Satire under the Principate: Persius and Juvenal

The satire of Persius and Juvenal: the change in audience

Even though their poetry is separated by about half a century (one writes under Nero, the other in the span of time from Nerva to Hadrian), Persius and Juvenal have important characteristics in common. Both declare their connection to the satiric poetry of Lucilius and Horace and therefore place themselves in that tradition; but programmatic purposes aside, this literary genre undergoes a marked transformation in their hands. The innovations are considerable in regard both to the form that satire now takes and to the audience for the work in society. The satires of Lucilius and Horace assumed as a likely audience the circle of their friends, whereas those of Persius and Juvenal, even though formally addressed to an individual, are actually directed to a general public of reader-listeners, before whom the poet plays the part of a censor of vice and morals. The form of the discourse is no longer the constructive conversation that, while examining human weaknesses, aimed at arousing laughter. From this there arose, especially in Horace's satire, a kind of complicity between author and listener that was the sign of a shared language, a successful communication. The author himself could figure in the text as implied audience for his own discourse, and the listener, now the poet's companion and partner in the satiric discourse, came close to becoming his active collaborator in developing a model of life. But now that the listener is denied any closeness to the poet and any possible identification with him, the satiric poet's discourse places itself on a different plane of communication, one that is detached and loftier. The courteous, confidential manner, the smile of self-irony, the indulgent understanding towards mankind's common foibles that characterized Horatian satire are replaced by invective, the unsparing denunciation that humbles and destroys its victim. The poet, while engaged in correcting men, appropriates those forms of stern moralism (the strictness of Cynic-Stoic philosophy) that Horatian satire had rejected, or rather mocked, as being one of the excesses to be guarded against. Along with this change in the role and position of the satiric poet, one notes in the poetry of Persius and Juvenal the clear signs of a new literary taste, of that anti-classical mannerism that arises in reaction to the classicism of the Augustan age and flourishes in the first century A.D. and later. But above all, the transforma-

The detachment of the poet from the listener

Invective

Satire and recitation

tion in the formal characteristics of post-Horatian satire is owed to the changed manner of its creation and reception. The satire of Persius and Juvenal is intended not for private reading but for oral performance, recitation in public, and it naturally aims at having a striking effect upon the audience. This purpose is directly served by the use of the showiest techniques of rhetoric.

1. PERSIUS

LIFE AND EVIDENCE

Aules Persius Flaccus, about whose life we are informed by a *vita* thought to go back to Valerius Probus, the grammarian of the first century A.D. and the first commentator upon the poet, was born of a wealthy equestrian family in A.D. 34 at Volterra, in Etruria (a trace of his Etruscan origin remains in his praenomen, *Aules,* a compromise between Etruscan *Aule* and Latin *Aulus*). When he was six years old he lost his father. At the age of twelve or thirteen he was sent to Rome to be educated in the best grammatical and rhetorical schools, but the teacher who left a decisive mark on his life was a philosopher, the Stoic Annaeus Cornutus, who brought him into touch with the circles of the senatorial opposition to the regime. Persius met, among others, not only Caesius Bassus and Lucan, whose friend he became, but also Seneca and Thrasea Paetus, to whom he was tied by bonds of admiration and also kinship. (Thrasea Paetus, who fell victim to Nero in 66, wrote a life of Cato of Utica that was famous in antiquity and would serve as a model for Plutarch's life of Cato.) Persius's conversion to philosophy caused him to lead an austere, withdrawn life devoted to study and family affection. His life was also quite short, for he died in 62, not yet twenty-eight years old.

WORKS

Persius did not write much—*scriptitavit et raro et tarde,* his biographer says—and he published nothing during his lifetime. His friend Caesius Bassus saw to the publication of his works after they had been revised by Cornutus (to whom Persius upon his deathbed had also left his extensive library). Cornutus advised against publishing Persius's first poetic attempts (a tragedy *praetexta* of uncertain title, a book of travels, an elogium of the heroic Arria Maior, daughter-in-law of Thrasea Paetus) but did authorize the publication, after he had lightly retouched the last part, of the book of *Satires,* which was greeted with immediate success.

