An Epithet for Argos in Apollonius

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Platt’s Conjecture

In an article entitled “The Lyrceian Water. A Passage in Apollonius” Arthur Platt singled out for attention Argonautica 1.124–131, a segment of the Catalogue of Argonauts concerned with the circumstances under which Heracles was recruited for their expedition:

&al' 'etp' di'e b'at'i o'ge:rioménov h'ro:ov
ne'ov ap' 'A:rkadí:is Lyrkei'ínov 'Ar'gos 'ameíf.as,
t'hn ó'dón i'í z'ówn f'ére k'áp'ro:ov d's r' 'en' b'hás:is
fé'rí:to Lámpéi'ís 'E:rmánbí'ovn á'm mé:ga t'í:fo:
t'vn mèn 'en' pr'ástoi'v Mú'k:hr'ánov 'ag'or'hís:i
d'ésmoi'll'óméno:ov me'gál'ó:ov á'p'se'é'sá:to n'ótov,
a'vt'ós d' 'í' ó't'í:ti p'ár'ék v'ón:ov Eú'r'ús'tí:ov
ú:rr'mí'thí:.

For more than one reason Platt found the reading Lyrkei'ínov 'Ar'gos unacceptable. 'A:meíf.as could not mean “having entered.” The road from Arcadia to Mycenae did not traverse Argos: hence “having passed” was likewise ruled out. Whether the epithet referred to a river or to a mountain, to call Argos “Lyrceian” was no more Greek than to call Athens “Cephisian” or “Hymettian” or to call Thebes or even Boeotia “Asopian” or “Cithaeronian.” Platt added a reminder that in any event Heracles did not go to Argos, but turned aside lest Eurystheus interfere with his plan to join the Argonauts.

Platt solved the problem in the following ingenious way. Now the Greek geographers and grammarians (Strabo, Hesychius, Stephanus of Byzantium, the scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius) take “Lyrceian” to refer to a mountain; the Roman poets (e.g. Ovid and Statius) take the word to refer to a river. Obviously, concedes Platt, the geographers and grammarians are right, the poets wrong. But Platt believed that

1 CQ 10 (1916) 83f.
he had found the explanation of their mistake and even a sort of genealogy for it. The Romans knew well the writings of the Alexandrians. They knew not only Apollonius’ Argonautica, but also the Hecale of Callimachus, unfortunately not preserved in full in our own time. Nevertheless the Callimachean utterance which may have led Ovid in Metamorphoses 1.598 and Statius in Thebaid 4.117 and 711 to apply the Latinized forms Lyrceus or Lyrchiex to a river is reported by Stephanus of Byzantium under the very rubric, Λύρχειον ὀδὸς ὁ Ἀργοῦς, which affirms the tradition of the geographers and grammarians. As quoted in somewhat truncated fashion by Platt, the Callimachus–Stephanus passage runs as follows:

\[τὸ τοπικὸν Λύρχειον ὀδὸν καὶ Λυρκήῖον\]

Platt strongly suspects that Apollonius, like Callimachus, has water in mind—not some imaginary River Lyrce(i)us, such as Ovid and Statius, misreading both Alexandrian poets, seem to have invented, but the well-known Inachus. Indeed, Schol. Apollonius 1.125 explains Λυρκήῖον by reference to a mountain ἄφ’ ὀδὸς ὁ Ἰναχὸς καταφέρεται ποταμός. Euripides, moreover, at the opening of his Electra addresses the river in question and employs language very similar to that of Apollonius. And just as the Euripidean text must be emended if it is to make sense, so the Apollonian. Just as Wyse has read \(δ\) rather than \(γ\)—hence \(δ\) γῆς παλαιὸν ΑΡΔΟΣ—in the tragic passage, so Platt in the epic reads not Λυρκήῖον "Ἀργοῦς ("Lyrceian Argos"), but Λυρκήῖον ἀρδος ("Lyrceian waters"). “Apollonius thus is here simply echoing Euripides,” observes Platt, “and the two corrections confirm one another.”

