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Μῆτις and Gender in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica**

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In Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, the issue of heroism is consistently intertwined with considerations of the construction of gender. At crucial junctures in the text Jason is explicitly compared to a female, while the text identifies Medea as the salvation of the Argonauts, implicitly conferring traditionally male heroic status upon her. In the many scholarly discussions about heroism in the *Argonautica*, Jason's femininity and Medea's masculinity complicate simple notions of the hero.[1] Jason's distance from traditional heroism is frequently expressed in the text by his ἀμηχανίη or "lack of a device" to solve an impasse. It must also be admitted, however, that Jason actually does accomplish everything he sets out to do and more. His ἀμηχανίη is thus temporary, and in every situation ἀμηχανίη is resolved successfully in heroic terms: he wins his battles, gets the girl, and has a νόστος. His salvation in each hopeless ἀμηχανίη is an intangible μῆτις or cunning plan that is implemented more tangibly by τέχναι, δόλοι, or the ultimately expedient enchanting drugs (θελκτήρια φάρμακα) of Medea.[2]

It is clear from the beginning of the poem that Jason and the Argonauts are capable of constructing μῆτις on their own and implementing it in more or less traditional epic situations. There are early implications in the *Argonautica*,

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[1]C. P. Hadas' 1936 article "The Tradition of a Feeble Jason," *CP* 31 (166–68) is one of the first modern pieces to connect the femininity of Jason and the question of heroism. Almost all the recent significant work on the *Argonautica* devotes significant space to the question of Jason's heroism: Clauss 1993, DeForest, Hunter 1988 and 1993, Knight and Lawall.

[2]*Pace* Clauss 1997a who recently has argued that the resolution of ἀμηχανίη for Jason and the Argonauts is diplomacy. Diplomacy, which might be defined as the clever use of words, could be considered one of the many aspects of μῆτις. See Detienne and Vernant 11 n. 3, 144, 285 and Pucci 1987: 17 and 62 for the semantic range of μῆτις.

however, that implicit within the notion of μῆτις lurk more sinister qualities of concealment, secrecy, and deceit. Because the feminine in Greek literature is associated with concealment, secrecy, and deceit, μῆτις—as I have argued elsewhere, building upon the work of Detienne and Vernant—comes to be represented as a capacity virtually inherent in females: Pandora in Hesiod is the paradigmatic example of this perception.[3] In the *Argonautica*, too, the quality and strength of μῆτις is represented as gendered: some males have a rather prosaic access to μῆτις, but the strongest and most successful μῆτις, as well as the most sinister, belongs to the female Medea. As the journey of the Argonauts progresses, circumstances require more and more efficacious μῆτις, and thus the balance of power and narrative interest seems to shift in a most unheroic movement from Jason ἀμήχανος to Medea πολυφάρμακος.

Consideration of the interrelationship between heroism, μῆτις and gender is not new to Apollonius. As in so much else, the prominence of μῆτις in the *Argonautica* owes a debt to Homer. In the *Iliad*, Antilochus' chariot race in Book 23 is the major instance of an open consideration of μῆτις as a tool for heroes, although Odysseus' night raid in *Iliad* 10 hints at that hero's μῆτις. One could also read the poet's reflections upon the artistic creation of Helen's weaving in *Iliad* 3 and Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18 as veiled references to the μῆτις of a bard; the *ecphrasis* of Jason's cloak in Book 1 displays a significant intertextual relationship with the latter. μῆτις becomes a much more integral element of the *Odyssey*, which incorporates the story of the hero's μῆτις in highly gendered, competitive, and hierarchical terms. Odysseus, πολύμητις and πολυμήχανος, has an inherent μῆτις that allows him to overcome the challenges to his νόστος presented by a series of dangerous and cunning females such as Circe (who shares the epithet πολυφάρμακος with Medea), Calypso, Helen in retrospect, and potentially Penelope. The narrative ultimately distinguishes between the positive social goals of the μῆτις of Odysseus, which are the accomplishment of his νόστος and the re-establishment of his οἶκος, and the destructive, self-serving impulses of female μῆτις. Odysseus' success resides in his superior μῆτις, despite the disturbing implications that possession of μῆτις may have for even his character. Both the text of the *Odyssey* and its hero succeed in marginalizing and controlling the ambiguous, dangerous qualities of μῆτις that arise in the female. In the *Argonautica*, however, the μῆτις of Medea and its destructive potential are welcomed by the hero until Medea and her μῆτις seem to transcend the control of Jason.

[3]Holmberg 1995 and 1997.

In the first books of the *Argonautica*, μῆτις functions as a beneficial and salvational attribute for the men of the Argo, who rely upon it on their sea voyage: as Detienne and Vernant point out in *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, μῆτις is crucial for successful navigation.[4] An inability to navigate a passage or πόρος is an ἀπορία, literally "a lack of πόρος or passage" that can be resolved by μῆτις.[5] ἀπορία, which is also used extensively in Greek in non-nautical terms to express an inability to resolve a difficulty, is roughly equivalent to the term ἀμηχανίη used in the *Argonautica* to express a hopelessly irresolvable problem, a situation that avails itself of no obvious μηχάνη or solution.[6] The relationship between πόρος, ἀπορία, ἀμηχανίη and μῆτις is first demonstrated in the *Argonautica* by the Argonauts' interaction with Apollo, one of the many divine patrons of their voyage who will employ μῆτις.[7] Before the journey to Colchis begins, the men sacrifice to Apollo requesting that he show the passages of the sea (πόρους ἁλός, 1.361); following favorable oracles from Apollo, Jason claims that it will be through Apollo's μῆτις that the Argo will travel and return safely (1.423).[8] On the return voyage, when the men are described as still having no plan (οὔ τινα μῆτιν / δὴν ἔχον, 4.1539–40) in Libya at the Tritonian lagoon and as trying to find πόροι, Apollo becomes the means of undoing the Argonauts' πείρατα (1567) of ἀπορία by sending Triton who then appears and states clearly a plan for the Argonauts to escape from their ἀμηχανίη. Thus in the *Argonautica* μῆτις provides the means of continuing the journey on the sea, a πόρος for the ἀμηχανίη of the Argonauts.

On the mortal level, Tiphys guides the Argo by shrewdness and planning (φραδμοσύνῃ μήτι τε, 1.560), and he pilots the boat τεχνηέντως. Here the ship and the Argonauts escape being bound by the perils that accompany the departure from their home harbor and might prevent the beginning of the voyage: they literally defy ἀπορία by finding the πόρος. The τέχνη of the pilot is the tangible application of μῆτις. At the gulf of Syrtis in the last book of the epic, the pilot Ancaeus experiences ἀμηχανίη (4.1308 and 1318). Jason responds by telling the Argonauts that they need to think up a μῆτις

[4]Detienne and Vernant 144–62, 215–56, 288, 291–92.

[5]Detienne and Vernant 18, 21, 112, 148–49.

[6]On μηχάνη see Detienne and Vernant 23 n. 3, 28, and 78.

[7]Albis 44–47 discusses the importance of Apollo as a god of sea and seafaring in the *Argonautica*.

[8]Albis 27 makes the point that πόρους ἁλός at 361 repeats the πόρους ἁλός of the Argonauts at 1.21 that the poet wants to remember—thereby establishing a parallelism between Apollo and the poet, which Albis goes on to argue more fully.

