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Notes on the Text of Juvenal

S. J. Harrison

Juvenal is a great Latin poet, but his text is not as well preserved as those of (say) Vergil and Horace. Many problems remain in modern editions,¹ and this article confirms or identifies some of the remaining problems and makes some suggestions for solutions.² I cite the revised OCT of Clausen (1992) as perhaps the most widely used text.

1.170-1:

experiar quid concedatur in illos
quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina.

These well-known lines about attacking only the dead seem to state that Romans of the past are buried under the Via Flaminia and the Via Latina; but there are several problems here. The ablative after tegitur ought to indicate the means of burial, as at Aeneid 10.904 corpus humo patiare tegi or Georgics 3.558 humo tegere. In any case, the reference is as usual to tombs placed not under but alongside the roads leading out of Rome, as at Juvenal 8.146-7 praeter maiorum cineres atque ossa volucri / carpento rapitur pinguis Lateranus et ipse. Read teritur: the ashes of the dead are vividly said to be trampled by the (users of the) neighbouring road. This striking image, providing an impressive close to an opening poem, is helped by the poetic use of tero of the wearing away by foot or vehicle of the roads themselves - cf. Ovid Pont.2.7.44 nec magis est curvis Appia trita rotis, Seneca HF 539 intonsis teritur semita Sarmatis, Statius Silv.2.2.12 qua limite noto / Appia longarum teritur regina viarum.

¹ I also cite by author’s name only Leo (1932), Housman (1938), Ferguson (1979), Courtney (1984), Nisbet, (1995), Willis (1997), and Braund (2004). The online text of Juvenal by Michael Hendry at www.curculio.com is well worth consultation. Asterisked items represent arguments for conjectures mentioned or included more than a decade ago by Susanna Braund in her Loeb edition – many thanks to her.

² I draw attention also to a posthumous article by Nisbet (2014), which presents conjectural solutions to problems at 4.133, 6.179, 9.29, 11.29, 11.86, 11.148 and 13.15.
Note that in the last two passages *teritur* is used in connection with a specific major road leading from Rome, as in Juvenal.

*5.30-31:*

ipse capillato diffusum consule potat
calcatamque tenet bellis socialibus uuam.

The host Virro drinks antique vintages, better wine than his slighted guests. *Tenet* seems very odd here: in what sense can he ‘hold grapes trodden in the Social Wars’? The verb here ought to be a natural progression from *potat*: read *calcataque madet… uua*, ‘and is soaked in a grape trodden in the civil wars’. Virro moves from drinking to drunkenness; for *madere* with ablative of the means of intoxication cf. Seneca *Ep*.95.5 *neruorum uino madentium*, Martial 10.49.2 *nigro madeas Opimiano*, while *uaa* refers to wine metonymically as often (e.g. Horace *Odes* 1.20. 9-10 *Caecubum et prelo domitam Caleno \ tu bibles uuan*, a similar context).

*6.O9-10:*

nec cella ponit eadem
munimenta umeri +pulsatamque arma+ tridentem.

These lines describe arrangements in a gladiatorial school, saying that the amateur sword-fighter does not stow his gear in the same place as the professional *retiarius*. Here as commentators note the shoulder-guards and the trident are the usual arms of the *retiarius*; *pulsatam* is clearly corrupt but must conceal a description of the trident. Suggestions have been made, e.g. *pulsatorisque* (Braund), *pulsatoremque* (Leo), both involving a novel use of a noun which normally means ‘beater’ and is found with the genitive of the object beaten (cf. Valerius Flaccus 5.693 *citharae pulsator Apollo*) which one might expect here. Read *pulsantemque arma*, ‘the trident that strikes armour’; \(^3\) for *pulsare* of striking armour or weapons cf. Vergil *Aen.* 8.528-9 *arma inter nubem caeli in regione serena \ per sudum rutilare uident et pulsa tonare*, Silius 9.642 *pulsatur galea et quatiuntur consultis arma.*

