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Echoing Hylas : metapoetics in Hellenistic and Roman poetry

Heerink, M.A.J.

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CHAPTER 4

EPIC HYLAS: VALERIUS FLACCUS' *ARGONAUTICA* AND STATIUS' *THEBAID*

Ganz erbärmlich ist (...) seine sklavische Abhängigkeit von Vergil. Ich dachte, etwas hat er doch gelesen, als ich VII 149 eine Anspielung auf den Orestes des Euripides, VII 301 auf die Bakchen fand. Aber beides stammt aus der Aeneis IV 479.

von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1924, II, 165, n. 2
(on Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*)

1. Introduction: the epic potential of Valerius' Hylas

In the previous chapters it was argued that Hylas, in the Hellenistic and Augustan ages, was associated with Callimachean poetry. In Roman poetry, these poetics, as is well-known, were interpreted more rigidly than they were conceived of by Callimachus himself as anti-epic.⁴⁸⁸ It is therefore striking that in Valerius Flaccus' Flavian epic *Argonautica*, Hylas initially seems to fulfil an epic role. When the Greek heroes assemble to join the Argonautic expedition at the beginning of the epic and Hercules and Hylas are introduced, Hylas is described as happily carrying the hero's weapons:

Protinus Inachiis ultro Tirynthius Argis
advolat, Arcadio cuius flammata veneno
tela puer facilesque umeris gaudentibus arcus
gestat Hylas; velit ille quidem, sed dextera nondum
par oneri clavaeque capax. (...)

Arg. 1.107-11

At once Tirynthian Hercules hurries there | unprodded, from Inachian Argos'
land. | His arrows tipped with venom's Arcadian fire | and his bow the

⁴⁸⁸ Ch. 1, Section 2.5 discusses Callimachus' position *vis-à-vis* epic. See also Sections 5.4 and 7.3 below for Roman "Callimacheanism".

youngster Hylas carries, | an easy load his shoulders gladly bear. | The club as well he'd hold, but still | his arms can't bear the weight. (tr. Barich)

Although he is a boy (*puer*) not able to carry Hercules' club, *nondum* ("not yet") suggests that he will be able someday and will thus become an epic hero like his adoptive father. This suggestion is not present in the parallel passage in Valerius' most important model, Apollonius' *Argonautica*:

(...) σὺν καὶ οἱ Ὕλας κίεν, ἐσθλὸς ὀπάων
πρωθήβης, ἰὼν τε φορεὺς φύλακός τε βιοῖο Arg. 1.131-2

And with him went his noble squire Hylas, in the first bloom of youth, to be the bearer of his arrows and guardian of his bow. (tr. Race)

This move of Valerius seems in line with the poetics of the *Argonautica* in general, for, as most scholars nowadays agree, Valerius' epic "recuperates" its Hellenistic predecessor as heroic epic – and in particular its protagonist Jason as epic hero – by viewing Apollonius' epic through a Virgilian lens.⁴⁸⁹ In fact, the Valerian relationship between Hylas and Hercules is modelled on that between Virgil's Ascanius and Aeneas.⁴⁹⁰ This is already apparent from the passage quoted above, which alludes to *Aeneid* 2. There, in a similar context, at the start of the epic journey of the Trojans, Ascanius is following Aeneas (compare the underlined words):

haec fatus latos umeros subiectaque colla
veste super fulvique insternor pelle leonis,
succedoque oneri; dextrae se parvus Iulus
implicuit **sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis**. Aen. 2.721-4

⁴⁸⁹ See esp. Hershkowitz 1998, 105-98 (Ch. 3: "Recuperations: better, stronger, faster"). Cf. Stover 2003, which builds on Hershkowitz's work. For the way Valerius' Jason evokes Virgil's Aeneas, see also Adamietz 1970, 37.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Hershkowitz 1998, 150: "In accordance with the established pattern of Valerian recuperation, once again this Romanization is a by-product of a sort of Vergilization of the situation as a whole, extending to the character of Hylas as much as to the character of Hercules, by modelling their relationship primarily on that of Aeneas and Ascanius." See also p. 168 below.

When I had finished speaking, I put on a tawny lion's skin as a covering for my neck and the breadth of my shoulders and then I bowed down and took up my burden. Little Iulus twined his fingers in my right hand and kept up with me with his short steps. (tr. D. West)

Later in the epic, at the beginning of the Hylas episode, the intertextual contact with this Virgilian passage is made even more clear. After Hercules has broken his oar in a rowing contest, the Argo slows down and Tiphys steers it towards the Mysian coast. Hercules then heads for the ash trees to cut one down to make a new oar, and Hylas following Hercules resembles Ascanius in the footsteps of Aeneas (as the bold markings highlight):⁴⁹¹

(...) petit excelsas Tirynthius ornos,
haeret Hylas lateri **passusque moratur iniquos.** Arg. 3.485-6

The man from Tiryns heads toward towering ash trees; | Hylas keeps close, slowing his unequal stride. (tr. Barich, adapted)

Hylas thus seems to be presented as a potential epic hero, destined to follow in the footsteps of his heroic father, just like Ascanius in the *Aeneid*. Whereas Aeneas' son is still a child at the beginning of the expedition (*parvus Iulus*), he is "flirting with adulthood" in *Aeneid* 9.⁴⁹² After Ascanius has slain the aboriginal Numanus Remulus, who was mocking the Trojans, he is congratulated by Apollo in terms that suggest that he is becoming a *vir*:⁴⁹³

macte nova virtute, puer, sic itur ad astra,
dis genite et geniture deos. Aen. 9.641-2

You have become a man, young Iulus, and we salute you! This is the way that leads to the stars. You are born of the gods and will live to be the father of gods. (tr. D. West)

⁴⁹¹ See Langen 1896-7, 253 (on Arg. 3.486); Garson 1963, 261 and Hershkowitz 1998, 151 for the allusion.

⁴⁹² Morgan 2003, 75. See also Hardie 1994, 15-7 on Ascanius in *Aen.* 9.

⁴⁹³ See e.g. Keith 1999; Hinds 2000 on the way Roman epic associates epic with men.

This passage and Ascanius' development in the *Aeneid* in general not only deal with maturation, however, but also with epic poetry, which, from Homer onwards, is a distinctly masculine affair.⁴⁹⁴ As Keith adds, however, "additional pressure on gender may be felt in Latin epic, given the centrality of *vir-tus* in all its senses to the genre at Rome".⁴⁹⁵ Because of this particularly close association of epic with masculinity in Rome, it is not surprising that Roman poets often self-consciously define epic in programmatic places by reference to men and their stereotypically epic activity, war.⁴⁹⁶ Virgil, for instance, in the programmatic prologue of *Eclogue* 6, speaks of *reges et proelia*, "kings and battles" (6), and Horace, in his *Ars Poetica*, describes epic as dealing with *res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella*, "deeds of kings and leaders and grim wars" (73). The opening of the *Aeneid* (*arma virumque* ...) is another, extremely brief, example, to which Roman poets often refer in more implicitly programmatic, metapoetical contexts. At the end of his taunting speech to the Trojans, in which he calls them effeminate, Numanus Remulus tells the Trojans to "leave arms to men" (*sinite arma viris*, *Aen.* 9.620). Ascanius, by then attacking and killing him, shows Numanus what epic (and more specifically the *Aeneid*) is all about. The juxtaposition of *virtute* and *puer* in Apollo's words self-consciously reveals how striking this feat actually is: a *boy* has just won a male-epic fight. In his second address to Ascanius Apollo reminds Ascanius of the fact that he is still only a boy, not an epic warrior, a point emphasized by the juxtaposition of *puer* and *bello*.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ As Morgan 2003, 66 expresses it: "Genres are gendered, and the epic genre is emphatically masculine." See also Keith 1999, 214 on the masculinity of epic.

⁴⁹⁵ Keith 1999, 214.

⁴⁹⁶ See, however, Hinds 2000, who shows that in practice Roman poets do not live up to this narrow definition: "'Unepic' elements, no matter how frequently they feature in actual epics, continue to be regarded as unepic; as if oblivious to elements of vitality and change within the genre (for which he himself may be in part responsible), each new Roman writer reasserts a stereotype of epic whose endurance is as remarkable as is its ultimate incompatibility with the actual plot of any actual epic in the Greek or Latin canon". (p. 223).

⁴⁹⁷ Hardie 1994, 209 (ad loc.): "Apollo concludes his second address, as he began his first, with the vocative *puer*, but, whereas in the first the collocation *uirtute puer* hinted at transition to manhood, here the juxtaposition with *bello* (pointing back to 590) seems to put Ascanius in his place; he is just a boy (*arma uirum* lies in the future for him)."

sit satis, Aenide, telis impune Numanum
oppetiisse tuis. primam hanc tibi magnus Apollo
concedit laudem et paribus non invidet armis;
cetera parce, puer, bello. (...)

Aen. 9.653-6

Let that be enough, son of Aeneas. Numanus has fallen to your arms and you are unhurt. Great Apollo has granted you this first taste of glory and does not grudge you arrows as sure as his own. You must ask for no more, my boy, in this war. (tr. D. West)

The killing of Numanus on the battlefield, however, makes it clear that Ascanius is on the verge of becoming a *vir* and thus an epic hero.

In book 3 of the *Argonautica*, Hylas is also successful on the battlefield, when he defeats the Cyzican Sages:

at diversa Sagen turbantem fallere nervo
tum primum puer ausus Hylas (spes maxima bellis
pulcher Hylas, si fata sinant, si prospera Iuno),
prostravitque virum celeri per pectora telo.

Arg. 3.182-5

But elsewhere in the field, where Sages works havoc, | boy Hylas for the first time ventures bold | and cheats him with his bow. (The greatest promise | fair Hylas showed for war, if only fate | allowed it, if only Juno had been kind.) He sends the man sprawling with swift arrow through chest. (tr. Barich)

As in the case of Ascanius (*tum primum*, *Aen.* 9.590), this is Hylas' first fight on the epic battlefield (*tum primum*, 183), and like Aeneas' son, Hylas seems destined to become an epic *vir*. The connection between the two epic boys is reinforced by the denotation of Hylas as *spes maxima bellis* (183), which recalls *Aeneid* 12, where Ascanius is called the "second hope of great Rome" (*magnae spes altera Romae*).⁴⁹⁸ But there is an important difference, for although Hylas is involved in a battle of epic proportions, it concerns a perversion of war, as the Argonauts are unwittingly killing

⁴⁹⁸ These intertextual connections between Hylas and Ascanius have also been documented by Spaltenstein 2004, 62-3 (ad loc.), who in addition notes the allusion to Marcellus' premature death as mentioned in *Aen.* 6.882-3 (*heu miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas. | tu Marcellus eris. "Child of a nation's sorrow, could you but shatter the cruel barrier of fate! You are to be Marcellus."*) in line 184 (*si fata sinant, si prospera Iuno*), which announces Hylas' disappearance later in the book. See n. 630 below for the possible metapoetical significance of Hylas' daring (*ausus*, 183) in this passage.

their own friends, the hospitable Cyzicans.⁴⁹⁹ Just like Apollonius in his Cyzicus episode,⁵⁰⁰ Valerius here seems to decline to write heroic-epic poetry in its purest form, as dealing with men and war, “essential epic”, as Hinds calls it.⁵⁰¹

In this chapter, it will be argued that the Hylas episode reinforces this impression, and that the idea, most elaborately discussed by D. Hershkowitz, that Valerius has recuperated the *Argonautica* as a heroic epic by a “Vergilization” of Apollonius’ epic, has to be significantly modified.⁵⁰² Although Hylas is initially presented as a potentially epic, Virgilian, hero, the literary history of the boy eventually comes into play, revealing the impossibility of the epic continuing in the Virgilian direction in which it was going. I shall first suggest that the episode functions as a metapoetical manifesto, revealing Valerius’ *Argonautica* as an epic that can only imitate its Augustan epic predecessor to a certain extent. Valerius seems to elegize the *Aeneid*, a move which he allusively associates with Ovid’s “elegiac epic” *Metamorphoses*, a poem that reacts to Virgil’s heroic epic in a similar way. Although the *Argonautica* is clearly influenced by the *Aeneid*, the way in which Valerius expresses his distance from Virgil, the Roman Homer, in the Hylas episode recalls Apollonius’ Callimachean position *vis-à-vis* Homer. As much as Valerius’ epic is a “Vergilization” of the *Argonautica*, it is an Apollonian version of the *Aeneid*. Secondly I shall argue that Statius, in a very brief passage in book 5 of the *Thebaid*, alluding to Valerius’ *Argonautica*, uses Hylas and Hercules in a similar way to comment allegorically on the relationship of his epic to Virgil’s. Finally, I shall suggest that the allusions of both poets make it possible to read their great predecessor metapoetically as well.

⁴⁹⁹ The battle is wholly described in terms of an “unholy” (*nefas*) civil war (see McGuire 1997, 108-113), comparable to e.g. the second half of the *Aeneid*. The war at Cyzicus, however, is completely useless, as it serves no purpose whatsoever, and can be considered a perversion even of civil war, “a veritable Hell on Earth” (Hardie 1993: 87). That the war is an extreme case is reinforced by Jupiter, who breaks off the battle (*Arg.* 3.249-53), and by Valerius’ own question to Clio concerning the war: *cur talia passus | arma, quid hospitibus iunctas concurrere dextras | Iuppiter?* “Why Jupiter permits a war like this, a clash | of guest and host?” (*Arg.* 3.16-8; tr Barich, slightly adapted).

⁵⁰⁰ See e.g. Ch. 1, p. 38.

⁵⁰¹ Hinds 2000, entitled “Essential epic”.

⁵⁰² Hershkowitz 1998. See also n. 489 above.

2. The Hylas episode and the *Aeneid*

2.1. A miniature *Aeneid*

Contrary to all the previous versions of the Hylas story, the events in Valerius' episode are motivated by Juno, who wants to remove the hated Hercules from the Argonautic expedition. Although the goddess is the traditional patron deity of the expedition, as she is in Apollonius' epic,⁵⁰³ she plays no part in the Hellenistic Hylas episode. The inspiration for Valerius' innovation seems to come from his other most important model, Virgil's *Aeneid*, for with her hatred and persecution of a single hero, Valerius' Juno resembles her Virgilian counterpart.⁵⁰⁴ In fact, because of her positive, sympathetic role in the rest of the Roman *Argonautica*, Juno's hatred in the Hylas episode is very striking, and creates the impression that the episode is an *Aeneid* in miniature. This impression is supported by allusions to Virgil's epic. Juno's entrance in the Hylas episode, for instance, is accompanied by an allusion to *Aeneid* 7:⁵⁰⁵

illum ubi Juno poli summo de vertice puppem
deseruisse videt, tempus rata diva nocendi
(...)

Arg. 3.487-8

When Juno from the heaven's zenith sees | that he [*Hercules*] has left the ship,
the goddess deems | the time has come for harm. (tr. Barich)

at saeva e speculis tempus dea nacta nocendi
ardua tecta petit stabuli et de culmine summo
pastorale canit signum cornuque recurvo
Tartaream intendit vocem, qua protinus omne
contremuit nemus et silvae insonuere profundae.

Aen. 7.511-5

⁵⁰³ On Hera's role in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, see e.g. Feeney 1991, 62-4; 81-5; for Hera in the earlier tradition, see e.g. Klein 1931, 19-27.

⁵⁰⁴ Hershkowitz 1998, 160-3 (pp. 160-72 extensively discuss the intertextual contact between Virgil's and Valerius' Juno's). On Valerius' Juno in general, see also Schubert 1991 and Monaghan 2005.

⁵⁰⁵ The parallel was already noticed by Langen 1896-7, 253 (on Arg. 3.488), but is curiously omitted by Hershkowitz 1998, when dealing with the intertextual contact between Valerius' Juno and her Virgilian counterpart (pp. 160-3).

The cruel goddess [*Allecto*] saw from her vantage point that this was a moment when harm might be done and, flying to the top of the farm roof, from the highest gable she sounded the herdsman's signal with a loud call on the curved horn, and its voice was the voice of Tartarus. The trees shivered at the noise and the whole forest rang to its very depths. (tr. D. West)

Although it is strictly *Allecto* who sets the war in Latium in motion in the *Aeneid*, it is of course Juno who has commanded her to do so. Valerius' allusion thus suggests that Juno's action in the Hylas episode – which constitutes the climax of Juno's hatred of Hercules in the *Argonautica*, as it brings about the removal of the great hero from the epic⁵⁰⁶ – is comparable to her rousing the war in Latium, which takes up the entire second half of the *Aeneid* and can be considered a culmination of hatred against Aeneas and his Trojans.

This connection with *Aeneid* 7 is reinforced somewhat later. After Juno has set her plan in the *Argonautica* in motion, she delivers an embittered monologue, the end of which clearly alludes to a similar monologue of hers in *Aeneid* 7, right before her ordering of *Allecto* to stir things up:⁵⁰⁷

verum animis insiste tuis actumque per omnem*
tende, pudor; mox et Furias Ditemque movebo. *Arg.* 3.519-20

* per omnem C: movebo V

But keep to your resolve, my shame, through all. I'll soon stir Furies and the god of Hell. (tr. Barich)

flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo. *Aen.* 7.312

If I cannot prevail upon the gods above, I shall move hell. (tr. D. West)

⁵⁰⁶ Hershkowitz 1998, 160.

⁵⁰⁷ See e.g. Eigler 1988, 39-47; Garson 1963, 266; Adamietz 1976, 48-9; Hershkowitz 1998, 161 for the allusions to the *Aeneid* in this speech.

Valerius' line, mentioning the Furies, almost seems a gloss on Virgil's less specific expression, as it is the Fury Allecto that Virgil's Juno will call from Hades.⁵⁰⁸ Picking up the previous allusion to *Aeneid* 7, in line 488, Valerius suggests that Juno will call up Allecto in the *Argonautica* as well. Although no Fury will appear in the remainder of the episode, Valerius' Juno herself appears to take the role of Virgil's Allecto.⁵⁰⁹ Just as the latter stirs up Ascanius' hounds, so that the boy will hunt the stag and unwittingly start the war in Latium, Juno rouses a stag to lure Hylas into hunting it:⁵¹⁰

sic ait et celerem frondosa per avia cervum
suscitat ac iuveni sublimem cornibus offert.
ille animos tardusque fugae longumque resistens
sollicitat suadetque pari contendere cursu.
credit Hylas praedaeque ferox ardore propinquae
insequitur, simul Alcides hortatibus urget
prospiciens. (...)

Arg. 3.545-551

She spoke, then quickly through the leafy thicket | flushed a stag and brought it
in youth's sight | with antlers high. Its slow escape and long | delays arouse the
boy's spirit, convincing him | to keep up with the stag's course. He thinks he
can | and, hot and fierce, he tracks his nearby quarry, while Hercules looks on
and shouts support. (tr. Barich)

⁵⁰⁸ See also Spaltenstein 2004, 153 (on Arg. 3.517-20): "Val. s'inspire aussi de Verg. Aen. 7,311 (...) (où Juno ira réellement chercher Allecto; mais Val. n'est pas tenu à tout conserver)." Although Langen 1896-7, 256 (on Arg. 3.520) notes the Virgilian parallel, he does not see the allusion to *Aeneid* 7 as part of a nexus, and thus interprets the allusion differently: "Videtur Valerius tangere ultimum duodecim laborum, quo Hercules iussus est Cerberum ex inferis afferre; cfr. etiam Verg. Aen. VII, 312."

