

THE CAUSE OF IDMON'S DEATH AT SENECA, *MEDEA* 652–3, AND AT VALERIUS FLACCUS 5.2–3.¹

‘The tale of the Argonauts was among the most popular myths in Greek and Roman literature of all periods.’² There was, however, not inconsiderable variation in certain aspects of the narrative: in the inclusion or exclusion of entire episodes; in (un)expected divergences from more authoritative versions of the story;³ and in the details of minutiae.⁴ In the Argonautic choral odes of Seneca’s *Medea* (301–79 & 579–669), and in Valerius Flaccus’ incomplete epic, there is a conspicuous, learned engagement with much of the earlier tradition that hints at versions of the myth that are divergent from those which the two poets privilege in their respective narratives.⁵ Such moments serve to assert the playwright’s and the epicist’s status as *docti poetae*, and to engage the learned reader in a (re)negotiation of the tradition; at times, an awareness of a literary past seems to be given to particular characters too so as to heighten the reader’s experience of the narrative—by a sort of prolepsis—as it unfolds.⁶

¹ My thanks to Stephen Heyworth and Tobias Reinhardt for discussing aspects of this piece with me, and to *CQ*’s reader for helpful comments. This piece was written whilst the author was the grateful holder of a postdoctoral fellowship from the British Academy.

² A. Zissos, *Valerius Flaccus’ Argonautica Book 1* (Oxford, 2008), xvii.

³ e.g. Valerius’ exclusion of the Stymphalian birds (cf. Ap. Rhod. 2.1030–89), and his addition of Aeson’s and Alcimede’s suicides (V. Fl. 1.752–826).

⁴ For an overview of versions of the Argonautic myth, and for Seneca’s and Valerius’ respective explorations of the tradition, see A.J. Boyle, *Seneca: Medea* (Oxford, 2014), lxi–lxxviii and Zissos (n. 2), xvii–xxvi; for Valerian mythopoesis, see J.J. Clauss, ‘Myth and Mythopoesis in Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica*’, in M. Heerink and G. Manuwald (edd.), *Brill’s Companion to Valerius Flaccus* (Leiden, 2014), 99–114.

⁵ e.g. at 451–3, Seneca has Medea refer to the scattering of her brother’s limbs over the *arua* of her father’s kingdom (cf. Ov. *Her.* 6.129–30), but, at 133, she asserts that his dismembered body was scattered over the *pontus* (cf. Pherecyd. *FGH* 3 fr. 32a and 32b τὸν Ἄψυρτον καὶ μελίσσαντας ῥίψαι εἰς τὸν ποταμόν; Apollod. 1.9.24 has the ambiguous βυθός, which could refer to the sea: μελίσσασα κατὰ τοῦ βυθοῦ ῥίπτει). (On the many versions of Apsyrtus’ death, see J.N. Bremmer, ‘Why Did Medea Kill Her Brother Apsyrtus?’, in J.J. Clauss and S.I. Johnston (edd.), *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art* (Princeton, 1997), 83–100.) I have tentatively wondered whether we should read *campo* for *ponto* at *Med.* 133, though remain unconvinced of the need for emendation.

⁶ One might think of the forceful assertion made by Medea as she girds herself to kill her children in Seneca’s play: *Medea nunc sum; crevit ingenium malis* (910). She is ‘now’ the person that a reader familiar with the tradition expects her to be; it is at this moment that she embodies the traits of the

In both Seneca's and Valerius' accounts of the death of the seer, Idmon, such instances of divergence from the tradition seem to occur. Whilst one may be inclined, in the light of my prior comments, to allow these two apparent aberrations to stand, there are good reasons to suspect that the *paradosis* is wrong in both cases; one may be led to wonder whether Valerius had Seneca's version of Idmon's death in mind.

SENECA, *MEDEA* 652–3

In the third choral ode of Seneca's *Medea* (579–669), the deaths of several of the Argonauts are described. Toward the end of the list, two seers are named: Idmon and Mopsus.

Idmonem, quamuis bene fata nosset,
condidit serpens Libycis harenis;
omnibus uerax, sibi falsus uni
concidit Mopsus caruitque Thebis.

