

‘Ending the *Argonautica*: Giovanni Battista Pio’s *Argonautica*-Supplement (1519)’

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Introduction: ancient *Argonauticas*

The *Argonautica* – the tale of Jason, his quest for the Golden Fleece alongside a band of Argonaut brothers, and his capture of the Fleece with the help of the Colchian witch- maiden Medea – is a very old story indeed: Argo is already marked out in Homer’s *Odyssey* as “well known to all” (πᾶσι μέλουσα, *Od.*12.70). Time and again authors of classical antiquity, both Greek and Roman, addressed the quest for the Fleece and its aftermath, in lyric (Pindar’s fourth *Pythian*), elegy (Ovid’s 12th *Heroides*), and of course tragedy, where Euripides’ and Seneca’s *Medeas* to this day dominate in modern receptions of the myth. The tale not just of the attainment of the Fleece, but also the adventures of the Argonauts along the way, was, however, tackled most fully in the Hellenistic *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius (written in the first half of the third century BC). Apollonius’ four-book epic – not only a narrative of marvellous adventures but also a treasure trove of aetiological, genealogical, ethnographical and scientific writing – sparked intense emulative response from Latin imitators, above all in the *Argonautica* of Varro Atacinus (now existing only in fragments), a late first-century BC translation of Apollonius that acculturated the Greek mythological epic to the contemporary nautical exploits of Julius Caesar.¹ But it would take the arrival of a new imperial dynasty, the Flavians, and another emperor famed for sea-faring exploits – Vespasian – for a Roman author to treat the myth of Argo once again in epic.

¹ On Apollonius, see esp. Hunter (1993a), Papanghelis & Rengakos (2001); on Varro’s *Argonautica* see Braund (1993); Newman (2008) 319-21.

Valerius Flaccus' new Flavian *Argonautica* – written between 70 and 96 AD – was no mere translation of Apollonius. Melding the plot of Apollonius' Greek epic with a distinctly Roman and Virgilianizing treatment of subject matter, Valerius jettisoned the ostentatious erudition of the Apollonian piece to concentrate instead on the heroic nature of the quest and its “recuperated” hero, refiguring Jason as an Aeneas-style *dux* rather than Hellenistic “anti-hero”. Medea, too, becomes a distinctly Roman *virgo* – one who struggles with *pudor* and who displays a vulnerability absent in Apollonius' terrifying witch-maiden.² Indeed, in our last glimpse of Valerius' Medea – as the Argonauts urge Jason to abandon her on the island of Peuce after their marriage and in the face of a threatening Colchian fleet who have come to re-claim her – she bases her appeal to Jason not just on the supernatural help she has provided, but also on the distinctly Roman grounds of *pietas* (*Arg.*8.415-44). Yet we never learn how Jason responds to this appeal, or indeed how Valerius intends to bring the *Argonautica* to a close. As Jason embarks on a stuttering reply – “Do you think I deserved something? Do you think I wanted such things to happen?” (*mene aliquid meruisse putas, me talia velle?* *Arg.*8.467) – the text breaks off.

The Flavian *Argonautica* thus ends on a classic cliff-hanger, roughly mid-way through its eighth book.³ As Barbara Smith, the author of the first structural study on closure remarked, “the perception of closure is a function of the perception of structure”: and the question of not just of structure but also structural *influence* has dominated modern speculation about the ending of Valerius' *Argonautica*.⁴ In an analysis which pitches the various specific possibilities offered by Apollonius (Valerius' *modello-esemplare*) against the generic example of Virgil (Valerius' *modello-codice*), Debra Hershkowitz concludes that

² On Valerius' *banalizzazione* of Apollonius, see Venini (1971), esp. 590-3, and further below. *The Companion to Valerius Flaccus* (2014) offers analysis and further bibliography on Valerius and Virgil, and the characterisation of Jason and Medea. For Valerius' Romanized Medea, see also and especially Zissos (2012).

³ The consensus is that Valerius died before finishing the poem; see however Ehlers (1980), who believes the *Argonautica* was mostly complete, with part of the poem lost in transmission.

⁴ Smith (1968) 7. For closure in classical epic see Hardie (1997).

whatever Valerius intended – a scheme of eight books, ten or twelve; a conclusion by duel between Absyrtus and Jason (following the Virgilian model of Turnus and Aeneas); or arrival in Thessaly (following Apollonius); or even an ending which encompasses the next stage of the myth, Medea’s murder of Pelias – it is the very *incompleteness* of Valerius’ epic that creates such richly diverse interpretative potential in the whole work.⁵

Ending the *Argonautica* (1): Maffeo Vegio’s *Vellus Aureum*

Where current scholarship embraces Valerius’ open-ended incompleteness, for supplementary-minded Renaissance scholars the *Argonautica* provided a different interpretative challenge. While continuators of Virgil’s *Aeneid* or Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* had a certain amount of creative licence in shaping their own endings, Valerius’ imitators had – uniquely – the full story already, in Apollonius’ Hellenistic epic, manuscripts of which had begun to arrive in Italy in the fifteenth century.⁶ Indeed, a full Apollonian *Argonautica* was available earlier than a Latin one, for the first manuscript of Valerius’ *Argonautica*, discovered by Poggio Bracciolini in the monastery at St Gallen, Switzerland, in 1416, contained only the first half of Valerius’ poem (*Arg.*1.1-4.317, with *Arg.*1.393-442 and 2.240 missing). It was only in 1429 that a “complete” Valerian *Argonautica* was found and transcribed (by Niccolò Niccoli), and it was not until 1474 that the *editio princeps* was published, by Ugo Rugerius and Dominus Bertochus.⁷

A possible early example of a continuation of Valerius may be found in Maffeo Vegio’s 1431 *Vellus Aureum*, a four book mini-epic in hexameters (roughly 1000 verses in total) which begins with the Argonauts already most of the way through their journey, about to arrive in

⁵ Hershkowitz (1998) 34. The influential distinction between ‘example model’ (*modello-esemplare*) and ‘code-model’ (*modello-codice*) comes from Conte (1984)

⁶ See Schade & Eleuteri (2001) 41-8.

