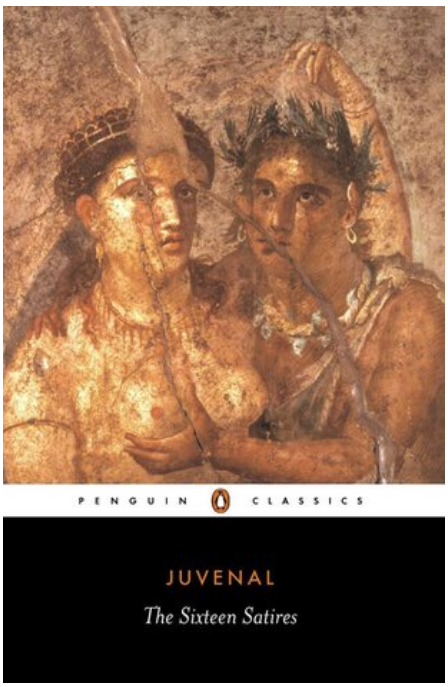

The Sixteen Satires

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Perhaps more than any other writer, Juvenal (c. AD 55-138) captures the splendour, the squalor and the sheer energy of everyday Roman life. In The Sixteen Satires he evokes a fascinating world of whores, fortune-tellers, boozy politicians, slick lawyers, shameless sycophants, ageing flirts and downtrodden teachers. A member of the traditional land-owning class that was rapidly seeing power slip into the hands of outsiders, Juvenal also creates savage portraits of decadent aristocrats - male and female - seeking excitement among the lower orders of actors and gladiators, and of the jumped-up sons of newly-rich former slaves. Constantly comparing the corruption of his own generation with its stern and upright forebears, Juvenal's powers of irony and invective make his work a stunningly satirical and bitter denunciation of the degeneracy of Roman society

The Sixteen Satires Details

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From Reader Review The Sixteen Satires for online ebook

Holly says

Peter Green translation. Next time read 'Loeb Classical Library' version 'Juvenal and Persius Satires' @ moval/inland valley libraries.

Eadweard says

Again, like some other Penguin translations of the classics; too modern, too anachronistic. Aside from that, excellent introduction and footnotes.

Bit I liked a lot:

" Consider the spoils of war, those trophies hung on tree trunks
a breastplate, a shattered helmet, one cheekpiece dangling,
a yoke shorn of its pole, a defeated trireme’s figurehead, miserable prisoners on a triumphal arch
such things are reckoned the zenith | of human achievement; these
are the prizes for which each commander, Greek,
Roman, barbarian,
has always striven; for them he’ll endure hard toil
and danger. The thirst for glory by far outstrips
the pursuit of virtue. Who on earth would embrace poor Virtue naked
if you took away her rewards? Yet countries have come to ruin
through the vainglory of a few who longed for
renown, a title
that would cling to the stones set over their ashes – although
a barren fig-tree’s strength would suffice to crack
these open,
seeing that sepulchres, too, have their allotted fate. "

Camilla Monk says

Let's be honest, from a reader's point of view, I found Juvenal's satires often repetitive, imbued with a bitter conservatism that leads him to fire in all directions at those he accuses of debasing the Roman society and contributing to a spirit of general decadence.

Long story short: It was better before, and lemme tell ya that back in mah time... ET.CAETERA.

It is to be noted that when Juvenal takes his stylus to complain that moderation and moral rigor are no longer rewarded int his wretched society and men really need to stop wearing gauze and being huge pussies, we're at the very dawn of the second century AD. Notorious homosexual and raging warlord Trajan has a few good years left, Hadrian, Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius will succede him, prolonging the blessed era of the "five

good emperors" for almost a century. Elagabalus and his homemade brothel built directly in the imperial palace won't imprint themselves in the pages of history books until 218.
It is therefore in utter good faith and complete historical myopia that Juvenal vents against his times for our enjoyment. If he only knew what was to come...

Now, from a purely documentary point of view, this is a gem, a direct dive into the mind of an ancient Roman blogger. Politicians, hipsters, rivals: an entire society takes life, preserved in this literary amber. Vivid details survive, famous and obscure references teach us what made the conversations at the time.

A necessary read for Roman history lovers (But, being the mediocre mind I am, I prefer Martial, because latrines jokes make me laugh. Please don't stone me.)

David Gustafson says

These are a collection of sixteen satiric monologues where Juvenal does his best to poke his finger in the eye of the Roman society of his day for not living up to its heritage.

