CONFLICT AND EMOTION IN MEDEA’S ‘IRRATIONAL’ DREAM (A.R. 3.616-35)

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ABSTRACT

This article combines a literary analysis of Medea’s dream (A.R. 3.616-35) in terms of Homeric models with a consideration of developments taking place in post-Homeric dream theory. Nausicaa’s dream is generally considered the primary influence for this passage, but Medea’s psychological characterization owes a great deal more to Penelope and her conflicted emotional state. As an adaptation of Penelope’s psychological dilemma, Medea’s dream is grounded in the originally Platonic notion that an irrational disposition can cause shameful dreams. The influence of this idea on Apollonius most likely came through a Stoic channel and enabled Medea to be presented negatively in terms of specific irrational passions. Medea’s dream should thus not be thought of as inspired by the gods in the strict Homeric sense but as a manifestation of her brewing passion, which enables the gods to intervene indirectly.

Introduction

Apollonius’ Medea is a psychologically complex character whose emotional depth is revealed in the dream passage in Book 3 of the Argonautica. Scholars have discussed the importance of Medea’s psychological characterization in Book 3, and her dream has been considered central to that characterization.1

1 Barkhuizen 1979 discusses Medea’s role in Book 3 of the Argonautica in terms of her psychological characterization, but does not discuss the dream passage in any detail. Papadopoulou 1997 examines Medea’s third monologue (3.772-801) in comparison with a similar monologue in Euripides’ Medea (1021-55) and argues that both are innovative in that they provide windows into the interior emotional state of Medea. Papadopoulou briefly discusses the dream passage on pp. 663-64. Natzel 1992:56-58 provides a brief but apt discussion of Medea’s dream as a manifestation of her desires and fears. Walde 2001:175-81 discusses the centrality of Medea’s dream to Book 3 and emphasizes that the dream serves the same function as her three monologues in that it may be considered a window into her own thoughts and provides a psychological characterization of Medea. Fusillo 2001: esp. 132-40 explains how Medea’s three monologues reveal her conflicted and indecisive disposition.
The content of the dream is particularly important, as it reflects Medea’s own inner conflict.

Past scholarship has primarily emphasized Homer’s depiction of Nausicaa’s dream (Od. 6.25-40) as Apollonius’ model for Medea’s dream, but I will emphasize Penelope’s emotional disposition in Book 19 of the Odyssey. Both desire a man and are emotionally conflicted: Medea longs for Jason but is torn over whether to help him, and Penelope is distraught over the absent Odysseus and whether to wait for him or remarry. I will show how Apollonius conflates these Homeric models by depicting Medea having a dream which is similar to Nausicaa’s dream in terms of narrative function, but which illustrates Penelope’s psychological frustration. This is an innovation since Homeric dreams do not illustrate emotional conflict. In the second half of this article, I will show how Apollonius’ literary adaptation of Medea’s dream can be explained in terms of later philosophical developments that stressed the influence of the irrational passions on dreaming. Whereas scholars have noted that Medea’s dream reflects the influence of ancient theories about dreaming, I will provide a more detailed analysis referring to specific developments. Although there has been debate regarding the question of the potentially divine origin of Medea’s dream, my analysis will confirm that Medea’s dream is better viewed not as direct message from the gods in the manner of Nausicaa’s dream, but as a product of her irrational

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2 My argument that Medea’s dream is an innovation of Homeric dreams fits into the broader understanding of Apollonius’ innovation of Homeric monologue. In both cases, Apollonius surpassed Homer in his ability to represent complex and often conflicting psychological factors. See Fusillo 2001 on how Apollonius has adapted and surpassed the conventions of Homeric monologue in Book 3 of the Argonautica.  
3 Kessels 1982:155-56 briefly discusses some developments in dream theory after Homer, but does not relate these developments in a specific way to Apollonius’ use of Medea’s dream. See esp. pp. 158-61 on Kessel’s treatment of Medea’s dream. Hunter 1989:164 ad loc. makes the general point that Apollonius must have had many ancient texts on dream theory at his disposal, but only mentions a few technical treatises in passing. Fusillo 1994:95-100 and Giangrande 2000:113-14; 2002:353-54 have investigated the onirocritical background of Medea’s dream in more detail than anyone else. Fusillo emphasizes the influence of Herophilus of Alexandria, but as I will explain below, this is insufficient. Giangrande argues that Apollonius was influenced generally by Pythagorean/Stoic doctrines, which posited that prophetic dreams originate in the soul of the dreamer, but become confused when one is disturbed. Giangrande touches on some of the same passages discussed in this article, but in contrast claims that ultimately Medea’s dream is still predictive. Walde 2001:179 n. 13 considers the dream an inner psychological phenomenon, but rejects the notion of investigating the dream in terms of the ancient science of onirocriticism.
passion. The gods are responsible only to the extent that they incited her desire for Jason.

