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Joseph R. Morgan

*Washington University in St. Louis*

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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS  
Department of Classics

An Epic Hydrography:  
Riverine Geography in the *Argonautika* of Apollonios Rhodios

by  
Joseph Railton Morgan II

A thesis presented to the  
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences  
of Washington University in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts

August 2016  
St. Louis, Missouri

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Apollonios and Geography.....	1
1.2 A Model for the Analysis of Geographical Description.....	12
2. Dilating the Lens of Descriptive Geography.....	26
2.1 Kolchis: Introducing the River as a Descriptive Framework.....	26
2.2 Istros: Historicizing Geography.....	38
3. Two Approaches to Riverine Itineraries.....	52
3.1 Istros: Cruising the Continent.....	52
3.2 Eridanos: Knowledge, Perspective, and the Loss of Agency.....	63
4. Conclusion.....	68
Works Cited.....	71

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Joseph Morgan

St. Louis, August 2016

FOR MY PARENTS  
TO WHOM I OWE ALL THIS AND MORE

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Apollonios and Geography

This thesis is a study of place, path, and word. More narrowly conceived, it demonstrates the several ways that these elements align to constitute spatial representation in an ancient literary text. The text under examination—Apollonios Rhodios’ *Argonautika*—narrates the voyage of a heroic crew through space and time.<sup>1</sup> This itinerant plot naturally commends the epic to a study of the dynamics of travel and its articulation in poetic form. So expansive are the horizons glimpsed in this work, however, that the researcher might easily founder in the mire of spatial detail pervading a text that is otherwise remarkably succinct in comparison to its Archaic precursors.<sup>2</sup> *Argonautika*’s rich spatial texture rewards concentrated geographical analysis, which has long been a fixture of Apollonian scholarship. Geography in Apollonios has been treated from various perspectives employing a diverse array of methodologies, including literary-critical approaches to the thematic valence of the Argonautic itineraries, attempts at identifying the poet’s sources through the geography of his epic, and narratological studies of Apollonios’ descriptive technique.<sup>3</sup> Despite this frequent treatment of Apollonian geography, however, there remains a gap in the understanding of just how this geography is constructed and articulated in

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the *Argonautika* employed for this study is Vian’s Budé edition, currently the most widely accepted edition of the epic. All translations from the Greek herein are my own.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the *Argonautika* runs some 5835 lines: brief in comparison to the *Iliad* (15,000+) and *Odyssey* (12,000+), but closer in length to the other poems of the Epic Cycle, if one trusts figures extrapolated from the book-counts related in Proclus’ *Chrestomatheia*. Narration of the journeys to and from Kolchis in the *Argonautika* consumes a great part of this sum. For sequences of prolonged travel narrative, see the voyage to Lemnos (1.519-608), Phineus’ prescriptive itinerary and the flight of the Boreads (2.164-530), the navigation of the Symplegades (2.531-647), the Euxine itinerary (2.648-719, 899-1029, 1231-1285), the theft of the Fleece and escape from Kolchis (4.6-210), the Istros itinerary (4.211-302), the voyage from the Adriatic to Aiaia (4.507-658), the western wanderings (4.753-981), the Libyan wanderings (4.1223-1619), and the voyage through the Aegean (4.1620-1772).

<sup>3</sup> See Delage 1930, Pearson 1938, Van Paasen 1957, Elliger 1975, Fusillo 1985, Williams 1991, Harder 1994, Clare 2002, Meyer 2008, and Danek 2009 for studies of geographical space in the *Argonautika*.



the text. In other words, what is lacking is a study of the techniques of Apollonian geographical description, conducted for its own sake.<sup>4</sup> In this study I endeavor to treat the nuts and bolts of Apollonian geographical description from a primarily narratological perspective, drawing on recent developments in the field achieved through the application of spatial theory and narratology to classical literature.

The study of descriptive modes adopted in antiquity for the representation of space in diverse contexts has yielded insights of significance not only to the history of literature, but also to the history of ancient thought. The various characteristics of a text's mode of spatial description inform the study of literary space as a cultural artifact. Hence insights drawn from an examination of descriptive modes attested in the *Argonautika* may be used to explore broader cultural and intellectual paradigms of the epic's compositional context. This study focuses in particular on a striking feature of spatial description in the *Argonautika*, namely the integration of multiple descriptive standpoints and focalizations into the representation of specific regions along the path of the Argo and a correlation between these multidimensional representations and the rivers that form critical segments of this route. Through his application of this multidimensional approach to river-oriented descriptions, Apollonios extends the geographical purview of his epic to encompass vast swaths of continental territory. This thesis will proceed to demonstrate that the poet modulates the dimensions of space covered at key points in the narrative, shifting the reader's viewpoint into and out of alignment with that of the Argonauts to diverse thematic effect.

The implications of this descriptive strategy in the history of literature are paralleled by corresponding implications for the history of ancient geography. This study thus engages with a

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<sup>4</sup> Thalmann 2011 treats Apollonios' construction of space as a cultural artifact, and thus comes closest to the approach that I advocate here.

neglected chapter in the history of geographical thought, namely its manifestation in the literary efflorescence of Early Hellenistic Alexandria under Ptolemy II (r. 282-246) and III (r. 246-221). The bounds of this deficit align roughly with conventional chronological and generic divisions.<sup>5</sup> Geographical developments of the late 4<sup>th</sup>/early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE have historically been treated in the form of a narrative of rapid advances in empirical knowledge stemming from Alexander's conquests and the consequent systematic reappraisal of earlier speculative geographies evinced in the fragments of Dikaiarchos, Eratosthenes, and their successors, the first scientific geographers.<sup>6</sup> Eratosthenes (276-194) in particular pioneered the comprehensive description of the earth's surface by a systematic division of the inhabited world into regions, termed *sphragides*, and attendant comment on the major physical features that delineate and occupy each region. This comprehensive approach to geography synthesized a holistic verbal model of the earth from distinct traditions of geographical discourse and set the precedent for the scope and methodology of serious geographical discourse for centuries to come.<sup>7</sup>

The enduring effects of this historical trend on the development of geography as a science have tended to eclipse corresponding repercussions in the content and structural features of descriptive geography as an element of non-scientific literature. This oversight betrays the

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<sup>5</sup> In the ages prior to the development of scientifically accurate systems of collecting and reproducing geographical information (via aircraft and satellite surveillance) advances were made in geography through both the collection of verbally-transmitted topographical data and the articulation of geographical models produced by analysis of this data as well as by the informed speculation of natural philosophers. Consequently, the history of geography focuses especially on periods characterized by a surfeit of such advances. The period under examination in this study falls between spikes in geographical advances. In the decades preceding Apollonios Rhodios' *floruit* in the middle decades of the third century BCE came a flood of fresh topographical data derived from the campaigns of Alexander the Great in the Balkans, Anatolia, the Levant, North Africa, Mesopotamia, Central Asia, and India, discussed by Thomson 1948, Bunbury 1959, Dueck 2012, Bucciantini 2015, and Gehrke 2015. Following Apollonios there arose the innovative geographical models of Eratosthenes and his critic Hipparchos. The intervening period is thus overshadowed by these two great leaps forward, a pattern this study seeks to redress. A corresponding gap appears in the study of geography's manifestation in the literary record, as prose genres grew to eclipse poetic articulations of geographical frameworks.

<sup>6</sup> For comprehensive surveys built upon scholarship undertaken at the close of the nineteenth century that attempt a diachronic narrative of developments in Classical geographical thought, see Thomson 1948 and Bunbury 1959.

<sup>7</sup> The tradition of Eratosthenes and his successors is preserved in large part by the Augustan geographer Strabo, whose colossal work is the lone survival from this once prolific scholarly movement.

narrow scope of the history of geography as it was conducted through the mid-20th century. Formerly the topic was anachronistically treated as the history of a discipline, addressing geography as an element of literature only when necessary for determining the extent of geographical knowledge prior to the genesis of scientific geography. Hence surveys of ancient geography commonly begin with an introductory chapter on “Homeric geography” that produces a sketch of geographical thought in the Early Archaic Period, drawing primarily on the Homeric poems and (to a lesser extent) the Hesiodic corpus.<sup>8</sup> Geographical analyses of Hellenistic literature have thus focused primarily on the identification of geographical source-texts reflected in a given piece of literature and largely ignore the contributions of such works of fiction themselves to geography broadly defined, that is, not only the raw data generated by geographical inquiry, but also the various modes of conceptualizing, representing, and transmitting space.<sup>9</sup>

I approach this conceptual gap from a literary perspective. Literary evidence constitutes the most extensive source of geographical formulations from antiquity.<sup>10</sup> That is not to say that our only legitimate source of ancient geographical thought is literary. There is also a body of epigraphic and cartographical evidence, though none particularly illuminating in regard to the period and topic under consideration. The prominence of textual evidence in the historical record of geographical knowledge is due in large part to the difficulties hindering the transmission and promulgation of visuals such as maps and diagrams over successive periods. The diversity of

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<sup>8</sup> e.g. Thomson 1948, pp. 19-27 and Bunbury 1959, pp. 31-84. These surveys are further flawed in a specific aspect of their content, namely the inclusion of maps illustrating the world-views of individual periods and authors. This visual content is commendable as a supplementary aid to the reader’s understanding of specific elements of the geographical frameworks treated in these surveys. However, these graphics too readily induce the reader to project these modern reconstructions onto the ancient textual evidence where no visual component remains or indeed may ever have existed. These graphic reconstructions must be approached with caution lest they eclipse the overwhelmingly verbal nature of ancient geographical thought.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Meyer 2008, pp. 275-276. For a revised approach to the development of ancient geographical thought broadly defined, see Janni 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Romm 1992 argues for the treatment of ancient geographical thought as a predominantly literary phenomenon.

geographical frameworks evinced in the literary tradition corresponds with the diversity of the Classical tradition itself. Temporally, the extant record of ancient geographical thought emerges with the birth of literature itself in the Homeric epics and persists as a fixture of both poetry and prose through the end of Antiquity. Geographers performed geographical readings of the Homeric epics from the earliest days of the ancient scholarly tradition. Indeed, even before the epics were subjected to scholarly scrutiny at Alexandria, ancients localized their geographical frameworks in the physical world (a process encouraged by Greek protocolonial interests contemporaneous with the approximate dates of the obscure process of the Homeric epics' textualization circa 700 BCE).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, ancient writers were engaged—whether consciously or unconsciously—in a process of geographical documentation, description, and reformulation throughout an extensive array of genres.

These writers composed works presenting complex spatial frameworks intended to perform a range of functions. Internal geographies ground epic plots, contextualize historical narratives, and serve as a basis for argumentation in numerous genres. Spatial frameworks consequently transcend the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, a distinction anachronistic to the ancients and unsuited to the analysis of geographical description in epic.<sup>12</sup> To appreciate the development of this tradition, the historian of ancient geography must scrutinize its totality. The means and mode of spatial representation in textual form are as vital to the study of geography as the scientific accumulation and plotting of topographical data.

The perspective taken by a narrator in surveying the range of space accessible to description couches the details relayed by this description in a particular way that bears thematic

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<sup>11</sup> For this phenomenon, see Malkin 1998, Dougherty 2001, and Hartog 2001.

<sup>12</sup> I hope to demonstrate in this study that “fictional” space is just as significant to the development of geographical discourse as more sober prose treatises, in response to the claim leveled by Dueck 2012, p. 28, that geographical elements of verse narratives “poetry was the main issue, and geographical traces highlighted decoration, served as ornamentation and supplied information only as a byproduct.”

significance in a narrative context. For the purposes of this study, I use the term “perspective” to denote both the descriptive standpoint and the view it affords. Writers have multiple perspectives at their disposal through which they might conceive of and describe space. One need only imagine taking a particular standpoint within the spatial confines of a narrative to begin describing the shape of this space. Thus the ability to conceive of a given standpoint and its attendant view is critical to the articulation of a narrative’s internal geography. Analysis of the perspectives adopted by a particular writer at specific points in a narrative demonstrates patterns of reliance upon specific perspectives in certain contexts. These patterns are useful indices of a writer’s capacity for spatial description. Additionally, when compared to studies of descriptive strategies deployed elsewhere in classical literature, these patterns elucidate aspects of a writer’s relationship to predecessors and contemporaries engaged in this practice.

The focalization of a given description is an equally informative narratological element in the study of a writer’s descriptive strategy and corresponding concept of space. Subsequent to adopting a particular descriptive standpoint, the narrator chooses an organizational principle for the ensuing description. Because verbal descriptions are limited by the linear nature of a text, this organizational principle commonly takes the form of a hypothetical (or actual) route through space. The narratological device through which a narrator accesses the points described on this route is the description’s focalization. To complicate the matter, the relationship between descriptive perspective and focalization is not fixed. It may shift as one or both of these elements change over the course of the description. Apollonios exploits this capacity for shifting perspective and focalization to achieve a multidimensional internal geography.

Owing to the flexibility of this modular descriptive strategy, the *Argonautika* provides some of the most striking examples of Hellenistic innovation in the area of geographical exegesis

as an element of epic narration. The sheer quantity of narrative devoted to descriptions of the Argo's voyage through space offers a comprehensive demonstration of the poet's descriptive finesse. Three of the four books into which this epic is divided narrate the mythical voyage of Jason and his companions beyond the edges of the *oikoumene*, supplementing the basic itinerary with a tremendous amount of topographical detail and scholarly comment.<sup>13</sup> The epic supplies a critical mass of geographical data and descriptive modes requisite for the study of Apollonios' conceptualization of space and its relation to those of other writers.

The spatial framework of Apollonios' *Argonautika* is a paradox of sorts. On the one hand the poet describes segments of the Argo's route with striking precision, supplementing the epic's comprehensive itinerary with detailed comments on travel time, relative distances, and navigational peculiarities.<sup>14</sup> Apollonios exploits numerous narratological devices from the toolkit of contemporary geographical literature so as to construct a veristic portrayal of the way humans perceive, conceptualize, and transmit spatial information. On the other hand, he preserves (and innovates) a corresponding set of fantastical features coloring the primordial landscape traversed by the Argo.<sup>15</sup> The relationship between multidimensional spatial descriptions and the fantastical features of this epic environment provides a rich vein of material for the study of a critical moment in the development of ancient geography.

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<sup>13</sup> I use the word *oikoumene* throughout this study to refer to what Greeks, beginning with Herodotos in the late 5th century BCE, envisioned as the zone of human habitation that extended to the limits of their geographical knowledge, limits which they variously associated with infinite bodies of water and inhospitable wastelands.

<sup>14</sup> In one foundational survey of the history of ancient geography, the *Argonautika* is likened to a geographical treatise in its precise articulation of topographical detail (Bunbury 1959, p. 21).

<sup>15</sup> While the fantastical element features throughout the poem, it is particularly concentrated in Book 4. This juxtaposition of the fantastical with the scientific broaches the question of poetic intent. cf. Delage 1930, pp. 7-9, who posits a didactic motive, Herter 1973, p. 42, who associates this dynamic with the aetiological interests of the Alexandrian poets, and Meyer 2008, pp. 273-275, who claims that "judging Apollonios as a geographer depends on preconceptions about the science of geography on the one hand and aesthetic criteria on the other. Geography seeks to represent nature in a manner faithful to reality whereas poetry calls for freedom in the handling of the material and a concept of aesthetic unity."

In the *Argonautika*, Apollonios transmitted not only a text, but also a compositional methodology. The poet reveals his epic world—the “*fabula space*”<sup>16</sup> of the *Argonautika*—piecemeal throughout the narrative, focalized from various reference-points and described from a number of different perspectives.<sup>17</sup> Precisely where and how Apollonios chooses to supply this spatial information varies in accordance with the manifold functions served by spatial description in Apollonian verse.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, analysis of the text for evidence of the compositional tools and strategies with which Apollonios constructed the spatial framework of his heroes’ journey provides a glimpse into the creative genius of no less prominent a figure in the Alexandrian intellectual climate than the Head of the Library, a post which Apollonios passed down to Eratosthenes during the reign of Ptolemy III (246-222). Though Apollonios may serve as but one data point in the study of geographical discourse circulating in the Library during the last quarter of the third century, his contribution is particularly significant because it treats geography in epic form, defining the *oikoumene* with the narrative of a mythical ship rather than the system of linear divisions adopted by Eratosthenes. In this respect, the descriptive strategies employed by Apollonios in the articulation of the Argo myth are as relevant to the development of geographical discourse in Alexandria as the scientific accomplishments of Eratosthenes.<sup>19</sup> Discussion will therefore turn here to a brief examination of the tradition of the Argo myth prior to Apollonios and will proceed thence to a treatment of geographical trends in the context of Early Hellenistic Alexandria.

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<sup>16</sup> De Jong 2012, pp. 1-18 defines “*Fabula space*” as the spatial context in which a narrative occurs. It includes not only those spatial elements explicitly described (this narrower category is termed “*story space*”) but also elements of the framework left unstated.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Meyer 2008, p. 275: “The quality of Apollonios’ geography is manifest in that he describes with precision not only people in a landscape but also the subjective perception of physical space.”

<sup>18</sup> For a brief survey of the functions performed by spatial description in Apollonios’ work, see Klooster 2012, pp. 66-75. Klooster’s analysis follows the terminology outlined in de Jong 2012, pp. 1-18.

<sup>19</sup> I use the term “linear” throughout this paper to convey the sense of a line, that is, an unbroken succession of points traced in two directions through space. I do not mean to convey a sense of directness. Eratosthenes carves his model of the *oikoumene* into irregular polygons (his *sphragides*) with quite crooked lines.

The myth of Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece is geographically articulated as the voyage of the Argo in the mythological tradition prior to Apollonios. The path of this ship and the trials distributed along it are therefore central to any discussion of the myth in the literary tradition. The return voyage in this tradition is of particular interest to the reader of Apollonios, as this sequence undergoes the most dramatic alterations to the route of the Argo.<sup>20</sup> When compared to prior manifestations of this mythical voyage, the implications of Apollonios' particular choice of route come to the fore.

The earliest attestation of the voyage corresponds with the birth of the literary tradition in the Homeric epics. Kirke refers to the Argonautic navigation of the Planktai as an element of the itinerary she provides for Odysseus and his attentive crew upon their return from the shores of Okeanos.<sup>21</sup>

οἷη δὴ κείνη γε παρέπλω ποντοπόρος νηῦς,  
Ἄργω πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ' Αἰήταιο πλέουσα.  
καὶ νύ κε τὴν ἔνθ' ὄκα βάλεν μεγάλας ποτὶ πέτρας,  
ἀλλ' Ἥρη παρέπεμψε, ἐπεὶ φίλος ἦεν Ἰήσων.

But one seafaring ship has sailed through,  
Argo renowned among all, sailing from Aietes.  
Even now the swell would have thrown her upon the great rocks,  
But Hera sent her through, since Jason was dear to her (*Od.* 12. 69-72).

The allusive nature of this attestation frustrates any attempt at establishing a precise itinerary to serve as a baseline for comparison with later iterations.<sup>22</sup> However, a few significant features of

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<sup>20</sup> Apollonios' account of the outbound voyage to Kolchis parallels that which is attested in earlier sources, though it contains significantly more detail regarding the landmarks that demarcate the route. Indeed, the tradition of the outbound itinerary remains remarkably consistent throughout successive manifestations in antiquity.

