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HOMERIC ECHOES IN APOLLONIUS RHODIUS' *ARGONAUTICA*

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APOLLONIUS' adaptations of Homer may be conveniently studied under the headings (a) verbal usages, (b) situations, and (c) similes, the last category being important enough to warrant separate treatment, even though it clearly merges with the preceding one. In sifting the voluminous material on Apollonius, considerable selectivity has been required in order to avoid repeating what others have adequately expounded. Among the more gratifying features of recent work is the abandonment of the once-fashionable view that Apollonius' deviations from strict Homeric usage are normally due to misunderstanding and not to his belief that the Homeric style could remain a living force, or rather be recreated as one, in the Hellenistic age.

(a) Verbal Usages

There would be little point in listing here the innumerable instances of Apollonius' absolute fidelity to Homeric usage. It is hoped, rather, that the grouping together of deviations below will suggest a scheme of adaptation on Apollonius' part. Generally, there is a clear relationship between Homer's and Apollonius' use of a word. Even in cases where Apollonius has rescued a Homeric word from centuries of desuetude, his modifications normally

reflect the recognized linguistic processes which would have been at work had the word been in constant use. However, before this is illustrated at length, some exceptions, in which there is no real relationship between Homer's and Apollonius' usage, will be examined.

There is no possibility of Apollonius' having misunderstood *δοάσσατο* ("seemed") in the recurring Homeric formula *ᾧδε δέ οἱ φρονέοντι δοάσσατο κέρδιον εἶναι* (*Il.* 14. 23, *Od.* 24. 239 *et passim*), yet *δοάσσατο* in Apollonius is semantically connected with Homeric *δοιή* ("doubt" in *ἐν δοιῇ* at *Il.* 9. 230), Bacchylides' *δοιάζω*, and Thucydides' *ἐνδοιάζω*. Apollonius experiments with various uses: *δοάσσατο* (mid., absol.), "she was perplexed" (3. 770); *ὅππότε δοῦπον / . . . δοάσαι* (act., trans.), "whenever she fancied (that she heard) a noise" (3. 954–55); *λεύσσειν / . . . δοιάζοντο* (mid., with inf.), "they fancied that they saw" (4. 575–76); *οὐδ' ἔτι βουλὰς / ἄλλῃ δοιάζεσκεν* (act., iterative, but not necessarily trans., despite the implication in LSJ), "she wavered no more" (3. 818–19). To a Homeric purist, this experimenting must have appeared as a veritable nightmare. It is at least an isolated one, and Apollonius' meaning is always clear. Another total deviation from Homeric usage occurs at *Arg.* 1. 184, *διερῇ . . . κελεύθῳ* ("watery path," referring to the sea). Homer uses

διερός twice: οὐκ ἔσθ' οὗτος ἀνὴρ διερός βρότος (probably in the sense of "alive") at *Od.* 6. 201, and διερώ ποδί ("nimble") at *Od.* 9. 43, but the regular meaning in later literature is "watery," so that in this case Apollonius is being independent of Homer but not in the least quaint. When Apollonius writes κορύνας ἄζηχέας ("seasoned clubs") at 2. 99, he is using the adjective in an un-Homeric way.¹ In Homer it means "unceasing," as in ἄζηχης ὀρυμαγδός (*Il.* 17. 741), but Apollonius seems to have been captivated by an obscure alternative etymology connecting the word with ἄζα, "heat." The "correct" Homeric word at *Arg.* 2. 99 would have been ἄζαλέος, which, interestingly, Apollonius uses of the sun with the active sense of "scorching" at 4. 679, again defying Homeric usage.

It is worth studying two adjectives whose meaning in Apollonius is different from, but associated with, the Homeric one. Always used of tangible objects in Homer, ἐϋσταθής means "well-based" or "stable" (e.g., of μέγαρον at *Il.* 18. 374). Apollonius, however, applies it to ζέφυρος at 4. 821, with the idea of "steady," as opposed to "gusty." The ἅπαξ λεγόμενον in Homer, δηναίος (*Il.* 5. 407), means "long-lived." The application of it to χρόνος at *Arg.* 4. 1547 is easy enough (Homer himself uses its opposite μινυθάδιος both of people and with αἰών), but Apollonius goes further at 3. 53 and 4. 645 when he makes it mean "having been long absent," best translated adverbially as "after a long time," "after so long." Apollonius' truly adverbial δηναίον, "for a long time," at 3. 590 occurs with a negative and it appears to be a weakened use, like English "not for long."

