BEYOND SATIRE: HORACE, POPULAR INVECTIVE AND THE SEGREGATION OF LITERATURE*

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Throughout its history, Latin Satire was engaged in acts of impersonation and masquerade. While written by and for members of an élite and highly literate class, it continually affected a low style in metre and diction, an aggressive engagement with or pointed withdrawal from contemporary social realities, and the partial or wholesale adoption of an authorial voice at some rungs below the highest of society. All this is well-known and relatively uncontroversial. What is also well-known is the way in which Roman satirists, especially Juvenal, were engaged in a dialogue with epic and other literary genres (including earlier satire). What is less accepted is that Roman satirists, not least Horace, were equally engaged in a dialogue with other non-literary or 'subliterary' traditions of verse. I shall be arguing that a primary intertext for the definition of Horace's poetry and poetic persona was the rich and varied contemporary tradition of popular invective poetry. I suggest that he is attempting to erect a *cordon sanitaire* between the genre of satire and these 'unofficial' or 'folk' forms, to segregate élite and popular culture, and to define his poetry as what we may anachronistically call literature.[1]

The core of this paper consists of a fresh look at Roman verse invective.[2] I will be suggesting that not only was the form, context, and performance of such verse richer and more complex than is sometimes suggested, but that this added up to a potentially troublesome package at the time that Horace was writing. It was a form of poetic production that insisted both on the blurring of distinctions between élite and popular, and on the explicit integration of poetry and politics. In his erection of the category of literature, Horace was engaged in an attempt to prevent literature and politics bleeding into one another, to sanitize potentially problematic forms of popular dissent and subject them to ideological closure. His attempt to establish a new literary order, to assimilate and police literary and social hierarchies, can be seen as an attempt to set the standard for the new regime in its formative years.

I. HORACE ON INVECTIVE

I begin with a well-worn staple of criticism of Horatian criticism: the way in which he negotiates the invective tradition bequeathed to him by Lucilius, and the complex manoeuvring performed around the key term of that tradition, *libertas*. For while Horace professes to embrace that tradition fully, he conspicuously fails to follow through in practice. The central text is the fourth satire of Book 1, where he is at pains to situate Lucilius within the tradition of Old Comedy:

[1] For the modern invention of 'literature', see T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), esp. introduction and ch. 1; for the invention of 'culture', R. Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (1958). For 'unofficial' or 'folk' literature, see M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays* (1981), 3–83; idem, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), ch. 4; idem, *Rabelais and his World* (1984).

[2] Assigned or anonymous verse fragments are cited, unless otherwise stated, from E. Courtney (ed.), *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (1993), henceforth *FLP*; some verses are also cited from W. Morel (ed.), *Fragmenta Poetarum Latinorum praeter Ennium et Lucilium* (1927), and the third edition revised by J. Blansdorf (1995). Inscribed verse is cited primarily from F. Bücheler, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, rev. E. Lommatzsch (1926) [=*CLE*], with reference also to the selection in E. Courtney (ed.), *Musa Lapidaria: A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions* (1995) [=*ML*].

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

The poets Eupolis, Cratinus and Aristophanes
and the other men who produced old comedy,
if anyone deserved to be recorded as an evil thief,
as an adulterer, a mugger, or in any other way
a crook, they showed great freedom in putting their mark on them.
Lucilius is wholly dependent on these poets, these the ones he followed
changing only their rhythm and metre.   *Sermones* 1.4.1–7

This construction of a literary heritage is more remarkable than it might at first sight appear. The reputation of Old Comedy in Antiquity was characterized by three factors: freedom of speech, the public nature of its political criticism and argument, and, above all, personal invective, *onomasti komoidein* — this last perhaps the most prominent of all. In making a link to this genre, Horace is opening a colossal can of worms, not least during the dangerous 30s when these satires were being written. Although he is already in this passage infecting his literary history with a moralizing taint (ll. 3–4),[3] he could hardly mention the unholy trinity of Old Comedy without prompting the thought of crude politics.[4] Add to that mix both Lucilius' reputation as a politically-engaged poet and the intensely-contested vocabulary of *libertas*,[5] and it would seem clear where Horace should be going with this.

And yet Horace is putting a lot of spin on his invective heritage. Here and in the other openly metapoetic *Sermones* (1.10, 2.1),[6] he distinguishes himself from Lucilius in terms of style — particularly levels of language, elegance of metre, and quantity of output. This reflects similar manoeuvres used by Aristophanes to differentiate himself from influential precursors, in particular Cratinus, in the parabasis of *Knights*.[7] Horace adds further voices to the mix: Callimachean elegance modifies Lucilian volume (1.4.9–13, cf. 1.10.50–1), Menandrian moralizing comes to supplant Aristophanic abuse.[8] Nonetheless, Horace continues to claim the mantle of *libertas*.[9] Thus he spends the rest of *Satire* 1.4 defending his right to speak, his freedom to attack people, and presents himself as being on the edge of acceptable practice.

[3] See the discussion of K. Freudenberg, *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire* (1993), 96–100.

[4] The most consistent expression of this is in the two works by Platonios, *On the Differences in Comedy* and *On the Differences in Character of the Comedians.* Although in their current form they are the products of Late Antiquity, Platonios' treatises are thought to reflect Hellenistic scholarship. For an accessible treatment of the reception of Old Comedy, see I. C. Storey, 'Notus est omnibus Eupolis?', in A. H. Sommerstein *et al.* (eds), *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis* (1993), 373–96; note also the important discussion of R. Janko, *Aristotle on Comedy: Towards a Reconstruction of Poetics II* (paper edn, 2002), both with bibliography.

[5] Freudenberg, op. cit. (n. 3), 86–92, surveys the disputes over both philosophical and political terrain.

[6] 'Metapoetic' is used here in the sense of poetry that is self-consciously *about* its status as poetry. Compare the extended (and disputed) range of meanings of 'metatheatre' in Aristophanic studies, cf. O. Taplin, 'Fifth-century tragedy and comedy — a synkrisis', *JHS* 106 (1986), 163–74, with bibliography. Note that although Horace's discussion of

poetics is open, attempts to interpret this continue to rely as heavily on what he *does* as on what he actually *says*.

[7] *Knights* 520–41.

[8] Note in particular 1.4.48–53, with the father-son relationship that is a major component of New Comedy. For Horace's shift from Old to New, see R. L. Hunter, 'Horace on friendship and free speech (Epistles I.8 and Satires I.4)', *Hermes* 113 (1985), 480–90, esp. 486–7, who identifies the shift as beginning in earnest at line 26. For further interaction with Greek Comedy, Old and New, see also 2.3.6–12, cf. Persius 1.121–5. For the figures of New Comedy, see 1.2.19–22, 2.3.26off., with further comments on stock figures below. For the moralizing trend in New Comedy, see, for example, *Adelphoe* 413–20. Fundanius, another comedian writing in the tradition of New Comedy, is mentioned in 1.10.40–2 and is the major figure in the dialogue of 2.8.

[9] 1.4.103–6 (*libertas* derives from parental advice), 129–33 (Horace's friends show *libertas* in correcting him; see further Section III, below). In general, see the discussion of N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (2nd edn, 1982), 86–131.

However, what constitutes 'acceptable practice' is clearly negotiable. For although Horace talks the talk, he conspicuously fails to walk the *liber* walk.[10] In practice, the closest that Horace ever gets to *onomasti komoidein* are figures that are nonentities or, more commonly, patently invented, speaking names.[11] This is most evident in 1.1–3, which offer moralizing sentiments based on cynic diatribes.[12] A clear cross-reference invites us to read the metapoetics of *libertas* offered in 1.4 against these poems and their stock targets.

> saepe tribus lectis videas cenare quaternos,
> e quibus unus amet quavis aspergere cunctos
> praeter eum qui praebet aquam; post hunc quoque potus.
> condita cum verax aperit praecordia Liber.
> hic tibi comis et urbanus liberque videtur,
> infesto nigris. ego si risi quod ineptus,
> pastillos Rufillus olet, Gargonius hircum,
> lividus et mordax videor tibi?

> You might often see people dining four to a couch,
> and one of them loving to insult everyone in any way he can
> except the one providing the water – him too later when he's drunk,
> and the truthful Liberator takes away his reserve.
> This man seems pally, witty and free-speaking to you –
> and you hate angry young men. If I laughed at the fool
> Rufillus for reeking of mints, and Gargonius of goat,
> do you think I am ranting and biting?   *Sermones* 1.4.86–93[13]

Here, *libertas* is not just scrupulous and targeted, but also much reduced. It's a lifestyle thing — bad breath, personal ethics, social *faux pas*. Horace explicitly espouses a careful, private *libertas* (cf. 1.3.51–2), which eschews overt reference to the political and public. Rather, the sphere of *libertas* is the private circle of friendship, and the point at issue is how to negotiate that relationship of *amicitia*.

Horace is borrowing an idea of free-speech (παρρησία) between friends which stems from Hellenistic and especially Epicurean philosophy, and which radically reappraises the παρρησία that was associated with Athenian Old Comedy (and, indeed, the Athenian democracy itself). And this philosophical re-definition of freedom is here apparently being mapped onto a re-writing of literary history. Although Horace's sources have been noted before,[14] the puzzle that this poses to readers still demands further investigation. Current explanations play down the startling nature of the shift here and suggest rather that Horace is trying to have it all: Old and New Comedy, Epicurean and Aristotelian philosophy, unrestricted and circumscribed *libertas*/παρρησία. None of these, however, are easy bedfellows, and not the least is the gap between public and private, political invective and measured moral criticism. Freudenburg has noticed the problem here, and has suggested that Horace is creating an 'absurd, impossible combination', with the proviso that this is nonetheless 'made very real within the world' of the *Sermones*.[15] This seems to me to be avoiding the issue. Even were we to take this simply as a sleight-of-hand, these are acts of assimilation that are ripe for deconstruction; but there are reasons to believe that this is, rather, a provocative working over of history and genre. Given that *libertas* was so politically contentious in this period,[16] its

[10] This observation is the starting-point of the analysis of G. L. Hendrickson, 'Horace, Serm. I.4: a protest and a programme', *AJP* 21 (1900), 121–42, which remains a central provocation, even though his conclusions have been challenged by later critics.

[11] Rudd, op. cit. (n. 9), 132–59.

[12] Freudenburg, op. cit. (n. 3), especially ch. 1.

[13] For Rufillus and Gargonius, see 1.2.25–7. For other cross-references between 1.4 and 1.1–3, see 1.4.114–15 (cf. 1.2.25ff.), 1.4.129–30 (cf. 1.3 *passim*).

[14] Hunter, op. cit. (n. 8), 488.

[15] Freudenburg, op. cit. (n. 3), 100.

[16] For the political use of *libertas* in the period, see C. Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Late Republic and Early Principate* (1968).

connotations of political freedom and invective could not but be interpreted.[17] Add to that the marked appearance of *libertas* at the beginning of *Sermones* 1.4, attached to such conspicuous, even notorious exponents of a radical παρρησία. Add further the redefinition of the term through a philosophical school that could be constructed (however partisan a spirit) as the antithesis of traditional Roman political virtues.[18] But even the re-orientation towards friendship is hardly innocuous when Horace's friends so conspicuously include Maecenas.[19] Finally, there is the gap between what Horace initially claims and what Horace actually does, together with his ultimate reappraisal and re-definition of *libertas* towards the quieter pole. In a sense, then, what the poem is presenting us with here is an active enactment of the philosophical re-definition on the literary plane. Perhaps this is absurd, although even (I would say especially) if so, the disjunction that is set up would require interpretation. However, it seems to me rather that the neutering of *libertas* presented here is entirely coherent and pointed: moving one mode of poetic (comic) expression towards the other, shifting the manner and the targets of invective from outrageous personal and political intervention to witty, but not wounding, criticism of moral foibles.[20]

How then can we read this conspicuous swerving aside[21] from public, political commitment, and the espousing of careful, responsible, private satire? One suggestion might be that Horace is deliberately advertising the limitations of satire within the contemporary context, as Emily Gowers has proposed in her discussion of 1.5. Satire is held up as a stunted, disabled form, as crippled as the characters encountered by Horace on his journey, unable to fulfil its proper function and reach its goal, that is to say (implicitly) political intervention.[22] Horace would thus be advertising the impossibility of satire given the context that he was writing in. As a reading of 1.5, this is sophisticated and attractive, and it is a position that will demand further consideration below. For the moment, however, it does beg the question of what *satura* was; or, rather, it begs the question of how *satura* would or could have been understood in the period, the contexts and filters through which *satura* would be viewed, and how 'Horace' is explicitly constructing his own take on the genre.

A rather different conclusion has been reached by du Quesnay, who has investigated Horace's move towards the invective of friendship and the concomitant re-definition of *libertas* precisely in the context of the satiric tradition.[23] Du Quesnay argues that there is a specific political programme underlying these moves. In the first place, this is an attempt to de-fang a Lucilian tradition which had strong Pompeiian connections. This would have been particularly pointed during the conflict between Octavian and Sextus Pompey. At the same time, it is an attempt to stress the tolerance — within limitations — of Octavian and his gang, and to illustrate how a poet could fit in. He further argues that

[17] *Pace* Freudenburg, op. cit. (n. 3), 102, who suggests that 'Lucilian *libertas* was, in a sense, beyond criticism in 35 B.C. . . . the political and social rhetoric of the late Republic was antipathetic to any softened or restricted version of old republican *libertas*, which had become the watchword of republicans and Caesarians alike'. Contrast J. Henderson, 'On getting rid of kings: Horace, *Satires* I.7', *CQ* 44 (1994), 146–70, who stresses the inescapable chain of connotations stemming from the equally contentious *rex* in *Sermones* 1.7.

[18] For Epicurean philosophy from this perspective, see Cicero, *de Finibus*, esp. 1.23–5 and the extensive critique in *de Finibus* 2. The exponent of Epicureanism, L. Torquatus (for whom see D. Berry (ed.), *Cicero: pro P. Sulla oratio* (1996), 17–20), is something of an intellecutal stooge (cf. J. Annas, *Cicero. On Moral Ends* (2001), xv–xvi). Relevant in this context is the joke made by Hortensius that he was ἄμουσος, ἀναφρόδιτος, ἀπροσδιόνυσος (Aul. Gell. 1.5.3).

[19] Maecenas is the addressee of the collection in 1.1. See also in particular 1.5, 1.9, and 2.8. On 1.5 and 1.9 (and their silences), see the discussions of E. Gowers,

'Horace, *Satires* I.5: an inconsequential journey', *PCPS* (199), 48–66, and J. Henderson, 'Be a Lert (Your Country Needs Lerts): Horace, *Satires* I.9', *PCPS* 39 (1993), 67–93, both with further bibliography.

