

Remember Medea, or Remember Her Name?

In the third book of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Jason attempts to win over Medea by invoking the story of the famed Ariadne. Scholars and commentators have long considered the extent to which this ominous comparison can be mined for narrative parallels and layers of foreshadowing (Green 2007, Goldhill 1991, Jackson 1999, Hunter 1989, Mawford 2021). A careful consideration of Jason's depiction of Ariadne's story and Medea's response to it reveals a marked focus on the relationship between remembrance and fame throughout the middle and end of Book 3 of the *Argonautica*. Mawford's recent chapter on the "manipulation of memory" in Apollonius' epic considers the way in which human and divine forces influence Medea's ability to remember – active memory – and her desire to be remembered in a positive light – passive memory (Mawford 2021). In this paper, I argue that the narrative importance of the memory of Medea, be it active or passive, appears even at the syntactic level throughout the third book of the *Argonautica*. Apollonius' use of verbs of remembering and forgetting in Book 3 of the *Argonautica* predicts Jason's future abandonment of Medea, and thus implies the eventual completion of the comparison of Medea to Ariadne and Jason to Theseus.

Nearly every use of the verb *mimnēskō* in Book 3 occurs as the first word of a new line, and all but one of the twelve uses of the verb are either spoken by or directly concern Medea. Her actual name, however, is never the object of any of the verbs of remembering or forgetting. Jason variously remembers Medea as "her" (Apoll. *Arg.* 3.534-5) or "you" (3.1079-80), and near the end of the third book, the narrator comments on Jason's ability to remember the "suggestions of crafty Medea" (3.1363-4). In the midst of Medea's *eros*-driven panic, there is an instance of deft word play between the verbs *mimnēskō*, to remember, and *mnasthō*, to court or woo (3.637).

While the dactylic hexameter posed some degree of restraint on the syntax of any given line, it would be a disservice to the author to attribute his aesthetic choices to metrical requirements alone.

Apollonius' syntactic choices with these verbs do not pose any grammatical difficulties, but the choice to make Medea's name syntactically impossible to be remembered reflects the tension in the scene in which Jason suggests Medea may become like Ariadne if she helps him. If Medea is like Ariadne, then Jason must be like Theseus – a man who will whisk away a young woman only to leave her behind, to forget her. The syntax of verbs of remembering and forgetting preclude both the reader and Jason from remembering Medea as character and as a person. Apollonius' Medea cannot be separated from the canonical character, and Apollonius forces the reader to confront that fact by implicitly connecting her to the explicitly stated Ariadne. Medea says that she cannot be compared to Ariadne, but the use of *mimnēskō* in Book 3 of the *Argonautica* places her in that role even before Jason brings up the myth.

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