

Religious Multiculturalism in Apollonius' *Argonautica*

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I focus on religious multiculturalism in Apollonius' *Argonautica* by highlighting the interconnections between different cultures and approaches to ritual in relation to space, place, and narrative structure. I demonstrate the existence of two religious spheres in the Argonautic world: a Greek sphere centering on Greece and the Aegean Sea and an Egyptian sphere stretching from Colchis to Libya. I show how, in Apollonius, each cultural domain functions as a microcosm of religious activities with which Greek and non-Greek characters engage according to Greek or non-Greek and local religious norms. Moreover, I demonstrate that, in Apollonius' multicultural world, the gods typically mediate between the Greek heroes and non-Greek characters by bridging their cultural and religious differences. Local divinities are particularly active as intermediaries in Books 3 and 4. We see a similar principle of divine mediation in the narrator's relationship with the Muses, who become his "interpreters" of Greek, non-Greek, and local knowledge. The importance of mediating between the human and divine realms, as well as between different languages and cultures, emphasized in the *Argonautica* reflects similar concerns in Apollonius' real context, where the role of Egyptian priests, who are bilingual in Greek and Egyptian, is representative of their prominence as mediators and transmitters of Egyptian knowledge on behalf of the Ptolemaic rulers.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Brill New Jacoby</i>
<i>CGRN</i>	<i>Collection of Greek Ritual Norms</i>
<i>FGrHist</i>	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>LSCG</i>	<i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
<i>PSI</i>	<i>Papiri della Società Italiana</i>
<i>TrGF</i>	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i>

EDITIONS OF APOLLONIUS

Text Vian and Delage (1974), (1980), and (1981)
Translations of the Apollonian text are by Hunter (1993a)

Scholia Wendel (1935)
Translations of the Apollonian *scholia* are my own



All other text, *scholia*, and translation editions are appropriately marked in the footnotes.

INTRODUCTION

The following discussion begins with a review of scholarship on the gods in the *Argonautica*. The main issues scholars have addressed include the comparison of Apollonian and Homeric divine characters and the development of human-divine relationships in the poem. A third avenue of inquiry investigates Apollonius' representation of the Argonautic world, including its religious aspects, from a bicultural perspective. The latter approach, pioneered by Susan Stephens, has opened the floor to discussions of Egyptian ideas in the *Argonautica*. In this dissertation, I focus on the representation of the gods and other characters' religious activity against the backdrop of Apollonius' multicultural *oikoumenē*. In addition to discussing Greek and non-Greek gods and cult, I address the occurrence of Egyptian elements in areas of the Argonautic world that are connected with Egypt. The aim of this study is to provide an outline of Apollonius' sacred landscape that accounts for religious and cultural differences, as well as the poet's shaping of geographical space.¹

¹ Recent studies on ancient sacred landscapes include Häussler and Chiai, eds. (2020). At pg. 1, Häussler and Chiai pose the fundamental questions, "How did the natural environment influence human activities, perceptions and religious understandings, and in turn how did humans interpret, shape and transform their natural environment?", which generally lead the volume's forthcoming discussions. On definition, essential scholarship, and methodologies, see Häussler and Chiai's introduction (pp. 1–14). Tilley (1994) has been highly influential. Williamson, ed. (2024) is a recent collection of essays about "religious topographies" in the Graeco-Roman world.

THE GODS IN THE *ARGONAUTICA*: SCHOLARSHIP OVERVIEW

Scholarly work on the Apollonian gods alongside their Homeric counterparts has flourished in the last decade of the 20th century since Denys Feeney's publication *The Gods in Epic*.² The major aim of these scholarly contributions has been to gauge the "seriousness" of the Apollonian gods in contrast to those of archaic epic.³ In a dedicated chapter, Feeney considers Apollonius' gods against the backdrop of the Homeric poems, concluding that there is no reason to assume the former to be less serious than the archaic epic gods.⁴ In Feeney's view, Apollonius' rendition of the gods also suggests his scholarly investigation of several matters, including the representation of the divine in archaic epic and the problems of realism and verisimilitude in divine scenes.⁵ Feeney's interpretation underscores Apollonius' careful approach as both narrator of his epic and critical reader of archaic Greek poetry. Similarly, in "The Gods and the Divine", Richard Hunter argues for Apollonius' gods as "no more or less 'real' than human characters", thus aligning with Feeney's earlier conclusions.⁶ Hunter also remarks that any stylistic difference in the characterization of Apollonian and Homeric divine originates from the different aesthetic sensibilities in the Hellenistic period.⁷ In contrast, Virginia Knight formulates different conclusions regarding the question of the "seriousness" of the Apollonian gods.⁸ Knight argues that Apollonius' scenario exemplifies a decrease in humans'

² Feeney (1991).

³ Griffin (1980) is the first to use this terminology to refer to the Homeric gods. Hunter (1993b), 75 remarks on Griffin's phrase and applies it to Apollonius' gods.

⁴ Feeney (1991), 57–98.

⁵ Feeney (1991), 80–1.

⁶ Hunter (1993b), 75–100. See pg. 76 for this quote.

⁷ Hunter (1993b), 88: "... the presentation of the divine is subject to the same Hellenistic aesthetic of fracture and difference as all other parts of the poem".

⁸ Knight (1995), 267–305.

access to the divine in contrast with the Homeric poems.⁹ In those scenes where the gods feature more prominently (“Athena at the Symplegades”, “The opening of Book Three”, “Hera, Iris and Thetis: 4.753–865”), Apollonius is strongly indebted to Homeric imagery and language from specific passages of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, even without producing exact copies of these reference scenes.¹⁰ Against this view, Christian Pietsch rejects the notion that Apollonius’ gods are mere vestiges of the Homeric gods and argues in favor of the poem’s internal theological unity.¹¹ Finally, Katrin Stöppelkamp proposes that Apollonius’ approach to the divine departs from the Homeric poems as he promotes the activity of lesser divinities over that of the Olympians.¹² Moreover, Stöppelkamp argues that Apollonius resembles Homer in representing the overlap between human and divine motivation, which does not prevent humans from acting according to their own will—albeit in a limited way.¹³

Scholars interested in human-divine relationships in the *Argonautica* have focused on the importance of ritual performance and the varying degrees of access to the divine that different categories of gods allow. An early article by David Gaunt investigates the role of the Apollonian gods alongside that of the Argo, a ship endowed with magical powers.¹⁴ Gaunt argues that both the gods and the divine ship are allowed restricted powers and a limited scope of action in the poem due to the poet’s attempt to preserve the “dignity of the story” and, at the same time, produce a more “humanistic” narrative.¹⁵ More recent approaches have highlighted a less demarcated separation between humans and the divine. Andrew Faulkner studies the human-

⁹ Knight (1995), 284.

¹⁰ Knight (1995), 291–305.

¹¹ Pietsch (1999).

¹² Stöppelkamp (2012), 335–72.

¹³ Stöppelkamp (2012), 371.

¹⁴ Gaunt (1972), 117–26

¹⁵ Gaunt (1972), 126.

divine relationship through prophetic activity and the role of prophets.¹⁶ Faulkner submits that the frequency of prophetic activity and its efficacy in the narrative depend on a principle that Zeus established through his mouthpiece, Phineus, in Book 2, whereby human knowledge achieved through divination cannot be all-encompassing.¹⁷ According to Faulkner, this principle is most evident in Book 4, where the gods supply for the gaps in human knowledge.¹⁸ In an interesting chapter comparing “Die Sakrale Geographie” of Apollonius and Dionysius Periegetes, Ekaterina Ilyushechkina analyzes three approaches to religious themes in Apollonius’ and Dionysius’ ethnographic accounts, namely, the sacred *locus*, the mythological narrative, and religious cult.¹⁹ Ilyushechkina’s study combines religious and geographical aspects of the narrative and showcases Apollonius’ construction of a cultic space in which the divine is closely connected with the geographical context.²⁰ Moreover, in her conclusions, Ilyushechkina remarks that, by intervening in the narrative as epic characters, the Apollonian gods allow for the construction of emotional narratives—contrary to Dionysius Periegetes, in whose *periēgēsis* they are subordinate to the geographical context.²¹ Sarah Hitch investigates Apollonius’ representation of heroes and hero cults in the *Argonautica* with regard to the renewed concern for epic and hero cults developing in the Hellenistic period.²² Remarkably, Hitch argues that the poet’s interest in heroization suggests a wider concern for the nature of the divine and the process of divinization.²³ Moreover, the emphasis on heroization and divination has a historical

¹⁶ Faulkner (2004), 49–65.

¹⁷ Faulkner (2004), 63–4.

¹⁸ Faulkner (2004), 64.

¹⁹ Ilyushechkina (2012), 163–79.

²⁰ Ilyushechkina (2012), 177.

²¹ Ilyushechkina (2012), 177.

²² Hitch (2012), 131–62.

²³ Hitch (2012), 157–8.

foundation in the Hellenistic period, particularly regarding the Ptolemies' involvement in analogous religious processes.²⁴ Suzanne Lye has investigated the role of ritual performance in the *Argonautica* from the human perspective and argued that relationships between gods and humans are based on correct ritual performance.²⁵ In particular, the Argonauts regularly perform ritual actions as a “preemptive form of problem-solving”.²⁶ In her conclusions, Lye emphasized the effectiveness of human rationality within the poem, especially through ritual performance as a coping strategy in difficult circumstances.²⁷ In his article titled “‘Heldendämmerung’ Anticipated: The Gods in Apollonius’ *Argonautica*”, James Clauss argues that the poet of the *Argonautica* represents a progressive shift in the human understanding of the gods, which ultimately leads to a lack of direct communication and, consequently, a greater separation between heroes and divinities.²⁸ Notably, Clauss remarks that Apollonius’ problematization of human-divine relationships is evident in the heroes’ progressive lack of direct engagements with the gods despite their dutiful ritual performance, which suggests a parallelism with the poet’s experience of the Hellenistic gods.²⁹ Additionally, Clauss has commented that the gradual disappearance of the Olympian gods from the narrative leaves more space for new divinities to emerge, and the increasing participation of these new “gods in the making” suggests the poet’s interest in the divinization of historical living figures, especially the Ptolemies.³⁰ In his recent Ph.D. dissertation, Bryan McPhee has further elaborated on the topic of Hellenistic heroization

²⁴ Hitch (2012), 158.

²⁵ Lye (2012), 223–47.

²⁶ Lye (2012), 225.

²⁷ Lye (2012), 243.

²⁸ Clauss (2016), 135–51.

²⁹ Clauss (2016), 135.

³⁰ Clauss (2016), 149–51.

by claiming that Apollonius composes the *Argonautica* as a hymn for the Argonauts.³¹ McPhee has emphasized how the heroes' prominent role contrasts with the gods' reduced involvement in the narrative. In conjunction with the numerous hymnic elements in the poem, the quasi-divine status of the heroes suggests the activation of a process of heroization and the celebration of its heroic recipients. Lastly, a recent article by Nadège Wolff draws attention to women's ritual performance, connecting it with nocturnal settings.³² Wolff has identified nighttime as the preferred context in which women not only practice their powers, including magic, but also, in the case of leading female characters such as Medea and Arete, have their say.³³

A third scholarly approach to studying the divine in Apollonius' *Argonautica* focuses on the coexistence of different religious systems in the poem, of which the most prominent are Greek and Egyptian. Even though scholars have occasionally observed the emergence of Egyptian religious themes and symbolism, it was only recently, especially thanks to Susan Stephens' pioneering work, that biculturalism in the *Argonautica* has been systematically researched.³⁴ In her book *Seeing Double*, Stephens investigated the historical and political significance of Egyptian themes and ideas in the three great Hellenistic poets Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius.³⁵ Regarding the *Argonautica*, Stephens argues that "Apollonius experiments with many of the traditional pharaonic themes", creating a narrative about a

³¹ McPhee (2020), [Ph.D. diss.].

³² Wolff (2020), 53–83. The association between nighttime and the feminine religious sphere is well acknowledged, as Wolff also remarks.

³³ Wolff (2020), 81–2.

³⁴ Stephens (2000), (2003), and (2008). Stephens does not frequently apply the terminology "multicultural" or "bicultural" in her work. This is, however, a common scholarly way to refer to Egyptian society since 525 BC (the annexation of Egypt into the Persian Empire) onward. See, in particular, Janet Johnson's (1992) edited volume: *Life in a Multi-cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyes to Constantine and Beyond*. Other studies on the notion of "Greekness" as opposed to "the other" in the *Argonautica* include Hunter (2008), 95–114 and Klooster (2013), 159–73.

³⁵ Stephens (2003). For "Apollonian Cosmologies" see pp. 171–237.

traditional Greek myth that entails Egyptian themes and symbolism.³⁶ She further proposes that these elements are not confined to the culturally Egyptian areas of the Argonautic world, which she identifies as Colchis and Circe's island, but maintains that they "permeate the entire text".³⁷ Stephens' discussion focuses on themes, symbolism, and narrative dynamics interpreted simultaneously from a Greek and Egyptian perspective. One of Stephens' main conclusions is that Apollonius' Egyptian symbolism evokes Egyptian foundational myths of "cosmic origins": the Sun-god's underworld voyage in the Solar barque and the genesis of the first island from the primeval waters.³⁸ As Stephens remarks, these myths symbolically exemplify the triumph of order (φιλία) from chaos (νεῖκος). They are, therefore, appropriate for an epic that emerges in conjunction with the Ptolemies' establishment of a "new order".³⁹

Stephens' study of the *Argonautica* from a bicultural perspective has prompted fruitful discussions of non-Greek, especially Egyptian, cultural aspects in Hellenistic literature.⁴⁰ However, despite Stephens' insightful remarks about the importance of cosmogonic Egyptian myths in Apollonius, there is more to be done regarding Apollonius' construction of the narrative structure and religious geography of the Argonautic world. In Stephens' interpretation, Greek and Egyptian themes transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, with the result that Greek

³⁶ Stephens (2003), 182.

³⁷ Stephens (2003), 183.

³⁸ Stephens (2003), 208.

³⁹ Stephens (2003), 208–9. An important passage in which Apollonius applies these terms is Orpheus' cosmogonic song in *Arg.* 1.496–511.

⁴⁰ Noegel (2004), 123–36 validates Stephens' conclusions about the *Argonautica* by highlighting three understudied cases of convergence between Greek and Egyptian elements: the golden fleece, the Argo and its crew, and the Argonauts' journey and enterprise. At p. 136, Noegel concludes that the Argonautic journey corresponds to the poet's "personal journey", especially regarding his investigation of the evolving negotiations between Greek and Egyptian religious domains in the Alexandrian bicultural milieu. Mori's (2008) study aimed to explore possible political and ideological resonances incorporated within religious cultic activity in the *Argonautica* and compare the literary cultic activity with the extant evidence of cultic activity for the Ptolemaic ruler and the Hellenic elite in Alexandria.

characters may be themselves representative of Egyptian symbolism.⁴¹ For instance, she remarkably proposes that Jason “began as a Greek hero... but [later] he takes on the role of *the other* for himself”; namely, he assumes a non-Greek identity.⁴²

In this dissertation, I propose a different perspective on Apollonius’ approach to multiculturalism. Rather than acting as epitomes of a Greco-Egyptian cultural merging, the Greek heroes travel across Greek and non-Greek territories and engage with Greek and non-Greek peoples to different degrees.⁴³ In some of these encounters, Greek and non-Greek peoples coexist and collaborate; in others, as when the Argonauts visit the Bebryces at the beginning of Book 2, troubles and hostilities ensue. Nevertheless, the Argonauts clearly retain their Greek cultural identity, first outlined in the catalogue of heroes (1.23–233). At the end of the catalogue, the poet refers to the Argonauts as Minyans (Μινύες, 1.229), after their eponymous Boeotian ancestor Minyas. The Argonautic expedition begins and ends on the Thessalian shore at Pagasae, while, throughout the journey, the heroes loudly express their concern for the *nostos*, a typical Greek and, especially, epic motif.⁴⁴ In Book 4, before the Argo puts in at Pagasae, Apollonius remarks on the distinction between the heroes and other non-Greek components of the crew, Medea’s Phaeacian handmaidens, by dwelling on the description of their amiable jesting on Anaphe (4.1719–30).⁴⁵ In particular, Apollonius emphasizes the playfulness of their quarrel:

⁴¹ Stephens (2003), 196: “... I suggest that Apollonius adapts Egyptian elements in such a way that they escape their individual cultural formations: they may be found sometimes in connection with the Colchians, who are linked in Apollonius’s text with Egypt, but also sometimes with the Greeks themselves—as represented by the Argonauts”.

⁴² Stephens (2003), 216 with my italics.

⁴³ Stephens (2000), 195–215 discusses the issue of cultural intermingling against the backdrop of 17th–18th century colonial literature.

⁴⁴ The Argonauts’ *nostos* often appears as an object of concern throughout the journey. See for instance 1.79, 249, 336, 417, 449, 556, 885, 904–5, 1293, 2.414, 690, 863, 3.75, 175, 468, 488, 549, 993, 1069, 4.98, 202, 522, 644, 1035, 1329, 1333–6, 1418–9, 1549, 1600. On this note, see also Morrison (2020), 147 n. 10.

⁴⁵ On this episode, see Bremmer (2005), 18–34. For a detailed analysis, see Chapter 1.

γλυκερὴ δ' ἀνεδαίετο τοῖσιν | κερτομή καὶ νεῖκος ἐπεσβόλον (“... this kindled a sweet exchange of abuse and mutual wrangling”, 4.1726–7). The unproblematic *neikos* between Greek heroes and non-Greek maidens constitutes the *aition* for an *aischrologia* ritual on Anaphe, which underscores the positive results of their multicultural collaboration. This episode suggests that the two groups foster a productive relationship even by maintaining their cultural individualities.

Further investigations of cultural identity and intercultural relations include Richard Hunter’s “Greek and Non-Greek in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius” and Andrew Morrison’s “Greeks and Non-Greeks” in his monograph *Apollonius Rhodius, Herodotus and Historiography*.⁴⁶ Hunter argues that Apollonius appears to, first, establish the Herodotean binary between Greek and “others” only to afterward show that his characters are more complex than their ethnic provenience alone would suggest. For instance, the Argonauts provide an “untraditional” model of heroism, which does not immediately prompt their association with the Ptolemaic royals. Similarly, three-dimensional characters like Aeetes and Medea defy typical conceptions about “otherness” and problematize the “apparent security of the Hellenic self-definition”.⁴⁷ Similarly, Morrison discussed Apollonius’ characterization of different *ethnoi* in the Argonautic world against the backdrop of Herodotus’ *Historiē* as a ‘code model’.⁴⁸ Morrison argues that Apollonius’ representation of non-Greek populations does not allow for direct correspondence with their historical counterparts in the Hellenistic period, especially the

⁴⁶ Hunter (2008), 95–114 and Morrison (2020), 145–78. See also Clauss’ (2000), 26–7 discussion of Apollonius’ intertextual references to the motif of the conflict between East and West.

⁴⁷ Hunter (2008), 106.

⁴⁸ Morrison (2020), 145–78. See, particularly, 156: “The *Argonautica* and the *Histories* also share some crucial spaces for contact between Greeks and non-Greeks, contact which can have profound and lasting consequences; here I suggest that the Herodotean presentation of particular locations is acting as an example-model for Apollonius’ own characterisation of the same location”.

Egyptians.⁴⁹ Morrison states, “Otherness is not (only) ‘Egyptian’; it is found even among the Greeks”.⁵⁰ In contrast, Morrison observes that Apollonius portrays non-Greek people who “closely resemble Greeks in culture and *nomoi*” since, Morrison concludes, the Greek world of the *Argonautica* is much smaller than the totality of culturally Greek areas in the Hellenistic period.⁵¹ Morrison’s approach is valuable because it highlights greater cultural, ethnic, and geographical diversity across the Argonautic world outside the Colchis-Greece binomial. It also successfully expands the umbrella of non-Greek ethnic references to other Mediterranean peoples besides the Egyptians by connecting Apollonius’ non-Greek peoples and locations with thematically and topographically analogous passages in Herodotus. Nevertheless, Morrison does not consider the gods and their interaction with the multicultural *oikoumenē* of the *Argonautica*, except for instances of ritual activity in a non-Greek context, such as the heroes’ rituals for Magna Mater in Cyzicus.⁵² Building on this, I endeavor to explore the representation of the divine in Apollonius by accounting for greater cultural variety across the Argonautic world than the dichotomy between Greeks and Egyptians. Specifically, I focus on the gods as agents and intermediaries within the multicultural world. The model proposed maintains a polarizing view of Greece and “Egyptianized” Colchis, which clearly represent two distinct spheres of religious and cultural interest. I address the scholarship on individual gods in the following chapters.

⁴⁹ Morrison (2020), 146.

⁵⁰ Morrison (2020), 166.

⁵¹ Morrison (2020), 149. At pp. 149–60, Morrison discusses the case of the Lemnian women who are “clearly foreigners, from the perspective of the Argonauts”, and of Phineus, who, despite his insightful knowledge of the Greek world and its customs, is Thracian (*Arg.* 2.238). For the perception of the Lemnian women as “foreign”, see Heracles’ words at *Arg.* 1.869–70: “surely, we will not be renowned if we remain locked up here forever with foreign women” (οὐ μὰν εὐκλειεῖς γε σὺν ὀθνεῖσι γυναιξίν | ἐσσόμεθ’ ὧδ’ ἐπὶ δηρὸν ἐελμένοι).

⁵² Morrison (2020), 156–8.

THE STUDY OF SPACE, PLACE, AND GEOGRAPHY IN APOLLONIUS

Regarding spatial terminology and definition, I mostly refer to Kate Gilhuly and Nancy Worman's explanation of space and place in the introduction to their co-edited volume *Space, Place, and Landscape in Ancient Greek Literature and Culture*.⁵³ As regards the definition of geography in antiquity, I draw from Duane Roller's *Ancient Geography*.⁵⁴ The term "space" applies to a three-dimensional, boundless, more or less abstract extent.⁵⁵ Ancient Greek lacks an entirely abstract idea of space; the closest terms are the nouns *χώρος*, "a definite space, piece of ground, place" but also "land, country", and *χώρα*, "space or room in which a thing is, defined as partly occupied space".⁵⁶ In archaic epic, specifically the *Odyssey*, Pierre Vidal-Naquet has remarked that "space figures into the opposition between the real and the imaginary, the gods, monsters, and men, sacrifice and barbarism".⁵⁷ According to this statement, archaic *epos* conceives space by negotiation between the real and the imaginary, or perhaps, the mythological.

⁵³ Gilhuly and Worman (2014). Anthropological studies presenting a general overview of space and place theory include: Lawrence and Low (1990), 453–505, a review of literature on the concept of "built environment", namely, "the broadest sense to any physical alteration of the natural environment, from hearths to cities, through construction by humans" (p. 454). Hirsch and O'Hanlon, eds. (1995) is an anthology of ethnographic studies focusing on native people's relationships with their natural and social surroundings, and landscapes. Relevant is also Ingold's (2000) sensory theory of space, which focuses on humans' perception and construction of space through movement. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, eds. (2003) is a collection of articles highlighting different theoretical approaches to space and place, with an introduction delineating the concepts of embodied, gendered, contested, inscribed, and transnational spaces. On the notion of "ethnoscapes", Appadurai (1996) is a seminal work. On indigenous' knowledge of the environment and its transformations, see Roy et al., eds. (2000).

⁵⁴ Roller (2015). Roller (2023) focuses on Ptolemy of Alexandria's *Geographical Guide* (mid-2nd century CE). Ptolemy's work, though considerably later than Apollonius' poem, may offer insights into the geographical understanding of the Argonautic world.

⁵⁵ Gilhuly and Worman (2014), 6–7.

⁵⁶ These definitions are from the LSJ. Gilhuly and Worman (2014), 4 also refer to the interchangeability of *χώρος*, *χώρα*, and *τόπος*.

⁵⁷ Vidal-Naquet (1986), xxii.

In the *Argonautica*, I argue, things are different. There remains a distinction between reality and the imaginary, history and myth; yet, the poet's scholarly and aetiological thrust encompasses the whole narrative space.⁵⁸ Hence, in the *Argonautica*, divine and human spaces are not mutually exclusive, nor does the concept of space pertain to one or the other domain. Through investigation and rationalization of the narrative space, the Hellenistic poet redefines the concept of space to include humans and gods, Greeks and non-Greeks, knowledge, and lack thereof. In this study, I propose to apply the term space to distinct cultural and religious areas of the Argonautic world to characterize the poem's underlying ethnic and religious layers. "A place"—in the words of Gilhuly and Worman—"is a multilayered locus of the imaginary".⁵⁹ The concept of place is closely correlated with human society, whereby a place functions as an ever-evolving repository of local identity.⁶⁰ The variables that constitute identity, such as class, gender, culture, and ethnicity, both at individual and social levels, contribute to the construction of place.⁶¹ In ancient Greek literature, this notion of place as a spatial frame of identity is well developed through different models, such as ancient Greek ethnography and Hellenistic aetiology. By combining aspects of both literary genres, the *Argonautica* provides a fruitful model for studying the interdependence between place and identity.

The formal study of geography in the ancient Greek world flourishes in the latter 3rd century BC through a systematization of the empirical and theoretical data collected up to that

⁵⁸ This is true also from a meta-poetic perspective. In this respect, the remarkable presence of fabulous creatures such as marine monsters and sirens in certain portions of the journey suggests the poet's endeavor to establish a literary dialogue with his archaic epic models, specifically the *Odyssey*. On this matter, Romm (1992), 194–6 argues that, even without reducing the Argo to a "ship of narrative", this metaphor is particularly suitable for a poem which portrays a sea voyage, just like the *Odyssey*, and, on a metaphorical level, activates an analogous meta-textual voyage across the world of the *Odyssey*.

⁵⁹ Gilhuly and Worman (2014), 6. See also Harvey (1996), 293–4.

⁶⁰ Gilhuly and Worman (2014), 6.

⁶¹ Gilhuly and Worman (2014), 6.

time.⁶² As Roller remarked, the study of ancient geography relies on three components: the topographical data collected by explorers, the creation of a theoretical framework within which to comprehend the world, and the primary (mostly) literary sources.⁶³ Although only four ancient geographical handbooks have survived, of which the earliest, Strabo of Amaseia's *Geography*, dates to the 1st century CE, ancient Greek literature is largely concerned with geography as a topic from the 8th century BC.⁶⁴ Apollonius' *Argonautica* is imbued with a strong interest in current and former studies of the known world.⁶⁵ As noted by scholars, Apollonius' reconstruction of the *oikoumenē* encompasses the traditional knowledge gathered by the "old geographers" of the archaic and classical period.⁶⁶

The seminal work on geography in Apollonius is Èmile Delage's *La géographie dans les Argonautiques d'Apollonios de Rhodes*, which investigates Apollonius' supplementation of Homeric geography with later authors.⁶⁷ Scholars have renewed their interest in Apollonius' intertextuality with geographical literature in the last few decades by focusing on his methodology of incorporating ethnographic, mythological, and geographical information in the epic. Mary Frances Williams' book on Apollonius' landscape centers on the Argonauts' experience of space, place, and landscape, especially relating to the heroes' emotional reaction with respect to the surrounding environment.⁶⁸ Doris Meyer has retraced Apollonius' references

⁶² Roller (2015), 2.

⁶³ Roller (2015), 2–4.

⁶⁴ Roller (2015), 4–5.

⁶⁵ Clare (2002), 67: "The sheer amount of geographical information purveyed by Apollonius is such that it becomes conceivable almost to categorise the *Argonautica* as a work of geography, the poet's predilection for such material reflecting Hellenistic fascination with matters geographical".

⁶⁶ The quoted phrase is a citation of Lionel Pearson's (1938) article "Apollonius of Rhodes and the Old Geographers", namely, the logographers of the Ionian school, especially Hecataeus of Miletus, whom, according to Pearson, Apollonius adopts as geographical and mythological sources.

⁶⁷ Delage (1930).

⁶⁸ Williams (1991).

to older geographical sources and submitted that he showed a major concern for the “history of human geographical expansion”.⁶⁹ Moreover, she remarks that the poem’s narrative outline, which is particularly fitting for the *periplous* or *periodos* type of journey, gestures toward the encyclopedic ambitions of fellow Hellenistic geographers.⁷⁰ William Thallmann’s “Apollonius of Rhodes and the Spaces of Hellenism” is an insightful resource on the construction of space in the *Argonautica*.⁷¹ As Thallmann argues, the poem is “a representation of space that portrays the Argonauts as constructing spaces of representation through their material, spatial practices in the various places they visit, and as constructing the area outlined by their voyage—the *oikoumenē*—as a large space of representation shaped to a great extent by a controlling Greek point of view”.⁷² The Argonauts shape the encompassing space along the voyage by altering individual places as they visit them, especially by performing rituals, establishing cults, or founding new sites. As they proceed in their journey, they connect the spots they modify across the *oikoumenē*, producing a Greek-centered network, which comes “often with overtones of political domination”.⁷³ Additionally, Thallmann suggestively proposes that the Argo is a vector of Greek identity throughout the journey.⁷⁴ Jacqueline Klooster’s contribution to the study of space in the *Argonautica* elucidates numerous aspects of Apollonius’ representation and organization of space, such as focalization, narratorial perspective, and political significance.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Meyer (2008), 223.

⁷⁰ Meyer (2008), 234.

⁷¹ Thallmann (2011).

⁷² Thallmann (2011), 24.

⁷³ Thallmann (2011), 24.

⁷⁴ Thallmann (2011), 67: “The *Argo*, then, as a Greek space defined by the social relations it helps to create, as a heterotopia presenting an idealizing and clarifying image of Greek society, confronts non-Greek lands and peoples with characteristically Hellenic social forms...”.

⁷⁵ Klooster (2013), 55–76.

Remarkably, Klooster attributes Apollonius' landscape "characterizing and psychologizing functions" that reflect on the mood and appearance of the heroes.⁷⁶

THE PROPOSED APPROACH

The geographical framework adopted by Apollonius offers numerous angles for analysis, especially at the interdisciplinary level. Scholars have demonstrated how the study of topography and geography in the *Argonautica* can be interrelated with other disciplines, such as ethnography, psychology, and anthropology. In this study, I investigate the space of the *Argonautica* to elucidate the correlation between space, ethnicity, and religion. I analyze Apollonius' representation of multiculturalism, namely, the coexistence of different cultures and, accordingly, religions, in the Argonautic *oikoumenē*. Given this, it is appropriate to adopt the expression "religious multiculturalism". As highlighted in the scholarship overview, scholars have mostly focused on Greek activity in the multicultural world, alongside, more recently, Egyptian elements. This study narrows the focus to concentrate on the divine and, specifically, on the gods' engagement with humans within the multicultural environment. Moreover, I aim to map Apollonius' geo-cultural framework onto the narrative structure of the *Argonautica*, namely, its internal subdivision into books and episodes. Specifically, in Chapter 1, I investigate the role and characterization of Apollo and Helios, mirror divinities in the Argonautic landscape, and, through their representatives, the Argonauts and the Colchian royal family, exponents of

⁷⁶ Klooster (2013), 66–75. See also Elliger (1975), 309: "Für den alexandrinischen Dichter ist nun aber charakteristisch, daß er auch die menschlichen Reaktionen auf das Naturgeschehen wiedergibt". In this section, Elliger discusses Apollonius' emphasis on the psychological processes and the emotions attributed to the heroes, especially fear, through the narrative.

different religious environments. In Chapter 2, I analyze the intervention of Olympian and local gods in the multicultural landscape. In Chapter 3, I discuss the role of Apollonius' Muses ὑποφῆτορες in relation to the Argonautic narrative, the process of poetic composition, and the poet's contemporary intellectual context. In Chapter 4, I focus on Apollonius' allusion to the Sesostris narrative, its significance in Greek and Egyptian political discourse, and the role of intermediary figures, such as bilingual characters in the poem and religious officials in Hellenistic Egypt, in the transmission of knowledge in a multicultural environment.

A DIGITAL MAP OF APOLLONIUS' SACRED LANDSCAPE



<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1UA1ggsRZrDFUvxlyvcttJhoYP8QKRUw&usp=sharing>

How to read the map:

- On the left-hand side, there is a column showing different categories of divine agents or places connected with cultic activity, which can be individually selected on the map;

- The map is color-coded; the various stops of the Argo's journey are also arranged by color and book (Book 1= purple, Book 2= green, Book 3= orange, Book 4= pink);
- Unsure locations are marked with a question mark; reasons for choosing a certain (disputed) location are often provided in the "description box".

CHAPTER 1: APOLLO AND HELIOS

THE POLARIZED DIVINE LANDSCAPE OF APOLLONIUS' *ARGONAUTICA*

This chapter outlines the essential structure of the Argonautic world. I contend that Apollonius organizes the divine landscape of the *Argonautica* around two poles, Greece and Colchis, which serve as centers of religious significance. These two religious centers represent a microcosm of religious activities and beliefs that the main representatives of each system, namely, the Argonauts and the Colchian royal family, perform and uphold with respect to their divine archetypes, Apollo and Helios. Considering the traditional connection between Colchis and Egypt, I argue for identifying Helios with the Egyptian Sun-god, Ra, and I investigate Apollonius' characterization of the Colchian god and his divine offspring, specifically Aeetes and Medea, in relation to Egyptian theology and ritual.⁷⁷ Egyptian religious elements are also present in Libya because of its proximity to Egypt.⁷⁸ Similarly, I discuss Apollo's cultic and theological aspects through his association with the Greek heroes.⁷⁹ Despite the differences in

⁷⁷ The leading studies for a bicultural interpretation of the *Argonautica* include Stephens' (2000), (2003), (2008) pioneering investigation of Egyptian ideas in Hellenistic poetry, especially Apollonius. Building on Stephens, Noegel (2004) discusses three previously overlooked examples of the interplay between Greek and Egyptian elements in the *Argonautica*: the golden fleece, the Argo and its crew, and the Argonautic journey and task. Mori (2008) studies the "real world context" underlying Apollonius' *Argonautica*. In particular, Mori focuses on the way Apollonius' audience could have received specific elements of the poem—e.g., Jason's heroism, conflict, and resolution patterns among the heroes, and the characterization of female characters, including Medea and the Lemnian women—against the backdrop of Ptolemies' politics and propaganda.

⁷⁸ See Stephens (2003), 218–37, who compares the Argo's return voyage with the course of the Egyptian Sun-god in the solar barque, and Mori (2008), 1–18, esp. 14–6. Regarding the Argonauts' conveyance of the Argo across Syrtis, Hunter (2015), 267 comments succinctly that: "Processions in which boats were carried towards temples were a familiar element of Egyptian cult, and this episode has been interpreted as one of the places in the epic where Greek and Egyptian culture come together, and the validity of Greek (i.e., Ptolemaic) claims to North Africa are confirmed".

⁷⁹ Scholarship on Apollo in the *Argonautica* includes Hunter (1986), 50–60, who focuses on Apollo's first epiphany in Book 2 and proposes an etymology of the cry *iē iē paiēon*. Feeney (1991), 69–70 and 75–7 discusses Apollo's epiphanies in contrast with other Olympian gods' appearance (or lack thereof) in the poem.

religious environments, Zeus is omnipresent in the Argonautic world and plays a prominent role in the religious systems of both Greeks and Colchians.⁸⁰ I discuss, when relevant, Zeus' role in the poem by contrasting it with those of Apollo and Helios. Finally, I argue that the Argonauts' cultic activity is mapped onto the geographical landscape of the *Argonautica* and demonstrate how specific ritual actions or divine moments delineate boundaries and culturally specific areas.

In the *Argonautica*, Apollo and Helios are two distinct divinities. The separate conceptualization of these divinities goes back to the Homeric poems, where Helios is the Sun-god and Apollo is an oracular and healing divinity.⁸¹ Similarly, Hesiod clearly distinguishes the two divine figures in the *Theogony* by characterizing Helios as the son of the titans Theia and Hyperion (*Th.* 371) while placing Apollo's birth in a later generation.⁸² Furthermore, Hesiod connects Apollo with the Muses, poets, and the lyre (*Th.* 94–5). The assimilation of Apollo with the sun dates back to the 5th cent. BC and his cult and iconography as a Sun-god persisted for centuries.⁸³ Conversely, Helios lacked a distinct mythological personality and a proper cult in the

Albis (1995), 104–9 suggests that, in composing Jason's prayers to Apollo (*Arg.* 1.411–9 and 4.1701–6), Apollonius alluded to Callimachus' *Aetia* 1 fr. 18 Harder. Belloni (1999), 231–42 argues that Apollo's epiphanies in Books 2 and 4 confirm his role as the “patrono” of the Argonautic enterprise. Belloni also considers Apollo's characterization in Apollonius to be in contrast with his Homeric counterpart, a remarkably “hostile” divinity. Bremmer (2005), 18–34 discusses Apollo's second epiphany on Anaphe, especially the etymology of Apollo's epithet *Aiglētēs* and the aition of the ritual. At pg. 30, Bremmer identifies the ritual celebration for Apollo *Aiglētēs* as “abnormal” because it is performed at night and includes water sacrifices and sexual banter between male and female characters.

⁸⁰ Scholarship on Zeus in the *Argonautica* includes Smyka (1980), 58–68, Feeney (1991), 57–98, esp. 65–9 (Zeus' absence in the narrative) and 58–62, 64–5 (plan and anger), Petrovic [forthcoming_a].

⁸¹ Compare, for instance, the characterization of Apollo at the beginning of the *Iliad* with Helios' representation in Book 12 of the *Odyssey*. The two gods significantly differ in character, attitude, and religious attributes. On Greek Helios, see Gordon and Wallraff (2006). Also, consider the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (3) and the *Homeric Hymn to Helios* (31).

⁸² Cf. *Th.* 918–20 (Apollo as the offspring of Zeus and Leto).

⁸³ Graf (2009), 121. The earliest attestations in Greek literature are Aesch. *Supp.* 212–14 (text uncertain) and Aesch. fr. 83 Mette. Scholars who have attempted to explain the Apollo-Helios syncretism include Boyancé (1966), 149–70, Burkert (1985), 148–9, and Konaris (2022), 483–504, who provides an overview of interpretations on the Apollo-Helios syncretism in the 19th and 20th cent. German and British scholarship. For

Greek world—except in Rhodes.⁸⁴ Things changed in the Hellenistic period, as Helios’ worship became increasingly popular, along with the development of a new interest in cosmic beliefs.⁸⁵ Despite the Apollo-Helios syncretism, there should be no doubt that Apollonius was aware of the separate conceptualization of Apollo and Helios in archaic poetry.

In the following sections, I explore the characterization of Apollo and Helios in the *Argonautica* and discuss the relationship of other characters with these gods, especially the Argonauts and the Colchian royal family. I claim that, in Apollonius, these characters act as representatives of either Apollo or Helios, not of both.⁸⁶ In contrast, both Greek and Colchian characters worship Zeus.⁸⁷ Concerning their actions in the narrative, Apollo and Helios are

instance, in his magnum opus *Götternamen*, Hermann Usener (1896) advanced the interpretation that Apollo is one of the “Sondergötter”, “personal gods”, who originally developed as an apotropaic divinity and only later assumed a solar aspect. In contrast, Roscher (1884-1937) considered Apollo’s identity as a solar divinity “one of the most certain facts of mythology”. Roscher (1873), 5–7 associates all of Apollo’s divine domains with the concept of solar light. For instance, Apollo’s oracular knowledge derives from and conveys spiritual light. See Konaris (2022), 485. Hoffmann (1963), 119–20 notes that Helios underwent iconographical changes in the 5th cent. BC, whereby he starts to lose his beard and assumes the ephebic traits typical of Apollo.

⁸⁴ Gordon and Wallraff (2006) maintain that even the aetiological myths on the origin of Helios’ cult in Rhodes address the lack of other official cults elsewhere in the Greek world (Pind. *Ol.* 7.54–6 with *scholium*, Diod. Sic. 5.56.3–5). See also Burkert (1985), 175.

⁸⁵ Hoffmann (1963), 117. Moreover, in the Hellenistic period, the development of the cult of Helios also involves the god’s syncretism with the newly introduced Serapis. Gordon and Wallraff (2006) explain that Helios starts being considered as “the dominant power in the cosmic order” in early stoicism, e.g., Eudoxus of Cnidus (Cic. *Rep.* 6.17, Sen. *Ep.* 41.5, Plin. *HN.* 2.12ff.). Moreover, Gordon and Wallraff (2006) argue [https://doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1116380]: “Helios thus became the focus of a late Hellenistic theology of nature which enabled the educated elite to distance themselves from the irrational traits of traditional polytheism, without having to repudiate the state religion. This theology also served to legitimise the ideological claims of the Hellenistic monarchies (e.g., *FGrH* 76 F 13, lines 9-12 [4.47f.]). The accolade *Néos Hēlios* (‘New Helios’), given to some Roman emperors, stands directly in this tradition (e.g., *ILS* 8794, line 34; *IGR* 3,345)”.

⁸⁶ Stephens (2003), 171–237 proposes a different view, whereby the Apollonian characters can embody both Greek and Egyptian ideas at different stages during the narrative.

⁸⁷ Cf. especially Apollonius’ mention of Zeus’ orders that Hermes delivered to Aeetes, namely, that he should welcome Phrixus and the Argonauts in Aia (3.584–8): οὐδὲ γὰρ Αἰολίδην Φρίξον μάλα περ χατέοντα | δέχθαι ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐφέστιον, ὃς περὶ πάντων | ξείνων μελιχίη τε θεοῦδεϊ τ’ ἐκέαστο, | εἰ μὴ οἱ Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἄγγελον ἦκεν | Ἑρμείαν, ὥς κεν προσκηδὺς ἀντιάσειεν.

among the least active characters but are especially prominent as recipients of divine cult from their representative worshipers. Notwithstanding, Apollo appears in two epiphanies in Books 2 and 4, which I discuss in detail. The heroes' cultic activity does not occasion the first epiphany during their stopover on Thynias. The second epiphany is instead a divine response to Jason's invocation. This pattern contrasts with the activity of other gods in the *Argonautica*, who participate in the narrative as full-fledged characters and typically act according to their motives.⁸⁸ Moreover, I investigate the motif of Apollo's luminousness in relation to other characters characterized by brightness and a star-like appearance, such as Jason, Orpheus, and the Dioscuri. Finally, I discuss Apollonius' comparative etiology of the Eridanus' amber involving "a Celtic interpretation" of Apollo. As regards Helios, I begin by comparing Aeetes' and Medea's displays of wrath in the poem with the representation of Helios' divine wrath in Egyptian myth and theology. Concerning Medea, I analyze her character in the *Argonautica* against the backdrop of the Egyptian myth of the "Distant" or "Wandering goddess", who is identified with the divine daughter and "Eye" of the Sun-god. Finally, I briefly discuss the practice of magic in ancient Egypt and demonstrate how the performance of magic in the Colchian sphere indicates an interplay with Egyptian beliefs and practices.

⁸⁸ For a detailed discussion, see Chapter 2.

APOLLO

Apollo's Epiphanies on Thynias and Anaphe

Apollo appears twice before the Argonauts at two different points in their journey: the first time, in Book 2, when the Argonauts disembark on the island of Thynias (2.669–84); the second time, in Book 4, as the heroes leave Crete and sail into an enshrouding darkness, the last obstacle before their full reintegration into the Aegean Sea (4.1706–10).⁸⁹ These epiphanies are characterized by remarkable brightness and luminousness.⁹⁰ Moreover, the appearance of the god causes the heroes to engage in collective ritual activities.⁹¹ In his early piece on Apollonius' Apollo, Hunter argued that the two epiphanies “are not separate, unrelated events, but part of one Apolline experience”.⁹² The association of Apollo with brightness, as well as with music and harmony, reflects the social harmony of the Argonauts.⁹³

⁸⁹ Scholarship on Apollo's epiphany in Book 2 includes Hunter (1986), 50–60, who stresses the iconography of Apollo as a god of light and harmony and provides an explanation of the etymology of Apollo's cry *iē iē paiēon* from Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*. Along similar lines, see also Hunter (1993b), 76. Thalmann (2011), 101 discusses this episode with regard to Apollonius' structuring of the landscape. Concerning the scholarship on the epiphany of Apollo in Book 4, see Albis (1995), 104–9, who juxtaposes Apollonius' characterization of the ritual on Anaphe and Callimachus' description in *Aet.* fr. 7c Harder (=fr. 7.19–34 Pf.), and Bremmer (2005), 18–34, who discusses the aition of the ritual that the heroes establish on Anaphe.

⁹⁰ See especially Hunter (1986), 50–60 and Belloni (1999), 231–42.

⁹¹ On the Argonauts' ritual activity on Thynias and Anaphe, see especially Hunter (1986), 50–60, Albis (1995), 104–9, Bremmer (2005), 18–34, Schaaf (2014), 38–9 and 267 n. 209.

⁹² Hunter (1986), 53–4.

⁹³ Thalmann (2011), 101 n. 67.

Apollo's Epiphany on the Island of Thynias (2.669–84)

Arg. 2.669–84

ἥμος δ' οὐτ' ἄρ' πω φάος ἄμβροτον οὐτ' ἔτι λήν
ὀρφναίη πέλεται, λεπτὸν δ' ἐπιδέδρομε νυκτὶ 670
φέγγος, ὃ τ' ἀμφιλύκην μιν ἀνεγρόμενοι καλέουσι,
τῆμος ἐρημαίης νήσου λιμέν' εἰσελάσαντες
Θυνιάδος καμάτῳ πολυπήμονι βαῖνον ἔραζε.
τοῖσι δὲ Λητοῦς υἱός, ἀνερχόμενος Λυκίηθεν
τῆλ' ἐπ' ἀπείρονα δῆμον Ὑπερβορέων ἀνθρώπων, 675
ἐξεφάνη· χρύσειοι δὲ παρειάων ἐκάτερθεν
πλοχμοὶ βοτρυόεντες ἐπερρώοντο κίοντι·
λαιῇ δ' ἀργύρεον νόμα βίον, ἀμφὶ δὲ νότοις
ιοδόκη τετάνυστο κατωμαδόν. ἡ δ' ὑπὸ ποσσὶ
σείετο νῆσος ὅλη, κλύζεν δ' ἐπὶ κύματα χέρσῳ. 680
τοὺς δ' ἔλε θάμβος ἰδόντας ἀμήχανον, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη
ἀντίον ἀυγάσασθαι ἐς ὄμματα καλὰ θεοῖο.
στὰν δὲ κάτω νεύσαντες ἐπὶ χθονός· αὐτὰρ ὁ τηλοῦ
βῆ ρ' ἵμεναι πόντον δὲ δι' ἠέρος.

“At the time when the immortal sunlight has not yet appeared, but it is no longer quite dark and a faint gleam has pierced the night—and the time which those waking call *amphilyke*—at that hour they entered the harbour of the deserted island of Thynias and stepped on to the land, completely

worn out by their efforts. **The son of Leto, travelling afar from Lykia to the countless race of the Hyperboreans, appeared to them.** On both sides of his face **golden curls** like bunches of grapes waved as he proceeded; in his left hand he carried a **silver bow**, and his quiver was slung around his back from his shoulder. **Under his feet the whole island shook and waves washed over the dry land. At the sight of him the Argonauts were struck helpless with amazement; no one dared to look directly into the god's brilliant eyes,** but they stood looking down at the ground, and he passed through the air far away out to sea”.

Apollo's epiphany in Book 2 is synchronized with the sunrise. The epiphany occurs at the “morning twilight” (ἀμφιλύκη, 2.671) and is depicted as a remarkably bright and luminous event. The god's physical features and implements contribute to the overall brightness of the epiphany, especially his golden curls (χρύσειοι... πλοχμοί, 2.676–7), brilliant eyes (οὐδέ τις ἔτλη | ἀντίον **αὐγάσασθαι ἐς ὄμματα καλὰ** θεοῖο, 2.681–2), and the silver bow (ἀργύρεον... βιόν, 2.678). The emphasis on luminousness has led scholars to propose that this epiphany might be interpreted as a poetic explanation of the natural phenomenon of dawn.⁹⁴ However, the Argonauts' intense emotional response and the trembling of the earth's surface under the god's stride suggest otherwise.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Hunter (1986), 52–3 and Feeney (1991), 76 suggest that the epiphany of Apollo at Thynias could be interpreted as a poetic description of a sunrise. On the latter point, Hunter (1993b), 80 argues that “Apollo's epiphany at Thynias *may* [author's italics] (but need not) be interpreted as a poetic version of sunrise”. Belloni (1999), 231–42 remarks on Apollo's “luminismo” and Apollonius' use of *enargeia* in this scene.

⁹⁵ Similarly, Hunter (1993b), 80 argues for viewing the Apollonian gods and their actions as “real” instead of, as in this case, considering them as poetic manifestations of natural phenomena.

Apollo's Epiphany near the Island of Anaphe (4.1694–710)

Apollo's second epiphany in the Sea of Crete further underscores his characterization as a god of light and brightness, which becomes salvific for the heroes shrouded in a deep darkness.

Arg. 4.1694–710

αὐτίκα δὲ Κρηταῖον ὑπὲρ μέγα λαῖτμα θεόντας
νύξ ἐφόβει, τὴν πέρ τε κατουλάδα κικλήσκουσι· 1695
νύκτ' ὅλοῃν οὐκ ἄστρα δίσχανεν, οὐκ ἄμαρυγὰι
μήνης· οὐρανόθεν δὲ μέλαν χάος ἤέ τις ἄλλη
ὠρώρει σκοτίη μυχάτων ἀνιοῦσα βερέθρων.
αὐτοὶ δ' εἴ τ' Αἰδὴ εἴθ' ὕδασιν ἐμπορέοντο
ἠεῖδεν οὐδ' ὅσσον· ἐπέτρεψαν δὲ θαλάσση 1700
νόστον, ἀμηχανέοντες ὅπη φέροι. αὐτὰρ Ἰήσων
χεῖρας ἀνασχόμενος μεγάλη ὀπὶ Φοῖβον αὐτεῖ,
ῥύσασθαι καλέων· κατὰ δ' ἔρρεεν ἀσχαλόωντι
δάκρυα. πολλὰ δὲ Πυθοῖ ὑπέσχετο, πολλὰ δ' Ἀμύκλαις,
πολλὰ δ' ἐς Ὀρτυγίην ἀπερείσια δῶρα κομίσσειν. 1705
Λητοῖδῃ, τὴν δὲ κατ' οὐρανοῦ ἵκεο πέτρας
ῥίμφα Μελαντεῖους ἀριήκοος, αἳ τ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
ἦνται· δοιάων δὲ μιῆς ἐφύπερθεν ὀρούσας,
δεξιτερῇ χρύσειον ἀνέσχεθες ὑψόθι τόξον·
μαρμαρέην δ' ἀπέλαμψε βιὸς περὶ πάντοθεν αἴγλην. 1710

“Suddenly, however, as they raced over the great expanse of the Cretan sea **they were terrified by the darkness which men call *katoulas***; no stars penetrated **the deadly darkness**, no beams of the moon; **down from the heavens spread a black emptiness, or it was some other gloom rising up from the furthest depths**. They had no idea whether they were moving in Hades or over the waters. They handed over their hopes of return to the power of the sea, helpless to control where it might lead them. **Jason, however, raised up his hands and in a loud voice called upon Phoibos, summoning him to save them**. In his despair tears flowed down; countless were the offerings he promised to provide, many at Pytho, many at Amyklai, many to Ortygia. **Son of Leto, you heard his prayer and swiftly descended from heaven to the two Melantian rocks which lie in the open sea. You leapt to the top of one and held aloft your golden bow in your right hand; in all directions it shone with a gleaming brilliance**”.

Contrary to the first epiphany, which occurred at the same time as the natural sunrise, this epiphany of Apollo takes place against the background of an unnatural darkness into which the Argonauts sail shortly after dawn (4.1690).⁹⁶ Moreover, in this case, the Argonauts and Apollo acknowledge each other since Jason invokes the god’s intervention with a prayer (4.1701–5). The poet’s direct address to Apollo (4.1706–10) is also significant as it clarifies that the epiphany occurs as a divine response to ritual.⁹⁷ Hence, even though Apollo’s epiphanies present similar

⁹⁶ Hunter (2015), 308 comments that this second epiphany reverses the paradigm of Apollo’s appearance in the Iliad “like night” (1.47).

⁹⁷ Lye (2012), 223–47 argues that divine-human relationships in the Argonautica are based on the correct performance of ritual. In this respect, it is worth noting that Jason’s prayer features correct ritual language and gestures. Specifically, he calls the god, asks for his help, and promises a reward while raising both hands toward the sky.

aesthetic traits of brightness and luminousness, the god’s interaction with the Argonauts and his movements across space vary considerably. In Book 2, the god appears as a passerby on his way to the Hyperboreans, a fabulous tribe located on the farthest northern edge of the world. Conversely, in Book 4, the god descends straight from heaven to the location from which the heroes invoke him (κατ’ οὐρανοῦ, 4.1706).

Notably, these epiphanies occur on (or in the proximity of) islands, which the Argonauts subsequently rename after the god.⁹⁸ Apollo, too, receives local cultic epithets and propitiation rituals on both occasions. Specifically, in Book 2, the Argonauts assign Apollo the epithet “of the Dawn” (*Heōdios*) and propitiate him on the island of Thynias according to Orpheus’ directions. In Book 4, they call Apollo “the Gleamer” (*Aiglētēs*) and establish a ritual cult on the newly renamed island of Anaphe.

Arg. 2.684–719

βῆ ῥ’ ἵμεναι πόντονδε δι’ ἡέρος. ὄψε δὲ τοῖον
 Ὅρφευς ἔκφατο μῦθον ἀριστήεσσι πιφαύσκων· 685
 “εἰ δ’ ἄγε δὴ νῆσον μὲν Ἑωίου Ἀπόλλωνος
 τήνδ’ ἱερὴν κλείωμεν, ἐπεὶ πάντεσσι φαάνθη
 ἡῶος μετιών· τὰ δὲ ῥέζομεν οἷα πάρεστι,
 βωμὸν ἀναστήσαντες ἐπάκτιον. εἰ δ’ ἂν ὀπίσσω
 γαῖαν ἐς Αἰμονίην ἀσκηθέα νόστον ὀπάσσει, 690
 δὴ τότε οἱ κεραῶν ἐπὶ μηρία θήσομεν αἰγῶν.
 νῦν δ’ αὖτως κνίσῃ λειβῆσί τε μειλίζασθαι

⁹⁸ On the geopolitical significance of Anaphe, see Stephens (2003), 236–7.

κέκλωμαι. ἀλλ' ἴληθι, ἄναξ, ἴληθι φαανθείς.
 ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη. καὶ τοὶ μὲν ἄφαρ **βωμὸν τετύκοντο**
χερμάσιν· οἱ δ' ἀνὰ νῆσον ἐδίνεον, ἐξερέοντες 695
 εἴ κέ τιν' ἦ κεμάδων ἢ ἀγροτέρων ἐσίδοιεν
 αἰγῶν, οἷά τε πολλὰ βαθείῃ βόσκεται ὕλη.
 τοῖσι δὲ Λητοΐδης ἄγρην πόρεν· **ἐκ δέ νυ πάντων,**
εὐαγέως ἱερῷ ἀνὰ διπλόα μηρία βωμῷ
καῖον, ἐπικλείοντες Ἑώιον Ἀπόλλωνα. 700
 ἀμφὶ δὲ δαιομένοις εὐρὺν χορὸν ἐστήσαντο,
καλὸν Ἰηπαιήον· Ἰηπαιήονα Φοῖβον
μελπόμενοι. σὺν δέ σφιν ἐὺς πάις Οἰάγροιο
Βιστονίη φόρμιγγι λιγείης ἤρχεν ᾠοιδῆς·
 ὥς ποτε πετραίῃ ὑπὸ δειράδι Παρνησοῖο 705
 Δελφύνην τόξοισι πελώριον ἐξενάριξε,
 κοῦρος ἐὼν ἔτι γυμνός, ἔτι πλοκάμοισι γεγηθώς—
 ἰλήκοις· αἰεὶ τοι, ἄναξ, ἄτμητοι ἔθειραι,
 αἰὲν ἀδήλητοι· τὼς γὰρ θέμις· οἰόθι δ' αὐτὴ
 Λητὼ Κοιογένεια φίλαις ἐνὶ χερσὶν ἀφάσσει—· 710
 πολλὰ δὲ Κωρύκiai Νύμφαι Πλειστοῖο θύγατρες
 θαρσύνεσκον ἔπεσσιν, “ἴη ἰε” κεκληγυῖαι,
 ἔνθεν δὴ τόδε καλὸν ἐφύμνιον ἔπλετο Φοῖβῳ.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ τὸν γε χορεῖη μέλψαν ᾠοιδῇ,
λοιβαῖς εὐαγέεσσιν ἐπώμοσαν ἧ μὲν ἀρήξιν 715

ἀλλήλοις εἰσαιὲν ὁμοφροσύνῃσι νόοιο,
ἀπτόμενοι θεῶν· καί τ' εἰσέτι νῦν γε τέτυκται
κεῖσ' Ὀμονοίης ἱρὸν εὐφρονος ὃ ρ' ἐκάμοντο
αὐτοὶ κυδίστην τότε δαίμονα πορσαίνοντες.

“After a long silence **Orpheus** finally addressed the heroes as follows: “**Come, let us call this the holy island of Apollo of the Dawn**, because he appeared to all of us here on his dawn journey; **let us build an altar to him on the shore and make what sacrifice we can**. If later he grants us safe return to the Haimonian land, then **we shall offer to him the thighs of horned goats. For the moment I bid you seek to please him with savour of sacrifice and libations**. Be gracious, O lord, be gracious in your appearance!” So he spoke. **Some of them at once built an altar out of stones**, while others scoured the island to see whether they could find any deer or wild goats, such as frequently graze in the deep forests. The son of Leto granted them a successful hunt, and **on the holy altar they solemnly burnt two thighs from each animal while calling upon Apollo of the Dawn**. As the meat burned, **they arrayed a broad dance in celebration of the brilliant Phoibos, the *Iepaiion Iepaiion***. With them the noble son of **Oiagros sang a clear song to the accompaniment of his Bistonian lyre**. He sang how once at the foot of the rocky ridge of Parnassos the god killed the monstrous Delphyne with his bow, when a young boy still in his nakedness, still rejoicing in long curls be gracious, please! Eternally, lord, your hair is uncut, eternally it remains unravaged. So does holy law proclaim, for only Leto herself, daughter of Koios, may hold it in her dear hands and the Korykian nymphs, daughters of Pleistos, urged him on, shouting ‘*Hie, hie*’”; this is the source of Phoibos’ lovely title. When the Argonauts had celebrated the god with dance and song, **they poured solemn**

libations and, laying hands upon the victims, swore that they would forever help each other in concord of mind. Even to this day there stands the shrine of kindly Homonoia which at that time they built to honour the most glorious divinity”.

The Argonauts’ cultic activity for Apollo at Thynias can be divided into four key moments: Orpheus’ encouragement to perform propitiation rituals for Apollo (2.684–93); the first half of the heroes’ ritual, which includes building an altar and performing a sacrifice along with a dance (694–703); Orpheus’ hymn to Apollo (703–13); and the final part of the heroes’ ritual, during which they make libations to the god, swear an oath in favor of mutual concord and establish a shrine to *Homonoia* (714–19). Similarly, the second epiphany of Apollo prompts the heroes to engage in a series of ritual actions that involve building an altar and performing sacrifices:

Arg. 4.1711–20

τοῖσι δέ τις Σποράδων βαιὴ ἀνὰ τόφρα φαάνθη
νῆσος ἰδεῖν, ὀλίγης Ἰππουρίδος ἀγχόθι νήσου·
ἔνθ’ εὐνὰς ἐβάλοντο καὶ ἔσχεθον. αὐτίκα δ’ ἠὼς
φέγγεν ἀνερχομένη· τοὶ δ’ ἀγλαὸν Ἀπόλλωνι
ἄλσει ἐνὶ σκιερῷ τέμενος στιόνετ’ ἀ τε βωμὸν
ποίηον, Αἰγλήτην μὲν ἐνσκοποῦ εἵνεκεν αἴγλης
Φοῖβον κεκλόμενοι· Ἀνάφην δέ τε λισσάδα νῆσον
ἴσκον, ὃ δὴ Φοῖβός μιν ἀτυζομένοις ἀνέφηνε.
ῥέζον δ’ οἷά κεν ἄνδρες ἐρημαίῃ ἐνὶ ῥέξειν

1715

“Before their eyes a small island of the Sporades appeared, near the little island of Hippouris; there they threw out the anchor-stones and made a stop. Soon came the light of dawn’s rising, and **in a shady grove they made a glorious sanctuary and altar of stones in Apollo’s honour, and they called upon Phobos with the title ‘Gleamer’ because of the gleam which had been visible afar off. The rugged island they called Anaphe** [‘Appearance’] because Phoibos had caused it to appear to them in their wretchedness. **They made sacrifices of the kind which men might be expected to make on a deserted shore”.**

The heroes’ struggle in dealing with the limited resources available for the ritual on the small island (4.1711) provides the opportunity for establishing a new ritual for Apollo “the Gleamer”:⁹⁹

Arg. 4.1720–30

ἀκτῇ ἐφοπλίσσειαν· ὃ δὴ σφεας ὀππότε δαλοῖς

1720

ὔδωρ αἰθομένοισιν ἐπιλλείβοντας ἴδοντο

Μηδείης δμωαὶ Φαιηκίδες, οὐκέτ’ ἔπειτα

ἴσχειν ἐν στήθεσσι γέλω σθένον, οἷα θαμειᾶς

αἰὲν ἐν Ἀλκινόοιο βοοκτασίας ὀρόωσαι.

⁹⁹ On this ritual on Anaphe, see Bremmer (2005), Halliwell (2008), 160–91, esp. 184–6, and Hunter (2015), 301–11. The *aition* for this ritual mockery also appears in Callimachus; see Hunter (2015), *comm. ad v.* The fragments of Callimachus relevant to this episode are fr. 7.19, 7.23, 21.8–12 Harder. On the Callimachean fragments, see Harder (2012), 2.207–8 and D’Alessio (2014), 495–7.

τὰς δ' αἰσχροῖς ἥρωες ἐπεστοβέεσκον ἔπεσσι 1725

χλεύη γηθόσυνοι· γλυκερὴ δ' ἀνεδαίετο τοῖσι

κερτομὴ καὶ νεῖκος ἐπεσβόλον. ἐκ δέ νυ κείνης

μολπῆς ἡρώων νήσῳ ἔνι τοῖα γυναῖκες

ἀνδράσι δηριόωνται, ὅτ' Ἀπόλλωνα θυηλαῖς

Αἰγλήτην Ἀνάφης τιμήορον ἰλάσκονται. 1730

“When Medea’s Phaeacian servants saw them pouring libations of water over the burning wood, they could no longer hold their laughter within their breasts, as they had constantly seen sacrifices of cattle in great numbers in the palace of Alkinoos. The heroes were delighted with their jesting and in turn mocked them with unseemly words, and this kindled a sweet exchange of abuse and mutual wrangling. As a result of the heroes’ merry-making, the women still compete with the men in this way on the island whenever they offer propitiatory sacrifices to Apollo the Gleamer, guardian of Anaphe”.

The ritual jesting is typical of fertility rituals such as the Eleusinian mysteries.¹⁰⁰ Commenting on ritual banter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Richardson states, “Laughter is often a symbol of rebirth, or of restoration of the dead to life”.¹⁰¹ The notion of ritual reintegration into life is particularly appropriate for the salvation of the Argonauts from the deadly night and their return to the Aegean Sea.¹⁰² Moreover, this *aition* emphasizes the successful cooperation of a culturally diverse group, including the Argonauts, Medea, and the

¹⁰⁰ Hunter (2015), 310.

¹⁰¹ Richardson (1974), 217. On ritual laughter, see also Halliwell (2008), 160–91.

¹⁰² Hunter (2015), 310–11. See Chapter 2 for the motifs of fertility and religious purification in Book 4.

Phaeacian women. The founding of the ritual on “a sweet exchange of abuse and mutual wrangling” (...γλυκερὴ δ’ ἀνεδαίετο τοῖσιν | **κερτομή** καὶ **νεῖκος** ἐπεσβόλον, 4.1726–7) recalls the outbreak of *neikos* among the Argonauts before their departure in Book 1 (450–515).¹⁰³ The playful fighting between Argonaut men and Phaeacian women on Anaphe emphasizes the distinction between the two groups in terms of gender, provenance, and ethnicity and, at the same time, provides a positive example of multicultural ritual activity for Apollo.

The Argonauts: Apollo’s Representatives

Apollo’s luminousness and the Star-like Heroes

As discussed, Apollo’s luminous appearance is prominent in his epiphanies in Books 2 and 4. Apollo’s assimilation with the Greek heroes further emphasizes these luminous aspects. Indeed, threefold associations between the heroes, Apollo, and stars are typical in the *Argonautica*. The comparison between Apollo and stars is typical in literature: in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the god is compared to “a star appearing at noon” (ἀστέρι εἰδόμενος μέσῳ ἡματι, 3.441). Furthermore, in the Hellenistic period, Apollo’s iconography included stars and starry imagery, especially on coins.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ In Book 1, Idas strongly reacts to Jason’s *amechania*, and Idmon scolds him for his disparaging attitude towards the gods. The heroes’ intervention and Orpheus’ cosmogonic song placate the quarrel. At this juncture, *philia* replaces *neikos* among the Argonauts. On the quarrel between Idmon and Idas, see Clauss (1993), 79–83. On *neikos* in the Lemnian women episode, see Chapter 2, pp. 118–24. See later in this Chapter (pp. 52–67) for the motifs of *philia* and *neikos* among the Argonauts.

¹⁰⁴ Iossif and Lorber (2009), 23–4. On Seleucid coins, the god Apollo is usually represented as sitting on the *omphalos* with a star above his head. This iconography of Apollo seems to have developed especially under Antiochus IV (ruled 175–64 BC), who also incorporated starry imagery into his royal portrait. Bergmann (1998), 65, argues that the ‘celestial’ motif on Antiochus’ IV coinage is consistent with older representations of Apollo-Helios, whose syncretism has already occurred since the 5th cent. BC. This argument emphasizes the existence of starry imagery in the iconography of Apollo before the Seleucid kingdom.

The Argonauts are first assimilated to stars when they walk among the crowd in Iolcos (1.238–40): “As they hastened on their way a great crowd of the citizens ran with them, but **the heroes stood out among them like bright stars among clouds**” (ἀμφὶ δὲ λαῶν | πληθὺς ἐπερχομένων ἄμυδις θέεν, **οἱ δὲ φαεινοὶ | ἀστέρες ὥς νεφέεσσι μετέπρεπον**). Further similes comparing individual heroes with stars include Polydeuces (2.41) and Jason (1.774, 3.956, and 3.1377).

Polydeuces as the Evening Star and the Deification of the Dioscuri

In Book 2, Polydeuces is compared to a star before his boxing match with Amycus. This simile emphasizes the hero’s brilliance and luminousness and evokes aspects of Apollo’s epiphanies.

Arg. 2.40–5

χωομένη Διὶ τίκτεν· ὁ δ’ οὐρανίῳ ἀτάλαντος	40
ἀστέρι Τυνδαρίδης, οὗ περ κάλλισται ἕασιν	
ἑσπερίην διὰ νύκτα φαεινομένου ἀμαρυγαί.	
τοῖος ἦν Διὸς υἱός, ἔτι χνοάοντας ἰούλους	
ἀντέλλων, ἔτι φαιδρὸς ἐν ὄμμασιν· ἀλλὰ οἱ ἀλκή	
καὶ μένος ἥντε θηρὸς ἀέξετο. πῆλε δὲ χεῖρας	45

“**But the other, of the line of Tyndareos, was like that star in the heavens** whose sparkling rays are brightest as **it rises through the darkness of evening**. Such was the son of Zeus, his

first beard still soft, **his eyes shining**; but his strength and might swelled like those of a wild beast”.

Polydeuces’ association with Hesperus, the Evening Star, is evocative of other epic characters’ astral connections. In *Iliad* 22.317–21, Achilles is compared with the Evening Star as he looks for Hector in the plain while wearing his new armor. In this passage, Hesperus is characterized as “the most beautiful star set in heaven” (ἔσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσταται ἀστήρ, 22.318).¹⁰⁵ In general, similes comparing stars and heroes on the battlefield are typical in Homer.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Sarah Hitch comments that while the Homeric heroes’ assimilation to stars, which is usually a result of divine intervention, is typically meant to emphasize their actions on the battlefield, the Argonauts seem to possess a natural star-like appearance that is not necessarily indicative of their military prowess (cf. *Arg.* 1.238–40).¹⁰⁷ This is partly true of Polydeuces: the hero’s starry appearance is seemingly due to his divine origin from Zeus, yet his association with a star occurs during his fight with Amycus.

Building on this, I suggest that the simile between the hero and the Evening Star Hesperus from Book 2 provides a foil for Apollo’s epiphany in Book 2, where the god receives the epithet Ἑώιος, “of Dawn”.¹⁰⁸ The metaphorical katasterism of Polydeuces in 2.41 prefigures his deification among the Mariandyni, where he is welcomed “like a god” (αὐτὸν δ’ ὥς τε θεὸν

¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Sappho fr. 104b depicts Hesperus as “the fairest of all stars”.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. for instance *Il.* 5.1–9 and 18.204–14.

¹⁰⁷ Hitch (2012) 143–4. On the reworking of Homeric similes in Apollonius, see Carspecken (1952), 58–99, Fusillo (1985), 327–45, Hunter (1993b), 129–38, and Knight (1995), 198–231.

¹⁰⁸ The juxtaposition of Hesperus and Apollo is attested in Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos*, where the poet characterizes the Evening Star as always looking down on resounding Delos, Apollo’s birthplace (οὔτε σιωπηλὴν οὔτ’ ἄγοφον οὔλος ἐθεύρας | Ἐσπερος, ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ σε καταβλέπει ἀμφιβόητον, 302–3). On hero cult in Apollonius, see Hitch (2012), 131–62. See also McPhee’s (2020) recent interpretation of the *Argonautica* as a hymn to the heroes.

Πολυδεύκεα δεξιόωντο, 2.756).¹⁰⁹ As Hitch remarks, the verb δεξιόωντο describes the action of welcoming a god in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 16.¹¹⁰ Shortly after, King Lycus tells the Argonauts that the Dioscuri will receive a cult and a temple on the Acherousian headland as a way of compensation for having defeated Amycus.

Arg. 2.806–10

νόσφι δὲ Τυνδαρίδαις Ἀχερουσίδος ὑψόθεν ἀκτῆς

εἶσομαι ἱερὸν αἰπύ, τὸ μὲν μάλα τηλόθι πάντες

ναυτίλοι ἄμ πέλαγος θεεύμενοι ἰλάσσονται·

καί κέ σφιν μετέπειτα πρὸ ἄστεος, οἷα θεοῖσι,

πίονας εὐαρότοιο γῆρας πεδίιο ταμοίμην.

810

“Moreover, high up on the Acherousian headland, I shall build a shrine to the sons of Tyndareos; every sailor on the sea will see it from afar and greet them reverently. For the future, I will set aside for them, as for gods, a fertile area of good plough-land on the plain in front of the city”.

Remarkably, Lycus expects the region’s inhabitants and all the incoming sailors to propitiate the Dioscuri (2.807–8).¹¹¹ The language used to refer to the Dioscuri’s cult as protectors of sailors in the Black Sea region belongs to a ritual context. The verb ἰλάσκομαι, “to

¹⁰⁹ Hitch (2012), 149 argues that Polydeuces’ analogy with a star represents a hint of his forthcoming immortalization. Similarly, see Fränkel (1968), 515–16.

¹¹⁰ Hitch (2012), 147.

¹¹¹ Hitch (2012), 149.

propitiate”, is only used for gods in Homer and Hesiod and for hero cults.¹¹² In the *Argonautica*, forms of ἱλάσκομαι, including the imperative ἱλάτε, are attached to other divinities.¹¹³ Moreover, in the poem’s epilogue, Apollonius begins his final address to the Argonauts with an allusion to hero cult: ἱλατ’ ἀριστῆες, μακάρων γένος (4.1773). Accordingly, the immortalization of the Dioscuri seems to anticipate Apollonius’ final address to the Argonauts in god-like terms.¹¹⁴

The deification of the Dioscuri is confirmed later in the narrative when Zeus’ voice, speaking through the Argo’s sacred beam, instructs them to ask the gods for safe passage into the Ausonian Sea to find Circe’s palace (4.588–91).¹¹⁵ The Dioscuri immediately raise their hands to pray for salvation in accordance with Zeus’ command (4.592–5).¹¹⁶ After crossing the territory of the Celts and Ligurians unscathed and finally reaching the Stoechades islands, the Argonauts recognize the Dioscuri as protectors of sailors:

Arg. 4.649–53

μεσσότατον δ’ ἄρα τοί γε διὰ στόμα νηὶ βαλόντες,
 Στοιχάδας εἰσαπέβαν νήσους, σοοὶ εἵνεκα κούρων 650
 Ζηγνός· ὃ δὴ βομοὶ τε καὶ ἱερὰ τοῖσι τέτυκται
 ἔμπεδον· οὐδ’ οἷον κείνης ἐπίουροι ἔποντο
 ναυτιλίας, Ζεὺς δέ σφι καὶ ὀψιγόνων πόρε νῆας.

¹¹² Hitch (2012), 148–9.

¹¹³ Cf. 1.1093, 1.1139 (Rhea), 3.1037 (Hecate), 4.1333 (Libyan Heroines), 4.1411 (Hesperides), and 4.1773 (heroes).

¹¹⁴ Hitch (2012), 157.

¹¹⁵ 4.588–91: Πολυδεύκεα δ’ εὐχετάσθαι | Κάστορά τ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖς ἦνωγε κελεύθους | Αὐσονίης ἔντοσθε πορεῖν ἄλός, ἧ ἔνι Κίρκην | δήουσιν, Πέρσης τε καὶ Ἑλίοιο θύγατρα.

¹¹⁶ 4.592–5: ὧς Ἀργὼ ἰάχῃσεν ὑπὸ κνέφας. οἱ δ’ ἀνόρουσαν | Τυνδαρίδαι, καὶ χεῖρας ἀνέσχεθον ἀθανάτοισιν | εὐχόμενοι τὰ ἕκαστα· κατηφείη δ’ ἔχεν ἄλλους | ἥρωας Μινύας.

“They emerged through the central mouth of the river and disembarked on to the Stoichades islands, safely arrived **thanks to the sons of Zeus**. For this reason **permanent altars and rites are established in their honour**, and that was not the only voyage over which they watched as protectors, but **Zeus entrusted to them also the ships of men who came after**”.

Apollonius indicates that the Dioscuri’s support was crucial to accomplish the latest feats. At this juncture, the Argonauts honor them as gods on the Stoechades islands with altars and sacrifices. The poet’s final comment regarding the Dioscuri’s panhellenic role as protectors of sailors contributes to solidifying their divine status.

Apollonius’ immortalization of the Dioscuri is compatible with the historical prominence of these gods in the Hellenistic period.¹¹⁷ As Hunter remarked, the prominence of the Dioscuri in Hellenistic and Alexandrian cult is due to their role as *theoi sōtēres*, which is also a fundamental aspect in their portrait in Books 2 through 4 of the *Argonautica*.¹¹⁸ Apollonius depicts the local and panhellenic process of immortalization of the Dioscuri through several phases, including the establishment of a local cult by the Mariandyni on the Acherousian headland, with the expectation that every passerby would propitiate them as gods, Zeus’ endorsement of the Dioscuri’s soteriological role for the Argonauts, and lastly, the Argonauts’ confirmation of the Dioscuri’s divine status and exportation of their cult in the Mediterranean. In Apollonius, the encounter between the Argonauts and the Bebryces, during which Polydeuces defeats Amycus in

¹¹⁷ On the Dioscuri’s cult in the Hellenistic period, see Visser (1938), 17–8, von Bissing (1953), 347–57, and Hunter (1996), 19–20.

¹¹⁸ Hunter (1996), 19. This is also the epithet with which Artemidorus addresses them (*IG XII.3, Suppl.* 1333). In the Hellenistic period, the Dioscuri are connected to other soteriological gods, namely, the Cabiri, divinities of the Samothracian mysteries, whom the Argonauts honor in Book 1.915–21. On the Cabiri, see pp. 60–62.

a boxing match, can be interpreted as an extended *aition* concerning the cult of the Dioscuri. During this episode, the assimilation of Polydeuces to the Evening Star prefigures his later deification and elevates him to being comparable to Apollo.

In sum, this episode is remarkable for two reasons. First, it elucidates the theological status heroes can achieve in the Argonautic world. Second, it provides an outline for the process of immortalization in Hellenistic poetry, whereby the hero accomplishes an extraordinary feat that benefits a local population, the people initiate a local cult for the hero, and, successively, other god-like heroes spread the cult across the Argonautic world. This framework is particularly suggestive against the backdrop of the newly founded cults for the Ptolemaic rulers, beginning with Ptolemy II Philadelphos.¹¹⁹

Jason's Appearance as Apollo and the Stars

The parallelism with Apollo is also relevant to other heroes, especially Jason, who is explicitly assimilated with Apollo in two scenes. First, in Book 1, Apollonius compares Jason's departure after saying goodbye to his mother with Apollo's journey out from his sanctuaries.

Arg. 1.306–11

ἦ καὶ ὁ μὲν προτέρωσε δόμων ἐξῶρτο νέεσθαι.

¹¹⁹ On the cults of the Ptolemaic rulers, see Fraser (1972), 1.213–46, Thompson (1988), Koenen (1993), 25–115, 125–38, Mori (2008), 25–27. On the development of the Ptolemies' dynastic cult, see Hölbl (2001), 94–5. On the Ptolemies' divine kinship with Heracles and Dionysus, see Mori (2008), 25 and 25 n. 40. Ptolemy III's divine descent is also stated in the Adulis' inscription, which details the Ptolemies' restitution of Egyptian objects that the Persians had taken away from Egypt: "The great king Ptolemy (III), son of King Ptolemy and Queen Arsinoe, the *Theoi Adelphoi*, the children of King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, the *Theoi Soteres*, descended through his father from Heracles, the son of Zeus, and through his mother from Dionysus, the son of Zeus". *OGIS* 1.54, translation by Mori (2008), 26. On the assimilation between Ptolemaic rulers and gods in Callimachus' *Hymns*, see Petrovic (2016), 164–79.

οἷος δ' ἐκ νηοῖο θυώδεος εἶσιν Ἀπόλλων

Δῆλον ἀν' ἡγαθέην ἢ ἐ Κλάρων ἢ ὅ γε Πυθῶ

ἢ Λυκίην εὐρεῖαν ἐπὶ Ξάνθοιο ῥοῇσι·

τοῖος ἀνὰ πληθὺν δῆμον κίεν, ὥρτο δ' αὐτὴ 310

κεκλομένων ἄμυδις.

“With these words he left the house and set out. **As Apollo proceeds from his fragrant shrine** and travels through holy Delos or Klaros or Pytho or broad Lykia beside the streams of the Xanthos; **just so did he pass through the great crowd of the people** and a loud shout arose as they all urged him on”.

This simile underscores the divide between Jason and the surrounding crowd in the same way as the comparison between the Argonauts and stars emphasizes their preeminence among the people of Iolcos (1.238–40).¹²⁰ Jason’s second direct association with the god occurs in Book 3, where he is remarkably compared to Apollo and Ares (3.1282–3).¹²¹ The hero’s splendid attire further develops the analogy between Jason and Apollo. A depiction of Apollo shooting at Tityus is wrought on the cloak that Jason receives from Athena (1.759–62).¹²² Jason wears the cloak

¹²⁰ Clauss (1993), 52–3 comments that Jason’s farewell to his mother and departure, including his brief encounter with Iphias, is marked by thematic oppositions: “male–female, young–old, optimistic–pessimistic”. I would add to these the contrast between ordinary and extraordinary, which Jason’s characterization as Apollo, in contraposition with the “ordinary” people of Iolcos, seems to emphasize.

¹²¹ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this passage.

¹²² See Clauss (1993), 120–29 for a comparative analysis between Jason’s cloak and Achilles’ shield. Clauss (1993), 126 argues that the sixth scene on the cloak featuring Apollo and Tityus showcases the antithesis between strength and skill. Moreover, Clauss (1993), 126 comments that: “The close association between Jason and Apollo [...] turns Apollo’s success over the monstrous Tityus into a hint of Jason’s future success, both over the powerful and menacing Aeetes and also over Pelias, whose reign in Iolcos threatens Jason and his family”.

while he approaches the city of the Lemnian women, and as he walks, he looks like a star (1.774). Apollonius describes the star's appearance and its effects on young women:

Arg. 1.774–81

βῆ δ' ἵμεναι προτὶ ἄστρῳ, φαεινῷ ἀστέρι ἴσος,
ὄν ῥά τε νηγατέησιν ἐεργόμεναι καλύβησι 775
νύμφαι θηήσαντο δόμων ὑπερ' ἀντέλλοντα,
καί σφισι κυανέοιο δι' ἡέρος ὄμματα θέλγει
καλὸν ἐρευθόμενος, γάνυται δέ τε ἠιθέοιο
παρθένος ἰμείρουσα μετ' ἄλλοδαποῖσιν ἐόντος
ἀνδράσιν, ᾧ καί μιν μνηστὴν κομέουσι τοκῆες· 780
τῷ ἵκελος προπόλοιο κατὰ στίβον ἦεν ἥρως.

“He went towards the city **like the bright star whose rising is admired by young brides**, shut up in their new-built chambers. **Its red brilliance through the dark air bewitches their eyes**, and the virgin, too, rejoices in her desire for the young man who lives in a distant city, the future husband for whom her parents are keeping her. **Like that star did the hero follow** behind the messenger”.

Hunter identifies the star as Hesperus, the Evening Star, a symbol of love and marriage.¹²³ As has been discussed, Polydeuces is assimilated to the same star in Book 2.40–1. The red brilliance of Hesperus recalls the red brightness of Jason's cloak itself (1.725–9): “You

¹²³ Hunter (1993a), 146. For Hesperus as a symbol of love and marriage, see Catullus 62.

could cast your eyes more easily towards the rising sun than gaze upon the **brilliant redness** of the cloak. Its centre was **bright red**, the border all the way round **purple**, and along the full length of the edge had been woven many cunning designs in sequence”.¹²⁴ The motif of Jason’s divine charm evoking feelings of awe and fascination is evident in his comparison with Sirius in Book 3.956–65. Before Jason meets Medea at the temple of Hecate, Hera bestows upon him godlike beauty that inspires awe, even among his companions (3.919–26). Medea’s reaction at the sight of Jason is described as “lovesick distress” (κάματον δυσίμερον, 3.961). I discuss Jason’s association with Sirius in greater detail later in this chapter. For now, it is sufficient to say that Jason’s beauty, which makes him comparable to a star and, accordingly, to gods, is a goddess’s work.¹²⁵ In this case, divine intervention providing Jason with godlike qualities contrasts with Polydeuces’ inherent star-like appearance.

The significance of the star-like imagery appears to change again by the end of Book 3, where the simile between Jason and a “fiery star” (3.1377) underscores the hero’s brilliant performance in the fight with the Colchian earthborn warriors:

¹²⁴ 1.725–9: τῆς μὲν ῥηίτερόν κεν ἐς ἥλιον ἀνιόντα | ὅσσε βάλοις ἢ κεῖνο μεταβλέψειας ἔρευθος· | δὴ γάρ τοι μέσση μὲν ἐρευθήεσσα τέτυκτο· | ἄκρα δὲ πορφυρέη πάντη πέλεν, ἐν δ’ ἄρ’ ἐκάστῳ | τέρματι δαίδαλα πολλὰ διακριδὼν εὖ ἐπέπαστο. Clauss (1993), 128–9 notes the analogy between the cloak’s redness and Jason’s starlike appearance. This emphasis on redness and brilliance is also relevant to the appearance of the fleece. In Book 4, the fleece shines red like a cloud glowing from beams of the rising sun (ἢ ἐπὶ κῶας | βέβλητο, νεφέλη ἐναλίγκιον, ἢ τ’ ἀνιόντος | ἡελίου φλογερῆσιν ἐρεύθεται ἀκτίνεσσιν, 4.124–6). When Jason takes the fleece in his hands, a red glow illuminates his cheeks and forehead (γηθόσυνος μέγα κῶας ἑαῖς ἀναείρετο χερσίν, | καὶ οἱ ἐπὶ ξανθῆσι παρησίσι ἡδὲ μετώπῳ | μαρμαρυγῇ ληνέων φλογὶ εἵκελον ἵζεν ἔρευθος, 4.171–3). Finally, Jason and Medea consummate their marriage on the fleece after throwing it on their bed (4.1141–3). Shining with his red gleam the fleece arouses sweet desire in the newlywed couple: πάσας δὲ πυρὸς ὥς ἄμφεπεν αἶγλη, | τοῖον ἀπὸ χρυσεῶν θυσάνων ἀμαρύσσετο φέγγος. | δαῖε δ’ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς γλυκερὸν πόθον· ἴσχε δ’ ἐκάστην | αἰδῶς ἰεμένην περ ὅμως ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλέσθαι (4.1145–8).

¹²⁵ With regard to Jason’s beauty in relation to heroism, Kampakoglou (2018), 113–39 argues that: “The Argonauts are defined as heroes inasmuch as they make such an impression on the viewer”. This thesis emphasizes the importance of the gaze as a means of heroic recognition and celebration. This modality is clearly appropriate for Jason.

Arg. 3.1377–80

οἷος δ' οὐρανόθεν πυρόεις ἀναπάλλεται ἀστήρ

ὄλκον ὑπαυγάζων, τέρας ἀνδράσιν οἷ μιν ἴδονται

μαρμαρυγῇ σκοτίοιο δι' ἡέρος αἰζαντα·

τοῖος ἄρ' Αἴσονος υἱὸς ἐπέσσυτο γηγενέεσσι.

1380

“As a fiery star quivers upward in the heaven trailing a furrow of light behind it a wondrous sign to men who see it shoot through the dark air with a brilliant gleam just so did the son of Aison rush upon the earth-born”.

At this juncture, Jason’s considerable development as a more warlike character in Book 3 causes him to resemble, as noted, both Apollo and Ares (3.1282–3). However, Jason’s fulfillment of a more successful military role does not happen without the help of divine and magical powers, specifically Medea’s intervention.¹²⁶ Hence, once more, it is noteworthy that Jason’s assimilation with Sirius and a “fiery star” in 3.1377 is not entirely compatible with the Argonauts’ starry appearance in Book 1.238–40, his god-like Apolline aura in 1.306–11, or Polydeuces’ star-like brightness in Book 2.41, who appears to be naturally endowed with both beauty and military prowess.¹²⁷ Given this, I propose that Jason loses his natural star-like and god-like qualities after he departs from Pagasae and re-acquires these features through divine or magical intervention. Contrary to Book 1, which narrates the progressive departure of the Argo from Greece, Book 2 is entirely set in a betwixt-and-between space between Greece and Colchis,

¹²⁶ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of Jason’s divine (and semi-divine) helpers.

¹²⁷ Along similar lines, one could argue that even Jason’s cloak, which confers him the red glow typical of the Evening Star, is the gift of Athena instead of a natural quality.

which encompasses the passageway into the Black Sea, namely, the Bosphorus. In this liminal zone, Polydeuces, a son of Zeus, retains his star-like and godlike features and even achieves immortality among the Black Sea population. In Book 3, the heroes have finally departed from the Greek world. At this juncture, they find themselves entirely outside Apollo's sphere of action, who never intervenes to assist the heroes. As I shall discuss in Chapter 2, additional help may come from other gods, such as Hera, but not Apollo. More frequently, the Argonauts need to rely on the help of local gods or peoples to accomplish their task.¹²⁸ This is also the reason why, in my view, Jason's star-like qualities are not apparent in Colchis without Hera's or Medea's help.