Several other adverbial uses cast light on Apollonius' independence. Homer uses παρακλιδόν metaphorically as "dodging the issue" in speech (*Od.* 4. 348), while

Apollonius gives it a physical application when a rider falls "sideways" (1. 757), and when an aged priestess is left "on one side," i.e., "by the roadside," as a crowd surges on (1. 315). Whereas Homer's use of αὐτοσχεδόν is confined to "hand to hand" fighting (e.g., *Il.* 7. 273), Apollonius uses it more generally as "nearby" at 1. 594, and transfers it to a temporal use ("immediately") at 1. 35, etc. There is a less easily explained divergence of meaning between ὑποβλήδην in Homer (a ἅπαξ λεγόμενον) and in Apollonius: cf. "by way of interruption" (*Il.* 1. 292) and "in reply" (*Arg.* 3. 400, etc.)

The preposition καταντικρύ approximately reverses the relationship observed between the poets' uses of παρακλιδόν, since Homer has it in a physical sense (of falling "sheer down from" a roof) at *Od.* 10. 559, while Apollonius makes Jason regret not having refused the expedition "in sheer defiance of" Pelias (2. 624). Apollonius ranges far beyond Homer's uses of ἀμφί + gen.: at *Il.* 16. 824–25, μάχεσθον / πίδακος ἀμφ' ὀλίγης, it means "over the possession of"; at *Od.* 8. 266–67, αἰεῖδεν / ἀμφ' . . . φιλότῃτος, simply "about." In δαῖτ' ἀμφὶ θεῶς θέσαν (*Arg.* 1. 1150), the meaning is extended to "in honor of," and Apollonius' most extreme use occurs at 2. 215–17: Ἰκεσίου πρὸς Ζηνός, . . . Φοίβου τ' ἀμφὶ καὶ αὐτῆς εἵνεκεν Ἥρης / λίσσομαι, where Apollonius' inelegant variation is presumably designed to contribute to the rhetoric as well as to his reputation for being cleverly un-Homeric.

Apollonius offers some bold variations on ἐπιλλίζω, a Homeric ἅπαξ λεγόμενον meaning "give a sign by winking" (*Od.* 18. 11). At *Arg.* 1. 486, it means "scowl"; at 4. 389, the idea of facial expression has become submerged in the more general one of "mocking." The complete shift of

1. Despite the unlikely *uaria lectio* θυμός . . . / ἄζηχης at *Il.* 15. 24–25.

meaning is exemplified in *φθιμένη μοι ἐπιλλίξουσιν ὀπίσω | κερτομίας* (3. 791–92). As Medea is talking about the taunts she will suffer when she is dead, the phrase probably means no more than “hurl reproaches.” A parallel weakening of meaning occurs in *μύρομαι*, “weep,” effectively onomatopoeic in Homer, but reduced to “flow” of a river at *Arg.* 2. 372 and “drip” of the walls of a house dripping with blood at 4. 666. Emotive, sarcastic *πέσσω*, as in *γέρα πεσσέμεν*, “to gorge himself on his prizes,” at *Il.* 2. 237, is palely reflected in *θρεπτήρια πέσσω* (*Arg.* 1. 283), where it means “enjoy,” “have.” Homeric *ἐνίπτω* is equivalent to “chide” whether it is accompanied by a strengthening phrase like *χαλεποῖσιν ὀνείδεσι* (*Il.* 3. 438) or a neutral one like *μυθῶ* (*Il.* 3. 427), but at *Arg.* 3. 931 it is dubious whether it means more than “express,” “declare.” Regularly in Homer “the accustomed haunts of animals,” *ἦθεα* in *ἀφίκοντο Κιανίδος ἦθεα γαίης* (*Arg.* 1. 1177) is no more than an indicator that the region is inhabited by men.

Narrowing of meaning occurs with *κτέρεα*. In Homer it means “funeral rites,” as at *Od.* 5. 311, but *ἐνὶ κτερέεσσιν ἐλυσθεῖς* (*Arg.* 1. 254) clearly refers to a funeral shroud. The early development of the word from concrete to abstract, i.e., from “possessions (buried with the dead)” to “honors,” “rites,” has been reversed by Apollonius in the course of his narrowing of meaning. On a germane subject, Apollonius alters the meaning of *στέλλω* at 3. 204–5, where *ἐνὶ γαίῃ | . . . στείλαντας* is “having buried.” In Homer *περιστέλλω* is “lay out” (*Od.* 24. 293). Apollonius’ two different uses of *ἀφανρός* exemplify narrowing in one case, weakening in the other. In Homer the word means “feeble” of a person (e.g., *Il.* 7. 235) or “ineffective” of a missile (e.g., *Il.* 12. 458). At *Arg.* 2. 453, Phineus tells the fortunes of all: *ὅτις καὶ*

ἀφανρός ἴκοιτο. Apollonius has evidently narrowed the meaning to “feeble in resources,” i.e., “poor,” or perhaps “of lowly station”; at 3. 144, *ἀφανροτέρη* applied to *χάρις* signifies merely “less.”

