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The Fall of the Curtain (Horace *S.* 2.8)*

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Horace *S.* 2.8 seems to lack the closure a final poem ought to provide. Until recently, studies of the satire have focused on this inadequacy, tending towards one of two positions. The first finds the poem basically insubstantial, and dismisses it as a "very pretty divertissement" or "whimsical" close.[1] The second emphasizes the idea that Horace is criticizing someone in the satire, though just whom remains unclear. Representatives of this approach diverge over the appeal of Nasidienus and of his food: does the host deserve our sympathy or earn his guests' rebuke? is the food sophisticated or just excessive?[2] The

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[1]Fraenkel 1957: 144 and Evans 311, respectively. Cf. Evans later on the same page: "Of the two final poems *S.* 2.7 is, however, by far the more important....In 2.8 there are no lessons to be learned, only examples of social behavior to be avoided." Cf. also Coffey 89: "[T]his satire is less important as a poem in its own right than as a document in the history of symposiac literature"; and Rudd 1966: 222: "Structurally it is the weakest ending in the book..."

[2]Baker and O'Connor think we should feel sorry for Nasidienus. For Baker, the guests have behaved rudely: "[I]t is not Nasidienus who is the primary butt of the satire in the poem, but his guests, Maecenas among them, for their rude behavior...the problem in the traditional reading of the poem is simply that the punishment meted out to Nasidienus is too big for his crime" (214). In his conclusion, however, Baker argues that Horace pays the guests an indirect compliment with this portrait because of the strong friendship it assumes. O'Connor explores similarities between Horace and Nasidienus (cf. also the parallels between satirist and chef, satires and food noted by Gowers 167–78 and Freudenburg 1995: 217–18), arguing that we are meant to sympathize with the artist's loss of control: "Nasidienus and his ruin reflect the poet's own doubts about the very nature of artistic effort before a potentially hostile audience" (24). Gowers 167–70 sides against Nasidienus: for all his similarities with Horace, he is a "distorted" version of the poet. Freudenburg 1993: 232–35 too implies that the host is at fault, though in his 1995 article he argues that the distinction between Nasidienus and Horace's friends is not so clear (216–19). As for other satiric dinner parties, Granius seems to have been above criticism in Lucilius' dinner party poem (cf. Fiske 408–9; Shero 129), in contrast to Juvenal's Virro and Petronius' Trimalchio.

ambiguity does not make for much of an ending. A fallen curtain, an unfinished dinner, guests who run away: all of this has dissatisfied readers expecting the kind of neat farewell Horace offers in the final satire of the first book, with its clear reference to publication (1.10.92).[3]

Since 1993, three scholars have made a substantial contribution to our understanding of the poem's wit and polish. Freudenburg, Gowers and Muecke[4] address neglected aspects of the satire through their attention to the genre and the broader symbolism of food, while Freudenburg's latest article on the role of Canidia uncovers a fascinating and entirely new level of meaning.[5] Still, despite these advances, the problem of the ending has not been resolved.[6]

In this paper I argue that, properly understood, 2.8 is an effective finale not only to the second book, but also to both books of *Satires*.[7] As the culmination of a series of satires on food in Book 2,[8] 2.8 literally drops the curtain on fancy food, explicitly warning against a departure from the simple lifestyle practiced by Ofellus in 2.2 and the country mouse in 2.6. Despite Horace's

[3]*I, puer, atque meo citus haec subscribe libello.* Horace likes neat endings in general. Books 1–3 of the *Odes* end self-consciously (see Santirocco, especially chs. 6 and 7); but cf. Muecke 229 on the lack of a "formal epilogue" to the *Epodes* and to *Odes* 4.

[4]Freudenburg 1993: 232–35; Gowers 161–79; Muecke 227–39. Cf. now Berg as well on food in Book 2.

[5]Freudenburg 1995 examines allusions to magic and witchery: Nasidienus corresponds to a witch, and his presentation of the food resembles love-charms and sacrificial ritual.

[6]Each of these scholars concedes the abruptness of the ending while trying to minimize its significance. Cf. Freudenburg 1995: 219: "The feast is unfinished...Yet, anything more would be indecorous, Canidia-like, sheer poison. *Iam satis est*"; Gowers 161: "[T]his dinner is very specifically staged as the consummation of all the connected themes of Book 2" but "we should see this as a deliberately premature ending, complementing the premature ending of the dinner and that unexpected shortness of the book as a whole" (178); and Muecke 228: "If 2.7 is the summarising "diatribe" satire, 2.8 is the last of the entertainment...not written explicitly as an epilogue, it still rehearses some of the main topics of the book" and "the tight symmetrical structure of the book removes the need for a formal epilogue" (229).

[7]Though published separately (ca. 35 B.C.E. for Book 1 and 30 B.C.E. for Book 2), the two books were part of a continuous project and Book 2 is in many ways an extension of Book 1 (for example the way in which the speakers in the second book turn the tables on Horace). Familiarity with Book 1 enhances reading of the sequel, but would not have been essential. D. P. Fowler 1989: 83 discusses "supertextual closure" versus closure of an individual work; as an example, he mentions Prop. 3.24 and 3.25, which we recognize as rounding off three books of poetry even if Prop. 1–3 is not generally considered "a single work." See now D. P. Fowler 1997.

[8]The even-numbered ones. Food figures in all the satires of the second book, e.g., 2.3 (111–28, 142–57) and 2.7 (29–39, 102–11), though I focus here primarily on the central food satires, 2, 4, 6, and 8.

oscillation between plain and fancy, country and city, the last satire does settle important questions about lifestyle raised from the start of the book.

The *cena Nasidieni* also gives the final word on satire's pedigree by returning to the relationship between satire and comedy, perhaps the most important literary theme of Book 1.[9] The connection between these two genres is the subject of the first book's final poem (1.10)[10] and fundamental for Horace's definition of his literary inheritance and stance. Horace, as we shall see, uses the ending of Book 2 to make a new beginning, one which turns precisely on the lineage he has established for satire.

Finally, as a conclusion to both the second book and the *Satires* as a whole, 2.8 tests the effectiveness of the teaching embodied in the preceding poems with the goal of producing readers who judge for themselves. As such, the poem marks the end of our training and the beginning of our independence, and so the completion of the satirist's task.

S. 2.8 opens with Horace questioning Fundanius, a writer of comedy, about the dinner at Nasidienus' house on the previous day. Fundanius replies that he had never had a better time and then, prompted by Horace, reports the first course (wild boar with crudités and fish-pickle) and names the other guests: three more literary types (Maecenas, Viscus and Varius), two "shades" brought by Maecenas (Vibidius and Balatro), and Nasidienus' own followers (Nomentanus and Porcius). Nomentanus played side-kick to Nasidienus and boasted about the rare origins of the foods presented, while Porcius, as his name

[9]Cf. *S.* 1.4, 1.10, and 2.1, and an extensive bibliography on this topic, e.g., van Rooy 144–85 and more recently Freudenburg 1993 chs. 1 and 2, with further bibliography. Despite the abundance of work on the link between comedy and satire in these other satires, the importance of comedy in *S.* 2.8 was not extensively treated before Freudenburg 1993 and Gowers. Earlier work on the satire concentrated on tracing connections with other models, especially Lucilius, who has several dinner party poems (cf. Fiske 408–15 and Shero 127–30, who suggests that the *cena Nasidieni* is a *contaminatio* of two Lucilian satires, since we find no single exact model). Another focus was texts on food like Ennius' *Hedyphagetica* or Varro's *Menippean Satires* (on which see the discussions in Rudd 1966: 213–23; Classen 340–41). More recent work on food in satire (e.g., Gowers ch. 3, Muecke 9–11, and Berg) acknowledges the influence of this background without searching for a model. Horace draws as well on Plato and the symposium, though the emphasis is all on food rather than conversation (cf. n. 20 below). Gowers 179 and Muecke 239 also cite mime, with its abrupt endings, as a possible influence.

