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Document Title: Juvenal: Satire 3

Written Assignments #3

First Impressions

What are your first impressions?

My first three impressions of this Juvenal piece were:

1. The feel, for me, was Shakespearean. As I read, I found myself back in high school English class. Yikes.
2. As this poetry piece was being read, it took more thoughtful concentration than the narrative pieces of *Suzanna* and *Judith*, which were previously analyzed.
3. I realized I was at a disadvantage not knowing all the names and references Juvenal included in his writing. I am sure readers of the day knew precisely who and what he was referring to and understood the various innuendos, but I was lost at times and thus am aware that I might have yet to grasp all the intended meanings and the depth of the satire.

The Fordham University copy of Satire 3 does not number each line of the poem; therefore, regretfully, not being able to discover the line pattern, line citations are not given in this analysis.

However, section citations, per A.S. Kline's translation, are listed below and will be used to direct readers to the text.

Section 1, 1-20: It's Enough to Drive Old Friends Away

Section 2, 21-57: The Dishonest and Dishonorable

Section 3, 58-125: And What About all Those Greeks?

Section 4, 126-163: Better Not Be Poor Here

Section 5, 164-189: It's Hard to Climb the Ladder

Section 6, 190-231: The Very Houses are Unsafe

Section 7, 232-267: And Then There's the traffic

Section 8, 268-314: And The Violence

Section 9, 315-322: So Farewell! (Juvenal The Satires Satire III - Fleeing Rome n.d.).

What kind of document is it?

As a result of research, one can learn that Satire 3 is a poetic piece with a dactylic hexameter rhythmic flow, which was common in ancient Greek and Latin poetry. The movement or style of the work is considered the “silver age of Latin literature.” As a satirical piece, this poem is full of judgment as it critiques life in Rome and stirs the readers to respond to the harshness of society.

Looking More Closely

Read through the document carefully. Make a list of any unusual words, phrases, or concepts.

I found several words and phrases unfamiliar and thus needed to look up to help grasp this Latin satire. Here is a partial list:

Quid Romae Faciam? – What will I do at Rome?

Paramour – lover, illicit partner of a married person

Dregs – the remnant of a liquid left in a container.

Purple-clad gentry – people in purple

Gay-decked – unable to find meaning

Delf – an excavation, usually a quarry or mine, hole in the ground

Hobnails – a short heavy-headed nail used to reinforce the soles of boots.

Potsherd – a broken piece of ceramic material, especially one found on an archaeological site.

A few one-liners that were of interest and jumped out:

“Let those remain who turn black into white....”

“The man whom Verres loves is the man who can impeach Verres at any moment that he chooses.”

“A man’s word is believed in exact proportion to the amount of cash which he keeps in his strong-box.”

“... nothing can be had in Rome for nothing....”

“Who but the wealthy get sleep in Rome?”

Is there a date on it? If so, what is it? If not, are there any other clues within the document that might indicate when it was written?

It is believed that Satire 3 was written 100-110 CE or after. Research indicates that it was written in light of life in Rome under the cruel emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) and his successor Nerva (AD 96-98) and Trajan (AD 98-117) (Hatina 2013).

Is there a location indicated? What is it?

The line “the thousand perils of this terrible city” and “my friend halted at the Dripping archway of the old Porta Capena (Section 1) supports the idea that Rome is the location.

Who wrote or created the document? How can you tell?

Decimus Junius Juvenalis, known in English as Juvenal, lived in the late first and early second century CE. He was born in Aquino, Italy, around 55-60 CE and died about 127. As a Roman poet, he wrote 16 Latin satires divided into five books, of which Satire III is in Book 1. It is said that “Juvenal was the last and most powerful of all the Roman satirical poets.”

Juvenal seems to be a conservative as he finds the pagan lifestyle appalling. He is familiar with Gentile values, as he is one himself, and he separates Gentile (Roman values) from Pagan (Greek values). Juvenal was not focusing on the Jews; thus, there is no direct indication that he was familiar with Jewish traditions; however, it is reasonable to conclude that the author was aware that Jew’s plight was the same as the Roman poor.

For whom was the document written or created? How do you know?

This piece seems to be written for the Roman Gentile reader. It stands to reason that the poor and the wealthy would be affected by it. People experiencing poverty could relate to the tone and outcry of the piece. At the same time, the rich, some being Juvenal’s peers and colleagues at one point, would take note of Juvenal’s criticism of their actions and beliefs. Furthermore, the piece

gives the most hope to those who can pack their things and leave for a better community. This document does not seem to have been written for the Jews, yet the Jews would have recognized the value and truth of the piece.

What is the purpose of the document? What made you think this?

Umbricius believed the Greeks and other foreign immigrants were ruining Rome, and he explains the horrendous oppression felt by the overpopulated city. Society was so corrupt that Rome was an unbearable place to live; therefore, he was leaving. It stands to reason that author's purpose of the document could be two-fold: to bring attention, and possibly shame, to the corrupt behavior of the wealthy; and to express encouraged hope that some could choose to move out of the city and say, "so farewell." (Section 9). With a population of about one million, it is estimated that 30 percent were slaves (Hatina 2013). If one were enslaved or an indentured servant, leaving would not be a realistic nor a straightforward option. However, dreaming of one day leaving might give comfort to the dire living conditions. The elites of Roman society only comprised 3-5 percent of the population (Hatina 2013), making the general non-enslaved-free people 65% of the inhabitants.

