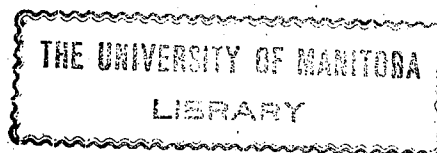


**THE SATIRES OF HORACE AND JUVENAL  
AS A SOURCE FOR CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT AND MANNERS  
A CONTRAST OF METHOD AND VIEWPOINT**

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The purpose of this thesis is to utilize the material that the Satires of Horace and Juvenal provide in order to portray the contemporary life of Rome. (No attempt has been made to include other sources in the discussion.) The references listed at the end of each chapter, are to be found in "Horace -- Complete Works" by Charles E. Bennett and John C. Rolfe, "The Fourteen Satires of Juvenal" by J. D. Duff, and "The Satires of Juvenal" by Harry L. Wilson.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

More than a century separated Horace and Juvenal, the greatest satirists of Rome. The former was born in Venusia in 65 B.C., the latter at Aquinum in 55 A.D.: both these products of rural Italy were the sons of freedmen. They both, too, lived in the times when the blood of Roman citizens was shed and the state was rent by civil strife, to which succeeded the establishment of a stable government and a new order. In his youth, Horace witnessed the bloodshed that followed the murder of Julius Caesar, the rise of youthful Octavius and his establishment of peace and the Roman Empire. Juvenal lived through the turbulent regime of Nero, which after the year of the Four Emperors and the rule of the first Flavian was followed by the dismal days of Domitian, which in turn happily made way for the new era of the good Emperors. In both of these dark ages, Roman society sank morally and socially to a very low level. This condition of affairs afforded an excellent opportunity for the moralist and satirist. Hence, arose the social writings of Horace, Persius, Martial, and Juvenal. The present discussion is concerned with the first and the last of these.

The first published works of Horace were his two books of Satires. It may be, that they were meant to be merely an experiment for future writings --- whether or not this was the case, need not be discussed here. Again, it is possible that Horace felt that other fields of literature were currently well occupied

by his contemporaries, and that there was a need for a potent writer in the field of satire. Moreover, though much influenced by Lucilius, his predecessor in satire, Horace probably believed that he could improve this type of composition. He candidly admits, in his discussion with Trebatius,<sup>3</sup> that he has no gift for writing epic and feels a strong urge to write satire, even<sup>4</sup> though his immediate reward may not be very great.<sup>5</sup> Whatever was the main motive of Horace for writing satire, his choice of this literary field was well rewarded by the popularity which his Satires enjoyed for centuries after his death.

It may be noted that there is a distinction in matter and manner between the first and the second books of Horace's Satires. The latter book presents a more serious aspect and outlook on life than the former. It may be observed throughout that Horace has a message which he wishes to impart to his readers, namely, his doctrine of the golden mean, so prevalent in all his works, and other lessons of moderation and common sense. The style, too, changes, since six out of eight satires in the second book are written in dialogue, whereas the entire first book consists of monologues.

Juvenal wrote only satires; they are divided into five books. There is a marked difference between the last two books (Satires X to XVI) and the first three (Satires I to IX). The later ones seem to lack the spirit and bitter vehemence of the early satires, particularly of the first three. There is a difference of opinion in regard to the sincerity of Juvenal. The present writer holds that Juvenal was serious and honest, although quite prejudiced. As

a serious-minded youth, Juvenal acquired ideals and a philosophy of life in accordance with which he formed his judgment on all vital matters. Consequently, when he later came to live at Rome, debauched in the days of Nero, gory in the year of the Revolution, and gloomy under the regime of Domitian, it is not surprising that Juvenal felt disappointed and discouraged, and gave vent to his feelings in caustic and incisive satires on human failings. Hence, came the bitter attacks found in the first three satires. As the years went by, however, a gradual change came over Juvenal, and his writings took on a gentler tone and a more tolerant attitude to the faults of humanity.

In his very first satire, Juvenal strikes the key-note and indicates the range and the reasons for his satires. Wearied by the tiresome and distasteful recitations of amateur writers of epics and dramas, he feels that it is his duty to retaliate, not by work of the same nature, but by something that is more appropriate, satire. Why should he not write satire? In an age when virtue is praised but starves, and vice abounds in monstrous luxury; in an age of infamous and ignoble characters, of parvenus, poisoners, murderers, informers, forgers, legacy-hunters and nouveau-riches it is difficult, he declares, to refrain from writing satire. In such an era in which vice has reached its zenith, indignation compels one to compose. Indeed, the entire daily life of Rome is a most fertile field to which Juvenal will resort; the abuses of his day, he deems, demand the lamp of Venusia.

