SATURNALIAN SATIRE: PROTO-CARNIVALESQUE REVERSALS AND INVERSIONS IN HORACE, SATIRE 2.7

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ABSTRACT

In Satire 2.7, on the occasion of the Saturnalia, Horace’s domestic slave Davus is invited to take the floor and lecture Horace himself in accordance with the traditions of this December festival. With the aid of the Stoic paradox ‘Only the wise man is free and every fool is a slave’, the servile speaker Davus turns the tables on his master Horace and accuses the satirist of the very vices that he has seen fit to criticise in others. Drawing together many of the trends of the second book of Satires, the penultimate 2.7 occasions a thoroughgoing reversal of roles not only social but also literary: author becomes audience, speaker turns addressee, and satirist is made target. The poem provokes contemplation as to the nature of moralising and the moralist, satire and the satirist. Although many scholars have tried to dismiss Davus as a ‘doctor ineptus’ because of this servile speaker’s errors and infelicities of both a logical and ideological nature, the present paper argues that on the occasion of the Saturnalia, Davus and Horace are involved in a ritual rather than a court case. It is suggested that the Saturnalian satire of 2.7 is best understood in the light of some of the theories of carnival and carnivalesque literature put forward by the modern Russian thinker Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975).

Reversals, it seems, are intrinsic to satire. In Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels, to take an example from English literature, the narrator first finds himself a giant among the Lilliputians, only to be relatively reduced, in the second book, to a miniature figure in the kingdom of the Brobdingnagians. An analogous reversal takes place between the two books of Horace’s Satires. In the first book we are confronted by a moralising personality who, as speaker from the beginning of Sat. 1.1, dominates the liber sermonum. The second book of Satires, however, sees a reversal or inversion of this trend, as most of that book has Horace retreat from the position of speaker and allow others...

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the floor. In the satires of the second book, posed as Socratic dialogues, we hear other speakers address and converse with Horace.

In some poems of the second book of Satires the relationship between author and audience seen in Horace's first book is stood entirely on its head. Here the author, or at least the fictional representative he presents in his work, has become the audience. In Sat. 2.3 and 2.7, the Stoic lectures of the second book, Horace's character is not only addressed but is taken to task by two imperfect Stoic enthusiasts, the mad Damasippus and the servile Davus respectively. In harmony with the topsy-turvy world of the festival of the Saturnalia which occasions the performances of either doctor ineptus, Damasippus and Davus are permitted to speak, while Horace allows himself to be reduced to a recipient of the moralising. Almost every discernible textual role in Book 1 is switched in the Saturnalian satires of Book 2: author becomes audience, speaker turns addressee, satirist is made target. However we may interpret them, these changes in Book 2 invite speculation as to the meaning of the various textual roles themselves, and the significance of their transposition. In particular, the penultimate poem of the second book of Satires seems set to provoke contemplation as to the nature of moralising and the moralist, satire and the satirist.

It must be far from accidental that some of the greatest inversions of Horace's second book of Satires are shown to take place on the occasion of the Saturnalia. This Roman festival, which lasted from the 17th to the 23rd December, pivoted on temporary reversals of normal societal power and status, providing marginalised members of the community with a way of letting off steam. During the Saturnalia Roman slaves were traditionally granted leave to dine at their masters' tables and to speak their minds freely, habits which would have earned stern chastisement throughout the rest of the year.\(^1\) It is appropriate therefore that the attack on Horace's position as satirist and moralist reaches its peak in Sat. 2.7, which is set at the time of the Saturnalia. A generically named household slave Davus is heard giving his master Horace a thorough dressing-down, complete with a suitable sermon on the Stoic paradox that all but the sage are slaves.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Slaves usually stood within earshot outside a room, at their masters' beck and call. Prohibited from speaking out of turn, slaves' main role was to listen (cf. equi auditis, Sat. 2.7.34-35); it was this state of affairs that the Saturnalia would temporarily reverse. For extreme cases of slaves being prohibited from speaking or eating in their master's presence, see Seneca, Epist. 47.24.

\(^2\) Cf. Fr. 349-366 von Arnim SFV 3. This famous Stoic paradox had already been treated in Latin by Cicero at Paradoxa Stoicorum 5: ... solum sapientem esse liberum et omnem stultum servum. In places, Horace may deliberately have Davus echo Cicero's more serious treatment. The application of this paradox to Davus' and Horace's
The Roman Saturnalia is just one of a number of festivals common to ancient, medieval and modern societies, which feature playful, temporary inversions of societal status and which for convenience are grouped under the hold-all term 'carnival'. 'Carnival' was the theme of the Russian thinker Mikhail Mikhaïlovitch Bakhtin's doctoral thesis, which later became his book on Rabelais, and apart from the ubiquitous 'dialogue', it is the subject most commonly associated with him.\(^3\) A Classicist by training, Bakhtin (1895-1975) noted similarities between the Roman Saturnalia and the later European carnival, even suggesting that there was no break in the tradition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages.\(^5\) Many of Bakhtin's observaetions about the European carnival, as lived and depicted during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, are retrospectively valid for the Roman Saturnalia, since they are similar types of festival.

