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Full Circle: Juvenal's Egyptians and the Return of the "Angry White Man" in *Satire 15*¹

NANCY SHUMATE

Abstract: Some critics have seen a softening of Juvenal's signature anger in the later satires, while others argue, on the contrary, that the *indignatio* animating the earlier poems resurfaces toward the end of the corpus. This paper supports the second position by comparing the characterization of speakers in the first six satires and in the fifteenth. In spite of its different setting and quasi-philosophical trappings, the (virtually) last poem's speaker emerges as a variation of the same reactionary character type so fully drawn in the first two books. The *Satires* are thus framed by prototypes of the grievance-driven "angry white man" of later eras.

Keywords: Juvenal; satire; identity; nationalism; othering; Romanness; persona.

One of the enduring questions of Juvenal criticism has centered on the relationship between the early and later satires, and in particular on whether the two groups of poems show continuity or divergence in terms of tone and voice. Does the signature angry indignation so evident in the first six satires persist to the bitter end of the corpus or, on the contrary, dissolve into resignation, philosophical detachment, or even high-minded altruism?² The Ur-analyst in this debate was Ribbeck, who argued in 1865 that there was such a shift in tone by Books 4 and 5, and especially in *Satires 10* and *12* through *15*, that the later poems must have been written by someone other than Juvenal. Among subsequent earlier scholars, Duff and de Decker followed in this vein, though not to the extent that they posited two separate authors. The latter explained the perceived difference as a sign of Juvenal's movement from the unvarnished expression of his own views in the earlier poems to increasingly elaborate rhetorical *tours de force* later on. Duff concurred that evolving satirical methods played a part in the shift that he too saw, while wondering about the role of "advancing years and failing powers" in softening Juvenal's bite. He was clear, however, in his conviction of a distinct change in tone: "Read the fifteenth satire after the first," he writes, "and the difference will seem astonishing."³

The specter of these earlier impressions of discontinuity hovers over the work of later critics who likewise identified a turn away from anger to its deflation or rejection, but now understood any variation in the satiric speaker's posture in terms of mid-century literary critical developments. Anderson, in two seminal articles from the 1960s, and later Braund are especially connected with the view that beginning with Book 3 (*Satires 7* through *9*), the poems move toward calm detachment, ironic distance, and even human empathy, albeit in fits and starts.⁴ Rather than looking for a change of heart in the author himself, however, Anderson argued that these variations depend on the particular *persona* or mask that the poet assumed in any given poem, as Juvenal experimented with different roles and characters in

¹ Some material in this article has been adapted from chs. 1 and 4 of Shumate (2006). The Latin text is that of Clausen (1959, rev. 1992); translations are mine unless otherwise noted. I am grateful to the anonymous reader for suggestions; any remaining errors and omissions are my own.

² There is general consensus that the *Satires* were composed and published in the second and third decades of the second century CE, in the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, with Book 1 probably appearing around 115 (but see Uden [2015, pp. 219-26], who argues for 100/101), and Book 5, the final book, after 127 (on internal evidence at *Satire 15.27*). There is no reason to believe that the *Satires* did not appear according to the order and book division that we have (Book 1=*Satires 1-5*; Book 2=*Satire 6*; Book 3=*Satires 7-9*; Book 4=*Satires 10-12*; Book 5=*Satires 13-16*).

³ Ribbeck (1865); de Decker (1913); Duff (1970, originally published 1898, pp. xxix-xxx).

⁴ Anderson (1962=1982, pp. 277-92 and 1964=1982, pp. 293-361) and Braund (1988).

the course of the *Satires* — a reading of Roman satire as performance art that has represented a major strain in modern scholarship. To many who subscribe to *persona* theory as well as “sincerity” holdouts, *Satires* 10 and 13 (from Books 4 and 5) have been seen as especially emblematic of the shift in tone: the former with its closing counsel to prefer “temperance, restraint, and equanimity” to destructive over-reaching, the latter with its speaker’s advice to Calvinus, who has been cheated out of a sum of money, to keep his angry response within bounds, replete with a dismissive swipe at the sort of *simplicitas* (13.35, in the sense of a naïve expectation of honesty) that had been affected as a virtue by the main character Umbricius in *Satire* 3. Though he cautioned the reader against being “taken in by [the] commonplace moralizing” in the ostensible appeal to equanimity in *Satire* 13, Morford still saw trenchant irony rather than *indignatio* as its operative mode, while Anderson glimpsed an almost Senecan *tranquillitas* in Book 5 as a whole.⁵

To these and like-minded critics, the culmination of this turn away from anger is often located in *Satire* 15, the last complete poem in the corpus — a disapproving tale of inter-village religious conflict in Egypt whose outcome is a sudden paroxysm of cannibalism. With its shocked condemnation of the destructive *ira* of the Egyptians and lengthy coda on the power of human compassion, *Satire* 15 seems to represent a final critique and rejection of the emotions that had animated the speakers in and of the poems of the first two books. Looking beyond the vehemence of the poem’s excoriation of the Egyptians, critics have focused on the emotional appeal to human ties that occupies its second half, suggesting that the elaboration of a positive vision to balance the initial hostility unleashed against the miscreants gives it a very different orientation from that of the entirely negative screeds of *Satires* 1 through 6. In this view, as Keane puts it, “*humanitas*, rather than misanthropy, is Juvenal’s new guiding principle” in the end.⁶

Considering the same texts, others have seen a very different trajectory; in their view, rather than dissipating, the speaker’s *ira* and *indignatio* go underground and regroup for a second appearance as the collection draws to a close. In this reading, even in *Satire* 13 with its apparent critique of anger, the address to Calvinus has a harsh and unforgiving edge, making it consistent with the note of bitterness and disillusionment that runs through many of the later poems, even if the outright rage of Books 1 and 2 has been muted.⁷ Here too, *Satire* 15 has become an important test case. Keane has argued that the focus of this poem is indeed *ira*, but that the rabid fury of the Egyptians rather than the anger of the speaker is the satire’s main critical target. To the extent that the speaker himself evinces angry indignation, it is the righteous philosophical kind — “good,” moral outrage condemning “bad,” destructive anger — which would seem to elevate his broadside above the straight venom of the earlier books’ monomaniacal ranting.⁸ But others have seen here a return of exactly that figure; any rejection of *ira* as counterproductive seemingly floated in *Satire* 13 has been forgotten. Godwin, for example, sees the *Satire* 15 speaker as “suddenly flip[ping] back into angry mode with his snarling and violent attack on Egypt,” and Coffey notes the “explosive violence” of the speaker’s treatment of the Egyptians in the exordium and narrative, even as he reads a “restrained irony” in the rest of the poem and indeed in Juvenal’s later books as a whole.⁹

Some critics in this camp have suggested that the continuity involves more than anger; it is a matter of theme and characterization as well as emotional tone. For them,

⁵ Quote on *Satire* 10 from Hooley (2007, p. 124); Morford (1973, p. 36); Anderson (1964, p. 190=1982, p. 356). See Keane (2015, p. 170 and nn. 8 and 9) for references to other discussions of *Satire* 13 as a pivot-point away from *ira*.

