Two notes on the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius

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TWO NOTES ON THE ARGONAUTICA OF APOLLONIUS RHODIUS.

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Résumé. — L’imitation virgilienne d’Apollonios de Rhodes peut nous aider à résoudre des problèmes de texte dans les Argonautiques. À En. 3.232 la phrase « ex — caecisque latebris » suggère que Virgile a compris qu’en écrivant « ἐκποθεν ἀφράστοιο — ὀλέθρου » à Arg. 2.224 Apollonios se référait à l’endroit d’ou viennent les Harpies. À En. 4.247 le mot « caelum » suggère que Virgile avait « πόλον » dans son texte à Arg. 3.161 et non pas le « πόλοι » transmis par les manuscrits.

Abstract. — Vergil’s imitation of Apollonius Rhodius may help to solve textual problems in the Argonautica. At Aen. 3.232 the phrase « ex — caecisque latebris » suggests that Vergil understood Apollonius to be referring to the place from which the Harpies come in the words « ἐκποθεν ἀφράστοιο — ὀλέθρου » at Arg. 2.224. At Aen. 4.247 the word « caelum » suggests that Vergil read « πόλον » in his text at Arg. 3.161 and not the transmitted « πόλοι ».

I. — In his description of the Harpies Phineus says that they swoop down « ἐκποθεν ἀφράστοιο — ὀλέθρου » (Arg. 2. 224). The phrase, found in all the surviving manuscripts, has posed a problem for commentators and translators. Two solutions have been suggested. Some have accepted an otherwise unattested meaning of « ὀλέθρου » as referring to the place from which death or destruction comes. Others have preferred to emend the text but the latest discussion along these lines ends with the words, « c'est à la croix que nous proposerions de revenir pour ce passage si discuté ». Back, therefore, to the dagger adopted

1. I would like to thank F. Vian, R. L. Hunter, J.-M. Jacques and especially A. M. Wilson for help and advice.
3. E. LIVREA, L’Épos Philologique : Apollonios de Rhodes et quelques homérismes méconnus. AC 49 (1980) 156, who discusses the emendations proposed by KOECILY (« δλεθροι »), HEMSTERHUIS (« δλεθρον »), CAMPBELL (« καταΐγεται δλεθρον » and « καταϊγεται ἐκ δλεθρου ») and CHUVIN (« ὄλυμπου »). He wrongly states, however, that « ἀφράστοιο » is never used as an adjective. Admittedly, at Arg. 2. 824 the boar leaps « ἐξοχεὸν ἀφράστοιο » to kill Idmon. In its own right this phrase means « from some unseen lair » (R. C. SEATON, o. c.). At Arg. 3. 1289-1290, however, the fire-breathing bulls appear « ἐκκαθητὶ ἀφράστοιο/κυκτιμῶν χθωνίου », a close parallel for the description of the Harpies. Apollonius thus uses the phrase both with and without a noun to describe the sudden onrush of animals. It is, therefore, not possible to exclude the possibility that « δλεθρον » is to be taken as a noun with the adjective « ἀφράστοιο ».

REA, T. XCII, 1990, n°s 1-2, p. 141 à 143.
by H. Fränkel in his edition of the poem⁴ and printed also by G. Paduano and M. Fusillo in the most recent edition of the *Argonautica*⁵.

In the *Aeneid* Vergil imitates Apollonius' Harpies episode, as has been noted by every commentator on the poem since Servius. Vergil's reference to the Apollonian phrase in question here has been noted but has not, to my knowledge, been used to throw light on the textual problem in the *Argonautica*⁶. When the Harpies attack the Trojans for the second time⁷ they swoop down « ex diverso caeli caecisque latebris » (*Aen.* 3.232). Vergil thus mentions the unseen place from which the Harpies swoop down. His « caecis » translates Apollonius' « ἄφράστοιο » and « Latebris » corresponds to « ὀλέθρου », referring to the place from which the Harpies come, and with both words filling exactly the same position at the end of the hexameter. I would submit, therefore, that Vergil read « ὀλέθρου » in his text of the *Argonautica* and understood Apollonius to have in mind the place from which the Harpies come. This is our earliest piece of evidence for the state of the text of the *Argonautica* at this point and supports F. Vian's solution⁸, to name only its most recent proponent, against those who favour emendation.

