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; Argonauticas; representación de la muerte.
Mots clefs: Apollonios de Rhodes; Argonautiques; représentation de la mort.


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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 past 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 proemium focuses on Apollo’s prophecy to Pelias and its consequences:

1.5-7

Τοίην γὰρ Πελίης φάτιν ἔκλυεν, ὡς μιν ὀπίσσω
μοῖρα μένει στυγερή, τοῦδ’ ἀνέρος ὄντιν’ ἰδοιτο
δημόθεν οἰοπέδιλον ὑπ’ ἐννεσίσῃς δαμηναί

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

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

So the *aition* of the expedition is the fear of death, which is expressed by the verb *δαμαίνει*.

This verb has a strong epic colouring. It appears eleven times in the Homeric corpus, always in the same position excepted in *Iliad* 13.603.

The other hellenistic poets never use this verb. Apollonius works within the epic code and varies the Homeric sequences.

Apollonius has Pindars’ 4th*Pythian Ode* 70-171 in mind, but he expresses Apollos’ prophecy in epic terms.

However epic death *par excellence* is death in battle, whereas no Argonaut perishes on the battle field.

The catalogue of the Argonauts extends over 211 verses. This «true periegese of heroic Greece» locates the expedition chronologically in the mythological tradition, but also presents «a certain psychological and family context».

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 programmaticaly 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 (*Iliad* 2.738-746).

The epithet *εοθλοσ*, which characterizes him, involves the development of a mythological note, through the intermediary of a simile:

1.57-64

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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 Pélias 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) ».


11 F. Vian, 1974, p. 5.

12 F. Vian, 1974, p. 10.
"Ἡλυθε δ’ ἄφνειην προλιπὼν Γυρτῶνα Κόρωνος Καινείδης, ἐσθλὸς μὲν, εὐδ’ οὐ πατρὸς ἀμείνων. Καινέα γὰρ ζωόν περ ἐτί κλείουσιν ἄοιδοί Κενταύροισιν ὀλέσθαι, ὅτε σφέας οἰος ἀπ’ ἄλλων ἠλασ’ ἀριστεύτες, οἱ δ’ ἐμπαλιν ὀρμηθέντες οὔτε μιν ἀγκλίναι προτέρω σθένον οὔτε δαίζα, ἀλλ’ ἀρρηκτος ἄκοιμοις ἐδύσετο νειόθι γαίης, θεινόμενος στιβαρῇσι καταΐγδην ἐλάτῃσι.

«From rich Gyrton 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: Καινείδης, Καινέα, Καινείδης. Caineus’ fate, expressed by an oxymoron, is paradoxical as he was invulnerable14: Καινέα γὰρ ζωόν περ ἐτί κλείουσιν ἄοιδοι15 / 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 Ἰρίτος ἢγερέθοντο, Ὁιχαλίης ἐπίουροι, ἀπηνέος Εὐρύτου υἷες, Εὐρύτου φ’ πόρε τόξον Ἐχηβόλος, οὐδ’ ἀκόντη δοστίνης’ αὐτῷ γὰρ ἔκων ἐρίδηνε δοτήρι.

«To him Clytus 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 ὑβρις16 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

15 This expression is probably an allusion to the Hesiodic Catalogue, fr. 87-8 M.-W., cf. R.L. Hunter, 2005, p. 248.
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Τοῖσι δ’ ἐπ’ Αἰακίδαι μετεκίθαθον, οὐ μὲν ἄμ’ ἀμφῳ
οὕδ’ ὄμιθεν, νόσφιν γὰρ ἀλευάμενοι κατένασθεν
Αἰγίνης, ὡτε Φώκον ἀδέλφεον ἐξενάριξαν
ἀφραδίῃ: Τελαμὼν μὲν ἐν Ἄθιδι νάσσατο νῆσῳ.
Πηλεύς δ’ ἐν Φθίῃ ἐριβώλακι ναὶε λιασθείς.

