Anatole Mori, “A Ptolemaic Thesis in Apollonius’ Argonautica” moria@missouri.edu CAMWS 2018

Abstract: Apollonius of Rhodes’ portrayal of the sea goddess Thetis in the Argonautica (3rd century BCE) clearly builds on her representation in Homer’s Iliad. In this presentation I argue that Apollonius also alters the behavior and narrative role of Thetis in connection with the Ptolemaic recontextualization of the sea and sea deities, particularly the cult of Arsinoe-Aphrodite-Zephyritis as a protector of sailors. Translations mine except where otherwise noted.

1. Posidippus 39 AB 2002
καὶ μέλλων ἥλιον πηδῶν καὶ πεῖσμα καθάπειν χροῖνες, Ἐπιδαύρος ἔχοντις “χαῖρε” δὲς Ἀραίων, ἢ ἄλλων ἐπιταχθεῖσας
ποιμνί ρεῖναι διὰ ψιλοτείχος, ἂν ἐγένη τε καὶ τεῖχος θεάν, ἢ ἦν Βοῦθρῳ ναοφοροῦν Σάμων δήκατο Καλλικράτης,
ναυτίλῳ, οὐ τὰ μάλτα: καθ’ εἶπολος δὲ ἔδωκε (5)
τό πρὸς θεῶν χρήσαντον πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλοις ἄνθρω
πίναι καὶ χρωσία καὶ εἰς ἄλλην ἄφοιρ’
ἐλεύθερας τὴν ἐπικαμουφέων.

2. Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica 4.873-79
αὕτη ἡ εὐνόην ἀνακάλυξιν εἰσελθὼν παῖδα φθόνον σαρώσατο διὰ φλογῆς, ἢκε δ’ ἀπόλυτη
σαρδαλίαν ἑσφελλόν, μέγα νίτις: ἡ δ’ ἀπόρροια, (875)
τὸν μὲν ἀρπαγήν χαμαῖνε βάλε καλκουτά, ἄναὶ δὲ, δομηθεὶς ἡμῶν, ἦς’ δὲν ὑπερβο\nβῆ’ ἢ μὲν ἐκ μικρόσοι δοὺς καὶ ἐπιθέτο τὸν
χυμόσειν· μετ’ δ’ οὐ τι παλάσσετο δι’ ὅτι ὅποιος

3. Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica 4.833-68
Άγας πάτρε, τὴν δέ θέτος τῷ πορευόμεθα μεθύον’
"Εἴ μὲν δὲ μαλακότροφο πυρὸς μένοι δὴ θελάλαι
ξαφνικά λήφθησαι ἐπίτωτον, ἢ τ’ ἂν ἔχωγε
θροπεσθεῖτο καὶ κύματα ἀνοικτοῦν
ταῦτα σαφεῖται, οὐκ ἄρα καὶ ἄρα
ἄλλα ἄριστοι τε καὶ ἄρα πολύθεν υδάτες,
οὐρανίωτας μὲν ἔλθοι αἰσθάνεται, ἐπιστεύοις
καὶ νῆσος δὴ πρεπήναι ἄνησται,
δός κεν υπῆρξον μνησάματο ναυτίλεσθαι."

"Αὕτη, καὶ ἀναστὰσις κατ’ αἰθέρος ἐμεῖς δίκαιος διὰ κατακοπής ἡμᾶς,
καρδίων κόσμοι, καὶ δόξαν θεάς ἀνακαλύβα
ποιμνί μας ποιοῦσαι, ἢ θεά 
πολλὰ μὲν ἐπιθέτο τὸν
χυμόσειν· μετ’ δ’ οὐ τι παλάσσετο δι’ ὅτι ὅποιος

Whether you are about to cross the sea in a ship or to fasten the cable
From the shore, say ‘greetings’ to Arsinoe of Fair Sailing.
Invoking the revered goddess from her temple, which was dedicated
By the Samian captain Callirrhates son of Boiscus,
For you, sailor, especially. And in pursuit of a fair journey
Other people too often address a demand to this goddess.
And that is why, whether you are heading for dry land or the divine sea,
You will find a lady ready to listen to your prayers.

