annihilates her enemy root and branch by destroying (only) his new connections, his chance for future offspring, and the children who have been born of his marriage with Medea—thereby undoing that marriage and all the deeds and sufferings it entailed. Further, all Medea's victims are, in part, images of herself: her fellow-tyrant and fellow-parent Creon,[67] her own dear children, the husband whose masculine values she has come to adopt, the bride who so closely resembles the young Medea. In all these ways, Euripides keeps his protagonist and her vengeance tremendously concentrated. Later dramatic versions of the myth may emphasize how Medea is most *unlike* other figures in the play. Euripides, by actively assimilating his heroine to characters and other elements internal to her story, gives his protagonist an almost unbearably focused power and allows her action a certain claim to reciprocal justice.

Of course this Medea is like no one else. But at the same time she does resemble many powerful elements in her traditional story. Moreover, she subtly assimilates her antagonists: she takes over their identities (as with Jason), or they hers (as with the princess). She destroys her enemies by becoming more like them, ruins them for being too much like herself. Ultimately Euripides' Medea expands to the point where she obliterates the other characters in her myth, fully transcending—and eradicating—her own once-limited identity as woman, wife, mother, mortal.

(I shall throw down and overturn everything, 414), *invadam deos et cuncta quatiam* (I will assault the gods and make everything shake, 424–25; cf. 527–28 for her human enemies).

[67] The resemblance between Medea and Creon as rulers is elaborated in some later *Medea* dramas, e.g., those of Seneca (cf. 203–6) and Jean Anouilh.

7

CONQUEST OF THE MEPHISTOPHELIAN NAUSICAA

MEDEA'S ROLE IN APOLLONIUS' REDEFINITION OF THE EPIC HERO

James J. Clauss

Helper-Maiden or Hero?

BOOK 3 of the *Argonautica*, with its gripping portrayal of Medea falling desperately in love, is so complete and compelling that many, if not most, readers virtually ignore the rest of the epic.[1] Because the poet focuses so much attention on Medea and her plight and because the Colchian princess contributes so much to the success of the expedition, some have even claimed, not unreasonably, that in the course of the poem Medea usurps the role of the hero of the Argonautic expedition.[2] Though attractive, such an interpretation does not explain away the fact that however one interprets Jason's character, Apollonius assigns him the traditional role of the hero: he is the one enjoined to complete the contest (ἄεθλος) of retrieving the Golden Fleece from Colchis,[3] and, in order to win the fleece, of yoking and driving the brazen bulls and killing the crop of earthborn

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[1] Ovid's comment to Augustus that book 4 of the *Aeneid* shared a similar popularity (*Tr.* 2.531–36) offers an interesting parallel.

[2] For instance, Beye 1982:120–32; Pavlock 1990:19–68; and De Forest 1994. Cf. Barkhuizen 1979, who argues that the erotic, not the heroic, holds primacy of place in the poem in general.

[3] As the expedition to Colchis is called: 1.15, 841, 903, 2.877, and *passim*.

men.[4] Despite the obvious differences between the Apollonian and the Homeric heroes,[5] Jason, like his archaic predecessors, longs to attain glory (κῦδος) through the success of his contest.[6] The invocations of books 1 and 3 are instructive in this regard: at 1.1–4 Apollonius introduces his topic as the glory of ancient men who sailed after the fleece, and at 3.1–5 he asks Erato to tell how Jason brought back the fleece through the love of Medea. Moreover, the poem concludes with a farewell to the Argonauts—there is no mention of Medea (4.773–81). In the openings of books 3 and 4, on the other hand, Medea is presented as the victim of love (3.3–5) or panic (4.1–5). Medea's contribution to the expedition in the role of "helper-maiden," modeled on Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*, does indeed affect how we understand Apollonius' articulation of the Argonautic hero; she does not, however, usurp his role.

Before examining Medea's role, particularly in book 3 of the *Argonautica*, I would like to look briefly at Jason; for his mode of action will not only set him apart from other heroes of the ancient epic tradition but will also require a higher level of assistance on Medea's part.

When the Argonauts first met on the beach at Pagasae, Jason invited them all to choose the best man as their leader. His description of the optimal captain is significant:

> Ἀλλά, φίλοι, ξυνὸς γὰρ ἐς Ἑλλάδα νόστος ὀπίσσω,
> ξυναὶ δ' ἄμμι πέλονται ἐς Αἰήταο κέλευθοι,
> τούνεκα νῦν τὸν ἄριστον ἀφειδήσαντες ἕλεσθε
> ὄρχαμον ὑμείων, ᾧ κεν τὰ ἕκαστα μέλοιτο,
> νείκεα συνθεσίας τε μετὰ ξείνοισι βαλέσθαι.
>
> (1.336–40)

> But, my friends, our return back to Greece is a matter of common concern
> and our journey to the palace of Aeëtes is also of common concern.
> Accordingly, sparing no one's feelings, elect now the best man
> among you as leader. To him will fall the consideration of all the
> details: the initiation of conflicts and treaties with foreign peoples.[7]

[4] As the contest in Colchis is also styled: 3.4–7, 502, 522, 720, 1407, and *passim*. Heracles' labors, typically called ἄεθλοι, are also so named in the *Argonautica*; cf. 1.1318, 1347.

[5] *Pace* M. Campbell 1994:*ad* 3.422f.

[6] Cf. 1.206, 351, 1292, 4.205. As a point of comparison, κῦδος is what Zeus wins through his thunderbolts (1.510) and what Idas boasts he can achieve through his spear (1.467).

[7] The text I use is that of Vian and Delage 1974, 1980, 1981; all translations are my own, unless otherwise specified.

The leader that Jason envisages is not a man of exceptional strength (βίη) or cunning (μῆτις)—the kind of hero one finds in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*—but a good organizer. In particular, the best of the Argonauts must settle conflicts (νείκεα) and arrange treaties or agreements (συνθεσίαι) with foreigners. What immedately follows this speech is equally significant: Heracles, the quintessential archaic and classical hero, refuses to be named captain despite his unanimous election by the men and thereby implicitly rejects this definition for himself.[8] The hero Apollonius offers is not independent like Heracles, who completes his contests by himself, but thoroughly dependent on the assistance of others. And indeed, following the accidental abandonment of Heracles, the only way that the expedition can succeed in the face of Aeëtes' superior power is through the help of another equally powerful agent. That helper is Medea, a foreigner with whom Jason will forge a deadly agreement.

And the Greatest of These Is Love

Apollonius begins the second half of the poem by invoking Erato, the Muse of love poetry. The wording warrants close attention:

> Εἰ δ' ἄγε νῦν, Ἐρατώ, παρά θ' ἵστασο καί μοι ἔνισπε
> ἔνθεν ὅπως ἐς Ἰωλκὸν ἀνήγαγε κῶας Ἰήσων
> Μηδείης ὑπ' ἔρωτι. Σὺ γὰρ καὶ Κύπριδος αἶσαν
> ἔμμορες, ἀδμῆτας δὲ τεοῖς μελεδήμασι θέλγεις
> παρθενικάς· τῶ καί τοι ἐπήρατον οὔνομ' ἀνῆπται.
>
> (3.1–5)

> Come now, Erato, stand alongside me and tell me
> how Jason brought the fleece back to Iolcus
> through the love of Medea. For you were allotted a share
> in Aphrodite's dispensation; you charm unmarried young women
> with your cares. For this reason you have acquired an erotic name.

Contrary to Homer's practice Apollonius sets himself and the Muse on the same level. Erato is asked to stand alongside the poet and to tell how Jason attained the fleece. Why Erato? She knows how to sing of love.[9] Apollonius, like his hero, would appear to need a "helper-maiden" to assist him with a topic that is foreign to his chosen genre: Aphrodite and

[8] For a discussion of this episode, see Clauss 1993:61–66.

[9] On the name Erato and a suggestion regarding Apollonius' model, see M. Campbell 1983:1–7.

the charming of unmarried (literally "unconquered") young women, a subject more appropriate for love poetry. This mixing of genres finds a ready parallel in the opening of the poem (1.1–5)[10] and provides an appropriate introduction for book 3, which treats the anxiety of love as a crucial element in the completion of a heroic contest. For, as Apollonius puts it, it is "through the love of Medea" that the expedition succeeds. By calling upon Erato, Apollonius, following the Hellenistic penchant for programmatic introductions, alerts the reader to his literary gambit.[11]

There remains one additional point to make with regard to the charming of "unmarried young women" (ἀδμῆτας παρθενικάς). Homer uses the phrase in a slightly different form (παρθένος ἀδμής, *Od.* 6.109, 228) only of Nausicaa.[12] The imitation suggests that the love story to follow will owe something to the Homeric portrait of Nausicaa, as indeed it does. Moreover, the transformation of the rare Homeric phrase might in itself suggest that what follows will be an innovative adaptation of the Phaeacian episode, which, as noted by many, it is.[13]

This highly suggestive introduction leads into the delightful and seemingly amusing episode in which Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite conspire to have Medea fall in love with Jason. Comments on this episode—in particular on the exchange among the goddesses and Aphrodite's encounter with her petulant son Eros—tend to focus on the realistic portrayals of the goddesses as Hellenistic women at court and of Eros as an overindulged child.[14] Playfulness is an essential ingredient of the one and only Olympian scene in the poem, but it has tended to overshadow the mordant symbolism that lies behind the comedy of manners. Hera, Jason's divine patron, wants her favorite to succeed and so she consults Athena, the goddess of war and protector of heroes. Athena is stumped (3.21). The implication of the consultation is clear: military action is not feasible for Jason against the likes of Aeëtes (15). It

[10] See Goldhill 1991:286–300; Clauss 1993:14–25.

