

Jason as Love-hero in Apollonios' *Argonautika*

Charles Rowan Beye

TWO TENDENCIES which appear in epic poems after the time of Homer are particularly important for understanding Apollonios. One is the gradual abandonment of the hero in favor of a concentration upon his adventures or on the historicity of events—a witness to the arrival of the antiquarian mind.¹ The other trend, more clearly seen and documented, is the growing self-consciousness of the poet, who finds either that the manner of epic poetry has been so well delineated as to be inhibiting or that he himself is engaged in scholarly analyses of epic which force him to think more objectively of the form.

The motivation for the first of these two tendencies can already be seen in Hesiod's account (*Theogony* 26ff) of the Muses' observation that they know how to tell lies as well as truth. Essentially this is a challenge to saga, which in early cultures is generally thought to be true history, as oral poets and poetry are thought to be passing on unchanged a record of events. Hesiod's anecdote acknowledges new suspicions about epic; henceforth epic poetry had either to acknowledge its fictional nature or to take on the pretensions to truth which Hesiod had arrogated unto himself.² The fragments of subsequent epics show that most poets preferred the latter, from the authors of the cycle to Rhianos, a contemporary of Apollonios. The former, by attempting to set the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into a greater continuing narrative, reveal minds bent on historicity. Random saga material, all the flotsam and jetsam of a lengthy oral epic tradition, seems to have been forced into a coherent vision of world history. Rhianos, on the other hand, composed a true, historical epic, a poem on the Messenian War.³ That his

¹ H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* III (Cambridge 1940) 802ff, discuss antiquarianism in epic poetry.

² See my *The Iliad, the Odyssey and the Epic Tradition* (Garden City 1966) 203–05. For a discussion of the informational element in Homer and its cultural function see E. A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1963) 36–114.

³ Cf. Pausanias' account of it in his description of Sparta (bk. 4). For a description of what we know of Rhianos' style and intent see C. Mayhoff, *De Rhiani Cretensis studiis Homericis* (Leipzig 1870) 15ff.

subject matter was in fact quite remote in time seems due to a convention which must have been a considerable inhibition to epic poets. A division between old and new Athenian history was recognized, with the Persian Wars as the dividing point. The later period was not thought to have any connection with myth, not to be set within the heroic range, unlike the earlier period, to which, indeed, Herodotos had already given a mythical, epical personality. The creation of a truly historical contemporary epic was avoided because the conflict between obvious immediate truth and epic's fictional potential was too great, particularly in the matter of personal characterization. The poets fell back on fact altogether; the fabrication of cyclic epics, therefore, went on apace,⁴ epics that simply outlined a series of saga events or remote historical events enacted by depersonalized participants. Something of the nature of these poems comes through in an amusing poem in the *Palatine Anthology* (11.130) beginning: "I hate those cyclic poets, the ones who keep saying 'and then'." These poems must have achieved an effect akin to what H. G. Wells' *Outline of History* done in hexameters would produce.

We can trace considerably better the increasing self-consciousness of epic poets. The poets themselves complain of the problem. Choirilos of Samos, for instance, laments the passing of the time when the meadow of epic poetry was untrod, and complaining that everything about epic is already known, he asks the Muse to lead him through a different kind of story (fr.1a Kinkel).

Choirilos was only modestly experimental. He chose a true subject, whereas in the Alexandrian period experimentation became more vigorous. Rudolf Pfeiffer's excellent new book, *History of Classical Scholarship*,⁵ makes it unnecessary to rehearse the details. It was a time in which notions of rhetoric and genre gave emphasis to form, when the vitality of prose pushed poetry to extremes of innovation. It was, as well, a time when epic poetry, far from having exhausted itself, was unusually popular. Callimachos may have inveighed against the long epic, but his objections were not necessarily heeded.⁶ There seems to have been extensive epic activity during the Hellenistic period.⁷ We

⁴ Cf. K. Kroll, "Das historische Epos," *Sokrates* N.F. 4 (1916) 3f.

⁵ R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford 1968); See especially "Zenodotus and his Contemporaries," 105ff; "Callimachus and the Generation of his Pupils," 123ff.

⁶ K. Ziegler, *Das hellenistische Epos* (Leipzig 1934).

⁷ J. U. Powell and C. A. Barber, ed. *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature*, 2nd ser.

know of vast numbers of contests, fierce competition for prizes, all for epic poetry. Later in the first century we hear of a club or guild of epic poets. Perhaps the quality of these epics was never high, but the instinct to practice the form did not die. The reason may well lie in the academic basis for epic that derived from the Library early in the Alexandrian period. If we knew more, we could perhaps speak of much of this production as being cheaply popular, and perhaps many of the writers as largely amateurs, men of letters rather than true poets⁸.

There were, however, serious attempts at epic, among them the poems of Rhianos. He was an epic poet of a new stamp because he was also involved in Homeric scholarship. Known in antiquity as Rhianos *grammatikos*, he produced an edition of both Homeric poems, from which over forty readings have been preserved. If Isocrates could now call himself a 'poet of words'⁹ and epic poets were *γραμματικοί*, then the implications of the trends from Hesiod onward which I have suggested are all the more apparent. Men such as Rhianos are in a sense the latter-day Homeridai, except that where the rhapsodes passed on the *ipsissima verba* of the master, the scholars of Alexandria were prepared in their studies to recreate the exact manner of the master.¹⁰ That they were conscious to an extraordinary degree of epic usage we know from the scholia to the Homeric epics. They were not only capable of making the subtlest distinctions in matters of diction (although often wrongly),¹¹ but they concerned themselves as well with matters of epic propriety. In this sphere they therefore undertook to recreate the Homeric mentality, to set the Homeric tone.¹² The story of Zenodotos athetizing *Iliad* 3.423–26 because it is not fitting for the goddess Aphrodite to set a chair for Helen and thus perform the task of a serving maid is exactly a case in point. It illustrates still further the essential truth of Choirilos' complaint that epic technique had discovered

(Oxford 1929) 35ff; F. Susemihl, *Geschichte der gr. Litteratur in der Alexandrinerzeit* I (Leipzig 1891) 375–409.

⁸ So B. Otis argues in *Virgil, a Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1963) 396ff.

⁹ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* I (Berlin 1924) 91–94; and recently J. A. Coulter, *GRBS* 8 (1967) 228–32.

¹⁰ This fact seems to me to justify confronting Apollonios with Homer as P. Händel does (*Beobachtungen zur epischen Technik des A.R.* [München 1954]), for which he has been criticized (cf. A. Maddalena's review in *RivFC* 33 [1955] 317ff). On the general question of poet-scholars in Alexandria see Pfeiffer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 88ff.

¹¹ Cf. M. van der Valk, *Textual Criticism of the Odyssey* (Leiden 1949) 91ff, 125ff.

¹² Cf. M. van der Valk, *Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad* II (Leiden 1964) 11–33, 406–35.

and reached its natural limits. The major fact which confronted anyone trying to compose epic was that the form and the tone were predetermined. He must observe this in one of two possible ways, either to accept it or to deny it.