Summary of the Satires

A prefatory poem (which according to some is an epilogue, since several manuscripts transmit it at the end of the collection), consisting of fourteen choliambics (i.e., scazons, or "limping" iambic trimeters, the meter of invective), polemicizes harshly against the literary fashions of the day. It is followed by six satiric poems in dactylic hexameters (669 verses altogether), the meter now traditional for this literary genre. Satire 1 illustrates the deplorable mannerisms of contemporary poetry (which tended equally towards affected neoteric frivolity and hollow epic-tragic pomposity) and the moral degeneration that accompanies it (shameless exhibitionism, vanity, and craving for success); the poet contrasts this with the disdainful protest of his own verses, which are addressed to free men. Satire 2 attacks

the merely formal, hypocritical religiosity of those who do not know what honest feeling is and who ask the gods only to satisfy their own cupidity for money. The third is addressed to a young gentleman who is leading a slothful, dissipated life and urges him to follow the path of moral liberation by obeying the precepts of Stoic philosophy. Satire 4 shows the necessity of practicing the principle of *nosce te ipsum* for one who has ambitions for a political career and wants therefore to give moral commandments to others. The fifth, addressed to his teacher Cornutus, develops the theme of freedom according to Stoic doctrine, contrasting the commonest human vices with the freedom of the sage who frees himself from the passions and lets himself be guided by his own conscience. The sixth satire, finally, in form a letter addressed to his friend Caesius Bassus, deplores the vice of avarice and holds up as an alternative model the Stoic sage who uses his possessions with moderation.

Satire and Stoicism

Stoic moral tension and the satiric genre

For the young poet, animated by the strong moral tension that was fostered by Stoicism, the satiric genre was a virtually obligatory choice (the first verse of the first satire, which is believed to be derived from Lucilius, may be a sign of this). His polemical spirit and enthusiastic desire for truth found in satire their most suitable instrument for expressing sarcasm and invective, as well as moral exhortation. Persius several times, especially in the more evidently programmatic poems, returns to the reasons for his literary choices: in conformity with the moral-pedagogical conception of literature that was held by the Stoics, his poetry is inspired more than anything by an ethical need, the need to expose and combat corruption and vice, and for that reason it is polemically opposed to the literary fashions of the day. For the moralist Persius, contemporary poetry is ruined by a degeneration in taste that is also a sign of moral worthlessness. He does not hesitate therefore to polemically claim for himself the quality of *rusticitas* (this would appear to be the meaning of the controversial term *semipaganus,* with which Persius describes himself in the opening choliambics). This means opposing the fatuous affectation and the inane mythological subjects of the fashionable poetry and taking upon himself with pride the task of violently assaulting people's consciences in order to try and redeem them. A real need therefore lies at the base of both his literary and his philosophical activity, which is represented as a drastic operation of moral surgery. *Radere, defigere, revellere,* terms recurring in his poetry, which denote the individual actions of this severe therapy, point to the process of demystifying reality, the removal of the scab of deceptive appearances that is necessary for a radical renewal of the conscience.

Morality and literary polemic

The vocabulary of the body

In describing the multiple forms in which vice and corruption manifest themselves, Persius often has recourse to a particular lexical field, that of the body and sex, where he has at his disposal a wealth of metaphors. The obsessive image of the belly becomes the center about which man's existence turns and the very symbol of his degradation (the likeness between moral fault and bodily illness was a common assumption of Stoic philosophy and its therapy of the passions). In just this area Persius gives us some of his most famous pictures, in which he shows to best effect that taste for

the macabre distortion of reality that is typical of the moralists's hallucinatory vision—the bald poet with the upset stomach in the first satire (56 f.), for instance, or the wealthy young man of the third satire, brutalized by sleep and revelry (3–4, 32–34, 58–59), or the depraved pleasure-seeker stretched out in the sun (4.33–41), or, most notable, the intensely expressionistic picture of the glutton dying in his bath amid the stench emanating from his own body (3.98 ff.).