[20] I thus follow Hendrickson, op. cit. (n. 10), to the extent that I emphasize that distance is being put between Horatian *libertas* and that of (the original) Old Comedy, and that this is (in some sense) polemical, but Hunter and Freudenburg to the extent that there is an attempt to keep Old Comedy on board in some form. It is pointedly re-worked, not rejected. Hunter observes that 'Like Old Comedy, Horaces's satires will enjoy παρρησία, but the meaning of the word has changed' (op. cit. (n. 8), 488), but does not develop the implications.

[21] For 'swerving aside', cf. Rudd, op. cit. (n. 9), 90.

[22] Gowers, op. cit. (n. 19), esp. 60–1.

[23] I. M. le M. du Quesnay, 'Horace and Maecenas: the propaganda value of *Sermones* I', in T. Woodman and D. West (eds), *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus* (1984), 19–58; cf. W. S. Anderson, *Pompey and his Friends* (1963), 57–82.

a number of the specific, moral points developed in the individual satires reinforce ideas being projected by the regime, and especially the activities of Maecenas.

I do not want to follow this line in its entirety, although I do think that du Quesnay is asking some of the right questions. For one thing, it is only through considering the bulk of comparable cultural production that one can see the full and individual implications of artefacts such as Horace's *Sermones*. Difficult as this is for such a fragmentary context, progress can be made. For another, I agree that the gaps in Horace's argument are conspicuous and have metapoetic and/or ideological implications. I am not sure, though, that du Quesnay comes up with the right answers. He is clearly right that in the industry of works on, or in the tradition of, Lucilian satire certain players had Pompeian links. Curtius Nicias wrote books on Lucilius and is said to have been a follower of Pompey and C. Memmius (Suet., *Gramm.* 14). M'. Otacilius Pitholaus is known as one of the prominent abusers of Caesar and is invoked by Horace (*Serm.* 1.10.2) as mixing Greek and Latin in his verses. Suetonius may also have identified him as both writing works in praise of Pompey and his father, and teaching the son rhetoric (the text, though, is far from secure).[24] Certainly, there was a family connection between Pompey and Lucilius. And it is true that there are instances where literary 'battles' are implicated with the political battles conducted on another level. Thus the invective of Pompeius Lenaeus (and perhaps others) against Sallust:

> ac tanto amore erga patroni memoriam extitit ut Sallustium historicum, quod eum 'oris probi animo inverecundo' scripsisset, acerbissima satura laceravit, lastaurum et lurconem et nebulonem popinonemque appellans, et vita scriptisque monstrosum, praeterea priscorum Catonis[que] verborum ineruditissimum furem.

> He showed such devotion to the memory of his *patronus* that he tore into the historian Sallust in a vicious satire for calling [Pompeius] 'a choirboy with a heart of darkness'. He called Sallust a useless, greedy, drunken queen, as shocking in his works as in his life, and above all a pig-ignorant thief of Cato's archaic vocabulary.   Suet., *Gramm.* 15.2[25]

The immediacy of this Pompeian tradition is perhaps lessened by the posthumous nature of the defence. For many of the other writers in the Lucilian tradition, political affiliations are simply anti-Caesarian, are unknown or unproven, or, indeed, are more closely associated with the Caesarian camp itself. Notable figures in this respect are P. Terentius Varro Atacinus, who amongst other things wrote poetry on Caesar's Gallic wars, and P. Valerius Cato, who does not seem to have had particularly strong associations.[26] We might be justified in seeing some satire as 'oppositional' rather than straightforwardly factional. It would be more accurate to suggest that no group or personality had a complete lock on the Lucilian tradition, or at least the tradition of *satura*. A further point is that the Lucilian tradition need not imply a political agenda at all. Autobiography and, indeed, scholarship seem to have featured as heavily as invective (political or otherwise) in the interests of this disparate group.[27]

If the history of post-Lucilian satire is, to say the least, murky (indeed it is unclear whether it really deserves to be called a tradition at all), there is a bigger problem for the du Quesnay position. This is that he relies upon a very narrow assessment of Horace's literary, cultural, and political context. Du Quesnay excludes both other 'literary' forms

[24] Suet., *Gramm.* 27. Cf. R. Kaster, *Suetonius. De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*, edited with a translation and commentary (1995). For Pitholaos' verses on Caesar, see Suet., *Div. Iul.* 75.5.

[25] cf. anon. vs. Sallust (Quint. 8.3.29 = *FLP*, 145 = *inc. poet.* fr. 40Bl.); Horace, *Serm.* 1.2.48.

[26] For the early circulation of and/or scholarship on Lucilius, see Suet., *Gramm.* 2.4. For scepticism about the Pompeian associations of Lucilian satire, see also E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (1985), 104–5.

[27] Sevius Nicanor wrote autobiographical hexameters (Suet., *Gramm.* 5.1), Valerius Cato an autobiographical *libellus* called *Indignatio* as well as a

commentary on Lucilius (see the opening lines of Horace, *Sermones* 1.10). The nature of the works by L. Abuccius (described as *Luciliano charactere* by Varro, *de re rustica* 3.2.17) and Varro Atacinus (Horace, *Sermones* 1.10.46–7) is wholly unclear. The voluminous output of the noted Pompeian, M. Terentius Varro, included four books of verse satire in addition to the more celebrated *Menippea*, according to Jerome's catalogue of his works, quoted and discussed by Ritschl, *RhM* 12 (1857), 150–3. If this is right, we know nothing for certain about their content. Varro's eventful career included both reconciliation with Caesar and later proscription at the hands of Antony.

of invective and the popular traditions of versified abuse and political engagement. He does this because he is working in a tradition of work on Roman Satire which argues that we should enforce generic purity and segregation. This is exemplified by Michael Coffey, who in 1976 explicitly argued, 'It is necessary to *eliminate* from the study of the Roman genre of satire various writings that have some topics or attitudes in common with it but have their own separate history' (my emphasis). In his 'Second Thoughts' of 1989, he is more nuanced, but repeats that forms of popular verse, 'are part of a social context of ribaldry which made the reception of satire easier, but they have nothing to do with its formal development'. This attitude, replicated in other modern handbooks, depends closely upon the analyses of Quintilian but ignores his historical position and his selectivity.[28] It is also a view determined by hindsight and the process of canonization. Coffey (like others) ignores the role of Horace himself in establishing and policing generic boundaries.

I would claim, rather, that by the time of Horace, satire should hardly be seen as a stable phenomenon. Indeed, part of Horace's self-appointed task is to stabilize, or re-orientate it. It is not controversial that Horace imposed certain linguistic filters on Lucilian language, just as he claims to have sharpened up the style. Metrically, too, Horace is narrowing the tradition and isolating his satire both from Lucilius' inheritance and from the street. For, although Lucilius seems to have settled upon the hexameter for the bulk of his production, his earliest work is in septenarii and senarii — the staples of Roman drama — and he also produced some elegiacs.[29] This echoes the metrical fluidity of earlier satire (Ennius and Pacuvius) and reproduces the same range of metres which continued to be the dominant metres of popular and inscribed verse.[30] It is worth noting also that when the sources talk of writers explicitly working in a specifically Lucilian mode (rather than a vague *satura*, or even hexameter autobiography), this has little to do with metre or form, and much more to do with the abusive character of their writing.

Moreover, the isolationist position on the genre of satire ignores the rampant 'literary' intertextuality of Roman culture, an object of modern critical attention from Fraenkel to Fowler. I have already noted how such literary plurality is emphasized in the text and is a constant reference point in *Satire* 1.4. We do, though, need to keep the broadest possible notion of intertextuality, to avoid privileging the 'literary', however that might be defined in the ancient world, and to resist sliding back into a re-statement of literary allusion. It is impossible to divorce an author or a text from his or its cultural context more generally, and to close down the dialogic interaction of production and reception. Indeed, the way that Horace specifically rules out popular consumption (if not production) of invective from his archaeology of satire should give especial pause to any notion of generic purity.

>   Sulcius acer   65
> ambulat et Caprius, rauci male cumque libellis,
> magnus uterque timor latronibus; at bene si quis
> et vivat puris manibus contemnat utrumque.
> ut sis tu similis Caeli Birrique latronum,
> non ego sim Capri neque Sulci; cur metuas me?   70

[28] M. Coffey, *Roman Satire* (2nd edn, 1989), 4 and 274; cf. S. H. Braund, *Roman Verse Satire* (1992). Although Coffey claims (p. 4) that Quintilian's account shows that we have every major satirist except Turnus, the survey above shows that this is patently untrue. Quintilian's selective handling of 'low' Roman genres is elsewhere demonstrable in the case of Phaedrus, omitted entirely from his account of fable.

[29] Septenarii in what became Books 25–26; septenarii and senarii together with hexameters in 28–29; elegiacs are collected in 22–24, and their chronology is unclear. For the problems over Lucilius' collec-

tions, see Coffey, op. cit. (n. 28), 38–42; Courtney, *FLP*, 7–21; A. S. Gratwick, 'Ennius and Lucilius', in E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (eds), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* II (1982), 156–71.

[30] Although there are some examples of more exotic metres, the three volumes of *CLE* reflect overwhelmingly the same split between senarius, septenarius, and elegy, and in particular in those poems that point to the lower end of the social (or literate) spectrum. (Hexameters tend to be used overwhelmingly for 'official' inscriptions.) For the affinities with drama, see below.

nulla taberna meos habeat neque pila libellos,
quis manus insudet vulgi Hermogenisque Tigelli.
nec recito cuiquam nisi amicis, idque coactus,
non ubivis coramve quibuslibet. in medio qui
scripta foro recitent sunt multi quique lavantes: 75
suave locus voci resonat conclusus.

                        The ranting Sulcius   65
and Caprius walk the streets, very loud and armed with accusations,
each of them a great terror to robbers; but anyone who
lived a good life and kept their hands clean could sneer at them both.
Suppose you should be like those robbers Caelius and Birrius,
I would not be a Caprius nor a Sulcius; why should you fear me?   70
No bar, no column would have my pamphlets,
for the public to get sweaty over — oh yes, and Hermogenes Tigellius.
I don't recite to anyone but friends, and only that when forced,
and I don't do it in any old place or in front of any old passer-by. There are
many who recite their verse in the middle of the forum or at the baths: 75
a private place echoes the voice in pleasing fashion.

                                      Sermones 1.4.65–76

The emphasis here is on public and popular *recitation* and *consumption*, and on public *abuse* and *accusation*: that is both from the informers of ll. 65–7 and from the (un-) Horatian poets (ll. 74–5). Likewise Horace in ll. 71–2 ought to be distancing himself from public text, performance and consumption. Recent commentators on this passage have unanimously (and on somewhat slender grounds) held that the *taberna* and *pila* of l. 70 must refer to a bookshop and/or bookstall — publication of a rather less public kind.[31] Given, however, that *libelli* may also suggest graffiti, I would like to keep the idea of rather less salubrious and less élite texts, contexts, and even producers in play here. This would certainly fit the lowlife informers who introduce the section. It would also fit the ample evidence for graffiti in the contexts of shops (to put it as neutrally as possible) and public spaces, as I discuss further below. Above all, it is suggested by the glaring (and paradoxically élite) intertext of Catullus 37. This, one of his most scabrous efforts, gives centre-stage to a low dive, a *salax taberna* — if not literally a brothel (as we might say, 'knocking shop'), then at least a bar with a back room — and the crew (from rather more tasteful and poetic backgrounds) who hang out there.

salax taberna uosque contubernales,
a pilleatis nona fratribus pila,
solis putatis esse mentulas uobis,
solis licere, quidquid est puellarum,
confutuere et putare ceteros hircos?
an, continenter quod sedetis insulsi
centum an ducenti, non putatis ausurum
me una ducentos irrumare sessores?
atqui putate: namque totius uobis
frontem tabernae sopionibus scribam.

Knocking-Shop, and you my fellow-punters,
down at the ninth pillar from the Brothers-in-Hats,
do you think that you're the only ones who've got dicks,
that you're the only ones who can fuck the talent
all ends up and think everyone else randy goats?
Or, because you sit there in a slack-jawed row,
a hundred or two hundred of you, you think I wouldn't dare

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[31] On the usual interpretation (cf. Palmer and Brown ad loc.), the *pila* is referring to a column of a public colonnade and either to a bookstall set up around it, or to a bookshop behind. The best evidence for this is *Ars Poetica* 373 (poor poets are not granted a *columna*), Martial 1.117.10–12 (who refers to the door-posts of a bookshop covered with adverts and/or tasters), and Martial 7.61.5 (who refers to a pillar heaped up with wine-bottles attached by chains, 'catenatis . . . lagoenis').

to cram my meat into the two hundred of you waiting in line?
Go on – keep thinking it: for I'll write up
the front of the whole shop with cocks.   Catullus 37.1–10

Horace's conjunction of *tabula . . . pila . . .* with the location of public invective is very
strongly suggestive of this earlier piece of abusive verse. The intertextual context helps
us to flesh out further Horace's path-not-taken. Catullus' poem itself (whatever else is
going on there) is a virtuoso display of personal invective and over-the-top obscenity.
One suggestion, clearly, is that this sort of poetry is peculiarly appropriate to this sort of
salax environment, whether part of the evening's entertainment or as a more permanent
record for customers. (The latter we can amply confirm from the epigraphic record.)
Indeed, the idea of graffiti of one form or another is brought to the fore as the invective
spews out. Catullus' apostrophe of the bar and its denizens concludes with a threat to
cover its façade with *sopionibus* — apparently obscene cartoon-phalluses, and a word
only found elsewhere in the lexicon of anecdotal insult or semi-literate graffiti.[32] Catullus
seems here to be stressing the continuities of his poetry with the poetry of popular
invective and obscenity, even figuring his poems as the offensive, public *sopio*, and
emphasizing how his poetic production comes onto the streets and/or discharges in
public places.
    If Catullus gives the impression that the idea of a *locus . . . conclusus* is simply
irrelevant (or impossible?) for this form of poetry, Horace by contrast is seeking to keep
the lid on; nowhere more so than in this rejection of Catullan context as well as Catullan
content. Repeatedly in 1.4, Horace stresses that it is invective that is open, is public, is
popular that he is keeping at arm's length.[33] As Rudd has suggested, 'One has the
impression that Horace was mainly concerned to justify his own position as a poet of the
élite'.[34] Certainly, Horace is working extremely hard here to rope off his output from the
sweaty masses, not only in terms of audiences but also in terms of contexts and spaces
for performance and/or publication (bars, columns, etc.). But the very insistence that
his is not or should not be a public discourse of poetry suggests that popular poetry —
that is, popular performance, display, and (re)production — demands to be taken as the
unconscious of this particular élite text.
    Thus on the one hand, popular invective is in this passage foregrounded in order to
modify and move away from the *libertas* of Lucilius and Old Comedy. That is, it is cited
in order to neuter and set aside the disturbing features of satire and comedy, to
distinguish (Horatian) satire from these predecessors as from the street, and to redirect
the genre towards the moralizing of New Comedy. On the other hand, Horace also
insinuates into this manoeuvre an attempt to rule out other traditions of élite invective.
Although I suggested that it is conspicuous that Horace avoids invective in the *Sermones*,
one strand of abuse does remain — the abuse of other poets, or, more precisely, the
abuse of other abusive poets. As we have seen, Hermogenes Tigellius is already
explicitly lumped in with popular traditions (1.4.72), Catullus intertextually so. In 1.10,
Horace develops this approach to the definition of his satire and lays into the fellow
travellers of the satire tradition. This time he picks out by name the bad boys of the
neoteric tradition, Calvus and (this time explicitly) Catullus.

