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SEVERAL DEATHS IN APOLLONIUS RHODIUS' *ARGONAUTICA**

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Resumen: La finalidad de este artículo es estudiar la representación de la muerte como material poético en las *Argonáuticas* de Apolonio de Rodas. Tres ejes de investigación complementarios son destacados: el análisis temático de un personaje que mantiene una relación particular con la muerte — Heracles; después el estudio de la evocación de algunas tumbas que insertan la expedición en una temporalidad mítica y en múltiples campos intertextuales; y, en fin, el examen de dos parejas de muertes que estructuran el recorrido — las de Idmón y Tifis, por un lado, y las de Mopso y Canto, por otro.

Résumé: Le propos de cet article est d'étudier la représentation de la mort comme matériel poétique dans les *Argonautiques* d'Apollonios de Rhodes. Trois axes de recherches complémentaires sont privilégiés: l'analyse thématique d'un personnage qui entretient une relation particulière avec la mort – Héraclès; puis l'étude de l'évocation de certains tombeaux qui insèrent l'expédition dans une temporalité mythique et dans de multiples champs intertextuels; et enfin l'examen de deux paires de morts qui structurent le parcours – celles d'Idmon, de Tiphys et de Mopsus et de Canthus.

Palabras clave: Apolonio de Rodas; *Argonáuticas*; representación de la muerte.

Mots clefs: Apollonios de Rhodes; *Argonautiques*; représentation de la mort.

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« *quem procul ut vidit tumulo speculator ab alto* »
Ovide, *Tristes* 3, 9, 11

The aim of this paper is not to trace Apollonius Rhodius' view of death nor to analyze the religious beliefs that arise in the *Argonautica*, but to study death itself as poetical material and to examine its representation in connection with poetic tradition.

Both programmatic passages which open the poem – the proemium and the catalogue – suggest the importance of this theme: Pelias' fear of death effects the expedition and references to death underlie the catalogue. The catalogue presents an organization that combines genealogies and *mythoi*. It constitutes a chronology that includes the *logos* in a narrative temporality.

One of the main characters introduced in the catalogue, Heracles, has a privileged relationship with death through his traditional status as slayer of monsters and this characteristic is an explanation of his involved position within the Argonauts. The hero initiates the Argonauts into violence during the first fight which takes place during their sojourn in Cyzicus. From place to place they come within the framework of a complex relation to the past¹ through the intermediary of death – or its expressions. One particular facet of this intricate relationship with literary past is the status of the grave in Apollonius' poem. Grave are paradigms of the exemplarity of the past that affects the present. The death of some Argonauts expands this reflection by inserting the heroes in a future that presents ruptures and continuities with the past.

The *Argonautica* is not full of death, but each death is significant. This thematic structures the poem and the reading of these deaths promotes our understanding of the poem.

1. A Passage under the Sign of death.

From the beginning the search of the Argonauts is placed under the sign of death. Apollonius in his proemium² focuses on Apollo's prophecy to Pelias and its consequences³:

1.5-7

Τοῖν γὰρ Πελῆϊς φάτιν ἔκλυεν, ὡς μιν ὀπίσσω
μοῖρα μένει στυγερή, τοῦδ' ἀνέρος ὄντιν' ἴδοιτο
δημόθεν οἰοπέδιλον ὑπ' ἐννεσίησι **δαμῆναι**.

« Such was the oracle that Pelias heard, that a hateful doom awaited him to be

¹ See S. Goldhill, 1991, pp. 284-333.

² See A. Hurst, 1967, pp. 39-44 for a discussion of proemium's structure.

³ J.J. Clauss, 1993, pp. 23-24.

slain at the prompting of the man whom he should see coming forth from the people with but one sandal⁴ ».

So the *aition*⁵ of the expedition is the fear of death, which is expressed by the verb δαμῆναι. This verb has a strong epic colouring. It appears eleven times in the Homeric corpus⁶, always in the same position excepted in *Il.* 13.603. The other hellenistic poets never use this verb. Apollonius works within the epic code and varies the Homeric sequences⁷. Apollonius has Pindars' 4th *Pythian Ode* 70-171 in mind⁸, but he expresses Apollos' prophecy in epic terms⁹. However epic death *par excellence* is death in battle, whereas no Argonaut perishes on the battle field¹⁰.

The catalogue of the Argonauts extends over 211 verses. This « true periegesis of heroic Greece¹¹ » locates the expedition chronologically in the mythological tradition, but also presents « a certain psychological and family context¹² ». Death is mentioned five times in the course of the catalogue. Death might have affected a character through his close relations before the departure of the Argô- a completive analepsis-, but the catalogue might also announce programmatically the disappearance of one of the Argonauts- a prolepsis. According to the principle of *variatio*, the methods of presentation differ from one character to another and the references to death occur in distinct narrative networks.

Two essential pieces of information are given about Coronus: his origin and his patronymic, which evoke the Homeric catalogue (*Il.* 2.738-746). The epithet ἐσθλός, which characterizes him, involves the development of a mythological note, through the intermediary of a simile:

1.57-64

⁴ All the translations of Apollonius Rhodius are by R.C. Seaton, (Ed. & Trans.), *Apollonius Rhodius: Argonautica*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1912.

⁵ A. Hurst, 1967, p. 40: « Trois vers sont alors consacrés aux craintes dont Pélée est saisi et à leur conséquence: l'expédition dont le but principal aux yeux du roi est d'infliger un démenti à l'oracle (vv. 15-17) ».

⁶ *Il.* 13.98; 13.603; 15.522; 16.434; 16.452; 17.421; 19.417; 21.578; *Od.* 3.269; 4.397; 18.156.

⁷ See M. Fantuzzi, 1988 and 2001.

