

# JUVENAL 8. 58–59

Juvenal opens his eighth Satire with the question *stemmata quid faciunt?*, supplies an answer in line 20, *nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*, and devotes the rest of the poem to exhorting his addressee to virtuous activity, both by negative *exempla* drawn from the degenerate nobility and by positive *exempla* drawn from the plebs, *novi homines* and the like. In lines 39–70 he addresses one particularly self-important noble and attempts to deflate his bombastic pride: in 56–67 he adduces an extended illustration from the animal world, apparently such as was common in the schools of rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> In animals the criterion of nobility is achievement; why, suggests Juvenal, should achievement be subordinated to birth in the case of man?

Juvenal describes the normal reaction to a successful horse:

nempe volucrum  
sic laudamus equum, facili cui plurima palma  
fervet et exultat rauco victoria circo;  
nobilis hic... (57–60).

The overall meaning of *facili – circo* is clear: the horse easily wins victories and gets a tumultuous reception from the audience in the circus (analogous to the reception of the virtuous noble earlier in the poem at 24–30),<sup>2</sup> as Ruperti<sup>3</sup> sees (ad 58): ‘qui velocitate sua multas facile victorias parat in curuli certamine, in campo, in circo’. However, there are three problems in these lines, all of which are crucial to translation and interpretation.

First, what is the case of *palma*? Editors and commentators disagree: Lewis, Pearson and Strong, Friedländer and Duff regard it as nominative; Housman ablative.<sup>4</sup> Our answer affects the way in which we construe the lines: if nominative, *palma* has its own verb (*fervet*) and *et* therefore joins the two clauses; if ablative, *et* merely connects the two verbs and *plurima... victoria* is the subject of both.

Secondly, the meaning of *palma*: ‘palm of victory’ or ‘palm of hand’?

Finally, the interpretation of *fervet et exultat*. The strained language has caused difficulties for commentators and translators. Ruperti, for example, writes ad 59 *fervet*:

<sup>1</sup> For example, Quint. 5. 11. 3–4 ‘id est inductio... “quod est pomum generosissimum? nonne quod optimum?” concedetur. “quid equus? qui generosissimus? nonne qui optimus?” et plura in eundem modum. deinde, cuius rei gratia rogatum est, “quid homo? nonne is generosissimus qui optimus?” fatendum erit’; cf. Apul. *apol.* 21: ‘hocine homini opprobriari, pauperiem, quod nulli ex animalibus vitio datur, non aquilae, non tauro, non leoni? equus si virtutibus suis polleat, ut sit aequabilis vector et cursor pernix, nemo ei penuriam pabuli exprobrat, tu mihi vitio dabis quod non facti vel dicti alicuius pravitatem, sed quod vivo gracili lare...’.

<sup>2</sup> sanctus haberi  
iustitiaeque tenax factis dictisque mereris?  
agnosco procerem; salve Gaetulice, seu tu  
Silanus: quocumque alto de sanguine rarus  
civis et egregius patriae contingis ovanti,  
exclamare libet populus quod clamat Osiri  
invento.

<sup>3</sup> Ruperti, *D. Junii Juvenalis Opera Omnia* (1820).

<sup>4</sup> J. D. Lewis, *D. Junii Juvenalis Satirae* (1873); C. H. Pearson and H. A. Strong, *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal*<sup>2</sup> (1892); L. Friedländer, *D. Junii Juvenalis Saturarum Libri V* (1895); J. D. Duff, *Fourteen Satires of Juvenal* (new edition 1970); A. E. Housman, *D. Junii Juvenalis Saturae* (1905); all ad loc.

