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RICHARD HUNTER

εἰς ἔτος ἐξ ἔτεος γλυκερώτεροι: *The Argonautica*
after Hermann Fränkel

In the first edition (1949) of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* E. A. Barber regretted that Apollonius' «passion for completeness had ruined the artistic effect of all but the third book»; despite attractive powers of description, «Apollonius' characterisation is weak, Jason in particular being a colourless figure, and the poem lacks all unity except that inherent in the theme itself». In partially revising Barber for the second edition (1970) – not all that long ago – C. A. Trypanis added some emphasis to the positive aspects, but essentially the picture was the same: «... as an epic the work is unsuccessful. The poet did not succeed in moulding into a whole the abundant erudite material he had collected; too often the narrative falls into long disjointed, soulless passages ... Apollonius is weak in characterisation. Jason ... is highly uninspiring and bloodless, completely lacking the energy of a heroic leader. Even Medea has no unity of character ... and has little real epic grandeur ... There is no whole-hearted, credulous admiration of the great past, but rather an attitude of coolly critical superiority, and this does not help in the writing of epic». In the third edition (1996), however, the *Argonautica* has become «a brilliant and disturbing achievement ... shot through with intelligence and deep ironies». More than one reason for this change may be considered. It could be, of course, that the contributor to the third edition has seriously over-rated the poem, but enthusiastic admiration of the *Argonautica* is in fact now more the critical rule than the exception. The recent revolution – no less grand term will do – in Apollonian studies is one of the most interesting events of the last thirty or so years in Greek studies, and any full consideration of it would involve broad issues of intellectual and cultural history. From a narrower, philological perspective, however, the significant landmarks are easy to identify.

* This is a lightly revised version of the lecture delivered to the colloquium; the text is much as it was delivered in the spring of 1997, and footnotes and bibliographical references have been kept to an absolute minimum. Some of the themes of this essay will receive more expanded treatment in the relevant chapters of a book on Hellenistic poetry which Marco Fantuzzi and myself are currently preparing. My thanks to Roberto Pretagostini for his invitation to speak at the colloquium and his hospitality in Rome, and to Marco Fantuzzi for his comments on, and an Italian translation of, an earlier version.

If the text and exegesis of Francis Vian is rightly the starting-point for all contemporary work on the *Argonautica*, much of the impetus to recent study can be traced to the publication in 1961 of Hermann Fränkel's Oxford Classical Text, a volume that fulfilled an undertaking (*Praefatio*, p. xxi) which the young Fränkel had made to Wilamowitz. Fränkel's brilliantly intelligent work laid bare a crucial fact about the *Argonautica*, which we now take for granted, but only because we are all the beneficiaries of Fränkel's work: the *Argonautica* is a very difficult poem. The text itself, let alone its interpretation, bristles with problems, and Fränkel was only too well aware (and indeed proud) that he had left the poem much more difficult than he found it (*Praefatio*, p. xx). Many of these problems have been, or may in the future be, alleviated by the traditional methods of textual criticism; the numerous papyri, which still await proper or, in some cases, any publication, and the rich indirect tradition are just two indicators of the size of the task which still confronts us. Other apparent problems to which Fränkel pointed may not be strictly textual (in the narrow sense), though they include some which he tried to solve by radical transposition of verses, but seem to require understanding of Apollonius' narrative techniques rather than emendation. For this task, the first requirement was an appreciation that the *Argonautica* was not merely difficult, it was also different in both technique and sensibility from archaic and classical poetry. Time after time Fränkel put his finger on things which demanded explanation, and his edition left behind it a scholarly agenda which would take decades to complete. The ever increasing bibliography on the *Argonautica*¹, and the sophistication of much recent work on the poem, is Fränkel's real legacy, even if the study of the poem has now gone in directions which Fränkel himself never imagined; much, however, of his agenda, as set out in the Oxford Classical Text and the *Noten zu den Argonautika des Apollonios* of 1968, remains with us as uncompleted business.

Let us consider first, though distinctions are here more than usually artificial, the poetics of the *Argonautica*. The assumptions upon which the earlier editions of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* judged and condemned the *Argonautica* ultimately derive from classical criticism, particularly Aristotle's *Poetics* and [Longinus]' *On the Sublime*. Unity, grandeur, 'soullessness' are concepts which may be easily traced to such criticism: 'Longinus', for example, regarded Apollonius as uninspired, if faultless (ἀπρωτος, 33. 4). One reason for the change in critical attitudes to the *Argonautica* is a

¹ An up-to-date bibliography has been prepared by Martijn Cuypers of the University of Leiden; it can be accessed at: <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/gltc/hellenistic.bibl/hellenistic.bibl.html>.