⁷ See Taylor-Briggs (2014); Zissos (2006) 173-4.

Colchis (i.e. roughly where the St Gallen MS (*Arg.* 1.1-4.317) breaks off).⁸ In a proem which begins by refusing to treat the early episodes of the Argonautic voyage (*VA.* 1.1-14), Vegio declares *Sola autem, quae sunt Colchorum in litore gesta, /expediam, raptum Phrixeeae pellis honorem, /vesanos sequar Medeae ardentis amores* (“I will recount only deeds done on the Colchian shore. I will pursue the stolen glory of Phrixus’ fleece and the frenzied passion of enflamed Medea”, *VA.* 1.15-17).⁹ Vegio depicts Medea falling in love with Jason, his completion of the tasks set by Aeetes, and their escape from Colchis, before the epyllion climaxes with Medea’s murder of her younger brother Absyrtus and Aeetes’ curse upon his daughter, with a speech that brings the poem into touching distance with the Senecan *Medea*: “And in the end, after she has roamed sea and earth and sky as a fugitive, needy and despised, may she bring a bloody death upon herself!” (“At demum maria et terras caelumque pererrans /exsul, egens, despecta, sua se caede cruentet!” *VA.* 4.246-7).

Could Vegio have seen the St Gallen MS of Valerius’ *Argonautica*, comprising only the first four books, and continued it? He was certainly no stranger to the art of supplementarity, for his 1428 *Supplement* to the *Aeneid* was highly popular throughout the Renaissance.¹⁰ And it is striking that Vegio draws upon Apollonius’ *Argonautica* in an intense but extremely limited fashion when he lists the participants of the expedition: at just the place where there is a lacuna in the Poggio MS and all its *apographa* (*Arg.* 1.393-442: cf. *VA.* 1.36-65 with AR *Arg.* 1.23-233).¹¹ It is tempting, then, to consider Vegio’s poem a continuation of Valerius. Yet the modern editors of *Vellus Aureum*, Reinhold F. Glei and Markus Köhler, are sceptical that these facts add up to the notion of conscious supplementarity. They find no trace of direct influence from Valerius Flaccus, instead

⁸ A modern edition with introduction and commentary is Glei-Köhler (1998); see also Putnam (2004). For further bibliography on *Vellus Aureum* see Glei-Köhler (1998) 16.

⁹ Text and translation of Vegio are from Putnam (2004).

¹⁰ For more on Vegio’s life and works see Glei-Köhler (1998) 8-11; Putnam (2004); on the *Supplement*, see xxx in this volume.

¹¹ See Glei-Köhler (1998) 21-27 for careful analysis of the catalogue.

analysing Vegio's poem as a conscious "Virgilianization" of Ovid's *Medea*.¹² Whether we wish to consider *Vellus Aureum* a "true" supplement or not, what is most striking about this early reception of the Argonautic myth is how limited Vegio's engagement with the poem fully furnished by Apollonius is. Vegio's Greek was simply not up to the task of committed, deep, engagement with Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*.¹³

Ending the *Argonautica* (2): Battista Pio's *Supplementum*

This problem would not apply to Valerius' next continuator, the Italian humanist Johannes Baptista Pius Bononiensis – or Giovanni Battista Pio (c.1475-1546).¹⁴ Pio was a Valerius Flaccus enthusiast, and in 1519 he produced not only a critical edition and commentary on the *Argonautica* but also a life of the poet and hexameter verse supplement to Valerius' epic, which finished off book eight with a further 113 verses, and provided two further books over another 1300 lines (Book 9 (vv.520); Book 10 (vv.790)).¹⁵ Pio was not just interested in Valerius, an "on-trend" author whose quality was rated rather more highly in the Renaissance than much of the twentieth century.¹⁶ A student of Filippo Beroaldo (the founder of the rhetorical school of "Apuleianism" and Professor of Rhetoric at Bologna (1474-1505)), Pio would succeed to his Chair, producing the first Renaissance commentary of Lucretius (1511), and editing among others Fulgentius, Sidonius Apollinaris and Plautus. Moreover, Pio, in the vanguard of Renaissance engagement with Greek classical works, produced Latin translations

¹² This position is accepted by Kobusch (2004) 126-7; Zissos (2006) 173 n.35. I have not been able to read Vignati (1959), who argues (p14) that Vegio's poem is a true supplement (cf. Gleis-Köhler (1998) 20 n.17). Ehlers (2001) suggests that *Vellus Aureum* may have been written as a deliberate *alternative* to Valerius' epic, written to re-establish a 'properly' Virgilian rendering of the story.

¹³ Before the Latin interlinear translation of Andronico Callisto (around 1475) further reception of Apollonius can only be found in the three books of Basinio da Parma, begun in 1455 and left unfinished at his death in 1457: see Ferri (1920); Resta (1981); Gleis-Köhler (1998) 22.

¹⁴ Sometimes also known as Giambattista Pio/Giovan Battista Pio. On Pio's life and works see most comprehensively Kobusch (2004) 19-101.

¹⁵ *C. Valerii Flacci commentarii Pio Bononiensi auctore cum codicis poetae emendatione ex antiquo exemplari dacico additis libris tribus, qui desiderabantur, et Orpheo Latino*, Bononiae 1519 – henceforth Pio (1519). On Pio's life of Valerius see Rieker (1998) 358-9; Kobusch (2004) 164-7: on his critical edition of Valerius, see Kobusch (2004) 144-81.

¹⁶ On Valerius' popularity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see Rieker (1998) 357-8; Zissos (2006) 173-8.

of Greek epigrams by various authors including Sappho, Moschus, and Apollonius' contemporary Callimachus.¹⁷ Pio was, then, peculiarly well suited not only to elucidate the artificial and mannered Latin of Valerius in his commentary, but also able confidently to supplement the gaps in Valerius' *Argonautica* with the Hellenistic epic of Apollonius.

