

The Argonautika

by Apollonios Rhodios

TRANSLATED, WITH INTRODUCTION,
COMMENTARY AND GLOSSARY BY

Peter Green

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

Berkeley Los Angeles London



In honor of beloved Virgil—

“O degli altri poeti onore e lume...”

—Dante, *Inferno*

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University of California Press, Ltd.
London, England

© 1997, 2007 by
Peter Green

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Apollonius Rhodius.

[Argonautica. English]

The Argonautika/by Apollonios Rhodios; translated, with introduction, commentary, and glossary, by Peter Green.

p. cm.—(Hellenistic culture and society; 25)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 978-0-520-25393-3 (pbk: alk.)

1. Epic poetry, Greek—Translations into English. 2. Argonauts (Greek mythology)—Poetry. 3. Jason (Greek mythology)—Poetry. 4. Medea (Greek mythology)—Poetry. I. Green, Peter, 1924– . II. Title. III. Series.

PA3872.E5 1997b

883'.01—dc20

96-24772

CIP

Printed in the United States of America

14 13 12 11

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—
Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials,
ANSI Z39.48-1984. Ⓜ

To C. M. C. G.
amicae, uxori, collegae

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like most of my books, this one has taken far too long in the making. I began the translation in 1988 in the comfortable and benignly user-friendly environment provided by the library of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. The first draft was completed by 1991 and has undergone several major revisions since. I did not start work on the commentary until 1992, using the interim period to absorb a large amount of the remarkably prolific scholarship on Apollonios published—after a long period of drought—during the past two decades, springing up (as Virginia Knight recently observed) as thickly as Jason's Sown Men from the ploughland of Kolchis. Thus translation and commentary assumed, to a surprising extent, quite separate characters in my mind, so that the problems I explored in my notes kept modifying earlier assumptions made while turning Apollonios's difficult Greek into English. The Glossary, not begun until the original version of my commentary was complete, emerged as a far more complex and lengthy undertaking than I had ever envisaged: in addition, it too shed fresh light on aspects of the Argonaut legend, not least by forcing me to recognize the interwoven, not to say ingrown, mythical family associations of Apollonios's heroic-age characters. “Only connect” was the phrase that kept recurring to me: two generations of epic nobility in which almost everyone, Jason not least, could claim kinship (by blood or marriage) to everyone else. Thus the quest for the Fleece began to take on some of the aspects of a family affair.

This take on the genealogical side of Greek myth was given a further boost by research I was carrying out, some two years ago, for an article with the tell-tale title “‘These fragments have I shored against my ruins’: Apollonios Rhodios and the Social Revaluation of Myth for a New Age.” I found myself tracing, inter alia, the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of myth-as-history, or historicized myth, from Homer to the Hellenistic era, with sometimes surprising results. One fact that emerged with quite startling clarity from this was the existence of a deep-rooted and well-nigh universal faith in the *actuality* of mythic narrative. These things, the Greeks were convinced, really *happened*, and such phenomena as allegory or historicist rationalization were simply devices exploited, as knowledge grew, to justify (or, failing that, explain away) the more embarrassingly archaic and outré features of traditional legend. I found a marvelous *reductio ad absurdum* of the rationalizing trend in Dionysios Skytobrachion's version of the Argonaut legend, epitomized at considerable length by Diodorus Siculus. This leached out the myth's entire magical or supernatural substructure—no fire-breathing bulls, no Clashing Rocks—and turned Medeia herself from a powerful virgin sorceress into a progressive rationalist do-gooder, not unlike Shaw's Major Barbara, with useful additional expertise in herbal and homoeopathic medicine. By contrast, Apollonios began to look, for the mid third century, quite remarkably old-fashioned.

Here was something with an unexpected ripple effect. The more I studied text and context, the less the Alexandrian Apollonios looked, the more a courageous (or antediluvian, according to one's attitude) throwback to the archaic worldview enshrined in literature from Homer to Pindar. Yes, he had the self-conscious irony inevitable in a highly literate scholar-poet overaware of his literary heritage; yet he had the characteristic Alexandrian preoccupation with roots, perhaps exacerbated by that *déracinement* sense peculiar to the rootless immigrant population of a new megalopolis such as Alexandria. But

became all too easy to see how the traditional conflict between Apollonios and Kallimachos may well have had a solid basis in fact. This was something I had long suspected, but which for a generation of scholarship has been regularly dismissed with scorn as a typical piece of romantic fiction, cooked up by scholiasts and commentators to fill a gap in our biographical knowledge. Once again I found myself forced, reluctantly (no, this is not ironic), into the too familiar role of odd man out. I argue the case in detail in my Introduction and various notes; here I mention it only as a factor contributing to the piecemeal development, in separate stages, of what I still find it hard to think of as a unified text. Among other things, the completion of my article on the revaluation of myth substantially modified my earlier thinking on Apollonios's place in that tradition and made my Introduction (the last part of the book to be written) a very different statement from what it otherwise might have been.

