

In search of a *corpus*: book and body in the *Satires* of Persius

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation treats Persius' book of satires as a physical object, as a text to be read aloud, as a literary artefact that has a fundamental total structure, and as a text that is interested in its genre and in how satire can position itself against tired philosophical and literary traditions and tropes. It seeks to diversify the intellectual contexts in which the satirist may be situated—both literary and philosophical, ranging from Hipponax to Ovid, Plato to Cornutus. In the first chapter, we struggle to track down a poet who compulsively avoids identification in his *Prologue*. It turns out that he is best identified by a reactionary Hipponactean meter and very misleading birdsounds. Without addressee or self-identification or occasion, the poem is labeled a *carmen* at the same time that we are told that *carmina* are to be distrusted. In the second chapter, the poet introduces his *libellus* to us—or, rather, it turns out that he is not interested in us at all—he talks to his book or to some fiction that he has invented for the occasion of *Satire I*. The book itself may be read or not, he doesn't mind. The poet focuses his attention on the poetry-reading practices of others in performance, alighting upon their every intimate body part, but denies us a view of him—he is merely the concealed spleen. In Chapter Three, the poet continues his exploration of performative speech (prayer, this time) in *Satire II*, while maintaining his self-concealment. We see only his inner, highly unappealing raw heart on a platter. A body part further to the spleen is added to our plate: the heart, uncooked. His last words hint at what he has to offer; but we'll be sorry that he does soon enough. Chapter Four shows that in the central poem, *Satire III*, the poet swings vastly in the other direction. Rather than a disembodied critique of others, the poem's opening lines are highly focalized through the poet's experience. He exposes more of his body

than we would ever wish to see—splitting and gaping open, it becomes a giant pore. At the same moment, his book comes physically into our view, but it is as split as he is. The hardened critic turns out to be a leaky vessel, a failing *proficiens* who cannot catch up to his Stoic lessons. In the fifth chapter, the poet picks up *another* book, Plato's *Alcibiades*, which shares his interest in the morally underdeveloped youth and the hazards of ethical progress. In *Satire IV*, his rendition of that dialogue, Persius offers a theory of dialogue as fiction that frames his engagement with philosophy. The result is that the Stoics may find that they have a very bad student on their hands, one who raises the specter of Socrates' misbehavior and failures. The sixth chapter expands the discussion of Persius' relation to the Platonic corpus in *Satire V*, which sustains and develops Platonic questions of desire, slavery, and praise, and confuses its own genres. Finally, Chapter Seven addresses Persius' retreat, projected death, and reincarnation in *Satire VI*. He reflects upon the fate of his body. He is unconcerned about what happens to bodies and poets—and, implicitly, their texts—after death. The poet's book and the body are merged in their insignificance.

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in memoriam patris, antiquorum etiam amatoris

PREFACE

This is a small offering on a small book. It takes as its premiss that Persius' *libellus*—as the poet calls it—ought to be read *as* a book. This dissertation, therefore, treats Persius' corpus as a physical object, as a text to be read aloud, as a literary artefact that has a fundamental total structure, and as a text that is interested in its genre and in how satire can position itself against tired philosophical and literary traditions and tropes. These poetic tropes, satirical but also lyric, are not cast aside, but mobilized ultimately to exceed and negate their conventions. Philosophical discourses and rhetorical practices, both Platonic and Stoic, turn out to be fictions. The book is framed by *recusatio* and disengagement in its first and last poems; unconcern for the fate of the book and its reception becomes unconcern for the fate of the poet's body and legacy.

I have made an effort to treat each of these seven poems (one choliambic prologue, six hexameter satires) with equal attention and in order, a practice which reflects a book-oriented methodology and one which has the added benefit of taking seriously the often under-served *Prologue* and second and sixth satires. Given that certain fundamentals of several of the poems are much disputed in the scholarship, in each chapter I first illustrate my basic understanding of the piece in question. I address in particular questions of structure and voice in order to underpin my subsequent analyses of that poem alongside illuminating comparanda. Those comparanda have been chosen with a particular view to broadening the literary and philosophical questions we may ask of the book at hand.

In seeking to diversify the intellectual contexts in which we may situate Persius and his meagre corpus, I have turned quite deliberately to *extra*-Horatian literary comparanda. This is not to downplay the weight that Horace's corpus exerts upon this book, but rather to show how other Roman and Greek literary traditions complement and even ironize that influence. Persius' artistic action upon Horatian texts—epistolary, satiric, and even lyric—was finely illustrated by Dan

Hooley in his *The Knotted Thong: Structures of Mimesis in Persius* (1997), a monograph on the poet that has not been surpassed in rigor or nuance. Likewise, I have turned quite deliberately to philosophical literature that has not previously been critically brought to bear upon the *Satires*, which have generally been subjected to elucidation by Stoic trivia. Similarly, this is not to downplay the rigor of Persius' manifest training in the standard precepts of Stoicism, but rather to examine Persius' conceptual engagement with philosophical writers and teachers that is as diverse as possible and plausible.

In service of these twin ends, the poets and philosophers upon whose work I have drawn vary widely; each is keyed to a particular question that the *libellus* demands. Frequently Persius invokes the authority of these figures only to deflate it, enacting a *recusatio* not only of his own literary persona, but those of his forebears. Callimachus and the character of Hipponax help us to understand the invective territory that Persius is claiming for his book. Ovid appears frequently throughout this examination of Persius' extra-Horatian engagements. Significantly, the *Metamorphoses* are important to understanding the prologue and final poem, two framing pieces which both capitalize upon and debunk the idea of transformation. The *Tristia* along with Propertius' elegies throw into relief Persius' conception of his book as a material object. Seneca the Elder and Epictetus exhibit for us the types of rhetorical and ethical pedagogy that Persius lampoons even as he demonstrates his intimate competence in those discourses—as a sort of intellectual double agent. Cornutus—a character in the *Vita* and *Satire V* of whom scholars have long made much—is adduced as an interlocutor through his extant written work, an etymological theology called *Epidrome*, rather than through a spectre reconstructed from “evidence” that the fifth satire provides. Plato occupies considerable territory in my assessments of how Persius theorizes dialogue and ethical progress through his documentation of relationship of a philosopher

and young man. Finally, the perennial voice of Ennius tells us how little we should care about literary-traditional posterity.

In the first chapter, we struggle to track down a poet who compulsively avoids identification in his *Prologue*. It turns out that he is best identified by a reactionary Hipponactean meter and very misleading birdsounds. Without addressee or self-identification or occasion, the poem is labeled a *carmen* at the same time that we are told that *carmina* are to be distrusted. In the second chapter, the poet introduces his *libellus* to us—or, rather, it turns out that he is not interested in us at all—he talks to his book or to some fiction that he has invented for the occasion of *Satire I*. The book itself may be read or not, he doesn't mind. The poet focuses his attention on the poetry-reading practices of others in performance, alighting upon their every intimate body part, but denies us a view of him—he is merely the concealed spleen. In Chapter Three, the poet continues his exploration of performative speech (prayer, this time) in *Satire II*, while maintaining his self-concealment. We see only his inner, highly unappealing raw heart on a platter. A body part further to the spleen is added to our plate: the heart, uncooked. His last words hint at what he has to offer; but we'll be sorry that he does soon enough. Chapter Four shows that in the central poem, *Satire III*, the poet swings vastly in the other direction. Rather than a disembodied critique of others, the poem's opening lines are highly focalized through the poet's experience. He exposes more of his body than we would ever wish to see—splitting and gaping open, it becomes a giant pore. At the same moment, his book comes physically into our view, but it is as split as he is. The hardened critic turns out to be a leaky vessel, a failing *proficiens* who cannot catch up to his Stoic lessons. In the fifth chapter, the poet picks up another book, Plato's *Alcibiades*, which shares his interest in the morally underdeveloped youth and the hazards of ethical progress. In *Satire IV*, his rendition of that dialogue, Persius offers a theory of

dialogue as fiction that frames his engagement with philosophy. The result is that the Stoics may find that they have a very bad student on their hands, one who raises the specter of Socrates' misbehavior and failures. The sixth chapter expands the discussion of Persius' relation to the Platonic corpus in *Satire V*, which sustains and develops Platonic questions of desire, slavery, and praise, and confuses its own genres. Finally, Chapter Seven addresses Persius' retreat, projected death, and reincarnation in *Satire VI*. He reflects upon the fate of his body. He is unconcerned about what happens to bodies and poets—and, implicitly, their texts—after death. The poet's book and the body are merged in their insignificance.

Although he received praise and generated commentary soon after his early demise,¹ Persius has sometimes been an isolated poet, in part because of his studied difficulty, but also in no small part because of the more popular Juvenal's aggressive neglect of him in his own construction of the history of Roman satire. This dissertation therefore also offers an implicit intellectual recontextualization of the poet. If Persius is not a satirist, as his successor would have it, what is he? In spite of Quintilian's placement of Persius among the greats of the "wholly" Roman genre (*Inst.* X, 1.93), Persius also declares that there is no room for him in that tradition. At the same time, the poet is also clearly interested in engaging the tropes and forms of other genres, philosophical modes (dialogue, diatribe, paradoxa) in particular, but also comedy,² elegy, and iambic. The resulting generic struggles, in turn, manifest in the difficulties of book-writing and book-reading that Persius thematizes.

My use of Ovidian, Propertian, and Callimachean comparanda does not require much

¹ *Vita* 22; the proliferation and consolidation of commentary would be sustained for centuries, Zetzel (2005: 1-9).

² Jennifer Ferriss-Hill (2015) provides a comprehensive study of the influences of Old Comedy on Roman satire and many useful insights on the ways in which Horace, Persius, and Juvenal capitalize upon Aristophanes' methods.

defense, so well documented are the intertextual interests and practices of poets. Franco Bellandi (1988) has offered a monograph on Persius' own engagement with the Ovidian, Propertian, and Callimachean tropes in the first satire. For Bellandi, Persius' use of Ovid and Propertius, especially, throws into relief his motivating aesthetic-ethical principle: literary technique must be subordinate to the moral ends of literature. Propertius' efforts in erotic elegy were underpinned by questionable morals; Ovid was entirely responsible for the trivialization and vulgarization of poetic activity. Persius rejects the "commodification" of literature: a poetics once invested with gravitas has been divested of its moral value. I will argue that Persius does indeed have Ovid and Propertius very much in mind, but that he shares several of their poetic concerns—inspiration and textuality, and, in the case of Ovid, transformation, fiction, and immortality.

Persius' Stoic affiliations have been thoroughly investigated and synthesized recently by Shadi Bartsch (2012). The philosophy-centered investigations presented here may reflect upon the intellectual activity of the Roman Stoics of the period by presenting Persius' *Satires* as an alternative (and complementary) "take" on both contemporary and classical philosophy. This work is in tandem with the current re-evaluation of Cornutus, the poet's "real life" teacher, especially by George Boys-Stones (2003, 2007, 2009, forthcoming), who has treated (and continues to treat) the once shadowy figure as an active philosopher, who commands a seriousness of attention, in line with his high reputation among the ancients. We know, for example, that in addition to the extant *Epidrome*, a theological-pedagogical text upon which I shall draw, Cornutus wrote in response to Aristotle's *Categories* and authored an *On Properties*, on a metaphysical topic.³ There is no reason, therefore, that we should suppose Persius' education or philosophical awareness to be narrow. Persius had a complete collection of Chrysippus. From a young age, he associated with a diverse

³ Sedley (2005: 117-122).

crowd of intellectual luminaries, including the Stoic dissident Thrasea Paetus, the poet Caesius Bassus, historian Servilius Nonianus, and the physician Claudius Agathinus. He knew Seneca, but was not exactly taken with that writer of ethics and pedagogical letters.⁴

The question of what Platonic texts are available and circulating in this period is a more complex one. But recent scholarship reflecting the fresh engagement with the Roman Stoics has shown that their use of and relation to the Platonic corpus was one of rigorous, critical engagement rather than one of hostility, ignorance, or indifference.⁵ While “citations” of Plato in the period sometimes seem insufficiently specific to be unequivocally first hand—perhaps through extracts or some secondary work—the critical mass of scholarship on Platonic readings in the period has accrued to the extent that we may now take the ideas and discourses that span the Platonic corpus to be available to as serious a reader of philosophy as Persius appears to have been from both internal and external evidence.

Of course, the philosophical and the literary are inextricable. Following the suggestion of Reckford,⁶ I make use of Epictetus as contemporary comparandum significantly useful for negotiating amid the seemingly bewildering crowd of voices that appear throughout the satires. The sheer implausibility of the range of the philosopher’s interlocutor-addressees makes it clear that ostensible narrative incoherence was not only navigable but meaningful to ancient readers. The diatribes move (and return) from topic to topic, subsuming the discourses that range from the Aesopic to the Platonic, from syllogism to gymnasium, all while turning constantly from person

⁴ *Vita* 25-29.

⁵ Some exemplary work includes: Setaioli (1985), Griffin (1989), Bonazzi and Helmig, eds. (2007), Sorabji and Sharples, eds. (2007), Boys-Stones on Cornutus and the *Timaeus* (2009) and *per litteras*, and A. G. Long (2013) among many others.

⁶ Reckford (2009: 91-95).

to person, raising and answering all and any objections.⁷

John Henderson's work on Persius' didactic satire (1991) points us to the conclusion that the voices presented across the satires are ambivalent and multi-interpretable in a way that tells us something significant about the text itself. Any attempt authoritatively to restrain the labored confusion—even illegibility and unintelligibility—of the voices presented in the satires makes for not only a rather flat reading but also ignores the absolute fundament of Persius' project: *Quis leget haec? min tu istud ais?* (*Sat.* I, 2). I nevertheless advocate particular identifications of speakers, especially in *Satire IV*, keeping in mind the notion that to read a text in private—even silently—with the attendant capacity of second visits and revisions, is an utterly different activity from reading the satire at a *recitatio*—with the vocal cues and gestures required when reading for others. To read privately and to read publicly are activities that make possible equally meaningful insights, but it is the performative Roman *lectio* that is my interest here and that is my present tool for navigation. It is an exercise in which Persius himself disavows interest—early on he tells us that he doesn't care for it—but I take the poet's patent anxiety about the event as permission to theorize around it.

Finally, I have a great sympathy with Kenneth Reckford's (2009) *Recognizing Persius*. Although our satirists turn out to be rather different men, we both seek to recover and reconstruct, in a way, Persius' corpus, a corpus that has been too often dismembered by more single-minded investigations of allusion, intertext, and metaphor that are less interested in a sense of the whole. Reckford's poet is a man of duty in the world, a man with a real life and a real personal history that meaningfully underpin his poetics. Persius emerges in admirable condition “with unblinking

⁷ For a recent thorough re-evaluation of the discursive strategies and structures of the diatribe “On Freedom” (IV, 1), which is most useful, see Willms (2011). For the best comprehensive view of Epictetus, see A. A. Long (2002).

awareness of the human condition, one's own especially, and the will to keep striving in the face of innumerable obstacles, both without and within."⁸ My Persius, by some contrast, emerges a smart but mean creature—an unrelenting critic of himself, of others, and of the possibility that the human condition could ever be anything other than the infinite regress it has always been. This is surely a difference between our own worldviews and of the satirist that we think readers of classics need in the twenty-first century.

⁸ Reckford (2009: 160). Also see Brassel (2011).

CHAPTER ONE: Choliambics and the Greco-Roman Bird Call (*Prologue*)

Poetic prologues are often elusive. Written to establish a fictive persona and generic expectations that might serve as rubrics for interpreting the work to come, they are equally written to deceive. But Persius' riddling prologue is exceptionally misleading. Persius goes out of his way *not* to introduce himself or his work, and even resists the generic expectation that the author will identify with a coherent fictional persona at all. Instead, Persius constructs an extraordinarily evasive poetic persona that identifies itself only by negation, by what it is *not*. In its place, he introduces metrical, aural, and etymological riddles to construct ways of self-identifying without identifying, thus obstructing and frustrating his reader's search for meaning from the very start. While Persius defies the reader's search for aetiology and meaning by refusing to construct a coherent poetic persona, his use of etymological sound-play throughout the poem stimulates and rewards other forms of reading attuned to his highly allusive and referential style.

The prologue—the first poem of Persius' little book—is carefully structured yet totally enigmatic, obscured by its brevity and its peculiar features. The poem is written in choliambics, a meter originating in the invective of Hipponax that developed through Hellenistic and Roman practitioners. Using choliambics is a conspicuous choice. Horace's *Sermones* have no such separate prefatory poem; the hexameter satires are introduced by a hexameter satire that is addressed, of course, to Maecenas—immediately positioning the text in its social milieu (*Serm.* I, 1.1). Persius' choice suggests that he deliberately sought a subversive literary precedent for his own prologue. Choliambics—identified with Hipponax, Callimachus, and Catullus—lead the reader to presume that just by virtue of its form (if not its content), the poems to come will be some sort of invective. By directly invoking Hipponax as that poet transmitted through Callimachus' *iambi*, Persius deliberately and fundamentally parts ways with Horace, his obvious predecessor

in both Roman satire and Callimachean iambic, at the very outset of his *Satires*, evading—if not negating—his own major poetic predecessor. Beyond marking his separation from Horace, whose *Sermones* are frequently “flagged” by allusion in the *Satires*, Persius’ use of choliambic asserts an aggression that has something in common with the practice of Catullus and perhaps other Roman writers of choliambic (unfortunately insufficiently extant to provide meaningful comparanda) and pointedly with the aggressive practice of Hipponax as literary-historical character. The dark and obscene humor of Persius’ caustic hexametrical Hipponacteanism will re-invigorate Roman satire, a genre civilized through the comparatively docile “wit” of the Horace of the *Sermones*.

The prologue’s metrical deviance from the standard hexameter of Roman verse satire, together with its brevity—just 14 lines—has often resulted in its marginalization from full and sustained treatment—or in its treatment as a mere *précis* of themes that are better developed in the first satire, which is more intelligibly programmatic and includes a parody of a poetry reading. This marginalization has persisted in spite of the enormous amount of work achieved in the early 20th century by Italian scholars who focused on textual and metrical issues⁹ and the remarkable interpretive 1988 monograph of Franco Bellandi, *Persio: dai verba togae al solipsismo stilistico: studi sui Choliambi e la poetica di Aulo Persio Flacco*, which treats the *Prologue* in conjunction with the first satire. Some further progress has been made especially in Charles McNelis’ innovative interpretation of the prologue from the perspective of choliambic history and also through Kirk Freudenburg’s insights into its poetics.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the relation of the prologue to the corpus of satires has usually been considered a tenuous one. Perhaps it does not belong to

⁹ Paolucci and Zurli (2007) provide an overview of these debates.

¹⁰Freudenburg (2001: 134-151) and McNelis (2012).

the book at all. Perhaps it serves as an epilogue (which does nothing to solve its problems).¹¹ Perhaps it refers to the iambic prologues of Roman *comedy*—an idea intriguing and not without merit, but since comedic prologues are written in *senarii* I omit them from my present inquiry.¹² Perhaps, finally, this little poem belongs precisely because it does *not* belong: Persius demands from his readers disproportionate interpretive work to bridge the gap between the prologue and the satires, in keeping with the disjointedness and elusivity of his satire more generally.¹³

Digest

<p>Nec fonte labra prolui caballino nec in bicipiti somniasse Parnaso memini, ut repente sic poeta prodirem. Heliconidasque pallidamque Pirenen illis remitto quorum imagines lambunt</p>	5	<p>No, I haven't dipped my lips in the Horsey Spring, nor do I remember having dreamed on twinpeaked Parnassus so <i>presto</i> I could turn out (<i>prodirem</i>) this way to be a poet. The ladies of Helicon and pallid Pirene I reject and leave (<i>remitto</i>) for The Greats (<i>Illis</i>), whose statues the clingy ivies lick. Myself a semipagan, I offer our song to the rites of the bards. Who enabled the parrot to do his own <i>chaere</i>, and taught the magpie to try our words? The Master of Art and Gifter of Genius, Stomach, the artist at pursuing voices denied. But—if the hope of underhanded coin will've glimmered—you'd believe that crow-poets and poetess-magpies sing Pegasus' nectar.</p>
<p>hederae sequaces; ipse semipaganus ad sacra uatum carmen adfero nostrum. quis expediuit psittaco suum 'chaere' picamque docuit nostra uerba conari? magister artis ingenique largitor uenter, negatas artifex sequi uoces. quod si dolosi spes refulserit nummi, coruos poetas et poetridas picas cantare credas Pegaseium nectar.</p>	10	

¹¹ The two important transmissions diverge, with profound implications. *P* places the choliambics before the *Satires* in a second hand; *A* and *B* place the choliambics after the *Satires*. See Reynolds (1983: 293-294). Pasoli (1968) places the choliambics at the end of the collection; its programmaticism does not automatically forbid its being an epilogue. To follow *AB* and leave the choliambics at the end of the book ignores the obvious allusions to the proemial passages of Hesiod, Propertius, and others, which I shall consider here in my own treatment. Also see Parker (2009: 158-161).

¹² cf. especially the idea of the Terentine polemic/parabasis-like prologue. For this, see Korzeniewski (1978).

¹³ Freudenberg (2001: 137-138).

The poem is generally seen to fall into two halves (1-7 and 8-14): the first offers a *recusatio* from the league of great poets, and the second a critique of contemporary poetry as mimicry. The first line anchors the work we are about to read in a low register: *prolui*, McNelis observes, only appears in satire. *Caballus*, meanwhile, “nag,”¹⁴ is not a nice name for any horse, especially for one of divine parentage: the *fons caballinus* refers to the Muses’ sacred spring that gushed forth when Pegasus struck the ground on Mount Helicon, the Hippo-crene, as the scholiast reminds us. Inspiration from the Muses occupies the first four lines, introducing a question—where the motivation to write will be found—that will recur again and again throughout the book. Here, the convention of dreaming on their mountains has been familiar since Hesiod who opened *Theogony* with a confluence of references to Helicon and the Hippocrene. That story was itself recounted by Callimachus in his *Aetia* I (fr. 2), where the poet also represented himself as a friend of the Muse by contrast to the Telchines (fr. 1.2, 24), associating himself with divine singing through his connection with Apollo (29-33). The place of Callimachus’ “dream relocation” was, apparently, Helicon.¹⁵ Persius’ *somniasse* also recalls Ennius’ dream of Homer *qua* peacock (fr. 9 Skutsch) and Propertius’ vision on Helicon at the waters of Bellerophon’s horse at the opening of his Book III, where he asserts his work’s affiliation with the divine sisters (*opus hoc de monte Sororum*, *El.* III, 1.17). In that poem, Propertius makes his human inspiration divine, calling upon Callimachus and Philitas as divinities whose sanctum he wishes to enter as *sacerdos* (*El.* I, 1.1-4). In elegy III, 3, Propertius recounts a dream in which he drank (*admoram ora*, *El.* III, 1.5; cf. Persius’ *labra prolui*, *Pro.* 1) at the Hippocrene (*Bellerophonte... umor equi*, *El.* III, 1.2). He had started to sing

¹⁴ McNelis (2012: 243); the term is used in satires by Lucilius 153 W (163 M), Varro *Sat. Men.* 388, 478.1, and Hor. *Serm.* I, 6.59 and 103.

¹⁵ Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2011: 12, 174).

of great Rome until Apollo rebuked him for attempting epic (*carmen heroi*, *El. III*, 3.15ff.). Propertius then moved from the Hippocrene to a cave of the Muses proper, where Calliope gave him his non-martial programme and re-moistens his lips from the font (*El. III*, 3.39-52), a relocation of inspiration not so far afield from where he started after all.

But the tropes of inspiration that Persius summons are entirely framed by negation: I did *not* wash, I did *not* dream, I *reject*. *Recusatio*, too, of course has its tradition; both Ovid and Propertius supply salient points of comparison for the movement away from a major genre in favor of the minor. In *Amores* I, 1, Cupid changes the poet's scheme (metrical and thematic). The poet complains that the *vates* and Helicon belong to the domain of the Muses, not to that of Cupid (*Am. I*, 1.1-15). Ovid nevertheless submits to the new god, relinquishing his Vergilian potential (*Am. I*, 1.1). Similarly in *Ars Amatoria*, the poet says that his poetry has not been inspired by neither Apollo nor the Muses coming upon him Hesiodically tending sheep (*servanti pecudes vallibus, Ascra, tuis*, I.28), but rather by Venus.¹⁶

Although Persius draws upon the same set of tropes as his predecessors, he importantly diverges from both the Propertian and Ovidian forms of *recusatio*: in spite of their denial of certain types of inspiration and generic affiliation, both earlier poets assert new sources of inspiration and create new mythologies for their work—Propertius moves from the Hippocrene to the Muses themselves, Ovid from Apollo and the Muses to Cupid and Venus. Persius offers no such re-direction in the lines that follow his remittance. The expectation of realignment is thus subverted and the work left incomplete as Persius lumps the divinities (*Heliconidas*) and their singing converts, responding irreverently to poetic self-sanctification: this is *my* offering... the parrot's

¹⁶ Kenny (1970: 372-380) has argued for placing Lucretius in this tradition, running from Hesiod through Persius. This would dovetail nicely with Lucretius' prominence in the first line of *Satire* I. If this is the case, then we have a nice literary-genealogical frame built out of the *Prologue* and the book's end, as Lucretius also forms part of the discussion on *Satire* VI; see my Chapter Seven.

chaere. Persius' prologue, then, is not only a *recusatio* from grand inspiration, but also a *recusatio* from the (almost as grand) tradition of *recusationes*.

The only positive identification of the poet is the neologism *semi-paganus*, a favorite site of argument. Glosses for this neologism have ranged widely: The scholiast proposes *semipoeta; et hoc verbo humili satirico modo usus est*. Other interpretations include “half-rustic,”¹⁷ “half-provincial,”¹⁸ “half-civilized outsider,” referring to Persius' Etruscan origins in Volaterra,¹⁹ “a half-member of the *pagus*,” i.e. of the company of *vates*,²⁰ “something of an outsider,”²¹ even “half-caste.”²² But to identify yourself solely with a neologism is, of course, no identification at all, but rather an instigation to the reader to play with words and engage in the manufacture of meaning.

For his own version of generic realignment, Persius supplies only the parrot's squawk and its *magister*, the stomach. We are greeted by the noise (not song) of a bird that, with its semi-human voice, is itself not even fully a bird. Like lines 1-7, the second half of the poem contains only repudiation—this time not of self but of other “poets.” While in the first half of the poem, the rejection of the fount of inspiration is not met by the assertion of a new source, in the second half of the poem inspiration does appear: it is the inspiration of *bad* poets, who, like trained birds, are

¹⁷ Bellandi (1988: 48).

¹⁸ Jenkinson (1990: 33-34) sees the term as having to do with Persius' status as landowner: “The existing *compaganus* ‘normalised’ the invention, and indicates its administrative reference.”

¹⁹ Reckford (2009: 39, 56).

²⁰ Harvey (1981) ad loc. argues that the metaphor of lines 6-7 comes from the Paganalia, in which each *pagus* made sacrifices “and P. represents himself as an interloper” who “does not have the unqualified right to be in the company of the *vates*.”

²¹ McNelis (2012: 240).

²² Braund (2004: 45).

led to mere mimicry by their *uenter*. Birds dominate the second half of the poem: the *psittacus*, the *pica* (magpie), and the *coruus* (the crow, or rook, or raven, in any case one of these related birds known for intelligence and trainability²³). The parrot can be taught Greek (*chaere*, 8), since it has a Greek-sounding name, while the magpie can be taught Latin (*verba nostra*, 9), since it has a Latin name. The teachability of poetic production, of *ars* and *ingenium*, in lines 8-9, presents the first example of pedagogy in a book in which pedagogy will form a recurring and central interest. Here the stomach is the *magister artis* and *ingeni largitor*, antithetical gears of artistic production deriving from the same source: art may be taught and creative genius bestowed.²⁴ The idea that poverty is the motivation to create is not an original one, but a particularly interesting precedent exists in Plautus' *Stichus*, where the parasite Gelasimus is the son of *Fames*: persistent hunger is specifically *comic* inspiration. *Gelasimus* will perform any joke for his next meal: it is *paupertas* that makes him *ridiculus* (*Stich.* 159-160, 177ff.).

The prologue's final three lines are regarded by Harvey and Bellandi as a question.²⁵ But this sentence is usually taken as a straightforward continuation of the previous idea, the diagnosis of poetic inspiration as the *uenter*. It is taken to mean that these are mercenary poets, poets who sing for their supper, or for money in the final case. Conington's translation gestures to this: "Only let a bright glimpse of flattering money dawn on *their* horizon, and you would fancy jackdaw poets and poetess pies to be singing pure Pierian sweetness."²⁶ The offer of money, in other words, is

²³ Arnott (2007: 90).

²⁴ Conington (1893) ad loc. observes an oxymoron in *ingenique largitor*—the inborn cannot be bestowed. Nevertheless, stomachs, too, are native to poets!

²⁵ Harvey (1981) ad loc.

²⁶ Conington (1893: 141) with emphasis added.

made to the poets. There is an interpretive problem in the Latin, however, as there is in English: Does *credas* refer to a generalized, anonymous “you” or to a particular *you*, the audience of Persius’ song? Persius himself uses *credas* in Satire III in a way that is more intelligibly generalized: “I’m belching so much you’d think that herds were braying” (*findor, ut Arcadiae pecuaria rudere credas, Sat. III.9*). On these readings, *credas* is a sort of parenthetical “wouldn’t ya know” or “you’d a thunk.”

But in the prologue, the condition belongs to *credere*—If there’s something in it for *you*, *you* would believe that these terrible poets are singing heavenly stuff—not to the birds’ *cantare*. The emphatic protasis exerts more pressure upon *credas*. *Credas* here may be used in the sense that it is used frequently by Ovid—that you would surmise one thing looking at a scene but in reality some other thing happens.²⁷ Ovidian examples of (dis)belief deal with transformation from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Illustrative examples include the petrification of Nileus (*adapertaque velle/ ora loqui credas, Met. V.193-4*) and the shipwreck of Ceyx and Alcyone (*inque fretum credas totum descendere caelum, Met. XI.517*). Most significant for our purposes here is in the Pygmalion episode where, as in Persius’ prologue, *credas* is contingent: misgiving or hesitation would stop a witness to the changing form of the statue from surmising that it was indeed in motion

*uirginis est uerae facies, quam uiuere credas,
et, si non obstet reuerentia, uelle moueri. (Met. X. 250-1)*

It is the face of a genuine girl, who you’d believe were living and—
if propriety weren’t in the way—were wishing to be in motion.

²⁷ The examples from Ovid are especially pertinent, but *credas* appears at a particularly high frequency in other corpora that are related by humor (Terence, e.g. *Andr.* 499), familiar language (Cicero’s letters, e.g. *ad Fam.* XIII, 29.4 or XVI, 8.2), or milieu (Seneca, e.g. *Ep. ad Luc.* 58.2.3). In these instances, *credas* seems not to be used in the generalizing sense. My point here is not to *exclude* a generalizing *credas*, but rather to include the possibility for a meaningful *credas*. I leave *crederes* aside for expediency.

Ovid puts forward that the audience in their imagined roles as viewers might believe that a simulacrum is the real thing. On Andrew Feldherr's reading, *credas* in the Pygmalion episode is a crucial element for understanding Ovid's theorizing of fiction and mimesis: "realistic art transcends its own essential artificiality to become what it represents." Ovid's *credas* is at the center of Pygmalion's encounter with his own art work, between knowing and not knowing what it is. The artist Pygmalion at first knows and glories in his creation as a creation. The hazard of belief is all the province of literary viewers. The problem with the statue is that Pygmalion himself becomes its viewer and believer.²⁸

From his anti-art perspective, the question of belief for Persius has not so much to do with the miraculous power of art to move and transform the real but rather with the traps that art can set for gullible audiences who imagine a heavenly song where there are only poets for hire. For Persius, the Pygmalion phenomenon is an exercise in the ridiculous: Art fools the artist; he is seduced by his own creation, as the climaxing poet of *Satire I* will be, overcome at his own poetry-reading. This theory that belief is crucial to the viability of mimesis will frame Persius' own imitation of a Platonic dialogue (itself a famously mimetic genre): Persius' use of *crede* in *Satire IV*, as we shall see, is a pointed reference to audience "buy-in."

Moreover, what is the audience *willing* to believe about poetry? On the reading of the more generalized *credas*: If the poets think they will be paid, their singing will be so good that you'd think it were inspired. But on the reading of a more specific, pointed *credas*, we might understand the conditional to mean: If you think *you'll* be paid, then you'd be willing to believe that their (bad) poetry is inspired. The audience, in other words, may be bought off. Persius implicates the audience alongside the poets in the bad-poetry industry. This question will persist through the first

²⁸ Feldherr (2010: 260-264).

Satire: To whom is it that the hack poets seem to sing divinely? Is it the poets themselves (they fancy that they are great) or an obliging (even mimetic) audience? Are the real fakes the poets or the listeners? Are *we* hearing properly?

The self-negation and other-repudiation that persist through the prologue leave us little to hang onto. But recitation of the poem reveals the prominence and pervasiveness of the aural *p*: the final *Parnaso* (2), *re-pente sic poeta prodirem* (3), *pallidamque Pirenen* (4), *semi-paganus* (6), *poetas et poetridas picas* (13); initial *picamque* (8), *psittaco* (9);²⁹ and the significant reformulation in the penultimate *Pegaseium* (14) of *fonte caballino* (1), each one “step” in from the bookends of *nec* (1) and *nectar* (14). *P* is most importantly, of course, for *Persius*. This marking of the text by *p* is a poetic signature for the *Satires*. The *persona* that advertises that it may have nothing behind it is, at least, a sound, a *carmen* (7).³⁰

Hipponax

The rejection of divine inspiration (the *fons caballinus*) by our poet, whoever he is, is an assertion that the entire tradition of great literature (*Pegaseium nectar*) from Hesiod through the Romans is wholly contingent on audience buy-in. In a like manner, the capacity to be inspired by Muses seems to be linked with hexameter verse itself—Callimachus’ elegant and Propertius’ gently ironizing elegiacs—but is left behind along with them. The dead-end, clipped, and crippled choliambic, the iamb that *limps*, by contrast, has no room for such niceties. Since the activity of

²⁹ The MSS have *psittacus*, though spellings of the word in some later Greek literature indicate that the sound *ps*- had been largely reduced to *s*- (e.g. *sittakos*, in Arrian, *Ind.* 15.8). An archaizing emphasis in oral performance of the text seems within reach, especially given the archaic *topoi* of the first seven lines and the Grecisms of the latter seven.

³⁰ Brouwers (1973: 263) makes much of these alliterations but seems to have missed the forest for the trees.

the poetic “persona” has thus far been abdication, leaving behind only Persius’ “initial,” we must look elsewhere for interpretive bearings: the principal formal interest of the poem is its meter—choliambic (scanzons)—one rooted in the personality of the sixth century Hipponax of Ephesus, traditionally credited in antiquity with its invention. The choliamb is so called because the final, non-substitutable spondee is *cholos* by comparison with the trotting iamb—and it drags along with it a particular disagreeable metrical *ethos*.³¹ Charles McNelis has noted that Persius signals his Hipponactean position with that final *caballino*, further to the same word’s signaling of a “low” (and thus satirical) linguistic register, as discussed above: the long penultimate syllable indicates that this is choliambic rather than pure iambic, in which the last foot is fixed as an iamb.³² But of course the *caballus*, the horse, also refers us to his human, *Hippo-nax*.

Persius’ composition in choliambics has elsewhere been interpreted as a fundamentally “Horatian” move, reflecting Horace’s attitude towards Callimachus and experimentation with iambic themes and forms in the epodes.³³ Horace, however, never used pure scanzons in the epodes, whereas the Alexandrian wrote five of his thirteen *Iambi* purely in that meter, including, significantly, the first and last. Persius’ first line is, therefore, an assertion of an alignment with Callimachus that metrically *bypasses* Horatian iambic.³⁴ Given Persius’ extensive use of allusion

³¹ See Rotstein (2010) also on the larger vs. narrower sense of iambic as invective.

³² McNelis (2012: 244).

³³ Cucchiarelli (2005: 64-65).

³⁴ How do the meters of Horace’s *Epodes* stack up against Callimachus’ *Iambi*? *Iambi* I-IV and XIII are in choliambics; poem V alternates choliambic trimeter and iambic dimeter; poems VI and VII alternate iambic trimeter and ithyphallics; poem VIII has only one line preserved, in iambic trimeter; poem IX is probably in catalectic iambic trimeter; poem X is in iambic trim, poem XI in brachycatalectic iambic trim, and poem VII in catalectic trochaic trim. See Trypanis (1975) ad loc. Horace follows Callimachus’ use of meters in frequently alternating iambic meters, but never choliambics. Epode XVII alone is stichic and in iambic trimeter. See Mankin (1995: 14-21).

to the Horatian corpus throughout the libellus, this must be construed as a self-conscious move. Moreover it is a specialized type of “iambic” writing. Horace’s meters are diverse, overlapping with the metrical practices of Archilochus, whom he pairs with Callimachus as a model for his own behavior in *Epode* VI. Archilochus almost certainly did not write choliambics—and, in any case, in the ancient tradition it was certainly Hipponax who was the genitor of the form. It is Hipponax to whom Callimachus brings to our attention in his own choliambic endeavor in his first few *Iamboi*.

To be clear: Hipponax is by Persius’ time as much, or perhaps more, a character in the tradition as an extant poet. This character was said to be a small, but punchy, brainy manipulator of speech.³⁵ And as inventor, he and his aggressive persona are particularly identified with this meter, in spite of the fact that there are a few epodic fragments, (frr. 115-18W) and a parody in hexameters (fr. 128 W).³⁶ Testimonia to Hipponax attest specifically to his conflict with Bupalus and Athenis, sculptors who had once lampooned Hipponax’s appearance. The sculptor creates a blunt kind of criticism in cartoon. To this portraiture, Hipponax responded with insults and condemnations, resulting in the story that presents the figure imagined by Callimachus and Horace in their later iambic practices. The significance of Persius’ identification with Hipponax is thus two-fold: the meter formulates for the poet a legendarily reactionary and invective voice; the meter asserts the poet’s claim to a humor and world-view that is more rigorous than those of his immediate predecessor.

³⁵ For the coherence of the ancient biographical tradition and Hipponax’s self-presentation, see Rosen (1988b).

³⁶ Rotstein, (2010: 33). Persius’ hexameter parodies appear in *Satire* I.

i.e. a critique that is not quite Hipponactean, this *praeteritio* of course reminds us of the classical characteristics of Hipponax's iambicism and the type of virulent attack into which a more vitriolic instantiation of the old poet *could* launch.³⁹ Callimachus' Hipponax pointedly refrains from the kind of attacks on the sculptor which tended toward the obscene—depictions of Bupalus' gluttony and sexual appetite.⁴⁰ There's a group of men: the first or second century Diegete tells us that they are philologists, possibly philosophers — either way, some group of self-styled intellectuals who are κέρφοι, sea birds, boobies, “bird brains.” To this flock, Hipponax tells a tale. Callimachus' rejection of Bupalean critique for his Hipponax therefore represents a choice for didacticism over pure aggression.

If Persius' *caballino* marks the text as Hipponactean, then *carmen adfero* marks the text as an echo of the “Hipponax” of Callimachus in particular. This may point us further towards Persius' embodiment of the role of Hipponax, one that is simultaneously more firm and more elusive than the citations of Callimachus. It is said that Callimachus opens the poem in the voice of Hipponax, but this is not quite accurate.⁴¹ Callimachus explicitly *names* the speaker of *Iambus* I “Hipponax” in his first line, “Listen to Hipponax.” Hipponax is framed as a character within a poem that belongs to Callimachus. This figure is a substitution for the Muse whom he invokes in the *Aetia*—a generic marker that signals a change in meter, register, and subject.⁴² We might therefore see Persius reading the first line of Callimachus' first *Iambus* in this way when we find him writing

³⁹ Acosta-Hughes (2002: 32-35). Although the attack on Bupalus was motivated by personal animus, sculptors as a group seem to have been attacked by Hipponax as well: the fragments of exhibit a particular dislike of the craft. We might even see this rejection of sculpture in Persius' rejection of the ivies that adorn the sculptures of the greats: *illis remitto quorum imagines lambunt/ hederæ sequaces* (*Prol.* 6).

⁴⁰ Rosen (1988b).

⁴¹ Morrison (2011: 330).

⁴² Morrison (2011: 330).

the Muses out of his script in the first lines of his *Prologue*. Callimachus also later rejects the figure of the older iambicist in order to signal his own innovation within that tradition: reference to Hipponax becomes a site of poetic independence when, in the choliambic conclusion to a collection which displays greater metrical diversity in its later poems—he asserts some distance from his predecessor by saying that he has *not* gone to Ephesus, Hipponax’s hometown.⁴³

Callimachus started making this shift away from his Hipponax-narrator as early as *Iambus* II and more firmly in *Iambus* IV. In *Iambus* II, the bird-man returns when Aesop, a fabulist instead of an iambicist, tells us a fable in which primordial animals shared in speech with humans.⁴⁴ When Zeus took speech away from them—for some impiety on the part of the fox, the Diegete says—animal utterances made their homes in humans. Perhaps these are Persius’ *negatas uoces*.⁴⁵ Callimachus uses the pretext of fable to attack his competitors: Eudemus has a dog’s voice, Philton that of an ass, tragedians are, somewhat incomprehensibly, fish (perhaps their mouths resemble the tragic mask?), and *someone* is a parrot.⁴⁶ *Iambus* II represents a half-step away from Hipponax, which becomes a full step away in *Iambus* IV, in which he casts aside the crutch of a *character* Aesop and launches straight into fable. Olive and Myrtle have a sort of *agon* and foolish crows chatter, but the explicit comparison to contemporary humans has vanished. Persius goes only as far as the project of *Iambus* II, to layer the animal over the human. He won’t leave critique for fable, and he commits his *persona* to the conservative Hipponax that Callimachus flagged for us but proceeded to soften.

⁴³ Acosta-Hughes (2002: 71).

⁴⁴ The fabular and the iambic are connected through the figure of the fox. See Steiner (2010).

⁴⁵ McNelis (2012: 245).

⁴⁶ Phinney (1983: 172).

Catullus and Petronius

Choliambics hobbled into Latin literature. The meter is significantly extant in Catullus; there is a suggestive fragment of Varro⁴⁷ in addition to reports of republican contemporaries Matus and Laevius using the meter.⁴⁸ For the present purpose, Catullus and Petronius provide sufficiently substantial comparanda. Catullus' choliambics formally underpin poems of aesthetic criticism—poems 22 (Suffenus) and 44 (Sestius)—of obscene aggression—poems 37 (*ad contubernales*), 39 (Egnatius' urine-scrubbed smile), and 59 (Rufus' Rufa).⁴⁹ Catullus deploys the critical pose associated with the meter of Hipponax against Suffenus' copious verses and ornately bound books: Suffenus writes *libri* (22.6) rather than a *libellus* and in so doing reveals that he is a goatmilking gravedigger in spite of all his pretension to be *bellus* (22.9). Catullus uses a maimed, crabby meter to critique an overblown style. Poem 44 in particular may provide some insight into Persius' *Prologue* and is itself particularly Hipponactean; Sestius is a terrible writer—so bad that his writings make Catullus sick. His symptoms include a chill which is “metrically... and lexically equivalent” to a fragment of Hipponax: *rigeos* (Hipp. fr. 43 Dg, 34 W) and *frigus* (Cat. c. 44.20).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ A fragment from the *Bimarcus* exhibits some features of choliambic meter and is suggestive of metapoetic content. Contrast the confident interpretation of Fiske (1908) with the cautious edition of Astbury (1985).

⁴⁸ On Fiske's reading, *pedatus* (propped up) is a play on the “limping” meaning of *choliambic*. If Fiske is right, Varro's choliambics are *about* choliambics and the meter enters Latin poetry with a certain self-consciousness. Varro's introduction of choliambic is concomitant with Cn. Matus and Laevius. Matus' *Mimiambi*, extant in several fragments, follow Herondas, another writer of choliambics, and Hipponax; Laevius' choliambic is extant in just one fragment, but apparently addresses a controversy on poetic style. On Matus cf. Volkmann (1901: 248). Fiske (1908: 337-340) argues against Vahlen's argument that the fragment is about the prose/meter mix of Menippea; Vahlen has reconstructed Bücheler's (1862) fragment 57, which is “very corrupt.” On Laevius, see Morgan (2010) on the fragmentary Latin scazons.

⁴⁹ For the present, I leave aside the *Sirmio* poem (31) and *Miser Catulle* (8), though the former concludes *ridete quidquid est domi cachinnorum*, some “key words” for Persius and the latter exhibits bitterness that is at least adjacent to invective.

⁵⁰ Jones (1968) reads the choliambic *O funde noster* (c. 44) as a parody. Vine (2009: 213-216) advocates for a direct connection between Callimachus and Hipponax by focussing on the Sestius poem. Poem 44

In spite of the aches and pains, Catullus still wants those dinner invitations: his *uenter*—that organ which will be the *magister* of Persius’ parrot—causes him to read and praise, rather than to write bad poetry, including himself in the critique by styling himself as a mercenary audience member.⁵¹ Perhaps Catullus is one of the lot in which “you” may be *Prol.* 14. For both Catullus and Persius as choliambicists, then, audiences are equally implicated in the industry of bad literature, where even *you’d* believe in bad poetry if there were something in it for you.

Poem 59 choliambically informs Rufus about the graveyard behavior of the *Ruf-a* who is, apparently, his *fellator*. Poem 37 sophisticatedly combines obscenity with the act of writing: Catullus threatens the *moechi* with scrawling *sopiones* on the tavern’s face, among other activities. We might see obscene Catullan choliambicism surfacing in Persius’ almost Priapic attacks. As Persius moves into hexameter, he excoriates the words, style, hypocrisy, diseases, and even the intimate grooming habits of the city around him. In *Satire IV*, for example, his diatribist sends up a sunbather who plucks out his pubic hairs thus to show off his *other* sprout—his *gurgulio*, actually, a windpipe standing up out of the groin. Catullus’ written (graphic) phallic aggression points us in the direction of *Satire I*, in which literature and sex are conflated: Persius presents us with a hip poetry reading in which he likens recitation and reception to anal sex.

Petronius

The choliambics of Petronius, roughly contemporary to Persius’ and also placed in a broadly “satirical” context, provide an important point of comparison. No argument about the priority of

echoes a Hipponactean fragment (43 Dg, 34 W.) in which “line-final *rigéos* (disyllabic, with synizesis) is metrically and... lexically equivalent to *frigus*” in *c.* 44.20. Also compare fragment 42a.2-4 Dg, 32.2-4 W).

⁵¹ Also compare Archilochus iambic fragment 78 against Pericles misbehaving at a banquet and drinking unmixed wine, uninvited, his belly has misled his mind and wits into shamelessness.

