Dictynna

Revue de poétique latine

12 | 2015

Varia

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/dictynna/1135>

DOI: 10.4000/dictynna.1135

ISSN: 1765-3142

Electronic reference

Simone Finkmann, « Polyxo and the Lemnian Episode – An Inter- and Intratextual Study of Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius », *Dictynna* [Online], 12 | 2015, Online since 28 January 2016, connection on 10 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/dictynna/1135> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/dictynna.1135>

This text was automatically generated on 10 September 2020.

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Polyxo and the Lemnian Episode – An Inter- and Intratextual Study of Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius

Simone Finkmann

I would like to thank the editors of this volume and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable and insightful comments.

1. Introduction

- 1 The story of the Lemnian women's manslaughter and the Argonauts' stay on Lemnos has been adapted in many different epic and tragic versions of the myth¹, so that it is not surprising that the female protagonist and most important character-focalizer, the Lemnian princess Hypsipyle, has received great scholarly attention and has been the subject of many prolific character studies.² The importance of another mortal female character who plays a decisive role in the Lemnian episode of Apollonius' Hellenistic *Argonautica*, the Flavian *Argonautica* of Valerius, and Statius' *Thebaid* has however been widely neglected.³
- 2 This study adopts a mixed-method approach of speech-act theory and narratology to determine the function of the Polyxo character in the context of the Lemnian episode with an intra- and intertextual analysis of character doublets and mirror-structures. The three epics are discussed separately in chronological order to establish the role and general importance of Polyxo in the individual episodes and to allow for a detailed analysis of intra- and intertextual parallels and character foils before a conclusion about the diachronic development of this epic persona in the different adaptations of the Lemnian episode is drawn.⁴

2. Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*

a) Structure

- 3 In Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, the Argonauts arrive at Lemnos one year after the Lemnian women's ruthless androicide (ARh. 1.627-30a). The narrator briefly summarizes the events in an external analepsis: in retribution for the neglect of her worship, Aphrodite instils the absent Lemnian men with passion for the captured Thracian maids, which triggers excessive jealousy in their lawful wives, who not only murder their husbands upon their return, but resolve to kill the entire male population to avoid future reprisal attacks (ARh. 1.609-26).⁵ The Argonauts' unexpected arrival sparks panic among the Lemnian women, who, in fear of a sea attack by the Thracians, rush to the harbour to defend themselves (ARh. 1.630b-9). Their maenadic frenzy is in direct contrast with the composure of the Argonauts, who agree on a diplomatic approach and dispatch their herald Aethalides (ARh. 1.640-52).⁶ The Lemnian queen initially gives the Argonauts her approval for an overnight stay in the harbour, but when the heroes are delayed by unfavourable winds on the following day, Hypsipyle summons her fellow Lemnians to an emergency assembly (ARh. 1.650-4). Apollonius' Lemnian council scene is arranged in ring composition with two messenger scenes framing the whole assembly and Hypsipyle's opening and closing address framing Polyxo's speech in the centre (ARh. 1.640-720).⁷ This structure not only underlines the great importance of Polyxo's words, but also the contrastive arrangement of male and female speech acts and perspectives in the entire episode: the male herald Aethalides (ARh. 1.640-51) is paired with the female messenger Iphinoe (ARh. 1.712-6); the elderly counsellor Polyxo (ARh. 1.675-96) with the experienced Hercules (ARh. 1.865-74); the Lemnian queen Hypsipyle (ARh. 1.793-833 and ARh. 1.888-98) with the Argonauts' leader Jason (ARh. 1.900-9); and the Lemnian women (ARh. 1.697-700) with the Argonauts (ARh. 1.717-20).⁸ The gender pairing is accompanied by a reversal of the traditional gender roles. This is highlighted by intertextual allusions to different Homeric council scenes, which emphasize the change from Homer's focus on epic topics such as war and combat to an elegiac focus on love and marital topics in Apollonius' council scene.⁹

b) Polyxo and Hypsipyle

- 4 As is the tradition in Homeric councils, the Lemnian queen as convenor of the meeting is the dominant speaker delivering both the opening (ARh. 1.657-66) and closing address (ARh. 1.700-1), and personally instructing the herald Iphinoe after the assembly (ARh. 1.703-7). Her proposal, to send the Argonauts gifts and daily necessities to keep them away from the city and cover up the Lemnian crime (ARh. 1.657-64),¹⁰ focuses on a temporary damage limitation for their recent *nefas* and is not fully developed. Hypsipyle's diffident invitation for an open discussion (ARh. 1.665f.) is modelled on an assembly in the *Iliad* (Il. 14.42-132), during which Agamemnon, upon facing defeat against Hector, requests old and young to contribute better ideas (Il. 14.107f).¹¹ Unlike in the Homeric assembly during which the young Diomedes advises an immediate attack on the Trojans (Il. 14.110-27), in the *Argonautica* it is an elderly female nurse who successfully soothes the rage of a female collective (ARh. 1.668b and 1.671b) and recommends not only a diplomatic approach, but the voluntary surrender of

homes, kingship, and bodies (ARh. 1.675-96). Apollonius therefore entirely reverses this traditional Homeric council scene in a contrastive allusion.¹²

c) Polyxo as φίλη τροφὸς (ARh. 1.668)

- 5 The connection between old age and wisdom is a commonplace of ancient philosophy. In her pragmatic analysis of their situation Polyxo follows in the tradition of shrewd nurses and experienced advisors, as firmly established by Odysseus' elderly nurse Eurykleia.¹³ The council of the Lemnian women in particular resembles Odysseus' instruction of Eurykleia to summon another collective of guilty women – the maids who betrayed Penelope in his absence (Od. 22.431f.).¹⁴ Polyxo's role and description, however, even more closely correspond to that of another male counsellor in the *Odyssey* (Od. 2.14-22).¹⁵ Her portrayal as elderly nurse of Hypsipyle bowing over a staff because of her feeble age (ARh. 1.669b-70a) and struggling to raise her head to speak (ARh. 1.673f.)¹⁶ echoes the depiction of the aged Aegyptius (Od. 2.15f.) as advisor of Odysseus' son.¹⁷ Both elderly counsellors support inexperienced rulers (Telemachus and Hypsipyle) with their speeches (Od. 2.35; ARh. 1.697-8a) when they ascend their father's throne in his absence and convene an assembly for the first time (Od. 2.9-14 and Od. 2.36-9; ARh. 1.653-6 and ARh. 1.667f) in view of an impending attack (Od. 2.30; ARh. 1.680).¹⁸ The two debates address the prospect of remarriage with similar urgency: while for the Lemnian women a union with the Argonauts is the solution to all their problems (ARh. 1.675-96), Penelope's determination to protect her marriage establishes the main problem from the viewpoint of the threatened Telemachus and especially the suitors (Od. 19.159-61, 19.530-4, and 20.339-44). In both accounts, it is not the sexual consummation and pleasure of the marriage that is in the foreground of the discussion, but the "economic aspects"¹⁹ of the respective union. While Aegyptius asks many questions and his speech primarily serves to establish a connection between past and present (Od. 2.25-34) and to set the ground for Telemachus' speech (Od. 2.40-79), Apollonius' Polyxo provides the indecisive Hypsipyle with a concrete solution to the current problem and thus by comparison exceeds the influence of the male counsellor in the *Odyssey*.

d) Polyxo's Speech (ARh. 1.675-96)

- 6 Polyxo's speech is as long as the four speech acts of the other female speakers combined in this scene. The length (22 verses) and central position of her speech as well as the collective approval (ARh. 1.697-9) leave no doubt that it is the nurse's proposal and not that of the queen that sways the Lemnians' course of action and functions as the "moving force in the narrative".²⁰
- 7 Polyxo is described at great length prior to her speech (ARh. 1.668b-74) because she is here mentioned for the first time in the epic and the introduction legitimizes her authority as an advisor to the queen.²¹ She speaks with the life experience of old age, as is common for nurses and advisors, but especially Apollonius' aged prophet Phineus.²² Polyxo's depiction and her entourage of four white-haired virgins (ARh. 1.671f.)²³ also evoke associations with the traditional roles of nurses as keepers of their *alumna's* *pudor* and as symbols of loyalty and *pietas* in tragedy and epic poetry.²⁴ This is reflected in Polyxo's speech, which is more analytical and practical than that of her nursling,²⁵

and solely succeeds because of her rhetorical ability and the strength of her argument, not as a result of divine interference.²⁶

- 8 Polyxo first agrees with the queen's suggestion and reverently confirms that there is no better solution than to send gifts to the strangers (ARh. 1.675f.).²⁷ She then, however, quickly goes beyond Hypsipyle's focus on the recent past and the present. The old advisor discusses the likelihood of attacks by the Thracians and other enemies (ARh. 1.677-9) and uses the arrival of the Argonauts (ARh. 1.680) in support of her argument about the vulnerability of an all-female community to violent attacks.²⁸ Starting from the greatest and most immediate threat to their lives Polyxo takes the discussion to more general, long-standing problems for an ageing community (ARh. 1.681f.). The old nurse paints a pessimistic picture of the Lemnian women's future hardship and their struggle to provide for themselves without male support (ARh. 1.683-8). The central topic of her speech is therefore the subject on which she is most qualified to speak – old age. Polyxo claims not to be worried for her own sake, as her timely death is near (ARh. 1.689-92), but appeals to the younger women to take the opportunity to escape their certain hardship by procreating with the Argonauts and permanently offering their land and rulership to them (ARh. 1.693-6).
- 9 Polyxo's proposal is so delicately phrased that it only becomes clear after Hypsipyle's confirmation (ARh. 1.700-1), the narrator's subsequent report of the women's joy over the union with the Argonauts and their renewed desire (ARh. 1.843b-52), as well as Herakles' speech (ARh. 1.865-74) that the nurse not only recommends a peaceful approach, but also proposes sexual relations.²⁹

e) Polyxo and Herakles

- 10 The two experienced advisors serve as a foil for each other as well as their young leaders and respective collectives.³⁰ While Polyxo is subtle and delicate in her persuasive speech and correction of her leader's proposal, Herakles does not hide his anger and discontent with Jason's decision. In fact, the Lemnian episode's gentle and soothing talk, as established by the first indirect speech act of Aethalides, ends with Herakles' speech, which marks "the end of the temporary female-over-male predominance that characterizes the meeting on Lemnos".³¹
- 11 Just as Polyxo argues that the Lemnian women are lost without their men and cannot successfully take over all typically male roles (ARh. 1.685b-8), Herakles criticizes the Argonauts for being too effeminate and having lost sight of their mission (ARh. 1.867b-71). In an echo of Polyxo's speech (ARh. 1.683-8), he provocatively asks if they want to waste their time harvesting the rich Lemnian land, naively hoping that the Fleece would fall into their hands by itself or through divine will.³² In other words, both advisors strongly argue against a reversal of the traditional gender roles.³³
- 12 Moreover, Herakles openly criticizes the Argonauts for the very sexual liaison with the Lemnian women that Polyxo's recommendation has facilitated. Polyxo's and Herakles' diametrically opposed persuasive speeches are individually successful and are accepted without any objections by the addressed collectives (ARh. 1.697-700; ARh. 1.875-6), but the speech of the experienced warrior has a greater impact in so far as it reverses the effect of Polyxo's speech.³⁴ Humbled and ashamed by Herakles' words the Argonauts leave Lemnos, thus undermining Polyxo's long-term plan.

3. Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

a) Structure

- ¹³ Whereas Apollonius' account focuses on the Argonauts' stay and departure from Lemnos, Valerius shows a much greater interest in the discussion of the Lemnian massacre and transforms Apollonius' highly contradictory narratorial (ARh. A.609-26) and actorial analepses (ARh. 1.793-833), and attribution of the crime to Aphrodite into a much more comprehensive external analepsis by the primary narrator and a complex divine collaboration between Venus and her helper Fama (VF. 2.115-241).³⁵ Valerius' striking changes do not affect the overcall logic and sequence of events, but the length, style, and focalization of his narrative differ significantly from Apollonius' account and lead to a distinct increase in suspense.³⁶ In a reversal of the Apollonian scene proportions, he drastically reduces the length of the extensive Lemnian assembly and messenger scene (21 verses), the core element of the Lemnian episode in Apollonius (81 verses), and only maintains a single speech act from Apollonius' Lemnian council scene, Polyxo's speech (VF. 2.322-5). Similarly, by vastly expanding Apollonius' account of the Lemnian homicide and by illustrating and complicating Venus' intervention as personified *furor* through her collaboration with Fama in the popular Homeric and Virgilian motif of divine disguise,³⁷ Valerius chooses a much more vivid mode of presentation that shifts the focus Apollonius places on the council scene to the divine intrigue and Lemnian massacre.
- ¹⁴ The Flavian epicist moreover makes two important changes with regard to the character ensemble – he omits the male herald Aethalides and changes the role of Polyxo. The first alteration can be explained by Valerius' compression of the scene and dramatization of Apollonius' account. The omission of the Argonauts' messenger and the queen's call for an emergency meeting after the discovery of the armed strangers (VF. 2.311-3a) emphasizes the greater urgency of the Lemnian assembly and establishes a parallel to the reception of the returning Lemnian men.³⁸ The similarities and the close temporal succession of the two arrivals create greater suspense³⁹ and reveals that the two seemingly isolated speeches of the Lemnian episode – the brief exclamation by the Lemnian men (VF. 2.113-4) and Polyxo's council speech (VF. 2.322-5) –, in fact correspond and serve as the starting and, respectively, end point in Venus' plot, marking the two key moments in the Lemnian narrative by emphatic verbal echoes that link them to the Lemnian mariticide.⁴⁰

b) Polyxo's Speech (VF. 2.322-5)

- ¹⁵ Polyxo's speech is not only the briefest direct speech of a named female character in Valerius' *Argonautica*, but it is also much shorter (3 5/6 verses) than the Apollonian model (22 verses).⁴¹ However, the fact that Polyxo's *oratio recta* is the sole remainder of Apollonius' council scene and that she is the only female speaker with a direct equivalent in the Hellenistic *Argonautica* whose role has been significantly changed by Valerius already indicates that her speech is of much greater importance than its brevity suggests. While in Apollonius' version the Argonauts' reception into the city and the impending discovery of the androicide are the central questions of the assembly (ARh. 1.640-66), Valerius' Lemnian women are not worried about their reputation, but they are debating their initial response to the strangers' arrival (VF. 2.322-4a). Polyxo's

un-rhythmical speech with many *hyperbata*, frequent ellipses, and its general brevity of expression stresses the importance of every single word of the seer, such as her first demand to welcome the Argonauts into the harbor: VF. 2.322 *portum demus*.⁴² In addition to Valerius' dramatization of the arrival as the direct cause of the council, Polyxo also uses the unexpected appearance of the Argonauts to different means than her Apollonian counterpart. Apollonius' nurse employs the arrival as proof of the Lemnian women's helplessness against the constant threat of sea attacks (ARh. 1.677-80) and pessimistically predicts that, even if one of the gods was kind enough to keep hostile invaders away from Lemnos, they would still have to endure countless other, even more disastrous afflictions (ARh. 1.680-8). Her speech therefore does not suggest a direct divine investment in the Lemnians' union with the Argonauts. Valerius' Polyxo by contrast proclaims the Argonauts' appearance as a sign of the Lemnians' regained divine favour (VF. 2.322b-4a *fatis haec, credite, puppis / advenit et levior Lemno deus aequore flexit / huc Minyas*).

- 16 Whereas the general meaning of Polyxo's statement is clear, the identity of the deity and the interpretation of the comparative adjective remain a matter of contention. Irrespective of whether *levior ... deus* refers to Venus' soothed anger and her amendments after the massacre (VF. 2.315),⁴³ to the Lemnians' patron god Vulcan (VF. 2.95 *Lemnos cara deo*) and his timely appeasement of Venus' wrath (VF. 2.313b-5), to Jupiter who through adverse winds (VF. 2.356-69a) prolongs the Argonauts' sojourn (VF. 2.356 *et deus ipse moras spatiumque indulget amori*), or more generally denotes divinity and collective divine will, the use of the key word *fata*, the strikingly direct and diverse divine intervention in the Lemnian episode,⁴⁴ and the fact that Polyxo's statement "agrees with a more general pattern in Valerius Flaccus: the Argonauts acting as saviours announced or determined by gods or fate"⁴⁵, strongly suggest that the union with the Lemnian women is part of Jupiter's world plan. Valerius thus transforms the practical assessment of an elderly nurse and wise counsellor into a prophetess' proclamation of divine sanction and significantly increases its impact.⁴⁶

c) Polyxo and Hypsipyle

- 17 Like her Apollonian counterpart, Hypsipyle is the convenor of the Valerian assembly (VF. 2.313), but there is no personal connection between the young Lemnian queen and her elderly nurse and Valerius does not directly juxtapose their council speeches. Polyxo immediately takes charge and controls the women's reaction to the Argonauts' arrival, while Hypsipyle entirely vanishes into the background for the duration of the assembly (VF. 2.311-31).⁴⁷ The exact context of Polyxo's speech remains unclear⁴⁸ and she strikingly does not refer or speak to Hypsipyle directly, but addresses the Lemnian women as a group (VF. 2.322). Similarly, the queen's approval of Polyxo's instructions is only implied by the collective endorsement and the dispatch of their messenger Iphinoe (VF. 2.326-7a).

d) Polyxo and Hercules

- 18 Just as Polyxo's relationship to Hypsipyle becomes much less personal in the Flavian *Argonautica*, which fashions her speech as neutral, professional advice to a group, the speech of Polyxo's male counterpart Hercules becomes more personal in tone in comparison to Apollonius' adaptation. Hercules focuses on the negative consequences

of the Argonauts' stay on Lemnos for his own reputation and he specifically attacks Jason's leadership qualities and personal lack of strife for heroic deeds (VF. 2.380b-1). Unlike in Apollonius, neither Polyxo nor Hercules demand a restoration of the traditional gender roles and Hercules' forceful exhortation of Jason does not contain any striking verbal allusions to Polyxo's brief collective appeal, so that only the aim and outcome of their speeches establish a direct contrast (VF. 2.378-84a).

- 19 As a result of the more subtle correspondence between Polyxo's and Hercules' role, the changed focus of their speeches, and the omission of Iphinoe's male counterpart Aethalides, as well as Hypsipyle's and Jason's direct speech acts, the gender pairing of the Lemnian episode is much less prominent. Instead, Valerius transforms Apollonius' "ongoing dialogue between the sexes"⁴⁹ and focus on gender roles into the longest chain of female speech acts⁵⁰ in representation of an exclusively female community.⁵¹ The only male voices, the Lemnian men's fatal announcement (VF. 2.113-4) and Hercules' appeal for an immediate departure (VF. 2.378-384a) both bring despair and solitude for the Lemnian women and not only highlight the two incidents the Lemnian women are infamous for – their manslaughter and the subsequent abandonment by the Argonauts – but they are also instrumental in making Lemnos an all-female society.

e) Polyxo as *vates* (VF. 2.316)

- 20 The analysis of Valerius Flaccus' Polyxo is affected by the corrupt text in lines VF. 2.317f. and the *lacuna* in VF. 2.322⁵² as well as the complete transformation of this character from an elderly nurse of the Lemnian queen into an otherwise unknown prophetess of Apollo (VF. 2.316 *vates Phoebo dilecta Polyxo*).⁵³ Valerius' effort to present Polyxo as a reliable divine mouthpiece is evident in the emphasis on Polyxo's exact reproduction (VF. 2.321 *ut auditas referens in gurgite voces*) of the instructions.⁵⁴ Although no explicit mention is made of Polyxo's age, one of the key features of this character in Apollonius, the profession of the seer is traditionally associated with old age,⁵⁵ such as in the case of Apollonius' prophet Phineus, a parallel that may have inspired Valerius' changes.
- 21 As Polyxo's oracular abilities are a Valerian invention, it is not surprising that the mysterious seeress is introduced in great detail.⁵⁶ Polyxo's unconventional vatic procedure consists in her dipping under water for divine consultation (VF. 2.317-21).⁵⁷ The narrator declares Polyxo's native country and parentage to be uncertain and carefully distances himself from the fantastical report⁵⁸ of her arrival by qualifying that the *vates* herself claims to have been drawn over the waters in a chariot by a team of seals and that the shape-shifting seer and sea god Proteus steered her course from the Egyptian caves to Lemnos (VF. 2.317-9).⁵⁹ The reference to Proteus establishes a connection between Polyxo and Homer's prophetic sea nymph, Eidothea, who betrays her father Proteus to help Menelaus return home when he has been driven off-course to Pharos (Od. 4.351-592).⁶⁰ Just like Apollonius, Valerius thus draws on Homer as an inspiration for his scene, but the type of intertextual model is very different and while the description of Polyxo and the general arrival situation resemble that of Eidothea, her conversation with Menelaus and the immediate speech context are entirely altered and by no means a model for Polyxo's speech. Whereas the effect of Apollonius' allusion to Homer is to contrast traditional Homeric council scenes with the unusual assembly of the all-female community, "a symbol of threat to male order and ancient societal

rules”⁶¹ and to establish Polyxo in the tradition of astute elderly nurses such as Eurykleia, the main purpose of the allusion to the Homeric sea nymph is to confirm Polyxo’s novel prophetic powers and to bestow divine authority on her words.

f) Polyxo and Henioche

- 22 The Eidothea allusion with its associated themes of divine punishment for neglected worship and a daughter’s betrayal of her father on behalf of a stranger’s *nostos*, not only complements the Lemnian episode and the story of Hypsipyle’s fatherly *pietas*, but it is also well-suited for the Medea narrative (VF. 5.177-8.617), which is construed as a parallel to the Lemnian episode (VF. 2.72-373a). In particular, the Argonauts’ arrival (VF. 2.311-2a ~ VF. 5.325-8) and Jason’s first encounter with Medea and her elderly nurse Henioche (VF. 5.325-98) resemble the Argonauts’ arrival at Lemnos and Polyxo’s instructions for Hypsipyle and the Lemnian women (VF. 2.311-31).⁶²
- 23 Despite their different professions there are numerous parallels between the two women, which is not surprising given Apollonius’ portrayal of Polyxo as Hypsipyle’s old nurse.⁶³ Both Henioche and Polyxo speak at the invitation of the local female leader (VF. 2.312b-3a ~ VF. 5.353-5), use their superior knowledge and authority (VF. 5.356: Henioche through old age and life experience, VF. 2.317-21: Polyxo through divine inspiration)⁶⁴ in a persuasive speech (VF. 2.322-5 ~ VF. 5.359-62) and succeed to reduce the women’s fear and ensure a friendly reception of the Argonauts (VF. 2.306-11a ~ VF. 5.342-6). Their speeches play an important role in a divine scheme (VF. 2.324b-5 ~ VF. 5.278-96), which is why their effect is enhanced by the respective goddess in charge: Venus appeases the Lemnian women (VF. 2.313b-5) and conceals all signs of their crimes from the Argonauts (VF. 2.327b-8) and Juno beautifies Jason (VF. 5.363b-5) and hides the Argonauts in a cloud to protect them from the Colchians (VF. 5.399-401). The two speakers’ recommendations are successful and ultimately lead to their advisees’ union with Jason. Polyxo and Henioche thus, like Apollonius’ old nurse Polyxo, strikingly have an effect that is contrary to their professions’ ethics: the priestess advises a sexual union shortly after the impious murder of the Lemnian men, and the guardian of Medea’s *pudor* does not protect her *alumna*’s virginity.