Extension of meaning, however, is the most common form of Apollonius’ deviation from Homer. The adverb *ἀπηλεγώς* is used by Homer only in *μῦθον ἀπηλεγώς ἀποειπεῖν* (*Il.* 9. 309, *Od.* 1. 373), with the meaning “bluntly,” “outright.” Similarly Apollonius has *ἀπηλεγώς νόον ἔκφατο* at 1. 439. Three uses of *ἀπηλεγώς* with verbs other than “speak” relate somewhat more closely to the word’s etymology (lit. “not caring,” from *ἀλέγω*). Warned of Circe’s enticements, Jason’s band *μίμνεν ἀπηλεγώς*, “remained (there) ignoring her” (4. 689). Likewise Jason, surrounded by the eager women of Lemnos, *νίσσεται ἀπηλεγώς*, “walked on ignoring them” (1. 785), which may be weakened in meaning to “walked straight ahead.” Thetis’ reproach to Peleus, *ἀπηλεγώς ἐχόλωσας* (4. 864), must mean “you angered me recklessly,” i.e., “caring nothing for my deserts.” However, in *ἀπηλεγώς πεπύθοιτο* (4. 1469), the etymology of the word has dropped out of sight: the meaning is “learn the whole truth,” and it is not difficult to see how this usage could develop from the original one in Homer.

Coming from *ἀμαλός* (“soft,” “weak”), *ἀμαλδύνω* in Homer means “destroy,” but the idea of gradual weakening may linger, as in *τείχος ἀμαλδύναι*, *ποταμῶν μένος εἰσαγαγόντες* (*Il.* 12. 18). Apollonius uses the word still in a physical sense at 4. 112 of the sun “effacing” the trail and scent of animals, but at 1. 834 he uses it of “suppressing” a fact in a narrative. In Homer *μεῖλια*, which is literally “soothing things,” occurs only in the narrow sense of a bride’s “dowry” (*Il.* 9. 147). The closest to this in Apollonius is at 4. 1190, where “bridal gifts” brought by strangers are alluded to.

"Propitiatory gifts" to the gods are *μείλια* at 4. 1549, while at 3. 135 Aphrodite promises Eros a *μείλιον*, "toy." The most drastic deviation from Homer occurs at 3. 594, where we find an abstract use: *εὐκότα μείλια τίσειν*, "make fitting amends." Homer uses *δόρπον* in the sense of "evening meal," as does Apollonius at 2. 304: *μέγα δόρπον . . . ἔθεντο* (the ensuing night being mentioned at 308). But in this same passage, we find *δόρπιοιο κορέσσαντ' ἡδὲ ποτήτος* (307). Here Apollonius is clearly using it of "food" in general, as opposed to drink. Homeric *κοσμήτωρ* (e.g., *Il.* 1. 16) always represents a very restricted aspect of *κοσμέω*, that of "marshaling" an army. The verb is most often, but not exclusively, used in this sense (cf. *Il.* 3. 1, "marshal" and *Od.* 7. 13, "prepare" of a meal). Apollonius, however, applies *κοσμήτωρ* to a child's "guardian" at 1. 194. Somewhat less felicitous is his extended use of *ἐπακτήρ*. Homer has it only as "hunter," e.g., *Od.* 19. 435. Ignoring the derivation from *κύνας ἐπάγειν*, Apollonius uses it of "fishermen" at 1. 625. He disregards also the diminutive force of *λαῶνιξ* in Homer: cf. the "pebbles" clinging to a fish at *Od.* 5. 433 and heavy "rocks" being levered up at *Arg.* 4. 1677–78. The adjective *λαρός* is, in Homer, "sweet (to the taste)" only, e.g., at *Od.* 2. 350, cf. *Arg.* 1. 456. Apollonius' metaphorical extension of it at 3. 933 to lover's talk is happily evocative. Likewise *πέζα*, which Homer uses as the "tip" of a pole at *Il.* 24. 272, becomes a versatile word in Apollonius' hands: at 4. 46 it is the "fringe" of a garment, and at 4. 1258 the "fringe" of a continent, hence "coastline." Finally, Apollonius has built usefully on Homer's *μετρῶ* ("traverse," "sail over" at *Od.* 3. 179) in applying the sense "sail past," "pass by" to *παραμετρῶ* (1. 595 and 1166, 2. 937).

