

**Ilaria MARCHESI**

**In Memory of Simonides: Rhetoric, Poetry, and Good Manners *chez* Nasidienus**

The paper investigates the previously unrecognized presence in Horace, *Satires* 2.8 of a traditional cluster of ideas depicting Simonides as the poetic originator of the art of memory. The theme of entrusting to memory valuable information is central to the poem. Fundanius, like Simonides at the famous dinner of Scopas, is able to recite the guest-list of the dinner party he attended by recalling the position each diner had occupied at the table. Moreover, Fundanius' puzzling remark that he "feared something worse had happened" (*nos maius veriti*: 2.8.57) when the awning fell on the main course finds its explanation in the far more tragic collapse of the dining-room ceiling in the traditional account of the invention of mnemotechnics.

The importance of Horace's re-invention and re-deployment of this anecdote (and of further elements alluding to the Alexandrian tradition about Simonides) lies in a confluence of three interrelated social, cultural, and poetic questions that Horace addresses in the second book of his satires (notably in 2.2, 2.4, and 2.6). The association of poetry, memory, and dining habits depends on the presence in each of an inherent opposition between nature and culture, for which the poetics of satire, the conservative rhetorical tradition, and the social discourse about "good manners" prescribe the same mediating recipe. At the level of social perception, food is a medium through which the negotiation of the natural and the cultural establishes Roman identity as a typically Horatian mean between the frugal (i.e. not overrefined) and the cultivated (i.e. not overly barbaric). The rhetorical debate about the "innate" or "learned" character of memory hinges on the same opposition. The authoritative voice of Cicero advocates the same mediating solution of balancing acquired technique with natural talent. In ending his collection of satires with a negative portrait of over-refined cuisine and an allusion to unnatural memory, Horace offers his positive solution to the issue of reconciling the exuberant and uncultivated tradition of Roman satire with the purity and restraint of post-neoteric poetry. The Lucilian full dish is balanced by a poetics of frugality and control, just as the muddy river of Lucilian satire is purified by the Horatian stream of *sermo merus*.

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