

## PERSIUS, SATIRES 6.6

The purpose of this note is to defend the following reading, offered by a minority of manuscripts, at *Sat.* 6.6.

(mox iuvenes agitare iocos et pollice honesto)  
*egregius* lusisse *senes*.

*egregius* . . . *senes* codd. nonnulli<sup>1</sup> *egregius* . . .  
*senex* (vel sim.) PaVGL *egregios* . . . *senes* CMNRW

Even if the evidence of the manuscripts showed merely that *egregius* . . . *senes* was an eleventh-century conjecture which gained a very moderate degree of acceptance, the reading would still have much to commend it. First, it explains better than anything else the existence of *two* strongly represented alternatives in the manuscripts—*egregius* . . . *senex* and *egregios* . . . *senes*. The latter seems to appear more frequently than the former,<sup>2</sup> and yet is pretty quickly seen to yield

<sup>1</sup> Viz. Trier 1088/28 8°	} (XIth cent.)	
Vat. Reg. Lat 1562		
Paris Lat. 9345		
Vat. Reg. Lat. 1424	} (XIth–XIIth cent.)	
Cambridge, Trinity College 0.3.57		
R.3.29	} (XIIth cent. or later)	
West Berlin, Staatsbibl. Preuss. Kulturbesitz		Lat. Q. 2
		Lat. fo. 49
		Lat. Q. 9

The readings in Vat. Reg. Lat. 1562 and Paris Lat. 9345 are corrections, contemporary or near-contemporary, of an original *egregios* (. . . *senes*). They were made (surely?) on other manuscript authority, or at least as independent conjectures, and are unlikely either to have been casually made in view of the increased difficulty they produce or (for the same reason) to be half-completed changes to the easy and obvious *egregius* . . . *senex*.

For the dates of these manuscripts and correctors see (in the order of the list given above) G. Kantenich, *Beschr. Verzeichnis der Hschr. der Stadtbibl. zu Trier* (1931), vol. 10, pp.15–16; D. M. Robathan, *CP* 26 (1931), 289, cf. 299; information supplied to me by the Cab. des manuscrits, Bibliothèque Nationale; W. Clausen (Oxford, 1956), p.41; M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trin. Coll. Cambridge* (1900–2), nos. 1229, 609; V. Rose *Die Hschr.-Verzeichnisse der Königl. Bibl. zu Berlin*, 2 Bd. 3 Abt. (1905), nos. 916, 991, 1009.

Trier 1088/28 8° is perhaps Jahn's manuscript *Tr* (Prolegg., 1843, p.CCIX). It has, and the other Trier MS., 1089/26 8°, has not, the required reading at Pers. 6.6 (cf. Jahn, 1843 edn., p.61). The appearance of its text,

too, is more nearly 'forma quadrata' (Jahn) than the other manuscript, to judge from the copies of single pages of each kindly sent to me; and its overall dimensions (14 × 19 cm) fit that description better than those of 1089/26 8°, which are 14 × 21 cm.

See W. Clausen (Oxford, 1956), pp.xviii–xxi on the respect occasionally due to secondary manuscripts of Persius. All symbols used for manuscripts in the textual apparatus above are the ones used in this edition.

<sup>2</sup> *egregios* . . . *senes* is the reading of the five manuscripts in the textual apparatus above; of a large majority (apparently) of Jahn's manuscripts (1843 edn.) although (Clausen, op. cit., p.xvi) his information was not always accurate; and of a majority of other manuscripts so far as my inquiries have gone: all eighteen manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (one Xth cent., one XIth, remainder XVth); the four Hamilton manuscripts in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (XIVth cent. or later); Codd. Norimbergensis, Ottoburanus, Trevirensis 1089, Turnacensis, Valentianensis 410 (Clausen, op. cit., pp. xiii, 40); nine manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (one XIth cent., two XIIth,

an impossible sense. How, then, did such a multitude of ancient scribes and correctors come to write or accept it in place of an original reading of such simplicity as *egregius . . . senex*?—unless it early became widespread because large numbers of them felt they were faced with something even more unacceptable, the proximity of an adjective, *egregius* to a noun with which it ought to agree but did not, *senes*; after which mere multitude would guarantee its survival. On this supposition, the lack of lucidity of the passage (cf. p. 147 n.1) and especially the less customary use of *senes* as an adjective (see below), yet without any accompanying noun to show that it *was* an adjective, are grounds for corruption. If on the other hand we suppose that *egregius . . . senex*, the only acceptable reading apart from the one I am arguing for, was the original reading, it is difficult to see why both words should get altered, still more difficult to see why in a number of manuscripts, however small, just one of them should be altered, and most difficult of all to see why the alteration would survive and multiply to such a degree that the original reading has been reduced to relative infrequency. The overall difficulty of the passage should not have caused the alteration of one phrase which seemed relatively simple. On the whole I feel that a more plausible account of the phenomena is given by supposing that an original text *egregius . . . senes* has been corrupted; that *egregios . . . senes* is a mistake made by scribes with a little Latin who had a bare recognition of what the immediate context meant and were able to note the corresponsion between *iuvēnes* and *senes* and to base their version upon it (cf. also Jahn, edn., 1843, p. 61); and that *egregius . . . senex* is a more thoughtful but mistaken ‘correction’ made by persons who could accept neither the original text nor the sense that would be produced if they adopted the more obvious alternative *egregios . . . senes*, of whose existence in the manuscripts they will, in some cases at least, have been aware.