(4.1336), and Peleus provides a fitting plan (ἐπήβολος...μῆτις, 4.1380) for them after interpreting a portent. μῆτις solves ἀπορία or lack of passage again. The importance of μῆτις and τέχνη in nautical matters is also emphasized in a series of similes in the boxing match in Book 2: Polydeuces' μῆτις at avoiding his boxing opponent's tactics is likened to the skill of a ship's pilot escaping waves by μῆτις (2.75) as well as to the actual building of a ship (2.79–82). Later we learn that Athena skillfully built the Argo (τεχνήσατο, 2.1187). μῆτις in the *Argonautica* thus seems to be the plan produced by intellectual application; the μῆτις can be carried out through τέχνη, among other methods.

In non-nautical contexts, μῆτις in the earlier books also refers to a salvational plan. When the Argonauts encounter Phineus, he tells them that the Harpies who attack him constantly have left him with no salvational plan (οὔτινα μῆτιν ἐπίρροθον, 2.225). Phineus is being punished because as a prophet, maddened and in folly, he had revealed too much of the mind of Zeus to men (2.313), thereby disturbing one of the crucial distinctions between gods and men: knowledge of future events.[9] Phineus says that Zeus now wants him to reveal insufficient prophecies so that men lack knowledge of the intention of the gods (2.315–16), thereby reinforcing the status of mortality. Phineus does, however, communicate information about two events that the Argonauts will encounter, namely the birds on the island of Ares and the dangers of the trip home. After Phineus' recitation of the labors that must be faced before the return home to Greece, Jason is again seized by ἀμηχανίη (2.410). At this point Phineus tells the Argonauts to believe in the crafty help (δολόεσσαν ἀρωγήν, 2.423) of Aphrodite. As is to be expected, this is not the whole truth, for Aphrodite will provide crafty help for the untold events that will unfold in Colchis, while other gods protect the Argonauts on their return. Jason and the reader will learn later what μῆτις will solve the ἀμηχανίη of the return, and the cunning nature of Aphrodite's help.

The Argonauts must deal with the birds on the island of Ares, however, before they reach Colchis. Phineus tells the Argonauts that they must drive off the birds with every possible plan (μήτι παντοίῃ, 2.383), but perhaps in keeping with Zeus' strictures, he does not advise the men about the exact nature

[9]Levin 152 discusses variants of the story of Phineus, one of which attributes Phineus' blindness to retribution for giving in to the malicious behest of his second wife and blinding his first wife and her children. Jackson 1992: 18–20, Knight 170 and Vian I: 146 comment on Phineus' Promethean nature as a benefactor to mankind who is later punished by Zeus.

of this μῆτις.[10] He also tells them that a prayed-for benefit (ὄνειαρ...ἄρητον, 2.388–89) will come to them on the island, but that he cannot divulge its nature (390–91). On the island, Aleus reminds them of the salvational plan (μῆτιν...ἐπίρροθον, 2.1050) mentioned by Phineus and suggests a μῆτις (2.1058) that is salvational (ἐπίρροθος) and pleasing to them (2.1068).[11] Aleus finds his inspiration in the behavior exhibited by Heracles in a similar adventure, when that hero made a great deal of noise directed at the Stymphalian birds by shaking a bronze rattle while revealing himself openly on a very large outcropping.[12] The Argonauts manipulate and change the overt confrontational μῆτις of Heracles by their own μῆτις: their tactic is to hide under their shields in order to protect themselves from the attack of the birds while shouting and brandishing their helmets and spears. Although hiding and concealment are generally considered non-heroic, the cleverness of the Argonauts in dealing successfully with non-mortal adversaries redeems and validates their use of μῆτις. Their salvation in the face of such extraordinary adversaries in fact enhances rather than diminishes their heroism, even though it is dependent upon μῆτις.

The possible connection between μῆτις and concealment demonstrated in the encounter with the birds recurs with more sinister implications in the figure of Jason in the first book of the epic. Μῆτις takes on the coloring of a secret plan or an ulterior motive when Jason has one of his many moments of tacit despair and sits in silence. Idas asks him what plan (τίνα...μῆτιν, 1.463) he is turning around in his mind and the Argonaut wants Jason to reveal his νόον (1.464), implying a deceptive secretiveness on Jason's part.[13] In addition, when the Argonauts have mistakenly left behind Heracles, Telamon unjustly accuses Jason of contriving a μῆτις (1.1291) and implementing a δόλος (1.1295) to get rid of Heracles so that he can receive all the glory. In both scenes, Jason is famously ἀμήχανος (1.460 and 1.1286), but the tension is resolved by the intervention of a god rather than Jason's μῆτις. Jason's restraint and reserve are interpreted as a concealment of some plan from the crew. This suspicion of a hidden μῆτις on Jason's part, an interior mental ability, seems to correspond to

[10]Knight 31 and 169–76 sees strong correspondences between Circe and Phineus as figures who provide advice for journeying heroes.

[11]Fraenkel 274–75 cites this repetition of μῆτις as ring composition, as an example of the tidiness of the poet, and as a sign that Apollonius has worked over his text.

[12]See Griffiths 33, Beye 37, and Feeney 1986 for the simultaneous proximity and distance of Heracles in the narrative, and esp. Feeney 1986: 60 on the μῆτις of Heracles in this episode.

[13]Fraenkel 75 reads this scene as a way to show Jason in a good light compared to Idas.

the narrative's emphasis on Jason's non-conformity with overt and traditional heroic qualities. On the contrary, the opacity of Jason's mind and suspicion of deceit is typical of traditional epic female characters such as Clytemnestra, Helen, and Penelope.[14] Not only does Jason's ἀμηχανίη contribute to his divergence from the Homeric hero and in some ways effeminize him, but he is further effeminized by his potential for employing μῆτις rather than βίη to solve ἀμηχανίη.[15] The suspicion of an inner μῆτις harboured by Jason enhances an association with the female that will be built throughout the epic, in counterbalance to the masculinization of Medea in her role as potential hero.

The theme of female μῆτις as an important, but dangerous, factor in the tale of Jason and the Argonauts emerges in the narrative about the fleece. Jason's quest for the golden fleece originates in the δόλος of Phrixus' stepmother (3.191), who wants to kill her stepchildren. Her murderous δόλος sets in motion the flight to Colchis of Phrixus, Helle, and the ram with the golden fleece. This story of female deceit recalls the tale of Bellerophon and Anteia in *Iliad* 6, where an angry and sexually rebuffed stepmother sends the hero on a lethal mission to Asia Minor.[16] An important element in the story of Phrixus and the golden fleece is the representation of female δόλος as ultimately destructive to the social fabric.

The combination of female μῆτις, sexuality and violence becomes a reality for the Argonauts in their encounter with the Lemnian women in Book 1.[17] The past history of the Lemnian women, narrated by the poet when the Argonauts land, reveals the women to be dangerous, particularly with regard to male sexuality: the women had dishonored Aphrodite's gifts (perhaps they had

[14]On Jason's enigmatic quality and the hiddenness of his mind, see Beye 24; Hunter 1988: 444 for Apollonius' "discretion" about Jason being one of the constant critical problems of the *Argonautica*; also Hunter 1993: 15 and 19; Clauss 1993: 200. Hadas 167 connects Jason's effeminacy with his ἀμηχανίη.

[15]The text expresses Jason's effeminization through his obvious sexual power and through similes comparing Jason to a female figure. Jason's first encounters with both Hypsipyle and Medea are notable for the lengthy description of Jason's striking beauty (1.721–92 and 3.285–98, 442–63, 922–26), which indeed enthralls both women. When Jason finally grasps the fleece, the crowning moment of his heroic quest, his joy at its attainment is likened to a girl's similar joy at a new garment (4.167–73).

