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## Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4 and the epic gaze: There and back again

The visuality of Apollonius *Argonautica* is complex and fascinating, and important for understanding that of later Greek and Roman epic.<sup>1</sup> The *Argonautica* features in *The Epic Gaze* as the epic that wouldn't, a refusenik of the epic genre, a counterexample.<sup>2</sup> This chapter explores the particular visuality of Apollonius in more depth, by focusing on book 4 and its continuities and divergences from the previous books.<sup>3</sup> William Thalmann, using the poetics of space, produces a reading of the Argonauts as a force for order, a representation of Greekness, closely interlinked with Greek colonisation.<sup>4</sup> Although he is careful to bring out the negatives, the difficulties and the confusions, this is an unusually positive reading of the *Argonautica*, rather in the same vein as Tim Stover's reading of Valerius Flaccus.<sup>5</sup> Space and visuality are closely related, and Thalmann illuminates processes of gazing in Apollonius, partly drawing on, or paralleling, the work of Alex Purves.<sup>6</sup> In contrast Sistakou's evocation of the *Argonautica* as "dark epic" calls up a different visuality, one centred on darkness, fantasy and horror.<sup>7</sup> In this chapter I re-examine gaze and vision in Apollonius by thinking about the difference between the explorers' gaze and

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1 See also Kampakoglou, this volume. On the importance of Apollonius for Virgil, see Nelis 2001. Apollonius in Lucan: Murray 2011; in Valerius (two recent interventions): Finkmann 2014, Seal 2014; in Claudian: Schindler 2005.

2 Lovatt 2013: lack of gaze of Zeus (34–5); divine viewing in comparison to Valerius Flaccus (48–9, 51, 54); epiphany and aesthetics (81); lack of prophetic madness (130); subverting ekphrasis (167–8); emptiness and the consumptive gaze (202); Medea and the evil eye (334–6).

3 On book 4 see bibliography in Hunter 2015, esp. Livrea 1973, Hutchinson 1988, 121–41, Dyck 1989, Goldhill 1991, 298–300, Williams 1991, 273–94, Harder 1994, Knight 1995, 200–7, Meyer 2001, Hunter / Fantuzzi 2004, 105–6, 123–4.

4 Thalmann 2011.

5 Stover 2012.

6 Purves 2010.

7 Sistakou 2012.

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**Note:** Many thanks to the organisers of the conference on Greek vision for inviting me, Alexandros Kampakoglou for showing me work in progress, Peter Hulse for some years of stimulating discussion of Apollonius 4, and for reading this chapter: Hulse 2015 has been a point of reference throughout this article. Finally, thanks to Richard Hunter for getting me into Argonauts. All translations of Apollonius are adapted from R. L. Hunter, *Jason and the Golden Fleece: (the Argonautica)*, Oxford 2009. Other translations are my own.

the colonial gaze, between the outward journey and the return, between the Argonauts as objects and subjects. To what extent are the Argonauts a force for order, distinguishable from Herakles as a bringer of chaos?<sup>8</sup> I also re-evaluate the significance of the divine gaze in book 4, where it takes on a new prominence, and explore the epiphanies of book 4. Much of the action in book 4 takes place in darkness, and I investigate the effects of this darkness. How does failure of the gaze relate to narrative control? How does the *Argonautica*'s play with different levels of knowledge and information relate to its exploration of visuality? Finally, I suspect that "the gaze" may not necessarily be straightforwardly visual, and I here pursue the connection between vision and the other senses in Apollonius book 4.<sup>9</sup>

First I briefly address the nature of vision and desire in the *Argonautica* as a whole. In a brief footnote (Lovatt 2013, 9 n. 25) I suggested that we could characterise Apollonius *Argonautica* as "the epic of desire", in contrast to Nonnus *Dionysiaca* as "the epic of fantasy". "Fantasy is the spectacle too full to retain meaning; desire the ever-receding absence; integration solves desire by applying fantasy; intersection sets the two against each other to make us uncomfortably aware of the whole process".<sup>10</sup> This follows a model of interpreting film put forward by McGowan 2007, based on the idea of the gaze as the *objet petit a*, the unimaginable, inaccessible desire of the other, a disturbance in the field of vision. In what senses is Apollonius' *Argonautica* about ever-receding absence? Both the *Odyssey* and the *Argonautica* as quest epics stage a process of deferral and delay in order to create the conditions of narrative. Odysseus' *nostos* is continually deferred; even on Ithaka he must remain in disguise and his relationship with Penelope and then with the other Ithakans is still under strain (and he will leave again). Does he ever actually achieve reintegration into his home? Revenge becomes a kind of pay-off, but a disturbing one, at least for a modern audience. The spectacle of the suitors' bodies piled up like fish (22.383–9) connects eerily with Lacan's image of the sardine can;<sup>11</sup> we feel ourselves potentially at sea, dead objects overwhelmed by the world around us.

Apollonius' *Argonautica* sets in tension two contradictory epic modes: in the one, the quest aims at the achievement of *kleos*, and simply setting out, gathering the heroes together, and building the ship is all that is needed to make a permanent mark on the landscape.<sup>12</sup> In the other, the fleece itself is a

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<sup>8</sup> Thalmann 2011, 48–9; as so often, Feeney 1991, 94–8 stimulates much thought on visuality, here on Herakles as object of the gaze of the Argonauts.

<sup>9</sup> On synaesthesia: Butler / Purves 2013; on smell: Bradley 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Lovatt 2013, 9 n. 25.

<sup>11</sup> An image of the world looking back at us: Lacan and Miller 1978, 91–104.

<sup>12</sup> On *kleos* and Libya, see Hunter 2008, 353–5.

symbol, but of what we are not sure; its acquisition is compromised by the manner of its acquiring and Medea's involvement; the fact that it does not deliver to Jason the kingship for which he had hoped, or the reintegration with his family for which the Argonauts long, but rather exile with Medea, and further bloodshed and tragedy, continually overshadows the sense of accomplishment created by reaching Colchis, gaining the fleece, escaping from the Colchians and returning home. The fleece becomes an empty signifier, a signifier of emptiness. The final movement of the poem, focused on the story of Euphemos and the clod, does not build on and integrate with what has gone before.<sup>13</sup> Thalmann suggests that the poem is "written from [this] position of obliquity, which, in its condition of being neither 'here' nor 'there', opened old understandings of space to re-examination".<sup>14</sup> Obliquity here refers to its writing in Alexandria, both at the centre of an empire and on the edge of Hellenism. But obliquity is also a characteristic of the female gaze: lack of power, indirectness, hostility, "looking askance", and of the oppositional strand of epic.<sup>15</sup> The *Argonautica* (and particularly book 4) is characterised by a sense of deferral and compromise; it is a poem about the journey rather than the arrival, the process rather than the achievement of the object of desire.

## Desire and the fleece

I start with a case study of the actual acquisition of the fleece, which brings out my key themes for book 4. The book begins in darkness, as Aeetes devises his plans all night long (παννύχιος, 4.7). Medea's fear on leaving the city is intensified by the darkness (47–8). The Moon watches her, but does not intervene, by, for instance, lighting her way (as at *Thebaid* 12.291–311 at the instigation of Juno). In contrast, the Argonauts are associated with light:

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<sup>13</sup> Pace Hunter 2015, 14 who argues that the Greek colonisation of North Africa forms the ultimate *telos* of the expedition: "The Argonautic expedition thus assumes a significance of scale which might otherwise seem to have been lacking". But if so this is certainly an oblique sort of teleology (and Hunter acknowledges the increasingly episodic nature of the end of book 4 (20), as well as its "Callimachean flavour" [25]), perhaps most clearly brought out by comparison with the *Aeneid*. Aeneas, too, is driven to North Africa, from which he only escapes with difficulty; while Italy has been prophesied and repeatedly insisted upon, Africa is the diversion which pulls the expedition and Roman history out of its path.