<p>Petronius, <i>Satyricon</i> 5</p>	<p>ringing strains in swift rhythm; then let him proudly tell tales of feasts, and wars recorded in fierce chant, and lofty words such as undaunted Cicero uttered. Gird up thy soul for these noble ends; so shalt thou be fully inspired, and shalt pour out words in swelling torrent from a heart the Muses love. Heseltine <i>et al.</i> ed. and trans.</p>
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These lines are recited by Agamemnon who indicts contemporary oratorical education: if only parents would have the boys take time to be imbued in serious reading, to labor at the harsh selection of words. Agamemnon proceeds to illustrate the point of education in a poem composed of 8 scazons followed by 14 hexameters, a Menippean of sorts. The teacher asserts in choliambic verses that a man in the pursuit of *artis severae* must adopt the code of severe *frugalitas* to prevent himself from being under the influence of tyrants and undesirables, or from indulging in dinners sponged off undesirables, excessive drinking, or, finally, as a bought-off *plausor* at the theater—to prevent himself from being a compromised, mercenary audience member, in other words.

The comparison that we might make between Persius' movement from choliambics to hexameters to Petronius' parallel movement might be seen as merely formal.⁵⁴ Setaioli argues *against* this comparison on the basis that the Prologue and Satire I, though related, are distinct compositions. If, however, we take Petronius to be the later poet, we may see him playing with this very shift in meter that appears in Persius' book. Upon starting his hexameters, Agamemnon strikes a different tone: once the orator has strengthened himself with philosophical learning, he

⁵⁴ Setaioli (2011: 20-21).

may drink from a font of inspiration (*Maeonium... fontem*) and write on epic subjects with the approval of the Muses (*Pierio... pectore*). Petronius' parody in these lines clearly align with Persius' attitude both to poetic inspiration from founts and Muses in the *Prologue* and to his send-up of grand themes in *Satires* I and V.⁵⁵ Agamemnon's claims about what is decorous in the work of an educated literary aspirant are clearly ironized by Petronius: the switch to hexameters follows the trajectory which he envisions from judicious orator to great writer—just like the career of *indomiti Ciceronis*. He sings epic excess with a host of tetrasyllabic words, in the manner criticized by Persius in the fifth satire. Perhaps Petronius is lampooning Persius' own epic pretension, which emerges in spite of himself, in the same satire, when he throws in the towel and uses epic tropes to fill out his hexameter (*Sat. V.21ff.*).

Latin choliambic literature looks forward directly to themes in the body of the satires: style, education, somatic symptoms for consumption of literature, the obscene. Llewelyn Morgan has argued that Catullus set choliambic and iambic programs for Latin poetry that Horace would classicize. Persius, by way of contrast with Horace, chooses not to back off from choliambic aggression but engages fully with the form's obscene associations in his aesthetic and ethical critiques. Nevertheless, the Latin poems reviewed here are importantly different from Persius' prologue. Catullus' and Petronius' choliambics provide us with a "back story": we have a narrative implicit within or around each poem according to which we may construe the poetic "persona." Persius' choliambics identify the author as a choliambicist, and betray nothing more. But as we have seen this is far from a neutral identity. His best identification is *as* a meter, but even this meter is dropped in the following poem. The search for the poet will have to continue.

⁵⁵ Compare Persius' *Ilias Atti/ ebria ueratro*, *Sat. I.50-51*; *res grandes nostro dat Musa poetae*, I.68; *Vatibus hic mos est, centum sibi poscere uoces,/ centum ora et linguas optare in carmina centum*, V.1-2. For a more detailed characterization of Agamemnon's verse see Edmunds (2009: 84-85).

Horace's avoidance of pure choliambics is all the more conspicuous in light of its use in previous Latin poetic critique, whether literary, instructive, or aggressive. I have suggested above that Persius' metrical choice is un-Horatian. But it is not the case that Horace does not invoke Hipponax. Although Horace does not write in pure choliambics, he does compare himself to Hipponax in *Epode VI* (*qualis... acer hostis Bupalus*, *Ep.* VI.13-14). *Epode VI* is an aggressive poem, in which Horace and his unnamed adversary, an offensive guest, are figured as dogs, and he makes his attack against the offender *like* Archilochus or *like* Hipponax. *Qualis* is a gesture to a more generalized iambicism than Hipponactean chol-iambicism.⁵⁶ Horace is interested in what it is to be an enemy: both Archilochus and Hipponax are named by their enemy status rather than by name, the former is the enemy of his intended father-in-law, Lycambes, and the latter the enemy of the sculptor, whom he makes infamous.

Persius' choliambicism—his metrical ethos—imagines the poem as Hipponactean in a way that is meaningfully different from Horace's and even from Callimachus'. His choice of the Callimachean iambic meter that Horace avoided calls attention to his departure from his ever-present immediate predecessor in Roman satire. Instead of being *qualis* Hipponax, like Horace, and instead of introducing a character called "Hipponax," like Callimachus, Persius speaks *as* Hipponax, without Callimachus' framing device, and without Horace's qualifier. Put another way: he marks his form as more rigorously Hipponactean than either of his predecessors. When in his final *Iambus*, Callimachus disavowed Ephesus, even as he returned to choliambics; he separated himself from Hipponax not only geographically but also generically, opening the poem with a libation to the Muses and Apollo, returning to a relationship typified in the *Aetia*, where Apollo

⁵⁶ See Rotstein (2010: 282-285) on the solidifying of the association of iambic, invective, and Archilochus.

reminds him to keep an elegant Muse (*Aetia* 1, 22-24). Callimachus ends up in that place whence Persius definitively departed. Persius' exercise in Hipponacteanism is brief but rigorous.

Why should Persius so methodically map out a Hipponactean identification for himself and avail himself of this backward-looking choliambic tradition and Catullan art rather than other freely available Roman invective practices—the epodic practice of Horace and the elegiac invective of Ovid's *Ibis*?⁵⁷ The answer lies in understanding the Hipponactean view of the world as much as a broader tendency to invective. As the choliambic Catullus would inscribe the world with *sopiones*, Hipponax saw the world in obscene sexual terms turning a proper name like *Βούπαλος* into an animal phallus symbol (Βου-φαλλός), for example, and using this word play as an opportunity to put his enemy in sexually compromised positions.⁵⁸ A Hipponactean worldview thus looks for opportunities for sexual humor. We may keep this—and his fragments—in mind if we are to look for Hipponactean jokes in the *Satires*. The platters of sausages, for instance, offered in *Satire* II, for example, may recall the type of “sausage” joke to which Hipponax gravitates.⁵⁹ The sneer that appears in the first and third satires (*Sat.* I.62 and *Sat.* III. 91)—*sanna*—may recall Hipponax's pun on the name of Σάννος as σάννιον (“penis”), the type of onomastic etymological play that, as we shall see, Persius appears to favor in his *Prologue* with Hipponax's own name.

⁵⁷ I leave aside the controversial matter of Ovid's *Ibis* and that poet's adoption of a Hipponactean persona. See Schiesaro (2011) and Rosen (1988a), who both follow La Penna's (1957) text, on the difficulties of the text and its interpretation.

⁵⁸ Rosen (1988b: 32).

⁵⁹ Rosen (1988b: 37-39).

Etymology

The importance of the metrical identification is reiterated by one of the poem's major strategies—etymological word play. The coincidence of *caballino* in the metrical position that identifies the verse as choliambic with its “translation” into Latin of the name of that meter's inventor suggests that etymology plays a significant role in the prologue. We might see Persius' etymological practice as having two, mostly separate, lines of descent: the one poetic and the other philosophical. James O'Hara's methods for distinguishing significant poetic etymology from among all possible embedded etymologies include two that are immediately applicable here: that etymological components appear in marked, especially framing, positions; that the presentation of multiple names for the same person or entity often calls attention to the constitution of names. Persius' *caballino* for *Hipponax* falls precisely under the rubric of the first principle. From the latter principle, we may take the confluence of associated names—of Parnassus, Helicon, and Pirene—in lines 2-4 similarly to draw attention to etymological interest. I take these two patent features as an indication that etymological wordplay is an important feature of this short poem and therefore seek its broader significance throughout.⁶⁰

As Glenn Most has remarked in his work on Persius' teacher Cornutus, *fonte... caballino*, also draws upon etymological practice.⁶¹ The *caballus-fons* is the *Hippo-krēnē*. The words' positioning at the beginning and end of the line conform to O'Hara's principle of framing—that etymological wordplay in Latin poetry is often signaled by placement at these structurally important line locations. The difficulty of this reading is that the poetic device that Persius deploys in *fonte...caballino* is a “dead end” for the reader: the practice of etymology, while relevant,

⁶⁰ O'Hara (1996: 59-60).

⁶¹ Most (1989).

clarifies nothing about the poet's programme because the poem has rejected it: it is after all *nec fonte... caballino*. This type of frustration characterizes Persius' corpus more generally. But *caballino* as *hippo-* appears in a second, perpendicular frame in the *Prologue*: as the word in the final position of the first line it functions in an etymological word play with the word in the final position of the last line, *nect-ar*, yielding *Hipponact-*. Through bilingual etymology, Hipponax literally frames the prologue from start to finish.

Ancient etymology was a practice of discovering or asserting multiple meanings and aitiologies for the same word; it did not seek to cleave to the single-minded discovery of "root." Rather, multiple etymologies contribute to the meaning of a word. A poet might offer multiple meanings himself or offer them in complement to or competition with the etymologies of other poets. On the philosophical side, the truth sought through etymology was cosmological rather than linguistic. Cornutus' *Epidrome* is intellectually comfortable with an idea that modern linguists would reject: that etymologies of a single word ostensibly at variance with one another may equally reveal truths about the universe. A Stoic might allow for aitiologies of the name Ἄιδης that are as distant (from a modern perspective) as ἀϊδής (unseen) and ἀνδάνω (by antithesis).⁶² Glenn Most puts it: "Ancient etymology often seeks to establish as many relationships as possible between one word and others, as though it were following the principle of the more relations the better."⁶³ A feature of the practice in Latin that distinguishes it from the Greek is that the scope of Latin etymology includes Greek, where Greek etymology is exclusive to Greek. Any particular Latin etymology may therefore seek to uncover the origin of its object in the other language.⁶⁴ The

⁶² As in Cornutus, *Epidrome* 5.

⁶³ Most (2016: 66).

⁶⁴ Most (2016: 66).

relevance of bilingual wordplay (*paronomasia* in translation) to Persius' prologue is signaled by the Greek *chaere* of the foreign *psittacus*. In the context of Stoic, Alexandrian, and Roman practices, any word that is etymologically marked may therefore participate in multiple aitiologies and languages and therefore multiple significances. Any particular bit of wordplay may, from a modern perspective, appear to be based on soundplay, but from an ancient perspective it may nevertheless fall within the scope of etymology.

Armed, then, with this understanding of the breadth (and capriciousness) of Stoic and Roman etymologies, we may approach the hazardous, but important *semi-paganus*, the mysterious word which has been given a variety of Latin- and Roman-centric treatments (discussed above). That word of dubious interpretation may equally be formed from the Greek *πάγᾶ*, a spring, the motif which both opens and closes the poem (*fonte*, 1, and *Pegaseium nectar*, 14). Pindar uses the form and motif in the final line of *Pythian IV* (*παγὰν ἄμβροσίῳν ἐπέων*, *Pyth.* IV.299). The possibility of this etymology for *paganus* within the Prologue is affirmed by *Pegaseium* (line 14). On this reading, Persius is half-*inspired*, half taking from a stream, even as he declares his departure from tradition. The relevance of bilingual wordplay (*paronomasia* in translation) to the prologue is also signaled by the Greek *chaere* of the foreign *psittacus*.

Vergil provides a helpful comparison here. For him, the poetic utility of etymology is to provide a local device that formally parallels the theme of origins. The *Eclogues*, therefore, contain comparatively few instances of etymological wordplay, while the *Aeneid* contains a great deal. In the case of Persius, the *Prologue* treats the problem of origins and at the same time dismisses them. The formal device of etymology appears and (alongside meter) asserts his source in Hipponax. *Semipaganus* indicates a splitting: the rejection of one tradition and the cryptic engagement with

another, the composition of aggressive attack. It is rejection and engagement by halves, half Latin, half Greek, half inspired, half disgusted.

Cheeping Choliambics

Etymology is, obviously, but one method of soundplay, which proves an important device of the prologue, functioning in tandem with the programmatic statement that the *semipaganus* will offer a song. The significance of the *carmen* and singing in Latin poetry and singing in general alludes to other proems, epic (e.g. Vergil, *Aeneid* I.1, Ovid, *Met.* I.4), obviously, but also to poetry that is trying to get away from epic (e.g. Ovid, *Am.* I, 1.5 and 3.19-21 and Propertius, *El.* I, 1.24 and 2.27). Acts of singing are standardly understood as metapoetic (e.g. the songs of Homer's Demodocus and Ovid's Orpheus). Song's appearance in a prologue, of course, must be programmatic. Persius knows all this as well as any student of literature, so *carmen* closes the first half of the poem (*Prol.* 7), *cantare* the latter (*Prol.* 14). Both *carmen* and *cantare* may be used for ritualized speech and birdsong, human, oracular, or avian singing⁶⁵ (e.g. Vergil, *Aen.* 4.462, Ovid, *Met.* 5.387), but *carmen* but is an unusual word for the "low" genres, appearing only in special circumstances.⁶⁶ The linguistic distance between *carmen* and *caballinus* is the ideological between Persius the *semipaganus* and the self-sanctifying *uates* whose work he is disrupting.

In those significant positions, both words should tune our ears for the songs that appear throughout the short poem. The poem develops Callimachus' casting of despised contemporaries as birds. In *Iambus* 1, "Hipponax" bemoans the foolishness of intellectuals, calling these

⁶⁵ Special, ritualized, upper-class speech: Winsbury (2009: 119-120).

⁶⁶ e.g. such as Horace *Serm.* II, 1.63, which is itself about the propriety of satirical composition.

philologues or philosophes *κέπφοι* (*Iambus* 1.6).⁶⁷ The *κέπφος* is none too bright in the tradition, especially in comedy, where it stands in for the flighty and gullible in Aristophanes (*Peace*, 1067), and also serves an insult, something like “twit” (*Wealth*, 912). This bird continues to stand in for the scattered mind during the Roman period: Cicero writes in a flustered note to Atticus that he has become bird-brained (*κεκέπρωμαι*, *ad. Att.* XIII, 40.2).

The parrot as imitator hardly needs introduction. Ovid valorizes its well-known talent for producing human sounds in his mock eulogy for the bird: *Psittacus, Eois imitatrix ales ab Indis, / occidit...* (*Amores*, II, 6.1-2). The range of related birds represented by the *coruus* and *pica* were considered remarkably intelligent and trainable, like the *psittacus*.⁶⁸ The magpie and the crow or raven—there is some dispute as to their identity—were similarly noted for their capacity for speech. Ovid’s *coruus* is *loquax* and *garrulus*, similar to Callimachus’ *κορόνη* (*Iambus* IV.82). Pliny tells us that a crow greeted Tiberius, Germanicus, and Drusus by name (*NH* X.121); and, in his own time, some Roman knight owned a specimen that could imitate several words together and was even then learning more and more (*NH* 10.124). Aelian (*NA* 2.51) has the magpie as the bird that speaks with the greatest variety of tones (*πολυκλαγγότατος*), which can be taught to speak like a human. The *pica* has her Ovidian pedigree, too: The Pierides challenged the Muses. When the Pierides sang, the cosmos darkened; when the *Muses* sang, it levitated and it was up to *Pegasus*

⁶⁷ Acosta-Hughes (2002: 30, n.3; 45-46): Regardless of whether *philologoi* or *philosophoi* be the proper reading, the group addressed is clearly one of “learned” men or intellectuals more broadly.

⁶⁸ Bellandi (1988: 99-104) observes the transformation of *psittacus* into *corui* and *picae* through a felicitous *uariatio* that additionally imports to the imitative speech of the parrot the idea of the vulgar croaking of crows; like owls elsewhere, Persius’ *corui* stand in for bad poets.

to restore it to order by striking the ground, whence arose the spring. For punishment, the Muses turned them into magpies, *picae*.⁶⁹

McNelis and Bellandi have observed that the boobies, the foolish birds from Callimachus' poem, become the *psittacus*, *corui*, and *picae* of Persius' prologue, figures of mimicked speech.⁷⁰ But Persius further amplifies the transformation of birds in a yet more interesting and pervasive way, one that capitalizes upon the aurality of the poem. As we have seen, *p*-sounds are prominent throughout the prologue—the poet's *signature*. *Psittacus* is central to the poem. The frequency of *p* increases: of the nine words in the final two lines of the poem, four begin with *p*. The repetition of *p* throughout the poem is itself a Greco-Roman birdcall: Aristophanes used *πιπιίξειν* for the approaching avian chorus in his comedy, who enter with their call *ποποποποποποπο* (*Birds* 310). The Latin *pipiare* is of course famous from Catullus' tongue-in-cheek lament on the death of Lesbia's sparrow, a lament which Ovid's parrot elegy *parrots*. Moreover its variant *pipare* is used of the *gallina* by Varro in his satire on the nature of men (*Menipp.* 3.2 =Non. 156M).

Persius' dispersal of *p*-sounds throughout the prologue, in place of simply making use of the verb *pipiare*, is clever onomatopoeia. But it does not come without cost to the reputation of

⁶⁹ The scholiast to Persius offers a different story: that the Hippocrene sprang from Pegasus' stamping the ground in his thirst.

⁷⁰ There has been a great deal of confusion and imprecision in "translating" bird names across geographical regions and between Latin and Greek, due to the broad similarities in the birds' appearances and perhaps less than expert knowledge on the part of an urban writer (then as today) on the differences among the raven, crow, rook, pie, and jay in terms of habits, calls, and speech-capacities. Wedgwood explains the confusion of crows and ravens in his short article "On the Confusion of Meaning between *Coruus* and *Cornix*" in the inaugural volume of *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1854: 107-108). The *coruus* (Greek κόραξ) is the raven, a solitary bird that croaks, an identity that is apparently clear from description of its sound in Pliny. Ovid must have confused the *coruus* for one of its cousins when he described it as *loquax* and *garrulus* (*Met.* II, 547). The *cornix* (Greek κορώνη) is likely the crow (in spite of most modern translations of Persius, in which the *corvi* are "crows") or its smaller cousin the rook, a more "talkative" bird that travels in groups. Vergil, it seems, shockingly confused the traits of the *coruus* and *cornix* in *Georgics* I, 388. The *pica* (possibly Greek κίσσα or also κόραξ) is the magpie or the jay (Pliny *HN* 10.21 and 10.78). For further details, see entries in Arnott (2007) and Thompson (1895).

the poet of the prologue, since it leads to a possible interpretation of his own poetry as mere mimetic bird-call. It is *Persius* after all who has composed the present poem *as* a bird-call, which comes to a close that is overloaded with cheap poetic devices and participates in the industry of Callimachean allusivity.⁷¹ *Persius*' participation in bird-songs and raucous poetry *may* even have been intimated when he calls himself *ip-se semi-paganus* in the sentence preceding the introduction of the *psittacus* (6-8)—⁷² a sort of aural identification between the lines. Moreover, the Italic *pica*'s language is *uerba nostra*—Roman—not unlike *Persius*' well-known (if not well understood) programmatic phrase *uerba togae* (*Sat.* V.14). And from yet another perspective, *Persius*' ubiquitous mimesis of Horace—some say slavish imitation—would seem to be portended here. *Persius* anticipates his own worst critics—that he has read (and only read) too much, that he is allusive without substance, that his thought is unoriginal, his words too compressed.

The significance of the production of peeping by the prologue is that the *sounds* made by these “birds,” or poets, are not only inane and imitative but also *incoherent*. The voice of Ovid's late parrot in *Amores* II, 6 was not just *ingeniosa* and *loquax* (*Am.* II, 6.16 and 37), but it was also lisping and babbling (with its *blaeso...sono*, 24, it is *garrulus*, 26). The poet here plays with both the verbal (“chattering”) and non-verbal (“babbling”) senses of *garrulitas*, in the case of this talking parrot who had, apparently, a speech impediment! Ovid's lisping parrot cannot even say his own name, *psittacus*.

That man with the voice of the parrot in Callimachus' *Iambus* II signifies those men who are both verbose and babbling (πολύμυθοι καὶ λάλοισι, 14). Among the throng of the birdbrains that

⁷¹ In addition to the dense alliteration of *p*, the last two lines also feature alliteration of *c* and a homoioteleuton of *-as*.

⁷² West does not mention the *psi-* in the section on the oversimplification of consonants in his later companion volume to his Oxford *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* (1971-1972), i.e. his *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (1974).

“Hipponax” confronts before the sacred wall is Euhemerus, a writer of nasty books (ἄδικα βιβλία), who babbles (λαλάζων, *Iambus* I.11). In Persius’ prologue, Notice the *c*-sounds around the final lines: *cra-cra* is the *coruus*’ raucus cry.⁷³ The specious words of Persius’ *poetae* and *poetridae* are ultimately non-verbal, but so, too, is the sound of Persius’ own poem. The prologue, which peeps throughout its 14 lines, looks forward to the incoherence of Persius’ *muttire* and *cacchini* in the first satire (*Sat.* I.12 and 119) and even to the animal sounds emitted from his body in the third satire (*findor, ut Arcadiae pecuaria rudere credas*, III.9). His budding satirist is frequently criticized for being unintelligible (e.g. *quid istas/ succinis ambages? Sat.* III.19-20).

Both the babbling and the stomach of the bird resurface as metaphor in the morning hangover scene in the third satire:

... a, cur non potius teneroque columbo
 et similis regum pueris pappare minutum
 poscis et iratus mammae lallare recusas? *Sat.* III.16-18

Oh, why not instead demand to eat in little bites like some soft dove
 or like princes and angrily reject your nurse’s lullaby?

The images and riddles of the *Prologue* thus extend far into the *Satires*. This will be seen to be the case even in the matter of Persius’ Stoicism. The prologue is susceptible to its own critique: Persius may himself be one of the birds: would you believe that (*credas*)?

Conclusion

Persius’ *Prologue* omits the trappings that in Latin poetry books tell a reader what he holds in his hands: something (notionally) biographical, some situating comment on his addressee, some suggestion of the quality of the text itself. These are preliminary starting points for interpretation of the rest of the book, even if they prove insufficient. Persius has none of that. His prologue’s

⁷³ Compare the *cra cra* of contemporary Italian.

stablest point of identification is the meter, which, with its established literary history, offers more by way of character than the oblique and evasive utterances of the poet. The etymology strengthens the poet's identification with another poet. But at the same time the Hipponactean identity limits itself by participating in the poem's self-negation: the etymological play *caballino-nect-* for *Hippo-nact-* is also part of the poem's framing aural negation: *nec* (1) and final *nec-tar* (14). We are very much left where we started, with no information.

From Ovid's tale of the *Pierides*, the *picae* already represent the consequences of challenging poetic authority. By composing a song that peeps and thus positioning his poetics as subject to his own anti-bird critique, Persius incorporates the anxieties of *imitatio*—of following Horace's *Sermones* too slavishly, as he is sometimes accused, or even of following Hipponax. The scope of Hipponactean aggression as formulated in Persius' book is therefore expanded to include the self as an object. Persius mocks his own poetic labor when he positions himself among the birds. In the hexameter poems, he will represent his speech as pointless and birdlike (e.g. *Satire* 1, *cum scrobe*, line 119; *Satire* 3, *teneroque columbo*, line 16). The verses of the *semipaganus* who struggles to write (*Sat.* 3.9) are unhappily split between poetry and philosophy, split between life as he lives it and the life that philosophy intends him to lead.

But what remains puzzling about Persius' invocation of the choliambic ethos is that the Hipponactean persona—the defective, aggressive critic—emerges more clearly in the *Satires* than in the *Prologue* itself. There is a way in which Persius is more “iambic” in the *Satires* than he is in the choliambics, which remain oracular and impersonal in the sense that the persona is absent. Through his choliambic practice, unframed and unqualified, Persius makes it possible to resurrect and embody that small, yet aggressive excoriator of the past. The etymologically marked nectar

also participates in soundplay: *nectar* not only belongs to *Hipponax* but also to *nec*. The first and last words of the poem are the same; the poem begins and ends with negation.

Iambic came, in ancient generic thinking, to be not just a set of meters or even an ethos appearing with that set, but a mode of invective that might be applied to literature⁷⁴ that is ethically, if not metrically, iambic. It is in Persius' hexameter satires, rather than the choliambic prologue, that we find parody and invective. Persius' unpleasant, reactionary hexametrical Hipponacteanism re-invigorates Roman satire, which had been made palatable for a principate by Horace.

⁷⁴ Rotstein (2010).

CHAPTER TWO: *Who's reading this stuff? (Satire 1)*

Through the prologue's indictment of poets as mimes and of *imitatio* as parroting, the poet denied that he would participate in mere literary convention. If, then, we thought that this prefatory, "programmatically" piece promised us something unconventional, we are sorely and immediately disabused in the first line of the first satire: *O curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane!* (Sat. I.1) echoes Lucretius, Persius' predecessor in verse philosophy in Latin—for whom *inane* is a signature code word.⁷⁵ We are reading (or hearing) Roman didactic poetry. But this *O tempora, o mores*-type expression is interrupted by, "Who'll read this?" (2). The interrupting voice implies that the philosophical didact's own verse is *inane*: his words are as vain as the Epicurean cosmos is void. Philosophical didactic is functionally irrelevant: *nemo* will read it (2). The rejection of the philosophical-didactic overture results in terse satires that eschew both the epic exposition of a *De Rerum Natura* and the honey on the cup of medicinal philosophy (*DRN* I. 935-50).

Quis leget haec? raises the fundamental pursuit of this chapter: to read the first *Satire* and the *libellus* in the context of early Imperial Roman reading practices, broadly construed: The first, apparent meaning—"To whom is reading Persius relevant?"—frames the first satire, where, by the end, *Quis leget haec?* will not only ask "Who is the implied reader of Persius?" but also "Will the implied reader be acceptable to Persius?"—even "Can anyone read this stuff?"

Previous scholarship on the first satire has revealed a great deal about where in the literary world Persius positions the aesthetic objects of his ire and about the poem's erotic metaphors.⁷⁶ The present chapter situates Persius' first satire within the context of early Imperial Roman reading and performance practices. Indeed, this poem is itself used as a crucial piece of evidence in the

⁷⁵ On distinguishing between Lucilian and Lucretian influence here, see Zetzel (1977).

⁷⁶ The major advances were made by Bellandi (1974) and Bramble (1988).

increasing scholarship on Roman *lectio* and *recitatio* as social activities and sites of social criticism.⁷⁷ A close reading attentive to the satire's Roman audience, genre, and parodies of contemporary poetry leads to a discussion of the range of possible readers that arises from the content and the structure of the satire: the performers of contemporary poetry represented within the text, the idealized *lector* imagined by the satire, and the implied, ironically drawn reader of this *Satire*. Persius' critical attitude toward *lectores* and poetic performance at Rome has a great deal in common with the values of writers on oratorical training and performance. A comparison with salient passages from Seneca's *Controversiae* clarifies which points of Persius' critique conform to traditional criticism and which aspects of his satire innovate. I shall argue that the terms and effects of Persius' parody are such that his satires are implicated in the very reading and performance practices that the satire maligns. Persius is terribly concerned about our aural hygiene, and so this chapter offers a full treatment of ears in the corpus. Finally, the ears lead us in to a concluding discussion of the physiognomy of satire—a set of correspondences between types of humor and body parts.

Digest

The first verse of the satire takes its tone and content from philosophical didactic poetry, but is quickly interrogated by another “voice” questioning the relevance of that genre in the contemporary literary scene (1-7). The poet goes on to interrupt his own self-defense, speculating whether it is *fas* to say what he's saying, and characterizing his own helpless laughter when he looks at Roman (*nostrum*, 9) life. The first example of *nostrum istud uiuere triste* is how Romans write in private both poetry and prose for public consumption (13). Persius quickly moves on to

⁷⁷ e.g. Markus (2000) and Parker (2009).

the ridiculousness of public performance, satirizing both poet and audience in erotic terms (13-21) and inveighs against the poet of the scene directly, *uetule*: his misunderstanding and abuse of learning (24-30). He returns to poetry performance, but this time to a dinner party, emphasizing Romans (*Romulidae*, 31) who style themselves as symposiasts (30-40).

An interlocutor accuses Persius of hypocrisy in his ridicule of poets who aim to please. Persius responds by refining his own position relative to praise (40-49)—it's not that he doesn't want it, it's that he doesn't want *yours*. The poet gives the interlocutor's understanding of praise and desire for honest a good shake down: what does it mean to seek and receive a "How pretty!" (*belle*) for composition and performance? The interlocutor has slight and superficial good qualities as poet and dinner host. The interlocutor knows how to compose poetry that perfectly adheres to the vogue and the standards that Romans currently teach. According to these standards, the self-medicated *Iliad* of Attius and ubiquitous dilettante verses (50-53) qualify their composers for a very complacent *belle*.

The contemporary poet aims for verses that softly flow in perfect alignment—too softly and too seamlessly. These are the poetic values that Persius' verses reject. Perhaps this is reflected in his choice of meter in the *Prologue*, where the limping iambs are specifically those which cannot flow with gentle rhythm (*molli... numero*, 63-64). In particular, contemporary poets fail to adapt their meter and poetic ideals to their genres: moralizing, erotic, festive, and epic verses are taught to be written all alike, by and for people who have been inundated with lightweight Greek literature. It is written with the kind of conventional "inspiration" that Persius rejected in the *Prologue* (63-78). The prevalence of these poetic values—including in education—should make the current state of language no surprise. Bad literature and teaching has resulted in a *sartago* of speech and a *dedecus* of performance (79-82). These values affect not only young people but also

those in the public sphere whose oratory has become inclined towards receiving applause for niceties, towards poetic devices rather than substantive argument (83-87). The desire for the evaluation *bellum* has come to govern all speech.

Persius moves on from satirizing the misguided motives and social impact of contemporary poetry to parody—lines that are meant to be particularly reflective of the Euripidean-degenerate themes that allegedly dominate the scene (92-106). The interlocutor warns Persius against parody of this type: it will have social consequences for him, too (107-114). The types of humor that Lucilius and Horace provide are misunderstood at the present moment. Lucilius' humor is a crackdown (*genuinum fregit*, 115), Horace's a more subtle poking fun (*omne uafēr uitium ridenti Flaccus amico/ tangit*, 116-117). Today's pompous magistrate is proud of having cracked down on city finances (*fregerit*, 130), and knows how to laugh at bad odds (*risisse uafēr*, 132). Social norms have changed: Persius is not allowed the type of sneering that was allowed to Horace ('rides,' ait, 'et nimis uncis/ naribus indulges,' 40-41; cf. [Flaccus] *callidus excusso populum suspendere naso*, 118) and is shown the door ('... extra/ meite.' *discedo*, 113-114). If Lucilius is characterized by a jaw and Horace a nose, Persius' identifying body part is a spleen (*sum petulanti splene*, 12)—importantly an internal organ rather than one that faces his audience. Persius claims the rights of the satirist from Lucilius and Horace to critique those around him: Why should he not laugh, even in *private*? Where can Persius find his audience? His ideal reader must be versed in Attic comedy, but in a particular way. He rejects those who appreciate humor in the common way (126-134). Lightweights should read *Time Out* and bestsellers/bodice-rippers/grocery store novels (equivalent for *Callirhoe*).

Two Satires

To follow Persius from topic to topic (as in my digest above) is to miss the major structural feature of the satire: his poem is crucially and decisively de-routed, even sidetracked and subverted, by the conspicuous interruption of his opening discussion. The question *nam Romae quis non...* (8) will not be completed for more than 100 lines. The question started in line 8, *nam Romae quis non...*, is finally completed by *auriculas asini quis non habet?* (121). The (non-metrical) complementarity of these half lines is signalled by verses that frame the interrupting excursus: *a, si fas dicere—sed fas/ tum cum... /aspexi...* (8-10) and *me muttire nefas?.../ ... uidi, uidi ipse, libelle* (119-120).⁷⁸ The first satire “proper,” which consists of only twenty one and a half lines (1-8 and 121-134), addresses the question of audience, the parenthetical, at over 100 lines, the question of poetic production. The first satire, then, reads thus:

O curas hominum! o quantum est in rebus inane!
quis leget haec? min tu istud ais? nemo hercule. nemo?
uel duo uel nemo. turpe et miserabile. quare?
ne mihi Polydamas et Troiades Labeonem
praetulerint? nugae. non, si quid turbida Roma
eleuet, accedas examenuē inprobū in illa
castiges trutina nec te quaesiueris extra.
nam Romae quis non...
auriculas asini quis non habet? hoc ego opertum,
hoc ridere meum, tam nil, nulla tibi uendo
Iliade. audaci quicumque adflate Cratino
iratum Eupolidem praegrandi cum sene palles,
aspice et haec, si forte aliquid decoctius audis.
inde uaporata lector mihi ferueat aure,
non hic qui in crepidas Graiorum ludere gestit
sordidus et lusco qui possit dicere ‘lusce,’
sese aliquem credens Italico quod honore supinus
fregerit heminas Arreti aedilis iniquas,
nec qui abaco numeros et secto in puluere metas
scit risisse uaffer, multum gaudere paratus
si cynico barbam petulans nonaria uellat.
his mane edictum, post prandia Callirhoen do.

⁷⁸ This line prepares us for a “didactic” turn in the following satires: cf. *uidi ego* in *Ars Amatoria* I. 487-8 and *uidi ego... uidi* in *Metamorphoses* XV.262-3. I shall discuss the latter in Chapter 7.

Oh, the woes of humanity! Oh, how great is the void in the universe! Who'll read that? You talking to me? No one, I swear. No one? None or two. Miserable rot. Why's that? Afraid that the Trojan Women and Polydamas prefer Labeo to me? Lightweights. No—if crowded Rome lifts something up, you shouldn't go and straighten the inferior balance on that scale—and don't make your investigations outside yourself. For who at Rome doesn't... who doesn't have ears of an ass? That's my secret, that's my laugh—this nothing of mine, I won't sell it to you for a whole *Iliad*. Whoever you are, inspired by bold Cratinus, you lose sleep over irate Eupolis and the Great Old Man, you: have a look here, too, in case you hear something a bit denser. From that point let my reader, with a steam-cleaned ear—not the dirt-bag who goes around making fun of Greek-style shoes or the guy who can muster a “Hey, one-eye!” at a one-eyed man, thinking he's something, since standing on Italic ceremony he cracked down on short measures as the aedile of Arretium, nor the sly fox who knows how to laugh at numbers on the abacus and goalposts on the cleaved dust, all ready to make merry if some hussy yanks a Cynic's beard. To them I recommend the daily bulletin in the morning and *Callirhoe* after lunch.

The bulk of this satire is a “parenthetical” or digression that overwhelms the original dimensions and motive of the poem. On this reading, the first line—Lucretian didactic—is not rejected because it is wrong, but rather because it seemingly has no audience; it is wholly out of step with what Persius portrays as contemporary literary taste (or lack of taste). A different type of diatribe will later be sought: but that philosophical mode will be demoted from the contemplation of the rhetorical woes and the contemplation of the universe to the examination of particulars: The acidity of Persius' work replaces the honey of Lucretius'.

For the remainder of this chapter, lines 1-8 along with 121-134 will be referred to as the “frame satire” and lines 9-120 as the “embedded satire.”

A troublesome beginning

The interchange of voices that the first satire offers in its first 7 lines presents various interpretive challenges for its reader. The identification of these voices has drawn diverse interpretations, not only because of its inherent flux but also because of an apparent attribution by the *Commentum* of the second line to Lucilius—which seems, upon examination, more likely to be a reference to the Lucretian quality of line 1. Regardless, since antiquity, the first line has been read as a “quotation.” The problem of interpreting the subsequent lines, which introduce the question of readership, has persisted for as long as the lines have had readers. Medieval manuscripts exhibit a variety of accounts for the seeming dialogue. The writing-reader of **L** marks the lines as a dialogue between the *Vox Persii* and the *Vox Saturae*, reflecting a sophisticated notion of who or what can speak.⁷⁹ *Satura* as a speaker makes sense once we take out the parenthetical diatribe: the putative addressee for lines 1-8 and 121-122, I argue, is Persius’ *libellus*; it is the *libellus* that objects to its author.

The remarks on voices in **L** reflect the mechanics of *lectio* that persisted from classical antiquity: that to read the navigation devices that control the flow of the text is predicated upon understanding the text, perhaps a counter-intuitive notion from a 21st century perspective, in which you might read in order to understand: *intellegere* is requisite for *legere*. The ancient practice of marking the text in ways that much anticipated standardized punctuation was a practice of readers, not of authors, though a particularly acute reader might mark a text for another as a favor.⁸⁰ *Lectio* is the practice for which, Quintilian advises, *Unum est... quod in hac parte praecipiam, ut omnia ista facere possit: intellegat* (*Inst. Orat.* I, 8.1-2). Similarly, Aulus Gellius tells us his response to a suggestion from an *homo inepte gloriosus* that Gellius read Varro’s satire in order that he (the

⁷⁹ Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, BPL 78 (L).

⁸⁰ Parkes (1992: 11).

gloriosus) interpret it: *Quo nam, inquam, pacto legere ego possum quae non adsequor? Indistincta namque et confusa fient quae legero.* (*Noct. Att.* XIII, 31). *Legere* here must lean heavily towards “reading aloud,” but it is important to note that there is no qualifier in the Latin and it is Gellius’ fool who puts the cart before the horse.

The reader of **L** indicates that the first line, the echo of diatribe, emanates from Persius’ profound philosophical knowledge: *Persius ex intima philosophia*.⁸¹ The interruption, for this reader, is the voice of Persius’ own satire—the voice of the genre against what has been said—in an apostrophe to the book we are reading, or the book we thought Persius was writing when we read *O curas hominum! Vox Saturae apostropha ad librum*. The retort “You talkin’ to me?” is Persius’ and the answer “No one will read it” is the return of the *Vox Saturae*. The reader takes the first line as the earnest, if aborted, attempt of “Persius” to write properly philosophical literature. The difference is not an arbitrary assignation of “A” and “B” to what is evidently a dialogue being born from the half lines. Rather, the difference is one of where we place “Persius” and the generic and ideological position of the author implied in and by the *Satires*. Is the “real” Persius the philosopher or the satirist? Is satire a conversion of abstract critique into common currency or is satire the only option left once philosophy has proven its own bankruptcy? For that medieval reader, “Persius” is a philosopher-didact who is forced to change genres by the voice of Satire. The evolution of philosophy within the *Satires* is reflected in a poetic voice whose first business is self-critique, exposing its own fictiveness, and modifying its own process throughout the book.

⁸¹ cf. Servius on *G.* I.415 and Cic. *Leg.* I.17.3 and *Acad.* I.8.11.

Lectores

How many readers does the first satire have? *legere* means at least two things in the first satire. It means “to read” in a general sense (*Quis leget haec? Sat. I.2*); it shortly acquires the sense “to recite literature to an audience” (*sede leges celsa, 17*). Persius’ performing *lector*, paradoxically, simultaneously recites and listens to his own recitation; his performance affects others and he himself is affected by his own utterance. This means that by the time we get to *lector* at the close of the poem, who is, as we shall see, an elusive creature, *legere* means “take in,” “to listen,” “to read,” “to recite.” The seemingly jarring equation of listening and reciting is supported by Roman reading practices more generally, in which to listen to literature was equally a form of reading.⁸² And indeed, Persius specifies that his reader must have a very particular ear (126).

The terms of Persius’ critique are reasonably situated alongside prose works on rhetoric from the early imperial Roman context. Here, for the sake of expediency, the set of commonalities and sympathies across Roman texts on oratory and rhetoric (and the pedagogy of reading and listening directed thereto) is referred to as “traditionalist” discourse, including for the present purpose the tradition that runs from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* through Dionysius of Halicarnassus to Quintilian; the Elder Seneca appears as a comparandum reasonably representative of that tradition and useful as an index for Persius’ critique, not as a site of direct allusion. While that tradition, of course, takes as its object the theorizing and teaching of oratory, it shares with Persius an interest in the ethics of performance. The proximity of the performances of poetic and oratorical works is apparent especially through the concern exhibited in the *Controversiae* and the *Ad Herennium* that the gestures and voices of performers of declamation or oratory not verge on the histrionic or sing-songish.

⁸² Winsbury (2009: 112-113); Parker (2009: 193-205).

Reader no. 1: The Painted Reader

The embedded satire stages a *recitatio*. The *lector* in this case is the performing poet. This lector is effeminate, watery, overtly stylish. The effect upon his audience is sexually arousing, even aggressive. Both he and his audience experience the *recitatio* erotically. The lector is affected by the words coming out of his own mouth as the *carmina* take on a life of their own. Although the poet has composed these morsels to bait others (*Sat.* I.22), the act of reading his own verse is so moving that it leads the poet-reader himself to orgasm.⁸³ After the public *recitatio* scene, Romans have degraded to giant (mere) Tituses made to quiver at poetry's vibrations. After the embedded *recitatio*, Persius takes us to a party with sympotic pretensions, where the elite *conuiuiae* (38) consume literature as they consume food (*ecce inter pocula quaerunt/ Romulidae saturi quid dia poemata narrent*, 30-31); listening to poetry is concomitant with drinking and eating (as it always was in the sympotic tradition). The scene piles up more and more grecisms, first in the narration (*hyacinthia*, 32) then through the sympotic lector's voice (*Phyllidas* and *Hypsipylas*, 34). These affected gestures are verbalized (nasalized?) through a defect: an implausibly stuttering, lispng nose (33). This lector's vocal affect is achieved by straining his words (*eliquat*, 35), recalling the *liquido... plasmate* of his more public predecessor (17).

⁸³ There is much disagreement about the image here, but it seems reasonably clear to me that the ejaculating *ocellus* of the poet is the singular "eye" of the "head" of the penis. Interpretations vary widely. Adams (1982) explains the *patranti ocello* as the eye of a lascivious person, consistent with literature in which the eye is the seat of desire. The idea of orgasm is therefore transferred to the eye (140-143). But there is no object of desire here in Persius' *Sat.* I, 18. Bartsch (2015: 52) reads this as a reference intelligible from a medical principle found in "Galen, Celsus, and Aristotle. Not only is semen (in Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 725a) a residue made from food, blood, and pneuma, but it is the region around the eyes that is most full of seed. An excess of food creates an excess of semen, and the inevitable result is—leakage."

Reader no. 2: An Ideal Lector

In the frame satire, the interrupting voice demands to know who the lector of the present verse satire could be. The poet answers that it is virtually no one (*uel duo uel nemo*, 2-3). Persius pursues the idea on the other side of the embedded satire: “Who doesn’t have the ears of an ass?” *Recitatio*, as we have seen, affects a broad spectrum of Romans, from middling Tituses to elite Romulids: readers and listeners are oversexed and oversaturated by literary consumption. By contrast, Persius’ ideal *lector* is not stuffed but rather prepared to hear something distilled (*decoctius*, 125) through a well cleaned ear (*inde uaporata lector mihi ferueat aure*, 126). This lector’s ear is discerning, distinguishing slapstick (*non hic qui... gestit*, etc., 127-133) from... But Persius does not tell us what it is that his *lector* distinguishes. It is presumably this that we are meant to listen for throughout his satires, satires that are particularly interested in *aures*.

The 112-line parenthesis compromises the aural tenability of the satire; the syntactic continuity of line 8 and line 121 is unlikely to be picked up without the text before the lector’s eyes or without a second oral reading. This observation is important because it means that while Persius defines his ideal *lector* as an *auditor*, he makes his own poetry unlistenable.

Persius’ reader—the none or two—is not at Rome. The reader of Persius is a reader of old Attic—not one who goes for the obvious humor directed at Greeks (*qui in crepidas Graiorum ludere gestit*, 127) but for the joke that is internal to clear-eared Greek readers. The scarcely existent lector (*nemo*, 2) is one who lives and breathes for the comedians of classical Athens, but who read those texts in a particular way. I take this passage differently from Ferriss-Hill, who takes the address to

*Audaci quicumque adflate Cratino
Iratum Eupolidem praegrandi cum sene palles* (123-124)

“You, whoever are inspired by bold Cratinus and lose sleep
over testy Eupolis along with giant Aristophanes...”⁸⁴

to mean that we have to go back to Aristophanes and Greek Old Comedy. This is partially right: that the ideal reader of Persius is one schooled in Greek Old Comedy,⁸⁵ and schooled in a particular way. The formulation Cratinus-Eupolis-Aristophanes in satire is also Horatian (*Serm.* I, 4.24-25), so this may mean that the reader is one who reads them in a Horatian way.

But if we recognize and interpret the frame proposed above, we realize that this “ideal” reader, whoever he is, is ultimately no one—he is as fictive as Persius’ interlocutor, a strawman whose fictiveness the satirist calls out in line 44, with *quisquis es, o modo quem ex aduerso dicere feci* (“Oh, whoever you are that I just created to argue for the opposition”). This discerning reader who possesses the well-calibrated ear, who will burn for Persius’ condensed decoction, has already been identified as *nemo*. This decoction is itself hypothetical: it is not even clear that what the satirist is writing will be *decoctius*: *si forte aliquid decoctius audis*, “if *per chance* you hear something better boiled down,” 125). Like his profession of the *rara avis* of the fitness of his composition (*si forte quid aptius exit... si quid tamen aptius exit*, 45-46), his decoction is conditional and therefore tentative; Persius takes care to remind us of this contingency.

Reader no. 3: The Ironized Lector

Persius’ critique of the contemporary lector shares much with the positions offered in prose works on rhetoric, which also offer narratives of decline and appeals to education. For example, Seneca’s *Controversiae* is motivated to provide models of rhetoric for an age in which *cotidie ingenia*

⁸⁴ Ferriss-Hill (2015).

⁸⁵ Ferriss-Hill (2015: 143).

decrescant et nescio qua iniquitate naturae eloquentia se retro tulerit (*Contr.* I, praef. 6). While Seneca focuses on the habits of orators, poets are also involved in his discussions: the two share principles of style as well as vices. Ovid and Montanus, for example, are both given to unnecessary repetition (*Contr.* IX.17). The same Arellius Fuscus about whose skills Seneca was ambivalent is also discussed as the teacher of Ovid (*Contr.* II.2.8). The concerns that Persius raised, while not coextensive with Seneca's, are meaningfully related to his elder's—and so are the terms of their critiques. Persius' objections to the effeminate, oversexed poet are much the same as the Elder Seneca's objections to the effeminate orator: both targets have abandoned the virility of Roman heritage. Seneca attributes the decline of *ingenium* to luxury or to a downhill vying for anything that is *turpe* but profitable, the universal law of decline. The *ingenium* and *industria* of the youth of the *Controuersiae* are affected by sleep and sloth, much like the young writer who will awaken in Persius' third satire; but, even worse, their pursuit of singing and dancing renders them effeminate (*Contr.* I, praef. 8); the ideal state for adolescents has become sweetness and softness (*Contr.* I, praef. 8).

Cassius Severus had earned his reputation as an orator through qualities associated with manliness (*Contr.* III, praef. 1-6): *ualetudo*, *uigor*, and *uirtus*. But even orators of the recent past might be of uneven quality: Arellius Fuscus is praised for *explicatio...splendida* but comes under fire for *compositio uerborum mollior* (*Contr.* II, praef. 1). But the contemporaries of Seneca's sons have no redeeming qualities: they have been fully unmanned (*emolliti eneruesque*, *Contr.* I, praef. 8), like the detested Romans of Persius' ire (*haec fierent si testiculi uena ulla paterni/ uiueret in nobis?*, *Sat.* I, line 103-4) and the emasculated word of the performing poet (*delumbe*, *Sat.* I, lines 103-4). An orator is not to be found among this depilated set (*in istis uulsis*, *Contr.* I, praef. 10),

whose habits anticipate the hairless target of Persius' fourth satire (*quinque palaestritae licet haec plantaria uellant...*, Sat. IV, 39).

