

Juvenal

The Satires

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Satire I: A Justification

SatI: 1-18 Unbearable Stuff!

Must I be a listener forever? Never reply,
Tortured so often by throaty Cordus's *Theseus*?
Must I let this fellow recite his Roman comedies,
Unpunished, and that one his elegies? Unpunished,
Consuming my whole day on some endless *Telephus*,
Or unfinished *Orestes*, the cover full and the margins?
A man knows his own house less well than I know
The grove of Mars or that cave of Vulcan's right by
The Aeolian cliffs; what the winds do, which shade
Aeacus torments, where *he's* from, he with the golden
Stolen fleece, how big that ash tree Monychus hurled –
Fronto's plane-trees, cracked marble, and columns
Fractured by non-stop readings, ring with this stuff.
Expect the same, then, from this best and worst of poets.
I too have snatched my hand out of reach of the cane,
I too have given old Sulla 'good advice': get lost, enjoy
A good rest. It's false mercy, when you trip over poets
Everywhere, to spare the paper they're all ready to waste.

SatI: 19-44 Why Choose Satire?

Why I still choose to go driving over the very plain
Where Lucilius the great, from Aurunca, steered his team,
I'll explain, if you've time to hear my reasons, quietly.
When a tender eunuch takes him a wife; when Mevia
Fights a Tuscan boar, with bare breasts, gripping the spear;
When a fellow can match all the aristocrats in wealth,
Who made me cry with pain when he used to shave me;
When a pleb from the Nile, when a slave from Canopus,
One Crispinus, hitching his Tyrian cloak on his shoulder,
Wafts the gold of summer about on his sweaty fingers,
Simply unable to suffer the dreadful weight of a gem;
It's hard not to write satire! For who's so tolerant of Rome's
Iniquities, so made of steel they can contain themselves
When along comes that lawyer Matho's brand new litter,
Full of himself; behind, one who informed on a powerful

Friend, ready to steal any scraps from the noble carcase,
Whom Massa the stool-pigeon fears, and Carus sweetens
With gifts, like Thymele, in the farce, fed by fearful Latinus;
When you're shoved by men who earn a place in the will
By night, men raised to the gods by the wide road now
To highest advancement, by a rich old woman's 'purse'?
To Proculeius just one twelfth share, but to Gillo eleven,
Each heir gets the portion that matches their performance.
May they turn truly pale as they snatch their blood-money,
Like a man with bare feet who's stepped on a snake,
Or the next loser to speak, at Caligula's altar in Lyon.

SatI:45-80 It's a Litany of Crime

How can I describe the fierce anger burning my fevered gut,
When people are crushed by the herd behind some despoiler
Who prostituted his ward, or one found guilty in a wasteful
Trial? How could disgrace matter if the money's safe?
Marius Priscus, in exile, drinks all afternoon, enjoying
The gods' displeasure, while you, the dutiful winner, weep.
Isn't that worth shining a light on, one lit by old Horace?
Isn't that my task? What better? No dull tales of Hercules,
Please, or Diomedes, or that bellowing in the labyrinth,
Or the sea struck by the wing-wrecked son of a flying artisan,
When a husband accepts a wife's lover's gifts, and no law
Against her cheating: expert now at staring up at the ceiling,
An expert too at snoring over his cup through vigilant nose?
When someone who's lavished his wealth on the horses, blown
The family fortune, thinks he's the right to expect a command,
Just for racing his speeding chariot down the Flaminian Way,
Like some puny Automedon? Yes, he was clutching the reins,
Himself, while showing off to his girlfriend, her in the cloak.
Surely I'm allowed to fill a fat notebook at the crossroads
When they carry past, on six shoulders, no less, some false
Signatory, exhibited, this side and that, in his almost bare
Litter, one, strongly resembling the effeminate Maecenas,
Who's made himself distinguished and rich with the aid
Of a brief roll of paper, and a moist signet ring?
When a powerful lady is next, who mixes in dried toad's
Venom, while offering her husband mellow Calenian wine,

Improves on Lucusta, by teaching her simple neighbours
How to bury their skin-blotched husbands to public acclaim.
If you want to be someone, do something worthy of prison,
Exile on tiny Gyara – the honest are praised, but neglected.
It's crime brings the gardens, mansions, elaborate dinners,
Old silver plate, and those drinking-cups carved with goats.
Who can sleep, for seducers of greedy daughters-in-law,
Who can sleep, for impure brides and teenage adulterers?
If talent is lacking, then indignation can fashion my verse,
Of such kind as poets like me, or Cluvenius, produce.

SatI:81-126 And All About Money

Since the days when a rainstorm raised the water-level,
And Deucalion sailed mountains by boat, asked a sign,
And the malleable stone was gradually warmed to life,
And Pyrrha displayed newly-created girls to the men,
What humankind does, its prayers, fears, angers, and pleasures,
Delights and excursions, all that farrago's in my little book.
And when was the flow of vice fuller? When did the palm
Open wider to greed? When did gambling arouse greater
Passion? See, they don't flock to the gaming tables now
With their purses: they place the family treasure and play.
What battles you'll see there, the croupier bringing forth
Warriors! It's quite mad to go losing a hundred thousand,
Surely, and yet to begrudge a shirt to a shivering slave?
Who of our ancestors built such villas, dined in private
On seven courses? Now the paltry handout-basket sits
On the doorstep, snatched at by a toga-clad mob,
As the patron first takes a nervous look at the faces,
Lest they've come to make false claim in another's name:
Known, and you're in. He even instructs the herald to call
The 'Trojan' elite, they too vex the threshold among us
All. 'Give first to the praetor, and then to the tribune.'
But a freedman is first. 'I was the first, here.' he says.
'Why should I fear, why should I hesitate, though I was
Born by Euphrates? The effeminate holes in my ears
Would proclaim it, if I denied it. Yet my five taverns
Bring in four hundred thousand, what more can the purple
Provide? While some Corvinus herds his leased sheep

There, in Laurentine fields, I possess more than Pallas
More than Licinus?' Well, let the tribunes wait, then,
Let cash be the conqueror; let the slave just arrived here,
With chalk-whitened feet, not yield to high office;
After all, among us, the greatness of riches is sacred,
Though fatal Pecunia (Cash) has no temple as yet
To dwell in, and as yet we've set up no altars to money,
As we worship now, Peace, Loyalty, Victory, Virtue,
Or Concord, with clatter of storks when we hail her.
But while the highest official reckons at year-end
What the handouts brought in, how much added fat,
What will his clients do for their togas and shoes,
Bread and fuel at home? Jam-packed the litters arrive
For their hundred pence, a wife who's pregnant or sick
Follows a husband doing the rounds, a craftier man
Plays the old trick, claims for his wife in her absence,
Pointing instead to an empty, close-curtained sedan,
'There's my Galla,' he cries, 'quick now, why the delay?
Show your face, Galla.' 'No need, she might be asleep.'

SatI:127-146 The Reward of Greed

The very day is distinguished by splendid things:
The handout, then the Forum, Apollo expert in law,
And the insignia, among which some customs-man
Out of Egypt, a nobody, dares to display his titles,
On whose statue it's fine to take not merely a piss.
Aged and weary his clients abandon the forecourts,
Relinquish their aims; since the hope of eating lasts
Longest in man, they must buy firewood and greens.
Meanwhile his lordship is dining on all of the best
Produce of forest and sea, himself, amid empty couches.
Now at their table, one of those lovely large round
Antique ones, these people consume a whole fortune.
Soon there'll be no parasites left. Who can bear
Such vulgar luxury? What a monstrous maw that feeds
On a whole wild boar, a creature that's fit for a banquet!
There's swift punishment though, when bloated you doff
Your cloak, and go for a bath, with a part-digested peacock
Inside. Then for the old it's death, intestate and sudden.

The news is passed round at dinner, with never a tear;
And the funeral's performed to the cheers of irate friends.

SatI:147-171 The Dangers of Satire

Posterity will need to add nothing to how we behave,
Our children will do and desire exactly the same;
All depravity stands at the edge of a chasm. Set sail,
Spread all your canvas. Perhaps you'll say 'Where
Is the power to match your subject? Where will you find
The frankness of those who wrote as they chose
With passionate spirit?' Well who do I dare not name?
What matter if Mucius could never forgive my words?
'Well, try Tigellinus, and you'll be the flame to his torch
That scorches men upright, their bound throats smoking,
And score a wide track with your corpse over the sand.'
Do I let him ride by, then, that man who's poisoned three
Of his uncles, and despise us from his feather cushions?
'Yes, button your lip, instead, when he sallies by:
If you even say: 'that's him', you'll be marked, an informer.
It's fine to pit pious Aeneas against the fierce Rutulian,
There's no problem with old Achilles pierced by a shaft,
Or a Hylas, chasing his pitcher, searched for by many:
But when fiery Lucilius roars as if waving his naked
Blade, the hearer whose criminal mind is long-frozen,
Reddens and sweats, his conscience new-stricken by guilt.
Then, there'll be anger and tears. So think about it first,
Before you go sounding your trumpet: too late to regret
Arming when you're at war.' Then I'll see what they can do
To me, whose ashes the Via Latina and Via Flaminia shroud.

End of Satire I

Satire II: Effeminate Rome

SatII:1-35 Put no Trust in Appearances

I'd like to flee this place, go far beyond the Sarmatians and icy Ocean, while those who pretend to the Curii's virtue, but live Like Bacchanals, have the gall to preach to us of morality. Lesson one: they're ignorant, though their houses you'll find Filled with plaster busts of Chrysippus; for the most perfect Is he who's bought the most lifelike Aristotle, or Pittacus, And ordered an antique Cleanthes to watch over his bookcase. Put no trust in appearances; after all isn't every street packed With sad-looking perverts? How can you castigate sin, when you Yourself are the most notorious of all the Socratic sodomite holes? Though hairy members, and those stiff bristles all over your arms, Promise a rough approach, your arse turns out to be smooth enough When the smiling doctor lances away at your swollen piles. Few words and a marked urge for silence is what they possess, Hair cut shorter than their eyebrows. Peribomius the pathic's More open and honest than they; who admits his affliction In his looks and his walk, all of which I attribute to fate. The vulnerability of such is pitiful, and their passion itself Deserves our forgiveness; far worse, are those who attack them With Herculean rectitude, and waggle their bottoms while Talking of virtue. 'How can I respect you, Sextus, when I see You wiggling your arse:' cries notorious Varillus, 'who's better?' The upright should scorn to limp, and white counter the black. Where's the sense in the Gracchi carping about revolution? How could sky not be confounded with land, sea with sky, Should Verrus the thief object to stealing, or Milo to murder, Should Clodius condemn adultery, Catiline his ally Cethegus, Should Sulla's Triumvirate, his disciples, jibe at his death-list. That's how Domitian, that recent adulterer, behaved, defiled By a fatal union, he who revived such bitter laws in his day, To terrify everyone, even the deities, even Venus and Mars, While Julia, his niece, ditched the contents of her ripe womb With abortifacients, and shed lumps resembling her uncle. Is it not just then and right, when the extremes of depravity Sneer at every false Scaurus, and bite back when castigated?

SatII:36-63 Hypocritical Adulterers

Laronia, the adulteress, couldn't abide that grim individual
Forever shouting: 'Whose bed now, you breaker of Julian law?'
Grimacing she said: 'O happy age, that set you on to carp at
Our morals. Let Rome be ashamed now, a third Cato falls
From the sky! But just as a matter of interest where did you buy
The essence of balsam that wafts from your hairy neck?
Don't hesitate to tell us who owns the shop it came from.
If it's a matter of quoting neglected laws and statutes, cite
The Scantinian laws before all the rest, men and not women
Scrutinise first: they behave worse, but then they have safety
In numbers, united behind their phalanx of close-linked shields.
Great is the union of effeminates, nor will you find
So detestable an example set by any one of our sex.
Tedia never licks Cluvia, Flora is never all over Catulla,
But Hispo yields to young men and gets sick both ways.
We never plead cases, do we? Is it we who learn civil law?
When do we disturb your courts by making an uproar?
There aren't many women wrestlers, girls on an athlete's diet.
But you men tease the wool, and draw back the finished fleece
In its basket, you tweak the spindle pregnant with finest thread
More deftly than ever Penelope did, more cleverly than Arachne,
More than any dishevelled mistress does, as she sits on the chest.
Why Hister had made provision for his freedman alone in his will,
Is well-known, why he gifted his wife so much while he lived.
She who sleeps third in a bed will end up wealthy.
Marry, and be quiet: secrets garner cylinder-seals.
And after all that, do you dare sentence us as guilty?
Acquit the ravens, and bring censure on the doves?'

SatII:64-81 Hypocritical Aristocrats

As she uttered a manifest truth the quivering Stoics
Fled; was there any one thing Laronia said that was false?
But what should women do when you dress in muslin,
Creticus, while people stare at your clothes, as you rail
At Procula and Pellita? Let Fabulla be an adulteress,
Find even Carfinia guilty if you like: guilty as she is,
She won't dress in a toga! 'But it's hot this July, I'm

Boiling.’ Then go naked: even madness is far less vile.
Behold what you wear, when citing laws and statutes,
To a victorious people, one with its wounds still raw,
Or mountain folk who are just come from the plough!
How you would protest if you caught a judge wearing
Such clothes! I doubt muslin’s decent even for witnesses.
You fierce indomitable champion of liberty, Creticus,
You’re so transparent. This stain is contagious and so
Will spread further, just as the whole herd of swine dies
In the field, because of the mange and scab on a single pig.
Just as a grape becomes tainted by touching another grape.

SatII:82-116 Those In the Closet

Some day you’ll dare something worse than that clothing;
No one’s wholly corrupted overnight. Little by little,
You’ll be received by those who, at home, in private, wear
Wide bands on their brow, necks all decked out in jewellery,
And placate the Good Goddess, like women, with a bowl of wine
And a young sow’s udder. But, in a change to the usual rule,
Women are challenged afar, and turned from the threshold,
The goddess’s altar open to men alone. ‘Hence, you profane ones,’
They cry, ‘no flute-playing girl with her mellow pipe here.’
Such secret rites were performed to torchlight, the Baptae
Accustomed to tiring the goddess, Cecropian Cotyto.
One man has blackened his eyebrows, moistened with soot,
Extends them with slanting pencil, and flutters his eyelids,
While applying the make-up; another drinks from a phallus-
Shaped glass, his bouffant hair filling a gilded hair-net,
Dressed in a chequered blue or a yellow-green satin,
While the master’s servant swears by the feminine Juno.
One holds a mirror, the pathic Otho’s constant companion,
‘The spoils of Auruncian Actor’ (Virgil), in which he used
To admire himself armed, as he issued the order for battle.
It’s worth noting in modern annals, and current histories:
A mirror was essential equipment to raise civil war.
It’s the mark of a supreme general, of course, to kill Galba
While powdering your nose, the maximum self-possession
Shown on Bebricum’s field, to aspire to the Palatine throne
While your fingers plaster your face with a mask of dough,

What not even Semiramis, the archer, in her Assyrian city,
Tried, nor Cleopatra, in grief, in her flagship, at Actium.
Here there's no shame in their language, or reverence at table,
Here is Cybele's foulness, the freedom to speak in a woman's
Voice, and an old fanatical white-haired man who's the priest
Of the rites, a rare and memorable example, an enormous
Throat, a gluttonous specimen, an expert well worth his hire.
Why are they waiting? Isn't it time already to use their knives,
To carve their superfluous flesh in the Phrygian manner?

SatII:117-148 And Those Out of It

Gracchus has given a dowry of four thousand gold pieces
For a horn-player, or one perhaps who plays the straight pipe;
The contract's witnessed, 'felicitations!', a whole crowd
Asked to the feast, the 'bride' reclines in the husband's lap.
O, you princes, is it a censor we need, or a prophet of doom?
Would you find it more terrible, think it more monstrous
Truly, if a woman gave birth to a calf, or a cow to a lamb?
He's wearing brocade, the long full dress, and the veil,
He who bore the sacred objects tied to the mystic thong,
Sweating under the weight of shields. O, Romulus, Father
Of Rome, why has this evil touched the shepherds of Latium?
Where is it from, this sting that hurts your descendants, Mars?
Can you see a man noted for birth, wealth, wed to another man,
And your spear not beat the ground, your helmet stay firm,
And no complaint to the Father? Away then, forsake the stern
Campus's acres, you neglect now. 'I've a ceremony to attend
At dawn, tomorrow, down in the vale of Quirinus.' 'Why's that?'
'Why? Oh, a friend of mine's marrying a male lover of his:
He's asked a few guests.' Live a while, and we'll see it happen,
They'll do it openly, want it reported as news in the daily gazette.
Meanwhile there's one huge fact that torments these brides,
That they can't give birth, and by that hang on to their husbands.
But it's better that Nature grants their minds little power over
Their bodies: barren, they die; with her secret medicine chest,
Swollen Lyde's no use, nor a blow from the agile Luperci.
Yet Gracchus beats even this outrage, in tunic, with trident,
A gladiator, circling the sand, as he flits about the arena:
He's nobler in birth than the Marcelli, or the Capitolini,

Than the scions of Catulus and Paulus, or the Fabii,
Than all the front-row spectators, including Himself,
The one who staged that show with the nets and tridents.

SatII:149-170 Rome's a Disgrace!

That ghosts exist at all, or the realms of the Underworld,
Cocytus, and the whirl of black frogs in the Styx,
Or all those thousands crossing the flood in one boat,
Not even children believe, unless wet behind the ears.
But suppose it were true: what would the shade of Curius feel,
What of the shades of the Scipios, of Fabricius or Camillus?
What of the legion at Cremera, the young men ruined at Cannae,
The dead of all those wars, what would they feel when a ghost
Descended from here? They'd desire purification, if they had
There, the sulphur, the flaming torches, and the moist laurel.
Down there, alas, we'd be paraded in shame. We may have
Sent troops beyond Ireland's shores, and recently captured
The Orkneys, beaten the Britons familiar with midnight suns,
But the nations we've defeated don't get up to what people
Get up to now, in victorious Rome. 'Yet nevertheless one
Zalaces, they say, an Armenian lad, more effeminate than all
The rest of the boys, gave himself to a passionate tribune.'
Look what foreign trade yields: he came here as a hostage,
We make them men of the world, if such boys stay longer
Adopting Roman ways, they'll never lack lovers, doffing
Their breeches, and little knives, their bridles and whips.
Those are the teenage ways they'll take home to Armenia.

End of Satire II

Satire III: Fleeing Rome

SatIII:1-20 It's Enough to Drive Old Friends Away

Though I'm disturbed by an old friend's departure, still
I approve his decision to set up home in vacant Cumae
And devote at least one more citizen to the Sibyl.
It's the gateway to Baiae, a beautiful coast, sweetly
Secluded. I prefer Prochyta's isle to the noisy Subura.
After all, is there anywhere that's so wretched and lonely
You wouldn't rather be there than in constant danger of fire,
Of collapsing buildings, and all of the thousand perils
Of barbarous Rome, with poets reciting all during August!
Now, while his whole house was being loaded onto a cart,
He lingered there by the ancient arch of sodden Capena.
We walked down to Egeria's vale with its synthetic grottos.
How much more effective the fountain's power would be,
If its waters were enclosed by a margin of verdant grass,
And if marble had never desecrated the native tufa.
Here, where Numa established his night-time girlfriend,
The grove and shrine of the sacred fount are rented out
To the Jews, who're equipped with straw-lined baskets;
Since the grove has been ordered to pay the nation rent,
The Muses have been ejected, and the trees go begging.

SatIII:21-57 The Dishonest and Dishonourable

Here it was that Umbricius spoke: 'There's no joy in Rome
For honest ability, and no reward any more for hard work.
My means today are less than yesterday, and tomorrow
Will wear away a bit more, that's why I'm resolved
To head for Cumae, where weary Daedalus doffed his wings.
While my white-hairs are new, while old age stands upright,
While Lachesis has thread left to spin, and I can still walk,
On my own two feet, without needing a staff in my hand,
I'll leave the ancestral land. Let Arturius, let Catulus live
In Rome. Let the men who turn black into white remain,
Who find it easy to garner contracts for temples, and rivers,
Harbours, draining sewers, and carrying corpses to the pyre,
Who offer themselves for sale according to auctioneers' rules.

Those erstwhile players of horns, those perpetual friends
Of public arenas, noted through all the towns for their
Rounded cheeks, now mount shows themselves, and kill
To please when the mob demand it with down-turned thumbs;
Then it's back to deals for urinals, why not the whole works?
Since they're the ones Fortune raises up to the highest sphere
Out of the lowest gutter, whenever she fancies a laugh.
What's left for me in Rome? I can't tell lies, I can't praise
A book that's bad, beg a copy; I've no notion of the motion
Of stars; I can't and I won't prophesy someone's father's
Death; I've never guessed a thing from the entrails of frogs;
Carrying to some adulterous wife whatever her lover sends,
Whatever his message, others know how to do; I'd never
Help out a thief; and that's why I'm never one of the boys,
More like a cripple, with useless body and paralysed hand.
Who is esteemed now unless he's someone's accomplice,
His mind seething with things that should never be told.
There's nothing they think they owe, they'll give nothing,
To a person who's only their partner in harmless secrets.
Verrus only cares for those who can make a case against
Verrus whenever they wish. May the sand of Tagus mean
Less to you, with all its gold that is washed down to the sea,
Than lost sleep, and the sadness of taking regular bribes,
And thus being forever afraid of some powerful friend.

SatIII:58-125 And What About all Those Greeks?

That race most acceptable now to our wealthy Romans,
That race I principally wish to flee, I'll swiftly reveal,
And without embarrassment. My friends, I can't stand
A Rome full of Greeks, yet few of the dregs are Greek!
For the Syrian Orontes has long since polluted the Tiber,
Bringing its language and customs, pipes and harp-strings,
And even their native timbrels are dragged along too,
And the girls forced to offer themselves in the Circus.
Go there, if your taste's a barbarous whore in a painted veil.
See, Romulus, those rustics of yours wearing Greek slippers,
Greek ointments, Greek prize medallions round their necks.
He's from the heights of Sicyon, and he's from Amydon,
From Andros, Samos, they come, from Tralles or Alabanda,

Seeking the Esquiline and the Viminal, named from its willows.
To become both the innards and masters of our great houses.
Quick witted, of shamelessly audacity, ready of speech, more
Lip than Isaeus, the rhetorician. Just say what you want them
To be. They'll bring you, in one person, whatever you need:
The teacher of languages, orator, painter, geometer, trainer,
Augur, rope-dancer, physician, magician, they know it all,
Your hungry Greeks: tell them to buzz off to heaven, they'll go.
That's why it was no Moroccan, Sarmatian, or man from Thrace
Who donned wings, but one Daedalus, born in the heart of Athens.
Should I not flee these people in purple? Should I watch them sign
Ahead of me, then, and recline to eat on a better couch than mine,
Men propelled to Rome by the wind, with the plums and the figs?
Is it nothing that in my childhood I breathed the Aventine air,
Is it nothing that in my youth I was nurtured on Sabine olives?
And aren't they the people most adept at flattery, praising
The illiterate speech of a friend, praising his ugly face,
Likening a weak, scrawny neck to that of brave Hercules,
When he lifted the massive Antaeus high above earth,
And lost in their admiration for a voice as high-pitched
As the cockerel when he pecks at his hen as they mate?
We too can offer praise in just the same way: but they
Are the ones believed. What comic actor's better at playing
Thais, the whore, or the wife, or Doris, the slave-girl, out
Without her cloak? It's as if a woman were speaking not
Merely a mask: you'd think all was smooth and lacking
Below the belly, and only split there by a slender crack.
Yet our comic turn, Antiochus, would be no great wonder
In Greece, Demetrius, Stratocles, or effeminate Haemus:
They're a nation of comics. Laugh, and they'll be shaken
With fits of laughter. They weep, without grief, if they see
A friend in tears; if you pine for a little warmth in the winter
They don a cloak; if you remark "it's hot" they'll start to sweat.
So we're unequal: they've a head start who always, day or night,
Can adopt the expression they see on someone's face,
Who're always ready to throw up their hands and cheer
If their 'friend' belches deeply, or perhaps pisses straight,
Or gives a fart when the golden bowl's turned upside down.
Besides, nothing's sacred to them or safe from their cocks
Not the lady of the house, or the virgin daughter, not

Even her smooth-faced fiancé, or the unbroken son.
Failing that, they'll have the friend's grandma on her back.
They like to own the secrets of the house, and so be feared.
And since I'm mentioning the Greeks, then let's pass on
From their gymnastics to a crime of a darker colour. Celer,
The old Stoic turned informer, brought about Barea's death,
His friend and pupil; Celer, of Tarsus, raised by the Cydnus,
Where a feather from Pegasus, the Gorgon's child, landed.
There's no room here for the Romans; it's some Greek;
Protogenes, or Diphilus, or Hermachus who reigns here,
Who never shares a friend, since that's their race's defect,
But monopolises him alone. For once they've dripped a drop
Of their country's native poison in a ready ear, I'm driven
From the threshold, and my long years of slavery are lost.
Nowhere is the casting off of a client more casually done.

