English

The satires of Horace, translated by Niall Rudd (1973)

Take a thousand men, you'll find
a thousand hobbies. Mine is enclosing words in metre.
(Satire 1, book 2)

Penguin classics translations are often old. This translation of Horace's satires was first published in 1973, a date which evokes fond memories of David Essex and Glam Rock for me but it is, of course, 50 years ago, now, and the translator of this edition, Professor Niall Rudd, born in 1927, is as dead as his hero Horace.

Quintus Horatius Flaccus, usually referred to in English simply as Horace, was born in 65 BC and died in 8 BC. His life therefore spanned the transition of Rome from free republic to proto-empire under the first emperor, Augustus.

Horace was the son of a slave, who was granted his freedom and made a successful career as an auctioneer's agent (Introduction page xvii), earning enough to send the boy Horace to a good school then on to Rome to study. Horace served as an officer in the republican army of Brutus and Cassius which was defeated at the Battle of Philippi in 42 by the allied forces of Octavian and Antony, but (obviously) survived and returned to Italy. (In Satire 1.6 Horace specifies that he was a tribune in charge of a legion in the army of Brutus, and the experience of seeing the republican ranks breaking and fleeing is described in two of his odes, 2.7 and 3.4.)

Back in Italy, Horace discovered his father was dead and his properties had been confiscated as part of the huge land appropriations carried out by Octavian after Philippi. Horace managed to get a job in the treasury and wrote poetry in his spare time (p.xvii). His verse came to the attention of Virgil, favourite poet of the new regime, who brought it to the attention of Augustus's schoolboy friend and cultural commissar, Maecenas (an event described in satire 1.6). This was in 37 BC. Two years later Horace published his first book, of ten satires.

Maecenas realised Horace's gift and became his patron, eventually buying him a large country estate , thus removing Horace's money worries. Henceforth the poet mixed with the top rank of Roman society and its leading writers.

Horace is most famous for his odes, which have charmed and consoled readers for 2,000 years. They are wise and gracious. Some of them are extremely flattering to his lord and master Augustus, so a regular debating point about Horace's poetry has been assessing how much he managed to keep his independence and how much he truckled to the wishes of the regime. The English poet John Dryden knew a thing or two about writing political poetry, so his opinion bears weight when he calls Horace 'a well-mannered court slave.'

Apparently, scholars broadly agree the following dates for Horace's poetry:

- Satires 1 (c. 35 to 34 BC)
- Satires 2 (c. 30 BC)
- Epodes (30 BC)
- Odes 1 to 3 (c. 23 BC)
- Epistles 1 (c. 21 BC)

- Carmen Saeculare (17 BC)
- Epistles 2 (c. 11 BC)
- Odes 4 (c. 11 BC)
- Ars Poetica (c. 10 to 8 BC)

Less well known than the odes are Horace's satires, written in elegantly crafted hexameters i.e. verse with six 'feet' or beats per line. There are two books of satires, book 1 containing 10 poems and book 2 containing 8 poems i.e. 18 satires in all.

This Penguin edition also contains Horace's epistles, book 1 containing 20 epistles, book 2 containing two standard epistles and then the longer, third, epistle which is a treatise on the art of poetry, the *Ars poetica* in the Latin.
This Penguin edition contains three brief forewords which show how Professor Rudd successively revised his translations in 1979, 1996 and 2005, the latter edition in particular being comprehensively revised 'to produce a smoother and lighter versification'.

Aspects of Horace's satire

Satire as argument

Horace's satires remind me a lot of Cicero's law speeches in that they are *arguments*; more precisely a series of arguments strung together around a central topic. They are designed to *persuade* you or, maybe like Cicero's speeches, to amuse and entertain the auditor while they go through the motions of persuading. They are a performance of persuading.