(Austin-Bastianini 2002)

But he [Peleus] sprang from the bed, looked at
His own son struggling because of the flame, and let loose
A fearsome roar at the sight, the overgrown child. Hearing him
She hurried the squalling baby to the ground,
Then she herself, like a breeze, like a dream,
Flew from the chamber and dove into the sea
In her anger, and after that she never again returned.

So she spoke, and Thetis answered with this statement:
"If it is true that the might of glowing fire and the raging winds
Will actually cease, then I for my part
In good confidence can say that I will save the ship
Even with an opposing sea, if the seafarer sweetly stirs.
But now it is time to travel a great distance
To join my sisters, who will be my helpers,
And to the place where the ship’s mooring lines are fixed,
That at dawn they may remember their voyage."

She spoke, leapt up through the air and dove into the eddying
Dark sea, and called to others for help,
Her own Nereid sisters. Hearing her
They met each other, and Thetis announced the commands
Of Hera and quickly sent all of them to the Austonian sea.
But she, swifter than a flash or rays
Of the sun, when it rises above earth’s edge,
Sped lighted through the water, until she reached
The Aeasian headland on the Tyrrhenian shore.
She found them beside the ship, delighting in throwing stones and
shooting arrows. She stood nearby and reached for the hand
Of Peleus, son of Aeacus, for he was her husband.
And no one else could regard her openly, but to him
Alone she became visible, and said:

“No longer now sit waiting on the Tyrrhenian headland,
But at dawn release the mooring lines of the ship,
And obey Hera, who aids you, for her command
With all speed the young Nereids are coming.
To draw your ship through the rocks called the Planktai,
For this journey, for you, is a good omen,
But don’t you go pointing me out to anyone, when you see
Me coming with you, if you don’t want me even madder
Than the last you saw in your thoughtlessness made me mad."
She spoke, and disappeared in the depths of the sea.
But a terrible pain struck him, for until now he had not seen
Her attend since she first left their chamber and their bed,
Angered because of noble Achilles, when he was a child.
4. Apollonius, Argonautica 4.930-55

And thus a new vessel, of a new name, that was to bear the name of Thetis, was launched. The work was done in haste, and the hull was not yet dry. But her son, Perseus, was ready to receive her. He was the leader of the expedition, and he had agreed to lead them to the land of the Phaeacians.

5. Homer, Iliad 18.101-4

And they, like girls along the shore, after dividing their skirts, wound in at the waist, play with a spinning doll, for there are beautiful women among all the ships. They always carry their weapons, and their ships are always ready to fight.
7. References to the Zephyr in Apollonius and Homer

Apollonius
2.276 the Harpies are faster than the Zephyr (cf. Il. 19.415)
2.721 favoring Zephyr 3 days after Homonoia offering
2.900 favoring Zephyr 12 days after Ancaeus replaces Tiphys as pilot
4.768 Hera tells Iris to ask Aeolus for a favoring Zephyr to Phaeacian Drepante
4.821 Hera tells Thetis that only the Zephyr will blow
4.837 Thetis says she can save the Argo if the Zephyr is steady
4.886 The Argo sails with the favoring Zephyr
4.910 Zephyr and waves bear Argo past the Sirens
4.1624 favoring Zephyr after Triton’s epiphany
4.1627 favoring Notos takes over after the Zephyr of 4.1624 ceases

Cf. 4.1098: Zeus sends Boreas vs. sons of Phrixus
2.1125 & 3.320-21 Argus speaks of fierce windstorms

Homer
Il. 2.147 the Zephyr strips wheat fields (simile)
Il. 9.5 Boreas and Zephyr cause a storm at sea (simile)
Il. 4.276 Storm cloud driven by the Zephyr (simile)
Il. 4.423 the Zephyr drives storm from sea to land (simile)
Il. 7.63 Troops darken like the Zephyr over water (simile)
Il. 11.305 Zephyr at odds with south wind in storm (simile)
Il. 23.200 storm-blowing Zephyr hosts feast for winds
Il. 23.208 Iris asks Boreas and blustery Zephyr to light Patroclus’ funeral pyre (cf. 23.195, 214-18)

Od. 2.421 Athena sends Telemachus a favoring Zephyr
Od. 4.402 Zephyr precedes epiphany of Proteus
Od. 4.567 Zephyr’s winds sing in Elysium
Od. 5.295, 332 Poseidon sets all 4 winds against Odysseus
Od. 7.119 Zephyr ripens Alcinous’ garden
Od. 10.25 Aeolus looses favoring Zephyr alone
Od. 12.289 Possibility of cyclone from Notos or the stormy Zephyr
Od. 12.408, 426 Screaming Zephyr destroys Odysseus’ crew
Od. 14.458 the Zephyr brings rain storm
Od. 19.206 the Zephyr brings snow storm

