

The Politics of
Apollonius Rhodius'
Argonautica

ANATOLE MORI



CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE

www.cambridge.org/9780521882255

This page intentionally left blank

THE POLITICS OF
APOLLONIUS RHODIUS'
ARGONAUTICA

Apollonius Rhodius' epic poem, the *Argonautica*, is one of the most important and influential literary productions of the Hellenistic period. This book shows how the retelling of a heroic adventure set in the generation before the Trojan War engages the political, religious, and ethical dynamics of its day by alluding to the real-world context of the early Ptolemaic dynasty as well as to poetic and other models. Through a hegemonic typology that ranges from the just and theocratic to the duplicitous and lawless, Apollonius characterizes the political heirs of Alexander the Great as pious, civilized rulers. This interpretation goes beyond previous studies by examining the political resonance of religious activity in the poem, and by relating these formulations (especially where they concern Apollonius' departures from his literary predecessors) to the ideological construction of Hellenic identity in third-century Egypt.

ANATOLE MORI is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Missouri-Columbia.



Bronze cult statuette of Alexander Aigiochos ("Aegis-Bearing") with *chlamys*-shaped aegis. Roman copy from Alexandria (London, British Museum). Original dated to late fourth century BC. Photo courtesy of the British Museum, © The Trustees of the British Museum

THE POLITICS OF
APOLLONIUS RHODIUS'
ARGONAUTICA

ANATOLE MORI



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521882255

© Anatole Mori 2008

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provision of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published in print format 2008

ISBN-13 978-0-511-43427-3 eBook (Adobe Reader)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-88225-5 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of urls for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of tables</i>	page vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	viii
1 Introduction	I
2 The politics of Alexandrian poetry	19
3 Strife and restraint among the Argonauts	52
4 Sexual politics in Lemnos, Colchis, and Drepane	91
5 Piety, mediation, and the favor of the gods	140
6 The bones of Apsyrtus	187
7 <i>Quid denique restat</i> : Apollonius and Virgil	224
<i>Bibliography</i>	236
<i>Index</i>	256

Tables

4.1 The early Ptolemies.	<i>page</i> 97
5.1 Sacrifices in the <i>Argonautica</i> .	157
5.2 Implied sacrifices in the <i>Argonautica</i> .	160

Acknowledgments

It is difficult for me to imagine how I could have completed this project without the help of Richard Hunter, who saw it in its initial stages as a University of Chicago dissertation and whose wise counsel in recent years has been of greater value to me than I can say. I have benefited from perceptive criticism offered by Alex Sens (who has read through more than one incarnation of the manuscript), James Clauss, Graham Shipley, and Susan Stephens, all of whom have saved me from an embarrassment of errors. Earlier versions of several sections from Chapter 3 first appeared in the *American Journal of Philology* 126.2 © 2005 by The Johns Hopkins University Press and are here reprinted with their kind permission. I am grateful to the Loeb Classical Library Foundation for their generous support in 2004–2005, and to the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia for arranging a leave from teaching in the winter of 2004.

For their encouragement and learned advice, I am greatly indebted to my colleagues John Miles Foley, Richard Foley, Raymond Marks, Charles Saylor, Dennis Trout, and Barbara Wallach. For their thoughtful responses to several chapters I thank David Schenker, James McGlew, and especially Daniel Hooley, whose judicious suggestions substantially improved the whole manuscript. I owe a debt of thanks to Ian Worthington for important corrections to an early draft and for his guidance in general, to Stefani Engelstein for comparing notes as our respective labors evolved, and to Nicole Monnier for helping me keep things in perspective. Most of all, I want to thank my colleague (and husband), Michael Barnes, with whom I share a dangerous passion for the poetry of Apollonius, and it is to him that I dedicate this book.

Abbreviations

Spelling and abbreviation generally adhere to the onomastic conventions of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Modern periodicals and multivolume reference works are abbreviated as in *L'Année Philologique*. Apollonius is cited from Vian 2002; Virgil from Mynors 1969. All translations are my own except where indicated otherwise.

- AB C. Austin and G. Bastianini (eds.) *Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia*. Milan, 2002.
- ABV J. D. Beazley. *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*. Oxford, 1956.
- CAH F. W. Walbank, A. E. Astin, and M. W. Frederiksen (eds.) *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. 7.1: *The Hellenistic World*. 2nd edn. Cambridge, 1984.
- CG *Catalogue générale des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire* (with monument number).
- Etym. M.* T. Gaisford (ed.) *Etymologicon magnum*. Amsterdam, 1962.
- FGrH F. Jacoby (ed.) *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Berlin and Leiden, 1923–40; 1940–59; 1994–.
- GP A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (eds.) *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*. 2 vols. Cambridge, 1965.
- IG II *Inscriptiones Graecae* II/III, Part 1: *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores*, fasc. i: *decreta annorum 403/2–230/29*. 2nd edn. Ed. J. Kirchner. Berlin, 1913.
- IG VII *Inscriptiones Graecae* VII: *Inscriptiones Megaridis et Boeotiae*. Ed. W. Dittenberger. Berlin, 1982.
- IG XI *Inscriptiones Graecae* XI, fasc. iv: *Inscriptiones Deli*. Ed. P. Roussel. Berlin, 1914.
- IG XII *Inscriptiones Graecae* XII: *Inscriptiones maris Aegeai praeter Delum*, fasc. iii, supplement. Ed. F. H. de Gaetringen. Berlin, 1904; fasc. vii. Ed. F. H. de Gaetringen. Berlin, 1908.