One way to deny the form is to pervert it, and to my mind, this is exactly what Apollonios set out to do. He is, however, unlike Euripides, who seems frequently bored with tragic usage and therefore laughs at the ingredients of his form. Time and again we can see Euripides slipping out of the manner and tone of tragedy to mock it.¹³ Apollonios in quite another way, quite seriously, took the materials of epic and put them together with various incongruities that, while legitimate, are bizarre, to create an epic poem that is thoroughly sensible and by denying much that is Homeric maintains the sense of Homer throughout. This is akin to the paradoxical element in surrealist painting. But, as theologians tell us, he who is agnostic is lost, whereas the man who denies God is accepting him as much as the true believer. Thus I would call the *Argonautika* 'anti-epic', rather than call Jason 'anti-hero'.¹⁴ He fits comfortably into the *Argonautika*; he is the hero within that narrative. It is the epic itself which in the face of the tradition is a distortion.

From the very first Apollonios indicates how he will acknowledge Homer by distorting him. His determination to avoid formulaic utterance while using Homeric words is notorious. Verbal repetition is the essence of Homeric diction; the quality which it imparts to the narrative is too well known to need discussion. Its absence then in language patterns that are otherwise immediately akin to older epic is remarkable, unsettling and, indeed, perverse.¹⁵ One could argue that this effective exotic manipulation of the language was hardly new, that we may see the same thing brought off by Antimachos of Kolophon, himself an Homeric scholar and poet. Antimachos, however, is trying for something else. His conscious and continuous obscurity achieved through neologisms and allusions is far away from the Homeric

¹³ The *Alcestis*, despite the special circumstances of its production, is possibly the best example; cf. my "Alcestis and her Critics," *GRBS* 2 (1959) 109–27.

¹⁴ Thus G. Lawall, "Apollonios' *Argonautika*: Jason as Anti-Hero," *YCS* 19 (1966) 121–69.

¹⁵ Händel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 82ff, argues that conscious variation is an Apollonian device to force the reader to attend to details and thus follow the narrative more closely. This is a common argument for the motives behind variation; and, of course, this is literate poetry (cf. C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* [Oxford 1942] esp. 39ff, and Pfeiffer, *op.cit.* [*supra* n.5] 25 n.1) but it is the language of Homer upset.

manner, whereas Apollonios remains relatively simple and direct.¹⁶ Still the change in Apollonios' style from that of Homer is demonstrable, because formulae have been replaced by individual words as the building blocks of the line.

Similar is the poet's practice in varying Homeric phrases. The notorious example is the poem's opening line where κλέα φωτῶν may stand for κλέα ἀνδρῶν; the variation shows the poet's control, his sense of artifice, and, more important, his mode of playing his poem against the reader's knowledge of Homer. In so doing he exhibits, if only in details, his conscious manipulation of the elements of epic poetry. Consider further the phrase in 1.19 where the ship Argo is described as a creation of Argos at the suggestion of Athena, Ἄργον Ἀθηναίης καμέειν ὑποθυμοσύνησιν. The phrase occurs once in the *Iliad* (15.412) to describe a shipbuilder's inspiration ὑποθυμοσύνησιν Ἀθηναίης and in the *Odyssey* (16.233), when Odysseus says he reached Ithaka at Athene's inspiration. Anyone familiar with the *Iliad* in the intimate way in which the ancients knew their Homer would probably recall the passage, and very likely the Odyssean one would come to mind as well; the reader would note immediately the alteration of the phrase, that is, the separation of the name and the noun by an intervening verb. This alteration is not a result of the process of changing, evolving epic diction over which Apollonios has no control, for other contemporary poets do recreate the Homeric manner. One of the hallmarks of epic style, for instance, a noun followed by one or two adjectives at the end of the line, is rare in Apollonios, but common in Kallimachos (e.g., *Hymn* 3) and Theokritos when they choose to be Homeric. Such stylistic variations in Apollonios are matters of the minutest detail, and very likely no reader would consciously recognize the majority of them. They do, however, produce for the constant reader of Homer the sense of a narrative style slightly askew or out of focus.

The manner in which Apollonios deals with form is more obvious. For instance, he introduces his catalogue in a way that is certainly a bolder assault upon our senses. The *Argonautika* is no doubt too brief for Apollonios to plunge far *in medias res* and to return only later to an

¹⁶ Although Apollonios' grammar and diction are more subtle and complex than Homer's; see K. Mugler, "Zur epischen Sprache bei Homer und Apollonios," *Philologus* 96 (1944) 1ff, and G. Marxer, *Die Sprache des Apollonios Rhodius in ihren Beziehungen zu Homer* (Diss. Zurich 1935). The style of the hexameters places Apollonios definitely to the side of Homer, as opposed, say, to Kallimachos; see A. Wifstrand, *Von Kallimachos zu Nonnos* (Lund 1933) 78.

introductory mood. Nor does he care to lock his catalogue into the narrative dramatically or thematically as did the poet of the *Iliad*. The catalogue stands alone, and the transitions in the first few lines of the poem are the very boldest: a four line invocation followed by an extremely condensed résumé of events leading to Jason's departure, which moves abruptly into the introduction of the catalogue. Gone is epic prolixity; gone, too, is the epic emphasis upon narrative. Gone is the feeling of effort and grandeur that preceded the Homeric Catalogue of Ships. Apollonios' sense of time and unity has been advanced as reason for this remarkable staccato effect; it is argued that he is constrained to introduce his list of characters before the narration starts.¹⁷ But it is more likely that Apollonios is being literary, playing with structure rather than securing it; for in fact we see this effect repeated at the close of his poem. In the fourth book he has moved his ship and crew ever closer to home, finally through a series of relatively inconsequential picaresque episodes (1170–72). Suddenly he shifts gears, so to speak, and delivers an abrupt epilogue after the manner of the Homeric Hymns. The epilogue fairly sneaks up on the reader.

Why? we may well ask. This is the result of the professionalism of the ποιητής-γραμματικός and his audience.¹⁸ He knows perfectly well the structure of his model; he understands the structure in terms of its parts and he can manipulate them at will; by so doing he demonstrates to his reader that he is reordering his Homeric models in some new perspective. The opening fifty lines of the *Argonautika* are, compared to Homer, surreal in their breathless and harsh juxtapositions; so is the conclusion. But as elements *qua* elements their fundamental similarity is unmistakable.

Apollonios wants still further to make it abundantly clear early in his poem where he stands before his tradition. He moves through action and character to establish the new perspective. Again he shows his seriousness, for in searching for a hero he proceeds to the central problem of epic in his time. He is emphatic in making clear that Jason will be his hero, and he accomplishes this chiefly by introducing Herakles in a significant fashion as the anti-hero. Apollonios' serious-

¹⁷ Händel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 15f.

¹⁸ "Of course every poet counts on the active collaboration of his audience, but as a rule he incites and guides the intended response, while Apollonios frequently does no more than provide the stuff, expecting the others to puzzle it out by dint of their own imagination and erudition," says H. Fränkel, "Apollonios Rhodios as a Narrator in *Argonautika*, 2.1–140," *TAPA* 83 (1952) 155.

ness perhaps needs stressing, for he seems to some to be creating a mock heroic poem, or in any case to be parodying epic. Such a view, however, does not account for the grimness and solemnity of emotion that appear frequently in this strange poem.

