

I

INTRODUCTION: MEET ANON

I Satirist Anonymus

frontis nulla fides

Set no store by appearance [or: 'never trust a title page']

Juvenal *Sat.* 2.8

One of the most celebrated novelists of our time has chosen to renounce celebrity entirely. She – we hope she is a she, or at least a they – goes by the name Elena Ferrante. But that is basically all she goes by. She conducts her few interviews not in person, but through text – a medium whose inherent qualities of absence and fragmentation allow an author the yawning, exhilarating vacuum of self-erasure. Her novels are full of critical insights into (male) authority and its propagation through the *name*, which breeds the illusion of ownership, guarantee, security, trust. But her most potent riposte to that discourse is the very way she runs the publication process. Here, now, in this early twenty-first century, where the paratext of a book is inevitably harnessed to serve the interests of capital, and the author must work for sales by pushing her name out there, doing book signings, talks, interviews, and generally hustling for a public presence – this preference for using a pseudonym and opting out of the marketing routine is a radical one. It may look strange and novel against the modern default of enforced self-promotion, but in reality there could be nothing more ancient. In filtering herself from her text, Elena Ferrante is striving to attain the condition of the fragment, the status of the classical: words without author (the best kind).

This book will argue that the head-bending dynamics of the disappearing author got going a long time before capitalism began to fuss over attribution, authorship, and ownership. Terry Eagleton once casually spotlighted that all texts are anonymous, in so far as they are all, upon reading and by definition, weened and estranged

Introduction: Meet Anon

from their author.¹ Not only that, but for many ages, in both manuscript and print cultures, anonymous circulation was the norm. It suits us well that the motto of the title page of a 1780 edition of *The Monthly Review* goes to Juvenal for inspiration: *fronti nulla fides* [sic], which the periodical translates ‘No trusting to Title Pages’.² Here, as for much of the history of writing, was a context in which it was normal to make up or suppress the name of the ‘true author’. Our own age is anomalous in its source-fetish, and to our peril we forget that names were for large tracts of time routinely confected, or completely written out of the reading process.³ But the classical world, and ancient imperial Rome, and a big-name satirist at that, may seem strange ground for ripping up the roots of *anon*. What would anonymity mean in a tight-knit recitation culture, where authors were constantly standing up to be counted, reciting their work to friends behind closed doors, or to public audiences in front of them? Where they were unfailingly sending around drafts of their work, signed and sealed, for genteel, tasteful, customized input? Surely the orality and sociality of Roman literary practice makes the author *present*, front and centre, always and forever?

My counter-intuitive response in this book is a ‘no’ at its most strident, and a ‘not necessarily’ at its most timid. The big aim is to recuperate the possibilities of textuality as a process, and text as a medium. I shall argue that at least one author – this so-called Juvenal – was well aware of the unique potential of text as a ‘technology of absence’: a weird device, that is, whose magic can lie precisely in our being kept from spotting the enigmatic hands behind it. While my scope is limited to a single-author case study, I mean the theory and practice contained herein to go

¹ Eagleton 2008.

² Quoted in Griffin 1999, 880. *Frons* in Juvenal of course cannot yet mean ‘frontispiece’, but there are attested usages of *frons* as the end of a book roll ([Tibullus] 3.1.13, Ovid *Tristia* 1.1.11; and for a possible play on this meaning at Petronius *Satyrica* 103.2, see Rimell 2002, 114–15 and Slater 2012, 251 n. 10: ‘the fake brands are thus false titles’). We could promote Juvenal’s exportable epigram to true epigraph status: ‘do not judge a book by its cover’ or ‘even if you have a name in front of you, you cannot trust it’.

³ Cf. Mullan 2007, 296–97. This book is a top-shelf survey of anonymity in modern English literature. Satire is a fixture, unsurprisingly; satirists such as Rochester (226–27) are especially adept at the game of attribution, making anonymity into a perverse brand of self-assertion. Cf. Rabb 2007, 162 on Pope.