The phenomenology of vice

In denouncing vice and harshly describing its manifestations, Persius links himself to the tradition of satire and diatribe (this explains his tendency to portray unchanging types and the impression thereby created of an almost academic quality). But he heightens its tones, moving them towards a macabre baroqueness that would reach its culmination in Juvenal. The phenomenology of vice becomes the most prominent aspect in Persius's satire, relegating to the margins the positive stage in the process of moral liberation; in comparison with the description of the negative aspects of reality, there are few directions on how to *recte vivere,* on the principles by which to shape one's existence.

The private dimension of Persius's Stoicism

The precepts set forth—every satire is focused on a specific ethical theme—originate in Stoic doctrine and its theory of virtue. The sage sees the conduct of his life within the framework of a cosmic order that is assured by God, and he finds in it the ultimate end to which natural law has destined him. Persius's Stoicism does not openly take on the characteristics of political engagement; rather, it tends towards an inner concentration that is the condition required for worshiping virtue and is similar to the withdrawn existence and the tranquil freedom from disturbance of the Epicureans.

From Satire to Examination of Conscience

The interrogation of Augustan models

But more than anything, Persius's book of *Satires* offers the historian of literature the rare opportunity for an important examination. It is necessary, however, to abandon the esthetic prejudice that would diminish the literary intentions of the work, reducing them almost solely to an exuberant exercise in philosophical morality, and to recognize behind the clear intertextual echoes that animate the work the real presence of exemplary models and authors, voices that are different and far removed from the Roman literary tradition and that are summoned to dialogue and contrast with one another. In this view the *Satires* may appear like a rich pool into which many sources have flowed, or like a body of harmonic resonances in which one can still recognize notes that had been dominant in the Augustan poetic programs. The first presence, constant and uniform, is the Horatian *sermo,* a form of discourse that had been able to adapt itself to satiric purpose as well as to epistolary thought.

But questions of more general bearing prove to be involved in the thorough understanding of the work. In part because of Lucretius, Augustan literature had attached importance to educational ambitions, to pragmatic applications (if we do not wish to say "didactic," a term that defines a precise tradition); that is to say, beyond the forms that belong to the didactic

genre, the poet sought an intense contact with the recipient, whom he provoked and involved, and for whom he proposed choices and values. Persius takes up this Lucretian model and develops it into its opposite; he practically turns Lucretius into an anti-model. And thus the traces of the Epicurean concept of a didactic relation on which to base literature find in the *Satires* of Persius their point-by-point liquidation.

Lucretius, Horace, and the model of the poet-teacher

It was Horace who, especially in his *Epistles,* had been the medium of introducing Lucretian attitudes and applications into Augustan classicism (see p. 313). Literary writing had then acquired the substance of a protreptic discourse, of a continually repeated exhortation to wisdom. Those texts had chosen to seek and to invoke, insistently, the cooperation of the reader-pupil. The poet had assigned to the imagined recipient the part of a friend whom the poet-teacher was striving to accompany along the path towards his own truth, towards the lofty and serene garden of the sages (the *angulus* of the *Epistles,* the *templa edita sapientium* of Lucretius's poem), from which he might contemplate without acrimony the surrounding desolation of the nonphilosophers. In this regard Horatian satire, to which Persius is indebted for many verses, proposed various alternatives. One of its characteristic features, in fact, is that it teaches but also travels with the friend it addresses along a common path towards the proposed objective. It is a gesture of association, a maieutic procedure, a gradual conquest, in which mutual understanding and indulgence are the basis of the relationship.

This is the model established in the tradition. Persius's poetic *liber* is like a meditation upon it and also an act of apostasy from it. Radically transforming what had been the cordial figure of the author-philosopher reaching out amicably towards the reader, Persius's *Satires* describe the journey of a perennially unheard teacher, a teacher destined never to find satisfaction and obedience. Although some of the scenic backdrops are changed from one text to another, the functional types remain opposed—the author-teacher, the mass of the *stulti* (who mock him, however), and the young recipient (who does not allow himself to become a pupil, however). Deprived a priori of any apostolic effectiveness, the didactic discourse in Persius does not permit itself any expectations of success, statutorily denies itself the possibility of a positive response from the recipient, and in the end sinks into that angry monotony that inevitably has an unfavorable effect on modern readers. The tranquil good humor of Horace's *sermo* is replaced by a consciously harsh and aggressive attitude, which is necessary in order to overcome the indifference of the *miseri* who are prey to vice, an attitude that does not scruple to display that rustic rudeness from which Horace's urbane cordiality had always fled.

