

SATIRES OF ROME

Threatening poses from Lucilius to Juvenal

KIRK FREUDENBURG

Professor of Greek and Latin, Ohio State University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014, Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2001

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Baskerville and New Hellenic Greek [A0]

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

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Freudenburg, Kirk

Satires of Rome: threatening poses from Lucilius to Juvenal / by Kirk Freudenburg.

p. cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 80357 8 (hardback) ISBN 0 521 00621 x (paperback)

1. Verse satire, Latin—History and criticism.
2. Lucilius, Gaius, ca. 180—ca. 102 B.C.—Criticism and interpretation.
3. Persius—Criticism and interpretation.
4. Juvenal—Criticism and interpretation.
5. Horace—Criticism and interpretation.
6. Rome—In literature. 1. Title

PA6056 .F74 2001

871'.0109—dc21

2001025772

ISBN 0 521 80357 8 hardback

ISBN 0 521 00621 x paperback

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CHAPTER I

Horace

THE DIATRIBE SATIRES (*SERMONES* 1.1–1.3): “YOU’RE NO LUCILIUS”

The opening scene of Horace’s first satire (*Sermones* 1.1) hustles us to the front row of a street-preacher’s harangue. The man who rails at us there (a genius? a fool?) has us labeled as miserable, unbalanced, driven by desires for wealth and prestige that are utterly out of sync with nature’s own sense of “limit” (*finis*), “due measure” (*modus*), and “just enough” (*satis*). From the very start, and without warning, he has decided that *we* are part of the problem, that *our* greed, discontent, lust, and so on, are grist for his satiric mill. Along the way we, his fidgety accused, must face up to that central, narratological task of determining who “we” imagine ourselves to be in relation to the man who speaks from the page, and just how much we want to credit his sometimes strained and addled reasoning against us. When he says *de te | fabula narratur* (“you are the fool in the story,” *S.* 1.1.69–70) do we run for cover by reminding ourselves that the speaker is a zealot and a know-it-all, or, even easier, that he has someone else in mind? Maybe he means his addressee, Maecenas, or the fictive audience inside the poem. Or how about the poem’s first-century-BCE “intended” readers? Could he possibly really mean me?

The barrage continues into the second poem, where the penetrating philosopher / snake-oil salesman (take your pick) turns his eye towards matters of the male libido. Some men, he complains, chase after high-class matrons, turned on by the threat of being caught *in flagrante*. Others bankrupt themselves on prostitutes, preferring the thrill of a potential social disgrace. The basic moral issue, and the speaker’s point of attack, remain precisely those of the preceding poem: fools willfully stray towards extremes because

they fail to content themselves with nature's basic, middling "enough." But what precisely is nature's basic "enough" when it comes to matters of male desire (is that really what's wanted, just "enough")? What is the "horny mean" between matrons and slaves that every idiot's penis, if it could talk (lines 69–71), would tell him to be happy with? Simply split the difference, the poet says. Halfway between paramours too difficult and too easy, between dazzling white and filth, free and slave, one finds an obvious compromise: freedwomen. What is so hard about that? One (glib) theory fits all. Such is this poet's comfortable, mock-Epicurean compromise. Unlike the Stoics, whom he abuses repeatedly in this book's initial poems, hard-nosed critics who would insist on ridding oneself of the desires that are the root cause of folly, this poet argues for having your desire, and enjoying it, too. Everything in moderation, especially moral philosophy regulating sex. Aristotle rolls over in his grave. Epicurus winces. We, quite possibly, laugh.

The third poem, the last of the book's inaugural triptych of "diatribe satires," so-called because of their strong resemblance to rambling sermons in the Cynic tradition (especially those of Bion), treats the delicate matter of criticizing faults spied in the company of friends, an issue with obvious programmatic relevance to the poet's own finger-pointing project.¹ The general message issuing from the poem is again one of balance and moderation, with the poet urging that, since all are born with faults, and since ridding oneself completely of these faults is out of the question (whatever Stoic zealots may urge to the contrary), one should be sparing in one's criticism of friends, always intending well, even finding certain defects attractive, like a well-placed mole on a girlfriend's cheek. Once again, Epicurean tenets are glibly tossed about. At times they are grossly mishandled, most famously in the mock-Lucretian "archaeology of justice" of lines 99–112, where the emergence of human language and laws is linked directly to early cave-dwellers' clubbing one another over acorns, caves, and – to make the point with a cave-man's finesse – "cunt" (*cunus taeterrima*

¹ Brown (1993) 89: "The first three satires of the book form a related group, and have more in common with, and owe more to the influence of, the Greek diatribe or philosophical street-sermon than any others." For specific connections with Greek diatribe, see Freudenburg (1993) 8–21.

belli|causa, 107–8). While the basic idea has good precedent in Lucretius, the packaging and delivery of the idea does not.² Clearly, very little of what this man says can be taken at face-value. One has to wait nearly one hundred and fifty years (until Juvenal's sixth satire) for a scene of acorn-belching romance that is anything like so deranged and comical.

But just as this speaker's routine threatens to go on too long and to become just a bit too obvious, the bumbling Lucretius disappears, and his accusations towards us, his buttonholed audience, come to an abrupt halt with the opening lines of *S.* 1.4. Here, perhaps to simulate an Old Comic *parabasis*, the clown drops his mask (or does he? see below) and gives way to that saner, steadier voice of a poet in his literary-critical, and now decidedly "programmatic" mode (*S.* 1.4.1–7):

Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae
atque alii quorum comoedia prisca uirorum est,
si quis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur,
quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui
famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.
hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus
mutatis tantum pedibus numerisque.

