

# Author and Speaker (s) in Horace's *Satires* 2

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## Introduction

This contribution looks at the complex construction of the relationship between author and speaker(s) in the second book of Horace's *Satires* (30 BCE). The ten poems of Horace's first book of *Satires* (35 BCE) had (apart from 1.8, almost entirely spoken by a statue of Priapus) been monologues narrated in the first-person voice of 'Horace', an apparently self-revelatory poet and moralist giving his views on the world and describing his own developing poetic and social career. The eight-poem second book of *Satires*, on the other hand, published five years later c.30 BCE, begins with an appearance by the poet as majority dialogue partner in 2.1, but then introduces a succession of other speakers who take over from the satirist, whose role in this book seems to be to provide an (often minimal) dialogue partner. Some previous scholarship has tended to stress the fragmentation of the satirist's voice here, and his mimetic skills in representing characters quite different from himself; but I want to argue in this piece that most of these speakers can be argued to represent aspects or potential aspects of Horace's character, and that characters other than the poet-narrator may in fact 'reveal' just as much about him as his own first-person voice.<sup>1</sup>

Much attention was paid in twentieth-century scholarship on Horatian satire, and on Roman satire in general, to the issue of how far the first-person poet-narrator represents the 'real' historical figure and views of the poet: are readers meant to assume that first-person statements in this poetic genre are in principle autobiographical, or that the first-person voice is itself always a rhetorical mask, often itself the object of irony and humour? <sup>2</sup> Is satire more effective if we link its speaker with an apparently real person, or is it more satisfying from a literary perspective if the speaker is an evident artistic creation? Does the evident artificiality of a voice compromise or deconstruct its moralising message? Of course, the topic of authentic voice is deeply problematic in any work of literature presented in the first person, where the speaking 'I' is itself necessarily carefully constructed as a character, and where an 'unreliable narrator' is always a possibility. <sup>3</sup> Horace's first book of *Satires* can certainly be read as the first-person linear and realistic representation of a successful career

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<sup>1</sup> See Labate 1981: 26-7 (stressing fragmentation and irony/lack of authority), Oliensis 1998: 53 (stressing the lack of resemblance between the poet and his Book 2 speakers). Sharland 2010 is an interesting and salutary exception to this tendency, from a Bakhtinian perspective; my view also resembles that of Freudenburg 2001: 99-100.

<sup>2</sup> For important contributions see especially Anderson 1982 and Braund 1996.

<sup>3</sup> For this concept see Booth 1983: 158-9.

in which the poet moves from excluded street moralist to member of the literary establishment, at least partly through the patronage of Maecenas;<sup>4</sup> but modern Horatian scholarship is clear that Horace's self-representation in any of his works is artful in the extreme and cannot always be taken at face value.<sup>5</sup>

In what follows I want to present a linear reading of the second book of *Satires*, and to argue that the issue of the identity of the satirist's voice is itself thematised. The poems of Book 2 largely subordinate 'Horace' the first-person poet to other voices: this is partly an artistic variation of narrative framework after the omnipresence of the poet's voice in the first book, a variation which as we shall see draws on the dialogues of Plato, but the book also begins with a poet who is worried that his satiric voice in Book 1 had been a little too forceful (see below), and the apparent occlusion of 'Horace' might be seen as a reaction to this anxiety. However, this does not mean that the poet himself vanishes; as I hope to show, the other voices of Book 2 consciously echo aspects of the poet's own self-characterisation elsewhere, and present us with characters who resemble 'Horace' in a number of ways.

## 2.1: Horace and Trebatius

At the beginning of the second book, the poet presents himself as in dialogue with Trebatius, former legate of Julius Caesar and a top legal expert,<sup>6</sup> and the topic of their conversation is precisely the poet's voice (2.1.1-6):

*Sunt quibus in satura videar nimis acer et ultra  
legem tendere opus; sine nervis altera quidquid  
conposui pars esse putat similisque meorum  
mille die versus deduci posse. Trebati,  
quid faciam? praescribe.' 'quiescas.' 'ne faciam, inquis,  
omnino versus?' 'aio.'* 5

'There are some who think I hit too hard in my satire, and that I stretch my work beyond a legitimate point; the other half reckons all my writing to be insipid, and that verses like mine can be spun a thousand a day. Trebatius, give me advice on what to do. 'You should take a rest'. Not write verses at all, you mean? 'Correct'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See especially Gowers 2003.

