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## Johnson's *London* and Juvenal's Third Satire: The Country as "Ironic" Norm

Howard D. Weinbrot

The affirmation of Johnson's distinction as a poet has renewed interest in *London* (1738), his first major poem and the first work that brought him literary reputation. The Juvenalian texts that he used have been meticulously traced; much of the poem's political background and satiric and rhetorical techniques have been discovered; and its successes and failures have become the object of lively, if not always enlightened, controversy.<sup>1</sup> This last issue has an importance beyond that of simple evaluation, for in the case of *London* that evaluation is linked to the larger question of how to read an imitation. We have learned that knowledge of the parent-poem is necessary for understanding of the imitation; but historical reclamation often surrenders to modern impressionism, the Loeb text replaces that of Heinsius or Casaubon, and we read Horace or Juvenal as if they were our rather than Pope's or Johnson's "contemporaries."<sup>2</sup> The reader of *London* needs to know both how Johnson would have read Juvenal's Third Satire and how to acquire such information. The assumption that Johnson read Juvenal as we do leads to inappropriate methodology and mistaken literary criticism. Specifically, according to several recent critics, Johnson failed to see that in Juvenal's Third Satire the poet was ironic and not serious in praising the country, missed part of his point, some of his resonance and, it would seem, some of his greatness as well.

As far as I can tell, this view first reached print in 1959, when Mary Lascelles told the readers of her "Johnson and Juvenal" that Juvenal's

real theme is not country pleasures but the mingled attraction and repulsion exercised by the great cosmopolitan city. . . . The two men [Umbricitus and Juvenal] are represented as going together to the point of departure from Rome, the gate on the Appian Way. There, Umbricitus urges his friend to follow his example; but in much of what he says ironic overtones can be heard: in his allusions, for example, to the insignificant, depopulated village where he means to settle, or the even more desolate regions which Juvenal ought to prefer to Rome's tawdry splendour. These wry hints are surely but the echo of Juvenal's own thoughts: of his inmost certainty that, if life in Rome is disagreeable, dangerous, degrading, outside Rome there is nothing to be called life, at all.<sup>3</sup>

She illustrates Johnson's frail understanding of Juvenalian irony in his portrait of the country seat. When Umbricitus describes the place of his retreat, he

names little hill towns (romantic, perhaps, to us, but for him uncouth, cold, and dull!); towns in which, for the price of a Roman garret, you can have the best house there is,

1/For some of the relevant works, see Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom, "Johnson's *London* and Its Juvenalian Texts," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 34 (1970): 1-23 (hereafter *HLQ*); "Johnson's *London* and the Tools of Scholarship," *ibid.*, 34 (1971): 115-39; and "Johnson's 'Mournful Narrative': The Rhetoric of *London*," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies in Honor of Donald F. Hyde*, ed. W. H. Bond (New York, 1970), pp. 107-44; Howard D. Weinbrot, *The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire* (Chicago, 1969), pp. 165-91; Donald J. Greene, *The Politics of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven, Conn., 1960), pp. 81-111; D. V. Boyd, "Vanity and Vacuity: A Reading of Johnson's Verse Satires," *ELH* 39 (1972): 387-403.

2/For a recent discussion of several pitfalls in the way of reading imitations, see William Kuper-Smith, "Pope, Horace and the Critics: Some Reconsiderations," *Arion* 9 (1970): 205-19.

3/Mary Lascelles, in *New Light on Dr. Johnson*, ed. Frederick W. Hilles (New Haven, Conn., 1959), pp. 41-42.

with a little patch of kitchen-garden—a *very* little patch: there will be room enough merely to raise the vegetables on which you will have to subsist, with a lizard for live-stock. . . . But Johnson turns *hortulus* into a country estate, and Juvenal's sour acceptance of a countryman's life into a little pastoral. . . . In such a mood, [of loneliness and anger in London, Johnson] might perhaps miss the irony in Juvenal's tale of country pleasures, yet find the denunciation of Rome (to which [the country scenes] had been a merely conventional foil) heartily congenial.<sup>4</sup>

Lascelles concludes that "Johnson's *London* has not the brilliance of its original, because it lacks the lightning flash of its irony."<sup>5</sup>