- LIMC* H. C. Ackermann and J.-R. Gisler (eds.) *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*. Zurich, 1981–.
- LSJ* H. G. Liddell and R. Scott (eds.) *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Oxford, 1968.
- OGIS* W. Dittenberger (ed.) *Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae*. 2 vols. Leipzig, 1903–5.
- P. Cair.* C. C. Edgar (ed.) *Zenon Papyri: Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*. 5 vols. Cairo, 1925–40.
- P. Eleph.* O. Rubensohn (ed.) *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin: Griechische Urkunden, Sonderheft: Elephantine-Papyri*. Berlin, 1907.
- P. Giss.* O. Eger, E. Kornemann, and P. M. Meyer (eds.) *Griechische Papyri im Museum des oberhessischen Geschichtsvereins zu Giessen*. Leipzig and Berlin, 1910–12.
- P. Lille* *Papyrus grecs*. Institute papyrologique de l'Université de Lille, 1907–12.
- P. Mil.* *Papiri dell'Università degli Studi di Milano*. Milan, 1937–.
- Vogl.*
- P. Oxy.* *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. London, 1898–.
- Pfeiffer i* R. Pfeiffer (ed.) *Callimachus: Fragmenta*. Vol. 1. Oxford, 1949.
- Pfeiffer ii* R. Pfeiffer (ed.) *Callimachus: Hymni et Epigrammata*. Vol. 2. Oxford, 1953.
- SEG* *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum*. Amsterdam, 1923–.
- SH* H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons (eds.) *Supplementum Hellenisticum*. Berlin, 1983.
- Suda* A. Adler (ed.) *Suidae Lexicon*. 5 vols. Stuttgart, 1967–71.
- Syll.* W. Dittenberger (ed.) *Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum*. 3rd edn. 4 vols. Leipzig, 1915–24. (Reprint 1960.)

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Anyone accustomed to Homeric tales of heroic honor and undying glory is liable to be perplexed by Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Nearly every line of the poem recalls an event or an expression from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, yet from a dramatic perspective there is little to compare with Achilles' wrath, Hector's death, or Odysseus' revenge against the Suitors. If the *Iliad* is a poem of force, the *Argonautica* is a poem of political alternatives. It is a crisis for the Achaeans when Achilles refuses to fight after ten years of battle, while the Argonauts' conflict with the Colchian army is patched up in only a few days. Their losses during the entire voyage are hardly Iliadic (four die unexpectedly, one is lost, two are left behind), and although their return, like the *nostos* of Odysseus, is delayed, it is a matter of weeks rather than years.¹

One of the delays occurs when the Argo is washed up by a shallow flood tide and stranded in the shoals of the Syrtes Gulf along the coast of Libya.² The Argonauts lose hope and go their separate ways expecting a slow anonymous death in the desert sun. The guardian nymphs of Libya, called the Herossae, take pity on them and tell Jason that they must repay a debt to their mother if they wish to return home (4.1305–36).³ Jason reports this to the rest, and they are all then startled to see a massive horse, dripping with briny sea water, rising out of the sand and galloping off. The

¹ The length of Argo's round trip voyage from Thessaly to Colchis has been estimated at about six months, from mid-June to early December; Green 1997 *ad* 1.559–68; 2.1097–99; and 4.1775–81. See also Severin 1985, whose one-way voyage in a replica of the Argo from the Bay of Volos to the mouth of the Rhioni River in Georgia took eighty days (May 3–July 21).

² The Egyptian shores from Paraetionium in Libya to Alexandria, lying several hundred miles to the east, were notoriously dangerous: see Diod. 1.30.1–5; Plin. *HN* 5.26; Procop. *Aed.* 6.3. Cf. Agatharchides on the grounding of elephant cargo ships along the African coast in the Arabian gulf, and the terrible suffering of the crews (Diod. 3.40). For discussion of this episode see Andrews 1989.

³ Nelis 2001b, 123, n. 238 notes and provides references for the parallel between this scene and the shipwrecked Odysseus, who is aided by the sea nymph Leucothoe as well as by Nausicaa and her maidens.

Argonauts are pleased by Peleus' interpretation of these portents: they are to bear the Argo (their symbolic mother) on their shoulders as they follow the horse's tracks toward an inland sea (4.1370–79).

The episode is at once familiar and strange. In some ways the apparition of the Herossae is reminiscent of a Homeric dream vision, as when the ghost of Patroclus comes to the sleeping Achilles with a request for swift burial (*Il.* 23.65–92).⁴ But the Libyan scene is set at noon, not night; the hero is awake, not asleep; and the Herossae are strangers to him.⁵ The narrator also compares Jason to a lion whose roar terrifies cattle and herdsmen (*Argon.* 4.1337–44), a simile that recalls Homeric descriptions of warriors in battle. When Menelaus catches sight of Paris, for example, he is said to feel like a starving, hunted lion that stops to devour a carcass though dogs are in pursuit (*Il.* 3.23–26). The Argonautic narrator again undermines the audience's expectations, however, by observing that Jason's voice, unlike the lion's roar, does not really threaten those nearby (*Argon.* 4.1337–44).⁶

In addition, many details of the episode are absent from one of Apollonius' literary models, Pindar's *Fourth Pythian Ode*. The first section of the celebratory ode rehearses Medea's prophecy about the foundation of Cyrene, a theme well suited to the chariot victory of King Arcesilaus. Of the portage of the Argo (4.25–27), Medea says only that

δῶδεκα δὲ πρότερον
ἀμέρας ἔξ Ὠκεανοῦ φέρομεν νώτων ὕπερ γαίης ἐρήμων
ἐννάλιον δόρυ, μήδεσιν ἀνσπάσσαντες ἀμοῖς.

twelve days earlier

On my counsel we drew our ship from Ocean and bore it
Over desolate ridges of earth.⁷

To this brief passage Apollonius adds descriptions of the Argonauts' anguish, the two apparitions, and Peleus' interpretation. He also expands Jason's role, presumably in keeping with another source, the historian Herodotus, who relates how Triton offered to guide Jason through the shallows in exchange for a tripod, though Herodotus does not say whether the Argonauts actually

⁴ Cf. also the evil dream that misleads Agamemnon in the likeness of Nestor (*Il.* 2.16–36). Virgil has Aeneas dream of the dead Hector (*Aen.* 2.268–97) and the dead Anchises (*Aen.* 5.721–45).

⁵ Vian 2002, 3:191, n. 1314; Green 1997, 342, n. 1312ff.

⁶ See Vian 2002 *ad loc.* on the similarity to *Od.* 6.130–34; cf. the fiercely roaring lion at *Il.* 5.299–302 (= Aeneas). On the subversion of the traditional epic simile, see Hunter 1993, 133; Goldhill 1991, 307–8.

