

## CRITICAL NOTES ON SOME PASSAGES IN JUVENAL

### Satire VII 108–110

“ipsi magna sonant, sed tum cum creditor audit  
praecipue, uel si tetigit latus acrior illo  
qui uenit ad dubium grandi cum codice nomen.”

Del. Jahn, Knoche 109.

Clausen, in his *appartus criticus*, refers to an explanation of this difficult passage by Madvig, *opusc. acad.*, pp. 543–44. Madvig endeavours to explain the passage by saying that a lawyer talks big about his fees, either before a creditor of his own, in order to reassure him about a debt owing to the creditor, or before a litigant who comes to court armed with a huge book of accounts in order to press for payment of a debt. This man has the effect upon the lawyer of making his lungs – here compared to a blacksmith’s bellows – produce greater lies still, probably in an endeavour to obtain the brief; lies presumably not about his high fees, for this would tend to frighten the prospective client away, but of his successful cases. Jahn deletes v. 109, a deletion accepted by Knoche, and thus the reading would appear invitingly simpler:

108 “ipsi magna sonant, sed tum cum creditor audit  
110 qui uenit ad dubium grandi cum codice nomen.”

The prevailing interpretation of the passage vs. 108–110 is that “creditor” means a person to whom the lawyer owes money, and that:

“acrior illo  
qui uenit ad dubium grandi cum codice nomen.”

represents another of the lawyer’s creditors who presses more emphatically for payment of his debt. There is, however, at this point of the satire, no reason to assume that the lawyer is in debt and that the word “creditor” means a person to whom the lawyer owes a debt. Hence, the interpretation that the lawyers talk big about their incomes to fob off their creditors needs revision. It is only the episode vs. 129–137 which tells us that the lawyer has to show a luxurious way of living to the outside world. His purple

gown opens credit for him (*spondet purpura*) and his amethyst-coloured garments help impress the public so as to procure clients (“*causidicum uendunt amethystina*”). His precarious financial position is hinted at, particularly in vs. 136–137:

“ . . . conuenit illi  
et strepitu et facie maioris uiuere census”

It is only after this statement that we would be justified in interpreting the word “creditor” as meaning a creditor of the lawyer. We are certainly dealing in the passage 108–110 with two different types of creditors; one in v.108 and another “*acrior illo*” in

109 “*qui uenit ad dubium . . . nomen*”

What simpler interpretation could there be than to see in both creditors clients of the lawyer? The lawyers are big talkers; this, of course was a prerequisite of their profession which was based more upon the art of rhetoric than upon legal mastery. The first creditor could well be understood as a client of the lawyer. They talk big in order to justify their claim for big fees. The other creditor “*acrior illo*” could be a prospective client, “*acrior*” because he is of course worried about his “*dubium nomen*” and digs the lawyer in the ribs to attract his urgent attention.

Now follow the “*immensa mendacia*” i. e. they do not talk big to this man about their fees, because they might repel a potential client, but about their many successful lawsuits.

Jahn’s deletion of v.109 simplifies the passage and makes its acceptance tempting were it not for the fact that the cause and the origin of an interpolation of this kind is as hard to understand as the passage including v.109. Interpolations in the text of Juvenal irritate mostly by their prosaic commonplace nature which do not impose heavy demands on the reader’s understanding, e. g.:

13,166 “*nempe quod haec illis natura est omnibus una.*”

or 11,161 “*namque una atque eadem est uini patria atque ministri.*” The fact that v.109 renders the passage so difficult to understand speaks for its not being interpolated and it should, therefore, not suffer the fate of deletion.

During a conversation in Oxford, Mr. Reeve disagreed with the theory expounded and draws attention to vs.106–107:

“*dic igitur quid causidicis ciuilia praestent officia et magno comites in fasce libelli.*”

as proving that the “causidicus” is in debt. But the verses seem merely to denote that the profession of a “causidicus” is not a prosperous one – poverty is however not synonymous with being in debt, cf.6, 357–59:

“... sed nulla pudorem  
paupertatis habet nec se metitur ad illum  
quem dedit haec posuitque modum.” tamen utile quid sit ...

The debts are created by:

“... conuenit illi  
et strepitu et facie maioris uiuere census”

in brief, by living beyond one’s means.

### Satire VI 335–345

“atque utinam ritus ueteres et publica saltem  
his intacta malis agerentur sacra; sed omnes  
nouerunt Mauri atque Indi quae psaltria penem  
maiolem quam sunt duo Caesaris Anticatones  
illuc, testiculi sibi conscius unde fugit mus,  
intulerit, ubi uelari pictura iubetur  
quaecumque alterius sexus imitata figuras.  
et quis tunc hominum contemptor numinis, aut quis  
simpuium ridere Numae nigrumque catinum  
et Vaticano fragiles de monte patellas  
ausus erat? sed nunc ad quas non Clodius aras?”

