

Inverting Paradigms and Identifying Monstrosities in Juvenal's "Satire VI"

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Abstract

In this paper, I offer a reading of Juvenal's "Satire VI" as an example of ancient Roman satirists' use of inversion, one of many techniques meant to invite political criticism without attracting the wrong kinds of autocratic attention. I claim that Juvenal inverts the paradigmatic father-son[-wife] relationship with a wife-husband-child chain to suggestively critique Roman governmental authority. This examination includes the relationship between the autocracy and aristocracy in ancient Rome, the nuances of the Roman household in relation to patriarchal representation, Roman satire's social function, aristocratic expectations of satire, and alternative forms of luxurious entertainment. Knowing that their writing would not create immediate change, satirists such as Juvenal convert an aristocratic audience's stress into humor, and in doing so channel a kind of "soft power" that aims to gently influence rather than directly attack. I conclude by restating that shying away from the search for meaning due to offensive metaphor (in this case, misogyny) is an academic mistake because it focuses on textual façade over underlying meaning. In fact, it is as these times of feeling offended that we should be more aggressive in our pursuit of meaning.

I. Introduction

"But whence come these monstrosities?" (Juvenal 6.286)

Juvenal's "Satire VI" may not fit into the modern category of a monster story, but monsters lurk within its narrative. A "she-tyrant" (33) dominates the poem as a central subject and metaphorical theme and embodies distinguishable traits that drive the question: is "Satire VI," often subtitled "The Ways of Women," about a particular type of woman, and does that suggestive figure warrant further reading to locate obscured meaning? Juvenal uses the term "monstrosity" in the plural, so another threatening villain must be located. Pulling away from the speaker's misogynistic trap toward an objective position allows us to see that Juvenal's monsters have more to do with factors within Roman society than the female sex. Subject, situation, and audience are approached with such cynicism that the poem assumes a critical posture that throws blame in many directions simultaneously.¹ A necessary consideration is Juvenal's vital question: where do these "monstrosities" originate? To attempt an answer, the poem's motifs of authority, family, and household must be understood within a historical framework. Roman satire's social function, the specific practice of thematic inversion, audience expectations, and alternative forms of luxurious entertainment should be reviewed to encourage a reading that understands certain subjects as ironic metaphor. After this introductory analysis, a close reading will be offered to examine how the poem's wife-husband-child social chain inverts the paradigmatic father-son[-wife] relationship, and in doing so artistically criticizes the Roman political system to encourage a benevolent autocracy.

The Roman satirist of the late first and early second century C.E. practiced within a tradition of symbols meant to represent social, and often political, issues.² Juvenal would have utilized these techniques to acquire the right kinds of attention from his audience, who had come to expect clever metaphor from their satirist.³ These expectations formed in part from a history of veiled criticism to avoid censorship under previous, harsher emperors, who burned books, exiled poets, and otherwise limited *licentia*.⁴ Satire, which assumed an important role in Roman culture, became so concerned with disguised messages that Frederick Ahl has appropriately claimed, "Once the art is detected [by the audience], the effect is lost" (197).⁵ The famed Roman historian Quintilian points to the complications entailed in sparking audience appreciation via veiled criticism:

You can speak well and make open statement against the tyrants we were discussing, provided the statement can be understood in another way. It is only danger you are trying to avoid, not giving offense. If you can slip by through ambiguity of expression, there's no one who won't enjoy your verbal burglary. (Quintilian qtd. Ahl 193)

¹ Susan Braund calls Juvenal's speaker (his *persona*) a "ShowMan" and "Bullshitter," p. 115 (1989).

² Frederick Ahl's "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome" is primarily about the required balance between symbolism and political commentary in Rome; see esp. p. 89-90; 204. Michael Coffey calls Juvenal's "Satire IV" "political satire" in his *Roman Satire*, p. 126.

³ See Matthew Roller, *Constructing Autocracy*, esp. p. 6-7: "They [aristocrats] wrote for an audience of other aristocrats, and they presumably hoped that their representations would be found compelling and persuasive by that audience."

⁴ *Licentia* is used by Ronald Mellor as the freedom to speak; see Mellor p. 79-80 on Roman censorship and autocratic response. Shadi Bartsch prefers *libertas* as free speech; p. 116.

