

## A NOTE ON PERSIUS, 5. 134 ff.

‘et quid agam?’ ‘rogat! en saperdas aduehe Ponto,  
castoreum, stuppas, hebenum, tus, lubrica Coa.  
tolle recens primus piper et sitiente camelo.  
uerte aliquid; iura.’

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IN l. 136, Clausen's<sup>1</sup> adoption of *et* from the best manuscripts would warm the heart of A. E. Housman, who takes exception to the *e*, *ex*, and *ec* of other editors (i.e. Jahn, Owen, and Nettleship): 'Spell it as you will, the preposition is not natural: the camel carried the pepper on his back, not in any of his numerous stomachs; and it does not follow that we ought to say "*tollere piper e camelo*" because there exist such phrases as "*desilire ex equo*".'<sup>2</sup> Instead, he takes both *primus* and *sitiente camelo* as adverbial adjuncts to the predicate which (though not parallel in form) are parallel in force and therefore united by the conjunction *et*.

Although *et* represents the *lectio difficilior*, Housman's argument (based on what he considers similar constructions in Verg. *Aen.* 5. 498, Ovid, *Met.* 5. 362 seq., and Cic. *ad fam.* 4. 6. 1) is tenuous. In fact, only the Vergil passage (*extremus galeaque ima subsedit Acestes*) presents a truly similar construction based on adverbial adjuncts and neither here nor in the Cicero example (*clarum virum et magnis rebus gestis*) are the parallel expressions separated and obscured by an intervening word as in the case of the Pers. 5. 136 *piper*. Furthermore, Housman conveniently overlooks the fact that the awkwardness of the Ovid passage (*postquam exploratum satis est loca nulla labare, / depositoque metu . . .*) is reflected in the variant reading *depositique metus* which clearly attempts to avoid the pitfalls of a temporal clause plus ablative absolute separated by an indirect statement.

Even more important, however, is the fact that Housman's dismissal of the *desilire ex equo* phrase cannot be accepted. A cavalier reference to the camel's 'numerous stomachs' does not account for Vergil, *Aen.* 3. 176 (*corripio e stratis corpus*) unless we assume that pious Aeneas crawled out of the midst of the bedsprings, and similar observations could be made in many other instances, to wit Ter. *Ad.* 520 (*ut . . . e lecto nequeat surgere*), Plaut. *Amph.* 764 (*ex tua accepi manu pateram*), Lucil. 662 (*e mensa . . . capturus cibum*), Plaut. *Capt.* 841 (*ex corpore exigam . . . maculas*), Varro *ling.* 5. 54 (*ex ovibus . . . vellere lanam*), and Tib. 1. 10. 61 (*e membris tenuem rescindere vestem*). Take it as you will, the preposition is quite natural; there is no reason why the pepper could not be unloaded *e camelo*, from the camel's back, and the substitution of *et* for *ex* would tend to add preciousness to a line which (due to the unfortunate juxtaposition of *recens* and *primus*) is already sufficiently crabbed.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Persi Flacci ed. D. Iuni Iuvenalis Saturae, ed. W. V. Clausen, Oxford, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> A. E. Housman, 'Notes on Persius', *CQ.* vii (1913), p. 24.