Apollonius Rhodius and a Homeric Gloss

Hyunjip Kim
Stanford University

Abstract: This paper examines Apollonius Rhodius's use of a Homeric gloss, ὁμαδέω. It argues that Apollonius adopts a double strategy in his intertextual engagement with Homer: Apollonius differentiates himself from his epic model on the one hand and establishes continuity on the other. For their appreciation, the two contrasting strategies require varying levels of familiarity with the Homeric original and Apollonius's own epic. This reflects, I argue, the fact that Apollonius addresses different expectations from his audiences, and that he, accordingly, variously presents himself as an innovative poet or as a meticulous scholar. The double strategy lends Apollonius authority as poet and scholar.

Keywords: Intertextuality; Homeric gloss; Apollonius Rhodius; *Argonautica*; Homer.

৵

T HERE IS A persistent question about Alexandrian poetry, namely, in its relationship with the past, whether it strives for continuity or polemical innovation. And the same question attaches to Apollonius's epic.[1] This paper offers a case study, Apollonius's use of a Homeric gloss, ὁμαδέω (the LSJ definition is "make a noise or din").[2] The word has a remarkably focused set of associations: found only in the *Odyssey*, it always describes the riotous behaviour of the suitors in the halls of Odysseus. This is an opportunity to see whether, when using ὁμαδέω, Apollonius chooses to rest within the boundaries set by Homer.

But first, on what grounds do we identify the source text for Apollonius's ὁμαδέω as the *Odyssey*? And how can we be reasonably confident that Apollonius's use of ὁμαδέω would have been measured against Homer's by audiences and readers? There are no certainties, especially since we are frustrated by the loss of much of Hellenistic writing. But based on the surviving evidence we can cite the following grounds. First, the word is a Homeric gloss and probably would have been recognised as one by educated audiences, as young Greeks were learning difficult

---

[1] Tradition and innovation are the two poles in the title of Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004; on trends in scholarship on Hellenistic poetry, see Klooster 2014; on Apollonius and intertextuality, see introduction to Knight 1995 with Nelis 1997; on trends in scholarship on Apollonius, see Glei 2008.

[2] Campbell notes the Homeric echo in his compilation of phraseological parallels. See Campbell 1981, 9 ad 1.474.

Homeric words since at least the fifth century.[3] And, in the time between Homer and Apollonius, we have no attestations of ὁμαδέω. This is unusual, since Homeric glosses are usually shared among Alexandrian poets,[4] but, in the case of ὁμαδέω, so far as we can tell, the link between Homer and Apollonius is unmediated.[5] Second, ὁμαδέω is found as part of a formula in Homer: μνηστῆρες δ' ὁμάδησαν ἀνὰ μέγαρα σκιόεντα ("the suitors cried out throughout the shadowy halls").[6] The ancients already took repeated phrases and verses to be typical of Homeric style.[7] The word ὁμαδέω is not only (exclusively) Homeric but characteristically Homeric. Third, the context of ὁμαδέω in the *Argonautica* recalls specifically the *Odyssey*. Five out of six attestations of ὁμαδέω in Apollonius concern a group of young men (the Argonauts), exactly as in Homer (the suitors).[8] And, the first time ὁμαδέω is used in the *Argonautica*, it is in the context of hubristic behaviour. The suitors are hubristic: when they cry out (ὁμάδησαν) and pray they might sleep with Penelope, Telemachus remarks on their insolence (ὑπέρβιον ὕβριν ἔχοντες, 1.368); on another occasion, after the suitors cry out (ὁμάδησαν), one of them speaks "overbearingly" (ὧδε δέ τις εἴπεσκε νέων ὑπερηνορεόντων, 4.769). When the Argonauts cry out (ὁμάδησαν) at 1.474, it is at Idas's outrageous confidence that the expedition will turn out well even if a god were opposed it (καὶ εἰ θεὸς ἀντιόῳτο, 470). The word ὕβρις is not too distant–feasts are *supposed* to be free from "insatiable hubris" (ἄατος ὕβρις ἀπείη, 459)–and Idmon rails against Idas for bringing "untimely destruction" onto himself (φρόνεεις ὀλοφώια καὶ πάρος αὐτῷ, 476) through his "presumptuous words" (σὺ δ' ἀτάσθαλα πάμπαν ἔειπας, 480). Idmon seems almost to be speaking about the suitors, who do come to an unpleasant end by their own doing.

