

APOLLONIUS RHODIUS AND VIRGIL

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The propositions that I wish to examine are first, that Virgil in creating his own poetic image very often fused together a number of his sources into what is sometimes a most intricate pattern, and secondly, that among these sources, Apollonius Rhodius was often prominent.

Most of the accepted facts of Virgil's youth and upbringing are to be found in the Vitae Vergilianae, short biographies written by post-classical authors. Of these the most important is that which was for a long time attributed to Donatus but which is now more generally ascribed to Suetonius. The other two Lives - those by Servius and by Valerius Probus (the latter no more than a brief preface) - seem to draw largely for their material upon Suetonius.

A few passages only are relevant to a study of Virgil's method of composition. To begin with, Suetonius records that Virgil's poetry required considerable time for its completion (Life of Virgil, 25):

Bucolica triennio, Georgica septem, Aeneidea undecim perfecit annis.

This is further emphasised later (22):

cum Georgica scriberet, traditur cotidie meditados mane plurimos versus dictare solitus, ac per totum diem retractando ad paucissimos redigere, non absurde carmen se ursae more parere dicens et lambendo demum effingere...

"When he was writing the Georgics, he is said to have been in the habit of writing daily a very large number of verses, thought out early in the morning, and throughout the day of reducing these to a very few by a process of reshaping; saying, not inappropriately, that he produced a poem as a bear her cub and licked it at last into shape..."

This is very important. Virgil would write or dictate lengthy drafts and by a process of reshaping (retractando), he would reduce these to a few perfect verses by evening.

Suetonius' Life has this to say of the Aeneid (21):

Novissime Aeneidem incohavit, argumentum varium ac multiplex et quasi amborum Homeri carminum instar, praeterea nominibus ac rebus Graecis Latinisque commune et in quo, quod maxime studebat, Romanae simul urbis et Augusti origo contineretur.

Clearly the Aeneid was intended to be a new kind of epic, comprehensive enough, as Suetonius suggests, to match the main themes of both the Iliad and the Odyssey, and to include the theme Virgil most wished to present, the origins of Rome and Augustus.

The two important ideas then, are first, Virgil's use of retractatio, and secondly, his concept of an epic poem which was to absorb and mould existing ideas and material into his new creation. It would seem clear - indeed it has never been disputed - that Virgil's sources cover an unusually wide range. And surely if the first draft of a passage of Virgil's poetry contained allusions to other works of literature, his final (compressed) draft would itself in all likelihood contain a number of such allusions, themselves compressed and interwoven.

This compression and fusing of sources in Virgil has been noticed by scholars from Servius onward, but it has risen to prominence in Virgilian studies since the publication in 1931 of E.K. Rand's The Magical Art of Virgil. Much work to substantiate Rand's important theory has been carried out by Mr. Jackson Knight, who sometimes calls this aspect of Virgil's technique "Integration of Sources".

In order to test the validity of this theory of integration, I have chosen to consider a number of passages from the Aeneid which seem to have one common source, the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius. In doing this, I hope to suggest that Virgil's debt to the Alexandrian epic poet was rather greater than is sometimes suggested.

Apollonius Rhodius was born about 280 B.C. and lived during the heyday of the Hellenistic Age when, under the patronage of the first three Ptolemies, the cultural centre of the world was in Alexandria (that is to say, from approximately 285-221 B.C.) It was in this age of scholarship that, flouting the contemporary preference for poetry in small measure - and incurring the bitter enmity of his erstwhile teacher Callimachus - Apollonius produced his epic poem, the Argonautica. It is a chronological and minutely detailed account of Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, in four books, some 6700 verses in length.

Opinions concerning the poetic merits of the Argonautica vary greatly, but are generally lukewarm at best. Callimachus' famous remark that a 'big book was a big mistake' — μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν — may well refer directly to the work of Apollonius, and some modern authorities compare his work with the more dreary Hollywood epics, for example, the recent offering, 'appropriately entitled "Jason and the Argonauts"'.

However, Apollonius Rhodius is not on trial this afternoon, and perhaps before continuing, we should allow his shade the benefit of E. V. Rieu's sympathetic description: "A young poet, full of zest and conscious of his talent but at the same time diffident of his reception, and in the end committing his work to the world in the trembling hope that 'as the years go by, people may find it a sweeter and yet sweeter song to sing'".

Servius at the beginning of his commentary on Aeneid IV writes:

Apollonius Argonautica scripsit et in tertio inducit amantem Medeam; inde totus hic liber translatus est.

It is in the Dido episode and perhaps there alone that the influence of Apollonius upon Virgil has been appreciated, and it is to this episode that we may turn to see the ways in which Virgil used the Alexandrian poet's ideas and material.

When the shipwrecked Aeneas meets Dido in Carthage in Aeneid I, the queen is compared in a simile with Diana (Aen. I, 498-502):

qualis in Eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi
exercet Diana choros, quam mille secutae
hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades; illa pharetram
fert umero gradiensque deas supereminet omnis;
Latonae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus:

"She was like Diana when she keeps her dancers dancing on the banks of Eurotas or along the slopes of Cynthus, with a thousand mountain-nymphs following in bands on this side and on that; she is taller than all other goddesses, as with her quiver slung from her shoulder she steps on her way, and a joy beyond words steals into Latona's heart." 2

Later, when Aeneas rides forth in the Royal Hunt, he is compared with Apollo (Aen. IV, 143-149):

qualis ubi hibernam Lyciam Xanthique fluenta
deserit ac Delum maternam invisit Apollo
instauratque choros, mixtique altaria circum
Cretesque Dryopesque fremunt pictique Agathyrsi;
ipse iugis Cynthi graditur mollique fluentem
fronde premit crinem fingens atque implicat auro,
tela sonant umeris;

"He was like Apollo when in winter he leaves Lycia and the river Xanthus and visits his mother's isle Delos to start the dancing anew, while around his altar Cretans, Dryopians and tattooed Agathyrsans mingle and cheer; Apollo himself paces on the slopes of Cynthus, with his clattering bow and arrows slung from his shoulder and his flowing hair pressed into neatness by a soft wreath of leaves and held by a band of gold."