Carnival, according to Bakhtin, always involves the suspension of the laws, prohibitions and restrictions of ordinary life: all distance between people, including that of a socio-hierarchical nature, is temporarily done away with during carnival, and in its place 'free and familiar contact among people' prevails.\(^6\) As a result, carnival often marries like with unlike, resulting in strange juxtapositions. As Bakhtin notes: 'Carnival brings together, unifies, wed, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid.'\(^7\) In short, carnival (and situations is ultimately based on Stoic humanism, and the principle that virtue precludes no-one whether slave or free (Sen. De Ben. 3.18; cf. Fr. 508 von Arnim SVF 3).\(^3\)

\(^3\) I have referred throughout to Caryl Emerson's 1984 English translation of Bakhtin's *Problem of Dostoевsky's Poetics*. Bakhtin had first published this work in a shorter form in 1929 and then revised it in 1963.

\(^4\) Between 1914 and 1918 Bakhtin read Classics for his first degree at the University of St. Petersburg (where he developed a particular enthusiasm for Greek), and throughout his life retained an abiding interest in Classical literature and the ancient world, as can be seen in all his writings (Dentith 1995:4).

\(^5\) Bakhtin 1984:129. Indeed, Bakhtin's idea was that the roots of carnival laughter could be traced to ancient ritual laughter as well as to ancient parody: 'This ancient ritualistic practice of directing laughter toward something higher (a deity or authority) defined the privileges of laughter in antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Much was permitted in the form of laughter that was impermissible in serious form' (127). Bakhtin also linked satire and Saturnalia: 'In Rome, the many diverse varieties of satire and epigram were linked, and were designed to be linked, with the Saturnalia; they were either written for Saturnalia, or at least were created under cover of that legitimised carnival licence enjoyed by the festival ...' (129).

\(^6\) Bakhtin 1984:122-23.

\(^7\) Bakhtin 1984:123.
Saturnalia), with their suspensions and reversals of hierarchic order, represent 'life turned inside out' or alternatively, 'the world turned upside down'.

Bakhtin has nevertheless often been criticized for his naïve belief in the potential of carnival for social experimentation and renewal. Carnival, like Saturnalia, Bakhtin's critics have pointed out, was aimed merely at keeping society's underlings in their places by providing them with a temporary outlet for their frustrations. In other words, that which masqueraded as potential regeneration was simply another variety of repression. When the festivities are over, it has been suggested, carnival (and Saturnalia) always turns bitter.

However, it is fair to note that Bakhtin was himself acutely aware of the limits of the reversals and inversions of carnival. He acknowledged, for example, the ambivalence inherent in the typical carnival 'crowning and uncrowning' phenomenon. Later European carnival's 'king for a day' rituals paralleled similar Saturnalian ceremonies, whereby Roman slaves were appointed 'king' or 'master' for a short period, and, in an inversion of the usual pecking order, temporarily permitted to rule the roost. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus himself once a slave, refers to the custom of choosing a 'king' by lot at the Saturnalia, and goes on to describe how, according to this game, the temporary 'king' is made to give orders as a master of ceremonies. In his discussion of the carnivalesque descendants of this game, Bakhtin cautions that within the very act of 'crowning', there exists from the start already the idea of immanent uncrowning. The one who is crowned, in the Medieval carnival, is a jester or slave, in other words, the complete opposite of a real king. In the same way, at the Roman Saturnalia the one given freedom of speech is the opposite of the free man and master he is allowed to address for a while. At the end of both carnivalesque ceremonies, the 'king for a day' and the slave will return to their original position or worse.

Bakhtin drew a direct link between the transposition of carnival into literature and its contribution to what he termed the 'dialogic' genres, the tributaries, from Antiquity on, of the so-called 'novelistic stream' of

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8 Bakhtin 1984:122.
10 Epict. Dis. 1.25.8.
13 As we shall see, this eventually happens to Davus: he is returned to his original position by being threatened with a worse one.
literature, which finally flowed into the modern novel, Bakhtin's main pool of contemplation. Bakhtin viewed the themes, images and characteristics of carnival as part and parcel of the 'dialogic' group of genres, among which he included Roman satire. He closely associated the themes of the carnival in literature with other elements that he observed in these genres that he identified as being akin to or forerunners of the modern novel. Bakhtin suggested that one of the defining characteristics of the serio-comical genres, in which he excavated the roots of the modern novel, was their 'Carnival sense of the world'. The ambivalent theme of crowning and uncrowning, which for Bakhtin was an essential part of carnival, was, he claimed, extraordinarily influential on the broader structures of these novelistic varieties of literature: 'This ritual determined a special uncrowning type of structure for artistic images and whole works', he observed. In addition, the theme of crowning and uncrowning was, according to Bakhtin, the carnival ritual that was most often transposed into literature.

I shall argue that Horace's Satires, particularly in Sat. 2.7, and more broadly, in the structured relationship between Books 1 and 2, exhibit a carnivalesque (or Saturnalian) sense of the world. The argument could be made that the second book of Satires in general portrays 'a world turned upside down', in that, as noted, many of the textual roles of the first book are reversed in Book 2, and this inversion of the little world of Horace's Satires is nowhere more apparent than in the penultimate Sat. 2.7. Just as the ritual Saturnalia, as a precursor of carnival, involves the suspension of the laws, prohibitions and restrictions of ordinary life, so Horace's literary Saturnalia means the reversal of the normal laws and conventions of the genre of Satire. If carnival (and Saturnalia) show that roles in society can be replaced or rotated, as Bakhtin thought, one could likewise argue that Horace's literary explorations of textual roles in Satires Book 2 show that these, too, may be replaced or rotated.