⁵ Quintilian calls Roman satire "entirely our own;" see Braund p. 6 (1992).

As a number of scholars have observed, the modern reader of Roman satire should vigilantly recognize such "ambiguity" that promotes a text "be understood in another way." In other words, a straightforward reading of Roman satire is likely inadequate. Ahl calls such metaphorical discourse "figured speech," which he suggests "was the normal mode of discourse throughout much of Greek and Roman antiquity" (204). A necessary component of figured speech was *schema*, which Quintilian summarizes as "pretending to say one thing and actually saying something else" (Ahl 188). Susan Braund develops her reading of Roman satire in *Roman Verse Satire* through recognition of poetic "*persona*," which she defines as a literary "mask" so effective that the opinions held in a satirical piece should be attributed to a fictional entity, not the author.⁶ In *Actors in the Audience*, Shadi Bartsch chooses the term "doublespeak" to discuss Juvenal's styled "authorial persona" (134) as simultaneous praise and criticism: "a doublespeak that lets itself be read differently by different audiences . . . that offers a general comment on the circumstances on its own production" (144); the term "authorial persona" is valuable because it highlights the importance of removing author from text.⁷ These experts create different key concepts but agree that Roman satire used metaphor to communicate multiple meanings while remaining elusive and hard to pin down. A critical reading of "Satire VI" demands a skeptical approach which refuses cursory interpretations settling on the poem as strictly misogynistic—as if façade is message. Such an interpretation may mark the "she-tyrant" as the poem's sole monster and disregard Juvenal's rich illustration of socio-political "monstrosities."

The preceding broad impressions of Roman satire are certainly required before a proper reading of "Satire VI" may be posited, but a narrower recognition of the specific satirical techniques employed by Juvenal is necessary. Braund's preparatory statements on Roman satire are a good place to begin: "The subject matter of satire is always 'the familiar,' distorted to a greater or lesser extent by satirical devices such as exaggeration, stereotyping, caricature, and inversion" (4). All four of these devices can be found in "Satire VI," the most crucial being inversion. An examination of the "she-tyrant" in regards to the paradigmatic symbol of the Roman family reveals Juvenal's aim to figuratively capsize established structures of authority. The family is a natural subject for satire, since it is perhaps the most "familiar" entity in social life. In *Constructing Autocracy*, Matthew Roller explains that familial metaphor was used in politics precisely due to such "familiar[ity]": "images of the father-son relationship are projected *en bloc* into the political domain, structuring power relations there in terms of this familiar authority relationship within the family" (237). Juvenal's choice to satirize social circumstances as bad—even monstrous—through his dysfunctional family appears rational under this traditional criterion. Braund's "familiar" is adopted from Leonard Feinberg's definition of Roman satire as "the playfully critical distortion of the familiar."⁸ A description of satire as "playfully critical" is oxymoronic and points to the difficulty of fulfilling agendas that require both entertainment and criticism. Although we have established Juvenal's manipulation of domestic roles as rational, further research into representations of familial norms in Rome can specify "Satire VI's" agenda.

Ancient Rome was a patriarchal society, and representations of a dominant male as *paterfamilias* (head of household) prepared audiences for a positive portrayal of public authority. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* establishes the social importance of the *paterfamilias*: "The

⁶ Braund 2 (1992).

⁷ This distinction is by no means radical. Contemporary critics of fiction urge a reader to segregate real and implied authors. See Chatman p. 240-1.

⁸ Feinberg qtd. Braund 4.

paterfamilias had an absolute power over the members of the family . . . It extended to life and death" (789).⁹ Other Latin terms important to this paper include *princeps* (for the sake of brevity, simply "emperor") and *dominus* ("master, owner"); all three concepts intertwine in "Satire VI." George Sabine and Stanley Smith, in their translation of *On the Commonwealth*, summarize Cicero's correlation of political and family life in *The Republic*: "An element of great stability when subject to 'paternal authority' (*patria potestas*), the family is the chief source in private life of that permanence which the ideal state establishes, embodies, and perpetuates" (65).¹⁰ By identifying the family as "the chief source" for the state's ideal of "perpetua[l]" "permanence," Cicero links domestic and institutional structures; elsewhere, Cicero himself is hailed *pater patriae* (*O.C.D.* 788). The meddling of personal and public behaviors in the political sphere is certainly related to later cultural expressions which echo Cicero's metaphorical connection. Roller lists Cicero beside Aristotle and Seneca as authors who fuse family and government. In his analysis of Seneca's *De Ira*, Roller marks this specific representation as tradition:

