Sat-eye-re: Eyes, Vision, and Doppelgängers in Horace's *Satire* 1.5

Self-parody and autobiographical jest are woven into the *Satires* of Horace. From his upset stomach in 1.5 to the explanation of his humble origins and freedman father in 1.6 to many other self-deprecating or self-effacing statements scattered throughout, Horace's personal life seeps through the lines of his poetry. In *Satires* 1.5 in particular, Horace draws attention to his less-than-appealing bodily malfunctions—inflamed eyes (*lippus,* 30, 49) and indigestion (*ventri bellum,* 7). Although it contributes rather comical commentary to the Brundisian travel log, the theme of malady, especially of the eyes, creates mockable doppelgängers of Horace in the figures of Aufidius Luscus and Messius Cicirrus that draw attention to his military chagrin—the desertion of his post at Philippi and subsequent sheepish life under the patronage of Maecenas.

The relationship of Horace to Aufidius Luscus in 1.5.34 as one of self-parody has been posited by at least two other scholars. Catherine Schlegel writes in her book on *Satires* 1 that Luscus recalls the satirist-narrator (Schlegel, 2005). E. Doblhofer likewise notes that Horace creates self-irony in Luscus, especially in his role as a *scriba* (Doblhofer, 1993). Only a few lines before introducing Luscus, Horace both mentions the arrival of two military men, Maecenas and Cocceius, and indicates that he [Horace] suffers from sore eyes (1.5.27-31). After the arrival of these men, Horace says little concerning their military business or prominence, but instead emphasizes suddenly his sickly eyes and their medicinal remedy. Further, in the lines in which Luscus is described, his most important feature is none other than his nominally mentioned impaired vision (*luscus*). Horace's focus on Luscus creates a direct contrast with the other gentlemen in order to emphasize eyes and eye problems in particular so that he can mock what eyes represent here—his past, indicated by Horace's intentional underrating of their military clout.

When Horace fought in the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. as a tribune under Brutus, he shamefully abandoned his shield, a scene that he recalls in his *Carmina* (2.7.9-12). Horace's shameful escape from the Battle of Philippi is a blemish on his record that he cannot let go. The scene above sets up a direct contrast between Luscus, a "one-eyed" praetor, and the men who fought for Antony, did not abandon their shield, and are now ambassadors entrusted with the peace negotiations of the ongoing battle.

Shortly after the introduction of Luscus, Horace includes the story of a fight between Sarmentus and Messius. Both of these men reflect Horace in some way. Sarmentus "has strong similarities to H.'s satirical persona" (Gowers, 2012) not only in his position of *scriba* (1.5.66), but also in his role as one who taunts Messius. Messius is another doppelgänger for Horace. His "ugly" or "shameful" scar, (*foeda cicatrix*, 60) subtly recalls Horace's scarring and shameful military past. Sarmentus mirrors Horace and his poetic self-mockery (i.e., he, who is like the poet, taunts another who is also like the poet). Horace goes on to write of how Sarmentus asks Messius to dance the *pastorem Cyclopa*, a reference to a one-eyed monster that cannot help but likewise look back to Horace's own eye troubles, monocular Luscus, and Horace's famous ignominy.

It is not only in *Satires* 1.5 that Horace connects bad vision with military embarrassment; he continues the theme of vision later in 1.7. As Emily Gowers notices, "the repressed memory [of Horace's awkward pre-history] surfaces in the first line, where there is squeezed the name of the fateful battle [of Philippi]: *Ru*—pili pus" (Gowers, 2003). Also suppressed in this two-word pairing, however, is the word "lipus", which, although misspelled, as is "pilipus," nevertheless provides assonance with *lippis* two lines later (Gowers, 2002). The *lippis* of line 3, as Gowers notes in her commentary, looks back to Horace's bad eyes in 1.5, and she specifically states that

this symptom is “of the politically uninvolved and the morally insensible” (Gowers, 2012), the former of which traits was especially characteristic of Horace when and after he abandoned his shield.

By placing themes of vision maladies in close proximity to military allusions, Horace undoubtedly creates a mockery of himself through his characters, his scenes, and his language that emphasizes his past and how he cannot escape his shame.

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