[11] On metaliterary aspects of the invocation, see Fusillo 1985:367; Grillo 1988:25–27; cf. also Händel 1954:93 and Feeney 1991:90–93. Moreover, a good parallel for this blending of heroic and erotic imagery is provided by Hunter 1987:136. Finally, on the theme and importance of love in the *Argonautica*, see Zanker 1979.

[12] Cf. Hunter 1989:*ad* 4–5

[13] E. g., Huber 1926:84–86; Beye 1982:122–29; Hunter 1989:26–30; Goldhill 1991:303.

[14] See, for instance, Wilamowitz 1924:2.181–83; L. Klein 1931:32–33; Huber 1926:39–41; Zanker 1987:205–7; M. Campbell 1983:10–19; Feeney 1991:77–78. Most recently, M. Campbell 1994 offers a detailed analysis in his commentary.

is at this point that Hera suggests a visit to Aphrodite's house to persuade the goddess to send her son, Eros, to charm (θέλξαι) Medea; she will give Jason the drugs he needs to acquire the strength to face Aeëtes' contest and thereby the opportunity to retrieve the fleece (25–29). As stated in the invocation of book 3, success depends on the charming (θέλγεις) of young unmarried women.

Apollonius modeled Hera and Athena's visit of Aphrodite on Thetis' visit of Hephaestus in *Iliad* 18. In both cases the goddesses go to the home of Hephaestus in need of a favor. There are, however, several important differences. First, Hera and Athena encounter not Charis (Hephaestus' wife in the *Iliad*) but Aphrodite (his two-timing wife in the *Odyssey*).[15] Second (and more significant), Hera and Athena ask not Hephaestus but his wife Aphrodite to cause Medea to fall in love[16] so that Jason can succeed in Aeëtes' challenge and return with the fleece. Moreover, Thetis had asked for armor for Achilles so that he could fight against Hector. This striking contrast between text and subtext reechoes the juxtaposition of epic and erotic topics seen in the invocation.

There exists another contrast between the two passages. In the *Iliad*, Thetis asked for new weapons and the poet described the golden armor in considerable detail. While it is not the object of Hera and Athena's visit per se, Apollonius supplies a golden artifact and a detailed description: a ball made by Hephaestus (3.131–41). The substitution of a plaything for a shield, so typical of Alexandrian sensibilities, complements the thematic blending of amatory and military themes.[17] Yet the amusing portrait of a wicked boy and a distraught mother has blinded many readers to the grim significance of the scene. The golden ball, longed for by an attractive but dangerous boy, is not merely a transformation of the Iliadic shield or, what is more to the point, an Olympian analogue for the Golden Fleece.[18] It is also emblematic of the

[15] Demodocus' story of the illicit love of Aphrodite and Ares is amusingly alluded to in the present scene: not only does Hephaestus' absence from home for reasons of his work (3.41–43) recall the god's trick to catch his adulterous wife in bed, but also Eros' threat to use his bow on Aphrodite herself anticipates her future escapade with Ares.

[16] Hera's request for Aphrodite's assistance was suggested by the goddess's similar request of Aphrodite in *Il.* 14, when she wanted to seduce Zeus. Here too, Hera wants help with a seduction; cf. Hunter 1989:*ad* 79–82.

[17] In book 1.721–73 we find the same blend in the description of Jason's cloak, which he wears as he goes to meet (and eventually make love to) Hypsipyle. The ecphrasis clearly recalls that of Achilles' shield, which he carries in his climactic battle against Hector. On ecphrasis in general in the *Argonautica*, see Thiel 1993, although his analysis of the cloak is problematic (cf. *AJP* 116 [1995] 326).

[18] As well argued by T. Klein 1980–81.

universe: a sphere with five parallel circles (κύκλα: the equator, tropics, and arctic circles) intersected at two points (ἀψῖδες: the equinoxes) by a spiral (ἕλιξ: the zodiac).[19] The implication of the bribe is bleak. Once Eros makes Medea fall in love with Jason, the universe will be in the hands of a completely amoral and capricious power. As an indication of how terrifying Eros is, even Aphrodite fears his unpredictable power (3.91–99). Moreover, to win his good will she must offer a golden gift. Medea too will offer a golden object, the fleece, to satisfy her eros.[20]

Charming the Unconquered Maiden

Diplomacy

Before approaching Colchis and King Aeëtes, Jason holds a meeting in which he suggests the use of diplomacy to see what Aeëtes' reaction to their request will be:

> Ὦ φίλοι, ἤτοι ἐγὼ μὲν ὅ μοι ἐπιανδάνει αὐτῷ
> ἐξερέω, τοῦ δ' ὔμμι τέλος κρηῆναι ἔοικεν.
> Ξυνὴ γὰρ χρειώ, ξυνοὶ δέ τε μῦθοι ἔασιν
> πᾶσιν ὁμῶς· ὁ δὲ σῖγα νόον βουλήν τ' ἀπερύκων
> ἴστω καὶ νόστου τόνδε στόλον οἷος ἀπούρας.
> Ὤλλοι μὲν κατὰ νῆα σὺν ἕντεσι μίμνεθ' ἑκηλοι·
> αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐς δώματ' ἐλεύσομαι Αἰήταο,
> υἷας ἐλὼν Φρίξοιο δύω τ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ἑταίρους,
> Πειρήσω δ' ἐπέεσσι παροίτερον ἀντιβολήσας,
> εἴ κ' ἐθέλοι φιλότητι δέρος χρύσειον ὀπάσσαι,
> ἦε καὶ οὔ, πίσυνος δὲ βίῃ μετιόντας ἀτίσσει.
> Ὧδε γὰρ ἐξ αὐτοῖο πάρος κακότητα δαέντες
> φρασσόμεθ' εἴ τ' ἄρηι συνοισόμεθ' εἴ τέ τις ἄλλη
> μῆτις ἐπίρροθος ἔσται ἐεργομένοισιν ἀυτῆς·
> Μηδ' αὖτως ἀλκῇ, πρὶν ἔπεσσί γε πειρηθῆναι,
> τόνδ' ἀπαμείρωμεν σφέτερον κτέρας, ἀλλὰ πάροιθεν
> λωίτερον μύθῳ μιν ἀρέσσασθαι μετιόντας.
> Πολλάκι τοι ῥέα μῦθος, ὅ κεν μόλις ἐξανύσειεν
> ἠνορέη, τόδ' ἔρεξε κατὰ χρέος, ᾗ περ ἐῴκει,
> πρηΰνας·
>
> (3.171–90)

[19] See Lendle 1979 and Pendergraft 1991.

[20] Boedeker in this volume reveals a comparable association between Aphrodite and Medea in Euripides' play.

> Friends, what I myself prefer to do,
> I shall make clear; the final decision, however, is up to you.
> The expedition is a matter of common concern, so too our ideas
> are a common concern for all equally. Let the one who withholds
> his thoughts and plans
> know that he alone deprives this group of its return.
> The rest of you, arm yourselves and stay here quietly along the ship.
> I shall go to Aeëtes' palace,
> taking with me the sons of Phrixus and two other comrades.
> Meeting him face to face, I'll approach him first with words
> to see if he might be willing to give us the Golden Fleece out of
> friendship,
> or if not, relying on his strength, he might refuse our request.
> In this way, learning in advance from him himself of our rebuff
> we can decide whether we shall engage him in battle or find some
> other
> *plan* that will prove helpful should we refrain from war.
> Let us not resort to *violence* before giving diplomacy a chance,
> especially since we are asking for his prized possession. It is better
> first to approach him and win him over through persuasion.
> Often what sheer strength can achieve only with great difficulty
> persuasion easily accomplishes as a matter of course, armed with
> the appropriate ingratiating flourishes.

The speech calls to mind Jason's first address to the Argonauts on the beach at Pagasae where he observed their need for unity of action (1.336–40, quoted above). In addition to providing a new starting point for the action,[21] the repetition of this theme underscores Jason's brand of leadership and heroism: making deals with foreigners. Moreover, Apollonius expresses Jason's two other alternatives to diplomacy in a significant way: either Aeëtes will turn to violence (βίη), forcing the Argonauts to respond in kind, or they will have to devise some clever plan (μῆτις). As it happens, Jason himself neither faces Aeëtes in battle nor himself devises a clever ruse. Rather, his ability to make deals with foreigners, to make a bargain for another's strength and cunning, is the key to his success.