[16]See duBois 130–37 on Bellerophon. Ino, Phrixus' and Helle's stepmother, manipulates an oracle which calls for the sacrifice of the children, but their mother saves them by sending them to Aea on the ram; see Pi. *P.* 4.161–63 and Apollod. 1.10.

[17]As has been amply remarked upon by scholars, this first encounter with the female establishes many of the elements which will recur in the encounter with Medea in Colchis.

initially rejected the men or ceased erotic activity), and when the men turned to other women as Aphrodite's punishment (1.614–15), the Lemnian women killed all the men in the city.[18] This narrative presents a female rejection of male sexuality that will be counterbalanced by the arrival of the Argonauts, the Lemnian women's acceptance of them, and the necessity for sexual encounters between the two groups.[19]

Initially, the Argonauts approach the Lemnians diplomatically, as they will later approach the Colchians, and they send a son of Hermes as a herald to persuade the Lemnian women to let them remain. Aethalides' persuasion succeeds in mollifying the Lemnian leader Hypsipyle, the only woman who did not kill her own male kin, and the potential for violence is averted. Instead of killing the men by βίη, Hypsipyle constructs a μῆτις (1.664, 665) by which the Argonauts would spend the night close by but separate from the Lemnian women. This μῆτις, which involves a relatively benign and potentially salutary deception of the Argonauts, still perpetuates the Lemnian women's rejection of the male and the socially debilitating consequences that follow. The Lemnian women, however, are persuaded by the more devious μῆτις (677) of the old woman Polyxo who proposes that the women welcome the men, still keeping the slaughter a secret, and seduce them into remaining with the women as protectors. This μῆτις, she says, is a fitting defence (ἐπήβολός ἐστ' ἀλεωρή, 1.694) for the Lemnian women against the threatening Thracians and against a future without offspring. Hypsipyle then meets the Argonauts and tells a different past history of the Lemnian women by wily words (μύθοισι αἱμυλίοισι, 792) in which she hides the fate of death that happened to the men (834–35), claiming that they first rejected their wives and subsequently sailed to Thrace after being barred from their city.[20] Polyxo and the Lemnian women thus use μῆτις for their own salvation, as the Argonauts do in these first books. The positive, salvational aspect of μῆτις among the Lemnian women, however, is

[18]The *scholion* to the *Argonautica* cites the reason for the men's rejection as the women's neglect of the cult of Aphrodite and their affliction by δυσοσμία; see also Apollod.1.9.17.

[19]See Clauss 1993: 111 for the reversal of gender roles.

[20]One might keep in mind that, whatever the cause, the shared element in these stories is that the men turn to women other than their wives and pay a penalty, and the potential reference to Jason's subsequent treatment of Medea. Hunter 1993: 112 notes the disjunction by commenting that we know one part of Hypsipyle's tale to be "false" while "the rest of it seems emotionally true." Clauss 1993: 131 points out that αἱμυλίοισι is only used by Homer of Calypso at *Odyssey* 1.56 when she tries to get Odysseus to stay. See DeForest 90–92 on the two different versions of the absence of the Lemnian men.

counterbalanced in the narrative by the potential danger that their μῆτις might present to the heroic mission of the Argonauts; Jason needs to be goaded into completing his mission by Heracles, and the reader is well aware of the women's potential for violence towards men.[21] The hidden violence of the women on Lemnos towards their families will eventually become manifest in Medea's overt violence against her father, her brother, and, in the Euripidean tradition known to Apollonius' Hellenistic audience, even her own children.

The relationship of the female to μῆτις introduced in Books 1 and 2 becomes central to the action in Book 3. Just as the god Apollo reflects the μῆτις belonging to the men and helps with the sea-going voyage, so the goddesses at the beginning of Book 3 reflect the more deceptive μῆτις of females in the narrative and instigate the erotic intrigues of Book 3.[22] In the very first lines, the poet indicates the direction of the book by appealing specifically to the Muse Erato, who charms (θέλγεις, 3.4) unmarried maidens. The help sought by the poet resonates in two directions: it resembles both the help sought by the poet from Apollo in Book 1, and the help sought by the hero of the epic from the charming Medea.[23] The notion of "charming," one of the words associated with μῆτις, also resonates throughout this book: Aphrodite and Eros will charm Medea, who in turn will charm the bulls and the snake guarding the fleece. The meta-narrative seduction of Erato mirrors the narrative erotic and pharmaceutical seductions contained within the book.[24]

On the narrative level, the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, along with the infant god Eros, intervene in the action through μῆτις, δόλοι, and θελκτήρια in order to help Jason avoid yet more ἀμηχανίη. At the beginning of Book 3, Hera and Athena, Jason's two champions, find themselves at a loss regarding Jason's approach to Aeetes, and each admits that she has no plan for helping the hero: they too are in a state of ἀμηχανίη. As a counterpart to the debate over approaching Aeetes with a δόλος or by words that had taken place

[21]Clauss 1993: 131 and 134 calls attention to the similarity of Jason's restraint by Hypsipyle to Odysseus' by Calypso and Circe.

[22]See Feeney 1991: 57–98 for an excellent treatment of the gods in Apollonius, and especially 93 for their importance in exploring modes of narrative, although he seems in his discussion more interested in how the gods provide psychological motivation. Griffiths 28 comments that in the *Argonautica* "the society of men and the society of immortals interact without fixed and official protagonists." Pavlock 40 comments on the implications of the poet's "deviousness" at the beginning of Book 3 in particular.

[23]See Clauss 1997a: 151 for the hero and Medea; Albis 68 for the poet and Apollo.

[24]Albis 68 and 70 expands on the seductiveness of poetry and love.

among the men at the end of Book 2, Hera now asks Athena, "Will you plan some deceit or should they [the Argonauts] persuade him with gentle words?" (δόλον τινὰ μήσεαι...ἦ καὶ τόνγ' ἐπέεσσι...πεπίθοιεν μειλιχίοις; 3.12–15). Athena confesses that she has no δόλος (ἀλλά τοι οὔπω / φράσσασθαι νοέω τοῦτον δόλον ὅστις ὀνήσει / θυμὸν ἀριστήων, 3.19–21), certainly a unique position for the goddess who boasted of her own capacity for μῆτις to Odysseus in the *Odyssey* (13.291–99). Hera then cunningly (μητιόωσα, 3.24) suggests that she and Athena now convince Aphrodite to employ Eros to charm (θέλξαι, 3.28) Medea with lust; then Jason will lead the fleece back to Greece by her plans (κείνης ἐννεσίῃσιν, 3.29).[25] Athena likes this shrewd plan (πυκινὴ...μῆτις, 3.30), although she herself has never experienced the enchantment of desire (θελκτήριον...πόθοιο, 3.33). The phrase is picked up later by Hera when she appeals to Aphrodite and outlines the μῆτις the two goddesses have in mind, contrasting force with seduction: the goddesses do not come needing force or hands (οὔτι βίης χατέουσαι...οὐδέ τι χειρῶν, 3.84), but to entreat Aphrodite that she invoke Eros to charm Medea with desire (θέλξαι πόθῳ, 3.86). Medea suits their purposes because she herself is δολόεσσα already (3.89); the reciprocity between the qualities of mortals and gods is underlined by a repetition of δολόεσσα, the adjective applied to Aphrodite's help at 2.423. Aphrodite bids Eros "θέλξον" (3.143), and he obliges after accepting the bribe of a golden sphere. Medea, the victim of this erotic enchantment, will also be the source of θελκτήρια. The usage of μῆτις in its many forms becomes highly overdetermined within this feminine circle, broken only by Eros and his arrow: Hera and Athena formulate a μῆτις that involves the spellbinding (θέλγειν) of Medea, who is a perfect candidate because of her already proven penchant for magical drugs and other supernatural enterprises, and who will accomplish their plan by herself using μῆτις, θελκτήρια, and φάρμακα. Medea is thus both the object and the subject of μῆτις.