                            ridiculum acri
            fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res.
            illi scripta quibus comoedia prisca viris est
            hoc stabant, hoc sunt imitandi: quos neque pulcher
            Hermogenes umquam legit, neque simius iste
            nil praeter Calvum et doctus cantare Catullum.

                    a witty approach, rather than a vicious one,
        is generally more forceful and effective for dealing with important matters.

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[32] See J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*   [34] Rudd, op. cit. (n. 9), 101–2.
(1982), 64–5 for texts and discussion.
[33] For disavowal of public production: see also
1.4.21–5, 69–78, 81–5, 93–103.

Those men who wrote old comedy
excelled at this; they are to be imitated for this: pretty-boy
Hermogenes has never read them, nor that ape
not 'learned' enough to read anything but Calvus and Catullus.
Sermones 1.10.14–19

This has often been considered a puzzling passage. It seems to be a sneer. Horace is throwing the neoteric buzzword, *doctus*, back in the faces of Calvus and Catullus. Yet, Horace himself is clearly working in a post-neoteric tradition, where intertextual sophistication and conspicuous learning were important features. Thus it is rather unclear why Horace should be beastly about the neoterics at all, especially given that, as I have argued, he has himself self-consciously been giving satire some of that good old Hellenistic polish. The passage is sometimes explained autobiographically in terms of a feud, with or without specific political attachments. However, I remain unconvinced that one can draw up definite alliances in the poetry of the late Republic, in what looks like a many-sided and shifting game of abuse and counter-abuse.

By itself, the use of *doctus* suggests an implied charge of ignorance (or even cliché), perhaps even a specific unfamiliarity with Greek comedy, not as far as we can tell a favourite of the neoteric poets. Even so, the idea of a lack of intellectual (or intertextual) adventure would remain a curious charge for either these poets or their readers.[35] Rather, the use of *doctus* by the neoterics as a *slogan* (i.e. its performative use) offers more potential as an explanation for Horace's tactics. It points towards partisanship and literary self-construction, the picking of literary fights and thus to invective — the other quality for which the neoterics were notorious. The explicit engagement here with neoteric literary posing thus mirrors the implicit engagement with neoteric invective more generally.

Indeed, it is even possible to see Horace here seeking to undermine the neoteric claim to being *doctus*, by seeking to oppose style and invective, thus destabilizing the twin pillars of neoteric production. If we consider more fully Horace's rhetoric of sophistication here, we can see how, just as in 1.4, a redefinition of comedy involves both its appropriation as the preserve of élite discourse and a displacement of invective in favour of style, taste, and restraint. Issues of propriety are set up as integral to sophistication and both as antithetical to popular verse and contexts. Here the threat of satirical performance and the need to exclude it are made all the more immediate by implicating not only ancient Greek satirical comedy, but also its equally scandalous Roman cousin, mime. From the beginning of the poem Horace segues from satire to mime to old (Old) comedy, and in so doing seeks to equate poverty of style with quantity of abuse. He starts by conceding invective power (of a sort) in Lucilius, but deploring his style. Moving onto the mime-writer Laberius, he claims that satirical force is outweighed by defective style, which is presented as the dominant consideration (ll. 5–8). He then elaborates at length the importance of a concise, witty, and varied style (ll. 9–14). Finally, he proceeds to the claim that the writers of Old Comedy are purveyors of just such playful humour as Horace himself recommends. Style in this sequence thus comes to displace satire. What the reader is ultimately presented with is the rump that is served up after the butchery of 1.4, rather than the meaty satirical carcass in a Laberian mould. In terms of the antithesis that is being set up here, Catullus and Calvus are being represented as a manifestation of an invective tradition at Rome which is to be as deprecated in the hands of sophisticated *litterateurs* as in the hands of a drunk in a Suburan dive. The neoterics, as much as Hermogenes Tigellius and the

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[35] For discussion of this passage, see E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (1957), 128–33, who stresses the moralizing thrust of Horace's argument here; and Rudd, op. cit. (n. 9), 118–24, who discusses the personal and auto-biographical dimensions, and relates this to a dispute over the importance of Lucilius, with the position of invective one element amongst many. Brown ad loc. suggests there is a criticism of the followers of the neoterics for exclusiveness in taste.

ape,[36] are introduced in order to be lumped together with popular forms of the poetry of abuse, and in order to exclude this form of discourse as a whole.

In his negotiation and, indeed, creation of his literary heritage, then, Horace is at pains to establish and prescribe the limits of satire, pointedly rewriting the history of Greek Comedy as much as that of his satirical predecessors. He excises the aggressive, confrontational, public, and political elements and relegates them to the realm of an invective poetry, which is variously characterized as belonging to the bar, the street, or the gymnasium; as stylistically impoverished; good for a laugh, perhaps, but it can be dangerous and, well, it's not really *poetry*. However, the explicit attempt to dissociate his form of satire from these contemporary traditions of invective suggests all the more that these forms, and the anxieties that they provoked, are exactly the context against which we need to be reading Horace's work.

What we can see is on one level a (heavily loaded) attempt to establish a line between categories of the literary and the non-literary (or 'sub-literary' or 'occasional' or 'ephemeral'). This cuts across categories of élite and popular, to the extent that the invective of élite origin as much as that of a more popular origin is ending up on the wrong side of the fence. There is, however, also the suggestion of Horace seeking to align literary and class hierarchies along the same axis. For a man of wealth (or at least comfort) and taste, Horace seems to be suggesting, literature *should* involve stylistic and political restraint; following Aristotle, abuse, obscenity, and personal confrontation *should* be for rustics, boors, and other undesirables.[37]

So much for theory. From a practical point-of-view, it is for good reason that Horace, in order to enforce his generic and cultural segregation, keeps at arms' length élite traditions as much as the popular. For, as I shall argue in the next part of the paper, it is in practice difficult to separate these strands of invective in the late Republic. In this sphere of cultural production, élite and popular have a dialogic and interactive, if not symbiotic relationship. But the intertwined discourses are politically as well as socially disruptive for the Horatian construct of satire. Whoever was producing or receiving it, Roman verse invective was fully implicated in the grubby realities of the politics and personalities of the late Republic and early Empire. These are the realities from which Horace is unpicking — or trying to unpick — the tradition of satire; this the poetic tradition and cultural context which should be lurking in the intertextual undergrowth when approaching a reading of the *Sermones*. In order to appreciate Horace's moves here, it is necessary to consider this broader context, to provide an archaeology of Roman verse invective.

II.   REPUBLICAN INVECTIVE: CONTEXTS AND CULTURES

In recent years, critics such as Amy Richlin and Anthony Corbeill have demonstrated how aggressive, and in particular sexualized humour pervaded Roman society in general.[38] Political discourse was no exception to this. The sort of 'literary' invective verse that I have largely been discussing thus far finds its place amongst an élite discourse of gossip, jokes, witticism, and lampoons as well as more formal invective in speeches, pamphlets, or on stage. The corollary of this is that it becomes difficult in practice to divorce either the satires of Lucilius and followers or the epigrams of

[36] Freudenburg, op. cit. (n. 3), 168–70, addresses once more the identities of these characters, but whatever their identity and affiliations, both he and the ape, together with the neoterics, seem to be represented as the opposite (ignorant) of the virtues of Old Comedy — Old Comedy as presented through a Horatian filter, that is.

[37] For which the key text is Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.1127b33–1128b4, discussed in detail both by Hunter, op. cit. (n. 8) and Freudenburg, op. cit. (n. 3).
[38] A. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus* (2nd edn, 1992); A. Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter. Political Humor in the Late Republic* (1996).

Catullus and the other neoterics from élite production more generally.[39] Equally, it is impossible to restrict the targets of invective: invective poetry was going from all sides towards all sides. Two of the most conspicuous exponents of political 'occasional verse' who we can actually trace are on the one hand C. Trebonius — suffect consul of 45 B.C., conspirator, later murdered by Dolabella — and on the other hand Octavian himself.[40] Indeed, it is perhaps ironic that from the Republican and Triumviral periods the only verses that are definitely attributed to a major political player and which are extant belong to the future *princeps*.[41]

What we can say with more security is that such verse was promiscuous, both at Rome and in the provinces. Our earliest, anonymous fragments are septenarii on Carbo (fr. 1C) and, from a bit later Pompey (fr. 2C). Pompey is also no less than Caesar a target of Calvus — the allegation again one of effeminacy (fr. 18, cf. fr. 17). Sulla, Clodius, Clodia, and Cato are also attested as having been targeted at Rome; Sulla, Pompey, Verres elsewhere in the Roman world.[42] When, following the death of Caesar, we move into the next round of triumviral squabbling, targets and allegiances unsurprisingly multiply and fragment, until as we head towards Actium the physical and propaganda confrontations are reflected in the poetic output too. While much of the material involves those on the Caesarian side, the bias reflects the interests of the sources — primarily Suetonius. Octavian, as much as Julius Caesar, who I shall discuss below, could exploit the invective tradition and give as good as he got. His surviving lines are a masterpiece of crude economy, if only for the number of targets he manages to implicate. The sexually demanding and predatory Fulvia is the prime target — fuck me or it's war ('aut futue aut pugnemus', fr. 1.5), but he also invokes (as partial motivation for Fulvia) Antony's relationship with Glaphyra, and further suggests that Fulvia's invitation is a parallel to an invitation from Manius for the triumvir to take him roughly from behind.[43]

Although there is, then, a multiplicity of élite targets and practitioners, it must be emphasized that the origin of most of our surviving fragments of verse invective is not so obvious. Some no doubt originated from the élite milieu, but for others the origins are far from clear. A case in point is the poem on 'the Twelve Gods', referring to a dinner party allegedly held by Octavian, where the diners dressed as Olympians (Suet., *Div. Aug.* 70.1; *vers. pop.* fr. 7). The author tells how the gods themselves averted their eyes. Suetonius cites this in parallel with letters from Antony; this suggests an Antonian source, but whether this came from the top or anywhere near that is open to question — and not only because these verses were, as Suetonius indicates, famously anonymous. For it is clear that the habit of verse and the habit of invective both stretched well beyond the usual environment of a Catullus, a Cato, or an Antony.

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[39] Named exponents of verse invective in addition to Catullus and Calvus include M. Furius Bibaculus (Tac., *Ann.* 4.34.5; Quintilian 10.1.96; cf. *Serm.* 1.10.36, 2.5.31; otherwise the composer of a *Bellum Sequanicum*); Pomponius? Papinius (*FLP*, 109), perhaps to be connected with a L. Papinius who composed Atellans; Manilius (*FLP*, 110); Domitius Marsus (*FLP*, 302–5); and Aulus Caecina (Suet., *Div. Iul.* 75.4–5). Some, at least, count as 'literary', or at least élite invective. From a more strictly literary tradition, note also parodies of Vergil (*FLP*, 284–6), by respectively anon., Numitorius, and ?Cornificius Gallus; and also the verses of anon. against Crassicius: Suet., *Gramm.* 18, cf. *FLP*, 306. For Catullus considered as part of a literary tradition of invective, see Richlin, op. cit. (n. 37), 144–56, W. M. Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position* (1995), ch. 3.

[40] Perhaps the Aulus Caecina of Suet., *Div. Iul.* 75.4–5 was from the rich Etruscan *gens*, cf. R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939), 82–3; Cato also wrote *iambi* against Scipio Metellus (Plut., *Cato Min.* 7). Cf. Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 94–5 for other possibilities. On élite obscene verse, see especially Pliny, *ep.* 5.3 and Fitzgerald, op. cit. (n. 39), 6–13.

[41] Octavian, fr. 1 = Martial 11.20. For other refer-

ences to his output, see Suet., *Div. Aug.* 85, Macrobius, *Sat.* 2.4.21 ('fescennini' on Pollio).

[42] Sulla: Plutarch, *Sulla* 6.19 (Ziegler); Cato: Plutarch, *Cato Min.* 73; Clodius and Clodia: Cic., *Q. fr.* 2.3.2. See also the improvisation on Memmius, quoted in Cicero, *de Oratore* 2.240 (=p. 109 Blansdorf). For other prominent targets, note Sarmentus (and Maecenas?), P. Ventidius Bassus, L. Plotius Plancus, L. Munatius Plancus, Lepidus, and T. Annius Cimber. See references and discussion below. For non-Roman contexts, see Cicero, *In Verr.* 2.3.77 (Sicily, against Verres), *SH* 1156–7 (Athenians against Sulla and Pompey; trochaic tetrameters catalectic); Dio 9.39.7–8 (Tarentum), 65.8.4–7 (Alexandria).

[43] On these lines, see J. P. Hallett, '*Perusinae glandes* and the changing image of Augustus', *AJAH* 2 (1977), 151–71, although I think she underplays their many targets. Syme's comment is entertaining here: 'The propaganda of Octavianus, gross and mendacious, exaggerated the role of Fulvia both at the time and later, putting her person and her acts in a hateful light; and there was nobody afterwards, from piety or even from perversity, to redeem her memory.' (Syme, op. cit. (n. 40), 208 n. 1).

The tradition of Roman verse invective at large is most concretely attested in the bars and brothels of Pompeii. The verses scratched on the walls there, and similar lines from elsewhere, demonstrate the same concerns as the Roman élite at play — especially a preoccupation with the material bodily stratum, more specifically drinking, food, and sex, and also gambling.[44] Politics and invective were also on display,[45] but direct abuse tends to be aimed at somewhat more prosaic targets in the local economy: bar and guesthouse-owners[46] and rivals for the affections of women and boys. From the other side of the counter, it is worth noting that equally, innkeepers could use verse epigrams as a combination of advert and house-rules.[47] At the rougher end of this Pompeiian spectrum, abuse of the local magnates the Vibii was conducted with frank obscenity:

> . . . fueere quondam Vibii opulentissimi,
> non ideo tenuerunt in manu sceptrum pro mutunio
> itidem, quod tu factitas cottidie in manu penem tenes.