⁸ See F. Vian, 1974, p. 50 with n. 2; J.J. Clauss, 1993, p. 24; C. Cusset, 1999, pp. 343-355.

⁹ The Homeric diction in the *Argonautica* has been carefully studied, see G. Giangrande, 1973, 1976; M. Campbell, 1981; V.H. Knight, 1995, and particularly P. Kyriakou, 1995. For non-epic features in the language of Apollonius see J. Redondo, 2000.

¹⁰ R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 45.

¹¹ F. Vian, 1974, p. 5.

¹² F. Vian, 1974, p. 10.

Ἦλυθε δ' ἀφνειὴν προλιπὼν Γυρτῶνα Κόρωνος
 Καινεΐδης, ἐσθλὸς μὲν, ἐοῦ δ' οὐ πατρὸς ἀμείνων.
 Καινέα γὰρ ζῶν περ ἔτι κλείουσιν ἀοιδοί
 Κενταύροισιν ὀλέσθαι, ὅτε σφέας οἶος ἀπ' ἄλλων
 ἦλασ' ἀριστεύων, οἱ δ' ἔμπαλιν ὀρμηθέντες
 οὔτε μιν ἀγκλῖναι προτέρω σθένον οὔτε δαΐξαι,
 ἀλλ' ἄρρηκτος ἄκαμπος ἐδύσετο νειόθι γαίης,
 θεινόμενος στιβαρῆσι καταίγδην ἐλάτησιν.

« From rich Gyrtos came Coronus, son of Caeneus, brave, but not braver than his father. For bards relate that Caeneus though still living perished at the hands of the Centaurs, when apart from other chiefs he routed them; and they, rallying against him, could neither bend nor slay him; but unconquered and unflinching he passed beneath the earth, overwhelmed by the downrush of massy pines ».

Alliteration¹³ strengthens the mythological development by emphasizing the protagonists: Καινεΐδης, Καινέα, Κενταύροισιν. Caeneus' fate, expressed by an oxymoron, is paradoxical as he was invulnerable¹⁴: Καινέα γὰρ ζῶν περ ἔτι κλείουσιν ἀοιδοί¹⁵ / Κενταύροισιν ὀλέσθαι.

Death appears allusively when the narrator mentions the name of Clytius and Iphitus' father, Eurytus:

1.86-89

Τῷ δ' ἄρ' ἐπὶ Κλυτίος τε καὶ Ἴφίτος ἠγερέθοντο,
 Οἰχαλίας ἐπίουροι, ἀπηνέος Εὐρύτου υἱες,
 Εὐρύτου ᾧ πόρε τόξον Ἐκηβόλος, οὐδ' ἀπόνητο
 δωτίνης· αὐτῷ γὰρ ἐκὼν ἐρίδηνε δοτῆρι.

« To him Clytius and Iphitus joined themselves, the warders of Oechalia, sons of Eurytus the ruthless, Eurytus, to whom the Far-shooting god gave his bow; but he had no joy of the gift; for of his own choice he strove even with the giver. »

According to the *Od.* 8. 215-228, Eurytus was killed by Apollo. His death is a paradigm of *hybris*¹⁶ and constitutes a warning for the Argonauts.

Analepsis can also be explanatory and Phocus' murder is used to explain why the sons of Aeacus come from different countries:

1.90-94

¹³ About alliteration in the catalogue, cf. F. Vian, 1974, p. 9.

¹⁴ Such a theme of superhuman capacity was familiar in the Epic Cycle, cf. M. Fantuzzi-R.L. Hunter, 2002, p. 129.

¹⁵ This expression is probably an allusion to the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, fr. 87-8 M.-W., cf. R.L. Hunter, 2005, p. 248.

¹⁶ Cf. M. Detienne, 1998, pp. 50-51.

Τοῖσι δ' ἐπ' Αἰακίδαοι μετεκίαθον, οὐ μὲν ἅμ' ἅμφω
 οὐδ' ὁμόθεν, νόσφιν γὰρ ἀλευάμενοι κατένασθεν
 Αἰγίνης, ὅτε Φῶκον ἀδελφεὸν ἐξενάριξαν
 ἀφραδίη· Τελαμῶν μὲν ἐν Ατθίδι νάσσατο νήσῳ,
 Πηλεὺς δ' ἐν Φθίῃ ἐριβόλακι ναῖε λιασθεῖς.

« After them came the sons of Aeacus, not both together, nor from the same spot; for they settled far from Aegina in exile, when in their folly but Peleus departed and made his home in Phthia. »

The prediction of the deaths of Canthus and Mopsus does not have the same explanatory purpose. It has already been observed that « the immediate effect is to point up the danger of the mission, and to emphasise that other destinies besides that of Jason are at stake » and that the location of the deaths permits the *Argo* voyage « to acquire greater dimension¹⁷ », but these remarks do not exhaust the possible meaning of this passage. These verses echo the beginning of the *Odyssey* with specific verbal allusions:

1.77-85

Αὐτὰρ ἀπ' Εὐβοίης Κάνθος κίε, τόν ῥα Κάνηθος
 πέμπεν Ἀβαντιάδης λεληημένον· οὐ μὲν ἔμελλε
νοστήσειν Κήρινθον ὑπότροπος, αἶσα γὰρ ἦεν
 αὐτὸν ὁμῶς Μόψον τε δαήμονα μαντοσυνάων
πλαγχθέντας Λιβύης ἐπὶ πείρασι δηωθῆναι.
 ὡς οὐκ ἀνθρώποισι κακὸν μὴ πιστὸν ἐπαυρεῖν,
 ὅπποτε καὶ κείνους Λιβύῃ ἐνὶ ταρχύσαντο,
 τόσσον ἐκάς Κόλχων ὅσσον τέ περ ἠελίοιο
 μεσσηγὺς δύσιές τε καὶ ἀντολαὶ εἰσορόωνται.

