JUVENAL AND THE POETICS OF ANONYMITY

The satirist Juvenal remains one of antiquity’s greatest question marks. His *Satires* entered the mainstream of the classical tradition with nothing more than an uncertain name and a dubious biography to recommend them. Tom Geue argues that the missing author figure is no mere casualty of time’s passage, but a startling, concerted effect of the *Satires* themselves. Scribbling dangerous social critique under a historical maximum of paranoia, Juvenal harnessed this dark energy by wiping all traces of himself – signature, body, biographical snippets, social connections – from his reticent texts. This last major ambassador of a once self-betraying genre took a radical leap into the anonymous. *Juvenal and the Poetics of Anonymity* tracks this mystifying self-concealment over the whole Juvenalian corpus. Through probing close readings, it shows how important the missing author was to this satire, and how that absence echoes and amplifies the neurotic politics of writing under surveillance.

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JUVENAL AND THE POETICS OF ANONYMITY

TOM GEUE

University of St Andrews, Scotland
To Andrew and Vania: my loving parents who first taught me to read and write.

Your first names are written and read (first).
Accursed the man, whom Fate ordains, in spite,
And cruel parents teach, to read and write!
What need of letters? Wherefore should we spell?
Why write our names? A mark will do as well.

Charles Churchill *The Author* 1–4

quid refert, tales uersus qua uoce legantur?
Does it matter, the voice in which such verses get read?

Juvenal *Sat.* 11.182

uana superuacui dicunt chirographa ligni
They say it’s a spurious signature on a worthless document

Juvenal *Sat.* 13.137
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The spine of this book has hardened with the help of two continents, three countries, five institutions, and twelve years on and off Juvenal. Above all it has been cracked into shape by the constant shock of both new and old ideas. The people behind them need names.

My Juvenal condition goes back to Emily Matters’ contagious pedagogy at North Sydney Boys High School, and the subtle seminars of Frances Muecke and Sarah Lawrence at the University of Sydney. Frances Muecke and Emma Gee were my unbeatable mentors throughout undergraduate Classics. I hope that their double-sided virtues of rigour and open-mindedness have made it into this book, in smattering if not droves.

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Studies helped me reach a point where I would not embarrass myself too much; the blotches that remain will be reflected in my own red face, and mine alone.

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from clusters of wealth built, directly or indirectly, on bleak histories of exploitation, slavery, and genocide; histories stretching into a university system which rewards its bosses with bigger bonuses, and its labour with greater precarity. Our most pressing job is to stop them repeating themselves.
ABBREVIATIONS, EDITIONS
AND COMMENTARIES

CIL  1863–. Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Berlin: de Gruyter.


OCT Oxford Classical Text


I follow Clausen’s OCT edition of Juvenal (1992) throughout except where otherwise noted. I also make regular reference to the following editions and commentaries:


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List of Abbreviations, Editions and Commentaries
