Roman Satire and Us
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The Nature of Satire:-- The one great original contribution of Rome to World Civilization was its remarkable body of satiric literature. No ancient writings have been more meticulously conned and commentated. For centuries they were the standard fare of the liberal education. Why have we lost them so completely today when we need them? We shall see.

J. Dwight Duff, supposedly the foremost authority on Roman Satire, from whom I took the course in the subject many years ago, derived the word satire from the old Roman satura lanx, a mixed salad with everything in it. The satirist, so to speak, let down his hair and spoke the first thing that came to mind. This exonerates me from the necessity of giving a neat and well-organized talk; for the spirit of satire requires that it be delivered in the informal style of the great American satirist Will Rogers. I make so bold as to introduce a subject that has not always proved popular among the elite, because I have already tested the waters in no less respectable a place than West Palm Beach, Florida Stake, and no one took offense. I will let you decide how relevant it is to our times; there is will be no time to draw parallels with our own day, though one finds the temptation often overpowering. But I hardly think that will be necessary when you hear what these men have to say.

Much of world literature deals with the foibles of humanity, to be sure, but what distinguishes satire from prophetic warnings,

moral tirades, and carping criticism, is that it has to be fun. I shall confine myself to five of the greatest satirists, Horace, Persius, Petronius, Juvenal, and Martial. Horace, who lived both under the Republic and the Empire enjoyed the friendship of Augustus and patronage of Maecenas, so he had less to be peeved about than the others, and has a lighter touch. In his First Satire he says that though the subject of his writings is not to be treated lightly, yet ridentem dicere verum quid vetat? What is wrong with having a good laugh while you tell the truth? He goes on to compare his writings to sugar coating on cookies for children. Lucilius, his predecessor, he says was witty but undisciplined and too rough in his indignation. The question is, "Is this a authentic literary form, suspectum genus hoc scribendi?" (77f). The satirist, necessarily spoofing important people, always has to watch his step. "Some say you like hurting people and do it deliberately," says Horace, "but I only make fun of the obviously ridiculous," which is a very different from the back biting, dirty little digs, and scandal that goes around at every dinner party, aimed at everybody but the host--until he leaves the room. (192). He says humor gets over your point better than gravity--the Old Comedy knew a thing or two.

The business of satirists, writes G.G. Ramsay citing Persius, is to "rebuke skillfully and pleasantly, in everyday language, devices and foibles of common life." Pleasant, to be sure, but Juvenal found that "There are lots of things you can't say if you are wearing a cheap coat." (V, 120). Certainly Petronius found

out the danger of stepping on toes--it cost him his life. Persius, to protect himself, clothed his jibes in learned and convoluted language that still puzzles the dons. Martial deflected the lightning with smart obscenities. "My page is naughty," he wrote, "but my life is upright." (lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba. I, iv, 8). He admits selling soft porn: "Luxury and license are never missing from my verse." (At mea luxuria pagina nulla vacat. III, lxix).

Reciting in Unison:-- Though living from the time of the Republic with its comedy of manners, through the reign of Domitian, our five satirists all describe the same Rome, all list the same vices in the same order of prominence (with money and the legal profession at the head of the parade), all feel that improvement is out of reach and prophesy an end that really arrived. The subject of the decline and fall of Rome has been thrust before the modern reader by the satirists, who describe in minute detail what brought it about.

Horace starts out by moralizing on the ant's wise seasonal use of her savings, "But with you it must all be one way: neither the heat of summer nor winter's cold, nor fire, nor the sea, nor steel can keep you from trying to make money--nothing will stop you until you are in the Forbes 400--or more literally "until you are richer than anybody else in sight." (I, 25ff). He cites the perennial argument: At suave est ex magno tollere acervo: Nothing is more satisfying than a substantial bank account. (I, 151). (Right out

of Malcom Forbes himself: "Nothing gives you freedom like bucks in the bank.") They just can't seem to get it, says Horace: "est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines..." There is a limit to things. You must control yourself and not go too far overboard on one side or the other. (I, 106). Because, as all the satirists remind us, rich Romans fall into two classes only, misers and wasters.

It is surprising to hear Horace, the mildest and kindest of poets, rip into the vices of the day: "All things--character, reputation, achievement (virtus, fama, decus) are in thrall to the allurements of wealth; the man who gets filthy rich is by that alone illustrious, courageous, and righteous. Also, he is wise, a king, and anything else he wants to be. And all because he is very rich. "Make money! money!" says Horace, "honestly if you can, but however you do it get money!" (Ep. I,i,65f). "Family and character, unless you have money to go with them, are only so much beach litter (alga, Serm. II,v,8).