These similes are alike in their language - qualis (qualis), iuga Cynthi (iugis Cynthi), exercet (instaurat) choros, umero (umeris), gradiens (graditur) - but their conception may be due to the integration of some six Greek sources.

In Iliad VII Homer compares Ajax with Ares (208-210):

"he sallied out like the monstrous Ares when he joins embattled armies, hurled at each other by the Son of Cronos in soul-destroying hate."

but this simile, though close in spirit to the similes in Virgil, is in detail quite different. A much closer parallel is to be found in Odyssey VI where Nausicaa is compared with Artemis (102-108):

οἴη δ' Ἄρτεμις εἶσι κατ' οὖρεος ἰοχέαιρα,
ἢ κατὰ Τηϋγετον περιμήκετον ἢ Ἐρθμανθον,
τερπομένη κάπροισι καὶ ὄκειρος ἐλάφοισι·
τῆ δέ θ' ἄμα νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
ἄγρονόμοι παίζουσι· γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Ληϊά·
πασῶν δ' ἔπερ ἢ γε κάρη ἔχει ἠδὲ μέτωπα,
δεῖτ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε κᾶσαι·

"It was just such a scene as gladdens Leto's heart, when her daughter Artemis the archeress, has come down from the mountain along the high ridge of Taygetus or Erymanthus to chase the wild boar or the nimble deer, and the Nymphs of the countryside join with her in her sport. They too are heaven-born, but Artemis overtops them all, and where all are beautiful there is no question which is she."

There are four passages in Apollonius which may have found their way into the two similes of Virgil; three are similes and the fourth is a passage of direct narrative. First there is a brief simile, comparing Jason with Apollo (Ap.Rh.I, 307-309):

οἶος δ' ἐκ νηοῦ θωάδεος εἶσιν Ἀπόλλων
δῆλον ἀν' ἠγαθέην, ἥε Κλάρον ἢ ὕγε Πυθῶ,
ἢ Λυκίην εὐρείαν, ἐπὶ Ξάνθοιο ῥοῆσιν.....

"...like Apollo when he issues from some fragrant shrine in holy Delos or Claros or maybe at Pytho or in the broad realm of Lycia, where Xanthus flows..."

which is echoed a little later (536) where the poet compares the Argonauts as they row with:

"young men bringing down their quick feet on the earth in unison with one another and the lyre, as they dance for Apollo round his altar at Pytho or in Ortygia or by the waters of Ismenus."

A third reference to Apollo is in the narrative where the Argonauts witness an impressive 'fly-past' by the god himself (Ap.Rh.II, 674-679):

τοῖσι δὲ Ἀπτοῦς υἱός, ἀνερχόμενος Λυκίηθεν
τῆλ' ἐπ' ἀπείρονα δῆμον Ἵπερβορέων ἀνθρώπων,
ἔξεφάνη· χρύσειοι δὲ παρειῶν ἐκάτερθεν
κλοχμοὶ βοτρυθέντες ἐπερρῶοντο κιδόντι·
λαίῃ δ' ἄργυρέον κῶμα βιδόν, ἀμφὶ δὲ κῶτοις
λοδόκη τετάνυστο κατωμαδόν.....

"Here they had a vision of Apollo on his way from Lycia to visit the remote and teeming peoples of the North. The golden locks streamed down his cheeks in clusters as he moved; he had a silver bow in his left hand and a quiver slung on his back;"

Finally there is an extensive simile comparing Medea with Artemis (Ap.Rh.III, 876-884): οἷη δὲ λιαροῖσιν ἔφ' ὕδασι Παρθενβοῖο

ἥε καὶ Ἀμνισοῖο λοεσσαμένη ποταμοῖο
χρυσείοις Ἀητωῖς ἔφ' ἄρμασιν ἐστηνῖα
ὄκειαις κεμάδεσσι διεξέλασθη κολῶνας,
τηλόθεν ἀντιόωσα πολυχνίσου ἑκατόμβης·
τῆ δ' ἅμα νύμφαι ἔπονται ἀμορβάδες, αἱ μὲν ἐπ' ἀβτῆς
ἀγρόμεναι πηγῆς Ἀμνισίδος, ἀν δὲ δὴ ἄλλαι
ἄλσσα καὶ σχοπιδᾶς πολυκίδακας· ἀμφὶ δὲ θῆρες
κνυζηθμῶ σαινοῦσιν ὑποτρομέοντες ἰούσαν·

"Like Artemis, standing in her golden chariot after she has bathed in the gentle waters of Parthenius or the streams of Amnisus, and driving off with her fast-trotting deer over the hills and far away to some rich-scented sacrifice. Attendant nymphs have gathered at the source of Amnisus or flocked in from the glens and upland springs to follow her; and fawning beasts whimper in homage and tremble as she passes by."

It would appear that Virgil composed his two similes with these various sources in mind, for details from them appear in his descriptions of Diana and Apollo. Generally, however, he seems to have used the simile from the Odyssey in describing Diana, and the three passages from the Argonautica concerning Apollo in his Apollo simile.

