

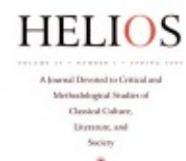


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“People Have to Watch What They Say”: What Horace, Juvenal, and 9/11 Can Tell Us about Satire and History

WILLIAM R. JONES

In the days and weeks following the attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, a related assault began on the place of irony and satire in America’s new post-9/11 culture. For example, on 18 September, *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter told the news website *Inside.com* that America had reached “the end of the age of irony”; on 21 September, Camille Dodero wrote in the *Boston Phoenix* of the end of “unbridled irony” for a “coddled generation that bathed itself in sarcasm”; and on 24 September, in a *Time* magazine editorial, Roger Rosenblatt also declared irony dead, its demise constituting “the one good thing [that] could come from this horror.”¹ Although a small number of media pundits came to the defense of irony, events in popular culture seemed to reflect the accuracy of the views of Carter and Rosenblatt, as many television productions that relied on ironic satire went temporarily (and, in at least one case, permanently) off the air in the face of a wave of public animosity.

The attack on ironic satire after 9/11 helps to illuminate one of the most contentious theoretical issues surrounding the genre: the role of history in the interpretation of satire. What is potentially useful to the literary critic/historian about moments of intense cultural crisis is that such moments tend to make satire’s ‘historicity’² more readily apparent. Since satire unapologetically engages with “those things which men do” (*quidquid agunt homines*)³ as Juvenal (1.85) wrote, the genre must invariably engage with profound shifts in the cultural ethos in a dialogic manner; however, it is when engagement turns to conflict during moments of crisis that satire is subjected to repression, and a repressive response often provides illuminating details about the nature of the conflict between the arbiters and the critics of a society. As one historical example, Annabel Patterson (1989, 83–4) describes the Elizabethan government’s effort to ban satire in the politically unstable summer of 1599

as “a struggle not only for the popular imagination but also, obviously, for control of the media by which that imagination was stimulated.” Patterson’s (1989, 86) contention that Elizabeth’s government could not tolerate “representational instability” resonates with modern times as well. During the heavily contested ministerial elections in Italy in 2006, for example, Prime Minister and media mogul Silvio Berlusconi invoked Italy’s *par condicio* law, which ensures equal time for all political views, as a means to prevent Italian comedians and satirists from deriding his administration on those television networks that were beyond his control. Satire’s historicity and the frequent desire to quell its unorthodox influence are recurring issues in cultural history; after all, if in actuality satire “has little power to disturb the political order,” asks Dustin Griffin (1994, 153), “then why have governments thought it important to control?” The battle to control the tenor of representations of the social ethos is an inherently ideological battle as the forces of authority work to maintain the orthodoxies that sustain it by suppressing those who would undermine such orthodoxies.

The repressive acrimony leveled at satire after 9/11 provides a kind of case study of the dynamics involved in the dialogue between contemporary satire and historical change. The radical shifts in America’s political, economic, and psychological climates of the time both influenced and were influenced by the prevalent modes of cultural criticism. Although space does not permit an exhaustive discussion of all the factors involved in the recent example of satire’s historicity, a broad outline may help to illuminate not only the historicity of contemporary satire but that of Roman satire as well. Such a comparison of contemporary America and ancient Rome is open to a host of well-founded objections, yet the comparison is made with such frequency as to merit serious consideration. Cullen Murphy’s recent book, *Are We Rome?* (2007), makes it clear that the recurrent comparison of cultures continues to be both relevant and useful. In the case of satire, comparing the cultural productions of imperial Rome and twenty-first-century America can provide a means to explore the ways in which modes of cultural criticism, past and present, reflect and negotiate significant shifts in the culture on which they rely for their very existence.

I. The Historicity of American Satire after 9/11

Roger Rosenblatt’s (2001) vitriolic valediction reveals much about the vitality of satire’s historicity and, particularly in this case, the incompati-

bility between modern modes of American satire and moments of intense cultural crisis. Rosenblatt’s words are a stark reflection of the collective sense of anguish and anxiety felt in the aftermath of the attacks, of the concomitant surge of patriotism in American culture, and of the surprising level of anti-intellectualism directed against those who challenge what is often presented as an understood set of accepted moral values:

For some thirty years, roughly as long as the Twin Towers stood, the good folks of America’s intellectual life have insisted that nothing was to be believed in or taken seriously. Nothing was real. With a giggle and a smirk our chattering classes—our columnists and pop culture makers—declared that detachment and personal whimsy were the necessary tools for an oh-so-cool life; the ironists, seeing through everything, made it difficult for anyone to see anything. (Rosenblatt 2001)

Rosenblatt’s perspective supports Linda Hutcheon’s (1994, 2) argument that irony is a political act that involves “relations of power based in relations of communication.” In the unstable social climate following the attacks, the political nature of the ironists’ indirect evaluations and judgments was depicted as tinged with a treasonous coloration: Rosenblatt deplored the ironists’ ability to undermine that which is ‘real’ with their questioning of conventional wisdom and their smirking intellectual elitism. Just as Aristotle warned that irony projects contempt for those who are in earnest, so Rosenblatt’s attack suggests that dissemblers, even more than angry rivals, are to be feared for their ability to obscure conventional truths; as Aristotle wrote of ironists, “Since you cannot see when they are near, you can also never see when they are far away.”⁴ While Rosenblatt’s earnest anger is not surprising given the circumstances, what is surprising is how the context of insecurity and fear magnifies the danger represented by the culture’s dissemblers. Here, they are presented as little better than anarchic nihilists, purposefully obscuring truth in their self-interested quest to undermine all types of orthodoxy; their demise is hailed as a victory for veracity: “People may at last be ready to say what they wholeheartedly believe” (Rosenblatt 2001), as long as what they believe (presumably) does not threaten to divide the spirit of national unity promoted after 9/11. Irony and those who wield it had become the threat from within.

Rosenblatt’s polemic inadvertently underlines the intimate link between the technique of irony and the genre of satire. As Linda Hutcheon (1994, 15) observes, “Irony always has a ‘target,’” which helps

to account for its pervasive use by satirists, but Northrop Frye (1957, 223) goes further in arguing that satire itself is in actuality a form of “militant irony.” Irony’s indirect structure, evaluative nature, and ability to irritate “because it denies us our certainties by unmasking the world as an ambiguity” make it, if not a form of satire itself, certainly one of the most valuable weapons in the satirist’s arsenal; however, such features also make ironic satire a target for those individuals (like Rosenblatt) who desire ideological certainty.⁵ As opposed to Frye’s diachronic approach, the attempt to define what modern satire was and was not in 2001 is, to say the least, problematic; as the Latin root word *satura* suggests, satire is a hodgepodge whose origin and nature are impossible to delineate clearly. As Ronald Paulson (1967, 4) has argued, “It is not at all the same thing to say that [Alexander] Pope wrote satire and to say that he wrote *a* satire . . . and ‘satiric’ is much the most popular form of the word.” However, whether contemporary satire is best described as a genre, a mode, a form, a tone, or an attitude, whether it is housed within poetry, the novel, film, radio, or television, whether it comes from the ideologically right or left, there are a number of common characteristics that help to distinguish a work as *a* (generic) satire.

