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# JUVENAL THE SATIRES

A new translation by Niall Rudd



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JUVENAL

*The Satires*



*Translated by*

NIALL RUDD

*Edited with an Introduction and Notes by*

WILLIAM BARR

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## THE SATIRES

JUVENAL (Decimus Iunius Iuuenalis), born AD 60 in the reign of Nero, spent his teens under Vespasian, and his early manhood under the terrible Domitian. He began to publish about AD 112 in the reign of Trajan, and finished about 130 under Hadrian. Over the centuries many readers have seen him as a stern moralist, others, more recently, as an extravagant wit. No one has doubted his status as a master of language. His powerful attacks on the vices of imperial Rome have been admired and exploited by several English writers, including Dr Johnson, who described his style as 'a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur'.

NIALL RUDD, a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, lectured at Hull and Manchester in the 1950s, and at Toronto in the 1960s. After five years at Liverpool he became Professor of Latin at Bristol, where he taught until 1989. He has also held a number of visiting posts in Canada and the United States. His books include *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge, 1966); *Lines of Enquiry* (Cambridge, 1976); *Themes in Roman Satire* (Duckworth, 1986), and an edition of Horace *Epistles II* and *Ars Poetica* (Cambridge, 1989).

WILLIAM BARR, a graduate of London University, was formerly Senior Lecturer in Latin in the University of Liverpool, of which he is now Honorary Senior Fellow. Since his retirement in 1989 he has also been Honorary Lecturer in Classics in the University of Leeds. He has published articles on Roman poetry, and he has edited Claudian's Panegyric on the Fourth Consulate of Honorius (Liverpool, 1981). He also wrote the introduction and commentary accompanying Guy Lee's translation of *The Satires of Persius* (Liverpool, 1987).

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To E.C.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks are due for permission to base this translation on the text of Juvenal edited by Professor E. Courtney and published in Rome in 1984 by Edizioni dell'Ateneo. The lines which Courtney has bracketed as spurious are translated in the notes; and where he has marked a word as unintelligible a conjecture has been translated. On the few occasions when the translation diverges from Courtney's text, this has been indicated in the notes. Professor Courtney's text is distributed in the United Kingdom by the Bristol Classical Press.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In this edition half a dozen errors in the first printing have been corrected. In addition, alterations have been made at the following places: I. 2, 142, 143, 144; 3. 75; 4. 48; 6. 414; 7. 61; 8. 197, 252; 12. 13; 15. 133; 16. 18, 19. The sources of these changes will be found for the most part in R. G. M. Nisbet, *Collected Papers on Latin Literature* (Oxford, 1955) 227–60, and W. S. Watt, *Eikasmos* 7 (1996) 283–9.

The *Select Bibliography* has been brought up to date.

N.R.

*Bristol, 2000*



## INTRODUCTION

As well as being the author of two of the best known Latin tags, *panem et circenses* ('bread and races', 10. 81) and *mens sana in corpore sano* ('a healthy mind in a healthy body', 10. 356), Juvenal has two other, more important, claims on our attention. In the first place, there is no surviving Roman satirist whose approach more nearly matches most modern readers' expectations of the genre. In the second place, he is the last Roman poet of any great significance. After his death, some time after AD 130, Latin poetry went into decline and its revival in the fourth century produced no one of comparable stature.

The verse form of satire practised by Juvenal had been evolved, after some experimentation, by Lucilius, an outspoken gentleman-poet of the second century BC, whom Horace in the next century, then Persius (first century AD), and Juvenal, at the beginning of the second century, all acknowledged as their model and inspiration. Lucilius' satires now exist only as a collection of fragments, preserved by later writers in the form of quotations or, more often, cited for their interest to the grammarian and the lexicographer. Such as they are, however, these fragments and the comments of his followers and critics leave us in no doubt about Lucilius' satirical method in two important respects. Firstly, he assailed his victims fearlessly, and, in defiance of Roman feeling on this point, did not scruple to use their names, a feature heavily underlined in ancient assessments of his work. Secondly, he made of his poems a record of his life, a habit that deeply impressed Horace, in stylistic matters one of his sternest critics, as something he could usefully imitate (*Satires* 2. 1. 30 ff.). His outspokenness he admired (*Satires* 1. 4. 1 ff., 1. 10. 3 f.), but, whether from inclination or prudence, he did not try to copy it.

