

Between 81 and 96 CE, Rome was ruled by a paranoid narcissist known for silencing any opposition and gaudy tastes. This tyrant, Domitian, was the subject of Juvenal's fourth satire, written between 100 and 127 CE. In Juvenal's "Satire IV", he tells the story of Domitian's purchase of an extravagant fish and the court proceedings surrounding the debate over what type of dish to use for the fish. Between 2016 and 2020, the United States was ruled by a paranoid narcissist known for his accusations of "fake news" leveled at his opposition and gaudy tastes. In *Saturday Night Live's* "Trump Press Conference Cold Open", they show a parody of a Trump press conference in which he answers reporters' questions in a variety of comically bad ways. Both rulers are critiqued for their gluttony, fiscal irresponsibility, and hypocrisy through hyperbole and parody. The similarity of the criticisms and how they're delivered suggests that humanity has always used humor and a sense of unity to endure problems with no clear solutions.

Both satires use hyperbole to highlight the extremities of their subjects' failings and relate to their audience. In line 38 of Satire IV, Juvenal compares Rome under Domitian's rule to being "enslaved by a Nero, ay, and a bald one too" (Juvenal 38). Nero was one of the worst-ever leaders of Rome, famous for his response to (and debated order of) the Great Fire of Rome. Clowns in Ancient Rome were bald, bumbling idiots. In this line, Juvenal is saying that Domitian is incompetent and malicious while using popular culture to convey the significance of these traits. In *Saturday Night Live's* satire, Donald Trump says many variations of the line "We need wall" (*Saturday Night Live*, 1:00). In this line, *Saturday Night Live* is referring to the wall proposed by the real Donald Trump on the US-Mexico border. They are using an overstatement of Donald Trump's stupidity (as a native English speaker, he should be able to correctly form a simple sentence like this one) and repeating it to show that he doesn't learn from his mistakes.

Both satirists utilize hyperbole to accentuate the unlikability of their protagonists. The audience, however, already dislikes the targets of the satire. Hyperbole is still a useful device because it establishes a connection between the author and the reader. Sharing a joke makes the reader feel connected to the author by establishing that they agree. Then, hyperbole is used to point out a specific trait in a creative way that shows the author's hatred for the target.

The connection established between the author and the audience is strengthened by parodying a popular format. Satire IV is told as if it were an epic poem, even invoking Calliope, the Roman muse of epics (Juvenal 4). *Saturday Night Live's* satire takes place in a press conference, with Trump taking questions from reporters. By putting their subjects into such extreme situations and then showing them acting completely out of place, the satirists subtly compare the current rulers of their respective nations with former rulers. The enumeration of senators in "Satire IV" is a clear parody of the excessive details added by authors like Homer. It feels warranted when Homer adds all of these details because he's telling the story of the great Odysseus. It feels comical when Juvenal adds these details because he's telling the story of a fish debate. This juxtaposition of mediums represents how jarring it is to see a ruler making such terrible decisions. On top of relating to the common man through a familiar story, parody can be used to juxtapose the floundering of the current leader with the prestige associated with their predecessors.

Through the use of hyperbole and parody, Juvenal's "Satire IV" and *Saturday Night Live's* "Trump Press Conference Cold Open" relate to their audience while conveying specific criticisms of their respective subjects. Juvenal was so famous for his satires of large societal problems with no defined solution that these types of satires were named after him. *Saturday Night Live's* satire is a continuation of his legacy. The similarity of their criticisms and strategies

across centuries suggests that in undesirable situations with no obvious way out, humans choose to relate to one another as a means of maintaining hope.

## Works Cited

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