Dramatised

The second way they're like Cicero is the way they routinely *dramatise* the text by inventing opponents, antagonists who make a point against Horace, his beliefs or his practice of poetry – so that Horace can then neatly refute them. For example the imaginary accuser in this excerpt:
'You like giving pain,'
says a voice, 'and you do it out of sheer malice.' Where did you get
that slander to throw at me?

The invented antagonist is just one component of the surprisingly chatty, conversational, buttonholing tone of Horace's satires.

Names

Another feature is the way Horace fleshes out general observations by embodying vices in certain named individuals. The notes to the book point out that we don't know who most of these people are. My hunch would be that Horace invented them, gave them plausible names, added them to the rogues gallery or cast of characters which populate the satires. He gives this trick a down-home explanation by attributing it to his dad:

Yet if I'm a little outspoken or perhaps
too fond of a joke, I hope you'll grant me that privilege.
My good father gave me the habit; to warn me off
he used to point out various vices by citing examples. (1.4)

The lyric poet tends to write about him or herself and their fine feelings. By contrast, Horace's satires overflow with *people*, talking, jostling, lecturing him, criticising, talking back. Thus characters named Ummidius, Naevius, Nommentanus, Tigellius the singer, Fufidius, Maltinus, Rufillus, Cupiennius, Galba, Sallust, Marsaeus, Origo, Villius, Fausta, Longarenus, Cerinthus, Hypsaea, Catia, Philodemus, Lady Ilia, Countess Egeria, Fabius appear in just *the first two* satires.
As a whole, as a genre, the satires overflow with recognisable social types and characters, all jostling and arguing with him, like an urban crowd or maybe like a very packed house party at a rich man's villa.

Anyway, the net effect is to make you, dear reader, feel as if *you* are in the swim, you are in the know, you are part of this smart set, fully informed of all the goings-on in Rome's smartest circles. Sometimes Horace's satires are like high society gossip columns.

The origin of satire

There has a been a lot of scholarly debate about the origin of the word and genre of 'satire'. The Middle Ages thought it had something to do with satyrs, the half men, half goats of mythology. Nowadays, scholars think it derives from the Latin word *satura*. It is now seen as a development of the rough, rude, vulgar plays and written entertainments the Romans composed in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, before they were really exposed to the long-established forms of Greek literature.
But in his introduction, the translator, Professor Niall Rudd, makes an important distinction between satire and *satura*. The Greeks, obviously, had countless expressions of the satirical *spirit*; what they didn't have was a genre named *satura*. The *saturae* that Horace wrote overlapped with the idea of satire, but not completely and not all the time. *Saturae* seem from the beginning to have been associated with the idea of medley and mixture. Rudd traces its origins from Naevius via Ennius, the first major Roman poet, to Lucilius, 'the first European satirist' (p.xi).
Horace himself refers to the key role played by the Roman poet Lucilius in inventing this genre. We know Lucilius died in 103 BC, because a state funeral was held for him, but nobody knows when he was born.

It is now routinely thought that Lucilius took 'the rude inartistic medley, known to the Romans by the name of *satura*' and used it as a vehicle for the kind of aggressive and censorious criticism of persons, morals, manners, politics, literature, etc. which the word satire has denoted ever since.
The reason we're not sure about any of this is because no single poem of Lucilius's has survived. We know that he wrote some thirty books (!) of satires, but we only have fragments, admittedly a lot of fragments, some 1,300 (!), but which are mostly single lines taken out of context and quoted in the works of later grammarians.

Lucilius seems to have begun his career by ridiculing and parodying the conventional language of epic and tragic poetry, setting against it the ordinary language of educated men of his time. You can see how there would be something intrinsically humorous in juxtaposing the highflown language of epic and tragedy with the actual humdrum, rather shabby lives most of us lead.

And how it would be only a small step from that to devoting entire poems to the real social practices of his time, with sarcastic commentary on the intrigues of politics, the ubiquitous greed not only of the rich but of grasping merchants, the gossip and scandal about well-known figures, the perennial disapproval of other people's sex lives, the equally perennial disapproval

of other people's gluttony and drunkenness, the ghastly vulgarity of the addle-headed mob who will follow any populist who throws them simple slogans, promises a better life, and so on.