All this, as I say, has taken a great deal of time, far longer than either I or my publishers originally envisaged. On the other hand, the delay has been immensely beneficial, not only for the radical rethinking that was, in a busy academic life, its main (though very far from its sole) cause, but also because it enabled me to take into account several admirable works that would otherwise have been denied me. I am thinking in particular of Malcolm Campbell's exhaustive commentary on the first 471 lines of book 3 of the *Argonautika*, David Braund's unique study of ancient Kolchis, and Virginia Knight's careful and sensitive analysis of Apollonios's subtler-than-Poundian echoes and exploitation of the Homeric texts, which he and his audience knew, in some cases literally, by heart. The cumulative debt that I owe to these and many other scholars in a newly resurgent area of research should be abundantly apparent from translation and commentary alike.

At the same time I should, perhaps, also signal the conscious limitations of this book (the unconscious ones will all too soon be brought home to me by critics). Since it is, as a translation aimed primarily (though not exclusively) at those with no knowledge of Greek, it is neither, in the technical sense, a critical edition, nor indeed (since it largely omits linguistic, syntactical, and grammatical discussion) a full commentary either. But it does, quite deliberately, study the historical, cultural, geographical, and literary background in far greater detail than is usual in a translation, grappling in the notes with a considerable number of textual problems that will only be of concern to those with some experience in classical Greek. The reason for this is simple: the only available commentary *on all four books* of the *Argonautika* is the outdated text of Mooney (1912), which was fundamentally inadequate even when written. Book 3 has always received far more attention than the rest, and students now have Hunter's 1989 edition conveniently available in paperback. But for the rest, in English, there is nothing. I have tried to fill that yawning gap at least partially, conscious that in order to understand Apollonios—and, more important, although the practice is academically often regarded as frivolous, to *enjoy* him—it is essential to treat his poem as a unity, and never, amid the details of piecemeal interpretation, to forget this.

Critics will not be slow to point out that I have failed to present the reader with an overall literary interpretation of the poem, preferably in the structural or poststructural mode of analysis now current. This is not for lack of studying recent attempts in this genre, and the attentive reader combing my notes will readily discern how much I have learned, mostly on points of detail, from scholars such as Bing, Cameron, Clauss, DeForest, Dräger, Fusillo, Goldhill, Hunter, Hurst, Segal, and Zanker, even when I disagree with them. But I could not but notice how their, and other, patterns differed so markedly from one another as to call the whole method into question (I had already come to much the same conclusion about the competing theories of ring-composition in Ovid). In particular, the lack of adequate scholarly controls over such speculation must always arouse suspicion. Thus since this book was designed in the first place as a handbook to further basic understanding, I decided that such exercises of the imagination, however scholarly, had no place in it; and a healthy respect for Occam's

Law kept me, wisely I feel, from venturing yet another version myself. Again, the nature of my undertaking meant that many studies that I admire greatly for their insights, and from which I have learned much, nevertheless did not find a logical place here: among these I would like to single out *honoris causa*, Mary Williams's percipient and highly original monograph on Apollonios's use of landscape.

Working on the *Argonautika* has been for me very much a labor of love. At the age of seven I first encountered, and was fascinated by, the quest for the Golden Fleece in that brilliant volume by Andrew Lang, *Tales of Troy and Greece*, never yet surpassed as a retelling of ancient myth for young people.¹ Years later, reading Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, I came across this passage:

“And yet, (said I) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning.” Johnson: “Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors.” He then called to the boy, “What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?” “Sir, (said the boy) I would give what I have.”

The boy's words, then and even today, struck an emotional chord that hit me directly and physically just as a certain high-frequency note drawn from a violin will shatter a wineglass. In one sense I have been giving what I have in pursuit of those bright, elusive, infinitely rewarding Sirens ever since. The anecdote seems to me the best justification ever put forward for a truly humane education.