The poets Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes, and all the other "real men" of Old Comedy, if anyone deserved lampooning, either because he was wicked, and a thief, or because he was an adulterer, or murderer, or notorious in some other way, they would brand him with abundant freedom of speech. Lucilius depends on them totally. These are the ones he follows, changing only their meters and rhythms.

The speaker's handling of Greek and Latin literary history in these lines is every bit as shaky as his grasp of Epicurean moral philosophy in the poems that precede. The picture he paints of Greek Old Comic poets branding criminals with the Roman censor's *nota* is anachronistic and far-fetched, to say the least, exaggerating the poets' public moral function to the exclusion of all of Old Comedy's many further purposes, practices, and effects.³

² Martindale (1993) 9: "Horace's 'unromantic' attitude to women is often described as typically Roman, and compared to Lucretius'. The comparison is unconvincing. Lucretius' suspicion of sexuality is fuelled by a fierce philosophic commitment; by contrast when in *Sermones* 1.3.107–8 Horace writes *nam fuit ante Helenam cunus taeterrima belli|causa* . . . the voice seems rather that of Shakespeare's Thersites. *Cunus* functions as a metonymy for woman, who is thereby reduced to this single orifice."

³ For *notare* referring to the censor's *nota*, see Lejay (1966) 76.

How often, an uncooperative reader might ask, does Aristophanes name and/or disgrace murderers in his extant plays? How many adulteries does he expose on stage? When, if ever! And what of Aristophanes' abundant jibes against non-criminals, and nobodies, philosophers, government officials, bumpkins, cabbage-sellers, and so on? How are these to be construed as corrective and "censorial" in function, and clearly in the public interest?

The lines are fraught with misinformation that caricatures not only the poets of Greek Old Comedy, but Lucilius as well. For Lucilius' dependence on these poets is hardly what it is made to seem here, so utterly direct and all-encompassing that Lucilius has "merely" to adjust their rhythms and meter. At best, the statement contains a grain of truth. At worst, it represents an absurd attempt to re-invent the writers of Greek Old Comedy as agents of public moral oversight, clear and simple, and thus to commandeer them for a very late (and lost, and highly contentious) Roman cause. Such notions, whether taken as "history" or "theory," are expressive of a strained ideology of the purposes and meanings of critical jests in the comic tradition. As if to rescue the writers named for some (pipe-dreaming Stoic's?) ideal state, Greek funsters are "theorized into" dreaded Catos by these lines, and Lucilius becomes an Old Comic watchdog of public morals, a quasi-Greek. Very little of this stands up to serious scrutiny. Alien, extreme voices, I suspect, have been filtered into these lines, and play inside them. Other, hard-line views (those of certain *fautores Lucili*? see below) are being sampled and sent up.

But given that gross exaggerations stand out in the opening lines of each of the three poems that precede, as if to characterize this poet's only way of commencing (*qui fit . . . ut nemo . . . contentus uiuat*, 1.1.1–3; *hoc genus omne*, 1.2.2; *omnibus hoc uitium est cantoribus*, 1.3.1), we should perhaps not be surprised that the literary/programmatic disquisition undertaken in 1.4 should take us immediately into a world of overdone extremes: *hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus | mutatis tantum pedibus*, 1.4.6–7. The real jolt delivered by these lines, I suspect, derives less from their added exaggerations about Lucilius, than from their daring to mention him at all. For here, quite unexpectedly, we are first given to believe that Horace actually *has* a Lucilius problem that he needs to set straight. On the heels of the diatribe satires, we may reasonably wonder how Lucilius comes into this picture at all. On

what basis does the poet assume that his ironical “diatribes” will have made us think of Lucilius as his one clear rival? Why not Lucretius or, more obviously, Bion? Is that really what Horace thought he was writing, “satire” after the manner of Lucilius?

If so, how were we to know? Nowhere in the book’s first three poems is Lucilius mentioned by name or his poetry explicitly called to mind – that happens first here, in 1.4, and then more prominently in the poem that follows (see below).⁴ His memory, if evoked in the book’s first poems, is activated by clues that are relatively general and understated, such as the steady presence (in hexameters) of a strong first-person voice, fond of vulgar expressions, and ready to criticize moral faults and, at times, to name names. While it is true that Lucilius, too, played the railing philosopher and literary critic in a number of poems, his performances in this mode were relatively few, and they worked to a remarkably different effect. They were famous not for their ironic undercurrents, but for their searing abuse of Rome’s most prominent writers, political figures and men of high social standing, both living and dead. Despite his legend, Lucilius’ enemies tended to be not moral derelicts and “enemies of the state” *per se*, but enemies of his friends, especially those known to be hostile to his closest and most powerful friend, P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus. Thus the voice he projects is not that of a barefoot preacher, but of a well-connected Roman aristocrat, powerful, unrestrained, and deeply invested in the party politics of the late second century BCE (as critical observer and commentator).

Such was the legend of Lucilius, well known to Horace, and hotly traded in his day as a kind of political/moral capital to be cornered and spent as one’s own.⁵ Traces of that legend can be heard to emanate from the opening lines of *S.* 1.4, where notions

⁴ The talking penis of *S.* 1.2. 69–71 reminded Horace’s third- and fourth-century scholiasts of a similarly gifted member in Lucilius (see below chapter 3). Beyond this, reminiscences are few and quite general. Fiske has argued that Horace’s *S.* 1.1 draws on certain commonplaces from Lucilius book 19, and that 1.2 may be an imitation of the third poem of book 29; see Fiske (1920) 219–77. His evidence is extremely thin. Recently Scholz (1986) has attempted to prove that the first four poems of Horace’s first book follow a thematic sequence found in (his elaborate reconstruction of) the first four poems of Lucilius’ earliest book (book 1 in early editions, later renumbered as book 26). His hypothesis has been dismantled by Christes (1989).