Od. 1.1-9

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσε·
 πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
 πολλὰ δ' ὅ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
 ἀρνύμενος ἦν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων.
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·
 αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο,
 νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελίοιο
 ἦσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ.

Like Odysseus they wandered but they did not return; here they are

¹⁷ R.J. Clare, 2002, p. 35.

similar to the companions of the Homeric hero. The diction inserts them into the thematic of epic voyage and echoes the two prologues by the intermediary of the twin paradigms: wandering and (non)-return¹⁸.

2. Heracles, the « Formulaic Hero¹⁹ »

Heracles is the archetype of the Greek hero who is defined by the fights that constitute his *kleos*. His involvement in the conquest of the Golden Fleece represents an interruption in the achievement of his Labors²⁰. His position within the band of Argonauts is at the same time central and peripheral²¹. He occupies a central place as an oarsman²² (1.531-532), but he is distinguished from the other Argonauts in two of the most important episodes of book I: the sojourn on Lemnos and the clash with the Earthborn Giants (1.989-1011). He is the hero who stands deliberately apart at Lemnos (1.855-856), Jason entrusts the guard of Argo to his care during the attempt to climb the mountain of Dindymun, and he is abandoned after the disappearance of Hylas. Two prolepses explain some of the events which will mark the independent course of Heracles, one is told by Glaucus²³ (1.315-325), the other by the narrator (1.345-357)²⁴. The arrival of the Argonauts at the Garden of the Hesperides just after the departure of Heracles, in book 4, is an episode which highlights the deep difference between Argonauts and the hero Heracles.

Heracles' attitude during the sojourn of the Argonauts in the island of Lemnos strongly contrasts with that of his companions who dally with the Lemnian women. The hero stands apart, close to the ship:

1.853-856

ἔνθ' ὁ μὲν Ὑψιπύλης βασιλήιον ἐς δόμον ὦρτο
 Αἰσονίδης· οἱ δ' ἄλλοι ὄπη καὶ ἔκυρσαν ἕκαστος,
 Ἴρακλῆος ἀνευθεν, ὁ γὰρ παρὰ νηὶ λέλειπτο
 αὐτὸς ἐκὼν παῦροί τε διακρινθέντες ἐταῖροι.

« Thereupon Aeson's son started to go to the royal home of Hypsipyle; and the rest went each his way as chance took them, all but Heracles; for he of his own

¹⁸ R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 30-31.

¹⁹ C. Watkins, 1995, ch. 38.

²⁰ D.C. Feeney, 1986, pp. 53-54.

²¹ R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 26; R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 88-89, with bibliography.

²² His installation on the ship, which sinks under its weight, is however not deprived of humour. He lays his club beside him and takes an oar which he will break comically. His clumsiness is a sign of marginality.

²³ On Glaucus' appearance, see J.J. Clauss, 1993, pp. 202-203.

²⁴ See R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 96-97.

will was left behind by the ship and a few remaining aloof comrades with him. »

Apollonius uses an Homeric para-formula²⁵ to express the situation of Heracles: *παρὰ νηὶ λέλειπτο*. In Homeric poetry there are only two occurrences of this formula in *Il.* 10.256 (...) τὸ δ' ἐὼν παρὰ νηὶ λέλειπτο, and in *Od.* 10.447 (οὐδὲ μὲν Εὐρύλοχος κοίλῃ παρὰ νηὶ λέλειπτο). In the first case, the subject is Diomedes' sword, but the second occurrence is more significant for our analysis because the subject of the verb is Eurylochus. Odysseus has come back in order to invite his companions, who have been left behind at the ship, to go to Circeus' house. Eurylochus tries to dissuade them from leaving the boat, but Odysseus' wrath forces him to change his mind. In the *Argonautica* the scene is inverted: it is indeed Heracles who convinces Jason and the other Argonauts that they should leave Lemnos and its pleasures. Apollonius has made an *imitatio cum variatione* of the Homeric episode²⁶. The echoes in Heracles' speech (1.865-874) of Thersites' abuse of Agamemnon in *Il.* 2 suggest the complexity of his character and of his heroic status²⁷, but the mention of *kleos* (1.869) forecasts his leading role during the battle against the Earthborn Giants.

Much scholarship has been devoted to the Cyzicus episode and to its sources. The geography in particular raises several questions about the representation of space²⁸ and its structural and/or symbolic interpretation²⁹.

Scholars have long acknowledged the intertextual link between the fight against the Earthborn Giants and *Od.* X³⁰. The main allusions which have been identified are the name of the spring³¹ close to the harbour – Artakia – and the method of attacking: they throw stones from a height, and their target is identified with a *πόντιον* ... *θήρα*, v. 991 (Apollonius' verse presents the only attestation of this *iunctura*). But the Earthborn Giants cannot be simply identified with the Laestrygonians and their description also recalls Hesiod's description of the Hecatonchires (*Theogony* 944-946)³². The *Gegeneis* themselves become preys for marine animals: an abomination for the Homeric warriors³³. The outcomes of the two episodes are very different³⁴. The representation of the Giants' appearance in

²⁵ On the para-formula, cf. M. Fantuzzi, 1988, pp. 9-11.

²⁶ On the *imitatio cum variatione* in Apollonius' poetry, see G. Giangrande, 1976.

²⁷ R.L. Hunter, 1993, pp. 33-36.

²⁸ F. Vian, 1978, pp. 96-106 (repr. 2005, pp. 63-72).

²⁹ See C. Cusset, 2004, with previous bibliography.

³⁰ F. Vian, 1974, pp. 29-30; J.J. Clauss, 1993.

³¹ É. Delage, 1930, pp. 100-101; V.H. Knight, 1995, p. 148.