<sup>21</sup> It is unclear whether the Homeric Planktai correspond to the Symplegades of later writers. Apollonios treats the two sets of rocks as distinct entities, placing the Symplegades at the Bosphorus and the Planktai among the Western Wanderings.

<sup>22</sup> The impossibility of this approach does, however, forestall a misleading assumption of the type so often elicited by the primacy of the Homeric epics in the Greek literary tradition. It would be mistaken to assume that the version represented in the earliest (Homeric) attestation of the Argonautic myth transmits the backbone of the "original" narrative. Moreover, it is impossible to recover any information regarding the geographical dimension of the source myth from the mists of the inaccessible oral tradition. We must therefore accept the Homeric attestation as one



this tradition shed light on this early iteration of the voyage. The Argo bears the epithet *ποντοπόρος*. This epithet is generally applied to ships in Homer and conveys the basic meaning “seafaring.”<sup>23</sup> Consideration of the components of this compound adjective suggests the role of ships as instruments for the imposition of linear order (*πόρος*) over a trackless expanse (*πόντος*).<sup>24</sup> When applied to the Argo, moreover, the root of this epithet bears special significance: Pontos-crossing Argo. The far-famed ship is thus at an early date associated with the successful navigation of the Euxine Sea, though this does not necessarily localize the Planktai in the area of the Euxine.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Kirke places the Argo’s passage through the Planktai on the return voyage from the land of her brother: *παρ’ Αιήταιο πλεύουσα*. Though Kirke provides no specific topographical markers with which to locate the Planktai, the context of this allusion indicates proximity to several other maritime hazards, specifically between the Sirens and the straits of Skylla and Charybdis. These mythical places are not associated with any readily identifiable locations in the *Odyssey*. As a consequence of this obscurity, during the period of Greek exploration following the composition of the Homeric epics, one tradition localized this group of obstacles in the Western Mediterranean.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, so firmly were these hazards tethered to the West by the time of Apollonios that the poet draws attention to the difficulty of accounting for their inclusion within his treatment of the Argo’s route.<sup>27</sup>

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version of the myth among several and thus avoid conflating temporal priority with proximity to a hypothetical source narrative. cf. Bunbury 1959, pp. 25-27.

<sup>23</sup> cf. *Il.* 1.439 and 2.771 for this general application.

<sup>24</sup> See Thalmann 2011, pp. 28-29.

<sup>25</sup> Frequent use of the epithet *ποντοπόρος* in a general sense casts doubt upon my narrow reading of this term. In its defense, I offer the universal association of the Argo with the Euxine “Pontos” in subsequent iterations of the myth.

<sup>26</sup> For studies of the localization of Homeric topography (focused primarily on the *Odyssey*) consult Malkin 1998, Dougherty 2001, and Hartog 2001. This process of mythological localization is particularly relevant to Apollonios’ treatment of the Argonautic *nostos*.

<sup>27</sup> cf. *Arg.* 4.552-556: *ἀλλά, θεαί, πῶς τῆσδε παρέξ ἄλός ἀμφί τε γαῖαν/ Αὐσονίην νήσους τε Λιγυστίδας, αἱ καλέονται/ Στοιχάδες, Ἄργώης περιώσια σήματα νηὸς/ νημερτὲς πέφαται; τίς ἀπόπροθι τόσσον ἀνάγκη/ καὶ χρεῖώ σφ’ ἐκόμισσε; τίνες σφέας ἤγαγον αὖραι;*

Subsequent treatments of the Argonautic *nostos* contain significantly more geographical detail than the Homeric allusion referenced above. Following the traditional narrative of developments in the Greek geographical consciousness, the rapid appearance of several variant routes in the literary record stems from an increased awareness of the topographical realities of the regions that became associated with the myth.<sup>28</sup> This hypothetical process is itself a problematic interpretation of the process of localizing myths, as it assumes the temporal priority of the Homeric version and follows an arboreal model wherein mythical variants branch out from a single origin. Attribution of another early iteration of the voyage to Hesiod in the scholia to Apollonios' *Argonautika* complicates this model.<sup>29</sup> The scholiast claims that Ἡσίοδος δὲ διὰ Φάσιδος αὐτοὺς εἰσπεπλευκέναι λέγει (*Scholia ad Apollonium Rhodium* 4.284). This is clarified in a separate scholion (*ad* 4.259) explaining that in the versions of Hesiod, Pindar, and Antimachos, the Argonauts sail up the Phasis River to the stream of Okeanos, which they follow south to Libya, portaging the Libyan desert until their eventual arrival at τὸ ἡμέτερον πέλαγος. Although certainty is impossible given the loss of the relevant portions of Hesiod and Antimachos, the scholia's credibility is partially vouchsafed by the survival of Pindar's lyric take on the voyage.

The route described by Pindar in *Pythian* 4 supports the testimony of the scholia. Though active approximately two centuries after Hesiod's supposed 7<sup>th</sup>-century *floruit*, Pindar attests to the enduring popularity of Argo's return on the waters of Okeanos.<sup>30</sup> He notes the course of their

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<sup>28</sup> Thus Bunbury 1959, pp. 21-22: "the ingenuity of the poets and logographers, having a wide field afforded them by the prevailing vagueness of geographical notions, was exercised in devising various routes—all equally imaginary, and equally impossible, by which the ship Argo was supposed to have effected her return to Thessaly."

<sup>29</sup> Bunbury 1959, p. 22 credits this as the "original" itinerary attached to the myth, contradicting his claim that the original version was impossible to determine (see above). Attribution of this version to Hesiod achieves a higher degree of credibility given the poet's familiarity with the river networks involved in this iteration: see the Catalogue of Rivers at Hesiod *Th.* 337-345.

<sup>30</sup> For the purposes of this study I accept the conventional attribution of the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* to a single poet named Hesiod active in the seventh century. I should acknowledge, however, that the historicity of the

outbound voyage from Iolkos northeast along the shore of Thrace and through the Symplegades, to the Phasis (*Pyth.* 4.202-212) and back along Okeanos (251-256) in brief, colorful strokes appropriate to *epinikia*, which could ill afford the exhaustive travelogues of epic. The poet's use of the Argonautic itinerary as a charter myth for the foundation of Kyrene and the sovereignty of Arkesilas predisposed his presentation of this version of the route, which facilitates the heroes' encounter with the god Eurypylos and the bestowal of the Libyan clod upon Euphemos (19-56).

## 1.2 A Model for the Analysis of Geographical Description

Having traced the tradition of the Argo's voyage in Greek literature prior to Apollonios, I will turn here to a brief exposition of the theoretical model of ancient geographical thought upon which the ensuing analysis is founded. The scope of this model and its interpretive implications are intended to encompass the myriad articulations of spatial data and concepts that contribute to the construction of a geographical framework, even if, as is often the case, the text presents no holistic synthesis articulating the contours of this framework. Hence, elements of explicit spatial description that do not contribute to such a framework are excluded from discussion. This portion of Chapter 1 explores the relationship between myth and geography, the transmission of geographical representations in antiquity, and the place of geographical writing in Early Ptolemaic Alexandria. I structure this study of Apollonian spatial description around a series of five fundamental premises that underpin the methodological framework of Chapters 2 and 3:

1. Focused textual engagement with geographical discourse as an element of ancient Greek literature arose and persisted in three distinct contexts. Data and concepts that

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poet Hesiod is far from certain, and that the various poems attributed to him by the ancients may in fact have been composed by multiple individuals during the Archaic period or earlier and were only compiled under the *Kunstpersona* "Hesiod" at a later date, as has long been a prevalent theory in Homeric studies. Hence the date of this Argonautic attestation is as insecure as that in Homer.

accumulated in each separate strain transferred rapidly to influence the others, ensuring a persistent eclectic element to the field.

2. Greeks frequently appropriated as evidence the most basic components of their mythology—characters, events, and settings—in a manner similar to that with which they approached historically documented periods.

3. In antiquity, verbal exposition proved the most enduring form of transmission of geographical knowledge and theory.

4. Innovations in the art of spatial description may therefore correspond to major developments in geographical discourse.

5. Apollonios consciously engaged in the active reception and reformulation of mythical space as a component of the Argonaut myth.

These five premises constitute a theoretical basis for the spatial analysis occupying subsequent chapters, which contend that the innovative *nostos* described in *Argonautika* 4 provides information critical to a thorough understanding of Apollonios' deep engagement with and reformulation of the geographical dimensions of the Argonauts' mythical world and the consequent implications of this perspective for the study of Hellenistic literature.

I will turn now to my first premise. Topically focused textual articulations of geographical discourse emerged in three separate fields in roughly the same period of Greek history (the late 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Subsequent developments in these independent fields of thought influenced the development of geographical concepts through the Classical Period and into the Hellenistic Era: practical descriptive geography, historiographical descriptive geography, and speculative geography. Each of these modes of articulating geographical concepts differed in purpose, methodological foundations, structure, and style. Despite these distinctions, however,

elements of each contributed to advances in the others. One cannot discuss the evolution of geographical excursuses in Greek historiography without addressing the presentation of topographical data in texts composed for practical application. Even the most mathematically rooted description of a theoretical model of the earth's shape is informed by spatial concepts articulated in the other two fields.<sup>31</sup> The conquests of Alexander the Great and subsequent developments in all three branches of geographical thought provide a striking and temporally proximate example of their codependence.

Alexander's expeditions opened the eastern horizon of the *oikoumene* to Greek thought on a scale unrivalled in previous centuries. The most basic catalyst of geographical revolution facilitated by the penetration of Central Asia was the alignment of geographical theory with empirical data accumulated by practical experience.<sup>32</sup> The boundless steppe north of Persia and the long shores of the Erythraian Sea, once objects of speculation and hypothetical points marking the edges of the known world, were now accessible to direct observation and precise measurement. On the precedent established by previous rulers of Asia, such as Dareios' sponsorship of the Erythraian voyage accomplished by Skylax of Karyanda, Alexander dispatched expeditions to the far reaches of his vast territory to address problems of topography such as the relationship between the headwaters of various major rivers and the contours of distant seas. The Caspian Sea and its environs invited exploration as a potential avenue north and

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<sup>31</sup> See Herodotos 2.5-34 for a thorough example of the tight interlacing of these three strands in his discussion of the geography of Egypt and the question of the source of the Nile's annual floods. Herodotos begins this geographical excursus in the midst of an ethnographic excursus, itself a form of lengthy introduction to the foreign spaces and peoples pertinent to the invasion of Kambyses narrated in the following book (3.1-38). His inclination is thus firmly established as historiographical descriptive geography. However, he demonstrates throughout this description a reliance upon native sources who are able to describe portions of the land as a product of their quotidian occupations: for example, Herodotos notes that the locals provide him dimensional figures in varying standards of measurement in proportion to the amount of property they own (2.6.2). Furthermore, he draws upon principles of theoretical geology and applies them in a display of counterfactual geography to illustrate the phenomenon of silting, a topic of immediate relevance to his more grounded description of the Nile delta (2.10-11).

<sup>32</sup> See Bichler 2015 for a discussion of the limits of Greek geographical knowledge in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE and the influence of contemporary spatial articulations of Achaemenid power structures on Greek thought. See Gehrke 2015 for a discussion of Alexander's contributions to the development of Greek geographical thought.

west for purposes of trade and further conquest.<sup>33</sup> The Indus Valley and the coast of the Erythraian Sea offered corresponding prospects to the south.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Alexander employed *bematistai* to perform the systematic measurement of his empire.<sup>35</sup> Alexander's conquests hence encouraged the accumulation of vast quantities of topographical data and either corroborated or dismissed longstanding theories concerning the shape of the eastern world. The conquests shuffled the relationship between practical, historiographical, and theoretical approaches to geographical description, but in the process proved the inherent dependence of each branch on the other. Moreover, they shifted the purview of geographical discourse to accommodate a continental framework after centuries of descriptions tethered to the Mediterranean. As Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, this shift echoes into the work of the Alexandrian scholar-poet as well.

Despite the tightly woven nature of this web of information constituting the loose generic field of Greek geography in its formative stages, it is important to recall the fundamental distinctions dividing these three fields of conscious geographical discourse.<sup>36</sup> Here I must reiterate the absence of an independent field of "geography" throughout much of antiquity, though there developed individual traditions of geographical writing in various contexts. Eratosthenes was the first to deploy the adjective γεωγραφικά in defining a prose treatise focused on describing the shape of the earth. Though his systematic approach to geographical description and sound mathematical proofs ushered in a new approach to geographical discourse, it did not eclipse the three original approaches to this multifaceted topic that emerged in the 6th century. For the purposes of this thesis, the field that is most firmly rooted in the daily accumulation and

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<sup>33</sup> See Gehrke 2015, pp. 91-92 for a treatment of geographical problems surrounding the Caspian Sea.

<sup>34</sup> See Bucciantini 2015 for a discussion of the exploratory expeditions of Nearchos and others in the wake of Alexander's conquest.

<sup>35</sup> See Strabo 15.2.8 and *FGrH* 119-121 for evidence of the use of this data as a basis for constructing geographical frameworks committed to writing.

<sup>36</sup> I derive terminology from Dueck 2012 in describing my own tripartite division of geographical discourse.

application of geographical data is termed *practical descriptive geography*. As its name suggests, this field developed to serve the needs of travellers of various types, drawing on primarily anecdotal information accumulated to facilitate spatial orientation and convey a minimal amount of topographical detail. In its most basic form, it comprised of a collection of topographical data arranged on a hodological principle: a coherent sequential structure following a hypothetical itinerary through space. Because sea travel was a relatively efficient means of long-distance transportation in the ancient Mediterranean, practical descriptive geography was initially focused primarily on the details of marine navigation, occasionally conveying brief descriptions of coastal regions and their inhabitants. These were termed *periploi* to account for their circuitous hodological structure and maritime focus.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of these works is unclear, but it seems unlikely that they served a practical purpose in the daily business of mariners. The texts are full of inconsistencies in measurement and sequence and often neglect details of use to the mariner, such as the quality of a coastal settlement's harbor or the navigational difficulties of a particular stretch of water. Instead, these works—along with their terrestrial counterparts, *periodoi*—likely represent exercises in the collection of spatial data from experienced sources and the construction of a comprehensive framework therefrom.

The second division of geographical discourse in this threefold scheme is termed *historiographical descriptive geography* to reflect the literary context in which it is embedded. The emergence of prose histories at the close of the 6<sup>th</sup> century provided the impetus for this form of geography. Ancient historiography developed a narrative structure following a sequence

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<sup>37</sup> In historiography, the term *περίπλους* designates the navigation of a ship around an obstacle such as a headland (e.g. Herodotos 6.95, Thucydides 2.80) or an enemy fleet (e.g. Xenophon, *Hellenika* 1.6.31). This term is later applied as a title to a selection of geographical works sharing features of style and organization later (the first work entitled such is the *Periplus* of Pseudo-Skylax, dated to the late fourth century BCE, but this title may have been applied as late as the sixth-century compiler Markianos of Herakleia: see Shipley 2011, pp. 1-23). Meyer 2008, p. 268 likens the spatial framework of the *Argonautika* to a comprehensive *periplous* encompassing the entire *oikoumene*. The Argo's route traces a near complete circle through the inhabited world. Furthermore, Apollonios orients various stages of the voyage using physical features of the coast as geographical reference points.

of key events. Historians therefore endeavored to contextualize these pivotal set pieces in a spatial framework.<sup>38</sup> Early prose writers also demonstrated an interest in the question of the position and features of various portions of the earth apart from the construction of a spatial context for chronological narrative: the relationships between points in space (places) were explored just as much as between points in time (events). Individual writers provided as much or as little spatial detail as their individual tastes demanded; some kept geographical description to a minimum while others devoted lengthy excursions to such descriptions.<sup>39</sup>

The third and final form of geographical discourse in this scheme is *speculative geography*, the type furthest removed from the empirical collection of geographical information and least pertinent to the immediate needs of ancient travellers. Speculative geography first emerged as an element of Presocratic philosophy.<sup>40</sup> Early proponents of speculative geography sought to discern the shape of the earth by a process of deductive reasoning drawing upon a number of basic assumptions regarding the composition of the cosmos. Speculative geography inspired the production of schematic geographical models that illustrated the basic elements of these cosmological frameworks.

I will turn now to Premise 2. Greeks engaged with the events, characters, and settings of their mythological tradition in historiographical contexts, applying the core methodologies of prose histories to this body of evidence as they would that of a historical period. As a consequence, verse narratives on mythological topics—the Homeric epics above all—were scrutinized for data relevant to the focus of the individual writer. Some historians account for the

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<sup>38</sup> See Dueck 2012, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Rood 2012 notes Thucydides' characteristic restraint in geographical exposition, reserving this type of information for episodes of high pathos. Herodotos occupies the opposite end of the spectrum, providing an abundance of geographical detail that illustrates his perspective on ethnic and geographical identity in the *oikoumene*.

<sup>40</sup> See Thomson 1948, pp. 94-122 and Bunbury 1959, pp. 120-155.



origins of historical conflicts by citing mythological precedent.<sup>41</sup> Others attempt to derive historical paradigms from mythological accounts, stripping them of fantastical elements so as to identify the historical truths at their core and illustrate their particular views on the prehistory of the Greek world.<sup>42</sup> Their acceptance of mythological material in this manner finds a close parallel in the geographical interpretation of Greek mythology. The Homeric epics in particular served as a primary source for geographical writers of subsequent ages.<sup>43</sup>

I will turn now to Premise 3. In antiquity, verbal exposition proved the most enduring mode of transmitting geographical knowledge and theory. Geographical information lends itself to verbal articulation. The act of supplying directions from Point A to Point B is one of the most basic functions of human communication. Geographical description also inspires visual representation in the form of schematic figures or precise maps. However, the transmission of these visual aids was hindered by the difficulty of reproducing graphically encoded information accurately over long stretches of time.<sup>44</sup> Copyists, many of whom probably had little to no familiarity with the concepts encoded in the material they were transmitting, easily introduced errors into such a complicated visual code. The absence of any surviving cartographical evidence from the Classical or Hellenistic periods problematizes any attempt at identifying the role of maps in the transmission of geographical information in the ancient world. However, it is evident from literary testimony that maps played a role in the rhetoric and education of the elite in the

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<sup>41</sup> Herodotos contextualizes his historical focus—the Persian Wars of the early fifth century BCE—as the most recent manifestation of a conflict with roots in the deep past. He traces the animosity between Greek and barbarian to a series of transgressions initiated by the theft of various important women drawn from the mythological tradition. See Hartog 1988 for a discussion of the role of cultural memory in the ethnographic paradigms constructed by Herodotos.

<sup>42</sup> Thucydides integrates much evidence of this type into his *Archaeology* (1.1-23), particularly in his treatment of Greek prehistory and the rise of the Cretan thalassocracy of King Minos in the Aegean (1.4).