A few years later her view of Juvenal's irony was quoted, approved, and elaborated upon by John Hardy<sup>6</sup> who, in turn, was praised by William Kupersmith. Hardy, Kupersmith says, argues "rightly, that Juvenal's praise of the country is ironic," and he himself insists that it is certainly "wrong to take Juvenal's jokes in 229 and 231 [the 100 Pythagoreans as guests and the single lizard as subject] as serious descriptions of rural pleasures." More recently still, Ian Donaldson has seconded Lascelles's "shrewdly observed" ironic interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

Such a view of Juvenal's poem, however, has little to recommend it. The statements above have no evidence, contemporary or otherwise, to support them. There is hardly much reference to Juvenal's poem. Instead, we merely have three critics who congenially borrow from and support one another on the strength of *ipsa* and *ipse dixit*. In spite of their arguments on authority, they have not considered the important reading of the Third Satire by William S. Anderson. He argues that Juvenal's poem is about the loss of Roman values in Rome and their preservation in the country. Aquinum has a variety of pleasant associations—friendship, divinities, and closeness to the land—whereas Rome is stripped of all pleasant connotations and is filled with faults and degeneration from virtue. By the end of the satire, Rome's

traditional values have abandoned it, and it remains an empty shell, a glittering facade which conceals its total rejection of the past, its complete subjection to foreign and de-

4/*Ibid.*, pp. 42–44. Lascelles apparently assumes that Johnson read the Third Satire for the first time, or reread it with new spectacles, while in London during 1737–38. In fact he took "Dryden's Juvenal" with him to Oxford in 1728, and had it with him in 1735 (see Allen Lyell Reade, *Johnsonian Gleanings* [London, 1928] 5:225, 115; *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman [Oxford, 1952], 1:4–6; James L. Clifford, *Young Sam Johnson* [New York, 1955], pp. 156–57). The rest of this paper deals with the likelihood of Johnson's myopia. Moreover, Lascelles is probably mistaken in regarding Juvenal's towns as insignificant, cold, dull, and desolate. Aquinum, Baiæ, Gabii, Cumæ, Fabrateria, Frusino, Praeneste, Sora, Tivoli, and Volsinii were either towns of great beauty, of minor but real commercial, agricultural, or vinicultural distinction, or of religious or historical importance. This information has been gathered in William Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* (London, 1854). Some of the same information would have been available to Johnson in Strabo, Stephanus's *Dictionarium historicum, geographicum, poeticum* (1561), and Louis Moréri's *Grand dictionnaire historique* (1674).

5/*New Light on Dr. Johnson*, p. 46.

6/John Hardy, "Johnson's *London*: The Country versus the City," in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century: Papers Presented at the David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra 1966*, ed. R. F. Brissenden (Toronto, 1968), pp. 253, 258.

7/William Kupersmith, "Declamatory Grandeur: Johnson and Juvenal," *Arion* 9 (1970): 58, n. 5. This is an otherwise valuable essay. Ian Donaldson, "The Satirists' London," *Essays in Criticism* 25 (1975): 106–22.

based practices. In Rome, men violate Nature; in Cumae she constitutes the only immediate attraction. . . . The natural state of things possesses a freshness, an innocence, that can exist only in the country; in Rome, innocence can only be violated, so that the cheap decoration of the fountain [of Egeria] symbolizes the whole scale of tawdry values of the city. As the Satire proceeds, the innocence of Nature comes to represent the original Roman character, and, in the charm of the country, Juvenal sets former Roman customs, Roman clothes, and Roman values now discarded in Rome itself. Since the country really constitutes the last stronghold of the Roman character, Umbricius must withdraw to Cumae, because there alone a true Roman will find satisfaction.<sup>8</sup>

The nonironic reading of the Third Satire's country scenes appears to be literal minded but in fact is profoundly symbolic. That Johnson might have been aware of this interpretation is suggested in his (unsuccessful) attempt to relate the attack on the city to praise of the old virtues of British strength, poverty, defiance of foes, and control of the sea.<sup>9</sup> The ironic interpretation and the implied criticism of Johnson's deafness in not hearing it are denied by one of the best classicists writing on the subject.