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. Korn 1989, 26: "Juno kündigt 3,520 an, daß sie die Furien und den Herrn der Unterwelt persönlich zur Mithilfe bei der Entfernung des Hercules von den Argonauten heranziehen wird (...)."

⁵¹⁰ On the intertextual contact between Hylas' and Ascanius' hunt, see Koch 1955, 135-6; Garson 1963, 262; Malamud & McGuire 1993, 202; Hershkowitz 1998, 152-3. In the passage quoted, the denotation of the stag as *sublimem cornibus*, "with antlers high" (545) alludes to *Aen.* 7.483, where Silvia's stag is described as having "mighty antlers" (*cornibus ingens*). Hylas' mood during the hunt (*ferox ardore*, "fierce with desire", 549) seems to be inspired by *Aen.* 7.496, where the hunting Ascanius is depicted as *laudis succensus amore*, "fired with love for praise" (see pp. 178-9) below for the way that Valerius differs from Virgil here). In the passage immediately following the one quoted here, *quadripes*, "four footed (animal)", which denotes Valerius' stag (552), alludes to *Aen.* 7.500, the only occurrence of *quadripes* to describe a deer in Virgil. Both animals are moreover far away from their hunters (*procul*, Arg. 3.553 ~ *procul*, *Aen.* 7.493). The intertextual contact between Valerius' *spiracula* (553) and Virgil's *saevi spiracula Ditis* (*Aen.* 7.568) is discussed in Section 3.1 below.

In no previous version of the story Hylas is depicted as hunting, and Valerius' innovation again "epicizes" Hylas by associating him with Ascanius. Not only is hunting the traditional activity to prepare boys for war,⁵¹¹ Ascanius' hunt in *Aeneid* 7 is particularly associated with epic, as his shooting of Silvia's stag sets the war in Latium in motion and thus starts the "essential epic", dealing with kings and battles, that Virgil announced in his programmatic "proem in the middle",⁵¹² at the beginning of *Aeneid* 7:

tu vatem, tu diva, mone. dicam horrida bella,
dicam acies actosque animis in funera reges,
Tyrrhenamque manum totamque sub arma coactam
Hesperiam. maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo,
maius opus moveo.

Aen. 7.41-5

Come, goddess, come and instruct your prophet. I shall speak of fearsome fighting, I shall speak of wars and of kings driven into the ways of death by their pride of spirit, of a band of fighting men from Etruria and the whole land of Hesperia under arms. For me this is the birth of a higher order of things. This is a greater work I now set in motion. (tr. D. West)

2.2. From elegy to essential epic in *Aeneid* 7

This transition to epic war is emphasized by a contrast that is set up between the bucolic and loving world of Latium and the grim reality of war into which Latium will soon be transformed. This transformation can also be read metapoetically in generic terms, as a bucolic and elegiac world that turns into epic.⁵¹³ As Hardie conveniently summarizes the switch from bucolic to epic:⁵¹⁴

In the *Eclogues* the tranquil world of the shepherds is recurrently threatened by violent events in the historical world; the transition in *Aeneid* 7 from the peaceful state that preceded the Trojan arrival to all-out war is also figured as a generic transition, from pastoral to epic: Allecto's last intervention (7.475-539)

⁵¹¹ See Aymard 1951, 469-81.

⁵¹² The term is borrowed from Conte 1992 (≈ 2007, 219-31), which studies the programmatic force of "proems in the middle" in general and this proem in particular.

⁵¹³ See esp. Putnam 1995, 118-23.

⁵¹⁴ Hardie 1998, 61.

causes Ascanius unwittingly to shoot the pet stag belonging to the royal herdsman's daughter Silvia ("girl of the woods"); Allecto, the 'plague lurking in the woods', 7.505, calls the vengeful farmers to arms with a blast on her trumpet, cruelly labelled a *pastorale signum* ("herdsmen's signal"), to which nature resounds in a parody of the pastoral echo (7.514-8).

Furthermore, in the ecphrasis of the stag (*Aen.* 7.483-92), pre-war Latium is associated with the pre-eminently anti-epic and anti-military genre: Roman love elegy. The relationship between Silvia and her stag, for instance, gets an elegiac dimension through the use of vocabulary:⁵¹⁵

cervus erat forma praestanti et cornibus ingens,
Tyrrhidae pueri quem matris ab ubere raptum
nutribant Tyrrhusque pater, cui regia parent
armenta et late custodia credita campi.
adsuetum imperiis soror omni Silvia **cura**
mollibus intexens ornabat cornua **sertis**,
pectebatque ferum **puroque in fonte** lavabat.
ille manum patiens mensaeque adsuetus erili
errabat silvis rursusque ad limina nota
ipse domum sera quamvis se nocte ferebat.

Aen. 7.483-92

It was a huge and beautiful stag with a fine head of antlers, which had been torn from the udders of its mother and fed by Tyrrhus and his young sons – Tyrrhus looked after the royal herds and was entrusted with the wardenship of the whole broad plain. Silvia, the boys' sister, has given this wild creature every care and trained it to obey her. She would weave soft garlands for its horns, combing and washing it in clear running water. It became tame to the hand and used to come to its master's table. It would wander through the woods and come back home of its own accord to the door it knew so well, no matter how late the night. (tr. D. West)

The word used to describe Silvia's love for the stag, *cura*, is very common in Latin love elegy.⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, *mollis* is an elegiac buzzword that here, in its connection with the weaving of garlands, recalls the intertextually connected scenes in *Eclogue 2*

⁵¹⁵ Cf. Putnam 1995 on the "understated eroticism of the description" (128).

⁵¹⁶ Cf. Harrison 2007b, 211 (on elegiac elements at the beginning of *Aeneid* 4): "Especially elegiac is the use of *cura(e)* (...) for the anxiety of love (Propertius 1.5.10, 1.10.17, 2.18.21, 3.17.4), and the climactic picture of the lover's consequent sleeplessness (Propertius 1.1.33, 1.11.5, 2.7.11, Tibullus 1.2.76, 2.4.11, Ovid, *Am.* 1.2.1)."

(*intexens*, 49) and *Eclogue* 10 (*serta mihi Phyllis legeret*, 41), where Corydon and Gallus respectively were depicted as elegiac lovers in a bucolic landscape, and garlands were associated with elegiac poetry.⁵¹⁷ The elegiac resonance of the “soft garlands” is reinforced by their occurrence in Propertius’ programmatic elegy 3.1, “in which the poet rejects the writing of Roman imperial epic in favour of erotic elegy.”⁵¹⁸ When the poet addresses the Muses, he opposes his Callimachean, elegiac poetry, as symbolized by the garlands, to “harsh” epic:⁵¹⁹

mollia, Pegasides, date vestro **serta** poetae:
non faciet capiti dura corona meo. Prop. 3.1.19-20

Daughters of Pegasus, give your poet soft garlands: an epic wreath will not do for my head. (tr. Heyworth, adapted)

This intertextual contact between the ecphrasis and this Propertian poem is strengthened by the mention of a limpid spring in the next line of the ecphrasis (*puroque in fonte*, 489), as this recalls the beginning of Propertius’ elegy 3.1:

primus ego ingredior **puro de fonte** sacerdos
Italia per Graios orgia ferre choros. Prop. 3.1.3-4

I am the first priest from the pure spring to begin bearing Italian sacraments to the accompaniment of Greek music. (tr. Heyworth)

Dealing with the poet’s inspiration in an explicitly programmatic context, Propertius’ *fons* has a clear metapoetic dimension, and the spring in *Aeneid* 7 can accordingly be read – even retrospectively, if Propertius’ poem postdates the *Aeneid* – as evoking

⁵¹⁷ See Ch. 3, Section 5.2. Cf. also e.g. Prop. 4.1.61 for the poetic associations of garlands: *Ennius hirsuta cingat sua dicta corona*. “Let Ennius crown his words with a shaggy garland.” (See Hinds 1998, 66 for the way Ennius is depicted here and in other Augustan poetry as an Archaic poet.)

⁵¹⁸ Hunter 2006, 7. The intertextual contact between the ecphrasis and Prop. 3.1 is discussed by Putnam 1995, 126-8. With Putnam I agree that, although the relative chronology of the two texts cannot be determined, “imaginative interaction can shed light on both poets.” Cf. also Ch. 1, pp. 29-30 for my approach on the relative chronology of Hellenistic poetry.

⁵¹⁹ See Ch. 3, n. 451 for Propertius’ use of *durus* and *mollis* as representing epic and elegy respectively.

Roman love elegy and reinforcing the elegiac nature of the poetic world of pre-war Latium and Silvia and her stag in particular.

The elegiac resonances of this world are reinforced by the intertextual contact with Dido's "elegiac love"⁵²⁰ for Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4, in particular the famous simile comparing the lovesick Dido to a wounded deer, and, by implication, Aeneas to the hunter:

uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur
urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,
quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit
pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum
nescius; illa silvas saltusque peragrat
Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo.

Aen. 4.68-73

Dido was on fire with love and wandered all over the city in her misery and madness like a wounded doe which a shepherd hunting in the woods of Crete has caught off guard, striking her from long range with steel-tipped shaft; the arrow flies and is left in her body without his knowing it; she runs away over all the wooded slopes of Mount Dicte, and sticking in her side is the arrow that will bring her death. (tr. D. West)

This simile resembles Ascanius' hunting of the deer, which is described immediately after the ecphrasis:⁵²¹

hunc procul errantem rabidae venantis Iuli
commovere canes, fluvio cum forte secundo
deflueret ripaque aestus viridante levaret.
ipse etiam eximiae laudis succensus amore
Ascanius curvo derexit spicula cornu;
nec dextrae erranti deus afuit, actaque multo

⁵²⁰ Like the love of Silvia for her stag, Dido's love is not typically elegiac. See Harrison 2007b, 211: "In elegy it is almost always the tormented male lover who describes himself as feeling the symptoms of love and suffering rejection and abandonment; in the *Aeneid* it is Dido who is depicted as enduring this range of emotions, while Aeneas steadfastly keeps his (genuine) feelings under control (...) and suffers insomnia only in the manner of a good leader." See also e.g. Hinds 1987, 134-5; Cairns 1989, 135-50 (Ch. 6: "Dido and the elegiac tradition"); Hardie 1998, 61-2 for the influence of Roman love elegy on *Aeneid* 4.

⁵²¹ For a comparison between Ascanius' hunt in *Aen.* 7 and the simile in *Aen.* 4, see also Griffin 1986, 180-2; Putnam 1995, 111-2. See Horsfall 2000, 321 (on *Aen.* 7.525-39) for more bibliography.

perque uterum sonitu perque ilia venit harundo.
saucius at quadripes nota intra tecta refugit
 successitque gemens stabulis, **questu**que cruentus
 atque imploranti similis tectum omne replebat.

Aen. 7.493-502

This is the creature that was roaming far from home, floating down a river, cooling itself in the green shade of the bank when it was startled by the maddened dogs of the young huntsman Iulus. He himself, Ascanius, burning with a passionate love of glory, bent his bow and aimed the arrow. The god was with him and kept his hand from erring. The arrow flew with a great hiss and passed straight through the flank into the belly. Fleeing to the home it knew so well, the wounded stag came into its pen moaning, and stood there bleeding, and filling the house with its cries of anguish, as though begging and pleading. (tr. D. West)

Once the contact between the two texts has been established, more parallels can be discerned that give the passage an elegiac colouring: like Dido in the first line of book 4, the stag is wounded (*saucius*, 500),⁵²² and like the elegiac *questus* of Dido in her soliloquy (*tantos ... questus*, *Aen.* 4.553), the wounded stag is also complaining (*questu*, 501).⁵²³

The difference between the two passages, of course, is that the hunting in book 4 is only metaphorical, whereas Ascanius is literally hunting a stag, but another verbal parallel between the two texts reveals that both Aeneas' metaphorical wounding of the elegiac Dido and Ascanius' shooting of Silvia's stag are comparable from a metapoetical point of view. Immediately before the ecphrasis of the stag, Virgil's comments on Allecto's rousing of Ascanius' hounds as "the first cause of suffering" and the beginning of war in Latium (*quae prima laborum | causa fuit belloque animos accendit agrestis*, 481-2). This recalls another famous scene in *Aeneid* 4, the marriage of Aeneas and Dido in the cave, which is also commented on by the authorial narrator, in similar terms: *ille dies primus leti primusque malorum | causa fuit*. "That day was the

⁵²² For the metaphor of love as wound, see e.g. Harrison 2007b, 211, adducing Tibullus 2.5.109; Ov. *Am.* 1.2.9; 2.19.5 as instances of elegiac use of *saucius*.

⁵²³ See Putnam 1995, 112 for the parallel. For the elegiac ring of *questus*, see n. 535 below and Ch. 3, p. 144 with n. 429 above. One of Dido's complaints, incidentally, that she was not allowed to live her life *more ferae*, "like a wild animal" (551), further strengthens the contact between Dido and Silvia's stag, a literal "wild animal", who is, like Dido is, disturbed and wounded by a Trojan. (Putnam 1995, 112).

first cause of death and the first of disaster.” So the misery and death of Dido, to which this marriage will eventually lead, and the war in Latium are associated with each other, a link that is described by Putnam as follows: “Had circumstances been otherwise and Aeneas not impinged upon her world, she [*Dido*] might have continued through life with a type of freedom similar to that which Virgil allots both the Latins and Silvia’s stag.”⁵²⁴ In metapoetical terms, this implies that the two poetic, elegiac worlds that oppose the epic mission of the *Aeneid*, that of Dido and that of Silvia and her stag, yield to their opposite – heroic epic – as represented by two male epic heroes, Aeneas and his son Ascanius.⁵²⁵ In Valerius’ *Argonautica*, however, this poetic transformation is, as I shall show, reversed.

3. From epic to elegy: Valerius’ elegiac Hylas episode

3.1. *Hylas’ erotic hunt*

When Hylas’ is hunting for Juno’s stag, the boy is depicted as the potential epic hero that Ascanius is in the *Aeneid*. The encouragements of the archetypal epic hero Hercules (*Alcides hortatibus urget*, *Arg.* 5.549) underline this. Accordingly, the expectation is raised that Hylas’ hunt will also lead to an outbreak of war, turning the *Argonautica* into an essential epic. Unlike Ascanius, however, Hylas does not succeed in shooting the animal, for when the stag jumps over a spring, the exhausted boy gives up:

(...) iamque ex oculis aufertur uterque,
cum puerum instantem **quadripes** fessaque minantem
tela manu **procul** ad nitidi **spiracula fontis**
ducit et intactas levis ipse superfugit undas.
hoc pueri spes lusa modo est nec tendere certat
amplius; utque artus et concita pectora sudor
diluerat, gratos avidus procumbit ad amnes.

Arg. 3.551-557

⁵²⁴ Putnam 1995, 112.

⁵²⁵ Cf. Hardie 1998, 61-2: “[O]ne way of viewing the situation in *Aeneid* 4 is as the interference of the values of the world of love elegy in the Roman (and epic) mission of Aeneas.”

Now both the stag and the boy move out of sight, | and as the boy pressed on
and brandished spear | with weary arm, the stag led him to outlets | of a
glistening spring, then lightly sprang across, | not touching water. Hopes are
this way thwarted | for the boy, and he no longer fights | to keep on going.
Sweat has bathed his limbs | and heated chest, and he eagerly falls to the
ground | beside the pleasant stream. (tr. Barich, adapted)

Hylas thus seems to fail as an epic hero, an interpretation that is reinforced by the remark that “the boy’s hope is thwarted” (*pueri spes lusa ... est*), for although the words refer to Hylas’ hope to shoot the stag, they also recall the Cyzicus episode in which Hylas was made to resemble Ascanius in the epic potential that he now fails to realize: *spes maxima bellis* (Arg. 3.183).⁵²⁶

Valerius’ Hylas seems to fall back into the anti-epic role that he had in literary history before the *Argonautica*. A second, close look reveals, for instance, that Hylas’ hunt is less of a double for Ascanius’ epic hunt, than a metaphorical, erotic hunt. At the start of the hunt, for instance, Hylas is described as *ferox ardore* (“fierce with desire”, 549). The erotic connotation of these words suggests that Hylas is like Silvia – with whom he is etymologically connected⁵²⁷ – involved in an elegiac relationship with a stag. This interpretation is supported by the erotically charged language used in describing the stag’s jump over the pool: the water remains untouched (*intactas ... undas*, 554), the adjective suggesting the virginity of the “beloved” stag.⁵²⁸ Valerius has thus rewritten Ascanius’ characterization during the hunt as *eximiae laudis succensus amore* (“burning with love of the highest glory”, Aen. 7.496). Although *succensus* can also be used in an erotic context,⁵²⁹ it is here clearly used in a martial sense, and, as Putnam has shown, Ascanius’ “love” is here contrasted with the

⁵²⁶ See p. 167 above.

⁵²⁷ See Introduction, Section 2 for the derivation of Hylas from ὕλη and for the etymological wordplay with the word’s Latin equivalent *silva*.

⁵²⁸ The erotic connotations of *ferox ardore* and *intactas undas* have been noted by Malamud & McGuire 1993, 203. For the erotic sense of the verb *tangere*, see also OLD 5b: “to touch (in a sexual or erotic sense)”, and p. 195 below.

⁵²⁹ Horsfall 2000, 333 (on Aen. 7.496) adduces Prop. 1.2.15 and 3.19.15 as parallels for the verb *succendere* in an amatory sense.

implicitly elegiac relationship between Silvia and her stag.⁵³⁰ Exploiting the intertextual contact between *Aeneid* 7 and *Aeneid* 4, where the wounding of a stag was used as an erotic metaphor for the fatal outcome of Dido's elegiac love, Valerius has thus transformed Hylas' initial epic hunting into an erotic, elegiac hunt.

3.2. Hercules as elegiac lover

Hylas is not the only one who is elegized in Valerius' Hylas episode, for as in Propertius 1.20, the boy becomes the unattainable elegiac beloved of Hercules, who is consequently also transformed, from an epic hero into an elegiac lover. As soon as Hercules notices that Hylas is gone, he is stricken by elegiac *amor*:⁵³¹

(...) varios hinc excitat aestus
nube mali percussus amor, quibus haeserit oris,
quis tales impune moras casusve laborve
attulerit. (...) Arg. 3.572-5

Then his love stirs a surge of feelings, | assailed by a cloud of trouble: where did he linger, | what brought such long, inordinate delay? | Was it accident, or some task he's doing? (tr. Barich)

The pallor and madness that Hercules experiences next are also typically elegiac:⁵³²
tum vero et pallor et amens cum piceo sudore rigor. "Truly did he turn pale then, and a numb frenzy took hold of him, while sweat pours down, black like pitch." (576-7; tr.