<sup>5</sup> The best treatment is Oliensis 1998; for a brief introductory account see Harrison 2007a.

<sup>6</sup> For the career of C. Trebatius Testa see Nisbet 1995

This amusing pseudo-consultation of the great lawyer is of course ironic, but his recommendation is both not followed and followed in the book: Horace continues to write, but the poet's own voice as speaker and/or expositor of views largely disappears for the next four poems, emerges again only in the first part of 2.6, and is then mostly replaced by Davus in 2.7 and by an anonymous narrator in the final 2.8. One model here is clearly the philosophical dialogues of Plato: though Plato (unlike Horace) is entirely absent from his own dialogues in which Socrates is usually the dominant character,<sup>8</sup> the move to dialogue and to the presentation of entertaining speaking characters on philosophical subjects both draw on this celebrated source, and (as we shall see) several of the poem-openings in this book evoke famous moments in Platonic dialogues. This theme of how far the poet is to reveal himself in this book is raised again in this poem in the description of Horace's satiric predecessor Lucilius at 2.1.30-34:

*ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim  
credebat libris neque, si male cesserat, usquam  
decurrens alio neque, si bene; quo fit ut omnis  
votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella  
vita senis. sequor hunc...*

In earlier days he used to entrust his secrets to his books, as if to trusted friends, not turning to any other source at all, whether things went badly for him or well; and so it comes about that the old fellow's entire life lies open to view, as if it were painted on a votive tablet. This is the man I follow...

Though the poet's statement that he will follow Lucilius in self-revelation is immediately followed by a brief passage of autobiography on his region of birth (34-39), the declaration seems problematic as a programme for this book: how can the poet reveal himself in a work where he speaks so little? As we shall see, this is skilfully done through deliberate conflation of his own characterisation and voice with those of other speakers.

## 2.2: Ofellus and Horace

The second poem introduces the key moral topic of frugal living, raised in other Horatian poems (for the general idea of *uiuere parvo* cf. *Sat.*1.1.28-60, *Odes* 2.16.13 *uiuatur*

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<sup>7</sup> Translations from the *Satires* and *Epistles* throughout are taken from Davie 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Though Plato alludes to his presence at Socrates' trial in the *Apology* (34a, 38b), in his dialogues he is always absent, famously so at *Phaedo* 59b Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἡσθενε, 'Plato, I think, was unwell'.

*paruo bene*). But in this context its origin as the view of someone else is immediately stressed (2.2.1-4):

*Quae virtus et quanta, boni, sit vivere parvo  
—nec meus hic sermo est, sed quae praecepit Ofellus  
rusticus, abnormis sapiens crassaque Minerva—,  
discite...*

What the virtue of frugal living is and how great (and this is no talk of mine but the teaching of the countryman Ofellus, a man of self-taught wisdom and rough learning), you should learn, my friends...

As commentators note, this opening neatly alludes to the beginning of the discussion proper in Plato's *Symposium*, where the doctor Eryximachus is about to propose love as the subject of post-prandial conversation, a subject really proposed by Phaedrus (*Symp.*177a):

Ἡ μὲν μοι ἀρχὴ τοῦ λόγου ἐστὶ κατὰ τὴν Εὐριπίδου Μελανίππην· οὐ γὰρ ἐμὸς ὁ μῦθος, ἀλλὰ Φαίδρου τοῦδε, ὃν μέλλω λέγειν.

Let me begin by citing Euripides' *Melanippe*: 'Not mine the tale'. What I am about to tell belongs to Phaedrus here.

Eryximachus then proceeds to cite Phaedrus' words on the subject before making his own proposal. This structure is neatly inverted in Horace's poem, which first of all paraphrases Ofellus' views in the poet's voice (Ofellus is emphasised as their source both at the start (above) and in the middle, 2.2.53-4 *Ofello / iudice*), and then allows the sage to speak for himself in the final section (2.2.116-36). Note too the pointed use of *sermo*: the word not only translates Plato's μῦθος, 'tale', but also means Horace's current style of writing, *sermo* being one of the terms Horace later uses to describe his hexameter satires (*Ep.*1.4.1, 2.1.250, 2.2.60).<sup>9</sup> The suggestion is that Horace has for the moment assigned his satire and its key theme to another author.