As we have already seen, however, modern scholars have stressed how very different the Flavian *Argonautica* is to Apollonius' epic, stylistically, thematically and ideologically. A continuation that simply "completes" Valerius with a translation of Apollonius – drawing upon Apollonius' *quid* with no attention to Valerius' *quale* – could hardly be counted as a compelling continuation. And at first glance, it does seem as if Pio's *Supplement* – with its stated aim to complete the *Argonautica* "on the basis of Apollonius Rhodius"¹⁸ – is rather deaf to that difference. Where Valerius excises Apollonius' erudite digressions and aetiological focus, Pio maintains them.¹⁹ Where Valerius has significantly altered characterisation, for example by making his Hercules a culture-hero, a saviour figure whose actions materially advance civilisation, Pio returns to Apollonius' depiction of a savage, almost bestial figure (*Supp.*10.462-81). And most egregiously, where Valerius has outright altered events – for example by killing off the Argonaut Canthus in the war in Colchis (*Arg.*6.317-70) or replacing the helmsman Tiphys with the Argonaut Erginus (*Arg.*5.65-70) – Pio fails to react to such alterations in his own continuation. Canthus must die again according to the Apollonian model (*Supp.*10.503-20; cf. *AR Arg.*4.1485-1501), and in Pio's *Supplement*, it is Ancaeus who somehow has been given the job of steering Argo once more (*Supp.* 10.282-95; *AR Arg.* 4.1259-76).²⁰

¹⁷ See Kobusch (2004) 114-5. Pio frequently translates Apollonius into Latin prose in his commentary on Valerius: see Kobusch (2004) 162-3.

¹⁸ *Octavi Libri Argonauticon Reliquum ex Apollonio Rhodio: Interprete Pio Bononiensi, cum duobus Aliis Libris Subsequentibus Ex Eodem Rhodio, unde habet perfecta historia argonautica*, Pio (1519) CLXIII.

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. *Supp.*9.44-55 and 10.231-43 on the settlements established by the Colchians chasing the Argonauts; *Supp.* 9.183-92, 10.634-5, 10.700-34 on customs and names resulting from Argo's passage.

²⁰ For these and other slips see Kobusch (2004) 632; Zissos (2014) 362-4.

It is no wonder, then, that Pio's continuation has been deemed "a work of uncertain artistic merit", praised only on the occasions on which it manages to shake off the oppressive mantle of Apollonian influence. Indeed, Pio's most recent critic, Andrew Zissos, sees in Pio's project a fundamentally insoluble tension between translation of Apollonius and continuation of Valerius, one in which the continuator shows only "intermittent moments of alertness" to his role as continuator.²¹ Yet I will argue that Pio is both well aware of the divergent impulses and preoccupations of the two authors he emulates, and closely attentive to the precepts of sixteenth-century translation theory, which demanded not just precision in comprehension but also rigour and creativity in expression, requiring that the translator "transform" himself to identify fully with the source text.²² Indeed, in the introduction and commentary to the *Supplement* written by Pio's son, Giulio Cesare Pio, the younger Pio explicitly articulates the differences in style between Valerius and Apollonius as poets, talks of the constant effort the continuator has to make to resist the "seduction" of the Apollonian model, and (drawing upon the ancient translation-theorist Horace) speaks of the "negligent diligence" of the listless *metaphrastes* who merely translates word-for-word.²³

Given the evidence above of Pio's "mistakes", we may conclude that the continuator in the end fails to resist the gravitational pull of the Hellenistic epic. Nevertheless, I will argue – in particular, in the characterisation of Jason and Medea, and in the creation of a strikingly gloomy Valerian *Weltanschauung* – that Pio shows a genuinely sophisticated understanding of the nature of Valerius' epic that can be seen throughout the *Supplement*. In

²¹ Zissos (2006) 174; he records further negative reaction from Caussin de Perceval (1829) ix-x. Zissos (2014) does however provide a more positive assessment of Pio's *Supplement*, and the commentary of Kobusch (2004), focussing on *translatio*, *imitatio* and *aemulatio*, offers excellent analysis of Pio's use of Apollonius and Valerius.

²² See esp. Bruni's (c.1426) *De Interpretatione Recta*, in Robinson (1997) 57-60. Pio has already used similar language in his edition of Valerius, where he asserts that he is bringing that author back to life through his labours (*nunc labore nostro redivivus Flaccus*): see Kobusch (2004) 146.

²³ Cf. Pio (1519) Introduction CLXIII, esp. *Tertium...quod verbum verbo reddere non possumus. Esset enim ῥαθυμότερον et absurdum: et ut proprie loquar, diligentia negligens* ("In the third place ... we cannot render word for word. To do that would both lazy and absurd, and to put it more appropriately, the work of one careless in his diligence." Cf. Horace, *nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus / interpres* ("Nor be concerned to render word for word, a slavish translator" *Ars Poetica* 133-4).

creating this synthesis of Greek and Roman, moreover, he is not just providing a continuation that is “Valerian” in spirit, but is also offering a creative transfiguration of his own scholarly edition of Valerius. For one of the great achievements of Pio’s commentary on Valerius, reflected in the *Supplement* itself, is the systematic tracking of the influence of Apollonius. Elucidating creatively just how closely Valerius’ *Argonautica* had already responded to Apollonius’ Hellenistic epic, Pio’s continuation invites us to examine anew Valerius’ debt to his Greek predecessor, re-dressing the balance of a modern critical focus which has hitherto largely neglected the Greek past of Valerius’ Flavian epic.²⁴ Pio, in other words, embraces the role of *interpres* not only in his role as critic and commentator of Valerius but also in his role as continuator.²⁵

Ending the *Argonautica*

Pio’s intention to create a seamless transition from Valerian *Argonautica* to *Supplement* that is at the same time rooted in Apollonius’ epic is signalled from the outset: first, in a declaration that Pio will supplement the *Argonautica* “on the basis of Apollonius and according to his own interpretation”, and then in an audacious rearrangement of Valerius’ own text. Concluding Valerius’ *Argonautica* at *Arg.*8.466, the edition declares “FINIS”.²⁶ Pio then offers the *last* line of Valerius’ epic as the *first* of his own *Supplement*, before allowing Jason to continue in a speech closely based on *AR Arg.*4.395-49 (which attempts to appease Medea’s anger, points out the extreme peril of their situation, and promises that if Absyrtus and Aeetes are intent upon Medea’s death, he will fight):²⁷

²⁴ On Valerius’ edition see Kobusch (2004) 144-80. The only full-length study of Apollonius and Valerius is Harmand (1898); Venini (1971) and Bessone (1991) are influential examples of the tendency to stress the differences between the two authors. See now also the essays in Augoustakis (2014).

