

## Callimachus, Apollonius, and the Poetics of Mud\*

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ὁ Φθόνος Ἀπόλλωνος ἐπ' οὐατα λάθριος εἶπεν·  
'οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν ἀοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος ἀεῖδει.  
τὸν Φθόνον ἀπόλλων ποδί τ' ἤλασεν ὡδέ τ' ἔειπεν·  
'Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ  
λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει.  
Διοῖ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,  
ἀλλ' ἥτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει  
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς, ἄκρον ἄωτον.  
χαῖρε, ἄναξ· ὁ δὲ Μῶμος, ἴν' ὁ Φθόνος, ἔνθα νέοιτο.

Envy whispered in Apollo's ear:

"I do not like the poet who's song is not as big as the sea."

Apollo kicked Envy with his foot and said:

"The stream of the Assyrian river is great, but it carries  
much refuse of earth and much filth with its waters.

The Melissai do not bring water to Deo

from every source, but from the trickling flow

that springs from a holy fountain pure and unsullied, the finest essence."

Hail, O Lord, but Criticism, let it go where Envy dwells.

(Call. *h. Apoll.* 105–113)

1.1 These famous lines present an argument by means of water and mud. The argument is part of a broad agenda that contains—in disputed proportions—religious, political and literary—critical elements. The present paper focuses on literary criticism, which is the immediate (although not necessarily the only) objective of Apollo's discourse. It is generally accepted that πόντος here represents the grand and pure Homeric origin of all waters; that the Assyrian river, polluted with the refuse of γῆ (the opposite of water), represents contemporary imitations of traditional epic; and that the pure spring is Callimachus' own poetry, "on a small scale, but highly refined."<sup>1</sup> Callimachus is

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<sup>1</sup>See e.g. Williams 85–99, Bing 1988: 55 n. 11. A. Cameron (forthcoming) argues against this firm association, suggesting instead that the point is that "small-and-refined is better than large-and-crude." But even so, it is clear that Homer looms large behind this exchange as the

thus proclaiming a literary credo. In what follows I shall consider some aspects of this proclamation, with particular regard to Apollonius' *Argonautica*.

1.2 Regardless of detail, Callimachus' comment will have reflected on the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius.<sup>2</sup> It may be difficult to establish the precise chronological relationship between Callimachus' hymn and Apollonius' *Argonautica* (or any parts thereof), but it is not necessary to do so, so long as our interest is in the terms and arguments of a debate, rather than in any narrowly historical progression. Indeed, "the fluidity of ancient 'publication' and the nature of intellectual life in Alexandria suggest that we need not envisage in every case a reworking by one poet of a finished and 'published' poem by another. Poets constantly fed off each other's ideas in ways which defy simple analysis into original and imitation" (Hunter 1989: 7–8).

Both Callimachus and Apollonius used Homeric poetry as a major source, but neither tried to be a second Homer: both were learned manipulators of poetic pasts which they could never truly re-enact.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, each had his own way of using the past. Apollonius was more of a "conservative" in that he wrote longer narrative epic, Callimachus more of an "innovator," who gave greater weight to new styles and shorter poems.<sup>4</sup>

Now, at some point (probably within the lifetime of both poets) there will have been at least a small group of *cognoscenti* (the two poets included) who will have been familiar both with *h. Apoll.* and the *Argonautica*. This group

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model of grand and pure poetry. Callimachus' interest in rivers was, of course, very considerable: we have every reason to assume that water imagery is a significant component of his aesthetic perspective. Cf. e.g. Horace, who clearly understood the discourse and imitated it in *S.* 1.4.11: "cum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles," and in 1.10.50: "fluere hunc lutulentum."

<sup>2</sup>For some allusive links between *h. Apoll.* and the *Argonautica* see e.g. Bundy 39–42.

<sup>3</sup>Both will have agreed with Euphorion fr. 118 (Powell): ...ἀπρωτίμαστος Ὀμηρος. Paradoxically, this was also the factor which allowed for change and innovation. Or, to use Bing's eloquent phrasing, these poets' constant and learned reference to the past "reflects the profound desire to compensate for a perceived epigonality and artistic disjunction" (1988: 75). Contrast e.g. the somewhat different projects of Quintus of Smyrna or Tryphiodorus, who despite writing much later than Callimachus and Apollonius, followed Homer much more closely.