[10]See Braund 1992: 25, who notes similarities between the concluding poems of both books of *Satires*. Cf. also the appearance of Varius and Viscus in both satires (on which see n. 30 below).

suggests, ate like a pig. Next Fundanius tells how the dinner progressed: the greedy Vibidius and Balatro called for larger cups of wine; Nasidienus gave a long-winded speech about an exotic fish course; and then out of the blue the dusty wall-hanging fell down, right onto the platter of food. Nomentanus tried to cheer his friend by calling upon cruel Fortuna, while the rest of the guests whispered and smothered their laughter. When Nasidienus brought out yet more unusual food, the guests took their revenge by running away without even a taste.

Horace on Horace: Critiquing the Food Critic

As commentators have noted, Horace grows relatively silent in Book 2. All but one of the satires in the second book take the form of a dialogue, in contrast to the monologues of Book 1, and Horace's own voice is eclipsed by the speech of other characters.[11] He is isolated even further in three cases (2.3, 2.4, 2.7), where the new narrators report something they have learned from a third party. No longer do we hear Horace's criticisms of others; instead we are treated to others' criticism of him. The effect is damaging: while in Book 1 the satirist presents himself as a generally consistent person with only minor foibles,[12] in Book 2 he comes off as a hypocrite.

Yet Horace's wavering in Book 2 is not hypocrisy. The satirist turns against himself the same attacks previously made on others in order to demonstrate the benefits of the satirical outlook. To begin with, tolerance for others will come from the ability to admit our own failings;[13] on a rhetorical level, the use of himself as a personal case also makes Horace's homilies easier to bear. In addition, his vacillation between opposing lifestyles effectively confuses his readers, forcing them to question things otherwise taken for granted.[14] The final satire is conclusive, but only if we understand the point of satiric criticism made through Horace's own example. Horace encourages us to

[11]Horace steps back from the main role in all of the satires except for *S.* 2.6 and is completely absent from *S.* 2.5. Anderson 42 describes this disappearance well: "The satirist lets himself be crowded off the stage by various fools who proclaim their warped ideas on various subjects, while the poor satirist meekly listens to them, uttering no criticism, often himself the target of misplaced ethical attack." Cf. also Fraenkel 1957: 136; von Albrecht 150; and O'Connor 32–34 on the multiple voices of 2.8.

[12]Cf., e.g., *S.* 1.3.19–20, 1.4.129–33.

[13]Cf. *S.* 1.3 *passim*.

[14]Anderson 42 (continuing the quotation in n. 11 above): "It is as if we have plunged into a convincingly dramatic atmosphere, where the truth is no longer told, but is implied and awaits our investigation."

sort out the contradictions by ourselves, then, but he has not neglected to leave clear hints and guidance.

Attention to the repetition of certain foods and stances as the book progresses shows that 2.8 resolves any doubts about how to eat. Food appears in all the satires of the second book and is a central theme of the even-numbered ones. The three food satires before 2.8 present clearly demarcated styles of eating: simple food in 2.2, fancy/pretentious food in 2.4,[15] with the two cuisines opposed in 2.6 in the fable of the country and the city mouse. 2.6 seems to express a preference for the modest country life, with Horace's praise of the Sabine farm and the country mouse's closing remarks about the safety of his rural nest. Yet the very next poem raises problems for this view. The sequence of satires leading up to 2.8 thus yields a predicament, for the alternation of plain and fancy food that begins in 2.2 has reached equilibrium by the time of the final satire.[16] In the discussion that follows, I focus on the ways in which 2.8 provides a conclusion to Book 2, concentrating upon a number of aspects that have been overlooked. There are of course many other dimensions to these poems, especially the rich social, political and moral associations of food in the *Satires*.[17] My treatment can only touch upon some of these elements insofar as they affect the central question of closure, but this selective focus is not intended to be reductive.

In the first of the food satires, Ofellus recommends the simplest food and warns against complicated and lavish meals in terms suggestive of the *cena Nasidieni*. The following example is typical:

[15]Catius also discusses some very simple and ordinary foods (cf. Classen 337–38; Gowers 136–37), but unusual foods predominate, and both types of food are discussed at a level far above that of survival and health, in contrast to the Ofellus satire. See in this vein Rudd 1966: 211 and 213: "Catius is ridiculous...because the ideas themselves are those of a pompous and over-fastidious gourmet whose obsession with food and drink is from the moralist's viewpoint basically frivolous."

[16]This climax is not adequately taken into account by Boll or Port, both of whom rely heavily on parallels between the first and second halves of the book; but cf. Ludwig 312–15, who allows for more interrelations between the four food satires. Berg's article studies the food satires in sequence, as I do, and also stresses the "interruption" caused by *S.* 2.7. Cf. also Baker 229–30 who looks at the last three satires of Book 2 as a "triad of poems linked by the Maecenas theme" (220). The benefits of a sequential reading are well demonstrated by Zetzel's article on the structure of Book 1.

[17]Cf., e.g., Baker on the implications of Maecenas's presence in *S.* 2.8; Gowers' excellent treatment of Horatian satire in general (126–79); and D'Arms.

> accipe nunc victus tenuis quae quantaque secum
> adferat. imprimis valeas bene: nam variae res
> ut noceant homini credas, memor illius escae
> quae simplex olim tibi sederit; at simul assis
> miscueris elixa, simul conchylia turdis,
> dulcia se in bilem vertent stomachoque tumultum
> lenta feret pituita. vides ut pallidus omnis
> cena desurgat dubia?[18] (2.2.70–77)
>
> Learn now what and how great are the benefits that the modest way of life brings. First, you enjoy good health. For when you remember that unpretentious food that agreed with you long ago, you may realize how harmful a variety of foods is for man. But as soon as you mix boiled and roasted, shellfish and thrushes, the sweet things will turn to bile, and the viscous phlegm will cause turbulence to your stomach. Do you see how pale everyone is as he rises from an unrecognizable meal?