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² Richard Hei of the long spee *Argonautica*, par
³ Cf. Aristot. I

the starting-point for the impetus to recent work on Fränkel's Oxford edition (*Praefatio*, p. xxi) Fränkel's brilliantly argued *Argonautica*, which we should be the beneficiaries of. The text itself, let alone Fränkel's commentary, was only too good for the poem much more than these problems have. Additional methods of criticism, if proper or, in some cases, are just two indicators of apparent problems to solve (in the narrow sense), a radical transposition of Apollonius' narrative. The first requirement was not difficult, it was also a matter of and classical poetry. The problems which demanded a new agenda which would be a bibliography on the poem, in which work on the poem, is now gone in such, however, of his and the *Noten zu den* as uncompleted

are more than usually conditions upon which the text is read and condemned the text, particularly Aristotle's criticism, 'soullessness' are the result of criticism: 'Longinus', for example, is soulless (ἀπρωτος, 33. 4). The text of the *Argonautica* is a

recognition – which Fränkel shared – that Aristotle might not be the most appropriate, or at least the only, critical guide to Hellenistic epic. The application of Aristotelian 'tests' to the *Argonautica* does, of course, throw into relief various important aspects of the poetics and narratology of the Hellenistic epic, and the importance of 'classical criticism' as a heuristic tool must not be underestimated. Thus, for example, Apollonius' use of direct speech, particularly of single speeches which receive no reply – a technique which looks forward to the *Aeneid*², can only be properly appreciated against the background of ancient discussion of Homeric practice³. We are, on the other hand, severely handicapped by our very considerable ignorance of the literary aesthetics of the early Hellenistic period; whereas the papyri of Herculaneum are slowly teaching us more about the critical context in which Vergil wrote, the *Argonautica* has not benefitted from any really comparable gain in our knowledge of Greek poetics. It is true that much work remains to be done in applying the aesthetics of the Homeric scholia (themselves not unimportantly influenced by Aristotelian ideas) to the narrative techniques of the *Argonautica*; important insights have already been achieved in such areas as Apollonius' practice with regard to similes, but it is my impression that we have so far barely scratched the surface. I suspect that the scholiastic categories, the various λύσεις, used to explain apparent puzzles in the Homeric text would shed interesting light on such areas as Apollonius' construction of character. The project would be a difficult and subtle one, for what is important is the intellectual structure which lies behind the scholiastic categories, not the categories themselves, but the prospect of real advance is there.

If students of the *Argonautica* are at a relative disadvantage with regard to the critical context in which the poem was written, there is always the implicit poetics of the poem itself, and here we have at least some comparative material to act as a control. Recent criticism has (rightly) identified much which the implicit poetics of the *Argonautica* has in common with Callimachean aesthetic principles, though it must also be admitted that too often Callimachus has been credited with a rigid poetic 'credo' which can be extracted from a few surviving poems and then used to test the 'Callimachean credentials' of any given text. The elite poetry of the third century was in fact far more diverse than was once thought, but an understandable concentration upon Callimachus must not be allowed to obscure broader horizons.

² Richard Heinze dismissed Apollonius as a possible model for Vergil in this matter because of the long speech exchanges in Book 3 (Heinze 1915, p. 413), but this is to ignore the rest of the *Argonautica*, particularly Book 4.

³ Cf. Aristot. *Poet.* 1460a 5-11; I have discussed this passage in Hunter 1993, p. 139.

Just as Hellenistic narrative is heir to the lyric tradition⁴, as well as to the epic, so also, as part of the gradually weakening boundaries between *mimesis* and *diegesis*, it is markedly 'dramatic'. The often-remarked debt of the third book of the *Argonautica*, in both subject and structure, to Attic drama must be set alongside such phenomena as the anonymous *Megara* (itself indebted to the *Argonautica*), a hexameter conversation between Heracles' wife and mother, which fashions a striking blend of the epic and dramatic traditions, and the *Alexandra* of Lycophron which offers a familiar tragic form, the messenger-speech, extended to the length of an independent tragedy⁵. Such 'dramatisations' of narrative reflect more than one literary development. On one hand, Hellenistic poetry is obsessively concerned with constructing its own 'literary history', in this case with the relationship between drama and the epic of which drama is the constructed descendant. Secondly, the increased circulation of written texts and an ever-growing reception of poetry through reading may be both a cause and a symptom of these new poetic forms. Some – certainly not all – poets give particular emphasis to those features of the text which suggest 'dramatic' presentation, but just as common is the exploration of the creative tension between modes of reception. Such an exploration may be on a relatively small scale. In Theocritus' account of the night when the baby Heracles strangled the snakes, 'dramatisation', in the form of interplay between speech and narrative, is used to mark the speed and confusion of events. The urgency of Alkmene's worry when she hears Iphikles crying out is marked by the ellipse of a verb to introduce her words (Theocr. 24. 34-35):

Ἀλκμήνη δ' ἄκουσε βοῶς καὶ ἐπέγρετο πρῶτα·
 «ἄνσταθ', Ἀμφιτρυῶν· ἐμὲ γὰρ δέος ἴσχει ὀκνηρόν·
 ἄνστα, κτλ.»