But Rudd emphasises that Lucilius's range was huge: the fragments include dramatic scenes, fables, sermons, dialogues, letters, epigrams, anecdotes and learned exposition. Medleys, indeed.

One other point: As part of mocking highfalutin' language, Lucilius used the more ordinary speech of educated members of his society and, especially when talking about himself, used a relaxed, open and candid tone of voice, an informal, candid tone which Horace copies.

But Rudd's discussion also raises a point which Horace himself repeatedly mentions, which is whether satire is even poetry at all, but more like a form of rhythmical prose. If the tone and subject matter become so casual and realistic, *is* it much more than rhythmic prose? Well, we can judge because in some translations Horace's verse *is* changed into English prose and even a cursory glance at these shows you that something is lost. This is a) the rhythmical pleasure which always comes from of reading lines of verse and b) admiration of his skill at coining a phrase, or turning a phrase, within the strict limitations of the metre. The display and performative aspects of verse are lost. Verse is better; it gives a more multi-levelled pleasure. When deciding what translations of these Roman poets to buy I always prefer the verse translation.
And so the genre of satire was born, the only literary genre the Romans could claim to have invented without Greek precedent.

Satire's limitations

However, the most obvious thing about satire is it doesn't work. American satirists ripped the piss out of Donald Trump during his bid to win the Republican nomination, then during his presidential campaign of 2015, and then, of course, during his entire 4 years in power. But in the November 2020 presidential election, the total number of votes cast for Donald Trump *went up*, from 62,984,828 to 74,216,154! So much for the tens of thousands of satirists, comedians, commentators, academics, film-makers, playwrights, novelists and so on who relentlessly mocked him for 4 years. Net result: his popularity *increased!*
Same with Boris Johnson in the UK. What brought him down was emphatically not the efforts of the thousands of liberal comedians and satirists relentlessly mocking his every move and word etc etc but the desertion of key allies in his own cabinet when they thought his erratic judgement threatened their own careers.

So if satire doesn't change anything, what is it for? Well, obviously to entertain and amuse. But there's another motive. If you reflect on what the effect of reading *Private Eye* or other satirical magazines, or being in the audience of some standup comedian is on the reader or audience, maybe the most obvious one is *making them feel virtuous*, making them feel an insider, in with the good guys, on the side of the angels.
I lost interest in, and then actively avoided, comedy programmes during the Trump presidency, because they became so lazy. All a joker had to do was make reference to Trump's hair or hands or two or three of his most notorious quotes and the audience exploded with laughter. This is the risk with satire, that you end up preaching to the converted. You are telling them jokes they already know, mocking figures that everybody already mocks – laughable politicians, corrupt businessmen, the royal family, rich bankers etc. It has little or no effect on the target but makes its audience feel knowing and justified. Everyone else is laughing. It's not just me.

But maybe by 'everybody' I mean mainly the well educated. The audience that finds the slightest reference to Trump howlingly funny is probably young, white, university educated. If we apply this model to Horace, we see that he explicitly appeals to a similar readership – not to the uneducated mob, not to the corrupt politicians or greedy merchants he mocks: but to a hypothetical readership of People Like Us; educated, moderate, sensible, guilty of a few forgivable foibles maybe, but innocent of all grosser corruptions and turpitudes. Decent people, yes, we agree with Horace.

So a working model of satire is that its main purpose is both to entertain, sure, but also to reinforce the group identity and groupthink of its educated, middle (in Rome, upper) class audience.

The other limitation of satire is the extreme narrowness of its range. The best novels take into the minds and experiences of people drastically different from their readers. Lyric poetry can interweave acuteness of perception with psychological insight. Epic poetry transports our minds to the superhuman realm of gods and heroes. Whereas, on the whole, satire hits its subjects with a mallet, and it is a narrow range of subjects.