2 Who, What, When, Where?

beyond our everyman satirist, and get us thinking hard again about what texts *qua* texts can really do. Performance studies has surely opened up grand new vistas for literature.⁴ But I believe we are not quite done with the written world behind the scenes: the catacombs of disappearing author and underground text are not yet properly probed. Here the touchstones will be secrecy, absence, evasion, gossip, clandestine script.⁵ Here we shall creep through the exit-strategies and get-out clauses of crepuscular satire. All unattributed and off the record, it goes without saying (so I am saying it, just in case).

Welcome to the world of satirist anonymous.

2 Who, What, When, Where?

autorem quaeris? frustra

Are you looking for the author? No point.

Donne *Ignatius His Conclave*

Juvenal is mercilessly unsympathetic to his readers' first questions. Try as we might, we can never recover the identity of the man who wrote those sixteen satires. Apart from the 'allusive' (and elusive) proof offered by one epigram of Martial, we cannot even assign the name Juvenal with any confidence. Unlike the vast majority of our extant Latin authors, Juvenal was not a man about town.⁶ He made no splash in elite literary circles. No contemporary (other than Martial) mentions a public figure called Juvenal, let alone Juvenal *the satirist*.⁷ No one pays him the compliment of

⁴ For a dogmatic hard-line pushing performance over text, see Wiseman 2015 and Wiseman 2008; for more complex incarnations, Lowrie 2009, Habinek 2005.

⁵ This is *terra cognita* from Scott 1990 (e.g. xiii): the 'hidden transcript' and 'infrapolitics' are now very much in the Classics vernacular (thanks mainly to Bartsch 1994). Anonymity takes up a good chunk of Scott's discussion (e.g. 137–52), which is generally helpful for sorting through the techniques. However, I do not wish to claim Juvenal as a subaltern hero meaningfully *resisting* through anonymity, but as an author making full use of this characteristic device of the underground.

⁶ On Juvenal's isolation compared to Horace and Persius, see La Penna 1990, 259; for silence on his socioeconomic circumstances, cf. Hardie 1990, 169. Lack of contact with contemporary emperors: Fein 1994, 98–99. Armstrong 2012 valiantly attempts to piece together the identity behind the words, but has to work hard with the slight bait of clue and inference.

⁷ Cf. Fredricksmeyer 1990, 796; though Juvenal's writing probably post-dated Pliny's by some years (Syme 1979a, 255).

Introduction: Meet Anon

‘allusion’ for a good two hundred years after his *probable* death.⁸ Most importantly for this book, the poetry gives us precious little sense of that same irrecoverable self – which is remarkable for a poetic genre that had cut its teeth on autobiographical ‘sincerity’.⁹ If this satirist was really as obscure as these resounding silences would suggest, it is miraculous that the work has survived at all.¹⁰

The problem of Juvenal’s identity is not just a question of *who* at the authorial level; it is also a question of *what* at the textual level. The notion of ‘two Juvenals’¹¹ clings to critical readings of the corpus and manifests itself in varying degrees of audacity. Ribbeck, the obligatory rogue of Juvenalian scholarship, famously deleted most of the later satires.¹² In the end his overactive scissors did not make the cut; but his spirit transmigrated into the general twentieth-century opinion that the satires deteriorated sharply as they progressed. Even now, in a more delicate scholarly community, the spirit is still with us: this time expressed in the more diplomatic form that Juvenal’s ‘approach’ or ‘persona’ ‘evolves’ over the course of the five books.¹³ All these questions are nothing more (or less) than ongoing negotiations of *what* precisely constitutes Juvenal and the Juvenalian. After a long period of implicit assumption that it (he) was to be found primarily in the early books of fiery *indignatio*,¹⁴ and that anything later was a disappointing form of departure, nowadays the Juvenalian is becoming more levelled. For that resetting – which this book will extend in its orientation towards the later satires – we have the persona

⁸ Though we cannot squeeze too much from the silence, bearing in mind vicissitudes of transmission (Baldwin 1982, 67–69).

⁹ See below and n. 79. ¹⁰ Cf. Townend 1972, 387.

