

SIMAETHA VERSUS MEDEA: EXAMPLES OF *OPPOSITIO*  
*IN IMITANDO* IN APOLLONIUS RHODIUS' *ARGONAUTICA*

By

EMILIA ŻYBERT

**ABSTRACT:** This paper compares Theocritus' *Idyll 2* with some passages from the third and fourth books of the *Argonautica* by Apollonius Rhodius. It assumes that *Pharmakeutria* was a model for Apollonius in some aspects, especially regarding love and magic motifs. The article analyses the epic poet's intertextual techniques which, in comparison with Theocritus' *Idyll 2*, result in a change of his poem's character.

The allusiveness of the Alexandrian poetry in general, and of Apollonius' *Argonautica* in particular, has been a well established, if not banal, fact, in contemporary researches on classical literature – at least since the famous article by Giuseppe Giangrande (1967) was published. Hellenistic authors, and Apollonius was no exception, had strong inclination to draw on the ancient literary tradition, reworking it and rearranging according to their proper poetic taste. In the case of Apollonius' work, his obvious model was the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but there were also many other references<sup>1</sup>. However, that constant dialogue with the bygone literature, which I propose to call a “diachronic intertextuality”, although very important regarding, for instance, researches on the novelty of Alexandrian poetic techniques in comparison to the older ones, had its completion in a “synchronic intertextuality”, that is allusions to contemporary literary works.

Intertextual play of this kind had a special piquant taste due to the fact that the author of the model work was still living. The most important, as it seems, example of such references in the *Argonautica* and in a work of another Alexandrian poet are two episodes: the rapture of Hylas (I 1207–1239) and the scene of a boxing duel between Polydeuces and Amycus (II 1–97) which have their close counterparts in two *Idylls*, 13 and 22, by Theocritus. The purpose of this article is not, however, to analyze such evident instances of poetic technique where whole scenes are being reworked. Rather, its aim is to show more subtle

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g.: Carspecken 1952; Campbell 1969; Knight 1991: 248 f.; Knight 1995; Rengakos 2008.

modes of *arte allusiva* which are to be found between Theocritus' *Idyll* 2 and some passages from the third and fourth books of the *Argonautica*.

I would like to start with the premise that Theocritus was the model for Apollonius. This assumption is in accord with Adolf Köhnken's thesis (1965; 2008) concerning *Idylls* 13 and 22. He, having analyzed two episodes from the *Argonautica* and *Idylls* mentioned above together with some other instances of common motifs in the poetry of Theocritus, Callimachus and Apollonius, came to the conclusion that, most probably, the latter two poets were indebted to the first one<sup>2</sup>.

This can be also backed up by some external evidence. Although the dates of lives of both poets are not certain, it is claimed that Theocritus himself edited the first seven *Idylls* which are placed at the beginning of the *Corpus Theocriteum*<sup>3</sup>, while the final version of *Argonautica* was composed probably in Apollonius' mature years. Thus it is highly probable that Apollonius was able to consult published works of his fellow poet before he completed his epic. However, there is also a poetical argument supporting this assumption. The second *Idyll* by Theocritus is a compact narration containing certain motives which appear also in the *Argonautica*. It seems more probable that Apollonius took them out of the Theocritus poem, reworked them and placed scattered in the second part of his epic than the other way out, regarding diversity and multitude of episodes in the *Argonautica*.

The first striking similarity between the second *Idyll* and books three and four of the *Argonautica* are two main subjects, love and magic, which pervade and dominate them. Both motifs constantly interweave which becomes evident for the first time while we look closer at the introduction to the *Pharmakeutriai* (1–16): the only mythological or divine names appearing there belong to the gods of love (Eros, Aphrodite) or magic (Selene, Hekate) and to three powerful sorceresses (Kirke, Medea, and Perimede). The plot tells a story of a forlorn girl, Simaetha who in desperation attempts to regain her lover's affection by means of magic. The whole poem describes a nocturnal ritual of erotic magic and is divided into two distinct parts. This division is emphasized by two different refrains in form of a call, the first of which is directed to *inyx*, a magical wheel used in love charms, while the second to Selene, the goddess also connected with erotic magic.

On the other hand, two last books of the *Argonautica* are dominated by the figure of Medea who represents, just like Simaetha, a young and inexperienced witch-girl, passionately in love with a handsome and much more worldly-wise youth. In Apollonius, the stages of the virgin's infatuation are the same as in Theocritus. Both girls, Simaetha and Medea, see Delphis and Jason respectively

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<sup>2</sup> For older attitude see Gow 1950a: XXII f.; 1950b: 231 f., 382 f.

