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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THE GHOST OF HERACLES: THE LOST HERO'S HAUNTING OF *ARGONAUTICA* 2

The abandonment of Heracles at the end of Book 1 in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* marks a turning point for Jason and the rest of the Argonauts. The aid of their mightiest hero, upon whose strength they had relied, is lost to them and they must find a means of accomplishing their nearly impossible mission without him. Allusions to Heracles occur throughout Book 2, in all nine units of action, drawing the reader's attention to Argonauts' efforts to carry on in the face of their loss. These allusions can be grouped into four categories: explicit mention, verbal echo, extrapolative allusion, and geographic reference. The poet's deliberate deployment of these allusions highlights the extent to which Heracles' strength-based approach to problem solving still influences the Argonauts' actions in Book 2. This approach contrasts with the role played by divine agents, which increases markedly in the poem's second half, beginning with Book 3.

KEYWORDS: Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, Heracles, Allusion, Verbal Echo

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January 31, 2011

THE GHOST OF HERACLES:
THE LOST HERO'S HAUNTING OF *ARGONAUTICA 2*

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THESIS

Rachel Severynse Philbrick

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2011

THE GHOST OF HERACLES:
THE LOST HERO'S HAUNTING OF *ARGONAUTICA* 2

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Classics
in the College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

Rachel Severynse Philbrick

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Robert Rabel, Professor of Classics

Lexington, Kentucky

2011

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*To Professor Rabel,
for all his guidance and support
and to the Todd's Road Stumblers*

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CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM OF HERACLES

Madman, savior, leader, and loner, the character of Heracles in Apollonius' *Argonautica* is a difficult one to pin down. He has been censured as “grotesque” and “paleolithic,”¹ labeled as ignorant and “almost comical,”² and praised as a hero endowed with “temperanza” and “sagezza.”³ Others have found middle ground, refusing to view his character as static over the course of the poem: “Some of the time [he] behaves like an insensitive brute... At other junctures [he] demonstrates such good sense and such moral probity as to put Jason and the other Argonauts to shame.”⁴ Even within the poem itself, he is both regarded as “the best” of the Argonauts⁵ and derided as shameless, pitiless, and “utterly destructive.”⁶

These dramatic swings in emotional response to the character can leave readers feeling as if they do not quite know what sort of man is Apollonius' Heracles. This problem is compounded by the Argonauts' absent-minded abandonment of the individual they all regard as the greatest hero among them. In such a rush to catch the favorable winds out of Mysia, they simply do not notice Heracles' absence as they sail away. All in all, the character of Heracles in the *Argonautica* represents a fascinating and frustrating

¹ Gilbert Lawall, “Apollonius' *Argonautica*: Jason as Anti-Hero,” *Yale Classical Studies* 19 (1966): 126, 128.

² Steven Jackson, “Apollonius' Jason: Human Being in an Epic Scenario,” *Greece & Rome*, Second Series, 39:2 (1992): 157.

³ A. Ardizzoni, “L'Eracle semnos nel poema di Apollonio,” *Catania* (1937): 43, cited by Donald Levin, “Apollonius' Heracles,” *The Classical Journal*, 67:1 (1971): 25.

⁴ Donald Levin, “Apollonius' Heracles,” *The Classical Journal*, 67:1 (1971): 25.

⁵ For example, when Jason urges the crew to elect “the best” (τὸν ἄριστον, 1.338) among them as leader; the crew unanimously elects Heracles.

⁶ In the opinion of Aegle, one of the Hesperides, Heracles is ὁ κύντατος (4.1433), νηλῆς (4.1438), and ὀλοώτατος (4.1436).

puzzle, and one is left wondering why the poet decided to include this great hero in the poem at all, if his lot was simply to be abandoned.

Though forgotten in Mysia, the character of Heracles in the *Argonautica* extends far beyond its shores. Though his physical self is abandoned even before the *Argo* reaches the Black Sea, his ghost follows the crew as they continue to make their way to Colchis and Aetes. Frequent reminders of the lost hero, consciously cultivated by the poet through allusions both subtle and direct, pervade the Argonauts' journey through the strange region of the Black Sea, maintaining his constant, though incorporeal, presence among the crew. The influence of the mightiest of the Argonauts haunts them, guiding them throughout their outward journey to the land of the Golden Fleece.

CHAPTER 2: HERACLES IN THE FLESH

Before his abandonment in Mysia, while he is still numbered among the *Argo*'s crew, the influence of Heracles cannot be denied. His dominating presence throughout the poem's first book provides the primary agency responsible for the success of the Argonauts' mission up until their embarkation at Mysia. His strength and single-minded attention to the accomplishment of the mission make him the leader—in fact, if not in name—of the expedition.

The character Heracles assumes in the *Argonautica* was in no way prescribed to Apollonius by ancient tradition, since the figure of Heracles in antiquity was highly malleable. It could accommodate almost any character type, from comedic to tragic. The wide range of his literary appearances—from the tragedy of Euripides' *Heracles*, to the buffoonery of Old Comedy (e.g. Aristophanes' *Birds*) and early satyr plays,⁷ to the more staid realm of epic—testifies to the adaptability of his persona. He could appear “as a great tragic sufferer and as a comic, lecherous, and gluttonous monster, as a metaphysical struggler and a romantic (or not so romantic) lover, as an exemplar of virtue and an embodiment of incredible, purely physical strength, as a divine mediator, and as the incarnation of rhetoric, intelligence, and wisdom.”⁸ Dennis Feeney has called him “the

⁷ Extant evidence of satyr plays is limited. For the evidence of Heracles' involvement in them, see Kevin Lee, “The Dramatic Presentation of Herakles by Euripides” in *Herakles: Passage of the Hero through 1000 Years of Classical Art*, ed. by Jaimee Pugliese Uhlenbrock (New Rochelle: Caratzas Publishing Co., Inc., 1986), 23-24.

⁸ Karl Galinsky, “Herakles in Greek and Roman Mythology,” in Uhlenbrock, 19.

most protean and ambivalent creature in Greek myth.”⁹ Apollonius therefore had nearly unlimited possibilities before him when choosing his own characterization of Heracles.¹⁰

The Heracles we find in the *Argonautica* harkens back to his most ancient persona¹¹ as the quintessential strong man. His unparalleled strength is constantly on display throughout the first book of the epic. This singular quality is emphasized from his first appearance in the poem, when he is listed among the other heroes in the catalogue. He is introduced through Homeric periphrasis: βίην κρατερόφρονος Ἡρακλῆος (1.122) so that his “Homeric might (βίην) and strong will (κρατερόφρονος) literally precede him.”¹² This manner of introduction makes obvious the most critical traits of Heracles in the eyes of the poet, who develops these characteristics by means of the details that follow. As if in testament to his unparalleled ability to accomplish apparently impossible tasks (as indeed is the Argonauts’ mission to Colchis), Heracles arrives at Iolcus fresh from one of his Twelve Labors, the capture of the Erymanthian boar. To further underscore his iconic strength, his iconic weapons—his bow and arrows (ἰὼν τε φορεὺς φύλακός τε βιοῖο, 1.132)—attend him, under the guardianship of his companion Hylas. Clauss has observed that this description of Heracles’ arrival introduces the second half of the catalogue (lines 122-227), comprising men of strength

⁹ D.C. Feeney. *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 95.

¹⁰ Dionysius Skytobrachion, an Alexandrian contemporary of Apollonius’, wrote a version of the *Argonautica* myth entitled *Argonautai* in which Heracles not only accompanied the crew all the way to Colchis but even led the expedition. For a good summary of Skytobrachion’s version of the *Argonautica* myth, see Peter Green, introduction to *The Argonautica*, by Apollonius Rhodius (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 30-34.

¹¹ On ancientness, see Galinsky in Uhlenbrock, 19.

¹² Anatole Mori, *The Politics of Apollonius Rhodius’ Argonautica* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 60.

(βίη) as opposed to the men of skill (τέχνη) presented in the catalogue's first half (lines 23-121).¹³ Heracles, then, stands quite literally as the leader of this group of strong men.

All of Heracles' actions in Book 1 develop further his character as the quintessential man of strength. When the crew sacrifices two cows to Apollo of Embarkation, Heracles kills his with a single blow to the head. This action contrasts sharply with the approach of Ancaeus, a man of skill, who neatly slits the throat of his cow with a knife (1.425-431). The Argonauts unhesitatingly elect Heracles to the *Argo's* middle rowing bench, the most demanding position on the boat (1.394-401). At Cyzicus, they leave him behind with a small crew to guard the ship while Jason and the rest climb Mount Dindymum. There, he is able to ward off almost single-handedly an attack from the Earthborn men who inhabit the region. When the Argonauts decide to engage in a rowing contest, Heracles not only outlasts all the rest but is forced to stop not by any dearth of strength but by the shattering of his oar, too feeble to support any longer his overpowering might (1.1156-1171). In terms of sheer strength and the ability to get things done, no man can compete with Heracles, and for that reason his fellow crew members unanimously regard him as "the best" (ὁ ἄριστος) among them.¹⁴

A persistent theme throughout the *Argonautica* is the obvious but unstated fact that Heracles by himself undoubtedly would have been able to complete the task that the crew of fifty-two men has set out to accomplish. His very arrival with the living Erymanthian boar establishes from the outset his ability to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks. The events that follow highlight the self-sufficiency of his nature. By

¹³ James Clauss, *The Best of the Argonauts: The redefinition of the epic hero in Book 1 of Apollonius's Argonautica* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 26-36.

¹⁴ See Note 5 above.

rowing the *Argo* single-handedly, he denies any need for help from the rest of the crew. At Cyzicus, he defeats (with the help of only a handful of fellow crew members) a hoard of earthborn men (γηγενέες, 1.989) well before the same task (to defeat “earthborn men,” γηγενέες, 3.1355) is put before Jason as a condition of winning the Fleece. As the epic comes to a close, the Argonauts stumble upon the garden of the Hesperides, which has been plundered recently by Heracles to complete his final Labor. The similarities between this task and Jason’s own acquisition of the Golden Fleece allow it to be seen as parallel to the Argonauts’ mission, accomplished in a different manner but accomplished successfully nonetheless (see Chapter 16). All in all, Heracles’ strength and self-sufficiency would have made gaining the Fleece a straightforward matter for him, just part of a typical day’s work. The rest of the crew would have been redundant.

In his solitary pursuit of accomplishment and glory, Heracles can be seen as a relic from the Homeric era. Along a mythological time line, the Argonautic expedition preceded the Trojan War by a generation, but according to the literary chronology, Apollonius’ *Argonautica* postdated Homer’s poems by more than four centuries. Apollonius’ Heracles embodies the Homeric values of personal glory, individual effort, and active pursuit of honor as opposed to idleness. In this respect, he stands apart from the rest of the crew, as exemplified by the incident at Lemnos: while Jason and the others happily dally with the Lemnian women, Heracles waits by the ship, eager to continue the mission. Eventually, he loses patience and rebukes the crew, who then agree to resume their journey. His single-minded focus on the accomplishment of the mission sets him apart from the rest of the Argonauts.

Heracles becomes separated from the expedition before the end of the *Argonautica*'s first book. The Argonauts accidentally abandon him in Mysia after he has wandered off in search of the lost Hylas. When the crew, already at sea, discovers his absence, they decide, after considerable debate, not to return to search for him. As they proceed on their journey to Colchis over the course of Book 2, however, the ghost of their lost companion—conjured up by the poet's frequent references and allusions to his appearances in Book 1—follows the Argonauts. They and the reader are continually reminded of Heracles' absence, and, with that, reminded of the need of the group to overcome problems that their mightiest hero would have accomplished easily for them.

CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF HERACLES

Numerous scholars (e.g. Knight, Green, Clauss, Lawall)¹⁵ have observed that Apollonius' Heracles never becomes integrated into the crew, maintaining a status of "other" among the rest of the Argonauts. Either directly or implicitly, they argue that his abandonment was on some level necessary, a direct result of his "otherness." While this analysis may help us to understand why Heracles is left behind, it does nothing to explain his persistent presence throughout the remainder of the poem and Book 2 in particular. What follows is an examination of three of the most comprehensive and (for my purposes) relevant attempts to understand the character of Heracles and the role he plays in the *Argonautica*.

Virginia Knight, in *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius*, has examined the Heracleian predicament through the Homeric lens. Though not limited in her analysis to the subject of Heracles, she compares the language used to describe him in the *Argonautica* with its Homeric sources of inspiration. She observes that Apollonius' Heracles possesses certain Cyclopean traits, most overtly displayed in the scene from Book 1 of Heracles' uprooting of the pine tree, where verbal parallels connect the tree to the Cyclops' club in *Odyssey* 9 and Heracles' actions to Odysseus' thrusting of the stake into the Cyclops' eye.¹⁶ Heracles, Knight points out, is the only one of the Argonauts to possess these negative Cyclopean traits, which are always elsewhere associated with an enemy "other," such as Amycus, Aeetes, and Talos.

¹⁵ Virginia Knight, *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius* (Leiden: Brill, 1995). Peter Green, 37. James Clauss, esp. 196-197. Gilbert Lawall, 123-131.

¹⁶ Knight, 128.

“[I]n this sense, Heracles is a misfit among the crew.”¹⁷ To keep such an “enemy” among the crew would be dangerous, so Heracles is abandoned (albeit unintentionally) before the end of the first book. Knight’s analysis brings to light many of the poet’s verbal allusions to the Homeric works and how these comparisons subtly help to shape the reader’s impression of the character of Heracles in Book 1. It reminds us of the debt Apollonius owes to Homer and illuminates the vast scope of Homeric allusions contained within the *Argonautica*. Her analysis helps us to understand from a Homeric perspective the literary reasons for Heracles’ abandonment, but it offers no method for making sense of the consciously crafted pattern of allusions to Heracles woven into Book 2.

In his provocatively titled book, *The Best of the Argonauts*, James Clauss attempts to defend, at the expense of Heracles, Jason, whose character has been besmirched again and again over the course of decades of scholarship. Responding to scholars like Carspecken, who criticizes Jason as “a great warrior only with the help of magical charms, jealous of honour but incapable of asserting it, passive in the face of crisis, timid and confused before trouble, [and] tearful at insult” (among other things),¹⁸ Clauss aims to prove that Jason is, after all, the best leader of the expedition, despite indications to the contrary.¹⁹ He finds that Jason possesses the very qualities Jason himself outlines as being necessary in the leader the Argonauts elect (1.332-340). He sides decidedly against Heracles and concludes that Heracles *had* to be abandoned for the sake of harmony among the Argonauts. “At the end of [Book 1], the Argonauts can proceed to Colchis

¹⁷ Knight, 131.

¹⁸ J. F. Carspecken, “Apollonius Rhodius and the Homeric Epic,” *Yale Classical Studies* 13 (1952): 101.

¹⁹ For example, the Argonauts’ own regard for Heracles as the best among them. This argument has been put forward previously, though in less detail, by Hunter (cf. 442).

without Heracles; for they have in Jason the best leader for them, one who promotes harmony so that as a unified group they can accomplish what a Heracles can do on his own as a matter of course.”²⁰ Though Clauss explicitly limits his analysis to the poem’s first book, it is possible to extend his logic to help make sense of the subsequent books. In doing so, we would read any later appearance of or allusion to the lost Heracles as a reminder to the reader of Jason’s superior leadership ability.

