The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

On Juvenal, Sat. I 102 ff

N. P. Vlachos

The Classical Review / Volume 14 / Issue 04 / May 2009, pp 217 - 218

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00082469, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00082469

How to cite this article:

N. P. Vlachos (2009). On Juvenal, Sat. I 102 ff. The Classical Review, 14, pp 217-218
doi:10.1017/S0009840X00082469

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

ON JUVENAL, SAT. I 102 ff.

- 102 'prior,' inquit, 'ego adsum.
 cur timeam dubitemve locum defendere,
 quamvis
 natus ad Euphraten, molles quod in
 aure fenestras
 105 arguerint, licet ipse negem? sed quin-
 que tabernae
 quadringenta parant. quid confert
 purpura maior
 optandum, si Laurenti custodit in agro
 conductas Corvinus oves, ego possideo
 plus
 Pallante et Licinis?'

The speaker is a freedman, who has come to receive his sportula and insists that he be attended to before the praetor and the tribune, as he has come first.

In l. 106 P reads *purpuraemator*, changed by a later hand into *purpura maior*, the reading of some of the inferior MSS.; others have: *purpurae amator*, the majority *purpura maius*.

To my knowledge the reading *purpura maior* has been accepted by all editors. It was supposed to denote the laticlave, which formed the distinction between senators and knights, and, being worn by the praetor and tribune, mentioned in l. 101, against whom the freedman is vindicating his rights, it was accordingly thought to be contrasted with 'quadringenta [sestertia]'; for this, constituting as it did, the census of the knights was thus explained as standing for 'purpura minor,' the dignity of the tunica angusticlavia, worn by the freedman.

But (1) the freedman manifestly is referring to his *income*, or perhaps to part of it, as amounting to four hundred thousand sesterces, and since a *capital* or *estate* valued at 400,000 sesterces entitled the possessor to the rank of eques, an income of that amount could never be used as characteristic of knighthood. Evidently Juvenal used 'quadringenta' [here merely to denote a large sum of money, exactly as in Sat. II. 117 and V. 132.

(2) '*purpura maior*' is an exceedingly strange phrase to designate the broad purple stripe; one would at least have expected '*purpura latior*' and, in fact, we nowhere else find the expression in the sense generally assigned to it.

(3) But even when so understood we are involved in inextricable difficulties, for the Corvinus, cited to exemplify the little benefit

to be derived from the *purpura maior*, manifestly has left the ranks of the senators long ago, and, therefore, *purpura maior* would have to be interpreted to mean: 'the circumstance that you once have worn the tunica laticlavaria.'

(4) Finally the two scholia on this passage comment on *purpura* alone, one explaining it as '*laticlavium*.'

But apart from these objections, what is the purport and tenor of the entire passage? Juvenal depicts the insolent and arrogant behaviour of one of these low-born Orientals against the *ipsi Troiugenae* (l. 100), the praetor and tribune (l. 101) figuring as their representatives; the freedman sneers at these noble Romans, because he, although born at the Euphrates, leads a luxurious life and possesses great wealth, while a Corvinus, although a descendant of a most illustrious house, lives in extreme poverty. The freedman does not contrast his supposed knighthood with the senatorial rank of the tribune and the praetor, for he lays no claim to any rank, nay, he even boasts, on the strength of his wealth, of his low and foreign birth. And, therefore, we expect him not to ask 'what good does it do to wear the laticlave?' but 'what is the good of being a native Roman,' or 'of being a descendant of a noble Roman house?' Now this very sense is supplied by one of the inferior MSS., reading: *purpura maiorum*.

The corruption in the other MSS. (including P) is easily explained. The archetype read something which was mistaken for *MATOR* and this was emended variously into *emator*, *amator*, *maior* and *maius*, the corruption simply arising from the fact that the stroke representing the ending -um had been placed by a scribe of the archetype too near the 1 (T); *maiorum* therefore is at least as probable a correction of P's reading as *maior*.