From the Odyssey Virgil took the general picture of Diana sporting with her train of nymphs or Oreades on the hills - Cynthus in Virgil, Taygetus or Erymanthus in Homer. From this source also comes the reference to the superior stature and beauty of the goddess and the joy that this inspires in Latona's heart. To all this Virgil adds a reference to Eurotas' banks, perhaps from the picture of Amnisus in Apollonius' simile of Artemis; and mentions the quiver of the goddess which may be an adaptation of the descriptions of Artemis' brother Apollo who is very frequently depicted as quiver-bearing, (as in his brief appearance to the heroes in Argonautica II).

The simile about Apollo in Aeneid IV is subtly woven from the three passages in Apollonius. The Greek poet made his Apollo journey to Delos and Lycian Xanthus; Virgil reverses this, or half of it, and makes the god journey from Lycia and Xanthus to Delos. 'Instauratque chorus' was perhaps inspired by the simile of the Pythian dancers in Argonautica I; while the binding of his locks and his quiver can be found in the description of the god in Argonautica II, although the picture is a conventional one.

These two similes by no means stand alone, for Virgil's methods of adapting sources can be seen clearly in many others. In Aeneid VIII (407-414) the poet describes, in a simile, a devoted housewife rising early to work in order to keep her home together. It is a picture rightly acclaimed for its own sake, and so the origins of it have received scant attention.

The elements of Virgil's picture come from two similes in Homer, (Od.V. 488-490 and Il.XII 433-435) and two in Apollonius Rhodius, (Ap.Rh. III 291-295 and IV 1062-1065). The details Virgil needed for the completion of his simile are not to be found in any single source, but are derived from a combination of all four. It seems here that Virgil again preferred a method of fusing and reshaping scraps of existing material.

Markus Hügi³ has considered a number of similes from the Argonautica showing how Virgil often used the material in the creation of his own similes, and it is possible to select a list of some twenty of Virgil's similes which have their parallels, if not always their sources, in Apollonius.

To revert to the Dido episode, the banquet given by the Queen for Aeneas contains the interesting song of the minstrel Iopas (Aen.I 740-746). The scene set for this by Virgil is close in detail to the scene in Alcinous' palace in Odyssey VII, and it is probable that Iopas was to some extent modelled upon Homer's Demodocus.

Odysseus was moved to tears by Demodocus singing of the Fall of Troy in Odyssey VIII (499-520) - an idea borrowed by Virgil earlier in Aeneid I when Aeneas, on seeing scenes from the Trojan War depicted on the walls of Dido's temple, is moved to utter the famous words (461-462):

En Priamus! sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi;
sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.

But Virgil makes Iopas sing a rather different, philosophical strain, considerably compressed in form and content, but suitably dignified for the occasion. The subject-matter (the moon, the stars and the seasons) is profound, but allusive rather than explicit. Virgil did not wish to overload this dramatic and fateful scene with too ponderous a digression.

The song of Silenus in the Sixth Eclogue (31-86) is the immediate source of most of Virgil's material for Iopas; for this, a much longer passage, is in similar vein. Silenus sings of the making of the earth, of the myths of Hylas, Gallus, Pyrrha and Pasiphaë; Iopas sings only the first section of Silenus' song - the elements, the moon, the stars, the beasts of the earth, and the seasons. But where Virgil may have used his own early writing here, it is almost certain that the ultimate source of the song of Iopas is the song of Orpheus in Argonautica I (495-511). Orpheus there sings of the creation of the earth and of life, and his song is very like that of Iopas in the brevity and allusiveness with which it is described.

Here then, Virgil seems to have taken at least two sources and, adapting these along with one of his own youthful works, produced a result that has all the power and dignity of its precursors and the quality of brevity appropriate to its entirely new context. The language of Iopas' song, incidentally, is strongly reminiscent of Lucretius, and Virgil may well have been considerably influenced here by the author of De rerum natura.

Early in Aeneid IV (96-128), Venus and Juno discuss the situation - and contrive to involve the love-sick Dido still further with Aeneas. Their interview here and the passage in Aeneid I (657-695) where Venus sends Cupid to strike Dido with the flame of love, are derived from the opening scene of Argonautica III, where Hera, Athena and Aphrodite plan to make Medea fall in love with Jason. Further to this, many of the details of the wedding of Dido and Aeneas in the cave recall the wedding of Medea and Jason in Phaeacia (Ap.Rh.IV 1128-1222), in particular the cave setting, the contriving of the ceremony by Hera, and the description of the nymphs as witnesses.

The three speeches (two by Dido and one by Aeneas), which follow Mercury's admonitory appearance to Aeneas, are rich in allusions to Apollonius - especially to the dramatic conversation between Medea and Jason in Argonautica IV (350-420) where Medea fears treachery on the part of the hero.

When Medea leaves the palace of Aeetes to elope with the Argonauts, Jason pledges himself to marry her, with a customary clasping of right hands (Ap.Rh.IV 99-100):

Ἔς ἡδδα, καὶ χεῖρα παρασχεδὸν ἦραρε χεῖρι
δεξιτερῆν·

This is echoed at the opening of Dido's first, reproachful speech (Aen.IV 307-308):

nec te noster amor nec te data dextera quondam
nec moritura tenet crudeli funere Dido?

and Dido's next words:

quin etiam hiberno moliris sidere classem
et mediis properas Aquilonibus ire per altum,
crudelis?

are close to Medea's in Argonautica IV, (388-389):

μήλα γὰρ μέγαν ἤλιτες ὄρκον,
νηλεές·

The emphasis placed upon crudelis and its Greek equivalent νηλεές suggests that Virgil had Medea's distraught speech very much in mind as he built up his picture of Dido's abject misery.