Gilbert Lawall provides a more comprehensive analysis than either Knight or Clauss. His reading of the poem allows us to view the character of Heracles as a part of a poetic strategy that spans all four books. He identifies four “types” of men, each represented by a member of the crew, that act as “foils” to Jason. Tiphys represents the man of skill (τέχνη), Telamon the man of war, Idmon the man of religious piety. Heracles, of course, embodies the man of strength whose “typical resource in overcoming obstacles is a primitive brute force which he deploys directly, in frontal attacks, against any situation confronting him.”²¹ This method of attack directly contrasts with Jason’s, who prefers to deliberate over challenges put before him. Each of the four men presents a certain way of approaching challenges, each in a way that contrasts with Jason’s own character, and each of the four methods ultimately will prove inadequate. Lawall views Heracles as a thoroughly frustrated figure, using as evidence the broken oar in the rowing contest and the futile search for Hylas. His failure among the Argonauts—symbolized by his loss of Hylas and subsequent abandonment—symbolizes the failure of the strength-based method of problem solving. As they navigate the challenges set before them in

²⁰ Clauss, 5.

²¹ Lawall, 124.

Books 2 through 4, Jason and the Argonauts will use the lessons learned from Heracles (both positive and negative) to bring about their own success.²²

Lawall's analysis allows us to understand Jason's unique style of leadership as something that is actively in development over the course of the entire book.²³ His reading of Heracles as a teacher and foil "not only to Jason, but also to the rest of the Argonauts as a group"²⁴ leaves room for understanding the pattern of allusions to Heracles that pervades Book 2. Though Lawall and Levin have both independently noticed the lasting nature of Heracles' influence on the crew, no scholar has noticed the extent of these references. Lawall has briefly remarked that the Argonauts follow the same route as Heracles through the Black Sea region, and that references to the hero provide a thread of cohesion to the traveling narrative of Book 2.²⁵ Levin has observed the persistence of Heracles' influence throughout the entire poem, but notices—or finds remarkable—only the most obvious of these incidents.²⁶ In fact, as the rest of this work

²² This interpretation has been reiterated more recently by Jackson (1992).

²³ Lawall's interpretation has been criticized by, among others, Theodore Klein ("Apollonius' Jason: Hero and Scoundrel," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series, 13:1 [1983]: 115-126), who states dismissively: "[T]he moralizing Lawall is embarrassingly left with what can be called a 'nihilistic' concept of education. The pupil is taught to practice shameless and amoral (albeit successful) pragmatism, the greatest personal advantage of which is located in his increased self-awareness of his own weakness and shamefulness" (122).

²⁴ Lawall, 124.

²⁵ Lawall, 125 n. 11: "Recurrent mention of Heracles throughout Book 2 helps tie its episodes together." The only mentions that Lawall notices, however, are the story of Heracles and the Amazons, Heracles and the Stymphalian Lake birds, the two explicit mentions of his absence among the crew (see below Unit 1 and Unit 5), and the mention of Prometheus' punishment. Lawall remarks that "Heracles is merely one of several unifying threads in the book."

²⁶ Levin, 26: "Though Heracles disappears from their midst before the Argonauts have even reached the Black Sea, he will continue as a potent influence long afterwards." His examples of this influence in Book 2, however, are limited to the explicit mention

will show, the references are much more numerous than previously thought. Focusing specifically on Book 2 and the Argonauts' struggles immediately following their loss of Heracles, I will show that these references occur frequently at the level of verbal allusion. Recognizing these references to the Argonauts' lost hero helps us to understand the first two books as a mutually enforcing whole, not two halves divided by the presence of Heracles and his absence. Heracles *in absentia* continues to exert the strong influence over the Argonauts that he wielded in person throughout Book 1. Though he may no longer be among the crew in the flesh, his spirit—in the form of poetic allusions and references—lingers and haunts Book 2, never allowing the reader to forget the kind of hero the Argonauts have left behind.

during the boxing match against king Amycus (see Unit 1 below), the story of Heracles and the Stymphalian Lake birds, and the story of Heracles and the Amazons.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS OF HAUNTING

The *Argonautica* is a very allusive poem that demands a high level of sophistication and erudition in its reader.²⁷ This allusive style has been examined in greatest depth in the context of Apollonius' indebtedness to Homer. Apollonius demonstrates acute awareness of the epic tradition in which he wrote and his contribution to the genre "cannot be understood apart from [the Homeric poems], in that a reading of Apollonius' poem is inadequate without study of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*."²⁸ From her own study of Homeric allusions in the *Argonautica*, Knight has put forth several general "rules" of the Apollonian style, which can help our understanding of his writing style in general.

First, Apollonius relies on few words to establish connections between passages. "[N]o more than half a line is repeated from Homer at any one time, and even that much is rare."²⁹ Even when echoing his own work, Apollonius repeats vocabulary sparingly. A second common poetic technique in the *Argonautica* is the "refitting" of a model scene (often Homeric) into an entirely different context. This has been observed especially with similes.³⁰ In Book 4, for example, the *Argo* is compared to a fierce snake that seeks the shelter of its hole to escape the scorching heat of the sun (4.1541-1545). The model

²⁷ Clauss (10) cautions: "Approaching the *Argonautica* without a considerable literary background, a reader would surely find Apollonius's poem a rather dull adventure story embedded in an antiquarian's travelogue, relieved only by a few interesting moments in Book 3 when Medea falls in love; the *doctus lector*, on the other hand, encounters not another mediocre epic about another hero on yet another legendary quest but a sophisticated poem whose double-tiered narrative informs and suggests, and whose meaning can be grasped only by a creative reading that sees both levels of the text."

²⁸ Knight, 39.

²⁹ Knight, 13.

³⁰ R. W. Garson, "Homeric Echoes in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*," *Classical Philology* 67:1 (1972): 8.

simile from the *Iliad* is that of Hector awaiting Achilles' arrival outside the walls of Troy in Book 22 (22.93-95). There, Hector is compared to a poisonous snake that coils around its hole, lying in wait for man. The image of the snake provides the point of contact, but Apollonius has altered the larger theme of the simile and its relation to the narrative episode.

These poetic techniques, marked by their highly allusive nature that relies on the reader's detailed knowledge of the model passage, characterize Apollonius' approach to the use of model scenes in general, even when he uses not Homeric passages but his own writing as the model. As a poet composing in a written medium rather than an oral one, Apollonius had the opportunity to construct allusions to and refit scenes within his own poem. In fact, these self-referential connections offer a vitally necessary means of tying together the narrative. Apollonius was a very deliberate writer, and his carefully constructed internal allusions serve important purposes at the level of plot and theme (see Chapter 15).

Apollonius had numerous tools at his command for invoking the ghost of Heracles. He reminds the reader of Heracles through an array of references, ranging from explicit to highly allusive. The most direct method is the *explicit mention* of the hero. This involves either the narrator or a character within the story directly mentioning Heracles by name. Explicit mentions usually revolve around a relevant anecdote involving Heracles, but can range in length from a complete story to just a few words. As these are the most obvious, numerous scholars (e.g. Lawall and Levin) have already remarked on them.

A second, less explicit technique is the *verbal allusion* or *verbal echo*. At times, Apollonius will recall the reader's attention to a previous event in the epic in the same way he invokes Homeric images: by consciously repeating key words. This method works by subtly evoking an earlier scene and inviting the reader to contrast that scene with the current event in the story. Even when the two scenes have no logical connection, a comparison can still be drawn by careful use of similar language. Parallels are strengthened by the use of the same word in the same metrical position in the line.

A third technique is the *extrapolative allusion*. Unlike the verbal allusion, the extrapolative allusion very often does not contain specific words from earlier events. Instead, the poet carefully constructs the scene in such a way that invites the reader to imagine Heracles' presence in the scene. The aptness of the scenario to the character of Heracles creates an expectation, which is automatically disappointed by his absence. By creating the scenario, however, the poet is able to bring Heracles to mind without making any verbal reference to him.

Finally, Apollonius uses *geographic references* to invoke the spirit of Heracles. In some ways a sub-category of extrapolative allusion, geographic references are references to locations that the lost hero was well known to have visited or reached in his travels. The voyaging nature of Book 2 easily lends itself to this type of reference. In many cases, the significance of the sites that the Argonauts visit on their journey to Colchis is inextricably linked with Heracles' earlier actions in the area.

I do not intend to claim that Apollonius thought of allusions in this way when he was writing them, or even that he consciously crafted each allusion that I will discuss. Rather, these are useful categories, tools that facilitate the discussion and comparison of

allusions. For what follows, I think it wise to keep in mind a few guidelines put forward by Virginia Knight for the examination of Homeric allusions in the *Argonautica* and which I find provide good rules of thumb for this general examination of influence and allusion. First, it is impossible to know for certain which allusions are “important” or consciously created by the poet; rather, “the best any one interpreter can do is to note those which have proved helpful to a personal reading and to make a case for them.”³¹ Second, the rarer the vocabulary being repeated, the less of it is needed to create a verbal allusion. Third, the more famous the model scene was at the time of the poem’s composition, the less work the poet needed to do to establish an allusion. In what follows, I attempt to bring to light the allusions to Heracles in Book 2, both the obvious ones and the more subtle ones, and to argue my own case for their importance to our understanding not only of the book itself but the structure of the poem as a whole.

³¹ Knight, 41.

CHAPTER 5: UNITS OF ACTION

The events of Book 2 can be easily divided into discrete units of action. The voyaging nature of this section of the epic, involving frequent embarkations and landings, readily lends itself to this process. These units—not original to the poem—provide convenient chunks of text for analysis. Table 1 below diagrams the structure of Book 2, as identified by William Race.

Table 1: Units of Action within *Argonautica*, Book 2³²

| Unit of Action | Lines | Events |
|-----------------------|--------------|--|
| (1) | 1- 163 | Boxing match of Polydeuces and Amycus |
| (2) | 164- 536 | Stay with Phineus; banishment of the Harpies |
| (3) | 537- 647 | Passage through Cyanean ["Clashing"] rocks |
| (4) | 648- 719 | Voyage to Thynias; epiphany of Apollo |
| (5) | 720- 814 | Voyage to the Mariandynians; stay with Lycus |
| (6) | 815- 898 | Deaths of Idmon and Tiphys |
| (7) | 899- 1029 | Voyage past Sinope and the Amazons |
| (8) | 1030- 1089 | Arrival at Ares' Island; rout of Ares' birds |
| (9) | 1090- 1285 | Rescue of Phrixus' sons and arrival at Colchis |

Each unit of action contains at least one type of reference or allusion to Heracles; many contain more than one. Though these units are artificial divisions of the Book, using them to analyze the narrative allows us to see just how frequent are the poet's references to the lost hero. Proceeding from the first unit to the last, we will see how the ghost of Heracles appears at each step of the Argonauts' journey to Colchis.

³² From William H. Race, ed. and trans. *Argonautica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), xv.

CHAPTER 6: UNIT 1: THE BOXING MATCH

The first book of the *Argonautica* ends with the crew's departure from Mysia, their realization that they have left Heracles behind, and the appearance of Glaucus, who resolves the bitter dispute over Heracles' fate by informing the Argonauts that Heracles was left behind according to the will of Zeus in order that he might complete his Labors and gain immortality (1.1315-1320). The epic's second book commences with the *Argo*'s landing among the Bebrycian people whose king, Amycus, enforces the custom that all visitors must compete with him in a boxing match. As soon as Amycus enjoins the Argonauts to select an opponent for him, the first allusion to the recently lost Heracles occurs. In line 15 of Book 2, Amycus calls upon the Argonauts to choose "the best of the group" to fight him:

τῷ καί μοι τὸν ἄριστον ἀποκριδὸν οἶον ὀμίλου
πυγμαχίῃ στήσασθε καταυτόθι δηρινθῆναι.

(2.15-16)

Therefore choose the best man of your group to stand here and contend with me in boxing.

The two words, τὸν ἄριστον, unquestionably conjure images of Heracles, who was consistently regarded as "the best" of the Argonauts throughout Book 1. During the election of the group's leader at Pagasae prior to the start of the voyage, Jason calls upon the group to select "the best" among them to be their leader:

ἀλλὰ φίλοι, ξυνὸς γάρ ἐς Ἑλλάδα νόστος ὀπίσσω,
ξυναὶ δ' ἄμμι πέλονται ἐς Αἰήταο κέλευθοι,
τούνεκα νῦν τὸν ἄριστον ἀφειδήσαντες ἔλεσθε
ὄρχαμον ἡμείων, ᾧ κεν τὰ ἕκαστα μέλοιτο,
νείκεα συνθεσίας τε μετὰ ξείνοισι βαλέσθαι.

(1.336-340)

But, friends, since our future return to Hellas and our journey to the kingdom of Aetes is common to us all, for these reasons now choose without prejudice the best man to be our leader, who would care for each of these things: settling quarrels and making treaties with foreigners.

The group unanimously and unhesitatingly elects Heracles. Only when the great hero declines the appointment and diplomatically suggests Jason as leader does the group approve this alternative course of action.

Moreover, when the Argonauts realize they have left behind Heracles at the end of Book 1, they once again refer to him as “the best” among them:

ἐν δέ σφιν κρατερὸν νείκος πέσεν, ἐν δὲ κολφός
ἄσπετος, εἰ τὸν ἄριστον ἀποπρολιπόντες ἔβησαν
σφωιτέρων ἐτάρων.

(1.1284-1286)

A powerful argument befell them, unspeakable in its noisy shouting, as to whether they had gone and left behind the best of their companions.

His strength and self-sufficiency, displayed throughout the first book, have shown Heracles deserving of the title of “best of the heroes.” His companions, moreover, have no hesitations in regarding him this way. In calling for “the best” man among the crew, Amycus unconsciously repeats the very words that were used twice before to describe Heracles. Amycus’ command, therefore, establishes the expectation that Heracles should be chosen to fight him—an expectation that is immediately undercut by the reality that Heracles is no longer among the group. This extrapolative allusion, reinforced by the verbal echo of τὸν ἄριστον (an echo that is itself strengthened by the repetition of the phrase in the same metrical location on all three occasions), reminds the reader of the great loss the Argonauts have suffered, now that they sail without their best man.

The boxing match presents the first obstacle that the Argonauts must overcome without Heracles, and the wound of his loss is fresh. Just when they need him most to play the role of the “best” hero, he is absent. The man they choose as his replacement, Polydeuces, contrasts greatly with the mighty hero. Unlike Heracles, the ultimate embodiment of βίη, Polydeuces is clearly a man of τέχνη. Polydeuces wears no rough animal skin but instead a finely woven cloak (ἐύστιπτον ... φᾶρος | λεππαλέον, 2.30-31), a sign of a man of skill rather than strength.³³ He is, like Heracles, a son of Zeus (Διὸς υἱός, 2.43), but he is a young man (ἔτι χνοάντας ιούλους | ἀντέλλων, 2.43-44), beautiful like a shining star (οὐρανίῳ ... ἀστέρι, 2.40-41). Heracles, by contrast, was the only mature adult to join the expedition.³⁴ Although a great boxer in his own right, Polydeuces relies on his skill and cleverness, not his brute strength, to win the fight:

ὥς ὄγε Τυνδαρίδην φοβέων ἔπετ' οὐδέ μιν εἶα
 δηθύνειν, ὁ δ' ἄρ' αἰὲν ἀνούτατος ἦν διὰ μῆτιν
 ἀίσσοντ' ἀλέεινεν.

