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The Horatian and the Juvenalesque in English letters

It is a time of trouble in California. Deaths from AIDS are everywhere. Nor is the wider political scene much brighter. In Reagan's America the poor queue up for private charity. Thom Gunn writes to his brother from San Francisco to invite him to come and share dinner, walks, talk, community. The tone – intimate, conversational, relaxed, jokey, detached – darkens as Gunn turns to current discontents:

> By then you will have noticed those
> Who make up Reagan's proletariat:
> The hungry in their long lines that
> Gangling around two sides of city block
> Are fully formed by ten o'clock
> For meals the good Franciscan fathers feed
> Without demur to all who need.
> You'll watch the jobless side by side with whores
> Setting a home up out of doors.
> And every day more crazies who debate
> With phantom enemies on the street.
> I did see one with bright belligerent eye
> Gaze from a doorstep at the sky
> And give the finger, with both hands, to God:
> But understand, he was not odd
> Among the circumstances.
> Well, I think
> After all that, we'll need a drink.[1]

The struggles of the poor are seen from a relatively comfortable Horatian outside, and the middle-class punch-line about needing a drink moderates any undue *saeva indignatio*. The greater part of the poem depicts the two brothers enjoying middle-aged pleasures: observing the neighbors, taking a

[1] Gunn (1992) 7 ("An Invitation").

trip on the ferry, climbing the hills, and preparing their dinner, with some elision of the political. This, we may say, is "Horatian" *sermo*, from 1992.

A century earlier Dickens surveyed, with radically disenchanted eye, the oppressive opulence and human emptiness of a dinner party among the newly arrived Veneerings. "She treats me like a piece of furniture," we like to say. In Dickens' nightmare world one taken-for-granted guest becomes a piece of furniture. The unwary reader may even be briefly deceived:

> There was an innocent piece of dinner-furniture that went upon easy castors and was kept over a livery stable-yard in Duke Street, Saint James's, when not in use, to whom the Veneerings were a source of blind confusion. The name of this article was Twemlow. Being first cousin to Lord Snigsworth, he was in frequent requisition, and at many houses might be said to represent the dining-table in its normal state. Mr and Mrs Veneering, for example, arranging a dinner, habitually started with Twemlow, and then put leaves in him, or added guests to him. Sometimes, the table consisted of Twemlow and half a dozen leaves; sometimes, of Twemlow and a dozen leaves; sometimes, Twemlow was pulled out to his utmost extent of twenty-leaves.[2]

At this table objects and appearances assume an energy that the conversation or the inner life of individuals lacks (something similar happens in Juvenal's fifth satire):

> The great looking-glass above the sideboard reflects the table and the company. Reflects the new Veneering crest, in gold and eke in silver, frosted and also thawed, a camel of all work. The Heralds' College found out a Crusading ancestor for Veneering who bore a camel on his shield (or might have done if he had thought of it), and a caravan of camels take charge of the fruits and flowers and candles, and kneel down to be loaded with the salt.

In this coruscating second chapter of *Our Mutual Friend*, his version of the satiric dinner-party (*cena*),[3] Dickens is writing within a well-established tradition but one that, in terms of style at any rate, owes little or nothing to Horace. The exaggeration and "caricature" (as we say, self-flatteringly); the garish light cast over the objects of the attack; the vividly observed "realistic" detail that topples into the surreal or hyper-real ("perhaps it is enhanced by a certain yellow play in Lady Tippins's throat, like the legs of scratching

[2] Dickens (1971) 48; subsequent quotations from 52 and 54. The passages could also be said to have "Ovidian" qualities (paradox and metamorphosis).

