

AN ASPECT OF THE STYLE OF VALERIUS FLACCUS' *ARGONAUTICON*

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R. W. GARSON has recently renewed W. C. Summer's ninety-year-old plea for a fair reappraisal of "the much neglected poet" Valerius Flaccus.¹ However, it may be suggested that preliminary to any such general re-evaluation there is a need for detailed investigations of various poetic aspects of the *Argonauticon*. In this paper there will be an attempt to provide one such study by reporting the results of an extensive examination of the style of the *Argonauticon*.

Because our principal concern was to produce a style description the appropriateness of which would rest on evidence assessable by independent analysis and verification, this particular study became, in effect, an exercise in applied stylistics. For in the last decades, linguistic stylisticians, in an effort to make possible more objective descriptions of style, have attempted to provide a theoretical basis for the concept of style. Central to many of their theories is the notion of selection or choice.² Its prominence appears to grow from the linguist's realization that the producer of a text is, at every level of production, faced with a selection from among a multitude of grammatical, phonological, and lexical alternatives. And the logical deduction from this is that his decisions with respect to these choices, ultimately, completely determine the text he produces. Various related definitions of style have been based on the apprehension of the importance of such selection to the eventual *nature* and *organization* of a text. For example, Seymour Chatman's summary:

¹R. W. Garson, "The Hylas Episode in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*," *CQ*² 13 (1963) 260. Garson attempts, in part, to provide such a reappraisal in his series of articles on Valerius Flaccus. See *CQ*² 13 (1963) 260-267; *CQ*² 14 (1964) 267-279; *CQ*² 15 (1965) 104-120; *CQ*² 20 (1970) 181-187.

My investigation of Valerius' style is based on my Ph.D. thesis, "Valerius Flaccus: Synonyms and Style," (unpublished, University of Toronto, 1972). Once more I would like to express my appreciation to my advisor, Professor D. O. Robson, Victoria College.

²Cf. S. Ullmann, *Language and Style* (Oxford 1964) 102; Roger Fowler, "Linguistic Theory and the Study of Literature," included in *Essays On Style and Language*, ed. Roger Fowler (London 1966) 1-28, p. 15; Lubomir Doležěl, "A Framework for the Statistical Analysis of Style," included in *Statistics and Style*, ed. Lubomir Doležěl and Richard W. Bailey (New York 1969) 10-25, p. 13; Richard Ohmann, "Prolegomena to the Study of Prose Style," *English Institute Essays 1958* included in *Essays on the Language of Literature*, ed. Seymour Chatman and Samuel R. Levin (Boston 1967) 398-411, pp. 401-403; Rulon Wells, "Nominal and Verbal Style," included in *Style and Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass. 1960) 213-220, p. 215.

"An author's style in this view is the idiosyncratic selection of features he makes from the language reservoir *OVER* and *ABOVE* the features required by the language itself . . . A writer's style in this view may be said to be his particular recurrences, his favorite patterns of choices. . . ." ³ Such a definition as this and others like it plainly suggested that if a critic were able to describe a writer's pattern of choices, he would have, in some sense, achieved a description of his style. Moreover, this description would be supported by analysable and verifiable evidence. Yet, notwithstanding the promise and prominence of this style as choice type of definition, there have been very few actual attempts to produce descriptions of style based upon it. ⁴

The reason for this paucity was immediately apparent once an effort was made to employ the definition (i.e., style as the pattern of selection from the optional features of the language) as the basis for a study of the style of the *Argonauticon*. From the outset it was necessary to make compromises and adjustments with the premises of our definition in order to make it operational at the textual level. Such tampering could not help but invalidate the results of the study and negate its claim to produce a complete description of the style of a work. Nevertheless, it was resolved to continue with the project to ascertain whether, after all the procedural adjustments had been made, a style description of any adequacy could result.

The first compromise involved delimiting of the area of choice to be considered. It would obviously be impractical, if not impossible, to

³Seymour Chatman, "On the Theory of Literary Style," *Linguistics* 27 (Nov., 1966) 21. Chatman is summarizing the views of other "linguistic stylists" (p. 21) in this definition. For a study of the various definitions given this word through the centuries see Nils Erik Enkvist, "On Defining Style," in *Linguistics and Style*, ed. John Spencer (London 1964) 3-56; R. A. Sayce, "The Definition of the term Style," *Proceedings of the IIIrd Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association* (The Hague 1962) 156-166; Louis T. Milic, *Jonathan Swift*, Chapter 2, "The Problem of Style;" Bennison Gray, *Style: The Problem and Its Solution* (The Hague 1969).

⁴For other applied studies based on the concept of choice, see Curtis W. Hayes, "A Study in Prose Styles: Edward Gibbon and Ernest Hemmingway," in Dolezél and Bailey (above, n. 2) 80-91. Hayes compares the style of these two authors with respect to their recurrent patterns of selection from the transformational apparatus of English; Charles E. Osgood, "Some Effects of Motivation on Style of Encoding," in Sebeok (above, n. 2) 293-306. Osgood examines the effect of motivation upon the style of suicide notes as reflected in the choice of various features in real suicide notes as contrasted to "pseudocide" notes; Richard M. Ohmann, *Shaw: The Style and the Man*. Ohmann claims to examine Shaw's habitual patterns of thought and feeling by means of his habitual selections, p. xii; M. A. K. Halliday, "Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*," in *Literary Style: A Symposium*, ed. Seymour Chatman (Oxford 1971) 330-365. Halliday attempts to interpret the meaning of a work and identify its theme by relating these to the meaning of various syntactic options selected with a greater than expected frequency in the work.

consider all the options confronting a text producer in the production of his text. It is perhaps for this reason that certain analysts of style have determined that their interest should center on the options a text producer has in expressing something, not primarily in his options of expression. That is to say their interest is in form (how something exists, how it is presented or given), rather than in context (what can happen or exist). As Roman Jakobson explains for the grammatical level:

The code of English gives to its users the freedom of choice between the active "he attacked" and the passive "he was attacked," but the study of style is not concerned with such a selection, while the choice of the active construction "they attacked him" or the passive one, "he was attacked by them,"—is a stylistic (or in classic terms which have been rehabilitated by Richards, rhetoric) problem, because both constructions have one and the same reference, and we could not object: "It's not true that they attacked him, but it's true that he was attacked by them."⁵

In Jakobson's view the student of style will be primarily concerned with choices which occur in similar semantic situations, with choices having the same references, or which are capable of fulfilling the same truth criteria.⁶ In the similar distinction he draws between "stylistic" and "non-stylistic" lexical choice, Enkvist appears to refer to this same restriction of concern on the part of some stylisticians:

Another type (of choice) may be illustrated by the choice between *Peter* and *John* in *x loves Mary*, or between *drizzling* and *pouring* in *it was x. Peter loves Mary, John loves Mary, it was drizzling and it was pouring* are all grammatically possible, but presumably the speaker will, on extralinguistic grounds of truth prefer one to the other in a given situation. Such a choice will here be called non-stylistic. A third type of selection appears in the choice between *fine man* and *nice chap* in *he is a x*. Both are grammatically possible, even idiomatic; and both have a certain range of frames and referents in common. This type of choice may be labelled as stylistic.⁷

The emphasis in these discussions on "stylistic"⁸ choice, or choice between equivalent alternatives, seemed to be an important one. For it

⁵In Sebeok (above, n. 2) 330. For content theory in stylistics, see Lubomir Doležal, "Toward a Structural Theory of Content in Prose Fiction," in Chatman (above, n. 4) 95–110.