At the start of Horace's penultimate satire, as in Juvenal's first, a listener finally gets the chance to speak. Announcing that he has been 'listening' -

17 Bakhtin 1984:126.
19 The later satirist Juvenal has his persona indignantly begin his Satires by expressing a similar frustration with the role of listener and stating his desire to take the floor: semper ego auditor tantum, numquam reponam? (Sat. 1.1). This may be a deliberate echo of Horace, Sat. 2.7, a symbolic claim to the role of satirist on the part of the later poet/speaker, just as Sat. 27.1-5 signals the start of Davus' brief reign as satirist. This
in other words, eavesdropping - for a long time, the generically named slave Davus reveals that he has 'a few things' (pauca) that he’d like to say to Horace. His master invites him to take advantage of the traditions of the Saturnalia, and to speak. Although there has been endless speculation as to what exactly the eavesdropping Davus may have been overhearing, the most satisfying suggestion is that he has been listening in on Horace’s prior sixteen satires. This interpretation, I find, is encouraged by the many echoes in Davus’ speech of Horace’s prior themes and diction, echoes which go as far back as Sat. 1.1, and which engage the poem in an intertextual dialogue with a number of satires in between. Like the source of his Stoic sermon, Crispinus’ janitor, who is also clearly in the habit of overhearing his master, Davus, we are to imagine, has made it his business to listen in on Horace as he composes his Satires and dictates them to his scribe. Like the janitor, also, Davus has up until now been leading a (literally) liminal existence as an ignored, unintended, and largely invisible audience, hovering on Horace’s threshold. At the start of Sat. 2.7, this audience has at last come out of the woodwork, ready to give his master, the satirist, a dose of his own medicine.

In Horace’s penultimate satire, the freedom of the Saturnalia, on which slaves were traditionally allowed to have their say, thus appropriately occasions a thoroughgoing reversal of roles both social and literary: a slave assumes the chastising authority of his master, and a former audience of the Satires (albeit a surreptitious one) gets to lecture the satirist. Davus shows that Horace, alas, has not been practising what he has been preaching. He turns the tables on Horace and accuses him of the very vices that he had seen fit to criticise in others. For example, inconsistency, the topic that

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20 Sat. 2.7.1-5. Eavesdropping, stereotypical servile behaviour in Roman Comedy, is the recourse of the powerless, a measure often resorted to by those whose lives or livelihood depend entirely on the whims of others, and who need access to knowledge not otherwise available to them.

21 Scholars have suggested various contexts for lamdulhum ausculto (2.7.1). These were outlined by Palmer 1883 ad loc.; cf. discussion by Bond 1978:85. While many possibilities can be defended within the dramatic scope of the satire, the open-endedness of the phrase lamdulhum ausculto may deliberately be inviting a ‘literary’ interpretation, namely that Davus has been overhearing all sixteen of the poet’s previous satires and now is ready to comment. Harry B. Evans observed: ‘Davus, having listened to Horace sermonize for a long period (indeed we have already encountered 16 satires in the two books) now has his chance to play satirist and proceeds to deliver his own diatribe’ (1978:309-10).

22 Sat. 2.7.45: dum quae Crispini docuit me ianitor edo.
Davus first addresses, and of which he eventually accuses Horace, had been the subject of discussion at the start of \textit{Sat}.1.3, where Horace had similarly impugned the hapless Tigellius.\footnote{See \textit{Sat}.1.3.3b-19a for Horace’s criticism of Tigellius’ inconsistency. Davus starts addressing inconsistency at 2.7.6, erroneously suggesting that consistency in vice is better than wavering between virtue and vice. This would have been unacceptable to orthodox Stoics (cf. Colish 1990:185). Davus appears to begin with a general and vague approach in order to test his master’s response (cf. Scarp 1969:21; Bond 1978:86). He only starts to apply criticism of inconsistency directly to Horace from line 22b, when specifically asked by his master to get to the point.} Discontent, of which Davus also claims Horace is guilty, had been the focus of the start of Horace’s first satire.\footnote{\textit{Sat}. 2.7. 22b-29a; cf. \textit{Sat}. 1.1.1-19. There are direct echoes here, between \textit{laudet diversa sequentis} (1.1.3) and \textit{laudas / fortunam} (2.7.22-23). There are also parallels between \textit{si quis dens} (1.1.15) and \textit{si quis... dens} (2.7.24), where in either case the prayers of the discontent are said suddenly to be fulfilled by a \textit{deus ex machina} device, but this fails to impress them, and they are revealed as not really wanting to change their positions.} Adultery, an accusation to which Davus devotes a large portion of his attack, had been ridiculed by the Horatian satirist \textit{persona} in \textit{Sat}. 1.2, and warned of by his so-called ‘father’ in \textit{Sat}. 1.4. Gluttony, of which the domestic slave also judges his master guilty, had been taken to task as recently as \textit{Sat}. 2.2. Positioned just before the end of Horace’s second book, \textit{Sat}. 2.7 is strategically placed to undermine the entire edifice that ‘Horace’ has been constructing as satirist since the start of his first book.