Now all difficulties seem to be removed. According to Platt, what Apollonius meant to say was that Heracles, as he might well do en route from Erymanthus to Mycenae, has just passed the Inachus.

\[ἀρδος | *Ἀργος\]

Platt’s conjecture has gained very little scholarly attention. This lack of enthusiasm results, I suspect, from a corresponding lack of

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3 Wyse confided his proposal to Platt about twenty-five years prior to the publication of the latter’s article on Apollonius 1.125.
conviction that the received reading “Αργός poses any real problem. Moreover, to offer an emendation on the basis of a text from another author which must in turn be emended to prove the point seems a risky procedure. Actually Wyse’s proposal suits the Euripidean context very well. Ω γῆς πυλαύν “Αργός, Ἰνάχου ῥοϊν is practically unintelligible. But if ἄρδος (“water” or “waters”) be read, “Ἰνάχου ῥοϊν becomes, as Wyse and Platt perceived, an epexegetical complement. No such compelling support exists for a comparable emendation of Apollonius. Euripides clearly speaks of water, Callimachus even of “Lyrceian” water. But Apollonius furnishes not the slightest hint that water is intended. Nor does the scholiast suggest it: his only concern is to explain Λυρκῆίον as a derivation from the name of an Argive mountain. The added statement that the Inachus originates on its slopes is introduced only to establish the mountain’s location.

Nor is Platt justified in claiming that the Roman poets have so misunderstood Callimachus or Apollonius as to celebrate a fictitious river. Ovid talks of “Lyrceian fields” (Lyrcea . . . arua); but in the context of Metamorphoses 1.597ff the only allusion to anything watery occurs in the expressions pascua Lernae and inductas lata caligine terras. A closer reading of Statius, Thebaid 4.117ff and 711ff will show that in both instances Lyricus is an adjective modifying the noun Inachus. What has led Platt and possibly others astray is Statius’ bold use of hyperbaton.

There remains Valerius Flaccus (omitted from Platt’s discussion), Apollonius’ close imitator and himself author of an epic on the adventures of the Argonauts. In language reminiscent of Ovid’s he mentions Lyreceia tellus (4.355), to which he joins antra (356). No reference to rivers or to water is to be found in this passage.

Scrutiny of the texts thus absolves the Roman poets of the charge of having ignorantly introduced into their verses a river that never existed. At the same time one may wonder whether Wyse and Platt have not created a ghost word of their own. The lexica list numerous Greek forms derived from the root ἈΠΑ-, all of them connected in some way with liquidity. But the neuter noun ἄρδος does not appear.

It is worth noting, however, that Gilbert Murray—was he aware of Wyse’s conjecture offered to Platt in 1891?—suggested something of the same solution at the turn of the century in his Oxford Classical Text of Euripides. Before introducing into his apparatus criticus the
respective conjectures of Camper (ἄγkos), Keene (ἄνδος), and Vitelli (ἄρκος) Murray ventures the following comment:

Suspicor id uocabulum [i.e. "Arγos, which he labels "uulgo post Victorium"] quasi ab ἄρδω dictum intellegi.

He does not explain why, but perhaps his surmise was elicited by the proximity of Ἰνάχων ῥοαὶ.

A neuter noun ἄρδος, despite lack of attestation, may well have existed in Greek. If it existed, the first line of Euripides' Electra would be the likeliest surviving literary text in which it could have occurred. But I remain unconvinced of its occurrence in Book 1 of the Argo·nautica. The Euripidean text as it has been transmitted is desperately ailing and in need of an effective cure. For the Apollonian, on the other hand, is any cure needed at all?

Let us grant that Platt may be right in chiding modern lexico·graphers for translating the active forms of ἄμειβω as "enter" in Herodotus 5.72 and Aeschylus, Choëphoroe 571. Let us grant even that in Argo·nautica 1.125 ἄμειψας means "having passed" or "having crossed." It is true enough that the most direct route from Mount Erymanthus to Mycenae would avoid the town of Argos altogether. But it is also true that, inasmuch as the upper course of the Inachus runs parallel rather than transverse to this route, there would be no need for Heracles to cross the river or even to pass it—except possibly in the sense of walking alongside for a few miles. Were he to follow the Inachus' left bank, his path would take him across several tributaries. Yet since the latter flow down from the north rather than the west, they cannot be "Lyrceian" in the same sense as would be a stream which takes Mount Lyreceion as its source.