¹¹ For a short history of the idea, see Keane 2015, 5. The idea of a profound shift after book 2 is common among persona critics. Anderson 1982, 361 divides his ‘two Juvenals’ at the advent of the Democritean satirist in *Sat.* 10; see also Townend 1973, 159 on Juvenal’s declining ‘allusive’ texture in the later books. Elwitschger 1992, 4–6 takes this wedge for granted, though he seeks to explain its nature differently (200–13). Bellandi 1980 (e.g. 8–9) tackles the problem as a shift from indignation to diatribe voice, beginning in *Sat.* 10; but a new Italian generation seems less sold on such a clear break (e.g. Campana 2004, 16, Bracci 2014, 31–32).

¹² Ribbeck is the usual extremist suspect of ‘two Juvenals’ (see e.g. Gold 2012, 97).

¹³ E.g. Keane 2015, 20 claims that the corpus tells a tale of personal evolution. Her work – which puts Juvenal firmly in the Roman satiric tradition of ‘a person expressing himself’ – is a good complement/challenge to the depersonalizing move of this book.

¹⁴ It was not always so: see Walker 2006, 17.

2 Who, What, When, Where?

revolution to thank.¹⁵ As well as these global concerns, ‘what’ is also a content question dogging the local in Juvenalian satire: what is this particular satire about, what is its target? The later satires especially seem to drift imperceptibly or jolt suddenly from topic to topic, as if to wreak havoc with the readerly desire for a point. And that might just be the point.¹⁶

Despite some progress, the basic query ‘what is Juvenal?’ necessarily repeats itself in the offices of textual critics. A pressing problem for those editing the text is the presence of numerous interpolations¹⁷ – which were, of course, not always considered interpolations.¹⁸ While textual criticism holds up the scientific method as its guiding light, the task of deciding what is and what is not an interpolation is often merely a subset of the question ‘*what* is Juvenal capable of? How low can he go?’¹⁹ Ribbeck again occupied the extreme end; modern scholarship has now regained composure and settled on a canon of around forty interpolations (give or take).²⁰ Parker points out how strange it is that a supposedly unread author like Juvenal should have so many interpolations creep in at his earliest reception phase;²¹ so could we imagine Juvenal as especially, deliberately susceptible to, even thirsty for, other hands to build his corpus into a polyphonic, many-handed collective?²² The continuing fluctuation in members of the ‘interpolation’ category is revealing in itself: the debate over *what is Juvenal* (and *what Juvenal is*) continues to rage even (or especially) at the high magnification of linguistic minutiae. As the italicized or bracketed hexameters flash in a modern edition such as that of the interventionist Willis, the choice between *der echte und der unechte* Juvenal is thrust into urgent consideration. The real Juvenal is always difficult to find.

¹⁵ Anderson 1982 and Braund 1988 stimulated interest beyond the early books (cf. Lindo 1974); Keane 2006, 140 explicitly targets the later work’s rehabilitation, and Keane 2015 is impressively egalitarian with her attention.

¹⁶ Uden 2015 shows how often Juvenal leaves the reader to tease out connections and meanings, with precious little authorial guidance (e.g. 202, on *Sat.* 12).

¹⁷ Martyn 1996b, 76. ¹⁸ On interpolations in Juvenal, see Courtney 1975.

¹⁹ On (the ‘curse’ of) excision as a trigger-happy response to deal with ‘sub-standard’ verses, cf. Baldwin 1989, 499.

²⁰ Courtney follows Housman and Clausen, Juvenal’s ‘sanest’ editors; Nisbet 2009, 56 thinks Housman was still too conservative. Willis wields the knife more liberally.

²¹ Parker 2012, 149–50.

²² Cf. Peirano 2012, 23; better to think of interpolation as a kind of creative imitation.