That is, the *paterfamilias*, in his dual roles of *pater* and *dominus*, is the obvious social paradigm for the authority of the emperor . . . The father-son relationship is particularly privileged as a positive model for the ruler's relationship with his subjects . . . the father-son relationship has been institutionalized as a model of the emperor through the title 'pater patriae.' (243-4)

Taking the historical interplay of familial and political terms into account along with the paradigmatic status of father to son as a literary symbol "for the authority of the emperor" leaves little doubt that Juvenal, who most experts agree was a member of the educated aristocracy, could be unaware of such a literary tradition.¹¹ Rather, it is likely that a great many Romans would recognize the father/emperor analogy, as the Roman household was commonly a venue for private as well as public life. Keith Bradley's comments in *Discovering the Roman Family* are memorable:

The value Romans put on personal or familial privacy was in fact very low, and for them the house was multifunctional, a place of constant social, economic, and sometimes political intercourse, not simply a place of habitation. It was . . . a place in which status was both displayed and acquired, given that worldly aspirations were inextricably bound up with domestic conventions. (8)

Bradley's observations help us imagine why the wealthy Roman father, whose household was conducted in a manner resembling an imperial court, could be reasonably compared to the *princeps*. The complex relationship between Roman satire, politics, and family generated a literary niche that turned into tradition; in an ironic shift that practice turned on itself by commenting on and questioning the bases of such a relationship. In "Satire VI," Juvenal inverts the father to son metaphor by moving the absent wife into the authoritative role of *paterfamilias*.

⁹ For more on the social role of the *paterfamilias* see Jane Gardner's *The Roman Household*, esp. p. 3-4, 89-91. See also Chapter 4 of Matthew Roller's *Constructing Autocracy*, where *paterfamilias* is used to refer to both father and emperor.

¹⁰ Sabine and Smith cite Cic. *de rep.* 4.5; 4.6; 5.5.

¹¹ *O.C.D.* p. 571. See also Roller p. 6-7. In another example Suetonius, who also wrote in the late second century C.E., utilizes domestic metaphor when he famously calls Julius Caesar "a man to every woman and a woman to every man" (26).

The social implications of such a move are relatively clear: it upsets a traditionalized literary hierarchy. My reading was conceived based on the suggestive political meaning carried in such literary or social inversion, so the interrelated conventions of the Roman elite should be mapped over Juvenal's satirical maneuver.

A complete analysis of the complex relationship between the Roman autocracy and aristocracy undoubtedly deserves its own thesis. To meet the brevity required here, I rely on Ronald Syme's seminal 1939 work *The Roman Revolution*, which remains invaluable despite its maturity; Clifford Ando's "A Dwelling beyond Violence" will be introduced, and Roller will be returned to in kind. Although opinions vary widely, the general consensus among scholars is that tension between the Roman autocracy and factors within the aristocracy existed from Octavian's transition to Augustus and *principate* in 27 B.C.E. onward.¹² As the power to influence became increasingly consolidated throughout much of the first century, the aristocratic Roman made necessary adjustments: "Roman aristocrats were familiar with the necessity of coping in a world that had an emperor in it; yet . . . alternative visions of how the emperor did or might or should impact the actions and values of aristocrats continued to be fiercely contested" (Roller 4). Because Roman satire was seen as a venue for the "playful" and "critical," the satirist was positioned as a figure in the consciousness of the elite who was expected to utilize figured speech, doublespeak, and *schema* to formulate, express, and assess such "alternative visions."