⁶As the last sentence of the Jakobson quotation implies, two sentences would be said to satisfy the same "truth criteria" or "grounds of truth" (Enkvist's phrase) if whatever is true of one is true of the other. This "truth condition" or "truth value" of a sentence can be seen to correspond to its meaning or sense (cf. Rudolf Carnap, *Introduction to Semantics*, 21). From this the explanation of "equivalent" items or terms follows. For two terms to be equivalent it must be the case that if in a given sentence we replace a term by an expression which is equivalent with that term, then the resulting sentence has the same meaning (satisfies the same truth criteria, ground of truth, truth condition) as the original sentence.

⁷Enkvist (above, n. 3) 17.

⁸"Stylistic" will be used within quotation marks to remind the reader that it stands for choices "with a certain range of frames and referents in common." It is not circularly

appeared to coincide with the ordinary notion of style as how something is done, as form or manner.⁹ As a further attraction it provided on the procedural level a useful rationale for reducing the area of choice which would require consideration. On this ground it was decided to limit our concern to "stylistic" choice. In addition, purely on the basis of operational simplicity, our examination was restricted to lexical "stylistic" choice.

A method of procedure still had to be established. How is one to ascertain the choices open to, or considered by, an author when all he has for examination is the finished product, the sum of all the choices? One area suggested itself as a wedge into the apprehension of a writer's lexical "stylistic" choices. This was the ordering, variation, and repetition of synonyms in a given work.¹⁰ If the functional linguistic definition of synonymy is accepted, i.e., that two terms are synonymous if they are interchangeable in the same context without change of truth value,¹¹

dependent on style, but is used to refer to those choices pointed out by Jakobson and Enkvist as being especially pertinent to the study of style. This may in some sense be special pleading on their parts, for it is difficult to conceive how one would go about examining the options linguistically possible for the text-producer in his text production unless he imposed some sort of "stylistic," semantic limitation.

⁹This emphasis is reflected in modified style as choice definitions; for example, "It is possible to define the sum total of style as all the choices of *equivalent* items which the language offers the user in each linguistic situation." So A. A. Hill, *Introduction to Linguistics Structures* (New York 1958) 406.

¹⁰Jakobson points out the importance of synonyms to stylistics, ". . . because the importance of synonyms (metaphoric, metonymic, non-figurative) is a very important area of stylistics. Such a lexical choice precisely indicates 'how a person talks about something rather than what he talks about,'" in Sebeok (above, n. 2) 330. See also A. A. Hill, *Linguistic Structure*, 407-408, Stephen Ullmann, "Stylistics and Semantics," in Chatman (above, n. 4) 145-147, and K. Baldinger, "La Synonymie—problèmes sémantiques et stylistiques," in *Problem der Semantik*, ed. W. Th. Elwert, *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, Neue Folge, Heft 1 (Weisbaden 1968) 46 f.

¹¹John Lyons, *Structural Semantics* (Oxford 1957) 96. In accepting this working definition, linguists are rejecting the criterion of universal substitution which is the criterion of synonymy most often invoked by philosophers. So far, however, the test of universal substitution has not permitted any two words in natural languages to be considered synonyms. For discussions of synonymy see William Alston, *Philosophy of Language* (New Jersey 1964); R. Carnap, "Meaning and Synonymy in Natural Language" *Philos. Studies* 6 (1955) 33-47, included in *Meaning and Necessity* (2nd ed., Chicago 1956); N. Chomsky "Review of B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*," *Language* 35 (1959) 26-58; N. Goodman, "On Likeness of Meaning," *Analysis* 10 (1959), reprinted in *Semantics and Philosophy of Language*, ed. Leonard Linsky (Urbana 1952) 67-74; John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge 1968); Benson Mates, "Synonymy," *University of California Pub. in Philosophy* 25 (1950), reprinted in Linsky 111-136; M. E. Olds, "Synonymy, Extensional Isomorphism," *Mind* 65 (1956) 473-488; W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (2nd ed., Cambridge, Mass. 1961), especially Essays I, II, III, VII; S. Ullmann, *Semantics* (Oxford 1962).

then a writer's very use of synonyms demonstrates his awareness of a choice among alternatives "with a certain range of frames and referents in common." That is, an awareness of lexical "stylistic" choice. This seemed to suggest that if an author's process of synonym selection could be examined over a wide extent, information concerning the pattern of his "stylistic" choices might emerge.

Upon this hypothesis the books of the *Argonauticon* were divided into their constituent episodes¹² (these were on the average about forty lines in length and usually corresponded to the paragraph divisions in modern texts).¹³ All the synonyms in each episode were then listed, and the members of each synonym group lettered "a," "b," "c," etc. in order to mark their pattern of arrangement.

This procedure was followed throughout the whole of the *Argonauticon*, and upon its completion it was apparent that positive conclusions concerning style were obtainable from a study of synonym choice. To anyone working his way through the episodic studies it would become increasingly clear, from his ability to anticipate the treatment of synonyms in individual episodes, that there must be some regular pattern to their use. And when the total findings of these studies were interpreted, it was established not only that such a pattern did exist but that it could be used to inform a description of the work's style. In order to amplify and substantiate these last statements, recourse will be had to tables and statistics, paraphernalia thought by some to be out of place in a literary study. An apology, if one is considered necessary, must rest on the fact that this examination, based on the relationship of numerous items, is capable of being interpreted only when organized and presented in some comprehensible form.

First, the various arrangements in which synonyms appear in an episode will be examined for indications of a general pattern of choice. Only those arrangements with from two to five members have been selected for study. Those with more members, because they are both fewer in number and able to appear in a greater variety of forms, seldom repeat in the same form and so are not especially useful in establishing a pattern of choice.

¹²It seemed only reasonable to expect a poet to concern himself with one episode, one situation, until it fulfilled his artistic expectations before proceeding to the next. The poet would thus tend to make synonym choices with respect to the surrounding context, and it is in this context that they should be interpreted. On the practical side, it is only in such a limited context that a pattern of choice would be perceptible. If a poet employs a word, and three lines later repeats the same word with a different referent, it is significant to the texture of the episode. However, if the same word is repeated after a three-book interval with a different referent, it does not have the same significance, or at least it will be a near impossibility to ascertain any significant pattern.

¹³This procedure followed closely that of Marvin Berry in "Virgil's Use of Synonyms," (unpublished diss., University of North Carolina 1959).

It was found that the frequency of each group¹⁴ was inversely related to the number of synonyms in it. Each of these will be considered in turn beginning with the two-member group with 735 examples (cf. Table I). In this case, the choice involved is a simple one. Either a word will be varied in an episode or it will be repeated. In 482 cases, or 66%¹⁵ of the two-member arrangements, variation is provided by the use of a synonym (resulting in the arrangement "ab"). In 253 cases, or 34%, the word repeats without variation.