⁶ Keane (2015, p. 169 n. 4). *Satire* 15 articulates a positive vision: e.g., Fredericks (1976), Singleton (1983).

⁷ See Keane (2015, p. 169 n. 6) for citations; also Godwin (2020, pp. 115-16): the speaker of *Satire* 13 “ends up as vindictive as Calvinus himself...no healer of minds, but rather a cruel teacher leading a foolish man by the nose...”

⁸ Keane (2015, pp. 192-202). In an earlier discussion (2010, pp. 116-17), she seems to locate more irrational anger in the speaker himself: “As anger becomes [the speaker’s] theme...it...gradually erodes his air of detachment and permeates his rhetoric...[he] seems to have swallowed his angry subjects and thereby stirred up his own capacity for savagery.”

⁹ Godwin (2020, p. 6); Coffey (1989, p. 135).

what ties the first two books to the later poems, including *Satire 15*, is the articulation of a consistent “worldview and value system,” as Nappa observes without elaborating any point-by-point correspondence. Like Coffey, Hooley hears in the opening salvo of *Satire 15* the “familiar, high-volume Juvenalian voice of incredulous outrage,” but in addition to noting that raw emotion he begins to fill in the content of the “value system” on display in *Satire 15* when he observes that the speaker’s outrage is driven by the same xenophobia that had featured so prominently in *Satires 1* through *6*. There, hatred of foreigners was an important driver of the kind of vicious invective against “offending race[s]” (Hooley) that erupts again in the penultimate poem. In suggesting that the satire’s ultimate target is not so much the Egyptians as the cultural and political depredations of Rome itself, Hooley follows McKim, who had argued that the pompous and deluded speaker of *Satire 15* is the vehicle for a critique of *Roman*, not Egyptian culture. In other words, as is often the case in readings informed by *persona* theory, what is being satirized is mainly the speaker’s own discourse, which McKim calls a “tissue of hysterical racism... and smug self-congratulation.”¹⁰ Here as elsewhere, however, general characterizations of the speaker’s disposition and prejudices, while spot-on, only hint at the complex workings of the “worldview and value system” that structures *Satire 15* and, I would argue, links it systematically to Books 1 and 2.

As my title indicates, I count myself among those who read *Satire 15* as circling back to the angry *indignatio* of the earlier books. Here I want to approach the question of continuity from a new angle, by fleshing out just how carefully constructed a reprise of one particular incarnation of the first two books’ famous angry satirist the speaker of the penultimate poem is, still clearly discernible behind his pose as the voice of reason and human empathy. For it is not just the generally intemperate malcontent or resentful marginalized citizen that returns, or even a particular antipathy such as xenophobia alone. What resurfaces as the corpus concludes is more precisely the wholesale “world view and value system” of a very specific and fully developed reactionary character type, consumed by all the interrelated hatreds — of women, foreigners, sex and gender deviants — that so clearly animate the earlier satires, in spite of the speakers’ tendency to cast their own animosities and grievances in high moral terms. In the earlier poems this character type finds its most completely realized expression in Umbricius, the querulous and resentful native left behind by social change in *Satire 3*, but it asserts itself whenever a speaker’s free-floating anxieties about his own status are channeled into virulent attacks on social “out-groups,” a signature dynamic especially evident in *Satires 1, 2, and 6* in addition to *3*.¹¹

In *Satire 15* we find the same bundle of prejudices propped up by the same rationalizing impulses, now transposed from Rome to the provinces with appropriate rhetorical adjustments on the part of the speaker. This situation requires that his visceral hostilities be modulated as he takes on a new, self-assigned role as the rational standard-bearer of Greco-Roman civilization, yet the old irascibility keeps coming to the surface, triggered by the same issues. It is as if a reconstituted Umbricius is doing his best to affect a cosmopolitan air because he senses its utility against the “out-group” that has now stirred his ire, but keeps losing control of the performance as his actual feelings break through. Thus, toward the end of his work, Juvenal reorients the brilliant portrait of a particular social type that he had introduced in Book 1 to explore how the same character might fare in a more global setting; this foray into the provinces together with the collection’s coda, the apparently unfinished sixteenth satire, combine to “enact a form of ring-composition...showing that little has changed either in society or...in this personal response to it,” as Godwin puts it recently in

10 Nappa (2017, p. 4); Hooley (2007, pp. 128-9); McKim (1986, p. 58). Gold (2012) argues for tonal and thematic unity — the latter under the umbrella of “what it means to identify as Roman” (p. 100), a question clearly at the core of the *Satires* — but leaves *Satire 15* entirely out of her discussion.

11 “Out-groups” is a term brought into wide use by Amy Richlin in connection with the social dynamics represented in Latin literature. *Satires 4* and *5* will be left aside in this discussion; while in a general sense they show all the crankiness of Books 1 and 2, their circumscribed thematic focus (imperial megalomania, corrupted patron-client relations) gives them speakers who do not clearly exemplify the specific character type under study here.

comments on the very last poem.¹² In what follows, I will trace the parallels that tie speakers of the early books and of *Satire 15* together as “rednecks” in togas,¹³ focusing on two aspects of characterization that especially define this type: their rhetoric of enemy construction, and the related package of personality traits that round out the picture of this ancient Roman “angry white man.”

A premise of Larmour’s *The Arena of Satire* is that in the end, Juvenal’s poems are about the search for Rome and Romanness in a rapidly changing and de-centered world. In modern terms, in other words, they are about the construction of national identity, but in Juvenal as in more recent times this is a defensive project rather than any positive celebration of shared values. In *Satires 1* and *3* in particular this reactive posture is on full display. These poems revolve around native male speakers trying frantically to shore up their precarious sense of self by conjuring up a phantasm of the un-Roman, a composite Other fabricated out of disparate but overlapping anxieties, to serve as the opposite term against which their own identity can be fixed and validated. In this universe, true Romanness is defined not so much by what the “authentically” Roman speaker is, as by what he (thankfully) is not.¹⁴ Misogyny is the bedrock upon which his nemesis, this Frankenstein monster of un-Romanness, is built. In a process replayed in later eras, the speaker’s deep-seated hatred of the female and of the values that women are imagined to embody is projected onto another internal “out-group,” male sex and gender deviants, and ultimately onto foreigners, in these poems mostly those who have made their way to Rome as immigrants, turning the city into a catch-basin of the “Syrian Orontes” (*Sat.* 3.62).¹⁵ In the speaker’s mind, these misfits bleed together to present a monolithic and existential threat to his own status as they destabilize the social and economic hierarchies upon which his own sense of identity and self-worth have depended. Tenuous as his place in those hierarchies may be, he clings to it as his birthright.¹⁶

In *Satire 6* the speaker inadvertently offers a useful catalog of the negative attributes of women that also shape the disparaging portraits of male gender outlaws and newcomers from the East that are especially prominent in Books 1 and 2; the pervasive elision of these three groups had been adumbrated in the first salvos of *Satire 1*, where the speaker intuitively lumps together a “soft eunuch” (*tener spado*, taking a wife, no less), a female arena-fighter, and various effeminate, newly rich immigrants as transgressive objects of derision (22-30). Of course, Juvenal did not invent the stereotypes of the female that he deploys; in their essentials they go back in Greek and Roman literary culture to Hesiod’s scathing picture of the first woman in *Works and Days* (60-105) and *Theogony* (570-612). In the *Satires*, however, they are embedded in a larger nativist rhetoric of Roman vs. non-Roman, in a Juvenalian version

¹² Godwin (2020, p. 6). *Satire 16*’s sixty transmitted lines begin to sketch out a complaint about the privileges enjoyed by soldiers at the expense of ordinary citizens. Ferguson (1979, p. 323) notes that “a return to an attack on the power structure of Rome is a return to [Juvenal’s] old self,” but it is more the “old self” of *Satires 4* and *5* (see previous note), whose situations do not provoke the combined race, class, and gender anxieties that link the speaker of *Satire 15* with those of the earlier books.