Since it is possible that even the best and the brightest can be wrong, however, we should establish criteria for a permitted ironic reading that exists independent of such authority. Let me, then, suggest four ways to determine whether Johnson could or should have read the Third Satire as being ironic: (1) What was Juvenal's characteristic attitude toward the presumed subject of irony in other poems? (2) Does the Third Satire itself demand or exclude an ironic reading of its apparent norms? (3) Is there a tradition of ironic interpretation of Juvenal which Johnson is likely to have accepted? (4) What was Johnson's attitude toward and use of irony in general at the time he wrote *London* and, in particular, did he discuss irony in Juvenal's poem?

1. Juvenal does not often write about the country, but when he does it is appreciative, lyrical, and wholly like the nonironic country of his Third Satire. Congreve translated the Eleventh Satire for Dryden's 1693 version of Juvenal and Persius, and there tenderly communicated Juvenal's praise of rural life that provides wholesome, humble food: a suckling kid, asparagus, large eggs, rich grapes, and pears. The country farm represents the old Roman values,

When the good *Curius* thought it no Disgrace,  
With his own Hands, a few small Herbs to dress;

8/William S. Anderson, "Studies in Book I of Juvenal," in *Yale Classical Studies*, ed. Harry M. Hubbel, 15 (New Haven, Conn., 1957): 57-63. Anderson also mentions the manuscript titles of the poem: "De urbis incommodis et de digressu Umbricii," and "Quare Umbricius urbem deserat" (p. 56, n. 29). For further useful discussion of Juvenal's satire (along the nonironic lines suggested), see Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark, "Per iter tenebriosum: The Mythos of Juvenal 3," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 96 (1965): 265-76, and William S. Anderson, "Lascivia vs. ira: Martial and Juvenal," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 3 (1970): 1-34.

9/See *The Formal Strain*, pp. 181-89. It is also suggested by his probable knowledge of Barten Holyday's "Argument" to his translation of the Third Satire. Since "No place for Honest men is left. . . . / *Umbricius* then from *Rome* departs, / Because he wants the *Roman Arts*" (*Decimus Junius Juvenalis and Aulus Persius Flaccus* [Oxford, 1673], p. 36). Of course it is also suggested in the poem itself, especially at line 119 where, according to Holyday, "No place / Is for a *Roman* left at *Rome*" (p. 39).

And from his little Garden, cull'd a Feast,  
Which fetter'd Slaves wou'd now disdain to taste.<sup>10</sup>

John Dryden Junior's translation of the Fourteenth Satire again emphasizes that the country is the home of the true old Roman values:

Give me, ye Gods, the Product of one Field,  
As large as that which the first *Romans* Till'd;  
That so I neither may be Rich nor Poor,  
And having just enough, not covet more.  
'Twas then, Old Souldiers cover'd o'er with Scars,  
(The Marks of *Pyrrhus*, or the *Punick Wars*,)  
Thought all past Services rewarded well,  
If to their share at last two Acres fell:

Yet, then, this little Spot of Earth well Till'd,  
A num'rous Family with Plenty fill'd;  
The good old Man and thrifty Housewife spent  
Their Days in Peace, and fatten'd with Content.  
Enjoy'd the Dregs of Life, and liv'd to see  
A long-descending Healthful Progeny.  
The Men were fashion'd in a larger Mold;  
The Women fit for Labour, Big and Bold.  
Gygantick Hinds, as soon as Work was done,  
To their huge Pots of boiling Pulse wou'd run:  
Fell too, with eager Joy, on homely Food;  
And their large Veins beat strong with wholesom Blood.  
Of old, two Acres were a bounteous Lot,  
Now, scarce they serve to make a Garden-Plott. [Pp. 299–300]

Juvenal's vision of the country in Satires Three, Eleven, and Fourteen is substantially the same: serious, nonironic, lyrical, and patriotically early Roman.<sup>11</sup>

2. Let us also look carefully at the poem itself, and especially at lines 229 and 231 which—we are told—are jokes. Since Dryden has eliminated a key word (the Circus becomes the playhouse), here is Madan's literal translation of 1789:

Could you be plucked away from the Circenses, a most excellent house  
At Sora, or Fabrateria, or Frusino, is gotten  
At the price for which you now hire darkness for one year.  
Here is a little garden, and a shallow well, not to be drawn by a rope,  
It is poured with an easy draught on the small plants.  
Live fond of the fork, and the farmer of a cultivated garden,  
Whence you may give a feast to an hundred Pythagoreans.  
It is something in any place, in any retirement,  
To have made one's self master of one lizard.<sup>12</sup>

10/*The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis*, 3d ed. (London, 1702), pp. 238–39. Subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in the text.

