



# **The Arena of Satire: Juvenal's Search for Rome (Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture Series)**

*David H. J. Larmour*

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In this first comprehensive reading of Juvenal's satires in more than fifty years, David H. J. Larmour deftly revises and sharpens our understanding of the second-century Roman writer who stands as the archetype for all later practitioners of the satirist's art.

The enduring attraction of Juvenal's satires is twofold: they not only introduce the character of the "angry satirist" but also offer vivid descriptions of everyday life in Rome at the height of the Empire. In Larmour's interpretation, these two elements are inextricably linked. *The Arena of Satire* presents the satirist as *flaneur* traversing the streets of Rome in search of its authentic core—those distinctly Roman virtues that have disappeared amid the corruption of the age. What the vengeful, punishing satirist does to his victims, as Larmour shows, echoes what the Roman state did to outcasts and criminals in the arena of the Colosseum.

The fact that the arena was the most prominent building in the city and is mentioned frequently by Juvenal makes it an ideal lens through which to examine the spectacular and punishing characteristics of Roman satire. And the fact that Juvenal undertakes his search for the uncorrupted, authentic Rome within the very buildings and landmarks that make up the actual, corrupt Rome of his day gives his sixteen satires their uniquely paradoxical and contradictory nature. Larmour's exploration of "the arena of satire" guides us through Juvenal's search for the true Rome, winding from one poem to the next. He combines close readings of passages from individual satires with discussions of Juvenal's representation of Roman space and topography, the nature of the "arena" experience, and the network of connections among the satirist, the gladiator, and the editor—or producer—of Colosseum entertainments. *The Arena of Satire* also offers a new definition of "Juvenalian satire" as a particular form arising from the intersection of the body and the urban landscape—a form whose defining features survive in the works of several later satirists, from Jonathan Swift and Evelyn Waugh to contemporary writers such as Russian novelist Victor Pelevin and Irish dramatist Martin McDonagh.

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