Her words 'dramatically' break into the expected narrative of 'addressing her husband she spoke as follows' (*uel sim.*). It is typical of Hellenistic poetry that such a technique, which looks innovative, had Homeric precedents which were well known to ancient scholars⁶; poets tended to expand the significance of the unusual, rather than to innovate *ex nihilo*. So too at 68, where the distraught Alkmene begs Teiresias to tell her the truth, we have both an unusual (though certainly not unparalleled) mode of speech introduction, almost an unmediated move from the indirect to the direct, and a speech which does not begin at the start of a hexameter (Theocr. 24. 67-69):

⁴ Perrotta 1923 remains fundamental.

⁵ On these texts cf. Hunter 1998.

⁶ Cf. Hunter 1993, p. 141, with bibliography.

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Ἄλκμῆνα καλέσσασα χρέος κατέλεξε νεοχμόν,
 καί νιν ὑποκρίνεσθαι ὅπως τελέεσθαι ἔμελλεν
 ἠνώγει· «μηδ' εἴ τι θεοὶ νοέοντι πονηρόν,
 αἰδόμενός με κρύπτε· κτλ.»

Most striking perhaps is the sequence at 47-51 as Amphitryon seeks to
 rouse the sleeping household (Theocr. 24. 47-51):

δμῶας δὴ τότε ἄυσεν ὕπνον βαρὺν ἐκφυσῶντας·
 «οἴσετε πῦρ ὅτι θάσσον ἀπ' ἐσχαρεῶνος ἐλόντες,
 δμῶες ἔμοι, στιβαροὺς δὲ θυρᾶν ἀνακόψατ' ὀχῆας».
 «ἄνστατε, δμῶες ταλασίφρονες· αὐτὸς αὐτεῖ».
 ἦ ῥα γυνὰ Φοίνισσα μύλαις ἐπι κοῖτον ἔχουσα.

Amphitryon's words are given a verse of introduction (47), but the cry
 of the servant woman follows immediately, and αὐτὸς αὐτεῖ, «master's
 calling», at the end of 50 comes as no less of a surprise, though one
 somewhat concealed if the text is read silently rather than recited, than
 when Amykos suddenly answers Polydeukes without narrative introduc-
 tion at the start of the extraordinary stichomythia in *Idyll* 22. Pause after v.
 49 suggests the lack of response to Amphitryon's instructions, but whether
 in fact ἄνστατε, δμῶες ταλασίφρονες, «get up, long-suffering servants» at 24.
 50 is spoken by Amphitryon or the servant-woman is a matter to which
 commentators should pay more attention⁷. In any event, the mimetic and
 dramatic quality of the text should not be in doubt. The 'dramatic'
 structures of the *Argonautica* are on a quite different scale, but a proper
 appreciation of them remains to be written. It is not merely a question of
 tracing Apollonius' 'sources' in classical drama, but of seeing how the
 juxtaposition of modes itself 'dramatises' the evolution of epic form from
 Homer through Attic drama and on to the combination of the two in
 Apollonius. There are, moreover, obvious implications here for Vergil's
Aeneid. Nor, of course, must we restrict too narrowly the concept of 'drama'.
 Passages such as Apollonius' "Catalogue of Argonauts" clearly exploit the
 tension between an oral form *par excellence* and the inevitability of written
 reception; the question of the 'performance' of the epic is also relevant here,
 though in this area it is difficult to progress much beyond speculation.

The upshot is that our conception of "the poetics of the *Argonautica*"
 must not be too narrowly focused upon what have traditionally been

⁷ Cf. Legrand 1898, p. 414. If spoken by Amphitryon, ταλασίφρων would be an amusingly
 epicised version of the abusive use of τάλας; if spoken by the servant, it would express the
 shared solidarity of the downtrodden. With either speaker, pause after v. 49 suggests that
 Amphitryon's words of 48-49 have had no effect on the «deeply sleeping» (47) slaves.

considered the principal concerns of Alexandrian poetry; Hellenistic poetics and poetic technique embrace a far wider range of questions than those alluded to in Callimachus' "Reply to the Telchines". We must always consider the *Argonautica* against the full backdrop of what we know of Hellenistic literary culture. Those who write about the *Argonautica* – or encourage others to do so – must be constantly alert to the wider picture.

