

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

Juvenal's second satire has received a great deal of scholarly attention and reevaluation in recent decades. In particular, scholarship has focused on the identification of the satire's target, progressing from "hypocrites" to "homosexuals" to "passive homosexuals" due to new methodologies for discussing how the Romans perceived their own sexualities. Satire 2 is filled with strident invective against these individuals, described as *pathici* and *cinaedi*, and one of the allusions Juvenal makes is to the *pathicus* Otho and his vain use of a mirror. Otho, the second emperor in the Year of Four Emperors and a once close companion to Nero, is an apt target: Tacitus says that Otho's mind was not as soft as his body (Hist 1.22); Plutarch portrays Otho and Nero's reciprocal, flamboyant displays of *luxuria* (*Galba* 19.3); and Suetonius juxtaposes Otho's noble suicide (*Otho* 9-11) with depilation and bread poultices (*Otho* 12.1). Against such a literary-historical background, Juvenal seems justified in choosing Otho as one of his examples of elite who have betrayed their masculinity and social status.

It is this Juvenalian description of Otho that this paper will explore, building on the recent work of Richlin (2009) and Nappa (1998) and arguing that Otho is, in fact, not a perfect example of Juvenal's overarching point in Satire 2. Instead, this paper will suggest that Juvenal devotes ten lines to his allusion regarding Otho and his mirror because he is reinterpreting Otho's life to serve his own purpose, namely that no elite Roman who desires to be penetrated can be trusted to wield power.

To support such a reading, this paper will look at the use of the signal words for abnormal sexuality, *cinaedus*, *pathicus*, and *mollis*, all of which each occur only once within the satire. It will be shown that Juvenal's use of this vocabulary progresses in pejorative intensity and in its

closeness to the Roman people, moving from the Greek Socratics to Roman citizens to a member of the Roman elite, namely Otho.

Once the importance of the placement of Otho's mirror in the second satire has been established, this paper will return to the depictions of Otho in Suetonius, Tacitus, and Plutarch in order to demonstrate the tensions between Otho's effeminacy and his political efficacy, particularly in regards to his assassination of Galba, his relationship with the praetorian guard, and his suicide. It will then show how the context in which Juvenal places his allusion to Otho and the references he makes within it are deliberately used to erase the fundamental ambiguity of Otho's depiction in the historical sources. By placing Otho's mirror in the kit of civil war, Juvenal is intentionally contradicting sources like Suetonius, who says that Otho killed himself to prevent further civil war, in order to erase the possibility that Roman power can exist without obeying the dictates of elite Roman masculinity.

Bibliography

- Morgan, Gwyn. *69 A.D.: The Year of Four Emperors*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Nappa, Christopher. "'Praetextati Mores': Juvenal's Second Satire." In *Hermes* 126. Bd., H. 1 (1998): 90-108.
- Parker, Holt N. "The Teratogenic Grid." In *Roman Sexualities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. 47-65.
- Richlin, Amy. "Juvenal and Priapus." In *Oxford Readings in Persius and Juvenal*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Richlin, Amy. "Not Before Homosexuality: The Materiality of the *Cinaedus* and the Roman Law

against Love Between Men.” In *Journal of the History of Sexuality* Vol. 3 No. 4 (Apr. 1993), 523-573.