

JUVENAL 10. 175-6

constratum classibus isdem
suppositumque rotis solidum mare

WHAT is the point of *isdem*? Editors of Juvenal pass over the word without comment and most translators are content with an unexplained 'the same'. But if it means 'the same as the ships that made the bridge', it is odd that it should be put with the first clause. On the other hand, if Juvenal means the same ships as those that passed through the Athos canal, the reference must be to the fleet that sailed to Greece and not to the boats that formed the bridge. The awkwardness of the passage is shown up by the obscurity of the Budé translation:¹ 'la mer tellement couverte de ces mêmes navires que, solidifiée, elle aurait supporté les roues des chars.'

The ancient scholia and most editors understand *constratum classibus* as referring to the bridge of boats. But this is not satisfactory, since (a) it only duplicates the reference to the bridge in 176, and (b) the word *classibus* suggests the fleet that sailed rather than the vessels that remained moored in the Hellespont. Duff,² therefore, rightly judged that the phrase 'does not refer to the bridge of boats (see l. 176) but only to the size of the fleet', quoting Livy 35. 49. 5 in support.

Livy's expression *consternit maria classibus suis* is a rhetorical hyperbole suggesting a fleet so large that you could not see the water for ships. It occurs in a speech by T. Quinctius, commenting scornfully on the boasts made by Antiochus' representative about the size of the king's fleet. The conceit is repeated in Curtius 9. 6. 7, where Craterus assures Alexander of his invincibility, even if the whole world *classibus maria consternat*; and again *ibid.* 9. 8. 5, of the terrifying spectacle of Alexander's own fleet sailing down the river: *totum amnem, qua prospici poterat, nauigiis constratum*. These three passages and Juvenal 10. 175 are the only examples quoted by *Thes. L. L.* for this use of *consterno*, and it would be natural to suppose that the sense is the same in Juvenal as in the other two writers. The same hyperbole is to be seen in Virgil's description of the Trojan fleet at Carthage, ready to sail for Italy: *latet sub classibus aequor* (*Aen.* 4. 582).

Now if Juvenal's phrase refers to the size of Xerxes' fleet, we should expect it to carry an echo of a phrase in Herodotus, since the whole sentence is about the 'lies' of Greek historians, and the other details in it all point to specific passages in Herodotus. And in fact Herodotus does provide the required phrase, where one would expect it, in his account of Xerxes' review of his forces: 7. 45 *ὥς δὲ ὦρα πάντα μὲν τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον ὑπὸ τῶν νεῶν ἀποκεκρυμμένον* . . . Here is the source of the conceit of the sea hidden by ships, and Virgil's *latet* is surely a reminiscence of Herodotus' verb.

This interpretation of the passage in Juvenal, however, makes it much less satisfactory, although perhaps not impossible, to take *mare* with both participles. It would be much better if we had another noun to go with *constratum*.

¹ Labriolle and Villeneuve, 5th ed. (Paris, 1951).

² *Fourteen Satires of Juvenal* (Cambridge, 1929).

This brings us back to the pointlessness of *isdem*: suppose *isdem* is a corruption which has ousted the missing noun, such a hypothesis would explain both the awkwardnesses in these two lines. For *isdem*, therefore, read *aequor*: then *constratum classibus aequor* will refer to the size of the fleet, and only 176 to the bridge. Now every word counts, and the *quidquid* clause is illustrated by two *exempla* instead of one. The phrase also carries verbal echoes not only of *Aen.* 4. 582 and the passages in Livy and Curtius, but also of *Aen.* 3. 157 *permensi classibus aequor*, *Aen.* 10. 269 *totumque adlabi classibus aequor*, and Manilius 1. 776 *Persidis et uictor, strarat quae classibus aequor*.

In the last example the simple verb *sterno* may in fact carry the same meaning as the compound, since the point of the line is Themistocles' victory at Salamis (see Housman ad loc.), and the size of the Persian fleet is therefore more relevant than Xerxes' bridge. On the other hand, Sidonius 5. 451-3 *nec tantae Seston iuncturus Abydo / Xerxes classis erat tumidas cum sterneret undas / et pontum sub ponte daret* clearly does refer to the bridge, and the fulsome repetitions make a striking contrast to Juvenal's terseness. But in the same paragraph, which glorifies Majorian's two fleets, Sidonius twice reproduces the conceit of hiding the sea when he compares the size of Agamemnon's fleet at Pergamon (*Carpathium texit ratibus* 449) and that of Cleopatra's at Actium (*Actiacas abscondit aquas* 457).

The original misunderstanding of Juvenal's meaning may have developed at an early date, since a scholion transmits it in the comment: *Xerxem dicit Persarum regem, qui Athonem montem in Achaia dicitur perforasse et inmisisse terris nouum mare, pontum contabulasse nauibus atque ita exercitum in Achaia transtulisse*.¹ The intrusive *isdem* could then have come from a gloss of some kind, such as an attempt to explain the unusual *solidum* by means of a participle and the words *classibus isdem*. Another possibility is that *aequor* was corrupted to *aequis*, which was then replaced by the more intelligible *isdem*.

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¹ *Scholium in Iuuenalem Vetusiora*, ed. Wessner (Leipzig, 1931), 173.