Argos, on the other hand, could be "Lyrceian," just as Argos could be "Inachian" (Schol. Euripides, Orestes 932). Though the scholiast on Apollonius explains Λύρκειον as a derivation from the name of the mountain whence springs the river called "Inachus," we learn from other ancient authorities both that a certain Inachus, ruling over Argos in very early times, was founder of a dynasty and that a descendant of his, a certain Lyrcus, became eponym of a town Lyrceia (Λύρκεια, see Pausanias 2.25.4f).

Platt's final objection is that Heracles, in order to avoid a further
confrontation with Eurystheus, bypassed Argos altogether. What Platt has failed to take into account is the fact that an ancient author, in using the neuter noun "Ἀργος, need not have been thinking restrictively of the city near the right bank of the River Inachus at a distance of so many stades from Mycenae and so many stades from Lerna or Tiryns. Thus Apollonius could say of Mycenae-bound Heracles, ἔτσι Ἀρκαδίης Λυρκηῖον "Ἀργος ἄμείψας ἰ τὴν ὀδὸν, without necessarily implying that he had passed through the town of Argos en route. What the poet meant to convey was that Heracles, having completed yet another of the labors assigned him by Eurystheus, received word of Jason’s projected expedition only a short while after he had crossed over from Arcadian into Argive territory.

Δυρκηῖον | Λυγκηῖον

Thus, though at first glance the word "Ἀργος here seemed questionable, there was no need to emend the traditional text of Argonautica 1.125 on its account. Actually Platt threw his not inconsiderable energies into attacking the wrong problem. Misled by a narrow conception of what the place name was supposed to mean, he sought to excise it from the text, when he should have been investigating more carefully the credentials of the attached modifier. Tradition makes Argos “Inachian” as much for the legendary hero Inachus as for the river of the same name. Similarly Argos is called ἄστυ Φορωνίκον in honor of Phoroneus (Schol. Euripides, Orestes 1246; Pausanias 2.15.5; Stephanus of Byzantium p. 112.18= Anon. Frag. 301 Schneider). Pausanias, like the scholiast on Euripides, designates Phoroneus as “son of Inachus,” but ascribes to the son some of the very accomplishments which the scholiast in commenting on Orestes 932 had credited to the father.

What matters is that the epithets Ἰνάχιος and Φορωνίκον, whatever their real origin, were thought to be derived from the names of those who had ruled and benefited Argos. Consider now the epithet Δυρκῆιον. Ἀπὸ ὅρους Άργεῖον ἀκουστέον explains Schol. Apollonius Rhodius 1.125. But other authorities, as we have seen, speak of Lyrcus, eponym of a town Lyrceia. That Argos could be styled “Lyrcean” in honour of a mountain guarding the frontiers is not implausible. Platt’s dictum is not persuasive, that epithets derived from the name of a
river or mountain are not Greek. Indeed, the scholiast's explanation seems to me far more plausible than others which have been offered. Argos would more easily take its epithet from an imposing mountain than from an obscure village beneath its slopes. Nor does Pausanias attempt to derive Δυρκεια from Δυρκεια any more than does the scholiast on Apollonius. What interests the latter is the significance of the epithet itself for Argos; what interests the former (2.25.4) is the process by which a certain place came to have a certain name:

τὸ ὄνομα [sc. Δυρκεια] δι’ αὐτὸν [sc. Δύρκου] ἔσχηκε·

Why was Lyrceia said to have been named for Lyrcus? Pausanias tells us only that he "took up residence" there and that he was a bastard son of Abas: hardly a likely candidate, therefore, for eponymous hero of his city. Abas, on the other hand, is a figure well known in Argive legend, a descendant of Inachus and participant in the royal succession. "Spacious roadsteads of Abas" ("Ἀβαντὸς ἐὐνυχόρους ἀγνίᾶς Pindar, Pythian 8.57) thus becomes an honorific synonym for Ἀργος in much the same way as ἄστυ Φορωμικῶν. Another Lyrcus, earlier than his namesake by several generations, did win renown. Though legend makes him father of a bastard, Basilos (eventual ruler of Caunus), the earlier Lyrcus was the legitimate son of Phoroneus. But this Lyrcus left the Peloponnesus in early manhood and gained his fame abroad. His career hardly warrants the derivation from his name of an epithet for Argos.6

His later namesake has doubtless been invented to provide an etymology for Δύρκεια. This conclusion derives support from the fact that Hesychius s.v. Δυρκίων δῆμος explains the place name by reference not to Lyrcus, but to someone called Lyrcius (Δύρκιος), of Argive stock once again, yet apparently brother to Abas rather than son.