<sup>14</sup> Thalmann 2011, 199.

<sup>15</sup> Obliquity and the epic gaze: Lovatt 2013, 52 (Bacchus), 65–6 (Juno), 115, 182–4 (cloaks), 231, 282 (*Achilleid*), 306 (Camilla), 332–4 (Ovid and *Invidia*), 342 (Statius' *Pietas*).

ἀντιπέρην λεύσσοῦσα πυρὸς σέλας, ὃ ρά τ' ἀέθλου  
παννύχιοι ἦρωες ἔυφροσύνησιν ἔδαιον (4.68–9)

... when she saw opposite the gleam of fire, which the heroes  
kept burning all night long in their rejoicing at the contest.

The darkness is emphasised by Medea's contact using her voice, which is recognised by the sons of Phrixos; she helps the Argonauts to navigate across the river to her using repeated shouts. Medea as female other can be expected to be at home in the darkness: implied at 50–3 is the idea that witches often roam at night. The Argonauts in contrast are creatures of the light, but with her encouragement are able to use sound as well as sight to control their surroundings. In fact, they are entirely reliant on Medea not only to lead them to the fleece but even to warn them that they are about to be attacked, as the repetition of παννύχιος suggests (4.7, 69). Both Medea and Aeetes make use of the night-time, while the Argonauts enjoy corporate bonding and frivolity (or social harmony). The surreptitious and unheroic nature of the acquisition of the fleece is emphasised by its timing: Jason and Medea creep out in the pre-dawn darkness, like huntsmen afraid that light will destroy the scent they are following (AR *Arg.* 4.109–13). Sleep compromises the function of the eyes and must be actively “thrown off” (ἐβάλλοντο, 109) and light physically intervenes with both tracks and the scent of the prey. The mention of the fleece at 123–6, now reddened by the rising sun (ἐρεύθεται, 126), draws their and our eyes to the ultimate goal, perhaps also hinting at the eroticism associated with the fleece.<sup>16</sup> The active predatory movements of Jason and Medea, who knows the path, is set against the even more predatory gaze of the dragon with his sleepless eyes (3):

αὐτὰρ ὁ ἀντικρὺ περιμήκεα τείνετο δειρὴν  
ὄξυς ἀπνοισιν προΐδων ὄφιν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν  
νισσομένους, ροίζει δὲ πελώριον· (4.127–9)

But right in front the monster stretched out its vast neck  
keen with his sleepless eyes he saw them coming  
and hissed very loudly;

The power of the dragon is located not just in his powerful gaze, which unlike that of the hunters, does not sleep, but also in its enormous size and terrifying

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<sup>16</sup> On redness and eroticism, see Kampakoglou, this vol. Hunter 2015 *ad loc.* notes the verbal link to the cloak of Jason, which further increases overtones of eroticism and deception, through its association with Hypsipyle. Apollonius' interest in reflected light is discussed by Hulse 2015, 97 and Zanker 2004, 62–71. Most importantly, it is used to form the marriage bed of Jason and Medea in Phaeacia (4.1141–3).

hiss, which pervades the countryside and petrifies mothers with their newborn babies (131–8).<sup>17</sup> The difficulty of perceiving the dragon in the darkness creates a sense of sinister illusion. Wreaths of smoke imply concealment of the full destructive potential of the snake (*Arg.* 4.139–44). The red glow of the fleece seems imminently about to be put back into darkness by its guardian, animate darkness itself. Medea’s prayers are the initial source of her snake-charming abilities, calling on Sleep and the queen of the underworld, the sounds themselves relaxing the snake. Her power is located in words as much as eyes, although her skills operate on the eyes of the snake to overcome its visual power, using sound, touch and scent (4.156–61). All Jason does is to follow in fear, a passive audience of Medea’s feat.

As Jason finally puts his hands on the fleece, Medea’s power in the dark grove is juxtaposed with Jason’s desire for the brightness of the fleece:

... λείπον δὲ πολύσκιον ἄλσος Ἄρης.  
 ὡς δὲ σεληναῖης διχομήνιδα παρθένοσ ἀἴγλην  
 ὑψόθεν εἰσάνέχουσαν ὑπωρόφιου θαλάμοιο  
 λεππαλέῳ ἐανῶ ὑποῖσχεται, ἐν δὲ οἱ ἦτορ  
 χαίρει δερκομένησ καλὸν σέλασ – ὡσ τότ’ Ἴήσων  
 γηθόσωννοσ μέγα κῶασ ἐαῖσ ἀναείρετο χερσίην,  
 καί οἱ ἐπὶ ξανθῆσι παρησίην ἠδὲ μετώπῳ  
 μαρμαρυγῇ ληνέων φλογὶ εἴκελον ἴζεν ἔρευθοσ. (165–73)

... leaving the much-shadowed grove of Ares.  
 And as a maiden catches on her finely-woven robe  
 the gleam of the moon when full rising above  
 her high-roofed chamber, and her heart  
 rejoices when she sees its fine rays – so then Jason  
 joyfully lifted up the great fleece in his hands,  
 there settled a red glow like flame from the glistening  
 of the wool on his fair cheeks and forehead.

Medea has told Jason to take the fleece (163); now he tells her to leave the grove (165–6). From the darkness of her interaction with the snake comes the unnatural brightness of the fleece, feminising Jason in his desire for it. The point of contact between simile and narrative is the light striking the clothing, and the rejoicing of both girl and hero; both are distinctly aware of their status as objects to be looked at. Jason’s fairness emphasises him as object of beauty,

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<sup>17</sup> The hiss evokes epic enormity, like the shout of Achilles at *Iliad* 18.20738, following as it does the powerful blaze that goes up from his head, which is likened to smoke from a destroyed city.

as full of desire for the fleece as Medea was full of desire for him.<sup>18</sup> His desire causes him to move from looking to touching; first he lifts it (170–1), and the text emphasises its weight (174–7); then he puts it over his shoulder and intermittently gathers it up, explicitly full of fear that it will be taken away and stroking it sensually (179–82). The light that surrounds him is red, with a mention of flame, so that the opposition between darkness and light is undercut, just as in star images.<sup>19</sup> Despite, or perhaps because of, his desire, he seems innocent, almost child-like, rather than rapacious, in this scene. When he reaches the Argo, Apollonius describes the Argonauts as a group viewing the fleece:

θάμβησαν δὲ νέοι μέγα κῶας ἰδόντες  
λαμπόμενον στεροπῆ ἵκελον Διός, ὥρτο δ' ἕκαστος  
ψαῦσαι ἐελδόμενος δέχθαι τ' ἐνὶ χερσὶν ἔησιν·  
Αἰσονίδης δ' ἄλλους μὲν ἐρήτυε, τῷ δ' ἐπὶ φᾶρος  
κάββαλε νηγάτεον. (184–8)

The young men were filled with wonder when they saw the great fleece shining like the thunderbolt of Zeus, and each was excited, longing to touch it and to receive it in their hands. But the son of Aeson restrained the others, and over it he threw a newly made cloak.