Homer is a clear intertext. But we are less interested in the fact of intertextuality than in its nature. The parallel just noted points to a difference. The Argonauts are not the antagonists, but the companions of the hero Jason, or even themselves the heroes of the poem.[9] And they do not cry out (ὁμάδησαν) out of hubris, like the suitors, but, on the contrary, to protest Idas's hubris. Their opposition to Idas

---

[3] See Aristophanes *PCG fr*. 233; Ehrenberg 1962, 289; Latte 1924.

[4] Rengakos 2008, 247.

[5] After Apollonius, the word continues an almost exclusively Homeric afterlife: it appears in Herodian's work on prosody, Quintus Smyrnaeus, Eustathius, the *Epimerismi Homerici* (quoted by the *Etymologicum Gudianum*), and the Homeric and Apollonian scholia.

[6] All translations are mine. The formula occurs in full hexameter form at *Od*. 1.365, 4.768, and 18.399, and with modifications at 17.360 and 22.21–22. For the frequency of the third person plural of the aorist in formulaic phrases, see Finkelberg 1989, 187–88.

[7] See Cratinus *fr*. 355 *PCG*; Pollianus *AP* 11.130; Fantuzzi 2008, 221–24.

[8] Ap. Rhod. *Argon*. 1.474, 2.638, 3.564, 3.1254, 4.1618. The exception is 3.970. We will discount 3.1304 ("ἐκ στομάτων ὁμάδευν, τὸν δ' ἄμφεπε δήιον αἶθος"). The verse is seriously corrupt. A fourth-century papyrus (*P. Mil.* 121) seems to suggest certain ancient editions had variants for v. 1303–5. See Vian 1980 ad 1305; cf. Hunter 1989, 243. It is difficult to account for the change in dialect in *homádeun,* which is a reading found in a manuscript by Demetrius Moschus and favoured in Hermann 1805. For the resemblance between the suitors and the Argonauts, two chorus-like groups of young men, see DeForest 1994, 53; Nishimura-Jensen 2009, 14; Bulloch 2006, 50.

[9] On the Argonauts as the collective hero of the poem, see Carspecken 1952, 111–25.

becomes clearer later on in the poem, when they cry out twice—each time the verb is ὁμάδησαν—against the bad-tempered Idas: when Idas rebukes them for unheroically seeking the help of Medea, a woman, the Argonauts "cry out" in muted disapproval—ἦκα μάλ' is a daring and paradoxical innovation, for those aware of the Homeric meaning of ὁμαδέω—without quite managing to speak out against Idas (3.558–65); the Argonauts "cry out" with joy (γηθόσυνοι) when Idas fails to break Jason's weapons (3.1252–55). The traditional negative resonance of ὁμαδέω is transformed, and ὁμαδέω is set in opposition to the qualities it itself evokes traditionally, hubris and impetuosity, embodied in the figure of Idas.[10] When Jason pretends to be dispirited to test the mettle of his men (ἀριστήων πειρώμενος, 2.638), the Argonauts "cry out" not out of insolence but in a show of good cheer (θαρσαλέοις ἐπέεσσιν, 639). The last time the Argonauts "cry out" in the poem, they are marvelling at the prodigious god Triton as he rescues them out of Lake Triton, leading them out onto the open sea (4.1602–1619); this is the inverse of the suitors' final ὁμάδησαν in the *Odyssey,* when they are awestruck not by their rescuer, but their imminent killer, Odysseus (22.21–22).

Apollonius turns a Homeric gloss, ὁμαδέω, against a Homeric hero, Idas. The gloss' negative resonance (from Homer) is transferred onto the hubris of a Homeric hero. Meanwhile, ὁμαδέω adopts a new set of associations: cooperation, good cheer, survival.[11] Apollonius subverts the Homeric world without leaving it; he inhabits it while distancing himself from its norms. There are other innovations in his use of ὁμαδέω. First, he does not imitate the hexameter-long formula, which is the form in which ὁμαδέω is usually found in Homer (see footnote 6 above), but takes the exceptional and heavily modified instance at 22.21, the line-end τοὶ δ' ὁμάδησαν, as his main model, repeating it four out of six times that ὁμαδέω occurs in his poem (1.474, 2.638, 3.1254, 4.1618). He also 'modernises' the spelling from *toì* to *hoí*: "οἱ δ' ὁμάδησαν". The most obvious anomaly, however, is 3.967–72, when, instead of young men, pines and oaks "cry out" (ὁμάδησαν, 971) in a simile describing the conversation of lovers. The scene strays far from the Homeric model. Love takes the place of hubris.[12] In this intimate encounter between Jason and Medea, there are not only no young men, but no collective at all (Apollonius makes a point of mentioning that Medea's attendants withdraw at 965–66).

