

Emendations in Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* book 4*

Abstract: The paper tackles about a dozen passages from book 4 of Valerius' *Argonautica*, arguing that the poem's text remains full of unsolved problems.

Keywords: Latin poetry, textual criticism, Hylas, Prometheus, Amycus, Io, Phineus, Harpies, Symplegades

This paper continues a series of articles on the text of Valerius' *Argonautica*, which is intended to cover eventually all of the poem's eight books.¹ Rather than providing a systematic textual commentary on Valerius' epic, the project's aim is more modest: to offer a few fresh ideas for emending the text of the *Argonautica*, and in doing so to demonstrate (or at least to illustrate) that it still is full of unsolved, and sometimes unrecognised, problems. I am convinced that this will remain true even after the project is completed, and that further scrutiny will have ample potential to detect more corruptions and to discover new corrections: what follows is just a selection of passages in treating which I hope to be able to make some tangible (if far from definitive) progress. Although on occasion I also endorse old (usually neglected) conjectures, it is likewise my conviction that further engagement with earlier textual scholarship will continue to offer opportunities for improving Valerius' text (as it is

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¹ “Emendations in Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* book 8,” *CQ* (forthcoming), “Further emendations in Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* book 8,” *RhM* (forthcoming), “Emendations in Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* book 7,”

found in the current editions). Since a fuller introduction is offered in the first instalment (on book 8), I shall not repeat here my account of Valerius' textual tradition; in any event, conjectural criticism is mostly concerned not with the establishing of the paradosis, but with correcting the paradosis when it appears to be corrupt. A brief methodological statement, however, may be in order: the diagnosis of corruption usually entails a negative claim ('the suspect feature is unparalleled'), and since the opposite positive claim ('the suspect feature is paralleled in such and such context') is susceptible of far more straightforward demonstration, the burden of proof should be assigned to defenders of the transmitted text. In practical terms this means that if the available commentaries fail to explain the paradosis in a satisfactory fashion, it is safe to assume that it is corrupt – until the opposite is demonstrated.² For every passage I discuss, I start by printing a version of the current 'vulgate' (usually a compromise between Ehlers's 1980 and Liberman's 1997 text, if they disagree), with a minimal apparatus if necessary (γ is the archetype of the extant manuscripts; C is Carrion's collation of a lost manuscript independent of γ).

***Argonautica* 4.23**

After fruitlessly searching for Hylas, abducted by a local nymph, Hercules falls asleep and sees his lost friend in a dream (22–24):

ecce puer summa se tollere uisus ab unda

Mnemosyne (forthcoming), "Emendations in Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* book 6," *CQ* (forthcoming), "Emendations in Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* book 5," *MH* (forthcoming).

² I have taken into account the following editions and commentaries, though I may not always cite them individually: Thilo (1863), Langen (1897), Giarratano (1904), Courtney (1970), Ehlers (1980), Korn (1989), Campanini (1996), Liberman (1997), Spaltenstein (2004), Murgatroyd (2009), Mariné Isidro (2017).

frondibus in croceis et iniquae munere nymphae
stansque super carum tales caput edere uoces.

What are the ‘saffron leaves’ that Hylas is wearing? Murgatroyd (2009: 42) takes the reference to imply “a garland of leaves from trees growing on his stream’s banks,” while apparently interpreting the adjective as denoting a bright hue (salad green?) and bearing a largely symbolic significance. Spaltenstein (2004: 210) takes the phrase to refer to reeds, with which Hylas’ head is said to be covered in Mopsus’ prophetic vision at 1.118–119 *subita cur pulcher harundine crines | uelat Hylas?* While water deities do indeed often appear wearing a wreath of reeds, we need not expect consistency between the two contexts (variation might be as likely, if not more so), and as Spaltenstein admits, reeds are usually depicted as having a darker green(ish) hue (cf. e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 10.205–206 *uelatus harundine glauca | Mincius*).³ Korn (1989: 34–35) and Liberman (1997: 116) take the adjective literally, assuming that a wreath of crocuses is implied; on the one hand, however, it is not clear why Hylas should be wearing crocuses, on the other, ‘foliage’ (*frondes*) would be an odd metonymy for ‘flower’. Besides none of these explanations being compelling in and of itself, there is also no strong reason to prefer one over another, and that too suggests that the text may be corrupt. How can it be emended? One option is to replace *croceis* with a more suitable epithet that would harmonise the context with 1.118–119, and *glaucis* seems the obvious candidate: we may compare 3.436 *glaucasque comis praetexere frondes* (olive branches?), but even more

