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The Bodily Grotesque in Roman Satire: Images of Sterility [1]

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> The joyful, open, festive laugh. The closed, purely negative satirical laugh. This is not a laughing laugh. The Gogolian laugh is joyful. [2]

It is virtually impossible today to write about the body, the grotesque, or the comic without encountering the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Since the publication of *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin's concepts of "carnival" and "grotesque realism" have become major players in all such discussions. [3] One of the unfortunate side effects of this phenomenon has been that more often than not the historical and generic specificity of Bakhtin's argument has been lost in the rush to hail the triumph of the lower bodily stratum, the celebration of fertility, and the subversion of authority wherever images of the grotesque are to be seen. [4] This cavalier appropriation of his concept of carnival has, in turn, made it easy to discredit Bakhtin's **[End Page 257]** analyses by simply pointing out examples of the grotesque to which carnival exuberance seems foreign, if not antithetical. [5] One such case is Roman satire. [6] This paper, however, will demonstrate the essential correctness of the Bakhtinian position in regard to Latin satire by returning from the vague, widely disseminated image of carnival gaiety that has been attributed to Bakhtin to the specificity of his text in which he argues that satire, though often rich in grotesque imagery, is essentially bereft of the idea of its regenerative force. Consequently, the festive laughter of carnival and the negative laughter of satire are always, as in our epigraph, strictly distinguished.

More importantly, Bakhtin, in the chapter entitled "Rabelais in the History of Laughter," makes a sharp distinction between satire and the carnivalesque, and between the classical body and the grotesque. For him, satire, far from representing the revivifying gaiety of carnival festivity, exemplifies a one-sided negativity whose predominant thematic structure is one of stasis rather than growth. [7] Any form of grotesque degradation that does not include a strong restorative element within it represents not the fulfilment of carnival but its loss. Writing about the grotesque ritual of crowning the king of fools and the consequent uncrowning of normative authority that he saw at the heart of carnival gaiety, Bakhtin notes: **[End Page 258]**

> This ritual determined a special decrowning type of structure for artistic images and whole works, one in which the decrowning was essentially ambivalent and two-leveled. If carnivalistic ambivalence should happen to be extinguished in these images of decrowning, they degenerated into a purely negative exposé of a moral or socio-political sort, they became single-leveled, lost their artistic character, and were transformed into naked journalism. [8]

This genre of the "purely negative exposé" represents for Bakhtin the world of satire. And while we may find the artistic evaluation of such works as "naked journalism" [9] less than satisfying, this statement clearly demonstrates the impossibility of directly assimilating Bakhtin's concept of satire to the carnivalesque. The presence of the grotesque is not a sufficient ground on which to determine that a given work belongs to the tradition of carnival.

In addition, the classical body, i.e., the ideal body of high classical sculpture and art, is for Bakhtin sealed and finished. It does not leak. The grotesque body, however, is one whose orifices are open to

the world. It spills over well-defined bounds. It is budding and feculent. [10] If Bakhtin's basic distinction between carnival and satire is accurate, then we would not expect the grotesque bodies of Roman satire to produce images of carnival fecundity. Instead they would be negative creations--icons of sterility, degradation, and ultimately death.

This paper will argue that such a characterization of Roman satire is essentially correct and will examine six representative passages in this light, two from each of the major surviving Roman satirists: Juvenal 9.43-46, where the bisexual gigolo [11] Naevolus negatively compares servicing his master's cinaedic desires to the labor of a common slave ploughing his **[End Page 259]** master's field; Juvenal 6.116-35, in which the empress Messalina is shown moonlighting at a whorehouse; Persius 1.15-25, where bad (i.e., effeminized) poetry is represented as invading bodies whose orifices are open and liquid, penetrating the loins, tickling the innards, and feeding the ears; Persius 4.33-41, in which Alcibiades depilating his genitals is compared to a farmer weeding his field; Horace's wet dream on the journey to Brundisium, *Satires* 1.5.82-85, a passage in which the poet's comic, frustrated sexuality is implicitly juxtaposed with the serious political work of Maecenas, Antony, and Augustus; and Horace 2.8.42-56, in which the presentation of the pregnant lamprey at the climax of the *Cena Nasidieni* leads to the collapse of a dust-filled canopy hanging over the table. In each of these cases, the bodies in question appear as open, leaking vessels; images of farming, food, or banqueting appear in close proximity; and sexuality is present. Yet this intermixing of grotesque bodies, food, and sex does not lead to increase or growth, but rather to sterility, decline, and/or fruitless frustration. [12]

The truth of this understanding can perhaps best be seen by directly comparing the first scene from Juvenal to one in Rabelais, the birth of Gargantua. The birth of Gargantua is remarkable on a number of levels. The setting is a feast at Mardi Gras during which Gargantua's mother consumes "sixteen quarters, two bushels, and six pecks" of poorly-washed tripe, as a result of which she has a monstrous attack of diarrhea that causes her to go into labor. "O belle matiere fecale que doivoit boursoufler en elle" (Oh what fine fecal matter to swell up inside her!). [13] The miraculous birth itself occurs as a result of a softening of the right intestine and the astringent that was applied as a remedy:

> Dont une horde vieigle de la compaignie, laquelle avoit la reputation d'estre grande medicine . . . luy fesit un restrinctif si horrible que tous ses larrys tant feurent oppilez et reserrez que à grande pene, avecques les dentz, **[End Page 260]** vous les eussiez eslargiz, qui est chose bien horrible à penser . . .
>
> At this point a dirty old hag of the company who had the reputation of being a good she-doctor . . . made her an astringent so horrible that all her sphincter muscles were stopped and constricted. Indeed you could hardly have relaxed them with your teeth which is a most horrible thought . . . [14]

The medicine has a similarly constricting effect on Gargamelle's womb, causing the young giant to be born from his mother's ear (in a parody of Mary's conception of Jesus through hearing the word of the Holy Spirit). This scene's saturation with images of feasting, excrement, death, and new life is in many ways typical of Bakhtin's understanding of grotesque realism. In it, the womb and the bowels, sexuality and shit, birth and death are tied up into one "grotesque knot" of carnivalesque vitality. [15]