⁷ Bowra 1947.

carried the Argo (4.179).⁸ In contrast to Pindar, then, both Herodotus and Apollonius focus on Jason and say next to nothing about Medea.⁹

Especially curious in terms of verisimilitude is the idea that Peleus' plan to carry the Argo would "please everyone" (4.1380).¹⁰ While his interpretation fits the portents, it is hard to see why the starving¹¹ Argonauts would enthusiastically agree to haul the Argo for days in the scorching heat toward an unknown destination. The narrator, who typically comments on unusual practices (e.g., the Colchian treatment of the dead, 3.200–9) and decisions that may have unpleasant consequences (the Boreads' reproof of Telamon, 1.1298–309), acknowledges the extraordinary nature of the deed by insisting on its historical veracity. Shifting from third-person narrative to second-person invocation, the poet praises the Argonauts' strength and endurance (4.1381–92) and claims that he has heard this story "infallibly" (πανατρεκές, 1382) from the Muses, noting that, as the descendants of the gods, the Argonauts were born for such exploits (4.1389). The audience is thus given a more or less logical justification for the success of the venture,¹² but no psychological explanation is given for the Argonauts' abrupt emotional reversal.

One might try to intuit some kind of internal motivation. Perhaps the Argonauts, who are aware that Zeus was angry with Jason and Medea, are encouraged by these signs of divine immanence, or perhaps they are simply relieved to be doing something, however laborious, instead of waiting for death to take them. Such readings are plausible in the absence of evidence to the contrary, but inasmuch as the psychology of Apollonius' characters is no more transparent here than it is elsewhere in the poem (with the obvious exception of Medea in Books 3 and 4), they are not only speculative but also, and more importantly, they fail to account for the narrative choices that Apollonius is making here. Why does Apollonius place greater weight upon this scene than Pindar? Medea's aid is as crucial in the *Argonautica* as it is in *Pythian* 4, so why does Apollonius follow Herodotus here by placing Jason in the central role? What is it, exactly, about the plan to carry the Argo that makes it seem appropriate to the Argonauts? What would the

⁸ See Murray 1972, 203 with nn. 5–7, on Herodotean echoes in Callimachus and Apollonius.

⁹ The narrator of the *Argonautica* does comment that the serving women around Medea were wailing like birds (4.1296–304).

¹⁰ Green 1997, 344, nn. 1370–79, 1381–87 comments that the seemingly more rational alternative of floating the Argo back to the coast is not entertained because quicksands were common in the area, but observes that the heroic portage must be relegated to the realm of fantasy.

¹¹ *Argon.* 4.1295 ἄκμηνοι καὶ ἄπαστοι, cf. Achilles' grief at the death of Patroclus, *Il.* 19.346 ἄκμηνος καὶ ἄπαστος.

¹² Fränkel 1968 *ad* 4.1382; Livrea 1973 *ad* 4.1381.

image of the Argonauts carrying the boat have suggested to an Alexandrian audience of the third century BC?

The present volume sets out to answer these and other questions by taking into consideration the historical context of the *Argonautica* and the formation of Ptolemaic political ideology. I explore how Apollonius' epic retelling of a heroic adventure set in the generation before the Trojan War engages the external world: the religious, socio-political, and ethical dynamics of Apollonius' day. The political tenor of Apollonius' other poems, all now lost, about the founding of cities like Alexandria, Naucratis, Caunus, Cnidus, and Rhodes, suggests that the *Argonautica* is informed by a similar consciousness of the political value of epic poetry,¹³ and that its consistent elaboration of the religious activity of leaders is rooted in the cultic ethos of contemporary politics. The aim of my argument is twofold: first, to explore the political resonance of religious activity in the epic, and second, to relate these poetic formulations of such activity (especially where they concern Apollonius' departures from his literary predecessors) to the ideological construction of Ptolemaic kingship and Hellenic identity in Egypt. By "religious activity" I mean formal communication with the gods, such as prayer and sacrifice, as well as practices that are less immediately connected with worship, such as the institution of new cults or shrines. Where previous historical studies have largely concentrated on Apollonius' life, career, literary chronology, and professional rivalries,¹⁴ I am principally interested in the effect of the Alexandrian political context on the imagery, characterizations, and motifs of the *Argonautica*.

As will become clear in subsequent chapters, Apollonius' heroes are composite figures, poetic renderings of Alexander the Great, the Ptolemies, and other historical figures, not to mention archaic epic heroes and characters from other genres.¹⁵ At times the components of their characterization can be contradictory and difficult to reconcile, particularly when it comes to the use of force: the Argonauts prefer diplomacy to aggression and yet are shown to be as dangerous in combat as their Homeric counterparts; Jason reveres the gods and yet commits a murder that violates the laws of Zeus. With these contradictions in mind I address not only the ramifications of

¹³ For this argument and additional references, see Hunter 1989, 10. Unfortunately, Apollonius' foundation (*ktisis*) poems do not survive, for the most part. Hunter (1989, 5) observes that while the subject matter of several (Caunus, Cnidus, and Rhodes) might lead one to imagine that they were composed during Apollonius' putative time in Rhodes, Ptolemaic interest in those areas was too pronounced to make the composition of these poems in Alexandria unlikely.

¹⁴ E.g., Fraser 1972; Pfeiffer 1968, 140–49.

¹⁵ In this respect, as in others, Virgil's rendering of Aeneas is comparable to Apollonius' construction of Jason. Boyle 1993b, 83, observes of Aeneas: "There is much in him, for example, of Mark Antony, Julius Caesar, Marius, Scipio Africanus, Camillus, Romulus and other Roman heroes." On the relation between the *Aeneid* and the *Argonautica*, see Chapter 7.

religious activity for authority figures in the *Argonautica* but also a number of related questions concerning Jason's status as a hero and as the leader of the Argonauts. My interpretative strategy has been to concentrate on the aspects of the epic that are least "Homeric" and have aroused much critical attention, for the most part unfavorable. Jason's reticence, Medea's dominance and recklessness, and their collusion in the deceptive murder of Apsyrtus have all been damned as departures from the heroic epic tradition. These incongruities look different, however, when they are set against alternative historical, literary, and mythological paradigms: what were taken as structural inconsistencies, ruptures, and flaws begin to cohere and fall into place.

