

Book 2 of Apollonius' *Argonautica* closes with a surprisingly little-studied passage on the torture of Prometheus (2.1246-1259), a figure whose significance for the poem is multi-faceted and well developed by the poet. This paper analyzes generally the role of Prometheus in the *Argonautica* and specifically the way in which Prometheus' three appearances (2.1246-1259, 3.844-868, 3.1085-1089) become significant for understanding the plight of Medea. The paper also examines, in light of the connection between Titan and sorceress, the role of the gods in an epic that is overtly concerned both with the ever-shifting relationship between gods and men and with the role that vengeance plays in the human experience.

I begin with an unnoticed connection that Apollonius makes between the scene of Prometheus' torture (2.1246-1259) and that of Medea's wounding (3.274-298). Through two specific verbal repetitions (e.g. *πολύστονος* 2.1256 and 3.279; *παλιμπετέες* 2.1250 and 3.285) and through several broader cumulative echoes (*άίσσοντα* 2.1250 and 2.1258; *ήιξε* 3.286; *ώκύπτερα* 2.1255; *ώκα* 3.278), Apollonius suggests that these episodes are two of a kind and ought to be read together as a frame of suffering that problematizes the light-hearted intervening Olympian council (3.7-166). In his treatment of Prometheus, Apollonius focuses on the cruelty of Prometheus' painful punishment to the exclusion of other aspects of his well-known story (Jackson 1993). His Prometheus is characterized by physical isolation and agony, the end of which is never suggested (Byre 2002). Medea's psychological isolation and suffering are also an area of intense focus for Apollonius, and his exploration of her tortured soul is arguably the aspect of the *Argonautica* which most influenced his successors. Those who read in isolation Books 3 and 4, sometimes referred to as "The Medea Books," are often tempted to rationalize Medea's suffering as necessary for the completion of the epic and thus to minimize the pity they feel for her. Apollonius, however, prepares his reader for a darker reading of Medea's suffering by connecting in his narrative frame the torture of Prometheus and the wounding of Medea to highlight the role that divine cruelty and vengeance play within his epic.

I continue with the other two Prometheus references in Book 3 of the *Argonautica* and their significance for Medea's characterization. When Medea harvests Jason's salvation, the *φάρμακον Προμήθειον* (3.845)—the act that severs her completely from her family—she causes Prometheus himself to scream in agony, while simultaneously inflaming her own psychological pain (3.844-868). Medea's decision, at this crucial moment in the epic, to help the Argonauts mirrors in its painful results the suffering that Prometheus eternally experiences as divine punishment for helping mankind. Finally, when Jason describes Iolcus to Medea, he notes that Prometheus once begat a son there (3.1085-1089) and thus Medea, by leaving her homeland, will go to Prometheus' country to bear Jason's children and to fulfill the gods' vengeance plan. Medea's future is Prometheus' past and at the intersection of their lives is the pain they experience at the hands of the gods.

This paper builds upon recent work concerning the gods in epic (e.g. Feeney 1991), while also challenging the still prevalent scholarly treatment of the "episodic" Book 2 as separate from the rest of the epic and therefore unimportant for understanding the more dramatic "Medea Books." The paper thus has bearing on the still problematic question of "unity" in the *Argonautica*.