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THE FUNCTIONING OF EPIC IN *SATIRE I* OF JUVENAL¹

Since the beginning of the first satire, Juvenal has rejected the use of epic as being too exploitable and too inefficient to describe the monstrosity of the Roman vice. Yet the epic allusions crosses all satire. The paper deals with the idea that the functions of the epic elements in the first satire, often being erroneously restricted to a decorative (i.e. mocking) one, are in a stringent manner connected with Juvenal's choice of satire as genre. The paper shows how Juvenal transfers epic foundings on the ground of the satire and how he uses them to form his programmatic principles.

Keywords: Epic Allusions, Satire, Genre, *recusatio*, Programmatic Function

Since the beginning of the first satire, Juvenal seems to reject epic understood as a 'genre' as too exploitable and too inefficient to describe the monstrosity of the Roman vice. Yet, he does not hesitate to apply numerous epic elements to the satire's service. Their representation, at first sight restricted to the decorative (i.e. mocking) function, may be the writer's deliberate creation oriented to emphasizing the programmatic principles that should shape all Juvenal's work. A detailed survey of the functioning of epic elements in this satire will reveal whether they form a composite entity, and if not, it may allow us to see Juvenal's actual poetical intentions.

Before coming to the main issue, we should, however, specify the terminology that will appear here, especially the one concerning the functions. They are divided into (1) internal, i.e. referring to the poetical work itself and concerning the narration as narrative mode and, by extension, as all

¹ The following article was presented under the title «*Nonne libet medio, ceras inplere capaces/ quadrvio...*» (*Iuv. 163–64*). Epic that crosses satire. Juvenal, *Satire I* during the conference 'Literary crossroads' organized by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research into Ancient Languages and Early Stages of Modern Languages and by the Department of Classical Studies of the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University in Brno held from September 19 to September 22, 2010.

activity that ensures the narrative understood as the sequence of events; (2) external, i.e. being mainly the comment on the ‘real’ world. This division, made to satisfy the demands of analyzing the satirist’s guidelines, does not include other functions of epic elements of the first *Satire* that, as might be expected, are not mutually exclusive. One more remark should be done: there are two types of epic reminiscences. The ‘explicit’ borrowings refer to a particular work of literature; they often contain a direct quotation. The ‘implicit’ epic references are those exploitations whose roots can not be clearly identified, or to the epic as a whole.

Treating of epic elements in *Satire I* it is necessary to distinguish between the ones which are employed by the satirist in the *recusatio* followed by *apologia* and those that appear in the rest of the satire. The anti-epic declarations of *recusatio* are strongly connected with its nature: the deprecation of the issues that are going to be rejected by the writer is a kind of *locus communis*; thus, all Juvenal’s examples of epic at the beginning of the satire form an ironic and scornful commentary on epic as a ‘genre’.

Epic appears just at the beginning of the first satire, already in the negative context:

vexatus totiens rauci Theseide Cordi? (1,2)

Accordingly, two next epic allusions present the very same character, ironical and aggressive:

*nota magis nulli domus est sua, quam mihi lucus
Martis et Aeoliis vicinum rupibus antrum
Volcani; [...].* (1,7–9)

*quid agant venti, quas torqueat umbras
Aeacus, unde alius furtivae devehat aurum
pelliculae, quantas iaculetur Monychus ornos, [...].* (1,9–11)

They underline the aspect that Juvenal uses for his justification of choice: the opposition between epic and satire. As Susanna Morton Braund observes:²

“Satire in Juvenal’s hands is very confident and assertive: it can replace epic. [...] satire accepts the epic frame of reference, but only to appropriate it for its own purposes.”

² Braund Morton, Susanna [ed.]. 1996. *Juvenal. Satires. Book I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 22.

The satirist makes his first step in replacing the epic with the satire at the end of the *recusatio-apologia*:³

*cur tamen hoc potius libeat decurrere campo,
per quem magnus equos Auruncae flexit alumnus,
si vacat ac placidi rationem admittitis, edam.* (1,19–21)

As it was already said, the introduction to the satire, in form of a combination of *recusatio* and *apologia*, has its own rights and the appearance of epic in both cases is well justified. The paper will deal with the rest of epic elements in the satire, trying to reveal the writer's techniques and his poetical intention.