The shining of the fleece is again represented as potentially violent, in its resemblance to the thunderbolt of Zeus, as is the desire it arouses, that must be restrained.<sup>20</sup> The wonder of the Argonauts seems akin to religious awe, as when they experience epiphany; but the desire to touch and to hold it goes beyond that, evoking for me the desire of the Greeks to stab Hector after his death at *Iliad* 22.369–74:

ἄλλοι δὲ περιδραμον νῆες Ἀχαιῶν,  
οἳ καὶ θηήσαντο φυῆν καὶ εἶδος ἀγητόν  
Ἔκτορος· οὐδ' ἄρα οἳ τις ἀνουτητὶ γε παρέστη.  
ᾧδε δὲ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·  
«ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ μαλακώτερος ἀμφαφάασθαι  
Ἔκτωρ ἢ ὅτε νῆας ἐνέπρησεν πυρὶ κηλέω.» (*Iliad* 22.369–74)

**18** Hunter 2015, 104 emphasises the eroticism of the image, in its connection to Jason's cloak (1.774–80) and Hylas' blush (1.1228–33).

**19** See Kampakoglou, this vol., on the comparison of Jason to Sirius. On the feminisation of Jason, see Bremer 1987.

**20** See Hunter 2015, 107 for the fleece as “marvellous work of art”; art can be radiant, but it can also be terrifying and exert power over viewers.

And the other sons of the Achaeans came running about him,  
 and gazed upon the stature and on the imposing beauty  
 of Hector; and none stood beside him who did not stab him;  
 and thus they would speak one to another, each looking at his neighbour:  
 “See now, Hector is much softer to handle than he was  
 when he set the ships ablaze with the burning firebrand”.

In both cases fleece and Hector’s body represent the climax of achievement in the poem. The phrase “softer to handle” (μαλακώτερος ἀμφαφάασθαι) is appropriate for the fleece.<sup>21</sup> The desire to touch is less aggressive than the desire to re-enact his death, but in both cases the group seek to participate in the glory of the successful individual. The intimacy of touching is for Jason alone, and he covers the fleece as one might veil a desirable woman. Jason’s speech of thanks to Medea makes sweeping claims for the fleece as more than a symbol of heroic glory: Medea is the helper not just of the Argonauts, but also of all Greece; the fate of their families and of all Hellas (202–5) apparently depends on the expedition. This is given in the voice of Jason, so follows a different line from the poet-narrator, who most often mentions Hera’s plan to take vengeance on Pelias. For instance, in passing at 4.241–3 the narrator explains the favourable wind as a means of bringing Medea as quickly as possible to Greece as an evil for the house of Pelias. However, Jason’s speech may also bring out an alternative version in which the fleece was more than an empty object of the quest, and had its own magical and religious powers that made it valuable in itself, not just a symbol of heroism and daring.<sup>22</sup>

Book 4 begins in darkness, then, which compromises the visual power of the Argonauts, who are associated with light, and makes them reliant on Medea. However the opposition between darkness as threatening and light as empowering is destabilised by the threatening light of the fleece, red, arousing desire and potentially destructive as well as powerful. The Argonauts view Medea and the fleece as a group, although Jason has his own separate subjectivity, and is also to-be-looked-at as he returns with the fleece draped over him, intimately tangled. Vision is only one sense at work in this scene: Medea uses

<sup>21</sup> Compare 4.181 εἴλει ἀφασσόμενος, where the same verb is used of Jason stroking the fleece, and *Od.* 3.38 κώεσιν ἐν μαλακοῖσι, where a fleece is described with the same adjective. Thank you to Peter Hulse for this point.

<sup>22</sup> Hunter 2015, 109 reads the fleece as «a talisman for their success and the future of their country» as the shield of Aeneas is «the fame and fate of his descendents», *famaque et fata nepotum* (*Aen.* 8.731). However, this comparison also brings out the differences between the two situations: Aeneas’ shield literally represents what will happen to his descendents, and his use of it will determine the foundation (or not) of their city. Here, Jason seems both grandiloquent and deceptive.

control over sound and scent to neutralise the dragon, while touch is the primary mode of engagement with the fleece. Despite the fact that this is the central scene of stealing, there is little emphasis on a rapacious gaze: the Argonauts wonder at the fleece, and Jason is feminised by his desire for it.

## The Argonauts' gaze

The marvelling gaze of the Argonauts as a group at the divine wonder that is the fleece is in fact fairly typical of the gaze of the Argonauts as a body in book 4. In *The Epic Gaze* I focused on the Argonauts as objects of the gaze rather than as subjects: Jason is an object of desire; the Argonauts are watched by women and others at moments of departure in Colchis and Lemnos, and in Phaeacia; they are watched by goddesses.<sup>23</sup> Medea featured more as the owner of a powerful gaze, especially in her encounter with Talos.<sup>24</sup> This section addresses the question of the subjectivity of the Argonauts. How do they gaze at the world? Is there a distinction between the gaze of the poem or poet-narrator or audience and the gaze of the Argonauts, including Jason? How do these gazes relate to the colonial gaze? Thalmann makes much of the way that traces left on the landscape by the Argonautic voyage prefigure and explain Greek colonisation of the wider Mediterranean world.<sup>25</sup> But the Argonauts themselves are not contemplating settling, or even establishing trade relationships with the places they visit. While Odysseus is keen to make substantive material gains from his travels, the Argonauts think and talk about this aspect of travelling much less.<sup>26</sup> How does the gaze of the Argonauts bring this out? What is the difference between the explorers' gaze and the colonial gaze? Is there also a returning gaze? I address these questions by comparing episodes of gazing involving the Argonauts in book 4 with those in books 1 and 2.

Despite the imagery which dehumanises the Colchians (numberless as waves on the stormy sea, as leaves falling from trees, ἀπειρέσιοι, 4.218; like

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**23** Jason as object of desire: Lovatt 2013, 265, 271; Argonauts as objects of the gaze: 229–30.

**24** Lovatt 2013, 334–6.

**25** On colonisation see Thalmann 2011, 77–114.

**26** For instance, Odysseus hopes that the Cyclops will give him guest gifts (*Od.* 9.229), and brings with him the wine received from Maro (9.196–211); Phaeacian gifts more than replace all the Trojan plunder (*Od.* 13.135–8); imaginary guest gifts feature in Odysseus' story to Laertes (*Od.* 24.273). There is one instance of successful exchange with the Hylleians at 4.526–8, in which the Argonauts give them a tripod in return for local knowledge about the route, and the ominous gifts to Apsyrtus (4.422–4), which lure him to the meeting. Elsewhere, Lycus honours Polydeuces with a gift of land (2.809–10) in return for his service of killing Amycus.

flocks of birds, 239–40), they too leave a mark on the landscape. When Medea sets up an altar to Hekate on the Paphlagonian shore at 244–52 and the altar: ἀνδράσιν ὀψιγόνουσι μένει καὶ τῆμος ιδέσθαι (“remains then afterwards to be looked on by late-born men”, 252), this does not straightforwardly serve as a marker of Greek possession of the landscape, since Medea has set it up, presumably following Colchian rites. Marks of the Argonautic voyage commemorate both sides of the story. But inasmuch as it is a Greek story, marks of the story colonise the landscape culturally for later Greeks. There is a separation between Argonauts and poet-narrator in perspective. For the Argonauts, and Medea, this is a temporary altar, erected to perform a particular function, which relates to their immediate survival. For the poet-narrator and for those remembering and telling stories about the Argonauts, this altar stands for Greek culture and mythology. The Argonaut story can colonise, even though the Argonauts themselves are not colonial or imperial.