It is the same with Persius. One prays publicly for mens bona, fama, fides..., for good sense, a well-earned reputation, and a life of honor, but our private prayers are, "God hasten the death of my rich uncle....grant that I hit upon a treasure somewhere....if I could only get rid of that lousy ward of mine..." (II, 7ff). His concluding advice to the Romans: "Go, sell your soul for lucre; buy and sell; ransack expertly every corner of the earth; let no one else outstrip you...double your investment...then triple and quadruple it, make a ten-fold increase!" And he

announces happily that the market is booming because of a great victory in Germany. (VI, 75f and 42ff).

Petronius has his hero Trimalchio sum up his countless successful business deals and real estate killings with the wise injunction: "Believe me, if you have a dollar you are worth a dollar. Get it and you will get more." credite mihi: Assem habeas; assem valeas; habes, habeberis. (Sec. 77). With W.D.H. Rouse (way back in 1913), let us paraphrase Petronius' conclusion which tells us how Rome had conquered the known world but still that was not enough. "The merchants' fleets went out and if there was still any hidden bay or shore that promised a profit, they declared that place Rome's enemy, and brought in the Marines (lit. the sorrows of war), and so the quest for wealth went on. There was no more happiness in familiar things, ordinary pleasures were beneath notice, the military went after everything. Africa, China, and Arabia all curse the plundering Romans. (199). He deplores the impoverishment and destruction as the forests are searched for beasts for the bloody shows...the tiger is wheeled in and a gilded palace to drink the blood of men while the crowd roars."

A persistent and unvarying theme of the satirists is the call for a simple, frugal, sensible life. That would have spared the environment. It is surprising to us to find real concern for the environment 2000 years ago, the wildlife and the forests were disappearing, much of it never to return. We ask how bad was it, weren't they overreacting? They were not. Vast regions of the world laid bare in those days, like the Karst lands of the

Dalmatian coast and much of Africa, have remain desert to this day. Is there any hope at all of turning the tide of decadence? asks Petronius. Not much hope: "The youth of Rome...is sick from the wealth their own hands have heaped up. See, everywhere they squander their loot, and the mad use of wealth brings their destruction....they have turned creation upside down and despoiled the earth." Then he notes the strip-mining and deforesting that have devastated large parts of the world (135), as elsewhere he laments (with Rachael Carsons) that "all the birds are now gone from the waters of Phasis; the shore is silent, only the empty wind sighs through the barren branches." (119). Even the sacred public lands and parks are rented out and overbuilt. (III, 10ff). Do you think that it is all very well to talk big about doing the right thing while you chop down even the sacred groves for commercial lumber? asks Horace. (Hor. Ep. I,vi,32, or Fairclough's note). He ends with the same dire prophecy that the others make. Fortuna speaks: "I hate all the gifts that I have made to lofty Rome, and I am even angry at my own blessings. The god that raised up those high palaces shall surely destroy them, and it will be my delight to burn them all and feed my lust with blood...the whole world is rent in pieces and dragged down to Stygian shades." (121). We can learn a lesson from these old Romans, sensitive to social injustice but also to man's inhumanity to nature.

The disturbing thing is how right they were. Rome did fall as we know, and it fell more than once. We see in Horace and Persius how the same corruption that overthrew the Republic is going to

destroy the Empire.

Juvenal is stung by the ascendancy of inferior people who are nothing but rich yet for that reason alone must be deferred to in all things. A freeborn Roman he says must step aside in the street for the slave of a rich man (III, 130). The first question asked in court about a witness is how rich is he? How many slaves? How many acres? "A man's word is exactly as good as the size of his bank account." (III, 143). Actually, the worst burden of the poor is the contempt in which they are held. Even Horace, the friend of Mycaenas and Augùstus, suffered sorely from the snobs who "gnawed at him for his impoverished origin. The sons of pimps born in a brothel enjoy the luxury seats at the games, the sons of gladiators and trainers sitting beside them (III, 153). Romans of modest means should have emigrated in a body long ago, he says. (160). For such life in Rome gets harder every day; they must pay huge rents for miserable holes, food costs out of sight; everyone pays too much for clothes but is expected to dress smartly (you have to meet expenses by robbing the next guy)--<u>hic vivimus ambitiosa paupertate omnes</u>. <u>Quid te moror?</u> <u>Omnia Romae cum prettio</u>. "So all of us have to live in genteel poverty. What else is there to say? At Rome everything is for sale." "Long live Pacuvius!" he cries. "May he live as long as Nestor! Let him steal, let him grab as much as Nero and pile up mountains of gold while no one loves him and he cares for no one." (XII, 48).