An unsuccessful teacher

The monologue of the examination of conscience

Yet precisely from this, from the loss of a recipient who is receptive to teaching, an advantage accrues to the work, or rather to the work's form of discourse. Once contact is weakened with the other pole of the communication (the one who should receive the message), space is won for a literature of interiority, for the confessional monologue; and this, too, is in part derived from Horace. In the "useless" teaching that is developed by the

Satires, then, one glimpses the scheme of a personal itinerary towards philosophy. The code of the examination of conscience is the cultural code (pre-Senecan) that seals the entire book. Thus the one who uses the voice and the function of a teacher in the text will reveal, if observed attentively, the features of a young person not yet free from difficulty, who perceives in his various pupils his own disease, which needs to be treated. In the end he comes all alone to the Elysian Fields of his philosophy and the Stoics who were his inspiration, a metaphorical destination that, in a significant coincidence, repeats the connotations of the *angulus* of which Horace had spoken in the *Epistles:*

> Hic ego securus volgi, et quid praeparet Auster
> infelix pecori, securus et angulus ille
> vicini nostri quia pinguior.

("Here I live, not worried about the mob or what the unfortunate south wind has in store for my flock, not worried because the field of my neighbor is more fertile" [*Satires* 6.12–14]).

The Harshness of the Style

The means of preaching: obscurity and harsh language

This aim of salutarily assaulting the reader, of shaking him up and showing him the crude reality of things, is chiefly responsible for the main characteristic of Persius's style, his well-known obscurity. This obscurity is in line with a tendency to conceal the train of thought behind a series of pictures that apparently are juxtaposed without there being inner connection between them, a technique originating in diatribe that some have compared to surrealism. The real need that, as was said, animates his verses (and that is innate in the satiric genre) leads him to choose ordinary, common language (*verba togae* [5.14]) and to reject rhetorical embellishments (*tectae pictoria linguae* [5.25]) that are the instrument of general mystification. A harsh language, polemically avoiding the refinements of smoothly exotic or fashionably archaic language and open instead to the brusque forcefulness of vulgarism, would prove to be the best means for expressing authentic feelings and the natural reality of things. For this purpose, since style is the faithful mirror of reality and does not betray its unpleasant ugliness, where Horace had recommended the careful choice of the *callida iunctura,* Persius regularly has recourse to the technique of the *iunctura acris,* of the collocation that provokes by its harshness *(lapidosa cheragra; noctem . . . purgas; avias . . . revello; murmura . . . secum et rabiosa silentia rodunt),* a harshness that can be either of sound or, more often, of sense (as in the frequent oxymorons that convey a surprising, hidden truth: these have a distancing effect analogous to that secured by the *aprosdoketon,* "the unexpected element," which surprises the reader and frustrates his expectations).

***The* iunctura acris**

The distortion of ordinary language

Thus the language is ordinary, but the style undertakes to distort it and compel it to express a truth that is not banal, to shed light on new aspects of reality, to establish unexpected relations between things (sometimes

with truly cryptic results, e.g., *puteal . . . flagellas* [4.49], *salivam Mercurialem* [5.112]). Another typical technique of Persius's moves in the same direction: the very bold employment of metaphor, which is useful for exploring new relations between things and capable of effects of extraordinary density and expressive power *(pallentis radere mores; de gente hircosa centurionum).*

The esthetics of obscurity

It is evident that a gap tends to open up between the need for a natural language and the pursuit of bold, innovative expression and that the asserted desire for clarity is subverted in the end by the obscurity of the artificial style, that is, by the implicit Callimacheanism that Persius himself inherited from his *auctor* Horace and scrupulously professes (in this way he fatally restricted his audience to that public of literary refinement that can decipher its secrets). Nonetheless, the proverbial difficulty of Persius's style is not, as has long been believed, the gratuitous habit of a stilted, academic poet; nor is it the harsh, striking expression of the strict Stoicism on which his satires are based. Instead, it derives from his desire to serve the esthetic and, especially, the ethical drives of his poetry. The risk of obscurity is the price to be paid for an art that is capable of blinding flashes.