Arrival

As Jason, accompanied by Telamon, Augeias, and the sons of Phrixus, proceeds across the plain of Circe, Hera sends a mist upon the city

[21] See Clauss 1990:138–39.

of Colchis to prevent their approach from being seen (3.210–14). As many have observed, Apollonius recalls Odysseus' approach to Alcinous' palace (*Od.* 7.14–17, 139–40, 143).[22] Moreover, the description of Aeëtes' palace (3.215–41) comes appropriately from Homer's description of Alcinous' (*Od.* 7.81–135).[23] Yet Apollonius also has other Homeric passages in mind. Once the men enter the city, they notice four fountains: one flowing with milk, one with wine, one with oil, and one with water. The water fountain was unusual in that it ran hot and cold at different times (3.221–29). The four fountains in Colchis call to mind Hermes' visit to Calypso's cave with its four fountains (*Od.* 5.68–73a) and the dual temperatures allude to the two sources of the Scamander River, a detail mentioned by Homer in the scene depicting Achilles' pursuit of Hector (*Il.* 22.148–52). Finally, the configuration of rooms in the palace (3.325–48) comes from Homer's description of Priam's palace when Hector returned to Troy (*Il.* 6.242–50).[24]

This preface to Jason's first encounter with Medea is highly suggestive. First, as in the case of Jason's previous encounter with Hypsipyle, the reader is asked to see Medea as a combination of Circe, Calypso, and Nausicaa: the Circean plain recalls the first; the four fountains, the second; and the overall imitation of the Phaeacian episode, the third.[25] Second, recollection of the Scamander's two streams not only imports into the Argonautic text its association with the climactic battle between Achilles and Hector, but also brings along the poignant comment that at this spot the Trojan wives and daughters used to clean their clothing (εἵματα σιγαλόεντα, *Il.* 22.154) before the war. Nausicaa met Odysseus when engaged in the same activity near a body of water (εἵματα ... σιγαλόεντα, *Od.* 6.26).[26] By inviting the reader to see a link between these two passages, Apollonius again invokes the thematic blend of martial and amatory motifs. Third, allusion to the episode in which Hector returned home and spoke to Hecuba, Helen, and Andromache makes the Colchian palace an ominous setting for Medea, who will tell her sister Chalciope that she fears for her sons, who have been for her brothers, nephews, and companions (3.731–32), thus recalling Andromache's statement to Hector that he is father, mother, brother, and husband to her (*Il.* 6.429–40).[27] The striking difference between the heroines and their situations, however, is that while Andromache does not succeed in persuading Hector with this line of reasoning and will in time lose her husband, Medea not only successfully manipulates Chalciope but in so doing gains the opportunity to meet with and ultimately marry Jason. The ingenuous Andromache fails and the guileful Medea succeeds.[28]

Jason's arrival at Colchis suggests the presence of a "helper-maiden" who will, like Nausicaa, facilitate his return home with a treasure. Yet the interplay of other subtexts invites the reader to see Jason as attractively vulnerable as Odysseus, but also as potentially destructive as Achilles. Medea at this point has yet to show what kind of Nausicaa she will be.

The Meeting

Once the embassy made its way into the palace, Medea was the first to see them. Apollonius informs us that Hera had kept Medea home for this purpose (3.250–52). As Hunter points out, Apollonius neatly inverts the Odyssean model: "Whereas Nausicaa had to be sent out in order to meet Odysseus, Medea has to be kept at home for Jason's arrival."[29] As Medea sees the sons of Phrixus, she screams. Although Apollonius does not say why, her reaction is due, no doubt, to the unexpected sight of her nephews, who returned to Colchis with Jason. Ironically her scream turns out to be an appropriate reaction to the sight of the man who is about to change her life irrevocably and for the worse.

Apollonius describes the onset of passion appropriately as a wound from Eros' arrow (3.275–98). In a brilliant adaptation of this erotic theme, the poet portrays the wounding in a manner reminiscent of the shooting of Menelaus by Pandarus in *Iliad* 3, the incident that destroyed the possibility of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Trojan War through a duel.[30] Not only is the thematic blending of martial and amatory themes in play, but the recollection of the Iliadic model again strikes

[22] E.g., Gillies 1928:*ad* 211; Hunter 1989:*ad* 210–14; Rengakos 1993:65–66; and most recently M. Campbell 1994: *ad* 210–14.

[23] Roux 1963:84–87 also sees evidence of contemporary palace architecture—Ptolemaic in particular—behind Aeëtes' home.

[24] Cf. Hunter 1989:*ad* Ap. Rhod. 3.235–48.

[25] On the Lemnian episode, see Clauss 1993:106–47.

[26] The collocation of these two words occurs only here in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

[27] Apollonius returns to this famous Iliadic passage later when he has Medea say to Jason prior to their departure from Colchis that she is his daughter, wife, and sister (4.368–69).

[28] The entire constellation of martial and erotic episodes might well have been suggested by the simile in which Odysseus is compared to a lion as he approached Nausicaa and her friends (*Od.* 6.130–34); see Beye 1982:122, who notes the "charming blend of eroticism and military parody" in this Odyssean scene.

[29] See Hunter 1989:*ad* 250.

[30] Lennox 1980 offers a thorough reading of this scene and its Iliadic model.

an ominous note: the Argonautic archer likewise threatens to wreak bloody havoc.

Medea recedes from the poet's gaze for the moment as the Argonauts are introduced to Aeëtes and the purpose of their journey is revealed. After learning that Jason has come for the fleece, Aeëtes not unreasonably suspects a plot against his throne; there was, after all, an omen warning against a conspiracy among his kinsmen (3.597–605). At this point, Aeëtes proposes an impossible mission as the price for the fleece: yoking the fire-breathing bulls, sowing the field of Ares with dragon teeth, and dealing with the monstrous crop (401–21). Jason, in the presence of the king and his people, has no alternative but to accept a contest that he has no hope of surviving. He clearly lacks the strength and cunning to succeed, while the only Argonaut capable of succeeding in Aeëtes' trial—Heracles—was abandoned in Mysia. Nonetheless, Jason will ultimately succeed against the bulls and the crop of the dragon teeth with Medea's assistance.

Love

Following the challenge, Jason returns to the Argonauts and Medea, to her room, her mind filled with thoughts of love (3.451–52). Apollonius has her replay the previous scene over and over in her mind, as Jason's words still ring in her ears (454–58).[31] This is the segue to the first of Medea's three monologues:

> Τίπτε με δειλαίην τόδ' ἔχει ἄχος; Εἴ θ' ὅ γε πάντων
> φθείσεται ἡρώων προφερέστατος εἴ τε χερείων,
> ἐρρέτω.... Ἦ μὲν ὄφελλεν ἀκήριος ἐξαλέασθαι.
> Ναὶ δὴ τοῦτό γε, πότνα θεὰ Περσηί, πέλοιτο,
> οἷκαδε νοστήσειε φυγὼν μόρον· εἰ δέ μιν αἶσα
> δμηθῆναι ὑπὸ βουσί, τόδε προπάροιθε δαείη,
> οὕνεκεν οὔ οἱ ἔγωγε κακῇ ἐπαγαίομαι ἄτῃ.
>
> (3.464–70)

> Why has this anxiety made me so distraught? Whether he is the
> best of all heroes who is about to be destroyed or the worst,
> let him go to Hell. Yet, I would like him to escape unharmed.

[31] Scholars have tended to focus on Apollonius' psychological portrait of Medea in love (e.g., Carrière 1959; Paduano 1972), which I shall avoid in this paper, focusing instead on the various literary subtexts and a determination of how they affect our understanding of Medea's role, particularly in book 3.

> Yes, may it turn out so, august goddess, daughter of Perses:
> may he escape death and return home. But if it is his fate
> to be killed by the bulls, may he learn this first,
> that I for one take no pleasure in his bitter destruction.

Again Apollonius poses indirectly the question that was seen as a major theme of book 1: who is the best of the Argonauts?[32] In her present state, however, for Medea the question is irrelevant. So charmed by Eros is Medea that to her it does not matter whether Jason is an Achilles or a Thersites.

