

THE FUNCTION OF THE PROLOGUE (1-20) IN THE ORGANIZATION OF JUVENAL'S THIRD SATIRE

S. C. FREDERICKS

JUVENAL'S THIRD SATIRE has often been praised for its lucid and coherent organization,¹ but it has not previously been explained in detail to what extent the first twenty lines of the poem contribute to its structural effectiveness.² As a matter of fact, apart from whatever rhetorical or narrative patterns are evident in the satire Juvenal has selected for his prologue key words and phrases which can only be termed poetically suggestive. He delivers the prologue *in propria persona* as he introduces his friend, Umbricius, a native Roman who is leaving the corrupt big city for a simple life at Cumae, the home of the Sibyl in Campania. Umbricius remains the speaker throughout the rest of the satire (21-322), ostensibly explaining the motives for his departure and bidding Juvenal a farewell, but actually putting together an invective against the city of Rome. This is divisible into six topics: the worthlessness of honesty (21-57), foreigners (58-125), poverty (126-189), innumerable dangers of the city (190-231), crowding and traffic (232-267), accidents, fights, thefts, and murders (268-314). In retrospect, however, each of the six themes of his rhetorical attack has already been poetically foreshadowed, and Umbricius merely develops a program already implied in the first twenty lines.

Juvenal uses the vivid present tense to lead into Umbricius' invective against Rome and describes how his friend stops his wagon at the Porta Capena before the two descend together into the denatured grotto of Egeria (*speluncas dissimiles veris*, 17-18). Most important because of their multiple ramifications are the lines which describe the once holy spot, now profaned and made artificial by marble (18-20):

¹Such an evaluation has been provided by L. Friedlaender, *D. Junii Juvenalis Saturarum Libri V* (Leipzig 1895) 189; by G. Highet, *Juvenal the Satirist* (Oxford 1954) 254, note 13, who offers an appraisal of it as "beautifully balanced;" by W. S. Anderson, "Studies in Book I of Juvenal," *YCS* 15 (1957) 34 and 55; and by E. C. Witke, "Juvenal 3, an Eclogue for the Urban Poor," *Hermes* 90 (1962) 244-248, re-appearing in his *Latin Satire: The Structure of Persuasion* (Leyden 1970) 128-134.

²Witke, "Juvenal 3," 245, has briefly surveyed Umbricius' speech as a poetic development of Juvenal's earlier words. Highet, 69, supplementary note, has recognized that Juvenal's words suggest four of Umbricius' six topics: foreigners in 14, greed in 15-16, extravagance in 18-20, and the destruction of Roman tradition in 12-20. Anderson, 59 and 62-3, has discussed the anticipatory function of lines 4-9 and 17-20 in a similar vein. The monographs of J. Gylling (*De Argumenti Dispositione in Satiris I-VIII Juvenalis* [Lund 1886] 23-37) and W. Stegemann (*De Juvenalis Dispositione* [Weyda 1913] 25-30) contain useful but uneven insights into the structure of the satire and altogether do not give enough credit to the prologue for anticipatory functions.

*quanto praesentius esset
numen aquis, viridi si margine cluderet undas
herba nec ingenuum violarent marmora tofum.*

In addition to the overtones of sacrilege in phrases like *praesentius esset numen* and *nec violarent*, the word *ingenuum* itself neatly foreshadows the next section of the satire where Umbricius' theme is the worthlessness of honesty (21–57) in a city whose only values are monetary ones. The tufa is "authentic" as well as "native," but the costlier marble has replaced it anyway, exactly as the honest, sincere Umbricius has been ousted from his rights by those who will do anything for money (*quid Romae faciam? mentiri nescio*, 41).

The transition from the worthlessness of honesty to the successful dishonesty of the Greeks (58–125) is an easy one, and indeed it is not so much their being foreign that Umbricius resents as the fact that they have usurped the place of genuine, free-born Romans (*non est Romano cuiquam locus hic*, 119). This too has been anticipated by *ingenuum tofum*, "native stone," opposed to the foreign marble,³ but there was an even stronger foreshadowing of the theme of usurpation earlier in Juvenal's reference to the Jews (13–16):

*nunc sacri fontis nemus et delubra locantur
Iudaeis, quorum cophinus fenumque supellex;
omnis enim populo mercedem pendere iussa est
arbor et eiectis mendicat silva Camenis.*⁴

Foreigners have robbed the native Italian Muses of their rites and desecrated a sacred spring and grove by earning their living there. Even the "basket of hay" implies the Jewish Sabbath, a foreign superstition which replaces a native Roman cult.⁵ Thus a literal reading of *silva mendicat*

³Pliny the Elder (*HN* 36.44–55 and 166–167) confirms the importance of the contrast between tufa and marble: a foreign stone introduced originally from Greece in the late Republic and later from Egypt under Augustus and Tiberius, marble was always associated with wealth and extravagance, pet topics of Pliny no less than of Umbricius. The inferiority of the native Italian tufa was equally a commonplace.