11/Johnson uses lines 5–8, above, as the illustrative quotation for the noun "Mark" in the *Dictionary* (1755). Basil Kennett cites much of the final paragraph as an example of Roman "Panegyrics upon the honest People of the first Ages of the Commonwealth" (*Romae Antiquae Notitia* [London, 1696], p. 63).

12/Martin Madan, *A New and Literal Translation of Juvenal and Persius* (London, 1789), 1:137–39. Samuel Derrick's extremely scarce *The Third Satire of Juvenal Translated into English Verse* (London, 1755), pp. 15–16, describes comparable "rural joys" (p. 15). Thomas Sheridan's prose translation of 1739 (reprinted 1745, 1769, 1777) also is faithful to a similar vision.

The presumed ironic jokes are the hundred Pythagoreans ("Unde epulum possis centum dare Pythagoraeis")<sup>13</sup> and the single lizard ("Unius sese dominum fecisse lacertae"). Throughout the poem, however, Umbritius pictures the formerly free Roman enslaved by his own poverty, the heartless oppression of the rich and ambitious, the illicit triumph of immoral foreigners, and the decay and dangers of life in Rome. At strategic points he places the exiled Roman in a true Roman setting, where he may attain humble poverty, hospitality, love of the land and its products and, most important, control over his own life. It is pitiful that a Roman must leave his city and define proper mastery as lord of a lizard; but it is nonetheless preferable to non-Roman slavery in the Greek city still called Rome.

Moreover, the poet behind Umbritius highlights the contrast between city servitude and country sovereignty. In the country one can feast 100 vegetarian Pythagoreans from his garden, in which his sole subject is a lizard; in Rome we see 100 humble clients and their servants coming from a great man's elaborate dole ("Nonne vides quanto celebretur sportula fumo? / Centum convivae; sequitur sua quemque culina": lines 249–50).<sup>14</sup> Each servant has the food resting upon a chafing dish heated by live coals; the dish, in turn, rests upon his head as he marches to the master's home. The Roman, metaphorically enslaved to the rich, also enslaves the "Servulus infelix" (line 253) whose lot is even worse than his master's. There is thus no joke in being lord of a single lizard and humble host of 100 invited and equal Pythagoreans: it is, in fact, a position morally superior to the urban Roman who is one of the 100 faceless dependents of a rich man and merely putative master of his own overworked slave. Insistence upon the loss of real Roman liberty is again made clear late in the poem where the drunken bully beats the poor Roman and gives him the "liberty" ("libertas pauperis haec est": line 299) of begging to keep a few teeth in his head. The poor man can only hope that the bully will not also bring him before a magistrate and charge him with assault. As a free country resident Umbritius will be master of a lizard; as an enslaved city resident he will be tyrannized by all. That may be black humor, but Juvenal surely means us to take seriously the emblematic sovereignty over a lizard and the projected invitation to 100 guests.

3. There is, then, no warrant either in Juvenal's other discussions of the country or in the poem itself for concluding that the country in the Third Satire is presented as anything but a positive norm. Nor is there justification for such a reading in any Latin edition and commentary or English translation or imitation from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century or in the work of Boileau and his compatriots in France. I have not been able to examine every possible Latin commentary, but I have seen most of those that Johnson might have seen and will here report on those of Brittanicus and Curio (1627), Schrevelius (1648, 1671 ed. quoted), and Prateus (1684, 1736 ed. quoted). None of these,

13/All Latin quotations from the Third Satire are from *D. Junii Juvenalis, et A. Persii Flacci Satirae*, ed. Ludovicus Prateus, 7th ed. (London, 1736). As the Blooms have shown in "Johnson's *London* and Its Juvenalian Texts" (see n. 1), this was the text (but not necessarily this reprint) which Johnson knew best, though the annotations of Schrevelius were more influential.

