

Satiric Takes on Philosophy, Philosophic Takes on Satire

A peculiar aspect of the Roman genre of *satura* is its enduring fascination with philosophy. Socrates himself was a consummate ironist, of course, and the satiric grand master Aristophanes mocked philosophy and philosophers (most famously Socrates) better than any Greek before Lucian. But sustained satiric engagement with philosophic texts, traditions, and schools is, like the genre itself, *tota Romana*. The Horatian satirist's interest in philosophy, particularly in the mock-dialogues of *Sermones* book 2, is well-known (e.g., 2.5, 2.7, cf. Persius poem 4; and see Hardie on Juvenal's mock-Platonic poems 3 and 9). Turpin suggests that the satiric speaker of *Sermones* 1.1-1.3 takes the pose of an Epicurean—and does a bad job at it. One of the classic questions of Persius' satire is whether it's Stoic or not, while the figure of Democritus laughing at human folly in Juvenal poem 10 has been taken as emblematic of the satirist's persona in the later poems, which (as Keane and Ehrhardt, among others, attest) deal recurrently with philosophy and philosophic inquiry.

This panel advances new arguments on Roman satire's engagement with philosophy, and flips the focus to explore how Roman philosophic poetry engages with satire. Readers of Horace, Juvenal, and Swift—and viewers of *The Colbert Report*—may be tempted to think of satire as an act that is essentially and unceasingly ironic and unserious, as Turpin argues. But Roman *satura* cannot be defined by satire alone: the *satura lanx* is stuffed full of unironic moments as well. Similarly, one might think philosophy has no truck with the low tone, irony, or bite of satire, and yet (for example) the tools of diatribe are integral to the persuasive force of the Lucretian speaker's refutations of Presocratic philosophers (*De Rerum Natura* 1.635-920, with Tatum), the fear of death (3.830-1094, with Wallach), and romantic or erotic obsessions (4.1030-1287, with Brown). The papers in this panel uncover new sites of intergeneric activity in the purportedly

philosophic poetry of Lucretius and in the satiric work of Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, and the Greek interloper Lucian.

Paper 1, “*L’Anti-Ennius chez Lucrèce: Satire and literary polemic in De Rerum Natura,*” demonstrates that both famous invocations of and heretofore unnoticed allusions to Ennius in *DRN* are in fact satiric treatments of the earlier poet. Satire informs Lucretian metapoetic attacks on Ennius, himself an author of satire, and the Lucretian portrayal of Ennius is echoed by later authors of *satura*, particularly by Persius. Paper 2, “Civic ambition and satiric authority in Lucilius and Lucretius,” argues that allusions in *DRN* to the satire of Lucilius—particularly in the discussion of Roman politicking—co-opt Lucilius’ poetic and moral/social authority for the Lucretian speaker’s own countercultural critiques.

Paper 3, “*Sermones* 2.5: A shady prophet, an obsequious hero, and a poet with something to prove,” shows how the *captatio*-strategies outlined by Horace’s Tiresias are modeled on the philosopher Philodemus’ description of the flatterer in his *De Adulatione*. By portraying Ulysses as a shameless brown-noser, the Horatian satirist by comparison appears a genuine, truth-telling friend of Maecenas. Paper 4, “The consolation of not-philosophy in Lucilius and Juvenal,” identifies Lucilius book 27 as the satiric-philosophic model for the mock-*consolatio* of Juvenal poem 13. Both poems highlight the limitations of philosophy and the fleetingness of material goods, while harshly mocking the addressee.

Paper 5, “Lucian’s *Nigrinus*: What is the effective corrective?,” explores the genre-bending biographical dialogue from the perspective of seriousness and irony. It can be neither fully: quotations of Homer and other literature are inapposite or immediately undercut, while the title character comes off less than well. If this were a work of flattery, it would be that of someone who had not learned from Philodemus or from Horace’s Tiresias! Instead, this richly refer-

ential piece seems to satirize popular philosophy and endorse satire itself as the only successful means of behavior-correction—and as such represents Lucian’s self-invitation to the table of Roman *satura*.

The panel has a duration of 100 minutes: 15 minutes for each paper, a 5-minute general introduction, a 10-minute response delivered by a cutting-edge scholar of Latin poetry, and 10 minutes general discussion.

Bibliography

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