Both Horace and Juvenal attack the weaknesses and the

failings of humanity; for example, both deride wealthy freedmen, who, having amassed great wealth, make a vulgar display of it. Horace in his genial manner satirizes those who need censure. He writes in such a way as to make his reader smile at them, and yet, to make him conscious that he too might possess similar fail-  
12  
ings. The conviction that this good-natured approach is the most effective even in satire is clearly and emphatically affirmed in the first satire of the first book when he asks "why shouldn't  
13  
one tell the truth with a laugh". This characteristic attitude constitutes the principal distinction between Horace and Juvenal. Juvenal, too, satirizes abuses, but, his attacks are in the form of vehement invective. He spares neither wrath nor ingenuity when he directs his assaults on human failings. He indulges in tirades and rages savagely at foreigners, corrupt women, degenerate nobility, and rich freedmen.

Both writers mention names of individuals, some of them being of great personages. Horace uses names either as a decoration or as types, representative of certain groups of people under the  
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attack, as for example, Novius for a parvenu, Balbinus for a dotting  
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lover, Porcius, a glutton, Opimius, a rich man, and Pantolabus,  
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18  
a greedy one. Other names, to serve as types, appear to be  
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borrowed from Lucilius, such as Nomentanus for a spendthrift. Some names, however, are probably thin disguises for contemporary  
20  
21  
personages, as Cervius for Servius and Cadius for Matius. The majority of his names are fictitious. He tended to satirize the class rather than the individual, the sin instead of the sinner. Juvenal, more than Horace, realizes that it is dangerous to



satirize any living personage. Therefore, he will attack only those whose bones rest by the Flaminian and the Appian Way;<sup>22</sup> and these men of the past, whom he does name, are selected by him as typical of a class. In this respect, he agrees with Horace. Despite this protestation of Juvenal, he cleverly portrays contemporary life.

There is one matter on which the reader must be cautioned. The scope of this thesis is limited to the Satires of Horace and Juvenal, and all inferences the present writer draws are necessarily based on these two sources. It is unjust to draw absolute conclusions about Roman society from such comparatively meagre evidence. A complete picture of the society of the day would of course involve a study of all contemporary writers as well as other evidence.

Further, it is impossible to overemphasize the distinctive characters of these satirists. Horace was amiable and took a genial attitude toward everything, while Juvenal, on the other hand, is bitter and severe even to trifling fault. He reveals the key-note of his character in his very first satire when he states that even if a man has no natural gift for writing satire,<sup>23</sup> indignation at current vices would force him to do so.

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16. Hor. II,8 (23-24).
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## CHAPTER II

### ETHICS AND MORALITY

The ethics and morality of society in the days of Horace and Juvenal had profoundly changed from those old hardy Roman principles, which had been influenced by the expansion of the city into a world-wide empire. The Civil Wars of Augustus and his predecessors, the prodigality and profligacy of Nero, and the tyranny of Domitian had all had their effect. The foundation of Roman morality, family life, had undergone the greatest change. Once it had been the source of honesty, uprightness, honor and social integrity. With its decay, Roman society degenerated. Dishonesty grew rampant in finance, business, politics and government. Vice assumed such various forms as hypocrisy, avarice, legacy-hunting, gambling, forgery, poisoning, brigandage and swindling. Horace satirizes them with weapons of wit and philosophy, while Juvenal attacks them with bitterness and vehemence. So fierce are his assaults that his reader is led to believe that there never was, in the entire history of civilization, a period so base and degenerate as was the last half of the first century A.D. Despite Juvenal's prejudices, it must be admitted that the moral standards of family life were at a very low ebb.

#### (a) FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

The state of family life in Rome at this period shocks the modern reader. It has been said that nowhere in the history of human civilization is there found a parallel to the domestic life of the late Republic and the first century of the Roman Empire.