Sen. *Med.* 652–5⁷

652 Idmonem] augurem *Heyworth**

653 serpens] pestis *Peiper* : uerres *Giardina* : monstrum *Franklinos*

Libycis] lybicus *E* : libicus *A* : Lyciis *Franklinos* (*iam Koetschau*) : Phrygiis *Giardina*

There are a number of perceived problems with these verses that have troubled commentators. Chief among them is that Seneca contradicts the far more common account of Idmon's death by apparently confounding it with the events surrounding Mopsus' death. According to Apollonius, Idmon died on the way to Colchis in the country of the Mariadynians, where Lycus ruled (Λύκων...πρόμον ἡπείροιο, 2.752) and where a river shared the ruler's name (Λύκοιο ῥέεθρα, 2.724). On the morning after their feasting with the

figure who has committed such hideous acts each time a version of her story is recounted that she was, for Cicero, a by-word for all that is repellent: he uses the words *Palatina Medea* to describe Clodia at *Cael.* 18. (A character's familiarity with their own literary past, often used by the author for ironic effect, is not uncommon in Ovid's *Heroides*.)

⁷ The lemma is taken from the OCT of O. Zwierlein, *L. Annaei Senecae Tragoediae* (Oxford, 1986).

locals, the Argonauts make for their ship accompanied by Lycus. As they proceed, Idmon is fatally wounded by a boar and dies in the arms of his companions.

ἦρί γε μὴν ἐπὶ νῆα κατήισαν ἐγκονέοντες,
καὶ δ' αὐτὸς σὺν τοῖσι Λύκος κίε, μυρί' ὀπάσσας
δῶρα φέρειν, ἅμα δ' υἷα δόμων ἔκπεμπε νέεσθαι.
ἔνθα δ' Ἀβαντιάδην πεπρωμένη ἤλασε μοῖρα
Ἰδμονα, μαντοσύνησι κεκασμένον, ἀλλὰ μιν οὐ τι
μαντοσύναι ἐσάωσαν, ἐπεὶ χρεὼ ἦγε δαμῆναι.
κεῖτο γὰρ εἰαμενῇ δονακώδεος ἐν ποταμοῖο,
ψυχόμενος λαγόνας τε καὶ ἄσπετον ἰλὺν νηδύν,
κάπριος ἀργιόδων, ὀλοὸν τέρας, ὃν ῥα καὶ αὐταὶ
νύμφαι ἐλειονόμοι ὑπεδείδισαν· οὐδέ τις ἀνδρῶν
ῥεῖδει, οἷος δὲ κατὰ πλατὺ βόσκετο τῖφος.
αὐτὰρ ὄγ' ἰλυόεντος ἀνὰ θρωσμοὺς πεδίοιο
νίσσεται Ἀβαντιάδης, ὃ δ' ἄρ' ἔκποθεν ἀφράστοιο
ὔψι μάλ' ἐκ δονάκων ἀνεπάλμενος, ἤλασε μηρόν
αἰγδην, μέσσας δὲ σὺν ὀστέω ἵνας ἔκερσεν.

Ap. Rhod. 2.812–26

The events presented in Apollonius' account match those of the *Argonautica Orphica*,⁸ and of Ovid's *Ibis*,⁹ as well as the summaries in Apollodorus¹⁰ and Hyginus.¹¹ In Seneca's version of the story, however, Idmon is killed by a snake (*serpens*) in the Libyan desert (*Libycis harenis*), presumably while the Argonauts are trying to get home from Colchis. This appears to confound the cause of Idmon's death (as presented by Apollonius) with that of Mopsus'.

⁸ *Arg. Orph.* 722–5: ἔνθα καὶ αἴσα παρέσχε καταφθίσθαι δύο φῶτας, | Ἰδμον' Ἀβαντιάδην <τε> κυβερνητῆρά τε Τίφυν· | τοῦ μὲν δὴ κατὰ σῶμα λυγρὴ ῥεῖσατο νοῦσος, | τὸν δ' <ἐ> κατ' ἐκτανε θήρ, σὺς ἄγριος.

⁹ *Ov. Ib.* 503–4: *quique Lycurgiden letauit, et arbore natum, / Idmonaque audacem, te quoque rumpat aper* (cf. scholia ad loc.).

¹⁰ *Apollod.* 1.9.23: οἱ δὲ Ἀργοναῦται πρὸς Μαριανδυνοὺς παρεγένοντο, κάκεϊ φιλοφρόνως ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑπεδέξατο Λύκος. ἔνθα θνήσκει μὲν Ἰδμων ὁ μάντις πλήξαντος αὐτὸν κάπρου, θνήσκει δὲ καὶ Τίφυς, καὶ τὴν ναῦν Ἀγκαῖος ὑπισχνεῖται κυβερνᾶν.