Several of Apollonius' deviations from

Homer can be simply explained by a change of voice, e.g., *ἀποσεύομαι*, "flee" or "rush" in Homer (*Il.* 6. 390), "put to flight" in Apollonius (1. 805). With *ἐπηρεφής*, Apollonius has gone a little further. In Homer it is "overhanging," "beetling" (e.g., *Od.* 10. 131, *Il.* 12. 54); in Apollonius, "overhung" (e.g., 2. 736, where a cave is overhung by trees and rocks). At 1. 1121 there is the additional notion of shelter when the image of a goddess is *φηγοῖσιν ἐπηρεφές ἀκροτάτησιν*. At 4. 144 the idea of overhanging is absent: a monster's coils are "covered" with scales. Homer's use of *ἐπήβολος* at *Od.* 2. 319 is active and very specific: *νηὸς ἐπήβολος* is "master of a ship," as opposed to "passenger." Apollonius' active uses of *ἐπήβολος* are absolute: *ἐπήβολος . . . ὀρμή*, "an initiative that will hit the mark" (2. 1280); *ἐπήβολος . . . μῆτις*, "fitting counsel" (4. 1380). He also has the word in a passive sense: *ἐπήβολος . . . ἀλεωρή*, "a way of escape is attainable, within your grasp" (1. 694); *ὅσσον τ' ἐκ βαλβίδος ἐπήβολος ἄρματι νύσσα | γίγνεται* (3. 1272–73), a measure of distance in which *ἐπήβολος*, still meaning "attainable," is a weak, dispensable word. Also active in Homer is *αἰδηλος* (lit. "making unseen"), "destructive," e.g., *Il.* 2. 455. Apollonius uses it in a variety of ways, mostly passive: he has *αἰδηλος ἐδύσατο* of Thetis vanishing into the sea (4. 865); at 1. 298 *πήματα . . . αἰδηλα* are "unforeseen"; the adjective is applied to Medea's path at 4. 47, and "secret" is the best meaning; at 4. 681 primeval monsters rising out of the mud are *αἰδηλοι*, "vague," "unformed," i.e., not divided into species. However, in some passages an active sense would be slightly more natural than a passive one: Medea's *ἔργ' αἰδηλα* at 3. 1132 are "ruinous" rather than "of uncertain outcome"; *αἰδηλα | δείκῃλα* at 4. 1671–72 are "baneful" rather than "darksome." Finally, one should compare Apollonius' active use of

φυταλή, "planting," at 2. 1003 with, e.g., *Il.* 6. 195, "a place that has been planted," i.e., "orchard," "vineyard."

Apollonius occasionally blurs Homeric distinctions. In Homer *βεβόλημαι* is confined to metaphorical usages, e.g., ἄχεϊ . . . βεβολημένος ἦτορ (*Il.* 9. 9), *βέβλημαι* serving in the literal sense, but at *Arg.* 1. 262 we find μήτηρ δ' ἄμφ' αὐτὸν βεβολημένη of Jason's mother falling about his neck. In confusing ἐλύω ("roll round," pass. "crouch") and εἰλύω ("wrap," pass. "be covered"), Apollonius introduces considerable imprecision of language. Homer is consistent: cf. νεφέλη ἐλυμένος (*Il.* 5. 186) and ἐλυσθείς, "crouching" (*Il.* 24. 510), but in Apollonius we find εἰλυμένα καπνῷ (3. 1291) alongside ὑπὸ κραδίῃ ἐλυμένος . . . *Ἔρως*, "huddled" (3. 296–97), and (*Ἔρως*) ἐλυσθείς, "crouching" (3. 281), alongside ἐνὶ κτερέεσσιν ἐλυσθείς, "wrapped in a shroud" (1. 254). There is confusion also between καθίημι and καταέννυμι, e.g., at 3. 830 where καταειμέναι means "let down" of hair, as if the perfect participle passive of καθίημι could have a hiatus. In Homer it would come from καταέννυμι and mean "covered," as at *Od.* 13. 351.²

(b) Situations

As a tale of adventure sprinkled with storms at sea, landfalls, monsters, princesses, royal receptions, and feats of strength, the *Argonautica* will vividly recall the *Odyssey* by its subject matter and its

episodic structure, while the martial sections inevitably contain echoes from the *Iliad*. The following treatment is highly selective, beginning with Apollonius' adaptation of parts of the farewell of Hector and Andromache.

