

## 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.

TOM GEUE is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer in Latin at the University of St Andrews, and has published widely on the literature of imperial Rome. He is currently researching a book on anonymous Roman writing, which also considers how readers now and then cope with the power and problem of anonymity.

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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

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page viii
<i>List of Abbreviations, Editions and Commentaries</i>	xii
1 Introduction: Meet Anon	I
2 Anonymity Programmed	32
3 The Anatomy of Anonymity: Bodies and Names	71
4 Shrinking, Slinking, and Sinking	131
5 Consolation, Isolation, Indigestion	203
6 Conclusion	286
<i>Bibliography</i>	309
<i>General Index</i>	345
<i>Index Locorum</i>	350

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viii



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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.  
 HA Magie, D. 1921–32. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.  
 OCT Oxford Classical Text  
 OLD Glare, P. G. W. 1982. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

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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