

## Lucretius, Seneca and Persius 1.1–2

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The second line of Persius' first satire, according to the *Commentum Cornuti*, was borrowed from the first book of Lucilius' *Satires*.<sup>1</sup> Most scholars have balked at this claim, and posit a host of textual corruptions: the commentator really meant Persius 1.1, or Lucretius, or Lucilius book 10. Solutions have been sought in the text of the *Commentum*, but not in the poem of Persius. The author of the *Commentum* initiated this debate with a question: what is the allusive background to Persius 1.2? In answering the same question I offer here a simpler account of what Persius and the author of the *Commentum* are trying to show at 1.2.

The commentary on 1.2, '*quis leget haec?*' *min tu istud ais? nemo hercule*. '*nemo?*', states:

QUIS LEGET HAEC hunc versum de Lucili primo transtulit. et bene vitae vitia increpans ab admiratione incipit.

The poet borrowed this verse from the first book of Lucilius. And he starts off with amazement, railing eloquently against the vices of life.

The chatty dialogue in 1.2 has seemed too prosaic for Lucilius' pen. An error has therefore been postulated so that the more poetic 1.1, instead of 1.2, could be assigned to Lucilius:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The *Commentum* is a ninth-century composition/compilation of a body of scholia, the earliest strata of which seem to have originated ca. 400 C.E. See Robathan et al. 201 col. ii; see also foremost Zetzel 1981: 19–31; Wessner 1917: 473–80, 496–502; Clausen 1956: xiv–xv. All citations from Persius follow the text of Clausen 1992. All citations from the *Commentum Cornuti* follow the notes provided by Jahn. J. E. G. Zetzel kindly provided me a copy of the preliminary stage of an edition of the *Commentum*, on which he and W. V. Clausen are at work. The passages from the *Commentum* that are discussed here do not differ from their more scientific text.

<sup>2</sup>Zetzel 1977: 40 n. 1. For a history of the postulated errors in the *scholium* see Bo 1096–97. Assigning Persius 1.1 to Lucilius: Marx fr. 9; Villeneuve 227 n. 4, 243; Warmington Lucilius, fr. 2; Charpin fr. 1.2; Harvey 13–14; Conte 80, n. 53; Kißel 110–12. Hooley 34–35 acknowledges the debate, but does not take sides.

O curas hominum! o quantum est in rebus inane!

As numerous scholars have seen, however, 1.1 strikes a distinctly Lucretian note.<sup>3</sup> The first two and a half feet are reminiscent of the beginning of Lucretius 2.14: *O miseras hominum mentes! o pectora caeca!* The second half of the line, furthermore, closes with a clear Lucretian tag: *est in rebus inane*.<sup>4</sup> To re-assign the comment on 1.2 to 1.1 postulates not only that the scholiast addressed the wrong line but that he also missed this commonly acknowledged allusion to Lucretius.

G. L. Hendrickson gave the first full argument for, and treatment of, the Lucretian echo, pointing to the similarity of the verse to Lucretius 2.14, and stressing that the Lucretian *inane*, that is, “the false desires and ambitions that harass mankind needlessly,” was well-suited to the context of Persius’ first satire.<sup>5</sup> Hendrickson accepted that the commentator’s note to 1.2 really belonged to 1.1. He suggested that at some point in the transmission of the *Commentum* a copyist misunderstood an abbreviation, misinterpreting Luc(re)ti(us) as Luc(ili)us. J. E. G. Zetzel adduced palaeographical parallels for confusion over the abbreviated forms of the names Lucretius and Lucilius, cautiously warning, however, that the best evidence supports the misreading of Luc(ili)us for Luc(re)ti(us), not the other way around.<sup>6</sup> In mounting this ingenious argument Hendrickson and Zetzel proceeded on the belief that the statement in the *Commentum* is misplaced.

Others have insisted that the commentary belongs at 1.2. D. Henss acknowledged the allusion to Lucretius at Persius 1.1 (see below) and suggested that if Persius 1.2 was not a direct quotation from Lucilius, it was surely part of a recognized tradition of satiric self-deprecation, and could have been inspired

<sup>3</sup>Lachmann II 62–66; Albini 129–32; Hendrickson 97–112; Zetzel 1977.

<sup>4</sup>The precise phrase occurs at 1.330, and (*in*) *rebus inane* occurs in the same metrical position on eight other occasions in Lucr. 1: 382, 399, 511, 569, 655, 658, 660, 843; also 5.365 and *rebus inani* at 1.742.

<sup>5</sup>So Hendrickson 98–100, against F. Marx’s assignment of Pers. 1.1 as Lucil. fr. 9, where it appears to be the exasperated exclamation of Jupiter as he convenes the *concilium deorum*.

