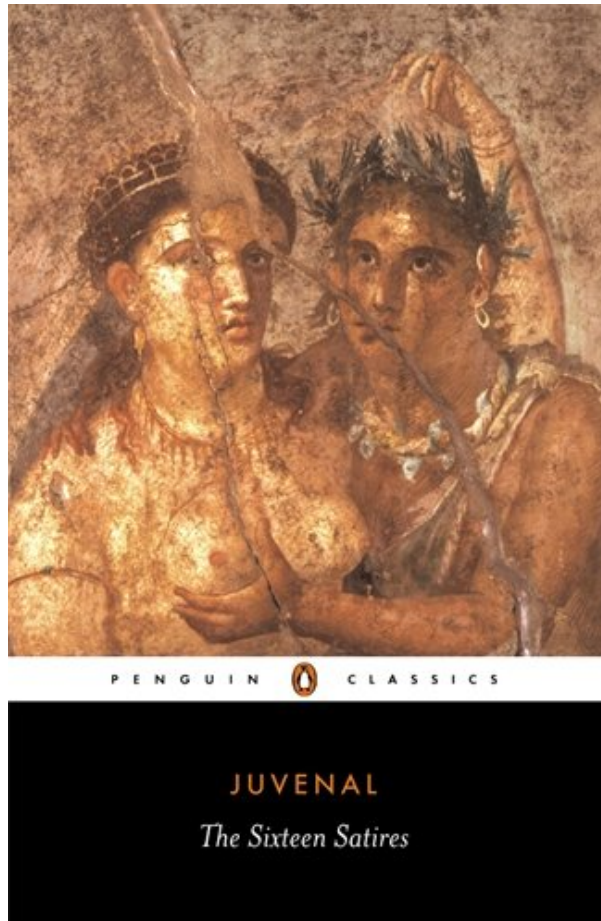


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Less is known about the life of Juvenal (D. Iunius Iuuenalis) than was once believed - a key source, an inscription naming one Iunius Iuuenalis, refers to a later descendant, not the satirist - and such evidence as there is remains sadly inadequate. Much of it comes from Juvenal's own work. We know that the family was from Aquinum in Latium near modern Monte Cassino. One ancient Life offers a plausible birth date of AD 55. Another states that till middle-age Juvenal practised rhetoric, not for professional reasons but as an amusement, which implies a private income. Book I of the Satires was not published till c. 110-12, when the poet was in his fifties, and is clearly the work of an impoverished and embittered man who has come down in the world - a hanger-on of wealthy patrons with a chip on his shoulder - but the precise circumstances of Juvenal's fall from grace are unclear.

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Juvenal's Satires create a fascinating (and immediately familiar) world of whores, fortune-tellers, boozy politicians, slick lawyers, shameless sycophants, ageing flirts and downtrodden teachers

Perhaps more than any other writer, Juvenal (c. 55-138 AD) captures the splendour, the squalor and the sheer vibrant energy of everyday Roman life. A member of the traditional land-owning class which was rapidly seeing power slip into the hands of dynamic outsiders, he offers equally savage portraits of decadent aristocrats; women interested only in 'rough trade' like actors and gladiators; and the jumped-up sons of panders and auctioneers. He constantly compares the corruption of his own generation with their stern upright forebears. And he makes us feel from within the deep humiliation of having to dance attendance on rich but odious patrons.

Green's celebrated translation is fully annotated and clarifies all references and allusions in the text, making it equally suitable for students and for continuous reading. For this new edition it has been substantially revised throughout to give it an even more contemporary flavour.

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Most helpful customer reviews

25 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

A Joy to Read!

By Lars P. Hanson

Peter Green's latest revision to his earlier translations of Juvenal's satires is an absolute joy to read! In the Introduction he recounts the changes he has made with a refreshing candor. In addition, he neatly summarizes the various viewpoints about the problematic portions of the Satires -- possible lacunae (gaps), possible line shuffling, possible transcription errors, etc. While such problems occur with any ancient text (such as the Bible), it is rarely that a translator will discuss the problems, the solutions the translator has employed, and the reasons for his or her choices outside of scholarly works. Peter Green's clear and persuasive arguments are a welcome change from the usual practice.