Seneca positions himself as one of the final *auditores* of a class of *declamatores* of a past and better age (*Contr.* I, praef. 25). Old age may be dimming Seneca's own memory from its brighter state (*Contr.* I, praef. 2-3), but the examples of rhetoric that this *senex* will offer are given authority by his very situation at the end of a great tradition. The profession of the decline of the phenomenal memory of his youth, on the one hand, renders the 10 books of recollections that he writes all the more impressive and, on the other hand, it implicitly leaves room for his own [*inuentio*] to arrange and rework the rhetoric of the past. Moreover, the prefaces to the later books guide our assessment of the evidence that Seneca presents: not all the orators were equally good in equal ways; Seneca makes sure we know, for example, Arellius Fuscus' shortcomings as well as his areas of excellence and, further, that we know how one of his students sought to repair the gaps in his model for the purposes of his own oratory, noticing that Fuscus' *splendida oratio* was lacking in anything *acre* (*Contr.* 2.1)—which will be an important term for Persius as well.

I suggest that, while he adopts aspects of “traditionalist” discourse for his critique of literary performance, Persius implicates himself—the critic—in the familiar narrative of Roman socio-literary decline in a way that is importantly different from his predecessor. In the preface to his *Controversiae*, Seneca positions himself advantageously in this story, as a representative upholder of a venerable tradition, capable of representing, recreating, and assessing models of the past to and for his eager and corrigible sons. By contrast, a morally-minded poet has neither audience nor genre. Persius includes his own work in the narrative of decline: the literary-ethical quality—the fittingness—of what he offers is doubtful (*si forte quid aptius exit... si quid tamen aptius exit...* and *si forte aliquid decoctius audis...*, 45-46 and 125). In consequence, while Seneca

offers a re-enactment of idealized oratory, providing model rhetoric through his putative *lector*, Persius fully re-enacts a *recitatio* that both forces his *lector* to perform degenerate poetry through “quotations” and forces his audience to listen to an aggressively eroticized narration of a *recitatio*. The oral *recitatio* of Persius’ first *Satire* before his own audience thus becomes a performance of precisely that literature that he—and his audience—are supposed to reject. Persius excels at that which he condemns. In effect, the re-performance delivered in the first *Satire* is a challenge to his audience in a way that the performance of Seneca’s *libellus* (*Contr.* IV, 1) is not: Seneca’s audience is challenged to listen, admire, and adopt; Persius’ audience is challenged to listen, to be tempted, and to resist.

Persius thus presents a further, highly ironized *lector* of *Satire* I. Even if Persius has managed something *aptius* and *decoctius*, it is nevertheless virtually impossible that you have the prerequisites to be his ideal reader. But beyond this, in the very act of performing the first *Satire*, the *lector* is his own undoing: if you are the *lector* of *Satire* I, you are put into the awkward position of reperforming what neither you nor your audience are supposed to enjoy: the erotics of the reading scenes and the parody or quotations of contemporary poetry elicit responses that are the subject of their critique. If you are a Roman in the audience, implicated in *nostrum istud uiuere triste*, you are captivated by gesture and style that characterizes *recitatio* and its more private counterpart, the *conuiuium*—and you end up laughing at yourself: Persius parodies a literary *recitatio* form that is dubiously popular.

Reading with your ears

The *lector*-as-reciter is ironized by the impossibility of performing the first *Satire* in a way that conforms to the poem's own literary-ethical standards. Similarly, the *lector*-as-listener is ironized by the aural unintelligibility of the performance: the chasm between line 8 (*nam Romae quis non...*) and line 121 (*auriculas asini quis non habet?*) is too great for the two lines to be construed reasonably at first hearing. By the time the satirist returns from the *excursus* of the embedded satire, the syntax of line 8 has been lost. Relative to the *Prologue*, the first *Satire* appears to have a much lower density of obvious sound devices. In a significant way, then, the ear is *not* a useful organ for understanding Persius' first satire, and yet, as we have seen, the *Prologue* itself primed the poet's audience to listen for aural devices such as etymological and onomatopoeic signposts, aural devices that fundamentally contribute to meaning. And in spite of the relative absence of soundplay and difficulty of listening to the poem, however, the ear itself becomes an important motif in the first satire; at the same time the activity of hearing is presented as a decidedly *non*-aural one. It turns out that the ear (*auris, auricula*) is often not a useful organ for hearing *within* the satire, either.

Soundplay

Just as proper names drew attention to etymological wordplay in the *Prologue*, the ear and hearing flag sound- and wordplay in the frame satire. The *auriculas asini* may be a reference to Asinius Pollio, popularizer of the *recitatio* that has been corrupted by Persius' contemporaries and is the subject of the first satire.⁸⁶ Pollio's association with the *recitatio*—probably of inviting an audience to listen to one's own new or in-progress literary productions—is attested since the elder Seneca

⁸⁶ Dalzell (1955); Parker (2009).

(*Contr.* IV, *praef.* 2). Similarly, the sentence describing Persius' reader (*quicumque*) is framed by sound repetition—*audaci... audis* (123-125)—involving the verb of hearing. The “book ends” of the frame satire are aurally coordinated: *nam romae quis non...* and *auriculas asini quis non...* (8 and 121). The latter line must also recall *demitto auriculas, ut iniquae mentis asellus* in Horace's *Sermo* I, 9 (20). More obviously, line 125 recalls lines 45-46, connecting the poet's contingent output between the frame and the embedded satires: ... *si forte aliquid decoctius audis* and ... *si forte quid aptius exit/...si quid tamen aptius exit*.

Within the embedded satire, sound repetition emphasizes, for example, the private parts and unseemliness of macho men in this most hazardous of positions: *ingentis.../intrans... intima uersu*; similarly the loss of control of their bodies is emphasized by the aural parallel in the same metrical positions between those lines in their first and second feet: *ingentis trepidare.../ intrans et tremulo...* The lines are further implicated by sound repetition over the caesurae: ... *Titos cum...* and *tremulo scalpuntur...* (20-21). Persius plays the same joke on one of his *lectores* that Ovid played on his poor *blaesus psittacus*, urging him to recite lisping and aspirating Grecisms: ... *balba de nare locutus/ Phyllidas, Hypsipylas...* (33-34).

Ears

More significant than the soundplay in the first *Satire*, are the motif of the ear and the representation of hearing throughout the poem. The ear appears five times: in line 22 little ears (*auriculae*) are the object of the contemporary poet's efforts at composition; in lines 59 and 121 they are the ridiculing, behind-the-back “donkey's ears” (*auriculae albae*) that Janus manages to avoid but to which everyone else at Rome is apparently subject; in lines 107-108 they are the ears of the average Joe, the one whom Persius is admonished for ridiculing too harshly (*tenerae*

auriculae); finally, in line 126 the *uaporata auris* is that of Persius' ideal reader. The terminology change from *auriculae* to *auris* is significant: the diminutive *auriculae*, appropriately, belong to the sphere of ridicule; *auris* to the sphere of Persius' reflections upon the potential of his own work.

The answer to the question *Nam Romae quis auriculas asini non habet?* is—like the answer to *Quis leget haec?*—surely *nemo*. The thesis of the satire is that everyone is subject to ridicule: everyone at Rome has ass's ears except for the god Janus (and that only because the eyes on the back of the god's head make it impossible, *not* because of some inherent good quality). When Persius suggests that everyone at Rome has the *auriculas asini*, it is *he* who gives everyone ass's ears, who marks out all Romans barring none. Since the assertion of the ancient biographer that Persius inculpated Nero along with his reviled poets and orators, and since the suggestion of the ancient commentator that in particular the ending of line 93 and the entirety of 99-102 belong to Nero, the idea that the princeps is also indicated by allusion to the Midas story has gone in and out of fashion.⁸⁷

It is possible, however, not to see Nero here, but nevertheless to see that Ovid's story of Midas in *Metamorphoses* XI is surely alluded to in Persius' poem.⁸⁸ Although an allusion to Midas does not necessarily have to be a direct "hit" at *Nero*, such an allusion does not of course *exclude* a king who takes his own shameless position vis-à-vis Apollo, the god in whose image Nero fashioned himself starting in the year 59.⁸⁹ The frame satire is also affiliated to Ovid's tale: Persius' *auriculae asini* mirror Ovid's *ures aselli* (*Met.* XI, line 179), each formulation containing one

⁸⁷ J.P. Sullivan has argued that the specter of Nero is unmistakably summoned by an allusion to Midas and that Persius' "parodies" are direct or nearly direct quotations of Nero's own experiments in poetry. For example, Sullivan (1978: 162-163) sees lines 104-105 as quotations of a poem by Nero.

⁸⁸ Sullivan (1978: 160-162).

⁸⁹ Champlin (2003b: 276).

diminutive. The laughter of Midas' *famulus* in Ovid's telling is prompted by what he has looked upon with his own eyes (*aspexerit*, *Met.* XI, line 186). The verb *aspicere* is an important principle for Persius—the satirist laughs because he has looked upon life and his *lector* must look with him (*aspexi*, 10; *vidi, vidi ipse*, 120; *aspice haec*, 125). Ovid's barber, unable to keep the secret, digs a hole in the ground (*effodit*, 186; cf. *Pers. Sat. I, hic tamen infodiam*, 120). Persius, too, has a secret (*opertum*, 121) which he wishes to confide in a ditch (*nec cum scrobe? Sat. I, line 119; cf. scrobibus tacitus... opertis*, *Met.* XI, line 189). Persius' *opertum* is all the more *opertum* because the lector with whom he shares his understanding (that to laugh is to laugh at the non-obvious) is non-existent.

And yet Persius positions himself as the *famulus* and his book as the reeds that must disclose his joke. The image of the *famulus* whispering in the grove moves forward with the poem. Ovid's barber *immurmurat* (*Met.* XI, line 187), yet the secret escapes; the pray-er of the second *Satire* similarly *murmurat*, mistakenly believing that uttering his vicious desires in a *murmur* will protect him from ethical critique (*Sat.* II, lines 6-9). The satirical mode mobilized in the first poem is written in the third with an uncooperative *harundo* (*Sat.* III, line 11; cf. *Met.* XI, line 190). The allusion to Ovid's Midas is important because it sharpens the more general point that everyone is susceptible to critique, to the more particular accusation that everyone lacks judgment: the asses' ears are a punishment upon Midas for his failure to discern between the playing of Pan and Apollo, for not hearing poetry properly (Ovid, *Met.* XI, lines 146-193).

Indeed, ears in the first *Satire* are depicted as doing anything but listening. As we have seen, ears in the first *Satire* are objects of mockery. They are also sites of disfigurement. The weak ears of Persius' targets are tortured: his speech is the act of scraping (as though warts⁹⁰) with truth them

⁹⁰ Bartsch (2015: 147-149).

unused to critique (*radere*, 107). Even in its best instantiation, the ear is not represented as listening; the ear of the ideal *lector* is steamed and the *lector* himself must be boiling (*uaporata... ferueat aure*, 126). If ears are not useful listening tools for either listening *to* (given the syntactic strain that the embedded satire places upon the poem as a whole) or listening *within* the first *Satire* (these organs do non-aural activities in both the embedded and frame satires), what happens to listening itself in the poem?

Hearing

If ears are disfigured by Persius' verses, other organs are *refigured* for "listening." The poet of the *recitatio* scene produces *carmina* as food for the ears (...*auriculis alienis colligis escas*, *Sat.* I, 22). This is the appearance of the ear that most closely resembles listening—and yet poetry must be turned into a dish for consumption. It is consumed even by the poet himself as food— *articulis quibus et dicas cute perditus*, 'ohe' (23)—to the point of being stuffed. The undiscerning *auriculae* of the audience are abandoned as tools for hearing and substituted implicitly by the gullet. Explicitly, even the *intima* and *lumbus* (21) may substitute for the ear as points of entry for poetry, which must get into the body somehow, if not by the ear, then, apparently, by any other orifice.

Finally, you may indeed hear something: *si forte aliquid decoctius audis* (125). But compare this more carefully with the lines with which it resonates (as I have discussed above): *non ego cum scribo si forte quid aptius exit/ ...si quid tamen aptius exit* (45-46). *Aptum* is a quality of address; *decoctius* a quality of a food, drink (Gowers), or medicine (Bartsch). Persius may *write* in a way that is evaluatable according to an oratorical criterion, but you cannot *hear* it without its transformation into something edible or imbibible (*decoctius*), like the audience of the *recitatio* scene waiting for their nibbles.

The Physiognomy of Satire

Four of Horace's *Sermones* provide important context for Persius' first satire: 1, 4 (a history of comic writing), 1, 6 (to Maecenas), 1, 10 (a defense of Horace's satire), and 2, 8 (a dinner party). These satires provide salient evidence for the use of the nose and of commentary within satire on the genre's own literary tradition. Persius mobilizes Horatian expressions against Horace himself: whereas the older satirist avoided associating himself directly with the nose of disdain, the younger poet identifies Horace with the nose and even levels that accusation against himself. Finally, Persius' redistribution of body parts among satirists programmatically determines the poem's difficult opening.

As we have seen, Persius uses *auriculae* to "tag" objects of ridicule, in particular persons unaware of their own ridiculousness who could not bear to face their weaknesses; the *auris* belonging to his lector is an object of reform. Other body parts are attributed to satirists themselves. The nose is a *topos* taken from the satires of Horace in particular, but also exists more generally in Roman writings describing those who scorn others.⁹¹

Within Horace's satires, the nose is a marker of a commonly held pose of disdain and of satirist-characters. In spite of Maecenas' high birth (*generosus*), he does not disdain Horace the way others disdain their inferiors, for whom to exhibit this type of scorn is to hang them from a curled nose (*nec... naso suspendis adunco*, *Serm.* I, 6, lines 3-6). One of the limited good qualities of Lucilius, in his role as a character in Horace's history of humor writing, is his satirically sharp nose: although a poet of clumsy "foot," he was a man *emunctae naris* (*Serm.* I, 4, line 8); a cleared nose presumably enables the satirist to sniff out what's off in others. But the turning up of a nose

⁹¹ The nose is an expression of "deliberative fastidium," Kaster (2001: 173-174). Kaster uses "deliberative fastidium" to describe the evaluation of one object or person as beneath another, generally beneath oneself. The turning up of the nose is related to the expression of *sanna*, Kaster cites Porphyrio on Horace, *Serm.* II, 37-39.

against others is not a uniformly positive quality: disdain is unwelcome to the satirist even though (or when) it is an obvious response to a difference in status. Maecenas refrains from disdain towards friends whose real worth is measured in the company they provide.

In *Sermo* II, 8, Balatro, one of Maecenas' set, is *omnia suspendens naso* (*Serm.* II, 8, line 64). Balatro stands in for a satirist: in addition to possessing Lucilius' characteristic expression, in response to the disaster of the canopy falling on top of the feast, he re-narrates the dinner scene as the labors of the host Nasidienus in epic diction, an impromptu satire of his own. The positioning of Balatro as a type of satirist within the scene is clear:⁹² Horace himself is absent from this scene, which is reported to him by Fundanius. Horace's play with names is evident in Nasidienus, who, ironically, has a misguided *nasus*: he is interested in food rather than discernment. His stand-in satirist is also etymologically compromised—Balatro is a “clown” and *Seruilus* (21).

Horace is at pains to separate himself from the pose of his literary forerunner and his own less judicious contemporaries. While he marks Lucilius' face with a satirical nose, on his own face Horace places the more restrained *compressis... labris* (*Serm.* I, 4, line 138). The interlocutor accuses Horace of satirizing for his own amusement, amusement which surfaces only in that play of a smile about his own mouth (*...risum/ excutiat sibi*, lines 34-35). That sort of self-reception is distinct from the reception of a satirist like Lucilius by his *auditor*. That type of satirist manages to *risu diducere rictum* (*Serm.* I, 10, lines 7-8), but along with a mouth agape, the *auditor's* ears may be exhausted by burdensome verse (*sententia... se impediatur uerbis lassas onerantibus... auris*, 9-10). The effect on both body parts is laxity and loss of control.

The Horatian formulation *naso suspendere* appears in Persius' own brief literary history, where he marks Horace himself as a nose in spite of that satirist's association of that body part

⁹² Cf. O'Connor (1990: 28).

with (he thinks) less refined comics (muddy Lucilius, servile Balatro). Persius marks Horace with the feature that Horace marked his own competitor-predecessor and marks Lucilius instead with the jaw of aggression (Pers. *Sat.* I, line 115), rather than the nose and clumsy foot. Persius as *aemulus* subjects Horace to his own measure and the smiling satirist shows up poorly. Persius' own more aggressive poetics cohere with the biographical tradition that he was inspired by the firebrand Lucilius (*lecto Lucili libro decimo uehementer saturas componere instituit, Vita*, 51-52).

Persius' replacement of Horace's smile with a nose and Lucilius' nose with a jaw raises the question of Persius' place within satirical physiognomy—a set of correspondences between body parts (nose, lips, jaw, ear) and literary roles (satirists, predecessors, objects, audiences). Just as Horace's interlocutor accused him of laughing to himself, Persius' interlocutor in the first *Satire* accuses him of hypocrisy and laughing with nasal disdain: *rides... et nimis uncis/ naribus indulges...* (*Sat.* I, lines 40-41). And so the accusation of the nose is made also against this poet. But the *nares* are not where he locates the seat of his humor. Rather Persius identifies his own laughter with his spleen: *sum petulanti splene* (*Sat.* I, line 12).

The spleen is associated with ill-temper and shamelessness.⁹³ The spleen will return in *Satire* 3, cleaving the poet in half as he recovers from a hangover: *turgescit uitrea bilis* (*Sat.* III, line 8). *Petulantia* is associated with a range of other character defects, such as *libido*, *prodigitas*, and other types of wanton behavior. The adjective is applied directly to body parts only rarely, notably by Ovid and Petronius; the latter gave a woman petulant eyes. To be *petulans* is to have no regard for propriety and public virtues (Cicero hurls the accusation against Catiline, for example; the quality also appears several times in the *Pro Caelio*). Persius' own *nonaria* at the end of this satire is *petulans* (*Sat.* I, line 33).

⁹³ Kissel (1990) ad loc.

But what does it mean to have a shameless spleen? The somatic identification of your humor says something about the type of humor (Lucilius' political attack, Horace's social amusement) and its communicability. Lucilius attacks with his teeth, Horace's smile is legible, even if multi-interpretable. The nose and nostrils are also legible sites for the expression of humor. The humor of the spleen, by contrast, is illegible; it is buried deep within. And here we are able to come back to the beginning of *Satire I*: *Quis leget haec?*

Although Horace also claimed that ... *cum mea nemo/ scripta legat uolgo recitare timentis*—a sentiment similar to what Persius asks himself in the opening to his first *Satire*, and surely a site of imitation—it becomes clear, in Horace's case, that *nemo* is really a small group of people, identifiable people, of friends and of a band (imaginary?) of poets (for instance *Sermones* I, 4, I, 9, and I, 10). Persius really has no audience (the ideal *lector* is hypothetical)—and his humor ultimately must be buried in the ground (121-122). The *libellus*-interlocutor introduced here makes his mark. The material of the book becomes the reeds that communicate the secret of Persius *qua* barber.

The first satire advertises two types of speech—the performative and the suppressed. The one is deviant and heard; the other is truth-speaking and unheard. The ethical coding of proclaiming and whispering will be flipped in the second satire, in which silent whispering is how true prayer gets transmitted and display is how false prayer is released. This attention to the difference between public and private will be variously developed throughout the satires: later, it will become knowledge of the inner self (e.g. *in cute*, *Sat. III*, line 30 and *in sese temptat descendere*, *Sat. IV*, line 23); speaking with someone else apart from others (*secrete loquimur*, *Sat. IV*, line 21); geographical distance from Rome (*hic ego securus volgi*, *Sat. VI*, line 12).

CHAPTER THREE: Currency exchange (*Satire II*)

While the first satire addresses a fictive “whoever you are,” *Satire II* is the first of three addressed to an identifiable, “real life” Roman along with *Satire V* (to the philosopher Cornutus) and *Satire VI* (to Caesius Bassus). The salutation of *Satire II* to a Plotius Macrinus, a “father figure” to the poet according to the *Commentum*, marks it as a birthday poem. It seems that even in a friendly *genethliakon*, the poet cannot long keep himself away from the business of ridiculing others. In the diatribe which follows upon the opening hail, Persius targets hypocrisy in prayer and then wrong-headed religious practices more generally, choosing his theme apparently by contrast with the propriety of Macrinus’ birthday celebration. As in the first satire, the chasm between the truthfulness of what is said privately and what publicly hangs wide: a whisper reveals the true opinion of the speaker. But while the poet was the whisperer in *Satire I*, in *Satire II* he condemns the whisperer as venal and hypocritical. More ingenuous belief in the gods’ susceptibility to persuasion through offering and superstitious behavior is deemed just as bad and equally worthy of disdain. Persius explains what an ethically better offering might be, departing for the temple to make it.

The satirist’s solitary voice, the speaking apart, looks forward to *Satire II* thus: What we have learnt from Ovid’s barber is that whispering is ultimately always heard. Persius constructs for himself a pose of whispering into reeds; the reed-pen (*Sat. III.11*) will work the transmission of his secret for him. In the present poem, it is the target of the satire, the praying person (henceforth “pray-er,” for lack of a better word) who does the whispering. But the pray-er’s secret, too, is out: here Persius exposes the food-stuffing and transactionalism that underlie religious practices, the straightforwardly hypocritical, the domestic, and the institutionalized alike.

As this chapter shows, the second satire is a poem in dialogue with the rest of the *libellus*. Persius analogizes the production and anticipated reception of prayer in this satire, to the production and anticipated reception of poetry in *Satire I*. The *Prologue*'s bird and its stomach supply a framework for this second satire, whose targets' conception of divine motivation relies on the idea that the gods are purchasable by feeding, feasting, and paying up. As a corollary to this, the second satire also develops the *Prologue*'s coin, an object of fascination for both poets and pray-ers, propelling the emergence of the *nummus* as a "character" through the remaining satires. Wherever the coin appears we should see fraudulence: susceptibility to being fooled—either by the value of money or by bad poetry. The idea of fraudulence with which Persius invests the *nummus* underpins the critique of poetics that emerges through the *Prologue* and *Satire I*. It is a critique of Horace that is also an exploration of Persius' own relation to Horace. Finally, the "virtuous" offering that the poet makes at the end of *Satire II* shows that he, too, is embedded in the world of his targets. This convivial self-satirization ultimately reminds us that this satire has been a jolly, if disconcerting, *genethliakon* to a friend, perhaps for his birthday banquet.

Sustained scholarship on this poem is scarce, but important inroads have been made in particular with respect to its imagistic techniques and the symbolic value of food.⁹⁴ Cynthia Dessen's notion that the piece is deficient in the "coherent pattern of images and verbal repetitions"⁹⁵ that unify the other poems was effectively dismantled by Everard Flintoff, who argued that the world contained in the poem is one thoroughly constructed around food: gods are propitiated by food and humans are food; man is *pulpa* (63). Humans also interact with the world

⁹⁴ Dessen (1968: 39ff.) compares the second satire with the first and suggests that its poetic techniques are inferior, that it is humorless, and that it lacks "unity."

⁹⁵ Dessen (1968: 43).

in a way that turns it into food; for example, luxury mining is articulated in terms common to harvesting fruits and the precious pearl is thus construed as edible (*bacam... rasisse*, 66).⁹⁶

In her wide-ranging study, Emily Gowers gives a succinct history of the Romans' mythology of their national diet. While virtuous Romans of the early republic ate simply, so the myth goes, elite Romans of the empire ate extravagantly, with the constitution of meals developing in parallel with the constitution of the empire. It is a myth of a decline in morals and of the pitfalls of exoticism. In the genre of satire, this decline manifests itself in the hodge-podge of foods that reflect the *lanx satura*. Gowers (with Flintoff) sees the Rome of *Satire II* as a slaughterhouse: "wading through dripping lard, chitterlings, lights and tripe, huge stews, and fatty sausages, Persius exposes man's own *scelerata pulpa*, spoiled flesh (63), in their midst."⁹⁷ Since Gowers, much of the scholarship on *Satire II* has explored the breadth of its "food imagery." Kirk Freudenburg sees the food metaphor as extending even to the poem's addressee and shrewdly reads Macrinus as Maecenas on a diet—Persius' Maecenas is *macer*! Food puns even express Persius' own final vow: *compositum ius* is both "justice composite" and "blended juice."⁹⁸ Shadi Bartsch interprets the food imagery of the second satire as part of a more general poetics of digestion and health food in the book as a whole.⁹⁹

As to Persius' relation to Horace, Niall Rudd's treatment of *Satire II* is in the main a discussion of Persius' characteristic poetics of one who is *iunctura callidus acri* (cf. *Satire V.14*): rapid shifts of syntax and tone, anthropomorphization, and most importantly, pressed slices of

⁹⁶ Flintoff (1982: 351).

⁹⁷ Gowers (1993: 182).

⁹⁸ Freudenburg (2001: 183-188).

⁹⁹ Bartsch (2015: 65ff.).

Horatian poetry.¹⁰⁰ Rudd has shown how Persius could compress multiple and diverse Horatian passages into just a few lines. Aside from limited lexical and thematic allusions to, for example, *Epistle* I, 16 and *Sermones* II, 5, Hooley finds his more sustained and “crucially informing counterpoint” in Ode III, 23, in which the poet addresses the ideally modest scope of a country woman’s prayers and practices, far from the grander rituals of state.¹⁰¹ Like Horace, Persius prefers the small offering of grain made with a pure heart to the trappings of the *pontifices*. But where Horace’s woman inhabits an idyllic simplicity of both mind and space, Persius’ woman is delusional and her practices repulsive. The rustic innocence that Horace idealizes Persius ridicules as mindlessness, a quality that for him characterizes Roman religion on every scale—exposing how very close idealization is to caricature (a notion that will seriously problematize the encomium of Cornutus in the fifth satire).

Largely outside of the foregoing conversations, Dietmar Korzeniewski calls our attention to the poet as gift giver and the second satire itself as an offering. The poem is not only the pious grain (or upright heart) offered to the gods, as Korzeniewski points out, but also a birthday gift to Macrinus. It therefore takes on features shared with other *genethliaka* and other poems that touch upon the birthday theme.¹⁰² This is a useful notion that reminds us to treat the poem as an entity rather than focus solely on its most delicious metaphors.

¹⁰⁰ Rudd (1986: 100ff.).

¹⁰¹ Hooley (1997: 185).

¹⁰² Korzeniewski (1970: 209-210).

Digested

Persius opens his second poem in a Horatian manner, congratulating his friend, the birthday boy Macrinus, on the moderate propriety of his prayers.¹⁰³ His friend's piety calls to this ever unsatisfied mind the state of prayer and ritual in the world, of which there are two categories: the hypocritical and the misguided. In its first attack (5-30), aimed at hypocrites, the satire samples persons whose private prayers for wealth, especially for inheritance, betray their roles and duties: an oath to give a magnificent funeral in exchange for the death of an uncle, a dowered wife, or a ward (9-14). In spite of their unvirtuous nature, prayers of this type are performed in a manner overtly consistent with public piety: ritual washings morning and night in the Tiber (15-16).

The diatribist addresses his interlocutor: "Hey, come on, tell me this—it's the tiniest thing I'm trying to work out—what's your opinion on Jupiter?" Does he think his impieties have escaped the god's notice because he's not suffered the proverbial signs of wrath (24-29)? Does he take the god for a fool, as the first satire's bad *lectores* of humor would the philosopher (28-29; cf. *Sat.* I.133)? The beard has resurfaced—now on the god and next on the statues (*Sat.* II.60). Like the undiscerning *petulans nonaria*, who yanked the beard of the philosopher, and like the yet more undiscerning reader of human affairs, who would find that funny (*Sat.* I.133-4), the pray-er imagines that, by appearing to be pious, he could pull the beard of Jupiter. Later, in a traditionally pious, but theologically unsound gesture, a Roman will believe that by coating the beards of their figurines in gold he could please the gods (58).

With his second line of attack (31-70), the diatribist's gaze alights on customs and domestic superstitions, which he portrays as generally silly and misconceived rather than hypocritical. But frank nature of this misconception does not adjust the satirist's method, not now that he's off to

¹⁰³ Horace: *Serm.* II, 6.13; See Hooley (1997) and Rudd (1986) on esp. *Epistle* I, 16 and *Ode* III, 23.

such a good start with his body-focused rant. In this rare moment of attention to a woman in the *Satires*,¹⁰⁴ he looks hard upon the aged grandmother or the auntie hovering over her precious charge and making prayers that are informed by fairy tales and delusions of future grandeur: the boy will be distinguished as a general, a man of wealth—no, a prince. The wetness and shaking of the public *recitatio* are mobilized here in the domestic activity of the old woman, the pray-er, fussing over the infant (31-38), whom she shakes (*quatit*) and whose wet little lip (*uda labella*) she marks with her sacralizing spit (*lustralibus salivis*). The problem of deluded prayer does not belong to the woman alone. To the contrary, the wayward direction of prayers and the implicit misattribution of material desires to the gods are shared by those who practice rituals everywhere, regardless of the ancient pedigree of their component parts—the entrails of slaughtered cattle, fires, melting fats, and cakes.

By using the language of lustral expiation to describe the scene, Persius links his ridicule of domestic superstitions to his exposure of the misconceptions that underlie haruspicy (44-51). Like the aunt's prayers for the baby boy, a man's rather unremarkable prayers for strength and success are characterized by vain repetition (*da.../ da...*, 45-46, and *iam...iam.../ iam...iam iam...*, 49-50; cf. *hunc.../ hunc...hic...*, 37-38). The gilded trappings of traditional religion are formulated by extrapolation from human wishes for wealth. A man projects his desire for gold onto his divinities and, paradoxically, gilds his divinities in the hope for some *quid pro quo* (55-60). A “moral” closes the diatribe: the only appropriate offering to the gods is that which is unrelated to what we think to be good because our flesh desires it, i.e. the upright heart.

¹⁰⁴ See Rudd (1986: 145) on included and excluded groups in the satires more generally.

Prayer as Poiesis

The second satire puts the contemporary practice of prayer and devotion into terms akin to those that described the first satire's *recitatio* and those that depicted the poetry industry in the prologue. Pray-er and poet are motivated to perform by greed, and both imagine an audience of eaters. While the second satire's critique is obviously aimed at the hypocrite, who prays aloud for virtue but under his breath yearns for material gain to the detriment of others, it is also aimed at the general principles underlying traditional practices of prayer and offerings to gods. The pray-er has made the mistake of interpreting the gods' reception of words as analogous to that of human audiences: not all *auriculae* are easily deceived by a well-sounding performance as are those of the Roman *auditores* in *Satire I*.

Put another way: a pray-er's appeal to the gods is the (external) formalization of a somatic response—a gut reaction. By analogy with his own pleasure in gold, the pray-er comes to the conclusion that the gods would be responsive to vows of new golden faces for their statues in exchange for dispersing his ill-omened dreams. Gods are thus seen as all too human in their greedy ambition. Such beliefs have resulted in the now standard practice of overlaying gold on the traditional ritual belongings of the old Italic gods.

Aurality

The poet writes an aural response in this poem to the preceding satire: the diatribe's climactic exclamation, *O curuae in terris animae et caelestium inanis* (*Sat. II.61*), clearly recalls the first line of the first satire, *O curas hominum! o quantum est in rebus inane!* (*Sat. I.1*).¹⁰⁵ That aural

¹⁰⁵ This is also an indication that the first and second satires were composed or revised in relation to each other and that the second satire does not represent the anomalous insertion of a youthful "exercise."

(and metrical) continuity (initial *O curuae...* and *O curas...*; final *inanis* and *inane*) is sustained by the correspondence of *quid iuuat hoc...?* (*Sat.* II.62) with *quis leget haec?* (*Sat.* I.2). The point of this connection is not immediately clear, though it does remind the reader of the pointlessness of speech, whether directed at humans or at gods: for neither the diatribist nor the pray-er is able to “reach” his audience. The line does not, of course, exhibit “Christian overtones” as Dessen suggests, regardless of its later appreciation by Christian moralists.¹⁰⁶ The line is Lucretian. This is no minor quibble. The line’s correspondence with the opening of the first satire further supports the plausibility of the LVC assignation of *Satire* I to Lucretius, discussed in the previous chapter. Both lines remind vanity of didactic in the world as construed by a satirist.

The *ures* ubiquitous in the first satire are replaced by *aurum* in the second: five sightings of ears (*Sat.* I.22, 59, 108, 121, and 126) are replaced by five glimmers of gold (*Sat.* II. 53, 55, 58, 59, and 69). In *Satire* I, gold is implicit in the allusion to Midas’ ears; in *Satire* II, ears are implicit in gold. The connection seems to exist solely on the level of sound—the ears are objects of feeding in the first poem; the gold is an offering in the second. The intra-corpus word play, lexical substitution, must also indicate something about the fungibility of objects to a satirist; diatribe sounds the same, regardless of what the target of the hour may be.

Venter

In his prologue, the poet declared that the *uenter* would be the master of invention; a glittering coin threw in further motivation—complicatedly for both poet and audience to participate in the bad art industry. In the second satire, *poiesis* includes the production of prayers for an economy that runs substantially on food and also on coin. The pray-er merely theologizes the method of

¹⁰⁶ Dessen (1968: 40).

repetitive, mimetic speech that appeals to audiences in the *recitatio* of *Satire* I and the prologue. The parrots of the prologue were motivated by food, the poets themselves by coin; and the pray-er expects the gods to be so motivated as well: offerings in the second satire are dough or dough, edible or metal. The composition of offerings for the *auriculae*, rather than *aures*, of gods is significant, as these mini-ears are imagined to be purchasable (*qua tu mercede deorum/ emeris auriculas*, *Sat.* II.29-30). The pray-er imagines his (divine) audience to have ears as receptive and unwitting as those of the audience at a *recitatio*: (*auriculis alienis colligis escas?* *Sat.* I.22). Like the poet, the pray-er offers edibles—here a dish of lung and oiled entrails¹⁰⁷—to his “audience.”

Dishes and puddings mixed for the gods have further significance for understanding the involvement of the satirist in constructing the world that he will seek to deface. The satirist takes ritual meat of epic and religious pedigree and mashes it into a sausage (42). Also an Apuleian word, *tuccetum* for sausage operates in a low register—pork bellies mashed up in the kitchen of the slave girl Photis, ritual food for the temple (*Ap. Met.* II, 7; V, 15; VII, 11; and IX, 22). The representation of a sausage offering precedes the representation of the more proper offering of a victim (45) and that order of presentation renders the reverent ridiculous:

*sed grandes patinae tuccetaque crassa
adnuere his superos uetere Iouemque morantur.
rem struere exoptas caeso boue Mercuriumque
accersis fibra: 'da fortunare Penatis,
da pecus et gregibus fetum.' quo, pessime, pacto,
tot tibi cum in flamma iunicum omenta liquescant?
et tamen hic extis et opimo uincere ferto
intendit... (Sat. II.42-49)*

But grand platters and thick sausages prohibit the gods' nod of approval of these words and delay Jupiter. You hope beyond hope to arrange your affairs with a slaughtered bull and you summon Mercury with the lobe of an organ: 'Grant to my Penates that they flourish, grant cattle and offspring to my flocks.' Worst of all people,

¹⁰⁷ Not “milks,” Flintoff (1982: 345)

on what grounds should that happen for you when the membranes of so many heifers are melting in the fire? Yet still he makes his efforts with entrails and a fat offering.

At the end of the day, it turns out, a sacrificial bull is just meat, guts, and fat, packaged in a bigger and better looking sausage. So, just as with the moniker “pony” for Bellerophon’s mighty steed in the choliambics (*caballinus*, *Prol.* 1), it is not only the participants in an activity who cheapen traditional forms, but also Persius himself who degrades these activities by applying his cheap labels onto hallowed objects, loading platters with fatty foods. The metaphors of food and ingestion, which have been elucidated by Flintoff, Freudenburg, and Bartsch, are augmented by those of listening: the pray-er imagines that the gods’ ears may be bought with food (*pulmone et lactibus unctis*, *Sat.* II.30), and so offers it in order to support his hope for bodily strength and a good old age (41). But gods are not that type of audience. Filling up a dish for Jupiter in the way that you might greedily heap extra servings of thick sausages on your own plate actually slows down your access to the gods. It is behavior of which they cannot approve. It is not only mediocre, everyday foods that clog the approval process. Even grander offerings do the same.¹⁰⁸ Sacrifices in the style of epic are the same as sacrifices in the style of satire.

***Nummus* (a novella)**

Attempting to buy off the gods (his audience) with edible offerings, the efforts of the pray-er *qua* cook recall the theory of *uenter* as divine inspiration that we saw in the prologue. The pray-er understands divine intervention to be a purchased result of divinized (and worshipper-subsidized) feeding; fortune is for hire. Now, at the moment when the pray-er’s efforts are shown to be in vain,

¹⁰⁸ Bartsch (2015: 77-79) interprets the *morantur* (43) as a metaphor for constipation that may be cured by eating cooked beets. The salutary quality of beets in Persius is its use for oral scraping in its raw form and appears uncooked in other satires, not here. Cf. also Rudd (1986: 101).

the language closely follows that of the *Prologue*. There, as we have seen, the hope (*spes*) of a deceitful coin glimmered. Here, in the second satire, the *nummus* has the final word, or at least the final gasp.

The *nummus* is characterized as *dolosus* (*Prol.* 12) or *deceptus* (*Sat.* II.50). *Deceptus* in the second satire is used in two ways: it both retains the sense from the *Prologue* of being deceitful—it is counterfeit—and acquires the new sense of being frustrated from its purpose of bearing interest. Why should it be important in the *Prologue* that the coin is counterfeit? The counterfeit coin is payment for counterfeit poetry; the posing *poetridae* cannot tell that even their profit from faked poems would be fake. In the second satire, as in the third, the *nummus* is counterfeit in a different sense: it is a counterfeit Good.

The glimmering *nummus* of the *Prologue* thus becomes more fully a character in the second satire. It will also continue to appear five times further. Whereas this coin was formerly the object of another's hope, *spes* (*Prol.* 12), in the second satire it has itself lost hope, *exspes*. Personified, this coin sighs (*suspiret*, *Sat.* II.51).¹⁰⁹ When it sighs from the bottom of the coffers (*fundo... in imo*, 51), it sighs equally in the ground, sharing the pray-er's concerns about his—their—estate. In the third satire, the “sick” man must learn the true use of the *nummus*, which is *asper* (*Sat.* III.69-70). The *Commentum* explains that the coin is *asper* because ill gotten (*male partus aut crimosus*). The *asper nummus* is also metonymic for the adverse, “rough” circumstances that result in lost profit. But this “newly minted” coin is also out of hope, it is *a-spe*; and, further, it huskily echoes the aspirate sound it made in the second satire—*suspiret*.

¹⁰⁹ Rudd (1986: 101) includes this detail along with the *prex emax* (*Sat.* II.3) in his observation that it is characteristic for Persius to give human qualities to non-human objects and non-human qualities to humans. Jahn (1843) argues that the pray-er is *deceptus* and *exspes* and, moreover, that he laments his expenditures in direct speech (*nequiquam fundo... nummus in imo*). Conington-Nettleship (1893) reject the punctuation and point forward to *Sat.* V.149, on which see below.

Further to developing the symbolic value of the coin in particular, Persius additionally thematizes somatic responses to money in general. After the expiration of the *nummus*, he proposes dangling gold and silver in full view of his target:

... *sudes et pectore laeuo*
excutiat guttas laetari praetrepidum cor (*Sat.* II.53-4)

You'd sweat and from the left side of your chest your heart would
shed drops, all a-tremble at the thought of rejoicing.

These symptoms—perspiration and palpitation—are also symptoms of erotic desire. In the next poem, the interlocutor will suffer the same at the sight of a girl, a reaction interchangeable with that elicited by the sight of money:

... *uisa est si forte pecunia siue*
candida uicini subrisit molle puella,
cor tibi rite salit? (*Sat.* III.109-11)

If you've spotted either money spotted or a gorgeous girl
from the neighborhood smiles, does your heart duly skip a beat?

Indeed, we have already seen such trembling in the overtly sexualized *recitatio* (*ingentis trepidare Titos, cum carmina lumbum/ intrant, Sat.* I.20-21). Symptoms may also be appetitive: the sight of the *nummus* in the dirt will be mouthwatering as the interlocutor will gulp back capitalist drool (*saliuam Mercurialem, Sat.* V.112). The salivation itself becomes his prayer for salvation to the money god, who had before at least received a sacrifice (*Sat.* II.45-6). Notionally separate vices—greed and lust—are extensions of the *ur-vice*: bad poetry.

The attention paid by the poet across the corpus to this small token should alert us to its symbolic value. We may consider the value of the *nummus*, then, as Neronian artefact and as philosophical topos. The appearance of the *nummus* is a marker of human misapprehension in both the prologue and the second satire. At the same time, it adds philosophical value to the piece. The

reception of money and poetry are not only conceived of in the same terms, but also received in similar ways—with striking physiological responses.

Finally, the satirizings of both poetry and prayer are made to cohere through aural resonance and soundplay. At the poem's close, the satirist reappears in the ritual attire with which he toyed in the prologue. There is a variety of ways in which Persius' discussion of money might seem to follow Horace's. For example, the idea of *Sermo* I.73, *nescis quo ualeat nummus, quem praebeat usum?* (Do you not know what good a coin is, what utility it presents?), may plausibly inform Persius' *quid asper utile nummus habet?* (What's useful about a rough coin? *Sat.* III.69).

Additionally, the fantasy of stumbling upon a fortune is shared by the poets' targets. Horace's

*O si urnam argenti fors quae mihi monstret, ut illi,
thesauro inuento qui mercenarius agrum
illum ipsum mercatus arauit, diues amico
Hercule!... (Serm. II, 6.10-13)*

Oh, if only Luck would show me her urn of silver, as to she did that man, the hireling who found the treasure and bought and tilled that selfsame field. oh, godly Hercules, my friend!

is reformulated in Persius' breathless and punchier

*... o si
sub rastro crepet argenti mihi seria dextro
Hercule!... (Sat. II.10-12)*

Oh, if only a pot of silver would clang back at me under a handy plough, Hercules!

This “decoction,” this condensation, of several Horatian lines into a shorter and at the same time more visceral space is typical of Persius' style and is the major distinguishing feature of his practice of *imitatio*. But a closer look at Persius' treatment of money in the satires reveals significant points of departure from his predecessor. Money and the mercantile for Horace are in general representative of a failure to live well or to understand what is valuable (e.g. *Serm.* I, 1.4-8 and 28-

32). The solutions for Horace are, of course, moderate spending and keeping company with men of good taste—a sensibility that will be satirized in Persius’ fifth satire. Persius views the lives of merchants chasing profit as lives of dissatisfaction and compulsion (e.g. *Sat.* V.132ff.). But within his satires, the coin takes on a life of its own, appearing seven times in his single short book, compared to twelve times across Horace’s nearly four-fold satirical output. The *nummus* becomes a minor character in the *libellus*, taking on human qualities and gestures. At the same time, it serves as a token reminder of human misunderstanding.

The *asper nummus* has further levels of significance, both historical and philosophical. Coinage has specific symbolic value among those philosophers most given to a joke as means of unmasking the foolishness of society, the Cynics. Diogenes, we are told, was sent into exile because he had defaced the coinage of Sinope: the Cynic expression defacing the currency (*παραχαράττειν τὸ νόμισμα*) “makes joking, parody, and satire not merely a useful rhetorical tool, but an indispensable one, constitutive of Cynic ideology as such.”¹¹⁰ Tempting though it may be to see the afterlife of Diogenes’ defaced coin in Persius’ *nummus*—perhaps not an implausible proposal, given the occasional cameo by a Cynic elsewhere (e.g. *Sat.* I.133)—the reading cannot be secure. Nevertheless, Diogenes’ story is instructive in that it reminds us that a coin is a symbol of the state and social convention more broadly, the common targets of both the Cynic and the satirist. We might also recall the Cynic’s excoriation of hypocrites in general, and his inveighing in particular against those who praise justice in speech but are unjust in practice, as well as those who censure wealth even as they prize it (Diog. Laert. VI, 2.28). The satirist’s unremitting ostentation of bodies and their parts might find its philosophic analogue in the principled shamelessness of the Cynics.

¹¹⁰ Branham (1996: 93); cf. Diog. Laert. VI, 2.20 and Bywater and Milne (1940).

An engine of the state, the coin moreover bore the face of the *princeps*. In the years preceding Persius' untimely demise, the hairstyle of Nero's numismatic portraits became increasingly elaborate, departing from the plainer styles of the *principes* before him exhibiting some artful curls.¹¹¹ We might think of the *lector* of the *recitatio* in the first satire, who is *pexus* (*Sat.* I.15). A golden symbol of the *princeps*, the coin recapitulates the nod to Nero that may be fleetingly glimpsed in the allusion to the Midas story in the first *Satire*. The culmination of this interest in both coiffure and stamped prettiness was the coming out of Nero as Apollo on coinage in the year 62, the year of our poet's death. In the years prior, Nero had already begun to make clear his aspiration to identify with that god, especially in his role as a patron of the arts.¹¹² At the Juvenalia of 59, Nero was hailed as Pythian Apollo and in the same year he began to associate (and to be associated with) with poets.¹¹³ Edward Champlin has argued for the broadly enthusiastic reception he received among intellectuals. As early as the year 60, the Apolline identification is registered (alongside a Dionysian identification) in the proem of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.

*sed mihi iam numen, nec, si te pectore uates
accipio, Cirrhaea uelim secreta mouentem
sollicitare deum Bacchumque auertere Nysa.
tu satis ad uires Romana in carmina dandas. (B.C. I.63-66)*

But already you are my divinity; and, if I, your prophet, accept you into my breast, I would not wish to appeal to the god who inspires things Delphic or turn Bacchus' attention away from Nysa.

¹¹¹ Champlin (2003b: 278); Hiesinger (1975: 8).

¹¹² Champlin (2003b: 278). The *asper nummus* also appears in Suetonius: Nero demanded support for his campaign to put down the rebellion of Galba, and a staff of "Amazons," to be paid in newly minted coin; because new coin was far more rare than general currency, the population balked at this stipulation (*Nero* 44). The event occurred several years after Persius' death in (we suppose) 62, but the passage nevertheless provides some insight into another way in which the *asper nummus* might be interpreted: it is rough to the touch, not yet worn down by its passage from hand to hand, and (the point to be stressed for now) hard to come by. The revision of your understanding of hard-won coin is part of the philosopher's task.

¹¹³ Champlin (2003b: 276).