In order to avoid utter defeat by the Colchian forces under Medea's brother Absyrtus, the Argonauts make a compact in accordance with which Medea should be abandoned. Sensing this, Medea begs Jason not to leave her and reproaches him with words in which her sorrow gradually turns to fierce rage (4. 355 ff.). She lists her services to him and stresses her betrayal for his sake of all she held dear, including her parents. At 4. 368–69, she says τῷ φημί τεῇ κούρῃ τε δάμαρ τε | αὐτοκασιγνήτῃ τε μεθ' Ἑλλάδα γαίαν ἔπεισθαι. One is strongly reminded of Andromache's plea that Hector should not leave her for the war (*Il.* 6. 407 ff.), but the loving affection of husband and wife contrasts with Jason's treachery toward Medea. Andromache reminds Hector of her loss of father, mother, and brothers, who had all been killed, while Medea is bitterly remorseful at having betrayed her family for Jason. Andromache expresses her utter dependence on Hector in the touching lines, σύ μοι ἔσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ | ἡδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερός παρακοίτης (429–30), whereas Medea's words quoted above express not so much her dependence on Jason as her fierce determination not to release her hold on him. This speech in Apollonius is, ironically, the prelude to the

2. Some additional information on deviations from Homeric forms and constructions is appended in summary, beginning with a selection of doublets. The Homeric forms are given first in each case: *ὄνοστος* / *ὄνοτος*; *μέσσατος* / *μεσσότατος*; *συνεχῆς* / *συνεχέως*; *ἀσπασίως* / *ἀσπαστῶς*; *ἀίκη* / *αἰξ*; *ἐπηγύς* / *ἐπήγεια*; *Περσεφόνεια* / *Περσεφόνη*. Occasionally we find un-Homeric extended formations, e.g., *πρῶσυνή* (1. 48); *κηδοσύνη* (1. 277, etc.); the iterative *δηγιάσκον* (2. 142) coined from *δηγίωντες*, as if coming from *δηγῖω*; *ἀκέως* (1. 765) from *ἀκέω*, as if *ἀκέω* existed; *κέκλεται* (1. 716) as a present based on a Homeric aorist; *μνηστὸς* (1. 780) used as if it were a noun, while in Homer it is always

adjectival; *ἄνδιχα*, always an adverb in Homer, as a preposition at 1. 908; *παροίτατος* at 1. 910 and 2. 29, but Homer has only a comparative of *πάροϋε*; at 1. 270, *ὀλόθεν* without a following *ὅλος* in breach of the Homeric idiom; *υἱός* used at 1. 482 with a patronymic noun instead of a patronymic adjective as in Homer; *χρεῖω* at 3. 599, doubly un-Homeric in that Homer uses only *χρεώ* elliptically and even the latter form never represents an infinitive; *ὅτε μή* ("unless") with the subjunctive, in Homer with the optative (cf. *Arg.* 1. 245 and *Il.* 13. 319, *Od.* 16. 197); *εἰσόκε* ("until") followed by the indicative at *Arg.* 1. 820 and 1001, 4. 164, whereas Homer has only the subjunctive at, e.g., *Il.* 2. 332, and the optative at *Il.* 15. 70.

worst betrayal of all, the murder of Absyrtus. The Homeric echo, with its subtle inversions, enriches the note of pathos in an elaborately wrought composition where pathos merges with rhetoric (there are clear reminders also of Euripides' Medea), cold deliberation with emotional turmoil.

Apollonius' Medea is one of the great creations of classical literature, while Jason is generally acknowledged to be inferior as an epic hero.³ If the epic has a frigid beginning, if Alcimede's lament over Jason's departure on the expedition has a hollow, conventional ring (1. 278 ff.) and if Jason's reply betrays little heroic fervor (1. 295 ff.), the reader does get just a glimpse of a real flesh-and-blood situation and may even hope for better things to come when Jason echoes Hector and then Priam: cf. *Arg.* 1. 303–4 and *Il.* 6. 490 ff., 24. 218–19. Here the context is similar to the Homeric originals. Rather more ingenious is Apollonius' adaptation of a passage heralding the climax of the *Iliad*: when Achilles is pursuing Hector, we read, πρόσθε μὲν ἐσθλὸς ἔφηνε, δῖωκε δέ μιν μέγ' ἀμείνων / καρπαλίμως, ἐπεὶ οὐχ ἱερήϊον οὐδὲ βοείην / ἀρνύσθην, ἃ τε ποσσὶν ἀέθλια γίγνεται ἀνδρῶν, / ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχῆς θέον Ἔκτορος ἵπποδάμοιο (22. 158–61). With some alterations this appears in a totally different context in Apollonius. After falsely accusing Jason of wanting to be rid of Heracles, Telamon repents and asks for forgiveness. Jason replies with dignity and humanity, excusing him with the words, ἀλλ' οὐ θῆν τοι ἀδευκέα μῆνιν ἀέξω, / πρὶν περ ἀνιθεῖς· ἐπεὶ οὐ περὶ πῶεσι μήλων, / οὐδὲ περὶ κτεάτεσσι χαλεπόμενος μενέηναι, / ἀλλ' ἐτάρου περὶ φωτός (1. 1339–42). In an epic which often suffers from nebulous characterization, Apollonius has

achieved an affecting note of solidarity through his adaptation of Homer at this point.