> . . . once upon a time the Vibii were billionaires,
> for all that they held in their hand not a sceptre but a dick,
> just as you do every day — hold your cock in your hand.
>
> CLE 231 = ML 85 (Pompeii)

Aside from the odd Plautine liberty, the metre holds together until the last line, when an extra foot creeps in.[48]

A more formal, and for that reason more extensive, corpus is presented by the sequence of votive inscriptions and epitaphs. Even here, the move to verse extended across classes and occupations, from slaves to consuls, most famously the Scipios.[49] An example, rather down the social scale from the Scipios, sees the traditions of formal epitaph and informal invective intersecting, part of a small set of pieces that subvert the dominant convention of epitaphs, which is to present the best side of the dead and those left behind. The freedwoman Acte is here presented as the polar opposite (even mirror image) of the twin ideals of both 'woman' and 'freedman' elsewhere so conspicuous in the epitaphic context.[50]

> tu sine filiae et parentium in u[no ossa] requescant. quidquid nobis feceris, idem
>   tibi speres. mihi crede, tu tibi testis [eris.

> Hic stigmata aeterna Acte libertae scripta sunt
> venenariae et perfidae dolosae duri pectoris:
> clavom et restem sparteam, ut sibi collum alliget,
> et picem candentem, pectus malum commurat suum.
> manumissa gratis secuta adulterum
> patronum circum scripsit et ministros ancillam et puerum lecto iacenti patrono
>   abduxit,
> ut animo desponderet solus relictus spoliatus senex.
> e[t] Hymno, [et] eade stimata secutis Zosimum.

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[44] 'That the content of both subliterary and literary invective is the same must be the result of consistent societal stimuli and tendencies, not a cause/effect relation' (Richlin, op. cit. (n. 37), 63). For a selection, see CLE 42, 44–50 (senarii); 230–3 (septenarii); 332–60 (hexameters); 924–57 (elegiacs); ML IID–E.

[45] CLE 38–40; ?41.

[46] CLE 930, 932.

[47] CLE 931. For similar adverts in relation to the theatre and performance, see below; cf. ML IIG.

[48] CLE 231 = ML 85 (with commentary). For a general metrical overview of inscribed verse, see ML, pp. 22–31. Later and more extreme examples are discussed in J. N. Adams, 'The poets of Bu Njem: language, culture and the centurionate', JRS 89 (1999), 109–34, with further bibliography.

[49] For slaves, see, for example, CLE 100, 238, 403; the epitaphs of the Scipios are CLE 6–9 (senarii) and 958 (elegiacs); commentary in ML. An overview of the population of Latin epitaphs and their occupations is provided by R. D. Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Roman Epitaphs (1942), esp. 266–75. Cf. also H. H. Armstrong, Autobiographic Elements in Latin Inscriptions (1910).

[50] There are parallel takes on a freedman CLE 1115 and for a jilting woman CLE 1178. Note also the bad wishes upon the deceased's murderer CLE 1948. See Lattimore, op. cit. (n. 49), 123–5, 283. For abuse of the dead, see I. Kajanto, 'On the freedom of expression in Latin epitaphs', Latomus 27 (1968), 185–6.

Allow the bones of daughter and parents to lie together in peace. Whatever you
have done to us, hope for the same. Trust me, you'll be your own witness.

Here are inscribed the eternal brands of the freedwoman Acte,
a poisoner, tricky, treacherous and hard-hearted:
(I leave her) a nail and a hemp rope to tie around her neck,
and burning pitch, to sear her evil breast.
Manumitted for free she went off with an adulterer,
cheated her patron and took away his servants, girl and boy, as her master lay in
   bed,
so that he died of a broken heart, alone, abandoned, plundered.
The same marks are laid upon Hymnos and those who followed Zosimus.
                                                      CLE 95 (Rome)

What we can find in such examples of this widespread pattern of invective is on one level
the policing of conventional structures of both gender and status. For critics such as
Amy Richlin, this social dimension is the dominant facet. On this line, the abuse of
Acte, and fellow violators of the social order, would serve to mark them publicly as
deviant and, equally publicly, reinforces conventional categories. For Richlin, aggressive
humour is both dependent on hierarchies and central to their maintenance. She proposes
a similar framework at the élite level: politicians slinging mud at each other, their wives,
sons and hangers-on, are engaged in a campaign of publicly humiliating and shaming
their opponents. Corbeill's investigation of political invective in the late Republic comes
to similar conclusions:

> . . . the teller of the joke isolates his opponent by portraying him as an individual, as someone
> who stands at odds with acceptable Roman notions of the role of the self in society. . . .
> Roman society lacked the model of a single all-moral deity according to which ethical
> standards could be formed and enforced. As a result, the community had to collaborate in
> the labelling of deviance in order to define its own moral codes.   Corbeill, p. 9.

Thus Octavian's attempt to set Antony and in particular Fulvia as sexually beyond the
pale is paralleled by the depiction of Octavian and his gang at decadent play as the
Twelve Gods. Both are attempts to gain mastery by locating the opponent outside of
Roman norms.

I do not want to dispute that there is a large amount of truth in this. After all, the
politics of exclusion is still healthy among conservative and/or communitarian elements
today, with an intended goal of a homogeneous and coherent society. This, it may be
said, continues to meet with a signal lack of success. The problem with both the
conservative formulation — and with the academic construction of Roman society — is
that it overplays the coherence of social and ideological formation, as well as leaving
little room in which forms of cultural, not to say, literary production can operate. There
is also a fundamentally normative understanding of ideology, although it should be
stressed that in Corbeill's formulation this ideological structure is itself dependent on
the various social strands coming together with apparently one voice. Although such
totalizing and structural notions of ideology are still dominant within Classical Studies,
it is clear that since the hey-day of Althusserian criticism, more dialogic, and
'overdetermined' models have gained ground, which offer amongst other things a more
convincing explanation of social change, as well as a more sophisticated understanding
of culture (without even getting into questions of subculture). Less abstractly, de Ste
Croix forcibly reminds us that Roman society was far from homogeneous, that we
casually elide from most accounts of Latin literature the contribution of those outside
the élite, and that we do so at our peril.[51]

[51] G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *The Class Struggle in the
Ancient Greek World* (1982), esp. ch. 6. For an
influential critique of totalizing models, see in particu-
lar E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist*
Strategy (2nd edn, 2001), esp. ch. 3, who stress the
'overdetermined' nature of ideology; J. Frow, *Marx-*
ism and Literary History (1986).

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There seem to me, then, to be two principal problems with the current understand-
ing of verse invective. Firstly, Corbeill's analysis, in particular, tends to elide the people
as a whole, except as a third-party, the audience who passively accept the assumptions
behind the invective performances.[52] Even if that were true, how shall we understand it
when the people themselves, or sections thereof, take over the subject position as a
producer of invective poetry? Secondly, even if we restrict our focus to élite contexts
and production, the ideals — and political advantages — of homogeneity seem to be
wildly overstated, not least in the turmoil of the late Republic.

This can be best seen if we consider the case of Caesar, and his creative sexuality.
Corbeill has noticed that Caesar in particular, and to a lesser extent Pompey, disrupt
any picture of mutual invective reinforcing social solidarity.[53] Canonical, for him, as an
example of the normative function of invective is Cicero. I question whether this is the
right way round. In terms of the power politics of the first century B.C., it seems clear
that for the major players at least, it was not how well you could fit in that was at stake,
but how distinctive and individual you were.[54] Indeed, we may ask whether 'fitting in'
was ever a dominant characteristic feature or interest of the Roman élite. Certainly, the
witticisms that are associated with Caesar tend not to avoid individualism but rather
positively embrace it — promoting the individual over the state structures, or over the
élite as a collective. Thus, Caesar's response to being labelled a tart and a queen is to
embrace the abuse and to compare himself with Semiramis and the Amazons (Suet.,
Div. Iul. 22.2).

This is a great comeback by Caesar because it diffuses the Foucauldian equation of
penetrated = passive = woman = powerless. But this itself suggests a further line of
approach to political invective, which is that it is the performative value itself of such
comebacks which is most at stake rather than their ideological or material content. If the
exchange of abuse can be seen in part as a game, albeit one that could be played for high
stakes, Caesar's response is formally excellent, capping the original joke and redirecting
it. But formal excellence is no good without polished performance, in particular timing.
Whether or not an audience 'really' believed or disbelieved the lines they were fed is
perhaps not the point. Whether the politician let himself be outmanoeuvred (let alone
hurt) in a performance context is a better indication of power and powerlessness than
the actual insult offered. Moreover, in this celebratory (or brazen) approach to sexuality-
in-performance, perhaps an early example of camp,[55] it might be thought that Caesar is
aggressively staking out a markedly individual subject position — invaluable to his
political project.

Further nuances can be derived, if we consider the alleged relationship between
Caesar and Nicomedes of Bithynia. Suetonius (*Div. Iul.* 49.1) claims that this was the
major and perennial stain on his character — or at least the allegation that Caesar was
the bottom and Nicomedes the top. In Suetonius' narrative, Caesar's flamboyant or
celebratory approach is juxtaposed with at least two different contexts and producers.
On the one hand, Suetonius introduces as *notissimos versus* the abuse from the neoteric
Calvus,

                    Bithynia quicquid
            et p[r]edicator Caesaris umquam habuit.

                . . . what ever Bithynia
        and the fucker of Caesar possessed.   Calvus fr. 17

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[52] Richlin's account is less problematic in this
respect.
[53] Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 60–1; Corbeill, op. cit.
(n. 38), ch. 5, esp. 195–7.
[54] Cicero himself can be seen to exemplify this kind
of manoeuvre. See C. E. W. Steel, *Cicero, Rhetoric
and Empire* (2001), 181–9, esp. 188, who argues that
the invective of the *de provinciis consularibus* 3–12
was, within a broader context of the renegotiation of

hierarchies of power, about Cicero performing him-
self as an orator.
[55] As a study of camp, the work of E. Newton,
Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America
(1979) is now dating, but remains central to more
theoretical treatments such as J. Butler, *Gender
Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*
(1991).

but at the same time, the same idea is taken up by his soldiers, marching as to triumph (*vers. triumph.*, fr. 1):

> Gallias Caesar subegit , Nicomedes Caesarem:
> ecce Caesar nunc triumphat qui subegit Gallias,
> Nicomedes non triumphat, qui subegit Caesarem.

> Caesar mastered Gaul, Nicomedes mastered Caesar:
> Now it's the triumph of Caesar, who mastered Gaul,
> not the triumph of Nicomedes, who mastered Caesar.
>
> vers. triumph. fr. 1 (Suet., *Div. Iul.* 49.4)[56]

This suggests that there are other divisions in Roman society that we need to consider beyond individual versus fellow-élite. Nowhere is the problem of positionality more effectively demonstrated than in this fragment. Soldiers, citizens, and Caesar, not to mention the Gauls and implicitly the Roman élite are all implicated in this fragment's celebration — if it is that — of their leader.

The importance of considering producers, performance, and context in the treatment of 'popular' verse, and the extent to which comfortable assumptions can be challenged in a non-élite context and from a non-élite perspective, can also be seen when considering the funerary epigram. An important example is the epitaph for a workman from the shipyards in Arles, Caecilius Niger (*CLE* 1191). The inscription was erected by the fellow workmates of the deceased (*artifices . . . sodales*, 11) clubbing together. This is in itself striking: very few other verse inscriptions feature *artifices* (only one in *CLE*, to be precise).[57] Likewise groups of *sodales* rarely act in such a way or write of themselves in such a fashion, and never do they stress their role as fellow *artifices*. What is particularly striking, however, is that in the three other clear instances in *CLE* of *sodales* putting up inscriptions, the verse is atrocious and rarely extends beyond conventional platitudes.[58] *CLE* 1191, by contrast, is very respectable verse (although the absence of line-ends makes it impossible to be certain); furthermore, it is built up through clever intertextual play that engages to some extent with the literary tradition but to a much larger extent with the traditional formulae of funerary verse. This extends and manipulates the traditional roles and positions constructed for the dead, the reader, and those responsible for erecting the inscription, all serving to emphasize the collective identity of the *sodales* and the dead man.[59]

> Praete]riens quicumque leges h[aec carmina nostra,
>   qua]e tibi defuncti nomina ver[a dabunt,
> incompto]s elegos veniam peto ne ver[earis
>   perlegere, et dicas carmen ha[bere fidem
> Caecilius Niger hic ille s[epultus ad undas,   5
>   quo cernis titulum, sta[bat et ipse loco.
> nunc tibi navales pauci damus ul[tima dona,
>   hoc et defuncto corpore munus [habe.
> ossa tuis urnis optamus dulce quiesc[ant
>   sitque levis membris terra mo[lesta tuis.   10
> artifi]ci artifices Nigro damus ista so[dales
>   carmina quae claudit rap[idus Rhodanus

> Whoever [pass]es by and reads [this poetry of ours,
>   which] will give you truly the names of the dead,

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[56] The interpretation of *subigo* as a metaphor of sexual mastery follows Adams, op. cit. (n. 32), 155–6. An alternative interpretation from the working of leather, 'to work (i.e. masturbate) someone' is available, preferred by *OLD* s.v. *subigo* 8b.

[57] *CLE* 483, a dedication to an *artifex* husband and father. Cf. M. L. Fele, *Concordantiae in Carmina Latina Epigraphica* (1988), s.v. *artifex*.

[58] *CLE* 405 (where the grammatical and metrical flaws are only amplified by the attempt to weld an Ovidian quote into the first line), 572 (Bücheler suggests gladiators or huntsmen), 803.

[59] There is some commentary in Lattimore, op. cit. (n. 49), 233–4. Compare the epigram for a dead charioteer from Tarraco (*CLE* 500 = *ML* 112), who though a *pauper* has an epitaph arranged through a whip-round by his colleagues (Lattimore) or fans (Courtney).