Literary Success

Antiquity

Persius's satires achieved immediate success both among poets (during a recitation Lucan is said to have become so excited that he exclaimed that Persius's works were true poetry, his own merely trivialities) and with a wider readership. The popularity and the difficulty of his poetry are indicated by the fact that shortly after their publication his satires had already received a learned commentary from Valerius Probus; many others followed in late antiquity, when his works were the object of intense philological activity. Quintilian (*Inst. orat.* 10.1.94) and Martial (4.29.7) attest to his continuing popularity, which, if anything, increased in late antiquity both among pagan poets and among church fathers such as Tertullian, Lactantius, Jerome, and Augustine, who appreciated his commitment to an austere morality.

Middle Ages and Renaissance

The many surviving medieval manuscripts and his frequent appearance in medieval library catalogues from the eighth through the twelfth century prove that he remained popular in the Middle Ages, when he became a school author and was venerated as an intransigent moralist. His works provided edifying quotations for such authors as Hrabanus Maurus, Bishop Rather of Verona (the all too eager rediscoverer of Catullus), Gunzo of Novara, and John of Salisbury. It was only during the later Renaissance that his occasionally arid and obscure style began to cost him readers; twenty-one editions of his works appeared before 1500. With the end of the Middle Ages Persius ceased to be read as a universally wise poet. And even when he was interpreted philosophically, as in Politian's lectures, he came to be seen increasingly within the limits of the genre of satiric poetry; but even here, among Roman satirists he came to be overshadowed by the

more accessible Horace and Juvenal. Yet where these were read he was never entirely neglected, as, for example, in neo-classical England and during the Enlightenment. It is not surprising that he was one of Kant's favorite authors; but it is somewhat odder to find Goethe praising him for having concealed bitter discontent in Sibylline gnomes and expressed his despair in somber hexameters. Whether the obscurity and intellectualism of some contemporary poetic modes will win him many new readers may be doubted.

2. JUVENAL

LIFE AND EVIDENCE

On Juvenal's life the information we have is scarce and unreliable, derived from the rare autobiographical references in his satires and from some epigrams addressed to him by his friend Martial. The many extant *vitae,* the most ancient of which goes back to the fourth century, are of little worth. Decimus Junius Juvenal was probably born at Aquinum, in southern Latium, between A.D. 50 and 60 (though some put his birth in 67). His family must have been prosperous, since he had a good rhetorical education, though he showed little interest in philosophy. He seems to have practiced law, but without earning the rewards he expected, and to have devoted himself to the declamations then in vogue. He probably came to write poetry at a mature age, after the death of Domitian (96), and he continued to compose into the reign of Hadrian. Like his oldest friend Martial, he lived in the shadow of the great, in the difficult position of a client, a man without economic independence. We know nothing of his death, which was certainly later than A.D. 127, the latest chronological reference in his verses. The ancient tradition that says he left Rome for Egypt, where he was sent at the age of eighty (so the story goes), under pretext of a military command, on account of certain verses that gave offense to a favorite of the emperor, is scarcely reliable.

WORKS

His poetic works consist of sixteen satires, in hexameters, subdivided into five books perhaps by the author himself (book 1: satires 1–5; book 2: 6; book 3: 7–9; book 4: 10–12; book 5: 13–16, a total of 3,869 verses); a fragment of 36 verses, regarded by most as authentic and belonging to the sixth satire, was discovered in 1899. The very few chronological indications there are lie between A.D. 100 and 127, and the publication of the satires, or at least their composition, must take place during this period.