<sup>6</sup>Zetzel 1977: 42, noting that “We will never know for certain whether Persius was alluding to Lucilius or Lucretius in his opening verse.” He also points out (40 n. 1) that *et bene...incipit* makes an appropriate comment on the pair of exclamations *o curas...o quantum...*, but *nemo hercule* (1.2) is an obvious expression of amazement and the *vitae vitia* noted in the *Commentum* are found in the rest of the poem, not in a single line.

by a passage from Lucilius.<sup>7</sup> W. Krenkel later attributed Persius 1.2 to Lucilius, apparently accepting the assertion of the *Commentum* as it stands (fr. 1.2). Persius 1.2, however, does not appear to fit the context of Lucilius 1, even if we have only a rough idea of the book's content. In the light of this poor fit D. Bo has derived an explanation from an anecdote in Persius' *Vita* (51–56):

sed mox ut a schola magistrisque devertit, lecto Lucili libro decimo  
vehementer saturas componere instituit. cuius libri principium imitatus  
est, sibi primo, mox omnibus detrectaturus cum tanta recentium  
poetarum et oratorum insectatione, ut etiam Neronem illius temporis  
principem inculpaverit.

But soon when he left school and his masters, upon reading the tenth book of Lucilius, he began to write satires in earnest. He imitated the beginning of this book, setting out to detract from himself first and then everyone, with so great an attack on contemporary poets and orators that he even heaped scorn on Nero, the emperor at that time.

On the strength of this story Bo suggested that the commentator at Persius 1.2 intended to refer to Lucilius' tenth book, not his first.<sup>8</sup> The *Vita*, however, claims only that the poet imitated the beginning of Lucilius 10, but does not specify where Persius did this.<sup>9</sup> Bo's view puts more trust in Persius' *Vita* than is probably justifiable, and it assumes that the biographical statement must somehow be reflected in Persius' poetry.

In 1981 R. A. Harvey (13–14) suggested that the note in the *Commentum* belongs at line 2, but that it explains line 1: *hunc versum* refers to *haec* in 1.2, which refers to Persius 1.1. A parallel for this roundabout manner of reference was sought at 6.10, where "reference is made to the Ennian quotation in the

<sup>7</sup>Henss 1954: 161: "Vielmehr handelt es sich bei Pers. 1.2: *quis leget haec? min tu istud ais? nemo hercule! nemo?* um einem Topos der Satire, wie er auch bei Hor. *Sat.* I 4.22 zu finden ist: ... *cum mea nemo | scripta legat...*" The topos is not exclusive to the formal genre of satire as Kibel (n. 7) *ad loc.* shows, citing Mart. 2.1.7–8, 2.86.11–12, 11.1.13–14 and Verg. *Ecl.* 6.9–10.

<sup>8</sup>The connection had already been noted and Bo was preceded by Némethy 55–56, esp. 55: "Unde primum libri decimi Luciliani versum a Persio huc translatum esse conicias"; Gaar 244–49; Reitzenstein 6; and apparently by Charpin whose testimonia for Lucil. 1.2 included both the *Vita* (attributed by Charpin to Probus) and the *Commentum* on Pers. 1.2 (cited as 1.1).

<sup>9</sup>It might be safe to assume that the *Vita* places the imitation somewhere in *Satire* 1, in the light of the allusion to 1.121 and Nero's "ass's ears" (*ut etiam Neronem...inculpaverit*) that the *Vita* claims were edited out by Cornutus, but this is not sufficient condition for placing the imitation at the beginning of the first satire.

previous line via *hoc*.” O. Skutsch, however, has shown that the *scholium* was in fact attached to 6.9.<sup>10</sup>

Harvey (14) suggests also that “an allusion to the *inventor* of satire is, at this point in the poem, infinitely more appropriate than an echo of Lucretius.” So too J. C. Bramble (67 n. 1): “Is it inherently likely that P[ersius] should make his *début* with an imitation of a writer who was not a member of the *satura* tradition?” Yet Horace’s *Sermo* 1.1 makes no reference to Lucilius, but does refer to Lucretius in the privileged poem-end position (1.1.118–19 ≈ Lucretius *DRN* 3.938). Juvenal opens *Satire* 1 with an attack on epic, comedy, elegy and tragedy, naming names but making no reference to satire or its originator until lines 19–20. Roman satire did not require its practitioners to invoke the originator of the genre by way of introduction, nor did any other genre of Roman verse. More importantly, the reference at Persius 1.1 is clearly to Lucretius, and so a simultaneous second layer of reference to Lucilius is unlikely *a priori*.

Thus some scholars propose multiple errors or corruptions on the part of the commentator, or copyists, and see the comment as referring to Lucretius. Some have tried to make sense of the *Commentum*’s reference to Lucilius as it stands. Others have justified an allusion to Lucilius in 1.1 on the basis of clumsy poetics. A more efficient explanation should be sought.

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The solution proposed here rests not only on issues of textual criticism, but also with our understanding of the programmatic context of Persius’ first two verses themselves. Others have noted the similarities of Lucretius 2.14 and Persius 1.1, but the passages have not been compared closely:

O curas hominum. o quantum est in rebus inane. (Persius 1.1)

O miseras hominum mentes! o pectora caeca! (Lucretius 2.14)

*O curas hominum* and *O miseras hominum* are in essence metrically equivalent; although the first opens with a spondee and the second with a dactyl, each occupies the first two and a half feet of its verse. The parallel syllables “O” and

<sup>10</sup>Skutsch 1968: 25–27, 28 n. 12, where he notes the independent confirmation (through private correspondence) by W. V. Clausen on the basis of autopsy of the MSS. (Leid. bibl. pub. 78, Monac. 25377, and Monac. 14482); see also Skutsch 1985: 750–51.

