

RICHARD HUNTER, *Apollonius of Rhodes: Argonautica Book IV*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, xi + 339 pp., ISBN 978-1-107-63675-0

Contrary to Jason in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, no one would ever consider Richard Hunter "short on heroics," as he once described the poem's hero (*CQ* 38, 1988, 436-53). Rather Hunter's contributions to the *Argonautica*, to Hellenistic literature and to Greek and Roman literature in general have been themselves of epic proportions in excellence no less than in volume. His is an output that ten Classics professors might struggle to produce nowadays! Not only is his research exhaustive and impeccable, his conclusions persuasive, but he writes with inspiring eloquence. I was particularly delighted to discover that Cambridge University Press was going to publish his commentary on Book IV of the *Argonautica*, adding to his other impressive commentaries on Book III of the same poem (*Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica Book III*, Cambridge 1989) and on Theocritus (*Theocritus, A Selection*, Cambridge 1999) in the same series, and am even more so now that I have had the opportunity to read and learn from this elegant new work by one of our discipline's preeminent heroes.

The Introduction packs a mighty punch with its tightly focused and judiciously argued presentation that commands a long reach even within a mere 27 pages. Following a brief resume of what little we know of the poet's life, Hunter offers a compact overview of the longest of the epic's books in which he describes the other-worldliness and experimental nature of a narrative that interweaves numerous and diverse earlier texts and reveals in the process the lively conversation between *μῦθος* and *λόγος* characteristic of the era. In the following section on the return journey, Hunter explores the poetic, historiographical, philosophical and geographical traditions that Apollonius employed in the writing of his *Argonautic nostos* that culminates in the Greek colonization of Cyrene. The *Odyssey* is clearly a critical intertext, so in addressing the age-old issue of the relationship between the epics Hunter underscores two significant points of contrast: the Alexandrian's extremely self-conscious language that, contrary to the Homeric texts, impedes a reader's progress by way of numerous lexicographical conundrums, and a linear and episodic narrative that would have Aristotle spinning in his grave. With regard to the *Argonautic* narratives shared between Apollonius and Callimachus, Hunter wisely observes that "the burden of proof lies with those who see Callimachus as the borrower" (25). The preliminary matter concludes with concise sections on the meter and text, both clear and helpful.

These dense opening pages well deserve slow and careful reading, like the epic itself, as they contain much that is useful and enlightening.

Comparison of what has become the standard text for Apollonius, that of Francis Vian (*Apollonius de Rhodes. Argonautiques*, Vol. 3, Paris 2002 [=1981]), with Hunter's new edition reveals that the editor has thoughtfully revisited and reconsidered Vian's great advance over Hermann Fränkel's famously idiosyncratic Oxford Classical Text (*Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica*, Oxford 1961). Although I may have missed a few instances along the way, I noted some 28 places in the text where Hunter prints a different reading (4.10, 28, 50, 142, 257, 345, 400, 430, 464, 551, 620, 673, 726, 852, 1057, 1196, 1301, 1385, 1402, 1453, 1478, 1505, 1523, 1601, 1628, 1726, 1746, 1749), to which can be added the 15 places where Hunter adds daggers not in Vian's text (4.35, 145, 278, 333, 376, 392, 408, 417, 657, 703, 950, 1032, 1410, 1647, 1715); he also posits two lacunae (at 4.59, 785) not in Vian. Apart from these, there are two lines where Hunter offers different punctuation (4.381, 1449) and nugatory spelling differences involving the verb *νίσ(σ)ομαι* (4.628, 648). I found at least five lines where Hunter's text includes an unnecessary moveable nu at the end of the line (4.152, 202, 375, 993, 1009); the source appears to be Fränkel's text (n.b., the lemma *ad* 202-5 reads *ἐνὶ χερσί*, although at 375 we read *μαργοσύνηισιν*). All of which is to say that Hunter takes a more skeptical view of the text than did Vian, but the arguments for his choices and for questioning the transmitted text are clear, well reasoned and founded on a broad array of approaches (metrical, intertextual, grammatical, lexical, etc.); he never insists but rather gives readers enough information to decide for themselves which way to go. I suspect that more often than not readers will go with Hunter, as do I.