Similarly, when Argos offers the Argonauts a route home in their lack of direction, his cartographic gaze is not marked as Greek, but rather deriving from information left behind by Sesostris, the Egyptian conqueror who is said to have founded Colchis. Argos’ speech (257–93) preserves and emphasises the antiquity and culture of Aea and the Colchians. He represents Greek knowledge about the past, but that knowledge is of the importance of the non-Greek past. Argos’ knowledge may or may not be divinely inspired, but the corporate viewing of the omen that follows suggests, at least on this occasion, that the Argonauts are following plot and divine plan, on a level with their own story:

Ὡς ἄρ’ ἔφη. τοῖσιν δὲ θεὰ τέρας ἐγγυάλιξεν  
 αἴσιον, ᾧ καὶ πάντες ἐπευφήμησαν ἰδόντες  
 στέλλεσθαι τήνδ’ οἶμον· ἐπιπρὸ γὰρ ὄλκός ἐτύχθη  
 οὐρανίης ἀκτίνος, ὅπη καὶ ἀμεύσιμον ἦεν. (294–7)

So he spoke. And for them the goddess put into their hands  
 an auspicious portent; as they saw it all shouted assent  
 that they should take this path; for a furrow was made right through  
 of a heavenly ray, where in fact they were to pass.

The Argonauts do not share Argos’ cartographic vision, but instead view (but also figuratively hold) an omen that points them in the right direction; they work and think together, assenting joyfully, and use the landscape as a point of orientation. They are not scanning for opportunities, or sizing up prospects; they are totally focused on finding their way.<sup>27</sup> During the journey in books

<sup>27</sup> Thalmann 2011, 113 points out that the Sinope episode at 2.955–61 shows the “opposite of colonial desire”.

1 and 2, divine navigational help comes through Phineus; the view from Mt. Dindymon allows them to see the Bosphorus and beyond, offering almost a divine gaze, but certainly a birds-eye view of the landscape (1.1112–6).<sup>28</sup> They begin by looking at landmarks as if they too know and can name them, like the narrator (1.580–608); throughout the poem it is often hard to tell if the names mentioned by the poet/narrator are intended to define where they are for the contemporary reader familiar with Hellenistic geography, or to reveal what the Argonauts are thinking about where they are. Thalmann points out that they have a less confident attitude towards the landscape and a less definite effect on the landscape after they pass through the Clashing Rocks and the further East they go.<sup>29</sup> This gaze which uses landmarks to find their bearings is not always secure: for instance at 4.575–6 they think they see the Keraonian mountains, but that is the moment when storm-winds blow them off course, due to the anger of Zeus at the death of Apsyrtus.<sup>30</sup> At 659–62 they keep in sight of the Tyrrhenian shores as they approach Aeaea, after the guidance of Hera (a shout in the lakes) and the prayers of Castor and Pollux, now sure again in their viewing of the route.

The marvelling gaze of the Argonauts is an aspect of the explorer's gaze, emphasising the vulnerability and powerlessness of humans outside human territory. When the Argonauts arrive at Circe's island, they are seized by *thambos* at Circe and her animals, put together as if from a mixture of different limbs:

τὼς οἶγε φυὴν αἰδηλοὶ ἔποντο,  
 ἥρωας δ' ἔλε θάμβος ἀπείριτον. αἶψα δ' ἕκαστος,  
 Κίρκης εἷς τε φυὴν εἷς τ' ὄμματα παπταίνοντες,  
 ῥεῖα κασιγνήτην φάσαν ἔμμεναι Αἰήταο. (4.682–4)

so these monsters shapeless of form followed her.  
 And boundless wonder seized the heroes, and at once, as each  
 gazed on the form and eyes of Circe,  
 they easily said that she was the sister of Aeetes.

Their darting eyes (παπταίνοντες, 683) are set next to the powerful gaze of Circe, who astonishes them in her resemblance to Aeetes. This emphasises the mutual threat and contamination at risk in the joining of gazes. The disappear-

<sup>28</sup> Thalmann 2011, 3–4; Thalmann's juxtaposition of this episode with that of Eros viewing the inhabited world on his journey to Colchis (3.160–6) brings out the way that the view from the mountain creates a semi-divine perspective for the Argonauts, even if their knowledge and understanding is always imperfect.

<sup>29</sup> Thalmann 2011, 114.

<sup>30</sup> This uncertainty and derailment is based on *Od.* 10.29–30; see Hunter 2015, 160. Here intertextual authority is used to reinforce narrative uncertainty, a typically Apollonian paradox.

ance, metamorphosis and re-emergence of the Hesperids also evokes wonder in the Argonauts (11):

Ἐσπέρη αἴγειρος, πτελέη δ' Ἐρευθῆς ἔγεντο,  
 Αἴγλη δ' ἰτεῖης ἱερὸν στύπος, ἐκ δέ νυ κείνων  
 δενδρέων, οἷαι ἔσαν, τοῖαι πάλιν ἔμπεδον αὐτως  
 ἐξέφανεν, θάμβος περιώσιον. (1427–30)

Hesperes became a poplar and Eretheis an elm,  
 and Aegle a willow's sacred trunk. And from these  
 trees their forms appeared, again certainly as they were before,  
 an immense marvel.

Here the wondering gaze is not explicitly that of the Argonauts, but that of the narrator too; the carefully crafted sounds of 1427–8, and the chiasmus of 1427, replicate the visual beauty of the transformation.<sup>31</sup> The Hesperids appear in response to Orpheus' prayer and the need of the Argonauts, who are parched by thirst after carrying the Argo across the desert, and the goddesses answer their desperation with pity. This desperation is conveyed vividly in the image of the Argonauts as ants around a hole, or flies around honey, at 1452–5, which makes the Argonauts into objects of marvel and disgust as much as subjects. However, they are more interested in finding Herakles than in their encounter with the Hesperids. Their final wondering gaze is also at a god, this time Triton, described in detail as half-god, half-sea monster at 1610–18; the spiny texture of his tail and the comparison of the tail fins (or flukes) to the horns of the new moon give a striking materialisation to the description, although simultaneously creating difficulties of interpretation which add to the textuality of the ekphrasis.<sup>32</sup> The response of the Argonauts

οἱ δ' ὁμάδησαν  
 ἦρωες, τέρας αἰνὸν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδόντες. (1618–19)

and the heroes shouted  
 when they looked with their eyes on that freakish portent.

**31** Morrison 2007, 300–6 argues of the narrator in book 4 that the «decline in the narrator's independence and self-confidence continues apace from there». This argument strikes me as too cut and dried for Apollonius: the relationship of the poet-narrator to his material varies from episode to episode. When at 303–4 Morrison argues that the narrator's passivity is transferred onto the narrative, surely this is equally the other way round: the passivity of the characters in the narrative is attributed to the narrator. In fact he seems equally in control in his masterful display of the Argonauts out of control, the playthings of the gods.

**32** See Hunter 2015, 296 for different interpretations; see *LIMC* s. v. Triton for similar visual representations.

mixes wonder with terror, even though Triton has spoken to them, accepted their offering and is now guiding the *Argo* physically on her way. They respond to this wonder with expiatory ritual, leaving behind altars to mark their passage. The Argonauts partly form an internal audience, guiding the emotional responses of readers, while also being exposed to the dangers of what they see, themselves heroic for surviving the viewing experience.

