is and what he writes is well known from as far back as Aristotle's "ethical" description of the history of Greek literature, where he argues that the most serious writers, because they

involve themselves with noble persons and activities, compose noble works, such as hymns and encomia, while those who are less serious mix with worthless persons, and therefore write lampoons (*Poetics* 4.1448b24–7).[3] This principle is a tremendous resource for satiric invention. For in availing themselves of it satirists are free to run back and forth along the line that connects poetry to poet. With it they detect in the poet, and in his body, the "signs" of his poetry, and vice versa.[4] Through a process that we will call "circulation," a larger literary significance is shifted onto the various entities and parts that were thought to make up the poetic text: topic, vocabulary, and poet (*res, uerba, poeta*) according to a distinction well worn already in Horace's day.

The poet's physical appearance, like that of the philosopher, historian, or of any grand political figure in antiquity, played an important role in figuring and expressing the moral and literary character of his work. Busts of not only Menander, Homer, and Epicurus, but also of Latin poets such as Accius and Ennius, adorned the private and public spaces of the city, the villa, and the Roman house. In his *Imagines*, Varro portrayed images of famous Greeks and Romans, attaching to each image its own biographical sketch and epigram. As far as we can tell, this was the first illustrated book in Latin literature. It taught that bodily characteristics could evidence moral greatness. The face of Socrates may have played an exemplary role here, with the philosopher's satyr-like visage being taken as the visible symbol of his tireless, and often paradoxical, dialectical research.[5] Hellenistic literary learning, by availing itself of an already ancient comic tradition (via Old Comedy and iambic poetry), found a cause for scholarly diversion in this: one recalls, for example, scholarly tales told of the archaic iambic poet, Hipponax, whose physical appearance was as disgraceful as his poems were rough (and who is said to have inveighed against the sculptors Bupalus and Athenis for producing an unflattering likeness of him [Test. 7–9 Degani]). Similarly the Alexandrian writer Philitas of Cos is said to have suffered from a flesh-consuming disease that was the perfect counterpart to, and expression of, his consuming passion for philological research.[6]

There is, then, a well-defined ancient context for thinking of the satirist's body as a literary expression. Taking this into consideration puts us in a position to respond to the question we have posed: it is actually *through*

[3] For the actual functioning of these concepts in ancient literary theory, see Cucchiarelli (2001), esp. 9–13.

[4] One sees the comic outcome of this procedure at Horace, *S.* 2.5.40–1, where the hack poet Furius is said to be "distended with fat tripe," and to "splutter" (*conspuet*) snow onto the Alps.

[5] See Zanker (1995).

[6] See testimonies 1–16 collected in Sbardella (2000) 77–9.

his own body that the satirist finds a complete and economical means for expressing his poetic consciousness. His body, besides functioning as a social instrument, is thus an intertextual device, useful for making comparisons with other poets and texts. Already Horace shows that he is aware of this peculiar property of the poet's body when he observes how imitation can be extended past matters of style to the precise physical acts and characteristics of the poet-model in question: "but if I should happen to turn pale, they [my hack imitators] would drink cumin to drain their blood" (*Epistles* 1.19.17–18).

Lucilius: fragments of a tireless body

It is likely due to the fragmentary state of his *Satires* that we do not possess a full and detailed image of the "body" of Lucilius. Such a hypothesis suits the available evidence, since the preserved fragments, however scarce, do provide explicit assertions about the poet's regard for his bodily concerns, such as for food, sex, and other basic needs. Lucilius' eye, we have already seen, knows how to isolate "physiognomic" particulars, and to note their comic potential, for example, by making stunning associations with the world of animals: "Broncus Bovillanus, with his tooth sticking straight out, he's a regular rhinoceros" (fr. 109–10W).[7] Such references to the body are often scrutinized by Lucilius in medical terms. Diseases, physicians, and body parts are particularly prominent in a satire of book 26 (fr. 676–88W). This book is the original context of fr. 678W (quoted on p. 207 above). But it also contains another more general reference to the connection of body to mind: "first, all physicians say that a human being consists of soul and body" (fr. 676–7W). In Lucilius, the satirist's role as healer was apparently prominent enough to leave the lasting impression that his moral discourse was conceived in the manner of a medical cure. For it is this aspect of Lucilius' work that Horace seems to seize on when he defines Lucilius' moral and political discourse as a kind of caustic, but beneficial, "salt rub": "But that same man is praised on the very same page for scrubbing the city with abundant salt" (*Sermones* 1.10.3–4).[8]