Introduction: Meet Anon

He is also notoriously difficult to date.²³ The text equips us with few pegs of *terminus ante/post quem*; as Freudenburg has most recently emphasized with his ‘time-warp’,²⁴ early Juvenalian satire tends to inhabit a vague imperial past, drawing its targets primarily from the Neronian and Domitianic eras.²⁵ Plausible conjectures have crystallized upon the following scheme, which I employ in this book: books 1 and 2 published in the later years of Trajan’s reign, books 3, 4, and 5 spanning approximately the first fifteen years of Hadrian’s. But full agreement on the problem of dating remains as intractable as ever. Most recently Uden has reopened the question of an *early* 100s publication date for book 1; controversially, he reads Martial 12.18 as a *response* to *Sat.* 1 (counterintuitive to most), and he is not the first to do so.²⁶ While such a transposition might seem impossibly violent, the salient point to note is how breezily it can be executed: only a few minor obstacles to work around and the text can sit as comfortably in 100 as it can in 115. I shall argue in the course of the book that this lack of temporal traction is not simply a function of our ignorance about *who* Juvenal was and *when* he flourished; rather, the generation of such aporia is a disruptive aim of the text itself. If Juvenal retracted his life from his satire, he also retracted his times.

Knotted to these unanswerable interrogatives is the final question: *where*? Larmour has recently cast the flâneurish poetics of Kristevan abjection/dejection over Juvenalian satire to show how the narrator wanders porously in and out of Rome’s boundary zones.²⁷ Frequent references to out-of-the-way fringes of empire nest uneasily alongside the bowels of the city. Larmour employs

²³ A commonplace, but see Baldwin 1967, 306. Waters 1970, 67 pushes for a Hadrianic date on ‘nearly all of the satires’, and Syme 1979a, 260 throws his weight behind 117–32 CE for all; cf. Fein 1994, 94, Hardie 1997. On this baffling ‘achronic’ aspect, see Uden 2015, 12–13; we might also pair Juvenal with his near contemporary Plutarch, who is also resolutely unctemporaneous (see Pelling 2002, 255). There was something vaguely in the air: cf. Rimell (forthcoming 2017) on temporal vagueness in Martial and Tacitus *Agricola*.

²⁴ Freudenburg 2001, 214–15.

²⁵ Cf. Waters 1970, 68. Though see Jones 2007, 60’s assessment of the *very* broad name distribution.

²⁶ See Uden 2015, 219–26, after Pasoli 1982.

²⁷ Larmour 2005, 175–77 (a framework now elaborated in Larmour 2016, e.g. 14–26). Cf. Uden’s brilliant marshalling of Dio Chrysostom’s ‘atopic topology’ (2015, 58–64).

3 How, Why?

the term ‘stray’ to describe the dislocated jolts around town, particularly as applied to an internal narrator such as Umbricius in *Sat.* 3.²⁸ He then goes on to map the course of the Juvenalian career from errancy among public spaces in the early satires to private ones later on: an attempt to reclaim some ‘fixed and comforting space’ which ultimately fails with the return of the abject stray in *Sat.* 15 and 16.²⁹ The wide circle described by Larmour is undoubtedly a response to the shudders in position and perspective³⁰ that plague the Juvenalian voice, making him so impossible to *place* as well as to date.³¹ Where does that leave us?

3 How, Why?

These four key questions are versions of a struggle with the problem of authorial absence. The fact that who, what, when and where perennially wriggle free from sure answer should not be dismissed as a mere frustration. This is the starting block which we must confront rather than sweep away. But sweeping away these ‘dead-ends’ is precisely what the ‘persona’ revolution did for Anglophone scholarship on Juvenal. The methodologically dubious biographism, which saw its peak in the notorious book of Highet³² (a scoundrel of Juvenalian scholarship second only to Ribbeck), naturally had to be jettisoned; the fruitless circularity of drawing insight into the life *from* the poetry and reflecting this life back *onto* the poetry was criminally obvious in Juvenal’s case, where ‘external’ evidence was so sparse. Then Anderson – deeply steeped in New Criticism – emerged on the scene to cut the circle: a poem did not require an ‘outside’ to work, and so it was not necessary to seek anything of the historical figure behind the voice constructed in the text.³³ Braund followed in his footsteps to

²⁸ Larmour 2005, 210. ²⁹ Larmour 2005, 210; cf. Larmour 2016, 26–27.

³⁰ Cf. Frye 1971, 244’s ‘second phase satire’.