Summary of the Satires

In satire 1, which is prefatory and programmatic, Juvenal polemicizes against the fashionable declamations and their fatuousness and declares his disgust at the widespread moral corruption that compels him to become a satiric poet (*difficile est saturam non scribere* [v. 30]). But in order not to bring hatred and revenge upon himself, he will not attack the present generation, only past ones. Satire 2 attacks the hypocrisy of those who cloak the foulest vice beneath the appearance of virtue; the poet's principal target is homosexuality. The third describes the poet's old friend Umbricius's abandoning Rome, the chaotic metropolis where life has

become dangerous for honest men. In the fourth satire he tells of the council called by Domitian to deliberate upon a grave question: how to cook the gigantic turbot presented to the emperor as a gift. Satire 5 describes the dinner given by the rich Virro and the humiliating situation of the clients invited. The sixth and longest satire is the famous tirade against the immorality and the vices of women. Satire 7 deplores the general decline in study and the wretched condition in which the writers of the day are forced to live; by contrast, it pines for the patronage that nourished Augustan literature. Satire 8 contrasts the false nobility of birth with the true nobility that derives from talent and feeling. The ninth recounts, in the form of a dialogue, the protests of Naevolus, a homosexual ill-rewarded for his difficult services. Satire 10 focuses on the folly of human desires. In satire 11 the poet contrasts the ostentatious luxury of rich men's banquets with the modest dinner offered him by a friend. In 12 he attacks legacy hunters; in 13, cheats and swindlers. In 14 Juvenal discusses the upbringing of children and the need to accompany precept with example. Satire 15 describes an episode of cannibalism that took place in Egypt (which the poet claims to know [v. 45]) and was provoked by religious fanaticism. The last satire, which is incomplete, lists the advantages offered by the military life.

Indignant Satire

The poetics of indignatio

The literature of the day, with its foolish delight in hackneyed mythological stories, is, according to Juvenal, absurdly far removed from the corrupt moral climate and the deep degradation of Roman society at the end of the first century and in the first decades of the second, the very years that to others seemed to herald a new glorious era following the grim period of Domitian. In the face of the unhalting spread of vice (*quando uberior vitiorum copia?* [1.87]), indignation will be the poet's muse (*si natura negat, facit indignatio versum* [1.79]), and satire will be the required genre, the kind of poetry most suitable for conveying the fury of his disgust. Juvenal thus, in the first satire, announces the reasons behind his poetics and the central place occupied by *indignatio,* marking thereby a perceptible departure from the Latin satiric tradition. Unlike Horace and even Persius, who, though fascinated by the representation of vice, did not refuse to propose a remedy (one based upon stern philosophical precepts), Juvenal does not believe that his poetry can influence the behavior of men, whom he regards as irremediably prey to corruption. His satire will limit itself to denouncing, to shouting out his rancorous protest, without cherishing any illusions of redemption.

The rejection of Roman moral thought

Juvenal refuses to conform, in other words, to the earlier rationalistic and reflective tradition of satire, but his rejection of that tradition is more general: it attacks the very forms of moral reasoning and judgment, the categories and structures of Roman moral thought. This last, as is well known, takes shape when a large number of topoi from Cynic-Stoic diatribe are adapted to Roman society, and it shapes in turn, in the most varied ways, Roman thinking about problems of personal ethics and social morality, providing it with structures of thought and types of solution. Juvenal rejects precisely the answers that are given by moral diatribe, by that

morality that teaches men to remain indifferent to the world of concrete, external things, to regard them with irony and detachment, and to cherish instead inner goods, to strive for the *apatheia* and *autarkeia* of the sage, which are the goals of a superior nobility of the spirit. Juvenal rejects and demystifies this consoling morality with the disdain of a man who is offended at seeing vice and wrongdoing rewarded and with the rancor of a social outcast, one who sees himself as excluded from the benefits that society confers on the corrupt and forced into the humiliating position of the client.

The invective of the outcast

Rancor towards society, hidden resentment at not belonging to it, is an important element in the indignant satire of Juvenal, who represents the Italian middle class that in the daily life of the Empire's cosmopolitan capital witnessed the constant subversion of the moral and political values of the national, republican tradition. Lacking an ethical-political awareness that could explain this turbulent development, the variety and mutability of the social picture, Juvenal looks upon this confused spectacle (which relegates him to the edges of the scene) as a tragedy performed in grotesque masks, and he does not have even the bitter satisfaction of invective. In the moralist's distorted view, Roman society appears irremediably perverted, and the roles of the several classes overturned, beginning with the nobility, which has unworthily abdicated its rightful functions (e.g.,protecting and promoting culture, as under the great patronage of the Augustan age) and which brutalizes itself in carousal and lust.