The nature of epic reminiscences

Juvenal refers mainly to the works of Latin epic poetry, to the *Argonautica* and the *Aeneid* for the most part. They are presented in form of explicit literary allusion, such as the following:

*ex quo Deucalion nimbis tollentibus aequor
navigio montem ascendit sortesque poposcit
paulatimque anima caluerunt mollia saxa
et maribus nudas ostendit Pyrrha puellas.* (1,81–84)

The subject matter is taken from the mythology, but, regarding the vocabulary, we may assume that the author relates to Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. The expression *navigio montem ascendit* reflects the arrival of Deucalion and Pyrrha on Mount Parnassus (cf. Ov. *Met.* 1,316–319); *sortesque poposcit* stands for setting out for an oracle (cf. Ov. *Met.* 1,367ff.) and echoes Ovid's *quaerere sortes* (Ov. *Met.* 1,368); the last reminiscence *anima caluerunt mollia saxa* describes fulfilling oracle's counsels which Ovid renders as: *saxa [...] molliri que mora mollita que ducere formam* (Ov. *Met.* 400–402).

The writer placed this passage between two important statements that describe Juvenal as a satirist:

1/ *si natura negat, facit indignatio versum,
qualem cunq; potest, quales ego vel Chuvienus* (1,78–79),
2/ *quidquid agunt homines votum timor ira voluptas
gaudia discursus nostri farrago libelli est.* (1,85–86)

³ A perceptive analysis of the beginning of the poem is offered by S. Braund (1996: 110–111).

The whole epic allusion is a kind of time phrase used by Juvenal. Juvenal says he is going to write about that which had appeared at the beginning of mankind and which has been in existence ever since. Instead of a simple, fixed time expression he chooses the expanded periphrasis. It would not be reasonable to consider it simply as an ironical amplification since the narrative co-situation treats of the author's principles. First, Juvenal defines the manner of his writing (*facit indignatio versum*), than the subject-matters (*votum timor ira voluptas gaudia discursus*). The appearance of epic between them seems to be quite surprising, especially when compared to the ironical passage from the beginning of the satire that exploits the same stratification of epic themes:

*nota magis nulli domus est sua, quam mihi lucus
Martis et Aeoliis vicinum rupibus antrum
Vulcani. Quid agant venti, quas torqueat umbras
Aecus, unde alius furtivae devehat aurum
pelliculae, quantas iaculetur Monychus ornos [...]. (1,7–11)*

Here the hyperbole is mocking and aggressive in tone; the one that refers to Ovid causes, by the deflation of the epic tone (line 84), a comical effect without the intention of attacking something. The parody, although existing, does not result from *indignatio*. The main purpose of this passage is to show that the author is capable of writing epic (as lines 81–83 could be taken out of their context and seen as a passage of epic work), but, angry with Roman vices, he chooses the satire.⁴ Hence, it seems to be a part of thoughtful programmatic statement; it is not, however, its central part. Juvenal makes use of epic to underline his satirist's role.

A similar manner of proceeding may be observed in another example:

⁴ If we accept this interpretation, we may observe an interesting change in *recusatio*: instead of exploiting the *topos* of modesty characteristic for the beginning of a poetic work, Juvenal seems to boast that he can write an epic work, but since it is dull, he turns to the satire. The author's grand ego stands in complete opposition to e.g. Horace's self-esteem who writes in *Carm.* 1,6:

*Nos, Agrippa, neque haec dicere nec gravem
Pelidae stomachum cedere nescii,
nec cursus duplicis per mare Ulixei
nec saevam Pelopis domum
conamur, tenues grandia, dum pudor
inbellisque lyrae Musa potens vetat
laudes egregii Caesaris et tuas
culpa deterere ingeni. (1,6,5–12)*

*securus licet Aenean Rutulumque ferocem
committas, nulli gravis est percussus Achilles
aut multum quaesitus Hylas urnamque secutus
ense velut stricto quotiens Lucilius ardens
infremuit, rubet auditor cui frigida mens est
criminibus, tacita sudant praecordia culpa.
inde ira et lacrimae. tecum prius ergo voluta
haec animo ante tubas: galeatum sero duelli
paenitet.* (1,162–170)

The heroes employed here as *exempla* (Aeneas and Turnus) and the works from which they are taken (*Aeneid* — Virgil’s, *Achilleid* — Statius’) serve Juvenal to make a bitter statement: ‘it is safe to write about them’. Juvenal is able to notice a paradoxical correlation: it is safe to write about the battle times and dangerous about the peace times. That is why this kind of writing demands a hero-writer (*Lucilius ardens*). The concept of the epic hero called Lucilius appears twice in the satire, at the beginning and at the end, forming a frame for the whole satire. First, he is not mentioned by name, but the listener has no problems with his identification:

*cur tamen hoc potius libeat decurrere campo,
per quem magnus equos Auruncae flexit alumnus,
si vacat ac placidi rationem admittitis, edam.* (1,19–21)

