

Interpolating an Isthmus: Juvenal 6.294-97¹

nullum crimen abest facinusque libidinis ex quo
 paupertas Romana perit. hinc fluxit ad istos 295
 et Sybaris colles, hinc et Rhodos et Miletos
 atque coronatum et petulans madidumque Tarentum.

295 istos *KU sicut coni. Nogarola* : istros *V* : ismos *Z* : indos *PR Arou*.

R. J. Tarrant has remarked that ‘Latin poets from Ovid onward . . . felt an almost irresistible urge to mention the Isthmus of Corinth wherever possible’,² and A. E. Housman admitted to a similar, though less urgent, inclination to introduce the city of Corinth into the passage quoted: ‘inter 295 et 296 excidisse uidetur uersus cuius clausula fuerit *Corinthus*’. Corinth would, of course, be very much at home in this list of depraved and wealthy (or formerly wealthy) Greek cities, and would suitably head the list. If Corinth were named first, Sybaris would make an appropriate second, since each had been utterly destroyed at the height of, and to some extent because of, its prosperity. So much is attractive about Housman’s suggestion. However, it is significant that he confined it to his apparatus, neither inserting an *exempli gratia* line 295b of his own composition, as he sometimes does elsewhere, nor marking a lacuna in the text.³

In addition to the puzzle of the missing Isthmus of Corinth, there are several other problems in our passage which, though individually minor, clump together in a highly suspect way. First, as Courtney says, *hinc . . . et . . . hinc et* provides an ‘unusual form of anaphora’, and it seems to me not only unusual but very awkward indeed.⁴ The meaning

¹ Text and apparatus are quoted from W. V. Clausen’s Oxford text, *A. Persi Flacci et D. Iuni Iuuenalis Saturae*, Oxford, 1992². Editors and commentators referred to by surname are G. A. Ruperti (Glasgow, 1825), A. E. Housman (Cambridge, 1931²), and J. Ferguson (London/New York, 1979). References to ‘Courtney’ are to E. Courtney, *A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal*, London, 1980. When not further specified, all references are *ad loc*.

² R. J. Tarrant, ‘The Reader as Author: Collaborative Interpolation in Latin Poetry’, in J. N. Grant (ed.), *Editing Greek and Latin Texts* (New York, 1989), 121-62, at 141-2.

³ Housman’s additions to his text of Juvenal are lines 1.156a, 14.229a, 16.2a, and most of 9.134, where 134a is Juvenal’s. He uses asterisks to mark lacunae after 1.131, 2.169, and 6.585.

⁴ It might be more natural to take the second *et* with the third, pairing *Rhodos* and *Miletos*. However, that would leave us with an even more awkward *hinc . . . et . . . hinc et* anaphora, or rather with a perfectly normal anaphora of *hinc* and a totally superfluous *et*. Neither possibility is at all attractive, and either seems much worse than Courtney’s parallel in *Aeneid* 10.369.

of the repeated *hinc* is also a problem, in that it must, as Courtney says, mean *ex paupertate perditā*, but in this context would more naturally mean *ex hoc loco*,⁵ with *paupertas* flowing away from Rome rather than wealth flowing in. The use of *istos* where *hos* would be more natural is also very strange: though not utterly unparalleled,⁶ it tends to reinforce our mistaken first impression of what is flowing in which direction. The use of *istos* is particularly difficult when taken with the double *hinc*: at first glance, it looks as if Juvenal is saying that *paupertas* has flowed from here (that is, Rome) to the formerly-wealthy cities of Greece and Magna Graecia: this would be especially appropriate for Sybaris, which is named first. It is only in the next line that we realize that it is wealth and depravity that are in motion, and that they are flowing to Rome, so that neither *hinc* nor *istos* can mean what we thought they did.⁷ Finally, the word-order, with both *Sybaris* and the superfluous *et* sandwiched between *ad istos* and *colles*, is odd, to say the least.⁸ Housman's proposed lacuna, even if it could be filled satisfactorily (which I doubt) would not solve all of these problems. It would presumably dissociate *istos* from *colles*, and disentangle the anaphora by using the superfluous first *et* in 296 to link *Corinthos* at the end of the lost line 295b with *Sybaris* in 296, but we would still be left with an awkwardly

⁵ In 2.1-2, *Vltra Sauromatas fugere hinc libet et glaciale / Oceanum*, a bare *hinc* certainly means 'away from Rome'.

⁶ Courtney refers to 4.67 and 14.179, both of which are familiar and perhaps colloquial, which our passage is not. Friedlaender adduces 3.29, in which Umbricius refers to Rome as *istic*, but there he is already outside the gate, and is speaking to one who is remaining.