« 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:

Od. 1.1-9

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

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)-return.\footnote{R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 30-31.}

2. \textit{Heracles, the « Formulaic Hero»}\footnote{C. Watkins, 1995, ch. 38.}

Heracles is the archetype of the Greek hero who is defined by the fights that constitute his \textit{kleos}. His involvement in the conquest of the Golden Fleece represents an interruption in the achievement of his Labors.\footnote{D.C. Feeney, 1986, pp. 53-54.} His position within the band of Argonauts is at the same time central and peripheral.\footnote{R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 26; R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 88-89, with bibliography.} He occupies a central place as an oarsman\footnote{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.} (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 Glaucus\footnote{On Glaucus’ appearance, see J.J. Clauss, 1993, pp. 202-203.} (1.315-325), the other by the narrator (1.345-357).\footnote{See R.J. Clare, 2002, pp. 96-97.} 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

\begin{quote}

\begin{verbatim}
ἐνθ’ ὁ μὲν Ὑψιπύλης βασιλῆιον ἐς δόμον ὄρτο Ἀἰσονίδης· ὁ δὲ ἄλλοι ὤρτο ἔκυρσαν ἓκαστος, Ἡρακλῆος ἄνευθεν, ὁ γὰρ παρὰ νηὶ λέλειπτο αὐτὸς ἑκὼν παῦροί τε διακρινθέντες ἑταῖροι.
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

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

Apollonius uses an Homeric para-formula to express the situation of Heracles: παρὰ νη môn λέλειπτο. In Homeric poetry there are only two occurrences of this formula in *Il.* 10.256 (…) τὸ δ’ ἐὼν παρὰ νη λέλειπτο, and in *Od.* 10.447 (οὔδὲ µὲν Εὐρύλοχος κούλη παρὰ νη 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 came 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 episode. 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 status, but the mention of kleos (1.869) forecasts his leading role during the battle against the Earthborn Giants.

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

Scholars have long acknowledged the intertextual link between the fight against the Earthborn Giants and *Od.* X. The main allusions which have been identified are the name of the spring close to the harbour – Artakia – and the method of attacking: they throw stones from a height, and their target is identified with a πόντιον . . . θῆρα, 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). The Gegeneis themselves become preys for marine animals: an abomination for the Homeric warriors. The outcomes of the two episodes are very different. The representation of the Giants’ appearance in

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26 On the *imitatio cum variatione* in Apollonius’ poetry, see G. Giangrande, 1976.
29 See C. Cusset, 2004, with previous bibliography.
32 J.J. Clauss, 1993, pp. 164-165.
34 V.H. Knight, 1995, p. 151.
death is reminiscent of Hellenistic epitaphs:\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{verbatim}
ὡς δ’ ὁτε δοῦρατα μακρά νέον πελέκεσσι τυπέντα
ὑλοτόμοι στοιχηδόν ἑπὶ ῥημινί βάλοσιν,
ὅρην νοησθέντα κρατεροὺς ἀνεχοίατο γόμφους—
ὡς οἱ ἐνὶ ξυνοχῇ λιμένος πολιοῦ τέταντο
ἐξείγη, ἄλλοι μὲν ἐς ἀλμυρὸν ἀθρόου ὑδαρ
δύπτοντες κεφαλὰς καὶ στήθεα, γνία δ’ ὑπερθεν
χέρσῳ τεινόμενοι: τοι δ’ ἐμπαλιν, αἰγιαλοῖο
κράπτα τεν ψαμάθοισι, πόδας δ’ εἰς βένθος ἐφείδον,
ἀμφω ὰμ’ οἰωνοίσι καὶ ἤθος κύρια γενέσθαι.
\end{verbatim}

«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 epigrams:\textsuperscript{36} The reader’s expectation is deluded with allusions to \textit{Od}. \textit{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 principle\textsuperscript{37} and this first battle should be read in the light of the second one. The \textit{presqu’homérique} feature of the fight against the Dolions has been extensively studied\textsuperscript{38}, however one aspect of this episode deserves further consideration: the fight takes place during the night. This important aspect of the fight is reported \textit{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 \textit{Iliad} (with the exception of the night-time killing of the Thracians in \textit{Iliad} 10, which is hardly a formal battle) ».