Limiting my argument on two fronts is necessary at this point. First, a satirist such as Juvenal was by no means a mouthpiece for the aristocracy, and represented the new order through his own unique imagination.¹³ Second, a satire was not expected to create immediate change; the present-day notion of "venting" is a useful term to consider the Roman satirists' function. Ando's statements on the dangers of universal characterization offer another important limitation to my argument. Although Ando's context is established in political theory, we should note that it is an "ontological mistake [to] attribut[e] singularity and personhood to a collective, namely, the *populus*, the citizen body" (186). I do not mean to posit that the "she-tyrant" represents a specific emperor or all emperors, but as a plausible political and social outcome of an irresponsible and unaccounted for distribution of authority. Likewise, I do not mean that the sympathetic husband of "Satire VI" is the aristocracy; such a reading is broad and groundless. Rather, we see in "Satire VI" the nuances of expected satirical technique, and how that technique may translate into plausible meaning for the educated elite. Though these elite had the advantage of familiarity with literary tradition in Roman satire, our task of detecting meaning that exists behind clever devices is comparable. Ahl's remark that "the speaker's audience [the Roman elite] was as ready to detect and decipher such allusions as the speaker was to provide them" (192) leads me to believe that this arrangement of interpreting shrouded meaning was typical.

In this paper I argue that it is this very condition of a need to express criticism toward government without the expectation of any real political change which gives rise to the extremes in Juvenal's work. The formation of aristocratic demands for simultaneous "play" and "critique" pushed the Roman satirist to increasingly radical forms of representation to, in effect, create a striking spectacle. Perhaps Juvenal and his contemporaries attack massive games and entertainment (as we will see in "Satire VI") because they viewed such exhibitions as competition with resources that create one mass spectacle aimed at distraction over commentary. The clever, ambitious Roman aristocrat may decide that a recognition and use of satirical

¹² *O.C.D.* p. 149. Syme p. 1.

¹³ See Roller p. 7: "their representations of the new order, and of the relationship between emperor and elites, were substantially their own uniquely individual constructions."

paradigms, and their antitheses, expands a power to influence.¹⁴ This process was no doubt convoluted: "Roman aristocrats are attempting to guide and shape the new order—to constitute their social reality—even as they struggle to comprehend and articulate it" (Roller 10). This spectacle allows, to use another contemporary term, a sort of "soft power." That is, since political realities created a dynamic where military power ("hard power") pledged allegiance to the autocracy, sway within autocratic circles was itself a form of power.¹⁵ The power to publically embarrass was a power to suggestively persuade for the aristocracy (not the general population, but each other), becoming a way to "avoid harm, preserve . . . traditional prestige, and gain various social advantages" (Roller 5).¹⁶ These are the sorts of gentle nudges at political behavior that the Roman satirist was capable of and expected to perform; a superior, more poignant performance increased the likelihood that history would remember a particular satirist.

II. Satire VI

Due to the nature of this project, I chose to organize this analysis thematically as opposed to sequentially. The popular tendency has been to follow the latter method.¹⁷ A sequential process requires less page-turning and, due to "Satire VI's" structure of flowing in and out of subject matter, the poem already organizes text by theme. But this type of reading is less apt to use evidence from throughout the poem to posit one or two points, as I aim to do here. Although the theme of authority could be further broken down into subcategories, approaching it intact avoids compartmentalizing an element of the poem that may be considered in its entirety.¹⁸ Additionally, authoritative posturing intermingles with social and familial norms in a way that threatens to merge. Rome's sensitivity to the divisions of a public and private self, in real life and in stories that talk about real life, is precisely what makes the technique of inversion so impactful. By examining the positioning of authority and the transgression of familial and social norms in "Satire VI," we can come to see that the poem's social criticism helps us identify the "monstrosities" therein. Each of these broad terms requires some description.

A discussion about positioning, posturing, jostling, and the resulting arrangement of authority may lead a reader to many places in "Satire VI." The text is noticeably saturated with these elements: exhibiting the creation of a social hierarchy is one of its main priorities. As I've claimed, "Satire VI" is primarily a critique of the Roman political system; the political system's effect on the social order is, for the most part, consequential. More specifically, I'm interested in representations of the relationship between the imperial autocracy and wealthy aristocracy in "Satire VI," how inversion works to comment on this relationship and, though this is probably suitable for another paper, why. An analysis of the effects that an artifact like "Satire VI" may have on Rome's elite informs us on how mechanisms of culture enter into the political conversation by commanding influence through soft power in the form of intellect, wit, and charm. The poem challenges arranged authority by questioning who decides the conditions of

¹⁴ See Mellor p. 79: "the Roman elite, whose loss of freedom of speech was closely tied to their loss of political power."