Jason has seemed to many an unlikely candidate for hero. The reasons are many, but in general they rest upon the fact that he is morally, spiritually and intellectually impotent, and perhaps a physical coward as well. If we look to the formal elements of the poem, however, Jason is inescapably the hero. And Apollonios has directed us to consider the formal creation of a hero by playing so emphatically with epic forms. He does not ask us to nominate Jason hero out of our hearts, but from our intellectual grasp of the structure of the poem. That Jason is formally the hero can be shown in many examples, but a few will suffice. Jason is the cause of the entire expedition, for it is he who so inspires Pelias' fear that the king conceives the plan that constitutes throughout the subject of the entire poem (1.5ff). Of this the poet reminds us often during the course of the action, for instance, when Argos says (3.356f), "it was for his [Jason's] sake that the others went out as a body from Hellas." More formally when the poet calls upon Erato (3.1ff) for poetic assistance, it is to tell the story of Jason. Or again, when the poet wonders aloud, so to speak, (2.1090f) why it was that Phineus encouraged the crew to land on the island of Aretias, it is because there Jason will meet the sons of Phrixus, who will provide him with immeasurable help in the ensuing narrative. Perhaps nowhere is he more obviously the hero than when the poet paints in detail his psychological state (e.g., 2.621ff). Jason's psyche is a matter of general concern; this is not true of any other hero, none of whom actually has a personality. The matter needs clarification since Jason seems unsympathetic to many critics, who therefore choose not to take him seriously.¹⁹ The matter is intellectual not emotional, however; we must acknowledge first that Apollonios has contrived *formally* to maintain Jason's primacy throughout the poem, and a primacy developed in heroic perspective.

One intellectualist theory develops the idea that the crew acts as hero in a body.²⁰ To be sure, Jason is attentive to his crew, and they often act as though innocent of any notion of his superiority. The

¹⁹ J. F. Carspecken, "Apollonios Rhodius and the Homeric Epic," YCS 13 (1952) 99f, gives a summary of views hostile to Jason.

²⁰ Carspecken, *op.cit.* (*supra.* n.19) 110ff.

speech in which Jason encourages everyone to offer advice (3.171ff) and enlarges upon the idea of the group depending upon its members suggests a kind of anti-heroic democracy. Sentiments such as this, combined with Jason's retiring nature and his emotional dependency upon Peleus, do not describe heroic vitality. Yet we must remember how often Jason does the talking, how it is he who deals with Aetes, it is he who gets the fleece and the girl. The important consideration is the total improbability of his doing so, its faulty perspective, indeed, its basic perversity. It is a collision between content and form.

The idea of the crew as hero will not work, for not only do they not engage our sympathies or our interest either singly or together but their effect upon the central action of the story is nil. For instance, Tiphys, the pilot of the Argo, dies (2.854), and while we are told that unendurable sorrow overcomes the crew at this disaster (858), a few moments later Ankaios is able to say that there are many skillful men aboard the Argo who can make the voyage safely (874-76). Idmon, the prophet, prophesies essentially to no point because the successful outcome of this venture has never been in doubt. Then, Orpheus, who is described as though a part of a painting, offers up his lyre at the tomb of Sthenelos (2.928), thereby rendering himself useless (although the poet has him incongruously making the music for the wedding of Jason and Medea in the fourth book [1159]). The crew is essentially decorative counterpoint to Jason. When they are being used most effectively by Apollonios, he contrives to show Jason as somehow lost in the crowd.

A more recent theory regarding the crew divides them into "types of human action,"²¹ *i.e.*, men of brawn, men of skill, men of valor and men of piety, who are meant to represent ways of confronting life alternative to that of Jason. The basic distinctions here set up, I think, are instructive, and we may presume that Apollonios wished to contrast Jason's behavior with other mental attitudes. The ineffectuality of these members of the crew, however, does not seem to me to be based upon allegorical design. None of them except Herakles is sufficiently characterized to make a real impression in the narrative. Only Herakles offers an adequately rich personality to suggest a way of life that fails. Furthermore, men like Peleus, or more particularly Idas, who are categorized as men of valor are not so far removed from the type represented by Herakles that they form a distinct category.

²¹ Lawall, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 123-48.

Jason, therefore, does not seem in some allegorical way to succeed where piety or skill must fail. Thus he is not an alternative to these qualities; therefore we need not consider Apollonios' conception of man to be realized in the person of Jason necessarily nor must it be a conception so depraved as some critics would have it.²²

The presence of Herakles in the narrative seems important, a means by which Apollonios enlarges and more clearly concentrates upon Jason. Herakles is present by design. Since the Argo's crew was not fixed unvaryingly in the tradition, one cannot say that Apollonios was forced to include Herakles in his account. Moreover, he seems deliberately to have omitted the hero Theseus, who was often included in stories of the voyage; his apology for Theseus' absence from the crew (1.101ff) is forced and inappropriate, and perhaps, therefore, self-conscious. Apollonios is sometimes praised for the adroit way in which he manages to dismiss Herakles from the narrative at the end of the first book. This view, however, must assume the initial awkwardness of introducing unnecessarily a traditional superhero who upstages a conventional, if not somewhat colorless, hero.²³ Herakles is surely in the narrative by plan. The poet seems boldly to clarify this by introducing Telamon's accusation of Jason (1.1290ff) that he sailed off from the island abruptly to be rid of Herakles and so to attach to himself alone whatever glory the expedition might confer. This cynical motive has been alleged by some critics to be Apollonios' own reason for dispatching Herakles. But the fact is that nothing in Jason's personality suggests glory-seeking or the will or energy to execute such a plan. The poet, on the contrary, offers the accusation to give overt expression to what his readers might happen to feel. Once said, it rings hollow, and the reader must dismiss the possibility that Herakles' departure from the narrative is a cheap and mechanical device on the author's part to bolster Jason's position. By forcing us to discount Telamon's criticism, the author draws attention to the implications of Herakles' departure and enforces its symbolic function.

Apollonios from the first contrives to establish Jason as a hero with a difference. His absence from the catalogue marks him off as someone

²² The members of the crew are remarkable for the magical powers they possess (see H. J. Rose, *Handbook of Greek Mythology*⁴ [New York 1950] 295; Carspecken, *op.cit.* [*supra* n.19] 107–09) and do not really use. Jason, himself, has none. Perhaps Apollonios is making a distinction between human and non-human heroes. Cf. C. Whitman's nicely drawn distinction in his *Sophocles: a Study in Heroic Humanism* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1951) 59f.

²³ Carspecken, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.19) 120f.

separate. In a sense the crew can be called his retinue, as the line concluding the catalogue implies (1.228): "These were the many helpers gathered together as helpers for Jason." His position, however, is thereafter made ambiguous by the unanimous decision on the part of the crew to elect Herakles as their leader (337–39). It is suggested to them that they choose the best man, one who will lead them, manage every detail, and handle their differences and dealings with the strangers whom they shall meet. Declining, Herakles suggests Jason as an alternative—but only because it was Jason who gathered together the band of men. Nonetheless, Jason, cause of the expedition as the fleece is its goal, central to the story as no one else is, appears alone, removed from the crew, structurally by his absence from the catalogue and emotionally by their failure to select him openly and spontaneously as their leader.