³² J.J. Clauss, 1993, pp. 164-165.

³³ See D.N. Levin, 1971, p. 101.

³⁴ V.H. Knight, 1995, p. 151.

death is reminiscent of Hellenistic epitaphs³⁵:

1.1003-1011

ὡς δ' ὅτε δούρατα μακρὰ νέον πελέκεσσι τυπέντα
 ὑλοτόμοι στοιχηδὸν ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνι βάλωσιν,
 ὄφρα νοτισθέντα κρατεροῦς ἀνεχοῖατο γόμφους—
 ὧς οἱ ἐνὶ ξυνοχῇ λιμένος πολιοῖο τέταντο
 ἐξείης, ἄλλοι μὲν ἐς ἀλμυρὸν ἀθρόοι ὕδωρ
 δύπτοντες κεφαλὰς καὶ στήθεα, γυῖα δ' ὑπερθεν
 χέρσῳ τεινάμενοι· τοὶ δ' ἔμπαλιν, αἰγιαλοῖο
 κράατα μὲν ψαμάθοισι, πόδας δ' εἰς βένθος ἔρειδον,
 ἄμφω ἄμ' οἰωνοῖσι καὶ ἰχθύσι κύρμα γενέσθαι.

« And as when woodcutters cast in rows upon the beach long trees just hewn down by their axes, in order that, once sodden with brine, they may receive the strong bolts; so these monsters at the entrance of the foam-fringed harbour lay stretched one after another, some in heaps bending their heads and breasts into the salt waves with their limbs spread out above on the land; others again were resting their heads on the sand of the shore and their feet in the deep water, both alike a prey to birds and fishes at once. »

More exactly it is the rhetoric of epitaphs for those who died in a shipwreck which is at work here. The anonymous deceased and the horror of the disappearance of the body eaten by fishes are indeed *topoi* of this category of epigrams³⁶. The reader's expectation is deluded with allusions to *Od. X.* and the reversal is due to Heracles' saving action. This fight is one of Heracles' Labors and is itself illustrative of the discourse delivered by the hero during the Lemnian sojourn.

Apollonius uses pairing as a structural principle³⁷ and this first battle should be read in the light of the second one. The *presqu'homérique* feature of the fight against the Dolions has been extensively studied³⁸, however one aspect of this episode deserves further consideration: the fight takes place during the night. This important aspect of the fight is reported *en passant* by Knight (1995, p. 86), who observes:

« The fighting itself takes place at night and on the seashore, unlike the battles of the *Illiad* (with the exception of the night-time killing of the Thracians in *Illiad* 10, which is hardly a formal battle) ».

³⁵ R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 42.

³⁶ J. S. Bruss, 2005.

³⁷ D.N. Levin, 1971, pp. 87 and 98.

³⁸ See D.N. Levin, 1971, V.H. Knight, 1995, pp. 84-92; R.J. Clare, 2002.

Iliad 10 is not the only hypotext for this fight. Knight [*ibid.* pp. 87-88] has rightly pointed the importance of Euripides' *Protesilaus* which underlines some features of Cyzicus' story, but the *Rhesus* has also influenced Apollonius Rhodius. Three points of contact can be singled out: the death of the ruler – Cyzicus for the Doliones ~ Rhesus for the Thracians -, the setting of the fight and the fact that the fighting takes place at night. This last feature is the main point. Apollonius emphasizes the battle as a night scene - 1.1019 ἀύτονυχί, 1.1022 ὑπὸ νυκτὶ, 1.1038 ὑπὸ νυκτὶ - and fighting ceases at dawn, 1.1053 ἠῶθεν. In *Iliad* 10 night is ambivalent: it conceals the intentions of the enemy, but also facilitates the task of the spies, whereas in the *Rhesus* the negative aspects of the night dominate³⁹: it distorts the judgment and destabilizes the minds. It is precisely this characteristic of night, which is picked up by Apollonius Rhodius. However he varies the theme, *more Alexandrino*, and describes a pitched battle, not a commando action.

After these two fights Heracles' other acts of violence are only mentioned in prolepses or analepses. Hylas' death, which causes Heracles' separation from the Argonauts, is preceded by an analepsis which evokes Theiodamas' murder. These verses are one of the most discussed examples of intertextuality between Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* and Callimachus' *Aetia*. What is less discussed by the commentators is the resurgence of an archaic Indo-European formula, which has been studied by Watkins⁴⁰: Hero – Slay (*g^when-)- Serpent (or monster, beast, adversary). Unlike Callimachus, Apollonius presents Theiodamas as a victim slain by a pitiless Heracles. The focus of sympathy is on the adversary of the hero. Apollonius uses the thematic variant of the formula, v. 1213: δῆου Θειοδάμαντος, ὃν ἐν Δρυόπεσσιν ἔπεφεν. These two complementary aspects of Heracles – formulaic hero and murderer- are present in the evocation of the sons of Boreas' death 1.304-305: ἄθλων γὰρ Πελῖαιο δεδοπότης ἄψ ἀνιόντας / Τήνῳ ἐν ἀμφιρύτῃ πέφεν· (...). These deaths form a framing structure around Hylas' episode and Heracles' abandonment:

Theiodamas' murder ANALEPSIS ἔπεφεν	Hylas' death The loss of Heracles	Sons of Boreas' death PROLEPSIS πέφεν
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This aspect of Heracles is foreshadowed by the combat against Earthborn Giants and is developed in book IV, where it strongly contrasts with the attitude of Jason and his companions. The thirsty heroes reach the Hesperides' Garden

³⁹ Jouan, 2004, pp. XXXVIII-XLI.