¹⁵ *O.C.D.* p. 150.

¹⁶ See also Roller 262: "To participate in this collective process of paradigm setting was to help invent the principate."

¹⁷ See Anderson p. 255-6. Anderson cites Highet's and Nagelsbach's sequential method before dividing "Satire VI" in a similar manner. Anderson on the essential nature of the poem's structure: "The central problem of Juvenal's Satire 6 is the relation of structure to contents" (255).

¹⁸ I am interested in how subjects combine to make a point, not how each subject exists in the poem in itself.

social contracts, who should guard the populace, who should collect taxes and how they should be used, who should raise future generations and how it should be done, and who is to blame when it all goes wrong. These questions intersect with Roman social expectations in natural yet meaningful ways.

Juvenal relied on the inversion of social norms to create an alternate reality that was both scary and funny to the audience. Though jarring (then and now), braving such extremes is necessary if one is to understand the poem's intended task. Societal norms uncomfortably blend and diverge from political topics, at times displaying political power through familial relations. This topic opens up a consideration of the Roman household, an individual's position within the household and its symbolic meaning, an obsession with luxury, the influence of mass games over the individual, and domestic metaphor.

The opening two stanzas of the poem (lines 1-37) portray nostalgia for days past, when "men were uncivilized" and "women were of the hardy mountain breed" (Anderson 257). Here, the transition from an uncivilized populace who "were poorly housed in chilly caves" (3) to a civilized people inhabiting an urban environment is accompanied by moral decline. The implication is that the decision to leave a natural state for the conveniences offered by society came with an expectation of a female figure like "Cynthia" or "Lesbia" as a wife, but Postumus instead receives a "she-tyrant."¹⁹ This immediately links the idea of government with marriage, both of which are formed by social contract. Postumus fades into a more general husband figure, a technique that invites the audience into the narrative. This invitation is answered at line 60, with the introduction of "our." This serves the poem temporally by contemporizing and further urbanizing the content alongside "our" ("our arcades," "our theatres"), and implicates the audience in Postumus' decision making. More importantly, the audience is introduced into the antithetical world that Postumus enters when he marries the she-tyrant, a world that lasts through the rest of the text. With his—and "our"—social contract with a she-tyrant made official, the audience begins to expect that the distortions of authority will cause moral decline.

The she-tyrant's introduction reads, "Can you submit to a she-tyrant / when there is so much rope to be had?" (32-3). A wife that demands submission directly contrasts the submissive hill-bred wife who "spread her sylvan bed with leaves and / straw" (5-6). The hill-bred wife aligns with paradigms of patriarchy, which is exactly why the poem excuses her so quickly. She acts only as a recognizable anchor, an identifiable archetype, to prepare the audience for something like representations of the ordinary father-son relationship; she is used only to introduce the she-tyrant and antithetical world that will carry the rest of the poem, then abandoned. Suicide is posited as a reasonable alternative to this inverted world, perhaps as an escape from marriage to an authoritarian wife. Or the thrust behind a logical decision to die may be more elusive, lying in the social repercussions she embodies.²⁰ To accept the she-tyrant's rule is to accept the antithetical world. This offer is easily denied in the poem's narrative but, Juvenal hints, it is an offer that Romans with real political influence felt obligated to accept. Such obligations give rise to the social need for "venting" and "soft power." The suffocating pressure provided by appeasing an emperor or satisfying a certain type of wife may share certain qualities familiar to the aristocratic husband, strengthening the poem's central metaphor. This speaks to satire's function: the transition into a fictionalized world of absurd antithesis which encourages the conversion of real world stress into laughter.

As the she-tyrant establishes her authoritative role in the poem, a now generalized

¹⁹ Williams writes that Postumus' primary goal is "[his] intention . . . to enter into the state of matrimony" (258).

