

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 is the 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, destabilizing 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, Satire 2.99-109

ille tenet speculum, **pathici** gestamen Othonis,
Actoris Aurunci spodium, 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 spodium 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 Bebricum 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

2. Juvenal, Satire 2.8-10

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

¹ Juvenal, trans. G. G. Ramsay, LL.D., Lirr.D, *Juvenal and Persius* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), 24-27.

² *Ibid.*, 148-9.

³ *Ibid.*, 152-3.

3. Juvenal, Satire 2.45-47

... 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 **effeminate**s is enormous.³

4. Tacitus, *Histories* 2.31

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

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³ Ibid., 152-3.

⁴ Tacitus, trans. Clifford H. Moore, *Tacitus Histories Books 1-3 (Loeb Classical Library)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 210-213.