Sometimes the *Iliad* serves Apollonius to infuse a little warlike spirit into his reluctant heroes. At *Arg.* 3. 502 ff., the Argonauts are at first daunted by Aeëtes' challenge, but then, spontaneously one after another, they spring up eagerly and offer to meet it. The reader will recall *Il.* 7. 161 ff., where we find a formidable catalogue of Greek heroes anxious to do battle with Hector, who is challenging them. This is perhaps an unfortunate example, though, as it required seventy lines and all the eloquence of Menelaus and Nestor to rouse the Greeks from their fear! Generally speaking, the heroic spirit sits comfortably in the *Iliad* but suffers in transit. The words of Hector rushing to his doom and those of the Argonauts trapped in Syrtis offer a telling comparison: cf. *Il.* 22. 304–5, μὴ μὰν ἄσπουδί γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην, / ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι, and *Arg.* 4. 1254–56, ἦ τ' ἂν καὶ ὑπὲρ Διὸς αἶσαν ἰοῦσιν / βέλτερον ἦν μέγα δὴ τι μενοινῶντας ὀλέσθαι. / νῦν δὲ τί κεν ῥέξαιμεν. . . ;

One would inevitably think of Nausicaa when reading of Jason's reception at Colchis, even without Apollonius' Artemis simile (3. 876 ff.), which begins by being deceptively like *Od.* 6. 102 ff. But whereas Homer's scene serves to throw Nausicaa's beauty into relief,⁴ Apollonius' ends on a sinister note, ἀμφὶ δὲ θῆρες / κνυζηθμῶ σαίνουσιν ὑποτρομέοντες ἰοῦσαν (883–84) corresponding to the effect Medea has on the people round her: ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ / εἰκον, ἀλευάμενοι βασιλῆϊδος ὄμματα κούρης (885–86). But what deserves especial notice is Medea's appeal to Arete not to give her up

3. Cf. my articles on Valerius Flaccus (and Apollonius) in *CQ*, N.S., XV (1965), 104–110 and XIII (1963), 263–65.

4. It is worth noting incidentally that the beautification of Medea at 3. 829 ff. is very closely modeled on that of Hera at *Il.* 14. 170 ff.

to the Colchians, ending, σοὶ δ' ὀπάσειαν / ἄθνατοι βίον τε τελεσφόρον ἀγλαΐην τε / καὶ παῖδας καὶ κῦδος ἀπορθήτοιο πόλῃος (4. 1026–28). Echoes of Nausicaa would have been predictable, but there is a particularly grim irony here in that Medea recalls Odysseus' words, σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τόσα δοῖεν ὅσα φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοινᾶς, / ἄνδρα τε καὶ οἶκον, καὶ ὁμοφροσύνην ὀπάσειαν / ἐσθλήν (*Od.* 6. 180–82), words once spoken in gentle flirtation, now echoed by Medea in a desperate plea to be saved from the death threatening her because of her devotion to her treacherous lover.

Lastly, Apollonius marks the time of day in a way that recalls Homer. A new stage of the narrative is ushered in with Ἡὼς δ' ἀμβροσίοισιν ἀνερχομένη φάεεσσιν / λῦε κελαινὴν νύκτα δι' ἥερος (4. 1170–71), and the Argonauts make their landfall when ἀγρόθεν εἰσι φυτοσκάφος ἢ τις ἀροτρεὺς / ἀσπασίως εἰς αὖλιν ἔην, δόρποιο χατίζων, / αὐτοῦ δ' ἐν προμολῇ τετρυμένα γούνατ' ἔκαμψεν / αὐσταλέος κονίησι, περιτριβέας δέ τε χεῖρας / εἰσορώων κακὰ πολλὰ ἔῃ ἡρήσατο γαστρί (1. 1172–76). It is hardly surprising that Apollonius has varied the time-honored formula about "rosy-fingered Dawn," and the second scene is more emotive than either of its models. Homer marks the turning point of a battle at midday with a much gentler sketch of a weary woodcutter making ready his meal in a glade (*Il.* 11. 86–89), and at *Od.* 13. 31–35, the long-suffering Odysseus wel-

comes sunset as does a tired and hungry plowman. In Homer the note of despair is absent, whereas in Apollonius' sketch there is a wealth of graphic and realistic detail, all reinforcing the idea of the laborer's unenviable, hopeless lot.⁵

