

Metrical abbreviations

- u - indicates a short syllable followed by a long one: this combination forms an iamb.
- - indicates two long syllables: this combination forms a spondee.
- u u indicates a long syllable followed by two short syllables: this combination forms a dactyl.

Chapter One

Life, Background, Literary and Social Milieu

Life and Friends

Ancient poets were careful not to reveal too much of their personal biography and this is especially so with Roman satirists. The satirist adopted a persona or mask through which he addressed his audience, which might vary from satire to satire. Even the most vivid scenes cannot be taken as autobiographical, nor can particular attitudes adopted by the persona be said necessarily to reveal the author's own views. Horace tells us that Lucilius, the first of the four great Roman hexameter satirists, "entrusted his secret thoughts to his books, as though to friends he trusted . . . so that his whole life, when he was an old man, was displayed like a . . . painting" [*Satire* 2.1.30-34]. This, if true, was exceptional, and certainly the case of Persius is quite different. Only in the fifth satire, when he tells of his debt to his teacher Cornutus [*Satire* 5.21-51], can we be sure that he is revealing the actual facts of his life. Our main source for his life is in fact an ancient *Vita* (Life) which several manuscripts attribute to Valerius Probus, a grammarian, editor, and literary critic from Beirut, who worked in the later part of the first century. Its true authorship cannot be established, but it appears to go back to a time close to Persius's own and so gives us more reliable information than we normally can glean from such *Lives*.

Aulus Persius Flaccus was born on 4 December 34 at Volaterrae (modern Volterra) and died of a stomach disease shortly before his twenty-eighth birthday, on his own property a few miles from Rome, on 24 November 62. Volaterrae is an Etruscan town and the name Aules is an Etruscan form of the Roman name Aulus. Although the Etruscans had long since lost their power and any political identity separate from Rome, people were proud to boast of their Etruscan descent. Persius himself refers to it at *Satire* 3.28-29, and Horace

refers several times to the Etruscan lineage of his patron, Maecenas, whom in the very first line of his Odes he addresses as "Maecenas, descendant of kings." Persius's Etruscan descent associated him with much that was finest and most ancient in Rome's cultural and social traditions, so that as a satirist he could claim to criticize the leaders of Roman society as one of their peers. This attribute he shared with Lucilius (ca. 168-102 B.C.), whose family had senatorial connections and was affluent. Horace (65-8 B.C.) and Juvenal (ca. 60-130), on the other hand, criticized the Roman aristocracy as outsiders. Horace was the son of a freedman (that is, his father had once been a slave) and owed his position to his education and ability, which brought him the friendship and trust of Maecenas, the great minister of Augustus. There is hardly any reliable evidence for Juvenal's social circumstances, but he writes as an outsider whose exclusion from the respectable circles of Roman society fueled the fires of satiric bitterness (or, as he himself called it, indignatio).

Persius was an equus ("knight"), that is, a member of the propertied class, and the Life says that he left an estate of two million sesterces to his mother and sister, separate, it would seem, from the real-estate, books, and silver that are also mentioned in the Life. Thus he was comparable in wealth to a modern millionaire, and his comfortable situation has some bearing on the facts that his satires deal with a narrower range of Roman life than those of Horace and display more detachment than the vigorous anger of Juvenal. His life was uneventful. Free from involvement in public life he lived, it seems, devoted to his mother, sister, and aunt, and was chaste and moderate in his personal habits. His father died when he was about six and his mother, Fulvia Sisennia (her name is Etruscan), married as her second husband a well-to-do equus called Fusius, who also died prematurely.

This sheltered existence, dominated by women, would hardly provide the raw material for satire, and the Life is informative about the people who influenced Persius's thinking. After completing his elementary education at Volaterrae he continued his secondary education at Rome, where among his teachers were the famous grammarian Remmius Palaemon and the rhetorician Verginius Flavus. Remmius may have been the teacher

of Quintilian, the most distinguished professor of education in first-century Rome. A freedman, conceited, arrogant, and luxury-loving, Remmius was nevertheless influential as a scholar and literary critic. In particular he taught that the Augustan poets, especially Vergil and Horace, should be considered as the true classical models, rather than their predecessors such as Ennius. Second, he was exact in his use of words (distinguishing, for example, between the two Latin words for "drop," stilla and gutta). In the next century Juvenal [Satire 6.451-53] criticized the pedantic blue-stocking who used Remmius's Art of Grammar as the canon of correct speaking by which to correct her husband. The two features of Remmius's teaching are easily traced in the work of Persius, most especially in the first Satire.

Verginius Flavus was a popular teacher of rhetoric, whose work was admired and quoted by Quintilian. Tacitus [Annals 15.71] records his exile by Nero in 65, linking him in this with the foremost Stoic teacher of the time, Musonius Rufus.

Grammar (which included literary theory and criticism), rhetoric, and philosophy were the substance of a liberal Roman education, and all three branches were combined in the person who had the most enduring influence upon Persius, Annaeus Cornutus, whose friend Persius became when he was sixteen. The relationship was not formal, like that of a student and classroom teacher, for it was rather the relaxed association of philosopher and disciple. The friendship lasted for the rest of Persius's life, and Cornutus (along with Caesius Bassus, mentioned below) edited the Satires for posthumous publication, while he advised Fulvia (Persius's mother) to suppress her son's other works. He was also a beneficiary of Persius's will.