These inversions and reversals in \textit{Sat}. 2.7 create a Saturnalian - or, to name it by its later term - a carnivalesque spectacle, whereby the entire miniature universe of Horace’s \textit{Satires}, to which we have been privy up to this point, has been completely turned upside down. True to the customs of the carnival, and its predecessor the Saturnalia, a lowly character (in this case, the slave Davus) has been elevated to the position of the ‘king’ figure, and is allowed to ‘reign’ temporarily. At the same time, the usual authority figure (in this case, Davus’ master, the satirist Horace) has been demoted and for the time being is subject to the power of the new ‘king’ figure and must do his bidding. In the context of \textit{Sat}. 2.7, this means that Horace is required to listen to Davus, while the latter is granted the privilege of monologue.

While \textit{Sat}. 2.7 occasions a dramatic interaction between Horace and his slave, it is perhaps worthwhile observing that we, the audience, now find ourselves cast in Davus’ erstwhile role - that of eavesdroppers, as we are compelled to listen in as the slave upbraids the satirist. Not every member of this audience, however, has welcomed the thorough role reversals of \textit{Sat}. 2.7: a number of modern scholars have evidently found the slave’s criticism of
As a result, they have misguidedy taken it upon themselves to vindicate Horace, often by attempting to nullify the criticism itself and its vehicle, Davus. An impression of autobiography is among the foremost fictions that Horace consciously creates in the *Satires*. That many earlier scholars seem to have felt the urge to defend Horace and to deflect Davus’ criticism from him is unquestionably the result of a naïve autobiographical approach to the *Satires*. But it is clear that this is exactly the effect that the attack on the ‘poet’ is designed to have: that poor ‘Horace’ is presented as the underdog cleverly invites audience support. To take Davus’ critique as referring unambiguously to the ‘real Horace’, the historical author himself, is surely to make an error of judgement. Davus’ stock servile name, which is introduced as early as line 2, establishes his interaction with his master as part of the world of Comedy, a fictive exercise rather than an actual occurrence.

Fiction or not, however, scholars need to explain why Davus’ irreverent caricature of ‘Horace’ in this, the penultimate satire, rings so true and remains, despite everything, one of the most abiding portraits of the Horatian satirist. Efforts on the part of modern scholars to dismiss Davus, as Horace eventually does at the satire’s end, have failed consistently. Walter Wil’s solution, for example, was that Davus’ inevitably servile viewpoint (his ‘Skdvenperspektive’), which apparently made him envious of Horace, in

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25 Lejay (1911:ad loc.) and Kessling-Heinze (1921:325) nobly sought to rescue Horace from Davus’ notorious adultery charge by suggesting an excursion between lines 46 and 71, in which Davus is supposedly attacking an imaginary target instead of his master. For the problems with this interpretation, see Highet 1973:274-75. The great irony of having a slave address the Stoic paradox on moral freedom and servitude to his master would be entirely lost if Davus had aimed his criticism at a general target. Another consideration dredged up by those desperate to acquit Horace of the adultery charge is that this section cannot be aimed at Horace because the accused is clearly an *eques* (lines 53-54) and they question whether Horace enjoyed this status. For Horace’s equestrian status, however, see Taylor 1925:161-70 and Armstrong 1986:255-88.

26 The second word placed in Davus’ mouth is *ausculto* (rather than *audio*). *Auscultare* is a verb which has distinct comic reverberations. At Plautus’ *Miles Gloriosus* 79-82, for example, the *serus callidus* Palaestrio mentions this word three times in a row when he first appears on stage. The name Davus comes up as the stock scheming slave with reference to Comedy at Horace, *Sat*. 1.10.40-41, where an intelligent prostitute and Davus eluding old man Chremes is mentioned as part of a typical comic plot: *arguta meretria ... Davusque Chremeta / eludens senem ...* Interestingly, the comic author mentioned in connection with this is Fundanius, who also narrates the occurrences of *Sat*. 2.8 to Horace.
effect disqualified him from being a serious critic of the satirist. This blanket condemnation of Davus on account of his servile status would, I suspect, strike most recent scholars as unfair. It is pretty obvious that Davus' observations are not to be discarded simply because he is a slave. Modelled as he is (however imperfectly) on the servus allidus of New Comedy, whose pithy advice is designed to help the master in the vicissitudes of life, Davus should be heard out, at least on the occasion of the Saturnalia.