Martial has much to say, as do all the satirists, on the trials of those who dance attendance on the rich. The practice

went back to the vote getting campaigns in the Republic. We hear of the trials of the client, shivering at dawn to wait on the great man, following his sedan-chair through the mud, staying up after midnight at the baths. In return he can expect to answer the summons to a feast where while the host and his personal guests gorge themselves on gourmet delights and discuss the culinary art in great detail, the poor client has to take skimpy leftovers from yesterday's feast, and get a sharp rebuke from a slave if he takes the liberty of helping himself to some of the better bread. Martial has put up with some 30 years of such foolishness; people will take anything from the rich, he says, who think they have it all coming to them. If you play up to the rich, he says, they will always let you down; they don't care about you at all no matter how subservient you are to them. (XI, 20).

Juvenal, Our Guide:-- We could go through all the satirists showing that each in his own way tells the same story describing the same scenes, often in almost identical phrases. Let us be content with Juvenal who has given us the richest fare. He starts out with the best reason for writing satire: "How can you keep from writing satire when you look around you in this wicked city?" This echoes Persius, who says in his opening line "I can't hold back. I simply must laugh to relieve the tension!" (1) Juvenal resumes, standing on a street corner as he views the passers by: Here comes Matho the lawyer, his huge bulk reclining in his magnificent litter [stretch-limousine], accompanied by his client,

an informer who betrayed his best friend [the money to be split between him, the lawyer, and the officials]. Elsewhere he tells us how lawyers must put on such a gross display of riches in order to attract wealthy clients; you could hire Cicero himself for ten bucks unless he had a huge gem on his finger. (140). So any aspiring attorney must have his rented Tyrian robe and his hired ring. (67). Martial's friends told him to take up law because there was good money in it; but most lawyers starved because there were too many of them. We are told how the ambitious father rouses his son up at dawn on the first day of school to get him off to an early start as a lawyer. The really successful lawyers are the horrors like Matho who live in a world of prime-time glitz.

Juvenal, from his downtown vantage-point watching the passing show in the street, sees people being pushed around by the strong-arm goons of a character who cheated and abused his ward to walk off with his money. And here comes another who was convicted and banished for plundering a province where he was governor; he now lives like a prince on his island, enjoying the loot he stole. Here is one who took cash from his wife's lover to look the other way. Carefree youth wasting fortunes on horses and chariots dash madly around endangering everybody. You can see it everywhere: here is one looking as rich as Maecenas, and all he had to do was change the seal on a document. There is a lady of high society from whom young women can learn effective ways of poisoning their husbands. Of course, everybody praises goodness and talks about morality, but goodness can beg in the streets--it is crime that

delivers the goods.

"Was there ever a time when vice flourished as it does today? When was greed more gross and universal, or gambling more a way of life? Men bring whole bank accounts to the casino...lose 5,000 sesterces on a throw, and then deny a shivering slave a rag for his back." A man builds himself seven villas and eats seven course dinners alone while giving scraps of food only to the deserving poor who have proven themselves worthy by proper subservience to him. While there are Romans who still keep the old frugal ways, a streetwise ex-slave coming from an Oriental slum quickly learns the ropes at Rome and by a succession of strictly illegal deals acquires a chain of stores or apartment houses and gets so rich that high officials step aside to make way for him in the street--money wins every time! Our hearts are set on riches, money is the holy of holies itself; we pay pious lip-service to Peace, Victory, Honor, Virtue, Home, Apple Pie, etc., while the storks that nest on the temples laugh themselves silly at our antics. Horace notes the feverish pace of business in the Central Arcade, to him it is a form of madness, with men's minds unbalanced by greed. (II,iii,64). Persius' famous first line catches the spirit: "<u>O curas hominum, o quantum est in rebus inane</u>!" Freely translated, "What a rat-race and how stupid it all is!"

And Juvenal goes on denouncing the cheap, grudging meanness of the rich (117). In the Second Book he talks about his special peeve the lawyers and the luxurious living, lady wrestlers, perfumes and dresses, sex and the cult of the body.