Family ties were lax because of the very nature of marriage which was a formal contract not prompted by affection on either side. Men and women married, divorced and remarried with little regard for the rights or emotions of their original partners. It was only a natural consequence that the children of such unions should follow in the footsteps of their parents. The main motive involved in marriages of such a nature was money. Hence it is not difficult to picture the true condition of family life in Rome. This state of affairs was more general in the capital, however, being especially prevalent in the upper strata of society and perhaps to a lesser extent in the lower ones. The reader should not be too prompt to conclude that it prevailed throughout the Roman Empire. Even in Rome itself there were found families whose moral standards were unimpeachable.

Juvenal reminds us of the Lex Julia by which Augustus tried to restore the ancient ideals of family life. In order to stimulate marriage and repress celibacy, he passed repeated enactments, the chief of which were the Lex Julia and the Lex Papia Poppaea, by which the power of the childless and the unmarried to inherit property was restricted. The marriage ties were very lax, being only a legal contract between two parties and readily broken at the desire of either party. The most trivial excuses were given to justify repudiation, as for example, the disparity of age. This was very often the fate of a wife who began to lose her beauty. Conversely, wives abandoned their husbands, forsaking them for other lovers. Women were known to remarry as often as eight times in five years. Impotent men often entered

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the matrimonial arena, which is not surprising when it is remember-  
ed that money was an influencing factor in the selection of a  
son-in-law or a daughter-in-law. Horace suggests that girls were  
often married for their parents' sake. Thus a debtor might  
7  
marry his daughter to his creditor, hoping that the latter would  
8  
leave enough money to pay the debt. Juvenal condemns the habit  
of marrying women on account of their wealth or dowry. He cites  
9  
cases of young wives strangled to death or otherwise murdered  
10  
because they happened to possess large dowries; men were wont to  
11  
use the shortest routes to reach their destinations. The serious  
result of such marriages was the problem of childlessness, which  
12  
was fashionable with the wealthy class. The general attitude  
13  
seemed to be that only the poor must have children. Children  
were considered to be too troublesome, and various ways were used  
14  
to dispose of them. They might be abandoned by a cistern or at an  
15  
aqueduct; but sometimes castaways were smuggled into rich homes  
16  
and adopted. Juvenal calls these children the nurselings of  
17  
Fortuna who smiles and protects them.

The relationship between husband and wife now enter into the  
discussion. There was intermarriage of Greeks and Romans. Horace  
18  
mentions Persius, a half-breed, but the race question will be  
discussed in a later chapter. Juvenal believes that it is difficult  
19  
for a man to tolerate a wife who is perfect. Some men do give the  
highest character to their wives; but, they have special reasons  
20  
for doing so. Thus Censennia can do no wrong because she is rich.  
21  
Other men connive at their wives' prostitution for the sake of  
their hire in the form of legacies, which revert to the husbands

22  
by the Lex Voconia. Sometimes, blood of wealthy brides stained  
23  
the hands of their husbands, recently wedded. Some husbands  
callously delegate to freedmen the dismissal of wives whose charms  
24  
have given way to wrinkles. Husbands were not alone at fault ---  
wives certainly were not angels. Juvenal bares the mercenary  
25  
nature of those who took every opportunity to rob their lovers.  
26  
Many became domestic tyrants. They would dictate to their consorts  
27  
their selection of friends and insist upon punishment of innocent  
28 29  
slaves, their personal tastes and dislikes, and their own choice  
30  
of heirs. To reward their husbands for their subservience, they  
31  
would abandon them and seek new husbands. This the wife accom-  
plished by resort to several tricks. Quarrels and recriminations  
32  
would continue all through the night, accompanied by weeping and  
33  
false accusations, which were only a mask to cover their infide-  
lity and adultery, the evidence of which the husband would find,  
34  
if he searched his wife's writing desk. Some women used cosmetics  
as a weapon. They put on hideous pastes as a barrier against the  
35 36  
husbands, but would remove these when they met their adulterers.  
37  
Caring so little about their husbands, they were equally careless  
38 39  
of expenses. They hated their husbands' friends and slaves.  
They sought solace in foreign religions and the society of foreign  
40  
priests to whom they became abjectly devoted. They went to the  
41  
utmost extremes to satisfy their fantastical urge of consulting  
42 43 44 45  
priests, astrologers, soothsayers, palsied Jewesses, and other  
46  
quacks about their future, the possibility of inheriting property,  
47 48  
the probability of becoming wealthy and winning new adulterers.  
Some, more degraded still, are smitten by a passion for actors  
49  
playing feminine roles in mimes, or even gladiators. They forsake