The Bakhtinian model of the Saturnalia or Carnival is a far more useful way of viewing the interaction between slave and master, former audience and erstwhile satirist, and ultimately, of understanding Sat. 2.7. Carnival (and its ancient Roman predecessor, the Saturnalia), as Bakhtin noted, removed all distance between people, and introduced in its place an eccentric new mode of interrelationship between individuals that entirely disregarded or else inverted the hierarchical power-relations of their usual day-to-day existence. Through its inversions and reversals, Carnival (and Saturnalia) characteristically juxtaposed opposites, matched incompatibles, and joined odd couples (the carnivalesque 'mêlange'). Accordingly, carnivalised literature (and that includes Saturnalian satire) often brings together images or things which are chosen either for their striking contrast, or, by the same token, for their inexplicable similarity. Davus and Horace are indeed an odd couple. Davus is both the opposite of Horace, as he is his slave, but, as he asserts with the aid of his favourite Stoic paradox, they are also ironically identical: Horace is as much a 'slave' in the moral sense as Davus is in the literal. By having a character such as Davus freely air his views on his poetic alter ego, Horace was doubtless casting the slave in the role of his character's externalized conscience (and I emphasise that this is for all intents and purposes his character's, and not his own, historical 'conscience'). It is Davus' task to swap roles with his master, to take his place as moral critic, to make the satirist his target, and thus to unseat Horace from his satiric throne. In Bakhtinian terms, Davus is Horace's carnivalesque 'decrowning double'.

As speaker Davus is far from perfect; his lecture contains a plethora of inconsistencies and infelicities of both a logical and an ideological nature, as many scholars have noticed. Due to these lapses of logic, most contemporary critics follow William S. Anderson in labelling Davus, along with that other would-be Stoic Damasippus in Sat. 2.3, a doctor inepus. Thus the recent modern consensus is that Davus is the latest in a long line of idiotic speakers to whom Horace allows himself to be subjected, and has his gentle

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29 Anderson 1982:46; cf. e.g. Parker 1986:106; Freudenburg 1993:47.
Socratic-style irony exposed in the course of *Satires* Book 2. While not denying the validity of this approach, it is perhaps equally important to bear in mind that the Saturnalian-carnivalesque tradition, according to Bakhtin, juxtaposes and unites precisely 'the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid.' ³⁰ For the topsy-turvy universe of the carnival (and the Saturnalia) elevates the fool, its equalising force places the lowly on a pedestal, and the free and familiar contact among people fostered by these occasions permits the relatively insignificant to address (at length) the great and powerful. Therefore a Bakhtinian-carnivalesque perspective on *Sat. 2.7*, as opposed to a traditional reading, encourages us to value Davus' viewpoint, in spite of all this speaker's infelicities.

Furthermore, as that famous phrase of Horace's first satire *ridens dicere vernon*, would itself seem to hint, mere foolishness or even ineptitude as a Stoic should not necessarily exclude the truth. But we should not expect Davus' accusations to be provable, as many scholars have - what he and his master are engaged in, in *Sat. 2.7*, is a ritual rather than a court case. Nevertheless, much of Davus' criticism of Horace is curiously convincing within the dramatic context of the *Satires*. If we are prepared to acknowledge the fictional world of the *Satires* we must assume that as Horace's domestic slave, Davus is party to all sorts of personal information about his master and in the course of his speech he shows that he is only too eager to serve and tell. In the dramatic context of *Sat. 2.7*, this domestic slave's comments, presumably inspired by intimate observation, are surely to be taken more seriously than, for example, the attack on Horace by the outsider and madman Damasippus in *Sat. 2.3*. Davus' onerous ineptitude should therefore constantly be weighed up against the ingenious clarity of this servile speaker's complaints about his master, 'Horace'.

Davus unravels the image of contented satirist that Horace has been at pains to knit for himself throughout much of both books of *Satires* prior to *Sat. 2.7*. For example, Horace, Davus asserts, is as inconsistent as the targets of his moralising in the first book of *Satires*, as his master longs for the country when he's in Rome, but he praises the city to the skies when he's living in the country.³¹ It appears that Horace, the critic of the dissatisfied in *Sat. 1.1*, is himself never contented. The town-country dichotomy is a recurring theme of Horace's work, and so this charge of inconsistency, or surprising lack of preference for either the country or the town, is a rather revealing indictment of his master on Davus' part. This is, after all, someone whose *alter ego*, in the satire just prior to this, was the country mouse!

³⁰ Bakhtin 1984:123.
³¹ *Sat. 2.7* 28-29: *Romae rus optas, ahentem rusticus / tellis ad astra levii.*
The arena of attack, however, that scholars have traditionally found the most shocking, and which Davus by contrast, seems to relish the most, if the length he devotes to it is anything to go by, is the sexual arena. Davus is developing the point that Horace is a 'slave' to various compulsions, and that the satirist's moralising is thus incompatible with his lifestyle. The argument becomes personal as Davus not only confronts Horace with his failings, but has what he claims is his own lifestyle compare favourably with what he assets is his master's. Davus contends that not only is Horace a slave to his passions, but that the satirist is at the mercy of even worse passions than he, Davus, is. For a start, Davus alleges, the poet engages in that dangerous pastime, adultery, while he himself more sensibly prefers the brothel: *Te omniae aliena capit, menetricula Davum* (46).