²⁰ See Roller p. 5. Roller cites Seneca's metaphorical use of suicide to express political freedom.

husband-figure assumes the posture of a subordinate who invites sympathy. With the she-tyrant's authority established, the narrative's process of inversion is complete. Her transition toward becoming the head of the household begins with infidelity: "As soon as his wife perceived that her husband / was asleep, this august harlot was shameless enough / to prefer a common mat to the imperial couch" (117-9). An "imperial couch" suggests that this husband figure is wealthy, and probably inside the autocratic circle; the "couch" contrasts "a common mat," which further inverts the poem's scenario by including the threat of social mobility. The wife's course toward power is fulfilled when her role as *paterfamilias* is announced: "Her household is governed as cruelly as a Sici / lian Court" (486-7). We can recall from the introduction that the *O.C.D.* describes a *paterfamilias* as having "an absolute power over the members of the family" (789). By his description of the wife as "govern[or]" of the "household," we may gather that Juvenal is purposely collapsing politics with familial metaphor. This technique situates Juvenal within a line of Roman authors who, as Roller discusses at length, use family to discuss politics. Of all the negative designations likely aroused by her domination, the most poignant would be instability. Recall Sabine's and Smith's remark that Cicero considered "the family . . . the chief source in private life of that permanence which the ideal state establishes, embodies, and perpetuates" (65). When considered in relation to the father-son paradigm, any instability evoked by the commanding she-tyrant was likely perceived as simultaneously humorous and frightening, perfectly matching Feinberg's definition of Roman satire as "playfully critical." The husband's misfortunate situation drives the questions: how did this unstable condition develop? Who is to blame?

These questions take us back to line 286, used as the epigraph of this essay, and its imprecise search for the origin of seemingly ubiquitous monstrosity. The desire to lay blame for the she-tyrant's action and the husband's inaction, or in other words the troubled social and domestic dynamics that the narrative has developed, points us in various directions. What I call situational horror and a display of troubled social dynamics Juvenal frames as the "monstrous morals of our town" (85). In this respect, by calling the town's morals monstrous, the poem asks its audience to question morals that allow individuals to consent to the rise of unstable and deplorable authority figures, such as those symbolized by the she-tyrant. An attitude that threateningly reaches outside of the bounds of its own narrative may not jar the reader because it is planted seamlessly throughout most of the poem. At times, the author challenges the audience by discrediting the fictional husband:

If you are not to love the woman betrothed / and united to you in due form, what reason have / you for marrying? . . . If you are honestly uxorious and devoted to one / woman, then bow your head and submit your neck / ready to bear the yoke. (200-9)

Although he is the implied recipient, the husband is not mentioned in this citation at all—the poem addresses only "you." Through the husband's act of marriage, the poem uses style and technique to posit a broader criticism. Inversion is a necessary step to destabilize the audience and introduce them into an antithetical world, where such criticism can take place safely in the realm of entertainment. Underneath this façade lies a bleak outlook on social contracts that are signed with an untrustworthy or unqualified authority figure. Juvenal's allusion to an animalized workforce ("submit your neck ready to bear the yoke") works to stimulate an aristocratic audience through hierarchal shame, and the stress on "one woman" aims to apply pressure on a poorly led imperial government with one decision-making leader.

The paradigmatic male father (the emperor) and son (the aristocracy) are invited to a world inverted by an evil wife's dynasty in order to encourage self-awareness. Ultimately, it is not the she-tyrant(s) that the poem blames, but sympathetic husband(s). This creates a scenario where fault does not rest with one character but the situation that created these characters; the very products of a social system are one of "Satire VI's" monstrosities:

It was the dowry that lighted his fires, the / dowry that shot those arrows! The dowry bought / liberty for her: she may make what signals, and write / what love letters she pleases, before her husband's / face; the rich woman who marries a money-loving / husband is as good as unmarried. (137-42)

This citation comes in a section that describes a marriage to Censennia, who was "the best of wives" (137) precisely because of her supplementary wealth, followed by a consideration of Sertorius' value as a wife, who may be imagined as attractive since "it is the face / that he [Bibula as husband] loves, not the wife" (143-4). Through the figures of Censennia and Sertorius, forms of temptation collapse into "a dowry" to suggest that since those being joined fetishize façade, neither marriage is genuine. Whether a display of wealth or an advertisement of beauty, it is spectacle, not content (which alludes to the poem's critical position on popular forms of entertainment), that seals this contract. If the "husband is as good as unmarried," even their very agreement operates as façade.