<sup>4</sup>I write "conservative" and "innovator" because, in a deep sense, both Callimachus and Apollonius display important elements of traditionality and innovation on many levels, and neither can be adequately described by only one term. I would suggest that "conservative" and "innovator" are to some extent outward stances, literary roles adopted by players in a complex cultural game, which allows these players to state forceful artistic credos even as they recognize their "epigonality" and their "artistic disjunction" (in Bing's sense) from their poetic origins. The argument below is one detailed example of this idea, which clearly requires a much longer discussion.

may be usefully described as an **interpretive community**, a modern critical term that is at the heart of “reception theory,” and which designates a shared set of interpretive values, premises, etc. uniting a group of individual interpreters:

The notion of ‘interpretive communities’ was originally introduced as an answer to a question that had long seemed crucial to literary studies. What is the source of interpretive authority: the text or the reader? Those who answered ‘the text’ were embarrassed by the fact of disagreement. Why, if the text contains its own meaning and constrains its own interpretation, do so many interpreters disagree about that meaning? Those who answered ‘the reader’ were embarrassed by the fact of agreement. Why, if meaning is created by the individual reader from the perspective of his own experience and interpretive desires, is there so much that interpreters agree about? What was required was an explanation that could account for both agreement and disagreement, and that explanation was found in the idea of an interpretive community, not so much a group of individuals who shared a point of view, but a point of view or way of organizing experience that shared individuals in the sense that its assumed distinctions, categories of understanding, and stipulations of relevance and irrelevance were the content of the consciousness of community members who were therefore no longer individuals, but, insofar as they were embedded in the community’s enterprise, community property. It followed that such community-constituted interpreters would, in their turn, constitute, more or less in agreement, the same text, although the sameness would not be attributable to the self-identity of the text, but to the communal nature of the interpretive act. (Fish 141)

This approach to reading and reception is singularly appropriate to the highly interactive community of interpreters of Ptolemaic Alexandria. For the Alexandrian interpretive community, a sharp critique of longer but impure poetry would have at least raised the question, “How does this statement relate to that well known example of the longer, broadly Homer-like poem, the *Argonautica*?” whether this question was originally and specifically “intended” by Callimachus or not. Consider that the *Argonautica* describes the voyage of the hero’s boat across the very substance of *h. Apoll.*’s critical metaphor, the sea: viewed through the lens of Callimachus’ idiom, Apollonius’ poem is thus an image of itself, a literary crossing of the *ingens aequor* of Homeric poetry.<sup>5</sup>

To suggest that a contemporary audience (including the poets themselves) ignored this critical potential once its ingredients were in place, is to suggest that Alexandrians who took pride in their subtle, educated skills and in their

<sup>5</sup>See Margolies, who notes the analogy between the *Argo*’s journey and Apollonius’ poetic journey (e.g. 41), and also the link with Callimachus’ imagery (85).

power to compare and re-arrange,<sup>6</sup> would have, indeed could have somehow “switched off” their basic literary instincts if it was stated that A was composed before A', or that A' was composed before A. This suggestion, if it fails to defy the fundamental human urge to compare like with like, is unthinkable, at least in terms of the Hellenistic interpretive community.<sup>7</sup>

2.1 Callimachus' vehicle for literary criticism, the hymn to Apollo, is itself a work of literature. It is therefore part of its own critical subject-matter. Callimachus acknowledges this by allowing an emblematic part of the hymn to Apollo to sing both of “itself” and of the greater whole:

ἦ ἦ παιῖον ἀκούομεν, οὐνεκα τοῦτο  
 Δελφός τοι πρῶτιστον ἐφύμνιον εὔρετο λαός,  
 ἦμος ἐκηβολίην χρυσεῶν ἐπεδείκνυσο τόξων.  
 Πυθῶ τοι κατιόντι συνήντετο δαιμόνιος θήρ,  
 αἰνὸς ὄφις. τὸν μὲν σὺ κατήναρες ἄλλον ἐπ' ἄλλω  
 βάλλων ὠκὺν οἷστόν, ἐπηύτησε δὲ λαός·  
 ‘ἦ ἦ παιῖον, ἵει βέλος, εὐθύ σε μήτηρ  
 γείνατ' ἀοσσητήρα· τὸ δ' ἐξέτι κείμεν αἰείδη.