Purpura alone in the meaning of purple garment, such as were worn by high officials at festivals and other solemn occasions, and hence, metaphorically, as denoting a position of high rank, as consulship and in later times even the emperor, is of frequent occurrence. Cp. Ov. *Fast.* i. 81, iamque novi praeceunt fasces, nova purpura fulget; Seneca *Ep.* 69, 4 ambitio purpuram [promittit] et plausum et ex hoc potentiam; *fragm.* 124 hic est ille homo honestus non apice, purpurave, e.q.s.; Sil. Ital. 14, 112 tertia pur-

pura (consulship); Mart. viii. 8, 4 *purpura te felix, te colat omnis honos*; viii. 66, 8 *gaudenti superest adhuc, quod optet, felix purpura tertiusque consul*; x. 10, 12 *purpura vestra*.

Purpura maiorum then would mean: 'the high dignity of one's forefathers,' 'the lofty station held by one's ancestors,' and could the freedman cite a better instance, exemplifying the little value of noble descent, than this Corvinus, a member of the illustrious gens Valeria, now compelled to work for wages?

One point more remains. In accepting the advocated reading we would have in l. 106 a hypermeter, Juvenal having nowhere else made use of this freedom. But, as is well-known, it is also found but once in Lucretius (cp. L. Müller *De R. M.* p. 354);

moreover it is here particularly justified, because *optandum* belongs in sense and construction to the preceding line; finally it is highly probable that the very existence of the hypermeter has been largely responsible for the corruption in our MSS.

The meaning of the entire passage is, therefore, this: 'I was here first; why should I hesitate to defend my rights, although only a freedman, and reared on the Euphrates? I am rich: and of what benefit is it to a man, to be able to boast of a long line of illustrious ancestors? Since a Corvinus hardly manages to keep alive, while I possess greater wealth than a Pallas and a Licinus.'

N. P. VLACHOS.

Philadelphia, Feb. 1900.

ON JUVENAL SAT. III., 203.

Urceoli sex.

These words are always taken as describing the extreme poverty of Codrus; namely, that his marble slab had as decorations only six mugs with a *cantharus* beneath, thus suggesting by way of contrast the *abaci* in the house of the rich man, covered with different kinds of *pocula* and other drinking utensils made of silver, gold, crystal and murrhine. However there is nothing in the verses following which indicates that Juvenal had this in his mind, although the contrast is carried out in reference to *recubans-Chiron* and *Graecos-libellos*. Cf. v. 216 *Hic*-v. 219 *Minervam*.

A characteristic of the style of Juvenal is his indirect mode of expression, frequently with underlying humor. This Satire abounds in examples of this peculiarity; vv. 26-28, 66, 91&c., consequently we should expect that the words *urceoli sex* have an implied meaning.

Juvenal in his description of the rich man says among other things that he is *orborem lautissimus* v. 221. This relates not only to his loss by fire, but also to the fact that he was childless and therefore received valuable presents. Cf. v. 129. If we adopt the best MSS. reading *Haec* in verse 218, we can conclude that the rich

man was unmarried. This is but another instance of Juvenal's indirect style. In this way is brought out the contrasted condition of the poor man, who has not only a wife but also *urceoli sex*. This can mean nothing else than that his family consisted of six persons, not a small number at a time when it could be said *in civitate nostra plus gratiae orbitas confert quam eripit*. This explanation shows the miserable plight of Codrus and makes the picture more graphic. Here is a poor man living in an attic with scarcely any furniture and few utensils and having a wife and large family depending upon him. He loses all and no one will give him even *frusta*.

The *urceoli* were commonly intended for individual use and contained hot or cold water, to be mixed with the wine. In this family, however, the *urceoli* had to serve also as *pocula*. These with the *cantharus* placed beneath the slab, which was not large enough to hold it, included all the drinking utensils of Codrus.

Jul. Paullus 111. 6, 90 gives a hint that *urceoli* were used at times as *pocula*. He says: *Omnia quae ad poculorum speciem-veluti paterae, culices, scyths, urceoli, &c.*

W. O. SPROULL.

University of Cincinnati.