Juvenal's view of the grotesque is very different. It is not fertile and revivifying but sterile. The passage from *Satire* 9 at which I want to look has many of the same elements found in the birth of Gargantua. It contains images of eating, excrement, and sexuality in a context rich with metaphors of the earth and agriculture (9.43-46):

> an facile et pronum est agere intra viscera penem
> legitimum atque illic hesternae occurrere cenae?
> seruus erit minus ille miser qui foderit agrum
> quam dominum. [16]
>
> Do you think it's nice and easy to thrust a proper-sized penis
> into a person's guts, encountering yesterday's dinner?
> The slave who ploughs a field has a lighter task than the one
> who ploughs its owner. [17] **[End Page 261]**

Although we have in this scene the same essential set of elements as in the birth of Gargantua, the accent placed on them is very different. [18] Everything here leads to nothing. Food does not produce new life, only excrement that, far from representing a potential source of renewed fertility, functions only as an obstacle to a sexual activity that brings neither pleasure nor fruit to the speaker. Thus Ferguson observes that the "agricultural metaphor" of ploughing "is common of sex . . . but in agriculture . . . the plough looks forward to harvest." [19] In this scene, however, there is nothing positive, or even profitable, about the activity since Naevolus' rhetorical question occurs in the course of a conversation about his difficulty in receiving proper remuneration for the services he renders. This sexual act is sterile not only in the literal sense, because it cannot produce offspring, but also metaphorically because it is without rewards, either monetary or emotional. Time in this poem is not pregnant with the future, but held static in the sterility of the present. [20] The grotesque in Juvenal's satire, as Winkler notes, does not revitalize, but represents "ambivalence, alienation, the crossing of established boundaries and aggression," [21] all of which are treated as negative values.

Roman satire, thus, like Roman sexual norms generally, does not exalt the fluid and the open, but the solid, the closed, the literally impenetrable. In the Roman world, as Catharine Edwards argues:

> Virtue is noble, dry and hard . . . found in public places, pursuing the public good, winning public renown. Pleasure, on the other hand, is wet, soft (*mollis*, *enervis*) and characteristic of slaves . . . The ultimate fate of pleasure is not fame, but disgrace and death . . . virtue is presented as masculine, pleasure as feminine. [22]

Unsurprisingly, Roman satire, like Roman society in general, also exalts the hard, the dry, and the masculine and degrades the soft, the liquid, and the feminine. [23] It is a phallic form that specifically eschews the relativizing and **[End Page 262]** revitalizing dialectic of the carnivalesque in which top and bottom, life and death, inside and outside constantly metamorphose into one another.

True to this concept of the genre, *Satire* 6 features a misogynistic narrator who directs his ire against women and marriage. In the process, there are numerous descriptions of feminine behavior and sexuality, representing them as simultaneously grotesque and sterile. The open sexual body of the woman here does not give birth to new life, as in the case of Gargantua's mother, but to a kind of wasting lust that saps the generative powers of both the family and the state. A prime example can be found in the description of the empress Messalina slipping out to a whorehouse as Claudius slept (6.120-32): [24]

> sed nigrum flavo crinem abscondente galero
> intravit calidum veteri centone lupanar
> et cellam vacuam atque suam; tunc nuda papillis
> prostitit auratis titulum mentita Lyciscae
> ostenditque tuum, generose Britannice, ventrem.
> excepit blanda intrantis atque aera poposcit.
> [continueque iacens cunctorum absorbuit ictus.] [25]
> mox lenone suas iam demittente puellas
> tristis abit, et quod potuit tamen ultima cellam
> clausit, adhuc ardens rigidae tentigine volvae,
> et lassata viris necdum satiata recessit,
> obscurisque genis turpis fumoque lucernae
> foeda lupanaris tulit ad pulvinar odorem.
>
> But with her black hair hidden beneath a blonde wig,
> she entered the steamy bordello with its old quilt
> and took up her empty cell. Then naked with gilded nipples **[End Page 263]**
> she hawked her wares beneath the lying name plate, "Coyote,"
> and displayed the belly that was your home, noble Britannicus.
> She blithely received everyone, demanding cash from all comers.
> (Lying down, one after another, she absorbed the thrusts of all.)
> Then, when the pimp sent his girls home, she left sadly,
> though she stayed as long as she could and was the last

> to close her cell, still afire with the lust of her erect clitoris,
> and exhausted from, but not yet sated with, men, she went home,
> and filthy, her cheeks black from the smoke of the shameless lamp,
> she bore the odor of the bordello to the imperial pillow. [26]

No doubt there is grotesque degradation in this scene. The sexualized, lower bodily stratum is featured prominently, and the heights of Roman society are brought low by their contact with it. [27] But degradation is only half the story of carnival. The other half is revitalization. [28] The fact that Messalina's body had produced new life is explicitly acknowledged in the apostrophe to Britannicus. Yet that moment seems long past. Indeed, Britannicus is only addressed because his position as heir to the throne--which is underlined with *generose*--is being undermined by his mother's behavior, behavior that ultimately leads to (or at least provides the rationalization for) Messalina's execution, Claudius' marriage to Agrippina, the adoption of Nero, and the latter being named Claudius' heir. As a result of these events, Britannicus is removed from the line of succession and, **[End Page 264]** thus, his death at the hands of his stepbrother is insured, since Nero could hardly afford to have a pretender to the throne alive in the imperial palace (Dio 61.34-35; Tacitus *Annales* 11.12, 26, 29-32, 34-38; 12.1-3, 8-9; 13.14-17; Suetonius *Divus Claudius* 36-39, *Nero* 33.2-3). Sexuality in this satire doesn't lead to new life but death.

