

KIN CONFLICTS AND STASIS: CIVIL WAR ON PEUCE IN VALERIUS FLACCUS' *ARGONAUTICA**

ABSTRACT

While it is no secret that Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica explores civil-war themes at great length, the conflicts arising on the island of Peuce between the Colchians and the Argonauts and within the Argonautic party itself in the epic's final book (8.217–467) have been overlooked in critical studies of Valerian civil war. This article argues that Valerius presents the conflicts on Peuce as examples of civil war—emphasizing the bonds of kinship between the conflicting parties and illustrating effects of this discord using imagery of stasis and cosmic dissolution associated with civil war in the wider Latin literary tradition—and thus invites reflection on the development and manifestation of internecine strife within the Argonautica.

Keywords: civil war; Valerius Flaccus; Peuce; kinship; stasis; dissolution

When, in the first book of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Jason agrees to Pelias' challenge to retrieve the golden fleece from Colchis rather than enter into a civil war (1.71–3), we might be tempted to breathe a sigh of relief that the poem will not follow Lucan's *Bellum Civile* to explore the violence and turbulence of internecine strife.¹ However, this relief is only temporary. The *Argonautica*'s basic narrative paradigm is underpinned by cases of internal conflict:² the discord between the divine brothers Jupiter and Neptune (1.498–567),³ the strife between Ino and her stepchildren which causes the fleece to be taken to Colchis in the first place (1.277–82, 2.585–612), the dispute between Aeson and Pelias which prompts the present Argonautic mission (1.21–37),⁴ and the fraternal war between Aeetes and Perses in Colchis during which the Argonauts assist Aeetes in exchange for

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¹ For Valerius' departure from the epic precedents set by Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, see T. Stover, *Epic and Empire in Vespasianic Rome: A New Reading of Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica* (Oxford, 2012).

² N. Bernstein, *In the Image of the Ancestors: Narratives of Kinship in Flavian Epic* (London, 2008), 36; A. Keith, 'Engendering civil war in Flavian epic', in L. Donovan Ginsberg and D. Krasne (edd.), *After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome* (Berlin and Boston, 2018), 295–320, at 303–13.

³ T. Stover, 'Opibusque ultra ne crede paternis: fathers and sons on the wrong side of history in Valerius' *Argonautica*', in N. Maniotti (ed.), *Family in Flavian Epic* (Leiden and Boston, 2016), 14–40, at 27–36. For civil war as fraternal conflict, see E. Fantham, 'Discordia fratrum: aspects of Lucan's conception of civil war', in B. Breed, C. Damon and A. Rossi (edd.), *Citizens of Discord: Rome and its Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2010), 207–21.

⁴ For sedition and the threat of civil war in Iolcus, see A. Zissos, *Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica Book 1: A Commentary* (Oxford, 2008), 123–4, 392–3; T. Pellucci, *Commento al libro VIII delle Argonautiche di Valerio Flacco* (Zurich and New York, 2012), liv–lv.

the golden fleece (6.1–760).⁵ Furthermore, the epic abounds with episodes of intrafamilial and internecine conflict in which the bonds, kinship and similarities between the two sides are stressed,⁶ such as the battle of the winds which threatens Boreas' own sons (1.605) following the Argo's launch (1.574–692),⁷ the Lemnian women's massacre of their menfolk (2.107–310),⁸ the Argonauts' accidental assault upon their former hosts on Cyzicus (2.627, 3.1–461),⁹ and the mutual slaughter of the earth-born men (7.638).¹⁰

One episode which has been excluded from studies of civil war within the *Argonautica* thus far is the conflict on the island of Peuce following Jason and Medea's theft of the fleece and flight from Colchis (8.217–467).¹¹ The events on Peuce—Jason and Medea's wedding, the Colchian attack and the emerging tensions in Jason and Medea's relationship—are far more often examined with an eye to either issues of epic closure and the relationship between Book 8 of Valerius' *Argonautica* and Book 4 of Apollonius Rhodius' Hellenistic epic,¹² or Valerius' engagement with other versions of the Medea story through the alarming omens which accompany her marriage to Jason here (8.247–51).¹³ Yet Valerius' depiction of the attempted Colchian offensive against the Minyae, the strife which develops between Jason and his men, and the emerging discord between Jason and Medea is striking given its use of language associated with familial relationships and the *Argonautica*'s wider presentation of internecine strife as a conflict between kin (broadly defined).¹⁴ Although *nefas*, a term associated with civil war in the wider Roman cultural imagination,¹⁵ is used

⁵ H.J.W. Wijsman, *Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, Book VI: A Commentary* (Leiden and Boston, 2000), 2–4. For 'Roman' elements in the Colchian civil war (6.55–6, 6.402–12) and Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.392–5 as a possible Hellenistic 'narrative stimulus' here, see respectively N. Bernstein, 'Romanas ueluti saeuissima cum legiones Tisiphone regesque mouet: Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and the Flavian era', in M. Heerink and G. Manuwald (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Valerius Flaccus* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), 154–69, at 164–5 and M. Danelia, 'Colchian-Scythian war in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', *Phasis* 12 (2009), 129–40, at 130.

⁶ Bernstein (n. 2), 30. Cf. Stover (n. 1), 113–14, 119–20, 144.

⁷ Stover (n. 1), 79–112.

⁸ Bernstein (n. 2), 50–2. For Valerius' Lemnian massacre and the 'osmotic ... relationship between love and war', see M. Fucecchi, 'War and love in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', in M. Heerink and G. Manuwald (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Valerius Flaccus* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), 115–35, at 118.

⁹ G. Manuwald, *Valerius Flaccus Argonautica Book III* (Cambridge, 2015), 60–3. For Lucanian and Virgilian models for the Cyzicus episode, see Stover (n. 1), 113–50 and M. Heerink, 'Virgil, Lucan, and the meaning of civil war in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', *Mnemosyne* 69 (2016), 511–25.

