

# **“COM MÃOS SE FAZ A PAZ SE FAZ A GUERRA”**

HOMENAGEM A MARIA DO CÉU FIALHO

VOLUME II

CARMEN SOARES  
GIORGIO IERANÒ  
FÁBIO DE SOUZA LESSA  
COORDS.

Esta obra reúne um conjunto de estudos em homenagem a Maria do Céu Fialho, helenista, Professora Catedrática aposentada e Investigadora Integrada do Centro de Estudos Clássicos da Universidade de Coimbra. O eixo estruturante destes dois volumes é a Paz e Guerra. Em torno deste binómio, organizam-se reflexões de especialistas de diferentes domínios científicos: Grécia e Roma Antigas, mas também outras áreas como a História e a Filosofia, a Literatura e os Estudos de Receção, a Religião e a Política. Os contributos incidem sobre temáticas tão diversas como a criação, o amor e a festa, ou a destruição, o poder e a violência. A ambivalência e a complexidade humanas, metonimicamente representadas pelas mãos, atravessam nestas páginas os contextos culturais e históricos do Egito, Grécia e Roma Antigas, até à Época Moderna e à Contemporaneidade.



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CARMEN SOARES  
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# DA NATUREZA À CULTURA

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

**MEDEA IN APOLLONIUS OF RHODES’  
ARGONAUTICA: THE HIDDEN MEANINGS  
OF A NAME AND ITS EPITHETS**

**MEDEIA NA ARGONÁUTICA DE APOLÓNIO DE  
RODES: OS SIGNIFICADOS OCULTOS  
DE UM NOME E DOS SEUS EPÍTETOS**

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**Abstract:** This paper studies Medea’s role in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes by examining her epithets, as well as when and how many times her proper name is mentioned. The use of the Homeric epithets πολυφάρμακος and πολυκέρδης establishes a link with the Apollonius’ narrative which is totally different from what we have in Homer. Regarding the latter epithet, the meaning has undergone a change as a result of the new Hellenistic message. Besides these, another lemma occurs as an epithet, κακόν, when it is used as an appositive for Medea.

These three Greek lemmas allow the reader to follow the character’s deeds from the point when she falls in love until she bewitches Talos. The lemma κακόν also provides information for foreseeing what Medea will become. The poet does not neglect to include

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in his narrative certain mythical signs which make the reader remember what he already knows. In fact, drama turned the unfortunate life of Medea as Jason's wife into a very well-known story. From the meaning of this last epithet, κακόν, comes a compound noun that is a conventional epithet in Homer: ἀνδροφόνος, which is ascribed subtly to Medea and Jason in a critical way.

**Keywords:** Medea's epithets, Skilled in drugs, Skilled in dealing with all kind of situations, Something evil, Men's killer.

**Resumo:** Propõe-se uma análise do papel de Medeia na *Argonáutica* de Apolónio de Rodes a partir dos epítetos, dando importância também aos momentos em que a personagem é mencionada e ao número de vezes em que isso acontece. Os epítetos homéricos πολυφάρμακος e πολυκέρδης que recebe articulam-se com a narrativa de modo diferente do que é habitual em Homero. Aliás, o epíteto πολυκέρδης tem em Apolónio uma aceção distinta, que resulta do enquadramento histórico-político do poema na época ptolemaica. Além destes epítetos, há um lema, κακόν, que tem função idêntica quando usado como aposto de Medeia.

Estes três lemas permitem seguir as ações da personagem desde o momento em que se enamora até que mata o gigante de bronze. O último epíteto recorda ao leitor, conhecedor da história mítica, como Medeia agirá ao chegar à Grécia. O poeta inclui na narrativa informação que evoca aquilo que o leitor já sabe, pois, na verdade, o futuro de Medeia é o seu passado. O teatro tornou a vida desditosa de Medeia como mulher de Jasão uma história bem conhecida. O sentido de κακόν está contido num epíteto homérico convencional: ἀνδροφόνος, que subtil e criticamente é atribuído a Medeia e a Jasão.

**Palavras-chave:** Os epítetos de Medeia, Hável em drogas, Hável em lidar com todo tipo de situações, Algo maligno, Assassino de homens.