[3] The dinner party is where we learn/are forced to learn, through imitation, a site of symbolic violence ripe for satire; it is also where we learn satire, by imitation. Other obvious examples are Horace *S.* 2. 8 and Petronius' *cena Trimalchionis*.

poultry"); the dazzling leaps between literal and metaphorical – all bespeak a mode that we might term the "Juvenalesque."[4]

Of course the classical presences here are mediated (as classical presences always are). Dickens, notoriously, was self-educated, and may never have read Juvenal even in translation. But he had a gift, exceeded only by Shakespeare, of assimilating or intuiting kinds of discourse – as a result, like Shakespeare, he could be "influenced" by writers he had never read. Gunn is approaching Horace by way of his much-loved Ben Jonson; indeed, the poem can be regarded as an imitation of Jonson's 101st epigram "Inviting a Friend to Supper," itself an amalgam of Horace and Martial in "Horatian" vein. Such are the workings of the classical tradition.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries – what may be called the neoclassical phase of our literature – Roman verse satire was regularly translated and imitated. During this period views of Horace and Juvenal were central to the definition of satire, the question of its proper character, and its justification. Satiric invective raised problems both ethical and religious for its practitioners; the standard defense was that satire served for the promotion of virtue and the reformation of vice.[5] Elizabethans and Jacobeans generally favored a more dyspeptic satire modeled on Persius and Juvenal, but by the end of the Augustan period there was a preference for better-mannered approaches. "Fine raillery" became the preferred gentlemanly mode.[6] For Pope *The Rape of the Lock* was "a sort of writing very like tickling,"[7] and one may say to that degree "Horatian." Even the irate Swift preferred, or claimed to prefer, humor to lashing, "which gives Horace the preference to Juvenal."[8] The adjectives associated with Juvenalian satire – "furious," "tart," "nipping," "choleric," "austere," "bitter" *et al.* – might suggest a personality insufficiently amiable. Disputations about the etymology of satire could be brought tactically into play: if derived from *satura*, the word might suggest a relaxed "Horatian" medley; if from *satyr*, something altogether more scabrous and wanton.[9] Even the contrast between a stern Jonson and a more genial and capacious Shakespeare could be drawn into the debate.[10]

[4] Cf. Jenkyns (1982) 204–5. His is one of the best accounts of the stylistic merits of Juvenal's writing. In the early modern period characterizations are often rather two-dimensional, stressing only the sneering, scoffing character of Juvenal.

[5] For the material in this paragraph see in particular Elkin (1973); also Weinbrot (1982).

[6] So Dryden observes that "there is a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body and leaves it standing in its place." On those grounds he particularly relished his portrait of "Zimri" (the Duke of Buckingham) in *Absalom and Achitophel* (Hammond and Hopkins [2000] 423–4).

[7] Elkin (1973) 150. [8] Elkin (1973) 159.

[9] See further Burrow in this volume. [10] Elkin (1973) 65.

Of course, there were voices on the other side: an outspoken Juvenal could be linked favorably to a tradition of English freedoms (as he was, if perhaps with some irony, by Dryden, who implied that he was "a zealous vindicator of Roman liberty").[11] But in general by the end of the Augustan period Horace (or "Horace") had emerged largely victorious. That victory, however, was destined to be short lived, as Romanticism brought new literary priorities and new classical favorites. Nonetheless, it could be argued that "Horace" helped to mediate the transition from the revolutionary crises of the seventeenth century to an Addisonian mode of gentlemanly consensus in the eighteenth.

At all events the names of Horace and Juvenal were by 1700 constantly linked in a mutually defining pair. A *synkrisis* was a set-piece rhetorical exercise with its roots in antiquity, for example the comparison of Caesar and Cato as the two greatest men of the time in Sallust's *Catiline*, 54.[12] The predominant trope in such writing was antithesis. Comparisons of poets and writers in this mode were common in the early modern period: Virgil and Homer, Virgil and Ovid, Virgil and Lucan, Jonson and Shakespeare. In such binaries one element is defined in terms of its perceived other; such categories seem needed "to think with," as the structuralists liked to tell us. The danger is the forcing out of middle terms.[13] The common opposition between Horace and Juvenal was both constructed out of, and contributed towards, a particular "take" on either author (sometimes there is also a triangulation with Persius).[14] Dryden in his "Discourse Concerning Satire" works, for the most part, in a relaxed and exploratory way with many of the traditional antitheses from previous scholarly discussions – instruction and pleasure, satire comical and tragical, vice and folly – to give a subtle and personal account of the two poets, which also legitimates his own satiric writing. If a poet is to be of use to his successors, there is a need for such images, without which constructive engagement may be difficult. These images, though, are best regarded as constructions, always open for renegotiation, always based on privileging certain elements over others, on selecting particular works as characteristic.[15] In the case of Horace's *Sermones* traditional favorites

[11] Hammond and Hopkins (2000) 415. So, too, Gibbon thought that, unlike Horace, "Juvenal alone never prostitutes his muse" (Weinbrot [1982] 39).