The fragmentary state of Lucilius' *Satires* prevents us from asserting too much. Most importantly, we cannot be certain that fragments spoken in the first person are to be taken as "Lucilius'" voice. But our general sense is that he often lurks in their shadow. In his poetry Lucilius started from his day-to-day experience, as Archilochus and Hipponax once did. As an imitator of their works, it is very likely that Lucilius knew how to disclose that same "realistic" view, of which so many testimonies remain, concerning himself and his own body. As, possibly, in fr. 688W: "when I had sweated my body dry in the stadium, in the gymnasium, and in the game of double ball," where the poet seems to call attention to his athletic skills.[9]

Lucilius takes his most decisive stance towards literary matters, and questions of satire, in the same book (26, likely his earliest book of satires, despite the late numbering). This book must be treated as an important locus of satiric self-representation, for the existing fragments allow us to intuit how Lucilius chose his audience, and how he expressed himself on the limits of anger and on the freedom of speech. But also under review in this book are the physiological aspects of poetic inspiration – all questions with clear relevance to a writer of satire, as Horace, *Sermones* 2.1, directly recalling this book, will later make clear.[10] But, despite the suggestiveness of these fragments, in reality we have come to know Lucilius, the expansive poet, able to write in diverse meters on questions of love, and on rhetorical and literary matters, and so much more, for a total of thirty books, chiefly through the image that Horace has left of him. For Horace, Lucilius is a kind of noble and lumbering giant of the old Republic. He is not without stylistic faults because he belongs to a past stage of Latin literary history. Yet he is incomparable in the energy and free-wheeling openness of his poetry. When Horace calls himself "inferior to Lucilius in fortune and talent," he tinges his comments with irony. But in this act of inventing the genre's *inuentor* as his richer, and elder, superior, he tells a substantial truth.[11] Certain characteristics that have come to identify Lucilius as a poet of satire, since they are by no means the compelling or necessary sum of his fragments, are perhaps best understood as points of contrast with Horace, based squarely in the story he tells.

Horace and the physiopathology of an inadequate satirist

In his *Odes* (his mature lyric poems composed in a variety of meters and traditions) Horace does not hesitate to figure himself in the role of a poet divinely inspired, and thus able to write verses that cannot be diminished by

[7] The bodily aspects and habits of animals are comically applied to humans elsewhere at Lucilius, frs. 273–4, 605–6, 1079–80, 1184W. For bibliography see Classen (1996).

[8] Ancient medical literature contains numerous prescriptions for "rubbings" (*defricationes*) of various kinds, e.g. with saliva, salt, oil, etc. Salt rubs are attested also in veterinary prescriptions, e.g. Columella, *De re rustica* 6.2.7 and 6.33.1.

[9] It is not clear that the "I" of these lines refers to the poet himself.

[10] The first "physiological" description of poetic inspiration in Roman satire is that of Ennius, *Saturae* 6–7V: "Greetings, poet Ennius, you who offer to mortals draughts of verse burning deep in the marrow."

[11] In the same way, Callimachus "invents" the Hipponax of his *Iambs*. For the invention of poetic *inuentores*, see Cucchiarelli (2001) 172–4.

the passage of time. If in his *Sermones* he comports himself in a very different, unassuming manner, this is not simply a matter of his being a younger poet, and thus naturally insecure. His *Epodes*, of roughly the same date as book 2 of his *Sermones* (ca. 30 BCE), prove that he has no difficulty addressing himself boldly to an entire community of citizens, taking the role of their spiritual guide – a surprising turnabout for a son of a freed slave (1.6.6), one that cannot be explained merely by reference to Roman political and juridical customs.[12]

The law of satire conspires with social necessity in this case, urging the poet to choose irony as his way of proceeding in satire. The author of the *Sermones* is not ensconced in the psychic trappings and enthusiasms of his other poetic worlds (especially those of his *Odes*, where he is often a civic spokesman and inspired bard). Rather, he is a citizen of Rome who measures himself against a complex web of powers and customs to achieve a difficult balance between his sense of belonging to a privileged group (he is a friend of the powerful Maecenas) and the attendant risk of self-pride (*superbia*) that brings public censure and dislike (*inuidia*). And yet, whereas epic poets can write about heroes and gods without having to declare Homer their unreachable exemplar, because epic does not require poets to account for themselves personally, the poet of satire, who is located in that reflective, "marginal" space alongside poetry, and apart from it, is naturally given to reflect on the problem of the genre's *inuentor*. Horace is generically constrained to tell us why he is not like Lucilius (fully three satires are dedicated to this question). And that series of explanations is shot through with social and political ramifications. For, as we have seen, it is not only his "talent" (*ingenium*) that separates Horace from his predecessor, but his "financial status" (*census*), and therefore this concerns his social standing and power. Intertextual engagement with Lucilius assumes that this social comparison is both evident and antagonistic.