<sup>3</sup> Lwall 1967.

and immediately fall in love with them (*Id.* 2, 82; *Argon.* III 284–290). Then, they suffer physical and psychical tortures which almost lead them to death; but while Simaetha simply falls ill (*Id.* 2, 83–90), Medea wants to commit suicide by means of her ominous poisons (III 802–810). At last, both girls find a fulfilment of their desires, but their happiness does not last forever: Delphis abandons Simaetha probably after a quite short time, while Medea's future lot, although not mentioned explicitly in the *Argonautica*, was well known from mythical tradition, and especially from Euripides' tragedy.

The description of the young men has also some features in common. Delphis and Jason have golden blond cheeks: τοῖς δ' ἤς ξανθοτέρα μὲν ἐλιχρύσοιο γενειάς (*Id.* 2, 78) ~ καὶ οἱ ἐπὶ ξανθῆσι παρησίσι ἠδὲ μετώπῳ (*Argon.* IV 172). However, while Theocritus compares the down on Delphis' face to a quite rare golden-flower which is a reflection of his passion for botanical lore<sup>4</sup>, Apollonius, by placing two things glowing with gold close to each other, in a way equates Jason's cheeks with the golden fleece carried by the hero (*Argon.* IV 173).

Furthermore, as it has been said above, both young men are much more experienced in love affairs. When Delphis visits Simaetha for the first time, he behaves like a typical lover, very skillful in erotic conversation. He comes, awaited impatiently by the girl, and with insincere modesty (as Simaetha realizes too late, calling him ὤστοργος [112], 'lacking of true affection'), fixes his eyes upon the ground (112). In an elaborate manner the young man extensively (114–138) describes now his affection towards Simaetha, but from behind his words the reader easily sees that Delphis does not really feel anything special to the poor girl; that he just seizes the opportunity to seduce her, and to obtain that he uses, as Charles Segal (1973: 38) observed, "exaggerations and inflated commonplaces [...] [that] suggest the artificiality of contemporary love-poetry".

The gesture of casting down the eyes is repeated by Apollonius in his depiction of Jason. When the hero approaches Hypsipyle, the queen of Lemnos, he is met by a throng of women. They joyfully dance around him, but he passes them by with his eyes fixed upon the ground (*Argon.* I 783 f.). The whole scene has a clear erotic tinge: Jason, wearing a purple cloak (I 721–767) which characterizes his erotic charm<sup>5</sup>, makes his way through a group of girls and women who have not seen a man for a very long time. He is beautiful like the Evening Star at which maidens and young married women missing their beloved ones stare longingly (I 774–781). However, when he meets Hypsipyle, he is not shy at all, although the sexual purpose of her invitation is quite obvious; on the contrary, it is the queen who feels forced to lower her eyes (I 790), because, as Charles Rowan Beye (1969) described him, Jason is a "love-hero". Such discrepancy suggests that in fact his previous modest gesture was fake and resulted rather from pride

<sup>4</sup> Ławińska-Tyszkowska 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Rose 1985: 35.

then shyness. His experience in love affairs is emphasized even more clearly in the scene where Medea and the hero meet alone for the first time. Again, it is the girl who shows desperate signs of her passion. When Jason appears at last, he is compared to Sirius, a star once more<sup>6</sup>. The similarity between this scene and the one from Theocritus' idyll, especially the picture of a girl waiting impatiently for her beloved (Simaetha at home, *Id.* 2, 104 ~ Medea near the temple of Hekate, *Argon.* III 948–955) is evident. But while, for instance, Theocritus just mentions that Delphis eventually “steps light-foot across the threshold” (ἄρτι θύρας ὑπὲρ οὐδὸν ἀμειβόμενον ποδὶ κούφῳ, 104), Apollonius also evokes the sound – or rather lack of it – of Jason's feet, fervently awaited by Medea; however, he develops the curt statement of his predecessor and imbues it with the atmosphere of restless longing: for the Colchian sorceress turns around constantly thinking she hears the sound of the hero's feet, but it is only the wind (ἦ θαμὰ δὴ στηθέων ἐάγη κέαρ, ὀππότε δοῦπον/ ἢ ποδὸς ἢ ἀνέμοιο παραθρέξαντα δοάσαι, 954 f.). When their lovers appear at last, Simaetha and Medea feel profoundly agitated. They both cannot move (*Id.* 2, 110 ~ *Argon.* III 964–965) nor speak (*Id.* 2, 108 ~ *Argon.* III 967). However, while the former one's forehead is covered with sweat, her whole body turns colder than snow (πᾶσα μὲν ἐψύχθη χιόνος πλέον, ἐκ δὲ μετώπῳ/ ἰδρώς μευ κοχύδεσκεν ἴσον νοτίαισιν ἔέρσαις, 106 f.) and stiff as a doll's (ἀλλ' ἐπάγην δαγῦδι καλὸν χροὰ πάντοθεν ἴσα, 110), the latter is in a state of emotional perturbation: her heart thudding, cheeks burning and blushing (ἐκ δ' ἄρα οἱ κραδίη στηθέων πέσεν [...]/ ἦχλυσαν, θερμὸν δὲ παρηίδας εἶλεν ἔρευθος, III 962 f.). Here, instead of coldness, sweat and deathly pallor suggested by an image of snow, Apollonius depicts Medea's condition using images of heat and redness which reflects the fiery nature of Helios' granddaughter. Thus the later poet gives an example of conceptual *oppositio in imitando* (to use the term coined by Giangrande 1967: 90): in contrast to Simaetha, average and rather passive Greek girl, the Colchian princess is burning with desire toward Jason. However, both girls cannot move and that fact underlines again the mastery of Apollonius, since he uses the same symptom of emotional shock but invents a totally opposite reason for it, namely a violent, overwhelming passion instead of faint.