The other commendation of the reading *egregius . . . senes* is that, understood with Jahn’s help (1843 edn., p. 214—*senes* adj., subaud. *iocos*. The meaning ‘seniles’ for *senes* can stand or fall along with the meaning ‘iuvēniles’ for *iuvēnes* in line 5) it makes good and effective sense, e.g. ‘Excellent, too, at dealing with the frolics of youth and at recounting, in decorous tone, those of old age’. The ‘frolics of old age’ as well as those of youth are found in the lyric of Horace (*Od.* 1.16 fin., 1.31.19 f., 2.11, 3.14 fin., 3.26, 4.1, cf. Anacreon fr. 5 Diehl, *A.P.* xi.41) so likely enough in Bassus’s lyric too. Stylistically, the final arrival at the antithetic word *senes* when the first major element in the colon is *iuvēnes*, and

remainder later). On Vat. Reg. Lat. 1562, Paris. Lat. 9345 see n.1 above. I have not so far discovered an example of the reading *egregius . . . senex* to add to those (six altogether) in the textual apparatus above.

One fifteenth-century manuscript, Paris Lat. 16696, before correction to *-os . . . -es*, had *egregios . . . senex* which is perhaps due to half-correction of one version in the light of the other. It might be urged that this pointed to a similar origin for the reading *-us . . . -es* which is here being defended. However, the Paris manuscript’s reading is, so far as I know, unique and belongs to an age when correction, including half-

correction, would be especially likely to occur. The *-us . . . -es* reading deserves more consideration because (see text) it explains how both alternative versions would first arise, and offers good sense; also because it is not unique and is older.

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the chiasmic arrangement by which it is effected, *iuvenes agitare iocos* . . . *lusisse senes* are both pleasing.<sup>1</sup>

Literary graces might perhaps be found in the only other acceptable reading, *egregius* . . . *senex*, also. Rhetorical point is present, it is true, in the paradox of the concluding word *senex*, following *lusisse*. But no literary grace will sufficiently compensate, in this phrase of this poet, for the absence of a sufficient degree of logical point when *egregius* . . . *senex* is read. It seems generally and rightly agreed that Persius is a poet who makes words work hard, and that he had an instinct for turning a sentence effectively. The 'received version' of line 6, containing *egregius* . . . *senex*, involves a rhetorical arrangement in which *iuvenes agitare iocos* is balanced by *pollice honesto* . . . *lusisse*. This is immensely feeble, in fact, un-Persian: an adverbial ablative phrase such as *pollice honesto* in the second expression is less direct and vigorous in itself than a direct object such as *iuvenes iocos*, and this adverbial phrase is also vague in meaning by comparison. *Lusisse*, the repetitive item in the balance, corresponding to *agitare iocos*, is unable to supply the deficiency and has a total emptiness which the repetition emphasizes. If my suggestion (n.1 below) that *pollice honesto* belongs ἀπὸ κωωοῦ to *iuvenes agitare iocos* is right, any individual meaning whatever will have gone from the phrase. Finally, this element in the balanced expression should properly be strong enough to stand last in a sequence of four such phrases (lines 3–6) each of which (whatever be the meaning of line 3) obviously says something different and reasonably distinctive about Bassus' poetry (1. (?) Its relation to Greek poetry, its metre and (?) language. 2. Its manly, serious side. 3. Its lighter side). How could a poet of Persius' tendencies promote something as vacuous as (4) *pollice honesto lusisse* to final place in the list, where a weight of meaning is required far beyond what it is able to supply?

With the reading *senes*, on the other hand, *senes*, antithesized against *iuvenes*, is the main item in the balance, and *lusisse*, while still a repetition, becomes, not empty, but a means to pointing out that the balance exists—one infinitive (in a poetically conventional form, the perfect) corresponding to another, *agitare*. *Pollice honesto*, although to be understood with both cola, lends weight to the second and final one.

