
ESSAY 4 CICERO'S RHETORICAL METHOD IN *IN VERREM V*

Cicero's rhetorical method in Verrine V fulfils various functions, diverting from structured reasoning (*probare*), and becoming a "self expression of the orator"¹. It influences emotionally (*flectere*), entertains (*delectare*)², and makes Verres a "human object of contempt"³. The need to persuade a jury and audience had already been accomplished in the *Actio Prima*, where the weight of evidence incriminated Verres. Considering the *Actio Secunda* was published but never delivered in court, the focus will be particularly on *dispositio* (arrangement of material), *elocutio* (style and power of words)⁴ and the context of the Verrines in Cicero's career.

Initially Cicero portrays a sense of uncertainty through the use of a tricolon of rhetorical questions, "quid agam, iudices? Quo accusationis meae rationem conferam? Quo me vertam?"⁵. This is ironic and contradicts Cicero's earlier claim, "Nemini video dubium esse...."⁶. Thus the use of *dubitatio*, mock uncertainty, could be a subtle joke at Hortensius' clout, and also expresses confidence that the severity of the crimes will speak for themselves.

Cicero's use of *praeoccupatio*, anticipating Hortensius' arguments, appears "to allow the defense its day in court"⁷, although Cicero has the opportunity to implement his own bias. A potential defence is expressed in a simile, "quasi murus quidam boni nomen imperatoris opponitur"⁸ and Cicero knows that this proposition of Verres as a general must be dismantled, otherwise there could still be public sympathy for the accused, evinced in the hypothetical command by Hortensius, emphasised through the chiasmus: "ne patiamini...eripi, ne obteri...velitis"^{9, 10}. Cicero eliminates this possible

¹ Kennedy, G. 1972, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Oregon, p.160.

² Wiise, J. 2002, 'The Intellectual Background of Cicero's Rhetorical Works', in *Brills Companion to Cicero: oratory and rhetoric*, ed J. May, Brill, The Netherlands, p. 358

³ Levens, R.G.C. 2001, *Cicero the Fifth Verrine Oration*, Bristol Classical Press, London, p. xl

⁴ Wiise, J. 2002, *Op. Cit.*, p. 356

⁵ II.5.2

⁶ II.5.1

⁷ Vasaly, A. 2002, 'Cicero's Early Speeches', in *Brills Companion to Cicero: oratory and rhetoric*, ed J. May, Brill, The Netherlands, pp. 71-112.

⁸ II.5.2

⁹ II.5.2

defence throughout Verrine V, essentially a catalogue of instances of Verres' cruelty. More specifically, he contrasts Verres to Marcus Crassus, "fortissimo viri"¹¹ and the exaggeration through the superlative is typical Cicero.

Particularly prevalent in Verrine V is the use of invective in *digressio*, indeed many of the charges are not relevant to the *lex cornelia*. Cicero has already applied an extended metaphor of Verres as the real pirate¹², and he further censures the accused's lust, the shamelessness in "...dies continuos compluris in litore conviviisque iacuisti"¹³, especially since his companions were "matres familias"¹⁴. Verres' licentiousness is juxtaposed with "apud socios fidelissimos, civis Romanos honestissimos"¹⁵, the superlatives heightening the contrast between his immorality and the virtues of Romans and Sicilians. The purpose, I believe, of introducing Verres lasciviousness is to satirize his role as praetor, with a catalogue of his acquaintances "Tertia...Pipa...Nice..."¹⁶. The depravity of conscience in the affair with Cleomenes' wife builds up towards a vivid image: "Stetit soleatus praetor populi Romani cum pallio pupureo tunicaque talari muliercula nixus in litore"¹⁷. This dark comedy turns the case into a trial of character, of moral corruption, rather than legal reasoning, which was effective in the entertainment and manipulation of the crowd to detest Verres.