¹⁰ Bernstein (n. 5), 165–6; Keith (n. 2), 312–13.

¹¹ For Peuce's association with ominous misdeeds (8.217–18), see B. Scott, 'Aspects of transgression in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*' (Diss., University of Liverpool, 2012), 5, 11–12, 40–9, 56–63; G. Romanescu et al., 'The ancient legendary island of Peuce – myth or reality?', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 53 (2014), 521–31, at 521–2.

¹² Pellucci (n. 4), v, xii–xxi, 305–6. For the *Argonautica*'s completeness, see D. Hershkowitz, *Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica: Abbreviated Voyages in Silver Latin Epic* (Oxford, 1998), 1–34; J. Penwill, 'How it all began: civil war and Valerius' *Argonautica*', in L. Donovan Ginsberg and D. Krasne (edd.), *After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome* (Berlin and Boston, 2018), 69–85.

¹³ For Apollonian and Valerian treatments of Jason and Medea's wedding, see Pellucci (n. 4), 267–78; E. Buckley, 'Over her live body? Marriage in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', in N. Maniotti (ed.), *Family in Flavian Epic* (Leiden and Boston, 2016), 61–88, at 61–72.

¹⁴ For familial discord as a symptom of civil war in Roman culture, see D. Armitage, *Civil War: A History in Ideas* (New Haven, 2017), 88–9.

¹⁵ For *nefas* and civil war, see R.T. Ganiban, *Status and Virgil: The Thebaid and the Reinterpretation of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, 2007), 34, 35 n. 44.

here only to refer to the theft of the fleece (8.267) rather than to the conflicts at hand, the episode's prominent discussions of kinship and conspicuous moments of stasis—the particular inertia and paralysis associated with participation in civil war more broadly in the Latin tradition—invite the episode's consideration as an example of internecine strife.¹⁶

This article examines how the language of kinship which runs throughout Valerius' Peuce episode—a *tantum bellum* in the minds of the Argonauts (8.385)—positions the conflict as a complex manifestation of internal or *civil* strife. In showing that the internal strife of the Peuce episode plays out on three levels of affinity—between the Colchians and the Argonauts; between Jason and Medea and the wider Argonautic party, and between Jason, the Argonauts, and Medea; and within Jason himself—I demonstrate that Valerius explores the impacts of civil conflict on three types of kinship: biological and marital relationships, symbolic relationships between companions, and socio-political relationships.¹⁷ Although the discordant parties within the Peuce episode attempt to 'alienate' their adversaries to cast them as 'external' enemies and fail to acknowledge that they are provoking and participating in a kind of internecine strife,¹⁸ Valerius does not allow his readers to overlook this fact. The consequences of these various disputes—moments of stasis and inertia and scenes of instances of cosmic dissolution¹⁹—are presented using themes and imagery deployed in other accounts of civil war in both the *Argonautica* and the wider Latin literary tradition. These civil-war themes may be presented in subtler terms than elsewhere in the *Argonautica*, but this does not mean that their significance here should be understated. Rather, we ought to recognize the events on Peuce as further confirmation that, despite its initial swerve away from a *bellum civile* in Iolchus, Valerius' *Argonautica* cannot escape the ever-present dangers of civil strife.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ARGONAUTS AND THE COLCHIANS

We begin with the largest conflict (in numerical terms, at least) in the Peuce episode: the Colchians' offensive against the departing Argonauts.²⁰ Absyrtus' declaration of his and Medea's shared parentage (*nec te | accipio, germana, datam*, 8.270–1), references to the Colchian fleet as that of Medea's family (8.261–3, 8.427–8), and Valerius' apostrophe to Medea noting—in case anyone had forgotten—that she is being pursued by her

¹⁶ For a summary of enduring Roman civil-war tropes, see E.C. Sanderson, '*Bellum uicturum* – a war about to live again: a study of necromancy and poetry in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*' (Diss., University of Liverpool, 2020), 6–10.

¹⁷ Bernstein (n. 2), 4–7, 31; H. Börm, 'Civil wars in Greek and Roman antiquity: contextualising disintegration and reintegration', in H. Börm, M. Mattheis and J. Wienand (edd.), *Civil War in Ancient Greece and Rome: Contexts of Disintegration and Reintegration* (Stuttgart, 2016), 15–29. For Roman extra-biological kinship, see C. Bannon, *The Brothers of Romulus: Fraternal Pietas in Roman Law, Literature, and Society* (Princeton, 1997); D. Krasne, 'Valerius' Argonauts: a band of brothers?', in L. Fratantuono (ed.), *A Companion to Latin Epic, 16–96 CE* (Maldon, MA and Oxford, forthcoming).

¹⁸ For the alienation of kinsmen in civil war, see M.B. Roller, 'Ethical contradiction and the fractured community in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*', *ClAnt* 15 (1996), 319–47; E.C. Sanderson, 'A wor(l)d beside itself: exploring and experiencing the Uncanny in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*', *Preternature* 10 (2021), 90–116, at 95–9.

¹⁹ For stasis and civil war, see C. Orwin, 'Stasis and plague: Thucydides on the dissolution of society', *The Journal of Politics* 50 (1988), 831–47; S. Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood: A Reading of Lucan's Civil War* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 59–61. For civil war and cosmic dissolution, see M. Lapidge, 'Lucan's imagery of cosmic dissolution', *Hermes* 107 (1979), 344–70; Sanderson (n. 16), 221–3.