⁵ On the Lucilian revival of the fifties BCE, see Anderson (1963) 78–9. For Lucilian *libertas* as a potent political symbol in the forties and thirties, see Freudenburg (1993) 86–102.

of high *aristo-cracy*, and deep *poli-tical* engagement, both assumed in the “poet as censor” metaphor, are cryptographically figured into the impressive set of names that begins the poem, the most famous of Greek comedy’s “real Romans”: *Eu-polis*, *Crat-inus* *Aristo-phanesque*. But given that this was the dominant, overbearing paradigm for the interpretation of Lucilius in Horace’s day, it is hard to see how Horace would have us believe that his poems belong to the same tradition in anything other than a tangential way. The contrast between the two writers is sharp, and patently obvious from his book’s first half-line: *Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo* . . . (“How come, Maecenas, nobody . . .”). With the odd juxtaposition of one name so politically resonant against another so empty, the stage is thus set for a very different kind of satiric enterprise: *Maecenas* versus *Nobody*! Why not start with Maecenas versus somebody? Surely Maecenas, one of the most powerful political figures of the thirties and twenties BCE, has bigger enemies to contend with than the anonymous fools and type-figures (farmers, merchants, soldiers, etc.) that come in for a thrashing in this poem. If Horace is bent upon seeming at all Lucilian in his poems, why not begin where Lucilius began his first book, by attacking not greed and vain ambitions in general, but the greed and vain ambitions of a man of real significance, such as Lucius Cornelius Lentulus Lupus, a consular senator and former censor and *princeps senatus*? He was Lupus “the Wolf,” nobody’s “nobody.”⁶

But even when Horace ventures to criticize by name, his targets are, without exception, unexceptionable: mere “nobodies” such as Crispinus, Fannius, and Hermogenes Tigellius, few of whom are known from any source outside the poems themselves.⁷ That said, it is still clear from the book’s first line that persons of real social and political significance do appear in Horace’s *Sermones* from time to time. But these always happen to be friends of the poet, or potential friends, rather than enemies, so they are always handled with a light touch. Thus the critical performance of these poems, while perhaps vaguely reminiscent of Lucilius, is anything but purely “Lucilian.” It comes as no surprise, then, that some in Horace’s audience found his efforts “gutless” (*sine neruis*) by comparison (see below).

⁶ For Lupus’ role in Lucilius book 1, see chapter 3 below.

⁷ The fundamental prosopographical study of names in the *Sermones* is that of Rudd (1966) 132–59.

But the first half-line of Horace's first poem does more than mark a shift away from the critical habits of Lucilius. Inside that shift, it urges a remarkably different sense of the satiric speaker as well, and thus it leaves us to consider the poet's non-Lucilian technique as a condition of his non-Lucilian self. He is no Lucilius, clearly. But then who, precisely, is he? Recently, Ellen Oliensis has remarked on the obvious irony that inheres in naming Maecenas so prominently in the first half-line of a poem where social climbers are freely abused: the act of naming Maecenas lets us see the social climber in Horace himself.⁸ For that name, standing out as it does in his book's first line, brings us immediately to the conclusion that this speaker, despite sounding so much like Bion, is not detached from the social world he criticizes, and thus unaffected by it, as any good cynic should be. His book's dedication to Maecenas, while blunt and minimal, the least elaborate dedication in all Latin literature (a single word), carries powerful implications for the speaker's self, and the way his lessons will be received: it puts him squarely inside a world of Roman social relations where promising young poets look to men of means to provide them access to books, learned audiences, and facilities, as well as abundant political and financial rewards.⁹

Scholars have often puzzled over the poet's one-word dedication to his patron as a narratological conundrum, wondering just how we are to think of Maecenas as the poem's addressee and principal audience when so much of what follows brings to mind the deictic trappings of diatribe, with its fictional hearers and interlocutors. How can the two settings work together? Are we to think that the speaker rants for Maecenas alone (hard to imagine), or perhaps among a select group of friends, with Maecenas front and center (at a formal recitation or dinner party)? Or is the performance, rather, to be imagined as a public harangue set along a busy street? If the latter, then how is Maecenas to be imagined as addressed by it, and functioning in it?

By beginning "How come, Maecenas" the speaker immediately casts himself as someone struggling to belong in Maecenas' social world, not someone anxious to escape from it. And yet he would have us believe that his is a secure and independent voice of moral criticism in the tradition of Bion. So which is he, the dependent

⁸ Oliensis (1998a) 17–18.

⁹ The fundamental study of poetry and patronage in Rome is White (1993).

lesser friend, or the cynic free agent? How can he possibly be one *along with* the other? Such is the puzzle of the poet's hard-to-place self that lurks inside the narratological puzzle of his opening poem's first line. And not just there, but throughout the diatribe satires generally. For despite our best efforts to place this speaker cleanly inside one of the several traditions to which his performances refer, he always manages to slip free of those traditions by failing to fit them in certain fundamental respects. And thus he always leaves some large remainder of himself unaccounted for.

Recently William Turpin has demonstrated that the speaker of *Sermones* 1.1–3 shows a high degree of comic patterning in the expression of his manners, social self-confidence, and moral point of view. Taken as the sum of these expressions, he argues, “the speaker of the satires is supposed to be understood both as a committed Epicurean and as a contemporary version of that stock figure of Greek and Latin comedy, the parasite, or professional guest. These two characterisations might be thought quite distinct, but for those hostile to Epicureanism or willing to be amused by it there was clearly a connection, and it is central to the character that Horace has created.”¹⁰ Thus a second tradition, that of comic party-goers and lackeys, resides uncomfortably inside the first, that of the preacher of Epicurean moral values. The self projected in these poems, like their genre (see below), is best understood not from within the narrow confines of any given tradition, but as a dialogue between traditions, and an effect of their interacting.