SatIII:126-163 Better Not Be Poor Here

Then, not to flatter ourselves, what office or service is left
For a poor man here, even if he dons his toga and dashes
About in the dark, given the praetor's hurrying his lictor
Already, to run on with a morning greeting to rich Albina,
Or childless, sleepless Modia, lest his colleague's there first?
Here, a freeborn son is detailed to escort a rich man's slave:
The latter can hand out gifts, worth as much as a military
Tribune earns, to aristocratic Calvina or Catiena, just
To writhe around on top of her once or twice; while you
In love with the look of Chione's finery, halt in your tracks
Hesitant about helping a whore descend from her high horse.
Find me a knight in Rome as holy as Nasica, who escorted
The image of Cybele, let Numa advance, or Caecilius Metellus,
Who rescued Minerva's fire-threatened statue, from Vesta's temple:
His character would be the very last thing discussed: money first.
"How many slaves does he own? How many acres of farmland?
How extravagant are his banquets, how many courses served?"
The number of coins a man keeps in his treasure chest, that's
All the credit he earns. Swear your oath on the altars of Rome
Or Samothrace, they'll maintain, as you're poor, you'll just flout
The divine lightning bolt, with the gods themselves acquiescing.
And what of the fact that the same poor beggar provides them all

With matter and cause for amusement, if his cloak's dirty and torn,
If his toga is weathered and stained, one shoe gaping open where
The leather has split, or when there's more than one patch showing
Where a rent has been stitched, displaying the coarse new thread?
There's nothing harder to bear about poverty's wretchedness
Than how it leaves you open to ridicule. "Off you go" they'll say,
"If you've any shame: don't dare sit here on a knight's cushion,
If you've insufficient wealth under the law", but they'll sit there
All those sons of pimps, born in some vile brothel or other,
Here the auctioneer's slick son can sit to applaud the show,
Beside the well-dressed lads of the gladiators and trainers.'
That's how that fool Otho was pleased to dispose of us all.
What prospective son-in-law can pass the test, here, if his wealth
Is less, or his luggage worse than the girl's? What pauper inherits?
When do aediles vote them onto the council? The indigent citizens
Should all have assembled, long ago, and migrated from the City.

SatIII:164-189 It's Hard to Climb the Ladder

It's hard to climb the ladder when constricted private resources
Block your talents, but at Rome the effort is greater still:
They're expensive, wretched lodgings; expensive, the bellies
Of slaves; and a meagre supper is just as expensive too.
You're ashamed to dine off earthenware plates, though you
Would feel no disgust if suddenly spirited off to a Sabellan
Or Marsian table, content in a poor man's coarse, blue hood.
To tell you the truth, in most of Italy, no one wears a toga
Unless they're dead. Even on days of major festival when
The traditional farce returns once more to the wooden stage,
When the rustic infant cowers in its mother's lap, at sight
Of a white gaping mask, even then you'll see everyone,
There, still dressed the same, those in the senatorial seats
And those elsewhere. White tunics are quite sufficient for
The highest aediles, as a garb to adorn their glorious office.
Here our smart clothes are beyond our means, here at Rome
A little bit extra has to be borrowed from someone's purse.
It's a common fault; here we all live in pretentious poverty,
What more can I say? Everything in Rome comes at a price.
What do you not pay so you can say: "Good morning, Cossus",
So Veiento will condescend to give you a tight-lipped glance?

This slave's beard is clipped, that one's lock of hair's dedicated;
The house is full of celebratory cakes you've paid for: take one
And keep your frustration to yourself. Clients are forced to pay
Such tribute-money, and supplement the savings of sleek slaves.

SatIII:190-231 The Very Houses are Unsafe

Who fears, or ever feared, that their house might collapse,
In cool Praeneste, or in Volsinii among the wooded hills,
Or at unpretentious Gabii, or the sloping hills of Tibur?
We inhabit a Rome held up for the most part by slender
Props; since that's the way management stop the buildings
Falling down; once they've covered some ancient yawning
Crack, they'll tell us to sleep soundly at the edge of ruin.
The place to live is far from all these fires, and all these
Panics in the night. Ucalegon is already summoning a hose,
Moving his things, and your third floor's already smoking:
You're unaware; since if the alarm was raised downstairs,
The last to burn will be the one a bare tile protects from
The rain, up there where gentle doves coo over their eggs.
Cordus had a bed, too small for Procula, and six little jugs
Of earthenware to adorn his sideboard and, underneath it,
A little Chiron, a Centaur made of that very same 'marble'
And a box somewhat aged now, to hold his Greek library,
So the barbarous mice gnawed away at immortal verse.
Cordus had nothing, who could demur? Yet, poor man,
He lost the whole of that nothing. And the ultimate peak
Of his misery, is that naked and begging for scraps, no one
Will give him a crust, or a hand, or a roof over his head.
If Assaracus's great mansion is lost, his mother's in mourning,
The nobles wear black, and the praetor adjourns his hearing.
Then we bewail the state of Rome, then we despair of its fires.
While it's still burning, they're rushing to offer marble, already,
Collect donations; one man contributes nude gleaming statues,
Another Euphranor's master-works, or bronzes by Polyclitus,
Or antique ornaments that once belonged to some Asian god,
Here books and bookcases, a Minerva to set in their midst,
There a heap of silver. Persicus, wealthiest of the childless,
Is there to replace what's lost with more, and better things.
He's suspected, and rightly so, of setting fire to his house.

If you could tear yourself from the Games, you could buy
A most excellent place, at Sora, at Fabrateria or Frusino,
For the annual rent you pay now, for a tenement in Rome.
There you'd have a garden, and a well not deep enough
To demand a rope, so easy watering of your tender plants.
Live as a lover of the hoe, and the master of a vegetable bed,
From which a hundred vegetarian Pythagoreans could be fed.
You'd be somebody, whatever the place, however remote,
If only because you'd be the master of a solitary lizard.

SatIII:232-267 And Then There's the Traffic

Many an invalid dies from insomnia here, though the illness
Itself is caused by partially digested food, that clings tight
To the fevered stomach; for, where can you lodge and enjoy
A good night's sleep? You have to be filthy rich to find rest
In Rome. That's the source of our sickness. The endless traffic
In narrow twisting streets, and the swearing at stranded cattle,
Would deprive a Claudius of sleep, or the seals on the shore.
When duty calls, the crowd gives way as the rich man's litter,
Rushes by, right in their faces, like some vast Liburnian galley,
While he reads, writes, sleeps inside, while sped on his way:
You know how a chair with shut windows makes you drowsy!
Yet, he gets there first: as I hasten, the tide ahead obstructs me,
And the huge massed ranks that follow behind crush my kidneys;
This man sticks out his elbow, that one flails with a solid pole,
This man strikes my head with a beam, that one with a barrel.
Legs caked with mud, I'm forever trampled by mighty feet
From every side, while a soldier's hobnailed boot pierces my toe.
Do you see all the smoke that rises, to celebrate a hand-out?
There's a hundred diners each followed by his portable kitchen.
Corbulo, that huge general, could scarce carry all those vast pots,
With all the rest that the poor little slave transports, on his head.
Fanning the oven, he runs along, his body held perfectly upright.
Recently-mended tunics are ripped, while a long fir log judders
As it looms near, while another cart's bearing a whole pine-tree.
They teeter threateningly over the heads of those people below.
Now, if that axle breaks under the weight of Ligurian marble,
And spills an upturned mountain on top of the dense crowd,
What will be left of the bodies? What limbs, what bones will

Survive? Every man's corpse wholly crushed will vanish along
With his soul. Meanwhile his household, oblivious, are scouring
The dishes; are puffing their cheeks at the embers; are clattering
The oily back-scrapers; by full oil-flasks, arranging the towels.
The slave-boys bustle about on various tasks, while their master,
Is now a newcomer on the banks of the Styx, shuddering there
At the hideous ferryman, without hope, poor wretch, of a ride
Over the muddy river, and no coin in his mouth for the fare.

SatIII:268-314 And The Violence

And now let's consider all the other varied dangers, at night:
What a long way it is for a tile from the highest roof to fall
On your head; how often a cracked and leaky pot plunges down
From a sill; what a crash when they strike the pavement, chipping
And cracking the stones. If you go out to dinner without making
A will, you're thought of as simply careless, dismissive of those
Tragic events that occur: there are as many opportunities to die,
As there are open windows watching you, when you go by, at night.
So I'd make a wretched wish and a prayer, as you go, that they'll
Rest content with simply emptying their brimming pots over you.
The impudent drunk's annoyed if by chance there's no one at all
To set upon, spending the whole night grieving, like Achilles for
His friend, lying now on his face, and then, turning onto his back:
Since it's the only way he can tire himself; it takes a brawl or two
To send him to sleep. But however worked up he is, fired by youth
And neat wine, he steers clear of him in the scarlet cloak, who issues
A warning as he goes on his way, with his long retinue of attendants,
And plenty of torches besides and lamps of bronze. Yet despises me,
As I pass by, by the light of the moon, as usual, or the flickering light
Of a candle, whose wick I take great care off, and cautiously regulate.
Take note of the setting awaiting a wretched fight, if you call it a fight
Where one of us lashes out, and the other one, me, takes a beating.
He stands up, and he tells me to stop. I've no choice but to obey;
What can you do, when a madman is giving the orders, who's stronger
Than you as well? "Where've you been?" he shouts, "Whose sour wine
And beans have you been downing? Which shoemaker's were you at,
Filling your face with boiled sheep's head, gorging it on fresh leeks?
Nothing to say? You'd better speak up fast, or get a good kicking!
Tell me where you're staying: what far field are you praying in?"

If you try to say something, or try to retreat in silence, it's all the same:
He'll give you a thumping regardless, and then still full of anger, say
He's suing you for assault. This is the freedom accorded to the poor:
When they're beaten, knocked down by fists, they can beg and plead
To be allowed to make their way home afterwards with a few teeth left.
And that's not all we need to fear; there'll be no shortage of thieves
To rob you, when the houses are all locked up, when all the shutters
In front of the shops have been chained and fastened, everywhere silent.
And, ever so often, there's a vagabond with a sudden knife at work:
Whenever the Pontine Marsh, or the Gallinarian Forest and its pines,
Are temporarily rendered safe by an armed patrol, the rogues skip
From there to here, heading for Rome as if to a game preserve.
Where is the furnace or anvil not employed for fashioning chains?
The bulk of our iron is turned into fetters; you should worry about
An imminent shortage of ploughshares, a lack of mattocks and hoes.
You might call our distant ancestors fortunate, fortunate those ages
Long ago, when lives were lived under the rule of kings and tribunes,
Those generations, that witnessed a Rome where a single prison sufficed.

SatIII:315-322 So Farewell!

I could add a host of other reasons to these, but the beasts of burden
Are braying, the sun is setting. It's time for me to leave; the muleteer
Has been waving his whip, to signal he's been ready to go for a while.
So farewell, keep me in your memory, and whenever Rome sends
You hastening back, for a rest in the country, to your own Aquinum,
Invite me from Cumae too, to visit the Ceres of Helvius, and your
Diana. I'll come in my nail-shod boots, I'll come and visit your chilly
Fields, and, if they're not totally shameful, I'll listen to your Satires.'

End of Satire III

Satire IV: Mock Epic

SatIV:1-33 Crispinus and the Mullet

Behold, Crispinus again! He's someone I'll often call on
To play a part, a monster without one redeeming virtue
To offset his faults, a weakling, strong only in lechery,
An adulterer, who rejects none but unmarried women.
What matter how extensive the porticoes are where he
Wears out his mules; how vast the groves where he's borne
Beneath the shade; how many acres of palace he's bought
Near the Forum? No miscreant's happy, least of all a sinful
Seducer, who recently slept with a priestess in a headband;
And she now destined to be punished, by being buried alive.
So, on to his lighter sins: all the same, if another had done
The deed, he'd be convicted by the Censor, for lax morals,
For what's normal in a Crispinus is criminal in another,
In a Titius or Seius. What can you do when the man himself
Is more dreadful and dire than any accusation you can bring?
He bought a red mullet, matched its weight in gold pieces,
Sixty, in fact, as those assert who'd make the gross, grosser.
I might praise his cunning plan, if with a gift so rare he stole
First place in the sealed will of some fond childless old man;
Or better still, sent it along to some high-ranking mistress,
Who rides along in that closed litter with the wide windows.
No way! It was for himself! Oh, we witness many things now,
The poor, miserly gourmet, Apicius, failed to enact. Did you,
Crispinus, clad in your native Egyptian papyrus dress, pay
As much, then, for fish-scales? Likely the fisherman could
Have been bought for less than the fish; land's cheap too
In the provinces but fetches a whole lot more in Apulia.
Imagine what kind of feasts the Emperor himself guzzled
In those days, if so many silver coins, a tiny fraction,
A side-dish from a moderate repast, were belched forth
By a purple-clad clown attached to the Great Palace,
Now a great leader of horsemen, who used to shout
His wares, dealing in fellow catfish from a rotten haul!

SatIV:34-71 The Enormous Turbot

Begin, Muse. And Calliope, you may be seated: this is no
Recitation, the truth's our theme. Come, girls of Pieria, tell
Your story, and may my terming you girls do me some good.
In the days when Rome was that bald Nero, Domitian's slave,
When that last of the Flavians was mangling a dying world,
A marvellous hulk of an Adriatic turbot came to light,
Below the Temple of Venus that graces Doric Ancona,
Filled the net, and stuck fast, no smaller than those fish
The Sea of Azov hides, that when the sun melts the ice
At last, find their way down to the Black Sea straits,
Bloated from long idleness and from the enduring cold.
The monster was marked down by the controller of boats
And nets, for his High Priest, the Emperor. After all,
Who'd dare sell or buy such a thing when even the beaches
Were covered with spies? Like a shot, the inspectors of seaweed
Everywhere, would tackle a naked oarsmen, and claim
That the fish was, without shadow of doubt, a fugitive
That had swum for long ages in Caesar's fishpond, and as
A prisoner on the run, must return to its former master.
If we're to believe Palfurius, or heed what Armillatus says,
Whatever is rare and particularly fine in the whole ocean
Belongs to the treasury, wherever it swims. Donated thus,
It can't go to waste. Now with fading autumn giving way
To frost, now with invalids prone to less frequent fevers,
Foul winter's keen weather served to keep the catch fresh;
Nonetheless, the fisherman hurried, urged by the wintry wind.
When the lake lay below, where ruined Alba tends the Trojan
Flame and worships at the shrine of the lesser Vesta,
A wondering crowd obstructed his entrance for a time.
When they yielded, the gates swung open on oiled hinges;
The senators, excluded, watched the fish enter and travel,
Straight to Agamemnon, where, the fisherman from Picenum
Said: 'Accept a gift too large for a private kitchen. Make this
A holiday. Hasten to fill your stomach with this rich food,
Consume this turbot preserved for your glorious reign.
It longed to be caught, itself.' What flattery! All the same
The cock's crest rose. There's nothing the powerful
Won't believe of themselves, when praised to the skies.

SatIV:72-129 The Summoning of the Council

Yet a dish was lacking large enough for the fish. So
The nobles, the Emperor hated, were summoned to a council,
Displaying in their faces the pallor of that vast and terrible
Friendship. The first to snatch up his cloak and hasten there,
As the Liburnian slave was calling: 'Hurry, he's seated now'
Was Plotius Pegasus, slave – what else were prefects then,
After all? – appointed to oversee a startled Rome, the best,
Most incorruptible, of jurists, one who thought that however
Dreadful the times, justice should be weighed without violence.
The aged and amiable Quintus Crispus was there as well,
A gentle soul, with a character to match his eloquence.
How much more useful a courtier he'd have been to that king
Of nations, lands and seas, if only he'd been allowed, while
Serving that ruinous plague, to condemn cruelty and offer
Honourable advice! But what's more deaf than the ear of a
Tyrant? On his whim hangs the fate of a friend, who simply
Wants to speak of rain, heat, or the poor spring weather.
Thus, Crispus never extended his arms against the flood,
Not being the kind of citizen to dare to offer his thoughts
Freely, nor one to put his life at risk for the sake of truth.
That's how he managed eighty summers and as many
Winters, protected by such armour even in that court.
Hurrying along with him came his peer, Acilius Aviola,
With a young son, Glabrio, whom a cruel death awaited,
So swiftly dealt by the master's sword; though it's long
Been a miracle to survive to old age among the nobility,
Which is why I prefer to remain a nobody on this earth.
It only brought that youth misery to appear as a naked
Hunter in the Alban arena, tackling bears at close quarters.
Who, after all, isn't wise to aristocratic arts these days?
Who'd be amazed at your pretences now Lucius Brutus?
It was easier in those days to impose on a bearded king.
No less in appearance, despite his humble background
Came Rubrius Gallus, guilty of an old unmentionable
Offence, yet more perverse than a pathic scribbling satire.
Montanus's belly was present too, with weighty paunch;
And Crispinus drenched in that morning's perfume,
Scarcely less odorous than a funeral cortege or two; more

Ruthless still, Pompeius, men killed at his slightest whisper;
Fuscus whose guts Dacia's vultures were destined to enjoy,
And who meditated battles in his marble villa; prudent Veiento,
In company with the deadly Lucius Catullus Messalinus,
Inflamed with passion for a girl he had never seen,
He'd be a great and notable monster even in our day,
A blind sycophant, and a terrifying hired accomplice,
Worthy to be one of those beggars blowing obsequious
Kisses at the wheels of your carriage on the hill at Aricia.
None was more impressed with the turbot; for he made
A long speech to his left, though the fish was on his right,
Which is how he used to praise the Cilician fist fights,
And the wires that whisk lads high up above the stage.
Veiento not to be outdone, like your fanatics, Bellona,
Goaded to ritual frenzy, prophesied: 'Here is the mighty
Omen of a magnificent and glorious triumph to come.
You'll net a king, or Arvigarus will fall from his British
Chariot.' 'This fish is a new species: do you see the spikes
Bristling from its spine?' The only thing Fabricius failed
To mention was the turbot's place of birth, and its age.

SatIV:130-154 The Council's Advice

'So what do you recommend? Should we chop it in half?'
'Spare it such outrage' cried Montanus, 'have a deep dish
Made, thin-sided, but large enough for its vast dimensions.
We need a prompt and mighty potter, like Prometheus.
Ready the wheel and the clay swiftly, and from this time
Forth, let there be potters, Caesar, among your servants.'
The proposal, worthy of the man, won the day. He'd known
The excesses of the old Imperium, and Nero's late hours,
The famished feeling at midnight, when Falernian wine
Gives heartburn. No one today has greater knowledge where
Food's concerned: at first bite he could tell if the oysters
Came from Circeii, the Lucrine Lake, or the Kentish Coast
By Richborough, or at a glance, a sea-urchin's native shore.
They rose, the council over, the nobles ordered to leave,
Whom the great leader had called to his Alban fortress,
Forced to hasten there, gathered together in surprise,
As though he'd news of the Chatti or fierce Sygambri,

As though a disturbing letter had arrived on frantic wings,
Sent swiftly from some far-distant region of the world.
Oh, if only he'd chosen to devote the whole of that age, given
To savagery, to such trivia, instead of depriving Rome of great
And illustrious spirits, with impunity, and none to take revenge!
Yet he perished as soon as the working man began to fear him:
It did for him, to be drenched in the Lamia family's blood.

End of Satire IV

Satire V: Patron and Client

SatV:1-24 Payment in Kind

If you're not yet ashamed of the way you live, if you think
That the highest good is still to live off another's leavings,
And can suffer the treatment Sarmenus or Gabba, the fool,
Endured at Augustus's table, where not all men were equal,
Though you swore on oath, I'd still hesitate to trust you.
I know nothing's nobler than the belly; yet, nonetheless,
If you lack whatever it takes to fill your empty stomach:
Is there no beggar's pitch vacant? No archway or lesser
Half of a mat somewhere? Are insults for dinner worth it?
Are you as famished as that? Wouldn't it be more honest
To shiver outside, and gnaw bread left behind by the dogs?
In the first place, understand that being invited to dinner
Will be treated as payment in full for all your past service.
Great friendship's reward is food: and your lord will enter it
In the accounts, however infrequent the dinner. Each couple
Of months, if he wishes, he'll invite a neglected client to eat,
So that the third cushion on some unfilled couch isn't vacant,
'Let's get together' he'll say. It's the height of your wishes.
What more could you want? Now Trebius has reason to break
His rest, and take to his heels, anxious lest the whole crowd
Of dawn visitors has already been round to greet the patron,
While the stars are still fading in the sky or even at an hour
When tardy Bootes' frosty wagon is still wheeling around.

SatV:25-65 Dinner With The Patron – The Drink

And what a dinner! You'll get wine too dry for cotton-wool
To absorb: you'll watch the guests turn into wild Corybants.
Brawls break out, but once you're hit you'll be hurling cups
Too, and dabbing at your wounds with a reddened napkin,
That's what happens as the battle rages between the guests
And the crowd of freedmen, with Spanish ware as missiles.
The patron meanwhile sips old wine, bottled when Consuls
Wore their hair long, and gets stewed on a vintage trodden
During the Social Wars, yet denies his dyspeptic friend a drop.
Tomorrow he'll get himself drunk on something from Setian

Or Alban hills, its name and vineyard erased by time, layers
Of soot coating the ancient jar, a wine that Thrasea Paetus
And Helvidius Priscus used to drink, wearing their garlands
To honour the birth of Cassius, Marcus Brutus, and his brother.
Virro, the patron, himself, drinks from capacious goblets, tiled
With amber, encrusted with beryl. You're not allowed their gold,
Or, if you are handed one, there's a servant guarding your place,
Counting the gems, keeping his eye on your sharp fingernails.
Forgive the patron: the splendour of his jasper's widely praised.
Virro, like many another, transfers from his fingers to the cups
Gemstones that might have decorated the front of the scabbard
Of Aeneas, that youth who Dido loved more than jealous Iarbas.
While you'll drain a Vatinian cup, its four nozzles like the nose
Of that cobbler of Beneventum for which it was named, cracked
Already, its broken glass due to be traded for sulphur matches.
If the patron's stomach's heated by food and wine, then distilled
Water cooler than frost in Thrace is ordered. Just now, was I
Complaining you'll not be served from the same bottle of wine?
Well, you'll drink different water too, your cup will be handed
You by some Gaetolian footman, or black bony Moroccan hand,
By one of those folk you'd not like to encounter at midnight
As you're carried past those tombs on the hilly Via Latina.
The flower of Asia serve the patron, bought for a higher price
Than all the wealth of those warrior kings Tullus and Ancus
Or, to be brief, all the trinkets of the richest rulers of Rome.
That being so, when you're thirsty, you'll be required to catch
The eye of your African Ganymede. A boy bought for so many
Thousands hasn't the time to be mixing drinks for paupers,
His looks and youth justify his scorn. When will he get to you?
When will the server of hot and cold water answer your plea?
Of course he's annoyed at having to answer to some old client
Who keeps asking for things, reclining there, while he stands.

SatV:66-155 Dinner With The Patron – The Food

The greatest houses are always full of arrogant slaves.
Behold another, grumbling as he offers you scarcely
Breakable bread, lumps of solid crust already mouldy,
That exercise your molars, while thwarting your bite.
While that reserved for the patron is soft snowy-white

Kneaded from finest flour. Remember to stay your hand;
The baking-tray must be granted respect; if you show
Presumption notwithstanding, a slave orders you to stop:
'Impertinent guest, please address the proper basket,
Have you forgotten which bread's reserved for you?'
'Was it for this, then, I left wife and home so often
To go scurrying up the Esquiline's freezing slope,
While the spring-time skies hurled down savage hail,
In a cloak soaked through by the endless cloudbursts?'
Look at the size of that lobster they bring the patron,
How it adorns the dish, how it's hedged all round
By asparagus, how it's tail scorns the diners, on entry,
Carried along, on high, in the hands of a tall attendant.
While you're served crayfish cupped by half an egg,
A morsel only fit for a funeral, on a miniscule plate.
The patron dips his seafood in Venafran olive oil, but the
Sallow cabbage they offer to poor you stinks of the lamp.
The oil provided for all your dishes is brought upstream
In one of those beak-nosed craft, of Numidian reeds,
Which is why the Romans won't bathe with Africans,
Since their oil protects them from the black snakes too.
That mullet the patron eats comes from Corsica or from
The cliffs below Taormina, since our waters are already
Quite fished-out, totally exhausted by raging gluttony;
The market-makers so continually raking the shallows
With their nets, that the fry are never allowed to mature.
So the provinces stock our kitchens, they're the source
Of what Laenas the legacy-hunter buys, and Aemilia sells.
Virro, our patron's served with a lamprey, the largest
Out of Messina's straits; for when the south-wind rests
And squats there in his cave, drying his dripping wings,
The nets defy Charybdis, the whirlpool, with temerity.
But what awaits you is an eel, the stringy snake's relative,
Or a fish from the Tiber, covered with grey-green blotches,
Slave of its shores like you, fed from the flowing sewer,
And a denizen of that drain beneath the heart of Subura.
I'd like a word with the patron, if only he'd lend a willing ear.
No one expects those gifts any more Seneca used to send
To his humble friends, that good Piso or Cotta Maximus
Would dispense, for the honour of giving was once prized

More highly than the symbols and titles of public office:
All we ask is that you treat us courteously. Do that and be
As lavish with yourself as others, stingy with your friends.
A huge goose-liver is set before the patron, a fat fowl
As big as a goose, and a frothing boar worthy of blond
Meleager's spear. After that he'll eat truffles, if it's spring,
When hoped-for thunderstorms swell them and the menu.
'You can keep your corn,' Alledius says, 'Libya, unyoke
Your team, just as long as you keep sending these truffles.'
Meanwhile, not to spare your indignation, you can watch
The carver flourish his knife, and dance about, and mime,
While he acts out every one of his master's instructions.
And, no doubt, it's a matter of no little importance
To carve the hare or chicken with appropriate gestures.
If you're ever tempted to open your mouth, as if owning
To a free man's first, last and middle name, you'll be hauled
Out feet first, and ejected, as Cacus was handled by Hercules.
Why should Virro accept a cup tainted by your lips, to drink
Your health? Who's so mad or reckless he'll call out
'Cheers!' to a patron? There's many a thing a man won't
Dare to say, while he's wearing a coat that's full of holes.
But if some god, or godlike figure, kinder than fate, gave you
Four thousand in gold, a knight's fortune, how swiftly then
You'd turn from a nobody into one of Virro's dear friends!
'Serve Trebius, give Trebius some! Would you like a little
Of this loin, brother?' Oh, Mammon, the honour's yours,
It's you who are his brother. And if you want to be a lord
Or an overlord, don't cherish a little Aeneas playing about
Your hall, or a little daughter even dearer to you than him.
A barren wife will render you a nearer and sweeter friend.
Yet nowadays it's fine if your Mycale gives birth, and spills
Three sons at a time into their father's lap, your patron will
Delight in your noisy nest. He'll provide a chariot-team
Jersey, in green; the neatest of nuts; and pennies if asked,
Whenever your infant parasite approaches him at dinner.
Lowly friends are served dubious fungi, while the master
Eats mushrooms, though of the type Claudius ate before
The kind his wife served, after which he ate nothing more.
Virro will call for apples for himself and the other Virros,
Apples whose scent is a meal on its own, the kind of fruit

That the perpetual autumn of Homer's Phaeacia produced,
Stolen you might think from the Hesperides' golden bough:
Your treat's a scabby apple, like one gnawed by that creature,
That monkey on the Embankment, in helm and shield, that fear
Of the whip taught how to hurl spears, from a hairy goat's back.