While the Argonauts generally respond to the world around them and to other people in a benign way, there are a few examples of unthinking violence. Thalmann points out that Herakles represents a chaotic and violent approach to the world in contrast to the generally careful, ordered and civilised Argonauts, in his slaughter of Ladon, guardian of the golden apples of the Hesperides (1393–409), and in the tale of his killing of Hylas' father.<sup>33</sup> Similarly at 1485–501 Caphaurus, a local shepherd, tries to defend his sheep, who were being stolen by Canthus, to feed the Argonauts; first he kills the Argonaut by throwing a stone; then the Argonauts retaliate and kill him in turn, taking the sheep for themselves. They are responding to his violent gaze, but their casual appropriation of his sheep is a kind of marauding rapacity itself. The line between monster and civilising monster-killer (Ladon and Herakles, for instance) is not secure in Apollonius, reflecting the way that Greek visuality brings object and subject together in a joint connection of viewing. This blurring between monster and monster-killer is particularly brought out by the comparison of the *Argo* to a snake with a violent gaze at 1541–7:

ὥς δὲ δράκων σκολιῆν εἰλιγμένος ἔρχεται οἶμον,  
εὐτέ μιν ὀξύτατον θάλπει σέλας ἡελίοιο,  
ῥοίζῳ δ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα κάρη στρέφει, ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε  
σπινθαυρύγεσσι πυρὸς ἐναλίγκια μαμῶντι  
λάμπεται, ὄφρα μυχόνδε διὰ ῥωχοῖο δύηται –  
ὥς Ἀργῶ, λίμνης στόμα ναύπορον ἐξερέουσα,  
ἀμφεπόλει δηναῖον ἐπὶ χρόνον. (1541–7)

And as a serpent goes writhing along his crooked path  
when the sun's fiercest rays scorch him;  
and with a hiss he turns his head to this side and that, and in his fury  
his eyes glow like sparks of fire,  
until he creeps to his lair through a cleft in the rock;  
so *Argo* seeking an outlet from the lake, a fairway for ships,  
wandered for a long time.

<sup>33</sup> Thalmann 2011 48: Herakles as preparing for culture, but not himself involved in it; 47–50: contrast with the Argonauts, and the difficulties of pinning Herakles down, in myth and space; 87–9 on Herakles and Ladon. For Herakles as monster in the Hesperides' representation, see Stephens 2003, 187.

Herakles killed the snake Ladon, and Mopsus has just been killed in his turn by a poisonous snake. Snakes are an emblem of the countryside in which they are stranded, and other similes in the vicinity use animals typical of Libya.<sup>34</sup> The Argo is both assimilated to its surroundings and alienated from them, just as Herakles is both monster and monster-killer. This simile is oddly hostile for its context; the evocation of Hector waiting for Achilles at *Iliad* 22.93–95 equally suggests both aggressor and victim:

ὡς δὲ δράκων ἐπὶ χειρὶ ὀρέστερος ἄνδρα μένησι  
 βεβρωκῶς κακὰ φάρμακ', ἔδν δέ τέ μιν χόλος αἰνός,  
 σμερδαλέον δὲ δέδορκεν ἔλισσόμενος περὶ χειρῖ:

And as a mountain snake waits for a man in his lair  
 Having grazed on evil herbs, and dire anger holds him  
 And he glares terribly as he coils about in his lair.

Again verbal echoes strengthen this link: εἰλιγμένος at *Arg.* 4.1541 echoes ἔλισσόμενος at *Iliad* 22.95. The Argo is both threatening and vulnerable: at *Aeneid* 5.273–81 Sergestus' wrecked ship is compared to a snake with a broken back, still gazing violently (277). The desperation of the snake's movements contrasts with its powerful gaze. The double-edged nature of Greek visuality stands out here: the Argo and the Argonauts are both subjects and objects at the same time. The Argonauts are out of place and have very little power over their surroundings, but their special relationship with the gods allows them to escape. By exposing themselves to the hostility of the landscape, they make themselves worthy of divine viewing. The North African episodes do foreshadow a prosperous colonial future, but also function as a wasteland from which the explorers only just manage to escape.<sup>35</sup>

The predatory gaze is as often turned against the Argonauts as used by them. For much of the first half of book 4 they are the objects of the searching of the Colchians, on the run and hiding. At 332 they choose an island to land on which is associated with Artemis, thus avoiding the men of Apsyrtus. After his death, Hera's lightning restrains the Colchians from attacking them. As they pass through the Celtic lands (645–7) they are only unharmed because Hera hides them in mist. The Sirens are represented as clearly monstrous, both objects of the narrator's gaze (given a physical description) and on the lookout for the Argonauts as possible prey:

<sup>34</sup> Hunter 2015, 289.

<sup>35</sup> Thalmann 2011, 78–91 on the Argonauts' "production of space" in North Africa.

τότε δ' ἄλλο μὲν οἰωνοῖσιν  
 ἄλλο δὲ παρθενικῆς ἐναλίγκιαι ἔσκον ἰδέσθαι,  
 αἰεὶ δ' εὐόρμου δεδοκημένα ἐκ περιωπῆς. (4.898–900)

but then they resembled partly birds and partly girls  
 to look upon, and always watching from the look-out  
 with its good harbours.

The marvelling gaze of the Argonauts is matched by the marvelling gaze of the shepherds inland up the Ister (316–22) who imagine the huge ships are monsters from the sea. This lack of knowledge in the audience, marking the shepherds as uncivilised, also conveys insight about the potential threat of invasion. But internal audiences in the *Argonautica* should not straightforwardly be mapped onto one level of knowledge or another. Here the internal audience are objects of marvel themselves in their turn for their ignorance. When the narrator marvels at the Argonauts he conveys a very different attitude; for instance, the portage of the Argo to Lake Triton inspires the wonder of the narrator at 4.1380–92. This passage emphasises the epic credentials of the Argonauts along with the authority and credibility of the narrator. The heroes are objects of our gaze through their strength and excellence, and because they have achieved things that many would consider unbelievable. They become part of the marvellous landscape through which they move, one marvel among many.

How does the journey in books 1 and 2 compare in terms of the marvelling and hostile gazes? Hylas (1.1229–39), Polydeukes (2.35–44) and Jason (1.306–11, 1.782–6) are all objects of the gaze, but mainly erotic objects. The Argonauts marvel at Phineus' horrific state (2.206–7) and cry out at the sight of the Harpies (2.269–70). After the passage through the clashing rocks, the Argonauts gaze at the sea and the sky (2.608–9). They are helpless with amazement at the epiphany of Apollo (2.681), and exchange gazes with the ghost of Sthenelos (2.915–22). On occasion the expedition has a predatory gaze: they attack the Bebrycians like wolves, glaring around (πολλ' ἐπιπαμφαλόωντες ὁμοῦ, 2.127) and the Argo is compared to a hawk (2.932–5, although mainly with emphasis on speed rather than vision). In short the mixture of power and powerlessness, of hostility and exploration, of marvelling and becoming objects of marvel is more or less consistent. To what extent is this part of the aesthetic of the *Argonautica*? The ambivalence of Apollonius matches the double-edged nature of Greek visuality, in which powerful vision equates to dangerous exposure.

## The Divine Gaze

When the Argonauts look out from Mt. Dindymon, they see in a similar way to Eros in book 3. As semi-divine heroes, they occasionally share in the divine gaze,

looking down from above, with panoptic, powerful vision, and agency. I have argued that the divine gaze is a generic determinant of epic.<sup>36</sup> The divine gaze of Zeus as ultimate force of authorisation is absent from the *Argonautica*; I previously argued that the *Argonautica* is a “text that eschews omniscient narrative, and prefers the limited perspective of its puzzled characters”.<sup>37</sup> How does book 4 compare to earlier books in terms of the divine gaze? There are more examples of the divine gaze and of interaction with the divine than in other books. These might for the most part be minor divinities, but they play a large role in the narrative. The divine gaze is not absent but rather uneven. Hera’s presence is felt throughout, rather like that of Athena in the *Odyssey*, perhaps supporting the sense in which book 4 forms a new *Odyssey* (covering the same ground) just as the end of Book 3 forms a miniature *Iliad*.<sup>38</sup> When they are about to go the wrong way, Hera intervenes with a shout (640–4); vision is implied, emphasis instead rests on movement and sound. We have seen how she uses mists to hide them as they pass through Celtic lands (647–8). When they leave the house of Circe, Hera is informed by Iris of their movements:

Οὐδ’ ἄλοχον Κρονίδαο Διὸς λάθον, ἀλλὰ οἱ Ἴρις  
πέφραδεν, εὔτ’ ἐνόησεν ἀπὸ μεγάροιο κίοντα· (4.753–4)

And they did not lie hidden from the wife of Zeus son of Cronos, but Iris pointed them out to her, when she noticed them going from the hall.