It is Lucilius, the *Auruncae alumnus*, who just as his epic predecessors, rushes for a battle. Lucilius portrayed as an epic hero is going to fight Roman vices. The detailed description of quasi epic battle (including epic *furor*) is given at the end of the satire as if Juvenal was making a kind of programmatic conclusion:

*ense velut stricto quotiens Lucilius ardens
infremuit, rubet auditor cui frigida mens est
criminibus, tacita sudant praecordia culpa.
inde ira et lacrimae. tecum prius ergo voluta
haec animo ante tubas: galeatum sero duelli
paenitet.* (1,165–170)

The satirist makes an allusion to Vergil’s description of Mezentius in battle fury (*Aen.* 10,711–718):

*ac velut ille canum morsu de montibus altis
actus aper, multos Vesulus quem pinifer annos
defendit multosque palus Laurentia silva
pascit harundinea, postquam inter retia ventum est,
substitit infremuitque ferox et inhorruit armos,*

*nec cuiquam irasci propiusue accedere virtus,
sed iaculis tutisque procul clamoribus instant;
ille autem impavidus partis cunctatur in omnis
dentibus infrendens et tergo decutit hastas:
haud aliter, iustae quibus est Mezentius irae,
non ulli est animus **stricto** concurrere **ferro**,
missilibus longe et vasto clamore lacessunt.*

Juvenal echoes Virgil's *infremuit* and *stricto ferro*. Moreover, few lines before (10,689) we can find in Vergil the expression *Mezentius ardens* which Juvenal probably adopted for his *Lucilius ardens* in line 165. Nevertheless, it is necessary to notice that Juvenal mirrors Vergilian vocabulary and expressions, but he employs it in a different context. His *ira* (line 168) refers to the listener's anger; at Vergil it is Mezentius, the hero, who is characterized by this feature. Similarly, Juvenalian *ense velut stricto* (line 165) refers to the Lucilius' arm while Vergil uses this expression to describe these attacking Mezentius and not the hero himself. The first example is noticeable — since the anger of the epic hero is replaced by the anger of the common listener, we may observe the deflating of epic tone.

The mention of Hylas (line 164) refers to the commencement of the satire as well — thus, this passage is a kind of enclosure (once again, we meet the motive of Lucilius, *auditor* and dull epic of which the *Argonautica* seems to be an epitome). The structure of this epic allusion is similar to the lines referring to Ovid: three examples of epic stories end with the humorous assertion on Hylas. Yet, its character differs. In passages concerning Lucilius Juvenal uses epic not as a sort of background for his programmatic statement, but he makes a programmatic statement by means of epic-style periphrasis. Here, epic plays the main role as it is used for formulating the programmatic statement — now, it concerns the role of the satirist.

The frequency of Greek reminiscences is alike but their nature is different. There are no explicit references (i.e. quotations etc.) to Greek poetical works as it was the case with passages taken from Latin works. Juvenal enumerates a lot of Greek heroes, but, as we may see on the following example:

*[...] sed quid magis? **Heracleas**
aut **Diomedas** aut **mugitum labyrinthi**
et **mare percussum puero fabrumque volantem**,
[...]. (1,52–54)*

it is either:

a) instrumental as in case of epic works on Heracles and Diomedes⁵ where

⁵ There were numerous examples of *Heraclea*, e.g. by Creophylus (cf. Paus. 4,2,3),

their usage shows the writer's disrespect and disdain to focus on epic themes while the world around him is full of more interesting subject-matters, or

b) mocking (to deprecate epic) as in case of the comic personification: *mutatum labyrinthi* — the roar of labyrinth, *mare percussum puero* — the sea hit by a boy, and in case of comic epithet: *fabrumque volantem* — the flying master-builder.

Choosing the stories of Heracles as an example of a hackneyed epic could be caused either by the number of existing *Heraclea* or because of the numerous occurrences of Heracles in other epic works (e.g. *Argonautica*). The second possibility is more probable as there was no such a great work on Heracles (like *Argonautica* in case of the Argonauts) that could be used by the satirists as an aim of his attacks. As far as the *Diomedea* is concerned, the one by Iullus Antonius could have been known to Juvenal, but it is hard to claim it with certainty; other Latin epic works wholly concentrated on Diomedes are not known. Thus, the satirist exploits Greek plural of *Diomedea* and *Heraclea* with the pragmatic function of synecdoche. Hence the second, hidden reading could be 'several Heracleses and Diomedeses' which is more disdainful than treating *Diomedea* and *Heraclea* only as epics concerning a hero.