There are five possible arrangements for the 412 three-member synonym groups to take: "abc," "aba," "aab," "abb," "aaa." Among these five, complete variation appears to be the much preferred arrangement in the *Argonauticon*. 187 examples, or 45% of the total number of groups, are completely varied. "aba" comes next in frequency with 73 examples, or 18%, followed by "aab" with 69 examples, or 17%, "abb" with 48 examples, or 11%, and finally "aaa", threefold repetition with 35 examples, or 8%. It is also apparent from this analysis that not only is complete variation preferred, but consecutive repetition is avoided. The two arrangements permitting no consecutive repetitions supply 63% of the examples, while the three allowing it contribute only 37%.

The 261 four-member synonym groups appear in fifteen different arrangements in the poem. One of the fifteen is by far the most prominent. There are 101 examples of the arrangement of complete variation ("abcd"), or 39% of the total number of examples appear in this form. Again, an inclination to avoid consecutive repetition is noticeable. The arrangements not allowing such repetition, though fewer in number (five as opposed to ten), amount to 62% of the whole number of examples.

Finally, there are 95 examples of five-member synonym groups which appear in thirty-three different arrangements. Once again complete variation ("abcde") is the most numerous, furnishing 34% of the total number of examples. Similarly, again the twelve arrangements with no consecutive repetition supply 58% of the instances whereas the twenty-two arrangements with it, although almost twice as numerous, supply only 42%.

These figures would seem to represent a remarkably consistent attitude toward synonym choice. In each type of synonym group, complete variation of synonyms is by far the most often employed arrangement. In fact, the four arrangements of complete variation ("ab," "abc," "abcd," "abcde") account for 53% of the total number of synonym groups leaving the remaining fifty-two arrangements less than half the examples (47%). Further, in each type of group, the arrangements which

¹⁴The word "group" is used to refer to a number of synonymous words (whether two, three, four, etc.) appearing in an episode. "Arrangement" refers to the pattern of these synonyms' occurrence (such as ab, abc, abcd, etc.).

¹⁵These percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

have no consecutive repetitions, although less numerous, constitute a larger percentage of the examples. Considering the groups as a whole, the twenty arrangements without consecutive repetition provide 64% of the total, while only 36% is supplied by the thirty-six arrangements which permit such repetition. The consistency of practice demonstrated by these figures denotes, if not yet a complete pattern of synonym choice, at least the salient features of such a pattern. In an episode Valerius preferred that all the synonyms be varied, and, failing this, that no consecutive repetitions take place. (Nor is this preference limited to arrangements of less than six synonyms. Examples of complete variation can be found in six, seven, and eight-member groups.¹⁶ And in the twenty-three synonyms for sea in the catalogue of Book 1, there are no consecutive repetitions.) But these conclusions based upon the various arrangements of synonyms describe only a pattern for the avoidance of repetition. Until a pattern of repetition is identified, no complete description of a pattern of synonym choice will be possible.

Such a pattern seemed to emerge when the synonyms were considered with respect to the distance between occurrences. In order to examine this aspect of synonym choice, all the groups of synonyms (not restricted to five-member groups or less) were divided in terms of the relationship of synonyms separated by intervals of various numbers of lines (cf. Table II). Once the information was arranged in this way, it was immediately apparent that there was a close correspondence between the position of two synonyms and the occurrence of repetitions. A conspicuous feature in the pattern of synonym choice might be expressed by the axiom that as the distance between two synonyms increases the percentage of two words repeating in this position is likely to increase.¹⁷ This formula is strictly adhered to up to a separation of seven lines. Thus repetition occurs in 7% of the cases where two synonyms occur in the same or successive lines, in 7% of those separated by one line, in 14% of those separated by two lines, in 16% of those separated by three lines, in 23% of those separated by four lines, in 27% of those separated by five lines, and in 28% of those separated by six lines. At the seven-line-interval position, the percentage unaccountably drops to 19%. It immediately rises again, however, and 26% of the synonyms separated by eight lines repeat. And this percentage remains nearly constant (25%) for the larger intervals of separation.

¹⁶There are eleven examples of complete variation in six-member groups, two in seven-member groups (2.146, 4.621), and two in eight-member groups (2.614; 7.409).

¹⁷There is also a relationship between distance and amount of consecutive repetition (cf. last column of Table II). As the distance increases, the percentages of repetitions which are consecutive declines. So figures also exhibit that Valerius tended to avoid consecutive repetitions.

These figures are of interest for the demonstration they give of the uniformity of Valerius' method of composition, which appears to proceed with an almost mathematical precision. But perhaps more important for the description of a total pattern of synonym use is the information they provide that 64% of all repetitions in the poem are separated by nine lines or more, 77% by six lines or more, and 82% by five lines or more. This permits the description to be extended. In each episode variation will be preferred, but as the distance between two synonyms increases the likelihood of repetition will increase. This likelihood will, however, always be comparatively slim for synonyms separated by less than five or six lines. The statement of this relationship between distance and repetition is especially welcome, for it characterizes a very commonly observed arrangement in the episodic studies. For example, it serves to characterize many of the arrangements which were noted to permit consecutive repetitions. In the episodic studies it was often observed that two synonyms would occur close together; these were almost always varied. However, if an extended interval separated a third synonym from these, consecutive repetition often occurred. Myriad examples of this type could be taken from the poem, for instance, 6.11 *vellera*, 18 *vellera*, 19 *exuvias pecudis*; 4.179 *dona*, 216 *dona*, 217 *honos*; 4.423 *Minyis*, 433 *Minyas*, 437 *manus*; 2.635 *rex*, 636 *Cyzicus*, 656 *Cyzicus*; 3.339 *Aesonides*, 369 *Aesonides*, 370 *duci*. Thus, if the synonyms in an episode fall into the arrangement "aab" or "abb," one might well anticipate that the two occurrences of "a" or "b" will be separated by an extended interval of lines.

One more aspect of Valerius' choices perhaps merits consideration before an attempt is made to formulate any general conclusions concerning a pattern of choice. Throughout the episodic studies, attention was paid to the position of a proper synonym in a synonym group (i.e., proper names, patronymics, or specific metonymic references, such as *Colchis* used of *Medea*). It was found that in 223 cases, or 64%, the proper synonym was used to begin the references. Moreover, in 34 of 123 cases where it does not introduce the references, it appeared in the same line with, or the line immediately following, the first reference. Thus in 74% of the cases the proper synonym occurs at the beginning of a list of synonyms. This seemingly extraneous piece of information is introduced because once again it testifies to the regularity of Valerius' manner of composition. And it is believed that it is this regularity, rather than any specific details, which should inform any description of Valerius Flaccus' pattern of synonym choice.