¹³ Winkler (1983, p. 223) applies this anachronism to Umbricius; I adopt it purposefully.

¹⁴ The shrillness of the speakers in the poems where Romanness is staked out — in Geue’s (2017, p. 190 n. 5) words, the “intensification of separation discourse” — ratchets up as the changes that trigger it become settled; the speaker’s very sureness of himself tells us that his cause is lost. Geue’s focus is on the tension between Roman satire’s, and especially Juvenal’s, impulse “to police an obsolescent, ‘pure’ space for the Roman self” (2017, p. 189) and the dynamic forces of empire that render this idea increasingly untenable until, he argues, they triumph by the end of the collection.

¹⁵ Hooley’s (2007, p. 119) otherwise perceptive formulation, that “targeting women is a perennial reflex for expressing” more generalized male angst about status loss, treats misogyny more as an effect than the wellspring of that angst — the glue that holds all the speaker’s psychosocial pathologies together.

¹⁶ In Hooley’s (2007, p. 116-17) evocative framing of the speaker’s anxieties (“Upstarts, newly-moneyed outsiders, women, foreigners, Greeks and Jews — these are the bogeys of the reactionary mind, complacent in its traditional privilege, jealous of position, resentful of change and displacement”), the catalog of discrete offenders fails to capture the extent to which they are all in effect the same person. Similarly Gold (2012), while discussing the ubiquity of such antipathies to demonstrate “consistencies in theme and tone” (p.98) in Juvenal, treats women and deviant men as largely distinct groups.

of a durable reactionary strategy, the feminization of enemies both foreign and domestic. The rhetorical building blocks of this discourse, neatly discernible in *Satire 6*, all fall under the general rubric of lack of self-control, woman's original sin, which can manifest itself in sexual voraciousness, dipsomania, materialism, and any number of other failings that signify slavery to animal and emotional impulses rather than obedience to the intellect.

This satire begins with one of several Juvenalian visions of the pristine past, centered here on the uncouth but virtuous "mountain wife" (*montana uxor*) huddled in a cold cave with her giant prelapsarian babies and acorn-belching husband, so different from the elegiac temptresses of the decadent present (1-10). The clearly parodic tone tells us a great deal about the poet's attitude to moralistic commonplaces, and about his characterization of the speaker, who is made to utter them seriously.¹⁷ After more riffing on Golden Age tropes ends with Justice and Chastity fleeing from the earth (11-20), the poem showcases several memorable vignettes of contemporary female sexual excess, often involving liaisons with lower-class, effeminate, and/or foreign men: there are the fan-girls who frequent the theater to drink in the performances of their favorite foreign-born actors and dancers, whose moves arouse the women sexually (6.60-81); the aristocratic *matrona* Eppia, who abandons her husband and children to follow a gladiator lover (6.82-113); and the "royal whore" (*meretrix Augusta*) Messalina, consort of a cuckolded emperor, driven by her insatiable sexual appetites to offer herself to all comers in the brothels of Rome (6.114-32). The figures and behaviors that the speaker condemns at the outset of the poem present a multi-faceted assault on his sense of right order. By associating transgressive Roman women with the effeminate, the foreign, and the déclassé in an atmosphere of urban decadence, he seamlessly elides all the forces he imagines as posing a threat to normative male Romanness. As the poem continues, the speaker additionally faults women as a group for their greed and material extravagance (spending beyond their means to indulge in *luxuria*, 6.149-57; 352-65); superstition (their passion for astrology and orgiastic foreign cults, 6.511-91); gratuitous cruelty, especially toward powerless inferiors such as slaves (6.219-23; 475-95); and even murderousness, if someone or something stands in the way of their lust or greed (6.133-5; 610-61). Juvenalian women are a paradoxical amalgam of the irrational and the calculating: duplicity and manipulation, exercised for nefarious ends, come to them naturally (e.g., 6.268-78).

Working from this guiding paradigm of primal alterity, the Juvenalian speaker easily projects its features onto the other living affronts to his sense of Roman maleness: deviant men and foreigners, two categories that are themselves often elided. In *Satire 2* his wrath is provoked by *cinaedi* — socially non-conforming and sexually passive men — who present themselves in the public sphere as paragons of manly virtue, all the while carrying on in private like the degenerate pathics that they really are. Thus this out-group too is imagined as honing duplicity into an art form; the speaker tags them with the oxymoron "solemn débauchés" (*tristes obsceni*), lamenting in line 8 that "there's no trusting appearance" (*frontis nulla fides*) — a suspicion that he applies to women in *Satire 6*. The imputed sexual activities of the target group in *Satire 2* in themselves represent a failure to exercise the quintessentially male prerogative of control (of others and of self, especially of one's bodily integrity), and thus in the speaker's mind implicate the entire group in "female" sexual excess. Strengthening the link, he imagines them involved in an orgiastic party scene (2.83-116) where, like the women in the bacchanal of *Satire 6* (314-51), they use religion as a cover for depravity. Here, mincing drag queens fuss over elaborate hair-dos, costumes, and make-up while enjoying free-flowing wine and engaging in ribald play — all stereotypically "female" behaviors. The

¹⁷ As Watson and Watson (2014, pp. 77-80) note, the proem of *Satire 6* is a "playful, characteristically Juvenalian take on the Myth of the Ages," first appearing in Hesiod (*Works and Days* 106-201) and refracted in earlier Latin literature by Horace (*Epode* 2), Virgil (*Georg.* 2.523-35), and Tibullus 1.5.21-34 (Watsons' examples). By the early empire the myth had devolved into a *topos* of declamatory rhetoric, the *locus communis de saeculo*, with its stock contrast between the virtues of poverty, simplicity, and hard work (usually identified with the past) and the dangers of contemporary wealth and luxury; see Bonner (1949, p. 61), with examples from the Elder Seneca. The second model is as important to Juvenal as the first.

poem abounds in exaggerated vignettes of effeminate men offending the traditional sex and gender order, such as the advocate Creticus, practicing law with his stylized “gay” gestures and risqué feminine dress (2.65-78).