Nor does the erotic lead to happiness or pleasure in *Satire* 6. As with the case of Naevolus, sexuality is reduced to its least idealized, most materialized manifestations, providing neither joy (Messalina is exhausted but not satisfied) nor gain. The open sexual body is reduced to a mechanism, a sort of shock absorber that receives the thrusts of phallic sexuality in a repetition compulsion that has neither erotic nor reproductive rhyme or reason. It is reductively anatomized in the image of the *rigida volva*, which is pictured as a burning (*ardens*), autonomous entity that exists beyond the structures of human control and certainly outside of any festive community. Indeed, it has a mind of its own, representing a species of erotic hunger that knows no satisfaction. Its voracity is limited neither by Messalina's extraordinary efforts to feed it nor by the social laws that forbid it. By the same token, Messalina is here pictured as having an unsatisfiable erection (a kind of female satyriasis) and is therefore implicitly gendered as male. As such, her sexual relations, on the ideological level, become every bit as homoerotic, and hence unregenerative, as those between Naevolus and his master in *Satire* 9. Finally, in the last line, *lupanar*'s (whorehouse) assonance with *pulvinar* (divine or imperial pillow) identifies the imperial bed with that of the bordello. Again we have degradation without redemption. For this identification signifies neither the sexual regeneration of the imperial household nor a positive release of libidinal energy.

The same terms, seen in the two scenes from Juvenal, are found again in the same essential relation in Persius: food that does not revivify, sex that does not satisfy, and grotesque degradation that does not edify. Our first example comes from Persius 1. In it, we move from the literal buggering of Naevolus to figurative sodomy. The penetrating party here is not a degraded gigolo, but a degraded and effeminized poetry that lacks the rough solidity that Persius and Roman ideology prizes. This kind of poetry, as Maria Wyke has recently pointed out with special reference to this passage, is most traditionally embodied within the Roman universe of genres by the soft verse of elegy, which stands in opposition to the phallic and hypermasculine form of satire. [29] By the same token, the penetrated **[End Page 265]** party is not the literal empress, but Rome's cultural elite attending a recitation in the capital. The imagistic context of this poetic pedication is important. It is filled with liquidity, trembling, and food (1.15-25): [30]

> scilicet haec populo pexusque togaque recenti
> et natalicia tandem cum sardonyche albus
> sede leges celsa, liquido cum plasmate guttur
> mobile conlueris, patranti fractus ocello.
> tunc neque more probo videas nec voce serena
> ingentis trepidare Titos, cum carmina lumbum
> intrant et tremulo scalpuntur ubi intima versu.
> tun, vetule, auriculis alienis colligis escas,
> articulis quibus et dicas cute perditus "ohe"?
> "quo didicisse, nisi hoc fermentum et quae semel intus
> innata est rupto iecore exierit caprificus?"

> Truly you will read these things from a lofty chair to the public, your hair slicked back, wearing your new toga, and pale then with your birthday sardonyx, when you will have lubricated your quavering gullet with a fluid modulation, effeminate [31] with your lusting eye. Then you may see huge Tituses all aquiver in a manner unseemly and their voices unsettled, while poems penetrate their loins, and their secret parts are tickled by feathery verse. You old reprobate, do you gather delicacies for others' ears that would cause you, all eaten up with gout and dropsy, to cry, "Stop, that's enough"? "But why have such learning, if this ferment and this wild fig tree, when it has grown inside, might not burst forth from my ruptured liver?" **[End Page 266]**

The shifting images that characterize this scene offer a fascinating tour of the Roman satirical grotesque in all its sexual and alimentary dimensions. We begin with the dandified poet whose pallor is a sign of excessive sexual passion. [32] The emphasis on the throat, its moisture and rippling quality, puts the reader in mind of the reciter's affected speech and prepares the audience for the combined images of perversion and *gourmandise* yet to come. [33] The throat is not only the site of poetic articulation and potential gluttony but also of the passive sexuality implicit in the poet's demeanor. This reading is strengthened by the description of the poet as both effeminate and possessed of a lusting, indeed "orgasmic" eye, whose quivering adds yet another level of fluidity that threatens to undermine the dry, solid virtues of the masculinist, Roman norm. [34] The poetry itself becomes the instrument by which the audience is sodomized, unmanning even the most burly of old-time Romans: these huge Tituses are pictured as being metonymically penetrated by the poet's throat (i.e., his quavering organ of poetic articulation). This creates a bizarre image of oral/genital, or more probably oral/anal, contact in which both parties are passive--since the action moves from one open orifice to the other--a kind of impossible sexual monstrosity in Roman ideology's normative zero-sum game. [35] This last image, in turn, is metamorphosed into an evocation of poetry as a kind of food for the ears in which the image of penetration is transformed into one of passive consumption, but with the emphasis once again on the use of an inappropriate orifice. [36] This is not the revivifying food of the Rabelaisian feast, nor does it recall the birth of Gargantua through Gargamelle's ear. These poetic *mignardises* are the refined delicacies of decay. They are associated with dropsy and gout, the diseases of decadence and impotence, rather than with fuel for new life. [37] Thus the grotesque marriage of food and sexuality in Persius' satire brings forth not a new generation of laughing giants, but sterility, decline, and ultimately death. It is not so much a feast for the ears as a plague. The final image of fermentation and sterility that we see in the **[End Page 267]** wild fig, which by definition bears no fruit (Pliny *NH* 15.79, Juvenal 10.45), [38] bursting forth from the frustrated poet's guts sums up the sterile perversity of the poetic exercise. At the same time, the phallic thrust of the fig tree [39] from the poet's liver, the seat of lust, [40] implies a destructive and empty eroticism more reminiscent of Messalina's moonlight excursions than Gargamelle's tripe-induced labor.