Yet the nature of the hero reemerges as a central issue in the following scene among the Argonauts (3.472–575). As they return to the group, Argus suggests that they employ Medea's assistance: through her drugs, the contesting hero (840) will not experience fear. Following Jason's description of his contest and the expression of willingness of several other Argonauts to take it on, Argus repeats his suggestion. As soon as he finishes speaking, a dove, pursued by a hawk, falls into Jason's lap while the pursuing hawk impales itself on the Argo. Mopsus immediately marks the significance of this event: Aphrodite approves of Argus' suggestion, which, as it turns out, confirms the prophecy of Phineus (cf. 2.423–25). Apollonius highlights the novelty of the decision to turn to love by having Idas, "caricature du héros épique" (Vian and Delage 1980:127 *ad* 3.557), rail against the prospect, recalling Heracles' reproach to the Argonauts on Lemnos (cf. 1.865–74):

> Ὦ πόποι, ἦ ῥα γυναιξὶν ὁμόστολοι ἐνθάδ' ἔβημεν,
> οἳ Κύπριν καλέουσιν ἐπίρροθον ἄμμι πέλεσθαι·
> οὐκέτ' Ἐνυαλίοιο μέγα σθένος, ἐς δὲ πελείας
> καὶ ἱέρκους λεύσσοντες ἐρητύεσθε ἀέθλων.
> Ἔρρετε, μηδ' ὔμμιν πολεμήια ἔργα μέλοιτο,
> παρθενικὰς δὲ λιτῇσιν ἀνάλκιδας ἠπεροπεύειν.
>
> (3.558–63)

> You damned fools! Surely we have come here in the company
> of women,
> we who call upon Cypris to be our savior.
> You no longer look to Enyalius' great power, but to doves
> and hawks in order to avoid heroic contests.
> Go to Hell! Care no more for the deeds of war
> but seduce defenseless young girls with your prayers!

[32] As argued in Clauss 1993.

Two modes of action collide, and in this case it is not strength versus cunning but strength versus Eros, and Eros will have the upper hand. As it turns out, Jason's ability to arouse passion will prove to be as successful as Achillean strength or Odyssean cunning.

While Argus confers with Chalciope about the possibility of having Medea assist Jason, Medea falls asleep and experiences a revealing dream: she imagines that Jason came not to acquire the fleece but herself, that she herself undertook Pelias' "contest" (ἀεθλεύουσα), that an argument arose in which she had to decide between her father and Jason, and that she chose Jason (3.616–32). As Hunter observes, Medea's dream is modeled on the one Athena sent to Nausicaa (*Od.* 6.25–40).[33] Nausicaa was instructed in her dream by the image of a friend to go to the shore to launder the clothes, and it is here that she meets and assists Odysseus. Comparison of the two dreams reveals another instance of the programmatic contrast between erotic and epic themes seen above: Nausicaa dreams of meeting a husband; Medea dreams of taking on a heroic contest. As in the case of Nausicaa, Medea's dream represents an important stage in the awakening of her passion. Her subconscious desire so revealed not only makes her true feelings clear, at least to the reader, but her dream also opens the way for her assistance of Jason. In effect, she has already decided for Jason and against her own father.[34]

From the language she uses, Medea would appear to have usurped Jason's role. She envisages herself as the contestant and the one who handles an argument, both terms that have been associated primarily with Jason in the poem prior to this point. This does not necessarily mean, however, that she has now become the hero of the epic.[35] Apollonius was following the lead of Euripides in having his "heroine" identify with her beloved in a subconscious state. Much as Phaedra does in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (198–231), Medea, freed in sleep to express her true thoughts, reveals her subconscious desire for the object of her passion by assuming the role of that very person.[36] Once she is

[33] Hunter 1989:*ad* 626–32.

[34] The imitation of *Od.* 18.188–89 and 19.516–17 in 3.616–18, noted by Hunter 1989:*ad loc.*, brings in Penelope as another model: a married woman who nonetheless longs for her husband or at least a husband. As Hunter notes, like Medea, Penelope had to consider whether or not to abandon her family and pursue reawakening sexual desires (cf. *Od.*19.524–29).

[35] See Vian and Delage 1980:*ad* 623.

[36] Such assimilation is also at play in Euripides' *Medea*, as Boedeker demonstrates in this volume.

awake, at the completion of her second monologue Medea more aptly identifies her role as that of helper:

> Ἔμπα γε μήν, θεμένη κύνεον κέαρ, οὐκέτ' ἄνευθεν
> αὐτοκασιγνήτης πειρήσομαι, εἴ κέ μ' ἀέθλῳ
> χραισμεῖν ἀντιάσῃσιν, ἐπὶ σφετέροις ἀχέουσα
> παισί· τό κέν μοι λυγρὸν ἐνὶ κραδίῃ σβέσοι ἄλγος.
>
> (3.641–44)

> Nonetheless, assuming the heart of a bitch,[37] I shall actively make trial of my sister, to see if she will ask me to help out in the contest, making my excuse anxiety for her sons. This might extinquish the pain in my heart.

Use of the phrase "to help out" (χραισμεῖν) makes it clear that Medea, at least in her own mind, does not see herself as the hero undertaking the contest but as the "helper-maiden." Nonetheless her dream reveals something about the nature of her help that pertains to Jason's heroic contest: once she agrees to participate, the work of yoking the bulls, plowing the field, and dealing with the deadly crop will prove to be easy (3.624). The Medean helper-maiden differs markedly from the Nausicaan model in the degree to which she can help. As we shall see, Medea can turn a weak Jason into a powerful Heracles. Moreover, unlike Nausicaa, Medea will not allow the hero she helps to leave without taking her along.

Shame

Another significant difference between the two helper-maidens involves their reactions to how their assistance might be viewed by their respective societies. Similar to Phaedra in *Hippolytus*, Medea's debilitating passion (ἔρος) struggles with her sense of shame (αἰδώς), a struggle that begins at 3.649, after she first thought of approaching Chalciope, and lasts until she gives Jason both the drug and instructions on how to use it; only after this does she loses all shame (δὴ γάρ οἱ ἀπ' ὀφθαλμοὺς λίπεν αἰδώς, 3.1068).[38] It is shame then that keeps Medea from approaching Chalciope, reducing her to the condition of a young bride whose groom dies before they consummate their marriage and who

[37] Regarding this phrase, Hunter notes that behind Medea stands also a "Helen model" (1989:*ad* 641–42 and p. 29, 1993:67).

[38] Hunter 1989:*ad* 766–68, 811–16, notes the Euripidean influence.

fears revealing her physical longing for her dead husband (3.648–64).[39] When a servant sees Medea's distress and reports it to her sister, Chalciope rushes to her side and questions her. Medea is at first silent out of shame, but eventually proceeds with her ruse, forced by passion (681–87). What she has to say to Chalciope is utterly shameless: she pretends that her dream involved harm coming to her sister's children and so she can seem to give Jason the help he needs out of sororal piety (727–39).

Alone again, Medea confronts her sense of shame for the last time. After reviewing her options, she gives voice to her frustration, bringing the issue to its climax:

> πῶς γάρ κεν ἐμοὺς λελάθοιμι τοκῆας
> φάρμακα μησαμένη; ποῖον δ' ἐπὶ μῦθον ἐνίψω;
> τίς δὲ δόλος, τίς μῆτις ἐπίκλοπος ἔσσετ' ἀρωγῆς;
> ἦ μιν ἄνευθ' ἑτάρων προσπτύξομαι οἷον ἰδοῦσα;
> δύσμορος· οὐ μὲν ἔολπα καταφθιμένοιό περ ἔμπης
> λωφήσειν ἀχέων· τότε δ' ἂν κακὸν ἄμμι πέλοιτο,
> κεῖνος ὅτε ζωῆς ἀπαμείρεται. ἐρρέτω αἰδώς,
> ἐρρέτω ἀγλαΐη·
>
> (3.779–786)

> How might I devise some use for my drugs
> without my parents finding out? What story shall I concoct?
> What ruse or what device will there be to mask my assistance?
> Seeing him alone, apart from his companions, shall I address him?
> What misery! Once he is dead I do not expect
> an end to this suffering. He will turn out to be
> my undoing the moment he loses his life. To Hell with shame!
> To Hell with reputation!

Medea longs to save Jason but her sense of shame and her concern for her reputation prevents her from acting upon this desire.

As seen above, shame (αἰδώς) referred to Medea's inability to express her inner feelings before another (Chalciope in her room) and will cause her to hesitate to speak to Jason at the temple of Hecate on the next day. The emotion arises from the need to keep one's most intimate feelings private. Yet Medea also dismisses concern for her reputation (ἀγλαΐη, literally "splendor"). If she helps Jason,

[39] The simile has received much scholarly attention: see Wilamowitz 1924:2.210 n. 1; Faerber 1932:18; Fränkel 1950:123–25; M. Campbell 1983:39–40. Ardizzoni 1976 vigorously argues against a sexual reading of the widow's plight.

she acknowledges that she will not escape the notice of her parents or other Colchians and will in this way bring shame (ἤσχυνε) on her family:

> ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς φθιμένῃ μοι ἐπιλλίξουσιν ὀπίσσω
> κερτομίαις· τηλοῦ δὲ πόλις περὶ πᾶσα βοήσει
> πότμον ἐμόν· καί κέν με διὰ στόματος φορέουσαι
> Κολχίδες ἄλλυδις ἄλλαι ἀεικέα μωμήσονται·
> ἦ τις κηδομένη τόσον ἀνέρος ἀλλοδαποῖο
> κάτθανεν, ἥ τις δῶμα καὶ οὓς ἤσχυνε τοκῆας,
> μαργοσύνῃ εἴξασα.
>
> (3.791–97)

> But even so they will utter all forms of insults
> after my death and every city far and wide will resound
> with the tale of my fate. And making frequent mention of me,
> Colchian women everywhere will hurl embarrassing taunts at me:
> "She died because she cared so much for some foreign
> man! She brought shame on her home and parents,
> giving in to lust!"