In his *Artis grammaticae* (late fourth century C.E.), the grammarian Diomedes defines satire in a way that provides a convenient baseline of conventional satiric characteristics. Satire, according to Diomedes, once qualified as poetry under the Romans but is now considered mere slander. It was fashioned in the style of Greek Old Comedy “for the purpose of carping at human vices” (*satura dicitur carmen apud Romanos nunc quidem maledicum et ad carpenda hominum vitia archaeae comoediae charactere compositum*).⁶ Such a definition suggests three essential components: a critical perspective (‘carping’); a recognizable target (‘human vices,’ in this case, or those established cultural institutions or individuals that embody such abstractions); and a conscious participation in *poiesis* (a ‘poem’ or *carmen*), a sense of the work’s carefully constructed schema. This final factor is quite important: Bill O'Reilly and Keith Olbermann often carp at targets, but they are polemicists rather than satirists because their work lacks an aesthetic frame. Satire is also transideological: Dennis Miller's currently conservative satire and Jon Stewart's liberal satire both employ the critical voice, oppositional stance, and their own unique schema. What Rosenblatt was objecting to, and what proved incompatible with the post-9/11 ethos, was a particularly popular type of modern satire that resembles M. M. Bakhtin's concepts of Carnival and Menippea: a skeptical form of philosophical testing that prides itself on

mocking what groups in authority represent as sacrosanct ideas and truths (Bakhtin 1984, 107–22).

Although Rosenblatt's views were in the majority, not everyone in the media shared these opinions. On 1 October 2001, for example, *Time* published yet another essay on the rejection of violent and satiric fare titled "What's Entertainment Now?" In this piece, James Poniewozik (2001) acknowledges that "hipness—the defining value of pop culture as we know it—is at odds with unity," and yet he cautions readers against preferring unity and escapism to allowing the makers of culture to question and mock: "We should be afraid to live in a country where entertainment that deals with people's fears is untouchable, where satire is impossible. A country where it is forbidden to mock the President by popular consensus is no freer than a country where it is forbidden to mock the President by law." On 25 September, the *San Francisco Chronicle* published an editorial by Laurel Wellman (2001) that also attempted to defend ironic satire as a healthy check and balance for America post-9/11: "The ability to laugh at the distinction between what we are told and what we experience means we have to recognize the difference—in other words, to think critically." Satiric ridicule, Wellman argues, has long been a tool against both dogmatic thinking and authoritarian efforts to control societies. However, with the benefit of hindsight, the reasonable arguments of Wellman and Poniewozik display their own earnest naïveté as each failed to appreciate the degree of "yearning for comfort" (as Poniewozik terms it), as well as the desire for unified resolve in both the public and private domains in the wake of the attacks. This yearning, embodied by the then ubiquitous phrase "United We Stand," not to mention President Bush's more ominous phrase, "You're either with us or you're with the terrorists,"⁷ whether in whole or in part, had the potential to alleviate some of the trauma that gripped the American consciousness after the attacks. However, it soon became clear that criticism and questioning, the hallmarks of the Menippean type of satire, were simply too threatening to a society (and to a government on the brink of war) which desired stability and a return to cultural normalcy above all else.

After hours of uninterrupted television coverage of the attacks and their aftermath, media executives responded to the collective sense of instability by returning to regular entertainment programming, but not before such programs were scrutinized thoroughly for what were deemed insensitive or inappropriate images or discussions of the World Trade Center, terrorism, bombings, etc. Many television programs in production in late September were put on hold, and those in reruns or syndica-

tion were edited in order to render them palatable for a culture in shock and mourning. For example, editors removed images of the Twin Towers from the title sequences of such shows as *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*; the Fox Network temporarily withdrew a syndicated episode of *The Simpsons* featuring the Twin Towers; and an exploding plane was removed from a post-9/11 episode of Fox's *24*. In some cases, the attempt to safeguard the public's emotions bordered on the absurd, as when, for example, advertisers withdrew an ad for Geico Insurance featuring a piggy bank falling from the sky, or when the Clear Channel Radio Network circulated a list of potentially insensitive songs, including Peter, Paul, and Mary's "Leaving on a Jet Plane."⁸

Numerous theatrical films were also postponed, cancelled, or edited in response to the post-9/11 calls for cultural sensitivity and stability. For example, the original theatrical trailer for the film *Spider-Man* (2002) was replaced because it featured a scene of a giant web suspended between the Twin Towers; the Towers were erased digitally from the film *Zoolander*; the release dates for the films *Collateral Damage* and *Big Trouble*, both featuring terrorist bombings, were delayed; and two films scheduled for release in 2002—*Men in Black II* and the Disney cartoon *Lilo and Stitch*—were forced to alter their climactic scenes that originally involved or evoked the World Trade Center. Taken as a whole, the efforts by media producers to erase (literally, in some cases) all painful reminders of the attacks in the name of sensitivity smack of historical revisionism, a collective denial that such horror ever took place. It is not surprising that a culture working so hard to erase its recent history could not tolerate a mode that demands intellectual engagement with a living and ambiguous present.

Most of the Menippean satires of the time, such as Comedy Central's iconoclastic news parody *The Daily Show*, NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, and the Internet newspaper parody *The Onion*, found themselves particularly obligated to heed the calls for sensitivity and/or collective denial, and each disappeared from the airwaves for a number of weeks. But beyond fearing to offend a culture in mourning, the very existence of this type of satire was threatened by its incompatibility with the current ethos of the culture, by the awareness that the traditional smirking criticisms and iconoclastic diatribes would not be accepted by a society that perceived itself as under threat. One program, Comedy Central's *That's My Bush*, a savage lampoon of the excesses of the Bush administration thinly veiled within the sitcom format, vanished from the programming schedule, never to return, as if such openly biased satire had never existed; the

hypersensitivity of the moment demanded the denial of all such divisive critiques. On 17 September, ABC aired a new episode of *Politically Incorrect* in which host Bill Maher violated notions of sensitivity and ideological unity with his decidedly Menippean comments that called into question the administration's depiction of the political situation as a simple moral binary of heroes versus cowards: "We have been the cowards," Maher stated, "lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away.... Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it's not cowardly." The response was swift and decisive: a storm of angry letters flooded into ABC, executives denounced Maher's comments, and the show was placed on hiatus. On 26 September, the same day that the controversial "Patriot Act" was approved as law, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer denounced Maher publicly, stating that, in the post-9/11 culture, "People have to watch what they say and watch what they do," a message not lost on advertisers, who quickly withdrew their funding. *Politically Incorrect* was officially canceled in May 2002, and would not surface again until February 2003 as *Real Time* on HBO, a less regulated pay-cable network.