While these figures appear to be Roman — a main point being the degeneration of the native male and of high-born men in particular — their emasculation makes them templates for the Juvenalian speaker’s ultimate symbol of the un-Roman, foreigners from the East, as the feminizing rhetorical net expands to ensnare that despised out-group as well. Thus in Juvenal as elsewhere, the conventional gendered opposition between rational male subject and unruly female Other is mapped onto cultural encounters, especially in *Satires* 1 and 3, in a preview of the full development of this trope in *Satire* 15. The idea of the decadent, effeminate Oriental, from the Juvenalian perspective ironically Greek in origin, again significantly pre-dates the *Satires*, going back in literary culture at least to Aeschylus’ *Persians* from 472 BC, but again, like misogyny itself, it becomes here an ingredient in an uncannily modern, and extremely toxic, nativist brew. Egyptians, Syrians, Greeks — they are all the same to the aggrieved Roman male speaker, crass upstarts encroaching on territory that is rightfully his. In *Satire* 1, the collection’s programmatic poem, he encounters *nouveaux riches* freedmen like the Egyptian Crispinus (1.26-30), ostentatiously hitching up his purple mantle and swishing (*ventilet*) his bejeweled fingers on a hot summer day while pointedly noting that such weather makes it impossible for him to wear his larger jewels. This sight, amidst an accumulation of other outrages, provokes the speaker’s famous exclamation that “it is difficult not to write satire” (*difficile est saturam non scribere*, 1.30). In the same poem we meet another parvenu, this time from the banks of the Euphrates, marked out as non-Roman by his unmanly earrings yet invoking his success in business to justify pushing ahead of poor, deserving natives in the dole line of a rich patron (1.102-9). As the “East” often included Greece in the Roman cultural imagination, *Satire* 3 continues the Orient-bashing with the sustained portrait of the “hungry little Greek” (*Graeculus esuriens*) as an over-sexed, scheming flatterer from a nation of natural actors (3.69-125). While the feminization of the first two figures is signaled by their girly gestures and crass materialism, the red flags in the case of the *Graeculus* are his lechery and easy duplicity.¹⁸

What is especially significant for our purposes is how the disparate groups against which the speaker positions himself fuse into one another in a way that makes them essentially interchangeable and functionally identical, their members mix-and-match exemplars of the same basic complex of threats to Roman maleness. Thus, in the speaker’s calculus, women are, on several levels — as Aristotelian deficient males, as sexual profligates, as unnatural intruders into the male sphere — sex and gender deviants as well as xenophiles; male sex and gender deviants are “female” as well as xenophiles; and foreigners are “female” as well as sex and gender deviants. The categories do not just overlap; they are virtually synonymous. This “homogenizing” tendency is a key feature of the speaker’s rhetoric of othering in the earlier poems, as it will be in *Satire* 15.¹⁹ Rounding out the picture is the attribution to all these groups alike of a laundry list of unsavory tendencies that supposedly come to them “naturally,” including innate viciousness (in Greeks due to a “defect in the race,” *gentis vitium*, 3.121) and criminality (women’s murderousness, mentioned above; the schemes of the immigrant hustlers depicted in *Satire* 3).

Another basic feature of the rhetoric’s structure is binarism: the habit of constructing reality in terms of stark antitheses that close off any possibility of complexity or nuance. The speakers’ thinking is structured through and through by a system of corresponding oppositions — male *versus* female, nature *versus* artifice, past *versus* present, native *versus*

¹⁸ On Greek and Roman views of people from the “Middle East,” and Roman views of Greeks, start with Isaac (2004, pp. 324-51 and pp. 381-405 respectively, with bibliography).

¹⁹ I borrow this use of the term “homogenization” from Mosse (1985, *passim*), who applied it to the same phenomenon in nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalist discourses of enemy construction. McClintock (1995, p. 56), analyzing colonialist othering that operated on a similar principle of substitution, calls it a “triangulated switchboard analogy.”

foreign, country *versus* city — in which all the first terms line up in one (the “good”) column while the second terms fall on the other (“bad”) side of the register, creating an airtight and rigidly valorized dualistic scheme. The country-city opposition in particular, in Juvenal as in conservative Roman thought as a whole, holds a certain pride of place in this system in that it contains within itself all the other contrasts.²⁰ For the speakers in the earlier poems, especially *Satires* 1 and 3, the city has come to represent everything false, corrupt, and wrong; it is the home not only of shape-shifting foreigners with their alien values but also of internal enemies, foremost among them womanish men and mannish women, all identified with a feminized and degenerate present. The countryside of the speaker’s imagination, on the other hand, embodies the clarity, stability, gendered virtues, and “authentic” Romanness of an increasingly distant national past. This enduring opposition, with all its ideological associations, implicitly undergirds the opening poem, where it is no accident that the city is the teeming backdrop of the social and moral collapse that provokes the speaker’s indignation.

It is in *Satire* 3, however, that this opposition is most fully articulated, not surprisingly given the poem’s explicit theme of the (perceived) injustices of city life. The poet pointedly frames the view of country life expressed by both the prologue speaker, Umbricius’ acquaintance who accompanies him to the city limits, and more centrally by Umbricius himself, as a deluded fantasy naively drawn from literature. Umbricius has resolved to seek a “pleasant retirement” (*amoenus secessus*) away from the *saeva urbs*, says his friend (3.4-5, 8-9), recalling the *locus amoenus* of pastoral poetry, while Umbricius, at the end of his tirade against city life, likewise signals his departure with a jarring, pastorally-flavored coda: “the cattle are lowing and the sun is setting: it’s time to go” (*iumenta vocant et sol inclinatum eundum est*, 3.316). In between these bookends, the (pure) country/(corrupt) city binary is fleshed out with the loaded ancillary oppositions that it always implies, especially between past and present, authentic and artificial, native and foreign, and masculine and feminine, often activated simultaneously. In a sense the entire scheme is an elaboration of the *locus communis de saeculo* trivialized elsewhere in the *Satires*,²¹ but this is no mere mockery of hackneyed rhetoric: Juvenal puts real ideological flesh on the declamatory bones.

Thus, for example, the prologue speaker laments that the location of the pre-metropolitan grove where Numa met his *amica*, the nymph Egeria, is now infested with mendicant Jews (3.12-16), and further disapproves of the phony grottos (*speluncae/dissimiles veris*) and marble that have replaced the grass and “native limestone” (*ingenuus tofus*) of old (3.17-20). Umbricius moves the artifice theme into the human realm with his complaints about the duplicity of foreigners, especially Greeks. “He can take his own expression from another’s face” (*potest aliena sumere vultum/a facie*) he says of the *Graeculus* with contempt/envy at 3.105-6, indignantly implying a contrast with his own congenital honesty, which makes it impossible for him to compete in a city of calculating immigrants: “What should I do in Rome? I don’t know how to lie,” he had exclaimed at 3.41 (*quid Romae faciam? mentiri nescio*).²² When he comes to spinning one of his reveries about rural life at 3.168-79, his loving invocation of a humble country festival has it all: stock figures of rustic Italian virtue (3.169, he imagines himself “transported to the Marsi and a Sabine table,”

²⁰ Vasaly (1993, p. 156) observes that “[t]here is hardly a topic in Latin literatures that appears more frequently and in a greater variety of guises than that of the contrast between the mores of the country and those of the city.” One guise was Roman satire, where the contrast, with all its points of contact with the equally conventional *laudes temporis acti*, had been a standard topic from the genre’s beginnings; see Braund (1989). In Juvenal it begins to take on the nativist cast that has characterized modern versions of the trope.