In the field of style, much remains to be done, despite the excellent work of Malcolm Campbell, Enrico Livrea, Antonios Rengakos, Francis Vian and others. One potentially productive area is the evolution of Apollonius' style, and not just verbal style, narrowly understood. I would, for example, very much welcome a study of Apollonius' similes which paid more attention than did the relevant pages of my 1993 book to possible internal differences across the text⁸. With a few notable exceptions – in particular the work of Marco Fantuzzi on speech introductions – we have little but impressions to guide us. My impression, like that of many others, is that the style of Book 4 differs significantly from that of Book 1: it is denser, more experimental and more allusive – the mere fact that I have to resort to these impressionistic terms shows how badly some serious work in this area is needed. If these impressions are correct, then (broadly speaking) two kinds of explanation may be entertained: either we are dealing with an evolution over time or Apollonius chose to mark the progress of his story by a stylistic, as well as a narrative, differentiation.

The two kinds of explanation are not, of course, necessarily incompatible or mutually exclusive. The first explanation is in fact entirely plausible. It is likely enough that the period of composition and public recitation of the *Argonautica* was, even by ancient standards, a long one, and Book 4 may have been 'published' long after Book 1⁹. Using the other explanatory model, we would say that the narrative and emotional complexities of the return journey, a journey which both comes very close to the *nostos* of Odysseus¹⁰ and departs from it as radically as it does from the outward sailing of Books 1 and 2, are marked out in the texture of the words and the syntax, with the inevitable complications of poetic voice which ensue. It is, of course, tempting and must be at least partly right to see this difference in terms of increasing distance from traditional epic style, in an ever-deepening confidence in the possible resources of written epic. Important

⁸ The recent study of Reitz 1996, does not address this issue directly.

⁹ The chronology of Apollonius needs a fresh look (one has been foreshadowed by J. D. Morgan of The University of Delaware). I have considered the possibility that 4. 1019-1022 echoes Callimachus' "Lock of Berenice", composed after 246/5 B. C., in Hunter 1995, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰ It is a great pity that C. M. Dufner's 1988 Princeton dissertation, *The "Odyssey" in the "Argonautica": Reminiscence, Revision, Reconstruction*, has not been published.

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observations have been made about such matters as avoidance of repetition and 'formulariness' in the *Argonautica*, but much work remains to be done. If I may risk another subjective impression, I would characterise the difference as that between certain stylistic 'experiments' in Books 1 and 2 and an all-pervasive feature of Book 4. For the former, the two songs of Orpheus – the cosmology of Book 1 and the "Hymn to Apollo" of Book 2 – are the most familiar instances of such 'experiments' with style and voice. Here the most instructive parallel comes from a text which may be nearly contemporary – the song which Lykidas imagines that Tityros will sing for him in Theocritus, *Idyll* 7 (vv. 72-89). As in Apollonius, the Theocritean text moves from a series of themes in indirect speech to a direct address (vv. 83-89) which may come from Tityros' song, or may be an intrusion of Lykidas himself. 'Song within song' is obviously a particular concern of third-century poets, but the persistent layering of poetic voice, interplay of direct and indirect speech, shifting focalisation and array of characters in *Argonautica* 4 suggests that we have moved beyond such 'set pieces' to the exploration of a new narrative style.

There is a further matter of importance raised by this passage. Theocritus' serial juxtaposition in Lykidas' song of similar 'myths' (those of Daphnis and Komatas)¹¹ depends in part upon what we might call a 'scholarly' sense of collection and classification; the collection, writing down and comparison of mythical material – part of what Marcel Detienne called «the invention of mythology» – belongs to the great systematisation of knowledge which so characterises the Hellenistic and Roman periods. So too for Apollonius also, stories are interwoven and connect in ways which illustrate the synoptic possibilities opened up by the scholarly activities of the third century. The fate of Thoas, saved by his daughter Hypsipyle, is a small but telling example (1. 623-626):

καὶ τὸν μὲν ἐς Οἰνοίην ἐρύσαντο
 πρόσθεν, ἀτὰρ Σίκινόν γε μεθύστερον ἀδηθείσαν
 νῆσον, ἑπακτῆρες, Σικίνου ἄπο, τὸν ῥα Θόαντι
 νηϊᾶς Οἰνοίη νύμφη τέκεν εὐνηθείσα.

The remarkable word order, mannered chiasmus and rhyming *spondeiazontes* mark this passage as indeed, in Fränkel's words, «extremer hellenistisch». What is important, however, is that the style of the passage responds to the 'parenthetic' narrative of which it is a part, and reflects a narrative vision through which the poet creates families of stories and moves freely back and forth through the sea of myth. All stories conjure up other stories, just as an

¹¹ Or, with a different interpretation, Daphnis, "the goatherd", and Komatas.