Unlike αἰδώς, which is internal, ἀγλαΐη is exterior and societal, the direct result of not following the dictates of one's inner sense of shame. Euripides' Phaedra summarized well these two types of "shame" that apply to Medea's situation: "There are two sorts: one is not evil and the other is a burden for families" (δισσαὶ δ' εἰσίν, ἡ μὲν οὐ κακή, ἡ δ' ἄχθος οἴκων, Eur. *Hipp.* 385–86).

In her instructions to Odysseus about how to approach the city and her parents, Nausicaa fears what the Phaeacians might think and say of her cavorting with a foreign man. She even criticizes any young woman who would bring shame on her family by such an association:

> καὶ δ' ἄλλῃ νεμεσῶ, ἥ τις τοιαῦτά γε ῥέζοι,
> ἥ τ' ἀέκητι φίλων πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς ἐόντων
> ἀνδράσι μίσγηται, πρίν γ' ἀμφάδιον γάμον ἐλθεῖν.
>
> (*Od.* 6. 286–88)

> And I shall blame another woman who might do some such thing:
> she who, against the wishes of her father and mother,
> consorts with a man before the day of her public marriage.

Comparison of these two responses to public opinion underscores Medea's complete helplessness and loss of shame. Moreover, she cannot even muster the courage to kill herself, as Phaedra managed to do.[40]

The Tryst

After having resolved to assist Jason, Medea anxiously awaits the dawn, when she will go the temple of Hecate to meet Jason.[41] Her maids prepare a mule-drawn wagon and accompany Medea to the trysting place, following behind her. As she goes, Apollonius compares her to Artemis:

> Οἵη δὲ λιαροῖσιν ἐφ' ὕδασι Παρθενίοιο,
> ἠὲ καὶ Ἀμνισοῖο λοεσσαμένη ποταμοῖο,
> χρυσείοις Λητωὶς ἐφ' ἅρμασιν ἑστηυῖα
> ὠκείαις κεμάδεσσι διεξελάῃσι κολώνας,
> τηλόθεν ἀντιόωσα πολυκνίσου ἑκατόμβης·
> τῇ δ' ἅμα Νύμφαι ἕπονται ἀμορβάδες, αἱ μὲν ἀπ' αὐτῆς
> ἀγρόμεναι πηγῆς Ἀμνισίδος, αἱ δὲ λιποῦσαι
> ἄλσεα καὶ σκοπιὰς πολυπίδακας· ἀμφὶ δὲ θῆρες
> κνυζηθμῷ σαίνουσιν ὑποτρομέοντες ἰοῦσαν·
> ὣς αἵ γ' ἐσσεύοντο δί' ἄστεος, ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ
> εἶχον ἀλευάμενοι βασιλῆίδος ὄμματα κούρης.
>
> (3.876–86)

> Just as at the warm streams of Parthenius,
> or after bathing in the river Amnisus,
> the daughter of Leto, standing on her golden chariot,
> drives the hills, drawn by swift deer,
> going far off to receive an offering of a hecatomb, plumed in rich smoke.
> Nymphs accompany her: some coming together from
> the spring of Amnisus, others leaving
> the groves and many fountains on the hilltops; as she moves
> wild animals crouch and surround her, whining obsequiously.
> In this way the group hastened through the city; and the people all about
> gave way, avoiding the eyes of the king's daughter.

[40] When Apollonius states that Medea is ultimately swayed by the many pleasures of life, he has in mind Phaedra's statement that people who act contrary to their good sense do so because of the many pleasures of life (Eur. *Hipp.* 382–85), as Hunter 1989:*ad* 811–16 rightly notes.

[41] On this episode, see M. Campbell 1983:56–61.

There the young women will while away the time, singing and collecting flowers until Jason arrives.[42]

As has long been observed, Medea's journey to meet Jason parallels Nausicaa's to the beach where she will encounter Odysseus.[43] The Phaeacian princess travels by mule-drawn cart (*Od.* 6.72–73) and her maids likewise follow on foot behind her (cf. 6.318–20). Instead of picking flowers, Nausicaa and her friends play ball and it is while they are at play that Homer compares Nausicaa to Artemis:

> Οἵη δ' Ἄρτεμις εἶσι κατ' οὔρεα ἰοχέαιρα,
> ἢ κατὰ Τηΰγετον περιμήκετον ἢ Ἐρύμανθον,
> τερπομένη κάπροισι καὶ ὠκείῃσ' ἐλάφοισι·
> τῇ δέ θ' ἅμα νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
> ἀγρονόμοι παίζουσι, γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Λητώ·
> πασάων δ' ὑπὲρ ἥ γε κάρη ἔχει ἠδὲ μέτωπα,
> ῥεῖά τ' ἀγριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι·
> ὣς ἥ γ' ἀμφιπόλοισι μετέπρεπε παρθένος ἁδμής.
>
> (*Od.* 6.102–9)

> Just as Artemis passes through the mountains, shooting her arrows—
> either along the peaks of Taygetus or Erymanthus—
> rejoicing in the pursuit of boars and swift deer.
> Together with her, the nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus,
> gather to play, and Leto's heart beats happily.
> High above them all Artemis holds her head and face,
> she is easily conspicuous, despite the beauty of all.
> In this way the unmarried young woman surpassed her maids.

Allusion to the Phaeacian episode once again accentuates the difference between the two characters. In the *Odyssey*, the simile focuses on appearance by implying that Nausicaa surpasses her friends in stature just as Artemis does her accompanying nymphs; in the *Argonautica*, the simile underscores Medea's quasi-divine status, for wild animals are often depicted as fawning on the "Mistress of the Animals" (πότνια θηρῶν).[44] The simile is doubly appropriate in Medea's case: in addition to anticipating the reaction that the people of Colchis have to their

[42] On the sexual undercurrents of this activity, see M. Campbell 1983:60–61.

[43] E.g., Gillies 1928:*ad* 874; Vian and Delage 1980:137 *ad* 869. In addition to the influence of the well-known Odyssean scene, Hunter 1989:*ad* 869–86 and Paduano and Fusillo 1986:*ad* 876–86 also note the influence of Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis* (cf. 110–12).

[44] In lines 883–84 Apollonius has in mind the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* (69–74), where Aphrodite is described in terms reminiscent of the πότνια θηρῶν; see Vian and Delage 1980:137 *ad* 869 and Hunter 1989:*ad* 883–84.

princess—all fear to look into the eyes of the young woman (3.885–86)—Artemis is linked in myth and cult, and is sometimes synonymous, with Hecate, whom Medea serves. Thus, rather than focusing on the beauty or stature of the helper-maiden, the simile emphasizes Medea's terrifying power. In this way and at this point, the demonic side of the Argonautic Nausicaa begins to emerge.[45]

As Jason goes to meet Medea at the temple of Hecate, Hera makes him even more attractive:

> Ἐνθ' οὔ πω τις τοῖος ἐπὶ προτέρων γένετ' ἀνδρῶν,
> οὔθ' ὅσοι ἐξ αὐτοῖο Διὸς γένος οὔθ' ὅσοι ἄλλων
> ἀθανάτων ἥρωες ἀφ' αἵματος ἐβλάστησαν,
> οἷον Ἰήσονα θῆκε Διὸς δάμαρ ἤματι κείνῳ
> ἠμὲν ἐς ἄντα ἰδεῖν ἠδὲ προτιμυθήσασθαι.
> Τὸν καὶ παπταίνοντες ἐθάμβεον αὐτοὶ ἑταῖροι
> λαμπόμενον χαρίτεσσιν·
>
> (3.919–25)
>
> Never was such a hero seen among the men of days long past—
> neither among those born from Zeus himself nor those
> who sprung from the other immortals—
> as Jason on that day after the wife of Zeus made him
> a wonder to speak with and to behold.
> The Argonauts themselves marveled as they saw him
> radiating with grace.