⁷ Ruperti reports that some have tried to read the passage this way. After recording *Indos* from three of his manuscripts, he adds 'non improb. Pithoeo, si mox, suadente Jac. August. Thuano, reponatur *Rhodon et Mileton*, ut sensus sit, paupertatem Roma excedentem fluxisse ad illas civitates, quae ante deliciis et voluptatibus insignes fuerint'. The problem with this solution is that it only applies to the first city named. *Paupertas* had certainly come to Sybaris, or to the place where Sybaris had been, but the Istrians had never been known for their wealth, and the Rhodians, Milesians, and Tarentines, if not as wealthy as they had been, were hardly poverty-stricken. On the other hand, wealth can come from these cities to Rome, without every one of them having to have become poor, though it is poetically effective that the one that has is put first. It appears that we are back with the usual interpretation, and all its difficulties. However, we will see that my own solution is not entirely unlike this one, achieving the same end by a different set of changes.

⁸ Although several of these problems converge on the first *et* in 296, I should perhaps mention here that that is one of the few words in the vicinity that I believe to be sound: the reader is warned.

placed *colles*, and very likely some of our other problems as well, depending on the precise text of the supplement.⁹

It seems to me that there is no need to invoke a missing line 295b, since the city of Corinth is already clearly alluded to in our text, if we understand our corrupt manuscripts properly. The variants for the last word of 295 (*istos*, *istros*, *ismos*, *indos*) point to *Isthmos* as the archetypal reading. Though found only in *Z*, *ismos*, as a *vox nihili*, is more likely than any of the other three to preserve some vestige of the truth. In fact, *ismos* is a mediaeval (mis)spelling of *isthmus*, as we see in Propertius 3.22.2 (*Tulle, Propontiaca qua fluit Isthmos aqua*), where the oldest manuscript (N) spells the word *ismos*.¹⁰ It is possible that *istos* in two of Juvenal's manuscripts (K and U) is itself an inadvertent corruption of *Ist(h)mos*, dropping the *m* instead of the *t*, rather than a conscious effort at a demonstrative pronoun. However, it was certainly the latter when Hieronymus Nogarola and L. Balbus proposed it, independently of each other and the manuscripts.¹¹

It is not, of course, sufficient to substitute *Isthmos* for *istos*: the corruption is deeper, or at least wider, than that. Although a solution which alters five separate words in the space of less than one line may seem uneconomical, I suggest that what Juvenal wrote was something like this (*felix* for *colles* is *exempli gratia*):

huc fluxit et Isthmos 295
et Sybaris *felix*, *huc* et Rhodos et Miletos,
atque coronatum et petulans madidumque Tarentum.

⁹ One of the problems in composing a satisfactory interpolation would be deciding whether to insert a third *hinc*: the two that are already there would be rather far apart without it, but a third might make things a bit crowded.

¹⁰ Scribes no doubt found the unwieldy sequence of consonants in *isthmus* difficult, and dealt with it in two opposite but, for our purposes, equivalent ways, either dropping one or more of the consonants, or adding an epenthetic vowel. In Juvenal 6.295 and Propertius 3.22.2, they dropped a consonant or two: certainly the *t* and perhaps also the *h*, though that may have been lost long before. In Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 1.1, on the other hand, the scribe of the surviving archetype (F) or one of his predecessors, faced with *Isthmos Ephyraea*, inserted a vowel in the first word, while dropping an aspirate in the second, to produce *isthomos epyrea*. (The scribe of one manuscript of Statius' *Thebais*, Klotz's M, at 6.557, faced with the adjective *Isthmiaca* or some previous perversion of it, was sufficiently confused or demoralized to insert an extra *m* and produce the grotesque *imstmiaca*.)

¹¹ It may be worth mentioning that Courtney has some doubts as to the existence of Nogarola, 'quoted, unless this is a literary fiction, by J. Parrhasius in his 'Liber de Rebus per Epistolam Quaesitis 29', published in 1567 long after the death of Parrhasius in 1522' ('The Progress of Emendation in the Text of Juvenal since the Renaissance', *ANRW* 33.1, 1989, 824-47, at 826). He also reports (*ibid.*) that Balbus had proposed *istos* in the interval (1524).

Isthmos is practically the reading of one manuscript, and changes of *ad* to *et*, *hinc* to *huc* (twice), and *colles* to (for instance) *felix* can hardly be called extraordinary measures, if a plausible *ratio corruptelae* can be found: more on this in my last paragraph. The proposed changes solve all of the problems outlined above. The anaphora is now unexceptionable, with each *huc* followed by a pair of nouns linked by paired *et*.¹² At the same time, the change of *hinc* to *huc* allows us to take the adverb in its natural local meaning, while preserving the ‘direction’ of the thought: Greek wealth and depravity have come to Rome, and *huc* expresses this in a simpler and much more regular way than *ad istos* . . . *colles*.¹³ Indeed, the lexically anomalous and textually insecure *istos* is now deleted. Finally, we may add Juvenal to the list of Silver Latin poets who mention the Isthmus of Corinth, thus confirming Housman’s intuition of the sense required.