It is well known that the name Medea comes from μήδομαι, ‘méditer un projet, preparer, avoir en tête’<sup>1</sup>. However, this does not have any particular import for better understanding Medea as a character in the *Argonautica*, since Apollonius receives the name from the myth he had chosen to tell. We encounter a sort of wordplay with her name at the moment that Argo leaves Aeetes’ palace and orders his brothers to stay there watching the ‘young girl’s plans’, μήδεα κόυρης (3.826)<sup>2</sup>. But what is really striking is how the poet shows the Hellenistic taste for linguistic details by giving attention to the lemmas employed. Apollonius mentions Medea’s name creatively and meaningfully. In this paper I will examine how many times and when the character is mentioned, and what nouns identify her, besides her proper name. Therefore, her epithets will be particularly relevant for the analysis in addition to the number of times the name Medea, or a synonym, appears in the poem<sup>3</sup>.

Before the Argonaut’s arrival in Colchis, the poem does not mention Medea, in spite of Phineus’ prophecies and Argo’s warnings about Aeetes’ behaviour as king. On the Argonauts’ destination the prophet only reveals the presence of the ever-wakeful guardian of the golden fleece and the king’s name (2.403-7)<sup>4</sup>. Later on, Argo, having just been saved from the shipwreck, also says nothing about the Colchian princess, speaking only of the deadly cruelty of Aeetes and the deathless and unsleeping guardian of the fleece (2.1202-13). Only at the beginning of the third book, Medea’s name is uttered in Erato’s invocation. This is when the Argonauts arrive at Colchis. The poet

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<sup>1</sup> Chantraine 1999: 693. In Homer the verb has mostly a bad sense: ‘plan and do cunningly or skilfully’ (LSJ I.2), but after Homer the lemma usually means ‘contrive, invent’ (LSJ I.3).

<sup>2</sup> For Hunter 1989: 185 this way of punning on Medea’s name ‘marks the men’s complete dependence upon the young girl’s μήτις’. The lemma μήτις in the poem also deserves to be studied, but that exceeds the purpose of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> I argued previously on the basis of some lemmas in the *Argonautica* that many words are full of hidden meanings. For the lemma ‘threshold’, οὐδός cf. Sousa 2021.

<sup>4</sup> As Clare 2002: 77 remarks Phineus’ prophecies are, as ‘a tourist handbook, an account of the important sights to be seen along the way to Colchis’.

addresses the Muse to ask for help to tell how Jason brought back the golden fleece ‘under Medea’s love’, Μηδείης ὑπ’ ἔρωτι (3.3)<sup>5</sup>. Her love appears as a protection that led Jason to be successful in his endeavours. Then, we must wait around 240 lines to read the princess’ birth name again. It reappears when Jason enters, for the first time, into Aeetes’ palace. This signifies how the poet leaves out the lemma Μήδεια until she enters into the poem. Meanwhile there is a problem to solve: if Medea is the main theme of the goddesses’ meeting at the beginning at book III, how will the poet refer to her? In fact, he chooses another word, which is not exclusive to the Colchian maiden, but which is quite often used to mention her: κόρη, ‘young girl’<sup>6</sup>.

Medea’s proper noun appears fourteen times in each of the two last books of the *Argonautica*<sup>7</sup>. The number is nearly the same with Jason’s birth name: fourteen occasions in book IV and thirteen in book III<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Hunter 1989: 96 notes the three long syllables in the beginning of the verse as an announcement of the entry of a major character and a new story.

<sup>6</sup> This lemma, which can also be translated as ‘daughter’, identifies Medea twenty-one times in book III (3.27, 153, 286, 444, 471, 477, 528, 616, 626, 671, 733, 760, 814, 826, 886, 940, 978, 1025, 1077, 1168, 1305) and twenty-six times in book IV (4.1, 20, 40, 72, 114, 145, 163, 188, 193, 231, 248, 350, 368, 465, 493, 689, 725, 732, 814, 1011, 1070, 1077, 1099, 1116, 1130, 1177). This number is very close to the number of times that Jason’s patronymic, Αἰσονίδης, appears: twenty-six in book III (3.58, 60, 86, 169, 194, 282, 288, 318, 385, 475, 491, 509, 542, 574, 752, 913, 941, 961, 973, 1017, 1142, 1163, 1214, 1221, 1262, 1278) and twenty-three in book IV (4.73, 92, 114, 149, 187, 253, 355, 427, 464, 477, 530, 688, 785, 1012, 1087, 1116, 1162, 1313, 1528, 1593, 1664, 1747, 1755). In the four books the patronymic makes a total of seventy-two occurrences. The definite article provides another way to mention Medea or Jason.

