
Reviewed by Vincent Hunink, Radboud University Nijmegen (v.hunink@let.ru.nl)
Word count: 1144 words

Juvenal and Persius were represented in the LCL as early as 1918, in the edition by G.G. Ramsay. Although S. Braund respectfully states that the old translation 'has lasted remarkably well' (p.vii), one could also say that it was obsolete, not only in its traditional, biographical approach, with the 'I' in the satirical poems being facilely identified as the poet himself, but also, perhaps inevitably, in its use of English. Given modern insights into Roman satire and the general aims of the LCL, a new edition was more than welcome.

It is a pleasure to see that nowadays acclaimed specialists take honour in preparing editions for the LCL. S. Braund has greatly advanced the study of Roman satirists with a number of important articles and monographs, such as her The Roman Satirists and Their Masks (1996). Moreover, she has published a translation of Lucan (1992). So her name as the editor of this volume is more or less a warrant for the highest possible quality.

The introduction is, in a word, magnificent: in merely 39 Loeb pages, S. Braund manages to give a broad, relevant overview of the whole genre, its origins and earliest representatives, while also setting the tone for a more modern approach of Roman satire as a genre in which the poet creates satiric mouthpieces (personae), who play a specific, exaggerated role rather than voicing the author's personal views. Persius and Juvenal are also presented, in 12 succinct but very helpful pages. There is even room for a page on their influence on later generations, for an account of the textual transmission, and an essential bibliography in 6 pages. The text reads as smoothly and easily as if it had been written without any special effort -- mostly a mark of excellence and a sign of meticulous work. Theory and speculation have been reduced to a minimum, and so the reader is left with the essential information needed to study the texts. This, one would argue, is precisely what a LCL introduction may be expected to achieve.

The texts of Persius and Juvenal are, no doubt, the most important part of the book. And here too, everything is truly excellent. Every text is preceded by a short introductory paragraph, setting out the general outline of the poem and adding some cautious general remarks about its aims and style. For instance, in the case of Juvenal's third satire, it is suggested that Umbricius, who leaves Rome a disappointed man, is in fact a jealous failure, something which may put his departure in a different light.

The Latin texts closely follow the recent OCT edition of Clausen (1992), with some minor changes in text and punctuation, all duly recorded in the limited
apparatus.

In her prose translation, S. Braund has consciously and explicitly avoided both old fashioned words (to mention one example, she even objects to 'therefore') and trendy idiom: the book is intended 'for a long shelf life' (p.vii). She has succeeded remarkably well in her task. For instance, here follows the beginning of Persius' first satire in Ramsay's older Loeb, followed by Braund's new one.

(Ramsay)

P. "O the vanity of mankind! How vast the void in human affairs!"

F. "Who will read stuff like that?"

P. "Is it to me you are speaking? Not a soul, by Hercules."

F. "What? nobody?"

P. "One or two perhaps or nobody."

F. "What a poor and lamentable result!"

P. "Why that? Are you afraid that Polydamas and his Trojan ladies will put Labeo above me? Stuff and nonsense! And if thick-headed Rome does disparage anything, don't you go and put right the tongue in that false balance of theirs; look to no one outside yourself. (...)" (P=Persius F=friend)

(Braund)

P "How troubled is humanity! How very empty is life!"

I Who'll read that?

P Are you talking to me? No one, for God's sake.

I No one?

P Perhaps one or two.

I That's disgraceful and pathetic.

P Why's that? Because Polydamas and the Trojan dames might prefer Labeo to me? Rubbish! If muddled Rome disparages something, don't step in to correct the faulty balance in those scales and don't search outside yourself. (...)" (P=poet I=interlocutor)

The difference in tone and style is apparent right away. Obscenities, always a weak point of older Loeb's, and a rather widespread phenomenon in Roman satire, are now correctly rendered. In the same first poem by Persius, we read about being 'in a state of enervation with your orgasmic eye' (Braund) for *patranti fractus ocello* (line 18) instead of 'with a rakish leer in your eye' (Ramsay).

A fairly large number of English notes (a few on every page) explain difficult turns or allusions in the translated texts. As a matter of fact, places requiring explanation are numerous indeed, especially in the obscure Persius, and the reader will be greatly helped by these added explicit remarks. Of course, they tend to reduce the literary value of the translation as such: it is as if one were to explain jokes and puns (as in Shackleton Bailey's highly useful Martial, also in the LCL). But for a reader who wishes to understand the Latin, it is certainly a great help to have puns, jokes, and obscure references explained.
With the LCL intending to guide readers to what is essential in the original texts, a translator inevitably has to curb any desire to produce flowery, original language or special effects that somehow directly convey the power of the Latin without necessarily clarifying it. Usually a neutral prose translation with explanatory notes proves to be the best solution here. But it must be said, it can hardly satisfy a translator's sense of creativity and artistry. In other words, a Loeb translator needs to be modest indeed and to limit herself to serving the reader rather than showing off her talents. It would probably have been easy for S. Braund to make a brilliant, idiosyncratic book with these texts of Juvenal and Persius. Instead, she has consciously focused her efforts on producing an edition that is, above all, a helpful guide to the texts themselves.

So is there anything in this book that is less than perfect? Hardly, I would say. On a material note, the book even has been given a headband and footband, a new phenomenon in the LCL (let us hope that future volumes will be equipped with a green or red bookmark!). At the most, I could quibble about the order of the index, which has Juvenal preceding Persius, while their texts are printed with Persius coming first. But if this, or the occasional misprint (p.26 'numerantur': read 'numeratur') is all that a critic can come up with, the conclusion must be clear. This volume is a truly great achievement, a most welcome addition to the LCL, and a must-buy for all institutional and private libraries of Latin literature.