This split perspective, at once both social and literary, conditions *Sermones* 1.4 and 1.5, the diptych that closes the first half of book 1. In *Sermones* 1.4 the comparison with Lucilius is explicit, announced in the high critical tones of a modern poet endowed with refined sensibilities: "The poets Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes . . . ," he intones. But later in the poem Horace thinks back on his own family background. In clear contrast to Lucilius' descent from Old Comedy's highest nobility, Horace finishes the poem with a contrasting portrait of his father. Whereas Lucilius took his habits of free speech (*multa cum libertate notabant*, 5) from his Old Comic ancestors, the young Horace took his (*liberius/iocosius*) from his freed-slave father (103–6). Clearly social differences, as well as literary, are ironically underscored by this passage.[13]

In *Sermones* 1.5, however, the comparison with Lucilius is expressed intertextually. His predecessor is never explicitly named, but memories of Lucilius' famous *Iter Siculum* ("trip to Sicily") are encountered at every turn of Horace's parallel *Iter Brundisinum* ("trip to Brindisi"). And they are all the more prominent in coming directly after a satire dedicated to an explicit comparison with Lucilius. To underscore the comparison, Horace has chosen a theme in which a writer of satire must necessarily be seen in terms of his own experience. Like a data-gathering probe, the traveling satirist observes, registers, and selects. His satire is the result of his observation, and of his own subjectivity in relation to a specific social reality. We do not know much of Lucilius' *Iter Siculum*. But certain facts are sufficiently clear: Lucilius, a rich landowner, undertakes that long and demanding journey presumably to visit his holdings in Sicily. The journey is conducted both on land and sea, and during those long days of travel Lucilius experiences a series of different mishaps and adventures. His fragments of the poem regale us with lively descriptions and comic scenes. The impression they leave is that Lucilius, as a traveler, lived out the very qualities of freewheeling vitality that characterize his poetry – the *Iter* seems to have occupied the entire third book of the collection. Typically forceful and down to earth is fr. 102–5W: "But everything there was fun and games. All was easy-does-it, I tell you, peachy and sweet. But when we reached Setia's border, that was tough going. Goat-clambering mountains, every one of them an Aetna, sheer as Athos."

But what most separates Horace as a traveler from Lucilius is his lack of social wherewithal. Horace does not undertake to visit his own holdings. He has no holdings to visit. With no particular goal of his own, he travels as a "companion" (*comes*) in the train of important political figures. Under the surface of Horace's poem there is the dark threat of the renewal of civil war, but what we view on the surface are the journey's incidental details. That is what Horace provides us with. He moves slowly. He plods, and "crawls" and gets stuck in the mud.[14]

[12] See Fraenkel (1957) 42–7. It is true that the poet of the *Epodes* cannot achieve his Archilochean aspirations – the collection closes with a palinode to Canidia; see Barchiesi (1994). Even in his *Odes* Horace is not a "true" Alcaeus. And again in his *Epistles* he breaks free from the expected, stereotypical perspective of a recent convert to philosophy (*Epist.* 1.1.14 "I am bound to swear by the words of no master").

[13] See Freudenburg (2001) 44–51.

[14] For the satirist's plodding pace in *S.* 1.5, see Gowers (1993b), and Cucchiarelli (2001) 15–55, 57–66.

Contrast Lucilius, a knight (*eques*) of old and illustrious lineage. He was famous for his fiery political combativeness – Horace would have us think of this at the beginning of *Sermones* 1.4. Whereas Lucilius's journey to Sicily was the expression of his private experience, letting us see another "relaxed" side of a famously political and well-connected man, Horace's journey to Brindisi represents his coming out into the public sphere and showing himself in the enviable role of one of Maecenas' closest friends. It seems, then, that in moving from Lucilius to Horace, along with a change in literary tastes, we experience a significant change in the social role of the satirist.

Horace wishes to express this difference, from one satirist to the next, as a difference in persons, employing his own body as a privileged instrument of satire. When his patron arrives in *Sermones* 1.5, at the point in the satire where, for the first time, he informs us of the "big issues" which are the cause of the journey, Horace describes himself applying ointment to his swollen eyes to soothe the symptoms of inflammation (*lippitudo*).[15] And in another moment of private relaxation with his patron, that same *lippitudo* prevents Horace from playing ball: "Maecenas goes off to play, Virgil and I to sleep. Yes, playing ball is nasty for those with bad eyes and upset stomachs" (48–9). Later in *Sermones* 2.1 the reader will learn that Lucilius, for his part, had no trouble in passing time in games and play with his friends, Scipio and Laelius (72–4), after leveling attacks against "the foremost citizens and the people, tribe by tribe" (69).