In satire 1.4 (i.e. book 1, satire 4) Horace makes a provisional list of the kinds of people he mocks: the greedy, the ambitious, those sexually obsessed with married women or with boys; over-rich collectors of *objets d'art* in silver or bronze; merchants anxious about their shipments and the next deal i.e. businessmen.
It's a familiar list, indicative of the way human nature hasn't changed much in 2,000 years, at least in complex societies. These societies seem to throw up the same types of character again and again, along with an audience of the *non*-rich, the non-perverted, the not-involved-in-politics, who enjoy being entertained by someone taking the mickey out of those members of society who *are* (rich, perverted, incompetent politicians or corrupt businessmen).
So if satire's targets are predictable, if the list of behaviours which are going to be mocked are known in advance, why is it not boring? Well, the answer is in the stylishness, zip and intelligence of the satirist, the vim and twist of their delivery. Plus – their sheer aggression. The best satire is malicious, so that beneath the jokes you sense real anger, and this anger, the way it is managed and shaped and directed can be immensely entertaining.

So it's a balancing act, satire: you've got to hit targets familiar enough for the audience to laugh in recognition but not so obvious as to become boring; you've got to display inventiveness and wit in hitting those targets; you mustn't attack your audience, for the most part you have to reassure them that they're on the side of the angels (although occasional good-natured jabs at the audience's complacency keep things lively – but not *too* much).
And any genuine anger you feel must be reined in and channeled into the show, not openly displayed – sublimated into comic invention, because raw anger changes the tone from comedy to rant. Watching performers like Lenny Bruce or Bill Hicks walk that line between inventive invective and rant can be thrilling, invogorating, shocking, hilarious.

Horace's satires display the kind of skill, variety and inventiveness which I'm suggesting good satire requires. They mock the usual suspects but often come at them from unexpected angles. And they do *sometimes* range a bit beyond the usual targets of satire into unexpected subject matter.
And this is because they are describing a society which, although in *some* respects similar to ours (the greedy rich, corrupt politicians, who's shagging who etc) in many other details is significantly different, and therein lies another pleasure in reading Horace – for the details of

ancient social history which pack the poems. Maybe this is all best demonstrated by a brief summary of each of the satires.

Summary of Horace's satires

Book 1

Satire 1 (121 lines)

Why do people work so hard and yet almost everybody is fed up with their job and would swap it in a moment for someone else's? Is it to do with greed? The poem turns into a dialogue with a miser.

Satire 2 (134 lines)

About sexual morality, it seems to say that whereas some rich men prefer sex to have obstacles, such as seducing other men's wives, the author likes to keep sex simple and simply available.

Satire 3 (142 lines)

Numerous details of people being quick to criticise others (even their own friends behind their backs) yet hypocritically asking indulgence for their own flaws. It turns into a general point, which is that the punishment ought to fit the crime, arguing against Stoic doctrine that all crimes should be treated with equal severity. Because:

no-one is free from faults, the best is the man who is hampered by the smallest

Therefore:

Let's have a fair penalty-scale for offences.

Satire 4 (143 lines)

Horace defends his writing of satires by claiming he writes very little, does not claim everyone's attention, does not give public recitations, his writings are for his own improvement and amusement. He makes the significant point that satire is barely poetry at all, but more like rhythmic prose. He has an invented interlocutor accuse him of malice but refutes the accusation, contrasting himself with the kind of creep who gets drunk at a dinner party and abuses all his friends; now *that's* malice. Then making the point that his father tried to teach him about life by pointing out men brought low by various flaws or low behaviour. His poetry is his notes to himself continuing that tradition.

Satire 5 (104 lines)

An amiable description of a journey Horace took from Rome to Brundisium, decorated with incidents and people encountered along the way, not least his good friend Virgil and his mates Plotius and Varius.