The moralist of *Sermones* 1.1–3 mishandles the stock ethical lessons he attempts to employ, but he does so in a way that puts a specific kind of face (a *persona* “mask”) to his voice. Scanning the lessons of the diatribe satires for indications of the speaker's moral character and station in life, we see that his thoughts easily stray from the point at hand towards matters of food, sex, and getting along with friends, telltale signs of the world he lives in, and what he values, and knows. The man has a keen eye for sizing up patrons. Some, he complains, spend too lavishly on the wrong sort (and he has to reach pretty low to get lower than himself, 1.2.1–4). Others spend nothing on their poor, but deserving, friends (1.2.4–11). He knows what it is like to drink too heavily at parties, and accidentally to break expensive tableware and piss on the furni-

¹⁰ Turpin (1998) 127.

ture (1.3.90–1). And he has learned the hard way not to barge in on Maecenas while he is reading or resting (1.3.63–6). Sleeping with a rich man’s wife he regards as dangerous, and anathema (1.2 *passim*). Grabbing chicken from the wrong side of the plate he considers a forgivable offense, especially for someone who is “starving” (*esuriens*, 1.3.93).

Clearly there is a pattern to his digressions and bunglings that is suggestive of the world he inhabits, and who he (fictionally) is. We see that pattern again, in the course of his telling us to overlook a friend’s insignificant faults, where his mind strays, leeringly, towards matters of cave-sex (1.3.99–110), and to that well placed mole on a girlfriend’s cheek (1.3.40). We see it in his priding himself on his x-ray vision for attractive women, able to size them up, part by part (“ass,” “neck,” “thigh,” “leg”), like a king shopping for a horse (1.2.83–90). Further, to round off his point about not being greedy in *Sermones* 1.1, he draws us into the only world he seems to know, and to have mastered, that of a pleasant “guest” (*conuiuia*) at someone else’s dinner-party (1.1.117–19). Eat just “enough,” he says. Don’t gorge yourself, and don’t overstay your welcome. Above all, know when it is time to get up and leave – and so he does, as if to prove himself worthy of being invited again. Such lessons, not because they are unknown to the diatribe tradition, but because they presume to know so much of, and draw so freely from, the world of dinner-parties, seductions, and keeping up appearances, tend to circumscribe our sense of the speaker’s range of experience, and define his specific eye-view. The end effect of these lessons is less a treatise on sane living *per se* than it is a *Parasite’s Guide to Getting by in Rome*, something that straddles the domains of serious philosophy and comic nonsense.

SERMONES BOOK 1 AND THE PROBLEM OF GENRE

According to their legends, Bion managed to speak the truth bluntly because he had no status to lose, and Lucilius because he had none to gain.¹¹ One man was content to remain a social outcast, so he spoke in a way that kept him begging and in bare feet. The other was a man of unassailable social influence, so he spoke in a manner that proved just how unassailable his influence was.

¹¹ For Bion’s life as street-preacher and beggar, see Kindstrand (1976).

In each case, just as in the case of the parasite figure of *Sermones* 1.1–3, style and self entail one another integrally. The speaker's habits of criticism are a condition of the social position he occupies, and the societal role he has given himself, or been handed, to play. But Horace's parasite philosopher lacks the strong social definition of a Bion or Lucilius. Neither an outcast nor a man of means, he speaks as he lives, from somewhere in the middle. And that does not bode well for his having a decisive manner of critical expression in his poems. His middling *genus* ("status") expresses itself in the generic indecision of the *Sermones* themselves.

"Who," then, exactly do these poems give us to think they are? What generic "pedigree" do they express for themselves if not that "simply" of a Bion, or a Lucilius? The first poems, we have seen, make a run at appearing regular, but then the diatribe satires abruptly give way to something quite different in 1.4, with the poet now performing in his literary-critical, "programmatically" mode. With the fifth poem we get to experience the low-life's eye-view (complete with mosquitoes and wet dream) of the big-shots' entourage to Brindisi (or wherever it was). Poem 6 pays tribute to the speaker's freed-slave father, and to Maecenas, a man who pays no attention to status whatever, provided you are a man of some status and not as lowborn as Horace's freed-slave father (*dum ingenuus*, *S.* 1.6.8). The anecdote-poems 7, 8, and 9 take us on-tour with †Brutus and †Co., into the gardens of a crack-assed Priapus, and out for an interminable stroll with a poet on-the-make (perhaps two). Poem 10 rounds off the book by having at the "Lucilius fans" (*fautores Lucili*) one last time, with the poet-critic telling us who really counts in his world of Second-Triumviral literary criticism.

It is an odd jumble of a book. A generic puzzle, if not a morass. The title that appears at the top of page 1, *Sermones* "Talks," "Discussions," does little to set up expectations and to guide readers along a specific generic path, unless perhaps it leads us to think of Plato's "Dialogues," a genre with obvious relevance to the poems of book 2 (see below), but no appreciable connection to those of book 1. Other than this one false lead, the title selects out next-to-nothing, and triggers no significant memories of other similarly named texts. As a generic marker, the title suggests specific ways of reading and making sense of the poems only in retrospect, once we have seen how conveniently it refers to just about everything

that *actually happens* in books 1 and 2: “diatribe,” “gossip,” “dialogue,” and so on. Once we are done, the term can do just about anything *we need* it to do to explain the book.

