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*Valerius Flaccus and Vergil's Argonautic Aeneid:
Myth and Intertextuality*

Abstract

Attraverso la dettagliata analisi intertestuale di una piccola sezione degli *Argonautica*, il contributo si propone di approfondire le modalità con cui Valerio Flacco riscrive gli *Argonautica* di Apollonio Rodio manifestando la consapevolezza dell'enorme influenza che Apollonio aveva esercitato sull'*Eneide* di Virgilio. Si ipotizza che Valerio Flacco considerasse l'*Eneide* un poema profondamente argonautico e vedesse in Enea e nei Troiani una nuova versione di Giasone e degli Argonauti. In che modo, quindi, Valerio ha imitato sia Apollonio, sia l'*Eneide*, che considerava una variazione sul mito di Argo?

In this paper I attempt to provide, by means of a detailed intertextual analysis of one small section of his *Argonautica*, a study of how Valerius Flaccus went about rewriting the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius in light of his appreciation of the enormous influence of Apollonius's poem on Vergil's *Aeneid*. I would like to suggest that it is worth taking seriously the idea that Valerius Flaccus read the *Aeneid* as a profoundly Argonautic poem, seeing in Aeneas and the Trojans new versions of Jasons and the Argonauts. The question then is this: faced with a poem that he saw as a variation on the Argo myth, how exactly did Valerius go about imitating both Apollonius and Vergil?

There is much to be gained from carefully comparing and contrasting the many extant versions of the story of the Argonauts in Greek and Latin literature¹. Interpretation of the myth can also be improved by a better understanding of the relationship between any two surviving renderings of the tale. To give but one example, it seems to be the case that readings of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius as a poem that must be read against the background of its Ptolemaic setting can help to sharpen attempts to see Valerius Flaccus' poem as a Flavian epic, in terms of the poem's possible relationship to the political context within which it was written². This paper, therefore, first as a contribution to a conference and now to this subsequent collection of papers entitled *Il mito e le sue varianti* could, or perhaps should, take the form of a comparative study of Valerius and Apollonius. Instead, I would like to adopt a different approach. Taking into account the role of the *Aeneid* as an intermediate text crucial to the appreciation of the ways in which Valerius reads Apollonius, I would like to provide, by means of a detailed intertextual analysis of one section of the Flavian *Argonautica*, a study of how

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¹ See, for example, MAC GÓRÁIN (2015).

² On the importance of fixing the date of the *Argonautica* for our understanding of literary history see STOVER (2023).

Valerius went about rewriting his Hellenistic Greek model in light of his appreciation of the enormous influence of Apollonius' *Argonautica* on Vergil's *Aeneid*. I would like to suggest that it is worth taking seriously the idea that Valerius Flaccus read the *Aeneid* as a profoundly Argonautic poem, seeing in Aeneas and the Trojans new versions of Jasons and the Argonauts. The question then is this: faced with a poem that he saw as a variation on the Argo myth, how exactly did Valerius go about imitating both Apollonius and Vergil?

In much recent work on Latin poetry, and in work on the post-Vergilian epic tradition in particular, the study of literary imitation, however defined and named (allusion, influence, reference, echo, borrowing, intertextuality), has occupied a central position. There can be little doubt that the lessons learned from reading some key scholarly contributions have sharpened critical faculties³. Numerous papers, monographs, conference proceedings, commentaries, and companions produce new insights and original analyses with impressive regularity⁴. This paper will thus drag its readers over much-travelled ground, doing so in order to try to shed a little light on some aspects of the imitative techniques of a poet who has not attracted quite the same level of critical attention that has been lavished on Lucan and Statius. I will focus on one short passage of text, the first 12 verses of book 5, in order to provide a small example of the kind of detailed study that Valerius' poem seems to demand, with particular emphasis on an aspect of epic technique that, for all its obvious simplicity, is still sometimes underestimated and under-used: the relationship between local cases of verbal imitation, reference or allusion and the scenes, contexts, and narrative structures within which they occur⁵.

One of the keys to understanding some of the complexity of Valerius' imitative method lies in appreciating that it functions on several levels simultaneously. It is this multi-layered aspect that makes the term 'intertextuality' so useful, since it can be used to cover a range of different kinds of related but distinct literary effects. My approach will be crudely intentionalist, in the belief that it is worthwhile attempting to glean through close reading whatever information about literary technique can be learned from the traces left by a fine poet's creative choices⁶.