and abandon their families, husbands, and children to follow  
and be paramours to these gladiators and actors. They brave the  
dangers of the sea as they travel in their company to distant  
lands, and the reason for this, Juvenal alleges, is that a woman  
will disregard her reputation, and indeed will sacrifice every-  
thing to satisfy her base desires. Some matrons of noble families  
descended to the lowest level of becoming public harlots, as did  
Messalina, the wife of Emperor Claudius. Male chaperons were set  
to watch suspected wives, but the precaution was useless when  
a cunning wife could easily bribe her guardian. Failing other  
means, the resourceful wife administered love philtres to her  
husband to secure his compliance with her wishes, a method which  
sometimes led to serious consequences, such as madness or death,  
as in the case of Caligula and Claudius. What a contrast with  
the days when life in Rome was hard and simple! Peace had  
brought luxury in its train, a worse enemy than war. "Now",  
Juvenal argues, "all the corruption of foreign nations have  
found a home here. How can one expect virtue in a woman who is  
not even sober? It is easy to understand her contempt for the  
altar of chastity. She is so unlike the Sabine matron."

The degradation of wedlock had its evil effect on children.  
Juvenal held that the greatest force for education was in the  
home. There above all, children were corrupted from the beginning  
by their parents' examples. Youthful minds are great imitators.  
All parents should take heed to their ways. If a son imitates his  
father and betters his instructions, his father has no right to  
be angry and to disinherit him. It is the duty of every father  
to rear his children for the state as suitable citizens, fit to

play their role in life, whether in peace or in war; parents  
are responsible for the future of the state. Children are like  
the birds and beasts, in reproducing the habits of their parents.  
But the example set in Rome was bad, where fathers encouraged  
their sons to value money above all else, and, having launched  
them on their careers of money-getting, were unable to hold them  
in check. It would not be strange if, in the end, the son, in  
order to obtain money, became a murderer, perhaps even of his own  
father. Fathers do not bear the whole weight of Juvenal's censure.  
Wicked mothers not only set bad examples for their daughters in  
adultery but even instructed and assisted them in the vice and  
became their accomplices. So it is, says Juvenal, that a mother-  
in-law makes peace impossible in a household during her lifetime:  
she teaches her daughter how to deceive her husband and fashions  
her into a character as bad as herself. The step-mother step-son  
relation is always a topic for gossip. A commonplace in Juvenal  
is the mother who does away with her step-son or even her own  
children if they are heirs to an estate. Care must be taken to  
prevent their being poisoned. The bribes of Medea and Procne are  
not the invention of ancient tragedy. They are repeated everyday  
in Rome; so is the deed of Clytemnestra. The method may be  
different, but the husband, nevertheless, dies.

Roman children were victims not only of their parents but  
also of their guardians. A ward often found herself despoiled by  
the greediness of her custodian. The innocent victim sometimes  
brought legal action against her trustee. Others were forced  
into adultery by the rapacity of their protectors.



That poisoning of relatives, children and parents was not unknown in Rome, we may perhaps infer from the reference to fratricide in Horace, and the amusing prediction that he himself was not destined to be poisoned. Aconite was used for this purpose. For the parricide, there was provided the severe and well-known penalty of being launched on the sea in an ox-hide sack with an innocent monkey. The penalty did not always deter children from poisoning their parents and especially if they were wealthy and long-lived. Mothers were known to be poisoned and wives strangled with impunity. Wives consulted soothsayers in regard to the death of their husbands, their husbands' wills and the welfare of their lovers. The enquirer's husband might subsequently die of poisoned wine and the guilty wife would ostentatiously display all the outward symptoms of an unconsolable but unreal sorrow.

Adultery is an ancient vice, practiced everywhere since the Iron Age. The morals of Imperial Rome were so bad that even notorious Canopus cried out against its monstrous corruption. The chastity of earlier Roman women had been due to their humble fortune and simple homes into which they did not allow vice to enter. Long peace had brought luxury and evil in its train. The crimes of Sybaris, Rhodes, Miletus and drunken Tarentum had flowed into Rome. Drunken lust knew no bounds. Adultery was widely practised among married women who skilfully hid their follies. It was useless to try to keep watch over such faithless wives, whose deceits and tricks enabled them to escape detection. Notorious offenders were found among women of high rank, of whom Perhaps Messalina was the worst. Men were as guilty as the