Just as Scipio and his friends relaxed with Lucilius, Maecenas was wont to unwind in the company of Horace and his other friends. But one gets the sense that the relationship of Horace to Maecenas is not on even terms. In *Sermones* 1.5 Horace is just one member of a larger "retinue" (*comitatus*), so one does not think that his absence from the group will spoil the fun. With Horace, the poet is no longer deeply in the know about grand political issues. Instead, Maecenas stands out as "patron" in order to show the literary specificity of his poet-friend, Horace. The poet's body thus becomes emblematic of his inferiority to his predecessor, a difference that only irony can defuse or, to some extent, redeem. From fr. 688W (cited above) it seems that Lucilius did not hold back from physical effort, including a good "draining" game of ball. Not only in 1.5, but also near the end of 1.6, Horace shows himself only moderately engaged in sport (125–6). The two diverse physical natures of the poets match their diverse manners of writing satire. Lucilius, Horace says (1.4.9–10), knew how to write 200 verses in an hour while standing on one foot, while he himself wrote rarely, and with painstaking attention

[15] *S.* 1.5.27–33. For *lippitudo* as the professional malady of poets and writers, associated also with humble crafts, see Cucchiarelli (2001), esp. 66–70.

to detail (1.4.18). Clearly in Lucilius Horace saw certain qualities of robust physical health. His nose was "wiped clean," Horace says at *Sermones* 1.4.8, referring to the sharpness of his wit (cf. Pliny, *Nat.* praef. 7 "Lucilius, who first established the nose [i.e. sharp wit] of style").[16] But in reference to his defects Horace draws images of excess and overflow (e.g. *Sermones* 1.4.11).

In *Sermones* 1.6, as in 1.5 and later in 1.9, we are treated to the world of Horace's daily routine as he moves from one place to the next, exploring and taking notes. We step into his shoes as he visits his usual haunts. But it is in *Sermones* 2.1 that the connection between the poet's own physical body and his verse fully rises to the surface. There Horace tells us that he writes because he suffers from insomnia (7). And one understands that Trebatius' prescription for him (intense physical activity and wine) is not what suits him. Later he gives us details about his *natura*, describing his origins in south Italy (34) that require him to write defensive poetry, just as a wolf must bare its teeth, and a bull must wield its horns (52–6).

Through his body Horace expresses his refusal to think big political thoughts, and to take an aggressive, and haughtily authoritarian (Lucilian), stance. Yet, in refusing aggression and censure, the *Sermones* also step away, more generally, from Lucilius' "healing" satiric regime. Already in his first satire Horace shows that he is comfortable with referring to medicine (80–3). And the body, especially in its comic, sexual aspects, plays a large role in *Sermones* 1.2, on the theme of adultery. In 1.3 the satirist's eye becomes more penetrating and attentive to scanning the bodies and minds of others for defects (especially 38–48, 73–4). And yet, he does this only on the way to refusing any too-rigid moral view. Rather, the real priority, he says, is friendship (*amicitia*), a companionable spirit that does not peer too deeply into the faults of others when these are minor in nature: "while you look at your own faults with swollen eyes daubed with ointment, why do you peer so keenly into the vices of your friends like an eagle or the snake of Epidaurus?" (1.3.25–7). The reader will soon discover, in 1.5, that the poet who writes these words is himself blear-eyed (*lippus*) and constrained to use ointment on his eyes. He himself necessarily lacks the sharp critical eye of the censor.

The inept teachers of *Sermones* book 2 subscribe wholeheartedly to various medical-dietetic regimes. This is perhaps most pronounced in the case

[16] For the nose as expressive of sharp wit, see *OLD s.v. nasus* 2. Clearly built into Horace's descriptions of his freed-slave father, esp. in *S.* 1.6, and of his poetical "father," Lucilius (as a means of contrast), in 1.4, are memories of the father of Bion of Borysthenes, as described at Bion fr. 1 Kindstrand: "a freed slave, one who wiped his nose clean with his sleeve." Horace names Bion as a model for *sermo* at *Epist.* 2.2.60.

of the farmer Ofellus (especially 2.2.70–88) and Damasippus, who regurgitates the hard Stoic teachings of a certain blowhard, Stertinius, on the theme "all men are fools" (especially 2.3.142–55, 288–95, with Horace responding back to him in strictly medical terms at 306–7, "just give me the complete details: what is the mental disease that you think I'm suffering from?").[17] In *Sermones* 2.4 and 2.8 medicine is prescribed in a more subtle form: Catius and Nasidienus are two gurus who teach their truths in gastronomic terms, theorizing about physiological costs and benefits as they go.[18] Here again, through alimentary references to the body, Horace delineates his own literary and moral values as a poet of satire. When the host's incessant nattering on the "causes" and "natures" of his feast incite Nasidienus' guests to flee, the *Sermones* end. This ending is, by implication, a way of commenting ironically upon some of the same, stereotypical habits of the satirist's own moral/physiological discourse.