The fifth book of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* opens with a short section describing the death of Idmon. These 12 lines are clearly marked off as a unit by

³ See e.g. WEST – WOODMAN (1979), CONTE (1986), FARRELL (1991), HARDIE (1993), FOWLER (1997), HINDS (1998), THOMAS (1999), EDMUNDS (2001), BARAZ – VAN DEN BERG (2013).

⁴ See e.g. LAZZARINI (2012), STOVER (2012), AGOUSTAKIS (2014), PARKES (2014), SOERINK (2014), DOMINIK – NEWLANDS – GERVAIS (2015).

⁵ On problems of terminology see THOMAS (1986). On verbal and structural or scenic allusion see KNAUER (1979²). For a study of this kind see VESPOLI MANTELLI CANEPA (2024), an experimental imitation commentary on the second half of book 1 of Valerius Flaccus.

⁶ On intertextuality and intention see, for example, LYNE (1994), IRWIN (2001), FARRELL (2005).

the fact that they open the book and that in line 13 attention turns to a second death, that of Tiphys⁷:

*Altera lux haud laeta viris emersit Olympo:
Argolicus morbis fatisque rapacibus Idmon
labitur extremi sibi tum non inscius aevi.
At memor Aesonides nimium iam vera locuti
Phineos hinc alios rapto pavet Idmone luctus.
Tum comiti pia iusta tulit caelataque multa
arte Dolionii donat velamina regis,
hospes humum sedemque Lycus. Flens arma revellit
Idmonis e celsa Mopsus rate. Robora caedunt
pars silvis portantque arae, pars auguris alba
fronde < caput > vittisque ligant positumque feretro
congemuere; dies simul et suus admonet omnes.*

The next day's light brought no joy to the heroes as it broke forth from Olympus: Argive Idmon falls before disease and ravaging fate, well aware that his life was near its end. But Jason, remembering that Phineus had spoken all too truly, from Idmon's taking apprehends yet other sorrows. Then he pays to his comrade the dues of ritual observance, and brings as a tribute the skilfully embroidered raiment of the Dolionian prince, while Lycus their host offers ground for his last resting-place. Mopsus in tears takes Idmon's armour from the lofty vessel; some cut down timber from the woods and bring it to the pyre; others bind fillets and white foliage about the augur's head, and setting him on the bier unite in lamentation; all alike bethink them of their own appointed day.

We will read this passage in terms of its manipulation of epic commonplaces, its position in an overarching narrative structure, and the presence of verbal reference. It is crucial at the outset to state that the text seems to be functionally referential at all three levels and in closely interrelated ways. In the interests of clarity of exposition, however, each level will at first be treated separately. We will start by looking at verbal reference, which will lead us on to the question of the use of traditional *topoi*, before finally turning to narrative context⁸.

In Apollonius Rhodius' version of the Argonauts' journey, which provides throughout the fundamental narrative model for Valerius' account of essentially the same story, the description of the death of Idmon occurs at book 2 (815-50). It is

⁷ Val. Fl. 5, 1-12. Text by EHLERS (1980); translation by MOZLEY (1934), slightly modified.

⁸ For an excellent treatment of some of this material along similar lines see VAN DER SCHUUR (2014).