14/For a brief statement regarding "The Duties of a 'Client'" in Juvenal's Rome, see Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, trans. E. O. Lorimer (London, 1946), pp. 171–73.

or any other commentator, sees ironic undercutting of the country anywhere in the poem. Though such scholars are not famous for their wit, they nonetheless were able to see and label irony when they thought it appeared. Prateus, for instance, reading Juvenal's praise of the divine poetry of Codrus (III, 207), says: "This is ironic; in fact he called Codrus raucous in Satire I" ("Ironice, Raucum enim Codrum dixit Sat. I" [p. 55]). Britannicus and Curio comment upon the opening of the poem and Umbritius's decision to go to Cumae. If they had noted irony, here would surely be a place to mention it. Instead, they tell us that Juvenal introduces Umbritius "who is prepared to quit the city because of its moral depravity: He presents his own account of the city's most outstanding horrors: Therefore the poet says: Though I am not unmoved because my friend Umbritius is leaving the City, yet because it is all thought out in his mind, I praise his resolution since, leaving Rome behind, he has decided to go to Cumae."<sup>15</sup> Schrevelius's discussion of the opening is substantially the same and also laments the loss of his dear friend to Cumae, the very ancient city in Campania and the home of the Sybil of Cumae ("Cujus dulci consuetudine & familiaritate mihi carendum").<sup>16</sup> Prateus similarly remarks that Umbritius attacks Rome and is leaving to go to Cumae, the home and shrine of the Sybil.<sup>17</sup> These commentators cannot find anything wrong with Cumae, or the towns Juvenal mentions later in the poem; nor can they see irony in the 100 Pythagoreans or single lizard. Schrevelius, borrowing from Lubin, includes this gloss on the lizard: "Migrating from the city to whatever place may receive you, that is considered the best home, where you may have a house and garden so small that hardly a single lizard itself can run about."<sup>18</sup> However small the land, it is nonetheless preferable to life in Rome and is "optimum putato domicilium."

The English translations, imitations, and commentaries were of course influenced by the Latin and would have reinforced Johnson's literal reading of the rural virtues. In 1682, for example, Oldham imitates the Third Satire, praises the country in the several expected places, and says that in Kent, or Surrey, or Essex

Had I the smallest Spot of Ground, which scarce  
Would Summer half a dozen Grasshoppers,  
Not larger than my Grave, tho hence remote,  
Far as St. *Michaels Mount*, I would go to 't,  
Dwell there content, and thank the Fates to boot.<sup>19</sup>

15/"Introduciturque Umbritium haruspice sui temporis amicum suum, parantem ob pravitatem morum ab Urbe discedere: cui ad notanda vitia dat partes suas. Ait ergo Poeta: Quamvis non possim non commoveri, quod amicus meus Umbritius ab Urbe discedat, tamen habita discessus ratione laudo ejus consilium, quod relicta urbe Roma, statuat migrare Cumas." As quoted in *D. Junii Juvenalis . . . Satyrae*, ed. Henricus Christianus Henninius (Utrecht, 1685), p. 455.

16/*D. Junii Juvenalis et Auli Persii Flacci Satyrae*, ed. Cornelius Schrevelius (Leyden, 1671), p. 56.

17/Prateus's "Interpretatio," a prose gloss in simpler Latin, reinforces the meaning of the lines and of the commentary (see pp. 37–38 and 56–57).

18/"Ex urbe migrans quocunque te receperis, optimum putato domicilium, ubi tuam habeas domum & hortum tam exiguum, ut vix una ipsum discurrat lacerta. *Lubin*" (Schrevelius, p. 89).

19/*The Works of Mr. John Oldham, Together with His Remains* (London, 1686; new pagination and title page for *Poems and Translations. By the Author of The Satyrs upon the Jesuits* [London, 1684], p. 199).