²⁵ Cf. *ex Apollonio Rhodio: Interprete Pio Bononiensi ...* Pio (1519) CLXIII. On the significance of Pio’s self-entitled role as *interpres* – also the name he gives himself in his task as editor of Valerius’ *Argonautica* – see Kobusch (2004) 144-6.

²⁶ Later editions do not use this conceit: see Kobusch (2004) 323.

²⁷ In the passages which follow I use the text of Kobusch and provide my own translations. For Apollonius, the edition is Fraenkel (1970); translations are from Hunter (1993b).

“ME ne aliquid meruisse putas? Me talia velle? (Arg.8.467)

Diva viro nimium coniunx infensa fideli.

Horreo si qua movent animos: ingrataque nobis

Quae te cumque premunt. Sed mollia tempora primum

captamus, saevique placet mora commoda belli.

Tot coiere duces hostilique impete turmae

certatim incubuere odiis mortemque minantur.

Causa fuga est et noster amor.” *Supp.8.458-74*

“Do you think I deserved something? Do you think I wanted such things to happen? My divine wife is too harsh to her faithful husband. I tremble if anything makes you angry, if any ingratitude on my part oppresses you. But we are seeking the favourable time, and I am resolved upon an appropriate delay to savage war. So many leaders have gathered, and with hostile onslaught the cavalry troops have settled around us, emulous in their hatred: and they threaten death. The cause is your flight and our love.”

Compare the closely corresponding response from Jason in the Hellenistic

Argonautica:

“Ἴσχεο, δαιμονίη· τὰ μὲν ἀνδάνει οὐδ’ ἐμοὶ αὐτῶ,

ἀλλὰ τιν’ ἀμβολίην διζήμεθα δηιοτῆτος,

ὅσσον δυσμενέων ἀνδρῶν νέφος ἀμφιδέδηεν

εἴνεκα σεῦ.”

AR Arg.4.395-8

“Calm down, poor lady. I too take no pleasure in this, but we are looking for some way to put off the battle, so large is the horde of the enemy blazing around us because of you...”

Pio’s work is clearly close, if heightened, translation of Apollonius: indeed *Diva* directly translates Jason’s opening address, δαιμονίη.²⁸ Yet there are some crucial differences

²⁸ As Kobusch (2004), whose commentary is very helpful throughout, notes.

too: in Valerius, Medea is *already* married, as Pio's Jason stresses when he calls on Medea as wife and himself as husband (*Diva viro ... coniunx*; cf. *Arg.* 8.415, 419). And while Apollonius' Jason is quick to make Medea the object of blame – they are surrounded “because of you” as he rather gracelessly puts it – Pio's Jason, who has already foregrounded his continuing fidelity (*viro...fidei*), declares their predicament comes not just from Medea's flight but also their joint love (*noster amor*).²⁹ Finally, Pio offers a crucial twist on the plan that Apollonius' Jason had put forward to thwart the Colchians. While the Greek Jason comes up with a plan to feign alliance with the Colchians in order to slay Absyrtus, committing to fight the Colchians only after their leader is taken from them by trickery (*AR Arg.* 4.404-9), Pio's Jason has no such devious proposal. If Absyrtus and Aeetes are bent upon Medea's death, this much more martial Jason declares, he will take the Colchians on in a fair fight (*“iusta in adversos committam proelia Colchos”*, *Supp.* 8.489). The scheming diplomat of Apollonius' epic has yielded to Valerius' characterisation of Jason as confident, battle-hardened *dux*.³⁰

Pio shows an equally acute understanding of Medea's characterisation. Here is her opening response in full:

Sic ait. Illa gravi ductorem affata dolore est:

“Num venti mea vota simul tua verba tulerunt

Aesonide ac pariter curas pepulere priores?

Tempora causaris subitique pericula belli,

postquam in deterius lapsa est fortunae Cytaeae

coniugis et noster non est reparabilis error?

Nunc Martem differre libet, nunc Colchida bella

post conubia pacta exspectatosque Hymenaeos.

²⁹ See Rieker (1998) 361; cf. Kobusch (2004) 325.

³⁰ For a rich close reading of the Absyrtus-murder which explores further the rehabilitation of Jason as figure of martial *virtus* see Zissos (2014) 368-74. See too Kobusch (2004) 311-14, 637-8.

Tu tantum confide mihi, placabo furem
germanum et blandis componam proelia dictis

legatos donis mulcens atque efferata corda.”

*Supp.*8.490-500

So Jason spoke. She addressed the leader in deep grief: “Have the winds then carried away my prayers and your promises alike, Jason, and likewise have they dispelled your former love for me? And do you plead as an excuse the inconvenient time and the danger of sudden war, *after* your Colchian wife’s luck has begun to run out, and our mistake cannot be undone? Now it pleases you to postpone battle, now to postpone Colchian wars – *after* you’ve made the marriage-contract and hoped-for wedding. Just you trust me: I will placate my raging brother, and I will settle war with sweet words, appeasing the envoys and their savage hearts with gifts.”