Dido blames Aeneas for leaving her to face the wrath of Pygmalion and Iarbas (wrath which she has incurred because of him) (Aen.IV 320-323):

te propter Libycae gentes Nomadamque tyranni
odere, infensi Tyrii; te propter eundem
extinctus pudor et, qua sola sidera adibam,
fama prior...

So in Apollonius, Medea makes a long and scathing speech to Jason when she fears he will give her back to her brother Apsyrtus (Ap.Rh.IV 355-390). In this she emphasises the cruel fate that will await her at home, and refers to her plight as being (364) ὄν ἐνεχεν καμάτων ("all because I saw you through your troubles"), which is essentially the same as Virgil's te propter. Euripides' Medea also states that she has made enemies of her friends (508) σοὶ χάριν φεροῦσα.

The irony of the phrase extinctus pudor is important in Dido's speech. Dido is conscious of the oath of chastity sworn to the shade of her late husband, Sychaeus, an oath she vowed never to break (Aen.IV 25-27):

vel pater omnipotens adigat me fulmine ad umbras,
pallentis umbras Erebi noctemque profundam,
ante, Pudor, quam te violo aut tua iura resolvo...

but has indeed broken (Aen.IV 54-55):

His dictis incensum animum inflammavit amore
spemque dedit dubiae menti solvitque pudorem.

Medea too has feelings of shame, for in helping Jason, she is betraying her father's house. She at first fears to help the hero (Ap.Rh.III 742):

† τὴν δὲ μιν † ἄβις
αἰδώς τε στυγερὸν τε δέος λάβε μουκωθεΐσαν...

"But Medea, left alone, fell a prey once more to shame and horror..."

but gradually she overcomes this shame (III 785-787):

ἔρρέτω αἰδώς,
ἔρρέτω ἀγλατή· ἔ δ' ἐμῆ ἰότητι σωθεις
ἀσχηθῆς, ἵνα οἱ θυμῷ φίλον, εὖθα νέοιτο.

"Away with modesty! Away with my good name! Saved from all harm by me, let him go where he pleases..."

And finally she is freed from it altogether (III 1068):

...δὴ γὰρ οἱ ἄπ' ὀφθαλμοῦς λίκεν αἰδώς·

"For now shame had left her eyes".

Dido's pudor and Medea's αἰδώς are different emotions but it is hard to believe that Virgil was not thinking of Apollonius here.

Dido concludes her speech with a poignant wish for a child by Aeneas (Aen. IV 327-330):

saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset
ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi parvulus aula
luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret,
non equidem omnino capta ac deserta viderer.

So Hypsipyle, Queen of Lemnos, as Jason prepares to leave the island in Argonautica I (897-898):

...λίκε δ' ἴμιν ἔπος, τό κεν ἐξανθήσασιν
πρόφρων, ἦν ἄρα δὴ με θεοὶ δάωσι τεκέσθαι.

"But tell me what I am to do if the gods allow me to become a mother; and I will gladly do it."

Virgil skilfully changes Hypsipyle's hopeful remark into Dido's pathetic and vain wish, thus deepening the tragedy of the situation. There is a similar contrast between the kindly and gentle reassurance of Jason to Hypsipyle (Ap. Rh. I 900-909), which begins:

Ἵψιπύλη, τὰ μὲν οὕτω ἐναίσια πάντα γένοιτο
ἐκ μακάρων·

"Hypsipyle, may the happy gods grant all the prayers that you make on my behalf..."

and the cold reply of Aeneas (Aen. IV 333-361). Virgil is making the tragedy as trenchant as possible and, consequently, his treatment of the episode is quite different from that of Apollonius.

Aeneas weakly admits his debt to Dido and says that he will never forget her (Aen. IV 334-337):

ego te, quae plurima fando
enumerare vales, numquam, regina, negabo
promeritam, nec me meminisse pigebit Elissae
dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.

This is an idea emphasised at least once in the Odyssey - where Nausicaa tells Odysseus to remember her (VIII 461-468), and five times in the Argonautica (I 896-897; III 1069-1071; 1079-1082; 1109-1117; IV 383-387), notably in the conversation between Medea and Jason in Argonautica III. Medea says (1069-1071):

Μνώεο δ', ἦν ἄρα δὴ ποθ' ὑπότροπος οἴκαδ' ἔκηται,
οὐνομα Μηδείης· ὣς δ' αὖτ' ἐγὼ ἀμφὶς ἐόντος
μνήσομαι.

"But do remember, if you ever reach your home. Remember the name of Medea, and I for my part will remember you when you are far away."

to which Jason replies (1079-1080):

Καὶ λίην οὐ νόκτας ὄτομαι, οὐδέ ποτ' ἤμαρ
σεῦ ἐπιλήρεσθαι, προφυγῶν μόρον, εἰ. ἔτεόν γε
φεύξομαι ἀσκηθῆς ἐς Ἀχαιίδα ...

"Of one thing I am sure. If I escape and live to reach Achaea...never by night or day shall I forget you."

Virgil transforms this conversation into the lame apology of Aeneas, which provokes Dido's terrible curse (Aen. IV 382-387):

spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,
supplicia hausurum scopulis et nomine Dido
saepe vocaturum. sequar atris ignibus absens
et, cum frigida mors anima seduxerit artus,
omnibus umbra locis adero. dabis, improbe, poenas.
audiam et haec Manis veniet mihi fama sub imos.