We hear *Hie, Hie, Paiëon* since this refrain did  
 the Delphian people first invent  
 when you first displayed the archery of your golden bow.  
 As you were going down to Pytho you came across a god-sent beast,  
 a terrible serpent. And you slew him, shooting  
 swift arrows one after the other. And the people cried:  
 “*Hie, Hie, Paiëon*, shoot an arrow!” Forthwith your mother  
 bore you as the Helper, and ever since then you have been celebrated in  
 this way. (*h. Apoll.* 97–104)

Not only does this passage sing of the Homeric hymn, it also introduces the critical exchange between Apollo and φθόνος that follows “by providing a test case, a specimen of Callimachus' novel style of representing traditional themes.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Callimachus is here asserting his own, as it were, “independent” poetic identity by marking a distinct narrated past in relation to

<sup>6</sup>These are the members of what Gelzer 145 rightly calls “a society of the mind.”

<sup>7</sup>There need not, in principle, be only one “interpretive community.” The community I am specifically referring to here is that of Alexandrian intellectuals, although in practice, the book-reading community of Ptolemaic Egypt was not, for example, exclusively urban (see e.g. Parsons 157–8).

<sup>8</sup>Williams 82. Calame 44 lays greater stress on religious and mythical aspects of the hymn, and speaks of “a kind of coincidence created between the form of enunciation of the present poem—a hymn—and the content of what is uttered—the description of a ritual musical performance.”

a narrating present: The aetiological lead-in, “We hear *Hie, Hie, Paiëon* since...” is uttered by a first person narrating voice situated outside the narrative, while the hymnic refrain itself, “*Hie, Hie, Paiëon*, shoot an arrow!”, is given in direct-speech (the narrative mode that is the antithesis of diegesis), and uttered by characters inside the narrative.<sup>9</sup> Callimachus is of course creating a clever, playful mixture of past and present, but at some significant junctures he seems to maintain a distinctness of ingredients. This practice, we might cautiously suggest, is one way for an Alexandrian poet to stress the innovative element in his appropriation of a grand but distant poetic past.<sup>10</sup>

2.2 Contrast this with Apollonius’ *Argonautica*. The poem begins as a hymn to Apollo, initially an ambiguous act, which could have been construed by the interpretive community either as a declaration of adherence to (more innovative) Callimachean aesthetic principles,<sup>11</sup> and to the ideas expressed by Apollo at the end of Callimachus’ hymn, or, since hymns were conventionally regarded as preludes to epic, as the lead-in to a more conservative poetic composition. Of course, following the *Argonautica*’s introductory hymn Apollonius does offer a longer narrative poem, which bears semblance, superficially at least, to a Homeric epic, while Callimachus openly counters the expectation for an epic sequel.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Apollonius’ introductory hymn to Apollo opens in the conventional manner of hymns, “I begin with you, Phoebus” (Ἀρχόμενος σέο

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Henrichs 130. Calame 46 suggests that the interaction of verbal tenses and enunciative stances in this passage tend to “efface the limits between the legendary or ‘mythological’ time and the time taken to perform the poem, the ‘ritual’ time; a continuity is woven between these two temporal dimensions which aims at superimposing them.” Linking poetic pasts and presents is, of course, a defining feature of all Hellenistic culture. But Callimachus is most emphatically not trying to pretend that legendary and ritual time are identical. The question, rather is *how*, and *from what perspective* is linking undertaken? See e.g. Depew 58. The first-person narrator is here in the plural. The question of “who is this narrator and what are his attributes” is very important, and as such incorporates a conscious manipulation of ambiguity (discussed e.g. in Bing 1993), but whatever the narrating entity, it is essentially situated in the narrating present, and does not overlap with any narrated character.

<sup>10</sup>On linking to a literary past see Bing 1988: 50–90.