Since this book is intended for those who are reading the *Argonautica* for the first time as well as for specialists in Hellenistic poetry, the remainder of this introduction considers the poem's historical and literary background. Here and elsewhere I treat historical and literary material separately, and although this structure may give the impression that discussion has been split into constituent analyses, my hope is that the reader will regard this comparative approach as a developmental and progressive strategy rather than as an exercise in the incommensurable. The conceptual boundaries between poetic and historical discussions can (and should) be acknowledged in a diagnostic framework, but it is important to recognize the artificiality of these same distinctions as a concession to scholarly discourse.

I begin by considering what Hellenistic poetry is, or at least what it has traditionally been thought to be. The term "Hellenistic" ("Hellenistisch") was first adopted by the nineteenth-century German historian J. G. Droysen, to distinguish what he saw as a dynamic new Hellenism in the historical period bounded by the death of Alexander the Great in 323 and Octavian's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 30. By "Alexandrian poetry" I mean poetry that was produced in and around Egyptian Alexandria early in the Hellenistic period, roughly from the end of the fourth century to the middle of the third century. Apart from these loose temporal and geographical parameters, it is not so easy to define what is uniquely "Alexandrian" or "Hellenistic" about such works because so much material from the fifth, fourth, and third centuries has been lost. Not much is known of fifth-century epic, elegy, and non-dramatic poetry, likewise obscure is nearly everything from the fourth century (apart from the New Comedy of the Attic playwright Menander) as well as the bulk of the poetry produced in the first twenty years of the third century.¹⁶ With so many missing links, it is impossible to speak with precision about the evolution of the literary

¹⁶ Hutchinson 1988, 10–11.

tradition down to Apollonius' time, and informed hypotheses have necessarily taken the place of evidence.

In what might be seen as a compensatory move, scholars have turned to the historical background of Alexandrian poetry in order to sketch the outlines of its new thought-world. Here again contemporary material is in comparatively short supply,¹⁷ and the decline of Athenian power after the fifth century has often been used to set the discursive stage. Readings of Hellenistic poetry have been informed by a sense of belatedness and decline that is exemplified by this passage from Rudolf Pfeiffer's famous address to the 1954 Jubilee Meeting of the Classical Association: "The [Alexandrian] poets were in a unique historical position. They could no longer speak as free citizens to a political and spiritual community as audience; their only chance was to write books for smaller circles of well-educated connoisseurs."¹⁸ According to this view Apollonius and the other scholar-poets associated with the Library of Alexandria had essentially abandoned the public sphere and devoted themselves to learned poetry because their "political and spiritual community" had been compromised: they were living under autocratic rule far from Athens – which at this time was Athens more or less in name only, her citizens having yielded their long-cherished autonomy to Macedon and the rich and powerful Hellenistic kingdoms.¹⁹

In retrospect, this assessment seems too restrictive: democratic citizenship was not a prerequisite for poetic expression in ancient Greece, and in any case it is possible for politically sensitive poetry to emerge outside (or at least in the margins of) liberal forms of government. Then, too, it is possible to characterize the *Argonautica* as a political epic because it is thematically concerned with the effects of royal power, although something more seems to be in play here. The Ptolemaic monarchy may not be "political" in the narrow sense of a legislative body (whether oligarchic or democratic) whose members discuss and vote on binding resolutions,²⁰ but even if one holds to a rigid definition of what constitutes genuinely political institutions

¹⁷ For the first seventy years of the third century, a period of Macedonian ascendancy that apparently held little interest for later (i.e., Roman) writers, no contemporary history survives. On the historiography and non-literary texts of the period, see Shipley 2000, 1–32; on ancient (and modern) historical sources for Alexander, see Worthington 2004, 234–42.

¹⁸ Pfeiffer 1955.

¹⁹ Although the Athenians were weakened militarily, they maintained the democracy at a local level: Lape 2004 shows how civic institutions like the theater continued to be politically engaged and helped to reformulate a new model of citizenship based on kinship and the retrenchment of citizenship requirements in the absence of an active military.

²⁰ Finley 1983, 50–51.

(i.e., representative rather than monarchical), the poetry produced in Alexandria at this time was inherently political because of its prominence in the politicized culture of the royal court and its contribution toward the expression of Ptolemaic ideology.

Nevertheless, the idea of a literary schism that divided the world of authentic public performance in politically engaged fifth-century Athens from the isolated and derivative culture of the written word and private study in Alexandria has continued to inform attitudes toward Hellenistic poetry.²¹ Sir Kenneth Dover traced this idea back to the ancient perception, arising early in the fourth century, that the great age of Greek poetry ended with the deaths of the Athenian dramatists Euripides and Sophocles in 407/6, to be replaced by a diminished, essentially custodial age dedicated to the preservation and nostalgic cultivation of the canon. On his view the major post-classical Greek poets – meaning Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius Rhodius – were steeped in the archaic and classical tradition and therefore managed to produce works of technical brilliance, although they unfortunately failed to “bring their intelligence to bear upon profound issues which excite the intellect and emotions simultaneously.”²² Clever, yes, but shallow and derivative: this view of the Alexandrians still holds sway in some circles, though it has long been called into question.²³ Peter Parsons, citing Dover (“If one wants an epoch, it should come with Euripides”), allows for the utility of treating the Hellenistic period as a discrete unit, but despairs of structuring it in terms of “dividing lines, new beginnings, universal characteristics, and unique preoccupations,” for, as he rightly concludes, “it is normally not a question of absolute novelties, but of novel emphases.”²⁴ However one chooses to characterize Hellenistic poetry, the “novel emphases” that define the *Argonautica* are consistent with those of other poems that were circulating in Alexandria and elsewhere in the Mediterranean early in the Hellenistic period (see Chapter 2).

²¹ See Bing 1988; Easterling and Knox 1985, 543: “To sum up, poetry had experienced a radical shift of direction by the Hellenistic period”; against this view see Cameron 1995. On the difficulty of definition see also Heinrich’s discussion of papers by Gelzer and Parsons in Bulloch *et al.*, 1993, esp. 171–87.

²² Dover 1971, lxix, lxxi.

