

## Juvenal, Satire 3

Though he was one of Rome's greatest writers, it is surprising how little is known about Juvenal's life. His full name was probably Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis. He was born at Aquinum, near Monte Cassino, probably in the reign of Nero (54-68 CE), but the exact date of either his birth or death is uncertain. Other than a few scattered references in Martial (ca. 45-104 CE), there is little evidence Juvenal was even well-known among his fellow Romans during his lifetime.

Juvenal's first nine satires are the most powerful and least agreeable, establishing him as probably the most "politically incorrect" Roman poet if not also the most caustic. Fueled by the irrational or irresponsible behavior of foreigners, women, homosexuals and cruel and decadent rulers, Juvenal's rage lashes out against greed, extravagance, vanity, stupidity, bad manners, urban blight and poetry recitals in August. It seems obvious why the poet must write satire, as he says in his own words: *difficile est saturam non scribere* ("it is difficult to not write satire").

Our excerpt is taken from Juvenal's Third Satire which is a rejection of city life in favor of bucolic simplicity. According to one modern critic, it is in this satire that his particular gift of vivid painting finds its best and bitterest observations about life in Rome.

### Text and Translation

#### Satire 3. 41-45

Quid Romae faciam? mentiri nescio; librum,  
What will I do at Rome? I am unable to lie; if a book

si malus est, nequeo laudare et poscere; motūs  
is bad, I am unable to praise and request (it); I don't know

41. **mentiri:** *mentior, -iri, mentitus sum*: not tell the truth, lie
42. **nequeo:** *nequeo, -ire, -ivi, -itum*: be unable  
**poscere:** *posco, -ere, poposci*: request, ask for  
**motus:** *motus, -ūs, m.*: movement

astrorum ignoro; funus promittere patris  
the movements of the stars; neither am I willing

nec volo nec possum; ranarum viscera numquam  
nor am I able to promise the funeral of a father; I have never examined

inspexi; . . .  
the guts of frogs; . . .

45

44. **ranarum:** *rana, -ae, f.:* frog  
**viscera:** *viscus, -eris, n.:* the internal organs; here, guts
45. **inspexi:** *inspicio, -spicere, -spexi, -spectum:* examine

### Satire 3. 74-80

. . . ede quid illum  
. . . Proclaim what you think

esse putes. Quemvis hominem secum attulit ad nos:  
that man is. He has brought to us along with himself any man at all:

75

grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes,  
grammar teacher, orator, architect, painter, personal trainer,

74. **ede:** *edo, edere, edidi, editum:* proclaim
75. **quemvis:** *quivis, quaevis, quodvis:* any at all  
**attulit:** *adfero, adferre, attuli, adlatum:* bring
76. **grammaticus:** *grammaticus, -i, m.:* grammarian  
**rhetor:** *rhetor, -oris, m.:* orator  
**geometres:** *geometres, -ae, m. (Greek form):* architect  
**pictor:** *pictor, -oris, m.:* painter  
**aliptes:** *aliptes, -ae, m.:* person who put oil on wrestlers; here, personal trainer

augur, schoenobates, medicus, magus — omnia novit  
fortune-teller, tightrope walker, doctor, magician — the hungry little

Graeculus esuriens: in caelum, iusseris, ibit.

Greek knows all things: (if) you give the order, he will go into heaven.

In summa non Maurus erat neque Sarmata nec Thrax

In sum, it was not a Moroccan nor a Sarmatian nor a Thracian

qui sumpsit pinnas, mediis sed natus Athenis.

who put on wings, but a man born in the middle of Athens.

80

77. **augur:** *augur, -uris*, m/f.: interpreter of auspices; here, fortune-teller  
**schoenobates:** *schoenobates, -ae*, m. (Greek form): tightrope walker  
**medicus:** *medicus, -i*, m.: doctor  
**magus:** *magus, -i*, m.: magician
78. **Graeculus:** *Graeculus, -a, -um*: a little Greek (diminutive of *Graecus*); here, the diminutive has a contemptuous sense  
**esuriens:** *esurio, -ire*: be hungry  
**iusseris:** future perfect for future, in a future more vivid condition  
**ibit:** *eo, ire, ivi, itum*: go (future third person singular)
79. **in summa:** *summa, -ae*, f.: the most important point; here, in sum  
**Maurus:** *Maurus, -a, -um*: Moroccan; Mauritania was a Roman province in North Africa  
**Sarmata:** *Sarmata, -ae*, m.: a Sarmatian; the Sarmatians lived in southern Russia  
**Thrax:** *Thrax, -acis*, m.: a Thracian; Thrace is in northern Greece
80. **sumpsit:** *sumo, -ere, sumpsi, sumptum*: put on  
**pinnas:** *pinna, -ae*, f.: feather; in plural, wing  
**Athenis:** *Athenae, -arum*, f.: Athens; here, locative case showing place where; Juvenal is alluding to Daedalus, the figure from Greek myth who flew from Crete to Italy on wings made of wax and feathers

### Satire 3.100-103

natio comoeda est. rides, maiore cachinno

100

The (whole) nation is a comedienne. (If) you laugh, he is rocked

concutitur; flet, si lacrimas conspexit amici,

by bigger guffaw; he bewails, if he has beheld the tears of a friend,

nec dolet; igniculum brumae si tempore poscas,

but does not suffer pain; if you should ask for a little fire at the time of winter

accipit endromidem; si dixeris “aestuo,” sudat.

he seizes a warm-up suit; if you say, “I am hot,” he sweats.

100. **natio:** *natio, -onis, f.:* nation, i.e. Greece  
**comoeda:** *comoedus, -a, -um:* comic; here, a feminine substantive meaning “comedienne”  
**cachinno:** *cachinnus, -i, m.:* loud laughter, guffaw
101. **concutitur:** *concutio, -cutere, -cussi, -cussum:* shake violently, rock  
**flet:** *fleo, flere, flevi, fletum:* bewail  
**lacrimas:** *lacrima, -ae, f.:* a tear  
**conspexit:** *conspicio, -spicere, -spexi, -spectum:* behold
102. **dolet:** *doleo, -ere, dolui, doliturus:* suffer pain  
**igniculum:** *igniculus, i, m.:* a little fire (diminutive of *ignis*)  
**brumae:** *bruma, -ae, f.:* winter
103. **endromidem:** *endromis, -idis, f.:* a rough cloak worn by athletes after exercises to keep warm; here, a warm-up suit  
**dixeris:** see *iusseris*, 78  
**aestuo:** *aestuo* (1): be hot  
**sudat:** *sudo* (1): sweat