Nero as *numen* provides Lucan as *uates* with inspiration for his epic song.¹¹⁴ In the prologue, Persius figured himself as a *semipaganus*, adding his song to the rites of such absurd bards: *ad sacra uatum carmen adfero nostrum*, (*Prol.* 7). The question of the sincerity of Lucan's proem is a familiar one;¹¹⁵ Persius' "contribution" is more obviously ironized in the *Prologue*. The fantasies of old bards were a phenomenon bad enough. The problem with their miming successors is that they replace *numen* with *nummus*, a poor substitute.¹¹⁶

The *nummus*' more poetic twin, *numerus*, appears seven times in the satires. In the first satire, Persius' uses the term standardly to discuss genre, whether poetry or prose (*numeros ille, hic pede liber*, *Sat.* I.13); the supposed literati discuss the poetry of the day with the same term (*carmina molli/... numero* and *sed numeris decor est*, *Sat.* I.63-64 and 92). The later appearance of *numerus* near the end of *Satire* I offers a change in meaning, however, to the straightforward "number" (*abaco numeros*, *Sat.* I.131). The sense is maintained in the first verb of the following poem when the satirist instructs Macrinus to mark the number of his day (*diem numera*, *Sat.* 2.1). Partially overlapping with its poetic meaning, *numerus* shifts to a more straightforwardly musical force in a seemingly tangential accusation in *Satire* V (*tris tantum ad numeros Satyrum moueare Bathylli*, V.123). In *Satire* VI, it overlaps with the satirist's praise of his addressee's musical talent (*mire opifex numeris*, VI.3).

The straightforward *numerus* of poetry is lost in the transition between *Satire* I and *Satire* II, where, as if re-summoning the *Prologue*, it is replaced by the coin, which did not appear in

¹¹⁴ See Leigh (1997: 22-26), Brisset (1964: 221), and Masters (1992: 230-233) for various interpretations of the proem, an issue which I do not wish to engage here. However ironically or sincerely one may choose to read Lucan, it is a far cry from the ire Persius turns on any such pretension in the *Prologue* and *Satire* V.

¹¹⁵ Champlin (2003a: 113-114).

¹¹⁶ *nummus* could also be spelled *numus*, as in Varro, *L.L.* VI, 61.

Satire I. In other words, the sequence *prologue - first satire - second satire* is paralleled by the sequence *coin - verse - count/coin*. Through the fungibility of *numerus* and *nummus*, Persius charges that the idea of counting, which ought to be pinned on the *numerus* as poetic foot, is predicated on the *nummus*. Pay-oriented poetics have replaced aesthetic and ethical poetics. The *nummus* is a figure for transactionalism, tying prayer production to poetry production. Its characterization as *dolosus* and *deceptus*, moreover, ties that transactionalism of speech-for-goods to counterfeisance.

The *Prologue* has been called “the most devastating critique of the patronage system.”¹¹⁷ These terms might equally be applied by extension and implication to the second satire’s critique of pray-er and religious practices. How far is Horace implicated in the *Prologue*’s send-up of the patronage system? Persius does, after all, work to *decoquere* Horace’s *corpus*. If Horace accuses Lucilius of writing too much, examples such as the compression of *Serm. II*, 6.10-13 into *Sat. II*.10-12 might signal Persius’ accusation that Horace himself writes too much—perhaps for a patron? Play for pay: An extra *numerus*, one more *nummus*. The further problem that the *nummus* creates for Persius is that it is also our reminder of the counterfeit and the mimicry of poets we saw in the *Prologue*: it makes Persius’ satires vulnerable to the same critique. Persius, famous for his virtuosic *imitatio*, arguably counts as a counterfeit Horace, famous for his advertisement of his patron. Here, Freudenberg’s observation that *Macrinus*, the dedicatee of the present satire, is a *Maecenas* might elucidate Persius’ compressive but ubiquitous *imitatio*.

The expectation of the pray-er in *Satire II* is the same as the expectation of the *poetridae* of the *Prologue*: *nummus*. *Nummus* has also displaced the archaic *Numa* (*Sat. II*. 59) of (a fantasy of) authentic Roman religion. The problem with the poetry and piety industries is that their

¹¹⁷ I cannot find the source of this quotation, but I know the phrase is not my own.

participants cannot spot a fake. Accordingly, the problem in the *Prologue* is that the faking “poet” cannot tell that the coin is fake: *si dolosi spes refulserit nummi... cantare credas Pegaseium nectar* (*Prol.* 12-14). The language is echoed in the fifth satire: *Marco spondente recusas/ credere tu nummos?* (*Sat.* V.79-80), where even freedom itself is exposed to be socially (and philosophically) counterfeit.

It is significant that neither the *nummus* nor his friends—gold, silver, bronze, or *as*—turn up in *Satire VI*, the poem ostensibly devoted to the problem of expenditure and the transfer of wealth through inheritance. We must pay attention, then, to the shifts in, and limits of, the coin’s symbolic significance. In that satire, the prices are gouged exponentially, beyond the reach of currency: “Sell your soul for profit” (*uende animam lucro*, VI.75). In his last cameo in the book, the coin resumes his story: like a dog, *nummus* takes on the characteristics of his human: the hope that [eludes] the coin is the hope that the pray-er had, too (*exoptas*, 44; *exspes*, 50). Where stomachs and ears feed and humans sweat (*sudes*, *Sat.* II.53), so too does the *nummus*:

*quid petis? ut nummi, quos hic quincunce modesto
nutrieras, pergant auidos sudare deunces?* (*Sat.* V.149-50).

What are you looking for? For the coins, whom you’ve reared on a conservative five percent investment, to go sweat out greedy eleven percent gains?

farre litabo

In the first two satires of the *libellus*, the actions that may be attributed to the satirist are few: looking, laughing, writing. The close of the second satire recalls his single action in the prologue: *haec cedo ut admoueam templis et farre litabo* (75), an action which complements his ironic vatic activity of song-offering in the prologue. So, we have a poet who looks, laughs, writes, and also

offers. But the nature of his offering is at first negatively defined—in keeping with a pattern that emerges across the satires. He offers to the gods what is not available from the platter of some corrupt person of the consular class. He offers the grits of a *pauper*.¹¹⁸ The pedestrian nature of this particular type of grain offering is twice reiterated in the *Satire V* (73-5), where *far* stands in for the basic livelihood of a Publius and *farrago* for the trifling quantity over which a newly minted freedman might quibble.

There is a contradiction in Persius' claim to find something that cannot be found on the *lanx*, for the genre in which he writes is itself the *lanx satura*. Although attribution of the phrase *lanx satura* to Varro is not claimed before the 4th century report of Diomedes, Freudenburg has argued that we should positively associate the phrase with the Republican polymath and satirist via his depiction in the *Academica*. There, the Varro of Cicero's composition uses the vocabulary of cooking and feasting in his description of his composition: *conspergere, admiscere, inuitare* (1, 2.8).¹¹⁹

Persius' assertion that he makes a simple sacrifice presents a paradox from the generic perspective, too. This satire is—as it ought to be—replete with images of fatty foods. Persius disdains mashes and mash-ups in general—such is his distaste for the speech stew (*sartago loquendi*) of the world around him, and the fat sausages (*tucceta crassa*) of ritual. He has certainly not stopped contributing to the *sartago* of speech that he despises (cf. *Sat.* 1.80). The satirist himself, like his targets, has turned the world into food. His own revision of the hypocrite's prayer

¹¹⁸ cf. *Comm. Corn.* II, 71.1-4.

¹¹⁹ Regardless of the modern “scientific” etymology of *satura*, Diomedes' Varro, Persius, and Juvenal certainly made literary hay from the available possible etymologies of *satura* from (and among) *sarcire*, *sartago*, *farciare*, *farcimen*, and *farrago*. Diomedes also has Varro as the propagator of the etymology of *satura* as sausage (*farcimen*). Cf. Freudenburg (2013: 300-306 and n.8) and Ferriss-Hill (2015: 102-114 and n.231).

for *mens bona, fama, fides* (8) contains a culinary pun: *compositum ius* is both a proper sense of justice and a blended sauce, either an uplifting value or a mere comestible. Indeed, following immediately upon the description of Messala's *magna lanx*, the pun might reasonably be heard first as sauce and only thereafter, when *fas* is joined to it, as justice. More straightforward than the pun is the offering of Persius' *incoctum pectus*—whether this is metaphorical or literal can only be judged by the relative weights of the two interpretations of *ius*.

The rawness of the poet's *pectus* may be compared with the vigorous treatment of his *praecordia*, which are to be given a good investigative smacking in the fifth satire (*Sat.* V.22). Whether Persius' prayer is ultimately deadly serious or yet another joke depends on how the reader assesses the distance between the hypocrite and the satirist. Morford observes that the terms *ius*, *fas*, and *pectus* form a philosophically and theologically sounder instantiation of the type of *mens bona* for which the hypocrite prayed aloud at the beginning of the satire.¹²⁰ The placement of Persius' virtues in close relation to the inner sanctum of his mind (73-4) suggests such a reading. Likewise, Rudd, while shrewdly identifying the double usage of *ius*, deems Persius' "spiritual food-offerings [to be] acceptable to the gods."¹²¹ Alternatively, the embeddedness of Persius' own prayer in a food-shaped world—that is, his inability to articulate the world of prayer and virtue in a way distinct from his targets' misguided vision of the world—self-consciously situates the satirist firmly within the hypocrisy against which he has been railing.

¹²⁰ Morford (1984: 43).

¹²¹ Rudd (1986: 104).

Happy Birthday. You're not as bad as the rest of them.

The second satire is not just a diatribe on hypocrisy. It is dedicated as a birthday poem. We must ask, therefore: What type of gift does Persius intend this to be? Why should *this* diatribe follow upon the observance of Macrinus' birthday pour (*funde merum genio*, 3)? It is a vehicle for piled platters at the birthday feast that naturally follows upon the birthday toast and birthday wish. Persius' diatribe on the fattening of prayers is itself an elaborate dish of *sermones*, *carmina*, philosophy, sausages, and gold—with a sprinkling of grain. Moreover, these final culinary jokes are precisely appropriate to a *convivium*, perhaps a birthday party.¹²² The *envoie* of hilarity returns us to his friend Macrinus and the status of *Satire II* as birthday card.

If we consider Macrinus' birthday not as pretext for an opportunity to write another in a series of diatribes, but instead as an essential quality of the poem, the satirist's worldview comes more clearly into focus. Propertius' over-the-top birthday verses for Cynthia (III, 10) are a confetti of best-dresses, wishes, and (of course) night games by comparison. But there is darkness on the edges. The poet hopes his song will banish the possibility of mourning (*El. III, 10.7*).¹²³ Similarly, Horace's *Ode IV, 11* on the occasion of Maecenas' birthday recounts the readying of the household (and the good wine) for the great man's celebration. But in his final words, the poet hopes that the day's activities will lighten dark cares (*minuentur atrae/ carmine curae, Carm. IV, 11.35-36*). What Persius does, then, is to invert the *genethliakon's* priorities: he takes the wistful sides to any remark—even a celebratory one—on the passing of life and makes bleakness the main course: “there is a sad descent to Persius.”¹²⁴ All he can offer is his uncooked heart and some grain, and it

¹²² For the coincidence of this type of joke with convivial poetry, see Gowers (1993: 39).

¹²³ On this, see Cairns (1971: 150).

¹²⁴ Thoreau (1840: 117).

is not even the birthday boy to whom he offers these—they go to the gods, as evidence of Persius’ separation from the world. This is becoming an awkward pattern, this matter of Persius’ gifts. In the prologue, *carmen adfero* was a sarcastic “Oh, I’ll give it to ya;” in the first satire, the final *Callirhoen do* was a similarly derisive presentation; here, in *Satire II*, the final *farre litabo* is offered in earnest, but to someone else.

Across the *Prologue* and *Satires I* and *II*, poetry and prayer are analogized via the leitmotif of the *nummus* as related productions and transactions through their shared adaptation of the theme of food and eating. Broadly, the theme of payment and consumption began with the *Prologue*’s allegation that the *uenter* is master of *poiesis* and that *poiesis* is motivated by coin (a take-down of the institution of patronage). The activities of poetry and the activities of prayer and ritual are both therefore built upon a projection of the prologue’s avian motivation onto human motivation in *Satire I* and, in *Satire II*, by the pray-er (mistakenly) onto the gods.

There are structural parallels between Persius’ provision of the stomach and of the coin as dual models of human motivation. Motivation by food and money are projected by poets and pray-ers upon their respective audiences. In the *Prologue*, bird-poets were motivated by their stomach and thus, in *Satire 1*, the poet cooks to please others. Birds love shiny objects; the human desire for coin, also presaged in the *Prologue*, is projected by humans onto gods. Later, the two understandings of motivation are so conflated that the foolish will even attempt to feed their coins (*Sat. V.149*) on a diet of accumulated interest. This is not the only “mistake” humans make when it comes to gold: they are themselves unable to discern the real from the counterfeit. Fakes abound in the *libellus*.

The *Prologue*’s send-up of counterfeit poetry to be paid in kind with counterfeit coin sets the agenda for the exposure of all that is *dolosus* or *deceptus* in the *Satires*. In the first satire this

manifests itself through the extreme conventionality that characterizes the production of contemporary poetry by which sound masks quality. In the second satire, this is paralleled by the production of ritual piety, which masks theological misconception and hypocritical prayers. In *Satire 3*, it is the hiding satirist himself who shall come under inspection. As the second satire sees prayer as poiesis, the three subsequent satires will treat philosophy as poiesis, proposing a narrative of the emergence of philosophy as an activity and as a literary genre. We shall see how the student of philosophy emerges from a disreputable sleep and the *Ur*-teacher of philosophy is recast as the gadfly.

*compositum ius fasque animo sanctosque recessus
mentis et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.
haec cedo ut admoueam templis et farre litabo.*

Justice and rightness balanced in the soul and the sacred
recesses of the mind a raw heart with noble respectability: grant that
I bring these to the temples and I'll make my devotional with grain.

Persius decides that his best offertory will be the insides of his mind and his raw heart; he retreats from us to make his [pious] propitiations. This moment of bizarre quiet and piety hints that we might hear the *carmen* that he promised to offer the *uates* in the *Prologue*, naïvely understood--perhaps he will offer us a *carmen compositum* for a place apart from the bodily fluids and improper organs of the first and second satires. The sounds that the third satire emits, however, are a snore, an interruption, and a full-body braying. And it is always this way...

CHAPTER FOUR: Split down the middle (*Satire III*)

Nempe haec adsidue. Yes, unrelentingly like this—things prior, things present, things to come. The third satire begins with perpetuity, morning, a hangover, a question, and a complaint. The poet exchanges elusivity and absence for radical subjectivity: it is highly focalized through the waking writer in the first person—at first a nascent, oceanic plural (“We snore,” *Sat.* III.3). We meet, at last, the imagined “author” of the book we have been reading, only to discover that he is as malformed a youth as ever was, incapable, it seems, of rising, speaking, writing. In the middle of the *libellus*, we meet the author in the middle of writing (or is he behind on his writing?). This new subject contextualizes the object-directed diatribes in *Satires* I and II, resolving (on my reading) the question of authorship while at the same time opening the new question of authority.

The satire’s first moment—which is also every moment—is focalized through the perception of cracks (*rimas*, 2) the interruption of sleep by a friend is followed by the attention suddenly drawn to the subject’s body, which is split (*findor*, 9); the subject receives pen and parchment that are figured as split, too—the nib is cracked, the parchment two-colored. The fissure of body, pen, and paper precipitates the splitting of discursive registers within the poem. Attempts at a dialogue scene will be aborted in favor of diatribe as the subject *qua* author proves incapable of completing the satire himself, in his real, newly revealed *propria persona*. We’re snoring off what’s enough to despume a heady Falernian (*stertimus, indomitum quod despumare Falernum/ sufficiat*, III.3-4): When the poet admits mid-book that he is sleeping off a hangover, Persius supplies an alarming revision to the implicit frame of the first three poems: If it has always been this way, have *Satires* I and II been as slogged as Attius’ indicted *Iliad* (I.50-51)? Have the preceding rants been his own drunken contributions to the symposium of Romans in their cups (I.30-31), or to Macrinus’ party—an uninvited diatribe delivered after the birthday boy poured out that strong wine (II.3)?

This chapter begins with the poem's opening through and alongside the history of its interpretation. To consider the components of this scene (How many voices? Whose are they? How are we to imagine these questions and answers unfolding?) is a *de rigueur* site of any serious treatment of this poem and so here also are offered some ways in which to synthesize a reading of this scene with the turns of the diatribe that follows it. Through a digest of the poem's broad outlines, this chapter argues that Persius' narratological experiment identifies the author-subject with his book, drawing in particular upon Horatian and Ovidian comparanda: in a change from the disembodied, obscure authorship of the first two satires, the book-subject acquires a physical body. This new embodiment of the poet provides evidence against the often repeated but not fully substantiable view that Persius' third satire, once its poetic devices have been explicated, is itself an ethical protreptic.

This chapter gestures towards studies of the Roman book as aesthetic project in order to reassess the opening of the third satire and thus to capitalize upon the tensions between imagined and actual reception in ancient reading contexts—the *lectio* upon which I focused my analysis of the earlier poems. This chapter argues that the prominence of the book as a material object early on in the poem offers a midway reprogramming of the *libellus* as a whole. The poem sets up new programs for Persius' satirical project. This reassessment opens a new avenue for interpreting the long diatribe that dominates the remainder of the poem. The absent poet becomes a present poet as object-driven critique is exchanged for subject-driven self-criticism. Vituperation of others' song and speech is exchanged for a self-portrait of the poet's own alleged failure to write and to speak. And questions of style—even as proxies for character—are exchanged for questions of moral substance, as poetics become supplanted by ethics as the satirist's principal interest, subsequent to the conflict between the public and private in the second satire. At the same time,

the shift to an inconsistent, and unpredictable subjectivity is thematized in the splintering of voice, body, and book, which are described in the same terms and thus mutually identified.

Voices (from the past) and Dialogue

The desire for clarity on what is happening in *Satire* III.1-34 could hardly be longer standing, nor the approaches more disparate. It is in recognition of this that I here draw together voices from across the long history of critical consideration of this poem. How should we identify the “voices” of the third satire’s opening scene? How should we understand the imagined context of their encounter? Who is the subject of *stertimus*? What exactly is a *comes*? For how long does he speak? The production of manuscripts, editions, and translations necessarily predicates how the poem is read; modern presentations of the text range from minimalist editorial interferences to the highly interventionist. The difficulties of punctuating the dialogue in this satire become still more striking when one observes that the number of meaningful lexical variants and conjectures is small by comparison.

The controversy raised by these lines is seen most plainly on the modern printed page, in both editions and translations, the first seven lines alone exhibit several divergences. Casaubon’s approach in his 1605 edition was entirely different even from the area of relative agreement among both prior and subsequent scholars:

... *quinta dum linea tangitur umbra.*
En quid agis? siccas insana canicula messes 5
Iamdudum coquit, & patula pecus omne sub ulmo est.
Vnus ait comitum: uerúmne? itáne? ocyus adsit

Casaubon believed Persius to maintain the role of the Stoic philosopher from the start: the beginning is not a scene-setting as much as it is the beginning of a speech without introduction, as is typical of satirical writers; the tradition before him that took the *comes* to be the philosopher

Are you sure? Really? Quick, someone come here. No one around? My bottle-green bile is swelling: my head is splitting – you’d think all the herds of Arcadia were braying. Now my book come to hand, and the two-tone parchment smoothed of hair, some paper and a jointed reed pen. Then we start whining: the liquid hangs from the nib too thickly, but when water’s added, the black cuttle ink thins and we whine that the reed keeps globbing together the diluted drops.

F

“You idiot, more idiotic by the day, is this the state we’ve got to? Oh, why don’t you act like a pigeon chick or a little prince instead, and demand your baby food cut up into tiny pieces, and throw a tantrum and refuse to let your mommy sing you to sleep?”

P

But how can I work with a pen like this? ...

F

“Who are you fooling? Why do you keep reciting these evasions? It’s your move. You’re mindlessly draining away—you’ll be a laughingstock...

think all the herds in Arcadia were setting up a bray.

Now he takes the book into his hand, and the parchment, which has had the hair taken off and shows two colours, and the paper, and the jointed reed. Next we begin to complain that the ink is thick and clots on the pen; and then, when the water is poured in, that the blackness of the liquor is ruined, and that the implement makes two washy drops instead of one. Poor creature! poorer and poorer every day! is it come to this? Had you not better at once go on like pet pigeons and babies of quality, asking to have your food chewed for you, and pettishly refusing to let mammy sing you to sleep?

‘Can I work with a pen like this?’ Whom are you trying to take in? What do you mean by these whimpering evasions? It is *your* game that’s playing, you are dribbling away like a simpleton, as you are. You will be held cheap...

Both translations are highly interventionist and mutually incompatible. Conington made sense of the text for his reader by introducing a third voice, a “narrator.” “The speaker is one of my lord’s companions” is as much argument as translation. This narrator presumably makes the observation “Now he takes the book into his hand...,” awkwardly separating the related *iam liber... uenit...* (10-11) from *tum querimur...* (12-13), where the temporal-adverbial *iam* and *tum* must conjoin one moment that precipitates the next: the receipt of writing materials and the discovery of their dysfunction. Conington frames the perplexing interplay of sensations and voices with his narrator who enables the presentation of a coherent “scene.” Braund, on the other hand, presents the lines as a “script” for a scene, to some extent in alignment with Casaubon’s theory of the satirist’s

switching roles and personae among the satires. The translation, however, awkwardly transforms the subjective sense-impressions of the room and the state of the body into statements seemingly addressed to another while at the same time hedging on how much is vocalized by placing quotation marks only around the words she attributes to the “friend” (F).

My point here is not to detract from the efforts of Conington and Braund at making intelligible for the reader-in-translation a poem often deemed unintelligible. Rather, the range of possible (and incompatible) readings generated by the text, and the impossibility of definitively “fixing” these lines, indicate that it is the text itself that is divisive, and, as we shall see, it is the text itself that thematizes the difficulties of its own division. Early readers—presenters of the text—also tried their hand at explanations of the scene: as in the case of the first satire, manuscript evidence indicates that both medieval and modern readers share concerns about how to begin a reading of a satire of Persius. The reader of **O** provides a re-narration of the scene in between the lines of the Latin.¹²⁷ The reader of **K** attributes the first four lines to a *paedagogus*, apparently, on this view, rousing the sleeper, who is marked *dormiens* repeatedly in the margins.¹²⁸ That reader seems to agree with the traditional scholiast, who reads the satire as belonging to a scene in which a teacher (*paedagogus*) attacks a student (*scolasticus*) in front of him for laziness, using his ill behavior as a proxy (and point of departure) for the vices of others in the world. But the scholiast doubles this interpretation: *et cum inducit paedagogum obiurgantem scolasticum... et inducit unum ex comitibus alium castigantem*. The companion (*unus comitum*) according to the *Commentum* rouses the sleeper who rises, calls for his servants, and expresses his irritation at their slowness to appear. The scholiast understands the poet’s voice to be the voice of the companion to some extent:

¹²⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Auct. F. 1. 15, fol. 83v (O).

¹²⁸ Křivoklát, Castle Library, I. D. 31, fol. 1v (K).

the question *an tali studeam calamo?* belongs to the student while *cui uerba?* and *Quid istas succinis ambages?* belong to the poet, presumably with the voice of the companion or teacher.

Now, some time later, “Housman’s ghost has lingered over Satire 3 for decades,” as Hooley has put it.¹²⁹ Indeed, the 1913 piece precipitated a tiny but lively industry of scholarship working out how to understand the controversial lines. Housman proposed something like an erasure of characters and scene by offering the idea that the satire gives us not two, not three “speakers,” but just one; the apparent diversity of voices represents an internal psychological tug-of-war between a higher and a lower self, not a dialogue staged between individuals.¹³⁰ This suggestion was challenged on the grounds that such a poem would be an unprecedented, unlikely production.¹³¹ The longevity, persistence, and manifest insolubility of the question, however, suggest that expectation may not be especially informative.¹³² And in fact scenes of self-contemplation are represented in Roman literature, not only by Seneca (for example in *De Ira* III.36), but also by Persius himself, in this very satire: a man pales at night at his own thoughts, which are incapable of being shared even with his nearest and dearest (*Sat.* III.42-43). D’Alessandro-Behr has used the methods of Bakhtinian dialogic analysis to propose that, on the one hand, the boundaries between the voices are dissolved by the poet (since they share vocabulary from differing registers and since the grammatical persons change) and, on the other, that the third satire presents a dialogue among strongly embodied characters.¹³³

¹²⁹ Hooley (1997: 202).

¹³⁰ Housman (1913).

¹³¹ Hendrickson (1928).

¹³² On readers’ expectation and elusive voicing, see Wehrle (1992: 39-44).

¹³³ D’Alessandro Behr (2005).

Some difficulties of the text seem to me to be overstated, some instances of grammatical person not so mystifying. For example, when addressing the sick patient, the phrase *temptemus fauces* (113) should not make us speculate on the presence of some further character.¹³⁴ Doctors and dentists often say, “Let’s see now...” or “Let’s open wide...” without patients jumping out of their skins wondering whether there be additional persons in the examination room. Similarly, if I told you that one of my friends woke me up this morning (*unus ait comitum*, 7), you would probably not leap to the thought that a throng of friends crowded my bedroom and only of one of them came forward to speak. At the same time, while some—even much—of the appeal of this poem lies in the elusive and meandering quality of its voices, as Reckford has advised, the performative demand of Roman *lectio* requires that the lines be readable, that is, readable aloud. Certain aspects of the opening scene are clarified as it proceeds: the interruption *en...* (5) is certainly an intrusion upon the sleeper.

The better question, rather, is: What is the pay-off from Persius’ composing the scene in this way, in which we are given very little information about the interruptor, the voice which becomes, as the poet continues to snore away, the diatribist? Here it is instructive to adduce Horace’s *Serm.* II, 3, the confrontation with and diatribe of Damasippus, a poem that has much lexical and thematic, and some formal, influence on Persius’ third satire. In Horace, the players in this *sermo* are provided in the first line, by the *scribis* of Damasippus (*Serm.* II, 3.1), who is identified by “Horace” at the first opportunity (16). In Persius, the opening scene focuses on emergence from the (drunken) darkness: The light, the time, and the liminal state precede the entrance of the voice that sets things in motion. Persius likes to play with false starts—indeed we have already seen this phenomenon in *Satire* I, where the didactic trajectory of the first line is immediately thwarted by

¹³⁴ D’Alessandro Behr (2005: 277).

the objection of the second, and in *Satire 2*, where the genial address to Macrinus gives way to a diatribe on hypocrisy after just five lines.

Persius' rewriting of the Damasippus scene has the following important effect: his first person overture (*stertimus*) disallows the ironizing of the critic's accusations. By introducing the subject's vice (and voice) before the words of censure from an alternate voice break into the scene, Persius removes the waking writer's capacity to undermine the accusations themselves. Horace's accuser is simultaneously identified and undermined: Damasippus himself has already proven a failure; his foray into philosophy is a second, recuperative career. We are prepared to question his lecturing at the writer. Horace's responses to the man are subtle (and not-so-subtle) critiques of his own that Damasippus seems not fully to process but that call for the ironizing complicity of the reader: May the gods give you... a barber! (*di te, Damasippe, deaeque/ uerum ob consilium donent tonsore, Serm. II, 3.16-17*) and Yes, I, too, am shocked you've been cured of your previous madness for cash (*noui,/ et miror morbi purgatum te illius, Serm. II, 3.26-27*). In Horace's closing scene, when Damasippus starts to cast barbs that are a little too close to home (You live beyond your means, *Serm. II, 3.24*), Horace pulls the plug: he has the final word, reminding Damasippus, and us, that—whatever the truth of his accusations may be—Damasippus is ever the worse man (*o maior tandem parcas, insane, minori! Serm. II, 3.326*). Persius' scene, by contrast, attests to the subject's dissolution in advance of the criticism, making evasion of the barbs impossible; the subject is indeed an uncivilized drunk; he has told us so in his own person (*stertimus, 3* and *findor, Sat. III.9*).

The divergence from the Damasippus satire, important though Horace's poem is to Persius, could scarcely be greater with respect to staging. Importantly, only the subject of Persius' satire is embodied in the opening scene: *unus comitum*, like the slave who evidently must later bring the

subject his supplies, is *disembodied*, outside the interest of the subject. Of course, this alternate voice is a product of the student's imagination: Persius told us as much in the first satire when he revealed his method for creating the patently fictive interlocutor (*quisquis es, o modo quem ex aduerso dicere feci, Sat. I.44*). The solipsism of the subject in *Satire III* is reflected in his own radical embodiment: we get much information about his existence as a body and none about the existence of the other—not even the name. We have seen the disembodied voice before, and not only in *quisquis es*. The absent poet and diatribist of the prologue and *Satires I* and *II* similarly resisted identification. The Subject is unable to speak or to respond coherently: aborted attempts at dialogue result in its abdication in favor of diatribe. In this new poem, the subject has passed the responsibility for diatribe on to the fictive interlocutor this time, radically shifting the direction of critique from other to self, or self-as-other, i.e. the subject is the object.

Digest

Here, in fairness, I submit my translation of the same lines:

Nempe haec adsidue, iam clarum mane fenestras
intrat et angustas extendit lumine rimas.
stertimus, indomitum quod despumare Falernum
sufficiat, quinta dum linea tangitur umbra.
'en quid agis? siccas insana canicula messes
iam dudum coquit et patula pecus omne sub ulmo est,'
unus ait comitum. verumne? itan? ocius adsit
huc aliquis. nemon? turgescit uitrea bilis:
findor, ut Arcadiae pecuaria rudere credas.
iam liber et positus bicolor membrana capillis
inque manus chartae nodosaque uenit harundo.
tum querimur crassus calamo quod pendeat umor.
nigra sed infusa uanescit sepia lymphā,
dilutas querimur geminet quod fistula guttas.
o miser inque dies ultra miser, hucine rerum
uenimus? a, cur non potius teneroque columbo
et similis regum pueris pappare minutum
poscis et iratus mammae lallare recusas?

an tali studeam calamo? cui uerba? quid istas
succinis ambages? tibi luditur. ecfluis amens,
contemnere. (Sat. III.1-21)

Of course, this constantly is what it is: now bright A.M. is getting into the windows and widening the narrow cracks with its light. We're snoring, enough to despume a stiff Falernian, while the line is touched by shade no. 5. 'Hey, what're you doing? The raging Dog Star's been cooking the dried crops for some time already and the whole herd's beneath the spreading elm,' says a friend. Really? Is that so? Someone better get here, fast! No one? Glassy bile is swelling: I'm being split open, so you'd think that the cattle of Arcadia were mooing. Now a book and its two-colored—hairs removed—skin and the pages and knotty pen come into my hands. Then we complain because a thick glob hangs from the reed. But black fluid keeps vanishing once the ink is poured in. Then we complain that the nib doubles the diluted drops. Oh, you wreck, a wreck every day hereafter, have we come to this point in life? ah, why no better than either a tender dove or the sons of kings are you refusing to nurse a little, and should you reject your nurse's lullaby? Well, could I work with such a pen? For whom are these words? Why are you droning on with these evasions? The joke's on you.¹³⁵ You're flowing out of your mind. You're a nothing...

With this operating account of how the opening lines are passed from the sleeping subject to the diatribist in view, the poem's more general trajectory may be outlined. The first several lines are marked by a density of time markers. The immutability of the human condition that the satire is about to describe (*adsidue*) is made particular and specific by the subsequent time markers. Persius opens his third satire with remarkable certainty: everything is constantly this way. His *adsidue* looks backwards upon the human condition (*Sat. I, 1 and 9-10*) that he has observed for us and forwards to the personal incapacities about to be revealed. The poet then applies the condition of perpetuity to the specific moments. The scene first introduces the sleeper as he wakes, snoringly late, documenting each moment of his undignified *levée*. The scene is focalized through

¹³⁵ I render this translation by analogy to *ludos facere alicui*. It makes better sense in the context of the preceding and following ridicule than interrupting the ridicule with allusion to a new metaphor.

the opening of an eye, mediated through the body and senses of the sleeper: the moment (*iam*) is defined by the impression in dark space of morning (*mane*) light broadening the gaps around a shutter (*Sat.* III.1-2). This movement of light and shadow causes the sleeper to surmise that the fifth shadow is arriving at the hour-line (*Sat.* III.4).

After the moment of morning has been related impressionistically, an importantly alternate voice (a “friend”) draws the subject’s attention to the time outside the room. The hour is reiterated by the phrase *canicula messes/ iam dudum coquit* (*Sat.* III.5-6): the noonday is baking the crops, further afield. The disruptive *en quid agis?* (*Sat.* III.5) that has goaded the sleeper to concern (*uerumne?* 7) ends in inaction. The adoption of his friend’s concern for the late hour is immediately upended. The sleeper catches on to the state of the fields; he proves it by appropriating the trope of the countryside and reformulating that language as the rustic state of the body, emitting its own lowing (*Arcadiae pecuaria rudere credas*, *Sat.* III.9). So the origins of pastoral. The petulant innards of the first satire burst with liquid (*turgescit uitrea bilis:/ findor*, *Sat.* III.8-9): the poet’s body comes into being and makes itself known at once with its rupture, his somatic reaction to the unfortunate news that time passes. Finally, *iam* (*Sat.* III.10) and *tum* (*Sat.* III.12) revert to the subject’s experience, his reception of writing materials (*inque manus...uenit*, 11).

Interest in the mechanics of his own body is succeeded by a solipsism that persists as the sleeper attempts to engage and act in the world. Preparing to write what we are about to read—and have read thus far—he huffily demands assistance (*ocius adsit/ huc aliquis*, *Sat.* III.7-8). Whereas Horace recognized the presence of his slave where pertinent to action (for example, *Serm.* I, 9.9-10), Persius’ assistant is recognized only when, infuriatingly, he is not there (*nemon?* *Sat.* III.8). When the “help” finally has arrived, with the required items in hand, the poet does not recognize his presence, that someone, anyone (*aliquis*) has transferred the writing supplies to him,

as something along the lines of “paper and pen are handed to me”¹³⁶ might achieve. Instead, paper and pen *uenit* into his hands (10-11), an experiential description that emphasizes his passivity. The pen is faulty, leaky, impossible to work with (*Sat.* III.12-14 and 19). As difficulties with his tools proliferate, writing turns out to be harder than whispering into a ditch—the satirist’s vain activity in the first satire. Reiterating the Midas allusion in that earlier poem’s communication failure, in the third satire the pen is Persius’ *harundo* (*Sat.* III.11), reedy conductor of the unspeakable. Persius will attempt to transmit his secret via reed after all, but his is a split transmitter.

The declaration of the subject’s everlasting wretchedness (*o miser inque dies ultra miser*, 15) reverts to the notion of perpetuity that opened the piece (*adsidue*, 1). Between lines 16 and 34, the subject’s moral failures are analogized by the alternate voice from infancy to death: the accusations leveled against him range from baby-talk (16-18) to an ethical death by drowning, an allusion to the Stoic lesson that he who drowns in only three feet of water drowns all the same—and so ends the life of him who tries but fails to be virtuous (*Sat.* III.33-34). We have seen metaphors of cooking and consumption already in the first satire’s morsels and the second satire’s sausages and unmixed juices. Here, the fatal adverse effects of consumption appear in the object’s belt-loosening and visceral fatness (*Sat.* III.31-34). Intervening between these two moments—the baby talk and the death—are an accusation of malformation (*udum et molle lutum es*, *Sat.* III.23): the sleeper is wet clay that will not survive the tap-test. This last is an allusion to the metaphor employed by philosophers (e.g. Socrates in *Phileb.* 55c and Diogenes the Cynic in *Diog. L.* VI, 30) for the testing of propositions and ideas, but here the poet applies the test to the whole self: This pot’s got to go back to the wheel.

¹³⁶ Contrast Ramsay’s “We now take up our book...” (1965: 345).

Jupiter, please punish tyrants who are moved by desire (35): This is Persius' new prayer—the last one we heard was at the end of *Satire II*, in which he declared that his prayers were better than those of the public and promised a *compositum ius fasque animo sanctosque recessus* (*Sat.* II.73)—the abstract prayer of an absent satirist. The tyrants here are those who are shackled by the psychic tyranny of misplaced desire (e.g. Epict. *Disc.* I, 19). So the analogy through which the man who cannot bear the terror of his inner life is compared to torture by the tyrant Dionysius (*Sat.* III.39-43).

We then proceed to reminiscence of the speaker's boyhood and his calculated failure to perform at school, to read or speak. The scene significantly revises the scenes of Horace's father attending that poet's lessons (*Serm.* I, 6.71-88; *memini...*, *Sat.* III.44), the diatribist says. What does he remember? The story cannot emerge from the life of this fatherless poet.¹³⁷ Persius' assertion of memory marks allusion to the earlier satirist's scene but also something more: Is he the reincarnated Horace, by dint of that metempsychosis which Ennius claimed and which our poet will appropriate in *Satire VI*?¹³⁸ Persius' own boyhood scene charms: the disappointed father sweating with anxiety, the son's preference for games rather than Stoic recitations, the gamble a greater concern than mortality (44-51). The subversion of lessons and the survival of boyhood are related without remorse; it is not until we read *haut tibi* (52), that that story is presented as a negative example for the subject, and we realize that it is not a variation on one of Horace's stories about *lippitudo*, blariness as a stock site of humor. The diatribist fixes his attention on the incongruity of the writer's philosophical-educational pedigree and his evident (in)capacity to function: still, even now he is snoring (*Sat.* III.58); yesterday's bender wafts from his gaping jaws;

¹³⁷ cf. *Vita* 7.

¹³⁸ I shall treat metempsychosis at length in Chapter 7.

not only is he not a straight shooter (*Sat.* III.60), but he attempts to pursue birds by slinging potsherds and mud (*Sat.* III.61)—bits of his own malformed substance (*Sat.* III.21-24).

Lines 63-76 adopt the deixis and multiple interlocutory mode characteristic of diatribe: see them asking for medicine—they (you) don't even know what true ailment is sneaking up on them that cannot be negotiated away (*Sat.* III.63-65). You, plural, (they) must learn the nature of the universe, the point of human existence, the best uses of material goods, and god's intention for you, singular (*Sat.* III.66-72). Also: don't be envious of the wealthy with their full larders (*Sat.* III.73-76). The diatribist has taken us outdoors, to the streets.

Here, some young musclebound jock takes his turn lampooning philosophers, who, he says, mumble useless nonsense at the ground, mindlessly chewing on their lips while contemplating the type of lesson just recommended by the diatribist: nothing comes from from nothing (*Sat.* III.77-84). He and his buddies are doubled over, usurping the roles of the satirist with their sneering noses and laughter (*ingeminat tremulos naso crispante cachinnos*, *Sat.* III.87; cf. *Sat.* I.12 and 118). The centurions tell us something new about the lessons to which the subject has been exhorted: Don't skip your lunch over it (*Sat.* III.85).

The diatribist returns from his excursus into philosophical life lessons and the rebuttal from the street satirist. He returns to and watches closely one of the sick men asking for a doctor (*Sat.* III.88-89). After a brief convalescence he goes back to the bottle (90-93) to whose ill effects we were introduced in line 3 with the trenchant Falernian hangover. He is interrupted: "Hey, buddy, you're getting pale" (*Sat.* III.94). The consumption of fatty feasts in Persius' world leads to sickness and death of the sort that form the negative *exempla* of *Satire* III. The man is so riddled with gout—disease of the rich—that the standardly prescribed hellebore is useless to this drunken, gluttoned, farting man whose teeth shed bits of sauce as they chatter in his last moments (98-102).

This scene recalls the opening scene of the poem in the following ways: first, the person's symptoms of dissolution are his gaping exhalation and his fondness for drink (*aegris/ faucibus exsuperat gravis halitus, Sat. III.88-89; gutture sulphureas lente exhalante mēfites, Sat. III.99; lenia loturo sibi Surrentina*¹³⁹ *rogabit, 93*); second, the interrupting voice of correction is unidentified, but on familiar terms (*heus bone, Sat. III.94*). The sick man is beyond correction by the alternate voice; the remainder of his body falls apart and he's carried out feet first (*Sat. III.100-106*).

The satire's closing scene shows no sign that the diatribist's interlocutor has changed or that he has switched locations in the city (e.g. *poscentis uideas, Sat. III.64; hic aliquis, 77; qui dicit, 90*). Since it is context-less, I suggest that it is the subject who plausibly returns and is the diatribist's final interlocutor. He has endured his "friend's" repeated flogging and has sat through that extended fable of the sick body (*Sat. III.63-106*). It does not apply: I'm not your guy; I'm not sick (*tange, miser... nil calet hic, Sat. III.107-108*). The diatribist has already censured the subject for living like Natta, whose self-indulgence required undoing his belt (*Sat. III.31*). He makes a final pitch at the sleeper: Does his fundamental disease not make itself known through his bodily responses to the temptations in the world before him (*Sat. III.109-111*)? That this final interlocutor is an embodiment of or variation upon the subject is evident in his identification with oral and guttural problems: An ulcer is latent in his mouth, his throat must be scraped with curative modest foods: the plain beets and cabbages recommended to avert the fate of that putrefying glutton (*Sat. III.111-114*) turn out not only to be handy scrapers for an oral ulcer but also to be laxatives for the whole entire tract.¹⁴⁰ The "friend" holds a final torch to the subject's eyes: they are all madness (*Sat. III.115-118*).

¹³⁹ On the high quality of the Surrentine, see Purcell (1985: 16ff.) on evidence from Pliny.

¹⁴⁰ Bartsch (2015: 41-42, 61, 75-77, and 88-89) on digestive health.

“Ainsi, lecteur, je suis moi-même la matière de mon livre.”

As we have seen, references to the poet in the *Prologue* and in the first two satires have been oblique; the first person in those earlier poems asserts what he is *not*, what he does not—perhaps cannot—do. The self-named *semipaganus* (an epithet highly subject to interpretation and therefore but a half-identification) recuses himself from the poetic tradition in the *Prologue*. The first person of *Satire I* appears in his recognition of his interlocutor’s fictionality (*o modo quem... feci*, *Sat. I.44*), his rejection of audience praise (*Sat. I.45-46*), his frustration over where he might find an audience (*nec cum scrobe?* *Sat. I.119*), and his related concern for the character of his *lector* (*Sat. I.123-126*). Nowhere is he an embodied character walking down the *Via Sacra* or rubbing elbows with the intelligentsia of a new empire. The “programmatically” poems, *Prologue* and *Satire I*, position that disembodied diatribist’s voice against poets who are very much tied to their bodies—the stomach of the birds (*Prolog. 11*) and the throat, nose, and mouth of the performers (*Sat. I.17* and 33-35). The disembodied “I” thoroughly incorporates his performer (with his “little eye”) and audience (with their privates) and his non-existent reader (ear and pallor over his books, perhaps a stand-in for the absent poet’s somatic response to reading) in *Satire I*, hypocrites (with tongue, saliva, fingers, eyes) in *Satire II*. Earlier satirists have visible body parts (nose and jaw) while Persius’ single somatic mark is unseeable, the inscrutable spleen of *Satire I*, which finally erupts into our view with the cleaving of his body only in *Satire III*. In the second satire, he is even more effaced: his *ego* addresses a prayer to Jupiter—an attack against his target; his final offertory is similarly a rejection of the vows and votives of others. In those poems, the poet is the voice of diatribe. This voice—a laugh permitted not even to whisper—is the extent to which the poet is present to his readers and targets.

In *Satire III*, we are introduced to a highly embodied satirist, a helpless body without integrity: exhaling liquid (*Sat.III.3*), swelling and side-splitting with bile, involuntary lowing (*Sat.III.8-9*), mind dribbling (*Sat.III.20*), head hanging, jaws gaping (*Sat.III.58-59*). The penetrable audience (*Sat. I.21-22*) is replaced by a subject whose orifices are examined and insides are in full view (*findor, Sat.III.9; ego te intus in cute noui, Sat.III.30; temptemus fauces, Sat.III.113*), just where the medical discourse that Bartsch has examined gains its full currency. Finally to know that elusive poet is to know him *too* intimately, in his skin, his body open. What we find there is all bile and methane.

Painfully aware, at last, of his body, the poet transfers somatic qualities onto the objects before him. The split-open writer is re-embodied in his writing materials. *Membrana* (parchment, *Sat. III.10*) is not merely *variatio* for *charta* (paper, i.e. papyrus) or for *liber*, which appear in the next lines.¹⁴¹ No, the corporeality of the parchment is emphasized by reminders of its production: a once hairy site (*positis...capillis, Sat.III.10*), it is *bicolor* because it was the interface between a body's innards and an outer condition. The writing surface is animal, rather than vegetable. A book is a body. The herd animals to which the friend alluded are present not only in the body of the writer but also in his book. *Membrana* is the material of a slow writer, too.¹⁴² *Scriptitauit et raro et tarde* (*Vita* 41). The text is its material: its split body is Persius' split body, its running ink Persius spilling out of his mind (*uanescit sepia, Sat.III.13; ecfluis amens, Sat.III.20*). The rustic origin of the pen is emphasized by *nodosa* (*Sat.III.11*), just as the term *bicolor* acts upon the parchment: the knots of the reed reflect Persius' interest in the roots of his book's materials, their organic

¹⁴¹ For *membrana*/ parchment as writing surface (rather than book surface), see Birt (1882: 57-61).

¹⁴² Quintilian tells us that wax tablets allow greater facility and flexibility in writing; parchment slows the writer down and the ink it requires is also a retarding distraction, as seen amply here in Persius (*Inst. Orat.* X, 3.31-33).

substance. Each iteration of the pen—*harundo* (*Sat.*III.11), *calamo* (*Sat.*III.12), *fistula* (*Sat.*III.14)—is imperfect; the knotty reed also turns out to be both too thick (*crassus*, *Sat.*III.12) and its ink too watery (*uanescit*, *Sat.*III.13). But the attribution of “knotty” to the pen is also an epithet transferred to the difficulty of the present poem; from the moment pen touches the paper, the writing splinters (*geminet quod fistula*, *Sat.*III.14). The bad poet blames his tools (*querimur*, *Sat.*III.14). The writing materials are a figure for Persius’ ambivalent poetics in this satire; pen is a metonym for the mind. The emanations from this dysfunctional mind, like the doubled book and doubling pen, are doublesong (*succinis ambages*, *Sat.*III.20).

Persius’ references to his text, from the address to his book in the first satire (*uidi, uidi ipse, libelle*, *Sat.* I.120) to the multi-stage appearance of the book in the third, recall another disheveled little book, addressed in the first poem of Ovid’s *Tristia*: *Parue—nec inuideo—sine me, liber, ibis in urbem* (*Trist.* I, 1.1). Theirs are blotted texts (*liturarum*, *Trist.* I, 1.13; *dilutas guttas*, *Sat.* III.14). Both poets stage these texts as diminutive and decrepit objects in search of a reader of a rare, perhaps even eluding, temperament, one that enables the imagined *lector*’s empathy with the author. As we have seen, Persius’ imagined reader (*Sat.* I.123-130) has an ear tuned for Persius and reads Attic Comedy in a way that is very rare and particularly Persian; he knows not to laugh at the low-hanging fruit but rather at some unarticulated quality of Comedy (politics? human vices?). To fulfill this set of prerequisites is quite possibly impossible for a non-fictional reader, perhaps for anyone who is non-identical to the poet himself. Ovid’s imagined reader will be one who sighs with Ovid and cries with Ovid (*qui me suspiret* and *nec siccis...genis*; cf. *lacrimis... meis*, *Trist.* I, 1.27-28 and 14). Unlike the tradition of poetry that asserts privacy and a small, elite readership, such as the *lectores* of Catullus and Horace, both the *Tristia* and the *Satires* assert that

their readership may not exist and that their physical manifestation in the world does little to attract a readership.