Fleischer's comments changed what had been an internally motivated suspension of satiric programming based on cultural sensitivity and economic pressure to an acknowledgment that the government would now have a hand in scrutinizing potentially divisive material in the popular media. Subsequently, most networks chose either to broadcast satiric programs taped prior to the attacks (once again effectively erasing recent history), or to pull satiric programs completely. When *The Daily Show* returned on 20 September, the show's producers felt it appropriate to replace satiric commentary with comedic segments taped prior to the attacks, segments intended "to make you smile," as host Jon Stewart said in his first televised monologue after 9/11, "which is really what is necessary right about now":

Even the idea that we can sit in the back of the country and make wisecracks, which is really what we do; we sit in the back and we throw spitballs, but never forgetting the fact that it is a luxury in this country that allows us to do that. That it is... a country that allows for open satire, and I know that sounds basic, and it sounds as though it should go without saying, but that's really what this whole situation is about. It's the difference between closed and open, it's the difference between free and burdened... And our show has changed, I don't doubt that. What it's become, I don't know. 'Subliminal' is not a punchline any-

more. One day, it will become that again and, Lord willing, it'll become that again, because it means that we have ridden out the storm.⁹

Some interesting aspects of Stewart's comments include the unaccustomed earnestness; the invocation of satire's conventional self-protective stance as an insignificant speck on the hierarchy of genres; the paralysis brought on by an awareness of the incompatibility of cynical/iconoclastic satire and the current cultural climate; the potential dissonance in lauding the country as "free" and receptive to "open satire" and the admission that satires such as *The Daily Show* will be forced to change their mode of criticism to suit the shifts in the culture; and the rejection of divisive mockery aimed at authority figures, as suggested by Stewart's allusion to one of President Bush's most infamous linguistic gaffs. *The Daily Show* had (apparently) become, as Horace remarks of his own risible satiric style, 'powerless' (*sine nervis*).¹⁰

Such powerlessness was short-lived. With the benefit of hindsight, it is surprising just how quickly iconoclastic satire did, in fact, reassert itself in the popular media. By the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks, *The Daily Show* had returned to its customary iconoclastic mode of mocking the ineffectuality of the administration, even going so far as to label Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld with a mildly obscene invective.¹¹ The central factors in the reassertion of invective and unorthodox satire in American media appear to have been the diminution of fear and the rapid fragmentation of the cultural ethos of unity. After erasing the evidence of the attacks in the popular media, and in the absence of further attacks, the American public again worked actively to forget, or to 'disremember,'¹² the devastating fear and fundamental instability they felt immediately after the attacks. In the absence of fear, there was less obvious surveillance from both government officials and economic sponsors of the potentially divisive and destabilizing voices of television satirists, and hence the kind of ironic satire hailed as dead and gone by many after 9/11 returned (albeit somewhat cautiously) to the fore of American popular culture. In short, as calm returned to a society witnessing events such as the failure to find the oft-touted weapons of mass destruction, the policy of 'extraordinary rendition,' the staged rescue of Jessica Lynch, the tortures at Abu Ghraib, etc., 'subliminable' became a punchline again, and far more quickly than anyone might expect. Satire's ability to adapt to historical circumstances has proved a valuable survival strategy, and its nature as an ideological check and balance has proved equally vital; in such a calm and yet contentious period, as Juvenal

states, "It is difficult *not* to write satire" (*difficile est saturam non scribere*: 1.30).

But when the cultural fear was at its zenith, the effort "to make you smile," as Jon Stewart stated, was the only contribution Menippian satirists could make that was deemed acceptable by the producers, consumers, and the arbiters of popular culture; to 'think critically' was (temporarily) tantamount to treason. When Jay Leno was preparing to return to *The Tonight Show*, his desire was to be "silly, not political" (see Poniewozik 2001). And during the opening of the first post-9/11 episode of *Saturday Night Live* on 29 September, producer Lorne Michaels asked New York City's Mayor Rudy Giuliani: "Can we be funny?" The tongue-in-cheek question belies the more dangerous question—"Can we be satiric?"—and the dominance of comedy in the episode suggested that the answer to the spoken question was "yes," while the answer to the unspoken question was "no." In fact, although scathing cultural commentary was rejected in the weeks after the attacks, light comedy was embraced, a situation not unlike the popularity of romantic musical comedy films produced in America during World War II. By late December 2001, the influence of comedy was being analyzed on PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* as offering measures of mass psychological 'relief': rentals of familiar, pre-9/11 comedies skyrocketed in the late fall; established television sitcoms such as *Friends* garnered higher ratings than usual, as did Nickelodeon's popular children's cartoon *Spongebob Squarepants*.¹³ In April 2003, *TV Guide* even went so far as to produce a self-interested cover story suggesting that watching *Spongebob* was the best cure for the feelings of sadness and anxiety prevalent in war-weary America. Despite arguments for the necessity of iconoclastic mockery in the wake of fundamental social change, the evidence suggests that what was desired (or perhaps what was offered) was escapist laughter, even a kind of infantile laughter, not to mention the comforting circularity of the conventional comedic structure in which normalcy returns in the wake of chaos, what Aristotle describes in the *Poetics* as the reconciliation of enemies at the end of the comedy in which "nobody kills anybody."¹⁴ By the end of 2001, the time had not yet come for the kind of critical thinking inherent in satire, but was instead the era of escapist fare and black-and-white morality, as suggested by the huge grosses taken in by films like *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (November 2001) and *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (December 2001).

While escapist fare was the most visible form of popular culture after 9/11, it is not completely accurate to suggest that the kind of vitriolic and

unorthodox satire prevalent prior to 9/11 had been driven completely from the media. Just as Bill Maher's program would do in 2003, ironic satire in the wake of 9/11 went 'underground' to a more (relatively) obscure medium, a medium less restrained by the influence of advertisers and the scrutiny of the public and the government: the Internet. It was the insularity of the medium that afforded cartoons such as "Get Your War On" and the newspaper parody *The Onion* to have the latitude necessary to express the outrage, anxiety, and despair that was being actively suppressed in much of the rest of the media soon after the attacks. On 26 September, *The Onion* ran such satirically ironic headlines as "U.S. Vows To Defeat Whoever It Is We're At War With" and "American Life Turns Into Bad Jerry Bruckheimer Movie." However, perhaps because of its relative notoriety and popularity, *The Onion* also ran less inflammatory headlines in the same issue, including "Hijackers Surprised To Find Selves In Hell" and "God Angrily Clarifies 'Don't Kill' Rule." Such headlines displayed, in Bakhtinian terms, an ideological conflict between Menippean satire's interest in presenting the instability of contemporary reality and the authorities' interest in presenting idealized moral absolutes; the latter offer a sense of solace, while the former demands uncomfortable critical thinking.¹⁵ For a culture in crisis, the reassuring clarity of absolutes is unquestionably more attractive than confronting uncomfortable ambiguities.

