

BOOK REVIEW

The Arena of Satire: Juvenal's Search for Rome. By DAVID H. J. LARMOUR. Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture Vol. 52. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. Pp. xi + 356. Hardcover, \$34.95. ISBN 978-08061515-64.

This decade has seen a welcome burst of new treatments of Juvenal's *Satires*. But David Larmour's interest in the corpus goes back many years, and his new book reflects careful organization of well-percolated ideas and synthesis of much scholarship and theory. At the center is the figure of the Juvenalian satirist, who is efficiently introduced as distinct from his generic predecessors by virtue of his urban identity and context. While Larmour's Juvenal is not exactly more visible to the reader than Uden's (2015), who crafts criticism in ways that allow him to stay hidden, he is more perceptible as the agent who maps satire's territory and evaluates what he sees there.

The book reads two metaphorical roles in the Juvenalian satirist, one conceptualized in modern theory, the other rooted in Roman culture. First there is Benjamin's idea of the urban *flâneur* whose wanderings generate a "city-text." Larmour observes that the Juvenalian satirist moves not just through the space of the imperial capital, but also, in his imagination, across the empire and back and forth in its history. The satirist wanders in search of stable meaning in his physical and social environment, but in the world he sees and describes, places and bodies have no stable identities or boundaries. To point to one key category, historic features of Rome's topography have become divorced from their original purposes or significances. Such conditions activate the second satiric role: that of the Roman *editor* of spectacles with sensational content (perverse pageants on ancient Roman roads, women urinating on altars, etc.). Unsurprisingly, these lenses for reading Juvenal privilege the ever-compelling *Satires* 1, 2, 3, and 6, which are featured prominently in multiple chapters on different themes (satire's mission, space and boundaries, the arena metaphor, the functions of objects). But room is made for examination of passages from the later *Satires*, where the metaphor of the arena endures even as Juvenal directs attention to more intimate spaces and interactions.

Larmour's Juvenal provocatively uses concepts of space, boundaries, origins, and flow, mapping them onto everything from human bodies to visions of the empire. In one sense the book's identification of these themes will not feel new to those familiar with Anglophone scholarship on Roman sexual and social invective (Amy Richlin, Barbara Gold, Paul Allen Miller). But Larmour considers them in connection to deeper questions about identity and meaning; he maintains Juvenalian satire is "speculative and philosophical in a fundamental sense" (320). This is acted out not only in Juvenal's imagery, but in his rhetorical procedures: for example, the frequent questions beginning with *unde* convey that "the satirist's pose is to gaze around and ask, 'Where do these people come from?'" (109). Unlike Freudenburg (2001), Larmour understands the audience of satire as automatically compliant ("the listener and reader . . . become *flâneurs* in the text," 22).

Larmour concentrates on the satirist figure and his material, reading Juvenal's imagery in ways that are usually inspired by ancient thought (e.g. the role of the *limen* in ritual) but in some cases suggested by modern satire or theory. He seems to leave few stones of classical scholarship unturned, finding value in philological and theoretical studies alike. Larmour's comfort with critical theory means that his readings of the *Satires* are punctuated with explications of pertinent ideas from Benjamin, Kristeva, Lacan, Scarry, and Frye. Meanwhile, there is plenty of engagement with other classical themes and texts, making for striking juxtapositions and treats (especially in the middle chapter on the discourse of the arena across Roman sources). Ancient comparanda and influences get the sustained treatment they deserve; for example, Livy's treatment of the problem of the Bacchic cult in 186 BCE is read next to *Satire 2*.

Another kind of juxtaposition is effected with the author's numerous photographs of sites and intersections in Rome that show the literal fragmentation of the ancient past and its coexistence with modern life. These illustrate the vision of the wandering satirist who is jarred by the ways "eternal" Rome is changing around him. Finally, being familiar with a range of satiric literary forms, Larmour brings interesting postclassical comparanda to bear. A large part of the concluding chapter is devoted to showcasing "modern Juvenalism" in a selection of novels and plays (by Waugh, McDonagh, and Pelevin). Besides bringing traditional classicists outside of their normal range, this exercise rightly emphasizes that Juvenal deserves to be seen as an important innovator and not just as the idiosyncratic end of a tradition.

In a field that continues to shy away from the peculiar later *Satires*, it is important for new interpretive paradigms to apply across the corpus or at least to describe its variations in new and meaningful ways. While the first two or three books get the bulk of the space in Larmour's study, the readings from the later books draw intriguing maps of the *flâneur*-satirist's gaze; significant attention is given to the prominence of objects and places, and there is frequent exploration of intratextual echoes. We can expect the inroads Larmour has made to bring more traffic from theory-friendly classicists to the neglected, but fascinating, corners of Juvenal's corpus.

For a good-sized and dense book, *The Arena of Satire* shows few cosmetic errors; these include the accidental conflation of two Hendersons in the bibliography.

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