"But I still believe that, if there is any power for righteousness in Heaven, you will drink to the dregs the cup of punishment amid sea-rocks, and as you suffer cry 'Dido' again and again. Though far, yet I shall be near, haunting you with flames of blackest pitch. And when death's chill has parted my body from its breath, wherever you go my spectre will be there. You will have your punishment, you villain. And I shall hear; the news will reach me deep in the world of death."

Apollonius provided Virgil with details for this passage. Medea, begging Jason to remember her, threatens (Ap.Rh.IV 1109-1117):

"But oh, at least remember me when you are back in Iolcus; and I, despite my parents, will remember you. And may there come to me some whisper from afar, some bird to tell the tale, if you forget me. Or may the Storm-winds snatch me up and carry me across the sea to Iolcos, to denounce you in your face, and remind you that I saved your life. That is the moment I would choose to pay an unexpected visit to your house."

and much later, in the face of desertion, she curses Jason (Ap.Rh.IV 383-387):

"I hope that you will think of me some day when you yourself are suffering. I hope the Fleece will vanish like an idle dream, down into Erebus. And may my avenging Furies chase you from your home and so repay me for all I have endured through your inhumanity."

However, the closest parallel to Dido's curse is the outburst of Chalciope to Medea when she is begging her sister to help Jason for the sake of her son Argus who was rescued by the Argonauts on their voyage to Colchis and is now pleading unsuccessfully with King Aetes on their behalf. The passage is in Argonautica III (703-704):

.... ἢ σὺ γὰρ φίλοις σὺν παῖσιν θανοῦσα
εἶπεν ἔξ 'Αἴδεω στυγερῇ μετόπισθεν 'Ερινός.

"...may I die with my dear sons and haunt you afterwards from Hades like an avenging Fury."

What is perhaps significant above all is how Virgil combines all this material from Apollonius' poem and recasts it into two speeches - the lame assertion by Aeneas that he will not forget his debt to Dido, and the ominous curse on Aeneas and the Trojans, later elaborated by Dido in her prayer (625):

Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor.

James Henry in his Aeneidea (Book II), quotes a remark of Charles James Fox:

"If there is an Apollonius Rhodius where you are, pray look at Medea's speech (lib.IV, vs.355) and you will perceive that, even in Dido's finest speech - nec tibi diva parens ... that he has imitated a good deal and especially those expressive and sudden turns - neque te teneo, etc; but then he has made wonderful improvements and, on the whole, it is perhaps the finest thing in all poetry."

From the dramatic point of view there is undoubtedly much in common between the two speeches, in the fluctuations and turns of mood and emphasis: Dido speaks of the falsehood of Aeneas; her hopeless plight; her folly; the malevolence of the gods; and, finally, curses Aeneas. Medea speaks of her own folly and despair; the need for justice on Jason's part; her pitiable plight; and, finally, curses Jason.

Dido's bitter and tragic expression of disillusionment (Aen.IV 373-375):

nusquam tuta fides, electum litore, egentem
excepi et regni demens in parte locavi;
amissam classem, socios a morte reduxi;

"No faith is left sure in the wide world. I welcomed him, a shipwrecked beggar, and like a fool I allowed him to share my royal place."

is the same as Medea's reproachful speech in Argonautica IV (356-358/366-367):

"Has your splendid success destroyed your memory? Have you forgotten all you said to me when you were forced to seek my help? ... And then the Fleece, for which you crossed the sea. You got it through my own folly."

Each emphasises what she has done to help her lover in his hour of need, and grieves bitterly at the predicament in which she is so ironically involved.

Virgil's deep feeling for the tragedy unfolding around Dido finds voice in the passionate outburst (Aen.IV 412):

improbe Amor, quid non mortalis pectora cogis!

This has its direct parallel in Argonautica IV, in the passage beginning (445-449):

Σχέτλι' Ἔρωσ, μέγα πῆμα, μέγα στήγος ἀνθρώποισιν

"Unconscionable Love, bane and tormentor of mankind, parent of strife, fountain of tears, source of a thousand ills, rise, mighty Power, and fall upon the sons of our enemies with all the force you used upon Medea when you filled her with insensate fury."

Dido, having failed to effect any change in Aeneas' determination, is assailed by visions and dreams (Aen.IV 452-473). She sees the holy waters upon the altar turned black and the wine changed into blood, and her dream is a nightmare: Aeneas is hounding her, she is wandering alone, and the Furies are in pursuit.

In Argonautica IV, Circe entertains the Argonauts on their return journey and is frightened by nightmares (IV, 664-667):

"She saw all the rooms and walls of her house streaming with blood, and fire devouring all the magic drugs which she used to bewitch her visitors."

Medea too has a nightmare (Ap.Rh.III 616-632), when she dreams that Jason has come to take her away, that she chooses to go with him, and that her parents are enraged by this.

Both Virgil and Apollonius show a certain psychological understanding of dreams - the distortion of reality and the onset of secret fears. Facts and fears become subconsciously confused and lead to a fantasy of foreboding. The Hellenistic delight in probing into psychology in this way seems to have interested Virgil. And if the details of the passages differ, this is only because the situations differ also.

