

## On Helpless Love: Love in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* 1

Scholars seem to agree that Apollonius of Rhodes develops love as a theme continuously throughout the *Argonautica*. Giangrande (2002) points out that although Apollonius draws his depiction of love using several different authors, he remains constrained by his epic style. At the same time, Zanker (1979, p. 53-56) argues that the author is conscious from the start of his narrative about his choice of the main theme, as the work stresses its view on love through the *ekphrasis* of Jason's cloak (1.721-773) and Heracles' violent reaction to the disappearance of his lover Hylas (1.1240-1272). Fusillo (2001) also identifies love as one of Apollonius' main themes, supposedly described as a positive feeling in opposition to the negativity of war. Nevertheless, I argue that it is necessary to consider the role of the gods in determining human action, an aspect normally dismissed in scholarship.

In the *Argonautica*, gods interfere by manipulating the characters' feelings when they are subject to love's influence. This gap in scholarship might exist because supposedly the divine apparatus is superficial for Apollonius' narrative when compared to Homer (as Barkhuizen 1979 argues). That, however, is not what the text points out to the reader. The first book demonstrates how important and influential the gods are to human actions. This paper will offer an analysis of how the episodes at Lemnos (l. 609–909) and Mysia (1.1187–1272) in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 1 foreshadow the development of the narrative and the fundamental role of gods later in books three and four.

In Lemnos, both the poet and Hypsipyle point out the essential role Aphrodite had in the disruption of the city (1.614-615, 1.802-803): since the husbands neglected to honor Cypris, she punished them with an obsession that drove them to cheat on their wives, who will later seek

revenge. In the present time of the narrative, Aphrodite also compels the Argonauts to be attracted by the women of Lemnos and the women to take them in. Though scholars, such as Hunter (1993), have already identified and commented on many of the similarities between Hypsipyle and Medea or even Hypsipyle and Jason, my analysis will indicate new possible parallels between other characters and the fundamental role gods play in the development of the narrative.

In Mysia, Aphrodite provokes an aquatic nymph to fall in love with Hylas (1.1233-1234). The nymph's feeling is described as "helplessness" (ἀμηχανία), the same word used in the description of the women of Lemnos (1.638-639) and multiple times for Jason and Medea. After Hylas' disappearance, Hercules suffers so much that he forgets about the expedition. The most common reading of this scene is a symbolic one. For example, Beye (1969, p. 46-48) suggests that this episode centers on the removal of the model of old (pederastic) love to create space for a model of a new hero. However, the rape of Hylas explores themes similar to the episode at Lemnos, such as love, violence, and loss of control over oneself. In this way, it reinforces their importance in the narrative and provides a broader consideration of these feelings, especially by contrasting the nymph's success and Herakles' failure regarding their love for Hylas.

Love moves characters of all genders and kinds (for example humans, heroes, and divine beings) in similar ways, but only those open to the assistance of gods are successful. This difference in active and passive roles is associated with divine intervention, which in Apollonius depends on the characters' ability to feel helpless (ἀμήχανος) and therefore to be more open to the assistance of gods, and contributes to the understanding of the paradoxical nature of Medea, a common theme in scholarship (e.g. Phinney 1967, Fantuzzi 2008, Zanker 1979, and Fusillo 2001).

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