When Jason at last addresses Medea, he starts with a very curious statement, saying that “he is not like other idly boastful young men” (*Argon.* III 976 f.). The reader do not have any particular reason to disbelieve his assurances, although it is actually known that the hero has already had some erotic experiences with the Queen Hypsipyle (I 1000 ff.). But the similarity of both, Simaetha and Medea's, meetings with their lovers, casts the reader's mind back to Delphis' artificial

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<sup>6</sup> Though much more dangerous one than the planet Venus when one takes into account famous passages from Hom. *Il.* V 1–5, XXII 25–32 and Hes. *Op.* 586 f.

monologue. Could it be after all that Apollonius wanted the reader to suspect that Jason eventually *is* an “idly boastful young man”?

There is another element which joins Theocritus’ and Apollonius’ poems. When Simaetha performs her ritual of erotic magic she does not only use spells of attraction (φιλτροκατάδεσμοι and ἀγωγή spells), but also resorts to a charm of hatred (called διάκοπαι or μίσηθρα<sup>7</sup> to separate her faithless lover from his new love. To obtain that she makes a libation and thrice, a potent magic number connected closely with Hekate<sup>8</sup>, she cries:

εἴτε γυνὰ τήνῳ παρακέκλιται εἴτε καὶ ἀνὴρ,  
τόσσον ἔχοι λάθας ὅσσον ποκά Θησέα φαντί  
ἐν Δίᾳ λασθῆμεν ἐυπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνας (*Id.* 2, 44–46).

whether it be woman that lies by him now, or whether man,  
may he as clean forget them as once, men say, Theseus forgot  
in Dia the fair-tressed Ariadne<sup>9</sup>.

The story of Theseus and his disgraceful abandonment of Ariadne, a Cretan princess who helped him kill her half-brother Minotaurus and escape safely both from the Labyrinth and from Crete, serves here as a *historiola*<sup>10</sup>, a tale inserted into a spell which is supposed to enhance the effect of a charm. The aim is obvious: by remembering that almost archetypical scene of mythological act of forsaking, Simaetha wants Delphis’ present favourite, whether a girl or a boy, to be abandoned in the same brutal and definite manner.

Curiously, however, the same story appears in Jason’ words directed at Medea that aim at obtaining the powerful drugs from the Colchian witch. Ironically, then, the hero uses it to convince the girl to help him in his trial:

δὴ ποτε καὶ Θησῆα κακῶν ὑπελύσατ’ ἀέθλων  
παρθενικὴ Μινωῖς ἐυφρονέουσ’ Ἀριάδνη,  
ἦν βὰ τε Πασιφάη κούρη τέκεν Ἥελίοιο.  
ἀλλ’ ἢ μὲν καὶ νηός, ἐπεὶ χόλον εὔνασε Μίνως,  
σὺν τῷ ἐφεζομένη πάτρην λίπε· τὴν δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ  
ἀθάνατοι φίλαντο, μέσῳ δέ οἱ αἰθέρι τέκμωρ  
ἀστερόεις στέφανος, τόν τε κλείουσ’ Ἀριάδνης,  
πάννυχος οὐρανοῖς ἐνελίσσεται εἰδώλοισιν·  
ὧς καὶ σοὶ θεόθεν χάρις ἔσσειται, εἴ κε σαώσεις  
τόσσον ἀριστῶν ἀνδρῶν στόλον· ἦ γὰρ ἔοικας  
ἐκ μορφῆς ἀγανῆσιν ἐπητείησι κεκάσθαι (III 997–1007).