Orpheus' Enchanting Song

Orpheus' prominent role in the *Argonautica* has attracted much scholarly attention.¹²⁹ The hero's primary position in the Argonautic catalogue suggests that he will play an essential role in the poem (πρῶτά νυν Ὀρφεὺς μνησώμεθα, 1.23), and scholars have investigated his skills as singer and peace-maker.¹³⁰ Clauss argues that Orpheus' remarkable ability to foster *philia* over *neikos* is a power he shares with other figures in the poem, including Apollo.¹³¹ In the *Argonautica*, however, Orpheus is not the son of Apollo, as different traditions maintain, but of

¹²⁸ See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion.

¹²⁹ On Orpheus in the *Argonautica*, see Graf (1987), 80–119, Christopoulos (1991), 205–22, Nelis (1992), 153–70, Busch (1993), 301–24, Flashar (1994), 10–31, Pietsch (1999), 521–40, Martin (2001), 23–33, Köhnken (2003), 19–27, Billault (2008), 197–208, Karanika (2010), 391–410, Santamaría (2014), 115–40, Schaaf (2014), 36–54, and Murray (2018), 201–24.

¹³⁰ Busch (1993), 301: “Schon daß Orpheus an erster Stelle des Heldenkatalogs der *Argonautika* genannt wird, lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit auf ihn”. Clauss (1993), 30–2, argues that the Argonautic catalogue is divided into two halves. Orpheus introduces the first half, which concludes with Talaus, Areius, and Leodocus. The second half begins with Heracles. See also Clauss (1991), 484–88.

¹³¹ Clauss (1993), 87.

the Muse Calliope and the Thracian king Oeagrus (1.24–5).¹³² Despite the absence of a direct lineage from Apollo, Orpheus’s music possesses an enchanting quality that evokes Apollo’s musical powers.¹³³ Considering that Apollonius emphasizes Orpheus’ musical and social skills at several points in the narrative, I will focus on the position of these scenes along the Argonautic journey and concerning the surrounding environment. Moreover, I will consider Orpheus’ use of different forms of lyre, namely, the *kithara*, *lyra*, and *phorminx*, with regard to the narrative framework.

A series of episodes revolving around Orpheus’ singing occurs in Book 1. First of all, Apollonius details Orpheus’ skills in the catalogue, where he accounts for the time when he made the wild oaks march down in close ranks “by the bewitching music of his lyre” (ὅς ὄγ’ ἐπιπρό | θελγομένας φόρμιγγι κατήγαγε Πιερίηθεν, 1.30–1). The verb θέλω also occurs a few lines earlier, when Apollonius states that Orpheus was believed to bewitch (θέλξαι, 1.27) even stones and rivers “with the sound of his songs” (ἀοιδάων ἐνοπῇ, 1.27). The *scholia* commenting on this passage explain that “to bewitch” (θέλξαι) here means “to deceive and delight” (ἀπατηῖσαι καὶ τέρψαι).¹³⁴ This interpretation recalls Hesiod’s depiction of the Muses as tellers of many false things that resemble the truth, as well as of true things (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν

¹³² Cf. for instance Pindar’s *Pyth.* 4.176–7, where he seems to imply that Apollo was Orpheus’ father: ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος δὲ φορμιγκτὰς ἀοιδᾶν πατήρ | ἔμολεν, εὐαίνητος Ὀρφεύς. Also, according to the Apollonian scholia 23–25a, Asclepiades (12 fr. 6c J.) has Orpheus as the son of Calliope and Apollo. The *scholia* add that Herodorus (31 fr. 42 J.) accounts for two Orpheuses, of which one traveled with the Argonauts. See Clauss (1993), 32 n. 24. On the issue of Orpheus’ identity in the *Argonautica*, see also Karanika (2010), 393, who argues that: “While in Apollonius it is clearly Orpheus the poet, the doubt in the scholia reflects the difficulty presented by a figure related to music and poetry participating in a heroic expedition”.

¹³³ On Apollo as musician, see Graf (2009), 28–42.

¹³⁴ *Schol. ad Ap.* 1.27: θέλξαι: ἀπατηῖσαι καὶ τέρψαι. τάσσεται δὲ ἡ λέξις ἐπὶ τῆς μετὰ βλάβης ἀπάτης· νῦν δὲ ὑπερβολικῶς κεῖται. ἀοιδάων δὲ ἐνοπῇ τῇ τῶν ᾠδῶν εὐρυθμίᾳ. οὐκ εὖ δέ· ἡ γὰρ ἐνοπή ἀεὶ ἐπὶ θορύβου τίθεται.

ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα | ἴδμεν δ' εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι, *Th.* 1.27–8).¹³⁵ The verb θέλω is even applied to Eratō in the proem of Book 3, where the poet explains that he calls on the Muse because “young girls, not yet mated, are bewitched by the cares you bring (ἀδμήτας δὲ τεοῖς μελεδήμασι θέλγεις | παρθενικάς, 3.4–5). In this passage, it is already quite clear that Apollonius’ Orpheus seems to embody different aspects reminiscent of other characters, especially the Muses and Apollo, with whom he is associated, either by kinship or affiliation.

The type of instrument associated with Orpheus at this juncture, namely, the *phorminx*, is also worth noting. The *phorminx* is a type of lyre already associated with bard figures in Homer.¹³⁶ However, the term *phorminx* is already missing from 4th cent. BC theoretical accounts about music; according to Martin West, the *phorminx* was probably already relegated to poetry by then.¹³⁷ Apollo is typically associated with the *phorminx* in Homeric poetry and 5th cent. BC sources.¹³⁸ Concerning Apollonius, therefore, references to the *phorminx*, especially regarding a character figure like Orpheus, associated with Apollo, would evoke a specific type of imagery more compatible with traditional epic than contemporary musical practices. In Orpheus’ specific case, the *phorminx* is immediately introduced as an instrument of rapture, enchantment, and,

¹³⁵ For this passage in relation to Apollonius’ Muses, see Chapter 3.

¹³⁶ Maas (1976), 49–50. Achilles is the only hero who plays a *phorminx* in the Homeric poems (*Il.* 9.187). On the difference between different forms of ancient Greek lyre, see Maas (1976), 34–55 and West (1992), 49–70. For the stringed instruments used in the early Hellenistic period, see Maas and Snyder (1989), 165–98. West (1992), 50–1 provides a very brief summary of the usage of these different terms to refer to the lyre in Greek sources: in Homer, the terms *phorminx* and *kitharis* are interchangeable and probably refer to the round-box lyre. The term *lyrā* appears from Archilochus onwards. In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, all three terms are applied to Hermes’ lyre in addition to *chelys*, “tortoise”. Pindar refers to his instrument, a box lyre, as both a *phorminx* and a *lyrā*. Fourth-century authors distinguish *kitharā*, *lyrā*, and *barbitos* as different instruments but do not mention the *phorminx*, which seems to have become “a strictly poetic word for a considerable time”. By this time, the *kithara* means “box lyre” and the *lyrā* the ordinary “bowl lyre”.

¹³⁷ West (1992), 51. Cf. for instance Pl. *Resp.* 399d; Arist. *Pol.* 1341a, Aristox. fr. 102, Anaxilas fr. 15 K.-A. Later sources distinguish between *kithara* and *lyrā*, e.g., Ptol. *Harm.* 1.16, 2.16, and Paus. 5.14.8.

¹³⁸ Cf. *HHAp.* 3.182–5, and Pind. *Nem.* 5.22–5 and *Pyth.* 1.1–4.

perhaps, even coercion, as the poet's control of the natural environment shows. Nevertheless, as mentioned, Orpheus' singing also accomplishes other effects, especially from the perspective of social harmony and unity. Again, Book 1 offers some noteworthy examples of Orpheus' peace-making abilities.

In Book 1.460–94, Jason's helplessness (ἀμηχανία, 1.460) stirs up a dispute (νεῖκος, 1.492) among the Argonauts, especially between Idas and Idmon.¹³⁹ The separate interventions of Jason, Orpheus, and other Argonauts avoid an escalation of the conflict:

Arg. 1.492–5

χώετ' ἐνιπτάζων· προτέρω δέ κε νεῖκος ἐτύχθη,
εἰ μὴ δηριόωντας ὁμοκλήσαντες ἐταῖροι
αὐτός τ' Αἰσονίδης κατερήτυεν. ἄν δὲ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς
λαιῇ ἀνασχόμενος κίθαριν πείραζεν ἀοιδῆς.

495

“So he attacked him angrily, and the **quarrel** would have gone further, had not their companions and the son of Aison himself restrained their dispute with words of rebuke. Moreover **Orpheus took up his *kithara* in his left hand and began to sing**”.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ On the quarrel between Idas and Jason, see especially Mori (2008), 74–82, who discusses this episode in detail. Fränkel (1960) argues that Idas is a foil for Jason and Clauss (1993), 83 comments on the antithesis between a “man of strength” and a “man of skill”. On Jason's *amechania* and traditional heroism, see Pietsch (1999), 104–13 and Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004), 104–17.

¹⁴⁰ Slightly modified translation from Hunter (1993a). In the following translations from Hunter (1993a), I have preferred the transliteration of Greek names of musical instruments to distinguish between *kithara* and *phorminx*.

Orpheus sings a cosmological song revolving around the opposition of *neikos* and *philia*, which, in Clauss' words, "provides a mythic reflection of the immediate context".¹⁴¹ In this scene, Orpheus picks up a *kithara*, a "professional" (τεχνικόν, Arist. *Pol.* 1341a) string instrument according to 4th cent. BC theoretical accounts.¹⁴² Accompanied by the sound of the *kithara*, Orpheus produces what we might call a professional citharodic song that fosters *philia* among the heroes. Following this, Apollonius reflects on the impact of Orpheus' song on the Argonauts, even after he has finished singing.

Arg. 1.512–8

ἦ· καὶ ὁ μὲν φόρμιγγα σὺν ἀμβροσίῃ σκέθεν αὐδῇ,
τοὶ δ' ἄμοτον λήξαντος ἔτι προύχοντο κάρηνα
πάντες ὁμῶς ὀρθοῖσιν ἐπ' οὔασιν ἡρεμέοντες
κηληθμῶ, τοῖόν σφιν ἐνέλλιπε θελκτὸν ἀοιδῆς. 515
οὐδ' ἐπὶ δὴν μετέπειτα κερασσάμενοι Διὶ λοιβάς,
ἦ θέμις, ἐστηῶτες ἐπὶ γλώσσησι χέοντο
αἰθομέναις, ὕπνου δὲ διὰ κνέφας ἐμνώνοντο.

¹⁴¹ On Orpheus' cosmological song, see Vian (1974), 252–3, Clauss (1993), 84–5, and Hunter (1993a), 144. According to Clauss (1993), 85: "The song of Orpheus thus provides a mythic reflection of the immediate context, the establishment of harmony out of *neikos*, and hints at Jason's future attainment of *κῦδος*"—through the parallelism with baby Zeus. See also Thalmann (2011) for the spatial and temporal framework of Orpheus' song. At pp. 37 and 46, Thalmann argues that Orpheus' cosmogony is closely correlated with the account of Sesostri's deeds in Book 4.

¹⁴² West (1992), 54. The *kithara* was also used in professional citharode competitions. On citharode competitions in Athens, see Power (2010).

“This was his song. He checked his *phorminx* and his divine voice, but though he had finished, the others all still leaned forwards, ears straining under the peaceful spell; such was the bewitching power of the music which lingered amongst them. Not long afterwards they mixed libations to Zeus as ritual demanded, and as they stood they poured these over the burning tongues of the sacrifices; then their thoughts turned to sleep in the dark of night”.

Notably, the *kithara* has transformed into a *phorminx*. The effect of the *kithara-phorminx* recalls the terminology used to describe Orpheus’ musical skills in the catalogue. Specifically, the “bewitching charm of the song” (θελκτὸν ἀοιδῆς, 1.515), which still holds the Argonauts captive, echoes Orpheus’ bewitching abilities in 1.27–31 (θέλξαι... θελγομένας φόρμιγγι). The use of the *phorminx* appears to be again linked with the enchanting effects of Orpheus’ music. Moreover, the noun κληθμός, “rapture, enchantment”, recalls Homer’s usage of this term in *Od.* 11.333–4, where the spell-bound Phaeacians are held captive by Odysseus’ tale: ὥς ἔφαθ’, οἱ δ’ ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ, | κληθμῷ δ’ ἔσχοντο κατὰ μέγαρα σκιάοντα. Here, the physical reaction of the Argonauts, who still lean forward and strain their ears after the song ends, exemplifies their emotional engagement and again suggests that Orpheus’ powers operate not only on a spiritual but also a bodily level.¹⁴³

More evidence of the effects of Orpheus’ singing on minds and bodies comes from the heroes’ sailing out of the harbor at Pagasae. In this scene, the Argonauts’ rowing is synchronized with the sound of Orpheus’ *kithara*. Apollonius assimilates the scene to a chorus in honor of

¹⁴³ Along similar lines, scholars have noted that Hellenistic poetry is often concerned with describing the emotional and physical reactions of the viewer or reader before the work of art. See, for instance, Goldhill (2001), 213–39.

Apollo, which young men perform to the sound of the *phorminx* at one of the god's major sanctuaries.

Arg. 1.536–41

οἱ δ' , ὥς τ' ἠΐθεοι Φοῖβω χορὸν ἢ ἐνὶ Πυθοῖ
ἢ που ἐν Ὀρτυγίῃ ἢ ἐφ' ὕδασιν Ἰσμηνοῖο
στησάμενοι, **φόρμιγγος ὑπαὶ** περὶ βωμὸν ὁμαρτῇ
ἐμμελέως κραιπνοῖσι πέδον ῥήσσωσι πόδεσσιν·
ὥς οἱ **ὑπ' Ὀρφεὺς κιθάρη** πέπληγον ἐρετμοῖς 540
πόντου λάβρον ὕδωρ, ἐπὶ δὲ ῥόθια κλύζοντο

“Like young men who set up the dance in Phobos’ honour at Pytho or perhaps Ortygia or by the waters of the Ismenos, and **to the music of the *phorminx*** beat the ground around the altar with the rhythmic tap of their swift feet, just so did their oars slap the rough water of the sea **to the sound of Orpheus’ *kithara***”.

The rhythmic sounds of the *kithara* enhance the Argonauts’ movements at the oars while simultaneously elevating this scene to a religious level through the comparison with the chorus in honor of Apollo. At first glance, the scene suggests an equivalence between Orpheus’ *kithara* and the *phorminx* played at Apollo’s sanctuaries. The comparison between the string instruments, however, involves different contexts: the Argonauts’ athletic setting, on the one hand, and the chorus’ religious activity, on the other hand. This consideration again suggests the

phorminx's closer association with Apollo and the *kithara*'s rightful employment in an agonistic context.

From a different angle, the religious scenario evoked by the simile between the Argonauts and a chorus of young men is especially relevant to Orpheus' next song, a hymn to Artemis as a protector of ships (1.569–79). Specifically, the analogy between the Argonauts and the chorus of young worshipers brings to mind the striking association between Jason and Apollo, for, as Clauss remarks, the simile implies that the captain would resemble the head of the chorus, namely, the god himself.¹⁴⁴ Hence, the hymn for Artemis sung a few lines later allows for a juxtaposition between the goddess and her counterpart, Apollo.¹⁴⁵ Similarly to the previous scene, Orpheus' hymn to Artemis causes the surrounding natural environment to synchronize with the heroes' physical activity.

Arg. 1.569–79

τοῖσι δὲ φορμίζων εὐθήμονι μέλπεν ἀοιδῇ

Οἰάγροιο πάϊς Νηοσσόον εὐπατέρειαν 570

Ἄρτεμιν, ἥ κείνας σκοπιάς ἀλὸς ἀμφιέπεσκε

ῥυομένη καὶ γαῖαν Ἰωλκίδα. τοὶ δὲ βαθείης

ἰχθύες αἰσسونτες ὕπερθ' ἀλός, ἄμμιγα παύροις

ἄπλετοι, ὕγρὰ κέλευθα διασκαίροντες ἔποντο.

ὥς δ' ὁπότε ἄγραύλοιο κατ' ἵχνια σημαντήρος 575

μυρία μῆλ' ἐφέπονται ἄδην κεκορημένα ποίης

¹⁴⁴ Clauss (1993), 95. See also Carspecken (1952), 96–7.

¹⁴⁵ Clauss (1993), 90.

εἰς αὖλιν, ὃ δέ τ' εἴσι πάρος, σύριγγι λιγείῃ
καλὰ μελιζόμενος νόμιον μέλος· ὥς ἄρα τοί γε
ὠμάρτευν· τὴν δ' αἰὲν ἐπασσύτερος φέρεν οὔρος.

“The son of Oiagros played upon his *phorminx* and sang for them in sweet song a hymn to the Protector of Ships, she of the noble father, Artemis who haunted those peaks by the sea as she watched too over the land of Iolkos. From out of the deep sea darted fish, large and small together, which followed their path through the water and leapt around them. As when a flock of sheep which have filled themselves full of grass follow to the stall **in the steps of their rustic master, and he goes in front playing a lovely shepherd’s tune on his shrill pipe**; just so did the fish accompany the boat which the strong breeze pushed ever forwards”.

Remarkably, just as the Argonauts were captivated by the sound of Orpheus’ *kithara-phorminx* on the shore of Pagasae, the fish now follow the Argo drawn by the sound of Orpheus’ *phorminx*. Apollonius draws an additional simile between the fish chasing the Argo and the sheep coming after the sound of the shepherd’s pipe. By extension, the simile implies a further analogy between the Argonauts and sheep following the sound of the shepherd’s pipe. The resulting image emphasizes the Argo’s harmonious engagement with the surrounding marine world. It also once more highlights the captivating powers of Orpheus’ *phorminx*.

Orpheus’ other individual interventions in the narrative of Book 1 pertain more to the religious and social spheres. Specifically, he facilitates the Argonauts’ engagement with the rites of the Cabiri on Samothrace and plays a significant role in founding the cult of Magna Mater on

Mount Dindymon.¹⁴⁶ Regarding the former, Apollonius briefly mentions that the Argonauts disembark on the island of Electra, Samothrace, according to Orpheus’ instructions (Ὀρφεὺς ἐφημοσύνησιν, 1.915). The purpose of their stopover on the island is to learn the mystery cults of the Cabiri “so that through **gentle initiations** they might learn secrets which cannot be revealed and thus sail in greater safety over the chilling sea” (1.916–8): ὄφρα δαέντες | ἀρρήτους **ἀγανῆσι τελεσφορίῃσι** θέμιστας | σωότεροι κρυόεσσαν ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα ναυτίλλοιντο. Worth noting is the attribute ἀγανός, “mild, gentle”, which modifies the noun τελεσφορίῃσι, “initiations”. The characterization of the initiation to the rites of the Cabiri as “gentle” seems to be quite at odds with the depiction of these mysteries from other sources.¹⁴⁷ In particular, fragments from Aeschylus’ lost play *Cabeiri* suggest that the Argonauts’ rituals involve much wine and drunkenness.¹⁴⁸ The depiction of the initiation to these rituals as “gentle” might refer more to Orpheus’ role in the process, especially considering his ability to foster harmony and *philia*.

Conversely, the establishment of the cult of Magna Mater on Mount Dindymon encompasses numerous rituals, none of which is identified as particularly “gentle”.¹⁴⁹ Instead, the rituals involve an armed dance performed at Orpheus’ bidding (Ὀρφεὺς ἀνωγῆ, 1.1134), during which the young men leap and beat their shields with their swords (1.1135–6). The primary purpose of this ritual is made explicit: “... that the ill-omened sound of the continuing

¹⁴⁶ Clauss (1993), 151, 153, and 169 mentions both episodes. On the Cabiri, see Hemberg (1950), Collini (1991), 237–87, Graf (1999), 23–7, Beekes (2004), 465–77, Blakely (2006), 32–54, Bowden (2010), 49–67, Fowler (2013), 1–19, Bremmer (2014), 37–47, and Schachter (2015). On the Samothracian mysteries in Apollonius, see Schaaf (2014), 63–9. On the foundation of the *Magna Mater* cult on Dindymon, see Chapter 2, pp. 145–59.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Hdt. 2.51 and Aesch. fr. 95–6 Radt. See Bremmer (2014), 37–47.

¹⁴⁸ Aesch. fr. 95–6 Radt. Athenaeus 10.428f–429a comments that Aeschylus was the first tragic poet to bring drunkenness on stage with Jason and his companions in the Cabiri (ἐν γὰρ τοῖς Καβείροις εἰσάγει τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ἰάσονα μεθύοντας, 10.428f).

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed overview of the ritual, see Chapter 2, pp. 145–59.

lamentations of the people for the king should be lost in the air” (ὥς κεν ἰωὴ | δύσφημος
πλάζοιτο δι’ ἡέρος, ἦν ἔτι λαοὶ | κηδεῖη βασιλῆος ἀνέστενον, 1.1136–8). Notably, in neither of
these episodes in Samothrace and Dindymon does Orpheus appear to play the lyre. He is a leader
of ritual actions without necessarily providing a musical accompaniment.

Orpheus’ deeds in Book 2 represent notable signposts in the poem: the hero’s leading role
in founding the cult of Apollo *Heoios* and the shrine of *Homonoia* on the island of Thynias
(2.684–93, 1.703–21) and his lyre dedication by the site of Stheneleos’ tomb upon instituting the
cult of Apollo Nēossoos (2.928–9). The former episode occurs right after Apollo’s first epiphany
and highlights Orpheus’ skills in several ways, including his musical abilities. In particular, he
encourages his companions to engage in ritual activities for Apollo to secure their safe return
(2.684–93). The rituals are accompanied by the Argonauts’ choral dance and chants “Ἰῆpaiῆον,
Phoebus Ἰῆpaiῆον”, as well as by Orpheus’ musical performance.¹⁵⁰ In this episode, the hero
plays the so-called Bistonian lyre, a Thracian type of *phorminx*: σὸν δέ σφιν ἐὺς πάις Οἰάγροιο |
Βιστονίη φόρμιγγι λιγείης ἤρχεν ἀοιδῆς (2.703–4).¹⁵¹ The sound of the song produced is λιγύς,
“shrill, clear”, an attribute already applied to the shepherd’s pipe in the Book 1 simile (σύριγγι
λιγείη, 1.577). Hence, in the same way as Orpheus’ shrill *phorminx* leads the movements of the
heroes’ choral dance for Apollo at Thynias, so, in Book 1, did his hymn for Artemis played with
the *phorminx*, there compared to a shrill rustic *syrinx*, lead fish and heroes across the sea.

The heroes’ rituals for Apollo *Heōios* and Stheneleos are landmark scenes in Book 2 and
the poem as a whole. When the heroes spot Apollo at Thynias, they have just crossed the
Symplegades and finally entered the Black Sea. The god does not perceive them as he is

¹⁵⁰ On the Argonauts’ chant, see Hunter (1986), 50–60.

¹⁵¹ West (1992), 55. This type of lyre appears in several 5th cent. BC vase paintings and is primarily related to
mythological Thracian singers, such as Orpheus and Thamyras.

traveling to another destination. The dedication to Apollo *Heōios* at Thynias is the second to last ritual performed for the Greek god until Book 4.1714, where the Argonauts consecrate a sanctuary to Apollo *Aiglētēs* on the island of Anaphe.¹⁵² The Argonauts' final ritual dedication to Apollo occurs shortly after the Thynias episode near the tomb of Stheneleus, one of Heracles' former companions in the Amazonomachy (2.911–4). When the Argo approaches the tomb of Stheneleus, the warrior's spirit ascends to greet the heroes (2.915–22).¹⁵³ At this juncture, the prophet Mopsus encourages the Argonauts to disembark and make libations for the deceased hero (2.922–26). This epiphany, as well as the heroes' emotional reaction (οἱ δ' ἐσιδόντες | θάμβησαν, 2.921–2) at the sight of the spirit, is reminiscent of Apollo's earlier epiphany on Thynias.¹⁵⁴ The heroes dedicate an altar to Apollo, "Protector of Ships" (νηοσσόος, 2.927), and perform a sacrifice near the tomb of Stheneleos (2.927–8). This is the last ritual they perform for the god until Anaphe in Book 4. The similarity between the two epiphany scenes and the vicinity to the Greek hero Stheneleus could be among the heroes' motivations for making this final dedication to Apollo. Part of the ritual is Orpheus' dedication of his lyre at the altar of Apollo (ὄν δὲ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς | θῆκε λύρην, 2.928–9). This ritual gesture constitutes the *aition* for the name of that location, "Lyrē" (ἐκ τοῦ δὲ Λύρη πέλει οὖνομα χώρω, 2.929). I contend that Orpheus' dedication of his lyre represents the physical boundary of Apollo's religious sphere in the *Argonautica*, which the heroes would not re-enter until Apollo's second epiphany in the Cretan

¹⁵² The Argonauts' rituals for Apollo are concentrated in Books 1 and 2. They include the construction of altars and sanctuaries for Apollo ἐμβάσιος (1.359), Apollo ἄκτιος and ἐμβάσιος (1.403), Apollo ἐκβάσιος (1.966 and 1186), Apollo ἐώσιος (2.686), Apollo μαντεῖος (2.494), and Apollo νηοσσόος (2.927). In Book 4, Medea dedicates altars to the nymphs and the Moirae in the precinct of Apollo νόμιος in Drepanē (4.1218). In 4.526–36 and 1550, the Argonauts offer Apollo's two tripods to reward the Hylleans and Triton for showing them the right way. Finally, the Argonauts build a sanctuary for Apollo αἰγλήτης (4.1714).

¹⁵³ I discuss the role of Persephone in this episode in Chapter 2, pp. 185–200.

¹⁵⁴ Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 347.

Sea by Anaphe. Moreover, this interpretation explains why Apollo is seen leaving behind the island of Thynias. The god has left his divine realm at Thynias, and the Argonauts perform their last ritual to him by the tomb of a Greek hero.

This is the only time Apollonius refers to Orpheus' instrument as a *lyre*. Hence, it is unclear which one of the lyres, the *kithara* or the *phorminx*, Orpheus leaves behind. The question stands from both a literal and a figurative perspective, whereby the type of instrument produces, as has been discussed, different kinds of effects on the audience and evokes various performance contexts. As mentioned above, the *kithara* is the instrument with which Orpheus fosters harmony among his companions or enhances the rhythm of their physical exercise (1.495, 540); instead, the sound of the *phorminx*, which also appears more frequently in religious contexts and in relation to Apollo, has bewitching effects over the surrounding human and natural environment (1.31, 512, 539, 569, 704).

The question regarding the type of lyre comes up again in Book 4, where, by playing his lyre, Orpheus prevents the Argonauts from suffering utter destruction through exposure to the Sirens' singing.¹⁵⁵

Arg. 4.891–911

νῆα δ' ἐνκραῆς ἄνεμος φέρεν· αἶψα δὲ νῆσον
καλὴν Ἀνθεμόεσσαν ἐσέδρακον, ἔνθα λίγεια
Σειρῆνες σίνοντ' Ἀχελωίδες ἠδείησι
θέλγουσαι μολπῇσιν ὃ τις παρὰ πείσμα βάλοιτο.

¹⁵⁵ On Apollonius' Sirens see West (2005), 45–7. On the etymological allusions in the Sirens episode, see McPhee (2024), 9–42.

τάς μὲν ἄρ' εὐειδῆς Ἀχελωΐω εὐνηθεῖσα 895

γείνατο Τερψιχόρη, Μουσέων μία· καί ποτε Διοῦς

θυγατέρ' ἰφθίμην, ἀδμῆτ' ἔτι, πορσαίνεσκον

ἄμμιγα μελπόμεναι· τότε δ' ἄλλο μὲν οἴωνοῖσιν,

ἄλλο δὲ παρθενικῆς ἐναλίσκῃαι ἔσκον ἰδέσθαι.

αἰεὶ δ' εὐόρμου δεδοκῆναι ἐκ περιωπῆς 900

ἧ θαμὰ δὴ πολέων μελιγδέα νόστον ἔλοντο,

τηκεδόνι φθινύθουσαι. ἀπηλεγγέως δ' ἄρα καὶ τοῖς

ἔσαν ἐκ στομάτων ὅπα λείριον· οἱ δ' ἀπὸ νηὸς

ἤδη πείσματ' ἔμελλον ἐπ' ἠιόνεσσι βαλέσθαι,

εἰ μὴ ἄρ' Οἰάγροιο πάϊς Θρηϊκίος Ὀρφεύς, 905

Βιστονίην ἐνὶ χερσὶν ἑαῖς φόρμιγγα τανύσσας,

κραιπνὸν ἐντροχάλοιο μέλος κανάχησεν αἰοιδῆς,

ὄφρ' ἄμυδις κλονέοντος ἐπιβρομέωνται ἀκουαὶ

κρεγμῶ· παρθενίην δ' ἐνοπὴν ἐβίησατο φόρμιγξ.

νῆα δ' ὁμοῦ ζέφυρός τε καὶ ἠχῆεν φέρε κῦμα 910

πρυμνόθεν ὀρνύμενον· ταὶ δ' ἄκριτον ἔσαν αὐδὴν.

“A moderate wind carried the ship forward, and soon they saw the lovely island of Anthemoessa where the clear-voiced Sirens, daughters of Acheloos, destroyed all who moored beside them with the enchantment of their sweet songs. Beautiful Terpsichore, one of the Muses, bore them after sharing Acheloos’ bed, and once they had looked after the mighty daughter of Deo, while she was still a virgin, their voices mingled in song. When the Argonauts came,

however, they looked in part like birds and in part like young girls. They kept a constant look-out from their perch in the lovely harbour: many indeed were the men whom they had deprived of their sweet return, destroying them with wasting desire. **For the Argonauts too they opened their mouths in pure liquid song as soon as they saw them.** The men made ready to throw the ship's cables to the shore, and would have done so, **had not Thracian Orpheus, the son of Oïagros, taken up his Bistonian *phorminx* in his hands and played a fast rendition of a quick-rolling tune, so that its resounding echo would beat in their ears, thus blurring and confounding the other song. The lyre overpowered the virgin voices,** and the ship was carried forward by the combined efforts of the Zephyr and the lapping waves which came from astern; **the Sirens' song became quite unclear**".

In this episode, clearly indebted to the Odyssean model, the Sirens are “clear-voiced” (λίγειαί, 4.892) daughters of the Muse Terpsichore, “who enchant [passersby] with sweet songs” (ἡδείησιν | θέλγουσαι μολπῇσιν, 4.893–4).¹⁵⁶ Apollonius' characterization of the Sirens' voice as “delicate” (ὄπα λείριον, 4.903) recalls other uses of this phrase in archaic poetry, especially its application to the cicadas' (ὄπα λειριόεσσιν, *Il.* 3.152) and the Muses' voice (θεῶν ὀπι λειριόεσση, *Th.* 41).¹⁵⁷ In contrast, Orpheus' song is “swift, rash” (κραιπνὸν... μέλος, 4.907) with a quick-moving rhythm (ἐντροχάλοιο... ἀοιδῆς, 4.907). The musical instrument he picks up for this performance is the Bistonian, or “Thracian”, *phorminx*, the same one he used to celebrate Apollo *Heoios* in 2.704. In Book 2, Orpheus plays a “clear-sounding” musical accompaniment

¹⁵⁶ For the meta-poetic analogies between this episode and the corresponding Siren scene in *Od.* 12, see Goldhill (1991), 298–300, Knight (1995), 200–6, and Hunter (2015), 205. Hunter (2015), 205 comments that it is almost certain that Apollonius drew from other sources for the contest between Orpheus and the Sirens, such as Simonides *PMG* 567 and 595. See also West (2005), 46–7 and Power (2010), 276–7.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. also Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica* 2.418.

for the heroes' choral dance and "Iēpaiēon" chants with the Bistonian *phorminx* (Βιστονίη φόρμιγγι λιγείης ἤρχεν ἀοιδῆς, 2.704). In Book 4, the adjective λιγύς has been shifted to the Sirens' voices (λίγειαί Σειρήνες), while Orpheus' song is hasty and rushed (κραιπνὸν μέλος), for the hero's main aim is to overcome the Sirens' song with the sound of his lyre strings (ἄμυδις κλονέοντος ἐπιβρομέωνται ἀκουαὶ κρεγμῶ, 4.908–9). The final picture emphasizes the volume of the *phorminx*' sound rather than the musician's skills (παρθενίην δ' ἐνοπὴν ἐβύησατο φόρμιγγι, 4.909). Similarly, the verb βιάζω, "to constrain, overpower by force", suggests the use of "strength" over technique or, typically in Orpheus' case, charm and captivation.¹⁵⁸ It would seem that, in this episode, Orpheus' music does not maintain the same bewitching powers it previously had in other circumstances. On the contrary, the Sirens' song possesses this power. Orpheus' quick-paced tunes allow the Argonauts almost to pass the island of Anthemoessa unscathed, but one of the heroes, Butes, yields to the Sirens' "shrill voice" and jumps into the sea: ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς Τελέοντος ἐὺς πάϊς οἷος ἐταίρων | προφθάμενος ξεστοῖο κατὰ ζυγοῦ ἔνθορε πόντῳ | Βούτης, **Σειρήνων λιγυρῇ ὁπὶ** θυμὸν ἰανθείς (4.912–4). Butes finds salvation through divine intervention, for Aphrodite takes pity on him and snatches him away from the swirling water (4.916–9).¹⁵⁹ This last incident suggests that Orpheus' quick-paced performance not only seems to produce a song inferior to his harmonious and refined productions of Books 1 and 2 but is also less successful in guiding the Argonauts' actions. As already discussed, Orpheus is here outside of Apollo's domain, and I would add that his music is not as efficacious as it used to be within

¹⁵⁸ The antithesis between "strength" and "skill" is a theme that Clauss (1993) thoroughly explores regarding Book 1. Moreover, Apollonius' emphasis on the Thracian type of lyre is significant, for Thrace is traditionally associated with Ares. Cf. esp. Hdt. 5.7 and Call. *H.Del.* 61.

¹⁵⁹ 4.916–9: σχέτλιος· ἦ τέ οἱ αἶψα καταυτόθι νόστον ἀπηύρων, | ἀλλά μιν οἰκτεῖρασα θεὰ Ἑρκεος μεδέουσα | Κύπρις ἔτ' ἐν δίναις ἀνέρέψατο, καὶ ῥ' ἐσάωσεν | πρόφρων ἀντομένη Λιλυβηίδα ναιέμεν ἄκρην. This scene provides the aition for the joint temple of Aphrodite and Butes on the western coast of Sicily (Diod. 4.83.1–2).

the god's divine sphere. By dedicating his *lyrē* to Apollo in Book 2, I suggest that he also abandons the extraordinary power that Apollo's influence provides to his music.

Apollo's Prophecies: The Edges of Divine Knowledge

In the *Argonautica*, Apollo's prophecies significantly impact the characters' actions and morale.¹⁶⁰ In particular, Apollo's prophecies for the Argonauts generally indicate the positive outcome of their *nostos*.¹⁶¹ The god's prediction of the *nostos* generates confidence and pleasure for the heroes and the members of their families. For instance, in Book 1.301, Jason already possesses prophetic knowledge about the *nostos* and reassures his mother about his future return to Iolcos.¹⁶² Shortly after, in 1.440–7, the prophet Idmon confirms the same outcome for the Argonautic voyage before the whole crew but also announces his death away from home.

Arg. 1.439–47

Αἶψα δ' ἀπηλεγέως νόον ἔκφατο Λητοῖδαι·

“ὅμιν μὲν δὴ μοῖρα θεῶν χρειῶ τε περῆσαι 440

ἐνθάδε κῶας ἄγοντας· ἀπειρέσιοι δ' ἐνὶ μέσσω

κεῖσέ τε δεῦρό τ' ἔασιν ἀνερχομένοισιν ἄεθλοι.

Αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ θανέειν στυγερῇ ὑπὸ δαίμονος αἴση

τηλόθι που πέπρωται ἐπ' Ἀσίδος ἠπείροιο.

¹⁶⁰ On Apollo's prophecies in the *Argonautica*, see Faulkner (2004), 49–66. On Apollo as an oracular god, see Graaf (2009), 43–64.

¹⁶¹ On Apollo's oracle for Jason, see Clauss (1993), 68–79.

¹⁶² Jason tells his mother to take courage from Athena's help, Apollo's favorable prophecies, and the heroes' assistance (θάρσει δὲ συνημοσύνησιν Ἀθήνης | ἡδὲ θεοπροπίησιν, ἐπεὶ μάλα δεξιὰ Φοῖβος | ἔχρη, αὐτὰρ μετέπειτά γ' ἀριστήων ἐπαρωγῇ, 1.300–2). Other mentions of Jason's visit to the Delphic oracle include Book 1.209–10 and 412–14.

ὤδε κακοῖς δεδαῶς ἔτι καὶ πάρος οἰωνοῖσι

445

πότμον ἐμόν, πάτρης ἐξήιον, ὄφρ' ἐπιβαίην

νηός, εὐκλείη δὲ δόμοις ἐπιβάντι λίπηται.”

“Swiftly he revealed to them without concealment the mind of the son of Leto: “Your fate ordained by the gods is to return here with the fleece. Numberless are the challenges which lie before you on your journey there and on the return. I, however, am destined by the hateful allotment of a divinity to perish far away from here, somewhere on the Asian continent. Even before today birds of ill-omen had instructed me as to my fate, but I left my homeland to embark upon the ship, so that a glorious reputation might thus be left behind in my home”.

In Book 4, Apollonius provides more details about Jason’s consultation of Apollo’s oracle at Delphi before the voyage. At this juncture, we learn that he received two tripods from the god:

Arg. 4.529–33

δοιοὺς γὰρ τρίποδας τηλοῦ πόρε Φοῖβος ἄγεσθαι

Αἰσονίδῃ περόωντι κατὰ χρέος, ὁππότε Πυθῶ

530

ἱρὴν πευσόμενος μετεκίαθε τῇσδ' ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς

ναυτιλίας· πέπρωτο δ', ὅπη χθονὸς ἰδρυθεῖεν,

μή ποτε τὴν δῆοισιν ἀναστήσεσθαι ἰοῦσι.

“When the son of Aison came to holy Pytho to make enquiries about this very voyage, Phoibos had given him two tripods for the long journey upon which he had to go. It was fated that any land in which these tripods were dedicated would never be laid waste by an enemy invasion”.

Apollo’s donation of the tripods is instrumental for the Argonauts’ survival in Book 4: the heroes exchange one of the god’s gifts with the Hylleians (4.522–36) and the other with Triton (4.1547–50, 1588–91) in return for guidance on how to move forward in their *nostos*.¹⁶³ The return journey appears again as the focus of Apollo’s prophetic activity in the *Argonautica*, whereas he provides no clear indications to facilitate the Argo’s voyage towards Colchis. Instead of delivering factual knowledge or geographical information about the route, the god gives Jason two objects that will help them obtain those details from someone else, specifically, local sources of knowledge. In so doing, the god facilitates the Argonauts’ communication with local people and divinities.

Apollo’s guidance concerning the details of the Argonautic journey appears in stark contrast with other sources of prophetic knowledge from Zeus, such as Phineus and the sacred beam of the Argo.¹⁶⁴ Glimpses of Zeus’ prophecies are scattered throughout the narrative, either in the form of recollected memories or uttered by other characters who act as Zeus’ mouthpieces in the poem. The availability of Zeus’ knowledge contrasts with the near absence of Apollo’s

¹⁶³ On the tripods, see Hunter (2015), 153. In Herodotus 4.179, Jason intends to offer Apollo one tripod but gives it to Triton in exchange for the god’s help. For the differences between Apollonius’ and Herodotus’ versions of this episode, see Morrison (2020), 137–8. For a geopolitical interpretation of Apollonius’ version of this episode, see Stephens (2003), 178–82, Mori (2008), 154, and Thalmann (2011), 90, 176, 182.

¹⁶⁴ Zeus’ oracular interventions in the poem: 2.196, 1146–7 (disputed), 4.557–61, 580–92. On the significance of Zeus’ oracle of Dodona in the *Argonautica*, see Chapter 3. On Phineus, see Chapter 4.

prophecies throughout the journey. Moreover, most of Zeus’ prophecies elicit fear in the heroes instead of pleasure, a typical emotional reaction to Apollo’s oracular responses.

Apollo’s “Multicultural” Profile in The Argonautic World

The Argonauts are not the only worshipers of Apollo in the *Argonautica*. A sanctuary of Apollo νόμιος, “Shepherd”, exists in Drepanē (4.1218), and Apollonius accounts for a “Celtic interpretation” of the Heliades’ amber tears involving a local version of Apollo (4.595–626).¹⁶⁵

Arg. 4.595–626

ἥρωας Μινύας· ἡ δ’ ἔσσυτο πολλὸν ἐπιπρὸ 595

λαίφεσιν· ἐς δ’ ἔβαλον μύχατον ρόον Ἡριδανοῖο,

ἔνθα ποτ’ αἰθαλόεντι τυπεῖς πρὸς στέρνα κεραυνῷ

ἡμιδαῆς Φαέθων πέσεν ἄρματος Ἡελίοιο

λίμνης ἐς προχοᾶς πολυβενθέος· ἡ δ’ ἔτι νῦν περ

τραύματος αἰθομένοιο βαρὺν ἀνακηκίει ἀτμόν, 600

οὐδέ τις ὕδωρ κεῖνο διὰ πτερὰ κοῦφα τανύσσας

οἰωνὸς δύναται βαλέειν ὕπερ, ἀλλὰ μεσηγὺς

φλογμῷ ἐπιθρόσκει πεποτημένος. **ἄμφι δὲ κοῦραι**

Ἡλιάδες ταναῆσιν † ἀείμεναι † αἰγείροισι

¹⁶⁵ On the association of Phaethon’s death with the Eridanus, see Barrett (1964), 300–1, Leigh (1998), 88–90, and Hunter (2015), 162–3. See Diggle (1970), 3–32 on Phaethon as a mythical figure in general. See also Bridgman (2004), 104–11 for a detailed analysis of Apollonius’ sources for this episode. Ancient sources on Phaethon include Hesiod *Th.* 984–91, fr. 150–1 MW, Aeschylus fr. 72 Nauck, Euripides’ Phaethon fr. 771–86 Nauck, Nicander fr. 63 Schneider, Pliny *N.H.* 37.30–47. In Plato *Tim.* 22c–d, Amasis states that the Egyptian version of Phaethon’s death epitomizes a realignment of heavenly bodies that move around the earth.

μύρονται κινυρόν μέλαι γόνον· ἐκ δὲ φαεινὰς 605
 ἡλέκτρον λιβάδας βλεφάρων προχέουσιν ἔραζε·
 αἱ μὲν τ' ἡελίῳ ψαμάθοις ἐπι τερσαίνονται,
 εὖτ' ἂν δὲ κλύζησι κελαινῆς ὕδατα λίμνης
 ἡίονας πνοιῇ πολυηχέος ἐξ ἀνέμοιο,
 δῆ τότ' ἐς Ἑριδανὸν προκυλίνδεται ἄθροα πάντα 610
 κυμαίνοντι ῥόφ. **Κελτοὶ δ' ἐπὶ βάξιν ἔθεντο,**
ὥς ἄρ' Ἀπόλλωνος τάδε δάκρυα Λητοῖδαο
 ἐμφέρεται δίναις, ἅ τε μυρία χεῦε πάροιθεν,
 ἦμος Ὑπερβορέων ἱερὸν γένος εἰσαφίκανεν,
 οὐρανὸν αἰγλήεντα λιπὼν ἐκ πατρὸς ἐνιπῆς, 615
 χωόμενος περὶ παιδί, τὸν ἐν λιπαρῇ Λακερείῃ
 διὰ Κορωνίς ἔτικτεν ἐπὶ προχοῆς Ἀμύροιο.
Καὶ τὰ μὲν ὥς κείνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσι κεκλήισται.
 Τοὺς δ' οὔτε βρώμης ἤρει πόθος οὔτε ποτοῖο,
 οὔτ' ἐπὶ γηθοσύνας τράπετο νόος. ἀλλ' ἄρα τοί γε 620
 ἦματα μὲν στρεύγοντο περιβληχρὸν βαρύθοντες
 ὀδμῇ λευγαλέῃ, τήν ῥ' ἄσχετον ἐξανίεσκον
 τυφομένου Φαέθοντος ἐπιρροαὶ Ἑριδανοῖο·
 νύκτας δ' αὖ γόνον ὀξὺν ὀδυρομένων ἐσάκουον
 Ἑλιάδων λιγέως· τὰ δὲ δάκρυα μυρομένησιν 625
 οἷον ἐλαιηραὶ στάγες ὕδασιν ἐμφορέοντο.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Vian (1981), 96 and Hunter (2015), mark line 4.604 as uncertain.

“They entered the remotest part of the stream of the Eridanos, **where once Phaethon, half-consumed by fire, fell from Helios’ chariot into the waters of the deep marsh, after the blazing thunderbolt had struck him in the chest.** To this very day the marsh exhales a heavy vapour which rises from his smouldering wound; no bird can stretch out its fragile wings to fly over that water, but in mid-flight it falls dead in the flames. **Around the lake the unhappy Heliades, encased in their slender poplars, grieve in moaning lamentation. Bright drops of amber fall to the ground from their eyes;** on the sand these are dried by the sun, and when the waters of the dark lake wash over the shores, as they are driven by the breath of the groaning wind, then the swelling current rolls all the amber into the Eridanos. **The Celts’ tale, however, is that it is the tears of Leto’s son Apollo which are carried by the whirling currents.** He is said to have wept countless tears **at the time when he reached the holy race of the Hyperboreans,** after leaving glittering heaven in the face of his father’s threats; he was angry because of the son whom noble Koronis had borne to him in rich Lakereia beside the streams of the Amyros. **This then is how the story goes amongst those people.** The heroes desired neither food nor drink, nor did their minds have any thought of delights. The days they spent worn out and exhausted, weighed down by the foul smell which rose from the small branches of the Eridanos as Phaethon’s corpse steamed; **at night they heard the piercing sound of the Heliades’ shrill lamentation.** As they wept, their tears were carried on the waters like drops of oil”.

This episode presents two aetiological myths explaining the presence of amber in the Po region.¹⁶⁷ In the Greek version, the Heliades, the sisters of Phaethon transformed into poplars, shed tears for the death of their brother; their tears fall into the river as drops of amber (ἡλέκτρον λιβάδας, 4.606). The Celts' version of the myth interprets those drops as the tears of Apollo for the death of his son Asclepius, whom Zeus killed because he applied his knowledge of medicine to resuscitate people from death.¹⁶⁸ Hunter comments that the Celtic version of the myth is not attested anywhere else, and there is no evidence for the connection between the myth of Apollo and Coronis and the *aition* of the amber drops.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, the ring composition of this episode, which ends in a reiteration of the Phaethon story (4.619–26), suggests, according to Hunter, that the Celtic version is undoubtedly false.¹⁷⁰ Be that as it may, to borrow one of Hunter's favorite phrases, it is essential to ask why Apollonius provides the double aetiology of the tear drops and why the god involved is Apollo. Despite the lack of literary sources, Apollonius' Celtic myth seems well supported by the material evidence of trade and commercial activities between Northern Europe and the Mediterranean.¹⁷¹ In particular, the trading of amber in Greco-Roman antiquity is attested since the Mycenaean period.¹⁷² Archaeological evidence has shown that the so-called "Amber Road" extended from the Jutland Coast in Denmark to the Adriatic, and the Po River was among the most important waterways in the last segment of the journey.¹⁷³ As Bridgman remarks, the Celts could have acted as middlemen between Northern Europe and the

¹⁶⁷ Byre (1996), 279–80 remarks that only the narrator knows the aetiological stories.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Hesiod fr. 51 MW, Pind. *Pyth.* 3.53–60, Aesch. *Ag.* 1021–4. See also Hunter (2015), 165.

¹⁶⁹ Hunter (2015), 165. A general association between the Celts and amber is made by Dio Chrys. 79.4.

¹⁷⁰ Hunter (2015), 165.

¹⁷¹ Bridgman (2004), 108.

¹⁷² Ahl (1982), 395 and Bridgman (2004), 108.

¹⁷³ Bridgman (2004), 108.

head of the Adriatic region.¹⁷⁴ Considering the assimilation between the Celts and the Hyperboreans in ancient sources, the involvement of Apollo in this episode is not implausible.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, in the Thynias episode in Book 2.675, Apollonius himself comments that the god would visit the Hyperboreans.

From another angle, the Baltic-Adriatic Sea amber route was not the only active one in antiquity. It has been suggested that the commerce of amber moved along a loop route, the first half of which began in the Black Sea and proceeded up to the Baltic Sea through the rivers Dniestr and Vistula.¹⁷⁶ At the same time, the second started from the river Oder and proceeded through the Elbe, Rhine, Saone, Rhone, Po, and into the Adriatic. This reconstruction of loop trading routes for the commerce of amber is particularly suggestive of the Argonauts' loop route in the poem, whereby the second half of the Argo's journey begins in the Black Sea and, through the rivers Danube and Sava, ends in the Adriatic Sea.¹⁷⁷ In Apollonius, the Argonauts are not the only ones taking the route westwards: Apsyrtus, too, journeys to the Adriatic with his Colchian fleet and tragically dies at the Brygean islands.¹⁷⁸ The connection between Phaethon and

¹⁷⁴ Bridgman (2004), 108.

¹⁷⁵ On the association in ancient Greco-Roman literature between the Hyperboreans and the Celts, see Bridgman (2004), 74–115. For the connection between Apollo and the Hyperboreans, cf. Alcaeus 1–4 Bergk (where he travels in a swan chariot), Pind. *Pyth.* 10.34–6, and Diod. 2.47.6. For the offerings that the Hyperboreans make every year to Delos, see Hdt. 4.33–5, Call. fr. 186 Harder. Diodorus discusses the Hyperboreans in 2.47.1–6, accounting for Hecataeus' version, that is, that the Hyperboreans lived in an island of the same size as Sicily beyond the land of the Celts (ἐν τοῖς ἀντιπέρας τῆς Κελτικῆς τόποις κατὰ τὸν ὠκεανὸν εἶναι νῆσον). Diodorus also explains that Apollo's association with the island of the Hyperboreans is because Leto was born there; he is therefore honored among them beyond all other gods (διὸ καὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω μάλιστα τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς τιμᾶσθαι, 2.47.2). The Hyperboreans are themselves priests of Apollo and worship the god in the notable temple and sacred precinct that they have erected (ὑπάρχειν δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὴν νῆσον τέμενός τε Ἀπόλλωνος μεγαλοπρεπὲς καὶ ναὸν ἀξιόλογον, 2.47.3).

¹⁷⁶ Ahl (1982), 395.

¹⁷⁷ For a detailed analysis of the Argonauts' return journey, see Chapter 4.

¹⁷⁸ Hunter (2015), 162–3 comments that: "... the Argonauts' first encounter is with [Apsyrtus'] ghostly namesake. See also Beye (1982), 165 and Fusillo (1985), 42–3.

Apsyrtus is already established in the Apollonian text, for the Colchians tend to call Apsyrtus by the nickname φαέθων, “the radiant one”, “since he outshone all young men” (καί μιν Κόλχων υἱὲς ἐπωνυμίην Φαέθοντα | ἔκλεον, οὐνεκα πᾶσι μετέπρεπεν ἠιθέοισιν, 3.245–6).¹⁷⁹ This connection implies that Phaethon’s and Apsyrtus’ deaths could be juxtaposed.¹⁸⁰ As Ivana Petrovic has recently demonstrated, the Argonauts’ symptoms of sickness caused by the pestilential environment of Phaethon’s lake (4.620–6) are suggestive of a mourning process that aligns with the Heliades’ grief for the death of their brother.¹⁸¹

The mourning motif is central in this episode, and Apollonius develops it from a multicultural perspective. The symbolism associated with amber in antiquity provides further insight into this interpretation. Amber was indeed appreciated for its perfume, warmth, electrical properties, and the life-preserving powers of the resin.¹⁸² In Baltic Europe and the Greco-Roman world, amber symbolized the sun.¹⁸³ Amber’s association with celestial imagery is significant concerning the *Argonautica* passage since, in both Apollonius’ aetiological myths and the main narrative events of Book 4, the motifs of death and mourning are closely related to the sun.

¹⁷⁹ This epithet is attributed to the Sun-god himself in *Il.* 11.735, *Od.* 5.479, 11.16, *Hes. Th.* 760, and *S. El.* 824. Petrovic [forthcoming_a], 3 n. 10 for comments that if the Heliades had pronounced Phaethon’s name, which also corresponds to Apsyrtus’ nickname, Medea would indeed have recognized it and her seemingly untroubled reaction at the murder of her brother would have more strongly contrasted with that of the Heliades. On the correspondence between Apsyrtus and Phaethon, see also Livrea (1973), 185, Vian (1981), 35–8, Fusillo (1985), 42–3, Byre (1996), 279–82, and Hunter (2015), 162–3.

¹⁸⁰ Fusillo (1985), 42–3 and Hunter (2015), 162–3. On Phaethon and Apsyrtus as one of the many Apollonian “doubles”, see Petrovic [forthcoming_a].

¹⁸¹ Petrovic [forthcoming_a]. The Argonauts’ food refusal at the Eridanus’ mouth is a motif that aligns with other episodes of collective mourning or suffering in the *Argonautica*: the aftermath of the Doliones’ massacre in Book 1 and the heroes’ arrival to the Syrtis in Book 4. In Book 1.1070–77, the survivors among the Doliones after the massacre are unable to eat or drink (1072) and, because they have not ground their grains for days, eat only uncooked food. In Book 4.1290–304, when the Argonauts are confined in the Syrtis, they await “the most lamentable end” (οἰκτίστῳ θανάτῳ ἔπι, 4.1296) in the Libyan deserted landscape, by laying down without touching anything food or drink (4.1295).

¹⁸² Ahl (1982), 395.

¹⁸³ Ahl (1982), 395. Spekke (1957), 3 argues that “amber discs are the oldest known symbols of sun worship”.

Phaethon and Apsyrtus are mirror figures in the *Argonautica*, which both relate to the Sun-god. Like amber, the Eridanus River, whose katasterism is attested in Hellenistic poetry, is associated with the heavenly sphere.¹⁸⁴ In sum, I propose that Apollonius presents the theme of mourning through a multicultural lens by developing three culturally different narrative frames: the Greek *aition*, the Celtic *aition*, and the Argonauts' storyline, linked through the sun motif. As I argue in Chapter 2, Apollonius shapes the Libyan micro-narrative as an episode of atonement and purification for the Sun-god, and the Argonauts' brief experience at the Eridanus river appears to foreshadow the events to come.

TRAVELING BETWEEN THE TWO POLES

The Argonauts' journey to and from Colchis allows them to explore culturally diverse regions of the *oikoumenē*. Some of these areas are less important from a narrative perspective but provide the poet with the opportunity for digressions of geographical or ethnographical character.¹⁸⁵ Apollonius' description of local populations' cultural and religious customs often suggests "otherness" from the perspective of Greece and Colchis or draws from the realm of

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Aratus *Phaen.* 359–60. Ahl (1982), 394 maintains that the Eridanus is a comparable small-scale version of the Milky Way.

¹⁸⁵ Hunter (1996), 17 argues that "the passage through the [Clashing] Rocks marks the attainment of knowledge and control through the eastward advance of Hellenic culture, which can then be manifested in the elaborate geography and ethnography of the southern Pontic shore, as Apollonius writes the cultural aetiology of this rich land. In this case, knowledge really is power".

myth.¹⁸⁶ Apollonius' reception of earlier ethnographies is also particularly prominent.¹⁸⁷ As I argued in this chapter, Orpheus' dedication of his lyre on the Acherousian headland, which follows Apollo's epiphany and "departure" from Thynias, marks the Argonauts' exit from Apollo's religious sphere. Before reaching Colchis, however, the Argonauts sail along the southeastern coast of the Black Sea, home to different populations belonging to the realm of myth and the fantastic but also relevant to Apollonius' contemporary history.¹⁸⁸

For instance, significant is the Argonauts' avoided contact with the Amazons, who inhabit the region of the Thermodon (2.964–1000). The Argonauts' proximity to their land provides the opportunity for mentioning Heracles' ninth labor, the stealing of Hippolyte's girdle (2.964–9), explaining how the Thermodon differs from all other rivers, an implied reference to the Phasis (2.972–84), and detailing the warlike customs of the Amazons.¹⁸⁹ On this note, Apollonius comments that the Argonauts' fight with the Amazons would have been "not without blood" (καὶ δ' οὐ κεν ἀναιμωτὶ γ' ἐρίδηναν, 2.986), because they are the war-loving daughters (φιλοπολέμους κούρας, 2.989) of Ares and the nymph Harmonia, who respect no justice (2.987) and are experienced in "grievous *hybris* and the works of Ares" (ἀλλ' ὕβρις στονόεσσα καὶ Ἄρεος ἔργα μεμήλει, 2.989). Paduano and Fusillo comment that Apollonius' description of the

¹⁸⁶ Stephens (2003), 206 discusses Apollonius' incorporation of "otherness" in the narrative, arguing that: "Otherness is extended beyond cultural behavior and into the very physical environment, in which nature seems to be suspended in a stage of experiment that has elsewhere disappeared".

¹⁸⁷ On Apollonius' incorporation of Herodotus' ethnography, especially regarding the contraposition between Greek and non-Greek peoples, see Morrison (2020), 145–78.

¹⁸⁸ On the Argonauts' exploration of the Black Sea, see Vian (1974), 128–68, Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 349–61, Cusset (1998), and Meyer (2008). See Hunter (2008), 257–77 on the convergence of the "divine" and "human map" of the *Argonautica* in Book 2. See also Sistakou (2012), 107–8 on Apollonius' aesthetics of darkness in the Black Sea region. Moreover, Ivanova (2013) discusses the early civilizations of the Black Sea. Braund (2018) discusses Greek religion and cults in the Black Sea region. In a recent paper, Ivana Petrovic addressed the representation of the Black Sea region in the *Argonautica* by highlighting Apollonius' incorporation of multiple sources, including mythological, geographic, and ethnographical accounts.

¹⁸⁹ Consider also Phineus' account of the outward journey in Book 2.311–407.

Amazons' interests in war and the works of Ares represents an *exemplum a contrario* concerning the Argonauts, who, instead, regularly exploit the works of love and avoid war.¹⁹⁰ The traditional representation of the Amazons is also clearly antithetical to Greek conceptions about women; judging from the characterization of Chalcioppe and Medea in Book 3, the "Amazonian model" does not entirely fit Colchian women either.¹⁹¹ The Argonauts luckily avoid a confrontation with the Amazons thanks to the winds sent by Zeus (2.993–5). The Argonauts' departure from the Amazons' territory allows the poet to digress on the tribal structure of their society (2.996–1000).

Apollonius accounts for the customs of other populations inhabiting the Black Sea coast, whom the Argonauts pass by on their way to Colchis (2.1000–29). The inverted *nomoi* of people such as the Chalybes, who do not cultivate the land but sell iron (2.1001–8), the Tibarenians, of whom the women bear children but the men experience birth pangs (2.1009–14), and the Mossynoecians, whose law customs are different from any others (*ἀλλοίη δὲ δίκη καὶ θέσμις τοῖσι τέτυκται*, 2.1018), are again suggestive of cultural "otherness" from both the Greek and Colchian world.¹⁹² Furthermore, Apollonius' digression about the inverted *nomoi* of the Black Sea people recalls Herodotus' and Xenophon's treatment of this theme.¹⁹³

The betwixt-and-between areas of the Argonautic world present a blend of customs and cultures that suggests "otherness" from Greek and Colchian perspectives. These regions provide the poet with an opportunity for mythical, ethnographical, and geographical digressions, which

¹⁹⁰ Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 357.

¹⁹¹ See Braund (2025) for a comprehensive discussion about the history and myth of the Amazons.

¹⁹² Cf. Morrison (2020), 92–3 on Apollonius' emphasis on difference.

¹⁹³ On Apollonius' treatment of the Mossynoecians' customs, especially in relation to Herodotus and Xenophon's *Anabasis*, see Morrison (2020), 92–3. On Herodotus' representation of law, custom, and culture, see Humphreys (1987), 211–20.

are reminiscent of older historiographical sources but could also draw from contemporary paradoxography.¹⁹⁴ From a narrative point of view, these territories can be considered “liminal spaces” between the two poles of the Argonautic world, Greece and Colchis. Analogously, Thalmann discusses Apollonius’ depiction of the Adriatic region as “a liminal place”.¹⁹⁵ Thalmann makes the remarkable observation that, when the Argonauts depart from the island of Aithalie (Elba) in the Tyrrhenian Sea, they leave behind stones and other vestiges (ἐν δὲ σόλοι καὶ τρύχεια θέσκελα κείνων, 4.657) in the place that is now called the “Harbor of Argo” (ἐνθα λιμὴν Ἀργῶος ἐπωνυμίην πεφάτισται, 4.658); the same name (Ἀργῶος λιμὴν) is also given to the Libyan port at which they put in at the end of the Libyan episode (1620–22): “In that place is the ‘harbour of the *Argo*’ and traces of the ship and altars to Poseidon and Triton” (Ἐνθα μὲν Ἀργῶός τε λιμὴν καὶ σήματα νηός | ἥδὲ Ποσειδάωνος ἰδὲ Τρίτωνος ἔασιν | βωμοί).¹⁹⁶ The homonymous harbors and the traces left by the heroes encapsulate the Adriatic region as a single space between their point of departure, Colchis, and their final point of arrival, Greece.

HELIOS

In Apollonius, several aspects of Helios’ characterization are reminiscent of his Egyptian counterpart. Scholars have already drawn connections between Colchian Helios and the Egyptian Sun-god Ra. Most importantly, Susan Stephens has highlighted the parallelism between Aeetes,

¹⁹⁴ See Zanker (1987), 118–9 on the influence of paradoxography on the Alexandrian poets. For a general discussion of paradoxography in the ancient world, see Schepens and Delcroix (1996), 343–460.

¹⁹⁵ Thalmann (2011), 183 n. 40.

¹⁹⁶ Thalmann (2011), 183–4: “These two harbors of the same name enclose both the narrative of the Argonauts’ voyage from the Sardinian Sea to Libya and the space they traverse, and give to both shape and definition”. On this point see also Harder (1994), 26–7.

the son of Helios, and the Egyptian pharaoh, whom Egyptians identified as “the son of the Sun (Re)”.¹⁹⁷ However, scholars have not fully explored how Colchian Helios corresponds to the Egyptian god Ra. In the following discussion, I discuss Helios’ emotional and iconographical traits by analyzing the characterization of his representatives, Aeetes and Medea. I aim to demonstrate that fiery wrathfulness, which, in the *Argonautica*, becomes an expression of Aeetes’ and Medea’s royal and magical powers, suggests references to the typical portrait of wrathful Sun-god and his divine daughters in Egyptian sources.¹⁹⁸

As James Clauss has recently demonstrated, anger is a recurring emotion in the *Argonautica*.¹⁹⁹ Clauss argues that, in Apollonius, anger often arises as an emotional reaction to the loss of a privilege.²⁰⁰ This anger activates one’s fear or anxiety of permanently losing the privilege.²⁰¹ For instance, Zeus becomes angry at Phineus due to the latter’s abuse of his prophetic knowledge; Zeus’ wrath seems to develop along with anxiety for the potential usurpation of his status as the “all-knowing god”.²⁰² Along similar lines, Aeetes’ wrath is aimed at the Argonauts, whom he perceives as a potential threat to his throne. It is later focused on Medea, who betrayed her family by departing from Colchis with Jason.²⁰³ Apollonius primarily

¹⁹⁷ Stephens (2003), 176. Similarly, Mori (2008), 148 notes that Ptolemy was considered “the son of Helios (Re) and the image of Zeus (Amon)”. Mori also mentions that the Ptolemaic king was assimilated into other Greek and Egyptian gods, such as Dionysus and Horus. At the same time, the queen was likened to Aphrodite, Isis, and Agatha Tyche, or “Good Fortune”.

¹⁹⁸ In *Od.* 12, Homer’s Helios, who sees and hears everything (Ἡελίου, ὃς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούει, 12.324), demands punishment for Odysseus’ companions from Zeus after they slew his cattle (12.375–84). Cf. also *Od.* 8.271 and *HHDem.* 3.26. Later Greek text from the 2nd-3rd cent. CE focus more on aspects of Helios’ anger: Ael. *NA* 14.28, Hyg. *Fab.* 205, and Opp. *Cyn.* 2.626.

¹⁹⁹ Clauss [forthcoming].

²⁰⁰ Clauss [forthcoming].

²⁰¹ Clauss [forthcoming].

²⁰² Clauss [forthcoming].

²⁰³ Cf. for instance, 3.594–602, where Aeetes is angered at the sons of Phrixus for having brought the Argonauts to Colchis due to his assumption that they wanted to usurp his throne.

refers to Aeetes' wrath as *χόλος*, a term also applied to Zeus' wrath throughout the poem; only once does he use the term *μῆνις*, which is suggestive of divine wrath.²⁰⁴ As I aim to show, Apollonius' portrayal of Aeetes as a wrathful representative of Helios recalls the wrathful character of the Egyptian god Ra. Analogously, Medea's wrathful personality develops throughout the narrative, mainly since the moment she flees from Colchis: the further away she travels from her country, the stronger her magic becomes and the more her wrath grows. Given this, I argue that the increase of Medea's powers and wrath away from her father suggests a similar narrative trajectory in Egyptian myth, namely, the myth of "Wandering" or "Distant Goddess".

Wrathful Gods in Egyptian Solar Mythology

The Wrathful Aspect of the Sun-god

In Egyptian lore, the Sun-god Ra was particularly associated with divine wrath.²⁰⁵ According to Jan Assmann, "implacable fury" is one of Ra's traits.²⁰⁶ Similarly, Geraldine Pinch, commenting on the representation of the Sun-god in Egyptian myth, argues that: "Ra is credited with human emotions of anger, bitterness, and pity...".²⁰⁷ Joseph Amgad has recently conducted a valuable survey of occurrences of divine wrath in Egyptian sources, highlighting that Ra's wrath is often portrayed as a destructive and unbearable force for humans.²⁰⁸ Amgad argues that most sources attesting to the wrath of Ra come from the New Kingdom, Second Intermediate,

²⁰⁴ Aeetes' *χόλος*: 3.368, 449, 614, 4.235, 391, 512, 740, 816, 1083; and *μῆνις*: 4.1205. Zeus' *χόλος*: 2.1195, 3.337–8 (*μῆνιν καὶ χόλον*), 4.558, 577, 585. On Apollonius' use of *μῆνις*, see Mori (2008), 88.

²⁰⁵ Assmann (1995), 203. See also Bleeker (1969), 52.

²⁰⁶ Assmann (1995), 203.

²⁰⁷ Pinch (1994), 25.

²⁰⁸ Amgad (2018), 27–65.

Late, and Ptolemaic periods.²⁰⁹ The wrathful manifestation of the Sun-god is typically connected with the sphere of human and divine justice.²¹⁰ Particularly illustrative, for instance, is this description of Ra from the Papyrus Chester Beatty: “His strength is victorious, he is master of fear, | his anger is directed against the impious; | he destroys rebels”.²¹¹ As mentioned, the Sun-god’s characterization as an exceedingly wrathful divinity seems to have survived through the Ptolemaic period.²¹² A Demotic composition titled “Instruction of Ankhsheshonq” (Papyrus British Museum 10508) represents Ra as the restorer of justice and order (Maat) in a land where the people received false accusations.²¹³ Sometimes, the sources indicate fear as the typical reaction to Ra’s excesses of wrath.²¹⁴ Sven Eicke provides an example of the type of utterances in which the deceased personifies Ra during his journey in the Underworld: “(O you) southern gods, dread me; (o you) northern gods, fear me!”.²¹⁵ These sources show how divine wrath and fear become part of the Egyptian conceptualization of the Sun-god.

²⁰⁹ Amgad (2018), 53. Amgad (2018), 52 also maintains that the sources mentioning Amun-Ra, the celestial manifestation of Amun, come from private monuments of the Ramesside and Third Intermediate Periods and, particularly, the Twenty-first Dynasty. See also Lucarelli (2006), 260, n. 60 and Morschauser (1991), 203.

²¹⁰ Assmann (1995), 197, Amgad (2018), 32–4. We find instances of Amun-Ra’s wrathfulness outside the judicial context in various sources, such as magical spells. For example, see P.Ch.Beatty VII, 9–10, verses 127–129: “Eyes look at you | fear of you fills everyone | their hearts are turned to you”. On this source, see Assmann (1995), 199. Contrary to P.Ch.Beatty IV, these fragments are classified as magical spells. For the classification of the papyrus, see Hall (1930), 46–7. Furthermore, the motif of divine wrath is also found in Coffin Texts and older funerary inscriptions carved in the interior wooden shell of the coffin. See Eicke (2017), 233–4.

²¹¹ P.Ch.Beatty IV rto 8,9-9,1; see Assmann (1995), 197. This portion of the papyrus is composed of fragments in hieratic dated to the 19th-20th dynasty (New Kingdom); it contains laudatory hymns to Amun-Ra. For the classification of the papyrus, see Hall (1930), 46–47.

²¹² Amgad (2018), 34.

²¹³ “Someone came to commit, in the Aphroditopolis nome, this crime, which took place in the temple of Hathor, lady of mfkʿt. Re and the Ennead, after hearing it, they were exceedingly angry because of it”—translation by Amgad (2018), 34. P. Jumilhac, XII, 23; Vandier (1961), 124, Pl. 8.

²¹⁴ On fear in ancient Egyptian religion see Eicke (2017), 229–46.

²¹⁵ CT VI,270k (Spell 648). See Eicke (2017), 233–4.

The Myth of the “Wandering Goddess” in Ptolemaic Alexandria

In ancient Egyptian mythology, a well-known narrative, the myth of the “Wandering” or “Distant Goddess”, contains the motifs of separation and subsequent reunification with the Sun-god, as well as of wrathfulness and pacification.²¹⁶ The myth’s protagonist, the wandering goddess, is the daughter of the Sun-god, who also personifies his eye. In Egyptian lore, the eyes of the supreme cosmic divinity are endowed with defensive powers.²¹⁷ Specifically, the lunar left eye belongs to Horus, while the right solar eye is the eye of Re, also personified as his divine daughter, the “wandering daughter of the sun”.²¹⁸ The two eye figures merge to represent the wrathful solar eye goddess.²¹⁹ This goddess generally fulfills an apotropaic function and is typically portrayed on amulets.²²⁰ Moreover, the eye goddess’ protective role also encompasses the descent of the souls of the dead to the underworld.²²¹ Different sources identify the eye of Re with other goddesses. A more aggressive version of the eye appears in a hymn to Re on the stele of the Eleventh dynasty pharaoh Sehtawy Antef I, which states, “My protection is the (angry) red glow of your eye”.²²² This passage suggests that the eye goddess attacks her enemies by shooting fiery darts from her eyes. Furthermore, rage is an essential emotional prerogative of the goddess’ aggressive role.

²¹⁶ Leanna Boychenko recently discussed this topic in an article titled “Daughters of the Sun: Apollonius Rhodius’ Medea and the Egyptian Eye of Re”. The article is currently under review.

²¹⁷ Darnell (1997), 35.

²¹⁸ Darnell (1997), 35.

²¹⁹ Darnell (1997), 35.

²²⁰ Darnell (1997), 37.

²²¹ Darnell (1997), 40–1. The Coffin text (CT I, 250a-e) identifies the eye of Ra as Bastet, a daughter of Ra from Isis whose religious sphere encompasses fertility, protection, and motherhood. The text also refers to the goddess’ purpose to shed light with her torches in the underworld for the souls of the blessed dead.

²²² Translation by Darnell (1997), 42.

As Barbara Richter remarks, representations of the myth of the “Wandering” or “Distant Goddess” and of festivals connected with it occur in reliefs in at least twenty-two Ptolemaic temples.²²³ Different pieces of evidence from different Ptolemaic temples allow scholars to create a “standard version” of the myth.²²⁴ The narrative follows the typical pattern whereby the god or the pharaoh must restore the order, Maat, in Egypt by resolving internal or external tensions.²²⁵ The myth is essentially based on the following outline:²²⁶

When the Egyptian sun god still lived on earth and governed Egypt, the lion-goddess Tefnut, his daughter and Eye, grew angry at him and wandered southwards. To convince his daughter to return to Egypt, the Sun-god sent forth her brother Shu, a lion god, and Thoth, who attempted to bribe her with offerings. The lion-goddess ultimately returned to Egypt. The wandering Eye was finally reintegrated in the Egyptian pantheon and the order (Maat) was restored.

Local versions of the myth contain slight variations from the “ideal version”. For instance, Joachim Quack has discussed an inscription from the Temple of Philae on the southern

²²³ Richter (2012), 1.

²²⁴ See Junker (1911), (1917), and Richter (2012), 2–3. The earliest reference to the Eye occurs in the pyramidal texts (PT 405 = 282 Allen): “Teti is that eye of yours that is on Hathor’s brow, which turns fully back the years from Teti”—translation by Allen (2005), 96. See also PT 689. By the Middle Kingdom, the myth also occurs in coffin texts (CT 76, 890), with additional details such as identifying the Eye with the lioness-goddess. A complete narration of the myth appears in the so-called “Myth of the Heavenly Cow”, a narrative included in a larger funerary text, the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, which is first attested on the inside of the outermost shrine of Tutankhamen (KV 62). See Piankoff (1951), fig. 16, pls. I, XXI and Guilhou (2010), 1. In this narrative, the Eye is identified with Hathor, the raging daughter of Re, whom Ra sends out to punish his enemies.

²²⁵ As Assmann (2001b), 220 remarks: “Der Zerfall der staatlichen Ordnung löst die Korrespondenz zwischen Himmel und Erde auf”.

²²⁶ Pinch (1994), 25.

border of Egypt, mainly constructed and decorated in the Ptolemaic period, which provides a hieroglyphic text that modifies the basic outline of the myth of the “Wandering Goddess”.²²⁷ According to this version of the myth, the gods Shu and Tefnut stop in Philae when they are traveling northwards from Bugem. The goddess, surrounded by flames, burns the enemies of Re. She then rises 10,000 cubits high into the sky, where she is eventually pacified. Quack has compared the evidence from the Ptolemaic temple of Philae with the Demotic narrative of the “Myth of the Eye of the Sun”, a text found in at least six papyri and still not entirely published.²²⁸ Following other scholarly interpretations explaining this myth from meteorological and astronomical perspectives, Quack has proposed that the myth could allude to the heliacal rising of Sirius.²²⁹ The return of Sirius in mid-summer also marks the beginning of the Nile’s flood season and, hence, of the Egyptian agricultural calendar.²³⁰

The rise of Sirius was a pivotal event throughout Egyptian history, including during the Ptolemaic Period. The Canopus decree (*OGIS* 56), a trilingual inscription commemorating the synod of priests held at Canopus in 238 BC, instituted a new festivity for the ruling couple Ptolemy III Euergetes and Berenice II on the day of Sirius’ rising, which marks the beginning of

²²⁷ Quack (2002a), 283–94. Hölbl (2001), 86 points out that the naos of the temple of Isis at Philae was entirely erected and decorated during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. Accordingly, Ptolemy II went down in history as the first great builder of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

²²⁸ Quack (2002a), 285. The text edition is Spiegelberg (1917).

²²⁹ Quack (1995), 116 n. k and (2002a), 286.

²³⁰ Spiegelberg (1915), 877 n. 1 and (1917), 2, proposes that the wandering of the eye of Ra could represent the sun’s southward movement from summer to winter. On this basis, the return of the eye of Ra to Egypt would represent the “return of the sun” and, specifically, the summer solstice, when the sun reaches its highest point in the sky. Quack (2002a), 287 contests this interpretation, arguing that the eye of Ra cannot simultaneously be identified with the sun. Junker (1917), 166–8 suggests an explanation of the myth concerning the moon’s cycle. The correlation between the beginning of the Egyptian New Year and the rising of Sirius is also attested in Greek literature. The *scholia* to Aratus’ *Phaenomena* 152 ed. Martin (1974) connect the rising of Sirius with the beginning of the Nile’s flood. On Sirius and the Egyptian New Year, see Lesko (1999), 156.

the New Year.²³¹ In the Greek text, Sirius is identified as “the star of Isis” (τὸ ἄστρον τὸ Ἰσιος, *OGIS* 56.36), whose heliacal rising occurs on the first day of the month Payni (τῇ νουμηνίᾳ τοῦ Παννί, *OGIS* 56.37)—corresponding to July 19th. The festival inaugurated for Ptolemy and Berenice in the Canopus decree was held in several locations across Egypt, and its celebration was exceptionally splendid in the temples of Dendera and Edfu, which Ptolemy began constructing in 237 BC.²³² Furthermore, the decree refers to Ptolemy III’s daughter, Berenice, who had died prematurely at the beginning of 238 BC.²³³ The decree juxtaposes the death of Berenice in the month of Tybi—which corresponds to the interval between Jan. 9th and Feb. 7th—with the departure of the Sun-god’s daughter (μετήλλαξεν τὸν βίον, literally, her “departure from life”); it also determines that Berenice should be granted the same honors that the daughter of Helios received at the time of her “apotheosis”.²³⁴ In referring to the daughter of Helios (ἡ τοῦ

²³¹ *OGIS* 56.35–7: ἄγεσθαι κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν πανήγυριν δημοτελῆ ἐν τε τοῖς ἱεροῖς καὶ καθ’ ὅλην τὴν {τὴν} χώραν βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίῳ καὶ βασιλίσσει Βερενίκῃ, θεοῖς Εὐεργέταις τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν ᾗ ἐπιτέλλει τὸ ἄστρον τὸ τῆς Ἰσιος, ἣ νομίζεται διὰ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων νέον ἔτος εἶναι, ἄγεται δὲ νῦν ἐν τῷ ἐνάτῳ ἔτει νουμηνίᾳ τοῦ Παῦνι μηνός (“A public festival and procession should be held every year in the temples and throughout the country for King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, the Benefactor Gods, on the day on which the star of Isis appears, which is regarded in the sacred scriptures as the New Year, but it is now celebrated in the ninth year, on the new moon of the month Payni”). The Greek text edition of *OGIS* 56 is Pfeiffer (2004). The translation is my own.

²³² Coppens (2009), 9. The Temple of Dendera arose on the old cultic site of Hathor. In the new Ptolemaic temple, Hathor shared her iconography with the goddess Nut and received inscribed dedications along with Isis. Isis herself had a smaller temple in the precinct. At Edfu, Horus, Isis’ child from Osiris, obtained a new temple. See Lesko (1999), 188.

²³³ Burstein (2022), 6.

²³⁴ *OGIS* 56.54–8: δεδόχθαι συντελεῖν τῇ ἐκ τῶν Εὐεργετῶν θεῶν γεγενημένῃ βασιλίσσει Βερενίκῃ τιμὰς αἰδίου ἐν ἅπασιν τοῖς <κ>ατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱεροῖς, καὶ ἐπεὶ εἰς θεοὺς μετέλθεν ἐν τῷ Τύβι μηνί, ἐν ᾧ περ καὶ ἡ τοῦ Ἡλίου θυγάτηρ ἐν ἀρχῇ μετήλλαξεν τὸν βίον, ἣν ὁ πατὴρ στέρξας ὠ[νό]μασεν ὅτε μὲν βασιλείαν ὅτε ὄρασιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἄγουσιν αὐτῇ ἑορτὴν καὶ περίπλουν ἐν πλείοσιν ἱεροῖς τῶν πρώτων ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μηνί, ἐν ᾧ ἡ ἀποθέωσις αὐ[τῆς] ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐγενήθη, συντελεῖν καὶ βασιλίσσει Βερενίκῃ τῇ ἐκ τῶν Εὐεργετῶν θεῶν ἐν ἅπασιν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱεροῖς ἐν τῷ Τύβι μηνί ἑορτὴν καὶ περίπλουν ἐφ’ ἡμέρας τέσσαρας ἀπὸ ἐπτακαιδεκάτης<ς>, ἐν ᾗ ὁ περίπλους καὶ ἡ τοῦ πένθους ἀπόλυσις ἐγενήθη αὐτῇ τὴν ἀρχὴν (“It was decreed to celebrate everlasting honors for Queen Berenice, the daughter of the Benefactor Gods, in all the temples throughout the country, and since she departed to the gods in the month Tybi, in which also the daughter of Helios originally departed from life, whom her father with love sometimes called his “crown” sometimes his

Ἡλίου θυγάτηρ), the text adds that her father sometimes called her “his diadem” sometimes “his eye” (ἦν ὁ πατήρ στέρξας ὠ[νό]μασεν ὅτε μὲν **βασιλείαν** ὅτε [δὲ] **ὄρασιν** αὐτοῦ). The association between the eye imagery and the daughter of the Sun-god is significant. Considering the myth of the “Wandering Goddess”, the text of this decree seems to blend elements of the ancient Egyptian narrative, such as the identification of the daughter of Re and the eye. At the same time, the text highlights the rising of Sirius, coinciding with the Egyptian New Year, as an important yearly event. The representation of the daughter of Re as the god’s eye or diadem in the Canopus decree, as well as the evidence of this myth from Ptolemaic temples, show awareness—or perhaps an attempt to raise awareness—of the myth and its symbolism in Ptolemaic times and among the Greek population of Egypt. This prospect becomes all the more intriguing considering that Jackie Murray has recently proposed 238 BC, the same year of Ptolemy’s synod and ratification of the Canopus decree, as the date of the composition of Apollonius’ *Argonautica*.²³⁵ Hence, I suggest that the “Wandering Goddess” myth and its imagery are present in the poem and can inform our interpretation of the *Argonautica* from a multicultural perspective. Specifically, I propose that the symbolism related to the Ptolemaic version of the myth of the “Wandering Goddess”—the eye of Re, divine wrath, Sirius, Isis—is significant in connection with Apollonius’ *Medea*.²³⁶

“eye,” and they celebrate for her a festival and a boat procession in several temples of the first (temples) in the very month in which her apotheosis took place, a festival and a boat procession lasting four days, from the 17th day, on which the boat procession and the release from the mourning for her originally took place, shall also be celebrated for Queen Berenice, the daughter of the Benefactor Gods, in all the temples throughout the country, in the month of Tybi”).

²³⁵ Murray (2014), 247–84.

²³⁶ Due to its content and the circumstances of its production, the Canopus decree was an extremely important document for the Ptolemaic royal house. The implication of connecting the language of the decree with the Egyptian myth of the “Wandering Goddess” and, in turn, with Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, is the indirect association between the character of Medea and female members of the Ptolemaic family. In particular, in association with the eye of Ra, the character of Medea would be associated with the deceased princess

Aeetes' God-like Wrath in The *Argonautica*

The first glimpse of Aeetes in the *Argonautica* is Argos' Book 2 description of the Colchian king to the Argonauts, who are utterly unaware of his character.

Arg. 2.1196–217

ἴσκε παρηγορέων. οἱ δ' ἔστυγον εἰσαΐοντες·
οὐ γὰρ ἔφαν τεύξεσθαι ἐνέρος Αἰήταο
κῶας ἄγειν κριοῖο μεμαότας. ὧδε δ' ἔειπεν
Ἄργος, ἀτεμβόμενος τοῖον στόλον ἀμφιπένεσθαι·
“ὦ φίλοι, ἡμέτερον μὲν ὅσον σθένος οὐ ποτ' ἀρωγῆς 1200
σχήσεται οὐδ' ἡβαιόν, ὅτε χρειώ τις ἵκηται.
ἀλλ' αἰνῶς ὀλοῇσιν ἀπηνείησιν ἄρηρεν
Αἰήτης· τῷ καὶ πέρι δεΐδια ναυτίλλεσθαι.
στεῦται δ' Ἥελίου γόνος ἔμμεναι, ἀμφὶ δὲ Κόλχων
ἔθνεα ναιετάουσιν ἀπείρονα· καὶ δέ κεν Ἄρει 1205
σμερδαλέην ἐνοπὴν μέγα τε σθένος ἰσοφαρίζοι.
οὐ μὰν οὐδ' ἀπάνευθεν ἐλεῖν δέρος Αἰήταο
ῥηίδιον· τοῖός μιν ὄφιν περὶ τ' ἀμφὶ τ' ἔρυται
ἀθάνατος καὶ ἄυπνος, ὃν αὐτὴ Γαῖ' ἀνέφυσεν
Καυκάσου ἐν κνημοῖσι, Τυφασινὴ ὑπὸ πέτρῃ, 1210
ἐνθα Τυφάονά φασι Διὸς Κρονίδαο κεραυνῷ

Berenice. Concerning Sirius, the star of Isis, the correlation would occur with Ptolemaic queens worshiped as Isis, such as Arsinoe II. The space of time available to me does not allow for an in-depth analysis of this topic, to which I aim to return in the future.

βλήμενον, ὁπότε οἱ στιβαρὰς ἐπορέξατο χεῖρας,
θερμὸν ἀπὸ κρατὸς στάξαι φόνον· ἵκετο δ' αὐτῶς
οὔρεα καὶ πεδίων Νυσίων, ἔνθ' ἔτι νῦν περ
κεῖται ὑποβρύχιος Σερβωνίδος ὕδασι λίμνης.” 1215
ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη· πολέεσσι δ' ἐπὶ γλόος εἴλε παρειᾶς
αὐτίκα, τοῖον ἄεθλον ὅτ' ἔκλυον.

“His words were designed to win them over, but they heard them with horror, for they did not believe that men who wished to take the ram’s fleece would meet a kindly reception from Aietes. Argos’ reply doubted the wisdom of undertaking such an expedition: “My friends, you will not lack any help whatsoever that our strength can provide, whenever the need arise. Nevertheless, Aietes is savage and cruel, and so this expedition causes me very great fear. He boasts that he is the offspring of Helios and around him live countless tribes of the Colchians; his terrifying voice and great strength would rival Ares. To take the fleece without Aietes knowing is also no easy task, for all around it is guarded by a deathless and sleepless serpent, the product of Earth itself; the serpent arose on the spurs of the Caucasus, below the Typhaonian Rock, where men say that Typhaon attacked the god with his mighty arms. He was struck by the bolt of Zeus, son of Kronos, and warm blood dripped from his hand. Even so he reached the mountains and the plains of Nysa, where to this day he lies encased in the waters of Lake Serbonis”. So he spoke, and at once the paleness of fear came over their cheeks, as they heard of the terrible challenge”.

The reputation of Aeetes' wrathfulness is a source of fear for Argos and his daughters.²³⁷

The Argonauts witness the first outburst of anger from Aeetes clearly as soon as Phrixus introduces them to the king and explains the reason for their visit.²³⁸

Arg. 3.367–84

τοῖα παρέννεπεν Ἄργος· ἄναξ δ' ἐπεχώσατο μύθοις

εἰσαΐων, ὑψοῦ δὲ χόλῳ φρένες ἠερέθοντο.