(2.74-76)

So he [Amycus], putting the son of Tyndareus to flight, pursued him, never allowing him a moment's pause, but he [Polydeuces] was always uninjured through his cleverness, dashing away to escape.

Although Polydeuces concludes the fight with a powerful display of strength when he crushes the bones in Amycus' head, he wins the contest by slyly tripping his opponent to gain the advantageous position:

³³ Clauss, 33.

³⁴ Clauss, 34.

τυτθὸν δ' ἄνδιχα τοῖο παρὲκ γόνυ γουνὸς ἀμείβων,
κόψε μεταίγδην ὑπὲρ οὔατος, ὅστέα δ' εἰς
ὀήξεν· ὁ δ' ἀμφ' ὀδύνη γνύξ ἤριπεν.

(2.94-96)

Rushing after him, [Polydeuces] stuck his knee a little past the other's knee and struck him above the ear and shattered the bones within; with bent knees, [Amycus] sank down in agony.

Had Heracles been present, the boxing match against Amycus would not even have been a contest. He would have been able to dominate the Bebrycian king with sheer might. An anonymous interlocutor (τις) raises this very point at the end of the first unit of action, once Polydeuces has already secured the victory:

ἦδη δ' ἄσπετα μῆλα περιτροπάδην ἐτάμοντο
ἦρωες· καὶ δὴ τις ἔπος μετὰ τοῖσιν ἔειπεν·
“Φράζεσθ' ὅτι κεν ἦσιν ἀνακλείησιν ἔρεξαν,
ἔι πως Ἡρακλῆα θεὸς καὶ δεῦρο κόμισσεν.
ἦτοι μὲν γὰρ ἐγὼ κείνου παρεόντος ἔολπα
οὐδ' ἂν πυγμαχίῃ κρινθήμεναι. ἀλλ' ὅτε θεσμούς
ἦλυθεν ἐξερέων, αὐτοῖς ἀφαρ οἷς ἀγόρευεν
θεσμοῖσιν ῥοπάλῳ μιν ἀγνηροῖς λελαθέσθαι.
ναὶ μὲν ἀκήδεστον γαίῃ ἐνὶ τόνγε λιπόντες
πόντον ἐπέπλωμεν, μάλα δ' ἡμέων αὐτὸς ἕκαστος
εἴσεται οὐλομένην ἄτην ἀπάνευθεν ἐόντος.”

(2.143-153)

The heroes had already rounded up countless sheep; and then someone among them spoke a word: “Imagine what they would have done in their cowardice if somehow a god had brought Heracles here too. For I really do think that with him here they would not have chosen to contend in boxing, that, when the man came, proclaiming his ordinances, the club would have made him forget his haughtiness and the ordinances themselves, which he announced. But we actually left him, neglected, on land as we set sail upon the sea, and each of us heroes will come to know deadly woe, now that he is far away.”

The identity of the author of this speech is of no consequence. The wish expressed is a vain and impossible one, and within the plot of the poem it plays no role.³⁵ No description of the Argonauts' reaction to this sentiment follows.³⁶ The words exist primarily to remind us, the readers, of Heracles' absence. This explicit mention concludes the unit that began with the extrapolative allusion to "the best" Argonaut. These two allusions bookend the entire boxing match, a scene in which Heracles would have been the natural choice of opponent. At the first opportunity since leaving him behind, the Argonauts encounter a situation that seems so explicitly to demand his presence. Instead of being able to rely on his unbeatable strength, the Argonauts, in the first of many instances, must find another solution to the problem at hand. This time, Polydeuces provides them with a satisfactory solution.

³⁵ In this, Apollonius closely follows Homer's use of τις-speeches; in the *Iliad*, these speeches almost never play a role in developing the action of the story (cf. Irene de Jong, "The Voice of Anonymity: τις-Speeches in the *Iliad*," *Eranos* 85 [1987]: 82). De Jong also observes that actual (i.e., actually spoken, not imagined) τις-speeches in the *Iliad* often serve to contrast the private feelings of the ordinary soldiers with the official deeds of the leaders (de Jong, 70). If such an idea is at play here (cf. Telamon's fury at Jason's appearance of unconcern at leaving Heracles, 1.1290-1295), it is quite undeveloped.

³⁶ Again, this closely follows Homeric precedent, particularly the τις-speech at *Iliad* 3.297-301, in which the Greek and Trojan infantrymen hope in vain for an end to the war. The narrator of the *Iliad* reacts to that anonymous speech with the following line:

ὥς ἔφρασαν, οὐδ' ἄρα πῶ σφιν ἐπεκροαίαινε Κρονίων. (*Il.* 3.303)

So they spoke, but the son of Kronos did not grant it to them.

This comment from the omniscient narrator informs the audience of the uselessness of such prayers for peace. In response to the anonymous Argonaut's vain wish, Apollonius' narrator grants his readers a similar (though rare) moment of insight into Zeus' designs:

ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη· τὰ δὲ πάντα Διὸς βουλήσι τέτυκτο. (2.154)

So he spoke; but everything had been fulfilled by Zeus' plans.

In this case, however, the audience is acutely aware of the futility of such a wish as the anonymous speaker has made. In fact, both the reader and the Argonauts themselves understand that Heracles was left behind through Zeus' will because Glaucus has already stated this explicitly (1.1315-1325).

CHAPTER 7: UNIT 2: PHINEUS' PROPHECY

After defeating king Amycus and his Bebrycian tribe, the Argonauts sail on to Thynias where they encounter the doomed seer, Phineus. In the longest unit of action in the book, Phineus tells the heroes how he has been cursed by Zeus for his accurate prophecies and what trials they can expect to encounter during the remainder of their journey. Phineus' prophecy constitutes an overview of the obstacles that the crew will have to overcome without Heracles' help. In doing so, he foreshadows the need for other sources of help—both mortal and divine—to take the place of Heracles' might.

Phineus' actual prophecy is framed by the banishment of the Harpies by the sons of Boreas. When the Argonauts first meet Phineus, he explains that Harpies, sent by Zeus, constantly snatch away his dinner, leaving him tormented by hunger. He is powerless to stop them but reveals that it has been prophesied that the sons of Boreas will stop his torment: τὰς μὲν θέσφατόν ἐστιν ἐρητύσαι Βορέαιο ἰυίεας (2.234-235).³⁷ Zetes and Calais pity the old man and vow to help him, provided that, in doing so, they do not act against the will of the gods. Reassured by Phineus, they prepare their attack. They lie in wait for the Harpies to arrive as they always do when Phineus prepares his meal, ready to use force: ἐγγύθι δ' ἄμφω ἰστήσαν, ἵνα ξίφεσιν ἐπεσσυμένας ἐλάσειαν (“They both stood nearby so that they might strike them with their swords when they swooped down,” 2. 264-265). This idea of force is repeated a few lines later when the sons of Boreas pursue the Harpies through the air, brandishing their swords in an attempt to stop them: τάων δ' αὖ κατόπισθε δύω υἱεσ Βορέαιο ἰ φάσγαν'

³⁷ The banishment of the Harpies by the Boreads was depicted frequently in art, by far the most common situation in which Zetes and Calais were represented. Cf. Karl Schefold, *The Gods and Heroes in Late Archaic Greek Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 192.

ἐπισχόμενοι ἐπ’ ἴσῳ θεόν (2.273-274). Force, however, will not prevail against the Harpies; it will take divine intervention by Iris to keep the Harpies away from Phineus permanently.³⁸

While Boreas’ sons pursue the Harpies, their companions tend to Phineus and hear his description of the adventures that lie before them. His prophecy extends from line 311 to line 425, at which point Zetes and Calais return:

Ὡς φάτ’ Ἀγηνορίδης· ἐπὶ δὲ σχεδὸν νιέε δοιῶ
Θρηκίου Βορέαο κατ’ αἰθέρος ἀίξαντε
οὐδῶ ἔπι κραιπνοὺς ἔβαλον πόδας· ...

(2.426-428)

So spoken the son of Agenor; and nearby the two sons of Thracian Boreas rushed down from the sky and set their swift feet on the threshold...

Their departure and arrival occur at the precise beginning and end, respectively, of Phineus’ prophecy. These two descriptions of the exploits of Boreas’ sons frame Phineus’ description of the voyage that lies ahead.

³⁸ In fact, Iris’ intervention is the only thing that keeps Zetes and Calais from killing the Harpies with their swords:

καί νύ κε δὴ σφ’ ἀέκητι θεῶν διεδηλήσαντο,
πολλὸν ἐκάς νήσοισιν ἐπι Πλωτῆσι κυχόντες,
εἰ μὴ ἄρ’ ὠκέα Ἴρις ἴδεν, κατὰ δ’ αἰθέρος ἄλτο
οὐρανόθεν, καὶ τοῖα παραιφαιμένη κατέρουκεν·
“Οὐ θέμις, ὦ νιεῖς Βορέω, ξιφέεσσιν ἐλάσσαι
Ἄρπυϊας, μέγαλοιο Διὸς κύνας· ὄρκια δ’ αὐτῆ
δώσω ἐγὼν ὡς οὐ οἱ ἔτι χρίψουσιν ἰοῦσαι.” (2.284-290)

[And then they would have torn [the Harpies] to pieces, contrary to the will of the gods, finding them far away on the Floating Islands, if swift-footed Iris had not seen them and dashed down through the upper air from heaven and, exhorting them, restrained them with such words: ‘It is not allowed, sons of Boreas, to strike the Harpies—the hounds of great Zeus—with your swords. I myself will make a solemn pledge that they will no longer go near him.]

This framing in itself does not allude to the lost Heracles. Only in the context of the events of Book 1 does the role of the Boreads gain significance. Zetes and Calais are mentioned twice in the first book. First, they appear at the end of the second half of the catalogue of heroes (in the βίη half³⁹ along with Heracles), last except for Acastus (cf. 1.211-223). The second time, at the end of the book, they take an active part in the debate over Heracles' abandonment. It is they who prevent Tiphys from turning the *Argo* back to Mysia to carry out a search:

καί νύ κεν ἄψ ὀπίσω Μυσῶν ἐπὶ γαίαν ἴκοντο,
λαῖπμα βησάμενοι ἀνέμου τ' ἄλληκτον ἰωήν,
εἰ μὴ Θρηκίῳ δὺο υἱὲς Βορέαο
Αἰακίδην χαλεποῖσιν ἐρητύεσκον ἔπεσιν,
σχέτλιοι·

(1.1298-1302)

And now quickly they would have reached the land of the Mysians, straining against the gulf and the ceaseless roaring of the wind, if the two sons of Thracian Boreas had not restrained the son of Ajax with harsh words—the unfortunate men.

The narrator then describes that these two are “unfortunate” (σχέτλιοι) because Heracles, upon hearing of their role in his abandonment, will enact his revenge upon them and kill them in Tenos. The Boreads' restraint of Tiphys constitutes their largest role in the story until their fight with the Harpies. Enhanced by its position at the end of Book 1, the fact that their destiny is intimately connected with Heracles is prominent in the reader's mind during the second unit of Book 2. Reading the passage in this context, the Boreads' earlier entreaty of Phineus—to promise them that they will not be transgressing the will

³⁹ See Clauss, Chapter 1, esp. 30-31.

of any god by protecting him from the Harpies (2.244-253)—seems steeped in irony.⁴⁰ The reader knows what Boreas' sons do not: that their fate has already been sealed and that they will die at the hand not of a soon-to-be offended deity but of a previously offended demigod. To the informed reader, their complete ignorance of their fate is tragic and their preoccupation with respecting the gods is both unnecessary and ironic.

Through this winking reference to the fate of Boreas' sons and through the framing of Phineus' prophecy with their pursuit of the Harpies, the poet achieves an extrapolative allusion to Heracles without ever mentioning the lost hero himself. Even in a setting so removed from his sphere of influence, Heracles hangs over the Argonauts like a specter. Such an allusion also draws attention to the absence of Heracles during the upcoming trials that Phineus describes. As they learn about their future challenges, the Argonauts are without their best hero; even worse, they will be without his aid when they actually face them. They will need to find ways to overcome them on their own.

⁴⁰ Feeney (71, n. 49) also recognizes irony in this poetic gesture.

CHAPTER 8: UNIT 3: THE CLASHING ROCKS

The first peril that the Argonauts face after leaving Phineus is passage through the Clashing Rocks that guard the mouth of the Black Sea. In this scene, the importance of rowing arises often. The poet uses rowing as a means to allude to Heracles throughout the scene. Heracles' great strength made him invaluable on the *Argo* in Book 1: he was unanimously elected to the middle rowing bench (cf. 1.394-401) and he could row the *Argo* all by himself, outrunning even Poseidon's horses (cf. 1.1153-1171). In their attempt to navigate the Clashing Rocks, Heracles' strength is sorely missed.

As the Argonauts approach the rocks, the helplessness of their situation is emphasized. Waves without warning crash around the boat, threatening to capsize it. The *Argo* seems not to respond to the frantic struggles of the oarsmen:

Εὐφημος δ' ἀνὰ πάντας ἰὼν βοάσκειν ἑταίρους
ἐμβαλέειν κώπησιν ὅσον σθένος. οἱ δ' ἀλαλητῶ
κόπτον ὕδωρ· ὅσον δ' ὑποείκαθε νηὺς ἐρέτησιν,
δις τόσον ἄψ ἀπόρουσεν, ἐπεγνάμποντο δὲ κῶπαι
ἥυτε καμπύλα τόξα, βιαζομένων ἡρώων.

(2.588-592)

Going among all of them, Euphemos shouted to his comrades to put as much strength as they had into their oars. And they struck the water with a shout. As much as the ship yielded to their oars, twice as much did it swiftly rebound, and the oars bent like curved bows as the heroes strained at them.

In these lines, Apollonius brings together three separate allusions to Heracles to remind the reader of his absence. The first, an extrapolative allusion, is created by the prominence of rowing, one of Heracles' strengths. Descriptions of the crew's rowing are threaded throughout the entire scene, acting as a gauge for the difficulty of the ship's passage. As Euphemos releases the dove whose flight through the Rocks will indicate

whether the *Argo*'s own passage will be safe, Tiphys commands the Argonauts to row "at ease" (θελήμονα, 2.557) so that they will be able to "trust in their strength" (κάρτει ὧ πῖσυνοι, 2.559) during the actual passage through the rocks. Once the dove has passed through, essentially unharmed except for a few missing tail feathers, the crew—here merely called "rowers" (ἑρέται, 2.573)—rejoices and Tiphys, seizing upon the fortuitous moment, commands them "to row with all their might" (ἑρεσσέμεναι κρατερώς, 2.574). But even their most vigorous rowing seems ineffectual in the face of the Clashing Rocks. It is a large wave, not their own efforts, that carries them forward between the rocks. The crew's rowing is even portrayed as working against their successful passage. Their rowing would have brought about the ship's destruction when a second wave approaches, for the *Argo*, "burdened by the rowing" (ὑπ' εἰρεσίῃ βαρύθουσσαν, 2.584), would have capsized if Tiphys had not eased up on the helm and allowed the wave to pass beneath the hull. The ship seems always to be dragged backwards by waves, contrary to the strenuous efforts being made by the rowers. Confronted with the rough seas created by the motion of the Clashing Rocks, their strength is able to accomplish nothing. In spite of their futile efforts, though, they are brought through safely by a large wave heading in the right direction and, ultimately, by the push Athena gives the *Argo*, the ship she helped build. Just like the tail feathers of the dove that preceded it, the *Argo*'s stern ornament is shorn off in the process.