Satire 6 (131 lines)

On ambition and snobbery. Horace starts by thanking his patron, Maecenas who, although he came of pretty exalted parents, is free of snobbery. He laments his own position ('only a freedman's son, run down by all as only a freedman's son', l.46). This morphs into an extended tribute to his father who scrimped and saved to send him to the best school. Horace earns very big brownie points in a patriarchal society like Rome's for his exemplary filial devotion. And then onto very attractive praise of the free and simple life he leads, being free of political office or ambition.

Satire 7 (35 lines)

A short piece telling the story of the half-breed Persius and the venomous outlaw Rupilius King. I didn't understand the narrative but I could see that at various points he mocks their confrontation by comparing it to episodes in the *Iliad*, i.e. mock heroic, presumably to some extent echoing Lucilius's mocking of high epic style.

Satire 8 (50 lines)

Spoken in the person of an old wooden statue of Priapus set up in the former common graveyard of the Esquiline Hill. Now, in line with Augustus's policy of beautifying cities, Maecenas has converted the cemetery into pleasure gardens, hence, presumably, the commission to write a speech for the old statue. Half way through it unexpectedly changes into a vivid depiction of the sorcery and witchcraft the statue has been forced to observe late at night as hags tear a black lamb apart with their teeth and trying to summon the spirits of the dead from the resulting trench of blood.

The poem ends with the Priapus triumphantly telling us how, in the middle of their spells, he let rip an enormous fart and sent the witches scurrying off in fear. As usual Horace gives the witches names but, as usual, scholars have been unable to identify them with historical individuals.

The Latin for witch was *saga*.

Satire 9 (78 lines)

Comic anecdote about how he was strolling out one day when he was accosted by an aspiring writer who begs an introduction to Maecenas and won't leave him alone. He drolly comments that a soothsayer ('a Sabine crone') predicted he wouldn't die or any ordinary ailment, but was fated *to be bored to death!*
The pest pesters him for insights about Maecenas who Horace proceeds to describe as a fine example of a wise and moderate man who has made the best of his fate (what else was he going to say?) A friend of Horace's joins them but, realising what's up, playfully refuses to intervene or help him by agreeing to a private conversation.

In the end it appears the pest is due in court and his opponent now spots him and roars, 'why isn't he in court?' It ends with a few obscure lines in which the opponent asks whether Horace will act as a witness (to what? why?) and Horace allows the opponent to touch his ear (why?), hustles the pest off to court, while people come running and shouting from every side. (Why?)

Satire 10 (92 lines)

Horace's fullest statement of his own theory of satire. The poem opens with him answering critics who have obviously objected to his comments in 1.4 about Licinius's lines being 'rough'. What you need for satire is:

- terseness, the opposite of verbosity
- a flexible style, sometimes severely moralising, sometimes light-hearted
- humour is often better at dealing with knotty issues than sharpness (as we saw in many of Cicero's legal speeches)

He creates the kind of puppet interlocutors I mentioned above in order to refute or address their points. A critic praises him for blending Latin with Greek but Horace says that's very outdated now. Catullus used Greek phraseology to introduce sensuality into his poetry. Horace eschews Greek, preferring only Latin. He says Greek is banned in law court, implying a comparison, implying satire is at least as serious as legal pleading.

Horace attributes the founding of satire to Lucinius (line 48) and replies to his critics that if Licinius were alive in Horace's day, he'd have to make a significant effort to slim down his verse and polish it. Then more rules:

- if you hope for a second reading of your work, delete and edit
- don't seek mass adulation, be content with a few, informed, readers

How many readers should the poet aim for? Strikingly, Horace names 14 individuals 'and several others', suggesting that he is writing for an audience of *about 20 people*.
The poem, and so the first book of satires, ends with an instruction to a slave to take this poem away and add it to 'my little volume'.

Book 2

Satire 1 (86 lines)

Dialogue with Trebatius, an imaginary legal expert, giving Horace the opportunity to defend his practice of satire. In the poem Trebatius gives Horace a series of sensible suggestions which the poet comically complains he can't implement.