The word *Saturae* “Satires” once did the same thing for Ennius, opening a space for him to toss four-books’-worth of disconnected occasional poems in various meters – quite possibly poems he composed as separate set-pieces intended for individual consumption.¹² Their collection and publication may, in fact, have been an afterthought. His title, *Saturae*, likely informed by Hellenistic Greek titles such as Σωρός “Pile,” ἄτακτα “Hodgepodge,” and σύμμεικτα “Miscellanies,” does not so much set off a new genre and tell us how to read as it warns readers against harboring any too rigid generic expectations.¹³ The term takes a drastic turn with Lucilius, the so-called *inventor* of satire (see *S.* 1.10.48), who established the genre’s characteristic form, focus, and tone in his monumental 30 books of *Saturae*.¹⁴ Especially influential was his trenchant, and at times obscene, moral criticism, the famous *Lucilianus modus* that became the hallmark of satire and attached itself indelibly to the term from the late second century on. So strong was Lucilius’ influence on the idea of “satire” that, by Horace’s day, the word is less a generic marker that works (in the usual way) by triggering a full and illustrious world of remembered texts, than it is a way of saying simply “the kind of poems Lucilius wrote.”¹⁵

That is the problem Horace faces in his first book. “Satire,” as it was handed to him, came prepackaged and complete. For his first-century audience, Lucilius *was* satire, so the idea of his writing something decidedly un-Lucilian (by way of being softer, less direct, briefer, and so on) and calling it “satire” is just a little

¹² Gratwick (1982) 158 points out that although “Porphyrio (*ad Hor. Sat.* 1.10.46) states that Ennius left four books called *Saturae* . . . it does not follow that the book arrangement or even the contents of the edition known to Porphyrio were due to Ennius himself. Each book, one *Satura*, contained miscellaneous poems, mainly in the iambo-trochaic metres and diction of comedy, but also some in hexameters and perhaps Sotadeans.”

¹³ On the origins of the term *satura*, see Knoche (1975) 7–16; and Coffey (1976) 11–18.

¹⁴ While the grammarians consistently cite Lucilius’ poems as “satires” (*satirae* or *saturae*), it is not certain that he gave them that name. Within the existing fragments he refers to them as *poemata* (“poems,” fr. 1091W), *ludus ac sermones* (“games and chats,” frs. 1039–40W), and *schedia* (“improvisations,” fr. 1131W), never *saturae*.

¹⁵ Gratwick (1982) 168: “It is not until Horace (*Sat.* 1.1.1) [*sic*] that we find *satura* used generically to designate a certain kind of poetry, and what Horace means is the kind of poetry that Lucilius wrote.” He means, of course, *S.* 2.1.1.

perverse, if not unthinkable. That is the problem the poet-critic wrestles with in book 1. That is the generic question he has us consider every time he feels around, elaborately, awkwardly, for a label to fit his collection of poems. Proceeding through the book we see him struggle to trigger our memories of Lucilius, most obviously in poems 4 and 5, without actually naming what he writes “satire.” The art of dodging the *s-* word becomes a game in itself: *genus hoc scribendi* (“this type/genre of writing,” 1.4.65), *nescio quid nugarum* (“some trifle or other,” 1.9.2), *hoc* (“this here,” 1.10.46), *sint qualiacumque* (“whatever-the-hell these things are,” 1.10.88), *haec ego ludo* (“these comic productions I put on,” 1.10.37), and so on. With each vague periphrasis we sense the painstaking avoidance of the word we are all thinking of, the one Lucilius makes us remember.¹⁶ By not naming the poems anything in particular, the problem of genre is allowed to dangle and disturb; it becomes *ours* to solve. It is we readers, after all, who come to these poems with preset notions of what really counts as “satire,” and with memories fixated on and energized by the monumental Lucilius. By repeatedly dangling the generic question in front of us, Horace reminds us of the tremendous obstacles he faces in dealing with us, readers who are notoriously less than willing to deal with him (he constructs us that way, at least), because he writes poems that recall and compete with one of our all-time favourites, Lucilius.

And yet, at the same time as these repeated circumlocutions dangle the generic question before us, they hint at ways we might handle the question. They invite us to look beyond the obtrusive, too-obvious model of Lucilius, and to stretch our generic imaginations into new, unexpected directions. At the very least they remind us of Catullus’ “strange/new little book” and the similar problems he invented, and performed himself facing, in struggling to assign a label to his mad assortment of poems: “The book is yours, Cornelius. You’re the one who used to think that my scraps (*nugae*) amounted to something (*aliquid*) . . . Take it, it’s yours, a

¹⁶ Van Rooy (1965) 66 is well aware of the problem: “Though Horace had published his first book under the title *Sermones*, we may assume that everyone, both detractor and well-wisher, referred to his poems as ‘saturae’ or ‘satires.’” Following Knoche, he explains (pp. 60–6) Horace’s failure to deliver the expected title in book 1 as a deliberate attempt to distance his work from the *Lucilianus modus*, with which the term *satura* was inextricably bound.

slim something-or-other of a book, for what it's worth" (*quidquid hoc libelli, quaecumque*). With every "this here" and "whatever it is" that Horace uses to (not) describe his work, he breaks into our memories of Catullus and his revolutionary little book. He lets our Catullan preconceptions (and these will vary considerably from reader to reader) colour the way we perceive *his* work. As we shall see shortly, it is precisely through such interlocutory, genre-constituting memories, of Catullus, Lucretius, Virgil, and others, that Horace's own book makes its best claim to being, itself, revolutionary, and new.

REMEMBERED VOICES: SATIRE MADE NEW IN *SERMONES* 1.1

To make satire his own, Horace must first dispossess others of it, those who thought it theirs alone by right of inheritance from Lucilius. To do this he must first locate and do his best to dislodge a number of inveterate readerly assumptions about what satire can and cannot do. Somehow the term "satire" has to be substantially erased and reprogrammed. We see him attempt to do this, in some obvious and aggressive ways, in the so-called "program poems" of book 1 (*S.* 1.4 and 1.10). Perhaps less obvious, but equally aggressive, are the deprogramming efforts of the first poem. In *S.* 1.1, beneath the jumbled moral lessons that direct us to observe nature's mean in matters of gain, there lies a second, parallel set of lessons concerning the natural limits of satire.¹⁷ The "moral" sum of *S.* 1.1, we have seen, is roughly this: the poem's deluded wretches are those who cannot be content with the basic "enough" (*satis*) provided by nature. Theirs is the opposite creed: *nil satis est* "nothing is enough" (line 62). They neither understand nor respect "limits" (*finis*) set by nature. Instead they choose to waste away in resentment towards others who have more. They want their stuff in great piles too, and as long as anyone else has more, they are driven to continue their pursuit of gain with unending "toil."