¹¹ *Hyg. Fab.* 18: *Argonautae dum apud Lycum morantur et stramentatum exissent, Idmon Apollinis filius ab apro percussus interiit, in cuius dum diutius sepultura moratur, Tiphys Phorbantis filius moritur* (cf. 14.26).

ἔνθα καὶ Ἀμπυκίδην αὐτῷ ἐνὶ ἥματι Μόψον
νηλειῆς ἔλε πότμος, ἀδευκέα δ' οὐ φύγεν αἶσαν
μαντοσύναις· οὐ γάρ τις ἀποτροπὴ θανάτοιο.
κεῖτο γὰρ ἐν ψαμάθοισι, μεσημβρινὸν ἥμαρ ἀλύσκων,
δεινὸς ὄφεις.

...

τῷ δ' ἄκρην ἐπ' ἄκανθαν ἐνεστηρίξατο Μόψος
λαϊὸν ἐπιπροφέρων ταρσὸν ποδός· αὐτὰρ ὁ μέσσην
κερκίδα καὶ μυῶνα πέριξ ὁδύνησιν ἐλιχθεῖς
σάρκα δακῶν ἐχάραξεν.

Ap. Rhod. 4.1502–6 & 1518–21

There are other versions of Idmon's death attested elsewhere. Valerius Flaccus—in a passage discussed below—says that he died as a result of illness (*morbis*, 5.2), and, in the *Naupactica*, as is clear from three fragments from the scholia on Apollonius, Idmon was still alive in Colchis.¹² It is also possible that this was the case in Eumelus' *Corinthiaca*.¹³

Let us return to the passage of the *Medea* in question. If one assumes, as most have done,¹⁴ that these lines are Senecan, a number of possible courses of (in)action present themselves. The first is to assume, as the majority of modern editors have, that Seneca has confused the deaths of the two seers, whether intentionally or not, and that the *paradosis* is

¹² *Naupactica* fr. 5 Davies (fr. 5 West; Σ Ap. Rhod. 3.523–4); fr. 6 Davies (fr. 6 West; ΣL Ap. Rhod. 4.66); and fr. 7 Davies (fr. 6–7 West; Σ Ap. Rhod. 4.86).

¹³ Eumelus, *Corinthiaca* fr. 4 Davies (fr. 21 West; Σ Ap. Rhod. 3.1354–7): οὗτος καὶ οἱ ἐξῆς στίχοι εἰλημμένοι εἰσὶ παρ' Εὐμήλου, παρ' ᾧ φησι Μήδεια πρὸς Ἴδμονα [*uel* Ἰάσωνα]. The textual tradition of the scholia is divided and editors have presumably printed Ἴδμονα (L) rather than Ἰάσωνα (P) on the grounds that the former is the *lectio difficilior*. F. Michelazzo, 'Il ruolo de Medea in Apollonio Rodio e un frammento di Eumelo', *Prometheus* 1 (1975), 38–48, at 40–3 has argued (persuasively to my mind) in support of reading Ἰάσωνα.

¹⁴ *pace* D. Heinsius in his *Animadversiones et Notae* in P. Scriverius, *L. Annaeus Seneca, Tragicus* (Leiden, 1621), 328–30. He argues forcefully, though not persuasively, that *Med.* 652–69 are spurious: on 652 he writes, 'Hactenus Seneca. Quae sequuntur usque ad finem, paedagoguli cuiusdam sunt. Qui hoc tamen est consecutus, ut impune eruditioribus illuderet. At quos viros haec non vidisse! Nam quot verba, tot mendacia, anachronismi, sribligines, ineptiae...Nescio utrum magis me misereat illius qui haec scripsit, an eorum qui hactenus Senecae attribuerunt.' It should also be noted, in relation to the verses under discussion in this article, that the stanzaic structure of the ode strongly supports maintenance of them. From 607, stanzas are constituted of eight Sapphic hendecasyllabic verses followed by an Adoneus. There are a number of complicated issues surrounding the text at the close of the stanza beginning with the death of Idmon (see O. Zwierlein, 'Weiteres zum Seneca Tragicus (II)', *WJA* 4 [1978], 143–60, at 148–51), but it seems more than likely that the strict stanzaic pattern should be retained until the end of the ode.

correct. The second is to seek to emend away Idmon, such that the whole passage under consideration refers to Mopsus. A third possibility is, by conjecture, to bring the cause of Idmon's death into line with that of the tradition represented by Apollonius' epic.