In the Third Book we see the Rome of the developers, the many-storied, flimsy, jerry-built tenements, crammed with people forever at risk from fire and collapsing structures while paying exorbitant rents. The poor getting ever poorer live in the parks and woods--hobo camps. The traffic is frightful. Nobody gives way to anybody else in the street; you get banged up by elbows, litter-poles and porters, your legs are filthy with dirt, trampled and kicked by the iron boots of the military (III,240). Rome is a mix of smog, noise, and money for Horace (fumum et opes strepitumque, Carm. XXIX, 123). A huge pile of lumber or marble tips over in the street when an axle breaks and nobody bothers to identify the mashed bodies. (255). It is even worse at night when the really big wagons roll through the streets with the drivers yelling at each other and traffic tie-ups making sleep impossible. Nobody but the rich can find a place where sleep is possible; in fact, the lives of most Romans are shortened by lack of sleep. (III,332). In the evenings the garbage, broken pots and dishes are thrown out of the windows (III,268); anyone would be insane to go out to dinner without making his will (273). The best that can happen is that they only dump their sewage on your head (268). He gives us the picture of the rich man going to a dinner party carried high over the heads of the mob which makes way for his litter as he lies sleeping or reading on the cushions. (240). You can be almost sure of getting mugged unless you happen to be rich enough for servants with torches and lamps. (278). You can almost count on getting beat up for fun, and there is absolutely nothing you can do

about it if you are poor. (298). But if you stay at home and lock everything up tight, you are still not safe. The gangs from the other side of the river will break in without any trouble. The police are helpless in the city even though jail is big business and the manufacture of chains is a major industry...and to think that there was a time long ago when Rome had only one prison! (302).

Con-men and lawyers "that can make black white," grab fat government contracts for rivers, harbors, temples, sewer cleaning, disposal of corpses, plumbing for new villas, and licenses for auctioning slaves and costly furnishings. Mountebanks and adventurers end up so rich that they can stage public games at their own expense for the whole city. Whatever is going on, always protinus ad censum, de moribus ultima fiet: "The first question you ask about a man is how much he has got, the last is about his character." (140). Virtus post nummos, as Horace sums it up--Virtus, as we all know, is the sum of all noble qualities; but it must always yield place to money.

Another famous passage: "What shall I do in Rome? (The same question Persius asks for a friend who is thinking of moving to Rome from the provinces, as also Martial for his good friend Fabianus), I am not good at lying...I know no astrology, have no connection with characters I could hire out as hit-men. The foreigners come and promptly set themselves up as professionals, inventing phony titles and degrees for themselves, running massage parlors, etc. Big money in it all. As for Fabianus, Persius'

friend, he is a misfit because he can't pander or flatter, or serve papers, or play up to old ladies, or pretend to have an inside at the palace, nor can he take pay for applauding some important entertainer or orator--how then is he to live? (Mart. IV, v). Everyone wants to move out of Rome. There is no place for me in the town; you can't get a decent wage and the pay gets less everyday...so I am saving up to get away from here. (Mart. IV, 21).

The poor must pay cash for everything. If you lose your money or your friends get richer than you are, they will cut you off in the street; they are no help! There is a basic rule for getting things done in business--you bribe the slaves to get access to the masters and then you bribe the masters." Here is the golden rule: "To him that hath will be given."

Book IV:-- From a village in the Nile Delta comes a curly-headed rascal, just such a one as Trimalchio was when he practiced as a pimp in an Asia Minor city before he was freed by his master's will which gave him enough money to go to Rome and enter business. "Vicious, depraved, diseased, pathologically lustful," but admired and respected, free to do as he pleases, because he is very very rich. This is an important point and often occurs in the satires. The richest and most obnoxious characters come as poor freed slaves to Rome and end up as multi-millionaires thanks to a tradition that holds property sacred and government that puts no restraint on corrupt business if it is successful and cooperative. It is taken

for granted that everyone is on the take, where there is no limit on free enterprise and absolute privatization, and by simple dishonesty one can become fabulously rich. Nothing could be further from the idea that "bread and circuses" (the famous quote is from Juvenal) are part of social planning; they are the cheap and easy way by which the owners of the world from the Emperor on down buy popularity and immunity from public criticism--the bonanza is not for the unemployed crowds but for the super-rich donors. "The free-born Roman now sells his vote for money," writes Petronius, "the people are corrupt, the Senate is corrupt, they buy their elections, their venerable authority lies helpless, corrupted by money (auro corrupta iacebat, 119). Public Relations, a product of the prevailing rhetorical education, has paralyzed clear thinking and debate with the techniques of persuasion "which ate swiftly into the heart of the Latin language and thought." (W.H.D. Rouse).