It is first necessary to consider the passage in isolation (3.616-635):

And heavy sleep released the maiden from her cares as she was reclining in her bed. But at once, destructive, deceptive dreams were vexing her just as [dreams commonly vex] a girl in grief. And she imagined that the stranger undertook the challenge, not at all intending to take the animal’s fleece, nor did he come to the city of Aeetes for that [fleece] of his, but in order that he may lead her into his home as a wedded bride. And she thought that she herself, wrestling with the bulls, toiled very easily, but that her parents neglected the promise because they did not propose for the maiden to yoke the bulls but for [the stranger] himself; thereupon, contentious strife came between her father and the strangers; yet both were urging her to direct her thoughts according to her will; suddenly, neglecting her parents, she chose the stranger, but terrible grief seized them and, enraged, they cried out. At the same time as the scream, sleep released her, and trembling, she arose in fear and she looked around the sides of her bed; and with difficulty she gathered her spirit.
in her chest as before and she drew up her heavy voice.\textsuperscript{4} The dream is presented as an opportunity for relief from her anxiety, but ends up causing her even more grief. The content is predictive in the general sense that Medea does end up helping Jason and leaving her parents, but strictly speaking, later events do not correspond to the dream. Jason did not come to the city specifically for her, she does not yoke the bull herself, and she will not be given a choice by her parents.\textsuperscript{5} The seemingly predictive elements certainly foreshadow future events, but there is nothing in the dream that could not have been foreseen by Medea given the circumstances.\textsuperscript{6} She longed for Jason and knew the potential consequences of helping him. In this way, the dream is better understood as a wish-fulfilment combined with her apprehensions about pursuing that desire.\textsuperscript{7} It is thus a presentation of her own inner conflict which is underlined by the inconsistency within the dream itself.\textsuperscript{8}

Apollonius’ use of the dream to depict this kind of inner turmoil has a strikingly modern ring to it and seems to anticipate Freud’s analysis of dreams as manifestations of unconscious desires, which have come into conflict with social mores.\textsuperscript{9} In this way, Medea’s erotic desire for Jason has come into conflict with her sense of restraint and fear regarding how her

\textsuperscript{4} All translations are by the present author.

\textsuperscript{5} Giangrande 2000:111-12; 2002:352-53 discusses these ambiguities, but concludes that the dream is a distorted prediction.

\textsuperscript{6} Green’s comments (1997: \textit{ad loc}) reveal his assumption that the dream is a symbolic prediction, but he does not consider the importance of wish-fulfilment and emotional conflict.

\textsuperscript{7} Papadopoulou 1997:663 suggests that the dream may be understood as a kind of wish-fulfilment; Natzel 1992:57 describes the dream as a combination of wish-fulfilment and anxiety about the potential consequences; Kessels 1982:158-59 considers the dream a combination of wish-fulfilment and prophecy; cf. Walde 2001:180 n. 17, who considers the concept of unconscious wish-fulfilment an anachronistic imposition on the ancient world.

\textsuperscript{8} As Papadopoulou 1997:658-59 has pointed out, Medea is not depicted as conflicted in her love for Jason in either Euripides’ \textit{Medea} or Pindar’s \textit{Pyth.} 4.213-23.

\textsuperscript{9} It is surprising that Freud did not seem to have taken notice of Medea’s dream in the \textit{Argonautica}. According to Wygant 2007:62-63, Freud only mentions Medea in terms of her relationship to Creon’s daughter in the context of his case history of Dora (see Freud’s ‘Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria’). Interestingly, his use of Medea does not refer to Euripides’ \textit{Medea} but to the 19th-century trilogy, \textit{Das Goldene Vlies}, by Franz Grillparzer. This is a version in which, unlike the ancient versions of Medea, the relationship between Creusa and Medea is particularly important.
parents will react. Medea’s dream is thus unusual among ancient descriptions of dreams in its depiction of a complex human psyche struggling with conflicting emotions.