With years of hindsight, the idea that iconoclastic satire requires socio-political latitude, even laxity, comes as little surprise; it is the detail provided by America's recent history that proves so illuminating. For example, the influence of collective emotions (particularly fear) on the production of a certain kind of satire at a moment of cultural crisis; the economic influences that move in parallel with ideological change; the ability of satire to morph into various forms and different media in response to the shifts in cultural ethos—they all add significant colorations to the study of satire's historicity. Before 9/11, America's collective sense of supremacy and insularity could easily tolerate the iconoclastic declamations of its satirists, buoyed as they were by the assumed unassailability of free speech. However, in contrast to many other countries around the world, America as a collective identity had not experienced devastation on its home soil on such a massive scale since the attack on Pearl Harbor, and never with such horrifying immediacy, and thus there was little cultural frame of reference to cope with the resulting trauma.¹⁶ When the ethos of invulnerability was lost, media producers and government authorities acted with surprising alacrity to silence the

divisive voices, driving them into less scrutinized media, while the populace, rejecting critical thinking, sought out the stabilizing structures of pre-9/11 comedy in order to facilitate the avoidance of painful memories. Yet with time, and in the absence of additional attacks, fear and pain recede, disremembering becomes forgetting, and the ironic satirist finds the space to declaim again, but not without some lingering scars.¹⁷

II. The Critical Debate over History and Formalism in the Study of Satire

Since the 1950s, literary theory has vacillated between an uneasy acknowledgment of some degree of historical dialogism in satire and passionate assertions of satire's formal independence from such limited and limiting concerns. In 1951, for example, Maynard Mack relegated the persistent appearance of historical allusions in satire to a secondary role behind formalist traditions descending from satire's rhetorical heritage. What the study of satire requires, writes Mack (1951, 82), is a method that deemphasizes satire's 'origins' and 'effects' and emphasizes the 'artifice' of the form. Six years after Mack, Northrop Frye proposed a more complex, yet still essentially formalist, interpretive system that claims satire is designed "to give form to the shifting ambiguities of unidealized existence" through parodying the conventions of the Romance genre. Although Frye does not completely reject the influence of history in satire as Mack had, satire's specific engagements with its cultural context still give pride of place to the diachronic influence of pre-generic *mythoi* (Frye 1957, 223).

In 1960, however, Robert Elliott produced an innovative study that attempted to bridge the gap between formalism and historicism by introducing an anthropological component into the interpretation of satire. Elliott's persuasive case for tracing satire's apotropaic social function back to Greek phallic rituals and Archilochean iambic verses marked a decisive break with the formalist trend; while generally admired, Elliott's formulations have not had the influence they merit, however, perhaps because the topic of satire has not received the attention it deserves.¹⁸ In the 1980s, the sociolinguistic theories of M. M. Bakhtin (which actually predate both Frye and Elliott) deepened the exploration of the dialogue between forms of satire, their historical context, and their social impact. Bakhtin's formulations of satiric Menippea¹⁹ as one of the foundational components of the novel tradition—which for Bakhtin includes the Socratic dialogues, the verse satires of Horace and Juvenal, the dialogues

of Lucian, and Petronius's *Satyricon*—help to legitimize satire as a necessary counterpoint to the more centripetal and monologic genres of epic and history. According to Bakhtin, it is satire's deliberate juxtaposition of an absolutist and valorized past against “the spontaneity of the inconclusive present” filled with contemporary polyglot language that produces the “corrective of laughter” that opposes more ideologically and linguistically centripetal imaginations of culture.²⁰ What is intriguing about recent American history involving satire is how valuable a culture in shock and mourning finds an absolute and valorized past, and how incompatible corrective laughter is with cultural crises.

Since Bakhtin's dialogic approach, the study of satire has largely stagnated due to the continuing polarization between the formalist and historicist camps. In 1985 and again in 2001, Fredric Bogel has argued for a return to his own brand of “intenser formalism” in order to resolve the critical impasse, an argument that Dustin Griffin flatly rejects.²¹ For Griffin, Bogel's method would serve only to erase the advances in satiric theory over the last forty years, effectively “subsum[ing] history and the world ‘out there’ to the formal order of satire” (Griffin 1994, 119). Griffin insists instead on embracing satire's unique historicity, its determination “to entice us to identify the masked targets and apply the conclusions to the external world we live in” (1994, 120). More recently, Charles Knight has attempted to drive the final nail into the coffin of pure formalism in satire, arguing for Bakhtinian-style dialogism reflecting both formal precedents and overt historicity:

Although its enduring value derives from its capacity to suggest the connections of historical moments to larger issues, satire remains rooted in the experience of history. The generalities of satire are implicit in particular events, inescapably tied to those events but at uneasy tension with them. Like all literature satire reflects its culture, but it seeks to establish a distance from it and to reveal its false elements. Satire both explores and reflects the gaps and contradictions of its culture; it is both critic and representative of those contradictions. (Knight 2004, 50)

As “both critic and representative” of history, satire is far more complex than pure formalist analyses can incorporate. Satire's relationship to history is dialogic rather than deterministic, an idiosyncratic exchange between the requirements of style and the specific cultural conditions that both produced the satire and serve as subject for its criticisms. As

such, it may prove necessary to explore the historicity of satire on a case-by-case basis, each work representing a unique dynamic between the synchronic forces of historical particulars and the diachronic force of literary tradition. However, with our own modern example of satiric historicity as a kind of palimpsest, comparable dynamics may be seen in Roman satire's dialogue between distinct satiric modes and distinct cultural contexts.

III. Horace, Juvenal, and the Historicity of Roman Satire

The seventeenth-century satirist and literary critic John Dryden, a man who witnessed firsthand a series of major historical crises and the concomitant shifts in his culture's ethos, was especially qualified to explore the peculiar historicity of classical satire. During his lifetime, Dryden saw republican rule replaced by an authoritarian monarchy in a manner that invited comparisons with Rome in the aftermath of its own civil wars. Thus, in his evaluation of the merits of Horace and Juvenal in *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693), Dryden displays great sensitivity to the nuances of the dialogue between history and satire.²² Like many before him, Dryden cites history as a means to account for the stylistic differences between Horace and Juvenal, and yet Dryden was uncomfortable with the centuries-old deterministic and biased model of satiric historicity. What Dryden sought was a more complex model capable of acknowledging satire's individualized dialogue with its 'true' cultural context:

'Tis generally said that those enormous vices which were practiced under the reign of Domitian were unknown in the time of Augustus Caesar; that therefore Juvenal had a larger field than Horace. Little follies were out of doors when oppression was to be scourged instead of avarice: it was no longer time to turn into ridicule the false opinions of philosophers when Roman liberty was to be asserted. There was more need of a Brutus in Domitian's days, to redeem or mend, than of a Horace, if he had then been living, to laugh at a fly-catcher. (1962, 132)

The historically deterministic argument resisted by Dryden runs as such: Determine the ethos or spirit of an historical moment (with some consideration for the author's personality) and you will understand the satire as determined by that ethos.²³ From such a potentially biased paradigm,

states Dryden, came the standard interpretation that Horace's satiric restraint and genial attention to human follies were a natural result of the urbane culture fostered by Emperor Augustus, while Juvenal's cynic "outrage" (*indignatio*, 1.79) was a natural response to the rampant immorality in a Rome reeling from the reign of the notorious Emperor Domitian. However, having himself published verses during both the demise of England's own republican era and the restoration of the repressive monarchy, Dryden recognized that the relationship between Roman satire and Roman history cannot be quite so simplistic.