So far, the study of ὁμαδέω in Apollonius has revealed a familiar intertextual strategy: Apollonius reworks traditional material—similes, type-scenes, *hapax legomena*, formulas—and opens up new possibilities.[13] And all it would take for an

---

[10] Idas stands for the wrathful and martial hero of the Homeric type, in contrast to the rational and temperate Jason. On Jason's new kind of heroism, see e.g. Carspecken 1952; Fränkel 1960; Clauss 1993.

[11] This is not to suggest that new ideals win out over the old. For Jason as anti-hero or non-hero, see e.g. Klein 1983; Schwinge 1986. Apollonius's moral verdict of new and old heroism is a controversial question, which is in any case beyond the scope of this paper. All I hope to establish is an opposition.

[12] On the love-theme in the *Argonautica*, see Zanker 1979.

[13] E.g. on similes, see Effe 2008; on type-scenes, see Knight 1995; on *hapax legomena*, see Kyriakou 1995; on formulas, see Fantuzzi 2008.

audience to register the details of Apollonius's innovations, examined above, is the knowledge that ὁμαδέω is found in the *Odyssey*, in a repetitive formula that describes the suitors, who are hubristic. But it would take a more mathematical kind of familiarity with the poems—we might say, with the texts, without insisting on giving a technological inflection to the distinction—to appreciate another layer of Apollonius's intertextual engagement with Homer: allusions to precise numbers of attestations, anomalies, and metrical positions. At this level, Apollonius reveals a different, conservative tendency. He follows Homer closely. The only slight adjustment is that, perhaps in a spirit of one-upmanship, Apollonius raises the Homeric count by one, but always exactly by one. For example, ὁμαδέω is attested five times in Homer, six in Apollonius. Apollonius also reflects the Homeric practice of repeating the same formula with ὁμαδέω several times and modifying it on a couple of occasions. Though Apollonius dispenses with the formula, he repeats the sequence οἱ δ' ὁμάδησαν four times (1.474, 2.638, 3.1254, 4.1618) and writes two variants (3.564, 3.971); compare Homer, who repeats the formula *three* times (1.365, 4.768, 18.399) and offers two variants (17.360, 22.21–2). And Homer uses two different metrical positions for ὁμάδησαν, after A4 or the trithemimeres (1.365, 4.768, 18.399, 17.360) and after position 9 or the ennehemimeres (22.21), while Apollonius's ὁμάδησαν starts after position 9 or the ennehemimeres (1.474, 2.638, 3.1254, 4.1618), or after A4 (3.971), or after C1 or the hephthemimeres (3.564)—difference of one, again.

This double strategy, in the end, is what makes Apollonius's engagement with the Homeric ὁμαδέω interesting. On the one hand, as argued above, he refashions the Homeric material and differentiates his new poetry from the old; on the other hand, although Apollonius had the choice, for example, to repeat οἱ δ' ὁμάδησαν fewer times or produce more variants,[14] he fastidiously establishes numerical near-continuity with Homer.

What could explain this duality in Apollonius's approach? Duality itself could be an explanation enough. For duality has been recognised as a pervasive paradigm in the Hellenistic era, not only in the sphere of literature but also politics and the sciences: the juxtaposition of high and low, Greek and Egyptian, poetic and scientific, and so on.[15] And that could account for Apollonius's double strategy. But a curious fact remains unexplained: a much more thorough knowledge of the poems is required to grasp the one strategy (continuity) than the other (innovation). Depending on the level at which read we him, Apollonius gives contrasting impressions of his relationship to Homer. And we may detect in this a symptom of Apollonius's commitment to establishing his authority on two fronts. For each, he meets different demands. As a poet, he overcomes the aesthetic problems involved in imitation of epic—for example, the repetitive style—by reimagining traditional material in new surroundings.[16] As a scholar, on the other hand, he demonstrates

[14] On the Alexandrian impatience with repetition, see e.g. Calhoun 1933; Fantuzzi 2008, 224–27.
[15] See e.g. Stephens 2004; Netz 2009.
[16] On epic's problematically repetitive style, see footnotes 7 and 14 above.

his command of the Homeric text by keeping close track of Homer's technique.[17] He addresses his audience both as a poetic champion of a new aesthetics and, seen from a different angle, as a meticulous scholar of the Homeric text. The gloss ὁμαδέω shows Apollonius securing this double authority as poet and scholar.