Juvenal, in marked contrast, while claiming both of these poets as his models, shows the aggressive spirit of Lucilius (though reluctant to attack living targets) but not the personal or autobiographical element. Lucilius, Horace, and, to a more limited extent, Persius use

their satire as a repository of personal confidences, presenting themselves to their readers on a level of carefully controlled intimacy. (Significantly, each of the three is at some pains to specify his preferred readership.) Juvenal, however, lurks in the shadows of his own satire. There are no anecdotes of childhood or family and, throughout his work, he remains as evasive and as difficult to identify as the few individuals he addresses in the later poems. Moreover, the declamatory tone he favoured makes intimacy impossible, and in consequence the only indications in the satires that have a bearing on his life add up to little more than the claim to have received a rhetorical training, his connection with Aquinum, his place at Tivoli, and a few dates as often as not of doubtful value.

External evidence is equally lacking. Publication of the five books of satires produced no immediate reaction that we know of. The reading public's awareness of Juvenal came much later. The only one of his contemporaries to name him is Martial, the writer of epigrams, who addresses him more as a friend than as a fellow poet. His name does not appear among the host of famous people of the day mentioned in the extensive correspondence of Martial's friend Pliny the younger, a wealthy patron of learning and literature, but whether because of Juvenal's obscurity or Pliny's hostility is not clear. An inscription from Aquinum, now lost, commemorates an offering to Ceres by one (Iu)nius Iuvenalis, a local magistrate, the tribune of a cohort of Dalmatian auxiliaries and a priest of the deified emperor Vespasian, but though Juvenal speaks of Aquinum and its shrine of Ceres as a place of retreat, there are no grounds for assuming that this man (possibly no more than a relative or a namesake) and the poet were one and the same.

By the time Juvenal's popularity was established with the reading public in the fourth century (Ammianus 28. 14. 4), notes (*scholia*) had to be supplied to assist their understanding and some biographical details to satisfy their curiosity. The few pieces of information put forward by the scholiast, based generally on what were felt to be clues given by the poet himself, were later worked up into a number of 'Lives'. These are found in an inferior class of manuscripts presenting a text of Juvenal characterized by spurious insertions.

The most plausible of these Lives (Clausen, edn., 179; Courtney, comm., p. 6) describes Juvenal as the son or foster-son of a freedman, who until middle life practised declamation, though not in a pro-

fessional way. The freedman father may be a borrowing from the well-established details of Horace's life (*Satires* 1. 6. 6 etc.); the references to declamation and middle life probably derive from Juvenal himself (1. 15 ff., 1. 25). On a more sensational level we are informed that he wrote some verses attacking a favourite of the emperor Domitian, a dancer called Paris executed in AD 83, and his librettist, for trafficking in military commissions, and that he then took up this kind of writing with enthusiasm but without seeking publicity. Later, we are told, a warm reception of his verses broke down that reserve and he inserted the lines on Paris into his seventh satire as verses 90–2. They seemed to fit another court favourite of the time, offence was taken, and Juvenal, then in his eighties, was given command of a cohort then being posted to Egypt, where he soon died of distress and boredom.

Other versions differed in detail, but the story of Juvenal's exile kept cropping up with such persistence that in the past many scholars felt obliged to accept it, using it as the basis of elaborate theories about his life and temperament, and modifying or disregarding its inherent improbabilities as they felt inclined. The story is open to many objections. Why, for example, should Juvenal in his eighties, after a lifetime of cautious reticence and having lived through Domitian's reign of terror, so far forget himself as to risk imperial vengeance by reviving his remarks about a long dead favourite in Satire 7, which is now widely assumed to have been written in the early days of Hadrian's beneficent rule? Why again should Hadrian, who never spent much time in Rome after his accession, have taken notice of anything said by a writer so apparently obscure as Juvenal? Or why was an offence described in the *Life* as slight and amusing punished in this way or punished at all?