Similarly, Athena notices them as they set out for the Clashing Rocks (Οὐδ’ ... λάθον, 2.535). Hera’s more traditional hostile gaze is found in the digression about Macris (ἔδρακε δ’ Ἥρη, 4.1137). In contrast, she sends the nymphs to the wedding cave to do honour to Jason (1151–2). The episode which begins with Hera’s vicarious gaze through Iris is a major set-piece of divine intervention (4.753–884), in which she uses Iris to muster the aid of Thetis, Hephaestus and Aeolus, in order to help the Argo pass through the Planktai. Thetis’ epiphany to Peleus alone (852–65) brings on a digression in which his mortal viewing (871–3) of Thetis trying to make Achilles immortal is so instinctively horrified and uncomprehending that she disappears like a breeze or a dream (877). The Planktai episode itself sees the Nereids turning the Argo into an object of play (948–55), while Hephaestus watches along with Hera and Athena. Further incidental moments of divine viewing include the Moon’s rather snide commentary on Medea’s flight at the beginning of the book (54–66) in which she remembers

<sup>36</sup> Lovatt, 2013, 29–77.

<sup>37</sup> Lovatt, 2013, 48.

<sup>38</sup> On *Odyssey* and *Argonautica*, see Hunter 2015, 14–21.

her own helpless and yet powerful gaze on Endymion; and Aphrodite's rescue of Boutes at 916–19 (although there are no words of vision).

There are certainly more epiphanies in book 4: not just Thetis to Peleus, and Triton to the Argonauts (as well as the Hesperides reappearing), but also the Heroines in the Libyan desert, and Apollo at 1694–730 in the *Katoulas* episode. The connections achieved are more effective than the results of many earlier epiphanies. At 1.1310–29 Glaucus ratifies the abandonment of Heracles; his shaggy chest and head are described (1312), but he does not act, or receive ongoing cult. In contrast the episode with Triton is much more detailed: the Argonauts offer one of the tripods given to Jason by Apollo at the Pythian oracle (4.529–33) to any god who will help them; Triton appears in the form of a young man with the gift of the clod, points out the way to them and vanishes with the tripod. In return the Argonauts make a sacrifice and perform a hymn. This prompts a full epiphany of Triton in his divine form, lavishly described by the poet-narrator (1610–6); his physical guidance of the *Argo* is combined with his bodily presence, and, as we saw above, both things form a marvel for the Argonauts. The encounter leads to the colonisation of Cyrene – a long-term result – as well as their short-term escape from North Africa.

Similarly, if we compare the encounter of the Argonauts with Apollo of the Dawn at Thynias in Book 2 with the corresponding episode at Anaphe in book 4, we see a stronger sense of connection and effectiveness. At 2.669–719 Apollo appears incidentally on his way from the Lycians to the Hyperboreans (674–6); the poet-narrator describes him in detail, but the Argonauts themselves do not dare to gaze face to face. Orpheus encourages them to make sacrifice and rename the island, and Apollo helps them in their hunting, but the temple that remains is a temple to Homonoia. In the episode in Book 4, at 1694–1730, the Argonauts encounter total darkness in the Cretan sea; even the stars and moon are dark. This ultimate failure of the gaze, that completely undoes all possibilities of navigating, is assimilated to black chaos (μέλαν χάος, 1697) from either heaven or hell, and causes a radical sense of disorientation and lack of knowledge among the Argonauts (1699–701). They are all now ἀμηχανέοντες (helpless, without a plan, 1701). Jason uses his loud voice, as he does in Syrtis to call on Apollo, promising offerings. Apollo comes and holds his bow in his right hand, sending out light from it (1706–10). The revelation brings land and dawn; the island is renamed Anaphe, and from the dialogue between the Argonauts and the Phaeacian maids comes an ongoing cult of Apollo. In Book 2 Apollo dazzles the Argonauts; in Book 4 he enables their gaze. In Book 2 he passes them by, in Book 4 he deliberately comes to their aid. The emphasis in the cult of Book 2 is on the Argonauts themselves, in Book 4 on the worship of Apollo.

Perhaps the ultimate difference between Book 4 and the earlier books is more in exaggerated polarisation, where complete blackness and chaos is contrasted with brilliant light. So the Argonauts are driven much further out of their way by divine anger and helped much more aggressively by divine aid. But in other respects the narrative drive is not very strong, as they wander without much sense of direction and there is no great confrontation on the horizon. Hunter finds Book 4 “experimental”, characterised by “eerie otherworldliness”, and a “powerful sense of improvisation and randomness”.<sup>39</sup> It is anti-Odyssean, as well as ultra-Odyssean, by finishing with travels and adventures rather than home and battles.<sup>40</sup> The most significant intertextual models, apart from the *Odyssey*, are found in tragedy and cyclic epic.<sup>41</sup> The dominance of Hera’s plan, complicated by Zeus’ punishment for the death of Apsyrtus, displays a decentring of the epic gaze.

## Into the dark

The episode of extreme darkness at Anaphe is the climax of the dark encounters of the Argonauts in book 4. But how dark is book 4 in comparison to other books? Is the *Argonautica* really a particularly dark poem? How does darkness relate to knowledge, power and their limits? We have seen the extensive night (or at least, pre-dawn) episode in which Medea confronts the dragon and Jason acquires the fleece. Darkness here is associated with trickery and sorcery, as well as danger.

The next night episode is equally dark. When Medea sets out to entrap Apsyrtus, her initial message suggests to him that they should meet at night, so they can plan tricks against the Argonauts together (νυκτός τε μέλαν κνέφας ἀμφιβάλησιν, “the black darkness of night should surround them”, 4.437). Apsyrtus arrives “in the shadowy night” (νύχθ’ ὕπο λυγαίην, 458). Clearly Apsyrtus is at a disadvantage because the Argonauts are hidden from him (452–4), and Jason attacks him from ambush (454–5, 464). Medea turns her

<sup>39</sup> Hunter 2015, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Or one might see the *Argonautica* as a successor of the experimental aesthetic of the so-called “continuation” of the *Odyssey* in the last book and a half, in which more aggressive divine intervention (Athene as *dea ex machina*) puts an end to a potentially infinite cycle of vengeance.