“-*ras hominum*” stand out. Both verses exhibit striking double exclamations, aimed at the vanities of humankind.<sup>11</sup>

Examination of the passages’ contexts reveals that the connection between the two is more systemic. Persius’ introductory verse invokes a line from the introduction to Lucretius’ second book. As Hendrickson showed, Persius’ *curae hominum* are the needless anxieties over external matters such as success and wealth that plague those who are blind to the more important inner concerns of living. Lucretius aims his satiric proem at precisely this type of person (Lucr. 2.1–14):

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis  
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;  
non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,  
sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suavest.  
6 suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri  
5 per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli;  
7 sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere  
edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,  
despicere unde queas alios passimque videre  
10 errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae,  
certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,  
noctes atque dies niti praestante labore  
ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri.  
o miseras hominum mentes, o pectora caeca!

In this famous passage Lucretius delights in philosophy’s lofty vantage, which affords a comfortable view down on all the strife, struggle and error of humankind below. This is precisely the rhetorical stance of the satirist, who dutifully notes humanity’s every fault and vice.<sup>12</sup> So the Juvenalian *persona* remarks as he stands on the street-corner, filling his notebooks with society’s wrongs: *nonne libet medio ceras implere capaces | quadriui?* (1.63–64). Horace’s *carmina bona* allow their composer to avoid prosecution if they are aimed appropriately: *si quis | opprobriis dignum latraverit, integer ipse? | ‘solventur risu tabulae, tu missus abibis’* (S. 2.1.84–86). In this passage Lucretius produces a dense compilation from his own notebook on satire,

<sup>11</sup>The anaphoric “O,” with the first element at the start of the line, is not common in hexameter verse. Compare Sil. 17.187; Mart. 5.25.11, 11.26.1; Ov. *Met.* 14.832, *Fast.* 6.509; Luc. 7.588; Prop. 2.15.1; Verg. *A.* 2.281, none of which bears likeness to either Pers. 1.1 or Lucr. 2.14.

<sup>12</sup>Dudley 116 addresses the satiric mode of this passage.

providing a list of several of Roman satire's principal commonplaces: aimless wanderers on the path of life (2.10),<sup>13</sup> corrupt and base geniuses (2.11),<sup>14</sup> arrogant pretenders to nobility (2.11)<sup>15</sup> and somewhat questionable behavior, by day or by night (2.12).<sup>16</sup> Lucretius here makes every possible effort to dress his philosophical proem in satiric garb.<sup>17</sup>

Lest the reader miss the allusion to Lucretius 2.14 at Persius 1.1, Persius rounds off the line with a sort of Lucretian *sphragis*, the phrase *in rebus inane*. In addition to Hendrickson's association of Lucretius' philosophy of cosmic void (*inane*) with Persius' satire on social emptiness and vanity (*inane*), we may note a further aspect of the Lucretian tag. The first half of Persius 1.1 (*O curas hominum*) alludes to a specific passage in Lucretius, but not by direct quotation. The last two feet of Persius' line, however, do recall Lucretius word-for-word (*rebus inane*) with a phrase that occurs throughout book 1 of the *De rerum natura* (and once more in book 5). Thus Persius alludes to a specific passage in Lucretius (2.1–14), while associating that allusion with an additional generalizing tag. If *O curas hominum* tells the reader, "introduction to book 2 of Lucretius," *in rebus inane* confirms the reader's identification. By joining the two echoes, furthermore, Persius emphasizes the close connection of the ethical proem to *DRN* 2 with the physical doctrine set forth in *DRN* 1. The resulting amalgam is not a line from Lucretius, but it is a Lucretian line, whose constituent parts are nearly identical to their counterparts in the original, both lexically and metrically.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Cf. in Persius the narrator's comments on his own former shortcomings, 5.34–36: *cumque iter ambiguum est et uitae nescius error | diducit trepidas ramosa in compita mentes, | me tibi supposui*.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Pers. Prologue 10–11: *magister artis ingenique largitor | uenter, negatas artifex sequi uoces*; 3.36–37: *cum dira libido | mouerit ingenium feruenti tincta ueneno*; 4.4–5: *scilicet ingenium et rerum prudentia uelox | ante pilos uenit*; 4.27: *hunc ais, hunc dis iratis genioque sinistro....*

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Pers. 3.27–29: *an deceat pulmonem rumpere uentis | stemmate quod Tusco ramum millesime ducis | censoremue tuum uel quod trabeate salutas?*

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Pers. 1.90–91: *uerum nec nocte paratum | plorabit qui me uolet incuruasse querella*; 2.15–16: *haec sancte ut poscas, Tiberino in gurgite mergis | mane caput bis terque et noctem flumine purgas*; 5.60–62: *tunc crassos transisse dies lucemque palustrem | et sibi iam seri uitam ingemuere relictam. | at te nocturnis iuuat inpallescere chartis*.

<sup>17</sup>Note also the parallel in sense and meter of Persius' line-ending in *rebus inane* with Lucretius' final example of the societal *inane*, the person who strives to take control of the world: *rerumque potiri*.