⁴Here as elsewhere in this article I cite Wendell Clausen's *OCT* (1959) without variation except in matters of orthography. There should be no problem if the Jews, as foreigners, anticipate the Greeks, as foreigners, since all the commentators have realized that Umbricius' invective includes Orientals as well as Greeks. See W. S. Anderson (above, note 1), 64. What Erich Segal says of Plautus' comedies, where all "non-Romans" are perfidious and "Greek" by convention and regardless of ethnic differences, is also an accurate description of Umbricius' prejudices. See *Roman Laughter* (Cambridge, Mass. 1968) 38 and 187, note 74.

⁵See P. Wessner, *Scholia in Iuvenalem Vetustiora* (Leipzig 1931) 108, for the scholiast's comment, *ad* 6.542: '*faenumque supellex*,' *quod his pulmentaria sua et calidam aquam die sabbati servare consuerunt*. Juvenal portrays Judaism as a typical oriental superstition in Satires 6.542–547 and 14.96–106. For confirmation in Tacitus of this view of Judaism as just one among many Eastern abominations and as enemy of the old Roman religion, see R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford 1958) 2.468, note 3 (on *Annales* 2.85.4).

("the forest begs") is poetically more correct than the synecdoche of container and thing contained (forest for the Jews in it). The idea that the sacred wood has itself been deprived of its livelihood and reduced to mendicancy by the Jews is a symbolic equivalent of Umbricius' own poverty, as he admits he has been outclassed by the Greeks since he cannot lie, cheat, fake, or feign (41-48), which is why Greeks are so prosperous in Rome: they can and will do anything (73-78).

The third section of Umbricius' speech, on poverty, is a hyperbolic description of the moral bankruptcy (126-189) of a city where all values have become monetary ones, for rich and poor alike (*omnia Romae cum pretio*, 183-184). The transition from the previous section is conspicuously logical since the topic of money was the first subject Umbricius brought up (22-24) and one which has been repeated from that point on. In the same way that artificiality has dislodged authenticity and foreigners true Romans, the desire for money has supplanted the old Roman values. This was first intimated in the prologue by *marmora* (20) and the monetary terms *locantur* (13), *mercedem pendere* (15), and *mendicat* (16). So the free-born Roman (*ingenuorum filius*, 131-132, with repetition of the significant word) must take second place to slaves of the wealthy or, worse still, to moneyed bastards (*lenonum pueri quocumque ex fornice nati*, 156). Paradoxically, then, the free-born are really the slaves (188-189):

*praestare tributa clientes
cogimur et cultis augere peculia servis.*

Umbricius' third argument may thus be viewed as a poetic expansion of the clever oxymoron, *ambitiosa paupertate* (182-183), for poor Romans have enslaved themselves by misguidedly accepting money as their only purpose for living. And this is in clear contradiction of the fact that poor men cannot hope to compete with the wealthy.

There are further important reminiscences of the prologue in this passage, and together they indicate how Juvenal has unified this satire as much with recurrent words and ideas as with the logical flow of Umbricius' rhetoric. First of all, these slaves, wealthier than free men and most likely foreigners as well, are carefully contrasted with the frugal native peoples of Italy (171-179), who have preserved the authentic *numen* of the old religion intact (172-174):

*ipsa dierum
festorum herboso colitur si quando theatro
maiestas*

This natural, "grassy theater" is an echo of Juvenal's original complaint against the falseness of Egeria's grotto, and it acts as well as the antithesis of the artificiality of the Greeks in the previous section, among whom there was no *maiestas* whatsoever because their every activity was a

stage play (*natio comoeda est*, 100). Second, Numa, who was mentioned in the prologue (12), makes another appearance (138) to re-emphasize the discontinuity between Rome's sacred past and her corrupt present. Since money has become the standard of values before which all others must pale, the census of Numa, traditionally the founder of Roman religion, would not have been high enough to make his oath good in a law court, and *mores* are replaced by *census* (140) just as *fides* (144) loses its original meaning and becomes a financial term, "credit."