The *Tristia* are missives meant to represent their author where he himself may not go (*ei mihi, quo domino non licet ire tuo!*, *Trist.* I, 1.2). Ovid's conceit is epistolary—and answers Horace's less desperate letter. In the final poem of *Epistulae* I, Horace presents himself at odds with his *liber*: in spite of having been reared for a private audience, the book wishes to go out in the world. The poem is an *envoi* to itself and its book: *fuge quo descendere gestis* (*Ep.* I, 20.5). In spite of the poet's assertion that these *Epistulae* were written for private circulation, the book is ready for the world and will live its own life, as from a desirable youth to a reminiscing old age, when it is to represent its poet favorably (*Ep.* I, 20.19-28). The book is polished (*pumice mundus*, *Ep.* I, 20.1) and calculated to be dear to the public upon release (*carus eris Romae*, *Ep.* I, 20.10), as the poet himself has been pleasing (*placuisse*, *Ep.* I, 20.23). In these two cases, the text's fictive body conforms to the character of its author. In the case of Horace, the body is *mundus* in keeping with the Horatian expressions of refinement; of Ovid, it is *incultus* in keeping with the disarranged appearance of a lamenter. Unlike the finish of Horace's book, the *Tristia* will be rough (*hirsutus*, *Trist.* I, 1.12), unadorned (*nec te purpureo velent vaccinia fuco*, *Trist.* I, 1.5), and unpolished (*incultus*, *Trist.* I, 1.3).

Tristia I is a particularly good foil for *Satire* III because it presents poems that assert their own unreadiness and isolation even as they are consumed through publication. Persius and Ovid assert a fictive condition of and for their books, either text being impossible to copy and distribute in the malformed state pretended. The poet asks his *lector* or *auditor* to imagine that the words being read arise from some object other than that before him, to replace the copy and see the disordered “original.” Like Ovid, Persius rejects the pumice of Catullus' famously polished *libellus* and

Horace's missive. But Persius also rejects the completeness—whether nice or unadorned—of the books of both earlier poets. In spite of its unkempt appearance, Ovid's book is ready to go (*uade*, *Trist.* I, 1.3). Ovid's and Horace's texts are persons—representatives, reliable (Ovid) or not (Horace) of the poet. The inchoate state of Persius' *libellus*, meanwhile, reflects its infantile and waking author. The book in pieces reflects the poet in pieces. It is Persius alone who presents his *corpus* as it comes into being—in the middle of writing, at the middle of his book.

Progress

The fissures of body and materials result in the poet's inarticulate sounds (*lallare*, *Sat.* III.18; *succinis*, 20; *maligne respondet*, 21-22) and split writing, the substantiation of a split mind that is given to inarticulacy (which proves ultimately unsustainable as it yields to the mode of the diatribist). The attention is drawn to the (in)activity of composition rather than of publication. Persius provides the splitting voice(s) of the satire's opening with a graphic equivalent: the cracking of the pen. Where at first his ink was an untenable glob, it now disperses and draws two lines on the page (*Sat.* III.14). The image of the written word persists: A philosopher's *upsilon* (metaphor for the paths of virtue and vice) regains its graphic importance (*Sat.* III.57-58). The letter has been drawn for you, and you are supposed to be grappling with the problem it represents. But Persius does not administer this lesson; instead, he composes an elaborate periphrasis for the very simplest of statements: *Y*. The philosopher and this poet have rather different ideas of the uses of letters. The philosopher-teacher introduces the letter to symbolize something important, that you are to take the matter of ethical choice seriously and that the paths of virtue and vice diverge at critical moments. Persius takes the letter as an opportunity to show off his flair for periphrasis,

in the drawn out; *Y* becomes instead a semantic joke: the image of divergence is his mouth, gaping open at its hinge (*conpage soluta*, 58).

Here it is necessary to assess Persius' philosophical commitments—not as a matter of citation, rhetorical technique, or expertise, but as a single, if major, component of a virtuosic poem. The diatribist's lectures conform showily to traditional Stoic methods, with *exempla* drawn from a diversity of philosophical and every day sources but all geared towards the purpose of motivation; such *exempla* in *Satire III*, however, fail in their protreptic purpose. This failure is deeply embedded in the structure of the poem—a failure which emerges from the conflict between the set of rhetorical techniques that traditionally teach progress on the one hand and entrenched thematic cyclicity on the other. Persius gestures extensively to particular Stoic philosophical-pedagogical practices; but their thematic repetition across the poem as a whole reveals their ultimate inefficacy.

Both Classical and Hellenistic schools of philosophy are relevant to this discussion because Persius' text gestures at their stock practitioners, and sometimes at specific texts in his corpus. To perceive even superficially the breadth of his engagement with representations of philosophy beyond Stoic maxims we need only to glance over each satire: e.g. Lucretius (*Sat. I.1*), Plato (*Sat. IV, passim*), Diogenes (*Sat. III.22-23*), the Cynics (*Sat. I.133*), Chrysippus (*Sat. VI.80*), Epicurean terminology (*Sat. II.63*), and, of course, Cornutus (*Sat. V, passim*). The Platonist seeks to reform the rational part of the soul in order to place it in a position of mastery over the non-rational parts; the Peripatetic, the philosopher least engaged by Persius, theorizes the source of moral feelings without proselytizing; the Cynic acts (or postures) as a living *exemplum* to the ostensible abdication of abstraction; the Epicurean guides his follower towards a (rigorously) pleasurable state. The Stoic works towards the improvement of the thoroughly rational mind—his fellow

strivers' mind in company with his own—through the development of a logic that will underpin action. The paradigm set by Zeno and Chrysippus is meant to engage the minds of progressors by training them in the proper use of logic and syllogism.¹⁴³ Noticing that early-stage students may lack the motivation to embark on these labors in the first place, the later (imperial) Stoic may use rhetoric that goes out of its way initially to rouse his addressees' emotions and interest in self-improvement. Such stirring rhetoric, however, ought only to be deployed in the service of turning others in the direction of a rational understanding that will ultimately disavow, and teach its students to disavow, emotion. Ideally, rousing rhetoric is used for protreptic purposes only; in fact, any continued reliance on raised emotions would indicate that the *proficiens* has not made progress in logic or ethical philosophy more generally. The ultimate goal of a Stoic is “precisely to improve his own and others' minds—their grasp of philosophical truths on the basis of the reasons that in fact make them true...”¹⁴⁴ Even Epictetus' vigorous diatribes alternate between violent and civilized *exempla* of ethical behavior. Cornutus' *Epidrome* for the beginner student of philosophy is tranquil, lucid; it both exemplifies and recommends application of reason in order to reduce the possibility of disturbance.

The rhetoric pertaining to the mind's fundamental ability to be molded appears in Persius' reference to the mind as clay and the urgency of getting the subject-as-pot to the wheel (*Sat.* III.23). Likewise, Persius' techniques roughly conform to contemporary extant models of protreptic rhetoric. The hortatory *praecepta* are meant for Stoic beginners and progressors; *exempla* of behavior are adjoined to those *praecepta* in order to illustrate the consequences of virtuous and

¹⁴³ See Roller (2015), Long (2002: 97-112), and Krueger (1996).

¹⁴⁴ See Cooper (2006: 46-48). Seneca, Cooper argues, does fully not adhere to this model; his use of emotional rhetoric sometimes obviates his purpose.

vicious motivation and behavior. Persius gives shorter shrift to *decreta* (statements of universal principles) and places a relatively greater emphasis on *praecepta* (hortatory and protreptic statements). He relies most heavily on exemplarity, albeit with some shades of difference from other “Stoic” practitioners: exemplarity in Seneca and Epictetus is often historical, legendary, or political (e.g. Agrippinus in Epict. *Diss.* I, 1; Alexander in Sen., *Epist. Mor.* 94.62-63); Seneca’s historical *exempla* often present vicious behavior as models of what to avoid; Epictetus’ very often present virtuous behavior (in any case negative figures are frequently paired with equal and opposite positive figures, e.g. Heracles and Odysseus in *Diss.* III, 24.) Persius’ *exempla* are often contemporary or literary and feature mundane characters rather than men of distinction; the *exempla* of *Satire* III are uniformly illustrative of vice (the insanity of the final addressee, the greed and lust of the coin-spotter, the shortsightedness of the “patient,” the avarice of the merchant, willfull moral ignorance of the centurion). The counter-argument that satire demands depictions of the debased, of the disgusting, only raises the point that Persius’ *choice* of genre is itself a perverse one.

The models of Seneca and Epictetus show us that *exempla* are best conjoined to *praecepta* in order for the precepts to be pedagogically effective: the *praecepta* with which a Stoic teacher frames his didactic anecdotes predict the vice or virtue of the exemplar and encourage the student to act in the future in a way that is informed by his new knowledge. Persius’ diatribist is similar to the “impassioned”¹⁴⁵ improver of self and others like Seneca and Epictetus; this is very much a departure from the un(der)heated, unemotional didacticism of Cornutus, whose *Compendium* demonstrates the unremitting application of logic to empower his student to engage in the world precisely without the emotions raised by conflict and confusion (*Epilogue*). *Praecepta* under

¹⁴⁵ to use the epithet of Cooper (2006: 45).

Roller's model of Stoic teaching are characterized by "deontic language and syntax: imperatives, futures with imperative force, the passive periphrastic conjugation, verbs like *debeo*."¹⁴⁶ We see these across Persius' little corpus, but the frequency of such *praecepta* increases significantly in *Satire III*; this in contrast to *Satires I and II*, where Persius observes vices in others in order to distinguish the character of his own speech, rather than to instruct his targets. But in *Satire III* Persius' diatribist warns: "Face your encroaching disease" (*uenienti occurrite morbo, Sat. III.64*); "Learn, you wrecks, and get to know the rules of the universe" (*discite et, o miseri, causas cognoscite rerum, Sat. III.66*), a *praeceptum* immediately followed by a series of unexplicated *decreta*; "learn and don't be envious..." (*disce nec inuideas...*, *Sat. III.73*).

Persius' manifest engagement with Stoic pedagogical techniques necessarily causes us to ask: to what end? Are deontic language, exemplarity, and lessons rendered here as verse equivalents to the speech of an active teacher or are they subordinate to some other, not entirely coextensive, program of the poem? Moreover, the extreme specificity of the passage of time discussed above ("Digest") throws into relief the confusion of the ages of life that unfolds within the satire.¹⁴⁷ By setting up the expectation of forward movement, time markers (*iam*, etc.) throw into relief the failure of human progress as projected within the poem. Persius draws our attention to the immutability of life through time, and he even rapidly supplies an entire life cycle within the first 34 lines. Childhood is invoked when the subject of the current moment is likened to a child (*regum pueris, Sat. III.17*); an adolescence of sorts comes into view when he is likened to clay in need of shaping, shaping at that very moment (*nunc, nunc properandus, Sat. III.23*); and then comes emergence from a great family into adulthood (*stemmate quod Tusco ramum millesime*

¹⁴⁶ Roller (2015: 133).

¹⁴⁷ For the significance of knowing/ not knowing the time in Roman satire, i.e. Horace, see Reckford (1997) on *Serm. II.6*.

ducis... vel quod trabeate salutas? Sat. III.28-29). This trajectory recurs through more extended scenes: childhood (Sat. III.44-51) and adolescence (Sat. III.52-57); sickness (Sat. III.63-65); and, again, sickness and death close out the poem (Sat. III.88-106). The “development” from youth to old age is observed not in one addressee but over a range of the characters we encounter; this is the fulfillment of what was promised early in the first satire: *tum cum ad canitiam et nostrum istud uiuere triste/ aspexi ac nucibus facimus quaecumque relictis* (“...then, when I’ve looked upon white hairs and this our sad living and whatever it is we do once toys have been left behind,” Sat.I.9-10). But at no point in the life of man, from four legs to three, is virtue attained.

The education in philosophy featured in this satire is defined by its incompleteness; lessons are given but not apprehended. The dying words of Rome’s most exemplary Stoic, Cato (himself reading Athens’ most exemplary Plato), are never spoken (Sat. III.45). The centurion’s lampoon of the philosopher (Sat. III.85) goes uncorrected and unchallenged. The sick man follows his doctor’s instructions for just three days before going back to the bottle (Sat. III.90-93). The recollection of Diogenes’ maxim that the education of a youth is like the molding of clay (*lutum*, Sat. III.23) into a pot provides a metaphor that the poet merely converts into all the messiness of mud. Persius’ youth flings his mud (*luto*, Sat. III.61), and he is sure to exit life muddied (*lutatus*, Sat. III.104), just like the negative exemplum before him, whom he stubbornly refuses to see as a version of himself. The metaphorical muddiness of his mind prefigures the corporeal muddiness of his death. The motif’s continuity over the course of the poem homologizes the apparently disparate persons, and the vices of the speaking subject of the frame-scenes become assimilated with those of the targeted objects of the embedded diatribe. As patent as Stoic rhetoric is in this poem, so manifest is the failure of its pedagogy. While Persius’ diatribist makes use of pedagogical *praecepta* in *Satire III*, their greatest density is seen between lines 63 and 76, when he intensifies

his diatribic mode and manner, perhaps after seeing that his other techniques—direct criticism (*Sat.* III.15-34), prayer (*Sat.* III.35-43), and a personal *exemplum* (*Sat.* III.44)—have done nothing to deter the writer from falling back to snoring (*stertis adhuc*, *Sat.* III.58) half-way through the satire.

Like Persius' *amens, effluens, non sanus* subject, the protagonists of Seneca's and Epictetus' negative *exempla* are also characterized by madness: Epicurus is disturbed (*Diss.* II, 20.15-18); Alexander has *furor* (*Epist. Mor.* 94.62); Pompey has an *insanus amor magnitudinis falsae* (*Epist. Mor.* 94.64-65). Seneca follows these *exempla* with further *praecepta*: these explain the difficulties that the common views of these men pose for the individual making an effort to progress towards virtue; they employ deontic language to exhort the student, now that he may fully recognize the problems entailed in philosophical progress, to pursue a true understanding of behavior (*Epist. Mor.* 94.68).¹⁴⁸ The target's response to the moral of the fatally disobedient patient's story (*Sat.* III.88-106) is "But I'm not sick!" (*tange, miser... nil calet hic*, *Sat.* III.107-108). Persius' use of rhetorical techniques upon which Stoic teachers rely is in conflict with his representation of their inefficacy: in his address to the subject, Persius' diatribist moves from *exemplum* to *exemplum*, from *praeceptum* to *praeceptum* to no avail. Persius offers no concluding resolution and protreptic *envoi*. The subject is unswayed by the injunctions to stir and motivate knowledge of the self and of the universe: he says and does what even the classic madman would deem madness (*dicisque facisque quod ipse/ non sani esse hominis non sanus iuret Orestes*, *Sat.* III.117-119).

Persius is evidently well versed in philosophy; his choice of writing Roman satire—in the tradition of satire—means that nothing is off-limits—including philosophers, who are patently risible in their lip-biting puzzlement, even if we also laugh at those who wrongly see that

¹⁴⁸ Roller (2015: 138-139).

eccentricity as their defining quality, like the centurions of lines 77-85. This is not to argue too far that he thinks Stoic theory is misguided. Rather, he presents the idea that the Stoic pedagogical methods in Imperial currency are demonstrably ineffective. Stoic practitioners use rousing rhetoric—but this implicitly appeals to non-rational emotions in order to lead one eventually to rationality, in tension with their belief that the human mind is wholly rational. This is the trap into which, as Cooper has argued, Seneca falls in his *Epistulae Morales*. Persius shows that mind and the body are incorrigible. His will to study, to get to the rigorous work of Stoic progress is subject to his body's instinct to sleep and his irrational refusal to understand *exempla* as having anything to do with himself. The sleeper does not register the *exemplum* of the sick, self-indulgent man, who has been carried out feet first: he fails to respond to Stoic exemplarity. But why should we be surprised?

Nempe haec adsidue, indeed: mid-diatribes, the intrusive *stertis adhuc* reminds us that the state of affairs of the opening scene (*stertimus*, *Sat.* III.3) is unchanged: you are *still* snoring (*Sat.* III.58-59); and in the final line, in spite of the rigorously didactic turn of the poem, the *amens* subject remains *non sanus* (*Sat.* III.20 and 118), just as he was out of his mind when we first met him. The progress that ought to be made through philosophical education and the adoption of a philosopher's way of speaking (diatribe) is confounded by the circularity of insanity. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: *amens*. Everything has always been mad—even the sign of time itself (*insana canicula*, 5). And if it is always, ever this way, then *stertimus* includes all of us.

Conclusion

The third satire's opening experiment in subjectivity develops the book's poetic program and thematic range and at the same time catalyzes the book's incipient interest in interiority and ethical coherence that comes to dominate *Satires* III, IV, and V. The first two satires attack the language, performances, and hypocrisies of others, with the second satire in particular laying this groundwork for our new direction through its exposure of whispered versus open prayer, and the first through its complaints about whispered versus public critique. The third satire has begun an investigation into the subjective experience of such a satirist; the subsequent two satires then offer more probing investigations of the philosophical development of the self. The theme of perpetual adolescence and frustrated progress will persist in *Satires* IV and V. This accompanies the shift across the *libellus* from poetics to ethics, from object to subject. Persius' interest in the identity of book and body, meanwhile, will come to its ultimate fruition in the final satire.

While the poem has resolved the question of authorship, the poet's authority has emerged severely damaged. It turns out that critique can only be delivered flatly by someone who is not fully there. The disembodied, embedded diatribist takes over this role from the poet, who gains a body in the third satire. This is to say that in the *Prologue* and first two satires, *ego* is an outsider, identified as part of traditions of satirists and comedians. In the third satire *ego* becomes an object of interest himself; a high degree of subjectivity and self-consciousness is assumed and paraded by the Persian poetic ego and the possibility is raised that the critic we've been listening to may not be quite all there himself. The subsequent satires will take up this interest in ethics and self-study through philosophy. The fourth satire will further probe the student; in that poem the character of the young Alcibiades will provide an analogue for Persius. Persius' own Socrates will come to life in the fifth satire, in which his insides will finally be shaken inside-out.

The generic shift to Socratic dialogue in the fourth satire is an important step away from the demolition of the third satire. Persius has proven that he cannot write or speak, much less engage in dialogue (*cui uerba?* *Sat.* III.19). Still, as we shall see, the choice of Socratic dialogue as an object of imitation is loaded: in *Satire IV*, Persius will carefully stack the deck against the pedagogue's favor by exposing dialogue's narratological framework and presuppositions. The aitiology of the book in *Satire III* looks forward to the aitiology of genre in *Satire IV*.

CHAPTER FIVE: pseudo-Platonic *Alcibiades* (*Satire IV*)

The fourth is the briefest of the satires in this slim *libellus*. From the notebooks of the young sleeper in the previous poem, the satirist now alights upon Plato's *Alcibiades*, a primer for beginners in philosophy and, presumably, right living. Persius, I argue, philosophically formalizes the question of self-knowledge broached in *Satire III* by affiliating *Satire IV* with this standard philosophical text, in which turning a young man towards the pursuit of self-knowledge is the philosopher's central aim. *Satire IV* re-imagines the seminal confrontation between Socrates and Alcibiades. This reimagining proceeds (or descends) into the form by now characteristic of our satirist, a diatribe—this time against vanity, with particular over-attention to the *arcana lumbi*. Through his imitation of Platonic dialogue (which, as we shall see, has nothing dialogical about it), Persius questions the entire notion of an authoritative teacher, a virtuous philosopher, and slyly exposes the potential hypocrisy at the heart of the canonizing project around Socrates. The innuendo and unconsummated erotic tension that makes much of Plato an enjoyable read are heightened to a pitch of sexual hysteria; confrontation with sexual organs replaces the philosophically and literarily productive subtlety of desire. It would require the straightest of faces to achieve equanimity while reading this satire, and, indeed, it would improbably deny Persius his place as a humorist. To reveal the philosopher as a performer, even a hypocrite, is to laugh at the philosopher, an activity sometimes not conceded to Persius and his reader, but one that must be allowed from a critical understanding of his reworking of philosophical tradition.

Persius frames *Satire IV* as a Romanization—and satirification, so to speak—of that dialogue which addressed the folly of the young Alcibiades' perilous aspiration to guide a people, a task for which his upbringing has ill prepared him. Though less often read today, in part because of the doubt cast upon its (and its sequel's) authorship, *Alcibiades* was a standard introduction to

philosophy in the period. *Alcibiades* I held canonical status among the ancients, especially as a protreptic to philosophy; doubts about its “authenticity” date only to the nineteenth century. Romans not only considered it to be Platonic but prized it as essential to an education in philosophy.¹⁴⁹ Persius, our philosophical *proficiens*, starts at the beginning, redeveloping in hexametric miniature the exchange between the legendary teacher and his notorious pupil. Persius’ choice to render this particular philosophical-pedagogical relationship in satire has important implications for our understanding of the place of philosophy and pedagogy in his satirical project. To start at the beginning of philosophy is to start with Socrates; but to revisit Socrates as a satirist is to resurrect that figure’s complexities and compromises, which had been put to rest through his beatification by the Stoics and other Hellenistic schools. That resurrection throws back into question the ultimate utility—and indeed viability—of philosophical ethical education.

In his restaging of Plato’s *Alcibiades*, Persius pulls the disastrously erotic thread that runs across representations of their relationship across the Platonic corpus and imputes them to the prequel presented by the Platonic dialogue at hand. The satirist makes explicit and central what is implicit in Plato. But Persius more than restores the de-fanged Socrates to his thornier—and livelier—Platonic roots; in fact, he goes too far. His unsanitized Socrates turns out to echo sounds from comedy in addition to those from Platonic dialogue. The cleverly problematized erotics between *erastes* and *eromenos* that underpin the Platonic corpus become bare sexual jokes. Socrates’ characteristic erotic and intellectual engagement with younger men becomes a fixation on genitals and pubic hair; his characteristic interrogation becomes the meanest self-indulgent diatribe.

¹⁴⁹ Denyer (2001: 4-14).

The fourth satire's treatment of its philosophical pre-text opens the way to enriching our understanding of the afterlife of Plato's dialogues. By rewriting this early encounter between Alcibiades and Socrates in *Satire IV*, the satirist puts contemporary Stoic philosophy in a discomfiting dialogue with Platonic texts. The prevailing Stoic view of Socrates is subverted by the exposure of essential conflicts between the instability and polysemy of the dialogue form, on the one hand, and the Stoic pursuit of progress according to stable virtue models, on the other. By reassessing the ways in which *Satire IV* is a provocative revision of contemporary philosophical convention, we see that Persius satirically disrupts the Socratic tradition of the Stoics by presenting the Socrates whom the Stoics would be least happy to see: the comedic, endlessly talkative, insulting, erotically-obsessed philosopher of Aristophanes and, indeed, of much of Plato for those who see Plato himself as a humorist.

The Socratic context

Persius' literary transformation of *Alcibiades* is predicated upon the *multivalence* of Socrates, which leads to a complex narratological structure and a slippery characterization of the philosopher. The divergent paths that Socrates presented to writers and thinkers had persisted from his own time, as is readily visible to us in the varying characters purveyed by Xenophon, Aristophanes, and Plato.¹⁵⁰ Even before his death and within twenty years of that event, portraits, visual and literary, of his physical peculiarities as markers of his character varied from the derelict in Aristophanes' *Clouds* to the portly Silenus-like character familiar from Plato (*Symp.* 215a-c, *passim*), and the man whose every apparent ugliness is actually a mark of beauty from Xenophon

¹⁵⁰ For a systematic treatment of Plato's rivals and interlocutors, see Kahn (1996: 1-35).

(*Symp.* 4-7).¹⁵¹ All depictions and descriptions of Socrates and his successors are, as Paul Zanker has argued, equally *topoi*: the magical physiognomy of Plato's wise man is as much a fiction as the meager body of Aristophanes' sophist.¹⁵² The whimsical Silenus comparison that we know from Plato and Xenophon is perhaps a reappropriation of the representation of the Satyr as a *paidagogos*. The robed Silenus represented on a wine cup from ca. 450 BCE chastises a schoolboy.¹⁵³ The importance of this image for understanding the origin of the tradition of Socrates-as-Satyr has been observed by Zanker and others;¹⁵⁴ moreover, the rod of punishment that the satyr wields is a patent substitute for the phallus in his traditional representations. Even though this is a clothed, pedagogic Silenus, the tradition of, and anxiety about, sexual aggression nevertheless surfaces.

The antagonistic, irksome, even "uncivilized" Socrates of the Athenian period yielded to a figure of great civic virtue in the Hellenistic period. The further softening of the figure in the Roman period built upon the Hellenistic impulse to civilize philosophers into model members of the state. Much of this remodeling of Socrates is apparent in the treatment of his hair and beard, configuring him as one venerably fit to preside—as a statue, an image—over spaces of learning and the civic cultivation of youth.¹⁵⁵ Philosophers, especially Stoics, were fashioned in visual media as conservative judges without feeling, retaining their beards as signs of their living in

¹⁵¹ Zanker (1995: 32-39).

¹⁵² Zanker (1995: 32-33). Aristophanes' thin Socrates is paralleled by visual caricatures of sophists in contemporary pottery.

¹⁵³ Appendix, fig. 2; Beck (1975: 46 and pl. 53, 276a).

¹⁵⁴ Zanker, p. 38.

¹⁵⁵ Zanker (1995: 12, 59-62); cf. Diog. Laert. II, 43.

accordance with nature, but cropping them closely—in other words, natural, but not too natural. Zanker has characterized this classicizing trend in visual media from the late Hellenistic and Roman periods as an “impoverishment of the iconography of the intellectual” by comparison with earlier Greek representations. The classical philosopher was now constructed to appeal to Roman patrons.¹⁵⁶

Three of the four major “schools” of philosophy in the Hellenistic period tried to answer the fundamental question of the relation of virtue to happiness posed by Socrates, but they diverged in their answers. Each still claimed Socrates as the founder of their philosophical practice. The positions of Stoicism, Skepticism, and Cynicism never differed on the extraordinary value of Socrates; they differed in their perception of the nature and content of that value. Each school placed differing emphases upon the putative “substance” of the philosopher’s teaching, the methodology of that teaching, and his manner of living. Stoics adopted from Socrates foundational “precepts” regarding virtue, and they attended less to his reputation for awkwardness and provocation. Their argumentation proceeded from their interpretation of ethical lessons, particularly from the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon and from the Platonic *Phaedo*, *Meno*, and *Protagoras*.¹⁵⁷ Skeptics took the characteristically Socratic *elenchos* to imply that no enduring philosophical conclusions could be reached, and that the practice of philosophy and access to virtue therefore existed solely in disputation. Cynics found in Socrates a model of virtue in mundane life, and in his repudiation of socially conventional goods; they practiced philosophy by living according to models that were logical ends to the more rigorous aspects of Socrates’ lifestyle. Even

¹⁵⁶ Zanker (1995: 184-197).

¹⁵⁷ Stoic engagement with Plato also went beyond ethical concerns, as has been shown by the rise in scholarship on Stoic cosmology and the *Timaeus*. See Mohr & Sattler (2010).

Epicureans, as A. A. Long has pointed out, who wholly omitted Socrates from their philosophical pedigree, arguably adapted their Epicurus to a model of Socrates.¹⁵⁸

That these divergent Hellenistic schools all laid claim to Socrates as their progenitor points to the multivalence of the Athenian philosopher. What is sometimes perceived as the Stoics' incomprehensible neglect of an interrogatory method (essential to Plato's representation of Socrates) was in fact a difference of emphasis, stemming from the broad spectrum of traditions that variously emphasized aspects of Socrates' person, whether as a figure of fun, respect, or puzzlement. While Plato's image of Socrates the questioner has prevailed in today's history of philosophy, the representations of writers such as Xenophon, Aristoxenus, and even of Aristophanes—and the traditions of interpretation that proceeded therefrom—persisted throughout the Hellenistic period. For their part, Cynics actually developed a hostile stance towards Plato's Socrates. Plato's Socrates also met with a viable rival in Xenophon's (perhaps comparatively anemic) Socrates, who was fundamental to the Stoa. Even within the Stoic tradition, the interpretation of Socrates could be a point of contestation, from its earliest moments: while Zeno was apocryphally inspired by Socrates, Aristo took issue with his teacher's departure from what should allegedly have been a Socratic practice restricted to ethics.¹⁵⁹ The apparent absence of dissension among Stoics of the Imperial period, however, does not exclude the widespread availability of divergent representation of the figure in other philosophical and literary texts.

The authority of this Stoic Socrates persists throughout the philosophical work of the early Empire. If we are to understand Persius' treatment of Socrates in *Satire IV*, it is crucial to understand how Socrates appears in this context. In the writings of Seneca, the teachings of

¹⁵⁸ See Long (1988) and (2002: 67ff).

¹⁵⁹ Frede (1999); Long (1988) and (2002: 67ff).

Musonius Rufus,¹⁶⁰ and, shortly thereafter, the teachings of Epictetus, whose lives all at one point revolved around the court of Nero and frame for us the all-too-brief period during which Persius wrote, Socrates was a figure whose ubiquity was at once banal and dynamic.¹⁶¹ Far less of Musonius Rufus survives than of Seneca and Epictetus. His (apparently oral) teachings were distilled into analects and transmitted by a student, Lucius. The breadth and intensity of his impact on Stoicism, however, are better understood through the positive *testimonia* of the ancients. As dry as the analects of Rufus may seem today, they provide crucial evidence for the moderation and establishmentarianism of authoritative (Roman) Stoic teachings and they are therefore important for any evaluation of Persius that would position the latter as a Stoic hardliner. The analects provide comparanda that throw into relief just how far from the contemporary Stoic confines Persius has dug his infamous hole (*hic tamen infodiam*, *Sat.* I.120). The diversity of themes and allusions to earlier figures exhibited in the analects provides a window into authoritative contemporary discourse. Rufus cites Socrates for his indifference to anger and pleasure; less conventionally he also mentions Socrates in his wholly rational case for the philosophical education of women and in his defense of marriage for the philosopher.¹⁶²

Socrates appears throughout the Senecan corpus as an exemplum of any and every kind of good behavior, from the maintenance of calm in the face of everyday mishaps to a philosophical

¹⁶⁰ The diversity of topics and references to earlier Stoics and legendary figures extant in the sayings of Rufus provides a window into the contemporary discourse. For more on these issues, see the introduction in Lutz (1947). Similarly, the teachings of Epictetus come to us from the work of his student Arrian, in several books of complex diatribes and the well-known “manual.” The complexity of the student-teacher relationship, especially in the latter case, cannot be overstated, but also cannot be treated here.

¹⁶¹ For more on these issues, see the introduction in Lutz (1947). For the present purposes we need not consider Epictetus as a meaningfully later philosopher because his formation took place in the milieu of Cornutus and Rufus—Rufus may have even been Epictetus’ teacher—and because of the affinities between the “datribes” and the teachings of Seneca and Rufus.

¹⁶² Lutz (1947: 41, 79, 92, 119).

attitude to death. The integration of Socrates—often named in the same breath as Rutilius, Regulus, or Cato—into Seneca’s exempla points to the extent of the pervasiveness of the figure in Roman consciousness. From these instances, we can see that Seneca frequently uses Socrates (and Cato) *ad libitum*, whenever he needs a “stock” *sapiens*.¹⁶³ But Socrates is not invoked by Seneca solely in this anecdotal, even indiscriminate, manner. At his most critical philosophical moment—in what amounts to his own apology in *De Vita Beata*—Seneca articulates the meaning of a philosophical life through the voice of Socrates at the culmination of his argument. There, the writer puts in the mouth of Socrates an extended defense against the charge of hypocrisy that might, Seneca argues, be leveled against any and all philosophers. As his speech gains impetus, his voice blends with Seneca’s own. Socrates is showcased as *ille Socrates* and *ecce Socrates ex illo carcere* (*DVB* 25 and 27). Crudely speaking, Socrates makes his argument from the Stoic perspective of preferred indifferents, and he engages in the Stoic practice of *praemeditatio*.¹⁶⁴ That Seneca should summon Socrates at his own moment of philosophical peril tells us that to stage the person and to embody the persona of Socrates is a maximally significant—even life saving—gesture, reserved for a moment of crisis.

Socrates was likewise essential for Epictetus, who was very probably a student of Rufus; his “diatribes,” written by his own student Arrian, are replete with allusions to claims made in the works of Plato and Xenophon.¹⁶⁵ We should understand Epictetus as a Stoic who is consciously

¹⁶³ For instance, among others: for the fear of death, *Epist. Mor.* 70.9.1-6; with Cato, *Epist. Mor.* 71.7 and 16-17; at length, *Epist. Mor.* 104 *passim*. Even the absence of fact might be cited in support of a philosophical argument: *Patricius Socrates non fuit* (*Sen. Epist. Mor.* 44.3). Socrates appears throughout the Senecan corpus in similar fashion, in *De Ben.*, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, *De Providentia*, *De Constantia*, *De Ira*, *De Brevitate Vitae*, *De Otio*, and, most pertinently, *De Vita Beata*.

¹⁶⁴ For a fuller treatment of the passage, see Ker (2009: 187-190).

¹⁶⁵ Long (2002: 74-86).

divergent from Seneca; after all, the latter is pointedly never named in the diatribes which are otherwise replete with Romans from the courts of Nero and other Caesars. In the diatribes, Socrates serves to demonstrate the best manner of living and, more importantly, of dying (*Encheiridion* 5). Epictetus frequently alludes to Platonic dialogues and to Socrates' biography as a model¹⁶⁶ of (self-examination) and education upon which to build an ethics for the imperial psyche. Socrates, then, is very much alive in the Stoicism of this period.

Socrates continued to be a vital figure in philosophical argument and practice. We might usefully think of the figure as a tradition, a product of textual, cultural, and moral accretion, a figure with unique flexibility and utility in the teachings and writings of the satirist's prominent philosophical contemporaries—and, moreover, a figure with the weight of moral authority behind him. There was one version of Socrates, however, that seems largely to have dropped out of the contemporary Stoic scene: the electrifying character whom we know from some of Plato's dialogues. For Epictetus, as for Seneca, too, Socrates was, in A. A. Long's formulation, "no gadfly or sting-ray, no lover or symposiast..."¹⁶⁷—not the man who attacked authority but rather the saint who embodied it. It is in this context of multiple iterations of Socrates that the peculiarity of character and form in Persius' fourth satire must be assessed. In the fourth satire, Persius revivifies a Socrates who has been absent from Stoicism. But in so doing, the poet exposes the instability and limitations of philosophical education and de-authorizes the certainty and assuredness of his colleagues' pursuits. The encounter between the youthful Alcibiades and the sage in the Platonic original thus closes on an ominous note: the implication is that this relationship risks failure and loss in the face of the attractions of politics. The encounter's satirical instantiation presents a

¹⁶⁶ Long (2002: 74-86).

¹⁶⁷ Long (1988: 150-151).

downward trajectory from Plato through the erotic to demo(li)tation without positive didactic correction.

The First *Alcibiades*

Alcibiades I presents Socrates' first foray into the education of Alcibiades at the crossroads. Even as a protreptic text it leaves open the possibility of divergent evaluations of the philosopher's teaching (and perhaps even of its own protreptic status). While it captures the dramatic moment in which the younger man supposedly attaches himself to Socrates, it is also encoded with the ways in which that relationship will collapse: the philosopher doubts whether he will successfully seduce the younger man away from the appeal of the *polis* and flattering connections. The dramatic-historical irony of the dialogue is one reason why its authorship has been questioned, and that questioning itself arguably indicates that the contest over the "real" Socrates is not over; certainly the contest over the "real" Plato is not. The canonical status of the text was not a matter of debate in the ancient period; it was, essentially, the textbook for Philosophy 101.

Plato's dialogue is protreptic in the sense that it dramatizes Socrates' effort to turn Alcibiades, who is about to embark on his (in)famous political career, toward philosophy. Socrates gives Alcibiades a survey of the questions that the latter is not yet able to answer: what is good, what is bad, what admirable, what contemptible, and, most importantly for the pedagogue, what constitutes real education and real knowledge. Socrates approaches Alcibiades explicitly as a lover (*ἐραστής σου*, *Alc.* 103a) and the only one of his lovers who has not given up. Up until this moment, however, he has not tried to engage Alcibiades in conversation; this, therefore, marks their first "dialogue," as a conversation and as a form. But Socrates has been watching (*σκοπούμενος*, *Alc.* 103b) the younger man, for a long enough time to have a sense of his character:

that he is the most arrogant of all men (πολλῶν γὰρ γενομένων καὶ μεγαλαφρόνων, *Alc.* 103b),¹⁶⁸ a vice that proceeds from the fineness of his physique and mind and the excellence of his family (*Alc.* 104a); his connections are aristocratic, including even Pericles (*Alc.* 104b). Alcibiades has rejected all of his lovers thus far, secure in the knowledge that they were beneath him (*Alc.* 104c). He wonders, in fact, why the strange and silent Socrates should be addressing him, bothering him (ἐνοχλεῖς), in fact, by following him around (*Alc.* 104d).

The role of *erastes* is not a mere pretext: Socrates continues to use erotic language in his address (104e) and when the dialogue has gained full momentum. His frustration with his prospective student is all the greater because of his own desire for him (ἀγανακτῶ ὑπὲρ τε σοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἐμᾶυτοῦ ἔρωτος, 119c). Socrates imagines a hypothetical situation in which he approaches Alcibiades, about to embark on a public speech, to ask upon what basis he is about to advise the Athenians (*Alc.* 106c). Alcibiades imagines his own reply (*Alc.* 106d). Socrates gets Alcibiades to agree to his conception of question and answer: if Alcibiades assents, then he has in effect articulated what has been said—and so Socrates' judgment of Alcibiades becomes Alcibiades' judgment of himself. “And what was said was that Alcibiades, the handsome son of Clinias, doesn't understand justice and injustice....” (*Alc.* 113b, Hutchinson, trans. in Cooper, ed.). Socrates argues that Pericles cannot teach Alcibiades because he has shown himself to be inexpert: if he were a true expert he would be able to impart his understanding, but no one can be shown to have become wiser from time spent with Pericles (*Alc.* 118c-119a).

No one, in fact, has bothered to give young Alcibiades an education that genuinely prepares to be a political leader; *that* has mattered to Socrates alone, as his lover (122b). Socrates claims

¹⁶⁸ Alcibiades will level the same charge against Socrates in *Symposium*, where he accuses him of ὑπερηφανία (*Symp.* 219c).

that he is uninterested in Alcibiades' body, beautiful though it is. After Alcibiades has agreed that someone who loves him will love his soul, not his body, he is convinced that he must try to keep his soul as attractive (κάλλιστος) as possible in order not to lose Socrates' interest (*Alc.* 131c-d). Alcibiades, it turns out, has never had any real lover except Socrates (*Alc.* 131e). Socrates' only fear is that Alcibiades will lose his spiritual bloom through corruption by the Athenians (132a). In order to avoid the terrible fate of being taken in by the *demos*' pretty face (εὐπρόσωπος) himself, Alcibiades must view them naked, stripped down (ἀποδύντα, *Alc.* 132a). Alcibiades ultimately swears his allegiance to his lover as a safeguard against such dangers. It is Socrates himself who expresses his uncertainty, well sensing the ways in which his student may be lost (and implicitly the ways in which he might fail), even before their lessons have begun (135e).

Digest

That, then, is the dialogue against which Persius presents his fourth satire for measurement. "Taking on the Republic?" *Satire IV* starts with the query posed by Socrates, whom the satirist identifies obliquely as the bearded teacher dispatched by hemlock poisoning (*Sat.* IV.1-2).

Socrates in turn obliquely identifies his addressee, Alcibiades, as the ward of Pericles the Great (*Sat.* IV.3). Clearly, he says, the youth's ability to deliver orations on affairs of state appeared precociously (*Sat.* IV.4-5). When the rabble rages, his genius silences the crowd with a gesture of grandeur. But then what will Alcibiades say? Socrates anticipates the slick tones of the young man's trite political speech (*Sat.* IV.8-9), for he knows how to balance (*suspendere*) the word "justice," he knows how to get the right rhythm (*pede*, *Sat.* IV.12), how to pinpoint vice. But it's all nonsense, Socrates continues: Shouldn't he stop thrusting at the obliging people? Isn't he the one in need of a fix? What's his idea of the good? To live large and constantly tanned? Of course,

he'll respond that his credentials are his family name, his shining good looks—no better than an average peddler (*Sat.* IV.20-22).

But really no one—no one!—tries to dig into himself, but instead everyone keenly scrutinizes the other guy (*Sat.* IV.23-24). Then he'll ask whether wealth and property should count for nothing (*Sat.* VI. 26-27). Does he mean the wealth of a man who celebrates the Compitalia stingily with roughage and vinegar? If he were to idle around slathered in oil to get some sun on his skin, some stranger would spit out a bitter “Such habits! Spreading out to dry your wrinkling penis and the recesses of your loins, withering vulvas.”¹⁶⁹ Alcibiades' slick body is the graphic fixation of these lines, which harp on depilation and the confusion of sexual characteristics (*penemque* and *uulvas*). The agricultural metaphor of raisin-making (*pandere* and *marcentis*) is expanded in *plantaria* and *filix*.

We know we're not supposed to like full or greasy plates from one of the second satire's pray-ers, who misguidedly offers his sausages¹⁷⁰ and rich cakes to the gods (*Sat.* II.42-49). Similarly, we know we're not supposed to like rich dishes from the fate of the target in *Satire* III, where the delusional sick man goes on feasting until his last breath (*Sat.* III.98-102). The hypocrite of *Satire* III transforms the despised food and platters of the targets of *Satires* II and III into the body of his own target. The greasy platters of the second satire and *the uncta pulmentaria* of the third—and indeed, Alcibiades' own predilection for an *uncta patella* (*Sat.* IV.17)—become his own greased-up body (*Sat.* IV.33), and thus becomes part of the book's food imagery. Though he coifs his beard, he shaves his inguinal windpipe (“throat” here as a stand-in emphasizes Alcibiades'

¹⁶⁹ For vinegar, see Bartsch (2015: 89-90).

¹⁷⁰ Or, “sausages” on a Hipponactean reading.

penetrability)—but in vain: even if pro-wrestlers were to steam and pluck these shrubs, that bush could not be tamed (*Sat.* IV.39-41). Beard plus bikini wax equals hypocrisy.

But we are all susceptible to these arrows of critique. This strange critic himself has a wound growing in his groin.¹⁷¹ The arrows of critique here in line 42 covertly work an elegiac motif into diatribe: the *sagittae* are a conversion of the arrows of love with which Alcibiades struck Socrates in the *Symposium*.¹⁷² In satire, these arrows go straight into the groin rather than the soul. This is the rule: a belt covers the target's fundamental wound. He puts stock in whatever comes to his one-track mind (*in penem quidquid tibi uenit*, *Sat.* IV.48). He shouldn't trust external praise but assess the totality of his own deficiencies.

Dialogue

We come to the now familiar consideration of speakers and “characters” in *Satire IV*. As with the other satires, these two issues are disputed. Here in particular there are two questions: (When) does Socrates finish speaking? Who is the diatribist? There is a feature unique to this diatribe that requires that we give it special attention: it is the sole example of diatribe in the book that never shifts to the second person plural characteristic of diatribe (contrast, e.g., *occurrite*, *Sat.* I.62, *dicite*, *Sat.* II.69, *occurrite*, *Sat.* III.64, *petite*, *Sat.* V.64, and *cognoscite*, *Sat.* VI.9).¹⁷³ Moreover, it lacks the shifting scenes characteristic of diatribe (e.g. multiple *lectiones* in *Satire I*, multiple prayers

¹⁷¹*ilia subter/ caecum uulnus habes*, 43-44.

¹⁷² 219b: ἐγὼ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα ἀκούσας τε καὶ εἰπὼν, καὶ ἀφείξ ὥσπερ βέλη, τετρῶσθαι αὐτὸν ὄμην...

¹⁷³ There appears to be some structural or functional significance in employing the second person plural after about sixty lines. *Cognoscite*, in *Satire VI*, is a quotation of Ennius. In my final chapter I will argue that the quotation of an Ennius who has awoken from his epic fantasy marks the first step in the incipient return to diatribe away from the Horatian restraint that opens the poem.

in *Satire II*, multiple sick and dying men in *Satire III*, multiple slaves in *Satire V*, and multiple misers in *Satire VI*) and therefore uniquely envisions itself as an *ad hominem* attack.

In the standard text of Wendell Clausen (1959), the speech of Socrates ends at line 22; by implicitly treating lines 1-22 as a prefatory scene to the remainder of the text, Clausen's text obscures what must be the continuation of Socrates' speech. In a recent treatment of this issue, Cedric Littlewood argues against the interpretations of John Henderson and Dan Hooley, who have reasoned that the critical attribution of lines to either an Alcibiades or a Socrates demolishes the obvious ambiguity of this text. Littlewood proposes that the fact that the fourth satire is "modeled on a dialogue... [implies] an exchange of criticism."¹⁷⁴ He also argues, however, against the standard dialogic interpretation that follows this logic of exchange—that the entire satire therefore must be divided between these two characters—and seeks to resolve the ambiguity by inserting a third speaker, a "Persius," to account for any lines that may clearly not be attributed either to Socrates or Alcibiades. Littlewood's argument sidelines the discomfiting ambiguity treated by Henderson and Hooley, which I suggest is critically important to understanding *Satire IV*, especially in relation to contemporary philosophical discourse.

But the question of speakers—characters—is nevertheless an important one for a text that would seem so ostentatiously to present its Platonic pedigree: it is a question of who speaks the language of philosophy and with what generic affiliations. The camp of critics to which Littlewood must ultimately belong assumes the premiss that because the satire invokes a Platonic dialogue, it must formally present the two voices in the "source" text, with speakers who are relatable to Platonic counterparts. What we are reading, however, is satire, *verse* satire, *Roman* verse satire, and so the question of genre is necessarily multi-sided. Persius invokes the dialogue in a form that

¹⁷⁴ Littlewood (2002: 58).

plays with the *idea* of dialogue but is *not* a dialogue—in my view—ironically and even tendentiously not a dialogue.

The voice of Alcibiades is only apparent in this satire (and it is given more structural prominence than it commands from the modern editorial convention of quotation marks). We do not hear the “real” Alcibiades: Persius has told us to *believe* (*crede*, 1) that the philosopher is speaking; the philosopher, in turn, asks us (and Alcibiades, if he is indeed there) to imagine the young man’s responses by reciting them himself. Alcibiades never performs his own response; rather, his voice is ventriloquized by the (imagined) teacher in misguided words that the philosopher puts into Alcibiades’ mouth by using the imperative (“*Dinomaches ego sum*” *suffla*, “*sum candidus*,” 20). In this manner, Socrates even tells the younger man what *he* (i.e. the younger man) thinks when articulating that conventional and inane public speech:

... *quid deinde loquere?* ‘*Quirites,*
hoc, puta, non iustum est, illud male, rectius illud.’