While the goddesses are adopting a project that employs elements of their μῆτις, the Argonauts' arrival on Colchis is being determined through the

[25]Hera is also μητιόωσα at 3.210 when she sends a mist to hide Jason from the Colchians, like Odysseus hidden by Athena from Phaeacians. μητιόωσα recalls δολοφρονέουσα in *Iliad* 14.197, 300, 329, where Hera asks to borrow Aphrodite's seductive girdle in order to conquer Zeus in the Διὸς Ἀπάτη, but cf. Lennox 46–49 who reads this episode as modelled more tightly on the visit of Thetis to Hephaestus in *Iliad* 18.

exercise of μῆτις by both the visitors and their hosts. Before meeting Aeetes, Ancaeus proposes planning whether to approach Aeetes with diplomacy or force:

> ὥρη δ' ἡμιν ἐνὶ σφίσι μητιάασθαι
> εἴτ' οὖν μειλιχίῃ πειρησόμεθ' Αἰήταο,
> εἴτε καὶ αλλοίη τις ἐπήβολος ἔσσεται ὁρμή. (2.1278–80)
>
> It is time for us to plan among ourselves whether thus
> we will try Aeetes by gentleness or whether even
> some other kind of aggressive approach will be fitting.

Jason too debates whether to proceed by force (ἄρηι, 3.183) or whether some other plan will be salvational (εἴτε τις ἄλλη / μῆτις ἐπίρροθος ἔσται, 3.183–84). He concludes by determining to test Aeetes not by strength but by words (3.185): he prefers μῆτις to a potentially violent heroic encounter. Here, still, μῆτις seems to represent a plan that will provide a way out of a difficult situation. This μῆτις depends not upon secrecy but upon the full disclosure to Aeetes of the Argonauts' mission in the rather foolhardy hope that he will simply hand over the fleece in return for the Argonauts' help in restraining an intrusive neighbouring people.

On the Colchian side, however, Aeetes thinks that the Argonauts are robbers who have come with δόλοι (3.373); even after the mission for the fleece is outlined for him by Jason with gentle words (μειλίχιοι, 3.385), he describes the Argonauts as pirates who care to contrive secret tricks (κρυπταδίους τε δόλους τεκταινέμεν, 3.592).[26] Aeetes reacts in an extremely distrustful manner and suspects the Argonauts not merely of cunning diplomacy but of attempting to usurp his throne based on a prophecy from Helios:

> χρειὼ μιν πυκινόν τε δόλον βουλάς τε γενέθλης
> σφωιτέρης ἄτην τε πολύτροπον ἐξαλέασθαι. (3.599–600)
>
> He must beware of a crafty trick and plans of his family
> and many-faceted madness.

Aeetes does not suspect a hateful plan (μῆτιν...στυγερήν, 3.603–4) from the very family members who will betray him, his daughters Medea and

[26]Vian II: 23 notes the atmosphere of suspicion on Colchis.

Chalciope.[27] He reacts to the suspected δόλοι of the Argonauts by testing their strength: he sets tasks for Jason that he himself calls unbearable tricks (ἀτλήτους...δόλους, 3.578), and the poet states that he planned a sharp trick for them (δόλον αἰπὺν ἐπὶ σφίσι μητιάασκεν, 4.7).[28] The trickery in these tasks lies not in something about them that Aeetes has hidden from Jason, but in their magical, extra-heroic nature: their accomplishment will require more than typical heroic βίη (3.399) like the birds on the island of Ares. The bulls, bronze-hooved and breathing flames through the mouth (3.410), seem to be the ones mentioned earlier (3.230–31), crafted by skillful Hephaestus (τεχνήεις Ἥφαιστος, 3.229) who also made the plough. The poet describes Jason as again experiencing ἀμηχανίη (3.423), a feeling echoed by the men later (3.504), although he yields to necessity in accepting the tasks.

It is clear from the nature of the challenge that the hero will surely need something that transcends mortal strength to complete this magical, semi-divine test. Argus, the son of Phrixus and Chalciope, provides a μῆτις (3.475) by suggesting that the Argonauts persuade his aunt Medea to help them, since she is skilled at using φάρμακα that control the supernatural.[29] He advises the group to appeal to Medea through his mother, Medea's sister Chalciope, who will be a timely help (ἐναίσιμος...ἀρωγή, 3.524). Mopsus, after a σῆμα apparently sent from Aphrodite (3.545–54 and again at 3.941–43), concurs in advising Jason to approach Medea with every sort of plan (μήτι παντοίῃ, 3.548) and with shrewd words (πυκινοῖσι...ἐπέεσσιν, 946). The former phrase is the same one Phineus had employed in advising Jason and the Argonauts how to deal with the birds on the island of Ares (2.183).[30] Jason will use his mortal μῆτις to convince Medea to unleash her supernatural μῆτις.

In the figure of the female Medea, the poet creates a character who is inherently possessed of a μῆτις associated with δόλος, τέχνη, φάρμακα and

[27]Chalciope uses her μῆτις to plan how to approach Medea to convince her sister to help her sons (μητιάασκε, 3.612 and ἐπιμητιόωσα, 3.668). For the blindness of Aeetes to the meaning of the oracle, see Levin 22; Hunter 1993: 148; Fraenkel 362–63.

[28]The dependence of the male Aeetes upon δόλοι in *Argonautica* 3 underlines his lack of conformity to the standards of the Greek heroic world and is perhaps a familial trait he shares with Circe and Medea.

[29]Argus says, "You have heard that a young woman practices magic under the advice of Hecate daughter of Perses" (κούρην...ἐπέκλυες.../ φαρμάσσειν Ἑκάτης Περσηίδος ἐννεσίῃσιν, 3.477–78); and he later describes her as [Medea] whom the superlative goddess Hecate taught to contrive drugs (τὴν Ἑκάτη περίαλλα θεὰ δάε τεχνήσασθαι / φάρμαχ', 3.529–30).

