

Revisiting the Ancient Heroes: Heracles and an Argonautic Odyssey [Unit 4]

Primary Reading: Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, books 1 and 4. [Also read 2.145-53, 767-801 and 955-69]

SECTION A: HERACLES

It is this section this week that shall comprise presentations. You should concentrate on the portrayal of Heracles, and Jason in comparison, and the use of myths in the exploration of this portrayal. Presentations will centre on:

- The Lemnian Episode
- The Hylas Episode
- The Hesperides Episode

For these presentations you should consider:

1. What are the mythic variants of this tale? How does Apollonius' variant differ? [***This time you will have to find these variants on your own***]
2. Why has AR chosen this specific variant? How do its thematic and narrative concerns contribute to the episode and epic as a whole?
3. What other mythical motifs has AR used in his representation of this episode? How aware are we supposed to be of these as an audience? Why have they been used?
4. What types of heroism do we see in this episode? How does this contribute to our understanding of a. the portrayal of Jason and Heracles as heroes, b. AR.'s notion of heroism and c. the notion of Hellenistic heroism?

Secondary Reading

Clauss J.J. *The Best of the Argonauts: The Redefinition of the Epic Hero in Book One of Apollonius' Argonautica*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, 106-47, 176-211 [Moodle]

Feeney, D. *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, 95-8. [Moodle]

George E.V. 'Poet and Characters in Apollonius Rhodius' Lemnian Episode', *Hermes* 100, 1972, 47-63. [Moodle]

Hunter R.L. *The 'Argonautica' of Apollonius: Literary Studies*, New York, 2004, 25-41. [Library]

Levin, D. N. 'Apollonius' Heracles', *CJ* 67, 1971, 22-28. [Moodle]

SECTION B: ARGONAUTIC ODYSSEY

In this section of the seminar, we will explore the Odyssean echoes in AR.'s *Argonautica*

Discussion Points:

1. Where do we find the Odyssean adventures? How has Apollonius embedded these in the narration of the return journey?

Myth in Greek and Roman Epic

2. Why would Apollonius have wanted to include these adventures in his epic?
3. In what ways does AR play with the readers' knowledge and expectations when he narrates the Odyssean stories? The Sirens offer ideal comparative material.
4. Which aetiological myths can you find in the final book of the *Argonautica*? What do these myths explain? What are the effects of the inclusion of aetiological myths on the reader?

Secondary Reading:

Goldhill, S. *The Poet's voice: Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 321-333. [Library]

Knight V. *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius*, Leiden: Brill, 1995, 122-3, 152-9. [Library]

Meyer, D. 'Apollonius Rhodius as a Hellenistic Geographer', in Papangelis, T.D & Rengakos, A., (eds.), *A Companion to Homer*. Leiden: Brill, 2001, 217-36. [Moodle]

West, M. L. 'Odyssey and Argonautica', *CQ* 55, 2005, 39-64. [Moodle]

SECTION C: THE CIRCE EPISODE

In this section of the seminar we will explore one of the most Odyssean of Odyssey scenes: the Circe episode.

Discussion Points

1. Why do the Argonaut's visit Circe? What can the differences in motivation between Odysseus and Jason tell us about this scene and the *Argonautica* as a whole?
2. How does AR play with the audience's knowledge of the famous Homeric scene with Circe? What is different and/or similar? Why?
3. What are the roles of a. Circe, b. Medea and c. Jason in this episode? What is their relationship with each other? Why is this significant to an understanding of this scene?
4. How does AR play with hospitality and recognition type scenes here? Why?

Secondary Reading:

Clauss J.J. *The Best of the Argonauts: The Redefinition of the Epic Hero in Book One of Apollonius' Argonautica*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, 149-77. [Moodle]

Dyck, A. R. 'On the Way from Colchis to Corinth: Medea in Book IV of the *Argonautica*', *Hermes* 117, 1989, 455-70. [Moodle under Unit 3]

Knight V. *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius*, Leiden: Brill, 1995, 122-3, 184-99. [Library]

Plantinga M. G. (2000), 'The Supplication Motif in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*', in Harder, M. A., Regtuit, R. F., and Wakker, G. C., (eds.), *Apollonius Rhodius*, Leuven, 105-28. [Library]

Plantinga M. G. 'Hospitality and Rhetoric: The Circe Episode in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*' *CQ* 57, 2007, 543-64. [Moodle]