<sup>7</sup> 3.3, 248, 284, 451, 611, 664, 710, 751, 948, 1070, 1136, 1246, 1364; 4.213, 243, 345, 449, 815, 1004, 1154, 1164, 1219, 1222, 1521, 1653, 1677, 1722. In 4.814 the proper noun goes with the lemma κόρη. This forecasts Medea’s status as Achilles’ wife in the underworld. Hera speaks to Thetis to convince her to help. Medea’s future after her departure from her homeland is always linked to Thetis.

<sup>8</sup> 3.2, 28, 66, 143, 357, 439, 474, 566, 922, 1147, 1194, 1246, 1363; 4. 63, 79, 107, 165, 170, 352, 393, 454, 489, 1083, 1122, 1152, 1331, 1701. The proper noun of Medea together with the patronymic occurs only once to express her torment in loving Aeson’s son (3.751-2). The lemma κόρη together with Ἰάσων also occurs once in Hera’s plotting speech (3.27). The combination between the lemmas κόρη and Αἰσονίδης is the most common and it occurs six times in book IV (4.73, 114, 465, 689, 1011, 1116) and once in book III (3.941). The close double mention of Medea’s and Jason’s names, besides appearing in Erato’s invocation (3.2-3), appears at the fire-breathing bulls’ task, when Jason is instructed by Medea (3.1246; 1364-5).

We can thus conclude that the poet is giving an equal prominence to female and male by matching these numbers<sup>9</sup>.

Besides this reading, what further information on Medea does the reader receive through the lemmas applied to her? Although epithets to qualify characters in Apollonius' epic poem are less varied and less frequent than in the Homeric epics, Medea receives two very expressive ones. They are confined to her alone and they are both semantically rich, for they are compound nouns: πολυφάρμακος (3.27; 4.1677)<sup>10</sup> and πολυκερδής (3.1364)<sup>11</sup>. In both cases the first element is the adjective πολὺς, 'many', and the second is φάρμακον, 'drug', and κέρδος, 'profit', respectively. These epithets with πολυ- are very common in the Homeric poems<sup>12</sup>. In the *Argonautica* there are other compound epithets with πολυ-, such as the Homeric πολύμητις, 'of many counsels',

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<sup>9</sup> I strongly reject the idea that Jason is a hero overthrown by Medea, as Fialho 2013: 148 notes. The unheroic behaviour of Jason has been much discussed. For example, Hunter 1988: 451 defends that Jason plays a secondary role once the fleece has been attained. Yet, on reaching the boat, Jason prevents his companions from touching the fleece and seats the princess in the stern decisively (4.187-189). He also manages to stop the crew at Circe's door and shows confidence and determination with Medea, who trembles with fear (4.688-689, 750-752). Countless situations prove that Jason is attentive, ready to react, and takes precedence over others whenever it is necessary. This shows how he maintains a fixed position as the Argonauts' leader after Medea's appearance. The point is that Medea has a place to conquer among these Greek men, in the Greek world. She has to emerge as an equal of Jason, and the homeward journey offers her that opportunity. On the controversial issue of Jason's heroism, cf. Mori 2008: 83 who also gives a concise and clear perspective on the matter.

<sup>10</sup> Apollonius had rejected Pindar's *bapax*, παμφάρμακος (*P.* 4.233), but he makes a choice very close to this one semantically: the first element in Pindar's epithet is παν-, from πᾶς 'all', while for Apollonius is πολυ-, 'many'. The Hellenistic poet chooses the Homeric source as expected.

<sup>11</sup> Jason receives two epithets like Medea: ἀρήιος, 'warlike' (1.349; 2.122), and ἥρως, 'hero' (3.509; 4.477, 784, 1161, 1527). On ἀρήιος cf. Beye, 1982: 31 e 82-83. Both Jason's epithets are Homeric; for ἀρήιος cf. e.g. *Il.* 2.698, 708; 3.339; 4.98; for ἥρως cf. *Il.* 1.102; 2.708, 844; 4.200. They are less meaningful than the two given to Medea, for they are shared with other Argonauts (1.548, 1000).