Medea’s dream and Homer

Similarities have been drawn between Medea’s lovesick emotional disposition in Book 3 of the Argonautica and Homer’s depiction of Penelope in the Odyssey. However, with respect to Medea’s dream in particular, most scholars consider Nausicaa’s dream (Od. 6.25-40) the primary model. This is problematic, since there are some significant differences between the typical Homeric dream and Apollonius’ use of Medea’s dream as a medium of psychological characterization. As I will show in this section, Medea’s dream is best understood as a conflation of Nausicaa’s dream and Penelope’s emotional disposition. By making Medea’s dream a medium of psychological

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10 Fusillo 2001:133-40 *passim* relates the Freudian concept of desire and censorship to Medea’s three monologues in Book 3.

11 Kessels 1978:12-14 warns that one should resist the temptation to impose Freudian theories on Homeric dreams. My reason for drawing the parallel between Freud and Apollonius, however, is precisely to show that in the case of Medea’s dream, Apollonius displays a strikingly modern perspective not found in Homer. This use of Freud to show a modern parallel is quite different from an interpretation of Medea’s dream such as the one by Beye 1982:136, which uses a Freudian-style analysis to interpret the literary significance of Medea’s dream. Cf. Papadopoulou 1997:663 n. 38; Natzel 1992:56-57; Walde 2001:180 n. 17.


13 Hunter 1989:163-64 *ad loc.* considers Homer’s Nausicaa the primary structural model for Medea’s dream passage, but also briefly discusses the importance of Penelope. Barkhuizen 1979:33 asserts that Medea is to be understood as a combination of Circe and Nausicaa. Following Hunter, Clauss 1997:160 primarily emphasizes the importance of Nausicaa as Apollonius’ Homeric model, but does mention Penelope in a note. Knight 1995:224-44, esp. 232-34 discusses correspondences between Nausicaa and Medea at length, but does not mention any other Homeric models in relation to Medea’s dream. Natzel 1992:57-58 emphasizes a number of differences between the dreams of Medea and Nausicaa, but concludes that the reader is intended to judge Medea against the backdrop of Nausicaa. Kessels 1982:159 compares Medea’s reaction to her dream to that of Nausicaa, but does not mention Penelope. Sansone 2000:159-63 admits that Nausicaa is an important influence, but emphasizes that there are other significant similarities with Iphigenia’s dream (IT 42-58) in the overall tone of the dream experience. However, Sansone does not take into consideration the importance of the emotional dispositions of the dreamers as a psychological force. Also, Sansone does not mention Penelope at all.
characterization, Apollonius has reinvented a Homeric dream in a strikingly un-Homeric fashion.

Typically, the Homeric dream tends to be described as a passive experience caused directly by the gods.\textsuperscript{14} A dream figure imparts concrete information, such as a prediction, a warning, or a command, in a straightforward and literal manner. Penelope’s dream about the eagle devouring the geese in Book 19 of the \textit{ Odyssey} is a symbolic prediction of Odysseus’ attack on the suitors, but it nonetheless contains straightforward one-to-one symbolic correspondences.\textsuperscript{15} In Homer, the dreamer’s imagination or emotional state is not depicted as responsible for the dream.\textsuperscript{16}

Nausicaa’s dream is a straightforward epiphany of Athena in disguise. Like Medea’s dream, it has an important narrative function in that it prompts a maiden to meet a hero. However, there is no sense in which the dream is a product of Nausicaa’s emotional disposition nor is it a medium of psychological characterization. Whereas Medea’s dream is not a direct command and no divine agent is mentioned, Nausicaa is visited by a specific goddess and urged with a very specific goal. In this way, Nausicaa’s dream fits the more traditional Homeric model described above. Furthermore, Medea’s dream is specific to Jason and presupposes her own pre-existing passion while Athena urges marriage on Nausicaa who was not previously disposed toward love. Moreover, whereas Medea is awakened by a scream and jumps up in fear, Nausicaa more calmly wakes up with the dawn. In sum, there are almost no similarities in terms of the emotional and psychological experience

\textsuperscript{14} Dodds 1951:104-05 emphasizes the passive and objective nature of Homeric dreams. See Van Lieshout 1980:13-28 for a discussion of passive dreams in Greek literature more generally, but see esp. pp. 13-16 on Homer. According to Van Lieshout, the following Homeric dreams may be considered passive: \textit{Il}. 2.5-84; 23.62-100; \textit{Od}. 4.795-842; 6.13-50; 14.495-501; 20.83-102.