Once again, Pio’s close adherence to the Apollonian text is clear, particularly in the final lines of the speech, which make reference to negotiation with Colchian envoys who simply do not feature in Valerius’ *Argonautica*. Reminiscent too of Apollonius is Medea’s lament that Jason has forgotten his promises (cf. AR *Arg.*4.355-9, esp. 358-9). But even so, this is hardly the οὐλοὺς μῦθος – or “deadly reply” – of Apollonius’ Medea, who has already struggled to contain her “grim anger” and desire to destroy everything, including herself, in consuming flames (AR *Arg.*4.390-3; her plan to kill Absyrtus follows at AR *Arg.*4.410-20). Rather, Pio’s Medea speaks here not as the supernaturally powerful witch but as the abandoned lover: like Virgil’s Dido, as the younger Pio points out in his commentary; or as the Dido of Ovid’s *Heroides*.³¹ Behind this abandoned heroine of course stands Catullus’ Ariadne, who had already upbraided Theseus with the words

“at non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti

voce mihi, non haec miserae sperare iuebas,

³¹ Pio (1519) CLXIII (referring to *Aen.*4.316) *per conubia nostra, per inceptos hymenaeos*; cf. Rieker (1998) 362. For Ovid, *Her.*7.8 (*atque idem venti vela fidemque ferent*) cf. Kobusch (2004) 391.

sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos,

quae cuncta aereii discerpunt irrita venti.”

Cat.64.139-42

“These were not the promises you once gave me with coaxing voice, nor did you order me to hope for this in my wretchedness, but for happy marriage, for a hoped-for wedding. The winds of the air scatter all these empty promises.”

Here, then, Pio’s Medea is recast as an abandoned heroine of Roman epic and elegy, an Ariadne or a Dido, in a way that clearly reprises Valerius’ own intertextual strategy in the *Argonautica*.³² It is only fitting, then, that when Medea and Jason get their second wedding, closely written to the Apollonian model, and reprising the attendance of flower-gathering nymphs, Argonaut guards, and Orpheus playing the wedding hymn (*Supp.*10.158-81; cf. *AR Arg.*4.1141-1160), Pio adds a significant new guest – the *pronuba* Juno, goddess of marriage – and precisely the signs accompanying Dido’s doomed wedding (*Supp.*10.175-6; cf. *Aen.*4.166f.).

Even Dido – Valerius’ major model for Medea – is, however, only ever a partial model for a heroine capable of a much more destructive response to love, and Pio’s decision to have his Medea classify their love as *noster non reparabilis error* is especially acute. Its sense encompasses the Apollonian original, where Medea laments her “mistake” (ἐπεὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἀάσθη / ἀμπλακίη, *AR Arg.*4.413-4) even as she makes her deadly reply; and of course to use *error* as synonym for “love” is well established in the lexicon of Roman elegy. Yet it is also the word Medea applies to herself when she first succumbs to love and makes the decision to help Jason in the *Argonautica* proper: “At last, having dared to speak in the midst of her grief she spoke: ‘By what misfortune, with what *error* am I willingly drawn away, to be thus wakeful?’” (*tandemque fateri / ausa sibi †paulum† medio sic fata dolore est: / “nunc ego quo casu vel quo sic per<vi>gil usque / ipsa volens errore trahor?”* ... *Arg.*7.7-

³² On Medea and Dido see Hull (1975); Fucecchi (1997); for the influence of other mythological heroines, Stover (2011). Kobusch (2004) 331 notes also the intertextual influence of Ovid’s Scylla (*Met.*8.1-151, esp. 134-5) on Pio here and 427 (ad *Supp.* 9.265) of Ovid’s Byblis (*Met.*9.515).

8; cf. *Supp.*8.490). Pio's phrase also re-echoes the exact moment at which Medea puts this decision into effect, as she casts her spells upon Jason to aid him in the tasks set by her father and embraces wrong-doing:

Inde ubi facta nocens et non revocabilis umquam
cessit ab ore pudor priorque implevit Erinys... *Arg.*7.461-2

As a result she was made guilty and her *pudor*, never to be recalled, receded from her face, and the Erinys, closer now, possessed her...

In this first speech from Medea in the *Supplement*, then, Pio astutely re-engages the crucial conditions of the Valerian Medea's first submission to infatuation. And in the apostrophe which follows – an interventionist tactic used much more often by Apollonius than Valerius– Pio skilfully invests the source text once again with the kind of infuriate love which has dominated throughout the Flavian *Argonautica*.³³

Σχέτλι' Ἔρωσ, μέγα πῆμα, μέγα στύγος ἀνθρώποισιν,
ἐκ σέθεν οὐλόμεναί τ' ἔριδες στοναχαί τε γόοι τε,
ἄλγεά τ' ἄλλ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ἀπείρονα τετρήχασιν·
δυσμενέων ἐπὶ παισὶ κορύσσειο δαῖμον ἀερθεῖς
οἷος Μηδείῃ στυγερὴν φρεσὶν ἔμβαλες ἄτην. *AR Arg.*4.445-9

Reckless Eros, great curse, greatly loathed by men, from you come deadly strifes and grieving and troubles, and countless other pains on top of these swirl up. Rear up, divine spirit, against my enemies' children as you were when you threw hateful folly into Medea's heart.

Improbe Amor, quantis mortalia pectora curis
involvis miscens odium funebria bella
et gemitus fletusque graves! Discordia demens

³³ Barich (1982) 11-12; Kobusch (2004) 311.

et manibus Rabies pectus laniata cruentis
funerea vadunt fraterna per agmina dextra.
Innumeris agitas discordem caedibus orbem
aspera cuncta viris fecundo pectore promens.
Elatus deus arcitenens facibusque timendus,
quali Medae complesti corda veneno
oblitae fratris, patriae oblitaeque parentum!

*Supp.*8.531-40

Reckless Amor, with what great cares you swamp mortal hearts, mixing hatred, deadly wars, and groans and heavy weeping! Mad Discordia and Rabies – scored across the chest with bloody hands – pace amongst the fraternal battle-lines with death-dealing hand. You agitate the discordant world with countless slaughter, furnishing from your fecund breast all things calamitous to mankind. Lofty arrow-bearing god, a fearful figure with your torches, with what poison did you fill the heart of Medea, forgetful of brother, fatherland and parents!