But that other is carefully chosen to resemble Horace himself. Like the Horace of the *Satires*, Ofellus is keen to purvey ethical truths, but is explicitly indebted to no particular

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<sup>9</sup> The point is well made by Freudenburg 2001: 112.

philosophy; the word *abnormis* (3) implies freedom from any sectarian line of thought,<sup>10</sup> and matches Horace's famous statement in the *Epistles* that he is not wedded to any school (*Epistles* 1.1.13-19). Like Horace, Ofellus has lost land in the confiscations of 41 BCE but emerged happily from the experience (127-36: cf. *Epistles* 2.2.49-51); like Horace, he preaches the virtues of the simple life and diet on his farm in the country (cf. *Sat.* 2.6 for a simple meal on Horace's Sabine estate). But there are also differences. Ofellus is a true peasant while Horace is a sophisticated intellectual, and Ofellus clearly lost property permanently and come to terms with it, while Horace's youthful difficulties have now been resolved by the generosity of Maecenas' gift of the Sabine estate, celebrated in *Sat.* 2.6; in this sense Ofellus, clearly a country neighbour of the young Horace (cf. 2.2.112), shows what might have happened to him had he not gone to Rome, made a career as a poet, and attracted the attention of Maecenas.

But the conflation between Horace and Ofellus extends beyond biography to that of narrative voice: the detailed exposition of the poem's central part seems to combine the perspective of the rustic sage Ofellus with that of 'Horace' the urban satirist. The passage on pretentious gastronomy in Rome (2.2.9-52), neatly anticipating the theme of 2.4, is spoken from the viewpoint of someone who knows the Roman scene: the references to urban exercises and military training (2.2.10-13) surely look to the Campus Martius, the usual location for such things. Conversely, the criticism of the miser Avidienius (2.2.55-64), nicknamed 'Dog', who makes his own revolting oil and wine, seems drawn from the framework of humble country life. The difficulties that interpreters have experienced in trying to separate out the voices of 'Horace' and Ofellus<sup>11</sup> are understandable: the poet's self-presentation and that of his character are inextricably intertwined. In some sense, Ofellus represents the part-time rustic in Horace, soon to be advertised in *Satires* 2.6.

## 2.3 : Damasippus, Stertinius and Horace

In *Satires* 2.3, Horace is initially upbraided by the art-dealer Damasippus for infrequent literary production (2.3.1-31), but the body of the satire then turns to Damasippus' reporting of a vast lecture by the Stoic philosopher Stertinius on the topic of wisdom and madness (2.3.34-299). The narrative framework once again owes something to an opening scenario from Plato's dialogues, reporting events and speeches to a third party (most famously Plato's *Symposium*, all narrated by Apollodorus from the report given him by Aristodemus). The enormous lecture of Stertinius looks like amusing parody of a philosophical opponent, later

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<sup>10</sup> See Lejay 1911: 328-9.

mocked at *Epistles* 1.12.10 *Empedocles an Stertinium deliret acumen*, ‘whether it is Empedocles who is mad or the brilliant Stertinus’. The extreme Stoic Stertinus drastically fails like the similarly voluble Crispinus (*Sat.*1.1.120 and 1.4.13-16) to achieve the Stoic ideal of conciseness, and presents extreme philosophical views which differ dramatically from those of the self-proclaimed moderate Horace of the *Satires* (cf. *Sat.*1.1.106-7). His discourse is also fundamentally non-Horatian in its length, making 2.3 by far the longest of all the satires, and thus contravening Horace’s favouring of Callimachean brevity (cf. 1.10.9); Damasippus himself as a Stoic follower and mouthpiece evidently espouses the same views. The two are in some sense inverse models for poetic and philosophical exposition, figures to be guyed rather than imitated.

And yet both Damasippus and Stertinus share elements of characterisation and voice with Horace. Damasippus, like the young Horace after Philippi (and like Ofellus), loses his property and has to start again (18-20); like Horace’s father, the auctioneer’s agent (*coactor*, *Sat.*1.6.86), he belongs to the bustling commercial world, which Horace might well have entered himself (1.6.85-7); and like the Horace of the *Satires*, he is concerned to summarise and retail the views of other philosophers (34), and uses an Aesopic fable to make a moral point (2.3.314-20, cf. e.g. 2.6.79-117). At the beginning of the poem, Horace asks *sed unde / tam bene me nosti?*, ‘but how did you get to know me so well?’: Damasippus replies that since his business failure he has had time to concentrate on the doings of others, but the question might also suggest that Damasippus (like Ofellus) is an *alter Horatius*. This idea of interchangeability is also reinforced by its setting on the Saturnalia, not just the season of free speech (hence Damasippus’ verbal assault on Horace) but also the season in which slaves and masters might temporarily change places: though Damasippus is not Horace’s slave like the Davus of *Sat.*2.7 (see below), the first half of his name recalls the servile Dama (cf. *Sat.*1.6.38, 2.5.18) and he is clearly presented as the poet’s social and intellectual inferior: the suggestion of a carnivalesque change of identities is therefore not astonishing.