> I beg your indulgence for these [disordered?] elegies, that you are not af[raid
>   to read them to the end, and that you say the poem [has sincerity.
> Caecilius Niger is the man who lies buried here next to the waves,
>   where you see the headstone; he himself used to stand in this place.
> Now we few naval-workers are giving you our [last gifts.
>   — accept the honour though the body here is dead.
> We wish that your bones sleep easily in your urn
>   and that the troublesome earth lies easy on your limbs.
> Craftsman to craftsman we, his mates, are giving to Niger these very
>   lines which the sw[ift Rhône] envelops.   *CLE* 1191.3–4

Opening invitations to the *praeteriens* traveller to 'stop, look and read' are ubiquitous and straightforward. These verses, though, shift the ground away from a request for the reader to stop and take notice. Instead, the standard formula(e) are developed: it is unselfconsciously assumed that the reader *will* be reading the poem[60] and *is* looking at the *titulus*. But rather than the *titulus* (the header with the formal record, or perhaps the inscribed tablet as a whole), it is the *carmina* that are emphasized, and presented as authentically the source or text of Niger's names.[61] Unlike the author/subject of a similar, if much briefer, epigraphic invitation to the passer-by, the *sodales* do not draw attention to their own poetic skill, if indeed they were responsible for the actual versification.[62] Nonetheless, there is a sense here of something special. Although lines 3–4 read like diffidence, the technical use of *elegos* (3), not mirrored elsewhere in *CLE*, suggests a formal interest that is unusual and a concentration on the poetic that is significant. Indeed we may have an echo here in the epigraphic realm of the ironic disclaimer for poetic endeavour that goes all the way back in Latin verse to Catullus' *nugae*.[63]

For it is the *carmina* themselves which are the last *munus* (8, cf. *ul[tima dona* 7). And the reader is not (only) being encouraged to read to the bitter end (*perlegere*)[64] in order to see *who* is buried here, but is being invited in specifically to appreciate the *fides* of the *carmina*, that is to say, the *fides* of the relationship between dedicators and dedicatee. The suggestion, I think, is that it is their identity and solidarity as fellow *navales . . . artifices* honouring a peer that is on display here: thus the repetition of first-person plurals, 'navales pauci damus' (7) echoed by the penultimate 'arti[fi]ci artifices Nigro damus ista sodales | carmina' (11). This emphasis on their identity as *artifices* is reinforced by the one clearly identifiable link to the literary tradition, via the Hesiodic conception of the good form of *Eris*, the mutual rivalry that sets one craftsman against another in the pursuit of excellence (τέκτονι τέκτων, *Works and Days* 25).[65] These lines frame yet another development of a common formula, which again scripts anew the role-play in the reading of epitaph. The invitation to the traveller to wish the bones an easy rest in the ground, 's(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis)',[66] is shifted away from a transaction between the passer-by and the dead and instead re-oriented as a presentation *to* the passer-by of the feelings of the *sodales*. That is, it is a presentation of the fellow-feeling

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[60] Closest is *CLE* 133.1: 'Quisque praeteriens titulum scriptum legeris . . .'

[61] For *nomina ver[a*, compare *CLE* 465 A 11, referring to the *titulus*. *CLE* 1191 is itself prefaced by just such a formal header.

[62] *CLE* 477, epitaph of M. Publicus Unio. The self-pluming is, alas, woefully misplaced. Courtney makes a general observation that '. . . we find literary adornment grafted onto basically subliterary material, which is an interesting testimony to an aspiration, sometimes almost painful, towards culture' (*ML*, pp. 9–10).

[63] Indeed, if the supplement in l. 3 is correct, then there seems to be a rather pointed reworking of Vergil's description of rustic poetry in the *Georgics* (*versibus incomptis*, 2.386) and/or of Horace's dissociation of a *vir bonus et prudens* from *incomptis* (sc.

versibus) at *Ars Poetica* 445–6. For a range of technical uses of *elegos*, see, for example, Domitius Marsus fr. 6.3, Juvenal 1.4, Pliny, *Ep.* 7.2.3, 7.2.7. I am indebted to one of the journal's referees, who compares similar Ovidian disclaimers (e.g. the epigram that introduces the second edition of the *Amores*), for making me realize there was much more to this epigram than I had at first thought. The concluding *claudit* shows a further degree of self-conscious self-referentiality.

[64] Invitations to *perlegere* also usually refer to the *titulus*, although it appears with another set of apparently modest *versuculos* in (the very fragmentary) *CLE* 1234.7, and with a *carmen* at *CLE* 2068.2.

[65] A connection with Hesiod was first suggested by Leo (cited in Bücheler's apparatus ad loc.).

[66] cf. *CLE* 1451–7, 1482.

and identification as *navales artifices* (and, not to be understated, the emotional bond)[67] with the dead Caecilius Niger.

Thus in *CLE* 1191, we can see intertextual play with both the discourse of funerary epigram and the literary tradition, in such a way that considerably complicates the usual roles and positions in the reading of the former. But it is not an appeal for attention or sympathy, nor even a celebration of the achievements of the dead man, but rather a form of collective expression and identity which poses a challenge to the reader. If we return to the poetry of invective, a similar problematizing of hierarchies of power can be seen in the epitaph devoted to invective against the freedwoman, Acte. Here, any normative function is more than somewhat modified by the frankly pathetic description of the *patronus*. The self-pitying narrative deconstructs any claims of this invective to power. Again, although issues of hierarchy and power are at stake in the Vibii inscription, they are far from the idealized expression of hegemony. While this fragment may be reincorporating the Vibii into the mass of Roman wankers, this is invoking a rather different hierarchical game than, say, that involved in Cicero's abuse of Clodius.

In all these examples, it is impossible to consider interpretation separately from issues of performance, speaker/producer, and context, and it is also clear that within the broader context of invective at Rome, verse, and in particular popular verse, presents a different set of issues of production and reception to that presented by off-the-cuff comebacks in the Senate or rhetorical *tours-de-force* at the lawcourts. Moreover, verse itself also appears to have been particularly problematic or particularly powerful. Suetonius frames the bulk of abuse on this theme, referring to *actiones*, *edicta*, letters, and memoirs, within two instances of verse invective, one from an élite context, one from the opposite end of the social and literary spectrum, beginning with a pointed *paraleipsis* of Calvus' verses on Caesar, and ending with the verses sung by the soldiery at his Gallic triumph (*vers. triumph.* fr. 1, above). This framing of the account with these choice examples of obscene verse raises two questions. Why was verse invective so important for Suetonius and how should we relate it to other forms of literary production? And is the same point being made by both Calvus and the soldiers, and from the same subject position? These questions are, I think, related.

It is important elsewhere for Suetonius to note that Caesar came to some kind of arrangement with the producers of two of the most conspicuous producers of abuse — again Calvus and Catullus.[68] Admittedly, Suetonius presents the treatment of verse invective (amongst other forms of publicly circulating material) as an index of the good or bad emperor,[69] and Caesar's forbearance, later in his career, of Pitholaos and Aulus Caecina is presented as an example of the *clementia* of the autocrat.[70] In the much more fractious air of the late Republic, invective presented at the least a more pressing problem than simply trying the patience — or mercy — of the target. And while we may wonder why the imperial biographer is concerned to present verse in this way, so too, at the other end of the spectrum, we may also wonder why a disgruntled john should bother to put his piece of invective in half-decent verse on a bar wall.

Courtney, introducing an anthology of what he takes to be the best of inscribed verse, suggests some purely formal reasons for the impulse to versify:

> In the case of graffiti verse form can concentrate the wit by its concision, and it is also the natural medium for the expression of erotic feelings. Humor, too fits verse much better than sober-sided prose.   Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, p. 9

In a more sophisticated variation on this kind of approach, Richlin has argued that verse functions as 'metacommunication', sending a cue to the audience that the message is humorous. She has also pointed out the presence of jingles and rhymes as a stable part of the repertoire of popular verse.[71] A particularly conspicuous example of repetition,

[67] For *sodales* who are described as having come and wept, cf. *CLE* 1100.3, 1149.3.

[68] Suet., *Div. Iul.* 73.1.

[69] See Catharine Edwards, 'Beware of imitations: theatre and the subversion of imperial identity', in

J. Elsner and J. Masters (eds), *Reflections of Nero* (1994), 83–97.

[70] Compare Tac., *Ann.* 4.34.5 for Caesar's relationships with Bibaculus and Catullus.

[71] Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 64–5.

verbal and structural parallels, and jingle is the soldiers' song about Caesar and Nicomedes, which almost wholly depends upon reversals among the different parties involved. Likewise parallelism plays a central part in Octavian's verses (Fulvia/Manius, Fulvia/Glaphyra, Antony/Octavian), and substitution in the Vibii riff.

These formal elements — puns and metaphors, as well as repetition, reversal, and capping lines — play as much with the ideological as the semantic field. Such, at least, would be the conclusion of a cognitive theory of humour rather than a social cohesion model.[72] But this gets us no nearer to the importance of verse. Clearly, the cultural context is important, not just the influence of Greek models, but more home-grown occasions for abusive verses — such as the Fescennini that took place at weddings. However, we are not dealing with verse that existed within a segregated performance space any more than within the rigidly demarcated space of literature. What makes verse important, threatening, and valuable is its performativity, and most crucially its re-performativity. The combination of pithy, epigrammatic construction with wit may make for a sharp one-liner; what gives lasting value amongst other things is the added stylization of the verse form that in turn facilitates memorization, collective utterance, and wide circulation.

Such a model of re-performativity would stress the fluid interchange of material between different social agents and contexts, blurring hierarchies. This is why Suetonius can cite both Calvus and the soldiers in the same breath. When Suetonius refers to these, no less than to the Mamurra epigrams of Catullus or the verses on Caesar and Nicomedes, he is talking not just soundbite politics, in which perfomativity counts, but enduring notoriety. In this sense, the distinction between élite and mass verse, literary and subliterary breaks down, or at the least becomes highly problematic. In terms of its consumption and reproduction, there is nothing to control their absorption into the same cultural and political blender. Richlin has argued that what distinguishes the higher 'literary' abuse of Catullus from other forms of élite invective is the increased level of abstraction, with one of the parties safely placed, as it were, 'offstage'.

> The enjoyment of a reader or audience comes from being a spectator at the exaggerated and elegant contest, without having to hear any arguments from the other side.[73]

Richlin, though, is only half-right. If reception itself were simply a passive activity, then this model of the audience lying back and enjoying the ride might be sufficient. But reception is a much more *constructive* process than that — not just in terms of interpretation, but also in terms of further dissemination. Once the epigram is out of the bottle, neither the author nor the audience are easily pinned down because of their anonymous, transitory, and/or collective nature. Thus the victim is left in command of the field, or to be more precise, the interpretative field is left in command of the victim. And this is why, I think, the invective poems of Catullus and company were threatening.

Thus in terms of reception, Suetonius is happy to quote lines of Calvus as *notissimi* in much the same way that he quotes the anonymous lines on the feast of twelve gods, apparently of less 'respectable' vintage. Such anonymous productions are regularly presented by Suetonius under the rubric, *vulgo* or *vulgatum*, even *vulgatissimum* as in the case of the soldiers' song.[74] Particularly relevant to the time of Horace' *Satires* is one that refers sardonically to Octavian's conflict with Sextus Pompey in the early 30s — at that time not entirely successful:

> postquam bis classe victus naves perdidit,
> aliquando ut vincat, ludit assidue aleam.

[72] Theorists from Aristotle to Freud to Raskin have stressed the importance of compression and cognitive shifts — the process of condensation and displacement — as the basis of a good joke. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a19–b3; S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, translated and edited by J. Strachey (1991 [1905]); V. Raskin, *Semantic Mech-* *anisms of Humor* (1985). Compare also the semiotic aspects of the work of Bakhtin.

[73] Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 212.

[74] Compare *vers. pop.* fr. 4, *vers. tr.* fr. 3, cf. *vers. pop.* fr. 7 (*vulgo*); *vers. pop.* fr. 9, cf. *vers. tr.* fr. 1 (*vulgatum*).

After being defeated twice and losing his ships,
To win one day, he keeps playing with his chips.   *vers. pop.* fr. 9.

For du Quesnay, these lines bear the hallmark of Pompeian propaganda. I doubt, however, that it is that simple. The question of authorship remains open, and I would like to keep in play the role of the public at large — not least given the inscriptional evidence, as I have discussed. Even if we should be careful in terms of seeing these as genuinely popular compositions, these and similar verses certainly rapidly become a part of public and popular discourse.

Here, questions of literacy are not in themselves entirely decisive.[75] Not only does Suetonius present many of the poems as reliant on oral transmission and production, but where he (and others) give an account of the contexts of the poetry, sung and inscribed, these without exception reinforce the idea of public orientation and a popular discourse.[76] Popular verse productions are always related to public sites, usually sites of crucial propaganda importance. As one of the few means of direct and active popular expression in the Roman state, these verses are situated unerringly at sites of maximum effectiveness. Thus lines against the consul Ventidius Bassus were situated publicly *per vias* throughout the capital (*vers. pop.* fr. 3C).[77] Sheer quantity of public exposure is at stake here, but this widespread reproduction of invective is perhaps also playing off institutional practices of inscription. Some control on this can again be offered by the epigraphic record. Although not much verse directly deals with the nuts and bolts of political manoeuvrings, there are indirect reflections of the tendency for informal political graffiti to colonize public spaces. In particular, a number of funerary inscriptions throughout the Roman world, in warning off the writers of electioneering graffiti, demonstrate an awareness of a public discourse that would aggressively re-use all available monumental space.[78]

The activity of the *scriptores* is best evidenced in Pompeii, where the local municipal electioneering tactics involved a relatively stable set of limited, prose formulas.[79] In Rome of the Republic, at least, public graffiti could be much more clever and pointed. Statues of key political players were often specific targets for verse graffiti. Both Caesar and Octavian had statues emended in this way with a new paratext — Caesar for making himself dictator, Octavian for making himself rich in the proscriptions (*vers. pop.* 5, 8). On one level, this may be the epigraphic equivalent of the well-known variants on 'Jesus Saves!' and 'Keegan scores on the rebound!'.[80] On another level, popular production is appropriating and subverting élite traditions of competitive display and propaganda in order to make specific political points.

Two further contexts were both public and performative — vociferously so. One I have alluded to briefly, namely the triumph; the other was the theatre. The role of the stage and its mass audience in Roman politics is beyond the scope of this paper, but it intersects with my story here at a number of points. Historians and literary critics have stressed its importance as one of the prime vectors for the *plebs* to make its views known — both in Republic and Principate.[81] As such it could both be valued as a live-action opinion poll, and be potentially dangerous. Macrobius reports an attempt by Caesar to intervene with Laberius, the writer of mime, Laberius' use of the stage to

[75] W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (1989) presents a minimalist case. I am somewhat sceptical about the comparative evidence he adduces, and emphasize that my thesis in no way depends on an assumption of 'full' literacy (i.e. competent reading *and* writing) amongst all consumers or producers of verse invective.

[76] Compare the linking of twin vectors of public invective against Nero: 'multa Graece Latineque proscripta aut uulgata sunt', 'many lines in Greek and Latin were written up or passed around' (Suet., *Nero* 39.2).

[77] Glossed as 'house fronts and columns' by Fraenkel, op. cit. (n. 35), 58.