Book V:-- The shares at a banquet are proportioned exactly according to the wealth of the guests. The high-priced dishes are for the rich friends who are expected to return the favor: "Money, money! It's his money, not you he is calling Brother." To supply such feasts put a great tax on the environment. The seas have been fished out; there are too many nets and they are too big, the fish can't attain to a full size. The Tiber fish are all infected from the sewers--those sewers of which Rome was as proud as Los Angles is of its freeways.

Book VI:-- Once we were an open society, almost nothing was ever stolen. Step by step justice left the earth for heaven. Chastity went with her. Theatre people are utterly promiscuous, they shock even the Alexandrians! And the richest are the kinkiest. The common thing is for married people to hate each other at least 14 hours a day. "Intolerabilius nihil est quam femina dives." (460). Nothing is more insufferable than a rich woman. Their days are spent in getting massages, in aerobics, in a surprising variety of athletic workouts and baths, both milk and mud. They are totally concerned with their appearance, and hard as nails, hugely overusing cosmetics, outrageous in their hairdos and their piles of jewels. A curl is out of place--the maid must be flogged. Some grand ladies employed professional torturers on a yearly basis (480). Bullying everybody in her brash, intimidating voice, spending money furiously, loathing her husband, his friends and his slaves, patronizing the Egyptian and Chaldean quacks and astrologers, the Roman matron goes her way, leaving a trail of tears behind her, pleased with her impressive display of power. The kidnapping of children for sale is a stock theme of the Greek and Roman plays; child abuse is universal and child prostitution is big business (one of the Fortune 500 engages in it).

Book VII:-- This book has been thus summarized by R. Humphries: "Now we suffer the evils of long peace. Luxury hatches terrors worse than the wars, the price of conquering the world. Every crime is here, and every lust, as they have been since the day when

Roman poverty perished...Dirty money it was that first imported to us foreign vice and our times broke down with over- indulgence." Vice is a very big business. The centers of culture are the wrestling school, the jail, and the gym. The police are everywhere but what good does it do? Here comes the famous line, Quis custodet custodes? Who will keep an eye on the cops? Charioteers and mimes have huge incomes but good artists are expected to perform for nothing. The Roman spends 10 times more on his plumbing than on his children's education. There is no discipline in the schools, pupils regularly beat up their teachers. The teachers are held entirely responsible for molding pupils' minds-- "that is what you are paid for," say the parents. But to collect that pittance the teacher usually has to get a court order. "A jockey gets more for a race than you get in a year." (sec. 135, and 178ff).

VIII:-- The rich produce absolutely nothing; the VIP always leans on others; while we plunder the world we try to rid the seas of pirates, and our own inner-cities fall into ruins. The big men form big corporations for systematic plunder of the Empire. Our youth run wild both over-indulged and neglected. We have made enemies of all the world. Farm boys, grabbed for military service, are treated like convicts, while the officers, men of wealth and high family, have ships loaded with loot from the war and quietly forward it on to Rome, addressed to their own estates and villas and auctioneers. Today we have pretty well cleaned out the beaten

and weakened lands; it is our allies that we plunder now. (104). We break sticks over their bloody backs in our greed, gleefully blunting our axes and overworking our executioners. All that to support an aristocracy that signs forged documents and sneaks out at night to indulge in wholesale adultery.

IX. Wickedness never was happiness:-- You had better not know too much, the rich are always wary of blackmail. But slaves know how to get their revenge: it is easy to spread domestic gossip around the town and make real trouble for people. In short, no one is secure in this society. (113ff). Everyone in fact is struggling to build security for the future, dreading old age more than death itself. (XI, 45).

X.:-- But all this is in vain. We are always asking for things that will ruin us, especially money. Too much money can excite the greed of people higher up than yourself, and then you are in trouble, in fact your are helpless. It was the greedy Tigelinus, jealous of Petronius, who had the Emperor order his death. (4). And here a disturbing note, for Juvenal assures us, that you were safe walking abroad if you didn't carry any money with you; would that we could say the same in our big cities today! "You will notice that the first thing everybody prays for in the temples is riches, for increase on their investments and a big killing in the market." (23). Democrates laughed at it all and Heraclitus wept--both of them were right. What if they had to look at what we do?

He then describes the outrageous pomp and nonsense of the parades and games. (30).