The inequities of the poor remain a major topic also in the next section, the fourth (190–231), and assist the transition. When fires rage, says Umbricius, rich and poor are easily distinguished because the wealthy have friends who will help them regain everything they have lost (212–222). Paradoxically, one might well suspect that Persicus started his own fire to replace his possessions with more and better ones (*meliora ac plura*, 220). This is a brilliant complement to the paradox given in Codrus (203–211) who owned nothing yet lost it all in a fire: *et tamen illud/perdidit infelix totum nihil* (208–209). But this fourth section and the two that follow it may more properly be viewed as a poetic expansion of four lines of Juvenal's prologue (6–9):

*nam quid tam miserum, tam solum vidimus, ut non
deterius credas horrere incendia, lapsus
tectorum adsiduos ac mille pericula saevae
urbis et Augusto recitantes mense poetas?*

Umbricius in this section of his speech develops the topics of fires and collapsing buildings and the natural fears of the poor in the face of these twin disasters. At the same time, however, there is poetic amplification because of the clustering of verbal images throughout the passage: (a) fires in *nulla incendia*, 197; Ucalegon, 198–202, an allusion to the burning of Troy in *Aeneid* 2.311; *ignem*, 214; *ardet*, 215; and *incenderit*, 222; (b) collapsing buildings in *ruinam*, 190; and *ruina*, 196; (c) fear in *timet* and *timuit*, 190; *securus*, 196; *horrida mater*, 212.

In the fifth section of his speech (232–267), Umbricius expands his previous argument and provides even more outlandish ways for poor Romans to die; for instance, by being kept awake night after night in a city where intolerable noises never cease (232–8). Crowding also takes its toll, and many are run over every day by traffic in the streets (243–8) or get crushed under overturning wagons (254–61). The rich man once again escapes both perils of noise and crowding by riding in a closed litter (239–42). However much Umbricius insists such incidents as these are part of normal experience in Rome, these lines raise the whole tone of his indictment against the city to a new level of comic exaggeration.⁶

⁶An interpretation of this passage suggested in G. Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton 1962) 4–5.

Just as important as the mere topics of crowding and traffic, however, are three poetic characteristics of the passage—images of quantity, hyperbolic metaphors, and epic travesty. All of these help to amplify the themes so that the whole passage becomes an outstanding example of Juvenal's use of the grand style for comic effect. The striking use of a language of quantity is evident in *plurimus aeger*, 232; *magnis opibus*, 235; *magno agmine*, 244; *planta undique magna*, 247; *quanto fumo*, 249; *centum convivae*, 250; *tot vasa ingentia, tot res*, 251. Exaggerating metaphors are *unda* for *turba*, 244, and *montem* for the contents of a cart, 258.⁷ The passage of course closes on a note of epic travesty as Rome's victim descends into Hades (264–267). Thus the poetic language evokes a scene of Rome “crowded with evils to the point of bursting,”⁸ a city to be contrasted with Cumae, whose absolute desolation and loneliness are desirable qualities (*vacuis Cumis*, 2).

The sixth section of Umbricius' speech (268–315) poetically elaborates the topic of crowding by juxtaposing the complex perils of the metropolis (*mille pericula*, repeated in *pericula*, 268, and *tot fata*, 274) with the simplicity desired by Umbricius. In this satire even *solus* and *unus* are words which become associated with Umbricius' desire for a romanticized view of Rome's past. Umbricius will give “one citizen” (3) to the Sibyl; all his belongings fit into “one cart” (10); he argues his case for being the master of “one lizard” (231).⁹ Again, this entire passage amplifies the two previous ones, yet poetically looks back to Juvenal's original programmatic words. This final topic of Umbricius' attack on Rome then brings his nostalgia for the past to complete fruition (312–314):

*felices proavorum atavos, felicia dicas
saecula quae quondam sub regibus atque tribunis
viderunt uno contentam carcere Romam.*

Rome in its golden past had one prison, a fitting thought to close this section of the satire since Umbricius' last invective has demonstrated that contemporary Rome is just one large prison filled with every crime and criminal known to man.

⁷A section of this passage (239–267) has been discussed by Witke, *Latin Satire* 147–150, as a rhetorical *amplificatio* in the grand style. The last example, *montem*, has been noticed and discussed by E. L. Harrison, “Neglected Hyperbole in Juvenal,” *CR* 74 (1960) 99–100. For Juvenal's use of the grand style for comic effect, see I. G. Scott, *The Grand Style in the Satires of Juvenal* (Smith College Classical Studies 8 [1927]) 46–90.

⁸Alvin Kernan in *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven 1959 [Yale Studies in English 142]) 69–73, has provided this apt characterization of the passage.

⁹The insight and examples are Anderson's; *YCS* 15.61–62.

The organization of the Third Satire therefore illustrates Kenneth Burke's definition of form in poetry as the arousal and fulfillment of the reader's expectations.¹⁰ Beginning with the prologue, the poem develops logically and thematically from section to section while the repetition of key words, phrases, and allusions results in a coherent poetic structure. This satire—which has long remained one of Juvenal's most popular—is also a very successful poem in its use of verbal foreshadowings which lead ultimately to their realization as fully stated themes.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

¹⁰In *Counterstatement* (Berkeley 1968³) 124.