<sup>11</sup>Margolies 3 notes: “From the very start, Apollonius makes it clear that he considers himself a Callimachean poet. He opens the poem with a hymn to Apollo, expressed by both the narrator and the heroes.” Cf. Hunter 1989: 34–38, also Clauss 17. For further bibliography see Clauss 2 n. 2. As often pointed out, the narrator’s use of the first person (with a verb of speaking/singing) at the beginning of a poem is typically hymnic/epinician. In heroic epic the singer is primarily a special **addressee** (“Sing to me, muse...,” etc.), and not a first person (i.e. a “personal”) **speaker**.

<sup>12</sup>Callimachus’ aesthetic would have required that no epic follow the *prooemium*. See Bing 1993: 182.

Φοῖβε... See Koller). By contrast, Callimachus' own hymn begins with an epiphany, "How the laurel branch of Apollo trembles!" (Οἶον ὁ τῶπόλλωνος ἐσείσατο δάφνινος ὄρπηξ) in a manner that is otherwise unattested in the extant literature, and which probably left little doubt as to his more innovative intentions.<sup>13</sup> So while both Apollonius and Callimachus were skilled and inventive weavers of poetic pasts and presents, the former sometimes blurred the seams between his different elements, where the latter left them somewhat more clearly marked. This observation again seems to fit in with the general relationship between the two poets: Apollonius being the more "conservative," Callimachus the more "innovative."<sup>14</sup>

2.3 Keeping in mind Apollonius' "blurring of seams," consider now these lines from the second book of the *Argonautica*:

σὺν δέ σφιν εὖς πάις Οἰάγροιο  
 Βιστονίη φόρμιγγι λιγείης ἤρχεν ἀοιδῆς·  
 ὥς ποτε πετραίῃ ὑπὸ δειράδι Παρνησσοῖο  
 Δελφύνην τόξοισι πελώριον ἐξενάριξεν,  
 κοῦρος ἑὼν ἔτι γυμνός, ἔτι πλοκάμοισι γεγηθώς  
 ἰλήκοις· αἰεὶ τοι, ἄναξ, ἄτμητοι ἔθειραι,  
 αἰὲν ἀδῆλητοι, τὼς γὰρ θέμις, οἴοθι δ' αὐτῇ  
 Λητῷ Κοιογένεια φίλαις ἐνὶ χερσὶν ἀφάσσει.  
 πολλὰ δὲ Κωρύκiai νύμφαι, Πλειστοῖο θύγατρεις,  
 θαρσύνεσκον ἔπεσσιν, ἣ ἴε' κεκληγυῖαι·  
 ἔνθεν δὴ τόδε καλὸν ἐφύμνιον ἔπλετο Φοῖβῳ.

and with them Oeagrus' goodly son  
 began a clear lay on his Bistonian lyre;  
 how once beneath the rocky ridge of Parnassus  
 he slew with his bow the monster Delphynes,  
 he, still young and beardless, still rejoicing in his long tresses.  
 May you be gracious! Ever, O Lord, be your locks unshorn,  
 ever unravaged; for so is it right. And none but Leto,  
 daughter of Coeus, strokes them with her dear hands.  
 And often the Corycian nymphs, daughters of Pleistus,  
 took up the cheering strain crying *Hie, Hie, shoot!*  
 hence arose this lovely refrain of the hymn to Phoebus.

(2.703–12 tr. Seaton, with alterations)

<sup>13</sup>"From the literary point of view, there survives no earlier example of such a mimetic presentation of an epiphany ritual." Williams 15 considers the vivid effect of such a beginning, but does not comment on the act as a possible declaration of innovation.

<sup>14</sup>See above, n. 4. In general, I would propose that by blurring the seams, a semblance of "conservativism" is achieved, and by exposing them the opposite, a semblance of "innovation." But again, this idea requires a lengthy discussion and is here only tentatively presented.