This is, I know, quite hopelessly old-fashioned and romantic. Robert Graves somewhere recalls his dismay at the reply he got from an earnest student of English literature when he asked her what she enjoyed about Shakespeare's (I think) work. “I don't read to *enjoy*” she said, in withering reproof, “read to *evaluate*.” The absence of genuine pleasure is what makes too much literary criticism today a coldly aridly sterile desert. Despite this I still retain my deep instinctive responses to great art and literature though a quarter of a century's exposure to American academic critical trends has come as near to killing such reactions in me as anything could do. In that sense the present work may count as an act of calculated defiance, as well as an invitation to relish one of the Hellenic world's oldest and most deeply resonant myths, told by a master of his craft, who loved the sea, and ships, and the complexities of human nature, and let that passion irradiate everything he wrote.

Nor have I ever forgotten that the *Argonautika* is an epic *poem*, though the two other translations most commonly used, the late E. V. Rieu's Penguin and R. L. Hunter's version for World Classics, tend to make readers (as I have found) do just that, being written in flat and businesslike prose. Rieu turned the *Argonautika* (as he did just about everything else he touched, including the Four Gospels) into a kind of boys' adventure story, while Hunter, on his own account, seems to have had no higher aim than to provide an updated replacement (as trot or pony) for R. C. Seaton's Loeb. There may, then, be room for a version that, while avoiding the excesses of critical fashion, is conscious throughout that Apollonios was a poet at least as talented as Matthew Arnold or Tennyson, and endowed with an even greater mastery of language. That mastery it is impossible fully to convey in English: I can only say that I have tried my level best to create an approximation to it.² The epic hexameter cannot easily be reproduced in a nonquantitative language: I have used for this purpose the long, loose, 5/6-beat stress equivalent developed by Day Lewis and Lattimore (for translating Virgil and Homer respectively).

I should, perhaps, also say a word about the spelling of proper names in this volume. My original idea was to eradicate the all-pervasive Latinization of Greek names that still largely persists in modern scholarship. The task proved surprisingly difficult. Many names (Herodotos, Polybios) required only minimal adjustment, but there were others—such as Loukianos (Lucian) and Kirillos

(Circe)—that almost literally set my teeth on edge by their oddity. For Aristotle, Hesiod, Homer, and Pindar, I retained the familiar form, and I have stuck to Aelian (rather than making him Ailianos since he was, after all, a Roman to the extent of bearing the first name Claudius. In some cases I compromised; in a few cases I abandoned the struggle altogether. I couldn't, for instance, face calling my main character Iason rather than Jason. Ptolemaios as a revision of Ptolemy also went against my instincts, as did Okeanos for Ocean. Finally, I didn't do anything about the Anglicization of Roman names, with the perhaps spurious justification that these were Latin anyway: I think the truth was that I felt no less uncomfortable with Ovidius (or, a fortiori, Naso) for Ovid, or Horatius (ditto Flaccus) for Horace than I did about any of the Greek metamorphoses I had choked on. So, like many others, I have ended up inconsistent in my usage.

Perhaps by way of compensation, I have been fiercely obstinate in the matter of punctuation. Some of the conventions established by the *Chicago Manual of Style*—I am concerned in particular here with the positioning of commas and periods vis-à-vis reported speech—regularly violate every logical principle of discourse for the sake of one easy all-purpose rule-of-thumb. Readers will notice that my treatment of quoted matter ignores these arbitrary canons, a decision which gave serious concern to my old friend and current copy-editor Peter Dreyer, whose objections I firmly overruled. I want to make it clear that what he (and possibly others) regard as solecisms are due to my insistence, and not to mere lack of proper scrutiny on his part. Indeed, he has been both meticulous and vigilant on my behalf throughout, and I am more than grateful for all his help. I also want to express my on-going gratitude, once again, to Mary Lamprech, classics editor *extraordinaire*, for always being there when she was needed, adroitly fielding all my questions, and providing throughout that nice blend of practicality, encouragement, and friendship, which all authors dream of in their publishers, and too many never find.