<sup>43</sup> cf. Strabo 8.1.1 for a defense of this practice in the face of earlier criticism of “Homeric” geography by Eratosthenes: Strabo considers Homer first among the geographers of Greece, followed by those who composed *periploi* and *periodoi ges* as well as those historians who included topographical excursuses as significant elements of their accounts (he names Ephoros and Polybios).

<sup>44</sup> See Dueck 2012, pp. 99-100.

Classical period.<sup>45</sup> This suggests at least a superficial familiarity with the cartographer's visual code among the aristocracy. However, even these textual attestations of maps demonstrate the limitations of the visual transmission of spatial information: they are accompanied by verbal explanations for the sake of the uninformed audience. Hence the need for verbal exegesis accompanies even graphic means of transmitting geographical frameworks in antiquity.

Premise 4 is closely linked with the literary repercussions of Premise 3 noted above: developments in geographical thought necessarily consisted of innovations in the verbal illustrations through which spatial information was conveyed in antiquity. These innovations may be grouped into three categories: changes in the form of the raw spatial data itself, the thematic focus of the description, and the descriptive mode. The first of these categories is an obvious element of geographical development. Different regions emerge and occupy the attention of geographers of different periods. Fresh information invites comment by writers and demands integration into existing frameworks.<sup>46</sup> Beyond these shifts at the level of raw data, there also occurred shifts in the type of spatial information that individual writers focused upon. These shifts in focus correspond to differences in the immediate context within which this information is embedded, whether it defines the territory of various peoples in ethnographical discourse, serves as a backdrop for comments on distant *thaumata*, or locates the sources of natural resources pertinent to the writer's study. Further removed from the level of basic geographical detail are changes in descriptive method, such as innovations in descriptive standpoint, focalization within narratives, and visual metaphor. This study discusses change on each of these levels in the context of the *Argonautika*.

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<sup>45</sup> For Classical Greek perspectives on the cartographical habit, see Herodotos 4.36.2 and 5.49.1-50.1 as well as Aristophanes, *Clouds* 220.

<sup>46</sup> e.g. the wave of geographical innovation following the conquests of Alexander the Great noted above.

Discussion shall now turn to Premise 5: Apollonios consciously engaged in the active reception and reformulation of mythical space as a component of the Argonaut myth in composing his *Argonautika*. The compositional process involved multiple points of engagement with this mythological material: reception of source material, consideration of this material from the perspective of a third-century Alexandrian scholar-poet, and reformulation of the material received to account for factors identified in the consideration of the material in the poetic context. The scholarly environment of early Hellenistic Alexandria demanded comprehensive engagement with the corpus of Greek literature available to member of the city's literary circles. Apollonios operated within this environment. The sheer diversity of sources that the scholia credit to Apollonios is testament to his reception of a wide range of Argonautic source material.<sup>47</sup> The poet's consideration of this material as an Alexandrian scholar may be inaccessible to the modern literary historian, but the poet's reformulation of this material and a comparison with what is securely known about the compositional methodologies and prevailing geographical views attested in contemporaneous works inform our perspective on Apollonios' own compositional methodologies.<sup>48</sup>

The correspondence of these five premises supports a geographical reading of Apollonios' *Argonautika*. Because myth is so clearly conceptualized in the Greek mind using the same essential framework of spatial description as that which the individual has at his disposal in describing events of historical reality, the geography of epic can be approached from a similar analytical perspective. Likewise, the detailed internal geography of this epic may be subjected to

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<sup>47</sup> It should be noted, however, that the scholia must not serve as a comprehensive list of Apollonios' sources. Indeed, much scholarly ink has been spilled in identifying which sources Apollonios actually used and drawing conclusions from this information regarding his poetic intent, e.g. Delage 1930 and Pearson 1938.

<sup>48</sup> This model of composition is mirrored within the epic itself in Orpheus' activity at 1.28-31. See Klooster 2012, p. 63.

the lens of narratology. The innovative modes of spatial description deployed by the poet are an index of broader changes in the conceptualization of space in the Hellenistic Era.

Apollonios broadcasts this program of innovation in the context of the *Argonautika*'s internal geography through a mixture of discrete foreshadowing and the withholding of information specific to the return itinerary. Because this thesis focuses on the articulation of geographical information, it is important to note the stark contrast between such exposition in the two lengthy voyages undertaken by the heroes in this epic: the outbound voyage, which occupies Books 1 and 2, and the return voyage, which occupies Book 4. As noted above, Apollonios chooses to bring the Argonauts home by a route entirely different from the outbound itinerary. The departure from familiar territory for uncharted waters in Book 4 freed the poet's hand, offering a blank canvas on which Apollonios—using all the compositional strategies at his disposal—painted an artifact of the epic tradition: a sequence simultaneously novel in subject and syncretistic in composition.

‘ὦ τέκος, εὖτ’ ἂν πρῶτα φύγῃς ὀλοῶς διὰ πέτρας,  
θάρσει: ἐπεὶ δαίμων ἕτερον πλόον ἡγεμονεύσει  
ἐξ Αἴης: μετὰ δ’ Αἴαν ἄλις πομπῆες ἔσονται.  
ἀλλά, φίλοι, φράζεσθε θεᾶς δολόεσσαν ἄρωγῆν  
Κύπριδος, ἐκ γὰρ τῆς κλυτὰ πείρατα κεῖται ἀέθλων.  
καὶ δέ με μηκέτι τῶνδε περαιτέρω ἐξερέεσθε.’

“O child, immediately upon escaping the ruinous rocks,  
Take heart: a god will guide you thence on a different route  
From Aia: indeed, after Aia there will be guides aplenty.  
But, friends, recognize the cunning assistance of divine  
Kypris. For the glorious enjoyment of our prize relies on her.  
But ask of me no more than this.” (Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.420-425)

In this cryptic pronouncement of Phineus, emaciated blind prophet of the Thynian shore, Apollonios encodes a programmatic statement that introduces to the attentive reader a hint of three crucial elements that define the poet's approach to the Argonautic *nostos*: divine

assistance,<sup>49</sup> a sequence of guides,<sup>50</sup> and a novel setting.<sup>51</sup> To this passage's internal narratees—the Argonauts—Phineus' foresight accomplishes very little in the way of practical advice. On the one hand, it serves the immediate function of dispelling the prospect of eternal exile from the Inner Sea, the obvious consequence of successful passage through the traditionally impassable Symplegades into the Pontos in the Argonauts' limited understanding of the epic's internal geography.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, the tantalizing clues it provides concerning the nature of the return journey bear tremendous import to the study of geography's prominent position in the epic.

Of the three elements Phineus foretells, mention of the return journey's novel route (ἔτερον πλόον) assumes the reader's interest and active engagement with the internal logic governing the epic's spatial framework.<sup>53</sup> It inspires anticipation of the path to come and invites contemplation of prior iterations of the Argonautic itinerary some eight hundred lines before the outbound voyage's destination (Kolkhis) is yet achieved.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, it foregrounds spatial progression as the structural framework constituting much of the epic's plot. The success of Jason's quest depends on the Argonauts' ability to traverse the epic's internal landscape. Indeed, the burden of ensuring a safe return for his comrades serves as a constant source of anxiety for

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<sup>49</sup> Phineus alludes both specifically to the celestial guidance provided by Hecate in the form of a blazing comet at 4.294-302 and more generally to the greater frequency of divine intervention (especially that of Hera) on the return voyage.

<sup>50</sup> e.g. the Hylleans at 4.526-528 and Triton at 4.1571-1585.

<sup>51</sup> As I clarify below, this return voyage is "different" in multiple ways: distinct in form and content from the outbound route and distinct in geographical context from its literary predecessors.

<sup>52</sup> At this point the Argonauts are ignorant of the physical repercussions of their imminently successful navigation: the Symplegades henceforward remain rooted in place flanking the Bosphorus. The path of the Argo yields many such changes to the physical landscape, enthusiastically explained by the scholarly narrator's frequent asides.

<sup>53</sup> For discussion of the epic's narratees, consult Cuypers 2004, pp. 53-57.

<sup>54</sup> As noted above, multiple poetic variants on the path of the Argonautic *nostos* prior to that of Apollonios are attested, though Apollonios' *Argonautika* contains the earliest extant narrative detailing the heroes' return itinerary. There are also several later variant accounts contained in works representing a range of both poetic and prose genres, among which are the so-called Orphic Argonautica and the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus. This diverse treatment demonstrates the myth's enduring capacity to inspire reconsideration and reformulation of geographical thought in the audience of each successive iteration.

Apollonios' sensitive Jason.<sup>55</sup> The frequency with which help comes to the Argonauts in the form of experienced mortal or divine guides further demonstrates that the Argonauts' persistent orientation crisis functions as a central conflict motivating the plot. As Phineus' prophecy indicates, the *Argonautika*'s geographical framework is central to Apollonios' conceptualization and transmission of the myth. Hence the peculiarities of his treatment, specifically the details and descriptive modes applied to the Argo's ἕτερος πλόος along the mythologized river systems of Europe, are the focus of this study.<sup>56</sup>

Book 4 of the *Argonautika* constitutes an important stage in the development of ancient conceptions of the inhabited world's northern limits.<sup>57</sup> This vast tract of dry land posed a challenge to the descriptive capabilities of the Greeks, adapted as they were to the description of smaller territories cut by rugged terrain and seasonal torrents on the rare occasions when circumstances deprived them of a marine reference-point. The Argo's route through Central Europe into the Western Mediterranean, in its capacity as an Apollonian innovation founded on prior mythological precedent, presents a unique reformulation of mythical geography not only in the text's geographical content, but also in the descriptive modes through which these details are

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<sup>55</sup> Jason's constant concern for his comrades echoes the mission of his literary predecessor/mythological successor Odysseus, introduced to the Homeric audience as ἀρνύμενος ἦν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων (*Od.* 1.5). Indeed, Jason's anxiety reads as if it were inspired by the prospect of the fate suffered by Odysseus' crews, a dynamic impossible within the mythical chronology yet entirely likely given Apollonios' overt use of the Homeric epics (especially the *Odyssey*) as literary models. A reader of the *Argonautika* familiar with the *Odyssey* cannot help but recall the poet's ominous elaboration of the above quotation: ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὡς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ:/ αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο,/ νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἡελίοιο/ ἦσθιον: αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ (*Od.* 6-9).

<sup>56</sup> D. Meyer 2008 attempts a similar approach but is hindered by the compulsory brevity of the companion chapter and her ambitious range, resulting in a cursory survey of the entire text that raises as many questions as it answers. She argues for reading Apollonian geographical conventions as "typical of geographical thought in the early Hellenistic period" (p. 271). Regarding the unpopularity of this approach Meyer cites the fragmentary state of the ancient evidence and the long-standing neglect of Hellenistic geography as an object of concentrated scholarly interest. cf. Delage 1930, pp. 14-19 and Rubio 1992, pp. 70-81.

<sup>57</sup> I would contend that the spatial description in the *Argonautika* has bearing on the study of ancient geographical conceptions of the entire inhabited world, but a study of such comprehensive scope is beyond the scope of this thesis. Hence I focus on a region for which Apollonios' contribution is particularly pronounced: the riverine fringes of epic cosmology.

conveyed.<sup>58</sup> Recent studies have identified a pattern in the development of these modes through the Classical Period pertaining to the inclination to offer a holistic presentation of a work's story space for the benefit of the reader.<sup>59</sup> Ancient writers differ in their approach to the ideal presentation of space in narrative. A distinction emerges as early as the Homeric poems between two types of spatial description. One approach adopts the divine perspective in order to describe space from a celestial standpoint, providing an impressionistic rendering of vast tracts akin to a cursory glance at a map.<sup>60</sup> This has been termed the proto-cartographical representation of space due to its affinities to the holistic representations of space in the round adopted by Ionian geographers.<sup>61</sup> This study prefers the term quasi-cartographical to remove the temporal element from the concept. The opposing type of description follows a route, real or imaginary, through space, presenting the experience of space in linear movement.<sup>62</sup> This has been termed the counter-cartographical representation of space. However, this study prefers the term "hodological" due to its more obvious designation of linear pathways.<sup>63</sup> Following the precedent set by the Homeric epics, Classical Greek writers tend to adopt one of these two strategies as a staple of spatial description in their works. Apollonios demonstrates a mastery of both these strategies in the *Argonautika* in his multidimensional articulation of the heroes' route.

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<sup>58</sup> By "descriptive modes" I denote the various methods of verbal representation at the storyteller's disposal. I derive this terminology and analytical methodology from the work of I. J. F. de Jong, for which see de Jong 2012, pp.1-18 as well as the useful glossary of terms at pp. xi-xiv.

<sup>59</sup> See in particular Purves 2010 and Thalmann 2011.

<sup>60</sup> This descriptive strategy predominates in the *Iliad*, in which individual actions occur in a descriptive void occasionally broken by vague references to the topography of the Troad. The poet confines extensive spatial descriptions to sequences of divine observation, the Catalogue of Ships, and the *ekphrasis* of the Shield of Achilles.

<sup>61</sup> Purves 2010, pp.1-23 introduces these differing approaches to the description of space employing the terminology noted here. Her terms for these two descriptive strategies suit the diachronic tendency of her thesis, but do not seem appropriate to the corresponding strategies attested in Apollonios.

<sup>62</sup> This descriptive strategy predominates in the *Odyssey* and persists as a fixture of spatial description in prose.

<sup>63</sup> The term "hodological" is derived from Janni 1984.

The peculiarities of Apollonios' treatment reflect his innovations in both the epic tradition and the development of Greek geographical thought broadly defined.<sup>64</sup> This claim is supported in the ensuing chapters with an analysis of both the specific geographical content and the methods Apollonios deploys in verbally conveying this information within a coherent spatial framework.<sup>65</sup> The structure of this argument reflects the Argo's linear progress through space and narrative time. Chapter 2 introduces the riverine orientational framework and its relation to Apollonios' shifting descriptive strategies with an examination of the descriptions contained within the narrative of the Argo's arrival at, and departure from, Kolchis. Chapter 3 focuses on the traversal of the European landmass via the extensive mythical river-systems Istros and Eridanos. Charting this discussion parallel to the Argo's progress will demonstrate the tremendous diversity of spatial representations within fixed geographical tracts and emphasize the close relationship between geographical detail and narrative structure.

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<sup>64</sup> Meyer points out the recently broadened semantic range of geography as comprising of not only specific pieces of information about the shape and orientation of points on a scale model of the earth's surface, but also the conceptual framework within which these pieces of information are perceived and in turn represented: "both topography and the study of geographical speculation, fantasy, and mythology" (Meyer 2008 p. 275).

<sup>65</sup> I will discuss ambiguities and exceptions to the internal coherence of Apollonian geography in their narrative context at relevant points in Chapters 2 and 3. For the moment, it suffices to note that the matter of coherence should pertain only to a discussion of the narrative's "story-space" (the sequence of explicitly described settings in which the events of the primary narrative unfold). By contrast, individual spatial "frames" introduced over the course of the narrative (in, for example, dreams, prophecies, and the like) do not necessarily find a place in the framework of the primary narrative. Consider Phineus' prophecy quoted above. It introduces a spatial frame sketched in the most basic contours: the prospect of an alternate route leading out of the Euxine basin. In this case, the frame in question does correspond to a spatial reality within the epic's geographical framework: the Argonauts succeed in escaping the Euxine using the transcontinental Istros waterway. In certain other instances of this type of spatial description, however, the reality of such a space is never confirmed by narratorial comment or description focalized by the Argonauts, as discussed below in the case of Apollo's exile among the Hyperboreans (4.611-618).



## 2. Dilating the Lens of Descriptive Geography

### 2.1 Kolchis: Introducing the River as a Descriptive Framework

An examination of Apollonios' deployment of geographical detail in the narrative of the Argonauts' experience arriving and departing from Kolchis will illustrate the relationship between the river as an element of the epic landscape and as an instrument of geographical orientation. This section introduces descriptive patterns that recur in subsequent discussion of the descriptive frameworks at play along the Istros route. The arrival of the Argo in Kolchis heralds a shift in the dynamics of spatial description from that of the outbound journey. The ship reaches the terminus of its maritime voyage on the easternmost shores of the Euxine Sea at the end of Book 2. In the liminal space occupying the end of this book, Apollonios includes a series of descriptive passages that disrupt the sequential shore-oriented descriptive mode of the outbound route and shift the reader's focus to the continent. The Phasis River replaces the shores of the Euxine as the primary geographical reference point orienting spatial description throughout the Kolchis narrative.<sup>66</sup> The Phasis maintains the linear structure of the coastal route but penetrates the continental interior of Asia. This riverine dynamic dilates the lens of spatial description to accommodate extensive tracts of terrestrial geography heretofore inaccessible to the coast-bound Argonautic perspective. Lest scholarly indulgence in the enumeration of distant locales detract from the heroic perspective and sever the continuity of narrative time, Apollonios applies a descriptive focalization that shifts subtly to facilitate brief glimpses of vast regions. This shifting

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<sup>66</sup> Discussion of the Phasis here is textually limited to sequences that illustrate the shift in descriptive mode that accompanies the shift in geographical context between maritime and continental travel.

focalization, achieved through a variety of narratorial tricks, strikes a balance between hodological and quasi-cartographical descriptive frameworks.

Apollonios introduces this structural shift at the conclusion of a particularly schematic description of the final stages of the voyage along the Euxine shore. The eastern extent of this coast is covered in an itemized sequence of the local inhabitants.

κεῖθεν δ' αὖ Μάκρωνας ἀπειρεσίην τε Βεχείρων  
γαῖαν ὑπερφιάλους τε παρεξενέοντο Σάπειρας,  
Βύζηρας τ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν: ἐπιπρὸ γὰρ αἰὲν ἔτεμνον  
ἔσσυμένως, λιαροῖο φορεύμενοι ἐξ ἀνέμοιο.

Thence in turn they proceeded alongside the Makrones and  
The boundless land of the Bekheires and the overbearing Sapeires  
And the Byzeres after them: for they clove ever onward  
Swiftly, propelled by the warm wind (2.1242-1245).

This brief catalogue illustrates linear progress by equating *ethnos* and territory, a descriptive method that conveys scant visual detail but stresses the scope of the distance travelled. The descriptors ἀπειρεσίην and ἔσσυμένως further emphasize the extent of the voyage and the Argo's swift pace. The terse description of this portion of the itinerary contrasts with the narrative immediately preceding it, which Apollonios embellishes with frequent ethnographical and aetiological asides. This contrast effects an accelerated pace as the Argo nears its destination at sea's end:

καὶ δὴ νισσομένοισι μυχὸς διεφαίνετο Πόντου  
καὶ δὴ Καυκασίων ὀρέων ἀνέτελλον ἐρίπναι ἠλίβατοι.

And now the innermost gulf of Pontos emerged before them as they advanced  
And above loomed the sheer precipices of the Caucasus Mountains" (2.1246-8).