Some get over these difficulties by accepting the Scholiast's assertions (1. 1, 4. 37, 7. 90) that he was banished by Domitian (on the evidence of Martial 7. 24 and 91 this could only have been after AD 92) and, returning to Rome after Domitian's death in 96 an embittered man, turned his hand to writing satire. Some modern critics like Hightet (*Juvenal the Satirist*, 40 f.) and, after him, Green (1974, 21 f.) have managed to create attractive and by no means implausible reconstructions of the poet's life, largely on the basis of the inscription and these stories of exile, while fully aware of the pitfalls. (Hightet, in a later work, *Poets in a Landscape* (1957), 193 ff.,

goes even further along these lines, adding many details that could only have originated in his own imagination.) The consensus of opinion among scholars of the present day is that the story of Juvenal's exile, like many other details in the *Lives*, was a late fabrication, needed to supply a biographical background to a virtually unknown author and to account for the bitterness of his tone.

As to the life and circumstances of Juvenal, there is little to guide us except the evidence of Martial and some scattered shreds of evidence supplied by the poems themselves. Indications of date are slight enough in all conscience, but enough to suggest that the five books came out in chronological order:

Book 1 (*Satires* 1–5), with its reference to the trial of Marius Priscus (1. 49–50), must have been published some time after AD 100 but before 112 or thereabouts.

Book 2 (*Satire* 6) has a reference (407 ff.) to a comet visible in November of AD 115, therefore *c.* 117.

Book 3 (*Satires* 7–9), if the Caesar of 7. 1 is rightly taken to be Hadrian, was probably published after his accession in 117 and before his departure from Rome in 121: say 121.

Book 4 (*Satires* 10–12) has no clear indications of date except that it is obviously after Trajan (12. 80): say 125.

Book 5 (*Satires* 13–16), where *Satire* 13. 17 refers to one born in AD 67 (probably) as having turned 60, has a date later than 127: say 130.

The reference to his youth as something in the past (*Sat.* 1. 24–5) would have meant to a Roman that he had passed the age of 45, giving a birth-date of about AD 60. In *Satire* 11 he represents himself as old (201–3), leaving us to infer that the *Satires* were the work of his middle and later years.

Martial addressed Juvenal in three epigrams, 7. 24, 91, and 12. 18. (Juvenal never returned the compliment, though he was obviously well acquainted with Martial's work.) The first two can be dated to AD 92 and must imply that Martial and Juvenal knew each other in Rome. Martial (7. 91) calls him *facundus* ('eloquent'), an epithet equally applicable to poets and orators. The third epigram (12. 18), with a date of AD 101–2, is much more interesting. It is written from Bilbilis in Spain, the place of Martial's retirement, and draws a picture of Juvenal plodding wearily through the noisy Subura (see on

3. 5) or paying his respects at the houses of the upper classes, sweating under the uncomfortable toga worn by clients in the performance of this duty. We have insufficient evidence to enable us to pinpoint with anything like accuracy Juvenal's position in the echelons of the Roman class system, but his own descriptions in the earlier satires of the condition of the respectable poor at Rome seem to imply that he was no stranger to the hardships and humiliations imposed on those at the lower end of the social scale.

Aquinum, where possibly he had some family connection (though the name Iuvenalis suggests that he came of a stock originally Spanish), offered an occasional escape from the discomforts of the capital (3. 319 ff.). In a later satire (11. 65 ff.) he speaks of his own farm at Tivoli with its steward and his wife as the source of the simple country fare he proposes to offer at his dinner-party. Tivoli was one of the most delectable spots within easy reach of Rome, favoured by the rich and noble, and, at this period, the place chosen by Hadrian for the construction of a more than ordinarily splendid villa. The possession of a place here, however modest, raises the possibility that Juvenal's circumstances had improved materially. Some such improvement in fortune has often been taken as the reason for the noticeable decrease in Juvenal's obsession with the poor and oppressed between his earlier work and his later, as well as accounting for a general mellowing of temper, notwithstanding a return to something like his old fire in the fifth book. But certainty is not to be had.

The literary output of Juvenal begins at a time when the bad years of Domitian were giving way to the humane and tolerant rule of Nerva (96-8) and Trajan (98-117), the start of the period of which Gibbon wrote that

if a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus (Bk. 1, ch. 3).