Persius himself tells us a great deal about his debt to Cornutus in the fifth satire, especially lines 21-52, which we shall discuss later. Cornutus was a freedman, a native of Leptis in Africa, and his name, Annaeus, implies that he had been a slave in the family that included Seneca and Lucan among its members. He too was a successful teacher, a rhetorician, a prolific writer, and author of a commentary on Vergil. Above all, he was a Stoic philosopher, whose teaching, Persius tells us, formed his own morals at the crossroads of adolescence [Satire 5.30-40]. He was also a

demanding critic of Persius's poetry [Satire 5.5-29]. Like Verginius and Musonius, he was exiled by Nero in 65.

These three scholars--Remmius, Verginius, and Cornutus--were the most important influences upon Persius. To them can be traced his precise use of words and collocations of words and metaphors; his close knowledge of the literary tradition (especially in epic and satire); finally, his Stoic philosophy.

The Life mentions other friends in the circle of Persius. In early adolescence he formed a lifelong friendship with Caesius Bassus, the only Roman lyric poet other than Horace to be mentioned by name in Quintilian's summary of Roman literature [Institutio Oratoria 10.1.96], although without enthusiasm. Persius, who addressed the sixth satire to Bassus, is more complimentary [Satire 6.1-6] in his admiration of Bassus's skill as a lyric poet. He was much older than Persius, who calls him senex ("old man"), and was said to have died in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79. He wrote a treatise on metrics and so may have had some influence on Persius's versification.

Five years younger than Persius was Lucan (39-65), the greatest poetic genius of the age and author of the unfinished epic on the Civil War between Caesar and Pompey. The Life says that Persius came to know Lucan when both were students of Cornutus. The story is probably apocryphal that Lucan applauded Persius as he was reciting, saying, "You are composing real poetry: mine is just trifling." Such modesty is not typical of Lucan, even before he came to write his epic, and it is doubtful that the two young poets formed a continuous friendship. Lucan's brilliant gifts and his ambition (helped by his relationship to Seneca, Nero's tutor and later principal minister) led him to embark on a public career, which ended very probably in 62, the year of Persius's death. Three years later he himself perished in the purge of 65. Lucan shared with Persius a love of liberty, expressed with greater passion than Persius could muster in the fifth satire, and a devotion to Stoic philosophy.

We have mentioned Seneca (4-65), the leading author of the age and a dominant influence in politics and literature during the first five years of Nero's reign (54-59), who retired from the court in 62 and, like his nephew, Lucan, was forced to commit suicide in 65.

Persius did not like him: "He also came to know Seneca late, but not so as to be attracted by his intellect," says the Life. A similar skepticism is expressed at greater length by Quintilian [10.1.125-31], who particularly disliked Seneca's egoism and what he thought was the pernicious influence on the young of his facile rhetorical style. Quintilian believed strongly in the close relationship of morality and rhetoric, and the same belief underlies much of Persius's first satire. It is likely, too, that the rather relaxed Stoicism of Seneca had compromised with worldly standards too much for the more doctrinaire Persius. Seneca was wealthy and politically powerful, and the austere period of his life when he both practiced the Stoic maxim of "living according to Nature" and wrote his Letters to Lucilius occurred after Persius's death. Persius's rejection of Seneca is significant as evidence for his independence from contemporary literary fashion (the subject of the first satire) and for his uncompromising acceptance of Stoic principles.

The Life mentions four older friends with whom Persius had a close emotional involvement, namely, Servilius, Agathinus, Petronius, and Paetus. Servilius Nonianus, whom he looked upon "as father," had been consul in 35 and died in 59. He was an historian of some gifts, although too diffuse according to Quintilian [10.1.102]. The other three older friends were in the circle of Cornutus. Two of them were apparently doctors, Agathinus (or Agathemerus), a Spartan, and Petronius Aristocrates, from Asia Minor, and are described in the Life as men who in their way of life were "most learned and pure." Both men are quoted by Galen: the former was the author of a work De Helleboro (on madness and its cure, perhaps), the latter is called grammaticus (perhaps meaning "scholar"). Both were enthusiastic students of philosophy, and the frequent use of medical metaphors by Persius may be due to these friendships.

Another older friend, not mentioned in the Life, was Plotius Macrinus, the addressee of Persius's second satire. The scholiast, (that is, ancient commentator) says that he also had been a student in the house of Servilius, and it is implied that he was older than Persius whom "he loved with a father's feelings." Persius was further said to have bought some land from him on favorable terms.

The fourth older friend mentioned in the *Life* was the most important. Paetus Thrasea, who for ten years was Persius's close friend, was married to Arria, a relative of Persius and the daughter of the famous heroine, Arria (the Elder), whose dying words in 42, "Paetus, it doesn't hurt," encouraged her husband to follow her in suicide. Thrasea was consul in 56, and for some years he attempted to reconcile his uncompromising belief in liberty with the rule of Nero. By 59 he could no longer accept the increasingly murderous autocracy of Nero, and in 63 he gave up attending the Senate. Although he avoided involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy of 65 he was forced by Nero to commit suicide in 66. Thrasea was the leading figure among the aristocrats opposed on principle to Nero. As the biographer and philosophical successor of Cato the Younger he had an unshakeable belief in liberty, as defined by the Stoics, and it led him and his friends, themselves Stoics, to put their principles above their personal security (1). Persius's association with such a man for ten years must have been of the greatest importance to the development of his thought and especially of his independence as a satirist. Through him he had contact with the higher levels of Roman politics and learned the practical meaning of liberty in a context different from the theoretical one of literary and philosophical discussions. Yet it must also be admitted that Persius uses *libertas* (for example, in *Satire* 5.73) generally in the nonpolitical sense, basing himself upon the Stoic paradox, "only the wise are free."