All of this, I maintain, applies at a second, less obvious level, to the writing of satire: the extreme Stoics targeted by the poem have no sense of "limit" when it comes to driving home their

¹⁷ See Freudenburg (1993) 110–14.

moral lessons. Horace would have us believe that they stack precepts one on top of the other until they resemble a massive, messy “pile.” Making that pile they regard as deadly serious work, so the critic never cracks a smile. In the famous question of lines 24–5 we are given to think that Horace’s rivals have serious objections to the idea of jesting censure: “what’s to say I can’t laugh and tell the truth at the same time?” (*ridentem dicere uerum | quid uetat?*). The critics’ disapproving frown, we assume, is an unalterable feature of their pile-making work. That miserable enterprise never ends because the preceptive heap they are so hot to have more of has no natural “limit.” Nothing is more notoriously undelimitable than a pile. And since angst keeps them from enjoying their stash, it just gets bigger and bigger. That, Horace suggests, is what their version of *satura* looks like.

Seen for this, its metaphorical potential, the poem is every bit as “programmatically” – and right where we most expect a program-poem to be – as the literary manifestos *S.* 1.4 and 1.10. For hidden squarely beneath each of the poem’s many “piles,” and behind every image of an *insatiate* fool, there lies the entrenched etymological notion that satire is something “heaped high” and/or “stuffed full” (*satur*). The idea has clear connections with the “stuffed plate” (*lanx satura*) etymology, especially given the poem’s inordinate emphasis on food and drink.¹⁸ Horace’s rivals, whether they subscribed to the notion or not, are clearly being made to speak for the “stuffed-/piled-high” theory here.

Yet, it seems equally likely that the image repeated in the poem of built-up “piles” anxiously guarded touches on a connection presumed between *satura* and Greek σωρός “pile.” Among

¹⁸ Romans who studied Horace’s *Sermones* were fond of the etymological game. Certain commentators whose notes have come down to us as the scholia of Pseudo-Acro prefaced their comments on individual lines of the *Sermones* with a short excursus on the naming of the work. First, they assert, there are those who connect the term “satire” to a plate handled by a follower of Bacchus, that is, by a satyr. Thus we are invited to think of a satyr’s unrestrained, horny, drunken ways. Others, they say, connect it with a *lanx satura* “plate stuffed full” offered to Ceres at her annual festival. That gets us thinking in terms of variety and fullness. And they mention still others who connect satire with being drunk, since such poems “freely (*libere* = ‘thanks to *Liber*, Bacchus’) rail at the disgraces and crimes of men, just like men when they are saturated, that is, drunk (*ut saturati homines idest ebrii*).” We think then of the freedom that comes with alcohol-induced oblivion; the chance finally to say whatever you really feel, regardless of all personal and social constraints.

Hellenistic works that may have informed the naming of Ennius' *Saturae*, Posidippus' grab-bag of epigrams known as "the Pile" is generally considered one of the most likely.¹⁹ But still more relevant to the idea of "satire" as "pile" here is the connection Horace posits between his critics and the philosophy of Chrysippus, the third-century head of the Stoa and vigorous defender of the faith against the skeptical Academy. If the critics lampooned in *S.* 1.1 really are the unbending, hyper-systematic Chrysippeans that Horace makes them out to be, both here and throughout the first book, then their version of moral criticism will indeed have possessed and proudly exhibited a "pile-like" nature.²⁰ In plying their moral work, they will have conjured up the relentless, syllogistic chain-arguments of Chrysippus, known generally as "soritic," or "pile-fashion" arguments.

The name derives from the so-called *sorites* paradox, the unsolvable puzzle that gave its name to a whole class of chain-arguments that proceeded by adding one syllogism upon the next, pile-fashion, until a point of inevitable, logical collapse was reached.²¹ The *sorites* paradox dealt specifically with the central issue addressed in *S.* 1.1, the pile's lack of natural "limits" (*fines*). The short version of the puzzle looks like this: if one grain of wheat doesn't make a pile, then how about two? Three? Four? At some point you have to give in and say "Yes, it's a pile now."²² But then the trouble comes in saying what precisely is magical about the magic number. What is the essential, "pile-constituting," quality that it has that the previous number does not? Chrysippus found this puzzle, developed by the Skeptics in several forms, especially problematic and worthy of study. Though it was sometimes used against him, and apparently to some effect, we know that by Horace's day the *sorites* paradox was specifically associated with Chrysippus to the exclusion of nearly everyone else.²³ It had

¹⁹ See Gratwick (1982) 160.

²⁰ For the *fautores Lucili* as neo-Chrysippeans, see Freudenburg (1993) 109–19.

²¹ On the *sorites* paradox, see Brink (1982) 80–1.

²² The more common version of the puzzle works in reverse, with seeds subtracted from an existing pile until a point is reached where it is no longer reasonable to call the seeds a pile. The scholiasts' note on P. 6.78–80 makes clear that the puzzle could proceed in either direction (*per adiectionem et detractionem*).