Pio's *improbis Amor* is of course not just direct translation of Apollonius but also literary reminiscence of the *improbis Amor* which destroyed Virgil's Dido (*improbe Amor, quid non mortalia pectora cogis! Aen.*4.412). But there is something again distinctly Valerian about Amor's effects here, for Discordia and Rabies were last unleashed at Lemnos (*Arg.*2.204, 206) in a "civil war" instigated by an infuriate Venus between wives and husbands, and that complex of imagery pointedly informs the fraternal blood of Absyrtus which is about to be spilled by Medea and Jason. And while Pio refuses to import the far from Christian imprecation with which Apollonius' narrator ends, his alternative – to picture a Medea forgetful of brother, father and fatherland – is once again closely attuned to Medea's experiences in Valerius' *Argonautica*, recalling as they do the day of her wedding, at which

“harmonious” (*unanimus*) Venus and Amor attended (*Arg.*8.232), and Medea celebrated the day “forgetful of her woes” (*oblita malorum*, *Arg.*8.238).³⁴

Pio’s consistent depiction of Medea throughout the *Supplement* as a woman in thrall to *error* and *Erinys* shows a commitment to Valerius’ characterisation of a heroic *virgo* persecuted by the gods and deserving of more pity than the calculating, brooding and unsettling Medea of Apollonius’ fourth book. Indeed, when Arete does help Medea with persuasive words to her husband Alcinous, she goes far beyond Apollonius’ Queen, who terms Medea’s actions foolish behaviour (“she made a mistake” (ἄσθη *AR Arg.*4.1080)). Instead, Pio’s Arete recasts Medea as a *pia virgo* standing up to the tyranny of her father (*Supp.*10.96-7) and calls upon her husband, as a just king, to favour the pious – “*Ergo pios, rex iuste, fove!*” (*Supp.*10.101). In fact, this Arete goes even further, introducing Medea as a woman who in giving aid to the Greeks has distinguished herself in pious daring:

“O dulcis coniunx, oppressam Aetida curis

exime, quae Minyas fovit cognataque Graii

arma ducis facilemque piis se praebuit ausis...” *Supp.*10.86-8

“Dear husband, lighten the load of Medea’s cares, she who aided the Minyae and the kinsmen allies of the Greek leader, and showed herself apt in deeds of pious daring...”

Arete here reaches beyond the example set by Medea herself in the *Argonautica* to frame her as the most outstanding female example of virtue in Valerius’ *Argonautica* – Hypsipyle, the glory of her fatherland and, famously saviour of her father, whose deeds of great daring Valerius himself applauds (*ingentibus ausis*, *Arg.*2.242).³⁵ By such means, Pio does not just

³⁴ See Schimann (1997), who sees in the Lemnos episode the key to the entire Medea-love narrative. Hardie (1993) 43-4 shows how indebted the Valerian episode already is to Virgil’s Dido-narrative. For further play on the Erinys-motif from Pio see esp. *Supp.*9.265-7, contrasting *AR Arg.*4.739; and for error/Erinys, *Supp.*10.26-9, 31-2 versus *AR Arg.*4.1011-9)

³⁵ Note too Medea’s final act in the *Supplement*, the murder of the bronze giant Talos from afar with magic. In Apollonius’ account Medea’s evil mind-set and “grim power” is foregrounded (cf. esp. *AR Arg.*4.1676-7. But Pio’s Medea speaks piously (*pia sermone*, *Supp.*10.669-70), motivated, as the commentary glosses, by compassion and the desire to lighten the Argonauts’ woes: (Pio (1519) CLXXXVII.

continue to characterise his Medea as *pia virgo*, resisting Apollonius' character development to the very end: he also displays a genuinely sophisticated understanding of the means by which Valerius articulates the nature of *amor* and its effect on Medea, drawing upon the same intertextual and intratextual strategies already used by the Flavian epic.

Pio's Neo-Latin *Argonautica*

We have seen, then, how Pio adheres to “Valerian” characterisation even when offering close translation of Apollonius. But it is not just in character-study that Pio resists the gravitational pull of the Hellenistic epic. Pio also imports the gloomily oppressive world of Valerius' *Argonautica*, whose preoccupation with dissimulative tyrants, the incursion of “Romanising” civil war, and the corruption of power has long been noted.³⁶ Of course, treachery abounds in the Hellenistic *Argonautica* too – the death of Absyrtus is a clear case in point – but right from the beginning of the *Supplement* Pio intensifies the atmosphere of deceit. In Apollonius' *Argonautica*, when Absyrtus goes to his death, he is emphatically deceived (αἰνοτάτησιν ὑποσχέσειησι δολωθείς AR *Arg.*4.456): but in Pio's continuation, Absyrtus is not only deceived, but is also a deceiver (*fallax*) as he goes to parley with his sister Medea (*Supp.*8.551).³⁷ The whole atmosphere, in fact, is treacherous – as the narrator puts it, “Firm faith is to be found nowhere!” (*Nusquam tuta fides!* *Supp.*8.545) – and throughout the *Supplement* the savagery of Aetes and the Colchians is emphatically stressed.

We have already seen Queen Arete stress, for example, in opposition to the just rule of her own husband Alcinous, the tyranny of the grim, enraged and iniquitous Aetes (*Supp.*10.86-111): an emphasis on good governance versus bad, not to be found in Apollonius' text, where the Hellenistic Arete, in a display of *realpolitik*, merely notes that

³⁶ See Bernstein (2014) with further bibliography.