Herakles, the crew's choice, is a formidable figure of saga and myth. He was the subject of epics by two of the Alexandrian canon of epic writers, Panyassis of Halikarnassos and Peisandros of Rhodes. Panyassis created the Herakles who could assault the gods, the lover of wine, the fighter of monsters, while Peisandros first created Herakles as hunter and all-round athlete. The references to him in the *Iliad* may perhaps indicate a live oral tradition coëval with that of the Trojan saga and the story of Achilles' wrath. Herakles is, therefore, an important alternative to Jason. He is on one level a counterpart to the heroic values of Achilles; he is still more perhaps analogous to Ajax or Diomedes as a man of considerable physical strength, animal daring and courage—all exemplified in his labors. Beyond this, the tale of the labors has a fairy-tale ring so that we may say that Herakles has also moved in the fairy-tale world in which Jason, too, will appear. Finally, through his exploits and travels he bears affinities with the new heroism that Alexander brought into the Greek world.²⁴ From the outset, then, Herakles' refusal to accept the unanimously offered leadership of the crew is momentous and totally serious. And Apollonios keeps his reader aware of Herakles often throughout the earlier part of the poem by such deliberate devices as the description of the Argo's lowering in the water under Herakles' weight (1.532f) or the crew's

²⁴ On the change from heroic poetry, with its concern for the individual warrior-hero motivated by strength, courage, resourcefulness, etc., to non-heroic poetry, peopled with legislators and civilization-builders concerned with the growth of the state, see Chadwick, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 333–43. Cf. also Wilamowitz, "Griechische Heldensage," *Kleine Schriften II* (Berlin 1937).

recognition that Polydeuces' powers would have been unnecessary had Herakles confronted Amycus (2.145–53).

Between the catalogue and Herakles' refusal Jason is portrayed in a strange fashion. The poet shows us the grief of Jason's parents at his parting, natural enough in the circumstances, but a grief so intense as to charge the mood with unrelieved sadness. Then Apollonios describes Jason's arrival at the beach where his comrades are assembled, gathered to meet *him*, as the poet says (320). Suddenly the poet interrupts Jason's appearance to describe the late arrival of Akastos and Argos, adding that the crew were filled with wonder as they saw them (322) in their resplendent clothing. The two naturally upstage Jason. In much the way Herakles functions, these events contribute to a certain deflation of the aura about Jason.

The character of these incidents is reinforced by the curious description of Jason's departure from the palace (307–16). After comparing him in simile with Apollo in his beauty as he sets forth to the shouts of the populace, Apollonios introduces an old woman, Iphias, the priestess of Artemis: ". . . she kissed his right hand, but had not the strength to say a word, eager though she was to do so, as the crowd pressed on. But she was left there by the wayside, as the old are left by the young; he passed by and was gone afar." The simile gives the first hint of the majesty that should rightfully belong to Jason as hero, but Apollonios has immediately undercut it with the description of the priestess, just as he has used the latecomers' arrival at the beach. True enough in crowds and processions old women will be lost and turned aside. But Apollonios manages to give the description considerable melancholia; we see the event from the sorry position of the old woman, and the glitter of Jason's triumphal progression is tarnished. The sadness here reinforces the misery of Jason's mother. Furthermore, Jason seems not to be master of his actions. He is swept along—no doubt unseeing and perhaps not caring—but part of the surge of events which he cannot control. The simile speaks against itself in a small detail. Jason, as analogue to Apollo, has bereaved the priestess of Apollo's sister. Since Apollonios, like Aeschylus, is always careful to make every point of his similes fit their context,²⁵ this minor incongruity is surely intended to reflect the world in which communication, continuity and coher-

²⁵ See H. Faerber, *Zur dichterischen Kunst in Apollonios Rhodios Argonautika (Die Gleichnisse)* (Diss. Berlin 1932).

ence are fractured, a world in which the glorious coming of Jason does not make things right.

The episodes which I have mentioned precede Jason's first effective act of leadership, the decision to sacrifice to Apollo (351ff). By this time we have seen him as alone, invested with an aura of melancholia and lamentation,²⁶ up-staged, not preferred, and finally set up as a dubious alternative to Herakles. Apollonios does not employ characterizing epithets in the Homeric manner, but Jason is sometimes described as *ἀμήχανος* 'without device or resource', 'helpless' and 'dejected'.²⁷ Certainly the opening scenes of the epic realize the implications of that epithet, as does Herakles' logic in suggesting Jason as leader. It is the force of events that places Jason where he is, rather than personal drive.²⁸

The bitter-sweet quality of the poem perhaps reaches an early peak in the lamentable mistaken killing of Kyzikos. He is compared to Jason as young and blooming. He is newly married, not yet a father; the poet stresses the risk he takes in going out of the bridal chamber at this time to banquet with strangers "casting fears from his heart" (979), the implication being that until he had secured his royal succession he should pass the time in lovemaking rather than enter the company of strangers who would as easily murder him as not. Such is the sweet goodness of the new groom, the kind host, the amatory young man. Because of the importance of love in this poem it is doubly horrible that Kyzikos is killed; trebly horrible that he is killed in ignorance by Jason. The poet offers this episode to illustrate seriously and awfully how *ἀμήχανος* Jason is. Things happen to him; he does not create them. The battle in which Kyzikos dies is in context as perverse as any episode in the poem. It is the first *ἀνδροκρασία* in the poem, in fact, almost the only one, with the traditional catalogue-like list of names. The battle is followed by the traditional lamentation and burial. While formal and traditional, the episode is startlingly wrong

²⁶ The main mood returns in small ways as the poem proceeds. For instance, when Idmon interprets an omen, the moment of prophecy has the quality of the description of Jason's departure from the palace. Idmon prophesies not only success for the mission but his own fated death. As Apollonios says (448f), "... the youths rejoiced at their return, but grief seized them over the misery for Idmon."

²⁷ See the instances cited by M. Hadas, "Apollonios called the Rhodian," *CW* 26 (1932) 41-54.

²⁸ As Carspecken, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.19) 106f, remarks, all the deities are on Jason's side, so that there can be no heroic resistance to cosmic or supernatural forces.

and meaningless. In this situation Jason's qualities as an epic hero seem altogether faulted.

It is shortly before this sorry episode on the island of Lemnos that another kind of Jason emerges, a more positive man, and here he is associated with love. Jason is more formally heroic on the Homeric model, specifically when he goes forth to an audience with the princess Hypsipyle. He girds himself, as it were, in a great cloak which is lengthily described.²⁹ We seem to be meant to be reminded of Agamemnon's arming in *Iliad* 12, although here one item which Jason takes up is fully described and there the description is spread over several articles of Agamemnon's armor. More exactly the description of the cloak recalls the description of Achilles' shield, for the cloak has designs representing the same kind of abstract symbolism that the shield bears.

The cloak gives to Jason the splendor and brightness of the sun (1.725f), recalling the countless times that Homer equates his heroes' martial brilliance with shining fire. Jason goes forth to the city like a star (1.774), as Achilles in the *Iliad* (22.26) rushes upon the waiting Hektor like a star. There are more points of comparison with that passage in the *Iliad*: the waiting Trojans, the waiting love-sick maidens; the darkness of the night in both cases (22.28: 1.777); Achilles rushing across the plain, the star rising over the girls' homes (22.26: 1.776); the star of the *Iliad* bringing fever, in the *Argonautika* charming the maidens' eyes (22.31: 1.777). As Jason approaches the city the simile places him in the context of a warrior endowed with wondrous might.³⁰ The entire passage commencing with the description of the cloak suggests the prelude to an ἀριστεία that is in general reminiscent of Achilles' preparation for battle at the close of *Iliad* 19. The one crucial difference is that Jason's ἀρετή is his sexuality.

