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Juvenal. Satires book III

John Godwin, *Juvenal. Satires book III. Aris and Phillips classical texts*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022. Pp. 330. ISBN 9781800854864

Review by

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Preview

This book joins the growing series of commentaries on Juvenal to which the author has already contributed with one on Book 4 (2016) and one on Book 5 (2020).[1] Turning now to Book 3, Godwin provides a text, translation, and commentary on *Satires* 7, 8, and 9. His purpose in writing the book is threefold: 'to help readers to enjoy this poetry, to understand the ideas being discussed and also appreciate the literary qualities of the Latin' (p. vii). This he does admirably for the typical Aris and Phillips audience: readers of Latin looking to approach Juvenal with guidance, as well as those with no prior knowledge of Latin or Roman culture. The commentary will also be useful for more experienced scholars as well. On Book 3, it joins the classic commentaries by Friedländer 1895, Mayor 1900–1901, and Courtney 2013, as well as the excellent individual commentaries that all the poems of Book 3 have received in recent years, by Stramaglia 2017, Dimatteo 2014, and Bellandi 2021 (the last of which appeared too late for Godwin to incorporate, p. viii). He also devotes great attention to Braund 1988, which is still a core study for the interpretation of the role of Book 3 within Juvenal's poetic career.

The Latin text is based on Clausen's OCT, and Godwin's translation is an enjoyable read that makes Juvenal's challenging language pleasurable. The commentary on each satire comprises a brief general introduction, a list of secondary literature, and line-by-line notes. In addition, the volume contains a Preface, Introduction, Bibliography, and Select Index.

The Introduction is divided into six sections: 'I. Who was Juvenal?' covers the main information we have about the poet and the dating of his life and work (see infra); 'II. What did Juvenal write?' outlines the tradition of Roman satire and Juvenal's place in it, and the main themes of the poet's five books. Godwin then focuses solely on Book 3: Book 3 is a first turning point in Juvenal's poetic career as his *indignatio* starts to give way to irony; its main difference from the earlier satires being 'one of tone rather than one of content' (p. 6). According to Godwin, the common theme of *Satires* 7–9 is criticism of the behavior of the upper class, who are accused of not supporting the arts (*Sat.* 7), falling short of their supposed moral and political high-ground (*Sat.* 8), and exploiting their clients (*Sat.* 9). 'III. Style—how did Juvenal write?' comprises an effective analysis of Juvenal's various stylistic features and literary devices, drawing its examples from Book 3. 'IV. The poet and the persona: why did Juvenal write?' uses *persona* theory as a way of reading Juvenal: the speaker of the poems is a character invented by the poet, who is not to be identified with him and who does not necessarily voice the poet's views. Godwin points out that this may not be the only way to read Juvenal and that the author's true thoughts can still emerge from the text: the reader shall decide whether to take the ideas expressed in it seriously or not. Nevertheless, Godwin's preference for persona theory is visible in his reading of the poems.[2] As a consequence, the author's interpretation is prone to a criticism often levelled at *persona* theory, namely that considering the poems mere rhetorical exercises limits our understanding of Juvenal's poems as culturally and politically charged satires that do engage with issues of contemporary society (cf. Bellandi 1998, 100–101; Freudenburg 2005, 28–29; Uden 2015, 3–5). However, Godwin acknowledges the interesting research done by Uden 2015 and Geue 2017 on the ways in which the poet self-consciously manages to hide behind the text. 'V. The metre' covers the basics of Latin quantitative metre and the building-blocks of the Latin hexameter. 'VI. The transmission of the text' deals with the paradosis of Juvenal's text (see *infra*), though it unfortunately overlooks its crucial presence in Charlemagne's court library (cf. Parker 2012, 155). For the transmission of the text, a reference to Dimatteo 2014, 15–19 would have been useful, since he has one of the most valuable recent discussions of the topic (now see also Bellandi 2021, 47–51).

The Commentary itself is the book's best asset. It guides the reader through the wealth of literary models and intertexts of Juvenal's poems and discusses their implications. Godwin is particularly mindful of Juvenal's parodic reworking of epic models (17-69-70, 115; 9.37, 69), his humorous use of epic style (7.25, 125–126; 8.56, 66–67, 270), and mythological allusions (8.133). Especially noteworthy are the stylistic remarks, the attention paid both to the figures of speech and to the frequent change and clash of stylistic registers: for instance, Juvenal's sudden switches from pathos to bathos (7.6–7, 18–19; 8.158, 272–273; 9.2, 79–80).

In regard to the general interpretation of each satire, Godwin has to deal with much-debated issues. First and foremost is the opening of *Sat.* 7: Godwin sees the address to the emperor as a means of flattering the ruler into granting the material support needed by modern men of letters who can't rely on patrons any more (pp. 91–93). Nevertheless, Stramaglia 2017, 119 (following Marache 1989, 607) has good reasons to look at it as a *captatio benevolentiae* exempting the *princeps* from the many criticisms in the rest of the poem about the state of the liberal arts (for another, different reading see Bellandi 2018, 430–435). Godwin then argues that the satire both raises and by the fact of its own existence and brilliance ultimately answers, in the affirmative, the question of whether it is worth working in the liberal arts anymore. Left unexplored is the possibility, more convincing to me, that the satire is a form of social critique on the state of the arts: while the poem does, as Godwin notes, stress the worthlessness of the life of letters, it attributes its cause to the failure of the upper class to financially support them and to foster a comprehensive cultural program (cf. Bellandi 2018, 426–430).