While the earlier character assassination appears to have a general aim of enthralling the audience, rousing an aura of suspicion, the *narratio* in Verrine V of the treatment of Publius Gavius has a fundamental purpose, to create a mood of fear. Cicero builds up a crescendo with the vivid accumulation of passive infinitives, "proripi ... nudari ... deligari expediri"¹⁸, heightening tension in the crowd by emphasising the unhuman-like cruelty of Verres, ultimately culminating in the climax of Gavius

¹⁰ Stephenson, L. 2008. "Commentary 1A" in *The Fifth Verrine Oration: A Workbook for HSC Continuers Latin Students*.

¹¹ II.5.5

¹² II.5.63

¹³ II.5.137

¹⁴ II.5.137

¹⁵ II.5.137

¹⁶ II.5.81

¹⁷ II.5.87

¹⁸ II.5.161

crying, “Civis Romanus Sum”¹⁹, which Cicero knows will stir national sentiment and inflame the crowd. The epithet, “miser”²⁰, applied to Gavius, the tricolon of “depreacaretur...imploraret...usurparet...”²¹, heightening his desperation, and the stark repetition of “crux”²² all rouse pathos, a function of Cicero’s rhetoric.

The rhetoric in the *peroratio* reverts to a “grander style”²³, with the exclamation, “O nomen dulce libertatis!”²⁴. Cicero is using *amplificatio*, “bestowing on the individual case a general human interest”²⁵ by asserting widespread ramifications. The execution of Gavius is symbolic of the denial of *libertas*, a basic right, “ius eximium”²⁶, of Roman citizenship. Thus, Verres is not only an enemy to the Sicilians, but Roman principles. The patriotic rhetoric, “animi multitudinis in istum dolore et odio et communis periculi metu concitarentur”²⁷, meant Verres could never escape the public eye. Furthermore, it underpins Cicero as a defender of Roman mores.

There is a continuation of the emotive tone and *amplificatio* in the invocation of Gods in the *peroratio*. Verres’ disrespect for Sicilian gods (pillaging from temples) offends both, a valued province, and the Gods of Rome. The “Capitoline Triad (Jupiter-Juno-Minerva)”²⁸, the most important Roman divinities, are deliberately addressed first. Secondly, Verres in dishonouring Ceres and Libraria, violates not only “Sicily’s tutelary Goddesses”, but “the inventors of agriculture and therefore civilization”²⁹. Cicero adds passion through the “te”³⁰ anaphora, which creates a solemn mood in his entreaties.

¹⁹ II.5.162

²⁰ II.5.162

²¹ II.5.162

²² II.5.162

²³ Vasaly, A. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 96-97

²⁴ II.5.163

²⁵ Von Albrecht, M. 2003. *Cicero’s Style: a synopsis*, Brill, The Netherlands, p. 242.

²⁶ II.5.163

²⁷ II.5.163

²⁸ Von Albrecht, M., *Op. Cit.*, p. 209

²⁹ Von Albrecht, M., *Op. Cit.*, p. 210

³⁰ II.5.184 - II.5.187

More importantly, Cicero portrays himself, not merely as a prosecutor for the Sicilians, but as a noble defender. Verres' disregard for the gods is contrasted with Cicero's obedience, his *pietas*. Cicero needs to build up his *ethos*, his character, because as a *novus homo*, status is acquired on merit. He asserts, "sed non idem licet mihi quod iis qui nobili genere nati sunt"³¹. As the aedile-elect, Cicero previously had little to show for Roman *fortitudo* and *virtus*, but by overcoming Hortensius, consul-elect and preeminent member of the bar, Cicero successfully demonstrated his rhetorical ability and determination as a prosecutor, as the advocate of the Roman people.

Thus, Cicero's rhetorical method transforms the case into a trial of character, of emotions and of Roman principles. Cicero's *Actio Secunda* was a *monumentum*³², winning public admiration through his engaging, vivid narration, and glory, by, he implies, serving the Roman populous, enabling him to rise politically.

³¹ II.5.180

³² Vasaly, A. *Op. Cit.*, p. 91

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