immediately obvious that Valerius has both displaced this event to a more prominent book-opening position in the overall structure of his narrative. He has also significantly contracted the size of the episode, reducing it from 36 verses to 12⁹. We begin with dawn: *altera lux haud laeta viris emersit Olympo*. Apollonius too has Idmon die at dawn, but his simple ἤρι (Ap. Rh. 2, 812) is replaced by Valerius' more complex formulation. The new day's light is described as coming forth from Olympus or becoming visible in the sky (depending on how one interprets the Latin) and is in addition qualified literally as «not happy for men», thereby foreshadowing the death and burial that will follow immediately. The habit of describing dawn at the opening of a book of epic poetry goes back to Homer, *Iliad* 8, 11, 19 and *Odyssey* 2, 3, 5, 8, 17, where one finds a variety of formulaic descriptions. Apollonius never opens a book with dawn; Vergil does so only once, at *Aen.* 11,1: *Oceanum interea surgens Aurora reliquit* («then the rising Dawn left the Ocean»)¹⁰. Valerius does so twice, in books 3 and 5. On both occasions he avoids Homeric and Vergilian formulations and creates his own variations, but he may well have had in mind the context at the start of *Aeneid* 11, which is dominated by the recent death of Pallas and preparations for his funeral. According to Wijsman (1996) in his commentary, there may be some verbal borrowing from the dawn of Ov. *Met.* 3, 149-50, occurring not at a book opening but at the beginning of the episode recounting the death of Actaeon: *altera lucem | cum croceis invecta rotis Aurora reducet* («when once more Aurora, borne on her saffron car, shall bring back the day»¹¹), with *altera lucem | [...] Aurora* as a possible model for *altera lux*. In his commentary, Spaltenstein (2004) does not follow Wijsman in comparing this Ovidian passage. Following Langen (1897-1898), as a parallel for Valerius' use of *Olympo* he cites *Aen.* 1, 374 (*ante diem clauso componat Vesper Olympo*, «sooner would heaven close and evening lay the day to rest»; cf. 7, 217, *extremo veniens sol aspiciebat Olympo*, «that the sun beheld as he journeyed from the uttermost heavens»)¹². The main interest of this observation, apart from illustrating the poetic usage of *Olympus* to mean 'heaven' or 'sky', lies in the fact that Vergil in the *Aeneid* uses the word *Olympo* twelve times, and *only* at line-end. A further check reveals that the placing of *Olympo* as the last word in a hexameter is quite frequent in Latin poetry, and that Valerius himself employs it seven times in all (1, 4; 1, 199; 2, 85; 5, 1; 5, 412; 5, 691; 7, 158). In terms of Latin hexameter verse-craft, therefore, using *Olympo* is a way of closing a hexameter. Indeed, on its 108 appearances in surviving

⁹ See VAN DER SCHUUR (2014, 100-101) on the main differences between the two versions.

¹⁰ Translation by HORSFALL (2003), modified. The whole line (on which see *ibid.*, 49), is repeated from *Aen.* 4, 129: on Vergil's dawn and night formulae see MOSKALEW (1982, 66-72).

¹¹ Translation by Miller (MILLER – GOOLD 1984).

¹² Translation by FAIRCLOUGH – GOOLD (1999-2001).

Latin hexameters from Cicero to Priscian, the only example in which it does *not* appear at verse-end is *Drac. Romul.* 4, 38¹³. A similar search applied to the beginning of *Val. Fl.* 5, 1 reveals that use of *altera* as the first word in a hexameter is also a relatively regular occurrence: 143 occurrences in the corpus. And taking this digital word-searching approach one step further, *lux* used as the second word in Latin hexameters is found 74 times. Vergil twice (*Aen.* 3, 117; 11, 210) opens hexameters with *tertia lux* and once (*Aen.* 10, 244) with *crastina lux* (also used by Valerius at 2, 566, thus illustrating his experimentation with this kind of verse opening). Each provides exactly the same metrical rhythm as that of Valerius' *altera lux*. Even more similar, and in fact with exactly the same meaning, is Horace's *postera lux* (*Sat.* 1, 5, 39), a combination that subsequently is favoured by Ovid, who uses it five times to start a hexameter (*Rem.* 509; *Met.* 9, 795; *Fast.* 1, 459; 6, 197 and 769). Following this trail leads to another hexameter beginning with *postera lux* occurring at *Ciris* 349¹⁴. And this verse, cited by Wijsman (1996), does indeed look very much like *Val. Fl.* 5, 1:

Postera lux ubi laeta diem mortalibus alnum (*Ciris* 349)

The following dawn (spread) **happily** the kindly day to **mortals**

Altera lux haud laeta viris emersit Olympo (*Val. Fl.* 5, 1)

The following dawn, not **happy** for **mortals**, became visible in the sky

One can note that *lux* and *laeta* (the second and fourth words in each verse) occur in exactly the same metrical position, after the opening *postera* / *altera* has given a one-word dactylic opening to each verse. Appreciation of the similarity to the line from the *Ciris* helps to bring out another point. The second half of *Ciris* 349, *diem mortalibus alnum*, is the same, word for word, as *Aen.* 5, 64f, another epic dawn: *praeterea, si nona diem mortalibus alnum | Aurora extulerit radiisque retexerit orbem* («moreover, should the ninth Dawn lift her kindly light for mortals and with her rays lay bare the world»; cf. also *Aen.* 11, 182-83 with the note by Horsfall 2003 comparing verses in which Vergil uses the expression *lux alma*)¹⁵. Valerius' *lux haud laeta viris* thus begins to look like a combination involving inversion of two Vergilian usages, *diem mortalibus alnum* and *lux alma*, both used of dawns that are described as kindly for mortals. The origin of the idea is to be found in Homer,

¹³ Information derived from a search carried out via the *Musisque deoque* database: <http://www.mqdq.it>.