²¹ See note 17 above.

²² Here Juvenal has Umbricius employ a version of the established rhetorical *captatio benevolentiae* of protesting, in a bid for sympathy, that he is just a simple and artless man — an ethical appeal, in Aristotelian terms (*Rhet.* 1.2.4; also, e.g., Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.8-9, and see Andersen [2001] on the topos of modesty). This bit of characterization may well have caused Juvenal’s rhetorically literate audience to view the speaker as less rather than more sincere. Claims of guilelessness were especially attached to rustic speakers and characters, so Umbricius assumes the moral valence of the country before ever leaving the city; see Vasaly (1993, pp. 156-72) on Cicero’s spin on the defendant in the *Pro Roscio Amerino*.

translatus...ad Marsos mensamque Sabellam, echoing earlier poetic appearances of these types with the same ideological coding²³); a marked absence of *luxuria* in any form; proper gender order (3.176, devoted mothers holding *rustici infantes*); nature, not artifice (3.173, the theater is edged with grass, not marble, in keeping with the ingenuousness of the whole population, wide-eyed at the performance of a familiar indigenous skit).²⁴ All this is cast as an antidote to the opposing values ascendant in the city.

This multi-layered coding of the cosmopolis as irredeemably bad is ostensibly reversed in *Satire 15*, where the reconstituted speaker's newfound (and situational) universalism at least implicitly positions the city as a prime symbol and beacon of enlightened Greco-Roman culture: at 15.110 the speaker marvels at the salutary effects of "Athens, both Roman and Greek" on less advanced peoples throughout the world (*nunc totus Graias nostrasque habet orbis Athenas*). Urbanity, now elevated and idealized, is here set in opposition to the country districts of Egypt and the savagery that allegedly arose there. Nevertheless, the fundamentally binary structure of the discourse remains in place, even if rhetorical opportunism has scrambled the plug-ins and the speaker's self-positioning has shifted from parochial Roman to global citizen of the civilized (i.e., Hellenized/Romanized) world. This recasting is possible because in this speaker's mind provincial Egyptians occupy the place held by Greek and other Eastern immigrants to the imperial metropolis in the earlier poems as objects of irrational fear and hatred, but it is still a stark matter of "us versus them."²⁵

On the whole, in fact, the rhetoric of what we now might call reactionary nationalism permeating *Satires 1* and *3* and that of colonizing imperialism in *Satire 15* are two sides of the same coin.²⁶ The former lashes out defensively once the colonial Other (or his doubles) has infiltrated the speaker's "homeland," the imperial center, while the latter starts from an offensive position, marshalling ideas of civilizing mission to justify rule over the same figure in his own land. Structurally, however, they operate on many of the same principles. In the later poem too, as we have seen, the speaker's thinking and the assertions that grow out of it are as binary as the simplistic zero-sum calculus of Umbricius; his deployment of the country/city topos illustrates this, even if its terms are inverted. Likewise he conceives of Egyptian culture and religion as diametrically opposed to his own, which represent the gold standard against which the imperfectly understood beliefs and practices of targeted Others are measured and found wanting. The conceptualization of difference as unambiguously valorized opposition is demonstrated from the outset in the first lines of the poem. There (15.2-13) a familiar anthropomorphic Roman goddess and "normal" culinary habits are

²³ Cf. Virgil, *Georg.* 2.167, *Marsos pubemque Sabellam*; Horace, *Odes* 3.5.9, *Marsus et Apulus*.

²⁴ Probably an Atellan farce, as opposed to the exotic novelties required to hold the attention of jaded city audiences (see Braund 1996, p. 204).

²⁵ One of the most rhetorically exemplary poems in Latin literature, *Satire 15* consists of *exordium* (1-32, everyone knows that Egyptian culture is crazy, but a recent incident there, incredible as it is, illustrates this in spades); *narratio* (33-92, a conflict between two towns over religious practices degenerates into a brawl culminating in a spontaneous act of cannibalism); *argumentatio* (93-131, instances of cannibalism from the past can be explained by extenuating circumstances — siege warfare, for example —, and the diffusion of Greco-Roman culture has eliminated even those; incorrigible Egyptian savagery falls outside this pale); and *peroratio* (131-75, human compassion is the basis of social order and progress; again, the Egyptians have failed to evolve — at which point the satire becomes a rhetorical train wreck, as we will see). The description of human flesh-eating has been taken at face value, as a misreading of Egyptian cult ritual, and as a declamatory or satiric topos; see Shumate (2006, p. 132 and n.4) for references. Juvenalian hyperbole and tendentiousness, along with the durability of cannibalism as a go-to charge for vilifying the not-self (see n. 27 below), tip the balance against strict factuality. Vincent (2011) has read the poem as paradoxography (p. 241, "a tale which is clearly fictional from the start").

²⁶ The bibliography on these two ideologies in the modern era is vast and growing, as additional articulations come under study; a journalistic illustration is Filipovic's (2021) retrospective following the recent death of right-wing radio shock jock Rush Limbaugh, which teases out the connection between misogyny and white supremacist "Christian" nationalism in the U.S. For a sense of the generic shape of these discourses, the seminal work of Mosse (1986) on sexuality and nationalism (shading into fascism) still repays study; for colonialism, Spurr (1993) and Boehmer (1995) similarly identify transferable sets of features.

sharply contrasted with a cartoon version of Egyptian animal worship and the claim that among them human flesh-eating is routine: “Some of them worship the crocodile, others quake at the ibis with snakes stuffed in its mouth, and they have golden statues of a sacred long-tailed ape....Here whole towns venerate cats, there fish, here dogs, but no one Diana.... It’s considered a sacrilege to eat leeks, onions, or mutton, or to sacrifice a kid, but perfectly fine to feed on human flesh.”²⁷ The rigid binarism introduced here undergirds the entire poem.

In addition to this principle, the speaker’s appeals in *Satire 15* rely on the same sort of blurring and eliding strategies that were ubiquitous in Books 1 and 2. Thus, Egyptians somehow manage to be both primitive, a sign of civilization’s absence (they are capable of spontaneously ripping a person limb from limb and devouring him), and decadent, a symptom of civilizational excess, which can circle back to barbarism in Greco-Roman thought (there’s no winning for Egyptians). This paradox is what the speaker sees in the Ombites’ pre-riot religious celebration: “Egypt is surely a rough place, but in *luxuria* the barbarous mob does not yield to [the] famous[ly dissolute city of] Canopus.”²⁸ In a related bit of rhetorical sleight of hand, Egypt’s ancient civilization and its complex multicultural history are airbrushed entirely out of the account, as the current inhabitants of a couple of backwater towns are made to stand for the country as a whole. The grand succession of high cultures in Egypt—Pharaonic, Hellenistic, even Roman—is erased, to be dismissively replaced by a monolithic “crazy Egypt” (*Aegyptos demens*, 1-2). Finally, the operation of reductive or homogenizing moves is consistently evident here too in the conflation of disparate groups marginal to the dominant discourse, which nevertheless present a mortal threat to the speaker’s mental equilibrium. Like the Eastern immigrants in the streets of Rome, the Egyptians of *Satire 15* are demonized in large part through their symbolic association with women and deviant males. “Race” is gendered and gender is racialized, as they had been in the earlier books.