⁵³⁰ Putnam 1995, 112. Ovid also seems to have reworked Virgil erotically in *Her.* 15.157: *Pyrrhae succensus amore*.

⁵³¹ Cf. Spaltenstein 2004, 166 (ad loc.): "(...) ici et au vers 4, 36, le contexte évoque pour *amor* l'idée de la passion amoureuse (...)." Cf. Arg. 3.736: *urit amor* ("his love burns"), and Arg. 4.2: *amores*, discussed below.

⁵³² For *amens*, see e.g. the programmatic passage in Prop. 1.1.11, where Milanion is "wandering madly in the dells of mount Parthenius" (tr. Heyworth): *nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris*. For *pallor*, compare what Propertius tells Gallus about Cynthia's effect on the elegiac lover in 1.5.21: *tum grave servitium nostrae cogere puellae | discere et exclusum quid sit abire domum; | nec iam pallorem totiens mirabere nostrum, | aut cur sim toto corpore nullus ego*. "Then you will be forced to learn how hard it is to be a slave of our mistress and what it is to depart from the house shut out. Nor will you any longer be surprised at my frequent pallor, or wonder why my whole body is as nothing." (tr. Heyworth)

Mozley). Somewhat later, he is even described as experiencing the typically elegiac *furor*,⁵³³ and is in this respect compared to a wounded lion:

ille, velut refugi quem contigit improba Mauri
lancea sanguineus vasto leo murmure fertur
frangit et absentem vacuis sub dentibus hostem,
sic furiis accensa gerens Titynthius ora
fertur et intento discurrit montibus arcu. Arg. 3.587-91

The man was like | a bloodied lion whom a shameful spear | thrown by a
fleeing Moor has hit, who moves | along with cavernous roar in empty teeth | it
grinds its absent foe. So Tiryns' man, | his face aflame with rage, now moves
along. (tr. Barich)

Aeneid 4 also comes into play again, for in this context Hercules obviously resembles the lovesick, elegiac Dido, who was compared to a wounded deer (see p. 175 above). Later in the episode, when it is said that "his love burns" (*urit amor*, 736), Hercules' *amor* again resembles Dido's elegiac passion, for which the fire metaphor is continuously employed (cf. e.g. *Aen.* 4.68: *uritur infelix Dido*. "Unhappy Dido burns.").⁵³⁴ The elegiac nature of Hercules' love is made even more clear when Hylas addresses Hercules in the aftermath of the episode, at the beginning of book 4 and describes his love as *questus* ("complaint"), a word that is often used to denote Roman love elegy, by reference to the genre's supposed origin:⁵³⁵ *quid, pater, in vanos absumis tempora questus?* "Why do you waste your time, | Father, in useless complaint?" (tr. Barich)

⁵³³ Cf. Arg. 4.5: *haeret inops solisque furit Titynthius oris*. "Tirynthian clings helpless to a lonely shore | and rages." (tr. Barich). See Ch. 3, n. 418 for the elegiac associations of *furor* ("madness").

⁵³⁴ The parallel with Corydon's elegiac love for Alexis is also striking, particularly in the light of the importance of this poem for Propertius 1.20 (see Ch 4, Sections 5 and 6): *me (...) urit amor*. "Love burns me." (*Ecl.* 2.68).

⁵³⁵ Cf. Barchiesi 1993, 365: "There is a strong tradition in Roman culture (not, apparently, in Alexandria) connecting the birth of elegy with lament, *querela*, ἐὲν ἰσχυρίῳ and the like." See also n. 522 above, and Ch. 3, p. 144 (with n. 429) for an example from Propertius.

3.3. The bucolic world of the Hylas episode

By elegizing Hylas' hunt and turning Hercules into an elegiac lover in the Hylas episode, Valerius thus inverts Virgil's transformation of Latium into an epic world of war. But Virgil's pre-war Latium was also associated with bucolic poetry, in fact with his own *Eclogues* (see p. 172-3 above). Although Valerius' elegizing of the *Aeneid* is more pervasive and clearer, Valerius also seems to invert Virgil's metapoetical progress in book 7 from the world of the *Eclogues* to the essential-epic world of the *Aeneid*, by staging the disappearance of Hylas and Hercules' mourning in a bucolic landscape. Already the nymphs, who inhabit Mysia, evoke a bucolic world, in particular because of their close connection with bucolic poetry in two of the three previous versions of the Hylas myth, where they acted as Theocritus' "bucolic Muses" (*Idyll* 13) and personified Virgil's *Eclogues* (Prop. 1.20) as Hamadryads.⁵³⁶ Like Propertius, Valerius seems to associate the world of Mysia specifically with Virgil's *Eclogues*, for the landscape that Hercules traverses as an elegiac lover is often described as *silvae* (3.585; 597; 685; 736; 4.20; 4.66), which is a usual metonym for Virgil's bucolic poetry.⁵³⁷ Furthermore, these *silvae* (and nature more in general) are personified by Valerius, for when Hercules traverses the forest in his search for Hylas, it is said to be afraid:

(...) pavet omnis conscia late
silva, pavet montes, luctu succensus acerbo
quid struat Alcides tantaque quid apparet ira. Arg. 3.584-6

(...) Far and wide the whole forest knows what passed | and trembles, and
hilltops tremble: what might he do, | Alcides, fired by bitter grief? What could |
a wrath so huge devise? (tr. Barich, adapted)

⁵³⁶ See Ch. 2, Section 3.4.4 and Ch. 3, Section 5.1 respectively. The description of Valerius' nymphs as having "a missile strap of myrtle wood" (*stricta myrtus habena*, 3.524) also has bucolic associations, for, as Spaltenstein 2004, 154 (ad loc.) suggests, Valerius' words evoke *Aen.* 7.817, where the weapon (of Camilla) is called "pastoral" (*pastoralem myrtum*).

⁵³⁷ See Ch. 3, n. 380 above.

At the beginning of book 4, Valerius' *silvae* again show emotions. After Jupiter has let his son fall asleep, the forests, wearied by Hercules' loud presence, get relief at last:⁵³⁸

(...) tandem fessis pax reddita silvis,
fluminaque et vacuis auditae montibus aerae. Arg. 4.20-1

Peace returns at least to the weary forest, | and breezes can be heard in empty hills. (tr. Barich)

In the *Eclogues*, *silvae* (and nature in general) are also commonly personified, for instance in *Eclogue* 5:

Daphni, tuum Poenos etiam ingemuisse leones
interitum montesque feri silvaeque loquuntur. Ecl. 5.27-8

The wild hills, Daphnis, and the forests even tell | how Punic lions roared in grief at your destruction. (tr. Lee)

This personification of nature is one aspect of the harmony that exists in the *Eclogues* between man and a sympathizing, responding landscape (as symbolized by the "bucolic echo"), and that is a precondition for bucolic poetry.⁵³⁹ Valerius' personified landscape, however, is not at all in harmony with Hercules, who frightens the *silvae*. As in *Idyll* 13, Hercules is thus presented as the archetypal heroic-epic hero who is

⁵³⁸ As Murgatroyd 2009, 41 suggests, *vacuis* (21) can here also mean "free from distractions" (*OLD* 11) or "free from anxiety" (*OLD* 12b), which would further personify the hills, and by extension the *silvae* as well. Murgatroyd's argument for this sense of *vacuis* here, however, that "'vacant' is not a likely sense as Hercules is still in the area, and so is Hylas (...), not to mention animals" is nonsensical: in the first instance the word clearly refers to the absence of Hercules' *screaming*, not his (or, for that matter, anyone else's) presence, the personifying sense being secondary.

⁵³⁹ See Ch. 2, Section 3.2; Ch. 3, Section 7.2. For similar expressions of sympathy by a personified bucolic landscape in the *Eclogues*, see e.g. *Ecl.* 1.38-9: *ipsae te, Tityre, pinus, | ipsi te fontes, ipsa haec arbusta vocabant*. "The very pines, Tityrus, | the very springs, these very orchards called to you!"; *Ecl.* 10.13: *illum etiam lauri, etiam flevere myricae, | pinifer illum etiam sola sub rupe iacentem | Maenalus, et gelidi fleverunt saxa Lycae*. "The laurels even, even the tamarisks wept for him | lying beneath a lonely cliff; even Maenalus' | pine-forests wept for him, and cold Lycaeus' rocks." (tr. Lee). Cf. *Georg.* 4.461-3 (nature's reaction to the death of Eurydice): *at chorus aequalis Dryadum clamore supremos | implevit montis; flerunt Rhodopeiae arces | altaque Getae atque Hebrus et Actias Orithyia*. "The chorus of her companion dryads with wailing rimmed | the mountain's peak, the crags of Rhodope mourned, | and alpen Pangaea, the martial land of Rhesus and the Getae, | the Hebrus mourned, and Orithyia the northwind's Attic bride." (tr. Johnson)

thoroughly out of place in this bucolic world.⁵⁴⁰ As in Propertius 1.20, however, he is also presented as a frustrated elegiac lover in a bucolic landscape.⁵⁴¹

In the case of Hylas, Valerius also seems to have combined Theocritus' and Propertius' Hylas poems. As I have argued in Chapter 3, the potentially epic boy Hylas became the personification of Theocritus' poetry by being transformed into a bucolic echo in *Idyll* 13. Propertius, on the other hand, turned the boy into an elegiac symbol and demythologized the bucolic echo, which was not produced by Hylas, into a natural phenomenon. In this way was the elegiac absence of the beloved symbolized, not bucolic presence. In particular, as I have tried to argue in the previous chapter (Section 7.2), Propertius reacted to Virgil's echo of Hylas in *Eclogue* 6.43-4, which, "echoing" *Idyll* 13, depicted Hylas as the origin of the echo and thus of bucolic poetry. Valerius' echo reacts to both Propertius and Virgil. When Hercules cries out Hylas' name, he is answered by the woods, *silvae*, and as in Propertius the echo thus at first sight appears in its demythologized form, as a natural phenomenon:

rursus Hylan et rursus Hylan per longa reclamatione
avia: responsant silvae et vaga certat imago.

Arg. 3.596-7

"Hylas", he shouts, "Hylas", over and over again through pathless territory. The forests reply and the wandering echo emulates his cry.

As we have seen earlier, however, *silva* can translate ὕλη, Hylas' ancient etymology.⁵⁴² It thus becomes possible that Hylas *is* responding to Hercules' cries after all as the echo into which he was transformed by the nymphs in Nicander's version of the Hylas myth in his *Heteroeumena*,⁵⁴³ a motif that was reflected – with a bucolic twist – by Theocritus and Virgil. In fact, the cry of Valerius' Hercules, with the double *Hylan*, intertextually "echoes" Virgil's repetition *Hyla Hyla*, which is on an

⁵⁴⁰ See Ch. 2, Section 3.3.3.

⁵⁴¹ See Ch. 3, Section 7.2.

⁵⁴² See Introduction, Section 2.

⁵⁴³ Ant. Lib. 26.4. See Introduction, Section 1 for the text.

acoustic level paradoxically (and playfully) made into an echo of Hercules' cry *Hylan* ... *Hylan* in Valerius' *Argonautica*.⁵⁴⁴ So Valerius produces a natural echo, but it is at least also suggested that Hylas, transformed into an echo, answers Hercules' cry as Virgil's bucolic *silvae*, the woods that the boy represents according to his name. Barchiesi reads Valerius' *vaga certat imago* ("the wandering echo emulates") as metapoetically summarizing the subtle intertextual game of the echo motif: Valerius' echo emulates the ones before.⁵⁴⁵ This interpretation can now be extended to the entire episode, of which the echo motif is only the tip of the iceberg. Valerius' Hylas episode inverts Virgil's move in the *Aeneid* from bucolic and elegiac poetry to epic by transforming the initially epic Hylas simultaneously into a bucolic and an elegiac symbol. By appearing in one text in the three guises that he had in literary history – epic (Apollonius), bucolic (Theocritus, Virgil) and elegiac (Propertius) – Valerius' Hylas thus not only echoes but also truly emulates his predecessors.

Despite Valerius' clear evocation of a bucolic world, in the Hylas episode and in fact the entire epic, the elegiac elements are most prominent in the inversion of the move from non-epic to epic colour in *Aeneid* 7, as I shall now argue.

3.4. *Dryope as Fury of love*

The main agency responsible for the elegizing of the *Aeneid* is Juno, but she is helped by the nymph Dryope, who in this respect resembles Juno's Virgilian assistant, the Fury Allecto. This resemblance is reinforced by an allusion to *Aeneid* 7. Valerius' striking *spiracula* (553), which describes Dryope's pool, alludes to *Aen.* 7.568 (*saevi spiracula Ditis*), the only occurrence of the word in Virgil, and in fact one of the few occurrences in Latin poetry.⁵⁴⁶ It there denotes Allecto's abode, to which the Fury

⁵⁴⁴ See Introduction, Section 2 for an elaborate discussion of the intertextual contact between these two texts.

⁵⁴⁵ Barchiesi 2001, 140. Cf. Introduction, Section 2.

⁵⁴⁶ The word only occurs in Lucretius (6.493), but cf. Ennius, *Ann.* 222 (*sulpureas posuit spiramina Naris ad undas*). See Spaltenstein 2004, 161 (ad loc.) for Valerius' *spiracula*: "Quoi qu'il en soit de son sens (...), *spiracula* évoque la fraîcheur agréable de cette source, comme notation traditionnelle." For Virgil's

returns after having done her duty for Juno. The allusion implies that Juno's words *Furias Ditemque movebo* ("I will stir the Furies and Dis", *Arg.* 3.520) earlier in the episode refer not only to the action of the goddess herself, but also to the nymph Dryope, whose dwelling resembles that of the Fury and who, in parallel with Allecto, is helping Juno on her mission against an epic hero. The difference is, however, that whereas Allecto starts a war, transforming Virgil's elegiac Latium into the grim world of epic war, Valerius' "Fury" Dryope does quite the opposite. She elegizes a potentially epic episode, by turning a potential epic hero, Hylas, and Hercules, the epic hero *par excellence*, into elegiac beloved and elegiac lover respectively by means of the abduction. In this respect it is interesting that Dryope does in fact live up to the etymology of a fury by inspiring *furor*, albeit the elegiac kind and not the madness of epic war. As Ascanius' epic hunt is transformed into an erotic one, so is Allecto transformed into what can be called a Fury of love. In fact, Valerius has elegized the *Aeneid*, or more specifically the "essential epic" into which it turned in book 7, in an episode that is set up as a miniature *Aeneid* but is in fact an inversion of it. I shall now show that the episode in this respect represents the entire *Argonautica*, prefiguring the way that the whole epic will go, thus inviting comparison with Apollonius' Hellenistic version.

4. Leaving the *Aeneid* behind: the Hylas episode as metapoetical statement

In the epilogue to the Hylas episode at the beginning of book 4 the elegiac transformation of Hercules is commented on by Jupiter. The god is not pleased with the situation and angrily addresses Juno:

spiracula, see Horsfall 2000, 374 (on *Aen.* 7.568): "(...) the *spiraculum* is a vent through which the subterranean world takes breath."

atque ea non oculis divum pater amplius aequis
sustinuit, natique pios miseratus amores
Iunonem ardenti trepidam gravis increpat ira. Arg. 4.1-3

The Father of gods could stand the sight no more | unmoved; he pitied his
son's devoted love | and railed at Juno hard, burning with anger | as she
quailed before him. (tr. Barich)

The word *amores*, which describes Hercules' passion, again seems to refer to love elegy, as it did in Propertius 1.20 and *Eclogue* 10 by reference to Gallus' elegiac *Amores*.⁵⁴⁷ This association with love elegy is reinforced by the evocation of the title of Ovid's elegiac *Amores*. But Hercules' elegiac love is called *pious*, which associates the hero with Virgil's Aeneas, whose defining characteristic is his *pietas*.⁵⁴⁸ This Virgilian association accords with the rest of the episode. The scene in which Hylas followed Hercules, for instance, alluded to Ascanius following Aeneas in *Aeneid* 2. Most importantly, the entire episode was determined by Juno, whose action against Hercules resembled that of her Virgilian counterpart against Aeneas, turning the Hylas episode into a miniature *Aeneid*. But whereas Jupiter kept control over the epic in the *Aeneid*, Juno gets what she wants in the *Argonautica*. Jupiter's beloved, Aeneas-like Hercules is removed from the epic, and the god's chances of being honoured with an *Aeneid* are gone. There is a metapoetical dimension to the angry Jupiter's comment on this situation a few lines after the passage just quoted, via an allusion to the first words of the *Aeneid*, that could be paraphrased as: "So this is your idea of how to run an *Aeneid*!":⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ See e.g. Ch. 3, Section 4. Jupiter's depiction of Hercules as "raging on lonely shores" (*solisque furit Titynthius oris*, Arg. 4.5) also has elegiac connotations: see p. 180 and Ch. 3, n. 418 above for elegiac *furor*, and Ch. 3, n. 468 for Propertius' association of the shore with elegy (and of the open sea with epic).

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. Murgatroyd 2009, 34 (on Arg. 4.2): "VF may be presenting Hercules here as a second Aeneas." Cf. also Galinsky 1972, 163 on Hercules in Valerius' Hylas episode in general: "He is the pious son of Jupiter, almost another Aeneas (...)."

⁵⁴⁹ I have specified the metapoetical interpretation of this line by Feeney 1991, 324, which refers to epic in general: "So this your idea of how to run an epic." Cf. Hershkowitz 1998, 163 (followed by Murgatroyd 2009, 37, on Arg. 3.7f.) for another interpretation of the line: "Jupiter indicates that Juno in her Vergilian guise is not behaving in a manner appropriate to her role in this epic." This reading

(...) sic Iuno ducem fovet anxia curis
Aesonium, sic arma viro sociosque ministrat! Arg. 4.7-8

So that's how Juno, racked with worry, nurtures | her captain, that is how she
gives him | the men and arms he needs. (tr. Barich)

Jupiter, realizing that this poem cannot become an heroic *Aeneid* any more, then tells Juno to continue her approach:⁵⁵⁰ *i, Furias Veneremque move; dabit impia poenas | virgo*. "Go on and rouse the Furies and Venus too. | The wicked girl will have her punishment" (13-4; tr. Barich). Jupiter here ironically alludes to Juno's own words, which immediately preceded and referred to the action she planned against Hercules to remove him from the epic:⁵⁵¹ *mox et Furias Ditemque movebo*. "I'll soon stir Furies and the god of Hell" (3.520). These words, as argued above, alluded to *Aeneid* 7.312 (*flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*), initially creating the expectation that Juno would also start an essential epic in the *Argonautica*. The "Fury" appeared to be Juno herself, however, and her accomplice Dryope was also associated with the Virgilian Allecto. But Valerius, instead of developing from this point an heroic epic in its purest form, allowed Juno and Dryope to elegize it. Jupiter now tells Juno to employ "the Furies and Venus" again in the remainder of the epic, clearly referring to the elegiac passion of Medea that Juno and Venus will stir up and that will eventually ensure the success of the epic mission.⁵⁵² The god's remark is more or less a hendiadys,⁵⁵³ since, as Hardie has argued, "for Valerius the workings between the

cannot, however, be reconciled with the fact that Juno gets what she wants, and that the epic will/must take a different course in what follows (see below).