φῆ δ' ἐπαλαστήσας—μενέαινε δὲ παισὶ μάλιστα

Χαλκιοῦρης, τῶν γάρ σφε μετελθέμεν οὔνεκ' ἐώλπει—, 370

ἐκ δὲ οἱ ὄμματ' ἔλαμψεν ὑπ' ὀφρύσιν ἰεμένοιο·

“οὐκ ἄφαρ ὀφθαλμῶν μοι ἀπόπροθι, λωβητῆρες,

νεῖσθ' αὐτοῖσι δόλοισι παλίσσυτοι ἔκτοθι γαίης,

πρίν τινα λευγαλέον τε δέρος καὶ Φρίξον ιδέσθαι;

αὐτίχ' ὁμαρτήσαντες, ἀφ' Ἑλλάδος, οὐδ' ἐπὶ κῶας, 375

σκῆπτρα δὲ καὶ τιμὴν βασιλῆϊδα, δεῦρο νέεσθε.

εἰ δέ κε μὴ προπάροιθεν ἐμῆς ἦψασθε τραπέζης,

ἦ τ' ἂν ἀπὸ γλώσσας τε ταμῶν καὶ χεῖρε κεάσσας

ἀμφοτέρως, οἷοισιν ἐπιπροέηκα πόδεσσιν,

ὥς κεν ἐρητύοισθε καὶ ὕστερον ὀρμηθῆναι, 380

οἷα δὲ καὶ μακάρεσσιν ἐπεψεύσασθε θεοῖσι.”

φῆ ῥα χαλεπόμενος· μέγα δὲ φρένες Αἰακίδαο

²³⁷ Chalciope and Medea's fear of Aeetes in Book 3: 3.449, 459, 614, 1105–7. It is possible that, in part, Argos inherited his fear of the king from his mother, Chalciope

²³⁸ On Argos' reworking of Jason's account as an attempt to secure Aeetes' hospitality, see Hunter (1989), 138.

νειόθεν οἰδαίνεσκον. ἐέλδετο δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸς
ἀντιβίην ὅλοδ' ὄφασθαι ἔπος·

“With these words Argos sought to win Aietes over, but **the king was furious at what he heard and his spirit rose up high in anger.** He replied in a rage his wrath was directed most at Chalkiope’s sons, for he thought that it was to help them that the Argonauts had come -and under his brows his eyes flashed with emotion: “Get far away at once from my sight, you villains, and take your tricks with you! Quick, out of our land, before someone suffers wretchedly for this story of a fleece and Phrixos! **You come here from Hellas, in league with others, not for a fleece, but to gain my throne and royal power.** If you had not already eaten at my table, I would have cut out your tongues and chopped off both your hands and sent you packing with only your feet left, to prevent you making any other attempt in the future, and because you told such lies about the blessed gods”. So he spoke in his rage, and deep down the spirit of Aiakos’ son swelled high”.

Aeetes’ assumption that the Argonauts have traveled to Colchis to usurp him of his royal powers triggers an angry reaction.²³⁹ Particularly vivid is the description of “his mind turning high with every wind due to his rage” (ὕψοῦ δὲ χόλῳ φρένες ἠερέθοντο, 3.368). After the Argonauts’ departure (4.206–11), Aeetes summons the Colchian assembly and gives his warriors menacing orders:

²³⁹ On the issue of whom Aeetes’ rebuke addresses, see Vian (1980) and Fränkel (1968), *comm. ad v.* See also Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 427 on the problem of Vian’s and Fränkel’s interpretations.

Ἦδη δ' Αἰήτη ὑπερήνορι πᾶσί τε Κόλχοις
Μηδείης περίπυστος ἔρωσ καὶ ἔργ' ἐτέτυκτο.
ἐς δ' ἀγορὴν ἀγέροντ' ἐνὶ τεύχεσιν, ὅσσα τε πόντου
κύματα χειμερίοιο κορύσσεται ἐξ ἀνέμοιο 215
ἢ ὅσα φύλλα χαμᾶζε περικλαδέος πέσεν ὕλης
φυλλοχόῳ ἐνὶ μηνί—τίς ἂν τάδε τεκμήραιτο; — ·
ᾧς οἱ ἀπειρέσιοι ποταμοῦ παρεμέτρεον ὄχθας,
κλαγγῇ μαιμώνοντες. ὁ δ' εὐτόκτω ἐνὶ δίφρῳ
Αἰήτης ἵπποισι μετέπρεπεν οὓς οἱ ὄπασσεν 220
Ἡέλιος πνοιῇσιν ἐειδομένους ἀνέμοιο,
σκαίῃ μὲν ῥ' ἐνὶ χειρὶ σάκος δινωτὸν ἀείρων,
τῇ δ' ἐτέρῃ πεύκην περιμήκεα, παρ δέ οἱ ἔγχος
ἀντικρὺ τετάνυστο πελώριον· ἠνία δ' ἵππων
γέντο χεροῖν Ἄψυρτος. ὑπεκπρὸ δὲ πόντον ἔταμνε 225
νηὺς ἤδη, κρατεροῖσιν ἐπειγομένη ἐρέτησι
καὶ μεγάλου ποταμοῖο καταβλώσκοντι ῥέεθρῳ.
αὐτὰρ ἄναξ ἄτῃ πολυπήμονι, χεῖρας ἀείρας
Ἡέλιον καὶ Ζῆνα κακῶν ἐπιμάρτυρας ἔργων
κέκλετο, δεινὰ δὲ παντὶ παρασχεδὸν ἤπυε λαῶ· 230
εἰ μὴ οἱ κούρην αὐτάγρετον ἦ ἀνὰ γαῖαν
ἦ πλωτῆς εὐρόντες ἔτ' εἰν ἄλδς οἴδματι νῆα
ἄξουσιν καὶ θυμὸν ἐνιπλήσει μενεαίνων

τίσασθαι τάδε πάντα, δαήσονται κεφαλῇσι

πάντα χόλον καὶ πᾶσαν ἐὴν ὑποδέγμενοι ἄτην. 235

Ὡς ἔφατ' Αἰήτης. αὐτῷ δ' ἐνὶ ἡματι Κόλχοι

νῆάς τ' εἰρύσσαντο καὶ ἄρμενα νηυσὶ βάλοντο,

αὐτῷ δ' ἡματι πόντον ἀνήιον· οὐδέ κε φαίης

τόσσον νηίτην στόλον ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ' οἰωνῶν

ἱλαδὸν ἄσπετον ἔθνος ἐπιβρομέειν πελάγεσσιν. 240

“Medea’s love and what she had done was already fully known to proud Aietes and all the Colchians. They gathered under arms in their meeting-place, as numberless as the waves of the sea raised high by a winter wind or the leaves in a dense forest which drop to the ground in the month when the trees are stripped—who could count them? Like this were the vast hordes who thronged the river banks yelling with enthusiasm for the fray. **On his finely wrought chariot Aietes was resplendent with the horses which Helios had given him; they ran like the blasts of the wind. In his left hand he raised up his circling shield, in the other a huge torch, and beside him lay his mighty spear, pointed forward. Apsyrtos held the chariot-reins in his hands.** Already, however, the ship was cutting through the open sea in front of it, driven forward by the strength of the rowers and the current of the great river as it swept down to its mouth. **In his grievous distress the king raised his arms to Helios and Zeus, and called them to witness the wrongs he had suffered. He shouted terrible threats against his whole people: if they did not bring back his daughter there and then, finding her either on land or still in the boat on the swell of the open sea, so that he could sate his anger which demanded revenge for all that had happened, they would take the full weight of his rage and distress on their**

heads and be taught a lesson. So spoke Aietes. On that same day the Colchians drew down their ships, placed the equipment on board, and on that same day they put out to sea. You would have said it was a huge family of birds whirring over the sea in flocks rather than a vast naval expedition”.

The formidable sight of fully armed Aeetes as “conspicuous” (μετέπρεπεν, 220) on the chariot driven by Helios’ divine steeds and with Apsyrtus by his side evokes the star-like descriptions of other heroes in the *Argonautica*.²⁴⁰ Regarding Aeetes’ appearance in this scene, Hunter comments that Aeetes’ ownership of Helios’ divine horses makes him a “Helios on earth”.²⁴¹ The king’s exceptional presence, in addition to his words of threat, makes him look as “monstrous” (πελώριον, 4.224) as his snake-guardian (4.129).²⁴² When he makes his address to the gods, Aeetes is “in the most painful anguish” (ἄτη πολυπήμονι, 4.228). He calls on both Zeus and Helios as witnesses of the wrongs he suffered (Ἡέλιον καὶ Ζῆνα κακῶν ἐπιμάρτυρας ἔργων | κέκλετο, 4.229–30). This is an important passage, for, as I argue in Chapter 2, the Argonauts perform a ritual of atonement according to Greek and Egyptian perspectives. Aeetes promises “terrible things” (4.230) to his people, namely, to unleash “all his wrath” (πάντα χόλον) and “all his ruinous vengeance” (πᾶσαν ἐὴν ἄτην, 4.235) against them, should they not fulfill his order to bring Medea back to Colchis, so that he might quench his limitless anger (θυμὸν ἐνιπλήσει μενεαίνων, 4.233).²⁴³ The impact that Aeetes’ threats made on his people is evident later in the

²⁴⁰ See earlier in this Chapter.

²⁴¹ Hunter (2015), 112. Cf. also Ares’ gift of a breastplate (3.1226–7) and Aeetes compared to Poseidon attending the Isthmian games (3.1240–5).

²⁴² Hunter (2015), 112. Cf. also the parallelism between 4.223–4 and 4.127 (αὐτὰρ ὁ ἀντικρὺ περιμήκεα τείνετο δειρήν).

²⁴³ On the barely comprehensive threats of the king, blinded by rage, see Campbell (1971), 419.

narrative, when, after Apsyrtus' death, the Colchian warriors decide not to return to their homeland "in fear of Aeetes' harsh wrath" (ἀτυζόμενοι χόλον ἄγριον Αἰήταο, 4.512).

The Colchian warriors' fearful flight from Colchis is certainly not unparalleled. In Book 4, Medea's fear of her father causes her to abandon her home country and follow the Argonauts.²⁴⁴ Any chance of being handed back to her father triggers Medea's feelings. For instance, in their meeting with the Colchians at the Brygean Islands, the Colchians claim that Aeetes is not concerned with the fleece (4.341–4); instead, Medea's fate is "the main point of dispute" (τὸ γὰρ πέλεν ἀμφήριστον, 4.345):

Arg. 4.345–9:

αὐτὰρ Μήδειάν <γε>—τὸ γὰρ πέλεν ἀμφήριστον—	345
παρθέσθαι κόρην Λητωίδι νόσφιν ὁμίλου,	
εἰσόκε τις δικάσῃσι θεμιστούχων βασιλῆων	
εἷ τε μιν εἰς πατρὸς χρεῖω δόμον αὖτις ἰκάνειν	
εἷ τε μετ' ἀφνειήν θείου πόλιν Ὀρχομενοῖο	348a
εἷ τε μεθ' Ἑλλάδα γαῖαν ἀριστήεσσιν ἔπεσθαι. ²⁴⁵	

"... but that Medea—**for this was the point of dispute**—should be entrusted to the maiden daughter of Leto and separated from everyone else, **until one of the kings who issue judgements should decide** whether she had to return back to her father's house or follow the heroes to the land of Hellas".

²⁴⁴ Actually, Hera amplifies Medea's emotions by instilling "the most painful fear in her heart": τῇ δ' ἀλεγεινότατον κραδίη φόβον ἔμβαλεν Ἥρη (4.11). See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of Hera's role.

²⁴⁵ Line 4.348a is repeated in 2.1186.

Faced with the possibility of being brought back to Aeetes, Medea has painful physical and emotional reactions: ἔνθα δ' ἐπεὶ τὰ ἕκαστα νόφ πεμπάσσατο κούρη, | δὴ ῥά μιν ὀξεῖαι κραδίην ἐλέλιξαν ἀνῖαι | νωλεμές (4.350–2). Medea's fear of Aeetes' wrath has increased since she departed from Colchis. Simultaneously, Medea seems to have acknowledged her emotions towards her father. When the Argonauts arrive in Drepanē, Medea pleads her case to Queen Arete, explaining that it was out of fear of Aeetes' wrathful punishment that she left her home country (4.1015–8). In her supplication to the Phaeacian queen, she once more asks not to be returned to the Colchians: “I beg you by your knees, queen! Show kindness to me! Do not give me over to the Colchians to be taken back to my father!” (γουνούμαι, βασίλεια· σὺ δ' ἴλαθι, **μηδέ με Κόλχοις | ἐκδώης ᾧ πατρί κομιζέμεν**, εἴ νυ καὶ αὐτή, 4.1014–5). The Phaeacians, too, demonstrate awareness of Aeetes' wrathfulness. During her private conversation with Alcinous, Arete comments that Medea has merely “escaped the heavy wrath of her fearsome father” (ὑπάλυξεν | πατρὸς ὑπερφιάλοιο βαρὺν χόλον, 4.1083). Alcinous' response confirms the queen's impressions but shows his reservations about attracting his ire on them.

Arg. 4.1101–3

οὐδὲ μὲν Αἰήτην ἀθεριζέμεν, ὡς ἀγορεύεις,
 λώιον· **οὐ γάρ τις βασιλεύτερος Αἰήταο**,
 καί κ' ἐθέλων, ἕκαθὲν περ, ἐφ' Ἑλλάδι νεῖκος ἄγοιτο.

“... not is it our advantage to ignore Aietes, as you say. **No king greater than Aietes**, and if he so wanted he could pursue his quarrel in Hellas, far away though he lives”.

Alcinous' mention of Aeetes' regality, which enhances his fearsomeness, leads us back to the king's earlier appearance as the god-like son of Helios. Aeetes' wrath brings him closer to the gods, especially to his divine father, Helios, and to Zeus, and similarly wrathful divinity in the *Argonautica*. In his final mention of Aeetes' anger (4.1205), Alcinous characterizes it as μῆνις, the gods' anger.²⁴⁶

Medea Becomes Isis: The “Eye of Re” in Ptolemaic Egypt

Medea's Wrath Against Talos

Medea's fear of her father progressively turns into rage and, simultaneously, more extraordinary magical powers.²⁴⁷ According to Clauss, the crescendo that Medea's powers reach by the end of the poem is a consequence of the “grim ramifications” of eros.²⁴⁸ Clauss' conclusion is attractive considering the obliterating role of eros as “a great misery” (μέγα πῆμα, 4.445). I would add that the progressive rise of Medea's rage is proportional to her departure from Colchis: the further she moves from Colchis, the more χόλος she seems to experience; the angrier she grows, the more she seeks to act independently from Jason.²⁴⁹ Medea's defeat of Talos, the bronze giant of Crete, corresponds to her heroic *aristeia*.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Cf. 4.1203–5: οὐδέ ἐ τάρβος | οὐλοὸν οὐδὲ βαρεῖται ὑπήλυθον Αἰήταο | μῆνιες. See also Mori (2008), 147 n. 27.

²⁴⁷ On Medea in the *Argonautica*, see Clauss and Johnston (1997), esp. Graf 21–43, on the Medea myth, Krevans 71–82 and Clauss 149–77, on Medea and heroism.

²⁴⁸ Clauss (1997), 176. Similarly, see Clauss (2000), 29 and Fantuzzi (2008), 287–310.

²⁴⁹ See Chapter 2 for a detailed analysis of the development of Medea's rage in Book 4.

²⁵⁰ On this passage, Clauss (1997), 175 comments that “Medea reveals the full extent of her power”. On the Talos episode, see Paduano and Fusillo (1968), 709–13, Livrea (1973), 450–9, Robertson (1977), 158–60, Hopkinson (1988), 194–200, Dickie (1990), 267–96, Buxton (1998), 83–112, Schaaf (2014), 311–28, and Hunter (2015), 298–305. Also, see Hunter (2011), 101–18 for a geopolitical interpretation of this episode, given the political influence of the Ptolemies on the far east of Crete.

νύχθ' ἐτέρην. ὑπέδεκτο δ' ἀπόπροθι παιπαλόεσσα 1635

Κάρπαθος. ἔνθεν δ' οἷ γε περαιώσεσθαι ἔμελλον

Κρήτην, ἥ τ' ἄλλων ὑπερέπλετο εἰν ἀλὶ νήσων.

τοὺς δὲ Τάλως χάλκειος, ἀπὸ στιβαροῦ σκοπέλοιο

ῥηγνύμενος πέτρας, εἶργε χθονὶ πείσματ' ἀνάψαι

Δικταίην ὄρμοιο κατερχομένους ἐπιωγήν. 1640

τὸν μὲν χαλκείης μελιγενέων ἀνθρώπων

ρίζης λοιπὸν ἐόντα μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἡμιθέοισιν

Εὐρώπῃ Κρονίδης νήσου πόρεν ἔμμεναι οὖρον,

τρὶς περὶ χαλκείοις Κρήτην ποσὶ δινεύοντα.

ἀλλ' ἦτοι τὸ μὲν ἄλλο δέμας καὶ γυῖα τέτυκτο 1645

χάλκεος ἡδ' ἄρρηκτος, ὑπαὶ δέ οἱ ἔσκε τένοντος

σύριγξ αἱματόεσσα κατὰ σφυρόν· αὐτὰρ ὁ τήν γε

λεπτὸς ὕμην ζωῆς ἔχε πείρατα καὶ θανάτοιο.

οἱ δέ, δύη μάλα περ δεδμημένοι, αἶψ' ἀπὸ χέρσου

νῆα περιδδείσαντες ἀνακρούεσκον ἑρετμοῖς. 1650

καὶ νύ κ' ἐπισμυγεῶς Κρήτης ἐκάς ἠέρθησαν,

ἀμφότερον δίψῃ τε καὶ ἄλγεσι μοχθίζοντες,

εἰ μὴ σφιν Μήδεια λιαζομένοις ἀγόρευσε·

“κέκλυτέ μεν· μούνη γὰρ ὁίομαι ὕμμι δαμάσσειν

ἄνδρα τὸν ὅς τις ὅδ' ἐστί, καὶ εἰ παγγάλκεον ἴσχει 1655

ὄν δέμας, ὅππότε μή οἱ ἐπ' ἀκάματος πέλοι αἰών.

ἄλλ' ἔχει' αὐτοῦ νῆα θελήμονες ἐκτὸς ἐρωῆς

πετράων, εἴως κεν ἐμοὶ εἴξειε δαμῆναι.”

ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη· καὶ τοὶ μὲν ὑπὲκ βελέων ἐρύσαντο

νῆ' ἐπ' ἐρετμοῖσιν, δεδοκήμενοι ἦν τινα ῥέξει 1660

μῆτιν ἀνωίστως, ἥ δὲ πτύχα πορφυρέοιο

προσχομένη πέπλοιο παρειάων ἐκάτερθεν

βῆσατ' ἐπ' ἰκριόφιν· χειρὸς δέ ἐ χειρὶ μεμαρπῶς

Αἰσονίδης ἐκόμιζε διὰ κληῖδας ἰοῦσαν.

ἔνθα δ' αἰοιδῆσιν μειλίσσετο, μέλπε δὲ Κῆρας 1665

θυμοβόρους, Αἶδαο θοὰς κύνας, αἷ περι πᾶσαν

ἡέρα δινεύουσαι ἐπὶ ζωοῖσιν ἄγονται.

τὰς γουναζομένη τρις μὲν παρακέκλετ' αἰοδαῖς,

τρις δὲ λιταῖς· θεμένη δὲ κακὸν νόον ἐχθοδοποῖσιν

ὄμμασι χαλκείοιο Τάλω ἐμέγηρεν ὀπωπᾶς· 1670

λευγαλέον δ' ἐπὶ οἷ πρῖεν χόλον, ἐκ δ' αἰδηλα

δείκηλα προῖαλλεν, ἐπιζάφελον κοτέουσα.

“Rocky Karpathos appeared next far off, and from there they were to cross over to Crete which rises above all other islands in the sea. **Bronze Talos broke rocks off a great cliff** and prevented them from attaching their cables to the land when they ran into the sheltered harbour of Dikte. Among the generation of demi-gods he was the last survivor of the bronze race of men born from ash-trees, and the son of Kronos gave him to Europa to watch over the island by

travelling three times a day around it on his bronze feet. **His whole body and all his limbs were of unbreakable bronze, but below the ankle-tendon there was a vein which carried blood, and the thin membrane covering it held the key to his life and death.** Though they were worn out and exhausted, the heroes quickly rowed the ship back from the land in fright. They would have been carried far from Crete in their wretchedness, bearing the burden of thirst and pain, **had not Medea spoken to them as they shrank back from the island: “Listen to me. I believe that alone I can destroy this man for you—whoever he is—even if his whole body is made of bronze, provided that his life is destined to reach an end. Use gentle oar-strokes to hold the ship here out of range of the rocks, until he yields to destruction at my hands.”** So she spoke. They removed the ship from the danger of the missiles and held it with the oars while waiting to see what unexpected plan she would carry out. **She held up a fold of her purple robe over her two cheeks and moved towards the stern-deck;** the son of Aison took her hand and guided her passage between the benches. **Then in her incantation she sought to win over the magic help of the Keres, devourers of the spirit, swift dogs of Hades which prowl through all the sky and are set upon mortal men. Three times did she beseech and call upon them with incantations, and three times with prayers. Her mind set upon evil, she cast a spell upon bronze Talos’ eyes with her malevolent glances; against him her teeth ground out bitter fury, and she sent out dark phantoms in the vehemence of her wrath”.**

The scene immediately presents a sharp contrast between Talos’ unbreakable body made of bronze (χάλκεος ἢ δ’ ἄρρηκτος, 4.1646) and the conditions of the Argonauts, worn out by their

toils and thirsty (ἀμφοτέρων δίψη τε καὶ ἄλγεσι μοχθίζοντες, 4.1652).²⁵¹ Medea does not attack Talos' unbreakable body but bewitches his mind by casting the evil eye against him and sending out dark visions fueled by her vehement anger (χόλον... ἐπιζάφελον κοτέουσα, 4.1671–2). In preparation for her ritual, Medea covers her eyes, the primary source of her power in this scene, to protect the rest of the crew.²⁵² Medea summons the Kēres, the spirits of the dead associated with Hades.²⁵³ Her prayer and incantation are marked by the number three, a magical number in Greek lore.²⁵⁴ Medea assumes an evil mind (θεμένη δὲ κακὸν νόον, 4.1669) and applies the principle of sympathetic magic, whereby her eyes cast a spell on Talos' eyes (ἐχθοδοποῖσιν | ὄμμασι χαλκείοιο Τάλω ἐμέγηρεν ὀπωπάς, 4.1169–70).²⁵⁵ The verb *μεγαίρω* means “to bear a grudge” and, in this context, can be considered as being a synonym of *βασκαίνω*, “to bewitch”.²⁵⁶ At this point, Medea turns all her physical and emotional exertion against Talos

²⁵¹ Livrea (1973), 453 comments on the tradition, recorded by Apollodorus 1.9.26, according to which Hephaestus was the maker of Talos. This tradition probably dates back to Simonides fr. 63 Page. Parallelisms for ἄρρηκτος include Pind. *I.* 6.47, Theocr. 22.16 and 25.264, and *Arg.* 1.63 (of Caeneus).

²⁵² Hunter (2015), 301–2, who also comments that Medea's eyes are not always dangerous (cf. 4.1669). The Homeric model for this line could be Aphrodite protecting Aeneas in *Il.* 5.315–6.

²⁵³ Hunter (2015), 302. The Kēres are mentioned also at 1.690, and 4.1485. Regarding the invocation of the Keres, Paduano and Fusillo (1968), 711 comment that Medea acts according to a standard magical practice called “metodo indiretto” whereby the magician summons intermediary spirits as catalyzers of magical powers. Paduano and Fusillo also maintain that Medea's technique in this episode is mixed, for she also applies the “metodo diretto”, by acting herself as a source of enchantment.

²⁵⁴ Hunter (2015), 303.

²⁵⁵ On Medea's sympathetic magic, see Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 711. On Medea's ability to control her eyes as a reference to Democritus 68 A77 D-K, see Hunter (2015), 303.

²⁵⁶ Hunter (2015), 303 identifies this as a unique use of *μεγαίρω* for *βασκαίνω*. In its intransitive form, *μεγαίρω* is commonly used for *φθονέω*, “to be envious”. The connection between envy as an emotion and the island of Crete is suggestive of the mythological Telchines, an ancient race of men credited with metalworks and the invention of craft. The Telchines were also identified as sorcerers able to cast the evil eye (Strabo 14.654). See Griffiths (2016). In Callimachus' *Aetia* fr. 1.7–8 Pf., the Telchines are “a tribe who knows how to waste away their own (or your) liver” and, in 1.17, they are described as “spiteful sorcerers”. Callimachus describes the destruction of the Telchines in fr. 75.65–9 Pf.; cf. also Pind. *P.* 4 and Bacchyl. 1. For the interpretation of the Telchines as Callimachus' critics in *Aetia* 1, see Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2002), 238–55.

(λευγαλέον δ' ἐπὶ οἷ πρῆεν χόλον, lit. “she gnashed terrible anger against him”) in the form of terrible phantasms (αἰδηλα... δείκηλα), “furiously bearing a grudge” (ἐπιζάφελον κοτέουσα). The adjective ἐπιζάφελος, here used adverbially, is typically found modifying χόλος in Homer (cf. *Il.* 9.525). Due to Medea’s incantation, Talos loses his balance and scratches his exposed blood-carrying vein (σύριγξ αἱματόεσσα, 4.1647), the only vulnerable part of his body: “he knocked his ankle on the sharp point of a rock, and from it flowed ichor like melting lead” (πετραίῳ στόνυχι χρίμψε σφυρόν· ἐκ δέ οἱ ἰχώρ | τηκομένῳ ἵκελος μολίβῳ ῥέεν, 4.1679–80).²⁵⁷ Finally, Apollonius compares Talos’ death with the fall of a mighty pine tree (4.1680–8).²⁵⁸

In the Talos episode, the emphasis is clearly on Medea’s wrath, which fuels her magic and allows her to kill the bronze giant. Medea’s wrath is an emotion that transforms her psyche: to produce such magic, Medea has to change her mind and make it evil (θεμένη δὲ κακὸν νόον, 4.1669).²⁵⁹

Medea’s Wrath and Egyptian Wrathful Goddesses

As discussed above, the protagonist of the Egyptian myth of the “Distant” or “Wandering Goddess” is the wrathful daughter of the Sun-god, who travels away from Egypt in her rage and needs to be brought back to her father. This myth, I argue, shows many narrative similarities

²⁵⁷ Notably, Talos’ σύριγξ recalls the shrill pipe (σύριγγι λιγείη, 1.577) with which the shepherd guides the sheep in the simile with Orpheus playing the lyre in 1.569–79. Ironically, while in Book 1, Orpheus can bewitch the surrounding natural environment with his lyre, Medea performs this role in the Talos episode. As has been argued, Orpheus’ ability to bewitch with the sound of his music is considerably diminished, if not entirely lacking, outside of Apollo’s religious sphere.

²⁵⁸ Cf. the comparison between the Gegenees and trunks lined up on the shore after being slaughtered by the Argonauts in Book 1.1003–11.

²⁵⁹ I disagree with Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 709, who consider the changes on Medea’s mind as a consequence of her magic instead of her wrath: “Medea afferma le sue energie interiori, chiamate a raccolta nell’atto di velarsi [...] l’atto di “crearsi un cuore malvagio” mette in luce l’alterazione prodotta dalla magia sull’io, fino a disgregare l’unità personale (si pensi ai frequenti paralleli fra la magia e le patologie mentali)”.

with the story of Medea in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Furthermore, the symbolism connected with the myth in Ptolemaic sources, including, mainly, the imagery of the eye of Helios associated with the daughter of the pharaoh, who is himself a son of Helios in the Egyptian imaginary, the heliacal rising of Sirius, and the Ptolemaic temple of Isis, provides further insight into the parallelism with Apollonius' Medea. In the following analysis, I discuss the parallelism between the Egyptian myth of the "Eye of Re" and Apollonius' portrayal of Media in the *Argonautica*.

To begin from an elementary correspondence, Medea's golden eyes are a conspicuous physical feature and a hallmark of her descent from the Sun-god. The most precise description of Medea's eyes occurs during her meeting with Circe in Book 4.

Arg. 4.727–9

πᾶσα γὰρ Ἡελίου γενεῇ ἀρίδηλος ιδέσθαι
ἦεν, ἐπεὶ βλεφάρων ἀποτηλόθι μαρμαρυγῆσιν
οἷόν τε χρυσέην ἀντώπιον ἔσαν αἴγλην.

"The whole race of Helios was easy to identify upon sight, because their eyes threw out into the far distance sparkling rays which glittered like gold".

Medea's eyes are a remarkable feature of her divine ancestor and become the means through which Medea kills Talos. The aggressive nature of the eye of Re in Egyptian mythology recalls this aspect. Furthermore, Medea's progressive distancing from Colchis coincides with the rise of her wrath, which eventually becomes a weapon against her enemies. This pattern follows

the basic framework of the Egyptian myth, although it should be noted that the range of emotions that Medea experiences is remarkably wider. Similarly, Aeetes sends out an army to bring Medea back, which Medea's brother Apsyrtus leads. This narrative trajectory also resonates with the Ptolemaic version of the Egyptian myth, where Tefnut's brother Shu is sent forth to bring his sister back to Egypt. However, in contrast with the Egyptian myth, the Greek heroine does not return home, nor does she ever have a proper reunion with her father. It would seem that she reconnects with her true self only by the end of the story, in Euripides, when she tragically destroys all ties with her Greek family and triumphantly leaves the stage on Helios' flying chariot.

The motif of the heliacal rising of Sirius is another element resonating with the *Argonautica*, especially regarding the significance attributed to Sirius (the Dog Star) in the poem. Apollonius makes two references to Sirius in the *aition* of the Etesian winds (2.498–527) and as a term of comparison for Jason's appearance (3.956–61).²⁶⁰ The myth of the genesis of the Etesian winds involves Cyrene, a virgin Apollo captured in Thessaly and brought to Libya. There, Cyrene begets Apollo's son Aristaeus and is turned into "a long-lived nymph and a huntress" (θεὸς ποιήσατο νόμφην | αὐτοῦ μακραίωνα καὶ ἀγρότιν, 2.509). The Muses teach Cyrene's son "the arts of healing and prophecy" (ἀκεστορίην τε θεοπροπίας τ' ἐδίδαξαν, 2.512) and, as an adult, Aristaeus becomes a shepherd in Phthia. The Dog Star comes into the picture when the inhabitants of the Minoan Islands summon Aristaeus under Apollo's advice to "ward off the plague" that Sirius' scorching heat has brought to them: ἦμος δ' οὐρανόθεν Μινωίδας ἔφλεγε νήσους | Σεῖριος [...] τῆμος τόν γ' ἐκάλεσσαν ἐφημοσύνης Ἑκάτοιο | λοιμοῦ ἀλεξητῆρα

²⁶⁰ For an analysis of the intertextual relationship between the Sirius-Jason and Sirius-Achilles similes in *Il.* 22.25–32, see Coughlan (2019), 871–9.

(2.516–9). Aristaeus successfully relieves the Minoans by building an altar to “Zeus of Rain” (βωμὸν ποίησε μέγαν Διὸς Ἰκμαίοιο, 2.522) and performing sacrifices for Sirius and Zeus himself (ἱερά τ’ εὖ ἔρρεξεν ἐν οὖρεσιν ἀστέρι κείνῳ | Σερίῳ αὐτῷ τε Κρονίδῃ Δί, 2.523–4). At this juncture, Apollonius introduces another *aition* concerning the sacrifices that the priests in Ceos still perform before the Dog Star rises: Κέφ δ’ ἔτι νῦν ἱερῆες | ἀντολέων προπάροιθε Κυνὸς ῥέζουσι θυηλάς (2.526–7). This passage seems to represent a cautionary tale for the second scene in which Sirius occurs in the *Argonautica*:

Arg. 3.956–61

αὐτὰρ ὃ γ’ οὐ μετὰ δηρὸν ἐελδομένη ἐφάνθη,

ὕψος’ ἀναθρόσκων ἅ τε Σείριος Ὠκεανοῖο,

ὃς δ’ ἦτοι καλὸς μὲν ἀρίζηλός τ’ ἐσιδέσθαι

ἀντέλλει, μήλοισι δ’ ἐν ἄσπετον ἦκεν οἰζύν·

ὥς ἄρα τῇ καλὸς μὲν ἐπήλυθεν εἰσοράσθαι

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Αἰσονίδης, κάματον δὲ δυσίμερον ὥρσε φανθεῖς.

“Soon, however, he appeared to her as she desired, like Sirius leaping high from Ocean; **it rises brilliant and clear to behold, but to flocks it brings terrible misery**. Just so did the son of Aison approach her, **brilliant to behold, but his appearance roused the sickening weariness of desire**”.

Jason’s epiphanic approach towards the Temple of Hecate is as fascinating as it is doomed, as his appearance causes Medea troublesome torments (κάματον δὲ δυσίμερον ὥρσε

φανθείς, 3.961). Notably, Jason’s star-like beauty in this episode is the result of Hera’s machinations (ἐνθ’ οὗ πώ τις τοῖος ἐπὶ προτέρων γένετ’ ἀνδρῶν... οἷον Ἰήσωνα θῆκε Διὸς δάμαρ ἥματι κείνῳ, 3.919–23). Medea fails to avert Jason-Sirius’s charm as Aristaeus does in the Etesian winds *aition*, and the meeting with Jason has grave consequences on her life. I suggest that the symbolism associated with Sirius in Greek and Egyptian lore, respectively, has an equal impact on the characterization of Medea. In Greek culture, Sirius is typically conceived as a bringer of hardships. Already in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod mentions the relief that Zeus’ autumnal rains bring to men oppressed by excessive heat, “for then, indeed, by day the star Sirius passes more lightly above the head of men born to misery” (δὴ γὰρ τότε **Σείριος ἀστήρ** | βαιὸν ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς κηριτρεφέων ἀνθρώπων | ἔρχεται ἡμάτιος..., 417–9). Homer does not directly mention the effects of Sirius, except for the famous assimilation between the Dog Star’s appearance in the sky and Achilles’ striking brightness on the battlefield (*Il.* 22.26–9). Apollonius appears to conform with this interpretation as he describes Sirius’ rising as a sign of upcoming misery for the flocks (μήλοισι δ’ ἐν ἄσπετον ἦκεν οἰζύν, 3.959).²⁶¹ Without properly recognizing Jason-Sirius as a threat, Medea welcomes the doom and destruction that the Dog Star conveys. Her action simultaneously fulfills Hera’s masterplan: “So was Hera planning, that Medea of Aia should abandon her native land and reach holy Iolkos to bring disaster upon Hellas” (ὥς γὰρ τόδε μήδετο Ἥρη, | ὄφρα **κακὸν Πελὶή** ἱερὴν ἐς Ἰωλκὸν ἵκηται | **Αἰαίη Μήδεια** λιποῦσ’ ἄ<πο> πατρίδα γαῖαν, 3.1134–6). Accordingly, just like Jason-Sirius brings evils to Medea, so does Medea inflict equal pain by leaving Colchis.

²⁶¹ Considering also the bigger picture, Apollonius’ statement at 3.959 could suitably allude to Jason’s attempt at Aetes’ golden fleece (μῆλα). On the significance of this term, see Chapter 2.

Nevertheless, in Egyptian culture, particularly in the Ptolemaic period, as the Canopus decree shows (*OGIS* 56.36), the Dog Star is characterized as the “star of Isis”. Isis’ assimilation with Sothis, the Egyptian name for Sirius, occurs in pre-Ptolemaic times—along with the goddess’ syncretism with other divine figures such as Astarte, Bastet, Nut, Renenutet, and, most importantly, Hathor.²⁶² In the Ptolemaic period, Isis received significant attention from the newly established Greek rulers.²⁶³ Arsinoe II adopted the combined iconography of Isis and Hathor, an Egyptian goddess of love, fertility, and music, as well as one of the Sun-god’s daughters, to be identified with the eye of Re in the “Myth of the Heavenly Cow”.²⁶⁴ In this regard, the motifs of fertility, agricultural regeneration, and seasonal cycles connected with the rising of Sirius, the star of Isis, and the Ptolemaic New Year festival recall Medea’s association with Persephone, as well as the fundamental themes of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.²⁶⁵ Concerning Persephone’s role in the afterlife, it is also worth pointing out that Isis has significant importance in connection with Egyptian funerary practices, for she “was the goddess of physical restoration.”²⁶⁶ The arrival of Sirius-Jason in Medea’s life marks her transition into the sphere of fertility and

²⁶² Lesko (1999), 156, 180, and Wilkinson (2003), 146.

²⁶³ Lesko (1999), 188. The Ptolemies dedicated a new temple to Isis and Serapis in Alexandria, and, as the city patroness and protectress of sailors, Isis was granted the epithets “Pelagia” and “of Pharos”. In addition to Alexandria, Isis was worshiped in numerous cities across Egypt, including Dendera, Edfu, and Philae. Philae became an important cultic site of Isis; as has been discussed, the myth of the “Wandering Goddess” had particular relevance. The hymns to Isis inscribed on the walls of her temple at Philae are among the few surviving hymns for the goddess. In this regard, see Hart’s (2005) entry on “Isis”. According to Žabkar (1988), 159–60, the priest who composed these hymns was probably Egyptian; this demonstrates that the cult of Isis was still crucial for the native Egyptian population, even under foreign domination. On “Isis Pelagia”, see Bricault (2020).

²⁶⁴ Lesko (1999), 188 and Minas-Nerpel (2022), 61. Minas-Nerpel (2022), 61 discusses Arsinoe II’s identification with Isis. See also Minas-Nerpel (2019), 141–83 on the cults of Arsinoe II and Berenice II.

²⁶⁵ Actually, Isis is already associated with Demeter in classical Greek literature. See, for instance, Hdt. 2.156: Αἰγυπτιστὶ δὲ Ἀπόλλων μὲν Ὠρεός, Δημήτηρ δὲ Ἴσις, Ἄρτεμις δὲ Βούβαστις. In the early Ptolemaic period, the Greek goddess becomes “a translation and extension of Isis”. See Thompson (1998), 705.

²⁶⁶ Assmann (2001c), 35.

reproduction, that is, her marriage with Jason and future motherhood, which the Egyptian New Year epitomizes.

Moreover, I suggest that the passage of Sirius in Medea's life has consequences on her magic throughout the rest of the narrative. As has been discussed, Medea's powers have significantly developed since her first meeting with Jason-Sirius. The assimilation between Sirius and Isis, a prominent magic divinity, elucidates this narrative trajectory. Isis is endowed with exceptional speaking skills, which make her an expert in spells.²⁶⁷ She is an important goddess in the daily life of worshipers, who typically invoke her support for protection and healing.²⁶⁸ However, in Egyptian mythology, Isis also applies her magic for coercive purposes, even against the Sun-god Re.²⁶⁹ Later evidence integrates the symbolism of Isis with Hecate. For instance, a spell from the Greco-Egyptian *Magical Papyri* addresses Hecate in her trimorphic form, with one side of her head representing a cow, an animal associated with Isis in Greco-Roman antiquity.²⁷⁰ Isis' abilities as a magician and orator make the goddess an expert in spells more than *pharmaka*, a component of magical expertise to which Medea fully transitions in her final toils by the end of the poem. The arrival of Sirius-Isis opens a new chapter of magical growth for Medea.

²⁶⁷ On Isis' eloquence, see Bommas (2022), 42–58.

²⁶⁸ Lesko (1999), 170 and Wilkinson (2003), 146–7.

²⁶⁹ Famously, in one of the myths, Isis discovers Re's true name, which gives her the power to control the god. See Wilkinson (2003), 147.

²⁷⁰ *PGM* IV.2118–22: “Hekate with three heads and six hands, holding / torches in her hands, on the right sides of her face having the head of a cow; and on the left sides the head of a dog; and in the middle the head of a maiden with sandals bound on her feet”. Translation by Betz (1986).

Hecate or Heka? Medea's Magic From Another Perspective

In Egyptian mythology, the Sun-god Ra is closely associated with magic. Magic, which the Egyptians named *heka*—*hik* in Coptic—is a force created at the beginning of times by which the world itself was created.²⁷¹ This principle is personified by the god Heka.²⁷² *Heka* correlates with the concepts of power and strength, especially royal iconography.²⁷³ The status of Heka in the Egyptian pantheon is elevated, also on account of the god's role as an attendant of the Sun-god on the solar barque.²⁷⁴ *Heka* is applied for offensive and defensive purposes: even though most Egyptian magical practices are prophylactic, numerous spells aim at damaging the enemy.²⁷⁵ The Sun-god partakes both in defensive and offensive magic.²⁷⁶ For example, apotropaic hymns to Ra aim to enhance his magical powers against his enemies, such as the giant snake Apophis he meets every night during his journey in the Underworld.²⁷⁷ Representations of the Sun-god often appear on prophylactic tokens and tools, including prophylactic wands and amulets for the afterlife.²⁷⁸

²⁷¹ For a definition of *heka*, see Ritner (1993), 14–28. Also, Assmann (1997), 3: “Magic in the sense of *heka* means an all-pervading coercive power—comparable to the laws of nature in its coerciveness and all-pervadingness—by which in the beginning the world was made, by which it is daily maintained and by which mankind is ruled”. Stephens (2003), 214 discusses the function of *heka* in ancient Egyptian religion and the relationship between *heka* and other goddesses associated with magic, such as Isis, Hathor, and Sekmet. She also elucidates the role of *heka* in the Sun-god's journey in the underworld. For the “decline” from *heka* to *hik*, see Ritner (1993), 235–50.

²⁷² Ritner (1993), 15.

²⁷³ Ritner (1993), 15.

²⁷⁴ Ritner (1993), 18.

²⁷⁵ Ritner (1993), 20–1.

²⁷⁶ Ritner (1993), 23–4 discusses Ra's association with *heka*/Heka, especially in “The Book of the Heavenly Cow”. In Papyrus BM 10188 (col. 27/5–6), Ra affirms, “Magic is my *ka*”. Ritner (1993), 24 further comments that, in several Graeco-Roman temples, Heka is represented as one of the fourteen *kas* of Ra.

²⁷⁷ Assmann (1997), 35–6. In one version of the myth from the Amduat, Re, Isis, and Seth paralyze Apophis by bewitching and robbing him of his strength. The snake is not killed, and there is no proper conflict. This is similar to Medea's overcoming of the giant snake guarding the golden fleece through enchantment and magic drugs (4.145–61).

²⁷⁸ Goelet (1994), 146, and Pinch (1994), 40 and 104–19.

The practice of magic in the Egyptian world is normalized—even among gods and pharaohs—and is not distinguishable from religion.²⁷⁹ The Egyptian Sun-god is among the major agents and recipients of ritual magic in both spheres of myth and cult. In the *Argonautica*, the Colchian realm clearly allows the practice of magic since several royal family members actively perform magic rituals. Medea is Hecate’s priestess, “the one with many drugs” (πολυφάρμακος, 3.27), while, in Aiaia, Circe has her poisonous philters (4.666–7) and shapeless beasts (4.672–81). Throughout the narrative, Medea’s magic progressively develops from prophylactic to harmful. It would seem, indeed, that the more she takes distance from Colchis, a region where magic is institutionalized, the more her magic grows powerful and destructive. In contrast, the magic powers that Medea experiences beyond the Colchian orbit, by either traveling abroad or becoming the victim of such powers, such as Jason’s “charms”, are highly damaging to her and often linked with devastating emotions, especially excessive wrath.²⁸⁰ From another angle, Medea’s outburst of anger in the Talos episode sets her mind on evil (4.1669), and, in this heightened, wrathful status, her mind can annihilate the bronze giant.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have argued that Apollonius’ Argonautic world is subdivided into two major religious and cultural domains, Greece and Colchis. The main characters in each space,

²⁷⁹ Ritner (1993), 20 very clearly states: “There can be no question of the legitimacy of magic in pharaonic Egypt”.

²⁸⁰ The physical and emotional damage caused by eros/Eros on Medea is well detailed through Books 3 and 4. The most significant episodes include Medea’s dream visions (3.616–35), Medea’s fear of her feelings for Jason (3.636–44), Medea’s shame and hesitation at consulting her sister (3.645–72), Medea’s sleepless night and the physical symptoms of eros (3.751–816). On Medea’s “interconnecting emotions”, see also Sanders (2021), 45–60.

namely, the Argonauts in Greece and the Colchian royal family, are associated, by analogy or by kinship, with the principal divinities of their region, Apollo and Helios, respectively. I have demonstrated how the Argonauts and the Colchian descendants of Helios play the role of divine representatives by displaying physical, iconographical, or emotional traits that resemble those of their divine counterparts. In discussing the Colchian religious sphere, I have assumed the correspondence between Colchis and Egypt in ancient sources and assimilated the Colchian Sun-god with the Egyptian solar divinity Ra. In particular, I have addressed the resemblance between aspects of the characters of Aeetes and Medea in Apollonius and the characterization of Ra and his daughters in Egyptian literary and material sources. Finally, I have considered Apollonius' depiction of spaces between Greece and Colchis and argued that they represent liminal zones of cultural otherness from a Greek and Colcho-Egyptian perspective. These liminal zones function as transitional areas between the religious domains of Apollo and Helios.

CHAPTER 2: OLYMPIAN AND LOCAL GODS

THE MULTICULTURAL RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF THE *ARGONAUTICA*

This chapter discusses the role of the gods in the *Argonautica* as agents and inhabitants of Apollonius' multicultural world. It focuses, in particular, on the role that divine characters play in the Argonauts' exploration of the multicultural space. This chapter aims to answer the following questions: What principles regulate the distribution of gods and supernatural agents throughout the narrative and across the Argonautic world? How do Olympian and local divinities intervene in Greek and non-Greek spaces? How do the gods facilitate (or prevent) the heroes' interactions with the multicultural space? What are the motivations for divine interventions in the narrative—i.e., fulfillment of a greater scheme, affiliation with other gods, or spontaneous involvement? To answer these questions, I will discuss the cultural significance of the gods in relation to place and space, their relationships with the human characters, and their inclinations to assist (or oppose) the human characters. As I discuss the gods in the *Argonautica*, I propose to adopt the labels “Olympian” and “local” gods, whereby the former refers to Olympian divinities following the Argonauts' progress and moving across space to interact with them, while “local” identifies the autochthonous divinities whom the Argonauts encounter along the way. Marine divinities tend to fall somewhat outside these categories as they meet the heroes at sea; hence, they inhabit their natural environment. However, as the individual cases of Glaucus, Thetis, and the Nereids show, these divinities belong to the Greek divine sphere because they comply with other Greek divinities. With regard to the local gods, it would be incorrect to disregard their presence or importance in Greek culture—hence, the decision to avoid the terminology “non-

Greek”. Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasize that these divinities are significant in relation to the place they inhabit or where their main site of worship stands. The interactions between the Argonauts and the local gods tend to follow two main dynamics. In the first case, the Argonauts strengthen their relationship with major local divinities through correct ritual performance according to local religious customs. This pattern structures the interactions between the heroes and Rhea in Cyzicus and between Jason and Hecate in Colchis. The second type of divine-human relations comprises unexpected encounters with local gods. Relationships with these divinities are not based on preexisting genealogical and ritual ties; most are established on the spot through the heroes’ improvisation of religious rituals or the divinity’s own initiative. The majority of these encounters occur in Libya, where the heroes are stranded in Book 4.

THE OLYMPIAN GODS IN THE *ARGONAUTICA*

The Departure of the Argo: A Programmatic Statement

The departure of the Argo under the gods’ watch is a *topos* of Greco-Roman literature.²⁸¹

Arg. 1.547–58

πάντες δ’ οὐρανόθεν λεῦσσον θεοὶ ἥματι κείνῳ

νῆα καὶ ἡμιθέων ἀνδρῶν μένος, οἳ τότε ἄριστοι

πόντον ἐπιπλώεσκον. ἐπ’ ἀκροτάτῃσι δὲ νύμφαι

Πηλιάδες κορυφῇσιν ἐθάμβεον εἰσορόωσαι

550

²⁸¹ Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 155. Cf. also the opening of Catullus 64. Clauss (1993), 88 comments that Apollonius structures the scene of the Argo’s departure from Pagasae “in ring format”, and that this “sets in relief a portrait of divine and semidivine observers watching as the Argo sails out of the gulf”.

ἔργον Ἀθηναίης Ἴτωνίδος ἡδὲ καὶ αὐτοὺς
 ἥρωας χεῖρεσσιν ἐπικραδῶντας ἐρετμά.
 Αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἐξ ὑπάτου ὄρεος κίεν ἄγχι θαλάσσης
 Χείρων Φιλλυρίδης, πολὺ δ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἀγῆ
 τέγγε πόδας, καὶ πολλὰ βαρεῖη χειρὶ κελεύων 555
 νόστον ἐπευφήμησεν ἀκηδέα νισσομένοισιν·
 σὺν καὶ οἱ παράκοιτις ἐπωλένιον φορέουσα
 Πηλεΐδην Ἀχιλῆα, φίλῳ δειδίσκετο πατρί.

“On that day **all the gods looked from heaven** upon the ship and the generation of demi-gods who sailed the sea, best of all men. **On the highest peaks the nymphs of Pelion** gazed in wonder at the handiwork of Itonian Athena and at the heroes themselves whose arms plied the oars mightily. From the top of the mountains Cheiron son of Phillyra came down to the sea and dipped his feet where the waves broke white; with his great hand he bade them farewell and wished them a safe return from their journey. With him came his wife, and in her arms Achilles, son of Peleus, to be held up to his dear father”.

Scholars have noted how Apollonius, in the first ever appearance of the gods in his epic, seems to emphasize distance between humans and divinities, who, in this episode, are relegated to the role of spectators of the demi-gods’ departure and Athena’s works.²⁸² In particular, Feeney remarks that Apollonius considerably delays any clarifications on how he will represent the gods

²⁸² For instance, Feeney (1991), 70: “Here, still, the gods are not doing very much, but are the ultimate divine audience”. The *scholion* on 1.547–8 comments that the gods clearly watch the departure because the heroes are “demi-gods” (ἡμιθέων ἀνδρῶν) and, hence, their descendants.

in the *Argonautica*.²⁸³ On the contrary, I believe that Apollonius provides a programmatic statement clarifying the human-divine structure of the Argonautic world. The poet organizes this scene on three levels: all the gods (πάντες θεοί, 547), the demi-gods (ἡμιθέων ἀνδρῶν, 548), and the nymphs (νύμφαι Πηλιάδες, 549–50). Moreover, he specifies their location as viewers and actors in the scene, namely, the gods observe from heaven (οὐρανόθεν, 547), the nymphs are on the highest peaks (ἐπ’ ἀκροτάτησι κορυφῇσιν, 549–50), and the heroes move over the sea (πόντον ἐπιπλώεσκον, 549). Notably, the poet attributes the nymphs the epithet “Pelian” (Πηλιάδες, 550), which also provides a topographical characterization: “the nymphs of Mount Pelion”.²⁸⁴ The poet’s spatial outline suggests a conceptual outline elucidating the structure of the Argonautic world in spatial and theological terms. First, there is the totality of gods who are located in the sky and “watch” (λεῖσσον) the scene. Second, the poet presents epichoric divinities who dwell on earth and are distinguished by the topographic marker Πηλιάδες. The nymphs’ emotional participation is stronger than that of the heavenly gods as they “look with astonishment at the work of Itonian Athena” (ἐθάμβεον εἰσορόωσαι ἔργον Ἀθηναίης Ἰτωνίδος, 550–1).²⁸⁵ The heroes and the Argo are at sea (πόντον), which is an unspecified place, just as the heaven (οὐρανόθεν) is.²⁸⁶ The sea is, in fact, a non-place, a space which the Argonauts can traverse to reach other places but cannot modify.²⁸⁷ This conceptualization of the sea builds on traditional descriptions of the sea from archaic Greek epic, particularly, the characterization of

²⁸³ Feeney (1991), 69.

²⁸⁴ See also Hunter’s (1993a) translation.

²⁸⁵ On the epithet of Athena “Itonian”, see Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 155.

²⁸⁶ Arguably, ancient peoples found in the sky indispensable means of orientation like the sun, stars, and constellations. Nevertheless, the boundless space of the sky is an extent that men of old and modern times can only traverse and not inhabit or modify.

²⁸⁷ Thalmann (2011), 62–3 discusses the contraposition between land and sea in the *Argonautica* arguing that the edge of the land is “a spatial feature that serves as a boundary” where the heroes stop and then move forward.

the Homeric πόντος as “spacious” (εὐρύς) or “boundless” (ἄπειρος) and in constant movement.²⁸⁸ On this note, in her book titled *The Sea in the Greek Imagination*, Marie-Claire Beaulieu argues that: “The sea offers no fixed points of reference, since it does not retain its shape but moves constantly”.²⁸⁹ Moreover, the sea lacks a definite color and retains an ambiguous shape, orientation, and materiality.²⁹⁰ Hence, in the Apollonian passage, the placement of the heroes “at sea” emphasizes their movement across this space, especially inasmuch as the sea is not inhabited by humans. In contrast, the divine characters, gods and nymphs, are linked to the places they inhabit, the sky and the mountain peaks, respectively. Only in the latter case, however, does Apollonius provide a specific geographical reference to situate the nymphs’ abode. This differentiation between gods dwelling in heaven and gods dwelling in specific places on earth is programmatic for the representation of divinities in the epic. I submit that the Apollonian gods are organized in two groups in relation to the multicultural space of the poem: first, gods who dwell in the sky and intervene in the narrative by traveling to the spot and, second, gods and divine agents who are connected to specific locations and interact with the heroes as they reach their place of abode. Furthermore, a significant distinction between the divine characters belonging to each group is that the gods residing in the sky and intervening in the narrative are Greek, while among the local divinities connected to specific places on land,

²⁸⁸ Homer refers to the movements of the sea with various expressions, such as: ὥς τε μέγα κῦμα θαλάσσης εὐρυπόροιο (“like a great wave of the broad- wayed sea”, *Il.* 15.381) πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ (“on the stormy sea”, *Od.* 4.354), κατὰ πόντον ἀπείρονα κυμαίνοντα (“on the boundless and swelling sea”, *Od.* 4.510).

²⁸⁹ Beaulieu (2015), 24.

²⁹⁰ Beaulieu (2015), 24. Beaulieu also discusses the ambiguity of the sea as home of unpredictable dangers. See for instance: μεγακήτεα πόντον (“the sea teeming with monsters”, *Od.* 3.158), δεινούς κόλπους ἀλὸς ἀτρύγετοιο (“the terrible bosom of the barren sea”, *Od.* 5.52), μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης δεινόν τ’ ἀργαλέον (“the great depth of the sea, terrible and difficult”, *Od.* 5.174), and πόντον ἀμείλιχον (“the implacable sea”, *Hom. Hymn. Diosc.* 8). Further ambiguity is in the parallel characterizations of the sea as “full of fish”, hence “nourishing” (ἰχθυόεις) and “barren” (ἀτρύγετος).

there are also non-Greek characters. Most of the latter ones enter the narrative in Book 4, especially when the Argonauts are stuck in Libya. While Apollonius' depiction of the heavenly Greek gods draws from the Homeric poems, albeit with obvious aesthetic variations due to the innovative taste of the Hellenistic poet, his representation of non-Greek epichoric divinities recalls other sources, particularly Herodotus' accounts of the same (or analogous) figures in the *Historiē*. Moreover, the Greek gods appear to move across the space of the poem with restrictions. This section will focus on the Greek gods' role in the multicultural world of the *Argonautica*.

Olympian Gods on Lemnos: *Philia* and Eros with Greek-like "Foreign Women"

The absence of internal conflicts between Olympians is one of Apollonius' prominent innovations in the representation of the epic gods. In particular, the Olympian gods who witness the departure of the Argo, as well as those divinities who later intervene in the narrative, appear to fully endorse the Argonautic expedition.²⁹¹ In this regard, the Olympians' non-conflictual relations generally mirror the heroes' relationship dynamics. Despite a few failed attempts, in fact, the Argonauts' cooperative approach, characterized by *philia*, contributes to their success in the expedition.²⁹² Nevertheless, relationships between the Greek heroes and non-Greek peoples they engage with could often turn out to be hostile or unproductive without divine intervention.

²⁹¹ On this point see Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 155.

²⁹² Examples of tensions among the Argonauts include Idas' and Idmon's quarrel (1.450–94), Heracles' scolding of his companions for indulging themselves with the Lemnian women (1.865–75), the heroes' quarrel after having left Heracles behind in Mysia (1.1273–1309), and, finally, Idas' protest in Colchis that they should rely on Ares and not Aphrodite to capture the fleece (3.556–65). It is notable that concord among the Argonauts grows through the journey. This suggests that the heroes' interaction with the 'unknown' fosters *philia* in the group.

The Argonauts' visit to the Lemnian women represents a clear example of divine intervention aiming to positively influence an encounter between culturally different peoples.²⁹³ The women of Lemnos are, in fact, remarkably identified as non-Greek.²⁹⁴ At 1.608, Apollonius characterized Lemnos as a Sintian land, following a tradition already known in the *Odyssey*. In *Od.* 293–4, Aphrodite invites Ares to her bed, stating that: "... Hephaestus is no longer at home, but is already gone, to Lemnos, I believe, to see the savage-speaking (ἀγριοφώνους) Sintians". The epithet ἀγριοφώνος, a Homeric *hapax legomenon*, is commonly assimilated in meaning to the more common βαρβαρόφονος, "speaking a foreign tongue".²⁹⁵ The Lemnian women, however, can obviously communicate with the Argonauts and even show notable "Greek" features, such as their civic and political institutions: "The Lemnian women came through the city and sat down in assembly as Hypsipyle their queen had instructed" (Λημνιάδες δὲ γυναιῖκες ἄνὰ πτόλιν ἴζον ἰοῦσαι | εἰς ἀγορήν: αὐτὴ γὰρ ἐπέφραδεν Ὑψιπύλεια, 1.653–4).²⁹⁶ At any rate, Heracles, the Greek hero *par excellence*, resolves any ambiguity regarding the Lemnian women's cultural identity as he rebukes the Argonauts for spending time "with foreign women"

²⁹³ Other interpretations of the Lemnian women episode in Apollonius include: Beye's (1969), 43–5 and (1982), 88–93 discussion of the contrast between the themes of eros and heroism; Clauss (1993), 136–47, who focuses on contraposition between the heroic model represented by Heracles in relation to Jason; Mori's (2008), 109–13 investigation of the political undertones in this episode, especially in relation to the descendants of Euphemos and one of the Lemnian women who will colonize Thera and then Cyrene. On the latter point, see also Thalmann (2011), 72.

²⁹⁴ On this point see Clauss (1993), 106 and Morrison (2020), 151–2. Also, Thalmann (2011), 71 comments that: "This is the only major episode until late in book 4 to be set in the Aegean Sea". Thalmann's point highlights how cultural difference is also noteworthy within the Aegean Sea, the core of the Greek sphere of influence.

²⁹⁵ The epithet βαρβαρόφονος is better attested but still rare in Greek literature. In archaic and classical Greek, it is found in Homer's catalogue of ships (*Il.* 2.867) to characterize "the Carians who held Miletus", and in Herodotus' Books 8.20 and 9.43. Notably, in both these cases, Herodotus incorporates the term βαρβαρόφονος in hexametric oracular references, thus emphasizing its epic register.

²⁹⁶ See Morrison (2020), 152 who also mentions the parallels between Apollonius' Lemnian women and the comic figures of Aristophanes' *Ekklesiazusae* or *Lysistrata*.

(σὺν ὀθνεῖησι γυναιξίν) instead of continuing their expedition.²⁹⁷ Moreover, the characterization of the Lemnian women as prototypical non-Greek female characters encompasses their military manner and extreme behavior against the Lemnian men, whom they mass slaughtered with the exception of old Thoas before the heroes' arrival.²⁹⁸ At 1.627–30, with a summarizing statement, the poet states that, after these events, the women found easier to tend the cattle (βουκόλιαί τε βοῶν), wear bronze armors (χάλκειά τε δύνειν τεύχεα), and plow the fruit-bearing fields (πυροφόρους τε διατμήξασθαι ἀροῦρας) instead of performing “the works of Athena” (Ἀθηναίης ἔργων), hence, female targeted tasks such as weaving. The militaristic asset the Lemnian women assume again as the Argonauts approach Lemnos is the main factor prefiguring an armed conflict between the two groups:

Arg. 1.633–39:

τῷ καὶ ὅτ' ἐγγύθι νήσου ἐρεσσομένην ἴδον Ἀργώ,
αὐτίκα πασσυδίῃ πυλέων ἔκτοσθε Μυρίνης
δήια τεύχεα δῦσαι ἐς αἰγιαλὸν προχέοντο, 635
Θυιάσιν ὠμοβόροις ἵκελαι· φάν γάρ που ἰκάνειν
Θρήικας. ἡ δ' ἅμα τῇσι Θεαντιάς Ὑψιπύλεια
δῦν' ἐνὶ τεύχεσι πατρός. ἀμηχανίῃ δ' ἐχέοντο
ἄφθογγοι, τοῖόν σφιν ἐπὶ δέος ἠωρεῖτο.

²⁹⁷ *Arg.* 1.869–70: οὐ μὰν εὐκλειεῖς γε **σὺν ὀθνεῖησι γυναιξίν** | ἐσσόμεθ' ὅδ' ἐπὶ δηρὸν ἐελμένοι.

²⁹⁸ *Arg.* 1.609–32: “There, in the year just passed, the whole people had been pitilessly killed at one stroke by the wickedness of the women. [...] Alone of all the women, Hypsipyle spared her aged father Thoas who ruled among the people” (ἐνθ' ἄμυδις πᾶς δῆμος ὑπερβασίῃσι γυναικῶν | νηλειῶς δέδμητο παροιχομένῳ λυκάβαντι. [...] οἷη δ' ἐκ πασέων γεραροῦ περιφείσατο πατρός | Ὑψιπύλεια Θόαντος, ὃ δὴ κατὰ δῆμον ἄνασσε).

“Thus, when they saw the Argo being rowed towards the island, they straightaway put on the armour of war and rushed out of the gates of Myrine on the shore, like bacchantes who devour raw flesh. They no doubt imagined that the Thracians were approaching. With them Hypsipyle, daughter of Thoas, donned her father’s armour. Not knowing what was happening, they poured out in silence, so great was their fear and suspense”.

The Argonauts defuse the women’s belligerent stance by sending the herald Aithalides to strike a deal (1.640–3), and with the help of the gods. Indeed, Aithalides is a son of Hermes and holds his father’s scepter (σκηπτρον ἐπέτρεπον Ἑρμείας, | σφωιτέροιο τοκῆος..., 1.642–3). As we learn in the following lines, Hermes had granted his son unperishable memory (μνηστὶν... ἄφθιτον, 1.643–4) and the ability to travel to and from the underworld (1.644–9). By the end of the day, Aithalides appeases (μειλίζατο, 1.650) the Lemnian women to consider receiving the Argonauts. Consequently, after rushing out the city walls like flesh-eating bacchantes, the women gather across the city to meet in a public assembly (1.653–4): Λημνιάδες δὲ γυναῖκες ἀνὰ πόλιν ἵζον ἰοῦσαι | εἰς ἀγορὴν. The diplomatic role Aithalides plays allows the women to re-enter the *polis* environment and assume a more civilized role. Accordingly, the influence of Hermes, successfully conveyed through his son Aithalides, ensures the transformation of the initial *neikos* between Greek heroes and non-Greek women into *philia*. However, divine intervention in this episode is not limited to Hermes’ sway. Aphrodite plays a significant part in the recent history of Lemnos, when the women slaughtered almost the entire Lemnian male population, and during the Argonauts’ stopover on the island. However, the goddess’ approach in these two instances is twofold and contrasting. At 1.614–5, Apollonius clarifies the reason for the extreme conduct of the Lemnian women before the Argonauts’ arrival: “The cause was the terrible anger of the

Kyprian goddess, because they had for a long time denied her due honours” (... ἐπεὶ χόλος αἰνὸς ὄπαζεν | Κύπριδος, οὐνεκά μιν γεράων ἐπὶ δηρὸν ἄτισσαν). In this case, Aphrodite’s intervention causes the Lemnian men to repudiate their wives in favor of the Thracian slaves they carried off to Lemnos; consumed by jealousy, the Lemnian women commit mass slaughter of their men. Accordingly, divine anger arises from the neglected performance of the goddess’ due rituals and activates severe consequences in accordance with a pattern Apollonius proposes also elsewhere in the poem.²⁹⁹ Aphrodite then overturns her stance toward the Lemnian people when the Argonauts arrive on the island, by favoring the women’s union with the heroes:

Arg. 1.850–2

ῥηιδίως. **Κύπρις γὰρ ἐπὶ γλυκὺν ἥμερον ὥρσεν**

Ἥφαιστοιο χάριν πολυμήτιος, ὄφρα κεν αὖτις

ναίηται μετόπισθεν ἀκήρατος ἀνδράσι Λῆμνος.

“... **as Kypris aroused sweet desire in them**; she did this for the sake of Hephaistos, the god of many wiles, so that his island of Lemnos might be duly populated by men”.³⁰⁰

Aphrodite’s intervention is in line with the decision the Lemnian women deliberated in their assembly. As Paduano and Fusillo have commented, Apollonius emphasizes a greater

²⁹⁹ Hera exemplifies the most prominent example of this pattern. Apollonius first mentions Pelias’ carelessness of Hera in the proem (1.13–4, also 3.64–5); later in the poem, the poet reveals Hera’s plan to have Medea come to Greece to bring ruin on Pelias and his reign (3.1133–6, also brief mention at 4.21). In a recent talk, James Clauss has elucidated this pattern in Apollonius’ representation of divine anger.

³⁰⁰ For a comparative analysis between this passage and *Il.* 1.592–4, where Hephaestus tells of his fall on Lemnos, see Clauss (1993), 103–4. Clauss argues that, by repopulating Lemnos, the Argonauts repay the favor that the Sintian men made Hephaestus, Aphrodite’s husband, by rescuing him after his fall.

divide between the decision-making of human characters and divine will than Homer, for whom human and divine action closely correspond.³⁰¹ Particularly, they remark how Aphrodite's decision appears to follow the women's deliberations to receive the men and sleep with them.³⁰² Nevertheless, Apollonius' innovative way to represent divine intervention does not necessarily diminish the impact of such interventions. As we have seen, earlier in this episode, the positive intercession of Aithalides, who is endowed with special powers from his father Hermes, has already contributed to the women's transition from a conflictual (*neikos*) to a welcoming disposition (*philia*) toward the Greek heroes. After the assembly, Aphrodite's influence ensures that *philia* successfully develops into *eros*. As Aphrodite's motives prevail, the same power that formerly created havoc in Lemnos fosters a productive relationship between Greek men and non-Greek women.

Aphrodite's role in the Lemnian women's episode foreshadows her involvement in the events in Colchis. However, Apollonius' representation of Aphrodite in Book 3 is quite different from her behind-the-scenes activity in the Lemnian episode. Apollonius' more elaborate portrayal of Aphrodite in Book 3 exemplifies a development in his representation of the gods that is in line with the progression of the narrative. As the narrative advances in Books 2 and 3, the Greek gods—especially, a core selection of them—appear more frequently in the story by following a certain outline. The gods are usually located externally with respect to the scene, mostly on Olympus, and observe the Argonauts' enterprise from afar. When they choose to intervene, they do so by traveling to the place of action. In these instances, the poet generally portrays the Greek gods according to their traditional appearance in Greek myth and

³⁰¹ Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 191.

³⁰² Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 191.

iconography; the heroes and other characters, however, do not seem able to perceive them except on a few remarkable occasions. Despite their seemingly unrestrained ability to travel to any parts of the *oikoumenē*, the Greek gods disappear from the narrative in various locations, particularly in Libya and Cyzicus. In these regions, the Argonauts mostly receive assistance from local divinities. In the remaining part of this section, I analyze the proposed outline in detail by focusing on the typical way Apollonius' Greek gods intervene in non-Greek territories and facilitate the heroes' relationships with non-Greek peoples.

Olympian Gods Intervene in the Narrative: Location, Travel, Perception

Eros, Athena, Iris

At the beginning of Book 3, Apollonius stages a council of goddesses commenting on the Argonauts' arrival in Colchis and debating how to help Jason retrieve the golden fleece.³⁰³ This episode, and the following one in which Aphrodite visits her son Eros, are set in Olympus. The poet first focuses on Hera and Athena:

Arg. 3.6–10

ὥς οἱ μὲν πυκνοῖσιν ἀνώϊστος δονάκεσσιν
 μίμνον ἀριστῆες λελοχημένοι· αἱ δ' ἐνόησαν
 Ἥρη Ἀθηναίη τε, Διὸς δ' αὐτοῖο καὶ ἄλλων
 ἀθανάτων ἀπονόσφι θεῶν θάλαμόνδε κιοῦσαι

³⁰³ On Apollonius' proem in Book 3, see Chapter 3. Campbell (1994) is a commentary on the first 471 lines of Book 3. On Eros *paidikos* at the beginning of Book 3, see Gillies (1924), 50–1, Pendergraft (1991), 95–102, and Di Marco (1995), 121–39. On Eros' golden ball, see Klein (1980–1981), 225–7. On the metaphorical use of the imagery of “playful Eros” in Apollonius and other poets, see Pretagostini (1992), 225–38.

“So the heroes waited in hiding, out of sight in the dense reeds. **Hera and Athena, however, saw them, and drew away from Zeus himself and the other immortals to a chamber where they could make plans**”.

The goddesses observe the heroes from afar; the note on their movement to another room (θάλαμόνδε, 3.9) and away from the other gods (Διὸς δ' αὐτοῖο καὶ ἄλλων | ἄθανάτων ἀπονόσφι θεῶν, 3.8–9) suggests that they are on Olympus.³⁰⁴ After the two goddesses resolve to visit Aphrodite to ask for assistance, Apollonius provides more details about their position:

Arg. 3.36–8

ἦ, καὶ ἀναΐξασαι ἐπὶ μέγα δῶμα νέοντο
 Κύπριδος, ὃ ρά τέ οἱ δεῖμεν πόσις ἀμφιγυήεις,
 ὁππότε μιν τὰ πρῶτα παρὰ Διὸς ἦγεν ἄκοιτιν.

“With this, they hurried off to the great palace of Kypris, which her husband, lame in both feet, had built for her when first he received her as his wife from Zeus”.

³⁰⁴ Hunter (1989), 101 notes the parallelism between this θάλαμος and Hera’s personal room in the *Iliad*, where she plots her deception of Zeus (14.166–8). Other models for this scene include: Thetis’ visit to Hephaestus to obtain Achilles’ new armor in *Il.* 18 and Demodocus’ song of Ares and Aphrodite’s love in *Od.* 8.

Regarding the location of Hephaestus' palace on Olympus, Apollonius follows the Homeric model (*Il.* 18. 369–71).³⁰⁵ The depiction of Aphrodite at the toilette offers a brief insight into the interior of the palace (3.43–51).³⁰⁶ Then, the elaboration of divine space on Olympus continues after the conclusion of the three goddesses' small council. At 3.111, Aphrodite agrees to get her son involved in the task and departs from the palace to find him:

Arg. 3.111–4

ἧ ῥα, καὶ ἔλλιπε θῶκον, ἐφωμάρτησε δ' Ἀθήνη·
ἐκ δ' ἴσαν ἄμφω ταί γε παλίσσυτοι. ἦ δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ
βῆ ῥ' ἵμεν Οὐλύμποιο κατὰ πτύχας, εἴ μιν ἐφεύροι.
εὔρε δὲ τόν γ' ἀπάνευθε, Διὸς θαλερῇ ἐν ἁλώῃ

“With this, she got up from her chair; Athena followed, and they both hurried out to return.

Kypris too left her chamber. **She went down the mountainside of Olympos** looking for her son.

She found him in a remote spot in Zeus' flourishing orchard”.

Aphrodite's descent from the top of Olympus to reach a mid-way spot between her divine palace and the human world prefigures Eros' downward flight to Aetes' palace. It also allows the reader to perceive Olympus as a tridimensional space with an internal structure and separate levels. Hence, at the beginning of Book 3, Apollonius complicates the generalizing idea

³⁰⁵ Contrastingly, Apollonius moves Hephaestus' anvil on the Wandering Island, or Planctae, off the northeastern coast of Sicily (perhaps modern Vulcano) (3.41–3). See Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 391, and Hunter (1989), 101.

³⁰⁶ On the construction of this scene, see also Lennox (1980), 45–73, and Campbell (1983), 10–8.

of the “heaven” as the seat (οὐρανόθεν, 1.547) from which the Olympians watch the Argonauts depart. Accordingly, scholars have argued that the most obvious reason for Apollonius’ digression on the gods’ private affairs and petty talks on Olympus is to contrast the gods’ frivolousness with the upcoming human miseries.³⁰⁷ Without denying the playfulness of this scene, it is worth remarking on the importance of the details it provides about the gods’ residence and ways to travel to and from it. As regards the latter, the poet provides a noteworthy description of Eros’ flight from Olympus (3.156–66), which, as Thalmann remarks, underscores the way gods move across and experience space, as well as how their experience contrasts with human perceptions.³⁰⁸

Arg. 3.156–66

αὐτίκα δ’ ἰοδόκην χρυσέῃ περικάτθετο μήτρῃ
πρέμνῳ κεκλιμένην, ἀνὰ δ’ ἀγκύλον εἴλετο τόξον.

βῆ δὲ διὲκ μεγάροιο Διὸς πάγκαρπον ἀλωήν,

αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα πύλας ἐξήλυθεν Οὐλύμποιο

αἰθερίας. ἔνθεν δὲ καταιβάτις ἐστὶ κέλευθος

160

οὐρανίῃ· δοιῶ δὲ πόλοι ἀνέχουσι κάρηνα

οὐρέων ἡλιβάτων, κορυφαὶ χθονός, ἧχί τ’ ἀερθεῖς

ἡέλιος πρώτησιν ἐρεύθεται ἀκτίνεσσιν.

νειόθι δ’ ἄλλοτε γαῖα φερέσβιος ἄστεά τ’ ἀνδρῶν

³⁰⁷ Hunter (1989), 112: “The fact that Medea’s bitter tragedy is to be for Eros merely a matter of a new toy emphasizes the gulf which separates mortals from the divine”. See also Fusillo (1985), 297–8 and Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 387.

³⁰⁸ Thalmann (2011), 4–7.

“He snatched up the quiver which was leaning against a tree-trunk, strapped it around himself with a golden band, and took up his curved bow. **Through the fruitful orchard of the great god he went, to emerge at the celestial gates of Olympos. From this point the road from heaven descends,** and two peaks of soaring mountains hold up the sky; heights of the earth, where the risen sun blushes red with its first rays. In his passage through the vast sky, the fertile earth, the cities of men and the sacred streams of rivers opened up beneath him; elsewhere were mountain-peaks, and all around the sea”.

Thalmann comments that, despite his “totalizing view”, Eros does not account for—nor “takes [any] interest in”—the individual places, such as the “cities of men”, that he encounters on his way.³⁰⁹ This helpful observation aligns with the glimpse of Eros that we get on Olympus, where the greedy god appears equally unaware of and uncaring towards human suffering. At the same time, both Eros’ behavior on Olympus and his traveling experience are informative of his unsympathetic attitude towards Medea in Colchis. Specifically, the impact of Eros’ sorrow-bringing arrow (πολύστονον... ἰόν, 3.279) contrasts with the god’s ability to act unnoticed (ἄφαντος, 3.275) in Aeetes’ palace.³¹⁰ The description of Eros’ emotional state as “aroused” (τετρηχώς, 3.276) “like a gadfly” (οἶόν... οἷστρος, 3.276) and the vivid characterization of the effects of his shot on Medea, whereby “speechlessness took over her heart” (τὴν δ’ ἀμφασίη

³⁰⁹ Thalmann (2011), 7.

³¹⁰ The epithet πολύστονος is Homeric and appears in a similar expression to the Apollonian formulation in *Il.* 15.451: αὐχένι γάρ οἱ ὀπισθε πολύστονος ἔμπεσεν ἰός.

λάβει θυμόν, 3.284), leave no doubt as to the god’s actual presence in the room.³¹¹ Nevertheless, Apollonius again insists on the Eros’ invisibility, even for Medea: “just so was the destructive Eros which crouched unobserved and burnt in Medea’s heart” (τοῖος ὑπὸ κραδίῃ εἰλυμένος αἶθετο λάθρη | οὔλος Ἔρω, 3.296–7).³¹² Notably, this is the last time Eros appears as an anthropomorphic figure in the narrative, although there are other mentions of ἔρω and ἔρωτες in the poem.³¹³

The Greek gods’ mode of intervention, consisting of observation, traveling to the spot, and unnoticed, yet impactful, involvement in the narrative, occurs at other times. Once again, these instances of divine intercession in the plot aim to facilitate the heroes’ relationships with non-Greek peoples or to assist them in their exploration of unknown paths and regions. Athena’s prompt flight and active participation in helping the Argo traverse the Clashing Rocks is a pivotal example.

Arg. 2.537–48

Εὐφημος· γαίης δ’ ἀπὸ διπλόα πείσματ’ ἔλυσαν·
οὐδ’ ἄρ’ Ἀθηναίην προτέρω λάθον ὀρμηθέντες.
αὐτίκα δ’ ἐσσυμένως νεφέλης ἐπιβᾶσα πόδεςσιν
κούφης, ἥ κε φέροι μιν ἄφαρ βριαρὴν περ ἐοῦσαν,
σεύατ’ ἵμεν Πόντον δέ, φίλα φρονέουσ’ ἐρέτησιν. 540
 ὥς δ’ ὅτε τις πάτρηθεν ἀλώμενος—οἷά τε πολλὰ

³¹¹ For the translation of the participle τετρηγώς from ταραάσσω, see Hunter (1989), 128.

³¹² Translation by Hunter (1993a), modified.

³¹³ Mentions of ἔρω: 3.972, 4.445; mentions of ἔρωτες: 3.452, 687, 765, 937. In most cases, it is impossible to distinguish between an upper case E and a lower case ε, leaving ambiguity as to the interpretation of the passage.

πλαζόμεθ' ἄνθρωποι τετληότες, οὐδέ τις αἶα
 τηλουργός, πᾶσαι δὲ κατόψιοί εἰσι κέλευθοι—,
 σφωιτέρους δ' ἐνόησε δόμους, ἄμυδις δὲ κέλευθος
 ὕγρῃ τε τραφερῇ τ' ἰνδάλλεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἄλλη 545
 ὀξέα πορφύρων ἐπιμαίεται ὀφθαλμοῖσιν·
 ὥς ἄρα καρπαλίμως κούρη Διὸς αἶζασα
 θῆκεν ἐπ' ἀξείνοιο πόδας Θυνηίδος ἀκτῆς.

“They untied the double cables from the land, and **their departure did not go unnoticed by Athena. Without delay she leapt on to a light cloud** which could bear her great weight swiftly, **and hastened towards the Pontos to bring welcome help to the rowers.** As when a man who wanders far from his own land—as indeed we wretched men often do wander, and no land seems distant but all paths are spread before us—can picture his own home, and as he sees in a flash the path there over land and sea, his thoughts dart quickly and his eyes grasp one place after another, just so did the daughter of Zeus swiftly leap down and place her feet on the Thynian coast of the Inhospitable Sea”.

Through this remarkable simile of Athena’s flight, it would seem that the poet adduces an interpretation of the gods’ experience of travel.³¹⁴ Apollonius describes Athena’s flight in different terms than Eros’ descent from Olympus in Book 3, by emphasizing the goddess’ synchronic, rather than progressive view of space.³¹⁵ Nevertheless, both divine interventions

³¹⁴ Thalmann (2011), 5–6 briefly discusses this passage with a focus on time and space.

³¹⁵ Thalmann (2011), 5.

occur according to the same modalities: a divinity observes the Argonauts' journey from above, realizes the difficulty, or even the impossibility, of the upcoming task, and flies downward to intervene. Thus, Athena notices the departure of the Argonauts and travels by cloud to the Black Sea to help the heroes proceed in their journey. Apollonius does not specify whence the goddess departs, but the simile suggests that her journey, albeit quick, covers a long stretch of land. It is plausible that she, too, flies from Olympus.³¹⁶ As the focalization turns back on the Argo, the heroes approach the Clashing Rocks and attempt the crossing, by first letting a dove fly through the passage as Phineus suggested (2.555–65). Athena intervenes *in extremis* as the current prevents the Argo from completely surpassing the boulders and pushes it backwards between the rocks.

Arg. 2.593–603

ἔνθεν δ' αὐτίκ' ἔπειτα καταρρεπὲς ἔσσυτο κύμα·
 ἢ δ' ἄφαρ ὥς τε κύλινδρος ἐπέτρεχε κύματι λάβρῳ
 προπροκαταΐγδην κοίλης ἀλός· ἐν δ' ἄρα μέσσαις 595
 Πληγάσι δινήεις εἶχεν ῥόος· αἱ δ' ἐκάτερθεν
 σειόμεναι βρόμεον, πεπέδητο δὲ νήια δοῦρα.
 καὶ τότε Ἀθηναίη στιβαρῆς ἀντέσπασε πέτρης
 σκαιῇ, δεξιτερῇ δὲ διαμπερὲς ὥσε φέρεσθαι.

³¹⁶ Indeed, the Homeric model for this scene is most probably the simile comparing Hera's return to Olympus to the memories of a man who traveled extensively (*Il.* 15.80–4): ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἄν ἀΐξῃ νόος ἀνέρος, ὅς τ' ἐπὶ πολλήν

γαῖαν ἐληλουθῶς φρεσὶ πευκαλίμῃσι νοήσῃ, | “ἔνθ' εἶην, ἢ ἔνθα,” μενοιμήησί τε πολλά, | ὥς κραιπνῶς μεμανῖα διέπτατο πότνια Ἥρη | ἵκετο δ' αἰπὸν Ὀλυμπον.... The detail of Olympus being Hera's destination encourages the idea of it being Athena's provenience in the *Argonautica*. See Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 309.

ἢ δ' ἰκέλη πτερόεντι μετήορος ἔσσυτ' οἰστῶ·

600

ἔμπης δ' ἀφλάστοιο παρέθρισαν ἄκρα κόρυμβα

νωλεμὲς ἐμπλήξασαι ἐναντίαι. αὐτὰρ Ἀθήνη

Οὐλύμπόνδ' ἀνόρουσεν, ὅτ' ἀσκηθεῖς ὑπάλυξαν·

“Then suddenly a wave rushed upon them from the opposite direction, and like a runaway boulder the ship was tossed on the wild wave ever further through the hollow sea. The eddying current held her in the midst of the Clashing Rocks; on both sides the Rocks shook and thundered, and the timbers of the ship could not move. **Then Athena took hold of a mighty cliff with her left hand, and with her right she shoved the ship between the Rocks.** Like a feathered arrow it shot through the air, and as the Rocks clashed violently together they broke off the tip of the stern-ornament. **Athena leapt up to Olympus, after the safe escape of the crew**”.

By attentively noting the goddess' individual movements, the poet emphasizes Athena's physical participation in this scene. Despite the exceptional nature of the Argo and its crew, the heroes clearly need divine help to survive the *Symplēgades*. Again, the Argonauts do not appear to have noticed the goddess' contribution, aside from her participation in the construction of the Argo:

Arg. 2.610–4

σώεσθαι. Τῖφος δὲ παροίτατος ἤρχετο μύθων·

“ἔλπομαι αὐτῇ νηὶ τό γ' ἔμπεδον ἐξαλέασθαι

ἡμέας· οὐδέ τις ἄλλος ἐπαίτιος, ὅσσον Ἀθήνη,

ἢ οἱ ἐνέπνευσεν θεῖον μένος, εὐτέ μιν Ἄργος
γόμφοισιν συνάρασσε· θέμις δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀλῶναι.”

“Tiphys was the very first to speak: “I believe that it is due to our ship that we have come safely through this danger at least. **The responsibility is none other than Athena’s, who breathed divine strength into the *Argo* at the time when Argos fitted her together with bolts;** thus the gods do not permit her destruction”.³¹⁷

Tiphys’ cryptic reference to Athena’s responsibility in the making of *Argo* could imply a hint of the heroes’ awareness of the goddess’ presence. Be that as it may, Tiphys ascribes the goddess’ merit only to the origin of the ship. Moreover, the following *themis*-sentence might as well just refer to Athena’s original merits and not her present intervention. Hence, despite the intrinsic irony of this scene, the Argonauts do not appear to see Athena. Finally, as we learn in 2.602–3, after ensuring the heroes’ safety, the goddess flies back to Olympus.

With regard to Book 4, Iris’ intervention in the narrative (4.753–841), which also lead to the involvement of Thetis and the Nereids, combines elements from both episodes discussed above. This scene is articulated on the basis of a similar outline to those already observed. First, Iris takes notice of the heroes’ departure from Circe’s palace and promptly informs Hera, who set her on the watch (4.753–6). Next, Hera bids Iris to visit Thetis, Hephaestus, and Aeolus to secure their help in the upcoming struggles, namely, the Argonauts’ route through the Planctae, Scylla, and Charybdis (4.757–69). The scene progresses as Iris flies down from Olympus and rushes to meet the other gods (4.770–884). Within this section, we find an inset narrative centering on

³¹⁷ Translator’s italics.

Thetis and Peleus (4.801–9) and Thetis’ epiphany to Peleus alone. Thetis leaves it to Peleus to inform the Argonauts of Hera’s plans and to urge them to trust Hera as their helper (Ἥρῃ πειθόμενοι ἐπαρηγόνοι, 4.858). Thanks to Iris’ intercession, Thetis and the Nereids intervene to grant the Argo a safe passage through the dangerous strait by lifting up the Argo and tossing it around until they manage to bring it out of the Planctae (4.920–81). Apollonius characterizes the nymphs’ incredible performance with a simile comparing them to girls playing on a sandy beach with a round ball (4.948–55). To sum up, Iris’ role develops through a few, well-defined steps: keeping watch over the Argonauts, reporting to Hera and receiving orders as to the incoming peril, flying down to intervene on the field, and, finally, pleading for help from the most relevant divinities in the area. As in previous cases, Iris’ presence remains hidden from the heroes’ sight; yet, Thetis shows herself to her husband Peleus. This event is at variance with divine activity as we have discussed it thus far. It does, in fact, introduce a different category of human-divine relationships as Thetis is a marine divinity and should therefore be considered as a local goddess in a marine environment. I will discuss this aspect of divine interventions in detail below; for now, suffice it to say that the Iris’ episode reproduces some prototypical elements of divine action in the *Argonautica* and, simultaneously, complicates the picture by combining a multitude of divine actors and representing different modes of human-divine engagement.

In my view, these three episodes are particularly emblematic of the narrative dynamics present in Books 3 and 4 as the Argonauts transition into the Black Sea. Since Argo is the first ship to pass the Rocks, the Argonauts traditionally open up the route for eastward voyages into the Black Sea.³¹⁸ In particular, these heroes are among the first Greek men to explore the coasts

³¹⁸ At 2.604–6, following the Argonauts’ crossing of the rocks, Apollonius provides an *aition* for the Bosphorus Strait: “... the Rocks were firmly locked together and rooted in one spot forever; for it was fated by the blessed gods that this would happen whenever any man had survived the voyage through them” (πέτραι δ’ εἰς ἓνα

of the Black Sea and interact with the local populations. Thanks to their exceptional features, they are generally able to pursue their objectives in the remaining part of Book 2 and partly in Book 3. However, divine help occurs promptly to assist them in extreme circumstances or with unattainable tasks. Moreover, interventions by the gods increase in Book 4, in which the Argonauts travel across less trodden areas of the *oikoumenē*.