g) Venus, Polyxo, and the Lemnian Men

- 24 One of the most important intratextual parallels, as indicated earlier, is that between the Lemnian men’s collective exclamation (VF. 2.113-4) as the starting point of the fatal divine intrigue and Polyxo’s speech (VF. 2.322-5) at the end of the Lemnian bloodbath as a sign of the Lemnians’ return to divine favour and shall therefore be discussed in more detail here. The Lemnian men’s direct speech act is primarily used as an intertextual marker that draws attention to Valerius’ digression from Apollonius’ account of their divinely-induced adultery with the Thracian women (ARh. 1.611-4 and ARh. 1.793-833).⁶⁵ In an echo of Hypsipyle’s claims (ARh. 1.801 αὐτῆσι δ’ ἀπείρονα ληΐδα κούραις / δεῦρ’ ἄγον), Valerius’ Lemnian men indirectly correct Apollonius’ version when they eagerly announce that they have brought the captive women as maids for their wives and thus as tokens of affection and not for adulterous pleasures (VF. 2.113-4 *o patria, o variis coniunx nunc anxia curis, / has agimus longi famulas tibi praemia belli*).⁶⁶ This collective proclamation of the Lemnian men’s faithfulness remains unsuccessful and does not reach or convince its intended addressees,⁶⁷ and therefore cannot prevent the

onslaught; to the contrary it even causes it serving as a cue for Venus.⁶⁸ The goddess takes the exclamation as an opportunity to exact her revenge on the Lemnians for neglecting to worship her.⁶⁹ She develops an elaborate plan (VF. 2.142b-60) and enlists Fama to help her spread the rumour among the Lemnian women that the alleged maids are concubines (VF. 2.131-2 *adfore iam luxu turpique cupidine captos / fare viros carasque toris inducere Thressas*).⁷⁰ In the guise of the Lemnian women Neaera (VF. 2.142b-60a) and Dryope (VF. 2.176b-84a and VF. 2.213b-4a) the goddesses in a combined effort instill jealousy and rage in the Lemnian women and persuade them to commit mariticide. By including the perspective of the Lemnian men and women and emphasizing both parties' unequivocal loyalty and faithfulness towards their spouses, Valerius renders the subsequent mariticide all the more tragic and highlights the destruction of familial relationships through divine power.⁷¹

- 25 Like that of the Lemnian collective, Polyxo's speech contains important inter- and intratextual markers and serves to highlight the divine influence in Valerius' Lemnian episode. Polyxo's reference to Venus at the end of her speech (VF. 2.324b-5 *Venus ipsa volens dat corpora iungi, / dum vires utero maternaque sufficit aetas*)⁷² recalls the goddess' own description of her role in the intrigue (VF. 2.134b *mox ipsa adero ducamque paratas*) following the Lemnian men's cue and her Fury-like appearance as instigator of the crime (VF. 2.196-8).⁷³ While the falsity of Venus' and Fama's proclamations in disguise is repeatedly and explicitly emphasized by the narrator throughout the Lemnian manslaughter as well as through conspicuous self-references that reveal the goddesses' true identities (VF. 2.158b-60 *sed me quoque pulsam / fama viro nostrosque toros virgata tenebit / et plaustro derepta nurus*; VF. 2.184b *magnum aliquid spirabit amor*),⁷⁴ the speech context presents Polyxo as a reliable, character-narrator, who truthfully reproduces divine prophecies, but does not establish an explicit connection between the vatic abilities of the priestess of Apollo and the goddess of love (VF. 2.316-21).
- 26 The transition from the sudden announcement of the Argonauts' arrival to Polyxo's brief and not further classified recommendation for the Lemnian women to engage in sexual intercourse with the Argonauts while they can still give birth (VF. 2.324b-5) is very abrupt.⁷⁵ The Apollonian model provides the full context and facilitates the interpretation. In the Hellenistic *Argonautica*, Polyxo appeals to the younger women to procreate with the Argonauts in order to avoid hardship and the complete extinction of the Lemnian people (ARh. 1.693-6). While the purpose for the union is the same, as the context of the prophetess' speech reveals, in comparison to Apollonius' speech Valerius' Polyxo seems to appeal to the women's personal aspirations for motherhood and their sexual desire rather than their practical senses and feeling of civic duty.⁷⁶ It is perhaps this slight change in focus and tone together with Polyxo's echo of and explicit reference to Venus and the correspondences to the speeches of the Lemnian men and the two goddesses that not only establish a firm connection between the individual subsections and instrumentalize Polyxo's speech as the final step of the divine interference on Lemnos, but that may have inspired her character's complete transformation in the *Thebaid*.

4. Statius' *Thebaid*

a) Structure

- 27 Statius' presentation of Polyxo differs from Apollonius' and Valerius' portrayal in many respects. Polyxo's much more comprehensive characterization is part of the Lemnian digression in Book 5 of the *Thebaid*. When the Argives reach Nemea, Hypsipyle is instructed by Adrastus to recount the Lemnian manslaughter (Theb. 5.1-27) and after initial hesitation reports the events in great detail (Theb. 5.49-498). The story of the Lemnian women is thus not reported by the external primary narrator, but by Hypsipyle, whose account seems to alternate between that of an internal narrator and unreliable character-focalizer and that of an epic narrator.⁷⁷ Statius seems to combine Apollonius' and Valerius' version of the Lemnian manslaughter by taking Hypsipyle's report in *oratio recta* from Apollonius' *Argonautica* and the comprehensive depiction of the massacre from Valerius' episode. The context of the Lemnian narrative and the embedded council scene are however entirely altered. The women's assembly is inserted much earlier in Hypsipyle's narration and takes place prior to the Lemnian men's return and thus before the androicide, which completely changes the cause, tone, and effect of the meeting, but, like Valerius' account, also highlights the structural parallels between the Lemnians' and the Argonauts' arrival and the women's respective reaction.⁷⁸

b) Hypsipyle and Polyxo as *hortatrix scelerum* (Theb. 5.103)

- 28 In addition to the narrative level and speech context, Statius also reverses Hypsipyle's and Polyxo's roles. After her flight the former Lemnian princess has become the slave-nurse of Opheltes (Theb. 5.486-504),⁷⁹ whereas Apollonius' diplomatic elderly nurse and Valerius' irenic priestess of Apollo is turned into the forceful convenor of the Lemnian assembly and the *de facto* leader of the Lemnian manslaughter (Theb. 5.85-103). From the beginning of her narrative onwards Hypsipyle emphasizes her own passivity and innocence and explicitly declares Polyxo the instigator of the Lemnian bloodbath (Theb. 5.103 *hortatrix scelerum*).⁸⁰ With the exception of her old age (Theb. 5.90 *aevi matura*), Statius' detached, hated aggressor (Theb. 5.327 *invisa Polyxo*) has no resemblance to Hypsipyle's gentle, beloved nurse in Apollonius (ARh. 1.668 φίλη τροφὸς), but she is "an original and effective creation".⁸¹
- 29 Despite these significant changes in Polyxo's character portrayal, the comparison and parallelism between Hypsipyle and Polyxo are still preserved in the *Thebaid* through their corresponding loss of and responsibility for the death of a male infant (Theb. 5.159-63: Polyxo's son ~ Theb. 5.499-554a: Hypsipyle's nurseling), which serves as a catalyst for the fighting (Theb. 5.159-69: the Lemnian manslaughter ~ Theb. 6.41-4: the Theban war), their divine inspiration (Bacchus instils Polyxo with maenadic *furor* in Theb. 5.90-103, but enables Hypsipyle to save her father at Theb. 5.265-95; Hypsipyle is also the only one who is not under the control of Polyxo's main inspiration Venus: Theb. 5.296-319), as well as the hatred both characters eventually incur from their fellow Lemnian women (Theb. 5.326-34: Polyxo for instigating the androicide ~ Theb. 5.486-92: Hypsipyle for proving their personal guilt through her abstention from the crime).⁸² Statius therefore turns Apollonius' and Valerius' positive character into an

antagonist and negative foil, “a Junonian figure, promoting *nefas* that Hypsipyle, a figure of *pietas*, will resist”.⁸³

- 30 As mother of four sons⁸⁴ and wife of Charops⁸⁵, Statius’ Polyxo is a representative of the Lemnian collective and as such a speaker who, in comparison to Apollonius’ old nurse and Valerius’ *vates*, is much more directly invested in the outcome of the council. Polyxo’s new double role as mother and wife allows Statius to maximize the dramatic effect of her transformation into a murderous and merciless Fury who is not only capable of, but even the initiator of the infanticide and mariticide.⁸⁶ Polyxo’s transformation in the *Thebaid* is abrupt and the circumstances under which she suddenly falls into a Bacchic trance and Venusian frenzy (Theb. 5.49-103) remain unclear and are not unequivocally determined in Hypsipyle’s narrative.⁸⁷ There can however be no doubt that her *furor* is instigated (Theb. 5.57-74), controlled (Theb. 5.157b-8), and eventually soothed by divine intervention (Theb. 5.302-3a).⁸⁸ Statius again seems to combine Apollonius’ and Valerius’ version when he omits the reason for the Lemnians neglect of Venus’ cult like the former (Theb. 5.57-9a) while briefly describing Venus’ personal involvement in the dissemination of hatred and marital discord among the Lemnians like the latter (Theb. 5.59b-84).⁸⁹
- 31 It has widely been recognized that Statius’ Medea-like portrayal of Polyxo as sword-swinging, child-murdering Fury (Theb. 5.90-103), who infects the Lemnian women with cruel passion and urges them to commit homicide, strongly resembles Valerius’ goddesses Fama (as Neaera) and especially Venus (as Dryope) in her appearance, speech, and actions.⁹⁰ Statius amplifies the atrocity of the manslaughter and further dramatizes Apollonius’ and even Valerius’ vivid narration by casting Polyxo in the role of Valerius’ Venus and making a Lemnian woman the ringleader of the massacre (Theb. 5.90-151).⁹¹ The initiator of the crime is thus not a traditional, anthropomorphic goddess in disguise, such as Virgil’s Allecto/Calybe, Iris/Beroe and Valerius’ Fama/Neaera and Venus/Dryope, but a mortal Lemnian woman.⁹² The narrative context complicates the interpretation. This seminal change could stem from Hypsipyle’s character-focalization and either reflect her attempt to underline the Lemnian women’s personal guilt, as opposed to her own innocence, or it could be indicative of Hypsipyle’s limited knowledge as an internal narrator and her failure to recognize the divine disguise that is so prominent in the Virgilian and Valerian model.⁹³ Irrespective of the narrative perspective, the depiction could also be understood as an interpretation of the divine influence portrayed in Statius’ predecessors and an illustration of “the weak and helpless state of humankind, its inability to control its own destiny, and its lack of free will”.⁹⁴

c) Polyxo and Oedipus

- 32 Unlike in the Argonautic intertexts, Polyxo’s most important male counterpart is not Hercules, who only plays a very minor role in Hypsipyle’s narrative (Theb. 5.441-4), but the instigator of the Theban civil war and motivating force of the Theban narrative, Oedipus.⁹⁵ Just as the character doublets Polyxo/Hypsipyle and Henioche/Medea serve to highlight the intratextual parallelism between the Lemnian and Colchian narrative in the Flavian *Argonautica*, Statius’ transformation of Polyxo emphasizes the similarities between the Lemnian digression and the Theban narrative and prefigures the Theban *nefas*.⁹⁶ In addition to Polyxo’s explicit comparison to a Theban maenad and distinct verbal echoes, Polyxo and Oedipus share similar characteristics.⁹⁷ They are of old age