\textsuperscript{35} R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{36} J. S. Bruss, 2005.
\textsuperscript{37} D.N. Levin, 1971, pp. 87 and 98.
Illiad 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 ὀντονυχί, 1.1022 ὑπὸ νυκτὶ, 1.1038 ὑπὸ νυκτὶ - and fighting ceases at dawn, 1.1053 ἰὸθεν. In Iliad 10 night is ambivalent: it conceals the intentions of the enmmy, but also facilitates the task of the spies, whereas in the Rhesus the negative aspects of the night dominate: 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 Watkins: Hero – Slay (*g’hen-) - 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: δὴν Θειοδάµαντος, ὃν ἐν Δρυόπεσσι ἐπέφνεν. These two complementary aspects of Heracles – formulaic hero and murderer- are present in the evocation of the sons of Boreas’ death 1.304-305: ὁθλων γὰρ Πελίαο δεδουπότος ἂψ ἄνιόντας / Τήνῳ ἐν ἀµφιρύτῃ πέφνεν. These two complementary aspects of Heracles – formulaic hero and murderer- are present in the evocation of the sons of Boreas’ death 1.304-305: ὁθλων γὰρ Πελίαο δεδουπότος ἂψ ἄνιόντας / Τήνῳ ἐν ἀµφιρύτῃ πέφνεν. These deaths form a framing structure around Hylas’ episode and Heracles’ abandonment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theiodamas’ murder</th>
<th>Hylas’ death</th>
<th>Sons of Boreas’ death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἐπέφνεν</td>
<td>The loss of Heracles</td>
<td>PROLEPSIS πέφνεν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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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’ passage. 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: ἵζον δ’ ἱερὸν πέδον, ὃ ἐν Λάδων
eisëtì pou chthìazon pachrússeia rùmeto mìla
χόρῳ ἐν Ἀτλαντος, χθόνιος ὁφις, ἀµφὶ δὲ νύμφαι
Εσπερίδες ποίηµνοι ἕφιµερον 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

τήµος δ’ ἥδη κεῖνος υφ’ Ἡρακλῆι δαίθεῖς
µήλειον βέβλπτο ποτὶ στύπος, οἰόθι δ’ ἄκρη
σύρη ἐτὶ σκαίρεσκεν, ἀπὸ κρατός δὲ κελαινῆν
ἄχρις ἐπ’ ἀκνηστίν κεῖτ’ ἀπνοιὸς· ἐν δὲ λιπόντων
ἀβρῆς Λερναίης ἡλιον αἰµατει πικρὸν όιστῶν,
µὺαι πυθόµενοισιν ἐφ’ ἐλκεσι τερσαίνοντο.
ὁχοῦ δ’ Ἐσπερίδες, κεφαλαῖς ἐπὶ ἀείδουσαι
ἀργυφέας ἐξανθήσατι, λίγ’ ἐστενο. οἱ δ’ ἐπέλεσαν
« 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 Watkins: 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 guard\textsuperscript{43}. In this respect, it seems to reevaluate the identity and the morality of the archaic hero\textsuperscript{44}.

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 \textit{sêma}, which gives social indications about the deceased and this sign is also a landmark\textsuperscript{45}. In the Argonautica the graves have these two purposes, but they are further also centers of cult\textsuperscript{46}.

