The title of this paper involves some kind of answer to the question whether the Latin satura as a literary type influenced satirical writing in general; or in short when, if ever, or at least before Sidonius Apollinaris,¹ in whose work the lexicons recognize what becomes the usual Medieval Latin sense of “satire, satirical,” the shift occurred which has left its mark on all modern languages in contact with the Latin tradition.

That Latin satura is not quite “satire” in the sense or senses which the vernacular languages inherit from Medieval Latin, no one, I think, really doubts. Dr. Johnson, to be sure, could still speak of satire as “a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured,”² but this is both too narrow and too broad for Latin satura, and irrelevant to most modern satire. Latin satirical writing covers much more ground than satura; not all satura is satirical in tone, and I should hope that no Latinist would classify, say, The Tale of a Tub as satura. In whatever way it has been proposed to misunderstand Quintilian’s satura tota nostra est (10,1,93), no one, I think, has ever thought he credited the Romans with the invention of satire but only satura. Important as it may be, however, for the history of Latin literature not to confuse satura and “satire,” once the question of a distinction arises, difficulties or at least complexities immediately follow.

If defining satura would suggest St. Jerome’s figure of trying to get a firm grip on an eel,³ defining vernacular satire might well suggest what I

¹ That a new sense, i.e., departure from the form of satura, does indeed occur in Sidonius, is by no means clear; where in Ep. 1,11 he speaks of satiographus and satura, a poema is under discussion; while satirice in Donatus on Eun. 232, if genuine, which is not beyond question, seems to mean “in the fashion of a writer of satura.”


³ Praef. in Librum Job: ut si velis anguillam aut muraenulam strictis tenere manibus, quanto fortius presseris tanto citius elabitur.
have been told is an old country expression, "trying to nail a custard pie to a wall." Satura at least is a major literary type in Latin, which arose at one time and place, and has, technically speaking, a limited history from the time of Lucilius to Juvenal; while "satire" has existed from time immemorial or since first men recognized that the opinions, habits or features of others were inferior to their own and consequently not conducive to the public good. The grammatical tradition of *satura* as a Latin literary type is clear enough, as succinctly stated in Diomedes: *Satira dicitur carmen apud Romanos nunc quidem maledicum et ad carpenda hominum vitia archaeae comœdieae charactere compositum, quale scripserunt Lucilius et Horatius et Persius.*

Granted that the *nunc quidem* does little to assure a date for what is likely to be a traditional statement, it does clearly, with its contrast accent, indicate a realization that *satura* was not always satirical in tone, but that nowadays, i.e., at almost any time after Persius's work was in circulation, the satirical tone is a distinguishing mark of what is still a *carmen*. When the term becomes extended to prose as well, what we may have is a shift from *satura* as a genre to the spirit and tone and perhaps the intent to tell the truth, whether with laughter as in Horace or with derision as in Persius and Juvenal, in the interest of some however vaguely envisaged public good. And if we may regard vernacular satire as a literary form, it may profitably be considered with the rhetorical background of persuasion as its goal—persuasion from a course of conduct or a set of views likely (whether or not designed) to darken public counsel.

If then we are looking for a point at which *satura* could be transferred from a form or literary type to writing in the satiric spirit no longer restricted to inheritance of a poetic tradition, it is with St. Jerome that it can be suspected as occurring. This indeed is the argument of David Wiesen in his full study of St. Jerome as a satirist, with which Hritzu, concurs yet without reference specifically to *satura*. This, then, is the question which lies before us.

That there is a vast amount of satire in all its aspects in Jerome's work, no one could doubt. Cavallera, in his comprehensive biography of St. Jerome, had already gathered numerous samples in his *Index*, under the

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4 1.485,30 Keil. Diomedes does allow for *satura* in other senses, but dramatic *satura*, if it ever existed (which I doubt), has no relevance here, nor does the so-called Menippean satire or *Cynica* (Aul. Gell. 2,18,6).


head Satirique (esprit) de Jérôme, and no one could read far in any of his works without having it forcibly brought to his attention. So much is true even if, as I should insist on doing, one excludes from this satiric spirit mere invective and abuse. Of this there is much to be found without searching. But where we are regarding satire as a literary form or device with the rhetorical background of persuasion in written form, invective and abuse are hardly to be regarded as belonging. In any case, invective, as he said, came to him from the influence of Cicero’s and Demosthenes’ Philippics, and hardly shows the influence of Latin composers of satira. In fact, if one were to deny any considerable debt of Jerome to the Latin satirists, one could certainly subtract much on the ground of his temperament (which was hardly saintly in any modern sense), his hasty temper, a constant tendency to dramatize and exaggerate, which was hardly tempered by his admirable rhetorical education, and, by no means least, the hostilities and disappointments he encountered.