Citing the imperial histories of Tacitus and Suetonius, Dryden amends what is "generally said" (1962, 132) of Roman history and the resulting satire, noting that the so-called gentle times (1962, 135) of early imperial Rome were in fact marked by a pronounced cultural shock as Rome moved from Republic to civil war and finally to principate, a movement accompanied by an anxious awareness among the higher and aspiring classes of both their vanishing *libertas* (freedom) and Octavian's growing *auctoritas* (power):

When Horace writ his satires, the monarchy of his Caesar was in its newness, and the government but just made easy to the conquered people. They could not possibly have forgotten the usurpation of that prince upon their freedom, nor the violent methods which he had used in the compassing that vast design: they yet remembered his proscriptions, and the slaughter of so many noble Romans, their defenders. (1962, 132–3)

Similarly, Sir Ronald Syme has argued famously for Octavian as a kind of proto-fascist: "During the Civil Wars every party and every leader professed to be defending the cause of liberty and of peace. Those ideas were incompatible. When peace came, it was the peace of despotism."²⁴ In his *The Satires of Rome*, Kirk Freudenburg (2001, 4, 75) describes the world of Roman politics after Actium rather mildly as "an uncertain, rattled age," and the ascension of Octavian as a "totalitarian squeeze" on the "'free-speaking,' old-Republican enterprise." V. G. Kiernan paints a similar picture of Horace forced to cope with a climate of violent socio-political change: "His own besetting worries were echoed and enlarged by those of a whole society hag-ridden by insecurity, injustice, resentments of every kind, some of the bitterest those within families. Violence was endemic."²⁵ Instead of a response to the emperor's urbanity, Horace's generic geniality and propriety, Dryden argues, were just as likely a

response to Augustus's unnerving consolidation of power and, more specifically, to his censorious edict against lampoons and satires (the *famosos libellos* or 'defamatory little books') whose authors cannot be identified.²⁶ This ban was issued, according to Dryden, in order to assuage the emperor's guilty conscience over his actions in securing the title *princeps*, as well as to control the eminence of his (and Rome's) reputation in the imagination of the populace (1962, 133).²⁷ In short, Dryden imagines that Horace's gentle comedic satires may have been born out of fearful necessity rather than personal style or cultural urbanity.

This image of Horace's style as motivated by fear and/or sycophancy is not new: Juvenal scoffs that Horace had a full stomach when he cried "Hurray" (*euhoe*, 7.62), while Dryden (1962, 132) similarly sneers at Horace as little more than a "court slave." However, with the benefit of the example of American satire in dialogue with the unstable ethos post-9/11, perhaps the image of Horace as political opportunist should be broadened to include the publicly salutary aspect of Horace's stylistic choices.²⁸ While the lure of economic and social advancement cannot be discounted as influences, Horace's stylistic preference for the risible (*ridiculum*) over piercing vitriol (*aci*) offered Rome's own anxious age of violent political change the kind of comforting comedic circularity similar to what occurred soon after the attacks on 9/11.²⁹ Horace's stylistic program centered on making the auditor 'smile' in another era when collective psychological comfort was sorely in need. Such a reading of the historicity of Horatian satire is fraught with troubling aspects; Horace's self-described "pedestrian Muse"³⁰ employs a kind of historical revisionism comparable to the early weeks post-9/11 that revises (or "white-washes," according to Ellen Oliensis [1998, 125]) the sociopolitical upheavals in a style that renders such violent events sweet and productive (*utile dulci*: Horace, *Ars P.* 343). To be sure, as Thomas Habinek (1998, 102) argues, a program like Horace's provides, wittingly or not, a "blueprint for an imperial literature," yet modern experience suggests that more attention should be paid to the influence of collective fear and social instability in the satires of Horace. If not a second *princeps* for Roman society, Horace can function as he says his own father did for him: a 'best father' (*pater optimus*: *Sat.* 1.4.105) offering genial lessons to a war-weary people. Horace's satiric style, Dryden noted, foregrounds its public nature, functioning like a "minister of state," while Juvenal's style is an equally valuable (if less restrained) minister of "our private pleasures" (1962, 132).

Broadly speaking, in an era of increased authoritarianism and cultural anxiety, Horace's preferred practice "to speak the truth with a laugh" (*ridentem dicere verum: Sat. 1.1.24*) is simply more feasible than the invective style of his predecessor, the Republican era satirist Lucilius, whose style Horace admires yet ultimately rejects; a 'conversation' (*sermo*) is a more stabilizing force than a 'satire' (*satura*). Horatian conversations hope to produce consensus, while satire, according to Juvenal, must rend with abandon in order to provoke 'guilt,' 'rage,' and 'tears' rather than a laugh:

ense velut stricto quotiens Lucilius ardens
infremuit, rubet auditor cui frigida mens est
criminibus, tacita sudant praecordia culpa.
inde ira et lacrimae. (1.165–8)

But whenever Lucilius blazes and roars as if with drawn sword, the hearer whose mind is chilled with crime goes red and his heartstrings sweat with silent guilt.

Then come rage and tears.³¹

William Anderson (1982, 39, 203) describes Horace's comic style, on the one hand, as not merely an expression of his abiding wit, but also as a socially "constructive" and "humane" mode, and Juvenal's style, on the other, as iconoclastic, even anagogic, tragically decrying both the degenerate world of Rome and the degenerate human race as a whole. Much of American satire before and several years after 9/11 is infused with the spirits of Lucilius, Juvenal, and Menippean satirists such as Lucian: standup comics Lenny Bruce, George Carlin, Richard Pryor, Dennis Miller, and Lewis Black, heirs to the declaiming Cynics, directly target persons living and dead in a matter befitting Lucilius and Juvenal. Menippean films such as *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *Life of Brian* (1979), *Brazil* (1985), and *Wag the Dog* (1997) are the heirs to Aristophanes' and Lucian's fantastic style of testing and critique of conventional social orthodoxies. It was this questioning spirit that became unacceptable to the new ethos of American culture in the short time following 9/11, while the Horatian style of safely chuckling at follies was cautiously embraced.

For his second book of *Satires*, appearing "hard on the heels of Actium" and perhaps even as the senate was granting Octavian the title of Augustus, Horace needed to look no further than his own unstable

time for examples of vice (Freudenburg 2001, 109). However, unlike Lucilius before him and Juvenal after, the Horatian speaker admits he does not have the latitude to express satiric indignation: if he should indulge his passion for this kind of writing, warns the jurist Trebatius, "One of your great friends will strike you with a killing frost" (*et maiorum ne quis amicus / frigore te feriat*: *Sat.* 2.1.61–2; translation by Fairclough). An ideologically centripetal form of satire was more likely to find a place in the new political order. As Ronald Syme (1960, 287–8) argues persuasively, "Italian nationalism followed rather than preceded the War of Actium. Only then, after victory, did men realize to the full the terrible danger that had menaced Rome and Italy." Horace, the disgraced Republican soldier, created "humane and tolerant" satires suited both to his temperament (perhaps) and to the dangerous times in which he lived: "Nor would the times now permit political satire or free attack upon the existing order in state and society. Republican *libertas*, denied to the *nobiles* of Rome, could not be conceded to a freedman's son" (Syme 1960, 254). Thus, Horace re-inscribes Lucilian *ira* not as the honest expression of individualistic free speech, but as self-indulgent excess that provides little public benefit. Whether he is seen as social reformer or sycophantic imperial mouthpiece, Horace files down Lucilius's satiric teeth by suggesting, on more than one occasion, that Lucilian liberty of speech strays beyond acceptable cultural boundaries.³² While his distaste for Lucilius is admittedly in harmony with Octavian's program of moral restraint, in his *Epistle to Augustus* Horace extends his distaste for Lucilian poetic excess to satire in general, which was 'rightfully' subjected to legal restraint for the benefit of society after threatening the *honestas domos* (the noble families), with its destructive "bloody tooth" (*cruento dente*: *Ep.* 2.1.139–55).