(c) Similes⁶

To any one objecting to the scant relevance of some epic similes, or to the ubiquitous lions in them, *Arg.* 4. 1338 ff. should commend itself as a *locus classicus*. There, Jason calling to his men is likened to a lion calling to his mate, and the following lines vividly describe the terror of man and beast and the quaking of distant mountain glens. We are then informed that Jason's voice caused *no* shudder among his crew, since it was that of a comrade calling to his friends. Whether we are meant to think of the forgotten lioness who would have taken all that roaring in her stride, or Apollonius is just confessing that his simile has rambled too far remains an open question. Homer's lion similes generally represent a hero's strength and ferocity. Their effect may have become conventional through overindulgence, yet the result is never so unhappy as in Apollonius' imitation. Jason may have had a loud voice, but his speeches before and after the simile are mouselike rather than leonine. Without sharing the clumsiness of the lion simile, Apollonius' bee simile at 1. 879 ff., based on *Il.* 2. 87 ff., is a

5. The originality of his vignette is in marked contrast to another attempt at depicting wretched tedium by means of sound and meter. Apollonius ends a line with βίοντον βαρὺν ἡγηλάζει (1. 272), Homer with κακὸν μῆρον ἡγηλάζεις (*Od.* 11. 618).

6. The ensuing discussion does not deal with cases of Apollonius' incorporating into his similes Homeric matter found outside the similes: cf. *Il.* 18. 470 ff. and *Arg.* 3. 1299 ff.; *Od.* 6. 99 ff. and *Arg.* 4. 948 ff. It does not cover similes bearing only a vague relationship to Homeric ones (cf. *Il.* 23. 597 ff. and *Arg.* 3. 1020 f.; *Il.* 21. 22 ff. and *Arg.* 4. 933 ff.; *Il.* 2. 459 ff. and *Arg.* 4. 1300 ff.), or those in which, despite any alterations, additions, or subtractions, there is a basic sameness

in the two authors about both context and simile (cf. *Od.* 11. 243 and *Arg.* 2. 169; *Il.* 6. 506 ff. and *Arg.* 3. 1259 ff.; *Il.* 2. 469 ff. and *Arg.* 4. 1452 ff.; *Il.* 16. 212 f. and *Arg.* 2. 1073 ff.; *Il.* 2. 754 and *Arg.* 4. 626; *Il.* 10. 360 ff. and *Arg.* 2. 278 ff.; *Il.* 15. 80 ff. and *Arg.* 2. 541 ff.). This last example, in which "quick as thought" is the common element, is interesting, however, as it may reflect social changes between the time of Homer and of Apollonius: Homer's traveler is eager for more travel and projects himself from one place to another in thought; Apollonius' has had enough, and he nostalgically projects himself homewards. For similes of great delicacy in which the Homeric influence is either nonexistent or negligible, the reader is referred to *Arg.* 3. 756 ff., 968 ff. and 4. 1479 ff.

failure in that its happy pastoral scene conflicts with the lamentation of the Lemnian women preceding it. The less elaborate Homeric model contains no incongruity, as the central idea of swarming throngs, common both to the warriors and the bees, is never lost sight of. As a self-contained vignette Apollonius' simile would rank as highly as the best in Theocritus.⁷

Against these failures, one may balance cases of Apollonius' having attained a far greater degree of aptness than his model. At 4. 139 ff., he adorns a simple idea, namely the similarity between a monster's coils and rings of smoke, with a series of striking images. Homer's smoke similes are, by contrast, muddled and unsatisfying. *Il.* 21. 522 ff. likens Achilles causing the Trojans suffering to smoke rising from a burning city. It need hardly be pointed out that fire rather than smoke causes suffering. The simile at *Il.* 18. 207 ff. derives from a gleam rising above Achilles' head. The initial comparison appears to be to smoke rising from an island under siege, but it emerges four lines later that this smoke comes from beacons which are visible as such only after sunset, and it is from them that the relevance to Achilles' halo comes. Apollonius' simile is undoubtedly superior in both its aptness and its imagery, and this is no isolated instance. The torment of Medea hesitating before throwing in her lot with Jason is likened to that of a virgin bride who has lost her husband and whose sorrow is too great to be communicated (*Arg.* 3. 656 ff.). Shyness, tears, sorrow, romantic love, all link the simile to Medea's actual situation. Apollonius had in mind *Od.* 8. 523 ff., where Odysseus weeping over Demodocus' song is likened to a wife clinging to her dying husband as she is beaten and

dragged off to captivity. Homer's scene of violence and hysteria occupies eight lines and accords ill with Odysseus' restrained weeping, which escaped the notice of all but Alcinous sitting next to him (532 f.). Apollonius' virgin bride simile shares its romantic strain with *Arg.* 1. 774 ff. Here Jason is compared to a star which delights a maiden in her bridal bower as she waits for her distant lover. The simile sets the tone for the Hypsipyle episode. It is a marked departure from the more conventional star simile, in which brightness and harm are the aspects of hero and star that the poets stress (cf. *Il.* 11. 62 f., 22. 26 ff., and *Arg.* 3. 957 ff.; and *Il.* 5. 5 f. and *Arg.* 1. 240, which are even simpler in that only radiance is mentioned).