<sup>12</sup> Odysseus, for example, is πολύτροπος, 'wily' (*Od.* 1.1; 10.330), πολύμητις, 'artful' (e.g. *Il.* 1.311, 440; 3.200, 216, 268; *Od.* 2.173; 4.763; 5.214; 7.207); πολύαινος, 'much praised' (e.g. *Il.* 10.544; *Od.* 12.184); πολυμήχανος, 'resourceful' (e.g. *Il.* 2.173; 4.358; 8.93; *Od.* 5.203; 10.401); πολύτλας, 'much-enduring' (*Il.* 10.248; *Od.* 5.354; 6.1, 249). Garvie 1994: 81 comments on this last epithet that it belongs to the semantic field which describes Odysseus' endurance and daring.

Hephaestus' attribute (1.851)<sup>13</sup>; the Homeric πολύρρηγες, 'rich in lambs', Tibareni's privilege (2.377)<sup>14</sup>; the Homeric *hapax* πολυλήϊοι, 'with many cornfields', an epithet that qualifies two brothers, the sons of Hermes (1.51), and Haemonia's people (2.507)<sup>15</sup>; the Homeric πολυπότνια, 'much venerable', an epithet assigned to Arete (4.1069) and two goddesses (1.1125, 1151)<sup>16</sup>; and the Apollonius' *hapax* πολυφράδμων, 'very eloquent', which is given to Glaucus (1.1311)<sup>17</sup>.

Let us return to Medea's epithets. The first one, πολυφάρμακος, 'skilled in drugs', occurs twice in Homer: in *Iliad* 16.28 it qualifies the physicians and in *Odyssey* 10.276 it describes Circe<sup>18</sup>. Like physicians, Medea is familiar with herbs, but she mixes them more as a sorceress like her aunt, Circe, since she does not heal or help one's recovery from illness<sup>19</sup>. But she does not kill any human being in the poem specifically through them, as she will do – in a future both unknown and known – in Euripides' *Medea*<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Hephaistos receives the Homeric epithet πολύμητις, 'of many counsels', which is also assigned to this particular god in *Iliad* 21.355.

<sup>14</sup> The lemma πολύρρηγες describes the seven cities promised by Agamemnon to Achilles (*Il.* 9.154, 296) and once belongs to Pelias (*Od.* 11.257).

<sup>15</sup> In Apollonius' poem this lemma is also used to describe a country (1.937; 2.580; 4.267). In the Homeric poems it qualifies a warrior defeated by Ajax, who died helping Priam (*Il.* 5.613).

<sup>16</sup> We find the epithet πολυπότνια in *b. Cer.* 211 and later in *Ar Th.* 1156.

<sup>17</sup> After Apollonius the only other occurrence, so far as we can know, appears in Opp. *H.* 4.28 referring to Aphrodite.

<sup>18</sup> Knight 1995: 181 studied the use of Circean epithets by Apollonius and concluded that πολυφάρμακος comes from the Homeric character, as well as δολόεσσα (3.89) and πότνια θηρῶν (3.876-84). There are no doubts about the Homeric inheritance for the compound noun, but the last expression does not occur in the *Argonautica*. Knight deduces it from the simile linking Medea to Artemis. Regarding the previous one, δολόεσσα, it is the predicative complement (or subject complement) of τέτυκται, used as a copulative verb (or linking verb) and so not properly speaking an epithet. Hesiod also uses πολυφάρμακος to qualify Circe (fr. 302.15).

<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, several authors underline Apollonius' tendency to present Medea's magical skills in terms of advanced knowledge in pharmacology rather than sorcery; cf. Gey 2001: 15.

<sup>20</sup> Apsyrtus' death comes directly from Jason's stroke, although Medea plans and assists him during the murder and she is even stained with her brother's blood. Authors have discussed whether the stain is accidental or not. For Fränkel 1968: 498, Beye 1982: 164 and Hutchinson 1988: 127 the act is on purpose; for Bremer: 425 and Byre: 14, n. 36 'both the staining and the being stained' are accidental. With her stain