²³ See, e.g., Pfeiffer 1968, who assigns a Renaissance-like creativity to the third-century poets, after the deadly fourth-century doldrums; Bulloch 1984, who discusses differing critical views of Callimachus’ piety, arguing for the genuine solemnity of his hymns; and Lloyd-Jones 1990, who explicitly counters Dover’s interpretation (cited above), arguing that a fifth-century audience would not have been taken aback by the passages he cites as overly learned or disrespectful of the gods.

²⁴ Parsons 1993, 155.

An examination of the contemporary context hardly qualifies as a new approach to interpreting ancient Greek poetry,²⁵ but what scholars of Hellenistic poetry have sought to do in recent years is to focus less on what has been lost, in terms of the manuscript tradition or political institutions, and more on what is known of Alexandria as the center of a group of scholar-poets who explored and experimented with poetic tradition in celebrating, among other subjects, their newly established royal patrons. This cross-disciplinary approach has proved to be most insightful, to judge by recent studies that are grounded in both the political as well as the literary context of Hellenistic poetry.²⁶ The work of Richard Hunter in particular has advanced our knowledge and deepened our appreciation of these works. Most significant, for my purposes, is his exploration of the ways in which the *Argonautica* not only encodes the activity of world travelers like the ancient Egyptian ruler Sesostris, the Athenian Xenophon, and Alexander, but also integrates into an epic format a wide range of topics that were relevant to the Ptolemaic political agenda, such as, for example, the geography of Libya, the Aegean, and the Black Sea, or the religious cults of Homonoia ("Concord"), the mysterious Samothracian gods, the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux), and the goddess Tyche ("Fortune").²⁷ What Hunter has shown is that the *Argonautica* is far more politically engaged than was previously supposed, and the same can be said of works by other Alexandrian poets. "Callimachus' writing takes shape as part and parcel of the Ptolemaic reorganization of society and state," writes Daniel Selden, "a hymn by Callimachus turns out to be as much a concrete embodiment of Ptolemaic ideology as the law courts, onomastic codes, the Pithom Stele, or Museion."²⁸ While the aesthetic sensibility of these works may not immediately strike the reader as explicitly political, they are nonetheless politically encoded, as Peter Bing demonstrates in a recent discussion of the Ptolemaic orientation of Posidippus' λιθικά epigrams ("On Gemstones").²⁹ In short, the artistry and personal ambition of the Alexandrians dovetailed with the

²⁵ Hutchinson 1988, 9–10 cautions: "I should by inclination be pleased to illuminate the poems through their historical setting. But the character of the evidence, and of the literature and of other aspects of the time, seems to discourage attempts to approach the literature by constructing the period."

²⁶ A representative, if not exhaustive, list includes Foster 2006; Gutzwiller 2005; Mori 2005; Stephens 2005; Depew 2004; Stephens 2003; Mori 2001; Stephens 2001; Reed 2000; Pietsch 1999; Selden 1998; Burton 1995; Rostropowicz 1995; Bulloch *et al.*, 1993; Koenen 1993; Zanker 1987; Rostropowicz 1983; Merkelbach 1981; Griffiths 1979.

²⁷ See Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 128–32; Hunter 1995 *passim*; 1993, 152–69, 1991, esp. 82–90.

²⁸ Selden 1998, 406.

²⁹ Bing 2005, 130: "The stones exemplify in their geographical distribution and social construction both the territorial and cultural/artistic aims of the Ptolemies and their poet, Posidippus."

desire of the first Ptolemies to be celebrated as the heirs to Alexander's empire, both in Egypt and beyond.

Of those scholars who are currently working on the political resonance of Alexandrian poetry, Susan Stephens has gone the farthest in demonstrating how the poets refashioned Greek ideas about kingship in the light of ancient Egyptian mythology, images, and symbols.³⁰ In her discussion of the *Argonautica* in *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Stephens explores how Apollonius sets up "competing centers of authority in his text by deploying Egyptian mythology in the epic as a conscious articulation of a new idea of kingship."³¹ I am very much indebted to Stephens' work and regularly guided by her observations, though in the end I take a slightly different view of the *Argonautica* because I do not agree that "[a]ny message of Greek cultural supremacy or of the transforming quality of Greek values is rendered moot."³² On my view the poem frames the connection between the practical forms of (Greco-Macedonian) political authority and the celebration of (mainly Greek) cult practice for a Greek-speaking audience, one that would have been gratified by tales of a divine mandate for Hellenic rule over Egypt. The visual spectacle of ruler cult, from its monuments, processions, and public celebrations to its physical insinuation within Egyptian temples, was a foil for the redefinition of political identity, helping to legitimate (and at the same time to screen) the reality of the military and economic foundations of the Ptolemaic dynasty. That the Ptolemies would have exploited native institutions to strengthen the monarchy by positioning it as favorable to Egyptians, had little bearing on the actual self-image of the colonizing Macedonians and Greeks. From my perspective, then, it follows that any identification between Greek and Egyptian culture in the *Argonautica* necessarily privileged the politically dominant group.

As part of the community of scholar-poets working under Ptolemaic patronage Apollonius was well positioned to appreciate their political interests. According to the sources that have come down to us with the surviving manuscripts of the poem,³³ it was probably during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (308–246; ruled 282–246) that Apollonius served as royal tutor, an honorific office held in association with the post of Chief Librarian, to Philadelphus' heir, the young Euergetes.³⁴ In recent years the composition of the poem has also been dated to Philadelphus' rule, between

³⁰ See Stephens 2005; 2003; 2000.

³¹ Stephens 2003, 235.

³² Stephens 2003, 235.

³³ On the ancient sources for Apollonius' life, see the section on Poetry under the Ptolemies in Chapter 2.

³⁴ Hunter 1989, 4.