There are no more real elections, money now takes care of all that, so nobody cares, and the once sovereign people give serious consideration to only two things panem et circenses. (72). As we have already noted, this arrangement permitted big money unchallenged rule. Everybody wants power but woe to the one who gets it. "Sine caede et vulnere pauci descendunt reges"--few rulers are deposed without slaughter and bloodshed. (110). (This is Mosiah's lesson to his sons.) But high or low everybody asks only one question, "What's in it for me?" (141). We are a pack of fools, is there anything to live for at all? The answer is another famous line: "Pray for a sound mind in a sound body, and a spirit unafraid of death." And here we come to the heart of the matter. All through the Satires the people are haunted by the vision of death; the writers constantly harp on it; it is actually the main theme of Trimalchio's banquet which climaxes in a rehearsal of his own funeral. And this is the explanation for the carbon copy likeness not only among the witty mockers of the Roman way, who borrow freely from each other, but also between them and the satirists of all other civilizations including our own.

For in the end, it is one force that drives this mad scramble--the constant awareness of the lictor who stands at our backs as he stood behind the triumphant Emperor in his chariot to remind him every minute that the iceman cometh, or words to that effect. Everybody is scared stiff by the summa dies et inelictable tempus,

that last day and hour that none can escape. This it is that makes them grasp desperately at all the fun they can get in the short time they can get it. Specifically what they want is what we want, the four fatal gifts of Nephi: power, gain, popularity, and the pleasures of the flesh (2 Nep 22:23). There is only one cure to this fatal declension, and it is the Gospel.

XI.:-- Everybody is a gourmet, food and diet are on our minds all the time culminating in the art of the banquet. A full description of various sumptuous suppers with detailed menus is supplied by the satirists. This is a natural object of satire, because of the absurd conjunction of overpowering elegance with hoggish appetites. You can only eat so much, but that is frustrating if there is no limit to what your money can give you. With distended waistlines they resort in a body from the table to the hot bath and the gym to work off the first seven courses, or to the place where they can throw it all up. Then it's back to the dining room again where the dishes grow progressively more costly as the festivities proceed, with astonishing displays of gastronomical erudition among the competing guests, and a vast swilling of and discoursing on the rarest and costliest possible wines.

Restless and unhappy (the subject of Horace's First Satire), they are always running away from themselves to famous resorts and watering spots to take the cure, and this causes them only one regret--that they have to miss the perpetual shows and spectator

sports that only Rome can provide. Of course there is no worse disaster than when our side loses at the races or in the gladiatorial contests (50); for the games, shows, and adultery are the chiefest joys of life in Rome. (175).

XII.:-- The twelfth book on the Roman practice of legacy hunting which goes back to the Republic. You ingratiated yourself to an important person, who was competing with other important persons for public office, by publicly joining his following and sharing his hospitality. Petronius ends his novel in the town Crontona where nobody does anything else but look for legacies. Everyone is a businessman, and you are either a prey or a victim (Isa. 59:15). It is "like a plague-city with nothing but carcasses to be devoured and crows to devour them." (115). It is right out of Swift or vice versa.

XIII.:-- This is a prophetic section. Theft, deception, the acquisition of money by perfidy and fraud or violent crime is the regular order of business in Rome. There are very few good men left. We are living in the ninth age of the world, and it is baser than the iron age. "There is no name for our kind of corruption. We call out for religion, reform, a moral awakening--but aren't you just as much interested in other people's money as the next man? Religion has become quite a show but it has lost its meaning...if somebody returns something entrusted to him, it is considered a nine-day's wonder. Today luck is everything. It is we who made

Fortuna a goddess. But what about religion?

In the famous Fifth Satire, Horace tells us how he and his fellow travelers to Brindisi, dignified and respected Romans, all have a good laugh at a legend associated with an ancient shrine. "Let the Jew Apella believe such things," he says, "I don't." Then he cites Lucretius' atheistic masterpiece, declaring that we think of the gods as safely tucked away in their heaven, "and when nature does odd things it is not because peevish deities are sending us something from upstairs. Risusque iocosque are his words--religion is nothing but a joke. (I, 597ff). His own philosophy is summed up in the famous Nil admirari Epistle (I,vi): The only way to be happy is simply not to take anything too seriously; don't let the signs in the heavens or happenings on earth get to you; just enjoy yourself today and let the rest go. "Nobody believes that the gods are real anymore, Trimalchio's guests agree; nobody fasts, no one gives a straw for religion, and we are paying for it." (44). Well, things just happen. Juvenal's own reflection is that the punishment from heaven is slow, perhaps it won't ever get to me, and, after all, people get away with all sorts of things, so why worry about that side of it?" (100). As to repentance, the only true tears shed are when somebody loses money.