[12] Compare Horace's comparison of himself as "lover of the countryside" with Fuscus, "lover of the city," in *Epist.* 1.10.

[13] See e.g. Hartog (1988) 212–59. Hooley's chapter in this volume shows how, *in practice*, the redeployment of Horatian and Juvenalian modes does not necessarily result in a strongly antithetical image of this poet or that.

[14] Quintilian (10.1.93–5) compares Lucilius, Horace, and Persius.

[15] For a fuller version of this argument see the introduction to Martindale and Hopkins (1993).

have been 1.9 and 2.6; poems judged less favorably are often dismissed as "immature" or "untypical" (like most of the *Epodes*). But it would be possible to construct a more Juvenalian Horace – or should that be "Juvenalian" and "Horace"? – from, say, 1.2 and 1.8, and 2.5; just as satires 9, 11 and 14 could be used to construct a more Horatian Juvenal (with, or without, the scare-quotes).

In such binaries either name is closely implicated with the other. One can go further and argue that the opposition is always already inscribed within the original texts (from the perspective of reception). In *Sermones* 2.1, a defense or mock-defense or mock-mock-defense, of his satiric writing, Horace says there are some to whom he seems too sharp (*acer*), while to others he lacks spunk (*sine nervis*), foreshadowing, or helping to create, the terms of later comparisons. In his first satire Juvenal places himself in relation to a tradition that includes Horace, wishing to replicate his predecessors (writing things worthy of Horace, *Venusina digna lucerna*, 51) but unable to do so because of his belatedness (a trope indeed appropriated from Horace).

Horace has been fully naturalized in English poetry (as, indeed, an element of "Englishness"). For this purpose, as in Thomas Wyatt's Horatian imitations in the sixteenth century, the satires blend seamlessly into the less caustic *Epistles* (did not Horace himself call both *sermones*?), and indeed into the entire œuvre. This English Horace is ironic and urbane, lover of the countryside, devoted to friendship and quietude (both political and philosophical), with the Sabine "farm" (aka a small villa-estate with eight tenant farmers) as the appropriate symbol of his moral preferences. For a textbook instance of such a Horace we can turn to the version of the end of *Sermones* 2.6, the tale of two mice, first published in 1663 by Abraham Cowley, one aspirant to the title of "The English Horace" (others include Ben Jonson and Alexander Pope).[16] Reading Horace through Cowley we encounter an amused but sympathetic treatment of both denizens of a mousey world, whose opposed lifestyles enable us to reflect on the difficult balance to be achieved by any searcher after the good life. Cowley gives to the "Epicurean mind" of the town mouse a speech that is no mere parody but recalls sentiments that animate some of Horace's most moving poems:

> Why should a soul so virtuous and so great
> Lose itself thus in an obscure retreat?
> Let savage beasts lodge in a country den;
> You should see towns, and manners know, and men,
> And taste the generous luxury of the Court,

[16] For a fine analysis of this neglected poem see David Hopkins, "Cowley's Horatian Mice" in Martindale and Hopkins (1993) 103–26.

> Where all the mice of quality resort,
> Where thousand beauteous shes about you move,
> And by high fare are pliant made to love.
> We all ere long must render up our breath;
> No cave or hole can shelter us from death.
> Since life is so uncertain and so short,
> Let's spend it all in feasting and in sport;
> Come, worthy sir, come with me and partake
> All the great things that mortals happy make.
> (34–47)

"You should see towns, and manners know, and men" looks back to the opening of the *Odyssey* by way of Horace's imitation in *Epistle* 1.2.19–20, not without help from another English Horatian, Ben Jonson ("Roe (and my joy to name) thou'art now to go/Countries and climes, manners and men, to know": *Epigrams* 128.1–2). There is humor in attributing sentiments so lofty to a mouse, but also a persuasive nobility of expression. As with Pope's treatment of the diminutive sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*, Cowley's mock-heroic mode holds in balance both the tininess of a murine world and our own analogous insignificance if seen from some larger perspective. At their country feast the *pièce de résistance* is "a large chestnut, the delicious meat| Which Jove himself (were he a mouse) would eat" (16–17): the mention of Jove introduces a measure which reduces humans as much as mice.