Davus' arguments are influenced largely by the practical moralising of Horace's first book of *Satires*. Having identified Horace as an adulterer, Davus proceeds with an elaborate contrast between what he depicts as his own carefree enjoyment of a prostitute, and what he alleges are his master's deluded sexual habits in pursing married women. Davus cautions that the *matrona*, unlike the prostitute, is not sexually agreeable (63b-65), is financially draining (*committit(te) rem omnem, 67), and the whole adulterous escapade is an extremely fearful undertaking (56-57) - not least because of the probability of a jealous husband lurking in the wings. Not only are most of Davus' arguments here the stock-in-trade of moralising on adultery, but many of the points he makes are also strongly reminiscent of *Sat. 1.2*, in which Horace had himself conducted a 'diatribe' against adultery as ruinously expensive, perilous to one's person and lethal to one's reputation, and not necessarily in

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32 We have seen above that some scholars have desperately sought ways for 'Horace' to avoid having to sit through this criticism. We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that Horace himself wrote the criticism and placed it in the mouth of his slave, Davus, clearly a vehicle for Horatian self-satire.
33 Thus Davus focuses on Bakhtin's much-celebrated 'lower bodily stratum' frequently identified and associated with the carnivalesque.
34 'You another man's wife captivates, a little tart Davus ...' (my emphasis). The *te* at the beginning of this chiasmic line contrasts with *Davum* at its end, and, marking the start of Davus' treatment of the Stoic paradox on moral servitude and freedom, it also signals the point where the comparison between Davus and his master begins in earnest, and where the positions of master and slave are, in terms of the paradox, emphatically reversed. The shared verb *capit* also looks forward to the theme of servitude in love so popular in love poetry that is to be exploited further by Davus in his attempt to show how Horace is a slave to love (cf. esp. 6671 and 88b-94). *Sat. 2.7* is in general a poem that literally clanks with the images of slavery, capture, and bondage.
that order. Davus’ accusation that Horace is an adulterer therefore suggests that the satirist is at best inconsistent, at worst a hypocrite.

Consorting with the virtually inaccessible matrona is so fraught with difficulty and of such a threat to Horace’s good name that Davus describes his master as having to venture out in disguise to meet another man’s wife (53-56a; cf. 67). Having thrown off his insignia of rank, the adulterous Horace appears in public incognito, with a cloak covering his perfumed head: *prodīs ex iūdio Dana / turpis odoratum caput obscurante lacerna* (54-55). It has been remarked that Horace’s hiding of himself, represented by his obscuring cloak (*obscurante lacerna*, 55), contrasts sharply with the prostitute’s openness, reflected in her nakedness in the bright light of the lamp (*clara nuda lucerna*, 48). In Sat. 1.2 Horace had cited the prostitute’s nakedness under her transparent attire as evidence of her complete lack of dissimulation. Hiding behind his cloak, as described in Sat. 2.7, however, Horace is ironically more like the matrona of Sat. 1.2, who concealed herself beneath her long *stola*. As a result, the dissimulating Horace of 2.7 compares negatively not only with Davus, but even with the prostitute.

Sat. 1.2 had ended with a scene in which Horace imagined himself in the possible role of the adulterer, caught *in flagrante delicto*, and racing from the scene of his sins. Despite some ambiguity in that the scene is strictly speaking hypothetical, we the audience are encouraged to picture - even if only momentarily - Horace in the clearly self-satiric role of fleeing adulterer. If believed or even if briefly entertained, this unfortunate personal experience hinted at towards the end of Sat. 1.2 would, within that satire itself, have added retrospective and ironic credibility to Horace’s admonitions to others to avoid adultery at all costs. The satirist may well have known first-hand what he was talking about when he asserted that life was tough for adulterers. At 2.7.58-61 Davus likewise pictures Horace being forced to hide from the jealous husband in a chest, the equivalent of the bedroom closet in modern farce. The graphic nature of both these Horatian passages indicates their probable debt to that favourite of the contemporary popular

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35 My emphasis. For the clever contrast in the wordplay on *lucerna ... lacerna*, see Rudd 1966:191; Scarpati 1969:26-27.
36 See Sat.1.2.83-85; 101-03.
37 Cf. 1.2.94-100.
38 All the verbs describing this scene are in the subjunctive after *vereor* (127-33). Curran (1970:237) thus cautions: ‘Actually, as *egomet mi* (131) indicates, Horace imagines himself in both roles, that of the undisturbed fornicator and that of the sur-prised adulterer but a distinction between the two is made by an extended use of subjunctive for the situation of the latter.’
39 Sat. 1.2.37-46.
stage, the perennial ‘adultery mime’, as reconstructed by Elaine Fantham and others. The stock figures, stage props and *topoi* of adultery that contributed to this raucous mime routine are all there in both sketches. In both, the *contusia*, the maid accomplice, is present just as in mime, desperately scheming to engineer a solution to the looming problem, but putting the adulterer’s interests last when the chips are down. In both, Horace evades the jealous husband, although by different means - fleeing in *Sat*. 1.2 and hiding in *Sat*. 2.7.

Hiding in a chest may well have led to the adulterer’s detection in the classic mime sequence, but Davus presents Horace as having escaped (*evasti*, 68) - for the present - just as the end of *Sat*. 1.2 saw him running away. The point that Davus makes with his mention of Horace’s apparent escape is that his master is crazy enough to go back, *even after his farcical getaway* (68-71). Far from a case of once bitten, twice shy (*doctusque cavehis*, 68), Horace, Davus suggests, *will not learn* from his mistakes. That Davus in *Sat*. 2.7 has located Horace within another stock adultery scene and had him escape, echoing his escape at the end of *Sat*. 1.2, helps to entrench the impression, however unjustified, in the mind of the reader of both books of *Satires*, that in spite of all his protests, Horace is a repeat-offender in adultery. While Davus is himself a character out of New or Roman Comedy, Horace’s lifestyle in the *Satires* is no better than a farce.