¹⁴ It hardly seems unreasonable to accept a pre-Flavian date for this text; for discussion see PEIRANO (2012, 173-88), KAYACHEV (2020, 5-30).

¹⁵ Some (e.g. KAYACHEV 2020) will see this as Vergil alluding to the *Ciris* or to a model of the *Ciris*; others (e.g. LYNE 1987 *ad loc.*) will take it as the author of the *Ciris* alluding to the *Aeneid*.

where we encounter the formulaic ἵν' ἀθανάτοισι φῶς φέροι ἡδὲ βροτοῖσι («to bear light to the immortals and to mortal men»¹⁶), occurring three times of dawn's light at the opening of a book (*Il.* 11, 2 = 19, 2 = *Od.* 5, 2; cf. *Od.* 3, 2-3, which is very similar).

What all this delving into verbal texture illustrates is how Valerius works with the Latin poetic diction used for describing dawn. One can easily trace several stages in his thinking. He decided to avoid the simple ἥρι with which Apollonius had given the timing of Idmon's death and instead to follow Homer and Vergil in opening a book of epic poetry with a more complex description of dawn. He seems then to have used *altera lux* as a variation on the hexameter opening *postera lux* that he will have known from Horace and Ovid, and possibly also from other texts now lost. In making the change he may have been influenced by the Ovidian *altera ... Aurora*, and perhaps also by the fact that *altera* as the first word of the second half of the epic (we will return below to discussing the probability that Valerius planned his poem in eight books) seems to pick up the poem's first word, *prima*. Valerius then seems to have had in mind also the dawn of *Ciris* 349, perhaps in the knowledge that it in turn resembles half of *Aen.* 5, 64. It is thus possible to suggest that the verse is fashioned out of at least these elements: the decision to open a book with dawn; *altera lux* as, among other things, a variation on *postera lux* at line-opening; *lux haud laeta viris* as an inversion of the Vergilian expressions *diem mortalibus alnum* and *alma lux*; *Olympo* at line end, as frequently in Latin hexameters. This leaves for discussion the choice of the verb *emergere* and the creation of the clausula *emersit Olympo*. We have already seen that *Olympo* is not infrequently used to end Latin hexameters. A further glance at previous uses of *Olympo* at line-end reveals that it is several times preceded by a three-syllable verb in the third-person singular active of various tenses, and that Vergil in surviving Latin hexameter poetry is the first to do so: *decedit Olympo* (*Georg.* 1, 450), *adfectat Olympo* (*Georg.* 4, 562), *demittit Olympo* (*Aen.* 4, 268), *demisit Olympo* (*Aen.* 4, 694), *aequabit Olympo* (*Aen.* 6, 834). This metrical trait is picked up by Manilius, who has *flagraret Olympo* (5, 745) and Lucan, who has *accessit Olympo* (2, 398) and *discessit Olympo* (6, 347).

In all, therefore, the first verse of Valerius' fifth book reveals itself as one written in the expectation that readers will appreciate a learned poet's personal take on a long-standing epic convention with its origins in Homer, and then subsequently adopted by Vergil, that of opening a book of epic with a description of dawn. As such, this verse is a neat test case for thinking about a topic that has been much debated in discussions of Latin literary allusion, i.e. the relationship between poetic

¹⁶ Translation by MURRAY – DIMOCK (1995).

language that seems to be deliberately referring to a particular model or models and language that seems to belong to a traditional literary *topos*¹⁷. There can hardly be a better-known epic *topos* than that of the description of dawn, and yet it seems hard to deny that Val. Fl. 5, 1 is indeed intentionally referential, and that it thus provides a nice example of a verse that permits deconstruction of the opposition between the allusive and the typical, between deliberate echo and accidental verbal confluence. Valerius seems clearly to be referring to a recurring feature in epic, one that over time has become associated with certain verbal traits and metrical conventions. This may not be exactly the same *kind* of verbal reference as, to take one famous much-discussed example, that linking *Aen.* 6, 460 (*invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi*) and Catullus 66, 39 (*invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi*), but it is not helpful, and certainly not conducive to proper appreciation of Valerius Flaccus as a literary artist, to exaggerate the difference between these two different types of referentiality or allusivity. They are rather two facets of a single phenomenon, one that now requires further investigation from a different perspective. In order to do so, we will move away from purely verbal detail to broader considerations of narrative structure and similarity of epic action.