Apollonios vests the horizon with an animate quality as the imposing ridge of earth is rendered manifest (διεφαίνετο) and seems to rise ever higher (ἀνέτελλον) at the limits of the heroes' vision. However, the physical bounds set by this imposing elemental divide are themselves

illusory, as Apollonios clarifies upon the ship's arrival. The sea-lanes end at the shore, but a vast river offers passage to the interior:

ἐννύχιοι δ' Ἄργιοι δαημοσύνησιν ἴκοντο  
Φᾶσιν τ' εὐρὸν ῥέοντα, καὶ ἔσχατα πείρατα πόντοι  
αὐτίκα δ' ἰστία μὲν καὶ ἐπίκριον ἔνδοθι κοίλης  
ἰστοδόκης στείλαντες ἐκόσμεον: ἐν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν  
ἰστὸν ἄφαρ χαλάσαντο παρακλιδόν: ὄκα δ' ἔρετμοῖς  
εἰσέλασαν ποταμοῖο μέγαν ῥόον: αὐτὰρ ὁ πάντη  
καχλάζων ὑπόεικεν.

By the knowledge of Argos they arrived by night  
At the broad-flowing Phasis and the furthest bounds of the sea  
And straightaway furled the sail, stowed the yardarm in  
The hollow mast-crutch, and then upon it  
They lowered the mast at an angle; and with the oars they swiftly  
Thrust into the river's vast course, and on all sides  
It gave way with a splash (2.1260-1266).

The transition from sea to river tests the navigational skills of the Argonauts.<sup>67</sup> Although this particular aquatic threshold does not threaten the heroes with *naufragium* in the manner of the Symplegades, it requires a native Kolkhian's familiarity with the local waters and a concerted effort on the part of the rowers to successfully navigate the estuary.<sup>68</sup> With a splash the Argo crosses the physical boundary between sea and continent and breaks out of the conceptual limitations of the shore-tethered descriptive framework.

As lines 2.1242-5 (quoted above) illustrate, the Argo's coastal voyage established a particular descriptive dynamic as the primary means of conveying geographical information relative to the ship's linear progress. The heroes' movement through the landscape elicits two

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<sup>67</sup> Though it is impossible to determine the degree of Apollonios' familiarity with the River Phasis (the modern Rioni) from his poetry alone, this episode does reflect a navigational hazard at the mouth of the river, where extensive alluvial deposits changed the shape of the estuary over time. The coastal region surrounding the delta of the Rioni is largely wetland. Prehistoric settlements of this coastal region, many of which were inhabited into Hellenistic times, were constructed on artificial mounds surrounded and drained by an extensive network of canals. See Braund 1994, pp. 48-54. cf. the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* 15, which notes the importance of river travel in this region, though exaggerates the situation to conform with the principles of environmental determinism proposed in that work.

<sup>68</sup> This is presumably Argos son of Phrixos rather than Argos the shipwright, though Apollonios does not specify. The former was familiar with the waters of his native land, having ventured west on a doomed expedition bound for Orchomenos. He later demonstrates a still broader knowledge of geography by revealing the riverine passage west out of the Euxine along the Istros (4.257-293). See below for further discussion.

descriptive contexts. Structurally, the sea route is a protracted sequence of shorter voyages interrupted periodically by logistical waypoints. Travel sequences narrating the voyage component are accompanied by a description of the route traversed, while adventures set at the waypoints prompt detailed descriptions of the immediate vicinity that are comparatively poor in geographical data. The riverine context preserves certain elements of this descriptive division while broadening the scope of terrestrial features described and prompting a multidimensional perspective through shifting descriptive focalization.

The Phasis functions at its most basic level as a means of diversifying the setting of the Kolkhis narrative, serving a similar purpose to the coastal sea-lanes of the preceding books. It provides a network upon which Apollonios distributes further waypoints on the quest for the Fleece as well as the means of transportation across the intervening space. Detailed descriptions of intimate settings such as the palace of Aietes elucidate the environs of each waypoint. The narrative charts a linear course within this network of riverside destinations, a double of the outbound voyage in miniature. However, the similarity ends at this structural level. The distinctive quality of the river network sets the continental interior under Apollonios' descriptive lens.

The physical dynamics of major continental river systems open the frontiers of geographical description. Although they facilitate linear movement along their course much like the shores of the sea, rivers only rarely broaden into vast expanses of featureless water, and even in these cases the banks are typically discernable given sufficient elevation. Riverbanks sheath the linear sequence of travel in a gauntlet of navigational reference points. Moreover, features along the banks may encroach upon the river itself, bringing them into closer proximity to the

descriptive standpoint taken by the narrator midstream.<sup>69</sup> Hence riverine spatial descriptions may take on the intimacy characteristic of waypoint episodes on maritime itineraries. Indeed, the river itself may serve as a waypoint along a terrestrial route. The banks of the Phasis serve in this capacity as the backdrop for Medea's covert flight from Aia:

ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη: τὴν δ' αἴψα πόδες φέρον ἐγκονέουσιν.  
ἀσπασίως δ' ὄχθησιν ἐπηέρθη ποταμοῖο,  
ἀντιπέρην λεύσσουσα πυρὸς σέλας ὃ ρά τ' ἀέθλου  
παννύχιοι ἦρωες εὐφροσύνησιν ἔδαιον.

Thus spoke [the Moon]; but her feet bore bustling [Medea] onward.  
And with joy she attained the river's banks,  
Catching sight of the gleam of fire opposite, which  
Throughout the night the heroes kindled in the flush of victory (4.66-69).

The Moon shares the reader's perspective in observing Medea's shadowy path from Aia through the river meadows to the banks of the Phasis. Aside from noting her point of departure and arrival at the Phasis, the description spares geographical detail in favor of conveying the mood of the landscape by emphasizing the alternation of light and darkness cloaking the region. The river itself divides Medea from the camp of the Argonauts, and the passage following the lines quoted above brings out its thematic significance as the Argonauts hasten to cross the river and intercept the distraught Kolkhian. The use of the river as a thematic centerpiece for framing intimate scenes such as this, however, merely illustrates its descriptive flexibility. The river's capacity for dilating the territorial range encompassed by a description is a still greater testament to Apollonios' skill at integrating shifting perspective into the epic's spatial fabric.

The linear course of a river, beyond providing connective tissue between points on an itinerary traversed by characters and described from their perspective, also provides access to regions inaccessible to this perspective. Major rivers, as persistent fixtures of regional

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<sup>69</sup> The lower reaches of the Phasis, Istros, and Eridanos are not thus overshadowed by precipitous banks; on the contrary, they divide into extensive deltas before meeting the sea. The imminence of particular features along the shore is therefore a fantasy of the poet, though a fantasy indicative of a particular conception of what a riverine environment is meant to look like for the purposes of an epic narrative.

topography, exist effectively outside of time, much like other geological features with linear characteristics such as mountain ranges and coastlines. However, unlike these stationary landmarks, rivers exist in perpetual motion. As much as much mountain ranges and coastlines may be said to loom and stretch when observed from the perspective of an earth-bound observer, adopting an animate quality for the sake of description, they do not move in the manner that rivers do. By virtue of this characteristic, rivers immediately invite the formulation of a linear framework extending beyond the range of human vision, removing the reader from the heroic perspective and focalizing further description following the course of the river itself.

Immediately upon the arrival of the Argo in the Phasis estuary, Apollonios tests the descriptive potential of the riverine framework.

ἔχον δ' ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ χειρῶν  
Καύκασον αἰπήεντα Κυταιίδα τε πτόλιν Αἴης,  
ἔνθεν δ' αὖ πεδῖον τὸ Ἀρήιον ἱερά τ' ἄλση  
τοῖο θεοῦ, τόθι κῶας ὄφις εἴρυτο δοκεύων  
πεπτάμενον λασίοισιν ἐπὶ δρυὸς ἀκρεμόνεσσιν.

On the left hand they kept  
Lofty Kaukasos and the Kytaiian city of Aia,  
And on the other the Plain of Ares and the sacred grove  
Of that god, where the watchful serpent guards the fleece  
Stretched out upon the leafy branches of an oak (2.1266-1270).

Apollonios provides the reader with a verbal map of the region that the Argonauts have just entered. He focalizes the description from the heroic perspective with the tactile directional ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ χειρῶν and corresponding ἔνθεν δ' αὖ.<sup>70</sup> In addition to maintaining the intensely visual framework introduced at 2.1246-1248 (quoted above), the tactile description establishes the Phasis as the reference point to which the regional locations are related.<sup>71</sup> Gleaning from the

<sup>70</sup> cf. Fränkel 1968 loc. cit.

<sup>71</sup> The Phasis provided a reference point for geographical descriptions of Kolchis in contemporary prose. In the *Periplus* of Pseudo-Skylax, dated to the late fourth century BCE, the following entry notes the barbarian city of Aia in relation to historically-attested coastal settlements and rivers among the Kolkhoi (P.S. 81): μετὰ δὲ τούτους Κόλχοι ἔθνος καὶ Διοσκουρίας πόλις καὶ Γυηνὸς πόλις Ἑλληνίς καὶ Γυηνὸς ποταμὸς καὶ Χιρόβος ποταμὸς, Χόρσος

imperfect ἔχον a gradual progression along a fixed route upstream, the reader can also infer the relationship of locations along each bank: the Kaukasos appears before Aia on the left and the Plain of Ares precedes the sacred grove on the right. Apollonios begins this brief descriptive sequence with the Kaukasos, a feature of the landscape that had already loomed into view at the heroes' approach.<sup>72</sup> The lofty crags of this range dominate the left bank of the river. The three subsequent entries in this description, by contrast, are not explicitly linked to the heroic line of sight at this juncture. While a reader might construe all four locations as points visible from the river-bound perspective of the Argonauts, the text itself defies confirmation of this interpretation and indeed suggests otherwise as the narrator hones in on a descriptive frame certainly inaccessible from the shore: the location of the Fleece itself hanging on an oak shrouded in the dense foliage of the sacred grove on the southern bank.<sup>73</sup> The contrast in visual accessibility between the impending Kaukasos and grove-shrouded Fleece indicates a shift in descriptive focalization from the Argonauts to the omniscient narrator.

Changes to the descriptive framework corresponding to the riverine setting are accompanied by narratorial techniques that tether increasingly immersive descriptions to the immediate experience of the Argonauts. The shifting focalization noted above strikes a balance between hodological and quasi-cartographical approaches to spatial description. Two further passages from the narrative will illustrate the integration of still more dramatic shifts than those discussed above. Apollonios accompanies his description of the Argo's arrival in Kolchhis with a

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ποταμός, Ἄριος ποταμός, Φᾶσις ποταμός, καὶ Φᾶσις Ἑλληνὶς πόλις. καὶ ἀνάπλους ἀνὰ τὸν ποταμὸν σταδίων ρπ' εἰς πόλιν Αἴαν μεγάλην βάρβαρον ὅθεν ἡ Μήδεια ἦν. ἐνταῦθά ἐστι Ῥις ποταμός, Ῥισις ποταμός, Ληστῶν Ποταμός, Ἄψαρος ποταμός. The *anaplous* mentioned here interrupts Pseudo-Skylax's coast-tethered descriptive sequence with a journey of some 180 stades upstream. The reference to Medea here is an additional curiosity.

<sup>72</sup> The Kaukasos is more readily visible from the inland location of Kytai (the historical Kyta identified as Aia by Apollonios) than from the coast of the Black Sea at the mouth of the Rioni. Apollonios contracts the geography of Kolchhis to render the major features of the landscape immediately visible to the Argonauts upon arrival.

<sup>73</sup> The hidden nature of the Fleece is evident later when Jason and Medea disembark and venture into the grove (4.123-126).

visually striking glimpse of a celestial prodigy that draws the heroes' attention to the upper air. In turning the attention of the reader to this distant monster, Apollonios subtly elicits the brief adoption of a god's-eye perspective. Just as the Argonauts catch sight of the Kaukasos barring their path forward, they perceive a massive creature soaring over the ship:

τὸν μὲν ἐπ' ἀκροτάτης ἴδον ἔσπερον ὀξεί ροίζῳ  
 νηὸς ὑπερπτάμενον νεφέων σχεδόν· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔμπης  
 λαίφεα πάντ' ἐτίναξε, παραιθύζας πτερύγεσσι.  
 οὐ γὰρ ὄγ' αἰθερίοιο φυὴν ἔχεν οἰωνοῖο,  
 ἴσα δ' ἐυξέστοις ὠκύπτερα πάλλεν ἔρετμοῖς,  
 δηρὸν δ'· οὐ μετέπειτα πολύστονον ἄιον αὐδὴν  
 ἦπαρ ἀνελκομένοιο Προμηθέος· ἔκτυπε δ' αἰθήρ  
 οἰμωγῆ, μέσφ' αὐτίς ἀπ' οὔρεος αἴσسونτα  
 αἰετὸν ὠμηστὴν αὐτὴν ὁδὸν εἰσενόησαν.

They saw it at dusk over the highest part of the ship  
 Soaring with a sharp whirl as high as the clouds, and  
 It shook everything like rags, whizzing by on its wings.  
 For it did not have the form of a bird of the air,  
 But swept its pinions like well-polished oars,  
 Too long. Not much later they heard  
 The dreadful cry of Prometheus stripped of his liver, and the  
 Ether resounded with his wailing, until they perceived it  
 Darting back from the mountain on the same route,  
 Sated with flesh (2.1251-1259).

The eagle is endowed with several characteristics that distance it from the mortal plane. Its role as agent of Prometheus' divine punishment vests the beast with supernatural associations. Beyond this association, Apollonios' description emphasizes specific unusual characteristics of its motion and physiology. The height at which the Argonauts spot the creature sets it at a physical remove from the terrestrial realm. The bird appears to operate at an altitude atypical even for a "bird of the air," high as the clouds; indeed, from the heroic perspective the sweep of its massive wings seems "too long" (δηρὸν δ') for the eagle to have the form of a normal bird.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Apollonios likens the monster to a ship by describing its outstretched pinions as oars propelling it at tremendous speed through the ether.

<sup>74</sup> cf. *Il.* 2.298, where δηρὸν characterizes a period as longer than appropriate.



The eagle's route is another significant feature of this description. The Argonauts catch sight of the beast at dusk as the light of the sun wanes and withdraws along the western horizon.<sup>75</sup> This dynamic frames the eagle's appearance in the last light of day as the beast hastens eastward from an unspecified origin point on a course parallel with that of the Argo. The eagle's linear path thus mirrors in ethereal form the Kolchis-bound marine route of the Argo. This elemental separation allows the heroes to observe a portion of the route between two unseen termini. Because the flight of this particular eagle bears mythological associations, the Argonauts (and Apollonios' readers) infer the locations of the distant termini, contextualizing their experience within the spatial framework accessed through the myth of Prometheus.<sup>76</sup> Apollonios provides an additional means of accessing this distant space by supplying aural evidence of the eagle's presence at the eastern terminus. The cry of Prometheus offers the heroes a non-visual means of extrapolating the eagle's route beyond the range of mortal vision. Apollonios thus paradoxically encourages the reader to envision the entire path of the eagle by integrating non-visual means of perceiving spatial relationships into the heroic perspective shared by the reader.

In addition to demonstrating the capacity of the heroic perspective to grasp spatial networks that extend beyond the bounds of human vision, the poet implicitly invites the reader to apply these alternative modes of perception to their own reading of the Argo's voyage by juxtaposing celestial and maritime itineraries through the simile of eagle-as-Argo. The elemental separation noted above facilitates perception of the eagle's course. The bird's supernatural speed confers immediacy upon the vision of its path akin to a glance at a route sketched on a map: it is easier to perceive the path of a distant object that moves at high speed because it covers the

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<sup>75</sup> Apollonios integrates into this description both of the semantic valences attributed to ἔσπερος, the evening and the West, though the accusative form suggests an accusative of duration of time as the primary function here.

<sup>76</sup> Apollonios primes the reader to visualize the eastern terminus by referring to the Kaukasos as the site of Prometheus' punishment immediately prior to the Argonauts sighting the eagle (2.1248-1250). The western terminus remains uncertain, though the eagle's role as an agent of Zeus suggests Olympos.

discernable route in a shorter amount of time.<sup>77</sup> By applying the ship simile to this dynamic and extending the descriptive lens to present a route with termini beyond the horizon, Apollonios encourages the visualization of the entire Argonautic itinerary in a single sweeping panorama. This vision recalls a striking simile applied to another celestial traveller in the poem, the goddess Athena:

ὥς δ' ὅτε τις πάτρηθεν ἀλώμενος, οἷά τε πολλὰ  
πλαζόμεθ' ἄνθρωποι τετληότες, οὐδέ τις αἶα  
τηλουρός, πᾶσαι δὲ κατόψιοι εἰσι κέλευθοι,  
σφωιτέρους δ' ἐνόησε δόμους, ἄμυδις δὲ κέλευθος  
ὕγρη τε τραφερή τ' ἰνδάλλεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἄλλη  
ὄξέα πορφύρων ἐπιμαίεται ὀφθαλμοῖσιν:  
ὥς ἄρα καρπαλίμως κούρη Διὸς αἴξασα  
θῆκεν ἐπ' ἀξείνοιο πόδας Θυνηίδος ἀκτῆς.

As when a man wandering from his homeland—such a thing as often  
We roving men suffer, nor is any land  
Distant, but all routes are visible—  
Sees his own home, and at the same time appears the way  
Both wet and dry, and now this way and that  
He grasps flashing quickly with his eyes:  
So swiftly did the daughter of Zeus dart  
And placed her feet upon the inhospitable Thyneian promontory (2.541-548).

To convey the near-instantaneous quality of divine travel, Apollonios draws upon elements of Homeric narration. He elaborates on the Homeric phrase “quick as thought” by describing the mental processes of a traveller far from home.<sup>78</sup> This description retains a thematic link with the divine element in its affinity to the god’s-eye perspective adopted periodically throughout the *Iliad*. The traveller’s vision aligns with the panoramic perspective elicited by the ship simile.

The ship and traveller similes discussed above demonstrate Apollonios’ ability to convey the spatial contexts that stimulate the formulation of a geographical framework in the mind’s eye. The poet establishes a number of foundational reference points accessible through the heroic

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<sup>77</sup> This principle can be illustrated by observing a meteor shower, in which individual “shooting stars” appear to take on linear form due to the speed at which they enter the atmosphere. The Argonauts witness this very phenomenon shortly after their departure from Kolchis at 4.294-301. See discussion below.