³ Internal inconsistencies are a known feature of Latin epic, see in general O’Hara (2007); more specifically, note that Mopsus’ prophecy is not fully consistent with the actual events in other details as well, as pointed out by Zissos (1999: 293): “Mopsus clearly indicates here that Hylas is abducted while fetching water (*urna umeris*, 1.219). But when events unfold in Book 3 the poet deviates from his prophet, describing Hylas as hunting a stag rather than fetching water at this moment (3.545–51).”

relevant would be Sil. 4.659–660 *tum madidos crines et glauca fronde reuinctum | attollit cum uoce caput* (of a river god). The alternative, which I believe is superior, is to change *frondibus* to *floribus*, taking it to refer to the waterlily, νυμφαία.⁴ While, as a new water deity, Hylas may have as good a reason to be adorned with reeds as with aquatic flowers, the latter make far better sense as a nymph’s erotic gift.⁵ In fact, *iniquae munere nympphae* may be intended as an etymological gloss alluding to the Greek term; while the etymology is quite transparent, it is spelt out by Pliny: *nymphaea nata traditur nymppha zelotypia erga Herculem mortua* (HN 25.75), an aetiology that interestingly likewise involves erotic rivalry between a nymph and Hercules.⁶ Though here Pliny apparently speaks of the white waterlily (*Nymphaea alba*), in the next paragraph he acknowledges the existence of a yellow species (*Nuphar lutea*), specifying its colour with the established native Latin equivalent of *croceus* (25.76 *est et alia nymphaea in Thessalia, amne Penio, radice alba, capite luteo, rosae magnitudine*). While Valerius can most naturally be assumed to be referring to the yellow waterlily, his wording is no doubt intended to allude to Ovid’s account of the origin of the daffodil (Ov. Met. 3.509–510 *croceum pro corpore florem | inueniunt foliis medium cingentibus albis*, implying a bicolour variety such as the *Narcissus poeticus*): it may not be entirely impossible that *floribus in croceis* should be taken as a *pars pro toto*, referring to the yellow centre of the *Nymphaea alba*.

***Argonautica* 4.67**

⁴ For the corruption, cf. *frondebat* read by a group of manuscripts for the archetype’s *florebat* at *Ciris* 121.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Nic. *Georg.* fr. 74.4–5 ἄσσα τ’ Ἰωνιάδες Νύμφαι στέφος ἄγνόν Ἴωνι | Πισαίοις ποθέσασαι ἐνὶ κλήροισιν ὄρεζαν, where a wreath of violets is similarly being offered as an erotic gift by the local nymphs.

⁶ It is not clear which story Pliny is referring to, but it appears a priori not unlikely that Valerius would have been aware of it (or a similar one), or indeed that waterlilies featured in a version of the Hylas myth.

Now that Hercules is no longer part of the Argonauts' expedition, Apollo implores Jupiter to let him free Prometheus (63–67):

nullumne malorum
finem adeo poenaeque dabis? te cuncta precatur
gens hominum atque ipsi iam te, pater optime, montes
fessaque cum siluis orant iuga. sat tibi furtum
ignis et aetheriae defensa silentia mensae.

The last line of the quoted passage hosts three problems. First, *defendere* needs to mean 'to punish' with *furtum*, a sense that is not attested in classical Latin.⁷ Second, with *silentia* it will naturally mean 'to protect', so a harsh zeugma has to be assumed. Third, it is not clear what *silentia mensae* can refer to in connection with Prometheus. Concerning the last issue, Murgatroyd (2009: 61) is no doubt right when he writes:

the reference could be to the story of Prometheus tricking Jupiter into choosing the worst part of the bull by wrapping up the bones in fat (Hes. *Theog.* 535ff.) [...]. That trick is connected with the theft of fire at Hes. *Theog.* 562ff. (as a result Zeus withheld fire from man, and Prometheus then stole it), and Lucian states specifically that it was punished by the chaining in the Caucasus.