I am equally grateful to the librarians of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and the Classics Library and the Perry-Castañeda (Main) Library in the University of Texas at Austin for their unfailing help they have always given me throughout the writing of this book. I must also thank the ever-resourceful staff of the Interlibrary Loan department, who, as usual, found me titles that I had written off as unobtainable, and more often than not surprisingly fast. The students on whom, in two seminars devoted to Apollonios and his work, I tried out most of my nascent ideas cheerfully gave me as good as, and often better than, they got, and in innumerable ways sharpened my thinking on the simultaneously most difficult and most rewarding of authors. My translation is based on the splendid edition, as sensitive to poetic nuance as it is solidly grounded in *Wissenschaft*, of Professor Francis Vian, made for the French Budé series, and contriving to pack a remarkable amount of informative comment, over and above text and *apparatus criticus*, into a necessarily limited format. I have not often diverged from it, and when I have, it is always with a sense of profound temerity. My understanding of Apollonios's text also owes much to the editions of Ardizzoni (for book 1 in particular), Hunter (for book 3) and, above all, that great Italian scholar Enrico Livrea (for book 4). (At the same time I should, perhaps, point out that my omission of Hermann Fränkel's Oxford Classical Text from my bibliography is not due to mere carelessness.) Other debts, to many scholars—including Fränkel in his *Noten*—are duly acknowledged in the Commentary; but the greatest debt of all remains, as always, to my wife Carin, for whose love, friendship, and intellectual stimulus over the quarter of a century the dedication to this book, as indeed the book itself, remains a sadly inadequate *quid pro quo*.

Peter Green

1. Lang, together with *The Heroes of Asgard* and several other highly formative texts, was put into my hands during the three years, from six to eight, that I spent at an English P.N.E.U. (Parents' National Educational Union) school, before being transferred to the less congenial rigors of prep and public boarding schools. Most of the serious permanent passions of my later life (including the study of classics as a profession, and the absorption of world literature and music for the sheer fun of it) had their roots in my P.N.E.U. days. I did not get any remotely comparable stimulation and excitement until I returned to Cambridge after World War II as an elderly (*I thought: I was twenty-three*) ex-service undergraduate.

2. I had completed the first draft of my own translation before I came upon the one included by Barbara Fowler (bare text and a little else) in her *Hellenistic Poetry: An Anthology* (Madison, 1990). Since it was clear at a glance that we were employing a very similar verse format and following essentially identical guidelines, I at once put hers away without reading further: nothing is harder to shake (*experto credite*) than the influence of a competitor with similar ideas to your own. Now that my text is submitted I have read Professor Fowler's version with considerable interest and not a little admiration. The real beneficiary is the Greekless reader. Whereas for long there was only Rieu's adventure story available, the student in particular now has not one but two verse translations plus an update of Rieu with more scholarship and marginally better prose.

I

The author of the *Argonautika* is a remarkably elusive character. We do not know exactly when he was born, or the date of his death. At least three cities—Alexandria, Naukratis, and, inevitably, Rhodes—were claimed in antiquity, and continue to be argued for today, as his birthplace. Our main sources for his life are not only late, but contain a number of arresting discrepancies. Did he turn to poetry early or late in life? He was royal tutor to one of the Ptolemies—but which one? He was head of the Alexandrian Library—but directly before and after whom? Why is there arguably no direct surviving evidence from his own day for the notorious literary quarrel it is claimed (by the *Souda*, s.v. *Καλλίμαχος*) he had with his near-contemporary Kallimachos?¹ How, chronologically speaking, is his retreat to exile to Rhodes to be related to his appointment as librarian and tutor? Under which Ptolemy was he born and flourished? The evidence is such that scholars have put his birth as early as 300 and as late as 265, and his death anywhere between 235 and 190.²

The central problem occasioning such disagreement is not so much the lack of testimony (above all of *early* testimony) as the awkward fact that our few late surviving witnesses on occasion so flatly contradict one another (though some of the disagreements, as we shall see, turn out to be more apparent than real). I therefore set them out here. The *Lives* were transmitted with the MSS of the *Argonautika*; scholarly efforts to trace them back (e.g., to a first-century B.C. critic called Theon) while praiseworthy, do not offer enlightenment or remove any difficulties. The same applies to the two entries from the *Souda*, a late-tenth-century Byzantine encyclopedia.