In her discussion of the book structure of Valerius' *Argonautica*, Hershkowitz (1998, 8) writes thus: «*Aeneid* 7 begins with the death and funeral of Aeneas' nurse Caieta; *Argonautica* 5 begins with the death and funeral of the Argonauts' prophet-in-residence Idmon. This is followed by the death and burial of the helmsman Tiphys, placed much later in the architecture of the epic (though relatively in the same place chronologically) than it is in Apollonius' epic (AR 2.851ff.)». In turn, Spaltenstein (2004, 389) in his commentary on Val. Fl. 5, 1-3 writes: «ce livre 5 occupe dans les *Argonautiques* à peu près la place du livre 7 dans l'*Enéide* [...]; or, Idmon meurt au début de ce livre comme Caiète le fait chez Verg. *Aen.* 7, 1sq., et Val. a pu être attentif à ce parallélisme». Both Hershkowitz and Spaltenstein are here building on the work of Mehmel (1934, 56) and Schetter (1959). The former had pointed out some similarities between the openings of *Argonautica* 5 and *Aeneid* 7, and the latter went on to use this observation as a key element in arguing that Valerius conceived of his poem as a work in eight books, with the deaths of Caieta and Idmon coming right at the beginning of the second half of each poem, a view largely accepted by subsequent scholarship¹⁸. A close comparison of the two episodes in question suggests that the aforementioned scholars are all perfectly

¹⁷ For exemplary discussion see HINDS (1998, 34-47).

¹⁸ On funerals occurring in the middle of epic narratives see VAN DER SCHUUR (2014, 95 n. 1).

correct in sensing connections between the death of Idmon and that of Caieta¹⁹. In terms of similarity of epic action, we find in both texts a death, followed by a burial and then the continuation of the voyage. If we accept that Valerius' epic was indeed planned in eight books, the placing of these events is extremely marked, not only as a book-opening scene, but also as the beginning of the second half of each epic. But if we set the two passages side by side and compare them on the purely verbal level, it has to be admitted that the similarities are remarkably slight. We will begin with what may be the strongest (*Aen.* 7, 1-7):

*Tu quoque litoribus nostris, Aeneia nutrix,
aeternam moriens famam, Caieta, dedisti;
et nunc servat honos sedem tuus, ossaque nomen
Hesperia in magna, si qua est ea gloria, signat.
At pius exsequiis Aeneas rite solutis,
aggere composito tumuli, postquam alta quierunt
aequora, tendit iter velis portumque reliquit.*

You, too, Caieta, nurse of Aeneas, have by your death given eternal fame to our shores; and still your honour guards your resting place, and in great Hesperia, if that be glory, your name marks your dust! Now good Aeneas, when the last rites were duly paid and the funeral mound was raised, as soon as the high seas were stilled, sails forth on his way and leaves the haven²⁰.

When Val. Fl. 5, 7-8 writes *donat [...], | hospes humum **sedemque** Lycus*, this detail can be compared to *Aen.* 7, 3: *et nunc servat honos **sedem** tuus*, with *sedem* in each case meaning 'resting place' (see *OLD* s.v. 6a). A reader who picks up this verbal similarity is in a position to appreciate further connections. Apart from the actual mention of the final resting place of Caieta and Idmon, the overall sense of the two sentences involved is not the same, but in both texts we do get a very similar syllabic sequence. Valerius has ...**at** ... | **ho...s sedem...us** where Vergil had ...**at ho...s sedem...us**. Next, if we take one more step back and look again at the two passages, we can see that the first half of Val. Fl. 5, 4, **at memor Aesonides** contains two syllables from *Aen.* 7, 5, **at pius exsequiis Aeneas**²¹. The point may seem absurd,

¹⁹ VAN DER SCHUUR (2014) is well aware of this link, but in his important paper concentrates on a closely related intertextual nexus, that involving Valerius' Idmon and Tiphys and Vergil's Palinurus and Misenus.

²⁰ Translation by FAIRCLOUGH – GOOLD (1999-2001).