aetiology may, though not always, conjure up a rival narrative (cf. 4. 982 ff. – Drepane). Although this kaleidoscopic perspective has, of course, roots in archaic poetry, we would not be wrong, I think, to be reminded of certain of the techniques of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (another later text whose links with the *Argonautica* might well repay detailed investigation). In the Hellenistic age myths, like customs, constitutions and courtesans, were sorted by various methods of ordering and recorded for posterity. The Alexandrian version of this activity almost always involved not merely collection, but also the exercise of judgement, *krisis*, whether the matter was the authenticity of a work of literature, the explanation of a Homeric *hapax* or the origin of a curious custom, all activities dear to Apollonius' heart. Aetiology as we find it in Callimachus and Apollonius is, at one level, the manifestation in the world of myth and custom of an all-pervasive habit of mind in Alexandrian *élite* culture. This is, of course, not to say that it is a mode unique to this culture; far from it – there is much, for example, that recalls the critical methods of Herodotus¹² – but it is crucial to the appreciation of third-century poetry that the aetiological mode is a very self-conscious transference to poetry of a manner deriving from, and still bearing the marks of, other modes of discourse. Unsurprisingly, this transference may lead to a richly ironic or humorous effect, though this must not be assumed for every case. Suffice it for the moment to say that we still lack a major study of Apollonius' myth-making; what is required is not merely the collection of his sources, their variant versions, and the choices (and possibly innovations) which Apollonius may have made, but an attempt to see Apollonius' myths within the intellectual, cultural, and political horizons and thought-patterns of the third-century. It is only fair to add that the study of 'the mythic' in *all* Hellenistic poetry is still at a very preliminary stage.

Epic 'sensibility' (or whatever one wants to call it) is a subject which no reader of Apollonius can ignore and one upon which much remains to be said, although it is very hard to discuss without drifting off into the vaguest kind of impressionism. What, for example, are we to say of the sequence at 1. 261-316 as Jason bids farewell to his mother? The whole is dominated by memories of the death of and lamentation for Hector¹³, and indeed central to any appreciation of the scene must be the attempt to say *why* it strikes us as both like and unlike archaic narrative, when so many of its features derive from Homer. The simile of the young girl clinging in tears to her aged nurse is justly renowned (1. 268-277)¹⁴:

¹² Cf. Murray 1972.

¹³ Cf., e. g., Clauss 1993, pp. 40-52.

¹⁴ Recent discussion and bibliography in Reitz 1996, pp. 7-15.

μήτηρ δ' ὡς τὰ
ὡς ἔχετο κλαί
οιόθεν ἀσπασ
μύρεται, ἦ οὐ
ἀλλ' ὑπὸ μητρ
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μήτηρ δ' ὡς τὰ πρῶτ' ἐπεχεύατο πήχῃε παιδί,
 ὡς ἔχετο κλαίουσ' ἀδινώτερον, ἤνυτε κούρη
 οἰόθεν ἀσπασίως πολιὴν τροφὸν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα
 μύρεται, ἦ οὐκ εἰσιν ἔτ' ἄλλοι κηδεμονίης,
 ἀλλ' ὑπὸ μητρικῇ βίον βαρὺν ἠγηλάζει·
 καὶ ἐ νέον πολέεσσιν ὀνειδέσιν ἐστυφέλιξε,
 τῇ δέ τ' ὀδυρομένη δέδετα κέαρ ἔνδοθεν ἄτη,
 οὐδ' ἔχει ἐκφλύξαι τόσον γόνον ὅσον ὄρεχθεῖ·
 ὡς ἀδινὸν κλαίεσκεν ἐὼν παῖδ' ἀγκὰς ἔχουσα
 Ἄλκιμέδη κτλ.

The primary models are the narrator's simile describing Odysseus weeping at Demodokos' song of the fall of Troy (*Od.* 8. 523-531) and Achilles' simile describing the weeping Patroklos (*Il.* 16. 7-11). Odysseus was compared to a woman weeping over the corpse of her husband; like that woman, Odysseus is a survivor, but although (as Demodokos' song has reminded him) the world in which he survives is bereft of comrades he loved, his future is in fact not nearly so bleak as that of the widow (and of all Trojan widows). Alkimedē, on the other hand, weeps like a young girl whose only solace is an old nurse; she is about to lose her only consolation (Jason), and the simile explores with great insight the complementary vulnerability of the old and the young. Let me note just two points of technique here. First, we, like Fränkel, might wonder about ἀσπασίως, "gladly", in 270. The young girl feels the paradoxical pleasure and relief of tears and the encircling comfort of her only friend, but what pleasure could Alkimedē find in her present situation? Are we to say that the adverb applies to the girl of the simile but not to Alkimedē? If so, how close is this technique to that of Homer, and should we put this down as a sign of relatively early composition, contrasting the simile of the young girl escaping from the rich house at 4. 35-40? On the other hand, however, the end of the passage seems to offer a radical departure from inherited technique. Jason tells his mother to remain quietly in the house and not to be a bad omen for the sailing; he then leaves the house «like Apollo». Of his mother nothing more is heard. We may contrast two Homeric scenes. In *Iliad* 6 Hector tells Andromache to get on with her work, and the poet tells us that she went in and wept with her maids (a significant difference from Hector's instructions), vv. 490-502; in *Odyssey* 1, in the Odyssean version of the Hector-Andromache scene, Telemachos tells his mother to go to her room and get on with her work, whereupon she too goes to her room and weeps, vv. 356-364 (cf. 21. 344-358). In Apollonius, however, Alkimedē's place is taken by the aged priestess Iphias who wants to address Jason as he proceeds through the town, but is prevented by the crowd and is left behind «as the old are by the young». It has been