Human satisfaction is never, of course, unalloyed, and Gibbon went on to surmise that this happiness must have been tempered by the reflection that its stability depended always on the character of a single man, the emperor. His optimism was obviously based with hindsight on a global view of those years, taking little account of individual lives.

For many undoubtedly it was the best of times. There was still plenty of 'old money' to be found in the hands of men like the younger Pliny, who lived in a style that could reasonably be called princely, though he himself did not consider it remarkable. The large landed estates in Italy and abroad were, in the right hands, constantly being increased by inheritance, marriage, prudent management and reinvestment. The extent of these holdings can be judged from the statement of Pliny the elder that at one time half of the province of Africa was owned by six men (*Natural History* 18. 35). Not everyone, however, had the good luck to keep their fortunes intact. Imperial disfavour was easily incurred under a Nero or a Domitian, and disgrace was usually accompanied by the confiscation of the family estates, as in the case of Rubellius Plautus (Tacitus, *Annals* 14. 60). In Juvenal, a wealthy freedman sneers at the idea of a descendant of the once great house of Messala Corvinus, now reduced to tending sheep that were not even his own (1. 107 f.). Many were brought to similar straits by the all too prevalent Roman tendency to luxury and display.

The temper of the times helped others on the way up. The rise of the ex-slave (see on 1. 109) was by Juvenal's day a well-established phenomenon, though not perhaps so common in real life as its prominence in literature might suggest. There are no good grounds, moreover, for accepting Juvenal's impression of Crispinus or the pushy freedman of 1. 102 ff. as entirely true to real life. These are probably caricatures of the type made famous by Petronius' Trimalchio. Still, the rich freedmen did exist, and, often backed or even partnered by their former owners, they applied themselves successfully to making money, unhampered by any class taboos about what was or was not a fitting occupation for a gentleman.

In this respect they had a distinct advantage over those shabby-gentee individuals described by Umbricius in Satire 3. (At an earlier date one might have said 'like Juvenal himself', but sheer lack of information on this head and the concept of the *persona* nowadays rightly forbid these rigid assumptions.) The existence of slave-labour on a large scale placed many kinds of work below the level of free-born men and, in regard to what profession or occupation a man might follow without compromising his own respectability or the pretensions of his class, Roman society had traditionally been as sensitive as our own. Philosophy too had something to say on the

subject. In his treatise *On Duties* 1. 150 f., a work which draws heavily on the Stoic Panaetius, one of whose guiding principles was 'the fitting' (Greek, *tò prépon*; Latin, *decorum*), Cicero declares that medicine, architecture, and teaching are well enough for those whose rank does not rule out that sort of thing. One could get away with trade, but only if it was conducted on a large enough scale (retail trade was vulgar); and successful traders had been known to retire from business, buy an estate and become country squires. Farming as a means of making money was above reproach. Principles like these, by which educated Romans of good standing tended to regulate their conduct, help to explain why such umbrage is taken at the entrepreneurial activities of the people described in Satire 3. 21 ff. Theirs were not 'respectable skills' (the expression recalls Cicero's own words); but, respectable or not, those who chose to live by them could stand on their own feet. Those who, like Umbricius, felt superior to them had few other ways of making ends meet than by attaching themselves to a patron, from whom, if nothing else came of the connection, they were at least sure of a hand-out (1. 95 and note), sufficient to keep body and soul together, or an occasional dinner. Patronage, of course, was never disinterested, and Juvenal in Satires 5 and 9 fuels the reflection that Trebius and, even more so, Naevolus are paying too heavily in humiliation and degradation for anything they receive or are likely to receive from their despicable patrons. The beggar's mat is mentioned in both satires as the final stage of destitution, but the advice tendered by Juvenal is remarkable for the ironic delicacy with which he steers clear of suggesting better ways of avoiding it than scrounging or sodomy, just as the reader's attention is focused on the moral aspects of Naevolus' chosen mode of life more effectively by Juvenal's affectation of bland acceptance than by any overtly expressed condemnation.