The Stoic physician, Persius

Much of the referential play that takes place between Lucilius and Horace is lost to us and cannot be restored. But Persius' allusions to Horace are constant, and can be tracked from poem to poem. As we move through the satiric tradition and include Persius in it, we see the poet's referential work becoming more involved, and his references more intense (for the same process of intensification in later English satire, see Hooley in this volume). Persius thinks back on Horace, but also on Lucilius. And he thinks back on Horace's reflections on Lucilius (or, if you prefer, on Horace's Lucilius).

Persius' first "programmatic" satire is the best place to investigate the poet's referential practices and views.[19] Towards the end of that poem the poet turns toward satire's inventor, Lucilius, in whom he recognizes the great castigator of vice as drawn by Horace in *Sermones* 2.1: "Lucilius slashed the city [sc. with his whip]: you, Lupus, and you, Mucius. Those are the ones he cracked his tooth on" (Persius 1.114–15, recalling Horace, *Sermones* 2.1.62–70). But whereas Horace proceeded in his telling of the tale to describe Lucilius as a trusted *amicus* of Scipio, and of Scipio's friends

[17] This satire (2.3) can be interpreted as Damasippus' "therapy" for a lethargic Horace, who suffers from severe writer's block (1–2).

[18] For Catius' medical language, see esp. *S.* 2.4.21–29, 55–62.

[19] Despite the many problems that surround the disposition of his poems, published shortly after the poet's death, it is clear that Persius considered his first hexameter poem programmatic.

(*Sermones* 2.1.71–8), Persius puts Horace in the Lucilian role of a powerful man's intimate friend: "Flaccus touches on his laughing friend's every vice, and once let in he plays near the heart, an old hand at dangling the people from his nose" (Persius 1.116–18). But this is to develop an idea implied by the Horatian model itself: "whatever I am, though no match for Lucilius in fortune and talent, still Envy will have to admit that I have lived among great men all along" (*Sermones* 2.1.74–7). Slightly farther on in his first poem, Persius completes his list of literary ancestors by naming the canonical authors of Greek Old Comedy, and this again reads as a reference to Horace, who at the beginning of *Sermones* 1.4 drew a direct line of influence from Old Comedy to Lucilius (and thus to satire).[20]

In certain other respects Persius' relationship to Horace is less sanguine. His Augustan predecessor kept direct attack, in the manner of iambic poetry, out of his satiric "conversations." For Horace, satire in hexameter verse is a prose-like means of cataloguing and commenting on his social experience. Clearly, his is a softened generic scheme that excludes iambic raging in the manner of Archilochus (or Lucilius). This is not the right mode for a freed slave's son who has been admitted into the circle of Maecenas. In his *Epodes*, however, in a generic register more formalized and marked clearly as "poetry," the reader finds verbal violence in ample measure, and the strong, expressionistic tones of aggression, of death, of sex, and magic. It is precisely this "epodic" side of Horace that interests the Stoic satirist Persius. He wants to reintroduce into satire the Lucilian mode of aggression that Horace understood quite well, but had relegated to a different generic space.

This difference between the two poets can once again be expressed through the poet's body, thus reconfirming the body as an instrument of literary self-awareness. This is a lesson that Persius learned in minute detail from Horace.[21] For example, in his *Epodes* Horace describes a wild fig tree (*caprificus*) in connection with one of the witch-hag Canidia's magical rites. There the weedy "cursed" tree is noted for its ability to crack apart tombs with its roots (*Epodes* 5.17). It is precisely this tomb-cracking quality of the wild fig that Persius uses to symbolize the poetaster's "bursting" bodily urge to compose bad poetry. The fool interjects: "but what was the point of my studying so hard if this yeasty stuff, and this wild fig, once it has

[20] The importance of Greek Old Comedy is by no means limited to the explicit theorizing of *S.* 1.4. See Cucchiarelli (2001), esp. 21–55, 199–203.