SatV:156-173 What Humiliation!

Perhaps you think Virro's intent on saving money. No,
He does it to grieve you; for what comedy, what mime
Is better than a groaning stomach? So his whole aim,
If you'd know, is to see you vent your anger in tears,
And make sure you'll never stop gnashing your teeth.
You see yourself as a free man, as your lord's guest:
While he thinks you're enslaved by the smell of food;
And he's not wrong; for what free-born child that's worn
The gold Etruscan amulet, or the pauper's knotted thong,
Could be so nakedly desperate as to endure him twice,
Unless the hope of dining well ensnared them. 'Behold,
Now he sends us half-eaten hare, or a bit of boar-haunch,
Now a puny bird's on the way.' So you all wait in silence,
Clasping your untouched bread. Oh, he understands it all,
He who treats you like this. If you'll suffer it, then you
Deserve it too. Soon, you'll be offering your head to be
Slapped and shaved, and you won't be afraid to endure
The whip: that's the dinner and friend you're worthy of!

End of Satire V

Satire VI: Don't Marry

SatVI:1-24 Chastity Has Vanished

I believe that Chastity lingered on earth in Saturn's reign,
And long-endured, throughout that age when a chilly cave
Offered a modest home, enclosed a fire, gods of the hearth,
And the master and herd as well, in its communal gloom,
When a wife from the hills made up a woodland bed
With leaves and straw, and the pelts of wild beasts, her
Neighbours. She wasn't you, Cynthia, nor you, Lesbia
Your bright eyes dimmed at the death of your sparrow,
She offered her breasts for her mighty infants to drain,
And was often hairier than her acorn-belching husband.
You see, when the world was new, the heavens young,
People lived differently, lacking parents as they did,
Born instead from cleft oak-trees, or shaped from mud.
And perhaps some traces or other of Chastity survived
Under Jupiter too, though long before Jupiter had grown
A beard, and the Greeks began to swear by other names;
When no man feared his apples or greens would be stolen,
And folk lived with their orchards and gardens un-walled.
It was later that with Justice, Astraea, her friend, she left
For the sky above, those two sisters flitting away together.
It's an ancient tradition, Postumus, to thrash an alien bed,
And make light of the sacred spirit of the marriage-couch.
Every other crime came later, spawned by the age of iron:
But the silver age it was, that witnessed the first adulterers.

SatVI:25-59 You're Mad To Marry!

Are you, in this day and age, ready for an agreement,
A contract, the wedding vows, having your hair done
By a master-barber, your finger already wearing the pledge?
Postumus, you were sane once. Are you really taking a wife?
Which Tisiphone is it, with her snakes, driving you mad?
You surely don't have to endure it, with so much rope about,
Those vertiginous windows open, the Aemilian bridge at hand?
If none of these multiple exits please you, wouldn't a boyfriend
Suit you better, one who would share your bed, a boyfriend

Who wouldn't quarrel all night; wouldn't demand from you
As he lies there, little gifts; and wouldn't complain that your
Body was idle, that you weren't breathing hard, as ordered.
'But Ursidius is marrying, he approves of the Julian Law,
He intends to raise a sweet heir, and forgo his plump doves,
His bearded mullet, all his hunts through the meat market.'
Well nothing's impossible, then, if Ursidius is wedding
Someone! If he, who was once the most noted of seducers,
He, so often concealed in a chest, like Latinus in the farce,
Is placing his foolish head in the marital halter! And that's
Not all, you say, he seeks a wife with traditional virtues?
O, good doctor, relieve the pressure on that swollen vein!
What a fastidious man! Go prostrate yourself in worship
At the Tarpeian shrine, go sacrifice a gilded heifer to Juno,
If you should happen to find a woman whose life is chaste.
There are so few of them fit to touch Ceres' sacred ribbons,
Whose kisses wouldn't appal their fathers. Fasten a garland
To your doorpost if you do, deck the lintel with marriage ivy.
Is one man enough for Hiberina, then? She'd sooner confess
Under torture to being happy with only one of her eyes.
'There's a girl on her father's estate in the country whose
Reputation is good.' Try her at Gabii, not in the country,
Try her at Fidenae, then I'll grant you the father's farm.
Who says she's not been carrying on in the caves or on
The hills? Have Jupiter and Mars gone into retirement?

SatVI:60-81 Look At Them In The Theatre

Can you find any woman that's worthy of you, under
Our porticoes? Does any seat at the theatre hold one
You could take from there, and love with confidence?
When sinuous Bathyllus dances his pantomime Leda,
Tucia loses control of her bladder, and Apula yelps,
As if she were making love, with sharp tedious cries.
Thymele attends: naive Thymele learns something.
But the rest, when the stage-sets are packed away,
When the theatre's locked, and the only sound's outside,
When the People's Games and the Megalesian are done,
Clutch sadly at Accius' mask, his wand, or his tights.
Urbicus, in the Atellan farce, in his role as Autonoe

Invokes a laugh, and lo, penniless Aelia falls in love.
They'll pay a fortune to get an actor's clasp undone,
They'll halt Chrysogonus's singing. Hispulla's mad
For a tragedian: you think it's Quintilian they fall for?
You're marrying a woman who'll make Echion a father,
Glaphyrus, the lyre-players, or Ambrosius with his pipe.
Let's set up platforms stretching along the narrow streets,
And decorate the doorposts and lintels with laurel boughs,
So your noble child, dear Lentulus, there in his tortoiseshell
Cradle, shall remind us of Euryalus, perhaps, the gladiator!

SatVI:82-113 What About Eppia?

Eppia, wife of a senator, ran off with the gladiators
To Pharos, to the Nile, and notorious Alexandria;
Even decadent Canopus condemned immoral Rome;
She forgot her home, her husband, deserted her sister,
Shamelessly, left her country, her wailing children,
And, amazingly, Paris her actor, and the Games.
Though, as a child of a wealthy family, she once slept
In a richly decorated cradle on soft, downy pillows,
That sea voyage concerned her little; nor her reputation,
Which is ever the least of losses to such ladies of luxury.
And, with a firm spirit, she endured Tyrrhenian waves,
The Ionian Sea's vast roar, though she was often hurled
From one abyss to another. Though the reason be just
And virtuous, for taking risks, women are still afraid,
Their hearts frozen with terror, trembling in every limb:
Yet they're courageous when daring shameful things.
If a husband demands it; then, boarding ship's a pain,
The bilge is sickening, sky spinning round and round.
But with a lover, her stomach's fine. A wife will vomit
Over her husband, a mistress eat with the sailors, stride
The deck, and delight in handling the stubborn rigging.
Was it good looks and youthfulness set Eppia on fire?
What did she see in him to endure being classed with
The gladiators? After all, her Sergius had already begun
To smooth his throat, an injured arm presaged retirement;
And his face was seriously disfigured, a furrow chafed
By his helmet, a huge lump on the bridge of his nose,

And a nasty condition provoking a forever-weeping eye.
He was a gladiator, though. That makes them Hyacinthus;
That's why she preferred him to children and country,
Husband and sister. They love the steel. That same Sergius
Once discharged, would have dwindled to poor Veiento.

SatVI:114-135 Or Messalina?

Are you worried by Eppia's tricks, of a non-Imperial kind?
Take a look at the rivals of the gods; hear how Claudius
Suffered. When his wife, Messalina, knew he was asleep,
She would go about with no more than a maid for escort.
The Empress dared, at night, to wear the hood of a whore,
And she preferred a mat to her bed in the Palatine Palace.
Dressed in that way, with a blonde wig hiding her natural
Hair, she'd enter a brothel that stank of old soiled sheets,
And make an empty cubicle, her own; then sell herself,
Her nipples gilded, naked, taking She-Wolf for a name,
Displaying the belly you came from, noble Britannicus,
She'd flatter her clients on entry, and take their money.
Then lie there obligingly, delighting in every stroke.
Later on, when the pimp dismissed his girls, she'd leave
Reluctantly, waiting to quit her cubicle there, till the last
Possible time, her taut sex still burning, inflamed with lust,
Then she'd leave, exhausted by man, but not yet sated,
A disgusting creature with filthy face, soiled by the lamp's
Black, taking her brothel-stench back to the Emperor's bed.
Shall I speak of spells and love-potions too, poisons brewed,
And stepsons murdered? The sex do worse things, driven on
By the urgings of power: their crimes of lust are the least of it.

SatVI:136-160 The Rich and Beautiful

'Then why does Caesennia's husband swear she's the perfect wife?'
She brought him ten thousand in gold, enough to call her chaste.
He's not been hit by Venus's arrows, or scorched by her torch:
It's the money he's aflame with, her dowry launched the darts.
Her freedom's bought. She can flirt, wave her love-letters in his
Face: she's a single woman still: a rich man marries for greed.
'Why then does Sertorius burn with love, for Bibula, his wife?

If you want the truth, it's the face he fell for, and not the bride.
The moment she's a wrinkle or two, her skin's dry and flabby,
Her teeth become discoloured, her eyes like beads in her head,
'Pack your bags' she'll hear his freedman cry, 'Away with you.
Nothing but a nuisance now, always blowing your nose. Be off,
Make it snappy. There's a dry nose coming to take your place.'
Meanwhile she's hot, she reigns, demanding of her husband
Canusian sheep and shepherds, demanding Falernian vines –
Such tiny requests! – his house-slaves, those in the prison gangs,
Whatever her neighbour has, her house lacks, must be bought.
Then from the Campus where the booths hide Jason in winter,
His Argonauts too, concealed, behind their whitened canvas,
She'll bear away crystal vases, huge, the largest pieces of agate,
And some legendary diamond made the more precious by once
Gracing Berenice's finger, a gift to his incestuous sister from
Barbarous Herod Agrippa, a present for her, in far-off Judaea,
Where barefoot kings observe their day of rest on the Sabbath,
And their tradition grants merciful indulgence to elderly pigs.

SatVI:161-199 Who Could Stand A Perfect Wife?

'Isn't there a single one worthy of you, in all that vast flock?'
Let her be lovely, gracious, rich, and fertile; let her exhibit her
Ancestors' faces round her porticos; be more virginal than the
Sabine women, with tangled hair, who ended war with Rome;
A rare bird on this earth, in the very likeness of a black swan;
Who could stand a wife who embodied all of that? I'd rather,
Much rather, have Venustina than you, Cornelia, O Mother
Of the Gracchi, if that proud expression has to accompany
Your weighty virtues, if triumphs are part of your dowry.
Spare us your father's defeat of Hannibal, please! Or Syphax,
Beaten in camp: vanish, now, with all of Scipio's Carthage!
'Mercy, Apollo, we pray, and you, Goddess, drop your arrows;
Her lads are innocent: Niobe, the mother's, the one to shoot!'
Though Amphion may shout that, Apollo still draws his bow.
That's how Niobe did for her flock of sons and the father too,
By thinking herself more noble than Latona's divine children,
While proving more fertile than the white sow of Alba Longa.
What's it worth, all the grace, the beauty, if you're evermore
In her debt? There's no pleasure in all those rare and exalted

Virtues, if the woman, spoilt by pride, comes dripping with
Bitter aloes not honey. Who, however devoted, doesn't loathe
The wife he lavishes so much praise on? Who's so devoted he
Can't hate her, too, for seven hours or so out of every twelve?
Some faults may be minor, yet too much for husbands to take.
What's more disgusting than this reality; no woman considers
Herself a beauty, unless she's transformed herself from Tuscan
To Greek, abandoned Sulmo for Athens? Every sigh's in Greek:
It's far less attractive to them to show their ignorance in Latin.
They tell their fears, it's Greek, vent their angers, joys, cares,
The secrets of their souls, it's Greek. What else? When they
Make love, it's Greek! Though you might grant it in some
Slip of a girl, if you're knocking on eighty-six, should it still
Be Greek? Such language is surely not decent for elderly
Women. Whenever that lascivious *ζωή και ψυχή* 'My life,
My soul' emerges, you're using words in public only ever
To be uttered under the sheets. What loins aren't warmed
By that seductive and idle phrase? It has legs. Yet, to ruffle
Your fine feathers, though you articulate, more sweetly than
Haemus or Carpophorus, your age is still visible on your face.

SatVI:200-230 The Way They Lord It Over You!

If you're not going to love the woman betrothed and joined
To you by lawful contract, there'd appear to be no reason for
Getting married, nor for wasting time on a feast with its cakes
For bloated guests at the end, or for that first night gift, when
DACIA, GERMANY, Trajan, in victory, gleam in gold on fine plate.
But if you're simply uxorious, if your heart's given to her alone,
Then bow your head, prepare to place your neck under the yoke.
You'll not find any woman who'll spare a man who loves her.
Though she's on fire, she'll still love to torture and fleece him;
So much the less suitable as wife, then, for a man who wishes
To be a good and desirable husband. And you'll never be able
To send a gift if your bride objects, you'll never be able to sell
A thing if she happens to disagree, nor buy one if she says no.
She'll control your affections: the friend whose first beard your
Threshold witnessed, older now: he'll be barred from the door.
She'll dictate your heirs, more than one will turn out to be your
Rival, though even pimps and trainers of charioteers are free,

To act as they wish, in a will; the arena enjoys the same right.
'Crucify that slave!' What's the crime of his that deserves it?
Where's the witness? Who accused him? Grant him a hearing.
One can never be over-cautious when a human life is at stake.'
'You fool, is a slave human? Even though he's done nothing:
I wish it, so I command it, let my will be sufficient reason.'
That's how she orders her husband about. Yet she'll as soon
Abdicate, change her home, re-use her bridal veil; then flit
Off again, and return, to her imprint in the bed she rejected,
Forsaking the freshly-decked doorways, newly-hung drapes,
The branches, still green as yet, that decorate the threshold.
That's how the score increases, that's how she gets though eight
Husbands in five autumns, a fitting epitaph to place on her grave.

SatVI:231-285 They Do As They Wish

Despair of any harmony if your mother-in-law's alive.
She'll teach a daughter how to strip her husband bare;
She'll teach her how to reply to letters seducers send,
In a manner neither simple nor uncultured; she'll outwit
Your guardians; buy them. Though she's perfectly well,
She'll call Archigenes, tossing her heavy sheets around.
Meanwhile, secretly, the lover lies there concealed,
Waiting impatient and silent, and toying with his cock.
You don't really expect the mother, to pass on honest
Behaviour, morals other than her own? Its appropriate
That a vile old woman begets an equally vile daughter.
There's rarely a lawsuit brought a woman didn't begin.
Manilia will accuse, unless she's maybe the defendant.
They'll even compose and construct the brief themselves,
Ready to dictate Celsus' headings and opening speech.
Who doesn't know those sports-wraps of Tyrian purple;
The female wrestling ring; who hasn't seen the battered
Training-post, hacked by repeated sword-blows, scarred by
Her shield. The girl's fully trained, totally qualified, ready
For the fanfare and fights at the Floralia, unless that is she
Plans something more, practises now for the wider arena.
How can you call her decent, a helmeted woman who spurns
Her very own gender? She loves a fight, even so she'd not
Wish to be a man; the pleasure we get is so little, after all,!

What a sight, if they auctioned off the wives' paraphernalia,
The sword-belts, arm-protectors, crests, and the half-size
Left-leg shin-guards! Or if it's a different fight she wages,
How happy you'd be if she managed to sell off her greaves.
Yet these are the girls who sweat in the thinnest dress, whose
Delicate skins are chafed by the smoothest wisps of silk.
Hear her cries as she drives home the thrusts she's learned,
Feel how heavy the helmet is that she bows beneath, see the
Breadth, the thickness, of those bandages round her knees,
And laugh when she takes to a chamber-pot, fully armed!
Grand-daughters of Lepidus, blind Metellus, and Fabius
Maximus Gurges too, what gladiator's wife ever wore stuff
Like this? When did Asylus's wife grunt at the training-post?
The bed that contains a bride is forever filled with quarrelling
And mutual recrimination; there's not much sleep to be got.
When she feels guilty about some secret misdeed then she's
Foul to her man, far worse than a tigress who's lost her cubs,
She feigns anger, hating your slave-boy, complaining about
Some fictitious mistress. She's a flood of tears at the ready,
Always at her command, just waiting for her to instruct them
In what manner of way to flow. And then you think it's love!
You're delighted, you worm, and start kissing away her tears.,
But the love-notes and letters that you'll find yourself reading,
If you ever fling open your jealous adulteress's writing-desk!
Say she's found with a slave or knight, then it's: 'Speak,
Quintilian, speak, give me a line of defence in this situation.'
'I can't. Invent one yourself.' She'll try: 'Long ago we agreed
that you could do as you wished, and that I could indulge in
Whatever I wanted. You can shout all you like, and turn life
Upside down, I'm only human.' Nothing is so audacious as
A woman caught in the act: her guilt fuels anger and defiance.

SatVI:286-313 What Brought All This About?

What brought this monstrous behaviour about, what's its source
You ask? Their lowly status used to keep Latin women chaste,
Hard work kept the corruption of vice from their humble roofs,
And lack of rest, and their hands, then, were chafed and hardened
From handling Tuscan fleeces, when Hannibal neared Rome,
When their husbands manned the towers at the Colline Gate.

Now we suffer the ills of a long peace. Worse for us than war
This luxury's stifling us, taking its revenge for an empire won.
No single kind of crime or act of lust has been lacking, from
The moment we were no longer poor: all vice pours into Rome,
From the Isthmus of Corinth, from Sybaris, Miletus and Rhodes
From insolent Tarentum, garlanded, and sodden with wine.
It was filthy lucre at first that brought these alien morals here,
Effete wealth that's corrupted the present age with revolting
Decadence. Does Venus care about anything when she's drunk?
She no longer knows the difference between head and tail,
She who laps at giant oysters, long, long after midnight,
When the foaming unguent's mixed with pure Falernian,
When they drink from perfume dishes, when the ceiling's
Already whirling, and duplicated lamps dance on the table.
Go on, ask yourself, why Tullia scornfully sniffs the air,
What that infamous Maura's foster-sister says as Maura
Passes by the ancient temple of Chastity in the Forum,
Here's where they halt their litters at night, to make water,
And drench the goddess's statue with flowing streams,
And take it in turns to ride and squirm under the moon.
Then it's off home they go: and when the daylight returns
You'll wade through your wife's urine to call on mighty friends.

SatVI:314-345 The Rites of Bona Dea

All know the secret rites of the Good Goddess, when the pipe
Stirs the loins, and the maenads of Priapus, maddened they say
By wine and horns alike, go tossing their flowing hair about
And howl. O how all their hearts are on fire for sexual pleasure
How they squeal then to the dance of desire, and how powerful
The torrent of undiluted lust that covers their drenched thighs!
Saufeia doffs her garland, challenges the brothel-keeper's
Slave-girls, then goes on to win the prize for shaking her arse,
She herself, in turn, admires Medullina's undulating wiggles:
The contest's between the ladies, their skill matches their birth.
Nothing is simulated in play, everything there is done for real,
Enough to light a spark in Priam, Laomedon's son, grown cold
With furthest age, or even in old Nestor's ruptured scrotum.
Then comes the restless itch of delay, then it's naked woman,
And the shouts from the whole grotto echo there, in unison,

'Now's the moment, admit the men.' If by chance the lover's
Asleep, she'll tell his son to don a hood and hurry to join them;
If that's no use, she'll summon a slave; if there's no prospect
Of slaves, she'll hire the water-man; if he's nowhere to be found,
And there's a lack of men, not a moment slips by, before she'll
Accommodate her arse, freely, to a donkey's rude attentions.
If only our ancient rites, or our state ceremonies at least, might
Be conducted free of such evils; but every India, every Moor
Knows about Clodius Pulcher, dressed as a lute-girl, bringing
A cock, one bigger than both of Caesar's Anti-Cato speeches
Put together, into that place, from which even a male mouse flees
Conscious of its balls; that place where they'll command any picture
To be veiled that happens to portray the form of the opposite sex.
In the old days, what human being ever scorned the gods' powers,
Or dared to laugh at Numa's earthenware libation-bowls, the black
Pots, and the little fragile plates found on the Vatican Hill?
But now does any sacred altar exist that lacks it's own Clodius?

SatVI:Ox1-34 and 346-379 And Those Eunuchs!

In all the houses where men live and entertain who embrace
Obscenity, and whose fidgeting right hands stop at nothing,
You'll find all there resemble a vile bevy of lewd dancers.
These creatures are allowed to soil the food, and stand beside
The sacred table, and cups are washed that should be smashed
If Colocyntha, or bearded Chelidon, have drunk from them.
Thus the gladiator-trainer's place is purer and better than their
Hearths, since in his troop the lightly-armed gladiators are kept
Away from the heavy. And isn't it true that the net-men don't
Associate with the lowly amateurs, that the shoulder-guards
And tridents of naked warriors are never kept in the amateur's
Equipment locker? There's a lowest class for such people
In every school, and heavier fetters for them in every prison.
Yet your wife makes you share the goblet with such objects,
With whom a yellow-haired whore from a ruined tomb
Would refuse to drink, despite the Alban or Surrentine wine.
It's on their advice that women suddenly marry or divorce.
It's with them they share life's boredoms and anxieties. It's
From such teachers they learn how to wiggle their arse and hips,
And whatever else the instructor knows. Yet he's not always

To be trusted: a hair-netted adulterer he'll paint his eyelids
With mascara, and strut around with his saffron gown undone.
You should be the more suspicious, the smoother his voice,
The more often his right hand lingers near his chubby loins.
He'll prove virile enough in bed; there he'll remove his mask,
An expert Triphallus, dancing the part of Alexander's Thais.
'Who do you think you're fooling? Keep that pantomime for
Others! I bet, you're every inch a man. I'd swear it: confess!
Or must we subject the female slaves to the torturer's rack?
I know the warnings and advice that all my old friends offer:
"Lock the door, and keep her close." But who is to guard the
Guardians themselves, when they win a prize for secrecy re
The lewd girl's affairs?' In crime, complicity guarantees silence.
The skilful wife anticipates, and therefore begins with them.
There are women thrilled by effete eunuchs, with their kisses
Ever-gentle, and their hopeless never-to-be-fulfilled beards,
Then, there's no need to use abortifacients. It's the very height
Of pleasure for them, when loins already ripe with youth's hot
Blood and its dark plectrum, are dragged away to the surgeons.
That's why the testicles are allowed to drop and develop first
And afterwards when they've achieved two pounds in weight,
Heliodorus has them off, to the barber's loss but no one else's.
It's a truer, more wretched debility the slave-dealer's boys are
Seared by, left shamed by the purse and chickpeas that remain,
But the man made a eunuch by his mistress is noticed by all,
From afar, as he enters the baths, and there's no doubt he can
Challenge Priapus, who's the guardian of vineyard and garden.
He may sleep with his mistress, Postumus, but don't entrust your
Bromius, once he's no longer smooth and hairless, to that eunuch.
And women both high and low feel the same lust these days;
The woman who treads the dirty pavement in bare feet, she's
No better than one who's borne on the shoulders of tall Syrians.
Just to watch the Games, Ogulnia is forced to hire a dress, forced
To hire attendants, a chair, the cushions, even the female friends,
And a nurse, and a yellow-haired girl, whom she can order about,
Yet she chooses to give away whatever's left of the family silver,
Down to the very last dish, as presents for smooth-skinned athletes.
Many are short of things for the house, but none feel any shame
About being poor, nor will they temper their habits to their means.
Their husbands sometimes look ahead, and feel forebodings of

Cold and hunger, learning at last that lesson taught by the ants:
But a spendthrift woman has no idea of diminishing resources.
She'll give not a thought to the cost of her pleasures, as if coins
Forever reborn keep burgeoning from an empty treasure chest,
Forever available to be gathered from a newly-replenished heap.

SatVI:380-397 There Are Those Who Fancy Musicians

If she likes music, no one whom the praetors hire for his voice
Will hang on to his clasp. Instruments are always in her hands,
Her web of sardonyx rings ever-flickering over the tortoiseshell
Lyre, the strings struck rhythmically by the quivering plectrum,
Which tender Hedymeles performs with: this she clasps, it's her
Consolation, and she lavishes kisses on that beloved implement.
There's even a woman of the Lamiae clan, with an Appian name,
Who went so far as to offer wine and grain to Janus and Vesta,
Demanding to know if her Pollio had any chance of winning
The Capitoline oak-leaf crown, and begging them to promote
His lyre. Could she have done more, if her husband had been ill,
Or if the doctors had been pessimistic about her dear little boy?
She stood there, in front of the altar, considering it no disgrace
To veil her head on behalf of a lyre, recited the words prescribed
In the proper form, and duly paled on viewing the lamb's entrails.
Tell me, I'm asking now, say, Father Janus, most ancient of gods,
Do you answer requests from such as her? You must have plenty
Of time in the sky: there's nothing I can see to occupy you there.
One consults you about comic actors, another wants to promote
A tragedian: your diviner will get varicose veins from standing!