By presenting his master as a shame-faced adulterer, Davus suggests once again that Horace has failed to practise what he has preached in his earlier bouts of moralising. But there are two things that have the potential to redeem Horace in our eyes. One consideration is that the poet has already undercut his own position and satirised his own *persona* by hinting at an intimate knowledge of adultery at the end of *Sat*. 1.2. By accusing himself first, Horace has preempted much of the blame that Davus tries to attach to him. Horace was certainly able to laugh at himself long before his comic slave took it upon himself to draw his master’s faults to his attention. Second, however, as Davus himself is eventually forced to admit, no charge of adultery can be pinned with any certainty on Horace. Davus anticipates Horace’s indignant objection by means of the device of the imaginary interlocutor: *Non sum moechus* ait - “But I’m not an adulterer,” I hear you say (72).

The slave can be relied upon to come up with a suitably servile analogy: just as Davus ‘wisely’ (*sapiens*) passes by silverware, resisting the temptation to steal it (72-73), so Horace avoids adultery on account of his fear of the

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41 Cf. *Sat*. 1.2.130 and 2.7.60.
consequences. But remove the danger, Davus adds, and Horace’s true nature will burst its chains. The accusation of adultery is therefore applicable not to what Horace actually does, but only to what his domestic slave claims he would undoubtedly do were it not so dangerous. Davus finally scores points here for correctly summarising the Stoic doctrine of *intention*, according to which a person’s intention and inclination were recognised as equally significant, if not equivalent to, his actions. It is interesting, however, that Horace himself had argued in Sat. 1.2 that adultery was to be avoided, not for any moral reasons, but because it was so dangerous. By arguing that Horace is an adulterer only by intent, Davus admits by default that his allegations of adultery are, for all practical purposes, untrue. Or again, a more cynical reading could interpret this to mean that, as has been implied by the descriptions of his narrow ‘escapes’, Horace has failed at adultery, though not through lack of trying.

It is curious that Davus’ accusations, although incapable of convicting ‘Horace’ of actual vice, do seem to stick to him, as it were. When all is said and done, it is Davus’ vivid description of Horace taking off his equestrian ring and sneaking out under the hood of his cloak – not forgetting his sliced back hair – for his supposed adulterous assignation, that stays longest in the reader’s or listener’s mind. While Davus’ allegations contradict the formal claims made by Horace in *Satires* such as 1.2, they are not really at odds with the overall impression of his character and past experience that the self-satiric Horace deliberately ‘let slip’ in that satire. So, while nothing definite can be proven, Davus’ charges of adultery have the effect of fostering suspicions about ‘Horace’, and further under-cutting any privilege that the authorial *persona* of Book 1 may yet enjoy.

My main point here, then, is that it does not matter whether Davus’ assertions about his master, the satirist, are proven or not: on the occasion of the Saturnalia Davus and Horace are engaged, as noted above, in a ritual rather than a court case. Davus’ ritual insults of Horace are to be laughed at and enjoyed, not painstakingly scrutinised for a possible degree of truth. I think that this is what many scholars have overlooked. In spite of his well-documented ineptitude, Davus’ criticism of Horace has an uncanny aptness within the context of the *Satires*. Through the reversal of roles in Sat. 2.7, the former moralist is revealed piece by piece as a more than worthy target of his own satire. In Davus’ eyes, Horace is a malcontent like those he has mocked in Sat. 1.1, a would-be adulterer like those he had derided in Sat. 1.2, inconsistent like Tigellius at the start of Sat. 1.3, a self-destructive rake of the type his

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42 Sat. 277-74: *tolle perichéum, / ian vagás prosiáet frenis natura remoti*.
43 Bond 1978:91.
‘father’ had warned him about in Sat. 1.4, and equal to the gourmands and profligates he had criticized in Sat. 2.2. Neither is Horace, according to Davus, really the self-contained, contented individual he saw fit to present in Sat. 1.6, where he claimed to enjoy the simple life, or in 2.6, where he purported to rejoice in his Sabine estate. Rather, Davus tells us that the restless Horace can never decide which he prefers - town or country. Davus’ dramatic and somehow curiously convincing revelations about his master relentlessly unravel all the virtues to which ‘Horace’ has laid claim in the previous Satires. This ‘most inclusive of all diatribes’ stands prior satires on their heads and calls into question the satirist’s moralising authority. What we are left with is the self-satirised ‘Horace’, the all-too human creature lurking behind some of his more outrageous claims in the Satires to date. Davus is the eventually-embodied voice of Horatian self-satire.