<sup>18</sup>Henss 1954: 160 observed this practice in Persius, "P[ersius] liebt es, aus mehreren Vorlagen einen neuen Vers zusammenzustellen, wobei sich die wörtlichen Übernahmen sehr oft auch metrisch mit der Vorlage decken." Further examples of this technique and others can

The Lucretian line and the satiric tone it invokes (from *DRN* 2.14) are carefully planted here. In the tradition of the *recusatio*, Persius signals from the outset his specific contribution to, and, more importantly, his modification of, the satiric tradition into which he inserts himself. He simultaneously adopts a philosophical stance in his satire<sup>19</sup> and appropriates Lucretius' philosophical rendition of satire. Lucretius' occasional predilection for satiric and Cynic/Bionic technique has been noted many times.<sup>20</sup> It has been observed of Lucretius' use of "Bionic" diatribe and satiric elements that "what was original to Lucretius was the marriage of these techniques with the high style that was mandatory for didactic epos so as to produce, in his 'pathetic' passages, a unique and individual fusion" (Kenney 19). Persius' originality stems from a similar marriage of style and genre: just as Lucretius draws on elements of satire to express his philosophical position, so Persius makes philosophy a part of his satiric agenda. Persius signals his intention and his generic innovation in the first line.

As Lachmann, Hendrickson and Zetzel saw, Persius 1.1 invokes Lucretius. Contrary to the objections of Bramble and Harvey, this allusion is neither inappropriate nor improbable. Its role in the development of the poem's argument is evident, but the impact of the allusion grows when, with this Lucretian backdrop to 1.1 in place, Persius alludes at 1.2 to another philosopher. The dialogue that follows shows the point of this second allusion. The interlocutor's response to Persius' Lucretian line is '*quis leget haec?*' (1.2). The narrator replies *min tu istud ais? nemo hercule*. '*nemo?*' the interlocutor queries, prompting the narrator to respond *uel duo uel nemo* (1.2–3).<sup>21</sup> This initial exchange encapsulates the most persistent theme of Persius' first satire, the search for an appropriate audience.<sup>22</sup> At 1.24–25 the interlocutor asks what good Persius' erudition is if he keeps it to himself: '*quo didicisse, nisi hoc fermentum et quae semel intus | innata est rupto iecore exierit*

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be seen in the same author's perceptive "Die Imitationstechnik des Persius," 1955: 277–94. I have been unable to see his unpublished dissertation "Studien zur Imitationstechnik des Persius" (Marburg 1951).

<sup>19</sup>Persius' Stoicism is well accepted; cf. the warning of Reckford 490–98, who points out that the Stoic currents in Persius' *Satires* are neither pure nor pervasive.

<sup>20</sup>See Murley, Vallette, Waltz, Dudley, and Kenney 17–20, 240–41 at 3.1068–69; see also Brown 151–53, 156–57.

<sup>21</sup>On the assignment of speakers in the opening lines see Kißel 106–9.

<sup>22</sup>Bramble 69 named this theme the "assault on bad literature," but Persius frames each example of shoddy writing in terms of its reader; the assault is on readers of bad literature.

*caprificus?*' The poet objects that knowledge is personal and that its value does not depend on another's recognition of it (1.25–27): *en pallor seniumque! o mores, usque adeone | scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter?* The interlocutor counters that it is pleasant to be pointed out in public by one's readers (1.28–30): *'at pulchrum est digito monstrari et dicier "hic est." | ten cirratorum centum dictata fuisse | pro nihilo pendes?*' Persius objects that the people's praise is worthless, since they prefer ephemeral garbage composed by incompetents:

- 30                                ecce inter pocula quaerunt  
                                  Romulidae satori quid dia poemata narrent.  
                                  hic aliquis, cui circum umeros hyacinthina laena est,  
                                  rancidulum quiddam balba de nare locutus  
                                  Phyllidas, Hypsipylas, uatum et plorabile siquid,  
 35                                eliquat ac tenero subplantat uerba palato.  
                                  adsensere uiri.

The full weight of this vivid portrait of poetic incompetence comes down on the last two words, "the 'heroes' nod in approval." The interlocutor accuses Persius of snobbery and suggests that if he writes decent poetry it ought to stand the test of time (1.40–43). Persius concedes that he is not so hard and that he would have praise, but he stresses (1.44–54) that he will not have it from an undiscerning audience (1.48–50): *sed recti finemque extremumque esse recuso | 'euge' tuum et 'belle.' nam 'belle' hoc excute totum: | quid non intus habet?*

Through the rest of the poem the two go back and forth arguing the merits and shortcomings of publication versus seclusion from their different perspectives, until Persius acknowledges that, like Lucilius and Horace before him, he too cannot keep quiet but will instead reveal the secret of the programmatic satire: the audience of his day is undiscerning; they all have the ears of an ass (1.114–21). Persius does find an audience for his poetry,<sup>23</sup> but it takes the entire first satire for him to recant the exclamation in lines 2–3 that he does not care whether anyone reads his works (*nemo hercule!...vel duo vel nemo*).

With this exclamation, the core of the satire's thematic program, Persius alludes to another famous passage in which the same question is treated.

<sup>23</sup>In claiming as a suitable audience for his satires avid readers of Cratinus, Eupolis and Aristophanes (1.123–25), Persius situates himself in the same poetic tradition as Horace before him, and Lucilius before Horace (Hor. S. 1.4.1–8).



