

## Lucilius and the Satisfaction of *satura*

This paper argues that etymological plays on *satura* are discernible already in the fragments of Lucilius. Puns on the genre-term as “full, stuffed, enough” are widespread in the verses of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal. Although Horace avoids the term *satura* in his first book of *Satires*, referring to his writings instead as *sermo*, “conversation,” he foreshadows its debut prominently at *Satires* 2.1.1 through strategic deployment of related words. So the Lucretian (*DRN* 3.938) paraphrase *cedat uti conviva satur* (“let him leave [sc. life] as a satisfied dinner-guest,” 1.1.119) near the conclusion of *Satires* 1.1 both connects *satura* with eating and a feeling of satisfaction and set up a second play in the following line, *iam satis est* (1.1.120), aptly translated by Freudenburg (2001: 32; cf. 1993: 112) as, “‘enough now,’ or better yet, ‘it’s satire now’” (cf. Gowers 1993: 129n80, 2012: 84-85).

Persius, while eschewing the formal term *satura*, winks at it in his unsavory picture of the “stuffed sons of Romulus” (*Romulidae saturi*, 1.31) drunkenly discoursing on the latest trends in poetry, or in his virtual quoting of Horace 1.1.120 as *hoc satis?* (“is this enough/satire?” 3.27; cf. 3.78). Above all, in offering up his satire as *aliquid decoctius*, “something more boiled down” (1.125), Persius both engages with and problematizes the genre’s self-representation as something full and condensed to perfection. Juvenal uses *satura* extensively in its straightforward sense of “satire” (1.30, 3.321, 4.106, 6.634) and also alludes to it in such phrases as *satur est cum dicit Horatius ‘euhoe’* (7.62; far more than “the well-filled poet after dinner sits down to write a wild Bacchic ode,” as Courtney 1980: 358 would have it) or *qui saturant urbem* (8.118; not merely “those who stuff the city full,” but rather who in doing so provide material for “those who satirize the city”). He also coins an additional genre-term, his famous *farrago* (1.86), which, with its meanings that encompass “mixed grains grown for animal feed,” and “medley,

hotchpotch,” strikingly evokes *satura* yet is notably more “degrading” (Gowers 1993: 209) to the genre.

Lucilius, like Ennius, called his collection *Saturae*, and Gowers 1993: 128, in the face of general skepticism, reads fr. 34 (*per saturam aedilem factum qui legibus solvat*) self-referentially. The adjective *satis* seems to be pointedly repeated at fr. 205-7, which begins *nam si, quod satis est homini, id satis esse potisset, / hoc sat erat*. More importantly, *satis* is found in connection with other terms that are, in the satirical context, often freighted with meaning. So at fr. 568, *denique uti stulto nil sit satis, omnia cum sint*, it is accompanied by *stultus*, suggesting that “for the stupid man, nothing is satire.” In fr. 1191-92 (*quamvis bonus ipse / Samnis, in ludo ac rudibus cuivis satis asper*), likewise, it lies sandwiched between *ludus*, “play,” a Horatian and Persian buzzword for their poetry, and *asper*, “rough,” resonant of Horace’s claim at *Satires* 2.1.1-4 that his satire has been charged as being too fierce (*acer*).

Fr. 1130-37, preserved at Cicero, *De finibus* 2.24-25, is most intriguing, as it combines these Lucilian usages of *satis* with those that will come later in Horace and Persius. The quotation begins by criticizing a man for being boastful (*ut iactare*) but without sufficient self-knowledge (*nec es satis cognitus qui sis*). Named are (C.) Laelius, a staple character in Lucilius (cf. Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.65), dubbed *sophos*, “wise” (the opposite of *stultus*), and one Gallonius, a wretched man (*homo miser*) who has “never in his life dined well” (*cenasti in vita numquam bene*; he reappears as a glutton at cf. Hor. *Sat.* 2.2.47). The latter formulation exploits the alimentary connotations of *satura*, which itself makes possible Horace’s nod to the Lucretian notion that one should depart from life like a satisfied dinner-guest. Finally, the fragment ends by combining the acts of dining and conversing, *bene cocto et / condito, sermone bono et, si*

*quaeris, libenter*, as Lucilius may be seen supplying Horace with his term *sermo*, and Persius with the notion of satire as something “cooked” (*cocto*, whence *decoctius*).

While the fragmentary state of Lucilius’ poetry naturally complicates the thread of argumentation proposed here, there is compelling evidence that self-aware plays upon the etymological possibilities of *satura* constituted part of Roman verse Satire’s fabric since its inception, rather than being, as has been commonly supposed, a later innovation.

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