In his interpretation of *Sat.* 8, Godwin shares Braund's view of the speaker as a 'pseudo-moralist rather than a moralist' (p. 173), since the anger shown towards the aristocracy's immoral conduct is often undercut by irony (contra Dimatteo 2014, 7–9). Singling out the relationship between *nobilitas* and *uirtus* as the main theme of the poem, Godwin offers a helpful overview of the topic in Greek and Roman literature. He then sections the political edge of the poem, since the aristocrat's behaviour is seen as a reflection of the bad example set by emperors like Nero (cf. 8.188–189, 211–230). This interesting observation might prompt wider consideration of Juvenal's views of the contemporary aristocracy during Hadrian's reign. For example, when the poem describes the aristocrats' past exploitation of the provincials (8.87–124), it likely also addresses the current administration of the provinces under the new emperor (cf. Dimatteo 2014, 9–12). Again, social critique is below the surface.

Godwin's succinct reading of *Sat.* 9 wisely steers away from positing either Naevolus or his patron as the sole satirical target. Both are objects of harsh criticism and mockery, each deserving the other. Godwin also rightly points out that the final indictment is of Rome (9.130–134), where there is a total lack of morals and the patronage system has reached new lows. Since Juvenal develops this topic throughout his poetic career, there are more correlations that could be discussed between *Sat.* 3, 5, and 9 (cf. Santorelli 2013, 15–19; Bellandi 2021, 14–31).

To turn to specifics, in the Introduction the need for synthesis perhaps sometimes leads to flattening some complex issues and to introducing some inaccuracies that may lead to misunderstandings, especially for an inexperienced reader.

Firstly, Godwin's dating of Juvenal's life and work (pp. 1–2) must be read with a caveat: the author argues for a late dating of the publication and doesn't take into account the most recent reconsideration of Juvenal's chronology. In this regard a bibliographical reference to Bellandi 2016 would have been necessary, which contains the latest complete reassessment of the topic. Specifically, Godwin suggests that Book 1 was published after AD 110 on account of a reference in 2.102–103 to Tacitus' *Histories*. However, the presence of this allusion to Tacitus is doubtful (for persuasive arguments, cf. Uden 2015, 219–221; Bellandi 2016, 11–13). Most importantly, there is no overall agreement on the dating of Book 1, whose latest certain *terminus post quem* is the reference to the prosecution of Marius Priscus in AD 100 at 1.49–50.[3] Indeed, the hypothesis of an earlier date of publication has been recently and rightfully reappraised and, even though Godwin may not share this view, it would have been worthwhile to mention it.[4] Most recently, Uden (2015, 222) believes it to have been published in AD 100–101, and Bellandi (2016, 14) suggests the first ten years of Trajan's reign or at the latest within the first decade of the second century (hence, before AD 110).

Secondly, when discussing the transmission of the text (p. 20) Godwin talks about P (IX century) as 'our earliest manuscript', without mentioning that our earliest *testimonia* of Juvenal's text are in fact three late antique fragments dated around the sixth century: the *fragmentum Antoniense*, the *fragmentum Bobiense* and the *fragmenta Ambrosiana* (cf. Tarrant 1983, 202–203; Parker 2012, 154–155).

Furthermore, he divides the manuscript tradition into two classes: the Pithoeanus (P) and Φ. By collapsing the P-class with his main testimony, he obliterates the existence of a few fragmentary witnesses related to P: Arou., Sang., Aurel., R[2], and the *Opus Prosodiacum* of Mico of St. Riquier, who quotes 32 lines of Juvenal (cf. Tarrant 1983, 201; Parker 2012, 155–157; Dimatteo 2014, 17–18; Bellandi 2021, 49).

Godwin also claims that P is significantly more reliable than Φ. However, the work of Knoche 1940 and 1950 has reassessed the mss. of the vulgate more positively: Φ does presents alterations to the text and many interpolations, but on several occasions it has the correct reading (cf. Dimatteo 2014, 18; Bellandi 2021, 49). Godwin himself is aware of this, since, in the same paragraph, he states that the main issue for an editor of Juvenal is whether to follow P over Φ or vice versa, indeed giving credit to the reliability of Φ.

As far as the bibliography is concerned, the section on the editions of the text (p. 21) omits some relevant editions and commentaries: Van Der Vliet 2014; Campana 2004; Knoche 1950; Manzella 2011; Santorelli 2012 and 2013. Moreover, Stramaglia's commentary should be quoted in his second edition (2017) instead of his first (2008).

Leaving aside these critical remarks, Godwin's book overall fulfils his purpose to help readers enjoy Juvenal and explain the *Satires*' main themes. Considering that Juvenal's text is demanding in terms of both syntax and literary, historical, and contemporary references, this volume provides a good starting point for a reader. To this end, Godwin's terse and lively style, which runs effortlessly through the key concepts of the poet's work, is a great asset. Although, as discussed above, the Introduction sometimes runs the risk of overly generalizing, it has the merit of making Juvenal's poetics and its scholarship accessible. At the same time, it will be a stimulating read for more experienced scholars. Since Godwin's book does not shy away from addressing the many debated aspects of the *Satires*, it invites readers to reassess their opinion on some of the core aspects of his ever thought-provoking oeuvre.

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Notes

[1] This review was written thanks to the support of a scholarship for a stay at the Hardt Foundation, for which I am most grateful.

[2] The limits of Godwin's use of *persona* theory – especially in regard to *Sat.* 6 – had been already pointed out by Santorelli 2017.

[3] These issues with Godwin's dating of Book 1 had been already brought forward by Santorelli 2017.

[4] For an overview of the scholarship on the date of publication of Book 1 cf. Uden 2015, 220, to which add Santorelli 2012, 24-28.

[5] Sigla as in Clausen 1992[2].

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