Scholars have noted that the sentiment expressed in Seneca's seventh epistle to Lucilius is similar in places to that of Persius 1 (*Ep.* 7.9):<sup>24</sup>

non est quod te gloria publicandi ingenii producat in medium, ut recitare istis velis aut disputare; quod facere te vellem, si haberes isti populo idoneam mercem: nemo est qui intellegere te possit. aliquis fortasse, unus aut alter incidet, et hic ipse formandus tibi erit instituendusque ad intellectum tui. 'cui ergo ista didici?' non est quod timeas ne operam perdideris, si tibi didicisti.

The close parallelism of *nemo est qui intellegere te possit* and *unus aut alter* with *nemo hercule!...vel duo vel nemo* is obvious. Likewise the question that Seneca has Lucilius ask, '*cui ergo ista didici*,' looks like the model for the question that Persius has the interlocutor ask, '*quo didicisse, nisi hoc fermentum et quae semel intus | innata est rupto iecore exierit caprificus?*' (1.24–25). Both questions ask what good genius is if it is not published. Even the answers to these questions are the same: Persius' narrator says that his learning does not require another's awareness of it (*scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter?*) and Seneca urges his pupil to learn for himself (*tibi didicisti*).

Upon closer inspection further similarities emerge. Throughout the letter Seneca exhorts Lucilius to stay away from the corrupting influence of the common mob. Seneca's advice, in other words, is the opposite of that offered by Persius' interlocutor. Seneca urges seclusion; Persius' interlocutor advises publication. Seneca warns that, even if Lucilius finds a capable audience of one, that person will have to be molded (*formandus*), a metaphor from the plastic arts. Persius uses a metaphor from pot-throwing to describe his poetry (1.45–46): *si forte quid aptius exit, | quando haec rara avis est, si quid tamen aptius exit*.... Seneca warns Lucilius to avoid the horrors encountered at morning and mid-day spectacles and that he should leave them to the senseless masses (*Ep.* 7.3–4):

casu in meridianum spectaculum incidi lusus expectans et sales et aliquid laxamenti, quo hominum oculi ab humano cruore adquiescant; contra est.... mane leonibus et ursis homines, meridie spectatoribus suis obiciuntur.

<sup>24</sup>Summers 162; Bramble 67–68; Harvey 24; Lee and Barr 67–68; Kißel 147 n. 127; Hooley 37 is explicit that Persius alludes to Seneca.

Morning is for murder, mid-day for cannibalism and other uncultured activities. In the final line of the first satire Persius appears to echo this passage in a comment on the readerly tastes of the senseless masses (1.134): *his mane edictum, post prandia Callirhoen do*. Morning and mid-day are especially “dangerous” times to be out in public for Seneca and Persius; the one is subjected to murderous sport, the other to dull Latin. Seneca’s seventh letter urges Lucilius to shun society to such an extent that he should communicate with the outside world almost exclusively through Seneca’s letters. The conceit is that we the audience are privy to this behind-closed-doors exchange. In Persius’ first satire the interlocutor urges the stubborn poet to publish. With his refusal Persius takes the same stance that Seneca exhorts Lucilius to adopt. Persius communicates his poetry to the nameless (and invented) interlocutor alone (1.44): *quisquis es, o modo quem ex aduerso dicere feci*. The conceit is the same as Seneca’s: even as Persius resolutely refuses to publish, we the audience read about his refusal in his published work.<sup>25</sup>

The rhetorical aim of Seneca’s seventh letter is to convince Lucilius to reject communication with the mob. The rhetorical debate in Persius 1 is whether or not the poet should reject communication with the readers of his day. Seneca reminds Lucilius to be wary of the pleasure that comes from the *adsensio* of the masses: *ista, mi Lucili, condenda in animum sunt, ut contemnas voluptatem ex plurium adsensione venientem* (Ep. 7.12). Persius too condemns the *adsensio* of the undiscerning readers and hearers of his day (*adsensere uiri*, 1.36–39; see above), and the bad literature that they applaud. Just as Seneca warns Lucilius to shrink within himself, away from the mob (*recede in te ipse quantum potes*, 7.8), so a frustrated Persius shouts “I quit!” (*discedo*: 1.114).<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Seneca’s exhortation to turn one’s attentions inward seems to lie behind Persius’ statement *nec te quaesiveris extra* (1.7–8). Seneca and Persius approve only of the inward view, as against concentration on *inane*, Hendrickson’s “false desires and ambitions.” The two works, then, overlap in several specific passages and, more importantly, in their overall thematic architecture. Both address an author’s relationship with his audience from the

<sup>25</sup>Though it is probably true that the *Satires* were published posthumously, as the *Vita* tells us, there is no reason to assume that publication was not intended; the conceit stands.

<sup>26</sup>The poet’s outburst is in response to *pinge duos anguis*: ‘*pueri, sacer est locus, extra | meiite*’ (113–14). If this shows the poet’s retreat from his audience, and the boys (*pueri*) are analogous to the poet, then urination here must be analogous to the poet’s work. Compare Volusius’ famous *cacata charta* in Catul. 36.1.

standpoint of the same question: are countless undiscerning readers more valuable than a single intelligent reader, or than no reader at all?