When Jason complains of his inadequacy (2.416ff), the prophet Phineus replies that he is to rely upon the aid of Aphrodite. The whole of the Lemnian episode illustrates this dimension of Jason's heroism. Sexual images are central, from the first discussion in Hypsipyle's

²⁹ See the scholiast *ad* v. 721f (*Scholia in Apollonium Rhodium Vetera* rec. Ca. Wendel [Berlin 1958] 60), who recognizes the unusual features of the cloak.

³⁰ When Jason appears to Medea in the moment that is the spiritual or emotional consummation of their love (3.956ff), he is compared to the same star, *i.e.* Sirius, as is Achilles in the passage here discussed (*cf.* Leaf *ad loc.* *Il.* 22.27) and there are other parallels (*e.g.*, *Argon.* 3.959 μῆλοισι δ' ἐν ἄσπετον ἦκεν διζύον; *Iliad* 22.31 φέρει πολλὸν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι).

council hall when her aged nurse Polyxo rises to speak from her seat next to four virgins, unmated (*ἀδμήs*, literally 'untamed'). Polyxo's warning of the time when there will be no one to do the plowing seems obviously sexual, especially after the barnyard adjective applied to the virgins (*cf.*, too, lines 867ff). On the cloak are images appropriate to the setting of the entire poem, that is the conflict between love and war, or rather love in war and war in love, such as the image of Aphrodite viewing her reflection in Ares' shield or the race contest of Hippodameia with love and hate clearly warring.

The simile of the star at Jason's approach involves a description of maidens enclosed in their chamber, surely the virginal state again. Jason is described as going through the gates of the city, then arriving at the palace where maidens open more gates to give him access to the princess whose name means 'High Gates'. Precedents for sexual symbolism are not wanting: one thinks of the Sapphic fragment of the fruit tree and the meadow (Diehl³ fr.5) and Hippolytos' ode to chastity (Eur. *Hipp.* 73ff), and attention has recently been drawn to the sexual imagery of the gates of the Acropolis in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (249ff).³¹ Here Apollonios depicts virginity that is to be overcome by the hero as a kind of battle encounter.

The traditional hero's panoply with which Jason's encounter with Hypsipyle commences formally declares him a hero, but the context is novel. Jason is a sexual hero, a lover; and this kind of hero is new in epic. Odysseus, to be sure, has a number of sexual adventures, and indeed more than once owes his survival to the ladies with whom he sleeps (even Nausikaa's sexual interest in him motivates her concern for his welfare). But there is an enormous difference in attitude between the two poems; in Odysseus' relationships with Circe or Kalypso we are not made to feel that the interest is anything other than simply sexual desire on the part of the females; certainly Odysseus keeps his affections for Penelope. The women in the *Argonautika*, on the other hand, seem to be interested in Jason in a deeper, more complicated emotional way.

Hypsipyle's feelings for Jason are veiled until he must leave. Then her actions and speeches tell that she does in some way love him (886ff). Jason's emotions are not revealed. But his manner of approach to Hypsipyle's palace, endowed with radiant sexuality, implies more

³¹ C. H. Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1964) 203. The notion is called "plausible" by K. J. Dover, *CR* 80 (1966) 160.

the lover, at least as far as externals, than even the magically rejuvenated Odysseus seems to suggest. Jason as a romantic lover is not, however, demonstrative or aggressive; his sexuality is simply the essence of his being. This is important to notice, for despite the formal elements of traditional heroism and sexuality Jason remains as *ἀμύχανος* as before. Endowed with a romantic sexual panoply which his personality does not complement, he seems to be an unfulfilled Paris.

While Jason and most of the crew go off to enjoy the delights of Hypsipyle and the other Lemnian ladies, Herakles remains behind with a few chosen comrades. The others enjoy an evening of gaiety and sensuality that stretches into days provoking Herakles' disgust, disgust at the delay, disgust at the sexuality. "Is it a pleasure to stay here to plow the rich (*λιπαρός*) soil of Lemnos?" he cries (1.867–74). "Let's leave [Jason] in Hypsipyle's bed until he has filled Lemnos with men children and there will come to him great fame (*βᾶξις*)."³² Herakles, the more traditional hero, offers his disapproval, and we may say that Apollonios is setting Herakles up as the alternative to Jason's sexuality.³³ Such is the force of this disapproval that the Argo departs abruptly.

Herakles, however, is made to disappear from the narrative, and the circumstances of his departure show Apollonios again defining the kind of hero which dominates his epic. Herakles' overwhelming strength reduces him in fact to impotence when his oar breaks as he furiously tries to maneuver the Argo alone, a portent of his departure and the reasons for it. Shortly thereafter he loses Hylas, who is snatched away by a love-sick water nymph. Herakles' frenzied search for Hylas takes him away forever from the voyage of the Argonauts and the winning of the fleece.

What is Hylas to Herakles that he prizes the boy above the sailing of the Argo? Hylas is Herakles' creature, reared by the hero from childhood after Herakles killed his father. There is a hint of Andromache's dependence upon Hektor here; her survival and the death of her family recall it. More specifically, Hylas holds a position analogous

³² Yet *βᾶξις* has perhaps more the bourgeois notion of reputation. The equation of plowing with sexual intercourse also occurs at 1.795f (the Thracian lands equalling the Thracian mistresses). One wonders if a *double-entendre* lurks in 1.829f.

³³ When Jason meets with Kyzikos Herakles again stays behind with some younger men (*ὀπλότεροι*). Whatever courtly and diplomatic civilities passed between Jason and Kyzikos are not part of Herakles' world. He stays at the beach until he rises up at the appearance of the earth-born men. Monstrous, savage fighting is more his kind of endeavor; cf. Lawall, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 124ff.

to Patroklos' relationship to Achilles or that of Sthenelos to Diomedes in the *Iliad*. Yet with a difference, for Patroklos is older than Achilles and for that reason a source of moderation, and Hylas is first described (1.131f) as in the prime of youth. When the water nymph first perceives him, he is rosy with beauty and sweet graces as the moon shines down upon him. Apollonios says no more, but Theokritos in his account of the episode (*Idyll* 13) identifies the young boy as Herakles' beloved. We have no real evidence that Theokritos' paederastic motif ought to be read into the Apollonian account, but I should say that this is so. The question of the priority of the two versions of the Hylas-Herakles story is not relevant.³⁴ Theokritos' version shows that such an interpretation was normal and reasonable. Even without it we can assess the relationship of Herakles and Hylas in terms of traditional epic. Setting aside the question of the degree of sexuality involved in the relationship of Patroklos and Achilles (which Aeschylus developed), we may confidently say that the *Iliad* shows the major heroes concerned with a male world. Masculine affection and concern appear again and again in relationships between the heroes. It is this to which Herakles is heir in Apollonios' conception if nothing else. The Theokritean version presents this side too: "As a father teaches his beloved son, so did Herakles teach Hylas all the lore which had made him noble and renowned himself, and never parted from him, neither at noon's onset, nor when dawn . . . sped upward to the halls of Zeus" (13.8–11). This seems to represent what at certain stages of Greek culture constituted the ideal emotional relationship.³⁵

On the other hand, tradition shows Herakles involved with women, for instance, Deianeira and Iole. Herakles, however, never appears to be a lover of women, a man given to affectionate, romantic interest in females. He is usually shown to be a lusty man; in Sophocles' *Trachiniai* his love for Iole seems to be simple physical passion compared to Deianeira's love for him. The insensitivity he shows in acquiring Iole (*Tr.* 352–67) is matched by his hostility toward Deianeira, even when he learns her true motive and error in injuring him. He is not a Paris

³⁴ For a review of the question see A. Köhnken, "Apollonios Rhodios und Theokrit: die Hylas- und die Amykosgeschichten beider Dichter und die Frage der Priorität," *Hypomnemata* 12 (Göttingen 1965). B. Otis, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 398–405, makes the point that Apollonios would not have shown Herakles as love-sick in the fashion of Theokritos because that would have sentimentalized him. If Apollonios is intent on Herakles representing an older form of heroism, the motive which Otis suggests makes sense.