plausibly argued¹⁵ that Iphias' rôle here is largely the invention of Apollonius himself, but my concern is only with the extraordinary manner in which the expected epic pattern is substituted by a similar, but profoundly different one. Fränkel was always concerned to see how Apollonius' technique was both like and unlike Homeric technique; despite the intense activity of recent years, we still lack a full study of this. It should not need to be said that such a study must concern itself with the relation between technique and meaning, not with technique alone.

It is indeed in the interplay of technique and meaning that some of Apollonius' most memorable effects are located. Let me consider briefly the Argonauts' doomed young host among the Doliones, Kyzikos. At the heart of the whole episode lies the double arrival on the peninsula – once openly to a hospitable reception (1. 961 ff.), and once by night, in ignorance and confusion, to be met with war (1. 1015 ff.). This doubleness, pointed by verbal and thematic repetition¹⁶, is played out in Kyzikos' life through the prophecy he has received (1. 969-971):

δὴ γὰρ οἱ ἔην φάτις, εὐδ' ἀν' ἴκωνται
ἀνδρῶν ἠρώων θεῖος στόλος, ἀντίκα τόν γε
μείλιχον ἀντίαν μηδὲ πτολέμοιο μέλεσθαι.

At one level, Kyzikos and his people reverse the pattern of Homer's Phaeacians who, despite their treatment of Odysseus, are described as very unwelcoming to strangers (*Od.* 6. 273-288, 7. 30-33)¹⁷. More particularly, the Phaeacian king, Alkinous, famously forgot «ancient oracles» which would have warned against universal hospitality (*Od.* 13. 171-178); not only does Kyzikos not forget *his* oracle, but he provides the Argonauts with supplies from his own resources (1. 968-969) in order to fulfil both its letter and spirit¹⁸. This is all to no avail, of course, as the warning of the oracle comes horribly true when the Argonauts 'arrive' for a second time and Kyzikos takes up arms against them¹⁹. It may be thought Apollonian, rather than

¹⁵ Cf. Nelis 1991.

¹⁶ Cf. the paired aetiologies (1. 953-960, 1019-1020); ἐυξείνωσ 963, ἐυξείνοισι 1018.

¹⁷ The link with Scherie is first established by Καλὸς ... Λιμὴν in 954, cf. *Od.* 6. 263.

¹⁸ 979, «he cast fear from his heart», and 1037-1038, «doubtless thinking that he was now beyond the reach of any grim disaster that the heroes could inflict», caused interpretative difficulties as early as the scholia. The various versions of the relations between the Argonauts and the Doliones which Apollonius found in his sources may indeed be relevant, but both passages may, more simply, refer back to the oracle Kyzikos had received: he knows that the arrival of a «god-sent expedition of heroic men» is a crucial moment, and however hard he has tried to carry out the instructions of the oracles, one can never be sure with oracles; and so it proved.

¹⁹ If there is any oracular ambiguity in the report of the oracle, it may lie in εὐδ' ἄν, 969: «when» or «whenever»?

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Homeric, that the misunderstanding and ultimate vindication of the oracle are not explicitly spelled out, though the repeated stress on the inescapability of fate (1030, 1035-1039) forces us to draw the appropriate lesson; what is clear, however, is that the technique reflects the familiar «cloud of unknowing» in which Apollonius' characters move²⁰. Technique and meaning are, as always, interdependent.