<sup>41</sup> On the final line of the *Argonautica* the Σ scholia make a link with cyclic epic: see Fantuzzi / Tsagalis 2015, 4. The scholia view the *Argonautica* as cyclic in both time and space, in the way it returns to its point of origin.

eyes aside and veils herself to avoid pollution and complicity in the attack (αἴψα δὲ κούρη | ἔμπαλιν ὄμματ' ἔνεικε, καλυψαμένη ὀθόνησιν, “immediately the girl turned her eyes aside, hiding them with her veil”, 465–6), but the touch of his blood is equally effective at implicating her. The interplay of sight and power is complicated by darkness, but it also has other implications. Atmosphere is at stake: the figure of the watching Fury at 475–6 further intensifies the mood of horror. After the murder the use of a torch as a signal reminds us of the darkness, and the Argonauts carry out a night massacre of the Colchians:

Οἱ δ' ἄμυδις πυρσοῖο σέλας προπάροιθεν ἰδόντες  
 τό σφιν παρθενική τέκμαρ μετιοῦσιν ἄειρεν,  
 Κολχίδος ἀγχόθι νηὸς ἔην παρὰ νῆα βάλλοντο  
 ἦρωες, Κόλχον δ' ὄλεκον στόλον, ἤυτε κίρκοι  
 φύλα πελειάων ἠὲ μέγα πῶϋ λέοντες  
 ἀγρότεροι κλονέουσιν ἐνὶ σταθμοῖσι θορόντες·  
 οὐδ' ἄρα τις κείνων θάνατον φύγε, πάντα δ' ὄμιλον  
 πῦρ ἄτε δηιόωντες ἐπέδραμον.(4.482–89)

Now the others together saw the blaze of a torch,  
 which the maiden raised for them as a sign to come,  
 they moored their own ship beside the Colchian ship,  
 and slaughtered the Colchian host, as hawks  
 slay the tribes of wood-pigeons, or as wild lions,  
 when they have leapt into the stable,  
 tumultuously drive a great flock of sheep.  
 Not one of them escaped death, but they rushed upon  
 the whole gathering, destroying them like fire;

The flash of the torch evokes the fire of the Argonauts as Medea finds them at the beginning of the book, and the effective communication in the dark suggests that they have now become like her, characters of the night. They are still associated with light, but now with fire that destroys. Just as when they attacked the Bebrykians, like wolves massacring sheep, now they are birds of prey or lions while the sheep huddle together in the stable. The addition of the bird to this image creates a stronger sense of predatory gaze. These images evoke the *Iliad* (5.161–2 – leaping lions; 15.323–5 – flock of sheep; 22.134–44 – hawk and dove) but the implication of the night setting and the lack of resistance from the enemy is that we have here a disturbing repetition of the night raid in *Iliad* 10.<sup>42</sup> Finally Peleus evokes the cover of night (νύκτωρ ἔτι, 495)

42 On the visuality (and morality) of the Doloneia, see Hesk 2013.

when exhorting the Argonauts to take cover further up the river and hope that the remaining Colchians disperse when they discover the massacre.<sup>43</sup>

The obvious night battle in Books 1 and 2 is the fiasco at Kyzikos (1.1012–77); in that case the battle is caused by the darkness and the Argonauts' lack of knowledge. They do not intend to use the darkness as a means of attack, but are confused about where they are, and are attacked by their former hosts. Intention is clearly very important, and while the Bebrykians have caused their own downfall by supporting Amycus, and the Doliones are as much at fault as the Argonauts, the Colchians are treated for the most part in a sympathetic manner, made victims by both Aeetes and the Argonauts.

When the anger of Zeus is revealed through the voice of Argo, they are facing a storm, and the gloom characterises their mood at this point: Ὡς Ἄργῳ ἰάχησεν ὑπὸ κνέφας, “So Argo cried through the darkness”, 592). This dark colouring is continued by the story of Phaethon as they proceed up the Eridanus; the lake vomits foul-smelling steam from the fiery wound of dead Phaethon, intensified by the eternal mourning of his sisters, and Apollo (597–626). The Argonauts themselves share this sense of despair and are affected by the sights, sounds and smells of the landscape, read through the myth of Phaethon. Similarly, smoke and darkness (and lack of understanding) characterise Peleus' memory of his split with Thetis (865–81). The Planktai, too, are associated with the forges of Hephaestus, which Hera asks him to shut off, and flames shoot from the rock, smoke blotting out the rays of the sun (925–8). The terror of imminent death is augmented by inability to see, and a lack of knowledge about what is happening.

Even Phaeacia, bright and welcoming in the *Odyssey*, has a substantial portion of night action, of a rather different sort: for Arete's bed-time dialogue (ἐνὶ λεχέεσσι διὰ κνέφας, “in bed through the night”, 1071) with her husband about passing judgement on the case of Medea and the Colchians necessitates an immediate wedding at night (αὐτονοχί, “that very night”, 1130). The light from the fleece goes some way towards dispelling the darkness (1142, 1145), but the return of dawn at 1171–2 reminds us that this has been a night episode, just as the final comment on their state of mind reminds us of the double-edged emotions associated with their marriage (joy and desire, but also fear and sorrow).<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Hunter 2015, 150 draws a strong contrast between the heroism of the Argonautic group and the furtiveness of Jason, who comes late to the “pitched battle”; but to me the crew are implicated in the darkness.

<sup>44</sup> On the light of the fleece and the darkness of the action, see Hulse 2015, *ad* 47–9, 167–86. A comparable illumination occurs at Euripides *Bacchae* 608–11. See also Rood 2014, 73.

In this sense, we might perhaps agree with Sistakou (2012, 60) in taking the night episode at Anaphe as a “eucatastrophe”/happy ending, although calling it the “decisive turning point towards the final success” seems a little too strong. Each time when they find their way again, get through the Planktai, find lake Triton, escape from lake Triton, destroy Talos, get through the darkness: each of these episodes could have resulted in the end of the expedition and the failure of the quest. But certainly this is the last episode of darkness and although it is in some ways the most intense, it also dispels darkness for the rest of the poem.

Book 4 is a relatively dark book: about 25 % of the lines take place in darkness, in comparison to about 10 % in book 1.<sup>45</sup> Frequently in Books one and two (20) the Argonauts successfully travel on through the night (1.600; 1.924–35; 1.1359; 2.660–1; 2.945; 2.1260–1, with reference to skill of Argus). In Book four they do so twice (4.979–80; 4.1629–35). They have, of course, lost their original choice of helmsman, Tiphys, who dies at 2.851–62, with only a third of Book 2 to go. He has guided them for most of the outward journey: but it is the skill of Argos which is mentioned as they arrive in the night at the river Phasis. The outward journey is punctuated by battles and encounters, but they do not on the whole deviate far from their route; the return journey takes them throughout most of the Mediterranean world, and contains several episodes of navigational despair.

Darkness does not just create atmosphere, it also thematises the failure of vision, lack of knowledge and the limitations of the gaze. If gaze is fundamentally about knowledge and power, then failure of vision implies lack of knowledge and powerlessness. In Book 4 particularly, the Argonauts are at the mercy of the landscape and the gods, able to take agency over their own fate only by interacting effectively with the divine. When they land at Syrtis, they can see no way to escape, no signs of habitation, and no way to get food or drink:<sup>46</sup>

οἱ δ' ἀπὸ νηὸς ὄρουσαν, ἄχος δ' ἔλεν εἰσορόωντας  
 ἡέρα καὶ μεγάλης νῶτα χθονὸς ἡέρι ἴσα  
 τηλοῦ ὑπερτείνοντα διηνεκές· οὐδέ τιν' ἀρδμόν,  
 οὐ πάτον, οὐκ ἀπάνευθε κατηργάσαντο βοτήρων  
 αὔλιον, εὐκίλῳ δὲ κατείχετο πάντα γαλήνη. (1245–9)

<sup>45</sup> In these calculations I included evening episodes and storm episodes, but not night dreams or dawn episodes. It is not always clear where to divide day from night, and whether to include other types of darkness, but I tried to follow the emphasis of the text on light and darkness.

<sup>46</sup> The lack of food and drink is a strong contrast with the similar passage at *Odyssey* 9.116–65 (goat island); cf. also *Od.* 5. 403–8.