<sup>7</sup> On erotic magic see Faraone 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Gow 1950b: ad *Id.* 2, 43.

<sup>9</sup> All translations of Theocritus *Idyll* 2 by Gow 1950a.

<sup>10</sup> On the function of the *historiola* in magical incantations see Versnel 2002: 150.

Once upon a time another kindly maiden, Ariadne daughter of Minos, rescued Theseus from terrible challenges; her mother was Pasiphae, daughter of Helios. When Minos' anger had soothed, she embarked upon Theseus' ship and left her homeland; the very immortals loved her, and as her sign in the middle of the sky a crown of stars, which men call "Ariadne's Crown", revolves all night long among the heavenly constellations. Thus will the gods show gratitude to you also, if you save so great an expedition of heroic men; and to judge from your appearance I would guess that your character is both gentle and kindly<sup>11</sup>.

According to his characteristic technique, Apollonius develops that short mention of Theocritus and adds some new elements. First of all, Jason describes the family and origin of Ariadne, which is important since the Cretan princes – by her mother, Pasiphae, sister of Aietes – turns out to be Medea's cousin. Thus, not only by the similarity of both stories, but also on account of their close relationship the girls' lot seems to be identical. Then, as a lure, Jason tells a story of Ariadne's diadem, which is placed in the sky in order to venerate the princess. Naturally and intentionally, the hero leaves that part of the story concerning the abandonment unsaid, and he either fails to mention who exactly – Dionysus and not, as Medea is supposed to conclude from his words, Theseus – gave Ariadne the crown and then placed it among the stars.

Such a cold calculation makes Jason resemble Delphis, even if the former is a hero destined to perform acts of superhuman courage and strength, while the latter is just a local playboy. Apollonius, then, deliberately refers to both mythological tale and Theocritus' idyll to create a complete, though implied, portrait of his hero. In the same time, however, the poet subtly alludes to the future abandonment of Medea by Jason, known so well from the Euripides' *Medea*.

Love and magic interweave once more in the close relationship of erotic theme and the Moon. In Theocritus' *Idyll 2* Simaetha summons Selene to shine on while she performs her ritual (*Id.* 2, 11). Furthermore, in the second part of the poem the girl calls on the goddess to listen to the story of her romance, addressing her with the refrain repeated twelve times: "Mark, Lady Moon, whence came my love" (φράζέό μιν τὸν ἔρωθ' ὅθεν ἵκετο, πότνα Σελάνα). It has been also claimed that the invocation has probably therapeutic effect for her<sup>12</sup>, and the peaceful farewell to the goddess of the Moon at dawn is also a sign of the girl's resigning to her fate.

Selene or the Moon was a celestial body, which together with the Evening Star – the planet Venus in fact – was invoked in erotic magic<sup>13</sup>. It is not quite certain what exact role Selene is supposed to play in Simaetha's rite, but her

<sup>11</sup> All translations of the *Argonautica* by Hunter 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Faraone 2001: 140.

<sup>13</sup> See Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.774–780; *Schol. in Theocr.* 2, 10 b–c; Gow 1950b: ad *Id.* 2, 11; *PGM* IV 2708–2784; Faraone 2001: 139–143. On a relation between the Moon and nuptial rituals in the *Argonautica* see Bremer 1987.

importance is indisputable. The goddess, as it seems, is expected to be a divine assistant – *parhedros* – who, just like her underworld counterpart, Hekate, identified here doubtlessly with the Moon<sup>14</sup>, is asked to help the girl accomplish her binding and bringing down charms.

Apollonius treats the same motif differently and, in a way, perversely. As it has been said, Medea is completely helpless in the face of her own desire. Although a powerful sorceress, she can neither suppress her passion nor just win Jason's affection. It does not mean, however, that she is not able to perform any erotic magic. In the fourth book of the *Argonautica* Mene, that is Selene, the goddess of the Moon, is watching Medea fleeing from her home, chased by both fear of her father's wrath and the love to Jason. The goddess is saying:

Οὐκ ἄρ' ἐγὼ μούνη μετὰ Λάτμιον ἄντρον ἀλύσκω,  
οὐδ' οἴη καλῶ περι δαίομαι Ἐνδυμίῳ.  
ἦ θαμὰ δὴ καὶ σεῖο κύθον δολίησιν αἰοδαῖς  
μνησαμένη φιλότητος, ἵνα σκοτίῃ ἐνὶ νυκτί  
φαρμάσσης εὐκηλος, ἃ τοι φίλα ἔργα τέτυκται·  
νῦν δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ δῆθεν ὁμοίης ἔμμορες ἄτης,  
δῶκε δ' ἀνιηρόν τοι Ἰήσωνα πῆμα γενέσθαι  
δαίμων ἀλγινόεις, ἀλλ' ἔρχεο, τέτλαθι δ' ἔμπης,  
καὶ πινυτὴ περ ἑοῦσα, πολύστονον ἄλγος ἀείρειν (IV 57–65).