²⁰ Pellucci (n. 4), 305–14.

brother (8.312–14) indicate that internal strife has broken out amongst the Colchians.²¹ Given the *Argonautica*'s demonstrable interest in kinship and the breakdown of such relationships, the emphasis on the familial qualities of this discord through repeated mention of Absyrtus and Medea's sibling status (8.263, 8.277, 8.312–17) is perhaps to be expected. However, there is also a second instance of internecine strife at work, this time between the Colchians and the Argonauts. While both groups refer to one another in foreignizing terms which initially frame this skirmish as a conflict between Europe and Asia (8.337–8, 8.347, 8.393, 8.396),²² Valerius reminds us that there is a deeper connection between the two sides since Jason and Medea's marriage (8.220–58) has rejoined the groups who had previously been allied during the Colchian civil war (5.633–4, 6.482–4).²³ This wedding may be accompanied by unfavourable omens indicative of the future calamities which will later befall the couple (8.243–6) and, as we know, Jason will ultimately discard Medea in favour of a more politically rewarding bride.²⁴ However, at this point in Valerius' *Argonautica* at least, there is a formal union between Jason and Medea, one which links the Colchians and the Minyae and thus complicates their present conflict.

By using terms including *coniugium*, *coniunx*, *fides*, *foedus*, *hymenaeos*, *iugalis*, *pactum* and *thalamus* to denote the wedding and subsequent relationship of Jason and Medea, Valerius leaves us in little doubt that, regardless of whether such a ceremony would be legally binding in the 'real world',²⁵ the two parties are now united. Each party's kin must therefore become the other's.²⁶ In fact, this practice begins before the 'official' marriage ceremony: Jason refers to Medea (prematurely) as his wife—*precor, adnue, coniunx* (7.497)—during his trials in Colchis, and Medea worries about the future of her relationship—*nec coniugii secura futuri* (8.206)—while departing Colchis aboard the *Argo*.²⁷ Jason, predictably, uses marital language again

²¹ For Medea's betrayal of her father—termed as an act of *nefas* (8.168)—and for the resulting guilt, see Bernstein (n. 2), 35–6, 43; C. Stocks, 'Daddy's little girl? The father/daughter bond in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and Flavian Rome', in N. Maniotti (ed.), *Family in Flavian Epic* (Leiden and Boston, 2016), 41–60, at 45–6.

²² The juxtaposition of the Thessalian Minyae with Aeetes' stock (8.378–80) affirms this Europe/Asia dichotomy. For Valerius' contrast between Europe and Asia as a precursor to the Trojan War, see W.R. Barnes, 'The Trojan War in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', *Hermes* 109 (1981), 260–70; D. Krasne, 'Valerius Flaccus' collapsible universe: patterns of cosmic disintegration in the *Argonautica*', in L. Donovan Ginsberg and D. Krasne (edd.), *After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome* (Berlin and Boston, 2018), 363–86, at 383–4.

²³ The terms *socias* and *iunxisse* (6.484) indicate that a collective has developed from the two groups: H.J.W. Wijsman, *Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, Book V: A Commentary* (Leiden and Boston, 1996), 284.

²⁴ Scott (n. 11), 5–6, 35–6; P.J. Davis, 'Medea: from epic to tragedy', in M. Heerink and G. Manuwald (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Valerius Flaccus* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), 129–210, at 194–5. For the *Argonautica*'s foreshadowing of these unfortunate events, see 1.224–6, 5.219–20, 5.442–54, 8.206, Stover (n. 1), 113–14. For Jason's marital status following his union with the Lemnian Hypsipyle, see P.J. Davis, 'Jason at Colchis: technology and human progress in Valerius Flaccus', *Ramus* 39 (2010), 1–13, at 9.

²⁵ For the events on Peuce (8.243–6, 8.252–60) and Roman wedding rituals, see G. Williams, 'Some aspects of Roman marriage ceremonies and ideals', *JRS* 48 (1958), 16–29; K.K. Hersch, *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2010), 20, 120, 186; Scott (n. 11), 37.

²⁶ Bernstein (n. 2), 4–7, 31. For this marital language elsewhere in the *Argonautica* (e.g. 1.224–6, 1.130–9), see Barnes (n. 22), 364; Davis (n. 24), 194–5.

²⁷ Cf. 8.420–2, Scott (n. 11), 20. For *coniugium* as a more general term for marital union, see S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford, 1991), 6.

to announce his wedding plans to the Argonauts: *ac primum socios ausus sua pacta docere | promissamque fidem thalami foedusque iugale* (8.221–2).²⁸ Here, however, the marital terms appear alongside language broadly associated with alliances and treaties, such as the treaty between the Colchians and the Minyae which was previously framed as both a *foedus* (5.633) and a joining of parties (*socias iunxisse manus*, 6.484).

Valerius' description of the wedding festivities echoes Jason's choice of words: Medea is referred to as Jason's bride (*cum coniuge*, 8.243), their union is again framed as a *promissam ... fidem* (8.249),²⁹ and the ritual water is specifically 'nuptial' (*undamque iugalem*, 8.245). Even the unpleasantness heralded by Absyrtus' arrival amidst the *inceptos ... hymenaeos* (8.259) cannot efface the bonds of kinship established during this ceremony.³⁰ When Jason weighs up the Minyae's complaints with his pledge to Medea (*sacri sibi conscia pacti | religio*, 8.401–2), the presentation of their marriage as a *pactum* reminds us of their newly confirmed ties of kinship in much the same way as the respective identifications of Jason and Medea as husband (*uir, coniunx*) and wife (*conubia*) (8.411, 8.415, 8.419–21).³¹

Although the Argonauts and the Colchians do not see one another as kin, they do acknowledge Jason and Medea's wedding—even though they do not explicitly recognize the implications of this union. On the Colchian side, Absyrtus jokes that he is the first to pay his respects to the couple (*desum ad conubia frater, | primus et ecce fero quatioque hanc lampada uestro | coniugio, primus cerebro dotalia sacra*, 8.277–9),³² noting their marriage rites and referring to their concord as both a *conubium* and a *coniugium*. On the Minyan side, while the Argonauts accept that the marriage has taken place—how could they not, since they attended the festivities—they frame Medea as an outsider (*externa ... uirgine*, 8.387)—once they realize that the Colchian fleet is approaching. However, even when besmirching the recent rites as the self-centred gratification of one at the expense of many, *an uero ut thalamis raptisque indulgeat unus | coniugiis?* (8.392–3), they still use the marital language—*thalamis* and *coniugium*—which denotes wider bonds of kinship as demonstrated during the earlier Lemnian episode (2.371).