It is sometimes assumed that Persius was a recluse "who must have formed his notions of life as much from books as from experience" (2), living a sheltered life and surrounded by attentive female relatives. The evidence does not support this view. He traveled abroad with Thrasea on more than one occasion, and the range of his friendships shows clearly that he was associated with men who led active lives (two of them rose to be consul, still a distinguished achievement even under the Empire) and pondered deeply on the ethical problems posed by political developments in the reign of Nero. Persius's personal involvement in public life was admittedly less than that of his predecessors in satire, for Lucilius had participated in the Spanish campaigns of his friend and patron, Scipio

Aemilianus, while Horace, who had fought on the Republican side at the battle of Philippi, was the friend of Maecenas, Augustus's minister, and declined a pressing invitation to serve as secretary to Augustus himself. But times had changed from those of Lucilius and Horace, for all the literary men of Nero's time who had been the emperor's friends and associates--Lucan, Seneca, and Petronius--were forced to commit suicide. Satire was at best a dangerous pursuit under an autocracy, and independence, essential for a poet, was especially a necessity for the satirist. The intense and private quality of Persius's satire is due more to his chosen way of writing than to lack of personal observation. His range of subject matter is narrower than that of Lucilius, Horace, and Juvenal, and reflects the preoccupation with ethics that characterized the Stoic thought of the age. But his own genius, and the friendship of men such as Cornutus and Thrasea, ensured that his satire would be incisive and vital.

The Neronian Age

Persius's maturity began with the introduction to Cornutus, when he was sixteen years old, four years before the start of Nero's reign (54-68). The Neronian cultural, social, and political background is therefore relevant to the work of a satirist who criticized the literature and morals of the age.

Nero was the first emperor to come to the throne after an education designed with his succession as the goal. His mother, Agrippina the Younger, married her uncle, the emperor Claudius, in 49 after the disgrace and execution of his former wife. She was driven by consuming ambition for power. With the aid of Seneca, to whom Nero's education was entrusted, and Burrus, prefect of the Praetorian Guard, she prepared the way for Nero. He displaced Claudius's own son Britannicus as the heir-apparent and was betrothed to Octavia, the emperor's daughter. When Claudius was murdered in October 54, the succession was smoothly managed, and the seventeen-year-old emperor was quickly accepted by army and people. The reign began well. Nero's public pronouncements, written for him by Seneca, promised a return to constitutional government and the consistent administration of law, and even the murder of Britanni-

cus in 55 did not shake his position. Abroad, the campaigns of Corbulo in the east provided victories enough for Roman glory.

Culturally the new reign was to represent a renaissance of literature and the arts, fields in which Nero had a deep interest and some ability. It was to be politically and culturally a new Augustan age, and Nero, so the court-poets wrote, was a new Apollo on earth to preside over the Golden Age of Roman culture. It is true that the reign did witness a remarkable flourishing of literature, drama, architecture, music, and painting, the more striking for its contrast with the culturally barren reigns of Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius (3). In literature Seneca created virtually a new prose style in his voluminous philosophical writings and revived tragedy with his dramas. His nephew Lucan re-created and transformed Vergilian epic, while a minor poet, Calpurnius Siculus (who was not close to the emperor), revived pastoral poetry with his Eclogues. Varronian satire (that is, mixed prose and verse with diverse subject matter) was revived in the Apocolocyntosis of Seneca early in the reign and later in the infinitely greater novel of Petronius, the Satyricon. In architecture and painting the Golden House of Nero was preeminent, and its use of brick-faced concrete and its frescoes had lasting influence in the history of European art and architecture. We cannot be so specific about music, but there is no doubt about the personal involvement of Nero in musical performances, and his encouragement led to the establishment of "Games" on the Greek model, that is, festivals where poetic, dramatic, and musical performances were prominent.

Such activities, however, could hardly govern an empire, and Nero's own character, joined to his lack of experience in military and political affairs, made deterioration inevitable. In 59 he instigated the murder of his mother, and from that time the influence of Seneca and Burrus declined, while others promised the independence that had been denied him in the years of his tutelage. This stage of the reign ended in 62 with the death of Burrus, the retirement of Seneca, the rejection and murder of Octavia, and, finally, Nero's marriage with Poppaea, the beautiful, talented, and unprincipled former wife of Otho (who was himself to be emperor for a short time in 69). It was also marked by

the celebration of the Juvenalia in 59, the first of the musical and dramatic festivals inaugurated by Nero and undoubtedly a stimulus to cultural activity. This festival was followed by the Neronia in 60.

These were the circumstances of the society that Persius criticized. The literary renaissance meant new literary styles, and changes in literary taste are among the targets of Persius's first satire. The deliberate cultivation of artistic and literary activities among the governing classes, and especially in Nero's circle of associates, was a challenge to the traditional values of the Roman upper class. For centuries there had been cultivated aristocrats, men like Scipio Africanus who welcomed the superior cultural heritage of Hellenistic civilization, or Julius Caesar, who was able to meet the leading writers and orators of the day as an equal. For these men cultural pursuits were separate from their public life, and military and political affairs were their primary activities. To secure the greatness of Rome and achieve personal glory were the ideals of the Roman aristocracy in the late Republic and early Empire. Nero had had no military experience, and his personal character combined with his education to lead him to attempt to change the traditional priorities. So long as the state was well governed by his subordinates such a policy could have been comparatively harmless, however much it aroused the scorn and resentment of conservative aristocrats. What in fact happened was far worse, the result of Nero's self-indulgence, natural disasters (notably the great fire at Rome of 64), and failures abroad, especially in Britain, Judaea, and Armenia.