However, in many ways less concerned with the actual problems of day-to-day living, life was improving. Martial, perhaps detecting a change in the temper of the times under Nerva and Trajan, had decided that there was little more to be gained by his particular talent for obsequiousness and obscenity (not that he had done especially well out of it before), and retired back to Spain. To Juvenal, on the other hand, the more relaxed and more tolerant atmosphere seems to have given the idea of devoting himself to a branch of literature to which he was well suited by temperament and training, and one that



provided the opportunity for unburdening himself of certain things that badly wanted saying. His highly individual conception of satire gave him ample scope for exploiting the techniques developed by his rhetorical training and the practice of declamation. In one important respect he differs from his predecessors. Whereas they have much to say about the kind of readership they prefer, and sometimes, as in the case of Horace, couple this with a disclaimer of any malicious intention in writing satire, Juvenal addresses himself to the task of writing satire in a torrent of rhetorical energy without the slightest attempt to limit or define his audience. Speaking for the most part in monologue, rarely introducing an interlocutor or adversary figure, the satirist makes his point less by the arts of conversation than by overpowering rhetoric. But the rhetoric of the Silver Age was very much a thing of the schools, and the opportunities for using it to gain some point in the real world against real opponents were more limited than they had ever been. Reflecting this, Juvenal's arguments often lose in force (for example in Satire 6 and Satire 10) from his apparent refusal to countenance the possibility that any man of ordinary sense and experience could with little difficulty cite examples that tell as heavily against him. Rhetorical commonplaces, like the superiority of country to town, of past to present, take the place of reasoned argument. The great heroes of the Roman Republic, an important part of the stock-in-trade of the rhetoric schools, are set up again and again as examples of the ideals of manhood (*virtus*) from which their unworthy descendants have progressively sunk.

The rhetorical influences at work in Silver Age literature of every kind are nowhere more apparent than in the prevalence of the *sententia*. This is a short pithy saying or epigram, in which a point is made so emphatically and so neatly that the listener involuntarily accepts it as proven. Juvenal is particularly skilful at making and using *sententiae*, some so brilliant that they have virtually acquired the force of proverbs. Several of these state a truth that we accept readily, like 3. 152 f.:

Of all that luckless poverty involves, nothing is harsher  
than the fact that it makes people funny.

or 2. 83:

No one sinks to the bottom at once.



(In each case, Latin, as usual, contrives to put the idea in far fewer words.) Other specimens, however, for all their brilliance will not stand up to close examination, and expose the device as a poor substitute for argument, for example 10. 96:

Even people with no desire to kill  
covet the power,

and the empty-handed traveller of 10. 22 would seem to be asking for trouble if he acted as Juvenal suggests and sang in the face of the disappointed robber.

All successful satire relies heavily on the licence to exaggerate, but Juvenal not infrequently abuses this licence, both in the grossly overdrawn caricatures he presents of individuals like his particular bugbear Crispinus, and in unabashed misrepresentation. Bad as Rome may have been, it is absurdly overstating the case to allege that its streets were swarming with murderesses to the extent that (6. 655 f.)

Every morning you meet Eriphyles in dozens, and also  
daughters of Danaus; every street has a Clytemnestra.

It is equally absurd to describe the father of Demosthenes, a wealthy armourer, as a grimy blacksmith with bloodshot eyes (10. 130 ff.). But it is all magnificent stuff provided it is not accepted as gospel.

Whatever the defects in his manner of conducting an argument, Juvenal emerges as a brilliantly effective and forceful stylist, particularly in the earlier and more declamatory sections of his work. The rhetorical question is constantly used, sometimes to suggest an identity of interest or a measure of agreement between the satirist and his reader; or sometimes, as at 1. 1 ff., a run of such questions is used to convey exasperation. Points are underlined by the repetition of leading words (anaphora), and arguments are balanced and values highlighted by a skilful use of antithesis. He can rise seemingly at will from a fairly pedestrian level into the grand style; lines 81 ff. of the first satire give a good example of this.

The formal structure of verse satire was not something that came within the scope of rhetorical theory, and Juvenal had an entirely free hand in determining the manner of introducing his satires and thereafter of directing the argument to his desired conclusion. Sometimes he uses an outline borrowed from another genre. Satire