Hera

The role Hera plays, especially in the third and fourth book, exemplifies the heroes' increasing need for divine assistance. The goddess strongly influences the course of events in numerous occasions, particularly in Colchis and during the Argo's return voyage from the Black Sea to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Due to Hera's more frequent engagement with the narrative, the modalities with which she operates vary more greatly compared with those of other divinities. For this reason, the criterion proposed here to investigate Hera's different modes of engagement with the narrative is to distinguish between the goddess' physical appearances as a full-fledged character and concealed interventions in the narrative. Moreover, a second criterion defining Hera's interferences with the Argonautic expedition is to differentiate between direct interventions and indirect influence through other characters. The application of these criteria is useful to systematize the complex outline representing Hera's activity in the *Argonautica*. Book 3 provides a good example of this complexity. As has been observed, at the beginning of Book 3, Hera appears for the first time as a character figure and plots Eros' intervention to induce Medea's feelings for Jason. At this juncture and in the following scenes, her influence over the

χωρον ἐπισχεδὸν ἀλλήλησιν | νωλεμέσ ἐρρίζωθεν· ὁ δὲ καὶ μόρσιμον ἦεν | ἐκ μακάρων, εὖτ' ἄν τις ἰδὼν διὰ νηὶ περάσσει).

plot, though crucial, is only indirectly activated through the intervention of Eros.³¹⁹ In contrast, Hera's interventions in the following sequences of the Colchian episode lack any physical appearance by the goddess. At this point, she acts without intermediaries by entering the narrative as needed and directly altering the circumstances and actions of her human subjects.

Apollonius' portrayal of Hera as a character at the beginning of Book 3 is the most extended full-fledged representation of the goddess in the *Argonautica*. Her depiction as a character figure is additionally fleshed out in Book 4, when Thetis and the Nereids help the Argonauts through the Planctae, Scylla, and Charybdis under the watchful eyes of Hephaestus, Hera, and Athena:

Arg. 4.956–60

τὰς δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἄναξ κορυφῆς ἐπὶ λισσάδος ἄκρης

ὀρθός, ἐπὶ στελεῇ τυπίδος βαρὺν ὄμον ἐρείσας,

Ἥφαιστος θεεῖτο, καὶ αἰγλήεντος ὕπερθεν

οὐρανοῦ ἐστηῖα Διὸς δάμαρ, ἀμφὶ δ' Ἀθήνη

βάλλε χέρας, τοῖόν μιν ἔχεν δέος εἰσορόωσαν.

960

“Upright on the very top of a sheer rock stood the ruler himself, Hephaistos, watching the Nereids as he rested his heavy shoulder on the handle of a hammer; **high above in the gleaming heaven the wife of Zeus stood and watched also**—so great was her fear that **she threw her arms around Athena**”.

³¹⁹ In these terms, Hera's instruction of Iris in Book 4 constitutes another clear example of the goddess' indirect intervention through another character.

It is again emblematic that Hera, together with Athena, seems to belong, in her anthropomorphic form, to “the sky [from] above” (ὑπερθεν οὐρανοῦ, 4.958–9). This modality of representation contrasts with the “earthly” characterization of Hephaestus, who, in this scene, stands on top of a nearby rock (κορυφῆς ἐπὶ λισσάδος ἄκρης, 4.956). The multi-layered depiction of the gods is in line with Apollonius’ deviation from the Homeric model regarding the location of Hephaestus’ furnace on the Planctae instead of on Olympus.³²⁰ At any rate, also in her second full-character representation, which, in its playful tone and aesthetics, recalls the beginning of Book 3, Hera is removed from the heroes’ activities on earth and watches attentively from above. As to the question of why Hera’s full-fledged portrayal occurs in these two episodes, in addition, perhaps, to the scene of the gods’ salutation of the Argo in Book 1, there could be a metaliterary explanation. The three scenes mentioned are distinctive in that they reproduce evident Homeric elements and draw from prototypical scenes in Homer.³²¹ Hence, a possible answer to the question above could be that, in these Homeric flavored scenes, Apollonius preferred to represent Hera in a more traditional way, perhaps, to recall the archaic epic model more closely. Moreover, in these scenes, the spatial contexts in which Hera appears as a character figure are traditionally Greek ones with respect to location and ethnic or cultural identity. In Book 1, upon

³²⁰ Cf. *Arg.* 3.41–2.

³²¹ The scene from Book 1 features the brief, albeit noteworthy, cameo of baby Achilles in the arms of Chiron’s wife Chariclo (σὺν καὶ οἱ παράκοιτις, ἐπωλένιον φορέουσα | Πηλεΐδην Ἀχιλῆα, φίλῳ δειδίσκετο πατρί, 1.557–8). On the metaliterary level, the appearance of Chiron and Achilles suggests the poet’s gesture towards the work of his predecessors, with a playful inversion of the chronological, old-young relationship between the *Iliad* and the *Argonautica* to contextualize the character of the baby hero in the timeframe of his poem. As a side note, the *scholion* to this passage (A 554 Wendel) confirms the identity of Chiron’s wife Chariclo, whom Apollonius merely calls Chiron’s παράκοιτις. The incipit of Book 3, as already mentioned, draws from scenes in the *Iliad*, particularly Hera’s plotting against Zeus (14.189) and Thetis’ visit to Hephaestus to commission Achilles’ weapons (18.385–87). Finally, the episode in Book 4 is clearly “Odyssean” in its reproduction of one of the landmark locations of the hero’s nostos through, particularly, the Tyrrhenian Sea.

the Argo's departure, "all the gods" (πάντες θεοὶ, 1.547), surely including Hera, attend the event from a point in the sky (οὐρανόθεν, 1.547) above Pagasae. The incipit of Book 3, featuring the small council of Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, takes place on Olympus. Finally, the Argonauts' route through the Planctae, Scylla, and Charybdis bring them off the coast of Sicily.

There are exceptions to this model. For example, Hera physically intervenes in Book 4 to ensure the Argonauts' safe passage through the territory of the Celts.³²² In particular, the goddess prevents the Argonauts from, first, entering the vast territory of the Celts and, eventually, sailing into Oceanus.³²³

Arg. 4.634–48

ἐπὶ δὲ διαὶ στομάτων ἰεὺς ῥόον. ἐκ δ' ἄρα τοῖο
 λίμνας εἰσέλασαν δυσχεύμονας, αἶ τ' ἀνὰ Κελτῶν 635
 ἥπειρον πέπτανται ἀθέσφατον. ἔνθα κεν οἵ γε
 ἄτη ἀεικελίη πέλασαν· φέρε γάρ τις ἀπορρῶξ
 κόλπον ἐς Ὠκεανοῖο, τὸν οὐ προδαέντες ἔμελλον
 εἰσβαλέειν, τόθεν οὐ κεν ὑπότροποι ἐξεσάωθεν.
 ἀλλ' Ἥρη σκοπέλοιο καθ' Ἐρκυνίου ἰάχησεν 640
 οὐρανόθεν προθοροῦσα, φόβῳ δ' ἐτίναχθεν αὐτῆς
 πάντες ὁμῶς· δεινὸν γὰρ ἐπὶ μέγας ἔβραχεν αἰθήρ.

³²² Other instances in which Hera safeguards the journey occur earlier in the narrative. At 4.509–10, Hera prevents the Colchians from pursuing the Argonauts. Zeus endorses her actions by hindering the remaining Colchians from crossing the Ceraunian mountains (4.520–1). Shortly after, however, the goddess understands Zeus' plans to punish the heroes for the murder of Apsyrtus and storms them backward to Electris island to ensure their purification (4.576–80).

³²³ Thalmann (2011), 163 comments on all the possible threats that the absence of Hera's intervention could have posed for the heroes.

ἄψ δὲ παλιντροπόωντο θεᾶς ὕπο, καί ῥ' ἐνόησαν

τὴν οἶμον τῇ πέρ τε καὶ ἔπλετο νόστος ἰοῦσιν.

δηναιοὶ δ' ἀκτὰς ἀλμυρέας εἰσαφίκοντο, 645

Ἥρης ἐννεσίησι δι' ἔθνεα μυρία Κελτῶν

καὶ Λιγύων περόωντες ἀδήιοι· ἀμφὶ γὰρ αἰνὴν

ἡέρα χεῦε θεὰ πάντ' ἤματα νισσομένοισιν.

“From this river they rowed into the storm-filled lakes which spread out over vast distances in the land of the Celts. There they would have met a wretched fate, for a tributary stream led to the gulf of Ocean and in ignorance they were going to enter it; they would not have returned safely.

But Hera leapt down from heaven and screamed from the top of the Hercynian rock; all the heroes alike quaked with fear at her voice, for the great sky resounded with a terrible roar. The goddess caused them to turn back, and they found the route along which a safe return lay. After a long journey they reached the coasts of the sea, traveling unharmed through the midst of the massed tribes of the Celts and Ligurians; **the goddess Hera aided them by pouring a deep mist around them on every day of the journey”.**

Apollonius represents Hera’s intervention in great detail by having the goddess follow a similar pattern to other Greek gods who descend among mortals to participate in human affairs. Having noticed the Argonauts’ mistaken route, she flies down from the sky (οὐρανόθεν προθοροῦσα, 4.641) and intervenes by warning them from a nearby spot, the Hercynian rock.³²⁴

³²⁴ Hunter (2015), 169–70 comments that the Hercynian rock was probably located in Germany, in the area of the Black Forest. On this location see Eratosthenes III B 118 Berger, Arist. *Meteor.* 1.350b5–6. The rock was

Exceptionally, the heroes acknowledge the frightening sound, which resounds greatly in the air (δεινὸν γὰρ ἐπὶ μέγας ἔβραχεν αἰθήρ, 4.642), and invert the route “at the goddess’ orders” (ἄψ δὲ παλιντροπόωντο θεᾶς ὕπο, 4.643). The heroes’ emotional reaction is conspicuous as “they quaked with fear” (φόβῳ δ’ ἐτίναχθεν αὐτῆς, 4.641). The poet clearly states that they “took notice of... the path” (ἐνόησαν... τὴν οἴμον, 4.643–4)—the use of the enjambment artfully suspends the phrase to let the reader pause on the direct object and adds an element of surprise. Despite the ambiguity as to whether the Argonauts recognize Hera, this scene too is modeled after another Homeric passage, namely, *Od.* 12.69–72, where Hera guides the Argo past the rocks of the Planctae on their way back from Colchis.³²⁵ Hera’s last act to safeguard the Argonauts’ escape from the region is to cover them with a deep mist, a typical ploy that gods make use of to protect their human protégés.³²⁶ As Apollonius emphasizes, the goddess’ additional purpose after having adjusted the Argonauts’ route is to preserve them from the local tribes of Celts and Ligurians (... ἔθνεα μυρία Κελτῶν | καὶ Λιγύων, 4.646–7). This policy is somewhat at odds with the outward journey to Colchis, during which the Argonauts were allowed to freely engage with hostile populations, such as the Gegenees, the Bebryces, or the Lemnian women.³²⁷

Hera’s approach again changes during the events on Drepanē, where she supports the celebration of Medea and Jason’s wedding by fostering the participation of the local nymphs and

probably connected with the myth of the Argonauts before Apollonius (cf. Arist. *Marvelous Things Heard* 105). See also Delage (1930), 252.

³²⁵ *Od.* 12.69–72: οἷη δὴ κείνη γε παρέπλω ποντοπόρος νηῦς, | Ἄργὸν πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ’ Αἰήταο πλέουσα. | καὶ νύ κε τὴν ἔνθ’ ὥκα βάλεν μεγάλας ποτὶ πέτρας, | ἄλλ’ Ἥρη παρέπεμψεν, ἐπεὶ φίλος ἦεν Ἰήσων. See Hunter (2015), 169.

³²⁶ See for instance *Il.* 3.380–2 (Aphrodite shrouding Paris with a thick mist), 20.443–4 (Apollo covering Hector with a deep mist), or *Od.* 7.15, 139–40, and 13.189–91 (Athena hiding Odysseus).

³²⁷ This topic is dealt with in detail earlier in this Chapter.

Phaeacian population (4.1128–1222).³²⁸ This episode marks Hera’s final appearance in Book 4 and stands out as one of the goddess’ finest moments, for, as Hunter comments, “Hera acts as both goddess of marriage and as Jason’s chief protector”.³²⁹ Hera is exceptionally involved in the marriage preparations. First, she calls the nymphs to participate in the wedding rituals (4.1151–2) and spreads “a truthful rumor” (νημερτέα βάξιν, 4.1184) across the city to gather people for the public celebrations. At a later point, we learn that the goddess had inspired queen Arete to report Alcinous’ “wise speech” (πυκινὸν ἔπος, 4.1200) regarding Medea, namely, that the Phaeacians would not return her to the Colchians if she had already shared the bed with Jason (4.1104–9).³³⁰ Thus, the marriage between Jason and Medea represents Hera’s last triumphal act in the poem, also symbolized by the nymphs’ hymenaea and choruses in the goddess’ honor (4.1196–99):

Arg. 4.1196–99:

νύμφαι δ’ ἄμμιγα παῖσαι, ὅτε μνήσαιντο γάμοιο,
 ἱμερόενθ’ ὑμέναιον ἀνήπυον· ἄλλοτε δ’ αὖτε
 οἴοθεν οἶαι ἄειδον ἐλίσσόμεναι περὶ κύκλον,
 Ἥρη, σεῖο ἔκητι·

³²⁸ On the events in Drepanē, see Schaaf (2014), 302–11.

³²⁹ Hunter (2015), 238 n. 1152. See Mori (2001), 85–106 and Caneva (2014), 25–58, on the model of Alcinous and Arete’s marriage in comparison with the Ptolemaic royal couple.

³³⁰ Notably, in this episode Apollonius repurposes the same terms, πυκινός and βάξις, albeit at two separate stages, which he used for the ekphrastic image of Phrixos and the speaking ram in 1.765–7: “As you looked on this pair, you would be struck dumb with amazement and deceived, for you would expect to hear some **wise utterance** from them” (κείνους κ’ εἰσορόων ἀκέοις, ψεύδοιό τε θυμόν, | ἐλπόμενος **πυκινήν** τιν’ ἀπὸ σφείων ἔσακοῦσαι | **βάξιν**, ὃ καὶ δηρόν περ ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι θηήσαιο). The noun βάξις, a derivate of the Homeric verb βάζω “to speak, say”, is mostly found in tragedy with the general meaning “saying”, and, especially, “an oracular saying” or “rumor”: Aesch. *Ag.* 10, 477, *Prom.* 663, *Soph. Aj.* 494, 998, *El.* 642, 638, 1006, *Eur. Med.* 1374, *Supp.* 642, *Hel.* 224, 351, *Or.* 1558, *Rhes.* 47. Regarding the ekphrasis of the speaking ram, Clauss (1993), 127 comments that the poet draws a parallelism between the experiences of Jason and Phrixos which foretells Jason’s successful arrival to Colchis and accomplishment of his quest.

“Whenever the Argonauts sang of marriage, all the nymphs blended their voices with them in the lovely wedding-hymn. At other times the nymphs sang and danced by themselves in a circle, **in your honour, Hera**”.

With regard to Hera’s concealed activity, this is prevalent in Books 3 and 4.³³¹ In particular, in Colchis, Hera works behind the curtains to help the Argonauts succeed against the Colchians. For instance, she hides the heroes’ first walk across Aia by spreading fog through the city (3.210–4) and ensures that Medea is in the palace when they arrive there (3.250). Later, Hera prevents Medea from poisoning herself to quench her painful feelings for Jason (Ἡρῆς ἐννεσίῃσι μετὰτροπος, 3.818) and, instead, increases Jason’s chances to obtain help from Medea by beautifying him before their encounter at the temple of Hecate (3.919–25).³³² Similarly, in Book 4, Hera’s endeavors are mostly aimed at guaranteeing Medea’s departure with the Argonauts (4.11, 20–3, 241–2) and the Argo’s nostos. With few exceptions during the return journey, Books 3 and 4 are entirely set in non-Greek territories and function as the framework of numerous encounters between the Argonauts and non-Greek peoples. Hera’s intensified activity in this portion of the Argonautic expedition is always aimed at helping the Greek heroes navigate their relationship with hostile non-Greek peoples or get across unknown territories. The only exception would seem to occur after Apsyrtus’ death in Book 4.576–80, as the goddess

³³¹ There is only one exception to this mode of action: in Book 2.865–70, Hera intervenes after the death of Idmon to hearten Ancaeus to offer his service as the new steersman. The rest of Apollonius’ references to Hera concerns her as a recipient of cultic activity and several mentions of her ambivalent feelings toward Pelias and Jason, which fundamentally motivate her actions in the poem.

³³² Cf. also the crows’ speech reporting Hera’s *boulē* (3.927–37), which the seer Mopsos correctly interprets as the goddess’ demand, for himself and Argos, to wait outside while Jason and Medea discuss the hero’s task.

subordinates her objectives to Zeus' purification demands and stirs the course of the Argo towards the island of Electris, at the mouth of the Eridanus River. Hera's personal motives for supporting the Argonauts' nostos, namely, to fulfill a vendetta against Pelias through Medea's future deeds, prompt her participation in the narrative.³³³ As has been observed, these direct interventions are regularly disguised, and the goddess seldom appears as a character figure—not even through the narrator's focalization. It is again significant that most of these direct interventions occur in non-Greek territories, and that the goddess operates in disguise, or detached from the ground level where all human activity occurs. This might indicate that the Greek gods refrain from acting as fully developed characters in certain areas of the Argonautic world, especially in non-Greek territories and among non-Greek peoples. At the same time, these are the areas of the Argonautic world where the Greek heroes' conditions appear most precarious and, consequently, divine assistance is most needed. In this complex cultural and geographical landscape, Hera operates alone, by participating in human affairs in disguise, or benefits from the work of other divine characters, such as Eros, Iris, and the nymphs.

³³³ Apollonius scatters pieces of information outlining Hera's grand plan throughout the poem. A first hint concerning Pelias' disregard of Hera occurs in the proem (1.14). Then, Hera's care for the Argonauts is reiterated at 2.217 and during Hera's speech to Aphrodite at the beginning of Book 3.55–75, especially lines 66–73 (see also 4.784–8). In the same speech, she also remarks on her resentment for Pelias' missed sacrifices (3.65). Finally, Apollonius confirms Medea's role in Hera's grand plan at the end of Book 3.1133–6. A brief reiteration of this idea returns at the start of Book 4.20–3, as Hera urges Medea to flee from Colchis with the Argonauts.

THE LOCAL GODS IN THE *ARGONAUTICA*

The Limits of the Olympian Gods' Sway

There are regions of the Argonautic world where Greek divinities do not interact with the heroes, even when these find themselves in great danger. Libya is perhaps the most remarkable of these areas. The heroes experience great distress in the Syrtis but do not receive any assistance from their divine protectors. Even Heracles, whose recent passage in the area is visible from the Hesperides' Garden, seems to be beyond the heroes' reach.³³⁴ As I will demonstrate, the Cyzicus episode presents parallels with the events happening in Syrtis and essentially lacks any prominent interventions by the Greek gods.³³⁵ Finally, Colchis represents a case somewhere in between, given the initial interference of Eros and Hera's repeated influence over Medea and the Argonauts. However, the events in Libya, Cyzicus, and Colchis are all characterized by the participation of local divinities in the narrative. In some of these cases, gods such as nymphs, local heroes, or marine divinities are epichoric and have a symbiotic relation with the surrounding environment. In other instances, these gods are closely connected to the territory due to the presence of important seats of religious cult. This is the case, especially, of Hecate in Colchis and Rhea in Cyzicus.

³³⁴ Clauss (2016), 150 aptly argues that Heracles should be close by this point to achieving his apotheosis: "The inability to see Heracles fully parallels the difficulty that the Argonauts have in observing Olympian presence on earth at this point in time and so would seem to confirm his apotheosis and point to the gradual working out of Zeus' plan for the gods' withdrawal from direct contact with human beings".

³³⁵ Apollonius' subtly mentions Hera in connection with the Earthborn stock, speculating that she had possibly reared them as a labor for Heracles (1.996–7): δὴ γάρ που κάκεῖνα θεὰ τρέφεν αἰνὰ πέλωρα | Ἥρη, Ζηνὸς ἄκοιτις, ἄεθλιον Ἡρακλῆϊ.

Cyzicus: Rhea – Cybele – Magna Mater

The sojourn in Cyzicus marks one of the Argonauts' collective heroic moments and, simultaneously, one of the poem's most tragic incidents.³³⁶ In the first half of the episode (1.989–1011), the heroes defeat the Earthborn giants they encounter while scouting on Mount Dindymon; in the second half (1.1112–56), they erroneously attack the Doliones, who had previously offered them a friendly welcome, and slaughter their warriors, including king Cyzicus (1.1030–5).³³⁷ Upon realizing the terrible mistake the following day, grief seizes both sides, and the heroes join the Doliones in the funerary rituals (1.1053–62). After Cyzicus' three-day-long funeral, which also causes his widow Cleite to take her own life, the Argonauts are ready to depart, but strong winds prevent them from doing so: ἐκ δὲ τόθεν **τρηχεῖαι** ἀνέβρθησαν **ἄελλαι** | **ἥμαθ' ὁμοῦ νύκτας τε δώδεκα**, τοὺς δὲ καταῦθι | ναυτίλλεσθαι ἔρυκον (1.1078–80). The winds blow for twelve days and as many nights impeding the heroes' departure until they receive a bird omen, a halcyon foretelling the interruption of the winds (1083–6).³³⁸ The bird seer interprets and refers to Jason the god's will:

³³⁶ Scholarship on this episode includes: Clauss (1993), 148–75, who focuses on the intertextual relationship between the Apollonian text and Homer; pages 167–75 provide an overview of the Argonauts' rituals for Rhea. Hunter (1993b), 16–7 and 42–3 discusses this episode as illustrative of Apollonius' representation of heroism, especially Jason's in the poem. Hunter (1993b), 42 usefully draws parallels between the death of Cyzicus and that of Apsyrtus: they both die “by night and in ignorance”. Zybert (2008), 373–92 juxtaposes Rhea to Hecate in Apollonius. Similarly, Schaaf (2014), 77–8 discusses the comparison between the two goddesses by referring to *Th.* 409–13, 426–8, 448–9. Thalmann (2011), 91–100 discusses the Cyzicus episode in geographical terms and regarding the heroes' “colonial experience”. On the geography of Mt. Dindymon, see also Clare (2002), 66–71. On the use of verbs of motion in the description of Mt. Dindymon, see Williams (1991), 83.

³³⁷ Before the Argos' arrival, the leader of the Doliones received an oracle requesting him to show hospitality to the heroes (1.968–71): δῶκεν δ' αὐτὸς ἄναξ λαρὸν μέθυ δευομένοισιν | μῆλ' αὖθ' ὁμοῦ· **δὴ γὰρ οἱ ἔην φάτις**, εἴτ' ἂν ἴκωνται | ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖος στόλος, αὐτίκα τόν γε | μείλιχον ἀντιάαν μηδὲ πτολέμοιο μέλεσθαι.

³³⁸ Schaaf (2014), 76–7 discusses the possible reasons why the goddess Rhea sent the bird omen. See also Fränkel (1968), 135.

Arg. 1.1092–1102

“Αἰσονίδη, χρειώ σε τόδ’ ἱερὸν εἰσανιόντα

Δινδύμου ὀκριόεντος **ἐϋθρονον ἰλάξασθαι**

μητέρα συμπάντων μακάρων, λήξουσι δ’ ἄελλαι

ζαχρηεῖς· τοίην γὰρ ἐγὼ νέον ὅσσαν ἄκουσα 1095

ἄλκυόνος ἀλῆης, ἣ τε κνώσσοντος ὕπερθεν

σεῖο περίξ τὰ ἕκαστα πιφασκομένη πεπότητο.

ἐκ γὰρ τῆς ἄνεμοί τε θάλασσά τε νειόθι τε χθὼν

πᾶσα πεπεύρανται νιφόεν θ’ ἔδος Οὐλύμποιο·

καὶ οἱ, **ὅτ’ ἐξ ὀρέων μέγαν οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβαίνει,** 1100

Ζεὺς αὐτὸς Κρονίδης ὑποχάζεται, ὥς δὲ καὶ ὅλλοι

ἄθάνατοι μάκαρες δεινὴν θεὸν ἀμφιέπουσιν.”

“Son of Aison, you must climb to this holy place on rugged Dindymon **to appease the Mother of the whole company of the blessed gods, the lady of the fair throne; if you do this, these harsh winds will drop.** For this is the message I have just now heard in the cry of the sea-dwelling halcyon which fluttered above you as you slept, revealing all that must be done. Upon the Mother depend the winds, the ocean, the whole earth beneath and the snowy seat of Olympus; **whenever she leaves the mountains and climbs to the great vault of heaven, Zeus himself, the son of Kronos, makes way, and all the other immortal gods likewise show honour to the dread goddess”.**

The Argonauts' propitiation cult for Rhea involves several stages. First, they carve a *xoanon*:

Arg. 1.1117–22

ἔσκε δέ τι στιβαρὸν στύπος ἀμπέλου ἔντροφον ὕλη,
πρόχνη γεράνδρυν· τὸ μὲν ἔκταμον, ὄφρα πέλοιτο
δαίμονος οὐρείης ἱερὸν **βρέτας**, ἔξεσε δ' Ἄργος
εὐκόσμως· καὶ δὴ μιν ἐπ' ὀκρίοντι κολωνῷ 1120
ἴδρυσαν φηγοῖσιν ἐπηρεφὲς ἀκροτάτησιν,
αἱ ῥά τε πασάων πανυπέρταται ἐρρίζωνται.

“There was a tough vine-stump, old and withered, which had grown in the forest. They cut this down to make a holy image of the mountain-goddess, and Argos carved it skillfully; they set the image on a rocky outcrop under the branches of the oaks which grew on the summit high above all other trees”.

Second, the Argonauts build a stone altar and perform sacrifices, by calling on Rhea, the Great Mother of Dindymon, and of Ida (Crete), and her Idean companions, Titias and Cyllenus:

Arg. 1.1123–31

βομὸν δ' αὖ χέραδος παρενήνεον· ἀμφὶ δὲ φύλλοις
στεψάμενοι δρυῖνοισι **θυηπολῆς** ἐμέλοντο,
Μητέρα Δινδυμῖν πολυπότνιαν ἀγκαλέοντες, 1125

ἐνναέτιν Φρυγίης, Τιτίην θ' ἄμα Κύλληνόν τε,

οἳ μοῦνοι πολέων μοιρηγέται ἡδὲ πάρεδροι

Μητέρος Ἰδαίης κεκλήαται, ὅσσοι ἔασιν

Δάκτυλοι Ἰδαῖοι Κρηταιέες, οὓς ποτε νύμφη

Ἀγχιάλη Δικταῖον ἀνὰ σπέος, ἀμφοτέρησι 1130

δραξαμένη γαίης Οἰαξίδος, ἐβλάστησε.

“Beside it, they heaped up an **altar** of stones and crowned themselves with oak leaves to **perform the sacrifice**. In their worship they called upon **the mother of Dindymon, mistress of all, the dweller in Phrygia, and with her Titias and Kyllenos**, who alone of the many **Cretan Daktyls of Ida** are called ‘guiders of destiny’ and ‘those who sit beside the Idaian Mother’”.

Third, Jason addresses a prayer and pours libations over the sacrifices:

Arg. 1.1132–4

πολλὰ δὲ τήν γε **λιτῆσιν** ἀποστρέψαι ἐριώλας

Αἰσονίδης γουνάζετ' **ἐπιλλείβων ἱεροῖσιν**

αἰθομένοις· ἄμυδις δὲ νέοι Ὀρφεὺς ἀνωγῇ

“**As he poured libations upon the burning victims**, the son of Aison many times **implored** the Great Mother to turn aside the storm-winds”.

Fourth, at Orpheus’ invitation, the heroes perform a *pyrrhike*, an armed dance:

Arg. 1.1134–9

αἰθομένοις ἄμυδις δὲ νέοι Ὀρφεὺς ἀνωγῇ
σκαίροντες βηταρμὸν ἐνόπλιον εἰλίσσοντο,
καὶ σάκεα ξιφέεσσιν ἐπέκτυπον, ὥς κεν ἰωὴ
δύσφημος πλάζοιτο δι' ἡέρος ἦν ἔτι λαοὶ
κηδεῖη βασιλῆος ἀνέστενον. ἔνθεν ἔσαιεἰ
ρόμβῳ καὶ τυπάνῳ Ῥεῖην Φρύγες ἰλάσκονται.

1135

“... and taking their cue from Orpheus, all the young heroes leapt and danced an armed dance and beat their swords on their shields so that the ill-omened sound of the continuing lamentations of the people for their king should be lost in the air. For this reason the Phrygians still worship Rhea with tambourines and drums”.

Finally, the goddess provides a favorable omen, by causing nature on the mountain to flourish. Moreover, the strong winds cease to blow and the Argo departs:

Arg. 1.1140–52

ἡ δέ που εὐαγέεσσιν ἐπὶ φρένα θῆκε θυηλαῖς
ἀνταῖη δαίμων, τὰ δ' εἰκότα σήματ' ἔγεντο.
δένδρεα μὲν καρπὸν χέον ἄσπετον, ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶν
αὐτομάτη φύε γαῖα τερεῖνης ἄνθεα ποίης·
θῆρες δ' εἰλυοὺς τε κατὰ ξυλόχους τε λιπόντες

1140

οὐρῇσιν σαίνοντες ἐπήλυθον. ἡ δὲ καὶ ἄλλο 1145
 θῆκε τέρας· ἐπεὶ οὐ τι παροίτερον ὕδατι νᾶε
 Δίνδυμον, ἀλλὰ σφιν τότε· ἀνέβραχε διψάδος αὐτῶς
 ἐκ κορυφῆς ἄλληκτον· Ἰησονίην δ' ἐνέπουσιν
 κεῖνο ποτὸν κρήνην περιναιέται ἄνδρες ὀπίσσω.
 καὶ τότε μὲν δαῖτ' ἀμφὶ θεᾶς θέσαν οὔρεσιν Ἄρκτων, 1150
 μέλποντες Ῥεῖην πολυπότιαν· αὐτὰρ ἐς ἡῶ
 ληξάντων ἀνέμων νῆσον λίπον εἰρεσίησιν.

“The goddess was no doubt well disposed towards the holy sacrifices, **as became clear from obvious signs.** Trees poured forth fruit in abundance, and around their feet the earth spontaneously sent up flowers amidst the soft grass; wild animals left their dens and lairs in the forest and came fawning with their tails. The goddess caused another marvel as well. Before this, there had been no flowing water on Dindymon, but in their honour she now caused an endless stream to gush down from the thirsty summit. The inhabitants of the area have ever since called that source ‘Jason’s Spring’. Then **the heroes prepared a feast in the goddess’s honour on the Mountain of the Bears and sang of Rheia, mistress of all.** At dawn the winds dropped and they rowed away from the island”.

The cult of the “Mother” or “Mother of the Gods” originated in Anatolia and was especially prominent in Phrygia (central Anatolia).³³⁹ The first attestations of her cult in Greece

³³⁹ Roller (1999), 1–2. Roller (1999), 2 maintains that the goddess’ name first appeared in 7th cent. BC Phrygian inscriptions addressing her as “Matar”, the equivalent of “Mother” in the local language. Farnell

go back to the archaic period.³⁴⁰ Archaic literary sources, specifically, Homer and Hesiod, do not mention the goddess with her full title of “Mother of the Gods”, but detail the genealogy of Rhea as mother of other Olympian divinities.³⁴¹ According to the Byzantine scholar Tzetzes (*in Lyc.* 1170), Hipponax is the first 6th cent. BC Greek poet to associate Rhea with Cybele, on the grounds that the goddess is worshipped in the Phrygian city called Cybella (Κυβέλλα).³⁴² However, the syncretism between the two goddesses in Greece is firmly established only from the 5th cent. BC onwards.³⁴³ By then, an earlier Rhea-Cybele syncretism has already occurred in Crete, where the cult of Cretan Rhea seems to have involved ecstatic and orgiastic elements for a long time.³⁴⁴ These aspects resurface in Greek tragedy, where Rhea-Cybele is often associated

(1907), 295 maintains that convincing evidence from Knossos suggests that the cult of the Mother originated in Crete, where the core religious system revolved around a central female figure, a goddess of fertility.

³⁴⁰ Roller (1999), 2–3. See also Farnell (1907), 289–90. Farnell (1907), 289 explains that the cult was imported to Greece in the archaic period and became prominent in Boeotia, Arcadia, Athens, and Akriai in South Laconia. The goddess was venerated under the cult titles ἡ μεγάλη Μήτηρ and Μήτηρ τῶν θεῶν. Farnell (1907), 293, remarks that the earliest inscription bearing her name comes from Ithaca and is dated to the 6th cent. BC. There is also extensive evidence about the importation of her cult in Arkadia in relation to Zeus’ local birth myths.

³⁴¹ In *Il.* 15.187–8, Rhea is the mother of Poseidon, Hades, and Zeus. In *Theog.* 453–8, Rhea begets Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Ares, Poseidon, and Zeus.

³⁴² Hipp. fr. 156 West. 156 West: ὁ Ἰππῶναξ Κύβηλιν τὴν Ῥέαν λέγει, παρὰ τὸ ἐν Κυβέλλα πόλει Φρυγίας τιμᾶσθαι.

³⁴³ Cf. remarkably Eur. *Bac.* 78–9: τὰ τε **ματρὸς** μεγάλας ὄρ- | για **Κυβέλας** θεμιτεύων. See Farnell (1907), 292 and Roller (1999), 170–1. The Derveni papyrus (end of 5th-4th cent. BC), Col. XXII.7–9, ed. Kouremenos et al. (2006), provides an example of the syncretism between Ge, Mother, Rhea, and Hera: Γῆ δὲ καὶ Μήτηρ καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Ἥρη ἡ αὐτή. ἐκλήθη δὲ | Γῆ μὲν νόμοι, Μήτηρ δ’ ὅτι ἐκ ταύτης πάντα γεται, | Γῆ καὶ Γαῖα κατὰ λῶσσαν ἐκάστοις. The second half of the column also stresses the parallel identification of Demeter and the Mother goddess with Ge, since “one name [belonged to] both goddesses, for it was the same” (ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἐν ὄνομα· | τὸ αὐτὸ γὰρ ἦν, Col. XXII.10–11).

³⁴⁴ Farnell (1907), 297 and Roller (1999), 172–3. According to Farnell (1907), 298–9 the proto-cult of Rhea as the Mother of the Gods migrated from Crete to the Hellenic world in old times, and the goddess gradually changed into a more “tranquil” Hellenic divinity, deprived of her orgiastic and frenzied aspects. It is with the reintroduction of a Phrygian version of this divinity called Cybele in the 5th century BC that the Greek cult of Rhea re-adopted its “tumultuous” aspects. It is widely accepted that Cretan Rhea and Phrygian Cybele correspond to the same divinity of ancient Anatolian populations.

with the Cretan tympanum, dances, and the clashing of shields.³⁴⁵ Similarly, the iconography of this goddess is composite, for she is both depicted as a maternal figure, with prominent breasts and snakes coiling around her, or as a warrior divinity, armed with helmet, bow, and spear.³⁴⁶ Moreover, she also typically appears as a mountain goddess guarded by lions.³⁴⁷

Herodotus briefly mentions Cybele's Lydian and Phrygian connections in Book 5, in relation to the burning of Sardis: "And so Sardis was burnt, and with it also the temple of the epichoric goddess Cybebe" (Καὶ Σάρδιες μὲν ἐνεπρήσθησαν, ἐν δὲ αὐτῇσι καὶ ἱρὸν ἐπιχωρίης θεοῦ Κυβήβης, 5.102.1).³⁴⁸ With regard to Cyzicus, in Book 4.76.2, Herodotus provides an interesting anecdote about the Cyzicenes' celebration of the Mother of the Gods and Anarchasis' experience with cultic performance during his return journey to Scythia, his home country. In particular, he vows to the goddess to perform sacrifices according to the Cyzicean custom (θύσειν τε κατὰ ταῦτά κατὰ ὥρα τοὺς Κυζικηνοὺς ποιεῦντας) and establish a nightly worship (παννυχίδα στήσειν) for her in his country, if she grants him a safe return.³⁴⁹ Anarchasis fulfills his return and, in Scythia, performs propitiation rituals for the Mother involving a small drum (τύμπανόν τε ἔχων) and images of the goddess hanged about himself (ἐκδησάμενος ἀγάλματα).³⁵⁰ Mentions of the mystery cults of Cybele appear in later sources, especially in

³⁴⁵ Roller (1999), 172–3 discusses the association of Cretan Rhea with these attributes.

³⁴⁶ Farnell (1907), 296.

³⁴⁷ Cf. again the chorus of Eur. *Bac.* 73–9: ὦ | μάκαρ, ὅστις εὐδαίμων | **τελετὰς θεῶν** εἰδὼς | βιοτὰν ἀγιστεύει καὶ | θιασεύεται ψυχὰν | **ἐν ὄρεσσι βακχεύων** | ὅσίοις καθαρμοῖσιν, | **τά τε ματρὸς μεγάλας ὄρ-** | **για Κυβέλας θεμιτεύων**. See also Roller (1999), 171 and 200.

³⁴⁸ The translation is my own. In this text, the spelling Cybebe is alternative to Cybele. Cf. also Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*, 31.1, for a reference to the temple of this goddess in Sardis.

³⁴⁹ Hdt. 4.76.2–3: καὶ εὖρε γὰρ τῇ μητρὶ τῶν θεῶν ἀνάγοντας τοὺς Κυζικηνοὺς ὀρτὴν μεγαλοπρεπέως κάρτα, **εὗξατο τῇ μητρὶ ὁ Ἀνάχαρσις**, ἣν σῶς καὶ ὑγιὲς ἀπονοστήσει ἐς ἑωυτοῦ, **θύσειν τε κατὰ ταῦτά κατὰ ὥρα τοὺς Κυζικηνοὺς ποιεῦντας καὶ παννυχίδα στήσειν**.

³⁵⁰ Hdt. 4.76.4. Anarchasis performs these rituals in secret, but someone sees him and reports to the Scythian king, who has Anarchasis killed. Herodotus' story about Anarchasis aims at demonstrating the Scythians' highly conservative mentality about foreign ritual.

Diodorus' *Bibliotheca* 5.48–9 and Strabo's *Geography* 10.3.7–9. Diodorus narrates the story of Iasion, a son of Zeus, whom the god himself initiates into the Samothracian mysteries.³⁵¹ During the marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia, Iasion's own sister, Electra, gifts to Iasion the sacred rites of the Great Mother of the Gods (τὰ τῆς μεγάλης καλουμένης μητρὸς τῶν θεῶν ἱερὰ, 5.49.1), along with the ritual instruments, namely, cymbals, kettledrums, and ritual paraphernalia (μετὰ κυμβάλων καὶ τυμπάνων καὶ τῶν ὀργιαζόντων, 5.49.1). Subsequently, Iasion marries Cybele and begets Corybas (5.49.2), who later brings to Phrygia the rites of the Great Mother of the Gods.³⁵² Hence, according to Diodorus, one version of the myth of Cybele, or the Great Mother, identifies Samothrace as the origin of the mysteries and argues for a later exportation of the rituals in Phrygia.³⁵³ With regard to Rhea, in 5.66.1, Diodorus maintains that to his day the Cretans still point to the foundations of Rhea's ancient house in Cnossus, thus acknowledging a source that connects the rites of the primeval goddess with Crete.³⁵⁴ Conversely, Strabo's brief mention provides a parallel reference to the “orgiastic rituals of the Mother of the Gods in Phrygia” (τοὺς τῆς μητρὸς τῶν θεῶν ὀργιασμοὺς ἐν τῇ Φρυγίᾳ) and on Mount Ida in the Troad

³⁵¹ Diod. 5.48. Iasion is the Samothracian counterpart of Attis.

³⁵² According to Diodorus, Dardanus, Iasion's brother, and Cybele participate in the eastward expedition: Δάρδανον καὶ Κυβέλην καὶ Κορύβαντα μετακομίσαι εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν τὰ τῆς μητρὸς τῶν θεῶν ἱερὰ καὶ συναπᾶραι εἰς Φρυγίαν.

³⁵³ Lehmann's (1951), 1–30 account of the excavation that the American School of Classical Studies at Athens and the New York University conducted in Samothrace between 1948 and 1949 includes the discovery of a “rock altar” of the kind found in Phrygia, which attests to the existence of cults of Rhea or Cybele in Samothrace. The rock appears to have been a site of worship before Greek settlers arrived to Samothrace and was later buried under the rotunda of Arsinoe. Lehmann (1951), 23 notably remarks that “[t]he [Hellenistic] New Temple”, thus, forms an important, though not necessarily the only, link between a primitive Greek tradition and an outstanding feature of late antique and later occidental architecture”.

³⁵⁴ This seems to be the place that Sir Arthur Evans identified as the temple of the “Mother Goddess”. See Evans (1921), 151–63.

Apollonius' depiction of Rhea as the Mother of the Gods captures some of the goddess' original traits. In Book 1, she is clearly connected with the mountain landscape and wildlife of Mt. Dindymon.³⁵⁶ Instead of presenting her as an orgiastic goddess whose rites induce bacchic frenzy, Apollonius attaches to the character of Rhea a certain conspicuous dignity, which certainly emerges in Mopsus' account of the respect that the goddess receives even from Zeus (Ζεὺς αὐτὸς Κρονίδης ὑποχάζεται, 1.101).³⁵⁷ A notable reference to Rhea as a "serious" goddess also occurs in Orpheus' cosmogonic song (1.494–511).³⁵⁸

ὥς τε βίη καὶ χερσὶν ὁ μὲν Κρόνῳ εἵκαθε τιμῆς, 505
ἢ δὲ Ῥέη, ἔπεσον δ' ἐνὶ κύμασιν Ὠκεανοῖο·
οἱ δὲ τέως μακάρεσσι θεοῖς Τιτῆσιν ἄνασσον,
ὄφρα Ζεὺς ἔτι κοῦρος, ἔτι φρεσὶ νήπια εἰδώς,
Δικταῖον ναίεσκεν ὑπὸ σπέρος, οἱ δέ μιν οὐ πῶ

³⁵⁸ Schaaf (2014), 75 comments on the first occurrence of Rhea in Orpheus' cosmogonic song in the context of the first dispute among the Argonauts "which threatened to destroy the heroes' community".

“[He sang of] how a violent struggle caused them to yield their positions of honour, [Ophion] to Kronos and [Eurynome] to Rheia, and to fall into the waves of Ocean. **Kronos and Rheia then ruled over the blessed Titan gods, while Zeus was still a young boy**, still with the thoughts of an infant, and lived in the Diktaian cave: the earth-born Kyklopes had not yet armed him with his blazing bolts, his thunder, and his lightning—the weapons which guarantee Zeus his glory”.

Nevertheless, the Argonauts’ institution of a ritual for the Mother Goddess involves solemn ritual gestures, such as the construction of an altar, animal sacrifices, and libations, as well as ritual dancing and music. The Argonauts appear to approach the ritual performance by splitting into groups: individual heroes such as Jason and Argos perform separate ritual actions including the crafting of an image of the goddess, the sacrifice, prayer, and libations, whereas “altogether the young ones” (ἄμυδις δὲ νέοι, 1.1134) engage in an armed dance under Orpheus’ instructions (Ορφεῖος ἀνωγῆ, 1.1134). Hence, the establishment of the Dindymian cult of Rhea follows a hierarchical structure, but it is marked as a communal effort. The composite character of the ritual also reflects in the multicultural aspects of Rhea, which Apollonius recalls during Jason’s prayer and invocation (1.1123–31). Rhea is the “Mother of Dindymon, mistress of many” (Μητέρα Δινδυμίνην πολυπότνια, 1.1125), the “inhabitant of Phrygia” (ἐνναέτιν Φρυγίης, 1.1126), and the “Idaian Mother” (Μητέρος Ἰδαίης, 1.1128), by whose side the Cretan Dactyls from Mount Ida (Δάκτυλοι Ἰδαῖοι Κρηταιέες, 1.1129), Titias and Kyllenos, are sitting (πάρεδροι,

1.1127).³⁵⁹ Additionally, the recurring presence of the oak tree (1.1121, 1123–4), one of Rhea’s sacred symbols, correlates the goddess with the iconography of Zeus in Greek lore.³⁶⁰

Conclusively, Phrygian, Cretan, and Greek titles and symbols of the goddess come together in the foundation of her cult on Mount Dindymon. Apollonius’ brief mention of the Samothracian mysteries on the island of Electra, presided over by the local divinities of the Cabiri, enriches an overall culturally complex picture (1.915–21).³⁶¹ From the perspective of the ritual agents, the Argonauts work as a team to establish the cult of a foreign divinity in a non-Greek region and gain the goddess’ favor. The Mother’s influence on the sphere of fertility emerges at the end of the episode as a reward, as she causes the mountain to flourish (1.1140–51).

The arrival of the Argonauts to Cyzicus marks the destruction of the Doliones, but their ritual of propitiation for the Mother of the Gods bring new life to Dindymon. The twelve days of storm during which the Argonauts are stuck in Cyzicus clearly represent a means of punishment for the heroes. As I argue later in the chapter, the number twelve returns in the Syrtis episode as a marker of divine punishment. In this respect, the punishment of the Argonauts in Book 1 does not only concern the heroes’ involuntary extermination of the Cyzicean men but also pertains to their earlier massacre of the earthborn giants (1.989–1011).³⁶² The primeval Γηγενέες are sons of

³⁵⁹ Apollonius mentions only two *daimones* whom he considers to be really at the goddess’ service. These divinities were otherwise three, five, or nine in other sources. This version of their birth in Crete seems to have derived from Stesimbrotus of Thasos, a logographer from the 5th cent. BC (107 F 12 Jacoby). The nymph Anchiale occurs only here and is otherwise unknown. See Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 221.

³⁶⁰ Cf. *Schol. ad Apollon. Rhod.* 1.1124 for the oak tree as a sacred attribute of Rhea.

³⁶¹ At the bidding of Orpheus, the Argonauts disembark to propitiate the Cabiri, local divinities whom Apollonius does not name here but whose cults are mentioned in Herodotus’ Book 2.51. According to Diodorus 4.43.1–2, initiation into the mysteries of the Cabiri provided protection in sailing. On the Samothracian mysteries, see Schaaf (2014), 63–9. See also Chapter 1, pp. 60–2.

³⁶² Thalmann (2011), 100 maintains that “The destruction they inflict on the Gegeneis and Doliones alters Kyzikos as relational space in favor of a new relational version, an essentially colonialist perception of its space, although one not free of contradictions”.

Gaia, who is also the mother of Rhea in traditional accounts (*Theog.* 135). Hence, the Argonauts' fight with the Earthborn is a fight with Gaia's own stock and, ultimately, Rhea's siblings from a Greek theogonic perspective.³⁶³ The giants' kinship with both Rhea and Gaia is perhaps an easily overlooked aspect of this episode, which is so much more focused on the Argonauts' superiority over—and infamous treatment of—the earthborn stock. Indeed, after killing all the giants, the Argonauts line up their bodies on the seashore, as prey for fish and birds (ἄμφω ἅμ' οἰωνοῖσι καὶ ἰχθύσι κύρμα γενέσθαι, 1.1011). The poet expands this final glimpse at the giants' unburied corpses through a simile comparing them with long planks that carpenters cut with an axe and dispose of on the shore (1.1003–11). The assimilation of the Earthborn with severed tree trunks suggests an even stronger bond between the giants and the wooded landscape of Mount Dindymon, where the Argonauts later establish the rituals.³⁶⁴ Accordingly, the ritual of propitiation for the “mother of all the blessed ones” (μητέρα συμπάντων μακάρων, 1.1904), the formula that Mopsus uses when he interprets the bird omen, is perhaps also alluding to another mother, Gaia, the mother of the decimated giants, as well as of Rhea. This ambiguity regarding the identity of the “mother” effects the ritual cults to be inclusive of both Rhea and Gaia and,

³⁶³ Clauss (1993), 165 discusses the Cyzicus episode in terms of ritual atonement for Rhea, whom he identifies with Gaia following the tradition found in tragedy, such as Aesch. *Supp.* 892, Soph. *Ph.* 391 (164 n. 33). In contrast, Hesiod's *Theogony* 131–6 clearly differentiates between the two goddesses by referring to Rhea as one of Gaia's children from Ouranos. In my view, it would seem more likely that Apollonius follows the Hesiodic tradition in this episode to emphasize the greater divide between earthborn and divine children of Rhea, such as Zeus. See also Murray (2024), 258–73 on “racecraft” as an interpretative lens in the Cyzicean episode. Remarkably, Murray (2024), 267 characterizes the Argonauts' massacre of the Earthborn as a “monster-slaying adventure”, in contrast with the death of the Doliones who instead retain a heroic status and receive proper burial. In her conclusions, Murray (2024), 273 maintains that: “... the ritual worshiping of Rhea that the heroes must perform on Bear Mountain hints that they have provoked divine anger from Gaia for leaving those Gegenees' corpses unburied on the shore”, even if, as she earlier argues (265), “on the surface of Apollonius' narrative, the Argonauts get away with their treatment of the Gegenees”. Again, the genealogical connection between Gaia and Rhea seems to validate the idea of divine punishment for both the massacre of earthborn giants and Doliones.

³⁶⁴ Cf. 1.1117–22, for a description of the Dindymean forest.

accordingly, to fulfill the heroes' atonement for both the Doliones' and the Gegenees' massacres. The accomplishment of a double atonement is particularly significant from an ethnic perspective, since the two wronged groups do not share the same indigenous background. While the Earthborn are an autochthonous population of Dindymon, the king of the Doliones, Cyzicus, descends from Greek and Thracian ancestors.³⁶⁵ Apollonius, in fact, characterizes Cyzicus as the son of Aineus, whom the *scholia* identify as of Thessalian origin, perhaps a descendant of Apollo and Stilbe (*schol.* P), who migrated from Thessaly to the Hellespont area.³⁶⁶ Cyzicus' mother, Ainete, is instead the daughter of Eusoros (1.949–50), a mythical king of Thrace whose name and genealogy also occur in Homer (*Il.* 2.844, 6.8).³⁶⁷ Additionally, Apollonius remarks that the Doliones descend from Poseidon and, for this reason, they are protected from the Gegenees' attacks (1.951–2): τοὺς δ' οὔτι καὶ ἔκπαγλοί περ ἔόντες | Γηγενέες σίνοντο, **Ποσειδάωνος ἄρωγῃ**: | τοῦ γὰρ ἔσαν τὰ πρῶτα Δολίονες ἐκγεγαῶτες.³⁶⁸ The cohabitation of Doliones and Gegenees in the territory, albeit in different areas of the region—the Gegenees dwell on Mount Dindymon (1.941–3) whereas the Doliones on the Cyzicean plain and the isthmus (1.947–8)—is therefore regulated on religious bases according to the influence of Poseidon. The separate slaughters of both peoples prevent the Argonauts from proceeding on the journey before they re-establish the local religious order. As a matter of fact, the heroes are unable to sail off the coast of

³⁶⁵ 1.948–50: ἐν δ' ἥρωις Αἰνήϊος υἱὸς ἄνασσεν | Κύζικος, ὃν κούρη διῶ τέκεν Εὐσώροιο | Αἰνήτη....

³⁶⁶ *Schol. ad. Ap. Rhod. A.* 936–49. P–R Wendel: P: “ἥρωις Αἰνήϊος”: Κυζίκου πατὴρ Αἰνεύς, Απόλλωνος παῖς καὶ Στύλβης <...> ὅθεν καὶ πόλις ὠνόμασται. <...> μητρὸς δὲ Εὐανθείας. μετέστη δὲ ἐκ Θεσσαλίας καὶ ὄκησε περὶ τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον. Q: “ἐν δ' ἥρωις Αἰνήϊος”: ὅτι ὁ Αἰνεύς Θετταλὸς ὢν τὸ γένος ὄκησεν ἐν Ἑλλήσποντῳ. γήμας δὲ Εὐσώρου βασιλέως τῶν Θρακῶν Αἰνήτην, γεννᾷ Κύζικον, ἀφ' οὗ ἡ πόλις. Εὐσώρου δὲ υἱὸς Ἀκάμας, ὃν Ὅμηρος ἐν τῇ Βοιωτίᾳ (B 844) ἡγεῖσθαι Θρακῶν ἅμα τῷ Πείρῳ <φησὶν>. R: “δίου Εὐσώροιο”: τοῦ ἐνδόξου Εὐσώρου ἢ θυγάτηρ. Εὐσώρος δὲ Θράκης βασιλεύς: Ὅμηρος (Z 8) “υἱὸν Εὐσώρου Ἀκάμαντ' ἦν τε μέγαν τε”.

³⁶⁷ *Schol. ad. Ap. Rhod. A.* 936–49. Q and R Wendel.

³⁶⁸ Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 202–3 comment that the Doliones' kinship with Poseidon is otherwise undocumented.

Cyzicus and proceed on their journey at sea, the domain of Poseidon. By propitiating Rhea and Gaia as “mothers” of Dindymon, the Argonauts atone for the massacre of the Doliones, Greek-like people connected with Thessaly, and the Gegenees, the autochthonous inhabitants of the region.

Colchis: Hecate

Hecate as a Local Goddess

The cult of Hecate is central in Apollonius' Colchian world.³⁶⁹ In Book 3, Jason performs a ritual invocation for the goddess, who strikingly appears in her anthropomorphic form. Remarkably, this is Hecate's only extant epiphany in Greek literature.

Arg. 3.1201–24

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἶδε χῶρον ὃ τις πάτου ἔκτοθεν ἦεν
ἀνθρώπων, καθαρῇσιν ὑπεύδιος εἰαμενῆσιν,
ἔνθ' ἦτοι πάμπρωτα λοέσσατο μὲν ποταμοῖο
εὐαγέως θείοιο τέρεν δέμας, ἀμφὶ δὲ φᾶρος
ἔσσατο κυάνεον, τὸ μὲν οἱ πάρος ἐγγυάλιζεν

1205

Λημνιάς Ὑψιπύλῃ, ἀδινῆς μνημήιον εὐνῆς.
πήχυιον δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα πέδῳ ἐνὶ βόθρον ὀρύζας,
νήησεν σχίζας, ἐπὶ δ' ἀρνειοῦ τάμε λαιμόν,
αὐτόν τ' εὖ καθύπερθε τανύσσατο· δαΐε δὲ φειτροῦς

³⁶⁹ For Hecate in the *Argonautica* see especially Zybert (2008), 373–92, Schaaf (2014), 144–222. On Hecate’s shrine in Colchis, see Thalmann (2011), 115–8. On Hecate in ancient Greek religion, see Johnston (1999), 203–49 and Rudloff (1999).

πῦρ ὑπένερθεν ἰεῖς, ἐπὶ δὲ μιγάδας χέε λοιβάς, 1210

Βριμῶ κικλήσκων Ἑκάτην ἐπαρωγὸν ἀέθλων.

καὶ ῥ' ὁ μὲν ἀγκαλέσας πάλιν ἔστιχεν· ἡ δ' αἶουσα

κευθμῶν ἐξ ὑπάτων δεινὴ θεὸς ἀντεβόλησεν

ἱροῖς Αἰσονίδαο. περίξ δέ μιν ἐστεφάνωντο

σμερδαλέοι δρυῖνοισι μετὰ πτόρθοισι δράκοντες· 1215

στράπτε δ' ἀπειρέσιον δαΐδων σέλας· ἀμφὶ δὲ τήν γε

ὀξεῖη ὕλακῃ χθόνιοι κύνες ἐφθέγγοντο.

πέισσα δ' ἔτρεμε πάντα κατὰ στίβον· αἱ δ' ὀλόλυξαν

νύμφαι ἔλειονόμοι ποταμηίδες, αἱ περὶ κείνην

Φάσιδος εἰαμένην Ἀμαραντίου εἰλίσσοντο. 1220

Αἰσονίδην δ' ἦτοι μὲν ἔλεν δέος, ἀλλὰ μιν οὐδ' ὥς

ἐντροπαλιζόμενον πόδες ἔκφερον, ὄφρ' ἐτάροισι

μίκτο κιών. ἤδη δὲ φόως νιφόεντος ὑπερθεν

Καυκάσου ἠριγενῆς Ἥως βάλεν ἀντέλλουσα.

“When he found a place set apart from men’s paths, open to the skies in the midst of pure water-meadows, he first of all bathed his tender body in the holy river as ritual demanded, and then dressed in the dark robe which Lemnian Hypsipyle once gave to him, to remind him of their sweet love-making. **After this he dug a trench a cubit long in the earth and made a heap of cut wood; then he slit the sheep’s throat over the pit and stretched its body over the fire in accordance with the rite. He lit the wood by putting in fire at the bottom, and poured out over it a mingled libation, calling upon Brimo Hekate to assist him in the contest. Having**

summoned her, he retreated. **Hearing the call, the dread goddess came from the furthest depths** to accept the sacrifices of the son of Aison. Around her head was a garland of terrible snakes entwined with oak-branches, and her torches flashed out a blinding brightness; all around her was the piercing bark of hellish dogs. All the fields trembled at her approach; the marsh-dwelling nymphs of the river who dance around that meadow of the Amarantian Phasis screamed aloud. **The son of Aison was seized by fear**, but even so he did not turn around as his feet carried him back to find his companions; already early-born Dawn was scattering her light as she rose above the snowy Caucasus”.

In this remarkable scene, Jason invokes Hecate to be his “helper in the labors” (ἐπαρωγὸν ἀέθλων, 3.1211). The goddess is otherwise associated with the royal family of Colchis and, especially, with Medea, who is her priestess.³⁷⁰ The cult of Hecate is also closely rooted in the Colchian territory, as the existence of a temple dedicated to the goddess in the Colchian royal capital demonstrates (3.738, and 842).³⁷¹ Evidence of Hecate’s cults in Colchis is well discussed in scholarship, and there are even scholars who argue that she originated as a Colchian divinity.³⁷² Notably, Vakhtang Ličheli investigates the so-called Hecatean mysteries of Vani, by comparing the accounts of Greek literary sources with the archaeological discovery in 1978 of a large pit in the lower terrace of the city-site.³⁷³ In particular, Ličheli considers ps.-Plutarch’s

³⁷⁰ Cf. 3.252: θεῆς αὐτὴ πέλεν **ἁρήτειρα**. Hecate is the daughter of the titan Perses (*Theog.* 409–11, *Arg.* 3.467, 478, 1035, 4.1020). Perses, in certain versions of the myth, is a brother of Aeetes, who eventually marries Hecate and has two daughters from her, Medea and Circe (Diod. 4.45.2).

³⁷¹ Thalmann (2011), 115–8 characterizes the shrine of Hecate as an “ambivalent space”. Specifically, he argues that: “The shrine to Hekate celebrates Jason’s success in gaining the fleece, but it also commemorates the magic that was the condition of that success; it is a thank offering for the drugs that made him invincible”.

³⁷² Ličheli (1990), 2 n. 3 provides useful references to local Georgian scholarship.

³⁷³ Ličheli (1990), 1.

description of Hecate's mysteries in his treatise "On Rivers" (*Mor.* 5.5), arguing that the author's description seems to align with the archaeological evidence.³⁷⁴ However, Ličheli does not take into account Apollonius' narration of Jason's propitiation ritual and invocation of Hecate. Part of the ritual indeed consists in digging a pit in the ground (πέδω ἐνὶ βόθρον ὀρύξας) and performing, first, an animal sacrifice and, then, a libation on top of it (3.1207–10). Thus, Jason's excavation of the pit in the ground precedes the invocation of the chthonic goddess, who aptly emerges from the "deepest hollows" (κευθμῶν ἐξ ὑπάτων, 3.1213). The epithet δεινή, which Apollonius attributes to Hecate in the epiphany scene, also characterizes Rhea in 1.1102. In this respect, scholars have argued in favor of the overlapping of the two divine figures in the *Argonautica*.³⁷⁵ Along these lines, Hecate might be considered as a "Mother Goddess of Colchis". Moreover, in the *Argonautica*, both Rhea and Hecate are associated with local mystery cults: the former with the Samothracian mysteries, the latter with "the nightly mysteries of the maiden daughter of Perses" (νυκτιπόλου Περσηίδος ὄργια κούρης, 4.1020), by which Medea herself swears during her stay in Drepanē.

Furthermore, David Braund discusses the so-called "Vani inscription", a bronze tablet dated to ca. 300 BC, which bears an inscription naming several gods in succession: Earth, Sun, Moon.³⁷⁶ The text of the inscription is in Greek letters: ΓΗ-ΚΑΙ-Ο-ΗΛΙΟΣ-ΚΑΙ-Ο-ΜΕΙΣ. The last divinity, ὁ Μείς, was a Moon divinity also represented on a type of Colchian didrachms from the 5th century BC.³⁷⁷ Coins provide additional evidence of the portrait of Hecate as a three-

³⁷⁴ Ličheli (1990), 4–5.

³⁷⁵ Ličheli (1990), 1–8 and Zybert (2008), 390.

³⁷⁶ Braund (1994), 138–9. The edition is Kauchtschischwili (2009), 149–50, who claims that the original text also included local Colchian divinities called Theoi Megistoi. The full text of the inscription is provided in Appendix 1.

³⁷⁷ For the identification of Μείς as a moon divinity see Strab. 12.3.31. In his seminal work on Georgian numismatics, Ivane A. Javakhishvili (1925) argues that the moon was the primary divinity of ancient Georgian

headed goddess, and of her association with several symbols, most importantly, the moon and the bull's head. Remarkably, both symbols have significant roles in the *Argonautica*. Imagery of bulls is notably related to the figure of Aeetes and his palace.³⁷⁸ With regard to the Moon, the poet attributes to her a remarkable cameo toward the end of the Colchian episode, as she appears to show her enjoyment at Medea's pain, seeing her flight from Colchis:

Arg. 4.54–65

τὴν δὲ νέον **Τιτηνὶς** ἀνερχομένη περάτηθεν
φοιταλέην ἐσιδοῦσα **θεὰ** ἐπεχίρατο **Μήνη** 55
ἀρπαλέως, καὶ τοῖα μετὰ φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἔειπεν·
“οὐκ ἄρ’ ἐγὼ μούνη μετὰ Λάτμιον ἄντρον ἀλύσκω,
οὐδ’ οἷα καλῶ περιδαίομαι Ἐνδυμίωνι.
ἦ θαμὰ δὴ καὶ σεῖο, κύον, δολίησιν ἀοιδαῖς
μνησαμένη φιλότητος, ἵνα σκοτίῃ ἐνὶ νυκτὶ 60
φαρμάσσης εὐκηλος, ἃ τοι φίλα ἔργα τέτυκται.
νῦν δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ δῆθεν ὁμοίης ἔμμορες ἄτης,
δῶκε δ’ ἀνιηρόν τοι Ἰήсона πῆμα γενέσθαι
δαίμων ἀλγινόεις. ἀλλ’ ἔρχεο, τέτλαθι δ’ ἔμπης,
καὶ πινυτὴ περ ἐοῦσα, πολύστονον ἄλγος ἀείρειν.” 65

tribes. Moreover, the cult of Μεῖς was typical in the hinterland, while Hecate was mostly worshiped on the coastal areas.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Aeetes' bronze-hoofed bulls (χαλκόποδας ταύρους, 3.230). Also, Jason's murder of Apsyrtus is compared to a butcher slaughtering a bull (βουτύπος ὥς τε μέγαν κεραλκέα | ταῦρον, 4.468).

“**The daughter of Titan, the goddess Moon**, was just rising from the horizon and saw her in her mad haste; she rejoiced with malicious pleasure as she reflected to herself: “I’m not the only one then to skulk off to the Latmian cave, nor is it only I who burn with desire for fair Endymion. Ah! How many times have your treacherous incantations caused me to hide when my mind was full of love, so that in the gloom of night and without disturbance you could work with your drugs in the way that brings you pleasure. But now you yourself, it would seem, are a victim of a madness like mine; **a cruel god has given you Jason to cause you grief and pain**. Be off then and for all your cleverness learn to put up with a misery that will bring you much lamentation””.

The term μήνη to refer to the moon is rare, as opposed to the more common σελήνη; before Apollonius, it appears only two times in the *Iliad* (19.374, 23.455) and once in the *Prometheus Bound* (797). The stem μην- forms the oblique cases of the Greek noun (ὁ) μείς, whose primary meaning in Greek is “month”. The meanings “crescent moon” or “phase of the moon corresponding to the month part” occur very rarely. By choosing to refer to the Moon goddess as Μήνη rather than Μείς, I suggest that Apollonius might be avoiding the ambiguity originating from the prevalent meaning of μείς. Furthermore, supposing that Apollonius was familiar with the local name of the Colchian Moon goddess, he would be conferring on the Moon goddess a conspicuously Colchian profile.

Hecate’s Intermediary Role in Jason’s Task

Apollonius’ characterization of Hecate as a local divinity has an impact on other aspects of the narrative. For instance, after the performance of rituals for the Colchian goddess, Jason’s character develops in a remarkable way. Specifically, for the first and only time in the poem,

Jason is assimilated to both Ares and Apollo: “His body was naked, and in different ways he resembled both Ares and Apollo of the golden sword” (καὶ ξίφος ἄμφ’ ὤμοις—, γυμνὸς δέμας, ἄλλα μὲν Ἄρει | εἵκελος, ἄλλα δέ που χρυσαόρω Ἀπόλλωνι, 3.1282–3). Apollonius’ depiction of Hecate as Jason’s “helper” (ἐπαρωγός, 3.1211) and, consequently, as a source of divine strength for the hero is also reminiscent of Hesiod’s portrayal of the goddess in the *Theogony*.³⁷⁹ In the so-called “Hymn to Hecate” (*Th.* 411–52), Hesiod introduces Hecate as a divinity who earned a place in Zeus’ pantheon (*Th.* 411–5), but whose privileges belong originally to the former order of the Titans (ὅσσ’ ἔλαχεν Τιτῆσι μέτα προτέροισι θεοῖσιν, 424).³⁸⁰ Hecate’s role in human affairs is particularly prominent: Hesiod explains that anyone who, even in his times, wishes to perform sacrifices “according to the norm” and to seek the gods’ approval, invokes Hecate.

Th. 416–20

καὶ γὰρ νῦν, ὅτε ποὺ τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
 ἔρδων ἱερὰ καλὰ κατὰ νόμον ἰλάσκηται,
 κυκλήσκει Ἑκάτην· πολλή τέ οἱ ἔσπετο τιμὴ
 ῥεῖα μάλ’, ᾧ πρόφρων γε θεὰ ὑποδέξεται εὐχάς,

³⁷⁹ Zybert (2008), 383 notes the verbal parallels between Apollonius and Hesiod’s *Theogony* (426: μουννογενής, 450: κουροτρόφος) and concludes that the Hellenistic poet drew from Hesiod for his characterization of Hecate. For an overview of Hecate in Hesiod, see Rudloff (1999), 6–20.

³⁸⁰ *Th.* 411–5: ἡ δ’ ὑποκυσαμένη Ἑκάτην τέκε, τὴν περὶ πάντων | Ζεὺς Κρονίδης τίμησε· πόρεν δέ οἱ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα, | μοῖραν ἔχειν γαίης τε καὶ ἀτρυγέτοιο θαλάσσης. | ἡ δὲ καὶ ἀστερόεντος ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἔμμορε τιμῆς, | ἀθανάτοις τε θεοῖσι τετιμένη ἐστὶ μάλιστα. “There she conceived and bore Hecate, **whom Zeus honored above all others**; he gave her dazzling gifts, **a share of the earth and a share of the barren sea. She was given a place of honor in the starry sky**, and among the deathless gods her rank is high”, translation by Athanassakis [2004]). Moreover, Hesiod states that nobody, not even Zeus, has ever tried to take anything away from Hecate (οὐδέ τί μιν Κρονίδης ἐβήσατο οὐδέ τ’ ἀπηύρα, *Th.* 423).

“For even now, **when a mortal propitiates the gods**
and, following custom, sacrifices well-chosen victims,
he invokes Hekate, and if she receives his prayers
with favor, then great honor goes to him with ease,
 and he is given **blessings, because she has power**”.³⁸¹

The various circumstances in which Hecate assists humans include “the assembly” (ἐν τ’ ἀγορῇ, 430), “war” (ἐς πόλεμον, 431), in which case she “stands by” those men for whom she wants to accomplish victory and glory (ἄνδρες, ἔνθα θεὰ **παρὰγίνεται**, οἷς κ’ ἐθέλησι | νίκην προφρονέως ὀπάσαι καὶ κῦδος ὀρέξαι, 432–3), “in judgment by the side of kings” (ἐν τε δίκη βασιλεῦσι παρ’ αἰδοίοισι, 434), “whenever men compete in an athletic contest” (ὅπότε ἄνδρες ἀεθλεύωσ’ ἐν ἀγῶνι, 435), and horsemanship (439). In the next section, Hesiod explains in detail Hecate’s intervention in human affairs in conjunction with other gods. For instance, Hesiod says that the fisherman who wants to ensure a good catch prays to both Poseidon and Hecate to fill his nets (439–43).³⁸² Finally, Hesiod stresses Hecate’s role as a “nurse” of all humans:

Th. 448–52

οὕτω τοι καὶ **μουνογενῆς** ἐκ μητρὸς ἐοῦσα
 πᾶσι μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι τετίμηται γεράεσσι.

³⁸¹ Translation modified from Athanassakis (2004).

³⁸² Next, Hesiod provides the parallel example of the man who, wishing to increase the number of his cattle or sheep, prays to Hecate alongside Hermes (444–7).

θήκε δέ μιν Κρονίδης **κουροτρόφον**, οἷ **μετ' ἐκείνην** 450

ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἴδοντο φάος πολυδερκέος Ἡοῦς.

οὕτως ἐξ ἀρχῆς κουροτρόφος, αἷ δέ τε τιμαί.

“And even though she was her mother’s **only child**

she has her share of honors among all the gods.

The son of Kronos made her the **fostering goddess for all youths**

who **after her** [birth] saw the light of wakeful Dawn.

A nurturer of youths from the beginning, she holds these honors”.

In her seminal work *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, Jenny Clay discusses the role of Hecate in the *Theogony* in relation to both Zeus’ new divine order and human religious activities.³⁸³ Hecate, a goddess belonging to the previous divine regime but retaining the privileges that Cronus assigned her even under Zeus’ rule, functions as an intermediary between the old and the new order.³⁸⁴ As Clay demonstrates, Hesiod establishes the concept of Hecate’s mediatory role on different grounds, especially regarding her interceding position in cultic activities, whereby she bestows great honor (πολλή... τιμή, 418) and happiness (ὄλβον, 420) upon those whose prayers she receives “of her free will” (ὃ **πρόφρων** γε θεὰ ὑποδέξεται εὐχάς, 419).³⁸⁵ On this note, Clay maintains that Hecate is not a “willing goddess” but a “willful goddess”, that is, “the one by

³⁸³ Clay (2003), 22–4 and 129–40.

³⁸⁴ Clay (2003), 131 and 138.

³⁸⁵ Clay (2003), 133: “... Zeus appears to divert the great powers of the goddess away from the gods onto the world of men where her good will and support lead to success in all areas of human endeavor”. Also, Clay (2003), 138: “Hecate mediates not only between the old and the new order, the Titans and the Olympians: her powers bridge the three spheres of the cosmos, and she forms the crucial intermediary between gods and men”.

whose will – ἔκατι – prayers are fulfilled and success granted”.³⁸⁶ By etymologizing Hecate’s name, Clay submits that Hesiod depicts Hecate’s interventions in the human sphere as dependent on the goddess’ will and arbitrary response to human prayers.³⁸⁷ Moreover, she also argues that Hesiod’s *Theogony* endorses Hecate’s mediatory role in all kinds of religious activities since any communication between humans and gods should begin with a prayer or a sacrifice.³⁸⁸

Hecate’s role as an intermediary between human and divine spheres is a suggestive lens for interpreting her role in the *Argonautica*. As already discussed, Hecate is one of the “local gods” (ἐνναέταις τε θεοῖς) whom Jason invokes upon his arrival in Colchis (2.1271–5).³⁸⁹ Hecate’s auxiliary role in both military and athletic contexts is already clear in the Hesiodic tradition (431–3, 435–9), and the goddess’ support appears therefore suitable for assisting Jason in accomplishing Aeetes’ task.³⁹⁰ Specifically, Hecate is propitious to men competing for “a beautiful prize”:

Th. 435–9

ἐσθλή δ’ αὖθ’ ὁπότε ἄνδρες ἀεθλεύουσ’ ἐν ἀγῶνι,

ἔνθα θεὰ καὶ τοῖς παραγίνεται ἡδ’ ὀνίνησι·

νικήσας δὲ βίη καὶ κάρτει, καλὸν ἄθλον

ῥεῖα φέρει χαίρων τε, τοκεῦσι δὲ κῦδος ὀπάξει

³⁸⁶ Clay (2003), 136.

³⁸⁷ Clay (2003), 137: “... Hesiod develops Hecate’s functions by etymologizing her name; [...] Similarly, Hesiod connects the name of Hecate to such common phrases as ἔκητι Διός and οὐκ ἀεκήτι θεῶν”.

³⁸⁸ Clay (2003), 137.

³⁸⁹ Besides the local gods, the other divinities Jason invokes and propitiates with a libation once the Argo reaches Colchis are Gaia and the souls of the dead heroes: αὐτὸς δ’ Αἰσονίδης χρυσέῳ ποταμόνδε κυπέλλῳ | οἴνου ἀκηρασίοιο μελισταγέας χέε λαιβάς | Γαίη τ’ ἐνναέταις τε θεοῖς ψυχαῖς τε καμόντων | ἡρώων... (2.1271–4).

³⁹⁰ See Stephens (2021), 3–14 for a discussion of the athletic context underlying Jason’s task.

“Again, is a noble goddess **when men compete**
for athletic prizes, because **she stands by them and helps**,
and whoever, **by force and strength**, wins a **fair prize**,
carries it away with ease and **joy** and brings his parents **glory**”.³⁹¹

Hesiod’s explanation of Hecate’s assistance in the athletic context elucidates her role as a helper in Jason’s contest. Particularly, Apollonius’ language and themes are analogous to Hesiod’s general remarks about propitiating the goddess in the “Hymn to Hecate”:

Arg. 3.1211–4

Βριμῶ **κυκλήσκων Ἑκάτην** ἐπαρωγὸν ἀέθλων.
καί ῥ’ ὁ μὲν **ἀγκαλέσας** πάλιν ἔστιχεν· ἡ δ’
αἴουσα]
κευθμῶν ἐξ ὑπάτων **δεινὴ θεὸς ἀντεβόλησεν**
ἱροῖς Αἰσονίδαο]³⁹²

Th. 416–20

καὶ γὰρ νῦν, ὅτε ποῦ τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
ἔρδων ἱερὰ καλὰ κατὰ νόμον ἰλάσκηται,
κυκλήσκει Ἑκάτην· πολλή τέ οἱ ἔσπετο τιμὴ
ῥεῖα μάλ’, ὃ **πρόφρων γε θεὰ ὑποδέξεται εὐχάς**,
καὶ τέ οἱ ὄλβον ὀπάξει, ἐπεὶ δύνاميς γε πάρεστιν.

Apollonius marks out Jason’s invocation with the reduplicated form *κυκλήσκω* (3.1211), which also occurs in Hesiod’s “Hymn to Hecate” (*Th.* 418).³⁹³ In both texts, the accusative *Ἑκάτην* follows the verbal forms from *κυκλήσκω*. Apollonius’ version vividly represents the outcome of the ritual that Hesiod outlines by providing an image of Jason’s ritual performance and of the goddess’ epiphany. Specifically, Jason performs a sacrifice which the goddess comes

³⁹¹ Translation by Athanassakis (2004).

³⁹² Vian (1980), ad v., marks line 3.1213 as uncertain. The reading ὑπάτων is preserved in all the manuscripts, the papyrus Berolinensis, and the *scholia*.

³⁹³ For the use of *κυκλήσκω* in hymnic language, see Malamis (2024), 199–273, especially 222–4.

to receive (δεινὴ θεὸς ἀντεβόλησεν | ἱροῖς Αἰσονίδαο, 3.1213–4) by ascending from below the earth (κευθμῶν ἐξ ὑπάτων, 3.1213).³⁹⁴ This stage of the ritual recalls Hesiod’s statement that the goddess favors whoever performs “beautiful sacrifices according to the norm” (ἔρδων ἱερὰ καλὰ κατὰ νόμον, *Th.* 417) and thus receives his prayers “willingly” (πρόφρων γε θεὰ ὑποδέξεται εὐχάς, *Th.* 419). Accordingly, Hecate fulfills Jason’s prayer that she may be a helper of the task (ἐπαρωγὸν ἀέθλων 3.1211). Apollonius’ epithet ἐπαρωγός matches the overall theme of Hesiod’s “Hymn”, which emphasizes Hecate’s assisting role through recurring expressions such as “she stands by and greatly favors whoever she wishes” (ᾧ δ’ ἐθέλη, μέγας πω παραγίνεται ἡ δ’ ὀνίνησιν, *Th.* 428).

Jason’s performance of the ritual sacrifice is not the only episode in which he resorts to praying to Hecate as a local goddess. During his first meeting with Medea, Jason beseeches the young woman by Hecate, her own parents, and Zeus (πρὸς σ’ αὐτῆς Ἑκάτης μελίσσομαι ἡδὲ τοκήων καὶ Διός, 3.985–6) to help him win the contest (3.983–4). The meeting takes place in the Colchian sanctuary of Hecate. Shortly after, the hero tells Medea that he would probably not be able to overcome the difficult test by himself (οὐ γὰρ ἄνευθεν | ὑμείων στονόεντος ὑπέρτερος ἔσσομ’ ἀέθλου, 3.988–9).³⁹⁵ Jason’s phrase οὐ ἄνευθεν ὑμείων, “not without you (all)”, could imply Medea’s partnership with—or reliance on—another agent, plausibly Hecate.³⁹⁶ Hecate’s

³⁹⁴ Regarding the reading ὑπάτων, Hunter (1989), 231 ad v. comments that “corruption has been widely suspected”. Moreover, he points out that the superlative also suggests “extremity in a direction other than height”.

³⁹⁵ Jason’s display of trust in Medea’s abilities could not sound more different from his cynical reply to Argos’ proposal to ask for Medea’s help: “Slim indeed are our hopes, if we must entrust our safe return to women” (μελέη γε μὲν ἦμιν ὄρωρεν | ἐλπωρή, ὅτε νόστον ἐπετραπόμεσθα γυναιξίν, 3.487–8).

³⁹⁶ Later, Jason is more precise regarding the identity of their helper when he refers to the hypothetical reaction of Greek peoples at the Argonauts’ future return to Greece: “If you reach that area and the land of Hellas, you will be honoured and respected among women and men; they will pay court to you reverently like a god, because it was **thanks to you** that their sons returned home safe...” εἰ δέ κεν ἦθεα κείνα καὶ Ἑλλάδα γαῖαν ἴκηαι, | τιμήσσαι γυναιξὶ καὶ ἀνδράσιν αἰδοίη τε | ἔσσαι, οἱ δέ σε πάγχυ θεὸν ὥς πορσανέουσιν, | οὔνεκα τῶν

role as Medea’s advisor in matter of *pharmaka* is stated earlier in Book 3: first, the poet comments that Medea is the priestess of the temple of Hecate where she spends most of her time (Ἐκάτης δὲ πανήμερος ἀμφοτεροῦτο | νηόν, ἐπεὶ ῥα θεῆς αὐτὴ πέλεν ἀρήτεια, 3.251–2); second, Argos advises Jason to ask for help from the young woman who “bewitches by the use of potions at the suggestion of Hecate, daughter of Perses” (κούρην δὴ τινα πρόσθεν ἐπέκλυες αὐτὸς ἐμεῖο | φαρμάσσειν Ἐκάτης Περσηίδος ἐννεσίησιν, 3.477–8).³⁹⁷ Thus, Medea’s connection with Hecate is already known to Jason by the time of their meeting in the goddess’ temple. Jason’s awareness of Medea’s resources is also clear from his immediate appeal to give him the “fitting *pharmaka*” she promised (ἐπεὶ τὸ πρῶτον ὑπέσθης | αὐτοκασιγνήτη **μενοεικέα φάρμακα** δώσειν, 3.983–4).³⁹⁸

In addition to delivering Jason what he needs (3.1013–4), Medea also provides him with instructions for the upcoming contest (3.1026–62), by advising him to perform a sacrifice and honor Hecate. This section of the meeting between Jason and Medea functions as an epitome of Jason’s ritual performance and, simultaneously, highlights significant aspects of the relationship between Medea and Hecate. In particular, the passage in which Medea instructs Jason to perform a libation for the goddess is emblematic:

μὲν παῖδες ὑπότροποι οἴκαδ’ ἵκοντο | **σὴ βουλῇ** (3.1122–6). The reference through the use of the second person singular in the phrase σὴ βουλῇ is clear but it could also merely work as a *captatio benevolentiae*.

³⁹⁷ It is unclear where Jason heard this information before (πρόσθεν ἐπέκλυες, 3.477). Argos does not seem to mention Medea’s powers nor her kinship with Hecate before this point. Could this be a metanarrative comment? Namely, you (“the reader”) heard this but from someone else, perhaps the author himself in 3.251–2.

³⁹⁸ Medea’s encounter with Chalcioppe (3.645–739) culminates with Medea’s promise to bring her *pharmaka* to Jason (3.737–9) to help him pass Aeetes’ test and also, as she emphasizes before Chalcioppe, save her children from the king’s wrath.

μουνογενῇ δ' Ἑκάτην Περσηίδα μειλίσσοιο, 1035
 λείβων ἐκ δέπαος σιμβλήια ἔργα μελισσέων.
 ἔνθα δ' ἐπεὶ κε θεὰν μεμνημένος ἰλάσσηαι,
 ἄψ ἀπὸ πυρκαϊῆς ἀναχάζεο.

“Make appeasement to **Hecate, the only-born**, daughter of Perses, by pouring in libation from a cup the works of bees in their hives. **When you have honored the goddess according to my instructions**, then retreat back from the pyre”.

The characterization of Hecate as the single child of Perses (μουνογενῇ δ' Ἑκάτην, 3.1035) is again reminiscent of Hesiod’ “Hymn” in *Th.* 426, where she is described as the only one of her kind and not less worthy of honors for this reason (οὐδ', ὅτι μουνογενῆς, ἥσσον θεὰ ἔμμορε τιμῆς).³⁹⁹ Shortly after, Hesiod again attributes the epithet μουνογενῆς to Hecate, stating that “... even though she was her mother’s only child she has her share of honors among all the gods” (οὕτω τοι καὶ μουνογενῆς ἐκ μητρὸς ἐοῦσα | πᾶσι μετ' ἀθανάτοισι τετίμηται γέραςσι, 448–9). The epithet μουνογενῆς is not attested before Hesiod, who uses it only once more in *Op.* 376. Apollonius uses it only once in 3.1035. In both instances from the *Theogony*, the concessive force attached to μουνογενῆς is noteworthy: Hecate is granted her share of honors among the gods *despite* her being an only child. Indeed, from the perspective of the *Theogony*, gods rely on their siblings to overthrow their predecessors’ rule and establish a new regime. Nevertheless, as

³⁹⁹ Hunter (1989), 188 notes that this epithet is also attributed to Persephone in late Orphic texts such as *Hymn* 29.2 (fr. 190 Kern). See also Zybert (2008), 383.

had been discussed, Hecate maintains her powers even after the installation of a new cosmic order and even though she is *μουνογενής*. Apollonius does not explicitly incorporate this idea from Hesiod but seems to apply *μουνογενής* as a plain epithet for the goddess, namely, “the only-born Hecate, daughter of Perses” (*μουνογενῇ δ’ Ἑκάτην Περσηίδα*, 3.1035).

Jason receives further instructions on how to appease Hecate, namely, to pour a libation and propitiate the goddess “having remembered [how to do so]” (*θεὰν μεμνημένος ἰλάσσειν*, 3.1037). Hunter’s translation of the absolute participle in Medea’s speech as “according to my instructions” fits nicely into the narrative and stresses Medea’s role. In the final section of her speech, Medea also advises Jason on how to defeat Aeetes’ earthborn warriors springing up from the dragon’s teeth (3.1051–59) and briefly refers to the heroes’ completion of the quest and upcoming *nostos*:

Arg. 3.1060–62

ἰθῦσαι, τὸ δὲ κῶας ἐς Ἑλλάδα τοῖό γ’ ἔκητι	1060
οἴσσει ἐξ Αἴης, τηλοῦ ποθι· νίσσο δ’ ἔμπης	
ἢ φίλον, ἢ τοι ἕαδεν ἀφορμηθέντι νέεσθαι.	

“**By the aid of this**, you will carry the fleece away from Aia back to Hellas, far into the distance; but go wherever you wish, wherever you want to go when you have set sail from here”.⁴⁰⁰

Apollonius’ use of the adverbial phrase **τοῖό γ’ ἔκητι** (3.1060) in Medea’s final remarks to Jason could also constitute an allusion to Hecate. The archaic epic case-form *ἔκητι*, or *ἔκῶτι*, is

⁴⁰⁰ Modified translation from Hunter (1993a).

typically found in Homer's *Odyssey* preceding the genitive of gods' names and is usually translated as "by the grace of, by the aid of".⁴⁰¹ As already mentioned, Clay has argued that in such cases the adverbial form ἔκητι and the name Hecate share the same root and, subsequently, by etymologizing the goddess' name, her role as mediator between worshipers and divinities become apparent in phrases such as ἔκητι Διός, "by the grace of Zeus, through Hecate's will".⁴⁰² Apollonius' adverbial phrase τοῖό γ' ἔκητι does not relate to a specific divine agent. For this reason, I believe, Hunter translates τοῖό γ' ἔκητι as the protasis of a conditional period, that is, "if you do this... [you will]". This translation gains greater meaning if one implements the generalizing condition "if you do this" with the etymological connection between the forms ἔκητι, ἔκατι, and Ἐκάτη. In this way, the phrase τοῖό γ' ἔκητι might also be literally understood as "by Hecate willing this" or "if Hecate wills this", and, consequently, as an equivalent of the old phrase "God willing", namely, "Hecate willing". In Medea's mouth, the expression "Hecate willing" becomes particularly significant as a formula of closure, emphasizing the need for divine favor to ensure the success of the quest.

Hecate's Role as Overseer of Oaths

The adverbial form ἔκητι with the genitive occurs at other times in the *Argonautica*.⁴⁰³ Remarkably, in Book 4, this form appears to be linked with the motif of oaths and oath-swearing rituals in relation to Hecate. Specifically, the most frequently mentioned oath is the one Jason swears at Medea's bidding to seal his promise of marrying her:

⁴⁰¹ Διός... ἔκητι "by the grace or aid of Zeus" (*Od.* 20.42), Ἑρμείας ἔ. (15.319), Ἀπόλλωνός γε ἔ. (19.86), Παλλάδος καὶ Λοξίου ἔκατι (Aesch. *Eu.* 759).

⁴⁰² Clay (2003), 136–7.

⁴⁰³ Cf. *Arg.* 1.116, 1.334, 1.773, 1.902, 2.253, 2.297, 2.524, 2.755, 2.1153, 3.266, 3.621, 4.390, 4.1018, 4.1087, and 4.1199.

“Δαιμονίη, Ζεὺς αὐτὸς Ὀλύμπιος ὄρκιος ἔστω 95

Ἥρη τε Ζυγίη, Διὸς ἐννέτις, ἣ μὲν ἐμοῖσι

κουριδίην σε δόμοισιν ἐνιστήσεσθαι ἄκοιτιν,

εὖτ’ ἂν ἐς Ἑλλάδα γαῖαν ἰκώμεθα νοστήσαντες”.