It starts with Horace saying he is attacked from al sides for either stretching the genre beyond its limit or, alternatively, writing too much. Trebatius advises he take a rest. Not a bad idea, but he can't get to sleep at nights and finds writing soothing. Trebatius advises he try swimming the Tiber three times or souse himself in wine; if he still needs to write, how about a history of the triumphs of Caesar? Even if he does a bad job it won't rouse the anger of his victims as satire does.

Again he namechecks Lucilius as his forebear and a better man than either of them. He asks Jupiter for a quiet life but if anyone crosses him, he'll make them the laughing stock of Rome.

Lucilius stripped away the facade of the great and the good parading through Rome and yet he still enjoyed the friendship of that hero Scipio Africanus and his wise friend, Laelius (the culture heroes who Cicero chose to set some of his philosophical dialogues among).

It ends abruptly as Trebatius warns Horace that if he composes foul verses to the detriment of someone's reputation he can expect to end up in court; to which Horace replies that he composes *fine* verses which a) please Augustus b) only target public menaces.

Satire 2 (136 lines)

A sermon on the virtues of the simple life put into the mouth of Ofellus, a peasant Horace knew in his youth. The basic idea is that a good appetite comes from the body, comes from exercise and bodily need, making redundant the increasingly exquisite choices of Rome's notorious gourmands and gluttons. Horace reserves an insult for 'the youth of Rome', 'always amenable to any perverse suggestion'.

A simple diet needn't be a stingy one, which allows him to lampoon misers who serve musty old food. The benefits of a simple diet include health, avoiding sickly excess, compared to gluttons who come away green from rich meals. When he's ill or as he gets old, the simple man can treat himself, but the glutton has used up all his treats.

A rich man should spend his money to help out the deserving poor or pay to rebuild old temples?

Who will fare better in a crisis, the spoiled man used to luxury, or the simple man with few needs who has prepared his mind and body for adversity?

Interestingly for social historians, Horace has his boyhood farmer friend, Ofellus, recount in some detail how his farm was confiscated as part of Octavius's policy of reassigning property to demobbed soldiers after his victory at Philippis (42 BC). Compare this with the bitter descriptions of land confiscation in Virgil's *Eclogues*.

Satire 3 (326 lines)

By far the longest satire. Horace is spending the holiday of Saturnalia on his Sabine farm when a guest arrives, Damasippus. The poem opens with Damasippus accusing Horace of fleeing the city but failing to write a line i.e. having writer's block. Damasippus goes on to describe how his business as an art dealer went bankrupt and he was standing on a bridge over the Tiber thinking about throwing himself in, when he was buttonholed and saved by a Stoic thinker, Stertinius.

With the zeal of a convert to the faith Damasippus proceeds to deliver a sermon on the text 'everyone is mad except the sage', asserting that loads of human vices, including greed, ambition, self indulgence and superstition, are all forms of madness.

Being so long exposes the fact, less obvious in shorter poems, that it's often hard to make out what's meant to be going on, and difficult to follow the presumed flow of thought or narrative. Stories come in unexpectedly, with characters we don't fully know, obscure references being made we know not why. Presumably his audience found that the logic of the arguments flowed smoothly and sweetly, but I found this one impossible to follow.

It's the biggest problem with ancient literature, that the reader has a good rough feel for what the author is on about but is often perplexed by an apparent lack of logical flow and ends up reading a series of sentences, sometimes themselves very obscure, which don't really seem to explain or convey anything. There are passages where you just zone out because you've lost the thread of the grammar or argument.

Satire 4 (95 lines)

Horace is given a lecture on gastronomy by Catius who has just attended a lecture on the subject. There's no satire or attitude, the entire thing is a very detailed list of which type of food, how to store and cook and serve it; it's like a guidebook and, as such, sort of interesting social history. Most of the actual cooking, like the instructions for preparing the best oil for cooking, sound complex and pointless. It includes the kind of rubbish pseudoscience the ancients delighted in (Aristotle believed that round eggs were male and long eggs were female etc).