For all that it is important to realize that the poet preferred complete variation and that he seems to have allowed distance to be the determining factor in the repetition of a synonym, it is more important to notice

the rigidity with which these preferences are allowed to control the actual use of synonyms in an episode. 82% of all repetitions are separated by five lines or more. The four arrangements of complete variation account for more than half of all the groups of synonyms with up to five members. 74% of all proper synonyms occur at the beginning of a group of synonyms. And even these lopsided statistics do not adequately convey the strictness of procedure encountered in the episodic studies, where the use of synonyms seems not to be based so much on stylistic inclinations or tendencies as upon rules. It is as if the poet before starting his poem had decided upon certain principles of composition, or choice, and strove through the course of his long poem to adhere as closely as possible to these principles. Thus, believing that his diction should be varied, in particular, that closely occurring synonyms should be varied, he allowed this belief to govern each and every section of his poem. He seemed not to realize that the overall effect of his systematized variation would not be varied at all, but would result in a pattern of synonym use best characterized by the oxymoron repetitive variation. By attempting with methodical monotony to achieve variation in his poem, Valerius can be seen to be the embodiment of Horace's warning—*in vitium ducit culpa fuga, si caret arte*.¹⁸ For it will be maintained, even at the risk of passing from descriptive statements to normative ones, that Valerius, by treating the question of synonym choice as though it were reducible to a comprehensive and uniform scheme, has demonstrated a failure in poetic craftsmanship. He has opted for a too easy solution for the problem of verbal "stylistic" choice. For if the fact that one object is capable of being denoted by many different terms, and its converse that one term is capable of denoting many different objects, is not a problem to the craftsman whose medium is language, it is at least the overwhelming reality of his art, one that is not reducible to a uniform, technical solution.

The principles implicit in Valerius' pattern of choice can be observed to be simply technical ones, based almost solely on the formal relationship of words in an episode with little attention for either the particular meaning or semantic situation of the words. One aspect of this formal emphasis is demonstrated by the fact that the particular referent of a word seems to exert little influence upon its repetition or variation. This is not to say that Valerius did not take precautions against the obscurity which might be caused by using denotative synonyms¹⁹ with different referents in the same episode. In Book 6, for example, when closely occurring instances of *vir* appear with reference to both Canthus and his enemies (6.362–365), the word always appears in the genitive with some part of Canthus' body when it is used to refer to him. Again in the boxing

¹⁸Horace, *Ars P.* 1.31.

¹⁹Denotative synonyms are those which can be used to refer to the same class of entities.

match (4.271 ff.), where *vir* is used with both Pollux and Amycus as referents, each occurrence is carefully contrasted with a specific word denoting the opposite contestant. But beyond avoiding obscurity, there is no positive correlation in the poem between word and referent. For example, in the whole poem there is only one case where the poet might conceivably be reserving the use of specific denotative synonyms for the same referent. In Book 8 the progression 286 *ratis*, 289 *arbor*, 292 *puppem*, 292 *ratis*, 296 *Argo*, 297 *rostra*, 297 *puppem*, 306 *rates*, 308 *puppem* occurs; in which each instance of *ratis* is used to refer to the Colchian ships and each instance of *puppis* to the *Argo*. The fact that this application of terms is not followed in the immediately preceding or succeeding episodes, where *ratis* (275) refers to the *Argo* and *puppis* (357) to a Colchian ship, suggests that it is only coincidental. There is much more indication in the poem that the referent of a word had little weight in determining variation or repetition.

There is no sign, for example, that Valerius preferred his repeated words to have the same referent. After examining all the synonym arrangements beginning and ending with the same word, it was found that in 215 instances, or 53% of the examples, the repeated words did have the same referent, and in 173 cases, or 47%, they did not. This almost equal division suggests that this feature of repetition was of no special concern to the poet.

Even when the examination was broadened, there was little evidence that Valerius particularly avoided repeating the same word with different referents in an episode. For example, there is evidence that the percentage of synonyms (i.e., words that fulfill the substitution criterion) appearing with different referents in an episode increases as the distance between two synonyms increases. 15% of the synonyms separated by a one-line interval occur with different referents, while 21% of those separated by nine to fifteen lines have different referents.²⁰ Thus, if the poet sought to avoid repeating the same word with a different referent, one could expect a smaller percentage of repetitions in the position where they are easier to avoid (because a smaller number of synonymous words are used with a different referent in this position) and where their appearance would seem to be more invidious—in the position where they are separated by a smaller number of lines. This, however, is not the case. 32% of the repeated words separated by one line, and 33% of those separated by an interval of from nine to fifteen lines have different referents. This would

²⁰The complete figures for the percentages of synonyms occurring with different referents are as follows: same or successive lines, 9%; one line, 15%; two line, 18%; three, 17%; four, 22%; five line, 21%; six line, 20%; seven line, 20%; eight line, 18%; nine to fifteen line, 21%; sixteen line and above, 24%. Percentages of repeated words with different referents can be found in Table II.

seem to demonstrate that the referent of a word was not an important concern in the variation and repetition of a synonym.

As was stated above, concern was centered upon the appearance of a word in an episode, on its physical relationship to other words, and other such technical and formal considerations. And, as was also noted, the effect of permitting such technical considerations to determine the choice of synonyms almost without variation throughout the whole poem is monotony.

This monotony or repetition of poetic technique is also discernible in other areas of synonym choice. The same synonyms, for instance, recur without innovation throughout the course of the poem, unaltered in any noticeable way by theme or situation. It has been observed that the words with reference to Aeneas shift in the course of the *Aeneid*, that, for example, the action of a particular scene will be reflected in the use of *pater* or *Anchisiades*.²¹ This sort of thematic variation is almost without parallel in the *Argonauticon*. Jason, Medea, the Minyae are all referred to by the same synonyms appearing over and over in the poem. The only exception may be the use of *Colchis*, a term with traditional connotations of witchcraft, to refer to Medea when she is depicted working her magic. The word also occurs, however, equally often with this referent when no magic is being performed or described.²² And on the whole, the same words, *virgo*, *nata*, *Medea*, *regina* occur. Nor are these denotative synonyms reserved for the princess; they are also the ones most commonly applied to Hypsipyle, *regina*, and Hesione, *virgo*.

Jason is also referred to throughout the course of the poem by the same words: *Aesonides*, *dux*, *vir*, *hospes*, *Iason*. There are occasional minor exceptions. The use of *hospes* increases in Book 7. He is termed *colonus* (7.549) by Aeetes before plowing with the fire-breathing bulls, and *victor* in Book 8.133 after finally seizing the golden fleece. But no extensive modification in the choice of terms can be observed to reflect any change in the theme.

One of the synonyms repeating with reference to Jason manifests yet another feature of the pervading monotony of Valerius' stylistic technique. *Praedo* appears four times in the poem;²³ each time in the passionate speech of a different character. Jason is termed *praedo* by Pelias after he has carried off Acastus, by Aeetes anticipating Medea's abduction and the theft of the fleece, and by Medea's mother and brother after her

²¹See Austin on *Aeneid* 2.2 *pater*, who cites 5.700, 8.28, 11.904, and 12.697 as further thematic uses of *pater*. *Anchisiades*, 8.521, 10.822; see Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1964) 340 and 359.

²²Magic: 7.575, 584, 596, 389, 625; 8.68, 70, 83. No magic: 5.349; 7.153, 181, 190; 8.2, 338.

