

# An Epithet for Argos in Apollonius

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## Platt's Conjecture

IN AN ARTICLE entitled "The Lyrceian Water. A Passage in Apollonius"<sup>1</sup> 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:

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἄϊε βάξιω ἀγειρομένων ἡρώων  
νεῖον ἀπ' Ἀρκαδίας Λυρκήϊον Ἄργος ἀμείψας,  
τὴν ὁδὸν ἦι ζωὸν φέρε κάπριον ὅς ῥ' ἐνὶ βήσσησι  
φέρβετο Λαμπεΐης Ἐρυμάνθιον ἄμ μέγα τίφος,  
τὸν μὲν ἐνὶ πρώτοισι Μυκηναίων ἀγορήισι  
δεσμοῖς ἰλλόμενον μεγάλων ἀπεσεύσατο νώτων,  
αὐτὸς δ' ἦι ἰότητι παρέκ νόον Εὐρυσθέος  
ὠρμήθη.

For more than one reason Platt found the reading *Λυρκήϊον* "Argos unacceptable. *Ἀμείψας* 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

<sup>1</sup> 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 *Lyrceius* to a river is reported by Stephanus of Byzantium under the very rubric, *Λύρκειον ὄρος Ἄργους*, 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 Λύρκειον ὕδωρ καὶ Λυρκήϊον<sup>2</sup>*

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 *Λυρκήϊον* by reference to a mountain ἀφ' οὗ ὁ Ἰναχος 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 ὦ γῆς παλαιὸν ΑΡΔΟΣ—in the tragic passage,<sup>3</sup> so Platt in the epic reads not *Λυρκήϊον Ἄργος* (“Lyrceian Argos”), but *Λυρκήϊον ἄρδος* (“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.

*ἄρδος | Ἄργος*

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

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller presentation of the text see the editions of O. Schneider (*Callimachea*, 2 vols. [Leipzig 1873] Frag. 55; cf. Frag. Anon. 298) or of R. Pfeiffer (*Callimachus*, 2 vols. [Oxford 1949–1953] Frag. 307=Schneider's 55).

<sup>3</sup> 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 "*Ἄργος* 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. Ὠ γῆς παλαιὸν Ἄργος, Ἰνάχου ῥοαί is practically unintelligible. But if ἄρδος ("water" or "waters") be read, "*Ἰνάχου ῥοαί* becomes, as Wyse and Platt perceived, an exegetical 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 *Λυρκήϊον* 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 *Lyrceus* 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 *Lyrceia 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 *APA-*, 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 (ἄγκος), Keene (ἄνθος), and Vitelli (ἔρκος) Murray ventures the following comment:

Suspisor id uocabulum [i.e. Ἄργος, 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 Ἰνάχου ῥοαί.

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 *Argonautica*. 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 lexicographers for translating the active forms of ἀμείβω as “enter” in Herodotus 5.72 and Aeschylus, *Choëphoroe* 571. Let us grant even that in *Argonautica* 1.125 ἀμείψας 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 Lyrceion 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 Λυρκήϊον 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 Lyrceus, became eponym of a town Lyrceia (Λύρκεια, see Pausanias 2.25.4f).<sup>4</sup>

Platt's final objection is that Heracles, in order to avoid a further

<sup>4</sup> The place name persists in modern Greece. Among the villages situated beneath Lirkion Oros (undoubtedly the mountain called Λύρκειον by the ancients) there are included not only Karia and Kapareli, but also Lirkia.

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 "Ἄργος, 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, *νεῖον ἀπ' Ἀρκαδίας Λυρκηῖον Ἄργος ἀμείψας | τὴν ὁδόν*, 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.

### *Λυρκηῖον | Λυγκηῖον*

Thus, though at first glance the word "Ἄργος 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 ἄστὺ Φορωνικόν 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 *Ἰνάχιον* and *Φορωνικόν*, whatever their real origin, were thought to be derived from the names of those who had ruled and benefited Argos. Consider now the epithet *Λυρκηῖον*. *Ἀπὸ ὄρους Ἀργεῖου ἀκουστέον* explains Schol. Apollonius Rhodius 1.125. But other authorities, as we have seen, speak of Lyrceus, eponym of a town Lyrceia. That Argos could be styled "Lyrceian" 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 *Λυρκήϊον* from *Λύρκεια* 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. *Λύρκεια*] δι' αὐτὸν [sc. *Λύρκον*] ἔσχηκε·

Why was Lyrceia said to have been named for Lyracus? 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" ("*Αβαντος εὐρυχόρους ἀγυιάς*" Pindar, *Pythian* 8.57) thus becomes an honorific synonym for Ἄργος in much the same way as ἄστν Φορωνικόν. Another Lyracus, earlier than his namesake by several generations, did win renown. Though legend makes him father of a bastard, Basilos (eventual ruler of Caenus), the earlier Lyracus was the legitimate son of Phoroneus. But this Lyracus 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.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

<sup>5</sup> The adventures of Lyracus, 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 Μιλήτου*; even Apollonius Rhodius in his *Καύνου Κτίσις* (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 Λυγκεία ἐκαλεῖτο.