Seneca and Burrus were replaced in 62 as Nero's advisers by Tigellinus, one of the new Praetorian prefects, and Poppaea, now Nero's wife. From 62 Nero's enthusiasm for musical and dramatic pursuits was publicly indulged, culminating in the seventeen-month tour of Greece in 66-68 from which he returned with 1,808 crowns, prizes won in musical contests. His egoism encouraged the development of autocracy, as opposed to the system of power shared between the emperor and the aristocracy that Augustus had introduced. Those who opposed Nero, or were thought to be a threat to his preeminence, were exiled or executed (usually by mandated suicide), and the economic resources of the Empire were increasingly squandered to provide for the

extravagances of the emperor and his court. His own position was weakened by the fire that destroyed nearly one third and damaged much of the rest of Rome in July 64, and he gave more ammunition to his critics by appropriating a large part of the center of the city for his new complex of palaces, villas, parks, and gardens, which we know as the Golden House (4). In 66 his egomania reached its climax in the "Golden Day" at which the Armenian King, Tiridates, did obeisance to Nero. Public spectacles, however, and aesthetic triumphs could not long defer the collapse of the regime. Nero had survived a major conspiracy in 65, largely thanks to the conspirators' own nervousness (5), but in 68 dissatisfaction among the upper classes at Rome and a revolt in Gaul ensured Nero's downfall. He was declared a public enemy, and on 9 June he committed suicide: he was thirty years old (6).

Roman Stoicism

Although Persius died in 62, the developments of the last six years of the reign were already clearly foreshadowed. One reaction of the educated upper class to the excesses of Nero was to turn to philosophy, for the most part to Stoicism. Roman Stoicism of the period combined the ideal of simplicity of life (lived "according to Nature") with service to the state and one's fellow man (7). At the same time it emphasized the dignity of the individual and therefore made liberty a central theme. If political liberty were curtailed, for example under a tyranny, personal liberty could still be asserted: a man need not compromise his Stoic principles, and the ultimate expression of individual liberty was suicide. This austere ethical teaching drew its strength from the basic Stoic doctrine that physical and temporal goods, such as wealth, health, and comfort, are "indifferent"--that is, they cannot affect the things that are primarily important to a human being, above all, virtue. Therefore Roman Stoicism had an overwhelmingly moral emphasis, teaching that virtue was more important than physical and temporal benefits, and that passions, such as anger and fear, were to be suppressed. Many Stoics were interested also in scientific questions and developed theories about physics, natural history, and cosmology.

These appear prominently in Seneca and Lucan, but not at all in Persius.

For Thrasea and other Stoics in public life the reign of Nero posed acute ethical dilemmas. Some, like Seneca, were able to compromise, but others, like Thrasea, could not. The phrase "Stoic opposition" is often used of the men opposed to Nero, but it should be used cautiously. The Stoics were not necessarily Republicans. Thrasea himself, for example, had as a senator and consul taken an active part in the government until 62, like other prominent Stoics. The leading Stoic teacher of the time, Musonius Rufus, wrote his treatise That Kings Should Study Philosophy upon the premise that monarchy is not an evil. The leaders of the Pisonian conspiracy in 65 did not seek to abolish the principate but to replace Nero by a better emperor. Yet when it became obvious that the principate and liberty could not be reconciled, the Stoics knew where their priorities lay. They followed the example of the younger Cato, who a century before had chosen suicide rather than surrender to Julius Caesar. They affirmed their liberty by refusal to compromise, which led in many cases to exile or death. For example, one of the charges against Thrasea in 66 was that he "made a show of liberty in order to subvert the principate" (8).

Thus Stoics in the time of Nero were deeply concerned with ethical and political questions. Persius died before the dilemma of the Stoics became acute, but we know, from the writings of Seneca and the accounts of the reaction at Rome to the murder of Agrippina, that thoughtful people were already facing the problems. Since Persius was not involved in public life he had no inducement to write political satire, although he hints at the possibility in the first satire [lines 107-21]. In any case to have done so would have invited his own destruction and that of his works. Tacitus and Suetonius record examples of authors who were executed and their works burned because they openly attacked the vices of an emperor or, equally serious, were thought to have done so. Therefore Persius directed his Stoic doctrines to the ethical side of Roman society. Thus in the first satire he explored the connection between morality and literature; in the fourth between self-knowledge and honesty in public life. In the fifth satire he examines liberty, but in the context of personal morality. And so it is with

the other satires, in which he deals with standard moral themes and exhorts his hearers to follow the precepts of philosophy. His satire criticizes universal faults in human nature; we will not find in them attacks on contemporary political leaders. Yet we would be wrong to dismiss them as irrelevant to Roman society in the Neronian age. The moral, cultural, and political developments that we have outlined were not unobserved by the satirist. In his satires we have authentic criticism of the moral trends of the age.

Chapter Two

Persius and the Satiric Tradition

Introduction

Roman authors were acutely conscious of the tradition of the particular genre in which they were writing. From the Greeks the Romans inherited the concept of to prepon ("what is fitting"), which finds its most memorable expression in Horace's Art of Poetry. Horace opens his third and final apologia for his satires [Satire 2.1] by quoting the charge that he has "stretched his work beyond the laws of satire" ("ultra legem tendere opus"). Satirists were as concerned as other poets with their place in the tradition and the relationship of their work to that of their predecessors. This is not merely literary narcissism, for such considerations led the satirist to say a good deal about the scope, content, and purpose of his poetry. While it was important to acknowledge one's debt to earlier writers--explicitly or by direct quotation or adaptation--it was equally important for the poet to tell his audience how he was altering the inherited tradition and why his predecessors' satire was inadequate for his own purposes. Such an approach is typically Roman: indeed, satire was thought to be the only exclusively Roman literary genre (1) (as opposed to a Roman adaptation of a Greek genre), and its major writers show the Roman characteristics of respect for tradition combined with adaptability to changing circumstances.