We are therefore presented with a conflict as jarring and contradictory as the one which threatens the island of Peuce: an inversion of the more traditional conflicts of recognition and response found in civil-war narratives whereby individuals struggle to comprehend their countrymen as enemies, and vice versa.³³ Rather than shying away from conflict with a 'kindred' enemy, Valerius' Argonauts make an enemy of and create conflict with one of their own. Ultimately, the question of whether this insistent perception of Jason's bride (8.387) derives from genuine enmity towards Medea in stark contrast to their earlier approval of her (8.220), from a desire for self-preservation in the face of a hostile Colchian force, or from a desperation to avoid yet another civil war matters not. While the *Argonautica's* characters insist

²⁸ For *fides*, *fides promissa* and *thalamus* in relation to marriage (and sexual loyalty), see Treggiari (n. 27), 237.

²⁹ For the syntactic variation of this phrase compared with 8.222, see Pellucci (n. 4), 298.

³⁰ For associations between *hymenaei* and danger, particularly in early Imperial Latin literature, see Hersch (n. 25), 239. Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.316.

³¹ Treggiari (n. 27), 6–7, 140, Buckley (n. 13), 62.

³² For allusions to ill-fated weddings frequented by Furies here, see Pellucci (n. 4), 324.

³³ See n. 18 above. A similar confusion of the rules of kinship and loyalty appears during Rome's war with the Sabines whereby each side frames the other as an external foe despite the 'marriage' of Roman men and Sabine women (Livy 1.10, Plut. *Rom.* 16–19).

through their words and actions upon seeing the looming skirmish as a *bellum externum*, Valerius' master narrative, the 'models' of civil strife elsewhere in the *Argonautica*, and the loaded language of affinity placed into his characters' mouths encourage us to understand the episode as a kind of kin-conflict, a kind of *bellum civile*.

Valerius also draws attention to the civil-war themes at play in the effects and consequences of Juno's divine intervention which holds the attacking Colchians at bay (8.322–84). By unleashing winds and storms and by directing their fury on the waters around Peuce (*inque unum pariter mare protinus omnes | infesto clamore ruunt*, 8.325–6), Juno conjures up a now-familiar epic scene: the storm at sea.³⁴ However, this is more than just a straightforward example of inclement (and unfavourable) weather. The fantastical and perhaps even hyperbolic characteristics of this storm which wreaks havoc upon not just the Colchian fleet (8.328–31, 8.375–81)³⁵ but also the natural world around it (8.326, 8.331–4) recall the kind of cosmic disturbance and dissolution which comes hand in hand with civil-war narratives of the early Imperial period,³⁶ as Lucan's *Bellum Civile* has demonstrated at great length.³⁷ As Krasne has shown, Valerius acknowledges this close association between civil war and the imagery of cosmic dissolution throughout the *Argonautica*, namely during the fraternal conflicts between Pelias and Aeson in Greece and Aeetes and Perses in Colchis (1.827–31, 6.439–48) and his description of the inherently (self-)destructive motions of the Symplegades (4.561–6, 4.574–6, 4.582–3).³⁸

Juno's sea storm features the confusions of natural order which are symptomatic of Valerian civil-war-induced dissolution. First, the winds' release (*uolucrum gens turbida fratrum | erumpit*, 8.323–4) recalls wider associations between winds and strife through their framing as a *gens turbida*, as well as the fears that the winds could 'annihilate the cosmos' if unleashed through the use of *erumpo* here.³⁹ Second, the storm's hurling of ships up to the stars (*in astra | itque reditque ratis, lapsoque reciproca fluctu*, 8.330–1)⁴⁰ echoes the *Argonautica*'s other moments of cosmic collapse, such as the description of a falling sky following the suicide of Jason's parents (1.828–9) and the comparison of the Symplegades to 'part of the stary pole fallen into the sea' (4.642–3).⁴¹ The use of *lapsus* to denote the movement of sea currents (*lapsoque reciproca fluctu*, 8.331)⁴² also recalls these two episodes and their illustration of the 'slipping away' of

³⁴ Hershkowitz (n. 12), 15–16. For epic storms, see T. Biggs and J. Blum, 'Sea-storms in ancient epic', in C. Reitz and S. Finkmann (edd.), *Structures of Epic Poetry – Volume II.2: Configuration* (Berlin and New York, 2020), 125–69.

³⁵ For the metonymic force of *Styrus* at 8.329, see Pellucci (n. 4), 358.

³⁶ Krasne (n. 22), 364.

³⁷ See n. 19 above.

³⁸ Krasne (n. 22), 354–9, 373–9, 384 notes Valerius' particular debt to Lucan in this area. For the metapoetic force of civil-war motifs in the Symplegades episode, see P. Murgatroyd, *A Commentary on Book 4 of Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica* (Leiden and Boston, 2009), 270–81; D. Krasne, 'When the Argo met the Argo: poetic destruction in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', in A. Augoustakis (ed.), *Flavian Poetry and its Greek Past* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), 33–48.

³⁹ Fantham (n. 3), 212 highlights Ov. *Met.* 1.58–60 and Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.44 (on Hor. *Carm.* 1.14) for winds as a political allegory as a prime example of this anxiety.

⁴⁰ For this imagery elsewhere, see Pellucci (n. 4), 259–60.

⁴¹ Krasne (n. 22), 368, 375 invites comparison with Luc. 1.75–6. Cf. P. Roche, *Lucan De Bello Civili Book I: Edited with Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford, 2009), 154.