Much that might account for his becoming embittered, for those who wish to argue that he did become so, certainly sprang from a temperament that past ages would have called perfervid. His response to criticism or dissent was rapid and violent to a degree which not only made him enemies but sometimes pained his friends. His support of virginity and the ascetic life in his Adversus Jovinianum aroused so much opposition in Rome through the apparent denigration of marriage and the normal Christian life, that his school friend, the senator Pammachius, was alarmed by the public reaction and attempted in vain to buy up and suppress the version in circulation. Cavallera, in fact, in his Appendix (Note P, pp. 103–115) devotes 13 pages to a digest of what he calls the Tribulations of St. Jerome; and J. Brochet’s older book on the enemies of St. Jerome does not suffer from a want of material.

After his education at Rome and experience with religious communities at Aquileia and Emona (Ljubljana), whose devotion to religion very nearly matched his own, he had written, “my native country [Stridon in Dalmatia], where rusticity is at home, has the belly as its god. There they live from day to day; the richest is the most saintly. ‘The pot,’ according

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7 The influence of Demosthenes here may be more decorative than historical, but of Cicero there is no doubt.


9 Letter 7,5 (A.D. 375–376), from the desert at Calchis, in about his 27th year: In mea enim patria rusticitatis vernacula deus venter est et de die vivitur: sanctior est ille qui ditiar est. Accessit huic patellae iuxta tritum populi sermone proverbium dignum operculum, Lupicinus sacerdos—secundum illud quoque, de quo semel in vita Crassum ait risisse Lucilius: “similem habent labra lactuam asino cardus comedente . . .”
to a proverbial expression, 'has a lid worthy of itself,' the bishop Lupicinuss." It is perhaps no marvel that sinister stories emanating from an "Iberian viper" at Stridon, as Jerome called him, had driven Jerome into exile. He had also quarreled with his aunt Castorina (Letter 13, A.D. 375–376), to whom he wrote demanding rather than seeking a reconciliation. He complains of hearing no news from Stridon, suggesting estrangement from his entire family. Nor did he find things much better in his retirement to the desert of Chalcis. There he not only found the monks barbarous, but their theological disputes harried him to such an extent that he had to leave and return to Antioch. When his life of Paul of Thebes, the earliest, in his view, of the desert saints, first began to circulate, his opponents, not without reason, maintained that that saint had never existed. Jerome responded, in his life of Hilarion, ten or more years later (ca. 389–392), with his customary heat, that he would pass by these dogs of Scylla with his ears stopped up. This confounding of the story of the Sirens with the monster Scylla would arouse little interest in the crowded history of mythological garbling, but what is noteworthy is that Jerome did indeed know better, yet indulged his anger at the expense of his knowledge. As a very generous critic very gently put it, "he did not intend to leave his opponents a monopoly of invective," and rarely in his prefaces, in the years that followed, did he fail to refer to his literary enemies, as here, as reptiles, birds and beasts whose habits and character were to be deplored. A fair sample perhaps is in Preface to Hebr. Quaest. in Genesim (PL 23, 983K), "those filthy sows who grunt against me, parum homunculum." When a council was convened at Rome in 382, he gladly returned there and became the friend, adviser and protégé of Pope Damasus. But risen to prominence and having perhaps some hopes of succeeding to the papacy (who hoped so is not clear), he had accumulated enemies numerous and powerful enough to force him once more to choose to go to Bethlehem (from 385 on), never to return to Rome. Thus from the age of about 40 for the next thirty years he lived the ascetic life of a monk, the life he had so ardently promoted from his early years and so vigorously, if not violently, demanded of others as the true Christian life. Still from his retreat poured forth not only works of scholarship but also of controversy, which

10 Vita Sancti Hilarionis 1: . . . maledicorum voce contemnimonius, qui olim detrahentes Paulo meo, nunc forsit an detrahren et Hiliarioni, illum solitudinis calumniat, huic obicientes frequentiam: ut qui semper latuit, non fuisset: qui a multis visus est, nihil existimetur. Fecerunt hoc et maiores eorum quondam Pharisaei, quibus nec Iohannis heremus atque ieiunium, nec Domini Salvatoris turbae, cibi, potusque placuerunt. Verum destinato operi imponam manum, et Scyllos canes obturatae auro transibo.

11 Cavallera I, 133.

12 Non mirum ergo si contra me parum homunculum immundae sues grunniant.
inflamed more hostility in those with whom he disagreed or whom he held up to ridicule. He found few to commend but many and much to condemn, and in response to criticism he pointed out (Hebr. Quaest. in Gen.) that Terence, Vergil, Cicero had all been criticized too, in spite of their eminence. In his life of Malchus, written shortly after his final withdrawal from Rome, in a preface full of bitterness, he described this narrative as a practice run in preparation for a history of the Church, “from the coming of the Saviour to our times, that is,” he says, “from the apostles to the dregs of our time—by whom the Church was born and grew, increased by per- secutions, was crowned with martyrdoms, and after it came to the Chris- tian emperors became greater in power and wealth, but less in virtue.”