“Dear girl, may Olympian Zeus himself, and Hera goddess of marriage, who shares Zeus’ bed, witness my oath that I shall make you my lawful wedded wife in my home, when we return safely to the land of Hellas”.

Medea’s request that Jason swear a solemn oath before the gods builds on the hero’s earlier promise to Medea in the temple of Hecate that they would share the marriage bed (ἡμέτερον δὲ λέχος θαλάμοις ἐνι κουριδίοισιν | πορσανέεις, 3.1128–9) and nothing but death could do them apart (οὐδ’ ἄμμε διακρινέει φιλότητος | ἄλλο πάρος θάνατόν γε μεμορμένον ἀμφικαλύψαι, 3.1129–30).⁴⁰⁴ Afterwards, several references to Jason’s oath and his vow to Medea in the temple of Hecate occur at pivotal moments in Book 4. In these scenes, the adverbial form ἔκητί with the genitive is frequently used. For instance, during their stopover at the Brygean Islands, Medea reproaches Jason that he has broken his oath if he and the other Argonauts agreed to give her back to Aeetes:

⁴⁰⁴ At this juncture, it is worth noting Hunter’s (1993b), 48 comment that the meeting scene between Jason and Medea in the temple of Hecate is particularly indebted to the clash between Achilles and Hector in the *Iliad*. Cf. also Hunter’s (1989) *comm. ad v.* 3.956–61, 964–5, 1105. In this particular case, the marriage deal that Jason and Medea seal in the shrine of Hecate would be reminiscent of Hector’s proposal to Achilles to allow either party to perform the appropriate funerary rituals after the duel.

Arg. 4.387–90

σῆ πάθον ἀτροπίη· τὰ μὲν οὐ θέμις ἀκράαντα

ἐν γαίῃ πεσέειν, μάλα γὰρ μέγαν ἤλιτες ὄρκον,

νηλεές· ἀλλ’ οὗ θήν μοι ἐπιλλίζοντες ὀπίσσω

δὴν ἔσσεσθ’ εὐκηλοὶ ἔκητί γε συνθεσιάων. 390

“**What I say the gods will not leave unaccomplished**—it cannot fall idly to the ground—**for you have broken a very solemn oath**, pitiless one! But not for much longer you will sit here happily and laugh at me **on account of the agreements!**”⁴⁰⁵

Medea’s mention of Jason’s “great oath” (μέγαν ὄρκον, 4.388) clearly refers to the hero’s oath-taking ritual (4.95–8) but also evokes the promise made in the temple of Hecate and, accordingly, before the goddess herself. I submit that the correlation between Jason’s marriage vows and Hecate underlies Medea’s threats that the heroes would be punished “on account of the agreements” (ἔκητί γε συνθεσιάων, 4.390). Actually, a certain ambiguity exists regarding which agreements Medea refers to in this passage: either the deal that the Argonauts have just finalized with the Colchians (συνθεσίην, 4.340) or the agreements that she and Jason made in the temple of Hecate. At any rate, even though at this stage in the narrative, greater emphasis is probably placed on the agreements between Argonauts and Colchians, the marriage deal is clearly relevant to Medea’s claims. By accepting to become Jason’s wife and departing with him, Medea has

⁴⁰⁵ Modified translation from Hunter (1993a).

abandoned any hopes of regaining her social position in Colchis.⁴⁰⁶ The adverbial form ἔκρητι channels Hecate's role in the marriage agreements and suggests her participation in the process of divine retribution, especially with regard to Jason's punishment for intending to violate the promise he made in her temple, break the oath he subsequently took, and dishonor her priestess. The punishment Medea envisions for Jason at the Brygean Islands includes the disappearance of the fleece (δέρος δέ τοι ἴσον ὄνειρ' | οἴχοιτ' εἰς ἔρεβος μεταμώνιον, 4.384–5) and the Erinyes persecuting him away from his fatherland (ἐκ δέ σε πάτρης | αὐτίκ' ἐμαὶ ἐλάσειαν Ἐρινύες, 4.385–6).⁴⁰⁷ Medea's reference to the Erinyes contributes another chthonic element to the picture, which would add up to the background presence of Hecate. Moreover, Apollonius describes Medea's emotional state as altered by “unbearable rage” (βαρὺν χόλον, 4.391). The same βαρὺς χόλος here attached to Medea is otherwise a divine attribute of Zeus (4.585) and Aeetes (4.740, and 1083).

⁴⁰⁶ As Euripides' Medea claims, when the Argonauts carried her off from Colchis, she was left with no one else but Jason to turn to. In the *Medea*, Jason's desertion causes her to suffer the ultimate offence: ἐγὼ δ' ἔρημος ἄπολις οὐσ' ὑβρίζομαι | πρὸς ἀνδρός, ἐκ γῆς βαρβάρου λελησμένη, | οὐ μητέρ', οὐκ ἀδελφόν, οὐχὶ συγγενῇ | μεθορμίσασθαι τῆσδ' ἔχουσα συμφορᾶς (“... while I, without relatives or city, am suffering outrage from my husband. I was carried off as booty from a foreign land and have no mother, no brother, no kinsman to shelter me from this calamity”, *Med.* 255–8). On Euripides' Medea as “truly alone”, see Kelly (2020), 78. Clauss (1997), 70 stresses Medea's critical position after helping Jason: “... if Jason forgets her and her benefaction, she will have sacrificed herself—her soul, her self-esteem, her standing in the family and community—for nothing”.

⁴⁰⁷ The curse of the Erinyes is also mentioned in Book 3, when Chalciope asks Medea to help her sons lest she would persecute her as a “hateful Erinyes” from the underworld (εἶην ἐξ Αἰδεω στυγερὴ μετόπισθεν Ἐρινύς, 3.704). Cf. also Medea's response at 3.712. Apollonius refers to the Erinyes' curse also in relation to Circe's purification ritual, with which she tries to appease their terrible wrath (ὄφρα χόλοιο | σμερδαλέας παύσειεν Ἐρινύας, 4.713–4). Finally, Medea invokes the Erinyes' name at 4.1042 as she discusses her destiny with Arete.

Further references to Jason's marriage proposal and oath-taking occur during the events in Drepanē.⁴⁰⁸ During a debate with Alcinous regarding Medea's fate, Arete underscores Jason's oath as a means for keeping her away from the Colchians:

Arg. 4.1083–8

πατρὸς ὑπερφιάλοιο βαρὺν χόλον. αὐτὰρ Ἰήσων,
ὥς αἰώ, μεγάλοισιν ἐνίσχεται ἐξ ἔθεν ὄρκοις,
κουριδίην θήσεσθαι ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἄκοιτιν. 1085
τῷ, φίλε, μήτ' οὖν αὐτὸς ἐκὼν ἐπίορκον ὁμόσσαι
θείης Αἰσονίδην, μήτ' ἄσχετα σεῖο ἔκητι
παῖδα πατὴρ θυμῷ κεκοτηότι δηλήσαιτο.

“According to my information, **Jason is from that moment bound by great oaths to make her his lawful wife in his palace.** Therefore, dear husband, **do not consent to make the son of Aison break his oath** and do not allow a father with seething anger in his heart to commit horrible outrages against his child **by your own accord**”.⁴⁰⁹

Arete encourages Alcinous not to “willingly” (ἐκὼν, 4.1086) make Jason break his oath (ἐπίορκον ὁμόσσαι, 4.1086) by delivering Medea back to Aeetes. Similarly, she invites her

⁴⁰⁸ Schaaf (2014), 302 argues that, despite Circe's purification ritual for Jason and Medea after the murder of Apsyrtus, this episode opens on a foreboding note through the *aition* of the island's name deriving from δρέπανον (4.982–92). Underlying this apparently joyous section, which culminates in the marriage of Jason and Medea, are, in truth, serious threats to Medea's safety, particularly the prospect of being sent home with the Colchians and thus meeting her father's punishment.

⁴⁰⁹ Modified translation from Hunter (1993a).

husband to express his will against (μήτ' ... σεῖο ἔκητι, 4.1087) any unfair treatment of Medea. In this scene, the motif of willingness, or lack thereof, is activated through the morphologically related forms ἐκών and ἔκητι, and is again connected with the theme of oath and oath-swearing, especially Jason's oath of marrying Medea. Accordingly, just like in the previously analyzed episodes, the forms ἐκών and ἔκητι hint at Hecate's implied participation in this scene. Further evidence comes from Medea's earlier supplication to Arete (4.1014–28, 1031–52), during which she claims to have departed from Colchis because “prudence and reason were driven out of [her] and not on account of lust!” (ὥς ἐμοὶ ἐκ πυκιναῖ ἔπεσον φρένες, οὐ μὲν ἔκητι | μαργοσύνης, 4.1018–9). Then, she swears by “the sacred light of the Sun-god” (ἱερὸν φάος Ἥελίοιο, 4.1019) and “the nightly mysteries of Perses' child”, that is, Hecate (νυκτιπόλου Περσηίδος ὄργια **κούρης**, 4.1020) that she did not willingly (μὴ μὲν ἐγὼν ἐθέλουσα, 4.1021) set out from Colchis with foreign men (σὺν ἀνδράσιν ἄλλοδαποῖσιν, 4.1021) but out of “hateful fear” (στυγερὸν τάρβος, 4.1022) of her father.⁴¹⁰ Medea's statement points back to the “most grievous fear” that Hera instills in her while she is still in Colchis at the beginning of Book 4 (τῇ δ' ἀλγεινότατον κραδίη **φόβον** ἔμβαλεν Ἥρη, 4.11). Through the usage of the adverbial form (οὐ) ἔκητι with the genitive μαργοσύνης (4.1018–9) and the following mention of the mysteries of Perses' daughter (νυκτιπόλου Περσηίδος ὄργια **κούρης**, 4.1020), Medea brings Hecate back into the picture. Subsequently, in her second speech addressed to the heroes, Medea bids them to “fear the agreements and the oaths” (δείσατε συνθεσίας τε καὶ ὅρκια, 4.1042) as well as “the Erinys of suppliants and the gods' anger” (δείσατ' Ἐρινύν | ἱκεσίην νέμεσίν τε θεῶν, 4.1042–3). Clearly,

⁴¹⁰ The ritual language of supplication is conspicuous in this speech, which opens with the typical gesture of clasping the knees indicated by the verb γουνοῦμαι, an alternative form of γουνάζομαι (4.1014).

the problem of the ὄρκια, or ὄρκοι, and especially Jason’s oath, is underscored in connection with Hecate, one of the divinities by whom Medea swears.

The practice of oath-swearing by chthonic divinities is already attested in Homer. In Book 3 of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon swears an oath to seal the terms of his agreement with the Trojans regarding the duel between Paris and Menelaus. During the ritual, he swears by several divinities, including “those below”:

Il. 3.275–80

τοῖσιν δ’ Ἀτρεΐδης μεγάλ’ εὖχετο χεῖρας ἀνασχών:	275
Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἰδηθεν μεδέων κύδιστε μέγιστε,	
Ἥελιός θ’, ὃς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷς καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούεις,	
καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ γαῖα, καὶ οἱ ὑπένερθε καμόντας	
ἀνθρώπους τίνυσθον ὅτις κ’ ἐπίορκον ὁμόσση,	
ὕμεις μάρτυροι ἔστε, φυλάσσετε δ’ ὄρκια πιστά	280

“And raising his hands, the son of Atreus prayed aloud for all:
“Father Zeus, ruling from Mount Ida, most glorious and greatest,
and thou the Sun, who oversees and overhears all things,
and Rivers and Earth, and **those of you beneath the earth**
who take vengeance on men who have died, on whomever has sworn a false oath,
you be witnesses, you guard these trusted oaths””.⁴¹¹

⁴¹¹ Translation by Alexander (2015).

Med. 395–400

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χαίρων τις αὐτῶν τοῦμὸν ἀλγυνεῖ κέαρ.

πικροὺς δ' ἐγὼ σφιν καὶ λυγροὺς θήσω γάμους,

πικρὸν δὲ κῆδος καὶ φυγὰς ἐμὰς χθονός. 400

“**For, by Queen Hecate**, whom above all divinities

I venerate, **my chosen accomplice**, to whose presence

My central hearth is dedicated, no one of them

Shall hurt me and not suffer for it! Let me work:

In bitterness and pain they shall repent this marriage,

Repent their houses joined, repent my banishment”.⁴¹⁷

In sum, in the *Argonautica*, Hecate’s name and its cognate forms ἑκατι or ἑκητι often accompany references to Jason’s vow taken in the goddess’ temple and oath. Hecate’s involvement in this issue is especially significant for Medea, the goddess’ protégé. Accordingly, just as it appears to be customary for Medea to swear by Hecate, it seems also reasonable that the goddess oversees any oaths taken in Medea’s interest.

However, the passages analyzed above also show that Medea’s attitude towards Jason evolves through the narrative. In Book 4, Medea does not maintain the compliant behavior she had during their first encounter in the temple of Hecate but reacts to Jason’s weighing the option of breaking his marriage vows with wrath (βαρὺν χόλον, 4.391) and threats. As has been mentioned, Medea begs Hera, the goddess of marriage, to intervene in case Jason were to break his oath:

⁴¹⁷ Translation by Vellacott (1963).

Arg. 4.382–7

μὴ τό γε παμβασίλεια Διὸς τελέσειεν ἄκοιτις,
ἧ ἔπι κυδιάεις. μνήσαιο δὲ καί ποτ' ἐμεῖο
στρευγόμενος καμάτοισι, δέρος δέ τοι ἶσον ὄνειρῳ
οἴχοιτ' εἰς ἔρεβος μεταμώνιον· ἐκ δέ σε πάτρης 385
αὐτίκ' ἐμαὶ ἐλάσειαν Ἑρινύες, οἷα καὶ αὐτὴ
σῇ πάθον ἀτροπίη.

“May the all-ruling wife of Zeus, on whom you pride yourself, not bring this to fulfillment! I pray that when you are worn out with your sufferings you will one day remember me, and that fleece of yours will vanish in the darkness like a dream. May my Furies drive you straight from your homeland, because of what I have suffered through your heartlessness”.

Medea’s invocation of her own Erinyes evokes the typical language of Greek ritual curses. According to Henk Versnel, the Erinyes as well as Hecate are among the primary divinities to be invoked in the so-called *defixiones*, “binding spells”, on account of their connection with the sphere of magic and chthonic forces.⁴¹⁸ The function of these divinities is, in Versnel’s words, to “carry out tasks not as representatives of rights or morality but on the strengths of their dark nature”.⁴¹⁹ However, the assimilation of the Erinyes and Hecate with the private context of Greek magic spells is not entirely reflective of Jason and Medea’s situation.

⁴¹⁸ Versnel (1991), 64.

⁴¹⁹ Versnel (1991), 64.

Even though Jason invokes Zeus and Hera as witnesses of the oath (4.95–8), the promise he makes to Medea in the temple of Hecate seals the deal from a local divine perspective. The annulment of Jason and Medea’s marriage contract would therefore represent an issue of divine justice and not a matter of personal vendetta. On this note, in contrast with the private purposes of Greek curses, Egyptian curses were primarily activated in the context of justice, especially, as Jan Assmann argues, “in cases where justice, that is, legal institutions, had failed”.⁴²⁰ The Egyptians did not so strikingly distinguish between chthonic and non-chthonic divinities as the Greeks did, so that the underworld gods, such as Osiris, the king of the dead, could be invoked alongside the gods of the living.⁴²¹ I argue that Medea’s appeal to chthonic divinities in matter of justice is in line with her role as priestess of Hecate and her Colchian background. From another angle, Medea’s reliance on Hecate to intercede between her and Jason is appropriate in consideration of the circumstances in which the hero swears the oath, namely, in Colchis and before the local gods.

Ultimately, the gods’ supervising role in the fulfillment of Jason’s oath is conspicuous during Jason and Medea’s wedding celebrations in Drepanē. Specifically, while describing the nymphs’ bridal chant and dances in a circle (4.1196–9), the poet addresses Hera as the recipient of these celebrations with the following formula: Ἡρῃ, σεῖο ἔκῃτι (“Hera, in your honor”, 4.1999). The nymphs’ ritual songs and dance happen “for Hera” or “on account of Hera” and, therefore, through Hecate’s mediation. The implied reference to Hecate as an intermediary figure between the nymphs’ rituals and Hera is noteworthy in the context of Medea and Jason’s wedding. Hera’s successful reception of the honors in fact corresponds to the fulfillment of

⁴²⁰ Assmann (2004), 352.

⁴²¹ Assmann (2004), 352.

Jason's oath and Medea's attainment of a more secure status. Hecate's role as overseer of oaths, ensuring Medea's safety, exemplifies the goddess' intermediary position between human and divine affairs.

Hecate–Persephone–Medea: Human and Divine Mediation

The intervention of Hecate as a mediator is itself activated through the mediation of Medea, who advises Jason on how to win the goddess to his side as a helper. Hence Jason's access to the local gods of Colchis, whose help he needs to win the contest, goes through Medea first and then Hecate. Notably, not only do Medea and Hecate perform similar roles in the poem, but they also share significant character traits. For instance, in Book 4 Medea, too, is identified as the heroes' "fine helper" (ἐσθλὴν ἐπαρωγόν, 4.196), just like Hecate in 3.1211.⁴²² In this passage, Jason characterizes Medea as the heroes' ἐπαρωγός to convince them to take her on board the Argo and save her from Aeetes' wrath (4.196–7). Less apparent is Medea's association with Hecate as an "only-born" (μουννογενής). Medea and Chalciope are in fact daughters of Aeetes from the same mother, the Oceanid nymph Eidyia, while Apsyrtus is the son of Asterodea, a Caucasian nymph (3.240–8).⁴²³ Apollonius rejects other versions of the myth by making Apsyrtus Medea's older brother.⁴²⁴ Similarly, there is a considerable age gap between Chalciope and Medea, since Medea herself admits to be her older sister's "sister and young girl"

⁴²² The only other character to receive this epithet is Orpheus in 1.32: Ὀρφέα μὲν δὴ τοῖον ἔων ἐπαρωγὸν ἀέθλων. The phrase ἐπαρωγὸν ἀέθλων remarkably echoes the same expression applied to Hecate in 3.1211.

⁴²³ Cf. also 3.647, where Apollonius says that Medea goes to visit her αὐτοκασιγνήτην, namely, "her sister from the same mother". In the *Theogony*, Hesiod mentions Eidyia as Medea's mother but says that the nymph united with Aeetes due to Aphrodite's influence (960–2). There is no mention of Chalciope. Aeetes and Circe are the offspring of the nymph Perseis and Helios (956–7). This version of the myth about Circe's parentage occurs also in *Od.* 10.135–9. Diodorus 4.45.1 has instead Hecate as both Medea and Circe's mother.

⁴²⁴ Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 413.

(ὥς δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ | φημὶ **κασιγνήτη τε σέθεν κούρη τε** πέλεσθαι, 3.732–3), since Chalciope breastfed her together with her own sons when she was an infant (ἴσον ἐπεὶ κείνοις με **τεῷ** ἐπαείραο **μαζῷ** | **νηπυτίην**, 3.734–5).⁴²⁵ Medea is therefore Aeetes’ youngest daughter and, as it clearly appears, his most exceptional child.⁴²⁶ In particular, Medea is the only one among Aeetes’ children to be endowed with knowledge of *pharmaka* and enchantments.⁴²⁷ This is particularly striking in relation to Chalciope, who is her biological sister. Furthermore, by participating in Apsyrtus’ murder, Medea contributes to eliminating her older half-brother and Aeetes’ male heir.

Medea’s characterization as an expert of *pharmaka* is clearly relevant to her role as a substitute for Hecate. Specifically, she is assimilated to *φαρμακίδες*, “sorceresses, experts of drugs”, in *Arg.* 4.53, and Aphrodite identifies her as *πολυφάρμακος* for the first time in 3.27.⁴²⁸ The first emblematic digression about Medea’s knowledge of plants and potions precedes her meeting with Jason in the temple of Hecate and regards the preparation of the Prometheion. The description of Medea’s ritual is again illustrative of her relationship with Hecate.

⁴²⁵ To this information Medea adds that “so she always heard from her own mother” (... ὥς αἰὲν ἐγὼ ποτε μητρὸς ἄκουον, 3.735), implying that she has a relationship with Eidyia as a grown up but the nymph did not (or could not) perform motherly duties when she was a newborn.

⁴²⁶ The motif of the youngest offspring being the strongest is typical in Greek myth. In the *Theogony*, Zeus is the youngest child who overthrows his father’s reign. Zeus in turn learns from a prophecy that his future newborn, hence his youngest son, would overthrow him and tries to prevent his birth by swallowing his pregnant wife Metis (*Th.* 886–900). The last challenge posed to Zeus’ throne comes from Gaia’s latest offspring, the giant Typhon (*Th.* 306).

⁴²⁷ Notably, Aeetes denies to be concerned that neither his daughters nor Apsyrtus could represent a threat to the Colchian throne (οὐδὲ θυγατρῶν | εἶναι οἱ τυτθὸν γε δέος μή πού τινα μῆτιν | φράσσωνται στυγερήν, οὐδ’ υἱέος Ἀψύρτοιο, 3.602–4). In particular, he does not fear that Chalciope and Medea could be able to contrive any “hateful plan” (τινα μῆτιν στυγερήν). Aeetes clearly underestimates his daughters, since they are both successful in conspiring to help Chalciope’s children and the Argonauts.

⁴²⁸ The epithet *πολυφάρμακος* is applied again to Medea in 4.1677.

ἔνθ' αὖτ' ἀμφίπολοι μὲν ἐφοπλίζεσκον ἀπήνην·
ἡ δὲ τέως γλαφυρῆς ἐξείλετο φωριαμοῖο
φάρμακον ὃ ρά τέ φασι **Προμήθειον** καλέεσθαι. 845
τῷ εἴ κ' ἐννυχίοισιν ἀρεσσάμενος θυέεσσι
Δαῖραν μουνογένειαν ἐδὼν δέμας ἱκμαίνοιτο,
ἦ τ' ἂν ὅ γ' οὔτε ῥηκτὸς ἔοι χαλκοῖο τυπῆσιν
οὔτε κεν αἰθομένῳ πυρὶ εἰκάθοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ **ἀλκῇ**
λωίτερος κεῖν' ἡμαρ ὁμῶς **κάρτει** τε πέλοιτο. 850
πρωτοφυῆς τό γ' ἀνέσχε καταστάξαντος ἔραζε
αἰετοῦ ὠμηστέῳ κνημοῖς ἐνὶ Καυκασίοισιν
αἱματόεντ' ἰχῶρα Προμηθεὺς μογεροῖο.
τοῦ δ' ἦτοι **ἄνθος** μὲν ὅσον πήχυιον ὑπερθεν
χροιῇ **Κωρυκίῳ ἵκελον κρόκῳ** ἐξεφάνθη, 855
καυλοῖσιν διδύμοισιν ἐπήρορον· ἡ δ' ἐνὶ γαίῃ
σαρκὶ νεοτμήτῳ ἐναλιγκίῃ ἔπλετο ρίζα.
τῆς οἷν τ' ἐν ὄρεσσι **κελαινήν ἱκμάδα** φηγοῦ
Κασπίῃ ἐν κόχλῳ ἀμήσατο **φαρμάσσεσθαι**,
ἐπτὰ μὲν ἀνάνοισι λοεσσαμένη ὑδάτεσσιν, 860
ἐπτάκι δὲ Βριμῷ κουροτρόφον ἀγκαλέσασα,
Βριμῷ νυκτιπόλον, χθονίην, ἐνέροισιν ἄνασσαν,
λυγαίῃ ἐνὶ νυκτὶ σὺν ὀρφναίοις φαρέεσσι.
μυκηθμῷ δ' ὑπένερθεν ἐρεμνὴ σείετο γαῖα,

“While the maids were preparing the wagon, she took from the hollow casket **a drug** which men say is called ‘**the drug of Prometheus**’. **The man who with nocturnal sacrifices gains the favour of Daira, the only born, and then anoints his body with this drug,** will be invulnerable to blows from bronze and will not yield to blazing fire, but for that day will be **invincible in might and strength**. It sprang up new-formed when the flesh-tearing eagle caused **bloody ichor from the suffering Prometheus** to drip to the ground on the Caucasian crags. **Its flower** rises on twin stalks a cubit high; in colour it resembles the **Korykian crocus**, and the root in the earth is like newly-cut flesh. **Like the dark moisture from an oak** on the mountains, she had gathered its sap in a Caspian shell **to work her magic, after having bathed seven times in ever-flowing water, and seven times having summoned up Brimo, nurse of children, Brimo the night-roamer, the infernal, the queen of the dead,** in the thick gloom of night dressed in black robes. **Beneath her the dark earth roared and shook as she cut the Titan’s root;** the son of Iapetos himself groaned as his spirit writhed in pain. This was the drug which she took out and placed in the fragrant band which was wound around her heavenly breasts”.

In this remarkable section, Apollonius deals with several aspects of Hecate’s cult, specifically the goddess’ attributes and relationship with worshipers. A few details occurring in Medea’s ritual also belong to the description of Hecate’s epiphany (3.1209–20). Specifically, the mention of the “dark moisture from an oak” (κελαινήν ἱκμάδα φηγοῦ, 3.858) suggests a connection with Hecate’s crown of snakes entwined with oaken shoots (περίξ δέ μιν

ἐστεφάνωντο | σμερδαλέοι **δρυῖνοισι** μετὰ **πτόρθοισι** δράκοντες. 3.1214–5). The roar the earth produces when Medea plucks the flower (**μυκηθμῷ** δ' ὑπένερθεν ἐρεμνὴ **σεῖετο γαῖα**, 3.864) also parallels with the earth's trembling underneath Hecate's steps (**πίσεια** δ' ἔτρεμε πάντα κατὰ στίβον, 3.1218). Hecate's epithets in the passage are remarkable. The goddess is characterized as “Daira” (**Δαῖραν**, 3.847), an epithet usually attributed to Persephone, and, once again, as the “only born” (**μουνογένειαν**, 3.847).⁴²⁹ A second series of epithets includes “chthonic” (**χθονίην**, 3.862), “mistress of those below” (**ἐνέροισιν ἄνασσαν**, 3.862), “Brimō”, that is, “the roarer” (**Βριμῷ**, 3.861 and 862), “nurse of children” (**κουροτρόφον**, 3.861), and “night wanderer” (**νυκτιπόλον**, 3.862). Brimō is again attributed to Persephone in Hellenistic and later literature.⁴³⁰ In addition to the titles Daira and Brimō, the more general epithets “chthonic” and “mistress of those below” underline the connection between Hecate and Persephone, who is the archetypal chthonic mistress. Furthermore, Hunter remarks that saffron is typically associated with Demeter and Persephone.⁴³¹ This correlation between Persephone and Hecate is also significant in relation

⁴²⁹ The *scholia* to *Arg.* 3.846–47a Wendel comment regarding “**Δαῖραν μουνογένειαν**” that Apollonius prefers the spelling Δαῖρα instead of Δάειρα for metrical reasons (τὸ Δαῖραν κατ' ἔλλειψιν ἐστὶ τοῦ ε διὰ τὸ μέτρον· Δάειραν γάρ ἐστι.). Moreover, they connect Daeira with Persephone based on earlier evidence, such as Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi*: ὅτι δὲ Δαῖραν τὴν Περσεφόνην καλοῦσι, Τιμοσθένης ἐν τῷ Ἑξηγητικῷ (fg 12 Tresp *Die Fragm. d. gr. Kultschr.* 1914, 52) συγκατατίθεται, καὶ Αἰσχύλος ἐν *Ψυχαγωγοῖς* (fg 277 N.2) ἐμφαίνει, τὴν Περσεφόνην ἐκδεχόμενος Δαῖραν. According to the scholiasts, the association with Persephone is fitting because of these goddesses' individual connection with the nightly realm (λέγει δὲ τὴν Περσεφόνην, ὡς δηλοῖ [διὰ] τὸ μουνογένειαν. Νυχίαν δὲ εἶπεν ἥτοι διὰ τὸ χθονίων βασιλεύειν—νύκτα γὰρ τὸν ἀφώτιστον τόπον φασίν—ἢ ἢν νυκτὸς οὐσης ἰλάσκονται· εὐλογον γὰρ τὴν τῶν νυχίων τόπων κρατοῦσαν κατὰ τὴν τῆς νυκτὸς ὥραν ἰλάσκεσθαι).

⁴³⁰ Hecate's epithet Brimō is attested in other sources including *Lyc. Alex.* 698, 1176, and *Orph. Arg.* 17, 429. This epithet is related to ὄβριμος, “mighty, strong”, an epithet of Ares in *Il.* 5.845. The *scholia* to Lycophron's *Alex.* 1176 comment that Brimō is an epithet attached to Persephone but also, referring to Apollonius 3.862, to Hecate. Hunter (1989), 190–1, comments that Brimō is applied to the syncretized divinity Selene—Hecate—Artemis—Persephone. See *PGM* iv 2270, in Betz (1986), 78. Zybert (2008), 382 comments on the double association of the epithets Daira and Brimō to Hecate and Persephone concluding that “both names have strong associations with death”.

⁴³¹ Hunter (1989), 190. Hunter also comments that the attribute “Korykian” points to a mountain cave near the town of Corcyus in Cilicia (southern Turkey), famously associated with saffron.

to Medea and her connection with Hecate. From another angle, in fact, considerations regarding shared attributes between Medea and Persephone could elucidate the role and characterization of Hecate herself.

As Hera reveals to Thetis in Book 4, Medea's destiny is indeed to become Achilles' spouse in the underworld.

Arg. 4.810–5

ἀλλ' ἄγε καί τινά τοι νημερτέα μῦθον ἐνίψω. 810

εὔτ' ἂν ἐς Ἥλύσιον πεδίον τεὸς υἱὸς ἵκηται,

ὃν δὴ νῦν Χείρωνος ἐν ἥθεσι Κενταύροιο

Νηιάδες κομέουσι τεοῦ λίπτοντα γάλακτος,

χρειώ μιν κούρης πόσιν ἔμμεναι Αἰήταο

Μηδείης· 815

“Come now—I will tell you something that will certainly prove true. When your son goes to the Elysian plain—the son who at this moment is looked after by the Naiads in the territory of the centaur Cheiron and who sorely misses your milk—**then he is to become the husband of Aietes' daughter, Medea**”.⁴³²

The prospective union with Achilles places Medea in a prominent position in the underworld, especially in parallel with Persephone. In genealogical terms, Medea's future union

⁴³² Notably, the characterization of Achilles as an infant who misses his mother's milk recalls Medea's situation as a child, whom her sister-mother Chalciope breastfed instead of her biological mother, the nymph Eidyia (3.734–5).

with Achilles provides a close parallel for Persephone's marriage with Hades: Medea and Achilles are cousins from their mothers' side, for both Eidyia and Thetis are daughters of Oceanus; Persephone and Hades are also related from the paternal side, for Hades is Persephone's father's brother and hence her paternal uncle.

Persephone's alternative name, Korē, is typically used in classical sources, especially in Euripides' tragedies, but it is already attested in post-Homeric archaic texts.⁴³³ Apollonius' digression about Medea's preparation of the Prometheion evokes the representation of Persephone in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, which begins with Persephone plucking flowers in the field before Hades abducts her (*H.H.* 2.1–20). Similarly, Medea's excursion to the fields to pick the flower springing from the blood of Prometheus precedes her flight from Colchis with Jason, who later becomes her first husband. According to Apollonius' description, the Prometheion is a saffron-colored flower (ἄνθος... χροίῃ **Κωρυκίῳ ἵκελον κρόκῳ**, 3.854–5), and the crocus is one of the flowers Persephone picks in the meadow (ἄνθεά τ' αἰνυμένην ρόδα καὶ **κρόκον** ἡδ' ἴα καλά, *H.H.* 2.6).⁴³⁴ Further parallelisms between Persephone's abduction in the *Hymn* and Medea's departure with the Argonauts are noteworthy. Specifically, when Hades captures Persephone, the goddess is in despair and screams from the chariot to call her father (*H.H.* 2.19–21).⁴³⁵ Similarly, the scene in which Medea departs with the Argonauts is equally charged with emotion: “Medea rushed back and stretched her hands out towards the land in helpless despair, but Jason spoke to her encouragingly and supported her in her distress” (... ἡ δ' **ἔμπαλιν αἰσσοῦσα | γαίῃ χεῖρας ἔτεινεν, ἀμήχανος**· αὐτὰρ Ἰήσων | θάρσυνέν τ' ἐπέεσσι καὶ

⁴³³ Cf. for example Archil. fr. 322.1 West: Δήμητρος ἀγνῆς καὶ Κόρης | τὴν πανήγυριν σέβων.

⁴³⁴ Cf. also *H.H.* 2.426, 428.

⁴³⁵ *H.H.* 2.19–21: ἀρπάζας δ' ἀέκουσαν ἐπὶ χρυσέοισιν ὄχοισιν | ἦγ' ὀλοφυρομένην· **ἰάχησε** δ' ἄρ' ὄρθια φωνῇ | **κεκλωμένη πατέρα** Κρονίδην ὕπατον καὶ ἄριστον.

Arg. 4.27–34

Ὡς ἄρ' ἔφη, βλεφάρων δὲ κατ' ἄθροα δάκρυα χεῦεν.

192

married woman, *nymphē*, is highly distressing. Nevertheless, as already discussed, the social security that Medea would gain through her first marriage with Jason, a Greek man, logically replaces these worries.⁴³⁶

The analogy between Medea and other maiden figures such as Persephone is also conspicuous in other passages.⁴³⁷ In Book 3, Apollonius assimilates Medea to Artemis while she travels from the palace to the temple of Hecate (876–86). Through the comparison with Artemis, which also evokes Nausicaa’s portrait in the *Odyssey* (6.102–9), this simile highlights Medea’s unmarried condition:

Arg. 3.876–86

οἷη δέ λιαροῖσιν ἐν ὕδασι Παρθενίοιο,
ἥε καὶ Ἀμνισοῖο λοεσσαμένη ποταμοῖο,
χρυσείους Λητωῖς ἐφ’ ἄρμασιν ἐστηῦα
ὠκείαις κεμάδεσσι διεξέλαησι κολώνας,
τηλόθεν ἀντιώσω πολυκνίσου ἑκατόμβης· 880
τῇ δ’ ἅμα νύμφαι ἔπονται ἀμορβάδες, αἱ μὲν ἀπ’ αὐτῆς
ἀγρόμεναι πηγῆς Ἀμνισίδος, αἱ δὲ λιποῦσαι
ἄλσεα καὶ σκοπιὰς πολυπίδακας· ἀμφὶ δὲ θῆρες
κνυζηθμῷ σαίνουσιν ὑποτρομέοντες ἰοῦσαν·

⁴³⁶ On this note, in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the description of Hades as a “not at all unfitting husband among the gods” provides a parallel discussion in terms of status and social position: οὐ τοι ἀεικὴς | γαμβρὸς ἐν ἀθανάτοισι Πολυσημάντωρ Αἰδωνεύς, *H.H.* 2.83–4).

⁴³⁷ On Medea’s “maidenly” features, see Graf (1997), 24–5. On Medea’s role as the “kidnapped maiden”, see Krevans (1997), 75–7. See Clauss (1997), 149–51 on whether Medea fulfills the role of the “helper maiden” or the heroine. For the modeling of Medea on the figure of Nausicaa, see Hunter (1989), 26 and Clauss (1997), 150.

εἶκον ἀλευάμενοι βασιληίδος ὄμματα κούρης.

“As when after bathing at the sweet waters of the Parthenios, or in the river Amnisos, the daughter of Leto stands in her golden chariot and drives her swift deer through the hills to accept a distant offering of rich sacrifice, and with her go her companion nymphs, some gathering from the very spring of Amnisos, others leaving the groves and the mountain-peaks with their many streams; around her the wild beasts whimper and fawn in fear. **Like this did they hasten through the city**, and all around the people made way for them, avoiding the eyes of the royal maiden”.

Besides Apollonius’ direct assimilation between Medea and Artemis, in this passage, other elements are worth discussing. Specifically, the river Parthenios means “river of the virgin” and, as Hunter remarks, “the ancients naturally associated its name with Artemis’ fondness for it”.⁴³⁸ Apollonius digresses on the Parthenios and its association with Artemis in Book 2, as the Argonauts sail by its mouth on the coast of the Black Sea:

Arg. 2.936–9

καὶ δὴ **Παρθενίοιο** ῥοὰς ἀλμυρῆεντος
 πρηυτάτου ποταμοῦ **παρεμέτρεον**, ᾧ ἔνι **κούρη**
Λητωίς, ἄγρηθεν ὅτ’ οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβαίνῃ,
 ὃν δέμας ἱμερτοῖσιν ἀναψύχει ὑδάτεσσι.

⁴³⁸ Hunter (1989), 194–5.

“**They passed the stream of the Parthenios**, most gentle of rivers as it flows into the sea; there, as she climbs again up from the hunt to heaven, **the daughter of Leto** cools her body in the lovely waters”.

Apollonius’ narrative at this stage of the journey is rich in references to female characters who endeavor to preserve their virginity such as Sinope (2.946–61) and the Amazons (2.962–1000). Furthermore, just before the river Parthenios, the Argonauts sail past the tomb of the hero Stheneleos, whose spirit emerges from below the earth to greet the Argo (2.911–29).⁴³⁹ To grant Stheneleos permission to momentarily leave the underworld is none other than Persephone herself:

Arg. 2.915–7

οὐ μέν θην προτέρω ἔτ’ ἐμέτρεον· ἦκε γὰρ αὐτὴ	915
Φερσεφόνη ψυχὴν πολυδάκρυον Ἀκτορίδαο,	
λίσσομένην τυτθὸν περ ὁμήθεας ἄνδρας ἰδέσθαι.	

“The Argonauts proceeded no further, **for Persephone herself sent up the tearful shade of the son of Aktor**, who had begged her to be allowed to see his compatriots even for a short while”.

⁴³⁹ Thalmann (2011), 112–4 comments on the apparition of Stheneleos arguing that the hero’s tomb on the Acherousian headland is “the focus of the assertion of Greek identity in an alien land” (112). Moreover, Thalmann (2011), 112–4 concludes that the tomb is located in a space of liminality between upper and lower worlds, as well as in a transition pace between western and eastern territories.

The elaborate web of connections encompassing Medea, Persephone, and Artemis expands and, at the same time, complicates the portrayal of Medea and, consequently, Hecate. The two most prominent elements that Apollonius' Medea shares with these divine figures are her (temporary) status of *korē* and involvement with the chthonic sphere. As has been mentioned, these goddesses are typically syncretized: in Apollonius, Hecate and Persephone share the same epithets; in other texts, Hecate and Artemis are fully integrated.⁴⁴⁰ Contrastingly, from an eclectic perspective, Medea appears to be more closely resembling Hecate and Persephone. The similitude with Persephone is suggestive of Medea's liminal position. Specifically, by marrying Jason, Medea transitions from being a *korē* to the status of *nymphē*. However, the end of her marriage with Jason and the murder of her children cause her to temporarily revert to the status of a childless and unmarried woman, until her next marriage with Aegeus, from whom she begets Medus, and then Achilles in the afterlife.⁴⁴¹ Analogously, Persephone's timeless liminal status between maidenhood and married life is part of her iconography; it also becomes a prototypical condition for young women dying unmarried and automatically becoming Hades' wives.⁴⁴² Medea does not become a wife of Hades, but her union with Achilles takes place in the underworld. On a similar note, it is important to observe that Apollonius incorporates the Hesiodic tradition according to which Hecate and Phorcus are Scylla's parents (4.827).⁴⁴³

⁴⁴⁰ On the syncretism of Artemis and Hecate see Nelis (1991), 101–3, Johnston (1999), 203–49, Zografou (2010), 245–8, and Mili (2015), 147–58.

⁴⁴¹ Already in the pseudo-Hesiodic ending of the *Theogony* (1001), Medea's son Medeus becomes the eponymous hero of the Medes. According to Graf (1997), 37, Medeus is later called Medus and Aegeus became his father.

⁴⁴² The inscription accompanying the "Phrasikleia" kore (*IG* I³ 1261) provides a famous example of this idea: Σῆμα Φρασικλείας. | Κόρη κεκλήσομαι | αἰεὶ, ἀντὶ γάμου | παρὰ θεῶν τοῦτο | λάχουσ' ὄνομα ("This is Phrasikleia's tomb. I will always be called maiden, having received this name from the gods instead of marriage", my translation).

⁴⁴³ Hes. fr. 262. Differently, in Homer Scylla's mother is Krataiis (*Od.* 12.124).

Despite her association with Artemis, in the *Argonautica*, Hecate is not a virginal goddess.⁴⁴⁴ Her epithet *κουροτρόφος*, “children-rearing” (3.861), which also occurs in the *Theogony* (450, 452), is appropriate for the goddess’ involvement in training young women such as Medea, but it is also not conflicting with her motherly condition.⁴⁴⁵

The making of the Prometheion marks the first time that Apollonius shows Medea “in action”.⁴⁴⁶ However, Medea’s crafts develop through Books 3 and 4, and her input determines the fulfillment of the heroic quest in different stages. Her feats in the *Argonautica* include her role as Jason’s helper in fulfilling Aeetes’ task, stealing the golden fleece from its watchful guardian (4.118–85), and killing her half-brother Apsyrtus (4.411–81). By the end of Book 4, however, Medea is no longer assisting as his *ἐπαρωγός* Jason in fulfilling his heroic task but acts alone in a quasi-heroic way: she annihilates Talos, the bronze giant of Crete, through the sole use of her charms.⁴⁴⁷ The Talos scene highlights again a mix of chthonic and magical elements, including Medea’s invocation to the Keres, that evoke the sphere of the underworld and Hecate’s domain. The annihilation of Talos marks a climactic moment in the development of Medea’s powers. Moreover, the Talos episode also further showcases Medea’s dangerousness and ability to inflict death on her own.

In contrast, in other episodes, causing death has not always been Medea’s principal aim. For instance, when she helps Jason steal the fleece, Medea lulls the snake to sleep by calling on Hypnos and Hecate (4.145–8) and smearing a *pharmakon* on its eyes (4.156–9). The process

⁴⁴⁴ Notably, there are other versions of Hecate’s motherhood. In Diodorus 4.45.1, Hecate begets Circe, Medea, and Aigialeus.

⁴⁴⁵ The same epithet is applied to Ithaca in *Od.* 9.27, peace in *Op.* 226, Hellas in Eur. *Tr.* 566, Delos in Call. *Del.* 276, Artemis in Diod. 5.73. See also “Kourotrophos”, possibly Hecate, in ps.-Hdt. *Vit. Hom.* 410 and 415.

⁴⁴⁶ On Medea’s Prometheion see Schaaf (2014), 165–94.

⁴⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of this scene, see Chapter 1, pp. 98–103. On Medea’s heroism, see Clauss (1997), 149–77, who discusses the redefinition of the epic hero in Apollonius.

does not involve killing the snake, nor does Medea's emotional state appear to be altered by anger. Instead, she looks at the snake in the eyes (τοῖο δ' ἐλίσσομένοιο κατ' ὄμματος εἶσατοῖ κούρη, 4.145) and bewitches it "with a lovely voice" (ἡδεῖη ἐνοπῇ, θέλξαι τέρας..., 4.147). Regarding the murder of Apsyrtus, Medea's rage is not directed against her brother. As has been mentioned, she is angry at Jason for having considered the possibility of giving her back to the Colchians (4.391). She also speaks very harshly against herself by describing her conduct as "shameful acts" (ἀεικελίοισιν ἐπ' ἔργοις, 4.411) that led to her "first mad folly and the evil plans that a god made [her] carry out" (ἐπεὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἀάσθην | ἀμπλακίη, θεόθεν δὲ κακὰς ἤνυσσα μαινιάς, 4.412–3).⁴⁴⁸ Medea's words echo Apollonius' brief outburst about "reckless Eros" (σχέτλι' Ἔρως, 4.445), who "threw hateful folly into Medea's heart" (οἷος Μηδείη στυγερὴν φρεσὶν ἔμβαλες ἄτη, 4.449). Medea does not directly carry out Apsyrtus' murder: she lures her brother into meeting with her, while Jason strikes him down (4.463–70). Remarkably, she covers her eyes with the veil to avoid seeing the death of her brother (4.465–7).

The murder of Apsyrtus, which corresponds to the first episode of rage, is the last deed she accomplishes as merely Jason's ἐπαρωγός. In Book 4, Medea fully acts on her own in several episodes.⁴⁴⁹ In Aiaia, Medea is the only one to have a conversation with Circe and receive her counsel about Aeetes.⁴⁵⁰ In Drepanē, she is the only one to be depicted as speaking directly to Arete on her own behalf.⁴⁵¹ The Talos episode represents the apex of this process of progressive enfranchisement from Jason as well as the outbreak of her wrath.⁴⁵² On this note, Apollonius comments on this scene by making one of his rare authorial remarks:

⁴⁴⁸ Modified translation by Hunter (1993a).

⁴⁴⁹ On the development of Medea's powers see Clauss (1997), 176 and Fantuzzi (2008), 287–310.

⁴⁵⁰ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁵¹ See earlier in this Chapter.

⁴⁵² See Chapter 1.

Arg. 4.1673–7

Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἥ μέγα δὴ μοι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θάμβος ἄηται,
εἰ δὴ μὴ νόσοισι τυπῆσί τε μῶνον ὄλεθρος
ἀντιάει, καὶ δὴ τις ἀπόπροθεν ἄμμε χαλέπτει, 1675
ὥς ὃ γε, χάλκειός περ ἐὼν, ὑπόειξε δαμῆναι
Μηδείης βρίμη πολυφαρμάκου.

“Father Zeus, my mind is all aflutter with amazement, if it is true that death comes to us not only from disease and wounds, but someone far off can harm us, as that man, bronze though he was, yielded to destruction **through the grim power of Medea, mistress of drugs**”.

The last line is remarkable: through her βρίμη and many drugs (πολυφαρμάκου, 4.1677), Medea is ultimately equal to Hecate and Persephone Βριμώ.⁴⁵³ From being a mediator between Jason and the goddesses, her βρίμη elevates her to being herself Βριμώ.

The development of Medea’s powers follows a vertical trajectory: by applying her *pharmaka* for defensive purposes, she eventually kills Talos. The harmful side of Medea’s powers is not unbecoming of Hecate’s deeds in Greek myth and art. Specifically, Hecate has been represented in the act of slaying the giant Clytios during the Gigantomachy.⁴⁵⁴ For instance, on the eastern frieze of the Pergamon Altar (164–56 BC), Hecate appears as a three-faced goddess fighting against Clytios with a torch, a sword, and a spear, and accompanied by her dog.

⁴⁵³ Hunter (2015), 304 comments that βρίμη is a “virtually unique occurrence of this noun”, which even the *scholia* gloss as ἰσχύς, “strength”. Apollonius’ word choice is definitely noteworthy and, in my view, is indicative of the poet’s attempt to draw attention to this noun in relation to other forms he previously used, such as the epithet Βριμώ.

⁴⁵⁴ The myth is reported in Apollodorus 1.6.2.

Earlier representations of this episode occur on Attic red figure vases.⁴⁵⁵ It would seem that Medea's killing of Talos mirrors Hecate's slaying of the giant Clytios.⁴⁵⁶ The two episodes involve similar victims and represent pivotal moments in the macro-narratives they are part of: Talos, the last vestige of the Bronze Age, is one of the final obstacles before the Argo's reintegration in the Aegean Sea. The Gigantomachy marks the definitive passage from the previous order to Zeus' unchallenged rulership.

Artemis as a Local Goddess: From Pagasae to The Brygean Islands

In Apollonius, Artemis does not enter the narrative as an active character; her name and cultic sphere, however, are closely related to important moments of the poem, such as the heroes' departure from Pagasae, Medea's encounter with Jason in Colchis, and the death of Apsyrtus. Furthermore, in Apollonius, Artemis is inextricably connected with Hecate through the character of Medea.

In Book 1, Artemis' aged priestess Iphias and Jason have an unconventional encounter in Iolcos, before the Argo's departure.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Attic red figure kylix (410–400 BC), Berlin F2531, Antikensammlung Berlin; Attic red figure amphora (400–390 BC), Louvre S1677, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

⁴⁵⁶ The motif of killing one of the giants born from Gaia is clearly also reminiscent of the two episodes in which the Argonauts, or Jason alone, annihilate the Gegenees.

⁴⁵⁷ On Iphias, Artemis' priestess in the *Argonautica*, see Beye (1969), 41–2, who comments on the sad tone of this scene. Nelis (1991), 96–105 connects the mention of Artemis through her priestess Iphias close to the departure of the Argo with the heroes' entrance into the liminal stage of a “coming of age” type of ritual. Clauss (1993), 53 highlights the thematic antitheses of the Iphias episode: “male–female, young–old, optimistic–pessimistic”. Similarly, Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004), 101 discuss the Homeric values represented in the Iphias episode, especially the contrasts between old and young. Schaaf (2014), 151–2 notes the verbal parallel between Medea, Hecate's priestess (3.252), and Iphias, Artemis' priestess (1.312), and discusses the correspondences between these two figures. See also Sansone (2000), 155–172 remarks on the analogy between the ekphrastic depiction of the speaking ram on Jason's cloak and the equally puzzling scene of failed communication between Jason and Iphias. Sansone also supports the association of Iphias with Aeschylus' Iphigenia in the *Agamemnon*, arguing that Iphias probably wished to alert Jason to the forthcoming griefs he

Arg. 1.311–6

κεκλομένων ἄμυδις. τῷ δὲ ξύμβλητο γεραιῇ

Ἰφιάς Ἀρτέμιδος πολιόχου ἀρήτειρα,

καί μιν δεξιτερῆς χειρὸς κύσεν· οὐδέ τι φάσθαι

ἔμπης ἰεμένη δύνατο προθέοντος ὁμίλου,

ἀλλ' ἢ μὲν λίπετ' αὖθι παρακλιδόν, οἷα γεραιῇ 315

ὀπλοτέρων, ὃ δὲ πολλὸν ἀποπλαγχθεὶς ἐλιάσθη.

“Into his path came **the aged Iphias, priestess of Artemis protectress of the city**, and she kissed his right hand; as the crowd pressed forward **she could not speak to him though she wished to, but was left behind there beside the path**, an old woman deserted by the young, and **he departed on his way far in the distance**”.

Scholars mostly agree that this scene is an invention of the Hellenistic poet.⁴⁵⁸ Given its originality, it is particularly difficult to interpret the meaning of Iphias’ failed communication with Jason. Instead of focusing on the hidden content of Iphias’ message, I would like to discuss the hero’s behavior towards the priestess of Artemis in this scene in contraposition with the

will face during the journey. Petrovic [forthcoming_b] further develops this line of thought by suggesting that Iphias’ unspoken message to Jason is a forewarning concerning the events occurring after the end of the narrative, namely, Medea’s killing of Jason’s children. Regarding Apsyrtus’ death in the temple of Artemis, Stephens (2003), 227 mentions the thematic analogy with Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, namely, the sacrifice of strangers to Artemis. On Artemis’ assimilation to Egyptian deities in Greek literature, see Stephens (2003), 58 (Bubastis, cf. Hdt. 2.156). See also Mori (2008), 218–20, who argues for the “metaphorical transformation of Apsyrtus into an animal” to be slaughtered at the temple altar. Schaaf (2014), 274 addresses the tradition connecting Artemis with death and gruesome images already present in Sophron’s *Mimes*.

⁴⁵⁸ For instance, see Fusillo (1985), 270 and Nelis (1991), 96. Note, however, Ardizzoni (1967), *comm. ad. v.* for the parallelism with *Il.* 14.39–40.

larger web of references to Artemis in the *Argonautica*. Despite her eagerness to talk to the hero, the old woman is left behind on the side of the path (λίπετ' ... παρακλιδόν, 1.315); in contrast, Jason wanders away from the spot (ἀποπλαναγχεῖς, 1.316).⁴⁵⁹ In commenting on the outcome of this encounter, Clauss states that “[Jason] is too focused on himself and his expedition to take notice of the elderly priestess” and remarks on the similarity between the hero’s behavior and that of his parents.⁴⁶⁰ This scene, however, could also supply a parallel for Apollo’s first appearance on the island of Thynias.⁴⁶¹ In Book 1, Jason’s comparison with Apollo occurs just before he met with Iphias (1.307–11). As has been discussed, the Argonauts spot Apollo on his way northwards to the Hyperboreans, but the god does not give any hints to have acknowledged their presence (2.683–4). In contrast to the god’s aloof demeanor, the Argonauts are held by “helpless amazement” (τοὺς δ’ ἔλε θάμβος ἰδόντας ἀμήχανον, 2.681) as they see Apollo, but “no one dares to look up in the direction of the god’s beautiful eyes” (οὐδέ τις ἔτλη | ἀντίον αὐγάσασθαι ἐξ ὄμματα καλὰ θεοῖο, 2.681–2). The Argonauts’ reverent reaction at Apollo’s epiphany on Thynias can be compared with the crowd’s cheerful response to the passage of Apollo-like Jason in Iolcos, even though the people of Iolcos are not afraid of addressing their hero (τοῖος ἀνὰ πληθὺν δήμου κίεν, ὥρτο δ’ αὐτὴ | κεκλομένων ἄμυδις, 1.310–11). Hence, just like Jason slights the aged priestess, even despite her gesture of ritual supplication, so does Apollo not pay any attention to the heroes and leaves them behind. Shortly after each of these episodes, Orpheus leads rituals in honor of Artemis and Apollo, namely, he sings a hymn to Artemis (1.569–71) and encourages the heroes to perform several rituals for Apollo (2.685–

⁴⁵⁹ Nelis (1991), 98 discusses the different possibilities of interpreting the participle ἀποπλαναγχεῖς: “having been led away” or, actively, “having wandered astray” (cf. *Od.* 8.573, 15.382).

⁴⁶⁰ Clauss (1993), 54.

⁴⁶¹ Hunter (1993b), 84–5 notes the parallel between 1.316 and 2.683–4.

719).⁴⁶² Nelis argues that the combination of Jason’s meeting with Iphias and Orpheus’ hymn to Artemis while the Argo leaves Pagasae suggests that Artemis “is thus intimately associated with the departure of the Argonauts”.⁴⁶³ Similarly, Hunter compares the “sense of loss and desolation” which Jason’s missed encounter with Iphias elicits with Jason-Apollo’s departure from Iolcos: “Jason leaves his family, Apollo leaves Artemis”.⁴⁶⁴ As has been argued, Apollo’s epiphany at Thynias and the Argonauts’ rituals are one of the last instances of Apollo’s presence in the poem until Book 4.⁴⁶⁵ By sailing off from the island of Thynias, the Argonauts depart from Apollo’s religious domain in the *Argonautica*. Given this, the association between Artemis’ and Apollo’s involvements in the narrative at Pagasae and Thynias is particularly suggestive of the themes of departure and abandonment.

The motif of the gaze is relevant to other scenes in which Artemis is present in Books 3 and 4. For instance, in comparing Medea with Artemis during her chariot ride to the temple of Hecate in Book 3.876–86, Apollonius comments on the reaction of the Colchian people to the passage of the royal chariot: “Like this did they hasten through the city, and all around the people made way for them, **avoiding the eyes of the royal maiden**” (ὥς αἶ γ’ ἐσσεύοντο δι’ ἄστεος, ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ | εἶκον **ἀλευάμενοι βασιλίδος ὄμματα κούρης**, 3.885–6). Such emphasis on averting the gaze returns during Jason and Medea’s encounter in the temple, when Medea casts her eyes down after Jason flatters her (ὥς φάτο κυδαίνων· **ἡ δ’ ἐγκλιδὸν ὅσσε βαλοῦσα** | νεκτάρειον μείδησε, 3.1008–9).⁴⁶⁶ Particularly striking is also Medea’s averted gaze from the

⁴⁶² For the discussion of both episodes, see Chapter 1.

⁴⁶³ Nelis (1991), 99.

⁴⁶⁴ Hunter (1993b), 85.

⁴⁶⁵ See Chapter 1.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. the heroes’ attentive and impressed gazing at Jason in 3.924–5: τὸν καὶ παπταίνοντες ἐθάμβειον αὐτοὶ ἐταῖροι | λαμπόμενον χαρίτεσσιν.

murder of his brother in the temple of Artemis at the Brygean Islands: “**The maiden turned her eyes away** and covered her face with her veil so that she could not have to look upon the blood which marked her brother’s death by the sword-blow” (αἴψα δὲ **κούρη** | **ἔμπαλιν ὄμματ’ ἔνεικε**, καλυψαμένη ὀθόνησιν, | μὴ φόνον ἀθρήσειε κασιγνήτοιο τυπέντος, 4.465–7). At this juncture, the hypothesis that the death of Apsyrtus functions as a sacrifice for Artemis is highly intriguing.⁴⁶⁷ It should also be noticed that, earlier in the narrative, Medea wished she had been shot by one of Artemis’ arrows before she laid eyes on Jason: ὥς ὄφελόν γε | Ἀρτέμιδος κραιπνοῖσι πάρος βελέεσσι δαμῆναι, | πρὶν τόν γ’ εἰσιδέειν, πρὶν Ἀχαιίδα γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι | Χαλκιοῦ υἱᾶς (3.773–6).⁴⁶⁸ Instead of being killed by Artemis’ arrows, Medea is shot by Eros.⁴⁶⁹ Apsyrtus, instead, struck in the temple of Artemis, does not die at the hands of the goddess but of Jason, who, in his most recent comparison with a divinity, was told to resemble both Apollo and Ares (3.1282–3).

The increased association between Artemis and death in Books 3 and 4 aligns with the progressive escalation of Medea’s offensive powers.⁴⁷⁰ On this note, as I have discussed, Apollonius appears to emphasize acts of viewing, or the lack thereof, in scenes where Artemis enters the narrative. In Book 3, Medea-Artemis is not looked upon by the commoners but casts her look aside when speaking to Jason. In Book 4, Medea still averts her gaze in the temple of Artemis, but Circe later recognizes her by her golden eyes, the hallmark of the Sun-god (4.725–6). Finally, Medea uses her eyes to kill Talos (4.1665–72). In Chapter 1, I have demonstrated

⁴⁶⁷ Mori (2008), 218–20.

⁴⁶⁸ *Arg.* 3.773–6: “Would that I had first been killed by Artemis’ swift arrows before I saw him, before Chalkiope’s sons reached the Achaian land”. See Fränkel (1968), *comm. ad v.* for an alternative interpretation of line 776 accounting for the fact that Chalkiope’s sons never reached Greece.

⁴⁶⁹ Hunter (1989), 181 comments on the tragic irony of this scene in which Medea wishes for the wrong arrow to have stricken her.

⁴⁷⁰ On Artemis and death, see Schaaf (2014), 274.

how the development of Medea's wrath is parallel to that of her magic. I compared this narrative trajectory with the Egyptian myth of the "Wandering Goddess". I have also discussed how, in the Ptolemaic period, the motif of the "return of the daughter of Re" seems to have been associated with the heliacal rising of Sirius, who is "the star of Isis". At this juncture, it is worth noting that Isis was also associated with Bastet (or Bubastis), an Egyptian cat-headed goddess of pregnancy and children typically identified as Artemis according to the *interpretatio graeca*.⁴⁷¹ The fearsome lion-goddess Sekhmet, who, as has been discussed, is one of Re's wrathful daughters and the "Eye" in Egyptian myth, is a complementary figure to the more benevolent Bastet.⁴⁷² Given this, Medea's association with Artemis in the *Argonautica* is also significant from the perspective of Egyptian myth. In particular, the evolution of Medea into a more fearsome and wrathful character can be paralleled with the shifting of these Egyptian goddesses between different manifestations: the Artemis-like Bastet or the more ferocious Sekhmet, perhaps analogous to a terrifying version of Hecate.

To conclude, in Apollo's religious sphere, Artemis is closely connected with the themes of abandonment and separation suggested by Jason's unsuccessful meeting with Iphias. In Books 3 and 4, Artemis is inherently present in the Colchian environment as a foil for Medea, just like her double Hecate. However, the more the narrative progresses, the more terrifying the goddess that Medea exemplifies becomes. Accordingly, by the end of the poem, Medea could be identified with an extremely angry version of Hecate or, from an Egyptian perspective, with the wrathful manifestation of Artemis' alter-ego Sekhmet.

⁴⁷¹ Delia (1998), 545. Cf. Hdt. 2.137: ἡ δὲ Βούβαστις κατὰ Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν ἐστὶ Ἄρτεμις. See also Hdt. 2.59 for the temple of Bastet/Bubastis in the homonymous city in the Delta.

⁴⁷² Delia (1998), 545 n. 32.

οἱ δ' ἀπὸ νηὸς ὄρουσαν, ἄχος δ' ἔλεν εἰσορόοντας 1245

ἡέρα καὶ μεγάλης νῶτα χθονὸς ἡέρι ἴσα

τηλοῦ ὑπερτείνοντα διηνεκές· οὐδέ τιν' ἀρδμόν,

οὐ πάτον, οὐκ ἀπάνευθε κατηυγάσσαντο βοτῆρων

αὐλίον, εὐκήλῳ δὲ κατείχετο πάντα γαλήνῃ.

ἄλλος δ' αὖτ' ἄλλον τετιμημένος ἐξερέεινε· 1250

“τίς χθὼν εὖχεται ἦδε; πόθι ξυνέωσαν ἄελλαι

ἡμέας; αἴθ' ἔτλημεν, ἀφειδέες οὐλομένοιο

δείματος, αὐτὰ κέλευθα διαμπερές ὀρμηθῆναι

πετράων· ἦ τ' ἂν καὶ ὑπὲρ Διὸς αἴσαν ἰοῦσι

βέλτερον ἦν μέγα δὴ τι μενοινώντας ὀλέσθαι. 1255

νῦν δὲ τί κεν ῥέξαιμεν, ἐρυκόμενοι ἀνέμοισιν

αὐθι μένειν τυτθὸν περ ἐπὶ χρόνον; οἷον ἐρήμη

πέζα διωλυγίης ἀναπέπταται ἠπείροιο.”

“They leapt from the ship, and **grief seized them** as they viewed the sky and the wide stretches of land like the sky, which disappeared into the distance without break. They could see no source of fresh water, no path, no herdsmen’s yard far off in the distance; everything was in the grip of perfect calm. **In their anguish** they would question each other: “What land is this proud to be? Where have the winds driven us? Would that we had neglected our deadly fear and had had the courage to travel the same route through the Rocks! **Indeed it would have been better to journey against Zeus’ decree and perish while attempting some great exploit.** Now what can

we do if the winds force us to remain here for even a very short time? How emptily stretches the coast of this vast land!’”.

The region where the Argonauts land is probably the Great Syrtis, a gulf on the northern coast of modern Libya and west of Cyrene.⁴⁷⁴ Greek authors traditionally identify Libya with a vast stretch of land extending from the west bank of the Nile and its delta to the Atlantic coast of Africa, specifically the Soloeis promontory, modern Cape Spartel (Morocco).⁴⁷⁵ According to Herodotus 4.42, the Libyan country, corresponding to the entire African continent, is “all-encompassed by water” (Λιβύη μὲν γὰρ δηλοῖ ἐωυτὴν ἐοῦσα περίρρυτος), except for the narrow side bordering with Asia (πλὴν ὅσον αὐτῆς πρὸς τὴν Ἀσίην οὐρίζει). Furthermore, the furthest northwestern promontory of Libya, the Pillars of Heracles, flanking the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar, is notably associated with Heracles’ tenth labor, the capture of Geryon’s cattle, and is conceptualized as a passageway into the unexplored depths of the river Oceanus.⁴⁷⁶ Heracles’ eleventh labor, which is to steal the golden apples of the Hesperides, also happens in the remote western edges of the *oikoumene*.⁴⁷⁷ Herodotus, too, refers to the Pillars of Heracles, as well as to stories of exploration into the Ocean, but challenges the verisimilitude of these stories in various regards.⁴⁷⁸ Indeed, it is clear that, in Greco-Roman antiquity, the Pillars of Heracles have

⁴⁷⁴ Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 671.

⁴⁷⁵ Hdt. 2.32.4: τῆς γὰρ Λιβύης τὰ μὲν κατὰ τὴν βορρῆν θάλασσαν ἀπ’ Αἰγύπτου ἀρξάμενοι μέχρι Σολόεντος ἄκρης, ἣ τελευτᾷ τῆς Λιβύης. In 4.41, he reiterates the position of Libya with regard to Egypt: ἀπὸ γὰρ Αἰγύπτου Λιβύη ἤδη ἐκδέκεται. Moreover, in comparison with the narrow Egyptian “peninsula”, Libya is very broad: κατὰ μὲν νυν Αἴγυπτον ἡ ἀκτὴ αὕτη στενὴ ἐστὶ [...] τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ στενοῦ τούτου κάρτα πλατεῖα τυγχάνει ἐοῦσα ἡ ἀκτὴ ἥτις Λιβύη κέκληται”, 4.41. See also Sanmartí (2021), 41.

⁴⁷⁶ The myth of Geryon is already present in the *Theogony* 287–94, 980–4. On Libya as the westernmost region of the world in contrast with Colchis, see Thalmann (2011), 26–7.

⁴⁷⁷ See pg. 227ff. in this Chapter for an overview of the geographical location of the Hesperides’ Garden.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. Hdt. 4.8.2, 42.2–4, 43.3, 152.2, 181.1, 185.1, and 196.1. Herodotus plainly expresses his disbelief regarding some aspects of these myths related to the Pillars of Heracles and the exploration of Libya. For

typically represented a passage into the unknown and the fantastic.⁴⁷⁹ In particular, for the Greeks the outskirts of the Mediterranean traditionally epitomize cultural “otherness” due to their remoteness and independence from the sources of Hellenic culture.⁴⁸⁰ This is mostly true of the African regions, “a place where”—in the words of Prudence Jones—“the supernatural can coexist with ordinary human life”.⁴⁸¹ The idea that better interactions with the divine could correspond to geographical remoteness is already present in Homer, who typically refers to the African populations living in the Sub Sahara as the “blameless Ethiopians” (ἀμύμονας Αἰθιοπῆας, *Il.* 1.423) and underscores their proximity with the gods.⁴⁸² Classical Greek authors refer to the autochthonous populations of Libya with the appellative Λίβυες, which, as comparative studies on Egyptian evidence demonstrate, seems to derive from a local form.⁴⁸³ Moreover, ancient Greek writers described the wide Libyan territory as subdivided into different

instance, he clearly challenges the idea that the river Ocean flows uninterruptedly around the earth, by stating that the Greeks have no evidence to prove that: τὸν δὲ Ὠκεανὸν λόγῳ μὲν λέγουσι ἀπὸ ἡλίου ἀνατολέων ἀρξάμενον γῆν περὶ πᾶσαν ῥέειν, ἔργῳ δὲ οὐκ ἀποδεικνῦσι (4.8.1). In 4.42.2–4, the story of the Phoenician ship circumnavigating Libya by order of the Egyptian pharaoh Neko is instrumental to demonstrate that Libya is indeed περίρρυτος, all-encompassed by water. Herodotus however objects that the *logos* also contains “unreliable elements” (οὐ πιστά, 4.42.4). See Romm (1992), 15–7. See also Romm (1992), 32–41 on “Herodotus and the Changing World Picture”.

⁴⁷⁹ On ancient paradoxography see Romm (1992), 82–120 and Geus and King (2018), 431–44. On Greek and Roman explorations of the Atlantic, see Roller (2006).

⁴⁸⁰ Romm (1992), 83.

⁴⁸¹ Jones (2017), 1–2.

⁴⁸² The Greek name Αἰθίοπες literally mean “burnt-face”. In *Il.* 1.423–4, Zeus and other gods are away from the Trojan battlefield because they recently paid a visit to the blameless Ethiopians by the Ocean to feast with them: Ζεὺς γὰρ ἐς Ὠκεανὸν μετ’ ἀμύμονας Αἰθιοπῆας | χθιζὸς ἔβη μετὰ δαῖτα, θεοὶ δ’ ἅμα πάντες ἔποντο. Cf. also *Il.* 23.207 and *Od.* 1.22–26, and Hesiod’s *Th.* 985–6. The Ethiopian Amazons are the main characters of a lost epic poem by Arctinus of Miletus titled *Aethiopsis* and belonging to the same epic cycle as the Homeric poems. On the “blameless Ethiopians” see also Romm (1992), 49–60.

⁴⁸³ See for instance Hdt. 4.181, Soph. *El.* 702; as an adjective (Λιβυκός, Λίβυσσα), see Eur. *Alc.* 346, Antiph. 217.13, Pi. *P.* 9.105, Soph. fr. 11 Radt, Hdt. 4.189, Aesch. *Eu.* 292 (Λιβυστικός). Egyptian sources of the late second millennium BC used the appellatives Rebu, or Lebu, to identify those peoples inhabiting the area surrounding the oasis of Ammon. See Brett and Fentress (1996), 22, Colin (1999), 13–8, and Sanmartí (2021), 42. See also Brett and Fentress, (1996), 17–22 for an overview of North African and, specifically, Egyptian visual representations of the “Libyans”.

tribal domains.⁴⁸⁴ The subdivision of ancient Libya into separate cultural groups identified by “ethnonyms” persisted throughout antiquity and up to modern times.⁴⁸⁵ Herodotus’ Books 2 and 4 of the *Historiē* offer one of the first ethnographic digressions about these populations.⁴⁸⁶ In particular, Book 2 focuses on the relationship between Egypt and the Libyan territory, as well as on the issue of cultural borrowing between neighboring countries. In the last section of Book 4 (145–205), Herodotus provides a geographical and ethnographic excursus of Libya, with particular focus on the history of Cyrene.⁴⁸⁷ Remarkably, some of the tribes he refers to, such as the Nasamones (4.172–3) and Garamantes (4.174), are also mentioned in the *Argonautica* through eponymous founding figures.⁴⁸⁸

Through the Hellenistic period, the first Libyan kingdoms, particularly the Massyli, established contacts with the Greek world, as Fentress remarks, “possibly directly with Alexandria”.⁴⁸⁹ Cyrene and Cyrenaica, the eastern area of ancient Libya, clearly maintained an

⁴⁸⁴ In the *Periegesis* (*FGrHist* 1 f334), Hecataeus of Miletus mentions the Μάζυες as one of the nomadic peoples of Libya. This fragment is preserved in Stephanos’ of Byzantium *Ethnika*, who also refers to the Maxyes (Μάξυες) and Machlyes (Μάχλυες). Sanmartí (2021), 42 discusses the correspondence between these names and similar forms, such as MZK, MZG, Mazices, Mazaces, appearing in Roman and Libyan inscriptions. These term “Amazigh”, currently used to indicate the indigenous inhabitants of the North African littoral, seem to have derived from these ancient noun forms. See Gsell (1927) 115–17, Camps (1961) 26–8 and Sanmartí (2021), 42.

⁴⁸⁵ Sanmartí (2021), 47.

⁴⁸⁶ Other ancient Greco-Roman authors writing about Libya include Pliny the Elder *N.H.* Book 5 and Claudius Ptolemy, *Geography* 4.4–6 (2nd cent. CE, Alexandria).

⁴⁸⁷ Herodotus’ *logos* on Cyrene covers especially chapters 4.150–167 and 200–205. Other important Greek sources on Cyrene are Pindar’s *Pyth.* 4.1–8, 259–62, 5.55–67, 79–103, and 9.17–70, 103–125, and Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo* 65–96.

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. 4.1494 (Γαράμαντρά) and 1496 (Νασάμωνα). On the Garamantes, see Daniels (1970) and Mattingly (2022), 64–80.

⁴⁸⁹ Brett and Fentress (1996), 25. Fentress bases this argument on numismatic evidence, considering the survival of a series of coins dating from about 241 BC which show the legend “Libyans” in Greek letters. Moreover, Brett and Fentress (1996), 27 comment that Masinissa, perhaps the most famous Massylian king between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, in his exchanges with Romans and Carthaginians, received honors appropriate for a Hellenistic monarch. Fentress also discusses the acknowledgement of Masinissa as a Hellenistic ruler in the monumental statuary of Delos and Athens. On Numidian monumental architecture as a

important relationship with Pharaonic Egypt since their foundation and, subsequently, with Ptolemaic Egypt. Already at the beginning of the Ptolemaic kingdom, Magas of Cyrene, a son of queen Berenice I from her previous marriage to a Macedonian officer, Philip, was appointed governor of Cyrenaica and ruled under the control of Ptolemy I (ca. 276–250 BC). Despite Magas’ attempts to secure Cyrene’s independence after the death of Ptolemy I, Cyrene returned under Ptolemaic control when his daughter, Berenice II, married Ptolemy III Euergetes and became queen of Egypt (246–222 BC).⁴⁹⁰ Indeed, the interest that early Ptolemaic rulers had in the Cyrenaica provides an additional historical foundation for Apollonius’ contextualization of Egyptian imagery and rituals in the Libyan episode.⁴⁹¹ Scholars have argued that several scenes of the Libyan episode contain references to Egyptian ritual and theology.⁴⁹² Most notably, Anatole Mori has compared the carrying of the Argo across Syrtis with the ritual transport of a portable statue of Amon-Re in the solar barque during the Egyptian Opet festival.⁴⁹³ However, scholars focused on the individual scenes constituting Apollonius’ “Libyan *mythos*”, without proposing a large-scale interpretation from a narrative perspective.⁴⁹⁴ In the following subsections, I concentrate on the individual characters whom the Argonauts encounter in Libya,

status symbol to claim parity with Hellenistic Egypt, see Quinn (2013). Brett and Fentress (1996) is the leading study concerning the Berber people. Schaus (2020), 353–7 provides an overview of the archaeology of the early settlements in Cyrenaica. Hitchner (2022) 3–8 provides a concise overview about the historiography of North Africa.

⁴⁹⁰ See Hölbl (2001), 39–40 for a detailed overview of Magas’ conflictual relationship with Ptolemy II Philadelphos. Hölbl (2001), 45 discusses Magas’ reconciliation with Ptolemy II.

⁴⁹¹ Stephens (2003), 182 argues that Libya could represent “a recognizable synecdoche for (at the very least) Alexandrian Egypt in Apollonius”. See also Thalmann (2011), 27: “... the reasons Apollonius made it the counterpart to Colchis probably had to do with the prominence of Cyrene as a Greek colony from the Archaic period on and with its importance to the Ptolemies”.

⁴⁹² See Stephens (2003), 218–37, Mori (2008), 13–8, and Hunter (2015), 267.

⁴⁹³ Mori (2008), 13–8. On the Opet festival, see also Stephens (2003), 45–6.

⁴⁹⁴ This definition of the Libyan episode as a *mythos* is my own, but Apollonius uses this word in one of his rare addresses to the Muses to refer to the transportation of the Argo through the Syrtis: Μουσάων ὅδε μῦθος, ἐγὼ δ’ ὑπακουὸς ἀείδω (4.1381).

the Libyan Heroines, Hesperides, and the god Triton, especially in relation to his mirroring divinity Glaucus, in order to provide an overarching interpretation for Apollonius' "Libyan *mythos*". Specifically, I argue that the Libyan episode constitutes a micro-narrative centering on rituals of atonement and purification from a non-Greek perspective. This episode belongs to the greater cycle of purification demands for the Argonauts, which Zeus announces after Jason and Medea slaughter Apsyrtus at the Brygean Islands. The Libyan micro-narrative complements Circe's purification rituals in Aiaia and satisfies Egyptian requirements of purification. Apsyrtus' direct descent from Helios, the supreme divinity in Colchis corresponding to Ra in Egyptian religion, further elucidates the need for atonement in Egyptian terms. This interpretation also explains why the Greek gods do not intervene to rescue the stranded Argonauts in the Syrtis. Instead, the heroes find salvation through the help of the local gods, the δαίμονες ἐγγένηται (*Arg.* 4.1549), who help them with the orientation and, eventually, with their escape from the hostile Libyan landscape.

Libyan Heroines

The Libyan Heroines are the first local divinities the Argonauts encounter (4.1305–31).⁴⁹⁵ Their appearance to Jason is spontaneous and, most importantly, salvific for the Argonauts to overcome their impasse in Libya.

Arg. 4.1305–10

καί νύ κεν αὐτοῦ πάντες ἀπὸ ζωῆς ἐλίαςθεν

1305

⁴⁹⁵ On the Heroines, see Hunter (2015), 260. Hunter contrasts the Libyan Heroines' interaction with Jason with the Sirens' episode in the *Odyssey* (12.189–91) arguing that the essential difference is that the former want to help, not destroy the hero. See also Feeney (1991), 91–2, Hunter (1993b), 126, and Thalmann (2011), 80.

νώνυμοι καὶ ἄφαντοι ἐπιχθονίοισι δαῖναι
 ἥρώων οἱ ἄριστοι ἀνηνύστω ἐπ' ἀέθλω·
 ἀλλὰ σφεας ἐλέηραν ἀμηχανίῃ μινύθοντας
 ἥρῳσσαι Λιβύης τιμήοροι, αἶ ποτ' Ἀθήνην,
 ἦμος ὅτ' ἐκ πατρὸς κεφαλῆς θόρε παμφαίνουσα, 1310
 ἀντόμεναι Τρίτωνος ἐφ' ὕδασι χυτλώσαντο.

“There and then they would have all departed from life, the best of heroes with their task
 uncompleted, leaving no name or trace by which mortal men might know of them; but as they
 wasted away in helplessness, **the heroines, guardians of Libya, took pity on them.** Once when
 Athena had leapt resplendent from her father’s head, **it was they who welcomed her and
 bathed her in the waters of Lake Triton**”.

Significantly, the Heroines appear to Jason as they take pity on him and the other heroes
 (σφεας ἐλέηραν, 4.1308), who are helplessly pining away in the Libyan desert. By recounting the
 myth of the Heroines’ reception of newly born Athena near the Tritonian Lake, the poet confirms
 their presence in the region even before the goddess’ birth and, consequently, highlights their
 status as epichoric divinities. At midday, the Heroines appear to Jason alone while he is in a state
 of unconsciousness, by lifting up the cloak covering his head and speaking to him (4.1310–4).⁴⁹⁶
 In lines 4.1315–6, Jason seems to wake up and react to the Heroines’ epiphany by turning his

⁴⁹⁶ The middle of the day (noon) is a standard time for epiphanies in Greek literature. See for instance
 Theocritus’ *Id.* 1.15–6: “it is not right, shepherd, it is not right to play the syrinx at midday, for we fear Pan...”
 (οὐ θέμις, ὦ ποιμήν, τὸ μεσαμβρινὸν οὐ θέμις ἄμυν | συρίσδεν. τὸν Πᾶνα δεδοίκαμες...).

eyes away out of respect (αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' εἰς ἐτέρωσε παλιμπετὲς ὄμματ' ἔνεικεν).⁴⁹⁷ However, it is unclear whether Jason really sees the goddesses or rather dreams about them. Apollonius may have reproduced the typical epic device of the “dream visit”, whereby a god stands by someone’s head while sleeping and appears in their dream. A useful *comparandum* for this scene is Athena’s dream visitation to Nausicaa in *Od.* 6, where the goddess’ aim is to help the shipwrecked Odysseus.⁴⁹⁸ In the *Argonautica*, the Heroines provide a salvific dream for the Argonauts, as they help them find their way out of the Syrtis (4.1318–29). Nevertheless, their speech is enigmatic and requires the heroes’ interpretation:

Arg. 1318–29

“κάμμορε, τίπτ’ ἐπὶ τόσσον ἀμηχανίῃ βεβόλησαι;
 ἴδμεν ἐποικομένους χρύσειον δέρος· ἴδμεν ἕκαστα
 ὑμετέρων καμάτων, ὅσ’ ἐπὶ χθονὸς ὅσσα τ’ ἐφ’ ὑγρὴν 1320
 πλαζόμενοι κατὰ πόντον ὑπέρβια ἔργα κάμεσθε.
 οἰοπόλοι δ’ εἰμὲν χθόνιαι θεαὶ αὐδήεσσαι,
 ἡρῶσσαι Λιβύης τιμήοροι ἡδὲ θύγατρες.
 ἀλλ’ ἄνα, μηδ’ ἔτι τοῖον οἰζύων ἀκάχησο·
 ἄνστησον δ’ ἐτάρους· εὖτ’ ἂν δέ τοι Ἀμφιτρίτῃ 1325
 ἄρμα Ποσειδάωνος ἐύτροχον αὐτίκα λύσῃ,
 δὴ ῥα τότε σφετέρῃ ἀπὸ μητέρι τίνετ’ ἀμοιβήν

⁴⁹⁷ On epiphanies see Petridou (2015), 195–228. Specifically, Petridou (2015), 197 argues that the remoteness of the landscape is a factor facilitating the encounters between humans and the divine: “Mountains, forests, remote and often rocky coastlines, and even the sea are all perceived as being on the borders of human space, as [...] facilitating encounters between gods and humans”.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. also *Il.* 2.1–83 (Zeus’ “evil dream”, οὖλον ὄνειρον, 2.6, to Agamemnon).

ὧν ἔκαμεν δηρὸν κατὰ νηδύος ὕμμε φέρουσα·

καί κεν ἔτ' ἡγαθήην ἐς Ἀχαιίδα νοστήσaiτε.”

“‘Unhappy man, why are you so downcast and despairing? We know that you and your comrades went to gain the golden fleece; we know every detail of all your sufferings, all the extraordinary things you have endured on land and sea in your wanderings over the ocean. We are the shepherd goddesses of the land, endowed with human voice, the heroines, guardians and daughters of Libya. Rise up, and no longer groan in distress like this! Stir your comrades! **As soon as Amphitrite releases the speeding chariot of Poseidon, then pay fair requital to your mother for all she has suffered in carrying you in her belly for so long;** in this way you will return safe to the holy Achaian land’”.

In the next sections, the heroes correctly interpret the Heroines’ instructions and exit the desert by carrying the Argo, their “mother”, on their shoulders for twelve days until they reach the Lake Triton (1330–92).⁴⁹⁹

Apollonius’ association of Greek gods, such as Athena and Poseidon, with Libya is not original to the *Argonautica*.⁵⁰⁰ Athena’s Homeric epithet Tritogeneia (Τριτογένεια, *Il.* 4.515, 8.39, *Od.* 3.378, Hes. *Th.* 895, 924) already suggests the myth of the goddess’ birth by Lake Triton.⁵⁰¹ Moreover, the issue of the Libyan origin of these two divinities is well-discussed in

⁴⁹⁹ Asper (2008), 175 draws a parallelism between the Argonauts’ interpretation of the Heroines’ message and the poem’s ideal reader, who proceeds by reading the signs laid out in the text.

⁵⁰⁰ For Athena and Poseidon’s association with Libya see, respectively, 4.1309–11 and 4.1325–6.

⁵⁰¹ Asheri (2007), 703 maintains that the epithet is difficult to explain. The *scholia* to Apollonius 4.1311 comment that Athena acquired the epithet Tritogeneia due to her birth beside the homonymous lake: Τρίτων ποταμὸς Λιβύης, ἔστι δὲ καὶ Βοιωτίας. δοκεῖ δὲ ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ παρ’ ἐτέρῳ αὐτῶν γεγενῆσθαι, ἀφ’ οὗ καὶ Τριτογένεια λέγεται.

Herodotus. In Book 2.50, Herodotus submits that the Greeks imported the god Poseidon from the Libyans, who were the god's original worshipers: "Indeed, wellnigh all the names of the gods came to Hellas from Egypt. [...] The gods whose names they say they do not know were, as I think, named by the Pelasgians, save only Poseidon, of whom they learnt the knowledge from the Libyans. Alone of all nations the Libyans have had among them the name of Poseidon from the first, and they have ever honoured this god".⁵⁰² Herodotus' Book 4 provides more information regarding Libyan Athena and the Libyan Heroines. According to Herodotus 4.180.2, the local tribe of the Auseans, inhabiting the region of Lake Triton, worship the goddess whom the Greeks call Athena (τὴν Ἀθηναίην καλέομεν) as a local divinity (τῷ αὐθιγενεί θεῷ). Indeed, Herodotus claims that the Libyans believe Athena to be a daughter of Poseidon and the Tritonian lake (τὴν δὲ Ἀθηναίην φασὶ Ποσειδέωνος εἶναι θυγατέρα καὶ τῆς Τριτωνίδος λίμνης, 4.180.5); due to a dispute with her father, the goddess gave herself to Zeus to be his daughter (4.180.5).⁵⁰³ With regards to ritual performance, Herodotus reports of a yearly festival that the Auseans perform for Athena (ὅρτῃ δὲ ἐνιαυσίῃ Ἀθηναίης, 4.180.2), involving two bands of maidens fighting with stones and spears according to the customs of their ancestors (τὰ πάτρια ἀποτελέειν, 4.180.2). Those among the girls who die due to the wounds are called "pseudo-parthenoi" (ψευδοπαρθένους, 4.180.2). Moreover, before the ritual fighting, a chosen girl, the most beautiful one, armed with helmet and armor, parades in a chariot along the lake shore (4.180.3). In 4.180.4, Herodotus concludes his description by advancing that the maidens' armor during the

⁵⁰² Hdt. 2.50: Σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ πάντων τὰ οὐνόματα τῶν θεῶν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐλήλυθε εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα. [...] τῶν δὲ οὐ φασὶ θεῶν γινώσκειν τὰ οὐνόματα, οὗτοι δέ μοι δοκέουσι ὑπὸ Πελασγῶν ὀνομασθῆναι, πλὴν Ποσειδέωνος· τοῦτον δὲ τὸν θεὸν παρὰ Λιβύων ἐπύθοντο· οὐδαμοὶ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς Ποσειδέωνος οὐνομα ἔκτεινται εἰ μὴ Λίβυες καὶ τιμῶσι τὸν θεὸν τοῦτον αἰεὶ. Translation by Godley (1920).

⁵⁰³ Cf. also Pausanias 1.14.6.

ritual fight was probably Egyptian. The *logos* of the Ausean women and their ritual fights in honor of a local Athena seems to recall certain aspects of Apollonius' Libyan Heroines.⁵⁰⁴

The archaeological evidence and anthropological parallels complementing these ancient accounts are equally suggestive. In his commentary on Herodotus' Books 1–4, David Asheri provides evidence of similar rituals to those Herodotus describes, particularly the so-called “feast of salt” performed until recent times in the Libyan region of Ghāt (Fezzan).⁵⁰⁵ In this ritual, the women were expected to perform a war dance and undergo an inspection of their virginity.⁵⁰⁶ Asheri claims, therefore, that the ritual seems to have involved elements of purification and initiation “with the undertones of an ordeal”.⁵⁰⁷ Asheri also comments that Herodotus clearly insists on the “local” character of the female divinity celebrated in the Libyan maidens' rituals. He remarks that she must have been a female divinity associated with the “world of the waters” and similar to the Egyptian goddess Neith, the Punic Astarte, and the Greek Athena. Herodotus himself proposes the connection between the Greek goddess Athena and her Egyptian counterpart Neith in the context of the Egyptian festival of Athena at Sais (2.59–62). According to scholars, however, this figure could have originated from “Libyan Athena”.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ Hunter (2015), ad v. suggests the parallelism with Herodotus. It is worth mentioning that the myth of the Libyan female warriors reappears in Diodorus Siculus, who speaks of a Libyan race ruled by women (ἔθνος γυναικοκρατούμενον, 3.53), whom he assimilates to Greek “Amazons” due to their custom of removing the breasts. In Book 3.52, Diodorus claims to have drawn from Dionysius Scytobrachion, a Hellenistic author who lived sometime between 323 and 250 BC in Alexandria. Diodorus claims to have referred to Dionysius' *Argonautica*, a rationalizing mythical romance set in Libya, to inform his sections about the Libyan Amazons (4.53–5), the myth of the Argonauts (4.40–55), and the Dionysus born in Libya (66.4–73.8). On the “Libyan Amazons”, see Penrose (2016), 139–42.