If we were already suspicious of efforts to represent both Lyrceus and an even more shadowy Lyrceus 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 Λυγκέως is an impossible etymology. One solution is to posit the one-time existence of a Lyrceus or Lyrceus 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.”<sup>6</sup> In any event, whether or not the legendary Lynceus or the legendary Lyrceus (or Lyrceus) 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’ *Αἴτια* (“Causes”), for example, and Apollonius’ *Κτίσεις* (“Foundings of Cities”). One of the latter, as we have already noted, was the *Καύνου κτίσις*, which

<sup>6</sup> I cannot accept Wilamowitz’ suggestion (*Aischylos: Interpretationen* [Berlin 1914] 24) that Lynceus’ name has crept in through a scribal miscopying of the name Lyrceus (*Λυρκεύς*).

contained a narrative about Lyrceus—not the alleged eponym of Lyrceia, but that other Lyrceus 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 *Λυρκήϊον* 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,<sup>7</sup> wrote the epithet "Lynceian" (*Λυγκήϊον*), derived ἀπὸ Λυγκέως τοῦ βασιλεύσαντος Ἄργου?

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

*Λυγκήϊον· ἀπὸ Λυγκέως τοῦ βασιλεύσαντος Ἄργου.  
ἐὰν δὲ Λυρκήϊον, ἀπὸ ὄρουσ Ἄργείου ἀκουστέον,  
ἀφ' οὗ ὁ Ἰναχος καταφέρεται ποταμός.*

The scholium thus attests to the received text. *Λυγκήϊον* is the reading preserved in the manuscripts, *Λυρκήϊον* 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 *Λυρκήϊον Ἄργος* in their Apollonius texts and banished *Λυγκήϊον* to the *apparatus criticus*? The practice seems to have started with Wellauer, following a suggestion of Gerhard.<sup>8</sup> Later editors have followed Gerhard and Wellauer, justifying their choice with the same main arguments: (1) In no other author is the epithet *Λυγκήϊον* joined with Ἄργος; and (2) the reading *Λυρκήϊον*, 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 *Λυρκήϊον* for *Λυγκήϊον* is no more necessary than Platt's ἄρδος for Ἄργος.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Conspicuously absent from the regular Argive tradition is Lyrceus, Abas' bastard son. Present instead are Abas' legitimate sons Proetus and Acrisius.

<sup>8</sup> A. Wellauer (ed.), *Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1828). E. Gerhard (*Lectiones Apollonianae* [Leipzig 1816] 18f) had theorized that the variation between *Λυγκήϊον* and *Λυρκήϊον* 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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 *Λυγκήϊον Ἄργος* forthrightly ("sic codices omnes, bene") and no less forthrightly denounces the variant reading ("altera lectio scholiastae memorata *Λυρκήϊον* deprauata est"). Although im-

The fact that *Λυγκήϊον* "Argos" 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 "Lyrceian" 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 *Λύρκειον* (the mountain) and *Λύρκεια* (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 *Ἰνάχιον* "Argos" and *Ἄργος ἄστν Φορωνικόν*. Like Inachus, like Phoroneus, like even Abas (in Pindar's *Ἄβαντος εὐρυχόρους ἀγυιάς*, i.e. "spacious Argive roadsteads"), but unlike Lyncus, 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 "Argos."

If, in addition, Strabo is right in quoting those who take "Argos" (or rather ἄργος) to mean *πεδίον* (8.6.9.; 9.5.6), then the combination *ΛΥΓΚΗΙΟΝ ΑΡΓΟΣ*<sup>10</sup> could signify to the subtle Alexandrian poet and to his subtle Alexandrian readers not only "Lynceian Argos," but also (*Λυγκήϊον* = *Ἀργεῖον*, ἄργος = *πεδίον*) "the Argive plain."

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patience with those who found *Λυγκήϊον* 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.

<sup>10</sup> Since minuscule writing had not yet developed, this—or rather *ΛΥΓΚΗΙΟΝ ΑΡΓΟΣ*: the scholiast's listing of alternatives shows the corruption to have been ancient—is what Ovid and Valerius Flaccus saw before writing respectively *Lyrcea arua* and *Lyrcea tellus*.