This intermingling of sexual and gastronomic imagery stands out even more sharply in our second passage, taken from the conclusion of Persius 4. Here the young Alcibiades, whose political aspirations have, at the beginning of this satire, been deflated by Socrates' biting irony, is pictured sunning himself naked when a stranger, in language grotesque and obscene, suddenly compares the youth's efforts at depilation to those of a man unsuccessfully weeding his garden (4.33-41): [41]

> at si unctus cesses et figas in cute solem,
> est prope te ignotus cubito qui tangat et acre
> despuat: "hi mores! penemque arcanaque lumbi
> runcantem populo marcentis pandere vulvas.
> tum, cum maxillis balanatum gausape pectas,
> inguinibus quare detonsus gurgulio extat?
> quinque palaestritae licet haec plantaria vellant
> elixasque nates labefactent forcipe adunca,
> non tamen ista filix ullo mansuescit aratro."
>
> But if all oiled up you should be relaxing and fixing the rays of the sun in your skin, there is a stranger nearby who touches you with his elbow and bitterly spits out, "What morals! To show the people both how you weed round your cock and the hidden part of your groin, your **[End Page 268]** shriveled hollows. [42] But when you comb the balsamed wool

> on your chops, why does a shaven little whistle stand out from your groin? Though five official oilers and depilators should pluck those seedlings and shake your boiled buttocks with hooked tweezers, nonetheless that hedge would not be tamed by any plow."

The passage starts on a tone of effeminate luxury as the well-oiled Alcibiades is pictured sunning himself in the nude. The use of the verb *figo* for the rays of the sun, however, introduces a sharper tone, giving us a first, veiled image of penetration. The exclamation *Hi mores* in 35 reminds the reader of Cicero's famous *O tempora, o mores!* at the beginning of the first Catilinarian, [43] a reminiscence whose resonance is reinforced by Alcibiades' political ambitions, discussed at the satire's beginning. With the very next word, *penem*, the satirical process of grotesque degradation begins, illustrating for the reader not only how far this work is from a discussion of affairs of state, but also, to the Stoic audience for whom Persius was consciously writing, how far a satire of Alcibiades in the age of Nero is removed from the moral condemnation of Catiline in the time of Cicero. The irony is only heightened by a comparison of the inconsequential nature of the former to the genuine drama of the latter. The stakes for the republic in Persius' day could not have been lower. The battle has already been lost. The young, dissolute aristocrat is no longer threatening to overturn the republic, but has become emperor in the person of Nero.

This implicit contrast between present decadence and past vigor is continued throughout the passage by a series of allusions to the poetry of **[End Page 269]** Cicero's contemporary, Catullus (cf. *c*. 49). Thus, in the very next line, the interlocutor accuses Alcibiades of displaying his depilated private parts to the general public. The verb he chooses, *pando*, is used in almost the exact same context in Catullus 6, where the poet demands that Flavius display his *latera ecfututa*. The word *pando* is not widely used by most authors and is found nowhere else in Latin literature in an explicitly sexual context. [44] Thus Persius' usage is striking and the sentence *penemque arcana lumbi / . . . marcentis pandere vulvas* can be fruitfully read as an allusion to its lone literary predecessor, *latera ecfututa pandas*. Yet, while the contexts of the two passages are similar in their graphic sexuality and imagery, the upshot of Catullus' call for Flavius to display his debauched loins is not merely shame and degradation, but also the invocation of genuine carnival renewal. Flavius is said to be enjoying a hot, if rather *déclassé*, affair, and Catullus proposes to call both him and his *febriculosum scortum* to the heavens with his verse, revealing that which Flavius had hoped would remain hidden, but immortalizing his erotic adventures at the same time. The tone is playful and teasing. It is far different in the case of Persius. The result of Alcibiades' public display of his private parts will be shame alone.

A second Catullan allusion can be seen in line 41. The plough that the interlocutor claims will not be able to tame the brush that grows round Alcibiades' anus (*non . . . ullo mansuescit aratro*) reminds the attentive reader of Catullus' evocation of Lesbia at the end of poem 11. Here her voracious, phallic sexuality is compared to the traditionally masculine image of the plough, and Catullus himself is portrayed as the effeminized flower that is her victim (*flos . . . tactus aratro est*). [45] In both Persius and Catullus, the central point of the image is the inversion of expected gender relations; neither Catullus nor Alcibiades should be ploughed. But whereas the image in Catullus is pathetic, since he is portrayed as the victim of Lesbia's brutality, in Persius, Alcibiades is portrayed as merely perverse. Moreover, while Lesbia's sexuality in 11 is seen as too robust, it is not **[End Page 270]** inherently different from that of Flavius' *febriculosum scortum* in poem 6, which, like poem 11, forms part of the opening sequence of the Catullan *libellus*. Vigorous female sexuality, however, only had its place within the Roman imaginary among the *scorta* Flavius frequented. Thus Lesbia's sexual passion is not irredeemable per se, but inappropriate for one of her social station and for the kind of relationship Catullus assumed to exist between them. It is this knowledge of wasted potential that gives the Catullus and Lesbia story its pathos, its sense of lost joy, of love betrayed. It is why Lesbia's sexuality continues to haunt him long after he has ceased to esteem her (*c*. 72). Alcibiades, on the other hand, is not only inherently perverse in his pursuit of his cinaedic desires, but those desires will also remain unfulfilled. Depilate as he might, no plough will ever penetrate that bracken. *He* can never be either Catullus or Lesbia.

The tissue of republican literary allusions that Persius deploys here shows that on every level Alcibiades is an absurd and degraded figure. He not only lacks the stature of a statesman such as Cicero, but even of a villain like Catiline. His *déclassé* erotic adventures lack both the carnivalesque potential for redemption of Flavius and his *scortum* in Catullus 6 and the tragic irony of Lesbia's phallic voracity in poem 11. Indeed, they appear to lack the prospect of pleasure at all. These references to the literary past, therefore, create a subtle counterpoint that reinforces the univocal condemnation of the object of

grotesque degradation in Persius' satires, a process continued in the agricultural metaphors that run throughout the passage. Beginning with *runcans* ("weeding") in line 36, continuing with *plantaria* ("seedlings" or "hair") in line 39, and finishing with *filix* ("hedge") and *aratrum* ("plough") in line 41, Alcibiades' groin is consistently allegorized as a field of weeds. [46] Yet this profusion of vegetative growth gives no hint of a future harvest to be enjoyed. The closest the reader comes to a feast here is the boiling (*elixus*) [47] of Alcibiades' buttocks, preparatory to the failed attempt at depilation. This too, however, like all the others, is to be a fruitless sexual endeavor. [48] **[End Page 271]**