[21] For corporeal imagery in Persius, fundamental studies are Reckford (1962), Bramble (1974), Bellandi (1996).

started to grow inside, should not break its way out of my liver into the open?" (Persius 1.24–5).[22] By reference to an organ of the body, the liver, specifically figured as epodic/Horatian (esp. via *Epodes* 5.37–40), Persius degrades the Lucilian idea of the satirist's unchecked spontaneity: "when I myself bring forth a verse straight from my heart" (Lucilius, fr. 670–1W).[23] In a procedure typical of Persius, in which multiple satiric voices intersect to produce a layered effect, confusing to the reader, yet, at the same time, demanding the reader's attention, the idea of poetry as a physical impulse is assigned to a hack poet who proudly vaunts that he has a wild fig "bursting" from his liver. His putting the tradition to this mistaken use is a satirically effective means for describing a kind of poetic inspiration that is, in Persius' day, itself unattainable and irrevocably compromised.

At times Persius assimilates his body to that of his predecessor, inheriting from him the specific marks that Horace had used to typify his inadequacy. If one characteristic that identifies Horace as an inadequate satirist is, as we have seen, a pair of sore and bleary eyes that he must constantly daub with salve, Persius claims to have learned to smear oil on his eyes as a schoolboy in order to avoid performing from memory the last "great words" of Cato in the throes of death (Persius 3.44–7). One is left to assume that he was precociously afflicted by *lippitudo* which, he says, he could feign as needed. But we know that this is exactly how Horace reacted to the arrival of Maecenas and Cocceius on the way to Brindisi (see above), and it is how he escaped having to play a game of ball.[24] In the case of both poets, *lippitudo* functions as a kind of poetic *recusatio*, and as a handy means of recusing the poet from certain big expectations.

Lucilius' idea of the satirist as a physician is given its most thorough and literal application by Persius, who resorts to dietary and curative imagery more often than any other satirist.[25] Often this finds him

[22] Already in v. 12 Persius speaks of satirizing as a physiological necessity: "my spleen is unruly, so I break out in laughter;" cf. 3.8–9, 4.6, 5.144. Perhaps following the satirist's own physiological clues, the biographers of Persius blame his premature death on a digestive ailment (*uitio stomachi, Vita Persi* 1.50) that perfectly suits an angry writer of satire (Latin *stomachosus* = "irritable").

[23] For Horace the "outer heart" (*praecordia*) was the seat of venomous iambic rage: "what is this venom that rages in my chest [*in praecordiis*]?" (*Epod.* 3.5); cf. Persius 1.116 (cited above) describing Horace's seasoned skills at "playing near the heart" (*circum praecordia*).

[24] In the biographical tradition, where biographical information accumulates with time and is therefore open to contamination, similarities between Persius and Horace extend to other details, often quite minute. For example, the sluggishness that characterizes Persius' rate of composition (*Vita Persi* 1.41, *scriptitauit et raro et tarde*) recalls the description of Horace in *S.* 2.3.1 (*sic raro scribis*).

[25] For specific occurrences, see Migliorini (1990).

literalizing and intensifying certain metaphorical notions ironically suggested by Horace. But for Persius, the body, and certain gross physical qualities, are not things ironically toyed with. They are obsessed over and scrutinized with a demanding, analytical eye that searches out ulcers that hide under an attractive surface (Persius 4.43–5).[26] One can easily see how Persius turns a physician's eye on poetry itself by exploiting the physiological connection between the poet and his verse.[27] Again this takes us to his first satire. There Persius uncovers the remote origins of his "diagnostic" procedure in Greek Old Comedy, by re-adapting that scene of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusai* where the playwright Agathon's effeminate verses effect the sexual arousal of his listeners. To conclude his performance Agathon tells his audience: "it is necessary that what one writes should resemble what one is" (167, see above, n. 3). Agathon's counterpart in Persius 1, all primped and speaking softly, brings his audience of Roman citizens to a high state of sexual arousal (Persius 1.15–21). But for Persius the body of his "victim" (or "patient"), which this satire picks out for special study, functions as symbol and symptom of a much larger moral condition. The act of chiding physical defects, though funny in a superficial way, is never an end in itself for Persius. It has no programmatic relevance, as he himself says at the conclusion of his first satire, where he writes off for failing to appreciate his work the person who is quick to make fun of somebody's Greek shoes, or the one who can say "hey, one-eye" to a one-eyed man (127–8).[28]

Juvenal. Or, how the satirist's body finally faded from view

After Persius, with Juvenal, we come upon a significant break in Rome's satiric tradition. It is as if the last of Rome's verse satirists wished to step aside from his role as epigone and respecter of a continuous tradition. Regarding Horace's light and ironic "conversations" Juvenal has nothing specific to say – a silence that sometimes seems hostile (Juvenal uses language rather harsh against Horace the "parasite" of Maecenas). It is clear that Juvenal

[26] Similarly Persius at 1.9–10 describes himself as "visually" inspired in his urge to write satire. His urge to laugh aloud first came "when I turned my gaze [*aspexi*] toward our old-timers and their hard and frugal ways."

