

SECTION I(cont)

Q3.

Horace and Juvenal both use humour in their writings (Satire 1.9 and Satire 3 respectively) to very different effects. Horace humorously describes a common and awkward social situation, while Juvenal employs black humour to bemoan the ridiculously dangerous, impossible, immoral, and pathetic life of a poor Roman in Rome. Nowhere is the different use of humour by the two authors more evident than in these two extracts.

These two passages are both violent and describe anger, and both deal with this violence humorously, although the violence described by Juvenal is much more severe, and the humour he employs is much darker.

In both extracts, a person is forced to fight a war using both words and actions, with another in the streets of Rome. From the first lines of each extract, the nature of this war is shown to be very different; Horace's "enemy" is actually a good friend "mihi carus", whereas the enemy of the poor man in the Juvenal extract is a mad, strong, and rich bully unknown to him "stat ... fortior". Horace and his friend stop to greet each other "consistimus", whereas the bully orders the poor man to halt "stat ... iubet". The "illum .. nosset" in Horace suggests the persona's hope of winning the battle and being extricated from his uncomfortable social situation; this hope is humorously shown to be futile by the end of the extract, causing the reader to laugh at Horace's drawn out but not-so-severe predicament. This section can be seen as a microcosm for the whole satire; each dramatic "act" (the form of the poem can be compared to a Greek comedy), discounting the introduction and "deus-ex-machina" conclusion, begins with a futile hope of Horace, and ends with this hope being shattered. Conversely, it is evident from the rhetorical question of "nam ... fortior" in Juvenal that the poor man is, from the outset, resigned to his fate; this creates a different, and much blacker type of humour. Again, this can also be seen to follow the form of the satire as a whole; the whole of Umbricius' tirade is a statement of reasons for his leaving the city; he is from the start resigned to the fact that he can no longer remain there.

The importance of words and actions in these respective battles are opposite in each extract; in Horace's "war of words" between his poetic persona and Fuscus Aristius, his actions of "vellere ... oculos" all come to nothing when Fuscus "dissimulare". Interestingly enough, the direct dialogue in the Horace extract is succinct and implied, while the futile actions of "vellere ... oculos" are described in great detail, creating a humorous and effective sight gag. No matter what Horace subtly does to attract Fuscus' attention the his predicament can be easily shrugged off in this pretentiously polite and sophisticated "battle" between Horace and his practical joker of a friend.

Conversely, in the Juvenal extract, the words, while more angry and violent (compare Fuscus' congenial "Unde venis" to the hateful and disrespectful "unde venis" spoken by

the rich bully on L292, and Fuscus' humorous reference to the "circumcised Jews" to the rich bully's prejudiced and derogatory one in "in ... proseucha" and the bully goes as far as to directly threaten physical violence in "accipe calcem"), mean almost nothing; the poor man suffers whatever insult the rich bully throws at him, and as shown by "dicere ... tantumdem est", his own words hold no power. No matter what the rich man had said, or what the poor man had responded, the outcome would have been the same. The rich man, more powerful in strength "idem fortior" and influence "feriunt ... faciunt", will beat the poor man and get bail besides. This extreme plight of the poor man, epitomised in "libertas ..est" and the succeeding epithet, make him so pathetic that he is laughable.

This extremely dark humour, at the expense of a pathetic poor man, is very different to the humour in the Horace poem, as can be seen by the tone at the ending of each extract. "meum ... bilis" suggests a controlled irritation on Horace's part; Horace, the "victim" of a trick by his friend, humorously exaggerates his plight with such a turn of phrase. However, the ironic and resigned tone of "libertas ... est" induces pathos as well as bathos for the poor man.