Throughout the poem, the speaker builds his picture of Egyptian depravity around what he posits as their fundamental defects: irrationality and lack of self-restraint. This idea is introduced in the very first line with the epithet *demens* applied to all of Egypt, and reinforced at the end of the exordium (15.32) with the pointed choice of the word *feritas* — animal wildness — to suggest a complete absence of self-regulating superego. This is what drives the Egyptians to superstition and intolerance, this is what causes them to nurse a primal hatred of their neighbors until it erupts into an orgy of violence; their destructive passion is also flagged with the rage words *odium*, *furor*, and *ira*, at 34, 36, and 131 respectively. Lack of self-control, a deficit of reason, superstition, grudges, vendetta justice: these are cornerstones of female stereotyping, as we have seen, and thus form a recognizable basis for the feminization of the Egyptians.²⁹ This characterization is evident from another angle in the festival scene that precedes the outbreak of hostilities, which the speaker frames in terms of “Oriental”

²⁷ *crocodilon adorat/pars haec, illa pavet saturam serpentibus ibin./effigies sacri nitet aurea cercopithecii/... illic aeluros, hic piscem fluminis, illic/oppida tota canem venerantur, nemo Dianam./porrum et caepe nefas violare...Janatis animalibus abstinet omnis/mensa, nefas illic fetum iugulare capellae:/carnibus humanis vesci licet.* Contemptuous views of Egyptian religion and culture are not uncommon in Latin literature: cf, e.g., Virgil, *Aen.* 8.698-700; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.11; and Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.78, which the satire’s opening lines echo and critically engage. For an overview of Greek and Roman attitudes towards Egyptians, which could be positive in different rhetorical environments, see Isaac (2004, pp. 352-70, with bibliography). For cannibalism as a marker of alterity in antiquity, see Alston (1996, p.101 and references); Isaac (2004, pp. 207-11).

²⁸ 15.44-6, *horrida sane/Aegyptos, sed luxuria.../barbara famoso non cedit turba Canopo.* Lucan also attributes both *luxuria* and *saevitia* to Egyptians, though not always to the same ones: at *BC* 8.542-3 Hellenized Canopus is *mollis*, Egyptian Memphis is *barbara*. Likewise he denounces Egyptian treachery, indifference to law, and murderousness (*BC* 10.60-81, 104-71, 332-98, 467-85), but there is little space for irony in his poem.

²⁹ The overarching rubric of deficient self-restraint allows lawless violence to be construed as female in Juvenal; the frequent characterization of male promiscuity and womanizing as effeminate in Latin literature (e.g. Antony in Cic. *Phil.* 2) works the same way. Both ideas may strike modern readers as counter-intuitive. Of course, Roman culture readily sanctioned many forms of *male* violence.

decadence. Like uncouth savagery, this is also a form of barbarism, as we have seen, and is conventionally mapped onto the feminine as well (as, again, in Aeschylus, *Persians*). The inhabitants of one town, the Ombites, are described as staggering about drunk on their holiday, dancing and indulging themselves with perfumes and floral crowns, while their enemies the Tentyrites, taking advantage of this diversion, plot a cowardly ambush (44-51). The reckless abandon of the party resonates with stereotypical “female” excess, while the reliance on treachery in “warfare” is likewise a variant of the duplicity long associated with women.³⁰

With the dread charge of being like women in a broad range of attributes clearly implied, it is an easy step to other tried-and-true forms of feminization, especially the insinuation of deviant masculinity; as in Books 1 and 2, women and deviant men slide around with foreigners on a seamless continuum of alterity in the mind of a native male anxious to bolster his own identity. In this vein, the speaker seems especially incensed that the dancing is being done by men, with other men — to the music of a “black” flute-player, thrown in for good measure (*inde virorum/saltatus nigro tibicine*, 48-49).³¹ This suggestion of transgressive maleness culminates at 15.124-8 in the unfavorable comparison of the puny and feckless Egyptians with the virile barbarians of the north and west, replete with mockery of their customary means of navigating the Nile: “A madness that has never seized the scary Germans or the Britons or the fierce Slavic tribes or the hulking Rumanians rages in that unwarlike and useless rabble who unfurl the pint-sized sails of their clay-pot rafts and lean on the short little oars of their brightly painted pieces of tile.”³² There are barbarians and there are barbarians, apparently, just as there are good and bad forms of menacing violence or of “natural” behavior. Thus emasculated and trivialized, the Egyptians are cast as classic feminized colonial Others, a provincial variation on the composite *bête noire* that the speaker fabricates and then vilifies in the Rome-centered satires. They are well on their way to being othered out of the human race altogether, a move that the speaker saves for his peroration, as we will see.

Juvenal’s characterization of the angry speaker involves more than the reproduction of that figure’s often internally inconsistent rhetorical strategies of self-definition through opposition. In a sense these strategies are an effect of the core personality traits of the social and psychological type so vividly brought to life in these satires.³³ These include his self-righteous indignation, which masks a profound lack of self-knowledge, and his unwillingness or inability to understand and adapt to the newly dynamic socio-economic world around him. This description applies to all the main speakers of the first six satires in some degree, but Umbricius again is the epitome of this type. He presents himself as a model of reason, moderation, and good sense in a city that seems to have lost its moral bearings, but the defects in his understanding of himself and his place in the new Rome are revealed by his misplaced lashing out at those he casts as somehow responsible for his own failings. Driven as he is by a deep sense of being wronged by others but lacking any capacity for critical analysis, self-

³⁰ It is worth noting that except at the end when the speaker becomes confused on this issue, *Satire 15* follows the standard nature=female/culture=male formula, whereas *Satires 1* and *3* reverse it by identifying country life (nature) with rustic masculine virtue and city life (culture) with feminine decadence. Nature is feminine and culture is masculine, except when they aren’t.

³¹ Godwin (2020, p. 324) notes that “dancing of this effeminate kind was not something which decent Roman men went in for,” citing the use of *saltator* as a term of abuse in Cic. *Pro Murena* 13. He also reminds us that from Herodotus on the Greeks and Romans referred to *all* Egyptians as black; here the adjective must either suggest a valorized gradation or further exoticize all the participants with a sweeping, and clearly pejorative, epithet. In either case its use here unsettles the conventional wisdom that color prejudice was virtually unknown in antiquity; see, e.g., Snowden (1996).

³² *qua nec terribiles Cimbrī nec Brittones umquam/Sauromataeque truces aut inmanes Agathyrsi,/hac saevit rabie inbelle et inutile volgus/parvula fictilibus solitum dare vela phaselis/et brevibus pictae remis incumbere testae. Inbellis* is often used disparagingly of men who are failures *qua* men, e.g. *Sat.* 6.366 (of eunuchs); 8.113 (of effeminate Greeks); Horace, *Odes* 3.2.14-15 (of shirkers in war).