(Theb. 1.240 ~ Theb. 5.90) and are suddenly blinded (literally: Theb. 1.46-8 ~ figuratively: Theb. 5.95-7a) in their solitude and isolation (Theb. 1.49-52 ~ Theb. 5.91-2a) by their vindictive madness (Theb. 1.46-55 ~ Theb. 5.91-103).⁹⁸ Consequently, they express their desire for retribution and vow to end their sons' lives (Theb. 1.73-87 ~ Theb. 5.125-9a).⁹⁹ Under the influence of a personified Fury (Tisiphone: Theb. 1.88-130 ~ Venus: Theb. 5.49-103)¹⁰⁰ Oedipus and Polyxo turn into "agents of divine vengeance"¹⁰¹ and their personal anger, guilt, and familial discord is spread to the entire population and leads to civil conflict (Theb. 1.123-30 ~ Theb. 5.143-51). Their prominent speeches not only function as the starting point of the violence (Theb. 1.56-87 ~ Theb. 5.104-42),¹⁰² but also reveal the complex divine hierarchies and the inevitability of Jupiter's *fata* (Theb. 1.197-247 ~ Theb. 5.49-334).¹⁰³

d) Polyxo and Argia

- ³³ It has been widely recognized that Hypsipyle serves as a prefiguration of Argia's *pietas* in Book 12 of the *Thebaid*,¹⁰⁴ but the similarities between Hypsipyle's negative foil Polyxo and Argia as an intratextual female counter-figure in the Theban narrative are often neglected. Both women are characterized as wives and mothers with young offspring (Theb. 5.98b-9a ~ Theb. 3.697b-8a) before they abruptly fall into a state of Bacchic *furor* (Theb. 5.95-102a ~ Theb. 12.204-27) during which they have terrifying visions (Polyxo of the goddess Venus: Theb. 5.134b-6; Argia of her dead husband Polynices: Theb. 12.187-93).¹⁰⁵ They deliver emotional speeches, which draw special attention to them due to the rare, dramatic insertion of a direct speech (Theb. 5.136b-8 ~ Theb. 12.333b-5), in which they look back to their encounter with the object of their vision, which eventually causes them to transgress gender boundaries.¹⁰⁶ Just like Polyxo (Theb. 5.105b) Argia also renounces her sex (Theb. 12.178 *sexuque inmane relicto*) and abandons the traditional gender role when she actively encourages her father Adrastus to declare war against Eteocles (Theb. 3.460-721) and despite Creon's explicit instructions she sets out to cremate Polynices (Theb. 12.173-261).¹⁰⁷ Whereas Polyxo is driven to violence by marital discord and explicitly vows to murder her husband (Theb. 5.123-8), Argia acts out of spousal devotion (Theb. 3.679-710), but her untraditional war request nonetheless results in the Theban fratricide and her husband's death (Theb. 11.136-50).¹⁰⁸ The quality of their marriages is similarly reflected in the shared wish for a better, second union. While Argia's husband Polynices before his death asks Adrastus to ensure a better marriage for his daughter (Theb. 11.192b *et natae melius conubia iungas*), Polyxo resolves to kill her current husband for a worthier union promised to her by Venus (Theb. 5.138 *ipsa faces alias melioraque foedera iungam*).

Argia's contrastive comparison with Polyxo on the one hand "serves partially to undermine the *pietas* of Argia's act",¹⁰⁹ on the other hand the fact that both women trigger similar catastrophes despite their diametrically opposed intentions highlights that any transgression of the traditional gender roles, irrespective of the underlying reason, is bound to cause calamity in the *Thebaid*.¹¹⁰

e) Polyxo's Speech (Theb. 5.104-42)

- ³⁴ The fact that Polyxo's speech is not only embedded in the longest first-person narrative of the *Thebaid* together with three other inserted speeches (Theb. 5.49-498), but also the only speech that contains an embedded quaternary narration-focalisation immediately

draws special attention to her words.¹¹¹ While Polyxo's authority is based on her old age and divine inspiration in the Argonautic epics,¹¹² it is her ferociousness and drive that establish her dominance in the *Thebaid*. This aggressive speaker, who begins the meeting by drawing her sword and forcefully demanding silence to call for violence against all Lemnian men (Theb. 5.102b-3), is the complete opposite of Apollonius' soft-spoken nurse and the Valerian *vates*, who calmly advocate a peaceful approach in response to the Argonauts' arrival and try to limit the damage of the manslaughter.

- 35 It is important to note that Statius' emergency council is not directly caused by the return of Lemnian men or the women's fear of adultery, but by the sudden onset of Polyxo's maenadic frenzy for which there does not seem to be a specific external trigger other than her personal frustration over the men's long absence (Theb. 5.95-102a).¹¹³ Unlike Apollonius' Polyxo who shuns the mention of sexual desire and intercourse and presents reproduction as a civic duty, and Valerius' prophetess who more directly, but abstractly and in modest terms, appeals to the women's personal desire for motherhood and highlights the divine investment in the Lemnians' union with the Argonauts, in the *Thebaid* Polyxo's words "seethe with sensuality"¹¹⁴ when she openly and at length urges the Lemnian women not to accept their solitude, sexual frustration, and lack of childbirth during their fertile years (Theb. 5.106-8). In an associative play on absence and death Polyxo poignantly addresses the women, in the first of many emphatic apostrophes, as *viduae* (Theb. 5.105) and appeals to their anger by highlighting the length of the men's absence in a chain of affective questions (Theb. 5.112-6a) before provokingly comparing their situation to that of animals and calling the Lemnian women lazy (Theb. 5.116b-7)¹¹⁵ and lethargic for accepting their desolation (Theb. 5.120a). She asks them to resort to violence and to renounce their sex (Theb. 5.105b *Armate animos et pellite sexum!*)¹¹⁶ in order to renew their love through violence (Theb. 5.110a *qua renovanda Venus*).¹¹⁷ Polyxo also uses the geographically close mythic examples of the Danaides to prove that women are capable of collective mariticide (Theb. 5.117b-9) and the example of Procne, wife of Thracian king Tereus, as a model for vengeful infanticide as punishment for a husband's adulterous crimes (Theb. 5.120b-2).¹¹⁸ Polyxo then vows to set an example herself by sacrificing her four sons to inflict the greatest possible psychological pain on her husband before murdering him, too (Theb. 5.123-8).¹¹⁹
- 36 At the climax of her speech, when Polyxo asks the women to follow her example (Theb. 5.129a), the frame speaker Hypsipyle dramatically pauses in her report to announce the sudden arrival of the Lemnian fleet.¹²⁰ It is this abrupt pause, which Statius highlights with one of the longest speech transitions in Roman epic (Theb. 5.129b-32a), that draws the readers' attention to the striking parallels between Valerius' and Statius' account in the second half of Polyxo's speech, but more importantly to Statius' reinterpretation of the Valerian version with its many ingenious twists.¹²¹ Just as Apollonius' and especially Valerius' Polyxo use the arrival of the Argonauts in support of their argument, Statius' character eagerly declares the Lemnian men's return to be a sign of divine approval (Theb. 5.133b-4a *deus hos, deus ultor in iras / adportat coeptisque favet*).¹²² In an echo and intertextual confirmation of the claim of Valerius' Polyxo (VF. 2.323-4 *melior Lemno deus aequore flexit / huc Minyas; Venus ipsa volens dat corpora iungi*) Statius' speaker dramatically reports Venus' words in *oratio recta* (Theb. 5.138 *ipsa faces alias melioraque foedera iungam*).¹²³

- 37 The interpretation of this passage is rendered extremely difficult by the complex character-focalization, which makes it impossible to determine whether Venus' reported appearance and instructions (Theb. 5.134b-6) are a dream vision, a rare example of a traditional epiphany and divine interference in the *Thebaid*, an allegory and as such one of the common abstract personifications of a deity, here a manifestation of Polyxo's sexual desire and "frustrated lusts",¹²⁴ a "psychological breakdown",¹²⁵ or merely the invention of an overenthusiastic imagination of an unreliable embedded speaker (Polyxo), frame speaker (Hypsipyle), or the primary narrator.¹²⁶ There are several discrepancies in Polyxo's account. Whereas in Valerius the recommendation of a union with the Argonauts follows the Lemnian massacre and is a remedy against the Lemnians' extinction and the goddess of love approves of the sexual relations for the purpose of reproduction and the survival of the Lemnian people, Statius' Polyxo claims divine approval of infanticide and mariticide for a union that only brings temporary relief.¹²⁷ This paradox is further emphasized by Venus' use of "the language of lustration in her exhortation toward sacrilegious violence"¹²⁸ when she appeals to the Lemnian women not to waste their fertile years, but to purge their marriage chambers of their lawful husbands (Theb. 5.137b *age aversis thalamos purgate maritis*).¹²⁹
- 38 It is striking that, just like the frame speaker, Polyxo concludes her report of Venus' speech with an exhortation to mariticide followed by transitional stage directions that claim divine approval. Polyxo reports that Venus herself left her the sword she has been holding in her hands during the speech and thus indirectly uses the weapon as proof of Venus' appearance (Theb. 5.139-40a).¹³⁰ She then comes back to the first sign of divine will, the concurrent return of the Lemnian men, emphasizing the necessity for immediate action (Theb. 5.140-1a). The arrival of the ship serves as background for the most important intertextual echo, Polyxo's suggestion of the Lemnian men's infidelity: Theb. 5.141b-2 *en ualidis spumant euersa lacertis / aequora Bistonides ueniunt fortasse maritae*.¹³¹ The adultery is the key reason for the Lemnian manslaughter in Apollonius where the Venus-induced infidelity is presented as a fact by the primary narrator (ARh. 1.611-4) and in Valerius where Venus with Fama's help creates a rumour of the adultery in order to incite the women to androicide (VF. 2.131f.). As Statius' Polyxo is cast in the role of Valerius' Venus it is internally consistent that she too proclaims the Lemnian men's unfaithfulness. Her revelation however is much less prominent and is presented as one of many reasons – a final thought rather than the crucial factor that decides the Lemnian men's fate. The tentative phrasing (Theb. 5.142 *fortasse*)¹³² not only emphasizes the uncertainty of the information, but the clear intertextual echo also suggests that Statius discards Valerius' account with the "simple explanation of jealousy as too crude and obvious".¹³³ This impression is corroborated by the direct contrast between the unsubstantiated claim and the excessive violence that follows Polyxo's speech.
- 39 Hypsipyle's ensuing description of the bloodbath reveals that Polyxo's vows and instructions are immediately put into action. She compares the Lemnian women to Amazons (Theb. 5.144-6), the "paradigmatic examples of gender inversion and perverse sexuality"¹³⁴, and reports in great detail how they renounce their sex, push their children from their breasts (Theb. 5.150f.), and begin the onslaught with a sacrifice of Polyxo's infant son (Theb. 5.143-69) before murdering their own husbands in cold blood (Theb. 5.170-312).¹³⁵ Just as the nature of Venus' occurrence in Polyxo's speech is ambiguous, Hypsipyle's declaration of Venus' ubiquitous influence (Theb. 5.157b-8 *sed*