⁴² Pellucci (n. 4), 361. Lucan uses the same term to denote the civil war's universal effects (*nimioque graues sub pondere lapsus*, 1.71). Cf. Roche (n. 41), 151.

fundamental cosmic structures (*lapsumque queat consumere mundum*, 1.832; *cum uincola mundi | ima labant*, 4.564–5).⁴³

Valerius expresses this idea even more explicitly (*crebra ruina poli caelestia limina laxat*, 8.334),⁴⁴ highlighting the immediacy of the universal disruption at hand through the doubled image of collapsing heavens and unravelling cosmic limits. Although Juno's will, rather than the strife between the Minyae and the Colchians, sparks this empyrean fragmentation, her decision is motivated by the present conflict. By linking the cosmic dissolution here with the turmoil associated with civil war through the language and imagery of undoing, Valerius invites to read this as a supplementary effect of the kin-conflict at hand and thus as a marker of the civil-war threat which underpins this episode. The ultimate result of this divinely inspired cosmic dissolution provides further indication that we are to read this episode as a kind of civil conflict. At first, it would appear that, since Juno's intervention has foiled the Colchians' plans and thus spared the Argonauts from danger, we have arrived at a happy outcome. However, the most direct impacts of this extraordinarily powerful storm suggest otherwise. In preventing their fleet from landing on Peuce, Juno's tempest forces the Colchians into a static deadlock which prevents them either from advancing their original offensive strategy or from initiating an alternative line of attack.

The powerlessness and inertia imposed upon the Colchians here recalls the kind of paralysis—the particular breed of stasis—which accompanies the outbreak of civil war as illustrated by Horace (*tacent et albus ora pallor inficit | mentesque percussae stupent*, *Epod.* 7.15–16) and Lucan (*deriguere metu, gelidos pavor occupant artus*, 1.246).⁴⁵ Styru's *furor*-driven exhortation to his men (8.335–55) fails to help them overcome the stormy waves, and both he and his crew are swallowed up in the churning waters without progressing towards the shore (8.356–68). Likewise, Absyrtus' attempts to circumvent the hostile conditions and make a new approach to Peuce following a brief pause in which he is frozen in indecision (8.369–73) come to naught as his ships are rendered immobile (8.374–84). The case for reading this immobility in civil-war terms grows stronger still when we consider the episode's evocation of the 'ship of state' allegory which stresses the need for a helmsman/statesman figure who is able to overcome dangers and guide his ship (and, by extension, the state) to safety.⁴⁶ Neither of the Colchian 'figureheads' here manages this: Styru and his flotilla are utterly overcome by the ravages of the storm, while Absyrtus—arguably the 'governing power' of the Colchian fleet (8.261–6)—is rendered impotent in the face of insurmountable obstacles. Valerius' Colchians are thus forced to yield to the whims

⁴³ Krasne (n. 22), 368, 374. The latter phrase (4.564–5) recalls the Stoic descriptions of universal frameworks (e.g. Luc. 1.80, Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.11.5) highlighted by Lapidge (n. 19), 819–21.

⁴⁴ For the heavenly framework under threat during a storm, see Luc. 5.633–4 (*motaque poli | compage laborant*), Fantham (n. 3), 209. While Pellucci (n. 4), 363–4 notes that the falling sky is an established literary topos, we cannot ignore the imagery of cosmic dissolution also present here alongside associated civil-war themes and tropes.

⁴⁵ Bartsch (n. 19), 59–61, C.A. Barton, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Blood* (Berkeley, 2001), 94. For the responses of Lucan's characters to the realities of the civil war, see Sanderson (n. 18), 95–9.

⁴⁶ Examples of this imagery include Archil. fr. 105–6 *IEG*, Alc. fr. 6, 73, 208 Voigt, Soph. *OT* 22–3, Cic. *Att.* 2.7.4. For surveys of this allegory, see N. Thompson, *The Ship of State: Statecraft and Politics from Ancient Greece to Democratic America* (New Haven and London, 2001) and P.J. Finglass, *Sophocles: Oedipus the King* (Cambridge, 2018), 174–5. For the ship-of-state trope and political turbulence in Latin literature (e.g. Hor. *Carm.* 1.14, Luc. 4.448–581), see K.O. Eldred, 'This ship of fools: epic vision in Lucan's Vulteius episode', in D. Fredrick (ed.), *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore and London, 2002), 57–85, at 73–6.

of Juno's tempest in much the same way that Lucan's Pompey is equated to a captain at the mercy of a storm (7.125–7) when unleashing his army at the battle of Pharsalus,⁴⁷ suggesting that the statesman's tools are especially powerless in the context of *internal* strife.

This picture of stricken ships demands that we consider the implications of this attempted assault for the wider Colchian group, namely the group which now includes the Argonauts because of their newly confirmed kinship. Ultimately, the root cause of the Colchian fleet floundering here derives from their decision to attack their own kin. Since the difficulties faced by their ships—and, by extension, their state—are brought about by a kind of civil conflict, it is fitting that the Colchian fleet should be hindered by the kind of stasis which accompanies such strife. Valerius' Colchians, while not silent or paralysed like Horace's and Lucan's Romans, are unable to free themselves from the suspended animation of this 'divinely imposed' stasis which closely resembles the stagnation associated with internecine strife. In depicting the Colchians' attempted assault on the escaping Minyae, then, Valerius presents us with a picture which abounds in threatening themes of kin-conflict, cosmic dissolution and unconquerable immobility, a picture uncannily similar to the *Argonautica's* other, more overt, episodes of civil war (1.21–37, 2.107–310, 3.1–461, 6.1–760, 7.638).