²¹ I print here the text of MYNORS (1969). Accepting the text of CONTE (2019), printing in his second Teubner edition an emendation proposed by K. Gervais, gives us *at pius Aeneas* in Vergil becoming *at memor Aesonides* in Valerius. The run of *at* + two-syllable adjective + *Ae* may be thought to lend some support to the conjecture.

until one appreciates that we are dealing with Jason and Aeneas, and that in each case with the immediate reaction of the leader of the expedition to the death of a companion of special significance, the seer Idmon and the nurse Caieta. Nor did Valerius omit the theme of religious piety and careful ritual observance over Caieta's burial, and so the adjective *pius* used of Aeneas at *Aen.* 7, 5 reappears at Val. Fl. 5, 6 of Jason's piety towards Idmon, *tum comiti pia iusta tulit*. Finally, one can also add that the way in which Valerius describes the laying of Idmon's corpse on its bier at l. 11, *positumque feretro*, allows him to reuse the same verb, minus the prefix, that Vergil had used of the setting up of the funeral mound of Caieta at *Aen.* 7, 6, *aggere composito tumuli*. This attempt to set out the meagre verbal traces left by the beginning of *Aeneid* 7 in the opening verses of *Argonautica* 5 raises an obvious and pressing question: what is a reader interested in Valerius' imitative techniques to make of these slight verbal similarities? Are we dealing with accidental confluence simply because both poets are describing the same event, the death and burial of a comrade? Are we dealing once again with a question that must be formulated in terms of the debate that sees a wide gulf between use of an epic *topos* and deliberate allusive reference? Or do we indeed have here exquisitely subtle Valerian use of the Vergilian model? And in any case, how does one go about deciding? It is at this stage, when faced with this kind of conundrum, that readers of epic must always ask themselves if there is any broader context that should be brought into the picture. It may initially seem misguided to propose that readers should turn from close analysis of the text to give consideration to broader narrative structures that risk creating confusion by throwing up yet further examples of similarity of epic action created by the exigencies of the generically conservative epic form. But when faced with a doubt about the exact nature of a specific case of verbal confluence, it is always worthwhile broadening the scope of the enquiry in order to try to get a sense of the wider narrative setting. Doing so in this particular case of possible connections between the Idmon and Caieta scenes produces some revealing findings. In order to delineate the wider narrative context within which we must operate, we will begin with Apollonius Rhodius, next look at Vergil's imitation of Apollonius, and then study Valerius' use of both Apollonius and Vergil. As already mentioned, Apollonius' account of the death and burial of Idmon occurs at *Argonautica* 2, 815-50. The events that precede and follow it in the Apollonian narrative of the Argonaut's voyage towards Colchis can be schematized as follows, describing as simply and neutrally as possible the basic narrative content:

2, 549-647: passage through the Symplegades.

2, 648-898: entry into and voyage along the southern coast of the Black Sea and arrival in the land of the Mariandyni. Death and burial of Idmon and of Tiphys. Ancaeus chosen as helmsman.

2, 899-1259: departure and voyage along the southern coast of the Black Sea; Argonauts sail past Prometheus.

2, 1260-85: night and arrival in the Phasis. Prayer of Ancaeus. Anchorage.

Book division

3, 1-5: invocation of the Muse Erato.

Vergil uses this section of Apollonian narrative when making his narrative transition from *Aeneid* 6 to 7²². The basic narrative content can be schematized thus:

6, 893-901: exit from Hades and voyage to Caieta. Anchorage.

Book division

7, 1-7: death and burial of Caieta. Departure.

7, 8-24: voyage along the western coast of Italy. Trojans sail past Circe.

7, 25-36: dawn and arrival in the Tiber. Anchorage.

7, 37-106: invocation of the Muse Erato and description of the situation in Latium.

Obviously, the single most obvious point of contact between Vergil and Apollonius here is the invocation of the Muse Erato, as has long been known and much discussed²³. But this explicit verbal reference occurs in the context of further significant similarities: Aeneas' exit from Hades, in an admittedly unexpected way, corresponds to the Argonauts journey through the Symplegades, long interpreted by students of Greek mythology as an entrance into the realm of death²⁴. The whole voyage of the Argonauts along the coast of the Black Sea has been seen to contain katabatic motifs and, more generally, one can see that Vergil was aware of an approach that reads the Argo's whole voyage as journey to the other world, and that this way of reading the myth of the Argo's voyage to the world's end in search of the Golden Fleece is a fundamental source for much material in *Aeneid* 6, including the Golden Bough²⁵. Then in addition, there are clear similarities between Apollonius' Prometheus episode and Vergil's Circe episode: in each case we have an account of sailing by night past a landmark associated with a famous mythological figure, and in each case also mysterious noises are heard by the sailors

²² As worked out in detail in NELIS (2001, 255-66); the essential points are already in SCHETTER (1959, 300-302).