²³ Brink (1982) 81: "Chrysippus' name in particular was associated with this mode of arguing." See also Reid on Cic. *Acad.* 2.49.

come to represent his peculiar brand of driving syllogistic analysis. If anyone could pile on the syllogisms, apparently, it was Chrysippus (in 705 slapdash volumes!).²⁴

To make room for his work in a world stuffed with preset notions of what satire already is and only can ever be, Horace must first engage in some aggressive demolition work. His first job in *S. 1.1* is to heave aside the “pile” that stands in his way, covering so much of the desired space of “satire.” The so-called “pile-arguments” of Chrysippus had a long and illustrious history in the field of Stoic dialectic, the study that Chrysippus helped shape and exhaustively systematize. The question we are asked to consider in *S. 1.1* is whether or not that pile-image, with all its built-in associations of dead-serious, dry, and unrelenting analysis, is really the best and most “natural” inroad into satire. For although the word “satire” is never used in the poem, it is clear that its “limits,” its definitional *fines*, are being probed into by the poem’s scattered images of piles, fools who cannot get enough (*satis*), and the dinner-guest who finally gets his fill (*satur*). To reset notions of satire, Horace drags his rivals’ precious pile out of its intended referential space, where it derives a certain lustre from an association with the driving dialectical methods of Chrysippus, and sets it within new, alien fields of reference where it seems awkward and out of place.

Put simply, there are places where piles do not belong, and in the course of the first poem, Horace shows us where these are. Some of these spaces, he insists, jut into the generic space he is determined to have for “satire.” Most obviously, he reminds us that piles have all sorts of negative associations in the traditional imagery of diatribes against greed: to want things in piles is to be a miser.²⁵ How, then, can his rivals rail against misers (as writers of diatribe must) if their own methods of censure can be labeled as miserly? Further, Horace previews his later obsession with compositional technique (*compositio, structura*), evident especially in

²⁴ Diog. Laert. 7.180: “He [Chrysippus] had abundance of matter, but in style he was not successful. In industry he surpassed every one, as the list of his writings shows; for there are more than 705 of them. He increased their number by arguing repeatedly on the same subject, setting down anything that occurred to him, making many corrections and citing numerous authorities” (Loeb trans.).

²⁵ On the *fines naturae* theme in diatribes and philosophical treatises on wealth, see Lejay (1966) 5–9. As a specifically Epicurean principle in Horace, see DeWitt (1939) 133–4.

S. 1.4 and 1.10, by having us consider the poem's various piles as quasi-compositional artifacts. The terms he uses to picture these piles (e.g. *congesta cibaria*, *acervo quem struit, immensum pondus*, *constructus acervus*, *congestis saccis*) are suggestive of rhetorical theories of arrangement, where the pile-metaphor is universally negative. Thus, if we imagine "satire" as a compositionally ordered space, as Horace invites us to do here, we see that the pile-image is hopelessly inept and out of place. In compositional theory it signifies always an overblown, disconnected mess.²⁶

"Finishing your work" (*finire laborem*, 93) cannot happen with a pile, because it has no "fixed ends" (*certi fines*, 106) to mark where you should stop. The inordinate emphasis on this theme throughout *S.* 1.1 draws us to consider how this poem ends itself. How does it locate its own natural *fines*? Lines 117–21 make quick work of the act of concluding, and the quickness of that ending is a key feature of how it means what it means. Instead of just ending the poem, the lines deliberately *perform the discovery* of the poem's end, and thus they help us think in new ways about satire's generic shape. By the poem's end, the pile has been substantially removed, making room for something new, and of Horace's own making:

inde fit ut raro qui se vixisse beatum
dicat et exacto contentus tempore vita
cedat, uti conviva satur, reperire queamus.
iam satis est. ne me Crispini scrinia lippi
compilasse putes, verbum non amplius addam.

And that is why it is so hard for us to find a man who'll say he has lived out his life in happiness and, content with time already spent, will step away from life, like a dinner-guest who has had his fill. Enough now. And in case you think I've been ransacking the writing-boxes of bleary-eyed Crispinus, I'll add not a word more.

The poet's parting words (*non amplius addam*) remind us of the fool swept away by the Aufidus because he has insisted on drinking

²⁶ Certain Stoics would have liked the mess and defended it on stylistic grounds. On compositional theory in the *Sermones*, see Freudenburg (1993) 128–84. The pile-metaphor is well represented in Quintilian under the terms *acervus*, *cumulus*, and *congeries*; cf. Quint. *Inst.* 7pr. 1 *sed ut opera exstruentibus satis non est saxa atque materiam et cetera aedificanti utilia congerere, nisi disponendis eis collocandisque artificium manus adhibeatur, sic in dicendo quamlibet abundans rerum copia cumulum tantum habeat atque congestum, nisi illas eadem dispositio in ordinem digestas atque inter se commissas devinxerit.*

from a flooded river, though his thirst required “no more than an urn” (*non amplius urna*, 54). That muddy river is the most salient literary-critical (compositional) image of the poem.²⁷ So here, at the poem’s end, we are directed away from those earlier metaphors of “flooding,” “stuffing,” “piling,” and so on, towards the idea of satire’s basic, natural “enough.” With *iam satis est* “enough now,” the poet shows that he, the poet who writes the poem and “defines” its beginning and end, has found the very thing that the pile-obsessed fools inside the poem were so notoriously unable to find; that basic “enough” of nature. That is the limit. That is the “end” and “finish” that their unwieldy pile can never have. Having found it, he performs his definitional achievement by doing something the fools of the poem can never do: he finishes his *labor*. One line after the “enough now” declaration, the speaker departs, the poem is done. Like the dinner-guest, his alter-ego in line 119, he is satisfied, and he performs his *satisfaction* by getting up and walking away. By setting *satur* (“full”) and *satis* (“enough”) in such close proximity (a “clever joining,” *callida iunctura*), he has us consider yet another etymological inroad into the genre: as nature’s basic “enough,” satire acquires a new, streamlined identity (*satura* from *satis*) that derives its basic relational energy and sense from the remembered “piles” and “plates” that are its rejected, half-erased prototypes.