(i) *Life A*: “Apollonios, the author of the *Argonautika*, was by birth an Alexandrian, of the Ptolemaïa tribe, and the son of Silleus (or, according to some, Illeus). He lived during the reign of the Ptolemies, and was a student (*μαθητής*) of Kallimachos. At first he was an assistant to (*συνών*)³ his own master, Kallimachos; but in the end (*ὄψις*) he turned to the writing of poems. It is said that while still in youth (*ἔφηβον*) he gave a reading of the *Argonautika* and was unfavorably received. Overcome by the opprobrium of the public and the sneers and abuse of his fellow-poets, he left his native land and took off to Rhodes. It was here that he polished and corrected his text,⁴ going on to give readings of it which won him the highest renown—the reason why in his poems he calls himself ‘the Rhodian’, for he enjoyed a brilliant teaching career there, winning Rhodian citizenship and other honors.”⁵

“During the reign of the Ptolemies” is the reading of most MSS, generally dismissed as, in Hunter’s words, “too obvious to need saying.”⁶ If so, one wonders, why was it said? In fact, when we seek a specific identity for “the Ptolemies”, plural, the answer at once presents itself: they are, and can only be, Ptolemy II Philadelphos and his sister-wife Arsinoë, the first and by far the most famous of the dynasty’s incestuous royal couples, known as the “Sibling Gods” (*Θεοὶ Ἀδελφοί*), and regularly portrayed together on both gold and silver coinage (Green 1993, 145–46, with fig. 57). It is also often argued that the account of his youthful literary performance is inconsistent with what precedes it—that is, that he turned to poetry “late”; but such flagrant self-contradiction within the space of two sentences

is unlikely even for a late scholiast. The Greek surely means no more than that he began as Kallimachos's scholarly assistant (in the Library?), afterwards branching off on his own as a poet (Delage 1930, 22–25). The ambiguity of *συνών* is worth noting: it can imply anything from casual acquaintanceship to cohabitation and sexual intercourse.⁷

(ii) *Life B*: “Apollonios the poet was an Alexandrian by birth, his father being Silleus or Illeus, his mother Rhodé. He studied with Kallimachos, who was then a *grammatikós* [teacher, scholar] in Alexandria, and after composing these poems [sc., the *Argonautika*] gave a public reading of them in Rhodes. The result, to his embarrassment, was a complete failure, as a result of which he took up residence in Rhodes. There he was active in public affairs and lectured on rhetoric [cf. nn. 3 and 5]. Henceforth he was ready to the readiness of some to call him a Rhodian. It was there, then, that he resided while he polished his poems. Afterwards he gave a hugely successful public reading—so much so that he was adjudged worthy [*ἀξιωθῆναι*] of Rhodian citizenship and high honors. Some sources state that he returned to Alexandria and gave another public reading there, which brought him to the very pinnacle of success to the point where he was found worthy [*ἀξιωθῆναι*] of the Museum's Libraries, and was buried alongside Kallimachos himself.”⁸

We see, then, that both *Lives* are fundamentally in agreement on the facts and, equally important, on the *sequence of events* in Apollonios's career, though B adds the important information concerning his return to Alexandria and his success there. To “be found worthy of” the Libraries clearly meant appointment as librarian, or perhaps in the first instance as a Museum scholar, not, as has sometimes—rather fancifully—been suggested, the admission of his works to the Library's holdings, for which inclusiveness, not merit, was the criterion.⁹ The close relationship with Kallimachos, whose own career is firmly pegged to the decades 280–50, and with Theokritos, who seems to have written most of his poetry before 270, would point us firmly in the direction of Ptolemy II's reign—the Golden Age of Hellenistic poetry—even without *Life A*'s reference (as I maintain) to the Sibling Gods.

(iii) P. Oxy. 1241, col. ii (Grenfell and Hunt, pt. 10: 99 ff.): “[Apollo]nios, son of Silleus, an Alexandrian, called the Rhodian, a student [or perhaps ‘acquaintance’: *γνώριμος*] of Kallimachos: he also [was? *ἔ[γένετο]*] the [t(eacher): word almost wholly illegible, possibly *δ(ιδάσκαλ)ος*, but could just as easily be *δ(ιάδοχ)ος*] of the [fi]rst king. He was succeeded by Eratosthenes, after whom came Aristophanes of Byzantion and Aristarchos. Next was Apollonios of Alexandria, known as the Classifier [*εἰδογράφος*], and after him Aristarchos son of Aristarchos, an Alexandrian, but originally from Samothraké, who [was] the tutor of <Ptolemy IV> Philopator's children.”