On the one hand, these lines seem to be a statement of aesthetics that are more “Callimachean” than “Apollonian.”<sup>15</sup> The passage is an *aetion*, that is, a song that explains to us the nature of the essential song (i.e. the hymnic refrain) of the god of poetry. This *aetion* is a distinct, short, narrative unit with a beginning and an end. On its own, the *aetion* is a hymn of sorts (cf. “he began a lay” ἦρχεν ἀοιδῆς, the typical marker of “hymn”<sup>16</sup>). Furthermore, Apollonius’ *aetion* is a condensed image of the poetic progress of the poem at large, just as Callimachus’ *aetion* is a model of Callimachean poetry: “Reading (or hearing) Orpheus’ hymn...presents, in concentrated form, the same experience as reading (or hearing) the *Argonautica* as a whole; at the centre of both stands the powerful poet, controlling a complex pattern of competing voices.”<sup>17</sup> So here we find an Apollonian *aetion* performing a similar function to the parallel Callimachean *aetion*. At the same time, by placing the *aetion* in the mouth of a fictional narrative character and embedding the words in the flow of a larger (more Homer-like) epic poem, Apollonius declares his apparent ability to incorporate a new form within a more traditional sequence in which the separate identities of the components are less distinct.

Apollonius’ “blurring” attempt has yet another aspect. Despite the fact that the lines are “officially” uttered by Orpheus, it is often suggested that the *aetion* is presented in the mouth of “the narrator” rather than “Orpheus,” especially as Apollonius seems to have encouraged “quasi-identification” of himself with Orpheus (Hunter 1993: 149). The *aetion* marker “hence arose this lovely refrain of the hymn to Phoebus” (ἐνθεν δὴ τόδε καλὸν ἐφύμνιον ἔπλετο Φοῖβῳ) is not ascribed to the “narrator” or to “Orpheus” without ambiguity, and the grammar of the paian cry “crying *Hie, Hie, shoot!*” (ἦ ἔε κεκληγυῖαι), does not permit us to say if it is in direct speech or not, i.e. whether we have been transported momentarily to the spatio-temporal reality

<sup>15</sup>Either these lines will have been written after Callimachus’—in which case they will have been construed as a re-statement of principles, or else, if Callimachus composed his lines after the *Argonautica* was published (cf. e.g. Herter 19–20), then it is a case of Callimachus appropriating a passage from Apollonius, “re-activating,” and possibly using it for his own purposes.

<sup>16</sup>Here too we find a blurring of the seams between past and present. The words ἦρχεν ἀοιδῆς, a speech-act which properly belongs to the singer of the hymn speaking in mimesis, in the present, and in the first person, is here presented in past tense, in the third person, and by the narrator in diegesis. The narrator is appropriating words that, strictly speaking, belong to Orpheus.

<sup>17</sup>Hunter 1993: 151. Cf. Lawall 154 on Orpheus’ song in book 1, and Fränkel 622–625 on the ending of the poem.

of the narrated event, or remain in our own diegetic point in space and time.<sup>18</sup> This blurring of present narrating context and a past narrated context contrasts with the more assertive separation we have seen in Callimachus' lines.

3.1 The passages discussed above underline a difference between Callimachus' and Apollonius' poetic approaches, let us say, between a (relative) separation of components on the one hand, and their (relative) blurring on the other. But these passages no less emphasise the underlying agreement between the two poets, who are both re-configuring the same elements of the past.

But where, within this Gestalt of difference and agreement, does Apollonius stand in relation to the stance expressed by Apollo in the concluding lines of Callimachus' hymn? These critical remarks could be construed—if left unqualified—as challenging the type of more traditional, longer, Homer-like poetic artifacts which Apollonius himself produces, or at least they would not fit in smoothly with Apollonius' integrative “blurring” practice.

Not far after the *action* of book 2, we find the following verses:

Αὐτίκα δ' Ἀσσυρίης ἐπέβαν χθονός, ἔνθα Σινώπην  
 θυγατέρ' Ἀσωποῖο καθίσσατο καὶ οἱ ὅπασσε  
 παρθενίην Ζεὺς αὐτός, ὑποσχέσῃσι δολωθεῖς.  
 δὴ γὰρ ὁ μὲν φιλόττος ἐέλδετο, νεῦσε δ' ὄγ' αὐτῇ  
 δωσέμεναι ὅ κεν ᾗσι μετὰ φρεσὶν ἰθύσειεν·  
 ἡ δέ ἐ παρθενίην ἡτήσατο κερδοσύνησιν.  
 ὥς δὲ καὶ Ἀπόλλωνα παρήπαφεν, εὐνηθῆναι  
 ἰέμενον, ποταμόν τ' ἐπὶ τοῖς Ἄλυν· οὐδὲ μὲν ἀνδρῶν  
 τήν γε τις ἱμερτῆσιν ἐν ἀγκοίνῃσι δάμασσεν.