³¹ The wildly wavering viewpoints of the Juvenalian eye/I will shimmer in the discussion of *Sat.* 15.

³² Highet 1954, but Highet 1937 constructed his ‘life of Juvenal’.

³³ For a history of the persona in literary criticism and probing of the concept in antiquity, see Clay 1998. When it comes to Juvenal, the persona is perceived on the continent to be an overgrowth in Anglophone scholarship: cf. Bellandi 1980, 97, Santorelli 2008b, 142, Elwitschger 1992.

Introduction: Meet Anon

complete what is essentially the Juvenal we still have, at least in Anglophone scholarship: a series of masked avengers which begins with the voice of anger only to cede to other satiric experiments later in the corpus. While there are major rumblings in this orthodoxy (see below),³⁴ the persona is still the predominant answer to *what Juvenal is*: that is, Juvenal is satire working through various ways of speaking satire, via various personae. Recent readings of Juvenal performed by one of the few Juvenal specialists in contemporary scholarship seem to accept a (qualified) persona frame out of appreciation for its contribution, and for fear of ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’.³⁵ Keane 2007b, for example, is essentially an application of a persona lens to book 5.³⁶ Her freshest book – an interesting focus on Juvenal as a text thematically wrapped in emotions – self-consciously manoeuvres within the constraints of this persona tradition, even if it does well to spotlight its shortcomings.³⁷ Freudenburg’s provocative thesis on Juvenalian parody of the Plinian/Tacitean ‘indignation industry’ also presents a species of (highly evolved) persona criticism.³⁸ Such approaches may still add a lot to our appreciation of Juvenal’s literary thickness, and they continue to be valuable; but their dark side is that they have led to a series of counterproductive, calcifying labels, which reduce the Juvenalian to one-word, static ‘moods’.

It is high time the author took a bigger breath from behind his mask.³⁹ ‘Who speaks?’⁴⁰ has always been the most resonant narratological question for satire, and it is still the obsession galvanizing my own reading.⁴¹ But what I would like to add is that the answer to this question does not have to be a cardboard

³⁴ Iddeng (2000, 2005) is the main anti-persona proponent; cf. Mayer 2003. Certain critics within Juvenalian studies are also deeply sceptical (Tennant 1995, 2003).

³⁵ Keane 2010, 117; Keane 2015, 6 extends her idea of a satiric career (a series of experiments with various personae).

³⁶ Keane 2007b, anticipated by Walker 2006.

³⁷ Keane 2015, 2; shortcomings discussed at 16–19. Other recent work also takes persona as read: cf. Roche 2012, 190, Watson and Watson 2014, 35–48.

³⁸ Freudenburg 2001, nodding to each satirist’s particular historical context (4).

³⁹ Cf. also Walker 2006, 7, extending Braund’s ‘parody of a moralist’ into books 4 and 5.

⁴⁰ The big (impossible) question also for Barthes 1995 (originally published 1968); see Gallop 2011, 32–33.

⁴¹ And it is not just our modern ‘identity’ hang-ups. This period of Roman history doggedly puts the question in many forms, welding a morbid interest in individual

3 How, Why?

cut-out self, or a pre-recorded voice robot. Better to answer it ‘anyone’, ‘no one’, or ‘not sure’⁴² than reduce that valuable sense of readerly disorientation to a few inane shorthands such as ‘angry’ or ‘ironic’. Masks fix an expression in plain sight, which is better captured out of it, and imagined in unnerving flux.

Winds of change are now blowing a gale. James Uden’s recent book marks an excellent new departure: a swing back to the ‘historical’ end of the historicity/literarity pendulum always oscillating in the background,⁴³ but also a great leap forward for both camps of criticism. Fed up with the inward-looking tradition, which entertains ‘context’ merely to picture Juvenal within the generic canon (Lucilius-Horace-Persius-Juvenal), Uden expounds the simple proposition that Juvenal was an author of his time. His shady self and multiple personae are part of, and explicable through, *de rigueur* Second Sophistic identity performance,⁴⁴ and his later poetry in particular responds directly to some of the currents of Hadrianic Rome. Uden undoubtedly pinpoints the major prompt for this book: the striking absence of ‘self’ in Juvenal’s oeuvre. But whereas Uden rationalizes this ‘invisibility’ through recourse to the intellectual zeitgeist, my ‘anonymity’ (as we shall see) will seek to plot authorial absence against a straight-up political background. Anonymous/invisible satire, in my view, is not only a quasi-postmodern performance of identity through its consistent erasure or complication. This dark mode is also about raising the stakes of literature to a matter of life or death.