Several difficulties remain.¹⁴ First, I can quote no parallel for the use of *Isthmos* to refer to the city and people of Corinth rather than its geographic position. However, Statius uses *Isthmiacus* to mean ‘Corinthian’ (*S.* 2.2.68), while Silius uses the same word to mean ‘Syracusan’ (13.341, 14.462), since the city was a Corinthian colony. The latter in particular is a bolder metonymy than the one I have posited. Second, Sybaris does not quite fit the list, since it was destroyed centuries before Rome’s loss of *paupertas*. However, this problem is present whether the text is emended or not. If anything, it seems better to have the exception placed second on the list, rather than first. Third, *fluxit* particularly suits Sybaris, which was the name of a river as well a town, and does not suit *Isthmos* at all. On the other hand, neither Rhodos nor Miletos was a river, so Juvenal clearly

¹² Courtney notes: ‘The cities are Italian, Greek, Greek, Italian.’ I think it is more important that all four — five with Corinth added — are culturally Greek. The arrangement of my list of five, though not chiasmic, is, I think, at least as elegant as the transmitted list of four, with a pair of cities, one Greek and one (geographically) Italian, each destroyed at the height of its wealth and power, another pair, both Greek (‘note the Greek termination, pointed in the anti-Greek J.’, Ferguson), and finally one Italian city given an entire line to itself, with three epithets to provide a further reminder of luxury, *hubris*, and disaster. Courtney refers to, but does not describe, the theatre-incident of 281 B.C. to which Juvenal surely alludes: the details are most readily available in Ferguson.

¹³ Juvenal uses *huc* in three other passages, and in two of the three (3.308 and 6.466) the meaning is ‘to Rome’. (The third is 6.416.)

¹⁴ This paragraph is particularly indebted to the Latin editor’s advice, though Dr. Heyworth also convinced me to suppress my own emendation of *colles* and tentatively proposed *felix*, among other improvements.

uses a partially inappropriate metaphor even without my conjecture.¹⁵ Fourth, the residual uncertainty about the word after *Sybaris* is disquieting: although *felix* would be a suitable epithet, it is to some extent mere metrical ‘filler’. On the other hand, it is possible that some more pointed word is still to be found: I invite suggestions. While not underestimating the difficulties of my conjecture, particularly the last two, they seem less severe than those of the transmitted text.

Although the precise details of each stage of the corruption I have posited are not recoverable, plausible guesses can be made. The first step would most likely have been the corruption of *Isthmos* to *ismos* or *istos*, as outlined above. Once this had happened, the word would have been quite vulnerable to misreading as an accusative plural.¹⁶ At that point, substitution of *ad* for *et* would have been nearly inevitable: with no transitive verb in the context, a preposition would have been badly wanted to govern the apparent accusative, and *ad* is the obvious one to choose in this geographical context. Corruption of *huc* to *hinc* was probably the second step, though it may have come first. The words are often confused with each other, and with *hic* and forms of *hic*: at 6.466, the first hands of two manuscripts (F₁ and r₁) have corrupted *huc* to *hinc*. Error would have been particularly easy in our passage, owing to the confusion about the ‘direction’ of the thought outlined above.¹⁷ Finally, *colles* looks like a conscious interpolation, designed to provide a noun, either to agree with *istos*, or for *Sybaris* (taken as a genitive) to depend on, and perhaps inspired by thoughts of the bare, ruined hills of Sybaris, to which *paupertas* has flowed.

¹⁵ Umbricius depict Orontes as a tributary of the Tiber in 3.62: *iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes*. It might appear that Juvenal is doing much the same thing with Sybaris in our passage, except that the other names are not suitable.

¹⁶ Misreading of the ending would presumably have come after the stem had been corrupted, since the Greek endings of *Rhodos* and *Miletos* in the next line did not bother the scribes. In the Oxford fragment, a scribe who did not recognize *neruos* as a nominative singular corrupted *aliusque in carcere neruos* to *aliosque* (6.O.13, corrected by Housman), making hash of the thought. Once a Greek word had been corrupted in such a way as to look Latin, it would have been that much more likely to suffer the same fate.

¹⁷ The anaphora would not have protected it. Once either *huc* had been corrupted to *hinc*, a scribe who realized that they were intended to match would be as likely to alter the right one as the wrong one — more likely, if the wrong one came first.