I am not the only one to skulk off to the Latmian cave, nor is it only I who burn with desire for fair Endymion! Ah! How many times have your treacherous incantations caused me to hide when my mind was full of love, so that in the gloom of night and without disturbance you could work with your drugs in the way that brings you pleasure. But now you yourself, it would seem, are a victim of madness like me; a cruel god has given you Jason to cause you grief and pain. Be off then and for all your cleverness learn to put up with a misery that will bring you much lamentation.

Thus in Apollonius' vision Medea performs some erotic charms to bring down the Moon (Mene) to the Latmian cave. The poet combines here a classical motive of “drawing-down the Moon”, an ability ascribed to witches, mainly from Thessaly<sup>15</sup>, and her relation with love magic. However, Apollonius rearranges traditional motifs and turns them upside down. In the episode Selene-Mene is no longer a subject but an object of magical rituals. She does not help to fulfil someone's erotic desires, but herself succumbs to Medea's magic which makes her long for her lover, Endymion. No wonder the goddess is upset and expresses her discontent in the mocking apostrophe to the Colchian princes. As it seems, the fact that Medea used her not even to perform some erotic charm but for another type of magic, suggested laconically in the phrase “to cast your spells safely in the darkness” (...ἵνα σκοτίῃ ἐνὶ νυκτί/ φαρμάσσης εὐκηλος..., 60 f.), results in

<sup>14</sup> Faraone 2001: 142.

<sup>15</sup> Aristoph. *Nub.* 749–756; on the motif see also Ogden 2002: 236–240; Hill 1973.

the goddess' greatest displeasure. That short statement indicates on the one hand that Apollonius once again used the technique of *oppositio in imitando*: while Simaetha calls Selene to shine on her ritual, Medea deliberately and deceitfully removes the goddess from the night sky. On the other hand, the statement hints at the character of the princess' favourite magic. It is probably far more dangerous, because it is connected with the darkness which is always associated with the Underworld and Hekate. In fact, a few verses earlier Apollonius suggests what exactly Medea does in the complete darkness: she often goes by night to the cemetery on the Circean plain, most probably near the temple of Hekate, to cut some "hard to gather roots" and find parts of the body of the dead (IV 51 f.) – used in necromancy – that are hung and buried there (III 200–209). Furthermore, in the *Pharmakeutriai* the girl talks to the Moon, just like probably so many other unhappy lovers before her<sup>16</sup>, while looking up to the goddess. Apollonius, on the contrary, makes the goddess herself talk to the sorceress, but here Mene is observing Medea' flight from on high. That proves his inventiveness and implies, on the one hand, that the status of Medea in comparison to Simaetha's is much higher, since it is Mene who addresses her; on the other, however, that now the position of the Colchian princess in relation to the goddess of the Moon is, because of her erotical madness, lower. And just like it is quite certain that Selene cannot hear the confessions of Simaetha, it seems that the Colchian princes either cannot hear the words of Mene (IV 66). Thus, although both heroines are young and naive and both practice erotic magic, the difference between them is striking. Simaetha is just a "next-door" girl who uses love spells after she has unhappily fallen in love, while Medea is and has always been a very dangerous sorceress who does far more serious things than chasing handsome young men. That is why Mene – Medea's great-aunt actually, which adds piquancy to the whole situation – feels such a satisfaction that her conceited and insolent relative at last succumbs to desire as well.

Closely related to the theme of magic is the figure of Hekate, the goddess of the crossroads, Underworld and spells<sup>17</sup>. In Theocritus' idyll she is mentioned for the first time at the beginning of the poem, together with Selene, with whom she was sometimes identified. Simaetha addresses the goddess with incantations, calling her with the epithet "chthonic" (χθονία, 2, 12) which emphasizes

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<sup>16</sup> See *PGM* IV 2708; *PGM* VII 874 f.; 889 f.

<sup>17</sup> On the nature of the goddess see Farnell 1896; Warr 1895; Reitler 1949; Marquardt 1981; Boedeker 1983; Rabinowitz 1983; Johnston 1990.

her connections with the world below. Then she describes her as coming over the graves and wading through black blood, accompanied by shivering dogs. In the end, the girl greets the goddess, now naming her “grim Hekate” (Ἐκάτα δασπλήτι, 2, 14) and asks for her assistance in fulfilment of her erotic charms:

...τὴν γὰρ ποταεῖσομαι ἄσυχᾶ, δαῖμον,  
τᾷ χθονίᾳ θ' Ἐκάτα, τὰν καὶ σκύλακες τρομέοντι  
ἐρχομένην νεκύων ἀνά τ' ἠρία καὶ μέλαν αἶμα.  
χαῖρ', Ἐκάτα δασπλήτι, καὶ ἐς τέλος ἄμμιν ὀπάδει (2, 11–14).