Stertinus, too, though contravening Horatian canons of moderation in both views and length, often sounds like the Horatian satirist. His lecture proceeds by picking out individual figures of folly and madness from current real life to exemplify models not to follow, the technique famously learned by Horace the satirist from his virtuous father (1.6.103-31): these include the wastrel Nomentanus (2.3.175, 224), who is not only an example already used several times in Horace’s *Satires* (1.1.102, 1.8.11, 2.1.22), but will also appear as a speaking character at Nasidienus’ dinner in the final satire of Book 2. Even Stertinus’ literary allusions map those of the Horatian writer of *sermo*: his memorable evocation of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* trilogy in his description of madness (2.3.131-141) recalls Horace’s entertaining use of this same myth in the description of a slave who killed her miser master as Clytemnestra

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<sup>11</sup> Well set out by Sharland 2010: 2003-7.

(1.1.100 *fortissima Tyndaridarum*), while his rewriting of the dialogue of Sophocles' *Ajax* to make a moral point about royal power (2.3.187-213) recalls Horace's later manipulation of the Pentheus/Dionysus confrontation from Euripides' *Bacchae* in the *Epistles* (1.16.73-9). Similarly, his use of Aesopic-style fable (2.3.186), shared with Damasippus (see above), recalls a key Horatian technique.<sup>12</sup>

So in *Satires* 2.3 we find an advance on 2.2: the poet is set against two characters not one, and each has traits which are distinctly Horatian. Is the Horace of the *Satires* at times really another Damasippus, a vulgar mouthpiece for others' views who comes from the commercial classes? And is the obsessive Stertinius an indictment of Horatian moralising, an illustration of the dangers into which the poet can fall when on his ethical high horse? This kind of self-undermining is typical of the poet's self-presentation generally:<sup>13</sup> the presence of such irony in this poem seems to be confirmed by its end, when Damasippus presents Horace with some clear home truths and forces him to admit that he is indeed mad, though Damasippus is madder (2.3.323-6). The cocksure Stertinius is thus finally contrasted with the self-undermining (but didactically more effective) Horatian speaker, who unlike the voluble Stoic can ironise his own moralising stance and thus make it more attractive to the reader.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.4: Catius and Horatian gastronomy

2.4 like 2.2 begins with the identification of a character other than the poet himself, a character who turns out to be the poem's main speaker (2.4.1-3):

*'Unde et quo Catius?' 'non est mihi tempus, aventi  
ponere signa novis praeceptis, qualia vincent  
Pythagoran Anytique reum doctumque Platona.'*

Catius, where have you been and where are you off to? 'I've no time to stop, I'm so keen to make notes of some new teachings that are of a kind to outdo Pythagoras and the man Anytus put in the dock [i.e. Socrates] and learned Plato'.

Where indeed does Catius come from? Though he is also likely to be a historical character,<sup>15</sup> one answer is that he comes from Plato, one of the very philosophers the 'new teachings'

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<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the fable of the fox and lion alluded to here by Stertinius turns up later in Horace's *Epistles* (1.1.73-5).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Harrison 2007a:

<sup>14</sup> As likewise in *Epistles* 1 – see Harrison 1995:48-51.

<sup>15</sup> See Muecke 1993: 167.

mentioned by Catius supposedly outdo, for this opening again picks up an opening from a Platonic dialogue, the *Menexenus* (234 a): Εξ ἀγορᾶς ἢ πόθεν Μενέξενος; ‘is Menexenus coming from the marketplace, or from where else?’; also similar is the opening of the *Phaedrus*, ὦ φίλῃ Φαίδρῃ, ποῖ δὲ καὶ πόθεν; ‘my dear Phaedrus, where to and where from?’. In both cases the opening is spoken by Socrates; and in both cases the ensuing work principally presents formal speeches, the three discourses about love by Lysias (one) and Socrates (two) in the *Phaedrus*, and the parodic funeral speech given to Aspasia in the *Menexenus*.<sup>16</sup> Horace’s poem takes up this feature of the Platonic originals, since almost the whole of *Satires* 2.4 consists of Catius’ speech which reports the precepts of another. Thus (as in 2.3) we find three voices here, that of the satirist, that of Catius, and that of his unnamed sage. The issue of the speaker of 2.4 is thus highlighted and played on at the beginning.