selves (cf. the explosion in biography) to a sharp eye for legal personhood and character (cf. Edwards and Swain 1997, 19–20: ‘The law officer’s brief was now to ask, “What sort of man is he?”’). This is also the age of ‘care of the self’, as well as one in which creating/reading subtle gradations of social identity was increasingly important (see Edwards and Swain 1997, 36–37).

⁴² Cf. Uden 2015, 5.

⁴³ Keane 2001, 16 observes that Juvenal himself encourages a historicist reading through the strong reality claim (cf. Keane 2007b, 40); she cautions against tendentiousness, but the nugget of historicity cannot be totally dissolved. For qualifications/revisions of the persona lens, see Keane 2006, 9–12 (pushing for a more socially engaged ‘author figure’; cf. 138); Plaza 2006, 4 (and *passim*) employs a model of irony as cheating, i.e. the satirist’s unique ability to both say and unsay at the same time – which both says and unsays persona theory. Braund herself recants in Braund 1997b, 38–40.

For the literarity/historicity swings and roundabouts applied to Horace, see Oliensis 1997, 97.

⁴⁴ Cf. Uden 2015, 8, 10, 54.

Introduction: Meet Anon

Of course, an unmistakable strand of persona criticism still lurks, for/in both of us. Uden's reading of *Sat.* 10, for example, makes use of the Freudenburg branch of 'persona parody'; in Uden's view, this poem ventriloquises a ridiculously extreme Cynic speaker in order to debunk this increasingly popular philosophy. But that is as it should be. Uden is a child of persona, as am I; the big enabling move he makes is to root these persona experiments in the performance culture of second-century Rome. The problem is not the persona *per se*, but stopping with it as the be-all-end-all of Juvenal. Here Uden represents a watershed step, and I want to continue in that blazed trail:⁴⁵ if we must have more Juvenalian personae, at least they may be allowed to say something about the world from which they sprang.

Not that they have always been denied that privilege in the past. Another way of tackling the persona has been through that old chestnut of the politics of irony. The very concept of the persona can be an attempt to bleach some of the uncomfortable aspects of an ancient male voice from those Great Men in whom scholars are so invested: some have pointed out that the detachable mask of the angry man makes the author figure more palatable to the predominantly liberal, knowing, ironising voice of modern Anglophone academia.⁴⁶ But against this spring-cleaning there has sprung up a branch of Juvenalian criticism that makes the dirt stick. Richlin 1992 rightly highlighted that in the realm of gender politics, the persona cannot break our ancient authors out of jail for free;⁴⁷ far from indulging in sophisticated self-criticism, their texts participate in and perpetuate the same ugly hard-nosed patriarchy as any other good Roman book. Richlin still employs the model of the persona, but rather than a risible angry man, she sees an actively hostile priapic persona.⁴⁸ And this persona is not to be quarantined

⁴⁵ With some narcissism of minor difference: see below.

⁴⁶ Cf. Uden 2011, VII; a comparable urge to make authors our 'complex' doubles>equals is rife all over Classics, from the subversive Virgil (see Tarrant 2012, 33–7) to the tricky Tacitus (Woodman and Kraus 2014, 22).

⁴⁷ Her discussion is conducted through Freudian humour analysis: the fearful satirist aligns himself with the audience against a threatening victim (e.g. 200).

⁴⁸ Richlin 1992, 195–209. On the co-presence of humour and serious misogyny in *Sat.* 6 for example, see Gold 1994, 101–02. Cf. Shumate 2006, 157 on poet-persona co-implication come *Sat.* 15.