⁴⁰ C. Watkins, 1995; on this formula in Hellenistic poetry, see Y. Durbec, 2006.

and discover the sad spectacle offered by Heracles' passage⁴¹. The description of Ladôn and of the nymphs, which is combined with an explanatory analepses, is complemented by Aigle's speech. These two narrative techniques combine to create the image of a spatially and temporally close Heracles, but also radically different from the Argonauts in terms of values.

The description consists in two parts contrasting sharply. The first one presents the Garden as a *locus amoenus* now disappeared:

4.1396-1399

πλαζόμενοι· ἴξον δ' ἱερὸν πέδον, ᾧ ἔνι Λάδων
εἰσέτι που χθιζὸν παγχρύσεια ῥύετο μῆλα
χώρῳ ἐν Ἄτλαντος, χθόνιος ὄφις, ἀμφὶ δὲ νύμφαι
Ἑσπερίδες ποίπνυον ἐφίμερον ἀείδουσαι·

« but they came to the sacred plain where Ladon, the serpent of the land, till yesterday kept watch over the golden apples in the garden of Atlas; and all around the nymphs, the Hesperides, were busied, chanting their lovely song. »

The peaceful aspect of this place and its sanctity is opposed to the desolation that followed Heracles' passage. Now Ladôn is dead and the nymphs are mourning for him. The detailed description of the lifeless snake accentuates the horror of the murder:

4.1400-1407

τῆμος δ' ἤδη κείνος ὑφ' Ἡρακλῆι δαΐχθεις
μήλειον βέβλητο ποτὶ στύπος, οἴοθι δ' ἄκρη
οὐρῆ ἔτι σκαίρεσκεν, ἀπὸ κρατὸς δὲ κελαινὴν
ἄχρῖς ἐπ' ἄκνηστιν κεῖτ' ἄπνοος· ἐν δὲ λιπόντων
ὑδρῆς Λερναίης χόλον αἵματι πικρὸν οἰστῶν,
μυῖαι πυθομένοισιν ἐφ' ἔλκεσι τερσαίνοντο.
ἀγχοῦ δ' Ἑσπερίδες, κεφαλαῖς ἐπι†χεῖρας ἔχουσαι
ἀργυφέας ξανθῆσι, λίγ' ἔστενον. οἱ δ' ἐπέλασσαν

« But at that time, stricken by Heracles, he lay fallen by the trunk of the apple-tree; only the tip of his tail was still writhing; but from his head down his dark spine he lay lifeless; and where the arrows had left in his blood the bitter gall of the Lernaean hydra, flies withered and died over the festering wounds. And close at hand the Hesperides, their white arms flung over their golden heads, lamented shrilly »

This scene involves a variant of the formula analyzed by Watkins⁴²: the hero kills a dragon with a weapon. But Heracles himself is a kind of monster and

⁴¹ See R.J. Clare, 2002, p. 102, who quotes the relevant bibliography.

⁴² See above.

Ladôn's massacre is an amplification of Theiodamas' murder. The poem opposes the robbery of the Golden Fleece guarded by a dragon who was put to sleep by Medea and the theft of the Golden Apples by Heracles who brutally killed the guard⁴³. In this respect, it seems to reevaluate the identity and the morality of the archaic hero⁴⁴.

3. Death on the way

3.1 Death and some graves

The comparison between the status of the grave in Homeric poetry and in Apollonius' *Argonautica* is indicative of the complex relations of Apollonius' poem to its Homeric precursors. In Homers' poems, a grave is a *sêma*, which gives social indications about the deceased and this sign is also a landmark⁴⁵. In the *Argonautica* the graves have these two purposes, but they are further also centers of cult⁴⁶.

From the chronological point of view it is possible to distinguish three groups of tombs. The oldest graves (Dolops, Sthenelus) are landmarks, but they also inscribe the journey of the Argonauts into a mythical temporality. On the contrary, the graves of the four Argonauts Idmon, Tiphus, Cantus, Mopsus and of Cizycus insert the deceased in a future and give them a poetical *kleos*. The announcement of the death of Boreas' sons and of the erection of their tombs constitutes the third group.

The evocation of two of these tombs, that of Idmon and that of Sthenelus, is the occasion for the poet to develop an ekphrasis which relates these passages to some funereal epigrams.

3.1.1 Two ekphrases

In book II the evocation of Sthenelus' tomb, 2.911-929, follows on the description of Idmon's *sêma*, which is described after the account of the last tribute. The text builds an opposition between the longevity of the tomb and the mistaken identity of the deceased:

2.841-850

καὶ δὴ τοι κέχεται τοῦδ' ἀνέρος ἐν χθονὶ κείνῃ
 τύμβος, σῆμα δ' ἔπεστι καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν ιδέσθαι,
 νήιος ἐκ κοτίνοιο φάλαγξ, θαλέθει δέ τε φύλλοις,
 ἄκρης τυτθὸν ἔνερθ' Ἀχερουσίδος. εἰ δέ με καὶ τό
 χρεῖῳ ἀπηλεγέως Μουσέων ὑπο γηρύσασθαι·

⁴³ D. C. Feeney, 1987, pp. 63-64; R.L. Hunter, 1993, pp. 27-30.

⁴⁴ D.N. Levin, 1971b, pp. 23-24; M. Fusillo, 1985, pp. 44-46; S. A. Stephens, 2003, p. 186; Y. Durbec, 2006, pp. 168-169.

⁴⁵ About the graves monuments in Homer, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995.

⁴⁶ See S. Said, 1998.

τόνδε πολισοῦχον διεπέφραδε Βοιωτοῖσιν
 Νισαίοισι τε Φοῖβος ἐπιρρήδην ἰλάεσθαι,
 ἀμφὶ δὲ τήνδε φάλαγγα παλαιγενέος κοτίνοιο
 ἄστυ βαλεῖν, οἱ δ' ἀντὶ θεουδέος Αἰολίδαο
 Ἰδμονος εἰσέτι νῦν Ἀγαμήστορα κυδαίνουσιν.