Dryden, who has not often been accused of lacking an ear for irony, is no less explicit in his translation of 1693. He portrays Umbricitus as going to "quiet *Cumae*"

Where, far from noisie *Rome* secure he lives,  
And one more Citizen to *Sybil* gives.  
The Road to *Bajae*, and that soft Recess  
Which all the Gods with all their Bounty bless. [P. 31]

Dryden becomes more lyrical when he describes the "Sweet Country Seats" and their "Crystal Streams" that water "all the pretty Spot of Ground."

There, love the Fork, thy Garden cultivate,  
And give thy frugal Friends a *Pythagorean* Treat.  
'Tis somewhat to [be] the Lord of some small Ground  
In which a Lizard may, at least, turn round. [P. 48]

In 1763 Edward Burnaby Greene's loose imitation attacks the Scottish triumphs in England and shows their power in banishing the English to the barren hills of Scotland.<sup>20</sup> But that is the only such negative use of the country within the more than 200 years I have surveyed. It is, I suspect, the exception that proves the rule, since Greene's inversion of country values can best be appreciated only when set against the received interpretation of a positive and revivifying country.

One later eighteenth-century comment upon the lizard will characterize the attitude of the century as a whole. In 1789 Madan says: "The poet means, that, wherever a man may be placed, or wherever retired from the rest of the world, it is no small privilege to be able to call one's self master of a little spot of ground of one's own, however small it may be, though it were no bigger than to contain one poor lizard. This seems a proverbial or figurative kind of expression." Madan's remark is supported both by a note in the Casaubon edition of 1695 and by Smith's more modern Latin *Dictionary*. There, under *lacerta* we see the line from Juvenal's Third Satire, see also that it is "Prov." and that it means "to get a place of one's own, however small."<sup>21</sup>

20/Edward Burnaby Greene, *The Satires of Juvenal Paraphrastically Imitated, And Adapted to the Times* (London, 1763), pp. 33-34. On August 18, 1763 Gibbon records his initiation to the Third Satire, and praises it without mentioning irony. By September 16 he had read the Fourteenth Satire as well and was impressed with the simple country scene (described above) ("Extraits de mon journal," in *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. John Lord Sheffield [London, 1796], 2:95-96, 113).

21/Madan, 1:138; I. and M. Casaubon (with J. C. Scaliger and H. C. Henninius), *D. J. Juvenalis Satyrae . . . accedit Auli Persi Flacci* (Leyden, 1695), p. 908, n. 231; Sir William Smith, *A Smaller Latin-English Dictionary*, rev. J. F. Lockwood (London, 1962 [1st ed., London, 1855]). The illustrative or "iconographic" evidence also supports the conservative view of *Cumae* as a place for one's retreat. The illustration in Holyday's *Juvenal* (facing p. 47) shows a pleasant coast, groves, roads, and different structures, including theaters, homes, and military camps, on the way to *Cumae*. Holyday tells us that this "Baian prospect and delight" is from "Bertellius in his Theater of the Italian Cities" (p. 44). The illustration to Dryden's *Juvenal* is more eloquent, if less pleasant (facing p. 30; 3d ed., 1702): the walls of Rome are in the background and Umbricitus and Juvenal, at the edge of the Tiber, are in the foreground. Behind them is the once sacred grove of Numa in which, from left to right, we see a rape, the untended altar of the god overgrown with weeds, Jewish merchants plying their wares, and one of the sacred trees being chopped down. Behind Umbricitus and Juvenal are the farmer's two horses being whipped forward by the servant and a cart which holds two children and a variety of personal effects, including what may be the household gods.



Furthermore, no less a satiric ironist than Boileau annotated and adapted Juvenal's Third Satire. Although he does see ironic lines in the poem, he fails to see them in the country scene and glosses "Cumae" by saying: "Cumes est un passage pour aller à Baies, un rivage fort agréable, une solitude charmante."<sup>22</sup> In 1701 he read and corrected Pierre Le Verrier's commentaries upon his work and thus provided a gloss upon his own First and Sixth Satires and Juvenal's Third Satire. With slight modifications, the commentary passed into the major editions by Brosette (1717) and Saint-Marc (1747) as the "Avis sur la I. Satire" of Boileau: "C'est une imitation de la troisième Satire de JUVÉNAL, dans laquelle est aussi décrite la retraite d'un Philosophe qui abandonne le séjour de Rome, à cause des vices affreux qui y regnoient. *Juvénal* y décrit encore les embarras de la même ville; & à son exemple, Mr. *Despréaux*, dans cette première Satire, avoit fait la description des embarras de Paris."<sup>23</sup>

This is a sample of the nearly unanimous view of the commentators, translators, and imitators of Juvenal's Third Satire on the Continent, in England, and in America from about 1600 to 1800:<sup>24</sup> they agree that the country as Juvenal presents it is the norm of a poem in which Rome is an anti-norm. There is, in short, no tradition of reading which could have shown Johnson that Cumae or the other country retreats were unpleasant.