When Dido at last resorts to magic and tells Anna the story of the charm given to her by the priestess of the temple of the Hesperides (Aen.IV 480-493), we find several allusions to Hellenistic literature - notably to the Second Idyll of Theocritus, and to the Argonautica. Magic was of great interest to the Alexandrians, a manifestation, one might say, of their taste for the exotic, and it is accordingly from writers of that period that the details of this episode seem to come. The introduction of the priestess of the Hesperides and her serpent is probably a reminiscence of the visit by the Argonauts to the Hesperides in Argonautica IV (1396-1409) where they view the body of the serpent Ladon, slain the previous day by Heracles. But more probably it echoes the description of the serpent guarding the Golden Fleece, charmed by Medea and Jason (Ap.Rh.IV 156-158):

"But Medea, chanting a spell, dipped a fresh sprig of juniper in her brew and sprinkled his eyes with her most potent drug; and as the all-pervading magic scent spread round his head, sleep fell on him."

This reminds us of Virgil's beautiful line - spargens umida mella soporiferumque papaver.

Argus' account of Medea's power as a sorceress (Ap.Rh.III 532-533):

"With these [herbs] she can put out a raging fire, she can stop rivers as they roar in spate, arrest a star, and check the movements of the sacred moon."

is clearly a model for Virgil's sistere aquam fluviis et vertere sidera retro. And the description of Medea's charm made from a root (Ap.Rh.III 864-865):

μυκτιθμῶ δ' ἔκνευρθεν ἔρεμνῆ σελετο γαῖα,
ῥίζης τεμνομένης Τιτηνίδος·

"The dark earth shook and rumbled underneath the Titan root when it was cut"

calls to mind Virgil's ... mugire videbis
sub pedibus terram ...

Dido is reluctant to use magic (Aen.IV 492-493):

testor, cara, deos et te, Germana, tuumque
dulce caput, magicas invitam accingier artes

like Medea, who agrees to do so only for her sister Chalciope's sake (Ap.Rh.III 772-783; 714-717).

Dido now prepares to die, invoking Hecate and other infernal spirits. These may here be a reminiscence of Odysseus' rites when he calls upon the shades of the dead in Odyssey XI (23-26) and also of Jason's invocation of Hecate in Argonautica III (1207-1224). The details of the love-charm and herbs Dido prepares are (Aen.IV 513-516):

falcibus et messae ad lunam quaeruntur aenis
pubentes herbae nigri cum lacte veneni;
quaeritur et nascentis equi de fronte revolsus
et matri praereptus amor.

"Herbs, reaped with bronzen sickles by moonlight and bursting with a black poisonous milk, were gathered there, and with them a love-charm ripped from the brow of a baby foal before the mother could take it."

There are two apparent sources for these "herbs with black poisonous milk". First there is the charm MOLY given by Hermes to Odysseus before he meets Circe (Odyssey X 302-306) - a charm that was "black at the root, but its flower was milky white." Secondly, there is Medea's charm in Argonautica III (851-859) "the root looked like flesh that had just been cut, and the juice like the dark sap of a mountain oak." From these two descriptions Virgil, with customary economy, produced his short account of Dido's herbs.

If Apollonius gave Virgil the ideas for his description of the herbs, it was perhaps Theocritus who gave him the idea of a love-charm torn from a foal, for in

Idyll II Simaetha says (48-49):

ἵππομανῆς φυτὸν ἔστι παρ' Ἀρκάσι, τῷ δ' ἐπι πᾶσαι
καὶ πᾶλοι μάλινονται ἀν' ὄρεα καὶ θόαι Ἴπποι.

"Coltsfoot is an Arcadian weed that maddens the young stallions and fleet-footed mares on the hills"

The charm is different, but the spirit of the passage is the same; and from the same Idyll comes Simaetha's command to her maid (18-19):

ἀλοϊτά τοι πρᾶτον κυρὶ τάχεται· ἄλλ' ἐκίπασε,
θεστυλί ...

This sprinkling of holy meal, an essential part of magic rites, is echoed in Virgil's description of Dido (Aen. IV 517):

ipsa mola manibusque piis altaria iuxta....

Virgil now contrasts the calm of the night with the distracted state of the queen (Aen. IV 522-532):

Nox erat et placidum carpebant fessa soporem
corpora per terras, silvaeque et saeva quierant
aequora, cum medio volvuntur sidera lapsu,
cum tacet omnis ager, pecudes pictaeque volucres,
quaeque lacus late liquidos, quaeque aspera dumis
rura tenent, somno positae sub nocte silenti
(lenibant curas et corda oblita laborum).
At non infelix animi Phoenissa,

"It was night, and tired creatures all over the world were enjoying kindly sleep. Forests and fierce seas were at rest, as the circling constellations glided in their midnight course. Every field, all the farm-animals, and the colourful birds were silent, all that lived across miles of grassy mere and in the wild country's ragged brakes, lying still under the quiet night in a sleep that smoothed each care away from hearts which had forgotten life's toil. But not so the Phoenician queen...."

In Classical times there were relatively few descriptions of nature - except in similes and other brief figures of speech - and it is therefore possible here to locate with relative certainty the sources of Virgil's imagery. There are four relevant passages - one in Alcman, one in Theocritus, and two in Apollonius Rhodius.

A fragment from Alcman (Lyra Graeca I, p. 76. Loeb Classical Library), quoted in the Homeric Lexicon of Apollonius Sophista, reads as follows:

εὔδοισιν δ' ὄρεων κορυφαί τε καὶ φάραγγες
πρωονές τε καὶ χαράδραι,
φῦλά θ' ἔρπετα τόσσα τρέφει μέλαινα γαῖα,
θῆρες τ' ὄρεσκόμοι καὶ γένος μελισσῶν
καὶ κινάδαλ' ἐν βένθεσσι κορφορέας ἄλδς.
εὔδοισιν δ' οἰωνῶν
φῦλα τανυπτερόγων.