⁵⁰⁵ Asheri (2007), 702–3. Cf. also Ribichini (1978), 39–60 and Mastrocinque (1982), 61–4.

⁵⁰⁶ Asheri (2007), 702–3. See also Camps (1982), 207–8.

⁵⁰⁷ Asheri (2007), 703.

⁵⁰⁸ Bonnet (1952), 513, Schlichting (1980), 392, Lesko (1999), 47, and Hollis (2019), 20.

Apollonius highlights the connection between the Heroines, Athena, and the Lake Triton. In the Heroines' speech, he also links the lake with Poseidon's typical imagery. Finally, Jason's description of the Heroines' appearance after the dream confirms their status of "maidens":

Arg. 4.1347–50

“κλῦτε, φίλοι· τρεῖς γάρ μοι ἀνιάζοντι θεάων,
στέρφεσιν αἰγείοις ἐζωσμέναι ἐξ ὑπάτοιο
αὐχένος ἀμφί τε νῶτα καὶ ἰζύας, ἥύτε κοῦραι,
ἔσταν ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς μάλ' ἐπισχεδόν...” 1350

“Listen, friends. As I lay in grief, three goddesses stood over my head very close to me; they were dressed in goatskins from the top of their necks around their backs and waists, just like young girls”.

From a slightly different perspective, the *scholia* to Apollonius 4.1322 comment on the identity of the Libyan Heroines by quoting three lines of Callimachus' fr. 602 Pf., in which the Heroines are “mistresses of Libya” looking upon the land of the Nasamones.⁵⁰⁹ Again, Herodotus' characterization of the Nasamones in his Libyan *logos* (4.172–3) features notable analogies with Apollonius' episode in Book 4. Herodotus locates the Nasamones next to the Auschisae, a Cyrenaican tribe, on the shore of the Greater Syrtis and characterizes them as shepherds (4.172). Most relevantly, Herodotus identifies the Nasamones as practitioners of

⁵⁰⁹ Callimachus fr. 602 Pf.: δέσποιναι Λιβύης ἡρωῖδες, αἱ Νασαμώνων | αἶλιν καὶ δολιχὰς θῖνας ἐπιβλέπετε, | μητέρα μοι ζώουσιν ὀφέλλετε (“Mistresses, Heroines of Libya, who look upon the Nasamons' tent and long shores, pay homage to my living mother”, my translation).

divinatory practices (μαντικῇ χρέωνται, 4.172), which consist of both prayers performed at their ancestors' tombs and incubation rituals (μαντεύονται δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν προγόνων φοιτέοντες τὰ σήματα, καὶ κατευξάμενοι ἐπικατακοιμῶνται). Herodotus' characterization of the Nasamones as shepherds resonates with the Heroines' description of themselves as οἰοπόλοι, namely, either “lonely” or “tending sheep”—the latter deriving from αἰπόλος.⁵¹⁰ The *scholia* to this passage explains that the epithet οἰοπόλοι means “to go about sheep” (περὶ τὰς οἷς πολοῦσαι) and assimilates the Heroines to the Ἐπιμηλίδες.⁵¹¹ This emphasis on the pastoral sphere seems also relevant in connection with Apollonius' later digression about the death of Canthus, whom Caphauros killed for his attempted stealing of sheep (4.1485–501). Caphauros is a man “not inferior” to him (οὐ μὲν ἀφαιρότερός, 4.1489), being himself a grandson of Apollo and Acacallis, daughter of Minos, and a son of Amphithemis or Garamas—the latter probably being a local form evoking the homonymous local tribe of the Garamantes, who border with the Nasamones in Hdt. 4.174. Furthermore, and most importantly, Herodotus' attribution of divinatory rituals of incubation to the Nasamones recalls the Libyan Heroines episode and their alleged visitation to Jason.

Considering the significant context of the Heroines' dream visitation in relation to Herodotus' account of the Nasamones' divinatory practices, I propose to look at this episode from the perspective of Egyptian and Ptolemaic rituals of divination.⁵¹² Starting with the New

⁵¹⁰ Arg. 4.1322–3: οἰοπόλοι δ' εἰμὲν χθόνιαί θεαὶ αὐδήεσσαι, | ἡρώσσαι Λιβύης τιμήοροι ἡδὲ θύγατρες.

⁵¹¹ *Schol. ad Arg.* 4.1322.

⁵¹² Scholars have already pointed out how the Argonauts' transportation of the Argo through the Syrtis recalls Egyptian ritual imagery. In particular, Mori (2008), 13–8 discusses the analogies between this scene and attested Egyptian rituals involving the processional conveyance of boats to the temple. See also Hunter (2015), 267. For dream visions and divine visitations in Egyptian lore, see Renberg (2017). See also Szpakowska's (2006), a collection of essays discussing various aspects of pre-Ptolemaic Egyptian oracular practices and divinities, and Nissinen (2017) for several comparative studies about literary accounts of divination and divinatory practices in Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek sources.

Kingdom, it was a standard Egyptian practice to carry the statue of the oracular god in procession to the temple before attending the divination ceremony.⁵¹³ The major Egyptian oracular divinity in this period is Amun, namely, “the unseen”, who is also a manifestation of Ra as Amun-Ra and, at a later stage, a counterpart to Zeus, with the title of Zeus Ammon.⁵¹⁴ It seems indeed that the earliest evidence of divination in Egypt goes back to few oracular inscriptions in the mid-18th Dynasty, at the start of the New Kingdom, particularly, the royal accounts of the pharaohs Hatshepsut and Thutmose III.⁵¹⁵ These texts show that the god Amun typically communicated his will by using the solar barque as a medium.⁵¹⁶ By comparing the ritual procession of oracular statues in Egypt with the Argonauts’ conveyance of the Argo through Syrtis, one uncovers, in my view, a wider set of connections between this episode and Egyptian ritual performance. In Egyptian lore the statue of the god was believed to contain the divine being itself.⁵¹⁷ On these lines, the statue of Amun, or Amun-Ra, the most important

⁵¹³ Frankfurter (2005), 236 and Tallet (2012), 398–9. Teeter (2011), 105–6 describes the individual steps of the procession by referring to a relief depicting a religious procession during the Opet festival (Dynasty 19. Luxor Temple): “On the day that the oracle was to be consulted, the god’s statue was removed from its naos in the temple sanctuary and placed in a shrine on a portable sacred boat. The boat was placed on carrying poles that were lifted by a team of white-clad priests”.

⁵¹⁴ Already in the Old Kingdom, Ra rose as the first manifestation of the Sun-god in the Heliopolitan region. However, the emergence of Amun (“the hidden one”) during the 11th dynasty in Thebes and his progressive development into major god of that region prompted the fusion of the two divinities Ra and Amun into Amun-Ra. In the Middle and New Kingdom, Amun-Ra was elevated to the status of supreme state god of the Egyptian pantheon. During this period of great flourishing, Amun-Ra’s priesthood became immensely rich and the god was dedicated a huge number of temples and cults throughout Egypt; the practice to assume his name, which had formerly been restricted to the rulers of Thebes, was adopted by the pharaohs. For a detailed study of Amun-Ra’s theology and cult in the New Kingdom, see Assmann (1983) and (1995). For a brief overview, see Wilkinson (2003), 92–7.

⁵¹⁵ Moore (2013), 1. On divination in ancient Egypt, see Lieven (1999), 77–126.

⁵¹⁶ Cerny (1962), 35, Kakosy (1982), 602, Römer (1994), 144–7, and Moore (2013), 1.

⁵¹⁷ See Bonnet’s (1971), 118–20, *Reallexikon Der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, for an overview of Egyptian statues of both human and divine characters. See also Lorton (1999), 123–210 for the theological understanding of cult statues in Egypt. Rutherford (2000), 133–46 discusses pilgrimage practices in the ancient Greek world, especially the ritual “watching” (*theōria*) of religious performance, by drawing an analogy with the notion of *darśan* in Hinduism (*darśana* in Sanskrit), which, at pg. 143, he defines as “contemplation, and

divination deity in the New Kingdom, should correspond, in the Apollonian episode, with the Argo, which, in fact, harbors a plank from Zeus' sacred oak at Dodona which is endowed with the god's own voice.⁵¹⁸ Furthermore, the conceptualization of Amun as “the unseen” or “concealed one”, based on his assimilation with the ether, is particularly evocative of Zeus' own characterization in the *Argonautica*, where the god never appears and is yet omnipresent.

Moreover, Zeus' oracles perform an important function in the poem, and, indeed, the god drives forward the narrative according to requirements of ritual atonement and purification.⁵¹⁹ As we learn in Book 2, Zeus' interests revolve around assuring the Argonauts' arrival in Colchis.⁵²⁰ In particular, during their encounter with the sons of Phrixos, Jason declares that he set out on the journey to “fulfill the sacrifice of Phrixos, Zeus' source of anger against the Aeolids” (ἐπεὶ Φρίξοιο θυηλὰς | στέλλομαι ἀμπλήσων, Ζηνὸς χόλον Αἰολίδησιν, 2.1194–5). What Jason means by this sentence is that the purpose of the Argonauts' journey is to atone for the averted sacrifice of Phrixos and, consequently, to placate Zeus' wrath. Apollonius revisits this pattern in Book 4, as Zeus' angry reaction at the murder of Apsyrtus forces the Argonauts to pay a visit to Circe in

the religious insight that accompanies this process”. Smith (2021), 76 and 317 has specifically addressed this ritual practice in connection with physical votive representations of the divine, such as statues. At pg. 76, Smith poses the question, “Were the Greek gods and goddesses manifest and present in visual or material form, in much the same way as Hindu worshippers experience *darshana* (Sanskrit: “viewing”), the auspicious sight of the deity?”. On *darśan* in Indian religions, see Eck (1996).

⁵¹⁸ The Argo's sacred beam from Dodona speaks in two occasions: as the Argo departs from Pagasae (1.524–7) and after the murder of Apsyrtus to bid the Argonauts to attend Circe's purification ritual (4.580–92).

⁵¹⁹ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Zeus' oracles in the *Argonautica* compared to Apollo's.

⁵²⁰ In Book 2, Zeus' *noos* lies behind two connected micro-narratives: the story of Phineus' punishment (2.180–93) and the events concerning the fleece, in which Phrixos and Argo are involved (2.1140–56, 1179–84, 1194–5). In addition, Zeus orchestrates the following events on the island of Phineus and the island of Ares: the Argonauts' arrival happens according to the prediction he had given to Phineus (2.196), he empowers the Boreads with unlimited strength to chase the Harpies away (2.275–7), through Phineus, he informs the heroes that they will meet “a source of help that cannot be divulged” (ὄνειαρ ἄρρητον), namely, Argos.

Aiaia and perform a purification ritual. Zeus communicates his wrath through the sacred beam from Dodona:

Arg. 4.580–8

νήσου ἔπι κραναῆς Ἥλεκτρίδος. αὐτίκα δ' ἄφνω 580

ἴαχεν ἀνδρομέη ἐνοπῇ μεσσηγὺ θεόντων

αὐδῆεν γλαφυρῆς νηὸς δόρυ, τό ρ' ἀνὰ μέσσην

στεῖραν Ἀθηναίη Δωδωνίδος ἤρμοσε φηγοῦ.

τοὺς δ' ὀλοὸν μεσσηγὺ δέος λάβεν εἰσαΐοντας

φθογγήν τε Ζηνός τε βαρὺν χόλον. οὐ γὰρ ἀλύξειν 585

ἔννεπεν οὔτε πόνους δολιχῆς ἀλὸς οὔτε θυέλλας

ἀργαλέας, ὅτε μὴ Κίρκη φόνον Ἀψύρτοιο

νηλέα νίψειεν·

“As they rushed along, there was a sudden shout from the plank of the hollow ship which Athena had fashioned from an oak of Dodona and set in the middle of the keel. It spoke with a human voice, and deathly fear seized them as they heard **the voice and heavy anger of Zeus**. It said that they could not escape from their suffering on the vast ocean and the terrible storms until Kirke had cleansed them for the pitiless murder of Apsyrtos.”.⁵²¹

⁵²¹ Zeus’ great anger is also mentioned at 4.577: ἀμφ’ αὐτοῖς **Ζηνός τε μέγαν χόλον** ἐφράσαθ’ Ἥρη. Moreover, the Argonauts recognize the sacred plank’s shouting as Zeus’ *boulē*, as they demonstrate at 4.1254–5: “Indeed it would have been better to journey **against Zeus’ decree** and perish while attempting some great exploit” (ἦ τ’ ἂν καὶ **ὑπὲρ Διὸς αἴσαν** ἰοῦσιν | βέλτερον ἦν μέγα δὴ τι μενοιώοντας ὀλέσθαι). On the Argo’s sacred plank as an example of aniconism, see n. 755.

The god concludes with the twofold order, for Castor and Pollux, to pray to the gods for a good navigation into the Tyrrhenian Sea (4.588–9) and to seek Circe, namely, “the daughter of Perse and Helios” (Πέρσης τε καὶ Ἡλίοιο θύγατρα, 4.591). Zeus’ reference to Circe’s lineage from the Sun-god is significant in addition to the following mention of Phaethon’s plunge into the Eridanus river and death (4.592–617). The story of Phaethon being struck by a “blazing lightning bolt” (ἐνθα ποτ’ αἰθαλόεντι τυπεῖς πρὸς στέρνα κεραυνῷ, 4.596) and falling off Helios’ chariot “half-burned” (ἡμιδαῆς Φαέθων πέσεν ἄρματος Ἡλίοιο, 4.597) seems to work as a cautionary tale of Zeus’ justice administration. Specifically, the overlapping between the figures of Zeus and Helios in this story suggests a connection between the two gods, as well as this story and the events in the Syrtis.⁵²² In the tale of Phaethon’s death, Zeus is the administrator of justice who punishes the young son of Helios for his hybriatic behavior. The young man’s fall into a swamp in the Eridanus’ delta causes the surrounding area to emanate a terrible smell coming from his wounds and deathly vapors (4.599–603). The Heliades maidens (κοῦραι Ἡλιάδες, 4.603–4), daughters of Helios, surround the pond in the form of poplars, lamenting the death of Phaethon (μύρονται κινυρὸν μέλεαι γόον, 4.605) and shedding amber tears to the ground (4.605–6).

In the Syrtis episode, the greatest source of harm for the heroes is the desert itself. Upon the arrival of the Libyan Heroines, the heroes are deprived of food and nourishment (ἄκμηνοι καὶ ἄπαστοι ἐκεῖατο, 4.1295), and the midday sun scorches them with sharp rays (ἐνδῖον ἥμαρ ἔην,

⁵²² A significant hint of Zeus’ and Helios’ overlapping roles in Book 4 occurs at 4.228–30, as Aeetes prepares to launch his people on a rescue and punitive expedition after the Argonauts: “In his grievous distress the king **raised his arms to Helios and Zeus**, and called them to **witness** the wrongs he had suffered. He shouted terrible threats against his whole people...” (αὐτὰρ ἄναξ ἄτη πολυπήμονι **χεῖρας ἀείρας | Ἥλιον καὶ Ζῆνα** κακῶν **ἐπιμάρτυρας** ἔργων | κέκλετο, δεινὰ δὲ παντὶ παρασχεδὸν ἤπυε λαῶ).

περὶ δ' ὀξύταται θέρον αὐγαὶ | ἡελίου Λιβύην..., 4.1312–3).⁵²³ The sun, a natural manifestation of the Sun-god, strikes the heroes with his rays just like Zeus' lightning crushes Phaethon. The image of the Sun burning his human subjects, especially wrongdoers, is important in Egyptian mythology: Ra was in fact believed to punish sinners with excessive heat and radiance.⁵²⁴ Moreover, in Egyptian sources, Amun-Ra's enactment of justice is regularly accompanied by great outbursts of divine wrath. For instance, a brief excerpt about Ra from the Papyrus Chester Beatty states: "His strength is victorious, he is master of fear, | his anger is directed against the impious; | he destroys rebels".⁵²⁵ In place of the Heliades' *kourai*, the Libyan Heroines take care of the Argonauts in their suffering by helping them get across the Syrtis. Their instructions, albeit difficult to interpret, allow the heroes to escape the hardships of the desertic landscape, namely, an epitome of the Sun-god's justice. By assuming that the procession of the Argo is equal to a procession of Zeus, epitomized by the Dodonian beam, and of his Egyptian counterpart, Amun-Ra, it would even be plausible that the Argonauts' feat functions as a propitiatory ritual for the wronged divinity.⁵²⁶

A second episode from the first book of the *Argonautica*, namely, the Argonauts' stopover in Cyzicus, provides further parallels to inform an interpretation of Apollonius' Libyan narrative in terms of ritual atonement and purification. In fact, the Argonauts' march across the

⁵²³ The heroes' deprivation of food contrasts with their refusal to eat in the vicinity of the Eridanus' delta: τοὺς δ' οὔτε βρώμης ἤρει πόθος οὔτε ποτοῖο, | οὔτ' ἐπὶ γηθοσύνας τράπετο νόος (4.619–20).

⁵²⁴ Assmann (1995), 53.

⁵²⁵ P.Ch.Beatty IV rto 8,9-9,1. See Assmann (1995), 197. This portion of the papyrus is composed of fragments in hieratic dated to the 19th-20th dynasty (New Kingdom); it contains laudatory hymns to Amun-Ra. For the classification of the papyrus, see Hall (1930), 46–7. The motif is found also in Coffin Texts, older funerary inscriptions carved in the wooden shell covering the mummy within. See, for instance, this example presented by Sven Eicke in which the dead is meant to personify Amun-Ra during his journey in the Underworld: "(O you) southern gods, dread me; (o you) northern gods, fear me!" (Spell 648). On this, see Eicke (2017), 233–4.

⁵²⁶ Suggestively, the carrying of the Argo as the heroes' "mother" produces an additional parallel with the story of Phaethon, in which the figure of the father receives emphasis.

Syrtis with the Argo on their shoulders lasts twelve days and twelve nights (4.1386–7), the same amount of time as their mourning in Cyzicus for their mass slaughter of the Doliones (1.1078–80).⁵²⁷ After performing the funerary rituals for Cyzicus (1.1053–74), the Argonauts are prevented from sailing by the raising of “fierce winds” (τρηχεῖαι ἀνέρθησαν ἄελλαι, 1.1078). It is only after this forced stop that the seers Acastus and Mopsus interpret a bird omen, a halcyon flying over Jason’s head, and instruct their companions to propitiate Rhea, the Great Mother goddess, as well as the mother of Zeus. The parallels between the Doliones’ and the Syrtis’ episodes are evident, as also clear is their structural symmetry. The former occurs near the end of Book 1, before the Argonauts’ stopover in Mysia, where they lose Heracles, and their faithful meeting with Glaucus. The latter is almost at the end of Book 4 and precedes their missed opportunity to finally catch up with Heracles by the Hesperides’ Garden. Their encounter with Triton ends the episode. The presence, or rather absence, of Heracles seems to be a recurring background motif in relation to both episodes. In this respect, it is perhaps useful to consider that the number twelve also amounts to the totality of Heracles’ labors, of which stealing the golden apple of the Hesperides corresponds to the eleventh.⁵²⁸ As I shall demonstrate in the next sections, other components of this micronarrative constructed around the theme of ritual purification occur in relation to the episodes of the Hesperides and Triton.

My third and final point regards the Heroines’ message to Jason, which is reminiscent of oracular speech. An important factor to consider is the type of knowledge that the Heroines

⁵²⁷ Stephens (2003), 218–31 connects instead the number twelve with the twelve hours long journey of the Sun-god in the solar barque across each half of his journey.

⁵²⁸ West (1997), 470–77 suggests that the myth of Heracles’ struggles through his twelve labors might have originated from the Sun’s struggle in the Egyptian *dat* for twelve hours. Particularly, individual elements of this myth, such as Heracles’ fights against snakes and his journey in the Sun’s golden bowl, have well-known Egyptian parallels. See also Stephens (2003), 221.

convey. Their mention of the Argonauts' expedition suggests that they are endowed with a form of omniscient knowledge. Moreover, their obscure explanation of how to find a way out of the desert is typical of oracular conveyances. This aspect fits well in the geographical context where the episode takes place, since the oracle of Amun, a famous oracular site later dedicated to Zeus Ammon, was located nearby in the Siwah Oasis, at the border with Libya. The legend of Alexander's visit to the oracle of Amun must have held a great fascination in the Ptolemaic period, contributing to the suggestiveness of the sacred site.⁵²⁹ Despite the lack of mentions of Siwah in Apollonius, the geographical and symbolic presence of the oracle is important in relation to the Libyan episode. In particular, it is critical to note that the two oracles of Zeus, at Siwah in Libya, and Dodona in Greece, share a common derivation from Egypt in Herodotus' Book 2.54–7.⁵³⁰ The notion of the oracle of Zeus Ammon in the backdrop of the Argonauts' feats in Libya, and, especially, at this stage of the narrative, when they set out to carry the Argo across Syrtis, bears additional evidence of the parallelism between the gods Zeus and Amun-Ra in this episode.

⁵²⁹ Arrian 3.3–4 tells the story of Alexander's visit to Siwah. At 3.3.1, Arrian states Alexander's reasons for visiting the site, namely, that the oracle was considered to be infallible, as the tradition of Perseus' and Heracles' consultations demonstrates: ἐπὶ τούτοις δὲ πόθος λαμβάνει αὐτὸν ἐλθεῖν παρ' Ἀμμωνα ἐς Λιβύην, τὸ μὲν τι τῷ θεῷ χρησόμενον, ὅτι ἀτρεκέες ἐλέγετο εἶναι τὸ μαντεῖον τοῦ Ἀμμωνος καὶ χρήσασθαι αὐτῷ Περσέα καὶ Ἡρακλέα, τὸν μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν Γοργόνα ὅτε πρὸς Πολυδέκτου ἐστέλλετο, τὸν δὲ ὅτε παρ' Ἀνταῖον ἦει εἰς Λιβύην καὶ παρὰ Βούσιριν εἰς Αἴγυπτον. Accordingly, Alexander aims to rival both heroes with the superiority of his divine ancestry (3.3.2). The mention of Heracles in relation to this legend is suggestive and shows resonances with his treatment as a character in the *Argonautica*, where he is particularly active in the background, especially considering the Hesperides' episode, as well as in the imaginary of the heroes as a reference model to emulate and, possibly, rival. On Alexander and Siwah, see Stephens (2003), 66–7.

⁵³⁰ See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of this *logos*. Noegel (2004), 127–8, too, observes the connection between the oracle of Dodona and the oracle of Siwah. He further argues that this relation further explains the Argo's endowment with prophetic abilities through the Dodonian plank. On the Argo's sacred plank as an example of aniconism, see n. 755.

Conclusively, an investigation of Apollonius' Libyan Heroines benefits from the evidence provided by ancient ethnographic accounts, such as Herodotus' Books 2 and 4, archaeological finds, and aspects of local cultural and religious interest in Ptolemaic Egypt. This comparative analysis has shown that the episode is rich in oracular motifs, which, accordingly, suggests a connection with other oracular moments in the poem. In this respect, considering Zeus' significance as the oracular divinity connected with the oracle of Dodona and, subsequently, the role of Zeus' oracular activity in the poem, I have argued that this portion of the Libyan episode should be discussed with reference to the themes of religious atonement. Specifically, I have proposed to interpret the scene of the transportation of the Argo as part of a ritual of atonement for the Sun-god, or Amun-Ra, a major oracular divinity in Egypt.

Hesperides

The Hesperides nymphs are the second group of local divinities whom the Argonauts meet during their Libyan detour (4.1393–449).⁵³¹ The encounter occurs near the Tritonian Lake, while the Argonauts are in search of a water spring to quench their thirst after transporting the Argo across the desert for several days. As the Argonauts reach a “sacred plain” (ἱερὸν πέδον, 4.1396), a shift in focalization brings the focus on the Hesperides' Garden and its guardian, the giant serpent Ladon, which Heracles killed just the day before, in order to steal the golden apples (4.1397–9). The Argonauts witness the Hesperides' lamentation (4.1406–7) and their

⁵³¹ Livrea (1987), 175–90 discusses the Libyan episode by considering, in particular, the connections between the Apollonian text, Callimachus' references to Libya and Cyrene, and the Ptolemies' interactions with Libya in the 3rd cent. BC. Livrea 177 considers the Libyan episode “una costruzione assai complessa e calibrata” consisting of mythological, geographical, and philological elements. At p. 190, Livrea conclusively describes the entire episode as a “metafora di morte”, which extends to the “shrouding”, κατουλάς, of the endless night (4.1695), the Argonauts' last challenge in the Cretan Sea.

metamorphosis into dust and dirt (κόνις καὶ γαῖα, 4.1408), a divine portent (θεῖα τέρα, 4.1410) as they approach them. Then, Orpheus, addressing the Hesperides with a prayer (4.1411–21), asks them to appear again before the heroes (δείξατ' ἐλδομένοισιν ἐνωπαδὶς ἄμμι φανεῖσθαι, 4.1415) and to reveal the location of a spring (4.1416–8); the prayer ends with a promise of countless gifts and other dedications upon completing their nostos (4.1418–21). Orpheus' fervent prayer encourages the nymphs to reappear in their arboreal form.⁵³² The Hesperides accompany their reverse transformation into goddesses with the blooming of their Garden:

Arg. 4.1422–31

ὥς φάτο λισσόμενος ἀδινῇ ὅπι· **ταὶ δ' ἐλέαιρον**
 ἐγγύθεν ἀχνυμένους. καὶ δὴ χθονὸς ἐξανέτειλαν
 ποίην πάμπρωτον, ποίης γε μὲν ὑψόθι μακροὶ
 βλάστεον ὄρηκες, μετὰ δ' ἔρνεα τηλεθάοντα 1425
 πολλὸν ὑπὲρ γαίης ὀρθοσταδὸν ἡέζοντο·
 Ἑσπέρη αἴγειρος, πελέη δ' Ἑρυθρὴς ἔγεντο,
 Αἴγλη δ' ἰτεῖης ἱερὸν στύπος. ἐκ δέ νυ κείνων
 δενδρέων, οἷαι ἔσαν, τοῖαι πάλιν ἔμπεδον αὐτως
 ἐξέφανεν, θάμβος περιώσιον. ἔκφατο δ' Αἴγλη 1430
μειλιχίοις ἐπέεσσιν ἀμειβομένη χατέοντας·

⁵³² The adjective ἀδινός, “vehement, loud”, which Apollonius uses to characterize Orpheus' prayer (ὥς φάτο λισσόμενος **ἀδινῇ ὅπι**, 4.1422), is also an epithet of the Sirens' voice in *Od.* 23.326—a rather evocative attribute for the man who overpowered the Sirens' “virgin voice” (παρθενίην ἐνοπήν) in *Arg.* 4.905–9. Thalmann (2011), 86 compares the Hesperides' “virtuoso display of shape shifting” with the Argo's assimilation with a snake (4.1541–7).

“This was his urgent plea to them. **They soon took pity on the grief-stricken men**, and first of all they sent up shoots from the earth; tall stalks burgeoned up from the shoots, and then flourishing young trees grew upright to a great height above the ground. Hespere became a poplar, Erytheis an elm, and Aigle the sacred trunk of a willow. From these trees as they were, they changed back again precisely to their earlier forms an amazing marvel! **With gentle words Aigle replied to them in their need**”.

Ultimately, the nymph Aegle responds to their prayer and reveals the position of a fresh spring (4.1432–49). In her speech, however, Aegle vehemently protests against Heracles’ tumultuous arrival to the garden, describing the hero as a savage and pitiless man:

Arg. 4.1432–49

“ἦ ἄρα δὴ μέγα πάμπαν ἐφ’ ὑμετέροισιν ὄνειρα
δεῦρ’ ἔμολεν καμάτοισιν ὁ κύντατος, ὅς τις ἀπούρας
φρουρὸν ὄφιν ζωῆς **παγχρύσεια μῆλα** θεάων
οἷχετ’ ἀειράμενος· στυγερὸν δ’ ἄχος ἄμμι λέλειπται. 1435
ἦλυθε γὰρ χθιζὸς τις ἀνὴρ ὀλοώτατος ὕβριν
καὶ δέμας, ὅσσε δέ οἱ βλοσυρῷ ὑπέλαμπε μετώπῳ,
νηλῆς· ἀμφὶ δὲ δέρμα πελωρίου ἔστο λέοντος
ὠμόν, ἀδέψητον· στιβαρὸν δ’ ἔχεν ὄζον ἐλαίης
τόξα τε, τοῖσι πέλωρ τόδ’ ἀπέφθισεν ἰοβολήσας. 1440
ἦλυθε δ’ οὖν κἀκεῖνος, ἃ τε χθόνα πεζὸς ὁδεύων,
δίψῃ καρχαλέος· παΐφασσε δὲ τόνδ’ ἀνὰ χῶρον,

ὔδωρ ἐξερέων. τὸ μὲν οὖ ποθι μέλλεν ἰδέσθαι·

ἦδε δέ τις πέτρη Τριτωνίδος ἐγγύθι λίμνης·

τὴν ὃ γ', ἐπιφρασθείς, ἣ καὶ θεοῦ ἐννεσίησιν, 1445

λὰξ ποδὶ τύψεν ἔνερθε· τὸ δ' ἄθρόον ἔβλυσεν ὔδωρ.

αὐτὰρ ὃ γ', ἄμφω χεῖρε πέδῳ καὶ στέρνον ἐρείσας,

ῥωγάδος ἐκ πέτρης πῖεν ἄσπετον, ὄφρα βαθεῖαν

νηδύν, φορβάδι ἴσος, ἐπιπροπεσὼν ἐκορέσθη.”

“A very great help indeed in your sufferings was the visit of that most vile man, whoever it was who took away the life of the snake which kept watch, and carried off the golden apples of the goddesses. Bitter is the grief he left behind for us. **Yesterday some man came, most foul in his violence and his appearance, his eyes blazing under his fierce brow, quite pitiless!** He wore the skin of a giant lion, untreated and untanned; he carried a thick olive branch and a bow, with which he shot and killed this creature here. He too came with a raging thirst, as you would expect of someone travelling the land on foot. **He dashed about all over here looking for water—which he was unlikely to see!** But there is here a certain rock near Lake Triton and—whether he had the idea himself or was inspired by a god—he kicked it violently at the bottom, and a great stream of water flowed out. **Pressing both arms and his breast to the ground, he drank a vast quantity from the cleft in the rock, until, flat on the ground, he had filled the pit of his belly like a grazing beast’.**”

Heracles’ recent passage through the garden solves the Argonauts’ problem of finding a water source. Indeed, after finding Heracles’ spring by the salty lake, the heroes express their

gratitude for him, who, though absent, still provided his aid to the companions (4.1458–60). Nevertheless, Aegle’s highly pejorative depiction of Heracles, a beast-like *τις ἀνὴρ*, strongly contrasts with the Argonauts’ praise, offering a brief insight into a less civilized side of the hero—indeed, not unfamiliar in traditional representations.⁵³³ At any rate, the Hesperides’ positive response to the Argonauts’ prayer allows the heroes to locate the source of water and revive themselves. Remarkably, the nymphs’ epiphany in the form of trees and restoration of the garden follow their initial reaction of pity for the heroes’ sufferance (*ταὶ δ’ ἐλέαιρον | ἐγγύθεν ἀχνυμένους*, 4.1422–3). This detail calls to mind the Libyan Heroines’ intervention in the previous scenes, who also intervene spontaneously by sympathizing with the heroes’ struggles. In the earlier instance, however, the Argonauts do not chance upon the Heroines but receive their unexpected visitation. The Hesperides’ first instinct at the heroes’ sight, instead, is to protect themselves by turning into dirt and dust.⁵³⁴ Moreover, Orpheus’ prayer, including the promise of future honors, plays a part in the scene. In sum, in both instances, the Argonauts’ encounter with local Libyan divinities turns out to be salvific to progress in their toilsome journey. The local

⁵³³ Cf. for instance Euripides’ portrayal of Heracles in the homonymous play. This representation of Heracles provides a foil for the earlier description of his search for Hylas in Mysia (1.1188–309). Among the most striking parallelisms, Heracles again acts in beast-like terms, being compared in his run after Hylas to a charging bull after having been stung by a gadfly (1.1265–9): *ὥς δ’ ὅτε τίς τε | μύωπι τετυμμένος ἔσσυτο ταῦρος | πείσεά τε προλιπὼν καὶ ἐλεσπίδας, οὐδὲ νομήων | οὐδ’ ἀγέλης ὄθεται, πρήσσει δ’ ὁδὸν ἄλλοτ’ ἄπανστος*, | ἄλλοτε δ’ ἰστάμενος καὶ ἀνὰ πλατὺν αὐχέν’ αἰείρων | ἦσιν μύκημα, *κακῶ βεβολημένος οἴστρω*. Heracles’ mental state is severely distraught: “When Herakles heard this, sweat poured down over his temples and deep in his body the dark blood boiled” (Ὡς φάτο· τῷ δ’ αἰόντι κατὰ κροτάφων ἄλις ἰδρώς | κήκειν, ἐν δὲ κελαινὸν ὑπὸ σπλάγχνοις ζέεν αἷμα, 1.1261–2). This scene resonates with the simile between Eros and a gadfly (οἶόν... οἴστρος) in Book 3.276, as well as with the effects of Eros/eros on Medea’s body and mind (3.284–98 and 751–65). For the representation of beast-like Heracles in Book 4, see also Stephens (2003), 187: “Heracles, the traditional bearer of a more civilized order, who clears the lands of monsters, is himself the monster”. This is also reminiscent of Jason’s comparison with a roaring lion searching for his mate (4.1338–43). As Hunter (2015), 262, notes: “Jason’s roar does not, however, terrify his comrades”.

⁵³⁴ The issue of protection is relevant in both episodes, as the death of Ladon, the nymphs’ own guardian (φρουρὸν ὄφιν, 4.1434), appears to be contraposed to the Heroines’ present status as “guardians of Libya” (Λιβύης τιμήοροι, 4.1358).

goddesses' decision to communicate with the heroes ensues more from the pity they feel for them in the present circumstances, rather than from their affiliation or personal motivations, as in most of the Greek gods' cases.

Scholars have discussed Apollonius' positioning of the Hesperides' Garden in Libya in view of its different location in different versions of the myth. For instance, Hesiod situates the Hesperides on the far side of Oceanus before Atlas (*Th.* 213–6, 275, 518). In the fragmentary *Geryoneis*, Stesichorus locates the nymphs on a divine island with golden homes (S 8 P.Oxy. 261 7 fr. 6 Davies-Finglass), while, in the *Hippolytus*, Euripides puts them at the “sacred boundary of the sky which Atlas holds” (σεμνὸν τέρμονα... | οὐρανοῦ τὸν Ἄτλας ἔχει, *Hipp.* 746–7).⁵³⁵ Besides Apollonius, few other authors locate the garden in Libya, namely, Agroetas (*Schol. Ap. Rhod.* 4.1396–99a), Ps.-Scylax (108 = GGM I, p. 84), and Diodorus Siculus (4.26.2–3).⁵³⁶ Apollonius' placement of the Hesperides' Garden in a real location underscores the importance of Libya in the epic as both a land of wonders and a place existing in history. Indeed, there is a strong connection between this myth and the Libyan topography, since the westernmost Greek colony of Cyrenaica, called Euesperides, and later supplanted by the newly founded city of Berenice, arose in what the Greeks believed to be the location of the Garden.⁵³⁷ Furthermore,

⁵³⁵ Davies and Finglass (2014).

⁵³⁶ Stucchi (1976), 58–61 argues that the localization of the garden in Libya could reflect the earliest tradition. The Hesiodic version in fact generally locates the garden in the far west, whereas the later authors' placing of the garden in Libya remains the earliest attestation of a precise location. See Ottone (2002), 326.

Herodotus does not mention the Hesperides Garden in the Libyan *logos*. Instead, a passage in Book 4 contains references to “Hill of the Charites”, which he describes as the only grassy place in the country, otherwise entirely sandy and dry. The hill is located at the source of a river which flows across the territory of the Macai (west from the Syrtis). The river could be the Wadi Caam, or Ka'am, better known as Cynips in antiquity. The “Hill of the Graces” features also in Callimachus fr. 673 Pf.: ἡ ὑπὲρ αὐσταλέων Χαρίτων λόφον.

⁵³⁷ Cf. Strab. 17.3.20. On Euesperides, see Gill (2003), 391–410. Stephens (2003), 182 n. 29 suggests that: “It is possible to regard the Argo's reentry into the Mediterranean from Lake Tritonis in the vicinity of modern Benghazi as an allusion to Ptolemaic control of the area”. See also Livrea (1987), 175–90, Hunter (1993), 152–3, and Thalmann (2011), 81 n. 12.

several cities named after Heracles existed in this region, whose presence attests to the popularity of the hero's local stories.⁵³⁸

With regard to the *scholia*'s reference to Agroetas' *Libyka* (*Schol. Ap. Rhod.* 4.1396–99a), they comment on the historian's rationalizing explanation of the Libyan Hesperides and their apples, by stating that the nymphs' property was not μήλα, “apples”, but πρόβατα κάλλιστα, “the most beautiful cattle”, which were golden (ἄ χρυσᾷ ὀνομάσθη).⁵³⁹ Considering the various meanings of τὸ μῆλον, either “cattle, sheep” or “apple”, as well as the significance of golden sheep in the poem, the scholiast, and Agroetas, provides a valid point of discussion.⁵⁴⁰ Scholars have indeed noted the correspondence between the Libyan episode and the beginning of Book 4, particularly with regard to the different treatment that the Colchian snake guarding the fleece in Ares' grove and the Libyan Ladon receive.⁵⁴¹ The semantic word-play which the phrase παγχρύσεια μήλα (4.1434), “all-golden apples” or “all-golden sheep”, provides another connection with the Argonauts' appropriation of the golden fleece in Colchis and, consequently, adds up to the overarching interpretation of the Libyan episode as a narrative of atonement in

⁵³⁸ Ottone (2002), 325.

⁵³⁹ On Agroetas' problematic dating, see Ottone (2002), 296. Schwartz (1894) argues for the 3rd-2nd cent. BC, before Diodorus. Jacoby (*FGrHist* 762) places him in the Hellenistic period, hypothesizing even an earlier timeframe. In the *BNJ* entry, Williams (2007) states that he seems to have lived during the middle or late Hellenistic period and contextualizes him outside the Alexandrian milieu due to his interest in the rationalization of archaic Greek myth rather than in linguistic or etiological aspects.

⁵⁴⁰ Pindar characterizes Libya as πολύμηλος, “rich in sheep”, in *Pyth.* 9.6. Diodorus 4.26.2–3 discusses both interpretations. At 4.27.1, however, he provides another rationalizing explanation of the μήλα as πρόβατα.

⁵⁴¹ On the comparison between Ladon and the Colchian snake, see Fontenrose (1959), 345–6, Hunter (1993b), 31–2, Thalmann (2011), 130 n. 47, Hunter (2015), 269. Stephens (2003), 225 compares the Colchian snake with Apophis, an analogous snake figure from Egyptian myth which Re needs to overcome every night before re-emerging from the Underworld. Another snake figure to be compared with Ladon and the Colchian guardian is the Aonian snake guarding the spring of Ares in Ogygian Thebes, which Cadmus slaughters on his way to find Europa (3.1176–82): βᾶν δ' ἴμεν, οὐδ' ἀλίωσαν ὁδόν· πόρε δέ σφιν ἰοῦσι | κρείων Αἰήτης χαλεπούς ἐς ἄεθλον ὁδόντας | **Ἀονίῳ δράκοντος, ὃν Ὠγγίῃ ἐνὶ Θήβῃ | Κάδμος, ὅτ' Εὐρώπην διζήμενος εἰσαφίκανεν,** | πέφνεν Ἀρητιάδι κρήνη ἐπίουρον ἐόντα· | ἔνθα καὶ ἐννάσθη πομπῇ βοός ἦν οἱ Ἀπόλλων | ὥπασε μαντοσύνησι προηγέειραν ὁδοῖο. For the comparison with the Aonian snake, see again Fontenrose (1959), 306–20.

response to the Greek heroes' crimes towards the Colchian people.⁵⁴² Just like Heracles seizes the παγγρύσεια μῆλα from the Garden, so do Jason and Medea carry off the golden fleece, a (παγ)γρύσειον μῆλον, from Colchis. However, Jason's and Medea's treatment of the Colchian snake, lulled to sleep with potions and incantations (4.145–61), contrasts with Ladon's condition, whom Heracles slaughters and leaves behind to rot (4.1400–5). Ladon's violent death recalls Apsyrtus' treacherous murder and, overall, the more brutal trajectory that Jason's and Medea's actions follow as the events of Book 4 unfold.

As has been discussed, Aeetes unleashes his wrath against the Argonauts after they carried off Medea at the beginning of Book 4.⁵⁴³ After the death of Apsyrtus, we can infer that the king's ruinous wrath (χόλος... ἄτη, 4.235) inevitably reaches the heroes and has consequences on their nostos. After all, earlier in Book 4, Circe already confirmed the unavoidability of Aeetes' rage against those responsible for the death of Apsyrtus:

Arg. 4.740–2

ἔλπομαι οὐκ ἐπὶ δὴν σε βαρὺν χόλον Αἰήταο	740
ἐκφυγέειν· τάχα δ' εἴσι καὶ Ἑλλάδος ἥθεα γαίης	
τισόμενος φόνον υἱός, ὅτ' ἄσχετα ἔργα τέλεσσας.	

“I do not think that you will longer escape the bitter anger of Aietes. Soon he will come even to the territories of the land of Hellas to take vengeance for the murder of his son, for your deeds have been unspeakable”.

⁵⁴² Hunter (1993b), 29, too, points out the various meaning of μῆλον/μῆλα.

⁵⁴³ On Aeetes' wrath, see Chapter 1.

Conclusively, the Hesperides' episode is part of a larger micro-narrative hinging on the themes of atonement and punishment. In particular, the Hesperides' παγχρύσεια μήλα are reminiscent of the fleece of Phrixus' golden ram, a χρύσειον μῆλον. Nevertheless, the violent death of Ladon further links this episode with the murder of Apsyrtus at the Brygean islands. Despite Circe's purification ritual, Aeetes' ἄτη eventually catches up on Jason and Medea, who must atone for their actions before the Sun-god.⁵⁴⁴ Compared to the previous section of the Libyan *mythos*, the encounter with the Libyan Heroines, at first sight this narrative section does not appear to show the Argonauts in particularly strained circumstances. Nevertheless, as the nymph Aegle aptly says, the heroes would not have found any water in that area, had not Heracles first searched for it in vain (ὕδωρ ἐξερέων, τὸ μὲν οὐ ποθὶ μέλλεν ἰδέσθαι, 4.1443) and then produced a water spring. Heracles' passage, though harmful to the Hesperides, allows the Argonauts to find water in the hostile Libyan environment. Due to Heracles' accomplishments in the landscape, which he successfully modifies, and the Hesperides' sympathy for them, the Argonauts locate the water source and progress in the journey. The final stage of their stopover in Libya involves a process of purification according to local Egyptian traditions, which I discuss in the next subsection. In this way, Apollonius' contextualization of the Hesperides' Garden in Libya, a real place and part of the Ptolemaic kingdom, is functional to the overarching meaning of the Libyan micro-narrative.

⁵⁴⁴ Hunter (2015), 158 highlights the motif of the need for purification before completing the journey. See for instance Orestes' purification at Delphi in *Eum.* 75–9. About this episode, Hunter (2015), 158 remarks “Just so, Jason and Medea will be purified by Circe and endure wanderings and terrible πόννοι in the Libyan deserts”.

Triton and Glaucus

The Argonauts' encounter with Triton (4.1537–94) is one of the three remarkable episodes involving Libyan epichoric heroes and divinities.⁵⁴⁵ The heroes reach the Lake Triton in search of the water spring that Heracles generated the day before their arrival at the Hesperides' Garden (4.1443–6). Between the Argonauts' meeting with the Hesperides and Triton's epiphany, Apollonius inserts the deaths of Canthus and Mopsus (4.1475–1536). The heroes' encounter with Triton occurs as they embark again on the Argo and enter the Lake, without being able to find a channel out into the Mediterranean Sea (4.1537–47). At this juncture, Orpheus attempts to communicate with the local divinities:

Arg. 1547–53

ἀμφεπόλει δηναιὸν ἐπὶ χρόνον. αὐτίκα δ' Ὀρφεὺς

κέκλετ' Ἀπόλλωνος τρίποδα μέγαν ἔκτοθι νηὸς

δαίμοσιν ἐγγενέταις νόστω ἔπι μείλια θέσθαι.

καὶ τοὶ μὲν Φοίβου κτέρας ἵδρυον ἐν χθονὶ βάντες· 1550

τοῖσιν δ' αἰζηῷ ἐναλίγκιος ἀντεβόλησε

Τρίτων εὐρυβίης, γαίης δ' ἀνὰ βῶλον ἀείρας

ξείνι' ἀριστήεσσι προῖσχετο

“Finally Orpheus bade them offer up outside the ship the great tripod of Apollo, as a propitiation to **the local gods** for their return. Therefore they disembarked on to the land and set up Phoibos’

⁵⁴⁵ On the influence of Pindar's *Pyth.* 4 on the Triton episode, see Mooney (1912), 387–8, Livrea (1973), 430–1, Stephens (2003), 178–82, Hunter (2015), 290, and Morrison (2020), 136. Regarding the location of Lake Triton, see Malkin (1994), 198–99.

gift. **Wide-ruling Triton appeared to them in the form of a young man; he picked up a clod from the earth** and offered it to them as a gift of friendship”.

The heroes attract Triton out of the homonymous lake by offering one of Apollo’s tripods to the local gods (δαίμοσιν ἐγγενέταις, 4.1549) in exchange for their guidance on how to accomplish the nostos.⁵⁴⁶ Triton appears and along with advice on how to exit the lake (4.1573–85), he also offers a clod of earth (γαίης βῶλον, 4.1552), which will become instrumental toward the end of Book 4 for the founding of the island of Thera, originally called Calliste (4.1731–45). The god remarks on his lineage from Poseidon (4.1558–9) and displays his ability as a shapeshifter, by changing his appearance from that of a young man (αἰζηῷ ἐναλίγκιος, 4.1551) into his true divine form (οἷός περ ἐτήτυμος ἦεν ιδέσθαι, 4.1603), namely, half a man half a sea creature (4.1610–16).⁵⁴⁷ Notably, Apollonius employs the term αἰζηός, meaning “in full bodily strength, vigorous”, and hence, as a substantive, “a strong, youthful man”, also earlier in Book 4 during Argos’ speech, to characterize the strong men of an older generation living in Egypt (μήτηρ Αἴγυπτος προτερηγενέων αἰζηῶν, 4.268). Triton responds spontaneously to the heroes’ gift offering and request for help. Just like in the case of other local gods, there is no indication in the text that his intervention was prompted by other divinities. His exchange with the Argonauts is instead articulated according to the principle of reciprocity, or gift giving, whereby, in the words of Walter Burkert, “personal bonds are forged and maintained, and relations of superiority and subordination are expressed are recognized”.⁵⁴⁸ Triton’s double epiphany and gift

⁵⁴⁶ See Stephens (2003) 179–80 for the significance of the gift exchange between Triton and the Argonauts in political terms. See also Mori (2008), 154.

⁵⁴⁷ Pindar’s *Pyth.* 4 too conveys the tradition of Triton’s appearance to the Argonauts in the guise of a man (ἀνέρι εἰδομένῳ, and 4.28–9: ... παιδίμην | ἀνδρὸς αἰδοίου πρόσσπιν θηκάμενος, 4.21).

⁵⁴⁸ Burkert (1985), 66.

exchanging with the Argonauts marks their reintegration into the Mediterranean Sea and near completion of their *nostos*.

Glaucus' role and characterization in Book 1 show several parallelisms with Triton, with the result that the two divinities are often considered mirroring figures.⁵⁴⁹ In the *Argonautica*, Glaucus' preemptive role is to dissuade the Argonauts from launching into a search for Heracles after their departure from Mysia.⁵⁵⁰ Apollonius' characterization of Glaucus as ὑποφήτης of Nereus (1.1311) epitomizes his traditional iconography as a prophetic marine divinity.⁵⁵¹ In Book 1, Glaucus foretells Hercules' forthcoming feats in Argos and Polyphemus' allotted role in Mysia, and elucidates Hylas' current status among the nymphs (1.1310–28).⁵⁵² Differently from Triton, who operates solely according to social and religious correctness, Glaucus demonstrates that he knows the will of Zeus and, indeed, advises the Argonauts against going after their lost companions because this would contradict Zeus' plans (τίπτε παρὲκ μεγάλιο Διὸς μενεαίνετε βουλῇν | Αἰήτεω πτολίεθρον ἄγειν θρασὺν Ἡρακλῆα, 1.1315–6). The epiphany of Glaucus marks the first full-fledged appearance of a divine character in the poem and, simultaneously, the closing of Book 1. As has been observed, in Book 1, the Argonauts come across non-Greek peoples who resemble Greekness with respect to their customs or cultural traits, such as the Lemnian women or the Doliones. Book 2, however, opens with the Bebryces, a population

⁵⁴⁹ See for example Hunter (1993b), 78. Other sources about Glaucus include Aesch. *Glaucus Pontios* (fr. 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 273 Sommerstein), Eur. *Or.* 362–4, Pl. *Rep.* 611d, Lycophr. *Alex.* 754, Pausanias 9.22.7, and Ov. *Met.* 13.917–965.

⁵⁵⁰ On the dispute arising after the loss of Heracles in Mysia, see Mori (2005), 209–36 and (2008), 82–90, who, in particular, discusses Telamon's accusations against Jason and successive apology after the meeting with Glaucus. This perspective is significant with respect to Glaucus' role as a bringer of *philia* among the Argonauts. I argue for a similar point regarding Aphrodite's intervention on Lemnos earlier in this Chapter, pp. 118–24.

⁵⁵¹ See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of this epithet.

⁵⁵² Beaulieu (2013), 121–41 and (2018), 207–24.

inhabiting the western coast of Bithynia and noticeable for their non-Greek characteristics. Their leader Amycus is indeed the most presumptuous of men (ὑπεροπληέστατον ἀνδρῶν, 2.4), and his “shameful law” (ἀεικέα θεσμόν, 2.5) clearly violates Greek hospitality customs.⁵⁵³ Hence, Glaucus’ appearance occurs right before the heroes’ transition into the Black Sea, a remarkably non-Greek territory; their conflictual encounter with the Bebryces foreshadows their passage into geographical and cultural difference.

As much as Glaucus “interprets” the designs of other gods and conveys them to the heroes, Triton’s mediation between the Argonauts and the hostile Libyan landscape makes him an “interpreter” of non-Greek space. Glaucus and Triton’s mirroring role as helpers is best observed in their capacity to comprehend undisclosed knowledge or unfamiliar landscapes and make them “intelligible” to the heroes. In this respect, Triton’s role as a divine mediator also applies to elucidating the Libyan territory from a cultural perspective. Specifically, the Argonauts’ exploration of the Tritonian lake and subsequent crossing of the lake according to Triton’s instructions convey Egyptian fundamental ideas about purity and purification rituals. In Egyptian culture, part of the funerary rituals that allowed a dead person to transition from the state of a corpse to its “eternal” form involved the symbolic “crossing of the lake”. The purpose of this phase of the ritual is purificatory, as the corpse was symbolically deprived of any foulness that could prevent its transformation into eternal matter.⁵⁵⁴ In visual representations of the ritual,

⁵⁵³ *Arg.* 2.5–7: ὅς τ’ ἐπὶ καὶ ξείνοισιν ἀεικέα θεσμόν ἔθηκεν, | μή τιν’ ἀποστείχειν, πρὶν πειρήσασθαι ἐοῖο | πυγμαχίης· πολέας δὲ περικτιόνων ἐδάϊξεν (“... and even on strangers he had imposed a shameless ordinance: no one might depart before trying his luck with the king in boxing, and many men from neighboring territories had thus met their end”). Amycus even underscores the necessity to abide by his law against hospitality, by attempting to intimidate the heroes (2.17–8): εἰ δ’ ἂν ἀπηλεγέοντες ἐμὰς πατέοιτε θέμιστας, | ἧ κέν τις στυγερῶς κρατερὴ ἐπιέσσει ἀνάγκη (“if you choose to ignore and trample upon my laws, you will find that consequences will be grim and violent”).

⁵⁵⁴ Assmann (2005), 32.

the body received a “purifying bath” in a particular type of basin called *šj*, “lake”.⁵⁵⁵ The word for “lake” (*šj*) appears in the accompanying spells, and also in Old Kingdom inscriptions in the phrase “after crossing the lake”, that is, after the purification bath in the “lake”. See, for instance, this example: “Going down into his house of eternity in very great peace, | that he might be provisioned by Anubis and Khentamentiu | after a mortuary offering is brought for him at the opening of the shaft, | **after crossing the lake after he is transfigured by the lector priests**”.⁵⁵⁶ In Jan Assmann’s words, “The phrase “crossing the lake” refers to passing safe and sound through the purification phase”.⁵⁵⁷ Moreover, scholars have explained the need for purification in Egyptian funerary rituals in relation to the myth of Osiris, which represents the prototype of the Egyptian embalming ritual.⁵⁵⁸ The myth tells of the dismemberment of Osiris’s body by his uncle Seth and scattering of the pieces throughout the earth; the embalming of the recomposed body symbolizes the reconstitution of the original form and preludes to his access to the afterlife. The dismemberment of Osiris’ body epitomizes the “violent death” which all Egyptians experience through passing away and symbolizes the reason for a purification ritual.⁵⁵⁹

In conclusion, Apsyrtus’ violent death and partial dismemberment by Jason recall the dismemberment of Osiris’ body.⁵⁶⁰ From an Egyptian perspective, the Argonauts complete a second ritual of purification—which follows Circe’s ritual performance—by successfully crossing the Tritonian lake. Triton, characterized as one of the Libyan δαίμονες ἐγγενέται, helps the Argonauts “cross the lake” by both providing instructions and physically driving the ship out:

⁵⁵⁵ Assmann (2005), 32.

⁵⁵⁶ Sethe (1933), 189. Transl. by Assmann (2005), 32.

⁵⁵⁷ Assmann (2005), 33.

⁵⁵⁸ Assmann (2005), 31.

⁵⁵⁹ Assmann (2005), 31–2.

⁵⁶⁰ Stephens (2003), 230 compares the dismemberment of Osiris’ body in Egyptian myth with the *machalismos* performed on Apsyrtus’ body. On Apsyrtus and *machalismos*, see also Schaaf (2014), 268–83.

“so Triton, holding on the stern-post of the hollow Argo, drove her forward into the sea...” (ὥς ὄγ’ ἐπισχόμενος γλαφυρῆς ὀλκήιον Ἀργοῦς | ἦγ’ ἄλαδε προτέρωσε..., 4.1609–10). From a structural point of view, the crossing of the Lake marks the reintegration into the Mediterranean and, ultimately, the Aegean Sea, in the same way as it exemplifies the reintegration of the deceased in the Egyptian afterlife. Since the Aegean Sea represents a fundamental element of Greek identity, by sailing into it the heroes come nearer to accomplishing their nostos and access their epic “afterlife” in the form of κλέα ἀνδρῶν. Triton’s contribution in this episode thus enables the heroes to: 1) advance in their nostos, 2) undergo a purification process from an Egyptian perspective, 3) be reintegrated in the Aegean Sea and, ultimately, in the Greek world.

Ideas of purity and purification are also relevant to Glaucus, the marine divinity corresponding to Triton in Book 1. The association between Glaucus and these themes has less to do with his auxiliary role as one of the heroes’ ὑποφήτης and προφήτης and concerns more the development of his character in earlier Greek literature as well as his position as Zeus’ mouthpiece in the *Argonautica*. Specifically, Apollonius’ Glaucus is Glaucus of Anthedon, whom Plato mentions in a famous passage about purity in relation to the soul and the difference between human and divine knowledge. Moreover, Glaucus’ acknowledgement of Zeus’ *boulē* suggests his proximity with the Olympian god and his masterplan, which centers on the need for the atonement of Phrixus’ averted sacrifice and the heroes’ purification from the murder of Apsyrtus.⁵⁶¹

The mythical figure of Glaucus has engaged scholarly interests since antiquity. Due to a variety of mythological alternatives concerning this god’s life story and identity, scholars have attempted to either reconcile the different traditions or to consider them as isolated mythological

⁵⁶¹ On Zeus’ masterplan, see n. 520.

threads.⁵⁶² Recently, Marie-Claire Beaulieu has differentiated between three separate Glaucus figures and discussed their occurrence in Greek and Latin sources.⁵⁶³ The Apollonian Glaucus, namely, the so-called Glaucus of Anthedon, is the same character that also appears in Plato's *Republic* 611d–612a.⁵⁶⁴ In the tenth Book of the *Republic*, Socrates discusses Glaucus' physical appearance as exemplifying the defilement of the soul once it reaches the earth (611d–612a). The discussion occurs within the larger framework of Socrates' discussion about the immortality (ἀθάνατον, *Rep.* 611b) and purity of the soul (καθαρόν, *Rep.* 611c). Indeed, one of Socrates' arguments is that, similar to the soul, Glaucus' worn-away and seashell-encrusted body makes the god “resemble in all respects more a beast than what he originally was by nature” (παντὶ μᾶλλον θηρίῳ εἰκέναι ἢ οἷος ἦν φύσει, *Rep.* 611d). In contrast, Socrates claims that Glaucus' soul is what remains “akin to the divine, the immortal, and the everlasting” (ὡς συγγενῆς οὐσα τῷ τε θεῷ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντι, *Rep.* 612a). The significance of Glaucus of Anthedon in Plato's discourse about purity and purification also pertains to the god's identity as a marine divinity. Marine water is indeed associated with purity and purification rituals in ancient Mediterranean religions.⁵⁶⁵ The *scholia* to *Rep.* 611d further explain the circumstances of Glaucus' evolution into a “sea monster”.⁵⁶⁶ In particular, the ancient commentators provide a

⁵⁶² For an overview of scholarship see Beaulieu (2013), 125–6.

⁵⁶³ Beaulieu (2013), 121–41.

⁵⁶⁴ For Glaucus of Anthedon, cf. also Pind. fr. 263 Snell–Maehler, Aesch. *Glaucus Pontius*, fr. 25a–31 Radt, Eur. *Or.* 362–4 with *schol.*, Ar. fr. 468–76 PCG, Eub. fr. 18–9 Kock, Antiph. fr. 76 PCG II, Anaxil. fr. 7 PCG II, Palaeph. 27, Diod. Sic. 4.486, Ov. *Met.* 7.232–3, 13.898–968, 14.1–74, Paus. 9.22, 6–7, Plut. *Cic.* 3, Paus. 9.22.6–7, Heraclitus *De incr.* 10, Verg. *Aen.* 6.36, Philostr. *Imag.* 2.5, Macrobian *Sat.* 6.5 and 13, Claudian. 10.158, Tzetz. *ad Lycoph. Alex.* 754, Ath. 7.296a–297c, and Nonnus *Dion.* 5.356, 43.75, and 115.

⁵⁶⁵ For sea water as a purificatory element in Greek religion see Parker (1983), 226–7 and Petrovic and Petrovic (2016), 69–70. For water as a purification means in Egyptian sources, see Quack (2013a), 115–58. Beaulieu (2018) argues for the understanding of Glaucus as a purificatory divinity on the basis of his identity of marine divinity.

⁵⁶⁶ The edition of the *scholia* is by Greene (1981).

backstory for the god's transformation: Glaucus, having chanced upon a water source of immortal life and having dived into it, achieved immortality; however, due to his inability to make a display of it, he threw himself into the sea.⁵⁶⁷ In analyzing the *scholia*, Beaulieu argues that Glaucus' outburst of madness and leap into the sea was due to his inability to understand and, subsequently explain, his newly acquired divine powers.⁵⁶⁸ In other words, he is a clear example of how a human mind cannot comprehend divine knowledge. She concludes by saying that: "Glaucus' physical metamorphosis therefore represents his psychological transformation".⁵⁶⁹ Hence, according to the *scholia* to *Rep.* 611d, the myth of Glaucus of Anthedon highlights the problem of the limitations of human intellect in contrast with divine knowledge. By upholding Zeus' bidding, Glaucus' agency contributes, to some extent, to Zeus' plan for the purification of Jason and his family.⁵⁷⁰

To conclude, in the *Argonautica*, Glaucus and Triton are mirroring characters with a similar role: to help the Argonauts stay on the right route on the way to and from Colchis. Glaucus and Triton are representative of different cultural domains. Glaucus is an agent of Zeus, as he reveals by beginning his speech with the phrase: τίπτε παρὲκ μεγάλιοι Διὸς μενεαίνετε βουλήν... (1.1315). The reference to Διὸς βουλή also evokes typically Greek archaic epic language (*Il.* 1.5). The more general association of Glaucus with Greek notions of purity and purification is also consistent with Zeus' major concerns in the poem. Glaucus is therefore representative of the Greek cultural domain. Conversely, Triton's location in Libya and his

⁵⁶⁷ 661d τὸν θαλάττιον Γλαῦκον: ... οὗτος γὰρ περιτυχὼν τῇ ἀθανάτῳ πηγῇ καὶ κατελθὼν εἰς αὐτὴν ἀθανασίας ἔτυχεν, μὴ δυνηθεὶς δὲ ταύτην τισὶν ἐπιδείξαι εἰς θάλασσαν ἐρρίφη.

⁵⁶⁸ Beaulieu (2013), 131.

⁵⁶⁹ Beaulieu (2013), 131. On metamorphoses as a metaphorical representation of psychological transformation in myth, see De Luce (1982), 77–90.

⁵⁷⁰ On the issue of purification in relation to the golden fleece, see Petrovic [forthcoming_b].

characterization link him with a non-Greek environment. In particular, his characterization as a αἰζηός and belonging to the category of the δαίμονες ἐγγενέται suggest a connection with Argos' description of Egyptian men of old in 4.268: μήτηρ Αἴγυπτος προτερηγενέων αἰζηῶν. The character of Triton is thus closely related to his geographical location in Northern Africa. Both divinities facilitate the heroes' fulfillment of purification rituals from Greek and Egyptian perspectives. In Book 1, Glaucus reroutes the Argonauts on the right path to Colchis according to Zeus' *boulē*, whose major aims in the poem include accomplishing atonement for Phrixos' missed sacrifice and achieving purification for the murder of Apsyrtus. In Book 4, the heroes fulfill their purity requirements also from a non-Greek perspective. Their crossing of the Tritonian lake epitomizes the purification phase of the embalming process, leading the Egyptian dead to their reintegration among the ancestors. Triton's contribution enables the heroes to be reintegrated into the Mediterranean Sea and, therefore, into the Greek world, having fulfilled purity standards through both Greek and Egyptian purification rituals.

CHAPTER 3: APOLLONIUS' MUSES *HYPOPHĒTORES*

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE EGYPTIAN TRADITION

Arg. 1.20–22

νῦν δ' ἄν ἐγὼ γενεήν τε καὶ οὔνομα μυθησαίμην
ἥρώων δολιχῆς τε πόρους ἄλός ὅσσα τ' ἔρεξαν
πλαζόμενοι· Μοῦσαι δ' ὑποφήτορες εἶεν ἀοιδῆς.

“I now shall recount the lineage and names of the heroes, their voyages over the vast sea and all they achieved on their wanderings. May the Muses be the *hypophētores* of my song!”⁵⁷¹

These are the famous lines with which Apollonius ends the proem of his *Argonautica*. The passage has raised a scholarly conundrum since the 1880s when Seaton commented on the meaning Liddell-Scott provides for the Apollonian epithet ὑποφήτορες.⁵⁷² Since Seaton's contribution, scholars have assiduously concentrated on several issues concerning the characterization of the Apollonian Muses and their relationship with the Hellenistic poet. Some of the main questions are: Why does Apollonius delay the address to the Muses until the end of the proem? What is the significance of the epithet ὑποφήτορες? What is the relationship between the poet and the Muses in the *Argonautica*? The interpretation of the rare term ὑποφήτορες has often represented the starting point of the discussion. Based on the understanding of this epithet,

⁵⁷¹ Modified translation from Hunter (1993a).

⁵⁷² Seaton (1888), 84.

scholars have proposed different theories addressing more wide-ranging questions of narratological character. In the following chapter, I will first present an overview of the scholarship concerning Apollonius' Muses as ὑποφῆτορες and then offer my interpretation of this epithet and the relationship between the poet and his Muses.

APOLLONIUS' MUSES: SCHOLARSHIP OVERVIEW

The scholarly debate concerning the Apollonian Muses is long-running and complex. In this regard, Jackie Murray has aptly noted that the poet may have deliberately intended to arouse his readers' curiosity about his relationship with the Muses.⁵⁷³ Among the many contributions that scholars have advanced regarding the term ὑποφῆτορες, two are the main interpretations: one school of thought advocates understanding ὑποφῆτορες αἰοδῆς as "inspirers of the song"; the opposing view favors the more innovative meaning of "interpreters of the song". Scholars such as Seaton, Mooney, Wilamowitz, and Vian, to name a few, argue for the meaning "inspirers" and the poet's adherence to tradition as subordinate to the Muse.⁵⁷⁴ This interpretation seems consistent with Apollonius' other addresses to the Muses throughout the poem, in which he appears increasingly perplexed about issues of content and characters' motivations.⁵⁷⁵ Similarly,

⁵⁷³ Murray (2018), 215 n. 49. It is noteworthy, however, that the Apollonian *scholia* do not comment on these lines. This might be a hint of the fact that ancient readers did not find Apollonius' address to the Muses as puzzling as modern readers do.

⁵⁷⁴ Seaton (1888), 83–4 and (1892), 392–7, Mooney (1912), 69, Wilamowitz (1924), 217, Vian (1974), 239. Ardizzoni (1967), 103 differentiates between the Muses ὑποφῆτορες at 1.22, "ispiratrici o suggeritrici del canto", and Glaucus' epithet ὑποφήτης ("interpreter"). De Martino (1984), 350 argues for the reading "ispiratrici", stating that Apollonius inherits the Muses from the archaic epic tradition. In their English translations, Hunter (1993a), 3 and Green (1997), 43, 202 prefer the meaning "inspirers". Giangrande (1998), 85 proposes "suggesters of my song". Similarly, Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004), 124 ("creative force") and Corradi (2007), 73 ("ispiratrici, suggeritrici"). Kyriakou (2018), 373 (both "inspirers" and "interpreters").

⁵⁷⁵ Campbell (1990), 481 and (1994), 3, and Giangrande (1998), 85.

in his commentary to Theocritus' *Idylls*, Gow adduces Apollonius' Muses ὑποφήτορες as a parallel to Theocritus' Μοισάων... ὑποφήτας in *Id.* 16.29, along with the phrase ἐγὼ δ' ἐτέρων ὑποφήτης in 22.116, arguing that, in all these cases, "the poet is only the mouthpiece of the Muse".⁵⁷⁶ Accordingly, Gow claims that the epithet ὑποφήτορες, "inspirers", should be regarded as equivalent to ὑποφῆται, "interpreters", similarly to the way Homer and other sources use it.⁵⁷⁷ Considering the grammatical construction of the term ὑποφήτορες with the genitive of an abstract noun, few scholars provide the meaning "narrators of the song" alongside "inspirers".⁵⁷⁸ Noteworthy is also the interpretation of other scholars, including Campbell and Cuypers, who recently paired the ideas of the Muses as "inspirers" and "sources" of truth or tradition.⁵⁷⁹

In contrast, advocates of the "interpreters" position, starting with Gercke and Perrotta, argue that Apollonius aimed to overturn the traditional subordination relationship between the Muses and the poet.⁵⁸⁰ For instance, Gercke maintains that Apollonius arrogantly elevates himself above the Muses in the proem to Book 1 only to later offer a *palinode* in Books 3 and 4 in response to the criticism of his fellow poets. Scholars have found several problems with Gercke's interpretation. First, it has been argued that it would be unseemly for Apollonius to exalt himself above the Muses.⁵⁸¹ Second, there is no evidence that Apollonius intentionally retracted his first invocation. Other exponents of the "interpreters" view, such as Feeney,

⁵⁷⁶ Gow (1952), II.311, 397–8.

⁵⁷⁷ Gow (1952), II.397–8 lists *AP* 14.1, Maneth. 3.326, and p.Ox. 1015.1. Hence, to Gow, Gercke's (1889) theory is "unconvincing".

⁵⁷⁸ Giangrande (1968), 55 n. 9, Borgogno (2002), 5–21, Manuello (2012), 124. Manuello (2012), 126 sees Apollonius as an interpreter of the Muses at 4.1381 (ὑπακουός).

⁵⁷⁹ Pearson (1938), 446, Campbell (1994), 3, Cuypers (2004), 48, Murray (2018), 215 n. 49.

⁵⁸⁰ Gercke (1889), 135–6, Perrotta (1926), 104 ("ministre").

⁵⁸¹ Ardizzoni (1967), 103 defines Gercke's theory as "absurd".

Goldhill, Hunter, and Murray, still focus on the progression of the poet-muse relationship through the poem, proposing a reading in meta-poetic and meta-narrative terms.⁵⁸²

In addition to Apollonius' reflections on his work and poetic persona, there might be other reasons to explain this development. Numerous recent theories address the question of the Muses' role by connecting it to other significant aspects of the narrative or the poetic process, including the poet's need to comprehend and reproduce Apollo's oracles or to master understanding his literary sources. Accordingly, the Muses become "interpreters" of the material or "research assistants" on behalf of the poet, according to Paduano-Faedo, Fusillo, Clauss, and DeForest.⁵⁸³ Similarly, Morrison and Júnior argue for the Muses as helpers in the technical process or "writing assistants."⁵⁸⁴ Clare sees the Muses as "interpreters" of tradition and "moral arbiters" of the poet.⁵⁸⁵ On a different note, Handel and Beye propose the Muses as "interpreters" of the poet and his language, maintaining that their assistance is necessary to help Apollonius express himself clearly.⁵⁸⁶ Finally, several scholars, including Albis, Gonzalez, Köhnken, Cerri,

⁵⁸² Feeney (1991), 90 relates Apollonius' increasing need for the Muses during the poem to a wider problem of representation of the gods in Hellenistic epic. Goldhill (1991), 294 argues that the *Argonautica* produces "a narrative of its narration", whereby the shifting poet-Muse relationship "must be seen within the movement towards poetry's new strategies of authorization". Hunter (1993b), 105 comments that the increasing role of the Muses in the poem is suggestive of the poet's evolving approach "brash, 'modern' self-confidence... to an archaic dependence upon the Muse". Murray (2005a), 82–97 argues that Apollonius' relationship with the Muses epitomizes a poetic contest between the innovative "I" of the Hellenistic poet and the traditional knowledge that the goddesses represent since they often look back at the archaic epic tradition. Furthermore, Murray (2005a), 95–6 claims that the differences in the poet's and the Muses' approaches, especially given Hesiod's characterization of the Muses as tellers of "many lies which resemble true things" in addition to the truth (*Th.* 27–8), causes the poet to gradually lose confidence in his ability to tell the truth under the Muses' influence. For this reason, the poet resorts to a more traditional form of invocation later in the poem.

⁵⁸³ Paduano-Faedo (1970), 377–86, Fusillo (1985), 365–6, Clauss (1993), 17–9, DeForest (1994), 40 ("the Muses now represent scholarship").

⁵⁸⁴ Morrison (2007), 293 and Júnior (2021), 114.

⁵⁸⁵ Clare (2002), 265–68.

⁵⁸⁶ Händel (1954), 10 n. 2: "Die Musen geben dem Dichter nicht sein Lied ein, sie verhelfen nur zum klaren Ausdruck". Beye (1982), 15 compares Apollonius to Apollo in that "what he declares is the raw, divine truth; the Muses in effect will make it into art, and hence intelligible". Notably, Beye is the first to suggest the

Klooster, and Schaaf, consider the Muses as “interpreters” of the oracles of Apollo and the will of Zeus.⁵⁸⁷ These scholars emphasize the crucial role of Apollo’s prophecies in the narrative progression and the poet’s need for a secure understanding of oracular language.⁵⁸⁸

The many scholarly interpretations aimed at clarifying Apollonius’ extraordinary approach to the epic Muses suggest that a definitive answer to this question is virtually impossible. To contribute to the ongoing debate, I argue that the Muses ὑποφῆτορες are “interpreters” of Greek and non-Greek languages and cultures in the *Argonautica*.⁵⁸⁹ It is my contention that Apollonius addresses the Muses, on the one hand, as experts of Greek tradition and, on the other hand, as “interpreters” of non-Greek material on his behalf. I discuss the morphological connection between the Apollonian Muses ὑποφῆτορες and the Selloi ὑποφῆται, the Homeric priests of Zeus’ sanctuary at Dodona and interpreters of his oracle. On this note, I also consider Herodotus’ account of the Egyptian origin of the oracle of Dodona.

Additionally, I investigate Apollonius’ engagement with non-Greek languages, particularly Circe and Medea’s conversation in Colchian. Particularly useful in this regard is also Argos’ description of the alternate route in Book 4, which I analyze in detail in Chapter 4. Subsequently, I discuss the position of other addresses to the Muses in the *Argonautica* and compare and contrast it with the development of the narrative, as well as Apollonius’ subdivision of the Argonautic divine landscape into two religious spheres.⁵⁹⁰ Finally, I explore the role of the

importance of the Muses as interpreters in connection with the process of understanding Apollo’s oracles. However, Beye does not go as far as to directly connect the Muses with the interpretation of Apollo’s oracles as other scholars do.

⁵⁸⁷ Albis (1996), 20 notes that “Apollonius casts his *Argonautica* as a sort of oracle”. Gonzalez (2000), 268 is the first to explicitly argue that the Muses are interpreters “of Apollo’s oracles and will”. Köhnken (2000), 56, Cerri (2007), 162–63, Klooster (2011), 220, and Schaaf (2014), 39–40. See also Klooster (2021), 104.

⁵⁸⁸ Notably, Albis (1996), 20 goes so far as to argue that “Apollonius casts his *Argonautica* as a sort of oracle”.

⁵⁸⁹ Stephens (2000), 195–215, (2003), 171–237, and (2008), 95–114.

⁵⁹⁰ See Chapter 1.

Muses in Hellenistic poetry in relation to the Egyptian goddess Isis, who, in Hellenistic times, was considered the patron of speech and writing and the inventor of hieroglyphs.

THE SELLOI: THE FIRST *HYPOPHĒTAI*

Dodona in the Homeric Tradition

Liddell-Scott defines Apollonius' rare coinage ὑποφήτωρ as equivalent to ὑποφήτης, a compound of φημί attested among Hellenistic poets, particularly Theocritus and Aratus.⁵⁹¹ The epithet ὑποφήτης is first used in *Iliad* 16.233–5, where it characterizes the Selloi, the “interpreters” of the oracle of Zeus at Dodona (Σελλοί... ὑποφῆται).

Iliad 16.233–5

“Ζεῦ ἄνα, Δωδωναῖε, Πελασγικέ, τηλόθι ναίων,
Δωδώνης μεδέων δυσχειμέρου· ἀμφὶ δὲ Σελλοὶ
σοὶ ναίουσ' ὑποφῆται ἀνιπτόποδες χαμαιεῦναι”

“Lord Zeus of Pelasgian Dodona, dwelling far away, ruler of Dodona of the bitter winter, around you dwell the Selloi, your interpreters, sleepers on the ground with unwashed feet”.⁵⁹²

These are the opening lines of Achilles' prayer to Zeus of Dodona to grant Patroclus' return from battle. The passage contains one of the few mentions of the cult of Zeus at Dodona

⁵⁹¹ Theocritus *Id.* 16.29 (Μοισάων... ἱεροὺς ὑποφήτας), 17.115 (Μουσάων δ' ὑποφῆται), 22.116 (εἰπέ, θεά, σὺ γὰρ οἶσθα· ἐγὼ δ' ἐτέρων ὑποφήτης), Aratus *Phaen.* 1.164 (Ὠλενίην δέ μιν Αἶγα Διὸς καλέουσ' ὑποφῆται).

⁵⁹² Translations of the *Iliad* are by Alexander (2015).

and the Selloi in Homer.⁵⁹³ Despite Dodona's appearance in other two passages in the Homeric poems, the Selloi are not mentioned again, and the epithet ὑποφῆται is a *hapax legomenon*.⁵⁹⁴ For instance, in *Odyssey* 14.327–30, Odysseus provides more information about the oracle of Dodona, even though he focuses on the oak tree as a source of prophetic knowledge without referring to the Selloi as its “interpreters”.⁵⁹⁵ In his comparative study of the “Oracles of Zeus”, Herbert Parke argues the two accounts of Dodona from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are not contradictory but complementary.⁵⁹⁶ In the *Iliad*, Achilles' description suggests that specialized priests, the Selloi, are specialized in interpreting the will of Zeus. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus introduces the oak tree element, which, in later accounts, is typically associated with the oracle of Dodona and the prophetic ritual but does not mention any mediators between the worshiper and the god.⁵⁹⁷ By considering the two accounts as supplementary, Parke advances the theory

⁵⁹³ In Homer, Dodona is otherwise mentioned only in the ‘Catalogue of Ships’ (2.750) and in two repeated passages in the *Odyssey* (14.327 and 19.296).

⁵⁹⁴ Reconstructing the identity of the Selloi is not an easy task. Already in antiquity, the *scholia* could not agree on the name of these people, and some commentators preferred the reading σ' Ἑλλοί to Σελλοί in this passage from the *Iliad*. The reading “Helloi” seems to be consistent with the Hesiodic fragment 181 (240 MW; 115 H), quoted in the *sch.* to Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (1167a), in which the author mentions a place called “Hellopia”, the land inhabited by the Helloi and the site of Dodona. Reece (2009), 201–2 discusses the philological issue of the name of this tribe, arguing that “Homer meant Σελλοί, and that is what we should read in our texts of this passage, but the actual name of the tribe was Ἑλλοί”. See also Windekens (1961), 91–4. The edition of the *scholia* is Xenis (2010).

⁵⁹⁵ *Od.* 14.327–30: τὸν δ' ἐς Δωδώνην φάτο βήμεναι, ὄφρα θεοῖο | ἐκ δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο Διὸς βουλὴν ἐπακούσαι, | ὅπως νοστήσει Ἰθάκης ἐς πῖονα δῆμον | ἥδη δὴν ἀπεών, ἣ ἀμφοδὸν ἦε κρυφιδόν (“But Odysseus, he said, had gone to Dōdōnē, to discover, from the deep-leaved sacred oak, what Zeus was planning, and how he should make his way back to Ithákē's rich land after so long an absence, whether openly or in secret”, translation by Green [2018]).

⁵⁹⁶ Parke (1967), 20.

⁵⁹⁷ For the oak tree as a symbol of the oracle of Dodona outside of Homer see: Hesiod fr. 181.6–9 in *Schol. ad Soph. Trach.* 1167a (ναῖον δ' ἐν πυθμένι φηγοῦ: [...] ἐνθεν ἐπιχθόνιοι **μαντήϊα πάντα** φέρονται, “[the Selloi] used to live **at the bottom of the oak tree**; [...] from there, these earthly men provide **all the oracles**”); Aesch. *Prom.* 832 (προσήγοροι δρυές, “the speaking oaks”); Soph. *Trach.* 171–72 (ὡς τὴν **παλαιὰν φηγὸν** αὐδῆσαι ποτε | **Δωδῶνι** δισσῶν ἐκ πελειάδων ἔφη, “as he said that he had heard the **ancient oak tree at Dodona** [say] through the two doves”) and 1164–71 (**μαντεῖα καινὰ... ἃ** τῶν ὀρέϊων καὶ χαμαικοιτῶν ἐγὼ | **Σελλῶν ἐσελθὼν ἄλσος ἐξεγραψάμην** | **πρὸς τῆς πατρῶας καὶ πολυγλώσσου δρυός**, “**new prophecies...**

that the role of the Selloi was to interpret the sounds produced by the tree, such as the rustling of branches and leaves, as a form of divine communication and to “translate” them for the public.⁵⁹⁸

The Oracle of Dodona in Herodotus

In Book 2.52–7, Herodotus elaborates on the origin of the oracle of Dodona and its genealogical ties with Egypt. In 2.52, Herodotus claims that Dodona is the oldest oracular site in Greece and the only one that existed at the time of the Pelasgians’ occupation of Greece (τὸ γὰρ δὴ μαντήιον τοῦτο νενόμισται **ἀρχαιότατον** τῶν ἐν Ἑλλησι χρηστηρίων εἶναι, καὶ ἦν τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον **μοῦνον**, 2.52.2).⁵⁹⁹ At this juncture, Herodotus provides the first connection between Dodona and Egypt, by accounting for the Pelasgians’ enquiry to the oracle of Dodona about whether they should adopt the names of the Egyptian gods for their divinities (ἔπειτε δὲ χρόνου πολλοῦ διεξελθόντος ἐπύθοντο ἐκ τῆς Αἰγύπτου ἀπιγμένα τὰ οὐνόματα τῶν θεῶν τῶν ἄλλων... καὶ μετὰ χρόνον **ἐχρηστηριάζοντο περὶ [τῶν] οὐνομάτων ἐν Δωδώνῃ**, 2.52.2).⁶⁰⁰ In 2.56–7, Herodotus elucidates the oracle’s historical association with Egypt. He provides the two known versions of the foundation of the oracle and then advances an interpretation of the facts.⁶⁰¹ The first version of the story, dating back to the Egyptian priests of Zeus at Thebes (οἱ ἱερεῖς τοῦ Θεβαϊέος Διός), accounts for the foundation of the oracles of Zeus at Dodona and Ammon by

which I wrote down at the bidding of the ancestral and many-tongued oak tree when I entered the grove of the Selloi, who live in the mountains and lie on the ground”).

⁵⁹⁸ Parke (1967), 27.

⁵⁹⁹ The edition of the Herodotus text is Hude (1927).

⁶⁰⁰ In the ancient Greek world, it was common practice to ask for the oracle’s approval to change a cult. See Parke (1967), 39, 110, 113, 189. The Pelasgians’ assimilation of the gods’ names from Egypt constitutes the second and intermediate phase within Herodotus’ theory of the evolution of Greek religion. Before this stage, the gods were nameless and undetermined; the third and last phase was, according to Herodotus, the systematization of this material by the first great Greek poets, Homer and Hesiod. See Lloyd (1989), 274.

⁶⁰¹ See Parke (1967), 38 for other versions of the founding of the oracle that Herodotus seems to ignore.

two Egyptian priestesses, who were taken away from their country and sold to Greece and Libya, in the spots where they would then establish the cults (ἔφασαν... δύο γυναῖκας ἱερείας ἐκ **Θηβέων** ἐξαχθῆναι ὑπὸ Φοινίκων, καὶ **τὴν μὲν** αὐτέων πυθέσθαι ἐς **Λιβύην** πρηθεῖσαν, **τὴν δὲ** ἐς τοὺς Ἑλληνας· ταύτας δὲ τὰς γυναῖκας εἶναι τὰς **ἰδρυσαμένας τὰ μαντήια πρώτας** ἐν τοῖσι εἰρημένοισι ἔθνεσι, 2.54.1).⁶⁰² According to the second version, which Herodotus attributes to the current prophetesses of Dodona (τάδε δὲ Δωδωναίων φασὶ αἱ προμάντιες, 2.55.1), two black doves flew from Egypt to Greece and Libya (**δύο πελειάδας μελαίνας** ἐκ Θηβέων τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἀναπταμένας τὴν μὲν αὐτέων ἐς Λιβύην, τὴν δὲ παρὰ σφέας ἀπικέσθαι, 2.55.1).⁶⁰³ The priestesses add that the dove arriving at Dodona perched on an oak tree and, in a human voice, conveyed Zeus' command to erect an oracle there (ἰζομένην δέ μιν ἐπὶ φηγὸν αὐδάξασθαι **φωνῇ ἀνθρωπηίῃ** ὥς χρὲν εἶη μαντήιον αὐτόθι Διὸς γενέσθαι, 2.55.2).⁶⁰⁴ Herodotus rationalizes these two accounts in 2.56. He claims that the first priestess of Dodona was an attendant of the temple of Zeus at Thebes before being captured and brought to Greece (ὥσπερ ἦν οἰκὸς **ἀμφιπολεύουσαν ἐν Θήβησι ἱδὸν Διός**, 2.56.2).⁶⁰⁵ In this view, Herodotus concludes

⁶⁰² The cult of Zeus at Dodona is that of Zeus Naios, a very ancient cult imported by the Indo-Europeans sometime in 3000 BC. See Parke (1967), 68 and Lloyd (1989), 276.

⁶⁰³ Already in Homer, doves are associated with Zeus as they bring him ambrosia: πέλειαι... ταί τ' ἀμβροσίην Διὶ πατρὶ φέρουσιν (*Od.* 12.62–3). Athenaeus discusses this tradition in 11.490–91a by quoting the Hellenistic poetess Moero of Byzantium, who explains the variation in the often-confused names “Pleiades” and “Peleiades” based on the Homeric passage. The specific species of dove associated with Dodona is the ring-dove (*Columba palumbus palumbus*), which is not the most common type in Greece but is a “partial migrant”; see Parke (1967), 43.

⁶⁰⁴ The variety of oak trees associated with Dodonian Zeus in this passage is the φηγός (*Valonian Oak*). The term φηγός is never used in the *Odyssey*, but instead, we find the more general δρῦς, especially in the description of the sanctuary of Dodona (*Od.* 14.328). In the *Iliad*, although there is no specific mention of Dodonian Zeus' sacred oak, there is a φηγός outside the Skaian gates of Troy (*Il.* 6.237) and φηγός is explicitly associated with Zeus in 7.60: φηγῷ ἐφ' ὕψηλῃ πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο. The sacred oak tree at Dodona was probably located south of the Acropolis and east of the *hiera oikia*; see Dakaris (1960), 37, and Lloyd (1989), 276.

⁶⁰⁵ The formula Herodotus uses to introduce his interpretation of the facts, ἐγὼ δ' ἔχω... γνώμην τήνδε, is recurring in chapters 1–99 of Book 2. See Lloyd (1989), xviii–xix.

that the establishment of the oracular sanctuary at Dodona occurred as a continuation of the cult of Zeus in Egypt since the priestess was reminded of the god when she came to Greece (ἐνθα ἀπίκετο, ἐνθαῦτα μνήμην αὐτοῦ ἔχειν, 2.56.2). Finally, in 2.56, Herodotus comments on the language of the first priestess of Dodona, clarifying, first, that the priestess established the Greek shrine only after she learned the Greek language (ἐκ δὲ τούτου χρηστήριον κατηγήσατο, **ἐπεῖτε συνέλαβε τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν**, 2.56.3). Moreover, he attempts to reconcile the two reported versions of the story by saying that the local population assimilated the captive women to doves because their speech was as incomprehensible to native Greek speakers as the chirping of birds (πελειάδες δέ μοι δοκέουσι κληθῆναι πρὸς Δωδωναίων ἐπὶ τοῦδε αἱ γυναῖκες, διότι βάρβαροι ἦσαν, ἐδόκεον δέ σφι ὁμοίως ὄρνισι φθέγγεσθαι, 2.571).