<sup>1</sup> I have wondered if the style of lines 2–6 of this poem, on the poetry of Caesius Bassus, is not purposely modelled to suggest the style of lyric, although the various types of expression it contains in combination are often used separately by Persius in this poem and elsewhere (e.g. 5.15–16, 6.23–4; 3.16–17, 22; 5.20; 5.3–4). The lengthy extension of a sentence (lines 3–6) by parallel expressions consisting of a predicative adjective followed by an explanatory infinitive is reasonably common in Horace's *Odes* (e.g. 1.35.2–4, 3.12.10–12, 4.12.19–20); so is the use of words ἀπὸ κωωοῦ (*vivunt* (2), *intendisse* (4), *egregius* (6), and perhaps also *pollice honesto* (5), cf. *Odes passim*, e.g. 4.9.47–9, 3.24.25–6, 3.11.5–6). Probably the best sense for line 3 is to be obtained by ignoring the more obvious connection of *veterum* with *vocum* (and

taking *numeris veterum* and *primordia vocum* as separate pairs, H. Beikircher, (1969), pp.21–2), cf. *Odes* 1.1.6 *dominos*, 1.35.6 *ruris* (Nisbet–Hubbard ad locc.), and there is 'syllepsis' in the use of *intendisse* with both *primordia vocum* and *marem strepitum* (Horatian examples of zeugma and syllepsis, Kiessling–Heinze, *Odes* 1.9.20). If this idea is justified, the shape of phrase produced by reading *senes* would contribute to the imitation too, cf. *Odes* 1.11.4 *plures hiemes* . . . *ultimam*, 2.3.1–3 *aequam* . . . *rebus in arduis* . . . *mentem* . . . *in bonis* . . . *temperatam* . . . , 2.9.10–12 *Vespero surgente* . . . *fugiente* . . . The variation of style for purposes including that of literary pastiche would not be strange in Persius: in addition to *Sat.* 1, cf. 5.1–9, 161–6, 6.62.

*Senes*, then, is a necessary reading because, with it, the fourth and final element in Persius' list makes the same kind of distinctive comment about Bassus' poetry as the previous three items make, and because the difference between that situation and serious weakness or total vacuity depends on the word *senes*. The division of light lyric into *iuvenes* and *senes iocos* is not prosaically explicit; but it would be apt and suggestive enough applied to Horatian lyric and one does not look for prosaic explicitness in Persius; and there are many features about the *Satires* which encourage us to think that Persius wrote as the reading *senes* would permit him to have written, and few features, if any, that suggest he would have written a complimentary and perhaps imitative passage on the workmanship of his friend's poetry in the style that the normally accepted version would force upon him. This is only to attempt an elaboration of Bentley's words ad Hor. *Carm.* 1.1.5 where, commending the reading *senes*, he says: 'habes . . . certissimam Flacci emendationem: ubi et sententia mirum quantum erigitur; et oratio novo cultu enitescit.'

Finally, what of the generation to which Caesius Bassus belonged, a question usually decided on the evidence of this line? I am afraid that Bassus perished in A.D. 79 without reaching the ripe age which *senex* is held to give him, and one would expect no differently in view of the information contained in Persius' biography (*Persi vita*, W. Clausen's edition, Oxford, 1956, lines 16 ff.): Calpurnius Statura died young during Persius' short lifetime and cannot, seemingly, have differed much from him in age. He and Bassus are said to be friends whom Persius had a *prima adolescentia*, and at that time of life one tends to have friends of an age similar to one's own. Of Servilius Nonianus the next sentence says (and it would be not unnatural to assume a contrast: this paragraph of the *Life* is full of exact information about the relative ages of the people it mentions): '[Persius] coluit [eum] ut patrem.' This phraseology should cast some doubt upon the idea of Buecheler and others<sup>1</sup> that Bassus was something like a generation older than Persius. If Bassus was so old one might have expected him to be mentioned together with Servilius Nonianus instead.<sup>2</sup> The picture of Persius' friendships with the three people—two playmates and one older person—would be an obvious one (and was, I think, intended to be so) were it not for *senex* at Sat. 6.6. I think the hindrance should be removed, and the small traces, whether of an ancient tradition or of an enlightened emendation of an ancient fault, given a place in the text.

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<sup>1</sup> Schanz—Hosius ii. 484.

<sup>2</sup> The *Life* does not, it is true, mention Lucan, who was Persius' near-contemporary, until the next sentence; but this is because he is mentioned as one of a group of friends made somewhat later in Persius' career, especially through his attendance upon Cornutus.

It is possible to read *senex* while main-

taining that Bassus was a young man if we say that the word does not refer literally to Bassus' age but to a pose of advancing years adopted by Bassus in the poems Persius is discussing. Yet this is less than satisfactory, because *senex* is fairly clearly related by function to *opifex* (line 3). As that does not refer to a poetic pose, it is not natural to assume that *senex* does so.