

The Philosophical and Intertextual Character of Odysseus in Horace *Satire 2.5*

In *Satire 2.5*, the least studied of the poems in Horace's frequently overlooked second book of *Satires*, Horace describes a consultation between Odysseus and Tiresias in the underworld. Instead of the sagely advice found in *Odyssey 11*, Tiresias has become a comic preceptor of the Roman practice of the *captatio*, urging a crafty Odysseus to abandon dreams of his home in Ithaca and to acquire his fortune by seeking the favor of someone near death who is rich and childless. It is the only satiric poem in Horace's collection that is formally set in the world of epic, and part of the satiric humor lies in the frequent shifts back and forth from the world of archaic epic to the Horace's Roman world in which the *captatio* has become prominent.

Criticism of *Satire 2.5* has focused on elaborating the poem's unique qualities and its function as satire. Rudd (1966) explores the subject-matter, setting, and form, while Roberts (1984) adds an emphasis on the indirectness of the presentation in creating a sense of indignation in the audience toward the practice of the *captatio*. Additionally, the theme of social climbing reiterates Horace's own anxieties elsewhere as he progresses from an outsider who had lost everything in the aftermath of Philippi into a true insider in Maecenas' circle (Oliensis 1998; Freudenburg 2001). Yet the polyvalent and saturated nature of satire leaves open the possibility that *Satire 2.5* may have even more targets than have yet been realized.

This paper explores the character of Odysseus in *Satire 2.5* against a matrix of possible philosophical intertexts, which represent additional latent satiric possibilities. Odysseus is a suitable student for Tiresias' teaching precisely because his heroic cunning offers ambiguity that can be exploited for comic effect (cf. Muecke 1993; Stanford 1963, Phillips 1959). Odysseus' wiliness carries the possibility that he may, in fact, be a rogue, who employs his excellent cunning in manipulating people for gain. Alternatively, both the wiliness and the long-suffering

endurance of Odysseus, emphasized comically in lines 20 and 23, appear in Stoic philosophical literature as a representative of their ideal sage (Lejay 1966: 475-6). It is my contention that although Horace's presentation of Odysseus is comic, the philosophical versions of Odysseus form part of the intertextual horizon of expectations in the ideal reader's mind, and are therefore relevant in assessing the satiric qualities of *Satire 2.5*.

A philosophical Odysseus has been overlooked in scholarship because Horace's characterization of Odysseus largely avoids direct philosophical language. Yet Horace's philosophical concerns elsewhere in the *Satires* invite the reader to contemplate how Horace's comic depiction contrasts with a philosophical Odysseus. Horace is strongly critical of the Stoics throughout both books of *Satires*. He closes each of the diatribe satires (1.1-3) with parting shots at wordy Stoics (Crispinus 1.1.120-1; Fabio 1.2.134; Chrysippus and Crispinus in 1.3.126-142). Then, he allows the Stoics a voice in *Satire 2.3* and *2.7*, but undercuts that voice through the ineptitude of the speakers, the bankrupt art collector Damasippus converted on the brink of suicide by Stertinius (2.3.20-26, 31-34) and Horace's own slave Davus who has been taking lessons in philosophy from Crispinus' janitor (2.7.45). Horace's comic depiction of Odysseus, then, may reflect latent Stoic criticism in the midst of a satire ostensibly about *captatio*. Additionally, Anderson (1982) has noted the Platonic structure and character of the second book of *Satires*. Horace invites his audience to consider the parallels between his own work and the dialogues of Plato. Plato had already employed Odysseus as a positive exemplar in book ten of the *Republic*, thus providing one additional contrast to the Odysseus of *Satire 2.5*.

In the first part of this paper, I examine the depiction of Odysseus in Horace's text. In the second part of the paper, I turn to the Stoic and Platonic depictions of Odysseus as possible intertexts. I conclude by situating these philosophical depictions of Odysseus within a nexus of

philosophical language throughout Horace's satiric oeuvre that is consistent with Horace's larger philosophical agenda throughout his *Satires*.

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