The same is, of course, true of techniques of allusion. Kyzikos' father-in-law, Merops of Perkote, is drawn from the *Iliad*, where he is a seer whose gifts led him to attempt to prevent his two sons going to the war; they would not listen, with predictably fatal consequences (*Il.* 2. 831-834, 11. 328-335). The Iliadic echo in 1. 975 is an ill-omen for the young king²¹, as perhaps also is the description of Kyzikos in 972, ἀρμοῖ²² που κάκείῳ ὑποσταχέσκεν ἴουλοι, if that is indeed borrowed from Callimachus, *Hecale* fr. 45. 1 Hollis (= 274 Pf.) ἀρμοῖ που κάκείῳ ἐπέτρεχεν ἄβροδς ἴουλος, and not *vice versa*, and if the Callimachean verse is a description by Hekale of one of her ill-fated sons or her now dead husband. The death of children would in fact lead into the childlessness motif of vv. 973-975, which continues the reversal of the Phaeacian pattern – there will be no 'Nausicaa' here – and whose pathos might seem "genuinely Hellenistic". Kleite and Kyzikos are so newly married that the doom which hangs over the passage evokes the topic of "death on the wedding night", so familiar from funerary epigram²³; so too, the particular misery of the childless dead is the other side of the many epigrams in which children are a source of consolation and pride for the dead (note παίδεσσιν ἀγαλλόμενος). Nevertheless, the brief sketch of Kyzikos' 'private life' owes most not to funerary epigram, but rather to the brief 'obituaries' of warriors which are such a feature of Iliadic battle-narrative, and this epic technique is itself an ill-omen for the king. More specifically, the picture of Kyzikos may evoke the story of Iphidamas (*Il.* 11. 221-247) who was killed by Agamemnon at Troy. Iphidamas had gone to war γήμας ἐκ θαλάμοιο, «after his marriage, straight from the wedding-chamber» (cf. *Arg.* 1. 978); by a curious coincidence (?), he left his ships at Perkote and proceeded on foot; he perished «far from the bride he had wooed, bringing help to his fellow-countrymen; he had known no joy from her (ἦς οὐ τι χάριν ἶδε, 11. 243), but had given much to win her: he had given a hundred cattle, then promised a further thousand, goats and sheep, from

²⁰ Cf., e. g., Hunter 1993, p. 79.

²¹ Cf., e. g., Clauss 1993, pp. 154-155. Whether we are to understand that Merops is responsible for Kyzikos' oracle, I do not know.

²² Text uncertain.

²³ The enjambement of 974-975, ἀκήροτος ... ὀδίνων, momentarily suggests that the marriage is not yet consummated, and 978 clearly evokes the wedding-night.

the vast flocks he pastured». The bT-scholia interpret v. 243 as in part a reference to the fact that Iphidamas and his wife had no children²⁴, and this, together with the huge bride-price (cf. *Arg.* 1. 977), brings us close to the story of Kyzikos. That allusion creates meaning is a truism, of course, but the subtlety of Apollonius' engagement with Homer means that this subject is far from exhausted: the future of Apollonius' characters is always somewhere already written in the poetry of the past.

If we return to Jason's departure from Iolkos, we can see that the substitution of Iphias for Alkimede invests the scene with a *generic* significance, pointed up explicitly by «as the old are by the young» (1. 315-316), which is at least not obvious in the primary archaic models; at one level, this is a guide to how we are to interpret what we read, and such authorial markers may be thought to be characteristic of the Hellenistic age. An extreme example is the famous simile of 2. 541-548 where the speed of the cloud-borne Athena as she travels to the area of the Clashing Rocks is compared to the speed of the thoughts of a homesick traveller, «as indeed we wretched men often do wander ...». The reworking of an Iliadic simile (*Il.* 15. 80-83) turns every reader into an Odysseus, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ πλάγχθη²⁵, thus inscribing within the epic itself the generic and didactic significance of epic poetry (the *Argonautica* no less than the Homeric poems) which is otherwise so clearly spelled out in the scholiastic and moralising traditions²⁶. The sympathy between ourselves and the characters of epic is now explicitly marked by the shared patterns which govern both their lives and ours (4. 1165-1169 is particularly noteworthy here). In very broad and simplifying terms, what might be called the 'particularity' of the archaic epic is replaced by a mode, which we might perhaps call 'exemplary', in which actions and scenes are *overtly* loaded with a cultural significance beyond the narrative which governs them; in the earlier period, the closest analogues for this mode are to be found in lyric and elegiac poetry, not in hexameter narrative.

The 'particularity' of Homer – and I would accept that the *Iliad* fits the model somewhat better than the *Odyssey* – consists in the depiction of a world composed of individually significant actions and speeches, and a form of what would later be called *enargeia* is the poet's principal weapon for allowing us access to that world. It might seem, but is not in fact, paradoxical that that *enargeia* depends, at least in part, upon the formularity

²⁴ Cf. Hunter 1989, p. 168 s., on *Arg.* 3. 656-664.

²⁵ Cf. Marzullo 1995-96. It is tempting also to associate this simile with the very processes of mental 'envisioning' necessary to read an epic description such as that of Athena on her cloud, cf. Reitz 1996, pp. 54-55. Cf. also Effe 1996, p. 297.

²⁶ Cf., e. g., Kaiser 1964.