This modesty is to be distinguished from the stinginess practiced by someone tellingly named Avidienus (53–69). Horace explicitly characterizes the advice as *nec meus hic sermo est* (2) and does not indicate whether he would align himself with this viewpoint or not, in keeping with the apparently noncommittal position he adopts in the second book. Nevertheless, the advocacy of a mean between two types of excessive behavior is reminiscent of the diatribe satires (1.1–3), and so Ofellus' counsel recalls advice Horace himself gave earlier.[19]

In 2.4, Catius hastens to repeat to Horace a lecture that he has just heard.[20] Though protecting the name of the author, Catius delivers a list of rules and precepts that constitute an ancient version of Martha Stewart, completely foreign to Ofellus' advice. Eating is no longer just a part of life but its entire focus, and Epicurean vocabulary inappropriate to the subject adds to the pretension. More importantly for our purposes, almost all of the elegant foods

[18]*Cena dubia* in line 77 makes one think of the unrecognizable food in *S.* 2.8, which Nomentanus must identify for the guests (25–33). This expression also appears at Ter. *Ph.* 342, where it is explained as a dinner so extravagant that one does not know what to eat first.

[19]Ofellus is an Apulian name, perhaps another indication of Horace's sympathy for this character (*S.* 2.1.34). Cf. Freudenburg 1993: 7 on Ofellus taking over the role of the speaker of the diatribe satires; he also states that "in creating his persona in *Satires* 1.1–4, Horace has drawn an analogy between the practitioners of diatribe...and their buffoonlike counterparts, the stern rustic moralizers of the comic stage" (38).

[20]Fraenkel 136–37 was the first to point out the resemblance of the openings of *S.* 2.2, 2.4, and 2.8 to Platonic dialogues. Cf. also Anderson 41–49 on the roles of the Socratic persona and the *doctor ineptus* in Books 1 and 2; Braund 1988: 144–45, who emphasizes the clash between philosophical openings and lowly subject matter; Gowers 138–40 for further Platonic allusions.

mentioned reappear in the *cena Nasidieni*: Falernian wine, sea urchin, boar, properly aged fish and meat, a compound sauce, Venafran olive oil, apples, and hare.[21] Directions for keeping the dining area neat (81–87) are also attended to in 2.8 (10–13). To clinch the connection, *beatae*, the last word of 2.4, is picked up in the first line of 2.8: *Nasidieni cena beati*.[22] The eighth satire thus continues where the fourth left off, as though Nasidienus has applied the very theory elaborated by Catius.[23]

At the end of Catius' report, Horace begs to be taken along for the next lecture:

> ...at mihi *cura*
> *non mediocris* inest, fontis ut adire remotos
> atque haurire queam vitae praecepta beatae. (93–95)
>
> But I have no ordinary longing to be able to visit the distant fountains
> and drink in the rules for the happy life.

Although *cura* would seem to denote enthusiasm, *non mediocris* is a token of excess and extravagance. Horace attributes to himself immoderate desires, thus revealing his own imperfections and inconsistencies. The desire to meet Catius' teacher is ironic, however, for to learn these precepts and dine in the way being described would be at odds with the values Horace endorses in Book 1 and in his praise of the Sabine Farm.[24] However complex Horace's pose in these other satires, it is surely not the case that he believes in anything substantially different from the recommendation of moderation and simplicity. He may show this advice being carried to extremes, or depict a figure, including himself, who cannot always bring himself to live according to these rules—but this does not negate the basic message.

The opposing themes in 2.2 and 2.4 are recapitulated in the meals of the country and the city mouse at the end of 2.6. Like Ofellus, the country mouse subsists on simple foods such as vetch and oats and is generous with whatever

[21]Falernian wine (2.4.24, 55; 2.8.16), sea urchin (2.4.33; 2.8.52), boar (2.4.41; 2.8.6), hare (2.4.44; 2.8.89), age of fish and meat (2.4.45–46; 2.8.6–7, 44), compound sauce (2.4.63–64; 2.8.45–53), Venafran olive oil (2.4.69; 2.8.45), apples (2.4.70; 2.8.31). Cf. also Classen 337–39 on the food in *S.* 2.4 and Berg 149–50 for further parallels between *S.* 2.4 and 2.8.

[22]Cf. O'Connor 24; Berg 149; and also *beati* at *S.* 2.6.74, where the question of whether men are happy through wealth or virtue is discussed at Horace's own dinner parties.

[23]Consult Rudd 1966: 220 and cf. especially Berg 149–50, who argues that Nasidienus is the unnamed professor of *S.* 2.4.

[24]Cf., e.g., the recommendation of the middle course in *S.* 1.1–3 and 2.6.1–15.

he has, giving the best bits to his guest. The city mouse disdains this homely food. Yet when he returns the invitation, he plays the slave (*verniliter*, 108), offering food that is not his own. Those who live in the city observe a system of reciprocal favors and subordination, and the country mouse's visit there puts his freedom at risk as well.

Preferences for simple or complicated food are closely intertwined with the issues of independence and fortune.[25] Earlier in 2.6, we learn that the people Horace meets on the street in Rome assume that he is merely a pawn of Maecenas and a source for political secrets (38–39, 47–58). They address him as a "son of Fortune" (49); he is annoyed by the epithet and the questions, whose implication is that Horace's connection with the most influential men in Rome has diminished his own individuality.

Davus insinuates something similar in the next satire (2.7), and his charge, since he has actually observed his master's behavior, carries more weight. Horace, Davus says, claims to prefer a simple meal in the country when there is nothing else going on; but as soon as Maecenas sends an invitation he dashes off to the city without a second's hesitation (28–39). Later on, Davus defines the man who is wise (*sapiens*, 83)[26] and free as someone whom Fortune cannot harm: *externi ne quid valeat per leve morari, / in quem manca ruit semper Fortuna* (87–88). Horace's association with *Fortuna* thus suggests that his conduct is neither balanced nor autonomous.

Satires 2.2 and 2.8 also appeal to *Fortuna*, both in the context of a meal. In 2.2, Ofellus describes the sort of simple dinner he enjoyed on a working day: all home-grown foods, the meal consists of greens, a shank of smoked ham, pullet or a kid, and for dessert, raisins, nuts and figs. He questions whether *Fortuna* could do anything to diminish his happiness, thus connecting himself with the *sapiens*.[27] In contrast with the healthy foods Ofellus mentions, the guests in 2.8 have been offered foreign and obscure delicacies. When the curtain falls, Nomentanus invokes *Fortuna* as the deity responsible for the catastrophe (61–63). It would seem as though Nasidienus' extravagance and false pride are responsible for the disaster. As with Horace, then, who was connected with

[25]See Fiske 412–13 on appeals to *Fortuna* in banquet scenes in Lucilius, Horace and Petronius.

[26]Gowers 132 examines culinary and other puns on *sapiens*.

[27]*Saeviat atque novos moveat Fortuna tumultus, / quantum hinc imminuet?* (126–27). *Fortuna* has already wrought the confiscation of Ofellus' land, a misfortune he overcomes through his belief that only Nature truly owns the land (127–35).

Fortuna in terms of his social climbing, public displays of self-advancement lead to embarrassment and humiliation.