Perhaps Cowley is a touch too comfortable with his own Horatianism.[17] Indeed, in general the English are often quick – over-quick? – to identify with the figure of an ingratiating Horace. In *Sermones* 1.9 most readers appear to associate themselves with the poet, not his interlocutor – the "bore" or "pest" as he is sometimes called (though to Ben Jonson, who turned this poem into a scene in his play *Poetaster*, he was both a bad poet and a bad man).[18] Such identification may serve only to reinforce our own complacencies: moreover is the "Horace" of this poem so different, in his actions and aspirations in relation to Maecenas and the court, from his unwelcome companion – unwelcome perhaps as raising precisely such

[17] An edition of Horace edited by Alexander Broome (1666) contains a composite translation of the whole of *Sermones* 2.6, with Cowley's mice preceded by the first half in a version by his friend Thomas Sprat, which gives the poem a contemporary setting and wittily makes Horace's Cervius into Cowley himself. Perhaps Sprat is twitting his friend on his over-earnest Horatianism.

[18] *Poetaster* III.i.4. A later scene (III.v) dramatizes Horace, *Sermones* 2.1, defending satires "That spare men's persons, but tax their crimes" (134). In v.i.94 Horace is commended by Augustus for his "free and wholesome sharpness." The epilogue is a defense of satire, deploying classical arguments.

questions?[19] Horace by contrast, it has been argued, continually tests the extent to which he is "a true Horatian."[20] As his slave points out, the supposed enthusiast for the countryside is quick enough to rush back to town the moment Maecenas beckons, a parasite of parasites (*Sermones* 2.7.28–34). In that respect Pope's engagement with Horace is a more probing one than Cowley's. Dr. Johnson complained of the *Imitations of Horace* (where the Latin text was printed parallel with Pope's version) that: "Between Roman images and English manners there will be an irreconcileable dissimilitude, and the work will be generally uncouth and party-coloured; neither original nor translated, neither ancient nor modern."[21] But the play of likeness and difference may be the animating point of the procedure, one in which each text reads the other, and at times resists the other. Walter Benjamin in "The Task of the Translator" argued for the truth-revealing qualities of such interlinearity: truth for Benjamin lying not so much *in* texts as *between* texts. This is the basis of one defining characteristic of great poetry: its *translatability*, by which we should understand not that any great poem has been successfully translated but that it *demands* such translation:

> For to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writings. The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation.[22]

In the case of the *Imitations* the interlinear version allows for the truth about both Horace and Pope.[23] In the words of T. S. Eliot, Pope can be seen as "giving the original through himself, and finding himself through the original."[24]

Identification with Juvenal is perhaps a rarer phenomenon. For example, where in Juvenal's version of the satiric dinner, satire 5, should the reader position herself? With the overweening host or the guest complicit with his own humiliation? Maybe for this reason, or because of the long-time preoccupation with him as primarily a moralist, Juvenal has resisted successful naturalization in English. His seventeenth-century translators and imitators, with the exception of Dryden, seem to bring little but a generalized sense of nipping choler to the task. One can point to (or construct?) isolated instances of the Juvenalesque, as I have done with the passages from

[19] The most suggestive treatment of this poem is Henderson (1999) 202–27.

[20] See Colin Burrow in Martindale and Hopkins (1993) 27–31. There is a *mise en abîme* here: by testing whether he is a true Horatian Horace becomes a true Horatian.

[21] Johnson (1905) II 247. Johnson's remarks may reflect his dissatisfaction with his own imitations of Juvenal.

[22] Benjamin (1970) 82. [23] For an excellent reading along these lines see Stack (1985).

[24] Eliot (1933) introduction xiv.