THE CONFLICT(S) BETWEEN THE ARGONAUTS, JASON AND MEDEA

Amidst the strife between the Argonauts and the Colchians we find a second, smaller-scale conflict unfolding on Peuce within the Argonautic party. Concerned about the threat posed by Absyrtus and the attacking Colchians, the Argonauts demand that Jason give up his new bride to allow them to return home safely with their original objective—the golden fleece—acquired (8.385–99).⁴⁸ This discord between Jason and Medea and the rest of the Argonauts sparks further contention, this time between Medea and the Argonauts (including Jason), as Medea demands that her new husband fulfil his spousal duties towards her ahead of his loyalties towards his men (8.415–44).⁴⁹ These varying but nonetheless fervent demands may initially appear to put Jason in a classic dilemma concerning individual and collective needs (*hinc praesens pudor, hinc decreta suorum | dura premunt*, 8.464–5).⁵⁰ However, the issue of kinship between and within the emerging Argonautic factions makes this predicament far more complex. In fact, Valerius' focalization of the party's relationships through Jason and his internal conflict—namely, the implied links between Medea and the Argonauts in light of their

⁴⁷ For the demolition of Pompey's status as a head of state here and thematic parallels with Luc. 1.498–503, see P. Roche, *Lucan De Bello Civili Book VII* (Cambridge, 2019), 100. Cf. Roche (n. 41), 310–12.

⁴⁸ For Jason and Medea's wedding and patterns of familial behaviour in Valerius' *Argonautica*, see Bernstein (n. 2), 60.

⁴⁹ For textual issues at 8.458–63 and their implications for Medea's character at this stage, see T. Schmitt-Neuerburg, 'Triumph der Medea? Kritische Bemerkungen zu den *Argonautica* des Valerius Flaccus', *Philologus* 145 (2001), 121–36, at 122–4.

⁵⁰ C. Castelletti, 'A hero with a sandal and a buskin: the figure of Jason in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', in M. Heerink and G. Manuwald (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Valerius Flaccus* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), 173–91, at 188. For dynamics between Jason and the Argonauts, see H. Lovatt, 'Teamwork, leadership, and group dynamics in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', in M. Heerink and G. Manuwald (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Valerius Flaccus* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), 211–28, at 211–15.

connections to him (8.403–4)—demands that we acknowledge the fundamentally internecine character of these disputes.

While some of the Argo's crew do have familial connections, Krasne's discussion of the catalogue of Argonauts (1.352–493) reveals that a metaphorical 'brotherhood'—similar to the socio-political kinship outlined by Bernstein—also connects them.⁵¹ When the individual members of the expedition gather before formally joining together and embarking upon a common mission, they are described as *omnis ... turba ducum* (1.100–1).⁵² Once they become a collective with a shared purpose, the Argonauts are described in terms—such as forms of *socius*—which reflect their kin status.⁵³ When Jason entices his cousin Acastus to join his venture, *socium te iungere coeptis | est animus* (1.165–6), he refers to his crew as *socii* and expresses Acastus' act of joining using language widely associated with the creation of kinship.⁵⁴ Jason also uses *socius* and *uir* elsewhere to refer to Mopsus and Idmon (*superum quando consulta uidetis, | o socii*, 1.241–2),⁵⁵ and the entire group (*ite, uiri ... hanc uero, socii*, 1.248–50).⁵⁶ Valerius' framing of the Argonautic group as *Minyae*—beginning with their launch of the Argo (1.184)—underscores this further.⁵⁷ The recurrences of the term *Minyae* throughout the *Argonautica* remind us time and again of the establishment of the crew's relationship and shared goal evoked in its first definitive appearance.

The Argonauts' kindred duty towards one another comes to the fore when they are required to depart from Mysa without Hercules and Hylas (3.715–25),⁵⁸ at which point 'the lack of divine guidance coupled with [their] sense of grief ... creates the impression they have made a bad decision, raising the possibility that they have acted disloyally'.⁵⁹ The repetition of *socius* referring to the main party (3.715–20) stresses the enduring companionship between the remaining crewmembers, companionship extended to those who join Jason's band of men later in the journey.⁶⁰ Shortly after the deaths of Tiphys and Idmon (5.1–62), the Argonauts find new companions (*comites*, 5.112) in Autolycus, Phlogius and Deileon, who are received as kin (*prima ruunt celeres ad litora seque precantur | accipiant socios*, 5.117–18),⁶¹ kin who 'fill in' the gaps in the Argo's

⁵¹ Bernstein (n. 2), 4–7, Krasne (n. 17). For affection and loyalty among kin in *Argonautica* Book 1, see J.E. Shelton, 'The storm scene in Valerius Flaccus', *CJ* 70 (1974), 14–22, at 19.

⁵² For the contrast between elder and younger heroes here, see A.J. Kleywegt, *Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, Book 1: A Commentary* (Leiden and Boston, 2005), 75 and Zissos (n. 4), 139.

⁵³ See Murgatroyd (n. 38), 160, 262, 300 on 4.292, 4.543, 4.626, and Manuwald (n. 9), 134 on 3.261. Valerius also uses *comes* (3.662, 4.6, 4.37, 5.6, 5.40, 5.128) and *manus* (3.3) in this way, although far less frequently.

⁵⁴ See 1.117–18, 6.484.

⁵⁵ Cf. 2.55, 8.183. Prior to this, Idmon addresses his companions who are also termed *socii* (1.234). For comparisons with Homeric and Augustan-era depictions of companionship, see Zissos (n. 4), 203 and Kleywegt (n. 52), 147 respectively.

⁵⁶ For similarities between this scene and Hor. *Carm.* 1.7.26—in which Teucer encourages his companions to be carefree—see Zissos (n. 4), 204–5.

⁵⁷ For *Minyae* as a 'stock poetic designation for Argonauts', see Kleywegt (n. 52), 120, Zissos (n. 4), 179. For *Minyae* as an indication of the long-standing connections between Thessalian Iolcos and Boeotian Orchomenos, see Wijsman (n. 23), 29.

⁵⁸ For Hercules' departure from the main narrative and Valerius' treatment of the rape of Hylas, see Manuwald (n. 9), 256–7.

⁵⁹ T. Stover, 'Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* 3.598–752: epic, history, and intertextuality', in N. Coffee, C. Forstall, L.G. Milic and D. Nelis (edd.), *Intertextuality in Flavian Epic Poetry* (Berlin and Boston, 2019), 43–64, at 45.