Similarly, Athena enhances Odysseus' physical appearance after he is bathed and puts on the clothes that the "unconquered maiden" (*Od.* 6.228) provided:

> τὸν μὲν Ἀθηναίη θῆκεν Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα
> μείζονά τ' εἰσιδέειν καὶ πάσσονα, κὰδ δὲ κάρητος
> οὐλας ἧκε κόμας, ὑακινθίνῳ ἄνθει ὁμοίας.
> ὡς δ' ὅτε τις χρυσὸν περιχεύεται ἀργύρῳ ἀνὴρ
> ἴδρις, ὃν Ἥφαιστος δέδαεν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
> τέχνην παντοίην, χαρίεντα δὲ ἔργα τελείει,
> ὣς ἄρα τῷ κατέχευε χάριν κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ὤμοις.
>
> (*Od.* 6.229–35)

[45] On the dual nature of Medea in the *Argonautica*, cf. Belloni 1981; Newlands in this volume discusses this feature of the myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the past, scholars have focused on the inconsistency between the young girl one finds in book 3 and the witch in book 4: e.g., Wilamowitz 1924.2:213–14; L. Klein 1931:231–33; Otis 1964:61–96; and Collard 1975. This negative appraisal of Apollonius' handling of the character of Medea, however, has been successfully countered by others: e.g., Phinney 1967; Valgiglio 1970; Paduano 1972:63–84; Beye 1982:158–61; and, most recently, Hunter 1987.

> Athena, Zeus' daughter, made him
> taller and more robust to behold, and down from his head
> she sent thick locks of hair, similar to hyacinth blossoms.
> Just as when a man rims a silver object with gold—
> the artist whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught
> all kinds of skills—and the completed work is graceful,
> so too the goddess surrounded his head and shoulders with grace.

The result of Odysseus' sudden transformation is immediate. Nausicaa, like Medea, wishes to have the hero as her husband (*Od.* 6.244–45).

Yet, once again, an interesting difference between Nausicaa and Medea emerges from a closer comparison of the wider contexts of these transformations. While there is no possibility that Nausicaa will ever betray her own sense of shame or her family, she never hesitates to speak freely with Odysseus, even when she is moved by his beauty. Medea, on the other hand, though a powerful sorceress, is unable to speak when she sees Jason, described as beautiful yet deadly like the appearance of the star Sirius (3.948–74).[46] Mention of this star recalls the climactic duel between Achilles and Hector in which Priam compared the fire in Achilles' eyes to the destructive Dog Star.[47] The thematic coupling of love and war in the Colchian episode is now fully realized: Jason, the "love-hero," to use Beye's term,[48] is engaged in his own particular kind of contest, that of infatuating and making deals with foreign women. Whereas Nausicaa's incipient love provided Odysseus with the opportunity to return home, where his real contest lay, Medea, just as she imagined in her dream and as their use of the fleece as a marriage bed implies (cf. 4.1141–46), represents Jason's real conquest; she is completely charmed by Jason's beauty and, upon his first request for the drug that will enable him to complete his task, hands it over (3.1012–13). To conquer Medea is to win the fleece, the opposite of the usual folktale motif, which has the young hero perform the contest to win the bride.[49] At this point, Jason has conquered the maiden.

[46] Hunter 1989:*ad* 956–61 aptly notes that the simile, an adaptation of *Il.* 22.25–32, corresponds to the simile in *Od.* 6 in which Odysseus, approaching Nausicaa, was compared to a hungry lion; see above n. 28.

[47] Hunter 1989:*ad* 964–65 notes not only that Apollonius had earlier alluded to this same scene but also that the Iliadic model, the duel between Hector and Achilles, becomes in Apollonius what Hector said it could not be: "an exchange of words between a young man and a girl" (*Il.* 22.126–28).

[48] Beye 1969.

[49] See Thompson 1955:H310–59. Beye 1982:137 refers to this scene as Jason's *aristeia*.

The sequence of allusions to the Phaeacian episode now comes to a climax. Aware that Medea is in love with him, Jason initiates the conversation by addressing her in an obsequious tone (3.974); in this we observe his "heroic" skill in action. Jason's opening words to Medea are a reversal of Odysseus' to Nausicaa.[50] At *Odyssey* 6.149–69, Odysseus expresses *his* awe before the Phaeacian princess, whom he likens to a goddess; Jason, on the other hand, asks Medea not to hold *him* in such awe (3.975–79). The same Argonautic speech contains another significant alteration from its Odyssean model. Jason concludes his first address to Medea with a promise of gratitude:

> Ὣς καὶ σοὶ θεόθεν χάρις ἔσσεται, εἴ κε σαώσεις
> τόσσον ἀριστήων ἀνδρῶν στόλον. ἦ γὰρ ἔοικας
> ἐκ μορφῆς ἀγανῇσιν ἐπητείῃσι κεκάσθαι.
>
> (3.1005–7)
>
> In this way you will earn the thanks of the gods if you save
> so great an expedition of heroic men. For you seem to me,
> to judge from your beauty, to abound in gentle courtesy.

Odysseus in his fairwell to Nausicaa promises something quite different:

> Ναυσικάα θύγατερ μεγαλήτορος Ἀλκινόοιο,
> οὕτω νῦν Ζεὺς θείη, ἐρίγδουπος πόσις Ἥρης,
> οἴκαδέ τ' ἐλθέμεναι καὶ νόστιμον ἦμαρ ἰδέσθαι·
> τῷ κέν τοι καὶ κεῖθε θεῷ ὣς εὐχετοώμην
> αἰεὶ ἤματα πάντα· σὺ γάρ μ' ἐβιώσαο, κούρη.
>
> (*Od.* 8.464–68)
>
> Nausicaa, daughter of great Alcinous,
> May Zeus, the thundering husband of Hera, bring it about that
> I return home and see my day of return.
> Thus, even there I shall pray to you as a god
> for all the days of my life. For you, dear child, saved my life.

Jason says that Medea's kindness saved not him but the whole expedition, and for this she will earn the thanks of the gods.[51] Odysseus, on the other hand, acknowledges that Nausicaa saved him and for this reason he will look upon her as a god. The alteration of the model calls attention to the difference between the archaic and the Hellenistic

[50] Cf. Hunter 1989:*ad* 975.

[51] Jason will repeat this line of thinking at 3.1122–27.

heroes: Odysseus' admiration and praise are directed outward toward Nausicaa, while Jason's panegyric, though expressed to Medea, emanates from his high opinion of himself, his crew, and his expedition. In short, Odysseus sees Nausicaa's assistance as the act *of a god;* Jason solipsistically treats Medea's assistance as an act *for the gods.*

In this context Medea hands the drug over to Jason, completely charmed by his beauty and words. She also instructs him in its use.[52] The instructions (3.1029–51) recall those given by Circe to Odysseus to prepare him for his underworld experience (*Od.* 10.516–40, 11.23–50),[53] and it is at this point that the Circean side of Medea begins to surpass the Nausicaan—once Medea, after finishing her instructions, loses all sense of shame (3.1068, cited above).

The Agreement

Now able to speak her mind more directly, Medea asks Jason to remember her:

> Μνώεο δ', ἤν ἄρα δή ποθ' ὑπότροπος οἴκαδ' ἵκηαι,
> οὔνομα Μηδείης· ὣς δ' αὖτ' ἐγὼ ἀμφὶς ἐόντος
> μνήσομαι[.]
>
> (3.1069–71)
>
> Remember, if ever you make it back home,
> the name of Medea, and so I shall remember you
> when you are far away.

She repeats this request following Jason's reply, this time with a threat:

> ἀλλ' οἷον τύνη μὲν ἐμεῦ, ὅτ' Ἰωλκὸν ἵκηαι,
> μνώεο, σεῖο δ' ἐγὼ καὶ ἐμῶν ἀέκητι τοκήων
> μνήσομαι. Ἔλθοι δ' ἡμιν ἀπόπροθεν ἠέ τις ὄσσα
> ἠέ τις ἄγγελος ὄρνις, ὅτ' ἐκλελάθοιο ἐμεῖο·
> ἦ αὐτήν με ταχεῖαι ὑπὲρ πόντοιο φέροιεν
> ἐνθένδ' εἰς Ἰαωλκὸν ἀναρπάξασαι ἄελλαι,
> ὄφρα σ' ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἐλεγχείας προφέρουσα
> μνήσω ἐμῇ ἰότητι πεφυγμένον. Αἴθε γὰρ εἴην
> ἀπροφάτως τότε σοῖσιν ἐφέστιος ἐν μεγάροισιν.
>
> (3.1109–17)

[52] On the significance of the drug, see Clark 1968.

[53] As has been observed; see Vian and Delage 1980:141 *ad* 1029; Paduano and Fusillo 1986:*ad* 1026–62; Hunter 1989:*ad* 1029–51.

Make sure that you remember me when you return to
Iolcus, and I shall remember you, despite my
parents. But I hope that a rumor might come to me from afar
or some bird carrying a message, should you forget about me;
or better, that raging storm winds carry me in person
over the sea from here to Iolcus
so that I might reproach you face to face
and remind you that you escaped thanks to me. If only I might show up
unexpectedly at that time before the hearth in your palace.

The desire to be remembered is modeled on Nausicaa's similar request of Odysseus:

Χαῖρε, ξεῖν', ἵνα καί ποτ' ἐὼν ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ
μνήσῃ ἐμεῦ, ὅτι μοι πρώτῃ ζωάγρι' ὀφέλλεις.

(*Od.* 8.461–62)

Farewell, dear guest, and may you remember me once you are in
your native land,
and that you owe me first the thanks for saving your life.