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Feeney 1991, 324: "Robbing Jason of Hercules means that the gaining of the fleece cannot remain a martial endeavour: now, says Jupiter, Juno will have to fall back on the Furies, and Venus, and Medea (...)."

⁵⁵¹ Hershkowitz 1998, 164, n. 219: "4.13 is an ironic echo of Juno's declaration at 3.520 (...)." Cf. Murgatroyd 2009, 38 (on Arg. 4.13): "There may also be a barbed echo of Juno's *Furias Ditemque movebo* at 3.520, indicating that the omniscient Jupiter overheard her."

⁵⁵² For Medea's elegiac passion, see e.g. Arg. 7.154 and 315, where it is denoted as *furor*, "madness" (cf. n. 533 above), Arg. 7.12, where Medea is described as *demens*, "mad" (as Dido in *Aen.* 4.78; see n. 558 below for bibliography on the parallels between the love of Dido and that of Medea), and Arg. 7.307, where her love is described as *saevus amor*, "cruel love".

⁵⁵³ Cf. Elm von der Osten 2007, 110, n. 302, who expresses a similar idea: "Meines Erachtens wäre es sinnvoller, die *Furiae* nicht als Personifikation aufzufassen, sondern *furiae* und Venus als eine parallele

effects of Venus, of Juno, and of the Furies are practically indistinguishable”.⁵⁵⁴ A link is thus created between the elegized *Aeneid* that the Hylas episode has turned into, through the agency of “Furies of love”, Juno and Dryope, and the outcome of the epic, which requires the same of kind of elegiac Fury now that Hercules is gone. Juno makes this importance of Medea quite clear later in the epic, for when the *Argonautica* has turned into an full-scale Iliadic, “essential-epic” battle between Aeetes, helped by the Argonauts, and his brother Perses in book 6, Juno sees that this is not the way for this epic to succeed:⁵⁵⁵

taliam certatim Minyae sparsique Cytaei
funera miscebant campis Scythiamque premebant,
cum Iuno Aesonidae non hanc ad vellera cernens
esse viam nec sic redditus regina parandos,
extremam molitur opem. (...) Arg. 6.427-31; 439-40
sola animo Medea subit, mens omnis in una
virgine, nocturnis qua nulla potentior aris.

Such deaths the Minyae dealt on field of battle;| vying with the scattered men
of Cytaeae,| they overwhelmed Scythia. Juno saw | that this was not the way to
get the Fleece | for Jason, or arrange his coming home,| and she contrives a last
resort. (...) Medea only comes to mind; this girl | alone gets full attention,
potent more | than any at the altars of the night. (tr. Barich)

In fact, Juno elegizes this most epic, most Homeric, moment in the poem – which invites comparison with what happens during the second half of the *Aeneid*⁵⁵⁶ – in a

Nennung der inneren und äußeren Motivation zu verstehen: Die *furiae* beschreiben die Leidenschaften, während Venus die Personifikation dieser Leidenschaften, also den von den Göttern ausgehenden, äußeren Einfluß darstellt.”

⁵⁵⁴ Hardie 1990a, 6. Cf. Feeney 1991, 322-4 on Valerius’ Lemnos episode, e.g. p. 324, n. 36: “It was Venus, assimilated to the condition of a Fury, who was responsible for the Lemnian episode (2.101-6).”; Elm von der Osten 2007, e.g. p. 179, n. 501: “Außer dem Eingreifen der Göttin Venus bzw. Iuno in der Lemnosepisode und in der Medeahandlung ist auch ein Episode im dritten Buch relevant, in der Iuno die Nymphe Dryope zu beeinflussen sucht (3,487ff.).”

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Feeney 1991, 326 on this passage: “The confrontation between the irrelevant grandiosity of martial epic and the present needs of this poem could not be more starkly engineered.” For the influence of the *Iliad* on the battles of *Argonautica* 6, see e.g. Fuà 1988; Smolenaars 1991.

⁵⁵⁶ See e.g. Baier 2001, 10-1: “Das sechste Buch bildet formal und inhaltlich eine Einheit. Es geht über die *Argonautica* des Apollonios Rhodios hinaus und greift bewußt auf die Heldenepik im Stile Homers und auf die Römische Epik zurück. Die Anführung von Truppenkatalogen sowie die

move that resembles (but is not as dramatic as) what she did in the Hylas episode. As Feeney observes: "The poem's great set-piece battle book is undermined, to become only an occasion for the girl to fall in love with her future husband; Jason's greatest moment of heroic action is engineered by Juno in order to impress Medea (6.600-20)." ⁵⁵⁷

The end of the *Argonautica* thus makes clear what the Hylas episode foreshadowed, i.e. that Valerius' epic cannot be an *Aeneid*. The Virgilian epic does contain elegiac elements that it has to leave behind in the end (Dido, Silvia and her stag), as they stand in the way of the essential epic mission. But Medea's elegiac passion, which resembles Dido's, as many scholars have observed, ⁵⁵⁸ is essential for Valerius' epic to succeed. The *Argonautica* can thus be called an elegiac epic and, to a certain extent, an anti-*Aeneid*. This inversion of the role of elegy in the *Argonautica* in comparison with that in the *Aeneid* is also made clear by the inversion of the roles that the gods Juno and Venus play in the respective epics. As Hershkowitz observes, "Venus, like Vergil's Juno, is out for destruction at any cost, while Juno, like Vergil's Venus, wants to protect her hero". ⁵⁵⁹

5. Ovidian Hylas

So Valerius' Hylas episode seems to be on two counts a metapoetical statement: it reveals both the *Argonautica*'s relationship to the *Aeneid* and the way the way that the whole epic will go. I shall now argue that the elegizing of the heroic-epic *Aeneid* in the Valerian Hylas episode is accompanied by allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The

Schilderung von Schlachtszenen ist zum einen als Reminiszenz an die *Ilias* gestaltet, zum anderen als Wiederaufnahme des Krieges zwischen Trojanern und Rutulern in der *Aeneis*." See Baier 2001, 65-8 and Wijsman 2000, 5-8; 12-3 for a more detailed discussion of the parallels.

⁵⁵⁷ Feeney 1991, 326. Cf. Hershkowitz 1998, 123-5; Lovatt 2006; Elm von der Osten 2007, 68-73 for the way the typically epic teichoscopy is transformed by Valerius Flaccus.

⁵⁵⁸ See e.g. Hull 1975, 3-7; Traglia 1983, 319-25; Salemmme 1993; Hershkowitz 1998, 99-100.

⁵⁵⁹ Hershkowitz 1998, 170.

basis of my argument will be that Hylas' transformation from potential epic hero to elegiac beloved resembles that of Narcissus and, particularly, Hermaphroditus.⁵⁶⁰ Valerius' epic thus seems to align itself with the poetical agenda of Ovid's elegiac epic, which can also be seen as a reaction to the *Aeneid*.

5.1. *Hylas and Narcissus*⁵⁶¹

When the exhausted Hylas gives up his chase of the stag, he lies down "greedily" beside the pool (*gratos avidus procumbit ad amnes*, 557). In accordance with and continuing the ambiguous language of the passage, the adjective *avidus* has erotic overtones here and refers to a metaphorical "thirst for love". This interpretation is reinforced a few lines later, when Dryope's hands, at the moment that they grab Hylas, are described as *avidas* (556), and the adjective is explicitly used in the erotic sense:

stagna vaga sic luce micant ubi Cynthia caelo
prospicit aut medii transit rota candida Phoebi,
tale iubar diffundit aquis: nil umbra comaeque
turbavitque sonus surgentis ad oscula nymphae.
illa **avidas** iniecta manus heu sera cientem
auxilia et magni referentem nomen amici
detrahit, adiutae prono nam pondere vires.

Arg. 3.558-64

Even as the light that shifts and plays upon a lake, when the moon looks down from heaven or the bright wheel of the sun at midday passes by, such a gleam did he shed upon the waters; he was not disturbed by the shadow of the nymph or her hair or the sound of her as she rose to kiss him. Greedily throwing her arms around him, as he called – alas! – too late for help, and uttered the name of his mighty friend, she pulled him down and her strength was aided by his falling weight. (tr. Mozley, adapted)

⁵⁶⁰ In discussing the correspondences between Valerius Flaccus' Hylas episode and Ovid's Narcissus and Hermaphroditus episodes, I have made much use of the parallels noted by Malamud & McGuire 1993, 203-8.

⁵⁶¹ This Section and the next are revised versions of Heerink 2007b, Sections 4 and 6.

This erotic interpretation of Hylas being *avidus* is further elaborated by the juxtaposed denotation of the pool as *gratus* ("pleasing"), an adjective that is in this context suggestive of the erotic attractiveness of the elegiac beloved.⁵⁶² Hylas thus resembles Ovid's Narcissus who was also chasing deer⁵⁶³ and, when he got tired, bent down (*procubuit*, *Met.* 3.414) to quench his thirst. Rather like Hylas, Narcissus also has a metaphorical thirst – for his own reflection – and also turns from a hunting, potential epic hero into an elegiac lover:⁵⁶⁴

dumque sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit,
dumque bibit, visae correptus imagine formae *Met.* 3.415-6

and while he wanted to relieve his thirst, another thirst grew in him, and while he drank, he saw a beautiful reflection and was captivated. (tr. Hill)

Once the intertextual contact with Ovid's Narcissus has been established, the impression is created that Hylas is also looking at the pool and is in love with his own elegiacally attractive reflection, as in Propertius 1.20.⁵⁶⁵ In this respect, it is interesting that both Hylas and Dryope are described as being *avidus*, which suggests that the two are, or will become, in some way, one and the same person. The etymology of their names also points in this direction, for whereas Hylas is etymologically connected to Greek ὕλη, as we have seen, Dry-ope is derived from Greek δρῦς, "oak-tree". We know from Apollonius of Rhodes (*Arg.* 1.1213) that Hylas' father, Theiodamas, was king of the Δρύοπες. So, Dryopian Hylas is a male

⁵⁶² The erotic overtones of *gratos ... amnes* (557) have been noticed by Malamud & McGuire 1993, 203. For the elegiac association of *gratus*, see e.g. Prop. 4.8.29-30: *Phyllis (...) | sobria grata parum: cum bibit omne decet*. "Phyllis (...), unattractive when sober; when she drinks, all charm." (tr. Heyworth)

⁵⁶³ *Met.* 3.356: *hunc trepidos agitantem in retia cervos* ("as he was driving nervous stags into the nets"; tr. Hill).

⁵⁶⁴ For Narcissus as an elegiac lover (as well as beloved), see e.g. Barchiesi & Rosati 2007, 179: "[Ovidio] mostra il tema dell'amore in una versione perversa, in cui tutto è illusione, e i *topoi* dell'elegia (amore insaziabile, amore e morte, morire d'amore, illudersi d'amore, fisica e ottica dell'amore, dominio degli occhi sulla ragione) vengono spietatamente presi alla lettera (...)." Cf. also Labate 1983; Rosati 1997; Hardie 2002, 158-163 (quoted in Ch. 3, n. 444).

⁵⁶⁵ See Ch. 3, Section 6.2 for the way Propertius' Hylas resembles Narcissus. It is hardly surprising that Valerius' Hylas resembles Propertius' "Narcissistic" Hylas by reference to Ovid's Narcissus, as Ovid's episode itself alludes to Propertius' Hylas (see e.g. Heerink 2007b, Section 3).

Dryope. Nicander seems to provide an interesting parallel, or maybe even model, for exploiting the etymological link between the names Hylas and Dryope: according to Antoninus Liberalis' summary, Nicander, in his now lost *Heteroeumena* ("Metamorphoses") told the story of a girl Dryope – a Dryopian, just like Hylas – who was abducted by nymphs and hidden in the ὕλη:

καὶ εἰς τοῦτο παρ<ι>οὔσαν τὸ ἱερὸν Δρυόπην ἤρπασαν Ἀμαδρυάδες νύμφαι
κατ' εὐμένειαν καὶ αὐτὴν μὲν ἀπέκρυψαν εἰς τὴν ὕλην. Ant. Lib. 32.4

One day, as Dryope was approaching the temple [of *Apollo*], the hamadryad nymphs gathered her up affectionately and hid her in the woods. (tr. Celoria)

How far does Valerius' implicit identification of Hylas and Dryope go? In the strange scene immediately before his abduction (558-61; quoted above), Hylas is described as spreading a gleam (*iubar*) over the pool. This gleam, reflected in the pool, seems to blind him, because he does not see the *umbra* of Dryope approaching to kiss him; nor does he hear the *sonus* of her approach. In this scene Valerius seems to combine Propertius' Hylas poem with Ovid's Narcissus episode. The *iubar* recalls the *candor* of Hylas in Propertius 1.20.45, which excites the nymphs. On the other hand, the fact that Hylas sees (or is blinded by) a gleam that he himself produces, recalls Narcissus, who sees in the pool a reflection of his own eyes, described as stars (*geminum sidus*) in *Met.* 3.420. The comparison of Hylas' *iubar* with the rays of the sun (*Phoebus*) and the moon (*Cynthia*) underlines this.⁵⁶⁶ By analogy with Narcissus and his reflection, Hylas and Dryope seem to be in some way assimilated.

Furthermore, as we saw, the Valerian Dryope is equated with a *sonus* and an *umbra*. This is exactly how Hylas himself is described later on in Valerius' narrative, as Malamud and McGuire have pointed out.⁵⁶⁷ As I showed earlier, Hylas answers Hercules' cry as a (bucolic) echo, an *imago* (*Arg.* 3.597), and he thus seems to have

⁵⁶⁶ The appearance of the name Cynthia is suggestive in a context that alludes to Propertius 1.20, but I cannot see more than an implicit nod to Propertius' Hylas poem here.

⁵⁶⁷ Malamud & McGuire 1993, 207; 213.

become a *sonus*. In book 4 of the *Argonautica*, Hylas will visit his friend Hercules in a dream as an *umbra*:

ille ultro petit et vacuis amplexibus instat
languentisque movet frustra conamina dextrae:
corpus hebet somno refugaque eluditur **umbra**. Arg. 4.39-41

The other [*Hercules*] moves toward him, stretching weak arms | empty again
and again in failed embrace. | His body grows feeble with sleep; the ghost
retreats | and slips away. (tr. Barich)

So Valerius' Hylas becomes both an *imago* and an *umbra*. Interestingly, these two terms, *imago* and *umbra* are combined in Ovid's Narcissus episode, where Narcissus' reflection is said to be an *imaginis umbra* (434; quoted above). This collocation probably lies behind Valerius' terminology: his Hylas and Dryope are modelled on Narcissus and his beloved reflection.⁵⁶⁸

Although Valerius' Hylas thus seems to be Narcissus-like, it is not really his own reflection that the boy loves: Hylas and the nymph Dryope seem to have become one after the abduction, which recalls Narcissus and the object of his desire, who were one and the same person. Valerius has thus created his own metamorphosis of Hylas. In fact, there is a story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which exactly this transformation takes place: two characters, a nymph and a boy, become one. The story referred to is that of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, which, as I will argue, is an important for Valerius' Hylas episode. The episode may even account for Valerius' allusions to the Narcissus episode, with which the Hermaphroditus episode is closely connected.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁸ As Hylas is associated with the origin of the echo, he also resembles Ovid's nymph Echo, who, rejected by Narcissus, becomes a *sonus* (*Met.* 3.401) just like Hylas, lending her name to the echo in an alternative aetiology for the natural phenomenon.

⁵⁶⁹ Hardie 2002, 146, for instance, calls the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus episode "a doublet of the Narcissus story". Apart from the verbal similarities, there is a *font* and a symbolic landscape, which attracts both Narcissus and Hermaphroditus (see Segal 1969 on the use of water (pp. 23-6) and flowers (pp. 34-5) in these two episodes as symbols of virginity as well as its loss), and a one-sided love: Hermaphroditus rejects Salmacis as Narcissus rejects Echo. And just as Narcissus and his beloved, his reflection, are one and the same, so Salmacis and her beloved will become one and the same.

5.2. *Hylas and Hermaphroditus*

There are more similarities between Valerius' narrative and the Hermaphroditus story than just the merging of two characters. The setting in both is a pool with very clear water. Salmacis and Dryope are both nymphs and hunters and they both fall in love with and rape a beautiful boy. When Salmacis sees Hermaphroditus and falls in love, her eyes shine like the sun reflected in a mirror:

tum vero placuit, nudaque cupidine formae
Salmacis exarsit; flagrant quoque lumina nymphae,
non aliter quam cum puro nitidissimus orbe
opposita speculi referitur imagine Phoebus. Met. 4.346-9

Then indeed he gave pleasure and Salmacis burned with desire for his naked beauty: and the nymph's eyes were aflame too, just as when Phoebus' orb, clear and at its brightest, is reflected in the image of a mirror facing it. (tr. Hill)

This comparison reminds us of Valerius' *Argonautica*, where the gleam that Hylas sheds on the pool is compared with the sun (*Phoebus*) shining on the water. Moreover, as Hylas sheds a gleam on the water, so Hermaphroditus gleams while swimming in the pool, just before the nymph rapes him:

ille cavis velox adplauso corpore palmis
desilit in latices alternaque brachia ducens
in liquidis translucet aquis, ut eburnea si quis
signa tegat claro vel candida lilia vitro. Met. 4.352-5

He swiftly jumped down into the waters slapping his body with hollowed palms and, plying his arms in turn, he gleamed through the transparent waters just like an ivory statue or white lilies if someone encases them in clear glass. (tr. Hill)

Finally, the blush of Hermaphroditus earlier in the story, when Salmacis asks him to marry her, is compared with the appearance of the moon in eclipse:

(...) pueri rubor ora notavit
(nescit enim quid amor) sed et erubuisse decebat.
hic color aprica pendentibus arbore pomis

aut ebori tincto est aut sub candore rubenti,
cum frustra resonant aera auxiliaria, lunae. Met. 4.329-33

(...) a blush appeared on the boy's cheek (for he did not know what love was) but even to blush became him. He was the colour of apples hanging from a sun drenched tree, or of stained ivory or of the moon grown red in the midst of her brightness while the relieving bronze sounds out in vain. (tr. Hill)

Comparably, Hylas' *iubar* in Valerius is likened to the shining of the moon (558-60; quoted above).