[78] See also *CLE* 194–6; for discussion, see Lattimore, op. cit. (n. 49), 125; *ML* 103a–d.

[79] See the analysis of H. Mouritsen, *Elections, Magistrates and Municipal Life: Studies in Pompeian Epigraphy* (1988).

[80] Quoted and discussed in J. N. J. Palmer, *The Logic of the Absurd: On Film and Television Comedy* (1987), 52–3. I have encountered many variants.

[81] cf. Z. Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps* (1969), ch. 2; Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 86.

reply, and the effect of that response on the audience.[82] Likewise, Suetonius records the co-opting of a theatrical tag by the audience to be directed against Octavian.

> sed et populus quondam universus ludorum die et accepit in contumeliam eius et adsensu maximo conprobavit versum in scaena pronuntiatum de gallo Matris deum tympanizante:
>> videsne, ut cinaedus orbem digito temperat?

> Once during a festival, the whole people took as an insult to him, and responded with huge applause to a line spoken onstage about a tambourine-banging eunuch of the Mother of the gods:
>> Do you see how the poof makes the globe beat to his tune?

<div align="right">Suet., Div. Aug. 68</div>

Here, the audience is engaged in an active role, in an act of allegorical interpretation, developing or involving the pun on *orbem*. However, just as the theatre could be the site for an audience decoding explicit or implicit political interventions from the stage, or actively reinterpreting the stage action to suit their interests,[83] so too they could provide their own verse content. A particularly good example is offered in *vers. pop.* 10, which attacks an upstart freedman, Sarmentus, and also through him, quite probably, Maecenas. In response to Sarmentus taking his seat amongst the *equites*, the theatre is said to have responded in verse, attacking his credentials. In fact, if editors are right to see in these lines separate instances of abuse, this figure seems to have produced a veritable sub-genre of abuse (all of which display variants on the types of joke that we have encountered already):

> – alium scriptum habet Sarmentus, aliud populus voluerat.
> – digna dignis: sic Sarmentus habeat crassas compedes.
> – rustici, ne nihil agatis, aliquis Sarmentum alliget.

> – Sarmentus has one mark; the people had wanted another.
> – Just deserts: let Sarmentus have some heavy fetters.
> – Country boys, don't just stand there, someone bundle up Sarmentus.

<div align="right">vers. pop. fr. 10[84]</div>

If we are setting up here the model of an ongoing dialogue between stage and auditorium, further continuities are afforded by the metre of popular song. A large proportion of popular output — that preserved in texts and that preserved on stone — is in the iambic senarius or trochaic septenarius that were the dominant metres of Roman drama. As well as comedy, Atellan farce, mime, and the later versified fables of Phaedrus all used language and metre that would find a place on the continuum that stretches from Plautus to Terence. This linguistic and metrical continuity encouraged slippage between the two. On the one hand, informal inscribed verse seems to directly quote from both drama and fable, on the other hand there is ample evidence for epigrams in response to or promoting actors, dancers, pantomimists, gladiators, and other entertainers.[85]

It is this popular Roman stratum against which the segregating manoeuvres of Horace need to be measured, as indeed (in a rather different way) do the earlier

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[82] Macrobius, *Sat.* 2.7.

[83] Similarly, Cicero reports audience interpretation and response to a line from Diphilos with reference to Pompey (*Ad Att.* 2.19.3 [=39.3 Shackleton Bailey], cf. Val. Max. 6.2.9). For the importance of allegory in coded criticism in the literary tradition, see F. Ahl, 'The art of safe criticism in Greece and Rome', *AJP* 105 (1984), 174–208; at the theatre, S. Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience* (1994), ch. 3; cf. also Edwards, op. cit. (n. 69). It is worth noting in passing that it was too explicit (gestural) reference that landed Datus in trouble with Nero (Suet., *Nero* 39.3).

[84] Quoted by the scholia on Juvenal, *Satires* 5.3,

which also give the Maecenas connection. The first plays on enrolment in the *equites* versus the brand of a slave, the second caps the *equites'* ring with heavy fetters, the third takes the name Sarmentus and puns on *sarmentum* (=a stick of firewood). For insults against Maecenas, see Courtney, *FLP* ad loc. and pp. 276–81.

[85] The *sententiae* in senarii of *CLE* 32–7 seem to derive at least in part from the stage. *CLE* 43 presents the beginning of aesopic fables in senarii. For entertainers and entertainment, see *CLE* 233, 358, 925–7, cf. 41, 359–60; *ML* IIG.

hellenizing moves of Catullus, Calvus, and Bibaculus. For these latter poets, though, there are clear continuities with the popular tradition in terms of both invective and rhythm in their employment of the elegiac epigram and, in the case of Bibaculus, the senarius.[86] Ross has argued at length that Catullus maintains a rougher style in his short elegiac pieces.[87] However, as Marxist critics, from Lukacs onwards, have stressed, formal elements themselves have ideological implications. Clearly, Catullus' play with his own subject position is implicated within a formal agenda of what constitutes Rome, masculinity, and popular identity. It is not, I think, too strong to suggest that Catullus' exuberant, polymorphic writing of the body is reflected in and refracted through the promiscuous polymetrics of his verse. In the same way, albeit after increasing literary segregation and through the exploitation of a different poetic form, Phaedrus' adoption of (or return to) mime-like senarii speaks volumes about his own stance within Roman culture and hierarchies of power.[88]

It is quite a step, though, from the individual poet or the individual actor to the production of verse by audiences *en masse*. And the importance of rhythm and song in public demonstrations is perhaps the most powerful reason for the importance of verse in the Roman political context. It is interesting to note that the verses that are securely attested as deriving from the audience at the theatre and the soldiers at the triumph are all septenarii. No less than the senarii, these reflected closely everyday speech; but their role, together with other long metres within the *cantica* of Plautus and Terence, accompanied by the *aulos*, suggests that they were in some sense chanted.[89] This would make them ideal to be taken up in mass, popular performance.

Anyone who doubts that metrical output is either possible or useful in a mass audience only has to go to their nearest football ground for some highly inventive chants, displaying a degree of formalization and intertexts that range from folksong to pop to opera. Equally, the language and rhythm of the contemporary popular protest or demonstration have their own repertoire. Likewise in Rome, we see intertextually flexible verse used as a critical weapon even in the edgiest of confrontations. Thus the accounts of Milo's trial and the confrontation between the supporters of Pompey and Clodius, conducted at the level of, amongst other things, chants and songs. As in the case of Caesar, the popular abuse of Pompey was, thematically at least, parallel to lines of Calvus. The question of the direction of influence remains open, if indeed it needs to be resolved at all.[90] In another confrontation — this time between Alexandrians and Vespasian — the metre of the demonstrators led the normally mild-mannered Vespasian to lose his rag: the idea of classical metre as intellectual terrorism is particularly appealing.[91]

[86] For Calvus' use of elegiacs, see fr. 17 on Caesar and fr. 18 on Pompey; for Bibaculus' use of the senarius, see fr. 3.

[87] D. O. Ross, *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (1969), 115–69.

[88] For the metre of Phaedrus and its relation to mime, see J. Wight Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age* (1927), 153–4; H. MacC. Currie, 'Phaedrus the fabulist', *ANRW* 32.1 (1984), 497–513, at 506–8 (with bibliography).

[89] Conventionally, septenarii and the other long metres of Roman Comedy are given the label 'recitative' on the analogy of modern opera; in fact we know next to nothing about the phrasing and performance of these verses beyond their musical accompaniment. For discussion of the evidence, see G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment* (1952), 362–4; W. Beare, *The Roman Stage* (3rd edn, 1964), 219–32; cf. W. M. Lindsay, *Early Latin Verse* (1922), 281–5. A comparison with Old Comedy is remarked upon by a Latin grammarian (Marius Victorinus, *Gramm. Lat.* 6.78), but although we have a label, παρακαταλογή, that can be used for 'recitative' within Greek drama, the performance of

the long metres is again disputed. See the discussion of A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 2nd edn with addenda, revised by J. Gould and D. M. Lewis (1988), 156–67.

[90] Plutarch, *Pomp.* 48.7, Cicero, *ad Q. fr.* 2.3, cf. Calvus fr. 18. See Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 86–7 for some discussion. For parody of Atellans, cf. the lampoon on Pupius, *FLP*, 107. The theme of *vers. pop.* fr. 3 *FLP* (on P. Ventidius Bassus) is recalled in *Catalepton* 10 and Horace, *Epod.* 4, but it is much reduced. *CLE* 95 borrows the language of wills. The general question of literary influence on popular verse lies outside the scope of this paper, but see, in the first place, the indices of Bücheler. As with the élite and popular abuse of Caesar and Pompey, the question of whether Octavian's ditty (fr. 1, above) influenced the abuse found inscribed on his soldiers' slingshots, or vice-versa, or they simply shared a common invective field is impossible to resolve. See further the discussion of Hallett, op. cit. (n. 43).

[91] Dio 65.8.5 (A.D. 70). The metre is τοῦ κατακεκλασμένου τοῦ ... ἀναπαίστου. The Tarentine abuse of L. Valerius Postumius and fellow envoys (Dio 9.39.8; 283 B.C.) was also a form of anapaestic.

In a different sphere, we also have evidence of the septenarius in soldiers' songs more generally.[92] However, it was at the triumph if anywhere that these chants came into their own. Pliny the Elder gives some idea of how these were performed — *alternis versibus* — suggesting a kind of call and response structure that would reinforce other linguistic parallelisms, which as we have seen are central to this type of invective.[93] And yet, although these verses are often subsumed under the label of invective, it is not at all clear how we should account for the soldiers' songs. The orthodox explanation for triumphal verse is that it is a time of licensed reversal, an instance of the carnivalesque in Bakhtin's formulation, where soldiers are given temporary permission to abuse their general. This could be linked on the one hand with the theatrical performances at the Floralia, and the master-slave reversals of the Saturnalia. Bakhtin himself generalized this into a broader claim for the context and reception of satirical verse and epigram more generally.

> In Rome, the many diverse varieties of satire and epigram were linked, and were designed to be linked with the saturnalia; they were either written for saturnalia, or at least were created under cover of that legitimized carnival license enjoyed by the festival.
>
> Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 129[94]

However, it should be emphasized that Bakhtin's own perspective on carnival was never particularly stable. Particularly in the later *Rabelais* book, the emphasis is much more on the transgression than on the licence (which has tended to predominate in Classicists' adoption of Bakhtin's analysis). Subsequent historical analysis has also stressed that carnival as a material phenomenon rather than the carnivalesque as an abstraction was always potentially threatening to the established order — there was always the danger that things could 'get out of hand'.[95]

Similarly, I want to suggest here that free speech at the triumph was never simply a case of direct reversal. Indeed, to build upon some earlier observations, the problems of context and performance indicate that there was much more than a binary that could be potentially reversed. As I noted above, there were a number of different players involved. This poses particularly acute problems of interpretation for these forms of popular verse. Both the (at least) triple-handed interaction at the triumph, and the problems of interpretation are clearly demonstrated in the following example:

> Antonius L. Caesarem avunculum, Lepidus Paulum fratrem proscripserant; nec Planco gratia defuit ad impetrandum ut frater eius Plancus Plotius proscriberetur, (4) eoque inter iocos militares qui currum Lepidi Plancique secuti erant inter execrationem civium usurpabant hunc versum
>   de germanis, non de Gallis, duo triumphant consules.

> Antony proscribed his uncle Lucius Caesar, Lepidus his brother Paulus; and Plancus did not shrink from ordering the proscription of his brother Plancus Plotius, and for that reason among their squaddies' jokes the soldiers who had followed the chariot of Lepidus and Plancus, amidst the abuse from (or of) the citizens, used (borrowed or assumed) this verse:
>   The pair of consuls are triumphing over their relations not the Gauls.
>
> *vers. triumph.* fr. 5 (Vell. Pat. 2.67.3–4)

At the very least, soldiers, citizens, and generals are each parties in this particular drama. Velleius' description of the soldiers' performance is both as part of the train of Lepidus

[92] Soldiers' songs — *vers. pop.* fr. 15 on Galba as general; for other references, see Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 94. For a chant supposed to derive from gladiatorial combat, see *Versus populares in Caesarem et similia* fr. 8 M, 'non te peto, piscem peto; quid me fugis, Galle?' Morel located this among the triumphal/political songs on Caesar in his collection, which may imply that he believed it to have some political reference (perhaps through the address of the gladiator/Gaul?). The metre is unclear: Morel takes it as ionic a maiore, rather than the first part of a pair of senarii, because of the lack of regular caesura, and because *Galle* is awkward to fit in at the start of the line (though, *pace* Morel, surely not impossible in some context).

[93] Pliny, *NH* 1.144 = *vers. triumph.* fr. 4.

[94] For triumphal verses, see *Dialogic Imagination*, op. cit. (n. 1), 58. See also Richlin, op. cit. (n. 38), 74–7.

[95] For a survey of literature on carnival, see S. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice: Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (1993), ch. 3.

and Plancus *and* within the context of the citizen spectators. It is unclear here whether the soldiers are (a) also abusing the citizens, (b) performing within the context of abuse *by* the citizens, depending on whether *civium* is an objective or subjective genitive. That is, were the soldiers abusing not just their general, but *also* the citizen populace at large; *or* were the soldiers' *iocos militares* supplementing, picking up, and amplifying popular discontent at the time of the proscriptions; or, indeed vice-versa? The verb *usurpare* itself has a range of meanings that only serve to dramatize further the problems around the triumph. As well as simply employing such abuse, it could mean they borrowed the abuse (from the crowd), or indeed that they took it up and applied to themselves, as it were through the abuse of their general.[96] It is important to bear in mind here that out of all the contexts of licence that have been singled out within Roman culture, the triumph is the one most conspicuously bound up with power politics; the reading of the soldiers' verses and engagement with the spectators thus becomes particularly fraught, and particularly within the context of civil war. For the soldiers, the apparent abuse of a general (it is in fact more slyly ironic punning rather than direct execration) could be a paradoxical celebration of their general's transgressive power. If one adopts a bottom-up soldier perspective rather than our typical top-down view of an élite tearing itself apart with proscription and murder, the soldiers' verses could then become a celebration of their own political force — a reminder to the generals of their political base and a highly partisan demonstration to the public at large.

This line becomes clearer when we look in more detail at the verses associated with Caesar. An example treats of the admission of Gauls to the Senate. Suetonius cites a *libellus*, inviting people to refuse to tell the new senators the way to the Curia. He then cites, as a parallel to this, a pair of senarii — though the performance context and quite probably the performers themselves seem to be quite distinct from those of the *libellus*.