According to Pausanias, moreover, the community to which Lyrcus is said to have come was not known as Lyrceia at first. Its original name was Lynceia (Δυργκείαι), a derivation from the name of the very hero whom Hesychius takes to be father of Lyrcius, whom Pausanias (2.16.2) designates as father of Abas, or Lyrcus' paternal grandfather. He is of course, Lynceus (Δυργκεύς), bridegroom of Hypermnestra and the only one of the sons of Aegyptus to escape the violence perpetrated

6 The adventures of Lyrcus, son of Phoroneus, are recounted by Parthenius, Erotica Pathemata 1 and 11; Nicaenetus, Frag. 1 Powell (extracted from Parthenius, loc. cit.), Aristocritus in his Περὶ Μῦθου; even Apollonius Rhodius in his Καῦνον Κτῖος (see Frag. 5 Powell).
by their cousins and brides, the daughters of Danaus. Pausanias relates that Lynceus, following a plan which he and Hypermnestra had conceived, escaped into the countryside and, taking refuge at a remote place within view of the Larisa (i.e. the acropolis), exchanged fire signals with his bride (2.25.4). In this way the learned antiquary furnishes an aetiological explanation for the still extant annual Argive torch festival, as well as an etymology to corroborate the statement τὸ δὲ χωρίον τότε μὲν Ἀυγκεία ἐκάλεῖτο.

If we were already suspicious of efforts to represent both Lyrcus and an even more shadowy Lyrcius as eponyms of the same town, we may be doubly dubious that this town was given successively two distinct, yet almost identical, names, derived in their turn from the closely similar names of an earlier and a later hero, both Argives of Inachid lineage. A sort of reciprocal contaminatio appears to be operative here. Λύρκειον and Λύρκεια are well-known place names, but their origin is obscure. To account for the name of the town, if not also for the name of the mountain, an eponym must be found—or manufactured. There exists meanwhile a body of Argive legend concerning the Aegyptid Lynceus. But Λύρκεια ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀυγκέως is an impossible etymology. One solution is to posit the one-time existence of a Lyrcus or Lyrcius to serve as eponym. The other is to assume that Lynceus was the founder and that the town was originally called Λυγκεία. Finally an accommodation is worked out between the two “traditions.” In any event, whether or not the legendary Lynceus or the legendary Lyrcus (or Lyrcius) corresponds to an historical personage, one suspects that the village actually got its name from the nearby mountain. How the mountain came to be called Λύρκειον I do not venture to surmise.

But sober history is one thing, legend another. The ancients were fond of deriving place names from the names of legendary heroes, just as they sought in heroic adventures the precedent for many a well-established custom or religious observance. The erudite poets of Alexandria were particularly adept at this practice, as the titles of some of their works bear witness: Callimachus’ Αἰτία (“Causes”), for example, and Apollonius’ Κτίσεις (“Foundings of Cities”). One of the latter, as we have already noted, was the Καύνου κτίσις, which

* I cannot accept Wilamowitz’ suggestion (Aischylus: Interpretationen [Berlin 1914] 24) that Lynceus’ name has crept in through a scribal miscopying of the name Lyreus (Λυρκεύς).
contained a narrative about Lyrcus—not the alleged eponym of Lyrceia, but that other Lyrcus whose ties with the Argolid are severed early and whose principal rôle is to serve as progenitor of the ruling house of Caunus. Here is a reason for suspecting that Λυρκήιον may not be the correct reading at Argonautica 1.125.

Is it not likely, then, that Apollonius, conscious of the fame of Lynceus in Argive legend and in the king-lists as Danaus’ son-in-law and successor, father and predecessor of Abas, wrote the epithet “Λυνκεῖα” (Λυρκήιον), derived ἀπὸ Λυνκέως τοῦ βασιλεύσαντος Ἀργοῦς?

These, in fact, are the words of the scholiast on Argonautica 1.125, which Platt failed to cite. In its entirety the scholium reads:

Λυρκήιον ἀπὸ Λυνκέως τοῦ βασιλεύσαντος Ἀργοῦς.
ἐὰν δὲ Λυρκήιον, ἀπὸ δροῦς Ἀργείου ἀκουστέον,
ἀδ’ οὐ δ’ Ἰναχος καταφέρεται ποταμός.