The best place to see what is going on is the law courts where anything goes. A contract is read over ten times, the litigant admits that it is his handwriting and his seal, but he gets it thrown out without any trouble. (135). This passion for litigation is mostly due to the personal satisfaction for revenge

(175), the delight of small mean minds. (189). Is there any hope of a change? Juvenal gives the same answer as the other satirists: It is all a one-way street: "When did a hardened brow ever recover the ability to blush? Who has ever been known to stop at one crime?" (204 f). And so he goes on to the next and fiercest discourse.

XIV.:-- All the young see anywhere is bad examples, especially among their parents. Educators can do nothing in such a condition. He gives examples of what goes on at home--the cruelty to slaves, the scandalous intrigues and affairs of parents (15ff). The house must be spotless when you are expecting an important guest, but you take no pains to keep your children free of real dirt. (59f). He talks about the fashionable suburbs with fabulously expensive houses, new developments springing up all along the coast, the Tiburine Heights, "and now on the Praenestene Hills..." homes surpassing the temples in cost and display. (86ff).

The youth spontaneously take to every vice but one--you must go out of your way to teach them real dedication to making money. A father holds up a billionaire miser as an example of sobriety and virtue (the lunch in the brown paper bag). He teaches his boy that no poor person is ever happy, and he instructs him in the mean little tricks and stratagems of business as his hunger for money grows. He must not think of spending a dollar for anything, no matter how necessary, unless it will bring him more dollars. As your wealth grows, your appetite for it increases; you buy up and

expand in all directions, real estate being the main source of great fortunes. If the owner of a field adjacent to your own lands refuses to sell it to you, you quietly turn your cattle into it in the dead of night and ruin it--then he has to sell. That is the way to do business. (107ff). You feel you can't be happy unless you have added more fields to your lands than the whole Roman populace once owned. (159). Trimalchio was out to buy the last lands between his Italian estates and the south end of Sicily, so, he says, that he can have the satisfaction of traveling from Cumae to Africa without ever leaving his own property.

And what is the cause of all this crime? Nothing brings poison and the assassin's knife into action more readily than the uncontrollable appetite for obscene wealth. (173). And whoever wants it must have it <u>now</u>. (188). You can gage the extent to which one is involved in this folly simply by studying people's "costly apparel."

And all this explains why a father must force his son to study law. (180ff). Never be fastidious, my boy, the smell of money is good no matter where it comes from. Memorize this: "Nobody is going to ask where you got it, the only thing that matters is that you have it"--<u>unde habeas quaerit nemo, sed oportet habere</u>." This is what old nurses teach little boys and what little girls are taught before their ABC's." (207). By the time your son begins to shave, he will know how to give false testimony in court and cheerfully perjure himself for the proper sum, solemnly swearing to heaven as he does it. (217). The wealth that people used to work

very hard for, is now got by easy and effective techniques (nullus enim magni scelus labor--you don't have to work hard for really big money). Naturally, you will deny that you ever taught such lessons to the young; but anyone who inculcates reverence for wealth is inevitably sewing seeds of avarice. (223). When you teach a boy that it is improvident to give money to a friend or to ease the poverty of a relative, you are teaching him to cheat or do anything at all to get money...don't worry, when the time comes your kid will be just as willing to rid you quietly of yours, saving himself the trouble of having to work as hard for it as you did--you taught him all that. (235). So we see that in Rome as in Zarahemla you can be sure mischief is afoot when the people "set their hearts on riches."

Of course, security is a major concern, making the rich prisoners of their wealth. Well, they can afford it, but they can't afford to do without it for a minute. (303). We wouldn't have these worries if we had any sense--it is we who have made a goddess of Fortune. (314). How much is enough? he asks, and says with Paul, "having food and raiment let us be therewith content." (316). All the satirists emphasized this point, that there is no need for all this ghastly excess.

XV.:-- Even in Homer's day the race was in decline. Today the earth brings forth nothing but vicious and mean-spirited men. Therefore, any god must look on it with scorn and disgust. (1ff). And how should it be? Nature has endowed the human race with kind

hearts and generous natures; it has given us tears to sympathize with friends in pain and with the poor. That is the best and proper part of our nature. (133). Who is worthy to experience true blessedness (of the mysteries) if he does not consider the suffering of others as his own? It is that which separates us from the beasts. (140). But today vipers get along better together; one beast does not attack another of its own species. When did the stronger lion ever kill the weaker? But we prey on each other first of all, and then on the rest of creation.