On the first course of inaction, Costa notes that there is 'confusion' at *Med.* 652–5, and asserts that, whilst one may emend, 'it is simpler to suppose that here as elsewhere Sen[eca] is careless about mythological detail'.¹⁵ Another possibility is to suggest that a number of the fluid ancient traditions surrounding Idmon's death may be at play, and that the question of confusion, and the possible alteration of the text, should thus be cautiously approached.¹⁶ Biondi takes the view that various aspects of the tradition were intentionally confused. He argues that the justification for the 'libera ricostruzione' of the more usual version of the myth by Seneca results from the proximity of the Calydonian boar that killed Ancaeus in the catalogue of Argonauts (643–4), and that the recasting of the myth and the juxtaposition of Ancaeus' and Idmon's deaths provides 'una sorta di dissimilazione referenziale'.¹⁷ Henderson, on the other hand, argues that the confounding of the ways in which the two seers died is 'somehow preferable in Seneca's view to the orthodox attributions of death by goring in Bithynia to Idmon and by snake-bite in Libya to Mopsus'. He notes that there are a number of contrasting details between the two seers, and asks whether we should add to these that 'Idmon met his end at the wild ends of the earth (653) but Mopsus of Thebes was stuck down without premonition in the bosom of his native city

¹⁵ C.D.N. Costa, *Seneca: Medea* (Oxford, 1973), 126; cf. F. Leo, *L. Annaei Senecae Tragoediae* (Berlin, 1878), 1.24–5, who considers a number of conjectures (of which only Peiper's—see below—is remotely plausible to my mind) before asserting that the vulgate 'et verissimum est nec iam ab ullo libro laccessitum'.

¹⁶ H.M. Hine, *Seneca: Medea* (Warminster, 2000), 173; cf. A. Némethi, *Lucio Anneo Seneca: Medea* (Florence, 2003), 232–3.

¹⁷ G.G. Biondi, *Il Nefas Argonautico: Mythos e Logos nella Medea di Seneca* (Bologna, 1984), 187–8. He asserts that the Calydonian boar killed Meleager rather than Ancaeus. This is not what Seneca wrote (*strauit Ancaeum uiolentus ictu / saetiger; fratrem, Meleagre, matris / impius mactas morerisque dextra / matris iratae*, 643–6), and it was, moreover, Meleager who killed the boar. (Boyle (n. 4), 291 seems to share the view put forward by Biondi that the 'standard' accounts of the deaths of Idmon and Mopsus were intentionally confused.)

(655)'.¹⁸ There is nothing in the Latin (nor in the tradition), however, to suggest that Mopsus died in his own city. If he were to have done so and one were to seek a geographical contrast between the locations of the deaths of the two seers, it would be worth noting that Bithynia is not, in a sense, any further from the 'wild ends of the earth' than Libya, and so the change of place for Idmon's death would seem unnecessary.

The possibility of emending *Idmonem* was suggested to me by Stephen Heyworth. He had tentatively conjectured *augurem*. Were one to accept this, one would have to have all four verses refer to Mopsus. One could then plausibly suppose that *Idmonem* was added as an erroneous gloss to *augurem*, and that it was later copied into the text. Whilst this readily resolves the issues that surround the confounding of the 'standard' accounts of Idmon's and Mopsus' respective deaths, it results in some awkwardness in the passage. First, the syntactical change of the *augur* from object (652–3) to subject (654–5) is strained; second, there is some tension between the assertion that Mopsus spoke the truth to all but was false to himself alone (654), and that he knew the (or, his own?) *fata* well (652). It is also the case that the paradoxos of 652 provides a bilingual play on the meaning of ἰδμῶν—'having knowledge of a thing'—as it juxtaposes the name of the seer (*Idmonem*) with the assertion that he knew the *fata* well (*bene fata nosset*); this elegant etymological play would be lost with the replacement of *Idmonem* with *augurem*. Alongside this, the close calquing, with the words *quamuis bene fata nosset*, of Apollonius' characterization of Idmon in the catalogue of Argonauts would also lose some of its force: ἰδμῶν δ' ὑστάτιος μετεκίαθεν ὅσσοι ἔναιον | Ἄργος, ἐπεὶ δεδαῶς τὸν ἐὼν μόρον οἰωνοῖσιν | ἦιε, μή οἱ δῆμος εὐκλείης ἀγάσαιτο, Ap. Rhod. 1.139–41). In rhetorical terms, it ought also to be noted that in this second part of the choral ode (607–69), in which the deaths of the Argonauts are described, a careful

