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MEDEA'S PASSION AND RHETORIC: TWO NOTES ON P.OXY. 5428

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## MEDEA'S PASSION AND RHETORIC: TWO NOTES ON P.OXY. 5428

These two notes attempt to strengthen the case for the adoption of two new readings that the recent publication of P.Oxy. 5428 (Benaissa, Slattery, and Henry 2019), containing lines 1020–50 of Book 4 of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, has brought to light.

## The First Reading

Jason and the Argonauts, along with Medea, have reached Drepane (Scherie) and the court of Alcinoos and Arete. The other band of pursuing Colchians<sup>1</sup> arrives and demands that Medea should be surrendered to them, so that they can take her back to Aietes. She throws herself first on the mercy of Arete and then she makes an impassioned plea to each of the Argonauts:

### 1. The Text

1025 κυγερον δέ με τάρβος ἐπεικεν  
 τηδε φυγῆς μνήσασθαι, ὅτ' ἥλιτον, οὐδέ τις ἄλλη  
 μητις ἔην. ἔτι μοι μήτηρ μένει, ὥς ἐνὶ πατρός  
 δώμασιν, ἄγραντος καὶ ἀκήρατος ...

... στρυγερὴ δὲ cὺν ὀθνείοις ἀλάλημαι.  
 δείξατε συνθεσίας τε καὶ ὄρκια, δείξατ' Ἐρινύν  
 1043 Ἰκετὴν νέμεσίν τε θεῶν, εἰς χεῖρας ἰοῦσαν  
 Αἰήτεω λῶβῃ πολυπήμονι δηῖωθῆναι.

Horrible fear persuaded me to think of this escape, once I went wrong and had no other recourse. The belt of my virginity remains just as it was in my father's house, undefiled and untouched ... I wander with strangers. Beware your agreements and oaths, beware the Fury of suppliants and the resentment of the gods, if I fall into Aietes' hands and am put to death with horrible suffering.

Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.1022–25, 1041–44

## 2. The Papyrus

τυγ]ερον [δε με τάρβος επει]ς[ε]  
 μνη]αζῶθαι οτ' ἡλι[τον ουδε τις άλλη]  
 εη]ν ἐ[τι μ]οι μητρὴ μένει ω[ς] εν[ι  
 ] σ̣ άχραν[το]ς και ακηρατος

... ἔτυ[γ]ερη δὲ θὺν ὀθνειοις ἀλάλημαι  
 ἔυν[θε]ϊας τε καὶ ὀρκια· δεισατ Ἐρινυν  
 Ἰνέμεϊν τε θεῶν· ἐς χεῖρας [ἀλ']ουσαν  
 Ἰλῶβηι πολυπημονι δηῖῶθηναι·

P.Oxy. 5428 offers a possible new reading in 1025 (Benaissa, Slattery, and Henry 2019, 114): Instead of δόμασιν (unnecessary with ἐνὶ πατρός, cf. 4.1004 ἐοῦ ἐς πατρός ἄγεσθαι<sup>2</sup>) the papyrus seems to show the remains of a lunate sigma (C), suggesting perhaps παρθεν[oc]. *Pace* the *editio princeps*: “the specifi-

<sup>1</sup> The Colchian pursuit divides into two bands (cf. *Arg.* 4.303–4). One group chases the Argonauts across Europe, along the River Istros (Danube). This group, taking the route through the Dark Rocks, are not seen again until they appear here in Drepane.

<sup>2</sup> Noted by *ed. princeps ad loc.*; cf. also *Arg.* 4.1079.