The other compound word, πολυκερδής, is a lemma uncommon in Greek literature, with only one usage before Apollonius, to describe Odysseus' mind (*Od.* 13.255). It is usually translated as 'very crafty', or a similar expression. But if we look at the adjective κερδαλέος, in the *Argonautica*, I have to propose a more accurate meaning for Medea's epithet πολυκερδής. The lemma κερδαλέος occurs once to describe Jason's speech (3.426) after Aeetes had defied him to show his μένος and his ἀλκή (3.407)<sup>21</sup>. The king imposes upon him the labour of the fire-breathing bulls and the young man responds with such hardship that he is instantly speechless and at a loss of what to do. Still, he faces the situation without replying. He accepts it, although he thinks that he is going to die. He even recognizes Aeetes' right to act with such cruelty. Therefore, a κερδαλέος speech is not a deceitful one, as it was Odysseus' answer to Athena, but it is a convenient reaction<sup>22</sup>. Jason responds to avoid war and to give himself time to think, probably with the Argonauts' help<sup>23</sup>. While in the *Odyssey* πολυκερδής takes the reader into the treacherous world of Odysseus for he is lying to the goddess, in the *Argonautica* it describes a different way to deal with difficult situations. Moreover, while Odysseus tells a lot of untrue stories, Jason never lies<sup>24</sup>, while Medea lies only once and, even then,

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her guilt becomes clear, and as Mori 2008: 217 says this involvement 'is the most problematic aspect of the murder'; cf. Sousa 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Sousa 2023.

<sup>22</sup> In the Homeric poems, the lemma κερδαλέος has different semantic uses, emphasising usefulness, profit, wit and convenience. As an attribute of βουλή it comprises the semantic field of usefulness (*Il.* 10.44). As a man's characteristic, it seems to indicate someone with whom one can make good money (*Od.* 15.451) or someone ποικιλομήτης, 'full of various wiles' (*Od.* 13.291). As the attribute of the mind, it can indicate a person who conceals certain thoughts (*Od.* 8.548). In speech it means an opportune discourse, as in Apollonius' (*Od.* 6.148). On the lemma κερδαλέος in Apollonius' poem, cf. Sousa 2022.

<sup>23</sup> The group always hears what each one has to say and Jason finds it crucial to listen to all; cf. Sousa 2022. This democratic attitude presupposes the appreciation of concord, which several authors envision as one of the most important supports of the new heroic world; cf., e.g., Mori 2005: 227-8. Cilleruelo 2010: 233 emphasizes the awareness of the community and democratic spirit and gives to Jason the role of 'un auténtico valedor de la homónoia argonáutica'.

<sup>24</sup> I have presented a paper entitled "Mentir ou reconfigurar a verdade na Argonáutica de Apolónio de Rodas", in which I have commented on Herakles' loss (SBEC XXIII Conference, 2021). This paper has not yet been published.

she reinforces her cunning speech with magic, scattering spells so powerful that wild animals could have been drawn to come down from the mountains. She is not a πολύμητις character in the way Odysseus is, but she is a πολυφάρμακος character, which means that she uses her herbs' knowledge to serve her versatility. Her knowledge allows others or herself to face uncommon obstacles, such as the fire-breathing bulls, the unsleeping beast that guards the fleece, the iron giant of Crete. But she does not yet operate in the field of deception. The only time she lies, in the poem, she does not create an intricate story as Odysseus tends to do. Rather, she says to her brother that she was planning to steal the fleece and wanted to return to her family and explained her situation for having been compelled to travel with the Argonauts by Phrixus' sons (4.438-441).

We may say that Medea has a very clear perception of what must be done, as does Jason, who does not deny Aeetes' labours, although he risks death by accepting them. When Medea decides to help Jason with the fire-breathing bulls and the earth-born men she reveals herself as capable of reacting appropriately to dangerous situations. It is undeniable that she considers suicide when weighing whether to leave Jason to his fate or help him, thus betraying her father<sup>25</sup>. But Medea's confusion can only end as it does, thanks to her πολυκερδής ability. The unexpected love is a problem, but it is also a promise of a new life; it is an adventure about to happen. Touched by love as she is, albeit a puppet for the gods, she has to accept her fate, just like Jason had accepted the labours. Further, she will reveal again her ability to manage situations when she asks for the help of all the Argonauts and Arete, at the moment when some Colchians arrive at Drepane to claim her. But Medea's restitution will not happen. She is instructed by Arete's herald that all she has to do is to marry Jason on that same night. She accepts the idea, although

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<sup>25</sup> The comparative κέρδιον appears when Medea concludes that it will be advantageous for her to put an end to her life (3.798). On these interior monologues, cf. Fusillo 2001.

she could not be received in the bridegroom's house as in a proper Greek wedding. In fact, they both accept this furtive wedding in a cave by night, in spite of all their dreams. So, she deals in the best way with this situation, just like Jason. In this way, the lemma πολυκερδής describes Medea's ability to deal successfully with issues, taking them in her stride.