270 and 260,³⁵ somewhat earlier than was previously thought (between 250 and 240).³⁶ Whichever decade one prefers, Apollonius composed the *Argonautica* in the formative years of the dynasty: roughly two generations after Alexander took control of Egypt (332),³⁷ a land in which the religious image of the king was arguably more important, ideologically speaking, than it was elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean world. The Ptolemies took the place not only of Alexander, who had forced the Persians out of Egypt, but also of the Egyptian pharaohs, who were traditionally seen as divine intermediaries between gods and mortals. Native opposition to the Macedonian occupation would increase over time,³⁸ as nationalistic literature like the *Demotic Chronicle* suggests,³⁹ but civil unrest was less problematic at the beginning of Ptolemaic governance than the external threat posed by the armies of the other Macedonian Diadochs ("Successors"), who had served as Alexander's generals. Those who survived the tumultuous years after Alexander's death in 323 would eventually assume royal titles as they fought to secure territory in Europe, North Africa, and Asia. Like other rulers of the Hellenistic period, the Ptolemies maintained a complex network of systems of power,⁴⁰ some intentional, others not, and it is fair to say that the security of Ptolemaic Egypt was founded on a powerful military, combined with the ideological promotion of the dynasty as both pious and divine in its own right.⁴¹

One of my main concerns, then, is to show how the *Argonautica*'s preoccupation with the religious agency of authority figures communicates the ideological interdependence of Ptolemaic politics and cult. The Ptolemies configured their rule in accordance with the expectations of their Egyptian

³⁵ Hunter 1989, 1–9.

³⁶ Vian 2002, 1:xiii views Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, written after 246, as contemporary with a revised version of the *Argonautica*, but Hunter (see previous note) suggests that similarities between these poems may be the result of earlier versions of the hymn, which probably circulated for some years among those who worked in the Library of Alexandria.

³⁷ See Chapter 2, n. 68 on the date of the poem.

³⁸ The first native revolt occurred in 245, at the beginning of the reign of Ptolemy III. The famed Rosetta stone (*OGIS* 1:90) reflects the concern of Ptolemy V (210–180) for the internal security of Egypt. For a translation, see Burstein 1985, no. 103, pp. 131–34. See also McGing 1997, 274–75.

³⁹ The *Demotic Chronicle* of the mid-third century romanticizes the age of the pharaohs before Macedonian rule. The "Oracle of the Potter," a religious text dated to 130–115 BC, prophesies the eventual collapse of latter-day Alexandria (see Burstein's translation in Koenen 1968). Parts of the third-century AD "Alexander-Romance" (Pseudo-Callisthenes), may date as far back as the third century BC; the depiction of pharaoh Nectanebo as the father of Alexander suggests Egyptian bias; see Stoneman 1994, and the introduction to his 1991 translation.

⁴⁰ On horizontal and vertical networks of suzerainty in the Hellenistic period, see Davies 2002.

⁴¹ Koenen 1993, 80.

as well as their Greek-speaking subjects,⁴² and religious cults were instrumental in this process. The royal image was a hybrid, fashioned by the kings and their advisors out of the political customs, cultural expectations, and religious practices of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Macedonians. Ptolemaic displays of piety took numerous forms, from the recovery of cult artifacts to the foundation and support of native Egyptian shrines and temples. The initial formulations of Ptolemy I Soter and later developments under his son and successor, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, show that the formation of the royal image was a dynamic process, subject to periodic revisions as the rulers first emphasized their ties to Alexander and later introduced and expanded cults dedicated both to the dynasty and to individual members of the royal house. Cults associated with particular family members were established with a view to the prestige of the dynasty among both indigenous and immigrant populations, not only in Egypt, but also in Greece, the Aegean islands, and Asia.⁴³ The authority of the Ptolemies was thus entwined with their religious activity, making participation in the cults of the royal family tantamount to an affirmation of political support.⁴⁴

In coming to terms with a work that arose out of a complex assortment of political influences and literary traditions, I am guided, methodologically speaking, by the assumption that the *Argonautica* supplies the audience with sufficient information to understand its characters' behavior – despite the fact that we are only infrequently given access to the thinking of heroes like Jason or Heracles. The thoughts, doubts, and desires of Homeric heroes are quite openly on display, as Eric Auerbach argued in the classic study *Mimesis*,⁴⁵ but Apollonius is much more restricted in this regard – frustratingly so, to many. If Apollonius was attempting a Homeric epic, the consensus is that he failed – and yet the portrait of Medea, whose anxieties are so masterfully explored in the second half of the poem, suggests

⁴² Macedonians spoke their own language, though Alexander and other members of the Macedonian elite were able to speak Greek. Despite the Macedonian military presence in Alexandria and in the Fayyum – a swampy bottomland (Lake Moeris) drained by the first two Ptolemies for settlement by Macedonian soldiers – the Greek language was more widely used. On the decline of the ethnic Macedonian population in Egypt, see Fraser 1972, 1:53–54, 80–81, 129, and 223, *passim*. On Greek attitudes toward Macedonia, see Vasunia 2001, 252–53.

⁴³ For Ptolemaic cult practice, see Hölbl 2001, 77–112; Shipley 2000, 156–76; Koenen 1993; Fraser 1972, 1:189–301; Cerfaux and Tondriau 1957, 189–227.

⁴⁴ There is an element of mild coercion connected, for example, with the local celebration of Arsinoë during the Arsinoeia, as well as the politically inflected establishment of cult centers elsewhere, as in Rhodes, to thank Ptolemy I Soter for his aid against Demetrius Poliorcetes (Diod. 20.100.3–4). See further Hölbl 2001, 92–93, 104.

⁴⁵ Auerbach 1953, 9.

that Apollonius' limitations in this area are neither accidental nor without purpose.⁴⁶ I suggest that the tone and resonance of those episodes that are less explicit from a psychological perspective are nevertheless reliably cued by other modes of expression, such as background settings, external behaviors, visual images, symbols, and allusions both to texts and to historical and political contexts. This range of expressive modes generates a higher intertextual register than has been previously considered, allowing the reader a greater range of comparanda not only among Apollonius' poetic predecessors and contemporaries, but also among Hellenic (and to a limited extent, Egyptian) customs, the political and cultic protocols observed by Alexander, and the projects of the Ptolemies themselves. In a very real sense this book applies to Apollonius M. A. Harder's close study of literary allusion in the *Aetia*, particularly her recognition that allusivity was for Callimachus "an important means for extending his dense and compact text on behalf of the reader," who is able "to situate the text he is reading in its literary and socio-cultural context."⁴⁷ The same claim can be made of Apollonius, with the central goal of exploring how the political focus of the *Argonautica* reinterprets concrete historical events and inflects them with more abstract ideological constructions and considerations.