There are also interesting parallels between Ovid's episode and Propertius' Hylas poem 1.20, which suggests that Valerius is "window-alluding" to Propertius through Ovid.⁵⁷⁰ When Propertius' Hylas arrives at the spring, he forgets his duty and starts picking flowers:

quae modo **decerpens tenero** pueriliter **ungui**
proposito **florem** praetulit officio;
et modo formosis incumbens nescius undis
errorem blandis tardat imaginibus. Prop. 1.20.39-42

Now childishly picking these with youthful nail, he put flowers ahead of his intended task; and now leaning unawares over the fair water he delays his wandering with the charming images. (tr. Heyworth)

The significance of this act is underlined by an allusion to Catullus' wedding poem 62:

ut **flos** in saeptis secretus nascitur hortis
(...)
multi illum pueri, multae optavere puellae:
idem cum **tenui carptus** defloruit **ungui**,
nulli illum pueri, nullae optavere puellae:
sic virgo, dum intacta manet, dum cara suis est. Cat. 62.39; 42-5

⁵⁷⁰ For the type of allusion to both a model (A) and to that model's model (B), which thus recognizes that the model of A is B, the terms "window allusion/reference" and "two-tier allusion" are current. See also Thomas 1986, 188-9 (= 1999, 130-2).

As a flower springs up secretly in a fenced garden (...); many boys, many girls desire it; when the same flower fades, plucked by a delicate nail, no boys, no girls desire it: so a maiden, while she remains untouched, the while is she dear to her own. (tr. Goold)

"The comparison of the bride to a flower, ready for defloration, is a conventional epithalamial image",⁵⁷¹ and we can anticipate that Hylas will soon lose his virginity. In the *Metamorphoses* it is Salmacis who is picking flowers, which there prefigures the loss of virginity of Hermaphroditus.⁵⁷²

Valerius' Dryope obviously resembles Salmacis in that she deflowers a boy. From a metapoetical point of view, as I argued earlier, this action of Dryope elegized Hylas and the *Argonautica* in general, prefiguring the way the epic would go. Interestingly, as I shall argue next, the nymph also resembles her Ovidian counterpart in this respect, since she also appears to elegize the potential epic hero Hermaphroditus in an episode that can be seen as a *mise en abyme*, a miniature, of the entire *Metamorphoses*.

5.3. Elegizing Hermaphroditus

The metapoetical dimension of the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus episode is related to a play on gender. Epic poetry is, particularly in Roman times, self-consciously characterized as a distinctly masculine affair, dealing with masculine activities such as warfare.⁵⁷³ Like Hylas at the beginning of Valerius' Hylas episode, the young Hermaphroditus is initially depicted as an epic hero, resembling Aeneas and, in particular, Odysseus, as Keith has shown:⁵⁷⁴

Mercurio puerum diva Cythereide natum
Naides Idaeis enutrivere sub antris,
cuius erat facies in qua materque paterque

⁵⁷¹ Hardie 2002, 156.

⁵⁷² Segal 1969, 34-5.

⁵⁷³ See also Section 1 above.

⁵⁷⁴ Keith 1999, 216-7. In this context, *labor* ("toil") in line 295 also evokes epic. See also p. 224 below for this epic association of *labor*.

cognosci possent; nomen quoque traxit ab illis.
is tria cum primum fecit quinquennia, montes
deseruit patrios Idaque altrice relictas
ignotis errare locis, ignota videre
flumina gaudebat, studio minuente laborem.

Met. 4.288-95

There was a boy born to Mercury and the goddess of Cythera and cared for by the Naiads in the caves of Ida; his was a face in which both mother and father could be recognized; and he took his name from them. As soon as he had lived three times five years, he left his father's mountains and abandoned Ida where he had been brought up and began to enjoy wandering in unfamiliar places and seeing unfamiliar rivers with a zeal that made light of toil. (tr. Hill)

That Hermaphroditus is nursed by nymphs on Mt. Ida recalls Venus' wish to have her son Aeneas raised there (*H. Hom.* 5.256-8), and just like Aeneas "Hermaphroditus leaves his home in the Troad to undertake a journey".⁵⁷⁵ But the boy's wanderings (*errare*, 294) are even more reminiscent of those of Odysseus, who, returning from Troy, sees the cities of many men.⁵⁷⁶ πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἶδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνων. "Of many men did he see the cities and learn the minds."

When Hermaphroditus arrives at Salmacis' spring, the scene recalls Odysseus again, arriving "at the isolated homes of the nymphs Calypso and Circe, but rehearses still more closely the Homeric hero's approach to Nausicaa and her companions who, after washing and clothing in the river, bathe and anoint themselves before enjoying a picnic lunch and playing ball (*Od.* 6.93-100). Salmacis similarly besports herself by the banks of her spring (...)." ⁵⁷⁷ As Keith observes, "[u]ntil the moment when Salmacis sees Hermaphroditus, (...) the Ovidian narrative proceeds on a gendered narrative trajectory that distinguishes the male epic hero from the feminized site of his labours: Hermaphroditus, a mobile male hero (like Odysseus or Aeneas) arrives in the course of his voyage of (self-)discovery at the home of Salmacis, an immobile female obstacle (like Nausicaa or Dido)." ⁵⁷⁸ When

⁵⁷⁵ Keith 1999, 217.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibidem. Cf. Labate 1993, 53-4.

⁵⁷⁷ Keith 1999, 217.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibidem.

Salmacis addresses the beautiful boy, the epic allusions continue, for her words (320-8) recall those of Odysseus to Nausicaä in *Odyssey* 6.149-59, but it is Salmacis who takes over Odysseus' role in a complete switch of gender roles: "[H]ere, if anywhere in Latin narrative, a female character aspires to the role of the (mobile, male) hero of epic."⁵⁷⁹ The eventual result of the episode is that the two characters merge and that the potentially epic *vir* Hermaphroditus ends up as a *semivir*, "half-man", his limbs "weakened", and in accordance with the boy's wish the spring will have the power to weaken men from that moment on:

ergo ubi se liquidas, quo vir descenderat undas
semimarem fecisse videt mollitaque in illis
membra, manus tendens, sed iam non voce virili
Hermaphroditus ait: "nato date munera vestro,
et pater et genetrix, amborum nomen habenti:
quisquis in hos fontes vir venerit, exeat inde
semivir et tactis subito mollescat in undis!"

Met. 4.380-6

And so, when he saw that the transparent waters, to which he had gone down a man, had made him a half-male, and that his limbs had been made soft in them, Hermaphroditus stretched out his hands and said, but no longer with a man's voice, "Grant your son a favour, oh father and mother too, for my name comes from both of you: whoever comes into this spring a man, let him come out from there a half-man, softened immediately he touches the waters." (tr. Hill)

This "feminization" of Hermaphroditus also clearly has a metapoetical dimension, as it is associated with Roman love elegy. Whereas the other nymphs are involved in the male activity of hunting, the epic association of which is enhanced by the emphatic use of the adjective *durus*,⁵⁸⁰ Salmacis herself is depicted as very feminine. In fact, she is described as a society lady from Roman love elegy, bathing, combing her hair and looking in the mirror (310-15), in a passage which seems to be

⁵⁷⁹ Keith 1999, 218 (one could also, however, think of Dido and Camilla in the *Aeneid*). Cf. Nugent 1990, 175-6 on the intertextual contact with *Odyssey* 6.149-59.

⁵⁸⁰ *Met.* 4.307, 309: *duris venatibus*, "hardships of the hunt" (tr. Miller & Goold). For the association of *durus* with epic, see p. 174 above and Ch. 3, n. 451.

influenced by Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*.⁵⁸¹ The terminology that is strikingly often applied to both Salmacis' feminizing spring – with which the eponymous nymph can be identified⁵⁸² – and her/the spring's feminizing action, i.e. *mollire* ("to soften", "to effeminate") and its cognates, also refers to love elegy, where the word is often used metapoetically to denote the genre.⁵⁸³ When Salmacis is said to soften/feminize Hermaphroditus (*Salmacis ... remolliat*, 286; *mollita ... | membra*, 381-2; *mollescat*, 386), the nymph can thus be seen metapoetically to elegize the epic Hermaphroditus.⁵⁸⁴ This interpretation is reinforced by the union of the boy with the nymph, which seems a perversion of the elegiac ideal of lover and beloved to become one.⁵⁸⁵

The wording of this merging – *mixta duorum | corpora iunguntur*. "Their two bodies, joined together as it were, were merged in one" (373-4) – recalls the prologue of the *Metamorphoses*, where *corpus* clearly has a metapoetical meaning:⁵⁸⁶

in nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
corpora; di coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa)
adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi

⁵⁸¹ Jouteur 2001, 273: "Le portrait de la coquette Salmacis (...) est influencé par l'Art d'aimer." Barchiesi & Rosati 2007, 288 (on *Met.* 4.310-5): "[Q]uesta Naiade frivola e oziosa somiglia a una dama della società galante romana: è bella (*formosus* connota fascino sensuale; cfr. McKeown 1989 a *Am.* I 5, 11), ama i bagni, passa il tempo nella cura dei capelli (mentre le ninfe-cacciatrici li portano regolarmente *incompti*: cfr. II 413 ecc.), si guarda allo specchio per agghindarsi (comme l'*Ars amatoria* alle donne insegna di fare: *quod quamque decebit | eligat, et speculum consulat ante suum*, III 135-6), indossa vesti trasparenti (come Cinzia, in Properzio, I 2, 2, o Nemesi, in Tibullo, II 3, 53), si distende mollemente sui prati (l' anafora di *mollibus* richiama per contrasto quella di *duris* ai vv. 307 e 309), raccoglie fiori (un passatempo che spesso prelude a scene di violenza erotica: cfr. V 391 sgg.)."

⁵⁸² See Keith 1999, 217-8; Keith 2000, Ch. 3 for the ways in which Salmacis "quite literally embodies the landscape through which Hermaphroditus travels." (1999: 217)

⁵⁸³ See Ch. 3, Section 7.1 for the association of *mollis* with elegy. Cf. Jouteur 2001, 272: "Il n'est pas impossible (ce serrait au contraire bien dans ses habitudes) qu' Ovide joue sur la polysémie de *mollis*, qui renverrait au genre féminin en même temps que réflexivement au genre élégiaque."

⁵⁸⁴ Hermaphroditus' elegizing perhaps already starts when he swims in Salmacis' spring, for his alternating strokes (*alternaque brachia ducens*, *Met.* 4.353; also quoted above), bring to mind the elegiac *alternus versus* (see also Ch. 3, p. 157). Cf. the clearly elegiac situation in Prop. 1.11, where Cynthia is envisaged swimming at Baiae "with an elegiac stroke, parting the water with alternating hand (*alternae ... manu* 1.11.12)." (McNamee 1993, 225).

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Barchiesi & Rosati 2007, 292 (on *Met.* 4.371-7): "[L]a preghiera di Salmacide di veder realizzato il suo desiderio di eterno possesso (...) dell' amato (il sogno degli elegiaci: cfr. Properzio, II 6, 41-2) viene esaudita dagli dèi."

⁵⁸⁶ See esp. Farrell 1999 and Theodorakopoulos 1999 on the metapoetical meaning of *corpus* here and throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.

Met. 1.1-4

My spirit moves me to tell of shapes changed into strange bodies; oh gods inspire my undertakings (for it was you who changed them), and from the first beginnings of the world lead my continuous song down to my own times.

(tr. Hill, adapted)

As S.J. Harrison conveniently summarizes the programmatic meaning of the prologue: “Metamorphosis is the theme of the poem, both in terms of its formal content, and in terms of its generic variety. Genres appear and disappear and are transformed into each other through the long course of the poem, following its explicit programme (1.1-2): literary *forms* are transformed into new *bodies* of poetic work”.⁵⁸⁷ Two “poetic bodies”, one epic and one elegiac, are thus merged in Ovid’s Salmacis and Hermaphroditus episode, and the result is a (poetic) body that is neither male (epic) nor female (elegiac):⁵⁸⁸

nec duo sunt et forma duplex, nec femina dici
nec puer ut possit, neutrumque et utrumque videntur.

Met. 4.378-9

They were not two, but they had a dual form that could be said to be neither woman nor boy, they seemed to be neither and both. (tr. Hill)

On the other hand, although Salmacis has feminized/elegized the boy, he is still a man – albeit just a half-man (*semivir*) – who keeps his male name Hermaphroditus and addresses himself as a male (*nato*, 383). Metapoetically, this implies that although the epic Hermaphroditus is elegized, he still remains epic up to a point. This paradoxical situation recalls the generic status of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in general, as I shall argue next.

⁵⁸⁷ Harrison 2002, 89. Cf. Keith 2002, 238: “Its [*the prologue’s*] self-referential commentary on the literary aims of the *Metamorphoses* is buttressed by Ovid’s use of *forma* and *corpora* (1.1-2), which in stylistic discussion can refer to literary ‘forms’ and ‘works’ respectively: the poet undertakes to transform the diverse literary forms of his sources into the hexameter body of his epic.”

⁵⁸⁸ Jouteur 2001, 280: “Le commentaire étonné du poète sur l’étrangeté de la créature ainsi décrite pourrait s’appliquer à la question des genres: tout en renvoyant à l’épopée et à l’élégie, le texte n’est plus ni l’une ni l’autre, mais un subtil mixte générique...”

5.4. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: an elegiac epic

Formally, the *Metamorphoses* belongs to the epic genre, because of its metre, and at the very beginning of the poem, the former elegiac poet Ovid emphasizes this status of his work by revealing a metamorphosis in his career. At exactly the moment that Ovid says that the gods have changed his poetry (in the second half of the second line: *nam vos mutastis et illa*), his poetry also changes in practice, for what could have been a pentameter up to that point, and thus an elegiac poem, at that very moment evolves into a second hexameter and thus an epic poem.⁵⁸⁹ This represents an inversion of the situation at the beginning of the *Amores* (quoted on p. 204 below), where Ovid says that he planned to write an epic (*arma ... violentaque bella*, *Am.* 1.1.1). Cupid sabotaged the project, however, by stealing a foot and changing his hexameters into elegiac distichs, eventually causing Ovid to change from a potential epic poet into an elegist.

A few lines later in the prologue, Ovid seems to reinforce the status of the *Metamorphoses* as a traditional epic, when he characterizes his poem as a *perpetuum carmen* (4), alluding to the prologue of the *Aetia*, where Callimachus says that he is reproached by his critics, the Telchines, for not having written “one continuous poem” (ἐν ᾧ σιμα δὴ γενέξ, *Aet.* 1.3 Pf.).⁵⁹⁰ But there is more. Ovid asks the gods to “spin out” (*deducite*) his epic, employing a metaphor derived from weaving.⁵⁹¹ In that context, *deducere* denotes the spinning of wool to produce a thin (*tenuis*) thread.⁵⁹² The word thus recalls Callimachean poetical ideals (cf. Μοῦσαν ... λεπταλήην, *Aet.* fr. 1.24 Pf.),⁵⁹³ an association that is reinforced by an allusion to *Eclogue* 6. The prologue

⁵⁸⁹ Tarrant 1982, 351, n. 35.

⁵⁹⁰ See Ch. 1, Section 2.5 for a discussion of this passage.

⁵⁹¹ Due 1974, 95. See e.g. Deremetz 1995, 289-92 for the metapoetical potential of *deducere*, and Introduction, n. 31 for “weaving” in general as metaphor for the poetical process.

⁵⁹² See Ch. 2, n. 272 for the Callimachean associations of *tenuis*.

⁵⁹³ See e.g. Gilbert 1976; Kenney 1976, 51-2; Heyworth 1994, 72-6. As Rosati 1999, 247 interestingly observes, however, *deducere* itself suggests both Callimachean, refined poetry and a continuous, narrative poem at the same time, as the verb also implies a long thread and thus “the idea of continuity and extension”. On Callimachus' *Aetia* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in general, see e.g. Knox 1986; Myers 1994. See Keith 2002, 246, n. 51 for more bibliography.

of this poem is clearly based on Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue (21-4), where Callimachus' patron Apollo advises the poet on the kind of poetry he should write:⁵⁹⁴

cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthus aurem
vellit et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen." *Ecloga* 6.3-5

When I was singing kings and battles, Cynthus pulled | my ear in admonition:
"A shepherd, Tityrus, | should feed his flock fat, but recite a thin-spun song."
(tr. Lee)

Like Callimachus, the shepherd Tityrus, who can be identified with the bucolic poet Virgil here,⁵⁹⁵ is admonished by Apollo to write refined, *deductum*, poetry.⁵⁹⁶ Whereas Ovid thus initially seems to mutate from a Callimachean elegist into an epic poet, a few lines later he states that his epic will paradoxically embrace Callimachean poetical ideals as well. As Merli states: "The principle which governs the mechanism of metamorphosis requires that something of the previous form be maintained in the new one."⁵⁹⁷ Although the *Metamorphoses* is formally an epic, it thus seems to retain inevitable traces of the elegiac past of the poet who produced it, and who already hinted at this past in the first two lines of his new work. The number of books of the poem also hints at a move away from traditional epic, which is "characterized by a number corresponding to a multiple of six",⁵⁹⁸ and in the direction of love elegy. More specifically, Merli suggests "a connection between Ovid's erotic elegy and his epic, especially if (...) we accept that the *Amores* follow the scheme of fifteen, twenty, fifteen elegies, or if (...) we at least accept that the first and the third books contain fifteen elegies each."⁵⁹⁹ This impression of an elegiac epic on the basis of the number of books is reinforced by the fact that the *Metamorphoses* constitutes "a literary

⁵⁹⁴ See Ch. 2, Section 2.1.2 for the text and translation of the Callimachean passage.

⁵⁹⁵ See e.g. Hunter 2006, 127 for this identification.

⁵⁹⁶ For the Callimachean dimension of *Eclogue* 6, and its prologue in particular, see esp. Deremetz 1995, 287-314.

⁵⁹⁷ Merli 2004, 307, basing herself on Solodow 1988, 183-6; Wheeler 1999, 12-3; 33.

⁵⁹⁸ Merli 2004, 306.

⁵⁹⁹ Merli 2004, 306-7.

diptych" with the *Fasti*, an elegiac poem that, by contrast, is very epic in the planned number of books.⁶⁰⁰ The subject matter of the *Fasti* is also very epic, as it deals with Roman history, just like the *Aeneid*. Despite its epic claim to deal with the history of the world (3-4),⁶⁰¹ the *Metamorphoses*, by contrast, deals mainly not with Roman history but with Greek myths about love; the traditional, "essential epic" about *reges et proelia* is hard to find in it.⁶⁰²

The beginning of the *Metamorphoses* proper, after the prologue, is a good example of the way Ovid's epic cannot escape the elegiac past of its poet and is thus elegized. Initially, the cosmogony that follows the paradoxical prologue (*Met.* 1.5-451) suggests that Ovid will write a Lucretian didactic epic,⁶⁰³ but then the love story of Daphne and Apollo is told:⁶⁰⁴

primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia, quem non
fors ignara dedit, sed saeva Cupidinis ira.
Delius hunc, nuper victo serpente superbus,
viderat adducto flectentem cornua nervo,
"quid" que "tibi, lascive puer, cum fortibus armis?"
dixerat, "ista decent umeros gestamina nostros." *Met.* 1.452-7

The first of Phoebus' loves was Peneian Daphne; which was given him not by blind chance but by Cupid's fierce anger. Recently, the Delian, made haughty by his conquest of the serpent, had seen him bending his bow with string drawn tight and, "What are these mighty arms to you, you wanton boy?", had said, "That equipment of yours befits my shoulders." (tr. Hill)

⁶⁰⁰ Kenney 2005, 650.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Ennius' *Annales*, which chronicles the history of Rome until Ennius' own day.