This armchair classicist found Juvenal to be grossly over-rated. Maybe he has been given such scholarly acclaim because he wrote his complaints in verse? I can find no other reason.

Alp Turgut says

Olaylara gerçekçi bir bak?? aç?s?yla yakla?arak dönemin karanl?k yanlar?n? keskin bir dille ele?tiren Juvenal / Iuvenalis'in tüm yergilerini okuyucuya sunan **"Satires / Yergiler - Saturae"**, toplumun üst s?n?f?ndan alt s?n?f?na kadar her kesimden insan? inceleyen e?lenceli ve ders verici bir eser; fakat çok fazla özel isim bar?nd?rmas? ve yergi türünde yaz?lmas? nedeniyle okumas?n?n oldukça zor oldu?unu belirtmek gerek. Bu yüzden kitab?n ak?c? olmad???n?n ne yaz?k ki alt?n? çizmeliyim; okumas? gerçekten fazlas?yla sab?r istiyor. Buna ra?men, dönemin ?artlar?n? görmek ve ?iir türünün ne ?ekilde evrim geçirdi?ine tan?kl?k etmek aç?s?ndan oldukça önemli bir yere sahip olan "Yergiler"de bir yandan Iuvenalis'in Homeros, Cicero ve Catullus gibi yazarlara dair referanslar?n? okurken di?er yandan da cinsiyetçi ve ?rkç? yakla??m?n? görme ?ans? buluyoruz. Bu arada, hayata, ya?l?l??a, e?itime, yoksulu?a ve zenginli?e dair olan 10., 11. ve 14. Yergiler favorilerim. K?saca, Roma Edebiyat?n? yak?ndan tan?mak ve ?iir türünün ne yollardan geçti?ini görmek isteyenlerin mutlaka göz atmas? gereken eserlerden biri.

27.06.2016
?stanbul, Türkiye

Alp Turgut

Caroline says

Full of invective, rage, bitterness, caustic crustiness, misogeny, erotic inventiveness and a wicked sense of humor. This is heavy handed satire, not tongue in cheek kidding. But once you get used to it, quite bracing.

Juvenal was disgusted by the licentiousness, gluttony, double-dealing, greed and various other vices that he saw around him in an unthreatened city--far different from the embattled Rome that bred men (and, presumably, respectable matrons) of the Republic. Question: would Juvenal have like a traditional Republican woman, or was his misogeny closer to the bone?

The translation is quite readable. (Rolfe Humphries that is, since Goodreads jumbles all reviews together and references to ‘this translation’ lose their meaning.) I actually listened to it, in an Audio Conoisseur recording by Charlton Griffin , and the poetry and sense were excellently conveyed. I think that listening gives a sense of how its first audience would have experienced it, for according to the introduction Juvenal trained mainly as an orator. For purists, be warned that there are anachronisms, which I usually dislike. But they are inserted lightly and judiciously, where a modern phrase captures Juvenal’s meaning.

John says

Juvenal was an angry, angry man. If he were living today, he would probably be a regular caller to radio talk shows, blathering on about how kids today have no respect and gays and liberals and Obamacare are ruining this great country. Instead, he lived in the 1st Century CE and wrote satires. Fortunately, in addition to the anger, he had a deadly sense of humor. From a modern perspective, many of these screeds are politically incorrect: Juvenal goes after homosexuals, women and foreigners. On the other hand, he also criticizes greed, corruption, abuse of power and special privileges for the rich and famous (including the military!). Each of the 16 satires (actually 15 1/2 because Satire XVI is unfinished) is unique, although they share common features. Most are in Juvenal's voice, but Satire III tells its story almost completely through another character's words. Most of the satires ramble on through a list of horrors, addressed one by one, but Satire IV tells a story about a giant fish to make its points. There are certain commonalities, however. Each satire gives very specific examples of the problem being addressed, using contemporary people and situations (although to avoid exile, jail or execution, Juvenal tries to avoid mentioning living people - it didn't work: he was exiled after the first book came out and only returned to Rome after a new emperor took over). This gives the 21st Century reader a fascinating, if jaundiced, glimpse into the details of Roman life during that era. (In Satire VI, you learn, for example, that some women trained as gladiators - to Juvenal's dismay, of course.) A second common thread is Juvenal's reference to historical exemplars to ground his work in an ongoing literary tradition. Here is one quibble I have with Rolphe Humphries' late 1950s translation. Most of us are no longer immersed in the classics during our elementary and secondary education, so Juvenal's references to other Greek and Roman writers, myths, or historical events could have benefited greatly from explanatory footnotes. Finally, I found the translation a pleasure to read. I confess that I didn't consciously appreciate the poetry, although the rhythms may have had some unconscious effect, presumably positive. Like another reviewer, I didn't mind the anachronisms, which are used for comedic purposes, whereas I usually have a problem with modern references in older works (see my Aristophanes review). Juvenal's attitude seems so contemporary that a few well-placed modernisms (the reference to a Roman singer named Elvius, e.g.) fit right in. For those interested in where old sayings come from, Juvenal contributed a few to the lexicon, such as: "It is hard not to write satire"; "Who guards the guardians?" (a.k.a., "Who watches the watchmen?"); "A sound mind in a sound body"; and "The people long for two things: bread and circuses."