The futility of the Argonauts' rowing contrasts sharply with Heracles' own exceptional ability. Heracles displayed this rowing prowess during the rowing contest in Book 1, where he not only outlasted all of his shipmates and rowed the *Argo* into opposing winds, but he even moved the ship over the water faster than Poseidon's horses

could move. The scene of the Clashing Rocks and the Argonauts' complete inability to move the ship forward invites the reader to imagine Heracles and the impact his presence at the rowing bench would have had on the episode. No doubt he could have easily forced the ship through the difficult passage while his crewmates rested at their oars. He, who had the ability to outdo even Poseidon, would have needed only to rely on his own strength. In his absence, the helpless Argonauts survive only through the assistance of Poseidon's niece.

This manner of extrapolative allusion is strengthened by several verbal echoes of Heracleian scenes from Book 1. First, the poet describes how Tiphys urges the Argonauts to save their strength early on so that they will be able to rely on it later: *κάσται ᾧ πίσυνοι*. This phrase harkens back to Heracles, who can be said to “rely on his strength” as a matter of course and to a greater extent than any other hero in all of the Greek mythical tradition. The poet has already made this explicit. During the scene of his uprooting of the tree, Heracles is described as “relying on his (manly) strength:” *ἠνορέη πίσυνος* (1.1198). These two phrases—descriptions of the Argonauts and of Heracles—are essentially identical in meaning, and remarkably similar in form (varied slightly in the manner we would expect from Apollonius, who avoids word-for-word repetition in general⁴¹) and in meter (both occupy the first two and a half feet of their respective lines⁴²). It is the great irony of the scene at the Clashing Rocks that the Argonauts rely vainly on their own strength. Whereas Heracles' faith in his might is well founded, since

⁴¹ Cf. Knight, 12-17.

⁴² Compare:

ἠνορέη πίσυνος, ἐν δὲ πλατὺν ὄμον ἔρεισεν (1.1198)

and

κάσται ᾧ πίσυνοι. τὰς δ' ἀντίκα λοίσθιον ἄλλων (2.559).

it yields tangible results (e.g., the uprooting of the tree), the Argonauts possess insufficient strength for the task at hand. This irony heightens the sense of loss created by Heracles' absence, as cultivated through the poet's extrapolative allusions.

The poet has already given his readers reason to expect this failure of the Argonauts' strength. When put to a similar test in Book 1, their strength failed then also. In the scene of Heracles' quasi-*aristeia* of rowing, the Argonauts' rowing abilities are tested in the rowing contest. As they take up their oars, they are described as "relying" — not on their strength, as in the Clashing Rock scene, but rather on the calmness of the sea (γαληναίη πίσυννοι, 1.1156) to aid their progress. Relying on this calmness, they row the ship with strength (βίη, 1.1157). For all of their strength and the calmness of the sea, though, the Argonauts fail at the very task they have set for themselves. Though they are able (for a rather brief span of time) to row the *Argo* at a rate that could outrun even Poseidon's horses, as soon as the sea becomes turbulent (here, a *σάλος* arises) they grow tired from their labor and stop rowing (τειρόμενοι καμάτῳ μετελώφρον, 1.1161). They leave it up to Heracles to keep the boat moving forward. Indeed, they can be said to be Ἡρακλέη πίσυννοι more than anything else. The sea swells that the Argonauts face in this scene from Book 1 cannot compare in intensity to those generated by the Clashing Rocks, but they look forward to those waves. When the rowers face the Clashing Rocks, they are not able to trust in any sort of calmness (since the nature of the Rocks is the antithesis of calm) and so have only their physical strength on which to rely. Just as their own strength failed them in the journey to Mysia, it will fail them again at the Clashing Rocks, but under much more dire circumstances. Unfortunately, they will no longer be able to rely on Heracles.

Other verbal reminders of Heracles occur throughout the Argonauts' journey through the Clashing Rocks. As the Argonauts struggle to propel their ship through the rocks, they are described as “straining” at their oars, which have become bent like “curved bows” under the force:

ἤύτε καμπύλα τόξα βιαζομένων ἡρώων
(2.592)

[The oars bent] like curved bows as the heroes strained at them

Packed into this one line are three words that apply directly to Heracles. First, as the Argonauts themselves realize, he is the greatest hero (ἥρωος) of all heroes. Second, the bow (τόξον) is one of his iconic weapons and it was conspicuously present throughout Book 1.⁴³ Third, using force (βιάζειν) is a notoriously Heraclean quality, who as we have seen epitomizes βίη (see Chapter 2). Any images or reminiscences of Heracles conjured by this line are ultimately frustrated by the fact that Heracles, the one hero who would have been able to ply the oars with some success, is no longer numbered among the rowers.

These verbal and extrapolative allusions, each of which could work independently to evoke the memory of Heracles, combine here powerfully to emphasize the desperate straits the Argonauts find themselves in without Heracles' strength. His powerful rowing skills, one of the characteristics that made him so valuable to the crew in Book 1 and in fact enabled the success of the voyage up to their arrival in Mysia, could have easily

⁴³ The bow is mentioned during Heracles' appearance in the catalogue of heroes (1.132) and in the tree scene (1.1195, 1.1205). It is also the weapon he uses to dispatch the Earthborn men at Cyzicus (1.992-994). Later, it will play an important role on Ares' island (see Chapter 13 below).

brought the *Argo* through the Clashing Rocks. Just like Amycus in the boxing scene, the Clashing Rocks present an obstacle almost perfectly suited to Heracles' skill set. The poet's repeated allusions to him pointedly remind the reader of "the best" hero's absence. In the face of his untimely loss, the Argonauts must once again find another solution to a problem seemingly insurmountable without Heracles. In the case of the boxing match, Polydeuces' skill and cleverness won the Argonauts the victory. In this case, the human effort provided by the rowers does not suffice. The *Argo* would not have made it safely through the rocks had not Athena pushed it through: καὶ τότε Ἀθηναίη στιβαρῆ ἀντέσπασε πέτρης ἰσκαίῃ, δεξιτερῆ δὲ διαμπερὲς ὥσε φέρεσθαι ("And then Athena braced her sturdy left hand upon a rock and with her right pushed it on its way through," 2.598-599). The Argonauts manage without Heracles, but just barely: the Rocks break off the tip of the stern ornament as they slam shut for the last time.

CHAPTER 9: UNIT 4: VOYAGE TO THYNIAS

The theme of rowing and labor that dominated Unit 3 continues into the next unit of action. As the Argonauts make their way through the Black Sea, the difficulty of the rowing gains emphasis. The rowing itself is described as “toil” (πόνον, 2.649). The crew spends the night as well as the day toiling at the oar. The struggle of the oarsmen themselves gains emphasis through a simile comparing them to oxen toiling under the yoke:

ὁμῶς δ' ἐπὶ ἡματι νύκτα
νήνεμον ἀκαμάτησιν ἐπερρώοντ' ἐλάτησιν
οἶον δὲ πλαδόωσαν ἐπισχίζοντες ἄρουραν
ἐργατῖναι μογέουσι βόες, πέρι δ' ἄσπετος ἰδρῶς
εἴβεται ἐκ λαγόνων τε καὶ αὐχένος, ὄμματα δέ σφιν
λοξὰ παραστροφῶνται ὑπὸ ζυγοῦ, αὐτὰρ αὐτμῆ
αὐαλέη στομάτων ἄμοτον βρέμει· οἱ δ' ἐνὶ γαίῃ
χηλὰς σκηρίπποντε πανημέριοι πονέονται·
τοῖς ἴκελοι ἦρωες ὑπέξ ἄλδος εἶλκον ἐρετμά.

(2.660-668)

Nevertheless at the end of the day and throughout the breezeless night they put their strength into the tireless oars, just as plowing oxen cleave the soil, toiling laboriously, and sweat drips incessantly from their flanks and necks, and their slanting eyes roll about under the yoke, and their parched breath heaves incessantly; all day long, they lean on their hooves as they toil in the earth; like these the heroes dragged their oars out of the sea.

This simile works to invoke Heracles' ghost on two levels, first in the contrast in expenditure of effort between the Argonauts and Heracles, and second through verbal allusions to Heracles' final corporeal appearance in the poem.

At the level of plot, the poet invites comparison between Heracles and the Argonauts as they struggle here to row the ship. This task is clearly difficult for them, as the comparison to toiling cattle (μογέουσι βόες) makes clear. In fact, their toiling has not changed since the rowing contest of Book 1, where the poet also describes them as

μογέοντας (1.1162). The labor evident in this simile offers a stark contrast to the ease with which Heracles rowed the *Argo* in the same contest. The Argonauts manage to reach Thynias, but once again, the plot invites the reader to extrapolate how the presence of Heracles would have enabled them to accomplish the task more easily.

On the verbal level, the level of allusions that subtly bind one scene to another, the poet develops the comparison of the Argonaut rowers to Heracles. Here the nature of the oxen simile plays a critical role. At the moment of Heracles' disappearance from the poem, in the reader's last image of him as he searches vainly for Hylas, he is compared to a bull enraged by the stings of a gadfly (1.1261-1272). He rushes about madly, now dashing forward, now stand still, apparently without method in his madness. As the Argonauts toil in this scene in Book 2, they are likewise compared to cattle. The poet describes how sweat (ἰδρῶς, 1.1261) pours down Heracles' face in his horror at Hylas' disappearance. Likewise, sweat (ἰδρῶς, 2.663) drips from the bodies of the toiling cows in the later simile.⁴⁴ In his heightened emotional state, Heracles drops to the ground the pine tree (ἐλάτην, 1.1263) he has just uprooted. The Argonauts strain at their oars (ἐλάτησιν, 2.661).

This last verbal echo offers a very interesting example of the poet's manipulation of key words. The word ἐλάτη can mean both tree (specifically, a pine) and the oar of a ship. In Book 1, when Heracles first enters the Mysian woods to fashion a new oar, he finds a pine tree (ἐλάτην, 1.1190) that is well suited to this purpose since it is tall and slender and without many branches or needles. In this context, ἐλάτη unquestionably

⁴⁴ This verbal connection is strengthened by the identical position of the word at the end of the line. Cf:

ὡς φάτο· τῷ δ' αἰόντι κατὰ κροτάφων ἄλις ἰδρῶς (1.1261) and
ἐργατῖναι μογέουσι βόες, πέρι δ' ἄσπετος ἰδρῶς (2.663).

refers to a tree, since Heracles finds it growing in the forest. When the word reappears in the scene of Heracles' rampage, when he throws it to the ground in his rage (χωόμενος δ' ἐλάτην χαμάδις βάλεν, 1.1263), the word still refers to the literal tree, but it is possible to see the shift in meaning beginning to occur. The tree has lost some of its inherent treeness during its uprooting. Now it is a lifeless, inanimate object, more akin to an oar than a living plant. Heracles destroyed it with the intention of turning it into an oar and, at the time of his rampage, he is halfway to completing this task. Though the ἐλάτη may not yet have the precise shape of an oar, it has the inanimate status of one and is destined to become one. In the scene of the Argonauts' rowing, the ἐλάται (plural here) are unquestionably oars, the oars at which they toil, futilely, in the absence of Heracles, whose own fate is inextricably tied to oars and rowing.⁴⁵ The meaning of this single word changes as it recurs throughout the epic, but it can never shake the associations it acquires through its appearance in earlier scenes.

The Argonauts land at the island of Thynias where they rest and sacrifice to Apollo. The unit of action ends with the heroes building an altar and dedicating it to Concord (Ὁμονοίης, 2.718). Coming after an extended description of their vision of Apollo walking on the island and their sacrifices to the god, this detail about Concord comes as a surprise, since a dedication to Apollo would make the most logical sense. The narrator explains that this dedication to “the most glorious goddess” (κυδίστην ... δαίμονα, 2.719) is prompted by an oath the heroes swore, an oath to teamwork:

⁴⁵ In one sense, he is doomed to be separated from the expedition because of his extraordinary rowing ability: his challenging of Poseidon during the rowing contest seals his fate (cf. Clauss, 181-183).

...ἧ μὲν ἀθήξειν
ἀλλήλοις εἰσαιὲν ὁμοφροσύνῃσι νόοιο,
ἀπτόμενοι θυέων·

(2.715-717)

As they lay hold of the sacrifices, they all agreed to help one another forever more.

The concept of Concord among the Argonauts is a theme that develops throughout the second book of the epic. Within Book 1, Heracles himself causes strife (νεῖκος) at least three times, either directly or indirectly: first, during the election of the group leader, when Jason, newly elected, inadvertently sparks a heated debate between Idas and Idmon (1.462-495); later, at Lemnos, when he upbraids (νείκεσεν) the crew for dallying so long (1.861-876); and, finally, indirectly after his abandonment when the crew argues over his fate (1.1290-1301). The concord among the crew, which is so prominent at this point in the second book that they thought it appropriate to dedicate an altar to the goddess, has developed out of the necessity for teamwork following the loss of Heracles. Without the mighty hero present to accomplish the difficult tasks for them, as the incidents of the boxing match and the Clashing Rocks have already made clear, the Argonauts are forced to rely on one another to complete the mission. Since “no one among the rest of the Argonauts, including Jason, could possibly achieve the goal of the quest by himself,”⁴⁶ Concord truly is “the most glorious goddess” from the Argonauts’ perspective because she is the only one who will guarantee the success of the mission.

⁴⁶ Clauss, 177.

CHAPTER 10: UNIT 5: VOYAGE TO THE MARIANDYNIANS

After dedicating the altar to Concord, the Argonauts sail on to the Acherusian headland where the Mariandynian people and their king Lycus live. The Argonauts have now arrived in a region where Heracles had a significant presence in the past. In this unit of action, Apollonius combines extrapolative allusions with geographic references to Heracles' earlier exploits to recall the lost hero to mind. This geographic overlap will continue to influence subsequent units as well, as the Argonauts follow in Heracles' gigantic footsteps.

Displaying an unabashed and open nature, Jason does not avoid discussing Heracles' abandonment when he relates to Lycus the story of their journey. He explicitly mentions Heracles and expresses remorse at leaving him behind: Μυσιδα θ' ὡς ἀφίκοντο Κίον θ', ὅθι κάλλιπον ἦρω | Ἡρακλέην ἀέκοντι νόω ("[Jason told] how they left Mysia and Kios, where they unintentionally [or, perhaps, unwillingly] left the hero Heracles," 2.766-767). This detail of their journey is included as prominently as the details of the Lemnian women and the Clashing Rocks, indicating that it still weighs heavily upon Jason's mind. Clearly, the Argonauts still feel Heracles' absence as acutely as the reader. Lycus responds to this piece of news with shock and distress: ὦ φίλοι, οἴου φωτὸς ἀποπλαγχθέντες ἀρωγῆς | πείρετ' ἐς Αἰήτην τόσσον πλόον ("O friends, the help of such a man you have lost in your attempt at such a long voyage to Aeetes!" 2.774-775). This reaction articulates the emotion that Apollonius' allusions to the lost hero have been cultivating in the reader throughout Book 2: that the loss of Heracles was indeed a terrible one. Lycus gives voice to the natural sentiment of the reader.