Dickens. (E. J. Kenney writes of Juvenal's "simple inability to see beyond the end of his nose," but qualified this criticism thus: "up to that point his vision has hardly ever been equalled except by a few such as Hogarth and Dickens."[25] Significantly the way the sentence is troped could itself be termed Juvenalian.) Ben Jonson seemed inhibited by a sense of classical decorum, when in his play *Sejanus* he directly imitated Juvenal's description of the fall of the Tiberian favorite. Juvenal's lines describing the melting down of a statue of Sejanus, which fairly crackle with life (10. 61–4),[26] are drained of energy and particularity to become the relatively colorless:

> Now
> The furnace and the bellows shall to work,
> The great Sejanus crack, and piece by piece
> Drop in the founder's pit. (v. 773–6)

As H. A. Mason has it, Jonson's rendering "represents only the *surface* of Juvenal. It is an abstraction from the text. What is absent from Jonson is Juvenal's *wit*."[27] And, one might add, his descriptive vividness achieved in part by the inclusion of "low" words, which would have been inadmissible in a tragedy. But Juvenal seeps more deeply into Jonson's consciousness elsewhere, for example in his grotesquely physical depictions of old age in *Volpone*. The Fox is feigning illness and age to gull gifts from legacy-hunters (a stock topic of Roman satire), and Juvenal, if more submerged than in *Sejanus*, becomes evident in the writing with its hyperboles, grotesquerie, similes, descriptive precision (though with less pathos):

> Mosca
> Would you once close
> Those filthy eyes of yours, that flow with slime,
> Like two frog-pits; and those same hanging cheeks,
> Covered with hide, instead of skin (nay, help, sir)
> That look like frozen dish-clouts, set on end.
> Corvino
> Or like an old smoked wall on which the rain
> Ran down in streaks.
> Mosca
> Excellent, sir, speak out;
> You may be louder yet; a culvering
> Discharged in his ear would hardly bore it.
> (1.v.56–64)

[25] Quoted by Jenkyns (1982) 220.

[26] *[I]am strident ignes, iam follibus atque caminis/ardet adoratum populo caput et crepat ingens/Seianus, deinde ex facie toto orbe secunda/fiunt urceoli, pelues, sartago, matellae.*

[27] H. A. Mason, "Is Juvenal a Classic?" in Sullivan (1963) 111.

Dryden comes closest to achieving a consistently compelling English Juvenal in his translations. What is missing from the *Sejanus* passage is shown by Dryden's freer rendering, from his Juvenal translations of 1692:

> The smith prepares his hammer for the stroke
> While the lunged bellows hissing fire provoke;
> Sejanus, almost first of Roman names,
> The great Sejanus crackles in the flames;
> Formed in the forge, the pliant brass is laid
> On anvils, and of head and limbs are made
> Pans, cans and pisspots, a whole kitchen trade.
> (91–7)

The last line gets some of the climactic, or anti-climactic, effect of Juvenal's final stab, *matellae* (64), while the phrase "a whole kitchen trade" sharply evokes an entire personal existence in a Juvenalian way. Dr. Johnson thought Dryden's translation wanted "the dignity of the original"; in his view "the peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur."[28] Certainly his own imitation of satire 10, the celebrated "Vanity of Human Wishes," has dignity, but its unremitting stylistic seriousness and moral sanity have seemed to many readers to miss Juvenal's "peculiarity" a great deal more than Dryden (whether it was designed to represent Johnson's sense of Juvenal, or rather to correct what was morally and stylistically undesirable in the original is unclear). Juvenal ends his declamation against Hannibal with an acknowledgment (perhaps imbued with self-loathing as well as a sense that everything has been said) of its hackneyed character:

> i, demens, et saevas curre per Alpes,
> ut pueris placeas et declamatio fias.
> (10.166–7)

In his imitation Johnson allows both himself and Charles of Sweden (his equivalent for Hannibal) their measure of uncompromised grandeur:

> He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
> To point a moral, or adorn a tale. (221–2)

Dryden (who admittedly omits the contemptuous mention of the Subura, perhaps misled by the commentators, and has "corrosive juices" for Juvenal's blunt "vinegar") gives:

[28] Johnson (1905) II 447.