Nausicaa never acted in a way that compromised her shame, interior or exterior, and her integrity remains intact. Medea, on the other hand, no longer has any shame to lose; she has indeed given her soul to Jason together with the drug (3.1015–16). Thus, if Jason forgets her and her benefaction, she will have sacrificed herself—her soul, her self-esteem, her standing in her family and community—for nothing.

In response to her first request to be remembered, Jason, like Odysseus, swears that he will not forget his helper's benefaction (cf. *Od.* 6.464–68, quoted above):

Καὶ λίην οὐ νύκτας ὀίομαι οὐδέ ποτ' ἦμαρ·
σεῦ ἐπιλήσεσθαι, προφυγὼν μόρον, εἰ ἐτεόν γε
φεύξομαι ἀσκηθὴς ἐς Ἀχαιίδα μηδέ τιν' ἄλλον
Αἰήτης προβάλῃσι κακώτερον ἄμμιν ἄεθλον.

(3.1079–82)

I believe full well that I shall never forget you, day or
night, if, escaping death, I actually
make it back to Greece unharmed and Aeëtes does not
impose another contest upon me even worse than this one.

Familiar with the subsequent history of this love story, the reader must wince at the irony of hearing Odysseus' words in Jason's mouth.

Nonetheless, Jason would seem to be sincere, since, as the poet tells us, moved by Medea's tears he too finds himself, temporarily at least, in the grip of love (3.1077–78).[54] He concludes this speech with a wish that Aeëtes might become reconciled to him and enter into a formal friendship, just as Minos did with Theseus (1100–1101), and thus hints at marriage. Medea immediately seizes upon this point and, in making an important contrast between the Greek and Colchian worlds, she unwittingly characterizes both Jason and herself accurately:

Ἑλλάδι που τάδε καλά, συνημοσύνας ἀλεγύνειν·
Αἰήτης δ' οὐ τοῖος ἐν ἀνδράσιν οἷον ἔειπας
Μίνῳ Πασιφάης πόσιν ἔμμεναι, οὐδ' Ἀριάδνῃ
ἰσοῦμαι. Τῶ μή τι φιλοξενίην ἀγόρευε[.]

(3.1105–08)

I suppose this is considered proper behavior in Greece: to honor
contracts.
But Aeëtes is not like Minos, the husband of Pasiphaë,
as you describe him, nor am I like
Ariadne. So don't speak of formal friendship.

From her limited perspective—she does not know the whole story of Theseus' love for Ariadne—Greeks may make and keep contracts among themselves; Aeëtes does not.[55] More significantly, she immediately grasps the import of Jason's wish: he speaks of making formal contracts with foreign peoples. Moreover, he is even about to offer her a deal: if she comes to Greece, he will marry her and love her until they die (3.1120–30). Medea replies by saying that she is no Ariadne. On the surface, her statement merely acknowledges that she will not be allowed to sail away with Jason by Aeëtes, as Minos was said to have allowed Ariadne to do with Theseus. The reader knows, however, that Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus, had to endure her fate passively; Medea will not allow Jason to abandon her both within and beyond the compass of the poem—that is, without a struggle. Medea is no Ariadne.

Following Jason's offer of marriage, Apollonius summarizes the situation succinctly and effectively:

[54] Vian and Delage 1980:36–37 gives a positive reading of Jason's proposal and overall an upbeat interpretation of Jason's "héroïsme et humanité" (32–35); Vian approaches Jason's character similarly, though from a different angle, elsewhere (see 1963, 1978).

[55] As Hunter points out (1989:*ad* 1100–101), the situation that Jason faces with Aeëtes is the reversal of the experience Odysseus had with Alcinous, who wishes to have the Ithacan as his son-in-law before he even knows who he is.

Ὣς φάτο· τῇ δ' ἔντοσθε κατείβετο θυμὸς ἀκουῇ,
ἔμπης δ' ἔργ' ἀίδηλα κατερρίγησεν ἰδεσθαι.
Σχετλίη, οὐ μὲν δηρὸν ἀπαρνήσεσθαι ἔμελλεν
Ἑλλάδα ναιετάειν· ὣς γὰρ τόδε μήδετο Ἥρη,
ὄφρα κακὸν Πελίῃ ἱερὴν ἐς Ἰωλκὸν ἵκηται
Αἰαίη Μήδεια, λιποῦσ' ἄ⟨πο⟩ πατρίδα γαῖαν.

(3.1131–36)

Thus he spoke, and her soul drowned in his words.
Nonetheless she shuddered at the thought of the unexpected that
was yet to come.
Poor woman, she was not going to refuse to live in Greece
for long. For this was Hera's plan:
that, leaving her fatherland, Aeaean Medea
come to holy Iolcus to be the death of Pelias.

While Medea swoons at the offer of a life together with Jason, she is also overcome with anxiety over the possible ramifications of her actions.[56] These lines thus provide a transition between books 3 and 4. In book 3 we have seen the effect that Eros has on the unconquered maiden; in book 4, Apollonius will study the effect that fear exerts on the witch (a topic that lies beyond the scope of this paper). Medea, Apollonius tells us, will make it to Greece so that Hera can have her vengeance on Pelias.

Jason has the last word in this scene and in the cluster of allusions to Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa:

Ὥρη ἀποβλώσκειν, μὴ πρὶν φάος ἠελίοιο
δύῃ ὑποφθάμενον καί τις τὰ ἕκαστα νοήσῃ
ὀθνείων· αὖτις δ' ἀβολήσομεν ἐνθάδ' ἰόντες.

(3.1143–45)

It's time to move along. I fear the gradual approach of
sunset and that some outsider might learn of all our plans.
We shall come back here to meet again.

In the *Odyssey*, it was Nausicaa who worried about being seen with a stranger by the locals (6.273–96).[57] A clever reversal once again reveals just how different the two situations are. In the place of a young girl's concern for her honor, Apollonius sets the hero's fear of compromising his contest. This meeting is after all Jason's real contest: charming the

[56] When we last see Medea in this episode, she is in the same ambiguous state; cf. 3.1149–62.

[57] Cf. Hunter 1989:*ad* 1143–45.

unconquered maiden. After his victory, he returns to his comrades joyously (3.1148); Medea retreats to her room in a state of confusion (1149–62).

The Mephistophelian Nausicaa

Book 3 ends with the successful completion of Jason's heroic contest.[58] Twenty-four hours elapse between the gift of the drug and the contest. During that time, Telamon and Aethalides fetch the dragon's teeth and Jason performs the rites described by Medea. Aeëtes' arming scene, followed by Jason's, suggests that a duel between Aeëtes and Jason will ensue. Moreover, imitations of Iliadic passages throughout the event give Jason's actions an archaic and larger-than-life coloration:[59] Medea's power has temporarily made Jason a hero comparable to the heroes of old, particularly Heracles, as a passing comment regarding the might of Aeëtes implies:

τὸ μὲν οὔ κέ τις ἄλλος ὑπέστη
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων, ὅτε κάλλιπον Ἡρακλῆα
τῆλε παρέξ, ὅ κεν οἷος ἐναντίβιον πτολέμιζε.

(3.1232–34)

Not any other among the heroes
would have resisted him [sc. Aeëtes] ever since they left Heracles
far behind. He alone would have fought him face to face in battle.

Jason proceeds to yoke the bulls, sow the dragon teeth, and destroy the earthborn offspring.[60] Hera's plan and Eros' intervention have been successful. Jason ultimately secures, as Heracles in the course of the epic will do in North Africa (4.1432–49), a golden object that hangs in a tree guarded by a serpent.[61] Although scholars in recent times have correctly observed that Jason falls short of an Achilles or an Odysseus

[58] Although, as Vian and Delage 1980:3 correctly notes, the conclusion of the book puts the spotlight on Jason's ἄεθλος, its execution is largely anticlimactic; just as Medea foresaw in her dream, the contest was going to prove to be very easy (3.624). Such a treatment of what was, in most accounts, the central contest of the expedition (as in the *Naupactica*, frs. 4–5 Davies, and Pindar *Pyth.* 4.220–41) was more than likely unique in its day.

[59] See Hunter 1989:*ad* 1278–407.

[60] That the warriors should be called "earthborn," γηγενέες (3.499 and *passim*), calls to mind the Γηγενέες that were sent by Hera against Heracles on the island of Cyzicus (cf. 1.989–1011).

[61] See Feeney 1987.

with whom he is implicitly compared throughout the poem, we must nevertheless keep in mind that like Heracles, he succeeds. At issue is no longer who the hero of the *Argonautica* is—that much is clear—but rather how this hero operates. And Medea plays a crucial role in the evaluation of Jason's brand of heroism and indeed of heroism in general.