> Gallos Caesar in triumphum ducit, idem in curiam:
> Galli bracas deposuerunt, latum clavum sumpserunt
>
> Caesar is leading the Gauls to his triumph and the senate-house alike:
> The Gauls have taken off their trousers and put on the broad stripe.
>
> *vers. trium.* fr. 3 (*Div. Iul.* 80.2; septenarii)

The point about the Gauls is made in a context that stresses both Caesar's capriciousness and his superior generalship. The 'dilution' of the Senate with Gallic blood — or trousers — has to be seen in the context of both the class position of the soldiers themselves and the highly unconstitutional basis of Caesar's power. That is to say, in addition to celebrating their own and their general's power, they can also both be availing themselves of ethnic prejudice *and* exploiting that to make points about the Senate. In other words, these verses are highly ambivalent: questions of class, status, ethnicity, and political self-interest are all on a knife-edge. To write this off as simple reversal — or as crude invective — is simply inadequate.

A parallel to the playing with ethnicity is also provided by the riffs on Caesar's sexuality. As I noted above, one point of the famous Bithynia lines (*vers. triumph.* fr. 1) is the inversion of the assumptions of a link between penetration and power: Nicomedes fucked Caesar, but Caesar fucked the Gauls. In the context of other jokes at that triumph which played upon his alleged relationship with Cleopatra, Caesar is not being set up as a poor deluded 'pathic', an Aristophanic Kleisthenes with an army. Rather Caesar is being constructed as transcending categories of sexuality and power, and through him the soldiers themselves, who together with their general have either overturned or threatened to overturn convention in so many other ways. Their *otherness*

becomes the point.[97] Just as Caesar was clearly marking himself out from his fellow-élite, so too the soldiers have a certain political capital in distinguishing themselves from the populace at large, and not least the *urbani*. In *vers. triumph*. fr. 2, the soldiers' display of themselves to the gaze of the citizen-audience is stressed, and the emphasis is on their differing roles as social, political, and sexual agents.

> urbani, servate uxores moechum calvom adducimus
> aurum in Gallia effutuisti, hic sumpsisti mutuum.
>
> Townies lock up your wives: we're bringing home the bald shagger.
> The gold you fucked away in Gaul, you borrowed here.
>
> <div align="right">vers. trium. fr. 2 = Suet., Div. Iul. 51</div>

The opposition between *urbani* and *milites* pointedly asks the question: 'How are you to contain him/us?' Here, his sexual exploits are perhaps slightly less beyond the pale — whatever the theory, male adultery was always regarded with a certain amount of double standards — but the soldiers compensate by combining it with a creative approach to the city's finances. Indeed, there is something of a reversal of an ideology of empire — or perhaps stripping it bare. Gaul is presented as a soldier's playground — on the one hand a province-wide brothel, on the other a cheerful drain of the city's revenue. Again, in terms of the financiers who will have been stung by this, there is a class point here. One end of the census is laughing at the other, the way it has been taken for a ride and suffered collateral damage.

The rubric of 'popular verses', then, hides a potential array of contexts of performers and performance, audience and reception. As with élite invective, different sets of popular verses can be in direct conflict — often very direct, as the example of Clodian and Pompeian demonstrators. Moreover, the verses can be multi-directional and ambivalent, constructing partisan interests by piggy-backing on conventional or hegemonic ideologies and identities, and playing off different addressees and referents. Although the state of the evidence, above all, emphasizes the triumph as a particularly edgy context, this ambivalence and reperformativity can be seen in the verses that seem to derive from other popular contexts. Another example involves Caesar and his ineffectual consular colleague Bibulus.

> non Bibulo quiddam nuper sed Caesare factum est:
> nam Bibulo fieri consule nil memini.
>
> It wasn't under Bibulus but under Caesar that a certain something happened:
> I don't remember anything happening with Bibulus as consul.
>
> <div align="right">vers. pop. fr. 4 (Suet., Div. Iul. 20.2)</div>

These lines are usually interpreted as straightforward criticism of Caesar and his threat to the *mos maiorum*. Yet they are wholly dependent on who is using them. For, if anything they are as much targeted at the ineffectual Bibulus. One can more readily imagine these lines being exploited as a sardonic, yet factionally neutral, critique of the collapse (yet again) of conventional government. One can imagine other scenarios. The key point is that the connotations of the joke are flexible and are ready to be co-opted from a number of perspectives, including from below.

In terms of the political engagement of verse invective, it is clear, then, that we are dealing not only with élite jibes spilling over into wider circulation, but with the outputs from a number of groups, outputs that interacted and could be appropriated or reappropriated from context to context. Each different group had a stake and a voice in the political process. Verse, as we have seen, is a means for expressing that voice in a particularly effective manner and often at particularly ambivalent moments in the

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[97] For the soldiers on the relationship with Cleopatra, see Dio 43.20.1–2, along with reference again to Bithynia and to the elevation of officers to the Senate. From a later context, compare *vers. pop.* fr. 16 on Otho *moechus* — the question there is whether Otho is plausible as a source of grandiose, compelling transgression. Sometimes a *moechus* is just a *moechus*.

political or cultural life of the late Republic. And in this particular crisis, having at least half a hand on the levers of poetic production involved more than the infiltration of literature or culture in a narrow sense. That is not to say that such verse offers direct political dissent or serious systemic critique. We may follow the analysis of de Ste Croix who argues that the direct political role of the people was not central, 'except as members of the faction supporting an individual politician whom they believed to be a *popularis*' — and in particular Caesar. For all that recent works have tended to emphasize the active political role of the people, in passing legislation and deciding between rival speakers, it still seems to be the case that such actions can be seen as operating within the broader ideological system of aristocratic factionalism.[98] But what direct political action there was offered the potential for more significant contributions. And this is particularly the case with the more significant interventions of the army. As de Ste Croix notes,

> . . . the *plebs urbana*, simply because of their permanent presence at Rome, had some political influence as voters in the Assembly, and the senatorial oligarchy had to take account of them, in so far as they could function as a 'pressure group'. If necessary, they could riot. . . . The soldiers and veterans, however, were a very different matter, and potentially a very much more serious threat to the oligarchy: in the end they helped to bring down the Republic.[99]

I stress the word 'potential'. Clearly, we do not get very far down the road of a deconstruction of the oligarchical *status quo ante*. After the consolidations of Augustus, popular responses were fully implicated within the ideology of the Principate. De Ste Croix goes somewhat further and argues that, at least within the earlier Empire, the popular conception of the imperial regime was as a brake upon the Senatorial oligarchy, working in their interests.[100] Popular verse, though, like the theatre, continued to be a site for expressing varying responses to the Principate. Although Suetonius tends to use his select quotations to exemplify critiques of tyrannical behaviour, there is also evidence of positive engagement by the people, in particular through the backing of popular members of the imperial family, not least the family of Germanicus.[101] In this sense, it is a continuation in attenuated form of competing dynastic claims and attendant verse under the late Republic.

As we move back to consider Horace and his carefully de-politicized *Satires* in the light of this tradition, it is possible to extend the analysis to consider the social and cultural as well as political implications of verse invective. For the genre as a whole does nothing if not undermine the careful hierarchies of Roman society. Just as the soldiers exploit and in particular transgress conventional notions of gender and sexuality, money and status in order to define and draw attention to their own political position, so too the other popular verse wears much the same ideological clothing, in order to make points from below. Thus, the verses on food, banquets, and gambling — all subjects close, indeed, to the heart of the Pompeiian graffiti-writers and no doubt elsewhere — depict an élite culture of excess, even criminality. We may note with reference to Octavian the feast of the twelve gods, his refuge in gambling in response to military failure, and lines detailing the interest of both him and his father in fine Corinthian ware and, well, just plain cash.[102] Most excessive of all, at least if we are to believe the popular verse, was the career of L. Munatius Plancus, abortive politician and successful killer of baby storks.

> Rufus praetorius instituisse traditur ut ciconiarum pulli manducarentur, isque cum repulsam praeturae tulisset tale epigramma meruit
> > ciconiarum rufus iste conditor,
> > hic e duobus elegantior Plancis,

[98] See in particular F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (1998); H. Mouritsen, *Plebs and Politics in the Late Republic* (2001).

[99] de Ste Croix, op. cit. (n. 51), 357. For independent actions of soldiers and *plebs urbana*, see p. 358, nn. 24–5 (referring to Syme, op. cit. (n. 40), 118, 178–9, 180–1, 209, 217, 221, 231), 371.

[100] de Ste Croix, op. cit. (n. 51), 362, referring

specifically to Josephus, *AJ* 19.227–8 on the installation of Claudius.

[101] Thus, against ridicule of Nero's *domus aurea* (*vers. pop.* fr. 14c = Suet., *Nero* 39.2) measure verse supporting Germanicus himself (*vers. pop.* fr. 12) or expressing optimism for Caligula (*vers. pop.* fr. 13).

[102] *vers. pop.* frr. 7–9.

suffragiorum puncta non tulit septem:
ciconiarum populus ultus est mortem.

The praetorian Rufus is said to have introduced the practice of eating the chicks of storks,
and when he was rejected for the praetorship he earned for himself this sort of epigram:
this man, the red man who declared open season(ing) on storks,
this one, the suaver of the two Planci,
did not take seven votes from the electors:
the people avenged the storks' death
vers. pop. fr. 6 (Porph., *ad Serm.* 2.2.50)

In each case, specific points are made — electoral failure, subversion of Octavian's
propaganda link to Apollo, allegations of corruption in the proscriptions, two defeats at
sea. Equally, though, the point is conveyed through the general representation of an
élite that is variously indulging in private habits that are at best deprecated (acting), at
worst illegal (gambling); having more interest in food than politics; and moving up from
small-time dodgy dealer to grand-scale racketeering.

In these cases, I think that the points that are made are not concerned so much with
marking élite members out from their fellow-élite, but exploiting common assumptions
about members of that élite. A number of strategies are involved — bringing down to
the level of the street, exposing double moral standards, revealing contradictions within
the élite, grotesque excess and megalomania. It is entirely possible that these derive
from a narrowly partisan origin, but the gags hardly demand it. Whatever their origin,
if viewed from outside the élite, they are predicated upon a common sardonic view of
the élite — although not perhaps with any particular moral commitment — and a
complex subversion of hierarchy and/or social cohesion. On the one hand, there is a
representation of a marked difference. On the other, the mystique and mystery of an
élite is removed, in favour of a common materiality and a bodily common denominator.
The difference is overwhelmingly to do with scale and degree. While there might be
some common strands with abuse within the élite, these gags are not in any
straightforward fashion ensuring social cohesion; indeed, the opposite is the case. The
example of Plancus the stork-killer, demonstrates this most clearly. Yes, we are seeing
here a play on greed and the increasingly bizarre dining habits of the élite; but it is as
much about the making strange of the form of the refined dinner party as any particular
flaw on the part of Plancus. Indeed, his problem is set up as precisely that of a society at
war with itself: the people did not vote for him. But equally, there is an ironic take on
the power of the people, or rather their lack of it — vengeance for the storks cuts both
ways.

Clearly, who that joke is told by is as important as who it is told against. Perhaps,
the most clear indication of this negotiability or openness of these *versus populares* are
the jokes on social climbing, to which those on Octavian's family life (*vers. pop.* fr. 8)
bear some affinities. One can compare the cracks against Sarmentus (fr. 10) and Bassus
(fr. 3) with the sneer against the size of Vetto's farm which has been preserved under the
name of Cicero.[103] Clearly, the Sarmentus lines and the Bassus lines have rather different
implications to Ciceronian snobbery. If the latter is laughing at the pretensions of Vetto,
keeping him at arm's length from the charmed circle, the abuse of Sarmentus and
Bassus, their pretensions and genuine social advancement, is predicated much more on
drawing them back into the mass of fellow mule-salesmen, freedmen, and others.
Hardly a subversive strategy, perhaps. On the other hand, what these gags have in
common with the ones concerned with food, drink, and gambling is a stance where the
élite are not qualitatively distinct from — and certainly no better than — the man in the
street or in the *caupona*, but where the scale of consumption, cant, and corruption
escalate to often ridiculous extremes. The jokes expose a common bodily materiality,

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[103] Cicero, fr. 4. Courtney classes this as 'dubium' (p. 156): 'the perfectly well-attested name Vetto has to be emended, since Cicero could not have shortened the -o.' For other verses on social climbing: *vers. pop.* fr. 11b (Tiberius), *vers. pop.* fr. 16 (Otho); for other verses on the small size of property: *fr. inc.* 13, Bibaculus fr. 1.

while stressing social and economic differences and the different scope for exploiting that bodily stratum. And that is subversive enough. To quote Bakhtin on folk humour:

> In grotesque realism ... the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egoistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people. ... The essential principle of grotesque realism is ... the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity.   Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 18

III.   HORACE, OCTAVIAN AND THE SEGREGATION OF LITERATURE

In sum, then, the tradition of popular verse is a promiscuous, public, uncontrolled, and anti-hierarchical literary form, which both feeds into and draws on contemporary élite poetry. It also represents one of the clearest vectors for the expression of popular opinion at the crisis of the Republic. It is this tradition that Horace is trying to segregate from 'official' or 'élite' production, from the practice of literature, from the genre of satire. It is also the tradition against which Octavian himself intervened on more than one occasion. The terms within which princeps and poet operate are, I think, strikingly similar. Octavian, for Suetonius, is personally hurt by lampoons and engages in the acts of a tyrant in indulging his vanity and restricting free speech (*Div. Aug.* 55–56.1). What interests me is that he also came up with the cunning — and much more specific — wheeze of forbidding anonymous pamphleteering.

Cynics (and I am one) will of course say that this is a way of acting against pamphleteering in general without being quite so obviously sweeping. Equally, Horace may just have been a self-conscious snob. But there is, I think, more. Both pointedly attempt to distinguish between anonymous, public pamphleteering and the poetry of the named, private author. For Octavian, this becomes a question of legal status, for Horace a question of aesthetics. Both equally are attempting to take the public poetry of invective out of politics, and the public politics out of invective. This re-definition of *libertas* is a response to the chaos of the triumviral years and the long crisis that preceded it. It was a period in which verse invective flourished, with mass and élite traditions intersecting and interacting, predicated upon divisions within the élite and, at times, a genuine role for popular opinion, at least in its military clothing. As Bakhtin has stressed, it is when the collision between the popular forms and official literature takes place that new and radical ideas can be produced, and the anti-hierarchical, yet productive power of laughter can be released, laying bare ideological (and semantic) closure. More concretely, as de Ste Croix has stressed, it is only when the élite is divided that any progressive moves can be made from below.