SatVI:398-456 And There Are Worse

Still it's better for her to play an instrument, than go flying about
The City brazenly, eager to converse amidst gatherings of men,
And speak to generals in their military cloaks, with her husband
Present, keeping a serious face herself, her nipples barely damp.
She knows every single thing that happens, throughout the world,
What the Chinese, and Thracians are doing; secrets of stepmothers
And of sons; who's in love, and which adulterer they're ravaging.
She'll tell you who got the widow pregnant, and in which month
It occurred, what words each woman uses in bed; which positions.

She's the first to locate a comet that threatens the kings of Parthia
And Armenia; she picks up the latest rumours and gossip, down by
The City gates, and invents some too; the Niphates river has burst
Its banks, endangering whole populations, while massive flooding
Has drowned the fields, cities are crumbling, regions are subsiding;
That's what she'll tell whoever she meets at the next street corner.
She's no more intolerable though than the woman who grabs hold
Of her humble neighbours and lays into them with a whip, cursing
Loudly. If her sound sleep happens to be interrupted by the barking
Of a dog, then she'll be shouting; 'Quick, and bring the cudgels!'
First she'll give orders for the owner to receive a thrashing and
Then the dog: she's formidable to meet, with a truly repulsive face.
She goes to the baths at night, orders her staff with the perfume jars
Around at night, all because she delights to sweat amidst the tumult.
When her weary arms fall back after exercising with heavy weights,
The practised masseur will press his fingers into her crest, and will
Force a cry from his mistress, as he strokes the surface of her thigh.
Meanwhile her wretched dinner-guests are overcome by boredom
And hunger. Eventually, she will arrive, her face hot and flushed,
Thirsting for a whole barrel of wine; so a full jar's brought and set
At her feet, from which she will down a pint or two before dinner,
And thereby create a raging appetite, then she'll eat till she feels sick,
And it all comes up again from her soaked innards, hitting the floor.
Rivulets flow over marble, and the gilded basin stinks of Falernian
Wine; and, just like that coiling snake that tumbled into a deep
Vat, she keeps drinking and spewing up. No wonder her husband
Feels nauseous and closes his eyes to try and keep down his bile.
There's worse yet, the woman I mean who as soon as she's taken
Her place at dinner, starts praising Virgil, forgives the failing Dido,
Pits the poets against each other, and compares them, weighing
Virgil in one pan of the scales, depositing Homer in the other.
The literary men concede, the rhetoricians are beaten, the whole
Party is silent, not even the lawyer speaks or the auctioneer,
Not another woman. Such powerful utterance falls from her lips,
You might say it's like the sound of dishes being struck, or peals
Of bells. No need for anyone to sound the trumpet, beat the gong:
She can come to the aid of the moon in labour, all on her own.
Even wise men claim one can have too much of a good thing;
So let the lady reclining next to you, not indulge in her own style
Of rhetoric, or revolve whole phrases before tangling you in some

Perverse argument, or know every event that occurred in history.
Let there be a few literary things she doesn't understand. I loathe
A woman who thumbs, and recites from, Palaemon's *Grammar*,
Always observes the laws and rules of speech, a woman learned
In antiquities, who knows lines from the ancients unknown to me.
Does any man care? She should criticise the crude speech of her
Girlfriends: husbands should be allowed the occasional solecism.
In fact, if she must appear so excessively learned and eloquent,
She may as well be a man, hitch her tunic knee-high, sacrifice
A pig to Silvanus, and only be charged a farthing at the baths.

SatVI:457-507 Endless Beautification

Once she's clasped an emerald necklace round her neck, once
She's stretched her earlobes and inserted a pair of giant pearls,
There's nothing she won't permit herself, nothing she thinks vile,
Nothing's more intolerable than the sight of wealthy women.
Meanwhile her face is a hideous and quite ridiculous spectacle,
Caked with layers of bread-paste, reeking of greasy Poppaeian
Creams, that stick to her wretched husband's lips. Eventually,
She'll uncover her face and remove the first few layers of stucco.
She begins to be recognisable, bathes like Poppaea in asses' milk,
To obtain which fluid she'd take the asses along in her entourage,
Even if she chanced to be banished to chill Hyperborean climes.
She'll arrive at her lover's with pristine skin. Why would she
Wish to look lovely at home? To please their lovers they find
Aromatic oils, they buy everything the graceful Indians send us.
But what's coated all over, revived, with all those concoctions
One on another, with those thick moist mounds of wheat-paste
Plastered all over its surface, do you call that a face or a boil?
It's worth considering thoroughly, in fine detail, what they do
And what they get up to during the day. If the husband's slept
With his back turned all night, her lady-secretary is in for it,
The wardrobe-master had best remove the clothes, the Liburnian
Litter-slaves are told they're late, they must pay for their master's
Slumbers. Sticks are broken on one slave, the whip and the strap
Scorch others; some women pay their torturers an annual wage.
They're lashed while she daubs, and listens to her girlfriends,
Or inspects the broad gold stripe on some embroidered dress,
They're beaten, as she reads her long vertical scroll of accounts,

And beaten, until the beaters are weary, and she cries: 'Away,
With them!' in a dreadful voice, once justice has been exacted.
Her house regime is no less cruel than a Sicilian tyrant's court.
If she has an assignation and wants to be beautified to a higher
Standard than usual, hurrying to make a rendezvous in the park,
Or, more likely, at the sanctuary of that brothel-keeper Isis,
Unlucky Psecas, the slave-girl, will be doing her mistress's hair,
With her own scalp torn, and her breasts and shoulders bared,
'Why's this curl sticking out?' and the bull-hide strap is ready
To exact a swift penalty for the foul crime of a twisted ringlet.
Why is it Psecas' fault? How can it be the slave-girl's fault if
Your own nose displeases you? Meanwhile another slave on
Her left, draws out and combs the hair, and coils it into a bun.
She'll seek the advice of a slave of her mother's promoted to
Spinning wool, after long service at hairpins; it's her opinion
That's sought first, then her inferiors in age and skill will give
Their views, as if their mistress's reputation were at stake, as if
Life itself were at stake: with so much anxiety, is beauty sought.
Her head is weighed down with layer on layer, tier after tier,
Piled high: it's an Andromache you'll see from the front, from
Behind someone altogether shorter. See, if you will, if she
Hasn't been granted, sadly, hips and thighs of meagre extent,
And, without high-heeled boots, is as short as a Pigmy maiden,
See is she hasn't to rise up on tiptoe to be able to plant a kiss.

SatVI:508-591 And They're So Superstitious

Meanwhile, she'll possess not a care or a single thought for her
Wronged husband. She lives her life like a next-door neighbour,
More intimate only in this respect that she loathes her husband's
Friends, and slaves, and is hard on his pocket. Behold, here are
The acolytes of frenzied Bellona, and of Cybele, Mother of Gods,
Led by a gross eunuch, with a form that perverted youth reveres,
Who long ago, wielding a flint knife, cut off his tender genitals,
Before whom the raucous band and the plebeian drums fall silent,
And whose cheeks are bisected by the straps of a Phrygian cap.
In a booming voice, he'll warn the woman to beware of windy
September's approach, against which she needs to purify herself
With a hundred eggs, and by gifting him her old russet dresses,
So that any sudden, serious danger is removed at a stroke along

With the clothes, atoning for the whole year in a single action.
In winter she'll break the ice, and submerge herself in the river,
Dipping herself three times in the Tiber at dawn, even plunging
Her fearful head in the swirling waters, and, naked and shivering.
She'll crawl across our proud King Tarquin's Campus Martius,
On blood-stained knees; and then if white Io should command,
She'll journey to the far bounds of Egypt and bring back water
From sweltering Meroe, to sprinkle around in the Temple of Isis,
That looms by the Campus polling-booths, the ancient sheepfold.
Indeed, she believes she's ruled by the voice of the Lady herself,
Hers being the kind of mind and spirit the gods speak to at night!
It's Anubis, therefore, who receives the best and highest honour,
Running along, mocking the lamentations of the crowd for Osiris,
Surrounded by his shaven-headed creatures, in their linen robes.
He's the one who petitions on your wife's behalf, when she fails
To refrain from sex on the holy days, owing a fine for violation
Of the bed. After the silver asp has been seen to raise its head,
It's his tears and professional muttering that guarantees Osiris
Won't refuse to pardon her transgression, provided, of course,
He's bribed, with a fat goose and a large slice of sacrificial cake.
No sooner does he give way, than a palsied Jewess will leave
Her hay-lined begging-basket to mutter her requests in an ear.
She's the interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem, high-priestess
Of the tree, and the faithful messenger of highest heaven.
Her hand too is filled, but with less; since the Jews will sell
You whatever dreams you wish for the tiniest copper coin.
While the soothsayer from Armenia or Commagene, having
Probed the meaning of a dove's lungs, will promise a tender
Lover, or a vast inheritance from some childless millionaire;
He'll dig into chicken breasts, the guts of a puppy, and now
And then a male child; himself reporting what he has done.
But even greater faith's placed in the Chaldeans: whatever
The astrologer claims, women will believe to have issued
Out of Ammon's oasis, the Oracle at Delphi having fallen
Silent, and the human race now blind as regards the future.
Yet the first of these astrologers is the one most often exiled.
They'll trust his skill, if his right hand's rattled the chains,
His left too, if he's languished in some distant military gaol.
No astrologer lacking a criminal record possesses any talent,
Only one who nearly perished, who managed to be banished

To a Cycladic island, languishing in the end on tiny Seriphus.
Your very own Tanaquil, will consult him about the lingering
Death of her jaundiced mother (she's asked about yours already),
When she'll bury sister and uncles, and whether her lover will
Outlive her; what greater tidings could the gods bring her?
At least she's ignorant herself of the threats posed by gloomy
Saturn, in which signs Venus shows herself as favourable,
And which month means loss, which days will bring a profit.
Remember always to avoid encountering the kind of woman
With a dog-eared almanac in her hands, as if it were an amber
Worry-bead, who no longer seeks consultations but gives them,
Who won't follow her husband to camp, or back home again,
If Thrasyllus the astrologer's calculations advise against it.
When she wishes to take a ride to the first milestone, she'll find
The best time to travel in her book; if her eye-corner itches
When rubbed, she checks her horoscope before seeking relief;
If she's lying in bed ill, the hour appropriate for taking food,
It seems, must be one prescribed by that Egyptian, Petosiris.
If she's middle-class she'll try the fortune-tellers at the Circus,
Select the cards, or offer her hand and brow to the prophet
Who demands of her lots of clicking sounds with the tongue.
Rich women obtain their readings from Phrygian soothsayers,
Or someone expert in star-signs and the cosmos, or the elder
Who publicly purifies the places where lightning buries itself.
Plebeian fates are decided in the Circus or on the Embankment,
Where those displaying a long gold chain hung on a bare neck,
Ask advice at the foot of the Circus towers or the dolphin columns,
About whether to leave the tradesman, and marry the inn-keeper.

SatVI:592-661 It's Tragic!

Yet at least such women endure the dangers of childbirth, and all
The effort of nurturing their offspring their lot in life dictates.
Hardly any woman who sleeps in a gilded bed will lie there in labour,
Such is the power of the arts and drugs, of that woman who procures
Abortions, and contracts to murder human embryos in the womb.
Be grateful, you wretch, and offer your wife yourself whatever she has
To take, since if she had chosen to let vigorous boys vex and stretch
Her belly, you might have been father to an Ethiopian! Your dark heir,
Barely visible at dawn, would soon be seen everywhere in the will.

I'll not dwell on adoption: the joys and vows so often proven false
At the foul latrine; the little Salian priests, the high-priests so often
Acquired from there; to bear, illegitimately, the Scauri family name.
Shameless Fortune lingers there at night, smiling on naked infants:
She warms them at her breast, and clasps them in her embrace, then
Hands them over to the most exalted of houses, secretly readying
A farce for her enjoyment; these are the ones she loves, these she
Showers with attention, always promoting them, her foster-children.
This fellow offers magic incantations, that one Thessalian potions,
Which allow a wife to befuddle her husband's mind, then beat him
On the buttocks with her sandal. That's the reason for the confusion
In your head, and your total forgetfulness of things that you did only
A moment ago. Still it's bearable, so long as you don't start raving,
Like that uncle of Nero's, Caligula, after Caesonia dosed him with
An aphrodisiac made from the membrane from a newborn foal's brow.
What woman isn't forever prepared to act like an Emperor's wife?
Then everything was on fire, the whole fabric collapsing in ruins,
Exactly as if the goddess Juno had driven her husband Jupiter mad.
Agrippina's mushroom, by comparison, turned out to be far less
Ruinous, since all it did was stop the beating heart of one old man,
He of the trembling head, and the lips dripping long strands of saliva,
Forced to 'descend' into the sky: Your wife's potion by contrast
Conjures up steel and fire, torments and tears the innards of knights
And senators, causing indiscriminate pain. Such the high cost of a
Mare's afterbirth, such the high price of a single venomous sorceress.
Wives loath a mistress's bastards; and it's long been acceptable
To murder a stepson; no one opposes it now, no one even objects.
You wards, who are rather wealthy, and lacking fathers, beware:
Guard your lives, and don't ever put your faith in a single dish:
Those warm pastries are dark with a mother's livid venom.
Have someone else taste first whatever the woman who bore you
Serves, get your terrified tutor to drink, before you, from the cup.
I'm inventing it all, am I? Placing satire in tragedy's shoes,
Exceeding the limits and rules set down my predecessors,
Opening my gaping mouth, and ranting, in Sophoclean verse,
Of things unknown to Rutulian hills, or the skies of Latium?
If only it were nonsense! Yet Pontia confesses: 'I'm guilty, I
Admit it all, I prepared aconite, and gave it to my own boys;
The crime was discovered, revealed; I carried it out myself. '
You did away with them both, and at the same meal, you viper?

You murdered both? 'Or seven, if there'd chanced to be seven.'
So we must believe what the tragedians say about cruel Medea
From Colchis, or sad Procne; I'll not venture to contradict them.
Those women too dared monstrous things, enormities even then,
Though not for money. Those crowning monstrosities elicit less
Amazement, when we realise it was anger that made the sex turn
To crime, when they were swept along, frenzy tearing their hearts,
Dashed about like rocks torn from the cliffs, when the mountain
Collapses beneath, and the face of the overhanging slope is shorn.
No, the woman I detest is the calculating one, in complete control,
Who betrays deep wickedness. Such as they, can watch Alcestis
Suffer death on her husband's behalf, yet if a parallel choice is
On offer, would happily watch a husband die to save their pup.
Every day you meet many a murderous Danaid, many an Eriphyle;
There isn't a street that doesn't possess it's very own Clytemnestra.
The only difference is: that daughter of Tyndareus swung an absurd
And unwieldy double-bladed axe, with both her hands, while these
Days the thing is accomplished with the insignificant lungs of a toad.
Yet a woman now will use steel, as well, if her cautious Agamemnon
Has downed one of the Pontic antidotes of thrice-conquered Mithridates.

End of Satire VI

Satire VII: Patronage

SatVII:1-52 It's The Emperor Or Nothing

The hopes, the whole business of letters depend on Caesar;
He's the only one who cares for the sad Muses, these days,
When even famous and notable poets have begun applying
For a lease on a bathhouse at Gabii, or a bakery in Rome;
When others no longer think it vile or shameful to act as public
Criers, when Clio, the Muse, from starvation quits the valleys
Of Helicon, Aganippe's spring, and flees to the market-place.
Because if you're offered never a farthing in the Pierian grove,
You're better off stealing Machaera's name and profession,
Selling the crowd whatever's at stake in the auctions' tussles;
Wine jars, three-legged tables, bookcases, trunks, those books,
Paccius's tragedy of *Alcathoe*, Faustus's *Thebes* and *Tereus*.
After all, it's better than being a paid witness, telling the judge
'I saw it' when you didn't; leave that to the knights of Asia,
The ones betrayed by a slave's fetter-mark, on a bare ankle.
Now, however, no one needs to submit to labour unworthy
Of their writings; no one, who weaves melodious measures
In an Eloquent voice; no one, who ever chewed on laurel.
To work, O young men! Our Leader views all with indulgence,
He's urging you on to find fit matter, to exercise your talents.
Telesinus, if you're still seeking support for your income from
Anyone else, if that's what makes you fill the yellow parchment,
You may as well gather firewood straight away, and offer your
Compositions to Vulcan, husband of Venus, and god of fire,
Or shut the sheets in the cupboard, let the bookworms gnaw them.
Break your stylus, you wretch, erase those battles you sat there
Penning all night, scribbling sublime verse in your tiny attic,
Just to win yourself the prize of an ivy-wreath, and meagre bust.
Don't expect anything more; the miserly rich learned long ago
To offer the eloquent, admiration only; to offer them praise,
As boys do Juno's peacock. The years have flown by, in which
You might have toyed with the sail, the helmet, the hoe. Now
Boredom invades the mind, it's now that experienced but naked
Old age comes to hate itself, and Terpsichore, Muse of the lyre.
Let me tell you the ruses he, you fawn on, adopts, to avoid
Aiding you: spurning the shrine of Apollo and the Muses.

He writes verse himself, and yields to Homer alone, due to
His thousand-year glory, but if you, fired by the sweetness
Of fame, give a recitation, he'll lend you a down-at-heel room.
He'll order a far-off iron-barred hall placed at your service,
The doors of which echo the squealing of sows. He'll place
His freedmen in seats at the end of the rows, and knows how
To scatter his friends about, those with high-pitched voices.
But none of the nobles will give you the price of their seats,
Or the price of the raised platforms held up by rented beams,
Or those chairs in the front row, due to be given back later.
Still we labour away, marking our furrows in the fine dust,
Turning the sands of the shore with our ineffectual ploughs.
Try to stop: the itch for writing holds you fast in ambition's
Noose, grows old along with you in your sorrowful heart.

SatVII: 53-97 What Room Is There For Genius?

Yet the outstanding poet, with no ordinary vein of talent,
Who's accustomed to weaving nothing that is vulgar,
Who coins never a trivial song from the public mint,
Whose like I cannot point out but can only imagine,
He's the result of a mind free from care, devoid of
All bitterness, full of longing for nature, fit to drink
From the Muses' spring. Sad poverty, you see, cannot
Sing in the Pierian cave, or grasp the thyrsus, lacking
The means to live that the body needs, night and day.
Horace had wealth enough, as he gave the Bacchic cry.
What room is there for genius, unless your heart has
Only a single care, troubles itself over poetry alone,
Swept away by Apollo of Cirrha, Dionysus of Nysa?
A mighty soul is needed, not one terrified of buying a
New blanket, if you're to envisage chariots and horses,
The face of the god, and the Fury who crazed Turnus.
If Virgil had lacked a slave-boy and decent lodgings,
All the snakes would have slid from the Fury's hair,
There'd have been no fierce blast from her war-trumpet.
How can we expect Rubrenus Lappa, to vie with ancient
Tragedians, if he's pawning *Atreus* for a dish and a cloak?
Unhappily, Numitor lacks the cash to help out a friend,
Yet he sends it to Quintilla, and was rich enough to buy

A tame lion, that surely consumes vast piles of meat;
Are we asked to believe the creature costs less to feed,
While a poet's intestines possess a greater capacity?
Lucan may rest content with fame, in his marble-filled
Gardens, but what good does glory do Saleius Bassus
Or starving Serranus, if it's glory and nothing else?
When Statius made Rome happy, and fixed on a date,
Everyone rushed to hear his fine voice, and the lines
Of his dear *Thebaid*: the crowd's hearts were captured
By the sweetness he affected, listening there, in ecstasy.
And yet, when he'd stunned the audience with his verses,
He'd starve, unless he sold his virgin *Agave* to Paris,
The actor who generously appointed to military office,
And set the six-month gold ring on the fingers of poets.
A dancer who gave what princes wouldn't. If you visited
The great halls of the noblemen, the Barea and Camerini,
Pelops and *Philomela* appointed the prefects and tribunes.
But don't go envying the poets such a theatre nourished.
Who now will be your Maecenas, Fabius or Proculeius,
Who'll prove your second Cotta, or be another Lentulus?
Then reward matched genius, many found it worthwhile
To look pale, and go without wine, for all of December.

SatVII: 98-149 Historians And Advocates Do No Better

Is your labour any more profitable, you writers of histories?
They too consume even more time, and more midnight oil.
There's no limit to them, indeed, the thousandth page tops
The growing pile, bankrupts you with that heap of papyrus,
As the vast number of facts, and the laws of the genre dictate.
Yet what's the harvest, what's the fruit of your ploughed soil?
Who'll pay a historian what they pay him who reads the news?
'A lazy tribe,' they'll say, 'who love their couch in the shade.'
And tell me what advocates earn from their representations,
And the huge bundle of briefs that accompany them to court.
They talk big, especially when a creditor might hear them,
Or when one, more pressingly still, nudges them in the side,
Clutching his large account book, to claim some dubious debt.
That's when their mighty bellows breathe out immense lies,
And they cover themselves with spit; but if you want to know

Their true harvest, the wealth of a hundred such advocates
Weighs less than that of Lizard, the charioteer of the Reds.
The lords are seated, and you rise, a pale Ajax, to support
Your client's contested liberty in front of a boorish judge.
Strain and rupture your liver, you wretch, so, exhausted,
You can decorate your stairs with victory's green palm.
What's the reward for your speech? A tiny dried-up leg
Of pork, a jar of tunny fry, or ancient onions, a month's
Ration for a Moor, or wine brought down the Tiber, five
Flasks for your four cases. If you come by one gold piece,
Part of that vanishes, by your contract with the lawyers.
'Yet Aemilius names his fee, even when our work's better.'
That's because a bronze chariot with four great horses sits
In his vestibule, his ancestor himself on a fierce charger,
Looking menacing from the high saddle, with lowered
Spear, a one-eyed statue contemplating battle. Thus
Pedo is embarrassed, and Matho fails, and it's the end
For Tongilius, who disturbs the baths with his filthy crew,
And washes away with his great rhinoceros horn, weighs
Down his young Maedians' long litter-poles on his way
Through the Forum to buy slave-boys, silver plate, agate
Vases or villas; and yet his efforts work. His purple and
Violet robes sell advocacy; it pays him to live with a stir
And appearance, that cost well beyond his true income,
His seaborne purple of Tyrian weave acts as guarantor.
But prodigal Rome sets no limits to your expenditure.
In eloquence our trust? No one these days would give
Cicero two hundred, unless a huge ring lit his finger.
The first thing a litigant looks for, is whether you run
Eight slaves, possess ten clients, a litter to follow you,
Togas to walk in front. That's why Paulus for court hired
A sardonix ring, and earned a higher fee than Basilus, or
Gallus. Eloquence rarely appears dressed in flimsy rags.
When is Basilus allowed to bring on a tearful mother?
Who can stand Basilus however well he speaks? If you
Make the decision to earn your living with your tongue,
Try Gaul, or better still Africa, the nurturer of advocacy.

SatVII: 150-215 Nor Do Teachers Of Rhetoric

Do you teach rhetoric? O Vettius, what a mind of iron,
You need, when a crowded class slays 'the cruel tyrant!'
For, whatever they've just read, sitting, each in turn
Gives standing, chants the same thing in identical lines.
Such stale greens are simply murder for the poor teacher.
They all want to know about style, what sort of cases,
And the summing up, and the shots that are likely to be
Fired by the other side, but not a single one wants to pay.
'You're asking me to pay? But what have I learned?'
'It's surely the teacher's fault, if our young dunce feels
Nothing stir in the left side of his chest, as he fills my
Poor head for five days with his 'dreadful Hannibal'.
It hardly matters what the set topic is: whether to march
From Cannae to Rome, or after the thunder and lightning
Cautiously hold the troops back, drenched from the storm.
Just state your price, you can have it now: what wouldn't
I give to make the father hear him as often I must?' That's
What six professors or more cry out with a single voice,
As they abandon 'the rapist' to take part in some real case;
The 'dosing with poison' is silent; the 'wicked ungrateful
Husband'; the pounding out of a 'cure for chronic blindness'.
So whoever descends from the grove of rhetoric to compete
In the fight, lest he lose the he pitiful reward that purchases
His ticket for the handout, which after all is the most he can
Expect, if he'll follow my advice, he should definitely retire
And find himself an alternative path in life. If you discover
The tiny fee for which Chrysogonus or Pollio teach the sons
Of the rich, you'll tear Theodorus's *Rhetoric* in tiny pieces.
Building the nobleman's baths costs him six thousand in gold,
More for the portico where he rides on rainy days. How can
He wait for blue skies, or spatter his equipage with fresh mud!
It's better here, the hooves of his mule stay bright and clean.
And he'll raise a dining hall elsewhere, resting on tall pillars
Made of Numidian marble, trapping sunshine when it's cold.
However much the place costs, someone will still be there to
Arrange the dishes skilfully, someone there to spice the food.
Twenty gold pieces, of all this show, will be fortune enough
For Quintilian: a son will cost his father less than nothing.
'So how come Quintilian owns so much land?' You have to
Make an exception for freaks of fate. The fortunate man is

Handsome and brave, wise and noble and generous as well,
On his black shoe is sewn the ivory crescent of the patrician.
The fortunate man is the greatest orator and javelin-thrower,
And, unless he has a cold, sings beautifully. It makes a huge
Difference you know what stars chance to greet you as you
Give your first cries, red-faced from your mother's womb.
If Fortune wishes, she'll make a teacher of rhetoric, consul;
If she wishes, she'll make a consul a teacher of rhetoric too.
What about Servius Tullius? Ventidius Bassus? What else
Was that but the stars, the strange mysterious power of fate?
Fate makes kings of slaves, and grants prisoners triumphs.
Nevertheless the fortunate man is rarer than a white crow.
Many teachers have regretted their idle and barren chairs
Of Rhetoric, as Thrasy-machus' suicide proves, and Carrinas
Secundus': you saw his poverty, Athens, yet only chose
To offer him cold hemlock. May the gods make the earth
On our ancestor's graves weigh lightly, may they have
Flowering crocuses, and everlasting spring, in the tomb.
They thought a teacher held the sacred role of a parent.
When Achilles as a young man learnt music in his native
Hills, he went in fear of the cane, and was careful not to
Mock at the horse's tail of Chiron the Centaur, his teacher;
But now Rufus and the rest are beaten by their young pupils,
Rufus, so often called a Cicero, though only a Gallic one.