This projected history he never finished, but certainly his numerous and vigorous strictures left the impression that the clergy of his time was in many cases corrupt, ignorant, debauched and greedy, as well as quarrel- some. The exaggeration is obvious enough; although at least some of the clergy strongly opposed Jerome’s propaganda for monasticism and asceticism, their objections were serious enough, and the charges he makes against some smack of fiction, as in his accusation of those who get up early to start potations and continue to drink until evening. Furthermore, the whole list of these vices, drunkenness and gluttony among the rich and powerful in particular, repeat the traditional themes of satura and suggest adaptations from literature. In particular, his attacks on women, from which it has been argued that pagan antifeminism became part of medieval tradition, raise a question as to how far his zeal for reform in the Church and mankind as a whole has not drawn him into intensification of literary themes. How much observation can really lie behind these scandalous charges? In any case, his response to criticism, more in anger than in sorrow, did (even when he was clearly in the right, as in the attacks made on his biblical translations) result in bitter quarrels, rupture of old friendships, and even, towards the end of his life, grave personal danger. His vigorous attacks on Pelagianism, in fact, aroused the Palestin- ian monks of that persuasion to attack his monasteries, and Jerome, as well as his monks and nuns, barely escaped being murdered.

13 Vita Malchi Captivi 1: Scribere enim disposui (si tamen vitam Dominus dederit, et si vitaepra- tores mei saltim fugientem me et clausum persequi desierint) ab adventu Salvatoris usque ad nostram aetatem, id est ab apostolis usque ad huius temporis fecem, quomodo et per quos Christi ecclesia nata sit et adulta, persecutionibus creverit, martyriis coronata sit; et postquam ad Christianos principes venerit, potentia et divitiae maior, sed virtutibus minor facit sit.

14 Wiesen, Chapter III, “The Church and the Clergy,” deals fully with the subject.

15 Wiesen, p. 108. Commentary on Isaiah, PL 24, 83C.

16 E.g., P. Delhaye, in Mediaeval Studies 13 (1951) 65–86.
In circumstances such as these and in the midst of such enmities, it might suffice to ascribe Jerome’s satire to the bitterness of disappointed hopes and to his natural resentment at unjustified criticism, as manifested in the constant carping at his biblical translations, reaching a crescendo with his Old Testament translations from the Hebrew rather than from the Septuagint. But this would account only for the invective, and not for the obvious literary character of much of his satire. For instance, if his attacks on the clergy of his own day may be said to be something new and based on observation, yet it is the princes of the church in the main that he attacks, and attacks on the same grounds (such as drunkenness, lechery and particularly gluttony) that the rich and powerful are ridiculed for in the earlier literature. The very traditional character of these charges suggests that their sources are in part literary, exaggerated in turn by his very genuine zeal for reform of society in general and the Church in particular. Most specifically, what is hard not to call the antifeminism, so rampant in his writing, can hardly have been an accurate representation of those women who were his closest friends and stoutest supporters. It might be well to remember that he had, after all, passed most of his life away from Rome, and the latter part of it in semi-retirement, far from the bustle and perhaps the corruptions of city life. In fact, a dissertation on St. Jerome’s observations on daily life by Sr. M. Jamesetta Kelley\textsuperscript{17} finds very little to collect. Jerome was, as was natural in his circumstances, an intensely bookish man, and to such an extent that Cavallera could demonstrate that what he professed to be a confession of his youthful sins, had in fact been lifted from his translation of a work of Origen.\textsuperscript{18} Is it fantastic to suggest that a man who can plagiarize his sins might not be the best guide to his own biography?

Jerome’s devotion to classical literature might appear, of course, to have been interrupted (if hardly forever, at least for a considerable period, perhaps for as much as fifteen years) by his celebrated dream, recorded in Ep. 22,30. Yet I think no one after Arthur Stanley Pease’s demonstration of 1919\textsuperscript{19} has maintained that he long kept the vow he there records; i.e., that from a tribunal on high he was judged, “Ciceronianus es, non Christianus. Ubi thesaurus tuus, ibi et cor tuum,” and in his terror and pain at the beating he was receiving as punishment, swore more than was required, “Domine, si umquam habuero codices saeculares, si legero, te negavi.” Famous as this dream

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\textsuperscript{17} Life and Times as Revealed in the Writings of St. Jerome Exclusive of the Letters (Catholic University of America Patristic Studies, 70), Washington, 1944.
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\textsuperscript{18} Cavallera II, 72–75.
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is, in the innumerable discussions it is often forgotten what this punishment was to correct: not so much the reading of classical authors, as to count these as his treasures while rejecting religious texts as uncouth because of their *sermo . . . incultus.*