Then what are you going to say? Think: “Roman countrymen: the former’s not just, the latter’s worse, the third option better.” (*Sat.* IV.8-9)

To read the diatribe as a continuation of Socrates’ speech makes sense of the second person *quaesieris* (25), which follows *expecta* (19), *i* (19), *suffla* (20) and even *puta* (9).¹⁷⁵ (This reading will have the further advantage of making sense of the situation proposed in line 33, *si unctus cesses et figas in cute solem in*, picking up Socrates’ earlier charge that Alcibiades thinks the good life is *uncta uixisse patella/ semper et adsiduo curata cuticula sole*, 18). “Dialogue” is only apparently bi-vocal; Persius’ revision of *Alcibiades* shows up Socratic *elenchos* for what it really

¹⁷⁵ *puta* may be taken as a true imperative (syntactically equivalent to *suffla*) or as an aside.

is: the teacher's exertion of control over discourse. The teacher creates his own fiction, the fiction of pedagogy, that ethics may be taught, staging his own classroom scene and playing all the parts.

Persius identifies the *magister barbatus* whom we are to imagine before us as *sorbitio tollit quem dira cicutae* ("...the one whom a stiff drink of hemlock exalts," 2)¹⁷⁶ and the *magister* in turn identifies his addressee as *magni pupille Pericli* (3). The significance of the first two lines extends beyond establishing characters: Persius makes explicit the foreshadowing of the disaster to come expressed in the Platonic Socrates' hesitation (135e)—a reflection of Plato's own anxiety about the utility of *elenchus*. The frame also makes central the historical irony of the text. The hazards at the ethical crossroads are an implicit concern in the protreptic dialogue; the satire seizes upon that implicit concern and eliminates the possibility that this fraught relationship ever could have succeeded—the satirist obstructs the path of Virtue. Here, Persius capitalizes not only upon the historical irony but also chronologically later discussions in Plato's *Symposium* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia* I, 2; in the former, the relationship is coming apart at the seams; in the latter it has utterly failed and that failure is Alcibiades'.

In his first two lines, Persius takes as his premiss the demise of both Platonic characters by identifying them not by name, but by their eventual ends—the death of the former and the latter's career as a politician. The satirist's initial projection to Socrates' suicide indicates that we are not meant to focus solely on the present, precious moment, but rather to have in view the end of the story. The satirist's initial identification of Alcibiades with the ultimate politician Pericles rather than with his father (which takes pride of place in Plato, *Alc.* 103a) keeps in view his ultimate forsaking of philosophy in favor of politics. In the final analysis, *apud Persium*, Alcibiades is not

¹⁷⁶ *tollit* plays with the ambiguity between exaltation and destruction.

the son of Kleinias or even a student of Socrates, but a product of the Pericles described as a failed teacher in *Alcibiades* (118e).¹⁷⁷

That Alcibiades' ultimate demise should reflect poorly upon the philosopher-teacher's great reputation is precisely the charge of which the Stoics' Xenophon labored to clear Socrates. Persius' terse formulations provide a frame of dramatic irony at which his model hints and which is embedded in Plato's treatment of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades more generally. From the first moment, the Socrates of Persius is manifestly too late: too late to avert Alcibiades' seduction by the world. Thus the unimpeachable authority of Xenophon's Socrates, and by extension the Stoics' Socrates, is demolished by Persius' poem. That protreptic was always going to fail. With this reading of *Satire IV*, we now have two instances of failed education: we have just seen the infinite regress of diatribe in *Satire III*. *Satire V* will offer another. That makes three—a pattern of failed pedagogy—in the corpus of this supposedly ardent follower of the Stoics, those peddlers of moral progress.

The Question of the Beard

Our final consideration in the Socrates-Alcibiades discourse outlined above is the matter of the beard. Bartsch has excluded the identification of the sun-tanner as Alcibiades, the identification advocated here. This exclusion is based upon two claims. The first claim is that the expression *ante pilos uenit* in line 5 means that Alcibiades' beard has not yet appeared. That argument rests only if we take the perfect *uenit* as a present completed ("your cleverness has shown up before

¹⁷⁷ If Pericles were really a great politician he would, like true experts, successfully impart his expertise. The ineptitude of his own sons already stands against this (118b-119a). This, of course, may also be construed to question Socrates' own wisdom: does his great failure with Alcibiades mean he is not wise? Xenophon argues against this very interpretation of Alcibiades-as-evidence in *Mem.* I, 2.12ff.

your hair”); but it may equally well have simple aspect (“your cleverness arrived before your hair”). The second claim is that since Alcibiades is an unbearded figure, he cannot be the bearded man in *Satire IV*.¹⁷⁸ In the Athenian evidence, however, Alcibiades’ hair growth is meaningfully *ambiguous*: in the two extant positively identifiable visual representations of the politician we have from the Classical period, he is beardless.¹⁷⁹ In Plato’s *Protagoras*, on the other hand, his cheeks are described as blooming in the scene that sets the stage for the dialogue on sophistry and bad pedagogy; Alcibiades’ beard growth is mentioned as a way of teasing Socrates for his enduring interest in a post-pubescent young man, like Agathon in *Symposium*. As a marker of sexual maturity, the maturation into manhood is hazardous for the young Athenian: it disqualifies him from being an *eromenos* to Socrates’ *erastes* and thus jeopardizes the erotic pretext of their relationship. Persius therefore capitalizes upon what is latent in Plato’s representations of Alcibiades and other men who are too old to be *eromenoi*. He characteristically makes the delighting tension that arises from the ambiguity of Alcibiades’ hair-status in Plato into a full-blown, discomforting incongruity between a well-cared for beard and well-cared for groin.

The preoccupation of Persius’ Socrates with Alcibiades’ body exposes to sunlight the questions lurking in Plato’s sustained interest in their relationship. Is he primarily a teacher or an *erastes*? Was his ostentatious lack of interest in Alcibiades’ body a sham? That body itself is also a site of ambivalence, situated somewhere on the border between boy and man, *erastes* and *eromenos*, student and teacher. The beard and pubic hair are central points of fixation for Persius’ Socrates. Hair is an important marker of both philosophical and sexual maturity. Hair and hairlessness are deceptive as forms of physiognomic pretense to either knowledge or youth. The

¹⁷⁸ Bartsch (2015: 108ff.) follows D’Alessandro-Behr (2009: 242-244).

¹⁷⁹ Zanker, (1995: 108).

philosopher is classically bearded: the beard is part of the positive identification of Socrates in line 1, where it occupies the central position and precedes even the canonical hemlock (IV.1-2). Alcibiades' precociousness is measured against his hair growth: his personal talents appeared even before his hair (IV.5). Later, in the philosopher's fixation on the displayed body, a special critique is reserved for the younger man's hair, top and bottom: the perfumed beard (*balanatum gausape*) stands in contrast to his shaven penis (*detonsus gurgulio*), from which sprouts (*plantaria* and *felix*) are weeded in vain (IV.37-41). Persius' treatment of the status of Alcibiades' hair adds the negative Roman view of the pathic: Amy Richlin offers a close reading of *Satire* 4 that is focused on the sexual status of Alcibiades, whom Persius figures as both *puer* and prostitute, male and female, bearded and shaven.¹⁸⁰ The disparity between the bearded face and plucked-smooth genitals is, as has often been noticed, a condemnation of hypocrisy more generally and in particular, as Shadi Bartsch has observed, a charge leveled at philosophers in invective and epigrammatic literature.¹⁸¹

The beard is a central maker and marker of philosophical maturity and a meaningful site in Persius' period, too.¹⁸² Cornutus offers us a critical comparandum for illuminating the idiosyncrasy of Persius *qua* "Stoic." The philosopher's *Epidrome* casts the beard along with penetrative power as an index of reason. Cornutus presents the god Hermes as divinely-sent λόγος, which makes man the λογικόν animal (*Epidrome* 16). In this allegorizing scheme, the traditional phallic marker of boundaries and crossroads becomes a figure of contemplation and inquiry:

"The ancients made the genitals of the older, bearded Herms erect, but those of the younger, smooth ones hang down: this shows that reason is productive and mature in those advanced in age... but in

¹⁸⁰ Richlin (1992: 187-191).

¹⁸¹ Bartsch (2015: 109-111).

¹⁸² Nero's *depositio barbae* in 59 CE may also be in the background here. Suet. *Nero* 12.4, 34.5; Cassius Dio, 61.19.1-2, 61.21.1-2. See also Williams (2010: 24, 78-84).

the immature it is unproductive and imperfect.”
(*Epidrome* 16, Boys-Stones, trans.)

This passage of Persius’ own teacher shows us what a good philosopher does when confronted with the unfortunate reality of beards and penis. Cornutus’ interpretation relentlessly moves outwards and upwards from the bodily to the philosophical. Body parts are not markers of physicality in the present but rather remnants of an ancient wisdom that may be reconstructed through careful exegesis.¹⁸³ Human phenomena—what the people commonly say, the irrational idiosyncrasies of mythology—may be deployed for a Stoic cosmological inquiry that is closely engaged with the Platonic inquiry.¹⁸⁴ Beard and erection are concomitant, while the smoothness of youth is consistent with flaccidity in the scheme of Cornutus. Persius’ young-looking sun-tanner thus rests in an ambivalent position when placed alongside the philosopher-proficiens herms of his master: he exhibits both activity and passivity. The *gurgulio* of Persius’ Alcibiades is erect, but the young man himself is supine (4.33-38). And it is not merely that Persius’ young man is growing a beard and is therefore too old to fulfill the role of *puer*, but also that he exhibits the mark of the philosopher, the beard, without possessing philosophical knowledge. By placing the student “Alcibiades” at the intersection of these categories, Persius foregrounds the risky ambiguities of adolescence and maturation.

The fuzziness of these categories—bearded vs. unbearded, blooming vs. shaven, depilated vs. pre-pubescent, as well as active vs. pathic, male vs. female—is precisely what Persius is playing with, and importantly playing up, in his imaginary Alcibiades. As Richlin has noted, the wound exposed or even created by depilation makes the sun-tanner pathic and female: *pandere vulvas*

¹⁸³ For the methodology of the text, see Boys-Stones (2003: 189-216).

¹⁸⁴ For the *Epidrome* as a text written in parallel to and response to Plato’s *Timaeus*, see Boys-Stones (2009: 141-162).

(IV.36).¹⁸⁵ This notion aligns well with the words of old Chrysippus, as reported in Athenaeus on shaving: Chrysippus tells us that to shave is to challenge the prudence of nature in making you a man.¹⁸⁶

For Bartsch, the sun-tanner is Socrates, a conclusion to which she arrives after rejecting the more obvious candidate, Alcibiades, by comparison with Martial. The learned philosopher, whose beard belies his desire to be penetrated (*percidi*) is familiar to us from the writer of epigrams who was a younger contemporary of Persius (*Ep.* IX, 47; VII, 58). In the epigrammatic genre, philosophers tend to be subject to charges of sexual hypocrisy: their profession of *virtus* is at odds with their desire to play *cinaedi*. Accusations of effeminacy and pathic behavior as outward manifestations of hypocrisy are part of a wider Roman system of invective and aggression.¹⁸⁷ Through their own professions and pedagogical aspirations, philosophers open themselves to critique, as we saw earlier in the defense of Seneca's Socrates against charges of hypocrisy in *De Vita Beata*.

But not all beards have the same symbolic significance: the outward appearance of the beard matters—and this is crucial to our judgment here. The beards of good Stoic philosophers are generally supposed to be short and unkempt. The cropped, patchy, unattended beard on the statue of Chrysippus is a reflection of his conservatism and his lack of concern for his body.¹⁸⁸ The beard of Persius' sun-tanner is marked as perfumed and combed (*balanatum gausape pectas*, IV.37), which places it not in the category of the beard of Martial's philosopher Pannychus, which *squalet*

¹⁸⁵ Richlin (1992: 187-190).

¹⁸⁶ Zanker (1995: 108-109); Athenaeus, *Deipn.* XIII.565.

¹⁸⁷ Richlin (1992: 221ff.).

¹⁸⁸ Appendix fig. 1; Zanker (1995: 109).

(*Ep.* IX, 47.2), but rather in the category of the *pexa barba* worn by the pathic youths whom another of Martial's philosophers, a "Galla," has tried unsuccessfully to "marry" (*Ep.* VII, 58.1-2, 10). Thus Alcibiades struggles in Persius, as in Plato before him, between his status as the penetrable *eromenos* and his behavior which comes increasingly to look like that of an *erastes* by the time of his melodramatic speech in *Symposium*.

Socrates *innocentissimus*

The *erastes*-pose of Socrates in *Alcibiades* coheres with the mention of Socrates' erotic pursuit of Alcibiades, who is filling out with a beard, as a matter of course in *Protagoras* (309a1-2).¹⁸⁹ In the opening of *Satire IV*, by contrast, the erotic aspect of their relationship is left unstated. This conspicuous suppression results in the diatribe's explicit fixation on the naked body on display. Again we are forced away from the Stoics' idealized image of Socrates into something considerably more down-to-earth. Plato's Socrates claims in *Alcibiades* and elsewhere that he is unmoved by the youth's body—in fact this is a sore spot for Alcibiades in *Symposium*. In *Satire IV*, Socrates both fixates on the naked, primed, and plucked body and ventriloquizes an extended, hysterical critique of it, even as he maintains that such criticism is misguided and blind. He fails on all counts to be "philosophical," developing instead a sort of pornographic puritanism. Indeed, like the Kreitton Logos of Aristophanes *Clouds*, he revealingly protesteth far too much.

We were put on notice in *Satire I* to hear the Aristophanic—and perhaps the comedian sends back his echoes here. *Clouds*, that caustic parody of Socrates and the project of philosophical education, provides two important comparanda, the first of which we glimpsed above. If we understand that the diatribe's target is Alcibiades, who spends his time on the tanning bed to the

¹⁸⁹ For related moments see Wolfsdorf (2008: 51-130).

detriment of self-knowledge, then we may see him sharing the vice of Pheidippus, whose concern for his tan delays him from going indoors to study (*Clouds*, 119-120). (Pheidippus himself has been read as an analogue for Alcibiades.¹⁹⁰) Socrates' split-brained diatribe, which starts with justice but devolves into holes of all sorts, significantly resembles the "Stronger Argument."

Persius' Socrates is a character split between the pedagogical and the erotic. Alcibiades' body is the graphic fixation of this Socrates, who is ventriloquizing the words of some stranger spitting at the scene before him (li. 34). This too-late Socrates is not merely the deliverer of a prefatory "homily" to the satiric diatribe,¹⁹¹ but the voice and figure through which the diatribe is mediated. But is Persius' deployment of Socrates in this satire just another example of a convention pervasive in contemporary moralizing discourse, a convention in which a healthy admixture of Socrates might support any ethical protreptic? The diatribe of Persius' hemlock-drinking philosopher is remarkably *un-Socratic*, both according to the Platonic model by which he guides through exchange and according to the Stoic model seen in Epictetus and Musonius Rufus, by which he moves through the world unruffled.

It is useful to consider how far from the Socrates of the Roman Stoics this ranter has turned out to be. Persius' Socrates engages in an activity from which a Stoic Socrates ought to refrain: he ought never to say a word that is *λοιδόρον* (Epictetus, *Diss.* II, 12.14). Persius' diatribist forgets that he, too, is subject to the law that he applies to the *ignotus*. It is he, Socrates, who by self-indulgently imagining what someone might sputter about Alcibiades' body and proclivities, brings that body and those vices vividly and hilariously into view. By contrast, the Socrates of Seneca's

¹⁹⁰ Vickers (1993) makes this argument partially on the basis of comparison to *Alcibiades* I among other Platonic texts. See also Moorton (1999).

¹⁹¹ See Guilhamet (1985: 3).

philosophical texts explicitly condemns fixation on the faults of others on the grounds that it is to the detriment of self-knowledge.¹⁹² Seneca also imagines that Socrates, when assaulted by a punch or otherwise driven to *ira*, lowered his voice and said less, not more (*De Ira* III. 5. 11-13).

Socrates is greater than the sum of his textual parts, asserts Cicero in the preface to Book III of *De Oratore* (III, 5), despite the fact that the Platonic dialogues are themselves written *divinitus* (*De Oratore*, I, 5). This textual portrayal of a man of *prudentia*, *acumen*, *venustas*, *subtilitas*, *eloquentia*, *varietas*, and *copia* inspired generations of philosophers. Interlocutors at varying levels of adherence to the program of Cicero's Crassus—the synthesis of philosophy and oratory—are consistent on what type of man Socrates was: the *omnium sapientissimus* who lived *sanctissime*, says Antonius, and (very importantly for my immediate purpose) *innocentissimus* of the charges for which he was put to death (*De Orat.* I, 231-233). The most irreverent the Roman interlocutors become on the subject of Socrates is that the philosopher sprinkled some *salsum* into his *gravitas*, just enough for *urbanis sermonibus* (*De Orat.* III. 270).

But what this composite image does *not* include—here or anywhere else in the Roman philosophical writers—is Socrates the *erastes*. These nice, politely polishing writers take their cue from Xenophon, upon whose construction of Socrates the Stoics in particular relied. *Memorabilia* I, 2 systematically rebuts an imagined accuser who charges the Socrates with having led young men—especially Alcibiades and Critias—astray. The violence and *hubris* of those characters were not at all consequences of their association with Socrates. Xenophon defends Socrates from the charge that the philosopher was a lover of youths and of vice; and down the line, Socratic traditions of the Roman period duly separate Socrates from homoerotic practice. In spite of any

¹⁹² *Si potestis, bonos laudate, si minus, transite; quod si uobis exercere taetram istam licentiam placet, alter in alterum incursitate. Nam cum in caelum insanitis, non dico sacrilegium facitis sed operam perditis.* (*De Vita Beata* 27.1).

generalized “homophobia,” when attention *is* drawn to homoerotic behavior, it is not Socrates who is taken to task for it – a glaring omission, one might suspect, but a question that the textual evidence indicates has been put to bed, at least in philosophical discourse.¹⁹³

Condemnations of pederasty, homosexual behavior, and other deviations from the hetero-norm do not intersect with discussions of Socrates in the writings of Persius’ philosophical contemporaries—Seneca, Musonius, Epictetus—or in those of his Latin predecessors. When Cicero excoriates deviance in the *Tusculan Disputations*, it is, strangely, Epicurus whom he invokes, and the spaces of deviance are the *gymnasia* of the Greeks, not the symposia, or other spaces traditionally associated with Socrates (*Tusc.* 33.7-71). For his part, Seneca talks about other Stoics, or, rather, about others operating *sub specie Stoica* who promote *vitia* and identify the *sapiens* with the *amator*, and who themselves pursue *iuvenes*. Again, this is a Greek custom (*consuetudo Graeca*), but not a Socratic practice. There therefore seems to have been a systematic tendency in philosophical discourse to expurgate the association between Socrates and homoeroticism in the relevant bodies of philosophical literature: a concerted effort, that is, to “clean up” Socrates’ act as part of his beatification at Rome. The degrading fixation on the sexual that characterizes the discourse of this philosopher limits and qualifies his sainthood.

Again Cornutus throws into relief Persius’ deviation from Stoic best practices. Cornutus’ treatment of the erotic in philosophy is a continuation of this expurgatory tradition. His seemingly bizarre conversion of the phallus into philosophy in the case of the herms, discussed above, conforms to his treatment of the muse Erato (*Epidrome* 17), whose name classically and (obviously) is associated with love (*teneri nomen amoris habet*, *Ov. Fast.* IV.196). Cornutus’ is a systematic suppression of the erotic in Erato. Rather than dealing with desire as manifested in and

¹⁹³ Contrast Bartsch (2015: 112-113).

cultivated through the arts, Cornutus turns to philosophical practice through a convenient etymological likeness between ἐράω and ἐρέω. The two exegeses he offers for her name are 1) that it comes from ἔρωξ because she cares about every type of philosophy; and 2) that it comes from ἐρέσθαι because she is the guardian of questioning and answering – of dialectic, in other words. These are, obviously, not alternative explanations: each has to do with philosophy; each equally turns away from the erotic. Cornutus strips Erato of her function as the muse of the ἐρωτικῶν (e.g. Plato, *Phaedrus* 259d); instead, he makes her the guardian of the σπουδαῖοι and the Muses in general the representatives of the φιλομαθόντες. When Cornutus later comes to Eros, a development unavoidable in his allegorizing treatment of Aphrodite, the winged boy becomes the impulse for thoughtlessness (*Epidrome* 25): Cornutus labors to convert the erotic into the abstract wherever he can in his introduction to Stoic allegoresis. Persius does the opposite of this, bringing us back to the nitty gritty of the physical, and this disruption of philosophical high-mindedness goes to the heart of his satirical project.

Just as Horace once showed us the wet-dream under the covers of a political embassy (*Serm.* I, 5.82-85), so Persius shows us the awkward, collar-tugging side of contemporary Stoicism. He awakens questions that have been all too smoothly put to bed, and he does so in a manner that plays with the orthodox repudiations of pederasty; as if putting balls in play, Persius puts the genitals back on display, a reminder of the origins and the continuing problems of philosophical discourse. Rather than barring us from laughter, Persius brings the type of ridicule of philosophers typical of the epigrammatic tradition to the fore in a text that is itself so patently steeped in philosophy. *Satire* IV thus implicates itself in its own critique, like its diatribist and the *ignotus*.

The satirist's opening command *crede* calls attention to the satire's status as a representation of a representation and also to the artfulness of the Platonic genre itself. Any Socrates is a fiction. Persius' Socrates is Aristophanic and moreover Hipponactean—a sex-joke making hater who possesses none of the *enkrateia* prized by Xenophon.¹⁹⁴ Looking forward to *Satire V*, we will see how Persius builds on this exploration of Socratic posturing. Persius' treatment of hypocrisy in *Satires IV* and *V* operates on two levels, thematic and generic, that are mutually reinforcing. On the thematic level, the diatribes of both satires are about hypocrisy: the diatribe of *Satire IV* is concerned with blind critique in general and with the masquerade of hair in particular; the diatribe of *Satire V* is concerned with the legal pretense to freedom and the unmerited claim that *haec mea sunt* (V.13). On the generic level, *Satire IV* theorizes the pretenses of philosophical dialogue, while *Satire V* sends up the pretense of Stoic diatribe. Both forms of discourse are framed by failure: the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates only gets worse in its Roman instantiation; the relationship between Persius and Cornutus that will preface the diatribe in the fifth satire will be predicated upon that model.

The status of philosophy's figures and texts are subject to the same hazard of audience belief to which the exalted status of poetic literature was subject in the prologue. Then again, in line 20, we discover that even within this system that recognizes the fiction of the dialogue, the crucial component of *elenchus*—the philosophical interlocutor—is itself invented by the philosopher: with the imperative *suffla* we see that Alcibiades does not in fact speak in this satire at all; he is ventriloquized by Socrates. Persius presents the veneer of a dialogue—it appears on a cursory glance that there are multiple speakers and that the Alcibiades has a voice—but in fact he gives us solely the voice of the teacher upon whom the further fiction of the student voice is

¹⁹⁴ On which see Kahn (1996: 30-31).

predicated.¹⁹⁵ Thus the whole exercise of education as dialogue—the central tenet of post-Socratic philosophy, is called into question.

¹⁹⁵ See Littlewood (2002: 57-59) on the history of allocation of lines in *Sat.* 4.

CHAPTER SIX: pseudo-Socratic Cornutus (*Satire V*)

The fifth satire may be read as a reasonably (for Persius) straightforward set of variations on moral *libertas*, a standard philosophical theme, conspicuous from *Republic* VIII and IX on the passions of the tyrant continuously through to Epictetus' diatribe IV, 1 on freedom. This chapter argues, however, that the satire's poetic and discursive features show that the deeper interest of the piece is its entanglement with Platonic questions that endure from the previous satire. The continued relevance of Platonic themes are marked by Persius' dubbing his teacher Socratic (*Sat.* V.37). The Platonic corpus is here treated as a resource for laughter and humor in ethical treatments. From the Stoic perspective, the irreverence and comedy of this reading of Plato would be a misuse and abuse of the legacy of Socrates as constructed and defended by Xenophon. But from the satirical perspective, generic interplay—sex, comedy, symposium—are already available in Plato. And it is all fair game when reading and re-working Socrates.

Persius puts non-philosophical literary genres in competition with the Stoic frame. This practice is somewhat out of step with Stoics' prevailing interpretations of the Platonic corpus and Socratic tradition, as it admits contrarian and ambivalent literary elements into what might otherwise be strictly a "declaration of love from one tough Stoic to another."¹⁹⁶

The fifth satire is closely linked to the fourth, which in its compactness at 52 lines functions to some extent as a preface to this very long poem at 191 lines: *Satire IV*'s foregrounding of the paradigmatic, historic, and problematic philosopher-youth relationship offers a tempting analogy for the philosopher-youth relationship as configured in *Satire V*. Moreover, *Satire IV* suppressed an important metaphor articulated and manipulated at length at the close of *Alcibiades I*: Socrates appropriates political terms of "freedom" and "slavery" for the ethical lexicon, a project to which

¹⁹⁶ Hooley (1997: 79).

the Stoics would subscribe too. Vice, he says, is appropriate for slaves (δουλοπρεπής, *Alc.* 135c) while virtue is characteristic of the free (ἐλευθεροπρεπής, *Alc.* 135c). Finally agreeing that he is not free because he does not yet know virtue, Alcibiades declares a role reversal: in order to avoid being a slave, he will attend Socrates *as* a slave—not quite, in the end, what Socrates had had in mind. In his declaration of this new servitude, Alcibiades has shown that he already fails to understand the Socratic lesson. Socrates fears that their pedagogical master-slave relationship will lose to the irresistible power of politics, which, of course, it will. Not a trace of this turn of events is to be found in Persius' *Alcibiades*, but the diatribe of its sequel, *Satire V*, does indeed focus on what it is to be a true slave.¹⁹⁷

The fifth satire opens with a lampoon of poetics at Rome, a lampoon that is superficially similar to much of the first satire (*Sat.* V.1-4). On this occasion, however, Persius attacks the noisy and pompous conventions of high genres, epic and tragedy, rather than the more delicate poetics under attack in the *Satire I*, whose hexameters suffer from the frothy indulgence in Maenads and the Dionysian (e.g. *Sat.* I.99-102). An interrupting voice tells him to ignore the mouths of bombast and follow a style whose sharpness reflects moral judgment (*Sat.* V.5-18). Then turning to Cornutus, the satirist changes his tune to an epicizing tribute to his friend (*Sat.* V.19-29), which honors his mentorship (*Sat.* V.30-51) and good qualities by contrast to the habits of the dissolute (*Sat.* V.52-64). A diatribe takes over midline, signaled by its characteristic exhortation to the

¹⁹⁷ Niall Rudd (1986: 144) has noted as an oddity that Persius never uses the word *seruus* in these lines, in order to make the point that Persius' relation to freedom and slavery is necessarily affected by his class status. Persius may not, in fact, be terribly interested in the lives of contemporary slaves. But Persius does indeed use *seruitium* and it is bitter (*Sat.* V.127), and he stages a scene with a *puer* ordered to attend to his master's bathing needs (*Sat.* V. 126). Masters also appear in the satire (*domini*, *Sat.* V.130; cf. *Sat.* V.78 and 156); they are unkind and relentless. Persius is showing how you are already a slave, through the experience of being roused in the morning. It seems likely that in the context of slave holding societies in Greece and Rome that the theme of slavery and freedom would have felt quite urgent.

crowd, a protreptic expressing the urgency of ethical reform (*Sat.* V.64-72). The diatribe takes on the task of teaching the difference between legal and moral freedom (*Sat.* V.73ff.); misunderstanding what constitutes the free exercise of volition causes the masses to submit to quotidian pressures and changeable emotions (*Sat.* V.132-188).

While the modes of the poets under fire in the first satire are there parodied and wholly rejected, in *Satire V* Persius takes the risk of appropriating the modes of the high genres for his own purpose in the encomium. In the diatribe, Persius will cycle through a catalogue of genres, discourses, and stock moments: Horatian satire and Stoic syllogism, of course, but also law, comedy, Horatian lyric,¹⁹⁸ and even his own anti-superstition diatribe and morning *lèvee*. None of it works, however. Every mode of persuasion and protreptic fails at the end of this satire, in a final confirmation of the circularity hypothesis that he offered implicitly in *Satire III*—you’re as sick at the end as you were at the beginning.¹⁹⁹

Epictetus’ diatribe on freedom (*Diss.* IV, 1) is a product of much the same milieu and education—Roman Stoicism in the imperial court. In that diatribe, the philosopher addresses the illusion of freedom that is held by Romans of widely differing social status. The slave and the consular type are equally enslaved according to the rigorous application of what it is to be truly free, which is to be free from the compulsion of one’s own fears and desires. In content, the texts exhibit similar *exempla*, and in structure, a similarly shifting interlocutor. But Epictetus does not

¹⁹⁸ The density of allusion in this poem is impenetrable, even for Persius: e.g. Horace, *Serm.* I, 6.38 for *Dama*, *Sat.* V.76; Epictetus, *Diss.* IV, 1 for *libertate opus est*, *Sat.* V.73 and *sed intus et in iecore aegro/nascuntur domini*, *Sat.* V.129-30; for Masurius Sabinus, see Kissel (1990) on *Sat.* V.89-90; for *Sat.* V.151-153 alone, cf. Horace, *Carm.* I, 11.7-8, *Carm.* IV, 7.16, and *Serm.* II, 6.97, and Kissel ad loc.

¹⁹⁹ In his elucidation of *Satire V* by comparison with Horace’s *Serm.* II, 7, Hooley (1997: 117) arrives at a partially shared conclusion about Persius’ pedagogy, as it were: “he seems not out to convert people; he shows little positive exhortation toward virtue of the sort one finds in Seneca, or, later, Epictetus.” But that is where we part ways. For Hooley, the avoidance of proselytism, is related to the principles of his Persius, who is a “humane moralist,” and both looks for and offers consolation in poetry.

play Persius' games. Whatever generic play he entertains (the appropriation of fable, for example, IV, 1.24-31), Epictetus makes sure that every new piece of evidence points firmly in the direction of moral reform—to the understanding of genuine, moral freedom.

Digest

Persius invokes the conventional vatic demand of poets for multiple voices to articulate the grandeur of their epic subjects (1-2) and conflates that amplificatory device with a caricature of the work of tragedians—a caricature that is full of pores on both sides of the performance: the wounds and groin of a tragic figure, on the one hand, and the gaping mouths of the admiring theater-goers on the other (3-4). In the fifth line, a voice interrupts with a question, *quorsum haec?*—similar to the *en quid agis?* that interjects in the fifth line of the third satire—wondering what dish the poet seems about to cook up and why he is trying to compete with his own hundredth throat. Implicitly, in the accusation of grabbing for his hundredth throat, the poet participates in the projection of over-the-top poeticizing through mimicry; his parody participates in the crimes of its object. The alternative is to leave well alone; leave it to the epicists – to the poets embarking on major works in the province of the Muses (*Helicone*, 7) or to those whose province is one of the cannibalistic culinary disasters of myth. The reference to *uates* and *carmina* and the muses recalls the poet's *recusatio* from epic and other inspired poetry from the *Prologue*. It is combined here with terms of critique from *Satire I*, with the likening of poetic composition to cooking food; those mouths are “body parts as essential for eating as they are for poetic recitation.”²⁰⁰ The lines conflate his epic tragedians, or tragic epicists, with the crow poets (*Prol.* 13) and the cook poets (*Sat.* I.22)

²⁰⁰ Ferris-Hill (2015: 109).

The interruptor explains Persius' preferable style, first in negative terms, (he does not huff, puff, and blow hard, recalling the relentlessly non-indicative identifications of the *Prologue*) The interruptor assigns him no bellows for a poetry factory, no caw of the *Prologue*'s crows (*Prol.* 13),²⁰¹ and no cheeks full to bursting. The windbag-tendency of the contemporary literary scene is rejected in favor of a precise analysis of social ills and a harsh style (*Sat.* V.10-20). Now diverging from Persius' bodiless and poetically anemic self-presentation in the *Prologue* and *Satire* I, this presentation of the poet by the interruptor assigns him a moderate mouth (*Sat.* V.15), just one mouth (a reasonable number) in contrast to the hundred mouths and tongues of the blowhards. Persius' style is wholly Roman (*uerba togae sequeris*); it is sharp, even difficult, and critical; it strips down and scrapes away at molding moralities (*pallentis... mores*); it is studied, modest, gentlemanly, and precise. Half of these qualities sound like the Persius we have come to know (*iunctura callidus acri*, 14; *doctus*, 16); half do not (*modico, ingenuo ludo*, 16).²⁰² The poet should turn from Thyestes' unfortunate feast of body parts and get to know the sandwiches of the people (18).

The ambivalence of the interruptor's description of Persius is only intensified by the reply of the poet who answers the interruptor with *non equidem* (19): "No, no, you're right: I'm not trying to get my page to make fluff weighty. We're speaking privately..."—still we (readers) are not privy to the identity of this bossy interlocutor—"but I'll talk about you in epic style." And so begins the so-called encomium of Cornutus, who is finally revealed at line 23. The encomium breaks away from *secrete loquimur* and treats its subject in the language of the most public of genres. These lines of hexameter satire become inextricable from hexameter epic devices, from its

²⁰¹ *coruus* and *cornix* are largely interchangeable; see Arnott (2007) and Thompson (1895).

²⁰² Anderson (1982: 171-172) discusses the fundamental incongruity of *defigere* with *ingenuo ludo*.

hailing the encouragement of the Latin Muse (*hortante Camena*, 21) to the ending of this “proem” in its ostentatiously Vergilian expression (*non ennarabile fibra*, 29).²⁰³ We might even see the directive that Persius gives to Cornutus—to thump the heart that he presents to him (*pulsa*, 24)—as a metamorphopoiesis of Cornutus into an Ennian Muse, one of the *Camenae* with thumping feet.²⁰⁴ The *Camena* also, through etymological wordplay attested by Varro,²⁰⁵ prepares Cornutus for a long song about to be sung in his honor, one of the *carmina* of the *uates*.

Cornutus turns out to be so effective a muse that even Persius would dare to join the *uates* in their demands (*deposcere*, 26; cf. *poscere*, 1) and draw out his song in a pure style. Cornutus’ earlier sanctioning of the singular mouth is overturned by Persius’ epic assumption of a hundred throats (*fauces*, 26), a satirical metonymic dislocation of the *ora* and *linguae* (2). While the trope is high-register watermark of epic, the same language is perverse in satires in which mouths are sites of softness and wetness (*eliquat ac tenero subplantat uerba palato*, *Sat.* I.35; *tenero latet ulcus in ore/ putre*, *Sat.* III.113-114; *uda lebella... lustralibus ante saliuus*, *Sat.* II.32-33), the tongue belongs to the panting dog (*nec linguae quantum sitiit canis Apula tantae*, *Sat.* I.60) and to the whisperer (*sub lingua murmurat*, *Sat.* II.9), and songs themselves are objects of sexual interchange (*carmina lumbum/ intrans*, *Sat.* I.20-21). In other words, all these poetic parts in satire mark inward ingress into the body, rather than outward production. Apparently the epic convention here is used for the tragedian’s prayer; and, moreover, it is transferred from poet to audience, whose mouths are also agape (*fabula seu maesto ponatur hianda tragoedo*, *Sat.* V.3) at the staged figure

²⁰³ *non ennarabile textum*, Verg. *Aen.* VIII.625.

²⁰⁴ *Musae, quae pedibus magnum pulsatis Olympum* (*Ann.* I.1) and *Musas quas memorant nosce (?) nos esse Camenas*, see Skutsch (1976: 77, n. 11).

²⁰⁵ Varro, *Ling. Lat.* VII, 27. See Skutsch (1976: 77).

who pulls a sword from the lumbic wound that he shares with Alcibiades, about which we have just read (*uolnera seu Parthi ducentis ab inguine ferrum*, *Sat.* V.4; cf. *ilia subter/ caecum uulnus habes*, *Sat.* IV.43-44). Tragedian, audience, and actor are all stymied in and through the shared satiric body-pores.

Persius puts his own body on display in the encomium, too. This time he hands himself over to Cornutus for a thorough shake-down, or inspection by slapping; but as in *Satires* I (spleen), II (heart), and III (bile), Persius' body is all internal parts—here, *praecordia* (*Sat.* V.117). More body is revealed, but still only innards—*sinuoso in pectore* (*Sat.* V.27) and *arcana...fibra* (29). Thump away at this heart of hearts-turned pot, distinguishing between the sound of solidity and the sound of embellished language (21-25).

Persius characterizes Cornutus as a Socrates to whom he submitted himself at adolescence; when he gave up the locket symbolic of childhood (*bullaque... pependit*, *Sat.* V.31) Cornutus responded by enfolding him in his Socratic lap. The arrangement of *Socratico, Cornute, sinu* firmly embeds Cornutus in the role—even in the body—of Socrates (37). Persius' assertion that he presented himself to Cornutus and was taken up by him (*me tibi supposui. teneros tu suscipis annos*, 36) has standardly been identified as referring to a formal Roman ritual in which a *paterfamilias* recognized an infant and therefore introduced the child into his household; but this interpretation must surely be questioned in light of Brent Shaw's argument that the tradition of this ritual is the fiction of historians.²⁰⁶

Indeed Persius' brief narrative of his hesitation at the divergent paths before him indicates that this is pointedly not an “infant” moment, but rather an evocation of the type-scene of the crucially adolescent threshold of moral choice. The latter day myth of Prodicus' young Heracles

²⁰⁶ Harvey (1981) ad loc. Contrast Shaw (2001).

at the crossroads of the Virtue and Vice—transmitted by Xenophon,²⁰⁷ that Socratic writer of such importance to the Stoics—is the paradigm of this scene; but the moral importance of a youth’s own agency in his education that is explicit in *me tibi supposui* is also prefaced (and ironized) by *Alcibiades* I itself, when the young man declares his own enslavement to Socrates. The metaphor is a philosophical citation of Persius, too: the divergence of moral choice at the branching crossroads (*Sat.* V.34-35) recalls the lesson of the branching path symbolized by the Pythagorean epsilon that Persius missed when he was snoozing through *Satire* III.²⁰⁸

The relationship is reframed as one of craft: Cornutus applied the ruler; Persius’ soul was molded by Cornutus’ thumb. Lines 41-44 express their friendship in the language of Catullan sympotic poems (e.g. *Carm.* 50); intellectual and personal intimacy followed, day and night (*Sat.* V.41-42), the two of them, it seems, to the exclusion of the world, sharing a single purpose while they pondered at their respectable dinners for two, obviously by common consent, led by a single guiding star (43-44). That star brings to mind yet another connection: this is an astrological pair, too, and all the celestial signs are in on it: fastidious Birthday balanced them evenly on Libra, Gemini coordinate their fates, and they evade the grim Saturn by Jupiter, together; somehow the star astrologically balanced Persius and Cornutus (51).

The image of the twinned scales that, in the fourth satire, Socrates used to describe Alcibiades’ delusional practice of public criticism (*scis etenim iustum gemina suspendere lance/ancipitis librae, rectum discernis ubi inter/curua subit...*, *Sat.* IV.10-12) is appropriated by Persius in the fifth satire to describe his relationship with his teacher (*nostra uel aequali suspendit tempora Libra/ Parca tenax ueri, seu nata fidelibus hora/ diuidit in Geminos concordia fata*

²⁰⁷ *Mem.* I, 2.

²⁰⁸ *uitae nescius error/ diducit trepidas ramosa in compita mentes*, *Sat.* V.34-35 and *et tibi quae Samios diduxit littera ramos/ surgentem dextro monstrauit limite callem*, *Sat.* III.56-57.

duorum..., *Sat.* V.47-49). The quality of their friendship is truly cosmic.²⁰⁹ The close, mutually informing relationship between Cornutus and Persius has allowed for the emergence of their shared fates (49). The two figures are conjoined with *mihi te* (27), *me tibi* (36), and, again, *me tibi* (51). And the arrangement of the phrase *nostra animae* around *pars tua* answers the question that *quanta* raises (22-23).

With the diversity of mankind, at line 52, the verses begin to take on a Horatian sensibility—men have different motivations and live differently; the reasonable voice balances their concerns nicely over the lines. In the context of the address to Cornutus as Persius’ sweet friend (23), we might recall Horace’s ode to his sweet patron (*O et praesidium et dulce decus meum*, *C. I.* 1.1) or his epistle to the same, bidden by the muse (*Prima dicte mihi, summa dicende Camena*, *Ep.* I.1). But the poetic even-handedness of this survey of human lives is destroyed in or via the enjambment of venereal disease, gout, and rot (57-58).

mille hominum species et rerum discolor usus;
uelle suum cuique est nec uoto uiuitur uno.
mercibus hic Italis mutat sub sole recenti
rugosum piper et pallentis grana cumini,
hic satur inriguo mauult turgescere somno,
hic campo indulget, hunc alea decoquit, ille
in uenerem putris; sed cum lapidosa cheragra
fecerit articulos ueteris ramalia fagi,
tunc crassos transisse dies lucemque palustrem
et sibi iam seri uitam ingemuere relictam. (*Sat.* V.53-61)

There are a thousand types of person and many colored are the ways of doing things; each has his own will and life is not lived by a single prayer. This man at sun up exchanges wrinkled pepper and seeds of pale cumin for Italian merchandise; this man, loaded, prefers to bloat away in his sloshed sleep; this man plays on the sportsfield; this man is depleted by the dice, that diseased man by sex. But once rocky gout has turned their knuckles into the branches of an old beech, then how the thick days and marshy light have passed and how life

²⁰⁹ Stoics were interested in astrology as part of a greater theory of human lives within the cosmos. For the significances of star signs, see Kissel (1990) ad loc.

has been lost—that’s what they groan to themselves, already too late.

He turns for the last time back to Cornutus with *at te*, (*Sat.* V.62): his life is devoted to study and teaching. This teacher is as if a sower of seeds--into the ears of youths, the ears that have been such an important receptacle and site of contest throughout the satires.

Diatribе suddenly—at long last?—interrupts this encomium’s turn to yet another metaphor—philosophical agriculture (we were about to learn about sowing adolescent ears with a philosopher’s fruit)—with its familiar call: *petite hinc, puerique senesque...* (*Sat.* V.64; cf. *discite et, o miseri, causas cognoscite rerum*, *Sat.* III.66). Conventionally, the start of this satire’s diatribe has been marked at line 73. Sometimes the final twenty or so lines of the “encomium” are identified as transitional.²¹⁰ But a recognition that this diatribe interrupts midline and turns from the single and singular, pointedly (atypically) identifiable addressee to the many in and after line 73, better accounts for the language of the lines that immediately follow and their literary and philosophical content. The diatribe becomes confused with too many devices: other characters get in the way of the diatribist and deliver their own sermons, effectively elbowing-aside their creator. Some other Stoic, Greed, Sloth, and even reason disrupt him. Persius’ recital of his lesson is diverted by literary imagination.

The diatribe emphatically declares its subject in *libertas: libertate opus est* (73).²¹¹ People fail to comprehend true freedom because they misinterpret the *libertas* conferred by manumission. Hurtling between sloth and careerism, they acquire ever more dominators of the psyche, mistresses such as Greed and Luxury. The encomium played with epic, tragedy, and Catullan and Horatian

²¹⁰ For a review of opinions on the breaks in this text, including those of Casaubon and Gildersleeve, see Anderson (1982: 154).

²¹¹ The phrase clearly alerts us to Horace, *Serm.* II, 7, the myriad connections with which Hooley (1997: 93-121) masterfully outlines.

lyric tropes. As the diatribe proceeds, it, too, pulls in scenes and tropes from other genres and poems as *exempla* that might persuade the *pueri senesque* of the importance of *libertas*.

The *uiatica* (*Sat.* V. 65) Persius urges all to seek is a contemporary metaphor for philosophical study used also by Musonius Rufus (“Τὸ ἄριστον γήρως ἐφόδιον;” XVII). An anonymous interlocutor, out of nowhere, complains at the satirist’s lack of urgency; he’ll get to it tomorrow (*Sat.* V.66-68). That interlocutor, of course, is always already condemned to the rat race: pinned to the back axle, he’ll never catch up, no matter how fast the wheels turn (68-72). Persius cites his own satire, too, with the invocation of *Satire* III’s hazy procrastinator:

*‘cras hoc fiet.’ idem cras fiat. ‘quid? quasi magnum
nempe diem donas!’ sed cum lux altera uenit,
iam cras hesternum consumpsimus; ecce aliud cras
egerit hos annos et semper paulum erit ultra. (Sat. V.66-69)*

‘It’ll happen tomorrow.’ Tomorrow be the same. ‘What? as if you’re granting such a great thing in a day!’ But when another morning arrives, already we’ve eaten up yesterday’s tomorrow. Look, another tomorrow will live out these years and always there’ll be another beyond.

These lines recall the day-after-day failure to rise in the third satire (*Sat.* III.1 and 15-16). The *nempe* there, the sameness of every morning of indolence has proceeded as predicted.

The satirist sends up the hypocrisy of the political paradigm: no one conceives of a recently freed slave as an equal; you wouldn’t believe that, just because he has acquired *Marcus* for a name, the freedman will have left his cheating mentality, the supposed slavish attribute, behind with his bondage (*Sat.* V.76-81). An interlocutor: But what else is freedom except the ability to live as one wills? Now it is an explicitly Stoic character who responds (*Stoicus hic, Sat.* V.86) and breaks down that logic. The Stoic is on Persius’ side—we know this because his ear has been cleaned out—like the *purgatas aures* of Cornutus’ students or the *uaporata aure* of the ideal lector of the first satire (*Sat.* I.126). Meanwhile, the satirist removes the grannies (with whose irrational views

of the world we are familiar from the second satire, *Sat.* II.31-38). But the action of the logical Stoic is different from the action of the satirist. Compare his methodical response—accepting one premiss, rejecting the others—to the physical response of the satirist, plucking grandmothers from the interlocutor’s lungs (*dum ueteres auias tibi de pulmone reuello*, *Sat.* V.92, i.e., to rid him of entrenched misconceptions): the philosopher and the poet have very different responses to ignorance and hypocrisy; for the one, it is to explicate and teach; for the other, it is to pick and pluck, in incomprehensible somatic terms. Next, we learn that it is not within the praetor’s power to assign to the ignorant those duties that accompany a subtle understanding of the universe (*tenuia rerum/ officia*, 93-94), nor to sanction the squandering of life (94).

Persius again confusingly cites Persius, staging a scene he’s already put on:

mane piger stertis. ‘surge’ inquit Auaritia, ‘eia surge.’ negas. instat. ‘surge’ inquit. ‘non queo.’ ‘surge.’ ‘en quid agam?’... (*Sat.* V.132-134)

In the morning you're snoring lazily. ‘Get up,’ says Greed, ‘hey, get up.’ you refuse. She's still there. ‘Get up,’ she says. ‘I can’t.’ ‘Get up.’ ‘Well, what should I do?’

The lines recall the snoring poet of *Satire* III, late to his table, whose “friend” roused him in much the same way:

Nempe haec adsidue. iam clarum mane fenestras
intrat et angustas extendit lumine rimas.
stertimus, indomitum quod despumare Falernum
sufficiat, quinta dum linea tangitur umbra.
‘en quid agis?...’ (*Sat.* III.1-5)

Of course, this constantly is what it is: now bright A.M. is getting into the windows and widening the narrow cracks with its light. We’re snoring, enough to despume a stiff Falernian, while the line is touched with by shade no. 5. ‘Hey, what’re you doing?...’