Horace proposed as an alternative a domestic and domesticated satiric mode with a psychological component for a Roman *populus* in crisis, much like the short-lived movements from satire towards comedy in the wake of 9/11, a comic strain that runs counter to the pessimism, ambiguity, and vitriol of traditional satire. Horace, the 'best father,' offered to an anxious public the *virtus* of "making the audience grin with laughter" (*ergo non satis est risu diducere rictum / auditoris; et est quaedam tamen hic quoque virtus* [Hence it is not enough to make your hearer grin with laughter—though even in that there is some merit, *Sat.* 1.10.7–8; translation by Fairclough]), while simultaneously demanding social and personal integrity, even as the established Roman liberties vanish:

mi satis est, si
 traditum ab antiquis morem servare tuamque
 dum custodis eges, vitam famamque tueri
 incolumem possum. (*Sat.* 1.4.116–9)

It is enough for me if I can preserve the customs handed down from our forefathers, and if, so long as you need a guardian, I can keep your life and reputation whole. (Translation largely based on Fairclough)

On the more problematic side, the historical erasure of painful collective memories exercised by the popular media soon after the attacks of 9/11 has strong resonances in Horace's plain style. For example, the encounter between the character of 'Horace' and the aspiring bore of *Satire* 1.9 provides a comic version of the Roman system of *patrocinium* (patronage) and, on an ironic level, there is the potential for a chuckle rather than a grimace at the violent factionalism and rapid rise of the class of *novi homines* (new men) that occurred during and after the civil wars (see Syme 1960, 369–86). Niall Rudd (1966, 78–80) notes the comically burlesque linguistic style of 1.9, with particular attention to the epic-style 'betrayal' of Horace by Fuscus, who refuses to rescue his friend from the aspiring sycophant. Horace's auditors are left with a revised and humorous impression of the betrayals and murders underlying the political shifts of the civil war era, a comic melodrama of the victory of a divinely sanctioned social order (*sic me servavit Apollo: Sat.* 1.9.73, 78).

Horace's last programmatic satire, the conversation with Trebatius (2.1), makes yet another case for the virtue of satiric restraint, while simultaneously creating another comic version of the dangerously repressive litigious world of post-Actium Rome. Rudd (1966, 128) famously dubs this work a "brilliant piece of shadow-boxing" devoid of "any real anxiety," while Maria Plaza (2006, 199) draws a similar impression of 2.1 as "generally filled with pride and self-assertion." However, the very real concern (if not anxiety) over exactly how to offer social commentary to an anxious society under increasingly stringent legal restraints is stated expressly early in the work:

nisi dextro tempore, Flacci
 verba per attentam non ibunt Caesaris aurem,
 cui male si palpere, recalcitrat undique tutus. (*Sat.* 2.1.18–20)

Unless the time is right, the words of Flaccus will not enter Caesar's attentive ear. Rub Caesar the wrong way, and he lashes out with his hooves in all directions in order to protect himself.³³

Although diffused by a humorous comparison (Caesar as a volatile horse), the social danger in early imperial Rome (and the speaker's anxiety) is quite genuine; if roused to ire, even the most comically 'floppy' (a pun on Horace's own name *Flaccus*) verses could produce an indiscriminate retribution intended to safeguard the authority of the new regime. One of the most striking features of Octavian's accession, according to Suetonius, was his employment of legal edicts as a means of social control, including laws governing morality, personal finances, and the infamous prohibition against satiric lampoons (Suetonius, *Aug.* 34 and 55); accordingly, Trebatius warns the satirist at line 61 that, should his satire exceed the new ethos of restraint, his life will be brief indeed. Such hostility to what Jon Stewart termed "open satire" is echoed in America's brief yet strident rejection of the iconoclastic ironists whose invective mode threatened to divide a frightened and insecure nation ("People have to watch what they say"). The Horace of 2.1 claims to draw his 'floppy' dagger/pen (*stilus*) only in order to protect both himself and his vulnerable nation, as Apulians like himself have always done (*Sat.* 2.1.34–41). In the end, the satirist and the jurist, the artist and the watchdog of culture, agree on stability rather than iconoclasm, encapsulated by the famous punning revision of satire from poorly written, illegal, immoral, and destabilizing *mala carmina* to *bona carmina*, that is, well-written, socially beneficial didactic satire that will please Caesar and harmonize with the satirist's own agenda for social stability (Horace, *Sat.* 2.1.82–4). Such an ideology of unity and historical revisionism was the order of the day in Augustan Rome, as it was in the days and weeks after 9/11, and yet it is noteworthy that, in the wake of endless social and political excesses, neither ethos of unity endured for very long.

If Horace's centripetal mode of comic satire arose in dialogue with a time of authoritarian repression and cultural fear not unlike America soon after 9/11, then Juvenal's privately minded declamations, explicitly aligned with the Lucilian style of satiric *libertas* (cf. Juvenal 1.19–20, 165), are possible only in a time of relative cultural stability and sociopolitical latitude not unlike the America before and many months after the attacks. As opposed to the facile assumption that Juvenal's indignant style was determined by the viciousness of his era, understanding Juvenal's historicity requires scrupulous attention to the dates of compo-

sition of the satires, which were probably written under what Suetonius describes as the “reserved and moderate” (*abstinentia et moderatione*) reigns of Domitian’s successors (Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian).³⁴ As opposed to Horace, Juvenal’s speaker can adopt the threatening pose of *indignatio* because there is less social instability and fear to render his divisive anger as truly dangerous.

Latitude, however, is not equivalent to the kind ‘toothless’ depictions of Juvenal’s style as argued in some of the recent critical literature. Freudenburg (2001, 235–7), for example, describes Juvenal’s choice to “reclaim that Old Republican freedom to attack his enemies” as a hypocritical and impotent gesture. As evidence, Freudenburg interprets Juvenal’s famous programmatic statement at the end of his first satire that he will attack only the dead: “the people whose ashes are covered by the Flaminian and Latin roads” (*experiā quid concedatur in illos / quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina*: 1.170–1; translation by Braund), often read as a self-protective gesture necessitated by the real possibility of retribution from Juvenal’s readership, as a mere “ghost-assault” by the “poor man’s Lucilius” (1.165–6; cf. Freudenburg 2001, 234–8). Plaza (2006, 40–2, 46–50) also argues for a dissonance at the end of *Satire* 1 between true Lucilian rage at the living and Juvenal’s attacks on the dead as constituting one among many humorous ‘jokes’ functioning to soften his criticisms, to garner reader sympathy, and to allow for multiple linguistic significations. Plaza goes so far as to suggest that Horace’s criticisms, ironically, are more violent and problematic than Juvenal’s, which accounts for Horace’s magnified use of humor as deflection. Juvenal’s defensive gesture, however, is a choice born of experience, not a necessity born of social anxiety (as in Horace’s case); outrage is available to Juvenal, yet he, like Horace before him, is keenly aware that should he “lampoon Tigellinus [Nero’s favorite] . . . you will burn at the stake, your dead body cutting a wide path through the dust of the arena.”³⁵ Horace must offer his tottering society *bona carmina*, but there is little necessity for comic relief in Juvenal’s mode, perhaps because Roman society, like America prior to and soon after 9/11, was able to tolerate a cautiously “pessimistic portrait of contemporary Rome [which] leaves no room for hope” (Anderson 1982, 331).

