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Poems

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From Horace's "Satires"

by [A. M. Juster](#)

Poets of every generation and school of thought rediscover Horace's odes and recast his work through their translations. Hundreds of superb poets have taken the plunge, including Milton, Crashaw, Congreve, Swift, Pope, Dryden, Cowper, Byron, Housman, Kipling, Pound, Lowell, and J. V. Cunningham.

Despite this continuing interest in Horace's odes, few poets of the past century have taken on his satires and few people today read the handful of translations by classics scholars. Why have poets relinquished this ground? Wit, wordplay, and humor, which tend to rely on ephemeral nuances of language and current events, are harder to translate than more personal poetry. Moreover, our mainstream literary culture doesn't value comic poetry, so only a few eccentric holdouts still write it. Indeed, today's translators of Horace's Satires lack even one contemporary model for a book-length comic poem.

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