II. — At the beginning of the third book Apollonius describes the meeting of Hera and Athena with Aphrodite and the sending of Eros from Olympus to Colchis which results from the encounter between the goddesses (*Arg.* 3.7-166). Eros' departure and flight are described as follows:

βή δὲ διέκ μεγάλοι Διός πάγκαρπον ἀλοήν,  
αὐτὰρ ἔπετα πόλας ἐξήλυθεν Ὀλύμποιο  
αἰθέριας ἐνθέν δε καταιβάτις εστί κέλευθος  
οὐρανή· δοιὼ δὲ πόλοι ἀνέχουσι κάρφην  
οὐρέων ἠλιβάτων, κορυφαὶ χθόνος, ἡξὶ τ᾽ ἀδερθεῖς  
ἡλίων προτίσιν ἐρεύθεται ἀκτίνεσιν,  
νεῖοθι δ᾽ ἀλλοτε γαία φερέσβιος αστεά τ᾽ ἀνήρων  
φαίνετο καὶ ποταμῶν ἱεροὶ ρώοι, ἀλλοτε δ᾽ἀντε  
ἀκρίες, ἀμφὶ δὲ πόντος, ἀν᾽ αἰθέρα πολλὰν ἱόντι.  

(*Arg.* 3.158-166)

This is the text as given by H. Fränkel. In the apparatus criticus for lines 161-166 he has written, however, « textus dubius ». The Vergilian imitation of Apollonius once again sheds some light on matters.

« πόλοι » poses a problem. It is difficult to see what the poles of the earth have to do with mountains and the location of the rising sun⁹. H. Fränkel suggests « πόλονδ' » as an alternative, with the mountains rising up towards heaven. More recently, however, F. Vian has

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5. Le Argonautiche (Milan 1986).
7. In both the *Aeneid* and the *Argonautica* there are three descriptions of Harpy attacks. Cf. *Aen.* 3.225ff ; 232ff ; 238ff and *Arg.* 2. 187ff ; 223ff ; 267ff.
8. It is perhaps worth noting a further argument in favour of seeing Apollonius as referring to a point of departure or destruction as the point of departure of the Harpies. These monstrous figures are often seen as having their home in Hades. See *Aen.* 3.215 and 6.289 and also RE vol. VII. 2 coll. 2419-2420.
accepted the emendation offered by A. Platt and printed « πόλον » and he has been supported by M. Campbell and G. Paduano and M. Fusillo. In this interpretation the high mountains support the sky and Eros' flight from Olympus to Colchis brings him to the mountains at the eastern edge of the world which support the heavens.

In Aeneid 4 Jupiter, after the prayer of Iarbas, sends Mercury to order Aeneas to leave Carthage. The flight of Mercury is in part modelled on that of Eros. His journey brings him from Olympus (Aen. 4.268) to Mt. Atlas:

\[ \text{iamque volans apicem et latera ardua cemit} \]
\[ \text{Atlantis duri caelum qui vertice fulcit,} \]
\[ (Aen. 4.246-7) \]

The subsequent description (248-251) presents Atlas as both man and mountain, giving a vivid picture of the well-known figure of the god who holds up the sky. Mercury thus flies from Olympus to Carthage via the mountain which holds up the sky at the western edge of the world just as Eros flies from Olympus to Colchis via the mountains which hold up the sky at the eastern edge of the world. Atlas supports the « caelum » just as the lofty peaks in the Argonautica support the « πόλον ». Vergil's imitation thus suggests that he read this word rather than « πόλοι » in his text and « πόλον » is in all probability what Apollonius actually wrote.

12. o. c.
13. See B. Orts, Virgil, A Study in Civilized Poetry (Oxford 1963) p. 82. Mercury's earlier descent at Aen. 1.297-304 was aimed at securing a safe reception for the Trojans in Carthage just as Eros' descent has the aim of securing help for the Argonauts after their arrival in Colchis. It is worthy of note here that Mercury's flight « per aēra magnum » (Aen. 1.300) during this first descent to Carthage refers to Eros' flight « αν' αἰθέρα πολλὸν » during his descent to Colchis. This is further evidence against the reading « αν' αἰθέρα πολλὸν » adopted by VIAN, (o. c., p. 1 n. 1) vol. 2 (1980). Cf. M. CAMPBELL, CR 32 (1982) 15. In Mercury's second flight both the earlier scene in the Aeneid and the Apollonian model are inverted by his being sent to get the Trojans out of Carthage.
14. For Atlas as the western limit of the world see Aen. 4. 480-482. There too the location is intended as a counterpart to the eastern Colchis with the Massylian priestess acting as a doublet for Medea. See A. S. PEASE, Publīi Vergiliī Maronis Liber Quartus (Cambridge/Mass. 1925) ad 483.
15. On the mountain ranges at the ends of the earth which support the heavens see Aristotle, Met. 1.13.350a 18-350b 14.
16. I had already written this note when R. L. HUNTER brought to my attention his comments on this passage in his Apollonius Rhodius, Argonautica Book 3. (Cambridge 1989). See ad 161-162.