Thus when the country mouse vows finally to be content with his country existence, he, like Ofellus, embraces his independence. The country mouse was willing to sample the luxurious lifestyle, he actually enjoyed the fancy meal, until something shocked him out of this mistaken judgment. The end of 2.6 ties in with the other even-numbered satires and argues on behalf of simplicity. The clash of opening doors and the barking of Molossian hounds clearly anticipate the curtain fall and deluxe dinner in 2.8—though the latter of course lacks any parallel to the mouse's final pledge. Before we reach 2.8, however, the intervening poem tries to undo much of what 2.6 has just established.[28]

Davus begins 2.7 with the remark that he "has been listening for a long time" (*iamdudum ausculto*, 2.7.1). He has heard at least the fable of the two mice and probably more. Midway through this satire, Davus points out Horace's hypocrisy about dinner invitations: given the opportunity, Horace will leave the country estate he claims to love in order to dine with Maecenas. This rebuke seems to come in response to the moral of the fable, which Davus recognizes as an ideal his master cannot live up to. The country mouse returned to the country; Horace wants to leave it. Yet this is precisely what does *not* happen in 2.8. As nearly everyone has pointed out, Horace's absence from Nasidienus' dinner is very strange.[29] His patron Maecenas is there, as are three other writers whom he clearly knows well;[30] it is unlikely that he was not invited. Has Horace listened in turn to Davus' lecture and changed his mind?

Perhaps Horace does try to repair his image by absenting himself from Nasidienus' party. But the guests can serve as his representatives.[31] Horace no longer needs to be there in person: his friends show the knowledge and discrimination that all people of taste should want to possess. And this applies even more to the audience, whose reaction to the final poem, much like that of

[28]See Armstrong 1986: 282: "There can be few more shattering transitions in the *Satires*."

[29]Cf., e.g., Lejay 583, Muecke 228, Baker 226.

[30]Horace tried to invite Fundanius for the same day (*S.* 2.8.2); Varius and Viscus are also referred to in *S.* 1.9.22–23 and 1.10.81, 83.

[31]See Gowers 166–67 on Fundanius (but also Nasidienus) as an *alter ego* of Horace. Some have concluded that Horace's absence demonstrates his negative view of the guests' behavior, e.g., Baker 226–27. Cf. Muecke 228: Horace's absence "may be intended to absolve him of rudeness to his host and to allow him to put in a critical perspective the description of the events as well as the events themselves" and Gowers 173: "[T]here is something insidiously rotten about the way Fundanius recalls these [the dishes]."

the guests, will be to laugh and then leave.[32] The absence of Horace in this book, and in 2.8 in particular, is a necessary corollary to the reader's development of his own critical stance. Horace intends that *we* should be able to pinpoint who and what is wrong at this advanced stage in his book. The fact that we are able to identify and diagnose problems indicates that we have learned the lessons of the *Satires*.

Rather than forming an insignificant conclusion to the second book, then, Horace's *cena Nasidieni* has placed the final stamp on vain hosts and pretentious food. The dinner in 2.8 is paired closely with the pretentious lecture in 2.4 and the city mouse's invitation in 2.6; even if Horace is sometimes tempted by such meals, he implies that their dangers are great. Running away may be rude, but it is, more importantly, a way of preserving independence. Perhaps we are meant to see Nasidienus' artistic guests as the band of poets Horace claimed he would call upon for help in the first book (*S.* 1.4.141): they would rescue him if the public lost patience with his exploration of morals and virtue. Fundanius, Maecenas, Varius and Viscus have in fact freed him from the charge of excessive criticism, for Nasidienus' behavior exonerates both guests and satirist from blame.[33]

The Birth of Satire: From Comedy into Life

Many standard features of comedy, especially New Comedy, turn up in *S.* 2.8. Some of these have been noted before; but others have been overlooked, and the cumulative effect of all of the comedic elements in the poem has not been thoroughly explored.[34] Of course, this dependence is natural, given Horace's emphasis on satire's comedic inheritance in *S.* 1.4, 1.10 and 2.1.[35] The fusion of the two genres in 2.8 recalls these earlier satires, which are also located at

[32]See Freudenburg 1995: 219.

[33]See the ending of *S.* 2.1, where Trebatius agrees with Horace that a justified attack will bring no punishment (83–86).

[34]Freudenburg 1993: 232–35 and Gowers 164–65, 178–79 have recognized many of the comedic elements. Before this, Schmidt 1071–72 and von Albrecht 149 viewed the satire itself as a comedy (cf. n. 50 below). Armstrong 1989: 53, too, comments that the dinner description is "itself a miniature comedy," and later says that "Fundanius behaves like a parasite in one of his own (lost) comedies" (55). Cf. also O'Connor 32. Rudd 1966: 202–7 looks at food and cooks in comedy in connection with *S.* 2.4. Gowers 164 points to tragic elements in the satire.

[35]Cf. n. 9 above. *S.* 2.1 actually treats the relationship with Lucilius and not comedy; but the distinction between Horatian and Lucilian satire in *S.* 1.4 and 1.10 is made in terms of comedic criticism.

crucial junctures in the collection. Comedy plays a key role in understanding the force of the ending.

To begin with, Horace includes in 2.8 several comedic devices used in other satires in the collection, primarily the other food satires. The first of these is the surprise produced when the wall-hanging falls down.[36] Surprise and the unexpected are among the most important ways of effecting humor: suspense, hidden identities, and sudden changes in plan pervade the plots of comedy.[37] A surprise encounter followed by running away seems to be a favorite ending of Horace's, which he uses four times in all (*S.* 1.8, 1.9, 2.6, 2.8). In 2.8, the collapse of the wall-hanging and the guests' sudden departure provide humor, but also focus our attention on key events in the satire.

Telling names for characters are a feature of comedy, Old and New, where they add to characterization and humor.[38] Some have argued that the protagonist of *S.* 2.8 was a real person,[39] but the name "Nasidienus Rufus" fits rather too well for someone obsessed with showing cultivation (the nose being the arbiter of taste).[40] The names "Balatro" for a buffoon, "Porcius" for a greedy character and "Nomentanus" for someone who names the food point as well to a comedic inheritance; and the other food satires exhibit this same tendency to assign revealing names. "Ofellus" (Little Morsel) in 2.2, for example, and "Catius" (Mr. Wise) in 2.4, both match their characters perfectly.

The representation of the cook as a student or follower of Epicurus is common in New Comedy.[41] Nasidienus' Epicurean pretensions are given away by Fundanius' remark in lines 92–93: *suavis res, si non causas narraret earum et naturas dominus*. Balatro speaks as a Lucretian in his attempt to soothe his

[36]For similar dining disasters, cf. *S.* 2.6.111–15 (sudden entrance and barking hounds); Prop. 4.8.43–44 (flickering lights and table collapse); and Petr. 54 (falling of acrobat on Trimalchio).

[37]In Aristophanes, cf., e.g., the identity-switch of Xanthias and Dionysus-Herakles in the *Ra.*, or the burning down of the *phrontisterion* at the end of the *Nu.* For Roman comedy, see Duckworth 227–31, 317–21, and 320: "The importance of surprise in Roman comedy can hardly be overestimated."

[38]For significant names in Aristophanes, cf. Dikaiopolis in the *Ach.*, Philokleon and Phobokleon in the *V.*, Euelpides and Pisthetairos in the *Av.*, etc. In New Comedy, cf. Leo 107–10, Ullman 61–64, and Duckworth 346–50. For satire, cf. Roos, Rudd 132–59, LaFleur 1826, and Freudenburg 1993: 48–50.