\textsuperscript{15} For a detailed discussion of this passage, see Kessels 1978:91-110. Rankin 1962 discusses the symbolism of the geese and the eagle in relation to other passages within the \textit{ Odyssey}. Also see Kessels 1975.

\textsuperscript{16} Hundt 1934:44-96 proposed the notion in Homer of ‘Innenträume’ (i.e. dreams which are the product of mental experience) and ‘Aussenträume’ (i.e. dreams which are indicative of objective fact). Dodds 1951:122 n. 8 was heavily influenced by Hundt and his use of this terminology, but Kessels 1978:3 and 50 emphatically rejects Hundt’s approach on the basis that this is a modern distinction anachronistically imposed on Homer. See Kessels 1978:165-66 for a comprehensive rejection of this idea; also p. 173 n. 42 and n. 43 for references to scholars whose arguments he has rejected and to passages where Kessels has refuted these kinds of arguments in relation to specific dreams.
of the dreamer, and Nausicaa’s dream contains no emotional conflict.\(^{17}\)

Scholars have insisted on the parallel by claiming that, even though no divine figure is mentioned in relation to Medea’s dream, Apollonius’ language suggests that one is implied.\(^{18}\) However, to make a god directly responsible for the dream is to obscure the complexity of Apollonius’ narrative which is propelled by both divine and psychological phenomena.\(^{19}\) Any correspondences between Medea’s dream and epic convention simply mean that Apollonius has adopted certain aspects of the Homeric tradition and presented them anew.\(^{20}\)

My point in raising objections to the similarities of the dreams is not to undermine the scholars who have drawn the comparison, but to more specifically emphasize the correspondences between the two passages and what can be gained by a consideration of their differences. While the dream passages of Nausicaa and Medea have the same narrative function (i.e. to prompt a maiden to meet a hero), they reflect two different methods of carrying out this purpose. The Homeric passage is straightforward: Athena wants Nausicaa to meet Odysseus; she plants the seed of marriage; and Nausicaa follows suit. Medea’s dream seems to simultaneously encourage and discourage her since it indicates both her desire for Jason and her fear about pursuing that desire. Her passion has come into conflict with her fear of defying her parents. To suggest that the gods caused the dream is to miss the significance of the emotional conflict depicted by the dream.

In order to make sense of Apollonius’ adaptation of Nausicaa’s dream as a model, more attention should be paid to the emotional dilemma expressed by Penelope in \textit{Od}. 19.509-34.\(^{21}\) Ignorant of his identity, Penelope explains to

\(^{17}\) The dreams of Nausicaa and Medea may also be distinguished as epiphany and episode dreams, respectively. See Harris 2009:23-90 on the development of these categories in ancient literature.

\(^{18}\) Campbell 1983:37-39 argues that, while some scholars maintain that Apollonius is breaking with epic convention by not mentioning Hera as the agent, one should understand Hera’s involvement to the extent that the dream still contains many aspects of the epic model that suggest a divine agent. Campbell cites, for instance, the use of adjectives such as θυεροτήτις and ὀλοί, which he thinks are suggestive of divine intervention. Campbell concludes, ‘Dreams cast in this mould are, according to epic practice, visitors sent from a higher power’ (38). Cf. Feeney 1991:89.

\(^{19}\) Walde 2001:178-81 argues that Medea’s dream should not be understood as divinely sent. Walde’s argument against a divine agent rests primarily on the fact that no specific divinity is mentioned, and the idea that the text suggests that it was caused by Medea’s everyday concerns.

\(^{20}\) For a more detailed discussion of the similarities between the dreams of Nausicaa and Medea, see Knight 1995:232-34.