But what of the poem’s content? Here too we see witty play, since it turns out that the amazing new precepts advertised by Catius are not philosophical but gastronomic: at line 12 we expect ethical precepts but find recommendations on eggs, and throughout the long reported speech on gastronomy which forms the body of the poem (12-87) witty allusions are made to philosophical modes of discourse,<sup>17</sup> ending with the ironic summary by the satirist that these doctrines are *uitae praecepta beatae*, ‘the teachings of the happy life’ (2.4.94). The kind of ingenuity and dedication which should be dedicated to seeking the truth about how best to live one’s life is here applied to the low appetites of food and drink; Catius and his nameless sage (unlike the seriously ethical ‘Horace’) are using the right language but the wrong content. As in 2.3, we might think initially that we are dealing with a straightforward attack on contemporary materialism and distorted values, but once again there are aspects of Catius and the unnamed speaker which uncomfortably recall the seamier side of the Horatian satirist. Though Horace generally stresses his few material wants and simple diet (especially in 2.6 with the humble dinner at his country place), his slave Davus in 2.7 suggests that this is only when he cannot enjoy the luxuries of Maecenas’ table (2.7.29-35):

*si nusquam es forte vocatus*  
*ad cenam, laudas securum holus ac, velut usquam* 30  
*vinctus eas, ita te felicem dicis amasque,*  
*quod nusquam tibi sit potandum. iusserit ad se*  
*Maecenas serum sub lumina prima venire*  
*convivam: "nemon oleum fert ocius? ecquis*  
*audit?" cum magno blateras clamore fugisque.* 35

<sup>16</sup> On the interpretation of the *Menexenus* see Coventry 1989.



If it happens that no invitations to dinner come your way at all, you praise your carefree greens, and, as though you wore chains when going anywhere, call yourself so lucky and hug yourself at not having to go out boozing somewhere. But should Maecenas bid you to join him for dinner late, just as the lamps are about to be lit, it's 'Won't someone fetch me oil quicker? Isn't anyone listening?' as you rant in a loud voice before scurrying away.

So Horace is a gastronome on occasion, just like Catius and his nameless sage, and the vice he is satirising is at least sometimes claimed as his own in this same poetic book. Horace, Catius and the nameless sage are perhaps not so far apart after all.

## 2.5: Horace as Ulysses

This opening poem of the book's second half matches its overall opening poem in taking the form of a parodic consultation: <sup>18</sup> 2.1 depicted Horace asking Trebatius for legal advice, whereas 2.5 replays in comic mode Ulysses/Odysseus' consultation of the seer Tiresias from the *Odyssey* (11.248ff). There is also a neat symmetry with Book 1: 1.5 had presented Horace's journey to Brindisi as at least partly a parody of the journey of the *Odyssey*, <sup>19</sup> and 2.5 (the fifth poem again) takes up the same technique. <sup>20</sup> The earlier presentation of Horace as a comic Ulysses/Odysseus thus suggests that the Ulysses of this poem may have Horatian elements. And so it proves. Like Horace (and Ofellus, and Damasippus), the Ulysses of 2.5 seeks to repair lost fortunes, and in an enquiry appended as an imaginary sequel to the series of useful responses about the future given by Tiresias in *Odyssey* 11, he asks:

*'Hoc quoque, Tiresia, praeter narrata petenti  
responde, quibus amissas reparare queam res  
artibus atque modis. quid rides?'*

Answer me this too, Tiresias, in addition to what you have told me, by what ways and means I can regain my lost wealth. Why do you laugh?

Tiresias' laughter perhaps suggests audience reaction to this incongruous juxtaposition of famous epic framework and low-life enquiry, but Odysseus on return to Ithaca will find

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. 2.4.36 *ratione*, 2.4.44 *sapiens*, 2.4.76 *uitium*, 2.4.82 *flagitium*.

<sup>18</sup> See Muecke 1993: 8.

<sup>19</sup> See Sallmann 1974: 202-6, Gowers 1993a: 55-9, Harrison 2007b: 86-9.

himself in much the same situation as Horace on his return to Rome after his experiences at Philippi (*Epistles* 2.2.49-52):

*unde simul primum me dimisere Philippi,  
decisis humilem pinnis inopemque paterni                      50  
et laris et fundi paupertas impulit audax  
ut uersus facerem...*

As soon as Philippi discharged me from there, brought down to earth with clipped wings and stripped of my father's home and estate, poverty made me bold and drove me to write verse...