And they darted from the ship, and sorrow seized them when they gazed  
 on the mist and the levels of vast land stretching far like a mist  
 and continuously into the distance; no watering place,  
 no path, no dwelling of herdsmen did they gaze upon far away,  
 but the whole was possessed by a silent calm.

This failure to see is a fundamental failure of knowledge. They do not know where they are or how to deal with their situation. Ankaïos' despairing speech also characterises their predicament in visual terms: he can see no way out:

ἐπεὶ τεναγώδεα λεύσσω  
 τῆλε περισκοπέων ἄλα πάντοθεν, ἦλιθα δ' ὕδωρ  
 ξαινόμενον πολιῆσιν ἐπιτροχάει ψαμάθοισι· (1264–6)

for, as I gaze far around,  
 on every side I spy out a sea of shoals, and masses of water,  
 fretted line upon line, run over the hoary sand.

The despair of the Argonauts is represented through a multiple simile in which they are compared to men like ghosts (not fully visible) as they wait for destruction by war, plague or storm, and respond to terrifying visual portents (bleeding statues, eclipse) (1277–92). The images vividly portray lack of agency along with lack of knowledge, as well as the mood of despair. The resolution of this episode is also presented in visual terms: first the epiphany of the Heroines to Jason, in which he is favoured by their visibility to him alone (1308–31); second the portent of the horse from the sea, interpreted by Peleus (1365–79).

Similarly, once they arrive at Lake Triton after carrying the Argo across the desert, the indirect salvation received from Herakles who has left behind a spring is offset by the failure of the miraculous gaze of Lynceus to apprehend him (1476–80). The knowledge that Lynceus acquires is the knowledge that they should not search for Herakles again; the simile, which describes his inability to see and understand where Herakles is, hints at apotheosis, but the narrator does not give the readers any further information than the Argonauts in this case. Instead he substitutes an *aition* about Polyphemus founding a city, information which is not presented to Canthus who is looking for him.

Book 4, then, is a dark book, although it ends with a restoration of gaze and light at Anaphe and the powerful gaze of Medea, defeating Talos. These two episodes of the powerful gaze that round off the book are in contradistinction to each other: although for now Medea aids the Argonauts in their return, she forms an alternative source of light and visual power, as the grand-daughter of the sun, whose beneficence cannot be relied upon.

## Vision and other senses

The gaze is most importantly conceptualised as the relationship between knowledge, power and vision. However, words used about lines of visual power in the plot are not always words of vision, but often words of knowing and perceiving. The gods look down from Olympus on events in the *Iliad* but they also hear the din caused by the clash of arms. The text of Apollonius is rich in interactions between vision and other senses, often in contexts of knowledge and power. In book four there are several episodes in which powerful connections are created through other senses, often with elements of the uncanny – a sort of non-visual gaze.<sup>47</sup> Touch, for instance, is often combined with viewing in the gaze of desire.<sup>48</sup> Touch and the desire to touch is certainly an important part of the erotic magic of the fleece. When Jason has finally laid hold of it, he carries it sensuously and possessively (179–82, 185–6). The Argonauts too are overwhelmed by desire to touch. Gaze creates desire to touch, and touch creates desire to keep. When Jason and Medea use the robe of Hypsipyle to seduce Apsyrtus to his death, the description of it emphasises the connection between gaze, touch, scent and desire:

οὐ μιν ἀφάσσω  
οὔτε ἄεν εἰσορώων γλυκὴν ἴμερον ἐμπλήσειας·  
τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἀμβροσίη ὀδμή πέλεν ἐξέτι κείνου (428–30)

Never could you satisfy your sweet desire by touching it  
or gazing on it. And from it a divine fragrance breathed

As well as her persuasive words and gifts to Apsyrtus, Medea adds θελκτῆρια φάρμακα (“enchanting drugs”, 442) which she scatters on the breezes, which have compelling power to draw animals from the mountains; it seems highly likely that these *pharmaka* too operate by scent. Three senses (touch, sight and smell) combine to persuade and deceive Apsyrtus, hinting perhaps at an incestuous desire for his sister. Similarly, in the cave at Peuce the nymphs feel an uncanny desire at the sight of the fleece and long to touch it (1143–8). A negative olfactory stimulation also creates a powerful emotional response in

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<sup>47</sup> A theory of haptic visuality has been developed by Marks 2002; see also Marks 1999. Marks argues that images which invite a haptic look are often grainy and distorted and suggest an inability to see; the haptic look rests on the surface rather than penetrating into the image. The oscillation between visual mastery and loss of power and control is particularly appropriate for reading Apollonius.

<sup>48</sup> On the haptic gaze in Apollonius, Alex Purves presented a paper at the Classical Association conference, Nottingham, 2014. See also Purves 2014.

the Argonauts when they pass the site of Phaethon's smouldering body (620–6). The combination of foul smell and sharp lament deprives them of joy and agency; here again Apollonius plays with levels of knowledge. While the poet narrator juxtaposes two *aetia* for amber for his readers, the Argonauts are simply afflicted by unexplained misery, as if drifting through the poem without being fully part of it, perceiving signs with the senses and responding emotionally, without necessarily understanding or even interpreting those signs. This can be compared to the moment when they pass Thrinakia, where first they hear the bleating of the sheep and lowing, then view the cattle of the sun (968–9). Again there is no sense that they are aware of the significance of what they see, or of the danger to their *nostos*, but here there is no emotional response either. Inarticulate sound as distinct from words can have something of the same effect as smell or sight, in that it carries an emotional charge without a precise meaning. So Jason's roar at 1337–43 generates paradoxical effects, both terrifying, and to the Argonauts potentially reassuring, just as the barking of a dog can be both fierce and protective. Where Achilles' shout in *Iliad* 18 throws the Trojans into panic and even causes death, Jason's shout brings his men together. Jason's shout, like Medea's gaze at Talos, and the scent of her *pharmaka* in the Apsyrtus episode, has force, power, almost agency. It is not what he says that causes action, but the sound itself. Similarly, the battle of music between the Sirens and Orpheus is a continuation of force by unusual means, not unlike the battle of the gaze between Achilles and Hector in *Iliad* 22: παρθενίην δ' ἔνοπλήν ἐβλήσατο φόρμιγξ ("the lyre overcame the maidens' voice", 909) Music fills their ears like wax, here giving sound a sort of materiality.<sup>49</sup> These examples help to define what it is about certain sorts of viewing that constitutes "the gaze": power, knowledge, agency and an uncanny ability to affect events, people, emotions at a distance.

## Conclusions

Apollonius *Argonautica* has a rich and fascinating visuality. In some ways Book 4 is an extension of earlier books, but there are differences of degree and emphasis. The Argonauts are not really colonists, or even explorers, on the return journey; they maraud very little, and are hardly rapacious at all. In comparison, the much more directed travelling towards a specific goal in Books 1–

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<sup>49</sup> Butler / Purves 2014 present various intersections of the different senses in antiquity, but haptic sound remains an area in need of further research.

2 calls for a powerful cartographic gaze. In Book 4, their gaze fails frequently; darkness is perceptibly more dominant. Rather they marvel passively as they attempt to escape from one difficult situation after another, less focused on material gain and glory than Odysseus, but instead often unaware of dangers and glories both. Levels of knowledge and control vary like levels of light from place to place and moment to moment: and their eventual return is disconcertingly sudden. There is a sensuality to Greek vision; we might say that Apollonius, particularly Book 4, is characterised by a haptic visuality. Viewers, and perceivers, both in the text and outside are often at a loss and unable to understand the deeper significance of events and perceptions. The intrusive texture of Apollonian poetry disturbs and confuses; there is an oscillation between power, control, success, light and disempowerment, helplessness, confusion and darkness.

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