⁶⁰ For the Argonauts' shared grief (3.724–5), see Manuwald (n. 9), 257.

⁶¹ Wijsman (n. 23), 73 invites comparison with Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.955–61 for details of the new companions.

roster (5.118–19),⁶² Valerius also confirms the flexibility of this Argonautic kinship by using *socius* to refer to the Minyae and affiliated peoples such as the Cyzicans (3.30, 3.146, 3.162), implying that conflicts (even accidental conflicts) within these relationships amount to civil conflicts.⁶³ As such, by the time Jason announces his wedding plans to his men (*primum socios ausus sua pacta docere*, 8.221), we are primed to understand the *socii* as a cognate entity.

Such is the nature of Valerius' Argonautic kinship. Let us now return to the discord amongst Jason, Medea and the Minyae on Peuce. Just as we saw in the case of the Colchians and the Minyae, while the parties involved in the two quarrels here acknowledge some aspects of the bonds between them, each group or individual endeavours to present their opponents in distinctly foreignizing terms without acknowledging the internecine consequences of the divisions created within the Argonautic party. First, in attempting to convince Jason to consider their needs and safety ahead of a 'foreign woman' (*externa ... uirgine*, 8.387), Jason's companions create a rift within their recently expanded collective. When challenging Jason to remember the nature of their allegiance (8.390–1),⁶⁴ the Minyae frame Medea as an extraneous presence who falls outside of the collective needs of their party, *pluresque animas maioraque fata | tot comitum* (8.389–90). Just as Jason and Medea's wedding—an event acknowledged by Jason's men (8.392–3)—had effectively united the Argonauts and the Colchians, the ceremony has also joined Medea and the Minyae in kinship. The Minyae's confrontation of Jason thus amounts to the beginnings of an internal conflict, morphing quickly from a threat of rebellion against a leader gone astray (8.390–1) to a conflict amongst kin.⁶⁵

After Jason has been swayed by the arguments of his men (8.404), Medea realizes that she is to be abandoned (8.410–12) and confronts her new husband, drawing her own battlelines within the Argonautic group.⁶⁶ Medea reminds Jason of his position as husband (*me quoque, uir, tecum Minyae ... nocte dieque mouent*, 8.415–16), and condemns his proposed desertion of her and his marital duties as an act of *nefas* (*meque ecce (nefas) te reddere poscunt*, 8.434). However, Medea draws sharp distinctions between herself and Jason's companions (*scis te mihi certe, | non socios iurasse tuos*, 8.422–3),⁶⁷ and effectively excludes the Minyae—perceived as being linked only to Jason rather than to herself as well—from the bonds of kinship between the couple. Given her stress on the familial and marital expectations of her relationship with Jason, Medea's failure to recognize the rest of the Minyae as her own kin in light of her recent marriage is as jarring as their earlier reference to her as a *uirgo externa*. Her bid to win Jason's favour and turn him back against the demands of his companions thus triggers the Argonautic party's further descent into civil strife.

Again, Valerius reminds us that, even though his characters may be ignorant—wilfully or otherwise—of the true character of the conflicts they enter into, we are not permitted such ignorance. In addition to drawing attention to the kindred positions of Medea and the Minyae relative to one another, Valerius also hints at the shared origins of the two

⁶² For *accedere* and *socii*, see Verg. *Aen.* 1.509, Wijsman (n. 23), 74.

⁶³ Manuwald (n. 9), 73, 104.

⁶⁴ Bernstein (n. 2), 60, Davis (n. 24 [2010]), 9.

⁶⁵ For the potential of rebellions to develop into full-blown civil wars, see Börm (n. 17), 17.

⁶⁶ For parallels between Valerius' Medea and Virgil's Dido in this respect, see Hershkowitz (n. 12), 251–2.

⁶⁷ Cf. 8.431, 8.434–6.

sides which vie for Jason's support and allegiance (*Martemque cupit sociamque pericli | cogitat ... haud ultra sociis obsistere pergit*, 8.403–4). In referring to Medea here as *sociam* alongside the Minyae as *sociis*, Valerius blurs the lines between these distinct factions to remind us that they are ultimately part of the same group. While this particular linguistic choice restates and reinforces the overlooked bonds within the splintered Argonautic party, the comradely references to Medea and the Argonauts have further implications. Valerius evokes another civil-war trope ossified in the Roman cultural imagination through this play on recurring terms of kinship: the difficulty of distinguishing of one's friend and enemy in the context of internal strife and the semantic confusion which accompanies it.⁶⁸ In doing so, Valerius reminds us of how we should now understand the Argonautic group following the wedding of Jason and Medea: as a collective 'whole', whose component 'parts' are at war.

THE CONFLICT WITHIN JASON

The smallest-scale example of a *bellum internum* during the Peuce episode takes place within Jason himself. Valerius' depiction of Jason considering his duties as husband and as Argonautic leader (8.463a–5) is replete with references to two key civil-war tropes encountered in the episode's earlier examples of internecine strife: imagery of stasis and confusions surrounding the language of kinship. Having been confronted by a distraught Medea (8.415–44), Jason loses some of the resolve he had gathered following the Argonauts' earlier intervention (8.385–99) and attempts to calm his bride's anger in the epic's final extant lines (8.465–7) following a brief reprise of his present dilemma (*maestus at ille minis et mota Colchidos ira | haeret, et hinc praesens pudor, hinc decreta suorum | dura premunt*, 8.463a–5).⁶⁹

Here, Jason appears to adopt the same 'foreignizing' strategy employed by the intra-Argonautic factions and by the Minyae and the Colchians alike. Medea is referred to as *Colchidos* (a foreigner) relative to the Argonauts who are framed as *suorum* (*his men*) in a striking echo of the Argonauts' earlier attempts to 'dissociate' themselves (and, by extension, Jason himself) from Medea (8.387, 8.389–90).⁷⁰ Medea's identification as *Colchidos* by Jason is particularly jarring given the extensive array of kinship-related language used to denote her connection with the Argonautic party, not to mention Jason's own comments on the nature of their relationship noted in the first two sections of this article. This apparent alienation of Medea by Jason recalls the Argonauts' earlier attempts to exclude Medea from their collective (8.387, 8.392–3) and thus make a 'foreign' enemy of one of their own. By focalizing this notion of Medea as an external presence relative to the Minyae through Jason, Valerius suggests that the Argonautic leader—like his companions—is reluctant to embrace the internecine character of this strife, and thus creates an inescapable conflict between the perceptions of Valerius' internal characters and external audience.