'seu ob fervorem cursus, seu ob ardorem animi victoris, seu denique ob insonantes spectantium plausus et acclamationes'. Green<sup>5</sup> avoids the issue with a paraphrase. The *OLD* bears witness to the unparalleled usages of these words, resorting to a '(cf.)' in the case of *fervet* (s.v. *OLD* 5 To be roused or fired b. (Transf., of the passions themselves)) and to a '(transf.)' in that of *exultat* (s.v. *OLD* 2 a. To behave in an unrestrained manner, run riot). Further, the *TLL* seems to be inadequate in its interpretation of these verbs in this passage.<sup>6</sup>

I would suggest that the first and third problems can be solved by recognizing a literary reminiscence here of a passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This reminiscence seems to have gone unnoticed by commentators on Juvenal and Ovid (surprisingly, even by W. S. Anderson), by G. Highet in 'Juvenal's Bookcase' and by E. Thomas in 'Ovidian Echoes in Juvenal'.<sup>7</sup> However, it is no surprise in view of the numerous echoes, imitations and parodies of the *Metamorphoses* in Juvenal.<sup>8</sup>

In Book 7 Ovid tells the story of Medea and Aeson (159–293): an accomplished witch, she rejuvenates him. Ovid describes her cauldron and the magic potion it contains:

interea validum posito medicamen aeno  
*fervet et exultat* spumisque tumentibus albet (262–3)

– the same words in the same position. Does this help an interpretation of Juvenal's lines? Of course the reminiscence could be unconscious. But conscious or not, it is a pointer. The fact that the three verbs in Ovid's line all have the same subject (*medicamen*) suggests that we should likewise understand *fervet et exultat* as both having the same subject in the passage in Juvenal – that is, *victoria*. The immediate corollary of this is to thrust *palma* into the ablative. This solves the first problem, of the case of *palma*. Thus the three arguments advanced by Housman for the ablative are complemented and strengthened:<sup>9</sup> against these points, it is hard to favour the nominative.

But what of the third problem, the unparalleled and strained usage of these words? The Ovid passage helps here too. The potion *medicamen* is the subject of the verbs and is described in them; it is given a container in the ablative case, *aeno*. Anderson<sup>10</sup> notes that this is conventional language for a boiling pot, and draws attention to Virgil's reapplication of this standard picture in a simile portraying Turnus' emotions:

magno veluti cum flamma sonore  
virgea suggeritur costis undantis aeni  
exsultantque aestu latices, furit intus aquai  
fumidus atque alte spumis exuberat amnis  
nec iam se capit unda, volat vapor ater ad auras  
(*Aen.* 7. 462–6).

<sup>5</sup> P. Green, *Juvenal: The Sixteen Satires* (Penguin) (1967).

<sup>6</sup> See *TLL* v. 2, col. 1951, 40–1 *exulto* IB2, 'fere i.q. gaudio laetitiaque in voces et clamores effundi, iubilare... instrumentis musicis tumultuari sim.' b 'de rebus: fere i.q. cum gaudio et clamoribus celebrari, concini' and *TLL* vi. 1, col. 594, 5 *ferveo* IV 'spectat ad sonitum: i.q. crepare, strepere': both verbs are limited to the denotation of sound, which is plausible in view of *rauco...circo* but, as I shall argue, does not allow the broader connotations full range.

<sup>7</sup> *AJP* 72 (1951), 369–94; *Ovidiana* (ed.) N. I. Herescu (1958), 505–25.

<sup>8</sup> e.g. 7. 115: *Met.* 13. 1 ff.; Highet and Thomas (n. 7) cite many more examples; and Highet writes (p. 381) that the *Metamorphoses* was Juvenal's 'best-liked poem'.

<sup>9</sup> Housman argues from a parallel for the phrase *facili...palma* (Cat. 62. 11); the contrast of *plurima...victoria* and *rara...victoria* (63); and parallels in Juvenal for the word-order. A further point can be made against the nominative: two adjacent pairs of words, each pair in the same case (*facili* *cui* dative, *plurima* *palma* nominative), would be unusual word-order for Juvenal, while the splitting of the ablative *facili...palma* is much more regular.

<sup>10</sup> W. S. Anderson (ed.), *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6–10* (1972) ad loc.