And straightway they landed on the Assyrian shore where Zeus himself  
 gave a home to Sinope, daughter of Asopus, and granter her  
 virginity, beguiled by his own promises.

For he longed for her love, and he promised to grant her  
 whatever her heart's desire might be.

And she in her craftiness asked of him virginity.

And in like manner she deceived Apollo too who longed  
 to wed her, and besides them the river Halys, and no man  
 ever subdued her in love's embrace. (2.946–54 tr. Seaton)

The second book of the *Argonautica* is where the Argo's outward journey takes place. In the “normal” geographic course of this “epic” voyage across the sea, the Argo reaches the land of Assyria, in which not only rivers, but also some

<sup>18</sup>It is in the nature of the cry that to utter the words is to do the thing: ἢ ἔε could either be direct speech or an internal accusative (“to cry the Paian.” Cf. e.g. *Iliad* 1.473).



Apollonian lore may be found. The Assyrian land, the mention of rivers, and Apollo, and perhaps even the context of an attack on purity (=virginity), must surely have alerted the Alexandrian interpretive community to the literary-critical discourse of Callimachus' *h. Apoll.* 94–113,<sup>19</sup> which is couched in the context of a hymn to Apollo. As we have seen, this discourse is also sponsored—at least partially—by Apollonius himself, and pronounced in his own version of the *aetion* only a few lines before. In other words, the poet's ship, both the fictional vessel and the meta-poetic "vessel" (in the sense discussed by Margolies), has hit some potentially rough waters. The question "is Apollonius' poetic output a large, but muddy stream?" has now been put forth.

3.2 Apollonius swiftly extracts his ship from the Assyrian region. A few lines further down he says:

λείπον Ἄλυν ποταμόν, λείπον δ' ἀγχίρροον Ἴριν  
ἥδ' καὶ Ἀσσυρίας πρόχυσιν χθονός.

they left behind the river Halys, and left behind Iris that flows hard by,  
and the delta-land of Assyria. (2.963–4 tr. Seaton)

It has sometimes been suggested that Callimachus' Assyrian river alludes to the Halys and the Iris. This is unlikely.<sup>20</sup> What *is* likely, however is that this second verbal reference to the Assyrian land<sup>21</sup> and its rivers by a poet who, as we have seen, shares at least some of Callimachus' poetic discourse, confirms the activation of the critical idiom of *h. Apoll.*, and, I would suggest, offers a critical response.

The scholia on *Argonautica* 2.963 (section b.) reads as follows:

ἥδ' καὶ Ἀσσυρίας (πρόχυσιν): πρόχυσιν ἔφη τῆς Ἀσσυρίας,  
τουτέστι τῆς Λευκοσυρίας, τὴν ἐκκειμένην χώραν αὐτῆς εἰς θά-  
λασσαν, ὡς καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐπάνω·  
λείπον Ἄλυν ποταμόν, λείπον δ' ἄλιμυρέα χώραν,  
Ἀσσυρίας ἀνέχουσιν ἀπὸ χθονός.

"and the delta-land of Assyria": he [i.e. the poet] speaks of the delta of Assyria, that is to say of Leucosyria, the area that stretches from it into

<sup>19</sup>It is difficult to say exactly how wide is the range of associations triggered by the passage. Consider that Callimachus describes Apollo as the ἐπαίτιος of the whole journey (is Apollo also the source of the poem called the *Argonautica*?)—fr. 18.9. Cf. *Argonautica* 1.360 and 422.

<sup>20</sup>The Assyrian river is probably the Euphrates: Williams 91; on ποταμοῖο also Bundy 41.

<sup>21</sup>Assyria is not mentioned anywhere else in the *Argonautica*, not even in the corresponding passage in Phineus' prophecy. See 2.369 ff.

the sea, as above.

“they left behind the river Halys, and left behind the area that flows into the sea that juts out from the Assyrian land.”