²³1.723; 7.50; 8.151, 267.

departure. There appears to be no figurative relevance intended by this repetition, that is to say the poet does not seem to be attempting to reveal Jason's real nature by the recurrence of this term. Rather, the repetition seems to be the result of Valerius' repetitious reaction to a poetic situation. So, composing a diatribe aimed at Jason, he invariably includes the same epithet, by repetition spoiling what was originally a fine choice of words. The first instance of *praedo* is effectively and ironically used: Pelias, who has set a task for his nephew which he hopes will result in his death, has the insolence to call Jason *praedo* because he includes Acastus in his crew. But when the term appears three more times in various emotional outbursts, it loses its initial force and the reader merely passes over it as something he has seen before in a similar context. This kind of repetition of response is widespread in the poem and not just limited to this last example. For instance, it was noticed that, periodically, related words denoting emotional states were piled up in an episode. Valerius appears to employ this method to convey an atmosphere, especially an atmosphere of grief, fear, or anger. While the systemized conventions which are the basis of language make verbal repetitions unavoidable, Valerius' practice in repeating the same kind of accumulations in similar situations would appear to go beyond the unavoidable. In the *Argonauticon*, there are two councils of the gods; in the first, Sol laments that his son Aeetes' kingdom must be disturbed. In the second, Mars laments that the fleece must be taken from his sacred precincts. Both gods also refer to the opposite complaints of Juno and Pallas. Thus in both these episodes similar groups of related words occur: 1.508 *questus*, 519 *queri*, 526 *luctus*, 527 *flentes*, 530 *gemit*, 530 *questus*; 5.623 *questu*, 628 *queror*, 647 *gemitu*, 647 *lacrimis*, 648 *querens*. Again, a repetitiveness of response is reflected in this occurrence of similar groups of synonyms in corresponding episodes. This repetitiveness goes deeper, for this lack of variation is actually a sign of failure in imagination in the construction of parallel episodes. If more evidence is needed, one might mention that at every departure and death of a prominent character such accumulations of related words occur. There are in fact sixteen such extended groups in the poem.²⁴ Admittedly, deaths and departures are sad, but there is more than one way to denote great grief. And by repetition Valerius depreciates the effect of the accumulated synonyms and, worse, at times seems to betray a lack of proportion or decorum. The lists of related words for grief and mourning experienced by the women of the city and mothers of Jason and Medea at their departures are very similar: 1.315 *gemitus*, 316 *flentes*, 317 *planctus*, 318 *ululatibus*, 335 *maeret*; 8.143 *ululatibus*, 158 *querellis*, 171 *questu*, 172 *exululans*. Exhibiting once again

²⁴1.315; 1.519; 2.141; 2.393; 3.275; 3.315; 3.333; 3.694; 4.42; 4.135; 5.5; 5.603; 7.475; 8.6; 8.143; 8.205.

the similarity of Valerius' response to analogous situations these lists, however, might justly be said to reflect the universality of a mother's grief. But parallel, if not more elaborate, groups also appear at the departure of the Minyae from Lemnos and from Sigeum, where Hercules has been left behind: 2.393 *dolor*, 393 *planctus*, 402 *ingemit*, 402 *questu*, 408 *lacrimans*; 3.716 *inlacrimat*, 719 *luctu*, 722 *flet*, 722 *maerent*, 723 *ingemit*. For all the grief involved at these departures, it is not equal to the sorrow of a mother at the departure of a child she has little hope of ever seeing again. There is no indication that Jason ever led Hypsipyle to believe he would remain at Lemnos, nor do the Argonauts appear to believe that Hercules is dead but only lost. Yet by reacting to each of these departures with the same technique, the poet has placed them all on the same level. Even in the cases where a similar emotional response is justified, the repetitiveness of this method is fatal to the reader's interest in the course of a long poem. Grief, tears, mourning, encountered sixteen times, referred to so often and at such length, finally lose their poignancy.

Since various aspects of Valerius' use of synonyms have been condemned for being repetitious, it is perhaps time to examine his use of repetition itself. It may be that Valerius, by limiting so carefully his verbal repetitions, was preparing the ground for a more powerful use of repetition when it did occur.²⁵ If this were the case, it might to some extent mitigate the censure of repetitive variation.

The related figures of anaphora, polyptoton, and climax in which words are repeated in the same or successive lines provide the single most extensive type of repetition. There are forty-four examples of this kind in the poem. Upon examination, it appears that Valerius' repetitiveness of technique infects even the use of these figures. One manifestation of this is the poet's tendency to repeat the same words in anaphora. So *pars* occurs in this figure three times, *bis* and *deus* twice.²⁶ These recurrences, however, are not especially harmful, for none of the instances is highly significant. Such repetition becomes damaging when one of the uses might have produced a more intense poetic effect, if permitted to stand alone. In Book 4.659 f., for example, Valerius has constructed a very fine climactic arrangement: *bis fragor infestas cautes adversaque saxa/saxa dedit*. The position of the words in this climax graphically conveys the crashing together of the rocks described in the line. However, much of the force of the figure is dissipated by its previous appearance

²⁵For Virgil's use of repetition cf. W. F. J. Knight, "Repetitive Style in Virgil," *TAPA* 72 (1941) 212-225; J. Marouzeau, "Répétitions et hantises verbales chez Virgile," *REL* (1931) 237-257; N. I. Hereseu, "Répétitions phonétiques et répétitions sémantiques chez Virgile," *RivFC* 9-10 (1937-38) 138-146; John Sparrow, *Halfines and Repetitions in Virgil* (Oxford 1931).

²⁶*Pars* 2.221 f.; 2.447 f.; 3.278 f.; *deus* 1.245.; 3.271.; *bis* 1.429 f.; 4.659 f.

just seventeen lines above: *cum procul auditi sonitus insanaque saxa/saxa neque illa* (641 f.). For the reader is not able to wonder, undistracted, at its almost metaphoric appropriateness but is forced to recall its previous use. In the first instance, the position of the words does not mirror their sense, and one feels the figure should have been reserved for the more powerful second usage. In fact, Valerius several times anticipates with bad result a figurative or effective usage. When he imitates Apollonius' unforgettable sketch (4.136 f.) of the children's sudden fear: *riguerunt ubere nati* (2.203), the recollection of the latter part of the phrase appearing eleven lines above (185) distracts the reader from its present use. Again, the use within a few lines of the two abstract terms *metus* and *horror* with reference to Pallene and Typhoeus limits the effect of both (2.16, 24).

Even repetitions separated by larger intervals can detract from the power of some poetic figures. The climax *trahiturque trahitque* occurred first in the grisly account of the warriors impaled upon the scythed chariot wheels. It conveys vividly the picture of the horses racing on, drawing behind them their chariots which in turn drag the bodies of the entangled men:

*hinc biiuges, illinc artus tenduntur eriles
quos radii, quos frena secant, trahiturque trahitque
currus caede madens . . .*

(6.413-415)

The phrase recurs in Book 7.594 in the depiction of Jason's struggle with the fire-breathing bulls. There seems to be no point to the repetition, the poet does not seem to be attempting to form any link between the two episodes. But this repetition would seem to be detrimental in at least two respects. First, the recollection of the former instance (which is unforgettable) distracts from the immediate scene which is one of the climactic moments of the poem. And second, the repetition in some way diffuses the remembered power of the first instance.