Lycus' speech marks only the second instance of an explicit mention to Heracles in Book 2. The first came after the boxing match (Unit 1) when an anonymous crewmember remarked how easily Heracles would have been able to defeat Amycus if he had been present. At that point, the loss was fresh and painful for the Argonauts. Since then, they Argonauts have undergone many trials and succeeded despite Heracles' absence. The grief (ἄχος, 2.773) that Lycus feels contrasts starkly with the Argonauts' own feelings or, more accurately, lack of feelings. The anonymous exclamation after the boxing match reveals perhaps a frustrated individual who is trying to accept the blow that fate has dealt the crew. But at no point, after the immediate realization in Book 1 that they have left Heracles behind, does the poet describe any emotion on the part of Jason or any other crewmember at Heracles' absence. To judge from Jason's own version of the trip, in which he sandwiches the event of Heracles' abandonment in between the details of their visit to Mysia and Kios and Glaucus' oracle, giving it no more or no less emphasis than the other details, Heracles' abandonment is of no more consequence to him than the rest of their adventures. But it is this aspect of Jason's story that Lycus picks up and this that provokes his feelings of grief.

In this scene, a deep divide exists between the feelings of the Argonauts and the feelings of the reader, as voiced by Lycus. In the moments following the crew's realization that Heracles had been left behind, a disagreement (νεῖκος) occurs among them as to the appropriate course of action. Jason takes the news particularly hard, eating his heart out with feelings of distress and grief (βαρείη νειόθεν ἄτη | θυμὸν ἔδων, 1.1288-1289). But once the disagreement is resolved, the crew never again mentions their lost companion, with the notable exception of the one anonymous interlocutor from Unit

1. To all appearances, the Argonauts seem content to put the unfortunate event behind them and move forward.⁴⁷ The reader, on the other hand, is not allowed to do the same. The incessant references to Heracles, both subtle and direct, keep the figure of the lost hero present in the reader's mind. When Lycus exclaims to the Argonauts about the value of the lost Heracles, he voices the emotions that the poet has been cultivating in the reader. At every step of the journey, the reader has been asked to consider how the tasks could have been accomplished more easily with Heracles' aid and therefore has a good idea of "what sort of man" (οἴου φωτὸς, 2.774) the Argonauts have lost.

During this unit, the connection and inherent comparison between Polydeuces and Heracles, established in the first unit of the book, becomes stronger. The Mariandynians welcome Polydeuces as a god (ὥστε θεὸν, 2.756) because he defeated Amycus, with whom they had been warring ever since Heracles withdrew from the region. Lycus describes to the Argonauts how, on his way to gain Hippolyte's belt, Heracles himself boxed with and defeated the mighty Titias (Τιτίην ἀπεκαίνυτο πυγμαχέοντα ἰκροατρὸν, 2.783-784). This story reinforces the reader's original impression created in Unit 1 that Heracles rather than Polydeuces would have been the natural choice for an opponent to Amycus, since Heracles has experience with such duels. Even in this description, Polydeuces cannot compare to the mighty Heracles, who used his strength (βίην, 2.785) to subdue not one tribe, as Polydeuces did,⁴⁸ but four: the Mysians (2.786), the Mygdones (2.787), the Bithynians (2.788), and the Paphlagonians (2.790).

⁴⁷ Green, 36-37: "Despite the Argonauts' protestations, several times reiterated [e.g., at 2.145-53; 774-95; 3.1232-34; 4.1436-82, esp. 1458-60], it is clear that they are much happier regretting his absence than dealing with his monstrous and unmanageable presence."

⁴⁸ After defeating their king Amycus, Polydeuces leads the Argonauts in the destruction of the entire Bebrycian tribe (cf. 2.98-129).

Polydeuces' defeat of Amycus cannot compare with such an extreme display of heroic might. The reader at this late stage is once again reminded of the hallmark characteristic of Heracles as he was depicted in Book 1: unequalled physical strength.

Although Heracles' strength and dominance cannot be matched, the Argonauts find themselves completing tasks in the region that he left unfinished. Lycus describes how the Bebrycians began attacking his people once Heracles left the region and the threat he posed had disappeared. By killing Amycus and demolishing the Bebrycian tribe, Polydeuces and the Argonauts have made the region safe for the Mariandynians for the first time since Heracles' departure.

This unit of action marks the first instances of geographic reference to Heracles' exploits in the region. Most obviously, the Argonauts are presented as completing a task left unfinished by Heracles, namely securing the area for the Mariandynians. In doing so, they are directly following in the footsteps of their lost companion. In addition to this quite explicit geographic reference (which is, as shown above, strengthened by a direct reference and an extrapolative allusion created through the character of Polydeuces), the poet includes a much more subtle reference to Heracles' actions in the region. Earlier in the unit, as the Argonauts sail along the Acherusian headland on their way to Lycus' port, they pass the "cave of Hades" (σπέος ... Ἄϊδαο, 2.735). This well-known opening to the underworld was believed to be the exit Heracles used when bringing Cerberus to Eurystheus.⁴⁹ In this rather oblique reference to one of the Twelve Labors, the poet depends solely upon the reader's knowledge of Heraclean mythology, for he includes no other allusions in this brief description. This geographic reference, though—together with

⁴⁹ Cf. Green, 244.

the reference to Heracles' involvement with the Mariandynians—marks the beginning of a series of such references that will dominate the descriptions of the Argonauts' voyage throughout the rest of the book (see especially Chapter 14).

CHAPTER 11: UNIT 6: DEATHS OF IDMON AND TIPHYS

During their stay with the Mariandynians, the Argonauts lose two more prominent members of their crew. Both Idmon the seer and Tiphys the helmsmen meet their fate in this land. The scene of Idmon's death and his crewmates' reaction to it constitutes the major focus of the unit. The poet describes how a wild boar lives in the marshes and how no human knows of its existence, but it is so dangerous that the nymphs who inhabit the area are afraid to go near it. The nymphs' fear turns out to be justified, as the boar, unprovoked, charges and with its tusk spears Idmon, who was merely walking near its reedy lair.

This scene is loosely based on Homeric precedent. Two Homeric boar-hunting scenes come readily to mind. One is the story of the Calydonian boar hunt in *Iliad* 9, the events of which provide a general outline for the Apollonian scene. According to Phoenix's version of the story, Artemis, angry with Meleager, sent a white-tusked boar (σὺν ἀργιόδοντα, 9.539) to wreak havoc on his property. The boar was massive and did much damage, killing numerous men. In the end, it took an entire group of huntsmen with their dogs to kill it. Apollonius' boar, though it kills only Idmon, is similarly large and dangerous and even has the same white tusks (ἀργιόδων, 2.820). Both boars also have a connection to the divine world. The Calydonian boar was sent by Artemis to be a punishment for Meleager. The Apollonian boar is called a "destructive omen" (ὄλοὸν τέρας, 2.820), of whose existence only the river nymphs are aware.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This reduced importance of the gods—who were not even aware of the monster, let alone responsible for its presence—fits with Apollonius' peculiar and un-Homeric representation of the divine, where the gods, in particular one acting as an avenging deity, are often absent. See Feeney for a detailed analysis of the role of the gods in the *Argonautica*.

In characteristic fashion, Apollonius takes some of the Homeric imagery and phrasing and refits it to his own scene. Homer describes how Meleager “conquered” the Calydonian boar: οὐ μὲν γὰρ κε δάμη παύροισι βροτοῖσιν (9.545). In the scene of Idmon’s death, however, it is fate which “conquers” Idmon: χρεὼ ἦγε δαμῆναι (2.817). Apollonius also retains the image of the men’s shouting, which in Homer occurs when the Kouretes and the Aitoloi argue over possession of the boar’s carcass (πολὺν κέλαδον καὶ ἀυτήν, 9.547). In the Apollonian scene, Idmon cries aloud in his agony at being attacked and his companions respond to his cry with shouts: ὄξυ δ’ ὄγε κλάγξας, οὔδαι πέσεν· οἱ δ’ ἐρυγόντες | ἄθροοι ἀντιάχησαν (“With a sharp cry he fell down; they, rushing to him, shouted as one,” 2.827-828). These connections occur only at the level of imagery, since no verbal echoes of the Homeric scene occur in the Apollonian one. To my eye, beyond the use of the word ἀγριόδων (where Homer uses ἀργιόδοντα) and the repetition of the verb δαμάω, Apollonius deploys no verbal echoes of the Homeric scene. Even the boar itself goes by another name, a σῦς in Homer whereas Apollonius calls his a κάπριος. Probably the mere mention of a “white-tusked boar” is enough to recall without hesitation the Homeric scene in the mind of a well-educated reader. Beyond large-scale similarities in plot (a large and ominous beast that kills humans), the poet does little with his language to encourage this association.

The other Homeric boar-hunting scene is the story behind Odysseus’ telltale scar in *Odyssey* 19. The Apollonian boar shares more characteristics with the boar of this story than it does with the Calydonian boar. The boar of Odysseus’ youth also has white tusks. It too lies in wait in a hidden lair (ἐν λόχμῃ πυκνῇ, 19.439). As the men come too close, the aggressive boar also emerges from its hiding place, on the attack (ὁ δ’ ἀντίος

ἐκ ξυλόχοιο | φρίξας εὖ λοφίην, 19.445-446). It even wounds Odysseus in approximately the same location that the Apollonian boar wounds Idmon: in the thigh.

Though the two scenes share many details, Apollonius seems to avoid using the Homeric vocabulary. Apollonius' boars are always κάπριοι, thereby inverting Homer's consistent preference for the word σῦς over κάπριος.⁵¹ Both boars have white tusks, but the one in the *Odyssey* is described as λευκῶ ὀδόντι (19.393), not ἀργιόδων (2.820). Odysseus receives his wound somewhere "above the knee" (γουνὸς ὕπερ, 19.449); Idmon's wound, while ostensibly in the same location, is specifically located in his μηρόν (2.825).⁵² The most overt echo comes in Apollonius' description of Idas' slaying of the boar. The boar rushes at him (ἔσσυτο δ' αὐτίς ἐναντίως, 2.830), but Idas wounds it with his spear (οὔτασε, 2.831). In the Homeric scene, when the boar stands to face the hunting party (στῆ ῥ' αὐτῶν σχεδόθεν, 19.446), Odysseus is the first to rush at it with his spear (ἔσσυτ', 19.447); after being wounded himself, Odysseus lands a deadly blow on its right shoulder (οὔτησε τυχὼν κατὰ δεξιὸν ὄμω). Verbal allusions at this point in the narrative are perhaps ironic because Idas, unlike Odysseus, is the *second* man to attempt to kill the boar after Peleus fails to hit it, undercutting the epic glory of the

⁵¹ In the *Iliad*, the word σῦς appears ten times while κάπριος appears only three times: 11.293, 11.414, 12.42. In *Iliad* 11, Odysseus is compared to a white-tusked (λευκὸν ὀδόντα, 11.416) boar (κάπριον, 11.414) being hunted by youths and their dogs. Also in *Iliad* 11 is a two-line simile comparing Hector to a boar or lion upon which a huntsman has set his dogs. This simile offers a neat inversion of the following one of Odysseus since now it is the Trojan Hector who is hunted by the Achaeans, rather than the Greek Odysseus surrounded by the Trojans. The adjective ἀργιόδοντας appears again, this time, though, describing the huntsman's dogs, not his prey. The word κάπριος never appears in the *Odyssey*.

⁵² Apollonius includes one brief, semi-ironic reference to the Homeric wound. Whereas Odysseus' wound does not penetrate to the bone (οὐδ' ὀστέον ἔκετο φωτός, 19.450), the tusk of the Apollonian boar pierces the sinews and the bone (μέσσας δὲ σὺν ὀστέω ἵνας ἔκερσεν, 2.826). Perhaps this is an explanation for why Idmon's wound was fatal while Odysseus' was not.

Homeric scene. In his customary manner, Apollonius has taken a Homeric model scene and adapted it to a new purpose within his epic. In general, however, he seems more indebted to the general plot of these two Homeric boar-hunting scenes than to specific verbal allusions.

Far more significant are the verbal allusions that connect the boar responsible for Idmon's death to another boar from an earlier scene in the *Argonautica*. The reader's first encounter with a destructive boar in fact occurs in the catalogue of Book 1, when Heracles first appears, carrying the Erymanthian boar strapped to his back. The poet describes how the still-living boar had fed in the great Erymanthian marsh before Heracles captured it, fulfilling one of his Twelve Labors:

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ αἶε βᾶξιν ἀγειρομένων ἡρώων
νεῖον ἀπ' Ἀρκαδίας Λυρκήιον Ἄργος ἀμείψας,
τὴν ὁδὸν ἢ ζῶν φέρε κάπριον ὅς ῥ' ἐνὶ βήσσης
~~φέρβειτο~~ Λαμπεΐης Ἐρυμάνθιον ἀμ μέγα τίφος

(1.124-127)

But when he heard the report that the heroes were gathering, he had just then returned to Lyrkeian Argos from Arcadia along the road by which he was carrying the wild boar — still alive — which in the Lampeian glens had fed on the wide Erymanthian marsh.

This iconic image of the great hero completing one of his mythical Labors presents Heracles at his most powerful. Such a presentation of Heracles, as we have seen, sets the tone for his role in the rest of the book.

In the scene of Idmon's death, Apollonius creates verbal allusions to this earlier Heracleian passage through conscious repetition of key words. Compare with the passage above the description of the boar that kills Idmon:

κείτο γὰρ εἰαμενῆ δονακώδεος ἐν ποταμοίῳ,
ψυχόμενος λαγόνας τε καὶ ἄσπετον ἰλύι νηδύν,
κάπριος ἀργιόδων, ὄλοδὸν τέρας, ὃν ὅα καὶ αὐταί
νύμφαι ἐλειονόμοι ὑπεδείδισαν· οὐδέ τις ἀνδρῶν
ἠεῖδει, οἷος δὲ κατὰ πλατὺ βόσκετο τίφος.

(2.818-822)

For there lay in a pasture beside the reedy river, cooling its flanks and belly in the mud, a white-tusked wild boar, a destructive portent, which even the marsh nymphs themselves feared; no man knew about it, since it fed all alone in the wide marsh.

Both boars are identified with the word κάπριος. Both live in a river habitat. Like the Erymanthian boar, the boar that kills Idmon feeds (cf. βόσκετο with φέρβετο) in the marsh (cf. πλατὺ ... τίφος with μέγα τίφος). The imagery of the second scene closely parallels that of the first and several key words, or close synonyms (e.g., βόσκετο), have been reused. A close analysis, though, of the final line from each passage shows that Apollonius has connected these scenes through identical placement of the word τίφος in the line:

φέρβετο | Λαμπεί- | ης || Ἐρυ- | μάνθιον | ἄμ μέγα | τίφος (1.127)

ἠεῖ- | δει, οἶ- | ος || δὲ κα- | τὰ πλατὺ | βόσκετο | τίφος (2.822)

These lines contain far stronger verbal echoes than are seen in either of the Homeric models upon which the scene of Idmon's death was based. Both Apollonian lines contain a nearly identical idea: a boar feeding in a marsh. In the two lines, φέρβετο and βόσκετο are synonyms with no significant difference in meaning; they are both used in the middle voice. In both lines, the word τίφος is placed in the last foot of the line, lending it additional emphasis. The fact that this word appears nowhere in the Homeric corpus, and that therefore Apollonius' use of it does not rely on Homeric precedent, strengthens the

connection between the two passages. In the first line, the marsh is “large” (μέγα); in the second, in a nearly synonymous turn of phrase, it is described as “broad” (πλατὺ). In addition to these verbal echoes, the two lines have very similar metrical structures: Both contain a strong caesura (||) in the third foot and a bucolic dieresis between the fourth and fifth feet. The multiple points of contact between these two lines—contact along visual, verbal, and metrical lines—preclude the hypothesis that the second scene is not consciously alluding to the first. The fact that neither scene is drawing upon Homeric vocabulary confirms that the earlier scene influenced the later one. The second passage has been carefully constructed to remind the reader of the first, thereby introducing the memory of Heracles into the new scene, although it logically does not relate to him.⁵³

This strong verbal allusion to Heracles serves to draw attention to the Argonauts’ unique method of problem solving through teamwork. When Idmon accidentally stumbles across the white-tusked boar and receives a deadly blow to the leg, all of the other heroes quickly rush to his aid. Peleus is the first to attack the boar; his throw evidently misses the mark since the animal begins to charge its attacker. Idas steps to the fore and impales it with his spear:

⁵³ The Calydonian boar shares several characteristics with Heracles: (1) both uproot trees; (2) in both scenes, the act of destruction and toppling the tree, as well as the roots of the tree are emphasized. This provides another (less direct) avenue for connecting Heracles with Idmon’s death: The boar that kills Idmon resembles the Calydonian boar; Heracles resembles the Calydonian boar; therefore, on some level, Heracles is present in the death of Idmon. This scene exemplifies the complex relationship between Apollonius’ model Homeric scenes and their manifestations in the text of the *Argonautica*. Very often, the allusions work on multiple, and sometimes conflicting, levels.