The origins of satire, like the derivation of the word satura, are a matter for debate, and we need not enter into the controversy here (2). The most likely explanation is that satura takes its name from lanx satura, that is, a dish (lanx) full (satura) of various first fruits offered to the gods. Thus variety was from the beginning a feature of Roman satire, and long after its form and content had become stabilized the last of the Roman satirists, Juvenal (ca. 55-130) described his satire as farrago ("a medley"). His

summary is a neat statement of the scope of satire [Juvenal, *Satire* 1.85-86]: "Whatever men do--their prayers, fear, anger, pleasure, happiness, business--all makes up the medley of my book."

As a literary form satire developed in two directions. The earliest Latin author to gather into a book a miscellaneous collection of poetry in different meters and on various subjects was Ennius (239-169 B.C.), the author also of the *Annales*, the first great Roman national epic. Neither Horace nor Persius nor Juvenal mentions his *Saturae* (as he called his collection), and it is Lucilius, not Ennius, that they considered to be the founder of the satiric tradition. This is because Ennius's *Saturae* were not in their view part of the tradition of hexameter satire in which they wrote. His medley of meters and subjects was continued in the other satiric tradition, of which Varro (116-27 B.C.), was the leading exponent, and it was further developed in the reign of Nero by Seneca and Petronius (3). This type of satire is called Menippean, from Varro's Greek model, Mennippus (ca. 250 B.C.). Its distinctive features were a prose narrative with verse interludes in various meters, forming a loosely structured whole, as varied in content as in form.

The other satiric tradition is the one that concerns us, and its founder was Lucilius (4), a Roman knight who lived ca. 168-102 B.C. His whole poetic activity was devoted to satire, and Horace, Persius, and Juvenal were right to look to him as the founder of their genre. Like Ennius he began by writing in a mixture of meters (books 26-29 contain iambs of different systems and hexameters), but with book 30 he turned exclusively to hexameters and in so doing definitely set the tradition of the hexameter satirists. In books 1-21 (which are later than books 26-30) he wrote only hexameters. Only about 1,400 lines survive, very few fragments being more than one or two lines long, so that it is difficult for us to assess his achievement. Many of the fragments survive in quotations by grammarians, for example, illustrating unusual words or usages, and give an uneven idea of Lucilius's work. Yet the surviving fragments, combined with the judgments of later authors (especially Horace and Persius) allow us to give a fairly detailed picture of the tradition that he founded. Before doing so, however, we should consider what he inherited from Greek writers.

The Greek Tradition

We should immediately distinguish between the genre of *satura* and the satiric spirit. When Quintilian claimed that "satire is wholly Roman" [10.1.93], he was thinking of the former. The Greeks, whom the Romans followed in every other literary genre (with the possible exception of letter writing), did not write satires as such. On the other hand, they wrote a great deal that was satirical, and the Roman satirists freely acknowledged their debt to the Greek tradition. Horace, for example, opens his first literary apologia [*Satire* 1.4.1] with the names of the three masters of Greek Old Comedy of the fifth century, in a resonant hexameter, "Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae," and he neatly summarizes Lucilius's debt to them [1.4.3-6]: "if anyone deserved to be marked out as a criminal or thief, or because he was an adulterer or cut-throat or notorious in some other way, him they would freely and publicly criticize. From them Lucilius totally derives. . . ." So Persius at the end of his program-satire [1.123-26] makes the same appeal to justify his excoriating the vices of society: "You, who are inspired by outspoken Cratinus or grow pale poring over angry Eupolis with the other Grand Old Man [that is, Aristophanes], look also at my words, if you are prepared to listen to something that is more than froth. Let my reader come from them with well-steamed ear." While no comparable fragment survives from Lucilius, it is at least probable that he acknowledged the same debt. At any rate, Horace and Persius make clear that a primary function of satire was a part of the tradition inherited from Greece, that is, social and moral criticism. It is in the so-called Old Comedy of Athens that such criticism was freely offered, indirectly through the action and dialogue, directly in the *parabasis*, a monologue in which the poet spoke to his audience through the medium of the Chorus.

A second vehicle for Greek moral and social criticism was the informal discourses of popular philosophers, who were especially a feature of city life in the Hellenistic age (that is, between 323 and 146 B.C.) (5). These teachers did not as a rule adhere to any one system of philosophy, although they were often closest to the Cynics, the least dogmatic of the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, and their diatribes (as

their discourses are technically known) were delivered at street corners or at any other place where a knot of hearers could be gathered (6). The informal nature of the diatribe is better expressed by the Latin word *sermones* (meaning "conversations" or "talks"), the very word, in fact, that Horace used for the title of his satires. Horace mentions the best-known of these Hellenistic philosophers, Bion, a native of the Crimea, who lived at Athens in the first half of the third century B.C. (he died ca. 255). He is described in more detail by Diogenes Laertius, the compiler of a set of *Lives of the Philosophers* during the first century A.D. (7). Horace refers to Bion's "black wit," and Diogenes amplifies the caustic nature of Bion's criticism in emphasizing his lack of manners and principles and his atheism. Above all, his teaching was unsystematic, and the informal structure of Roman hexameter satire certainly owes something to this aspect of the diatribe. Bion was unconventional: his discourses were enlivened by epigrams (called by the Romans *sententiae* and a particularly prominent feature in the writing of Persius's contemporaries), parody (especially of epic), rhyme, and verbal jingles. In style he favored metaphors drawn from everyday activities or from medicine, sometimes used merely to illustrate an ethical point, sometimes so developed as to take over the abstract idea that they were introduced to illustrate. From another Hellenistic philosopher, the Cynic Teles (ca. 235 B.C.), we know that Bion personified the virtues and vices, for example, by having Poverty make a speech on the virtues of self-sufficiency. Persius adopted this technique in his fifth satire with the dramatic presentation of Avarice and Luxury [*Satire* 5.132-56].