Insinuations of the husband choosing ignorance over truth repeat after the wife ruins a dinner party by misbehaving and vomiting: "The sickened husband closes his eyes and so / keeps down his bile" (432-3). A feeling of nausea is felt, the eyes are closed, and the illness is successfully mitigated by a decision to look away (as opposed to continuing to look). This kind of inaction furtively creates sympathy for the husband while he is otherwise maligned. Choosing convenient ignorance over inconvenient truths, it seems, is the husband's sin. The only solution that the poem proposes is total disobedience toward the wife, "So the better the man, the more desirable he / be as a husband, the less good by far will he get out / of his wife" (212-4). Behaving poorly and appearing undesirable somehow triggers desirable conduct from the wife; it seems that opposing the authority figure's will is actually a responsible move, since she would otherwise hear no dissenting voice. This cannot occur unless the husband is aware of the reality of his dire social situation, while cognizant of his internal impulses on how it may improve.

The poem approaches reproduction, both of voices and individuals, with an anxious tone. In Rome at this time, a dissenting opinion that travelled by voice was more threatening than one written down, "It seems that the Romans were initially far more frightened by the spoken word than the written word, given that the former could be diffused more widely in a semiliterate society. The Roman elite wished to prevent agitation by the masses" (Mellor 82). Uncontrollable imitation and duplication would be treated with trepidation by a wealthy Roman audience for this reason. But it must occur, for reproduction is the encouraged result of marriage. Sex produces a future generation that, "Satire VI" suggests, may be deformed or mutated since the product of two polluted sources will itself be tarnished. Ideology is another source of threatening multiplication, "Thus does / the tale of her husbands grow; there will be eight of / them in the course of five autumns—a fact worthy / of commemoration on her tomb!" (227-30). The diffusion of ignorant marriage creates still more husbands for the wife, and her influence grows with each new social contract. Rather than encourage children from these marriages, the poem recommends abortion, "So great is the skill, so powerful the drugs, of the / abortionist, paid to

murder mankind within the womb. / Rejoice, poor wretch; give her the stuff to drink / whatever it be, with your own hand" (594-7). This climactic move effectively ends the family and imagines the definitive form of control through a "monstrous town's" hereditary manipulation. The poem opens with a lust for a past beyond reach, and is bookended by a future that is a potential problem worth annihilating. Monstrosities have been allowed to calibrate the social trajectory, launching Romans into an unforeseen and dangerous time.

Once a monstrous enemy is identified the instinct is to destroy it. Yet this monster already lives inside the city walls, so must be purged rather than defended against. If victory, or a happy ending of some sort, is possible within the poem, it would seem to require the reversion to a standard hierarchy of paternal authority. Instead, the question of authority echoes in the poem's famous lines, "Yes, but who will ward the warders?" (348; 375). This query simply asks: who will watch those to whom we willingly give authority through social contract? In "Satire VI's" context, any she-tyrant can rise up and claim authority if she desires a husband badly enough and imposes her will. The question of who has influence over the handlers of authority is paradoxical by nature, but the poem is built upward from the energy this question supplies. When unbridled power crystallizes to a single point, Juvenal suggests, the common man loses his ability to identify and subdue social monstrosities. "Satire VI" tells us that that monster is ubiquitous among those who are willing to submit for reasons of ignorance, apathy, or fear.

III. Conclusion

Travelling this course through "Satire VI" informs us on how Rome treated satire, and how that specific art functions in similar fashion today. Of all the themes that this examination presented upon me, I was most motivated by exploring the concept of "soft power." The term became a way for me to think about how persuasive and impactful our interpretations, presentations, and representations can be. As I stated earlier, the power to publically embarrass was a power to suggestively persuade, and that holds true across today's social spectrum.²¹ I was initially attracted to this poem because my classmates declined it without looking behind its metaphorical façade, so I made it my point to find implied, masked meaning. While I found my meaning, I would hope that current and future courses in the Classics give Juvenal's "Satire VI" sufficient emphasis to allow others to find their meaning, as well.

"the text is incomplete until the audience completes the meaning" (Ahl 187).

²¹ See Stephen Colbert for a contemporary version of such phenomena.

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