⁶⁰² Cf. Hardie 1991, 47: "taken together the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses* represent Ovid's typically indirect answer to the challenge of Virgil's epic, on the one hand a Callimachean elegy on the central subject of the *Aeneid* and on the other a hexameter epic on themes for the most part not Roman." Cf. Hinds 1992, 82: "The *Fasti* (...) is at times a rather epic kind of elegy; just as at times, though with even greater complication, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a rather elegiac kind of epic."

⁶⁰³ See e.g. Knox 1986, 11. Cf. Due 1974, 120: "Viewed from this angle the *Metamorphoses* have not only high epic pretensions but the highest possible; they are universal, a Weltgedicht...".

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Keith 2002, 251: "In the *Metamorphoses*, the tale of Apollo and Daphne follows a reprise of the cosmogonic motif and announces *amor* as a pervasive theme of the poem."

Although *primus amor* (452) in first instance refers to the fact that Daphne is Apollo's first love, Ovid also indicates that this is the first love story in the *Metamorphoses*.⁶⁰⁵ But the words have yet another meaning. After the haughty Apollo has belittled Cupid, the boy teaches him a lesson by shooting the god through the heart, making Apollo fall in love and admit his defeat:

certa quidem nostra est, nostra tamen una *sagitta*
certior, in vacuo quae vulnera *pectore* fecit. Met. 1.519-20

My arrow is sure indeed, but there is one arrow surer still which has made wounds in my empty heart. (tr. Hill)

As the words in italics in these two texts and the text that follows indicate, Ovid here clearly alludes to the first poem of his *Amores*, his *primus amor*:⁶⁰⁶

arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
 edere, materia conveniente modis.
 par erat inferior versus – risisse Cupido
 dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.
 “*quis tibi, saeve puer, dedit hoc in carmina iuris?*
 (...)”
 me miserum! *certas* habuit puer ille *sagittas*:
 uror, et *in vacuo pectore* regnat Amor. Am. 1.1.1-5; 25-6

Arms, and the violent deeds of war, I was making ready to sound forth – in weighty numbers, with matter suited to the measure. The second verse was equal to the first – but Cupid, they say, with a laugh stole away one foot. “Who gave you, cruel boy, this right over poetry” (...) Ah, wretched me! Sure were the arrows that you boy had. I am on fire, and in my but now vacant heart Love sits his throne. (tr. Showerman & Goold, adapted)

Ovid is here hit by Cupid's arrows, which cause him to abandon his epic project and become an elegist. This passage is reworked in the *Metamorphoses*, where the initial

⁶⁰⁵ E.g. Harrison 2002, 88; Barchiesi 2005, 207 (on Met. 1.452).

⁶⁰⁶ On the intertextual contact with *Amores* 1.1 in this episode, see esp. Nicoll 1977; 1980; Knox 1986, 14-7; Hardie 2005, 91-2. The metapoetical dimension of the Daphne episode is conveniently discussed by Keith 2002, 246-50.

context is also epic, as Apollo has just slain the Python.⁶⁰⁷ The god's question as to what that boy is doing with "epic" weapons (*fortibus armis*) should also be seen in this light, as it implies that Cupid is out of his element in the epic world of *arma*; these fit (*decent*, 457) Apollo better.⁶⁰⁸ Cupid, however, shows the god of poetry that he knows how to handle his *arma*. Driven by epic anger (*saeva Cupidinis ira*, 453), which recalls that of Juno in the *Aeneid* (*saevae ... Iunonis ... iram*, *Aen.* 1.4; cf. 1.25),⁶⁰⁹ he turns the epic hero Apollo into an elegiac lover, as he turned the potentially epic poet Ovid into an elegiac poet.⁶¹⁰ On a metapoetical level, Ovid shows that he can write his familiar elegiac poetry in epic by elegizing epic, adjusting his own metamorphosis from elegist to epic poet with which Ovid started the *Metamorphoses*.

The Daphne episode can thus be seen as a *mise en abyme* of the *Metamorphoses*, a miniature that describes the entire work, and this also goes for the Hermaphroditus episode, in which a potentially epic character is elegized. Although Ovid's pose *vis-à-vis* the epic tradition involves more genres that his epic can incorporate or into which it can transform, such as tragedy and bucolic,⁶¹¹ it is mainly elegiac poetry that works against the epic nature of the poem, that elegizes it.⁶¹² In the light of the strong

⁶⁰⁷ Hardie (2005, 91) speaks of "a hyper-epic dragon-slaying episode". See also Nicoll 1980, 181 for the way this passage evokes epic.

⁶⁰⁸ Hardie 2005, 92: "The metaliterary quality of the meeting in the *Metamorphoses* emerges through allusion to the first words of the *Aeneid*, *arma virumque* (arms and the man), in Apollo's indignant question as to what a *boy* has to do with arms; *decent* (befits) suggests the infringement of a literary decorum." I thank Prof. Nauta for sharing his thoughts on this passage with me.

⁶⁰⁹ Fränkel 1945, 208, n. 5.

⁶¹⁰ In fact, the story can be seen as an aetiology, explaining the origin of the genre. Hardie 2002, 129: "The story of Daphne is the foundational narrative of the inaccessible elegiac *dura puella*, to be possessed by the elegist and his readers only in the form of a *scripta puella*."

⁶¹¹ E.g. Harrison 2002, 88: "[T]he epicization of Euripides' *Bacchae* in 3.511-733 and of his *Hecuba* in 13.399-733 are only two of the most notable examples". See e.g. Farrell 1992 and Barchiesi 2006 for bucolic influences in *Met.* 13.235-68 (Polyphemus). See Hinds 2000, 221-3 for an overview of the various approaches with regard to the generic status of the *Metamorphoses*: (1) it is a "pure" epic (Heinze 1919); (2) it is *not* an epic, but (a) a "Kreuzung der Gattungen" (the term is derived from the title of Ch. 9 of Kroll 1924); (b) "it resists *any* appeal to genre as a useful interpretative tool" (p. 221) (Galinsky 1975); (c) constitutes a new genre (cf. Klein 1974, Knox 1986); (3) it is an epic, in which (a) the boundaries of the genre are creatively crossed (Hinds 1987, 99-134 (cf. 1989), with which I agree); (b) all other genres are subsumed within a "totalizing ambition" (p. 222) (Conte 1994, 115-25).

⁶¹² See e.g. Tränkle 1963a; Knox 1986; Hinds 1987; 1989; Harrison 2002, 87-9; Keith 2002, 245-58; Heerink 2009 for elegiac influences in the entire *Metamorphoses*.

opposition set up between elegy (as dealing with women and love) and traditional epic (as dealing with men and war) by Augustan poets, and in the light of Ovid's past as a versatile elegist, this is hardly surprising.

Ovid's elegizing of epic in the *Metamorphoses* can also be seen in the light of the *Aeneid*. As Hardie states: "The *Aeneid* instantly became the central classic of Latin literature, and all surviving post-Virgilian epics relate to the *Aeneid* in the way that the *Aeneid* relates to Homer, as the intertext by which they define their own aesthetic and ideological ambitions. (...) The first major epic to take up the challenge, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is so strange and original a poem that its status as epic has often been denied and the centrality of the Virgilian model misrecognized."⁶¹³ In recent decades, however, scholars have extensively shown how Ovid's poem "is both a challenge as well as a response to the *Aeneid*,"⁶¹⁴ and the elegized nature of Ovid's work, as emblemized by Ovid's Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, can thus be seen as part of this reaction to the *Aeneid*. In fact, as was shown in the previous paragraph, Hermaphroditus, before he was elegized by Salmacis, resembled Aeneas.

When Valerius' Dryope rapes Hylas – as Salmacis rapes Hermaphroditus – and when the two merge – as the Ovidian characters do – Valerius imports the metapoetical dimension of the Ovidian episode and of the entire work it represents. Valerius' reaction to the *Aeneid*, his elegizing of the potential Virgilian hero Hylas and the Aeneas-like Hercules in an episode that can be seen as representative for the entire *Argonautica*, can thus be seen as very Ovidian.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹³ Hardie 2005, 91.

⁶¹⁴ Papaioannou 2005, 2. Cf. Hardie 1991, 47: "[T]aken together the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses* represent Ovid's typically indirect answer to the challenge of Virgil's epic, on the one hand a Callimachean elegy on the central subjects of the *Aeneid* and on the other a hexameter epic on themes for the most part not Roman." See also e.g. Hardie 1990b; Baldo 1995; Smith 1997 on the *Metamorphoses* and the *Aeneid* in general. For Ovid's most obvious challenge of the *Aeneid*, his "little *Aeneid*" (*Met.* 13.623-14.582), see e.g. Papaioannou 2005, with pp. 3-16 for a discussion of earlier work.

⁶¹⁵ Stover 2003, 127-33 argues that Jason's address to Medea at their first meeting (*Arg.* 5.378-84) also alludes to Salmacis' address to Hermaphroditus (*Met.* 4.320-6), creating a tension in the epic: "Will Jason's confrontation with Medea be as unmanly for him as a dip in the emasculating waters of Salmacis' spring?" (132). Although Stover's argument would strengthen my "Ovidian" interpretation of the Hylas episode as *mise en abyme* of Valerius' *Argonautica*, for which Medea's elegiac love was of

6. Valerius in the footsteps of Virgil

The transformation of Hercules is one of the most obvious ways in which Valerius elegizes Virgil's heroic-epic *Aeneid* in the Hylas episode. The great hero evokes Aeneas, and his departure from the *Argonautica* means that the epic will not turn into an *Aeneid*, as Jupiter quite clearly states at the beginning of book 4. Hercules thus seems to symbolize Aeneas and the *Aeneid* in the Hylas episode; this is also implied at the end of the episode, where Hercules, after it has become clear that Valerius' elegiac epic is not the right place for him, resumes his heroic-epic ways by going to Troy, with its obvious Virgilian (as well as Homeric) associations:

iamque iter ad Teucros atque hospita moenia Troiae
flexerat Iliaci repetens promissa tyranni. Arg. 4.58-9

And now he had bent his steps to the Trojans and Troy's hospitable walls,
claiming the promise of the Ilian monarch [*Laomedon*]. (tr. Mozley)

In fact, the ending of line 58 (*hospita moenia Troiae*) is common in the *Aeneid*.⁶¹⁶ Furthermore, *iter* can have metapoetical connotations, as it has in the epilogue to Statius' *Thebaid*, where it refers to the epic's path to fame:

durabisne procul dominoque legere superstes,
o mihi bisenos multum vigilata per annos
Thebai? iam certe praesens tibi Fama benignum
stravit **iter** coepitque novam monstrare futuris. Theb. 12.810-3

My *Thebaid*, on whom I have spent twelve wakeful years, will you long endure and be read when your master is gone? Already, 'tis true, Fame has strewn a kindly path before you and begun to show a new arrival to posterity. (tr. Shackleton Bailey)

great importance, I cannot agree with it for two reasons. First of all, Jason's address to Medea is clearly based on that of Odysseus to Nausicaä in *Od.* 6 (as Stover himself also notes), which is also Ovid's intertext, and the few verbal parallels can be explained by this common model. Moreover, even if Valerius were to be alluding to Ovid, Jason, and not Medea, as Stover has it, would be associated with the "elegizing" Salmacis; this would make no sense, as Medea is the elegizing factor.

⁶¹⁶ *Aen.* 5.811; 9.144; 11.288. Cf. Murgatroyd 2009, 56 (ad loc.).

So Hercules will now take a new poetic path, in the direction of Virgil's *Aeneid*, as symbolized by Troy, whose walls are hospitable to him, i.e. willing to receive him.

Hylas, on the other hand, was a boy eager to become an epic hero, and he initially resembled Ascanius, Aeneas' successor. In the end, however, Hylas is elegized and transformed into Hercules' elegiac beloved. Hylas' transformation recalls that of Valerius' epic in general, which set out to become a second *Aeneid*, but became an elegized, Ovidian version of it. Like the beloved women of elegiac poetry, with their poetical names – Cynthia for instance, who symbolizes Propertius' poetry – Hylas lives up to his metapoetical etymology (< ὕλη, "subject matter") by symbolically representing the *Argonautica*. At the beginning of the Hylas episode, this symbolic relationship between Hylas and Hercules is briefly summarized:

(...) petit excelsas Tirynthius ornos,
haeret Hylas lateri **passusque moratur iniquos**. Arg. 3.485-6

The man from Tiryns heads toward towering ash trees; | Hylas keeps close, slowing his unequal stride. (tr. Barich, adapted)

Whereas Hercules is associated with epic greatness (*excelsas...ornos*),⁶¹⁷ Hylas is associated with elegy, for his "unequal steps" (*passus...iniquos*), triggering the use of *passus* in the sense "metrical foot",⁶¹⁸ evoke the difference between the hexameter and the pentameter of the elegiac couplet. The elegiac interpretation of Hylas is reinforced by the allusion to the simile comparing the lovesick Dido to a wounded deer in *Aeneid* 4, an important intertext for the rest of the Hylas episode, as I argued

⁶¹⁷ In ancient rhetorical theory, *excelsus* ("elevated", "sublime"; OLD 2b) is used to denote the grand style. See e.g. Plin. *Ep.* 9.26.2; Cic. *Or.* 34/119. For the association of *orni* ("ash trees") with epic, see *Ecl.* 6.71, where Hesiod is represented as the prototypically Callimachean poet, for he brings down (*deducere*, with its Callimachean associations) ash trees (*ornos*) from the mountains, which suggests a switch from heroic-epic to Callimachean-epic poetry. Cf. Hunter 2006, 27, who adduces Orpheus' introduction in A.R.'s *Arg.* 1.26-31 as a parallel, suggesting a Callimachean model for both passages.

⁶¹⁸ OLD 1d. For *passus* in this sense see e.g. Stat. *Silv.* 4.5.58: *hic plura pones vocibus et modis | passu solutis*. "Here most of your compositions shall be in words and measures that are free of meter (*passu solutis*)." (tr. adapted from Shackleton Bailey)

earlier (*Hylas haeret lateri*, 486) ~ *haeret lateri letalis harundo*, *Aen.* 4.73).⁶¹⁹ In the programmatic position at the start of the Hylas episode, these lines seem to state metapoetically that the elegiac Hylas (= the *Argonautica*) elegizes the epic Hercules (= the *Aeneid*) by delaying him (*moratur*), forcing him to walk in Hylas' "metre": this is what happens almost literally in the Hylas episode itself and in Valerius' elegiac epic in general.

But Hylas is also described as following Hercules, in the passage just quoted and at the beginning of the epic, when the two characters are introduced:

Protinus Inachiis ultro Tirynthius Argis
advolat, Arcadio cuius flammata veneno
tela puer facilesque umeris gaudentibus arcus
gestat Hylas; velit ille quidem, sed dextera nondum
par oneri clavaeque capax. (...) Arg. 1.107-11

At once Tirynthian Hercules hurries there | unprodded, from Inachian Argos' land. | His arrows tipped with venom's Arcadian fire | and his bow the youngster Hylas carries, | an easy load his shoulders gladly bear. | The club as well he'd hold, but still | his arms can't bear the weight. (tr. Barich)

Valerius here seems to exploit the metaphor of "following" for imitation of a poetical predecessor. Statius explicitly deploys it in this way in the already mentioned epilogue of the *Thebaid*, where the poet addresses his own epic:

vive precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta,
sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora.
mox, tibi si quis adhuc praetendit nubila livor,
occidet, et meriti post me referentur honores. Theb. 12.816-9

Live, I pray; and do not try to match the divine *Aeneid*, but ever follow her footsteps at a distance in adoration. Soon, if any envy still spreads clouds before

⁶¹⁹ The parallel was noted by Langen 1896-7, 253 (on *Arg.* 3.486). I do not agree with Spaltenstein 2004, 145, who comments that "[h]aeret lateri represses des expressions traditionnelles", as the combination of a form of *haerere* and *lateri* earlier than *Arg.* 3.486 occurs only in *Aen.* 4.73. The combination also occurs in *Stat. Theb.* 10.100: *hic haeret lateri redimita Voluptas*. The *communis opinio* is, however, that the *Thebaid* postdates the *Argonautica* (see n. 625 below).

you, it shall perish, and after me you shall be paid the honours you deserve.
(tr. Shackleton Bailey, slightly adapted)

In lines 816-7, “perhaps the most explicit intertextual reference in Latin epic”,⁶²⁰ Statius comments on the relationship between his own epic and Virgil’s *Aeneid*: the *Thebaid* is to follow in the footsteps of the *Aeneid*, albeit at a distance, in homage. In line 817, Statius aptly reinforces his words by alluding to a passage from book 2 of the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas tells Creusa to follow him (the underlined words indicate the intertextual contact):⁶²¹

(...) mihi parvus Iulus
sit comes, et longe servet vestigia coniunx. Aen. 2.710-1

Young Iulus can walk by my side and my wife can follow in my footsteps at a distance. (tr. D. West)

The metaphor of following in someone’s footsteps, which Statius uses to describe the relationship of his *Thebaid* to the *Aeneid*, is at the same time a trope which both activates *and* describes the intertextual process. So does Statius actually enact what he advises here:⁶²² his own words follow Virgil’s own – at some distance (*longe*). In the first instance *longe* seems to refer to Statius’ modesty and reverence for Virgil, and it is also a necessary word to mark the allusion. It also comments on the allusion, however, and has an implicit, metapoetical dimension, as *longe* comments on the limits of the *Thebaid*’s imitation of the *Aeneid*. The message that can be read is that the *Thebaid* goes its own way and has its own dynamics and agenda, and this in fact the way that the epic is interpreted by scholars nowadays.⁶²³ This more confident subtext

⁶²⁰ Nugent 1996, 70.

⁶²¹ Nugent 1996, 70-1; cf. Dominik 2003, 98-9. This allusion to *Aeneid* 2 is very apt, as Virgil’s words itself also allude to a model, and metaphorically comment on it: Virgil’s Creusa follows Aeneas as Eurydice followed Orpheus in the *Georgics*. See further Section 8.1 below.

⁶²² See e.g. Barchiesi 2001, 129-40 for a theoretical discussion of several “tropes of intertextuality in Roman epic” (fate and fame, dreams, prophecy, images, echoes).

⁶²³ Statius’ “creative imitation” of the *Aeneid* has received extensive treatment in recent years: see e.g. Hardie 1990a; Feeney 1991, 337-91; Hardie 1993; Dominik 2003, and in particular the most recent study by Ganiban 2007.

is in harmony with the two lines that immediately follow and end the epic: "Soon, if any envy still spreads clouds before you, it shall perish, and after me you shall be paid the honours you deserve." At first sight these lines just seem to be a modest expression of hope, but "the hope for *meriti honores* is the language of worship paid to a hero or god".⁶²⁴ So Statius implicitly calls his epic divine, just as he called the *Aeneid* a few lines earlier (*divinam Aeneida*, 816).