[27] Already in his choliambic prologue Persius describes poetic inspiration by means of bodily figures, through images of lips washed, bellies fed, etc. Likewise, the figurative language of Persius 5.5–6 is strictly alimentary. In using the topos of the hundred mouths the inspired poet is said to "ingest huge chunks of song."

[28] Persius' revision of satire turns the satirist's critical focus from public, "superficial" matters to internal matters of the soul; see Freudenburg (2001) 188.

conceives of satire as a "high" literary enterprise, a form sustained at the level of rhetorical invective or declamation (see Victoria Rimell and Catherine Connors in this volume). He regards Lucilius, his favored model, as a kind of epic charioteer who races at a reckless pace across the plains of his native Suessa Aurunca (*Satires* 1.19–21). It will come as no surprise, then, that his satires often come into much closer contact with Horace's *Epodes* than they do with his *Sermones*. But in withdrawing from satire's more recent traditional register, Juvenal also avoids providing autobiographical specifics about his life and his physical condition. The two phenomena go hand in hand.

If Juvenal eliminates from his *Satires* all detailed references to his body and to his personal biography, this relegation is actually an effect of his embracing the impersonal, "objective" voice that he knew from the epic tradition. It is as if the satirist's personal details, so important to all satirists who preceded him, are no longer of interest to this satirist or to his readers. Rather, what counts for Juvenal is the gusto of high invective and of moral sermonizing, a tone of speech that actually becomes much softer in his later satires. In the opening attack of his first satire we hear the poet's ranting as a voice out of the blue, all on its own, without any helpful lead in or further specification: "am I always to be just a listener!?" (1.1). And it is this reactionary stance that defines the poet for who he is. For he tells us that his best means for reacting against the bad, long-winded, and meaningless poems to which he has been subjected for so much of his life is to write satire. This explanation reads like a paradoxical reprise of Horace, *Sermones* 1.10.40–9, where Horace described how he came to "choose" to write satire by determining that all the other genres had already been taken (both poets provide fairly extensive lists of the possibilities that they have ruled out). Only Juvenal takes a different tack, by depersonalizing the genre, and figuring it as a kind of "epic" rant. His satiric voice is thus completely absorbed by the generic practices that he sets out to emulate. And like Persius, but in a much different way, Juvenal too seems to want to reintroduce into satire a mode of criticism that Horace had relegated to his *Epodes*: by claiming to be fired by "indignation/resentment" (*indignatio*) he taps into the force that energized the iambic poet at Horace, *Epodes* 4.10.

There seems to be one instance in his first satire where Juvenal treats us to a biographical detail. But the reference is more generic than specific. He says at 1.25: "when I was a young man, my beard rasped heavily under the barber's razor." That is it. What we learn from this is that Juvenal, upon reaching manhood, went to the barber for his first shave, like so many other of his fellow Roman citizens. But the verse perhaps concedes something

rather more satiric than epic, in a pun upon the poet's name (*iuueni mihi* = *Iuuenali mihi*).[29]

Here in Juvenal, the poet's bodily expression (in this case, the pronounced absence of his bodily self) collaborates with his choice of satiric register. For Juvenal, satire's "rediscovered" register is in the depersonalizing ambit of epic, or in a tragic mode that tends towards generalization. And it is precisely this complete break with the satirist's traditional openness in providing us with specific details (rather than generic references to the life of any old indignant Roman citizen) that informs those rare and teasing references that he gives us to the life that he presumably led. As if to toy with our expectations, he says at 11.56–9:

> today, Persicus, you will find out whether I've been leading you on with pretty words in reference to my life, my habits, and my wealth; whether, while praising pea soup, I'm secretly a glutton; whether in front of the crowd I call for porridge, while whispering "cakes" in the waiter's ear.[30]