The social latitude available to Juvenal does not undermine the ideological daring in his overt alliance with the Republican Lucilius made just prior to the contention that he will only attack the dead. Whereas Horace chooses to blunt Lucilius’s teeth, Juvenal dons Lucilius’s helmet,

but always aware of the shifting limitations on satire: *tecum prius ergo voluta / haec animo ante tubas: galeatum sero duelli / paenitet* (So turn all this over in your mind before the trumpets sound. Once you've got your helmet on, it's too late for second thoughts about fighting, 1.168–70; translation by Braund). Lucilius can blaze with Republican *libertas*, while Juvenal must, admittedly, shield his imperial-era *libera verba* within a network of self-contradictions. But it is the *virtus* of *ira* expressed by both Lucilius and Juvenal that marks their common, and bold, centrifugal ideology: "Anger and direct, spontaneous honesty belong together; anger befits the desire for, and expression of, freedom" (Anderson 1982, 319, 331).³⁶ Juvenal's self-contradictory program is akin to the increasingly iconoclastic satire post-9/11; both modes have the relative latitude necessary to express their vitriol against events that they can no longer ignore, yet that vitriol is often mingled with caution.³⁷ For example, the emperor, like the sanctified symbols of the Twin Towers, is a symbol the satirist approaches at his peril, and yet it is the enormities of the imperial past that offer rich ground for Juvenal to mine; readers are left to draw the analogical connections on their own. In *Satire 4*, one of his most openly political satires, Juvenal attacks Domitian, the "bald-headed Nero,"³⁸ in a richly ironic tale of factionalism over the fate of a gigantic fish. Although perhaps not terribly daring considering the animosity to Domitian shared by much of Juvenal's readership, hurling invectives at a different emperor is an effective (yet deflected) way to caution the court of Trajan. After an extended harangue against the parasite Crispinus, the speaker ironically acknowledges the self-contradictory danger of his program by practicing the very thing that he tells us doomed most of Domitian's courtiers: "freedom of speech" (*libera verba*: 4.90–1). Only the honest councilor Crispus, who restrained his verbal freedom, the speaker reports, managed to survive to the ripe old age of 80. Such verbal restraint is the order of the day in a society under stress or threat, a society like Domitian's, Nero's, and Augustus's, but unlike, perhaps, Juvenal's own, where there was sufficient latitude in which to carefully decry orthodoxy. Juvenal and the American satirists some years after 9/11 (and those working in the less economically restrained medium of the Internet during the crisis) claim they must speak out against "the rich excess of vices" (*uberior vitiorum copia*: 1.87) in a manner that resembles Lucilius, but they also build sufficient defensive structures into their satires to protect themselves from a culture that has seen authoritarian repression and could easily see it again.

IV. Where is American Satire Now?

If it was possible, but ill-advised, to attack the living in Juvenal's day, so America seems to have moved from Lucilian lampoon before 9/11, to Horatian comic solace, to a more mitigated, yet increasingly invective form of Juvenalian satire. For example, it is intriguing to note that in June 2007, Comedy Central began airing an animated series lampooning the Bush presidency entitled *Lil' Bush*, a program with a passing, if softened, resemblance to the live-action program *That's My Bush*, which vanished in the wake of 9/11. It is equally intriguing to note the irony of the fact that Roger Rosenblatt, the *Time* magazine essayist, who in 2001 bid a savage farewell to satiric irony in popular culture, published his first novel in 2006, a satire entitled *Lapham Rising*. Years of relative normalcy and ever-increasing skepticism has given even the most ardent critics of satire the latitude to employ the genre once more, but how they employ the available modes of satire remains a complex negotiation. Juvenal's sharp (if cautious) Lucilian sword has been the increasingly popular weapon of choice for many recent satirists, but for Rosenblatt, who once wrote admiringly of the "new and chastened time" of cultural unity, the weapon of choice is the grin. As with Horace's stylistic decisions during his own chastened time, Rosenblatt's risible style sidesteps direct engagements with the obvious targets of the moment, choosing instead a main target few could object to: the *nouveau riche*. The novel's protagonist is essentially Horace's Stoic philosopher Damasippus of *Satire* 2.3, railing against the excesses of humanity while comically revealing his own limitations. Yet in an era of relative latitude and manifold targets, such a stylistic choice may make the reader "grin with laughter," but ultimately, the satire itself seems "powerless" (*sine nervis*; see endnote 10 below).

The advantage of the Horatian style is that it has little difficulty finding acceptance among patrons and audiences, whether it appears at moments of historical crisis or at moments of historical calm. The Juvenalian style, on the other hand, less concerned with acting as a genial *pater optimus* to an unstable society or a mercurial patron, requires the latitude of historical calm in order to express its outrage with relative impunity. As societies experience their inevitable crises, forms of cultural criticism are necessarily affected. Yet it is the very fact of satire's ability to adapt to historical change—whether accommodating, mitigating, or confronting ethical shifts—that confounds the efforts of both pure formalism and historical determinism. The nature of satire requires a dia-

logic approach to its historicity, whether a scholar is approaching the satires of Rome, Augustan England, or twenty-first-century America.

Notes

1. Graydon Carter's comments are featured in Wellman 2001; Camille Dodero's comments in her 2001 essay; and Roger Rosenblatt's in his 2001 essay. The texts of these essays are archived and available online (listed individually in the Works Cited).

2. Following Dustin Griffin, I use the term 'historicity' as a means to discuss the nature and degree of contact a particular mode of satire has with the various material conditions of its historical moment; see Griffin 1994, 115–23.

3. Texts of Juvenal and Horace are taken from the Loeb editions of Susanna Braund (2004) and H. R. Fairclough (1999), respectively. All Latin translations are original unless otherwise indicated.

4. See Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.2.24 and 2.5.11–2. The translation is taken from Ahl 1984, 175.

5. The quotation is from Milan Kundera's *The Art of the Novel*, cited in Hutcheon 1994, 15.

6. For Diomedes' discussion of satire, see Keil 1981, 1: 485–6.

7. President Bush made this statement before the United States Congress on 21 September 2001.

8. Much of this information was gathered independently. However, for verification, see such sources as Dixson 2004; "9/11: Pop Culture and Remembrance" at <http://septerror.tripod.com/movies.html>; "Judging the Mood of a Nation," PBS Online for PBS's NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, posted online on 24 October 2001; and the entry for "List of Audiovisual Entertainment Affected by the September 11, 2001 Attacks," posted on Wikipedia.com. The references to the Geico commercial and the Clear Channel memo are drawn from Poniewozik 2001.