But his suggestion that *silentia* could refer to Jupiter's attempting to keep the story quiet is

⁷ *TLL* 5(1).305.2–3 cites Trag. inc. 84 Ribbeck *ad Troiam cum misi ob defendendam Graeciam* and Caes. *BC* 1.7.8 *imperatoris sui tribunorumque plebis iniurias defendere* as potential attestations, but in the former case the sense appears to be 'to defend, to fight for', in the latter 'to defend against, to protect from'.

farfetched. It appears fairly certain that *silentia* is a corruption, possibly attributable to scribal reminiscence of 3.608 *silentia mensae* (some two-hundred lines earlier), which would mean that the original word may not have been close to *silentia* in ductus.⁸ We need a reference to Prometheus' offence against the gods' table that would parallel *furtum*, and the term that naturally comes to mind is *iniuria* (for the collocation, cf. Stat. *Theb.* 1.247 *Tantalus et saeuae periit iniuria mensae*; for pairing *furtum* and *iniuria*, cf. Ov. *Met.* 3.266–267 *at, puto, furto est | contenta, et thalami brevis est iniuria nostri*).⁹ This change solves the second and the third problems, but the first remains, and it is more serious than appears to have been realised: it is not only that the required sense is post-classical, but, more importantly, with *furtum* (and *iniuria*) the verb will naturally have its primary sense “to avert, fend off” (*OLD* s.v. *defendo* 1b), which in the context will produce a strikingly subversive effect (‘you have sufficiently prevented the theft of fire and the offence against our cuisine’ – far from, and the damage was permanent). What can *defensa* be concealing? One option is to restore a word that would refer to Jupiter's punishing or avenging Prometheus' crimes (taking *tibi* as a dative of agent): I can only think of *punita*, but the corruption would be difficult to account for.¹⁰

⁸ It might be objected that a scribe would be unlikely to remember a phrase used two-hundred lines earlier, but (subconscious) memory does not always work in a predictable way; note e.g. that Tarrant (2016: 58) plausibly attributes a variant reading at Ov. *Met.* 12.103 to scribal reminiscence of 1.140, or that Heyworth (2007: 113, 345, 355) cites Prop. 1.2.8 to explain corruption at 2.1.58 (almost an entire book intervening), 2.23.14 for 3.12.17 (about 1000 lines), 3.8.17 for 3.13.59 (some 200 lines). This is not to say that my explanation of the postulated corruption is certain, only that it is not implausible; moreover, as I suggest in the following footnote, a palaeographical explanation is also available (the two need not be mutually exclusive).

⁹ If we assume dittography of *sa*, it is not so difficult to imagine *fañ-* being misread as *file-* (with *-uria* = *-ntia*), fresh in the scribe's mind from 3.608.

¹⁰ Palaeographically easier would be *reprensa*, but the verb seems too weak for the context (“rebuke, censure”, *OLD* s.v. *repre(he)ndo* 5).

Alternatively the participle could refer to Prometheus' paying for his crimes, and I tentatively suggest *dependsa*. While the verb is unparalleled with a direct object denoting the offence, it can be used in reference to paying a penalty (Cic. *Cat.* 4.10 *poenas rei publicae dependisse*, *Sest.* 141 *omnes fere rei publicae poenas aut praesenti morte aut turpi exsilio dependerunt*, Ulp. *Dig.* 12.6.42.pr. *poenae non solent repeti, cum dependae sunt*; cf. further Apul. *Met.* 7.9 *uindictae uobis depensuram*): 'paying off one's offence' seems a plausible compression for 'paying off a penalty for one's offence'.

Argonautica 4.73

Iapetus too raises his voice from the underworld in support of Prometheus (73–74):

tunc etiam superas Acheronte auditus ad arces

Iapetus, grauis orantem procul arcet Erinys.

73 *superas ed. pr.*: super γ | auditus γ: -ur C

Besides the slight uncertainty in the paradosis, the bare ablative *Acheronte* is a cause for concern: Korn (1989: 66) illustrates it with Lucr. 4.37–38 *ne forte animas Acherunte reamur | effugere* and Verg. *Aen.* 5.99 *manesque Acheronte remissos*, but in both cases the notion of separation is implied by the verb; there is no such implication in *audiri*, and a bare ablative should most naturally be taken in a locative sense.¹¹ Moreover, *ab Acheronte superas ad arces auditus* would mean 'heard everywhere from the underworld up to heaven', not that his

¹¹ Spaltenstein (2004) and Murgatroyd (2009) do not bother at all.

crying in the underworld was heard in heaven.¹² Finally, though in and of itself unobjectionable, it is conspicuous that *arces* appears almost exactly over *arcet* in the next line. I think *ab* is required (cf. 5.140–141 *clausis telluris ab antris | peruigil auditur Chalybum labor*, Stat. *Theb.* 5.94 *a summis auditus montibus Euhan*), and the one place it can easily be restored in is instead of *ad* (the confusion between the two prepositions/prefixes is ubiquitous, but note e.g. *abripit* for *adripit* [Heinsius] at 144). This in turn will mean that *arces*, no doubt produced under the influence of *arcet* below it, conceals an epithet for *Acheronte*, and palaeographically the easiest option would be *atro* (cf. Sen. *Ag.* 606 *Acherontis atri*), though other alternatives may also be possible, such as *imo* (cf. e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 11.23 *Acheronte sub imo*). This leaves us with *superas* to deal with, but it is a conjecture, and γ’s *super* may no less easily be a remnant of *superis* (cf. Sil. 11.460 *auditus superis, auditus manibus Orpheus*). In sum: *superis Acheronte auditus ab atro*, ‘Iapetus was heard by the upper gods all the way from the dark Acheron’.