[30]Fraenkel 359 notes the interpretive jump that Mopsus makes to lead Jason to Medea.

the supernatural. Medea comes to epitomize the strongest aspects of μῆτις, the salvational and the destructive mixed in equal parts. Her very name, Μήδεια, seems to imply a connection with the thinking and planning associated with μῆτις, a connection perhaps alluded to by Argus when he determines to find out the mind and plans of the girl (νόον καὶ μήδεα κούρης, 3.826), and by Circe who says to Medea, "You planned an evil and unsuitable return," (κακὸν καὶ ἀεικέα μήσαο νόστον, 4.739).[31] Medea's μῆτις is well known to her family and in ample evidence throughout Books 3 and 4. Chalciope begs Medea to contrive either a trick or some plan for the contest (ἢ δόλον ἤ τινα μῆτιν ἐπιφράσσασθαι ἀέθλου, 3.720) to help both her sons and Jason; the unfortunate Apsyrtus tries to find out if Medea has planned a trick against the foreign men (εἴ κε δόλον ξείνοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσι τεχνήσαιτο, 4.462). Medea's μῆτις finds expression in her ability to manipulate language or to lie: she lies to Chalciope, speaking with deceit (δόλῳ, 3.687); to her parents, asking herself what kind of story to tell them (ποῖον δ' ἐπὶ μῦθον ἐνίψω; 3.780); to her young friends when she goes to meet Jason at the temple; to Arete, saying that a hateful fear made her flee Colchis after madness, not any other plan (οὐδέ τις ἄλλη / μῆτις, 4.1023–24), forced her to commit a bad deed; and she deceptively tells Circe that she did the deeds on Colchis by the βουλαί (4.734) of Chalciope, omitting all mention of the recent murder of Apsyrtus.[32]

But more importantly for the completion of Jason's tasks and the retrieval of the fleece, Medea's μῆτις is supplemented by her knowledge and manipulation of the ambiguous, multivalent magical skills of μῆτις. These comprise enchanting spells and φάρμακα that she has been taught by Hecate, with the manipulation of φάρμακα being a form of τέχνη.[33] The spells seem a logical extension of Medea's more mundane ability to lie convincingly: she is described as attracting Apsyrtus to their meeting by μῦθοι that charm him (θελγέμεν, 4.436) and as reinforcing these with enchanting drugs (θελκτήρια φάρμακα, 4.442). On a more celestial and presumably more magically challenging level, the moon comments that Medea has in the past used deceptive songs (δόλιαι ἀοιδαί, 4.58–59) to attract her, and Medea enchants (θέλγε) the spirits of the underworld with ἀοιδαί (4.1665, 1668) when she faces Talos. Hera in her first reference to Medea, however, calls her

[31]Natzel 73 argues for an etymological connection between Medea's name and μήδεσθαι.
[32]See Dyck 456 for Medea's rhetorical power.
[33]See n. 29 and also 3.250–52 and 3.842 for Medea's relationship to Hecate.

πολυφάρμακον (3.27), and φάρμακα will be the means of salvation for Jason.[34] Medea's epithet πολυφάρμακος resonates both with Jason ἀμήχανος and Odysseus πολύτροπος, πολυμήχανος, and πολύμητις.[35] The text delineates both the positive and negative uses of φάρμακα: the πολλὰ φάρμακα in Medea's box are both noble and destructive (τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ τὰ δὲ ῥαιστήρι[α], 3.803), like Medea herself.[36] Medea's φάρμακα save Jason from the bulls of Aeetes and they disable the snake guarding the fleece: this is their beneficial aspect.[37] From this beneficial perspective, the φάρμακα are frequently described as θελκτήρια (3.738, 766, 820–21, 4.1080): they charm like a seductive song or woman. But the positive effect for Jason and Medea has a destructive effect for the bulls and snake, the objects of the enchantment. Likewise, the same φάρμακα that Medea will provide to Jason for his own protection and salvation could enable Medea to destroy herself: these φάρμακα again are destructive (ῥαιστήρια, 3.790) and soul-destroying (θυμοφθόρα, 3.807). Even when the φάρμακα are being used for beneficial purposes, their destructive power can be evoked: Medea deceptively tells her handmaidens that she is going to give Jason some other more evil drug (κακώτερον ἄλλο...φάρμακον, 3.910–11), referring to the φάρμακον that will in fact save him, and Jason calls the drug terrible (αἰνόν, 3.1169).

The name of the particular drug that Medea provides for Jason epitomizes its powerfully ambiguous status: Προμήθειον (3.845). Prometheus is the deceiver of Zeus in the *Theogony*, and as such he both harms and benefits mankind. His original deception of Zeus is responsible for the final division between men and gods, his second deception for both the return of fire to mortals and the advent of the female, labor, and various evils: in Hesiod, Prometheus is the creator of the mortal condition, for better or worse.[38] Medea's deceptive drug, however, enables the mortal hero to defy the mortal condition by granting him the means to combat a magical foe and to transcend his mortal

[34]At 4.53 Medea is compared to φαρμακίδες; Circe too is πολυφάρμακος at *Od.* 10.276. Graf 31 points out that Medea's association with φάρμακα is evident as far back as Hes. *Th.* 956–62.

[35]Medea herself is once described as ἀμήχανος at 4.107 before the episode of the fleece and before she has devoted herself entirely to the darker aspects of deceit. See Jackson 1993: 38 and 1992: 156 for the variation of ἀμήχανος on Odysseus' πολύμητις and for Medea ἀμήχανος.

[36]The φάρμακα of Helen in *Od.* 4 also can be either good or bad; see Bergren's excellent analysis in "Helen's Good Drug."

[37]3.738, 3.766, 3.820–21, 3.768, 3.984, 3.1042, 3.1247, 3.1305, 4.1080–81 against the bulls; 4.157–59, 164 against the snake.

[38]See Jackson 1993: 19 on Apollonius' extending "the notion of Prometheus helping mankind."

limits in a fantastic environment in a way that is unavailable to Homeric heroes.[39] Medea, by her gender a descendant of the race of Pandora, gives Jason in tangible form the Promethean deceptiveness signified by Zeus through his creation of Pandora. This Promethean drug makes Jason invulnerable, and his use of a Promethean drug of μῆτις becomes clearly both acceptable and necessary when faced with such a magical and fantastic task.

Manipulation of φάρμακα by Medea and her contact with Jason are obviously reminiscent of the encounter between Circe and Odysseus in the *Odyssey* (Circe will intervene in the *Argonautica* later too).[40] The differences in the construction of the narratives, however, are instructive. Odysseus does not receive a drug from Circe. On the contrary, he receives a substance specifically not termed a drug but μόλυ from a male god in order to overcome Circe's magic. Odysseus conquers Circe's drugs and coerces her cooperation, which comes in the form of verbal advice. In the *Argonautica*, the hero seeks out and accepts the dangerous drug itself as his own tool in the accomplishment of his goal. The text of the *Odyssey* carefully controls and marginalizes the power of Circe and her drugs; the text of the *Argonautica* allows what is effectively repressed in the *Odyssey* (μῆτις and the female) to become the means to its hero's end. This in turn permits the text of the *Argonautica* to play out later the dangerous and destructive possibilities of female μῆτις and power only hinted at by the *Odyssey*.

The first meeting of Jason and Medea at the temple of Hecate, where Jason harnesses the μῆτις of Medea for his own purposes, is crucial to understanding the interaction between the respective μῆτις of these two characters. Once again, Jason relies upon his own resources, his verbal facility and his physical beauty, to charm another into acting on his behalf. In this case, his understanding of Medea allows him to manipulate the young girl into putting her much more powerful μῆτις at his service.[41] After Argus has informed the Argonauts about the potential usefulness of Medea's powers, Jason ventures forth to beg the young woman's assistance: he approaches her in

[39]One of the salient features of Homer is his exclusion from the plot of his epics of any magical or supernatural attributes or tools for his heroes that other variants include, such as Achilles' magical armor, spear, heel. The only exception seems to be Achilles' talking horses. Knight 100 comments on these differences; see also Vian II: 32.

[40]See Knight 113 for comparisons with Circe's drugs.