"Asleep are the peaks and ravines of the mountains, the ridges and the torrents; the species of animals that the dark earth brings forth, the wild animals of the mountains and the race of bees. The beasts in the depths of the purple sea, and the races of long-winged birds are asleep."

As this is only a fragment, quoted for philological reasons, it is impossible to judge whether the description of nature asleep was given for its own poetic value, or as in the passage from Aeneid IV, to serve as a contrast with some restless human being.

Alcman's imagery is bold and has a strongly personal flavour. It is easy to imagine him as being inspired to write these lines by the majestic peaks of the Taygetus mountain range which dominates the Vale of Lacedaemon. Possibly the imagery was too bold for Virgil, whose description is much gentler and more pastoral. However, the basic idea of the countryside and its denizens asleep must have come from a knowledge of Alcman.

The picture in Alcman is a local one - only a brief reference to the sea takes the reader beyond the sleeping mountains. Virgil, on the other hand, has made his picture a more general one - the peace of night covers the countryside, the sea, and even extends into the heavens. Here there seems to be more than a hint of Theocritus, Idyll II (37-41):

Ίουξ, ἔλαχε τὸ τῆνον ἐμὸν ποτὶ δῶμα τὸν ἄνδρα.
ἦνίδε σιγῆ μὲν κόντος, σιγῶντι δ' ἄηται·
ἀ δ' ἔμα οὐ σιγῆ στέρων ἔντοσθεν ἄνισα,
ἄλλ' ἐπὶ τήνῃ πᾶσα καταλθομαι, ὅς με τάλαιναν
ἀντὶ γυναικὸς ἔθρε κακὴν καὶ ἀπάρθενον ἴμεν.

"Magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love! Lo! silent is the deep and silent the winds, but never silent the torment in my breast. Nay I am all on fire for him that made me, not wife but shameful girl, no more a maiden."

Although the details of expression are not quite the same as Virgil's, the feeling of universal calm, so strong in the second line of Theocritus' description, brings the two passages close together.

Moreover, Theocritus uses the brief description of night as a contrast for Simaetha's restless and tortured mind. This is an idea directly repeated by Virgil - his night sequence affords a contrast for the love-stricken Dido. But it cannot be said that Virgil derived the idea from Theocritus alone; for, although there is much other evidence for his familiarity with Idyll II, there are two passages in Apollonius Rhodius which can equally well have been in Virgil's mind.

The first is Argonautica III (744-751):

Νῆξ μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἄγεν κνέφας· οἱ δ' ἐνὶ κόντῳ
ναῦται εἰς Ἑλίχην τε καὶ Ἀστέρας Ὀρίωνος
ἔδρακον ἐκ νηῶν· ὕπνοιο δὲ καὶ τις ὀδίτης
ἦδη καὶ πυλαῶρος ἐέλδετο· καὶ τινα παίδων
μητέρα τεθνεώτων ἀδινδὸν περὶ κῶμ' ἐκάλυπτεν·
οὐδὲ κυνῶν ἑλαχὴ ἔτ' ἀνὰ πτόλιν, οὐ θρόος ἦεν
ἦχηεις· σιγῆ δὲ μελαινομένην ἔχεν ὄρφνην.
ἀλλὰ μάλ' οὐ Μήδειαν ἐπὶ γλυκερὸς λάβεν ὕπνος....

"Night threw her shadow on the world. Sailors out at sea looked up at the circling Bear and the stars of Orion. Travellers and watchmen longed for sleep and oblivion came at last to mothers mourning for their children's death. In the town, dogs ceased to bark and men to call to one another; silence reigned over the deepening dark. But gentle sleep did not visit Medea."

and the second is probably a recollection of this, altered and abbreviated by Apollonius for its new context (Argonautica IV, 1058-1061):

στρευγόμενοις δ' ἄν' ὄμιλον ἐπλήθυνεν ἐβήτειρα
Νῆξ ἔργων ἄνδρεσσι, κατευκλήθησε δὲ πᾶσαν
γαῖαν ὁμῶς· τὴν δ' ὄβρι μίνυθά περ εἴνασεν ἕκνος,
ἀλλὰ οἱ ἐν στέρνοις ἀχέων εἰλίσσεται θυμός.

"In the midst of the alarms, Night with her gentle ban on man's activities descended on the company. She put the world to sleep; but not Medea. For her there was no rest, her heart was wrung with pain."

In both examples, it is clearly the contrast that is being sought and not merely pictorial decoration.

Since Virgil's Dido owes so much to Apollonius' Medea, it is more than likely that these two passages from the Argonautica influenced Virgil's description of night, even if points of exact comparison are limited to the last two lines of the second piece. Apollonius makes his first picture (III 744-751) rather unhappy and ill-boding, whereas Virgil's is peaceful and almost soothing, the effect of the contrast being thus considerably heightened. Doubtless Virgil turned for his details to Alcman and Theocritus because he felt that the first passage in Apollonius was too restless, and the second rather trite.

Macrobius (Saturnalia V, 17,4) comments:

"Virgil made good use of whatever material he found worthy of imitation, so that he shaped almost the whole of Aeneid IV from Apollonius' Argonautica IV by transferring to Dido and Aeneas the passionate love of Medea for Jason."