***Argonautica* 4.215**

In Bebrycia the Argonauts encounter Amycus, who cannot wait to fight them (214–215):

iam pridem caestus resides et frigida raris
dentibus aret humus.

I think Liberman (1997: 263–264 n. 36) was right to suspect *dentibus*, *pace* Spaltenstein (2004: 258: “*caedibus* de Li. banalise”): (1) *dentes rari* properly means ‘gaping teeth’,

¹² Unless it is used with a verb of motion, the construction with *ab* and *ad* denotes a span of space or time, cf. e.g. Cic. *Arat.* fr. 34.136 *a malo ad puppim clara cum luce uidetur*, Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.4 *talos a uertice pulcher ad imos*, Ov. *Met.* 5.445 *solis ab occasu solis quaerebat ad ortus*.

‘incomplete set of teeth’, as noted by Korn (1989: 150–151), which incongruously conjures up the image of an anthropomorphic figure with missing teeth; (2) relatedly, it takes some strain to read *raris dentibus* as an ablative absolute, while construing it with either *frigida* or *aret* produces an absurdity; (3) apart from the implication being both extremely vague and extremely hyperbolic (how many teeth, and of how many adversaries, should one expect to be lying around for them not to be perceived as *rari*?), it also makes no practical sense: while blood can be quickly absorbed by the soil and/or dry up, teeth would just remain where they fell more or less indefinitely, so their low number cannot support the point of *pridem* ‘for a long time’ in the same way as *frigida* and *aret* do.¹³ I also think that Liberman was right to propose *caedibus*, but I would further suggest that his case can additionally be supported with two arguments.¹⁴ First, the Valerian passage alludes to Verg. *Aen.* 8.195–196 *semperque | caede tepebat humus* (with *pridem* and *raris* contrasting *semperque recenti*, and *frigida ... aret* reversing *tepebat*), the Virgilian Cacus episode being an important model for Valerius’ treatment of Amycus.¹⁵ Second, *dentibus* can plausibly be explained as a scribal correction for *[c]aedibus* misread as *dedibus*, after the loss of line-initial *c*. Finally, to Spaltenstein’s charge that *caedibus* is a banalisation, one may respond with a thought experiment: assuming both *caedibus* and *dentibus* were transmitted variants, how likely would editors be to prefer the latter?

¹³ Korn (1989: 150–151) aptly cites Plin. *HN* 11.274 *uitae brevis signa ponit raros dentes*, Suet. *Aug.* 79.2 *dentes raros et exiguos et scabros*, add Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.55 *spiritum cum stridore per raritatem dentium non recipiunt sed resorbent*.

¹⁴ I cannot parallel *caedes* with *rarus*, but for the adjective used of a liquid, note e.g. Hor. *Carm.* 4.1.34 *manat rara meas lacrima per genas*; though here *caedes* may be intended in its more usual abstract sense: ‘because of the infrequency of bloodshed, the earth is cold and dry’.

¹⁵ See e.g. Murgatroyd (2008: 385–386).

Argonautica 4.229

Castor feels anxious for his brother, as he is preparing to fight Amycus (226–229):

tum pauor et gelidus defixit Castora sanguis,
nam nec ad Elei pugnam uidet ora parentis
nec sonat Oebalius caueae fauor aut iuga nota
Taygeti, †labitur† patrios ubi uictor ad amnes...