« And so a barrow to this hero was raised in that land, and there stands a token for men of later days to see, the trunk of a wild olive tree, such as ships are built of; and it flourishes with its green leaves a little below the Acherusian headland. And if at the bidding of the Muses I must tell this tale outright, Phoebus strictly commanded the Boeotians and Nisaeans to worship him as guardian of their city, and to build their city round the trunk of the ancient wild olive; but they, instead of the god-fearing Aeolid Idmon, at this day honour Agamestor. »

The *sēma*, which should reveal the identity of the owner of the tomb, was not destroyed but Apollo's oracle allotted it a new significance. The excursus placed under the authority of the Muses⁴⁷ thus highlights a well-known semiotic fact: a sign can acquire various significances according to the historical contexts of reception. These verses present some *topoi* of grave epigrams, but they have especially strong connections with the thematic of the foundation-poems⁴⁸: the consultation of Apollo's oracle, the foundation of the city around the grave and the heroic cult. We find this data in Herodorus, 31 F 50-51 Jacoby. Promathidas, 430 F 2-3 Jacoby, indicates the substitution of identity. This problem of identity finds an echo in Callimachus' *Aetia*, fr. 50, 72-83 Massimilla. These poets are scholars who try, by their erudite interventions, to elucidate an error of naming or a misreading⁴⁹.

After leaving the Acheron (2.899ss.) the Argonauts ἔδρακον, v. 911, Sthenelus' grave, Σθενέλου τάφον ... Ἀκτορίδαο. This character brings the Argonauts again into contact with Heracles, because he has taken part in the expedition against the Amazons. Sthenelus acts as link between the *hic et nunc* of the heroes and Heracles' geographical and temporal *ailleurs*. He was wounded κεῖθεν and died in the cliff where the Argonauts land, ἐπ' ἀγχιάλου θάνεν ἀκτῆς. However the gap is abolished by the terrifying appearance of his ψυχὴ which comes to see «his countrymen», v. 917 ὁμήθεας ἄνδρας ἰδέσθαι. The whole scene is built on glances⁵⁰: the Argonauts look at Sthenelus who has returned from Hades to see

⁴⁷ See R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 265-266.

⁴⁸ On the poetics of colonisation and on foundation-poems, see C. Dougherty, 1993, N. Krevans, 2000.

⁴⁹ S. Goldhill, 1991, pp. 324-325.

⁵⁰ G. Zanker, 2004.

them. He observes Argo, v. 918 τύμβου δὲ στεφάνης ἐπιβὰς σκοπιάζετο νῆα, and at his sight the Argonauts are transfixed with fear, v. 921-922 οἱ δ' ἐσιδόντες / θάμβησαν (...). The presence of the verb « to see » is a characteristic feature of ekphrastic epigrams⁵¹. The point of view according to which Sthenelus is described is ambiguous. The lexical field of the sight and the Argonauts' reaction at Sthenelus' appearance could lead the reader to think that the description reflects the internal point of view of the Argonauts, but the indication v. 919 τοῖος ἐὼν οἷος πόλεμόνδ' ἔεν reveals an omniscient narrator. The short description is focused on a visual element characterized by its glare and its color, v. 919-920 ἀμφὶ δὲ καλή / τετράφαλος φοίνικι λόφῳ ἐπελάμπετο πῆληξ. The place of the appearance, v. 918 τύμβου δὲ στεφάνης ἐπιβὰς, and the aspect of the Sthenelus, a beautiful warrior, suggest an identification with an imaginary heroic statue of the deceased which would have decorated his tomb.

3.1.2 Paired death

The deaths of Idmon, Tiphys, Mopsus and Canthus – the only Argonauts who really die during the expedition- occur in two groups of two, one in book 2.815-856, the other in book 4.1485-1536⁵². These two episodes take part in the dialogue established within the poem between the two voyages of the Argonauts⁵³.

The account of Idmon's death has a tragic aspect⁵⁴. Idmon – beyond the irony conveyed by his name⁵⁵- experiments in this scene the limits of his science which is exceeded by Fate, although he knew that he was to die (1. 140-141; 443-447):

2.815-817

Ἐνθα δ' Ἀβαντιάδην πεπρωμένη ἤλασε μοῖρα
Ἰδμονα, μαντοσύνησι κεκασμένον, ἀλλά μιν οὔ τι
μαντοσύναι ἐσάωσαν, ἐπεὶ χρεὼ ἦγε δαμῆναι.

« And here his destined fate smote Idmon, son of Abas, skilled in soothsaying; but not at all did his soothsaying save him, for necessity drew him on to death ».

The agent of destiny is here a wild boar characterized by a double indetermination which underlines the limits of Idmon's knowledge, 2.821-822 οὐδέ τις ἀνδρῶν / ἠεῖδει and 2.824 ἔκποθεν ἀφράστοιο. The hypotext of this scene is the hunting

⁵¹ On the distinctive features of ekphrastic epigrams, see L. Rossi, 2001, pp. 17-21. Fusillo, 1985, p. 268 analyses the « effetto scenico » of this passage.

⁵² R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 44.

⁵³ P. Händel, 1954, pp. 87-92; M. Fantuzzi-R.L. Hunter, 2002, pp. 158-159.

⁵⁴ M. Fusillo, 1985, p. 127.