οἱ δ' ἐρυγόντος
ἀθρόοι ἀντιάχησαν. ὀρέξατο δ' αἶψ' ὀλοοῖο
Πηλεὺς αἰγανέη φύγαδ' εἰς ἔλος ὀρμηθέντος
καπρίου· ἔσσυτο δ' αὐτίς ἐναντίος, ἀλλά μιν Ἴδας
οὔτασε, βεβρυχῶς δὲ θοῶ περὶ κάππεσε δουρί.
(2.827-831)

When he bellowed, the rest of the group answered with a cry. Peleus quickly took aim at the deadly boar with his javelin as it rushed in flight into the marsh. Then, turning to face him, it rushed back; but Idas wounded it, and with a roar it fell down from the sharp spear.

The united effort of the group succeeds in destroying the boar. Although the Argonauts could not save Idmon's life, he dies in the arms of his companions (χείρεσσι δ' ἔων ἐνὶ κάτθαν' ἐταίρων, 2.834). The Argonauts' group effort contrasts with Heracles' experience with the Erymanthian boar, which he successfully captured on his own. The verbal allusion to the earlier Heracleian passage emphasizes the contrasting methodologies: teamwork as opposed to self-sufficiency.

The Argonauts are distraught at the loss of Idmon. They forget about their journey and mourn for three days. Just as they complete the funeral rights, they lose their helmsman, Tiphys, to an unspecified disease (μυνηθαδίη ... νοῦσος, 2.856). This second death nearly undoes the Argonauts. They remain, overcome by grief, with the Mariandynians for several days, not desiring to leave the tombs of their companions.⁵⁴ The loss of yet another member of their team—a team that has become all-important to accomplishing their mission ever since the loss of Heracles—almost causes them to

⁵⁴ It may be significant that the poet makes a point of mentioning the worship of Idmon as “city guardian” by the Boeotians and Nisaeans (2.844-850). These settlers of the region, when they invaded the territory of the Mariandynians in the 6th century, founded a city called Heracleia (cf. Pausanias 5.26.7). The mention of these people offers yet another (very oblique) allusion to Heracles, presumably the figure after whom they named their city.

abandon their mission. They might have stayed with Lycus indefinitely, never reaching Colchis, had not Hera intervened to spur them on:

καί νύ κ' ἔτι προτέρω τετιημένοι ἰσχανόωντο,
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' Ἀγκαίῳ περιώσιον ἔμβαλεν Ἥρη
θάρσος

(2.864-866)

And then in their grief they would have delayed longer, if Hera had not struck Ancaeus with immense courage

Here, Hera, through the medium of Ancaeus, assumes the role that Heracles played at Lemnos and spurs on the group to resume their quest. Just as Athena's right hand pushed the *Argo* through the Clashing Rocks, Hera raises their spirits and impels them to move forward on their journey. Teamwork once again prevails as they elect Ancaeus to be their new helmsman without any of the strife that marked Jason's election-by-default at Pagasae.

CHAPTER 12: UNIT 7: VOYAGE PAST SINOPE AND THE AMAZONS

When finally they take leave of the Mariandynians, the Argonauts embark on a long segment of sailing that takes them past numerous locations connected with Heracles. This unit of action therefore contains multiple geographic references to the lost hero, coupled with explicit mentions of him. Unlike in their interaction with Lycus, however, where they actually completed a task left unfinished by Heracles, the Argonauts are mere sightseers as they pass by these significant locations of Heracleian myth. Lawall has already noticed that “the earlier expedition [of Heracles against the Amazons] forms a contrasting background to Jason’s.”⁵⁵ He recognizes that this episode is connected to other Heracleian reminiscences (he mentions three others) and that together this “[r]ecurrent mention ... helps tie its [Book 2’s] episodes together.”⁵⁶ But the significance of these Heracleian references runs much deeper than is seen by Lawall, who does not recognize the Heracleian thread as a persistent theme continued from Book 1 and therefore does not notice the larger thematic context into which the Amazon unit fits.

When Lawall compares Heracles’ Amazonian expedition to “Jason’s [expedition],” he refers to the entire mission to Colchis and he specifically highlights the contrast between modes of action. “While Heracles won the girdle through ambush and war, Jason will shun any direct confrontation in battle with Aetes. He circumvents the warlike king and outwits him through trick.”⁵⁷ Here Lawall fails to take into account the highly significant fact that Heracles’ acquisition of Hippolyte’s belt (at least in the *Argonautica*) was in fact cleverly executed *without bloodshed*. As Apollonius himself

⁵⁵ Lawall, 125.

⁵⁶ Lawall, 125 n. 11.

⁵⁷ Lawall, 125. Here, Lawall is apparently thinking of Jason’s use of pharmaceutical aids as his way of “tricking” Aetes.

tells the story, Heracles' hostage Melanippe was returned to Hippolyte "unharméd" (ἀμπήμωνα, 2.969) in exchange for the belt. This anecdote does little to show any contrast between Heracles and Jason, who himself will find it necessary to abduct Medea to protect them both from Aeetes. This mention of Heracles' encounter with the Amazons can be viewed far more effectively as one segment in a complex extended allusion to this Heracleian Labor, begun in Unit 5, that further emphasizes the Argonauts' loss of their crewmate.

The extended allusion begins during the Argonauts' stay with the Mariandynians. King Lycus, hearing of Heracles' abandonment, tells Jason and the crew that he knows Heracles well (εὖ γὰρ ἐγώ μιν ... οἶδ', 2.775-777) since he had hosted the man during his journey to the land of the Amazons. This mention is the first reference to this particular Labor. The thread begun in this scene from Unit 5 is picked up again in Unit 7 as the Argonauts approach Amazon territory. The heroes sail by the tomb of Sthenelus, at which point the narrator uses the dead man's involvement in the expedition against the Amazons to mention Heracles explicitly: δὴ γὰρ συνανήλυθεν Ἡρακλῆι ("For he had gone there with Heracles," 2.913). This small detail does little to develop the story of Sthenelus. It does, however, connect to Lycus' mention of the same Heracleian exploit and it brings Heracles once again into the forefront of the reader's mind.

The thread of the Amazons is picked up again briefly a few lines later. After a full day of sailing, the Argonauts stop in Assyria, where they meet the sons of Deimachus of Tricca. The narrator mentions that these three brothers have lived in the region "ever since they became separated from Heracles" (Ἡρακλῆος ἀποπλάγχθεντες, 2.957). This explicit mention of Heracles in the context of his Amazonian Labor provides

another such reference, the third in a series of references that are increasing in frequency as the *Argo* draws ever closer to the land of the Amazons. The poet strengthens the connection between the elements of this series by means of a verbal allusion to the first mention by repeating the word ἀποπλαγχθέντες at 2.957 in the same metrical position as Lycus used to lament Heracles' abandonment in Mysia (οἴου φωτὸς ἀποπλαγχθέντες ἀρωγῆς, 2.774).⁵⁸ This growing swell of references to Heracles' expedition against the Amazons, driven on the level of plot by the fact that the Argonauts are retracing Heracles' footsteps in the region, creates a sense of expectation for the Argonauts' arrival in the land of the Amazons. The reader already knows the consequences of Heracles' activities in the region. The source of tension comes from the unpredictable form that Jason's interaction with the Amazons will take. In the many ways already discussed, the Argonauts both seek to emulate Heracles and are forced to develop their own method of problem solving. As the Jason and his crewmates approach their much-anticipated encounter with the Amazons, the reader cannot be sure how the crew will handle the notoriously hostile tribe of warriors.

The narrator prolongs this suspense dramatically. The *Argo* sails on from Assyria, eventually rounding the Amazonian headland (γνάμψαν Ἀμαζονίδων ... ἄκρην, 2.965). (This geographical description is itself a very subtle allusion to Heracles since, as Race notes, this point of land was "[t]raditionally called the cape of Heracles."⁵⁹) Immediately following, the narrator provides a brief, four-line description of Heracles'

⁵⁸ This echo reminds the reader that Heracles left these men, just as he was left by the Argonauts. His actions have come full circle. The three sons of Deimachus embark with the rest of the crew in order to sail with them (2.960-961), a neat inversion of the Argonauts' earlier embarkation from Mysia without Heracles.

⁵⁹ Race, 191, n. 86.

acquisition of Hippolyte’s belt (2.966-969). This mention is the fourth and final one in the thread of explicit mentions about Heracles’ Labor against the Amazons. It is naturally the longest, since the Argonauts have finally reached the very site of his achievement of the Labor. Following this description, the Argonauts are said to moor their ship in the harbor “because the sea was becoming rough for them to travel” (ἐπεὶ καὶ πόντος ὀρύνετο νισσομένοισιν, 2.971). The narration of this scene is leading the reader to expect a confrontation between Argonauts and Amazons. The narrator delays any fulfillment of this expectation with a lengthy digression about the many branches of the Thermodon river (2.972-983). When at last the narrator returns to the Argonauts, the reader receives the first hint that the expectation of an encounter will not be fulfilled:

καί νύ κε δηθύνοντες Ἀμαζονίδεσσιν ἔμειξαν
 ὑσμίνην, καὶ δ’ οὐ κεν ἀναιμωτί γ’ ἐρίδηναν—
 (2.985-986)

And they would have tarried there and joined battle with the Amazons,
 and they would not have fought without bloodshed—

This apodosis of a past unfulfilled condition, even without its protasis, introduces doubt into the reader’s mind. The statement that the Argonauts “would have” done something implies that they did not in fact do it. Toyingly, the narrator establishes a contrast between Heracles’ *actual* actions and the *potential* actions of the Argonauts: whereas Heracles actually acquired Hippolyte’s belt without bloodshed (he returns his captive “unharmedly,” ἀμπήμονα, 2.969), the Argonauts are prepared to engage in battle “not without bloodshed” (οὐ κεν ἀναιμωτί, 2.986). But the narrator does not develop this contrast further and once again delays providing any sort of conclusion by digressing for six lines about the mores and lineage of the Amazons. Finally the reader is given the

protasis of the conditional and the long-awaited explanation of the Argonauts' Amazonian encounter, or lack thereof:

εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ἐκ Διόθεν πνοιαὶ πάλιν ἀργέσταιο
ἦλυθον.

(2.993-994)

—if the northwest winds sent by Zeus had not come back.

With these words, the narrator punctures the reader's swelling expectation of confrontation. The technique of delaying makes the ultimate conclusion all the more frustrating. The Argonauts are snatched away from a bloody battle apparently by the will of Zeus. Zeus' involvement in the epic is extremely limited,⁶⁰ and this rare mention of it recalls two other earlier references to Zeus' will: first, when Glaucus emerged from the sea to inform the Argonauts the Heracles had been left behind "according to the plan of great Zeus" (παρὲκ μεγάλιο Διὸς ... βουλήν, 1.1315); second, in Unit 1, when the narrator mentions that Heracles' abandonment had been "fulfilled by Zeus' plans" (τὰ δὲ πάντα Διὸς βουλήσι τέτυκτο, 2.154). Here, Zeus' winds extricate the Argonauts from a Heracleian situation. According to Zeus' will, the path of Heracles and the path of the Argonauts must diverge.

⁶⁰ Feeney, 58-60.

CHAPTER 13: UNIT 8: ARES' ISLAND

As the Argonauts seek a place to land to rest from their sailing, they approach the island of Ares, inhabited by birds that shoot arrows at passersby. The Argonauts attempt to drive off the birds with their own arrows, but the strategy of using force against divine avians, which failed against the Harpies (see Chapter 7), proves no more effective here. Amphidamas, recalling the example set by Heracles during yet another of his Labors at the Stymphalian Lake, recommends taking a less aggressive approach:

οὐδὲ γὰρ Ἡρακλῆς, ὅπῳτ' ἦλυθεν Ἀρκαδίηνδε,
πλωάδας ὄρνιθας Στυμφαλίδος ἔσθενε λίμνης
ὤσασθαι τόξοισι (τὸ μὲν τ' ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ὄπωπα).
ἀλλ' ὄγε χαλκείην πλαταγὴν ἐνὶ χερσὶ τινάσσω
δούπει ἐπὶ σκοπιῆς περιμήκεος, αἱ δ' ἐφέβοντο
τηλοῦ ἀτυζηλῶ ὑπὸ δείματι κεκληγυῖαι.

(2.1052-1057)

For Heracles, the time he went to Arcadia, was not strong enough to banish with his bow the birds floating on the Stymphalian lake (I saw this first-hand); but shaking a bronze rattle in his hands, he made a hollow sound from high upon a high lookout, and the birds fled far away, screeching in their alarmed terror.

In this instance, when βίη failed Heracles, he relied on shrewdness (μητις, cf. 2.1058) to accomplish the Labor. Ever influenced by the best of their group whom they left behind, the Argonauts adopt his strategy, but in a way that emphasizes their now characteristic teamwork: Ὡς ἄρ' ἔφη, πάντεσσι δ' ἐπίροθος ἦνδανε μητις (“Thus he spoke, and his helpful plan was pleasing to all,” 2.1068). The group listens to Amphidamas’ idea and unanimously approves it. The entire crew works together to accomplish the task, dividing the labor so that half of the group rows the ship (τοὶ μὲν ... ἐλάασκον, 2.1071) while the others protect the group with their spears and shields (τοὶ δ' αὐτ' ἐωχείησι καὶ ἀσπίσι

νήα κάλυψαν, 2.1072). Together, the crew gives a war-like shout that drives off the entire flock of birds.

This incident marks the first (and only other) time since the boxing match in Unit 1 when a crewmember explicitly mentions Heracles by name. Here, though, the lost hero is invoked not to bemoan his absence but quite the opposite: to hold him up as a model from which the Argonauts can learn strategies for solving their present difficulty. The anonymous interlocutor from Unit 1, in his grief, was only able to exclaim how easily Heracles would have been able to defeat Amycus if he had been present, thereby giving voice to the understood devastation of the rest of the crew at the loss of Heracles. This comment is made after Polydeuces had already killed Amycus, making the hopeless wish a moot point, since Heracles' prowess was, after all, not needed. In this scene, so far removed from the earlier boxing match, the mention of Heracles demonstrates how far the Argonauts have come from their earlier state of grief. They no longer mourn the loss of the greatest hero, wishing in vain that he were present to solve their problems for them. Instead, they are able to follow his example to solve the problem their own way— together, as a group. The Argonauts have not separated themselves entirely from their dependence on Heracles, but they have become confident in their own abilities to solve challenges on their own.