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3 N.B. this is misprinted as *pulsantem* (without –*que*) in the apparatus of Braund (2004).
8.1-9:
Stemmata quid faciunt? quid prodest, Pontice, longo
sanguine censeri, pictos ostendere uultus
maiorum et stantis in curribus Aemilianos
et Curios iam dimidios uneroque minorem
Coruinum et Galbam auriculis nasoque carentem, 5
quis fructus generis tabula iactare capaci
Coruinum, posthac multa contingere uirga
fumosos equitum cum dictatore magistros,
si coram Lepidis male uiuitur?

This famous opening argues that nobility and imagines are no virtue unless allied with good behaviour. Coruinum in line 8 must be wrong given the same word in the same position in line 5 (the proper name is clearly at home there). Some solve the problem by omitting 6-8 as an interpolation (e.g. Courtney) or by regarding them as an alternative authorial opening (e.g. Willis), but these lines seem to present a neat variation on 1-5, following aristocratic names (four) with magistral offices (three, on my proposal). In 2004 I suggested censorem for Coruinum in line 7, adding the most relevant political office in the matter of morals (note that censoris is found in the same initial position at 11.92) even if your ancestor was censor, this is no guarantee that you yourself will be morally worthy.

10.173-6:
creditur olim
velificatus Athos et quicquid Graecia mendax
audet in historia, constratum classibus isdem
suppositumque rotis solidum mare.

There are two problems in these lines. First, velificatus should mean ‘given sails’ or ‘turned into sails’, the only meaning it has in the only other passive occurrences of this verb in classical Latin, two, both in Apuleius (Fl.2, Socr.7; cf. OLD s.u. 3). But the reference here is to Xerxes’ famous cutting of a canal through the Athos peninsula (cf. Herodotus 7.122), which is very hard to describe as giving the mountain sails, though it can be described as creating a new sea - cf. e.g. Catullus 66.45-6 cum Medi peperere novum mare, cumque iuventus
per medium classi barbara navit Athon (~ Callimachus Aet.fr. 110 Pf. 45-6 καὶ διὰ μέσσου | Μηδείων ὀλοαὶ νῆες ἔβησαν Ἄθω). Read uelis sectus: the mountain is ‘cut through’ first literally by Xerxes and then metaphorically by his fleet’s sailing through it (for this elevated use of seco cf. OLD s.u. 5). For the ‘cutting through’ of Athos cf. Cicero De Finibus 2.112 Athone perfosso, Pliny NH 4.37 fretum, quo montem Athex Persarum rex continenti abscidit, and for the idea of sailing through it cf. Lucan 2.676-7 cum uela ratisque | in medium deferet Athon and the passages of Catullus and Callimachus already cited. Second, isdem in 175 makes no sense: ‘the same fleets’ has no reference point, unless one is supplied from the vague velificatus, not at all easy, and the second adjective destroys the balance between the participle/ablative noun pairs constratum classibus and suppositumque rotis. Read classibus aequor, a Vergilian hexameter-ending (cf. Aeneid 3/157, 4.313, 4.582, 10.269), used by Manilius to describe the same phenomenon, Themistocles’ massive naval deployments at Salamis (1.776 Persidis et victor strarat quae classibus aequor); cf. also Livy 35.49.5 consternit maria classibus suis. The use in the same sentence of both aequor and mare is unproblematic: such pleonasm is common of the sea in the Latin epic style here adopted. 4

10.193-5:

talis aspice rugas
quaes, umbriferos ubi pandit Thabraca saltus,
in uetula scalpit iam mater simia bucca.