fallit ubique / mixta Venus, Venus arma tenet, Venus admovet iras)¹³⁶ can be interpreted as a traditional divine interference by the goddess or a personification of the Lemnian women's desire for new love relations that serve as their main source of motivation according to Polyxo (Theb. 5.110a *qua renovanda Venus*). It is her speech (Theb. 5.138 *meliora ... foedera*) with the promise of better unions as well as the pervading influence of Venus during the Lemnian massacre that establish a close link to the Argonauts' subsequent arrival and give the Lemnian episode a greater "inner unity"¹³⁷ in comparison to Apollonius' and Valerius' account. This is also reflected in the Argonauts' reception. Whereas in the Argonautic epics Polyxo's speech prevents the Lemnian women from providing the Argonauts with a hostile reception, Statius' Hypsipyle is consistent in her portrayal of the mad Lemnian women as Amazons and has them attack the Argonauts upon their arrival (Theb. 5.335-421).¹³⁸ The circumstances that lead to the concomitant disappearance of the Lemnian women's *furor* remain in the dark, just as its initial cause,¹³⁹ and the Lemnian narrative is fittingly concluded with two striking intratextual allusions that highlight the ring composition: the Lemnian women finally return to their traditional gender roles (Theb. 5.397 *rediit in pectora sexus*) and love is renewed, as Polyxo predicted (Theb. 5.445-6a).¹⁴⁰

5. Conclusion

- 40 Polyxo speaks and appears only once *in propria persona* in the context of an all-female counselling scene in the Lemnian episode. Despite the similar context and numerous structural and thematic parallels, Polyxo is the only female speaker of these epics, whose role and function undergo a significant change. Apollonius depicts Polyxo as the beloved old nurse of Hypsipyle. Her expertise as a speaker is based on her life experience and she acts as an elderly advisor to the young inexperienced Lemnian queen. Valerius presents Polyxo as an otherwise unknown priestess of Apollo. The speech of the seeress requires a special vatic ritual and she serves as a divine mouthpiece communicating the regained divine benevolence to the Lemnian women. Statius' character is depicted as a Lemnian mother and wife, who under divine influence becomes the ruthless instigator of the manslaughter and with her forceful exhortation infects the other Lemnian women with her Venusian *furor*.
- 41 The level of inclusion in the female collective varies with the different roles of the speaker. Apollonius focuses on Polyxo's personal relationship with Hypsipyle and has the speaker distance herself from the subject matter and the long-term benefits of her proposal for the collective as a result of her old age and impending death. Valerius' mysterious priestess, whose journey from Egypt to Lemnos is discussed in her introduction, is the most removed of the three characters and her description entirely focuses on her profession and vatic ritual. By contrast, Statius' persona is the most involved speaker, as she is directly affected by the barrenness and sexual frustration of the Lemnian women that result from their husbands' continued absence. All three characters are moreover accompanied by a small entourage that serves as an intertextual link and further highlights the character's respective function: Hypsipyle's elderly nurse is escorted by four white-haired virgins in Apollonius. This portrayal of Apollonius' entourage, which creates a parallel to the four sons of the *Odyssey*'s elderly advisor Aegyptius, may have inspired Valerius' transformation of Polyxo into a priestess of Apollo. In the Flavian *Argonautica*, the seer is drawn to Lemnos from Egypt

by a team of seals, an image, which also echoes a Homeric intertext, the prophetic nymph, Eidothea. In Statius' case, the entourage serves to underline the stark contrast between the *Thebaid's* lustful warmonger and Apollonius' irenic, demure nurse. Whereas the Apollonian virgins highlight Polyxo's virtue in the Hellenistic *Argonautica*, the four children, whom Statius' Lemnian mother and wife vows to sacrifice, emphasize her ruthlessness and cruelty.

- 42 Although the general context of the Lemnian council scenes is comparable, the length and exact placement of Polyxo's speech in the respective episodes varies in accordance with Polyxo's different roles. The character's speech receives special attention in all three episodes and succeeds in decisively changing the Lemnians' course of action. In Apollonius, Polyxo's long speech (22 verses) is placed in the centre of the council scene, which contains seven speech acts in a complex ring composition; in Valerius, Polyxo's brief utterance (3 5/6 verses) is the only remaining speech from Apollonius' Lemnian council scene; and Polyxo's speech (36 1/3 verses) in Statius is not only the longest of the three, but it is also embedded in the longest character narration of the *Thebaid*, contains the only quaternary narration-focalisation of the epic, and is dramatically interrupted by stage directions. By comparison, Polyxo's speech in Apollonius and the Lemnian episode as a whole is the least dramatic version, as the speech is delivered one year after the Lemnian androicide and only after the Argonauts have already been identified as friendly guests through prior communication; Valerius increases the suspense by presenting the council as an emergency meeting that is held in response to the Argonauts' unexpected arrival. The juxtaposition of the Lemnians' return and the Argonauts' arrival as well as the change of perspective from the Lemnian men to their wives render the events more tragic and mark Polyxo's speech in Valerius as the conclusion to the vividly described Lemnian manslaughter. Statius' changed narratological context and character-focalization increase the tension and importance of Polyxo's words even further, as her speech serves as the starting point and immediate trigger of the Lemnian bloodbath.
- 43 Despite their different placement and function, the three speeches share three themes: they refer to divine will, urge the Lemnian women to put an end to their barrenness, and strife for new sexual relations. In Apollonius, Polyxo only uses divine benevolence as a hypothetical example to emphasize that even if the gods protected the Lemnian women from a hostile attack at that point, they would still continue to depend on men for their general safety and the chance to reproduce. The divine intervention in connection with Polyxo and the Lemnian council scene is not explicitly discussed in Apollonius, while Polyxo's speech in Valerius is presented as a reproduction of divine instructions and the union with the Argonauts as a part of Jupiter's *fata*. The seeress acts as a mouthpiece for the gods in their communication with the Lemnians, which is a common pattern for the indirect communication between mortals and immortals in the Flavian *Argonautica*. In Statius, Polyxo speaks in maenadic frenzy and even becomes the embodiment of Valerius' vengeful and destructive goddess Venus. The changes regarding Polyxo's character are thus not only representative of her portrayal as a mortal female character in the respective Lemnian episode and epic as a whole, but they also reflect the use and function of the epics' *Götterapparat*.
- 44 Just as the method and intensity of the references to divine will and interference vary, so do the line of argument and explicitness of the speaker's reference to sexual intercourse in accordance with the speaker's respective profession. Whereas

Apollonius' and Valerius' Polyxo recommend a union with the Argonauts as a remedy for hardship in order to save the Lemnian people and restore the previous status, Polyxo's desire for a new and better union is not derived out of need or for prevention in the *Thebaid*, but it is in fact the reason why she urges her fellow Lemnian women to kill their husbands. Apollonius' elderly nurse phrases her request most delicately and appeals to the women's sense of civic duty and pragmatism and accordingly advocates procreation to avoid future hardship, prevent the extinction of the Lemnian people, and return to the traditional gender roles. The speech of Valerius' *vates* seems to appeal to the women's personal aspirations for motherhood and their sexual desire. The prospective union with the Argonauts is presented as a divine remedy and restoration of the traditional status. Statius' wife and mother is completely overcome by her sexual desire and openly urges the Lemnian women not to accept their sexual frustration and lack of childbirth, but to leave behind the alleged weakness of their gender and kill their husbands in revenge. However, Statius' Polyxo, just like other women in the *Thebaid*, is severely punished for renouncing her sex and transgressing traditional gender roles and causes widespread calamity as a result of it.

- 45 The comparative analysis of the portrayal of the epic persona Polyxo in Apollonius Rhodius' and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* as well as Statius' *Thebaid* revealed a high level of intra- and intertextual engagement that draws attention to the drastic change Polyxo's character undergoes from Apollonius' to Statius' adaptation of the myth. Apollonius combines several Homeric council scenes in his depiction and uses both young and old male advisors as well as Odysseus' elderly nurse Eurykleia as a model for Hypsipyle's old nurse Polyxo. These intertextual allusions on the one hand serve as an example of the wisdom of old age and highlight the prominent theme of the generation conflict in Apollonius' Lemnian episode; on the other hand the contrastive allusion to the male-dominated Homeric council scenes also emphasizes the transgression of traditional gender roles in Apollonius and the change from a focus of combat and martial topics in Homer to love and marital topics in Apollonius' female council scene. Traditional gender roles and civic duties of men and women are also in the centre of both Polyxo's and her intratextual male counterpart's speeches in the Hellenistic *Argonautica*. In their roles as experienced advisors to their young leaders and their respective collectives, Herakles and Polyxo both advocate traditional gender stereotypes. Even though Valerius keeps Apollonius' intratextual character pairing and also has Hercules end the Argonauts' stay on Lemnos with his criticism of the Argonauts' effeminate and forgetful sojourn on Lemnos, the focus of the Valerian scene lies on Lemnos as an all-female community. This is also reflected in the distribution of speech acts. The Lemnian episode contains the longest chain of female speech acts – as opposed to Apollonius' gender pairing – and the two remaining male speech acts that frame the episode only bring bereavement and solitude upon the Lemnian women. As in Apollonius, it is a Homeric allusion that provides the backdrop and a key to the understanding of Polyxo's role. The reference to the prophetic Odyssean sea nymph Eidothea firmly establishes Polyxo as *vates* and creates an intratextual parallel to the other seers of Apollo in the Flavian *Argonautica* – Idmon and Mopsus. Like them, Valerius' Polyxo serves as a facilitator for the communication between gods and humans when she presents the Argonauts as divinely-sent saviours on a civilization mission. The Eidothea-allusion supports yet another intratextual parallel in Valerius and shows how skillfully the Flavian epicist combines different inter- and intratextual allusions. Just as the description of Apollonius' elderly nurse resembles that of the old

seer Phineus, Valerius' *vates* is created as a character doublet to Medea's nurse Henioche. Polyxo's speech in response to the Argonauts' arrival at Lemnos and her recommendation of a union with the strangers prefigure Henioche's speech to Medea upon Jason's arrival in Colchis and her facilitation of her nursling's subsequent union with Jason. The intertextual allusion to Eidothea, another daughter who betrays her father to help a stranger return home, therefore not only supports Valerius' reinvention of Polyxo as a *vates*, but it also strengthens the *Argonautica*'s intratextual character doublet. Statius conducts an even more radical transformation of the Polyxo character as well as the entire narratological context of the Lemnian episode in general. The *Thebaid*'s maenadic ringleader of the manslaughter is in many respects the exact opposite of Apollonius' demure and gentle nurse. Like Apollonius' Polyxo, who respectfully advocates a return to the traditional gender roles and the civic duty and value of mother- and wifehood, Statius' Lemnian mother and wife in blind *furor* drives her fellow women to mariticide and infanticide. In an allusion to Vergil's and Valerius' vengeful goddesses in disguise Statius increases the suspense and tragedy of the Lemnian *nefas* by having a fellow Lemnian act as instigator and ringleader of the crime. Statius Polyxo' is not only the mouthpiece of Venus, but she turns into Valerius' ruthless divine warmonger herself. Just as Statius' further dramatizes the account of the manslaughter, he also turns Polyxo's reference to Venus' will in Valerius' vatic speech into an embedded speech in which the goddess herself encourages the manslaughter. Polyxo's speech and especially the inserted stage directions with the reference to Venus' sword strongly echo Valerius' version. In a similar way to Valerius, who employs the collective direct speech of the Lemnian men, a parallel to Polyxo's speech, to correct Apollonius' presentation of the Lemnian men's adultery as a fact and turn it into a rumor created by Venus and Fama, Statius uses Polyxo's speech to discard Valerius' version that the mere report and suspicion of the Lemnian men's adultery could be a sufficient justification for the Lemnian women's excessive violence. Statius instead proposes a third explanation – Polyxo's inability to control her own fate as a result of mankind's general helplessness and lack of free will.