Here are some examples from Bion's diatribes. "Old Age is the haven from [the sea of] troubles"; "wealth is the sinews of success"; "do not try to change things but, like sailors, adapt yourself to circumstances"; "in prosperity crowd on full sail, in adversity reef your sail"; "marry an ugly wife and trouble's in store; marry a pretty one, she'll be a whore" (an approximation to the jingle in the Greek of *poînên* and *koinên*). Other features of the Hellenistic diatribe were the dialogue, through the introduction of an imaginary interlocutor (Persius engagingly reveals this device in his first satire, line 44, "whoever you are whom I have

just introduced as an adversary"), and the use of animal fables, of which Horace's story of the two mice is a brilliant Roman adaptation [*Satire* 2.6.79-117].

A third genre through which the Greek satiric spirit influenced Roman satire was the iambic, poems of short to moderate length containing political, social, and moral criticism, often expressed in bitter terms and with scathing attacks on individuals. Its greatest exponent was also one of the earliest, Archilochus of Lesbos (ca. 620 B.C.), who was the direct inspiration of Horace's earliest published poetry, the *Epodes* (ca. 42-35 B.C.). Satirical iambs were revived in the Hellenistic age, especially by the Alexandrian poet Callimachus (ca. 275 B.C.) (8). One variation of the iambic meter was the choliambic or *scazon* (that is, "limping" iambic), in which the trimeter (that is, a line formed of three double iambs) ended with a spondee (--) instead of an iamb (u-, a short syllable followed by a long one). The effect is to slow up the progress of the line to its end, so that it appears to limp. For example, the first scazon of Persius's prologue reads *nēc fontē lābrā prōlūī cābāllinō*, and the reader who reads the last two syllables if they were *-inō* will quickly see the differences in the rhythm. The inventor of scazons was Hipponax (ca. 540 B.C.), and in the first line of his iambs Callimachus describes himself as if he were a resurrected Hipponax. Another Hellenistic choliambic poet was Phoenix of Colophon (ca. 280 B.C.) (9), whose choliambics often had a strong gnomic element (that is, expressing general maxims in proverbial or epigrammatic form), combined with a tendency to moralize. The following quotation from an anonymous choliambic poem attacking greed is illustrative: "Well, I would prefer to be self-sufficient and to be thought a worthy man, than to be involved in many affairs and find my enemies saying: 'he's seaborne cargo, he came where he came from.'" Here the proverbial quotation and the metaphorical reference to life as a sea and man as a seafarer are typical of the Hellenistic moralizing tradition that influenced Roman satire.

Comedy, diatribe, and iambic poetry were the principal Greek literary influences upon Roman satire. Other Greek influences can be traced, most notably in philosophical prose: for example, Lucilius refers to *Socratici charti* ("Socratic texts": fr. 789 W), which could

refer either to Plato's dialogues or to the Socratic writings of Xenophon, and he paraphrases Plato's Socratic dialogue, *Charmides* (10). Persius's fourth satire also opens with a scene in which Socrates lectures Alcibiades, the material being based on the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades I*, and Horace, especially in the second book of *Satires*, was influenced by Socratic writing. But it was the other three Greek genres that gave to Roman satire the source of many of its distinctive features, which were: the castigation of vice and exhortation to virtue; the use of wit and irony; personal attacks and obscenity; the use of metaphor and analogy, often leading to the merging of abstract idea and concrete example (for example, moral vice and physical disease, as in Bion and in Persius's third satire); the loosely structured diatribe with its discursive method and informal transitions; finally, the use of dialogue or of an imaginary interlocutor.

Lucilian Satire

Most of the Greek features that we have identified are to be found in Lucilius (11). His earliest work was in the iambic tradition (books 26-29), but it was his adoption of the dactylic hexameter as the exclusive medium for his satire (books 30 and 1-21) that was his most important contribution to the genre, for this marked a final break with the tradition of the Ennian miscellany. In his "program" in book 26 he describes the audience at which he is aiming [fr. 632-35 W]), not the highbrow intellectuals nor the uncultured masses, but the worthy and moderately cultured men, one of whom Cicero (in a comment on this fragment) calls "a good man and not unlettered." In a word, says Lucilius, "I want to be read neither by the very learned nor by the uneducated." This appeal to a select and moderate audience became part of the traditional program, and in the case of Horace and Persius it had some bearing on their attitude to the problem of freedom of speech, one of the most acute dilemmas of the satirist writing in a society no longer free. Lucilius, indeed, was a man of wealth and social standing, among whose friends were some of his most powerful contemporaries. He was therefore able to speak with frankness, both about himself--which is the privilege of the socially self-

assured--and about his enemies, whom he attacked with a directness worthy of Archilochus. He himself described his method: "then let me fly at him with teeth bared and (blazing) eyes like a dog," a metaphor later adopted by both Horace and Persius (12).