Aggressive fury against all

His aggressive fury spares no one, and it grows especially heated against the figures who best symbolize the society and the manners of the swarming metropolis—the vulgar arrogance of the nouveaux riches, the excessive power of the freedmen, the cunning boldness of the Orientals, the moral degradation of the starveling writers.

Misogyny

Women, both free and emancipated, are a special target. By their easy movement in society they personify for the poet the destruction of modesty; they inspire him to write the sixth satire, one of the most ferocious misogynistic documents of all time, in which the dark grandeur of Messalina, the imperial prostitute, stands out especially.

Apparent democratism

This radical aversion to his own day and the rabid protests he registers against injustice and against the oppression and misery in which the humble and the outcast live have led some to speak of a democratic attitude on the part of Juvenal. This is a mistaken view, however; apart from some occasional expressions of solidarity with the poor and the helpless, his attitude towards the crowd, towards the uncouth and unlettered, towards whoever engages in commerce or manual labor, is one of deep and inalterable scorn. His intellectual pride and nationalistic resentment of flattering, intriguing Greeks and Orientals (whose competition harms Roman *clientes*) permit him to claim for himself, at most, affluence and social recognition but leave him far from harboring any aspirations to social solidarity.

Sterile idealization of the past

Instead, injured and rejected by a society that destroys and scorns his values, Juvenal tends to idealize nostalgically the past, the good old days dominated by a sound farmer morality and polemically contrasted with the

corrupt citizenry of the present, a society not debased by Orientals, ex-slaves, and businessmen. This flight from the present, this archaizing utopia (a topical motif in Roman moral thought), seems the only possible outcome of Juvenal's *indignatio* and amounts to an implicit admission of his frustrated powerlessness.

The later Juvenal and the return to diatribe

A marked change of tone is observable in the second part of Juvenal's work, that is, in the last two books, in which the poet expressly renounces violent *indignatio* and assumes a more detached attitude, which aims at the *apatheia* of the Stoics. In this he is returning to that diatribe tradition of satire from which he has drastically departed. His view thus widens into a more general observation and allows itself the time to take a more tranquil view, one that is resigned in the face of the world's incurable corruption. And yet upon this facade of impassability cracks open here and there, showing the old fury, and the undying rage sometimes breaks out again. Not even the remedy of philosophic indifference succeeds in calming his wounded and frustrated mind.

The Sublime Satiric Style

Indignatio *and loftiness of tone*

Whereas in the earlier tradition the fact that satire had ordinary reality as its subject led it to adopt a humble stylistic level, a familiar and unpretentious tone (*sermo,* in fact), now, when this reality has become unusual and vice has peopled it with *monstra,* satire must match it with grandiosity. It therefore no longer adopts a lowly style, but one like that of the genres traditionally contrasted with satire, epic and especially tragedy. Satire would lack an essential feature of these genres, their fictionality (which Juvenal several times polemically rejects), because it would remain realistic, but it would have their loftiness of tone, that grandeur of style that would correspond to the violence of his *indignatio.*

"Tragic" satire

Juvenal thus transforms profoundly the formal principles of the satiric genre, breaking the traditional link with comedy (i.e., dispensing with the *ridiculum*) and bringing satire near to tragedy, on the level of content (the *monstra*) and style, which is similarly "sublime." A familiar technique in Juvenal is the employment of epic-tragic language precisely in connection with the coarsest, most vulgar content; his purpose is to bring out the lowness of the material by contrasting it with the loftiness of the form of expression. His realism, which richly documents for us the habits and usages of daily life at the time, strongly tends to distortion, of course, because he is dealing with figures and scenes of such coarseness that the indignant moralist's biliousness vents itself on them.

