

Juvenal, Satire 6

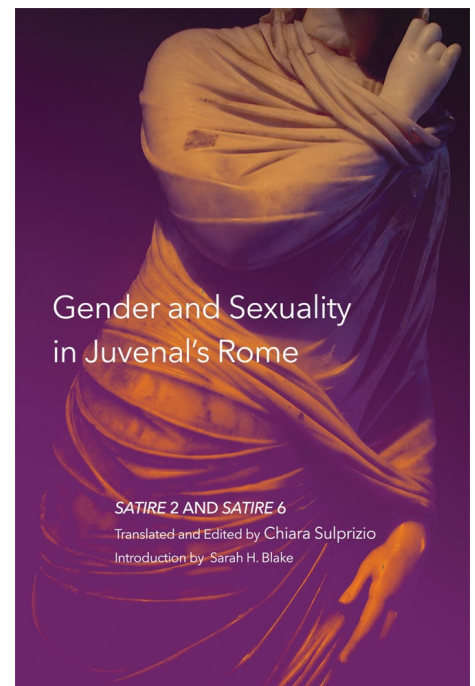
By Chiara Sulprizio & Sarah H. Blake

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Introduction

Juvenal's 6th Satire is famous for its misogyny. In this module, we highlight key passages, suggest useful companion texts to pair with the Satire, and offer a set of discussion questions focusing on misogyny in the Imperial Roman context. A sample lecture and PowerPoint is included.

Juvenal's 6th Satire is an advanced and unpleasant text. It's useful to show the elements and range of Roman misogynistic thinking (regarding women's bodies, behaviors, sexuality). There's a shock value in reading some of Juvenal's most obscene passages (e.g., the description of Messalina).



Satire 6 is also about male effeminacy and men's failure to control women, and so speaks to regimes of masculinity in Roman thinking (see also Satire 2).

This module could also be useful for teaching Satire 6 in a broader course on satire as a Roman literary form, or in an advanced Latin class, where it could be read with satires by Horace, Persius and Lucilius.

Primary Sources:

"Juvenal: Satire 6," in Chiara Sulprizio, Sarah H. Blake, *Gender and sexuality in Juvenal's Rome: Satire 2 and Satire 6*. Oklahoma series in classical culture, volume 59. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020.

- Assign either all of Satire 6 = pp. 65-95 or lines 1-62, 78-135, 286-345, 435-456, 474-507, 627-661
Suggested companion texts:
 - Medical texts on female bodies and liquids
 - Semonides, **fr. 7**, on types of women as compared with different animals
 - Pliny, **NH 10.172**, on Messalina's sexual competition with a sex worker
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Secondary Sources:

Lecture notes by Chiara Sulprizio on Juvenal, Satire 6 and Gold 1998 (PDF attached above)

Slideshow to accompany Lecture Notes (PDF attached above)

Discussion/Reading Questions

What are Juvenal's complaints about women? What stereotypes/images does he invoke?

What about men? About marriage?

How is it that Roman women and men came to be like this, according to Juvenal?

What cultural work does this kind of poetry (satire) do? How do you think a Roman reader/listener would respond to this poem?