Contrary to Homeric references to Dodona, Herodotus' *logos* focuses on the oracle's origins and cultural background, especially its connection with the Egyptian cult of Zeus at Thebes. The connection with Egypt, however, is not unique to Herodotus. The *scholia* to Sophocles' *Trachiniae* mention that Pindar maintained the tradition of the doves flying from Egypt to Greece and Libya in one of his lost peans.⁶⁰⁶ Herodotus also differs from the Homeric tradition in his representation of the cult officials at Dodona. Contrary to the *Iliad*, where a tribe of male priests are the interpreters of the oracle, in Herodotus' Book 2, the task of attending to the oracle is assigned to priestesses whose function and responsibilities are not specified. Parke argues that these divergences in the literary sources demonstrate that the oracular procedures at

⁶⁰⁶ *Schol. ad Soph. Trach.* 170–2 (δισσῶν ἐκ πελειάδων): ... τὴν μὲν εἰς Λιβύην ἀφίκεσθαι Θήβηθεν, εἰς τὸ τοῦ Ἀμμωνος χρηστήριον, τὴν δὲ <εἰς τὸ> περὶ τὴν Δωδώνην, **ὥς καὶ Πίνδαρος Παιᾶσιν** (““from the two doves”: that one **arrived** in Libya **from Thebes**, at the temple of Ammon, the other one somewhere near Dodona, **as** [it is said] **also in Pindar's paeans**”, my translation). Parke (1967), 57–8 posits that the connection between Dodona and Ammon could have been elaborated in a lost source pre-dating Herodotus and Pindar, such as Hecataeus. The edition of the *scholia* is Xenis (2010).

Dodona have undergone significant changes since the Archaic period.⁶⁰⁷ Leaving traditional variants aside, a more fruitful approach is to consider the Homeric and Herodotean accounts as a single body of earlier literary evidence that Alexandrian scholars could access and study synchronously as an anthological source on Dodona. Given this, this study assumes that the scholar-poet had not only these, if not more, literary sources at hand at the same time but also that he could freely refer to different sources written by various authors in different periods to create a network of meanings and allusions between his poem and other works.⁶⁰⁸ The details emphasized in the Homeric and Herodotean traditions that are important for this study are:

- a. specialized cult officials run the oracle of Zeus at Dodona;
- b. the Homeric priests are called Selloi, and their function is that of “interpreters” (ὑποφῆται) of the god;

⁶⁰⁷ Parke (1967), 75. For instance, Strabo 7.7.12 maintains that the three old priestesses (τρῆις γραῖαι) substitute the original male priests designated as *hypophētai* when Dione is added to share the temple with Zeus (σύνναος).

⁶⁰⁸ Scholars supporting Apollonius’ engagement with Herodotus elaborate on thematic, narrative, and linguistic aspects. Murray (1972), 200–13 discusses Herodotus’ prestige in the Hellenistic period as ὀμηρικώτατος and highlights echoes of the *Historiē* in the *Argonautica*, especially *Arg.* 1.591 (Hdt. 7.193) and *Arg.* 4.1349 (Hdt. 4.189). Cusset (2004), 31–52 investigates the themes of “le civilisé et le sauvage” in Apollonius and argues for the Hellenistic author’s indebtedness to Herodotus (and Xenophon) for the description of the Black Sea populations’ non-Greek, ‘savage’ customs. Building on Hornblower’s (1995), 66, conclusions about the knowledge of Herodotus and Thucydides in the Hellenistic period, Priestley (2014), 157–86, maintains that the reason for the greater popularity of Herodotus’ *Historiē* lies in its subject matter, namely, the Persian Wars, a conflict between Greeks and the “other”. At pp. 173–9, in particular, Priestley argues that Apollonius’ characterization of an “undifferentiated Hellas [...] contribute to the presentation of the Argonautic expedition as a panhellenic enterprise against non-Greeks”. For the concept of “undifferentiated Hellas”, see Hunter (1993b), 159–60. Finally, Morrison (2020) argues for Apollonius’ in-depth use of Herodotus as both *modello codice* and *modello esemplare* for many passages, especially in the context of his ethnographic descriptions of mythological events. Remarkably, Morrison compares Herodotus’ relationship with his historiographical sources to Apollonius’ own quest for truth, which progresses on two levels: the scholarly investigation of historiographical sources and the traditionally epic appeal to the Muses’ knowledge. On Apollonius and the “Old Geographers”, especially Hecataeus, see Pearson (1938), 443–59.

- c. in the Herodotean *logos*, Zeus' oracle at Dodona is originally connected to Egypt and Zeus' cult at Thebes;
- d. Herodotus revisits the theme of "interpretation" epitomized in Homer by the Selloi ὑποφῆται by assuming a problem of communication between the first Egyptian priestesses and the local population of Dodona;
- e. the oak tree and black doves are symbols associated with the oracle of Dodona.

Based on the highlighted evidence, I propose that Apollonius alluded to the Herodotean *logos* about Dodona in his own way, namely, by producing a new word, ὑποφήτωρ, that is morphologically related to ὑποφήτης and the Greek literary tradition of Dodona.⁶⁰⁹ Thus, Apollonius would not only suggest a comparison between the Muses and the Homeric interpreters of Zeus at Dodona but also point to the challenges of interpreting and assimilating foreign knowledge and ritual, just as in the case of exporting the Egyptian cult of Zeus (or Amun-Ra) to Dodona. The Dodonian oracle could represent Greek tradition by metonymy, and the Egyptian cult of Zeus/Amun-Ra could represent Egyptian knowledge. The Hellenistic poet who strives to gain specific knowledge of both traditional and intellectual contexts requires the help of the Muses ὑποφῆτορες, "interpreters" and perhaps even "translators".⁶¹⁰

Given this thesis, Glaucus' characterization in Book 1.1311 as the "exceedingly wise interpreter of divine Nereus" (Νηρῆος θείοιο πολυφράδμων ὑποφήτης) slightly complicates this

⁶⁰⁹ For further evidence of Apollonius' incorporation of the Homeric and Herodotean traditions, see Appendix 2.

⁶¹⁰ Garriga (1996), 112–3 already advances the possibility of "translators", but his explanation that the Muses translate the poet's first idea and then interpret it, in order to make it intelligible for the audience, seems unsatisfactory to me.

thesis.⁶¹¹ In the *Argonautica*, Glaucus' epiphany occurs after the Argonauts lose Heracles in Mysia. Apollonius applies the epithet ὑποφήτης to Glaucus, referring to his expertise in interpreting Nereus, another Greek marine divinity. The fact that the two epithets, ὑποφήτης and ὑποφήτωρ, appear near the beginning and the end of the same book of the *Argonautica* suggests that the poet may have subtly linked his coinage ὑποφήτωρ with the Homeric *hapax*. Given that they derive from the same root, the two epithets could also essentially share the meaning “interpreter”. Conversely, the noun suffix -τωρ, which generally denotes the “doer” or “agent of an action” in words such as “ρήτωρ”, might seem to reinforce the basic idea of the epithet formed by the combination of the preposition ὑπό and the root of φημί.⁶¹² This morphological variance resulting in a different degree of intensity of the epithet ὑποφήτωρ might be understood as addressing the more significant role the Muses ὑποφήτορες play in the context of poetic composition than that of Glaucus ὑποφήτης, whose expertise remains at the level of the narrative. This idea pertains not only to the Muses' traditional position at the core of the epic poem but also—and in particular—to the importance of their more special role as “interpreters” of non-Greek sources in the *Argonautica*.

⁶¹¹ Cf. Eur. *Or.* 364: Νηρέως προφήτης Γλαῦκος. On Glaucus as an agent of Zeus in the poem, see Chapter 2.

⁶¹² Smyth (1920), 229–30. On ὑποφήτωρ as an Apollonian coinage based on ὑποφήτης, Klooster (2011), 218 n. 34 comments that: “Apollonius was not averse to supplementing incomplete Homeric verbal paradigms; analogously, he may have tampered with prefixes and suffixes of nouns and adjectives to coin new formations”. Rengakos (1994) omits commenting on either ὑποφήτης or ὑποφήτωρ. Rengakos (1994), 173–5 discusses the occurrence of Homeric *hapax legomena* in Apollonius by addressing the issue of the difficult interpretation of some Homeric *hapax*. Rengakos argues that Apollonius either explained the *hapax* with a clear exegesis or used them twice in the epic (*dis legomena*) by attributing them a different meaning for each use. The case of ὑποφήτης/ὑποφήτωρ, whereby the poet complicates the Homeric meaning by coining a new epithet, seems to contradict this thesis. On Homeric *hapax* in Apollonius, see also Fantuzzi (1988), 26ff., 42ff.

THE NARRATOR'S *AMĒCHANIA*: COLCHIAN AND EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE IN THE *ARGONAUTICA*

The conversation between Medea and Circe in Aiaia exemplifies another instance of bilingualism in the poem. The scene occurs after Circe performs a purification ritual to free Medea and Jason from the pollution of Apsyrtus' murder. The two come to Circe's palace as suppliants and remain in ritual silence by the hearth until the end of the religious procedure (4.693–4).⁶¹³ Only after Circe completes the ritual does Medea lift her gaze from the ground and allow the sorceress to recognize her as one of her kin through her golden eyes, a mark of Helios' progeny (4.726–9).⁶¹⁴ At this point, Circe starts questioning Medea about the reasons for their journey (4.720–3) and longs to hear the kindred voice of Medea (ἔτο δ' αὖ κούρης ἐμφύλιον ἰδμεναι ὁμόφην, 4.725).⁶¹⁵ The emphasis on Circe and Medea's native language is revived when Medea begins to recount her recent deeds: "So Medea told her all she asked [...], speaking gently in the Colchian tongue" (ἦ δ' ἄρα τῇ τὰ ἕκαστα διειρομένη κατέλεξεν, | **Κολχίδα γῆρυν ἰεῖσα...**, 4.730–1)". The poet does not directly report Medea's tale but summarizes her speech in the third person (4.730–7): "She told her of the expedition and the heroes' travels, of all their efforts in the tough challenges, how her anguished sister had persuaded her to act falsely, and

⁶¹³ The prominent models of this scene are Odysseus' supplication by the hearth in Alcinous' palace (*Od.* 7.153–4) and Orestes' kneeling by the *omphalos* spattered with the blood of Clytemnestra (*Eum.* 40–3). See Hunter (2015), 179–80. On ritual supplication, see Gould (1973), 74–103.

⁶¹⁴ Apollonius emphasizes Medea's powerful eyes in other passages: the crowd avoids Medea's gaze as she passes through the city in 3.885–6; Medea bewitches Talos with her "hate-filled gaze" at 4.1669–70. For a discussion of Medea and the evil eye, see Lovatt (2013), 334–6 and (2018), 88–112, for a focused investigation of the "gaze" in Book 4. For the textual difficulty with the transmitted βαλοῦσαν (4.726) and possible interpretations, see Hunter (2015), 185–6.

⁶¹⁵ Hunter (2015), 185 n. 725 comments that Circe's desire to hear Medea's kindred voice is redundant because she had already recognized her golden eyes. The emphasis is indeed on Medea and Circe's non-Greek, native language rather than Circe's need to hear Medea's speech to identify her.

how she had fled away with the sons of Phrixos from fear of the father's violence. Of the murder of Apsyrtos she did not speak...".

Medea's reply to Circe is shaped as a narrative ellipsis ending with the *praeteritio* of the murder of Apsyrtos.⁶¹⁶ The reference to Chalciope's negative guidance as the cause of Medea's misbehavior is another element that contributes to slightly disconnecting this account from the poet's narrative.⁶¹⁷ Indeed, Medea alters Apollonius' version of the events and casts herself as the story's narrator.⁶¹⁸ Apollonius shows awareness of Medea's "Colchian version", namely, an account of the events given in her own language and to one of her relatives.⁶¹⁹ He does not reproduce Medea's Κολχίδα γῆρος, Colchian, or perhaps Egyptian, but understands the content of the speech and summarizes it by considering Medea's changes.⁶²⁰ This precise display of knowledge suggests Apollonius' acknowledgment of foreign languages; however, his indirect

⁶¹⁶ By having Medea omit the murder of Apsyrtus, Apollonius alludes to and subverts the Homeric model, namely, Nausicaa passing on marriage out of shame during her conversation with Alcinoos in *Od.* 7.66–7. As Hunter (2015), 187 states: "Nausicaa has been a central model for Medea throughout, but there is a world of difference between γάμος and φόνος". Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 621, comment that the stylistic feature governing Medea's speech is the censure motivated by her fear of Aeetes, who is appropriately mentioned as βαρύφρονος Αἰήταο (4.731).

⁶¹⁷ When Medea and Chalciope meet in 3.670ff., Medea wants her sister to ask her for help in saving her sons and manipulates her into doing so: ... ὥπὲ δ' ἔειπεν | τοῖα δόλω· **θρασέες γὰρ ἐπεκλονέεσκον Ἔρωτες** ("Finally she did speak, and with cunning, for the bold Loves buffeted hard against her", 3.686–7) and φῆ ῥα **κασιγνήτης πειρωμένη**, εἴ κέ μιν αὐτὴ | ἀντιάσειε ("Her words were designed to test whether her sister would take the lead in asking her to help her sons", 3.693–4).

⁶¹⁸ This narrative technique is analogous to Argos' recounting of the alternate *nostos* earlier in Book 4.256–93. There, too, the poet assigns the task of narrating the route to a character, Argos, whose knowledge of the Colcho-Egyptian language makes him a well-suited candidate to report on material drawn from Egyptian sources. See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of this scene.

⁶¹⁹ Hunter (2015), 186: "Medea answers Circe's desire by speaking Colchian, thus of course excluding Jason; this, together with the use of indirect speech and the fact that what we receive is inevitably a transcription into Greek of what was said, strongly marks her reply as very much her 'Colchian' version of events". See also Hunter (1993b), 146–7: "... direct speech was not a practical possibility here; indirectness, which places a barrier between us and 'what was actually said', suggests the linguistic barrier placed in front of Jason".

⁶²⁰ The analogy between Colchian and Egyptian is one of Herodotus' 'proofs' to show the genealogical connection between the two peoples (2.105). See Stephens (2003), 222–3.

representation of Medea's Colchian speech seems to attest to a differentiation in the representation of Greek and non-Greek languages. This differentiation seems to depend on the poet's expertise in non-Greek languages and cultures.

APOLLONIUS' OTHER ADDRESSES TO THE MUSES: KNOWLEDGE AND STRUCTURE

As has been observed, there are cases in which Apollonius does not report texts or conversations in the original but incorporates them into the narrative in other ways, such as translations of texts into Greek or summaries of direct speeches. Concerning Medea and Circe's conversation, Apollonius avoids directly rendering the material that would have originally appeared in a non-Greek language. This approach indicates Apollonius' general concern for truth and accuracy regarding the content of his work.⁶²¹ In general, preoccupation with knowledge arises throughout the poem and affects the author and the characters at different levels. The story of the seer Phineus, on which Apollonius focuses at length in Book 2 (178–531), constitutes a primary example of this theme. Upon the Argonauts' arrival on Phineus' island, we learn that Zeus has given the prophet "lingering old age" (γῆρας μὲν ἐπὶ δηναιόν, 2.183), made him blind (ἐκ δ' ἔλετ' ὀφθαλμῶν γλυκερὸν φάος, 2.184), and unleashed the Harpies against him to prevent him from eating any food (2.184–9). Phineus reveals Zeus' reasons for punishing Phineus (2.311–6): "It is not permitted by the gods that you should know everything accurately, but what they wish you to know, I shall not conceal from you. On a previous occasion I thoughtlessly

⁶²¹ Clare (2002), 265–68 has a useful discussion on content and communication in the *Argonautica* in relation to the Muses. Clare (2002), 268 aptly argues that: "...the Muses are used by Apollonius as instruments in the articulation of a debate on what is desirable, appropriate or necessary for the poet to communicate, the self-imposed yardsticks of quality being transparency (cf. ἀπηλεγέως, 2.845), propriety (cf. οὐκ ἐθέλων, 4.985) and truth (cf. πανατρεκές, 382)".

committed a foolish act by revealing the mind of Zeus in all its particulars through to the end. It is his wish that prophecy should reveal the decrees of the gods only incompletely, so that men are always ignorant of some part of the gods' purpose."⁶²² In other words, knowing too much can be a curse in the world of the *Argonautica*, as can knowing too little.

Apollonius' concerns about handling foreign languages and cultures resonate more with the latter condition, namely, having incomplete or partial knowledge of the subject. The poet regularly manifests these worries when he addresses the Muses at different points in the poem. In Book 2, for instance, Apollonius explicitly states that the Muses requested him for a correct explanation of the *aition* of the hero cult established for Idmon in the land of the Mariandynoi.

Arg. 2.844–50

ἄκρης τυτθὸν ἔνερθ' Ἀχερουσίδος. Εἰ δέ με καὶ τὸ
 χρεῖῳ ἀπηλεγέως Μουσέων ὕπο γηρύσασθαι, 845
 τόνδε πολισσοῦχον διεπέφραδε Βοιωτοῖσι
 Νισαίοισι τε Φοῖβος ἐπιρρήδην ἰλάεσθαι,
 ἀμφὶ δὲ τήνδε φάλαγγα παλαιγενέος κοτίνιοιο
 ἄστυ βαλεῖν, οἱ δ' ἀντὶ θεουδέος Αἰολίδαο
 Ἴδμονος εἰσέτι νῦν Ἀγαμήστορα κυδαίνουσι. 850

“If, with the Muses’ help, I must also tell without constraint of what follows, Phoibos

instructed the Boiotians and the Nisaians to pay honours to this man under the title ‘Protector of

⁶²² *Arg.* 2.311–6: “κλυτὴ νυν· οὐ μὲν πάντα πέλει θέμις ὕμμι δαῖναι | ἀτρεκές· ὅσσα δ’ ὄρωρε θεοῖς φίλον, οὐκ ἐπικεύσω· | ἀσάμην καὶ πρόσθε Διὸς νόον ἀφραδίησιν | χρεῖων ἐξείης τε καὶ ἐς τέλος· ὧδε γὰρ αὐτὸς | βούλεται ἀνθρώποις ἐπιδευέα θέσφατα φαίνειν | μαντοσύνης, ἵνα καὶ τι θεῶν χατέωσι νόοιο”.

the City’ and to establish a city around this roller of ancient olive-wood; they, however, to this day glorify Agamestor rather than Idmon, the descendant of god-fearing Aiolos”.

The fact that the Muses bid the poet to correct the original *aition* with a brief note about the current cult of the local hero Agamestor reveals more about their relationship with the poet, who appears, in this case, as subordinate to their needs for historical accuracy. The poet’s submission to the Muses’ demands is well expressed by the preposition ὑπό preceded by the genitive Μουσέων in anastrophe. As a side note, the prepositional phrase Μουσέων ὑπο alongside the verb of speaking γηρύσασθαι possibly recalls the epithet ὑποφήτωρ and might be a pun relating to the meaning of the Apollonian *hapax*.⁶²³ Apollonius’ clever usage of the verb γηρύσασθαι in this scene issues a suggestive analogy with his characterization of Medea’s Κολχίδα γῆρυς. The verb γηρύω, “to sing”, which Hesiod famously applies to the Muses “who know how to tell many lies that resemble true things” in *Th.* 27–8 suggests a certain duality between truth and falsehood—or, perhaps, between what is easily discernible and what remains unintelligible.⁶²⁴ In the case of Medea’s native language, ambiguity arises also due to the traditional notion that Colchians and Egyptians spoke the same language.⁶²⁵ Remarkably, this particular use of γῆρυς to denote non-Greek languages has been longstanding. In Homer, γῆρυς

⁶²³ Analogously, in Apollonius the preposition ὑπό in anastrophe with the genitive is found at 4.643–4: ἄψ δὲ παλιντροπόωντο θεᾶς ὑπο, καὶ ῥ’ ἐνόησαν | τὴν οἶμον τῇ πέρ τε καὶ ἔπλετο νόστος ἰοῦσι. In this episode, Hera cries out from the Herkynian rock and warns the Argonauts not to sail to the lands of the Celts to avoid shameful destruction (ἄτη ἀεικέλῃ, 4.637). The Argonauts return on the right path of their *nostos* at the bidding of the goddess (θεᾶς ὑπο).

⁶²⁴ *Th.* 27–8: ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, | ἴδμεν δ’ ἐὺτ’ ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι (“we know how to tell many lies that pass for truth, and when we wish, we know to tell the truth itself”, translation by Athanassakis [2004]).

⁶²⁵ Hdt. 2.105.1: φέρε νῦν καὶ ἄλλο εἶπω περὶ τῶν Κόλχων, ὥς Αἰγυπτίοισι προσφερέες εἰσί. λίνον μοῦνοι οὔτοί τε καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι ἐργάζονται καὶ κατὰ ταῦτά, καὶ ἡ ζῶν πᾶσα καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα ἐμφερής ἐστι ἀλλήλοισι.

is a *hapax legomenon* characterizing the non-Greek mix of languages spoken by the Trojan soldiers on the battlefield (οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἦεν ὁμῶς θρόος οὐδ' ἴα γῆρυς | ἀλλὰ γλῶσσ' ἐμέμικτο..., 4.437–8).⁶²⁶ Analogously, in *Arg.* 2.844–50, Apollonius claims to speak (γηρύσασθαι) “with the Muses’ help” about matters happening in non-Greek lands, precisely in Heraclea Pontica in Bithynia, to correct the false tradition of the Greek cult of Agamestor. In both scenes from the *Argonautica*, the verb γηρύω and the noun γῆρυς imply cultural and linguistic difference, in a way that is reminiscent of Greek archaic poetry. The duality expressed by γηρύσασθαι in relation to the Muses in the Hesiodic tradition seems to be revived by the connection between the Muses and Medea. Medea’s Colchian-Greek bilingualism could be the key to understanding the application of γηρύσασθαι to the poet himself and the Muses.

Apollonius’ addresses to the Muses intensify throughout the poem, as do his pleas for help.⁶²⁷ Most of these direct appeals to the goddesses occur in Book 4, which focuses on the heroes’ return journey and deeds outside the Mediterranean Sea. Apollonius appears to be increasingly uncertain about how to provide a reliable account of the facts. After the death of Apsyrtus, for example, the poet distances himself from the narration and poses a direct question to the Muses seeking their advice in relating the events to follow “without erring” (νημερτές, 555).

Arg. 4.552–6

ἀλλὰ, θεαί, πῶς τῆσδε παρέξ ἁλός, ἀμφί τε γαῖαν

Αὔσονίην νήσους τε Λιγυστίδας, αἱ καλέονται

⁶²⁶ I thank Brett Evans for reminding me of this passage.

⁶²⁷ On this, see Feeney (1991), 91 and Hunter (1993b), 105.

Στοιχάδες, Ἀργώης περιώσια σήματα νηὸς

νημερτὲς πέφονται; τίς ἀπόπροθι τόσσον ἀνάγκη 555

καὶ χρεῖώ σφ' ἐκόμισσε; τίνες σφέας ἤγαγον αὔραι;

“**How is it, goddesses, that beyond this sea,** in the Ausonian land and the Ligurian islands called Stoichades, **many clear traces of the Argo’s voyage appear?** What necessity and need took them so far away? What winds directed them?”

The most striking instance of Apollonius’ quest for truth in Book 4 occurs on the Argonauts’ conveyance of the Argo through the Syrtis.

Arg. 4.1381–87

Μουσάων ὅδε μῦθος, ἐγὼ δ' ὑπακουὸς ἀεῖδω

Πιερίδων. καὶ τήνδε πανατρεκὲς ἔκλυον ὁμφήν,

ὕμέας, ὃ πέρι δὴ μέγα φέρτατοι υἱεὺς ἀνάκτων,

ἧ βίη, ἧ ἀρετῇ Λιβύης ἀνὰ θῆνας ἐρήμους

νῆα μεταχρονίην ὅσα τ' ἔνδοθι νηὸς ἄγεσθαι 1385

ἀνθεμένους ὥμοισι φέρειν δυοκαῖδεκα πάντα

ἥμαθ' ὁμοῦ νύκτας τε.

“**This tale is the Muses’, I sing obedient to the daughters of Pieria. This report too I heard in all truth that you,** much the greatest sons of kings, by your strength and by your courage

placed the ship and all that your ship contained aloft upon your shoulders, and carried it for twelve whole days and an equal number of nights through the sandy deserts of Libya”.

By claiming that this portion of the narrative is the Muses’ μῦθος entirely and that he himself is their obedient singer (ὕπακουδς ἀείδω, 4.1381), Apollonius finally declares his complete dependence on the goddesses. Some scholars have taken this declaration as the final stage in the process of poetic submission to the Muses that began with the proem of Book 1.⁶²⁸ The poet’s need for the Muses has never been open to question, as the meaning of the very epithet ὑποφῆτορες, “interpreters”, in relation to non-Greek culture(s) demonstrates. Indeed, Apollonius requires the Muses’ assistance to gain control of specific knowledge areas that are more relevant in the poem’s second half, where the narrative is increasingly focused on foreign peoples and unexplored territories outside the Mediterranean region. In particular, the Colchians and their territory are central in the last two books. Except for the council of the gods in Olympus, Book 3 is almost entirely set in Colchis. Two of Book 4’s major events, such as the Argonauts’ visit to Circe in Aiaia and the crossing of the Syrtis in Libya, occur in locations linked to Colchis and Egypt either in the narrative or in the poet’s time.⁶²⁹

Finally, the proemial beginnings of Books 3 and 4 represent an important clue to the prominence of the Muses and their expertise in the second half of the *Argonautica*.

Arg. 3.1–5

Εἰ δ’ ἄγε νῦν, Ἐρατώ, παρά θ’ ἴστασο καί μοι ἐνίσπε

⁶²⁸ Beye (1982), 17 and Hunter (1993b), 105.

⁶²⁹ On this passage, see Mori (2008), 13–8 and Hunter (2015), 267. See esp. my discussion of the Libyan episode in Chapter 2.

ἔνθεν ὅπως ἐς Ἴωλκὸν ἀνήγαγε κῶας Ἴήσων
Μηδείης ὑπ' ἔρωτι. σὺ γὰρ καὶ Κύπριδος αἴσαν
ἔμμορες, ἀδμήτας δὲ τεοῖς μελεδήμασι θέλγεις
παρθενικάς· τῷ καὶ τοι ἐπήρατον οὔνομ' ἀνῆπται.

5

“Come now, Erato, stand beside me and relate to me how it was that Jason brought the fleece from Colchis to Iolkos through the power of Medea’s love. I invoke you because you also have been allotted a share of Kypris’ power, and young girls, not yet mated, are bewitched by the cares you bring; for this reason a lovely (*eperaton*) name has been attached to you”.

Arg. 4.1–5

Αὐτὴ νῦν κάματόν γε, θεά, καὶ δῆγεα κούρης
Κολχίδος ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, Διὸς τέκος· ἧ γὰρ ἔμοιγε
ἀμφασίῃ νόος ἔνδον ἐλίσσεται, ὀρμαίνοντι
ἥέ μιν ἄτης πῆμα δυσίμερον ἧ τό γ' ἐνίσπω
φύζαν ἀεικελίην ἧ κάλλιπεν ἔθνεα Κόλχων.

5

“You yourself, goddess, tell of the suffering and thoughts of the Colchian girl, you Muse, child of Zeus; within me my mind whirls in silent helplessness, as I ponder whether I should call it the mad, sickening burden of desire or a shameful panic which caused her to abandon the tribes of the Colchians”.

Contrary to the proem in Book 1, in which Apollonius delays his address to the Muses until the end of the section, in the proems to Books 3 and 4, the poet's address to the Muse is in the foreground. First, in Book 3, the poet specifically invokes the Muse Eratō, the Muse of lyric poetry, and asks her to provide assistance by standing next to him (παρά θ' ἵστασο καί μοι ἔνισπε, 3.1); the responsibilities of the poet and the Muse are evenly balanced. At the beginning of Book 4, however, Apollonius requests the Muse's full commitment to continuing the narration as he admits to being in a state of great mental confusion and aphasia (ἧ γὰρ ἐμοί γε | ἀμφασίη νόος ἔνδον ἐλίσσεται ὁρμαίνοντι).⁶³⁰ Apollonius' growing anxieties concerning truthfulness and accuracy and increased pleas for the Muses' support in the proems of books 3 and 4—and, especially, in the last book—are not surprising if one considers that this portion of the Argonautic journey as well as the sources he consults to reconstruct the events belong outside the Greek poet's area of expertise. Thus, I submit that the poet's noticeable delay in addressing the Muses in the proem of Book 1 might be meant to mirror the way he arranges their interventions in the poem: even though the Muses appear once in each of the first three books at 1.22, 2.845, and 3.1, their role is for the most part suspended until Book 4, where the poet frequently calls upon them as they are most needed.

⁶³⁰ Apollonius uses the verb ἐλίσσω, “to turn around, roll, wind around” in different contexts, including in relation to mental activities. At 1.463, for example, Idas asks Jason to disclose the thoughts that he is revolving in his mind (“Αἰσονίδη, τίνα τήνδε μετὰ φρεσὶ μῆτιν ἐλίσσεις;”, “Son of Aison, what is this plan which you are turning over in your mind?”).

THE WELL-READ MUSES ENCOUNTER ISIS

The grounding of Hellenistic poetry in the written form and its alignment with scholarship required a new conception of poetic inspiration: the Homeric Muse, a singer of poems, gives way to, in Peter Bing's words, the "'reading' and 'writing' Muse".⁶³¹ Apollonius' Muses adhere to the new poetic conventions and become experts in both Greek knowledge and non-Greek languages and cultures that are relevant to the poet's own social and intellectual environment. The Ptolemies institutionalized the Muses' prominent role in Greek literature by founding the Museum, a shrine to the Muses, next to the Library of Alexandria, the leading center intended for preserving tradition and producing new knowledge in the Hellenistic period.⁶³² Furthermore, the Muses' established role in the Alexandrian intellectual milieu harmonizes with that of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who, in Hellenistic times, was associated with written language and regarded as the inventor of hieroglyphs.⁶³³ This analogy between Greek and Egyptian goddesses is further supported by the identification of the Ptolemaic queens with all these figures. With regard to the Ptolemaic queens and the Muses, Callimachus' invocation of a "tenth Muse" at the beginning of *Aetia* has led ancient commentators to propose a connection with Arsinoe II.⁶³⁴ In Chapter 1, I have already discussed the Canopus decree as a Ptolemaic epigraphic source against which to consider the analogy between Medea and Isis. At this

⁶³¹ Bing (1988), 29. The most prominent example of the "singing" Muse is again Homer's invocation in *Il.* 2.484–92.

⁶³² On the Museum and Library of Alexandria, see Fraser (1972), 305–35. See also Bing (1988), 14. See also my discussion of Egyptian temple libraries and the role of priests in Chapter 4.

⁶³³ Dillery (1999a), 268, Bommas (2022), 52.

⁶³⁴ *PLitLond* 181.45, *P.Oxy* 20. 2262, fr. 2a.10–15 Pf. The scholarship on this matter is extensive. See especially Koenen (1993) 93–4, Lelli (2002) 15–6, Müller (2009) 197, Acosta-Hughes (2010), 75, 80, and Prioux (2011), 208. Identifying the tenth Muse with Berenice II is also possible; see Gelzer (1982) 23–4 and D'Alessio (2007) 541 n. 67.

juncture, I will briefly reiterate that Arsinoe II was connected with Isis in many respects. First, the sibling couple formed by Osiris and Isis represented a suitable model for the royal marriage of Ptolemy II with his sister Arsinoe II.⁶³⁵ Second, the names and iconography of Arsinoe and Isis come together in epigraphic and visual evidence: an early Ptolemaic inscription celebrated Arsinoe as “Isis, Arsinoe, Philadelphus” and there are recurring representations of the queen in the temple of Isis at Philae.⁶³⁶

The queen’s association with both goddesses in different contexts suggests a second connection between the Greek Muses and Egyptian Isis.⁶³⁷ It would seem that these divine figures especially converge in the sphere of writing and literature. Regarding the *Argonautica*, the Muses-Isis correspondence is suggestive of the unique role the goddesses have as “interpreters” and experts in Egyptian material on behalf of the poet. Furthermore, the analogy between Medea and Isis, which I have proposed in Chapter 1, offers an insightful parallel for the same connection between Medea and the Muses, whereby Medea acts as an intermediary between Jason and the Colchian gods in the same way as the Muses are intermediaries between the poet and the non-Greek material he researches on and writes about.

⁶³⁵ The union of Zeus and Hera was the corresponding prototype on the Greek side. See Pfeiffer (2020), 96. The association of Ptolemy with Osiris is significant in this regard because Osiris’ counterpart in the Greek pantheon was Apollo, who was often characterized as “Musegetes”, namely, “leader of the Muses”. Remarkably, Diodorus 1.18.4 highlights the correspondence between Apollo Musegetes and Osiris, leader of a chorus of nine singing maidens “who among the Greek are called Muses”: εἶναι γὰρ τὸν Ὅσιριν φιλογέλωτά τε καὶ χαίροντα μουσικῇ καὶ χοροῖς: διὸ καὶ περιάγεσθαι πλῆθος μουσουργῶν, ἐν οἷς παρθένους ἑννέα δυναμένας ᾄδειν καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἄλλα πεπαιδευμένας, τὰς παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ὀνομαζόμενας Μούσας (“For Osiris was laughter-loving and fond of music and the dance; consequently he took with him a multitude of musicians, among whom were nine maidens who could sing and were trained in the other arts, these maidens being those who among the Greeks are called the Muses”, translation by Oldfather [1933]). See Dillery (1999a), 275.

⁶³⁶ *OGIS* 31, *PSI* 539.3. For the Arsinoe reliefs at Philae, see Žabkar (1988), 12–5 and Dillery (1999a), 276.

⁶³⁷ See Dillery (1999a), 276: “Insofar as the queen in Egypt was also Isis, one could say that there may well have been a precedent for thinking of Isis as connected to the Muses”.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have proposed my contribution to the long-running debate about the role of the Muses ὑποφῆτορες in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. In taking the “interpreters” stand, I have sided with scholars who argue that the Apollonian coinage ὑποφῆτορες is modeled on the Selloi ὑποφῆται, the priests of Dodonian Zeus who interpret his oracles in *Iliad* 16. However, the reviewed scholarship has not gone so far as to consider Herodotus' version of the foundation of Dodona. In the Herodotean *logos*, the oracle is of Egyptian origin, and the first priestess is, in the author's view, a native Egyptian who originally attended the cult of Amun-Ra at Thebes. I have argued that both accounts are behind Apollonius' conception of the Muses ὑποφῆτορες, namely “interpreters” and perhaps “translators” of both the Greek and non-Greek, Egyptian, worlds. The significant analogies between the role of Isis and that of the Muses in the Hellenistic period, both associated with the Ptolemaic queens, endorse the view of the Muses' multicultural character in Alexandrian poetry. In the *Argonautica*, the Muses' importance with regard to non-Greek cultures can be observed when Apollonius emphasizes the use of non-Greek languages in the poem and shows mastery of them. Furthermore, the poem features numerous references to the Homeric and Herodotean narratives in the context of communication between humans and the divine. Structurally, the frequency with which Apollonius addresses the Muses is higher in the last two books, where the narrative focuses on non-Greek characters and settings. The Muses are indispensable in this part of the epic to “interpret” the Egyptian material on behalf of the Alexandrian poet. Their role as “interpreters” does not imply subordination to the poet; on the contrary, the Muses remain essential to the poem's completion, as they are in archaic epic.

CHAPTER 4: THE SESOSTRIS NARRATIVE

THE ROLE OF THE PRIESTS AS CUSTODIANS AND TRANSMITTERS OF KNOWLEDGE

This chapter aims to show how Apollonius' anchoring of the *Argonautica* in historical events is highly significant from both a Greek and an Egyptian perspective and, ultimately, how Ptolemaic propaganda embraces them both. The discussion will focus on Apollonius' reference to the Sesostris legend in Argos' speech (*Arg.* 4.256–93). Scholars have already demonstrated the importance of the passage as a reference to the model of ideal pharaonic kingship upheld by the Ptolemies. In an important article titled “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt”, Lloyd states that the figure of Sesostris, the legendary pharaoh of the 12th dynasty, became the archetype of the ideal ruler for the ancient Egyptians.⁶³⁸ Similarly, Hunter maintains that the legends centering on Sesostris' deeds and commemorating several kings from the 12th dynasty and later periods were adapted to offer “a picture of the ideal ruler”.⁶³⁹ Although the relevance of Sesostris as a paradigmatic example of leadership cannot be denied, the present discussion will investigate the Apollonian Sesostris from a different angle. In particular, I will explore Apollonius' relationship with earlier Greek and Egyptian literary sources about Sesostris and his assimilation of the political motifs underlying the Sesostris narrative from both Greek and Egyptian perspectives. First, I will analyze the speech of Argos in terms of narrative, structure, and its position in Book 4 and the poem. Second, I will focus on the Colchian foundation scene (*Arg.* 4.271–81) within the speech of Argos and discuss it from a rhetorical and stylistic point of

⁶³⁸ Lloyd (1982a), 38. Moreover, Middle Egyptian language and narratives are considered “Classical Egyptian” and include foundational texts for the shaping of Egyptian literature and culture. See Allen (2010), 1.

⁶³⁹ Hunter (2015), 120.

view. This section aims to show that this portion of Argos' speech is exceptionally rich in indeterminate expressions and offers a wide scope for allusions. Apollonius' allusion to Sesostris is prominent and connects the foundation narrative to both earlier and contemporary elaborations of the legend by Greek authors. In this respect, I trace the development of this narrative back to Herodotus' Book 2 and explain the relationship between the later accounts, including Apollonius' Colchian foundation scene. I argue that Herodotus maintains a prominent role as 'code model' for Apollonius' elaboration of the Sesostris narrative.⁶⁴⁰ Still, I demonstrate that Apollonius also distances himself from the Herodotean *logos* while alluding to Egyptian symbolism and iconography. In my view, this move suggests the poet's interest in a multicultural perspective regarding the Sesostris narrative that is particularly relevant to his own time. Finally, I provide an appendix (Appendix 3) in which I briefly discuss the political relationship between the first Ptolemaic rulers and the kingdoms in Asia Minor. In particular, I explore the issue of what it means for the Ptolemaic kings to claim an anti-Persian political agenda in the 3rd and 2nd cent. BC.

THE SPEECH OF ARGOS

Narrative and Structure

Shortly after the Argonauts embark on their return journey, Medea bids them to stop on the Paphlagonian shore to sacrifice to Hecate (4.243–7).⁶⁴¹ After participating in the rituals, the heroes turn their attention to the return journey by recalling Phineus' prediction that they would

⁶⁴⁰ See Morrison (2020), 162 for the characterization of Herodotus as a 'code model' for Apollonius.

⁶⁴¹ See Chapter 2 for an overview of Hecate's role as "helper" of the Argonautic expedition.

follow a different route from that point of the return journey. At this juncture, Argos delivers a speech (4.257–93) highlighting an alternate route from the Black Sea to Greece, which could allow them to avoid the Colchians in their pursuit.⁶⁴²

Arg. 4.256–93

πᾶσιν ὁμῶς. Ἄργος δὲ λιλαιομένοις ἀγόρευσε·
“Νεύμεθ’ ἐς Ὀρχομενόν, τὴν ἔχραεν ὕμμι περῆσαι
νημερτῆς ὅδε μάντις ὅτω ξυνέβητε πάροιθεν.
ἔστιν γὰρ πλόος ἄλλος, ὃν ἀθανάτων ἱερῆς
πέφραδον οἱ Θήβης Τριτωνίδος ἐκγεγάασιν. 260
οὐ πῶ τείρεα πάντα τὰ τ’ οὐρανῷ εἰλίσσονται,
οὐδέ τί πῶ Δαναῶν ἱερὸν γένος ἦεν ἀκοῦσαι
πευθομένοις· οἳ δ’ ἔσαν Ἀρκάδες Ἀπιδανῆες,
Ἀρκάδες, οἳ καὶ πρόσθε σεληναίης ὑδέονται
ζῶειν, φηγὸν ἔδοντες ἐν οὔρεσιν· οὐδὲ Πελασγίς 265
χθὼν τότε κυδαλίμοισιν ἀνάσσετο Δευκαλίδησιν,
ἦμος ὅτ’ Ἡερίη πολυλήιος ἐκλήιστο,
μήτηρ Αἴγυπτος προτερηγενέων αἰζηῶν,
καὶ ποταμὸς Τρίτων εὐρύρροος ᾧ ὑπο πᾶσα
ἄρδεται Ἡερίη, Διόθεν δέ μιν οὐ ποτε δεύει 270
ὄμβρος ἄλις, προχοῇσι δ’ ἀνασταχύουσιν ἄρουραι.

⁶⁴² For general remarks on the speech, see Hunter (2015), 116–24. On Apollonius sources, see Murray (1970), Fraser (1972, I), 496–505, Stephens (2003), 32–6, and Hunter (2015), 117–8 and 120–1.

ἔνθεν δὴ τινὰ φασὶ περίξ διὰ πᾶσαν ὁδεῦσαι
 Εὐρώπην Ἀσίην τε, βίη καὶ κάρτει λαῶν
 σφωιτέρων θάρσει τε πεποιθότα· μυρία δ' ἄστη
 νάσσας ἐποιχόμενος, τὰ μὲν ἤ ποθι ναιετάουσιν 275
 ἥε καὶ οὐ· πουλὺς γὰρ ἄδην ἐπενήνοθεν αἰών.
 Αἶά γε μὴν ἔτι νῦν μένει ἔμπεδον υἷωνοί τε
 τῶνδ' ἀνδρῶν οὓς ὅς γε καθίσσατο ναιέμεν Αἶαν·
 οἳ δὴ τοι γραπτὺς πατέρων ἔθεν εἰρύονται,
 κύρβιας οἷς ἐνὶ πᾶσαι ὁδοὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἔασιν 280
 ὑγρῆς τε τραφερῆς τε περίξ ἐπινισσομένοισιν.
 ἔστι δέ τις ποταμός, ὕπατον κέρας Ὠκεανοῖο,
 εὐρύς τε προβαθὴς τε καὶ ὀλκάδι νηὶ περῆσαι·
 Ἴστρον μιν καλέοντες ἐκὰς διετεκμήραντο·
 ὅς δ' ἦτοι τείως μὲν ἀπείρονα τέμνετ' ἄρουραν 285
 εἰς οἶος, πηγαὶ γὰρ ὑπὲρ πνοιῆς βορέας
 Ῥιπαίοις ἐν ὄρεσσιν ἀπόπροθι μορμύρουσιν,
 ἀλλ' ὁπότ' ἂν Θρηκῶν Σκυθέων τ' ἐνιβήσεται οὖρους,
 ἔνθα διχῇ, τὸ μὲν ἔνθα μετ' ἠοίην ἄλα βάλλει
 τῇδ' ὕδωρ, τὸ δ' ὀπισθε βαθὺν διὰ κόλπον ἵησι 290
 σχιζόμενος πόντου Τρινακρίου εἰσανέχοντα,
 γαίῃ ὃς ὑμετέρῃ παρακέκλιται, εἰ ἐτεδὸν δὴ
 ὑμετέρης γαίης Ἀχελώιος ἐξανήσιν".

“Argos, however, responded to their need: “Our destination was Orchomenos, by the route which that truthful prophet whom you recently encountered warned you to travel. **For there is another way for ships, which the priests of the immortals who were born in Thebe, daughter of Triton, discovered.** Not yet did all the constellations whirl around the heaven, not yet could enquirers learn of the sacred race of the Danaans. Only the Apidanean Arkadians existed, Arkadians, who were said to have lived before the moon, eating acorns in the mountains. At that time the Pelasgian land was not ruled over by the glorious descendants of Deukalion; **Egypt, mother of the men of earlier times, was called Eeria, rich in crops, and Triton was the name of the broad-flowing river by which the whole of Eeria was watered—as heavy rain from Zeus never drenches it—and whose streams cause crops to shoot up in the fields. The story is that a man set out from there to travel through the whole of Europe and Asia, trusting in the might, strength, and boldness of his armies. In the course of his progress he founded numberless cities,** some of which are still inhabited, and some not, for long ages have passed since then. **Aia at least remains intact even to this day, together with the descendants of those men whom this conqueror settled in Aia. Moreover, they preserve writings of their ancestors, pillars on which are shown all the paths and boundaries of the sea and the land for those who are going to travel in a circuit.** There is a river, the remotest branch of Ocean, broad and very deep and navigable by a merchant ship; men who have traced it a great distance call it the Istros. For a long space it cuts its path as a single river through a vast territory, for its sources bubble up far away in the Rhipaian mountains beyond the blast of Boreas, but when it reaches the boundaries of the Thracians and the Scythians, it splits in two: one stream empties here into the eastern sea; but behind it the other branch flows through the deep gulf which rises

up from the Trinakrian sea which lies along your land, if indeed it is true that the Acheloos comes forth in your land”.

Argos’ speech is structured in the following three parts:

1. **The existence of the πλόος ἄλλος (257–71):** Argos recounts his unfinished journey from Colchis to Boeotia and introduces the second route on which the Argonauts are about to embark to secure a safe return to Greece. In doing so, he explains that the discovery of the second route belonged to Theban priests in Egypt, whose civilization came long before the time of the Greek mythical king Deucalion and his progeny.
2. **The foundation of Colchis (272–81):** Argos provides a brief yet remarkable account of the foundation of Colchis by an unnamed Egyptian military leader and his men. In elucidating the connection between Colchis and Egypt, Argos indicates a second source of knowledge for the alternate route to Greece, namely, a set of Colchian pillars (κύρβεις) that display the map and instructions for the return journey.
3. **The course of the path along the Istros (282–93):** Argos provides a more detailed description of the route proceeding along the two main branches of the Istros River. According to Argos, the two river channels branch off from the main course of the Istros and flow into different seas, namely, the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea. More specifically, the route that the Argonauts should follow stretches from the Narex, the Eastern mouth of the Istros, across the Eastern European mainland and into the Mediterranean.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴³ The channel called Narex is not the only mouth of the Istros into the Black Sea. A subdivision of the Colchian army under the command of Apsyrtus goes up the river from the “Lovely Mouth” and anticipates the Argonauts by reaching the Adriatic Sea before them (4.305–8).

Argos' speech concludes with a favorable omen: a goddess, perhaps Hera or Hekate, provides a favorable omen by lighting up the right sailing path (τοῖσιν δὲ θεὰ τέρας ἐγγυάλιξεν | αἴσιον..., 4.294–5).⁶⁴⁴ Accordingly, the Argonauts hasten toward the great stream of the Istros (4.294–302). With regard to the speech's internal coherence, the three subsections are logically connected. As has been discussed, Argos offers a description of the alternate route, the essential piece of information that the Argonauts need to complete the *nostos*, only at the very end of his intervention while spending the first two sections of his speech explaining the source of this knowledge and validating the Colchians' reception of it. Regarding the latter, Argos' speech focuses on acknowledging Egyptian knowledge as ancient and authoritative and Colchis' fundamental relationship with Egypt. The prominence of the Egyptian element in Argos' speech is remarkable as it harmonizes with the larger narrative structure of the poem, whereby the last two books focus on the exploration of non-Greek territories, two of which, Colchis and Libya, are especially connected with Egypt.

The Position of the Speech in Book 4 and the Poem

The prominence of Egypt in Argos' speech and, more generally, at this stage of the journey is significant in the development of the poem's narrative. As argued in Chapter 3, the more the narrative progresses, the more the poet relies on the Muses ὑποφῆτορες to become proficient at non-Greek knowledge and traditions. The poet's increasing appeal to the goddesses

⁶⁴⁴ Concerning the identity of the goddess mentioned in 4.294, Hunter (2015), 124 maintains that this is Hera. However, when the Argonauts disembark on the Paphlagonian shore and immediately before Argos delivers his speech, Medea invites them to propitiate the goddess Hekate (4.246–7). Thus, although Hera acts as the primary guide of the Argonautic expedition in Book 4, it is not entirely clear which goddess directs the heroes toward the Istros.

to recount truthfully the events occurring in the last two books is in line with the Argonauts' need for experts in the Colcho-Egyptian language and traditions and Greek and local gods to progress in their journey. Nevertheless, not only is the Greek and local gods' involvement necessary to the heroes, but also the participation of extraordinary humans, such as Medea, and bicultural agents like Argos. It can be noted in this regard how the Argonauts' ignorance of a suitable sailing route contrasts with the Colchians' experience of the territory. Also, the greater number of Colchian warriors whom Apsyrtus leads would constitute another disadvantage in case of close combat.⁶⁴⁵ This factor contributes to the need for the Argonauts to find a way of escape rather than risking to confront the Colchian army at the Bosphorus. The present circumstances align with Phineus' predictions in Book 2 regarding the heroes' inability to sail back through the Symplegades:

Arg. 2.420–2

“ὦ τέκος, εὖτ’ ἂν πρῶτα φύγῃς ὁλοὰς διὰ πέτρας,
 θάρσει: ἐπεὶ δαίμων ἕτερον πλόον ἡγεμονεύσει
 ἐξ Αἴης: μετὰ δ’ Αἴαν ἄλις πομπῆες ἔσονται.”

“Once you have safely passed through the deadly rocks, my child, have confidence: **god will guide you on a different route back from Aia**, and there will be **escorts** enough on your way there”.

⁶⁴⁵ Apollonius gives a description of the Colchian army embarking to sail after the Argonauts and compares them to a huge mass of birds flying and screaming across the sea (ὥς ἔφατ’ Αἰήτης: αὐτῷ δ’ ἐνὶ ἡματι Κόλχοι | νῆας τ’ εἰρύσαντο, καὶ ἄρμενα νηυσὶ βάλλοντο, | αὐτῷ δ’ ἡματι πόντον ἀνήιον: οὐδέ κε φαίης | τόσσον νηίτην στόλον ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ’ οἰωνῶν | ἰλαδὸν ἄσπετον ἔθνος ἐπιβρομέειν πελάγεσσιν, 4.236–40).

Phineus alludes to Argos' instrumental role in the Argonautic quest as he instructs the heroes to stop on the Island of Ares, where they would find a "source of help that cannot be mentioned" (ὄνειαρ ἄρρητον, 2.388–9). Apollonius clarifies the meaning of Phineus' prediction by interjecting in the narrative upon the Argonauts' arrival at the Island of Ares:

Arg. 2.1090–2

τίς γὰρ δὴ Φινῆος ἔην νόος, ἐνθάδε κέλσαι
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον στόλον; ἦ καὶ ἔπειτα
ποῖον ὄνειαρ ἔμελλεν ἐλδομένοισιν ἰκέσθαι;

“What was Phineus' intention in making the divine expedition of heroic men put in here? **What help** would then come to them in their need?”

Both the Argonauts' encounter with Phineus on the Thynian coast (2.178–531) and their rescue of Phrixos' sons from the island of Ares (2.1030–1227) separately function as a foil for Argos' speech in Book 4. Moreover, the speech of Phineus and the meeting of the Argonauts with the sons of Phrixos in Book 2 are also closely interconnected within the narrative. Hence, allusions to either of these sections would seem to constitute a larger web of intratextual references to Book 2. Further validation of Argos' role as helper and guide of the Argonautic expedition is provided by Jason himself. Following the discovery of Argos and his brothers' lineage and their kinship with Aeson, Jason's father, Jason explains their shipwreck survival as the will of Zeus (2.1179–84) and formally asks Argos to join them as “helpers” and “leaders of

the voyage” (ἐπίρροθοι ἄμμι πέλεσθε καὶ πλόου ἡγεμονῆες, 1193–4). By underlining the importance of Zeus’ divine providence in these events, Jason implicitly connects their meeting on the Island of Ares with Phineus’ prophecy and declarations of Zeus’ will.

Another important reference connecting the speech of Argos to the two Book 2 episodes is the motif of salvation. In Book 2, the Argonauts rescue both Phineus and Phrixos’ sons by chasing away the monsters that torture them, Zeus’ harpies and Ares’ birds, and restore harmony. In the case of Argos and his brothers, the heroes also offer them a getaway from the island of Ares by inviting them on board the Argo. The heroes’ exertions in rescuing Phineus and Phrixos’ sons are counterbalanced by their contributions to the fulfillment of the Argonautic enterprise. Phineus’ instructions for evading the Clashing Rocks and reaching Colchis are essential to the progression of the narrative in Book 2 and the progression of the Argonautic expedition. Similarly, Argos’ guidance in Book 4 is crucial for escaping the pursuing Colchians and completing the *nostos*. The relationship between the Argonauts and these characters is founded on a pattern of reciprocity, for the heroes’ correct performance of acts of service during the first half of the journey corresponds to equal benefits in other portions of the narrative. In other words, the advancement of the Argonauts’ voyage significantly depends on the successful collaboration between the heroes and the people they encounter along the way.⁶⁴⁶

Nevertheless, there are considerable differences regarding how the Argonauts obtain help from Phineus in Book 2 and Argos in Book 4. When the Argonauts encounter Phineus on the Thynian coast, they have not yet crossed the Clashing Rocks and are still traveling the portion of

⁶⁴⁶ Lye (2012), 223–47 offers a similar explanation of the relationship between gods and mortals in the *Argonautica*, whereby divine intervention in support of the heroes is based on correct ritual performance. In the context of human relationships, the Argonauts secure the help of other characters such as Phineus, Argos, and Medea by setting up reciprocal liaisons and offering benefits in return.

the route closer to Greece and the Aegean Sea. In these lands at the periphery of the Greek world, the Argonauts receive instructions for their voyage from the Greek seer Phineus, whose specialty is interpreting and expounding the will of Zeus. Hence, the circumstances in which the Argonauts encounter Phineus and the origin of Phineus' knowledge of the journey pertain to the Greek cultural sphere. In this context, by accessing Zeus' superior knowledge, Phineus mediates between the gods and the heroes. Conversely, Argos performs a different kind of mediation by bridging the cultural and linguistic gap between the Greek heroes and the Egyptian sources of knowledge for the alternate route. As already observed, the need to rely on experts in non-Greek languages and cultures grows in the poem's last two books as the journey goes through more remote lands and peoples. Indeed, just as the poet seems to depend more on the Muses' mastery of foreign knowledge and the development of the narrative, the Argonauts also find themselves in a position to seek the cooperation of the locals to accomplish their tasks and attain salvation. Argos' intervention in Book 4 is significant as it demonstrates the Argonauts' reliance on local heroes and non-Greek resources in the poem's second half. This necessity is already evident in the case of Medea, whose help is fundamental in overcoming Aeetes' tasks and retrieving the golden fleece. Similarly, Argos' bilingualism and knowledge of Colchian and Egyptian culture are essential to complete the *nostos*.

THE FOUNDATION OF COLCHIS AND THE SESOSTRIS REFERENCE

The Foundation Scene: Style and Rhetorical Characteristics

Argos' speech in Book 4 of the *Argonautica* is characterized, in Hunter's words, by a "mystical, almost inspired" tone.⁶⁴⁷ The remarkably "mystical" flavor of this section originates from a combination of stylistic features that create vagueness and indeterminacy, as well as a pattern of allusions. Additionally, the meter of the entire passage is rich in *spondeiazontes* that confer a certain gravity to the lines.⁶⁴⁸ Lines 271–81 feature emblematic stylistic features, especially with regard to indeterminate and allusive elements. First, the poet accomplishes indeterminacy by employing generalizing expressions as temporal and geographical markers. For instance, Apollonius sets the discovery of the alternate route by Egyptian priests in very ancient times by referring to a time before the constellations that are visible to his day and the race of the Greeks (4.261–3), a time before the moon and the kingdom of Deucalion (4.264–6). This rather complex yet nebulous characterization of the chronological setting for the finding of the route is consistent with the description of Egypt as "misty" (Ἡερίη, 4.267) and "mother of men of earlier generations" (μήτηρ Αἴγυπτος προτερηγενέων αἰζηῶν, 4.268). The indeterminate quality of the speech climaxes in the middle section, where the poet exploits a series of syntactical and rhetorical devices such as indefinite pronouns and adverbs, hyperboles, and generalizing terms.

⁶⁴⁷ Hunter (2015), 116. Hunter (2015), 116 argues that Argos' speech represents a "counterpart" to Phineus' factual and precise description of the outward journey in Book 2. On the relationship between Argos' and Phineus' speech, see also Pearson (1938), 455–7 and Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004), 124–5.

⁶⁴⁸ Hunter (2015), 116. Hunter counts seven *spondeiazontes* and remarks that they constitute nearly 20% against 8% in the whole of the *Argonautica*.

ἐνθεν δὴ τινά φασι περίξ διὰ πᾶσαν ὁδεῦσαι

Εὐρώπην Ἀσίην τε βίη καὶ κάρτεϊ λαῶν

σφωιτέρων θάρσει τε πεποιθότα· μυρία δ' ἄστη

νάσσας· ἐποικόμενος, τὰ μὲν ἦ ποθι ναιετάουσιν 275

ἦε καὶ οὗ· πολὺς γὰρ ἄδην ἐπενήνοθεν αἰών.

Αἶά γε μὴν ἔτι νῦν μένει ἔμπεδον υἰωνοί τε

τῶνδ' ἀνδρῶν, οὓς ὅς γε καθίσσατο ναιέμεν Αἴαν·

οἳ δὴ τοι γραπτῶς πατέρων ἔθεν εἰρύονται,

κύρβιας, οἷς ἔνι πᾶσαι ὁδοὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἔασιν 280

ύγρῆς τε τραφερῆς τε περίξ ἐπινισσομένοισιν.

The adverb ἐνθεν (“from there”, 4.272) at the opening of the section connects the sentence with the previous unit but fails to provide a clear connection to any noun in the previous lines. The reader should connect ἐνθεν to the antecedent meaning “Egypt”, but the name Αἴγυπτος (4.267–8) and the epithet Ἡερὶή (4.270) connected with the river Nile (ποταμὸς Τρίτων, 4.269), are not immediately preceding the indeterminate adverb. Following the adverb ἐνθεν is the verb φασι (“they say”, 272), whose grammatical subject is not expressed and which is construed with the indefinite pronoun τινά in the accusative (“[they say that] a man...”). The hyperbolic expressions of lines 272–3 (περίξ διὰ πᾶσαν ὁδεῦσαι | Εὐρώπην Ἀσίην, “he traveled all round the whole Europe and Asia”) and 274–5 (μυρία δ' ἄστη | νάσσας, “he founded thousands of cities”) add to the indeterminate flavor of the passage as the poet gives generalizing geographical indications of the subject’s military feats and provides a large, yet approximative

number regarding the foundation of the cities. The polyptoton Αἶά... Αἶαν in lines 277–8 forms a neat ring composition and might activate a pun on the interpretation of the proper noun as the generalizing term for “land” (αἶα).

The abundance of indeterminates in these lines affects the overall tone of the passage by conveying a tone of gravity and vagueness, which suits the narrative setting in older times. Furthermore, the indeterminates allow for more open interpretations involving linking the Apollonian narrative with other texts. In particular, the suggestive phrase ἔνθεν δὴ τινά φασι (2.272) invites further reflections regarding the identity of the indefinite pronoun and, accordingly, the interpretation of the entire passage. The *scholia* on this Apollonian passage explain the indefinite τινά as a reference to the legendary king Sesostris, an Egyptian pharaoh from the 12th dynasty, whom later sources celebrate for his extensive military campaigns, the founding of cities in foreign lands and building programs in Egypt.

The Sesostris Narrative in Greco-Roman Sources

The *scholia* to Apollonius’ Book 4.272ff. discuss the identity of the indefinite pronoun τινά.

ἔνθεν δὴ τινά: Σεσόγῳσις Αἰγύπτου πάσης βασιλεὺς μετὰ Ὡρον τὸν Ἰσίδος καὶ Ὀσίριδος παῖδα τὴν μὲν Ἀσίαν ὀρμήσας πᾶσαν κατεστρέψατο, ὁμοίως καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα τῆς Εὐρώπης. ἀκριβέστερον δὲ ἔστι τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ παρὰ Ἡροδότῳ (II 102–10). Θεόπομπος δὲ ἐν γ' (115 fg 46 J.) Σέσωστριν αὐτὸν καλεῖ. Ἡρόδοτος δὲ προστίθῃσιν (102), ὅτι, εἰ μὲν τινὰς πολέμῳ κατέστρεψεν, στήλας ἐτίθει πῶς ἐνίκησεν· εἰ δὲ παρεχώρουν, γυναικεῖον ταῖς στήλαις αἰδοῖον προσετίθει σύμβολον τῆς μαλακίας. Δικαίαρχος δὲ ἐν α'

Ἑλλάδος βίου (fg 7 M. II 235) Σεσόγχωσιν καὶ νόμους [αὐτὸν] θεῖναι λέγει, ὥστε μηδένα καταλιπεῖν τὴν πατρίαν τέχνην· τοῦτο ὑπολαμβάνειν ἀρχὴν εἶναι πλεονεξίας. καὶ πρῶτον αὐτὸν εὗρηκέναι ἵππων ἄνθρωπον ἐπιβαίνειν· οἱ δὲ ταῦτα τὸν Ὡρον, οὐ τὸν Σεσόγχωσιν.

“Sesonchosis, king of all Egypt after Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, marched upon Asia and subdued it all, as well as most of Europe. Herodotus’ account of him is more accurate.

Theopompus, in his third book, calls him Sesostris. Herodotus adds that, if he subdued anyone in battle, he used to set up steles based on how he won: for if they yielded to him, he would add female genitals on the steles as a symbol of weakness. In his first book of the *Life of Greece*, Dicaearchus says that he also established laws so as for nobody to quit their father’s profession; for he assumed this to be a source of arrogance. He also says that he was the first man ever to have discovered how to mount horses. Others, however, claim that Horus discovered this, not Sesostris”.

The *scholia* mention three Greek sources regarding Sesostris, namely, Herodotus, Theopompus, and Dicaearchus. The author characterizes the Herodotean *logos* as “more accurate” (ἀκριβέστερον) and remarks on Herodotus’ account of the steles set up by the pharaoh to commemorate his victories. The author also seems to be interested in the name variants “Sesostris” and “Sesonchosis” with which the pharaoh is recorded in Greek sources. On this note, scholars argue that these different name forms in Greek sources are all acceptable as they

originate from Greek authors' attempts to transcribe the Egyptian name *S-n-wsr.t*.⁶⁴⁹ The name *S-n-wsr.t* is attributed to three homonymous pharaohs from the 12th dynasty, from which the fictional Sesostris seems to have been inspired.⁶⁵⁰ In particular, Senwosret I and III seem to represent two important models for shaping this character in later narratives.⁶⁵¹ The legend of Sesostris is transmitted in both Greek and Egyptian sources. With regard to Greek sources, the following, in chronological order, are earlier and contemporary with Apollonius.⁶⁵²

- Herodotus 2.102–10
- Aristotle *Pol.* 7.10 (1329b)

⁶⁴⁹ On Sesostris' name variations in Greco-Roman sources, see Malaise (1966), 244–9 and Quack (2004), 46–8. Notably, *S-n-wsr.t* is the transliteration of the corresponding hieroglyphic orthography. The name means “the man of Useret” and is formed from the following individual components: *s-* (old *z*), “man”, *-n-*, the indirect genitive, and *-Wsr.t*, meaning “the Powerful one”, in the feminine. Malaise (1966), 245 explains that the linguistic evolution from the transliterated form *S-n-wsr.t* into the Greek Σέσωστρις begins from the pronunciation *Se-n-wòsre* or *Se-wòsre*. The form *Se-wòsre* is preferable because the indirect genitive *-n-* has fallen out as early as the 12th dynasty. The *-w-* of *Se-wòsre* falls out because a long *ω* replaces the *-o-* sound and a *σ* is added to avoid hiatus. The third *σ* in Σέσωστρις is the one from *-wòsre*, while the *τ* is epenthetic between *s* and *r*. The name variant “Sesostris” is found in a series of Greek authors, while the variant Sesonchosis is used by the *scholia* as well as in texts from the Roman period. The latter form derives from a mix with Sheshonq, a name of Libyan origin belonging to several kings in the 22nd dynasty. In his record of the 12th dynasty, Manetho uses both the name forms “Sesostris” and “Sesonchosis” to distinguish between the three homonymous pharaohs. The name variant Sesoosis appears in Diodorus.

⁶⁵⁰ Sethe (1900), 4–9 was the first modern scholar to attribute this name to three homonymous pharaoh figures from the 12th dynasty and to propose this period as the historical foundation of the legend. Manetho also seems to have validated the name Sesostris transmitted by Herodotus and chronologically placed the pharaoh in the 12th dynasty. Sethe (1904), 3–57 addresses the reinterpretation of the name as *s-ws*, “the strong man”. On this interpretation, see also Ryholt (2009), 231–8. Montet (1945), 51 proposed that Sesostris was actually the nickname of pharaoh Ramesses II; Malaise (1966), 248 claimed that this theory is “indéfendable”. In terms of important scholarship on Sesostris, Malaise (1966), 244–72 still represents the canonical work. See also Maspero (1901), 593–609 and 665–83, Kees (1923), Braun (1938), 13–8, Posener (1956), 141–44, Lloyd (1982a), 37–40, and Gaggero (1986), 1–19. More recent studies include Eduardo (2004), 151–72, Trnka-Amrhein (2013), (2018), 23–48, and (2020), 70–94, and Hoffmann and Schoske, eds. (2024).

⁶⁵¹ Lloyd (1989), 324.

⁶⁵² Obsomer (1989), 33–5 lists classical sources. See also Burstein (1996), 591–604, who provides a survey of the treatment of Egypt in Greek historiography.

- Hecataeus of Abdera *FGrHist* 264 F 25 (via Diodorus Siculus: 1.53–8)
- Megasthenes *FGrHist* 715 F 11b (via Arrian 5.4–6)
- Manetho *FGrHist* 609 F 1-3

Greco-Latin sources later than Apollonius include:

- Diodorus Siculus 1.53–8
- Isidorus *Hymn* 4.⁶⁵³
- Plutarch *De Is. et Os.* 24
- Tacitus 2.60
- Strabo 769
- *The Alexander Romance*
- *The Sesonchosis Novel*

Herodotus

Herodotus introduces his *logos* on Sesostris (2.102–10) by outlining the methodology used to collect evidence (2.99).⁶⁵⁴ At 99.1, Herodotus claims that he is going to record Egyptian

⁶⁵³ Isidorus' fourth hymn contains a praise of Porramanres, a fictional god-king figure whose historical antecedent is Amenemhet III, son of Sesostris III. The pharaoh Sesosis is mentioned in lines 29–31 as the father “who has gone to the Western Heaven” and, hence, has returned to Re after his death. Because Porramanres is characterized as the grandson of Amun-Ra, his father Sesostris is also of divine origin. Amenemhet III receives a well-attested cult in the Fayyum in the Greco-Roman period, and Isidorus' *Hymn* seems to attest to the importance of Sesostris in the same cultic environment. The text, translation, and commentary of Isidorus are by Vanderlip (1972). See Vanderlip (1972), 72, for Ptolemy Philadelphos' possible promotion of his connection with Amenemhet III in the Fayyum region. See also Trnka-Amrhein (2013), 15–33.

⁶⁵⁴ Lloyd's (1989) commentary on Book 2 constitutes an invaluable and updated resource for the study of Herodotus and Egypt. See also Armayor (1980), 59–71, Vannicelli (2001), 211–40, Vasunia (2001), 75–135,

logoi based on what he has heard (Αἰγυπτίους ἔρχομαι λόγους ἐρέων κατὰ τὰ ἤκουον) and to this information he will add what he has seen (προσέσται δὲ αὐτοῖσί τι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὄψιος). Chapters 100 and 101 focus on the first kings of Egypt, starting from Min and the construction of the first temples, such as the temple of Ptah (Hephaestus) in Memphis. The *logos* on Sesostris constitutes Herodotus' first extensive narrative on an Egyptian pharaoh and surely one of the most detailed accounts of individual pharaohs in the *Historiē*.⁶⁵⁵ It also represents a focal point of Book 2 as it occurs roughly in the middle of Herodotus' Egyptian history. Herodotus' source of information for the Sesostris' *logos* is the Egyptian priests (τὸν ἔλεγον οἱ ἱερεῖς..., 2.102.2).⁶⁵⁶ The narration of Sesostris' deeds includes the king's military expeditions along the Red Sea (2.102.2) and in Asia and Europe (2.103.1). Within the account of his military feats, Herodotus reports the tradition of Sesostris' στήλαι (2.102.4–5), the commemorative slabs that the king used to erect in the countries he subjected and upon which he would inscribe the Egyptian symbol of the female genitals as a symbol of the enemies' cowardice.

Hdt. 2.102.4–5: ὅτέοισι μὲν νυν αὐτῶν ἀλκίμοισι ἐνετύγχανε καὶ δεινῶς γλιχομένοισι
περὶ τῆς ἐλευθερίας, τούτοις μὲν στήλας ἐνίστη ἐς τὰς χώρας διὰ γραμμάτων λεγούσας
τό τε ἑωυτοῦ ὄνομα καὶ τῆς πατρὸς, καὶ ὡς δυνάμει τῇ ἑωυτοῦ κατεστρέψατο σφέας·
ὅτεων δὲ ἀμαχητὶ καὶ εὐπετέως παρέλαβε τὰς πόλεις, τούτοις δὲ ἐνέγραφε ἐν τῇσι

Lloyd (2002), Harrison (2003), 145–55, and Krebsbach (2014), 88–111. On the significance of reconstructing the “Egyptian historicity” in Book 2, see Moyer (2011), 42–83.

⁶⁵⁵ Trnka-Amrhein (2013), 48–9.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. also 2.102.3: κατὰ τῶν ἱερέων τὴν φάτιν. On the wisdom of Egyptian priests in Herodotus, especially the Heliopolitan ones (λογιώτατοι), see 2.3.1. Also, on the characterization of the Egyptian priesthood in Demotic and Greco-Roman sources, see Escolano-Poveda (2020), especially, her overall analysis at 237–80.

στήλῃσι κατὰ ταῦτὰ καὶ τοῖσι ἀνδρηίοισι τῶν ἐθνέων γενομένοισι, καὶ δὴ καὶ αἰδοῖα
γυναικὸς προσενέγραφε, δῆλα βουλόμενος ποιέειν ὥς εἶσαν ἀνάλκιδες.

“Whenever he encountered a brave people who put up a fierce fight in defence of their autonomy, he erected pillars in their territory with an inscription recording his own name and country, and how he and his army had overcome them. However, whenever he took a place easily, without a fight, he had a message inscribed on the pillar in the same way as for the brave tribes, but he also added a picture of a woman’s genitalia, to indicate that they were cowards”.⁶⁵⁷

Herodotus accounts for Sesostri’s colonization of the Phasis River region, particularly the Colchians’ and Egyptians’ resemblance as an inset micro-narrative within the *logos* (2.103.2–105). In this section, Herodotus maintains that the current population of Colchis descends from a detachment of Sesostri’s army that remained behind to colonize the region. Furthermore, several factors, including the Colchians’ physical appearance, weaving skills, language, and lifestyle, and the practice of circumcision, which traditionally originates in Egypt, confirm the Colchians’ Egyptian ancestry. In chapters 2.107–9, Herodotus summarizes the events occurring after Sesostri’s return to Egypt: the king’s averted ambush, which his brother attempted, and the accomplishment of a massive building and reform program in Egypt. Lastly, chapter 2.110 of the Sesostri *logos* is prominent as anti-Persian propaganda. In this chapter, Herodotus underscores Sesostri’s supremacy as a military leader by characterizing him as the only Egyptian king to ever rule over Ethiopia (Βασιλεὺς μὲν δὴ οὗτος μόνος Αἰγύπτιος Αἰθιοπίας ἦρξε, 2.110). Herodotus’

⁶⁵⁷ Translation by Waterfield (1988). Herodotus expands on the matter of the στήλαι in 2.106, where he indicates the countries where these pillars are still visible, and describes other reliefs representing the pharaoh.

declaration precedes Sesostris' set up of a commemorative statue group in front of the temple of Ptah in Memphis. Successively, Herodotus says that when Darius attempted to establish his own commemorative monument in the same spot, the Memphite high priest prevented him because his military achievements were inferior to those Sesostris accomplished. Herodotus concludes the *logos* by narrating that Darius willingly gave in to the priest and acknowledged Sesostris' superiority.

Hist. 2.110: **Βασιλεὺς μὲν δὴ οὗτος μούνος Αἰγύπτιος Αἰθιοπίας ἦρξε**, μνημόσυνα δὲ ἐλίπετο πρὸ τοῦ Ἥφαιστείου ἀνδριάντας λιθίνους, δύο μὲν τριήκοντα πηχέων, ἑαυτὸν τε καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα, τοὺς δὲ παῖδας ἔοντας τέσσερας εἴκοσι πηχέων ἕκαστον· τῶν δὲ ὁ ἱεὺς τοῦ Ἥφαιστου χρόνῳ μετέπειτα πολλῷ Δαρεῖον τὸν Πέρσην οὐ περιεῖδε ἰστάντα ἔμπροσθε ἀνδριάντα, φὰς οὐ οἱ πεποιῆσθαι ἔργα οἷά περ Σεσώστρι τῷ Αἰγυπτίῳ· Σέσωστριν μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα τε καταστρέψασθαι ἔθνεα οὐκ ἐλάσσω ἐκείνου καὶ δὴ καὶ Σκύθας, Δαρεῖον δὲ οὐ δυνασθῆναι Σκύθας ἐλεῖν· οὐκὼν δίκαιον εἶναι ἰστάναι ἔμπροσθε τῶν ἐκείνου ἀναθημάτων μὴ οὐκ ὑπερβαλλόμενον τοῖσι ἔργοισι. Δαρεῖον μὲν νυν λέγουσι πρὸς ταῦτα συγγνώμην ποιήσασθαι.

“Sesostris was the only Egyptian king to rule over Ethiopia. The monuments he left to posterity stand in front of the temple of Hephaestus and consist of two stone statues thirty cubits in height of himself and his wife, and statues of his four sons too, each twenty cubits in height. Many years later the priest of Hephaestus refused to let Darius the Persian erect a statue of himself in front of this group of statues, arguing that his achievements did not match those of Sesostris the Egyptian. ‘After all,’ he said, ‘Sesostris defeated as many peoples as you, and the

Scythians as well, whom you were unable to conquer. It would not be right, then, for you to stand out in front of Sesostris' statues, since your achievements do not surpass those of Sesostris'. They say that Darius conceded the point".⁶⁵⁸

Chapter 2.110 occurs in a prominent climactic position at the end of Herodotus' *logos* on Sesostris.⁶⁵⁹ Specifically, Herodotus' concluding remarks about the Persian king's admitted inferiority to Sesostris end the story on an obvious political note.⁶⁶⁰ The polemical overtones of Herodotus' *logos* are noteworthy, considering that the Sesostris narrative appears to have re-flourished in Egypt in the 5th cent. BC as a piece of anti-Persian propaganda.⁶⁶¹ This narrative is most probably based on earlier accounts about the pharaoh.⁶⁶² Nevertheless, while Herodotus' testimony underscores the Egyptian priests' hostile stance against the Persian king Darius, other local sources, such as the remarkable inscription of Udjahorresnet, paint a different picture.

In Herodotus, the anti-Persian views underlying the Sesostris legend resonate with the *Historiē*'s overarching themes: the great conflict between Greeks and Persians and, ultimately, the Greeks' victory and assertion of Greek freedom and identity. The same political sentiment occurs in other *logoi*, which illustrate the deficient or evil traits of Persian rulers. For instance, in

⁶⁵⁸ Translation by Waterfield (1988).

⁶⁵⁹ West (1991), 154, refers to this encounter as one of the "significant confrontations" of the *Historiē*.

⁶⁶⁰ Ryholt (2013), 61 states that Herodotus' "story is deliberately polemical, as is also shown by the contrasting designations 'Sesostris the Egyptian' vs. 'Darius the Persian'".

⁶⁶¹ Braun (1938), 15, Murray (1970), 162–4, Lloyd (1976), 16–8, Ivantchik (1999), Moyer (2011), 72–4, Stephens (2003), 34–6, Rood (2006), 294, and Hunter (2015), 120.

⁶⁶² Quack (2013b), 63–88 maintains that later Demotic sources on Sesostris demonstrate the existence of a tradition concerning the kings of the Middle Kingdom. On this position see also Obsomer (1989) and (1998), 1431–33. Ryholt (2009), 231–8 surveys the occurrence of royal figures, including Sesostris, in the historical literature dating back to the Greco-Roman period of Egypt. Ryholt concludes that certain royal figures entered these narratives because of their large-scale building programs, the remains of which were still conspicuous in later periods.

3.27–9, Herodotus reports Cambyses’ ruthless slaughter of the Apis bull and public insult of the Egyptian gods and their religious officers.⁶⁶³ According to the following chapters, the king goes mad after killing the bull (αὐτίκα διὰ τοῦτο τὸ ἀδίκημα ἐμάνη, 3.30.1) and accomplishes another series of crimes. The Egyptian priests react by burying the Apis bull in secret from the king (3.29.3). Günter Vittmann argues Herodotus’ narrative of the killing of the Apis bull does not find support from sources and, therefore, shows only one side of the story.⁶⁶⁴ However biased Herodotus’ portrayal of Cambyses in Egypt might be, his characterization of the Persian king is mostly consistent.⁶⁶⁵ For instance, in 3.16, Herodotus characterizes the *damnatio memoriae* that Cambyses attempts against Amasis by exhuming and burning his body as an “impious” action (οὐκ ὄσια, 3.16.2) from both Persian and Egyptian cultural perspectives (3.16.3–4).⁶⁶⁶ By providing both Persian and Egyptian viewpoints, he not only emphasizes the gravity of Cambyses’ actions but also empathizes with the defeated party, the Egyptians, against the Persian king. In addition, Cambyses’ failure to conquer the Ethiopians, “the nearest people to Egypt” (οἱ πρόσσυροι Αἰγύπτῳ, 3.97), contrasts with Sesostri’s primacy as the only Egyptian king to ever rule Ethiopia (βασιλεὺς μὲν δὴ οὗτος μοῦνος Αἰγύπτιος Αἰθιοπίας ἦρξε, 2.110.1). In

⁶⁶³ On this episode as an example of the reception of Cambyses in Greek and Egyptian sources, see Bresciani (2008), 503–6.

⁶⁶⁴ Vittmann (2003), 125. Similarly, Bresciani (2008), 504 argues that Herodotus’ version is problematic for there is evidence that Cambyses participated in the burial of the Apis bull.

⁶⁶⁵ The representation of Cambyses as a merciless ruler is not entirely coherent even in Herodotus. For example, at 3.15 he states that Cambyses would have appointed the Egyptian pharaoh Psammetichus III governor of Egypt under his lead if only he had not interfered with his business (εἰ δὲ καὶ ἠπιστήθη μὴ πολυπρηγμονεῖν, ἀπέλαβε ἂν Αἴγυπτον ὥστε ἐπιτροπεύειν αὐτῆς).

⁶⁶⁶ According to Herodotus, cremation is a form of pollution for the Persians because they consider fire to be divine and, in their culture, it is wrong to offer a corpse to a god (θεῶ οὐ δίκαιον εἶναι λέγοντες νέμειν νεκρὸν ἀνθρώπου, 3.16.3). With regard to the Egyptians, they forbid cremation because they believe fire to be a “living beast” (πῦρ θηρίον εἶναι ἔμψυχον, 3.16.3), which devours everything but dies once it has reached its fill, and it is not their custom (νόμος οὐδαμῶς σφι ἐστί, 3.16.4) to feed the dead to a beast. Herodotus concludes thus: “So Cambyses’ command contravened both Egyptian and Persian beliefs” (οὕτω οὐδετέροις νομιζόμενα ἐνετέλλετο ποιεῖν ὁ Καμβύσης, 3.16.4).

sum, the anti-Persian nationalist flavor of Herodotus' Sesostris *logos* resonates with similar passages focusing on the rulers of the First Persian Domination of Egypt and harmonizes with the central theme of the *Historiē*.

The near absence of monumental royal inscriptions produced under Cambyses makes it difficult for scholars to contrast Herodotus' depiction of Persian kings during the First Persian domination of Egypt (525–404 BC) with Persian documents.⁶⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the inscription carved on the “Vatican Naophorus” statue celebrating Udjahorresnet, a high-rank “collaborator” of Persian rulers in Egypt, represents remarkable evidence from a local Egyptian source.⁶⁶⁸ In the inscription, Udjahorresnet introduces himself as the former admiral of the fleet under Amasis (570–26 BC) and Psammetichus III (526–5 BC), an appointment that Cambyses did not confirm. Conversely, Udjahorresnet states that Cambyses handed over to him the office of “Chief Physician”, adding that the king invited him “to be beside him as a Companion and Controller of the Palace when I had made his royal titulary in his name of King of Upper and Lower Egypt Mesuti-rē (sc. Offspring of Rē)” (12–3).⁶⁶⁹ Moreover, Udjahorresnet claims to have made a supplication to Cambyses to remove the “foreigners who had settled in the temple of Neith” and restore the sacred space to its original state, a process involving the purification of the temple and re-establishing of the priestly personnel (19–22). According to Udjahorresnet, Cambyses came to Sais and made a generous offering (26) to the goddess Neith and the other gods, “even

⁶⁶⁷ The Old Persian cuneiform script was in fact invented only under Darius I, as the Persian king himself claims in the Bisitun inscription. See Vittman (2003), 122. However, the epitaph in hieroglyphs of the Apis bull from the Serapeum at Saqqara (now in the Louvre, Paris) is dated to the 6th year of Cambyses' reign (524 BC). The epitaph seems to strongly contradict Herodotus 3.27–9. On the epitaph, see Posener (1936), 30–5 and Kuhrt (2007), 122–4.

⁶⁶⁸ Vittman (2003), 122. On Udjahorresnet see Lloyd (1982b) and Dillery (2003). The dedicatory statuette was set up in the temple of Neith at Sais and then moved to Europe in older times, probably already under the emperor Hadrian. The statuette is now in the Vatican Museums.

⁶⁶⁹ All translations of Udjahorresnet's text are by Lloyd (1982b), 169. The line numbers are from Lloyd's text.

as every excellent king had done”. Udjahorresnet claims that Cambyses honored the goddess because he himself had introduced the king to “the greatness of Her Majesty, for she is the mother of Rē himself” (27–9). The next section of the inscription regards Darius, under whose rulership Udjahorresnet appears to have maintained his influence. Specifically, Udjahorresnet states that Darius commanded him to return to Egypt while he was in Elam and restore “the office of the House of Life” (44), or *per-ankh*, an ancient Egyptian institution for learning reserved for the elites and the clergy.⁶⁷⁰ Udjahorresnet provided the temple libraries with “students who were the sons of men of quality” and placed them “under the direction of every scholar” (45), with all the necessary tools to accomplish their work.⁶⁷¹ Furthermore, Udjahorresnet explains why Darius instructed us to re-open the temple libraries: “His Majesty did this was because he knew the usefulness of this craft for causing the sick to live and to cause to endure the names of all the gods, their temples, their offerings, and the conduct of their festivals forever”.

Commenting on this text, Alan Lloyd states that “... the capacity of Cambyses and Darius to assimilate to the traditional model of kingship was of crucial importance in determining the willingness or otherwise of Udjahorresnet to accept and co-operate with them”.⁶⁷² Establishing a relationship of mutual advantage between the Persian rulers of Egypt

⁶⁷⁰ For the House of Life, the leading study is Gardiner (1938), 157–79. The institution of the House of Life survives through the Ptolemaic period, as Ptolemaic inscriptions demonstrate. In particular, two stelae record the titles of Horwennefer, “learned in every chest of the House of Life which is in the Min temple” and Wennefer, a “king’s scribe of the House of Life”. See Webb (2013), 23.

⁶⁷¹ On Egyptian temple libraries, see Ryholt and Barjamovic (2019) on *Libraries before Alexandria*, especially the chapters by Parkinson (pp. 115–67) on the Egyptian libraries between 2600–1600 BC, Hagen (pp. 244–318) on the 1600–800 BC libraries, and Ryholt (pp. 390–472) on the Late period and Greco-Roman period libraries. Older sources include Burkard (1980), Fowden (1986), Assmann (1992), 9–25 and (2001a), 412–13, Osing (1999), 58–9, and Jasnow and Zauzich (2005), 33–6.

⁶⁷² Lloyd (1982b), 174.

and Udjahorresnet demonstrates the latter's influence on the administration of the kingdom, especially at the local level. From the opposite perspective, Udjahorresnet's testimony paints a different image of Persian rulers from Herodotus' *logos*, whereby the foreign kings endeavor to uphold local institutions and grant favors to local intermediary functionaries. The figure of Udjahorresnet is a prominent model for the prototype of the authoritative priest who collaborates with the Persian ruler and, simultaneously, becomes an advocate for restoring and preserving traditional Egyptian culture and religion.

Manetho, Hecataeus, Megasthenes

Later accounts of Sesostris from the Hellenistic period confirm some elements of the narrative in the Herodotus passage. Manetho's account shows considerable divergences from Herodotus' Book 2, proving that he attempted to correct the Herodotean model.⁶⁷³ Unfortunately, Manetho's account has come down to us entirely through later authors and in a fragmentary form.⁶⁷⁴ Since different authors have quoted the same Manethonian fragments, these can present slight variations. Hence, scholars typically compare and contrast them to advance conclusions on the original text. The most common format in which later authors preserve Manetho's fragments is the chronography, although longer narrative passages are occasionally inserted. Manetho's account on Sesostris and the 12th dynasty of Egypt is one of the longer narrative portions.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷³ Dillery (2015) is the fundamental work on Manetho and Berossus. See also Verbrugghe and Wickersham (1996). On Manetho's reliance on Herodotus, see Armayor (1985), 7–10 and Dillery (1999b), 93. See also Escolano-Poveda (2020), 92–105 for a discussion of Manetho's characterization as a priest against the backdrop of his priestly context and in consideration of the Egyptian sources now available to us.

⁶⁷⁴ On Manetho's textual transmission, see Dillery (2015), vii–xiv and Hidalgo (2021), 167–78. On the current state of Manetho, Escolano-Poveda (2020), 91 maintains that “The most important consideration that has to be kept in mind at all times... is that none of their works have been preserved directly”.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. fr. 34 “According to Africanus” (from Syncellus), fr. 35 “According to Eusebius” (from Syncellus), fr. 36 Eusebius, *Chron.* I (Armenian version).

Remarkably, Manetho does not account for all three homonymous rulers named Sesostris but mentions only two: a Sesonchosis, whom he considers the first ruler of the dynasty, and a Sesostris, who is listed as third.⁶⁷⁶ Scholars argued that the historian applied the name variation to avoid confusion between two homonymous rulers but did not account for Sesostris II, who ruled after Amenemhat II.⁶⁷⁷ In Manetho's records, Sesostris, the third ruler of the 12th dynasty, is the one who best corresponds to the Herodotean Sesostris. Similarly to Herodotus' *logos*, the Manethonian Sesostris conquered the whole of Asia and Europe as far as Thrace and erected στήλαι to commemorate his military victories, on which he, too, inscribed symbols to differentiate between stronger and weaker opponents.⁶⁷⁸ These parallels between Manetho's and Herodotus' accounts seem to suggest an intertextual connection between the two authors. Still, they could also prove that both authors were referring to a common source.⁶⁷⁹ Similarly, Manetho's changes with respect to the Herodotean *logos* seem to imply that he drew from other sources, especially local Egyptian texts and Egyptian historical literature.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁶ In particular, Manetho seems to indicate Sesostris III, not Sesonchosis I, as the ideal pharaoh described by Herodotus. On this matter, see Quack (2004), 48, Murray (1970), 171, and Ivantchik (1999), 418–19 and 422.