[39]Roos; Rudd 1966: 148; Berg 149.

[40]For nose in this sense, cf. Fiske 414; Gowers 167–68.

[41]See Dohm 163–72, 187–90.

host after the crisis;[42] and though he is obviously mocking Nasidienus, it is significant that he does so in Epicurean terms. In 2.4, whose strong connection with 2.8 we have already seen, Catius adopts Lucretian terminology for his cooking, using terms such as *natura, praecepta* and *ratio*[43] throughout the satire.

A final link between satire and comedy of all periods is the presence of fish at the banquet. Fish, usually a high-cost or luxury item,[44] happens to be one of the most often-mentioned foods in comedy.[45] Fish courses have a conspicuous place in the other food satires,[46] especially 2.4, but 2.8 gives particular prominence to this part of the meal. Nasidienus' fish course consists of *murena* or eel, the subject of a special joke in Aristophanes and one apparently picked up by later writers of comedy.[47] His description of the eel-dish lasts for twelve lines, longer than any other part of the meal;[48] and, as though this recital were too much, the wall-hanging collapses during the recipe for the sauce, landing directly onto the fish platter itself.

All these features lend a comic background to the discussions about food and add to the theatricality and humor of the satires. We might almost say that Horace portrays comedy as the ancestor of satire in terms of critical content and conversational tone in Book 1, while in Book 2 he links the two through humor. That is, the significance of comedy is shown not merely by style, tone, or even speaker,[49] but rather by incorporation of the physical and structural components of comedy directly into the satires. Three other comedic elements pertain exclusively to the meal in 2.8: the guests, the role of feasts in comedy,

[42]*S.* 2.8.73–74, an allusion to Lucr. 3.55–56.

[43]*Natura*: 7, 21, 45, 64; *praecepta*: 11, 95; *ratio*: 36. Cf. Classen 341, 343–36 on the role of Epicureanism in *S.* 2.4, and also *S.* 2.4.94–95, an allusion to Lucr. 1.927–28. The scholia say Catius was an Epicurean and the author of a *De rerum natura*, though this may not be the same Catius as the speaker of 2.4.

[44]See Dohm 60: "In diesem Zusammenhang muss noch kurz von einer auffälligen Tatsache gesprochen werden, nämlich dass in solchen Speisekatalogen (in Aristophanes and the fragments of Old Comedy) erstaunlich oft von Fischen die Rede ist. Sie erscheinen in den Aufzählungen der Archaia als die am häufigsten verwandte Speise, und sie bilden, wie wir später sehen werden, in der Mese und der Nea in der überwiegenden Mehrzahl der Fälle das Material, dem der Koch seine Kunst angedeihen lässt."

[45]Cf. generally Purcell, and Gilula 391–93.

[46]*S.* 2.2.31–42, 2.4.37–39, 45, 58–59, 76–77, though note 2.2.120, where the simplest and most satisfying meal is said *not* to include fish sent for from town.

[47]See Gilula 390–91.

[48]See Freudenburg 1995: 211–12 on magical elements in the preparation of the sauce for the eel.

[49]Consult Freudenburg 1993: 27–51 on comedy's influence in these respects.

especially as a conclusion to the play, and the curtain fall. These last two are particularly revealing of the function of the concluding poem.[50]

The narrator of the events of that day is Fundanius, the comic poet whom Horace praises in *S.* 1.10:

> arguta meretrice potes Davoque Chremeta
> eludente senem comis garrire libellos
> unus virorum, Fundani. (40–42)
>
> Fundanius, you alone of living poets can delight us with your chatty plays, in which the cunning courtesan and Davus deceive old man Chremes.

We know nothing of the playwright besides this reference, but the names of his characters, Davus and Chremes, indicate that he wrote New Comedy in the tradition of Menander and Terence.[51]

Elsewhere in Book 2, Horace interweaves the profession or status of the interlocutor-turned-narrator with the subject matter of the satire. In 2.1, for example, Horace consults Trebatius, a famous lawyer of Cicero's time, about the legal limits of satire.[52] In 2.2, Ofellus, characterized as a rustic gentleman fallen on hard times and a philosopher *abnormis...crassaque Minerva*, advocates a plain and simple diet. In 2.7, Horace's slave Davus lectures about freedom in a conversation purported to have taken place during the Saturnalia. If Horace sustains this pattern, we ought to expect a connection between Fundanius' profession and the dinner party as well.

We learn little about the behavior of the literary guests at Nasidienus' dinner,[53] but the rest of the company resembles characters straight out of comedy. Nasidienus' friends Nomentanus and Porcius and Maecenas' shade Vibidius exemplify the parasite or *scurra*, while Balatro recalls the comic

[50]It has also been suggested that the satire itself can be read as a four- or five-act comedy. In my view, however, the poem as a whole does not constitute a play. Instead, the curtain divides the poem and initiates a new drama when it falls, following Roman custom. On four acts, see Gowers 178; on five acts, cf. Schmidt 1071–72, who calls Fundanius' narrative "eine wahre Komödie," and von Albrecht 149.

[51]Menander uses the name Daos eight times (*Asp.*, *Kol.*, *Dys.*, *Epit.*, *Georg.*, *Her.*, *Pk.*, *Per.*); Terence uses Davus twice (*An.* and *Ph.*), and Chremes four times (*An.*, *Eu.*, *Hau.*, and *Ph.*).

[52]Legal terminology appears within the first five lines (*legem*, 2; *praescribe*, 5) and throughout the satire (9, 81, 86, etc.). See LaFleur 1812–26 for discussion of the legal import of 2.1.

[53]Like Horace, they are in a certain sense "absent" from the meal.

slave.[54] Nomentanus is relatively well-mannered and plays a loyal if pretentious defender of Nasidienus. The sole purpose of his presence at the dinner is to encourage and later console his host. At the opposite extreme, Porcius' single appearance reveals him gobbling down his food (23–24). Yet even Porcius manages to abstain from drink together with Nomentanus so as not to offend Nasidienus (40–41). Vibidius, on the other hand, is unequivocally greedy and more aggressive. He calls for larger glasses of wine during the course of the meal, encouraging Balatro to drink up (33–35), and later on inquires whether the flagons were broken since he has never received more wine (80–83).

The name Balatro, meaning "clown," points both to his role in the satire[55] and his similarity to the comic slave, and it should come as no surprise that his full name is Servilius Balatro (21). After the curtain fall and Nomentanus' appeal to *Fortuna*, Balatro feels inspired to add some remarks of his own (65–74). In his speech, he mocks the self-importance of their host by comparing him to a general: *sed convivatoris uti ducis ingenium res / adversae nudare solent, celare secundae* (73–74). The military metaphor and elevated tone, indicated by artificial word-order and an allusion to Lucretius,[56] recall the diction of the comic *servus callidus* and plant us squarely in the middle of a drama.