Similarly, but more implicitly, Valerius also seems to use "following" as an intertextual metaphor that is representative of the relationship between the two epics, since the *Aeneid* is a very important model for Valerius, both in the Hylas episode and the entire *Argonautica*. Just like Statius' words, Valerius' metaphor also describes the intertextual process, for, as the bold and underlined words indicate, the two passages in which Hylas is following Hercules allude to the same passage in *Aeneid* 2, where Ascanius is following Aeneas:

haec fatus latos umeros subiectaue colla
veste super fulvique insternor pelle leonis,
succedoque oneri; dextrae se parvus Iulus
implicuit **sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis**. *Aen.* 2.721-4

When I had finished speaking, I put on a tawny lion's skin as a covering for my neck and the breadth of my shoulders and the I bowed down and took up my burden. Little Iulus twined his fingers in my right hand and kept up with me with his short steps. (tr. D. West)

Also like Statius, Valerius reveals the limitations of his imitation of the *Aeneid*. Ascanius will eventually become an epic hero and a worthy successor to his epic father, and the expectation is initially created that the same will go for Hylas (*nondum* ...). Although Hylas indeed follows Hercules, however, as Valerius imitates Virgil, Valerius' Hylas ultimately parts from his role-model, metamorphosing into an elegiac symbol and turning Hercules temporarily into an elegiac lover, until the hero leaves Valerius' elegiac epic and returns to the heroic-epic world of the *Aeneid*.

⁶²⁴ Pollmann 2004, 289 (ad loc.), referring to Hardie 1993, 111.

7. Statius in the footsteps of Virgil

Hylas and Hercules also make their appearance in Statius' epic *Thebaid*. In a brief passage of only four lines in the fifth book of Statius' *Thebaid*, Hylas is described as following Hercules:

audet iter magnique **sequens vestigia** mutat
 Herculis et tarda quamvis se mole ferentem
 vix cursu tener aequat Hylas Lernaeaque tollens
arma sub ingenti gaudet sudare pharetra Theb. 5.441-4

Young Hylas dares the voyage, following and adapting great Hercules' stride, whom running he scarce matches, slowly though the other moves his bulk; and lifting the arms of Lerna he rejoiced to sweat beneath the huge quiver.
 (tr. Shackleton Bailey)

As I will argue in what follows, this passage can also be read metapoetically, in a way similar to the passages involving Hylas and Hercules in Valerius' *Argonautica*, to which it clearly reacts and the poetical agenda of which it copies:⁶²⁵ Hylas following Hercules symbolizes the relationship between the *Thebaid* and the *Aeneid*.

7.1. Following Virgil

The words with which Statius describes Hylas following Hercules (*sequens vestigia*, 441) are intertextually connected to the epilogue of the *Thebaid*, where, as shown earlier, Statius told his epic to follow in the footsteps of the *Aeneid*:

vive precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta,
 sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora. Theb. 12.816-7

⁶²⁵ With almost all scholars I assume that Valerius' *Argonautica* antedates Statius' *Thebaid*. Cf. Zissos 2006, 166, n. 5: "The theory that Statius influenced Valerius rather than the reverse has occasionally been aired, but is unlikely (...)." On the passages under discussion, cf. Zissos 2008, 142 (on *Arg.* 1.107-11): "This composite treatment [*in Arg. 1.107-11 and Arg. 3.486*] is punctually reworked at *Theb.* 5.441-4, esp. 443-4 ...". On the intertextual contact between the *Argonautica* and the *Thebaid* (and in particular between their respective Lemnos episodes), see e.g. Schenkl 1871, 303-4; Manitius 1889, 251-3; Summers 1894, 4-5; 8-11; Vessey 1970; Aricò 1991, 206-10; Smolenaars 1991; Delarue 2000, 302-5 (more bibliography in Zissos 2006, 166, nn. 4-5).

Live, I pray; and do not try to match the divine *Aeneid*, but ever follow her footsteps at a distance in adoration. (tr. Shackleton Bailey, slightly adapted)

The contact between the two passages is reinforced by the allusion of both passages to the end of *Aeneid* 2, where following Aeneas is at stake. Whereas Statius' epilogue alludes to Creusa following Aeneas (*longe servet vestigia coniunx*, *Aen.* 2.711), as was shown above (pp. 208-9), not Creusa but Ascanius is the subject in the *Aeneid* 2 intertext of *Thebaid* 5, which was also alluded to by Valerius (see p. 209 and 211 above):⁶²⁶ *sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis*. "And he [Ascanius] follows his father with unequal steps." (*Aen.* 2.724).

Statius' allusion to Virgil in *Thebaid* 5 is not immediately obvious, though. At first sight, Statius only seems to allude to the beginning of Valerius Flaccus' Hylas episode: *passusque moratur iniquos*. "And he [Hylas] delays his [Hercules'] unequal steps." (*Arg.* 3.486). Valerius clearly alludes to the *Aeneid* 2 passage mentioned, through which Hylas is associated with Ascanius and Hercules with Aeneas. That Statius alludes (in *Thebaid* 5) to the Virgilian passage through Valerius Flaccus is reinforced by Statius' allusion to the other passage where Hylas is following Hercules, in book 1 of the *Argonautica*:

Protinus Inachiis ultro Tirynthius Argis
advolat, Arcadio cuius flammata veneno
tela puer facilesque umeris gaudentibus arcus
gestat Hylas; velit ille quidem, sed dextera nondum
par oneri clavaeque capax. Arg. 1.107-11

At once Tirynthian Hercules hurries there | unprodded, from Inachian Argos' land. | His arrows tipped with venom's Arcadian fire | and his bow the youngster Hylas carries, | an easy load his shoulders gladly bear. | The club as well he'd hold, but still | his arms can't bear the weight. (tr. Barich)

⁶²⁶ The appearance of forms of the verb *sequi* in *Theb.* 5.441 (*sequens*), *Theb.* 12.817 (*sequere*) and *Aen.* 2.724 (*sequitur*) also suggests intertextual contact between the three texts.

The underlined words highlight the quite obvious intertextual contact. Both Valerius' and Statius' Hylas carry Hercules' arrows; Statius' *Lernaean arma* both neglects Valerius' comment that the weapons concerned are arrows (*tela*), dipped in poison, and specifies Valerius' *Arcadio*, as the blood concerned is that of the Hydra of Lerna. Whereas Valerius' Hylas was not yet able to carry Hercules' club, Statius' Hylas has difficulty carrying Hercules' huge quiver. Both, however, enjoy the burden.

Valerius here alludes to the same passage from *Aeneid* 2 as he alluded to at the beginning of Hylas episode proper (see p. 209 and 11 above). So Statius has combined both Valerius' passages dealing with Hercules and Hylas, both of which allude in turn to the passage in *Aeneid* 2 where Ascanius is following Aeneas.

7.2. *Hylas and Hercules in Thebaid 5: a metapoetical reading*

To return to the contact between *Thebaid* 5 and 12: the fact that both Statius' Hylas passage and the epilogue of the *Thebaid* allude to the end of *Aeneid* 2, where the following of Aeneas is at stake, strengthens the intertextual contact between *Thebaid* 5 and the very metapoetical epilogue. The latter passage seems to retroject its metapoetical meaning on Statius' description of Hylas following Hercules, activating the metapoetical metaphor of following in the footsteps of a poetic predecessor in another, more implicit context, and taking a cue from Valerius' statement: Hylas following Hercules is like the *Thebaid* following the *Aeneid*.⁶²⁷ If this is so, many other details seem to acquire an additional, metapoetical meaning, filling in some gaps in the metapoetical allegory. That Hylas or the *Thebaid* "dares" (*audet*, 441) the voyage is potentially metapoetically significant, as the verb can refer to ambitious literary

⁶²⁷ Hardie 1993, 110 seems to imply a metapoetical link between *Thebaid* 5 and 12: "Statius warns his poem not to attempt to rival the 'divine *Aeneid*', but to 'follow at a distance and ever worship the *Aeneid*'s footsteps' (12.816-7). To follow is to imitate, which may in itself demand exertion, as for example in the case of Hylas trying to keep up with Hercules at 5.441-4 (...) Virgil himself, when charged with plagiarism, had said that it was easier to steal the club of Hercules than a line from Homer (*Vita Donati* 46)." Inspired by his suggestion, I am trying, however, to make a reasoned case for the intertextual contact between the two passages and for a metapoetical reading of *Thebaid* 5.

projects, in particular an epic.⁶²⁸ Statius uses the verb explicitly of his own epic project at the beginning of the *Thebaid*:

(...) limes mihi carminis esto
Oedipodae confusa domus, quando Itala nondum
signa nec Arctoos **ausim** spirare triumphos
bisque iugo Rhenum, bis adactum legibus Histrum
et coniurato deiectos vertice Dacos
aut defensa prius vix pubescentibus annis
bella iovis. *Theb.* 1.16-22

(...) Let the limit of my lay be the troubled house of Oedipus. For not yet do I dare breathe forth Italian standards and northern triumphs – Rhine twice subjugated, Hister twice brought under obedience, Dacians hurled down from their leagued mountain, or, earlier yet, Jove's warfare ward off in years scarce past childhood. (tr. Shackleton Bailey)

The poet addresses Domitian here and declares that he will limit himself to telling the story of the house of Oedipus, since he does not yet dare (*ausim*) to tell of Domitian's triumphs. This is not just a random parallel between two passages, for only here and in the epilogue – in other words, at the beginning and end of the *Thebaid* – does Statius explicitly comment on his own epic and its relationship with the *Aeneid*, which *does* sing of contemporary events.⁶²⁹ It therefore seems reasonable to see also in *audet* at *Thebaid* 5.441 a reference to Statius' epic ambition.⁶³⁰ Whereas he

⁶²⁸ See McKeown 1998, 11 on Ovid, *Am.* 2.1.11-2, also with references to e.g. *Fast.* 6.22, *Trist.* 2.337, *Pont.* 2.5.28f. and *Prop.* 2.10.5f.

⁶²⁹ Cf. Pollman 2001, 12: "In contrast to the *Aeneid*, the *Thebaid* does not contain any direct references to contemporary or recent Roman history but stays completely on the mythological level. The only exception to this are a few lines at the beginning (*Theb.* 1.17b-33a) and at the end (*Theb.* 12.810-9) of the *Thebaid*, where Statius praises Domitian, the emperor under whom he is writing." Implicitly, however, Statius' *Thebaid* has contemporary relevance, as McNelis 2007 has shown (see below), and, as Dominik 2003, 98 suggests, Statius already seems to suggest this in *Thebaid* 1: "By declaring pointedly that his theme is intended to apply only to Thebes (16f.) and then juxtaposing his statement with a brief mention of Domitian's deeds (17-22), the poet provocatively suggests the contemporary relevance of his poem." See also Rosati 2008 on the political and poetical connections between the prologue and the epilogue of the *Thebaid*.

⁶³⁰ Retrospectively, Hylas' "daring" during his first epic fight against Sages in the Cyzicus episode (*Arg.* 3. 182: *tum primum puer ausus Hylas ...*), which evoked Ascanius' first fight in *Aeneid* 9, as shown in Section 1 above, can also be seen to be metapoetically significant: Valerius/Hylas dares to write an

did not dare to write an epic on Domitian, Statius here implicitly states he has taken up the challenge to compete with Virgil: *audet iter*. The metapoetical reading of *iter* is reinforced by the metaphorical use of the word at the beginning of the epilogue of the *Thebaid* (12.813), where it is clearly used metaphorically, as it refers to the path of the *Thebaid* to fame (p. 207 above). Because of the already established clear intertextual contact between *Thebaid* 5 and the epilogue, we may infer that *iter* in *Thebaid* 5.411 can be read similarly: Hylas or the *Thebaid* dares to attempt the (poetical) journey to fame, in the footsteps of Hercules or the *Aeneid*. *Arma* in line 444 invites a metapoetical reading as well. In this context, right after the allusion to *Aeneid* 2 in 443 (discussed above), and placed at the beginning of the line, the word clearly alludes to the famous first word of the *Aeneid*. The metapoetical potential of the word, as a concise definition of epic by Roman poets, is well-established. Often, as in *Aeneid* 1.1, the definition also includes the other stereotype: that it deals with men.⁶³¹ Ovid, however, restricts himself to *bella* in the *Remedia Amoris*: *fortia Maeonio gaudent pede bella referri* (“bold wars rejoice to be related in Homeric feet”, 373), and to *bella* as well as *arma* in his *Amores*: *arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam | edere* (“I planned to speak of arms and violent wars in heavy feet”). Here the quite explicit reference to the genre of epic is underlined by an allusion to the first word of the *Aeneid*, marked by the identical position of Ovid’s *arma* at the beginning of the line.⁶³² In *Heroides* 3.87, where Briseïs is addressing Achilles, Ovid uses only *arma* to hint at a metapoetical statement about epic: *arma cape, Aeacide, sed me tamen ante recepta* (“Take up arms, Aeacides, but take me back first”).⁶³³ Hinds interprets this line metapoetically in terms of the tension between the genres of epic and elegy in the elegiac *Heroides*: “Fulfil your martial epic project, Achilles, but take care of erotics

epic in the footsteps of the *Aeneid*. As I argued, however, the Hylas episode reveals there that the *Argonautica* will eventually take another direction.

⁶³¹ See also Virg. *Ecl.* 6.3: *reges et proelia*, “kings and battles”; Hor. *AP* 73: *res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella*, “deeds of kings and leaders and grim wars”. See also Section 1 above for a discussion of epic stereotypes. I owe the following examples to Hinds 2000.

⁶³² For the way in which the position of a word in the line can mark an allusion, see Wills 1996, 22-3: “positional marking (in relationship to line- or book-boundaries)”.

⁶³³ Translation adapted from Hinds 2000, 224-5.

first!"⁶³⁴ This example shows how easily a metapoetical reading can be invited – in the right context – by just the word *arma*, placed in the same line position as in the *Aeneid*. The same seems to be the case in *Thebaid* 5, where Statius' *arma* both alludes to the *Aeneid* and contributes to a metapoetical reading of lines 543-4, concerning his own epic: the *Thebaid* follows the *Aeneid* (Hylas carries Hercules' *arma*), but Statius enjoys this burden (*sub ingenti gaudet sudare pharetra*).⁶³⁵

The metapoetical dimension of the passage is reinforced by Statius himself, who also discusses the *Thebaid* and its relationship with the *Aeneid* in his *Silvae*:⁶³⁶

quippe te fido monitore nostra
Thebais multa cruciata lima
temptat **audaci** fide Mantuanae
gaudia famae.

Silv. 4.7.25-8

For 'tis with you [*Vibius, the addressee*] as my trusty counsellor that my *Thebaid*,
tortured by much filing, essays with daring string the joys of Mantuan fame.
(tr. Shackleton Bailey)

Statius here clearly alludes to the epilogue of his epic, which also speaks of the epic as a product of hard work (*multa cruciata lima*, 26 ~ *multum vigilata per annos*, 12.811-2), and of its imitation of the *Aeneid* as an attempt (*temptat*, 27 ~ *tempta*, 12.816:). The joy (*gaudia*) and daring (*audaci*) that the *Thebaid* experiences during this imitation, however, recall Hylas, carrying the arms of Hercules (*audet iter*, 441; *gaudet*, 444). Statius, combining allusions to both *Thebaid* 5 and 12 in the *Silvae* thus strengthens not only the intertextual contact between the two passages even further, but also the metapoetical significance of Hylas following Hercules.

7.3. Statius' Callimachean poetics

The question remains as to why Statius associates his epic with the anti-epic boy Hylas. In the *Argonautica*, as I have argued, Hylas was initially presented as an

⁶³⁴ Hinds 2000, 224-5.

⁶³⁵ Cf. Hardie 1993, 110, quoted in n. 625 above.

⁶³⁶ I thank Prof. Nauta for sharing his thoughts on this connection with me.

Ascanius, a potentially epic hero. In the Valerian Hylas episode, however, the boy distanced himself from his Virgilian model, symbolizing the way in which the *Argonautica* followed the *Aeneid* to a certain extent but eventually elegized it. Similarly, Statius' Hylas follows Hercules but he adapts (*mutat*, 441) the steps of the great hero. This accords with the *Thebaid's* epilogue, where Statius advised his epic to not just imitate the *Aeneid*, but follow it at a distance (*longe*). But in what respect does the *Thebaid* take another path from the *Aeneid*? I think this has to do with the Callimachean poetics of the epic, which provide an explanation for the association of the *Thebaid* with Hylas, the paradoxical boy who initially reveals epic potential but is eventually associated with anti-epic Callimachean ideas.

McNelis, in his 2007 book *Statius' Thebaid and the Poetics of Civil War*, has argued that the *Thebaid* distances itself from the *Aeneid* and its confidence in the ending of civil war between Trojans and Italian tribes with the establishment of a monarchy under Aeneas, all of which mirrors the recent ending of civil war in Rome by Augustus. Statius' poem deals with civil war in Thebes, a city which has a long history of contemporary relevance in Greek and Roman literature,⁶³⁷ and which in the *Thebaid* clearly (albeit implicitly) evokes Flavian Rome. In the *Thebaid*, Thebes is "a metaphor to examine civil war and its concomitant problems in early imperial Rome",⁶³⁸ and as part of this agenda, the epic engages with the *Aeneid*. As McNelis says, "the poem adopts the Virgilian interest in both the gods and arrangement of the narrative, but it then presents disturbing gods and a narrative that is hindered from making progress. By upsetting these formal features, Statius challenges – but does not dispose of – Augustan claims for order, stability and national progress. The *Thebaid* does not accommodate the transfer of *Pax Augusta* to the Flavian world".⁶³⁹ McNelis also claims – and this is the main point of his book – that this civil war and the related conflict with the *Aeneid* is reflected in the poetics of the *Thebaid*, where

⁶³⁷ See McNelis 2007, 4-5 for examples.

⁶³⁸ McNelis 2007, 5.

⁶³⁹ McNelis 2007, 7.