In the target, the satirist-diatribist sees the sleeper of *Satire* III; in other words, Persius sees himself.

For her part, *Luxuria* seductively interrogates him—where is he in such a mad rush to go? (*quo*

deinde, insane, ruis, quo? *Sat.* V.142), again with similarity to the warnings against wrongheadedness in *Satire* III.²¹² But the roles of exhortation have been perverted in these restagings. How is the target of a verbal lashing meant to identify and view his commander? Similarly, with *disce*, the diatribist will urge his target to wipe that sneer off his face (*Sat.* V.91)—but the expression on the face of the target is one of which Persius himself has been accused (*Sat.* I.40-41).

The diatribe of *Satire* V uses prefabricated principles, such as *libertas* and *natura*,²¹³ affiliating itself to Stoicism on a lexical level. But diction only goes so far. *Ratio* chatters *nonsense*, making it impossible for her listener to learn. As in *Satire* III, there is a noticeable lack of positive didactic *exempla*.²¹⁴

The Stoic has a vinegar-cleansed ear, *Stoicus hic aurem mordaci lotus aceto* (*Sat.* V.86); he is similar to the *ignotus* in *Satire* IV. *Ratio* appears, chattering in the ear (*secretam garrit in aurem*, *Sat.* V. 96); this is similar to *secrete loquimur* (21). Her speech is incomprehensible to the listener; *garrire* even recalls the meaningless speech of birds: Ovid's parrot, as we have seen, is *garrulus* (*Amores* II, 6.26). The inscrutable law is explicated: someone must not be allowed to do what he will undoubtedly screw up (96-97). Universal law, nature herself, says that action from ignorance

²¹² *tibi luditur. effluis amens,/ contemnere*, *Sat.* III.20-12; *dicisque facisque quod ipse non sani esse hominis non sanus iuret Orestes*, *Sat.* III.117-118.

²¹³ *sapiens* (114), *publica lex* (98), *ius...sui* (176) and The Right (*recti*, 121). cf. Harvey (1981) ad loc.

²¹⁴ The expectation-failure scheme is in fact the real pattern in this satire. The diatribe only partially performs proper pedagogy in philosophy, failing to represent the progress fundamental for contemporary Stoics. The inevitable intractability of procrastination is laid down by the series *cras-idem-nempe-lux altera-iam cras-cras hesternum- aliud cras-semper* (66-69) as soon as the diatribe tries to move forward from *petite hinc* (63). The scenario of failure to be one's own master (li. 115-121) is three times longer than the scenario of success (li. 113-114). The (comedic) young man—even if he should escape his mistress—would be free *nec nunc* (174).

is forbidden (98-99). Medicine and navigation²¹⁵ are lower-stakes, real-world examples of this (99-104)—so why should expertise in discerning Truth from Falsity be any different (104-106)?

quaeque sequenda forent quaeque euitanda uicissim,
illa prius creta, mox haec carbone notasti?
es modicus uoti, presso lare, dulcis amicis?
iam nunc adstringas, iam nunc granaria laxes...
(*Sat.* V.107-110)

Have you marked down both the things that will have to be pursued and the things to be avoided by turns, the former first in chalk, next the latter in charcoal? Do you make moderate prayers at a conservative hearth, sweet towards your friends? Just now do you close your pantry, just now open it...

The poetic balance and restraint of these lines once more ring as Horatian as their values. But even in Persius' poetic practice, there is a failure successfully to turn his gaze from the bodily feasts:

... inque luto fixum possis transcendere nummum
nec gluttu sorbere saliuam Mercurialem? (*Sat.* V.111-112)
...and could you pass by a coin fixed in the mud without slurping
back mercenary drool?

The satirist spoils the relief of ethical and poetic balance with a return to the mud and drool that pooled and stagnated throughout his previous satires.²¹⁶

The target of the diatribe says “Yes,” but the satirist-diatribist cannot believe him, it's more likely that he is holding on to former vices while parading around a new hide (115-118). Reason has imparted nothing to the target: no matter what he does, he'll screw it up, no matter how trivial

²¹⁵ The mention of “Melicerta” is particularly perverse. Persius uses his pre-metamorphosis name instead of his cult name, Palaemon: cf. *Met.* IV, 542 and *Fasti* VI, 501, where Ovid makes clear the division between the names. The infant unaware, in Ovid's picture, is laughing at the moment of his murder by his frenzied father (*ridentem*, *Met.* IV, 516). Juno laughs at the sight (*risit*, *Met.* IV, 524), an atrocity of trivial divine jealousy.

²¹⁶ e.g. *liquido cum plasmate guttur/ mobile conlueris*, *Sat.* I.17-18; *summa delumbe saliuu/ hoc natat in labris et in udo est Maenas et Attis*, *Sat.* I.104-105; *lustralibus ante saliuus*, *Sat.* II.33; *udum et molle lutum es*, *Sat.* III.23; *lutea pellis*, *Sat.* III.95;

or banal the action (113-123). Again, the target asserts that he is free—but surely he mixes up legal and ethical freedom. Persius reiterates the lesson: freedom does not consist in the manumission, only in wisdom (113-14 and 125). The target is as much a slave as the most menial *garçon* who runs after his master to the baths.

No prayer of yours will obtain for you the slightest bit of Right Living (119-121). It is not right to mix up a lack of expertise with delicate dances (122-123). “I am free,” but how do you arrive at this conclusion, when you’re so lost as to the fact of your spiritual masters? (124-125) Another scene: Barking orders for a slave to prepare his master’s bath. You don’t feel anything. But if you have inner masters, you are no less a slave. (126-131).

This is the important lesson: nothing outside yourself compels your body (*neruos*) to do anything; it is the congenital masters that live within, that hide deep in your diseased liver (*Sat.* V.127-130) to which you are ultimately enslaved.

Straight out of comedy, a young man tells his slave that he’s about to break with his mistress, lest he make himself and his family ridiculous (161-166). “Well done.” But will she cry? (168) “You’re a tough guy till you prove yourself her slave, saying ‘what should I do?’” In these lines it is the slave, for a change, who points out the folly of his superiors (169-174). Davus, too, Horace’s slave, makes a cameo from *Serm.* II, 7.²¹⁷ This, this is the moment we’ve been talking about—the question of non-legal freedom (174-175). Does the man driven by political ambition have self-control? (176-177). The characters of *Satire* II return: the public has strange, superstitious beliefs: Jewish rituals (180-184), bizarre cultic practices that smack of Egypt (185-188)—all oily and anatomical, in the ways we’ve seen before.

²¹⁷ On the importance of which poem, see Hooley (1997: 64-121) and above.

You make these points—in fact all the ethical critiques that have been presented in the satires—in front of a crowd of muscled centurions; the big one laughs, buys a hundred Greeks for an even hundred. (189-191). The satire closes on a disconcerting note. You finish your diatribe. Centurions laugh at it and buy a hundred-pack of philosophers (189-191), reminding us that pedagogical labors fall on deaf ears.

The final lines, with the singular *dixeris haec* (*Sat.* V.189), reframe the diatribe in the context of the address to Cornutus: the diatribe has been recited as an example of the type of philosophizing Cornutus (or a Cornutus-aspirant) uses to proselytize (63ff.). As the diatribe proceeds, however, Persius confuses the diatribe with other methods of exhortation and persuasion, however, other masters get in the way of his lessons and themselves deliver sermons. The *Stoicus hic* becomes one of several dominating speakers, occupying the same plane with *Auaritia*, *Luxuria*, and a surprisingly ineffective *Ratio*. Persius' ventriloquizing of his teacher is thwarted by his involvement in literary technique and literary worlds.

Persius : Cornutus :: Alcibiades : Socrates

The unbalanced relationship of Socrates and Alcibiades staged in *Satire IV* provides an important interpretive frame for *Satire 5* that ironizes the Persius-Cornutus relationship and puts Persius' encomium in dialogue with Platonic texts and Platonic questions. If Cornutus is a Socrates in *Satire V*, then Persius is suggestively an Alcibiades, an analogy pre-determined by the satirist's having gestured towards that infamously problematic student-teacher relationship in the previous poem. Persius *qua* Plato (the student who documents) is in conflict with Persius *qua* Alcibiades (the student who praises).

The implicit analogy “Persius : Cornutus :: Alcibiades : Socrates” is confirmed by various correspondences between both students and teachers across the two poems. Clearly, the Socratic lap of Cornutus (*Socratico, Cornute, sinu, 37*) puts him squarely in the role of that philosopher, and remind us of *Symposium*, as Hooley and Villeneuve have observed.²¹⁸ Lexical parallels between the representations of Persius and Alcibiades also precede and prepare for that explicit identification. Both youths display cleverness in speech (*dicenda tacendaue calles, Sat. IV.5; iunctura callidus acri, Sat. V.14*), a precocious talent that is morally indifferent; it is only a form of potential, and even a hazardous one when misdirected in the matter of public concerns (*et potis es nigrum uitio praefigere theta, Sat. IV.13; doctus et ingenuo culpam defigere ludo, Sat. V.16*). In *Satire IV*’s graphic description of Alcibiades’ body, his groin is “weeded” and yet his “bush” cannot be ploughed away (*haec plantaria uellant, Sat. IV.39; non tamen ista filix ullo mansuescit aratro, Sat. IV.41*); the work of the Socratic Cornutus upon the minds of young men is pitched in agricultural terms (*cultor enim iuuenum purgatas inseris aures, 63*).²¹⁹ The juxtaposition is telling. The idea of pruning and plowing, of course, has a long and erotic history in both poetic and philosophical literature. Catullus classically uses the trope in his Sapphic (and thus erotic) poem to Furius and Aurelius on the sexual transgressions of Lesbia, and additionally in his epithalamium.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Villeneuve (1918) ad loc. and Hooley (1997: 81-82).

²¹⁹ P. A. Miller (1998: 268-269) discusses this metaphor in *Satire 5* as an engagement in “grotesque” discourse. Cf. Nussbaum (1986: 172) and the failure to reproduce in human love vs. productive sowing in Aristophanes’ speech in *Symposium*.

²²⁰ *illius culpa cecidit uelut prati/ ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam/ tactus aratro est* (Cat. *Carm.* 11. 22-24) and *ut flos in saeptis secretus nascitur hortis,/ ignotus pecori, nullo conuolsus aratro...* (Cat. *Carm.* 62.39-40). See Nussbaum (1986: 172) on the possible use of the metaphor in *Symposium*.

Like *Satire IV*, *Satire V* is framed by a relationship between youth and philosopher. There is an important structural difference between the two poems, however. The principal speaker on stage in the fourth satire was the philosopher, whereas the speaker of the fifth is the younger man, in an important reversal of dialogical roles. The question remains: will philosophy fare better in this satire than it did in the last?

Platonic Praise and Friendship

The encomium as an expression of friendship is not a philosophically sound sort of poetry. We know this from Cornutus' swift reminder within the satire to keep it simple, but also from Platonic dialogues on friendship, praise, and the education of youths. Encomium mythologizes and misleads. Therefore, as we shall see, Persius writes the encomium to his philosopher-friend as "bad" literature, not only using the poetic tropes that he has repeatedly assailed, but also by reigniting certain erotic-Socratic tendencies that, as discussed in the previous chapter, were sidelined in the period. Erotic complicity in ethical development runs across the Platonic corpus, for example in *Alcibiades I*, *Lysis*, and *Symposium*. In *Phaedrus*, it is the grounds upon which some of Plato's most beautiful pages were written—the conversation of Socrates and Phaedrus on the nature of love set on the banks of a river (231a-242b). Indeed, the erotic is essential to Plato. But it is anathema to the tradition that follows Xenophon.

The relation between praise and love is the motivating factor in *Lysis*, the dialogue in which Socrates interrogates the understanding that a group of boys have of friendship. The set-up of the pedagogical moment is this: upon hearing that the besotted Hippothales has been praising Lysis in prose and verse, Socrates shows the boys that praise genres are inefficient for obtaining the objects of their affections. Besides, Hippothales' praise of his beloved fails ethically because it is an

exercise in self-aggrandizement by association. Socrates will show them the effective method of obtaining the beloved: confuse and reduce him to incapacity through philosophy. Hence the dialogue on what constitutes friendship is based on the premiss that philosophy will get you a boyfriend. By extension, Persius would seem to share young Hippothales' error: he is speaking philosophically defective literature.

As the dialogue takes shape, it turns out that friends value each other because they belong to one another:

“And if you two are friends with each other, then in some way you naturally belong (φύσει πη οἰκεῖτοι) to each other..”

“Absolutely,” they said together.

“And if one person desires (ἐρᾷ) another, my boys, or loves him passionately (ἐπεθύμει), he would not desire him or love him passionately or as a friend (ἐφίλει) unless he somehow belonged (οἰκεῖος) to his beloved (ἐρωμένῳ) either in soul or in some characteristic, habit, or aspect of his soul.”

(*Lysis* 221e-222a, Lombardo, trans. in Cooper, ed.)

Persius' description of his friendship with Cornutus is actually very close to the portrayal of friendship in *Lysis*. Both the theory presented in *Lysis* and the Stoic theory of friendship use the language of belonging, but Persius seems to reject the Stoic development in favor of the Platonic variant. The notion of what is οἰκεῖον as a property of friendship—that one loves what is in some sense one's own, what one can appropriate or share—is also a central part of the Stoic theory of friendship. But Stoic οἰκείωσις is an expansive idea; it starts with an affinity for kin and expands outward to include all humanity.²²¹ The friendship of the satirist, on the other hand, is far from all-encompassing. The closeness between Persius and Cornutus is concomitant with their separateness from the rest of the world: *secrete loquimur* (21) are the two words that turn the satirist's attention away from the follies of other writers and, in the same gesture, introduce Cornutus to the text.

²²¹ For the relevant ancient testimonia, see Long (1997: 16-29).

Their friendship, in other words, is rather “Platonic” in the sense presented in *Lysis*. It is also clearly sympotic.

In *Symposium*, Alcibiades’ speech on *eros* and Socrates has been insightfully interpreted by Andrea Nightingale as a “systematic misreading” in its encomiastic endeavor that ultimately fails to represent the philosopher; and by Martha Nussbaum as a poetic complication of philosophy.²²² Persius has forgotten that praise is at odds with the purposes of a philosopher and that praise may equally well be a condemnation in that it exhibits the inefficacy of the teacher’s instruction and of philosophical rhetoric more generally.²²³ Like Alcibiades, he reminds us that the teacher is no saint, and that philosophy is susceptible to a critique that is beyond its control, outside of its own discourse, and vulnerable to poetic reconfiguration.

Persius explicitly writes his encomium with the tropes of “bad” literature and “suspect” genres that foreground the tension between purpose and modes of speaking. Persius deplored the motif of the hundred mouths as bad poetry.²²⁴ But rather than discussing his teacher in a poetically and, more importantly, in a philosophically sound mode, Persius praises Cornutus in precisely those “bad” poetic terms, demanding 100 mouths for himself, flagrantly writing both “bad” poetry and “bad” philosophy: Rather than backing off from *poscere* (*Sat.* V.1), Persius strengthens the request with *deposcere* (26). We have already been informed about the content of good poetic practice is: to pin down bad habits with precision (*mores defigere*, 15-16) and from that position to draw out his words (*hinc trahe quae dicis*, 17).²²⁵ But in the encomium, with deliberate glibness, Persius has

²²² Nightingale (1995: 106-107).

²²³ The leading dactyl *me tibi* (36)—*me* first—enacts Socrates’ observation in the *Lysis* that the act of eulogizing is tantamount to self-praise.

²²⁴ ... *centum sibi poscere uoces/ centum ora et linguas optare in carmina centum* (*Sat.* V.1-2).

²²⁵ Anderson (1982: 171-172) describes the fundamental incongruity of *defigere* with *ingenuo ludo*.

pinned down the philosopher, right into his own self (*te fixi*, 27) and he draws out his words for a philosophically unsound project: praise.

Plato and ethical slavery

The encomium of the teacher in *Satire V* has been considered a reflection of their “joined commitments.”²²⁶ On Hooley’s view any ideological problem that might arise from the writing of a eulogy in a satire may be written off by analogy to the “benevolent irony” modeled by Horace in his ode to Maecenas (*Carm.* 2.17). The possibility of reading the relationship documented in the eulogy as tied up with the master-slave relationships of the diatribe has been taken by Anderson as the wrong reading, as the reading of “fools.”²²⁷ For these critics, the function of eulogy is largely to allow Persius to emerge as a pedagogical voice equal to that of his tutor’s. But is there any interpretive value in having Persius in fact play the fool? Let us examine philosophy and slavery in this regard based on the signal of the *Socratico sinu*.

At the close of *Alcibiades I*, the young man enslaves himself to Socrates—an odd notion in general, but all the more so because of the terms he use. Alcibiades declares that he attend Socrates specifically as a *paidagogos* (παιδαγωγεῖν, 135d) proposes an enslavement to the philosopher more nuanced than one that might be indicated by δουλεύειν. It is a strange proposition that positions Alcibiades as slave (and thus lower status), but one with great personal responsibility for (and thus higher status) charge; he is an older person guiding a younger person; he is even a wise teacher (as the *paidagogos* in *Republic* 390e). Of course, these are inversions of the manifest relation between the two men: Socrates is older and wiser; it is Socrates who is meant to guide

²²⁶ Hooley (1997: 79-82).

²²⁷ Anderson (1982: 160). See also Hooley (1997: 87-93).

Alcibiades to virtue. Socrates does not refute this assertion but rather deduces from the success of his love for Alcibiades, now parentally conceived:

“Then my love (ἔρωϑ) for you, my excellent friend, will be just like a stork: after hatching a winged love (ἔρωϑ) in you, it will be cared for (θεραπεύεσθαι) by it in return.”

(*Alc.* 135e, Hutchinson, trans. in Cooper, ed.)

The difficulty of the relationship has much in common with the complexity of the relationship between Persius and his Cornutus—parental affection, submission, teaching, and desire. The pretext of the slavery metaphor in *Alcibiades* and the maintenance of these terms, alongside the complication of erotics and ethics, throughout much of the Platonic corpus provides intellectual context for Persius’ philosopher-youth relationship. Alcibiades declares his continued servile status in his notional encomium of Socrates in which he also accuses the philosopher of injustice and ambition. Plato as a resource for humor and the satirical has been increasingly an area of interest. Bracht Branham has elucidated the comic and satirical elements in the Platonic corpus broadly in service of his examination of Lucian’s “reinscribing philosophical dialogue in a variety of comic traditions.”²²⁸ Lucian’s assessment of his own work is that he “saved Dialogue from the Academy,”²²⁹ in other words, Lucian saves Plato from Philosophy. We may see Persius’ project in the satires along similar lines: Persius seemingly rescues Stoicism from its own institutional lethargy by revivifying and restaging and, most important of all, reorienting the endless circularity of the problems of speaking, writing, teaching, and even of being in a way that his prosaic fellows at Rome would not.²³⁰

²²⁸ Branham (1989: 67).

²²⁹ Branham (1989: 67).

²³⁰ A possible analogue might be Seneca’s tragedies in contrast with his prose treatises, but this comparison is not one that will be examined here.

In *Symposium*, Alcibiades has the distinction of delivering the sole speech featuring *eros* of and for an individual, a real-life, non-mythological exemplum. The party guests who precede him praise love along the more general lines of origin myths and social conventions. Their speeches, however, provide a variety of vocabulary and themes that Alcibiades' speech ultimately distorts or inverts in the face of his overwhelming desire for this ugly older man. When he sees Socrates his "heart starts leaping in my chest" (215e) and he is so stirred that his life is equivalent to the abjection of slave bondage (ἀνδράποδοῦς, 215e). The line is important because it is the strange slavery/attendant discourse that *Alcibiades* seeks to explain.

Both Branham and Andrea Nightingale have gestured towards the ways in which humor arises from the discomfort of the friction of different types of language presented in the dialogues. Plato dramatizes humor of an intellectual kind in the very process of argument and refutation, in the clash of mutually incompatible languages. This "dialectical humor" differs from the humor of character in that it is produced by the confrontation of alien perspectives rather than by the presentation of personality."²³¹ The clash of genres more broadly is the motivator of dialogues such as *Menexenus*, in which eulogy is dismantled, and *Symposium*, in which encomium after encomium fails until real tribute is demonstrated in *elenchos*.²³² But as Michael Mader has shown, humor is not only an ancillary phenomenon; laughter and comedy are themselves of interest to Plato. Further to intellectual humor, but also situational and physical humor, Sonja Tanner observes.²³³ Tanner has usefully opened the question of laughter in the Platonic dialogues and

²³¹ Branham (1989: 67).

²³² Nightingale (1995: 106-107).

²³³ Tanner (2017: xiii-xiv).

proposes that Comedy and philosophy may be mutually engaged and complementary.²³⁴ Both are about critical assessment. Aristotle, Quintilian, and Diogenes Laertius attribute to Plato some significant taste for mimes, the low-register comic forms, with Quintilian reporting that the comic texts of Sophron formed a pillow for his head on his deathbed (*Inst. Orat.* I, 10.17).²³⁵ While Andrew Ford has argued that anecdotes associating Plato and the mimes of Sophron are late, even Hellenistic, and thus apocryphal, the interest here is that this association of Plato and the comic was available to Persius.²³⁶

Persius' nights with Cornutus are an ideal symposium of two that take place in Socrates' lap—are they just the sort of evenings that *Symposium's* Alcibiades had wished for? Alcibiades recounts the evenings he shared with Socrates, over meals, “talking late into the night,” lying on the couch together (217c-219d). The passion with which Alcibiades describes his desire to be in Socrates' company runs deep: “I mean my heart, or my soul, (τὴν καρδίαν γὰρ ψυχὴν) or whatever you want to call it, which has been struck (πληγείς) and bitten by philosophy” (218a). Alcibiades, after one of these evenings together, admits that Socrates is the “only worthy lover (ἐραστὴς ἄξιος) I have ever had...” (218c), recapitulating and confirming Socrates' assertion in *Alcibiades*. The younger man condemns Socrates, however—his “amazing arrogance and pride” (219c). Alcibiades' inability to captivate Socrates, however, leads him to believe that “no one else has ever known the real meaning of slavery (καταδεδουλωμένος)” (219e). That line is a real-world instantiation of Pausanias' general principle of “the lover's total and willing subjugation to his beloved's wishes” but shows that, contrary to Pausanias' civic estimation, his pursuit does not

²³⁴ Mader (1977: 43-79).

²³⁵ Tanner (2017: xi-xxx).

²³⁶ Ford (2010).

exhibit the nobility of voluntary enslavement (δουλεία ἐκούσιος) (184c). The real evidence of the relationship between the philosopher and the younger man subverts the social expectations (and excuses/ or the glossings-over) provided by society. Or perhaps Alcibiades' behavior is servile because the roles have been partially switched, in that he is behaving as an *erastes* even as he is structurally the *eromenos*. Pausanias' speech also reminds us that the relationship of the *erastes* and *eromenos* is embarked upon in the service of improving the character of the younger man and his progress towards virtue and wisdom. (184d-e). The reason why all of this is important is because the Persius: Alcibiades equation reminds us of all that underlies the philosopher-youth relationship, and that enslavement is indeed a very relevant evil twin to "Platonic" love—in as many ways as "Platonic" may be construed.

Conclusions

Cicero once staged a dialogue on rhetoric at the feet of Plato (*Brutus* 24). The presence of the Greek philosopher looming over the Roman interlocutors, provided a measure for the orator's own success and the legitimation of his mission to historicize and systematize rhetoric. But it was, importantly, an *image* of Plato that Cicero used—a particular representation, one acceptable and adaptable to Roman purposes. The very setting—on a meadow—brought the activity of philosophical discourse outside the city, to a country-seat, from which distance the history of oratory—and even intellectual history more generally—might be more clearly perceived.²³⁷ Persius' is, of course, a radically different treatment of the Platonic philosophical heritage: rather than invoking the authority of the Athenian philosopher as a static, finished object, he tentatively engages with his texts, providing a critique not only of the fictiveness of Platonic

²³⁷ cf. Zanker (1995: 198-204).

dialogue but also of the sanitizing treatment of the genre and of Socrates by the Stoics. He does so in ways that we might consider Persius' *Satires* as being part of the tradition of "Socratic" literature.

Just as parody is reflected in both the visual and literary traditions, this sanitizing strain is reflected too in the philosophical traditions discussed above. We may now see, at this chapter's conclusion, just how far Persius' satire is from his teacher Cornutus' measured critique of fallible social and civic conventions and institutions, carefully balanced with a pragmatic approach to full integration with the establishment, in the *Epidrome*.²³⁸ It is important to remember—in all of these belated interpretive struggles—that Persius writes to elicit a laugh. The parody of—or the anxiety over—the schoolmaster who surfaces on a classical wine-cup²³⁹ in Chapter Four persists through the Neronian period. Quintilian, Persius' younger contemporary, reminds parents contemplating sending their sons away for education to beware the pederastic goings-on among boarders and the deviance of schoolmasters (*Inst. Orat.* I, 2.4ff.).²⁴⁰

With *crede* (*Sat.* IV.1), Persius theorized Platonic dialogue. In the fifth satire, he shows himself to be both Alcibiades and Plato. *Alcibiades* I, which underpinned the fourth satire, presented the backstory—the prequel—to the relationship so passionately described by Alcibiades in *Symposium*, in which the younger man professes and despairs over his fundamental—and seemingly intractable—enslavement to his desire for the philosopher. That relationship is some inversion of relationship *erastes* and *eromenos* which had already been developed in Pausanias' speech. The significant structural difference between the fourth and fifth satires is that the principal

²³⁸ Boys-Stones (2007: 77-88).

²³⁹ Appendix, fig. 2; Beck (1975: pl. 53, 276a).

²⁴⁰ Richlin (1992: 223).

(indeed, the only) speaker of *Satire IV* is the philosopher whereas the student dominates the fifth satire. *Satire V* follows the model of *Satires I* and *III*, opening with an exchange. The interruption (*Sat. V.5-18*) in this case appears to be supplied by Cornutus, who is identified when the opening voice resumes speaking (*Cornute, Sat. V.23*). The satire begins with a dialogic premiss but explicitly overturns the generic expectations for dialogue, as it is conventionally dubbed.²⁴¹ Coming after *Satire IV*, in which the Platonic philosopher is shown to be an out-of-control control-freak, this poem turns the tables on the lessons of Socratic personages. As with the idea of παιδαγωγεῖν at the end of the Platonic *Alcibiades*, the roles of philosopher and youth are importantly switched between the fourth and fifth satires. In *Satire V*, the student controls the negotiation of dialogue, encomium, and diatribe in this, the longest of the poems; this control puts him in a position of ideological strength from which to make his final renunciation in the sixth satire. The seeds of Plato's own problematization of the philosopher-youth relationships in *Alcibiades* continue to germinate in the fifth satire; another Platonic question, the value of praise genres, which emerges from among dialogues such as *Symposium*, *Lysis*, and *Menexenus* presents a further problem for Persius' Socratic relationship.

Satire V, like *Satires III* and *IV*, has standardly (if loosely) been identified as a "dialogue",²⁴² but as with those poems, Persius uses interruption and response as one of several ways of destabilizing the philosophical lessons transmitted. In this, the longest of his satires, the diversity of genres includes his characteristic take on (or display of) Stoic diatribe but also the philosophically unsound and destabilizing genre of encomium. Persius' engagement with Platonic and Socratic questions is profound, but rather than solely lending authority to the piece, the

²⁴¹ e.g. Reckford (1962: 490).

²⁴² As it is conventionally dubbed, e.g. Reckford (1962: 490).

summoning of that body of thought in fact undermines the virtues of his philosophical relationship with the Stoic teacher Cornutus' and the putative project of teaching *libertas*. At the end of this rapid cycling through genres of speaking and persuading, which frequently utterly diverts and even thwarts ethical progress, the pedagogical labor of Persius' "Socrates" is shown to be fruitless in the context of the overriding dynamic[s] of Romans and (or *over*) Greeks. Persius is demonstrating the ways in which his practice flouts Socratic and philosophic convention, this time not first through diatribe, but rather through encomium.

Recognizing that Satire IV is *not* a dialogue enables a more flexible reading that may make sense of Persius' manipulations of philosophical discourses. He invokes the dialogue in a form that *plays* with dialogue but is *not* a dialogue, ironically and even tendentiously so. *Satire IV* transmits a great deal *about* philosophy—but not what Stoicism *wishes* us to recall: eroticism, confusion, a confrontational Socrates. *Satire V* shows that ethical pedagogy is an exercise in futility.

Shadi Bartsch has gestured towards some of these similarities and allusions to the Alcibiades-Socrates encounters in Plato's dialogues but sees Persius' appropriation of the quintessential and problematic Platonic relationship as de-sexualizing and de-problematizing, which is to say, humorless. For her, the relation of *Satires IV* and *V* to the *Alcibiades* and Platonic corpus more generally is one of revision and pointed transcendence. On her argument, Persius' choice of a model of education represented in Alcibiades indicates the satirist's approval of the educational practice on display on the dialogue: Persius' own experience of pedagogy (and, implicitly, the project of Roman Stoicism) is new and improved. Bartsch's Persius condemns Plato's erotic metaphors and over-sexed Socrates (whom she identified as the sun-tanner) "in the service of a less compromised and purer philosophical stance." Xenophon, she points out, positioned the opening of *Memorabilia* as a defense of Socrates, a man in charge of his *aphrodisia*

and *gaster*, against the charge of sexual corruption; and Xenophon himself admitted that Socrates might have ensured Alcibiades' capacity for *sophrosune* before discussing politics. Persius, like Xenophon, revises *Alcibiades* in *Satire IV* and proposes "a new, desexualized, and particularly Stoic model" for pedagogy in philosophy in *Satire V* to replace the erotic dialectic of the Platonic Socrates.²⁴³

But Persius' engagement with the Platonic corpus is subversive in ways that Plato himself anticipated. It is not the case that the philosopher may not be a figure of fun.²⁴⁴ *Satire IV*'s treatment of dialogue parodies and (thus) theorizes that genre; and *Satire V*'s treatment of the teacher then involves "Cornutus" in the problems set up in *Satire IV*. For all of the pre-determined Stoic principles here related (*libertas*, 73, *ratio* 96, 119, *sapiens*, 114, *publica lex*, 98, *natura*, 98, *ius...sui*, 176,²⁴⁵ and The Right, *recti*, 121), Cornutus' own teaching may be viewed as hazardous. From the perspective of authorship, whereas in *Satire IV* Persius' philosopher staged the dialogue and played all the roles, in *Satire V* Persius steals the show, playing not only the young speechifying Alcibiades but also playing Plato.

Laughter is not entirely outside of the philosophical project, either. Laughter is part of the Platonic project. Plato himself—through Alcibiades—offers us ways to laugh at Socrates. He is a Silenus. He has a thing for attractive young men. He creepily follows you around. This is not to laugh solely at Socrates, of course: Alcibiades makes himself utterly ridiculous in these scenes,

²⁴³ Bartsch (2015: 97-99 and 114-115).

²⁴⁴ Bartsch (2012: 218) has said that for Persius, the "Stoic philosopher is not a figure of fun," recalling Plaza's assertion that laughter in satire is generally authorized with the exception of laughter directed at the philosopher in Persius. See Plaza (2006: 232).

²⁴⁵ cf. Harvey (1981), *loc. cit.*

too—this strapping, godly young man practically apoplectic—though still able to rant—at the mere sight of some below average borderline pervert.

Persius ends his fifth satire with laughter and an admission of the pointlessness of the discourse he has been advertising. The final poem will pursue this literary self-destruction. If we start from the evident premiss that the last satire is part of the book of which it is, manifestly, a structurally crucial part, what is there in it that “book ends,” so to speak, the text? To begin with, Persius starts all over with the question of inspiration. He is fully embodied at this point and that embodiment takes over from the book. The sixth satire is a letter; the book is in a new form, ready to go out into the world, like Ovid’s little *Tristia*. It is the finally “packaging” of the satires. But what does any of this have to do *Satire V*? The reopening of the question of inspiration seems to come from the *Prologue* but it also comes from the fifth satire. In the fifth satire, poetic convention and inspiration turned out poorly for philosophical speech. All things Greek are a dime a dozen, anyway. So Persius removes to the western coast and wraps up his body in burial cloths.

CHAPTER SEVEN: The Birdman lives on (*Satire VI*)

This chapter establishes the place of the final satire within the structure of the *libellus*, an epistolary satire which revisits and meaningfully develops *topoi* from the earlier poems, making it a retrospective of sorts.²⁴⁶ Importantly, the poem recycles thematic elements—major and minor—with which Persius built his *libellus*: his *recusatio* from the league of inspired poets; characters and stock-types; mercenariness; his own and other poets’ somatic markers; plant vs. animal foods; fear for the fate of his work. *Topoi* from the literary-critical oriented prologue and first satire are reformulated in the sixth satire’s interest in literary survival through manifest thematic, structural, and aural resonances. The poem is contextualized in a tradition of literature on the twin themes of poetic inspiration and poetic survival. Finally, we shall see how the fate of the earlier poems is crucially bound up in the fate of the present poem.

As many have observed, though perhaps overstated, the poet restrains his discourse in a “Horatian” manner. But such relative restraint lasts only until the poem’s end, where we read an *envoi* as obscene, aggressive, and joking as anything we have encountered in the earlier poems, rivaling even the graphic, sexually explicit language of *Satires I* and *IV*. Persius’ apparent revision to his manner of speaking is short-lived. The concluding line of the satire is characteristic of his style in earlier satires; the obscene diatribist is resurrected.

The satire provides a direct reference to Ennius in a quotation of his satire and the last look at his dream. The allusion to Ennius’ dream of Homer that opened the first poem (*Prol.* 1-6) is revisited and revised by the quotation of Ennius that opens the last poem (*Sat.* VI.9-11); the trope that opened the *Prologue* comes back in the sixth satire and therefore frames the entire book. Ennius reappears not as the lampooned epicist but rather as the awakened satirist through a

²⁴⁶ It does not take for granted that the poem signifies a mostly unrelated departure from the project of *Satires I-V* in form, topic, and tone; Bartsch (2015: 9-10).

quotation that Persius uses to let his reader—whether the addressee, Bassus, or the so-called “over-reader” —know where he is. This has much greater significance than has been previously allowed: (1) to quote Ennius is to redeem him from his own epic pretension and (2) to show that Ennius awakes from his fantasy, is also to give him that afterlife which he desired and asserted for himself—as part of satire. For Persius, Ennius *qua* epicist is dead, but Ennius *qua* satirist lives on.

Persius allows for the survival of the elder satirist early in this poem even as he comes to disavow his interest in survival. The significance of Persius’ rejection of Pythagorean survival is all the greater because the emergent project of the sixth satire is to address the question of his legacy, therefore, his death. Through the Ennian peacock, Persius suggests Pythagorean interpretations of his book, probing the limits of his own literary afterlife. Ennius is reintroduced along with his characteristic body part, the heart, an organ that completes Persius’ somatic theory of literature. The return of diatribe in the last stages of the poem reintegrates it stylistically with the graphic images of the central poems—food, fat, sex.

Life Issues

The critical commonplaces on the sixth satire are perplexing, but so entrenched that they are worth mentioning: the sixth satire is unrelated to the rest of the book; the sixth satire retreats from the satirical mode; the sixth satire is a truncated poem; the sixth satire is truncated because of the early death of the poet. One of the reasons for this style of interpretation of the sixth satire is the alleged evidence of its unfinishedness presented in the *Vita*, which contains information of varying degrees of credibility. In order to assess this, it becomes necessary to deal with what the *Vita* tells us more broadly. The *Vita* contains several types of information which we might distinguish and assess separately; some details are particular enough to be valued as having emerged from some set of

historical events, others general or conventional enough possibly to have emerged from generic conventions from the lives of poets. Unique to Persius' biography are details such as dates of birth and death (4 December 34 and 24 November 62, *Vit.* 1-3), birth place (Volaterrae.), social status (equestrian), location of his property (*Vit.* 4-6), extraordinary composition of his library (*Vit.* 38-39), sums of testamentary disbursements (*Vit.* 35-39), the composition of his family (father's early death; female relatives including Arria, stepfather, *Vit.* 7-9 and 32-34), intellectual associates (Remmius Palaemon, *grammaticus*, Verginius Flavius, *rhetor*, Caesius Bassus and Calpurnius Statura, *poetae*, Cornutus, *tragicus*,²⁴⁷ and through him Servilius Nonianus, Lucan, fellow *auditor Cornuti*, Claudius Agathinus, *medicus*, Petronius Aristocrates of Magnesia, and, finally, Thrasea Paetus, with whom he traveled abroad, *Vit.* 10-31). Even here, however, the labeling of Cornutus as *tragicus* (*Vit.* 29) is confusing at best, and perhaps evidence against the *Vita*'s reliability or interpolation. I also add to this "unique" category qualitative information that is not deducible from the text of the *Satires*, such as Persius' reverence of Servilius Nonianus *ut patrem* (*Vit.* 17), his colleague Lucan's over-the-top (i.e. *Lucanian*) amazement at Persius' *poemata* (*Vit.* 20-22), his emulation of Agathinus and Aristocrates (*Vit.* 24-28), his disregard of Seneca (*Vit.* 23), his sense of *pietas* in respect of his mother, sister, and aunt (*Vit.* 32-34). Some personal qualities, however, begin to bridge the area between the particular and the literary. That he was *morum lenissimorum* is probably not deducible from the bitter poems, for example; but that he was moral and chaste (*fuit frugi, pudicus*, *Vit.* 32-34) might well be so, from the many lines inveighing against the habits of others.

²⁴⁷ The labeling of Cornutus as a *tragicus* has been confusing given what we know about him otherwise. Perhaps it was an interpolation, or perhaps it transmits something true, but otherwise unverifiable. Seneca wrote tragedies; it is not inconceivable, but it is unlikely, that Cornutus did, too. See Boys-Stones (forthcoming) on verified and unverified works of Cornutus.

On the other hand, his manner of writing *et raro et tarde* (*Vit.* 41) might well be entirely deduced from the impressions of the grumbling poet late to his writing desk in the morning of *Satire* III and even from the statement *si forte quid aptius exit,/ quando haec rara auis est, si quid tamen aptius exit* (*Sat.* I, 45-46). Indeed, Lefkowitz has argued at length that ancient biographies of the poets are mythicizing forms of the poets' own first person stances.²⁴⁸ The study of biography does reveal the structures of the genre, with its own mythic models. Other literary claims in the *Vita* might well be, if not wholly constructed, at least assimilated to biographical conventions about poets—inspiration from a predecessor (in this case Lucilius) and posthumous editing (in this case by Cornutus and Bassus, two of his three named addressees).

The *Vita* has perhaps unduly influenced the interpretation of *Satire* VI because it has raised the specter of posthumous editing and intervention, even total rearrangement, given the early death of the poet. The *Vita* says that the *liber* was left *imperfectus* at Persius' death (*Vit.* 41-42) and that it was tightened up, lightly, by Cornutus before publication by Bassus (*leuiter contraxit Cornutus et Caesio Basso, petenti ut ipse ederet, tradidit edendum, Vit.* 43-44). This has been taken to mean that Cornutus removed parts from *Satire* VI; this is possible, but also part of the tradition in poetic biographies of posthumous editing by friends and literary heirs, as with Vergil and Varius, so Suetonius tells us, or Lucretius and Cicero, supposed by Jerome. But the degree to which the poems were “unfinished” and the degree to which Cornutus “abridged” the text are entirely open to interpretation, however. *Imperfectus* may not refer to the last poem alone or it may just as well refer to some turn of phrase or half-lines.

The other strand of the *Vita*'s presentation of the sixth satire (which is in more than one way a farewell to *vita*—the depiction of Persius as virtue hero—also deserves reconsideration.

²⁴⁸ Lefkowitz (1978: 459-464).

Credence in this *uirginalis poeta* not only skews the way we think about the poet but also limits what we notice about a particular poem. In the case of the sixth satire it facilitates a blind eye to the poem's obscene end and an overemphasis on symptoms of the poet's reformation – something that has been commonplace throughout the scholarship, leading to the idea of the sixth satire as somehow separate from the rest of the book.

Critical Background

“The satiric program described by Persius in the first part of the satire is complete by the end of the fifth.”²⁴⁹ Morford repeats the worn idea that the satire has been truncated and then offers evidence precisely to the contrary, observing that the final reference to Chrysippus in VI forms a ring with the opening of the piece: “Persius’s use of the *acervus* (“heap”) to end his satire is brilliant” because, he says, the Stoic paradox forms a ring with the lines of Epicurean moderation at the beginning of the poem.²⁵⁰ For her part, Bartsch explains the contents of her monograph thus: “Even satire 6 is left aside as nonrepresentative of the project of satires 1–5; its epistolary form, its imagery, the change in its tone, all mark it as part of a new direction—perhaps one cut short by Persius’ fatal stomach ache of 62 CE.”²⁵¹

Statements like the above can rest only on a reading of the poem's first several lines, which set a relatively tranquil tone; nonetheless aggression is incipient soon after and is in full force by the poem's end. It is possible that the neglect of the poem's close represents the last frontier of prudishness. After a methodical close reading of the bulk of the satire, Morford elides Persius'

²⁴⁹ Morford (1984: 64).

²⁵⁰ Morford (1984: 71).

²⁵¹ Bartsch (2015: 9).

most obscene lines 61-74 with a restrained one-sentence paraphrase.²⁵² The biting end seems to play no role in the interpretation of the poem that it concludes.

Dan Hooley did see fit to include the poem in his monograph, where it is paired with *Satire* IV. Hooley reads the epistolary and lyrical opening of *Satire* VI as a “denouement” from the heady obscenity of the fourth satire. While previous scholars interpreted the poem as a genial variation on a genial Horatian exemplar, *Epistle* II, 2, Hooley notes the “inconcinnity” of Persius’ attack on his heir and uses that observation as an opportunity to re-evaluate how the poem’s supposedly moderate opening is related to Horace.²⁵³ While the lyric language in which Persius describes his addressee, the lyricist Caesius Bassus, is unquestionably Horatian (much of it from *Epistle* II, 2), the context of Persius’ adaptation should discomfit Bassus. In that epistle, Horace goes on to limit the value of lyric aesthetics; by composing lyrics himself, Bassus, Hooley argues, “has not *listened* to his master.” Bassus’ position as Persius’ fellow is thus ironized – he is not a true disciple of Horace. The satirist, by contrast, has done a more thorough reading of their shared predecessor; the allusions to the epistle that he applies to himself reflect ethical rather than aesthetic considerations, showing off his deeper understanding. His is a morally sounder choice of object for mimesis than Bassus’; he is the disciple who has performed the rigorous close reading of Horace, who is able to produce a poem that reflects the tensions between satire and letter, theory and practice.²⁵⁴ Hooley’s interpretation is one way of moving us away from the idea that the sixth satire is broken-backed and out of place, suggesting that Persius is using his final poem to contemplate his own place in the Roman satiric and poetic tradition. As we look in more detail at

²⁵² Morford (1984: 70).

²⁵³ Hooley (1997: 154-156).

²⁵⁴ Hooley (1997: 157-174).

Persius' allusions to Horace, his invocation of Ennius and his final, searing return to invective form, we can get to the heart of Persius' considered, complex sign-off from satire.

Digest

Winter. Have you retreated yet to your hearth, my friend? The opening lines are addressed to the lyric poet (Caesius) Bassus. The addressee is conspicuously absent and *Satire VI* is thus an epistolary poem. These lines suggest that this book of satires has become a letter to another contemporary "Horace," perhaps a more mature "answer" to the variations on the *Sermones* that have preceded this poem. Persius asks after Bassus' hibernation and song making, and lets him know that he himself is safely tucked away in Liguria. Both writers have withdrawn from city life and are engaging in poetic activity. This Bassus was the only Latin lyricist after Horace (perhaps) worthy of mention, Quintilian tells us (*Inst. Orat. X*, 1.96). Bassus, therefore, appropriately winters at a Sabine hearth (1). To prove his credentials and virtuosity (he is an *opifex*),²⁵⁵ he strums his lyre in a way that is Roman, i.e. masculine (*marem strepitum fidis intendisse Latinae*, 4; *egregius luisse senex*, 6) yet Greek,²⁵⁶ i.e. subtle, (*numeris ueterum primordia uocum*, 3), mournful (*tetrico... pectine*) and yet humorous (*iuuenes agitare iocos*, 6).²⁵⁷ An honorable figure, his character allows him to traverse the range of these modalities without being at risk of turning into one of the Greekish hyacinthine poets of the first satire.

²⁵⁵ We might see a shade of irony in the construction *opifex...intendisse* (4), which recalls the *artifex sequi* (*Prol.* 11).

²⁵⁶ Ennius, who will appear shortly, was called *egregius poeta* by Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* III, 45).

²⁵⁷ Rudd (2008: 378, n. 2) concurs with Jahn (1843) and Braund (2004) that the better reading is *mox iuuenes agitare iocos et pollice honesto/ egregios luisse senes* — a reference to where *luisse* (6), with *intendisse* (4), relies upon *opifex* (3), rather than the upon *senex* (6), to which, I would point out, it is adjacent (on Clausen's reading). The poetic effect on Rudd's reading is a reference to Roman comedy's typical targeting old men for humor. I follow Clausen (1956) here.

The opening lines are tuned to Horace, the Horace of the odes. Rudd observes that here the Augustan poet's lyric diction surfaces and, strikingly, that *uiuunt* marks the survival of lyric poetry, the first glimpse of a topic—literary legacy—that will involve much of the poem.²⁵⁸ The verses' musical temperament is modulated through *lyra*, *pectine*, and *chordae* (2), *numerus* (3), *fidis* (4), and *pollice* (5). Persius also winters in Horace's lyric world with some subtle exchanges of meaning, for example what it means to winter (*hibernatque meum mare*, VI.7; cf. Hor. *Serm.* II, 2.2.17 *hiemat mare*). Even his choice of location, the *Ligus ora* (6) is perfectly melodic: the space he occupies is *Liguria*, and also λιγύς. A good place, in short, for a Muse or a lyre (λίγεια μὲν Μοῖσ' ἄφα, Pi. *Fr.* 520; φόρμιγγι λιγείη, Hom. *Il.* IX.186, *et passim*). Plato played a similar etymological game, once: ἄγετε δὴ, ὦ Μοῦσαι, εἶτε δι' ᾠδῆς εἶδος λίγεια, εἶτε διὰ γένος μουσικὸν τὸ Λιγύων ταύτην ἔσχετ' ἐπωνυμίαν (*Phaedr.* 237a).

Persius describes his present location—Come, get to know Moon Bay!—by quoting line 9 apparently from Ennius; these are words of the heart of Ennius awakening from his Pythagorean dream of Homer *qua* peacock.²⁵⁹ (We will return to the significance of Ennius further on.) We are sent back to the *Prologue* by line 11: *Maeonides Quintus pauone ex Pythagoreo*, where dreamed-up inspiration and a birdlike poet are served up at once. Here in Luna is where he is unbothered by the crowd (*securus uolgi*, 12; *securus*, 13), again as Hooley points out, a Horatian pose; the lyric mode persists for another moment: he is unconcerned by the unpredictable (*quid praeparet auster/ infelix pecori*, 12-13). Even if—and here we get a hint of the satirist within—the rabble enrich themselves, he'd reject concerns about what they're doing. We've seen *this* Persius before: in *Sat.*

²⁵⁸ Rudd (2008: 378-382) suggests that Persius takes up Horace's use of Sappho's reflection on survival (cf. Hor. *Carm.* IV, 9.11).