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 \textit{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 \textit{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:

\begin{quote}
καὶ δὴ τοι κέχυται τοῦδ’ ἀνέρος ἐν χθονὶ κείνῃ
tύμβος, σήμα δ’ ἐπεστὶ καὶ όψιγόνοισιν ἰδέαθαι,
νήμιος ἐκ κοτίνου φάλαγξ, θαλέθει δὲ τε φύλλοις,
ἀκρῆς τυθὸν ἐνερθ’ ἀνεπροσίδος, εἰ δὲ μὲ καὶ τὸ
χρειῶ ἀπηλεγέως Μουσέων ὑπὸ γηρύσασθαι·
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{43} D. C. Feeney, 1987, pp. 63-64; R.L. Hunter, 1993, pp. 27-30.
\textsuperscript{45} About the graves monuments in Homer, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995.
\textsuperscript{46} See S. Said, 1998.
тόνδε πολισσούχον διεπέφραδε Βοιωτοῖσι ἴλασθαι, 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 séma, 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 Muses 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-poems: the consultation of Apollo’s oracle, the foundation of the city around the grave and the heroic cult. We find this data in Herodoros, 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 misreading.

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’ ἀχιάλου θάνεν ἀκτῆς. However the gap is abolished by the terrifying appearance of his ψυχὴ which comes to see «his countrymen», v. 917 ὁ πρόθεος ἄνδρας ἱδέσθαι. The whole scene is built on glances: the Argonauts look at Sthenelus who has returned from Hades to see

them. He observes Argo, v. 918 τόμβου δὲ στεφάνης ἐπιβας σκοπιάζετο νῆα, and at his sight the Argonauts are transfixed with fear, v. 921-922 οὶ δ’ ἐσιδόντες / θάμβησαν (...). The presence of the verb « to see » is a characteristic feature of ekphrastic epigrams. 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 ἕων οἷος πολέμονδ’ ἔχει 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 καλῆ / τετράφαλος φοίνικι λόφῳ ἐπελάππετο πῆλης. The place of the appearance, v. 918 τόμβου δὲ στεφάνης ἐπιβας, 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 4.1485-1536. These two episodes take part in the dialogue established within the poem between the two voyages of the Argonauts.

The account of Idmon’s death has a tragic aspect. Idmon – beyond the irony conveyed by his name - 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

ˇΕνθα δ’ Ἀβαντιάδην πεπρωμένη ἡλασε ἡλιστε μοίρα
ˇΙδμονα, μαντοσύνησι κεκασμένον, ἀλλά μιν οὖ τι
μαντοσύνει εἰάσωσαν, ἐπεὶ χρεὼ ἦγε δομῆναι.

« 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 οὐδὲ τις ἄνδρων / ἡείδει and 2.824 ἔκποθεν ἀφράστοιο. The hypotext of this scene is the hunting

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51 On the distinctive features of ekphrastic epigrams, see L. Rossi, 2001, pp. 17-21.
52 R.L. Hunter, 1993, p. 44.
54 M. Fusillo, 1985, p. 127.
scene in which Odysseus takes part with Autolycus’ sons in *Od.* XIX\(^{56}\), 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 hunters\(^{57}\). In Apollonius Rhodius we can find the monstrous boar, 2.820 ὀλὸν 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

(...) oi δ’ ἐρυγόντος

aderou αντιάχησαν. ὄρεξατο δ’ αἰψ’ ὀλοοίο
Πηλεύς αἰγανέῃ φύγαδ’ εἰς ἔλος ὀρμηθέντος
καπρίων· ἔσσυτο δ’ αὕτις ἐναντίος, ἀλλά μιν Ἰδας
οὔτασε, βεβρυχός δὲ θῷο περὶ κάππεσε δουρί.
καὶ τὸν μὲν χαμάδις λίπον αὐτόθι πεπτῆσαν.

«(...) 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 Ida 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’s 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: δοιὰ γὰρ οὖν κείνων ἔτι σήµατα φαίνεται ἀνδρῶν. The insistence on the simultaneity of these two death (2.855-857: (...) ἀλλὰ νῦ καὶ τόν /αὐθί μιννυθαδὴ πάτρης ἐκὼς εὐνασε νοῦσος. / εἰσὸκ’ Ἀβαντιάδαο νέκυν κτερέιξεν ὀμιλός.) underlines the links between Idmon and Tiphys. The helmsman is the « nautical double\(^{58}\) » 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:

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\(^{56}\) F. Vian, 1974, p. 216 n. 1.