The epithets πολυφάρμακος and πολυκερδής allow the reader to follow Medea's path in the poem. The lemma πολυφάρμακος is said for the first time by Hera when she speaks about the advantage of joining the Colchian princess on the voyage for the fleece. The goddess does not utter her name, for that aspect is unimportant. However, she qualifies her as a girl skilled in drugs, since it was for this reason that Hera had chosen her. Her skill is what it matters, not her birth name.

If we summarize Medea's role in the poem, we can see more clearly the connection between her πολυφάρμακος skill and the deeds she performs. Before the Argonauts' arrival, she is a young priestess of Hecate, who spends more time in the goddess' temple than in the palace (3.250-2). Conversely, after the Argonauts' arrival at the palace and Eros' arrow shooting, she becomes a girl madly in love with Jason, struggling against feelings (3.283-ss.). After that, she is an indirect helper in the tasks imposed by her father upon Jason and in putting the unsleeping beast to sleep (3.1026-ss). Once at sea, when the first rescue expedition sent by her father arrives to claim her, she becomes an organiser and abettor of crime, plotting and helping in her brother's murder (4.349-491). Then, when the second rescue expedition arrives at Drepane, she becomes a Greek lady by marrying Jason (4.982-1169). Finally, in her last exploit, Talos' death, she reveals herself to be a specialist in drugs (4.1620-1688)<sup>26</sup>. Her skilfulness in drugs is thus revealed each time she helps, for all she puts into practice require that kind of knowledge. The lemma πολυφάρμακος has its second, and final occurrence in Talos' bewitchment,

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<sup>26</sup> Dickie 1990 studied the integration of pre-Socratic science in this episode.

in which it appears together with her name, because there are no more exploits performed by Medea after that. For this reason, this is also the moment to mention both her name and her chief ability<sup>27</sup>.

On the other hand, if the lemma πολυκερδής describes Medea's ability to deal well with problems, why is her πολυκερδής skill mentioned only once? In fact, it is stated at the moment that Jason sees the earthborn men shooting up from earth like corn. Thus, it occurs precisely when, for the first time, we see in practice what this πολυκερδής ability actually means. It is important to mention her πολυκερδής talent in its first appearance, because here begins the moments when the Argonauts are going to feel Medea's true power. This ability is mentioned together with Medea's birth name to underline that it is exclusive to her. Her next moves will prove it: her emotionless attitude in front of the guardian's fleece, her murderous plan, her resignation to marry and her audacity against Talos<sup>28</sup>. In this way we can see how Apollonius creates a link between Medea's epithets and the narrative contents, which marks a notable difference from Homer<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> After this verse, we read Medea's name just once more in a context in which it could easily be replaceable. In 4.1722 the proper noun is used to mark the person to whom the servants belong, at the moment when they were laughing at the Argonauts' water libations. This passage echoes the one in the *Odyssey* when Odysseus' men were using water instead of wine in their sacrifices after the impious killing of the sacred cattle; cf. Hunter 2015: 310. It is superfluous to mention Medea's proper noun, because the servants' attitude is not shared by the Colchian girl. There is no reason to think that Medea was also making fun of the men. Therefore, the only reason to quote her name here would be to match the number of times Jason and Medea's names appear in this book: both fourteen times.

<sup>28</sup> The heroes were already thinking in moving away from Crete (4.1651-3).

<sup>29</sup> For Vivante 1980: 160 Homeric epithets do not link to narrative. Indeed, Odysseus proves his craftiness constantly, but generally it does not matter to the point of the story that the skill is mentioned. Even so we cannot deny the appropriateness of some of the epithets' choices, as Rutherford 2019: 129 highlights on the use of ἀνδροφόνος in *Iliad* 18.149. In fact, this epithet is very accurately chosen in that context, although it could be metrically replaceable for another one also given to Hector, ἱππόδαμος (e.g. *Il.* 7.38; 16.717; 22.261). Therefore, the epithet can have a meaningful force in Homer, but only occasionally, since it does not come from a literary design as in the *Argonautica*.