¹⁸ J. Henderson, 'Poetic Technique and Rhetorical Amplification: Seneca Medea 579–669', *Ramus* 12 (1983), 94–113, at 107.

stanzaic structure is maintained,¹⁹ and that as the ode progresses, the number of casualties mentioned in each stanza increases so as to create an accelerating cumulative effect. Tiphys, Orpheus, and Heracles—some of the better-known Argonauts—receive a stanza each (616–24; 625–33; 634–42), but from the stanza beginning in 643, the catalogue of deaths becomes rather denser. Were Mopsus the subject of the whole stanza, 651–660b, it would enfeeble the rhetorical thrust of the latter part of the ode to a considerable degree.

Let us consider the third course of action. The difficulties with the description of Idmon's death as represented in the vulgate have been outlined above. A relatively straightforward solution to the problem would be to read *monstrum Lyciis*.

Idmonem, quamuis bene fata nosset,
condidit monstrum Lyciis harenis.

The adjective *Lyciis*, already conjectured by Koetschau,²⁰ provides an appropriate descriptor for the *harenae* of the country of the Mariadynians, where Lycus ruled and a river shared his name. It is cited by Zwierlein²¹ and appears in the apparatus of Hine's edition, but is dismissed by both. This is perhaps because it only resolves half of the problem: it was a boar that killed Idmon in the 'standard' account, not a snake. The banalization of the rarer *Lyciis* to the common *Libycis* is straightforward enough to imagine, and the reading of E may represent an intermediary stage in the process of corruption (*lybicus* E : *libicus* A); it is also possible that such a banalization was prompted by the prior corruption into *serpens* of the preceding spondee—'a well-known seer was killed by a snake, but not in Lycia', a scribe might have thought. It is not inconceivable that the juxtaposition of *harena* with *Libyae* thirty or so lines later may have influenced a copyist too (*pestes uocat quascumque feruentis creat / harena Libyae*, 681–2).

¹⁹ See n. 14.

²⁰ P. Koetschau, 'Zu Seneca's Tragoedien', *Philologus* 61 (1902), 133–59, at 137–8.

²¹ O. Zwierlein, *Kritischer Kommentar zu den Tragödien Senecas* (Stuttgart, 1986), 151.

The Sapphic hendecasyllable requires a spondaic word to follow *condidit*, and a number of suggestions have been made with which to replace *serpens*. In their edition, Peiper and Richter print the former's conjecture *pestis*,²² which may refer to animals,²³ but is never thus used by Seneca. In the tragedies, it is used to refer to disease, poison, infection or plague,²⁴ to people who are deemed to be scourges,²⁵ and to mythical harbingers of ruin;²⁶ it also occurs figuratively to denote a possible cause of destruction.²⁷ In his last edition, Giardina proposes *uerres*.²⁸ This gives us the desired sense, but it is not a term used elsewhere by Seneca.²⁹

None of these satisfies. As mentioned above, I propose to read *monstrum*. This is a word that occurs frequently in Senecan tragedy, and is not infrequently used of (potentially) deadly creatures: e.g. the snakes that Hercules throttles as a child (*Her. F.* 215), the Lernaean hydra (*Her. F.* 241), the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece (*Med.* 473), and the creatures summoned by Medea from the desert (*Med.* 684); the term *monstra* is also taken closely with *fera* at *Her. F.* 434 (*obici feris monstrisque uirtutem putas?*).³⁰ Valerius uses *monstrum* to refer to the Erymanthian boar in his *Argonautica* at 1.374. The use of *monstrum* to refer to the boar that killed Idmon would, furthermore, look back to Apollonius' account of the death, in which the white-tusked boar is described as a ὀλοὸν τέρας whom the marsh-dwelling nymphs fear (2.820). It is straightforward enough to suppose, moreover, that a reader felt the

²² R. Peiper and G. Richter, *L. Annaei Senecae Tragoediae* (Leipzig, 1867).

²³ e.g. the Nemaean lion ([Sen.] *Her. O.* 1193) or the Lernaean hydra (Lucr. 5.26); cf. *TLL* 10.1.1930.59–1931.8.