In the following chapters I demonstrate that the multiple roles and responsibilities of kings and heroes in this epic draw on the real world context of Alexander and the early Ptolemies as well as material from Homeric epic, the epic cycle, and other poetic works. Chapter 2 examines more closely a number of relevant topics, from Alexander's arrival in Egypt to the organization of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and from the character of Alexandrian poetry in general to the literary controversies specifically associated with the *Argonautica*. Chapter 3 addresses the representation of conflict and resolution in Book 1 – the election, the conflict with Idas, and the quarrel with Telamon – from the perspective of Macedonian political protocols as well as philosophical ideals of self-restraint, while Chapter 4 weighs the prominence of female characters like Medea and the Lemnian ruler Hypsipyle against the political activity of the queens Arsinoë II, wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and Berenice II, wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes. Chapter 5 surveys the religious responsibilities of Alexander and the early Ptolemies in order to evaluate the representation of kings like Alcinous and the Colchian Aeëtes. To show that Apsyrtus' death represents another realistic (albeit problematic) aspect of Hellenistic political power, Chapter 6

⁴⁶ Book 3 focuses on Medea's emotional turmoil after falling in love with Jason (esp. 3.616–912, 948–1162), while Book 4 details her fear at the possibility of betrayal and capture (e.g., 4.11–108, 338–444).

⁴⁷ Harder 2002a, 223.

contrasts the ambush of Apsyrtus with the murders by stealth that were committed by the agents of Alexander and the Ptolemies. Finally, in Chapter 7, I explore some of the ways that this new reading of the *Argonautica* inflects our understanding of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

While I am particularly concerned with the historical models provided by the activity of late fourth- and early third-century rulers and military leaders, analysis of poetic influences on the *Argonautica* remains pivotal inasmuch as the poem responds to literary models in contrasting the behavior of good (i.e., peaceful, pious, diplomatic) leaders with that of bad (violent, unstable) ones. This is not to say that such contrasts are absent from Homeric epic. Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1 is the antithesis of Nestor in *Odyssey* 3, for example, but the difference is that the *Argonautica* is a single epic that displays the relative strengths and shortcomings of the rulers encountered by the Argonauts. The poem is unified in its formulation of a hegemonic typology, ranging from the just and theocratic to the duplicitous and lawless, for an audience who viewed themselves as civilized conquerors: just towards allies and subjects, scrupulous with respect to ritual observance and the will of the gods, and called by destiny to rule in foreign lands.⁴⁸ Apollonius places greater emphasis than Homer on the religious activity not only of kings but also of the heroes themselves: the Argonauts' frequent sacrifices, their concern to establish shrines, their influence on local customs. Homeric heroes like Achilles and Odysseus enjoy a familial closeness with certain gods, but these characters are predominantly defined by their social isolation and intense desire for punitive vengeance, whereas it is religious activity of one kind or another that distinguishes Jason and other leaders in this poem. Thus, while many Argonautic scenes depicting religious activity may call up Homeric and other poetic precedents, they have also been reformulated in ways that suggest they owe much to the politics of cult practice in Ptolemaic Egypt.

A particularly telling example of this kind of reformulation appears in the portage of the Argo, described at the beginning of this chapter. Certain aspects of this episode recall an Egyptian ritual that is significant, at least from a Greco-Macedonian point of view, because of its association with Alexander. This particular cultural referent goes a long way toward explaining Medea's reduced role in this episode as well as the Argonauts' lack of concern about the dangers of the proposed adventure. Peleus' odd plan

⁴⁸ For a study of the stereotype of the Hellenistic good king as a model for Virgil's Aeneas, see Cairns 1988, 1–28, esp. 17–21 for a list of specific characteristics: e.g., preeminence in, among other things, virtue, military strength, self-control, mercy, strict observance of the law, desire for *homonoia*/concordia, good appearance, and so on.

does not seem odd to them because it mimes the ritual transport of an image of the god Amon-Re in a portable solar boat during festival processions that took place all over Egypt. One of the most important of these processions occurred in the second month of the Nile flood season as part of the annual Opet festival at Karnak.⁴⁹ During the festival priests carried an image of the god over land from the temple of Amon in Karnak to Luxor temple. The solar boat would respond to questions from the public during this procession: a forward inclination would indicate yes, while a retreat would indicate no. On rare occasions an individual might be admitted to a private audience with the god inside the temple, although the meeting was mediated by priests. The purpose of the Opet festival was the divine rejuvenation of the pharaoh, who accompanied the procession and at its conclusion would emerge from Luxor temple to be reunited with his people, renewed and symbolically reborn with Amon-Re.⁵⁰

Alexander witnessed a ritual of this type during his visit to the oracle of Zeus Amon at Siwah, where the aniconic image of the god was carried in a golden boat by eighty priests after private consultation with the king.⁵¹ In contrast to Luxor temple, where commoners might be admitted to an audience with the god, Siwah was a royal oracle, to be questioned only by the pharaoh. Alexander was unique in personally consulting this oracle, for no Egyptian pharaoh had ever made the arduous journey into the desert.⁵² Zeus had long been identified by the Greeks with the Egyptian god Amon; the Hellenic renown of Siwah had increased after the foundation of nearby Cyrene (c. 500) and likely prompted Alexander's visit. As Phiroze Vasunia puts it: "The weight of mainland Greek lore about the foreign god Ammon, combined with whatever Alexander learned in and around Egypt and whatever personal desires he nurtured inside himself, helped propel the new ruler to Siwah."⁵³

The procession of the Argonauts to Lake Triton thus enacts an "appropriate" cultic response to a numinous apparition in Libya, with certain features of such Egyptian boat processions reimaged here and elsewhere in the poem.⁵⁴ Greek precedents can, of course, be found: the traditional processions that enacted the advent of Dionysus (a most fitting parallel, especially for Alexander) using ship-like chariots that were sometimes wheeled,

⁴⁹ See Kemp 1991, 206. ⁵⁰ Kemp 1991, 208.

⁵¹ On the golden boat: Diod. 17.50.6; Just. 4.7.24; on the entire journey to Siwah: Arr. 3.3–4; Plut. *Alex.* 26–27; Diod. 17.49.2–51.4; Curt. 4.7.5; Just. 4.7.5–32. See further Hölbl 2001, 11. Cf. Reed 2000, 326 on the Osiris festival, which included sacred boat processions. Stephens 2003, 231 compares this episode with the Egyptian myth of the underworld progress of the solar boat.