[41]One might note that in Pi. *P.* 4, Jason receives direct help from Aphrodite in his approach to Medea, and Pindar's text indicates that he is the manipulator of incantations (ἐπαοιδαὶ, 217) and that he kills the snake by his own τέχναι (249).

his full magnificence, which emphasizes his appearance and his speech (3.919–26). He is counselled by Mopsus to persuade her with carefully wrought words (3.946). The sinister aspect of Jason's approach to Medea is enhanced and reinforced by the simile illustrating the danger he presents to her, which recalls Priam's description of Achilles in *Il.* 22.26–32:

> αὐτὰρ ὅγ' οὐ μετὰ δηρὸν ἐελδομένῃ ἐφαάνθη,
> ὑψόσ' ἀναθρῴσκων ἅ τε Σείριος Ὠκεανοῖο,
> ὃς δή τοι καλὸς μὲν ἀρίζηλός τ' ἐσιδέσθαι
> ἀντέλλει, μήλοισι δ' ἐν ἄσπετον ἧκεν ὀιζύν—
> ὣς ἄρα τῇ καλὸς μὲν ἐπήλυθεν εἰσοράασθαι
> Αἰσονίδης, κάματον δὲ δυσίμερον ὦρσε φαανθείς. (3. 956–61)
>
> But he soon appeared to her awaiting him, as Sirius rising up
> high from Ocean, who indeed rises beautiful and conspicuous
> to behold, and who has sent to flocks an unspeakable
> misery—thus the son of Aeson came to her beautiful to look at,
> and having appeared he roused love-tormented trouble.

The simile playfully both emphasizes and deconstructs the danger of Jason's approach to Medea: Jason has certainly not attained the height of emotional intensity that makes the simile so appropriate for Achilles in the *Iliad*, nor is he about to fling himself into battle against an enraged opposing army. On the other hand, his demands of Medea will place her at great risk and pose significant danger for her. The text returns again and again in this simile to the visual aspect of the comparison (ἐφαάνθη 956; ἐσιδέσθαι 957; εἰσοράασθαι 960; φαανθείς 961): unlike Achilles, for whom the simile seems to be a closely descriptive expression of his dangerous violence, the language within Jason's simile repeatedly emphasizes Jason's appearance, thereby underscoring the distance between Jason and the hero with whom he is compared.[42]

Just as Jason's appearance and the simile likening him to Sirius and thereby to Achilles hide more than they reveal, or perhaps promise more than they deliver, so Jason's initial address to Medea craftily implies erotic interest on Jason's part without an explicit declaration. When Medea and Jason come face to face, Jason instantly recognizes, before any words have been exchanged, that Medea is overcome by ἄτη (3.973): his accurate perception allows him to

[42]"To seek to express what Jason is like, is (inevitably) to return to the texts of the past (and) to articulate his otherness" (Goldhill 307). Knight 113 points out that the reader is left without guidance about how to relate Jason to Achilles—does he measure up, or is he being compared with his Homeric counterpart deleteriously?

gain the upper hand in the negotiations. Speaking fawningly (ὑποσσαίνων 3.974),[43] Jason mentions that he is alone, that Medea's favor will place him in her debt, and that once back in Greece he will repay her ἀρωγή (990) by making her name and fame beautiful (οὔνομα καὶ καλὸν...κλέος, 992) as if she were a hero. He also launches into the myth of Ariadne, which is designed to take advantage of Medea's excited state and convince her to help him as Ariadne had helped Theseus: Jason carefully avoids mention of the less salubrious aspects of Ariadne's fate, and later specifically deflects Medea's pointed question on the subject.[44] The initial request from Jason is sufficient to convince the girl, and she hands over the φάρμακον (1014): the cunning and seductive combination of Jason's appearance and his speech have overcome Medea.

The text of the *Argonautica* itself describes Jason as being in love with Medea as a result of this meeting, but the extent or depth of this love becomes a matter of controversy almost at its inception.[45] Jason pronounces a series of oaths to Medea that even within the *Argonautica* begin to appear increasingly fraudulent, calling to mind his later treatment of her as represented in Euripides' *Medea*. In the course of their first meeting, Jason offers significant pledges to Medea. Before he receives the φάρμακον, Jason promises κλέος (3.990–92); after he has the φάρμακον he tells her that he will never forget her (3.1079–80); as a response to her vow to hunt him down if he does not fulfill this promise, he then states that if she does indeed come to Greece he will marry her.[46] When Medea announces her intention of actually accompanying the Argonauts to Greece after she has dealt with the snake and obtained the fleece for them, Jason's conditional promise changes to the more definite temporal "when" (εὖτ' ἄν, 4.98). Yet after their first meeting, a simile describes Jason as

[43]ὑποσσαίνων recurs at 4.410 when Jason addresses Medea after promising to hand her over to the Colchians.

[44]See Bulloch 593–94; Goldhill 301–2.

[45]At the moment when they glimpse each other, the poet informs the reader that they both (τώγε, 3.971) are about to speak under the compulsion of Eros; they are described as being mutually in love at 3.1022–24, and later a destructive love (οὖλος ἔρως, 1078) has stolen over Jason.

[46]Lennox 458 reads this offer of marriage as "primarily protective in function"; Hunter 1993: 15 emphasizes Jason's deceit and our inability to reconstruct his intentions; Vian II: 37 does not see why Jason's love must be less than sincere even though his approach to Medea is calculated; more recently Natzel 76 and Pavlock 64 doubt the motivation and intensity of Jason's love: Natzel writes "doch ist es eine halbherzige Liebe, die mehr auf Mitlied beruht als auf Leidenschaft." All of these conjectures are merely speculation about Jason's interior motives at this point, since the text does expressly mention his love.

a fraudulent thief (κλωπήιος ἠύτε τις φώρ (3.1197) when he performs the necessary rituals before his encounter with the bulls and the sown men: the simile aptly expresses both Jason's opportunistic promises to Medea and the theft of the fleece he is about to set in motion. Regardless of his love for Medea herself, Jason's opportunism, if not deliberate deception, becomes evident in Book 4 when he agrees to hand her over to the Colchians in exchange for the fleece and his escape. Only after a series of threats on her part does Jason relent, agree to honor his promises, and plan with Medea their escape together. The *Argonautica* presents a Jason for whom it is possible to break oaths, thereby reinforcing the Euripidean narrative, and presents a Medea who is already willing to resort to the most extreme threats to enforce the promises made to her.

The encounter with the snake that guards the fleece is the first of a series of incidents that demonstrate to Jason and the Argonauts Medea's potential for destructive power. For the contest with the bulls and the sown men, Medea gives the φάρμακον to Jason as his tool. Medea herself, however, conquers the snake and provides the Argonauts with the object of their voyage, the golden fleece. She relies upon her ability to manipulate θελκτήρια and φάρμακα by invoking Sleep to charm the monster (θέλξαι τέρας, 4.147), and the snake is indeed charmed by the song (οἵμῃ θελγόμενος, 4.150) as Medea continues to mix drugs with spells (ἀκήρατα φάρμακ' ἀοιδαῖς, 4.157; see 158–59 and 164). Jason is sensible enough to become frightened by this infernal display (πεφοβημένος, 4.149), and it is perhaps his memory of her power over the snake that causes his fear of her in the Apsyrtus episode.

As a result of these encounters, Medea's μῆτις is repeatedly given credit for the salvation of the hero in *Argonautica* 3, although this positive aspect is undercut by her own nature and the nature of her tactics.[47] The text consistently juxtaposes the ἀρωγή so necessary for the Argonauts with the potential deceit and danger of Medea's μῆτις. Before the Argonauts encounter Medea, as noted, Phineus informs the crew that Aphrodite, whose association with erotic deception should alert the Argonauts, will provide them with crafty help (δολόεσσαν ἀρωγήν, 2.423): in Book 3, Aphrodite delivers salvation through δολόεσσα Medea (3.89).[48] The ἀρωγή is deceptive both in its methodology

[47]See now Clauss 1997a: 149–50, 177 arguing against Medea's heroism and for Medea as "helper-maiden," esp. 149 n. 2, where he cites recent scholarship.