It is clear enough that we never get very far along that specific path. The victory of Augustus, and his consolidation of power and society, once more closes down the ideological field. It is this move towards closure that we see in Horace's — and Augustus' — segregation of popular verse. I say segregation rather than repression. There was no active need for the physical thought-police: by symbolically policing the boundaries of élite — literary — discourse, the destabilizing effects of the unruly popular verse become marginalized and, largely, contained. Yes, the disavowal of invective is, from one perspective, the disavowal of the bitterness and nastiness of the triumviral years; but from another it represents the re-statement and re-establishment of hierarchies and boundaries under the guise of aesthetics. Horace, then, is a *Lucilius restitutus* for the *respublica restituta* — both back-formations that are equally specious.

Horace's moral map is studious in its negotiation of hierarchy and its efforts to construct an idea(l) of social cohesion within that hierarchy. His diatribes and moral rebukes are, as I noted in the first part of this article, targeted at anonymous, unimportant, or invented characters, with more than a hint of literature as a closed system. Just as you would be hard pressed to detect in his poems any explicit sign of a political system in meltdown, you would find it difficult to detect any explicit signs

either of the social or cultural origins of such a conflict, or of the effects of that political crisis back on wider culture or society. As for the popular production of poetry, indeed any subliterary forms, it is either denied, appropriated for higher purposes, or ridiculed. In addition to the eviction of invective, we may note the comic presentation of the curse-tradition and witchcraft in 1.8.[104] Fable, which in its early imperial exponent, Phaedrus, comes as close to a genuine social critique as anything in Roman literature, becomes a cute tale of mice (2.6) rather than Phaedrus' disruptive citizen/subject-frogs. Horace's version of fable emphasizes quietism and moralizing allegory over anything more disturbing or disruptive.[105] Naturally, critics have raved: 'Horace's carefully developed story of the town and country mouse (*Sat.* 2.6.79–117) possesses a delicate humour worlds removed from the crude psychology which Phaedrus regularly offers.'[106]

Horace is attempting in the *Satires* to construct a model of literature, of culture in the narrow sense, to coincide with this broader social model. He is defining out of his poetry anything that disturbs order, cohesion, knowing one's place — all things that are inherent in popular invective, politically and culturally. In fact, it is explicitly under the heading of *libertas* that Horace makes this attempt, and through the figure of the Saturnalia itself. For after the negotiations and redefinitions of satire as genre in Book 1, we return to the definition of *libertas* itself in the final poems of Book 2. Against the models of Book 1, the ones where it is possible to go too far, it is 2.7 in particular that demonstrates (the new) order. In dramatizing the free speech of the slave Davus at the Saturnalia, it is emphasized that this *libertate Decembri* is bounded, limited, and contained, a brief and licensed reversal, with no threat to the status quo, which itself ordained it (2.7.4–5). Davus, like the critic of 1.1–3, concentrates on moral failings, in particular his master's lack of self-sufficiency and comfort, despite his riches. Rather incongruously, given his position, Davus pushes a Stoic line on *libertas*: freedom is self-control and it is the wise man, such as himself, who is truly free. He is thus more free than his master, Horace (2.7.83–94).

The watchword of Triumviral politicking is here reduced to a shadow of its former self. But Horace claims that Davus has overstepped the limit and slaps him down in a stark reminder of the power relationship (2.7.117–18). Licence, then, is temporary; although here we are faced with the rather curious sight of a satirist repressing another satirist. But this is not inconsistent with the position outlined in 1.4 and 1.10. Davus is represented as not knowing when to stop (cf. 1.3.51–2), and in that sense is exactly what Horace has been seeking to exclude. What seems to be going on here, in the final satire of the book, is an attempt to give limited voice to these deprecated voices and enact the repression and separation that he earlier constructed for the genre of *satura*. As presented here, *libertas* is not only a question of how to speak, but also a question of who speaks and where. Slaves, like the drunks and hangers-on of 2.8, are (according to Horace's theoretical position) those types that not only are particularly fond of abusive, crude, or farcical comedy, but are also those types that are most ripe for comedy at their expense. Both in fact go too far (cf. 2.8.37), and in the case of the latter are explicitly described as being laughed at, rather than with (2.8.79).

This allows us, I think, to return to Gowers' proposition that Horace is inviting us to inspect the gaps between what *satura* should be and the circumscribed reality. As I have argued, there is a strong match between the reality of the exclusion of invective poetry and of political or personal criticism of real individuals and Horace's rhetoric about what the satirist should be doing. The definition of *satura* itself should be seen as

[104] For the tradition, see L. Watson, *Arae: the Curse Poetry of Antiquity* (1991). For the important and recurring figure of Canidia, see the excellent discussion by E. Oliensis, 'Canidia, Canicula and the decorum of Horace's Epodes', *Arethusa* 24 (1991), 107–38, with further comments below.

[105] For frogs as citizens *par excellence*, see Phaedrus 1.2, 24, 30. For fable as 'subaltern literature', see A. La Penna, 'La Morale della favola esopica come morale delle classi subalterne nell'antichità', *Società* 17.2 (1961), 459–537. For a more nuanced recent

treatment, see J. Henderson, *Telling Tales on Caesar: Roman Stories from Phaedrus* (2001); alas, the poor frogs are marginalized even in this most iconoclastic of tellings (pp. 187–91).

[106] F. R. D. Goodyear, 'Phaedrus', in Kenney and Clausen, op. cit. (n. 29), 624–6, at 625. Apparently this sort of thing, for Goodyear, is not allowed in 'proper' fable. 'His fables contain elements of satire and "social comment", not at all gentle: if he had chosen to write satire proper, he might have vied with Juvenal in trenchancy and bitterness' (p. 624).

far less stable in this period than is sometimes assumed, and one of the major gaps that needs to be accounted for is that between Horace and that invective tradition in which 'élite' and 'popular' were constantly interacting. One of the major problems with constructing Horace's satiric cycle as an elaborate allegory of external (cultural and/or political) pressure is that during the period of Book 1 at least this tradition was thriving. It is not the case, then, that the *Sermones could not* have been written differently, but Horace *chose not to do so*. Rather, what is striking is that they so carefully and explicitly distance themselves from this other (dangerous, disruptive) way of doing satire. And the theoretical position that Horace uses to distance his own *satura* from traditions of invective poetry allows us to formulate an alternative position for Horace's gallery of cripples and the dispossessed in 1.5. Unpalatable as it is for either modern tastes or the modern construction of Horace, these are exactly the category of the laughable that we find in Aristotle and elsewhere,[107] and exactly the kind of producers that Horace is aiming to expel from the category of the literary.

At the same time, it is noticeable that one of the characters whom Horace encounters on his 'inconsequential journey', in the comic duel of buffoons at 1.5.51–70, is precisely the same Sarmentus who in that period seems to have had an entire repertoire of popular abuse aimed at him. Horace's treatment of Sarmentus in this passage again fuses class, taste, and poetics in order to create a character who in more than one sense does not know his place. He describes Sarmentus as a *scurra* and aligns him with the kind of behaviour that he distances himself from in 1.4, inappropriate behaviour in a social context — i.e. Horace's restricted construction of what popular verse was for. In Horace's hands, the *scurra* is being set up to be laughed at, not with, and the abuse tradition of popular verse re-directed towards social buffoonery and associated with (performers and targets of) low status.[108] Again, this double move redefines and marginalizes popular verse and uses it as an index of class and refinement. As we have seen, that tradition itself had plenty to say about Sarmentus from its own rather different perspective(s) and position(s). Both content and context were rather more pointed and engaged. Although, like Horace, the theatrical interventions touched again on Sarmentus' meteoric rise from obscurity, their focus was not so much on his origins and lack of social graces, as on a public expression of the issues of corruption and abuse of the system that allegedly brought Sarmentus his position. The not-so-subtle implications, especially in the performance context, extend to the one(s) that yanked him out of it.

Although I have argued that Horace, in distancing himself from the cultural context of satirical poetry, is broadly aligning literary and class concerns, this is not to deny either that he is appropriating either certain low elements of style or numerous low characters. The former, though, need to be seen in the context of his theorizing of mixed, witty and varied style. The latter, amongst other things, serve to further the distancing of traditions. However, it might well be objected that whatever the apparent claims and practices of the character 'Horace', the act of incorporation sows the seeds of his own downfall. Thus Davus' model of freedom that Horace is so keen to displace looks to some extent like Horace's own model of controlled, circumscribed, moral satire. Moreover, the claims he makes about 'Horace' are close to the mark: we may ask then whether it is because he has hit a nerve that Horace shuts Davus up. In the same way, the eager and ingratiating Pest of 1.9 mirrors 'Horace' the social-climbing poet; or Canidia poses awkward questions for him and even starts to resemble Maecenas in her insistent demands and Horace's inability to answer or perform.[109] Explore these echoes, then, and we can deconstruct Horace's literary power-games; or, we can even claim that Horace is setting himself up for a fall.

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[107] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a17, 1449a32–3. For Plato, βωμολοχία is involved in both the content and the reception of comedy (*Republic* 395e5–396a6, 606c2–9). Aristotle further elaborates (1449a32–7) by saying that it is specifically ugliness that is comic (provided the object is not presented as being in pain).

[108] Sarmentus' servile origins are hinted at in ll. 55 and 65–7. On this passage, see Gowers, op. cit. (n. 19), 59.

[109] So Henderson, op. cit. (n. 19); Oliensis, op. cit. (n. 104).

Or is he? From a historicist perspective, the slave Davus, the witch Canidia, even perhaps the clumsy Pest, have the social, as well as the narrative, dice loaded against them — and in terms that have little to do with logic, something to do with philosophical dogma, and a lot to do with basic prejudice. But even were we to give full rein to these discordant voices, they are still speaking about, and problematizing, Horace himself, his accommodations and his weaknesses, which is on one reading entirely consistent with the Horatian *persona* and programme. From the point of view of genre, when the dust has settled, this leaves Horace's *satura* still more anxious, hobbled, and unthreatening. These characters hardly give full throat to the invective form or trouble Horace's construction of it (which as we have noted has through some fancy footwork danced away from the ground of force itself as a possible good). But I would make the further, stronger, claim that such characters as Davus paradoxically *lose* their voice in the act of being voiced by Horace. These may be *Sermones*, but even where there is more than one character talking, they are hardly genuine dialogues (in a Bakhtinian sense).[110] Whatever such voices may say, they are not speaking *for themselves*. Thus Davus' moral questioning may on one reading (intentionally or otherwise) destabilize the character Horace and his pretensions, but Davus and his discourse can never step outside the limits of moral questioning or the temporary licence of the Saturnalia. That is, Davus can never attain autonomy outside of his very narrow fictional world. And as an allegory either for *satura* or for the nature of popular invective, he is a rather depressing figure.

I suggested earlier that the link that Bakhtin sets up between Roman invective and the carnival culture of the Middle Ages is not entirely satisfactory. Rather, there was considerably more fluidity between popular and élite, and a greater edginess of performance context. I conclude by refining that position. The period of the late Republic is not dissimilar to the Renaissance context that Bakhtin sets up for Rabelais: fluidity of textual performance and reperformance, free interaction between high and low, a context of change and crisis. Such a context, according to Bakhtin liberated laughter from its ghetto, and, temporarily, allowed it to flourish.

> The lower genres begin to penetrate the higher levels of literature. . . . The culture of laughter begins to break through the narrow walls of festivities and to enter into all spheres of ideological life. . . . The process was completed in the Renaissance. . . . It became the form of a new, free and critical historical consciousness.   *Rabelais*, 97

However, the reimposition of hierarchies and a moralistic orientation sent folk forms back underground, and Rabelais to the very edge of the literary canon.

> But this hierarchy was as yet only an abstract and confused idea. Certain social, political and ideological transformations had still to take place; the circle of readers and literary connoisseurs had to be differentiated and narrowed before the hierarchy could express the interrelation of genres and become a regulating force.   *Rabelais*, 65

What we can see in Horace is the enactment under the figure of the Saturnalia of this act of generic regulation. Either reacting or pre-empting, we see here the establishment or re-establishment of a bifurcated carnival culture. In Horace, for the oppressed there is the *libertas* of the Saturnalia — temporary expression safely contained. The power of laughter is closed down. The free play of invective is disinfected from Roman satire. In his promotion of literary stability, Horace then is an ideological foil for the political stability engineered, or in the process of being engineered, by Octavian. By interrupting the dialogue between élite and popular forms, by constructing invective as marginal, Horace is cutting off the disturbing power of laughter at the knees.

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[110] For Roman satire as within Bakhtin's category of the *spoudogeloion*, as a novelistic precursor, see *Dialogic Imagination*, op. cit. (n. 1), 21. It is worth noting that Bakhtin himself does not ascribe to these forms genuine polyphony. For his conception of dialogue within a monologic context, see *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, op. cit. (n. 1), 33–4, 178. He notes apropos of Shakespeare (one of his most important precursors) that '. . . drama may be multi-levelled, but it cannot contain *multiple worlds*; it posits only one, and not several, systems of measurement' (p. 34).

IV.   POSTSCRIPT: 'ALL CREATURES WILL MAKE MERRY . . .'

The story of Horace's interaction with popular verse does not end there. My concern in this paper has been to consider his intervention at a time of crisis and the shoring up of the literary and social hierarchy. When later in his career Horace comes to celebrate the regime in its developed and stabilized form, he again negotiates popular verse, only this time the poetry of celebration, not invective. In *Odes* 4.2, he turns to the description and/or orchestration of Augustus' return in triumph to the City. In Horace's narrative, there is no challenging invective from either audience or soldiers. Rather, Horace joins his voice to the massed choirs of grateful subjects.

> tum meae, si quid loquar audiendum,
> vocis accedet bona pars, et, 'o sol
> pulcher! o laudande!' canam, recepto
> Caesare felix.
>
> Then, if I anything I say can be heard,
> I will add a hearty shout and I will sing,
> 'O happy day, O hail to the chief!'
> happy now that Caesar has returned.
> *Odes* 4.45–8

Does this mean that the boundaries that Horace sets up in the *Sermones* are no longer relevant, now that everyone is singing from the same hymn-sheet?[111] It is hardly so simple. As commentators have noted, Horace is borrowing the form of a popular verse, in the septenarius fragment of 'o sol pulcher, o laudande' (46–7);[112] but just as with the earlier *Sermones*, we can see, once again, the appropriation and re-configuration of a demotic form, shoe-horned into the Sapphic stanza and bolted onto an elaborate dance of engagement/refusal with Pindar. Not one hymn-sheet, then, but (at least) two — the popular form only an echo within this laureate construct, no matter how populist the pose.[113] More than that, Horace is not only joining his voice to the massed ranks, but also actively scripting the response of the populace — both what they shall sing and their motivation. Once again Horace is writing the people. This *is* what will happen on Augustus' return, this *is* how we will sing: songs of love, not hate. Altogether now. Don't worry. Be happy.

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