<sup>78</sup> cf. *Od.* 7.36.

perspective and may from this point dilate the descriptive lens to encompass regions inaccessible from this perspective provided that he maintain a connection to narrative space and time. This principle is particularly evident at the conclusion of the Kolchhis narrative, when Jason and Medea encounter the serpent guarding the Fleece. Apollonios locates the point of access to the sacred grove containing the Fleece within the river-oriented schematic map established at the outset of the Kolchhis narrative. Beginning their course on the Phasis, which persists as the aquatic thoroughfare serving Aietes' vast domain, the Argonauts cruise upriver until they reach Ram's Rest:

τῆμος ἄρ' Αἰσονίδης κούρη τ' ἀπὸ νηὸς ἔβησαν  
 ποιήεντ' ἀνὰ χῶρον ἵνα Κριοῦ καλέονται  
 Εὐναί, ὅθι πρῶτον κεκμηῶτα γούνατ' ἔκαμψε,  
 νότοισιν φορέων Μινυήιον υἱ' Ἀθάμαντος.  
 ἐγγύθι δ' αἰθαλόεντα πελεν βομοῖο θέμεθλα,  
 ὄν ῥά ποτ' Αἰολίδης Διὶ Φυξίῳ εἶσατο Φρίξος,  
 ῥέζων κεῖνο τέρας παγχρύσειον, ὡς οἱ ἔειπεν  
 Ἑρμείας πρόφρων ζυμβλήμενος. ἔνθ' ἄρα τούς γε  
 Ἄργου φραδμοσύνησιν ἀριστῆες μεθέηκαν.  
 τῷ δὲ δι' ἀτραπιτοῖο μεθ' ἱερὸν ἄλσος ἵκοντο,  
 φηγὸν ἀπειρεσίην διζημένῳ ἧ ἔπι κῶας  
 βέβλητο, νεφέλη ἐναλίγκιον ἧ τ' ἀνιόντος  
 ἡελίου φλογερῆσιν ἐρεύθεται ἀκτίνεσσιν.

Then Aison's son and the maiden disembarked from the ship  
 Upon a grassy tract in a place called Ram's Rest,  
 Where it first bent its tired knees,  
 Bearing the Minyan son of Athamas on its back.  
 And nearby was the sooty base of an altar  
 Which Phrixos son of Aiolos erected for Zeus Phyxios,  
 Sacrificing this gilded wonder as thoughtful Hermes  
 Advised in conversation. There  
 At the urging of Argos the heroes left them.  
 And the two of them arrived amidst the sacred grove via a shortcut  
 Seeking the immense oak upon which the Fleece  
 Was flung, like a cloud stained red  
 In the blazing rays of the rising sun (4.114-126).

Apollonios stresses the site's cultic significance and indicates that the heroes follow the very path blazed by Phrixos and the celestial ram a generation prior to the events of the *Argonautika*.

The Argonauts' use of routes linked with the mythical past adds thematic depth to these

itineraries.<sup>79</sup> Once again Argos contributes geographical familiarity with the region to the heroes' progress, indicating the location of his father's arrival on the ram as a suitable trailhead facilitating access to the Fleece's sacred grove.<sup>80</sup> Apollonios' diction stresses the direct quality of the path (ἀτραπιτοῖο) linking the grove with the river.

This emphasis on the proximity of the Fleece's grove to the Phasis takes on particular significance in the ensuing description of Jason and Medea's encounter with the guardian serpent. In this passage, Apollonios exploits the Phasis as an element of a broader regional network of rivers that telescope the descriptive range from lowland Kolchis across the interior of Asia. The poet deploys the serpent's resounding hiss as a vehicle for shifting descriptive focalization:

αὐτὰρ ὁ ἀντικρὺ περιμήκεα τείνετο δειρὴν  
ὄξυς ἀύπνοισι προΐδων ὄφιν ὀφθαλμοῖσι  
νισσομένους· ροίζει δὲ πελώριον· ἀμφὶ δὲ μακρὰ  
ἠιόνες ποταμοῖο καὶ ἄσπετον ἴαχεν ἄλσος.  
ἔκλυον οἱ καὶ πολλὸν ἐκὰς Τιτηνίδος Αἴης  
Κολχίδα γῆν ἐνέμοντο παρὰ προχοῆσι Λύκοιο,  
ὅς τ' ἀποκιδνάμενος ποταμοῦ κελάδοντος Ἀράξεω  
Φάσιδι συμφέρεται ἱερὸν ῥόον, οἱ δὲ συνάμφω  
Καυκασίην ἄλαδ' εἰς ἐν ἐλαυνόμενοι προχέουσι·  
δείματι δ' ἐξέγροντο λεχωίδες, ἀμφὶ δὲ παισὶ  
νηπιάχοις, οἳ τέ σφιν ὑπ' ἀγκαλίδεσσιν ἴαυον,  
ροίζῳ παλλομένοις χειῖρας βάλλον ἀσχαλόωσαι.

But opposite them the serpent, keenly observing their approach  
With sleepless eyes, extended its long neck,  
And emitted a mighty hiss: and the long  
Banks of the river and the unspeakable grove resounded.  
Even they heard, those who far from Titanid Aia  
Inhabited Kolkhian territory along the mouths of the Lykos,  
Which, branching from the roaring Araxes,  
Joins its sacred flow with Phasis: they jointly  
Pour forth into the Caucasian Sea, driven into a single stream.  
But newborns were roused with terror, and around infant children  
Who were sleeping in their arms,

<sup>79</sup> The significance of the Istros river system as a mythical transcontinental highway is discussed below.

<sup>80</sup> Note the structural similarity of 4.122 and 2.1260. The phrases Ἄργου φραδοσύνησιν and Ἄργοιο δαημοσύνησιν are grammatical and semantic equivalents to one another. Argos' geographical authority accrues a nearly formulaic quality.

Anxious women encircled their hands for those shaken by the hiss (4.127-138).

This description shares its aural component with the eagle sequence noted above. In both cases, sound facilitates access to distant locations. Sound is able to link two points with a common experience by traversing the intervening distance almost instantly, as the case of Prometheus and the eagle demonstrates. However, sound can also be described as resounding throughout a specific area. The serpent's prodigious hiss not only fills the immediate area, but also resounds inland along a linear path supplied by the course of the Phasis and continues on along the waterways of the interior. Thus sound again provides Apollonios with a means of dilating the geographical range of description while tethering the distant regions to narrative time by sound's aforementioned capacity to instantly connect distant places.

The descriptive sequences treated above demonstrate Apollonios' prudent distribution of geographical detail and the variety of methods he uses to integrate these descriptions into the narrative fabric of the epic. Discussion will now turn to the articulation of another river system—the Istros—through an embedded narrative, demonstrating further means of integrating vast spaces into the heroic perspective.

## **2.2 Istros: Historicizing Geography**

Apollonios integrates the Argo's novel route across the Balkan Peninsula into the epic's *fabula* space by associating this northern passage with historicizing accounts of conquest and migration. He privileges one such account—the myth of Sesostris—with detailed explanation within the narrative while conveying others through a network of intertextual allusions couched as geographical reference-points. The former supply thematic foils to the journey of the

Argonauts themselves, while the latter color the vast extent of continental territory opened to description by the dynamics of riverine geography.

Apollonios introduces a historicizing element to the Istros route from its first manifestation as a product of Kolkhian Argos' geographical knowledge. The poet deprives the Argonauts (and his readers) awareness of this riverine escape route until the heroes are forced to seek it out by the fraught circumstances in which they depart Kolkhis. Jason returns the attention of the heroes to Phineus' instructions as they pause briefly on the shores of Paphlagonia:

αὐτίκα δ' Αἰσονίδης ἐμνήσατο, σὺν δὲ καὶ ὄλλοι  
ἥρωες, Φινῆος ὃ δὴ πλόον ἄλλον ἔειπεν  
ἐξ Αἴης ἔσσεσθαι: ἀνώιστος δ' ἐτέτυκτο  
πᾶσιν ὁμῶς. Ἄργος δὲ λιλαιομένοις ἀγόρευσεν.

And immediately Aison's son recalled, and with him the other  
Heroes, Phineus, who proclaimed that the voyage back from Aia  
Would be different, but one nevertheless unanticipated  
By all. But Argos addressed them as they yearned (4.253-256).

Argos fills a role akin to that of Phineus for the desperate heroes. These two figures possess knowledge that functions in the narrative as a key that unlocks the next stretch of the journey, without which any progress is impossible. It is a role with a deep history stretching back to figures of the *Odyssey*, namely Kirke and Teiresias, who together instruct Odysseus in the requisite steps to be taken in accomplishing the hero's delayed *nostos*.<sup>81</sup> Apollonios extracts and expands upon this element of the epic voyage by constructing a geographical context that requires multiple guides to navigate successfully. He also varies the nature of the information supplied by these guides. Though functionally parallel, the routes conveyed by Phineus and Argos differ significantly from one another in source and content.

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<sup>81</sup> It is a riddle of the version of the *Odyssey* transmitted to us that despite Kirke's insistence that a journey to the Underworld and consultation of Teiresias are necessary to ensure a successful *nostos*, the blind prophet provides no information about the precise route to take. Instead Kirke herself provides this information upon the heroes' return to Aiaia (*Od.* 12.37-110).

Whereas Phineus accesses the geographical knowledge of the Argonauts' Euxine itinerary through his prophetic ability, Argos possesses this information as an element of his strictly geographical expertise, a characteristic applied broadly to the Kolkhians as a people in Book 4.<sup>82</sup> Argos first indicates to the heroes the route's specific relevance to his personal history by reminding them of the sons of Phrixos' ill-fated expedition in search of the Aiolids' ancestral seat, Orchomenos.<sup>83</sup> The brothers had intended to bypass the lethal Symplegades by shunning the southern passage to the Aegean in favor of a northern route along the Istros. Argos explains the source of his familiarity with this unanticipated route:

ἔστιν γὰρ πλόος ἄλλος, ὃν ἀθανάτων ἱερῆς  
πέφραδον οἱ Θήβης Τριτωνίδος ἐκγεγάασιν.  
οὐπω τεῖρα πάντα τά τ' οὐρανῶ εἰλίσσονται,  
οὐδέ τί πω Δαναῶν ἱερὸν γένος ἦεν ἀκοῦσαι  
πευθομένοις: οἴοι δ' ἔσαν Ἀρκάδες Ἀπιδανῆες,  
Ἀρκάδες, οἱ καὶ πρόσθε σεληναίης ὑδέονται  
ζώειν, φηγὸν ἔδοντες ἐν οὐρεσιν: οὐδὲ Πελασγίς  
χθῶν τότε κυδαλίμοισιν ἀνάσσετο Δευκαλίδησιν,  
ἦμος ὅτ' Ἡερίη πολυλήιος ἐκλήιστο,  
μήτηρ Αἴγυπτος προτερηγενέων αἰζηῶν,  
καὶ ποταμὸς Τρίτων ἠύρροος ᾧ ὑπο πᾶσα  
ἄρδεται Ἡερίη — Διόθεν δέ μιν οὐποτε δεύει  
ὄμβρος ἄλις — προχοῆσι δ' ἀνασταχύουσιν ἄρουραι.  
ἔνθεν δὴ τινά φασι πέριξ διὰ πᾶσαν ὄδεῦσαι  
Εὐρώπην Ἀσίην τε, βίη καὶ κάρτεϊ λαῶν  
σφωιτέρων θάρσει τε πεποιθότα: μυρία δ' ἄστη  
νάσσατ' ἐποیحόμενος, τὰ μὲν ἦ ποθι ναιετάουσιν  
ἠὲ καὶ οὔ: πολὺς γὰρ ἄδην ἐπενήνοθεν αἰών.  
Αἴᾳ γε μὴν ἔτι νῦν μένει ἔμπεδον υἰώνοι τε  
τῶνδ' ἀνδρῶν οὓς ὄγε καθίσσατο ναιέμεν Αἴαν,  
οἱ δὴ τοι γραπτῶς πατέρων ἔθεν εἰρύονται,  
κύρβιας οἷς ἔνι πᾶσαι ὁδοὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἕασιν  
ὕγρῆς τε τραφερῆς τε πέριξ ἐπινισομένοισιν.

<sup>82</sup> Aietes claims sufficient knowledge of the inhabited world's dimensions to critique the voyage of the sons of Phrixos (3.307-313). This knowledge derives from firsthand experience from the god's-eye perspective while driving his sister Kirke westward to Aiaia on the chariot of Helios, rendering him the *Argonautika's* most geographically savvy mortal character. For Kirke's role as guide in the *Odyssey*, see below. The extensive geographical knowledge and navigational skills of the Kolkhian fleet in pursuit of the Argo will also be treated below.

<sup>83</sup> The Argonauts happen upon the marooned brothers on the Island of Ares, prophesied by Phineus in vague terms at 2.388-391 and realized in the narrative at 2.1090-1230.

For there is another navigable route, which the priests of the immortals  
 Have made known, those who are descended from Tritonian Thebe.  
 Not yet did there exist any constellations that wheel in heaven,  
 Nor was there any holy race of Danaans to ascertain  
 For those inquiring. There were only the Apidanian Arkadians,  
 Arkadians, who are said to have lived even before the moon,  
 Eating acorns in the mountains. Nor was the Pelasgian  
 Land then ruled by the famous sons of Deukalion,  
 At the time when Egypt, mother of mighty ancestors,  
 Was called Eërië rich in grain,  
 And the broad-flowing river Triton, by which all  
 Eërië is irrigated, and from Zeus the rain never fails her,  
 And with its floods the fields produce grain in abundance.  
 They say that a certain man ventured thence in a circuit through all  
 Europe and Asia, trusting in the force and might and courage of  
 His hosts: numberless cities  
 He colonized and dominated, some that they still inhabit,  
 And others not, for a sufficiently lengthy period has since accrued.  
 Aia indeed even now stands firm, and the descendants  
 Of those whom that man established to inhabit Aia,  
 Who maintain their fathers' scrawls,  
 Pore over tablets, upon which are all routes and the limits  
 Of water and land all around (4.257-281).

Argos provides a historicizing summary of the transmission of this geographical information across space and time. He claims the authority of an ancient tradition whose source is placed at a tremendous spatial and temporal remove from the events of the *Argonautika*. It is difficult, however, to determine Argos' means of access to this tradition amidst the apparent chronological inconsistencies that define it. How does Argos access the knowledge of a hidden northern passage, and in what manner is this geographical information rendered for his use? It is important to ask these questions of the text in the pursuit of Apollonios' methods of integrating a geographical framework into his poetics. This passage demonstrates the integration of geography into the internal logic of the epic, justifying at length a secondary character's possession of privileged information through the construction of a historicizing background narrative and further appeals to the commonplaces of Greek accounts of Egypt.



This “alternate route” is attributed to priests descended from Tritonian Thebe, an eponymous female figure associated with the foundation of Egyptian Thebes.<sup>84</sup> The religious character of those responsible for promulgating this information vests its practical spatial data with the quality of a sacred text, though Argos’ use of φράζειν (4.258) suggests readily accessible information rather than the closely guarded tenets of a mystery cult. Furthermore, in this particular context—the transmission of an obscure itinerary through *terra incognita*—the verb echoes similar circumstances in the epic tradition. It is particularly reminiscent of Odysseus’ description of Kirke’s instructions for the *nekuia* of Book 11:

νῆα μὲν ἔνθ’ ἐλθόντες ἐκέλσαμεν, ἐκ δὲ τὰ μῆλα  
εἰλόμεθ’· αὐτοὶ δ’ αὐτε παρὰ ρόον Ὀκεανοῖο  
ἦομεν, ὄφρ’ ἐς χῶρον ἀφικόμεθ’, ὃν φράσε Κίρκη.

And upon arrival we ran the ship aground, and brought out  
The sheep; and beside the stream of Okeanos  
We ventured on until we reached the place that Kirke indicated (*Od.* 11.20-22).

In spite of the circumstantial similarity, however, this passage demonstrates a significant difference between the φράζειν of Argos and Odysseus. The object of Odysseus’ φράζειν is more limited (hence clearer) than that of Argos’ Egyptian priests, indicating the transmission of a specific terminus rather than the sequence of waypoints constituting an itinerary.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the nature of Argos’ tradition of an alternate route remains unclear in spite of the relatively long description that Apollonios provides. Argos does not specify the place of these priests in the

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<sup>84</sup> The patronymic Τριτωνίς in the context of this Egyptian tradition denotes the nymph Thebe’s descent from the Nile (ποταμὸς Τρίτων at 4.269). Hunter 2015 notes that we need not read ἐκγεγάσιν in too strict a sense: “From a Greek perspective the inhabitants of Thebes are all ‘descendants of Thebe’” (loc. cit.). However, the descent of these priests nests well with the divine ancestry so thoroughly attributed to the Argonauts in the catalogue of heroes at 1.23-233.

<sup>85</sup> Odysseus quotes Kirke’s exact instructions earlier in his narrative (10.504-540). Though Kirke does not supply an itinerary to accompany her instructions for Odysseus’ journey to the shores of Okeanos, she does provide a detailed description of the location at which they are to perform the *nekuia*. She also describes the way home to Ithaka from Aiaia upon the heroes’ return from their encounter with the dead (12.37-110).

chronology of the route's transmission.<sup>86</sup> Further elaboration of the mytho-historical circumstances relevant to the tradition complicates the picture. Argos seems to indicate that these priests are responsible for the promulgation of the route and hence his own familiarity with it, suggesting a point in the recent past, yet he proceeds to describe a period of deepest antiquity during which a conflicting source of transmission is introduced. In the brief narrative initiated by φῶσι (4.272), the geographical data that would facilitate the formulation of this route is apparently collected in the field by the anonymous commander, likely the Sesostris described in similar terms by Herodotos and Diodoros.<sup>87</sup> The foundation of colonies and preservation of written records dating from the period of this man's conquests traces the route's transmission from its discovery to the generation contemporary with the Argonauts.

To whom Argos credits the account of Sesostris' conquests is also unclear, a feature of the narrative that broaches the topic of dubious attribution and the credibility of geographical discourse. One interpretive route is to accept the Egyptian priests as the assumed subjects of φῶσι, though this raises the question of how Argos gains access to their account in the first place, isolated as Kolchis is from Egypt.<sup>88</sup> Unlikely as direct communication between Kolchis and Egypt seems in the context of the general isolation characterizing most of the communities encountered in the *Argonautika*, the parallels with Herodotos' prefatory claim to direct consultation of the Egyptian priests as the primary source for the historian's account of major developments in Egyptian political history (including the conquests of Sesostris) are too obvious to ignore:

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<sup>86</sup> The perfect form πῆφραδον indicates only that the information was promulgated at some point prior to the voyage of the sons of Phrixos.

<sup>87</sup> See Herodotos 2.102-111 and Diodoros 1.53-53, in which this figure is referred to as Sesoösis.

<sup>88</sup> The inscribed tablets preserved from the time of Sesostris' conquests would not be nearly as impressive a survival if communication with Egypt had remained consistent throughout the intervening period, in which Argos himself acknowledges that the network of countless settlements ruled by Sesostris had fragmented (4.276).

μέχρι μὲν τούτου ὄψις τε ἐμὴ καὶ γνώμη καὶ ἱστορίη ταῦτα λέγουσα ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε Αἰγυπτίους ἔρχομαι λόγους ἐρέων κατὰ τὰ ἤκουον: προσέεται δὲ αὐτοῖσι τι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὄψιος. Μῖνα τὸν πρῶτον βασιλεύσαντα Αἰγύπτου οἱ ἱερεῖς ἔλεγον τοῦτο μὲν ἀπογεφυρῶσαι τὴν Μέμφιν. τὸν γὰρ ποταμὸν πάντα ῥέειν παρὰ τὸ ὄρος τὸ ψάμμινον πρὸς Λιβύης, τὸν δὲ Μῖνα ἄνωθεν, ὅσον τε ἑκατὸν σταδίου ἀπὸ Μέμφιος, τὸν πρὸς μεσαμβρίας ἀγκῶνα προσχώσαντα τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον ῥέεθρον ἀποξηρῆναι, τὸν δὲ ποταμὸν ὀχετεῦσαι τὸ μέσον τῶν ὀρέων ῥέειν.

