

Parallels of Inversion Between Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Juvenal, *Satires* 3 and 4

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There are several similar ways in which both Apuleius, in *The Golden Ass* or the *Metamorphoses*, and Juvenal, in the *Satires*, utilize the theme of inversion. In this case, inversion takes what is expected and flips it on its head. This could be a plot leading up to one conclusion, only to be inverted and follow a different path. This also includes preconceived notions and past knowledge about how things should be, but are inverted to be unexpected or contrary to the norm. Apuleius and Juvenal often use this theme of inversion with both drastic changes and subtle inconsistencies to drive the plot forward. Inversion is also used in a way to allow the protagonists of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Satires* to consider societal issues from a different perspective, that they did not hold before the inversion. Additionally, both Apuleius and Juvenal use inversion to highlight a theme of tragedy.

Both Apuleius and Juvenal consistently utilize the theme of inversion to drive the plot forward. These inversions can take multiple forms. The most prominent form of inversion in *Apuleius' Metamorphoses* is of an unexpected and drastic change in situation surrounding the plot that causes the story as a whole to change. Juvenal in *Satires* 4 tends to take a more subtle approach, using general changes and inconsistencies in how something is written or described compared to the real world. The first major inversion that flips the plot on its head in the *Metamorphoses* is of Lucius' murder trial during Festival of Laughter in book 3, before he is transformed. It appears as though Lucius will be condemned and and tortured for the murder of three men. However, the expected punishment of the trial is inverted as "*laughter broke out*" (*Metamorphoses* 3.10), exchanging his actual death for an intense social one (*Lateiner, pg. 231*). This inversion is used as a plot device that helps to explain the importance of Lucius and how his "*illustrious family is famous throughout Thessaly*" (*Metamorphoses* 3.11). The targeted

ridicule as tribute and an offer of a bronze statue in his honour helps to establish that Lucius is a significant and powerful individual and that he has much to lose. After Lucius has been turned into the ass, there are many circumstances where a quick inversion of the plot leads things in a new direction. The most immediate of them happen soon after he is transformed. Photis tells him “*All you need to do is to eat some roses*” (*Metamorphoses* 3.25) and that his transformation will be reversed, planning to perform this magic the next morning. Instead of safely returning to his human form, the story is once again inverted with the gang of robbers and the kidnapping of the ass. The inversion of Lucius is complete and the story continues from a different angle. In *Juvenal, Satires 4*, we see the repeated inversion of common things stretched to be unbelievable to continue the story. The very basis of it, the “*hulk of an Adriatic turbot*” (*Satires 4*, 39) that is too large for the unimportant fishermen to eat is an inversion of reality, an inconsistency that is used as the main plot point. Once the fish is delivered to the Emperor, there are further inversions of the importance of imperial councilors where Juvenal twists the historical facts in order to emphasize the feebleness of the nobles (*Tennant (Part 2)*, pg. 159). The most important nobles of the city are summoned as a powerful council to solve the mundane problem of how to cook the fish, coming to the uninteresting and common decision to “*have a deep dish made, large enough for its vast dimensions*” (*Satires 4*, 131-132).

The theme of inversion is also used in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Satires* to allow the protagonist, and in turn the reader, to consider societal issues under a viewpoint that they would otherwise not hold. This is clear in *The Golden Ass* when Lucius is turned into a beast of burden, able to listen but not speak. Before the inversion, Lucius is simply traveling through Thessaly for business as a rich and powerful man. His curiosity about magic has Photis transform him into an ass, leaving him isolated from humanity. From a wealthy man to a beast of burden, unable to “*invoke [his] civil rights*” (*Metamorphoses* 3.29) after being kidnapped he has essentially transformed into a slave. This voiceless aspect of slavery is continuously emphasized by Lucius’ failed attempts to speak his resistance (*Sabnis*, pg. 80), and is a far cry

from his eloquence in defending himself during his murder trial during the Festival of Laughter. As an ass, Lucius is relegated to simply listening to stories that others tell without the ability to interject or speak for himself. The main inversion in *Satires 3* that allows Umbricius, as the protagonist of the story, to consider differing viewpoints is the inversion of the natural order of things in Rome. A man who once had an “impeccable” upbringing (*Tennant (Part 1), pg. 192*), who “*breathed the Aventine air*” and “*was nurtured on Sabine olives*” (*Satires 3, 84-85*), it is clear that Umbricius was once in a position to think highly of Rome. Umbricius brings up many perceived problems that are inversions of how things used to be in the city. The biggest issue that he faces is his rapidly worsening financial position, where there is no “*joy in Rome for honest ability*” or “*reward any more for hard work*” (*Satires 3, 21-22*). There is an inversion as a free-born citizen like Umbricius can no longer afford to live in the city (*Tennant (Part 1), pg. 193*), with poverty being a major theme in this poem. The next most important problem Umbricius is concerned with is “*a Rome full of Greeks*” (*Satires 3, 60-61*). However few of the poor in the city are Greek as they diminish and push aside the poor Roman population, an economic and social class that now applies to Umbricius. An inversion of the natural and historical things in Rome, along with poverty among free-born citizens, and Rome rapidly filling with Greeks are all used to consider Rome under a new viewpoint that would otherwise not be held.

Inversion is used to highlight a theme of tragedy in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. The main tragedy is clear in the Charite Complex which surrounds the tale of Cupid and Psyche. The inversion involved deals with the tragedies that lead to kidnapping, betrayal and vengeance of Charite. The vengeance portion of the story has been discussed by scholars as an extraordinarily tragic occurrence that mimics Greek tragedy more than having the intended characteristics of being a Greek romance (*Brandão 183-195*). The wedding imagery of the Charite Complex uses tragic inversion in a way to enhance the revenge plot of the expected romantic story. It is based on Thrasyllus’ murderous plot against the husband of Charite and intensifies this tragic inversion as all three marriages, those of Tlepolemus, Charite, and

Thrasyllus, are fulfilled only in death instead of love (*Frangoulidis 601-619*). When it comes to the inversions of tragedy, it is clear that Apuleius makes allusions to both Euripidean and Sophoclean tragedies (*Frangoulidis 612- 613*). Inversion to highlight a tragedy of displacement manifests itself throughout Juvenal Satire 3. At the base level, the poem is a story of tragic departure and displacement. Though the inversion of displacement can be considered different to that of tragedy, it goes hand in hand as Umbricius is tragically displaced from his home. Umbricius' farewell speech shows that his exile had already begun even before he passed through the walls of Rome (*Geue 6-8*). The reversal of desire for nostos binds the displaced and exiled to their home, however Rome had become unfamiliar, foreign, and paradoxical (*Geue 6-8*). In doing so, the Rome that Umbricius has left has tragically become a displaced place itself (*Geue 6-8*). Satire 3 is complicated due to the displacement as it suggests that the person had a place to begin with. However, Umbricius' rhetoric makes Rome a place of no places and tragically makes him be displaced without origin (*Geue 6-8*). His exile and displacement is no longer formed later on, but instead begins with a type of exile of Rome itself. This leads Umbricius with a lack of place which becomes irreversible, leaving the tragedy that is his lack of belonging. The imagery of this leads to the influence of his experiences.

To conclude, Apuleius and Juvenal use inversion to highlight a theme of tragedy. Inversion is also used to allow the consideration of societal issues from an alternate viewpoint that had not been held before. Finally, inversion is often used by both Apuleius and Juvenal to drive the plot forward by taking what is expected and reversing it. Apuleius and Juvenal both utilize the theme of inversion in several similar ways across many points of both the *Metamorphoses*, or *the Golden Ass*, and the *Satires*.

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