³³ Hooley (2007, p. 117) on *Satire 2*, but generally applicable: “...the narrative serves to sketch out a portrait of the observing consciousness as much as the things observed.”

examination, or mature course-correction, he often slips into logical incoherence, transparent rationalization, and rhetorical opportunism. Thus, to take a few examples, Umbricius is oblivious to the irony that he seeks refuge from a decadent Rome overrun by Greeks in Cumae, a Greek city famous for its “immoral” *luxuria*; his jealousy of the Greek’s superior adaptive skills is barely disguised even as he resents and condemns it (3.105-6); his self-pitying claim that he is unable to compete with the newcomers because of his natural honesty (3.41) seems smug and petulant; and his expectation of an easy life once he gets to the country borders on the delusional.³⁴ Like kindred Juvenalian speakers, Umbricius seeks scapegoats, not a better understanding of his situation. He frames what is from a larger perspective simply inevitable social and economic change as complete cultural and moral collapse; this allows him to seize the high ground while avoiding the need to reassess his own views.

The encore appearance of this particular type of angry character in *Satire 15* is signaled at the beginning and further developed as the poem unfolds. The reader is alerted to the speaker’s barely sublimated fury in the first two lines, an indignant rhetorical question that echoes the ones that launched the first satire: “Who doesn’t know what sort of monsters crazy Egypt worships? (15.1-2, *quis nescit...qualia demens / Aegyptos portenta colat?* cf. 1.1, “Will I always just have to listen? Will I never respond ... [to the third-rate poetry being recited by aspiring bards everywhere I turn in Rome]?”—*semper ego auditor tantum? numquamne reponam...?*). This opening offensive leads into a scathing broadside against what the speaker presents as the absurdities of Egyptian religion (15.2-13, its motley array of animal gods, its misguided dietary restrictions), propelled by the sarcasm and hyperbole that are hallmarks of the earlier speakers’ wide-ranging tirades. As in the earlier satires the speaker’s anger, in the exordium and throughout the poem, blinds him to logic and generates rhetorical gaps that widen as his argument advances, undermining his self-positioning as the voice of reason in the clash of civilizations that he sets up. He is not troubled, for example, by the slippage in his picture of the Egyptians as both decadent and barbaric, or by his inconsistent treatment of the Egyptians’ religious intolerance and his own: he mocks the catalyst that drove them to violence — conflict over whose gods were more legitimate³⁵ — while taking up the same sort of cudgel to attack the legitimacy of Egyptian deities as a whole, in spite of living in an increasingly syncretistic imperial world. Likewise, he exculpates Spaniards who were allegedly guilty of cannibalism on the grounds that they were *in extremis*, but also because they had not yet been enlightened by Greco-Roman culture and so could not have known any better (15.106-12, where he cites the spread of Greek philosophical teaching and Roman rhetorical training as salutary), yet does not extend the same pardon to the Egyptians, even though in his telling they too are still untouched by civilization.³⁶

But it is in the poem’s peroration (131-75) — precisely the section where others have found a rehabilitated and more humane Juvenalian speaker — that the coherence of his discourse really breaks down, as his true views and incorrigibly crabbed disposition sabotage an already wobbly attempt at philosophical commentary. Having based his declamation up to this point on the premise that superior *culture* tames beastly human impulses, he shifts abruptly to the claim that *nature* is the author of good behavior, because it gives compassion

³⁴ This outline of the psycho-social profile of the speakers in the earlier satires, particularly *Satires 1* and *3*, closely follows the reading of Braund (esp. 1996, pp. 110-21 and 230-6). More recently Gallia (2016, pp. 337-9 and *passim*), discussing *Satire 3* alone, adds as markers of Umbricius’ muddle-headedness his unwitting philhellenism (in his participation in the Greek literary and material culture all around him in Rome); his understanding of national identity in terms of “blood and soil” when in fact Roman citizenship was not ethnically based; and his failure to realize that as a poor(ish) Roman he could make common cause with marginalized outsiders.

³⁵ 15.37-8, *uterque locus cum solos credat habendos/esse deos quos ipse colit*.

³⁶ The two exonerated Spanish peoples are the Vascones, whose main town Calagurris was pressed by Roman forces loyal to Sulla during the Sertorian war in 72 BCE, and the Saguntines, besieged by Hannibal in 218 BCE. Even if one accepts that exposure to Greco-Roman culture is the only hedge against cannibalism, it is unlikely that the Vascones, remote as they were, would have been completely untouched by it, as there had been a Roman presence in Spain since the second Punic war that encompassed almost the entire peninsula by 72.

to the “human race” and separates “us” from the mute beasts on their lower plane: “Nature, which has taught us how to cry, proclaims that she gives very pliant hearts to the human race. This is the best part of our sensibility...it separates us from the herd of beasts.”³⁷ Just who is granted admission to the *humanum genus* in Roman thought can vary with genre, philosophical orientation, and rhetorical purpose, but it is clear that this speaker has mainly people like himself in mind while going out of his way to exclude the Egyptians, who fail all the membership tests — the capacity for pity, the drive toward orderly community building — that he sets in this passage. By invoking the double-edged sword of *humanitas* as, ultimately, a screen for exclusion — as code for “us,” not “them” — the speaker draws on ample precedent, but as often he tries to have it both ways — or simply fails to notice the tension — when he overlays his implied interdiction of the Egyptians with a patina of the universalism (innate, “natural human” compassion *precedes* civilization here) that could also attach to this and related terms.³⁸ His remarks about nature’s gift of compassion segue into a miniature Lucretian narrative of progress (15.149-58) whose incremental steps toward stable and secure communities are driven by uniquely human intellect (*animus*), now bestowed by a “common founder” (*communis conditor*).³⁹ The relationship between *natura*, the initial benefactress, and this suddenly appearing masculine *conditor* is unclear, but there can be no doubt that this is another “human” process in which the Egyptians can play no part.

Virtually mid-thought in his account of social progress, however, the speaker abruptly changes course when he blurts out, “But now there’s more harmony among snakes!” (*iam serpentum maior concordia*, 15.159).⁴⁰ Unable to sustain the idea of progress any more than he could hold onto his faith in culture, he slips back into the narrative that far better suits his temperament: a picture of cultural and moral decline, replete with benign animal species putting degenerate man to shame and once constructive technology turned to nefarious ends; the nadir of this trajectory is the Egyptians’ heinous act (15.159-71). At this point the questions are piling up: wait, is it culture or nature that determines who people are and how they behave? Is the human race (whoever that is) on a path of progress or decline? Are the mute beasts bad and technology good, or is it the other way around? And what about the Egyptians? Are they outliers in an otherwise widely shared process of advancement, or the end-point of a universal downward spiral?⁴¹ Readers will look in vain for cogent answers from this speaker, whose cosmopolitan pose and strategic virtue signaling have unraveled to expose a kindred spirit to the irascible, dishonest, and pessimistic reactionary of the earlier poems. There, less stressfully for him, the situation did not require a tenuous and opportunistic embrace of Greek culture.