The commentary does not disappoint, on the contrary it abounds with remarkably rich and fascinating details. Hunter's mastery of Greek and Roman literature is on display throughout the work, as he connects the Apollonian text with its earlier and contemporary models and its later Greek and Roman imitators. He ferrets out parallel after parallel from the Homeric epics, Cyclic epics, Homeric hymns, Hesiodic poems, Orphic hymns, lyric poets, tragedians, historians, geographers, rhetoricians, philosophers, mythographers, magic papyri, Hippocratic corpus, and vase paintings. Comparisons with post-Classical (Antimachus, Callimachus, Theocritus, Eratosthenes, Moschus, Nicander, inter alios) and Roman (tragedians, Vergil, Ovid, Valerius Flaccus) authors are always apt and elucidating. Hunter's use of the Homeric scholia and ancient grammarians to support interpretations and readings (e.g., *ad* 176-7, 222, 259-60, 1442) models best practices.

In addition to the literary commentary, Hunter explores the nitty-gritty details of the text deeply and from many angles—a feature particularly useful for advanced undergraduate students at whom the series is in part aimed—explicating grammatical (e.g., duals with plural verbs, pregnant use of *ἐν*

instead of accusative), lexical (e.g., τμήγω for τέμνω) and morphological (e.g., apocope, epic/ionic ατο instead of ντο) peculiarities, noting rhetorical tropes (e.g., anacoluthon, chiasmus, epanalepsis, figura etymologica, hypallage, polyptoton), giving close attention to the nuances of particles (e.g., *ad* 57-8, 1165, 1394-95, 1441-43) and to prosody as it affects the meter (e.g., *ad* 213, 246-47, 1071, 1084) as well as issues pertaining to the meter itself (e.g., *ad* 570, 1191-93, 1606). Not even humble τε escapes the notice of Hunter's analytical gaze (e.g., 317-18, 323-4, 1614-16).

Everywhere in the commentary Hunter demonstrates his exquisite ability to tease out what is unstated by Apollonius and to understand and explain the nuances of his artistry and its reflection of contemporary tastes. I cite only a few random instances of the many astute and revealing comments made in the book; my copy of the text has many single, double and triple check marks of approval throughout. On the traditional simile involving leaves *ad* 216-17, Hunter notes, "[t]he parenthetic question, and the spondaic rhythm ..., draw sudden attention to the narrator within a multiple simile, which is very often a marked site of authorial self-consciousness." The poet's use of ἐπίηρα as "reward" *ad* 375 is seen as the extension of a connection made by ancient grammarians between ἦρα and χάρις, such that "[t]he use of such a linguistic preciousness at a moment of high drama and self-loathing is an effect very typical of Hellenistic poetry." *Ad* 381, "the contrast between the vivid future referring to Medea's imagined punishment and the more remote optative referring to Jason's 'sweet return' is very expressive." The expressiveness of the statement benefits from Hunter's return to the older punctuation. In looking at Jason's response to Medea once she realizes that he has made a deal with Apsyrtus, Hunter notes "[w]e have no more idea than does Medea whether to understand that he is merely improvising his way out of a difficult situation" (*ad* 395-409). Hunter duly points out where Apollonius is being experimental, especially in his handling of messengers and their reports (*ad* 417, 435-41). With regard to the use of a Homeric hapax *ad* 427-8, "[t]he preciousness of Hypsipyle's gifts is marked by the rarity of the word used to denote them." Scylla's parentage was disputed in antiquity, her mother being either Krataiis or Hecate. "[W]ith the sensitivity typical of a Hellenistic poet, Hera combines these variants into one, by treating Krataiis, 'the powerful one', as a suitable name for Hecate, who was indeed a goddess with many names" (*ad* 829). Through these and other comments like them, Hunter both explicates a compact and complex text and helps readers see first hand why Apollonius' great epic survived the test of time.

A close reading of the many fine observations made in Hunter's new commentary on Apollonius offers a veritable seminar on Greco-Roman literature, with reference to all of the secondary literature that needs to be brought to bear on a reading of Book 4. Many years of scholarship went into the making of this commentary. What I particularly admire is not only the

net result of his Heracleian efforts, but also the remarkable ease that Hunter appears to have in setting forth his enviable wealth of knowledge, an ease that makes this book such a pleasure to read. Disagreements with readings were few and nugatory, errata fewer and inconsequential (if  $\pi\epsilon\rho$  [519] is going to be separated from the relative pronoun it accompanies, it needs an accent, as in Vian, and *ad* 1563 I believe Hunter means to say “Euphemus may have appeared in this role already in Hesiod,” not “Pindar”). The only serious issue I have with this book is that it sets the bar far too high for those coming after.

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