This is a half-truth, as Servius' remark that Virgil exclusively used Argonautica III. There is ample evidence to show that material for the Dido episode was drawn from both books, as well as from other sources (e.g. Homer's Nausicaa in Odyssey VI, Apollonius' Hypsipyle in Argonautica I, and Euripides' Medea). Nor must we forget R.M. Henry's remark⁴ that there were available to Virgil translations of the Odyssey (by Livius Andronicus), of Euripides' Medea (by Ennius), and of the Argonautica (by Varro Atacinus), as well as Naevis' Bellum Punicum, which is reputed to have linked for the first time the names of Aeneas and Dido.

Another remark of R.M. Henry⁴ is worth quoting here:

"We shall not appreciate Virgil's art, nor indeed understand his work, unless we keep in mind not only his inspiration as a great poet, but his conscious ambition to be the pattern and teacher of his age ... he was a member of a great artistic guild with a common store, upon which he might freely draw, not only of general lessons, but even of particular episodes and phrases."

Many of these "particular episodes and phrases" can be found to have come from Apollonius, to be altered and often improved by Virgil in his search for perfection. But in some longer episodes as well, Virgil draws material directly from the Argonautica.

Time here permits only a provisional list of comparisons:- the Song of Orpheus (Ap.Rh.I 496-511) with the Song of Iopas; the love of Hypsipyle for Jason (I 653-909) with that of Dido for Aeneas; Cyzicus and Cleite, king and queen of the Doliones (I 961-1077) with the ill-starred Latinus and Amata; the boxing match between Amycus and Polydeuces (II 1-97) with the boxing match in Aeneid V; Phineus and the Harpies (II 178-499) with Virgil's Harpy Episode in Aeneid III; the conversation between Hera, Athena and Aphrodite (III 6-110) with the conversation of Venus and Juno in Aeneid IV; Medea's love for Jason (Ap.Rh.III and IV passim) with Dido's love for Aeneas; and the encounter of 'Argo' with the Nereids (IV 922-965) with Cloanthus' victory in the boat-race in Aeneid V (239-243) and with the Cymodocea sequence in Aeneid X (219-257).

The 16th Century scholar Scaliger asserted that the Aeneid was far superior to most of its sources, and provoked Jeremy Hoelzlin to remark:⁵

neque enim Aeneis Vergiliana esset quod est si nullus fuisset Apollonius.

"For Virgil's Aeneid would not be what it is, if there had been no Apollonius."

This heated exchange achieved nothing either for Virgil or for Apollonius, and H. de la Ville de Mirmont neatly sums up their disagreement:⁶

"Apollonius suffers less from the telum imbelles sine ictu aimed by Scaliger than from the bear-hug inflicted by Hoelzlin."

In his review of Mirmont's Apollonius de Rhodes et Virgile, R.C. Seaton writes:⁷

"Between Homer whom he imitates, and Virgil by whom he is imitated, Apollonius resembles an earthenware pot between two brazen vessels."

This is Mirmont's conclusion also, and there can be little doubt that it is essentially justified. Nevertheless, Virgil saw a good deal in the Argonautica which he could usefully adapt for his Aeneid. Indeed, the evidence goes against another of Seaton's remarks:⁷

"Virgil only makes use of Apollonius to enrich his poem by certain elegances and refinements of thought and expression."

There are many occasions when Virgil borrows an idea from Apollonius and adds "elegances and refinements" from elsewhere. It must be emphasised that Virgil always adapts the material he borrows.

The strength of Apollonius lies, perhaps, in his precision and attention to detail, although from an aesthetic standpoint, these are often also his weaknesses. In details he often achieves great beauty and shows exceptional flights of imagination,

but these are too rarely sustained. Longinus⁸ described him as ἄκωτος (flawless) which is not altogether a kindly (or correct) remark. Yet Virgil appears to have admired this precision, for many of the smaller details of the Argonautica find their way into the Aeneid.

F.A. Wright in his History of Later Greek Literature says that:⁹

"Balancing merits against defects, the verdict commonly given is that the Argonautica is a magnificent failure."

The influence of this "magnificent failure" upon Virgil is apparent throughout his work - in minute details and sometimes in episodes embracing several hundred verses. Apollonius was, of course, less important to Virgil than Homer, as a primary source of the Aeneid. On the other hand, his importance in this respect is not so very much less. To deny him a degree of importance is to reject what seems the only tenable theory regarding Virgil's technique, the theory that seeks to show how, again and again, Virgil's genius fuses poetic art and inspiration with learning. As Goethe said:¹⁰

"There is, through all art, a filiation. If you see a great master, you will always find that he used what was good in his predecessors, and that it was this which made him great. Men like Raphael do not spring out of the ground. They took their root in the antique and in the best which had been done before them. Had they not used the advantages of their time, there would be little to say about them."

Notes

1. The Voyage of Argo, Penguin Classics, p.12.
2. The translations used in this paper are by E.V. Rieu (Odyssey; Iliad; and Argonautica), and W.F.J. Knight (Aeneid), all in Penguin Classics.
3. Markus Hügi: Vergils Aeneis und die hellenistische Dichtung, Bern, 1952.
4. R.M. Henry: Medea and Dido, Classical Review XLIV, July 1930, pp. 97-108.
5. Jeremy Hoelzlin: Argonautica I-IV, Leiden 1641.
6. Henri de la Ville de Mirmont: Apollonios de Rhodes et Virgile.
7. R.C. Seaton: Classical Review IX, 1895, p.175.
8. Longinus: On the Sublime, 33, 4.
9. F.A. Wright: A History of Later Greek Literature, Chapt.II.
10. Goethe: Conversations with Eckermann, 4th January, 1827.