Speech Still Kills: Echoes of Juvenal's Satire 1 in Satire 10

It has often been argued that Juvenal's Satire 10—popularly known as "The Vanity of Human Wishes" after Johnson's famous imitation—advocates a move away from *indignatio* and *ira* to a more "philosophical" contemplation of human follies and vices. In his commentary, Courtney (1980, 446) suggested that Satire 10, opening Book 4, should be seen as "programmatic", with 10.51-2 effectively replacing 1.85-6. All subsequent scholarship, including most recently Uden and Geue, has followed his direction to at least some extent. This paper offers as possible support for the notion of a "re-set" in Satire 10 its reprise of a primary theme of Satire 1, namely speech vs silence.

In Satire 1, the speaker bursts onto the scene in an exhilarating display of plain speaking, which concludes with a promise to be a second Lucilius, the founder of the genre celebrated for his fearless *libertas*. But by the end of the poem's tour of Rome as *ipse dies pulchro distinguitur ordine rerum* (1.127), the speaker has retreated from his vaunted Lucilian *parrhesia*, after being warned by an interlocutor of the dangers of "naming names"—you will end up being executed in the arena (*pone Tigillinum, taeda lucebis in illa/ qua stantes ardent qui fixo gutture fumant,/ et latum media sulcum deducis harena*, 1.155-7). By the end of the programmatic Satire 1, then, the dangers of opening one's mouth too wide have displaced the desire for unconstrained satirical tongue-lashing.

As the speaker of Satire 10 takes us through and systematically rejects all the foolish things humans pray for, things which harm us in all realms of life (*nocitura toga, nocitura petuntur/ militia*, 10.8-9), it is striking how many of the *exempla* trotted out as

evidence have to do with the dangers of speech and the advisability of keeping silent. Indeed, the first category mentioned is rhetorical power and eloquence, which has been the death of many: *torrens dicendi copia multis/ et sua mortifera est facundia* (10.9-10). I shall focus here on two segments of Satire 10: the narrative of the downfall of Sejanus (56-113) and the famed eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero which follows immediately afterwards (114-32).

In the Sejanus narrative, after the account of how his statue was smashed and melted down into scrap-metal for pots and pans, we are privy to snatches of conversation (*sermones . . . secreta . . . murmura volgi*, 88-9) among the watching citizenry (67-72 and 81-88), and these echo the concluding dialogue between the speaker and his unnamed interlocutor at Satire 1.150-71. When one man says that Sejanus wasn't convicted in court but by a "long and wordy letter from Capri", the other says, essentially, "say no more!" (*bene habet, nil plus interrogo,* 70-2). The population at large has retreated from (*nunc se continet*, 79-80) its traditional role in votes and elections, and is concerned only with "bread and circuses". While the fate of Sejanus exemplifies the dangers of seeking a powerful position, the narrative relies heavily on the need for vigilance in what one says. The cutting up and smelting of the statue picks up on the flames of the human torches in the arena at the end of Satire 1.

This leads nicely into the pairing, in a manner reminiscent of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, of Demosthenes and Cicero: even schoolboys long to be as eloquent as they were, in spite of the fact that it was their rhetorical skills which doomed them (*eloquio sed uterque perit orator,* 118). Cicero should have stuck to his bad poetry, suggests the speaker—also recalling the poetasters attacked in the opening foray of Satire 1—and then

he might not have lost his head and hands (120-22). The reference to the *Second Philippic* and Antony's swords (123-6) recall the sword drawn (*ense stricto*) against *Lucilius ardens* and the aphorism that "it's too late to repent of battle once you've put your helmet on" (*galeatum sero duelli/ paenitet*) as the interlocutor signs off in Satire 1.165-70). Demosthenes' violent end is cited as a parallel, without going into detail, the speaker focussing instead on how he steered the Athenian Assembly (*moderantem frena* echoing Lucilius as charioteer in 1.20). There is also a vignette of his father hammering out swords in the fiery forge, recalling the smelting of Sejanus' statue above (128-32).

These and other close verbal echoes, combined with images that allude back to the most prominent concerns of Satire 1, suggest that Satire 10 is indeed offering a programmatic reset, but with the same basic anxieties about giving voice in dangerous times underpinning the "new" approach.

Bibliography

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