4. Nevertheless, when faced with so independent a reader as Samuel Johnson, especially the young Sam Johnson, the lack of such a tradition need not exclude the possibility that he could have found irony in the relevant scenes. The preponderance of evidence—so great that it virtually amounts to proof—is that he

22/Boileau, *Satires de Perse et de Juvénal. Expliquées, traduites et commentées par Boileau, publiées d'après le manuscrit autographe, par L. Parrelle* (Paris, 1827), 1:169 (see also *Les Satires de Boileau commentées par lui-même et publiées avec notes par Frédéric Lachèvre: Reproduction du commentaire inédit de Pierre le Verrier avec les corrections autographes de Despréaux* [Courmenil, 1906], p. 55). Bossuet, among others, seconded Boileau's interpretation. In 1684 he commented upon the satires of Juvenal and Persius for the benefit of the Grand Dauphin of France. He glosses "vacuis" (line 2) in this way: "C'est à dire que Cumes est une ville vuide des desordres et des embarras de Rome; c'est une raison fort bone qui oblige Umbrilius d'y aller habiter." And he says of the lizard (line 231): "D'être le maître de quelque chose; on dit encore *unius vermiculi*" (see *Oeuvres inédites de J.-B. Bossuet. . . . Tome I: Le Cours royal complet sur Juvénal*, ed. Auguste-Louis Ménard [Paris, 1881], pp. 81, 100). The translations by Martignac (Paris, 1683), Tarteron (Paris, 1695), and Dusaulx (Paris, 1770; 2d ed. 1782; 3d ed. 1789) are silent regarding irony.

23/*Oeuvres de Boileau Despréaux*, ed. M. de Saint-Marc (Amsterdam, 1772), 1:14. Italics and Roman type are inverted in the text.

24/For a convenient gathering of further comments in Latin, see the Casaubon edition (n. 21 above) and its "Cento variorum." For other translations and comments in English see *Juvenal's Sixteen Satyrs*, trans. Sir Robert Stapylton (London, 1673); [Thomas Sheridan], *Satires of Juvenal . . . With . . . Notes, Relating to the Laws and Customs of the Greeks and Romans* (London, 1739); *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis*, trans. William Gifford (London, 1802), (Gifford's Juvenal was reprinted in Philadelphia in 2 vols. in 1803); *Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis*, trans. Rev. William Heath Marsh (London, 1804); *A New Translation with Notes, of the Third Satire of Juvenal*, trans. John Duer (New York, 1806); *The Satires of Juvenal*, trans. Francis Hodgson (London, 1807). The relevant commentary concerns the opening of the poem and the main country passage, especially lines 229 and 231. Other translators—Edward Owen in 1785, for example—say nothing, presumably because they regard the lines as clear enough without their gloss. Hodgson (pp. 32, 376–77) believes that Juvenal himself wishes to stay in Rome; but he does not attribute irony to Juvenal—simply a tolerance for the needs of his less literary friend.

in fact did not hear Juvenal's irony because it is not to be heard. We should remember, after all, that Johnson's "Swiftian" political pieces *Marmor Norfolciense* and *A Compleat Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage* were published in 1739 and that *London* itself is filled with ironies—of those who "vote a patriot black, a courtier white" (line 53),<sup>25</sup> of Frenchmen who use industry to escape industry (line 113), and of a great man whose palace is destroyed by Heaven and restored in abundance by men (lines 194–209). At this point in his literary career Johnson's ear was as finely tuned to irony as it ever was.