Up to this point my own observation, consideration, and inquiry are responsible for rendering an account of these things, but from this point on I will proceed to report the accounts of the Egyptians themselves in accordance with what I myself have heard; however, in addition to these there is also something of my own observations. The priests say that Min, Egypt's first ruler, constructed dikes around Memphis. For the entire river flowed alongside the sandy mountain facing Libya, but Min drained the ancient bed of the river as much as one hundred stades from Memphis, and conducted the river so as flow between the mountains (2.99.1-2).

Following the pattern that he establishes here with the reign of Min, Herodotos introduces each subsequent episode of his Egyptian political history by restating that the priests are the source of this information.<sup>89</sup> Each episode is thus rendered in *oratio obliqua*. Apollonios, by contrast, introduces the priests at 4.257 but continues the description of the world's primordial state in *oratio recta*, suggesting that Argos is not repeating the words of the priests. He delays his transition to *oratio obliqua* until his treatment of the conquests of Sesostriis, perhaps intending instead to equate the temporal context of the conquests with the promulgation of the northern passage on the priests' initiative.

By an alternate interpretation, Argos' use of φάσι may indicate the oral tradition of his own people, the Kolkhians. However, the most attractive solution would be to accept the testimony of the Egyptian priests themselves as the source of this account, preserved among the numberless colonies on inscribed tablets. This would link the priests' account with the Kolkhians' ancestral records. Hence the account of the priests may logically be rendered in both

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<sup>89</sup> See 2.100.1, 2.102.2-3, 2.112.1, 2.116.1, 2.118.1, 2.120.1, 2.124.1, 2.126.1, 2.136.1, 2.139.1, 2.142.1, and 2.143. Herodotos notes a transition back to his typical eclectic pool of sources at the end of this portion of the Egyptian excursus (2.147.1): ταῦτα μὲν νῦν αὐτοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι λέγουσι: ὅσα δὲ οἱ τε ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι λέγουσι ὁμολογέοντες τοῖσι ἄλλοις κατὰ ταύτην τὴν χώρην γενέσθαι, ταῦτ' ἤδη φράσω: προσέεται δὲ τι αὐτοῖσι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὄψιος.

the perfect and present tenses by Argos, the former instance denoting the original act of inscribing the tablets, and the latter indicating the immortal voice of the inscriptions echoing on through subsequent generations. This syncretistic interpretation colors Argos' description of the inscriptions with the aforementioned religious associations characterizing the transmission of this geographical knowledge.

Argos identifies Egypt as the physical source of both the geographical knowledge of the Istros and the individual responsible for pioneering the route. Apollonios dwells on the particulars of this tradition in order to emphasize its deep antiquity and note the circumstances in which the account survived the long centuries that witnessed the gradual collapse of the empire carved out by Sesostriis.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, so enduring does the account prove that it outlasts even the memory of the mighty conqueror's name.<sup>91</sup> The prospect of the route's preservation in a textual or graphic form offers insight into Apollonios' conception of the various means by which geographical information is encoded and transmitted. The description of the tablets upon which the ancestral records are preserved in Kolkhis does not specify the exact nature of the text or graven diagram that preserves the route. The potential interpretations of 4.279-281 vary dramatically due to the broad semantic range of the terms therein. The most basic point of

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<sup>90</sup> At 2.106 Herodotos claims that the pillars of Sesostriis could still be found as far north as Skythia and Thrace in his day, taking their absence from more distant territories as evidence for the northern limits of this conqueror's empire. Further on in his narrative (2.106) he notes the location of three carvings that he claims commemorate the triumphs of Sesostriis: one in Palestine (which he claims to have seen in person) and two in Ionia: one on the road between Ephesos and Phokaia and one between Sardis and Smyrna. Of these three carvings, two may be identified with known reliefs: in the mountains north of Nahr al-Kalb in present-day Lebanon (in the former region of Palestine) can be found a monumental relief of Ramesses II and in the Karabel Pass between Izmir and Sardes is a strikingly similar relief of the Hittite King Tarkasnawa. Neither of these monuments commemorate the conquests of the historical Sesostriis—Egyptian Senusret III—but their inclusion in the account of Herodotos, along with the apparent existence (or invention) of similar reliefs in Skythia and Thrace, are testament to the tenacity of this figure, along with the pattern of Egyptian preeminence he represents, in the engagement of Greek travellers, conquerors, and settlers with local objects of deep antiquity.

<sup>91</sup> Though we cannot be certain that Apollonios intended to convey the obliterating effects of time in Argos' omission of Sesostriis' name, the contrast between τινά and the surfeit of proper nouns studding this passage and the ensuing travel narrative conveys this regardless of poetic intent. The obvious reference to the account preserved in Herodotos and Diodoros further highlights the oddity of the omission.

contention in the interpretation of these lines is whether to assume a textual or graphic representation of the “routes and limits” described by Argos. Further problems arise on either side of this fundamental issue. If a text, what genre does it conform to? Does it convey the routes as an extension of a historiographical account of Sesostri’s conquests or as an independent work of geography akin to a Greek *periplous*? Is its descriptive framework hodological or quasi-cartographical? If graphic, what visual metaphors does it employ to convey the dimensions and locations of the route in question? Lexical clues support arguments answering each of these questions. Apollonios clouds his description in frustrating obscurity. His lack of clarity turns the reader’s attention from the details of transmission to its thematic significance.

The preservation and transmission of this knowledge in Kolkhis illustrates the thematic significance of writing as a means of communicating geographical information across vast gulfs of space and time. I have already noted the prevalence of oral communication of geographical information throughout the epic. Apollonios demonstrates an uncommon ability to envision and describe space from multiple descriptive standpoints while maintaining the cohesion of his linear narrative. Here the poet demonstrates an understanding of the historical significance of textually transmitted geographical information by illustrating its advantage over the oral tradition.

Apollonios emphasizes the ease with which the Kolkhians access and apply age-old geographical information to their seafaring tradition through Argos’ pivotal role in effecting the Argo’s escape and the corresponding maneuvers of the birdlike Kolkhian fleet.<sup>92</sup> Through this characterization, the poet establishes a contrast between the comparably limited geographical knowledge of the Argonauts and the detailed erudition of Argos and the Kolkhians.

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<sup>92</sup> The revelation of the Kolkhian naval forces at 4.236-240 supplies another instance of shifting descriptive standpoint akin to that cued by the eagle-as-ship metaphor discussed above. Likened in number to a vast flock of birds, the fleet acquires an aerial character rich in implicit associations: the ability to traverse the landscape in a direct line, access to the “bird’s eye” perspective, and tremendous speed.

An examination of Argos' revelation of the Istros route itself draws attention to the scant detail he chooses to provide. This comparatively brief enumeration of the route ahead invites comparison with the instructions of Phineus and requires a thorough discussion of the implications of the choice details he works into this description. Argos' mention of the routes preserved on the Kolkhian tablets cues a transition to discussion of the route in question:

ἔστι δέ τις ποταμός, ὕπατον κέρας Ὀκεανοῖο,  
 εὐρύς τε προβαθῆς τε καὶ ὀλκάδι νηὶ περῆσαι.  
 Ἴστρον μιν καλέοντες ἐκὰς διετεκμήραντο:  
 ὅς δ' ἦτοι τείως μὲν ἀπείρονα τέμνεται ἄρουραν  
 εἷς οἶος, πηγαὶ γὰρ ὑπὲρ πνοιῆς βορέαο  
 Ῥιπαίοις ἐν ὄρεσσιν ἀπόπροθι μορμύρουσιν:  
 ἀλλ' ὀπόταν Θρηκῶν Σκυθέων τ' ἐπιβήσεται οὖρους,  
 ἔνθα διχῆ, τὸ μὲν ἔνθα μετ' ἠοίην ἄλα βάλλει  
 τῆδ' ὕδωρ, τὸ δ' ὀπισθε βαθὺν διὰ κόλπον ἴησι  
 σχιζόμενος πόντου Τρινακρίου εἰσανέχοντα,  
 γαίῃ ὃς ὑμετέρη παρακέκλιται, εἰ ἐτεὸν δὴ  
 ὑμετέρης γαίης Ἀχελώϊος ἐξανήσιν.

There is a certain river, the northernmost branch of Okeanos,  
 Broad and sufficiently deep even for a cargo-ship's passage.  
 Having named it Istros they charted its course a great distance,  
 Which divides endless plowland for a time  
 Single and solitary, for beyond the blast of the north wind its springs  
 Seethe far off in the Rhipaian Mountains.  
 But as soon as it encroaches on the borders of the Thracians and Skythians  
 There it splits in two; one stream enters the eastern sea,  
 The other reverses course, cleaving through a deep gulf  
 Of the Trinakrian Sea,  
 Which inclines toward your land, if the Acheloös truly  
 Issues forth from your land (4.282-293).

For his description of the northern passage out of the Euxine, Argos chooses the course of the Istros as his organizational principle. In doing so, the Kolkhian diverges from the descriptive mode of prior guides, who offer prescriptive instructions that detail the successive stages of an itinerary and appeal to regional topography as a means of orientation. Argos, by contrast, adopts the course of the river itself as a descriptive standpoint from which he describes the adjacent territory. He first constructs the geographical framework across which the Argonauts will chart their route over the course of the ensuing narrative, rather than first enumerating the itinerary and

integrating geographical reference points *ad hoc* as Phineus did. Argos' description thus aligns closely with the Phasis-centered description of Kolkhis discussed above. This divergent approach establishes a broader geographical framework than the prescriptive mode adopted by Phineus, as it integrates information otherwise inaccessible from the heroic perspective. As a result, the ensuing account of the Argo's river cruise diverges somewhat from Argos' geographical description to reflect the shift in descriptive focalization to that of the Argonauts themselves.

Before describing the river's course in relation to the surrounding landscape, Argos first sketches the character of the river itself. Apollonios integrates a great deal of intertext into Argos' description of the Istros, beginning with the epic formula ἔστι δέ τις and specifying ποταμός.<sup>93</sup> Argos alludes to the river's place in the geographical scheme of the epic tradition by invoking the great Okeanos so emphatically dismissed by Classical Greek critics.<sup>94</sup> The reference to this tradition recalls prior iterations of the Argo's return voyage, some of which traced the ship's course along the northern and southern arms of the mythical river.<sup>95</sup> Apollonios strikes a balance between the epic tradition and contemporary geography by invoking the mythical genealogy of the great rivers, all of which traditionally descend from mighty Okeanos.<sup>96</sup> Through allusion to oceanic genealogy, Apollonios acknowledges his story's roots in a period of limited horizons and avoids linking his geographical framework with so controversial a body of water.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Nestor begins a description of his homeland ἔστι δέ τις ποταμός at *Il.* 11.723. The shorter prefatory formula occurs elsewhere in the *Iliad* at 2.811 (the *sema* of Myrine) and 11.711 (the Pylian *polis* Thryoëssa).

<sup>94</sup> Herodotos rejects the antiquated concept of all-encompassing Okeanos, which he associates with the Ionian logographers and early cartography, particularly the work of Hekataios (see 2.23, 4.8.2, and 4.36.2).

<sup>95</sup> For Argo's voyage on the stream of Okeanos, see Hesiod fr. 241, Pindar *Pythian* 4, Antimachos fr. 76 Matthews, Timaios (*FGrHist.* 566 F85), and Skymnos of Chios fr. 5 Gisinger. For a brief discussion the voyage's various routes in the tradition, consult Chapter 1.

<sup>96</sup> Hesiod supplies this genealogy in his catalog of rivers at *Th.* 337-370. The phrase κέρας Ὠκεανοῖο is elsewhere used by Hesiod to describe the Styx (*Th.* 789). A hypothetical source of the Istros in the stream of Okeanos likely derived from its traditional characterization as a European Nile, the sources of which were placed by one tradition at Okeanos (attested at Herodotos 2.21).

<sup>97</sup> For the vitriolic character of ancient criticism associated with the concept of Okeanos, Herodotos supplies a particularly illustrative example: γελῶ δὲ ὀρέων γῆς περιόδους γράψαντας πολλοὺς ἤδη καὶ οὐδένα νοονεχόντως ἐξηγησάμενον: οἱ Ὠκεανόν τε ῥέοντα γράφουσι πέριξ τὴν γῆν εἰδῶσαν κυκλοτερέα ὡς ἀπὸ τόννου, καὶ τὴν Ἀσίην τῆ

Argos' description does, however, retain a further intertextual link to epic Okeanos. The verb μορμύρειν, applied at 4.287 to the headwaters of Istros, designates the roar of the sea in earlier epic.<sup>98</sup> Use of this vivid descriptor preserves some of mighty Okeanos' power in the aquatic germ of Istros.

Argos' reference to the Rhipaian Mountains further complicates the categorization of *Argonautika*'s geographical framework. This mountain range serves as a consistent northern boundary to the *oikoumene* in various geographies of the Archaic and Classical periods.<sup>99</sup> Their function as a dramatic linear feature of the earth's hypothetical northern fringes ensures their persistent recurrence in the tradition of Classical geography even during periods of broadened Greek exploration. The popular etymology of the name "Rhipaian" associates this range with the blasts of the North Wind and by extension the utopian land of the Hyperboreans.<sup>100</sup> As a consequence of their persistence in the geographical tradition, the range undergoes periodic reorientation to reflect the expanding horizons of Greek exploration. Writers place them just beyond the limits of these horizons or assimilate them with actual mountain ranges in Central and Northern Europe.<sup>101</sup> Apollonios' placement of the sources of Istros in this mythical range obscures the river's upper courses in the ever-shifting geography of the *oikoumene*'s northern fringes.<sup>102</sup> Despite this lack of precise geographical contextualization and the contested status of the Rhipaian Mountains, the Argo's path remains clear. Because the heroes' itinerary traverses

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Εὐρώπη ποιούντων ἴσην. ἐν ὀλίγοισι γὰρ ἐγὼ δηλώσω μέγαθός τε ἐκάστης αὐτέων καὶ οἷη τις ἐστὶ ἐς γραφὴν ἐκάστη (4.36.2).

<sup>98</sup> See *Il.* 5.599 (the surge of waves breaking on shore) and 18.403 (the frothing stream of Okeanos); cf. the application of the participle to the River Xanthos, reflecting its gore-choked flood, at 21.325.

<sup>99</sup> For references to this fabled northern range, see Sophocles, *Oed. Col.* 1248, Hekataios of Abdera at Aelian, *H.A.* 11.1, Aristotle, *Meteor.* 1.13,

<sup>100</sup> For this etymology, see Damastes of Sigeion at Steph. Byz. s.v. Ὑπερβόρειοι.

<sup>101</sup> Finkelberg 1998 argues for a late classical association with the Alps, a range that otherwise appears surprisingly late in the extant literary tradition despite its proximity to Greek settlements on northern shores of the Adriatic and Liguria.

<sup>102</sup> Apollonios follows Aeschylus (Sch. ad Ap. Rh. 4.284) in locating the sources of Istros in the Rhipaian range.



only a portion of the Istros' course, the incursion of these mythical mountains proves as inconsequential a detail as the reference to Okeanos discussed above. To describe this geographical contrast in narratological terms, these references to fabulous northern topography frame the *Argonautika*'s carefully realized story space in an ambiguous *fabula* space where features of dubious credibility are free to exist as a nebulous system of geographical reference-points separate from the experience of the Argonauts themselves.<sup>103</sup>

Argos emphasizes the Istros' navigable quality and provides specific information about its course in the remainder of his prefatory description, priming the reader for the Argo-focused description of the ship's voyage through the interior. He notes the breadth and depth of its channel, sufficient to accommodate a *holkas*, a broad-beamed cargo ship. The appearance of this term in an epic context seems a blatant anachronism, or at the very least a prosaic intrusion, given its absence from the vocabulary of the extant epic tradition. Its employment as a kind of standard for the evaluation of a river's navigability is uniquely suited in this epic context to the circumstances of the Argo's voyage, appealing to the reader's presumed familiarity with the relative size of a cargo ship compared to the slim contours of an oared galley such as Argo. Apollonios thus appeals to contemporary Greek nautical traditions in order to convey the navigability of Istros.

Aside from navigability, the other feature of the Istros integral to the river's use as a passage west is the bifurcation of its course. Argos claims that a fork exists in the Istros along the borders of the Skythians and Thracians (4.288). The use of these two tribes in particular as orientational reference points suggests the mythical fork's location along the Lower Danube, which divided the extensive territories of the populations designated by these two ethnic

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<sup>103</sup> As Chapter 3 demonstrates, the Argo's path comes dangerously close to this fundamental spatial divide in the journey up the Eridanos.

categories. The association of the Istros with the territories of these particular *ethnoi* is problematic when read in conjunction with Classical accounts of the interior region, which place the primary territory of the Skythians far to the northeast of the Istros in the pasturelands north of Lake Maiotis and the Tauric Chersonese.<sup>104</sup> From a coastal perspective such as that of the late Classical *Periplus* of Pseudo-Skylax, however, the sequence of ethnic territory running clockwise around the Euxine places the Skythians immediately after the Thracians, between which regions lies the mouth of the Istros and the eponymous Greek colonial foundation.<sup>105</sup> Apollonios thus projects the ethnic categories of the coast onto the interior of the Balkans, an overt attempt to fill in gaps in the knowledge of contemporary geography corresponding with the innovative riverine geographical framework of Book 4.

Argos' account of the mytho-historical and spatial context of the Istros route further demonstrates the descriptive innovations introduced along the Phasis and introduces a temporal dimension to internal dynamics of geography as an element of characterization in the narrative. Apollonios employs a riverine organizational principle to the Kolkhian's description that shifts the descriptive standpoint to permit to the reader glimpses of distant geography relegated to the narratological *fabula* space. The historicizing account wherein Argos details the transmission of this geographical information through space and time serves as an internal commentary on the geographical habit that illustrates Apollonios' evaluation of this practice. In the following chapter, discussion will turn to the poet's Argo-focalized geographical descriptions in the ensuing narrative of the heroes' traversal of the spatial framework established here.

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<sup>104</sup> See especially Herodotos 4.99-101. The territory trends northward from the mouth of the Istros rather than following the river inland. Herodotos provides a brief description of the river's course through the interior of Europe, enumerating a sequence of tributaries and placing its sources in the far west (4.48-50).

<sup>105</sup> See Pseudo-Skylax 67.9-68.1.

## 3. Two Approaches to Riverine Itineraries

### 3.1 Istros: Cruising the Continent

In Chapter 2 I introduced the versatile standpoint afforded to geographical description by the use of a riverine organizational principle introduced with Apollonios' synoptic description of Kolkhis focalized on the Phasis and Argos' temporally integrated description of the Istros. I now turn to the traversal of Istros and Eridanos by the Argonauts themselves. This chapter continues the treatment of Apollonios' methods of integrating multidimensional descriptions of space into the narrative by demonstrating the polyvalent character of experienced space. The Istros and Eridanos systems in particular reveal the tight interlacing of hodological narration and quasi-cartographical description that enables the narrator to supplement the Argo's immediate tract of experienced space with swaths of continental geography. As demonstrated in previous chapters, this multidimensional descriptive mode deepens the poetic landscape, furnishes numerous intertextual links with a broad range of texts, and confers further thematic significance upon the route.