...for to thee, goddess, will I softly chant, and to  
Hekate of the world below, before whom even the dogs stand  
Shivering, as she comes over the graves of the dead and the  
Dark blood. Hail, grim Hekate, and to the end attend me...

All of the images and names, used by Theocritus to portrait Hekate, belong to the usual staffage of the goddess in the classical and later periods (see above). The quoted passage has also a hymnic character corresponding with the specificity of prayers and magical incantations as well. The picture is gloomy and almost ominous, and manifests Simaetha's idea of the goddess, doubtlessly taken from traditional representations of Hekate.

Another passage where Hekate is mentioned has a quite different character. Now the goddess does not appear as a divine being from hymns and litanies. She is no more summoned, on the contrary, her dreary figure, so vividly depicted some verses below, is supposed to have come to the crossroads, her traditional place of worship. Simaetha who hears the howling of dogs in the town is absolutely sure that the goddess is approaching, so she takes precautionary measures to avert from her own home evil brought by Hekate:

Θεστυλί, ταὶ κύνες ἄμμιν ἀνὰ πτόλιν ὠρύνονται  
ἅ θεὸς ἐν τριόδοισι· τὸ χαλκῆον ὡς τάχος ἄχει (2, 35 f.).

Thestylis, the dogs are howling in the town;  
the goddess is in the crossroads. Quick, clash the bronze!

Then, the dread goddess appears, at least in Simaetha's belief, but neither the girl nor the reader can see her. Hekate's coming is announced only by the howling of dogs, her sacred animals. And although her epiphany is not complete – in fact, it is not even sure – this does not seem to weaken the effect of terror and awe; on the contrary, in the realistic scenery of an average town from the third century BC the epiphany of a goddess would be a dissonance<sup>18</sup>. Theocritus

<sup>18</sup> For instance, gods in Callimachus' *Hymns* 2 and 5 do not appear at their festivals *in propria persona*, although their approaching is emphasized by the poet. If they show themselves to people, it is only in the sacred history, told in *Hymn* 6.

was perfectly aware of the fact. However, he did not give up showing the actual epiphany of Hekate, but transferred it to the sphere of speculation and imagination.

The same theme, the invocation and the epiphany of Hekate, although treated in a quite different way, was taken up by Apollonius. In the *Argonautica* the goddess is twice called with the epithet “chthonic” (III 862; IV 148), the one used also by Simaetha to define her. In both cases it is Medea who summons Hekate while performing two complicated and dangerous rituals: the first one is to gather a root of a miraculous plant *prometheion*, the second to destroy the bronze giant Talos. However, Apollonius does not confine himself to imitating epithets used by Theocritus. Instead, he consequently reworks the hymnic stanzas and enriches them with more names and attributes of Hekate. He calls her, with the words of Medea, “Brimo rearing babies, night-wanderer, underworld, the Lady of the dead” (ἐπτάκι δὲ Βριμῶ κουροτρόφον ἀγκαλέεσσα, / Βριμῶ νυκτιπόλον, χθονίην, ἐνέροισιν ἄνασσαν, III 861 f.). This *embarras de richesse* is supposed to emphasize the prayer-like specificity of the calls, their rapid and urgent character, typical for pleas. It also evokes, in a very concise but expressive way, a gloomy and dense atmosphere surrounding the goddess which immediately creates in the reader the mood of foreboding something frightful to happen. Furthermore, Apollonius would not have been an erudite, had he not used also epithets from another poem of great importance for the Alexandrian authors; in the *Theogony* by Hesiod Hekate is called κουροτρόφος (*Theog.* 450), that is exactly with the same name as in the *Argonautica* (III 861).