Our last pair of examples is the least grotesque, Horatian decorum knowing greater restraint than is found in either Juvenal or Persius. In the first passage, Horace, on his way to Brundisium with Maecenas, who is to attend an important meeting of the representatives of Augustus and Mark Antony, has stopped at a villa. [49] The evening's entertainment features two lower-class yokels whose comic buffoonery is laughed more at than with. The next day Horace and company continue their journey to Apulia where they take shelter from the burning Scirocco at a tavern whose promise of hospitality proves illusory. Not only does the kitchen smoke and the chimney catch fire, but that evening the poet is stood up by a girl who had promised to come to his bed. As a consequence of his frustration, he has a wet dream and soils himself. The passage stands out as the sole description of a nocturnal emission in ancient literature outside of a technical, philosophical, or medical context. [50] The scene features the open, liquid body, but directs the force of that image back on the satirist himself (1.5.82-85):

> hic ego mendacem stultissimus usque puellam
> ad mediam noctem exspecto: somnus tamen aufert
> intentum Veneri; tum immundo somnia visu
> nocturnam vestem maculant ventremque supinum
>
> Here in bed I wait like an idiot till midnight for that tease of a girl: sleep however carries me off, still intent on sex; then dreams stain my nightshirt and my up-turned belly with obscene fantasies.

This passage can be seen as an example of that gentle, if somewhat grotesque, self-mockery that is the trademark of Horatian satire. Yet, though Horace's self-parody makes his work more ironic and consequently less one-sided and less negative than that of his successors, his use of the grotesque is very similar. In Bakhtinian terms, one might say that while Horatian satire is more dialogic than that of Juvenal and Persius, [51] since it **[End Page 272]** more explicitly dramatizes the undermining of the speaker's authority, it is no more carnivalesque. For not only is the conjunction of food and sexuality, implied by the metonymic link between the one night's feasting and the next night's wet dream and bespattered belly, every bit as sterile as that seen in Juvenal and Persius, it is also less subversive than that of his successors. Horace's little comedy is always kept at a safe distance from the authoritative discourse represented by Maecenas and Augustus. [52] Indeed, Horace's journey ends at Brundisium but the actual treaty was reached at Tarentum, outside his presence. Horace thus keeps a strict *cordon sanitaire* between the eruptions of his body and of the satiric grotesque and the centers of power and patronage to which he was then trying to gain access. [53] Such a strategy of containment necessarily limits the power of the grotesque in Horatian satire. For Bakhtin, however, carnivalesque renewal requires the subversion of the existing hierarchies of power. The double movement of uncrowning and recrowning must both be given their full scope for the laughter of the carnival to be truly present. By marginalizing his own misadventures, while subtly juxtaposing the small joys of private life with the unnamed anxieties of the public man, Horace carefully leaves the structures of power and their ruling ideology firmly in place. [54] The liquidity and crossing of borders that the grotesque implies is not only fruitless in this case but also strictly contained.

Our final passage comes appropriately enough from a failed feast, the *Cena Nasidieni* of *Satires* 2.8. As the concluding satire of the second volume it offers a final commentary on the theme of the proper feast that runs throughout the book. The central problem of the text as a whole is how to avoid excess and, hence, that crossing of boundaries that constitutes the grotesque. [55] Thus, in 2.2, a peasant that Horace recalls from his boyhood, Ofellus, extols the virtues of a simple diet. In 2.4, Catius, with a fervor normally reserved for the arcane secrets of the mysteries or the hidden truths of philosophy, recalls the extravagant recipes of an unnamed **[End Page 273]** gourmet, whom Deena Berg has identified as Nasidienus. [56] The implicit contrast between the gourmets, Catius/Nasidienus, and the simple farmer,

Ofellus, is then rendered explicit by 2.6's fable of the City Mouse and the Country Mouse, a tale told in the context of Horace's own modest contentment as he spends a night of quiet conviviality with friends at his Sabine farm. [57] This monologic installation of his own practice as the model to be imitated is, however, overturned in 2.7 when the slave Davus notes Horace's inability to follow his own counsels of moderation whenever a dinner invitation from Maecenas arrives. This uncrowning of Horace leads us to 2.8 in which the satirist asks the comic poet Fundanius to recount the tale of a dinner party the latter attended with Maecenas. Poem 2.8, thus, offers a set of final reflections on the theme of proper conviviality without imposing a sense of monological closure, since Horace himself remains tangential to the narrative framed by Fundanius' comedy. [58]

In that comedy, Nasidienus is seen as a pretentious host who aspires to being part of Maecenas' circle, but whose very eagerness condemns him as irredeemably vulgar. Yet whereas the braggart host's exclusion is definitively signaled when his guests abruptly depart, leaving the meat course untasted, Horace, in a typically dialogic and distancing gesture, does not directly participate in that condemnation. [59] The climax of this comic meal that leads to the guests' departure is a dish of pregnant lamprey, surrounded by shrimp "swimming" in a peppery sauce, all presented in the *trompe l'oeil* fashion dear to Roman gourmets (2.8.42-44): [60]

> adfertur squillas inter murena natantis
> in patina porrecta. sub hoc erus: "haec gravida" inquit
> "capta est, deterior post partum carne futura."
>
> Then a lamprey is brought in, stretched out on a platter between swimming shrimp. At this the master of revels said, "this fish was caught pregnant; the flesh would be of poorer quality after having given birth." **[End Page 274]**

The feast, of course, is the site of the carnivalesque par excellence. Gargamelle gives birth during the celebration of Mardi Gras. But the *Cena Nasidieni* is a feast gone awry. Whatever mirth arises in it is directed against the host rather than toward a celebration of conviviality, the open body, and excess that leads to carnival's cycle of degradation and renewal. The grotesque at this feast is not in the service of renewed vitality, but rather reminds the reader that transgression leads to failure and humiliation. Where Bakhtin notes that the pregnant body is one of the privileged sites of grotesque realism, representing as it does the erasure of the boundaries between bodies and the consequent potential generation of new life, [61] the pregnant lamprey is sterile and perverse. [62] It will never give birth, but has been frozen in this state for the purposes of consumption. The grotesquerie is then compounded by it being presented as if it were alive with shrimp swimming about. As Arrowsmith famously remarked of Petronius' Trimalchio, Nasidienus "does not know what might be called the mortal modalities . . . By eating he proposes to forget death, to 'seize the day' and to live; he passionately desires life, but with every mouthful he takes, he tastes death." [63] The conjunction of the feast and sexuality in this scene gives rise not to regeneration but to a kind of death-in-life, symbolically evoked by the *trompe l'oeil* presentation of the pregnant lamprey.