⁵² Vasunia 2001, 274. ⁵³ Vasunia 2001, 274–75.

⁵⁴ See Stephens 2003, 218–37 for discussion of possible connections between the Argo's return and the progress of the solar boat.

but sometimes carried by men.⁵⁵ So, too, for example, the association of Zeus with Amon suggests an additional connection between the “talking” solar boat and Argo’s revelatory speech through the beam of Dodona that occurs earlier in Book 4 (4.580–83).⁵⁶ The oak of Dodona is imagined as a metonym for Zeus, for while it is Hera who ensures that the oak communicates with the Argonauts, what it communicates is the true judgment of Zeus regarding the Argonauts’ fate.⁵⁷

What is more, the portage of the Argo revisits and completes an event at the beginning of the *Argonautica* itself: Jason’s cardinal act of piety in bearing the goddess Hera, a maternal protector, upon his shoulders through the spring flood waters of the River Anaurus (1.8–11; 3.64–73). Just as Hera favors Jason above all others for honoring her in this way (3.74), so the Argonauts’ portage of the Argo marks them as favored sons of the gods (4.1389–90):

ἔμπεδον ἀθανάτων ἔσαν αἵματος, οἷον ὑπέσταν
ἔργον ἀναγκαίῃ βεβημένοι.

Necessity compelled them to so great a deed
That surely theirs was the blood of immortals.

Certain Argonauts are introduced early in the poem as the sons of Olympian gods,⁵⁸ but Apollonius is more evasive about the Argonauts’ ties to the gods elsewhere, and only in this passage does he come close to an explicit statement about the divine heritage of the Argonauts as a group.⁵⁹ It is telling that the Argonauts’ blood kinship with the gods is brought into relief in Libya, a setting where divine ancestry carried considerable political weight. Alexander’s capacity to endure the extremes of the Libyan Desert as he made the trip to Siwah was similarly understood, at least by him, as a mark of divine heroism.⁶⁰

Like his Greek-speaking audience, Apollonius would have been interested in the Egyptian culture that surrounded him, but such interest would

⁵⁵ See Burkert 1985, 100–1, 166.

⁵⁶ Like the barque of Amon, the oracle of Zeus at Dodona gave simple yes or no responses to questions. In Greece such exchanges were not gestural but rather inscribed on lead tablets: Burkert 1985, 114.

⁵⁷ Hera’s role as transmitter of Zeus’s judgment in this scene is comparable to Arete’s role in transmitting the judgment of Alcinous in Book 4 to the Argonauts (see Chapter 4).

⁵⁸ E.g., Heracles and the Dioscuri (or at least Polydeuces) are sons of Zeus (1.146–50; 1188); Erytus and Echion are sons of Hermes (1.51–52).

⁵⁹ The narrator observes that the better part of the Argonauts claim blood kinship with daughters of Minyas, a son of Poseidon (1.231–32), and Peleus observes that the Argonauts are very nearly (σχεδόν) of the blood of the immortals (2.1223).

⁶⁰ According to Callisthenes, Alexander’s court historian, the king was inspired to go to the oracle by the examples of Perseus and Heracles (Strabo, 17.1.43). Strabo rejects the rumor that Alexander was saved by providential rains and the guidance of two crows. See also Arr. 3.3.1.

also have presumed an Egypt that naturally accepted and even eagerly recognized Macedonian sovereignty. Accordingly, the manifestation of the Herossae is as “nationalistic,” in its way, as Aeneas’ vision of the Penates at *Aeneid* 3.147–71.⁶¹ Hunter, who has noted this parallel, suggests that while the “nationalist religious resonance” of the Penates helps to unify the *Aeneid*, the Herossae are more evocative of the fractured structure of the *Argonautica*.⁶² I would add that the parallel is still closer since the welcome extended to the Greeks by the native gods makes explicit the ideological framework, unifying it in a way that Virgil evidently appreciated. Peleus’ interpretation of the Argo as the “mother” mentioned by the Herossae recasts the Argonauts’ near death during a flood tide in Libya as a preparation for a symbolic rebirth, and a possible allusion to the pharaoh’s rebirth at the climax of the Opet festival. But where the *Argonautica* experiments with traditional epic by quite literally exalting maternal figures, the *Aeneid* restores patriarchal order as Aeneas bears his father Anchises on his shoulders, not across the River Anaurus, not out of the burning Libyan sands, but out of the burning city of Troy.

In effect, the portage of the Argo is a colonizing aition, an explanatory account that recasts a traditional Egyptian ritual as the analogue of a labor that was originally performed by Greek heroes.⁶³ Broadly speaking, the episode is framed as aetiological: what happened long ago in the Syrtis Gulf looks ahead to the same things “that happen even today”⁶⁴ – although the stranding of Argo has no causal bearing on later misfortunes. Granted, this episode is not included in discussions of Apollonian aitia, and it must fall into the category of implicit aetiologies since it is not marked by the linguistic formulae (e.g., εἰσέτι νῦν “still today”; ἔτι νῦν περ “still to this very day”) that often (though not always) introduce the aition proper. Nor, for that matter, does it confirm, as aitia often do, the historicity of an event – indeed the opposite is true since the narrator must appeal to the authority of the Muses in order to vindicate it: Μουσάων ὄδε μῦθος (4.1381). Nevertheless, in characterizing the portage as aetiological my purpose is not to identify yet another species of what is known to be a versatile, even protean figure,⁶⁵ but rather to acknowledge its participation in a programmatic articulation of the link between the remote past and the Ptolemaic

⁶¹ The Penates are the household deities whose effigies are brought safely by Aeneas out of Troy; they appear during the night and advise Aeneas to leave Crete and settle instead in their homeland Hesperia (Italy).

⁶² Hunter 1993, 174.

⁶³ On “linguistic colonialism,” see Barnes 2003, 22; Stephens 2000, 208; Dougherty 1994.

⁶⁴ On the various types of aition in the *Argonautica* see Barnes 2003; Valverde Sanchez 1989.

⁶⁵ Barnes 2003, 175–76.