

BOOK REVIEW

Gender and Sexuality in Juvenal's Rome: Satire 2 and Satire 6. By CHIARA SULPRIZIO, trans. and ed. with an introduction by Sarah H. Blake. Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture, vol. 59: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020. Pp. xiv + 164. Paperback, \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-8061-6488-5.

This volume of translation and commentary, perhaps best-suited for advanced Latin students, takes as its subject Juvenal's second and sixth satires, two works that have long proved problematic to those concerned with gender in antiquity. The book begins with Blake's commentary, which provides useful discussions of (among other subjects) the satires' manuscript traditions, the nature of life in the High Empire, gender norms and deviations of the period and marriage and morality in the Republic and the Empire. While some of the content may be familiar to Latin scholars, her work is nonetheless informative. The authors also break new ground by producing a work in English which sets these two particular satires side-by-side with robust historical and social contextual detail. For example, cultural notes include facts regarding the reign of Domitian; readers new to Juvenal's work will understand all the better his need for coded, sly language when they learn that one of the punishments Domitian doled-out to dissidents was public execution using methods described in myth (11).

The section of the introduction on gender norms includes the argument that as Rome prospered and became wealthier, it became more fixated on luxury and self-indulgence. As a result, women were perceived as no longer being the virtuous wives they once were (21). It will come as no surprise that a Roman woman was not supposed to become a *meretrix*; it may also not be surprising that men enjoyed reading about such characters and that they abundantly populated the literature of the day (23). If readers desire a succinct yet thorough discussion of Juvenal's misogyny, Blake's introduction contains a section titled "Satire 6: women. You Can't Live With Them ... Full Stop" (27). This portion of the commentary also serves as a roadmap of sorts for those who must traverse the murky and hurtful content of the satire. If readers want to know how long the section on marriage is before they can move on to the "waywardness" of Maura and Tullia,

or for how many lines Juvenal will berate effeminate men in the Oxford fragment, this section will indicate at what point readers can take a breath and perhaps have some calming tea or a strong drink.

Updates in translation are refreshing, especially when the text merits colloquial and even slang interpretations. Consider Satire 2.21, where the original reads *ego te ceventum, Sexte, verebor?* A literal “movement of haunches” is made all the more evocative with the modern “twerking” (40). Lines 32-33 might be rendered as some version of premature womb-loosening or birthing but Sulprizio’s “gushing forth chunks” is more evocative and illustrates Juvenal’s lack of sympathy towards a woman with a problematic pregnancy (40). Perhaps understandable (as Juvenal was not at all polite in his language) but still problematic is the translation of line 100 with “that fa* Otho” (41). (Sulprizio does remark that the chosen word is offensive in her notes). A phrase such as “effeminately vain” may have served just as well. The end notes deserve praise, with helpful explanations of terms such as “Lex Scantinia.” What was meant to provide protection to freeborn male minors could also be used as a political weapon, “with which one could harass political opponents through accusations of degeneracy and sexual perversion” (52).

Satire 6 presents similar opportunities for modernized vocabulary and similar evidence of Juvenal’s lack of respect for women. Why leave *uxor* as wife, when you can turn it into “cavewoman” (l. 5) when the reference is to the long-gone days of Saturn? “She-devil” is a good English equivalent for “Tisiphone” (l. 29), and if readers are unfamiliar with the name, the translator provides a succinct description of the snake-haired fury and tormentor of evil-doers (99). “Love-juice” for *meri veteris* (l. 319) may be a stretch but is more descriptive and fitting than “old wine” (79). Those who are new to this satire might want to write off Juvenal’s language as hyperbole and jest and argue that he allows himself an out when he says, “Obviously I’m making this up” (l. 634, 94). To the very end, however, Juvenal maintains that he is not exaggerating, not “spouting off a grandiose song with a Sophoclean wail” (l. 636, 94). Spouting or not, Juvenal says we should take him at his word – and so we do and render judgment on him as we will.

Of particular note is the book’s bibliography, containing a thorough list of works on the various topics relevant to these pieces: Roman satire in general, Juvenal’s corpus in particular, texts on gender and sexuality, girlhood in ancient Rome, morality in antiquity and prostitution. This reviewer finds the book most useful for undergraduate and graduate courses on satire in general, Juvenal in particular, and studies of women in antiquity. Sulprizio’s translation and notes,

combined with Blake's introduction, are an admirable deep-dive into these distasteful pieces. They have done considerable work so that their readers do not have to.

REBECCA HUSKEY

University of Oklahoma, rhuskey@ou.edu