\(^{21}\) See note 13 above.
Odysseus that she is torn between getting remarried and waiting for her husband. This frustration causes her grief day and night: ‘Moreover when night comes and sleep has seized everyone, I lie in bed and closely packed around my heavy heart sharp pains vex me as a cry’ (αὐτὰρ ἔπει νυὲ ἐλθῃ, ἔληοι τε κοίτος ἀπαντάσει, κείμαι ἐν λέκτρῳ, πυκναί δὲ μοι ἄμφ’ ἄδυνον κῆρ / δέξεια μελέδωναι ἄνθρωπον ἐφῄσασθαι, 515-17). There is no reference to a dream, but like Medea, Penelope is deeply troubled as she lies in bed. The similarities between their troubled dispositions is strengthened by the use of the words ἄδυνος and ἔρέθω. Interestingly, Penelope says that sharp pains disturb her, using the same word (ἔρέθω/ἔρεθίς) as is used to describe the effect of Medea’s dream on her in line 618. In isolation, this correspondence would perhaps be insignificant, but in light of the parallel use of ἄδυνος, there seems to be a significant link between these two passages. The word appears in lines 616 and 635 of Medea’s dream, thus framing the passage as a whole and perhaps calling attention to its enigmatic meaning. Apollonius’ use of this word is first of all significant because within both the Iliad and the Odyssey, it is only in this passage that the word is used in a context comparable to the passage from Apollonius. The most common use is to describe a weeping or a wailing. Od. 19.516, on the other hand, is the only passage where it is used in the context of troubled sleep. Rather than describing sleep directly like Apollonius, Homer specifically uses the word to describe Penelope’s κῆρ while she tries to sleep. This can be described as a phenomenon similar to the popular Hellenistic practice of employing Homeric hapaxes. Apollonius has appropriated an uncommon word from Homer and has used it in a way that can be paralleled by only one instance in the Homeric corpus. Apollonius’ use of ἔρέθω and ἄδυνος is most significant.

22 Within Book 3 of the Argonautica, the word also appears at lines 1104 and 748. Its use in the latter passage is noteworthy because it is used to describe the sleep of a woman who has lost her children. This is the only additional instance in the Argonautica where ἄδυνος is used of sleep.

23 E.g. II. 22.430: Τρωῆσιν ἐ’ Ἐκάβη ἄδυνον ἔξημερε γόσσῳ. On the use of ἄδυνος in Homer, see Silk 1983:322-24. Although in certain contexts ἄδυνος may have a specific semantic meaning, Silk explains that, like other poetic archaisms, ἄδυνος is often evocative of various poetic contexts without corresponding to a strict definition. When ἄδυνος has a specific meaning in Homer, it often corresponds to πυκνός in contexts that denote crowded groups of animals, or to describe loud or constant weeping. My choice to translate ἄδυνος as ‘heavy’ in this passage and others is not intended to define its exclusive meaning in a particular passage, but to provide a practical English translation which can be rendered consistently in various contexts in both Homer and Apollonius for the purpose of this article.

24 Cf. II. 16.481 where ἄδυνος is also used to describe someone’s κῆρ.

25 Of course, ἄδυνος is not mentioned in Kyriakou 1995.
for the present study as they emphasize the parallel emotional distress of Medea and Penelope.26

That a line of comparison should be drawn between the emotional dispositions of Penelope and Medea is further supported by Penelope’s description of her conflicted θυμός. Explaining that she is torn between marrying a suitor and remaining steadfast for her husband, she says, ‘thus in two ways my heart is also compelled this way and that’ (ὡς καὶ ἔμοι δίχα θυμός ὀρφεῖται ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα, Od. 19.524). ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα in this context is reminiscent of Medea’s uncertainty after waking up from her dream. Immediately after the dream, she rejects the idea of marriage with Jason and asserts her maidenhood as she considers that the visit of the Argonauts may result in some great misfortune. Then, without explanation she immediately resolves to talk to her sister about helping the heroes in their challenge. Preparing to leave her chambers, she goes back and forth in indecision until she collapses on her bed in despair after the fourth attempt (3.654-55).27 Her wavering movements are described in the same language as Penelope used above to describe her indecision: ‘And she went back out again from inside, and again she withdrew within; in vain her feet were carrying her this way and that’ (ἐκ δὲ πάλιν κεῖν ἐνδόθεν, ἄψ τ’ ἀλέεινεν / εἰςω τημύσω δὲ πόδες φέρον ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα, 3.650-51).28 Here ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα is used to describe the physical expression of her uncertainty as she hesitates before talking to her sister.29 Just as Penelope experienced anguish because she was torn between two choices, so was Medea. Therefore, Medea’s dream may recall the Nausicaa passage in terms of narrative structure, but it is more reminiscent