SatVII: 216-243 Or Schoolmasters

When do Celadus, and learned Palaemon, pocket the rewards
A schoolteacher's labour merits? Yet whatever it amounts to,
And it's less than a teacher of rhetoric's pay, even from that
The pupil's unfeeling attendant nibbles a chunk for himself
As does the cashier who pays it. Yield to them, Palaemon,
Be prepared to see some part of it vanish, as a pedlar does
When he haggles over a mat and a snow-white quilt for winter.
But make sure you get something, for sitting from midnight
Onwards where no blacksmith would sit, or a carder of wool
Used to drawing the staple out fine with a slant steel comb;
Make sure you get something, for breathing in the stench
Of as many lamps as boys, while your Horace grows wholly
Discoloured, and soot clings tight to your blackened Virgil.

Though it's rare to get paid without a tribune's investigation.
Yet you parents lay down savage laws for the schoolmaster,
Demand he should stick to the rules in his use of grammar,
Should read the histories, and know all the authors as well
As he knows his fingernails. If by chance he's asked a question
As he heads for the warm baths or the freeman Phoebus's spa,
He must know the name of Anchises' nurse, of Anchemolus's
Stepmother, and her birthplace, how many years Acestes lived,
And how many jars of Sicilian wine he handed to the Trojans.
You'll demand he forms tender characters under his thumb,
As if he were moulding faces from wax; you'll demand he acts
Like a father to that crowd, forbids them to play dubious games,
Or mutually indulge. It's no light thing to keep watch on all
Those boys, with their hands and eyes quivering with purpose.
'That's your job,' the parents say, yet come the turn of the year
You'll get, in gold, what the crowd grants for one gladiatorial win.

End of Satire VII

Satire VIII: Rely On Your Own Worth

SatVIII:1-38 What's The Point Of A Pedigree?

What's the point of a pedigree, Ponticus? Where's the profit
In being judged by the length of your bloodline, of displaying
Portraits in oils of your ancestors, the Aemiliani standing tall
In their chariots, the Curii half-height, a Corvinus devoid of
A shoulder, or a Galba missing his ears and a nose; what's
The value in being able to boast a Censor in your extensive
Family-tree, or be connected through a tangle of branches
With a dictator, and sundry smoke-stained masters of horse,
If, beneath the shade of the Lepidi, life is hard? What's the use
Of all those busts of warriors, if you spend your time gambling
The night away, staring at the Numantini, and don't sleep till
Venus rises, under whom generals raise standards and camp?
Why should a Fabius, scion of Hercules, delight in that god's
Great altar, or the title Allobrogicus, when he himself is idle
And greedy, and softer than the fleece of a Euganean lamb,
When he shames his unpolished ancestors by having his loins
Smoothed with Catanian pumice, while his dealing in poison
Degrades his poor clan with a bust that should be shattered?
You may decorate your whole atrium with old wax portraits
Throughout, but the one and only virtue's personal excellence.
In morality: be a Cossos Gaetulicus, a Paulus Macedonicus,
A Claudius Drusus, put that before rows of ancestral statues,
Let that take precedence over those consular rods of office.
The first debt you owe me is greatness of soul. Do you justify
Being regarded as sound, tenacious of justice in word and deed?
I acknowledge a true prince, then; hail to you Gaetulicus, or
Silanus: whatever the nobility of your race, hail to you, rare
And illustrious citizen, be welcomed by a joyful country,
Let the people cheer as they're wont to do when Osiris is found.
Who would call a thing noble that's unworthy of its breeding,
A thing distinguished by a glorious name, and nothing else?
We give the name 'Atlas' to someone's dwarf, we call their
Black Ethiopian slave, 'Swan', while some bent and deformed
Girl's beautiful 'Europa'; and a dull dog with chronic mange,
That spends its time licking at the rim of a dried-up lamp,
Is called 'Tiger', 'Leopard', or 'Lion' or whatever else

In this world roars fiercely. So watch out, take care that
It's not for such reasons they call you Creticus, or Camerinus.

SatVIII:39-70 I'm Talking About You, Rubellius Blandus

Who am I warning, like this? I'm talking about you, Rubellius
Blandus. You're puffed up with pride over the exalted origins
Of the Drusi, as if you'd done something to make you noble,
As if it were due to you that your line's bright with Julian blood,
Not that of a hired weaver from under the windy Embankment.
'You're all base' you say. 'You're the lowest of the low, not
One of you can even prove where his ancestors' came from,
While I'm descended from kings.' Long life to you, may you
Take lasting joy in your origins. But from these plebeian depths
Come your eloquent Romans, who take on cases to defend
Uneducated nobles; from this crowd of togas comes the man
Who'll untie legal knots and solve the mysteries of justice;
From here comes the diligent young soldier headed for the
Euphrates, or a legion watching over the conquered Batavi.
But you, you're merely 'descended from kings', a broken Herm.
Indeed the only thing distinguishing you from a Herm is this:
The Herm's head's made of marble, while your flesh is alive.
Tell me, you scion of Trojans, who would call a dumb animal
Noble unless it was sound? That's what we praise a racehorse
For, its speed, its countless easy wins that create a furore in
The noisy Circus as it takes the prize; that's a noble horse,
The one, that whatever pasture nurtured it, gallops well clear
Of the pack, and raises a cloud of dust in the lead, on the flat.
The rest, over whose harness Victory rarely hovers, are cattle
For sale, sired though they are by Hirpinus or Coryphaeus.
There's no respect for ancestors there, no regard for the
Shades; tardy offspring fit only for turning the millstone,
Are obliged to find themselves fresh owners at knock-down
Prices, and pull wagons around yoked to their weary necks.
So if you're to impress me, not your line, offer something
Personal that I might set against your name, besides those
Titles we gave, and still give, to those to whom you owe all.

SatVIII:71-141 Ponticus, Here's How To Behave

I've addressed enough to a young man whom tradition records
As proud, and inflated, and full of his close connection to Nero.
It's rare enough to find human feeling in people of that class.
But Ponticus, I'd not want you to be valued only for the praise
Your family earned, or do nothing yourself to justify future
Praise. It's wretched to have to rely on the fame of others, fear
The roof will collapse in ruins, if the pillars are taken away.
That trailing on the ground the vine will long for its lost elm.
Be a fine soldier, and a fine guardian, and a sound judge too.
If you're summoned as witness in a confused and ambiguous
Case, even if Phalaris, the Sicilian tyrant, orders you to lie,
And spell out your perjuries, his Bronze Bull ready to torment
You at hand, it's a worse evil to prefer survival to dishonour,
And for the sake of staying alive, lose the reason for living.
Such die deserving death, though dining on a hundred Lucrine
Oysters, bathed in a bronze tub filled with Cosmus's perfume.
When, as governor, you're welcomed at last to your long-awaited
Province, take a bridle and curb to your anger, and your greed,
Demonstrate some sympathy for the impoverished provincials:
What you'll see are the marrow-bones of kings, sucked dry.
Keep an eye on the law's restrictions, what the Senate command,
The copious rewards that await the virtuous, the righteous bolt
Of Senatorial lightning, that condemnation that ruined Capito
And Tutor, for stealing from the Cilicians. Though, why bother?
Look round for an auctioneer, Chaerippus, to sell off your rags,
Since Pansa is stealing whatever Natta left; and then be silent;
It would be madness to lose the fare for the ferryman as well.
The provinces never groaned like this, the pain of their losses
Was never so great, when, soon after conquest, they flourished.
Then their houses were bulging, there were vast piles of cash,
Military cloaks from Sparta, purple Coan silks, besides
Paintings by Parrhasius, statues signed by Myron, lifelike
Ivories by Phidias, no lack of endless works of Polyclitus,
And scarcely a table about lacking Mentor's silverware.
From the provinces, Dolabella, from there Antonius, and that
Temple-robber Verres carried off loot concealed in tall
Ships, achieving greater triumphs in peacetime than war.
These days when some little farm is seized, the locals have
Only a few yoked oxen, a pitiful herd of mares, to be driven
Off with the patriarch of the herd and the household gods

Themselves, too, if any of their statues are worth the taking.
Perhaps you despise the unwarlike Rhodians, and perfumed
Corinth, and rightly so, what could a whole effeminate race
Of youths, from there, with their depilated legs, do to you?
It's hairy Spain you should avoid, and the Gallic region,
And the shores of Illyria; and beware of African reapers
Who glut the idle City, freeing it for the races or the stage.
How great anyway are the rewards you'd win from so
Dire a crime, since Marius Priscus stripped Africa bare?
Take care above all to do no great injury to the wretched
And the brave. Leave them their swords and shields,
Though you take every last piece of their gold and silver.
What I've just written is not some mere maxim: it's truth;
Believe me I'm reading aloud now from the Sibyl's leaves.
If your retinue of followers behave, if no long-haired
Apollo takes bribes for you; if your wife's free of guilt,
Not set to use the courts in every town to snatch spoils
With her hooked talons, like that harpy Celaeno; then you
May spell out your forebears back to King Picus, and if
It's exalted names you treasure, include the Titans' whole
Battle-line among them, including Prometheus himself.
But if you're driven, precipitately, by greed and ambition,
If you slake whips and break them on provincial backs,
If blunted axes, and weary executioners, thrill you,
Your ancestral nobility will contrast with your baseness,
And shine its light on actions that should shame you.
Every fault of character's the more open to reproach
The higher the rank is of the person who displays it.

SatVIII:142-182 Not Like Lateranus!

What's so impressive about your custom of penning false
Wills, in temples your grandfather built, or while gazing
At your father's triumphal statue? That, as an adulterer
By night, a Gallic cowl from Saintonge hides your head?
Lateranus, the gross, muleteer consul, outdoes that: he flies
By his forebears' bones and ashes in his speedy carriage,
Then shames them, by applying the brake himself: true
He does it at night, but the moon sees it, and the glaring
Stars bear witness. He drives himself! When his stint at

The office is over, Lateranus takes up a whip in broad
Daylight, never worries about meeting an adult friend,
In fact he'll wave to him first, with the whip; he even
Shakes out bales of hay, pours feed for his weary team.
And then, though he sacrifices sheep, or a red bullock,
In Numa's rites, he swears by the horse-goddess Epona
At Jove's altar, by the painted icons on his rank stable.
And when he's off to enjoy a midnight eating-bout
A Syrio-Phoenician, drenched in endless perfumes, runs
To greet him, some Syrian Jew from the Idumaeian Gate,
With that host's welcome, 'My Lord and Master' while
Cyane, robe hiked to her thighs, offers the jar for sale.
Some defender of his faults, will tell me: 'We too were
Like that when young,' that's as maybe, but you ceased
To nurture those errors. What tempts disgrace should be
Transient, a fault to be trimmed away with the first beard.
Grant lads indulgence: but our Lateranus headed straight
For bathhouse wine jugs and painted awnings even when
He was old enough to fight, or guard the Syrian frontiers,
Or Armenia, the Danube, the Rhine. Send him to Ostia,
Caesar, when you've found him in that vast eating-house.
Where he'll be reclining next to some assassin, mingling
With sailors, consorting with thieves, and fugitive slaves,
Down there, among executioners, sat with coffin-makers,
Or the drums, now fallen silent, of some priest of Cybele.
There's it's a free for all, a communal jar, there no one has
Separate couches, tables set apart. Ponticus, if you chanced
To own a slave you found there, what would you do? Surely,
He'd be destined for some Lucanian or Tuscan slave-farm.
But you, you scions of Troy, you excuse it in yourselves.
What shames the working man's fine for a Brutus, a Volusus.

SatVIII:183-230 Aristocrats Indeed!

Were these examples we cited never so wretched, never
So shameful, are there not worse examples still to come?
When you'd spent your cash, Damasippus, you hired out
Your voice to the stage, and acted Catullus' noisy 'Ghost'.
Agile Lentulus played the bandit Laureolus, rather well, I
Thought him worthy of his crucifixion. And let's not start

Excusing the populace; there's a hard side to this audience,
That sits, and watches the triple follies of these aristocrats,
Listens to pantomime Fabii, laughs at the slapstick antics
Of the Mamerci. What matter how well their drubbings pay?
They're selling themselves, without some Nero's coercion,
Can't wait to sell, even when it's the noble praetor's games.
But consider: the stage over here, versus a violent death there;
Which is best? Is there anyone so scared to die, he'd rather act
Thymele's jealous spouse, or play foil to Corinthus the clown?
Still if an emperor could play the lyre, a noble in a pantomime's
No marvel. What could be worse, except the gladiatorial school?
There you may behold Rome's shame: one of the Gracchi fights,
But not in heavy armour, not with a shield or with a curved blade;
He rejects such things, you see: look, he's brandishing a trident.
When he's flourished his right arm, and hurled his trailing net,
Without success, he'll raise his bare face to the spectators, and
Having ensured he's known throughout the whole arena, flees,
Dressed as a Salian priest, there's no mistake, his golden tunic
Taut below his neck, the twisted cord swaying from his cap.
So the opponent ordered to fight this Gracchus, suffers a greater
Loss of face than he would have done from any wound received.
If the masses were granted a free vote, who would be so foolish
As to hesitate about preferring Seneca to that Nero who deserved
Worse punishment than the usual parricide, who should have been
Sewn with more than a snake and monkey in a sea-drowned sack.
Nero wrought Orestes' crime, but the motive was quite different.
Agamemnon's son, with divine indulgence, avenged his father,
Murdered at a banquet, you know, but never polluted himself by
Slitting his sister Electra's jugular, or shedding his Spartan wife
Hermione's blood, he prepared no poisoned doses for relatives,
He never took to the stage, like Nero, to sing the part of Orestes,
He never wrote an epic of Troy. What actions more deserved
Punishment, by Verginius and his army, by Galba and Vindex?
Such were the deeds and accomplishments of our noble emperor,
Who loved to prostitute himself on a foreign stage, in vile song,
Winning Greek garlands of dry celery leaves for his performance.
So grant your ancestors' statues the prizes won by your voice,
Lay your Thyestes' tragic robe with its long train, your mask of
Antigone or of Melanippe, before the feet of your own Domitius,
Go hang your lyre from your colossus, carved out of marble!

SatVIII:231-275 Let Us Celebrate Our Humble Origins

Where is a more exalted ancestry to be found, than yours Catiline,
Or yours Cethegus? Yet armed by night you connived to attack
Homes and temples and set them alight, like those sons of Gaul
In breeches, like the scions of those Senones who sacked Rome,
An outrage punished by legal execution, in 'a coat of burning pitch'.
While Cicero the consul, alert, halts the advance of your banners.
He, a self-made man from Arpinum, of humble origin, a municipal
Knight new to the City, posts helmeted troops everywhere to protect
The terrified people, labours away over all the seven hills of Rome.
So his toga, in time of peace, brought him as much titled distinction,
Without stepping outside the walls, as Octavius, his sword stained
From continual slaughter, snatched for himself at Leucas, by Actium,
Or Philippi, in the fields of Thessaly; moreover Rome was still free,
When she named Cicero as parent and father of his native country.
And Gaius Marius, also from Arpinum, toiled in the Volscian hills
To earn a living, labouring away behind another man's plough.
And later felt the centurion's gnarled stick on his head, if he
Showed reluctance as he dug the camp's moat with his tardy pick.
And yet it is he who takes on the Cimbri at a moment of high risk
To his country, and it is he alone who defends a trembling Rome.
And that's why when the crows fly down to feast on the mounds
Of dead, never having fastened on mightier corpses, his fellow
Consul, Catulus, though a nobleman, receives the lesser laurels.
The Decii were plebeian souls, and their names plebeian too,
Yet they were worth all the legions, all of their allies, and all
The youth of Latium, to Mother Earth and the gods below.
Servius Tullius, born to a slave-girl, won the robes and crowns
And rods of Romulus, he the very last of the good kings of Rome.
The traitors who planned to unbar the gates to the exiled tyrants,
Were the sons of the consul himself, though, the very citizens
Who should have achieved great deeds on behalf of fragile liberty,
Deeds that Gaius Mucius or Horatius Cocles might have admired,
Or Cloelia, that girl who swam the Tiber, the frontier of our power.
A slave, deserving to be mourned by Roman women, it was who
Revealed the secret plot to the Senate, while the traitors got their just
Rewards, a flogging, then their newly-legal execution under the axe.
I'd rather you were fathered by Thersites, and behaved like Achilles,

Grandson of Aeacus, brandishing the weapons forged by Hephaestus,
Than that Achilles fathered you, only for you to behave like Thersites.
Though you can unroll the family tree, and trace your name far back,
It still derives from that first melting-pot of Rome, that granted all
Asylum; and whoever your first ancestor might have been, he was
Still a herdsman, or performed some other task I'd rather not mention.

End of Satire VIII

Satire IX: Patrons Again: A Dialogue

SatIX:1-47 Why so Wretched, Naevolus?

I'd like to know why I so often see you looking gloomy,
Naevolus, your brow all overcast, like Marsyas in defeat.
Why does your face look so like Ravola's, when he was
Caught rubbing his wet beard between Rhodope's thighs?
Crepereius Pollio's expression was never more wretched,
He who goes around offering to pay triple interest rates,
And can't find anyone foolish enough to accept. Where
Are those fresh furrows from? Happy with little, once
You were the young knight, born within Rome's walls,
An elegant guest, with biting humour and forceful wit.
Now everything's changed: your face is grave, your
Dry hair a bristling forest, your skin has lost that gloss
Produced by depilating it with heated Bruttian pitch,
And your legs too, neglected, dark with sprouting hair.
Why emaciated like a chronic invalid, long tormented
By a habitual fever, one that recurs every three days?
We detect the mind's troubles lurking deep in the ailing
Body, as we detect its joys too; in either case the face
Reveals the mood. Thus it appears you've altered your
Direction, treading the opposite path to the one you trod.
It's not so long ago, after all, as I recall, you used to be
Seen at Isis' shrine, or by the Ganymede in the Temple
Of Peace, or at alien Cybele's secret Palace, or that of
Ceres (is there any altar those whores don't profane?);
An adulterer more notorious than Aufidius, quiet too
About how you also found favour with their husbands.
'Lots of men may find that way of life makes a profit,
But I've no reward for all my efforts. Sometimes I'd
Receive a badly made cloak from the loom of a Gallic
Weaver, or some thin silver plate of inferior quality.
Fate rules human life, even those parts hidden beneath
The folds have their fate. Yet if the stars abandon you,
The immeasurable length of your mighty cock won't
Help, even though Virro with drooling lips sees you
In the nude, and his host of flattering notes assails you
Endlessly: 'men are always attracted to the *catamite*'.

For what's more monstrous than a tight-fisted pervert?
"I paid you this, I gave you that, and later you had more."
He adds it up as he wiggles about. Bring on the abacus,
And the slave-boys taking notes; count fifty in gold
Paid out in total, but then let's add up all my efforts.
Or do you think it's simple to drive an upright cock
Into the depths, only to come across yesterday's meal?
That slave has the easier life who ploughs the field
Rather than its owner.' Yet you surely felt yourself
Sweet and pretty enough to be the gods' cupbearer?

SatIX:48-91 Indignation

'Does your rich man ever indulge a humble hanger-on,
A follower; is he ready even now to spend money on
His sickness? Behold, him to whom one gives that green
Umbrella, those balls of amber, on his birthday, or when
Rainy spring commences, lounging on his chaise longue,
Fondling his secret gifts at the Matronalia. Tell me, you
Little love-bird, for whom are you keeping all those hills
And fields in Apulia, lands wide enough to weary a hawk?
Your fertile vineyards at Trifolinus, at hollow Gaurus, or
On the Cumeaeen ridge, keep you well supplied; is there
Anyone who corks more casks of the long-lived vintage?
How much would it cost you to grant a few acres there,
To your client, and his weary loins! Is it better that your
Child in the country, its mother, toy cottage, and puppy
Playmate, be left to your cymbal-clashing eunuch friend?
"It's shameful of you to beg," he says. But my rent cries:
"Beg!" my slave-boy makes demands, the sole one, single
As Polyphemus's great eye, cunning Ulysses escape plan.
Since one's not enough I'll buy another, but both will need
Feeding. What will I do when the cold winds blow? What,
I ask, what shall I say to the boys' feet and shoulder-blades
In December's northerlies? "Bear up, wait for the cicadas?"
Though you set aside, and ignore, my other services, how
Do you rate the fact that if it had not been for this loyal
And devoted client, your wife would have stayed a virgin?
You know how you asked for my help, how often and in
How many ways. The girl was actually walking out on you

When I grabbed and embraced her; she'd already torn up
The contract, applied for divorce; I spent a whole night
And barely remedied it, you crying outside the door, my
Witnesses the sounds you heard from bed and mistress.
There's many a household where a fractured and shaky
Marriage that's almost dissolved, is rescued by a lover.
Whom do you turn to? Whom do you set first, or last?
Ungrateful perfidious one, is it worth nothing to you,
Nothing at all, that your little son or daughter's my doing?
You're happy enough to accept them, and splash the news
Of your virility all over the papers. Garland your doors,
You're a father, I've given you ammunition against gossip.
You're a parent, in law, through me wills treat you as such,
You can garner bequests intact, and the sweet windfalls too.
And extra benefits will even accrue along with those gifts
If I add to the numbers, if I should make it a trio.' You've just
Cause for resentment, Naevolus; but what do you say in reply?

SatIX:92-134 Advice and Reassurance

'He ignores me, and seeks out some other two-legged donkey.
But remember to keep these complaints of mine to yourself,
Be silent, and lock these confidences away deep inside you;
For the enemy's deadly who's skin is smoothed with pumice.
He who's committed his secret to me, he blazes with hatred,
Just as much now as if I'd told all I know. He'd not hesitate
To pick up a knife, break my head, light a fire at my door.
And with wealth like his, pure poison costs little or nothing.
So keep what's secret close, like the Court of Mars at Athens.'
Ah Corydon, Corydon, do you really believe a rich man's
Secrets can ever stay hidden? If the slaves are mute his horses
Will talk, his dog, his doorposts, his marble floors. Close the
Shutters, curtain the cracks, bar the doors, quench the light,
Make everyone leave the place, have no one sleep nearby;
By the second cock-crow what the man does will still be
Known to the nearest tradesman, well before dawn; the
Pastry-cook's imaginings; the head-chef's and the carvers'.
What crime do they ever refrain from attributing to their
Masters, extracting revenge by rumour if they're beaten?
There'll always be someone who'll seek you out at the

Crossroads, and drunkenly fill your poor unwilling ear.
Ask them to be quiet, it's from them you need to seek
The assurance you seek from me. They like betraying
Secrets, even more than swilling stolen Falernian wine,
In those quantities Saufeia imbibed at public sacrifices.
There are many reasons for living an upright life, this
One especially, you can treat your slave's tongues lightly;
For the tongue's the worst part of all of an ill-behaved slave.
'The advice you've just given give is good, but it's generic.
What do you suggest I do, after wasting all this time, all
My hopes deceived? For the swift blossom's blowing by
And is gone, the briefest part of our sad constricted life;
While we drink, while we call for garlands, perfumes,
And girls, old age comes stealing upon us undetected.'
Don't fret, you'll never lack a catamite friend as long as
These hills stand proud; they'll arrive in their carriages
And ships, all those who stroke their hair with effeminate
Fingers. Even better try rich old women, you'll be more
Than welcome; just keep on chewing those rocket leaves!

SatIX:135-150 Fate's Against Us

'Keep your suggestions for the fortunate; my Clotho
And Lachesis are happy enough if my cock can feed
My belly. O my poor Household Gods, whom I always
Pray to with a little incense or corn or a simple garland,
When will I fix on something to rescue my old age from
The beggar's stick and mat? I only need two hundred in
Gold as income from safe investments, and a few plain
Silver cups, the sort Fabricius banned as Censor, and two
Strongmen from the Moesian crew, to allow me to take
My place, in safety, in a hired litter at the noisy Circus;
And I'd like an engraver, bowed over his work, besides,
And another who can do lots of instant portraits; it would
Do. When will I even have enough to be called poor? A
Wretched prayer it is, without hope of success; for when
I summon Fortune, her ears are plugged with wax, purloined
From the ship whose unhearing crew fled the Sicilian Sirens.