This text is an extract from some sort of chrestomathy or handbook (second century A.D.), listing, in chronological order, some of the chief librarians in Alexandria. The column immediately preceding is lost, but must have named the first appointee, whom we know from the *Souda* (s.v. *Ζηνόδοτος*, 74) to have been Zenódotos, Homeric scholar, epic poet, and tutor to Ptolemy I's children. Ptolemy II was born in 308: thus if we place Zenódotos's appointment c. 295, we shall not be far out. But who succeeded him? Some scholars would like to believe it was Kallimachos,¹⁰ presumably on the principle of academic merit reaping its just reward; but the almost unanimous silence of our ancient sources is not encouraging,¹¹ and it should also not be forgotten that the librarian was a crown appointment.¹² Perhaps not coincidentally, both Zenódotos and Apollonios were epic poets and Homeric scholars: this may well reflect Ptolemy II's own preferences. The likelihood of Apollonios having been appointed as Zenódotos's direct successor is very great. Unfortunately, it is not certain beyond all doubt: both chronologically and based on P. Oxy. 1241, there is room for Kallimachos's tenure between the two.¹³ On the other hand, Apollonios must, on chronological grounds, have been tutor to Ptolemy III rather than Ptolemy I, and scholars have therefore agreed that “first” (*πρώτου*) was

slip, perhaps through misreading a slovenly hand, for “third” (τρίτου). After Apollonios the sequence makes complete sense (though Aristarchos is mentioned twice: I suspect that the scribe had the Samian as well as the Samothrakian in mind) and can be accepted.

(iv) The *Souda* (s.v. Ἀπολλώνιος, no. 3419, Adler, 1: 307): “Apollonios, an Alexandrian, writer of epigrams; spent some time on Rhodes; son of Silleus; a student of Kallimachos; contemporary with Eratosthenes, Euphorion, and Timarchos, in the reign of Ptolemy known as The Benefactor [Euergétes], and Eratosthenes' successor in the Directorship [προστασία] of the Library in Alexandria.”

This encyclopedia entry differs sharply in two (clearly related) aspects from our other testimonia: it dates Apollonios firmly in the reign of Ptolemy III and later (Euphorion was appointed librarian in Antioch by Antiochos the Great at some point after 223), and makes him Eratosthenes' successor rather than predecessor, as chief librarian. The obvious explanation, provided by (iii) above, is that the author of this entry confused our Apollonios with Apollonios the Classifier. Some, however, prefer for whatever reason,¹⁴ to accept the *Souda*'s dating, against all our other evidence, and to place Apollonios's librarianship *after* that of Eratosthenes.¹⁵ Such a choice cannot be sustained, and more recent scholarship rejects it.¹⁶ Dating apart, nothing in the *Souda* entry contradicts our other sources.

The biographical notice that can be constructed on the basis of these witnesses, and reinforced with circumstantial literary and historical testimony, differs somewhat from currently accepted scholarly versions of Apollonios's life.¹⁷ The main premiss of these is that the central episode related by the *Lives*, Apollonios's youthful literary setback, and his sojourn on Rhodes as a consequence of this, as well as his quarrel with Kallimachos, must be viewed as a fiction. I see no need for such an assumption. Nor do I feel the need to refute some other claims made about him that have no basis whatsoever in the evidence—for example, that his departure to Rhodes took place late in life, or that he was exiled. Here, then, is my reconstruction of his life and career (for the four sources discussed above, I use the abbreviations L1, L2, P, and S).¹⁸

Apollonios, the son of Silleus and Rhodé (L1, L2, P, S), an epic poet (S) and author of the *Argonautika* (L1), was an Alexandrian by birth, of the Ptolemaï's tribe (L1), and thus the first native-born Alexandrian poet. (His family may have moved to Alexandria from Naukratis.) Since he flourished under Ptolemy II Philadelphos (L1) and was a student of Kallimachos (L1, L2, P, S), who was born c. 310, his own birth can be placed somewhere between 305 and 290. The earlier range seems much more probable, especially if his relationship with Kallimachos began when the latter, not yet Ptolemy II's protégé, was still a *grammatikós* (L2; S, s.v. Καλλίμαχος,) in the Alexandrian suburb of Eleusis—that is, before 285. Thus Apollonios's early, unfortunate, public reading (L1, L2) will have taken place—if the term “youth” (ἐφηβον) be interpreted in its strict sense—when he was between eighteen and twenty: that is, at some point in the period 285–280, and (interestingly enough) while he was still attached, as student or assistant (L1), to Kallimachos. It was after this, late in the day (surely that ὀψέ, in context, has to be ironic?), that he determined to make his prime activity poetry rather than criticism (L1) and removed himself to Rhodes (L1, L2, S) in order to do so.