26 There is also a noteworthy parallel between the language Homer uses to describe dreams which are not true and Medea’s description of her dream to her sister. According to Penelope, dreams which come through the gate of ivory bear ‘idle words’ (ἐπε’ ἀκράντα, Od. 19.565); Medea proclaims that she had the sort of dreams which she wishes the gods would render ‘idle’ (ἀκράντα, A.R. 3.691). The parallel is particularly striking considering that the word only appears three times each in both Homer and Apollonius (Ili. 2.138; Od. 2.202; 19.565; A.R. 1.469; 3.691; 4.387).
27 See Barkhuizen 1979:35 n. 35 on this motif of actions that culminate after the fourth time.
28 Similar constructions with ἐνθα are also used in relation to Medea and her emotional state at A.R. 3.758 and 3.772.
29 See A.R. 3.652-53 where Medea’s conflicted emotions are given physical expression. As Medea hesitates in her, at first unsuccessful, attempt to visit her sister, her movements are described as simultaneously being driven by desire (ἵμερος) and held back by shame (αἴδως).
of Penelope’s conflicted disposition.\textsuperscript{30}

**Medea’s dream and ancient dream theory**

Apollonius’ adaptation of Penelope’s psychological dilemma in the form of Medea’s dream is not simply a literary adaptation, but reflects specific post-Homeric developments regarding the causes of dreams. Medea’s dream is strikingly different from the typical Homeric dream in that Homeric dreams are external messages sent by the gods, while Medea’s dream is presented as an emotional conflict aroused by her own passions. For this reason, Medea’s dream is best explained in terms of later developments in dream theory that assert that dreams do not come from some external divine source, but from within the dreamer.

Before the Classical period, specific theories for the causes of dreams are not extant. In the middle to the late 5th century BCE, the idea that dreams are simply the product of one’s daytime thoughts or concerns emerges and continues through later periods.\textsuperscript{31} Various medical theories and explanations for dreams also emerged in the late 5th or early 4th centuries BCE and were practiced through the time of Galen.\textsuperscript{32} Herophilus of Alexandria (fl. 3rd century BCE) is one medical writer to whom scholars have pointed as a possible influence on Apollonius.\textsuperscript{33} A tripartite dream classification is attributed to Herophilus, which may reflect a synthesis with Stoic ideas.\textsuperscript{34} His

\textsuperscript{30} The phrase εἰνθα καὶ εἰνθα also appears at Il. 24.5 where it is used to describe a frustrated Achilles as he lies sleepless in bed.

\textsuperscript{31} E.g. Hdt. 7.15-16; Empedocles, DK 31 B108; Arist. *Div. somn.* 463a22-32. The idea that dreams could be the by-product of the effect of light on the eyes during the day also emerged around this same time: e.g. Plato, *Ti.* 45b-46a; Arist. *Insomn.* 459a24-462b12.

\textsuperscript{32} The earliest Hippocratic treatises which deal with dreams are *De morbo sacro* and *De diaeta* 4; on these, see Van Lieshout 1980:98-100 and 185-90. On dreams among Roman physicians, see Oberhelman 1993:136-44.

\textsuperscript{33} For a general discussion of Herophilus’ attitude to dreams, see Von Staden 1989:306-09.

\textsuperscript{34} Oberhelman 1993:135-36 considers Herophilus’ classification a synthesis of Stoic and Ps.-Hippocratic ideas. He considers the first and second class Stoic and the third class to be Hippocratic. Von Staden 1989:308-09 considers Herophilus’ classification to be essentially the same as that attributed to Posidonius (Cic. *Div.* 1.64). Blum 1936:69-70 is less eager to link the two systems. He argues that the classification of Herophilus is a distinctly medical version of the Posidonian approach. Schrijvers 1977 has tried to link Herophilus’ tripartite system more closely with Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of τέχνη, φώς, and τύχη, but Von Staden 1989:306-07 rejects this notion.
first two classes of dreams are both considered predictive. One is sent by the
gods, and the other is caused by the soul producing its own predictive
images. Herophilus says the third class of dreams consists of those dreams
that are caused by one’s desires as in the case of lovers who imagine that they
are having sex with their loved ones.\textsuperscript{35} The third class is the one which has
been singled out in an attempt to explain the specific dream theory that
influenced Apollonius in relation to Medea’s dream.\textsuperscript{36} To be sure, it is
relevant to Medea’s dream in that her dream is, in part, an erotic wish-
fulfillment. However, this explanation is not sufficient. Medea’s dream is a
wish-fulfillment produced by her desire for Jason, but this wish is fulfilled
with additional, undesirable complications. In other words, her dream does
not end in a warm embrace as Herophilus’ description of his third class of
dreams suggests.