Furthermore, despite its fragmentary nature,⁷¹ we can read this passage alongside a comparable case of Jason's interior struggles—his deliberations following Pelias'

⁶⁸ C.H. Lange, 'The logic of violence in Roman civil war', *Hermathena* 196–7 (2014), 69–96, at 82; Sanderson (n. 18), 95–9.

⁶⁹ Cf. 8.400–4, Castelletti (n. 50), 188.

⁷⁰ I am indebted to the anonymous reviewer for their apt suggestion of 'dissociate' here.

⁷¹ For questions around Jason's character here, see Davis (n. 24 [2010]), 9.

challenge to reclaim the fleece (1.66–80)—to consider further aspects of internal discord within his situation here. Valerius presents Jason's evaluation of the options available to him in response to Pelias' proposed quest through a series of rhetorical questions which explore various examples for the courses of action he might take (1.66–80).⁷² Although we are not told so specifically, we may safely assume that this process of consideration takes place within Jason's mind.⁷³ Jason's effective 'imprisonment by indecision' is revealed in the passage's final lines, *tandem animi incertum confusaque pectora firmit | religio* (1.79–80), which contrast his previous lack of clarity—and thus his prior inability to proceed with a plan of action—with the resolve provided by divine guidance.⁷⁴ This speculative passage provides us with a rough template to ascertain what takes place 'between the lines' during Jason's inertia on Peuce.

Jason is 'stuck' (*haeret*) in a 'geographical, strategic, and moral *impasse*',⁷⁵ unable to make headway in either of the avenues of duty open to him which press him on either side (*premunt*) in this moment of indecision. As Penwill has noted, these circumstances bear a marked resemblance to the tricky situation faced by Lucan's Caesar at the abrupt close of the *Bellum Ciuile*: Valerius' Jason is 'hemmed in by hostile forces' just as Caesar is trapped in Alexandria (10.535–9), and the verbal similarities between the passages—the repeated *hinc ... hinc* (8.464, Luc. 10.537–8) and the evocation of Lucan's *insultant* (10.538) in Valerius' *premunt* (8.465)—indicate that these parallels are no mere accident.⁷⁶ In fact, the Lucanian intertext observed by Penwill here is just the beginning: the dynamics of Jason's paralysis suggest that we are to understand this brief description alongside the Peuce episode's larger and more overt instances of internecine strife.

If we accept the possibility that *haeret* (8.464) is indicative of an elaborate deliberative process (and signifies the imposition of some physical pause) akin to that suggested in *Argonautica* Book 1, then we can interpret Jason's hesitation here in terms of another symptom of one of the 'civil' conflicts which unfolds on Peuce: the inertia imposed upon the Colchians which recalls the stasis and paralysis arising from civil war (8.335–84). This stasis deriving from the 'war inside [Jason's] head', centred upon and confined to one individual, may not appear as grandiose or as awe-inspiring as that arising from Juno's storm of cosmic proportions which halts an entire fleet in its tracks. Even so, this experience of stasis is no less potent. Jason conceives of his dilemma in terms of duty to the divine pact of marriage vs his duty towards his comrades rather than in terms of the kind of (quasi-civil) strife he will set in motion by committing himself to either side. Just as the Colchians, for all their ardent desires to give the Minyae a piece of their mind(s), were held in inescapable stillness by Juno's storm, so too Jason becomes a kind of civil-war victim, caught 'staring into the abyss, frozen in that eternal moment, forever on the brink of fratricide and all it will lead to'.⁷⁷

CIVIL WAR(S) ON PEUCE

Civil strife looms large over Valerius' *Argonautica*, and the events which unfold on the island of Peuce are not immune from its contagion. Throughout this episode, Valerius

⁷² For Valerius' use of deliberative subjunctives here, see Kleywegt (n. 52), 56, Zissos (n. 4), 122.

⁷³ For psychology and motivation in the *Argonautica*, see Kleywegt (n. 52), 54.

⁷⁴ Kleywegt (n. 52), 64.

⁷⁵ Penwill (n. 12), 70.

⁷⁶ Penwill (n. 12), 70–4.

⁷⁷ Penwill (n. 12), 83.

presents multifaceted explorations of biological/marital, symbolic and socio-political kinship along with the serious consequences of violating its rules. By following breaches of kinship with themes and imagery so closely associated with civil war elsewhere in the *Argonautica* and the wider Latin literary tradition, Valerius reminds us that the conflicts which result from these contraventions ought to be understood as examples of internecine strife. As we learn from the various examples of discord which occur on Peuce, ignorance of—or refusal to accept—the ramifications of kin-relationships and the duties they imply are not excuses, nor will they suffice to hold back the crippling stasis and the devastating cosmic dissolution which arise as symptoms of kin-conflict. Valerius' depiction of the implications of different kinds of kin-conflict within this episode reminds us that civil war may be unleashed on any level: between two significant powers united by marriage and prior alliances (as in the case of the Colchians and the Minyae), within one group which splinters under the pressure of the incompatible motivations of opposing internal groups (as in the case of the Minyae and Medea [and Jason]), and within the warring duality of the irresolute mind of an individual (as in the case of Jason himself). The complex discussion of the manifestations of internecine strife on Peuce thus provides a framework through which we may (re)consider the *Argonautica*'s acknowledgement of the inevitable fragility of concord, the enduring threat of discord, and the fallacy of attempts at alienation in civil war.

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