cation 'maidenly' is not needed", the close parallel (not mentioned *ibid.*), Moschus, *Europa* 72–3 οὐ μὲν δηρὸν ἔμελλεν ... ἢ οὐδ' ἄρα παρθενίην μίτρην ἄχραντον ἔρυθαι, 'not for long was she to ... or keep her virgin girdle undefiled' seems to offer strong support for the new reading. For παρθένος used as an adjective add to LSJ s.v. ΑΠ (in addition to Eur. *Hipp.* 1006 παρθένον ψυχὴν ἔχων, *Epigr. Gr.* 319.3 = Kaibel p. 122) Eur. *Heracl.* 783 ὑπὸ παρθένων ἰαχεῖ ποδῶν κρότοις, *Ion* 270 ἐς παρθένους γε χεῖρας, *Phoen.* 838 παρθένῳ χερσί. Moschus' imitation of Apollonius seems to be a reversal of Medea's words.<sup>3</sup> She has, so far, preserved her virginity, while Europa is about to lose hers. Two very different heroines! The use of παρθένος, if accepted, in the emphatic first position in the line, rather than the unnecessary δώμασιν (n. 1 above) would be very much in keeping with Apollonius' use of enjambment. "Necessary enjambment", that is when syntax forbids any strong break at the end of a verse, is a feature of nearly one half of the *Argonautica*, whereas the Homeric figure is around 30%" (Hunter 2015, 26). It would be rare indeed, in a speech so full of rhetoric, for Apollonius not to use this stylistic feature to make an emphatic point.<sup>4</sup> The case for accepting παρθένος may be further strengthened by comparing similarly phrased *Arg.* 2.501–2 εὖαδε γάρ οἱ ἢ παρθενίη καὶ λέκτρον ἀκήρατον.<sup>5</sup>

There is also perhaps a link with *Arg.* 4.1298–9 ἔκτοθι ἢ πέτρης χηραμοῦ, 'from a hollow rock', which is based on *Il.* 21.494–5 κοίλῃν εἰσέπτατο πέτρην ἢ χηραμόν, '(the dove) flew into the hollow rock', where there was ancient scholarly discussion of the interpretation of χηραμός. The scholia explain κοίλῃν ... πέτρην as a gloss on χηραμόν.<sup>6</sup> Some may have taken it as a two-termination adjective. Apollonius seems to reflect this by using χηραμός as an adjective at line 1299 but as a noun at 1452.<sup>7</sup> His possible use of παρθένος here, as a two-termination adjective,<sup>8</sup> may be a similar case, also linked to another strand of Hellenistic scholarly discussion, concerned with Homer's apparent occasional use of masculine adjectives with feminine nouns.<sup>9</sup> A scribe who did not understand this might well have replaced παρθένος with the easier δώμασιν.

### The Second Reading

Line 1043 εἰς χεῖρας ἰοῦσαν: the syntax and the sense of this are difficult.<sup>10</sup> The problem may have been solved by the papyrus which, according to *editio princeps* has [[αγ]]'ύουσαν, which is to be interpreted as αγ deleted and ι added.<sup>11</sup> The reading of Π gives good sense (see *editio princeps ad loc.*) and should be accepted: 'leading (me) into the hands of Aietes to be killed with horrible suffering (λώβῃ πολυπήμονι)'. Medea's threats (δείξατε ... δείξατ') are complex. With συνθεσίας τε καὶ ὄρκια, she recalls the opening of her remonstrances with Jason against the possibility of handing her over to the other band of pursuing Colchians.<sup>12</sup> The Erinys that she mentions must be, partly, one of the band with whom she threatened Jason

<sup>3</sup> For this feature of Hellenistic poetry, sometimes known as *oppositio in imitando*, see further Thomas 1986, 171, 185.

<sup>4</sup> In this speech alone cf. 1018 μαργαρίνης, 1024 μήτις ἔην and for Apollonian imitation in Moschus, see further Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 217.

<sup>5</sup> 'for dear to her were her maidenhood and an undefiled bed', with παρθενίη occupying the emphatic first position in the line.

<sup>6</sup> ΣΑ *Il.* 495b χηραμόν: ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐξηγεῖται, τί ἐστι χηραμός, ὅτι κοίλῃ πέτρα, 'he explains what χηραμός is, that it means a hollow rock.'

<sup>7</sup> See further Hunter 2015, *ad loc.*

<sup>8</sup> Rather than some form of his more usual παρθενικός -ή -όν (cf. 4.1106).