CHAPTER 14: UNIT 9: ARRIVAL AT COLCHIS

By the last unit of action, with the *Argo* nearing its destination, the allusions to Heracles begin to die down. The Argonauts rescue from shipwreck the sons of Phrixus, who then accompany them to the shores of Colchis. In the Argonauts' giving of aid to Argos and his brothers, the book's theme of teamwork continues. Phrixus' sons will return the favor when they prevail upon their mother, Calchiope, to persuade Medea to give Jason the drugs that will allow him to complete Aeetes' challenge. These new members of the crew will become critical additions to the team that will help Jason carry back the Fleece to Iolcus.

As they sail to Colchis with the new members of their crew, the Argonauts pass the Caucasus, on whose cliffs Prometheus endures his eternal torture (2.1246-1259). This provides one final opportunity for an extrapolative allusion to Heracles. As Lawall observes, the "mention of Prometheus' punishment ... will remind the reader of Heracles' future expedition to slay the eagle and release the Titan."⁶¹ For the first time, the Argonauts have stepped out of Heracles' footsteps. No longer are they *following* the hero's former route of conquest and influence, but rather *preceding* him, anticipating his future expedition into this remote region. Such an anticipatory allusion is fittingly positioned at the close of Book 2, since Jason's adventures in Colchis that begin with Book 3 will mark his abandonment of the Heraclean method of problem solving in favor of supernatural aid. By depicting the Caucasus prior to Heracles' arrival, the poet already seems to be anticipating the shift in agency that occurs between the poem's two halves (see Chapter 15).

⁶¹ Lawall, 125 n. 11. Prometheus' liberation by Heracles is first attested in literature by Hesiod (*Theogony* 526-528).

This final allusion to Heracles represents one element in a complex web of allusions to the hero's official Labors and unofficial trials that spans the entire poem. The other elements of this narrative construction have been mentioned above as they appeared in their respective units of action, but it is profitable to take this opportunity to pull back and see them as a cohesive whole.

In many respects, Heracles' life path, as chronicled through the narrative of the Twelve Labors, parallels the journey of the Argonauts. These two separate narrative threads overlap at two and only two distinct points in the *Argonautica*: first, at the beginning of the poem, when Heracles joins the crew and sails with them until his abandonment, and second, at the very end of the poem, when Lynceus thinks he catches sight of Heracles leaving the garden of the Hesperides. These first and last appearances are each associated with one of the conventional Twelve Labors. The Argonauts' last encounter with Heracles follows immediately upon his completion of the Labor of obtaining the golden apples of the Hesperides; when Heracles first joins the crew at Iolcus, he is carrying the recently captured Erymanthian boar. These two encounters provide fixed points of intersection between the narrative arc of Jason's quest and the narrative arc of Heracles' Labors. For a brief period while Heracles sails with the crew, these two arcs overlap. Once Heracles is abandoned, they diverge, to cross again for one fleeting, final moment in Libya. As we have seen, Heracles is not absent from the crew even though his own path is no longer joined to theirs.

Such a narrative structure encourages the reader to imagine the narrative of Heracles' Labors as running parallel to the story of Jason's voyage to Colchis. The poet fosters this interpretation through the repeated references and allusions to various Labors.

In all, the poem contains references or allusions to seven of the canonical Twelve Labors. Already aware of the capture of the Erymanthian boar, the reader learns at 1.1195 that Heracles has also already killed the Nemean lion, for he wears its skin (δέρμα λέοντος). His earlier expedition against the Amazons dominates the narrative of Unit 7, as discussed above. He has also evidently completed the Labor of the Stymphalian Lake birds since Amphidamas offers testimony to the success of his nonviolent technique (2.1047-1067). The reference to the cave of Hades at 2.735 alludes to his journey to the underworld to bring back Cerberus alive.⁶² While describing the slaying of Ladon at 4.1404, the poet mentions that the arrows Heracles used to shoot the serpent had been poisoned with the blood of the Lernean Hydra, representing another completed Labor. The acquisition of the golden apples of the Hesperides is the seventh Labor described or alluded to over the course of the poem.

In addition to the seven “official” Labors referenced, two (lowercase) labors (not included in the conventional Dodekathlos) are mentioned. First, Heracles’ slaying of the Earthborn men at Cyzicus is described as an *aethlios* sent to him by Hera:

δὴ γὰρ που καὶ κείνα θεὰ τρέφεν αἰνὰ πέλωρα
Ἥρη, Ζηνὸς ἄκοιτις, ἀέθλιον Ἡρακλῆι

(1.996-997)

For indeed the goddess Hera, wife of Zeus, surely was raising those terrible monsters too as a labor for Heracles.

⁶² In the canon established by Apollodorus, this Labor was Heracles’ last. Whether Heracles has already completed this Labor or it is yet to be fulfilled is impossible to determine (and irrelevant) due to the obliqueness of the allusion. Furthermore, the “canonical” order of the Dodekathlos attributed to Apollodorus would not be established for several centuries yet.

This incident, if it is not an Apollonian invention, was certainly a relatively rare story. In Book 2, as the *Argo* sails past the Caucasus, the site of Prometheus' torture (2.1246-1259), the reader is invited to think of his future liberation at the hand of Heracles, which is considered one of the *praxeis* ("deeds") rather than a Labor.⁶³

As the Argonauts journey on without their lost companion, their own course often runs parallel to Heracles' own path to deification. The reader, aware of those Labors already performed, is left free to consider the remaining five and to imagine Heracles accomplishing them simultaneous to Jason's expedition. Such a mental construction, developed during the poem's first half (in which the majority of the allusions and references occur), receives confirmation at the end of Book 4 when the Argonauts come across Heracles' footprints in the Libyan desert. This final intersection of the two narrative arcs testifies to the fact that he has been continuing on his own personal journey parallel to, though separate from, the story of Jason, on which the poet has been focusing. The final glimpse of the lost hero also provides a satisfying coda to the events of the first two books and offers a point of contrast to Jason's method of problem solving, which has diverged significantly from Heracles' own method since the latter's abandonment.

As the Argonauts, at the end of Book 2, pass out of the path trod by Heracles in which they had been traveling through the Black Sea, they leave behind the old Heraclean model for problem solving. The Argonauts' feelings about his loss have changed from grief at his abandonment (observed in Unit 1) to acceptance and an embrace of his methods of approaching challenges (neatly exemplified by the problem of

⁶³ Hesiod (*Theogony* 529-531) explains that Heracles' freeing of Prometheus was sanctioned by Zeus in order to augment Heracles' glory on earth. On the distinction between Labors, *parerga* ("works"), and *praxeis* ("deeds"), cf. Uhlenbrock, "Herakles" Labors, Works, Deeds," in Uhlenbrock, 2-6.

the birds of Ares in Unit 8) to, eventually, forgetfulness. Medea and, through her, the gods will provide the necessary means through which Jason will be able to gain the Fleece.

CHAPTER 15: AS THE GHOST FADES: EROS' ASCENDANCY TO POWER

I have tried to show up to this point the degree to which the first two books of the *Argonautica* are tied together by the character of Heracles so that they form a distinct whole. Though Heracles is lost less than halfway through that whole, the model he has set for the Argonauts on the nature of problem solving—a model they both adhere to and adapt to their own style of work—remains in place throughout the two books. The poet's frequent allusions to Heracles allow the reader continually to assess the degree to which the Argonauts are adhering to their Heracleian model and the degree to which they deviate from it. In this respect, the character of Heracles provides a lens through which the actions of the Argonauts in Book 2 can be viewed and evaluated.

The opening of the third book introduces an abrupt move away from the Heracleian theme of the poem's first half. The second half opens upon Olympus, where the reader finds Hera and Athena scheming of the best way to aid Jason.⁶⁴ They are having difficulty devising an adequate plan for overcoming Aeetes and allowing Jason to obtain the Fleece. The goddesses are, ironically, struck by the same sort of ἀμηχανία that characterizes Jason. Faced by the seemingly insurmountable obstacle presented by the figure of Aeetes, they can only sit and stare at the ground, brooding, trying desperately to think of something.⁶⁵ Aeetes poses as difficult a challenge to the immortals

⁶⁴ Feeney (77) calls this scene a “great shift in gear.”

⁶⁵ Very similar language is used in these two scenes, the first of the goddesses and the second of Jason reaction to Aeetes' challenge. The goddesses are described:

καὶ ἐπ' οὐδεὸς αἶ γε ποδῶν πάρος ὄμματα ἔπηξαν,
ἄνδιχα πορφύρουσαι ἐνὶ σφίσιν· (3.22-23)

Later in the same Book, Jason is described:

ὁ δὲ σίγα ποδῶν πάρος ὄμματα πήξας
ἦστ' αὐτῶς ἄφθογγος, ἀμηχανέων κακότητι. (3.422-423)

as to the mortal Jason. In the end, Hera succeeds in solving the problem. She finds the solution in Eros.

Eros will spark a burning passion for Jason within Medea that will cause her boldly to offer supernatural aid to Jason, thereby enabling him to gain the Fleece. This single incident will drive the events of the remainder of the story, “resonat[ing] through all that follows with a series of appalling aftershocks.”⁶⁶ Jason, having stumbled upon a force even more powerful than βίη, will no longer miss the presence of Heracles. In the first half of the poem, the Argonauts managed to accomplish the challenges they encountered through teamwork based on a model of human endeavor largely based on Heraclean strategy. The opening of Book 3 introduces a shift away from this type of mortal agency toward immortal agents of action. Eros plays the role of catalyst that causes the action of the poem’s second half to unfold.

The poet signals the transfer of driving agency from human endeavor (symbolized by Heracles in the poem’s first half) to superhuman intervention (symbolized by Eros in the poem’s second half) through a complex verbal allusion early in Book 3. In the scene that leads up to this allusion, Aphrodite has found her troublesome son gambling with Ganymede in Zeus’ orchard. By promising to give him the beautiful ball that belonged to the infant Zeus, Aphrodite manages to convince Eros to shoot Medea and make her fall in love with Jason. In the moment when Eros abandons his gambling and takes up his bow and arrows, preparing to set out on his mission—at the very moment Eros arms himself to

The almost word-for-word repetition of four entire feet of the line is an unusually extensive verbal echo for a poet remarkable for the subtlety and sparseness of his echoed words. The ἀμηχανία of Jason is stated explicitly, while that of the goddesses is merely implied through the connection with Jason.

⁶⁶ Green, 40.

change the course of the rest of the poem—the poet inserts a verbal echo that connects Eros with Heracles. Through this echo, Eros appears to take up the weapons that Heracles had laid down in Mysia before he was abandoned.

The Heracleian scene to which the poet’s words harken is the most iconic depiction of Heracles from Book 1, when he single-handedly uproots a tree to make a new oar:

ρίμφα δ' οἰστοδόκην μὲν ἐπὶ χθονὶ θήκε φαρέτρην
αὐτοῖσιν τόξοισιν, ἔδω δ' ἀπὸ δέρμα λέοντος·
τὴν δ' ὄγε, χαλκοβαρεὶ ῥοπάλω δαπέδοιο τινάξας
νειόθεν, ἀμφοτέρησι περὶ στύπος ἔλλαβε χερσὶν
ἠνορῆ πῖσυνος, ἐν δὲ πλατὺν ὤμον ἔρεισεν
εὐ διαβάς· πεδόθεν δὲ βαθύρριζόν περ εὐούσαν
προσφύς ἐξήειρε σὺν αὐτοῖς ἔχμασι γαίης.
ὥς δ' ὅταν ἀπροφάτως ἰστὸν νεός, εὐτε μάλιστα
χειμερὶ ὀλοοῖο δύσις πέλει Ὠρίωνος,
ὑπόθεν ἐμπλήξασα θοῇ ἀνέμοιο κατάιξι
αὐτοῖσι σφήνεσσιν ὑπέκ προτόνων ἐρύττηται—
ὥς ὄγε τὴν ἤειρεν· ὁμοῦ δ' ἀνὰ τόξα καὶ ἰοὺς
δέρμα θ' ἑλών ῥόπαλόν τε, παλίσσυτος ὄρτο νέεσθαι.

(1.1194-1206)

He quickly placed his arrow-bearing quiver, together with his bow, on the ground, and took off his lion skin; and, shaking it [the pine tree] from the ground with his bronze-laden club from below, he grasped the trunk with both hands, trusting in his strength, and leaned his broad shoulder on it, his feet wide apart. Clinging to it, he won it, with its bindings of soil, from the ground, even though it was deep-rooted. As when (especially during the wintry setting of destructive Orion) a swift blast of wind strikes the mast of a ship from on high and rips it from the forestays, wedges and all—just so did he seize the tree; and, taking up his bow and arrows and lion skin and club, he went off in a rush to return back.

These lines depict Heracles at his most iconic. His unparalleled strength is put on full display. The description of his corporeal power, equal only to the force of a winter’s gale, is framed by two descriptions of his iconic accoutrements: his lion skin, his club, his bow, his arrows and quiver. The first three lines carefully describe how he laid all of the items

on the ground; the last two lines again mention, one by one, the items as Heracles retrieves them, having accomplished his task. The theme of this scene is overpowering strength and, as one of Heracles' last appearances in the book and the poem, it creates a memorable impression of the unsurpassable hero.

As Eros prepares to descend to earth in Book 3, he is described as taking up his weapons in very similar language. Although lacking the club and lion skin, he gathers his own iconic bow and arrow—used in a completely different manner from those of Heracles—which had been resting on a nearby tree stump:

ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἀστραγάλους συναμήσατο, κὰδ δὲ φαεινῶ
μητρὸς ἐῆς, εὖ πάντα ἀριθμήσας, βάλε κόλπῳ.
αὐτίκα δ' ἰοδόκην χρυσέη περικάτθετο μίτρῃ,
πρέμνω κεκλιμένην, ἀνὰ δ' ἀγκύλον εἶλετο τόξον·
(3.154-157)

He collected his knucklebones and tossed them (after counting them all well) into his mother's gleaming lap. And straightaway he put his quiver, which had been leaning against a stump, around his body by its golden strap, and also took up his curved bow.

On the surface, these two scenes have nothing to do with one another. Within the plot of the poem, there is no logical connection between the two figures. But, in spite of the incongruity between the subject matter, the poet has linked these two scenes together by means of subtle verbal echoes.

The poet has constructed the echo on several levels. On the most superficial level, the two scenes are connected by the weaponry that is common to both: Heracles and Eros each possess a bow, arrows, and a quiver. These two, though, are hardly the only figures in myth to use such instruments, and the poet does not rely on this meager coincidence to make his point.

On a second, slightly deeper level, the two figures are connected by the quality, not merely the identity, or their weapons. In the Heraclean scene, the hero's club is described as "bronze-laden" (χαλκοβαρεῖ ῥοπάλω). Bronze, the strong, workmanlike metal, is perfectly suited to Heracles' character. In the scene of Eros, the god's quiver has a golden strap (χρυσέη ... μίτροη) attached to it. This precious metal is appropriate for the character of Eros, who is as superior in divinity to Heracles as gold is superior to bronze. So, although the quality of the metal differs between the two scenes, nevertheless the weaponry of the two figures is related by a similar golden gleam.