Why Rhodes? No one has bothered with this question, except (by implication) through the mistaken claim (Lefkowitz, 12–13) that, against all the evidence, Rhodes was in fact his birthplace. I have elsewhere (Green 1993, 203–4) suggested that the independence of that proud maritime republic perhaps offered an atmosphere more sympathetic to epic, not least an epic largely bound up with the sea, than did Ptolemaic Alexandria.¹⁹ Since then an excellent article has been published pointing out what a deep and personal knowledge the *Argonautika* reveals of navigation, maritime life, shipbuilding, and nautical expertise in general—expertise surely gained, in the first instance, on Rhodes. How long did he remain there? To become genuinely knowledgeable about seafaring, as well as

engage in public life, pursue a distinguished teaching career, complete his revised *Argonautika*—fragments of a prior draft of book 1 survive embedded in the scholia²¹—and achieve a position of international literary eminence would all take considerable time. This indeed would seem to have been the case. The *terminus ante quern* for his return to Alexandria would have to be the inception of his tutorial duties with the young Ptolemy III Euergetes, who cannot have been more than fifteen at the time, and may have been as young as twelve. Euergetes was born at some point between 288 (the year of his father's marriage to Arsinoë I) and 275.²² We are therefore looking at a date not earlier than 275 and possibly as late as 260. If Apollonios emigrated to Rhodes in the period 285–80, he would have spent a minimum of thirteen years there, and more probably about twenty. He could thus easily have been forty—a perfectly acceptable age for such honors—at the time of his triumphant return (L2), and his appointment by Ptolemy II as royal tutor (P) and chief librarian (P; S?): I would suggest a date around 265.

There followed a long period of uneventful success and productiveness. It would have been in the years that Apollonios wrote foundation poems on the origins (*κτίσεις*) of Alexandria and Naukratis, and an aetiological poem entitled *Kanobos*, just as during his Rhodian residence, he had similarly composed works about Kaunos, Knidos, and Rhodes itself.²³ He was equally busy in his capacity as Museum scholar, with critical works on Homer (including a monograph attacking his predecessor Zenodotos), Hesiod, and Archilochos.²⁴ It is possible that he also began a second revised edition of at least part of the *Argonautika*, which got no further than book 1, and that it was the existence of this revision which occasioned references to the “previous edition” (*προέκδοσις*) by the scholiasts.²⁵

On his accession early in 246, Ptolemy III Euergetes summoned Eratosthenes from Athens to take over the office of chief librarian.²⁶ There was no question of his old tutor being dismissed, let alone exiled: Apollonios had served with distinction for twenty years, was now in his sixties, and had earned an honorable retirement. If there is any truth in the tradition (L2) that after he died (probably at some point in the 230's), he was buried beside Kallimachos, that suggests, not (as has been romantically inferred) a reconciliation between the two men, but rather the existence of a special burial site or private cemetery for distinguished members of the Museum community.²⁷

II

When considering Apollonios's place in Hellenistic literature, it is impossible to ignore the tradition, whether true or fictional, of his alleged quarrel with Kallimachos, since this lurks at the heart of several much-debated problems: appointments and working conditions in the Library and the Museum; the nature of third-century epic, the interpretation of Kallimachean aesthetic principles, and the relationship of the *Argonautika* to both; finally, the precise meaning and scope of the tradition hostile to Kallimachos, as testified to by passages in that poet's works such as lines 105–14 of the *Hymn to Apollo*, or the partly fragmentary preface (1–38) of the *Aitia* attacking the “Telchines”—malevolent mythical dwarfs here standing in for literary opponents. This is not the place to attack such problems in detail; but anyone who wishes to read the *Argonautika* with a reasonable degree of understanding should at least be able to appreciate the social and aesthetic context in which it came to be written. Even if we regard a personal vendetta between two distinguished officers of the Alexandrian Library as unproven (though hardly, bearing modern academe in mind, intrinsically improbable), are the respective literary positions of Apollonios and Kallimachos such that hostility, even if nonexistent in fact, could easily be presumed in theory?