Apollonios treats the course of Istros twice over the course of Book 4, privileging this segment of the Argonautic itinerary with both a synoptic description voiced by an internal narrator and a sequential account of the heroes' route described by the primary narrator. Through the embedded narration of Argos son of Phrixos, he provides a synoptic survey of the river as a geographical feature, tracing its course from the Rhipaian Mountains to the Euxine Sea. This succinct hydrographic description prefaces the narrator's treatment of the river in the epic's temporal sequence. The sequential priority of Argos' hydrography serves as a plot device

explaining the river's function as an escape route, but also presents to the reader the relevant geographical framework prior to the heroes' own experience of this space. As a consequence of the juxtaposition of these two types of description, every nugget of spatial data contained therein may be analyzed both in the context of the immediate description and in relation to the broader framework constructed of material from both perspectives.<sup>106</sup> Such an analysis forms Part One of Chapter 3. Discussion first treats the topographical and regional detail articulated along the route, after which it will treat characteristics of descriptive standpoint and range in relation to the narrative's structure.

The poet's description of the Istros voyage is articulated as a sequence of topographical reference points and regions of a type common to other hodological narrative segments in the epic. A crucial distinction that sets this particular itinerary apart from other hodological descriptions of this kind, however, is its division into a series of variant pathways traced briefly through the established geographical framework by references to both Argos' most recent speech and more distant descriptions of the outbound route.<sup>107</sup> Three parties depart the Euxine in this passage: the Argonauts themselves, a group of Kolchians led by Apsyrtos, and a second group of Kolchians. The first group of Kolchians issues forth from the Symplegades into the Aegean while the second group pursues the Argonauts into the narrow confines of the Istros. The use of specific topographical features as reference points for the description of these variant routes and relation of each to the others is at this juncture crucial to the reader's understanding of the sequence of events leading to the next major stationary episode, the murder of Apsyrtos in the

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<sup>106</sup> I specify these two contexts—immediate description and broader geographical framework—in order to introduce the particular qualities of this juxtaposition that I treat throughout the first part of Chapter 3 in relation to the central question of this thesis: the contribution of Apollonios' mingling of hodological and quasi-cartographical perspectives. There are of course numerous contexts in which to situate data related by these descriptions (e.g. literary intertext, relevant real-world topography, mythological tradition, etc.). I remain cognizant of these contexts and appeal to them frequently as in previous chapters.

<sup>107</sup> I return to this unusual feature of 4.298-337 in the discussion of the Istros narrative's structure below.

Adriatic. Hence there is greater reliance upon the geographical framework outlined by Argos and the still broader network of topographical features enumerated in Books 1 and 2, though some fresh geographical description is supplied in addition:

γηθόσυνοι δὲ, Λύκοιο καταυτόθι παῖδα λιπόντες,  
 λαίφεσι πεπταμένοισιν ὑπεῖρ ἄλα ναυτίλλοντο  
 οὔρεα Παφλαγόνων θεύμενοι: οὐδὲ Κάραμβιν  
 γνάμψαν, ἐπεὶ πνοιαί τε καὶ οὐρανίου πυρὸς αἴγλη  
 μίμνεν ἕως Ἴστροιο μέγαν ῥόον εἰσαφίκοντο.  
 Κόλχοι δ' αὐτ', ἄλλοι μὲν ἐτώσια μαστεύοντες  
 Κυανέας Πόντοιο διέκ πέτρας ἐπέρησαν,  
 ἄλλοι δ' αὖ ποταμὸν μετεκίαθον, οἷσιν ἄνασσεν  
 Ἄψυρτος, Καλὸν δὲ διὰ στόμα πεῖρε λιασθεῖς:  
 τῷ καὶ ὑπέφθη τούς γε βαλὼν ὑπερ ἀρχένα γαίης  
 κόλπον ἔσω πόντοιο πανέσχατον Ἴονιοιο.  
 Ἴστρον γάρ τις νῆσος ἐέργεται οὔνομα Πεύκη  
 τριγλῶχιν, εὖρος μὲν ἐς αἰγιαλοὺς ἀνέχουσα,  
 στεῖνον δ' αὐτ' ἀγκῶνα ποτὶ ῥόον: ἀμφὶ δὲ δοιαί  
 σχίζονται προχοαί: τὴν μὲν καλέουσι Νάρηκος:  
 τὴν δ' ὑπὸ τῇ νεάτῃ Καλὸν στόμα: τῆδὲ διαπρὸ  
 Ἄψυρτος Κόλχοι τε θωότερον ὠρμήθησαν,  
 οἱ δ' ὑποῦ νήσοιο κατ' ἀκροτάτης ἐνέοντο  
 τηλόθεν.

Filled with joy, and leaving behind in this very place the son of Lykos,  
 They voyaged over the sea with sails spread wide,  
 Gazing out at the mountains of Paphlagonia, but they did not  
 Round Karambis, since the gales and the gleam of celestial flame  
 Remained, until they arrived in the mighty course of Istros.  
 But some of the Kolkhians, in vain pursuit  
 Traversed the Cobalt Rocks of Pontos,  
 While others in turn sought the river, those whom  
 Apsyrτος commanded, and turning aside entered the Beautiful Mouth.  
 Thus he took the lead, bringing these men over the tongue of land  
 Into the furthest gulf of the Ionian Sea.  
 For a certain island by the name of Peuke is encircled by Istros,  
 Triangular, projecting its breadth toward the shore,  
 And a narrow apex toward the river, and around it two  
 Courses divide. They call the one that of Narex,  
 And the other, on the southern side, the Beautiful Mouth. And by this route  
 Through in advance Apsyrτος and the Kolkhians hastened more quickly;  
 But north by way of the island's tip [the Argonauts] ventured  
 Far (4.298-316).

The reader's comprehension of the different routes taken by the Argonauts and by the band of wayward Kolkhians depends upon a familiarity with the geographical framework established by

Apollonios in prior sections of the journey. The heroes follow the outbound route in reverse until the point at which they cross the Euxine, confident in the wind and the blazing portent of Hekate guiding their path. Prominent features of Pontic topography orient both Argonaut and reader and mark the point of divergence from the Argo's original eastbound route. The mountains of Paphlagonia serve as a last point of correspondence between the two voyages, marked by the poet with stress on the pathetic force of the heroic line of sight.<sup>108</sup> This divergence is further marked by instant deprivation of orientational aids other than οὐρανίου πυρὸς αἴγλη, a visual cue essential to the successful transition of the Argonauts from the itinerary of Phineus to that of Argos.<sup>109</sup> The celestial flame that connects these two regional frameworks is not itself related directionally to either.<sup>110</sup> Conversely, the southbound route of the wayward Kolkhians is dependent upon the geographical framework established in Books 1 and 2 but disappears from the narrative upon the successful traversal of the Symplegades. The swift pursuit of Apsyrtos' Kolkhians charting a course through virgin territory, by contrast, encourages a brief pause in the hodological description of the various routes to accommodate a proportionally brief shift into the quasi-cartographic descriptive mode.<sup>111</sup>

Apollonios provides the requisite spatial framework for an ambush sequence and the subsequent inversion of the ambush upon the original ambushers by elaborating upon the

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<sup>108</sup> The Argonauts do not merely catch sight of this now-familiar geographical reference point; they *wonder* at the sight of it. θεούμενοι denotes the physical act of observation and the mental effects of perception on the self.

<sup>109</sup> Note that Argos provides no specific instructions directing the Argonauts from Phineus' linear framework to the zone of own synoptic geographical description, which ends at the mouths of Istros.

<sup>110</sup> There is even more ambiguity to the nature of the god-sent αἴγλη if one considers the sudden shift in terminology between the initial appearance of Hekate's portent (4.294-6, quoted below) and its mention here (4.301) and recognizes the curiously solar features of the latter. I will discuss this further below when treating the narratological structure of the route and its relation to spatial description.

<sup>111</sup> See below in the discussion of the structure of the Istros route for treatment of this momentary shift in descriptive mode.

connective potential of the Istros as a continental thoroughfare.<sup>112</sup> The poet essentially duplicates Argos' description of the Istros' central European bifurcation in miniature by further dividing the river's eastern course in two hard by the Euxine coast at the Island of Peuke. Apollonios seems to equate this island with the delta of the Danube, which is laced with further channels and encompasses numerous "islands" formed thereby. Other writers may have proposed a larger number of mouths, but Apollonios' choice of two facilitates the ambush in a simple framework while preserving the essential shape of the delta in the triangular island Peuke, which is elsewhere located upriver or out at sea.<sup>113</sup> The assimilation of complex topographical features into a geographical framework articulated textually by a system of linear relationships and simple polygons demonstrates Apollonios' inclination to tailor the visual component of a quasi-cartographical description to suit the conflict impelling a complex plot.

Following the description of Peuke, Apollonios resorts to the use of *ethne* as geographical reference points in a manner akin to that which characterized his description of the Argo's route along the southeastern shores of the Euxine at the close of Book 2.<sup>114</sup> The linear sequence collapses into a catalogue of ethnonyms enumerating the tribes impacted by the novel sight of Argo:<sup>115</sup>

εἰαμενήσι δ' ἐν ἄσπετα πώεα λείπον  
 ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι νηῶν φόβῳ, οἷά τε θῆρας  
 ὀσσόμενοι πόντου μεγακήτεος ἐξανιόντας.  
 οὐ γάρ πω ἀλίας γε πάρος ποθὶ νῆας ἴδοντο

<sup>112</sup> For a Homeric example of geographical description as a component of the dynamics of ambush, consider the ambush set by the suitors for Telemachos in the *Odyssey* and his successful avoidance of the plot, articulated in a disjointed narrative divided between Books 4 and 15.

<sup>113</sup> For ancient accounts of the mouths of Istros, consult the list of references compiled in Livrea 1973, p. 103. See especially Herodotos 4.47.2 and Ephoros F157 (= Strabo 7.3.15) for a larger figure (5). Pseudo-Skylax locates the similarly named island of Leuke in the gulf formed between the Istros and the Tauric Chersonese (68.4). Strabo, by contrast, locates Peuke 120 stades inland from the sea, and knows of seven mouths (7.3.15).

<sup>114</sup> See Chapter 2 Part 1 above for the equation of *ethnos* and *chora* as elements of description from the hodological perspective in Book 2.

<sup>115</sup> See Thalmann 2011, pp. 115-146 for a discussion of passages such as this, which constitute the integration of Hellenic self-fashioning through a comparison with the Other as an element of spatial production.

οὐτ' οὖν Θρήξι μιγάδες Σκύθαι οὐδὲ Σίγυννοι,  
οὐτ' οὖν Τραυκένιοι, οὐθ' οἱ περὶ Λαύριον ἤδη  
Σίνδοι ἐρημαῖον πεδίον μέγα ναιετάοντες.

And in the river-meadows rustic shepherds left innumerable flocks  
Out of fear of the ships, considering them akin to beasts  
Having emerged from the sea of monsters.  
For by no means had they previously seen seagoing ships,  
Neither the Skythians mingled with Thracians, nor the Sigynnoi,  
Nor yet the Traukenioi, nor the Sindoi  
Who already inhabited the great desolate plain around Laurion (4.316-322).

The occasion for this list of continental *ethne* is not explicitly linked with the sequential articulation of the Istros route, but appeals instead to the collective *altérité* conveyed by the assemblage of remote ethnonyms. So obscure indeed are some of these—whether due to errors introduced during the manuscript tradition or poor attestation in extant literature—that their geographical and cultural significance may be irretrievably lost to the modern reader.<sup>116</sup> A number are, however, attested to varying degrees in the Classical tradition. Skythians and Thracians had served as the broad regional and ethnic designations used for continental European northerners by the Greeks since Homer. The regions inhabited by each of these peoples were defined with increasingly precise borders, particularly along the northwest coast of the Euxine, an area of frequent and prolonged contact with Greek traders and settlers through the Classical and Hellenistic periods.<sup>117</sup>

As noted above in my discussion of Argos' geographical insights, the Istros was an enduringly popular topographical feature for writers delineating these regions. The reverse—the use of these tribes as reference points on Argos' schematic representation—is less effective due to general ignorance of the course of the Upper and Middle Danube, necessitating the projection

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<sup>116</sup> The Traukenioi are mentioned only by Stephanus of Byzantium (631.20) as neighbors of the Sindoi on the Euxine littoral. The manuscripts all transmit “Graukenioi,” which is otherwise unattested (though it is unclear whether Stephanus' source for the “Traukenioi” was not in fact this very passage). Fortunately, other tribes listed in this catalogue are better attested in the extant literature.

<sup>117</sup> For a study of trade with the Greeks and colonial foundations in the western Euxine, see Boardman 1999, pp. 238-263.



of this regional relationship from the coast far inland to the mythical bifurcation of the Istros. Unlike Argos' description, however, the catalogue of *ethne* noted at 4.319-322 serve this orientational role well. Though precise placement of these tribes in a geographical framework is difficult if limited to the vague regional network provided in here, comparison with the location of these peoples in other texts offers a clearer picture.

The sequence in which *ethne* are listed in this brief catalogue contributes more to the geographical framework in this portion of the Istros narrative when the reader is aware of their place in the geographical frameworks of other ancient writers. It becomes evident that Apollonios arranges them along a route inland when these comparisons are made. Moreover, the tribes should all have access to territory adjacent to the river, as their reaction to the strange sight of the ships prompted the catalogue to begin with: these are communities of ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι pasturing their sheep in the river meadows. It therefore seems that Apollonios intends them as regional reference points replacing topographical features in the context of this condensed inland description. As a point of comparison, Herodotos traces the course of Istros in similarly broad strokes oriented along a linear sequence of ethnically defined regions, but anchors them in space using the Istros' numerous tributaries as topographical reference points.<sup>118</sup> Apollonios instead relies upon intertextual allusion for geographical clarification.

As noted above, both Thrace and Skythia are more clearly defined to the Greek eye along the lowest stretches of the Istros and the coast of the Euxine. Given their sequential priority in this catalogue, it follows that they represent the first pastoral nomads passed by the ships. They form an initial reference point for this sequence close to the delta and extending inland to the river's mythical bifurcation if the insights of Argos are taken into account. Beyond this region

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<sup>118</sup> Herodotean prose is suited to this linear approach to complex riverine topography and frequently relies upon it in order to project order over vast extents of distant territory. For his description of the Istros, see 4.48-50. For his use of rivers elsewhere in Skythia, consult the surrounding description from 4.47-58 and Purves 2010, pp. 123-126.

the obscurity of each tribe increases.<sup>119</sup> The Sigynnoi are attested by various authors in a wide range of locations. Herodotos, in his description of Thrace, notes their place along the upper courses of the Istros as it approaches the territory of the Enetai at the head of the Adriatic:

τὸ δὲ πρὸς βορρῶ τῆς χώρας ἔτι ταύτης οὐδεὶς ἔχει φράσαι τὸ ἀτρεκέδες οἴτινες εἰσὶ ἄνθρωποι οἰκέοντες αὐτήν, ἀλλὰ τὰ πέρην ἤδη τοῦ Ἰστρου ἔρημος χώρα φαίνεται εἰσοῦσα καὶ ἄπειρος. μόνους δὲ δύναμαι πυθέσθαι οἰκέοντας πέρην τοῦ Ἰστρου ἀνθρώπους τοῖσι οὖνομα εἶναι Σιγύννας, ἐσθῆτι δὲ χρωμένους Μηδικῇ: τοὺς δὲ ἵππους αὐτῶν εἶναι λασίους ἅπαν τὸ σῶμα ἐπὶ πέντε δακτύλους τὸ βάθος τῶν τριχῶν, μικροὺς δὲ καὶ σιμοὺς καὶ ἀδυνάτους ἄνδρας φέρειν, ζευγνυμένους δὲ ὑπ' ἄρματα εἶναι ὄξυτάτους: ἄρματηλατέειν δὲ πρὸς ταῦτα τοὺς ἐπιχωρίους. κατήκειν δὲ τούτων τοὺς οὖρους ἀγχοῦ Ἐνετῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ Ἀδρίῃ. εἶναι δὲ Μήδων σφέας ἀποίκους λέγουσι. ὅκως δὲ οὗτοι Μήδων ἀποικοὶ γεγόνασι, ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἔχω ἐπιφράσασθαι, γένοιτο δ' ἂν πᾶν ἐν τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ. Σιγύννας δ' ὧν καλέουσι Δίγυες οἱ ἄνω ὑπὲρ Μασσαλῆς οἰκέοντες τοὺς καπήλους, Κύπριοι δὲ τὰ δόρατα.

Regarding the area to the north of this region none are able to demonstrate exactly what men inhabit it, and regarding the other side of the Istros the territory appears uninhabited and endless. But I have been able to learn that the name of one group of men living across the Istros is the Sigunnai, and that they wear Median clothing, that their horses are shaggy all over their bodies to a length of five finger spans, that these are small and short-snouted and unable to bear men, but that when yoked together to chariots they are exceedingly swift, and that owing to these characteristics the natives drive chariots. Their borders extend to the Enetai on the Adriatic. They say that they are themselves Median colonists. But how they came to be Median colonists I am unable to address; indeed, anything may come to pass given a sufficiently long time. But the Ligyes who dwell inland above Massalia call their hucksters Sigunnai, while the Cypriots call their spears this (5.9).

This heavily ethnographic passage corresponds well with Apollonios' placement of the Sigynnoi west of the Thracians and Skythians. However, an exact correspondence between their locations in Herodotos and Apollonios is impossible given the critical difference in their placement of the sources of Istros. Herodotos, in an uncharacteristic bow to archaic concepts of symmetrical geography, suggests a source in the far west of the *oikoumene* near the unidentified city of Pyrene among the Keltoi and Kynetes to reflect his idea that the Istros is a European counterpart to the Nile, the sources of which he places in the far west of Libya.<sup>120</sup> Apollonios, by contrast, locates its sources in the far north among the Rhipaian Mountains. If Apollonios relies on the

<sup>119</sup> The rough waters of the Iron Gates were likely a significant obstacle for early attempts at navigating upstream to the gentler country of the Middle Danube.

<sup>120</sup> For Herodotos' discussion of the sources of Istros and comparison with the Nile, see 2.33-34.

testimony of Herodotos here for the relative location of the Sigynnoi, he must do so without recourse to the geographical framework established by the historian. This offers insight into the compositional strategy employed by Apollonios in the construction of the Istros route. He established a basic geography of the river, drawing heavily on mythological accounts and adapting more recent information to facilitate the river's use as an escape route in the narrative context.<sup>121</sup> Reference to the Traukenioi and Sindoi are similarly severed from precise topographical placement. In the case of the former the modern reader is entirely without recourse to external means of geographical contextualization due to the apparent lack of surviving attestations of this ethnonym.<sup>122</sup> Apollonios links the latter, by contrast, to the unidentified toponym Laurion, a name pregnant with Classical associations but likely of central European origin.<sup>123</sup> Though the modern reader lacks sufficient ancient testimony to contextualize Apollonios' placement of this tribe along the Istros, it appears that he has again negotiated between variant traditions of the tribe's location, else he would not include a temporal element (ἤδη) to their association with Laurion.