Our brief survey has shown how Lucilius adapted Greek satiric techniques to Latin hexameter satire. In the immense range of his subject matter he included literary and grammatical criticism, and in so doing introduced to the Roman tradition a fundamental feature. Greek Old Comedy had been a vehicle for literary criticism, and its most famous example, the debate between Euripides and Aeschylus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, significantly links the poet's work to moral and social considerations, that is, to his value as the teacher of his fellow citizens. We shall see that the connection between poetry and morality was of primary importance in Persius. Among Lucilius's fragments is one critical of the tragedian Accius, and another defending his criticisms of Homer (13). While literary criticism was in general important to the satiric tradition, it was especially significant when it extended to the style, content, and purpose of satire, so that it was fundamental to the poet's conception of satire. This is made abundantly clear in the three "literary" satires of Horace [1.4, 1.10, 2.1] and in the first and fifth satires of Persius.

Horatian Satire

Horace was much concerned with the definition of satire, and he shared the ancient respect for the rules of a particular genre. In the opening lines of *Satires* 2.1 he sets the scene in terms of a law court, with himself up on a charge of having broken the laws of the genre of satire: "there are those who charge me with being too bitter in my satire and with stretching my work beyond the law." Like Lucilius (in book 26), Horace begins his satires with a statement of his purpose and methods (14). In his first satire Horace announces that he will castigate vice (in particular the vice of avarice) and in its place he will put the virtue of moderation (the Greek *sophrosyne*): "there is restraint in things; in a word, there are fixed limits, either side of which what is right cannot be" [*Satire*

1.105-6]. As for his style, he will adopt the wit and irony that marked the Hellenistic diatribe. In Greek this was called to spoudogeloion (literally "serious laughing") which Horace neatly turns into Latin with the words ridentem dicere verum ("to tell the truth with a smile," line 24). His moralizing, he says, will indeed deal with serious subjects, but in a lighthearted style--features of which might be wit, fable, analogy, metaphor, indeed anything that would sweeten the pill of ethical doctrine. In lines 23-27 he distinguishes between seriousness of purpose and subject on the one hand, and lightness of style on the other.

In three satires Horace acknowledges his debt to Lucilius while also criticizing him, and the three give a good idea of the tradition that Horace inherited and the changes that he made. After acknowledging his and Lucilius's debt to Greek Old Comedy in Satires 1.4.1-7, he goes on to criticize Lucilius for diffuseness and carelessness in composition [lines 9-13]. Horace himself, he claims, will be more professional in his writing, above all, more self-critical. He then defines his own satire, which he ironically refuses to count as poetry, saying that like that of Lucilius it shares with real poetry only the characteristic of meter, in all else being sermo merus ("just prose talk," lines 47-48). He quotes from Ennius's epic [lines 60-61] to establish the difference between his sermones ("talks," that is, satires) and the lofty poetic genre of epic. Yet Horace gives the lie to his self-irony by his mastery of poetic technique in this very satire: the neatly turned phrase (for example, disiecti membra poetae, ["limbs of the dismembered poet," line 62], in reference to quoting tags from Ennius), and the vivid metaphor (for example the ink of the cuttlefish at line 100 for a gossip destroying a friend's reputation, or the life belt of the novice swimmer at line 120 for the young boy helped by the precepts of his father). Having established his style, Horace can then return to consideration of his purpose, that is, his duty as moral critic, which he has outlined with reference to Old Comedy in lines 1-5. This he introduces with a defense against the charge that he enjoys hurting the objects of his criticism [line 78], which Lucilius had also had to answer (15). He further acknowledges his debt to Lucilius in this section by adapting Lucilius's appeal to a limited audience [lines

71-78]: "let no bookstall or poster-display have my slim volumes for the sweaty hands of the common crowd to paw over. . . . I recite my work only to my friends, and even then under compulsion." Serious criticism of vice is the satirist's duty, provided it is done with wit [line 91] and good-natured moderation [lines 101-3]. Finally, Horace justifies himself by reference to the precepts of his father [lines 105-29] and, the result of this early training, his own upright character [lines 129-43].

Satire 1.4 is discursive and polemical, and it does not have the self-assurance or literary finesse of its successors, Satires 1.10 and 2.1. Horace was thirty when he published his first book of satires in 35 B.C., and the satire reflects the defensiveness of a young man whose literary and social position was not yet fully assured. It is an important statement of Horace's view of the satirical tradition: while he firmly acknowledges his place in the tradition of Lucilius, he shows by his criticisms of Lucilius how he himself is changing it. Although the two later literary satires show more positive characteristics and even more masterly poetic techniques, the fourth satire sets forth the essential principles of Horace's satire. It is important for an understanding of Persius's place in the tradition.

In Satire 1.10 Horace answers those who had taken exception to his criticism of Lucilius. Granting the good qualities of Lucilius, such as wit and the castigation of vice, he argues again for changes in the tradition. Dealing first with wit [lines 7-19] he says that the satirist's laughter must be tempered by brevity and economy of expression; by variety of mood; finally by irony, for "a smile is more effective than bitterness and often cuts through serious matters better" [lines 14-15]--an excellent statement of the peculiar qualities of Horatian satire. Further he argues for better Latinity, whereas Lucilius had used many Greek words without translating them (lines 20-30), and defends his own efforts to renew Lucilian satire by reference to leading contemporary authors in other genres, such as Vergil in pastoral poetry (lines 31-49). He concludes the passage by emphasizing his own inferiority to Lucilius, the founder (inventor, line 48) of the tradition. This said, he returns to his criticism of Lucilius's undisciplined style [lines 50-

74], repeating his call for self-criticism in Satire 1.4. Finally, he returns to the theme of the satirist's audience [lines 74-91]: a select audience demands the highest standards of writing, and therefore of self-criticism. Horace names fourteen of his pauci lectores ("few readers"), and they include the greatest writers and literary patrons of the day--Maecenas, Varius, Vergil, Messalla, and Pollio. In this alone Horace is claiming a high place for satire in Roman literary circles. Consequently, it demands the most polished poetical craftsmanship to be worthy of its discerning audience.