The repetition of two similarly constructed anaphoras provides another example of a repetition which might better have been avoided. The affecting struggle over Canthus' body is graphically portrayed in the phrase: *Canthum sequitur, Canthumque reposcit* (6.368). The repetition of the name ironically emphasizes, by calling a thing, an object of pursuit, by a proper name, the mere corporeality of the dead body. But again the effectiveness is weakened by the recollection of a less powerful instance of a similar anaphora: *Glaucum sequitur, Glaucumque ruentem* (3.153). In the latter example it is the pursuit of a still living warrior that is being portrayed. In conclusion, concerning at least this aspect of repetition, it might be said that Valerius allowed the effectiveness of certain of his figures to be squandered by repeating them in less appropriate contexts.

Even when the examination of repetition is broadened, it cannot be observed that Valerius employed it with any great effect. This is not to say that he never employs repetition with thematic or structural importance. As was noted in the episode studies, for example, *ira* repeats five times in the fifty-four lines of the Phineus episode to stress the cause of the seer's blindness—the wrath of Jove.²⁷ Just as in the preceding episode *fata* was used four times in thirty-two lines emphasizing the role of fate in man's existence.²⁸ (But it might be maintained that the repetition of the same figure in two consecutive episodes is more typical of Valerius Flaccus' choice than the effective repetition of words.) Throughout the episode depicting Gesander's slaying of Aquites *natus* and *pater* also ironically repeat.²⁹

On the whole, however, most examples of extended repetition of words merely followed the pattern already noted in Valerius' choice of words; that is to say, words seem not so much to be repeated, as to be permitted to repeat if sufficiently separated. Thus, for example, *mens* repeats consecutively four times in one episode. Each instance has a different referent and is separated by at least nine lines from the nearest repetition.³⁰ Similarly *remus* repeats four times in a single episode: 1.443 *remum*, 450 *remo*, 460 *remo*, 471 *remo*, 471 *tonsas*. Each word has a different referent, and there appears to be no purpose behind the repetition. Variation is provided only for the closely occurring words in line 471. Many of the cases of extended repetition take this form, for instance: *soror* 7.117, 137, 152; *spes* 7.413, 426, 438, 452; *meritus* 7.484, 501, 509; *labor* 5.18, 38, 49; *manus* 5.143, 159, 164; *os* 5.367, 373, 379, 387; *vertex* 4.368, 381, 396; *virgo* 8.32, 38, 45; *pater* 2.250, 256, 265, 271.

But there are also instances of extended repetition which involve close repetitions for which there can be observed no poetic reason: *ratis* 4.668, 678, 681, 690; *nox* 7.372, 393, 400, 403; 2.281, 288, 291; *Peleus* 1.257, 264, 266. All in all, Valerius cannot be seen to exploit to any extent the poetic possibilities of repetition. It was not that his deviations might shine the more strongly that he adhered to such a strict pattern of synonym use.

R. W. Garson in his article, "Valerius Flaccus the Poet,"³¹ suggests yet another element that might serve to qualify the description of Valerius' pattern of lexical "stylistic" choice as monotonous and repetitive. It is his thesis that Valerius not only embellished his poem with traditional figurative language, but that he also illuminated it with new and evocative figurative expressions. And it seems that if it were the case

²⁷4.472, 474, 483, 521, 526.

²⁸4.432, 446, 449, 458.

²⁹6.286–316.

³⁰6.439, 453, 463, 476.

³¹*CQ* 20 (1970) 181–187.

that the *Argonauticon* was constantly enlivened by figures which had the effect of distracting the reader from the overall monotony of the poem's pattern of choices, the description of Valerius' style would have to be altered. It is necessary at this point to determine whether Valerius' use of figurative expressions does in fact have such an effect.

During the study of synonym choice, one becomes aware that Valerius often made use of figurative language. In fact such language was observed to provide the poet with his "stylistic" options. This was one of the sources for the difficulty in defining synonyms. For example, it soon became apparent that metonymy permitted the same referent to be denoted by many terms, which, because each emphasized a different property or quality of the referent, seemed to share only a slight relation in meaning. So a ship might be referred to by five different terms, each of which selects a different property of the referent for emphasis: 2.429 *ratem*, 430 *clavi*, 436 *nautas*, 443 *prorae*, 445 *puppis*. Or metonymical usages could allow the Promethean herb to be referred to by six different, seemingly distinct, terms: 7.356 *florem*, 357 *gramina*, 363 *herbae*, 365 *aristas*, 366 *seges*, 367 *feta*. Or the temple at Colchis could be referred to by five terms: 5.403 *aras*, 404 *adytis*, 408 *limina*, 410 *tecta*, 416 *templi*. Metaphor similarly is used to extend the range of Valerius' "stylistic" options; for example, several of the words used to refer to Medea's love are metaphorical: 7.154 *furori*, 156 *ardor*, 157 *malo*, 162 *amorem*, 173 *cura*, 184 *amor*. Conversely, but with an equally disturbing effect upon an attempt to define synonymy, metonymy and metaphor also act to permit the same word to appear in different contexts with quite dissimilar meanings. So *nox* in various contexts is used to refer to the time of night, a storm, the shade of trees, or death.³²

Generally such uses of metaphor and metonymy, which are so common in the poem, can hardly be said to be arresting. They seem rather to be simply an extension of the normal, referential use of language in which a word, as Josephine Miles observes, is "a single unit at one level of discrimination, but covers many other units at the other levels."³³ The license afforded a poet does permit Valerius to extend the referents of a word by a more blatant use of metonymy and metaphor, but in the context of the poem, their traditional setting, these figurative usages are absorbed and comprehended almost without the reader's awareness. And rather than distracting the reader from an apprehension of the poem's general pattern of synonym choice, these figurative expressions seem to be one of the means by which the pattern is constructed. For it is noteworthy that in the examples cited, where metonymy and metaphor were

³²Night, *passim*; a storm, 1.617; shade, 8.25; death, 3.291.

³³Josephine Miles, "More Semantics of Poetry," *Kenyon Review* 2 (1940) reprinted in Chatman and Levin (above, n. 2) 264-268, p. 265.

used to supply a number of synonyms, the effect of the use of these figurative synonyms was the variation of closely occurring references. Similarly *nox* was employed in the figurative sense "shade" among several closely occurring references to shade.

There is in fact evidence throughout the episodic studies that the impetus behind the use of a figurative expression is often the poet's desire to conform to his poetic principle of avoiding the close repetition of terms. To notice just one more example, the word *vellus* is used almost without exception in the poem to refer to the golden fleece in single or separated references. It appears that the poet, generally, employed a more figurative expression with this referent only when impelled by his practice of avoiding close repetition, as, for example, in the following cases: 5.228 *vellera*, 229 *monumentum periculi*, 230 *ardenti metallo*, 237 *vellera*, 242 *terga*, 242 *auro*, 250 *vellera*; 5.621 *vellera*, 629 *vellera*, 632 *Phrixeo metallo*; 6.11 *vellera*, 18 *vellera*, 19 *exuvias pecudis*.