This common theme points to the most compelling parallel. Seneca closes the seventh letter with three similar anecdotes about authors and readers, none of which is attested elsewhere (*Ep.* 7.10–11):

Democritus ait, ‘unus mihi pro populo est, et populus pro uno’. (11) bene et ille, quisquis fuit (ambigitur enim de auctore), cum quaereretur ab illo quo tanta diligentia artis spectaret ad paucissimos perventurae, ‘satis sunt’ inquit ‘mihi pauci, satis est unus, satis est nullus.’ egregie hoc tertium Epicurus, cum uni ex consortibus studiorum suorum scriberet: ‘haec’ inquit ‘ego non multis, sed tibi; satis enim magnum alter alteri theatrum sumus.’

Seneca reports three authors’ slightly different responses to the same question put to Persius by the interlocutor, ‘*quis leget haec?*’ The meanings of Democritus’ and Epicurus’ responses are almost identical: one reader is as good as many, and many as good as one. The unnamed speaker, on the other hand, gives a response that is more like Persius’ than Democritus’ or Epicurus’. Like Persius, the unnamed author is at ease even with no readers at all (*satis est nullus*).

Through the allusion to Seneca’s seventh letter and to its concluding anecdotes, Persius inserts his response to the question of readership (*nemo hercule!...vel duo vel nemo*) among these three.<sup>27</sup> Thus Persius aligns himself most closely with the unattributed anecdote in Seneca, while putting himself in the company also of Democritus and Epicurus. In the light of the allusion to Lucretius at Persius 1.1, it is striking that the poet alludes in the next line, through Seneca, to two of the forerunners of Lucretius’ scientific and philosophical thought.<sup>28</sup> The effect is heightened by the fact that both Seneca

<sup>27</sup>Hooley 37 appears to be alone in connecting the second anecdote with Persius 1.2, if only in passing. We can be confident that Persius had not a common source but this specific letter in mind for two reasons: first, because he alludes not only to the second anecdote, but to the rest of the letter as well; and, second, because the anecdotes are not otherwise attested. Kißel *ad loc.* has collected phrases that bear some similarity to *vel duo vel nemo*; to his roster of Greek parallels we may add a fragment of the Epicurean Diogenes of Oenoanda, Smith fr. 3, iii.5–iv.3.

<sup>28</sup>Korzeniewski 385–86, 386 n. 7, notes a possible reference at 1.12 (*cachinno*) to the famous laughter of Democritus, a commonplace of Roman satire; cf. Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.194, *rideret Democritus*, and Juv. 10.33–34, *perpetuo risu pulmonem agitare solebat* | *Democritus*. The

and Persius rest their arguments on a mysteriously ambiguous authority. Persius takes sides with Seneca's *quisquis fuit* (whoever it was). Seneca gives advice through the words of an unnamed character; Persius takes advice from an unnamed character (1.44): *quisquis es, o modo quem ex aduerso dicere feci*. Seneca's *quisquis* and Persius' *quisquis* take opposite stands in the respective debates, but their similarly vague identities stand out: both Persius and Lucilius receive advice on publication and seclusion from a mysterious "*quisquis*."

With the first allusion (1.1) Persius claims a Lucretian distance from the objects of his satire; in the allusion to Seneca that follows he signals his Epicurean posture in regard to his treatment of author and audience. The two echoes go hand-in-hand. The meaning of Persius' Lucretian withdrawal from the objects of his satire in the first allusion is lent greater weight by the second allusion to Seneca's seventh epistle and the dissociation from society that it advocates. By means of a delicate web of satire, philosophy, and their practitioners Lucretius, Democritus, Epicurus, Seneca, and Persius himself, the satiric distance of the poet is recast in terms of his philosophical relationship to his readers. This is an obvious credibility-building tactic: like Democritus or Epicurus, Persius reports philosophical truths. Persius the poet would have only a discerning audience, two or none. Likewise, Persius the philosopher desires an audience, two or none, that is able and willing to accept his precepts. Persius first isolates Lucretius' satiric stance of separation from the objects of his philosophy and Seneca's depiction of the philosopher's stance of separation from the dangerous outside world/potential audience; he then weaves them together into a coherent picture of his own relationship with his audience in literary and philosophical terms. The complex intertwining of the two allusions forms the backbone of Persius' programmatic satire, and with it the poet establishes his position in the satiric and philosophical traditions.

Contrary to a modern claim that an allusion to Lucretius is not suited to the first line in a book of satires, we find that the allusion to Lucretius is essential to Persius' argument. Persius does not mention Lucilius, the father of the genre, until 1.114–15. Nor does he mention Horace, his greatest model, until 1.116–18. Rather, he devotes most of the programmatic satire to defining bad literature and bad readers. The rhetorical conceit of the first 113 lines is that Persius proclaims himself a writer without an audience,<sup>29</sup> disavowing not only

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group of philosophers invoked by these two allusions may include Aristotle as well: see Relihan.

<sup>29</sup>On Persius' self-imposed literary semi-isolation see Hooley 26–63, esp. 62–63.

an audience but literary predecessors (Labeo, 1.4; Attius, 1.50; Accius, 1.76; Pacuvius, 1.76; even Vergil, 1.96), and most importantly, the very notion of a literary predecessor. He conceives in 1.1–13 a brief picture of a world in which satire is almost *sui generis*, lacking a literary history, and self-sufficient, requiring no audience. The poet's conception of this world is built on the double allusion to Lucretius and Seneca in 1.1–2.