Jim says

If you would like a glimpse of everyday life in Ancient Rome, you could hardly do better than read The

Sixteen Satires of Juvenal. There, like a **National Lampoon** chiseled in stone, are all the everyday flaws -- that are still flaws today -- that mess up people's lives. It is all done with a light touch. At one point, talking about the fate of Aelius Sejanus, who was the Emperor Tiberius's number one man, he writes:

> Some men are overthrown by the envy their great power
> Arouses; it's that long and illustrious list of honours
> That sinks them. The ropes are heaved, down come the statues,
> Axes demolish their chariot-wheels, the unoffending
> Legs of their horses are broken. And now the fire
> Roars up in the furnace, now flames hiss under the bellows:
> The head of the people's darling Sejanus
> Crackles and melts. he face only yesterday ranked
> Second in all the world. ow it's so much scrap-metal.
> To be turned into jugs and basins, frying pans, chamber-pots.

This passage is a good example of Juvenal's picturesque speech as he shows it is best not to rise too high, less one fall ingloriously like Sejanus.

Peter Green's translation in this Penguin edition is a keeper.

Christel says

"We are now suffering the calamities of long peace. Luxury, more deadly than any foe, has laid her hand upon us, and avenges a conquered world...wealth enervated and corrupted the ages with foul indulgences."

Dave/Maggie Bean says

Juvenal was foulmouthed, cynical, and embittered, his mind a veritable cesspool of wealth-envy and entitlement. But he was a keen observer of the human condition, and the effete, decadent Rome he satirizes is eerily similar to modern America. There is truly nothing new under the sun. Could Juvenal’s satirical commentary on his own time serve as a cautionary tale for our own?

Probably not. "We’re an empire now -- we create our own reality…"

Or do we?

Composed in the first century AD,(and mangled over time), this collection of satires has to be read to be believed. Juvenal, in my opinion, was hardly an admirable character, but he was damned good at what he did. And did it with a vengeance. The date of its authorship notwithstanding, Satires is a vicious, razor-sharp poem-as-polemic, a vitriolic lampoon; not only of the effete, decadent cesspool that was first century Rome, but of human nature in general.

Juvenal’s rogues’ gallery of deviants, drunks, ersatz tough-guys, nouveau riche vulgarians, greedy merchants, street thugs and decadent aristocrats is as familiar to the modern eye as to the ancient – and as contemptible. His satires fairly radiate scorn and loathing for their objects; scorn and loathing rendered all the more acid and effective by their author’s attention to detail and choice of verbiage. It’s tempting to say

that Juvenal renders perversion and peccadillo alike in loving detail – but "shockingly unflattering detail" is far more accurate. His idiom of choice -- quite appropriately -- is likewise shocking and unflattering.

I've heard Dante referred to as "the master of the disgusting," and rightly so – to a certain extent. Skilled though he was, he couldn't hold a candle to Juvenal, whose gutter language and revolting imagery are as hilarious as they are nauseating. Moreover, like Dante, Juvenal possesses a rare gift: the ability to make "a silk purse from a sow's ear" – or, more accurately, from an entire pigsty and its occupants. In other words: Juvenal takes the repulsive and sickening, and through some twisted alchemy of his own, renders them strangely beautiful.

Making gold from lead or other base metals is one thing – making it from "bulldagger" gladiators; cross-dressing, homosexual Ceres cultists; cheating wives; husbands who double as "political pimps"; and oily, favor-purchasing foreign merchants is another entirely.

And yet Juvenal succeeds admirably.

We're in serious trouble, boys and girls...

