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Folorunso Taiwo, *Satura Romana: An Odyssey in Ancient Roman Satire*. Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd, 2018. Pp. iii + 129. Paperback (ISBN 978-978-952-707-6) N1500

Amidst waning interest and consideration for Classical studies, especially in a country like Nigeria, there is the need for scholars to contribute and input a wide range of resources to build on the already existing knowledge, and of course, chart new courses, thereby establishing new vistas of knowledge.

Taiwo's *Satura Romana*, attracted little attention from classicists when it first appeared in 2018, but it is expected that with this second edition, which includes reviews, it would attain scholarly limelight and garner the attention it truly deserves.

This book sets out to explore the origin of the tradition of verse or poetic satire, with a view not only to situate it properly within established literary genre, but also to establish the affinity of this Greco-Roman tradition and the tradition established by Africans and the English poet-satirists of the Renaissance.

Origin, Form and Functionality (1-13), appears to set the central/pivot of analysis that validates the author's discussion on Roman verse and satire. He sought to provide in this volume an accurate, lively and readable account of what a student who is new or relatively new to Roman satire may expect to find in the verse tradition.

Taiwo recalls the evidence of the origin of the genre from accounts by ancient commentators, such as Quintilian, Diomedes and Livy, among other evidence also from the "Greek world of ridicule," especially evidence of the work by the learned Varro, in antiquity. To corroborate, the tradition from the Greek world, excerpts from Aeschylus' *Glaukos Pontios*, including Fragments of humour in Satyr-drama as used in the *Glaukos* are discussed in the Appendix.

Defining *Satura*, both in antiquity and in contemporary times which is the preoccupation of the third chapter, in the view of the writer, requires a sizeable debate, and Taiwo, here examined the complications of achieving and providing a satisfactory definition.

Studies such as G. Highet's *Juvenal the Satirist* and *The Anatomy of Satire*, and L. Feinberg's *The Satirist*, attempted an imposition of a definition of Satire, by identifying the attitude of the satirists, here Taiwo's analysis explores such ambiguity and shifts in dominant meanings from one age to another, which has tended to generate a 'protean' nature for the genre.

Further contribution to the problem of defining the genre, the author scrutinizes Alvin Kernan's *theory of Satire*, which problematizes the *persona* theory in both the ancient and Renaissance English satirists. Taiwo wonders whether satire can be divorced from its other unruly relative, such as invective, in view of Kernan's description of 'the scene of satire as disorderly, and grotesque.' At the end of this chapter, which analysed other scholarly views on the nature of satire, in antiquity and modern times, the reader is left with the impression that the issue of definition of satire despite the copious scholarship remains fluid.

Chapter three reviews the 'Roman society and the preoccupation of Satire.' This preoccupation was towards a pragmatic end, Taiwo claims; that such poetic discourse was designed to direct the lives of men. The Roman satirists were conscious of the functional basis of their art form, which is utilitarian, just like the older and higher artforms—Epic and Tragedy.

The period between 1st and 4th century AD witnessed an influx of mixed races and cultures into Rome, due to its cosmopolitan nature and being a centre of power. What Taiwo brings out especially well is the predisposition of the residents of Rome to such celebrated show/display of didacticism by their poet-satirists, and they, the audience, were not put off by such open didacticism. Thus, the discussion on 'Rome and the satiric poets', aptly, showcases individual poets from Lucilius to Petronius, and the passions that drove them into writing *Satura*.

This selected biography of the poet-satirists naturally launches into an extended discourse of the issues that occupied their attention in antiquity. Taiwo identifies a binary thematic preoccupation, in and (discontent and avarice) both of which were doctrinaire commonplaces of the existing philosophical schools.

With a creative use of horizontal thematic method of analysis, Taiwo engages the ancient satirists in a crisscross dialogue on the subject of their diatribes and what they regard as inappropriate behaviours and vices of ancient socio-political and cultural contradictions. The themes also include *Corruption and Hypocrisy*; *Extravagance and lack of self-control*; *Voluptuary and Prodigality*; were naturally overlapping subjects of *Luxuria and incontinentia*, which the ancient satirists highlighted on the plank of *convivium* (dinner-party), “as a platform for showcasing the ruinous effects of pursuit of pleasures,” among other vices. *Sumptuary Excesses and effeminacy*, a natural corollary of *Political Profligacy*, which was the normative scenario in the late Republic and under the Principate.

At all events, there is no doubt that the historical, cultural and regional particularities of the ancient Roman genre of *Satura*, may not only have left a mark on the tradition of modern satire, but from Taiwo's extended discussion in his horizontal themes of the satirists in this book, among other things, it would be of immense benefit to all who would see satire as a truly universal literary genre, especially as it straddles identical themes universally.

In conclusion, *Satura Romana* is a book that combines the historical and critical essence of satire, using it to navigate the current realities. It has not only provided a deep understanding of satire but also, is capable of sparking new interests for willing scholars and researchers.

Works Cited:

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