The solution as propounded by Tiresias is the traditional satirical target of *captatio*, legacy-hunting, achieved through self-ingratiation with the rich.<sup>21</sup> This might seem purely conventional, but Horace's own career in the 30s BCE can be described as achieved in this way, even by himself: in the comic autobiography of *Epistles* 1.20, Horace claims that he 'found favour with the foremost men of Rome in war and peace' (1.20.23 *primis Urbis belli placuisse domique*), and in his advice to Scaeva in the same book, advising on how to make powerful friends, he states that 'to have found favour with the leaders of society is not the lowest form of renown' (1.17.35 *principibus placuisse uiris non ultima laus est*). Augustus is clearly meant in both instances, but the plural also includes Maecenas (*primus domi* to Augustus' *primus belli*), and of course the crucial feature of Horace's career as narrated in the *Satires* is his relationship with Maecenas, the patron who clearly gave him the Sabine estate and financial independence, something celebrated in the very next poem after 2.5. How different in fact was Horace's pursuit of the rich and influential from that advised by Tiresias? <sup>22</sup> Here again a satirically exaggerated character may reflect elements of the satirist himself.

## 2.6: Horace and the mice

In *Satires* 2.6, we hear the rare voice of the poet himself, at least for the first two-thirds of the poem, in which he celebrates his Sabine country estate, apparently given to him

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<sup>20</sup> Harrison 2007b: 86 n. 30

<sup>21</sup> For this practice at Rome and its literary treatment see Champlin 1991: 87-102.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. similarly Oliensis 1998: 57: 'Is Horace an honest Ofellus, content with his lot, whose farm has been miraculously restored, or a Ulysses who has worked hard and deviously to accomplish such a restoration?'

by Maecenas between *Satires* 1 (35 BCE) and *Satires* 2 (30 BCE). <sup>23</sup> The poem begins by detailing Horace's busy life at Rome (1-60) and then turns to the paradisiacal escape offered by his rural retreat. The rustic dinner-party in the latter described at 2.6.63-5 (beans and bacon) is clearly meant to contrast positively with the hyper-luxury of the city dinners and gastronomy which constitute the obsession of Catius and his unnamed sage in 2.4 (see above) and Nasidienus in 2.8 (see below). It is also the locus for the discussion of ethical topics emblematic for the *Satires* (2.6.70-77):

*ergo*  
***sermo** oritur, non de villis domibusve alienis,*  
*nec male necne Lepos saltet; sed quod magis ad nos*  
*pertinet et nescire malum est agitamus; utrumne*  
*divitiis homines an sint virtute beati;*  
*quidve ad amicitias, usus rectumne, trahat nos;*  
*et quae sit natura boni summumque quid eius.*

And so conversation arises, not about other people's villas or town houses, or whether Lepos dances badly or not; rather our discussions are about matters which concern us more, and which it would be bad not to know: whether it is wealth or virtue that makes men happy; or what attracts us to friendships, self-interest, or an upright character; and what is the nature of goodness and what its highest form.

Here the poet suggests that the country is the true place for the ethical discourse of the *Satires*: *sermo* names the satiric literary form as at 2.2.2 (see above) as well as simple conversation. This Platonic-style symposiastic dialogue is the stage for the famous Aesopic-style fable of the town and country mouse (2.6.79-117), <sup>24</sup> in which the country mouse tries the fleshpots and dangers of the city with his urban relative but is only too glad to return to the country. The tale is told in the voice of Cervius, a rustic neighbour, another embedded character voice, but the technique of using a moralising fable recalls the voice of the poet himself elsewhere (see on 2.3 above). No moral is offered for this tale in the poem, but the country mouse has often been seen as an analogue for Horace, keen to withdraw to the country and avoid the pressures of city life which he has described earlier in the poem. <sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> For the best modern discussion of the poet's mild occlusion of the gift here and elsewhere see Bowditch 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Indeed the imitation in Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse* (1918) acknowledges Aesop (a name likely to be known to her child readership) but uses details from Horace.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g. Rudd 1966: 252

contrast drawn between town bustle and country life is rerun in the story of the two mice, which thus becomes a *mise en abyme*, an embedded repetition of the outer frame story of the poem: <sup>26</sup> similarly, the first meal it relates, a humble repast offered by the country mouse to the town mouse, is clearly a version of the lowly rustic meal at which it is being narrated.