Contrary to opinions by Merkel, Wendel, Mooney and others,<sup>22</sup> H. Fränkel has argued that the words ἐν τοῖς ἐπάνω are unlikely to refer to an earlier version, the προέκδοσις of the *Argonautica*. Fränkel points out that in sections a. and c. of the scholia to 963–65 similar expressions (καὶ ἐπάνω μέμνηται and καὶ ἄνω) are used to refer the reader to Phineus’ prophecy at 2.371ff. Thus in 963 b. the reference is also to Phineus’ description, although no citation is given in our extant text. The words ἐν τοῖς ἐπάνω in b. simply mean “above.” “Above” is probably right: we may even consider the possibility that it points not to Phineus’ prophecy, but simply to 946. The scholia of 964 record their comments under ἀντίκα δ’ Ἀσσυρίης, so in both 963–65 and 946 Assyria is the main element of the lemma. Line 946 is “above,” but close enough to require no specific line-reference.

More importantly, whatever the precise reference, the scholia here provide us with a **model of response** by the interpretive community, indeed a markedly Hellenistic model of response, as scholiastic approaches reflect an Alexandrian interpretive preoccupation (e.g. Gelzer 141–44, Parsons 156). The mention of Assyria is something that draws the attention of a learned reader and triggers a comparison.

As for the alternative verses provided by the scholia, Fränkel dismisses them with contempt, suggesting that they could have come from anywhere (251–52). This is only partially true. We cannot say who composed them, nor when. But the scholia do not normally invent things: they cite. These verses were composed by someone who seems to have been closely familiar with Apollonian style.<sup>23</sup> Of particular significance is the use of “flowing into the sea,” ἀλιμυρέα. The word is Homeric (2x) and used in the context of rivers; it appears four times in Apollonius, indeed once only a few lines before our passage (2.936); moreover, it appears five times (!) in the Orphic *Argonautica*, whose source is widely acknowledged to be Apollonius Rhodius.<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>22</sup>So Merkel in his edition, p. 50, citing the scholia on Hom. *Il.* 18.182, ἐν τοῖς πρότεροις. See also Mooney 408, Wendel 196–97.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. e.g. usage of χθονός, almost universally localized in the same sedes in epic (Homer, Hymns, Apollonius, etc.), e.g. *Arg.* 1.155, 784, 1180, 1360; 2.683, 946 (!), 964 (!), 3.162, etc... The rigid localization of the lexical/grammatical entry goes entirely against the localization tendencies of the (non-lexicalized, non-grammaticalized) metrical shape **short-short**, which is one of the most flexible in the hexameter. See O’Neill 139. Usage of χθονός in any other position could have indicated inexperience.

<sup>24</sup>*Il.* 21.190; *Od.* 5.460; *Arg.* 1.913; 2.554, 36; 4.645; *Orph. Arg.* 68, 344, 462, 630, 737.

Apollonian origin is particularly evident in the Orphic description of the visit to the land of the Paphlagonians:

Καραμβιακὴν δ' ἔκετ' ἄκρην  
 Ἀσσυρίων τε λεῶν τρηχύν τ' ἀγκῶνα Σινώπης,  
 ἢ ἔπι Θερμῶδων κεῖται Ἄλυσός τε ῥέεθρον  
 πουλὺν ἐπ' αἰγιαλὸν δίνας ἀλιμυρέας ἔλκον

[Argo] reached the cape of Carambis  
 and the Assyrian people, and the rugged headland of Sinope,  
 beyond which lies the Thermodon and the course of the Halys  
 that carries forth its sea-bound eddies towards a long beach.  
 (735–7, text Vian)<sup>25</sup>

The Orphic poem does not, however, seem to follow the *πρόχυσιν* version given in our extant text of Apollonius. The scholia's "variant," whose likely source is Apollonian at least in character, and also its Orphic echo, can thus again serve as a guide to the **reception** of the poem by an interpretive community: the alternative they both offer argues for the uniqueness, perhaps the "strangeness" of the word *πρόχυσιν*, which is an uncommon, non-Homeric word not found in the extant epic literature, and an Apollonian *hapax*.