⁵⁵ R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 44 n. 134.

scene in which Odysseus takes part with Autolycus' sons in *Od.* XIX⁵⁶, with however two important differences: unlike Odysseus Idmon was not hunting and he succumbed to the after-effects of his wounds. The hunting scene in *Od.* presents the same basic plot as that of another famous hunting, that of Meleager, *Il.* X: a monstrous boar, a hero who is distinguished from his other companions. The beast is killed from a blow by the hero himself isolated from the other hunters⁵⁷. In Apollonius Rhodius we can find the monstrous boar, 2.820 ὄλοὸν τέρας, and a character isolated from the group, 2. 823-824, but there is an inversion. Idmon is mortally wounded by the wild boar who is killed by a collective action:

2. 827-832

(...) οἱ δ' ἐρυγόντος

ἀθρόοι ἀντιάχθησαν. ὀρέξατο δ' αἶψ' ὄλοοιο
 Πηλεὺς αἰγανέη φύγαδ' εἰς ἔλος ὀρμηθέντος
 καπρίου· ἔσσυτο δ' αὐτίς ἐναντίος, ἀλλά μιν Ἴδας
 οὔτασε, βεβρυχῶς δὲ θοῶ περὶ κάππεσε δουρί.
 καὶ τὸν μὲν χαμάδις λίπον αὐτόθι πεπτηῶτα·

« (...) and as he was struck his comrades flocked together with answering cry. And quickly Peleus with his hunting spear aimed at the murderous boar as he fled back into the fen; and again he turned and charged; but Idas wounded him, and with a roar he fell impaled upon the sharp spear. And the boar they left on the ground just as he had fallen there (...) ».

The boar which Idmon meets lives aloof from men but takes the initiative of the attack. It has some features of both the Homeric boars, as e.g. the wild boar of the *Odyssey* it lives in the depths of the forests, but, like Meleager's boar, it defends itself against men and proves to be a killer (*Il.* 9.545-546).

The account of Tiphys' death opens with an interrogation, 2.851: Τίς γὰρ δὴ θάνεν ἄλλος. This question is a narrative link between the *excursus* on Idmon's destiny and Tiphys. The grave is the starting point of the questioning, 2.853: διοῖα γὰρ οὖν κείνων ἔτι σήματα φαίνεται ἀνδρῶν. The insistence on the simultaneity of these two death (2.855-857: (...) ἀλλά νυ καὶ τὸν / αὐθι μινυθαδὴ πάτρης ἐκὰς εὔνασε νοῦσος. / εἰσόκ' Ἀβαντιάδαο νέκυν κτερείξεν ὄμιλος.) underlines the links between Idmon and Tiphys. The helmsman is the « nautical double⁵⁸ » of the seer. Tiphys' science is presented in the Catalogue as well as Idmon's divinatory art. Both are able to make predictions based on observation:

⁵⁶ F. Vian, 1974, p. 216 n. 1.

⁵⁷ Schnapp-Gourbeillon, 1981, p. 138.

⁵⁸ N. Krevans, 2000, p. 81.

1.105-108

Τίφυς δ' Ἀγνιάδης Σιφαιέα κάλλιπε δῆμον
 Θεσπιέων, ἐσθλὸς μὲν ὀρινόμενον προδαῖναι
 κῦμ' ἀλὸς εὐρείης, ἐσθλὸς δ' ἀνέμοιο θυέλλας,
 καὶ πλόον ἠελίῳ τε καὶ ἀστέρι τεκμήρασθαι.

« Tiphys, son of Hagnias, left the Siphæan people of the Thespians, well skilled to foretell the rising wave on the broad sea, and well skilled to infer from sun and star the stormy winds and the time for sailing. »

1.144-145

(...) αὐτὸς δὲ θεοπροπίας ἐδίδαξεν
 οἰωνούς τ' ἀλέγειν ἢ δ' ἔμπυρα σήματ' ιδέσθαι.

« (...) and himself taught him the art of prophecy -- to pay heed to birds and to observe the signs of the burning sacrifice. »

The desperation that afflicts the Argonauts is a leitmotif structuring several episodes and especially the death of Cyzicus. In Book IV the deaths of Canthus and Mopsus are the origin of the feeling of dereliction which seizes the Argonauts rejected to Libya by a storm⁵⁹. After having discovered the signs that Heracles had recently passed by in the Hesperides' garden, some of them search for him. Canthus wants to learn Polyphemus' fate from Heracles, but he cannot find the hero. The omniscient narrator substitutes for Heracles to evoke Polyphemus' lot, 4.1467-1477⁶⁰. Like the account of the vain attempt to find Heracles, of which it is an appendix, this analepsis delays the narration of Canthus' death, but it also prepares it. Canthus meets a shepherd and endeavours to bring back the sheep to his famished companions. This scene, which presents some parodic features of Iliadic fights, has strong similarities with the encounter of Heracles and Theiodamas, but with an opposite issue:

4.1485-1501

Κάνθε, σὲ δ' οὐλόμεναι Λιβύῃ ἐνι Κῆρες ἔλοντο.
 πῶεσι φερβομένοισι συνήντεες, εἶπετο δ' ἀνὴρ
 αὐλίτης· ὅ σ' ἔων μῆλων πέρι, τόφρ' ἐτάροισι
 δευομένοις κομίσειας, ἀλεξόμενος κατέπεφνε
 λαὶ βαλῶν· ἐπεὶ οὐ μὲν ἀφαυρότερός γ' ἐτέτυκτο,
 υἱωνὸς Φοίβοιο Λυκωρείοιο Κάφαυρος
 κούρης τ' αἰδοίης Ἀκακαλλίδος, ἣν ποτε Μίνως
 ἐς Λιβύην ἀπένασσε θεοῦ βαρὺ κῦμα φέρουσαν,
 θυγατέρα σφετέρην· ἢ δ' ἀγλαὸν υἷα Φοίβῳ

⁵⁹ A. Hurst, 1967, p. 125.

⁶⁰ N. Krevans, 2000, p. 71; R.J. Clare, 2002, p. 103.