The translations themselves preserve the sense of the original Latin, with little or no modern colloquialisms. As the translator noted in his Introduction, he was aghast to note in the first edition the extent to which he had both varied from the original line structure of Juvenal's works and the extent to which he had employed contemporary language, which now seemed dated. As a result, Peter Green retranslated most of the Satires to correct these errors. The latest edition of this work thus is far truer to the original work. The resulting text provides fascinating insights into Roman life during Juvenal's lifetime.

Another wonderful aspect of this edition are the clear and self-contained footnotes. The reader is not left having to scramble to find some obscure text in order to understand the footnote. Peter Green puts all the information necessary into each footnote, and also provides external references as necessary.

This work stands in stark contrast to Walsh's translation and footnoting of Petronius' Satyricon (Oxford Classics series), which I also reviewed.

Peter Green's translation of Juvenal's Satires is well worth purchasing and reading for anyone at all interested in life and issues in life in late first and early second century Rome.

42 of 47 people found the following review helpful.

A great translation of a great work

By A Customer

Juvenal, is by far one of the greatest writers of the Roman era. His biting style and keen insight is a pleasure to read, and has not lost its appeal after the long years since it was written. Many of the subjects that Juvenal lashes at with his sharp wit are still apply today (government corruption and decadence among others). However, Juvenal clearly wrote his satires for the era of the roman empire, not the 21st century, and his references often fly over the reader's head. The translator has done a fabulous job in explaining these details in the copious notes at the back of the book. It is highly suggested that one reads sections of the notes before reading those sections in the satires to gain the greatest understanding.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Beware the wasp - and the mullet!

By Jon Chambers

Yes, Dr Jones may well be right in suggesting that there are better editions than this (although it would have been useful if he'd told us exactly which ones and why!). However, Peter Green arguably offers the best introduction to Juvenal's Satires. After all, Green is not writing for the specialist but for the average, intelligent reader - the kind of reader that Penguin Classics habitually caters for. Jones probably has scholars like Susanna Braund in mind and I'd imagine that her editions are those that professional classicists like him find most valuable. She offers an extremely perceptive commentary, full Latin text and a translation that is, I suspect, closer to the letter than Green's. But Braund comes at a hefty price - £18 for Volume I alone.

In any case, this Penguin edition has lots to offer besides value. Green captures the spirit and vitality, as well as the sharply ironic humour, of the original at least as well as Braund or Rudd, the two main competitors. His Juvenal sounds fresh, witty and modern (as well as occasionally loathsome, misogynistic and xenophobic). His Introduction, moreover, is extensive and engaging. It may well be 'old-fashioned' in its lack of enthusiasm for the 'persona theory' (ie the view that the poet is donning a mask and not voicing his own opinions, thereby preventing us from reading the satires as self-revelation). But Green does at least address 'the much-vexed question of Juvenal's satirical persona', and gives us an alternative approach. He inclines to the view that Juvenal's savage indignation resulted from humbling personal experience. According to long-held tradition, he was exiled - probably to Egypt. Green surmises that this story of exile is true, and that it might well have taken the harshest form - 'deportatio' - involving the confiscation of everything dear to a Roman citizen: land, money, status. In the early satires, Green sees Juvenal as 'a waspish gadfly from Aquinum' and a 'snarling chip-on-the-shoulder flay-all'. The gradual softening of tone (anger - cynicism - irony) can be accounted for, Green thinks, by a gradual improvement in Juvenal's material circumstances. In this reading, therefore, the Satires are at least partly autobiographical.

So, maybe not definitive and certainly not radical, but an edition that's good enough for the vast majority of interested readers. Good enough even for Dr Jones himself, otherwise he wouldn't have used Green's translation in his (excellent) article 'The persona and the addressee in Juvenal's Satire 11' in *Ramus*, vol.19, no2, pp160-68, 1990, when Braund's and Rudd's alternatives were also available.

Oh, that mullet. You'll have to read Green's illuminating note to line 317 of Satire X.

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