⁶⁷⁷ See, for instance, Malaise (1966), 247. On the identity of the missing Sesostris, see Waddell (1940), 67.

⁶⁷⁸ See, for instance, fr. 34 Waddell (*FrGHist* 609 F2), from Syncellus: Σέσωστρις, ἔτη μὴ', ὃς ἅπασαν ἐχειρώσατο τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐν ἐνιαυτοῖς ἐννέα, καὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης τὰ μέχρι Θράκης, πανταχόσε μνημόσυνα ἐγείρας τῆς τῶν ἐθνῶν σχέσεως, ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς γενναίοις ἀνδρῶν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς ἀγεννέσι γυναικῶν μόρια ταῖς στήλαις ἐγγαράσσω, ὡς ὑπὸ Αἰγυπτίων μετὰ Ὅσιριν πρῶτον νομισθῆναι ("Sesostris, for 48 years: in nine years he subdued the whole of Asia, and Europe as far as Thrace, everywhere erecting memorials of his conquest of the tribes. Upon *stelae* [pillars] he engraved for a valiant race the secret parts of a man, for an ignoble race those of a woman. Accordingly, he was esteemed by the Egyptians as the next in rank to Osiris", transl. by Waddell [1940]).

⁶⁷⁹ Pritchett (1993), 181 advances this option concerning the steles.

⁶⁸⁰ For an overview of Manetho's possible Egyptian sources, see Waddell (1940), xxi–xxiv. On Egyptian historical literature from the Greco-Roman period, see Ryholt (2009), 231–8.

Manetho was an Egyptian priest from Sebennytus who probably advanced to the position of high priest of Heliopolis and was active at the Ptolemaic court.⁶⁸¹ In particular, in fr. 3 Waddell, Syncellus states that Manetho lived under Ptolemy II Philadelphus and dedicated his *Aegyptiaka* to him (γενόμενος ἐπὶ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Φιλαδέλφου γράφει τῷ αὐτῷ Πτολεμαίῳ). Moreover, in the famous fragment 80 transmitted by Plutarch's *Is. and Osir.* 28, which features the introduction of the Serapis' cult in Alexandria, Manetho appears as the personal advisor of Ptolemy I Soter. The prominent position that Manetho retained in the Egyptian clergy and his proficiency in Egyptian scripts and the Greek language granted him access to resources in the Egyptian temple libraries that were otherwise inaccessible to Greek-language scholars.⁶⁸² Specifically, John Dillery has argued that Manetho composed the history by relying on the historical sources available in the "House of Life".⁶⁸³ Conversely, Herodotus, who claims to have depended on the oral accounts of Egyptian priests, was not able to directly consult the written sources available in the libraries of his time.⁶⁸⁴ On these lines, in his introduction to the *Aegyptiaka*'s fragments in the *Contra Apionem*, Josephus claims that Manetho condemned

⁶⁸¹ On Manetho's life, see Waddell (1940), ix–xiv. Dillery (2015), vii–xxxiii and 1–51 provides an excellent introduction to Manetho and his time.

⁶⁸² Escolano-Poveda (2020), 102 argues that Manetho's "general structure (king list) and contents of the narrative sections (Demotic narratives) are genuinely Egyptian". Escolano-Poveda (2020), 102–3 analyzes in detail the Egyptian library contents which Manetho seems to have drawn from and concludes that "the previous discussion does not leave any room for doubt on his access to the materials kept in the Egyptian temple libraries, and thus on his condition as a high-ranking priest".

⁶⁸³ Dillery (2015), 161–82. See also Quack (2002b), 171 for an interpretation of the House of Life as independent from the temple and connected instead with the royal palace. This theory could endorse the idea of Manetho's work in the House of Life as a close collaborator of Ptolemy.

⁶⁸⁴ On interpreting Herodotus' Book 2 against Egyptian sources, see Quack (2013b), 63–88. Quack argues that the fragmentary Demotic sources referring to the royal figures of the Middle Kingdom attest to the continuation of their tradition into Demotic literature of later periods.

Herodotus at several points in his history for having made mistakes due to ignorance

(Μανεθῶς... πολλὰ τὸν Ἡρόδοτον ἐλέγχει τῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν ὑπ' ἀγνοίας ἐψευσμένον, 42).⁶⁸⁵

Hecataeus' take on Herodotus is more difficult to assess. In his influential article published in 1970, Murray argued that all of Hecataeus' basic facts about Sesostri come from Herodotus.⁶⁸⁶ At first glance, however, this seems almost an impossible claim to make as the work of Hecataeus survives only as integrated into later authors' texts, and we do not know the extent to which the material has been reworked. Hecataeus' narrative about Sesostri is transmitted in Diodorus Siculus' Book 1 and elaborated as a biography.⁶⁸⁷ Until recent years, scholars believed that Diodorus' Book 1 relied exclusively on two main sources, namely, Hecataeus of Abdera for the historical sections and Agatharchides of Cnidus in matters of geography.⁶⁸⁸ Burton convincingly argues that although Diodorus seems to have drawn extensively from a single source in individual portions of the *Bibliothēke*, he was using other sources to supplement his accounts.⁶⁸⁹ In this respect, chapters 51–68 of Diodorus' Book 1, which contain the Sesostri account and are seemingly based on Hecataeus, seem to be heavily informed by the Herodotean *logos* on the grounds of remarkable parallelisms. Notably, the story of Sesostri's στήλαι also occurs in chapter 1.55.7–8 of Diodorus' *Bibliothēke*, where it seems to closely imitate the Herodotean version as it maintains the differentiation between pillars

⁶⁸⁵ On this passage, see Dillery (2015), 89–90.

⁶⁸⁶ Murray (1970), 162. On Hecataeus' sources for Book 1, see Burton (1972), 1–34 and Hornblower (1994), 213–32.

⁶⁸⁷ The *quaestio* of Hecataeus' status as Diodorus' main source is vexed. Building on Jacoby (*FGrH* 264), Murray (1970), 144–50 sustained the rather radical stance that “most (perhaps all) of Hecataeus' book survives in epitome” in Diodorus' Book 1. More recently, Muntz (2011), 574–94 has strongly countered this view concluding that “the evidence for Hecataeus as Diodorus' main source for Book 1... is essentially non-existent”. For the characterization of Diodorus' account of Sesostri as a biography, see Murray (1970), 161 and Trnka-Amrhein (2013), 61–2.

⁶⁸⁸ Burton (1972), 1–2. Burton (1972), 3–6 provides a survey of scholarship up to Murray's (1970) article.

⁶⁸⁹ Burton (1972), 1.

associated with either weak or bolder adversaries.⁶⁹⁰ Nevertheless, as Burton remarks, it is problematic to assume Diodorus' unmediated borrowing from Herodotus because of discrepancies between the text and the *logos*.⁶⁹¹ The account of Sesostris' στήλαι too shows some slight adjustments from the *logos*, such as the general note added by Sesostris in hieroglyphs on each stele ('τήνδε τὴν χώραν ὅπλοις κατεστρέψατο τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ δεσπότης δεσποτῶν Σεσόωσις', 1.55.7) or the detail of the addition of male genitals to mark the warlike enemies (αἰδοῖον ἐν μὲν τοῖς μαχίμοις ἔθνεσιν ἀνδρός, 1.55.8), that are absent in Herodotus. Moreover, Diodorus acknowledges the existence of conflicting Greek and Egyptian sources on Sesostris that complicate the reception of the story (53.1).⁶⁹² For this reason, Diodorus endeavors to provide the "most satisfactory account" (τὰ μάλιστα συμφωνοῦντα) based on both the literary evidence and material remains (τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἔτι κατὰ τὴν χώραν σημείους). This is important because it suggests that Diodorus—and possibly

⁶⁹⁰ Diod. 1.55.7–8: διόπερ ὅρια τῆς στρατείας ποιησάμενος ἐν τῇ Θράκῃ, στήλας κατεσκεύασεν ἐν πολλοῖς τόποις τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κατακτηθέντων: αὗται δὲ τὴν ἐπιγραφὴν εἶχον Αἰγυπτίοις γράμμασι τοῖς ἱεροῖς λεγομένοις, 'τήνδε τὴν χώραν ὅπλοις κατεστρέψατο τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ δεσπότης δεσποτῶν Σεσόωσις'. τὴν δὲ στήλην κατεσκεύασεν ἔχουσαν αἰδοῖον ἐν μὲν τοῖς μαχίμοις ἔθνεσιν ἀνδρός, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀγεννέσι καὶ δειλοῖς γυναικός, ἀπὸ τοῦ κυριωτέρου μέρους τὴν διάθεσιν τῆς ἐκάστων ψυχῆς φανερωτάτην τοῖς ἐπιγινόμενοις ἔσεσθαι νομίζων ("Consequently he fixed the limits of his expedition in Thrace, and set up stelae in many parts of the regions which he had acquired; and these carried the following inscription in the Egyptian writing which is called "sacred": "This land the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Sesoösis, subdued with his own arms." And he fashioned the stele with a representation, in case the enemy people were warlike, of the privy parts of a man, but in case they were abject and cowardly, of those of a woman, holding that the quality of the spirit of each people would be set forth most clearly to succeeding generations by the dominant member of the body", transl. by Oldfather [1933]).

⁶⁹¹ Burton (1972), 25–9. In particular, Burton (1972), 26–7 mentions a series of details that seem to be unique to Diodorus' account.

⁶⁹² 1.53.1: [...] ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τούτου τοῦ βασιλέως οὐ μόνον οἱ συγγραφεῖς οἱ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι διαπεφωνήκασιν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν κατ' Αἴγυπτον οἱ τε ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ διὰ τῆς ᾠδῆς αὐτὸν ἐγκωμιάζοντες οὐχ ὁμολογούμενα λέγουσιν, ἡμεῖς πειρασόμεθα τὰ πιθανώτατα καὶ τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἔτι κατὰ τὴν χώραν σημείους τὰ μάλιστα συμφωνοῦντα διελθεῖν ("... And since, with regard to this king, not only are the Greek writers at variance with one another but also among the Egyptians the priests and the poets who sing his praises give conflicting stories, we for our part shall endeavour to give the most probable account and that which most nearly agrees with the monuments still standing in the land", transl. by Oldfather [1933]).

Hecataeus before him—took inspiration from the Herodotean model but made changes to comply with the evidence provided by other sources of knowledge, including Egyptian literature, priests' lore, and material remains.⁶⁹³

Just like Manetho, Hecataeus was active in court under Ptolemy I Soter.⁶⁹⁴ It is tempting to consider whether Manetho's and Hecataeus' allegiance to the Ptolemaic court played a role in developing their narratives about Sesostriis.⁶⁹⁵ Indeed, not only were both Hellenistic historians active under the first Ptolemaic kings, but they might have also worked in concert with one another.⁶⁹⁶ Given the remarkable political character of the Sesostriis narrative in Herodotus and considering the probable influence of the *logos* on both Manetho and Hecataeus, it is important to note that Ptolemaic kings also expressed their interest in the Sesostriis legend as an instrument of political propaganda and, consequently, could have encouraged their historians to produce timely accounts of the deeds of the legendary pharaoh.⁶⁹⁷ Notably, the first Ptolemaic kings endeavored to adopt pharaonic models of kingship to reinforce their hold on the Egyptian population.⁶⁹⁸ Sesostriis represented the prototype of the ideal Egyptian ruler and offered a

⁶⁹³ Cf. Burstein (1992), 49: "...Hecataeus used his Egyptian sources to revise, not replace Herodotus' account of Egyptian history so that his vision of the Egyptian past remains essentially the same as that of his great predecessor".

⁶⁹⁴ Wandrey (2006) and Dillery (2015), 23–5.

⁶⁹⁵ Ryholt (2013), 59–78 discusses the issue of the development of a certain type of narratives in the form of an *imitatio Alexandri* and centering on legendary figures like Sesostriis.

⁶⁹⁶ On the possible mutual influence between Manetho and Hecataeus and, especially, on Manetho's evaluation of Hecataeus' *Aegyptiaka*, see Waddell (1940), xxiv–xxv, Murray (1970) 168, Dillery (1998) 256–7 and (1999), 109. On the status and role of Greek historians under Alexander and the Diadochs, see Dillery (2015), 4–32.

⁶⁹⁷ On this note, Ryholt (2013), 62 argues that "what Alexander had failed to achieve, the legendary Sesostriis had accomplished. In other words, the conquests of the Hellenistic Sesostriis were fictitiously made to exceed those of Alexander, just as those of the Achaemenid Sesostriis had been made to exceed those of Darius". See also Murray (1970), 163.

⁶⁹⁸ Posener (1960) is a seminal work on Egyptian pharaohs. On the divine status of Hellenistic rulers as pharaohs, see Préaux (1978), 238–71, Walbank (1984), 62–100, Thompson (1988), 117–28, and Koenen

suitable paradigm of kingship. In a recent article, Eduardo summarizes the most relevant reasons why Sesostriis was the quintessential pharaoh figure from the Ptolemies' viewpoint.⁶⁹⁹ These include Sesostriis' organization of his kingdom as a co-regency, his very successful military leadership structured around both naval and land campaigns and his efficient re-organization of the kingdom from a socio-political perspective.⁷⁰⁰ The Ptolemies aimed at strengthening their empire from a military point of view and in terms of internal socio-political stability.⁷⁰¹ Therefore, these historians' choice to include the Sesostriis legend in their works could have had panegyric aims, namely, the purpose of producing an idealizing kingship narrative for the Ptolemaic kings.⁷⁰²

Megasthenes' mention of Sesostriis in the *Indika* appears less relevant to the discussion of this ruler in earlier and contemporary Greek texts.⁷⁰³ Megasthenes (ca. 350–290 BC) was a diplomat and historian under Seleucos I, who traveled several times as an envoy to India between 302 and 291 BC.⁷⁰⁴ The *Indika*, of which only three books are extant, is a geographical and ethnographical account of India based on Megasthenes' collection of observation and

(1993), 25–115. On the political importance of pharaonic kingship in the Hellenistic period, see Rice (1983), 181, Hölbl (2001), 92–8, and Manning (2010).

⁶⁹⁹ Eduardo (2004), 151–72. See also Stephens (2003), 34–6, who discusses Sesostriis as an idealized political model in Hecataeus.

⁷⁰⁰ On co-regency as an instance of “the convergence of ideas from the two cultures”, namely, Ptolemaic-Greek and Egyptian, see Dillery (1999), 111–2.

⁷⁰¹ With regard to co-regency, the Ptolemies introduced this scheme to maintain the political order in times of power shifting between one Ptolemaic ruler and the next. For instance, Ptolemy I Soter made his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphos, his co-regent around 280 BC. This period of joint rulership ended in 282 BC, when Ptolemy I died and Ptolemy II was crowned pharaoh. See Hölbl (2001), 35.

⁷⁰² On the other hand, the Ptolemies could rely on Greek models of ideal monarchical rulership, such as those presented by the 4th cent. BC Greek philosophical treatises of Isocrates and Xenophon. On the influence of Xenophon's ruler ideology on the Ptolemies, see Farber (1979), 497–514.

⁷⁰³ Murray (1972), 200–13, however, emphasizes Herodotus' importance in the writings of several Hellenistic historians, including Megasthenes.

⁷⁰⁴ Brodersen (2014). On India in the Hellenistic period, see also Karttunen (2017).

information received from interpreters.⁷⁰⁵ Megasthenes' account could provide a contrasting example to the Alexandrian authors regarding the political significance of the Sesostri narrative from the perspective of the Seleucid dynasty.⁷⁰⁶ In this respect, in *FGrH* 715 F 11 of the *Indika* (as preserved in Arrian 5.4-7 and Strabo 15.1.6), Megasthenes denies that the Egyptian army ever reached India, even though this is expressly part of the tradition in other Hellenistic authors such as Hecataeus, who states that Sesostri subdued the Asian mainland as far as India (1.55.2–4).⁷⁰⁷ Scholars have speculated on the possible political reasons for Megasthenes' denial of Sesostri's conquest of India.⁷⁰⁸ Murray, for instance, interprets the Sesostri narrative in Megasthenes as a "direct response" to Hecataeus' account, which idealized the Ptolemies and their ideal of pharaonic kingship.⁷⁰⁹ In Murray's view, by stating that Sesostri, an ideal model of kingship for the Ptolemies, never invaded India, Megasthenes aimed at contraposing Hecataeus' piece of Ptolemaic propaganda with a political narrative favoring the Seleucids.⁷¹⁰ At any rate, it is telling that the Sesostri legend was also adopted by Hellenistic authors who did not belong to the Ptolemaic sphere and possibly included it as a political manifesto of allegiance to one or the other Hellenistic regime.

⁷⁰⁵ Brodersen (2014).

⁷⁰⁶ Megasthenes was a Greek ambassador of Seleucus I Nicator and died in ca. 290 BC. See Kosmin (2013), 99–115, for a more general overview of the relationship between Megasthenes' *Indika* and Seleucid politics.

⁷⁰⁷ Ryholt (2013), 62–4 discusses the occurrence of Bactria as one of the tributary states of Ramesses, another historical figure that inspired several legends, in Tacitus' *Ann.* 2.60.3. Ryholt argues that Bactria, as well as other territories from the same list, "were never conquered by Egypt but are included to match and surpass the conquests by Darius and Alexander".

⁷⁰⁸ Among the major contributions to the debate, see Murray (1972), 207–8, Bosworth (1996), 121–4, Ivantchik (1999), 426, and Trnka-Amrhein (2013), 143.

⁷⁰⁹ Murray (1972), 207–8.

⁷¹⁰ Zambrini (1982), 97–102 contradicts Murray's (1972) theory by stating that the Seleucids did not have a direct control of India in the same way as the Ptolemies controlled Egypt and, hence, that Megasthenes aimed at creating an idealistic ethnographic model for the Seleucids instead of an anti-Ptolemaic narrative.

In sum, the primary elements to highlight in Hellenistic Greek accounts of Sesostris are the following:

- The “Sesostris narrative” is a recurring motif in Greek authors’ accounts of Egypt;
- The Sesostris narrative is typically charged with political overtones expressing the authors’ allegiances or opposition to a specific political regime;
- The Hellenistic authors’ sources of information for the legend seem to have varied according to their language proficiency and ability to access local written sources in Egyptian: for Greek-language writers, bilingual priests are among the primary informants;
- Egyptian priests act as intermediaries between Egyptian documents and non-Egyptian speakers and become vehicles of knowledge transmission and chief collaborators of foreign rulers.

The Sesostris Narrative in Egyptian Sources

Egyptian narratives centered on the pharaohs Senwosret I, II, and III began to appear in the Middle Kingdom (2040–1782 BC), the period of Egyptian history to which the 12th dynasty belonged. Scholars have argued that the first ruler of this dynasty, Amenemhat I, was not of Egyptian origin but usurped the throne from the last pharaoh of the previous dynasty, Mentuhotep IV.⁷¹¹ This political upheaval would explain the erasure of Mentuhotep’s name from the king lists and the flourishing of highly propagandistic literature to support the new ruling dynasty.⁷¹² Modern scholars have identified this type of Middle Kingdom narratives that focus

⁷¹¹ Callender (2000), 145.

⁷¹² Posener (1956).

on the deeds of legendary pharaohs endeavoring to maintain their power against external contenders as a distinctively Egyptian literary genre, the so-called *Königsnovelle*.⁷¹³ In the *Königsnovelle*, the external threats challenging the Egyptian native rule are often associated with “Easterners” or the “Hyksos”.⁷¹⁴ Elaborations of the *Königsnovelle* involve its combination with a related narrative form, namely, the *Chaosbeschreibung*, which deals with the difficult aftermath of losing native rule in Egypt.⁷¹⁵ These early narrative prototypes seem to have greatly impacted the literature of later periods. In particular, Posener suggests that the nationalist literature arising in the Middle Kingdom inspired later legends concerning the legendary pharaohs.⁷¹⁶ Additionally, several fragmentary texts from the Greco-Roman period attest to the merging of the Middle Kingdom *Königsnovelle* with the *Chaosbeschreibung* narrative discourse.⁷¹⁷ The frequent incorporation of Middle Kingdom narrative motives in later literature suggests that Middle Kingdom literary exempla started to be considered “Classic Egyptian” literature.⁷¹⁸

Regarding the figure of Sesostriis, we have early extant papyrological evidence for celebratory tales focusing on Senwosret I and III, including “The Story of Sinuhe” (“Praise of Senwosret I”), transmitted in two papyri from the 12th and 13th dynasties, “The Teaching of King Amenemhet I for his Son Senwosret”, which was probably composed in the 12th dynasty but

⁷¹³ Hermann (1938). See also Osing (1980), 556–7 and Dillery (2005), 387–406.

⁷¹⁴ Dillery (2005), 390.

⁷¹⁵ Dillery (2005), 390.

⁷¹⁶ Posener (1956), 69 and 141–4. See also Widmer (2002), 393.

⁷¹⁷ On the *Chaosbeschreibung* as a “discourse”, see Dillery (2005), 390. Koenen (2002), 173 has labeled this subgenre composed of two narrative trends as the “Prophetic *Königsnovelle*”. Both Greek and Demotic evidence of the “Prophetic *Königsnovelle*” survive from the Ptolemaic Period, including the “Prophecy of the Lamb” (in Demotic), the “Oracle of the Potter” (in Greek), the “Dream of Nectanebo” (in both Greek and Demotic), and Manetho’s “Amenophis narrative”.

⁷¹⁸ See, in particular, Wildung (2003), 61, on the survival of these texts as Classic Egyptian.

whose best source is a papyrus from the 18th dynasty, and “The Cycle of Songs in Honor of Senwosret III”, namely, a collection that originally contained six songs preserved in papyri from Illahun, of which only four survive.⁷¹⁹ Furthermore, Marina Escolano-Poveda has recently suggested that the “Tale of the Herdsman” preserved in P. Berlin 3024 + P. Mallorca I was also part of the legitimatory agenda produced for the kings of the 12th dynasty, including Senwosret I.⁷²⁰ The survival of these stories as oral literature and in literary form went through different phases. Kim Ryholt states that there is no undisputable evidence to claim that Middle and Late Egyptian texts in the form of narrative and wisdom literature survived beyond the Saite Period (664–525 BC).⁷²¹ Specifically, there are no extant “translations” of Middle Egyptian texts on Sesostriis into Demotic, the other written script flourishing in Egypt during the Saite Period (25th–26th dynasties), besides those belonging to the Roman period.⁷²² Nevertheless, it is possible that earlier Demotic sources for which we have no evidence acted as a middle resource between the Middle Kingdom narratives and the later Demotic writings from the Roman period (1st cent. CE).⁷²³ These sources could have represented additional “source material” for Greek-language historians such as Herodotus, who could rely on Egyptian bilingual priests to consult them, and bilingual writers like Manetho in the Ptolemaic period.

⁷¹⁹ See Simpson (2003) for the translation and commentary of these texts. See also Bresciani (1969).

⁷²⁰ Escolano-Poveda (2022), 123–40.

⁷²¹ Ryholt (2010b), 711–2.

⁷²² Ryholt (2005), 162. On the development of Egyptian language and writing, see Allen (2010), 1–9.

⁷²³ Ryholt (2006), 18. Trnka-Amrhein (2013), 15–33 provides a good survey. Among the later Demotic examples she provides, two papyri from Tebtunis (P. Carlsberg 411 + PSI inv. D 29, P. Carlsberg 412 + PSI inv. D 30) and one unpublished papyrus (PSI inv. D 92 verso + P. Carlsberg 77 verso) date from the Roman period (1st cent. CE) but could have been related to the traditional 12th dynasty stories. She also mentions an ostrakon (O. Leipzig UB 2217), whose wording of certain phrases seems closer to Diodorus’ account of Sesostriis. On this, see also Ryholt (2010a), 431.

APOLLONIUS' ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SESOSTRIS NARRATIVE

Apollonius' engagement with the Sesostris narrative in Book 4 is important in relation to the Hellenistic poet's historical background as well as the narrative framework of the *Argonautica*. Scholars have extensively discussed Apollonius' references to the Sesostris narrative in Herodotus' Book 2 and Hecataeus' more contemporary account.⁷²⁴ Hunter remarks that by the time of Apollonius, the character of Sesostris not only exemplified the stories of several Egyptian leaders from different periods but also served as an ideal Egyptian model for the characterization of contemporary Greek rulers in Egypt, such as Alexander the Great and the Ptolemies.⁷²⁵ Along similar lines, Stephens argues: "Indeed it would have been difficult for a contemporary audience not to have regarded Alexander's conquests as a template of sorts for the *Argonautica*".⁷²⁶ Furthermore, Hunter comments that the Sesostris legend could have developed as an instrument of political propaganda against the Persians.⁷²⁷ This interpretation would consider the classical Greek anti-Persian narratives elaborated on Sesotris, such as Herodotus' *logos*, and the nationalist Egyptian narratives arising after the Second Persian domination of Egypt (340/339–332 BC). Among the latter, the *Demotic Chronicle*, a Demotic text established

⁷²⁴ Murray (1970), 168 n. 9 and 170–1 argues that Apollonius' reference to the Egyptian pharaoh probably draws more on Hecataeus' account than Herodotus' *logos*. Similarly, see Ivantchick (1999), 412 n. 39. Furthermore, Ivantchick (1999), 412 maintains that Apollonius briefly reports the information conveyed by the Herodotean account and perhaps even refers to the steles that Sesostris sets up in the *logos*. See further Stephens (2003) 177–8 and Hunter (2015), 120.

⁷²⁵ Hunter (2015), 120. See again Ryholt (2013), 59–78, on the *imitatio* in relation to Alexander the Great through figures such as Sesostris.

⁷²⁶ Stephens (2003) 178.

⁷²⁷ Hunter (2015), 120. Similarly, see Morrison (2020), 145–78, especially 160–6 on "Egyptians and Otherness".

in Ptolemaic priestly and intellectual circles (3rd cent. BC), is a prominent source.⁷²⁸ According to Janet Johnson, this text represents a political statement with the twofold purpose of predicting the advent of a new native ruler and defining the prototype of the ideal king.⁷²⁹ In accomplishing this goal, the *Demotic Chronicle* appears to be openly anti-Persian but not necessarily anti-Greek.⁷³⁰

Moreover, the *Demotic Chronicle* aligns with later Greek literature on this period, such as Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, which emphasizes Artaxerxes' ruthless leadership and the resulting hatred of his Egyptian subjects.⁷³¹ Among Artaxerxes' most renowned transgressions, later Greek sources mention the slaughter and eating of the Apis bull, the killing of the Mnevis bull and the goat of Mendes, the sacking of temples and destruction of city walls of major Egyptian cities, and the confiscation of religious property.⁷³² The latter crime becomes instrumental in Ptolemaic anti-Persian discourses, whereby the Ptolemies characterize themselves as champions of justice and religious piety for having recuperated the Egyptian spoils that the Persians had taken over the years and returned them to Egypt.⁷³³ This political layout

⁷²⁸ Bresciani (2008), 506 and 525–6. On the value of the *Demotic Chronicle* as a historical source, see Johnson (1974), 1–17. Quack (2015), 34–6 focuses on the “critical undertone[s]” of the *Demotic Chronicle* in relation to the problem of rulers' *damnatio memoriae* in the Egyptian tradition. Specifically, Quack (2015), 38 claims that “[a]ll other specifically named rulers [after the first Persian domination] are judged negatively; only the future savior-king is described in a positive way”.

⁷²⁹ Johnston (1983), 61–72.

⁷³⁰ Johnston (1983), 61–72.

⁷³¹ Plutarch, *De Is. and Os.* 355 C and 363 C, where Artaxerxes is mentioned as Ochus, the “most cruel and feared Persian king (καὶ γὰρ τὸν ὀμώτατον Περσῶν βασιλέα καὶ φοβερώτατον Ὀχον, 355 C) and slaughterer of the Apis bull. See also Aelian, *VH* 6.8 and *Natura animalium* 10.28, and Diodorus Siculus 16.40.5, where the author emphasizes the Egyptians' contempt for the Persian king ([Ὀχος] καταφρονηθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων). At 16.51.1–2, Diodorus reports Artaxerxes' conquest and the storming of Egyptian cities.

⁷³² Bresciani (2008), 526.

⁷³³ Bresciani (2008), 526 cites the Satrap Stele of Ptolemy I Soter as evidence of Artaxerxes Ochus' confiscation of religious property. However, Bresciani also mentions the Lille Demotic papyrus 27, which seems to entail a more peaceful relationship between the Persian king and the Egyptian priesthood. This is

also resonates with the themes of the *Alexander Romance*, a text dating from the 3rd cent. CE, which, however, appears to have drawn from narratives originating from the 3rd cent. BC onwards.⁷³⁴ In this text, Alexander is the rightful Egyptian king who has returned. Remarkably, upon Alexander's arrival in Egypt, the priests acclaim him as the "new Sesonchosis, ruler of the world": οἱ προφητῆται... ἀνηγόρευον αὐτὸν νέον Σεσόγχωσιν κοσμοκράτορα (α 1.34.1-2). Following this episode, the tale about the oracle of Nectanebo prophesizes the return of the rightful Egyptian king, Alexander, and explains his direct descent from the Egyptian pharaoh Nectanebo I (α 1.34.3–6). On this note, Ptolemy I Soter too exploited the correlation between Nectanebo and Sesostris by adopting the *nswt-bity* name—the royal title typically translated as "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" or "Dual King"—of *Kheper-Ka-Re*, which was common to both Nectanebo I, the founder of the last Egyptian dynasty, and Senwosret I, one of the historical figures who inspired the character of Sesostris.⁷³⁵ In this regard, Dillery has argued that Ptolemy's move "offered the opportunity for a political statement" and was possibly instigated by Manetho, Ptolemy's personal adviser.⁷³⁶

Nevertheless, while the characterization of Persian rulers at the advent of Alexander's reign is rather negative in both Greek and Egyptian sources, this is not necessarily true, as has been emphasized, of Persian kings from the period of the first Achaemenid conquest of Egypt,

significant because it could prove that the Ptolemies might have even endorsed a rather biased picture of the Persian regime in Egypt for propagandistic purposes.

⁷³⁴ On the dating and transmission of the *Alexander Romance*, see Nawotka (2017), 1–33. See also Stoneman (2003) and Trnka-Amrhein (2013), 86–7, for the text's revision and composition. On the relationship between the *Alexander Romance* and older Demotic texts, such as the sequel to *Nectanebo's Dream*, see Ryholt (2002), 221–41.

⁷³⁵ Dillery (1999b), 112. Along similar lines, Murray (1970), 163 argues that the Ptolemy I Soter might have promoted Hecataeus' praise of Sesosis to blur the memory of Alexander's recent glories and, consequently, allow more room for his own achievements.

⁷³⁶ Dillery (1999b), 112 and (2003), 201.

such as Cambyses and Darius. Specifically, the testimony of Udjahorresnet contrasts with local Egyptian accounts from the Hellenistic period, such as the *Demotic Chronicle*.⁷³⁷ Notably, the case of Udjahorresnet is not isolated. Dillery discusses a similar figure, the Egyptian priest Somtutefnakht, who actually appears to have lived through the end of the Second Persian domination of Egypt.⁷³⁸ The stele of Somtutefnakht suggests that he witnessed several shifts of power from Egyptian into foreign hands. Specifically, Somtutefnakht first obtained his post as chief priest of Sekhmet from Hnes (Heracleopolis Magna) under the last native pharaoh of Egypt Nectanebo II, and possibly—“although certainty is impossible”, as Dillery commented—he witnessed the installation of both Persian and Greek rulers.⁷³⁹ The essential aspect to consider is that Somtutefnakht seems to have experienced these events from the Persian side. However, as Dillery maintained, “he is clearly quickly taken up by the new rulers of his land and restored to his priestly position”.⁷⁴⁰ Just like in the case of Udjahorresnet, Somtutefnakht’s evidence attests to the collaborative role that Egyptian priests assume under newly established foreign monarchs. Another example comes from the time of Ptolemy I Soter, namely, the tomb of Petosiris, the high priest of Thoth, at Tuna el-Gebel.⁷⁴¹ The tomb, dating back to ca. 320 BC, is decorated with a remarkable blend of Egyptian and Greek stylistic and iconographic elements.⁷⁴² Petosiris’ tomb also presents inscriptions in which the deceased priest speaks in the first person and reflects on his life.⁷⁴³ Particularly remarkable is a section in which Petosiris claims to have “put the Temple

⁷³⁷ The *Demotic Chronicle* is in contraposition with the Udjahorresnet inscription even regarding Cambyses. Bresciani (2008), 505–6 discusses the reaction of the Egyptian priests at Cambyses’ decree sanctioning the diminution of the revenues that were granted to Egyptian temples and gods. See also Dillery (2015), 37.

⁷³⁸ Dillery (2015), 37–8.

⁷³⁹ See Dillery (2015), 38 for a discussion of the evidence.

⁷⁴⁰ Dillery (2015), 38.

⁷⁴¹ Dillery (2015), 39–40. On Petosiris’ tomb, see Lefebvre (1923–4).

⁷⁴² Baines (2004), 46 and Dillery (2015), 39.

⁷⁴³ Text and translation by Lichtheim (1980).

of Thoth in its former condition” (3.46). Dillery argues that Petosiris’ statements highlight a different condition from that of a simple intermediary; instead, in the inscription, Petosiris declares to have received his privileges from the god himself, who hence invested him of the authority to restore the order (Maat) in the temple.⁷⁴⁴ In earlier periods of Egyptian history, this role typically belonged to the pharaoh, the closest figure to the gods and, therefore, the true priest.⁷⁴⁵ However, Petosiris’ statements suggest the establishment of a different arrangement, whereby the high priest arose to be a prominent agent in ensuring the divine order.⁷⁴⁶ This increase in the priests’ prestige and influence happened at the expense of the king, who was stripped of his priestly attributes.⁷⁴⁷ Moreover, as Dillery remarked, this shift seemingly mirrored an equivalent shift in the political sphere with the advent of foreign rulers. In other words, while non-native Egyptian kings, including the Ptolemies, endeavored to assume total control of the country, the priests increased their authority in the religious context as representatives of tradition.

To return to Apollonius, scholars agree that Herodotus is a ‘code model’ for Apollonius.⁷⁴⁸ In particular, Herodotus’ *logos* on Sesostris is an important source for the speech of Argos in Book 4. The two texts, in fact, show remarkable verbal parallels:

⁷⁴⁴ Dillery (2015), 39.

⁷⁴⁵ Dillery (2015), 39. See also Posener (1960). On “The King as Sun-Priest” see Quack (2015), 26.

⁷⁴⁶ Dillery (2015), 39–40. On Maat see Assmann (2001b).

⁷⁴⁷ Dillery (2015), 40.

⁷⁴⁸ For Herodotus as a ‘code model’ in Apollonius’ foundation scene, see Morrison (2020), 162. See also Livrea (1973), 92, Stephens (2003), Cusset (2004), 31–52, 176–8, Thalmann (2011), 43–7, and Hunter (2015), 120–2.

<i>Arg.</i> 4.272–6:	Hdt. 2.102.3:	Hdt. 2.103.1:
ἔνθεν δὴ τινὰ φασι πέριξ διὰ	ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ ὡς ὀπίσω	Ταῦτα δὲ ποιέων διεξήιε τὴν
πᾶσαν ὁδεῦσαι Εὐρώπην	ἀπίκετο ἐς Αἴγυπτον, κατὰ	ἥπειρον, ἐς ὃ ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας ἐς
Ἀσίην τε βίη καὶ κάρτει λαῶν	τῶν ἱρέων τὴν φάτιν, πολλὴν	τὴν Εὐρώπην διαβάς τοὺς τε
σφωιτέρων θάρσει τε	στρατιὴν τῶν [...] λαβὼν	Σκύθας κατεστρέψατο καὶ
πεποιθότα· μυρία δ’ ἄσθη	ἤλαυνε διὰ τῆς ἡπείρου, πᾶν	τοὺς Θρήικας.
νάσσατ’ ἐποικόμενος, τὰ μὲν ἥ	ἔθνος τὸ ἐμποδὼν	
ποθι ναιετάουσιν ἡὲ καὶ οὗ·	καταστρεφόμενος.	
πουλὺς γὰρ ἄδην ἐπενήνοθεν		
αἰών.		

As already stated, the adverb ἔνθεν in Apollonius is indeterminate, contributing to the indefinite tone of the passage. Apollonius’ usage of ἔνθεν in 4.272 is also reminiscent of chapter 102.3 of Herodotus’ *logos* on Sesostris, which begins with the phrase: ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ ὡς ὀπίσω ἀπίκετο ἐς Αἴγυπτον.... Although ἐνθεῦτεν, taken as an adverb of place, seems to introduce Sesostris’ return *to* Egypt instead of his departure *from* it, as in Apollonius, Herodotus’ chapter focuses on his prompt departure on a military expedition. The details of Sesostris’ journey are provided in the next chapter (103), in which Herodotus also introduces the inset narrative centering on Colchis (103–5). As already pointed out, the speech of Argos continues with the indeterminate φασι, a marker of a scholarly allusion to other sources, which seems to activate a connection between this passage and other texts such as Herodotus’ Book 2. It is noteworthy that φασι not only acts intertextually as an “Alexandrian footnote” but also represents a direct

reference to Herodotus' phrase κατὰ τῶν ἱρέων τὴν φάτιν ("according to the priests' story", 2.102.3).⁷⁴⁹ In the *Argonautica* passage, therefore, φασι acts at the narrative level as a reference to the Egyptian priests who convey the tradition of Sesostriis. In contrast, at the intertextual level, it functions as an allusion to both the Sesostriis *logos* in Herodotus' Book 2 and this very passage containing the expression κατὰ τῶν ἱρέων τὴν φάτιν. Finally, Apollonius seems to play with Herodotus' generalizing geographical notes about Sesostriis campaigns, whereby his wording περίξ διὰ πᾶσαν... Εὐρώπην Ἀσίην τε recalls a combination of Herodotus' phrases διὰ τῆς ἡπείρου (2.102.3) and ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας ἐς τὴν Εὐρώπην (2.103.1).

Conversely, Apollonius' narrative on Sesostriis also departs from Herodotus. In chapter 102 of the *logos*, Herodotus recounts Sesostriis' return to Egypt from his sea voyage, his subsequent departure on a land campaign, and the establishment of the στῆλαι in the lands he conquered. As we have observed, Herodotus' description of Sesostriis' steles seems to be one of the most influential passages in later accounts of the pharaoh. Both the *scholia* and the Alexandrian historiographers report on this part of the tradition by elaborating on Sesostriis' establishment and decoration of the στῆλαι. On this note, Apollonius also refers to a set of pillars called κύρβεις that the first Egyptian founders erected in Colchis and inscribed with maps of the *periploos*. Conventionally, κύρβεις were three-sided pillars of pyramidal shape, turning on a pivot, on which laws were inscribed.⁷⁵⁰ This detail recalls the tradition of the Herodotean στῆλαι but also seems to demonstrate Apollonius' distance from both Herodotus and other contemporary accounts informed by the *logos*.⁷⁵¹ Accordingly, Apollonius adjusts the shape and function of

⁷⁴⁹ For this kind of "Alexandrian footnote" see Hinds (1998), 1–5, Harder (2012), 2.586, and Hunter (2015), 118. See Nelson (2023), for a new take on "Hellenistic" figures of speech in archaic poetry.

⁷⁵⁰ Hunter (2015), 122.

⁷⁵¹ I thank the audience attending one of the presentations I gave on this material, especially John Dillery and Andrej Petrovic, for helping me reflect further on this point.

Sesostris' pillars to serve the purposes of his narrative. The pyramidal shape of the pillars is here evocative of the Egyptian symbolism underlying the entire passage. Moreover, their ability to rotate fits into the *periodos* narrative type, whereby the inscribed maps lead the way for "those who are going to travel in a circuit" (*Arg.* 4.281). Finally, the function of Apollonius' κύρβεις is didactic, instead of commemorative, as in the case of Herodotus' στῆλαι, and therefore appropriate for the Alexandrian literary context. Apollonius' diversions from the Herodotean model suggest his acquaintance with other non-Herodotean sources. Moreover, his emphasis on Egyptian symbolism and iconography concerning the pyramidal shape of the pillars hints at a conventional Egyptian background.

The verbal parallels between Apollonius and Herodotus' Book 2, supported by Apollonius' allusion to other literary sources through the indeterminate φασι, activates a connection with the *logos* for the learned reader. In addition, I propose that the Apollonian text encourages the reader to unpack the erudite reference to Sesostris and the Sesostris narrative in Greek tradition and reflect on the process and agents through which this narrative has been transmitted. In this respect, Apollonius traces the outline according to which knowledge of the alternate path arrives to the Argonauts: the Theban priests discovered the path (4.259–60), the Egyptian soldiers traveling with Sesostris engraved a map of the path (γραπτὺς πατέρων) upon Colchian κύρβεις (4.279–80), which Argos interprets thanks to his bilingual background and explains to the Argonauts.

In providing a miniature description of the process of establishing a foreign rule in a certain territory, this episode also highlights the mechanisms through which knowledge is transmitted and assimilated across different languages and cultures. Particularly prominent in Apollonius' miniature are the figure of the military leader who establishes a new cultural order in

a certain region, such as Sesostri in Colchis, and the priests who first produce and then pass on important pieces of knowledge. This knowledge is accessible or partially accessible to native speakers, depending on their degree of literacy. In the next stage of transmission, namely, between speakers of different languages, intermediary figures such as bilingual priests or, as in Argos' case, heroes with a multicultural background, intervene to translate the information. Apollonius' description of this transmission process constitutes, in my view, his great addition to the re-elaboration of the canonical Sesostri narrative. In Apollonius' articulated account, the tale of Sesostri not only provides an epitome of the ideal leader but also emphasizes the role of those who, accordingly, discover, transmit, interpret, and translate the story across different cultures. In Egypt, the chief representatives of this role are the bilingual priests, such as Udjhorresnet and Manetho, while, in the *Argonautica*, the most prominent intermediary characters include Argos, Medea, especially, and the gods. As I have argued in the previous chapters, the heroes necessarily rely on these figures to navigate—no pun intended—their relationship with other characters belonging to different cultures, understand information presented in different languages, and learn the specifics of ritual performance for local gods. For instance, as priestess of Hecate, Medea instructs the Argonauts on the local cults of the Colchian goddess. In the same way, at the metaliterary level, the poet relies on the Muses as “interpreters” of foreign languages and cultures to comprehend and elaborate the material belonging to a non-Greek cultural background. The emergence of intermediary figures in the *Argonautica* who bridge the knowledge gaps between different cultures or, from another angle, between humans and foreign divinities, mirrors the development of historical priestly figures in Apollonius' contemporary world, who significantly evolve to compensate for the fundamental cultural divide between the Ptolemaic rulers and the Egyptian gods.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Mediation and interpretation are key concepts of the Apollonian world. Gods, ritual performers, and religious officials are often the protagonists of this process of cross-cultural interactions and transmissions. In the *Argonautica*, this pattern is particularly striking given Apollonius' expansion of the *oikoumenē* to encompass non-Greek territories and peoples. The gods often intervene in the narrative to bridge the Argonauts' knowledge gaps regarding the surrounding space and the populations they encounter. Sometimes, the gods favor such encounters, while, at other times, they prevent them from happening to protect their heroic protégés. Sometimes, the involved divinities are the Olympians, who leave their heavenly seat to travel to the spot and provide their assistance. Occasionally, local gods offer their help by providing information concerning the route or other means that allow the heroes to proceed on the journey. Olympians and local gods can act spontaneously or respond to the heroes' cultic activity.

Furthermore, the Argonauts' rituals resemble standard Greek practices or foreign cultic actions, which additional intermediary agents, most importantly, Medea, instruct them to perform. This complex religious landscape is further complicated by the coexistence of different religious systems, especially Greek and Colcho-Egyptian. As I have argued in Chapter 1, the most prominent divinities of each religious sphere, Apollo and Helios, influence the appearance, attributes, motivations, and behavior of their representative characters, namely, the Argonauts and the Colchian royal family, the direct descendants of the Sun-god. Members of either of these groups, especially the Argonauts, are often familiar with the religious language of their own cultic sphere but need the intervention of external agents—the gods or the locals—to navigate non-Greek divine and ritual environments. I have submitted that Apollonius demarcates the two

main areas of religious interest by underscoring particular religious actions such as Orpheus' dedication of his lyre or the Argonauts' ritual for Apollo *Aiglētēs* on the island of Anaphe. Apollonius also delineates transitional territories betwixt-and-between Apollo's and Helios' spheres, such as the southeastern portion of the Black Sea between Thynias and Colchis. As I have shown, the Argonauts' cultic activity significantly decreases after they leave the Apolline sphere. In contrast, their need for external help increases. For instance, had Medea not assisted Jason in his task and not implicated the local divinities, especially Hecate, the hero would hardly have accomplished his mission and returned to Greece. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, the roles of Medea, a mediator between Jason and Colcho-Egyptian ritual, and Hecate, who traditionally mediates between humans and gods in archaic poetry, epitomize the prominent status of the intermediary type of agent in the *Argonautica*.

Different approaches to mediation and interpretation are appropriate on other levels. For example, in Chapter 4, I have elaborated on Apollonius' "Alexandrian footnote" referring to Sesostris, a legendary pharaonic figure appearing in Greek and Egyptian political narratives celebrating the merits of native Egyptian rule. While the Argonauts are not required to identify this aspect of Argos' elucidation concerning the alternate route to Greece, the reader is invited to untangle Apollonius' allusion to Sesostris and connect the passage with other narratives focused on the pharaoh, such as Herodotus' Book 2. Similarly, the narrative trajectory that Apollonius designs for Medea—whereby the Colcho-Egyptian princess and descendant of the Sun-god leaves her country while simultaneously her powers and wrath develop considerably—echoes the well-known Egyptian myth of the "Distant Goddess", which the Ptolemies themselves appear to have incorporated in their royal iconography and nomenclature in the Canopus Decree. Where Egyptian literary and visual *comparanda* may help ancient and modern scholars identify

references to this myth in royal documents, as well as in Hellenistic literature, the Egyptian bilingual priests active in Ptolemaic Egypt certainly represented the primary channel of information for the Greek rulers. As intermediary figures, the priests maintained their role of informers and transmitters of knowledge that would be otherwise hardly accessible to non-native speakers. Accordingly, whether the acts of mediating and interpreting occur in the *Argonautica* or the poet's cosmopolitan society, there appears to be a need for communication between culturally different sources of knowledge and recipients.

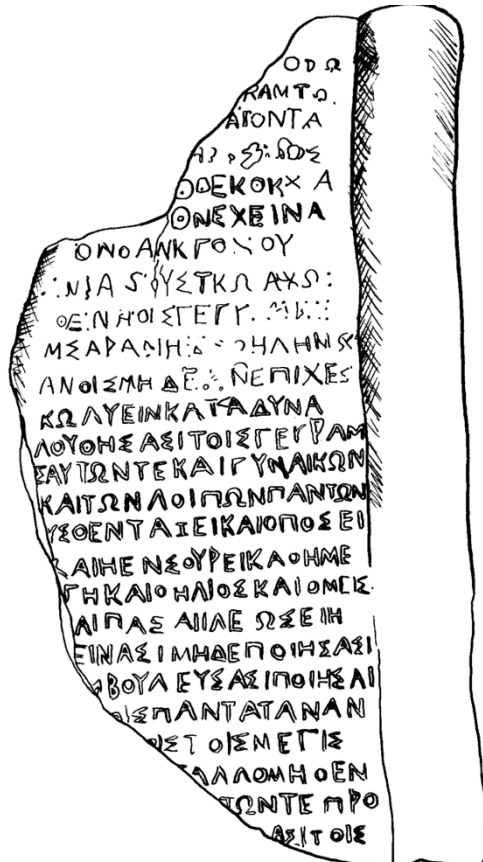
Similarly, Apollonius' Muses ὑποφῆτορες act as "interpreters" and perhaps even translators of the Alexandrian poet. Just as the Argonauts need interpreters of foreign languages and traditions along their journey across non-Greek lands, so does the poet demonstrate his need for the Muses and their understanding of local non-Greek cults and knowledge. The poet's ἀμυχανία concerning particular details of the Argonautic quest is typically related to events occurring in non-Greek territories and which seem to recall Egyptian ideas, such as the Argonauts' transportation of the Argo through the Syrtis. Apollonius' ἀμυχανία is analogous to the Argonauts' ἀμυχανία throughout their sojourn in Libya; in both cases feelings of helplessness are resolved through the intervention of divine agents: the local gods of Libya and the Muses. In the poet's multicultural reality, figures such as Udjhorresnet and Manetho appear to have performed a similar role. From another angle, the Muses' correspondence with Isis, the Egyptian goddess of literacy and eloquence but also of magic, offers an insight into women's intermediary roles. I have suggested that the myth of the "Distant Goddess" further links Medea to Sirius, the star of Isis in Egyptian lore, and, simultaneously, Isis is a suitable parallel for Medea herself. Given the association of Isis with the Ptolemaic queen Arsinoe II and Berenice II in Alexandrian cult and iconography, the character of Medea appears to be part of a larger web of allusions

extending to the Muses and the Egyptian mythical figure of the “Eye of Re”. Whether pertaining to the Apollonian poem, the Ptolemaic court, Egyptian myth, or the Alexandrian library and Mouseion, the intermediary role of these women is decisive in supporting Greece’s intellectual relations with the rest of the world.

The ultimate purpose of this project was to delineate a system through which Apollonius’ sacred landscape could be interpreted. Reconstructing the structure of the Argonautic religious world and its internal workings is challenging, for the richness of Apollonius’ poetics, especially concerning the gods, resists any superficial attempt at categorization. One could say that Apollonius’ narrative often proceeds centrifugally due to the insertion of inset narratives, aetiological tales, and mythological digressions. Nevertheless, the investigation of the Argonauts’ cultic activity and the gods’ movements across the landscape helps to determine a coherent spatial and cultural structure of the Argonautic world, within which certain systematic principles regulating human-divine interactions, ritual activity, and multicultural cultic experiences apply. Ultimately, considerations regarding Apollonius’ multicultural world can inform our understanding of his divine landscape, and, vice versa, the representation of the gods greatly contributes to the understanding of Apollonius’ perception of cultural pluralism.

APPENDIX 1: THE VANI INSCRIPTION

Text and Transcription by Kauchtschischwili (2009), 149–50.



ΟΣΩ
 ΠΑΝΤΙΟΣ
 ΑΠΤΟΝΤΑ
 ΝΟΤΑΦΟΣΣ
 5. ΠΟΛΕΙΦΘΗΝΑ
 ΠΟΝΕΧΕΙΝΑ
 ΟΥΣΙΤΟΥΣΕΚΓΟΝΟΥΣΚΑΙ
 ΟΝΤΑΣΤΟΥΣΤΗΝΑΥΤΩΝ
 ΟΥΣΕΝΤΟΙΣΓΕΓΡΑΜΜΕ
 10. ΘΕΙΣΑΚΑΙΤΗΝΣΤΗΛΗΝ
 ΑΝΟΙΣΜΗΔΕΑΝΕΠΙΧΕΙ
 ΚΩΛΥΕΙΝΚΑΤΑΔΥΝΑ
 ΟΛΟΥΘΗΣΑΣΙΤΟΙΣΓΕΓΡΑΜ
 ΣΑΥΤΩΝΤΕΚΑΙΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ
 15. ΚΑΙΤΩΝΛΟΙΠΩΝΠΑΝΤΩΝ
 ΥΣΟΕΝΤΑΞΕΙΚΑΙΟΠΟΣΕΙ
 ΚΑΙΕΝΣΟΥΡΕΙΚΑΘΗΜΕ
 ΓΗΚΑΙΟΗΛΙΟΣΚΑΙΟΜΕΙΣ
 ΑΠΑΣΑΙ ΙΛΕΩΣΕΙΗ
 20. ΕΙΝΑΣΙΜΗΔΕΠΟΙΗΣΑΣΙ
 ΜΒΟΥΛΕΥΣΑΣΙΠΟΙΗΣΑΙ
 ΟΙΣΠΑΝΤΑΤΑΝΑΝ
 ΟΙΣ ΤΟΙΣΜΕΓΙΣ
 ΕΑΛΛΟΜΗΘΕΝ
 25. ΤΩΝΤΕΠΡΟ
 ΑΣΙΤΟΙΣ

Transcription: ὁ σὼ[φρων ? -ος ὦ] | τῷ] παντὶ ὅσι[ια] | ἄπτοντα | ν] ὁ τάφος σ[| ἄ]πολειφθῆνα[ι
 | πον ἔχειν α[|]ουσι τοὺς ἐκγόνους καὶ | ποι]οῦντας τοὺς ἦν αὐτῶν |] ους ἐν τοῖς γεγραμμέ[νοις |
 χαραχ]θεῖσα καὶ τὴν στήλην | μηδὲ ...]ανοὺς μηδὲ ἀνεπιχει[ρήτοις κώλυειν κατὰ δύνα[μιν |
 ἀκ]ολουθήσασι τοῖς γεγραμ[μένοις |]ς αὐτῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν | καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν πάντων | ο]υς ὁ
 ἐν τάξει καὶ ὁ ποσεῖ(?) | καὶ ἡ ἐν Σούρει καθημέ[νη στήλη | ἡ] Γῆ καὶ ὁ Ἥλιος καὶ ὁ Μαεῖς | κ]αὶ
 πᾶσαι ἰλεως εἴη | μηδὲ τ]είνασι μηδὲ ποιήσασι | συ | μβουλεύσασι ποιῆσαι |]οις πάντα τάναν[τία
 | θε]οῖς τοῖς μεγίσ[τοις |]ς ἄλλο μηθὲν | τῶν τε προ[| ἀσίτοις (? πᾶσι τοῖς)

APPENDIX 2: FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE DODONA TRADITION IN

APOLLONIUS

As has been discussed, Apollonius incorporates both Homer's and Herodotus' traditions about Dodona in the *Argonautica*.⁷⁵² In addition to drawing from these traditions to redefine the Muses' model, Apollonius seems to integrate other aspects of the Homeric and Herodotean accounts, namely, the imagery of the oak tree of Dodona and the black birds.

THE ARGO'S SPEAKING PLANK FROM A DODONIAN OAK TREE

The construction of the ship Argo is mentioned several times in the poem.⁷⁵³ One aspect of the tradition on which Apollonius does not seem consistent is authorship in the ship's construction. Already in the proem to Book 1, Apollonius reports the older poets' version according to which Argos built the ship "following Athena's instructions" (νήα μὲν οὖν οἱ πρόσθεν ἔτι κλείουσιν ἄοιδοι | Ἄργον Ἀθηναίης καμέειν ὑποθημοσύνησιν, 1.18–9). Later in Book 1, the poet seems to indicate Athena as the only artist behind the work and Jason as her pupil in learning how to measure out parts of the Argo (Παλλάς... πρῶτον δρυόχους ἐπεβάλλετο

⁷⁵² Parke (1967), 14 on the role of Dodona in the Argonautic myth: "...the link with Dodona is of a very primitive character and concerns the ship itself—the core of the legend".

⁷⁵³ Murray (2005b), 88–106, discusses Apollonius' subtle disagreement with earlier traditions concerning the construction of the Argo. Accordingly, Murray (2005b), 101, argues that Apollonius provides his own version by way of a discontinuous 'micronarrative' within the poem's 'macronarrative'; the informed reader is meant to re-assemble "Apollonius' micronarrative about the Argo's construction... as if it were a single text restored from scattered fragments". For the definition of 'micro-' and 'macronarrative' adopted by Murray (2005b), 88–106, see Nagy (2003), 18–9. On the re-composition of Apollonius' micronarratives, see also Petrovic [Forthcoming], 7.

νηὸς | Ἄργου, καὶ κανόνεσσι δάε ζυγὰ μετρήσασθαι, 1.723–4).⁷⁵⁴ As the Argonauts depart from Pagasae (1.519ff.), Apollonius provides more information regarding the composition of the Argo and Athena’s involvement in the assembling. At 1.524–27, both the harbor and the ship emit a frightening shout encouraging the heroes to depart:

Arg. 1.524–527

σμερδαλέον δὲ λιμὴν Παγασήϊος ἡδὲ καὶ αὐτὴ
 Πηλιὰς ἰάχην Ἄργω ἐπισπέρχουσα νέεσθαι· 525
 ἐν γάρ οἱ δόρυ θεῖον ἐλήλατο, τό ρ’ ἀνὰ μέσσην
 στεῖραν Ἀθηναίη Δωδωνίδος ἤρμοσε φηγοῦ.

“And a strange cry did the harbour of Pagasae utter, yea and Pelian Argo herself, urging them to set forth. For in her a beam divine had been laid which Athena had brought from an oak of Dodona and fitted in the middle of the stem”.

The outcry the Argo produces comes from the oak tree plank from Dodona, which Athena framed in the middle of the ship’s keel.⁷⁵⁵ The verb *ιάχω*, expressing the action of

⁷⁵⁴ According to Murray (2005b), 88–106, lines 1.723–4 are part of Apollonius’ micronarrative about the construction of the Argo in contrast to the version of older poets provided in the proem (1.18–9). The other episodes constituting the Apollonian micronarrative are: Athena’s installation of the Dodonian oak plank (1.526–7, 4.582–3), Athena fashioning the keel props (1.723–4), Athena breathing divine strength into the ship (2.612–3), and Athena cutting the Mount Pelion timbers with a bronze axe (2.1187–8).

⁷⁵⁵ The Argo is endowed with a human voice and prophetic powers in Aesch.’s *Argo* (*TrGF*, frags. 20, 20aR), Pherekrates (*FGrHist*, 3F111), *Prom.* 832 (προσήγοροι δρύες, “speaking oak trees”), the Orphic *Arg.* 707 (εὐλαλὸς τρόπις, “the sweetly speaking ship’s keel”), and Valerius Flaccus’ *Arg.* 1.2 (*fatidica ratis*, “prophetic vessel”). The Argo’s shouting plank is an example of aniconism, the ability of a non-iconic cultic object—a non-figurative representation of the divinity, such as a statue—to signify the presence of the divine. On aniconism in Greek antiquity, see Gaifman (2012).

shouting, is regularly applied to human subjects in Homer.⁷⁵⁶ This is not, however, the only meaning of the verb, which can also modify non-human subjects assuming the meaning “to ring, resound”.⁷⁵⁷ Therefore, the broad Homeric usage of this verb does not support the idea that the plank speaks in a human voice at 1.525. On the other hand, the poet clearly says so the second and last time the ship speaks up in Book 4. At 4.580-85, Hera causes the Argo’s beam to shout to direct the Argonauts toward the island of Circe and perform a purification ritual to appease Zeus’ wrath. The oak tree plank suddenly cries again in a human voice amid the heroes (αὐτίκα δ’ ἄφνω | ἴαχεν **ἀνδρομέη ἐνοπιῇ** μεσσηγὺ θεόντων, 4.580–81). This second outcry arouses “destructive terror” among the hearers (τοὺς δ’ **ὀλοὸν** μεσσηγὺ **δέος** λάβεν εἰσαΐοντας, 4.584) because they recognize Zeus’ voice and his grievous anger (**φθογγήν** τε Ζηνός τε βαρὺν **χόλον**, 4.585). Thus, not only does the plank appear to speak intelligibly for human hearers, but it also acts as the mouthpiece of Zeus and his will in the same way that the oak of Dodona does.⁷⁵⁸ More specifically, there is a strong parallelism between the instructions Zeus conveys to the Argonauts through the Dodonian plank’s articulated message and those he provides in the form of oracles through the oak tree at Dodona. From the listener’s point of view, the heroes’ prompt identification of Zeus as the source behind the plank’s shouting is also comparable to the worshippers’ acknowledgment of the god at Dodona. Furthermore, Apollonius underscores the connection between the oak tree plank, Zeus, and Dodona by repeating the same phrasing as 1.526–27, τό ρ’ ἀνὰ μέσσην | στεῖραν Ἀθηναίη Δωδωνίδος ἤρμοσε φηγοῦ (4.582–83).

⁷⁵⁶ See, for instance, examples from *Il.* 17.317 (Ἀργεῖοι δὲ μέγα ἴαχον), 19.41 (σμερδαλέα ἰάχων); *Od.* 4.454 (ἰάχοντες ἐπεσσύμεθ’), 10.323 (ἡ δὲ μέγα ἰάχουσα ὑπέδραμε).

⁷⁵⁷ In Homer, the verb ἰάχω modifies rocks (*Il.* 21.10, and *Od.* 9.395), waves (*Il.* 1.482, 2.394, and *Od.* 2.428), fire (*Il.* 23.216), a bowstring (*Il.* 4.125), hot iron in water (*Od.* 9.392).

⁷⁵⁸ Hunter (2015), 161, comments that given the origin of the oak tree plank from Dodona “it is appropriate that it is this plank which informs the Argonauts of Zeus’ anger”.

In the Argonautic myth, the ship Argo carries a sacred beam carved from a Dodonian oak tree.⁷⁵⁹ To read this in terms of Herodotus' *logos* about Dodona, the oak tree plank and the Argo together would symbolize a synthesis of Greek and Egyptian elements, where the ship represents Greek identity, and the Dodonian plank retains a twofold Greco-Egyptian character.⁷⁶⁰ In particular, in discussing Apollonius' emphasis on the imagery of the oak tree, Noegel addresses the importance that the Ptolemies attributed to sacred groves, especially of sycamore, persea, date palm, and acacia, associated with the cult of Amun-Ra.⁷⁶¹ According to Herodotus, the sacred plank embodies the will of Zeus as manifested through the oracle of Dodona and epitomizes the cult of Zeus/Amun Re as practiced in Thebes. In particular, Apollonius endorses the correlation between the Argo's sacred plank and the prophetic properties of the Dodonian oak by having the heroes identify the beam's utterances as the will of Zeus. Of the two messages

⁷⁵⁹ The Dodonian origin of the speaking plank of the Argo seems to be a Hellenistic innovation, perhaps Apollonius'. Cf. Call. fr. 16 (λάληθρον δὲ ἐπειδή, φασιν, ἐκ τῆς φηγοῦ τῆς ἐν Δωδώνῃ ξύλον εἶχε φωνῆεν καὶ Καλλιμάχος φωνήεσσαν αὐτὴν ἐκάλεσε, "it could talk, they say, because it had wood that could speak from the oak tree in Dodona and Callimachus called it 'vocal'" [Schol. s ad Lyc. *Alex.* 1319 Scheer]); Lyc. *Alex.* 1320–1 (φογγὴν ἐδώλων **Χαονιτικῶν** ἄπο | βροτησίαν ἰεῖσαν..., "emitting a human voice from the deck"), where Chaonia is the northwestern part of Epirus, the region of Dodona. Commenting on the speaking powers of the Argos' beam, the *scholia* connect the Apollonian passage in Book 1 (1.526–7) with *Od.* 14.327 and the Homeric tradition of the speaking oak tree at Dodona: πιθανῶς ἐκ τῆς Δωδωνίδος φησὶ δρυὸς τὸ ξύλον εἶναι ἐν τῇ Ἀργοὶ τὸ φωνῆεν, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὴ ἐφθέγγετο, ὥς φησιν Ὅμηρος (*Od.* 14. 327): ὄφρα θεοῖο ἐκ δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο Διὸς βουλὴν ἐπακούσαι ("they persuasively say that the oak tree beam from Dodona in the Argo could speak because the tree spoke too, as Homer says (*Od.* 14. 327): "that he might listen the will of Zeus from the divine oak tree with lofty foliage").

⁷⁶⁰ Nevertheless, it should be noted that groves were ubiquitously associated with cultic activity in the Greek world before the Hellenistic period. Burkert (1985), 84–5, maintains that: "[the] modern experience of a Greek sanctuary is indissolubly fused with the landscape" and we find proof of this in archaic and classical texts praising the "sacred" character of certain landscapes, such as cliffs and groves. For groves associated with religious cults in ancient literary texts, see: Sappho fr. 2 and Soph. *O.C.* 668–706. Groves also appear extensively in Greek sacred regulations; see, for instance, *CGRN* 26 regulating the cults performed in a sacred olive grove (ἐν τῷ Ἑλαιεῖ, 12), *CGRN* 167 on the sale of the priesthood of Zeus Alseios ("of the sacred grove"), and *LSCG* 150B on the protection of the sacred grove of Asclepios. Conclusively, it is perhaps more reasonable to argue that groves had sacred connotations throughout Greek and pre-Hellenistic Egyptian cultures.

⁷⁶¹ Noegel (2004), 128–9.

that the Dodonian plank delivers in Books 1 and 4, Apollonius seems to characterize the first one as an indefinite roar (1.525) while distinguishing the second utterance as being delivered in a “human voice” and corresponding to the voice of Zeus (4.581–85). The poet’s emphasis on matters of transfer and comprehension between the sacred beam and the Argonauts is reminiscent of the problem of intelligibility associated, in general, with ancient oracles and, in this particular case, with the oracle of Dodona as portrayed in Homer and Herodotus. While, on the one hand, Homer introduces the Selloi ὑποφῆται as “interpreters” of the oracle of Dodona to the public, Herodotus, on the other hand, speculates on the issue of communication between the native Egyptian priestess and the Greek worshipers during the Dodonian shrine’s first period of operation. From another angle, Apollonius also develops the theme of communication and interpretation of sacred signs through the characters of Idmon and Mopsos, the two seers accompanying the Argonautic expedition. Remarkably, Mopsos seems to be related to Dodona by birth as his traditional epithet Titaesios, which Apollonius adopts in his catalogue (Μόψος Τιταρήσιος, 1.65), could refer to the river Titaessos in Thessaly, coupled with Dodona in the Homeric ‘Catalogue of Ships’ in *Iliad* 2 (οἱ περὶ Δωδώνην δυσχείμερον οἰκί’ ἔθεντο, | οἷ τ’ ἄμφ’ ἱμερτὸν Τιταρήσιον ἔργ’ ἐνέμοντο, 2.750–51).⁷⁶²

To conclude, the Greco-Egyptian heritage of Dodona, as characterized in Herodotus, is incorporated in the Argonautic ship together with the sacred plank Athena inserted in the keel.

⁷⁶² For the earliest use of the epithet Titaesios, see Hesiod’s *Sh.* 181 (Μόψον τ’ Ἀμπυκίδην, Τιταρήσιον, ὄζον Ἄρης). Lycophron has the variant Titaironeios at 881 (Μόψον Τιταρώνειον), which is explained as a patronymic by the *scholia*. The *scholia* to Apollonius 1.65 too explain Τιταρήσιος as a patronymic: Ἀμπύκου υἱὸς ὁ Μόψος τοῦ Τιτάρωνος, μητρὸς δὲ Χλώριδος. Parke (1967), 14 and 18 n. 33, believes Τιταρήσιος to be “no doubt local and not patronymic”. The Orphic *Argonautica* provides a suggestive clue to support Parke’s view: in lines 128–29, Mopsos is said to have come “from Titaros”, and his mother, Aregonis, to have given birth to him “under an oak” (καὶ Μόψον Τιταρήθεν ὃν Ἄμπυκι νυμφευθεῖσα | Χαονίην ὑπὸ φηγὸν Ἀρηγονίς ἐξελόχευσε).

Issues of interpretation and successful communication between the worshippers and the divine, both exemplified in pre-Apollonian literature by the role of the Homeric Selloi and the first Herodotean priestess at Dodona, also emerge in the exchanges between the Argonautic heroes and the sacred plank of the Argo. The heroes clearly understand that the divine messages delivered by the sacred oak tree beam come from Zeus, even without the mediation of their divine interpreters, Idmon and Mopsos, one of whom is traditionally associated with Dodona by birth.

THE COLCHIAN BLACK BIRDS

Medea and Jason's first meeting in the temple of Hecate in Book 3 presents several references to marriage. Among these is the intervention of Hera' "chattering crows" (λακέρυζαι... κορῶναι, 3.929) who are perching on a poplar tree outside the temple of Hecate (3.927–37). Their presence foreshadows the encounter between Jason and Medea and references married life.⁷⁶³

Perching on a poplar near the entrance to the temple (αἴγειρος φύλλοισιν ἀπειρεσίους κομόωσα, 928), one of the two birds speaks up and delivers a message from Hera (τάων τις... Ἥρης ἡνίπαπε βουλαῖς, 930–1). The message is clearly directed to Mopsos, and the references to the "inglorious seer" (ἀκλειῆς μάντις) and the "things that children know" (ὅσα παῖδες ἴσασιν) have a proverbial tone.⁷⁶⁴ The birds' utterances retain the unclear and ambiguous language of

⁷⁶³ The introduction of the crows occurs at 3.927–9: ἔστι δέ τις πεδίοιο κατὰ στίβον ἐγγύθι νηοῦ | αἴγειρος φύλλοισιν ἀπειρεσίους κομόωσα· | τῇ θαμὰ δὴ λακέρυζαι ἐπηυλίζοντο κορῶναι ("Now by the path along the plain there stands near the shrine a **poplar** with its crown of countless leaves, whereon often **chattering crows** would roost"). Hunter (1989), 200 mentions a few ancient sources in which crows are associated with marriage.

⁷⁶⁴ The crow's criticism of Mopsos recalls Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* 2.106 (οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν ἀοιδόν, ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος ἀεῖδει, "I admire not the poet who sings not even as much as the sea"). On this parallel, see Bundy

oracular messages.⁷⁶⁵ Mopsos seems to be the only group member able to understand the birds' message and promptly addresses Jason, urging him to enter the temple of Hecate alone. Mopsos showed to have an insight into the workings of the meeting even before chancing upon the crows when Hera beautifies Jason (3.919–25), and he happily understands everything that is going to happen (...ἐγήθησεν δὲ κελεύθῳ | Ἀμπυκίδης, ἥδη που οἰσσάμενος τὰ ἕκαστα, 3.925–26).

Scholars usually identify the *korōnē* as the hooded crow (now *Corvus Cornix*), a black and light gray raven in the Mediterranean region.⁷⁶⁶ These birds were an object of interest in the ancient world and appear as typified characters in different literary contexts, such as maxims and proverbs, fables, and meteorological lore.⁷⁶⁷ Most importantly, ancient authors characterize *korōnai* as premonitory birds whose flying course, resting habits, and cawing are interpreted as either good or bad omens.⁷⁶⁸ For this reason, *korōnai* are traditionally associated with Apollo.⁷⁶⁹

(1972), 40–1 and Hunter (1989), 200. Overall, this episode evokes Callimachus' chattering birds in *Ia*. 4. 61–93 (= fr. 194.61–93) and *Hec.* fr. 260 Pf. (=SH 288). Paduano and Fusillo (1986), 489, highlight this passage's general reference to the fable genre. See also Fränkel (1968), *comm. ad v.*

⁷⁶⁵ Hunter (1989), 200, remarks that Apollonius could be the first Greek author to characterize crows as birds of omen and prophecy. Cf., however, the crow reporting to Apollo about the betrayal of the beloved Coronis in Pindar's *Pyth.* 3.

⁷⁶⁶ Arnott (2007), 167. The more common variety of *korōnē* in the Balcan region and the eastern side of the Black Sea is the *Corvus Cornix Sharpii*, which is similar in all respects to the *Corvus Cornix* and is also present in some regions of Italy. Ancient authors such as Aristotle (*H.N.* 606a24–5) recorded the presence of *korōnē* (*Corvus Cornix*) also in Egypt. Occasionally, Latin and Greek authors confuse the hooded crow (*korōnē*, *cornix*) with the all-black Raven (*korax*, *corvus*), e.g., Hesychius κ3739. See also Mynott (2018), 25.

⁷⁶⁷ For the crow in fables, see Aesop. 127, 129, 218, 258; Phaedr. 2.6. For the 'Crow and scorpion' proverb see: Meleager *A.P.* 12.92 (=116 G-P), Hesychius κ 3740, Suda κ 2107. For the crow in curses, see Aesch. *Ag.* 1472–4 and the common imprecation ἐς κόρακας ("to the crows", i.e., "to hell with you!"). The crow also appears in Egyptian art: see, for instance, the funerary relief depicting two hooded crows from a tomb at El-Riqqa (XII Dynasty). See Grimm (1990), 137 fig.1 and Arnott (2007), 169. In general, on birds in ancient Egypt see Bailleul-LeSuer and Ressman (2012).

⁷⁶⁸ Arnott (2007), 169–70: "The Hooded Crow's normal calls, like the Raven's, were interpreted as weather forecasts". See also Mynott (2018), 27–9. For the crow as a premonitory bird in Greek literature, see Hesiod *Op.* 746–7, Aristotle fr. 253 (= Aelian *N.A.* 7.7), Theophrastus *De Signis* 39, 53, and Aratus *Phaen.* 1002, 1022.

⁷⁶⁹ Extant representations of Apollo on fifth century Attic pottery occasionally show the *koronē* accompanying the god. See, for instance, the approximately 460 BC Attic white-ground kylix attributed to the Pistoxenos Painter, now at the Archaeological Museum at Delphi. See Bommelaer (1991), 231–3.

Crows are also famous for their monogamy and fidelity to their partners to the extent that they have become an emblem of weddings and married life.⁷⁷⁰ Wedding songs called “The Crows” were meant to bring good fortune to newlywed couples and remind them of their marital duties, particularly those of begetting legitimate heirs.⁷⁷¹ Hence, the intervention of the crows just before Medea and Jason’s meeting suggests a subtle contrast between the erotic and hopeful tones of their conversation and the disastrous consequences of their future marriage.⁷⁷² In other words, the presence of the crows in this scene represents a misleading omen for Jason and Medea: on the one hand, the birds’ message contains an invitation to facilitate the conversation between the two and allow them to develop stronger feelings for one another; also, the crows’ symbolic association with long-lasting marital unions could be seen as another element foreshadowing the couple’s happy marriage. On the other hand, the accomplishment of Hera’s counsels (Ἡρῆς βουλαῖς, 931) has the goal of destroying king Pelias and his household.

The intervention of the chattering crows in the narrative suggests a further reference to the foundation of Dodona, as reported in Herodotus.⁷⁷³ As mentioned above, birds are central in the Greek version of the *logos* and Herodotus’ own interpretation of the tradition. The *logos* about Dodona emphasizes the birds’ provenience from Egypt, their dark appearance, and the communication process between birds and humans or, according to Herodotus’ explanation, between foreign priestesses likened to birds in their talk and the Greek-speaking public. Notably, the Colchian *korōnai* intervening in Book 3 display similar characteristics: they are dark-colored,

⁷⁷⁰ Cf. Aristotle fr. 347 Rose, Aelian *NA* 3.9, *Cyranides* 1.2, *Physiologus* 27. See also Hunter (1989), 200, Arnott (2007), 168, and Mynott (2018), 256–7.

⁷⁷¹ Cf. Schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.32, Horapollon *Hierogl.* 1.8 (p. 18-19 Sbordone), Hesych. s.v., Aelian *NA* 3.9. For an in-depth discussion of these sources, see Yiannis (2020), 1–21.

⁷⁷² Apollonius openly refers to the tragic outcomes of Medea’s arrival to Greece at the end of the exchange (3.1133–36), addressing Eros as σχετλίνη (3.1133), “merciless, wretched, cruel”.

⁷⁷³ I thank Jackie Murray for suggesting this connection.

they do not seem to communicate with the public but only with expert listeners, and they are Colchian and, hence, Egyptian in origin. Nevertheless, the connection between Apollonius' Colchian crows and Herodotus' black birds may be problematic in several respects. First, in the *Argonautica*, the tree on which the *korōnai* perch is a poplar (αἴγειρος), not an oak, as we would expect in the context of an allusion to Dodona. Second, despite Mopsos' proficiency in comprehending and explaining bird messages, which seems to underscore the importance of ornithomancy in this scene, the correlation between this episode and the mantic practices associated with the Dodonian doves is questionable. Ornithomancy was ubiquitous in the ancient Greek world and not exclusively associated with Dodona.⁷⁷⁴ In contrast, the most relevant aspect of the Colchian crows episode with respect to the imagery and tradition of Dodona is Hera's involvement in the picture. As already mentioned, at 3.931 the goddess instigates the crow's speech to ensure that Jason and Medea meet alone in the temple. Similarly, when the Argo addresses the Argonauts for the second time in Book 4, Hera's intervention is crucial in setting the conditions for Zeus' message to be delivered to the heroes.⁷⁷⁵ In both scenes, the goddess is remarkably active in the background, manipulating the narrative to direct the course of events toward her personal goals. Thus, the two episodes, namely, the bird's speech and the Argo's second shouting, contain elements that are either explicitly linked to or might remind the reader of the Dodonian narrative; most importantly, however, they are marked by Hera's concealed interference.

⁷⁷⁴ On bird divination, see: Dillon (1996), 99–121 and (2016), 139–77, and Baumbach and Trampedach (2004), 123–60.

⁷⁷⁵ 4.576–9: ... καὶ τότε βουλὰς | ἄμφ' αὐτοῖς Ζηνός τε μέγαν χόλον ἐφράσαθ' Ἥρη. | μηδομένη δ' ἄνυσιν τοῖο πλόου, ὥρσεν ἀέλλας | ἀντικρύ... (“And then Hera bethought her of the counsels and wrath of Zeus concerning them. And she devised an ending to their voyage and stirred up storm-winds before them...”).

APPENDIX 3: PTOLEMAIC CLAIMS TO THE ANTI-PERSIAN

PROPAGANDA

Since the conquest of the Egyptian kingdom, the Ptolemies strove to legitimize and consolidate their empire through a combination of military initiatives and propaganda. The 3rd century BC, in particular, was animated by a series of conflicts between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, namely, the Syrian Wars.⁷⁷⁶ However, the ideological conflict with the East also developed as an anti-Persian nationalist narration that aimed to contrast the Ptolemies' military prowess and pious conduct with the Persians' failures on the battlefield and hubristic activities.⁷⁷⁷ A recurring theme in these documents is the return of the Egyptian spoils captured by the Persians during their occupation of Egypt to their legitimate seat. The motif appears already in the Satrap Stele that Ptolemy son of Lagus established in 311/310 BC to commemorate his war against "the land of the Syrians" and the restoration of the "sacred images of the gods which were found within Asia, together with all the ritual implements and all the

⁷⁷⁶ The First Syrian War (274–1) involved Ptolemy II Philadelphos and Antiochus I. Ptolemy II fought again against the successor of Antiochus I, Antiochus II, in the Second Syrian War (260–53), while the Third Syrian War (246–1) saw Ptolemy III and Seleukos II in conflict. The other three major conflicts between Ptolemies and Seleucids occurred at the end of the 3rd cent. BC and the beginning of the 2nd cent. BC. See Hölbl (2001) for a detailed account.

⁷⁷⁷ References to the Persians occur in the poetic works of Callimachus and Theocritus. For instance, Theocritus' *Encomium* to Ptolemy (*Id.* 17), upon introducing Alexander, characterizes him as a "grievous god against the Persians" (Ἀλέξανδρος | Πέρσαισι βαρὺς θεός, 17.18–9). Callimachus' allusions to the Persians are more elusive and related to a meta-poetic context. See, for instance, Callimachus' *Aetia* fr. 1.18 Harder (κρίνετε,] ἢ μὴ σχοίνῳ Περσίδι τὴν σοφίην), *Hymn to Apollo* 108 (Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος), and *Coma* fr. 110.45–6 Harder (καὶ διὰ μέ[σσου | Μηδείων ὀλοαὶ νῆες ἔβησαν Ἄθω). Conversely, Apollonius never refers to the Persians in the *Argonautica*, as the epic avoids mentioning historical events that are not set in the distant, mythic past.

sacred scrolls of the temples of Upper and Lower Egypt”.⁷⁷⁸ Also emblematic is the Pithom Stele (273 BC), according to which Ptolemy II Philadelphos received a tribute from the cities of Asia and returned to Egypt the statues that the Persians had sacked.⁷⁷⁹ Ptolemy III was similarly praised in the Decree of Adulis (242 BC) and the Canopus Decree (239/8 BC). In the former, Ptolemy claimed to have recaptured the spoils taken away by Cambyses from the Seleucid kingdom. In the latter document, the celebration of Ptolemy focuses on his piety toward the gods since he brought back the cult statues that the Persians had stolen (lines 11–2). As Barbantani recently remarked, the main objective of these declarations was for the Ptolemaic king to obtain the favor of his Egyptian subjects.⁷⁸⁰

The Ptolemaic anti-Persian policy could virtually extend to the Seleucid dynasty.⁷⁸¹ The Seleucids continued assimilating the traditions of the people they subjugated, especially the Babylonian religious customs.⁷⁸² Nevertheless, Barbantani argues that the overlapping of anti-Persian and anti-Seleucid sentiments is not well documented in the Ptolemaic context, except “in relation to traditional pharaonic assertions”.⁷⁸³ In other words, the Ptolemies proposed the analogy between Persians and Seleucids as a propagandistic narrative that would appeal more to the local Egyptian population than to the Greek elite in Alexandria.⁷⁸⁴ In contrast, Visscher contends that more subtle anti-Seleucid motifs exist in Ptolemaic court poetry and are, therefore,

⁷⁷⁸ Translation by Simpson and Ritner (2003).

⁷⁷⁹ The association between the Seleucid dynasty and the old Persian empire reappears in a Demotic *ostrakon* from Karnak dating back to 258/7 BC, where Ptolemy II features as the king who “won over the philo-Persian king”, namely, Antiochus I. See Barbantani (2002), 43.

⁷⁸⁰ Barbantani (2002), 44.

⁷⁸¹ In Visscher’s words (2020), 137: “... the Seleucid Empire could also be regarded as the successor of the Persian Empire”.

⁷⁸² Barbantani (2002), 42.

⁷⁸³ Barbantani (2002), 43.

⁷⁸⁴ Barbantani (2002), 43.

directed to an exclusively Greek readership.⁷⁸⁵ In making this claim, Visscher explicitly challenges Barbantani's statement that "in the extant fragments of Hellenistic "court poetry" the rival dynasties are ignored".⁷⁸⁶ Although I am persuaded by Visscher's interpretation of Callimachus' *Lock of Berenice* as court poetry celebrating the Ptolemaic ideal of royal marriage in contrast with the ongoing struggles of the Seleucids' marital unions in the 3rd cent. BC, I do not propose a similar interpretation of Apollonius' Sesostris narrative in anti-Seleucid terms. I do believe, however, that the Sesostris narrative in Apollonius could recall the paradigm of the "just war" waged by Alexander against the Persians since it was significant for both the Greek population living in Egypt and the local Egyptians.

The memory of the Persian Wars was still very vivid in the Hellenistic period and was revived by Alexander's more recent defeat of the Persian Empire.⁷⁸⁷ Famous poetry composed in the 5th cent. BC to celebrate the deeds of the Greeks circulated in Egypt during the Hellenistic period.⁷⁸⁸ In addition, these poems became a source of inspiration for Hellenistic court poets writing about the conflicts of their time, namely, the campaigns of the Ptolemaic king against the barbaric tribes of the Galatians.⁷⁸⁹ The Galatian Wars (279/8 BC) were usually the subject of

⁷⁸⁵ Visscher (2020), 145. See, in general, Visscher (2020), 119–53, on Callimachus' construction of an anti-Seleucid narrative in the *Lock of Berenice*.

⁷⁸⁶ Visscher (2020), 145, and Barbantani (2002), 42.

⁷⁸⁷ Priestley (2014), 157: "The Persian Wars held an extremely important place in the cultural memory of communities across the Greek world in the Hellenistic period". See also Dillery (2015), 5, on the significance of classical Greek historiography, particularly Herodotus' *Historiē*, as an inspiration for Alexander's campaigns in the East

⁷⁸⁸ Barbantani (2002), 32 provides a short list including the elegies of Simonides, Aeschylus' *Persae*, Choerilus' *Persika*, and Timotheus' *nomos* from Abusir. Additionally, Diogenes Laertius 8.57 recalls a lost poem by Empedocles retelling Xerxes' invasion of Greece (καὶ διότι γράψαντος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἄλλα ποιήματα τὴν τε τοῦ Ξέρξου διάβασιν καὶ προοίμιον εἰς Ἀπόλλωνα...), which, according to the tradition, was burnt by the philosopher's own sister, or perhaps his daughter, because he did not complete it (ταῦθ' ὕστερον κατέκαυσεν ἀδελφὴ τις αὐτοῦ ἢ θυγάτηρ, ὥς φησιν Ἰερώνυμος, τὰ δὲ Περσικὰ βουλευθεῖσα διὰ τὸ ἀτελείωτα εἶναι).

⁷⁸⁹ Barbantani (2002), 32.

hexametric poetry.⁷⁹⁰ Fragment *SH* 958 (*P.Hamb.* 312 inv. 381, 2nd–3rd cent. BC) is exceptional as it represents the only example of early Hellenistic elegiac poetry of a military subject.⁷⁹¹ In her discussion of this text, Barbantani claims that the case of *SH* 958 is emblematic as it shows that, in the Hellenistic period, the Galatian Wars were considered a “reenactment” of the Persian Wars.⁷⁹² On the other hand, Alexander’s defeat of the Persian empire allowed the Ptolemies to win over their Egyptian subjects by adopting a stark anti-Persian stance.⁷⁹³ In other words, the Ptolemies opted to foster an “alliance against the common enemy”, that is, the Persians.⁷⁹⁴ The Ptolemaic initiative to return the Egyptian cult statues that the Persians had taken away during the Persian Domination agreed with this general policy. In addition, we should interpret the Ptolemies’ specific application of this anti-Persian ideological strategy in the Egyptian religious context as an attempt to gain the support of the powerful Egyptian priestly class. As remarked by Bortolani, the Ptolemies were compelled to preserve indigenous institutions, including the Egyptian priesthood, and support a program of conservation of Egyptian religious monuments and traditions to legitimize their position as pharaohs.⁷⁹⁵ As the experience of the Persian rulers

⁷⁹⁰ Barbantani (2001), 181–223, and Barbantani (2002), 33. Remarkably, Apollonius briefly remarks on the Celts at 4.634–48, outlining the sailing route of the Argonauts from the Rhone into the “wintry lakes” (λίμνας... δυσχείμονας, 4.635) of Northern Italy and Switzerland. Apollonius describes the territory of the Celtic tribes as a “vast land” (ἡπειρον ἀθέσφατον, 4.636) and comments that the Argonauts would have met “shameful ruin” (ἄτη ἀεικέλη, 4.637) had Hera not shouted in their direction to lead them back (4.640). Even though the narrator here marks Oceanus as the main threat to the Argonauts, his characterization of the Celts leaves no doubt about the danger of encountering them and their land. See also Hunter (2015), 168–9, on Apollonius’ vague geographical references in this passage.

⁷⁹¹ Barbantani (2002), 33.

⁷⁹² Barbantani (2002), 34. See also Priestley (2014), 157: “in the collective imagination of the Greeks, the Gauls became the Persians of a later age”.

⁷⁹³ Consider again the association between Alexander and Sesostris in later narratives such as the *Alexander Romance*. See Chapter 4.

⁷⁹⁴ Kienitz (1953), 79: “Jeder Feind Persiens war damit automatisch Ägyptens Verbündeter”.

⁷⁹⁵ Bortolani (2016), 7–8. In particular, she states that “thus collaboration with the Egyptian priestly class became fundamental”. About the temples, in particular, Bortolani (2016), 8 n. 23 remarks that: “The temples

has shown, meeting the hostility of the Egyptian priesthood, who also held a monopoly over the Egyptian cultural heritage, could damage the royal elite's image in the eyes of their local subjects.

depicted the foreign rulers, but the iconography, hieroglyphic writing and religious themes stuck to the Egyptian tradition". See also Thompson (1988), 117.

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