In this description of the facial ravages of old age, it is not clear why the aged ape is described as ‘already a mother’, and the phrase iam mater has been rightly suspected by editors (see Courtney’s discussion). Nisbet (255) proposed iam marcess, a participle used of withered grapes at Martial 5.78.12, but otherwise meaning ‘drooping’ or ‘feeble’; Ferguson’s Garamantis picks up the African location of Thabraca but might be thought to overemphasise geography here. Read turpissima: the point of extreme ugliness is exactly right here, and the passage would echo Ennius Sat. 69 V (= XVII Russo) simia quam similis turpissima bestia nobis.

10.311-13:

fiets adulter
publicus et poenas metuet quascumque mariti
+irati+ debet.

Here the poet looks ahead to the future tribulations of the handsome boy, due to suffer as an adulterer. P’s debet makes no sense; F’s debent, probably a later correction, is little improvement (the required ellipse of an infinitive such as exigere is not at all easy). Housman’s lex irae debet is printed by Willis, while Courtney prefers his own irae debeat; in 2004 I suggested irati reddent, ‘bring about’, ⁵ with mariti as subject of the verb, but I now realise that the natural reading of poenas reddere is ‘render due penalties’, referring to suffering rather than inflicting appropriate punishment (cf. e.g. Sallust Jug.14.22 fratris mei necis mearumque miseriae gravis poenas reddat, Ciris 337 reddidit, heu, Graius poenas tibi, Troia, ruenti). If we suppose that the original reading at the end of the line was maritis (as at 6.184), then we can read this together with iratis reddet, ‘and he will fear the penalties he will duly pay to angry husbands’; the plural husbands are very suitable here given the suggestion of multiple lovers in adulter | publicus.

11.143-4:

nef frustum caprae subducere nec latus Afrae
nouit auis noster, tirunculus ac rudis omni
tempore et exiguae furtis inbutus ofellae.

Here the poet’s serving-boy is presented as thieving from the poet’s modest table. In the phrase omni ... tempore both case and meaning are difficult (see Courtney; Nisbet (256) conjectured omni ... crine). A simple solution is at hand: excise tirunculus ... exiguae, so that the text reads:

nef frustum caprae subducere nec latus Afrae
nouit auis noster, furtis inbutus ofellae.

Nor does my boy know how to steal a chunk of venison, or a slice of guinea-fowl, trained as he is (only) in the thieving of a (mere) chop.

⁵ Mentioned in the apparatus by Braund (2004).
11.171-5:

non capit has nugas humilis domus. audiat ille
testarum crepitus cum uerbis, nudum olido stans
fornice mancipium quibus abstinet, ille fruatur
uocibus obscenis omnique libidinis arte
qui Lacedaemonium pytismate lubricat orbem.

The poet stresses the contrast between his own modest home-entertaining and the decadent erotic dancers to be found at more debauched feasts. The passage is highly repetitious, with both 172-3 and 174 referring to obscene language (uebris ... quibus abstinent, uocibus obscenis), and the relative clause of 172-3 with its much postponed quibus looks suspicious (though nudum ... mancipium could be considered a single sense-unit). Again excision provides an elegant solution: if we remove the words audiat ille ... abstinent, the text reads:

non capit has nugas humilis domus. ille fruatur
uocibus obscenis omnique libidinis arte
qui Lacedaemonium pytismate lubricat orbem.

‘My humble home has no room for these frivolities. Let him enjoy the obscene lyrics and every art of debauchery, who lubricates his Spartan circular floor with spat-out wine.’

12.78-9:

non sic igitur mirabere portus
quos natura dedit.

Here the poet’s addressee is expected to admire the artificial harbour of Portus more than its naturally-formed counterparts (non sic = ‘not so much’). The problem here is igitur; as Housman saw, this is clearly a stopgap. His similes and Nisbet’s ueteres (257) provide possible epithets, but similarity and antiquity seem to have little point here. I suggest positos: the point is that the well-designed layout of the artificial harbour is superior to natural harbours such as that of Carthage, and pono is here used in the sense of ‘build, construct’ (OLD s.u. 3): ‘not so much will you admire the construction of the harbours which nature has bestowed’.
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