²⁴ *Her. F.* 1084; *Tro.* 584; *Med.* 681 (where snakes may also be implicit), 720; *Phaed.* 210 (of *libido*); *Oed.* 4, 55, 152, 589, 1060; *Thy.* 89.

²⁵ *Tro.* 628 (of Astyanax), 892 (of Helen).

²⁶ *Med.* 355 (of the Sirens); cf. Verg. *Aen.* 3.215 of the Harpies and 3.620 of Polyphemus.

²⁷ *Ag.* 557 (of shallow straits as a *pestis* for sailors).

²⁸ G. Giardina, *Tragedie: Lucio Anneo Seneca* (Pisa, 2007), 1.293. He also prints *Phrygiis* for *Libycis*, comparing Catul. 46.4; this takes us further from the *paradosis* than *Lyciis*, and is less felicitous in the light of the presence of Lycus in most accounts.

²⁹ Indeed, the term *uerres* is not used by the majority of poets, but cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.22.6–8: *quam [pinum] per exactos ego laetus annos / uerris obliquum meditantis ictum / sanguine donem.*

³⁰ cf. *TLL* 8.1449.71–1450.34.

need to provide *monstrum* with a gloss, and, in so doing, mistakenly wrote *serpens*, confounding the causes of the deaths of Idmon and Mopsus; one spondaic word could then easily have replaced the other in the course of copying.³¹

VALERIUS FLACCUS 5.2–3

I should like to consider the death of Idmon in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* in the light of the proposed reading of *monstrum Lyciis* at *Med.* 653. The account provided by the Flavian poet opens the fifth book of his work, and follows on immediately from the *festā conuiuia* held in Lycus' palace at the end of the preceding book (4.760–2). In it, Idmon, not unaware of the time of his death, is said to have been snatched away by the fates and by illnesses (*morbis*).

Altera lux haud laeta uiris emersit Olympos:
 Argolicus morbis fatisque rapacibus Idmon
 labitur extremi sibi tum non inscius aevi.
 at memor Aesonides nimium iam uera locuti
 Phineos hinc alios rapto pauet Idmone luctus.
 V. Fl. 5.1–5³²

2 morbis] *fort. morbo Courtney* : *monstro Franklino*
 3 inscius] *conscius Löblich*³³

The use of *labor* to mean 'die' here seems heavily indebted to its occurrence in Seneca's *Oedipus*, where it is likewise coupled with the idea of rapacious fate: *stirpis inuictae genus interimus / labimur saeue rapiente fato* (124–5). With *morbis*, however, Valerius' usage seems rather odd. First, the pairing of the plural *morbi* with *fata* is unparalleled, though some

³¹ For the intrusion of apparent glosses into the Senecan paradoxos, cf. *Her. F.* 659–60 and *Tro.* 921–2 with Zwielerin (n. 21), 55–6 and 104–5 respectively.

³² The lemma is taken from E. Courtney, *C. Valerius Flaccus: Argonauticon Libri Octo* (Leipzig, 1970).

³³ G. Liberman, *Valerius Flaccus, Argonautiques: Chants V–VIII* (Paris, 2002), 159 supports (and prints) Löblich's conjecture, *non conscius*; for a persuasive defence of the transmitted *non inscius*, see F. Spaltenstein, *Commentaire des Argonautica de Valérius Flaccus (livres 3, 4 et 5)*, Coll. Latomus 281 (Brussels, 2004), 390.

support may be gained for reading the singular *morbo*³⁴ from Seneca, *Oed.* 1059 (*uiolenta Fata et horridus Morbi tremor*). Second, the collocation of the verb *labor* with *morbus* is found nowhere else in extant Latin, and the *comparandum* offered by Wijsman in his commentary ad loc. is no such thing: in the passage of Lucan that he cites, *labens* means ‘stumbling’.³⁵ The oddness of the vulgate of Valerius’ text is not, in and of itself, insurmountable, though, if one takes *labitur* closely with *fatis rapacibus*.