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If Persius 1.1 evokes Lucretius, and if I am right to suggest that 1.2 evokes Seneca, what then did the author of the *Commentum* mean by the words *hunc versum de Lucili primo transtulit*? First the phrase *hunc versum...transtulit*: Zetzel (1977: 42) cites a famous passage from Servius (at *Ecl.* 10.46: *hi autem omnes versus Galli sunt, de ipsius translati carminibus*) to make the point that “scholiasts are notorious for their exaggeration in the matter of literary dependence.” On this interpretation *hunc versum...transtulit* is an exaggeration because at 1.1 only part of Lucretius’ verse, *est in rebus inane* (1.330, 569), is quoted, while another half-line is paraphrased (2.14). Those who argue that the scholiast’s note at 1.2 signals a direct quotation from Lucilius similarly call for “*transferre*” to mean “to quote.” Henss (1954: 160 n. 1), however, saw that *transferre* never takes this meaning in the *Commentum*, citing the commentary on 3.1.<sup>30</sup>

hanc satiram poeta ex Lucili libro quarto transtulit castigans luxuriam et vitia divitum. et cum inducit paedagogum oburgantem scholasticum, increpat omnium segnitiam.

In this case *transferre* can scarcely denote the quotation of an entire book of Lucilius. The phrase means, “he adapted this satire from Lucilius 4,” or “he modeled this satire on Lucilius 4,” or perhaps even, “he alludes in this satire to Lucilius 4.”

To Henss’ case we may add the following. At Persius 3.21 (*contemnere sonat vitium, percussa maligne*), the *Commentum* notes: CONTEMNERE: *haec ab Horatio male translata intempestiva sunt. Horatius ‘quin tu invidiam placare paras, virtute relicta? contemnere miser.’* Here a single word is quoted; apparently with poor effect according to the author of the *Commentum*. The

<sup>30</sup>Note the similarity to the comment at 1.2: *hanc satiram...transtulit castigans* (at 3.1) ≈ *hunc versum...transtulit...increpans* (at 1.2).

author of the *Commentum* appears to object to the literary sensibility of the allusion, not to the quotation of only one word, for at Persius 3.31 (*non pudet ad morem discincti vivere Nattae*) the *Commentum* notes:

DISCINCTUM: dicit neglegentem, perditum, ut Horatius ‘discinctus aut perdam nepos’ (*Epod.* 1.34) vel discinctum obesum et ventriosum luxuria, qui cingi non possit. nam ob pinguedinem calluisse hunc Nattam induxit. quod potest ab Horatio videri translatum, qui ait (*S.* 1.6.123–24) ‘unguor olivo non quo fraudatis immundus Natta lucernis.’

Here again, there appears to be a parallel in sense, but only one word, *Nattae*, could qualify as a quotation. In only one case does *transferre* seem to signify quotation. On Persius 6.9 (*‘Lunai portum, est operae, cognoscite, ciues’*) the *Commentum* notes *hunc versum ad suum carmen de Ennii carminibus transtulit*.<sup>31</sup> This is the sole witness to the verse’s Ennian authority. Thus, the only instance in which *transferre* in the *Commentum* might mean “to quote” lacks independent control. The line, furthermore, gives one of only two instances in which the archaic genitive *-ai* appears in any position other than line-end<sup>32</sup> and might be considered suspect on these grounds. In the light of the *Commentum*’s use of *transferre* to indicate the direct importation of a single word from one line to another, one might be justified in doubting that Persius 6.9 was quoted in its entirety from Ennius. Not even Vergil, perhaps the most allusive of the classical Latin poets, quotes his peers in full with any frequency.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that “*Lunai*” is the only Ennian word in the line. Henss’ conclusion must stand.

I suggest that the *Commentum* acknowledged the allusion in Persius 1.2 to Seneca’s seventh letter to Lucilius. We know from Aulus Gellius that in antiquity Seneca’s *Epistulae morales* carried the epithet by which they are known today, “*ad Lucilium*.”<sup>34</sup> We may speculate that the *scholium* in the *Commentum* at 1.2 originally read something like *hunc versum de Senecae epistularum moralium ad Lucilium libro primo transtulit*. We know, furthermore, from the *explicit*s in MSS. of Seneca’s letters, **LQg**, that book 1 of

<sup>31</sup>See the discussion on the comments of Harvey above.

<sup>32</sup>Skutsch 1985: 751.

<sup>33</sup>Jocelyn 142.

<sup>34</sup>In commenting on Seneca’s merits and shortcomings as a literary critic Gellius writes *in libro vicesimo secundo epistularum moralium quas ad Lucilium composuit...[sc. Seneca] dicit....* (12.2.3).