The significance of the dream, then, is not so much a rejection of Cicero, Vergil and other pagan authors, as a turning to Christian scholarship, in which his censor had found him wanting. Letter 22 probably dates from 384, and the dream some ten years earlier. During these years and for sometime following, Jerome had to perfect himself in Greek and acquire a grasp of Hebrew for his translations and commentaries. This work would certainly leave him little time for reading for pleasure, and he writes with regret of what the neglect of the Latin classics had done to his style, in his commentary on *Galatians* (PL 26, 399C): “all *elegantia* of speech and *venustas* of Latin eloquence had been defiled by the *stridor* (hissing) of Hebrew reading.” And gives one reason:

“For you know,” he says to the noble ladies Marcella, Paula and Eustochium, to whom he addresses his work, “that it has been more than fifteen years since Cicero, Vergil or any pagan author has come into my hands. And if it happens that, when we are speaking, anything of that sort creeps in, it is as if we remember an ancient dream through a cloud.”

In any case, the most thorough study of St. Jerome’s references by Harald Hagendahl has shown, more fully than previous work, the great extent of Jerome’s indebtedness to classical Latin authors. As for the satirists, Hagendahl is certainly correct in observing of Jerome’s treatise against Jovinian, and its reminiscences of Persius, “I think we may safely conclude that Jerome at that time [i.e., in 393, nine years after *Ep. 22*] intentionally renewed his acquaintance with the Stoic poet.” Jerome has in common with the satirists not only the traditional themes but also, very frequently, the use of historical or fictitious names to designate his opponents, in order to give the impression that it is the sin and not the sinner he is aiming at: for instance, Luscius Lanuvinus (Lavinium?) as a pseudo-

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20 *Bibliotheca . . . carere non poteram* [at Jerusalem]. Itaque miser ego lecturus Tullium ieiunabam. Post noctum crebras vigilias, post laerimas, quas mihi praeceptor torum recordatio peccatorum ex imis visceribus eruebat, Plautus sumebatur in manibus. Si quando in memet reversus prophetam legere coepisset, sermo horrexat incultus et, quia lumen caecis oculis non videbam, non oculorum putabam culpam esse, sed solis.

21 *Sed omnem sermonis elegantiam et Latini eloquii venustatem stridor lectionis Hebraicae sordidavit. Nostis enim et ipsae quod plus quam quindecim anni sunt ex quo in manus meas nunquam Tullius, nunquam Maro, nunquam gentilium litterarum quilibet auctor ascendit: et si quid forte inde dum logumur obrept, quasi antiqui per nebulam somnii recordarum. Quod autem profererim ex linguae illius infatigabili studio, aliorum iudicio derelinquo: ego quid in mea amiserim scio.*

nym for an opponent. More than that: if the range of subject, sharpness of tone and, what is perhaps even more striking, the wide range in levels of style and language suggest *satura* as in some way offering models, with these the diffuse unity of the *sermo* would fit. That his connection of his satire with *satura* is conscious is, I think, indicated in two passages, which Wiesen also discusses. The first of these is contained in the famous *Letter* 22,32, telling of a rich hypocritical woman and her vicious treatment of an old hag trying to collect alms twice; to which he adds, *nomina taceo, ne saturam putes*, as if it fit otherwise the requirements of the genre. And in *Letter* 40,1, addressed to a certain Onasus (clearly a pseudonym), he says, "You claim that you are the one I am pointing out in my comments, and you call me into court and foolishly charge me with being a writer of satire (*satiricum scriptorem*) in prose." Interpretations of these somewhat ambiguous remarks differ; but clearly, in the first case, all that distinguishes some of Jerome's work from historical Latin *satura* in his eyes is that he does not dramatize by introducing a cast of names, which *satura* normally does. In the second case, "you foolishly charge" seems clear enough, because a charge of slander or libel will not lie when the plaintiff is not clearly identified.

Thus, on what scanty material is left us, it would appear that Jerome consciously chose what he felt was the spirit, tone and dramatic vivacity of *satura* in Horace and Persius, at least, and interpreted *satura* as now meaning the manner and the matter but not the form, thus giving impetus to new movements to come. That the *carmen*-aspect was overlooked, may still seem strange; but it is noteworthy that the one comedy surviving from this period is in prose, even though a kind of rhythmical prose. And I have argued elsewhere that the so-called verse of Commodian is not verse, quantitative or accentual, but prose poetry. I do not know whether there is any connection to be found here; but the whole problem of novelty versus tradition in the Late Latin period awaits an answer.

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23 *Liber Hebr. Quaest. in Genesim, Praefatio*, PL 23, 955A.