

Roman Satire: Horace and Juvenal and *persona*

A) Horace

- *Satires* (Book 1 about 35BC; Bk 2: 30 BC): self-construction (“image management” Lyne).

Don't take self-presentation at face value: selection and manipulation of detail (e.g. father's poverty; omits mentioning affairs of Maecenas; little about himself, including sex life)

1) “He was a poor man with a few / scraggy acres, yet he wouldn't send me to Flavius' school / / Instead he courageously took his boy to Rome, to be taught / the accomplishments which any knight or senator would have his own / progeny taught.” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.71-8; tr. Rudd)

2) “In the past he [Lucilius] would confide his *secrets* to his books, which he trusted / like friends; and whether things went well or badly he'd always / turn to them; in consequence, the whole of the man's life / is *laid before* us, as if it were painted on a votive tablet.” (Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.30-34; tr. Rudd)

i) humble and self-deprecating presentation (“milder faults”: 1.4; self-mockery) > bolsters his satiric position (a satirist liable to accusations of self-righteousness and malice)

3) “Here, like an utter fool, I stayed awake till midnight / waiting for a girl who broke her promise. Sleep in the end / overtook me, still keyed up for sex. Then scenes from a dirty / dream spattered my nightshirt and stomach as I lay on my back” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.82-5, Horace)

4) “Maecenas went off to take exercise; Virgil and I had a sleep, / for ball-games are bad for inflamed eyes and dyspeptic stomachs.” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.48-9) (37 BC: i.e. age 28!)

ii) personal material > opportunity to discuss his relationship with Maecenas (in 7/10): social, moral, poetic and political

- NB Horace a client of Maecenas: financial dependence (Sabine farm)

5) “This is what I prayed for. A piece of land- not so very big, / with a

garden and, near the house, a spring that never fails, / and a bit of wood to round it off. All this and more / the gods have granted. So be it. I ask for nothing else, / O son of Maia, except that you make these blessings last.” (Hor. *Sat.* 2.6.1-5, Horace speaking of Sabine farm)

- accusations of not belonging to circle, inferior status to Maecenas (knight and unofficially powerful); presents himself as vulnerable to ill will and jealousy e.g. accusations of social climbing

6) “... of all the Lydians settled on Tuscan soil / none is of more exalted birth than you are” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.1-2, of Maecenas)

7) “I revert now to myself - only a freedman’s son, / run down by everyone as only a freedman’s son, / now because I’m a friend of your’s, Maecenas, before / because as a military tribune I commanded a Roman legion.” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.45-8)

8) “All this time, every day and hour, yours truly has become / a more frequent target for jealous comment. Suppose he [Maecenas] has sat / in the grandstand with me or played in the Park, there’s an instant chorus / of ‘Lucky dog!’.” (Hor. *Sat.* 2.6.47-50)

- How to deal with criticisms of fawning dependence and social climbing: signs of independence: e.g. criticism of wealth and social prominence (1.1 attack on materialism addressed to Maecenas, a wealthy man; 1.6 shows drawbacks of high status)

9) “No one will call me stingy as they do you, Tillius, / when in site of being a Praetor you have five servants behind you / carrying a commode and a wine-cask along the road to Tivoli. / In this and a thousand other ways I’ve an easier life / than you, my eminent senator. / I wander wherever I please / on my own; I ask what price they’re charging for greens and flour” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.107-12)

- How to deal with criticism: patron/client relationship, *amicitia*. Maecenas as true friend (*amicus*); justification of position in Maecenas’ circle, as virtuous companion and talented poet

10) “Why, when the worthy Scipio and the wise and gentle Laelius / left the stage of public life for the privacy of home, / they would let their hair down and join the poet in a bit of horseplay, / as they waited for the greens to cook. Whatever I am, and however / inferior to Lucilius in rank and talent, Envy will have / to admit, like it or not, that I’ve moved in important circles.” (Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.71-7; Lucilius of high social standing, here dining informally with patron)

11) “you [Maecenas] are so careful to choose suitable people, / and to hold aloof from twisters on the make.” (Hor. *Satires* 1.6.51-2)

12) “For me the great thing is that I won / the regard of a discriminating man like you, not by having / a highly distinguished father but by decency of heart and character.” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.62-4)

B) Juvenal

- Background: life under Domitian (ruled 81-96 AD); literary production under Nerva (96-8) and Trajan (98-117); disclaimer? Little autobiographical material in *satires*