The grotesque degradation implicit in this scene, however, goes well beyond the perverse image of pregnancy aborted by a feast. Indeed the question arises, with what is the lamprey pregnant? The answer to Horace's audience might well be less obvious than it seems to us. For, as a number of Horace's Renaissance commentators note, as well as more recently Lejay, lampreys were widely believed in the ancient world to mate with vipers. Thus Nasidienus' *pièce de résistance* was not simply grotesque but, to a Roman audience, potentially dangerous. [64] Moreover, as Prudentius notes (*Hamartigenia* 581-607), the female viper was thought to conceive through a bizarre form of oral intercourse during which the head of the male was **[End Page 275]** bitten off. Her offspring, in turn, were born by gnawing their way through the mother's entrails, thus killing her. The lamprey, therefore, whose womb is filled with baby vipers, not only fuses the images of fertility and sterility, but its consumption demands that fusion for it can only be eaten while still pregnant, since, were it to carry its venomous brood to term, it would be consumed by its offspring and its flesh would be inedible. This fusion of birth and death in the image of the pregnant lamprey, which serves as the emblem of the overzealous gourmet's violation of boundaries, marks the turning point in the satire's narrative and signals the beginning of the denouement that will leave its host abandoned and the final course untasted. Immediately after the lamprey is brought in, the master of ceremonies engages in a long and pompous disquisition on the sauce in which it is swimming. At this moment, the tapestry overhanging

the diners collapses, covering the tables and guests with "as much dust as the north wind blows from the Campanian fields" (2.8.56). Thus, as Kirk Freudenburg notes, "In the annihilation of the fish course, death injects itself into Nasidienus's dinner party in its most unthreatening, comic form." [65] But, as we have seen, death in a less comic form was implicit in the image of the pregnant lamprey all along, and, in point of fact, the party never recovers from this disaster. For Nasidienus and his aspirations of admission to Maecenas' charmed circle, it is the beginning of the end.

As in our first example from Juvenal, this last passage from Horace has all the same elements as those found in the birth of Gargantua, only, as was the case with Juvenal, the accent is different. Pregnancy, feasting, agriculture, and death all appear. Yet the pregnancy does not produce joyful, new life, but is abortive and signifies a perverse commingling of species that conjures death. The feast in the *Cena Nasidieni* is not the site of communal celebration and new life, but is left uneaten, with its host ridiculed and abandoned. The fields are not fertile. They merely blow dust. Death is not celebrated as part of the cycle of existence, but functions as a sterile end. What separates this passage from those of Juvenal and Persius is the satirist's bemused distance from the invective moment. For, as we have noted, in poem 2.7, the poet has conceded the compromised nature of his own position in the book's ongoing debate on the nature of the proper feast. Thus, in 2.8, while the grotesque degradation that appears in Fundanius' account of the *Cena Nasidieni* may be absolute, the poet's **[End Page 276]** relation to that degradation is left ambiguous. In Horace's last satires, it seems, the grotesque is deployed within a more thoroughly dialogized frame than is found in either of the other satirists or in his own earlier work, but the signification of the grotesque within that framework is unchanged.

In sum, these six passages (and more could be added) indicate that Roman satire, through its deployment of the grotesque, privileges by negation the closed, the solid, and the finished over the open, the fluid, and the boundless. As such, it is located firmly within the mainstream of traditional Roman morality that, as defined by Catharine Edwards, privileges the dry, the hard, and the masculine over the fluid, the soft, and the feminine. [66] This understanding of satire allows one final point to be made. If the preceding analysis is correct, Roman satire can be described in psychoanalytic terms as a discourse of the phallus that defines itself in opposition to those very features of the grotesque that make its humor work, features that it ultimately labels as, if not feminine, then at least effeminized. It rejects that model of unbounded desire, of wetness, transgression, and leakage that Anne Carson has demonstrated was attributed to women in the ancient world. [67] This is substantially the same model that Irigaray has embraced under the rubric of "fluid mechanics" as an antidote to the oppressive certainties of a masculinist logic that privileges the bounded entity over the open and grotesque, as Micaela Janan has recently made clear. [68] Satire in this view is a vehicle for that same phallic and aggressive ideology first described by Amy Richlin in *The Garden of Priapus*. [69] Its humor does not seek to open up the world to change and the other, as does the Rabelaisian grotesque, but to affirm the rigidities of present and past by always picturing the violation of boundaries as leading to death and sterility--and that's no carnival.

Yet satire is also obsessed with the very images of food, sexuality, and the grotesque that are associated with that same potential for regeneration that the satirical vision appears to lack. How are we to understand this continued presence of the rejected other? On the one hand, the satirist's pose as the scold of decadence and the maintainer of boundaries requires **[End Page 277]** that such a partition between same and other, masculine and feminine, and good and evil be strictly enforced. This is the essence of the ideology of the bounded form. On the other, the binary logic of the partition itself creates a kind of structural desire for the excluded without which the boundary, and hence the satirist, could not exist. The logic of exclusion is thus always, ultimately, self-undermining, and it is through the unsustainability of the satirical stance, through the very vitality of the vile bodies it denigrates, that carnival's hope (however muted) of resurrection reasserts itself as the unacknowledged, and indeed forbidden, ground of the satirical grotesque.