XVI.:-- This last incomplete chapter is dedicated to the perks and benefits of the military. In every situation they have it their own way. A soldier cannot be tried in a civil court and he considers the civilian his enemy. That determined the fate of Rome. Forty-three emperors were deposed by the soldiers in favor of a rival who promised them higher pay.

In 1913 W.H.D. Rouse sums up the message of the Satyricon: "These characters are one and all the product of a period in history when the primary aim of the ripest civilization in the world was money-making." Trimalchio, his hero, "differs from minor personages who crowd his dining-room only in the enormous success with which he plied the arts of prostitution, seduction, flattery, and fraud." In this "the most vivid picture extant in classical literature of the life of the small town, the pulsating energy of greed is felt everywhere. Men become millionaires with American rapidity, and enjoy that condition as hazardously in Cumae as in

Wall Street." (p.xiv).

At the banquet "nearly all warm themselves with this fatuous talk of riches and drink and deaths, but one man...a shrewd Asiatic immigrant like Trimalchio himself...blows cold on their sentimentality with his searching talk of bread prices in Cumae, rising pitilessly through drought and the operation of a ring of bakers in league with the officials. He tells in brilliant phrases of the starving poor, of the decay of religion, of lost pride in using good flour (in the baking business). Then Echion, an old-clothes dealer, overwhelms him with a flood of suburban chatter about games [the spectator sports that absorbed everybody], and children and chickens, and the material blessing of education. But Ganymede is the sole character of Petronius' novel who brings to light the reverse side of Trimalchio's splendor. A system of local government which showers honors upon vulgarity, and allows Trimalchio his bath, his improved sanitation, his host of servants, his house with so many doors that no guest may go in and out by the same one, is invariably true to type in leaving poor men to die in the street. The very existence of poverty becomes dim for Trimalchio, half unreal, so that he can jest at Agamemnon for taking as the theme of a set speech the eternal quarrel of rich and poor." But between the rich and poor there is one link, one activity they have in common--"Between rich and poor in Cumae the one link is commerce in vice." It is sex that pays off.

We have not had the time nor the need to draw modern parallels to the Roman situation. You can find them scattered throughout the

weekly news in rich abundance. [As I wrote this, behold a news item. Liz Taylor married for the eighth time on Michael Jackson's ranch in a simple ceremony costing $2,200,000. This of course is absurd but as a bid for respect and awe, it shows where our values lie.]

At the present time America is producing a spate of bitter satirical novels. The latest of these is Brett Easton Ellis' American Psycho. "We hate the author for saying it," a British reviewer writes (Washington Post, May 6-12, 1991), "In American Psycho nobody cares. Slaughtered bodies lie undiscovered. The city has fallen apart. Nobody takes much notice. The police have other things to do. Those who are killed don't rate--they are the powerless, the poor, the wretched, the sick in mind, the seller of flesh for money: their own and other people's. The tides of the city wash over them; erase their traces. The landlady, seeing her blood-spattered walls, is vexed because she needs to re-let quick. She doesn't want a fuss, she wants her rent....Money, restaurants, designer labels, smart clothes, things. That's all we've got, we smart young things, to cheer us up, and nobody is shocked. Nothing shocks. We are stunned; we are brutalized."

Come with me to rural Manti, my mother's birthplace. Even now the saddened citizens face the destruction of one of the most interesting and charming of their pioneer monuments, the 125-year old ZCMI. An outside developer wants to make a parking lot. They protest, says the news item, "but Mr. C---- says he will do what he pleases. 'If they want to stop me, they can buy me out,' he said." (Trib. 22/10/91). The only power anyone has now is money. And how

do you get it? "Lying is part of the playing field," says a once high executive in Merrill Lynch and Company. "It's ingrained in the way the Street operates....What distinguishes Wall Street lying is that it is pervasive and routine, an accepted part of doing business...according to industry executives and traders." (Wn. Post, 14-20/10/91).

All this inspires just two citations from the Book of Mormon. The first one applies to us, according to President Benson. "...there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions...For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches more than ye love the poor and the needy and the sick and the afflicted....Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which has no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?" (Mormon 8:37-39). Rome and America, the land of promise? "At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel...and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole world, (they) shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and secret abominations." (3 Nep 16:10). This, the parting word of the Lord to the Nephites, is given to them explicitly to be delivered to us.

I think I have said enough.