Callimachus' poetics – or rather the Roman, more rigid anti-epic conception of his poetics, Roman “Callimacheanism” – plays a crucial role, in that it opposes the more traditional epic poetics of the work. In particular, “allusions to Callimachus' poetry play a substantial role in Statius' construction and pursuit of a teleological narrative”.⁶⁴⁰ This narrative is delayed for about 1700 lines in books 4 to 6 of the *Thebaid*, which deal with the stay of the Argive leaders on their way to Thebes at Nemea and the foundation of the Nemean games. McNelis argues that the aetiological episode constitutes a “Callimachean delay” in the poem's otherwise continuous progress towards the epic duel between the brothers Eteocles and Polynices, and in this episode McNelis sees metapoetical allusions to Callimachus' poetry.⁶⁴¹

In the programmatic epilogue, Statius seems to state that these Callimachean poetics play a part in the intertextual contact with the *Aeneid*. As McNelis shows, the *multum vigilata* in line 811 goes back to Callimachus through Cinna.⁶⁴² But there is more. The whole idea of a self-referential *sphragis* seems to go back to the self-referential statement which ends Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* (quoted on p. 32 above).⁶⁴³ The *livor* (“envy”) of Statius' opponents, which is mentioned in the last two lines, recalls two well-known Callimachean passages: the end of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* again, where a personified Jealousy (Φθόνος) opposes Callimachus' poetry, and the *Aetia* prologue, where Callimachus attacks his literary opponents, who are said to be jealous: ἔλλατε Βασκανίης ὀλοὸν γένος. “To hell with you, then, spiteful brood of Jealousy.” (*Aet.* fr. 1.17 Pf.; tr. Nisetich)⁶⁴⁴ These allusions to Callimachus suggests that in his epilogue Statius self-consciously not only puts his poem in the

⁶⁴⁰ McNelis 2007, 11.

⁶⁴¹ McNelis 2007, 76-96 (Ch. 3: “Nemea”).

⁶⁴² See McNelis 2007, 23: Statius alludes to *FRP* 13.1-2: *haec tibi Arateis multum invigilata lucernis | carmina* (“This poem (...), the subject of many sleepless nights with Aratus' lamplight”; tr. Hollis). In its turn, the passage alludes to Call. *Ep.* 27.3-4 Pf., where Aratus is praised: χαίρετε λεπταὶ | ῥήσιες, Ἀρήτου σύντονος ἀγρυπνίης. “Hail subtle words, token of Aratus' vigilance.”

⁶⁴³ Pollmann 2004, 284 (on *Theb.* 12.810-9).

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. Pollmann 2004, 285 (on *Theb.* 12.810-9). “Poetic jealousy” is a common motif in Latin poetry generally: see e.g. Prop. 3.1.21ff.; Ov. *Am.* 1.15.1-6.

same epic league as Virgil's *Aeneid*, but also programmatically embraces the Callimachean poetics, which, as McNelis has shown, pervade the entire epic.

That Hylas in the footsteps of Hercules symbolizes the *Thebaid* as a paradoxical, Callimachean epic is reinforced by the strong intertextual contact with this Callimachean epilogue. The immediate context of the appearance of Hylas and Hercules, however, also points in this direction, as it too deals with the *Thebaid*'s relationship with the *Aeneid* as a *mise en abyme* of the entire epic. This I shall now demonstrate.

7.4. Hypsipyle's narrative as *mise en abyme* of the *Aeneid*

Hylas and Hercules make their appearance in the *Thebaid* as part of a book-length narrative by Hypsipyle in book 5, which is the main cause of the already mentioned "Callimachean" delay of the epic narrative at Nemea. When the Argive leaders meet the former queen of Lemnos, she tells them of the Lemnian women, who, (with the exception of herself) murdered all the men on the island, and of the Argonauts, who arrived at the island shortly after the massacre. Hypsipyle's narrative contains a small catalogue of the Argonauts coming ashore at Lemnos. The former queen mentions some prominent crew members (Theseus, Orpheus, Meleager, Peleus), but ends with a more extensive description of Hylas following Hercules.

Vessey has noted that "Hypsipyle's account of the Lemnian massacre and its aftermath (...) is an epic within an epic, illustrating by parallel, antithesis and symbol, the dominating themes of the whole".⁶⁴⁵ Ganiban, in his 2007 book dealing with the *Thebaid*'s interaction with the *Aeneid*, more specifically shows how this *mise en abyme*, a miniature of the entire epic, is also a programmatic statement about the relationship between the *Thebaid* and the *Aeneid* comparable with the epilogue of the

⁶⁴⁵ Vessey 1973, 170. Cf. Vessey 1970, Nugent 1996, Ganiban 2007, 71; McNelis 2007, 90-1. Cf. Feeney 1991, 322-4, who shows that Valerius' Lemnos episode (*Arg.* 2.82ff.) is also a small epic in itself. See n. 625 above for bibliography on the intertextual contact between the two Flavian Lemnos-episodes.

Thebaid.⁶⁴⁶ At first sight, the *Thebaid* seems to follow the *Aeneid*. Ganiban argues that Hypsipyle, “more than any other character in the epic, (...) is specifically and self-consciously modeled on Virgil’s Aeneas. Indeed she represents the most direct use of Aeneas in the *Thebaid*” (71). For example, “her description of the Lemnian massacre is modeled on the fall of Troy and its aftermath in *Aeneid* 2-3” (77).⁶⁴⁷ But Ganiban goes on to show how in fact Statius in this episode (just as in his entire work) distances himself from the *Aeneid*. Like other characters in the epic, Hypsipyle initially seems a Virgilian character (in this case Aeneas), but she is transformed, reinterpreted, and ends up as that character’s foil (in this case Dido).⁶⁴⁸ On the other hand, as McNelis has shown, the setting of Hypsipyle’s narrative is “Callimachean” Nemea, which works against the teleological epic narrative of the *Thebaid*. Ganiban’s and McNelis’ conclusions thus nicely complement each other. At Nemea, just as in the epilogue, Statius imitates the *Aeneid* to some extent, but precisely where he distances himself from his Augustan predecessor, Callimachean poetics come into play.

This Callimachean context strengthens the metapoetical significance of Hylas following Hercules in as passage that can be seen as a further *mise en abyme*, a metapoetical statement within another one.

8. Virgil in the footsteps of Homer

Since the passages of Valerius and Statius in which Hylas is metapoetically following Hercules allude to the same passage in *Aeneid* 2, where Ascanius is following Aeneas, it is tempting to think that Virgil’s passage can also be read metapoetically. As I will

⁶⁴⁶ Ganiban 2007, 71-95 (Ch. 4: “Hypsipyle’s narrative of *nefas*”). On the phenomenon of *mise en abyme* see also Introduction, Section 4.

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. also Nugent 1996 on how Hypsipyle’s narrative interacts with the *Aeneid*.

⁶⁴⁸ Ganiban 2007, 71.

argue next, a metapoetical reading of Ascanius following Aeneas in the *Aeneid* is indeed retrospectively made possible by the texts of Valerius and Statius.⁶⁴⁹

8.1. Aeneas as poet figure

In what immediately follows the passage under discussion, Virgil also seems to use the metaphor of “following” to describe and comment on the relationship of his text to a model, for Virgil’s Creusa follows Aeneas as Eurydice followed Orpheus in Virgil’s own *Georgics*:

pone subit coniunx (...)
(...)
iamque propinquabam portis omnemque videbar
evasisse viam ... *Aen.* 2.725; 730-1

Creusa walked behind us. (...) I was now coming near the gates and it seemed that our was nearly over and we had escaped ... (tr. D. West)

iamque pedem referens casus evaserat omnis,
redditaque Eurydice superas veniebat ad auras,
pone sequens ... *Georg.* 4.485-7

And soon his steps retracing he had dodged every pitfall | and Eurydice restored was coming to the upper air | following behind ... (tr. Johnson)

Apart from these reminiscences, the verbal and other similarities between the two narratives in general are so many,⁶⁵⁰ that a reader must have been constantly reminded of the story from the *Georgics* and invited to compare the stories. But there is more. As Kofler has recently argued, the association of Aeneas with Orpheus that is established by the intertextual contact has metapoetical significance.⁶⁵¹ Orpheus is the “archetypal poet”,⁶⁵² and in *Georgics* 4 Virgil associates his own poetic persona

⁶⁴⁹ See also Introduction, n. 41 for the approach of “retrospective interpretation”.

⁶⁵⁰ For a discussion of the contact between the two texts see Heurgon 1931, 263-7; Briggs 1980, 99-101; Kofler 2003, 97-102.

⁶⁵¹ Kofler 2003, 95-104 (Ch. 5: “Aeneas und Orpheus”), drawing heavily on previous work by Boccolini Palagi 1990 and Deremetz 2001.

⁶⁵² Coleman 1962, 58.

with the legendary poet and singer – as well as Argonaut – Orpheus.⁶⁵³ The clear parallels between Aeneas and Orpheus, particularly in *Aeneid* 2 and 6 (Aeneas' *katabasis*),⁶⁵⁴ suggest that Aeneas – also both a hero and a singer, like his Homeric predecessor Odysseus⁶⁵⁵ – can be seen as a manifestation of the persona of Virgil, at least in those places where he is recalls Orpheus, as is the case when Creusa is described as following Aeneas from line 725 onwards.

8.2. Aeneas and Hercules

Immediately before this passage, however, in which the figure of Aeneas has affinities with Virgil's poetic persona, Aeneas begins his epic mission, and Virgil already seems to create a link between himself and his protagonist there. For convenience' sake I quote the passage again:

haec fatus latos umeros subiectaque colla
veste super fulvique insternor pelle leonis,
succedoque oneri; dextrae se parvus Iulus
implicuit sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis. *Aen.* 2.721-4

When I had finished speaking, I put on a tawny lion's skin as a covering for my neck and the breadth of my shoulders and the I bowed down and took up my burden. Little Iulus twined his fingers in my right hand and kept up with me with his short steps. (tr. D. West)

⁶⁵³ See esp. Lee 1996 (*Virgil as Orpheus*).

⁶⁵⁴ See Kofler 2003, 97 for these parallels. Cf. Hardie 1998, 47, n. 87: "the Underworld scene [*with Orpheus in Georgics* 4] is reused in Aeneas' *katabasis* in *Aen.* 6".

⁶⁵⁵ See Kofler 2003, 102-4 on Aeneas as a singer in *Aen.* 2 and 3, where the narrator Aeneas and the persona of Virgil converge. The situation is comparable to that in *Od.* 9-12. In Homer, Odysseus is associated with the singer Demodocus, who sings of the fall of Troy. In the *Aeneid*, the association of the singer Iopas with Aeneas shows very clearly that the latter is identified with the poet Virgil, as Iopas's song alludes to both *Ecl.* 6 and *Georg.* 2, on which see Deremetz 2001, 169 (quoted by Kofler 2003, 104, n. 322): "La distance séparant Iopas d'Énée serait donc interprétable comme l'illustration de celle qui sépare l'*Énéide* de l'ensemble *Bucoliques/Géorgiques* et signifierait, en termes de carrière littéraire, l'abandon par Virgile d'une première veine, hésiodique et alexandrine d'inspiration (...), et son passage à la grande épopée d'inspiration homérique, dans la continuité de Livius, de Névius et d'Ennius." The identification of the singer Aeneas with Virgil is strengthened by the fact that Aeneas not only succeeds Iopas, but is also the successor of Demodocus in telling of the fall of Troy. As Demodocus can also be associated with the persona of Homer, Aeneas is, like Virgil, a successor of Homer.

In the first two lines, Aeneas dresses as Hercules, an important model for him throughout the *Aeneid*, as is well-known.⁶⁵⁶ This suggests that Aeneas will undertake an adventure of epic proportions, a Herculean *labor*, which is strengthened by the words *succedo oneri* ("I accept the burden") in the next line. The convergence of Virgil and Aeneas seems to start here already, since the Odyssean part of Virgil's Homeric epic – and thus in a sense the *Aeneid* itself – starts here as well. Through the narrator Aeneas, who can be identified with the persona of the poet Virgil in *Aeneid* 2 and 3 in any case,⁶⁵⁷ Virgil seems to comment on his own project: he will now accept the burden of putting himself in his great model's shoes. The model of Virgil is of course Homer, and Hercules is thus associated with the great bard, which was also the case in Apollonius' *Argonautica*.⁶⁵⁸ As Hercules is the greatest Greek hero and is an important model for Aeneas throughout the *Aeneid* – as is the greatest Greek poet for Virgil – this association is appropriate. The anecdote told in Donatus' *Life of Virgil*, where Virgil himself associates Hercules with Homer, is also of interest here.⁶⁵⁹

Asconius Pedianus libro, quem contra obtrectatores Vergilii scripsit, pauca admodum obiecta ei proponit eaque circa historiam fere et quod pleraque ab Homero sumpsisset; sed hoc ipsum crimen sic defendere adsuetum ait: "cur non illi quoque eadem furta temptarent? verum intellecturos facilius esse Herculi clavam quam Homero versum subripere." Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 46

Asconius Pedianus in the book which he wrote against the detractors of Virgil cites only a few complaints against him, and those mostly relating to matters of fact or to his borrowings from Homer, and says that Virgil used to rebut the charge of plagiarizing Homer with the following remark: "Only let such critics try to do the same themselves. They would soon find that it is easier to steal his club from Hercules than to steal a line from Homer." (tr. Camps 1969)

⁶⁵⁶ See e.g. Feeney 1986. Hardie 1998, 83, n. 127 provides more bibliography on Hercules as a model for Aeneas.

⁶⁵⁷ See n. 655 above.

⁶⁵⁸ See Ch. 1, Section 2.2.

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. Hardie 1993, 110, quoted in n. 627 above.

8.3. Poetic father and son

The identification of Aeneas and Hercules in lines 721-4 is anticipated a few lines before the passage discussed, where Aeneas said that he would carry his father: *ipse subibo nec me labor iste gravabit*. "I shall take you on my own shoulders. Your weight will be nothing to me." (708; tr. D. West). When Aeneas dresses like Hercules a few lines later, this line (708) retrospectively acquires an additional symbolic meaning as well, which refers to the epic as a whole: Aeneas not just carries his father on his shoulders, but the fate of the city of his ancestors, in his search for a new location. This symbolical interpretation is reinforced by the intertextual contact with the end of *Aeneid* 8, where Aeneas admires Vulcan's shield, for here the Herculean and the symbolical aspects of Aeneas' burden are combined:⁶⁶⁰

talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis,
miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet
attollens umero famaue et fate nepotum.

Aen. 8.729-31

Such were the scenes spread over the shield that Vulcan made and Venus gave to her son. Marvelling at it, and rejoicing at the things pictured on it without knowing what they were, Aeneas lifted on to his shoulder the fame and the fate of his descendants. (tr. D. West)

The shield recalls Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18, but Hesiod's *Scutum Herculis* is also a model, and thus "it is, in a way, Hercules' own shield that Aeneas is picking up".⁶⁶¹ But Aeneas' shield has greater significance: "He takes up the historical burden that will issue in an *imperium* over the entire world; he is picking up a world, if not the world."⁶⁶²

Because Aeneas dressing like Hercules seems to have a metapoetical meaning, the burden of his father on Aeneas's shoulders seems to have metapoetical significance as well, as Aeneas describes it as a Herculean *labor* in line 708. Moreover, Hardie has stressed the importance of generational and, in a political context, dynastic

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. Feeney 1986, 73-4.

⁶⁶¹ Feeney 1986, 74.

⁶⁶² Feeney 1986, 73.

continuity in ancient Rome, and has shown that Roman epic constantly thematizes familial relationships, for instance that between father and son, because of its obvious relevance for familial and dynastic succession.⁶⁶³ Hardie then argues: "The Roman imperial epic's obsession with the need for, and possibility of, succession reflects the historical realities of the first century A.D.; it also relates to the poet's own desire to prove himself a worthy successor to the great epic poets who lived before him, and in particular to succeed as a follower of Virgil." Thus, for instance the father-son relationship can be employed metaphorically to describe the relationship of one poet to another,⁶⁶⁴ and Hardie discusses an example from *Aeneid* 6, where "the relationship between Aeneas and Anchises is also that between Virgil and 'father' Ennius".⁶⁶⁵ Something similar seems to be the case in *Aeneid* 2. In this context, however, the poetical father of Virgil is not Ennius, but Homer, and the metaphor of the father-son relationship is combined with that of carrying a heavy, Herculean burden. Metapoetically, Aeneas, dressed as Hercules and carrying his father Anchises in *Aeneid* 2, can thus be seen as the poet Virgil taking on the "burden" of Homer.

9. Valerius, Statius and Ascanius

As Hardie has also shown, in the context of dynastic succession Ascanius plays a quintessential role in the *Aeneid*: "Aeneas succeeds Hector as the bearer of Trojan hope for the future, and with that succession goes the replacement of Astyanax by

⁶⁶³ Hardie 1993, 88-119 (Ch. 4: "succession: fathers, poets, princes"). See, for instance, p. 89: "The epic is an ideal vehicle for the representation of this conception as of the relation between individual and family, because of the genre's hospitality to repetition, impersonation and possession."

⁶⁶⁴ Hardie 1993, 99.

⁶⁶⁵ Hardie 1993, 104.

Ascanius as the essential link between the present generation of heroes and the heroes and rulers of the future: Iulus is the eponymous ancestor of the *gens Iulia*."⁶⁶⁶

Returning to the *Argonautica* and the *Thebaid* once more, these epics can be seen to extend the metapoetical dimension of *Aeneid* 2. Politics and poetry can merge in the *Aeneid*, in other words: dynastic succession can at the same time mean poetic succession. In the *Aeneid*, Ascanius is the symbol of the future of the Iulian dynasty, and the Flavian epics are written in this future, clearly dealing with the principate after Augustus.⁶⁶⁷ Valerius and Statius have, so to say, taken over the role of Ascanius as followers of Aeneas/Virgil but, as in the *Aeneid*, the theme of dynastic succession also has a metapoetical significance for Statius and Valerius. Whereas Aeneas in *Aeneid* 2, dressed as Hercules and carrying his father Anchises, can be seen as the poet Virgil imitating his predecessor Homer, the Flavian poets – in the guise of Hylas, alluding to *Aeneid* 2 and using the metapoetical metaphor of following in one's footsteps – seem to have put themselves in the role of Ascanius in the *Aeneid*, following his (poetic) father Aeneas/Virgil. Unlike Ascanius, however, the Flavian epicists, along with their Hylas, will eventually take a path that differs from Virgil's, both poetically and politically.

⁶⁶⁶ Hardie 1993, 91.

⁶⁶⁷ Stover 2006 has extensively argued that the *Argonautica*, reacting to Lucan's "iconoclastic" epic (which dealt with the end of the Julian-Claudian dynasty as well as epic), hails a new beginning, both politically and poetically. See also Toohey 1993 and Taylor 1994 for political allusions in the *Argonautica*, and McGuire 1997 for the political interpretation of the themes of civil war, suicide and tyranny in Valerius' epic, as well as in Silius Italicus' *Punica* and Statius' *Thebaid*. Many interesting observations on the political dimension of these epics can also be found in Hardie 1993, *passim*. For a concise discussion of the much debated ideological dimension of the *Thebaid*, which has, as in the case of the *Aeneid*, been interpreted "optimistically" and "pessimistically", see conveniently Ganiban 2007, 2-6. In the rest of his book, Ganiban goes on to show that the political dimension of the *Thebaid* should be seen in the light of its interaction with the *Aeneid*. He holds the nuanced view that "the *Thebaid* offers a critique of the *Aeneid*, one that is based on the moral virtues so important in the 'optimistic' readings of the poem, yet also deeply implicated in the political dialogue about monarchic power, which is so central to the 'pessimistic' line of interpretation." (p. 6).