End of Satire IX

Satire X: The Vanity of Human Wishes

SatX:1-55 Be Careful What You Ask For

In all the lands that stretch from Cadiz to the Ganges and the Dawn,
There are few who, free of a cloud of errors, can discern true good
From a host of opposites. What indeed do we wish for or fear that is
Rational? How often is what we conceive so far from wrong-headed
That we don't regret both the effort, and the fulfilment of our desire?
Whole families have been ruined by the gods' too ready compliance
With their prayers. They ask for what harms them whether in peace
Or war; to many people their own torrential flood of speech and their
Own eloquence is fatal; think of Milo of Croton who perished from
Relying on his own strength, and his awe-inspiring show of muscle;
More people are still undone by the money they gather with too much
Care, by a wealth that exceeds all other competing family fortunes,
As vast as a whale from British waters when compared to a dolphin.
That explains why in those dreadful times, Gaius Cassius Longinus
Was besieged, on the orders of Nero, by an entire cohort, as was
Seneca the millionaire's vast garden, with the splendid mansion
Of the Laterani surrounded: soldiers rarely seek to invade a garret.
Though you might only be carrying a few items of plain silver,
When you set out to travel at night, you'll still be afraid of swords
And sticks, panic at the shadow of a reed stirring in the moonlight;
While an empty-handed traveller can whistle in the robber's face.
The most popular prayer, as noted in all the temples, is for cash:
May my wealth increase, may my family treasure-chest hold the
Highest value of anyone's in the Forum. Yet you'll never imbibe
Poison from earthenware; the time to fear it is when you lift a cup
Studded with gems, when Setian wine glows in the golden bowl.
So, do you admire Democritus yet, that one of the two philosophers,
Who laughed at the human race, whenever he stirred a foot to move
From his threshold, while the other, Heraclitus, in contrast, cried?
We so readily censure the world with harsh derisive laughter, that
It's a wonder where all the moisture flooding his eyes came from.
Democritus' sides used to shake with perpetual laughter, despite
The fact that the cities of his day lacked togas with purple borders,
And togas with purple stripes, rods of office, litters, and tribunals.
What if he'd seen our eminent praetor standing there in his high
Chariot, in the midst of the dust in the Circus, in Jupiter's tunic,

With that regal Tyrian ornamentation, on the embroidered toga
Falling from his shoulders, and a crown of such huge diameter,
That there isn't a neck created made strong enough to bear it?
In fact a sweating slave holds it in public, and lest the praetor
Is over-pleased with himself, rides beside him in the same car.
Now add the bird that soars from his ivory sceptre, add the horn
Players over here, over there the long lines of his official escort
Leading the way, and the citizens in white who march at his bridle,
Transformed into friends by the hand-outs tucked in their purses.
In those days too Democritus found laughter in every encounter,
His shrewdness shows that men of excellence, great exemplars,
May yet be born in a dull climate, in a land of castrated sheep.
He laughed at people's anxieties and at their delights as well,
And sometimes at their tears, while to Fortune's menaces he
Himself would say: 'Go hang!' and show her his middle finger.
So what are the vacuous, pernicious things that people ask for?
Is there a point to those wax tablets, prayers at the gods' knees?

SatX:56-113 The Emptiness Of Power

Some are destroyed by their power, downed by profound envy,
Some are sunk deep by their long and illustrious list of honours.
Noosed by a rope, their statues are dragged to the ground, even
The wheels of their chariots are smashed, and broken to pieces
With axes, while the legs of their innocent horses are shattered.
Now the flames roar, the bellows hiss, and that head idolised
By the people glows in the furnace, flames crackle around huge
Sejanus; the face of a man who was number two in the world
Is converted to jugs and basins, turned to pots and frying pans.
Deck your houses with laurel, lead a great bull whitened with
Chalk up to the Capitol: come see Sejanus dragged along by
A hook, everyone's celebrating! 'Look at the lips, look at the
Face on that! You can take it from me, he was never a man
That I liked' 'But what was the crime that brought him down?'
Who informed, what's the evidence, where are the witnesses?'
'That's all irrelevant; a lengthy and wordy letter arrived from
Capri.' 'That's fine, answer enough.' But what of the Roman
Mob? They follow Fortune, as always, and hate whoever she
Condemns. If Nortia, as the Etruscans called her, had favoured
Etruscan Sejanus; if the old Emperor had been surreptitiously

Smothered; that same crowd in a moment would have hailed
Their new Augustus. They shed their sense of responsibility
Long ago, when they lost their votes, and the bribes; the mob
That used to grant power, high office, the legions, everything,
Curtails its desires, and reveals its anxiety for two things only,
Bread and circuses. 'I hear that many will perish.' 'No doubt,
The furnace is huge.' 'My friend Bruttidius Niger looked
Rather pale, when I met him in front of the altar of Mars;
I'm scared that Tiberius, like a defeated Ajax, will exact
Punishment for being so poorly protected. Let's run swiftly
And trample on Caesar's foe, where he lies on the riverbank,
Making sure our slaves see us, so they can't deny it and drag
Their terrified masters to justice, with nooses round our necks.'
Those were the crowd's secret murmurings regarding Sejanus.
Would you like to be greeted as Sejanus, possess all that he
Possessed, be the one to grant highest office to some, appoint
Others to military posts, be seen as the Emperor's guardian,
He who sits on the little constricted rock of Capri with a herd
Of Chaldean stargazers? Surely you'd like his troops, their
Spears, his excellent cavalry and private fortress; why
Wouldn't you? Even those who have no wish to kill, enjoy
The power to do so. But what's the value of fame and wealth,
If the good that delights is matched by an equal measure of ill?
Would you rather be wearing the purple-edged toga of him
Who's being dragged along, or rule empty Gabii or Fidenae;
Lay down the law over weights and scales, break vessels that
Give short measure, as a ragged official in deserted Ulubrae?
So perhaps you'd admit Sejanus had no idea what to ask for?
Since he simply kept asking for greater honours, demanding
More and more wealth, he was building a lofty many-storied
Tower, from which the fall would only prove greater, whose
Collapse into shattered ruin would be only the more profound.
What destroyed the Crassi, the Pompeys, and that man Caesar
Who brought the Romans under his lash, and so tamed them?
Simply seeking that place at the top, using every trick that
Exists, simply extravagant prayer granted by spiteful gods.
Few kings go down to Ceres' son-in-law, Dis, free from
Blood and carnage, few tyrants achieve a tranquil death.

SatX:114-146 The Rewards of Fame and Eloquence

The fame and eloquence of a Demosthenes, or of a Cicero,
Is what lads pray for, and keep on praying for, all through
Minerva's spring holidays, every lad with a slave to guard
His slim satchel, and a farthing to give to the thrifty goddess.
Yet both orators died for their eloquence, a rich overflowing
Stream of talent was what sent both of them to their deaths.
Talent had its hands and neck severed, no feeble advocate's
Blood drenched the rostrum, it was Cicero's, he who said:
'O Rome, you are fortunate to be born in my consulate.'
If he'd always carried on in that vein, he might have denied
Antony's swords. Rather risible verses than you, O immortal
Second Philippic, so conspicuous by your fame, the one that's
Rolled out next on the scroll. Demosthenes, your inspiration,
He too, the wonder of Athens, was snatched by harsh death,
When he hauled at the twisted reins of the packed assembly.
He was born with the gods, and malignant fate, against him,
Being sent away from the coals, the tongs, and anvil of filthy
Vulcan, where eyes ran with the soot from the glowing ore,
From his father's sword-manufacture, to a teacher of rhetoric.
The trophies of war too are considered to be more than human
Glories, the breastplate pinned to a bare tree trunk, cheek-piece
Hung from a shattered helmet, a chariot yoke short of its pole,
An ornament from the stern of a conquered ship, a sad captive
On the fortress's heights, these are the things for which a Greek
Or Barbarian, or a Roman commander exerts himself, these are
The things that provide an incentive, for danger and hard work.
So much more intense is the thirst for fame than for virtue.
Who'd embrace virtue simply for itself, if you took away all
The reward? Yet nations have been destroyed by the ambition
Of a few, by their desire for fame and a title, a name that might
Cling to the stones that guard their ashes, those stones the barren
Fig tree's malicious strength is capable of shattering, since
Even their very sepulchres are granted a limited span by fate.

SatX:147-187 The Paths Of Glory

Put Hannibal in the scales: how much do you find the greatest
General weighs? A man too big for North Africa, that stretches

From Moroccan ocean's pounding to tepid Nile, then mounts it
As far as the Ethiopian tribes, and another species of elephant.
He adds Spain to his empire, and then vaults the Pyrenees.
Nature then bars his passage with the snowy Alps; whose rocks
He splits with vinegar and fire, bursting through the mountains.
He holds Italy now, yet aims to advance still further. 'Nothing
Is won,' he claims, 'until our Carthaginian army has shattered
The City gates and I plant my flag at the heart of the Subura.'
O what a sight, what a painting it would make, the one-eyed
General riding an African elephant, his Mauretanian beast!
So how does it end? O Glory! That very man, defeated, sits
A noted dependant, in the King of Bithynia's palace, there
To wait till his majesty chooses to wake. No sword, or stone,
Or javelin makes an end of a life that once troubled humanity,
But a little poisoned ring, avenging the rings, spoil from Cannae,
Repaying all that blood. Go, madman, and climb the hostile Alps
To entertain schoolboys, and provide matter for their speeches.
A world was not enough for that youth from Pella, Alexander,
Seething with discontent at the narrow confines of his universe,
As if trapped on some rocky prison isle, tiny Seriphus or Gyara:
But once he's entered that city, Babylon, built of brick and clay,
He must be content with it as his coffin. For death alone reveals
How small the remnants of a human being. Then there's Xerxes:
The tale that he sailed through Mount Athos, all the lies Greece
Tells as history, gained credence; the Hellespont bridged by his
Vessels, solid enough for vehicles to cross; we credit the stories
Of streams running dry, of deep rivers being drunk by the Medes
At their meals, all that Sosostriis sang with drenched sleeves.
Yet what state did Xerxes return in, on relinquishing Salamis?
He vented his savage rage by lashing the winds, Caurus, Eurus,
Who'd never experienced the like even in their Aeolian prison,
He bound Poseidon, the Earthshaker himself, with chains,
(That was lenient. What? Didn't he think him worth branding
Too? What god would have chosen to be that man's slave?)
What state was he in? In a single ship, of course, sailing the
Bloodstained waves, his prow slowly pushing corpses aside.
So often that's the price extracted for man's desire for glory.

SatX:188-288 The Penalties Of A Long Life

‘Grant me a long life, grant me many years, Jupiter.’
But think of the many endless ills old age is full of!
Take a look, first of all, at its ugly face, repulsive,
And wholly altered, with an ugly hide in place of
Smooth skin, the drooping jowls, the wrinkles such
As those that the old mother ape scratches at on aged
Cheeks, in shadowy spreading groves of Numidia.
Between the young there are plenty of differences,
One’s better looking, one’s stronger than another,
But the old are alike, body and voice both trembling,
The head quite bald, the nose dripping, like a baby;
The poor wretch mumbles his bread with useless gums.
Even to his wife and children, and himself, he seems
So dire even Cossus the fortune-hunter feels disgust.
The pleasures of food and wine are no longer the same
As his palate dulls; and as for sex its now long-forgotten,
Or should you try, his limp prick with its swollen vein, just
Lies there, lies there though you pummel it all night long.
What else could you expect from such feeble white-haired
Loins? Desire that attempts oral sex without the strength
To perform it, is that not rightly suspect, too? Now take
Note of another lost power. What pleasure is there in music,
However fine the singer, what pleasure in Seleucus’s lyre,
Or the sound of the pipers, in cloaks of glittering gold?
What matter where he sits in the vast theatre, if he can
Barely hear the loud horn-player, the fanfare of trumpets?
The slave-boy has to shout loudly, in his ear, to make his
Visitors’ names heard, or even tell him the time of day.
Moreover fever alone warms the few pints of blood in
His already icy body. A host of diseases of every strain
Encircle him, and if you asked me to name each of them
I could sooner tell you how many lovers Oppia has had;
Or how many patients Themison kills in a single autumn;
Or how many partners Basilus has swindled, how many
Wards Hirus; how many men generous Maura sucks off
In a day, or how many pupils have been laid by Hamillus;
Quicker to run through the number of villas that man owns
Who made my fresh beard rasp, in shaving me, when young.
This old man’s shoulder’s impaired, that one’s groin, or
That one’s hip; he’s blind and jealous of the one-eyed; he

Takes food from another's fingers between bloodless lips;
His jaws used to open wide when dinner appeared, now he
Just gapes like a baby-swallow when the selfless mother
Flies to it, bringing a mouthful. But worse than a physical
Decline is the onset of dementia, when his slaves' names
Are forgotten, the face of his friend whom he dined with
The previous evening, and even the children he fathered,
And raised himself. In his will, he'll cruelly deny his own
Heirs their inheritance, and leave everything to his dearest
Phiale; showing what the breath of a skilful mouth can do
That's been employed for years deep in a whorish cavern.
Even if his mental powers remain intact, he's required to
Face the funerals of his sons, gaze on his beloved wife's
Or brother's pyre, on the urn containing his sisters' ashes.
It's the penalty for living a long life; to endure old age with
Domestic tragedy endlessly repeated, sorrow after sorrow,
Forever mourning, forever clothed in black. Nestor, King
Of Pylos, if you choose to give any credit to Homer's tale,
Presents an example of survival second only to the ravens.
Surely he must have been happy, delaying his death for so
Many generations, counting his centuries on his finger-ends,
And toasting himself in so many new vintages? Well listen
A moment, to the complaints he made regarding the decrees
Of fate, and the length of his life's thread, forced to see his
Ardent son Antilochus's bearded body ablaze, questioning
Everyone there, as to why had survived to endure that day,
And what crime he had committed to deserve so long a life.
Peleus said the same, when he mourned the loss of Achilles,
And Laertes prematurely mourning the wandering Odysseus.
If Priam had died earlier, while proud Troy was still standing,
If he had died before Paris had begun to construct his brave
Fleet of ships, he would have joined the shade of his ancestor
Assaracus, his corpse borne, with great solemnity, held high
On the shoulders of his sons, Hector and his brothers, and
Accompanied by a host of Trojan women in tears, lead by
Cassandra and Polyxena, his daughters, their garments torn.
What then did a long life bring him? He saw a world ending,
Asia Minor brought to defeat, swept by fire and the sword.
Then he removed his crown, and took up arms, a soldier
With trembling arm, to fall, at highest Jove's altar, slain

Like an ox, too old for the thankless plough, offering its
Wretched, scrawny neck to the blade of its master's knife.
At least he died a human being, while his wife, Hecuba,
Survived only to bark fiercely from a bitch's gaping jaws.
I'll turn to Roman examples, after passing swiftly over King
Mithridates of Pontus, and Croesus, ordered by eloquent Solon
The Just, to look to a long life's end before calling it fortunate.
A long life led Marius to exile, prison, the Minturne Marshes,
It was the cause of him begging his bread in ruined Carthage;
Could nature, or Rome, have displayed anyone more fortunate
Than that citizen, if his triumphal spirit had breathed its last,
When he'd led the massed ranks of his prisoners in procession,
And ridden amidst all that military pomp, at the very moment
When he finally chose to step down from his Teutonic chariot?
Campania, foreseeing his fate, offered Pompey a death by fever
He should have longed-for, but the prayers of people in many
Cities prevailed; so that Fortune, his own and Rome's, saw him
Defeated, and severed that head she'd saved. That mangling
Lentulus and Cethegus avoided; punished for their conspiracy,
They died whole, and the corpse of Catiline too lay there intact.

SatX:289-345 And As For Good Looks!

The anxious mother prays in a low murmur, for a sons' good looks,
More loudly for a daughter's, as she stares at the shrine of Venus,
With the most extravagant of requests. 'Why criticise me?' she'll
Demand, 'After all, Latona delights in her daughter Diana's beauty.'
But Lucretia's fate would inhibit me from praying for good looks
Like hers. Virginia would much have preferred to possess Rutila's
Hunched back, and yield her own face to Rutila. Moreover, a son
With a handsome form always makes his parents so nervous and
Wretched: since it's so rare for beauty to coincide with restrained
Behaviour. He'll be denied his manhood, even though his family
Tradition is all for morality pure and simple, imitating the ancient
Sabines, even though nature may have endowed him generously
With a face that glows with blushing modesty, with an innocent
Disposition (What more, after all, could nature do for the lad;
Nature, who is more powerful than any chaperone's vigilance?)
And why? Because of the unrestrained dishonesty of his seducer,
Who'll even dare to corrupt the parents themselves: such is his

Confidence in the power of bribery. No tyrant in his barbaric
Fortress has ever sought to have an ugly adolescent castrated!
No bandy-legged scrofulous teenager, with a swollen belly
Or a hunched back, was ever the target of Nero's foul desires!
Yet, carry on, and indulge your pride in your boy's good looks,
And you must expect even greater dangers. He may well prove
A notorious adulterer, living in fear of whatever punishment
Some furious spouse may exact. His stars won't make him
Any less likely than Mars to fall into the husband's net. And
Resentment sometimes goes well beyond what the law allows:
There's death by the sword, or a cruel scarring from the lash,
Some adulterers have even been bugged with dried mullets.
Still your Endymion seduces some married woman he's fallen
In love with. Soon, when Servilia has handed over her money,
He'll become hers whom he does not love, and strip her of all
Her personal jewellery; which of them, if she's an Oppia or
A Catulla, is likely to deny that wetness between her thighs?
'But if he's pure what harm can beauty do him? What good
Did it do Hippolytus or Bellerophon leading an austere life?
Stheneboa burned as hotly as did Phaedra, and both of them
Lashed themselves into a rage. Woman's at her most savage
When she's stirred to hatred by a sense of shame. What advice
Will you give Silius whom Claudius's wife has determined
To 'marry'? He's the finest, most handsome member of the
Patrician race, yet a glance from Messalina is drawing him
To a wretched finale; she's been waiting a while now, her
Bridal-veil all ready, her regal marriage bed's prepared, all
Can see it in the garden; her dowry's a thousand gold pieces,
And even the augur and witnesses have arrived not long ago.
Did you imagine this was a secret only shared with a few?
She won't marry unless it's legal. What's your decision?
If you don't choose to obey, you'll be dead before evening;
If you commit the sin, there'll be the briefest delay before
What's known to Rome, and the mob, reaches Caesar's ear.
Bow to her commands, if a few days of life are worth that.
Whichever decision you think is easier or more preferable,
You'll still have to offer your fine white neck to the sword.

SatX:346-366 So Much For Prayer

So is there nothing worth people praying for? If you'll take
My advice, you'll allow the gods to determine what's right
For us, and what's likely to benefit our situation; for
The gods grant us gifts that are more fitting than nice.
They show more care for us than we do for ourselves. We
Seek marriage and offspring driven by blind emotion, by
Vain desire, while the gods know all about the children
We'll have, and what kind of wife ours will turn out to be.
Still, if you want a reason for prayer, for offering a pretty
White piglet's innards, the sacred sausages, at the shrines,
Then you might pray for a sound mind in a healthy body.
Ask for a heart filled with courage, without fear of death,
That regards long life as among the least of nature's gifts,
That can endure any hardship, to which anger is unknown,
That desires nothing, and gives more credit to all the labours
And cruel sufferings of Hercules, than to all the love-making
All the feasting, and all the downy pillows of Sardanapalus.
The prayer I offer you can grant yourself; without doubt,
The one true path that leads to a tranquil life is that of virtue.
If we were prudent, you'd possess no power, Fortune: it's we
Who make you a goddess, and grant you a place in the sky.

End of Satire X

Satire XI: An Invitation To Dinner

SatXI:1-55 Know Yourself

If Atticus, the wealthy, dines well, he's the height of elegance,
If Rutilus does so, he's mad. What sparks louder laughter in
The public than a bankrupt gourmet? Every dinner-party,
Every bathhouse, square, and theatre is talking of Rutilus.
While his limbs are young, they say, and strong enough, for
Him to fight in a helmet, while his blood still burns hotly
He's about to sign up to the code of the gladiatorial school,
With its royal decrees, free of the tribune's pressure or veto.
You can find plenty like him, whose only reason for living
Is to satisfy their palate, whose creditors, barely eluded,
Frequently lie in wait for them at the gate of the market.
The most poverty-stricken gourmet will dine in choicest
And richest style, though facing ruin; the cracks apparent,
He'll still be searching the four elements for appetisers,
Price no obstacle to his desire; indeed, if you watch closely,
He delights all the more in whatever proves most expensive.
He'll not hesitate for a moment about raising liquid funds
By pawning the silver, or melting down mother's statue.
He'll not hesitate a moment to spend four thousand in gold
Spicing his gourmet dishes; only to eat stew with the gladiators.
It depends who holds the feast, then; Rutilus spells extravagance,
But the expense in Ventidius' case is laudable and his wealth
Increases his fame and reputation. It's right to despise the man
Who knows how superior Mount Atlas is in height to the other
Towering summits of Libya, yet hasn't the least idea how small
His purse is compared with a treasure chest that's bound in iron.
The saying γνῶθι σεαυτόν: 'know yourself', is of heavenly origin,
It should be fixed in the memory, dwelt on in the heart, whether
You're seeking a wife, or aim for a place in the sacred Senate;
Thersites had no wish to win the contest for Achilles' armour,
That breastplate in which Ulysses made an exhibition of himself.
If it's you who affect to defend a difficult and highly important
Case, then take counsel with yourself, ask yourself what you are,
A powerful orator, or merely a windbag, like Curtius or Matho?
You must know your measure, and be conscious of it in great
Things and in small, even for instance when you're buying fish;

No point in desiring mullet, if your purse only runs to gudgeon!
Think of the fate that awaits you, as your wallet grows leaner
While your appetite increases, when you've sunk your paternal,
Inheritance, your property, your silver plate, all of that heavy
Stuff, with all your fields and herds, in your spacious stomach.
With spendthrift lords the last to go is the Roman knight's gold
Ring, after which Pollio ends by begging with a naked finger.
It's not a premature demise, an early funeral, the extravagant
Should fear, but old age, that is more to be feared than death.
There's the usual progression: they'll borrow money in Rome
And squander it in the lender's face; then, while there's still
A small amount left they'll flee for Baiae and its oyster-beds.
It's no worse these days to be declared bankrupt, than move
The other way, to the Esquiline from the seethe of Subura.
The only grief they experience fleeing the City, their only
Regret, is having to miss a year of races in the Circus.
There's not a trace of a blush on their faces: Shame is
Mocked as she hastens from Rome, few seek to detain her.

SatXI:56-89 An Invitation To Dinner – The Food

Now you'll discover, Persicus, whether I live up to this fine talk
In reality, in my style of living and my behaviour, or whether
Though singing the praises of beans, I'm really a gourmet at heart,
Ask my slave for porridge in public, but whisper 'tart' in his ear?
Now you've promised to be my guest, I'll be your King Evander,
While you'll be Hercules, hero of Tiryns, or that lesser guest
Aeneas, who could still count a goddess in his family tree.
Listen to what I'll serve, without recourse to the market.
From my Tiburtine farm comes a little kid, the most tender,
The plumpest, of the herd, that's as yet unacquainted with
Grazing, that hasn't yet dared to nibble the hanging willow
Shoots, there's more milk than blood in its veins; then wild
Asparagus, picked by my steward's wife when she's finished
Her weaving; large eggs, still warm, wrapped in wisps of hay,
Accompanying the hens themselves; and grapes kept for half
A year, still as good as they were when they hung on the vine;
Syrian and Signian pears; and in the same baskets of fruit
Fresh-smelling apples equalling those from Picenum; don't
Fret, their autumnal juice has been tempered by frost,

And they've shed that dangerous lack of ripeness. In the
Old days, this would already have seemed a luxurious feast
To the Senate. Manius Curius Dentatus would cook humble
Greens, picked in the garden, on his modest hearth, now
Every squalid ditch-digger in the chain-gang would refuse it,
While reminiscing about the tripe he ate in some steaming diner.
It was the tradition long ago to hang a side of salted pork
From the wide-barred rack ready for festive occasions, and
To serve your relations a birthday meal of bacon, with fresh
Meat too, if you received a cut from the sacrificial victim.
Even a relative, three-times consul, who'd held the office
Of dictator, and who'd commanded armies, would still
Hurry back for such a feast, earlier than usual, carrying
His spade on his shoulder, from some hillside he'd tamed.

SatXI:90-135 An Invitation To Dinner – The Surroundings

In the days when they trembled before the Fabii and Scauri,
Fabricius, and stern Cato, when the strict censor's rigid
Moral code caused even his colleague to shiver with fear,
No one pondered, as a matter for serious consideration,
What species of tortoise swimming the Ocean's wave,
Might make a fine and notable headrest for the elite;
Their couches were modest with bare sides, the bronze
Front displaying an ass's head garlanded with vines,
Around which the playful rural children would frolic.
Their homes and their furniture matched their cuisine.
Then soldiers were simple men, ignorant of Greek art,
And they'd break up cups made by great craftsmen,
Their share of the spoils from some conquered city,
So their horses could be decked with the trappings,
And their helmets be studded with scenes their foes
Might gaze at, as they died; fate commanding the wolf
To be tame, that sucked Romulus; or the twins in the cave;
Or their father, Mars, descending, no shield or spear.
And thus they served their porridge in Tuscan bowls:
Their silver served solely to make their armour gleam.
You could envy all that, if you were the envious sort!
And the power of the shrines was more tangible then,
A voice in the depths of night echoed in silent Rome,

When the Gauls were on the march from the Ocean shore,
And the gods acting as prophets. Such, Jupiter's warning,
Such the protection he offered Latium, when his image
Was fashioned from pottery, not tarnished by gold.
In those days you saw home-made tables crafted from
Our own trees; the wood was stacked for use, if some
Ancient walnut tree was overturned by an easterly wind.
But now the rich get no pleasure from dining; the turbot,
The venison are tasteless; the roses and fragrances foul,
Unless the great round tabletop is held up by a massive
Ivory pillar, a rampant snarling leopard made of tusks
Imported from Aswan, Gate of Syene, by the swift
Moors, or the Indian traders, even more dark-skinned;
Tusks that the elephants drop in the glades of Nabatea,
When they prove too large and heavy. It stirs the appetite,
And strengthens the stomach; a pedestal made of silver,
Would be like a plebeian iron ring on the finger. So I
Avoid the snobbish guest, who compares me to himself,
And despises my meagre resources. I own not an ounce
Of ivory, neither dice nor abacus beads made of the stuff,
Even the handles of my knives are fashioned out of bone.
Yet they've never made the fish or bread I serve rancid,
Nor is the chicken I carve any the worse for that reason.