- 46 Just as Valerius' character doublets Polyxo/Hypsipyle and Henioche/Medea serve to highlight the intratextual parallelism between the Lemnian and Colchian narrative in the Flavian *Argonautica*, Statius' intratextual comparison of Polyxo to Argia and Oedipus, two of the key instigators of the Theban civil war and motivating forces of the Theban narrative, stresses the similarities between the Lemnian digression and the Theban narrative, prefigures the Theban *nefas*, and reveals Polyxo as both an agent and the subject of divine vengeance as well as a dangerous woman who is transgressing the traditional gender stereotypes. Statius also takes Valerius' portrayal of Polyxo as a character doublet to Henioche, the facilitator of Medea's union with Jason, one step further by turning Polyxo into another Medea; to be more precise into the tragic mother who turns into a child-murderer to punish her adulterous husband, the very part of Medea's story that is only foreshadowed but not fully developed in Apollonius' and Valerius' version of the myth.
- 47 The intricacies of the individual authors' unique, multi-faceted portrayal of the Polyxo character, the fact that this is the only female speaker who occurs in all three epics while undergoing a significant role change, and the many intra- and intertextual allusions employed in the depiction of this epic persona leave no doubt that Polyxo is not only one of the key characters of the Lemnian episode, but also an interesting case study and striking example of the authors' complex use of combinatorial intra- and

intertextual allusive techniques in their strife for originality and ingenuity in the adaptation of a popular myth.

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APPENDIXES

Fig. 1: Direct Speech Acts in Apollonius Rhodius' Lemnian Episode

Speaker	Lines	Length (in vv.)	Addressee(s)	Speech Cluster
Argonauts	1.640-1a	(NRSA) ¹⁴¹	Aethalides	M ¹⁴²
Aethalides	1.650-1a	(NRSA)	Hypsipyle	M
Hypsipyle	1.657-666	10	Lemnian women	G1 ¹⁴³
Polyxo	1.675-696	22	Lemnian women	G2
Hypsipyle	1.700-701	2	Lemnian women	G3
Hypsipyle	1.703-707	5	Iphinoe	M

Iphinoe	1.712-716	5	Argonauts	M
Hypsipyle	1.793-833	41	Jason	M
Herakles	1.865-874	10	Argonauts	M
Hypsipyle	1.888-898	11	Jason	D1 ¹⁴⁴
Jason	1.900-909	10	Hypsipyle	D2

Fig. 2: Direct Speech Acts in Valerius Flaccus' Lemnian Episode

Speaker	Lines	Length (in vv.)	Addressee(s)	Speech Cluster
Lemnian men	2.113-114	2	<i>coniunx, patria</i>	M
Venus	2.127-134	8	Fama	M
Fama (as Neaera)	2.142b-160a	18 1/6 ¹⁴⁵	Eurynome	M
Venus (as Dryope)	2.176b-184a	8 5/12	Lemnian women	M
Venus (as Dryope)	2.213b-214a	1 1/6	Lemnian women	M
Hypsipyle	2.249b-253a	3 5/6	Thoas	M
Hypsipyle	2.256-257a	1 1/12	Bacchus	M
Hypsipyle	2.274b-276	2 7/12	Bacchus	M
Hypsipyle	2.290-299	10	Thoas, Luna	M
Polyxo	2.322-325	3 5/6	Lemnian women	M
Hypsipyle	2.335b-339	4 1/3	Jason	M
Hercules	2.378-384a	6 7/12	Jason, Argonauts	M
Hypsipyle	2.403-408a	5 1/4	Jason	M
Hypsipyle	2.419-424	5 5/6	Jason	M

Fig. 3: Overview of All Direct Speech Acts by Mortal Female Speakers

Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*

	Speaker	Length in total (vv.)	Female Speech (%)	No. of Speeches
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1	Medea**146	251	38.91%	17
2	Hypsipyle	69	10.70%	5
3	Chalciope	28	4.34%	4
4	Arete	23	3.57%	1
5	Polyxo	22	3.41%	1
6	Alcimedea	14	2.17%	1
7	Circe	10	1.55%	1
8	γυναίκες	9	1.40%	1
9	Iphinoe	5	0.78%	1
		423 (av. 47.89)	100%	32 (av.3.56)

Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

	Speaker	Length in total (vv.)	Female Speech (%)	No. of Speeches
1	Medea***	212 3/4	37.29%	23
2	Hypsipyle	32 11/12	5.77%	7
3	Eidyia	26 11/12	4.72%	1
4	Hesione	21 5/6	3.83%	1
5	Alcimedea	18 4/7	3.26%	2
6	Clite	13 3/4	2.41%	1
7	Henioche	3 11/12	0.69%	1
8	Polyxo	3 5/6	0.67%	1
9	<i>famula</i>	3 1/2	0.61%	1
		337.99 (av.37.55)		38 (av. 4.22)

Fig.4: Hypsipyle's Lemnian Narrative and Embedded Speech Acts

Speaker (L1) ¹⁴⁷	Speaker (L2) ¹⁴⁸	Embedded Speaker (L3) ¹⁴⁹	Embedded Speaker (L4) ¹⁵⁰	Lines	Speech Length	Embedded Addressee(s) (L4)	Embedded Addressee(s) (L3)	Addressee(s) (L2)	Addressee(s) (L1)
epic narrator									external audience
	Hypsipyle			5. 49-498	449 5/6			Adrastus & Argive warriors	
		Polyxo		5. 104-29a 5. 132b-42	25 3/4 10 7/12		Lemnian women		
			Venus	5. 136b-8	2 1/3	Polyxo			
		Hypsipyle		5. 245b-7a	2 1/6		Thoas		
		Bacchus		5. 271b-84a	13 1/6		Thoas and Hypsipyle		
		Lemnian women		5. 491-2	2		secum		

NOTES

1. Cf. Bahrenfuss (1951) 157-276, Krumbholz (1954) 125-39, Vessey (1973) 171-8, Poortvliet (1991) 65-70, Brown (1994), 57-93, Dominik (1997) 29-50, Delarue (2000) 130-3, and Boner (2006) 149-62.
2. Cf. Götting (1969), Vessey (1970) 44-54, Iglesias Montiel (1973) 225-331, Frings (1996) 145-60, Nugent (1996) 46-71, Krevans (2002/3) 175-83, Casali (2003) 60-8, Gibson (2004) 149-80, Masciadri (2004) 221-41, Ganiban (2007) 71-95, and Walter (2014) 208-39.
3. This article works under the general assumption that Valerius' account of the Lemnian episode preceded Statius'. See also Vessey (1970) 44-48, Smolenaars (1994) xxxv-xlii, Ganiban (2007) 77, and Lovatt (2015) 408-24. All line references and quotations follow the editions of Fränkel (1961), Ehlers (1980), and Hill (1983).
4. Due to the limited scope, with the exception of important individual references, the intertextual analysis has to be restricted to the three epics under discussion and Homer as a model for Apollonius.
5. The narrator's summary is contrasted with a report of the events by a character-focalizer (Hypsipyle) that differs in several respects from the first account and emphasizes Hypsipyle's preoccupation with protecting the Lemnians' reputation. In a highly deceptive speech the queen tries to conceal the homicide by explaining the complete absence of Lemnian men with a divinely-induced abandonment of their wives in favour of their Thracian mistresses and their decision to take their sons with them to Thrace (ARh. 1.793-833). For a detailed comparison of Hypsipyle's and the primary narrator's accounts, cf. Berkowitz (2004) 46-52. In Apollodorus 1.9.17 Venus casts a bad smell on the Lemnian women that repels their husbands.
6. Cf. Nishimura-Jensen (1998) 456-69 for a detailed discussion of the messenger scene.

7. Cf. Appendix, fig.1. See also Elderkin (1913) 198-201, Ardizzoni (1965) 257f., Hurst (1967) 61, Levin (1971) 63f., George (1972) 54, Clauss (1993) 114f., DeForest (1994) 86, and Nishimura-Jensen (1998) 463f.
8. See also Clauss (1993) 108-10.
9. Cf. Knight (1995) 115: “an intriguing substitution of *militia amoris* for real conflict”. See also Arend (1975) 116-21, Pavlock (1990) 45-51, Clauss (1993) 117-9, De Jong (2001) 45 n.3, and Daniel-Müller (2012) 100-7.
10. It is striking that Hypsipyle includes herself in the guilty collective (ARh. 1.662 ἐπεὶ μέγα ἔργον ἐπέξαμεν), although she alone abstained from the crime (ARh. 1.620-1). Cf. also Ibscher (1939) 15 and Levin (1971) 64.
11. Cf. the elderly Nestor at Il. 14.52-63. See also Lohmann (1970) 138f., Levin (1971) 65, George (1972) 55, Clauss (1993) 116, and Janko (1994) 155.
12. Cf. Clauss (1993) 117-9 and DeForest (1994) 87f.
13. Cf. George (1972) 56 and Clauss (1993) 137. See also Karydas (1998) 3: “(f)or women, especially, age conferred authority and power”. For a comparison of Apollonius’ elderly advisors Polyxo, Phineus, and Iphias, cf. Hübscher (1940) 69f. and Nelis (1991) 97. On Polyxo’s portrayal as Hypsipyle’s nurse in Sophocles’ *Lemniai*, see Pearson (1917) 52 and Lloyd-Jones (1996) 205.
14. For Eurykleia as an astute advisor, cf. Od. 1.438 and Od. 2.346. See also Karydas (1998) 24f.
15. For more structural parallels, cf. Clauss (1993) 106-19, Bulloch (2006) 50-2, and Barker (2009) 95-9.
16. Cf. Höfer (1909) 2747,13-30 s.v. ‘Polyxo’ (no.7) and Hyg. *Fab.* 15: *Polyxo aetate constituta dedit consilium*.
17. Cf. Clauss (1993) 118f., De Jong (2001) 47, and Barker (2009) 95f. For more parallels between Polyxo and Telemachus, cf. Bulloch (2006) 51f.
18. Polyxo’s four female companions (ARh. 1.671-2) correspond to Aegyptius’ role as father of four sons (Od. 2.17-23). Cf. Clauss (1993) 119f., DeForest (1994) 87, and Bulloch (2006) 52.
19. George (1972) 57. See also Clauss (1993) 119.
20. George (1972) 56.
21. On the reduction of the nurse’s introduction to her age and profession, see Levin (1971) 65 and Nelis (1991) 99. Homer’s Diomedes begins his reply to Agamemnon with a lengthy preface of his own lineage to legitimize his authority and to compensate for his inexperience (Il. 14.110-27).
22. The similarities in their depiction may have inspired Polyxo’s role transferral from Hypsipyle’s elderly nurse in Apollonius to a prophetess of Apollo in Valerius. On Polyxo and her companions’ description as an inspiration for Catullus’ portrayal of the Fates, cf. Papanghelis (1994) 45f.
23. For a more detailed discussion of the virgins’ white hair and old age, see Prescott (1909) 320, Ardizzoni (1967) 280, Fränkel (1968) 97, Levin (1971) 42f., Giangrande (1977) 98f., and Papanghelis (1994) 44-47.
24. Cf. Manioti (2012) 62f. For echoes of Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae*, see Nishimura-Jensen (1998) 465.
25. See also George (1972) 55-7 and Natzel (1992) 180.
26. See also Mori (2007) 465.
27. On Polyxo’s influence on Hypsipyle’s second speech, cf. George (1972) 55 and Holmberg (1998) 135-59.
28. Polyxo’s viewpoint is shared by the female collective: the Lemnian women are acutely aware of their helplessness against a hostile attack (ARh. 1.633-9). Her plea to restore the traditional gender roles and leave warfare to men inevitably echoes Hector’s chastisement of Andromache in the *Iliad* (Il. 6.490-3). Cf. Blumberg (1931) 16f. and Nishimura-Jensen (1998) 466.
29. Cf. George (1972) 57f. and Berkowitz (2004) 147.
30. Cf. George (1972) 60 and Clauss (1993) 117-9.