Satire 5 (110 lines)

A satire on how to get money, in an interestingly imaginative setting. This is a dramatic dialogue set in hell between Ulysses who has gone down to hell, as described in Homer's *Odyssey*, book 11, and the wise blind seer Tiresias who he meets there.
Ulysses is afraid of returning home penniless, so Tiresias gives him advice on how to pick up money. The satire lies in the cynical worldliness of the advice. Thus: if you're given a thrush or a similar present, present it to the household of the nearest rich, old man. Apples and other fruit from your farm, give to a rich man first. He may be a crook or a murder, doesn't matter; butter him up.

Fish around for old men's wills. If a law case comes up volunteer to help any party who is old and childless, regardless of the rights or wrongs. Tell the old geezer to go home while you manage his affairs for him. If you do well other fish will swim into your net.

Or find a man with a delicate, sickly son and worm your way into his affections, with the hope that the sickly son dies and you inherit. If the old guy offers you a look at the will, blithely wave it away as if of no interest. If he writes terrible poetry, praise it. If he is an old lecher, don't hesitate to hand over your wife. And so on, all painting a picture of the untrammelled greed and corruption of contemporary Rome.

But what if Penelope is pure and moral? Offer her a share of the takings, she'll agree to prostitute herself quickly enough. Even after the old boy's died and you've inherited some of the fortune, make a show of building a decent tomb, if other heirs need financial help offer it: the more you plough, the more you sow.

Satire 6 (117 lines)

Written in 31 BC 3 or 4 years after Maecenas removed all Horace's money worries by presenting him with a farm in Sabine country. It is a straightforward comparison of the advantages of country life versus the stress of the city, much imitated by later authors.

There's some reference to the hurly burly of business, of being accosted in the street and the forum and asked for this or that favour. But a lot of it revolves around his friendship with Maecenas, endless petitioners asking his opinion about this or that state policy, because they know he is friends with Maecenas, who was Octavian's deputy on his absence during the final war against Antony. When Horace claims to know nothing, the petitioners are upset or angry, convinced he does but is refusing to share.

How much nicer to be at his country place, to enjoy a simple but filling dinner, and then interesting, unrancorous conversation with good friends. Unexpectedly, the poem ends with a retelling of the proverbial story of the town mouse and the country mouse.

Satire 7 (118 lines)

Another sermon on a Stoic theme. As with some of the others, I found the exact structure confusing. I think Horace's slave, Davus, delivers an extended sermon invoking Stoic doctrine to assert that Horace is just as a much a 'slave' to his passions and habits as Davus is an actual, literal slave.

Satire 8 (95 lines)

Another dialogue which goes straight into an ongoing conversation, as the poet tells his friend Fundanius that he knows he was at a dinner party given by the arriviste, Nasidienus Rufus, for Maecenas and some others last night: what was it like?

Fundanius gives a wry description of the over-fussy meal, with its multiple courses of ridiculous luxury, plus an absurd over-selection of wines. Two of the guests decide to wind the host up by drinking vast mugs full of the very expensive wine and the pretentious fish dish has only just been served when the awning, presumably over the whole party, collapsed, causing a great cloud of black pepper. Nobody is harmed, the awning is fixed. The host wants to abandon it but Nomentanus persuaded their host to continue and the meal proceeds

The guests bend to each others' ears and whisper gossip and criticism. I feel sorry for Nasidienus with such ungrateful badly-mannered guests. Then the extravagant culinary *pièces-de-resistance* are brought in, namely crane, goose liver and hare's legs – but the narrator ends the poem by saying the guests got their own back on the arriviste by leaving without touching a thing. Pretty mean but vivid indication of the *snobbery* which was central to life in Rome's educated classes.