τίκτεν, ὄν Ἀμφίθεμιν Γαράμαντά τε κικλήσκουσιν·
 Ἀμφίθεμις δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα μίγη Τριτωνίδι νόμφη·
 ἢ δ' ἄρα οἱ Νασάμωνα τέκε κρατερόν τε Κάφαυρον,
 ὃς τότε Κάνθον ἔπεφνεν ἐπὶ ῥήνεσσι ἐοῖσιν.
 οὐδ' ὄγ' ἀριστήων χαλεπὰς ἠλεύατο χεῖρας,
 ὥς μάθον οἶον ἔρεξε. νέκυν δ' ἀνάειραν ὀπίσσω
 πυθόμενοι Μινύαι, γαίη δ' ἐνὶ ταρχύσαντο
 μυρόμενοι· τὰ δὲ μῆλα μετὰ σφέας οἴγ' ἐκόμισσαν.

« But thee, Canthus, the fates of death seized in Libya. On pasturing flocks didst thou light; and there followed a shepherd who, in defence of his own sheep, while thou weft leading them off (11) to thy comrades in their need, slew thee by the cast of a stone; for he was no weakling, Caphaurus, the grandson of Lycoreian Phoebus and the chaste maiden Acacallis, whom once Minos drove from home to dwell in Libya, his own daughter, when she was bearing the gods' heavy load; and she bare to Phoebus a glorious son, whom they call Amphithemis and Garamas. And Amphithemis wedded a Tritonian nymph; and she bare to him Nasamon and strong Caphaurus, who on that day in defending his sheep slew Canthus. But he escaped not the chieftains' avenging hands, when they learned the deed he had done. And the Minyae, when they knew it, afterwards took up the corpse and buried it in the earth, mourning; and the sheep they took with them. »

The outline of Heracles' encounter with Theiodamas in Apollonius and in Callimachus compared with that of Canthus and the shepherd is the following:

1. A is famished
2. A meets B whose animals are able to nourish him
3. A and B are unable to establish a peaceful relationship and fight
4. The issue is favorable to A and B is killed *vs* the issue is favorable to B and A is killed.

The inversion is underlined by the use of the same verbal root, which has been analysed *infra*, but the conclusion of Canthus' story is double: the Argonaut is killed by his adversary, who is murdered in turn by Canthus' companions. So Canthus' death ironically recalls Heracles' deed.

Mopsus' death by an asp-bite is one quite common in ancient Egypt and is unhomeric⁶¹. The description of the bite's effects is extremely clinical and the list of symptoms mitigates the horror of the *enargeia*⁶². Despite these medical features, this death is intended to recall Ladon's murder by Heracles. Mopsus is

⁶¹ R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 44; V.H. Knight, 1995, pp. 83-84 and 92 n. 44.

⁶² G. Zanker, 2004, pp. 159-160.

killed by a δεινὸς ὄφις, 4.1506, and Heracles has killed a χθόνιος ὄφις, 4.1398⁶³. The fates of Canthus and Mopsus appear like inversions of Heracles' destiny.

4. Some conclusions: Polysemic deaths

The death of three main characters- Cyzicus, Amycus and Apsyrtus- contributes to a network of meanings whose comprehension illuminates the interpretation of the poem as a whole. We observe a double movement in the *Argonautica*: one from the primitive to the civilized⁶⁴ and another to a « more disingenuous code of morality⁶⁵ ». The explicit evaluation of the Argonauts' actions during these three episodes partakes of this evolution.

Cyzicus dies unexpectedly, killed by Jason, and many of his companions are killed defending him, 1.1030-1035 and 1039-1040. This scene conveys a strong *pathos*⁶⁶ and given the fight's confusion the detailed slaughter is shocking⁶⁷. The twelve days during which the Argonauts are retained by winds correspond to the number of the Doliones who have perished in the fight, and this delay is a manifestation of Rhea's anger⁶⁸. The ambiguity of the scene is enhanced by the parallels with Apsyrtus' death of and the massacre of the Colchians: first the purification of Jason and Medea in 4. 659-672 reflects that of the Argonauts⁶⁹, then Cyzicus and Apsyrtus die during the night, in ignorance and in silence, finally a simile compares attackers to hawks and victims to doves⁷⁰. On the contrary, there is no trace of ambiguity in the only duel of the poem: the confrontation of Polydeukes and Amycus⁷¹. Yet it is difficult to say that a lawless generation is replaced by a juster one⁷². According to the Greek aristocratic values Apsyrtus' murder, whose brutality Apollonius emphasizes⁷³, is not juster than Amycus' attitude towards strangers. The evolution is unstable⁷⁴ and this

⁶³ R.L. Hunter, 1993, pp. 31-32.

⁶⁴ See R.L. Hunter, 1993.

⁶⁵ J.J. Clauss, 2000, p. 25.

⁶⁶ M. Fusillo, 1985, p. 106.

⁶⁷ R.J. Clare, 2002, p. 190.

⁶⁸ J.J. Clauss, 1993, pp. 166-167.

⁶⁹ J.J. Clauss, 1993, p. 172 n. 48.

⁷⁰ See R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 194-195.

⁷¹ V.H. Knight, 1995, p. 133.

⁷² R.L. Hunter, 1999, p. 90.

⁷³ See F. T. Griffiths, 1990, pp. 25-39; C. S. Byre, 1996, pp. 13-14; J. N. Bremmer, 1997, pp. 84-85.

⁷⁴ See C. Cusset, 2004, p. 52: « En séduisant Médée, il se fait pourtant inversement gagner par la sauvagerie Colque et cette gangrène morale du civilisateur, celle « syphilisation » du civilisé symbolisée dans la souillure contractée lors du meurtre d'Apsyrtos, le frère de

instability reflects the evolution of the epic genre in the Hellenistic period.

Médée, signale aussi le caractère inquiétant de la réduction de l'opposition sauvage-civilisé ».

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