The scholium thus attests to the received text. Λυρκήιον is the reading preserved in the manuscripts, Λυρκήιον a mere uaria lectio of whose existence no one today would have been aware, had the scholiast not volunteered an alternative reading.

Why, then, for the past century and a half have editors consistently printed Λυρκήιον Ἀργος in their Apollonius texts and banished Λυρκήιον to the apparatus criticus? The practice seems to have started with Wellauer, following a suggestion of Gerhard. Later editors have followed Gerhard and Wellauer, justifying their choice with the same main arguments: (1) In no other author is the epithet Λυρκήιον joined with Ἀργος; and (2) the reading Λυρκήιον, attested in the scholium ad loc., has the support of Callimachus, Ovid, and Valerius Flaccus. But the tradition of the manuscripts requires no correction. The Gerhard–Wellauer substitution of Λυρκήιον for Λυρκήιον is no more necessary than Platt’s ἀρδος for Ἀργος.

7 Conspicuously absent from the regular Argive tradition is Lyrcus, Abas’ bastard son. Present instead are Abas’ legitimate sons Proetus and Acrisius.
8 A. Wellauer (ed.), Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1828). E. Gerhard (Lectiones Apollonianae [Leipzig 1816] 18f) had theorized that the variation between Λυρκήιον and Λυρκήιον was explicable in the light of the tradition (recorded in the anonymous biographies prefixed to the scholia) that Apollonius revised the text of the Argonautica after the failure of its initial oral presentation.
9 R. F. P. Brunck, In Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica uariae lectiones, notae et emendationes (=vol. 2 of his edition of the Argonautica [Strasbourg 1780]), p. 11, supports Λυρκήιον Ἀργος forthrightly (“sic codices omnes, bene”) and no less forthrightly denounces the variant reading (“altera lectio scholiastae memorata Λυρκήιον deprauata est”). Although im-
The fact that \textit{Λυρκήιον "Αργος} appears nowhere else is hardly conclusive: the alternative combination appears nowhere else either. Callimachus writes of Lyrceian "water," Ovid of Lyrceian "fields," Valerius Flaccus of Lyrceian "earth." None of the three combines "Lyrieian" with "Argos," nor, in fact, does Statius. For the same reason Wellauer's second criterion likewise fails. Since in the passages under consideration Apollonius alone mentions Argos, while the other poets refer to fields or streams, is it not likely that for the latter an epithet related to the place names \textit{Δύρκειον} (the mountain) and \textit{Δύρκεια} (the village near the mountain) is appropriate, but to the former the more fitting term would be one which reminds his reader of the Argive royal succession? There was ample precedent for Apollonius in such expressions as \textit{'Ινάξιον "Αργος} and \textit{"Αργος ἄστυ Φορωνικόν}. Like Inachus, like Phoroneus, like even Abas (in Pindar's \textit{"Αβαντος εὐρυχάροις ἀγιώσ, i.e. "spacious Argive roadsteads"}), but unlike Lyrccus, Lynceus was celebrated by the Argives for his successful and beneficent rule over their city. Thus his name, no less than one of theirs, might quite appropriately provide an epithet, or even a substitute, for the word \textit{"Αργος}.

If, in addition, Strabo is right in quoting those who take \textit{"Αργος} (or rather \textit{ἄργος}) to mean \textit{πεδίον} (8.6.9.; 9.5.6), then the combination \textit{Λύτκθιον Αργός}\textsuperscript{10} could signify to the subtle Alexandrian poet and to his subtle Alexandrian readers not only "Lyriqueian Argos," but also \textit{(Λυρκήιον = 'Αργείον, ἄργος = πεδίον) "the Argive plain."}

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\textsuperscript{10} Since minuscule writing had not yet developed, this—or rather \textit{ΛΥΤΚΘΙΟΝ ΑΡΓΟΣ:} the scholiast's listing of alternatives shows the corruption to have been ancient—is what Ovid and Valerius Flaccus saw before writing respectively \textit{Lyrea ariu} and \textit{Lyrcia tellus}.  

\textsuperscript{10} Patience with those who found \textit{Λυρκήιον} attractive—there were such even before the advent of Gerhard and Wellauer—has led him seemingly to ignore certain difficulties, Brunck nevertheless argues cogently in justifying his own position.