It is fashionable nowadays to assert “that both quarrel and controversy are entirely modern

inventions.”²⁸ Like many such assertions, this one is not true. Though the *Souda* is regularly trawled for useful (i.e., supportive) evidence, but briskly dismissed as late and untrustworthy when it records testimony at odds with the theory *du jour*, the entry on Kallimachos (its format suggesting derivation from Hesychios of Miletos) contains the following comment on one title in a list of Kallimachos's works: “*Ibis*, a poem of deliberate obscurity and abusiveness, directed against a certain Ibis, who had become Kallimachos's enemy: this person was Apollonios, the author of the *Argonautika*.”²⁹ The reason for the hostility is not stated, but there is at least a strong chance of its having been literary. We might have guessed that such feuds were common in the Museum, and a famous squib by Timon of Phleious confirms it: “In the polyglot land of Egypt, many now find pasturage as endowed scribbler, endlessly quarreling in the Muses' birdcage.”³⁰ Kallimachos himself, imitating Hipponax, urged scholars not to be mutually jealous.³¹ But with “free meals, high salaries, no taxes to pay, very pleasant surroundings, good lodgings and servants”, there was, as Pfeiffer remarks,³² “plenty of opportunity for quarrelling with one another.” Leisure, combined with the arbitrary uncertainties of royal patronage, must have made backbiting and paranoia endemic.

Despite the enormous amount of scholarship generated by this topic—Kallimachos is, after all, just about the ideal scholar-poet to most classicists, a subtly flattering *Mirror for Academe*—direct testimony for what he actually *disliked* in Hellenistic literature is limited. There are three main items of evidence, which, taken together, offer a fairly consistent picture. Two of them—the preface to the *Aitia* and the conclusion of the *Hymn to Apollo*—have been mentioned above. The third is a six-line epigram (28 [30] Pf.) on the theme of distaste for what is “base, common, or popular.” There are a few other hints (e.g., the last line of *Epigr.* 8 [10] Pf. wittily closes with a six-syllable word, *βραχυσυλλαβή*, meaning “brevity”), but these three texts form the basis for all argument.

“All that's commonplace makes me sick” (*σικχαίνω πάντα τὰ δημόσια*) is the central message of the epigram: this includes—fact merging into literary metaphor—indiscriminate lovers, public fountains, overpopulated highways, and, a point to which I shall return in a moment, “cyclic” poetry. Popularity in short (a perennial academic tenet, this), is suspect. The avoidance of well-trodden roads is a theme that recurs in the preface to the *Aitia* (25–28), in the form of advice from Apollo. Also, the poet should chirp like the cicada, not bray like the ass (29–32); poems should not be measured by their length (15–18). Jealous dwarfs (1–2, cf. 17), no friends of the Muses, mutter (*ἐπιτρύζουσιν*) against Kallimachos because he has not written one sustained epic, many thousands of lines in length, about kings or heroes (3–5), but instead turns out short poems, like a child (5–6), and is a man of few lines (*ὀλιγόστιχος*, 9). The cryptic postscript (105–14) to *Hymn II* has personified Envy (*Φθόνος*) whispering in Apollo's ear (106): “I do not admire that poet whose utterance lacks the sweep and range of the sea.”³⁴ To which Apollo replies, with a swift contemptuous kick (*ποδί τ' ἤλασεν*), that a river such as the Euphrates may have a vast current (*μέγας ῥόος*), but also carries down a mass of silt and refuse; whereas Demeter's priestesses bring her, not just any water, but only (111–12) that “thin trickle, the ultimate distillation” (*ἄκρον ἄωτον*), pure and undefiled, that rises from the sacred spring”.

The general message, despite some teasing obscurities of detail that have occasioned endless debate, is clear enough. Kallimachos is advocating three fundamental qualities in poetry: brevity, originality, and refinement, whether of style, language, or form. The criticisms against him (not so different from some still current today) are for not having produced a “major” or “substantial” work. His answer is that bulk inevitably includes dross and (the donkey's bray applies here) vulgarity in utterance. The real problem in the context of our present discussion is how far any of this could be directed against epic poetry in general and Apollonios in particular. “The cyclic poem” (*ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν*) of *Epigr.* 28 [30] 1 might be thought specific enough, but it has often been pointed out that *κυκλικόν*, “cyclic” or “epic”, also carries the secondary literary senses of “commonplace

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