³⁷ Cf. the commentary ad. *Supp.*8.548-50: *Heros: Iason: quem honesto nomine vocat non ob amorem aut reverentiam: sed ut tegetet insidias.* (“*Heros*: Jason. He calls him by this true name, not on account of love or respect, but in order to conceal his deceitful plans”, Pio (1519) CLXV. Medea too is *fallax* (*Supp.*8.518). On Absyrtus, cf. Zissos (2014) 371 n.30. Kobusch (2004) 353.

while the Greeks are allies, Aetes is an unknown quantity who lives far away (AR *Arg.*4.1074-6). And at the very outset of the *Supplement*, too, we have seen Jason take the same tactic, simultaneously re-echoing the tyranny of Pelias which motivated the quest in *Argonautica* 1 (*aspera iussa*, *Supp.*8.475; cf. *Arg.*1.200), and intensifying Medea’s terror with a vividly realized picture of Medea’s future humiliation at the hands of the Colchians, led in sordid triumph beneath the savage gaze of family and amidst the hostile muttering of the mob (*Supp.*8.474-83).³⁸ This extensive speech goes far beyond the understated speculation of the Apollonian source: “ὁ τοι καὶ ῥίγιον ἄλγος / ἔσσεται, εἴ σε θανόντες ἔλωρ κείνοισι λίπομεν” (“If we join battle, we will all perish in hateful death, and the pain will be even worse for you if our deaths leave you an easy prey for them”, AR *Arg.*4.402-3). Here too Jason makes the case for just versus unjust governance, as he declares he will fight “just wars” (*iusta proelia*) if the mad arrogance (*vesana superbia*) of Absyrtus and the savage (*efferus*) Aetes insist on war (*Supp.*8.484-9).³⁹

Such a vision of worldly power – often articulated in displays of verbal art and artifice which exceed the more measured strategies of persuasion that we find in both Apollonius and Valerius – may not simply reconstruct a jaded Valerian *Weltanschauung*, but also reflect upon Bologna’s troubled present.⁴⁰ Indeed, Beate Kobusch sees in Pio’s Jason not simply the attempt to follow Valerius’ Aeneas-style characterisation, but also to create the model of a new kind of Renaissance hero. Yet if Pio’s Jason is motivated by a modern notion of justice,

³⁸ For further “Valerian” language of tyranny see esp. *Supp.*9.212 with *Arg.*7.579, 8.60; *Supp.*9.213-4 with *Arg.*5.659.

³⁹ Note, for example, in Jason’s speech alone striking hyperbaton (e.g. *Supp.*8.468), bold alliteration (*mortemque minantur*, 473), and the clever use of metre, the double elision of 473 reflecting the frenzy of the forces closing in, while Arete opts for emotive questions and exclamation (*Supp.* 10.91, 101, 110), deploys argument not only *ab utili* (as Apollonius’) but also *ab honesto* (92-7) and *ab impossibili* (101-2), and offers a barrage of antithesis contrasting the *pia virgo* with her *iniquus pater*. For further on Pio’s lexical, stylistic and metrical choices see Kobusch (2004) 600-626. On Valerius’ mannered style see Barich (2014) esp. 33-35 with bibliography; on Apollonius’ style, which shows much less interest in rhetorically charged speech-making, see Toohey (1994); more generally, Hunter (2001).

⁴⁰ See Kobusch (2004) 60, 71-2, noting that Pio lived through the events which provided much material for Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*: Pio himself authored a short poem *De Pace* (1503) and a longer six-book epic on the history of Bologna in 1510. For further contemporary resonances see Kobusch (2004) 345 n.1009; also 380-1, 393, 415, 497.

this makes his murder of Absyrtus all the more difficult to contemplate, and Pio does not shy away from much more overt critique of his character than the ancient texts allow. While we have seen Pio work to lessen Jason’s responsibility for the plan to kill Absyrtus (indeed Pio skirts the issue of an explicitly articulated plan for murder from Medea too), when it comes to the actual slaughter he applies the epithet *saevus tyrannus* to Jason *himself*, a pejorative term we have not seen in Valerius’ *Argonautica* (albeit focalized through the experience of Absyrtus (*Supp.*8.562-3)).⁴¹ The same loaded word has also been applied earlier to Jason, as the recipient of the gift of Thoas’ cloak (a symbol of a previous desertion, since it was given by Hypsipyle “to the Greek tyrant” on his departure from Lemnos (*Argolico ... tyranno, Supp.*8.511)).

Indeed, in an innovative coda to the murder of Absyrtus, we may see Pio offering his own solution to this most problematic act committed by the heroic *vir* and *pia virgo* so obviously otherwise recognizable as Valerius’ characters. After the pair have committed the murder, and Medea seeks absolution from Circe, the nymph explicitly condemns the shameful of love itself in compelling her to crime in words that transform the speech of Apollonius’ Circe, who merely laments Medea’s “shameful journey” (AR *Arg.*4.739): “*Sic cogit amor, sic incitat ira. /Pro miseram, qui turpis amor! Quae tristis Erinnyis /impulit in facinus tantum!*”... (“So love compels, so anger incites. Ah, you wretch, how shameful love is! Which dreadful Erinys has driven you to such a crime!” *Supp.*9.265-7). This condemnation of love is accompanied by a genuine act of love from Jason, which – as the continuation’s commentary points out – is entirely invented by Pio:⁴²

Illa gravi iam dudum oppressa dolore
desiccata levi rorantia lumina peplo,
donec Iolchiacus deflentem sustulit heros

⁴¹ Cf. Zissos (2014) 371, who reads this moment as the nadir of Jason’s characterisation in the *Supplement*, a low-point from which the hero will re-attain heroic status.

⁴² Pio (1519) CLXXI.

et – iuvenem comitatus Amor – suadere salutem

incipiunt blandoque levant sermone gementem.

*Supp.*9.276-280

Medea, so long now burdened by weighty pain, dries her tearful eyes on her fine robe, while the Iolchian hero gathered her up in his arms as she wept, and – Amor accompanying the young man – they begin to urge her to cheer up and lighten her groans with coaxing words.