> Go, climb the ragged Alps, ambitious fool,
> To please the boys, and be a theme at school!
> (271–2)

In general Dryden's Juvenal is witty, but not merely opportunistically so, and combines "pathos, surreal fancy, studied observation, or delicately imagined beauty,"[29] reflecting Dryden's enthusiasm for a writer who "gives me as much pleasure as I can bear" (the sexual connotations of the language are evident, and indeed traditional in satire):[30]

> He fully satisfies my expectation, he treats his subject home; his spleen is raised, and he raises mine . . . he drives his reader along with him, and when he is at the end of his way, I willingly stop with him. If he went another stage, it would be too far; it would make a journey of a progress, and turn delight into fatigue.[31]

Imitation, of course, can combine different models (scholars call this *contaminatio*). The great French satirist Boileau was praised for "uniting the style of Juvenal and Persius with that of Horace."[32] Howard Weinbrot argues that Pope eclectically combined ancient models, rather as Shakespeare blended tragedy and comedy, to produce a mixed mode.[33] Horace may often have been the declared model, but Pope, it has been argued, found Horatian equanimity difficult of achievement and was in some respects temperamentally closer to "Juvenal." For example, the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* starts in relaxed colloquial vein, and employs an autobiographical mode to present an apologia for Pope's life and works; but the range of tones goes way beyond the *sermo pedestris*. Thus the line about the dunce in his garret (42) – "Lulled by soft zephyrs through the broken pane" – lovingly uses the grand style only to undercut it with demeaning detail to produce an effect that could be called Juvenalian.[34] The blending of tones, grave and gay, owes much to Horace, but the range is greater. When Pope turns on the hated Lord Hervey, the seesaw of the endstopped couplets perfectly combines with the barrage of metaphors (including Pope's favorite insect imagery and references to *Paradise Lost*) to anatomize his victim's slippery and satanic androgyny. Only with Dante, perhaps, has anger been such a spur to poetic creativity:

[29] Hopkins (1995) 52 (part of an excellent account of Dryden's translation of Juvenal 10).
[30] E.g. Persius 1. [31] Hammond and Hopkins (2000) 412.
[32] Elkin (1973) 43 (quoting William Shenstone, 1764). [33] Weinbrot (1982) 276–364.
[34] For an account of the poem as enacting the failure of a good-humored "Horatian" satiric mode to give an adequate response to contemporary abuses see Weinbrot (1982) 240–75.

Let Sporus tremble – 'What? That thing of silk,
Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk?
Satire, or sense alas! can Sporus feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?'
Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt that stinks and stings;
Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys;
So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.
Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.
Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
And – as the prompter breathes – the puppet squeaks;
Or at the ear of Eve, familiar toad,
Half froth half venom, spits himself abroad,
In puns or politics or tales or lies
Or spite or smut or rhymes or blasphemies,
His wit all see-saw between 'that' and 'this',
Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
And he himself one vile antithesis.
Amphibious thing! that acting either part,
The trifling head or the corrupted heart,
Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,
Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.
Eve's tempter thus the rabbins have expressed,
A cherub face, a reptile all the rest;
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust,
Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.
(305–33)

No wonder the upright Johnson felt discomfort with the passage.[35]

The modern phase of aesthetics, for which Kant's *Critique of Judgement* is the key text, has tended to separate the artistic sphere from the ethical. Kant himself was concerned only to distinguish different kinds of judgment (the judgment that "X is beautiful" from the judgment that "X is (morally) good"). But subsequently, particularly with the development of versions of aestheticism like art for art's sake, art became a separate realm of human activity. In Swinburne's words, "To art, that is best which is most beautiful; to science, that is best which is most accurate; to morality, that is best which is most virtuous."[36] The result is that the standard moral defense of satire

[35] Johnson (1905) II 246 ("The meanest passage is the satire on Sporus").

[36] Quoted by Prettejohn (1999) 1.

left the genre looking rather exposed as non-art. Indeed, satire does not feature in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861) and hardly in *The Oxford Book of English Verse* selected by Arthur Quiller-Couch ("Q") and published in 1900, while Roman satire is omitted altogether from H. W. Garrod's *Oxford Book of Latin Verse* (1912). Today, critics are mostly uneasy with any neo-Kantian notion of aesthetic autonomy; satiric writing may be valued precisely as a carnivalesque challenge to the very idea of "art."[37] But it seems reasonable to argue that the virtue of satire *as poetry* may differ from its virtue as moral discourse, and even that the two may pull in opposite directions. One may go further and argue that satire only becomes great poetry when it reveals artistic impulses of a non-moral kind.[38] Critics have noted how irony takes on a kind of autonomous life in both Swift and Pope.[39] The chaos that Pope's satires reveal to us is not the dull chaos that ordinarily surrounds and cramps us but a kind of sharp, manic, surreal vision of a bright disorder. An example is a detail from the chapel service from the *Epistle to Burlington*:

And now the chapel's silver bell you hear,
That summons you to all the pride of prayer.
Light quirks of music, broken and uneven,
Make the soul dance upon a jig to heaven . . .
To rest, the cushion and soft dean invite,
Who never mentions Hell to ears polite.
(141–5, 150–1)

"Pride of prayer" inverts the Christian ideal of humility before God, while the neat coupling "cushion and soft dean," with the adjective cheekily transferred from the noun it more "naturally" goes with, is a typical Popean zeugma. The couplet about the music, however, belongs to a different imaginative order. The ostensible point is incongruity (this secular-sounding music hardly suits conventional ideas of what is appropriate in divine service); but

[37] So e.g. White (1993) 122–59.

[38] The best of Dryden's satires can also be analysed in this way. *Mac Flecknoe* is much more than an attack on Shadwell:

> Such writing is neither heroic nor burlesque, neither for nor against, neither political nor aesthetic. This is heroic writing that despairs of itself and laughs at itself; it is satire that for the first time in English takes on not Juvenalian power nor Horatian civility but something softer and wilder and, if one wants, more English. This is satire as dream ('His rising fogs prevail upon the day', 'Thoughtless as monarch oaks that shade the plain', 'And lambent dullness played around his face') – satire as longing, as true poetry. (Everett [2001] 32)

[39] So e.g. Griffin (1994) 65.

nothing in the language registers disgust, and instead we are presented with a curious moment of felicity, almost a childish beatific vision, which runs imaginatively counter to the purported moral.[40] In Juvenal, too, the satiric impulse is a fluctuating one, even if he is less elusive than Pope. In satire 5 the moral point is that the host gives inferior food to his less important guests, but it is the food itself that fires Juvenal's imagination:

> aspice quam longo distinguat pectore lancem
> quae fertur domino squilla, et quibus undique saepta
> asparagis qua despiciat conuiuia cauda,
> dum uenit excelsi manibus sublata ministri. (80–3)

> look with how long a breast the lobster which is brought to the master marks out the dish, and fenced on all sides by what asparagus spears, with what a tail it looks down on the dinner party, when it comes carried on high by the hands of the attendant.

Epic diction presents us with the lobster as great man (an image worthy of the imperious host as well as of Juvenal's epicizing satiric *lanx*), borne on high ringed by a green palisade.[41]

The Romans seem to have been proud of their primacy in satire, or rather *satura*, even while acknowledging the low status of the genre (Horace pretends at least that his satires are not "real" poetry, like Ennius' *Annals*). It constituted a distinctive but in the last resort a limited achievement. Perhaps its greatest gift was its later progeny. As a verse satirist Pope combines many of the virtues of the satires of Horace and Juvenal to surpass them both in imaginative reach. At the end of the fourth book of the *Dunciad* Pope, the English Horace, produces a maimed sublime that owes something to Juvenal and more to Milton (who also wrote some extraordinarily powerful satiric passages)[42] to set forth, while at the same time resisting through this very act of writing, the ultimate apocalyptic triumph of Dullness:

> In vain, in vain, – the all-composing hour
> Resistless falls: the Muse obeys the power.
> She comes, she comes! the sable throne behold
> Of Night primeval and of Chaos old!
> Before her fancy's gilded clouds decay,
> And all its varying rainbows die away.

[40] For the childlike in Pope see Martindale (1983); for a brilliant account of the *Dunciad* along these lines see Jones (1968), a classic essay.

[41] See Jenkyns (1982) 218.

[42] See e.g. the speech of St. Peter in "Lycidas," or "the Paradise of Fools" (*Paradise Lost* 3.440–97).

> Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
> The meteor drops, and in a flash expires . . .
> Lo, thy dread empire, Chaos, is restored,
> Light dies before thy uncreating word;
> Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall,
> And universal darkness buries all.
> (627–34, 653–6)

What Roman satirist ever wrote anything like that?[43]

After the eighteenth century the direct influence of Roman verse satire waned somewhat, but its traces can be tracked even in unexpected places. *The Waste Land*, for example, in whose genesis Popean satire played a significant part, can be seen as a modernist version of mock heroic, or perhaps *mock* mock heroic:[44]

> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> ('The Burial of the Dead', 60–3)

(The echo of Dante's *Inferno* in this grim modern cityscape can be seen as a characteristically satiric gesture towards the stylistic grandeurs of a great tradition.) One wonders if, and how, the Horatian and Juvenalesque will continue their manifestations in the twenty-first century. The matter ought to be of some concern to all who read this volume. Will satirical verse in the twenty-first century find the need of the sharpnesses of a classical tradition to ignite itself against?[45] In a review of Elizabeth Cook's recent novelette *Achilles* (2001), Michael Silk issues this timely warning to his fellow classical scholars, a warning that the profession would do well to heed:

> The past is dead past or living past. It lives only in its current renewals, the most vital of which are artistic, even if many academic custodians of the past have difficulty grasping that point and its significance. Renewals of the classical past are for the Western world the prime instance – both of renewal and of academic incomprehension. 'A pretty poem, Mr Pope, but you must not call it Homer', said the eighteenth-century scholar, Richard Bentley, of Pope's *Iliad*:

[43] Of course, Horace is capable of this kind of imaginative reach in the *Odes*, as is the epicist Lucretius, in diatribe or "satiric" mode. But it remains true that ancient and modern satirists work with different notions of what the genre can, or cannot, do.

[44] So Rawson (1982) 60–1. Part 3 of *The Waste Land*, "The Fire Sermon," originally contained a section in heroic couplets after Pope, which Eliot deleted on the advice of Ezra Pound.

[45] Classical satire seems currently out of fashion with poets; by contrast Martin Amis, though no Juvenal, has something of his brattish sharpness.

> portentous and still dismally representative words . . . As Elizabeth Cook's dismally dead Achilles says to her Odysseus: 'don't you know it's sweeter to be alive . . . than lord of all these shadows?' Then, 'he strides away, leaving Odysseus unblessed.' Academic custodians beware, lest you too prove to be mere lords of shadows – in fleeting communion with the unblessed.[46]

Further reading

Currently the best basic introduction to English satiric writing and the issues it raises is Dustin Griffin, *Satire: a Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington 1994) – the material is organized thematically.

For useful collections of translations and imitations there are two Penguin volumes: *Horace in English* (1996) ed. D. S. Carne-Ross and Kenneth Haynes (with an admirable introduction by the former) and *Juvenal in English*, ed. Martin M. Winkler (Harmondsworth 1996, 2001). For the reception of Horace generally see Martindale and Hopkins (1993).

For Augustan attitudes to satire see Elkin (1973). For individual satirists see the following: on Oldham – Paul Hammond, *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture* (Cambridge 1983); on Dryden – Hopkins (1995) 31–60; on Pope – Stack (1985); Weinbrot (1982).

[46] Silk (2001) 24. On the whole neither ancient nor modern satire has attracted the best critical minds. Accordingly I would like to thank the members of an *ad hoc* Satire Reading Group at Bristol, who served to arouse my interest in the topic: Paul Duffus, Duncan Kennedy, Genevieve Liveley, Ellen O'Gorman. Thanks are also due to Colin Burrow, Elizabeth Prettejohn, and, above all, David Hopkins.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521803595

First published 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
The Cambridge companion to Roman satire / edited by Kirk Freudenburg.
p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to literature)
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0-521-80359-4 – ISBN 0-521-00627-9 (pbk.)
1. Satire, Latin – History and criticism. 2. Rome – In literature. I. Freudenburg, Kirk, 1961– II. Series.
PA6095.C36 2005
877'.010932376 – dc22 2004057024

ISBN 13 978 0 521 80359 5 hardback
ISBN 10 0 521 80359 4 hardback
ISBN 13 978 0 521 00627 9 paperback
ISBN 10 0 521 00627 9 paperback

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COMPANION TO

ROMAN SATIRE

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