Virgil exploits the image to create an analogy between the contents of the pot and Turnus' inner tumult (especially stressed by *intus* and, when it boils over, *nec iam se capit unda*).

In the same way, I would suggest Juvenal takes this conventional language for a pot boiling and reapplies it for a visual effect, rather than Virgil's psychological insight. Thus *victoria* the subject corresponds to *medicamen*: it is like the potion, boiling and leaping up. And the pot? Our ablative corresponding to *aeno* is *circo*: the *Metamorphoses* passage invites us to regard the Circus Maximus as a rounded container, analogous to the cauldron. Further, we may note that *victoria* and *circo* are juxtaposed, reflecting the Ovidian word-order and position, *medicamen aeno*. In short, Juvenal depicts the scene in the circus of the audience greeting the horse's *plurima... victoria* in terms of a boiling cauldron. He says, 'many a victory boils and leaps up', which by poetic compression suggests a picture of the audience seething and leaping up in excitement at the many victories.

This interpretation gains support from the fact that Juvenal again combines these same three motifs (namely victory, the circus as a container, and noise) at ll. 197–8:

totam hodie Romam circus capit, et fragor aurem  
percutit, eventum viridis quo colligo panni.<sup>11</sup>

Only the second problem remains, that of the meaning of *palma*. Only Weidner, Creekmore and Ramsay<sup>12</sup> interpret it as 'applause' (e.g. '...the swift horse whose speed sets every hand readily aglow...' (Ramsay)); Pearson and Strong and Lewis do not rule it out entirely (e.g. Lewis: 'Others take it "of the clapping of hands by the spectators"'). But the parallels support 'palm of victory': e.g. Cat. 62. 11 'non facilis nobis, aequales, palma parata est'; Hor. *Od.* 4. 2. 17–18 'quos Elea domum reducit/palma caelestes pugilemve equumve'; Phaedr. *A.* 21. 1–2 'equum e quadriga multis palmis nobilem/abegit quidam et in pistrinum vendidit'; Ov. *Fast.* 4. 392 'primaque ventosis palma petetur equis'; *Met.* 7. 542–3 'acer equus quondam magnaeque in pulvere famae/degenerat palmas...' ('he disgraces his victory palms' translates Anderson); and Suet. *Nero* 22. 2 'neque dissimulabat velle se palmarum numerum ampliari'. In either case, an idea elsewhere in the sentence is reduplicated: either that of victory or that of noisy reception: 'for whom with easy first place many a victory boils and leaps up in the hoarse circus' or 'for whom with ready applause many a victory boils...'. Rather than postulate deliberate ambiguity here, which would be a possible interpretation, but not perhaps the most satisfying, 'palm of victory' seems ultimately preferable, for it suits Juvenal's purpose to stress not so much the tumultuous reception given by the audience as *both* the plurality of victories (*plurima... victoria*) and the ease with which they are won (*facili... palma*): two different, complementary aspects of the horse's success.

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<sup>11</sup> The interpretation proposed by A. Weidner (*D. Junii Iuvenalis Saturae* 1873) – that *victoria* means the cry, 'Victory' – has its apparent plausibility weakened by the fact that this would subtract one of these three motifs, i.e. the visual element of circus = pot, besides which *ferveo* and *exulto* only infrequently refer to noise, but usually to activity (and often mass human activity, e.g. *ferveo*: Luc. 9. 254, Petr. 123.1.214; *exulto*: [Sen.] *Oct.* 834–5, Tac. *Ann.* 14. 34).

Pearson and Strong's suggestion that 'Victory is said to do (*fervere*) what the horse or the *auriga* actually does in consequence of the victory' similarly diminishes the imaginative visualization of the circus in cooking-pot tumult, apart from not taking account of the frequent association of mass activity with *ferveo* (*OLD* 4).

<sup>12</sup> Weidner: see n. 11; H. Creekmore, *The Satires of Juvenal* (translation) (1963); G. G. Ramsay, *Juvenal and Persius* (Loeb) (1918).