Juvenal also uses Greek references to create ironical effect. We observe two epic expressions with this function where the irony occurs in form of antonomasia:

[...] *iubet a praecone vocari*
ipsos Troiugenas [...]. (1,99–100)

[...] *dum pervolat axe citato*
Flaminiam puer Automedon? [...]. (1,60f.)

The satirists seems to prefer Latin reminiscences over the Greek ones which more often are employed to present Roman (sic!) vices.

Demodocus (cf. Plut. *De fluv.* 18), Diotimus (cf. Suidas s.v. *Εὐρόβατος*), Cinaethon and many others. *Diomedea* is ascribed to Iullus Antonius (and not, as Mayor wrongly claims, to Iulus Antonius Acro; cf. Mayor, J. E. B. [ed.]. 2007. *Mayor's Juvenal 'Thirteen Satires' with new introduction and bibliography by John Henderson*. Vol. I. Bristol: Phoenix Press, 111). Cf. Acro's: *Iullus Antonius heroico metro Diomedias duodecim libros scripsit egregios, praeterea et prosa aliquanta. Diomedea* could have been a *nostos*, describing Diomedes' settlement in Italy.

The nature of the epic subject-matters

The majority of the epic subject-matters relates to war and warriors. They comprise the idea of epic hero, epic *furor* in battle and epic war in general. The epic allusions not connected with war themes treat of mythological flood, the recreation of humans, Pyrrha and Deucalion, Icarus and Daedalus, Hylas and perhaps Heracles. They are found only in two places in the first satire while the rest of the occurrences oscillate between the epic hero, warriors and battles (the *recusatio* is here not taken into consideration). The first example, already analyzed, has poetical function; the second passage, in which Juvenal is asking himself why he should write about the labours of Heracles, Diomedes' return or killing of the Minotaur in the labyrinth, is also a part of the writer's poetical self-determination, especially when we take into consideration the question that precedes the exempla: *Haec ego non agitem?* (line 51).

The war subject-matters are applied to create programmatic statements as well, like in the example above:

[...] *tecum prius ergo voluta*
haec animo ante tubas: galeatum sero duelli
paenitet. (1,168–170)

to create a warrior hero fighting crimes:

ense velut stricto quotiens Lucilius ardens
infremuit [...] (1,164–165)

or to create an ironical effect:

[...] *neque enim oculis comitantibus itur*
ad casum tabulae, posita sed luditur arca.
proelia quanta illic dispensatore videbis
armigero! simplexne furor sestertia centum
perdere et horrenti tunicam non reddere servo? (1,89–92)

Interestingly, in two first examples, the author does not exploit war epic to mock epic as a *genre*. To do it, he prefers making use of adventurous epic (cf. the use of the *Argonautica* in the *recusatio*). It seems that, in two first examples, he wants to apply the war subject-matters into the service of the satire. He makes from the satirist a hero, like an epic one, with a particular enemy: Roman Vice. He rushes for a battle, i.e. for writing the satire. By extension, Juvenal could have aimed at the creation of quasi epic story whose protagonist, purpose and means (*indignatio* that stands for *furor*) resemble those of epic war.

The mocking example of the third passage presented above illustrates the writer's ability to create a battle picture. There *itur* is a quasi epic impersonal passive verb (cf. 4,65) showing a first step of preparing to a battle;⁶ *ad casum tabulae* is an allusion to *ad casum belli*; *posita arca* is an ablative absolute used to describe a second step in the gambling 'battle'; the gamblers, having come to the tables, station their forces; *proelia quanta,*

armigero belong to war vocabulary applied by the satirist to the gambling table; in such a way, a game becomes a battle and a steward — an armed enemy. The epic picture created by Juvenal, when comic, become a satire.

It seems that the favorite subject-matter of Juvenal is war and anything which is connected with war; hence, he is able to transpose the aggression of war on the aggressive concept of satire as a *genre*.

The functions of epic elements

Most of the functions of epic allusions in the first satire (except of those in the *recusatio*) are internal which means that they refer to the text itself understood as the sequence of events and to the nature of the writer's poetical creation.

The literary allusions which the author employs in plotting his stories use e.g. epic vocabulary only to sketch a coherent scene (e.g. 1,89–92) and not to mock epic as a *genre*. In the same way, we must treat the examples of *antonomasia*: epic is used like a means to prove Juvenal's point of view. The main instances where the epic is mocked is *recusatio* but it seems that it is the *topos*' requirement.