Verses 335–336 were deleted by Heinrich who describes them as „ein frommer Wunsch . . . der aber an dieser Stelle herzlich matt ist, und den Leser auf einmal aus der Wärme in die Kälte versetzt.“ This condemnation is indeed justified, but Heinrich has not gone far enough, for in fact vs.335–345 are open to grave doubt. At v.314 Juvenal began a description of the enormities practised at the rites of the Bona Dea, culminating in a five-stage climax (adulter . . . iuuenis . . . servi . . . aquarius . . . asellus). This is an unsurpassable climax of filthy lewdness, practised in Juvenal’s own time and by the women whose vices are the target of his satire. The description is now finished and some reflections on it follow. It may appear that “atque utinam” effects a transition to a new class of religious rites, namely the ones which are public and ancient; thus implying that the rites previously considered were not public and ancient. If so, the implication is absurd for the rites of Bona Dea were among the most ancient in Rome and were certainly “publica sacra” in that they were celebrated “pro populo

Romano" (Cic. ad. Att.1, 12, 3). Alternatively this is not a transition but merely a pious reflection: would God that these ancient and national ceremonies were not so profaned as I have described them. In either case it is absurd to illustrate the point by the weaker example which follows where a far more striking example has preceded. If the noblest matrons of Rome copulate with slaves and donkeys at the rites of the Bona Dea, what is the point of telling us that 176 years before some daring person intruded himself upon these same rites when he was not allowed to be there, especially when this malefactor was a man and the satire is supposed to be aimed against women? How could the mere presence of a man be thought of as a profanation comparable with the lewdnesses already described?

The verses in themselves are not badly written, and they show a good knowledge of classical antiquity. In a different context they could be sensible and effective, but here they do not belong. They may, perhaps, be a passage from some lost poet, written down in the margin by a keen student who was struck by the parallelism of theme with the preceding passage of Juvenal.

#### Satire IV 116

"grande et conspicuum nostro quoque tempore monstrum,  
caecus adulator dirusque, a ponte satelles  
dignus Aricinos qui mendicaret ad axes"

Courtney deals with this passage at length in "*The Interpolations in Juvenal*", Bulletin cf. cl. Stud. v.22, 1975. According to him "a ponte satelles" has usually been understood to mean that Catullus was a "beggar courtier". He quotes parallels 6,118 "meretrix Augusta", 8,148 "mulio consul" etc., but says that the persons concerned are actually acting as prostitute and muleteer respectively and this he considers necessary for such oxymoron to function properly. Catullus, however, is not represented as begging and moreover Juvenal could not say first that Catullus was a beggar and then that he deserved to be one. A different punctuation could assist in preserving the line, and at the same time the word "pons" would have to be subjected to closer scrutiny. Apart from the customary meaning of bridge over a river, "pons" also refers to the bridge at the comitia over which the voters passed one by one to the septum, to deposit their votes, cf. Varr. ap. Non 522, 21 squ.

If we read:

“caecus adulator dirisque a ponte. Satelles dignus Aricinos qui mendicaret ad axes”

we could understand Catullus to be described as a blind and horrible cringing flatterer, who uses his talents to influence peoples' votes, a worthy “satelles” – obviously to the emperor – who could well (be thought to) beg on the steep descent of the via Appia near Aricia. Voting of this kind was no longer practised under Domitian (cf. Mommsen, *Roem. Staatsrecht* iii 397 ff.) but Juvenal could have used the epithet in an historical sense, in an endeavour to create the desired picture of Catullus.

### Satire VIII 1–8

“Stemmata quid faciunt? quid prodest, Pontice, longo sanguine censi, pictos ostendere uultus maiorum et stantis in curribus Aemilianos et Curios iam dimidios umeroque minorem Coruinum et Galbam auriculis nasoque carentem, [quis fructus generis tabula iactare capaci Coruinum, posthac multa contingere uirga fumosos equitum cum dictatore magistratos,] si coram Lepidis male uiuitur? . . .”

Del. v.7 Jahn, vs. 6–8 del. Jachmann, whom Knoche and Clausen follow. This is one of the most vexing passages in the corpus of Juvenal. What stands above may be taken as the text of the archetype, the variant “Fabricium” for the second “Coruinum” in a few late MSS. being no more than an attempt to correct what was felt to be a mistaken repetition. The omission of vs. 5–6 in G is simply an accidental omission by homoeoarchon, and the omission or wrong placing of v.7 in a few MSS. most probably arises from dissatisfaction with the obviously bad line causing it to be struck out and subsequently replaced by contamination (Jachmann, p. 190; J. G. Griffith, “Author-Variants in Juvenal”, p. 105).