Moreover, the opening of the poem makes clear that we are to see Thales' departure as intelligent and thoughtful. The first speaker echoes Juvenal and insists: "Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend, / I praise the hermit, but regret the friend" (lines 3–4). Johnson revised the first edition's reading of the following two lines in order to stress Thales' wise decision. He changed the couplet which began "Who now resolves from vice and London far" to "Resolved at length, from vice and London far, / To breathe in distant fields a purer air."<sup>26</sup> And as A. D. Moody has shown, Johnson also revised the country scenes in order to make them more attractive.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps, it might be argued, Johnson really did find irony in the poem but chose to ignore it, since it did not suit his purposes. Though we cannot reclaim Johnson's exact attitude in 1738, we do have several of his subsequent remarks regarding Juvenal's Third Satire. On March 8, 1758 he wrote to Bennet Langton: "I am satisfied with your stay at home, as Juvenal with his friend's retirement to Cumae: I know that your absence is best, though it be not best for me." He then quotes the first three lines of Juvenal's Third Satire—Boswell's note to the *Life* adds the first eight of *London*—and adds: "*Langton* is a good *Cumae*, but who must be *Sibylla*? Mrs. Langton is as wise as *Sibyl*, and as good; and will live, if my wishes can prolong life, till she shall in time be as old."<sup>28</sup> Near the end of 1770 when the Reverend Dr. William Maxwell was to return to Ireland, Johnson, Maxwell reports, told him that "he knew, it was a point of *duty* that called me away.—'We shall all be sorry to lose you,' said he: '*laudo tamen*'" (2:133)—that is, from the second line of Juvenal's poem as Johnson rendered it, "Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend" (line 3). And, finally, on April 9, 1778, Boswell, Johnson, and others discussed the erstwhile lizard without hinting at ironic meanings:

One of the company asked him the meaning of the expression in Juvenal, *unius lacertae*. JOHNSON. "I think it clear enough; as much ground as one may have a chance to find a lizard upon."

Commentators [Boswell adds] have differed as to the exact meaning of the expression by which the Poet intended to enforce the sentiment contained in the passage where these

25/*Samuel Johnson: Poems*, Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr., with George Milne, 6 (New Haven, Conn., 1964): 50. Subsequent quotations are from this text.

26/*Ibid.*, p. 48, n. 5.

27/A. D. Moody, "The Creative Critic: Johnson's Revisions of *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*," *Review of English Studies*, N.S. 22 (1971): 140–41.

28/*Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (Oxford, 1934–50), 1:324–25. Subsequent quotations are from this edition.

words occur. It is enough that they mean to denote even a very small possession, provided it be a man's own. [3:255]<sup>29</sup>

Let me now sum up the findings of the four points regarding irony in Juvenal and its perception, or lack of it, in Johnson: (1) in his other satires Juvenal is consistently favorable to the country and uses it as an emblem of the old Roman values; (2) the Third Satire itself insists that the 100 Pythagoreans and mastery of a single lizard in the country be contrasted with the 100 dinnertime dependents and metaphorical enslavement in Rome; (3) English, Latin, and French commentators, translators, and imitators—including some conspicuous ironists—for over 200 years regard the country sections as serious norms that are not undercut; (4) Johnson was particularly sensitive to irony during 1738 and is not likely to have missed something that was in the poem. His own work on *London* and his subsequent comments as late as forty years thereafter indicate that he regarded the praise of the country as clear, positive, and, in its opening at least, warm and touching.

Several obvious but neglected points emerge from this review. In general, an undefended modern interpretation should not be foisted upon an ancient poem; if that poem is the model for an eighteenth-century imitation the student should attempt to reclaim the contemporary reading. In particular, it is misleading to apply a hitherto unknown interpretation of Juvenal's Third Satire to show Johnson's benighted understanding of his parent-poem; and it is similarly misleading to suggest that Johnson's ignorance can explain the comparatively diminished brilliance of *London* or explain aspects of the poem that other hypotheses fail to do. There are many obstacles in the way of "proper" reading of an eighteenth-century imitation: perhaps the first is acceptance of the tautology that it is an eighteenth-century imitation.

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29/For some of these interpretive squabbles, see Casaubon, p. 908; Gifford, pp. 97–98; Hodgson, p. 380. Boswell's final remark is justified.