However, Apollonius does not only adapt vocabulary of predecessors or contemporary authors; in accordance with another Hellenistic principle, that of variety, he applies a different word, though meaning almost the same and regarding the same object. He calls Hekate a “dread goddess” (δεινὴ θεός, III 1213) where Theocritus uses a word δασπλῆς (Ἐκάτα δασπλήτι, *Id.* 2, 14) to describe her. What is interesting, both adjectives appear in the Magical Papyri: the latter as an epithet of Selene, with whom Theocritus actually identifies Hekate (*PGM* IV 2856), while the former characterizes Hekate herself (*PGM* IV 1404). However, she is mentioned there not in her celestial aspect represented by the Moon – in the *Argonautica*, for instance, the goddess Mene, as it has been shown above, is a separate divinity – but revealing her more frightful face, that is of the Underworld Persephone. Although the Magical Papyri came from later period (the first ones dated to the first century AD), we can assume without any risk that a great bulk of magical texts and recipes gathered in the *PGM* had been created much earlier. Furthermore, both epithets are parts of two large incantations which have hymnic character and can even be treated as elaborated and beautiful prayers (*PGM* IV 1400–1434; IV 2785–2890). This, on the other hand, leads to a risky but tempting assumption that these two incantations might have been known in one version or another to Theocritus and to Apollonius.

The technique of *variatio* can be observed as well in another passage concerning Hekate. In the fourth book of the *Argonautica* Medea summons the goddess to help her kill a giant Talos, calling her “Lady night-wanderer, chthonic, gracious to grant success to the enterprise” (ἄνασσαν/ νυκτιπόλον, χθονίην εὐαντέα δοῦναι ἐφορμήν, IV 147 f.). The plea resembles the one used by Theocritus (καὶ ἐς τέλος ἄμμιν ὀπάδει, 2, 11–14), but only because of its general sense, position in the end of the verse and the same arrangement of accents. Apollonius, instead of a common, closing formula in magical rites<sup>19</sup> (which uses the word τέλος, meaning ‘end’ and ‘purpose’ in the same time), changes it completely and applies different words. Placing them in such a context is probably the poet’s invention which once more highlights Apollonius’ attempts to avoid repetition. On the other hand, he provides Hekate with the epithet “gracious” (εὐαντέα, 148)<sup>20</sup>, intentionally contrasting it with “grim” (δασπλής, 2, 14) used by Theocritus to define the goddess. Consequently, it seems that he gives another example of *oppositio in imitando*. However, the epithet “gracious” has apotropaic and euphemistic character. Just like, for instance, Erinyes were called Eumenides to appease their anger, Hekate, another chthonic and dangerous divinity, is called with a name which, through its meaning, is supposed to grant her favours. Therefore, Apollonius manifests, so to say, his double perverseness: he applies an epithet of Hekate with an opposite meaning to the one used by Theocritus, but eventually it turns out to be only a propitiative name; the real nature of the dreary goddess remains unchanged.

A real epiphany of Hekate takes place in book three of the *Argonautica*. Jason, following strict directives of Medea, performs a nocturnal ritual (III 1191–1225), which is to ensure him the favour of the goddess and, in consequence, a victory over fire bulls and Dragon Warriors. The ritual ends with the appearance of Hekate; the whole scene has some features in common with Theocritus’ vision but at the same time differs in some very significant aspects:

καί ρ' ὁ μὲν ἀγκαλέσας πάλιν ἔστιχεν· ἡ δ' αἰούσα  
 κευθμῶν ἐξ ὑπάτων δεινὴ θεὸς ἀντεβόλησεν  
 ἱροῖς Αἰσονίδαο, πέριξ δέ μιν ἔστεφάνωντο  
 σμερδαλέοι δρυῖνοισι μετὰ πτόρθοισι δράκοντες,  
 στράπτε δ' ἀπειρέσιον δαΐδων σέλας· ἀμφὶ δὲ τήνγχε  
 ὄξειή ὑλακῆ χθόνιοι κύνες ἐφθέγγοντο.  
 πίσεια δ' ἔτρεμε πάντα κατὰ στίβον· αἱ δ' ὀλόλυξαν  
 νύμφαι ἔλειονόμοι ποταμηίδες, αἱ περὶ κείνην  
 Φάσιδος εἰαμενὴν Ἀμαραντίου εἰλίσσονται.  
 Αἰσονίδην δ' ἦτοι μὲν ἔλεν δέος, ἀλλά μιν οὐδ' ὥς  
 ἐντροπαλιζόμενον πόδες ἔκφερον, ὄφρ' ἐτάροισι  
 μίκτο κιών... (III 1212–1223).

<sup>19</sup> See Gow 1950b: 39.

<sup>20</sup> On this epithet as ascribed to Hekate see Vian 2002: 152.

Having summoned her, he retreated. Hearing the call, the dread goddess came from the furthest depths to accept the sacrifices of the son of Aison. Around her head was a garland of terrible snakes entwined with oak-branches, and her torches flashed out a blinding brightness; all around her was the piercing bark of hellish dogs. All the fields trembled at her approach; the marsh-dwelling nymphs of the river who dance around the meadow of the Amarantian Phasis screamed aloud. The son of Aison was seized with fear, but even so he did not turn around as his feet carried him back to his companions.