From his own unique perspective, Juvenal makes full use of the fundamental tools of satiric language. Physical specimens, bodily functions, and diseases he often subjects to his satirist's expert medical eye.[31] And the concept of the body as an instrument for reading the mind he makes explicit at 9.18–20, recalling similar sentiments in Lucilius and Persius: "in a sick body you can detect the soul's hidden pains, and its pleasures. The face takes both expressions from there." Thus even the epic satirist feels the need to reaffirm one of satire's most basic and powerful assumptions. In Satire 7 Juvenal focuses on the topic of poetry and poets in order to re-engage with the topic of his first satire. And like that poem's precursors in Persius' *Choliambs* and Persius 1, and Horace's *Sermones* 2.1, Juvenal's seventh poem is another "first" satire because it introduces book 3. Here again the poet's bodily aspects are drawn in detail, with the poet's vocation described as a matter of "chewing on bay [leaves]" (*laurumque momordit*, 19), an alimentary

[29] Another possible teasing reference to the poet's biography is *Sat.* 3.319, where Umbricius' casual reference to "your Aquinum" has been taken by many commentators to imply that Juvenal was born there.

[30] Cf. *Sat.* 4.106: "more shameless than a sodomite writing satire."

[31] For example, at *Sat.* 3.232–6, 13.124–5, 208–16. The notion of wrath as a corporeal necessity is developed in full by Juvenal: "my dry liver blazes with anger" (1.45), "blazing with seething guts" (13.14–15), and so on. His satire's alimentary associations are best known from the two outlandish feasts of satires 4 and 5 of book 1. *Sat.* 15 draws connections between anger, the specific motivating force of the poet's early works, and cannibalism. For useful observations on Juvenal's physiological language, see Weilen (1996).

variation on Persius *Chol.* 1 "I never rinsed my lips in the nag's spring." He then draws a picture of his ideal poet who is far detached from reality and utterly free from quotidian worries: "but the outstanding poet, a man of no common mettle . . . this poet, though he is the sort I cannot point to, but can only intuit, he is the product of a mind free from worry" (7.53–7). This freedom from everyday concerns, he says, renders the poet's mind "just the right sort to drink from the Muses' spring" (58–9). But in studying the bodily conditions of poets, Juvenal sarcastically congratulates the skinflint patron for choosing to keep a pet lion instead of a poet: "for of course everyone knows that beasts are cheaper to feed, and that it takes more to fill a poet's guts" (77–8). Again at vv. 96–7 the poet's digestive apparatus is a product of satiric invention, as are the stereotypical "bodily" means he uses to attain a state of high inspiration: "then [sc. in the days of great patrons long past] rewards were equal to talent. In those days plenty of poets found that it paid to turn pale and abstain from wine for the whole month of December."

Even in this satire, a poem especially attentive to the physical states of poets, Juvenal does not offer his own body as a specimen of study. Instead, he has us consider the genre's previously open-handed habits of bodily self-expression in the exemplary image of a satirist who told us much about himself, in all of his works, and who fully exploited the literary significance of his own body: "Horace is punch-drunk [*satur*] when he says 'hooray!'" (62) – where the idea of satiric fullness/inebriation contrasts ironically with the shout of bacchic/lyric drunkenness and high poetic inspiration (*euhoe*!). Here, one last time, we observe not only the impersonal distance that the epic satirist Juvenal maintains, but we also have an instance of his employing that "clinical eye-view" that typifies the satirist's way of looking at the world since the time of Lucilius.[32]

It is through their bodies, each possessing its own peculiar set of strengths and inadequacies, that the poets of Roman satire configure their satiric principles. Through these bodily expressions, each satirist establishes his relation to his predecessors. And with them, each satirist provides a means for the genre's further configuration.

Further reading

On the corporeal figuring of satiric poetry in Rome, the pioneering study of Bramble (1974) remains fundamental. To this Labate (1992) provides insights that are both valuable and complementary. For the redeployment of the literary-critical "body language" of comedy and iambic poetry in satire, see Cucchiarelli (2001). Zanker (1995) addresses the physical-iconographic portrayal of intellectuals in antiquity. On the biographies of ancient poets, still a reliable guide, with full bibliographical documentation, is M. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London 1981). For Latin authors a good starting point is J. Farrell, *Greek Lives and Roman Careers in the Classical Vita Tradition*, in P. Cheney and F. A. de Armas, eds. *European Literary Careers: the Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Toronto 2002) 24–46. Required tools for the study of literary criticism in antiquity are D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, eds. *Ancient Literary Criticism: the Principal Texts in New Translations* (Oxford 1972) (a source-book) and D. A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (London 1981).

[32] This does not imply that Juvenal may not occasionally make indirect references to his own body. It is likely that he does this in *Sat.* 11 where, in the process of inviting a friend to dinner, the poet describes his own *uictus simplex*; cf. esp. 56–9 (cited above). In verse 203 he tells of having "wrinkled skin," a detail that may well have been true since he was quite old when he wrote the poem.

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