***Speculum Civilis Sarcina Belli:* Otho the *Pathicus* in Juvenal’s Satire 2**

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**Thesis:** This paper aims to examine Juvenal’s extensive allusion to Otho in the context of current scholarship. Juvenal mentions the mirror of Otho the *pathicus* in Satire 2, in which he is targeting elite passive homosexuals, who are the most culpable for Rome’s decline. The literary figure of Otho isthe perfect example of this category: he comes from a good family, every historical source which depicts him brands him as effeminate, and he assassinates an emperor, destablizing the state, which leads to civil war. Moreover, he was, however briefly, emperor, the person who was considered to be the only true man in Rome. In his selection of Otho, Juvenal seems to be making a conventional allusion at first, but Juvenal is deliberately reducing the ambiguity of Otho’s character, and his heroic suicide, into a mirror to make his reference, which he does to rewrite history and demonstrate that it is impossible for a *pathicus* to make any positive contribution to the state.

**1. Juvenal, Satire2.99-109**

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| ille tenet speculum, **pathici** gestamen Othonis,  Actoris Aurunci spolium, quo se ille videbat  armatum, cum iam tolli vexilla iuberet.  res memoranda novis annalibus atque recenti  historia, speculum civilis sarcina belli ;  nimirum summi ducis est occidere Galbam  et curare cutem ; summi constantia civis  Bebriacis campis spolium adfectare Palati,  et pressum in facie digitis extendere panem,  quod nec in Assyrio pharetrata Samiramis orbe,  maesta nec Actiaca fecit Cleopatra carina. | Another holds in his hand a mirror like that carried by the **effeminate** Otho: a trophy of the Auruncan Actor, in which he gazed at his own image in full armour when he was just ready to give the order to advance—a thing notable and novel in the annals of our time, a mirror among the kit of Civil War! It needed, in truth, a mighty general to slay Galba, and keep his own skin sleek; it needed a citizen of highest courage to ape the splendours of the Palace on the field of Bebriacum and plaster his face with dough! Never did the quiver-bearing Samiramis the like in her Assyrian realm, nor the despairing Cleopatra on board her ship at Actium.[[1]](#footnote-1) |

**2. Juvenal, Satire 2.8-10**

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| frontis nulla fides; quis enim non vicus abundat  tristibus obscenis? castigas turpia, cum sis  inter Socraticos notissima fossa **cinaedos**? | There’s no trusting appearances. After all, isn’t every street packed with grim-looking perverts? Do you criticise disgusting behaviour when you yourself are the most notorious digging-hole among Socratic **pathics**?[[2]](#footnote-2) |

**3. Juvenal, Satire 2.45-47**

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| … respice primum  et scrutare viros: faciunt peiora, sed illos  defendit numerus iunctaeque umbone phalanges.  magna inter **molles** concordia. | … Look at men first, subject them to scrutiny. They behave worse, but they’ve got safety in numbers and in their phalanxes, with shield overlapping shield. The solidarity between **effeminates** is enormous.[[3]](#footnote-3) |

**4. Tacitus, *Histories* 2.31**

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| Sane ante utriusque exitum, quo egregiam **Otho famam, Vitellius flagitiosissimam** meruere minus Vitellii ignavae voluptates quam Othonis flagrantissimae libidines timebantur: addiderat huic terrorem atque odium caedes Galbae, contra illi initium belli nemo imputabat. Vitellius ventre et gula sibi inhonestus, **Otho****luxu saevitia audacia rei publicae exitiosior ducebatur**. | In fact, before these two met their deaths, in which **Otho won a glorious reputation while Vitellius gained infamy***,* the indolent pleasures of Vitellius were less feared than the fiery passions of Otho. Moreover the murder of Galba had made men stand in terror of Otho and hate him; but no one blamed Vitellius for beginning the war. The sensuality and gluttony of Vitellius were regarded as disgracing him alone; **Otho’s luxury, cruelty and daring seemed more dangerous to the state.[[4]](#footnote-4)** |

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1. Juvenal, trans. G. G. Ramsay, LL.D., Lirr.D, *Juvenal and Persius* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1918), 24-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid., 148-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 152-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tacitus, trans. Clifford H. Moore, *Tacitus Histories Books 1-3 (Loeb Classical Library)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 210-213. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)