Bibliography

Texts and editions

Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica.* Ed. H. Fränkel, *Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica*. Oxford 1961.

———— *Argonautica Book 3.* Ed. R. L. Hunter, *Apollonius of Rhodes: Argonautica Book 3*. Cambridge 1989.

————*Argonautica Book 3.* Ed. F. Vian, *Apollonios de Rhodes,* Argonautiques*. Tome II: Chant III. Texte Établi et Commenté Par Francis Vian et Traduit Par Émile Delage*. Paris 1980.

Homer, *Odyssey*. Eds D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera*, vols 3–4. 3rd ed. Oxford 1920.

Secondary Literature

Bulloch, A. 2006. "Jason's Cloak," *Hermes* 134 (1), 44–68.

Calhoun, G.M. 1933. "Homeric Repetitions," *UCPCP* 12, 1–25.

Campbell, M. 1981. *Echoes and Imitations of Early Epic in Apollonius Rhodius*. Leiden.

Carspecken, J.F. 1952. "Apollonius Rhodius and the Homeric Epic," *YCIS* 13, 33–143.

Clauss, J.J. 1993. *The Best of the Argonauts: The Redefinition of the Epic Hero in Book One of Apollonius'* Argonautica. Berkeley.

DeForest, M.M. 1994. *Apollonius's* Argonautica*: A Callimachean Epic*. Leiden.

Effe, B. 2008. "The Similes of Apollonius Rhodius: Intertextuality and Epic Innovation," Papanghelis & Rengakos (eds.) 2008, 199–220.

Ehrenberg, V. 1962. *The People of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy*. New York.

Fantuzzi, M. 2008. "'Homeric' Formularity in the Argonautica of Apollonius of Rhodes," in Papanghelis & Rengakos (eds.) 2008, 221–41.

Fantuzzi, M. & R. L. Hunter 2004. *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry*. Cambridge.

Finkelberg, M. 1989. "Formulaic and Nonformulaic Elements in Homer," *CPh* 84 (3), 179–97.

---

[17] On Apollonius as a Homeric scholar, see Rengakos 2008.

Fränkel, H. 1960. "Ein Don Quijote Unter Den Argonauten Des Apollonios." *MH* 17, 1–20.

Glei, R. F. 2008. "Outlines of Apollonian Scholarship 1955-1999," in Papanghelis & Rengakos (eds.) 2008, 1–28.

Hermann, G. 1805. *Orphica*. Leipzig.

Klein, T. M. 1983. "Apollonius' Jason: Hero and Scoundrel," *QUCC* 42, 115–26.

Klooster, J. 2014. "Between (Unbearable) Lightness and Darkness: Trends in Scholarship on Hellenistic Poetry," *AC* 83, 159–69.

Knight, V. 1995. *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the* Argonautica *of Apollonius*. Leiden.

Kyriakou, P. 1995. *Homeric* Hapax Legomena *in the* Argonautica *of Apollonius Rhodius: A Literary Study*. Stuttgart.

Latte, K. 1924. "Glossographika," *Philologus* 80 (2), 136–75.

Nelis, D. P. 1997. "Review of *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the* Argonautica *of Apollonius* by Virginia Knight," *EMC* 16, 340–44.

Netz, R. 2009. *Ludic Proof: Greek Mathematics and the Alexandrian Aesthetic*. Cambridge.

Nishimura-Jensen, J. 2009. "The Chorus of Argonauts in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*," *Phoenix* 63 (1/2), 1–23.

Papanghelis, T. D. & A. Rengakos (eds.) 2008. *Brill's Companion to Apollonius Rhodius*. Leiden.

Rengakos, A. 2008. "Apollonius Rhodius as a Homeric Scholar," in Papanghelis & Rengakos (eds) 2008, 243–66.

Schwinge, E.-R. 1986. *Künstlichkeit von Kunst: zur Geschichtlichkeit der alexandrinischen Poesie*. Munich.

Stephens, S. A. 2004. *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*. Berkeley.

Zanker, G. 1979. "The Love Theme in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*," *WS* 13, 52–75.