Feasts and banquets are a theme of all ancient comedy. Although the function of food in the *cena Nasidieni* most closely resembles that in New Comedy, there are also similarities with Old and Middle Comedy. In Aristophanes, for example, reference to a banquet signals the conclusion of six plays.[57] Since they take place after staged time, we never learn anything about what these feasts entailed, but their position at the end of the play is suggestive for the location of Nasidienus' feast at the end of *Satires* 2. Aristophanes also introduces food within the body of the play, often as a symbol of class or

[54]Lejay 583–85 thinks all four of these guests are facets of the *scurra* or parasite; but cf. Corbett's introduction, where he names Lejay as someone who has misunderstood the role of *scurra* and clarifies the "twofold identity" of this character. Corbett does not mention *S.* 2.8 in his discussion of Horace, but the satire does not in any case give us enough information for determining whether Nomentanus, Porcius and Vibidius are parasites or *scurrae*; on these distinctions, cf. Corbett ch. 2.

[55]See Lejay 584, who suggests that Balatro, though a counterpart to Porcius, is of a higher order, just as Maecenas is superior to Nasidienus.

[56]Lucr. 3.55–56, and Muecke ad loc. For other examples of military language, cf. Dohm 192–95 and Duckworth 337 and n. 22, agreeing with Fraenkel 1922 that such metaphors are more typical of Plautus than of Terence.

[57]*Ach.*, *Ec.*, *Eq.*, *Lys.*, *Pax*, *Pl.*

nationality or a metaphor for style and sex.[58] Many of the ideas expanded in Middle and New Comedy are already present here, though a close connection between food and plot is still undeveloped.

Dinners and parties must have abounded in Middle Comedy. Even without a context, the number of fragments about food implies that feasts and their preparation were a recurrent theme of these plays.[59] Individual dishes are described in detail, often by braggart cooks.[60] This *topos* may have influenced Horace's depiction of self-important chefs with their precise enumeration of ingredients and technique. Given the culinary associations of satire,[61] it is not surprising that Horace's chef-hosts discuss food, even if this business belonged exclusively to slaves in comedy.

New Comedy offers the most fruitful parallels with Horace's food satires. Though eating and drinking play an insignificant role in the plays of Terence, Menander and Plautus make them an integral part of the drama. Attitudes to food reveal the true colors of hosts and guests and thus contribute to characterization.[62] The role of the cook and his activities in the kitchen are also woven into the dramatic action of the play.[63] Culinary preparations within the body of a play distract the audience from the main plot and build suspense, looking ahead to the meal in the final act. Here all the characters will be reunited for the last time and any remaining misunderstandings resolved.[64] Though banquets sometimes take place either before the end of a play[65] or after

[58]See especially *Ach.* Consult Gilula *passim* and, on sexual innuendoes in Aristophanes, cf. Henderson 47–48, 142–44, 160–61.

[59]A cursory glance at the numerous fragments about food from Alexis or Antiphanes, for example, reveals the crucial role of food and banquet preparations in Middle Comedy. Although the fragments are quoted mostly by writers on food like Athenaeus, their number is surely too high to be merely a consequence of the selection process. Cf. Prehn 5–25, who concludes that feasting was most common in Old and Middle Comedy; Webster 112, 163 and 164, where he admits that even if feasts are less common in the comedies of Menander, this was not necessarily true of Menander's contemporaries; and Nesselrath 297 on the prominence of the cook in Middle and New Comedy.

[60]See Dohm 84–211; and, e.g., Men. *Dys.* 644–46; Ter. *Ad.* 419–31; Pl. *Ps.* 810–25, 28–36.

[61]*Satura* probably referred originally to a mixed plate or type of stuffing, and implied abundance as well. Cf. Coffey 11–16; Knoche 8–13; Braund 1992: 6–7.

[62]Cf. Men. *Dys.* 447–54, *Epit.* fr. 6 and 126–32; Ter. *Ph.* 334–45; Pl. *Aul.* 371–87, *Capt.* 473–97, *Men.* 87–107, *Mos.* 887–89, *Rud.* 140–46 and 344–46, *St.* 183–92, 485–504, 510–16, 686–723.

[63]Cf. Dohm 211–75 and Nesselrath 297–309.

[64]See Frye 163–71.

[65]E.g., Pl. *Capt.*, *Ps.*, and *Men.*

staged time,[66] Menander and Plautus are both fond of using the feast to wrap up loose ends, and six Plautine plays end with feasting and revelry.[67] Horace, too, gives recipes and advice on how to plan a dinner in 2.2 and 2.4 but saves the actual banquet scene for last, as the occasion on which he will clarify any lingering ambiguities about how to eat and how to judge.

One example of Roman New Comedy, Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, associates dining with manners, friendship, and independence in a manner analogous to that of Horace. Attention to how one should behave at the dinner party is a widespread *topos* in Greek and Latin literature,[68] but the detailed parallels here suggest the possibility of direct influence. In a series of speeches that some have found rather alien to the plot,[69] the old man Periplectomenus brags about his independent and contented lifestyle.[70] In the process he discusses the habits of hosts and guests. These passages are worth looking at in more detail.

First we learn that Periplectomenus is himself an excellent guest (*conviva*) and has wonderful manners. Among other things, he shows restraint at the table: he does not interrupt (642–46) or grab at food or drink out of turn, nor does he get so intoxicated that he starts a row at a dinner party (651–54). Pleusicles goes on to define these table manners as the marks of a good friend: *at quidem illuc aetatis qui sit non invenies alterum / lepidiorem ad omnis res nec qui amicus amico sit magis* (659–60). Even though this garrulous old man wears out his listeners as the scene goes on, it is clear that Pleusicles and the slave Palaestrio find much of what he says commendable. True friendship requires showing proper respect for fellow guests and moderation in food and drink. In the *Satires*, Horace makes the same connection, but emphasizes the opposite type

[66] E.g., Pl. *Cur.*

[67] Men. *Dys.*, and probably the *Georg.* and *Asp.* Pl. *As.*, *Aul.*, *Bac.*, *Per.*, *Rud.*, *St.* Cf. also the end of Ter. *Ph.*

[68] E.g., Ath. 11.462c–f and 463a (= Xenoph. I, B1 and Anacr. eleg. 2, respectively, in West); Cic. *Fam.* 9.15–26; Gel. 13.11. Cf. also Lambin and Lissarague, who discusses the evidence from vase painting together with lyric poetry.

[69] Cf. Periplectomenus' parts at *Mil.* 641–761. These passages may be *contaminatio* from another play with a banquet scene; cf. Williams, and Duckworth 200, who points out that "the abandoned dinner motif" is not limited to this play and so does not necessarily have structural implications.

[70] His boast arises in response to Pleusicles' apology for involving an old man in matters of love (Periplectomenus is to help Pleusicles wrest his mistress away from the soldier Pyrgopolynices). Periplectomenus objects to the insinuation that he is past the age of love and pleasure, and spells out at great length what a fulfilling life he leads.

of behavior. By depicting characters who are ignorant of proper manners, Horace shows that something has gone wrong with a friendship that desires only to impress.