Apollonius gives a complete, even elaborate depiction of the goddess' appearance, as if he tried to fill in the "impressionistic" portrait of Hekate in the *Pharmakeutriai*. From the depths of the Earth she approaches Jason's sacrifices, crowned with dreary snakes intertwined with oak twigs<sup>21</sup>. She holds torches in hands and around her a pack of hell hounds bark and bay. When she walks, the whole Earth is trembling which is, on the one hand, a *locus communis* of all epiphanies<sup>22</sup> and, on the other, is a logical consequence of the goddess manifestation, since she emerges from the Underworld. And at the same time a cultic cry – *ololyge* – bursts from the lips of Amarynthian nymphs who probably perform then a kind of ecstatic dance. All of these elements create an aura of terror which is a multiplied version of Simaetha's fear when she hears the baying of dogs on the crossroads.

Apollonius, according to his usual technique, avoids any direct quotations. That is why he does not use the word σκύλακες (Theocr. *Id.* 2, 12), but the more appropriate in the terrifying circumstances noun κύνες (*Argon.* III 1217), since the former denote young animals, even puppies. However, Theocritus mentions dogs, that is κύνες, but later on, in the scene where Hekate is supposed to come to the town. The dogs here, probably real ones, howl like in Apollonius' version (*Id.* 2, 35 ~ *Argon.* III 1217). Furthermore, he plays with the actual fact of the goddess' appearance: in the *Pharmakeutriai* Hekate is depicted only in Simaetha's narration. When the girl thinks she is approaching, there can only be heard noise made by her sacred animals. On the other hand, in the *Argonautica* the goddess manifests herself in the most spectacular way: Apollonius cumulates all her attributes and provides her coming with both visual (snakes, oak twigs, light of torches, dogs) and sound (howling of dogs, crying of nymphs and probably noise of the earthquake) effects. All of that, however, is not to be seen by Jason who, like Simaetha, performs a rite summoning the dread goddess. In fact, he is forbidden to look behind after having finished his sacrifice<sup>23</sup>, because

<sup>21</sup> A probable example for that was a passage from Sophocles' tragedy 'Ριζοτόμοι (fr. 535 Pearson): 'Ηλιε δέσποτα καὶ πῦρ ἱερόν,/ τῆς εἰνοδίας 'Εκάτης ἔγχος,/ τὸ δι' Οὐλύμπου προπολοῦσα φέρει / καὶ γῆς ἀνιοῦσ' ἱεράς τριόδους,/ στεφανωσαμένη δρυτὶ καὶ πλεκταῖς/ ὤμων σπείραισι δρᾶκόντων.

<sup>22</sup> See Hom. *Il.* XIII 18 f.; Callim. *Hymn* 2, 1 f.; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* II 679 f.

<sup>23</sup> See *PGMLXX* 1–4 where a similar prohibition appears in the spell in which Hekate is called.

that would kill him and at the same time destroy the whole ritual (*Argon.* III 1039–1041). So the hero, like the Coan girl, can only hear the sounds accompanying Hekate's arrival, not the goddess herself.

Thus all similarities, although apparent, are external. When we look closer we will see that the relation between the *Pharmakeutriai* and two last books of the *Argonautica* has got a far more complicated and complex character. In most general terms, it is based on the principle of opposition, both conceptual and lexical. That of course proves the insatiate inventiveness of Apollonius, especially when the poet uses some common motifs – as in the case of drawing-down the Moon – to create a completely innovative literary situation. However, his longing for diversity has also another reason and purpose. Theocritus' idyll, which belongs to the *humilis* genre of the epic, has got different character than Apollonius' poem. Its aim is to reflect a contemporary – even if literary transformed – reality. By contrast, the *Argonautica* tells about mythical past, taking place *in illo tempore* when heroes and sorceresses were descendants of the gods, the world was populated by frightful monsters and cruel kings and when miracles just happened. That is why characters and situations has got larger scale as well. We can say that the *Pharmakeutriai* is mainly “realistic”, and the *Argonautica* “romantic”; the former is “impressionist”, while the latter, “expressionist”. That difference refers also to the tone of both poems. Theocritus' idyll is pervaded with lyricism and light irony, Apollonius' epic, on the other hand, is more solemn and its irony seems more tragic or bitter. However, the latter's style is by no means grandiose, partly thanks to the intertextual play which he proposes: it distances the reader from the plot reminding them constantly that it is literature, not real life, that they are reading about. It also proves that Apollonius' epic, having sources of inspiration of such a high quality is not a muddy Persian river but has crystal clear waters.

*University of Wrocław*

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