<sup>9</sup> See further (Schironi 2018, 193–4) discussing Aristarchus' treatment of *Il.* 15.626 where he accepted the feminine noun ἀήτη with a masculine epithet, δεινός to mean 'terrible blast'. Schironi also notes Apollonius' use of the Homeric two-termination τυτθός -όν as a feminine at *Arg.* 3.93, 4.832 (also Callim. *h.* 3.64). For the complex links between Apollonius' text and the Homeric variants transmitted under the name of Aristarchus, see further Rengakos 2008, 251.

<sup>10</sup> "the transmitted ἰοῦσαν offers no satisfactory sense or syntax", Hunter 2015, *ad loc.*

<sup>11</sup> P.Oxy. 5428 appears as Plate V in Vol. LXXXIV: ΑΓΟΥΣΑΝ is very clear, though the signs of correction are visible. A stroke of deletion runs obliquely through the ΑΓ from mid-left to right with an ι added over the Α.

<sup>12</sup> 4.358–9 ποῦ τοι Διὸς Ἰκεσίῳ ὄρκια, ποῦ δὲ μελιχραὶ ὑποσχέσιναι βεβάσιναι; (Medea to Jason), 'Where are your oaths, by Zeus protector of Suppliants? Where have all your sweet promises gone?'

at 4.385–6,<sup>13</sup> partly, the Erinys that observes the murder of Apsyrtus,<sup>14</sup> and also the Erinys that will avenge Medea, here portraying herself as a suppliant of the Argonauts, if they abandon her to Aietes' mercy.<sup>15</sup>

One might expect an Erinys to 'drive'<sup>16</sup> rather than 'lead' a victim but for ἄγω used in the sense of 'leading someone to a bad fate or death'<sup>17</sup> cf. *Il.* 13.602–3 τὸν δ' ἄγε μοῖρα κακὴ θανάτοιο τέλοσδε | κοῖ Μενέλαε δαμῆναι ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτῆτι,<sup>18</sup> 'an evil fate was leading him to the end of death, to be slain by you, Menelaus, in the dread conflict', 2.834 κῆρες ἄγον θανάτοιο, 'for the evil spirits of death were leading them on',<sup>19</sup> Aesch. *Cho.* βοᾷ γὰρ λοιγὸς Ἐρινὺν | παρὰ τῶν πρότερον φθιμένων ἄτην | ἑτέραν ἐπάγουσαν ἐπ' ἄτη, 'for slaughter cries out for a Fury who comes from those who perished before to bring further ruin upon ruin'. To speak of a Fury 'leading' its victim is, indeed, appropriate when one considers the ultimate fate of the Argonautic (and Euripidean) Medea and shows Apollonius sensitive to a subtle nuance of the literary language. Overall, this papyrus fragment again warns us against over-confidence in the transmitted text of the *Argonautica*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> ἐκ δέ σε πάτρης | αὐτίκ' ἐμαί σ' ἐλάσειαν Ἐρινύες, 'May my Furies drive you straight from your homeland.'

<sup>14</sup> 4.475–6 ὁξὺ δὲ πανδαμάτωρ λοξῶ ἴδεν οἶον ἔρεξαν | ὄμματι νηλεῖης ὀλοφώιον ἔργον Ἐρινύς, 'And with swift side-glance the irresistible pitiless Fury beheld the deadly deed they had done.'

<sup>15</sup> So, *ed. princeps*, *ibid.* 114.

<sup>16</sup> For the idea of being 'driven' by the Erinyes cf. Aesch. *Cho.* 1062, *Eum.* 210, 421.

<sup>17</sup> For fate or the gods 'calling' or 'leading' a man to his death, see further Griffin 1983, 42–43.

<sup>18</sup> The use of the infinitive of purpose δαμῆναι is similar to Apollonius' δηωθῆναι (1044).

<sup>19</sup> On the connection between Erinyes and Keres, see further (Sewell–Rutter 2007, 80), quoting Eur. *El.* 1252: Orestes is to be hounded by κῆρες ... αἱ κυνώπιδες θεαί ('the keres, the dog-faced goddesses').

<sup>20</sup> So, Hunter 2015, 27.