31. George (1972) 60. On the verbal similarities between Aethalides', Hypsipyle's, and Polyxo's agreement and soft-spokenness, cf. Levin (1971) 66f. and George (1972) 56.
32. Herakles' provocative question also echoes Hypsipyle's speech (ARh. 1.795-6a).
33. Herakles' criticism and abstinence (ARh. 1.874b) correspond to Hypsipyle's innocence and her concern for the reputation of the guilty collective (ARh. 1.661-2). See also Clauss (1993) 137.
34. On the dramatic irony of Herakles' statements regarding the future success and glory of Jason's amorous affairs (ARh. 1.874b), cf. Clauss (1993) 137.
35. Cf. Appendix, fig. 2. On Apollonius', Valerius', and Statius' episode division, see Dominik (1997) 30-47.
36. In both versions Venus/Aphrodite avenges the Lemnians' neglect of worship by either literally (ARh.) or figuratively (VF.) generating the Lemnian men's adultery and instilling jealousy and fatal frenzy in their wives.
37. Zissos (1999) 300 describes Valerius' *Argonautica* as "a demanding and hyper-allusive text".
38. The juxtaposition highlights the inherent paradox in Apollonius and Valerius: the Lemnian women greet their husbands with a massacre and invite strangers into their homes and beds. See also Harper Smith (1997) 142.
39. Valerius' omniscient narrator declares that the Lemnians' rage would have stirred them on to attack the Argonauts, too, had Vulcan not soothed Venus' anger (VF. 2.313b-5). Apollonius' reference to Venus' post-massacre support of the Lemnians on behalf of Hephaestus could have served as a model (ARh. 1.850b-2). The circumstances under which the Lemnians' rage abates remains unclear in Apollonius' episode (ARh. 1.634-8).
40. On the structural importance of Valerius' collective speeches, cf. Finkmann (2014) 73-93. For a more detailed analysis of the parallel, see chap. 3 par. g) below.
41. Cf. Appendix, fig. 3.
42. See also Poortvliet (1991) 186 and Dräger (2003) 387 who understands *portum demus* as a sexual innuendo.
43. Cf. Polyxo's explicit reference to the goddess' wishes as well as the narrator's confirmation of Venus' milder position towards Lemnos (VF. 2.369 *divae ... melioris*) and her concealment of the women's guilt (VF. 2.327b-8). See also Hercules' counter-speech: VF. 2.380b-1a *me tecum solus in aequor / rerum traxit amor*.
44. Cf. Summers (1894) 72 and Spaltenstein (2002) 396. On the predominantly indirect divine interaction with humans in Valerius' *Argonautica*, see Manuwald (2013) 33-51.
45. Manuwald (2009) 596 n.26. See also Adamietz (1976) 35, Gross (2003) 142, and Manuwald (2013) 42.
46. Cf. Bahrenfuss (1951) 131, Hurst (1967) 60, Shelton (1971) 90-4, La Penna (1981) 248-50, Harper Smith (1987) 145f., Poortvliet (1991) 68f., Manuwald (1999) 179f., and Gross (2003) 141.
47. Cf. Gross (2003) 143.
48. See also Harper Smith (1987) 142f.
49. Nishimura-Jensen (1998) 466 n.60.
50. Cf. Venus' deceitful manipulation of Medea in Book 7 (VF. 7.101-538), which contains the same number of female speech acts (10). For further parallels, cf. Elm von der Osten (2007) 106-58 and Scott (2012) 124-46.
51. The queen's four successive speeches - the highest number of uninterrupted speech acts by a Valerian speaker - and seven speeches overall confirm Hypsipyle as the most important character-focalizer of this episode.
52. For a detailed discussion of the *mss.*, see Bury (1896) 36, Köstlin (1889), 655-7, Harper Smith (1987) 144-7, and Poortvliet (1991) 182-8.
53. All three prophets in Valerius' *Argonautica* (cf. VF. 1.228, 1.383-4, 3.372) as well as the primary narrator (VF. 1.5-7) are linked to Apollo. On the similarities between Idmon, Mopsus, and Polyxo, cf. Levin (1971) 150f. and Manuwald (2013) 41.

54. See also Harper Smith (1987) 145 and Poortvliet (1991) 185.
55. Köstlin (1889) 656 suggests an explicit age reference with the variant reading *sed, maxima, teque* (VF. 2.317).
56. Cf. Spaltenstein (2002) 394, Dräger (2003) 386, Gross (2003) 141-4, and Manuwald (2009) 587.
57. Köstlin's argument (1889, 656) that Polyxo is dipping under water to cleanse herself in a similar fashion to Medea (ARh. 3.859-60) and Atalanta (Theb. 9.572-4) prior to the consultation, is unconvincing.
58. Ambivalent descriptions are common for this profession and prophetic scenes in general, and the portrayal of everything mystical and supernatural in Valerius' *Argonautica* in particular. See also Burkert (2005) 36.
59. See also Harper Smith (1987) 144f., Liberman (1989) 114, and Poortvliet (1991) 183f.
60. Cf. Harper Smith (1987) 144, Poortvliet (191) 184, and Dräger (2003) 386f. Another source of inspiration could be the tradition of Polyxo as a Naiad of the Nile. Cf. Höfer (1909) 2745, 33-4 s.v. 'Polyxo' (no.3).
61. Maciver (2012) 61.
62. Medea's old nurse does not feature in the Greek model, where it is Medea's sister Chalciope who encourages her to meet Jason in private (ARh. 3.674-739).
63. Apollonius' description of Polyxo and her entourage of virgins (ARh. 1.671f.) may have evoked associations to the Roman Vestal cult and inspired Valerius' transformation of Polyxo into a *vates*. Cf. Garson (1964) 275.
64. Cf. Poortvliet (1991) 188f. and Gross (2003) 142.
65. All secondary collective speeches in Valerius' *Argonautica* are used as intertextual markers and highlight a significant digression from the Apollonian model, cf. Finkmann (2014) 79-81.
66. The context of the corrective exclamation is problematic and further emphasizes Valerius' intertextual engagement and interesting twist on Apollonius' version. Cf. Vessey (1985) 329-32 and Poortvliet (1991) 91.
67. For the Lemnian women's continued belief in their husbands' adultery, cf. VF. 2.343-5.
68. The Lemnian men's declaration of their wives' loving concern for their husbands (VF. 2.117 *anxia curis*) is full of dramatic irony, as the women's excessive worry (VF. 2.137 *exesam curis*) is turned into anxious jealousy by Venus and Fama (VF. 160b-1 *sic fata querellas / absceidit et curis pavidam lacrimisque relinquit*).
69. Valerius attributes the lack of worship to Venus' adultery with Mars. The Lemnians' strong response on behalf of their patron god Vulcan (VF. 2.82-106) makes their excessive rage after the alleged adultery internally consistent, reveals the full irony behind the adulterous goddess' choice of scheme, and explains why Venus is able to turn the Lemnian women against their husbands so quickly. For a more detailed discussion of the anticipatory doublet, cf. Vessey (1985) 327f. and Dominik (1997) 32.
70. See also VF. 2.147 *iamque aderunt, thalamisque tuis Threissa propinquat* and VF. 2.163b-5a *totam inde per urbem / personat, ut cunctas agitent expellere Lemno, / ipsi urbem Thressaeque regant*. For a detailed discussion of Venus' influence in the Lemnian episode, cf. Elm von der Osten (2007) 18-52.
71. Cf. George (1972) 48, Vessey (1973) 172, and Berkowitz (2005) 43-6. See also Pearson (1917) 53: "there is nothing tragic in Apollonius' account".
72. For Valerius' tendency to repeat the contents of a phrase in different words, cf. Harper Smith (1987) 13. Both speakers use the time limitations to their fertility and the opportunity presented by the strangers' arrival in their argument, cf. ARh. 1.681-5, ARh. 1.694-6. On Polyxo's correct identification of the foreigners as *Minyas* (VF. 2.324), cf. Harper Smith (1987) 146: "the poet might have assumed such knowledge for poetic convenience".
73. For further references, cf. Strand (1972) 82, Poortvliet (1991) 187, Hardie (2012) 200, and Scott (2012) 130f.