SatXI:136-182 An Invitation To Dinner – The Entertainment

And I won't have a carver to whom the whole school
Of carvers has to bow down, a disciple of Trypherus
The learned, in whose classroom they blunt steel, slicing
Sows, huge hares, wild boar, gazelle, Scythian pheasants,
Enormous flamingos, Gaetulian oryx, sumptuous fare,
Till the elm-wood chopping board's echoes fill the Subura.
Nor has my novice servant learnt how to purloin a hunk
Of venison, or slice of Guinea fowl, untutored all his days,
And only initiated as yet in the stealing of tiniest scraps.
An uncultured boy will hand round the commonest cups,
Bought for a few pennies; he'll be wrapped against the cold;
He's no Phrygian, or Lycian slave obtained from the dealer
At great expense: when you want something, ask him in Latin.
All my slaves dress alike, their hair is cut short and straight,

And it's only been combed today because of the dinner I give.
This one's a tough shepherd's son, this one's father's a drover.
That one sighs for the mother he's not seen for so many days,
Pines for his little cottage, and the goats that he knew so well,
He's a noble face, and his sense of honour is noble, both are
Fit to adorn those who are clothed in the glowing purple toga;
His voice hasn't broken, he doesn't display his teenage balls
At the baths, he hasn't yet offered his armpits for plucking,
Nor does he nervously hide his swollen cock with an oil-flask.
The wine he'll serve you was casked in the very same hills
He comes from, and below whose summits he played.
Perhaps you're expecting the sound of tunes from Cadiz,
To set you going, dancing girls shimmying to the floor,
Wiggling their bottoms around to appreciative applause.
Young wives watch such, reclining beside their spouses,
Even though you may be too embarrassed to describe it.
It has the effect of arousing jaded desire, fiercely too,
Like stinging nettles; swelling more and more, until
With its sights and sounds, the pent up liquid flows.
My humble home excludes such nonsense. Let the man
Enjoy the clacking castanets; words from which even
The naked slave, for sale in a rank brothel, will abstain;
Let him delight in filthy language and pornographic art;
Whose spat out wine-dregs oil his Spartan marble floor;
My dinner today will offer another kind of enjoyment:
We'll have recitations from Homer, and Virgil's verse
Resonating on high, each challenging for supremacy.
What matter whose voice delivers such words as those?

SatXI:183-208 Leave Your Cares Behind

But now relinquish care, put business aside, and treat
Yourself to a pleasant interlude, in which you may
Idle the whole day away. There'll be not a mention
Of payments due; nor shall you let your wife arouse
Your silent anger, though she's out from dawn to dusk,
Though she comes back in the dark, her flimsy dress
Clinging to her, and suspiciously wrinkled, her hair
All over the place, and her face and ears still aglow.
Throw off whatever annoys you at my door, leave

House and slaves behind, whatever they've smashed
Or lost, and forget above all your friends' ingratitude.
Here the rows of spectators celebrate the Idaean rites,
And the Megalesia's starting flag; the praetor's already
Seated there in triumph: he's paid for the teams, and if I
Dare say so, without offending the vast, the excessive
Crowd, the Circus contains the whole of Rome today;
That ear-splitting noise tells me the Greens have won.
For if they'd lost you'd see this City of ours muted
And in mourning, as when the consuls lost their battle
In Cannae's dust. Let the youngsters watch, theirs is
The clamour, the daring bets, a stylish girl at their side:
My wrinkled hide would rather drink the spring sunlight,
And shed its toga. You can head for the baths already,
With a clear conscience, though it's an hour till noon.
It's not something you will do every day of the week,
Since even this sort of life grows excessively boring:
Our pleasures are deepened by less frequent indulgence.

End of Satire XI

Satire XII: Friendship

SatXII:1-82 Safe Return

This day is sweeter to me than my own birthday, Corvinus,
It's the day when the festal turf awaits the promised victims.
We bring a snow-white lamb for Juno, queen of the gods,
And its equal for Minerva, with her Gorgon-headed aegis;
While the sacrifice to Tarpeian Jove tugs petulantly at the
Long tether, making the rope quiver, and tossing its head;
Since it's a spirited calf, you see, ready for temple and altar,
For sprinkling with pure wine, one already ashamed to suck
At its mother's teats: with budding horns, it butts the oak tree.
If my personal resources were ample, a match for my feelings,
We'd be dragging a bull fatter than Hispulla to the slaughter,
One slowed by its very bulk, not nourished in local pastures,
But its lineage the product of the fertile fields of Clitumnus,
And its neck would be bowed, for the tall attendant's blow.
All this is to mark my friend's safe return, he who trembles
Still at terrors past, filled with amazement yet that he survived,
For besides the dangers of the sea he escaped the lightning too.
A single mass of dense cloud shrouded the sky in darkness,
While sudden flashes of fire struck the yardarms. Every man
Aboard thought he had been hit, and thought shipwreck as
Nothing compared to a death enveloped in blazing canvas;
It's always so, just as serious, if when a storm of poetry rises,
Behold there's some other crisis! Listen and pity once more,
Though the rest is on a par with that experience, dreadful
But not uncommon, as all those votive tablets in the shrines
Of Isis bear witness; who of us is unaware that artists earn
A living from painting them as offerings to the goddess?
That kind of ill-fortune overtook my dear friend Catullus.
With the hold half-full of water, and the waves already
Driving the stern this way and that, and the white-haired
Helmsman's skill unable to counteract the swaying mast,
He then tried to deal with the wind by jettisoning the cargo,
In imitation of the beaver that in its desire to escape death,
Will bite off its testicles and render itself a eunuch: then
The drug, *castoreum*, is made from its preputial glands.
'Take everything I've got,' cried Catullus, willing now

To hurl even his most precious possessions overboard,
Purple-dyed clothes fit even for some tender Maecenas,
And others made from the wool of flocks tinted by their
Grazing on special grasses, plus the effect of the hidden
Powers of the fine water, and climate, of southern Spain.
He'd no hesitation in hurling his silver plate away; dishes
Made for Parthenius, Domitian's chamberlain; a mixing
Bowl big as an urn, fit for Pholus the thirsty centaur, or
Even Fuscus' wife; baskets; a thousand plates; and a pile
Of engraved cups that Philip of Macedon once drank from.
Is there another such man, in all the world, with the will
To set his life above money, his survival above his goods?
Overboard went most of what's useful; there was still no
End of danger. Then, driven by necessity he resorted to
Taking a blade to the mast, so as to extricate himself from
His narrow strait: taking that ultimate risk, where the remedy
We adopt makes the vessel we're journeying in even weaker.
Away then, commit your life to the winds, rely on a broken
Plank, four inches of pinewood away from death, or perhaps
Seven inches away from death, if the planking is extra thick;
And remember next time, along with your nets full of bread
And the bellied flagons, to take some axes for use in a storm.
But once the waves died down, and the passengers' state
Improved, and destiny triumphed over the wind and sea;
Once the Fates began to weave a stronger thread, benign
Hands happily winding white wool into the yarn; and once
The wind arose, though no more than the lightest breeze,
The wretched vessel, ran on, its manoeuvrability impaired,
Every cloth spread to the wind, with the one remaining sail.
Now that the fierce southerly winds were abating, the sun
Returned bringing fresh hope of survival. Then the heights
Of Mount Alba, loved by Iulus, Aeneas' son, and preferred
By him to Lavinium, his stepmother's city, came in view,
Its peak named for the white sow whose litter amazed the
Delighted Trojans, and the novel sight of her thirty teats.
At last the ship passed the Tuscan lighthouse and entered
The breakwaters of Portus Augusti, that quiet the waves,
Those arms that leave Italy's shore, stretch out and meet,
In the sea; no ancient harbour created by nature is more
Impressive. Then the master steered his crippled vessel

Into the inner roads of the harbour, so sheltered a pleasure
Boat from Baiae could cross, where sailors, heads shaved
To fulfil their vow, tell, in safety, garrulous tales of peril.

SatXII:93-130 And Perish Those Legacy-Hunters!

Off with you lads, control your tongues and minds
Garland the shrines, lay out the grain and knives,
And decorate the green turf and the spongy hearths.
I'll follow, and once I've performed the sacred rite,
Head home again, where the little statues gleaming
With fragile wax will receive their slender crowns.
Here I'll propitiate my Jupiter, and offer incense
To my paternal Lares, and scatter the viola petals.
Everything gleams, long branches beside the door
That welcomes the festive day with lamps at dawn.
Lest you suspect my efforts, Corvinus, this Catullus,
Whose return I celebrate by preparing these altars,
Has three young heirs: who'd buy, I'd like to know,
Even a sick chicken, about to shut its eyes for good,
For the sake of a friend who's such a poor investment!
Truly even a hen's too pricey; no one sacrifices even
A quail for a man with children, while if rich, childless,
Gallitta, or Pacius, show even a sign of fever, the whole
Colonnade is studded with neat prayers on their behalf.
There are people who'd promise to sacrifice a hundred
Bullocks, or even elephants, though now there are none
For sale, here, and the beasts won't breed in Latium given
Our climate, though it's true there's Caesar's herd, bought
From the dark nations to graze in Rutulian forests, and in
The land of Turnus, unfitted to be enslaved by lesser men,
Since their ancestors once served the King of Molossus,
And Hannibal of Carthage, and even our Roman generals;
Carrying squads of our soldiers, as a part of the battle line,
Equipped with turrets on their backs, advancing to the fight.
Novis, or Pacuvius Hister, those legacy-chasers, wouldn't
Hesitate for a moment in leading those ivory-bearers to the
Altars, or slaughtering them before Gallitta's household gods,
Sole victims worthy of such gods, and those fortune-hunters.

If you let him, the latter would even promise to make a sacrifice
Of the tallest and therefore handsomest of his herd of slaves,
Tie the sacrificial bands to the foreheads of boys or girls alike,
And if he'd a nubile daughter at home, his own Iphigeneia,
He'd offer her too on the altar, without even the hope of her
Being replaced by a deer, as in that variant of the tragic story.
Good on you, my fellow citizens, a thousand ships cannot
Compare with a legacy; since if the victim eludes the funeral
Goddess, Libitina, he'll fall into the trap set by some truly
Amazing effort of Pacuvius, and destroy his previous will,
And probably, in brief, leave him the lot, leaving him to lord
It then over his beaten rivals. So you see how useful it can
Be to slit Iphigenia's throat, slay a daughter from Mycenae.
Long live Pacuvius, may he live as long as Nestor, may he
Possess as much as Nero stole, may he pile up a mountain
Of gold, may he love no one, and never be loved in return!

End of Satire XII

Satire XIII: Mock Consolation

SatXIII:1-70 Why So Surprised, Calvinus?

Setting a bad example won't make the perpetrator feel pleased.
That's the first manner in which life takes its revenge, that no
One who's guilty absolves themselves, in their own judgement,
Though he be a praetor who's corrupt influence rigged a vote.
So why should anyone be surprised, Calvinus, at recent events,
The wicked crime, a matter of trust betrayed? It's not as though
You're a person of such slender means the weight of this modest
Loss will sink you, nor is your experience something that's rarely
Known: it's the kind of bad luck familiar to many a person, banal
These days, a card that's plucked from fortune's outspread hand.
Put an end to your excessive grief. One's indignation should not
Burn more fiercely than fitting, nor be greater than one's injury;
Yet you can scarcely endure the slightest, the least, the tiniest
Particle of hurt, you're all in a blaze, with your innards seething,
Because your friend won't return that sacred sum of money you
Entrusted to him. Why should that surprise someone with sixty
Years behind him, a man who was born in Fonteius' consulship?
Have you gained not an ounce of profit from all your experience?
Surely those precepts are fine which the sacred books of wisdom
Offer; the wisdom to overcome fate, and yet we also consider
Those people fortunate, who have learned from life's teachings
To endure unpleasant things, and to bow and not resist the yoke.
What day is so full of good luck it fails to produce theft, fraud,
And betrayal, and the benefits gained by other sorts of crime,
The wealth that's gained through the sword or the poison chest?
The good are rare: count them, there are scarcely as many as
There were gates to Thebes, or mouths draining the rich Nile.
It's the ninth century of Rome now, an era even worse than
The age of iron, and Nature herself can find no name for its
Wickedness, she has no baser metal left to provide a label.
What's the point of invoking the aid of men and gods, with
The clamour Faesidius' noisy crew makes, cheering him on,
For a handout? Say, old man, for whom a lad's gold charm's
More fitting, don't you know the lure of other people's cash?
Don't you know how your simplicity moves the crowd to
Laughter, when you demand no one perjure himself, when

You seek divinity in lofty temples, on blood-stained altars?
The natives once lived that way, until Saturn was forced to
Forsake his crown, and grabbed the rustic sickle as he fled;
Back then, when Juno was but a child, and Jupiter lived as
A private individual in the caverns of Cretan Mount Ida;
There were no heavenly banquets then above the clouds
No Ganymede, no Hebe, Hercules' wife, as cupbearers,
No Vulcan, once the nectar was poured, wiping his arms,
Black with soot from his Liparean forge and workshop.
Each god dined alone, nor was there the crowd of gods
That exists today; the heavens being content with only
A handful of deities, and weighing more lightly on Atlas'
Shoulders; grim Pluto had not yet drawn his lot, winning
His kingdom in the depths, wedding Sicilian Proserpine;
No Ixion's wheel, no Furies, no Sisyphean rock, or dark
Vultures for Tityos; just happy shades, no infernal rulers.
In that age wickedness was greeted with astonishment.
They thought it a primal sin, one punishable by death,
If a young man refused to defend his elders, or a boy
To defend anyone with a beard, even if his own home
Did possess more berries, or a larger heap of acorns;
So revered was even four years seniority, and the first
Signs of a beard were the equivalent of sacred old age.
These days if a friend fails to renege on your agreement,
And returns your purse to you with all its rusting metal,
It's a marvel of fidelity, a portent fit for the prophetic
Etruscan books, or the sacrifice of a garlanded lamb.
If I come across an outstandingly honest man, I rank
It with some monstrous embryo, or a fish turned up,
Amazingly, by the plough, or a pregnant mule; as
Stunned as if it rained stones, or as if a hive of bees
Had swarmed in a great cluster on the roof of a shrine,
Or as if a swift-flowing eddying river of milk, with its
Whirling vortices, had rushed precipitously to the sea.

SatXIII:71-119 How They Seek To Justify Themselves!

You complain about a hundred gold pieces gone astray,
In his sacrilegious act of fraud? Why not that secret hoard
Of two thousand lost thus by another, or yet another's still

Greater sum, that an angle of his vast treasury scarce holds?
It's so simple, and easy, to ignore those divine witnesses,
If there's no mortal in the know. See how loud he is in his
Denials, and the self-possession displayed on his lying face.
He swears by the sun's rays and the Tarpeian lightning bolt,
And Mars' lance and the arrows of Apollo, Cirrha's prophet,
And by the shafts and quiver of Diana, the virgin huntress,
And by your trident Neptune, father of the Aegean, and he'll
Add Hercules' bow, and Minerva's spear, for good measure,
Whatever weapons happen to exist in the heavenly armoury.
And if indeed, he's a father, he'll say, with a tear: 'Or may I
Devour my son's brain boiled, doused with Egyptian vinegar!'
There are those who attribute everything to acts of fortune,
Who believe that the world goes on its way without guidance,
And that nature brings on the succession of days and years;
Who will therefore touch any altar you like without concern,
Others believe the gods exist, yet still commit perjury, saying
To themselves; 'Isis may choose to do what she wishes with
My body; let her strike me blind with an angry shake of her
Rattle, so long as, sightless, I keep the cash I'll deny receiving.
Lung disease, or festering abscesses, or even the loss of a leg
Are worth it. Though Ladas, the runner, were poor, he should
Still have no hesitation, unless he's mad or dying, in praying
For the rich man's gout; for what does the glory of swiftness
Bring after all, or thirsting for that wreath of Olympian olive?
Though the gods' anger is great, it's slow indeed to take effect.
How long might it take before they trouble me? I may even
Find the powers that be are indulgent; ready to forgive all this.
The same crimes are committed but with very different results:
One man's prize for his sins is crucifixion, another's is a crown.'
His heart trembling in terror at his vile trespass, this is how he
Calms himself. When you summon him to the sacred shrine,
He's ahead of you, drags you there, ready to vex you further;
When the cause is ill, given endless audacity, such confidence
Appear highly convincing. He's acting out a farce, like that
Fugitive jester in Catullus's witty mime, while you, wretched
Fool are roaring, loudly enough, it would seem, to out-do Stentor,
Just as Mars roars in Homer's *Iliad*: 'Jupiter, can you hear all this,
Yet not utter a word: surely you must speak out, though your lips
Be made of marble or bronze? Why else do we unwrap the incense

So piously, or the sliced calf's liver, or the pieces of white pork-fat
To add to the glowing coals? As far as I can see there's not a jot of
Difference between your statue and one of big-mouthed Vagellius.'

SatXIII:120-173 Your Loss Is Nothing New

Alternatively, accept this solace, worthy of being offered even
By one who's not read the Cynics; or the dogmas of the Stoics,
Distinguishable from the Cynics by their shirts; or delighted
With Epicurus, happy with the plants in his miniscule garden.
Difficult illnesses should be cared for by the greatest of doctors:
But even one of Philippus' students would do to take your pulse.
If there's no more detestable crime you can point to in the whole
Of the world than this, I'll be silent, I won't stop you beating
Your chest with your fists, or smacking your face with the flat
Of your hand. After all, after a loss you close the doors; cash
Is mourned, throughout the house, with a louder moaning and
Wailing than a death; no one feigns grief in such a matter, or
Remains content with merely ripping the hems of his clothes,
Or simply making his eyes sore with his simulated weeping;
When it's money that's gone astray we grieve with real tears.
However, if every court you see is full of similar complaints,
If when a document's been pored over ten times by the other
Party, the signature is later declared false, and the whole thing
Worthless, condemned by one's very handwriting, one's seal,
That prince of sardonyx stones, kept secure in an ivory chest,
Why do you, O precious creature, think your case should be
Judged extraordinary? What? Are you the child of a white hen,
While we are common chicks hatched from misfortune's eggs?
It's a minor thing you've experienced, it calls for modest anger,
One you've cast your eyes on more serious crimes. Compare
The hired thief, or the deliberate fire that's started with matches,
The front door revealing the first effect of the flames; Compare
Those who steal huge venerable rusted chalices from the ancient
Temples, given us by nations, or crowns once dedicated by kings;
If those valuables are lacking, some lesser vandal appears who'll
Sacriligiously scrape the gold from Hercules' thigh or Neptune's
Face, or go stripping the thin gold leaf from the statue of Castor;
Compare the manufacturers and dealers in poison, the parricide
Who deserves to be thrown in the sea in an ox-skin, along with

The ill-fated ape, an innocent, but nevertheless sewn in as well.
That's but a part of the wickedness Gallicus, Prefect of the City,
Hears all day, from the morning star's setting to that of the sun!
A single courtroom is sufficient if you want to understand the
Behaviour of humankind; spend a few days there, then dare to
Call yourself unfortunate, once you're far away from the place.
What's so surprising about goitre in the Alps, or about a breast
In Meroe, beside the Ethiopian Nile, bigger than its fat baby?
Who gapes now at those blue-eyed Germans with their yellow
Hair, with their greasy curls all twisted into their pointed braids?
Imagine a Pygmy warrior in miniature armour who suddenly
Runs towards a raucous cloud of Thracian birds and is grabbed
By a savage crane in an instant, and carried off through the air
In its curved beak, no match for his enemy. If you saw that here,
Among the crowd, then you might shake with laughter; but there,
Where the whole army's no more than a foot tall, no one laughs.

SatXIII:174-249 Forget About Revenge

'Is the perjurer to suffer no punishment then for his irreligious
Fraud?' Well imagine he'd been dragged away in the heaviest
Of chains, and executed at once based on your judgement (what
More could you want?); nevertheless your loss remains, that
Money of yours will never be returned, but the blood that has
Been shed from the headless corpse will grant invidious solace.
'Yet vengeance is fine, it's more gratifying than life itself!'
So the uneducated claim, whose tempers you see flaring for
The slightest reason, sometimes for no earthly reason at all.
That's not what Chrysippus the Stoic says, nor the gentle mind
Of Thales, or old Socrates who lived below sweet Hymettus,
He who would never have inflicted on his accusers one drop
Of the hemlock he was obliged to drink, in his cruel prison.
Indeed vengeance is always a delight to the weak and petty
And small-minded. You can see that straight away, since
No one enjoys vengeance more than a woman. Yet why
Believe the guilty have escaped, when conscience dwells on
Their vile deeds, terrifies them, strikes with its silent whip,
Wielding its invisible lash, there, in the tortured mind?
A fierce punishment it is indeed, to bear in your breast that
Hostile witness, night and day, a punishment more savage

Than anything Rhadamanthus, or stern Caedicius contrived.
The Pythian prophetess told a Spartan, who asked about
His keeping money entrusted to him, retaining it legally
By swearing a false oath, that he'd not go unpunished.
He had truly wished to know Apollo's thoughts on the
Matter, and whether the god would sanction the crime!
He returned the money, through fear, not principle, yet
Every word from the shrine was true and worthy of that
Temple, as was witnessed by his death, and those of his
Children, his household, and kin however far removed.
Such was the punishment suffered solely for thinking of
Doing wrong. Since, he who merely contemplates some
Secret wickedness in his mind, incurs the same guilt
As if he had done the deed. Think, if he really does it!
Perpetual anxiety is his, which even affects his eating,
His throat parched as in sickness, and the stubborn
Food sticking in his gullet. The wretched man spits
Out his Setian wine, and the choicest ageing Alban
Vintages displease; offer him finest Falernian; as if
It were sour, dense wrinkles will furrow his brow.
At night perhaps his conscience allows him a brief
Respite; after tossing all over the bed, his limbs lie
Quiet; when at once he'll see the temple, the altar
He's insulted and you, his victim, in dream, a sight
To make him sweat profoundly; your image, ghostly,
Larger than life, scaring him, driving him to confess.
Such are men who turn pale and quake at every flash
Of lightning, who faint at the first rumble of thunder
In the sky, as if the fire falls to earth not by chance or
The tempest's frenzy, but in anger, as if in judgement.
If they're unharmed, they dread the next thunderstorm
With greater anxiety, as if the lull were a postponement.
Moreover if they once start to feel feverish, sharp pains
In the side keeping them awake, they believe their bodily
Afflictions sent by a higher power: and consider them
The gods' spears and missiles. They don't dare pledge
A bleating beast to the little shrine or promise the Lares
A cockerel's crest; what respite from illness can the guilty
Hope for? What sacrificial victim isn't worthier of life?
They're full of resolution when they commit the crime;

Only after the evil's done do they begin to acquire a sense
Of right and wrong. Yet their nature, fixed and incapable
Of change, will still return to the paths it has condemned.
Who ever set a limit to their own sins? When does a blush
Of shame, once banished, reappear on some hardened brow?
Who have you ever seen who remains content with but one
Offence? Your miscreant will set his foot in the snare, he'll
Suffer the hook in some dark prison, or he'll join a crowd of
Notorious exiles, on some rugged rock in the Aegean Sea.
You'll revel in the bitter punishment meted out to the one
You hate, and eventually you'll cheerfully admit the gods
Are not as dull-witted as Claudius, nor as blind as Tiresias.

End of Satire XIII

Satire XIV: Bad Parenting

SatXIV:1-58 Try Setting A Good Example

There is much, Fuscinus, that's displayed, and passed on,
To children by their parents, which merits condemnation,
And tarnishes the brightness of things with its lasting stain.
If the old man ruins himself gambling, his heir while still
A child plays too, his little cup armed with the same dice.
Nor can his relatives expect much from some young man,
If, taught by his wastrel father's long-practised gluttony,
He's learnt how to peel truffles, marinade mushrooms,
And drown fig-peckers, *beccaficos*, in the right manner,
As they swim in the resulting sauce. You may flank him
With a thousand bearded tutors to left and right, but such
A lad when his seventh year is past, or even before he
Has all his new teeth, will always wish to dine in lavish
Style, nor fall short of the highest standard of cuisine.
What effect will a man have on his son, if he delights in
The clank of chains, thrilled by branding, convicts, gaols?
Is Rutilus, when he enjoys the savage sound of a flogging,
And thinks the lash sings sweeter than any Siren; when
He's a Polyphemus, an Antiphates, to his fearful home,
Only happy, if the torturer's been called, and someone's
Feeling the hot iron, for a pair of towels; is he teaching
Mildness of spirit; or how to rise above minor errors;
Or that he recognises the minds and bodies of slaves
Are of the same substance, the same elements as ours?
In your naivety do you expect Larga's daughter not to
Commit adultery, she who couldn't name her mother's
Lovers quickly enough, at such speed, that she wouldn't
Need thirty breaths to do it? She was mother's accomplice
When a child, now she drafts *billet-doux* at her dictation,
And sends them via the same sodomites to her own lover.
It's nature's law: bad examples at home corrupt us sooner
And more swiftly, because they lodge in our minds with
Greater authority. Some young man or other perhaps may
Resist this influence, if Prometheus has fashioned his heart
With generous skill, forming it from some superior clay,
The rest, long-exposed to the old sinful round, are dragged

Along in their father's footsteps, on that path to be shunned.
So refrain, lest those born of us should imitate our crimes,
The reality is that all of us can be taught to copy behaviour
That is shameful and perverse; some Catiline will conspire,
In every nation, you'll find those opposed to freedom under
Every sky, but no Brutus, no Cato, his uncle, to defend it.
Let no foul sights or language touch a father's threshold.
Keep far off, far away, you girls the pimps supply, those
Songs too sung by the parasite who parties all night long.
A child deserves the utmost respect. So if you're planning
On something vile, have some regard for his tender years,
And your little son may deter you from doing wrong.
If later on he does something to stir the censor's wrath,
If he proves himself like you not only in form and looks
But your true son in his behaviour too, sinning more
Profoundly, while following closely in your footsteps,
No doubt you'll castigate him, attack with bitter words,
And after that choose to make an alteration to your will.
But where's the justification for such stern parental looks,
Such outspokenness? Despite your age, you've done worse,
Your forehead, empty of brains, in need of a cupping glass.