Thinking Further

What do you think the writer thought was the most important information to convey? Why?

As one reads between the lines, the writer has two crucial pieces of information to convey. One, new foreigners (immigrants) will change the current society. Satire 3 expresses that Rome is ruined by the influence of the Greeks and other foreigners (sections 2, 3, 4), physically (Sections 1, 6, 7, 8), morally (sections 2, 3), and emotionally (Section 5). Two, with Rome having no place for moral standing, one could choose to leave and would not endure the harsh cruelty of the city.

Does the document convey a specific tone?

Oh, YES! As a satirical piece, the tone is very critical, sarcastic, and even mocking against Greeks and Roman society. The course worksheet states, “Juvenal shows disdain for corruption that bases the truthfulness of testimony on a person’s status and that the impoverished have no real status in Rome, even though they are Roman.” Goodwin “praises [Juvenal’s] wonderful ability to be rude without being crude.” (Godwin 2022)

Can you tell the point of view of the writer? Is it objective?

Throughout the piece, the writer’s biases against the foreign cultures taking over Rome and his complete disapproval of the pagan culture can be read.

What is the writer’s attitude about Israel’s God or the nations’ gods? How can you tell?

There is no mention of Israel’s God, and the only reference to other gods is in Section 4, “Tough he swear by all the alters of Samothrace or of Rom, the poor man is believed to care naught for Gods and thunderbolts, the Gods themselves forgiving him.” This supports Rome’s (and Greek) polytheism society and sheds a positive light on the gods as they forgive the poor man out of their goodwill. Even though not outwardly stated in Satire 3, “religion pervade every aspect of daily life at every social level and every ethnic group” (Hatina 2013). However, the author does express the importance of morals, as he expresses the lack of morals in society.

What is the writer’s attitude toward “Jews”?

Jews are mentioned in Section 1 in connection to the old Porta Capena’s fount and grove, which “are let out to Jews, who possess a basket and a truss of hay for all their furnishings.” From this line, the author is putting the Jews in the same group as the poor of Rome, which makes the Jews

part of those whose houses were unsafe (they would have lived on the higher floors), those getting insufficient sleep, and victims of the violence.

What is the writer's attitude about "non-Jews" or those ruling over them? How can you tell?

The writer's attitude toward the Greeks is very negative, and the depth of such disapproval can be seen in section 3. Section 4 continues with bitterness that the wealthy outrank poor Roman citizens, "Here in Rome, the son of free-born parents has to give the wall to some rich man's slave." The author continues to express that "money talks" with statements like a man's word is believed in proportion to his cash and inquiries are made about one's wealth before one's character.

What does the writer believe about the Torah (the Law)?

Even though most 2nd Temple Judaism was unified in their shared interest in the Mosaic Law and the idea that all forms of Judaism related to it in one way or another, there is no mention of the Torah or the Covenant in Satire 3. However, a reader knowledgeable in the Torah can understand that the strong critique of paganism coincides with Jewish laws. Perhaps that is why Christians have preserved Juvenal's satires.

What other customs or institutions of Judaism do the writers mention? What is his attitude toward these customs or institutions?

There is no mention of the customs or institutions of Judaism beyond what is being experienced.

What is the attitude of the writer toward morality or natural law? How can you tell?

Starting at line 41, Section 2, the narrator states he cannot lie, cannot praise a bad book, ignorant of astrology, has never read entrails, will not deliver packages to illicit lovers, and will not help a

thief. Such comments and the outrage about what others are doing indicate that morality is highly regarded. Throughout Satire 3, “Juvenal paints a vivid portrait of a city that prizes corruption and self-indulgent behavior over mortality” (The Satires of Juvenal Study Guide 2023).

Does the document remind you of any biblical event, character, or book of the Bible? What made you think of those events, characters, or biblical books?

- **Jonah:** As one reads about the complaints of Rome’s society, one can be reminded of Johan. He, too, did his share of complaining about Nineveh’s society.
- **Sodom and Gomora:** Line 109, “...there is nothing sacred to his lusts,” and several lines following, which list several sexual lusts, remind this writer of Sodom and Gomora.
- **Numerous verses** mention the characteristics of Roman society, which Juvenal critiques.
- **Jesus:** The line in Section 2, which states, “and win the applause by slaying whomsoever the mob with a turn of the thumb bids them slay...” reminds me of the crowd yelling, “Crucify [Jesus].”
- **Onesimus:** Onesimus was a runaway slave. Paul tells Philemon that Onesimus was “formerly useless to you” (Philemon vs. 11). This verse came to mind as the idea of the slaves leaving Rome as a solution to their circumstances.

Summary Statement:

Juvenal: Satire 3 is an imaginative biased document full of prejudice against the Greeks.

Although not intended to be humorous, some sections render a level of chuckles. However, this piece depicts the harsh reality of the Roman-Greco society, which comprised the elite and the non-elite, with no middle class. The poem also addresses the moral decline, which, according to the author, was brought in by the Greeks and has deteriorated the city to the point of being

unlivable for upstanding citizens. This satire may give a glimpse into the beginning and end of a great city and nation.

This primary document, which has been preserved for nearly two-thousand years, is not a religious piece, but it does support Jewish ideologies of morals and ethics. The Old Testament warns about corruption and bad company, and the New Testament warns that bad company corrupts good character. Throughout the Bible, God reveals his heart for the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized.

This 21st-century America, with its moral decline and socialist agenda, can be seen as a future Rome. May this nation take heed of history.

References

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