There is another lemma which appears twice as an epithet for Medea in a time to come, an apparently basic and simple word that predicts what this woman will become after the ship's arrival in Greece: κακόν (3.1135; 4.242). It is rare in Homer to emphasize men's faults with epithets, although compound lemmas with κακο- can be used in vituperations between heroes<sup>30</sup>. Without explaining why, Apollonius says suddenly in two final clauses that Hera had arranged Medea's landing in Greece as something harmful, κακόν, to Pelias<sup>31</sup>. Why name Pelias' ill fate, if the episode is left out from the poem? Perhaps because it is a way to close the theme of the quest, for it was imposed upon Jason by Pelias precisely. The poet notes it as a prediction, but the reader already knows what caused Pelias to suffer. In this manner Apollonius brings Medea's myth into the poem.

Moreover, it is important to remark that the use of the adjective κακός as a noun, besides identifying in the poem a fear or a misfortune<sup>32</sup>, appears for the first time as a kind of human characteristic in a vocative addressed to Eros. Aphrodite, Eros' mother, begins her plead by scolding him for being an 'unspeakable rascal', ἄφατον κακόν (3.129). This expression precedes the forewarning of what Medea will be after landing in Greece. Thus, the lemma also allows the reader to see Medea as an embodiment of Eros.

Having established a narrative connection for the two previous epithets of Medea, we can ask what is the narrative link this time. In fact, Pelias' misfortune is an episode of Medea's myth that the epic poem does not include. In both contexts it is mentioned as an observation by the poet: the first on the occasion of the meeting of

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<sup>30</sup> E.g. *Il.* 23.483 (κακοφραδής); *Od.* 16.418 (κακομήχανος).

<sup>31</sup> Both passages have the ethnonym Αἰαίη linked to Medea, which is a way to emphasise on her foreignness: 'when she comes to Greece, she will bring barbarian horror with her' (Hunter 1989: 223). Besides, it evokes very appropriately the exclamation αἰαῖ; cf. Hunter 2015: 115. The idea seems to come from Pherecydes' summary of the story: Ταῦτα δὲ τῷ Ἰήσονι Ἥρη ἐξ νόον βάλλει, ὥς ἔλθοι ἡ Μήδεια τῷ Πελῖᾳ κακόν (fr. 60). But Pindar also mentions her as Pelias' killer in *P.* 4.250.

<sup>32</sup> Cleite's suicide (1.1063), Phineus' curse (2.222), the heroes journey's outcome (3.637), Jason's death (3.784).

Medea and Jason in the temple, where she gives him the magical oils, and the second as soon as Medea sails with the Argonauts, when a gentle breeze is blowing. Therefore, we can conclude that the lemma as an epithet occurs first when the erotic strategy begins and later when the dice are already cast. But why does the story display Medea as a calamity for someone in particular? Could it be only a kind of prophecy of what is to come? Between 3.1135 and 4.242 the lemma explains the help she gives to Jason: she is wondering why had she done what she did, feeling that her act was infamous (3.1162)<sup>33</sup>. At that moment, it is clear to Medea that she had the audacity to do something really harmful as a Colchian princess. She had no doubts that her life will never be the same. If we link this epithet to the narrative, we may say that between the first κακόν and the second, the bad event is an idea which is still vague. It is only a certainty that bad things will come about. At this point of the story, the harm Medea feels that she had done does not affect others, but only herself. Although the poem does not spell this out, it is possible to see omens of what will be her unfortunate life as Jason's wife<sup>34</sup>. Yet, for the time being Medea just feels that her life is going to change drastically and not for the better. So, the first κακόν does not forge a connection with the ensuing story. The second κακόν is another matter. For, after helping with the unsleeping beast Medea plans her brother's death to avoid returning her parents' home. In this she reveals herself to be a doom to Apsyrtus. In this episode the reader can foresee what she will become as Jason's wife. To make her portrayal as a future lethal woman more dramatic, the poet also

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<sup>33</sup> For Hunter 1989: 224 this 'verse conveys fear and bewilderment'.

<sup>34</sup> On Jason's first meeting with Medea, he speaks of Ariadne's help to Theseus, opportunely omitting her abandonment. This can be interpreted to the reader as a forewarning of his future disloyalty to her. However, he does not say a word about it; cf. Hunter 1993: 14, 51, Mori 2008: 190. For a list of different points of view of this allusion, cf. Clare 2002: 280, n. 59.

invokes Zeus, completely stupefied and afraid, in her last deed, Talos' death (4.1673-5)<sup>35</sup>

If we wish to link Medea's three epithets with one another, we may say that her skill in drugs provides her with plentiful resources to be able to foresee what will be the best move (it enriches the possibilities of action). Further, to be both skilled in drugs and able to take action expediently turns her into a real κακόν to others.