Apollonios completes the Istros segment by detailing the river's course from its mythical bifurcation to the Adriatic. He resumes the reliance on specific, visually prominent topographical features after the obscure ethnographical orientation quoted above. The Kolkhians of Apsyrtos retain the descriptive focalization of this passage:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τ' Ἄγγουρον ὄρος καὶ ἄπωθεν ἐόντα  
 Ἄγγούρου ὄρεος σκόπελον πάρα Καυλιακοῖο,  
 ᾧ περὶ δὴ σχίζων Ἴστρος ῥόον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα

<sup>121</sup> cf. Pseudo-Skylax 20.

<sup>122</sup> I exclude Stephanus of Byzantium from consideration given the likelihood of his debt to Apollonios for this ethnonym.

<sup>123</sup> The historically significant Athenian region of Laurion and its local silver mines are the most obvious Classical parallel to this name. However, a toponym geographically closer (though chronologically distant) is the Imperial Roman frontier encampment Lauriacum, located on the Upper Danube among the foothills of the Alps. This identification corresponds with the hypothetical westward progression of locations in this catalogue despite Apollonios' unusual description of the mountainous environs as ἐρημαῖον πεδίον μέγα.

βάλλει ἄλος, πεδίον τε τὸ Λαύριον ἠμείψαντο,  
δὴ ῥα τότε Κρονίην Κόλχοι ἄλαδ' ἐκπρομολόντες,  
πάντη, μὴ σφε λάθοιεν, ὑπετμήξαντο κελεύθους.

But proceeding there beside Mount Angouron and thence  
From Mount Angouron alongside the headland of Kauliakos  
Around which Istros divides its course and this way and that  
Enters the sea, they traversed the Laurian Plain,  
Then the Kolkhians, debouching into the Kronian Sea  
In every direction, lest [the Argonauts] escape, cut off their routes (4.323-328).

Apollonios specifies the relationship between various features of the landscape passed by the Kolkhians, offering a precise sequence that clarifies the geographical framework obfuscated by the preceding catalogue of *ethne*. The identification of these topographical features is difficult again given the lack of extant testimony, but the contours illustrated here correspond with the contrast between the vast Hungarian Plain of the Middle Danube and the mountainous environs of the Iron Gates downstream.<sup>124</sup> The brief description condenses a vast extent of riverine terrain and deprives the journey any temporal markers that would indicate the passage of time. The furious pace of the ships and the condensed geography contrast markedly with the detailed narrative of the outbound itinerary, conveying the urgent plight of the heroes at this stage of the voyage. The descriptive content of the hodological narrative are thus altered in the tight confines of the river to accommodate the narrative's tonal shift.

Having treated the topographical detail of Apollonios' account of the Istros route, I will now examine the narratological structure of the route and its several shifts in perspective. As noted in the discussion of topographical detail orienting the Istros route above, a significant descriptive gap occurs in the space between the departure of the Argonauts from the mouth of the Halys River and their arrival at the Istros. Besides separating these segments of the return voyage, the gap divides the geographical frameworks described by Phineus and Argos. The

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<sup>124</sup> Precisely what location along the course of the Lower Danube inspired Apollonios' description of the mythical bifurcation is another matter of speculative debate. The Danube lacks large tributaries and offshoots on its eastbound course between the Carpathian and Balkan Mountains.

heroes have no verbally transmitted directives with which to chart a course across the open expanses of the Euxine, even after Argos provides his learned description of the European river systems that offer a potential escape route. The lack of explicit, embedded directions generates ambiguity in the mind of the reader as well. Indeed, Apollonios' readers are set adrift in the same conceptual void as that faced by the heroes at this juncture, bound in narrative time to the heroic perspective. In place of verbal guidance, an appeased Hekate offers a visual aid to lead the way: a fiery comet tracing a linear course through the sky. The appearance of this celestial path at a transitional point in the narrative between sea and river corresponds with the function of Prometheus' eagle at the conclusion of Book 2.<sup>125</sup> The visual cue of this heavenly phenomenon prepares the reader for the subtly shifting perspective that Apollonios will deploy in the ensuing riverine descriptive framework.

The poet narrates the traversal of Istros in a brief passage remarkable for its diverse narrative and descriptive structure.<sup>126</sup> Hekate's comet reintroduces the shifting descriptive standpoint deployed along the Phasis and treated above. This feature of Apollonian narration permeates the Istros itinerary, covering the brief narrative from multiple perspectives. The itinerary divides into three distinct hodological experiences at the outset, following the course of the Argonauts as well as two groups of Kolkhians. The range of epic geography covered by this brief tripartite description is vast, drawing upon the established framework constructed over the course of the narrative and supplementing this with additional material that cues a further descriptive shift toward the quasi-cartographic perspective. The view from above facilitates a schematic presentation of the river delta requisite for comprehending the means by which the

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<sup>125</sup> See Chapter 2, Part 1.

<sup>126</sup> Because I have quoted the passage in full over the course of my preceding discussion, I refrain from lengthy quotations in this section and refer my readers to these prior quotations except in cases that demand immediate consultation of the Greek.

Kolkhians arrive in the Adriatic ahead of the Argonauts. Following this synoptic description, focalization again shifts, never remaining in the same space for more than a few lines. The route is described piecemeal from multiple perspectives, generating a conglomerate description that conveys distinct thematic insights from each perspective adopted.<sup>127</sup> The perspective of the Argonauts themselves—so long the descriptive focalizer in hodological portions of the narrative—is lost along the way. This strange feature of the description augments the dynamic of the ambush, revealing to the reader the details of plot and landscape arrayed in force against the success of the heroes' return.

### **3.2 Eridanos: Knowledge, Perspective, and the Loss of Agency**

This brief final portion of Chapter 3 examines the description of the Argonauts' journey up Eridanos and the corresponding deprivation of navigational agency as the heroes despair at the horrors of kin-slaughter perpetrated in the Adriatic. Like the Istros voyage, vast swaths of terrestrial space are traversed in a series of short passages removed from any sense of temporal progression and spatially contextualized using a fusion of mythical and real-world topographical reference-points. Apollonios exploits the shifting descriptive standpoint to striking effect in laying bare the feverish landscape traversed by this final segment of the Argo's route along the world's northern fringes.

Apollonios' presentation of the Eridanos river system vacillates between spatial description and mythological excursus in a manner akin to the narrative of the Argo's approach to Kolchis and description of Prometheus' torments. This thesis is concerned with the integration

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<sup>127</sup> The description transitions between the perspectives of the hypothetical omniscient narrator describing the shape of the epic's world, the perspective of the Kolkhians hastening west to and applying an apparent mastery of geographical knowledge to effect their ambush, and the perspective of the distant Other viewing the curious display from without, frightened at the novel sight.

of multidimensional approaches to geographical description and must pass over much of Apollonios' frequent references to the transmission of mythological information. However, the integration of multiple mythological traditions into the Eridanos voyage and the privileging of this information at the expense of a sequential enumeration of topographical features indicates a change in thematic emphasis that must be addressed as it pertains to the narrative structure. The route taken by the Argonauts along the shores of the Adriatic following the murder of Apsyrtos is filled with topographical detail. The sudden shift away from this descriptive mode presents the Eridanos as a place rather than a linear space. Description focuses on features of the atmosphere instead of features of the landscape:

ἡ δ' ἔσσυτο πολλὸν ἐπιπρὸ  
 λαίφεσιν: ἔς δ' ἔβαλον μύχατον ῥόον Ἴηριδανοῖο,  
 ἔνθα ποτ' αἰθαλόεντι τυπεῖς πρὸς στέρνα κεραυνῶ  
 ἡμιδαῆς Φαέθων πέσεν ἄρματος Ἡελίοιο  
 λίμνης ἔς προχοᾶς πολυβενθέος: ἡ δ' ἔτι νῦν περ  
 τραύματος αἰθομένοιο βαρὺν ἀνακηκίει ἀτμόν.  
 οὐδέ τις ὕδωρ κεῖνο διὰ περὰ κοῦφα τανύσσας  
 οἰωνὸς δύναται βαλέειν ὑπερ, ἀλλὰ μεσηγὺς  
 φλογμῶ ἐπιθρῶσκει πεποτημένος. ἀμφὶ δὲ κοῦραι  
 Ἴηλιάδες ταναῆσιν ἀείμεναι αἰγείροισιν,  
 μύρονται κινυρὸν μέλαι γόν: ἐκ δὲ φαεινὰς  
 ἡλέκτρου λιβάδας βλεφάρων προχέουσιν ἔραζε:  
 αἰ μὲν τ' ἡελίῳ ψαμάθοις ἐπι τερσαίνονται,  
 εὔτ' ἂν δὲ κλύζησι κελαινῆς ὕδατα λίμνης  
 ἡϊόνας πνοιῆ πολυηχέος ἐξ ἀνέμοιο,  
 δὴ τότε ἔς Ἴηριδανὸν προκυλίνδεται ἀθρόα πάντα  
 κυμαίνοντι ῥόῳ.

She sped far ahead  
 With the sails, and entered the innermost current of Eridanos.  
 Where Phaethon, stricken in the chest with blazing lightning  
 Fell half-cooked from the chariot of the Sun  
 Into the courses of the deep lagoon, which even now  
 Spouts forth a heavy mist from his burning wound.  
 Nor is any bird soaring across that water on nimble wings  
 Able to traverse it, but flitting over the middle  
 Plunges down at the heat. And the Heliad maids  
 Singing among tapering poplars  
 Motionlessly emit a plaintive wail. And gleaming  
 Drops of amber they pour from their eyelids,  
 Which are dried by the sun upon the sand;

But when the waters of the black lagoon wash over  
The banks in a gale from the keening wind,  
Then in heaps they all tumble forth into Eridanos  
With the raging current (4.595-611).

This deeply allusive spatial description engages each of the reader's senses through the heroic perspective, generating a rich and multifaceted atmosphere. Yet the deep lagoon lacks any specific topographical features whereby the lavish vignette might have been contextualized in a geographical framework. Apollonios temporarily abandons the linear framework of an itinerary to present a caustic atmosphere as a pathetic foil to the Argonauts' own despair.

Apollonios resumes the description of this riverine voyage to introduce the nexus of the three-headed waterway at the source of Eridanos. In doing so, the poet fulfills a geographical fantasy by uniting the headwaters of three major rivers.<sup>128</sup> Across this fantastical transit route Apollonios draws the Argo into the alien landscape at world's end:

ἐκ δὲ τόθεν Ῥοδανοῖο βαθὺν ῥόον εἰσεπέρησαν,  
ὅς τ' εἰς Ἑριδανὸν μετανίσσεται, ἄμμια δ' ὕδωρ  
ἐν ξυνοχῇ βέβρυκε κυκώμενον. αὐτὰρ ὁ γαίης  
ἐκ μυχάτης, ἴνα τ' εἰσὶ πύλαι καὶ ἐδέθλια Νυκτός,  
ἔνθεν ἀπορνύμενος, τῇ μὲν τ' ἐπερεύγεται ἀκτὰς  
Ὠκεανοῦ, τῇ δ' αὖτε μετ' Ἴονίην ἄλα βάλλει,  
τῇ δ' ἐπὶ Σαρδόνιον πέλαγος καὶ ἀπείρονα κόλπον  
ἐπτὰ διὰ στομάτων ἰεὶς ῥόον. ἐκ δ' ἄρα τοῖο  
λίμνας εἰσέλασαν δυσχείμονας, αἱ τ' ἀνὰ Κελτῶν  
ἠπειρον πέπτανται ἀθέσφατον. ἔνθα κεν οἱ γε  
ἄτη ἀεικελίη πέλασαν: φέρε γάρ τις ἀπορρῶξ  
κόλπον ἐς Ὠκεανοῖο, τὸν οὐ προδαέντες ἔμελλον  
εἰσβαλέειν, τόθεν οὐ κεν ὑπότροποι ἐξεσάωθεν.  
ἀλλ' Ἥρη σκοπέλοιο καθ' Ἐρκυνίου ἰάχησεν  
οὐρανόθεν προθοροῦσα, φόβῳ δ' ἐτίναχθεν αὐτῆς  
πάντες ὁμῶς: δεινὸν γὰρ ἐπὶ μέγας ἔβραχεν αἰθήρ.  
ἄψ δὲ παλιντροπόωντο θεᾶς ὕπο, καὶ ῥ' ἐνόησαν  
τὴν οἴμον τῇ πέρ τε καὶ ἔπλετο νόστος ἰοῦσι.  
δηναῖοι δ' ἀκτὰς ἀλιμυρέας εἰσαφίκοντο,  
Ἥρης ἐννεσίησι, δι' ἔθνεα μυρία Κελτῶν  
καὶ Λιγύων περόντες ἀδήιοι: ἀμφὶ γὰρ αἰνὴν

<sup>128</sup> Apollonios identifies the Eridanos and Rhodanos as branches of this mythical river system but leaves the northernmost branch without a name. Given this branch's northbound course and terminus at Okeanos, the description suggests an early attestation of the River Rhine.



ἤερα χεῖε θεὰ πάντ' ἤματα νισσομένοισι.

Thence they embarked upon the deep course of the Rhodanos,  
Which passes along into Eridanos, and stirred into confusion  
The water roars in union. For from innermost earth  
Where are the gates and threshold of Night,  
Stirred thence it issues forth in one direction to the headlands  
Of Okeanos, and in another it enters the Ionian Sea,  
And in another directs its current toward the Sardinian Sea and the immeasurable gulf  
Through seven mouths. But from here  
They entered the wintery lakes, which extend north to the  
Unutterable territory of the Kelttoi: there they would  
Have approached in unseemly ignorance. For there is a certain offshoot  
To the gulf of Okeanos, which at unawares they were about to  
Enter, whence their return would not have been saved,  
But Hera shouted from the Herkynian promontory,  
Springing down from heaven; nevertheless, all were shaken with fear of her,  
For the high ether resounded frightfully.  
But they were turned back by the goddess and recognized  
The way preceding by which their homecoming would come to pass.  
They passed through the salt-surgng promontories alive  
At Hera's urging, continuing through the numberless tribes of Kelttoi  
and Ligyes unscathed, for the goddess poured out a tremendous  
Mist for them as they advanced throughout the day (4.627-648).

The narrative returns to a mixture of hodological and quasi-cartographical approaches to the route of the Argo as the poet articulates an itinerary through this landscape. The integration of these descriptive standpoints is complete: each branch of the river system is described in relation to the central nexus and their termini on the shores of various bodies of water, and along each the Argonauts travel for at least a short distance, including the nameless ἀπορρώξ that nearly leads the heroes to their doom in the gulf of Okeanos. The readers are privileged with knowledge accessible only to Hera and the other immortals from their perspective in heaven, producing brief moments of dramatic irony as the heroes attempt to navigate the system without knowing its contours.

After a brief delay Hera intervenes and provides the requisite knowledge and divine protection to ensure the heroes' *nostos*, curiously applied in this geographical context. This term cannot refer to the heroes' path back to Thessaly: many trials lie ahead of them before they achieve the end of their journey. What Apollonios implies here is a link between the

Mediterranean and a decentralized idea of the Greek homeland: Hera speeds the Argonauts “home” to the *oikoumene*, the vast inhabited world in which the heroes regain agency over their journey by a familiarity with the long sea-lanes of the Mediterranean. The stark contrast in geographical mastery of the northern landscape between reader and hero, achieved by a description that aligns the perspectives of reader and immortal, is permitted to revert to equilibrium upon the Argo’s return through the mouths of Rhodanos, the gates of Apollonios’ *oikoumene*.

## 4. Conclusion

The roving course of this analysis has traversed a diverse array of geographical frameworks and charted the contours of Apollonios' shifting descriptive strategies in the context of each major river system along the Argo's route. The methodological meanders complicating its argumentation merit a brief recapitulation here at the terminus of this journey.

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of geographical innovation in the *Argonautika* by contextualizing Apollonios' representation of the Argo's route in the literary and geographical traditions of antiquity. Apollonios expanded the treatment of the journey by elaborating on the particulars of the itinerary to and from Kolchis. From a narratological standpoint, Apollonios adopted shifting descriptive modes to a degree unrivalled in previous extant articulations of the route. The poet therefore enriches the mythical voyage on two levels by engaging with the traditions of both geographical detail and narratological strategy.

Chapter 2 explored Apollonios' integration of a riverine organizational principle into the geographical framework of the journey and its relationship to the descriptive strategies noted above. The use of rivers as points of focalization expand the range of territory encompassed within Apollonios' geographical framework. Moreover, they provide a means of shifting descriptive standpoint between the hodological experience of the heroes and the quasi-cartographical panorama of the narrator's omniscient perspective. Chapter 2 dwells on the articulation of these descriptions as internal extensions of story space cued by stimuli perceived from the heroic perspective.

Chapter 3 continued this exploration of Apollonios' river-oriented representations of space by turning to the use of rivers as conduits within the network of places constituting the epic's internal geography. The Istros serves as an example of a river covered in two forms of

geographical exegesis, one in the context of an embedded narrative and one following the path of the ship itself. The latter description builds upon the framework established by the former and exploits the reader's familiarity with this network to leap between several descriptive standpoints in the context of relatively brief travel narrative. In contrast, the description of the journey up Eridanos into the confines of Northern Europe exploits the unity of spatial description supplied by the omniscient narrator and plays on the denial of this information to the heroes. The thematic significance of this contrast demonstrates Apollonios' employment of geographical knowledge as a device of the epic plot.

The varied focus of each chapter offers a survey of Apollonian geography as a twofold contribution to the tradition of spatial description in antiquity. Examination of Apollonios' representation of rivers in both detail and method of the geographical description reveals the depth of the poet's capacity for conceptualizing vast territories and the finesse with which he weaves the exegesis of story space into the epic's narrative context. Beyond simply echoing the advance of geographical interests to a terrestrial perspective in Early Hellenistic Alexandria, the *Argonautika* demonstrates that this fresh continental perspective is capable of accommodating the thematic dimensions of an epic voyage with as much power as the boundless seas of Archaic epic.

The field of narratological analysis, and specifically the focus on descriptive strategy that I have endeavored to promote in this study, awaits comprehensive application to the geographical discourse attested in other ancient writers. The analytical model articulated in the introduction to this study is intentionally broad: Apollonios and the *Argonautika* are but a single data point in a vast—but finite—corpus of texts of sufficient length and complexity to convey a spatial framework. Moreover, the broad scope of this model may be honed to a keen edge and

trained on questions yet more specific than the matter of rivers in Apollonian epic. Ideally, this thesis will encourage the further development of a philology of spatial description: every text might undergo a still more stringent analysis of syntactical and stylistic features. This data would complement the comprehensive stylistic analyses already undertaken by proponents of narratology and spatial studies. Only through such a synthesis of methodological skillsets will a history of geography in the Classical tradition be forged for the new millennium.

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