²⁵⁹ I take *postquam* to stage a scene—these are Ennius' words upon awakening, rather than indefinitely after writing the *Annales*.

I. 40-49, Persius refused to care what the crowd might think of his poetry and to desire their praise. Here, Persius perseveres in refusing to have anything to do with *hoi polloi*. From his formal *recusatio* in the *Prologue* to his continual recusals (I.5-7, 41, 48), *recusare* is a very Persius thing to do and he'll do it till his last breath—a moment that is about to be more vividly on the horizon than ever before. He wouldn't even care if everyone of lower status should acquire wealth greater than his—still even then, he wouldn't stop enjoying life; safely away in his retreat, he refuses to shrivel up over social degradation, or to dine without condiments and have only a whiff of wine (*adeo omnes/ ditescant orti peioribus, usque recusem/ curuus ob id minui senio aut cenare sine uncto/ et signum in uapida naso tetigisse lagoena*, 15-17). The new moderation and reasonable indulgence that he allows himself is concomitant with his turn away from the aggressive persona of much of the earlier satires. Similar to his admission of grease to his plate, he allows himself pleasure, too. His assertion of security belies the fact that Persius is nevertheless very much noticing changing conditions and girding for the possibility that those of humble origins are hot on his aristocratic heels; indeed, just how close they are to succeeding him will shortly become the subject of the poem.

It is only natural that someone is bound to disagree with his careless attitude, since infinite variation and disagreement are possible: a single birthday, he observes, produces people of different dispositions in spite of their shared birthsign; here he plays on the double meaning of *gemini*: even twins may have a *varo genio* (18-19); remember his special relationship with Cornutus (*Sat.* V.47-51). One, a miser, only takes out the oil and pepper for his cabbages on birthdays; while another even as a boy liberally applies a tooth to his ample store (19-22). The banal crowd still represents ill judgment, but now that is ill-conceived abstemiousness. Dry vegetables, instead of being curative (e.g. III.112-114), become a sign of irrational stinginess. Part

of Persius' resolve to enjoy his own estate includes not to live lavishly as a show off (22-24); he'll enjoy himself without turning into a snob (*nec tenuis sollers turdarum nosse saliuas*, 24). Persius likes words like *sollers* (V.37 and 5.14; VI.24, VI.75) and *uafer*, "key words," but—Cornutus' craftiness notwithstanding—cleverness is not in itself a virtue for the satirist. The miser is *uafer*, a word used of the dumb joker (I.132) but also of Horace (I.116). In *Satire* I, Horace was clever at ribbing a friend just in the right place; in *Satire* V, Cornutus was tricky with pedagogy. Here, *sollers* describes the gourmand who is expert at distinguishing among flavors of the delicacies before him. What you are expert at, what you take time to discern, is an important question for Persius, as we have seen and shall see. It was the crucial point in *Satire* IV. But the poet's last look at cleverness seem indifferent to its value. Also, we have read about saliva before as a bodily response in *Satire* V (112) and it made its filmy appearance in the mouths of disdained poets and grandmothers (I.104, II.33), whose parochialism is thus contracted by the foodie. Everyone's vice looks the same and has the same symptoms as every other person's vice, whether a sophisticated urbanite or provincial.

In lines 25-26 he finally turns to an anonymous (diatribic) addressee: live, use your goods in proportion to your bounty—but remember, there will always be a new harvest. It's OK—*fas*—to eat the contents of your pantry. *Fas* has been a loaded issue for Persius in this book (I.8, 61, 119; II.73; III.69; V.98, 122). But its last instantiation, in the poem of this less intense Persius, is not existential, philosophical, or political. It's just that you're allowed to eat what you've got. "What could you be afraid of?" (26). The *naufragus* whom we encountered in *Satire* I returns. There he was disdained and rejected by the satirist for the quality of his destitute, streetsinging verse: *cantet si naufragus, assem/ protulerim? cantas, cum fracta te in trabe pictum/ ex umero portes?* ("If a wreck sings, could I offer a dime? do you sing, since on your shoulders you carry a painting of

you on a broken mast?” *Sat.* I.88-90). In *Satire* VI the sailor returns, but here the satirist imagines him as a friend to be saved from desperation: *trabe rupta Bruttia saxa/ prendit amicus inops...largire inopi, ne pictus oberret/ caerulea in tabula*, (“His mast busted, a down-and-out friend takes the Bruttian rocks... give something to the pauper, lest he wander about painted on the blue picture,” *Sat.* VI.27-28 and 32-33). A new thought for satire: Be merciful. Perhaps Persius really has changed! Give the poor pauper some land. So you spend down some of the estate: Who cares whether an heir might give you a low-cost funeral in retaliation for your “excesses” (*Sat.* VI.33-37)?

Someone bestial (*bestius*) blames the whole problem of excess and indigence on the Greeks—whether trained in philosophy or gourmanderie. This Bestius is a Horatian character (*Ep.* I, 15.37) but also reminiscent of a Persian centurion, a member of the goatly tribe (*de gente hircosa centurionum*, *Sat.* III.77), who pointed out the chewing and lunching habits of learned Greeks—Arcesilas, Solon—and declared *quod sapio satis est mihi* (*Sat.* III.78). But there’s a twist here: This *Bestius* is making the sort of criticism that Persius himself might have made before: Roman manhood has yielded to too-soft taste. His diction and syntax are even Persius-like:

...*ita fit*; postquam **sapere** urbi
 cum pipere et palmis uenit **nostrum hoc maris expers**,²⁶⁰
fenisecae crasso uitiarunt unguine pultes. (*Sat.* VI. 38-40)
 “That’s the way it happens; after this, our in-the-know, came to the
 city with its pepper and dates, haycutters ruin their oatmeal with
 thick oil.”

cf. tum cum ad canitiem et **nostrum istud uiuere triste**
 aspexi ac nucibus facimus quaecumque relictis,
 cum **sapimus** patruos. (*Sat.* I. 8-11)
 “Then, when I’ve looked upon our grays and this, our sad being alive
 and whatever it is we do once games are left behind, when we smack
 of uncles...”

and

²⁶⁰ “unmanly,” i.e. *maris* here is genitive of *mas* rather than *maris*, per Housman (1913: 28).

*haec fierent si testiculi uena ulla paterni
uiueret in nobis? summa delumbe saliu
hoc natat in labris et in udo est Maenas et Attis
nec pluteum caedit nec demorsos **sapit** unguis.*

“Would these things happen so if any vein of our fathers’ balls survived in us? This castrated bit floats atop saliva on the lips and in the damp is Maenas and Attis, he neither bangs the desk nor tastes bitten-down nails.”

The railings of Persius’ interlocutors in this satire—against spice and “taste,” against the effeminate, against care for the *naufragus*—are the types of criticism that Persius himself might have offered in the earlier poems. As we gear up for the poem’s blistering end, the satirist has come to his more reasonable senses—reformed (albeit in another guise?)!

Should he fear posthumous consequences, what happens beyond the ash (41)? With lines 26 and 37, this is the third time fear of the consequences of expenditure is raised. This time Persius makes the addressee of his reply specific—it’s his heir—and then again anonymous—whoever he’ll be—emphasizing the reversal by enjambement (*at tu, meus heres,/ quisquis eris*, 41-42). Listen up: Haven’t you heard that expenses are now required to celebrate Caesar’s victory? The cold ash is being swept away for new sacrifices and games (43-49). Answers the earlier question—what happens beyond the grave?—with an image of utter carelessness: ashes to ashes. Persius will spend on that, too, and take no objections from the heir as he puts on a show, dispensing oil and meat-pie (50), a picture quite opposite to his moralizing anti-meatplatter vegan offering that closes the second satire. Just try and stop him, too: there’s a pile of stones next to him—in other words, he has weapons at hand.²⁶¹ This is the point at which Persius’ enlightened generosity becomes an act of aggression.

²⁶¹ The sequence between vocatives, questions, and imperatives from *Sat.* VI.41-52 is bizarre. I more or less follow Housman, who more or less follows Hermann (1842). Persius pulls his heir aside to inform him that he’ll be participating lavishly in celebrating a foreign triumph. The heir doesn’t dare to disagree aloud: Persius stands closer to a rocky field. See Housman (1913: 29-30)

And if he has no heir to fill in the place of *quisquis*? Family all run out? There's always someone at hand to fill in (*Sat.* VI. 52-56). A cunning beggar (Manius) approaches and weaves a line of descent in order to make a claim to the estate—Persius has finally been shown his uncle—a man of the soil.²⁶²

The Satire Strikes Back

“Why are you demanding the baton while it's still my turn?”

(*qui prior es, cur me in decursu lampada poscis?* 60-61)

The shift from more or less sanguine life advice to taunting attack picks up speed. Back off: Persius isn't dead yet. We have been misled to think that the aggressive Persius is on the wane, but his afterlife turns out to be just as aggressive as his first go. The return of the obscure satirist is more vengeful and less didactic than ever before. His heir demands the torch too early in the relay race (61). “I am your Money God, just like you've seen him in the paintings.” This apotheosis is a new role for the mercurial poet, the final complement to the mysterious *semipaganus* of the *Prologue* who was a spleen in *Satire* I and then overwhelmingly body in *Satire* III. Now Mercury, Persius is playing the role of temptation. Before, you might just happen to stumble upon a *nummus* on the road of satire and have to gulp back your *saliuam Mercurialem* in order to ward off a visible drool (V.112). Now it is Persius who deliberately jingles the money bag before you in a test that you will never pass. You, now, are a compilation of all the variously mercenary interlocutors and targets, the hypocrite buying off the gods (II.29), the trader chasing profit across the seas (V.132-150), the birdie eyeing the glint of the coin (*Prol.* 12). Think he shouldn't be wasting wealth on what we know (from *Satire* II) to be inane rituals? Try and stop him. He dares you. Want to know

²⁶² Manius is proverbial. See Kissel ad loc.

what's left in the storehouse? Watch him pour it out: *nunc nunc inpensius ungue/, ungue puer caules* ("now, now, thickly pour, pour it on my cabbage, boy," VI.68-69). It's a spiteful move. We know that Persius prefers a lighter dish; he disapproves of oils and oiliness in general (cf. IV.17-18 and 33; II.29-30). But he'd rather pour out the oil than to gratify his ever watchful heir.

The heir complains about the diminishment of the estate. He'll get whatever he gets, is *Mercurius'* reply (VI.64-65). The complaints of the heir only egg Persius on to drown his heretofore healthy vegetables in oil. His register is sinking even faster to the satiric. The style of his final provocations (*nunc nunc inpensius ungue/, ungue*, VI.68-69) mimic his invective best hits (e.g. *tunc tunc...*, *Sat.* I.11; *nunc nunc properandus...*, *Sat.* III.23-24). His turn to decadence turns out to tick off his heir as much as living in enlightened Horatian moderation does. He'll use anything as ammunition against his new fictive foe, even adopting what he openly despises (e.g. *lactibus unctis*, *Sat.* II.30; *opimum/pingue*, *Sat.* III.32-3, etc.) if it will increase terror—nothing is off-limits now. Persius again modifies his earlier take on the best proportions of vegetable to animal—no off-cuts for him (69-70). In spite of his recommendations of salutary beets, cabbages, and the like in the earlier satires, Persius has turned out to be no vegetarian at all in this poem. This is provides a nice lifestyle analogue to his literary rejection of Pythagoreanism, in which the philosopher advised that we lay off the meat lest we eat a relative (*Met.* XV.174-175). If we rid our poetics of Pythagorean literature, let's rid ourselves of Pythagorean vegetarianism, too.

The behavior and thoughts and judgments of others won't lead him to tread more carefully or to write more pleasantly but rather to do the opposite. The smoked ear (*fissa fumosum sinciput aure*) of VI.70 brings us back around to the steamed ear that was so important in *Satire I* (*uaporata lector mihi ferueat aure*, 126). Not so anymore: it's an edible. And then, with his penultimate

breath, Persius unleashes a boiled-down best hits of his most explicit, vulgar satire. Should he eat such paltry meats so...

ut tuus iste nepos olim satur anseris extis,
cum morosa uago singultiet inguine uena,
patriciae inmeiat uoluae? mihi trama figurae
sit reliqua, ast illi tremat omento popa uenter? (*Sat.* VI.71-74)

“...that one day, stuffed with goose livers, some prodigal grandson of yours can take a whizz in lady flaps whenever the fickle vein of his dissolute groin may let go a sob? Should I be left with a cobweb for a figure, but his sponge of a stomach jiggle with fat?”

If we were wondering where Hipponax had gone, we now have our answer. This final sausage fest makes this the iambicist’s *re-reincarnation*. Persius’ basest images have returned: the outstandingly fat potbelly (*pinguis aqualiculus propenso sesquiped extet*, *Sat.* I.57), a good pissing off (*extra/meiite*, *Sat.* I.113-114), the parade of privates—some lexically identical (*uoluas*, IV.36; *inguinibus*, IV.38, *testiculi uena*, I.103), others implied (*intima*, I.20, *penemque arcanaque lumbi*, IV.35, etc.). So much for reform of Persius’ poetics, the “change in its tone,” and “new direction.” If Persius is succumbing to his “fatal stomach ache,” he’ll leave us on (and in) his terms.²⁶³ What type of inheritance will Persius leave? Whatever he wants—and less, to spite his heir. For us that means, he’ll leave less than Horace did—less generic variety, so few lines that they’re incompressible (quite apart from being incomprehensible).

Of course *satur* for the grandson is important. We’ve seen stuffed dishes before—vividly in the greasy meat platters and fatty offerings of the satire on prayer (*pulmone et lactibus unctis*, II.30; *tuccetaque crassa*, II.42; *omenta*, II.47; *extis et opimo*, II.48)—and we’ve seen the metaphorical dishes and dumplings (*escas*, *Sat.* I.22, *offas*, *Sat.* V.5) that a poet might cook up for the likes of *Romulidae saturi* (*Sat.* I.31). The poet leaves us with the chockfull platter of the genre:

²⁶³ *pace* Bartsch (2015: 9).

the platter of foods that apocryphally provided the metaphor for the vulgar, distasteful miscellany characteristic of Roman satire. Persius has loaded his heir with the ugliest bits of satire; the heir will be a walking *satura* now. Persius has moved from commenting on ugly things to creating an ugly thing. As another (if less smooth) Alcibiades he sells himself (*uende animam lucro, mercare atque excute sollers omne latus mundi*, “sell your soul for profit, make a trade, and clever shake down every part of the world, VI. 75-76; cf. *penemque arcanaque lumbi/ runcantem populo marcentes pandere uuluas*, IV.36) as he wanders through the world clever (that key word *sollers*, again) at gaining as much as profit as possible—not unlike that prefatory bird poet), buying Greeks who are requisitely fat (*Cappadocas...pinguis*, VI.77). The heir imagines himself to be amassing his estate (doubling, quadrupling, tentupling, VI.78-9), but is himself an amassing of satirical properties, overeating, oversexed, overambitious. He adopts the linguistic ticks of the genre to which he belongs: repetition and imperative (*iam... iam.../ iam... depunge* VI.78-79; cf. *nunc nunc*, III.23; *nunc nunc...ungue/ungue*; VI.68), abuse of philosophy (*Chrysippe*, 80).

Chrysippe is Persius’ last breath, too—his encyclopedic and laborious philosophy. His heir frantically invests and endlessly compiles to his wealth as a never-ending exercise in the logical puzzle of defining “heap” (*aceruus*, σωρίτης).²⁶⁴ The poet offers his fellow Stoics their own famous paradox converted into an endless piling of death, sex, and money. If seemed that the line of attack that he would choose from among his embarrassment of critiques would be literary self-reflection and literary re-programming, his final lines remind us of the banality of philosophy.

²⁶⁴ For references to Chrysippus, see Seneca, *De Ben.* V, 19.9 and Cicero, *Academica* II, 93.

Ennius, always a Classic

The appearance of Ennius towards the beginning of this satire is clearly a crucial moment for Persius' exploration of poetry generally and satire particularly. It recalls both Ennian satire itself and also the invocations of Ennius in Persius' other satiric predecessor, Horace. Having set the stage with nods to the Horatian Ennius, Persius can go on to build his own interpretation of that this great Roman poetic forebear means for his own work. After his epistolary opening, Persius tells Bassus that he's in Liguria. He next returns us to the central motif of the *Prologue*, poetic inspiration:

'Lunai portum, est operae, cognoscite, ciues.'
cor iubet hoc Enni, postquam destertuit esse
Maeonides Quintus pauone ex Pythagoreo. (Sat. VI.9-11)

“Get to know the port of Luna, citizens, it's worth your while.” This is what the heart of Ennius commands, after Quintus has snored away being *Maeonides* out of the Pythagorean peacock.

Hooley has suggested that Ennius' awakening is a gentle nudge to Bassus that he exit his own lyric fantasy.²⁶⁵ It is also a reflection on his own fantasies. Indeed, in these lines, Persius re-opens the theme of epic-poetic inspiration that we recently saw most roundly rejected in *Satire V*. The idea has been an important one from the start however: in the *Prologue*, Persius rejected inspiration—whether emanating from Muse or Stomach. Included amid that prefatory density of allusion to poets and their sources was the tradition surrounding Ennius. That tradition is multiple, and, since we no longer have the Ennius, not likely to be recoverable. It is not disputed that in his *Annales* Ennius reported that he, sleeping on a mountain, was approached by Homer, who informed him of their metempsychotic bond: Ennius, epic poet, bore the soul of Homer himself. The secondary strain, reflected in and perhaps arising from Lucretius and Propertius, says that Ennius drank from

²⁶⁵ Hooley (1997: 157ff.).

the spring of the Muses on Helicon.²⁶⁶ A third, peculiar variant has Ennius' Homer appearing after a metempsychotic life in the form of a peacock. It is of course the most peculiar path that our peculiar poet has pursued.

The origin of *Lunai portum...* has been debated. The scholiast and Jahn attribute it to the *Annales*, the latter observing the epicizing *cor* which Persius offers as the verse's source. Perhaps more astute, however, is Housman's observation on its style: a call to attention like *cognoscite, ciues* is more characteristic of satirical and, as we saw in Chapter One in "Hipponax's" Ἀκούσαθ'... ὧ]νδρες οἱ νῦν (*Iamb.* 1.1 and 6), of more generally invective style.²⁶⁷ The diatribist of Persius' own third satire uses the address: *discite et, o miseri, ... cognoscite* (*Sat.* III.66). But there is a patent difference in register: Gowers observes that *cor*, though it appears frequently throughout the fragments of Ennius, does not appear in the extant satirical fragments, whose body parts incline towards the mouth and foot.²⁶⁸ In other words, our satirist has paired a satirical fragment with a pointedly epic identification. Both Jahn and Housman can be right in this way: Housman does not have to disavow *cor* as epic (which it is) in order for *cognoscite* to be satirical (which it is). Regardless of the actual relative dating of Ennius' works, Persius clearly seems to imagine that his satirical predecessor had some resurrection from his epic delusion. Persius uses the verse of an awakened Ennius, the Ennius who has snorted himself back to life and his lucid persona (*destertuit*) after a Homeric dream. Unlike the epicist to whom the *Prologue* alluded, the satirist is useable by Persius.

²⁶⁶ See also Archias *AP IX*, 64; Courtney (1988: 95-97).

²⁶⁷ Housman (1934: 50-51) argues that the scholiast's comment need not imply attribution to the *Annales*. In any case, Housman writes, "even if he or any other authority did assign it to the *annals*, we should be bound to disbelieve him."

²⁶⁸ Gowers (2007: 17).

And yet it is not merely that Persius can use the verse of a satirical, post-delusion poet. Notice in particular the way in which Ennius wakes up from his fantasy: *destertuit*. We've seen a satirist snoozing in this *libellus* before—crabby Persius himself, who opened the third satire snoring off a hard Falernian (*stertimus, indomitum quod despumare Falernum/ sufficiat*, *Sat.* III.3-4). In one of his many self-serving literary histories, Horace reminds us that poets like to drink—are better, even, when drunk. Ennius, he says, hit the bottle especially hard when writing epic (*Ennius ipse pater numquam nisi potus ad arma/ prosiluit dicenda*, *Epist.* I, 19.7-8). In *Satire* III, Persius pulled the curtain back on his own “process,” and he does now for *Ennius pater*, too: Ennius, arriving late to this *libellus*, well after early birds Lucilius and Horace (*Sat.* I.115-118), turns out to have been sleeping off what looks very much like a hangover, in the style of his satirical successor.

Why Ennius in this form? The line quoted (9) is plainly satirical, perhaps even diatribic in that it faces its contemporaries. Foundational Ennius occupies a nice locus for a poet seeking to situate himself in a literary tradition; Persius' choice of this otherwise somewhat unremarkable line to describe his *place* is thus perhaps doubly motivated. Horace had recalled Ennius as a figure in the literary tradition subject to critique by subsequent poets such as Lucilius and also, by extension, himself (*Serm.* I, 10.54-55). Similarly, Lucretius establishes his superiority over his generic predecessor by exhibiting his “superior knowledge of dreams, visions, and death”—precisely the sites upon which Ennius had predicated his *Annales*; but Ennius and his dream also become a *topos* in an “apologetic” tradition that Lucretius develops in these lines.²⁶⁹ In a largely similar, but more difficult passage, Horace asserts that Ennius seemed rather careless of whether his poetry would

²⁶⁹ Segal (1990: 252); Kenney (1970: 372-380).

live up to the expectations that he raised by claiming his Homeric heritage (*Epist.* II, 1.50-52).²⁷⁰ Horace reminds us that Ennius' claim to be an *alter Homerus* was predicated on the Pythagorean theory of the transmigration of souls—*somnia Pythagorea*, as the Augustan puts it (*Epist.* II, 1.52).

Characteristically, Persius has combined two Horatian passages: the drunk Ennius of *Epist.* I and the Pythagorean Ennius of *Epist.* II. But for all that, as I show next, the Pythagorean Ennius has a further, two-fold significance for Persius: thematic to *Satire* VI and structural to the *libellus*.

Pythagorean Poets

Throughout the sixth satire, Persius, as we have seen, has been preoccupied with his own afterlife, dwelling first on Horace's afterlife by weaving it in with his own poetry, and ending up by embodying his own vituperative style as intensely as possible. In the middle of all of this, Ennius and his dream of Homer provide a central point of contact for the theme of past and future lives. The dream's background in Latin literature and thought deserves some further attention, as we examine exactly what it meant to Persius in his final poem.

Ennius' choice of metempsychotic dream must have been informed by the discourse around Pythagoreanism among second century Romans, whose lively interest in and mythologies about the sixth century philosopher have recently been elucidated by Katharina Volk.²⁷¹ In this section, I walk through other poets' discussions of Ennius and his dream (Lucretius and Propertius) in order to show the range of possibilities that is available to Persius. I also review Ovid's talkative

²⁷⁰ Rudd's gloss on li. 51-52 (1986: 82, ad loc.): "[To judge from his clumsy style], Ennius appears to have little concern as to whether his claims and Pythagorean dream are vindicated." —Though Rudd finds this unsatisfactory, because it does not follow in the sense. In any case, there's some ironizing of Ennius' ambition and *somnia Pythagorea* (*Epist.* II, 1.52).

²⁷¹ Volk (2015).

Pythagoras who narrates much of latter part of the *Metamorphoses*. What is important about Ovid is that he presents us with the most thorough and recent explication of the Pythagorean myth. The passage is not, obviously, about Ennius, but it is a major site of the tradition through which Ennius emerges in Persius; the passage may even, for Ovid, provide a space within which Ovid may displace the foundational figure of epic.

Early in *De Rerum Natura*, a text recalled by Persius in the first line of his first satire (*O quantum est in rebus inane! Sat. I.1*), Lucretius asserts that ignorance of the universe, and in particular ignorance of the material nature of the soul, is a form of oppression by religion and superstition (*DRN I.102-112*). This power is wielded by the priests (*uates*), named twice in this passage (*DRN I. 102 and 109*), who create delusions (*somnia*) for the people. Lucretius cleverly capitalizes upon the double meanings of both *uates* and *somnium* in this passage in order to indict not only religious institutions but also the poets who support them. *Vates* as prophet becomes *uates* as poet; *somnium* as fantasy becomes *somnium* as dream, as Lucretius moves seamlessly, in the same sentence, from the warnings of the *uates* to the seemingly—and only seemingly—less harmful work of Ennius who propagated the notion of the eternal soul. Here, Lucretius, without fully narrating Ennius' dream, uses the notion of the *somnia uatum* as a preface to that poet's apparent assertion that he descended, crowned, from Helicon, after an encounter with evergreen (*semper florentis*, 124) Homer. Here we might recall Persius' cryptic and ironical assertion in the *Prologue* that his work is a "contribution" to the *uates* (*Prol. 7*). As it is in close proximity to his presentation of the Lucretian (secondary) variant of the tradition of Ennius' dream, the variant in which the poet encountered the Muses on Helicon in addition to (or instead of) Homer, I suggest we take the *Prologue's* mysterious *sacra uatum* as a Lucretian joke.

Persius' proemial pretension to be a *uates* also recalls Propertius' entry into his third book of elegies as a *sacerdos* with a request for inspiration from the holy spirits Callimachus and Philitas (III, 1.1-3), which I have touched upon in Chapter One. He has found a new path to the Muses with his polished page, which itself marches down from the mountain. Propertius has a rude awakening from his fantasy of being inspired in a wholly Ennian manner: Apollo informs him otherwise within two poems (III, 3). Propertius adds to the tradition that Ennius drank from the fount of Bellerophon in his own *recusatio*. Apollo steers him away from it and guides him to a new place for writing on his page: Propertius is not allowed to live out the Ennian dream; in Persius, neither will Ennius be.²⁷²

The lengthiest instantiation of a metempsychotic appearance, however, is of course Pythagoras' own in his cameo as narrator in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XV.60ff.). Ovid names his new narrator the *Samian* man (*Met.* XV.60), as will Persius in his brief nod to his ancient moral didactic device (III, 56). The mystical philosopher's disquisition is described in conventional didactic language similar to what we find in both Lucretius and Persius: *magni primordia mundi/ et rerum causas et quid natura docebat,/ quid deus, unde niues, quae fulminis esset origo...* ("He was teaching the elements of the great world and the origins of the universe and what nature be, what god, whence the snows, which the cause of lightening...," *Met.* XV.67-69)²⁷³. The cosmology of Lucretius is pointedly revised in Ovid's *rerum... natura*. But this Pythagoras delivers the lecture to a stupefied audience (*coetusque silentum/ dictaque mirantum...*, *Met.* XV.66-67) who fail to believe the speech he offers in Ovid (*primus talibus ora/ docta quidem soluit, sed non et credita,*

²⁷² For a full treatment of the vatic in Propertius and Ovid (and Lucretius) see Newman's work on the *uates* (1967).

²⁷³ Also cf. *discite et, o miseri, causas cognoscite rerum:/ quid sumus et quidnam uicturi gignimur, ordo/ quis datus... quem te deus esse/iussit et humana qua parte locatus es in re, Sat.* III.66-72).

uerbis, 73-74). Don't be afraid of death: the body feels nothing, whether destroyed by cremation or old age, and the soul lives on, finding ever new homes (*corpora, siue rogas flamma seu tabe uetustas/ abstulerit, mala posse pati non ulla putetis;/ morte carent animae semperque priore relicta/ sede nouis domibus uiuunt habitantque receptae*, *Met.* XV.156-159).

Beyond these poets' shared generic and didactic convention, however, I suggest that there is a further way in which Persius has played at the edges of didacticism and Pythagoreanism before: memory. In his discussion of metempsychosis, the Ovidian Pythagoras apparently conforms to other didactic techniques in the assertion of personal experience through memory (*memini*). But uniquely for him, this authority rests upon his memory of a past life: he remembers being the Trojan Euphorbus (*ipse ego (nam memini) Troiani eram belli/ Panthoides Euphorbus eram...*, *Met.* XV.160-161).²⁷⁴ We might see that Ovid simultaneously builds his own authority upon Homer, by re-narrating the Iliadic scene, marking his allusion not just in subject matter but also in verse: for example, the Homericizing patronym appears in the first position in *Metamorphoses* as it does in the scene of his slaying in *Iliad* XVII.81.

Persius pokes fun at *his* reincarnated poet, Ennius, even as he redeems and revivifies him, by attributing to him an initial Homeric patronymic, *Maeonides*, which frames its line with the final *Pythagoreo*.²⁷⁵ Persius gently ribs his transmigrator by invoking his Homeric credential against him. It is worth considering, since this is after all study of satire, the possibility that Ovid gently undermines his Pythagoras, even as he capitalizes on the philosopher's narrative work. In spite of his use of the Homeric passage, John Miller points out, subtle differences arise between

²⁷⁴ Literary allusion and the closeness of Ovid to Homer: in Pythagoras' case, Ovid's marks his closeness to the slaying of Euphorbus in *Iliad* XVII.81 by placing the patronymic epithet in the same position. See Miller (1994: 475).

²⁷⁵ Again, Lucretius provides an interesting comparandum, with his simultaneous praise and blame of Ennius. On the relation, again, see Kenney (1970: 372-380).

the Homeric and the Ovidian renderings: for example, Homer's Euphorbus is killed by a spear to the neck rather than, as Pythagoras has it, to the chest. Miller suggests that the "factual" forgetfulness of the Homeric scene ultimately ironizes the philosopher's assertion of extraordinary memory.²⁷⁶ A further ironization might be that in Pythagoreanism "proper," to the (limited) extent that we understand it, souls do not remember past lives.

Ennius' pretension to be Homer is like Pythagoras' to be Euphorbus. Lucretius' Ennius frames his account of his interaction with Homer as a remembering (*commemorat*, 126). Ovid's Pythagoras, too, remembers—he remembers being a character in a poem (*Iliad* XVII); this Pythagoras' memory of continuity is perhaps a critique of the Lucretian material soul.²⁷⁷ Assertion of memory, which we saw in the *memini* of Persius' third satire (*Sat.* III.44ff.), gestures to a broader literary allusion: there, *memini* was a memory of Horace's life through satire, not of an episode from Persius' own. Literary memory in Persius is allusion to and retexturing of Horatian verse, not experience. Nonetheless, our satirist was not merely *remembering* his Horace, but also remembering *being* Horace. Persius perhaps sets up a lifecycle for satire that epicists have long claimed; remembering is not mere play on allusion and intertext as much as a re-embodiment and reclaiming. If the afterlife were indeed to exist, for Persius, it would not be such a solemn affair—you'll find yourself getting up to the same tricks as you did the first time around. Paradoxically, for Persius, Ennius may speak again once he has awoken from the delusion that he will survive; letting go of poetic survival ensures it. The Ennian motif is recycled not as an image of the *source*

²⁷⁶ Miller (1994: 473-478). Feldherr (*infra*) discusses the interpretation but seems to move away from it. In any case, Persius would take the cynical view, as ever. As to Ovid, the wonderment and bewilderment and incomprehension of Pythagoras' listeners seems to reflect on them as much as on the philosopher.

²⁷⁷ For a fuller and more nuanced view of the interactions among Ovid, Lucretius, and Pythagoras, see Segal (2001).

of poetry (as in the *Prologue*) but rather as the *afterlife* of poetry, precisely where Persius treats the fate of his own body—in this poem in which he foregrounds ashes.

Cor Values

Housman's argument for the *satiric* (rather than epic) provenance of the Ennian line (*Lunai portum...cognoscite...*, 9)—to which I have gestured above—was based in part on *cor iubet hoc Ennii, postquam destertuit esse/ Maeonides* (*Sat.* VI.10-11). Where Jahn pointed out that Persius uses *cor* as an epic affect, Housman focused on Persius' marking the line as quotation of the post-dream Ennius. Whether Persius was aware of the chronology of the satirist-epicist's *corpus* is immaterial: he clearly distinguishes an epic Ennius the dreamer—and perhaps even a parroter of convention—from Ennius the alert critic. The significance of Ennius' heart exceeds the conjunction of epic and satire: the heart had been an important part of that poet's self-presentation, his “quintessential biological organ.” Emily Gowers has examined the *cor Ennii*, which appears with significant frequency among the fragments. The heart is, she argues, “intimately connected with Ennius' conception of himself.”²⁷⁸

Beyond the heart, Ennius also associates himself with other internal “organs of consciousness,”²⁷⁹ such as the brain and marrow to communicate “concentrated strength, authenticity and vitality.”²⁸⁰ While the heart is partly a conventional metonym for character—it is upon his own *praecordia* that Persius claims Cornutus does his work of fashioning (*Sat.* V.22)—importantly it is Ennius' last word about himself: upon his self-composed epitaph Ennius left us

²⁷⁸ Gowers (2007: 17-18).

²⁷⁹ Gowers (2007: 19).

²⁸⁰ Gowers (2007: 35).

with his *tria corda*. The *cor* thus also represents *Ennius* beyond the epic persona.²⁸¹ By assigning to Ennius his heart in *Satire* VI, Persius admits him finally into the physiognomic league of satirists, which I have discussed at length in Chapter Two. The line is now complete. Ennius' heart now precedes Lucilius' jaw, Horace's nose, Persius' spleen.

Importantly, Persius is more like Ennius than Lucilius and Horace on this revised scheme: they are both internal organ satirists. And their insides sound out: they snore. The comic use of *destertuit* with an object clause reminds us of Persius' use of *stertimus* with an object in the opening of *Satire* III. Furthermore, we learned in *Satire* III what the real reason is for a poet to sleep late and snore—it's the hangover—so Ennius' activity is recontextualized as also potentially the hoax of a lazy writer, further aligning the two poets. As I have suggested above, the peacock recalls the birds of the *Prologue*, which also recalled by the divine inspiration motif. Bizarre enough to satisfy a Persius, the peculiar peacock tradition has the further advantage of providing him with a conclusory bird poet—and, moreover, a bird that begins with *p*-! The *pauo* takes his place among the *psittacus* (*Prol.* 8), *coruos poetas et poetridas picas* (*Prol.* 13), and, of course, most importantly, the peeping Persius. In reciting Ennius, Persius is “parroting”—or peacocking, in this case.

Ring Cycle

Importantly, the resurfacing of Ennius just *here* means that the figure frames Persius' book, appearing as he does at the beginning of the prologue through Persius' *recusatio* of an Ennian dream and at the beginning of the final poem through direct quotation. Now that he has been brought back to life (in the same manner as Persius at the start of *Satire* III), he may participate in Persius' satire. A touch of Pythagoreanism is all the more significant when we consider its

²⁸¹ Gowers (2007: 31). For a series of broader insights in to Ennius and his afterlives, see the excellent papers in Gowers and Fitzgerald, eds. (2007).

placement in the final poem. Just as Pythagoras monopolizes the final book of *Metamorphoses*, a structurally significant place that sets up Ovid's discussion of his own longevity, so too does the post-Pythagorean Ennius preface a discussion of Persius' longevity.

Andrew Feldherr has emphasized the structural importance of Pythagoras' cosmological narration of the passage from Greek mythology into and through Roman history. The recapitulation of the *Metamorphoses*' own events allows the audience to review what they themselves have been reading and the enormous scope of this new work before the poet asserts its achievement and future endurance. Beyond the opportunity that Pythagoras' speech offers the audience of the *Metamorphoses*, the embedded narrator also offers something to Ovid: a gnomic and theoretical restatement of Ovid's poetic project.²⁸² Not the stuff of fancy: all things, the philosopher confirms, are indeed constantly adopting new forms (*Nec species sua cuique manet, rerumque nouatrix/ ex aliis alias reparat natura figuras, Met. XV.252-253*; cf. *In noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas/ corpora, Met. I.1-2*). That it is a philosopher of endlessness, of rebirth and renewal, who makes this assessment of the universal condition (and therefore of the poem) argues in advance for Ovid's concluding lines, which assert that both his work and the poet will be eternal. The aggression of this assertion lies in its consumption of both the Callimachean Horace and the epic *Ennius*:

*Iamque opus **exegi**, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis
nec poterit ferrum nec **edax** abolere uetustas.
cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
parte tamen meliore **mei** super **alta perennis**
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam. (*Met. XV.871-879*)*

The lines patently recall the final poem of Horace's third book of *Odes*:

Exegi** monumentum aere **perennius

²⁸² cf. Feldherr (2010: 150-151).

*regalique situ pyramidum **altius**,
 quod non imber **edax**, non Aquilo impotens
 possit diruere aut innumerabilis
 annorum series et fuga temporum.
 Non omnis moriar multaue **pars mei**
 uitabit Libitinam; usque ego postera
 Crescam laude recens, **dum Capitolium**
scandet cum tacita uirgine pontifex. (Carm. III, 30.1-9)*

But both poets, in particular Ovid, because of his generic choice and recent narration of the history of Rome, appropriate Ennius through the classic pun *perennis/perennius*, from Lucretius' *Ennius... /detulit ex Helicone perenni fronde coronam* (DRN I.117-118). Persius avoids this tired—and, what's worse, *imitative*—joke: no one is *perennius*, or even *perennis*, especially when pretending to epic proportion. Horace claimed Ennius' leafy crown (*mihi Delphica/ lauro cinge uolens, Melpomene, comam*, Carm. III, 30.15-16); Persius has rejected this, too (*illis remitto quorum imagines lambunt/ hederæ sequaces*, Prol. 5-6).

Beyond the mere reawakening of Ennius, the *Prologue* is also reinvented by Persius' insertion of the Pythagorean "peacock" (*Sat.* VI.11)—a changed (i.e. Ovidian) form—where for Horace the straightforward Pythagorean "dream" had sufficed (*Epist.* II, 1.52). Ennius, it turns out, had been one of those disdained bird poets, parroting the conventions of Homer. The younger satirist aligns himself with one strand of Ennian lineage—not the epic but the satiric—and also shows how the Ennian tradition may be manipulated by one and the same figure. The tension between epic and satire, of *Satire* I and *Satire* V is here resolved through the satire's consumption of epic—not only its tropes but even its poets' deepest fantasies. Satire has consumed epic's tropes, its Muses, many mouths, and foundational figures. The best poets are parodists, the best epicists, satirists, just as the best tragedians are comedians, as Aristophanes shows off to us in *Frogs*.

Fate of the Body

The trope of Pythagorean rebirth recapitulates and revises the poet's program. Coming as it does at both the beginning *and* end of both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Satires*, the theme has proven its utility beyond providing a mere "ring" structure; the trope itself is about beginning and end, cyclicity and renewal. Rebirth, of course, also implies a death. Persius, unlike Ovid the epicist, writes on the dark, crabbed end of the literary spectrum; his use of the trope is inverse: as a source of inspiration and beginning, it useful only insofar as those may be pointedly rejected; it is more useful where it offers an opportunity to reflect on closure and death. Persius' preoccupation with the fate of his body towards the end of the sixth satire is bound up with his reflections on poetic afterlives throughout the poem. He has resurrected Horace, only to reject that reincarnation in favor of a return to invective; he has resurrected Ennius only to cast doubt on the possibility of dead poets being able to live again in any authentic way. Now what is going to happen to him?

After Ennius divulges Persius' location and after Persius confesses his disengagement from the rat race, the poem takes up the subject of legacy, what *res* to leave behind to a successor. It turns out that the new, moderate tone of Epicurean enjoyment and generosity was a pretext for castigating the heir who licks his chops at the prospect of the estate to come and who objects to every expenditure from it made in advance of his inheritance. Persius' death as the requisite for inheritance and the relation between the two raises physical questions that might make an abstracting Horace or Ovid uncomfortable: How will his body be treated after death? How do his current actions affect his posthumous potential? Doesn't he fear some retaliation in memoriam for having gone his own way? If his heir perceives resents him, what sort of funeral will he have (VI.33-34) What will happen to his bones (VI.35-36)? Will his ashes get away with it (VI.41)? Or

will they be swept away once cold, like the vestiges of old sacrifices in anticipation of the new (*aris/frigidus excutitur cinis*, VI. 44-45)?

Persius marks his unconcern for his dead body by raising its specter, again and again, a repetition that perhaps belies that unconcern. I suggest that this treatment concludes the metamorphoses of Persius' body that we have seen across the book. As we have seen in his first and last poems, Persius draws upon the tropes of Propertius III, 1. In that poem, moreover, Propertius reflected on his body and ashes, involving Lucretius and, especially, Horace's concluding ode. But where Horace, Richardson points out, only passed over death and pointed to posthumous survival (*non omnis moriar* III, 30.6), the elegist took the opportunity to reflect also upon his physical death.²⁸³ Soon after his appeal for inspiration, his prophetic *carmen* (III, 1.5) turns into a book (*pumice*, III, 1.8). His glory ought to be assured, like the winner of a poetic chariot race, a narrow win (*non datur ad Musas currere lata uia*, III, 1.14). His Callimachean dream rejects Ennian ambition as too common (*multi, Roma, tuas laudes annalibus addent*, III, 1.15). The book replaces the poet: it is the *pagina*, not Propertius, that descends from the Muses' mountain (III, 1.17-18). Propertius will be paid with interest after death (III, 1.22). *His* grave will *not* be neglected: *illum post cineres auguror ipse diem./ ne mea contempto lapis indicet ossa sepulcro*. Age will increase his fame which will proceed better on the lips of men after his funeral (III, 1.23-24). He knows this from observing the fate of earlier literature, e.g. the *Iliad*: envisioning epic fame, Propertius claims for himself an increasing repute among future generations of Rome (*seros nepotes*, III, 1.35). His bones will be well cared for, under the protection of Apollo (III, 1.37-38).

Whether coincidental, Persius' frame poems (*Prologue* and *Satires* I and VI) engage in Propertius' tropes: inspiration, posthumous fate at the hands of grandsons, and emphasis on the

²⁸³ Richardson (1977: 318).

book. Persius, however, comes up with an answer opposite to Propertius'. Where Propertius cares very much about his literary afterlife, Persius' literary afterlife is a matter of indifference to the poet, as he declared in response to the challenge of the fictional interlocutor in *Satire I*: no concern for the popular reception of his poems, whether they be praised, trashed, or burned. The aural and thematic correspondence between the lines on the literary afterlife in the first satire and the lines on the bodily in the last form a frame further to the Pythagorean:

VI. 41-42

haec cinere ulterior **metuas**? at tu, meus heres
quisquis eris, paulum a turba seductior audi.

Beyond the ash should you fear these things? But you, my heir,
whoever you'll be, hear this, a bit further aside from the crowd.

I.41-44

... an erit qui uelle recuset
os populi meruisse et cedro digna locutus
linquere nec scombros **metuentia** carmina nec tus?
quisquis es, o modo quem ex aduerso dicere feci

... or will there be someone who'd refuse to hope to have won the
voice of the people and to've said something worthy of embalming
and to leave behind poems fearing to be used for neither fish nor
incense? Whoever you are, you whom I've just made to speak from
the opposition...

The last satire's recollection of the first is unmistakable: Persius makes his interlocutor explicitly fictive at the same moment that he considers the futurity of his *corpus*, whether literary or somatic. The lexical and aural arrangement of VI.41-42 reformulates that of I.43-44: *metuas...tu* becomes *metuentia... tus* and *quisquis es, quisquis eris*. Indifference to fear for his posthumous fate—poetic in the first satire, physical in the last—is closely connected at the level of verse across the poems.

What is happening in the lines from *Satire I*? Lines 41-44 follow the representation of the poetry reading at the symposium, where we found drunk Romulids toasting to the value of poems

recited by an affected, Greekish *lector*: The songs will have an afterlife; the poet's ashes may rest secure.

If we broaden our scope but slightly the fate of the poet's ashes provide an implicit alternative for Persius' funeral:

I. 36-40:

nunc non **cinis** ille poetae
felix? non leuior cippus nunc inprimit **ossa**?
laudant conuiuiae: nunc non e manibus illis,
nunc non e tumulo fortunataque fauilla
nascentur uiolae?

“Doesn't the great ash of the poet rest happy now? Now doesn't his tombstone rest lighter upon his bones? The dinner partiers give praise: aren't the violets growing from his ghost, aren't they now growing from his tomb and and blessed cinders?”

VI.33-36:

... sed cenam funeris heres
negleget iratus quod rem curtaueris; urnae
ossa inodora dabit, seu spirent cinnama surdum
seu ceraso peccent casiae nescire paratus.

“Whether the cinnamon waft dull or the cassia is spoiled from cherry—he's prepared to pay no attention.”

The body is treated like a bad meal—one of the many rancid or ill-dressed dishes we have seen throughout the book. Persius' lack of concern for the body is in some ways a Lucretian ending: he cares nothing for death; he is fearless, i.e., he has learnt the principal lesson of *De Rerum Natura*; he has even learnt to enjoy an Epicurean life, even if only out of spite. But Persius one-ups Lucretius, too: he is equally uninterested in the fate of his text, in competing for the status of *aeternis uersibus*, accessible only through epic. The ashes of the text become the ashes of the body as the fate of the body takes the place of the fate of the text. We were introduced to the embodied satirist as a splitting body at the same time that we were introduced to his writing as a splitting text

in his central poem (*Satire III*). Through the consequent identification of his book with his body, Persius' bodily legacy becomes his literary legacy. Burn it.

The end of the book-body we have been reading exhibits a satirist armed with all his invective strategies but shed of all virtuous pretenses, a splintering off of the decent Horatian. *Satire VI* very much belongs to the book of this *Mercurius*, this *mercurialis* poet. In fact, I would argue that it is impossible to have a full understanding of Persius' project without it. Restraint is left to one side as Persius recklessly veers ever closer to the margin of the perverse. While he hedged about the quality of his reader (*quisquis*) in the first satire, by the last, Persius assumes a bad *quisquis*: *Quisquis es (lector)* may possibly be found with the proper literary and aural credentials; *quisquis eris (heres)* is simply already beyond the pale. The identity of the poet's literary project with his body is carried to its logical conclusion. At the same time that the satirist decisively rejects Pythagorean metempsychosis, bodily and literary afterlives, and the concerns of his future and fictive heir, he establishes his longevity by returning with full satirical force at the end of his book. The poet exits this piece about dying with a revivifying of his former self. He will die, but that is all that he shall give to death.

finis

Persius lampoons the desire to be perennial, the escapist fantasy of poets (the escapist fantasy belongs perhaps to all humans, but Horace, Ennius, and Ovid are all Persius' clan). But nevertheless he, too, has a fantasy that he cannot escape: it is not that he wants to be eternal, but rather that he wants to be able to control the afterlife of his work. If a poetic afterlife includes manipulation by someone of Persius' lot, or worse, it is something to be avoided at all costs. Instead of inscribing his work on bronze or sending it up to the stars, he burns it. The satirist's final act of

demolition is the destruction of his body-book. At the same time, *Satire VI* offers two afterlives for *this* poet, a reincarnation and an apotheosis. The forceful return of the hater offers a *re*-reincarnation of Hipponax—his humor that makes the truly obscene a matter of course. And Persius' claim *sum tibi Mercurius* (62) is his final, evasive self-identification—he is now the god of money, and but more importantly the director of the souls of the (un)dead.

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