The poem’s final lines shake out memories gathered from all sorts of places. Some of these memories, we have seen, are based inside the poem itself, drawing on what we were told there about the misers who could not get enough, and the blowhard critics who mimic them so uncannily. Mostly, though, in reading these lines (as with any line of Roman poetry) we are working with memory-banks completely erased: the works of Crispinus, Fabius, and anyone else who may have fallen through the cracks of the poem, too subtly handled to be noticed by us now, are completely lost to us. We have no real memories of their works, just reminders and cartoon-images, with assurances from the poet that these practitioners of whatever it was they were doing (we cannot even know that!) were completely inept. Because genres “happen”

²⁷ On the river imagery of Hor. S. 1.1, see Freudenburg (1993) 185–92.

precisely through the dialogic processing of these memories, our view of Horatian satire can never look terribly like Horace's view or that of any of his intended, first-century-BCE readers (views multiple and unstable in themselves).²⁸

Still, there are other memories shaken out by the poem's last lines that project from texts that are known to us quite well, and these texts bring with them their own generic and ideological associations that necessarily contribute to our sense of what this new brand of Horatian satire is all about. The most famous and best explored of these allusions is to Lucretius, who used the full dinner-guest metaphor in his diatribe against the fear of death to convince us that, when life is a drag, there is nothing to fear in dying. In commenting on the last lines of *S. 1.1*, scholars routinely make only the most obvious connection between the two passages by matching Lucretius' *ut plenus . . . conuiuia recedis* with Horace's *cedat uti conuiuia satur*.²⁹ Still, as the words highlighted below attest, the points of contact between the two passages are actually more extensive (Lucr. 3.938–43):

cur non ut **plenus uitae conuiuia recedis**
aequo animoque capis securam, stulte, quietem?
sin ea quae fructus cumque es periere profusa
uitaque in offensast, cur **amplius addere** quaeris,
rursum quod pereat male et ingratum occidat omne,
non potius uitae **finem facis atque laboris?**

²⁸ Conte (1994) 5: "If we instead see every text as an interlocutor of some other text, the frame becomes animated and starts to move. Every new text enters into a dialogue with other texts; it uses dialogue as a necessary form of its own construction, since it tries not only to hear other voices but somehow to respond to them in such a way as to define its own." The fundamental study of intertextual memory as a "dialogic," genre-constructing, activity is Conte's monograph *Memoria dei poeti e sistema letterario*. His ideas are usefully summarized in the introduction to his *Latin Literature, a History*. Among recent followers of Conte, I have been most influenced by Hinds (1998) and Fowler (1997). Also Kennedy (1989) 210: "genres are only intertextual frames, only ever constructed in discourse." And thus their forms are never singular, stable, and/or final, but a mere "momentary coherence" (I owe the phrase to Dan Hooley *per litteras*). Cf. Fowler (1997) 14: "We do not read a text in isolation, but within a matrix of possibilities constituted by earlier texts, which functions as *langue* to the *parole* of individual textual production: without this background, the text would be literally unreadable, as there would be no way in which it could have meaning."

²⁹ For example, both Lejay (1966) 28, and Kiessling–Heinze (1961) 21 treat the *conuiuia satur* as a discrete "image" added from Lucr. 3.938 rather than as a figure that functions within, and brings with it, a larger moral discourse on nature's inherent limits. For a somewhat broader perspective, see Glazewski (1971).

Why not, like a dinner-guest who has taken his fill of life, just step away, you fool, and with mind at ease take hold of rest that is free from care? But if all that you once enjoyed is now drained to the dregs and lost, and life gives you pain, why do you seek to add more of what it will be painful and unwelcome to lose a second time, and to see vanish utterly away? Why not, instead, make an end of your life and of your toil?

To my knowledge, no one has picked up on the connection between *amplius addere* of line 941 and Horace's parting *amplius addam*. Yet, in making the connection we are much more inclined to pick up on the careful dovetailing of the poem's last two lines into the moral discourse that precedes, dovetailing already signalled by the various "inside" allusions mentioned above. Taking the full allusion into consideration, then, we see that what at first looks like, and gets edited as, a detached "literary" jibe closing the poem actually extends from and takes its sense from the dinner-guest metaphor that precedes it in lines 118–19.

There is a second, hidden, feature of the Lucretian passage that bears upon the way in which the conclusion of *S. 1.1* does its definitional work: the voice that scolds the fool for refusing to "die already" in Lucretius is none other than that of the personified *Rerum Natura* "Nature of Reality," the focus and title of that mammoth work. Thus the voice that breaks into the final lines of *S. 1.1* is not just any standard, didactic voice from Lucretius, it is the voice of his *Rerum Natura*. With it, we think not just of Lucretian diatribe generally, but of a specific, revolutionary, six-book project that goes by the name *De Rerum Natura*. Even more, those who know their Lucretius well remember not only that the dinner-guest metaphor of book 3 is assigned to his title-character, but that she casts the fool's demand for more life in terms of his failure to "finish his labor" *finem facis atque laboris*. Thus, that central problem of Horace's first poem, the quest for limits set by nature (*denique sit finis quaerendi, cumque habeas plus | pauperiem metuas minus, et finire laborem | incipias, S. 1.1.92–4*), is recalled silently one last time at the poem's end through an allusion that is itself positioned and performed as the natural "finish" of the poet's first satiric labor. Horace is no (Lucretian) fool.

Sermones 1.1 is thick with voices remembered from other works. The most prominent of these, the one scholars generally have been most ready to hear, is the Lucretian voice that breaks in at several points and is most prominent in the poem's last lines. Still,