²³ See NELIS (2001, 267-75) for analysis and bibliography.

²⁴ See HARDIE (1993, 85-87) for the connection.

²⁵ See NELIS (2001, chap. 6), with BREMMER (2009, 199) for agreement and HORSFALL (2013, 154-55) for disagreement.

as they skirt a grim and frightening section of coastline. And finally, the arrival of the Trojans in the Tiber at the midpoint of the *Aeneid* corresponds precisely to the arrival of the Argonauts in the Phasis right in the middle of Apollonius' *Argonautica*²⁶. It remains now to see how Valerius reacts to this imitative nexus that so strongly binds together the Apollonian and Vergilian narratives²⁷.

In the broadest terms, the fourth book of Valerius' *Argonautica* contains that section of the Argo's voyage that we find in the final section of the first and most of the second book of Apollonius' epic. Between 1, 1345 and 2, 548 Apollonius narrates in turn the end of the Hylas episode, the encounter with Amycus and the Phineus episode. Valerius includes these same episodes between 4, 1 and 4, 640, adding in at ll. 344-421 two non-Apollonian sections about Orpheus and Io. Then comes the next section of the voyage:

4, 637-732: passage through the Symplegades.

4, 733-62: arrival in the land of the Mariandyni.

Book division

5, 1-72: Mariandyni. Death and burial of Idmon and Tiphys. Erginus chosen as helmsman.

5, 73-176: departure, voyage along the southern coast of the Black Sea. Argonauts sail past the Chalybes and Prometheus.

5, 177-216: evening and arrival in the Phasis. Anchorage. Prayer of Jason.

5, 217-77: invocation of a Muse (*dea*) and description of the situation in Colchis.

The similarities to the Apollonian narrative outlined above are obvious. In both poems we get the passage through the Symplegades, followed by arrival in the land of the Mariandyni, then the death and burial of Idmon and of Tiphys and the choice of a new helmsman. After that, we get in each case departure and the continuation of the voyage along the southern coast of Black Sea and the sailing past Prometheus, before the arrival in the Phasis, a long-awaited event that is greeted with a prayer, by Ancaeus in Apollonius, by Jason in Valerius' version. Within such obviously parallel accounts of the same events, one difference grabs the attention, and that is the placing of the book division. Where Apollonius had placed it in between the moment of arrival and the invocation of Erato that opens the third book, thus cutting his epic very precisely into two halves of two books each, Valerius places his book division immediately before the death of Idmon, and we have to wait until 5, 217

²⁶ See NELIS (2001, 255-66) for fuller discussion of all these points.

²⁷ HUTCHINSON (2013, 174) has argued thus in an important contribution to the study of the intertextual technique of Valerius: «as regards episodes and narrative, while Apollonius forms a sequential intertext, relation to the *Aeneid*'s scenes is non-sequential and multiple».

to get the invocation of the Muse. But once Vergil is brought into the picture, Valerius' variation on the Apollonian model becomes readily comprehensible. Being fully aware of the nature and extent of Vergil's reworking at the end of *Aen.* 6 and the start of *Aen.* 7 of the Apollonian handling of the transition from book 2 to book 3, Valerius's imitative strategy is only comprehensible when seen as combining allusion to both models. Rather too often, scholars working on Valerius treat his use of Apollonius and Vergil as two separate strands. But in fact they are almost always inextricably connected, because Valerius was a keen and informed reader of the full extent of Apollonian influence on the *Aeneid*. In this particular case, it is easy to see how, after careful study of the intertextual nexus linking his two main sources, he chooses to imitate different aspects of both. And in planning this section of his narrative, he clearly considered as a key structural element the placing of the death of Idmon in precisely the same place as that of the Vergilian Caieta, that is as the first episode of the first book of the second half of his epic (as argued already by Schetter 1959, but without taking into account the full extent of Valerius' debt to both Apollonius and Vergil). In diagrammatic form the essential elements underpinning the relationship between the three poems can be presented thus:

Val. Fl. 4-5		Verg. 6-7		Ap. Rh. 2-3
Symplegades	-----	Hades	-----	Symplegades
Mariandyni	-----		-----	Mariandyni
Book division		Book division		
Idmon	-----	Caieta	-----	Idmon
New helmsman	-----		-----	New helmsman
Prometheus	-----	Circe	-----	Prometheus
Phasis	-----	Tiber	-----	Phasis
Prayer	-----		-----	Prayer
				Book division
Muse	-----	Muse	-----	Muse

Reading down the first column and then looking across at the other two, one can see instantly how Valerius's narrative is based on both models simultaneously. For example, Vergil having modelled his Circe episode on Apollonius' Prometheus episode, Valerius draws on both. For verbal allusion to Vergil compare Val. Fl. 5, 168-70, *tum gemitu propiore chalybs densusque revulsis | rupibus audiri montis labor et grave Titan | vociferans* («then as the **roar** grew nearer the sound of the

iron and the rending of the mountain **is heard**, and the loud clamour of Prometheus»²⁸) and *Aen.* 7, 15, *hinc exaudiri gemitus iraeque leonum* («from these shores **could be heard** the angry **roars** of lions»²⁹).

And Vergil having turned the Phasis into the Tiber, Valerius has once again the Phasis, but one that is similar to the Tiber³⁰. And crucially, it is immediately obvious that Valerius' placing of Idmon's death at the start of book 5 corresponds to Vergil's placing of the death of Caieta at the opening of *Aen.* 7, and that all this must have been the result of long and careful planning on Valerius' part. When working out his own version of the story he must have studied systematically Vergil's use of the narrative structure of Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Once this knowledge was acquired, Valerius was able to work with Apollonius and Vergil in a perfectly coherent manner, drawing on both models in order to build his own account of the voyage of the Argonauts.

Having attempted to analyse the text on the level of epic action and overall narrative structure, we can now return to the matter of the slight verbal similarities that seemed to exist between Val. Fl. 5, 1-12 and *Aen.* 7, 1-7. To the question asked earlier about whether we are dealing with accidental verbal confluence or highly subtle verbal reference, I would suggest that we can lean decisively in favour of the latter. Given the similarity of action and the parallel book structure we have been looking at, it is surely hard to believe that the verbal traces occurring in the Idmon and Caieta episodes are totally accidental. Rather, it seems much easier to accept that Valerius' imitative technique is built on a combination of referential strategies, all simultaneously active, by means of which his evolving narrative is constantly and dynamically linked to its two fundamental models, the already tightly interconnected voyages of Apollonius' Argonauts and Vergil's Trojans. As we have seen in our analysis of the handling of Idmon, basic similarity of action (death of a comrade, burial, departure) exists alongside adroit variation on standard epic *topoi* (description of dawn), narrative placing (dawn and death at book opening) and subtle verbal patterning (e.g. Valerius' *at ... | ho...s sedem...us* and Vergil's *...at ho...s sedem...us*. Or again, *at memor Aesonides* and *at pius exsequiis Aeneas* or *at pius Aeneas*). One could hazard the guess that the verbal similarities are so remarkably slight precisely because the narrative and topical connections are so obvious. But what is more important methodologically for the study of Augustan, Neronian and Flavian epic poetry is to accept the implications of the fact that the

²⁸ Translation by MOZLEY (1934).

²⁹ Translation by FAIRCLOUGH – GOOLD (1999-2001), modified.

³⁰ For verbal traces compare Val. Fl. 5, 177-91 and *Aen.* 7, 25-36, where we find *in aequor...ruit ~ in mare prorumpit*; *fluvio = fluvio*; *tumulumque...videt ~ lucum prospicit*; *socios iubet ~ sociis...imperat*.

texts in question are constantly referential on all these closely interrelated levels. And the lesson to be drawn is one that should certainly give pause for thought: despite all that has been achieved in the study of the allusive nature of post-Vergilian Latin epic, much detailed and systematic work remains to be done. It is only by undertaking this kind of study that we will be able to arrive at a better understanding of how Valerius Flaccus read the *Aeneid* as a profoundly Argonautic poem. And on a wider scale, scholars interested in the history of a given myth, taking into account all its types and variations, need to pay close attention to debates about the very nature of intertextuality in Greek and Latin poetry. The rewriting of a myth and the dynamics of allusion go hand in hand.

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