

The Presence of Ovid in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Ovid's influence on Valerius Flaccus is only now beginning to emerge from behind the more insistent voices of Apollonius Rhodius, Vergil and Homer. While scholars such as Adamietz, Hershkowitz, Hardie, Zissos, and Shelton have worked extensively on the Apollonian, Vergilian and Homeric influences on Valerius' text, the understanding of Ovid's influence, while not wholly ignored in the past (cf. von Albrecht), still remains to be elaborated more fully. For example, Stover has recently shown the importance of Ovid's Salmacis-Hermaphroditus episode for the character development of Jason at the critical meeting between him and Medea (*Arg.* 5.378-84). I wish to carry study of the Ovidian elements at play in Valerius' epic further by comparing Ovid's Perseus-Andromeda scene (*Met.* 4.604-803) with Valerius' Hercules-Hesione episode (*Arg.* 2.451-578), as well as Ovid's description of the palace of Apollo (*Met.* 2.1-115) with Valerius' depiction of Aeetes' royal abode (*Arg.* 5.407-68).

A study of literary allusion is only useful if it also seeks to show *why* one author uses another. At key points in the *Argonautica*, Ovidian references enhance the reader's awareness of elements of change or love, and these references seep down through the layers of meaning to reinforce the political agenda of this pro-Flavian poet. Further, they serve as a reminder that change does not yield permanence, but that each act, each hero, each venture, is then followed by another. This allows Valerius to create a panegyric epic for the recently established Flavian dynasty while simultaneously forecasting its inevitable demise.

This paper will examine some of Valerius' more salient references to Ovid and will attempt to illustrate their use within these layers of meaning. The result will be a greater understanding of Valerius' epic and also of the ways in which literary allusion enhances the depth of an author's poetic—and political—agenda.

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