³⁵ Cf. Phaidros' speech in *Pl. Symp.* 178A–180B. For Aeschylus see now B. Snell, *Scenes from Greek Drama* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1964) 14f.

who welcomes Helen to the bedchamber; he is more like Odysseus, whom prudence and lust place next to a Circe or Kalypso.

For Hylas Herakles demonstrates considerable concern, grief, deep need. This is the version of Apollonios. Taking from Theokritos the potentials of the relationship we may view Herakles as a hero of the type who offers his soul to a young male, while freely seeking sexual satisfaction from females. Herakles, alone of the figures in the catalogue, is described as having a young helper (*δπάων*). He is a hero of the older epic tradition. Apollonios, by removing Herakles from the narrative in pursuit of Hylas, still more clearly shows Jason as a new kind of epic hero, a romantic hero, a love hero, a man who will move out of the male dominated context of traditional epic into a new heterosexual tragedy of manners. This is the most important function of Herakles. His earlier appearances went far toward establishing Jason as perhaps nothing more than an ordinary man perversely in hero's clothing. Herakles provides the measure, Jason is found wanting until at Lemnos he is invested with a kind of heroism. Finally Jason and his peculiar *ἀρετή* triumph, as Herakles and the tradition for which he stands must withdraw in a paederastic pursuit that has no place in love epic.

Herakles, like Idas and Peleus, also stands for a martial skill and toughness of personality that is found wanting in the new ambience. This is mirrored on the divine level (3.18ff) when Athene is helpless and love is not; "it's not strength or force of hands we need," says Hera to Aphrodite, "but love" (3.84). Similarly Jason can ponder (3.182–84) whether he should meet Aetes in battle, or in fact contrive some other plan. Fighting is passé; Jason alone of the heroes seems to understand this. Herman Fränkel has well brought out the anachronistic quality of the opposite mentality, particularly in Idas, calling him a kind of Don Quixote in this epic.³⁶

I believe that Virgil was much impressed by the way in which Apollonios used Herakles symbolically in his poem and modeled the introduction and departure of Anchises in the narrative after Apollonios' usage. For Anchises is freighted with an heroic world that can no longer sustain itself, and he must die before Aeneas can properly assume his own heroic proportions.³⁷

³⁶ H. Fränkel, "Ein Don Quijote unter den Argonauten des Apollonios," *MusHelv* 17 (1960) 1–20.

³⁷ See Beye, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 223f.

Yet in contrast to Herakles Jason remains ἀμήχανος, especially emotionally. Herakles' dash after Hylas shows an energy and vitality that Jason never musters, and Apollonios chooses to remind us of this at the very end of the epic in his description of Herakles and the Hesperides. Here once again we see the old-style hero who achieves his prize through his own strength and courage, relying on no one. Jason, as we know, must depend upon Medea completely in order to get the fleece. This is the way Apollonios tells it, and in so doing he is working on the implications of the new kind of hero revealed in Book 1. To an extent this new hero owes his personality to his sexuality.

From the first Jason has been shown to be not responsible for his actions; Herakles chose him leader of the Argonauts, Hypsipyle needed a mate, darkness made Kyzikos an anonymous enemy and victim. Just as he was initially depicted as being swept on by the crowds, so he continues to be swept on by events throughout the poem. However much we may choose to consider this singularly strange, we cannot deny that Jason is uniformly portrayed as passive. Such consistency suggests that Apollonios consciously chose to represent Jason in this fashion. By surrounding him with the props of traditional heroism he offers the reader a paradoxical figure who provides a commentary on the epic form itself.

Jason's initial conquest of Medea's heart and his subsequent victory in the contest which Aeetes sets for him are critical moments in the narrative which call for heroics. Apollonios has introduced two episodes reminiscent of Homeric epic. The Homeric coloration highlights alternately the importance and the absurdity of these moments. Among them stands out specifically the embassy of Hera and Athena to Aphrodite, who at their request sends Eros to earth to inflame Medea with love. The dramatic scene is that of Thetis going to Hephaistos in *Iliad* 18. In one view Jason, as a kind of wandering Odysseus, needs his Athene, who in this epic will naturally be replaced by Aphrodite. As Phineus said, the crew must find their help in Aphrodite. Essentially she provides this in the form of her son, Eros. But Athene's and Hera's embassy of petition strongly reminds one of Thetis' trip to Hephaistos for Achilles' new shield. The reference to Hephaistos in the Apollonian scene as the builder of Aphrodite's house and the explanation for his absence bring to mind the cozy domesticity of Charis and Hephaistos in the *Iliad* scene. This is made sharper by the parallel in the greetings. As Charis says (*Iliad* 18.386) to

Thetis: "You didn't used to visit us too often," so Aphrodite says to Hera and Athene (3.53f): "Why have you come, you two, who before did not come too frequently?"

Eros then becomes the invincible shield who will help the hero, the new hero of love. Eros descends to earth majestically in a manner reminiscent of Homer (although the scholiast tells us that Apollonios is imitating Ibycus at this point). The description of the descent gives majesty to the otherwise petulant pretty baby boy. The scenes of the conspiring goddesses and the two divine boys at their dice have been often called inappropriate to an epic context; the goddesses much resemble Alexandrian court ladies. Since the Ptolemaic court was almost as close as one could get to the divine in that era, such women and their manner, as well as the elegance and grace of their lives, are a natural counterpart to the more rigorous scenes on Olympos in the Homeric epics. The temptation to see in them a source for the mood of mock-heroic, especially in Eros' descent, is checked by the deeply passionate and tragic quality of Medea's love; the story of Jason and Medea is ultimately too serious. Love is a force in life that has many sides, one of which is overwhelming passion. But love has also an ambience of beauty, gaiety and a sense of careless pleasure which the goddesses and Eros and Ganymede provide. They form the sensible divine entourage to Medea's love, and in this sense they are as thoroughly epic as Athene's appearance to Achilles in *Iliad* 1 or her appearance to Diomedes in Book 5.³⁸

The other scene in Book 3 which translates us back to the world of heroic epic is Jason's victory in the contest of plowing the field and sowing the dragon's teeth, a scene that is meant to be Jason's *ἀριστεία* clearly. The mood, of course, is different because Jason is dealing with fantasies and he is protected by magic; yet an *ἀριστεία* it is. Apollonios has very well managed to show its surreal aspects by describing Jason's preparations for the contest (3.1191ff), involving magical rites performed at night, his covering himself in a cloak given him by Hypsipyle which, as the poet says, is a memorial to their continual love-making.³⁹ This description is opposed to that of Aetes girding

³⁸ Händel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 105ff, believes these scenes show Medea's intervention to be the work of the gods; thus Jason's love-making has the touch of god in it and becomes an heroic trial like any other.