Even some of Valerius' more effective usages seem to be a consequence, at least in part, of the poet's attempt to conform to his regular pattern of word use. The use of the expression *caerulus horror* (1.652) to refer to a stormy sea merits commendation, for it both precisely conveys the dark, rough appearance of the sea while it also metaphorically alludes to the dread induced in the Argonauts by the seas. But it should also be noted that this expression occurs in an extended series of closely occurring references to the sea, in which nine different synonyms appear: 1.642 *fundo*, 646 *undas*, 651 *pontum*, 652 *caerulus horror*, 653 *unda*, 654 *aequore*, 657 *aquis*, 657 *gurgite*, 666 *pelago*, 667 *undarum*, 669 *fretum*, 672 *pontus*. It may be suggested that anyone familiar with Valerius' usual pattern of synonym use might expect an especially figurative usage³⁴ to appear in such a series. For it might easily be anticipated that the constraint imposed upon the poet by the necessity of providing variation in eleven closely occurring references would impel him to forge a very figurative expression in an effort to create yet another varied reference. Similarly, an effective figure occurs with the use of *ictus* to refer to the crashing rocks: *contra omnes validis tenui discrimine remis/pergere iter mediosque ratem transferre per ictus* (4.689-690). For the word figuratively refers to rocks in terms of the blows the Argonauts anticipate from them at any moment. But again this figure may perhaps be seen to be inspired by Valerius' desire to provide variation in an extended series of references: 4.668 *scopulis*, 671 *cautes*, 672 *saxa*, 677 *montibus*, 681 *Cyaneae*, 681 *scopuli*, 688 *scopulos*, 690 *ictus*, 691 *saxa*, 692 *iugis*, 696 *scopulis*. And the same desire may be glimpsed behind the use of the metaphor *aeratam*

³⁴The term "especially figurative usage" or "very figurative usage" differentiates between the use of such a figure as *horror* and that of, for example, the more common figure *aequor*.

nubem (6.88) used to refer to an armed band in the catalogue of Perses' troops: 6.48 *legio*, 53 *phalanx*, 66 *acies*, 70 *agmina*, 72 *aciem*, 74 *gente*, 80 *viros*, 81 *manus*, 87 *turmas*, 88 *aeratam nubem*, 94 *viris*, 95 *pedes*. Thus all three of these effective metaphors can be seen to result, at least in part, from the poet's attempt to provide variation in closely occurring references. Of course, the apprehension that the use of a figurative expression is prompted to some extent by a compositional principle does not necessarily imply that the expression itself is any the less evocative. But it does suggest that since a reader of the *Argonauticon* can expect a figurative expression to occur under certain given circumstances, the use of such a figure, rather than distracting from the regularity of Valerius' pattern of choice, contributes to it.

Thus far the discussion of Valerius' figurative language has centered on his handling of traditional figures, all of which have their sources and counterparts in his poetic predecessors. For, as Garson points out, it is these standard images that must comprise the major portion of any poet's figures.³⁵ But it is Valerius' new coinages, his poetic innovations that Garson emphasizes in the diction section of his article. It might be valuable to investigate how, if at all, these innovations relate to Valerius' regular pattern of word choice.³⁶ Valerius' phrase *tepidi singultibus agri* (3.218) is the first considered by Garson:³⁷

The ground was warm with blood, not with death throes, or more particularly, with the rattling in the throats of the dying. Valerius' line would have accommodated *atque madentes sanguine campi* perfectly, but his unique use of *singultus*, stretched to mean 'blood spurting out amid the paroxysms of death' make his scene so much more vivid and terrible.

The use of this phrase does have the poetic effect Garson specifies. But it remains to be seen whether or not the phrase has another role, whether or not its use allows Valerius to implement any of his compositional principles.

First it will be necessary to describe one of Valerius' rules of composition, often observed in the episodic studies.³⁸ It was observed that Valerius almost without fail attempted to link his extended comparisons to the narrative in which they occurred by the use of verbal bonds, usually by the repetition between the parts of words or synonyms. It was noted further that, in his efforts to forge such bonds, Valerius would upon occasion resort to "false" bonding; that is to say he would fashion between

³⁵Garson (above, n. 31) 181.

³⁶Even if these innovations could not be seen to have any relation to the pattern, the *nine* commendable innovations adduced by Garson could have little influence upon the description of Valerius' style based upon the examination of 5,590 lines of text.

³⁷Garson (above, n. 31) 182.

³⁸A general consideration of this practice will appear in *TAPA* 104 (1973).

the simile and the surrounding narrative purely verbal similarities which were not reflected in corresponding semantic similarities. With this practice in mind the fourteen line section (206–219) in which the phrase occurs should be considered. The section begins with a comparison of the increased activity of volcanos:

nox alta cadentum
ingentes resonat sonitus augetque ruinas;
ut magis Inarime, magis ut mugitor anhelat
Vesuvius, attonitas acer cum suscitatur urbes (206–209)

Perge age Tartareae mecum simul omnia noctis
Musa, sequi. trepidam Phaeton adflavit ab alto
Tisiphonen graviorque locos iam luce propinqua
umbra premit; non signa virum, non funera cernunt
et rabie magis ora calent. vos prodite, divae
Eumenidum noctisque globos vatique patescat
armorum fragor et tepidi singultibus agri
labentum atque acti Minyis per litora manes. (212–219)

In order to make one ground for his comparison explicit, Valerius has stressed the noise in both parts of the comparison with the use of the phrase *cadentum ingentes resonat sonitus* and the verb *anhelat* (a word that would seem to allude to both the “roaring” and the “heaving” of volcanos). But as it stands there is no verbal connection between the simile and the narrative. Valerius, in his usual manner, would seem to attempt to remedy this lack by the use of *adflavit* four lines later—*trepidam Phaeton adflavit ab alto/Tisiphonen* (213–214). For although both *anhele* and *adflo* are being used figuratively here, they might in a different context act as synonyms. The primary meaning of both words alludes to breathing. But the poet seems not to have been satisfied with this verbal bond, for he forges another one. Moreover, he attempts verbally to stress the connection between the second bond and the initial comparison. With the use of the synonymous participles *cadentum* (206) and *labentum* (219), Valerius would seem to signify that the phrase *tepidi singultibus agri/labentum* (218–219) is intended to hark back to *cadentum/ingentes sonitus* (206–207). In fact if *singultus* were being used less figuratively it would refer to one aspect of the sound of falling warriors, their last gasp as it were. Thus Valerius returns to the protasis of the comparison with a word which if it were being used less figuratively would refer to “gasping” or “breathing out with sobs.” This use corresponds closely to that of *anhele* in the apodosis which could refer to “panting” or “breathing” if it were used less figuratively. In this manner Valerius forges another “false” bond between his simile and narrative. And it becomes apparent that the use of *singultus*, while it may be an effective figure, also plays a role in allowing Valerius to conform to his

usual practice of providing verbal bonds between his comparisons and the narrative in which they occur.