9. The text of Stewart's speech was transcribed by the author from a videotaped copy of the program that aired on 20 September.

10. Horace, *Sat.* 2.1.2. Freudenburg (1990) argues for the sexual connotations of Horace's description of his style as *sine nervis* ('limp' or 'impotent').

11. Stewart labeled Rumsfeld as part of the "dickiest generation."

12. The word 'disremember' suggests a conscious effort to erase painful memories through avoidance behavior.

13. Again, much of this information was collected independently; for verification of television ratings and film rentals, see "The Charts" in issue 617 of *Entertainment Weekly* published on 28 September 2001. PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Report*, "What's So Funny? Terence Smith Reports on the Slow Return of Comedy after the September 11 Attacks," was posted on PBS online on 31 December 2001 and is archived there.

14. See Aristotle, *Poet.* 13.11–3; translation drawn from Fyfe 1973. Here, Aristotle distinguishes the pleasure of tragedy from the sentimental comic impulses of reconciliation and neat closure.

15. For more details, see Bakhtin 1984, 106–22.

16. The anonymous reader points out (quite accurately) that many groups of Amer-

icans (African-Americans and Native Americans in particular) have experienced massive devastation. However, the immediacy of witnessing (in some cases, as it was happening) an attack “directed against Americans as Americans,” as the reader so aptly put it, was unique in the collective experience of the country.

17. Currently, certain topics remain off limits to cultural critics; the Twin Towers themselves are perhaps the most striking example. Even with the rapid reassertion of iconoclastic satire, it is interesting to note that director Oliver Stone chose to focus his 2006 film *World Trade Center* on the rescue of two New York Port Authority workers on 9/11. The film’s tag line, “A True Story of Courage and Survival,” suggests the film’s stabilizing and salutary social agenda, a striking departure for a controversial director whose depictions of the Vietnam War (*Platoon*) and the Kennedy assassination (*JFK*) were anything but orthodox. A related example may be the case of University of Colorado Professor Ward Churchill, who was removed from the university after characterizing those working in the Towers as “little Eichmanns.”

18. Freudenburg (2005, 26) aptly describes Elliott 1960 as “a remarkable book, both for its findings and for the high price it holds in the history of satire’s socialization.”

19. Bakhtin (1984, 114–9) defines the Menippea as a genre of “ultimate questions” in which philosophical ideas, discourses, and accepted ‘truths’ are put to the test through subjection to extraordinary or fantastic situations, particularly, to carnivalesque comic inversion.

20. Bakhtin 1984, 114; see also Bakhtin 1981, 27 and 55.

21. See Bogel 2001, 9 and Griffin 1994.

22. Quotations from Dryden’s *Discourse* are taken from Watson 1962.

23. To some degree, Hight (1961) makes such a deterministic argument: Juvenal, “middle-aged, grey, and gloomy” (5), was driven to write satire because of the fear (9) and senses of injustice, poverty, and insult (40) experienced during both Domitian’s “reign of terror” and the degenerate era following the emperor’s death (5).

24. Syme 1960, 9, referencing Lucan, *Phar*. 1.670.

25. See Kiernan 1999, 163–4. Other examples of and arguments concerning the repressive and authoritarian climate of early imperial Rome include: the banishment of Ovid (Feeney [1992, 4] argues for Ovid’s awareness of the death of free expression or *libertas* under Augustus); in the *Annals*, Tacitus describes the accession of Augustus as a “blood-stained peace” (*pacem cruentam*: *Ann.* 1.10.3); Gruen (2005, 34) describes Augustus’s transfer of power to the Roman people and senate in 27 B.C.E. as a transfer in name only, and cites the following passages from Augustus’s own *Res Gestae* (“I had total power in all matters,” 34.1) and Ovid’s *Tristia* (“Caesar Augustus is the state,” *Trist.* 4.4.13–6). Reinhold and Swan (1990) provide a thoughtful overview of Dio Cassius’s *Histories*, noting that Dio purposefully downplays the senatorial plots against Augustus (168), the severity of Octavian’s infamous proscriptions (160), and the dissonance between the “ruthlessly ambitious, unscrupulous, and cruel” Octavian and the (apparently) humble and judicious emperor (158). Suetonius’s description of the libelous poems (*carmina ad infamiam cuiuspam*: *Aug.* 55) against Augustus posted constantly in the senate, as well as Augustus’s decision to criminalize such works, certainly implies a dangerously polarized political environment in which the *princeps* desired decisive control over how he was represented.

26. See Suetonius, *Aug.* 55. I am indebted to the anonymous reader for the sugges-

tion of *famosus* as ‘rumor-filled,’ as well as for what the translation implies about Augustus’s desire to control forms of cultural representation. I was referred to O’Neill’s (2003) excellent essay on the Roman imperial elite’s representation of the plebian *circulus* as a means to survey and control unauthorized populist activity.

27. Defamatory songs were already outlawed in the *Twelve Tables*, as Cicero notes in *De republica* 4.12.

28. Highet (1962, 35) describes Horace’s style in similar terms: “Rather, even at the risk of over-simplifying them [i.e. the conversational satires], he will make them plain to understand and easy to remember, so that they may bridge the gulf between philosophy and the general public.”

29. See Horace, *Sat.* 1.10.14.

30. Horace, *Sat.* 2.6.16–7: *ergo ubi me in montes et in arcem ex urbe removi, / quid prius illustrem saturis Musaque pedestri?* (So, now that from the city I have taken myself off to my castle in the hills, to what should I sooner give renown in the *Satires* of my prosaic Muse?; translation by Fairclough).

31. The translation is Braund’s. Horace describes his work as “satire” in *Sat.* 2.1.1 and *Sat.* 2.6.17; in *Sat.* 1.4.48, the speaker questions if the *sermo* style of satire should even qualify as poetry. In any case, the speaker suggests to the suspicious reader that his satires are not driven by Lucilius’s malicious invective (see lines 56–65).

32. Cf. Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.1–13; 1.10.1–6 and 64–74; and 2.1.62–78.

33. The translation is adapted from Rudd 1966, with the aid of Mary-Kay Gamel.

34. For the dating of Juvenal’s *Saturae*, see Highet 1961, 9–17; Coffey 1976, 119–23; and Barr 1991, xii–xiii. See Suetonius, *Dom.* 24.

35. Juvenal 1.155–7: *pone Tigillimum, taeda lucebis in illa / qua stantes ardent qui fixo gutture fumant, / et latum media sulcum deduct harena.*

36. Because only fragments of Lucilius’s satires survive, the conclusions are largely conjecture based on the statements of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal concerning Lucilius.

37. A recent example of such a seemingly self-contradictory stance would be those moments when *The Daily Show* assaults the Iraq War and its leaders in the government, yet then goes out of its way to praise the soldiers fighting in the field.

38. Juvenal 4.37–8: *cum iam semianimum laceraret Flavius orbem / ultimus et calvo serviret Roma Neroni* (Once upon a time, when the last of the Flavians was mangling a world already half-dead, and Rome was the slave of a bald Nero [i.e. Domitian]; translation by Braund).

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