Vergil’s Organic Use of Rhetorical Figures in *Aeneid* I

"It is only when we understand Virgil's use of rhetorical techniques that we can appreciate his originality as a poet. He never uses them merely for display. They never degnerate into mannerisms" (K.W. Gransden, *Virgil: Aeneid Book VIII*, Cambridge 1976: 49; cf. V. Pöschl, *The Art of Vergil*, 1962: 22-3). Though every beginning Latin student is asked to identify rhetorical figures in *Aeneid*, little scholarly attention has been given to the unique organic way Vergil uses them. E.g., in the first book of *Aeneid*, Vergil uses rhetorical figures almost etymologically to direct our attention to a definition of rational leadership.

Vergil employs *hypallage* twice in the first seven lines: *saeuae memorem Iunonis ob iram* (1.4) and *altae moenia Romae* (1.7). The first suggests not only the problem of “mindful wrath,” that is, of the Roman republic’s cycle of revenge and civil war, but also Vergil’s solution in book XII, when "mindfulness" (i.e., prudential rule) will be transferred from "wrath" to a new Juno re-united with Jupiter. The second, “the walls of high Rome,” suggests that the new city to be founded must undergo a literal *hypallage*, “change,” from the present Rome. The militaristic feature of “high walls” must change into a "high civilization" of which the gods approve.

Vergil constructs the Aeolus episode (1.50-80) around a number of rhetorical figures, most notably *hendiadys*, which occurs three times: *uinclis et carcere frenat* (1.54); *molemque et montis insuper altos / imposuit* (1.61-2); *tu sceptra Iouemque / concilias*. He also uses personification: *illi indignantes… mollitque animos et temperat iras* (1.55, 57); and *prolepsis*, when Aeolus begins to think about his marriage to Deiopeia and his thoughts turn to “grasping,” *capessere*, and “lying with her,” *accumbere* (1.77, 79). The last two help to explain the first: the winds are personified as emotions through a famous etymological play on *animos* > *ἄνεμος*. Their human “feelings of being treated unworthily,” and “anger” suggest they are symbols of emotion. Aeolus’ proleptic desires are meant to portray literally the internal psychological events that occur as an inferior leader “yields” to temptation (Juno's bribe of Deiopeia recalls the Judgment of Paris, whom Aeolus resembles). The problem of such “weak-will,” *akrasia*, was most famously treated in Plato’s *Phaedrus* by the metaphor of the charioteer and his two horse chariot. Vergil alludes to Plato by setting Aeolus and the winds in a cave. He uses *hendiadys*, “one through two” to suggest the unification of the twin horses of desire under the singular control of reason (cf. Cicero who employs *hendiadys* in horse imagery of Catiline, *In Cat.* 1.1.1-2).

Aeolus’ indulgent leadership is answered by Neptune’s rational statesmanship, anticipated by verbs of mental perception (*sensit, prospiciens, uidet*, *nec latuere* 1.124-30). But it is answered most famously in his *aposiopesis* (1.135) and the first epic simile, (1.148-56). Neptune is right to be angry, but choses not to indulge it. He shows leadership and restores order to his realm. His sudden silence, *quos ego –,*  demonstrates a sudden reining in of his irrational promptings. In the epic simile, the forces of chaos are personified as “rocks fly and fury supplies arms” (1.150); these are answered by Neptune’s chariot which “obeys” (1.156). Vergil uses the simile organically as a "likeness" of leadership, which Aeneas is to imitate.

Vergil employs two notable rhetorical figures to suggest the required evolution of Aeneas. As he gazes upon the Trojan war scenes in Dido’s temple of Juno, he “feeds his soul upon an empty picture,” *animum pictura pascit inani* (1.464). The *oxymoron* of “feeding upon the empty” suggests the literal inconsistency that must be removed from his soul: it is not the picture that is empty, but Aeneas’ interpretation, in seeing Homeric humanity in what is intended to be the glorification of Juno’s triumph over himself. To become a leader, he must learn how to interpret the meaning of art and experience better. The second is the *tmesis* in his profession of gratitude to Dido (1.607-610). Aeneas seems unaware that his language foresees a love affair with the queen, with “rivers (*sc.* of desire) rushing to the sea,” and shadows “arching” over the mountains. He promises eternal devotion, but already intends to "cut short" his promised affection: *quae me cumque terris*. The *tmesis* demonstrates the flaw of Aeneas, in creating the appearance of being an Odyssean suitor for Dido, however unwittingly. It also suggests the evolution of his *eros* that will be needed to turn from the model of Aeolus, who indulges his own desires, to that of the dutiful shepherd (*polus dum sidera pascet*). Thus for Vergil, rational statesmanship consists not only in control of the passions, but in the transformation of the self and the state into a new integral and civilized whole.