The difficulties of v.7 are obvious:

- (a) “Coruinum” is repeated from v.5;
- (b) it is absurd to fill the capacious table with one name;
- (c) “postac” cannot mean “furthermore”, “in addition”, as the sense requires here.

Hence Withof acutely proposed “nomina tot posse ac”, in which the postulated corruption of “posse ac” into “posthac” is plausible, but it is hard to believe in a scribe who wrote “Coruinum” by mistake for “nomina tot”. Housman sought to improve on Withof by reading “pontifices posse ac”, supposing that a scribe be-

gan to write "pontifices" but slipped to the "po" – of "posse ac", thus leaving a headless verse which was conjecturally supplemented with "Coruinum". Transcriptionally this is more plausible than Withof's proposal but Jachmann objects to the sense, considering the priests to be out of place in the list of civil and military offices.

Jahn dealt with the problems of the verse more drastically by expelling it and its removal certainly leaves no gap in the syntax. Then, when deletion had gone out of fashion, Leo propounded his theory of author-variants, finding vs. 1–5 and vs. 6–8 to be alternative versions, both from the pen of Juvenal. This theory left the difficulties of "Coruinum posthac" untouched and further emendations were necessary (Griffith, p. 108). If vs. 6–8 represented the older version, as Leo supposed, then the vocative "Pontice" would be lost and we should not know to whom the satire was addressed, for Ponticus is not mentioned again until v.75 while, in the middle, as if to create further confusion, we are told that the poet is speaking with Rubellius Blandus (vs.39–40).

Jachmann recognised two versions, but declared that vs. 1–5 were genuine while vs. 6–8 said the same thing "nicht in absichtsvoller Variation, sondern in tautologischer Wiederholung" (p. 189). To the objections already raised against the verses he added others, principally "die vage Verschwommenheit der ganzen Vorstellung". For at first we are dealing with a genealogical table with names connected by lines indicating kinship, then we have the "fumosi equitum magistri" which can only be statues or busts. For Jachmann this second version was, like 10,225 f., an attempt to replace the difficult proper names by generic terms which would be easier to understand. Juvenal, he contends, indicated famous ancestors only by names of typical examples, as is his wont, and after the Aemiliani, Curii, Coruinus and Galba, went straight on to the Lepidi.

This is clearly a very clever proposal. It is, however, open to some objections. The long catalogue of proper names is not so very long, and it is odd that the interpolator, while getting rid of three, should have chosen to retain one. Griffith (p. 106) seeks to refute some of Jachmann's objections, but hardly with full success. It is his contention that the only part of the whole passage open to serious objection are the two words "Coruinum posthac" and he has a theory to account for their presence. The passage originally had v.6 in the form:

“quis fructus generis tabula iactare capaci”

and

“quis fructus generis multa contingere uirga”

Unhappily these two forms were written down one after the other and were taken to be the sixth and seventh verses. Now, since the second was obviously wrong, the repeated part was struck out and an alternative substituted. Thus, says Griffith, we save ourselves from jettisoning three lines, when only two words are at fault. This is, again, an ingenious piece of theorising, but it is open to various objections. In the first place, for the two variants to be capable of making sense, it would be necessary for “generis” to go closely with “fructus” instead of being governed by “capaci”. To the present writer, however, “quis fructus generis” seems quite senseless. Secondly, if the words “quis fructus generis” were seen to be mistaken and in need of replacement, it is odd that the corrector could not think if anything better than “Coruinum posthac”, for the capaciousness of the table might at least have suggested to him a plural “Coruinos” – although for that matter his idiocy in using a proper name which had appeared only two lines before is almost incredible.

If it is permissible in so vexed a passage to propose another solution, I should like to suggest the deletion of vs. 7–8 and a small alteration of v.6:

- 1 “Stemmata quid faciunt? quid prodest, Pontice, longo
- 2 sanguine censeri, pictos ostendere uultus
- 3 maiorum et stantis in curribus Aemilianos
- 4 et Curios iam dimidios umeroque minorem
- 5 Coruinum et Galbam auriculis nasoque carentem,
- 6 [quis fructus, generis tabulam iactare capacem,
- 9 si coram Lepidis male uiuitur?”

This reading appears to eliminate most of the difficulties. First it eliminates the undesirable repetition of “Coruinum”; secondly, it removes the much-criticised “posthac”; thirdly, it brings the Lepidi into closer proximity to the catalogue of names in vs. 3–5; fourthly, it takes away the contradiction between the “tabula capax” and the solitary name of “Coruinus”, and last, but not least, it puts the “tabula” into its proper place, that is, at the end of the list of names which feature in it.