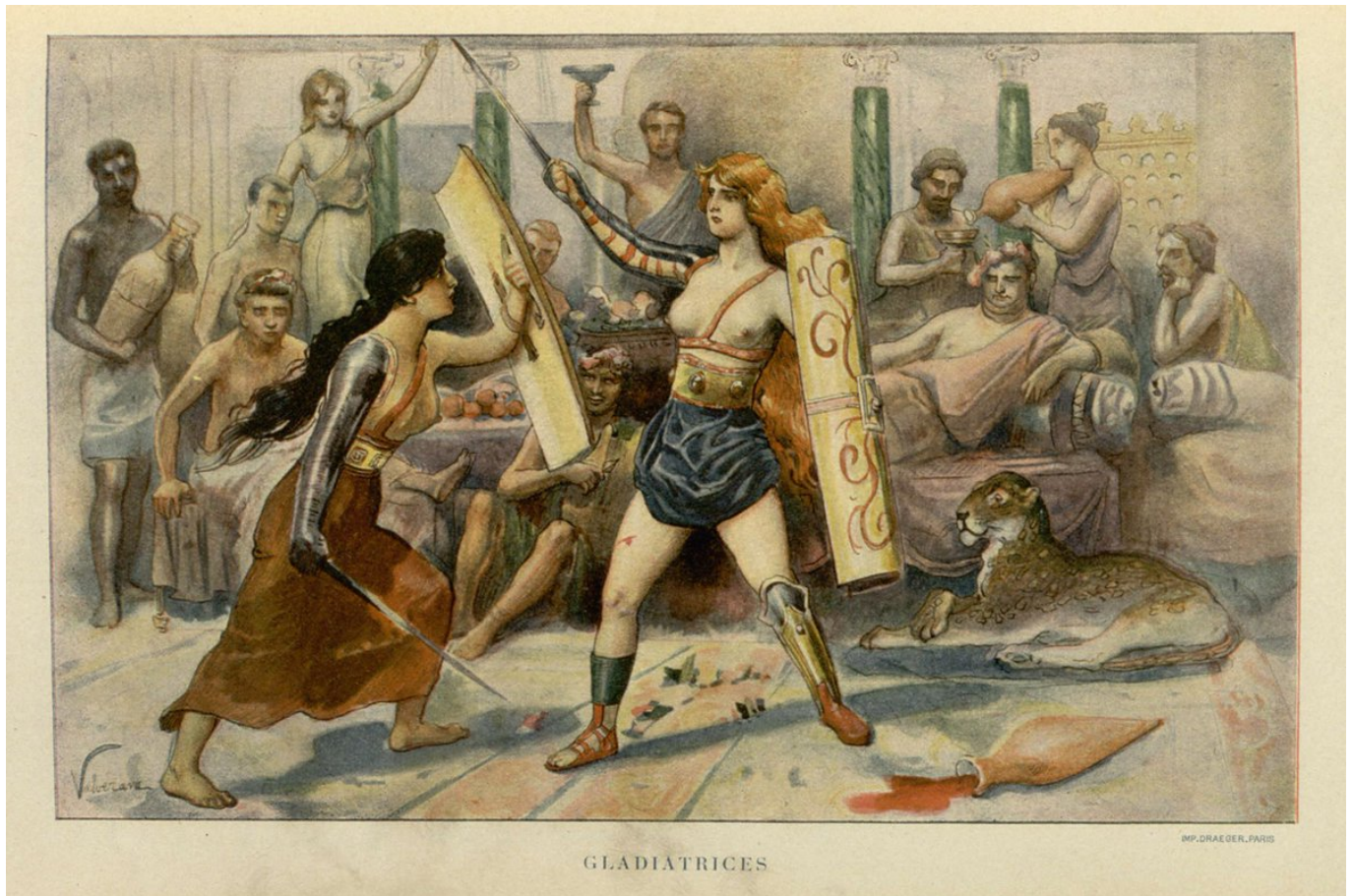
What historical contexts inform the production of this poem? Or, more simply, why do you think Juvenal wrote this at the moment he did?

Is there such a thing as a good woman in Juvenal? Is his misogyny distinctive to his world or universal?

Can women produce satire? Why or why not?

What similarities, if any, do you see between Juvenal's "advice" to Postumus to avoid marriage, and contemporary ideas about women, men, and relationships?

Multimedia Resources:



A postcard from the 1800s/early 1900s depicting female gladiators

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Onion, Rebecca. "**It Is a Miracle That Employers Don't Murder More Secretaries** ." *Slate*, 17 Aug. 2018.

- This is a short article that discusses a book entitled *What Men Don't Like about Women* that was written in 1945. The parallels with Juvenal are self-evident and make for good conversation about the persistence of misogynistic ideology in the modern day.