To summarize, the ideas expressed through Medea's epithets materialise throughout the story's narration and accordingly follow the chronological sequence of the myth. To begin with, Medea as Hecate's priestess is πολυφάρμακος, a role which she retains when the Argonauts arrived at Colchis (it is for this reason that Hera decided to use her). Then, Medea's as Jason's helper, crime planner, accomplice, and defeater of beasts (first the fleece's guardian and next the bronze giant) is a πολυφάρμακος girl who shows her πολυκερδής skill. This last ability is mentioned when the reader sees its result and the next events will provide evidence of it. Medea's actions are announced and closed with the mention of her as πολυφάρμακος. The idea of being a κακόν has to do more with the myth than the epic story, for it conveys to the reader her unfortunate fate as Jason's wife and the misfortunes she will provoke upon others. The poet also highlights the future events of the myth, since it is well known what effects will follow.

Last but not least, κακόν as an epithet in Apollonius evokes the epic epithet ἀνδροφόνος, 'men's killer', which is mostly associated with Hector<sup>36</sup>. Although this compound noun is not used as an

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<sup>35</sup> For Fränkel 1968: 615-6 the reader feels for the first time in this episode Medea as a threat for human race. However, Medea's dangerousness for mortals has already been expressed in the poem through the κακόν epithet.

<sup>36</sup> Hector can be described by the Achaeans as ἀνδροφόνος in the enemy's eyes (*Il.* 1.242; 9.351; 16.77, 840; 17.638) as much as by the poet (*Il.* 6.498; 17.428, 616; 18.149; 24.509), for the epithet emphasizes the 'threat he poses to the Achaeans ... or on the Trojans' loss when he dies' (Graziosi, Haubold 2010: 224) or, I would add, the incredibly slaughter that Hector is capable of committing. In fact, to be a men's killer is a praiseworthy trait in the Homeric world, where the hero has to perform

epithet in the *Argonautica*, it qualifies Medea indirectly, together with Jason, when they go looking for Circe to be purified (4.701). Apollonius thus revises the old epic world by presenting through Medea men's killing as an evil deed, κακόν<sup>37</sup>. In contrast, in the new epic world heroes must be extraordinary men not in war but in diplomacy, whereas to be a killer of men is an infamous behaviour (the Argonauts almost lose their lives after Apsyrtus' murder), a strategy that must be completely cut out, even if the Ptolemaic dynasty seemed to be specially found of it<sup>38</sup>.

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warlike deeds. But the epithet in Homer can also depict unsuitable conduct, as for example when Lycurgus is attacking an immortal god (*Il.* 6.134).

<sup>37</sup> If Homer is crucial for understanding the review that the poet is suggesting of the old epic world, there are two other literary contexts that could have inspired Apollonius to make a subtle link between Medea and the ἀνδροφόνος attitude, because in them both the lemma, although in plural, describes female behaviour. Tradition provides that the motif of gender reversal was very convenient to the Hellenistic poet. Pindar in *P.* 4.252 employs the compound noun to illustrate the Lemnian women's slaughter of their husbands and sons, just two lines after speaking of Pelias's murder by Medea, while Polimestor in *E. Hec.* 1061 describes as ἀνδροφόνους the Trojan women, who had just killed his children. On the legal aspect of this word in 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Athens cf. Battezzato 2018: 224.

<sup>38</sup> From Arsinoe's first wedding with Lysimachus up to her third marriage with her sibling, Ptolemy Philadelphus, several politically strategic murders had occurred. Of these, some benefited the Ptolemaic Dynasty, while others jeopardized it: an example of the first kind is Agathocles, Lysimachus' son, whose death had been profitable for the house of the Ptolemies, while an example of the second is the murder of the two youngest sons of Arsinoe II, with which Ptolemy Keraunos wanted to dispel any threat in the line of succession. These were crimes perpetrated in the family bosom. But there were others that transgressed inviolable values, such as the rebellion of Ptolemy Keraunos against Seleucus, his host, and his subsequent death.

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