A little further on, Pleusicles worries that he will cause Periplectomenus great expense by staying with him (672). The old man makes light of this, for he has the means: he is not married. Explaining why not, he declares that the problem with women is their constant demand for money (685–700). By contrast, he lives for himself and is free: *liberae sunt aedes, liber sum autem ego; mi volo vivere* (678).[71] This sentiment recalls the importance of freedom throughout the *Satires*, well encapsulated by Davus' question at 2.7.83: *Quisnam igitur liber*? Indeed, after this question, Davus' first example of someone who is *not* free is a man burdened with a wife who demands money (88–94).

Finally, when Pleusicles repeats his concern about troubling Periplectomenus (749–50), the latter accuses him of speaking like the average visitor and launches into a cynical speech about insincere guests. Seated at the table with the food in view, they always say "you shouldn't have"—and then eat up all the food before them (751–56, 758–62).

These views evoke the scenario in *S.* 2.8. Periplectomenus' generosity where good friends are concerned and his contempt for ungrateful company recall Nasidienus, who provides a wealth of unusual food for unappreciative guests (though there is more to it than that). Again, both hosts share an Epicurean outlook. As we have seen, Nasidienus uses Epicurean vocabulary and treats cooking as if it were a philosophical system. Periplectomenus wants to live a life of *ataraxia*: he rejects domestic life, including the idea of having children, whose illness or loss[72] would cause him unbearable pain (718–22). He enjoys parties and celebrations, though in moderation. And Palaestrio responds to Periplectomenus at 757 as though a philosopher had just spoken: *ut docte et perspecte sapit.*

The similarities between Horace's dinner-party and the *Miles Gloriosus* imply, together with the occurrence of a banquet at the end of six Plautine plays, that Horace was attracted to the themes and structure, if not the style, of

[71]Cf. also 706: *nunc bene vivo et fortunate atque ut volo atque animo ut lubet.*

[72]Note, too, that Nasidienus reacts to the crashing down of the curtain as though he has just lost a son: *ut si / filius immaturus obisset, flere* (58–59).

Plautus' drama.[73] The playwright's influence also strengthens the case for a link between New Comedy and Horatian satire. Terence's dramas and prologues are echoed in several passages in the *Satires*.[74] These allusions have contributed significantly to scholarly understanding of the manner in which Horace distinguishes his satires from those of Lucilius, i.e., as influenced by New, rather than Old, Comedy.[75] We should nonetheless be careful not to draw too strict a line between Old and New. Horace brings texts of comic poets from both periods to the Sabine Farm, if we can trust Damasippus (2.3.11–12).[76] The lineage Horace traces for Lucilius and himself, it must be remembered, is not a historical fact, but a poetic fiction designed to distinguish Horace's own satires from those of a successful predecessor.

The fact that a banquet tends to conclude a comedy needs to be understood now in light of the most dramatic event of 2.8, namely the fall of the curtain. In the context of Nasidienus' home, *aulaeum* has been construed as a wall-hanging. It is also the word used for a theater curtain.[77] Horace plays on this dual meaning with his response to Fundanius' report of the curtain fall: *nullos his mallem ludos spectasse; / sed illa redde age quae deinceps risisti* (79–80). *Ludos*[78] together with *spectasse* indicates a dramatic performance, and *risisti* in the next line further defines this drama as a comedy.[79]

[73]Cf. Horace's criticism of Plautus at *Ep.* 2.1.58 and 170–76, and on this point Fairclough 192–93; Freudenburg 1993: 165, 190.

[74]Most striking are the references to the *Ad.* in *S.* 1.4.48–52, 56, 105–28. Cf. also *S.* 2.2.77 and *Ph.* 342; and the slave Davus in *S.* 2.7.

[75]Cf. n. 9 above, and also Sellar 218–19, Fairclough 187–93, Leach and LaFleur 1794–1812.

[76]*Quorsum pertinuit stipare Platona Menandro, / Eupolin, Archilochum, comites educere tantos*? If Plato is the comic poet, then we have one poet each from Old (Eupolis), Middle (Plato), and New Comedy (Menander). Admittedly Plato could refer instead to the philosopher (cf. n. 20 above). The name "Archilochus" might be a reference to the *Epodes* or, alternatively, to the invective elements shared by comedy and satire.

[77]*OLD* s.v. *aulaeum* 2 (pl.) cites our passage for the meaning "curtains, hangings, tapestries." For other theatrical vocabulary in Horace, cf. two other usages of *aulaea* for theater curtain: *Ep.* 2.1.189 and *Ars* 154; *scaena* in *S.* 2.1.71; and Gowers 165, 178–79 on curtain imagery in the poem. Even though curtains were probably not used in Plautus' or in Terence's eras (cf. Beare 257 and Duckworth 84–85), they were known by Horace's time, as the passages from the *Ep.* and the *Ars* show. See also Cic. *Cael.* 64–65.

[78]Cf. *ludo* used alone for Horace's own satires at *S.* 1.10.37; Anderson 33; Muecke ad loc. with reference to Pl. *Cas.* 760.

[79]Gowers sees the dinner as a mixture of comic and tragic elements: cf. 164 and 166: "*Satire* 2.8 is best read as a final critical trial: a tragicomic convivium which sums up all the difficulties facing the satirist...." Of course, comedy regularly includes parodies of tragedy; Ar. *Ra.* is an obvious example.

Unlike modern practice, the curtain in a Roman theater was lowered at the beginning of the play and raised at its conclusion.[80] In *S.* 2.8, the fall of the curtain occurs about halfway through the satire, at lines 54–55 of a ninety-five line poem. Since the curtain was only used at the beginning and end of a play, and not between acts, the curtain fall must then signal the opening of a drama. But then why only here? Does Horace mean that the drama begins at line 55, even though Fundanius has been narrating since line 6?

The curtain fall does in fact mark some sort of beginning, for it coincides with a significant change in the guests' behavior.[81] In the first part of the satire, there is no indication that the company resents Nasidienus or his manners. Indeed, up until the disaster, Fundanius describes Nasidienus as a perfectly considerate host.[82] He has servants clean the table and floor so that nothing offends the guests (10–13); he offers Maecenas his choice of wine (16–17); none of the guests seems to mind his habit of describing the food as it is brought out; and he is upset when the *umbrae* call for bigger wine glasses, not out of stinginess, but lest the wine provoke cursing or spoil the guests' palates (37–38). The phrase *cenae pater* (7) also denotes the concern Nasidienus feels for his dining companions.[83] However derisive this portrait may seem to us, it is significant that the guests are completely duped.

After the fall of the curtain, however, the company becomes highly critical. They laugh at Nomentanus' ode to *Fortuna* (63–64); whisper among themselves (77–78); now for the first time complain about Nasidienus' explanations of the food (*suavis res, si non causas narraret earum et / naturas dominus*, 92–3); and insult their host by running away before tasting the dishes of the last course (93–95). Before the drama really begins, Fundanius and the other guests are indifferent to Nasidienus' pretensions. After the curtain comes down, however, they become critical and hostile. The beginning of the drama

[80]On the conventions of the Roman stage curtain, cf. Duckworth 84–85; Beare 257–64; Austin 129 at Cic. *Cael.* 65.21.

[81]Schmidt 1071 briefly notes the change, but thinks that the guests are taking advantage of the new situation for their own malicious fun.