Similar to this last example is another Garson offers of Valerius' "brilliant" use of language³⁹ with the phrase, *ardentes stabula effudere tenebras* (7.566). This, as Garson explains, "clearly refers to the mixture of fire and smoke issuing from the bulls."⁴⁰ But again the question may be posed: does this figurative reference to the bulls relate in any way to Valerius' regular pattern of word use? Once more the fact that the phrase occurs in a section of a narrative set between two similes will be important to our consideration of it. Immediately preceding the use of the phrase, Jason, waiting all alone for the bulls' appearance, has been compared to a javelin.⁴¹

... ut extremis desertus ab orbibus aclis
quem iam lassa dies austrique ardentis harenae
aut quem Rhiphaeus exstantem rursus ad arces
nix et caerulei Boreae ferus abstulit horror

(560-563)

It is noteworthy that the opposing forces are described in terms of heat (*austris ardentis harenae*) and cold darkness (*caerulei Boreae ferus horror*). These terms correspond closely to those describing the bulls, the forces facing Jason. Thus by the use of analogous terms Valerius has made the ground for his comparison explicit, and also connected the simile to the narrative by verbal correspondences—*ardens* repeats and both *caeruleus* and *tenebrae* can be used to refer to darkness. Moreover, the phrase *ardentes tenebras* does double duty, for it also creates verbal, although not semantic, connections with the simile immediately following it:

ac velut ex una siquando nube corusci
ira Iovis torsit geminos mortalibus ignes

(567-568)

For in certain contexts *nubes* and *tenebrae* and *coruscus* and *ardens* can act as synonyms. Once again it can be seen that Valerius' effective use of a figure grows at least in part from this attempt to adhere to his usual rules of composition.

Several more of Garson's examples of innovations also perform such a function. For example, he comments on the effective verb/noun juxtaposition in the simile comparing Hesione to a statue *exanimus*.../*maeret ebur* (2.465-466), which in his words "has destroyed the distinction between art and the reality it represents."⁴² This may well be the case, but

³⁹Garson (above, n. 31) 182.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹There is a textual problem concerning exactly what object is being compared to Jason—*aclis*, Kramer; *ales*, Bussen; or *axis*, V. But this does not alter the fact of the verbal similarities between the parts of the comparison.

⁴²This quotation also applies to *caelata*... *multa/arte*... *velamina* (5.6-7), *picto*... *variaverat auro* (3.11), as well as to the phrase at 2.465 f.

it may be hazarded that also significant to the employment of the phrase is the fact that Hesione has just been described *ad primos turgentia lumina fetus* (464). The use of *maeret* makes one ground for the comparison explicit. Another innovation cited by Garson is the phrase *luce fragosa* (2.198) which he suggests "is perhaps the most original phrase in Latin literature for lightning and the thunder following it."⁴³ All would admit to the effectiveness of this phrase, but one observing the use of *tonitru* in the next line might suggest that its use, like that of so many figurative expressions, was a result, at least in part, of an attempt to provide variation in closely occurring references.

In general Valerius' use of innovational figures appears to coincide with that of his use of more traditional figurative language. Both play a part in allowing the poet to practice his principles of composition. This is not to say that individual expressions may not be both effective and evocative, but merely to suggest that their use has little effect in distracting a reader from the extreme regularity of Valerius' pattern of "stylistic" choice. Rather, as has already been put forward, more often than not Valerius' employment of figurative language seems to be the product of his normal pattern of choice, the result of his attempt to conform to his self-imposed principles of composition.

In conclusion, an attempt has been made to demonstrate that an almost unrelieved repetitiveness informs nearly every feature of Valerius Flaccus' choice of synonyms.⁴⁴ In a high proportion of instances, he tends to choose his synonyms upon the same pattern, tends to employ the same synonyms without variation with reference to his characters throughout the poem, and tends to assume the same arrangements of synonyms in similar situations. It has been suggested that the uniformity of his pattern of choice indicates nothing so much as being one determined by certain set principles—principles observed to be almost totally formal, concerned solely with the appearance of words, and their disposition in a limited poetic texture. As might be anticipated, the effect of allowing such short-sighted principles to govern the choice of words throughout a long poem is monotony. And monotonous would seem to be the best one-word description of Valerius' pattern of choice, of at least this aspect of his style.

⁴³Garson (above, n. 31) 183. Garson is quite right that Valerius has coined an especially fine poetic phrase here.

⁴⁴Cf. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure* (Chicago 1968) 14: "If, on the other hand, there have been no surprises or disappointments [in the pattern of a poem], if all our expectations have been gratified, then the poem has been as predictable—and as interesting—as someone's reading the alphabet."

TABLE I
SYNONYM ARRANGEMENTS

Two member arrangements: 735 examples

	Number of Examples	Percentage of Whole
ab	482	65.5%
aa	253	34.4%

Three member arrangements: 412 examples

	Number of Examples	Percentage of Whole	Percentage without consecutive repetition
abc	187	45.3%	63.1%
aba	73	17.7%	
aab	69	16.7%	
abb	48	11.1%	
aaa	35	8.4%	

Four member arrangements: 261 examples

	Number of Examples	Percentage of Whole	Percentage without consecutive repetition
abcd	101	38.6%	61.6%
abcb	22	8.4%	
abac	16	6.1%	
abca	17	6.5%	
abab	5	1.9%	
abba	6	2.2%	
aabb	6	2.2%	
abaa	20	7.6%	
aaba	10	3.8%	
abbb	4	1.5%	
aaab	5	1.9%	
aaaa	8	3.0%	
aabc	17	6.5%	
abcc	16	6.1%	
abbc	18	3.0%	

TABLE I (Continued)

Five member arrangements: 95 examples

	Number of Examples	Percentage of Whole	Percentage without consecutive repetition
abcde	32	33.6%	57.7%
abcae	1	1.0%	
abcad	4	4.2%	
abada	1	1.0%	
abacd	9	9.4%	
ababd	1	1.0%	
ababc	1	1.0%	
abaca	2	2.1%	
abcab	1	1.0%	
abcdc	1	1.0%	
abcda	1	1.0%	
abcdb	1	1.0%	
abccd	3	3.1%	
aabca	4	4.2%	
aabcd	4	4.2%	
aaaaa	1	1.0%	
abbbb	2	2.1%	
aabac	1	1.0%	
abbcd	2	2.1%	
abbba	1	1.0%	
abbcb	3	3.1%	
abcbb	2	1.0%	
abcdd	3	3.1%	
abaac	2	2.1%	
abbca	1	1.0%	
abbbc	1	1.0%	
aabbb	1	1.0%	
abccc	1	1.0%	
abaaa	1	1.0%	
abaab	2	2.1%	
aaaba	2	2.1%	
abbab	1	1.0%	
aaaab	1	1.0%	

Total number of examples—1,503. 53.2% have complete variation. 63.6% have no consecutive repetition.

TABLE II
REPETITIONS

	Number of Instances	Number of Repetitions	Percentage of Repetitions	Percentage of Repetitions with Different Referents	Percentage of Consecutive Repetitions
Same or successive line	941	66	7%	12%	98%
One line interval	420	35	7%	32%	80%
Two line interval	476	68	14%	40%	85%
Three line interval	412	65	16%	26%	75%
Four line interval	350	81	23%	32%	73%
Five line interval	316	85	27%	34%	72%
Six line interval	289	81	28%	32%	63%
Seven line interval	278	52	19%	29%	67%
Eight line interval	304	78	26%	23%	60%
Nine to fifteen line interval	1,620	405	25%	33%	47%
Sixteen line and above interval	2,757	692	25%	38%	29%

1,097 or 64% of all repetitions are separated by nine lines or more.

1,308 or 77% of all repetitions are separated by six lines or more.

1,393 or 82% of all repetitions are separated by five lines or more.

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