Rosa Ramôa says

"É preciso ser-se rico para poder dormir sem barulhos,em calmas moradias(...).A passagem de carroças nas ruas estreitas ou as discussões por causa de um rebanho(...) tiram o sono a qualquer um.(...)E,se se isto não bastasse,há ainda outro género de perigos aos quais estamos expostos,quando caminhamos,de noite,pelas ruas:frequentemente,das janelas,das varandas ou dos telhados tombam tijolos,vasos ou telhas,que nos podem esmagar os crânios (...).Podemos dar-nos por felizes se apanharmos com o conteúdo de uma bacia em cima."

Justin Evans says

I've long been sceptical of contemporary novels that are advertized as satires. Consider Jonathan Coe's 'Rotters' Club,' which was okay, but compared even to a supposedly realistic novel like 'The Line of Beauty,' contained little satire beyond its propensity for pointing out that people ate some really bad food in the seventies. So I finally got around to reading Juvenal, and my scepticism has been gloriously affirmed: yes, satire can be really, really mean; it can be full of almost explosive moral indignation.

'For what is disgrace if he keeps the money?'
'What can I do in Rome? I can't tell lies!'
'Of all that luckless poverty involves, nothing is harsher/ than the fact that it makes people funny.'
'A poor man's rights are confined to this:/ having been pounded and punched to a jelly, to beg and implore/ that he may be allowed to go home with a few teeth in his head.'
'When power which is virtually equal/ to that of the gods is flattered, there's nothing it can't believe.'
'You must know the color of your own bread.'
'that which is coated and warmed with so many odd preparations... what shall we call it? A face, or an ulcer?'
'If somebody owns a dwarf, we call him/ Atlas; a negro, Swan; a bent and disfigured girl/ Europa. Curs that are listless, and bald from years of mange/ and lick the rim of an empty lamp for oil, are given/ the name of Leopard.'

'However far back you care to go in tracing your name/ the fact remains that your clan began in a haven for outlaws.'
'Do you think it's nice and easy to thrust a proper-sized penis/ into a person's guts, encountering yesterday's dinner?/ The slave who ploughs a field has a lighter task than the one/ who ploughs its owner.'
'Don't you attach any value to the fact that, had I not been/ a loyal and devoted client, your wife would still be a virgin?'
'Shame is jeered as she leaves the city.'
'The whole of Rome is inside the Circus.'
'What other man these days... could bear to prefer his life to his plate, and his soul to his money?'
'If I happen to find a totally honest man, I regard/ that freak as I would a baby centaur.'
'Tears are genuine when they fall at the loss of money.'

Not to mention the classics, 'it's hard not to write satire,' 'who watches the watchmen,' 'bread and circuses,' 'healthy mind in a healthy body' (all translated slightly differently here).

All of these are funnier or crueler in context.

Rudd's translation (in the Oxford World's Classics edition) seems solid; I haven't compared it to the Latin. He translates line for line, which I imagine will make it easier to follow the original language, and in a loose meter which allows him to make everything make sense. It's rarely pretty, but it is readable. And his notes are excellent.

Yann says

La Rome impériale voit arriver le règne de l'argent roi, de la luxure, des inégalités sociales, de la gloutonnerie, des excès les plus divers. Juvénal, outré par les turpitudes de ses contemporains se livre ici à une exécution en réglé de ceux qui excitent son indignation en déchirant à belles dents la respectabilité dont ils veulent commettre l'imposture de se parer. Il en évoque sans ménagement l'écart abyssal entre les héros et les valeurs de l’ancien temps et les mesquineries de leurs descendants.

Jennie says

There is something strangely satisfying about reading a book from a couple thousand years ago and being able to shout out things like, "Oooh, burn," and "Bitch, you got schooled," every couple of pages. Juvenal is one of the earliest masters of snark, and therefore, one of my heroes. Unfortunately, this type of humor tends to be closely linked to the political and cultural context in which it was written, and having to read page-long endnotes to get the joke sometimes took the oomph out of the punchlines. But I view that as a fault in myself, for not being educated enough. And it was a huge ego boost when I actually did understand the political and cultural references, so it all evens out in the end.

Jonathan says

Juvenal’s Top Tips to Make Rome Great Again:

1. Get rid of the damn foreigners
2. Get rid of those effeminate queers
3. Make sure women Know Their Place
4. Get rid of the rich snobs
5. And the bloody nouveau riche
6. Return to the Good Old Days and the Simple Life
7. More people should be farmers and soldiers
8. Get back the sanctity of Family Life with parents teaching their children virtue and morality
9. Pay poets more money