The closer analysis of particular epic passages (according to the order of appearance in the satire) reveals their thoughtful arrangement. The structure of the first satire has been long discussed and many scholars refused to consider it as a coherent entity.⁷ This point of view is nowadays rejected and even if some inconsistencies are still found in the satire, the scheme of the structure is following:⁸

1/ lines 1–18: 'why to write?'

2/ lines 19–80: 'why to write a satire?'

⁶ Cf. S. Braund (1996: 96f.).

⁷ Cf. the introductions and commentaries on the first satire in the editions of Strong and Pearson or Duff.

⁸ The main criterion of this division, based on the one proposed by Knapp, Charles. 1925. "A brief review of Juvenal Satire I." *The Classical Weekly*, 19, 20, is the function of the passages.

3/ lines 81–86: ‘what to describe?’,

4/ lines 87–149: ‘what particular vices should be condemned?’ (with examples from Roman life),

5/ lines 150–171: ‘why is it dangerous to write a satire?’ (a sort of conclusion with a dialog that stress the dangers of writing satire and the author’s concession in favour of writing about the dead).

To line 80, epic appears in negative context. First in *recusatio* and *apologia* (except of the *Auruncae alumnus* passage), than as a scornful question on subject-matters of writing and as an ironical antonomasia. The change in function is observed in lines 81–84 (*ex quo Deucalion...*) and from line 152 to 171 (*securus licet Aenean...*) where epic serves to formulate the satirist’s programmatic statement. Meanwhile, there are two other occurrences of epic: one as an antonomasia and the second in the metaphorical description of gambling.

The material gathered shows that the author is quite consequent in his use of epic. He criticized its hackneyed character, but not its principles (thus his use of an epic hero). One singular (but crucial from the point of view of all Juvenal’s work) inconsistency appears at the end of the satire. In the last epic passage, which is a sort of his programmatic summary, Juvenal assumes that writing epic is safer than writing satire:

*securus licet Aenean Rutulumque ferocem
committas, [...].* (1,162ff.)

Hence, the listener expects that satirist will deal with something dangerous, i.e. with the condemnation of the powerful. Instead, Juvenal turns to the dead (breaking the taboo of *de mortuis nil nisi bene*) writing in the last two lines of the first satire:

*[...] experiar quid concedatur in illos,
quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina.* (1,170–171)

The author’s choice of times he is going to write about has caused many interpretative problems.⁹ Plaza states explicitly:

“Instead of a night ablaze with just indignation he turns to be a coward after all, as soon as he is faced with a threatening reality. The grand picture of a warrior and the elevated archaism of *duelli* are smashed down against the bleak tomb-rows of familiar streets.”¹⁰

⁹ Possible interpretations are presented by Plaza, Maria. 2006. *The Function of Humor in Roman Verse Satire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 49.

¹⁰ M. Plaza (2006: 47).

However, if this matter is perceived through the prism of epic, it seems to be in total concordance with Juvenal's aims. There is no 'persona's frustrating metamorphosis from warrior to chicken',¹¹ because the author's persona does not change — it fits into the author's epical project. Juvenal has created the character following the epic principles and, just as the epic does, he turns to the past looking for the most representative themes for his work and not from the fear of writing about the mighty of his times. The epic describes Aeneas, Diomedes, Argonauts — in short, the grandest heroes and the grandest times. Juvenal, trying to create a satire of chief importance, directs his gaze in past as it offers more magnificent and imposing examples to be ridiculed in the satire than the present. It is, after all, confirmed by his choice of themes: *quidquid agunt homines* and not *homines* themselves. Juvenal's hero is going to fight the Roman Vice and not the particular person. It simply happened that the past offers more interesting and challenging *exempla* from the point of view of the satire. This interpretation allows the reader to treat the Juvenal's use of epic in the first satire as a composed entity.

Juvenal's idea of creating quasi epic satirical portrait of Romans that can replace the proper epic would require a great effort from the satirist in his next satires. For now, the listener has quite a coherent image of epic in the first satire. The satirist introduces an epic warrior to fight against crime in Rome; he proves that he is capable of writing epic (it is a development of the idea of *recusatio* and *apologia*); by means of epic, he defines himself as a satirist using epic examples, from pragmatic point of view, in positive (e.g. lines 168–169) and negative (e.g. lines 52–54) context. Thus, even if the writer egocentrically said the epic had lost its value and was no more needed in his times, he seems to lose his sting from time to time. He may not make use of epic themes in a serious imitative manner, but his intentions, when doing so, are very serious. Hence, speaking about a great contrast between satire and epic in the first satire should be well balanced.

¹¹ Idem.

