

## Is This Conjecture Too Bold or Not Bold Enough? Juvenal 8.165

Juvenal expounds on youthful indiscretions (8.163-66):

defensor culpae dicet mihi 'fecimus et nos  
haec iuuenes.' esto, desisti nempe nec ultra  
fouisti errorem. breue sit quod turpiter audes,       165  
quaedam cum prima resecentur crimina barba.

I cannot prove it, but I suspect that Juvenal wrote *audis* in 165. Of course, *bene audire* often means 'to have a good reputation', *male audire* 'to have a bad reputation' (*OLD* s.v. 5.b, with quotations extending from Cicero to Tacitus). In *De Oratore*, Cicero uses the latter of a depraved young man who straightened out in adulthood, just as Juvenal recommends. Since it's one of the more amusing passages in Cicero – which is saying a lot – I cannot resist quoting the whole thing here (from Kumaniecki's 1969 Leipzig Teubner):

Est bellum illud quoque, ex quo is, qui dixit, inridetur in eo ipso genere, quo dixit; ut, cum Q. Opimius consularis, qui adulescentulus male audisset, festivo homini Egilio, qui videretur mollior nec esset, dixisset: 'quid tu Egilia mea? quando ad me venis cum tua colu et lana?' 'non pol' inquit 'audeo. nam me ad famosas vetuit mater accedere.'

Though it took some boldness for an upper-class Roman girl to misbehave (note Opimius' *non pol audeo*), I'm not sure that applied to adolescent males,<sup>1</sup> and *audes* seems somehow a bit off in our passage of Juvenal. Cicero also once varies the negative version with *minus commode audire* (*Verr.* 3.3.134), which seems slightly bolder than what I propose for Juvenal: *breue sit quod turpiter audis*, 'let your shameful reputation be brief'.

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<sup>1</sup> Please feel free – or even obligated – to correct me in the comments.