8. Anyte, Palatine Anthology 9.144
Κύκριδος οὖσας ο χόρος, έπει θήλεις πληθνη
αὐτήν ἐπ᾽ ἡμέραν λαμπρὸν ὄρην πέλαγος,
δώρα θηλέων ναυτών τελή πλάνων· ἀμφι δὲ πάντως
δειμάνει, λιπαρὸν δερκόμενος ξέναν.

This country belongs to Cypris, for dear it was to her
Always from the land to behold a clear sea,
To make the voyage dear to crewmen, but the circling ocean
Eyes her shining icon in fear.

9. Apollonius of Rhodes, Fragments
Κάνωνος, Steph. Byz. s.v. χόρα
Ἀπόλλωνιος ἐν τῷ Κανώνῳ
τέρμαε δὲ νησίῳ ἐκ χαρίτες
πλόδος κουμίζον δώρα πλευρίας Νεκτοῦ.

Canopus. Stephanus of Byzantium, entry for “country”
Apollonius says in his Canopus:
And the sweet voyage of ships will delight you, the one bringing your countrymen the gifts of the rich Nile.
(Race 2008)

10. References to the Zephyr in Hesiod

a. Theogony 378-79
Ἀστραίω θέος ἄνυμος τέκες καρποθόμους,
ἄργεσσας Ζέφυροιν Βορέην τ᾽ αἰσθηροκέλευθον
To Astraios Eos bore the stouthearted winds,
bright Zephyr and the swift coursing Boreas

b. Theogony 869-70
ἐκ δὲ Τυφώος ἐξετ᾽ ἄνυμνοις ὑγρον ἄντων,
νόσφι Νότου Βορέας τε καὶ ἄργεσσας Ζεφύροιοικ
From Typhios, the wet strength of blowing winds
Except Notus, Boreas, and bright Zephyr

c. Erga 592-96
ἐπὶ δ᾽ αἰθαλα πανέμοιν οἴνον,
ἐν σκίνθι αἰξόμενον, κεχρημάτων ἄντος ἑωθῆς,
ἄντων ἄρκατος Ζεφύρων τρέψαντα πρόσωπα-
κρινῆς δ᾽ ἐνάπου καὶ ἀπορρόφοι ἢ τ᾽ ἀθάλωτος
τρίς ὢν τε σχέσεων, τὰ δὲ τέκτατον ἱµένον οἴνον.
And drink shining wine
Sitting in the shade, a heart full of food,
Turned to face the fresh blowing Zephyr.
From an ever flowing gentle spring
Pour out three water libations, but the fourth of wine.
11. Callimachus, Iambus 16 fr. 228 Pfeiffer

O bride, already on its way, under
the starry Wain...past the moor
your stolen soul was speeding
...lamentation keen...a single voice
and this...'our queen gone'
...What was the sorrow
drowned [our light]?
...pain
overflowing taught us
...and the great husband, for his wife
...fires to blaze, an offering
...the delicate water

...facing the altars of Thetis
...Thebes

(Nisetich 2001)

12. Pfeiffer's notes on fr. 228 I.15 Θετίδος

15 suppl. Wil. e Schol. [τίς νήσοις ἐν η τεθίδος [σ] θυμοί [supra ενη ζερ. Θετίδ.]]

15 insula cum Thetidis alis adsic ignata; fort. Phoebus est insula Illa et portus Alexandriæ region continentis quae contra est Insulam (Inde usque ad Thebas in Aegypto superior regionum flammæf?) Thetidem Alexandriæ cultum esse nullo testimonium extat nisi Sex Emp. Pyrrh. Hyp. III 221 (1 p. 193, 1 sq. Mutschm.) aπουρων ἐν Ἀλεξάνδρει τῷ Παρο (Fabric., ἡρω κατατόρ. Θετίδα καὶ ἔξοχον θηρῶν [?] )

13. Homer, Iliad 24.93-94

...So she spoke and, shining among goddesses, took
a midnight blue veil: no garment was darker than this one.

Select bibliography