³⁹ Polydeuces when confronting Amykos (2.30ff) is conceived much like Jason, that is, sensual, if not pretty. He wears a delicate cloak given him by a loving Lemnian girl. His opponent, clothed in a heavy cloak and girded with a staff, is called earth's *πέλωρ τέκος* (39) and is the loser.

for battle (3.1225ff), where the king puts on the traditional items of investiture. The king when accoutered rides forth fierce and proud as any traditional hero, but, of course, ineffectually, because that kind of heroic strength and purpose is now meaningless. Aeetes is only an astonished onlooker in this scene. Aeetes' emotional capitulation marks the success of Jason's ἀριστεία on the heroic level, magic, maiden and love apart.⁴⁰

The narration of Jason's contest is filled with similes (sixteen in the last 150 lines of Book 3) as the ἀνδροκτασίαι of the *Iliad* are. Apollonios has for the most part introduced similes that recall those of the *Iliad*, that is, a vigorous horse (1259), lightning in a stormy sky (1265), a rocky reef in a pounding sea (1294), a raging boar facing hunters (1359). The comparison of Jason to a falling star (1377ff) is particularly effective in recalling the style and feeling of heroics in the *Iliad*. With this event (an ἄεθλος as Apollonios calls it)⁴¹ the third book ends in high epic allusion as it had begun with the embassy to Aphrodite.

But, as has often been noted, the third book belongs to Medea, which at first glance seems fatal to any heroic pretensions on the part of Jason. Medea, however, appears as Jason's victim, or more specifically Eros' victim. She is as much ἀμήχανος⁴² in the face of love as Jason has been earlier in facing the entire expedition to Colchis. To this extent they parallel each other and sustain a mood throughout the poem of victims helpless in a world they never made, culminating finally in their lack of enthusiasm toward their so long delayed marriage (4.1161ff), when they are forced into sexual intercourse; to make the mood more obviously wrong the poet surrounds the couple with the customary features of a joyful celebration (4.1128–69). Medea has her magic skill as Jason has his sexuality; beyond this they are essentially helpless, acted upon far more than acting. In Book 3 each has his moment of individual heroism, Jason's the more typical, Medea's the more novel, that of a love-sick woman. From her love springs the decisive action of the third book, but this seems to be balanced by Jason's killing of Apsyrtos in the fourth, an act that springs if not from love then at least in part from deep concern.

Although Medea contributes the aid that settles the course of action,

⁴⁰ Händel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 117f.

⁴¹ ἄεθλος is the traditional word used in accounts of Herakles' adventures.

⁴² The simile of the young bride now widowed (3.656ff) occurring at the onrush of Medea's mounting physical desire for Jason, foreshadowing the doomed nature of her love, produces the same mood of melancholia and frustration that pervades the early part of Book 1.

there are constant intimations that Jason controls the situation. The motif of Theseus and Ariadne suggests that Jason is the user and Medea the used. More importantly the numerous allusions to Nausikaa of the *Odyssey* evoke a Medea under the spell of the stranger Jason. In creating the Nausikaa-Medea equation Apollonios seems to show the same determination he exhibits elsewhere to emphasize the perversity of his epic world. Medea changes subtly from the sweet young thing whom we know Nausikaa to be into the witch who is ultimately capable of anything (and in this we are meant to be reinforced perhaps by Euripides' conception of her).⁴³ Apollonios has contrived a particularly remarkable description of Medea in Book 3 (828–90). It begins with the light of day, the maiden's washing away the tears of the love-sick night. The bath, the ointment, the perfume, the veil gleaming like silver, her entourage of fragrant maidens—all combine to display lightness, goodness and innocence. As the maidens hitch up the chariot for Medea we are reminded of Nausikaa, off to the seashore for the family washing. The impression of Medea as a Nausikaa-figure is intensified at 869ff by the description of her departure in the chariot with her lovely maidens dancing along beside. As if to set the parallel still more firmly, Apollonios compares Medea to Artemis; the lengthy simile recalls a similar one at *Odyssey* 6.102ff. These portraits, however, surround a description of the magical charm which Medea is transporting to the temple of Hekate, a goddess generally associated with night (quite the reverse of the atmosphere of the opening passage). During nocturnal incantations, we are told, Medea has created the charm herself, got from a flower sprung from the blood spilled by the eagle which chews Prometheus' liver. With this description Medea, the witch, the mysterious and strange, stands revealed. Apollonios manages this Jekyll-and-Hyde perversity nicely with the remark (3.867f): "She brought the charm out and set it in the fragrant girdle which went about her ambrosial bosom." Another time the poet achieves an equally unsettling juxtaposition. In the beginning of Book 4 Medea is wracked with anguish and decides to leave her family. Both her anguish and her departure (4.11ff) are the pitiable tale of an innocent maiden in trouble; indeed, the simile (35ff) emphasizes exactly this: she is like a servant girl afraid, alone in a strange land,

⁴³ Händel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 116f, points out that the earlier tradition (*cf.* Pind. *Pyth.* 4.214ff) shows her to be a witch; thus the process has been to humanize the witch rather than *vice versa*.

stealing away from a house where her mistress maltreats her. Then Apollonios intrudes the other Medea (50ff): "Now Medea decided to go to the temple, for she was not ignorant of the road, since often before she had wandered that way in search of corpses and deadly roots from the earth, things which sorceresses are usually out looking for."

Medea's fairy-tale features are dangerous. Jason's emotional involvement with her is shown by Apollonios to be finally fatal to him in terms of traditional heroism. Medea's world, her family are far from the traditional heroic world scaled to normal men. Jason by attaching himself to her becomes lost in this other world. Partly Jason's seeming ineffectuality in coping with his environment stems from its fantastic character. Odysseus' travels through the more magical parts of his fairyland show him deserted by the Olympian gods,⁴⁴ symbolic of the fact that he cannot function as a typical saga hero in such a setting. But in just such a setting Apollonios has located the major part of his story. While the myth calls for it, the poet particularly emphasizes its unreality, and in this fairy-tale world Jason is lost. From the first Aeetes—Circe's brother, we should remember—shows a barbarity (3.377ff) that stuns Jason; the contest which Aeetes demands is grotesque. Naturally Jason is at a loss (*cf.* 3.423, 432). After the poet describes Jason's agreement to the contest as *κερδαλέος* (426), with its overtones of the crafty Odysseus, we know he has been ironic when he has Jason tell his crew (3.500f): "I agreed to Aeetes' plan for there wasn't any better idea that came to my mind." Jason is out of his context, and when Medea instructs him in what he must do (3.1026ff), the magical directions show that Jason's tasks will be at least as complicated as Odysseus' adventures, because normal man is made to go to the final limits of fairyland in this elaborate ritual.