229 labitur γ: capitur C

This is a well-known issue: γ’s *labitur* is both nonsensical and unmetrical, while C’s *capitur* is simply nonsensical (see Liberman 1997: 264–265 n. 38). Most editors adopt the old conjecture *lauitur*, but it has two weaknesses: (1) *ad* is an odd choice to express the notion of having a bath *in* a river; (2) having a bath is an unlikely occasion for being cheered by fans (*pace* Spaltenstein 2004: 261). However, both Meyncke’s *rapitur* and Liberman’s *canitur* (which he supports with Pind. *Ol.* 7.15 ἄνδρα παρ’ Ἀλφειῷ στεφανώσάμενον) are less than ideal too: *rapi* is not a suitable verb to describe the movements of a champion (*OLD* s.v. *rapio* 8a: ‘(refl., or pass. in middle sense) To take oneself off hurriedly, rush off or along’), while the references to ‘cheering’ (*fauor*) and ‘singing’ (*canitur*) would be either tautological (if they imply more or less the same activity) or incompatible (if they imply different activities). I believe what we need is the old anonymous conjecture *graditur* (the corruption was no doubt triggered by the omission of *g*), which appears to have been completely ignored since Giarratano (1904: 37). The verb is perfectly suitable in reference to a solemn procession (*OLD* s.v. *gradior*: “To make one’s way [...], proceed, step, walk (esp. in a stately or

deliberate manner”) and is in fact often accompanied by *uictor* in a predicative role (note esp. 2.545–548 *superabat ouanti | litora tuta gradu* [sc. Hercules], *qualis per pascua uictor | ingreditur [...] | taurus*).¹⁶

***Argonautica* 4.380**

Orpheus recounts the story of Io (376–380):

illa, ubi uel fessi tremerent erroribus artus
uel rueret summo iam frigidus aethere uesper,
heu quotiens saxo posuit latus aut, ubi longa
aegra siti, quos ore lacus, quae pabula carpsit,
uerbere candentes quotiens exhorruit armos.

Although not usually considered textually suspect, the passage has two difficulties: first, the syntactic articulation of its latter half (beginning with 378 *aut, ubi...*); second, the meaning of its last line. The overall structure is bipartite, each part consisting of an opening subordinate temporal clause (*ubi...*) and a following main clause that is an exclamatory question (378 *quotiens ... posuit* and 380 *quotiens exhorruit*); within this structure, the intervening exclamatory question clause in 379 (*quos ... quae ... carpsit*) is usually taken as coordinate with the second *quotiens* clause, but there are two reasons to doubt this construal. On the one hand, it violates the symmetry of the passage (two instances of *ubi* answered by *quotiens*),

¹⁶ Cf. further Verg. *Aen.* 6.855–856 *insignis spoliis Marcellus opimis | ingreditur uictorque uiros supereminet omnes*, Sil. 12.279–280 *graditur comitante triumpho* [sc. Marcellus] | *maior quam ferret cum uictor opima Tonanti*, Corip. *Ioh.* 6.61–62 *ingreditur uictor populo gaudente triumphans | urbem per mediam*, Vell. 2.56.1 *Caesar omnium uictor regressus in urbem*, 122.1 *Vindelicorum Raetorumque uictor curru urbem ingredi*.

with additionally *quos* and *quae* failing to match the temporal force of *quotiens*.¹⁷ On the other, it is not clear why being thirsty (*aegra siti*) should be a premise to eating grass (*pabula carpsit*), let alone to being flogged (380), as it naturally is to drinking (*lacus ... carpsit*). The passage will make far better sense if we take *quos ore lacus, quae pabula carpsit* as a parenthetical aside, motivated by (but not strictly predicated on) the *ubi* clause: when a reference is made to Io's thirst, Orpheus interjects – 'and what pools, what fodder she had to taste!' (for the implication, cf. Ov. *Met.* 1.632 *frondibus arboreis et amara pascitur herba*, 634 *limosaque flumina potat*) – before continuing with the main *quotiens* clause, to which we finally turn. The line is usually taken to mean something like 'how often she shuddered with her fore-quarters in fear of flogging', but this interpretation has at least three weak points. First, with *exhorrescere* the object of fear is normally expressed by the accusative, not the ablative. Second, it is an awkward notion that Io should shudder with a part of her body (and anyway one could expect the hind- rather than the fore-quarters to be receiving lashes) – *exhorrescere* is normally used of a person as a whole, and is predominantly metaphorical ('to dread') rather than physical ('to tremble').¹⁸ Third, there seem to be no parallels for Argus pursuing Io with a whip. Heinsius proposed reading *uerbera candenti ... armo*, which alleviates the grammatical problem but does not improve the sense. I believe this approach is

¹⁷ Thus Liberman (1997: 130) takes *quos* and *quae* in the sense of *quot* (apart from other imprecisions): "de la source de combien de lacs n'a-t-elle pas, altérée depuis longtemps, approché ses lèvres, combien de pâturages n'a-t-elle pas broutés, combien de fois ne fut-elle pas horrifiée de se voir des épaules enflammées par les coups."