That being said, I have wondered if it would not be better to replace *morbis* with a word that could refer to Idmon’s death without digressing from the ‘standard’ account. A neutral term referring to death is possible,³⁶ but more apposite, in that it avoids tautology with *fatis*, would be to conjecture a noun that could refer to the boar. *monstro* could work well here—it is used by Valerius, as already noted above, to refer to the Erymanthian boar—and one might suppose a particular debt to Seneca’s description of Idmon’s death in the *Medea*. Aside from removing the oddity of having Idmon die from some sort of illness (found nowhere else in the varied extant traditions), it would give a particular point to *labitur*. One might suppose that Valerius is using the verb to mean ‘die’, but playing on its sense of ‘fall’: this is, after all, what Idmon may be imagined to have done on being struck by the boar. (This may provide some traction for Wijsman’s supposed parallel too.) The corruption of *monstro* to *morbis* is not too difficult to imagine: the words are not dissimilar in shape, and

³⁴ Courtney (n. 32) wonders, in his apparatus criticus ad loc., whether *morbo* should be read for *morbis*. Besides the juxtaposition of *Fata* and *Morbus* at Sen. *Oed.* 1059 (where they are joined by *Macies*, *Pestis* and *Dolor*), the only other instance of the pairing of *fatum* and *morbus* is in a figurative usage at Sal. *Rep.* 2.13.6: *quippe si morbo iam aut fato huic imperio secus accidat, cui dubium est quin per orbem terrarum uastitas bella caedes oriantur?*

³⁵ H.J.W. Wijsman, *Valerius Flaccus Argonautica, Book V: A Commentary*, Mnemosyne Supplement 158 (Leiden, 1996), 15. He cites *uolnere labens* at Luc. 2.265, but these words refer to a man stumbling after being wounded by what cannot, in the light of the context, be a fatal blow: *quis nolet in isto / ense mori, quamuis alieno uolnere labens, / et scelus esse tuum?* (2.264–6); cf. E. Fantham, *Lucan: De Bello Ciuili Book II* (Cambridge, 1992), 129: ‘[t]he...man [wounded by another] seeking his death blow from Cato is a pointed perversion of the epic situation in which a warrior, killed by an Achilles or Aeneas, takes comfort from their greatness.’

³⁶ Stephen Heyworth has suggested *leto* as an *exempli gratia* conjecture.

the ablative singular could have been changed to the plural under the influence of *fatis*.³⁷ The fact that Tiphys is struck down by some sort of disease whilst the Argonauts are mourning Idmon's death may have influenced a copyist too.

τίς γὰρ δὴ θάνεν ἄλλος (ἐπεὶ καὶ ἔτ' αὖτις ἔχευαν
ἥρωες τότε τύμβον ἀποφθιμένου ἐτάριοιο,
δοιὰ γὰρ οὖν κείνων ἔτι σήματα φαίνεται ἀνδρῶν);
Ἀγνιάδην Τίφυν θανέειν φάτις· οὐδέ οἱ ἦεν
μοῖρ' ἔτι ναυτίλλεσθαι ἐκαστέρω, ἀλλὰ νῦ καὶ τὸν
αὖθι μινυνθαδίη πάτρης ἐκάς εὐνασε νοῦσος.
εἰσόκ' Ἀβαντιάδαο νέκυν κτερέιξεν ὄμιλος.
Ap. Rhod. 2.851–7

ecce inter lacrimas interque extrema uirorum
munera, quem cursus penes imperiumque carinae,
Tiphyn agit uiolenta lues, cunctique pauore
attoniti fundunt maestas ad sidera uoces.

...
socii supremo in tempore Tiphyn
ante alios superesse uolunt. mors frigida contra
urget, et ille recens oculis interuolat Idmon.
V. Fl. 5.13–16 & 25–7

Valerius' indebtedness to Senecan tragedy is well documented,³⁸ and may already be seen in the lexical borrowing from the *Oedipus* in this passage.

In short, then, it is my proposal that, in Seneca's and Valerius' accounts, Idmon was disposed of by a boar on the banks of the river Lycus, as in Apollonius' version. The two passages should read thus.

Idmonem, quamuis bene fata nosset,
condidit monstrum Lyciis harenis.
Sen. Med. 652–3

³⁷ For the corruption of one form into an adjacent one (*morbo* > *morbis*) under the influence of a neighbouring word (*fatis*), cf. V. Fl. 4.593, where *futuris* is transmitted as *futuros* in V, presumably under the influence of the preceding *animos*.

³⁸ A recent treatment and overview may be found in E. Buckley, 'Valerius Flaccus and Seneca's Tragedies', in Heerink and Manuwald (n. 4), 307–25.

Argolicus monstro fatisque rapacibus Idmon
labitur extremi sibi tum non inscius aeui.
V. Fl. 5.2–3

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