[82]See Rudd 1966: 222: "It puts the guests in an exceedingly poor light..." though he adds "But this cannot have been Horace's intention." Baker 214 dwells on the positive side of the host and sympathizes with him ("the punishment meted out to Nasidienus is too big for his crime"); later (223) he observes that Nasidienus might seem offensive at lines 45–53, just before the curtain fall, but maintains that Nasidienus has not done anything to deserve the treatment he receives from his guests.

[83]See Muecke ad loc.

triggers the guests' satirical comments. Further, the disaster has changed them internally as well: whereas earlier they gulped down their wine (39–40), now they no longer desire rich food (94–95). They see Nasidienus' meal in a new light.

To understand this transformation, we need to reconsider satire's descent from comedy. The setting of the satire is, as we have seen, a comedy: a comic poet recounts a dinner, itself a frequent event in comedy, and references to comic characters and effects are inserted throughout. As we approach the end of the book, the comedy comes to a close. The banquet, so frequent an ending in comedy, is a most appropriate finish to the comedy-inspired *Satires*. Paradoxically, this ending consists in a new beginning.[84] The drop of the curtain reveals the opening of a new and related drama, which ensues immediately and without a break from what preceded: satire is born out of comedy in what amounts to a staging of the literary background of the genre. The beginning of satire does not, however, imply that the poem's humor stops. Satire is heavily invested in comic traits, as we have seen, and the party is arguably even funnier after the curtain fall. Nor does satire's onset imply that there has been no satire until this point. There has, of course, but always in connection with the poet's life: his background, social and literary, his friends, his farm. This time the emergence of satire is for the guests, and for us as well. Horace reenacts the origins of satire in order to dramatize the dawning of moral discrimination in those other than himself.

While the curtain fall emphasizes once more the shared background of comedy and satire, it also highlights their differences. Comedy presupposes certain stock characters and situations. There are rules about its form and laws concerning whom the playwright may criticize. By contrast, satire has none of these constraints.[85] Structure and subject-matter are free. Horace can end his book wherever he chooses; he is not compelled to fill up five acts.[86] Dinner-parties, a political rendezvous, witches' incantations on the Esquiline are just a few of the varied topics that appear in Horatian satire. And the satirist can ridicule anyone he chooses, living or dead.

[84]This paradox is emphasized by Fundanius' comment at 59–60: *quis esset finis*, which raises expectations of closure only to disappoint them (the poem lasts another thirty-five lines). On the deceptive use of *finis* in the *Aeneid*, see Mitchell-Boyask. Similarly, *tolleret* in the very next line, of Nomentanus' attempt to cheer Nasidienus, "suggests the raising of a stage curtain" (Gowers 165)—but, ironically again, hinting at an end that does not in fact come. See also n. 92 below.

[85]Cf. *S.* 2.1 and the discussion in LaFleur 1812–26.

[86]Hence the eight, instead of ten, poems in Book 2?

More importantly, comedy does not involve the audience on a personal level in the same way satire does. The playwright's own life has no part in the plot of a play, and the physical distance between stage and spectators reflects their disengagement. Horace's satires, however, are ostensibly about the author himself. References to poets like Varius and Viscus, to his patron Maecenas, and to social-climbers trying to meet Maecenas demonstrate that the satires are, at least on one level, intended for readers in the poet's own circle (cf. Pers. 1.116–18). This very personal presentation also attracts outsiders. The chatty and seemingly frank portrayal of Horace's likes and dislikes, combined with his fallibility, encourage our own identification with the poet and allow us to learn from Horace's instruction as well. When Horace makes satire follow out of a comedic banquet, then, he demonstrates more than his genre's descent. He also reveals its practical application.

The *cena Nasidieni* resolves the (semi-fictional) tale of Horace's background and entry into Maecenas' circle, his inheritance both paternal and literary, and his struggles to remain himself in his relations with others. Horace was able to rise from his freedman background and mingle with the most élite in Rome;[87] yet he does so without sacrificing his independence. He retains the personal freedom to decline invitations from the wealthy and well-connected[88] and the literary freedom to criticize Lucilius, his very popular predecessor in the genre.

When the curtain falls, the guests become aware for the first time of what is going on around them. They notice the extravagance and the braggadocio of Nasidienus and react with horror to their surroundings. The dust that settles onto the food represents the corruption of the lifestyle. Their new satirical outlook enables Horace's literary friends to think for themselves, to distinguish between sincerity and pretense, generosity and vanity,[89] as Horace himself has learned to do.

The satirist offers his readers something for their own lives as well. The beginning of satire incites our critical thinking: no longer a passive audience, we are transformed into active participants as we must decide whether it was right to run away from Nasidienus' meal or not. Only when we ourselves learn

[87]On Horace's financial status, see Armstrong 1986.

[88]See the article of Baker, which argues that the negative portrait of Maecenas in *S.* 2.8 demonstrates how comfortable Horace's relationship with his patron is. *Ep.* 1.7 also comes to mind.

[89]In this way, the curtain fall is also like a covering which has been stripped away or, as one of the readers for this journal suggests, a dropped veil, which reveals host and guests for what they are.

to play satirist will we recognize how to behave, how to eat, what to value. Horace's troubling absence from 2.8 thus makes perfect sense. We can no longer rely on the poet to point out what is right and wrong, just as he too had to move beyond his father's system.[90] We have all grown up: our education is complete and our independence won—whether this emancipation is successful or not, of course, will depend on the type of reader. Critics are correct therefore to sense that the poem lacks closure.[91] There is no neat ending in which everything is clearly pointed out. The closure lies rather in the fact that we are supposed to have learned how to discern on our own.[92]

The lack of a didactic end thus produces a transition from satire into life, allowing the lessons embodied in this and the preceding poems to continue on in the lives of its readers. Like Horace, we have learned to see ourselves and others, no matter what their relationship to us, in a critical light, and so to make the kind of choices that will enhance our lives. Horace makes it absolutely clear that we should maintain a satirical outlook even after we finish reading the *Satires*. The theater curtain is never drawn upwards: satire does not end. There is always a need for it to fill—whether in Horace's life[93] or in our own.

[90]Horace's father educated him through the use of examples and by "branding" (*notando*, *S.* 1.4.106) various types of vice. His approach is linked with Old Comedy (cf. *S.* 1.4.1–5 and *notabant* in line 5), while the gentler attacks of his son resemble those of New Comedy; cf. nn. 74 and 75 above.

[91]See, however, the different (if interrelated) senses of closure in D. P. Fowler 1989: 78–79 and also in D. P. Fowler 1997: 3.

[92]It is useful here to think of the abrupt and open-ended conclusions of the *Aeneid* (on which cf. Hardie 1993: ch. 1 and 1997: 142–51 with Putnam 86–91) and of *De rerum natura* (examined by P. Fowler), which seem to leave it "up to us" how to interpret them. See also Freudenburg 1993: 232 for a different parallel between *S.* 2.8 and the conclusion of Lucretius' poem: "both deal with the shattering of man's foolish gestures towards eminence and stability through the sudden injection of death" (death, in the case of 2.8, being the loss of the fish course, which is compared to the loss of a son).

[93]Hence the very satiric *Epistles*.

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