

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) “my father, who, though poor with a starveling farm, would not send me to the school of Flavius ... — nay, he boldly took his boy off to Rome, to be taught those studies that any knight or senator would have his own offspring taught.” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.71-8; tr. loeb)

2) “He [Lucilius] in olden days would trust his secrets to his books, as if to faithful friends, never turning elsewhere for recourse, whether things went well with him or ill. So it comes that the old poet's whole life is *open to view*, as if painted on a votive tablet.” (Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.30-34)

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 I, utter fool that I am, await a faithless girl right up to midnight. Then, after all, sleep carries me off still thinking upon love, and evil dreams assail me.” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.82-5, Horace)

4) “Maecenas goes off to ball-playing, Virgil and I to sleep, for such play is hard on the sore-eyed and the dyspeptic.” (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 large, where there would be a garden, and near the house a spring of ever-flowing water, and up above these a bit of woodland. More and better than this have the gods done for me. I am content. Nothing more do I ask, O son of Maia [Mercury], save that thou make these blessings last my life long.” (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) “Though of all the Lydians that are settled in Tuscan lands none is of nobler birth than you” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.1-2, of Maecenas)

7) “Now to return to myself, “son of a freedman father,” whom all carp at as “son of a freedman father”—now, because I consort with you, Maecenas; but in other days, because as tribune I had a Roman legion under my command.” (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.45-8)

8) “For all these years, every day and hour, our friend^b has been more and more the butt of envy. Has he viewed the games, or played ball in the Campus with Maecenas? “Fortune's favourite!” all cry.” (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 taunt me with meanness as he does you, praetor Tillius, when on the Tibur road five slaves follow you, carrying a commode and case of wine. In this and a thousand other ways I live in more comfort than you, illustrious senator. Wherever the fancy leads, I saunter forth alone. I ask the price of 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) “Nay, when virtuous Scipio and the wise and gentle Laelius withdrew into privacy from the throng and theatre of life, they would turn to folly, and flinging off restraint would indulge with him in sport while their dish of herbs was on the boil. Such as I am, however far beneath Lucilius in rank and native gifts, yet Envy, in spite of herself, will ever admit that I have lived with the great,” (Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.71-7; Lucilius of high social standing, here dining informally with patron)

11) “you [Maecenas] are cautious to choose as friends only the worthy, who stand aloof from base self-seeking.” (Hor. *Satires* 1.6.51-2)

12) “I count it a great honour that I pleased you, who discern between fair and foul, not by a father’s fame, but by blamelessness of life and heart.” (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) “then it is hard not to write satire.” (Juv. *Sat.* 1.30, “Juvenal” speaker)

15) “If talent is lacking, then indignation will inspire my poetry, such as it can, the sort of verses you can expect from me or Cluvienus” (Juv. *Sat.* 1.79-80)

16) “all human activity—prayers, fears, anger, pleasure, joys, hustle and bustle—this is the mishmash of my little book.” (Juv. *Sat.* 1.85-6)

17) “And when was the supply of vices richer?” (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) “Shall I always be stuck in the audience? Never retaliate for being tortured so often by hoarse Cordus’ Song of Theseus? Let them get away with it, then?—this one reciting to me his Roman comedies and that one his love 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) “You see, once he’s dripped a drop of the poison which comes naturally to him and his race into that receptive ear, I am hustled away from the threshold and my long years of slavery have been wasted. Nowhere is the ditching of a client more casual” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.122-5, Umbricius)

21) “But when you fancy the look of a tart in her dress, you stop and hesitate about asking Snow White down from her high seat” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.134-6, Umbricius)

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

22) “Ah, Quirinus, that supposed rustic of yours is putting on his chaussures grecques [Greek slippers]” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.67)

23) “They come—this one leaving the heights of Sicyon, this other from Amydon, this one from Andros, that one from Samos, this one from Tralles or Alabanda—heading for the Esquiline and the hill named from the willow, to become the innards and the masters of our great houses.” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.69-72)

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

iii) country preferable?

25) “Although I’m distressed at the departure of my old friend, all the same I approve of his decision to establish his home at empty Cumae and to donate a single fellow-citizen to the Sibyl.” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.1-3)

26) “After all, have you seen any place so dismal and lonely that you wouldn’t consider it worse to live in dread of fires, and buildings collapsing continually, and the thousand other dangers of savage Rome—and poets reciting in the month of August?” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.6-9)

iv) indiscriminate criticism

27) “the grove and shrine of the sacred spring are rented out to Jews, with their equipment, a hay-lined chest. Why? Every tree has been told to pay its rent to the people, the Camenae have been thrown out, and the grove has now taken up begging.” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.13-6, of Camenae, grove of Muses)

28) “where Numa used to date his nighttime girlfriend [nymph Egeria]” (*Juv. Sat.* 3.12; Numa supposed to get decisions about religion from Egeria)

29) “Fortunate were our distant ancestors, you’d say, and fortunate those once-upon-a-time generations under the kings and tribunes that saw a Rome satisfied with a single prison.” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.312-14)

v) excess of examples

30) “Cordus’ possessions were: a bed too small for Procula, six small jugs to decorate his sideboard, and, underneath, a little centaur, Chiron, made from the same ‘marble,’ and a box, by now ancient, which kept his little Greek books safe—and the philistine mice were gnawing the immortal poems.” (Juv. *Sat.* 3.203-7)

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