74. Cf. Vessey (1985) 331, Feeney (1991) 247-9, Hardie (2012) 200, and Buckley (2013) 86f. On Fama as a metaliterary trope, cf. Zissos (1999) 297.
75. See also Happle (1957) 42.
76. Cf. Gross (2003) 143.
77. See also Götting (1969) 73-86, Vessey (1970) 44-54, Brown (1994) 117-23, Nugent (1996) 60f., Dominik (1997) 31, Mauri (1999) 11f., Casali (2003) 60-68, Gibson (2004) 157-66, and Ganiban (2007) 73f.
78. Cf. Vessey (1973) 171-9, Dominik (1994) 59-61, and Gervais (2008) 18-20.
79. Pearson (1917) 53 suggests Sophocles' *Lemniai* "may have ended with the selling of Hypsipyle into slavery".
80. See also Schetter (1960) 6f., Vessey (1985) 45f., Nugent (1996) 60f., and Ganiban (2007) 79.
81. Vessey (1973) 173. For Polyxo's old age and infant children (Theb. 5.99), see also Nugent (1996) 59.
82. Cf. Dominik (1997) 57-9, Hershkowitz (1998) 47f., Gervais (2008) 32, Augoustakis (2010) 49f., and Soerink (2014) 77f. for a list of verbal echoes. The parallel between Opheltes' death and the Lemnian manslaughter already exists in Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, cf. Ganiban (2013) 250f.
83. Ganiban (2007) 79.
84. Polyxo's four children correspond to her entourage of four virgins in Apollonius, cf. fn. 18.
85. On *Charopeia coniunx* (Theb. 5.159), cf. Thome (1993) 162f., Soerink (2014) 97, and Gervais (2015) 228. On the allusion to Iris' disguise as Beroe (Aen. 5.620 *Tmarii coniunx longaeva Dorycli*), cf. Gervais (2008) 66.
86. A historical source of inspiration for Polyxo's radical transformation into a child murderer could be the mother of Vettius Crispinus. Cf. Vessey (1973) 179 n.2.
87. Cf. Vessey (1973) 171-84, Thome (1993) 161-3, Taisne (1994) 240f., Dominik (1997) 56-60, Hershkowitz (1998) 47f., Ganiban (2007) 78f., and Gervais (2008) 17f.
88. Cf. Vessey (1973) 172, Dominik (1997) 33, and Delarue (2000) 315-7.
89. See also Nugent (1996) 60f. and Ganiban (2007) 79.
90. Cf. VF. 2.123-4a *talem diva sibi scelerisque dolique ministram / quaerit avens*. For a more detailed discussion, cf. Bahrenfuss (1951) 185-7, Delarue (1970) 444, Vessey (1973) 172f., Thome (1993) 161f., Bussi (2007) 281-9, Ganiban (2007) 78f. and Walter (2014) 211-4.
91. Cf. Vessey (1985) 45f., Dominik (1994) 59, Thome (1993) 130-81, and Hershkowitz (1998) 249-60.
92. On Statius' 'combinatorial imitation' of Virgil's Venus and Allecto, cf. Legras (1905) 65, Bahrenfuss (1951) 185-7, Götting (1969) 76, Hardie (1989) 5-9, Nugent (1996) 59, Parkes (2014) 330f., Soerink (2014) 77, Walter (2014) 213, and Gervais (2015) 226-8. Polyxo's actions prefigure Tisiphone's and Megaera's influence on Polynices at Theb. 11.57-118. Statius' Polyxo has also commonly been recognized as a model for Silius' Fury Tisiphone who disguises as Murrus' wife Tiburna to drive the Saguntine women to suicide (Sil. 2.526-649).
93. Cf. Harper Smith (1987) 74, Dominik (1997) 33, and Gervais (2008) 39-48.
94. Dominik (2012) 198.
95. Cf. Schetter (1960) 6f., Vessey (1970) 45f., and Dominik (1994) 59.
96. On structural similarities, cf. Vessey (1973) 174 and Augoustakis (2010) 47.
97. For a list of the most important verbal echoes, cf. Vessey (1973) 175 n.2.
98. Cf. Vessey (1973) 175.
99. The death of their spouses is directly linked to their sons' death, but whereas Polyxo vows to kill her husband (Theb. 5.128-9a), whose death is only implied by the collective homicide (Theb. 5.491), Oedipus is unaware that he is indirectly announcing and causing Iocasta's suicide (Theb. 1.68-72), which is explicitly described (Theb. 11.634-47).

100. Cf. Vessey (1973) 174. Tisiphone's vengeful ascent to earth after Oedipus' speech strongly resembles Venus' descent from heaven after the exclamation of the Lemnian men in Valerius (VF. 2.115-25).
101. Vessey (1973) 174.
102. Oedipus delivers the programmatic first speech of the *Thebaid* and Polyxo the first embedded speech of Hypsipyle's Lemnian narrative. See also Hubert (2013) 120f.
103. Cf. Theb. 1.240b-1a *meruere tuae, meruere tenebrae / ultorem sperare Iovem* and Theb. 5.133b-4a *deus hos, deus ultor in iras / adportat coeptisque favet*. See also Dominik (1994) 25-2 and McNelis (2007) 130.
104. See also Bernstein (2008) 99f., Gervais (2008) 40f., Augoustakis (2010) 47, and Chinn (2015) 334.
105. Cf. Schetter (1960) 7 and Hershkowitz (1997) 37.
106. Cf. Soerink (2014) 184 and Chinn (2015) 334.
107. See also Hershkowitz (1998) 38, Augoustakis (2010) 84f., Chinn (2013) 332-4, and Hubert (2013) 109-26.
108. Cf. Vessey (1973) 160, Dominik (1994) 130-3, Pollmann (2004) 46f. and Bernstein (2008) 5.
109. Chinn (2015) 334.
110. See also Ganiban (2007) 141.
111. Cf. Appendix, fig. 4. The parallel between Hypsipyle's and by extension Polyxo's speech and that of the famously unreliable narrator Sinon (Aen. 2.108-44) calls the veracity of Polyxo's claims into question and especially the report of Venus' words. For verbal echoes, cf. Highet (1972) 247f. and Ganiban (2007) 75 n.14.
112. Due to Polyxo's direct involvement, her age is not an attribute of wisdom and experience as for her Virgilian and Argonautic counterparts, but it is primarily a personal factor (Theb. 5.106b-8) that increases her anxiety about her fading fertility. For a discussion of Polyxo's age, cf. Vessey (1973) 179. On the contrast between Valerius' young Neaera and Statius' aged Polyxo, cf. Harper Smith (1987) 74.
113. See also Vessey (1985) 45f.
114. Vessey (1973) 180. On the Lemnian women's sexual aggression in Aeschylus' *Hypsipyle*, cf. the Apollonian scholiast (ARh. 1.769-73). See also Dominik (1994) 5 and Nugent (1996) 60.
115. On Statius' use of animal imagery to reflect dehumanization, cf. Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 172-205.
116. See also Delarue (2000) 451, Keith (2000) 33, and Augoustakis (2010) 49.
117. Cf. Theb. 5.70 *protinus a Lemno teneri fugistis Amores*. Hypsipyle later describes her forced union with Jason and her own motherhood in similar terms: Theb. 5.465 *duroque sub hospite mater / nomen avi renovo*. Without the Argonautic intertexts, Polyxo's proposal would appear extreme, if not illogical. Cf. Krumbholz (1954) 134, Vessey (1973) 179, Nugent (1996) 59, and Gervais (2015) 227f.
118. On the tradition of Polyxo as mother of the Danaides (Apollod. 2.1.5.), cf. Höfer (1909) 2745, 33-34 s.v. 'Polyxo' (no.3). On fatal marriages in the *Thebaid* and their special importance for the Argives and Thebans, cf. Thome (1993) 162, Bernstein (2015) 147, and Gervais (2015) 228.
119. Theb. 5.125b *decus et solacia patris* is echoed by Hypsipyle's lament over Opheltis (Theb. 5.609b-10a *o rerum et patriae solamen ademptae / servitiique decus*). See also Soerink (2014) 77f. and Gervais (2015) 228.
120. Cf. Nugent (1996) 60.
121. Cf. Lipscomb (1909) 116.
122. Cf. VF. 1.245b-7 *deus haec, deus omine dextro / imperat ... / Iuppiter*. See also Vessey (1973) 175, Gervais (2008) 36, and Walter (2014) 213.
123. Cf. Harper Smith (1987) 78, Gervais (2008) 32, and Walter (2014) 213.
124. Vessey (1973) 181.

125. Gervais (2008) 17.
126. Cf. Hypsipyle's attribution of Opheltes' death to Venus: Theb. 5.621f. *numquam impune per umbras / attonitae mihi visa Venus*. See also Lewis (1936) 50-2, Vessey (1973) 179-81, Feeney (1991) 375f., Brown (1994) 119f., Dominik (1994) 54f., McNelis (2007) 90, Gervais (2008) 28-32, and Soerink (2014) 140.
127. Cf. Schetter (1960) 55, Vessey (1973) 180f., and Gervais (2008) 17.
128. Dee (2013) 193. See also Ganiban (2007) 78.
129. Venus' *quid perditis aevum?* (Theb. 5.136b) and Polyxo's *quin o miserae, dum tempus agi rem / consulite* (Theb. 5.140b-1a) correspond to VF. 2.325 *dum vires utero maternaque sufficit aetas*. See also VF. 2.114 *has agimus longi famulas tibi praemia belli*.
130. Polyxo's claim confirms Valerius' version in which Venus forces swords into the hands of the Lemnian women (VF. 2.209-15) and drives them to murder their husbands (VF. 2.216-41).
131. Cf. Vessey (1973) 172, Gervais (2008) 68f., and Walter (2014) 212.
132. The affective gemination *hoc ferrum stratis, hoc, credite, ferrum / imposuit* (Theb. 5.140b-1a) recalls Theb. 5.133b-4a *deus hos, deus ultor in iras / adportat coeptisque favet* and *Bistonides veniunt fortasse maritae* (Theb. 5.142b) the more assertive proclamation in VF. 2.322-3 *fatis haec, credite, puppis / advenit*, VF. 2.147 *iamque aderunt, thalamisque tuis Threissa propinquat*, and VF. 2.158a *iam veniet durata gelu*.
133. Vessey (1973) 180. See also Dominik (1997) 33.
134. Hershkowitz (1998) 48. See also Theb. 12.529 *ipsae autem nondum trepidae sexumve fatentur*. On gender differentiation in the *Thebaid*, cf. Krumbholz (1954) 134 and Thome (1993) 162.
135. Cf. Götting (1969) 76, Vessey (1985) 45f., Soerink (2014) 77, Walter (2014) 213, and Gervais (2015) 228.
136. Cf. Theb. 5.192b-3a *dederat mites Cytherea suprema / nocte viros*. See also Krumbholz (1954) 134, Vessey (1973) 174, Dominik (1997) 31-4, Gibson (2004) 158f., McNelis (2007) 90, and Walter (2014) 211.
137. Schetter (1960) 55. See also Vessey (1973) 174f., Gibson (2004) 158f., and McNelis (2007) 90.
138. According to the Apollonian scholiast (Schol. ARh. 1.769), Statius follows the accounts of Sophocles and Aeschylus. See also Krumbholz (1954) 134, Harper Smith (1987) 142, and Gervais (2008) 15.
139. The simultaneous soothing of the storm (Theb. 5.420-44) strongly suggests divine influence. See also Vessey (1973) 177 and Gervais (2008) 106f.
140. Cf. Krumbholz (1954) 134 and Thome (1993) 162.
141. NRSA = Narrative report of a speech act.
142. M = Monologue with no reply.
143. G = General interlocution
144. D = Dialogue
145. The length of the speeches is calculated in metrical half feet. No distinction is made between a trochaic word and a monosyllabic word of one-half foot.
146. Medea is the only mortal female speaker whose occurrence is not confined to a single book (the number of books is indicated by *).
147. L1 = level 1 : primary narrator.
148. L2 = level 2 : secondary narrator.
149. L3 = level 3 : tertiary narrator.
150. L4 = level 4 : quaternary narrator.

ABSTRACTS

This paper examines the main similarities and differences in the portrayal of the minor mortal female character Polyxo in Apollonius Rhodius' and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* as well as Statius' *Thebaid*. In a close reading of the three epics, Polyxo is identified as the key character of the Lemnian episode. Even though she speaks only once in *oratio recta* and merely appears in *propria persona* in one section of the episode, Polyxo is the driving force of the Lemnian narrative and her words contain striking intra- and intertextual allusions which draw attention to the drastic change her character undergoes from Apollonius' to Statius' adaption of the myth. The comparative analysis of her character portrayal reveals a high level of intertextual engagement and shows that a full appreciation and understanding of the respective Polyxo character and its function in the Lemnian episode and the epic plot as a whole is impossible without a careful examination of its intertexts which can retrospectively affect the interpretation and create a new meaning. As Polyxo's portrayal is inextricably linked to the depiction of the goddess Venus, the changes in her characterization are not only the result of intertextual rivalry, but they are also reflective of the use and function of the divine apparatus in the three epics under discussion.

INDEX

Keywords: Apollonius, *Argonautica*, council scenes, Hercules, Hypsipyle, intertextuality, Lemnos, narratology, Polyxo, speech presentation, Statius, *Thebaid*, Valerius, Venus