SatXIV:59-106 Think of Your Children's Well-Being

There's no rest for your household when a guest's expected.
'Sweep the marble floor, rub the columns till they shine,
Brush away that dead spider up there, and all its web;
You, wipe the plain silver, and you, the ornate vases.'
The master's voice rages, as he stands there holding his rod.
You're anxious and wretched, lest your friend should arrive
And be offended by the sight of a foul dog-mess in the hall,
Or a portico splashed with mud, though a little slave-boy,
With half a bucket of sawdust, can soon put that to rights,
Yet you make no effort to ensure your son is witness to
A home that's pure, and without a flaw, beyond reproach!
It's fine to produce one more citizen for people and country,
So long as he's an asset to that country, capable of farming,
Capable of achieving something, in peace and war alike.
What matters most are the virtues you instil, the morality
You teach him. The stork feeds its young on lizards and

Snakes, it finds in the wild: and once they acquire wings
The chicks will seek out those same creatures themselves.
The vulture flies to its young bringing pieces of carrion,
Morsels from dead cattle or dogs, or from crucifixions:
So that's a vulture's food when full-grown it feeds itself,
When it's already building its own nest high in some tree.
While the noble eagle that's Jove's companion hunts for
Deer and hare in the glades, and carry the prey from there
To its eyrie: and when its offspring too reach maturity
And leave the nest, hunger prompts them to swoop on
The prey they tasted first after breaking free of the egg.
Caetronius loved building, and would raise the roofs of
His villas high along Caieta's curving shore, or the far
Slopes of Tivoli, or alternatively the hills of Praeneste,
Outdoing the Temples of Fortune and Hercules, with his
Marble transported from Greece or more distant places,
Just as Posides, Claudius' eunuch, tried to top the Capitol.
With such edifices. In that way, Caetronius shrank his
Assets, frittered away his fortune, and yet there was still
Plenty left. All of that his son too foolishly squandered,
In constructing newer villas, out of even rarer marble.
Then there are those that, blessed with a father who
Reveres the Sabbath, worship only the clouds in the sky
And its spirit, who draw no distinction between the pork
From which their father had to abstain, and human flesh,
And who swiftly rid themselves of even their foreskins.
It's their custom to ignore the laws of Rome, the Judaic
Code being that which they study, adhere to, and revere;
The Pentateuch, the mystic scroll handed down by Moses:
Nor do they reveal the way to anyone but a fellow-believer;
Leading only the circumcised, when asked, to the fountain.
It's the father that's to blame, treating every seventh day
As a day of idleness, separate from the rest of daily life.

SatXIV:107-188 The Avaricious Are The Worst

Our other vices, though, the young imitate by choice, it's
Avarice that they're commanded to indulge in regardless.
It's indeed a deceptive vice, with the form and pretence
Of virtue, with its dour character, severe look and dress.

The avaricious, indeed, are praised as if for their frugality,
Economical people who keep a firmer hold of their wealth
Than if their fortune were guarded by that dragon of the
Hesperides, or the one in Colchis. Added to which, people
Consider that those of whom I speak are famously skilful
In acquisition; those, indeed, who forge larger inheritances
From their ever-glowing furnace, on their assiduous anvils.
Whoever admires wealth, and considers that no one who's
Poor could ever be happy, will exhort his sons to start out
Along that road, and devote themselves to that same sect.
There are various elements to the vice: he'll imbue them
With these from the start, force them to practise every last
Stinginess; soon he'll teach them insatiable desire for gain.
He'll punish his slaves' bellies with inadequate provisions,
And starve himself; indeed he can't even bring himself to
Consume those last blue-green slices of his mouldy bread;
As early as mid-September he'll take to storing a portion
Of yesterday's mincemeat; and in summer he'll set aside
His beans for another meal, sealed up with a little piece
Of dried mackerel, or half a rotting catfish; and he'll count
The sections of chopped leek before putting them away.
A beggar from under a bridge would refuse his invitation.
Yet why go through such torment just to heap up wealth,
Show your patent obsession, with such manifest lunacy,
And live the life of the poor, simply in order to die rich?
Meanwhile, with your purse's swollen mouth bulging,
Your desire for cash will grow as your money grows,
You'll buy another villa, one rural estate's not enough;
You'll love extending the boundary, and the neighbour's
Cornfield seems bigger and better; you'll buy it, and the
Vineyards, and the hill-slope pale with its mass of olives.
If the owner won't accept a single offer you make, well
Then, you'll drive lean bullocks and starving mules with
Necks weary from the yoke, into his green corn at night,
And they won't return to their yard till the whole of his
New crop, as if scythed, has filled their empty bellies.
You can scarcely count the number of people who make
Complaints of this kind, how many ravaged fields are sold,
But what of the gossip, and the blaring noise of scandal?
'Where's the harm,' men say, 'lupin seed for me, rather

Than have the neighbours all around singing my praises,
While I reap a handful of grain from a miniscule estate.’
That will spare you from disease and infirmity I suppose,
You’ll be free of anxiety and care, will you; granted a long
Life, and better luck, from the very moment you acquire
Sole possession of a tract of agricultural land as large as
That ploughed by the Roman people, under King Tatius!
Later yet, when, broken by age, fights with fierce Pyrrhus,
Or the Molossian blades, the veterans of the Punic Wars,
Were granted a bare couple of acres for their many wounds,
None of them thought that return for their blood and toil,
Was less than they deserved, nor the country ungrateful
Or short on loyalty. Those few clods of earth satisfied
The father himself and his crowded cottage, his pregnant
Wife lying there, four children playing about, one child
A slave’s and three of his own; as long as an ample meal,
Large pots of steaming porridge, awaited their big brothers,
When they would return home, from the ditch or furrow.
Nowadays that patch of ground’s insufficient for a garden.
Greed is usually the root of crime: no fault of the human
Mind causes more poison to be mixed, or a more frequent
Rampaging about with a blade than the uncontrolled desire
For extravagant wealth. For the man who wants to be rich,
Wants to be rich now; but what reverence for the law, what
Fear or shame can you expect from a greedy man in a hurry?
‘Rest content with your huts in the hills, lads,’ is what some
Aged sire of the Hercini, Vestini, or Marsi would say long
Ago, ‘Let’s seek bread enough for our table, from the plough:
That’s what our divinities approve of, our gods of the fields,
Through whose power and assistance, after the welcome gift
Of ears of corn, men lost their taste for the fruit of the ancient
Oak. They have no wish to do what is forbidden, who feel no
Shame in wearing great rawhide boots in the frost, or skins
Reversed against the east wind: this new and foreign purple
Cloth, of every kind, is what leads to wickedness and crime.’

SatXIV:189-255 Your Children Will Outdo You

Those were the precepts old men taught the young; but now
Once autumn’s done, the father wakes his slumbering son

In the middle of the night, shouting: 'Grab your wax tablets,
Boy, scribble, stay awake, prepare your cases, study the civil
Laws of our ancestors, or seek the centurion's swagger stick,
Make sure, the commander Laelius notes your uncombed head,
Your hairy nostrils, and admires the breadth of your shoulders;
Demolish the huts of the Moors, and the forts of the Brigantes,
So your sixtieth year might bring you the Eagle that makes you
Wealthy; or if you shrink from enduring the long labour of a
Military career, if the sound of cornets and trumpets loosen
Your anxious bowels, buy what you can sell for half again,
And don't let yourself become fastidious about those goods
That have to be stored on the right bank of the Tiber, or
Think to start drawing a distinction between perfumes
And hides: profit always smells fine whatever its source.
Always remember to keep these words on your lips: fit
For the gods, fit even for Jove himself were he a poet:
"No one will ask how you made it, but make it you must."
Here's what I'd like to say to any father threatening to give
Such advice: 'Tell me, O mindless fool, who asked you to
Hasten the process? I'll answer for the pupil bettering his
Teacher. Relax, don't worry: you'll be outdone as surely
As Telamon outdid Ajax, or as Achilles exceeded Peleus.
The young need a gentle touch; the evils of adult sinfulness
Have not yet pierced their marrow. Soon enough, when your
Son's started shaving, taken the razor's curved edge to his
Beard, he'll bear false witness, he'll perjure himself for a
Handful of coins, though clasping the foot of Ceres' altar.
If his wife, you daughter-in-law, crosses your threshold
With a dowry: it's fatal: consider her dead and buried.
She'll be strangled in her sleep! He'll find a quicker path
To the possessions you seek to acquire on land and sea;
Major crime after all takes little effort. 'I never taught him
That,' you'll say, then, 'I never told him to behave that way!'
Yet the reason for his wicked thoughts, their source, is you.
For anyone who has taught his children love of vast wealth,
And produced avaricious sons by giving them foolish advice
Has granted them full licence, wholly abandoned the reins
Of the chariot; call it back if you will, there's no stopping it,
Scorning you in its flight, it leaves the turning posts behind.
No one believes in offending only to the extent permitted:

They'll allow themselves a great deal more leeway than that.
When you tell your son the man's a fool, who gives presents
To a friend, or helps a poor relation and sets him on his feet,
You're teaching him to rob, to cheat, to pursue wealth by
Every form of crime. Your love of cash is as great as the
Heartfelt love of the Decii for their country, or, if Greece
Speaks true, Menoeceus' devotion to his city of Thebes.
So you'll see that fire, whose sparks you yourself kindled,
Burning far and wide, and razing everything in its wake.
You'll be spared no wretchedness. The cub you've reared,
A roaring lion in a cage, will destroy its trembling teacher.
His astrologer has read your horoscope, but it's a bore to
Await the spindle's slow unwinding: you'll die before the
Thread is broken. You're already in the way, thwarting his
Wishes, already your long stag-like old age torments him.
Find that doctor, Archigenes, straight away, and buy one
Of King Mithridates' antidotes, if you'd still seek to enjoy
Another fig, to cull a few more roses. You'll need the drug
Fathers, as well as kings, had best swallow before they eat.

SatXIV:256-302 The Risks You Take

It's a famous show I'm giving, whose equal you'll not see
On any stage, any platform of our distinguished praetor's,
Just take a look at how people risk their lives to swell their
Fortunes, for a huge bag of gold in their brass-bound chest,
For the money deposited in Castor's Temple, under guard,
Ever since Mars the Avenger lost his helmet, and failed to
Keep tight hold of his assets. So forget holiday theatricals,
Cybele's *Ludi Megalenses*, the *Cerealia*, and the *Floralia*:
Human affairs are bound to offer us far more entertainment.
What delights the mind more? Bodies hurled through the air,
By some acrobat, who's an expert in walking the tightrope,
Or you, who haunt the deck of that Cilician ketch you're
Stuck with, forever tossed by the northerlies and southerlies,
A cheap and desperate trader in smelly sacks, so thrilled to
Import sweet raisin-wine from the shores of Jupiter's ancient
Crete, along with the wine-jars, his compatriots? Yet he who
Plants his feet on the tightrope with wavering step, garners
Himself a living from that occupation, in order to keep off

The hunger and cold: while you take foolish risks, merely
For a thousand talents and a hundred villas. Look at the sea
And the harbours full of great vessels: most of the human
Race is ocean-bound. Fleets will go wherever the hope of
Profit summons them, not merely crossing from Crete to
Rhodes, but sailing North African waters, leaving Gibraltar
Far behind, hearing the setting sun hiss in the western deeps.
And the great prize for your efforts, having seen the Ocean
Monsters, and the children of the waves, is to return home
Again with a full purse, proud of your swollen bags of loot.
More than one kind of madness hounds men's minds. Orestes,
Clasping his sister, was terrified by the Furies' fires and faces,
Ajax attacking a bullock thinks it is Agamemnon bellowing
Or Odysseus. The man who loads his ship to the gunwales
With goods, with only a plank between him and the waves,
May forgo his tunic or cloak, but surely needs a minder,
If the only reason for all that risk and effort, is a pile of
Clipped silver coins, with their legends and tiny portraits.
Clouds lower, the thunder rumbles, still: 'Cast off,' he cries,
The owner of that load of grain and pepper just purchased,
'They're no threat, the darkened sky, those black streaks of
Cloud; it's summer lightning.' Unhappy man, this very night
Perhaps, he'll go overboard, the timbers shattered, whelmed
And engulfed by the waves, his belt clasped in his left hand
Or teeth. And he for whose dreams all the gold whirled down
By the Tagus, or the Pactolus in its reddened sand, would
Not suffice, must now, a shipwrecked wretch, be satisfied
With a handful of rags to cover his freezing flanks, a few
Scraps of food, and the pennies he can beg as a survivor;
Holding a daub of the wreck, maintaining himself by alms.

SatXIV:303-331 It's Never Enough

What's acquired with so much effort is kept safe with even
More care and anxiety: guarding great wealth's a sad affair.
Licinus, the millionaire, sets out his fire-buckets, commands
His team of slaves to keep watch all night, terrified for his
Amber, and his statues, pillars of Phrygian marble, ivory,
And tortoiseshell plaques. The pot Diogenes, the naked Cynic
Slept in never caught fire; break it, it was still there tomorrow,

Patched with lead, or another shelter would appear. Viewing
That earthenware jar with its inhabitant, Alexander saw how
Much happier the great philosopher was, lacking desires,
Than he who claimed the whole world for his own, fated
To suffer dangers as great as his victories would prove.
If all were wise you'd have no power, Fortune: it is we, we
Who make you a goddess. Yet if you were to ask for my
Advice, I'd tell you what measure of wealth suffices, just
As much as you need to stave off hunger, thirst and cold,
As much as you needed, Epicurus, in your little garden,
As much as Socrates kept in his house, in ancient times;
Nature says nothing different, wisdom nothing different.
Does it seem I'm constraining you to follow only those
Fine examples? Then, add something from our Roman
Tradition, settle for what Otho's laws ordained as needed,
To join the fourteen rows of knights, or if that still makes
You frown, triple it, and make it twelve thousand in gold.
If by doing that I've still not filled your lap, if you want
More, not the riches of Croesus, nor the Persian lands,
Could ever satisfy your desire, nor the wealth of Narcissus,
That freedman to whom Claudius granted all, and whose
Orders he obeyed, in executing his empress, Messalina.

End of Satire XIV

Satire XV: Compassion Not Hatred

SatXV:1-92 Among The Cannibals

Who's ignorant, Volusius of Bithynia, of those monsters
The mad Egyptians worship? One city reveres the crocodile,
In another, they'll tremble at an ibis, gluttoned with snakes.
The sacred monkey's golden image gleams where unearthly
Chords reverberate from Memnon's crumbling statue, where
Ruined Thebes, with its hundred gates, is buried in the sand.
One town's folk will venerate cats, another's freshwater fish,
Or they'll say their prayers to a dog: yet none worship Diana.
It's a sin to violate a leek, or crunch an onion in your teeth
(O holy race, whose gardens give birth to such divinities!),
They abstain from woolly animals completely at their tables,
And there it's a sin, as well, to slaughter a goat's offspring:
But it's fine to feed on human flesh. When Ulysses told the
Tale of such a crime, at the dinner table, to startled Alcinous,
Some of his listeners must have been moved to anger, or to
Laughter even, thinking him a fluent liar. 'Return him to the
Waves, why don't you? He's earned the reality of some cruel
Charybdis, by inventing his Cyclopeans, and Laestrygonians.
I'd sooner believe in his Scylla, or his clashing Cyanean rocks,
His bag of winds, or his Elpenor, grunting beside his fellow
Oarsmen, turned to swine by a delicate touch of Circe's wand.
Does he think we Phaeacians are as empty-headed as that?'
It's what he'd have cried, rightly, some sober man of Corcyra,
One who'd restricted his intake of wine from the brimming jar;
Since Odysseus, after all, had not a single witness to his story.
In turn, I'll tell a horrendous tale of recent happenings, in Iuncus'
Consulship (*127AD*), beyond the walls of baking Coptos (*Quift*),
A crime perpetrated by the mob, more horrific than any tragedy.
For, if you chose to swish the tragic robes from Pyrrha onwards,
No tragedian portrays the crime of an entire people. Yet hear this
Instance of savage barbarism, one that occurred in our own times.
Between two neighbouring towns on the Nile, Tentyra (*Dendera*)
And Ombos (*Naquada*), there flamed an ancient and enduring feud,
An undying hatred, an open wound, not amenable to being healed.
The fury of the people had been roused, on both sides, because each
Loathed their neighbour's gods, considering those they worshipped

Themselves the only true divinities. So, when a sacred festival, was
Held by one tribe, the other's chieftains and elders, decided as one
To seize this opportunity, and prevent their enemies from enjoying
The celebratory happiness of the day, and the delights of a banquet,
With tables positioned by the temples, at the crossroads, with their
Dining couches, often in continuous use all day and night, until the
Seventh dawn lights them. (The native Egyptians may be uncouth,
But as far as I can tell myself, scandalous Canopus, in its civilised
Extravagance, more than matches that of these barbarous masses.)
Added to which victory seemed certain over feasters, inarticulate
And staggering drunkenly with wine. On one side were dancers,
Men swaying to the sounds of a dark-skinned piper, with flowers,
Perfumes, in all their variety, their brows all wreathed in garlands:
On the other savage hatred. First they begin with sonorous insults:
With tempers blazing, these are the bugle-calls to start the brawl.
Then both sides come together with a cry, using their naked hands
As weapons. Scarcely a jaw remains unwounded, it's hard to find
Any visage, perhaps there's none, that's lacking some nasal injury.
Already, throughout the ranks, mutilated faces are to be seen,
Features distorted, the bones gaping whitely through torn cheeks,
Or fists covered with blood from damaged eyes. Yet they realise
This is still some sort of puerile game, a childish attempt at battle,
Since there are no corpses yet to trample, and what's the point
After all, of a fighting mob that's thousands strong, if everyone
Emerges from this alive? So the fighting grows fiercer, and now
They start to gather stones from the ground, and bending their
Arms back, begin to hurl them; these the home-grown missiles
Rioters use, not the rocks that Ajax or Turnus wielded, nor as
Heavy as the one with which Diomedes struck Aeneas on the hip,
Merely the sort of stones a strength inferior to theirs, belonging
To those born in our times, can manage to lift high and launch.
For the human race was already in decline when Homer lived.
Now the earth produces men who are sinful but worthless,
Such that any god who saw them, would laugh, in derision.
Let me turn back to my tale. The one side, having gathered
Reinforcements, dared to take up their weapons and renew
The fierce fight, sending a hail of hostile arrows, into the air.
Chased by the men of Ombos, those of Dendera, that town
Blessed by the palm-trees' shade, turned their backs in swift
Retreat. One man, in panic, slipped as he fled, fell precipitately,

And was captured. He was immediately chopped in a hundred
Pieces, one man providing enough substance to feed the mob,
Who triumphantly devoured him, even gnawing at his bones,
Thinking it far too tedious a wait to barbecue him, or cook
Him in a pot over a blazing fire, content to eat the body raw.
I'd like to celebrate the fact, though, that they chose not to
Desecrate your gift to the world, Prometheus, the fire you
Stole from highest heaven. My congratulations to that fierce
Element: that delights me too. Yet no cannibals that chew
Human flesh, ever dined on any other corpse more willingly.
Lest you ask, or are in doubt, about the perpetrators of that
Crime, let me say it was not merely the first who dined well,
But the very last spectator, also, seeing the whole body quite
Consumed, drew his fingers over the ground to taste the blood.

SatXV:93-174 In Praise Of Compassion

They say too that the Basques prolonged their lives (72BC) by this
Kind of thing, although in an altogether different situation, then
It was hostile fate, and the extremity caused by war, provoked
Their actions; a dire crisis, dreadful hunger during a long siege.
They had already eaten every creature, every plant, and whatever
Else they had to, driven by the pains of an empty belly, till even
Pompey and his men pitied those skeletons, their pallid leanness.
Famine made them start to tear at each other's limbs, they were
Even ready to lacerate their own. Could men or gods refuse to
Forgive those who had to suffer such dire and monstrous things,
When even the shades of those whose bodies they were eating
Forgave? Zeno the Stoic's precepts lead us to act otherwise.
Today Greece's Athens, and ours, influence all. Gaul's
Eloquence is educating Britain's lawyers, and even farthest
Thule already talks of hiring its own professor of rhetoric.
How should we expect the Spaniards, I mentioned, of Metellus'
Day to have known the Stoic school? Yet those Spaniards were
Noble, and those of Saguntum earlier (218BC) were equal in
Courage and steadfastness, victims of an even worse disaster.
What like defence could those Egyptians offer, more barbarous
Than the priests of Diana's altar at Maeotis, since were we to
Accept the poets for now, the Taurian who initiated their foul
Rites only enacted human sacrifice, the victim's body subject

To no more, no further desecration, than the knife. But what
Impelled the Egyptians, where was the dreadful famine, what
Threatening army drove them to commit so detestable a crime?
If the soil of Memphis was parched, surely there was another
Way to have shamed the Nile into rising, and soaking the earth?
Not even those dreadful Germans, or the Britons, those savage
Scythians, or monstrous Transylvanians, raged with the frenzy
Of this mindless civilian mob, a people good only for hoisting
The miniature sails on their earthenware boats, and leaning on
Those tiny oars depicted on their jars. There's no punishment
You can devise severe enough for such a crime, nor a fitting
Retribution for those peoples whose rage drives them on as
Would famine, and urges them to like behaviour. By her gift
Of tears, Nature acknowledges she has granted human beings
Compassionate hearts: it's the finest element of our sensibility.
And so she causes us to weep for the ward, who with long
Childish hair, hiding a face wet with tears, rendering its
Sex indeterminate, has summoned a defrauder to court.
Nature demands we sigh, when we meet the funeral cortege
Of a girl fated never to marry, or attend an infant's burial,
One too young for the pyre. Who that is good, and worthy
Of the mysteries, and wishes to live like a priest of Ceres,
Can treat others' ills as alien to themselves? This is what
Separates us from the dumb herd, and thus we alone are
Granted abilities worthy to be revered, fit for the gods;
And equipped for artistic practice and creation; we alone
Exhibit a sensibility inspired by the high heavens above,
And lacking in those with faces bowed towards the earth.
When the world began, what fashioned us mutually only
Granted them so much mind, us intellect, so that mutual
Empathy would drive it to seek and offer help; draw
Scattered individuals into community; migrate from the
Ancient forests, leave the woods our ancestors inhabited;
Build houses, and join another roof to our own hearths;
So that, thanks to our neighbour's threshold, the mutual
Confidence achieved would render both our sleep secure;
Protect with our weapons the fellow citizen who staggers
From some deep wound, or has fallen to the ground;
Give the common bugle-cry, as a signal; be defended
By the same turrets; our gates locked by a single key.

Yet now there is more harmony among snakes. The
Wild beast spares its relatives with similar markings.
When does a stronger lion take the life of a weaker?
Where does a wild boar die at the tusks of a greater?
The Indian tiger lives in perfect peace with the fierce
Tigress, and savage bears live together in harmony.
Yet it proves not enough for human beings to beat
Out lethal steel on the inauspicious anvil, outdoing
The first smiths who spent their hours forging rakes
And hoes, mattocks, and ploughshares, men lacking
The method for making swords. The people we have
Cast our eyes on are those for whom killing others
Is insufficient to quench their anger, those who think
Faces, arms, and torsos a source of food. What would
Pythagoras say? Would he not flee such horrors, he
Who, not only abstained from animal flesh as if it
Were human, but even from certain varieties of bean!

End of Satire XV

Satire XVI: The Military Life

SatXVI:1-60 The Advantages Of The Military Life

Who could list all the rewards of a fruitful military career, Gallius? There's no more desirable gift the gods can grant Than to join a successful unit, one blessed with good luck. I wouldn't mind being a nervous recruit at that camp gate, Under its auspicious stars. The hour of benign fate, after All, is even more powerful than a recommendation to Mars From Venus, or Juno, his mother, whom Samos delights. Let me first deal with the benefits enjoyed by all soldiers, Not the least being that no civilian will dare to assault you, Rather if he's beaten himself, he'll give out that he wasn't, Reluctant to show the praetor his missing teeth, the lumps On his face, the black swollen bruises, and the eye he has Still retained, although the doctor's making no promises. If he seeks redress for it, he'll get a hobnailed boot for a Judge, and swollen calf-muscles lining the wide bench, Since the old military law, the rules of Camillus, are Still in force, and soldiers can't attend court outside the Camp, away from the standard. 'A centurion's military Enquiry is totally fair,' you'll say 'and I shall have my Revenge, if, as in my case, it's a well- proven complaint.' But the entire division is hostile, and all the units will act As one to ensure your redress is troublesome, and worse Than the injury incurred. It would be worthy, therefore, Of Vagellius' the blusterer's mulish mind, for your two Legs alone to offend all those heavy boots, with their Thousands of nails. Besides who would accompany you So far from the city, who'd be your Pylades and venture Beyond the massive Embankment? Let your tears cease, And don't bother friends who'll only make their excuses. When the judge says 'Call the witness!' if the man who Saw the assault has the nerve to say, 'I saw it,' he'll be Worthy of the long hair and beard of one of our honest Ancestors. It's easier to find a false witness against a Civilian than one who'll tell a truth that reflects badly On a military man's honour, and his superior status. Now let's note the other rewards and benefits of taking

The military oath. Imagine some devious neighbour has
Stolen a valley, some tract of land from my family estate,
Rooting out the sacred stone at the heart of the boundary,
That I honour, at the Terminalia, with cakes and polenta,
Or that a debtor continually refuses to repay me a loan,
Claiming his signature's forged, my document worthless,
Then I'm forced to wait for the sessions, when the whole
World files its suits; and then accept a thousand delays
And frustrations. Often, though we're all ready, we have
To disperse, because the benches aren't there, eloquent
Caedicius is still in his cloak, Fuscus is passing water,
That's how we fight each other in the Forum's soft sand.
But those who wear armour, and hang a sword by their
Side, have the hours of their hearings adjusted to suit,
Their money not wasted on some never-ending case.
Plus, it's only soldiers who've the right to cash earned
While their fathers still live, For it's held that wealth
Acquired in the service should not form part of that
Which the father wholly controls. So Coranus who
Follows the standard, and garners a soldier's pay,
Is courted by his own doddering parent. The son is
Duly promoted, and earns the reward for his efforts.
To the general no doubt it seems crucial that a brave
Man, should also be rendered the most successful,
That those who delight in medals and decorations...

End of the Satires