Rhetorical training and ideological authenticity in Juvenal

His expression, which is always prone to explode in hyperbole and in which courtly and plebeian tones and lofty and obscene words clash, with intentionally striking effect, is visual and pregnant, dense and sententious (many of Juvenal's verses have become proverbial). In his declamatory emphasis, in this tone which is always ready for denunciation and invective (and which rarely relaxes into reflection or laughter), in the fixity of the targets he attacks and in the repetition of the moralizing topoi, some have

perceived the influences of the rhetorical schools and of the declamations that Juvenal had long practiced, and his poetry has always been burdened with this accusation of academicism. But the studies of the last decades have examined Juvenal's poetics more deeply and shown how his means of expression serve the ideological purposes of "the most tragic and greatest poet of human vices."

Literary Success

Antiquity

Juvenal seems to have been relatively neglected in the second and third centuries; neither Donatus nor Jerome ever refers to him. He is first mentioned by Lactantius, and Ammianus Marcellinus attests his rise to popularity in the last quarter of the fourth century, especially among poets and grammarians—Servius cites him more than seventy times in the course of his commentary on Virgil, and Servius's student Nicaeus published an edition of the *Satires.* One evident result of this brief spurt of interest in Juvenal, which seems to have reached its climax by the end of the century, is the two sets of scholia on his poems, which go back in part to this period but continued to grow through the Middle Ages (when one was attributed to Valerius, the other to Persius's friend Cornutus). He was read by such poets of late antiquity as Ausonius, Rutilius Namatianus, and Claudian, while his presence in bilingual glossaries suggests that he was used in the eastern part of the Empire to teach Latin to speakers of Greek.

Middle Ages

Juvenal returned to prominence during the Carolingian revival and figured in Charlemagne's court library. Throughout the Middle Ages his popularity as a moralist secured him both a wide circulation (besides fragments of three ancient manuscripts, well over five hundred medieval ones have been found) and a firm place in the medieval school curriculum. Heiric of Auxerre studied him and is mentioned in the scholia; students practiced the rules of meter on his verses; he provided examples for the teaching of rhetoric; and in 1086 the grammarian Aimericus gave him the first place in his canon of authors. For the genre of medieval Latin satire, which flourished in the twelfth century, Juvenal provides the most important model. Both medieval prose authors and poets refer to him often. Dante and Petrarch knew his works; Geoffrey of Monmouth, John of Salisbury, Vincent of Beauvais, and other medieval authors quoted him frequently; and in his *Troilus and Creseide* Chaucer provides explicit confirmation for a judgment expressed in the tenth satire by "Juvenal lord." Indeed, according to one of the ribald university songs of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, "they believe more in Juvenal than in the doctrine of the prophets" *(magis credunt Juvenali, quam doctrinae prophetali).*

Renaissance and later

In the Renaissance Juvenal's popularity, like Persius's, decreased somewhat. In particular he ceased to be regarded as a universal sage and was understood instead within the more limited confines of the moralizing satirical tradition; but within this genre he remained a dominant influence. It was Juvenal, for example, rather than the other Roman satirists, who contributed most to Luigi Alamanni's thirteen satires on the vices of Italy,

to Ariosto's seven on social corruption (including not only women and priests but also patrons and humanists), to the satires of Parini and Alfieri, of Hugo and Carducci and Joseph Régnier. English translations by Stapylton (1660), Holyday (1673), and Dryden (1693) suggest his importance to neo-classical satire, and in the next century Samuel Johnson modernized, sanitized, and humanized his third satire ("London") and his tenth ("Vanity of Human Affairs").

The strange taste for neo-Latin satires in the Juvenalian mode lasted longer than anyone might have expected. In the eighteenth century they were written on English matters by Pope's contemporary William King and on Polish ones by Antonius Loz Poninski, in the nineteenth century on Swiss matters by Petrus Esseiva and on Croatian ones by Junius Resti, and as recently as the 1960s on American matters by Harry C. Schnur, who also published a supplement to Juvenal's last satire, perhaps inspired by the miraculous feat of a young Oxford undergraduate, E. O. Winstedt, who in 1899 discovered thirty-six previously unknown verses in a manuscript of the sixth satire.

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