13) “declaimed more or less till middle age, rather for pleasure than because he was training for school or forum” (*Life of Juvenal*)

- works: 5 books of *Satires*: Book 1: *Satires* 1-5; Book 2 (v women): *Satire* 6; Book 3: *Satires* 7-9; Book 4: *Satires* 10-12; Book 5: *Satires* 13-16

- What kind of Satirist? *Satire* 1: alleged moral outlook undermined

i) nature of content: driven by moral indignation, poetic efforts disparaged, attacks all kinds of vice

14) “it’s hard *not* to write satire” (Juv. *Sat.* 1.30, “Juvenal” speaker)

15) “If nature fails, then indignation generates verse, / doing the best it can, like mine or like Cluvienus” (Juv. *Sat.* 1.79-80)

16) “What folks have done ever since- their hopes and fears and anger, / their pleasures, joys, and toing and froing- is my volume’s hotch-potch”

(Juv. *Sat.* 1.85-6)

17) “Was there, at any time, a richer harvest of evil?” (Juv. *Sat.* 1.87)

- BUT start of satire emphasises poor state of writing: turgid and irrelevant. Not criticizing its morality. Speaker primarily attacks greed and social climbing

18) “Must I be always a listener only, never hit back, /although so often assailed by the hoarse *Theséid* of Codrus? / Never obtain revenge when X has read me his comedies, /Y his elegies?” (Juv. *Sat.* 1.1-4)

- Note also speaker's excess of examples and indiscriminating attack and tone of voice (rant not reason)> dents moral credibility

- asks readers to listen to his satires if they “admit reason” (*Sat.* 1.21, *rationem admittitis*)

- Satire 3: main speaker (Umbricius) undermined

i) dubious moral high ground: chip on shoulder; complains can only afford cheap prostitute!

19) “What can I do in Rome? I can’t tell lies” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.41, Umbricius)

20) “So when he has put in his patron’s / ready ear a drop of his own and his country’s poison, / I am pushed from the door; gone are my years of service. / Nowhere on earth does the loss of a client matter less.” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.122-5, Umbricius)

21) “but you, however, / when you fancy Chione’s looks, will have to stop and think twice / before helping the dolled-up harlot down from her chair.” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.134-6, Umbricius)

ii) inconsistencies in criticism. Attacks Greeks who have invaded Rome. Moving to Cumae (Greek colony)

22) “Romulus, look- your bumpkin is donning his *Grecian* slippers” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.67; tr. Rudd)

23) “*He’s* from far-off Ámydon, *he’s* from Sícyon’s heights, / *these* are from Andros and Samos and Tralles, or else Alabanda. / they make for the Esquiline, or the willow’s hill, intent on becoming / the vital organs and eventual masters of our leading houses.” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.69-72)

24) “Does it count for nothing at all that I, from earliest childhood, / breathed the Aventine air and was fed on the Sabine berry?” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.84-5; Aventine originally populated by people from other parts of Italy)

iii) country preferable?

25) “Sad as I am at the fact that my dear old friend is leaving, / I applaud his decision to make his home in derelict Cumae, / thus providing the Sibyl a with a solitary fellow townsman” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.1-3)

26) “When have you ever seen a place so dismal and lonely / that it doesn’t seem worse to live in fear of continual fires, / collapsing houses, the countless threats of a savage city, / not to speak of poets reading their work in August.” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.6-9)

iv) indiscriminate criticism

27) “with its holy spring and temple, is rented / to Jews, whose paraphernalia consists of a hay-lined chest / (every tree is obliged to pay its rent to the people; / and so, with the Muses evicted, the wood has taken to begging)” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.13-6, of Camenae, grove of Muses)

28) “where Numa used to meet his sweetheart [nymph Egeria] at night-time” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.12; Numa supposed to get decisions about religion from Egeria)

29) “Happy, one feels, were our distant ancestors, happy the ages / which lived of old beneath the rule of kings and tribunes, / in the days when a single jail sufficed the capital city” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.312-14)

v) excess of examples

30) “Cordus possessed a bed too small for Prócula, a handful / of little pots adorning his sideboard, below them a tiny / mug, and, supporting the

whole, a marble Chiron couchant. / A chest, now far from new, contained some volumes of Greek; / and illiterate mice were busy gnawing the deathless verses.” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.203-7)

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