[48]See *Odyssey* 9.32 for Circe δολόεσσα. Clauss 1993: 125 comments that Aphrodite and Medea are analogues, although without mentioning this epithet. DeForest 78 asserts that Phineus' advice determines the direction of the poem towards an unheroic reliance on love.

and in its efficacy: as every reader of Apollonius and Euripides knows, Medea delivers Jason home to even greater horrors than he experiences in Colchis. Medea herself ponders what trick, what thievish plan of help will there be (τίς δὲ δόλος, τίς μῆτις ἐπίκλοπος ἔσσετ' ἀρωγῆς; 3.781) and repeats ἐπίκλοπος... μῆτις (3.912) when she has deceived her attendants and runs off to meet Jason. The mortal μῆτις that has provided salvation for the Argonauts is ἐπίρροθος and ἐπήβολος (2.225, 2.1050 and 1068, 2.1278–80, 3.184, 4.1380). The change in modifier is telling: the adjective ἐπίκλοπος fits the more devious nature of Medea's μῆτις, which depends upon the deception of Chalciope, her parents, and her handmaidens, and relies upon magical implements. The adjective also emphasizes that Medea essentially steals the fleece from her father. At this stage, Medea herself feels αἰδώς and δέος (3.742) because of the ἀρωγή (3.740) she has planned through her μῆτις for Chalciope's sons (μητιάασθαι, 3.743; μητίσομ' ἀρωγήν, 3.1026); later, she cries because she knows that by her βουλῇ an evil deed (κακὸν ἔργον, 3.1162) has been committed.[49] Yet when Jason begs her for the φάρμακα, he claims that he will thereafter repay the favor of her salvation (ἀρωγή, 3.990) according to θέμις, attributes the salvation of the Argonauts to Medea's βουλή (3.1126) and repeats that Medea will be honored throughout Greece for saving the Argonauts.[50] By the manipulation of Aphrodite, who has been described as a source of crafty help by Phineus (2.423), δολόεσσα Medea achieves the pinnacle of nobility at the beginning of Book 4 when Jason calls her the noble helper (ἐσθλὴν ἐπαρωγόν, 4.196) of the Argonauts. Even with an acknowledgment of the tricky nature of μῆτις, Medea's capacity for deception can be depicted as a beneficial quality throughout Book 3 and at the beginning of Book 4 because of its role in helping Jason accomplish his heroic goal: Medea's μῆτις, although clearly a betrayal of her own family, can still be viewed as a positive benefit for the hero. The interpretation and valuation of her μῆτις as noble, however, becomes severely challenged by her even more extreme μῆτις as Book 4 progresses.

When the Argonauts embark upon the return voyage to Greece, Jason continues to rely on verbal μῆτις, while Medea sinks deeper into the destruction of her family through magical μῆτις. After fleeing Colchis with

[49]DeForest 107 and 110–11 reads the character of Medea as the tragic hero who struggles between Homeric αἰδώς and "Callimachean" ἔρος.

[50]Jason says that she will be honored and respected by women and men (τιμήεσσα γυναιξὶ καὶ ἀνδράσιν αἰδοίη, 3.1123), but the repute of her actions in Colchis and on the return, and her further sinister behavior in Greece, decisively prevent her from receiving any respect from the men and women of Greece despite her role in Jason's return.

both the fleece and Medea, Jason and the Argonauts are pursued by Medea's brother Apsyrtus and a band of Colchians.[51] Outnumbered by the Colchians, Jason apparently accedes to an agreement with them that would leave him with the fleece while surrendering Medea's fate to some judicial kings (4.345–49). Jason's solution is diplomatic, but involves a betrayal of the love he claimed for Medea in Colchis; Apollonius' text gives no indication at all that Jason is deceiving the Colchians. Medea, upon learning the apparent intentions of Jason and the Argonauts, rages at Jason, reminding him of the oaths he has given her (4.358–59) and stating that they are sanctioned by δίκη and θέμις (4.372–73), which echoes his promises to her in Book 3. The terrified Jason (ὑποδδείσας, 4.394) now states that the truce during which he promised to give Medea back will give them time to think up a δόλος (4.404). As Hunter points out, it is unclear whether Jason lies to Medea here or not: the reader is left with "uncertainty."[52] In response to Jason's suggestion, Medea angrily challenges him to plan an evil deed that will be added to the other unsuitable deeds (ἀεικελίοισιν ἐπ' ἔργοις 4.411) she devised by μῆτις (4.412). It is Medea, however, who plans the δόλος of murdering her half-brother Apsyrtus.[53] Although Medea recognizes the ignominy of her deeds, her plan to murder her half-brother no longer causes her αἰδώς and δέος as did her behavior in Book 3: she outlines the plan to kill Apsyrtus expediently and without remorse. This μῆτις has become completely devoid of moral constraint: Medea ends her soliloquy with a challenge to Jason and a chilling declaration of her own lack of concern:

> ἔνθ' εἴ τοι τόδε ἔργον ἐφανδάνει, οὔτι μεγαίρω,
> κτεῖνέ τε καὶ Κόλχοισιν ἀείρεο δηιοτῆτα. (4.419–20)
>
> Then, if this deed is pleasing, I don't blame you,
> kill and undertake a Colchian battle.

Upon Medea's urging, then, the two lovers put together a great trick (μέγαν δόλον, 4.421) for Apsyrtus. Medea exhibits a readiness to destroy her own

[51]The reasons for Medea's flight (fear or love) and the poet's apparent abrogation of control over his narrative at the beginning of Book 4 have been the focus of discussions of Apollonius' ambiguous treatment of narrative by many scholars: Beye 17; Feeney 1991: 1; Goldhill 293; Hunter 1987: 134–35; Lennox 458; Zanker 64.

[52]Hunter 1987: 131; see Hunter 1993: 15 for Jason's character not being an authorial given and Vian 1973: 1034 for the reader lacking guidance from Apollonius here.

[53]Fraenkel 487 notes Medea's readiness to kill her brother.

blood relatives that finds its most extreme expression in the murder of her own children in Euripides' *Medea*.

Apsyrtus is attracted to the trap set by Medea through the lure of Hypsipyle's cloak (which contains the answer to Medea's question to Jason about Ariadne's fate in Book 3) and by Medea's persuasive, deceptive tales that charm him (θελγέμεν 4.436). Medea's deception of Apsyrtus involves telling him that she wants to go back to Colchis and that she plans to make a δόλον (4.438, 462) to retrieve the fleece from the Argonauts. This μῦθος (4.435) is reinforced by enchanting drugs (θελκτήρια φάρμακα, 4.442), and Apsyrtus comes to his death tricked (δολωθείς, 4.456) by the most terrible promises. Apollonius increases the poignancy of this scene by likening Apsyrtus to a tender young child (460), perhaps referring to the alternative tradition in which Apsyrtus actually is a child.[54] This reference to Apsyrtus as a child also heightens the reader's sense that the necessity of this murder is dubious, although it is in the service of the safe return of Jason. The poet ensures, however, that although Jason acts in an intentionally deceptive manner, it is Medea who plans the murder of her kin.[55] The end result of Medea's μῆτις, indicated by the collocation of words such as θέλγω, δόλος and φάρμακα, is murder by treachery, the remarkable *hapax legomenon* δολοκτασία (4.479), applied to the slaying of a blood relation.[56] The enormity of the deed and its excess are made even more apparent by the anger of Medea's aunt Circe, well-known for her own deceit and handling of drugs: Circe has men follow her by trickery (δολοφροσύνῃσιν, 4.687), and she also has masses of drugs (ἀθρόα φάρμακα) with which she charms visitors (θέλγει, 4.666–67). She is unable to forgive the couple when they arrive at her doorstep, although she performs the

[54]Lennox 460–62 and Jackson 1993: 29 discuss variations of the Apsyrtus episode and Apollonius' apparent innovations. The oldest version of the story extant is Pherecyd. *FGrH* 3F2c. Bremmer 85 notes that the horror of the murder is also heightened by its occurrence in a temple.