These indicators suggest the poet's self-identification with the country mouse, but the town mouse is also recognisably Horatian: his facile Epicurean address to the country mouse, as commentators have noted, comically reflects the sympotic exhortations of *carpe diem* in the *Odes* (2.6.93-7):

*carpe viam, mihi crede, comes : terrestria quando  
mortalis animas vivunt sortita, neque ulla est  
aut magno aut parvo leti fuga: quo, bone, circa  
dum licet, in rebus iucundis vive beatus:  
vive memor, quam sis aevi brevis.*

'Put your trust in me, and take to the road with me as your companion, since earthly creatures live with mortal souls as their lot, and there is no escape from death for great or small, therefore, my good fellow, while you may, live a happy life amid joyful things; live mindful of how brief your time is'.

Indeed, in this very poem the poet has been seen as a man about town, beset with urban duties but also rejoicing in his friendship with the very urban Maecenas (2.6.32), and in the next poem (as noted above) we see him cancelling a humble dinner of the sort described in 2.6 for a luxurious feast at Maecenas' house (2.7.29-35); as his intimate critic Davus points out, Horace praises the country when in Rome, Rome when in the country (2.7.28-9). The poem in fact presents the cultural and social complexities of Horace's life as a poet: his poetry is often written in the country (2.3.11-12, 2.6.16-17), but that country location is itself a gift from the urban Maecenas and the subject of his satire is largely urban vice. Horace can never be only the country mouse, and the placing of the story in the mouth of the rustic Cervius leaves this issue more open than if it were voiced by the poet himself; Cervius presents the country's view of the city, which Horace can adopt or drop at his own convenience. In this poem the plurality of voices serves to express the poet's divided views.

## **2.7: Davus – Horace's *alter ego* ?**

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<sup>26</sup> For the idea in general see Dällenbach 1989.

*Satires* 2.7 begins with (and is dominated by) the voice of Horace's slave Davus, exploiting the licence of the Saturnalia to tell his master a series of home truths (2.7.1-5):

*'Iamdudum ausculto et cupiens tibi dicere servos  
pauca reformido.' 'Davusne?' 'ita, Davus, amicum  
mancipium domino et frugi quod sit satis, hoc est,  
ut vitale putes.' 'age libertate Decembri,  
quando ita maiores voluerunt, utere: narra.'*

'I've been listening for a while now and wanting to say a few things to you but as a slave I've been afraid to'. Is that Davus? 'Yes, it's Davus, a bought slave but one who's a friend to his master and an honest fellow, that is, honest enough not to be considered too good to live'. Come, make use of the freedom December allows, as our forefathers wanted it so; say your piece'.

Here Davus is in some sense characterised as the linear reader of the book, who like him has been listening to the voices of the last six poems.<sup>27</sup> But he is also an *alter ego* of Horace as satirist: his exposition of Horace's faults begins (6-22) with a pair of individuals exemplifying a particular vice, very much in the anecdotal satiric mode Horace claims to have inherited from his father (cf. 1.6.103-31, see on 2.3 above), and he covers a range of topics already familiar from the *Satires* (inconsistency from 1.3, discontent with one's lot from 1.1, town and country life from 2.6, Crispinus from 1.1 and 1.4, adultery and its dangers from 1.1, satiric treatment of the Stoic sage from 1.3, gluttony from 2.4). In this rehearsal of familiar themes there is perhaps a sense of a final gathering up of key material as the book (and Horace's satiric corpus) moves towards its end. Thus in this poem, as in his initial indictment by Damasippus in 2.3, Horace is hoist with his own satirical petard in the voice of another, who imitates him only too effectively: the carnivalesque Saturnalian setting of both poems befits and reflects this reversal of the normal situation.

## **2.8: Horace and Fundanius**

In this final satire we once again encounter a Platonic narrative framework: the poet meets the comic poet Fundanius, who proceeds to give him an account of the pretentious dinner at the house of Nasidienus (2.8.1-5):

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed Sharland 2010: 262 suggests that the phrase refers to listening to all the poems of both books of *Satires*.

