

Brian CHERER
Narrated Perception and Virgil's "Subjective Style"

In this paper, I will analyze Virgil's innovative use of a narrative technique more familiar, perhaps, to students of modern literature, especially the psychological novel. This technique, widely referred to as "narrated perception" (although some prefer to call it "free indirect perception") serves to convey a character's perceptions without their being explicitly introduced or "tagged" by such expressions as "he saw", "she heard", etc. That "narrated perceptions" are to be attributed to a particular character, rather than to the narrator (despite common practice), can be inferred from context. Such contextual clues include, most prominently, the exclusive use of progressive tenses (especially the imperfect, where appropriate), proximal deictics, and third person reference. More obviously, any instance of "narrated perception" requires the "on-stage" presence of some perceiving character. By citing examples of narrated perception mainly from Book 1 of the *Aeneid*, I shall argue that Virgil exploits the "figural potential" of this technique in order 1) to establish the main character's nearly constant, though fluctuating, subjective presence in the narrative; 2) to establish the narrator's close affinity (or, as some prefer, identification) with the main character; and 3) to diminish, if not completely efface, the narrator's own presence by allowing certain other, competing subjectivities (of Juno and Cupid, for instance) to take his place.

Once I have laid out the theoretical and historical background for my topic, I shall proceed to analyze Virgil's use of narrated perception by examining the 6 or 7 examples of it in Book 1, starting with the passage that presents Juno's perceptions upon her arrival at Aeolus' cave (52-7), and concluding with the passage that presents Cupid's perceptions of the banquet that Dido has given in honor of her Trojan guests (699-711). In between these passages, I shall discuss Virgil's skillful use of narrated perception to describe the storm, the city of Carthage, and, of course, the Trojan War murals in Juno's temple, all memorable scenes of the first book of the *Aeneid*. This arrangement, I suggest, allows for the gradual emergence of Aeneas' subjectivity, even as the narrator effectively effaces his own presence. Moving beyond Book 1, I shall discuss select scenes in order to judge the extent to which Virgil uses narrated perception throughout the remainder of the poem, paying special attention to its use in Book 2, where Aeneas assumes the role of narrator.

In the end, I shall argue that narrated perception provides a--if not, *the*--major means by which Virgil effectively evokes the subjectivity of particular characters, while effacing his own narrator. To this extent, I hope to provide a more plausible--or, at least, a more theoretically sophisticated--explanation of Virgil's infamous "subjective style". At the same time, my study addresses broader narratological concerns, particularly the need to refine the concept of internal focalization--a necessary first step in any study that deals with the early deployment of this potent narrative technique.