¹⁸ Cf. Murgatroyd (2009: 193): "some take this to mean that she physically trembled with respect to her shoulders because of a blow or blows struck/about to be struck, but it seems improbable that just her shoulders would quiver (and not also, for example, her forelegs), even if that was where she had been flogged or feared a flogging. It is more likely that she shuddered at (the painful state of) her shoulders because of a lash or lashes (already inflicted on them)." The latter interpretation, however, can hardly be extracted from the Latin.

fundamentally wrong; I suggest the line should be taken to develop the topos of a metamorphosed beauty anguished by the sight of her new body: ‘how often Io shuddered at her white fore-quarters (of a cow)’ (cf. esp. *Ciris* 81–82 *heu quotiens mirata novos expalluit artus*, | *ipsa suos quotiens heu pertimuit latratus*, of Scylla made a monster: it seems likely that both the *Ciris* and Valerius, or rather Orpheus, are alluding to Calvus’ *Io*). This is the normal function of the accusative with *exhorrescere*, but more importantly, it explains the relevance of the *ubi* clause: when she succumbs to thirst, Io is forced to look at her bovine reflection in the water as she drinks (cf. *Ov. Met.* 1.640–641 *nouaque ut conspexit in unda | cornua, pertimuit seque exsternata refugit*). The one remaining detail to clear up is *uerbere*, which I suggest is a corruption for *uellere*: what horrifies Io is not only that she now has animal *armos*, but also that they are covered with white fur.¹⁹

***Argonautica* 4.490**

The Argonauts prepare a meal for Phineus, but just as he is about to start eating, he senses the Harpies coming (489–491):

uescique iubent ac mittere curas,
cum subitus misero tremor et pallentia primae
ora senis fugere manus.

Besides some minor issues in the manuscripts (not reported here), the passage is generally considered sound; there is, however, a potential problem. Commentators take *primae* ...

¹⁹ Although *uellus* does not seem elsewhere to be used by Valerius in reference to objects other than the golden fleece, note 6.135–136 *Thysageten cinctumque uagis post terga silebo | pellibus*, where *pellis* (likewise mostly reserved for the golden fleece) refers to another kind of animal skin.

manus to mean ‘fingers’ (see e.g. Murgatroyd 2009: 243), but this reading is not entirely convincing. To begin with, there are no exact parallels for *primae manus* meaning ‘the hands’ extremities’, though in and of itself this need not be a strong objection. More essentially, this use of *primus* with body parts has a (so to speak) delimitative or localising force: with greater or lesser emphasis, it conveys that only a part of the limb is affected by, or involved in, an action (cf. esp. 8.44 *primis supplex dedit oscula palmis*, Prop. 2.26.11 *uix primas extollens gurgite palmas*); in other words, rather than producing an inert periphrasis for (say) ‘fingers’, it expresses focus (in the linguistic sense), and it would be odd to hear that Phineus’ very fingers (or only his fingers) fell away from his mouth.²⁰ Besides, the role of grammatical subject performed by *manus* endows the noun with a degree of agency, which further exacerbates the oddity of the expression (‘the hands in their extremities fled from the mouth’). As often, Spaltenstein is sensitive enough to notice that “cette expression a quelque chose d’étrangement compliqué” (though, as often, not decisive enough to suspect corruption).²¹ I suggest we should read *pronae* (for the corruption, cf. esp. Man. 3.359): the adjective can be used of body parts (“directed downwards or towards the ground (esp. of parts of the body),” *OLD* s.v. *pronus* 2b, note esp. [Tib.] 3.6.6 *et nobis prona funde Falerna manu*), though here it no doubt is used predicatively with *fugere* to specify that downward motion is implied (cf. Sen. *Nat.* 6.17.2 *uim ruina parat et prona cum ipsis quae obiacebant fugit*), the point being that Phineus is no longer able to hold his hands raised and steady (cf. *tremor*) and lets them fall, rather than (say) that he pulls them away from his mouth in disgust.

²⁰ Or indeed that ‘his hands were the first to flee from his mouth’ – another dangerously real possibility.

²¹ Spaltenstein (2004: 323); he also tentatively suggests to “penser à une transposition pour *primum*, sc. avant que les Harpies soient sur place,” but this will be in conflict with the following lines stating that the Argonauts did not realise the Harpies were coming until they were already there.

Argonautica 4.497

The Harpies defile the banquet the Argonauts are about to share with Phineus (497–498):

tum sola conluuie atque inlusis stramina mensis
foeda rigant.