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Notes

1. My thanks to Susanna Braund, Martha Malamud, and *Arethusa*'s anonymous referees for their many helpful suggestions. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Barbara Gold who first saw these ideas many years ago in the ill-formed and overfed work of an equally grotesque M.A. student. All remaining

deformities are, of course, stubbornly my own.

2. Bakhtin 1986.135. I want to thank Susan I. Stein for bringing this passage to my attention.

3. For a survey of recent work on the grotesque, see Robertson 1996.1-14 and 119-24.

4. On this phenomenon and its pernicious effects, see Emerson 1993.128-32; Rubino 1993.141-43; Eagleton 1989; Stallybrass and White 1986.13-15, 30-35, 72-75; and Jacobs 1991.74, 80. On the attempt to identify carnival and the grotesque, and then generalize from Bakhtin's conclusions to genres and periods beyond those which he specifies, see Platter 1993 and forthcoming. For an example of this simple identification of the grotesque with the carnivalesque, see Andreas 1984.62-66.

5. Carnival has become the focus of controversy within Bakhtin scholarship. The debate, more often than not, has political overtones. In general, those scholars who place the most emphasis on carnival represent leftist or neo-Marxist readings of Bakhtin, while those involved in the current drive to devalue carnival's place within the Bakhtin canon are avowedly conservative critics. Only by treating the concept with historical and generic precision will it be possible to move the debate beyond a rather sterile ideological interchange. See Morson and Emerson 1990.3-4, 11, 67, 77, 92-96, 102, 104, 106-19, 124-25, 161-62, 433-52, 479, nn. 6-7; Emerson 1994; Shepherd 1993.xvi-xxi; Gardiner 1992.2-6, 9-22, 107, 138, 197, nn. 3-4 and 8, 215-16, n. 11; Holquist 1990.8, 34-35, 157-58; Frow 1986.64-68, 97-99, 133-39, 158-59; Todorov 1984.11. Stallybrass and White record Tony Bennet's claim that "Bakhtin's study of Rabelais should hold an exemplary place in materialist cultural criticism" (1986.7). See also the exchange of letters between Hirschkop and Shepherd, on the one hand, and Morson, on the other, in *PMLA* 1994.116-18. For a general discussion of the multiple readings of Bakhtin currently in circulation, see Miller and Platter 1993a.117-20.

6. See Gowers 1993.30-31 on Bakhtin's view of the grotesque as being "too rosy" to account fully for its use in Roman satire; a similar critique is found in Richlin 1983.70-72. For an analgous view from the perspective of Greek literature, see Rössler 1986.

7. Bakhtin 1968.28-29, 37-39, 81, 114, 211; Gardiner 1992.47; 207, n. 20. This is a distinction that eludes Byrd in his otherwise excellent article on Freudian influences on Bakhtin's theory of laughter (1987).

8. Bakhtin 1984.126.

9. It recalls the naive, mimetic vision of the genre found in the work of critics like Highet 1962.3; Duff 1936.6; Gérard 1976.iv-ix, 35-38. In Bakhtin's case, however, he is talking more about a rhetorical and generic stance rather than the actual representation of reality. Journalism, in its pretense to present "just the facts," is necessarily a monologic genre.

10. Bakhtin 1968.23-34, Rebhorn 1993, Gowers 1993.128.

11. This is not to say that Naevolus is a common prostitute. As Braund 1988.130-77 points out, he is a *cliens* with equestrian pretensions, who "chooses to make his living sexually" (p. 155).

12. Admittedly these six cases do not prove that the grotesque in Roman satire always and everywhere functions in exactly this fashion. To make that case would require a much longer article that would soon grow tedious from the necessary repetition an exhaustive study implies. It is sufficient to note that many more examples could be added to the list proffered here and that evidence for the satirical grotesque as a celebration of the powers of regeneration is far harder to come by. For a similar reading to the one offered here of more passages from Juvenal, see Miller forthcoming. On Persius, see note 47.

13. The translation of Rabelais is from Cohen 1981.48; the passage itself can be found at Rabelais 1962.38. The spelling and accentuation reflect sixteenth-century practice.

14. Cohen 1981.52, Rabelais 1962.48-49.

15. Bakhtin 1968.163. For a fuller treatment of this passage and a defense of Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais, see Miller forthcoming.

16. The texts of Juvenal and Persius are both taken from Clausen's OCT (1959).

17. Translation by Rudd 1992.

18. On the importance of "accent" in Bakhtin, see *inter alia*, Bakhtin 1981.276-77, 282, 288-94.

19. Ferguson 1979 ad loc.

20. Anderson 1960.260.

21. Winkler 1991.24.

22. Edwards 1993.174.

23. Edwards 1993.63-64, 192-94; Richlin 1984; Kennedy 1993.31-33.

24. Braund 1992a.76, 82.

25. This much debated line is printed with brackets by Clausen 1959, accepted without comment by Ferguson 1979, bracketed by Friedlaender 1962, Knoche 1950, and Rudd 1992 (who prints it only in his notes), and dropped by Green 1974 and Labriolle and Villeneuve 1967 (orig. 1921). A good summary of the arguments on both sides can be found in Courtney 1980, who notes that it could have been deleted for reasons of prudery. Courtney advances the variant reading *ac resupina* as a remedy for the problematic *continue*, which is accepted by Rudd 1992. In the absence of compelling evidence for deletion, the line should be retained. The emendation to *ac resupina* is attractive.

26. All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

27. See Richlin 1995.205: "In Roman thought, the use of makeup seems primarily to be connected with the idea that the female body is something that needs to be fixed. This idea appears to underlie both the real use of makeup by real women . . . and the references to makeup in the works of male authors. . . . Disgust with the lower parts of the female body--what Bakhtin calls the 'material lower bodily stratum'--is generalized to the whole body, dealt with palpably on the face . . ."

28. Bakhtin 1984.125-27, 164.

29. Wyke 1995.119-20, 126.

30. Morford 1984.36.

31. The translation of *fractus* as "effeminate" may not be immediately obvious. The poem as a whole is about effeminacy and, in this passage, the notion of being "broken" clearly means something like "powerless" or "impotent." Quintilian, in a passage on corrupting music, uses *fractus* as a gloss on the adjective *effeminatus* (1.10.31). See the *OLD*; Conington 1874; Bramble 1974.76-77; Jenkinson's translation, 1980; and Edwards 1993.81-82 on the Elder Seneca.