[55]Bulloch 594; Lennox 462. The cause for Medea's actions here is Eros, whom the poet apostrophizes with a string of derogatory epithets (σχέτλιε, μέγα πῆμα, μέγα στύγος, 4.445), adding that Eros threw ἄτη into Medea (4.449). Eros was also the cause of Medea's first, less murderous betrayal of her family on Colchis. Fraenkel 493 notes that this is the only place in the epic that the author gives free rein to his feelings, although the narrator also responds to the story of Talos and the evil eye, 4.1673. Natzel 106 argues that the effect and power of Eros excuse Medea from responsibility from her brother's murder and make her a tragic figure, although the attribution to Eros equally could signify Medea's weakness and the susceptibility of her character both to Eros and murderous impulses.

[56]Griffiths 27 calls this murder "a single paradigmatic atrocity with the symbolic scope and irresolvability of the whole series in the *Oresteia*."

absolution commanded by Zeus.[57] Even in the magical world, Medea has transgressed boundaries of propriety and necessity.

Medea's last μῆτις (4.1661) is her victory over the bronze giant Talos who protects Crete. Talos can be read as the personification of the mythic, heroic bronze race lauded by Hesiod.[58] Sensibly enough, the Argonauts furiously attempt to back off from a confrontation with this epic creature, but Medea insists that she be allowed to annihilate him. Although this episode does not carry the same moral weight that the murder of Apsyrtus does, it nevertheless provides further commentary on the nature of Medea's μῆτις. She insists on confrontation when it might be avoided (the Argonauts are not truly in ἀπορία) and she takes on Talos alone, with no help whatsoever from the other heroes: her insistence and her solitary power are unsettling. The description of her methods emphasizes her magical skills and their infernal quality: she covers her head and must be led out by Jason like a priestess; she invokes spirits of the underworld (θέλγε Κῆρας 4.1665); she chants and bewitches Talos particularly through images to his eyes (4.1665–72).[59] The μῆτις of the female Medea conquers a male bronze hero from the epic past. Although it may be over-interpretation to read Medea's destruction of Talos as the destruction of epic, as DeForest does, it is surely not unwarranted to suggest that Medea, the figure in the poem most associated with its difference from traditional epic, destroys an emblem of that very epic tradition who, by reason of his vulnerable heel, may recall the figure of Achilles.[60] Once again Apollonius seems to displace onto Medea the betrayal of traditional values.

Medea emerges as ἐπαρωγή against Talos, achieving her success through μῆτις by relying on θελκτήρια. The potential heroism implicit in Medea's salvation of the Argonauts, however, is seriously undermined by the extremely destructive, immoral, and in the case of Talos, unnecessary nature of

[57]"But I will not approve your plans and your unsuitable flight" (οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε / αἰνήσω βουλάς τε σέθεν καὶ ἀεικέα φύξιν, 4.747–48). For Zeus's anger, see 4.558.

[58]*Op.* 143–55. For Talos, see Hunter 1993: 155, 166; Knight 140. Achilles too is, in sources unfortunately much later than Apollonius (Stat. *Ach.* 1.134), possessed of invulnerability except for his heel. It is impossible to determine if either Homer or Apollonius had available a version of Achilles' life which included his invulnerability.

[59]See Dickie 267–96 for Medea's evil eye.

[60]See DeForest 30, 125, 136 for the destruction of Talos as symbolizing the end of epic poetry.

her methods.[61] This last and most extreme act of μῆτις by Medea—for she disappears from the narrative thereafter—emphasizes the polarity of μῆτις. This polarity is expressed in the text of the *Argonautica* through a movement from the masculine to the feminine gender, in which the salvational μῆτις of the males is contrasted with the salvational but also dangerous, deceptive and destructive μῆτις of Medea.[62] From the originary story of female δόλος and the golden fleece, through the μῆτις of the Lemnian women and, finally, the μῆτις of Medea, female μῆτις becomes ever more sinister as it becomes ever more vital to the mission of the Argonauts.[63] In addition to a qualitative difference in the μῆτις of males and females, a quantitative difference also emerges. Males may possess some μῆτις, but females in the narrative are the strongest practitioners of the art: Jason ἀμήχανος yields to the powerfully efficacious Medea πολυφάρμακος. As the Talos episode demonstrates, the μῆτις of the males seems to maintain a balance and exhibit control, while the μῆτις of Medea eventually becomes entirely excessive. The necessity of Medea's μῆτις to the success of the heroic mission of the Argonauts, however, ensures its corollary status as a salvation. The salvational status of Medea's μῆτις and the establishment of Medea as an untraditional heroic female are consistently undermined and problematized by her dark brand of μῆτις—and vice-versa.

Unlike its predecessor the *Odyssey*, with which the *Argonautica* shares many similarities, Apollonius Rhodius' narrative does not succeed in marginalizing the μῆτις of the female; instead, like its hero, it welcomes and incorporates female μῆτις. The *Argonautica* acknowledges the temporarily beneficial nature of Medea's μῆτις while simultaneously revealing its danger.

[61]See Griffiths 26; Barkhuizen 33; Beye 132 and 135; DeForest 107; Natzel 73; and Pavlock 51 for Medea's heroism.

[62]The figure of the mythical poet Orpheus is also described as ἐπαρωγός and has the ability to charm or θέλγειν (1.27–32), but he remains throughout a constructor, rather than a destroyer, of socio-cultural institutions and conventions. Orpheus thus seems to represent a facet of μῆτις closely connected with the salvational μῆτις associated with the Argonauts early in the epic. The suggestion of a form of poetic μῆτις implied by the figure of Orpheus is provocative, and will be pursued in a subsequent article.

[63]The inappropriateness of excessive and independent female help emerges after Argus' first suggestion of a plan to approach Medea, and there are repeated references to the ignominy of entrusting the νόστος to women, with obvious allusions to the νόστος of the *Odyssey*. Jason laments that the Argonauts will be turning over their νόστος to women (3.488); later, Mopsus reminds the Argonauts that Phineus has prophesied that their νόστος will be in the care of Aphrodite (3.549–50) and that they will return home by the plans of Aphrodite (Κύπριδος ἐννεσίῃς, 3.942) who is their συνέριθος. Idas objects to the procedure and castigates the weakness of women (παρθενικὰς...ἀνάλκιδας, 3.563).

In the *Argonautica*, the concept of μῆτις, along with the concepts of heroism and gender with which it is imbricated, remains outside secure and easy interpretation, retaining its polyvalent, ambivalent, and even disturbing status. The epithet πολυφάρμακος encapsulates the polarized and problematic nature of Medea's help: μῆτις, like Medea, remains an ἐπαρωγή πολυφάρμακος.

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