This is Horace's most forthright statement about his satire. Five years later, in 30 B.C., he published his second book of satires, in which the first satire deals predominantly with the lex operis, the laws of Lucilian satire. His topics are much the same as in Satires 1.4 and 1.10, but his method is more ironic and more lighthearted. He uses dialogue, defending himself against the critical advice of the lawyer Trebatius, and he acquits himself at the end with a punning parody on the eighth of the Twelve Tables (which were the basic statement of Roman law). Some critics have dismissed this poem as frivolous, but it should be seen rather as adhering to a serious critical position which Horace has already established in the earlier literary satires. Its lighthearted irony and brilliant wit are weapons of a poet who knows that his position is unsailable.

For nearly a century after the publication of Horace's satires no author of any note attempted to write in the genre. The reason is simple: freedom of speech was a thing of the past, and the poet who criticized (or was even thought to be criticizing) the great ran the risk of exile or execution, or at least the destruction of his work. Persius therefore inherited the tradition as Horace had left it.

Conclusion

Horace as a satirist was one of the four "great shades" whom Dante counted as the greatest of classical poets, lesser only than Vergil (16). Whether one agrees with Dante's judgment or not, there can be no doubt of Horace's originality within the Lucilian tra-

dition. Lucilius had created the hexameter satire using his own genius on the informal satiric material inherited from Ennius and the Greek writers. This he adapted to the Latin language, in itself no mean achievement. Eventually he disciplined the genre by the exclusive use of the dactylic hexameter. He followed the Greeks in his uninhibited attacks on named contemporaries, so much so that bitterness (acerbitas) was later considered to be his outstanding characteristic. His immense range and facility led him to write much that was diffuse and of uneven quality. If we are to believe Horace, he is rightly to be called the founder of the genre. His successors all acknowledged his primacy, but each worked within the Lucilian tradition to alter it. Horace's greatest contribution was in the tone of his satires, above all in the use of irony and wit: the phrase ridentem dicere verum ("to tell the truth with a smile") summarizes the essential quality of Horatian satire. But there were other equally significant changes: Horace was a polished craftsman, even in his earliest work (which includes the satires), and his mastery of the telling phrase or the vivid metaphor set a new standard for his successors. Equally sure was his control of language and meter, and his ironic description of satire as sermo merus ("mere talk") conceals his range and flexibility of style and meter, in keeping with a conversational genre whose material covers a wide range of subject matter. Horace's versatility allowed him to perfect a style adequate to the variety of satire. Finally, Horace brought to satire a new conception of the satirist's "mask" or persona, through which he addressed his audience. While we cannot judge Lucilius fairly from a mere collection of fragments, his acerbitas ("bitterness") seems to have been fairly constant, and Horace says that he was direct in his self-revelation. Horace is more varied: for example, the satirist who castigates vice in Satire 2.5 is very different from the persona in the mellow quasi-autobiography of Satires 1.6 and 2.6. The subtle and shifting persona is partly the result of Horatian irony and poetic flexibility, and so peculiar to Horace. But he showed the way for his successors (both in Latin and in later French and English literature) to use the satirist's persona as an effective part of satiric technique.

This then was the satiric tradition inherited by

Persius. His early death and limited output prevented him from matching the achievements of Horace or of his successor Juvenal. Like Horace he acknowledged his debt to his predecessors but established his own originality within the tradition, as an examination of his satires will show.

Chapter Three

The Prologue and the First Satire

The Prologue

A prologue of fourteen choliambic lines precedes Persius's first or program-satire (1). We have seen that the iambic tradition was important in the transmission of the Greek satiric spirit, and Horace's earliest poems (the *Epodes*) were written in iambs, sometimes combined with dactylic lines, in the spirit of Archilochus. Although Persius is unique among the hexameter-satirists in using choliambics, Lucilius, like Horace, had written iambs before his satirical hexameters. Persius's older contemporary, Petronius, combined choliambics and dactylic hexameters in one of the verse interludes in his *Satyricon* [chapter 5]. The meter was also used by nonsatirical writers, for example, by Catullus--more than a century before Persius--whose eighth poem is a moving expression of bitterness and despair after breaking with Lesbia. Quite different in tone are the choliambics of Martial (ca. 90 A.D.) whose epigrams are more in the Greek iambic tradition.

The unusual meter has led some scholars to conclude that the choliambics are not connected with the satires, or even that they are not by Persius. Others believe that these fourteen lines are really two separate seven-line poems. Others again believe that they are an epilogue, rather than the prologue to the satires, since they are placed last in two of the principal manuscripts, while the most important originally omitted them. These problems should not detain us. We may assume, with the majority of scholars, that the choliambics are a prologue to the satires, and we shall see that they are a unity in themselves and linked in tone and theme to the first satire.

The satirist in announcing himself must state his place in the tradition of the genre, reject other genres of poetry (especially epic), and distinguish his chosen genre, satire, from the grander styles of epic and tragedy. All these things Persius does in the first satire, but they are foreshadowed in the prologue, whose general tone claims a lower place for