The heart of the connection, though, lies in the poet's manipulation of the central imagery. Here, Apollonius is refitting one of his own scenes, not a Homeric model scene. The pivot point around which his manipulation revolves is the image of the tree, which is common to both scenes. In the first passage, the pine tree that Heracles uproots is the central focus of the scene. It serves as the object against which Heracles' might is deployed. He is described as leaning his shoulder (ὤμων ἐρεῖσεν) against it before uprooting it with his bare hands. It is a testament to his unmatched strength that, apart from a single blow to the tree with his club, his weapons play no part in the scene. Instead, they lie on the ground, unused, to be retrieved once the task has been accomplished.

The image of the tree also appears in the description of Eros. Here, though, it plays a much smaller role in the scene, but a role that nevertheless harkens back to the earlier Heraclean one. Here, the tree is merely a "stump" (πρόμυω) that acts as a support for Eros's quiver, which leans against it. Despite the dissimilarity of vocabulary, the core image has been retained and refitted: Whereas Heracles himself had leaned against the

tree after putting his quiver on the ground, here, it is the quiver, which sits on the ground, that leans against the tree (πρόμῳ κεκλιμένην). Heracles wrapped his hands around the “stump” (στύπος) of the pine tree; Eros’ quiver leans against the synonymous πρόμῳς. The way in which these two scenes are constructed allows the reader to imagine that it is Eros himself who picks up the quiver of Heracles, which had been left on the ground near the remains of the demolished pine tree. In this context, the use of πρόμῳς rather than ἔλατῃ or an equivalent word serves further to plant in the reader’s mind the connection between Heracles’ destruction of a tree and the destroyed tree in the scene of Eros.⁶⁷

One unmistakable verbal echo elevates this connection between Heracles and Eros—until now argued solely from the similarity in the imagery of the two passages—from probable to intentional on the part of the poet, and therefore highly significant. The first lines of both passages, the lines that introduce the description of the weaponry, begin with nearly identical phrases. The Heracleian passages starts with:

ῥίμφα δ’ ὀιστοδόκην

whereas the description of Eros begins with:

αὐτίκα δ’ ἰοδόκην

Not only are these two phrases essentially identical in meaning⁶⁸ but they also occur in the same metrical position: they both occupy the first half of their respective lines, up to the strong caesura in the third foot. These two passages, then, have three distinct points of

⁶⁷ It may also be significant that, out of all of Heracles’ accoutrements, his quiver is the only thing that he does not retrieve at the end of Passage 1. In line 1205, his arrows (ἰούς) are mentioned, but not his quiver. This omission leaves possible for the reader the idea that Eros here takes up the quiver that Herakles left by the remains of the tree he tore down. In terms of plot, of course, nothing of the sort is happening, but in terms of the images created by the poet’s words, such a connection is possible.

⁶⁸ ῥίμφα and αὐτίκα are synonyms, and ὀιστοδόκην is the adjectival equivalent of ἰοδόκην.

contact: weaponry, the tree image, and meter. For a writer who thought about his writing as much as Apollonius clearly did, this could never happen accidentally. The poet's almost word-for-word repetition of the half-line from Book 1 is quite deliberate and purposeful. It signals to the reader to appreciate the larger connections between the two passages. By creating a connection between these two lines, it demands the association of Eros' quiver with Heracles' quiver. In doing so, it asks the reader to connect the character of Eros and his role in the poem with the character and role of Heracles.

These textual and verbal associations of Eros with Heracles are supported by depictions of Eros in popular art at the time of the publication of the *Argonautica*. Beginning in the fourth century BCE, artists began depicting Eros either in the act of stealing or already in possession of Heracles' attributes.⁶⁹ These images were popular, presumably due to the inherent contrast between the figures of Heracles and Eros and the values they each represented, and the newfound ability of an image to "embody an apparent logical contradiction ... [and] to reveal profound and hitherto hidden truths."⁷⁰ Over time, the freshness of these images faded as the motif became clichéd. In the third century, though, when Apollonius was composing, some of the bloom of the motif would still have been on the rose. It seems to me highly probable that Apollonius was aware of this fashionable depiction of Eros with Heracles' attributes in popular art and that this influenced, if not inspired, his literary depiction of a similar theft. This hypothesis is all the more convincing in the context of other known examples of Apollonius' indebtedness

⁶⁹ Uhlenbrock, "The Herakles Motif in Classical Art," in Uhlenbrock, 12; Susan Woodford, "Herakles' Attributes and their Appropriation by Eros," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 203.

⁷⁰ Woodford, 202.

to the visual arts.⁷¹ The fact that images connecting Eros with Heracles were abundant at the time the *Argonautica* was published means that the poet could count on the contemporary reader's brain being pre-programmed to notice the textual connections that he was creating.

Eros' assumption of the bow and arrows helps articulate the critical change that takes place between the two halves of the poem. His act of picking up the weapons has unmistakable Heracleian undertones, creating a connection that helps to bring into relief the fact that the type of agency exemplified by Heracles has lost its power by the beginning of Book 3. As I have argued, the first two books of the poem, taken as a single discrete unit, represent the success of human endeavor. In Book 1, this theme was embodied by Heracles and his unequalled strength. After his abandonment, the Argonauts as a coherent team reach Colchis almost exclusively by means of human endeavor, often imitating Heracles' precedent. In these two books, the gods play a strikingly minor role.⁷² The only concrete instance in the first half of the poem of Homeric-style divine intervention occurs when Athena pushes the *Argo* through the Clashing Rocks.

The second half of the poem, by contrast, is dominated by divine agency. Medea—inspired by Eros, manipulated by Hera, and herself a priestess of the underworld goddess Hecate—makes Jason's acquisition of the Fleece possible through her supernatural aid. She, as a tool of the gods, is responsible for the mission's success once

⁷¹ Perhaps the most famous example of this phenomenon is the depiction of Aphrodite on Jason's cloak gazing at her reflection in Ares' shield, which was modeled after a famous Greek sculpture. Phinney ("Hellenistic Painting and the Poetic Style of Apollonius," *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (1967), 145-149) argues that the vividness of the descriptions in the *Argonautica* replicates the painting style of Apollonius' day.

⁷² On the diminished role of the gods in the beginning poem, see Feeney, 58-60.

the heroes reach Colchis. Hera in particular takes a much more active role in Books 3 and 4. In true Homeric style, she shrouds Jason in a mist as he enters the city of Colchis for the first time. She intervenes to prevent Medea from committing suicide as the girl struggles with her unbearable passion for Jason. On multiple occasions in Book 4, she directly protects the *Argo* and her crew, as when she persuades Thetis to have the Nereids guide the *Argo* safely past Scylla and Charybdis. Eros, as the source of Medea's devotion to Jason and therefore of the success of the mission, can be viewed as the figurehead of this theme of divine intervention that dominates the epic's second half. The arrow that Eros sends into Medea's heart will bring about not only Jason's acquisition of the Fleece, but also Medea's abandonment of Colchis, the murder of her brother, Apsyrtus, and the Argonauts' eventual safe return to Iolcus. By taking up Heracles' weapons, Eros takes up the torch, so to speak, of responsibility for accomplishing the epic's necessary outcomes.

CHAPTER 16: POWER IN ABSENCE

Despite the crushing blow it dealt to the Argonauts at the time, in the end Heracles' abandonment in Mysia allows the Argonauts to develop what will become their signature interdependence. Heracles' "notoriously solitary and idiosyncratic virtue"⁷³ could not accommodate itself within a mission that provided so little opportunity for personal glory. Although Mori sees Heracles' arrival at Iolcus as an indication of his willingness "to abandon his solitary labors in exchange for a voyage that promises renown for others,"⁷⁴ his behavior throughout the first book of the epic consistently reinforces the self-sufficiency of his character. Capable of accomplishing the nearly impossible task on his own, Heracles never needed to subscribe to the theme of teamwork, which emerges early in Book 1 and which develops in significance in his absence in Book 2. "Heracles' godlike strength and self-sufficiency are completely inappropriate for a group of highly talented, but interdependent, heroes engaged in a nautical aethlos."⁷⁵ In a demonstration of complete disregard for the team unit, Heracles goes so far as to call for the disbanding of the entire crew at Lemnos, proposing that each man go his separate way (ἴομεν ἀντίς ἕκαστοι ἐπὶ σφεά, 1.872). As long as Heracles is counted as a member of the group, there will inevitably be tension between interdependence and self-sufficiency.

In Heracles' absence, teamwork among the Argonauts flourishes. Though posed with formidable challenges, the group moves forward at each step in the journey through the personal accomplishments of a different hero or group of heroes. In the second book,

⁷³ Hunter, 442.

⁷⁴ Mori, 60.

⁷⁵ Clauss, 197.

a notable lack of discord (*νεῖκος*), which arose on several occasions in Book 1 (cf. 1.462-495, 1.1290-1297), creates an atmosphere of serene egalitarianism within the group, where plans are put forward, approved, and often executed by the whole. Such an interdependent character befits the nature of the mission, where “[f]ailure will ... lead only to a miserable and unsung death, where there is no *kleos* to alleviate the oblivion [and] anything less than safe return with the Fleece would be as if they had never set out.”⁷⁶ Heracles, though, who by his very nature stands apart from the rest of the heroes, has no place in this sort of group. The very contrast of his nature to the nature of the group serves to illuminate the characteristic of teamwork among the Argonauts and the unique quality of Jason’s leadership. The omnipresent reminders of Heracles throughout Book 2, therefore, offer pointed reminders of the crew’s interdependence. Though the Argonauts believed their group had been weakened by the loss of Heracles, in fact the team as a whole became stronger. Each allusion or reference to the lost hero reminds the reader of this new strength.

Teamwork among the Argonauts succeeds in bringing them safely to Colchis, but as a means of action it will be able to carry them no further. The challenge set before Jason is not one that can be met by ordinary human means, even by a group of individuals all pulling together. The Argonauts’ ready willingness to tackle any problem that comes their way turns them into “obstructionists”⁷⁷ in the face of Aetes’ man-destroying challenge to yoke the fire-breathing bulls and slay the horde of earthborn men. Only superhuman assistance, as provided through Medea, will allow Jason to win the Fleece. The thematic change from human endeavor to superhuman assistance that takes

⁷⁶ Hunter, 440.

⁷⁷ Lawall, 139.

place between the poem's two halves has already, as noted above, been introduced, first suggested by the extended heavenly scene that opens Book 3 and later by the deliberate connection between Heracles in Book 1 and Eros in Book 3 that invites the reader to contrast each agent's mechanism of action. The reader, then, understands the change in agency long before the Argonauts themselves, who continue to try to solve unconventional problems through their conventional (i.e. mortal) means. Out of the entire crew, only Jason recognizes that the seemingly impossible challenge calls for a new—divine—method of attack.

Attention to the subtle allusions to Heracles' influence allows for a more unified reading of the *Argonautica*'s first two books than previous analyses have allowed. Though Heracles' abandonment may have been necessitated by his status as "other" among the crew, his influence over the action of the epic does not end with Book 1, the point where most investigations into his character end. Instead, his influence persists throughout Book 2 and offers a unifying theme for the first half of the poem. By noticing the carefully woven threads that bind Books 1 and 2 into a cohesive whole, we are able to understand that the Heraclean model of problem solving remains intact throughout, only modified by the Argonauts and their focus on teamwork to accommodate for the loss of Heracles' strength.

Such an interpretation of the poem's structure and major themes does not exclude other analyses, such as those of Clauss and Lawall. In fact, the highly complex nature of the *Argonautica* invites and perhaps demands multiple modes of interpretation. Each approach to understanding the poem merely offers one lens by which we strive to make meaning. The existence of one lens does not invalidate the meaning(s) acquired through

others. I believe that the Heraclean lens helps us to see the poem's carefully divided structure and further illuminates the exceptional nature of Jason's acquisition of the Fleece, which others have already begun to see through other lenses.

A final testament to the contrasting agencies of the epic's two halves occurs toward the end of the poem, when the Argonauts find themselves marooned in Libya. The stranded and increasingly thirsty Argonauts come upon the plain of the Hesperides, only to find the nymphs deep in mourning. Just the day before, Heracles had shot the serpent that guarded the sacred tree and stolen its golden apples. Jason beseeches the goddesses and Aegle then speaks to him, complaining of Heracles' vicious theft.

Heracles' acquisition of the golden apples of the Hesperides stands exactly parallel to the Argonauts' acquisition of the Golden Fleece. The incidents are remarkably similar. In both cases, a sacred golden object is removed by a foreigner without the owner's permission. In both cases, the thief was commanded to carry out the theft by a higher being (Pelias/Hera, Eurystheus/Hera). In both cases, a deadly serpent guarded the precious object that had to be overcome in order to accomplish the theft. Aegle's story finally answers the unspoken question, first inspired by Heracles' abandonment: *How would things have turned out differently if Heracles had reached Colchis?*

These plot-based similarities highlight the starkly different means by which these two thefts were accomplished. In the case of the golden apples, Heracles accomplished the task in the most straightforward and characteristic way possible: with force. Having shot the serpent, Ladon, with poisoned arrows, he then snatched the apples from the tree. His smashing open of a nearby rock in order to create a water source (described by Aegle at 4.1444-1449) merely emphasizes Heracles' straightforward, strength-based approach

to problem solving.⁷⁸ Jason's acquisition of the Golden Fleece constitutes, by contrast, was an enormously complex endeavor brought about by a mix of "persuasion, magic, intrigue, the cooperation of many human agents, and the intervention of several divinities, [most notably] Aphrodite."⁷⁹ This teamwork, supported by the help of the gods, characterizes Jason's own method of problem solving. Confronted once again by the physical person of Heracles, it becomes apparent how far the Argonautic expedition has moved beyond the simplistic methodology of Books 1 and 2, where human endeavor constituted the main, and for all intents and purposes the only, driving factor to the mission's success. Now, as the mission reaches its conclusion, the extraordinary nature of the Argonauts' success⁸⁰ stands in stark relief.

⁷⁸ In this situation, it is remarkable that Heracles used poison-tipped arrows to kill the guardian serpent. Not only does poison seem somewhat out of character for Heracles, whose own personal strength has always sufficed, but the pharmaceutical nature of the serpent's death mirrors the black-magic drugs that Jason used, with Medea's guidance, to complete Aetes' task and that Medea used to lull to sleep the serpent guarding the Fleece. Lawall, at least, does not seem concerned by Heracles' uncharacteristic preference for pharmaceuticals over might; he still sees the slaying of the serpent as representing the stereotypical method of attack for Heracles: "Heracles takes the *direct approach* [emphasis mine], simply slaying the serpent and carrying off the apples. He ignores the Hesperides, who tear their hair and lament. Jason, on the other hand, works solely through Medea, who puts the serpent to sleep with her magic... Heracles leaves behind him a scene of death and misery" (Lawall, 129).

⁷⁹ Levin, 27-28.

⁸⁰ Most remarkable in its rejection of Homeric ideals of heroism. Hunter (440): "Even the personal glory for which a Homeric warrior can hope is offered to the Argonauts only very conditionally. Failure here will lead only to a miserable and unsung death, where there will be no *kleos* to alleviate the oblivion... anything less than safe return with the Fleece would be as if they had never set out. The subordination of all else ... to this single obsessive end is a striking departure from the structural organization of the Homeric poems."

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