*'Ut Nasidieni iuuit te cena beati?  
nam mihi quaerenti convivam dictus here illic  
de medio potare die.' 'sic, ut mihi numquam  
in vita fuerit melius.' 'da, si grave non est,  
quae prima iratum ventrem placaverit esca.'*

How did you like your dinner with the wealthy Nasidienus? For when I sought to have you as my own dinner-guest I was told that you were drinking there yesterday from midday. 'So much so that never in my life have I had a more enjoyable time.' Tell me, if it's no trouble, what tasty dish won round your angry stomach.

As has been noted, this repeats the pattern of the opening of Plato's *Timaeus* (17b), where Timaeus asks Socrates to repeat yesterday's discourse εἰ μὴ τί σοι χελεπόν, ἐξ ἀρχῆς διὰ βραχέων πάλιν ἐπ'ἀνελθε αὐτά, 'if it is not troublesome for you, go back briefly over it from the beginning'.<sup>28</sup> We should also note that there are echoes here (as in the opening of 2.3) of the opening of Plato's *Symposium*, narrated by Apollodorus in response to an unnamed interlocutor from the report given him by Aristodemus,<sup>29</sup> and we recall that the great comic poet Aristophanes (like his counterpart Fundanius) was a key participant in that Platonic party. The content, for its part, recalls that of 2.4, where Catius gives the similarly pretentious gastronomic precepts of the unnamed sage. There is a natural affinity between Horace and Fundanius: the latter is clearly a fellow discriminating literary man in the circle of Maecenas (*Sat.* 1.10.42), and links between Horatian satire and the work of comic poets is a theme of both books of satires (1.4.1-7, 2.3.11-12).<sup>30</sup> The two share moral weaknesses as well as strengths: as the opening shows, like Horace at 2.7.29-35, Fundanius can be tempted away from the normal round of soberer meals with friends for a luxurious blow-out with the rich. As in 2.7, figures and themes from previous satires reappear, not just the obsessive gastronomy of 2.4 and epic parody (in 2.8.5)<sup>31</sup> of 2.5 and 1.5, but also Maecenas (2.3, 2.6 and 2.7 as well as throughout Book 1), Varius (1.5, 1.6, 1.9, 1.10), Nomentanus (1.1, 1.8, 2.1, 2.3), and Canidia (1.8, 2.1). Fundanius clearly behaves as Horace would have done had he been present, commenting ironically on the host's pretensions, and fleeing with Maecenas at the end of the poem (2.8.93-5):

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<sup>28</sup> See Gowers 1993b: 162-3, Freudenburg 2001: 117.

<sup>29</sup> Muecke 1993:227

<sup>30</sup> Freudenburg 1993: 107-8

<sup>31</sup> Muecke 1993: 230.

*quem nos sic fugimus ulti,  
ut nihil omnino gustaremus, velut illis  
Canidia adflasset, peior serpentibus Afris.*

... off we ran, taking our revenge on him by tasting nothing whatever, as though Canidia, worse than African snakes, had breathed her poison on them.

Here of course we need to recall that this is also the end of Horace's poetic book: like the departing narrator Fundanius and the sensible guests at Nasidienus' gross feast, the poet here takes leave of the *Satires*, and as at the end of *Epistles* 2.2 (2.2.215 *tempus abire tibi est*, 'it's time for you to depart'), we find the thematising of departure at a concluding point, a well known form of poetic closure.<sup>32</sup> Thus the play between the voices of Horace and Fundanius here allows a neat and witty end to both poem and the book.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, this piece shows how in Horace *Satires* 2 we find a move to dialogue and to highlighting speakers who are not the poet, a major difference from *Satires* 1 and a marked variation in narrative technique; in literary terms, Plato is an important model here, both as a predecessor in ethical dialogue and as a consistent user of narrative frameworks and openings which complicate the issue of the narrative voice and occlude the author himself. But this divergence from the voice of 'Horace' is not in fact a move away from self-revelation. Rather, this move allows the presentation of aspects of the poet's character as previously established in his work, using the medium of other figures and voices who (despite their surface differences) share important elements with the satirist, whether aspects of biography, philosophical and ethical ambitions, or modes of exemplification, expression and argument; it thus allows the poet indirectly to expose and meditate on his own moral weaknesses in other poems as he does directly in Davus' Saturnalian critique of his master in 2.7, though this too is delivered with unmistakable elements of his master's voice. With consistent subtlety and wit, the many non-Horatian voices of Book 2 thus provide a mode of mirroring in complex and interesting ways the career, concerns and foibles of 'Horace' himself.

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<sup>32</sup> See Fowler 1997: 114-5