With its stress on the characterization of the speaker and on the implied gap between that figure and the poet himself, this reading of *Satire 15* (and of the earlier poems as well) follows in the tradition of *persona*-centered criticism of Roman satire. Reacting

³⁷ 15.131-3 and 142-3, *mollissima corda/humano generi dare se natura fatetur/quae lacrimas dedit. haec nostri pars optima sensus...separat hoc nos/a grege mutorum*. The distinction between rational humans and mute beasts is conventional; see, e.g., Sallust, *Cat.* 1.1-2.

³⁸ See Braund (1997) on the narrow identification of *humanitas* with Greco-Roman culture rather than “humanity”/the human race as a whole. This meaning was common, as she explains, but existed alongside a more universalizing use of the term as shared human experience across cultures, including even “barbarian” ones.

³⁹ 15.148-9. To the Juvenalian narrative of progress, cf. Lucretius, *DNR* 5.925-1457. Uden (2015, p. 213) argues that *conditor* (an epithet of the emperor) flags the Hadrianic universalism that he thinks the satire problematizes. If this identification is correct, *conditor* becomes in my reading a kind of shadow foil to the speaker’s provincialism, which his pretenses cannot obscure.

⁴⁰ Godwin (2020, p. 22) describes the claim at 15.159-64 that animals never attack their own as a “ludicrous argument” — one of many in this monologue — though elsewhere (e.g., p. 306, p. 344) he seems to fall for the speaker’s humanitarian posturing.

⁴¹ Geue (2017, pp. 207-10) reads the sudden shift from targeting the Egyptians as uniquely depraved to blaming the whole human race as a marker of the incremental collapse of self into Other and *vice versa* that is inevitable under empire — a background dynamic not inconsistent with a speaker characterized as both confused and defiant.

to earlier approaches that took the sentiments expressed in the poems at face value as the honest beliefs of the poet, who was not distinguished from the speaker — in other words, biographical and moralistic approaches — *persona* criticism posited that the speaker is a dramatic construct fashioned by the author, who takes up the mask and plays that role much as an actor or declaimer would. A consequence is that the satiric target can shift, from the poem's ostensible objects of invective to the speaker who does the inveighing — his attitudes, values, temperament, and failings.⁴² In recent years there has been a movement away from *persona*-based readings toward a corrective focus on “satire as literary, political, and cultural discourse,” motivated in part by a sense that the centrality of irony in, for example, a performance of anger empties satire of substance and renders it a self-contained literary exercise, a “medium of humor rather than authentic social criticism.”⁴³ While this could suggest a welcome antidote to the strain of criticism that reads much of Latin poetry as solipsistic literary navel-gazing, there is no reason why *persona* readings and serious social criticism have to be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, criticism is at its most biting when parody highlights the absurdities of its object — here, to a great extent, the speaker himself — through comic exaggeration, while preserving the recognizable contours of that object as it exists in real life. Even then it can sometimes be difficult to tell where “real world” speech ends and parodic distortion begins — to such an extent do some extremisms manage, in effect, to satirize themselves.

Another objection to *persona* readings points to the improbability that any Roman author could be as “woke” as a strict distinction between elite poet and benighted, satirized speaker implies — could be, as Nappa puts it, an early version of the “liberal modern Western man who opposes sexism, racism, and imperialism.”⁴⁴ Surely this formulation screams anachronism, but character-mediated, parodic critiques of conservative discourse do exist in Latin literature — witness Encolpius' monologue on the decline of education at the beginning of what remains of Petronius' *Satyricon*, and almost anything the hypocritical grifter Eumolpus says in the same work. In any case, this objection posits a polar opposition between the poet and the speaker he creates, whereas in reality the distinction is usually less clear-cut. After all, if its appearance in Cicero and Tacitus is any indication, vilification of Egyptians on cultural and religious grounds may have been as acceptable in elite literary circles as it was (if it was) among the lower classes that Umbricius represents, and most Romans (if they thought about it) may well have restricted *humanitas* to people like themselves, even in the era of Hadrianic universalism.⁴⁵ Yet attachment to arguable assumptions and to unexamined prejudices, chauvinisms and other dominant discourses can co-exist with self-awareness, self-interrogation, and self-parody: we only need think of Horace's continuously self-deconstructing *personae* in his satires, the internalized acceptance, even endorsement, of British colonialism alongside barbed satirical critiques of it in novelists such as Conrad

⁴² Cf., e.g., Jonathan Swift as distinguished from the mouthpiece of his “modest proposal,” the liberal actor Carroll O'Connor playing the bigot Archie Bunker in the 1970s sitcom “All in the Family,” or Stephen Colbert's performance as a right-wing pundit on “The Colbert Report.” See Keane (2010, pp. 109-111; 2015, pp. 16-20) and the Watsons (2014, pp. 36-40) for overviews of the development of *persona* theory as it has been applied to Roman satire, including arguments for and against this approach.

⁴³ Quotes from Keane (2015, p. 20) and the Watsons (2014, p. 37), respectively. Another reason for the shift is probably *persona* fatigue: the question of whether this model is applicable to ancient texts is ultimately intractable, a situation exacerbated in the case of Juvenal by the virtual impossibility of reconstructing his life, which might tell us something about what views he was likely to hold or, on the other hand, critique. For surveys of evidence for the *vita*, see Armstrong (2012, pp. 59-62) and Courtney (1980, 1-10), with the caveat that both lean toward the biographical fallacy.

⁴⁴ Nappa (2017, p. 4).

⁴⁵ Cicero and Tacitus, see above, n. 27. Gallia (2016, p. 341) suggests that Umbricius' apologetic introduction to his denunciation of the “Greek city” in *Satire* 3 (58-60: *quae nunc divitibus gens acceptissima nostris/et quos praecipue fugiam, properabo fateri/nec pudor obstabit*) indicates that the xenophobic views he expresses were not widely shared in this period, or at least not publicly acknowledged. If true, this could support reading the views and the speaker who holds them as the (clearly distinct) poet's satiric target.

and Waugh, and the retrograde Mr. Chips routines enacted by countless self-satirizing Latin teachers every day. Author and speaker are always co-mingled; as Geue observes, “the self will come through.”⁴⁶

These and other questions remain central to any comprehensive account of Juvenalian satire, but answers are elusive, and the more limited task at hand, that of weighing claims for the unity of the corpus, does not depend on their being definitive. Whether the speaker’s discourse is taken at face value or is itself the target of critique, as I believe, it is clear that in *Satire 15* we have come full circle, back to the enraged, resentful, grievance-driven, and self-righteous mode of the first two books, and not only in general terms but in the very structures of the intertwined cultural discourses reproduced in these satires. Contrary to widespread views of a movement toward equanimity, the *Satires* are bookended by Roman prototypes of the “angry white man,” whose descendants have haunted history up to the present day.

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⁴⁶ Geue (2016, no pagination). His leftist critique of *persona* readings is appealing, especially in the way it connects them to the pernicious underbelly of postmodernism through the exaltation of a politically crippling irony in both. Still, he understates irony’s potential for political and social engagement, even if reading Juvenal more as an ironic critic of (e.g.) misogyny than as an actual misogynist does have the perhaps suspicious effect of yielding a poet more palatable to modern sensibilities. See Roche (2012, p. 202) for a brief overview of Horatian play with *personae* and how it helps the poet interrogate his own assumptions.

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