\(^{58}\) N. Krevans, 2000, p. 81.
1.105-108
Τῖφυς δ’ Ἀγνιάδῆς Σιφαιέα κάλλιπε δήμον Ἰσσαπιῶν, ἐσθλὸς μὲν ὀρινόμενον προδαήγησθαι κυμ’ ἀλός εὐρείτης, ἐσθλὸς δ’ ἀνέμου θυέλλας, καὶ πλόον ἤελιώ τε καὶ ἀστέρι τεκμῆρασθαί.

« Tiphys, son of Hagnias, left the Siphaean 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 οἰωνοὺς τ’ ἀλέγειν ἢδ’ ἔπυρα σήματ’ ἰδέσθαι.

« (…) 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 storm. 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, 4.1467-1477. 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 Λιβύη ἕνι Κῆρας ἔλοντο. πώεσι φερβομένοις συνήντεες, ἐίπετο δ’ ἀνήρ αὐλίτης· ὃ σ’ ἐόν μῆλων πέρι, τόφρ’ ἐτάροις δευμένοις κομίσεας, ἀλεξόμενος κατέπεφνε λεί βαλῶν· ἐπεὶ οὐ μὲν ἀφαυρότερός γ’ ἐτέτυκτο, υἱωνὸς Φοίβου Αἰείδα μεγάλος ἀριστείς, δίκη αὐλίτης ἀκακαλλίδος, ἣν ποτε Μίνως ἐς Λιβύην ἀπέναντες θεοῦ βαρύ κύμα φέρουσιν, θυγατέρα σφέτερην· ἢ δ’ ἁγλαὸν υἱῆ Φοίβῳ

60 N. Krevans, 2000, p. 71; R.J. Clare, 2002, p. 103.
τίκτεν, ὃν Ἀμφιθέμιν Γαράμαντά τε κικλήσκουσιν· Ἀμφιθέμις δ’ ἀρ’ ἐκείτα μίγη Τριτονίδι νύμφῃ· ἡ δ’ ἀρσικοί διί νασάμονον ἔκτε κρατερόν τε Κάφαυρον, ὥς τοῦτο Κάνθον ἐπεφνεν ἐπὶ ῥήγεσιν ἐδόσιν.
οὐδ’ ὄγ’ ἀριστήν χαλεπάς ἡλεύσατο χείρας, ὥς μάθον οίων ἔρεξε. νέκυν δ’ ἀνέιραν ὀπίσσω πυθόμενοι Μινύαι, γαῖῃ δ’ ἐν ταρταρωταῖο
μυρόμενοι· τὰ δὲ μήλα μετὰ σφέας οὐγ’ ἐκόμισαν.

«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 unhomeric. The description of the bite’s effects is extremely clinical and the list of symptoms mitigates the horror of the enargeia. Despite these medical features, this death is intended to recall Ladon’s murder by Heracles. Mopsus is

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killed by a δεινὸς ὄφις, 4.1506, and Heracles has killed a χθόνιος ὄφις, 4.1398. 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 civilized and another to a « more disingenuous code of morality ». 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 and given the fight’s confusion the detailed slaughter is shocking. 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 anger. 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 Argonauts, then Cyzicus and Apsyrtus die during the night, in ignorance and in silence, finally a simile compares attackers to hawks and victims to doves. On the contrary, there is no trace of ambiguity in the only duel of the poem: the confrontation of Polydeukes and Amycus. Yet it is difficult to say that a lawless generation is replaced by a juster one. According to the Greek aristocratic values Apsyrtus’ murder, whose brutality Apollonius emphasizes, is not juster than

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63 R.L. Hunter, 1993, pp. 31-32.
65 J.J. Clauss, 2000, p. 25.
71 V.H. Knight, 1995, p. 133.
Amycus’ attitude towards strangers. The evolution is unstable\textsuperscript{74} and this instability reflects the evolution of the epic genre in the Hellenistic period.

\textsuperscript{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 Médée, signale aussi le caractère inquiétant de la réduction de l’opposition sauvage-civilisé ».
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