3.3 *Πρόχυσιν* has sometimes been translated as "alluvial deposit."<sup>26</sup> This is lexically correct but semantically incomplete. Language does not exist in the abstract. It is a communicative device used by speakers and directed at hearers who are situated in a specific time and space. To anyone living in Alexandria, indeed, most probably to all but the most ignorant inhabitants of the Hellenistic οἰκουμένη, the word *πρόχυσιν* would have conjured up a concrete, contemporary image, which in many ways is the antithesis of a learned, archaic reference. As the Argo leaves the Assyrian river a concrete image of, quite literally, **the muddiest place in the world**, is evoked: the vast, silty delta of the River Nile.<sup>27</sup> Thus the Argo swiftly heads for the clear waters of the open (Homeric) sea, carrying with it not only the epic heroes, but Apollonius' epic itself,<sup>28</sup> with an added visual "echo" thrown in for good measure. By using the

<sup>25</sup>For the comparison see Vian 181–82. The text is not without problems, and there are questions regarding the order of lines, none of which, however, affects our argument.

<sup>26</sup>Mooney 206. Cf. also Delage 167: "alluvions de la terre assyrienne."

<sup>27</sup>Cf. also Herodotus 2.5.12, 2.12.10. Herodotus' description of the Nile delta would have almost certainly been known to educated Alexandrians.

<sup>28</sup>The word *πρόχυσιν* is not attested as a critical term elsewhere in Hellenistic literature. However, it is interesting to note that Ps.-Longinus, comparing Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, says that the latter does not have τὴν πρόχυσιν ὁμοίαν τῶν ἐπαλλήλων παθῶν (9.13.8)

word *πρόχυσις*, Apollonius again argues the case for a non-separated mix of past and present ingredients in two ways. First, he **telling** his readers something about the literary-critical issue at hand, namely that it is possible to sail the *ingens aequor* of epic without getting stuck in the mud. Second, he is **showing** us how to do it, by using a non-Homeric, non-epic word, that exists first and foremost in the “real world,” within a segment of epic diegesis. This is a singularly effective maneuver: “they left behind the muddy delta of the Assyrian land” (λεῖπον... Ἀσσυρίης πρόχυσιν χθονός) is, to use current linguistic terminology, a **performative** utterance. By saying the word, its speaker is doing the thing.<sup>29</sup>

4. Just as the quest for the golden fleece takes Argo and the Argonauts to a geographic place called Assyria, so Apollonius’ (meta-) epic journey takes him to a literary-critical domain.<sup>30</sup> And just as Argo can make her way past that land’s alluvial deposits, so Apollonius makes his way through a literary-critical argument.<sup>31</sup> The importance of his response should be neither over- nor under-stated, but put in its proper perspective. The literary critical issues at hand are considerable, but no open charge has been made against Apollonius, who is, at least in some ways, a Callimachean poet. Reading our text in this way may allow us to side-step the issue of any putative “quarrel” between Callimachus and Apollonius. What we have seen is not a case of personal mudslinging, but a broad, positive flow of ideas within a community.

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“nor is there [in the *Odyssey*] any such outpouring of passions crowding one on another [as in the *Iliad*]” (Russell 97). It need not surprise us that Ps.-Longinus uses *πρόχυσις* approvingly. We would expect the “outpourings” of Homer to be “a good thing.” “Outpourings” in the context of Assyrian rivers and Homeric imitators are another matter altogether. See n. 31, below.

<sup>29</sup>In the specific technical sense, as defined originally by Austin and Searle (see Crystal 255). A common example of a performative utterance is, “I promise to do so and so...” By **saying** the words the speaker (e.g. a priest, a magistrate) is also **doing** the thing, i.e. the act of promise. It should be noted that in this use the term describes an inherent semantic function of particular types of utterances, and is not identical with “performative” in the sense of “intended for public performance on stage, in front of an audience, etc.”

<sup>30</sup>Depew 59 suggests that Callimachus uses mimesis and aetiology “as a means of highlighting the essential textuality (and inter-textuality) of his poetic recreation,” and is focusing on the audience’s experienced world; if, as Depew suggests, Callimachus is essentially subverting precise references to “a particular cult or geographical location” (65) in order to achieve textuality, and if Apollonius indeed shares important elements of aesthetics with Callimachus, then the example discussed here may be an Apollonian parallel, revealing “the essential textuality” of Apollonius’ re-creation.

<sup>31</sup>He may even be hinting that mud is not all bad. The Nile’s alluvial deposits were the source of the Delta’s fertility. Cf. the positive use of *πρόχυσις* in Longinus, above, n. 28.

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