During Davus’ attack on the satirist, we witness a ritual unmasking of the authority figure. Davus crowns himself ‘moralist’ in Horace’s place, and reigns throughout most of Sat. 2.7 as sole speaker. The only one who can stop Davus is Horace, who must aggressively assert his own rights as master, moralist, and author.45 At line 116, therefore, Horace at last interrupts Davus, abruptly demanding: unde mihi lapidem? – ‘Where can I get a stone?’. Davus’ innocent response is to ask Horace why he needs a stone. Ignoring this question, Horace next asks: unde sagittas? – ‘Where can I get arrows?’ (116). It has been remarked that while the first weapon Horace asks for is suggestive of comedy, the second is more typical of tragedy:46 the register thus changes dramatically between the start of line 116 and its end, as a ‘tragedy’ looks set to happen at the hands of the enraged master. The master’s amusingly threatening mien towards his slave is not, however, an entirely unusual comic situation. But the interruption has been so sudden that Davus has failed to grasp that the carnival is over, and that they are back in the ‘real world’, so to speak, the ‘day after’ where the joke is on Davus, not Horace, and the master, not the slave, has the last laugh. Horace finally plays

44 Rudd 1966:194.

45 Most readers would probably identify Davus’ mention of Horace’s ‘black companion’ (comes atque, 115), usually taken as anxiety or depression, as the final straw that breaks the camel’s back. The discourse has suddenly taken on a dark, sinister tone that many have perceived as being alien to Roman satire. Davus has gone so far in his criticism of the satirist that he is threatening to step outside of its generic bounds altogether (see Evans 1978:311, who sees this as a ‘farewell to satire’). The slave has touched a nerve, and gone as far as it is possible to go at stripping Horace’s satiric mask. Shortly thereafter, after silencing Davus, Horace leaves satire, never to return again (apart from as a fellow member of the audience in Sat. 2.8).

his ace, which is the warning that if Davus does not shut up and be off at once, he will be packed off to join the ranks of the labourers on Honace’s Sabine farm.\footnote{Sat. 27.117-18: ocius hinc te / ni rapi, acceda opera agro nona Sabino.} This final threat, an overwhelming demonstration of power, ends the satire and silences Davus. Horace has the last word. The Saturnalia has at last turned bitter.

Ironically, the same Sabine farm that had been Honace’s longed-for \textit{rus},\footnote{Sat. 2.6.60: o \textit{rus}, quando ego te aspiriam?...} the epitome of contentment in the satire preceding this one, is now used as a weapon of mastery might. Davus, who has been preaching, however inexpertly, on the Stoic view of moral enslavement, is faced with the realities of physical slavery; either he is now to hold his tongue or suffer banishment to the harsh and isolated ways of lowly rustic servitude. The urban if not urbane Davus must either forgo his Saturnian \textit{libertas}, or face a drastic reduction in the little freedoms that, in spite of his servile status, he ordinarily enjoys in the urban context - little freedoms, like for example visiting brothels, and so on.

In \textit{Sat.} 2.7, Horace’s Saturnalian satire, as proto-carnival, unites disparate elements, invites a slave to take his master to task, and allows a comic stock-figure to come to life and to beat the satirist at his own game. And although as master and as satirist, and ultimately, as author of the \textit{sermo}, Horace finally returns Davus to his place, although the Saturnalia is over far too quickly, nevertheless the slave’s temporary \textit{libertas} and what it has enabled him to say has irrevocably captured the imagination of the satire’s recipients. Horace’s Saturnalian satire, as proto-carnival, celebrates the potential replaceability of roles both societal and generic. Not only am I suggesting that the Saturnalian \textit{Sat.} 2.7 is an ancient anticipation of the later Bakhtinian literary carnival, but I am going so far as to argue that, in addition, the penultimate satire to some extent mimics the nature and structure of Horace’s \textit{Sermones} as a whole. The rise of Horace’s own \textit{persona} within the circle of Maecenas in \textit{Satires} Book 1 is in itself a type of proto-carnivalesque literary ‘uncrowning’ ritual; in \textit{Sat} 1.10, too, Horace crowns himself the new master of satire without actually, he assures his listeners, depriving poor old Lucilius of his \textit{corona}.\footnote{Sat. 1.10.48-49: \ldots neque ego illi detrahere asim / haeren tem capiti cum multa laude \textit{coronam}. These lines are usually understood to refer to Roman satire’s ‘inventor’ Lucilius. We have seen that according to Bakhtin (1984:126) the influence of festivals of the carnival-type on literature resulted in ‘a special uncrowning type of structure for artistic images and whole works.’ I am suggesting that Horace long anticipated later examples of this by adopting a Saturnalian-inspired ‘uncrowning type of structure’ for his two books of \textit{Satires} taken together.} Of course, Horace’s uncrowning comes in Book 2, where he is replaced as speaker by a

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\footnote{Sat. 27.117-18: ocius hinc te / ni rapi, acceda opera agro nona Sabino.}
succession of other would-be satirists, including Davus, the slave who turns satirist for a day. The reigns of these new, largely inadequate satirists are indeed ephemeral: Horace eventually silences them and reclaims his (albeit crumpled) crown. It is a crown which, dented by Davus, would never again fit Horace quite so well.\textsuperscript{30}

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\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Sat}. 2.8 has an internally proto-carnivalesque structure. Within the final satire we see an attempted self-crowning, but an equally swift uncrowning of the ambitious but hapless host and would-be member of Maecenas’ circle Nasidienus. Interestingly, Ellen Olicensis has suggested that in trying to amend his fortunes by means of his culinary ‘art’ (\textit{ut art / emendatum fortunam}, 2.8.84-85), Nasidienus stands at least partly for Horace’s own persona (1997:102; 1998:57-62).


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