The most salient problem here is *inlusis*, which fails to produce a fitting sense in the context: recent editors and commentators follow Strand (1972: 102–103) in taking the verb to mean ‘to violate’, but it is doubtful that it can denote physical violence as such (see *OLD* s.v. *illudo*), while the notion of mockery and torture would be misplaced here (the Harpies might be said to torment Phineus, but hardly the tables). A previously popular conjecture is *inlisis* ‘crushed’, but, irrespective of how fitting the idea of the Harpies crushing the tables is for the context (one might rather expect something like *inuersis*), it only highlights the uncertainty of the overall image. The implication must apparently be that the ground (*sola*) and the rugs (*stramina*) are being defiled with the food and wine that the Harpies sweep off the tables; this, however, comes as an anticlimax after the reference to *conluuie*, with which *inlusis* ... *mensis* is syntactically coordinate (and thus cannot be an ablative absolute, *pace* Spaltenstein 2004: 325). What, actually, does *conluuie* mean? Murgatroyd (2009: 245) paraphrases it with ‘excrement’, and this is indeed the expected sense, especially in the light of the Virgilian model (*Aen.* 3.216–217 *foedissima uentris* | *proluuies*). It is, however, questionable whether the word can have that meaning: in contrast to *proluuies* which properly means ‘discharge, effusion’, *colluuies* means ‘collected muck, sewage’ more generally; or to put it another way, while both terms can denote ‘liquid dirt’, the former refers to it in terms of its source, the latter in terms of where it is contained, and as such it should imply a polluting agent that has a source external to the Harpies’ bodies. I find it difficult to explain why Valerius would have

substituted *colluuiēs* for Virgil's *proluuiēs*, and to me it seems a real possibility that he did not, and that it was a scribe who misread an abbreviation for *pro* (*p*) as one for *con* (*o* or *c̄*).²² This, in turn, can only strengthen our suspicion of *inlusis* ... *mensis*, and I suggest that we read *infusis* ... *merdis* (both misreadings would be easy: *fu* → *lu*, esp. after *pro[con]luuie*, and *rd* → *nf*). Although *merda* is absent in literary prose and rare in poetry (never in higher-register genres), it is indelicate rather than obscene, and seems to have been the proper term for the excrements of animals, in particular birds (note esp. Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.37–38 *merdis caput inquiner albis | coruorum*); it is a strong word (see Adams 1982: 233–234), but quite apt to bring out the repugnancy of the Harpies' attack.

Argonautica 4.686

The Argonauts are attempting to pass through the Symplegades (686–688):

inde, uelut mixtis Vulcanius ardor harenis
uerset aquas, sic ima fremunt fluctuque coacto
angitur et clausum scopulos super effluit aequor.

The passage describes the turbulent waters between the moving rocks, and commentators take the simile to refer to an underwater eruption; yet there are reasons to doubt such an interpretation. First of all, this would be a case of *obscurum per obscurius*, or at least *per aequae obscurum*: underwater eruptions are not a commonly observed phenomenon. Besides, there is little in the text to suggest an eruption, and the reference to sand is odd: surely sand is

²² For corruption involving confusion between (word-initial) *p* and *c*, cf. e.g. Sen. *Phaedr.* 740 *porrigit* → *corripit*; see further Zwierlein (1986: 485).

not the most salient substance that will be propelled through water by an exploding volcano.²³

I find it inconceivable that recent editors fail to appreciate, or at least to mention, Sabellicus' old conjecture *aenis* (completely ignored since Giarratano 1904: 43), which is undoubtedly right (*ahenis* → *arenis* is quite straightforward). The image of water being boiled in a kettle exactly matches what happens between the Symplegades (the sea seething near the bottom, *ima fremunt*, and then spilling over, *scopulos super effluit*), and there are several parallels for such a simile.²⁴ It is, however, less clear what to do with *mixtis*, and this may partly explain why *aenis* has not been adopted by everyone. Sabellicus is reported to have conjectured *mixtus*, which I do not understand, while Heinsius proposed *mixtas*, which seems to express more or less the same idea as *uerset* and not in an idiomatic way (it raises the expectation that the water is being mixed with another substance). The simplest solution is to write *magnis* (cf. *patulum ... aenum* at Avien. *Arat.* 1722 quoted n. 24): *mixtis* might be a scribal correction attempting to make sense of the text after *aenis* had been corrupted to *harenis*.