In his first encounter with Medea, Jason prayed that Aeëtes might become reconciled to him and enter into a formal friendship, just as Minos was said to have done with Theseus (3.1100–101). To this Medea replies: "In Hellas, I suppose, it is considered appropriate behavior to honor contracts" (συνημοσύνας, 3.1105). Jason responds by making a promise of marriage, which he reiterates at 4.92–98 and 190–205. As Apollonius had Jason expressly state at Pagasae, the best among them is the one who can handle quarrels and agreements (συνθεσίαι) among foreigners. Medea's consenting to meet with Jason and give him the drug and necessary instructions is called an agreement (συνθεσία, 3.821). Medea refers to Jason's assent to marry her and bring her back to Greece as an agreement (συνθεσίαι, 4.390, 1042; see also Alcinous' agreement to allow Medea to stay with Jason on condition that they were married, 4.1176). Moreover, Jason's bargain with Apsyrtus, Medea's brother, to keep the fleece but hand Medea over to a local king for judgment is likewise called an agreement (συνθεσίαι, 4.340, 378, 404, 437, 453). Thus, Jason's success is due not only to his ability to settle quarrels, a prominent feature of book 1, but especially to his skill at forging agreements, as is evident in books 3 and 4.[62]

Apollonius presents Jason in Colchis as a transmogrified Odysseus who makes his way back home aided by a surrogate Nausicaa. When Odysseus landed on Phaeacia, he was in sore need of help. His divine protector, Athena, intervened to have Nausicaa meet and take an interest in him. She provided instruction as to how to approach her parents, Alcinous and Arete, and this enabled Odysseus to secure safe passage home. Much like—or rather more than—Odysseus, Jason needs help. In fact, the parallels between these two heroes continue beyond book 3 during Jason's return to Iolcus: like Odysseus he too encounters Circe on Aeaea; sails past the Sirens, Scylla, Charybdis, the Planctae, the cattle of the sun; and spends time on the island of the Phaeacians, where he meets Alcinous and Arete.[63] Yet a crucial difference exists between

[62] On book 1, see Clauss 1993:79–85, 198–210. Hunter 1993:63–64 briefly touches on the theme of agreements and their betrayal.

[63] On the relationship between the *Argonautica* and the *Odyssey*, see Meuli 1921; Dufner 1988.

the two heroes: Odysseus forgoes marriage with Nausicaa in order to return to Penelope; Jason continues to need Medea's help, if he is to return home with the Golden Fleece. Medea, then, although presented in such as way as to recall Nausicaa, emerges as a more powerful and indispensable "helper-maiden."

Odysseus was renowned for his adaptability (he is typically described as "clever"—πολύτροπος and πολύμητις) and, although—unlike Jason—assisted at different times by various women and goddesses, nonetheless he possesses the strength and especially the cunning needed to succeed on his own. Jason, on the other hand, is often called ἀμήχανος or ἀμηχαέων—"clueless"—and cannot possibly succeed without the help of others, divine and mortal. Nausicaa helped Odysseus because of her budding interest in him but backed off because he longed to return to his wife; Medea, in contrast, is forced to sail with the Argonauts out of fear, and, try as he may, both in Colchis and on the way back to Greece, Jason cannot shake the helper-maiden from Hell. In short, Apollonius has completely inverted the Odyssean pair of hero and helper-maiden by setting a resourceful (πολυφάρμακος) Nausicaa opposite a helpless (ἀμήχανος) Odysseus.

In the opening of the epic Apollonius described Jason as a man of the people (δημόθεν, 1.7). Despite his moment of glory, Jason is no Heracles, with whom he is implicitly compared in the poem, but is, as a man of the people, all too ordinary.[64] In essence, he is a good-looking young man who attracts women, young (Hypsipyle and Medea) and old (Hera in disguise and Iphias, the aged priestess of Artemis); and, in addition to settling quarrels, he has a knack for making agreements among foreigners. Once the Argonauts lose Heracles, Jason and his men are on their own. Their only avenue of success is to enlist the aid of a helper who can turn a weak and helpless Jason into an invincible Heracles, even if only for a few hours. Jason is the best among the Argonauts precisely because he is the only one physically attractive and diplomatically skillful enough to make a deal with a Mephistophelian Nausicaa. But such deals are soon regretted. Just before their return to Iolcus, Medea reveals the full extent of her power when the Argonauts encounter the bronze man, Talus, on Crete, and Medea casts a spell on him from afar.[65] The poet intervenes with the following comment:

[64] See Clauss 1993:23–25.

[65] Paduano 1970–71 offers a fine analysis of this episode; for a more recent treatment from a different angle, see Dickie 1990.

Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ μέγα δή μοι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θάμβος ἄηται,
εἰ δὴ μὴ νούσοισι τυπῇσί τε μοῦνον ὄλεθρος
ἀντιάει, καὶ δή τις ἀπόπροθεν ἄμμε χαλέπτει.

(4.1673–75)

Father Zeus, my mind is greatly amazed at the thought that death confronts us not only through disease and bloodshed, but even harasses us from afar.

What began as an impossible mission for an ordinary man has in the course of its success turned into a hideous nightmare. Being no Heracles, Jason followed Odysseus' model in seeking the help of a Nausicaa. Being no Odysseus, Jason needed someone more powerful than Nausicaa, and, through the intercession of Hera, he finds, and makes a deal with, a being who does not need a club or spear to destroy her enemies; her malignant thoughts and fiendish prayers are sufficient (4.1659–72). As Jason discovers, the cost of achieving mythical heroism in a postmythic world is an irrevocable deal with a Hecatean power. But what makes Medea's role both so fascinating and chilling is not simply Apollonius' deft handling of the love theme in an epic context, to which the preface of book 3 adverts, but rather the grim ramifications of this love. As the daughter of Aeëtes and priestess of Hecate, Medea possesses the ability to create a Heracles or destroy a man of bronze. Yet she would not have lost her soul, together with her shame, if she had never known such an all-consuming, self-destructive passion. In the world of the *Argonautica*, Eros is a more destructive force than either strength or cunning, and its destructiveness can work on behalf of or even against the object of desire, as Jason will one day learn. Even more unnerving, we learn that as a result of Aphrodite's bribe, Eros, a wanton brat completely lacking in any scruples, now possesses and controls the universe.

Heroes like Heracles are, according to Apollonius, as distant and hard to envisage as the new moon (4.1477–80). For a culture so concerned with realism, it must have been evident that the only way the deeds of a Heracles or Achilles or Odysseus could ever be replicated was through the help of some magical or divine power.[66] In the *Argonautica* Medea plays this role. Seen from this angle, the choice of the Argonautic myth for an Alexandrian epic becomes all the more understandable. The traditional story, especially filtered through the Euripidean

[66] Cf. Valgiglio 1970:328.

lens,[67] gave Apollonius the opportunity to explore the impossibility—or even absurdity—of Heraclean heroism in a postmythic world in which anyone who attempts a heroic contest requires an invincible "helper maiden." In addition to this, in his choice of the Argonautic tale the poet has created an ironic setting for Jason's particular brand of "heroism," which entails the settling of quarrels and forging of agreements with foreigners. At the conclusion of the poem, the reader, left to supply the ending of the Argonautic story, must be aware that the best of the Argonauts will ultimately fail to settle the quarrel he has with Medea over the breaking of his old agreement with her and the forging of a new one with another foreign bride.

As I hope to have shown, Medea's role in the *Argonautica*, book 3 in particular, is that of helper-maiden, not hero. The nature and degree of her assistance to the hero is crucial: helping Jason as she must if he is to succeed, Medea underscores his difference from Odysseus, and hers from Nausicaa, and thus affects how we respond to the epic and its hero. Regarding the helper-maiden herself, Medea's difference from Nausicaa reveals yet another feature of her "otherness" that others in this vo<lume have observed and commented on in various ways. The Phaeacians, despite their physical separation from the Greek world, are—roughly speaking—within that world culturally: they play the same games, worship the same gods, and, when hospitable, honor their guests, like Nestor, Menelaus, and others, with banquets and gifts. Nausicaa's cultural imperatives are likewise the same as those one would expect of a young Greek woman: do the laundry, move about attended by other women, be hospitable, and don't cavort with foreign men. Medea, on the other hand, is portrayed by Apollonius as a manipulative, powerful, and threatening foreign woman who, among other things, does not do laundry. Thus, the systematic imitation of Nausicaa's words and experiences sets Medea's foreignness in relief by placing in the background the icon not merely of a Hellenic woman, but of one who was best known for her virtue and restraint. Thus, as the passionate and terrifying Medea does things that call Nausicaa to mind, the reader becomes more keenly aware of the "other" that is within Medea.

[67] On Medea's portrayal in the *Argonautica* as a "prequel" to Euripides' play, see, e.g., Dyck 1989; Knight 1991. Rosenmeyer 1992, in his penetrating analysis of decision making in the *Argonautica*, offers a strong argument for the influence of lyric deliberation both in Medea's monologues and throughout.

MEDEA

ESSAYS ON MEDEA IN
MYTH, LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY,
AND ART

James J. Clauss and
Sarah Iles Johnston,
Editors

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