As if to symbolize this emphasis Apollonios has devised two voyages for the Argo, the first (in Books 1 and 2) in essence as realistic as any *περίπλους* known to the Greeks, but the second (in Book 4) an adventure in a fairy-tale world of strange people and impossible geography.⁴⁵ Here Jason meets Medea's aunt, the witch Circe, surrounded by veritable grotesques rather than simply men transformed into animals. Here in this fairy-tale setting he finally takes Medea's virginity. Perhaps most significantly it is in this final part of the epic that Jason most decisively acts when he murders Apsyrtos. It is Jason

⁴⁴ See G. M. Calhoun, "The Divine Entourage in Homer," *AJP* 61 (1940) 257–77.

⁴⁵ Händel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 63–67.

who does the killing, and Apollonios makes Jason's act the more individual by having Medea turn her eyes away. The death of Apsyrtos is accomplished by first trapping him with gifts. Consistent with the main theme of this epic, the primary gift is a cloak which Hypsipyle earlier had given to Jason. The cloak bears in its very texture the memories of love-making; Apollonios recounts the time when Dionysos made love to Ariadne upon the very cloak after she had been deserted by Theseus. Once again sexuality gives him victory.

The poet seems to make a comment upon this by breaking the narrative with an apostrophe to love, which works so much evil for mankind; it comes between the description of the cloak and the murder of Apsyrtos. The poet's sudden subjectivity provides a sharp focus on the killing of Apsyrtos. The event is, of course, unheroic, and an evil crime. Again we witness the perversion of the hero, now set within the perverse, bizarre arena of the final travels. Jason has traveled far in this narrative, and in a sense he is a victim of Medea in this unnatural world (*cf.* the emotional trap laid for Jason beginning at 4.345ff). Apollonios has contrived a strange story and a strange man in Jason. The murder of Apsyrtos, however, reflects the rhythm of love and hate in the poem, a motif first introduced in the song which Orpheus sings in Book 1 (496–511). The song is offered by Orpheus to quell the ugly mood of quarreling between Idmon and Idas; its theme is suggested by the quarrel, that is, the alternation of love and hate or strife as the two opposing and ruling forces in the universe. Critics have found this song inapposite, a forced intrusion of Alexandrian pedantry, Apollonios' chance to display his knowledge of Empedocles' philosophies (*cf. e.g.,* Diels fr.17). But the theme of the song grows out of the quarrel and furthermore seems to elaborate a motif which runs through the entire epic, the conflict of love and hate (or destruction). The theme appears formally as in the design on Jason's cloak, where Aphrodite is shown looking at her reflection in Ares' shield. Dramatically the theme appears in the warmth of the reception offered by the Doliones and their leader, Kyzikos, to Jason and his crew, soon to be reversed in their sudden and wanton murder; or the theme may be seen in the women of Lemnos killing all their menfolk only to seek out sexual relationships with Jason and his crew. Again and again love and hate alternate and often seem to grow the one out of the other; it is a rhythm in which Jason himself is caught rather than one that he has created.

Finally, I would offer two suggestions. In a poem so carefully and frequently charged with sexual symbols and turning upon the sexuality of the central figure, it seems worth pondering whether the fleece represents Medea's virginity. The fourth book begins with Medea's anguish; she has betrayed her people and her father in helping Jason. Her anguish is shown as occurring in her room, which she leaves finally after having left a cutting of her hair for her mother, a memorial to her virginity, she says. She precedes this by kissing her virginal bed and the folding doors on both sides of it and then she strokes the walls of her room. Shortly thereafter it is she who offers to Jason the fleece and he responds by vowing marriage (4.86–87, 95–98). I suggest that in the context of this poem (and consonant with Apollonios' mode of stating things) the golden fleece represents on one level Medea's maidenhead. Jason's acquisition is his triumphant heroism, a natural consequence of his innate sexuality. Medea in her Nausikaa-like dream of wish fulfillment (3.616ff) has already confused the fleece and herself, confused her rôle and Jason's in contesting for the fleece; it is she in her dream who yokes the oxen, she who bestows the fleece, and in all of this within the dream she seems to be giving up her virginity. And finally when Jason and Medea consummate their love they lie on the fleece, so that it is bound up by the poet in their feelings toward each other.

Secondly, I call particular attention to Jason's extraordinary passivity. In part this may derive from Apollonios' view of mankind as helpless, at least in his own time, contrasting an Alexandrian Jason to an Homeric Herakles. But there is more to Jason's passivity, I believe, and that has to do with his sexual attributes. His sexuality is not, as we have shown, either paederastic or simply physical. He has an ambience always of the romantic qualities of beauty, grace and charm. His females, Hypsipyle, and, of course, far more notably Medea, love him with a passion. As Book 4 shows, Jason cares for Medea as well. This heterosexual love bespeaks a kind of sexuality new to epic, and I believe that Jason appears essentially passive because the epic tradition could not, even for Apollonios, accommodate itself to the theme of a male exhibiting strong feelings of love and affection for a female. One is reminded of the peculiar revulsion that Pentheus feels toward the disguised Dionysos in Euripides' *Bacchae* (453ff), because he sees in the stranger's good looks something erogenous, some electric quality designed for seducing women. No self-respecting male would either

be so handsome or so needlessly interested in the female sex; that is the implication. To the Greek mind it is not masculine.

Compare the successful development of feeling which Theokritos manages in his Hylas poem. This, however, is homosexual love, sanctioned in poetry for some time, a kind of love in any case dignified and built into the institution of culture, as the initial speech in the *Symposium* signifies. No sanction of this sort existed for heterosexual love in epic, at least so far as men were concerned. A Phaedra might be love-sick in tragedy, a Medea might go mad for love, but no man shows this passion. Apollonios wished to achieve Jason's heroism through his sexuality, as is evident in the way in which Jason approaches Hypsipyle and by the manner in which the poet removes Herakles from the narrative. Nonetheless, the poet fails, I believe, in exhibiting Jason as a fitting sexual hero, a counterpart to his anguished Medea. I think that to do so successfully would have seemed too daring.

Perhaps also Apollonios was influenced by the misogynistic strain that runs through so much of Greek literature, already apparent I believe, in the *Odyssey*.⁴⁶ Once Jason has Medea under his spell, once he has contrived (with Eros) to be her lover, then he himself is caught somehow. To be sure, Medea is special, being a witch, but she is also very much a woman, and she leads Jason farther and farther away from the normal world he knows, where alone he can possibly exercise any control. This is perhaps not so much the enchantment of a witch as it is of a woman; and too, this may be a misogynistic element more characteristic of the genre than of the culture.

Beyond this, Apollonios may have had the alternative desire to indicate the failure of will among his contemporaries. By leaving Jason's emotional reactions hidden, he allowed himself to portray a hero as essentially ἀμήχανος, which may very well have been part of his aim. The poem is ambiguous; when it is perverse one feels the poet's control; but its ambiguity, on the contrary, seems to me to be irresolution on the poet's part.⁴⁷

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
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⁴⁶ See Beye, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 174-78, 201f; also S. Butler, *The Authoress of the Odyssey*² (London 1922) 115-57.

⁴⁷ I should like to thank my former student, James Michael Tillotson, for a number of suggestions adopted in this essay, particularly in connection with Arg. 4; too, I should like to thank my friend, William M. Calder III, for his generous criticisms of several drafts. I have read versions of it to several audiences, first to the Columbia University Faculty Seminar on Classical Civilization, from whose criticisms the paper has profited.