32. Bramble 1974.72-75.

33. Morford 1984.36.

34. Bramble 1974.76-77, Barr 1987 ad loc., Gowers 1993.183. On *patro*, cf. Porphyrion on Horace *Satires* 1.5.84, a passage to be discussed later.

35. Bramble 1974.78-79; Barr 1987 ad loc.

36. On 22's *auriculis* as a pun on *auri-culis*, see Bramble 1974.95.

37. Gowers 1993.182-85; Barr 1987 ad loc; Connington 1874 ad loc.; Bramble 1974.84-85, 87.

38. Bramble 1974.93.

39. "The connotations of the *caprificus* must be derived from the *membrum virile*," Bramble 1974.93, although Adams 1982.113-24 notes that the *ficus* itself generally represents the site of anal penetration. Thus a thrusting fig is an oxymoron analogous to the oral/anal penetration discussed above. The *caprificus* is of course the wild fig.

40. Bramble 1974.90-91.

41. Morford 1984.52. There is disagreement on whether the character addressed at the end of the satire is Alcibiades or not. See for example Connor 1987.58-59.

42. *Vulvas* is difficult. *OLD* lists this passage under its second definition, "the female sexual organ," as the sole example of its use for a male homosexual. The plural is likewise difficult to explain except as a poeticism inapt for the plain speaking context and metrically unnecessary. Nonetheless the theme of effeminacy is a constant throughout Persius and this image merely takes it to its logical conclusion. Likewise, the manuscript tradition is unanimous. Thus I follow Bo 1967 and Forcellini et al. 1965 in understanding for *vulva*, "per similitudinem dicitur etiam de podice viri qui muliebria patitur." See Juvenal's use of the same term in 6.129 examined above. There he employs terms normally used for describing male sexuality, *tentigo* and *rigidus*, to portray Messalina's overly aggressive sexuality, just as Persius here uses terms normally reserved for women to describe Alcibiades' effeminized sexuality. See Adams 1982.103-04. I owe the translation "hollows" to my colleague, David H. J. Larmour.

43. Cf. Martial 9.70. On the Catullan context of Martial's recollection of the first Catilinarian, see Swann 1994.18-19.

44. The word is used only twice more in Catullus, once in Horace, three times in Caesar, four times in Plautus, once in Terence, and three times in Petronius--all in neutral contexts. It is never found in Sallust, Tibullus, or Cicero's letters and *rhetorica*, but oddly enough six times in his poetry and once in the *Pro Sestio*. Persius uses it only this once. Ovid is quite fond of the word, using it twenty-three times, but thirteen are set phrases about hair and the rest are equally innocuous. Likewise it is found thirty times in Vergil and frequently in Livy, but always in strictly neutral contexts.

45. Persius' line is in fact polyphonous, echoing, as Barr 1987 ad loc. notes, Vergil *G*. 2.239 and Horace *S*. 1.3.37 as well.

46. As Richlin 1995.187-88 observes, woman's *forma*, in its *inculta* state, is also compared to "sterile soil" and "toothed brambles" in the opening lines of Ovid's *Medicamina Faciei*. Persius may have had this passage in mind.

47. See Bo 1967 and Barr 1987. Gowers 1994 has an excellent discussion of the themes of precocious and hence luxurious growth, failed harvest, and boiling, reduction, fermentation, and rot in both Persius' satires and contemporary depictions of Nero. Her analysis demonstrates that our reading of the present passage can be extended throughout the corpus of Persius. See also Malamud 1996.39.

48. Connor 1987.61.

49. Rudd 1982.54; on Horace's decorum, see Gowers 1993.126.

50. Heuzé 1988.119.

51. This is not to say that Persius' satire necessarily presents us with a single coherent point of view. Indeed, part of the difficulty, and part of the point, of Persius' satire is to challenge the reader to (re)construct the poem's speaker and in the process to (re)examine his/her own self-construction. See Henderson 1993.

52. Gold 1987.134-35.

53. Fedeli 1992.49, Braund 1992b.19.

54. On the difference between Persius and Horace, see Gowers 1994.132: "Persius' satires are a special case, since satire is writing that, in theory, cannot exist without contemporary reference. And in this area comes the oddest Neronian 'fulfilment' of all: instead of Horace's neutral compromise, which, most unsatirically, propped up the Augustan regime, we have Persius' muzzled underground bark . . ."

55. Gowers 1993.7, 121-22; O'Connor 1990.23; Berg 1996.142.

56. Berg 1996.148-49.

57. Berg 1996.147-48.

58. Caston 1997.236-42.

59. Braund 1992b.24-25, Baker 1988.226-27.

60. Gowers 1993.156-57, 172; Benedetto 1981.48; Caston 1997.244.

61. Bakhtin 1968.21-27, 1984.164.

62. O'Connor 1990.27. Gowers 1993.173 sees an allusion to legacy hunting.

63. Arrowsmith 1966.308. See also p. 309: "In the field of sexual appetite, satiety, indulgence to the point of debility, appears as impotence. As constipation stands to food, so impotence stands to sexuality; both are products of *luxuria* in a society which has forgotten its cultural modalities and which cannot recover life . . ."

64. See Lejay 1966; Lambinus 1577; Cruquius 1597; Bond 1670, citing Oppian (*Halieutica* 1.554-79), Athenaeus (7.312e, in turn citing Nicander *Theriaca* 822-24), and Pliny the Elder (*NH* 9.23).

65. Freudenburg 1993.234, Benedetto 1981.48-49.

66. Edwards 1993.175.

67. Carson 1990.133-45, 153-60.

68. Irigaray 1977, Janan 1994. On Irigaray and feminism's compatability with Bakhtin, see Herndl 1991.10-11, Schwab 1991.57-62, Nell 1995, and Nell forthcoming.

69. Richlin 1983.57-80.

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