***Argonautica* 4.705, 707**

Having successfully passed through the Symplegades, Jason is terrified by the prospect of having to face them again on his return journey (703–707):

nec uero ipse metus curasque resolvere ductor,

²³ Contrast e.g. Sen. *Nat.* 2.26.5 *deinde saxa euoluta rupesque partim illaesae, quas spiritus, antequam urerentur, expulerat, partim exesae et in leuitatem pumicis uersae.*

²⁴ Verg. *Aen.* 7.462–466 *magno ueluti cum flamma sonore | uirgea suggeritur costis undantis aeni | exsultantque aestu latices, furit intus aquai | fumidus atque alte spumis exuberat amnis, | nec iam se capit unda, uolat uapor ater ad auras*, Luc. 9.798–799 *spumeus accenso non sic exundat aeno | undarum cumulus*, Sil. 5.605–606 *ut multo accensis feruore exuberat undis | clausus ubi exusto liquor indignatur aeno*; cf. further Avien. *Arat.* 1722 *patulum torret Vulcanus aenum.*

sed maria aspectans: heu qui datus iste deorum
sorte labor nobis. serum ut ueniamus ad amnem
Phasidis et mites, inquit, dent uellera Colchi,
unde per hos iterum montes fuga?

Commentators do not explain the sentence taking up the second half of the quoted passage, but it would seem that interpreting the *ut* clause in the sense of *OLD* s.v. 35b “(in conceding a point for the argument’s sake) even supposing” is the most attractive option: even if the Argonauts have success in Colchis (which is far from guaranteed), they will have to pass through the Symplegades for a second time. But I do not understand *unde*: it does not mean ‘how’, and Barich (2009: 134) seems to have a point when he omits the question word altogether in his translation (“Must we a second time escape these mountains?”).²⁵ The easiest solution would be to write *inde* (‘from *there* we will have to return through the Symplegades again?’), though other options may be possible too, for instance *deinde* (‘thereafter’). However, my main concern is with *serum*: apart from the uncertainty as to its grammatical construal (should it be taken as an adverb or an adjective in agreement with *amnem*?), its basic connotation is negative (‘*too* late’), which is out of place here, as Jason is envisioning a successful completion of the outward journey. I have considered proposing *lenem* (to match *mites* used of *Colchi* in the next line), but perhaps more straightforward will be *demum*: as Murgatroyd (2009: 336) comments, “Jason is picking up Phineus’ remarks about the journey

²⁵ It has been suggested to me that “From what source, cause” (*OLD* s.v. *unde* 3) can account for its use here, but ‘why, for what reason’ is not the same as ‘how, by what means’. Moreover, with a term like *fuga*, *unde* should naturally have its primary spatial sense (‘from where’), and even if it were to have an abstract meaning, it would be ‘why’ (‘why do we have to pass through the Symplegades again?’), not ‘how’, but both ‘from where’ and ‘why’ make no sense in the context.

to Colchis now before them at 587–616 (and actually echoing 616)” – with *demum*, the echo of 616 *sic demum rapidi uenies ad Phasidis amnem* will be even more pointed (‘supposing we do indeed reach the Phasis *eventually*’).

Argonautica 4.729

The Black Sea freezes in winter (729–732):

illic umbrosae semper stant aequore nubes
et non certa dies, primo nec sole profundum
soluitur aut uernis cum lux aequata tenebris,
sed redit extremo tandem in sua litora Tauro.

Apart from Heinsius conjecturing *umbroso*, the text of 729 does not seem to have come under suspicion. However, the exact implication is elusive: on the one hand, *stant aequore* should normally mean ‘is motionless in the sea’ (cf. e.g. Ov. *Met.* 3.660 *stetit aequore puppis*), which clearly cannot be the intended meaning; on the other, one could expect the point to be that the clouds are hanging just above the water, but it is doubtful that the bare ablative can bear out such a specific implication. An easy change could be *aethere*, but this would be little more than a metrical filler, while leaving *umbrosae* vacillating between a descriptive (all clouds give shade) and a distinctive (not all clouds give the same amount of shade) interpretation. While these objections may not prove that the transmitted text is corrupt, it seems worth entertaining the possibility that Valerius wrote *umbroso ... agmine*, ‘overshadowing mass’: this would both eliminate a vague and superfluous locative expression and clarify that the clouds’ ability to block out sunlight is very much the point. For *agmine* → *aequore*, cf. Man. 2.5 (and in the opposite direction, Verg. *Aen.* 10.569), and note *aequata* right under it in the

next line but one, while the ending of *umbroso* (→ *-se*) may have been influenced by the following *semper*; for the text thus established, cf. esp. 3.91–92 *caeruleo ueluti cum Iuppiter agmine nubem | constituit*, further Lucr. 6.100 *magis denso sunt agmine nubes*.

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