In this act of consolation, Pio recalls the Jason of Valerius' *Argonautica*, who had comforted his lover before (*Arg.*7.412 *solatus amantem [est]*). But this moment also reverses the roles played by Jason and Medea herself before the murder of Absyrtus, when Medea comforted her “sad lover” Jason (*Phasias his maestum solatur amantem, Supp.*8.502) and forced him to undertake the treacherous murder of Absyrtus (*Supp.*8.501-4). Pio's reading of the murder, in other words, suggests that it is not only Medea in this *Supplement* who is subject to the compulsion of the *Erinyes*: Jason too suffers from a love which forces him in turn into the role of *tyrannus*. This moralizing approach to the consequences of love – its depiction as a mutually damaging *error* now felt as much by Jason as Medea – constitutes a significant turn away from the preoccupations of the ancient *Argonauticas*, but sits well in the scholarly context of a sixteenth-century interpretation of the motivations and costs of love.⁴³

As much as Pio's *Supplement* positions itself as the “completion” of Valerius on the basis of Apollonius, then, it is also a document entirely of its time in its rhetoricity, its moralizing approach, and its interest in the depiction of power more broadly. Even Pio's interest in the aetiological and scientific – which clearly does not emulate Valerius – is inspired as much by the encyclopaedic interests and polymathic ambitions of neo-Latin scholarship more generally as it is by slavish adherence to Apollonius.⁴⁴ But above all, Pio moves furthest from his source when it comes to the simile. Beate Kobusch notes that Pio has

⁴³ Note, e.g. Pio's own comments ad *Arg.*6.473, (remarking on the special susceptibility of women to love); and his notes ad *Arg.*7.8 and *Arg.*8.162 which draw on Plautus' and Horace's depiction of the misery of love. For a reading that stresses Pio's moralizing depiction of heroism more generally in the *Supplement*, in line with contemporary ethical thought, see Kobusch (2004) 379, 635-41.

⁴⁴ See Kobusch (2004) 628.

already recognized and adopted Valerius' general strategy when it comes to the Apollonian simile, using this figure as an opportunity to advance his own interests (often, the exploration of a character's psychological interiority in more depth).⁴⁵ And as Valerius often re-tunes a simile to the contemporary concerns of first-century AD Rome, Pio most explicitly brings the mythological world of the *Argonautica* into touch with sixteenth-century Bolognese life here.

The most strikingly original incursion of the modern is in the simile which in Apollonius' text compares the swift motion of Argo, propelled by Nereids through the Planktai, to a game of catch played by young girls (AR *Arg.*4.948-55). In Pio's version the point of comparison is now a strapping youth of Bologna, who competes with his young companions and at the same time conditions his body while playing the game (*Supp.*9.474-85). This version – motivated not just by a spirit of literary emulation but also by *pietas patriae*, as the commentary notes – allows Pio a brief moment of praise for his city.⁴⁶ Less developed, but perhaps even more arresting, is Pio's attempt to bring alive the fear felt by the Argonauts as they are trapped in the sandy wasteland of the Syrtes after a nine day storm, and are convinced that they are going to die. Apollonius' simile uses the aimless roaming of the Argonauts as the centre-point of comparison, figuring them as men wandering a city "like lifeless ghosts, awaiting the destruction of war or plague or a terrible storm," and accompanied by horrific portents, cult statues sweating blood, and untimely darkness at noon (AR *Arg.*4.1278-87).

Pio chooses instead a multi-layered simile, which encompasses the soon-to-die plague victim, a countryman unsettled by storm, and the supernatural phenomena of Apollonius' text (*Supp.*10.301-14). Yet he focuses, at the beginning, entirely on the fear felt by the sailors, in a

⁴⁵ "Often Pio wanders and leaves behind the author, in order to as it were clothe and adorn the poetic work with flowery detours" (*Vagatur saepe Pius et auctorem relinquit: ut floridis diuerticalis poeticum opus uelut uestiat: ac exornet*, Pio (1519) CLXIII). On Pio's similes see Kobusch (2004) 631.

⁴⁶ See Kobusch (2004) 463-4 on this and other moments of praise for Bologna.

simile which expresses their emotion not just through the excitement of a young soldier new to battle, but also the pity for him felt by his more experienced comrades:

Non secus ima pavor crebro praecordia pulsu

haurit, anhelanti iuvenis cum fervidus ore

munera Martis init coram duce militibusque

vulnera et incerti miserantibus ardua belli. *Supp.*10.301-4

Not otherwise does fear engulf his hammering heart, when the eager youth fights for the first time with gasping breath in the presence of his commander and soldiers – who pity him for the wounds and hardships of risky war to come.

Pio here neglects the psychological horror of the Apollonian simile to concentrate on the adrenaline surge of physical fear, forcing an irrational correspondence between the tyro soldier and the exhausted warriors of the *Argonautica*. Nor is there a direct correspondence for the complicating factor in the simile, the compassion felt by the already battle-hardened soldiers. But, as Beate Kobusch convincingly suggests, the pity focalized through the soldiers within the simile refracts the emotional charge demanded of the readers outside it, who should be feeling compassion for the Argonauts.⁴⁷

This invitation to empathize once again forges a bridge between the classical past and contemporary life. Though it is only a passing moment in a catalogue of terrifying experiences to be endured by the Argonauts, it also suggests a larger sense of compassion within the *Supplement* on Pio's part that can be traced right back to its first major episode, the murder of Absyrtus. There, Pio offered an insight into the horrific moment at which Absyrtus realized he was being attacked by Jason, and tried to react. Throughout the *Supplement*, the changes he has made, as have we have seen, often raise the emotional stakes, offering a vision of Medea who is more menaced by the Colchians than even in Apollonius, a Jason

⁴⁷ Kobusch (2004) 532-3.

who is more susceptible to love than his classical forebears. In this innovative simile – carefully and closely woven into the larger translation and imitation project of the *Supplement* – Pio offers a microcosmic encapsulation of the value of his continuation more broadly. His ambition is not only to “finish off” Valerius’ *Argonautica* in a manner which continues the closely-interlinked relationship of Apollonius and Valerius that he had already explicated in his commentary. Pio also aims to bring that *Argonautica* back to life, animating it as a text which can speak to his contemporary readers as a relevant and engaging experience.