Seneca's letters ends after the twelfth letter.<sup>35</sup> The seventh letter thus falls in the first book. The only error, therefore, would be the over-compression of a reference to Seneca's *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* until only the name of Lucilius remained. We have the right citation but deduced the wrong Lucilius.<sup>36</sup>

It is routinely claimed that Seneca's *Letters* were composed after his retirement in 62, and so after the death of Persius, but the evidence is too slim for the detailed chronologies that have been advanced. Others have held the *Letters* to be fictional.<sup>37</sup> The only strictly datable event in the *Letters*, the fire at Lugdunum in 62 C.E., appears near the end of the collection (91); the rest is modern deduction and invention.<sup>38</sup> Even if we accept, on the strength of a single datable event, that the entire corpus of 122 letters was arranged and edited so as to appear in its present form some time after 62, there is nothing to suggest that any number of the letters did not circulate earlier in different—oral or written—forms. We cannot assume that the author wrote, compiled, and edited the book of letters in a few years, letting no one read or hear portions of it before completion, producing the work afresh, without drawing on previous drafts, recitations, discarded sections or versions of letters sent or not sent. This was almost never the manner of literary production in antiquity and it is unlikely to have been the case here. As Starr has recently demonstrated, ancient books often had rich and varied histories of circulation before their authors let the “finished products” be copied without restriction.<sup>39</sup> Persius' *Vita*, moreover, informs us (23) that he met Seneca late in life. Thus, it may be reasonable to assume that, just as Propertius could refer to the *Aeneid* well in advance of its “publication” (2.34.65–66), Persius and others would have had access to some of Seneca's *Letters* before their “publication.”<sup>40</sup> In the end the question here turns on the issue of whether the entire composition of a book as large and complex as Seneca's *Letters* may be dated credibly on the strength of one

<sup>35</sup>Sigla from Reynolds 1965a: vi.

<sup>36</sup>Note that, like Gellius, the author of the *Commentum* even cites the *Letters* by book-rather than letter-number.

<sup>37</sup>For the chronologies see Albertini; Grimal 219–33 and 443–56; Abel 1981: 472–99, 1985: 653–775. Fictional: Cancik 4–5; Maurach 21.

<sup>38</sup>Griffin 2, 396, 400.

<sup>39</sup>See also Plin. *Ep.* 1.13, 8.21.

<sup>40</sup>Wilson 119 n. 3 points out that “Letters intended from the outset for publication may nevertheless have been sent to the addressee; letters sent in the course of a regular correspondence may later be revised, expanded, supplemented with other material prior to publication.”

datable event. The allusion in Persius gives sufficient reason for reconsidering the validity of a rigid dating of Seneca's *Letters*.

The *Commentum* does not cite Seneca elsewhere; nor for that matter does it cite Lucretius.<sup>41</sup> Citations from ancient authors in the *Commentum* are not nearly as numerous as they are in, for example, the scholia to Juvenal (Wessner 1931). Moreover, the bulk of the citations in the *Commentum* come from Vergil and Horace. Nevertheless, several unique citations do survive in the *Commentum*: Labeo, *Ilias* 4.35 at Persius 1.4; Pacuvius, *Antiopa* fr. 15R<sup>3</sup> at 1.77; Cornelius Severus fr. 10M at 1.95; Sallust, *Catiline* 1 at 2.61; Aesop at 4.23. Letters 1–88 are remarkably well-attested in the period during which the *Commentum* was compiled: four ninth-century MSS. (pPLV) and an early tenth-century MS. (O) are known.<sup>42</sup> Since the citation in the *Commentum* is consistent in nearly all the MSS.,<sup>43</sup> it is probable that the vagaries of late antique transmission are responsible for the corruption at 1.2 and that, by the time the Carolingian composer/compiler began work, the scholia already contained the erroneous reference to “Lucilius” alone. The original reference most likely comes from one of the previous fourth- or fifth-century strata, identified by Zetzel and Robathan et al., from which the *Commentum* was compiled. Even if Seneca's *Letters* may not have been in the mainstream ca. 400 C.E., we must bear in mind that the late antique Latin scholia repeatedly turn up unexpected citations (e.g., the reference to Tibullus 1.7.29 in the scholia to Juvenal at 8.29), and a reference to Seneca's *Letters* therefore would not be surprising.

On my reconstruction of the original note to 1.2, if “*ad Lucilium*” was stripped of its syntax—because of the accidental omission or corruption of any part of the title, for example—the reflex gesture would have been to adjust the inflection of *Lucilium* to the genitive, in order to bring some sense to the Latin: “*de Lucili libro primo*.” Lucilius, after all, was a known author of books. The appearance of the name “Lucilius” near the start of Persius' first satire would certainly have made the late antique or medieval copyist think of Lucilius the satirist before Lucilius the recipient of Seneca's letters, as it has for modern scholars. Thus a simple but practically irreversible mistake would have gained currency. If this is so, then in spite of the numerous, sometimes serious errors that have been alleged, the note in the *Commentum* has been transmitted in the

<sup>41</sup>KiBel 110.

<sup>42</sup>Reynolds 1965b: 17–25.

<sup>43</sup>Only K, a reputable but derivative witness to the *Commentum*, puts the note at 1.1; see Zetzel 1981: 28, 31 n. 26.



proper position, at 1.2, as has the name Lucilius, if not the identity of the person indicated. Even the book number, the element most likely to be corrupted, has been transmitted accurately in the reference. Persius 1.1 alludes to Lucretius. Persius 1.2 alludes to Seneca's seventh letter to Lucilius. This is the story that has lain behind the statement in the *Commentum* for the last thousand years.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup>A version of this paper was delivered at the one hundred and twenty-seventh annual meeting of the American Philological Association in December 1997. I am grateful to F. Newton, K. Reckford, L. Richardson, jr., M. Weiss and especially to K. Rigsby for their generous assistance and spirited criticism. Special thanks also to J. E. G. Zetzel, who should not be held agreeable to the interpretations offered here.

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