It has already been noticed that Apollonius tends to apply similes inspired by Homer in contexts far removed from the original Homeric ones. The following examples are significant also: in the first case Apollonius has applied to emotional contexts a simile arising from an action in Homer, and in the second he has done the opposite. At *Il.* 12. 433 ff., an evenly balanced battle gives rise to a homely sketch of a spinning woman balancing wool against weights on a pair of scales. Apollonius has drawn two related similes from this Homeric passage in order to describe two distinct phases of Medea's emotional turmoil. First, at 3. 291 ff., the love flaring up in Medea's heart after Eros has shot his arrow is likened to the blaze of a fire when twigs are added to a smoldering log by a poor spinning woman forced to eke out a living in the small hours. The second simile occurs when the results of Medea's passion are already clear and she fears that the Colchians may capture her. Her sleeplessness, tears, and pain lead at 4. 1062 ff. to the simile of a widow turning her spindle in the night and shedding tears as she hears her orphaned children weeping.

7. Cf. *Arg.* 1. 575 ff., which amplifies the pastoral element of its model *Il.* 13. 492 ff.

Apollonius has progressively heightened the pathetic element: in Homer it is an adjunct (*ἄεικέα μισθόν*); in the second simile of Apollonius it has become the very essence of the matter. In contrast, one may look at *Il.* 22. 93 ff. and *Arg.* 4. 1541 ff., both similes having a fierce snake as their subject. Homer's snake, lying in wait for a man, represents Hector waiting for Achilles, and the emphasis is on the wrath in its heart. In Apollonius, the *Argo's* tortuous course is compared to that of a snake seeking shelter from the blazing sun. The description, for all its vividness, is largely external, and Apollonius has remolded his matter in as thoroughgoing and effective a way as in the more complex examples above.

From a conscious Alexandrian artist one expects greater complexity, subtlety, and accuracy in similes than one does from Homer. At *Il.* 13. 389 ff., a hero falling in death is compared to a tree being felled for timber (cf. *Il.* 4. 482 ff., for the same idea with greater adornment). At *Arg.* 4. 1682 ff., however, the simile has two stages, each corresponding to an aspect of the narrative: the tree has been left half-felled by the woodcutter (Talus sways as the strength passes out of his legs); the tree snaps off and crashes through the force of the night wind (Talus falls to the ground with a thud). Complexity is, of course, not altogether foreign to the similes of Homer: *Il.* 15. 271 ff. repays careful study, and the brief simile of the hawk and the doves (*Arg.* 1. 1049 f.) has its much more elaborate model (*Il.* 22. 139 ff.). Achilles praying not to drown in the Scamander

likens his lot to that of a swineherd swept away while trying to cross a torrent in winter (*Il.* 21. 282 f.). The simile is a very obvious one, and Apollonius has applied it with greater subtlety at 4. 460 f. The helplessness of Absyrtus in trusting the treacherous Medea is compared to that of a little boy trying in winter to cross a torrent which even a grown man could not cross. For the more accurate application of a simile, one may look at *Il.* 13. 703 ff. alongside *Arg.* 2. 662 ff., the subject in both cases being the exertions of oxen dragging a plow. In Homer there are two yoked oxen, as the context is simply that the two Ajaxes remain side by side in battle. By applying the simile to the Argonauts rowing hard day and night, Apollonius has given the predominant aspect of the simile, namely the exertions of the oxen, a relevance lacking in the original. Moreover, there is the obvious affinity between plowing the soil and, as we say, plowing the waters.⁸

The above observations suggest a high degree of independence of Homer. In conclusion, I suggest that if Apollonius had carried this independence one drastic step further and written several Argonautic epyllia instead of a *μέγα βιβλίον* (for it is in construction that he is at his worst), Theocritus would not be alone as a figure at once of Alexandrian literature and of world literature.

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8. For further examples of a more precise relationship between context and simile in Apollonius, cf. *Il.* 11. 67 ff. and *Arg.* 3. 1386 ff.; *Il.* 16. 156 ff. and *Arg.* 2. 123 ff.; *Il.* 15. 381 ff., 15. 624 ff., and *Arg.* 2. 70 ff.; *Il.* 11. 548 ff. and *Arg.* 1. 1243 ff.