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of language; formular language 'particularises' each action, in the sense of investing it with particular and independent narrative significance. Apollonius rejects formularity, and the narrative 'clarity' and epic distance which goes with it. Here are two similar examples from the early part of the poem. Immediately after the Catalogue we read (1. 234-237):

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δμῶεσσιν ἐπαρτέα πάντ' ἐτέτυκτο
 ὄσσα περ ἐντόνονται ἐπήρεες ἔνδοθι νῆες,
 εὖτ' ἂν ἄγη χρέος ἄνδρας ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα ναυτίλλεσθαι,
 δὴ τοτ' ἴσαν μετὰ νῆα δι' ἄστεος κτλ.

Are we to say that the heroic expedition is here 'reduced' to just another trading mission, or is Apollonius' concern again with generic 'exemplarity'? After all, even if his *Argo* was not the first ship, it is *the* ship *par excellence*. The men to whom the poet refers in 236 are not specified further with regard to the age in which they live, but I would guess that most ancient and modern readers would conjure for themselves a picture of sailors of Apollonius' own day, even if it seems to be the case that Apollonius elsewhere tries to archaïse with regard to the actual technology of sailing. Rather similar is a slightly later scene. The Argonauts feast on the beach on the evening prior to their departure (1. 457-461):

μετέπειτα δ' ἄμοιβαδὶς ἀλλήλοισι
 μυθεῦνθ' οἶά τε πολλὰ νέοι παρὰ δαίτι καὶ οἴνω
 τερπνῶς ἐπιόωνται, ὅτ' ἄατος ὕβρις ἀπίη.
 ἔνθ' αὖτ' Αἰσονίδης μὲν ἀμήχανος εἶν ἐοῖ αὐτῷ
 πορφύρεσκεν ἕκαστα, κατηφιόωντι εὐοικῶς.

Again, both the *generic* significance of the scene is made explicit – and again «the young men» are most naturally understood as not bound to a particular time – and the poet refuses to 'particularise' Jason's behaviour by investing it with a clear significance. The broad distinction between Homer and Apollonius in this matter is, I hope, clear, however unnuanced this brief discussion has been. Any full examination of this matter would, of course, have to consider the relation between such techniques and Homeric practice in similes, where it is often thought that the poet moves forward into 'his own world'; there is, at least, no obvious Apollonian equivalent for the famous Homeric «men of the present day» who are always compared unfavourably with the heroes of the central narrative. Such broad questions of epic time seem to me to offer in fact an exciting area for future research.

We now know enough about Apollonius' technique at the level of detail to enable the argument to move forward, and I very much hope that the next major study of "Apollonius and Homer" will indeed take that step, but

I am also conscious of the fact that Apollonian studies stand at the crossroads. The subject has indeed come on in huge leaps in recent decades, but there is such a thing as scholarly fashion and there is a danger that interest will shift elsewhere, perhaps in the mistaken belief that the most important part of the scholarly task has been done (or is currently being done). Important and familiar subjects such as "Jason's heroism", *eros* and epic, Medea's psychology, and the reception of the *Argonautica* at Rome will, I hope, continue to attract students of the poem, but the more 'technical' *desiderata* (papyri, even perhaps a new text...) are perhaps in greater danger. Beyond these, no challenge is more pressing or more difficult than the placing of the *Argonautica* within its cultural context. It is now widely accepted that there is a contemporary dimension to Apollonius' epic, visible in the religious and social world it depicts and in the values it propagates. There is a great deal on these subjects to be learned from a close reading of Vian's editions, and the now little read volume of René Roux (*Le Problème des Argonautes* [Paris 1949]) has the great merit of making one think about the relation between the Hellenistic Aegean and that sea in which the Argonauts sailed. In his admirable recent survey of such issues, Gregor Weber observes that «Das Werk des Apollonios Rhodios scheint beinahe gänzlich frei von aktuellen Bezügen auf die Herrscher zu sein»²⁷. As far as the *Argonautica* is concerned, there is an obvious sense in which this is true, particularly if we take a narrow view of the *aktuell*. If it is true in a wider sense also – if, for example, I was wrong to find the Ptolemies lurking in Book 4 – then surely we should ask "why?", for the fact, if fact it is, is more surprising than at first appears, and becomes *very* surprising once we have brought the *Aeneid* into the picture. Be that as it may, we await a proper study of how the geography, real and mythic, of the poem is to be mapped on to the intellectual and political horizons of the Ptolemaic period. The available evidence is much scarcer and the set of problems entirely different than, say, confronts those who seek to set Attic drama within its cultural and intellectual context, but there is no source as rich as the *Argonautica* if we wish to understand the *mentalité* of the Greek *élite* of the third century: οὐ φουκτὰ κέλευθα.

²⁷ Weber 1993, p. 409.

- J. J. Clauss, *The B*
 B. Effe, *Tradition*
 «Hermes» 12
 R. Heinze, *Virgils*
 R. Hunter, *Apollon*
 R. Hunter, *The Ar*
 R. Hunter, *The Di*
 R. Hunter, *Before*
 G. C. Wakke
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 Ph.-E. Legrand, *E*
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