In order to clarify the relationship between Medea’s dream and post-
Homeric dream theory, I believe more attention should be paid to a broader
philosophical development regarding the effect of the irrational passions
more generally on prophetic dreaming. Plato is the first author whose explicit
statements on this point are extant. In a well-known passage from the
Republic (9.571c-72c), Plato relates the distinction between predictive and
non-predictive dreams to the rational and irrational parts of the soul. In the
context of a discussion about the desires (ἐπιθυμία), it is said that the one
whose rational faculties are stimulated before sleep is more likely to have
predictive dreams, and the one who – perhaps through excessive food or
drink – stimulates the irrational parts of the soul is more prone not only to
non-predictive dreams, but also to shameful images of lust and debauchery.
In this way, Plato asserts a close connection between the passions and the
nature of one’s dreams. Immediately after this passage, Socrates goes on to
explain that he has a more general point: all people have uncouth desires that
are bound to come alive when they sleep (572b). Medea is certainly not
depicted as indulging in excessive food or drink before her dream, but her
dream may be understood as the product of an irrational disposition brought
about by desire and fear.

It seems likely that this passage had a significant influence on later
theories about dreaming. In Cicero’s De divinatione, an important source for
earlier theories of divination, this passage is paraphrased.\textsuperscript{37} It again appears in
Latin translation in a commentary on the Timaeus by the Christian Neo-

\textsuperscript{35} Von Staden 226c (= Ps.-Galen, De historia philosopha 106).

\textsuperscript{36} See Fusillo 1994:95-100 for the most extensive discussion of the relationship
between Medea’s dream and Herophilus’ classification system for dreams. Cf. Fusillo

\textsuperscript{37} Div. 1.60-61.
platonist Calcidius (fl. c. 400 CE). After citing the passage from the Republic, Calcidius goes on to discuss Socrates in the following two sections (254-55) where he explicitly claims that Socrates’ ability to dream prophetically is directly related to his purity of body and soul. Calcidius emphasizes the diversity of dreams and explains that some come about in conjunction with the rational part of the soul either because it is pure and separated from disturbance, or because it is overwhelmed by the passions. Thus there is an important distinction between dreams that are caused by a pure soul and those that are the product of the influence of the passions on the soul.

What the use of this Platonic passage by Cicero and Calcidius has in common is that both cite it in contexts which are heavily influenced directly or indirectly by the Stoic philosopher Posidonius (fl. early 1st century BCE). In other words, it seems likely that the passage from the Republic had already been incorporated into their Stoic sources dealing with the causes of dreams. There is more direct evidence for this in another passage from Cicero’s dialogue, which is also thought to go back to Posidonius. It says that, when one goes to sleep with good thoughts conducive to the tranquility of the soul, one is more likely to have prophetic dreams effectively. Specifically, one is more likely to discern ‘definite and true things’ (certa et vera). The love-struck and tormented Medea certainly did not go to sleep with thoughts conducive to tranquility, and in fact, she is described as seeking sleep to escape her troubles. In Homeric epic, a troubled mind leads to insomnia, as in the case of Penelope; in Apollonian epic, it leads to troubled dreams.

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38 Comm. in Ti. 253.
39 Socratem vero haec evidenter solitum somniare arbitror ex eo, quod tam corporis quam animae puritate totum eiusmod animal viget (Comm. in Ti. 254).
40 Multiformis ergo est ratio somniorum, siquidem sunt quae velut percussa gravis reflexaque mente vestigis doloris penitus insignitas per quiatem refovent imaginates praeterita consternationis, sunt item quae incta cogitationes rationabilis animae partis vel purae atque immunis a perturbatione vel in passionibus posita oborientur, nililique minus quae divinis potestatibus consulentibus praemonstrantur vel etiam poenae loco ob delictum aliquod formata in atrociem et horridam faciem (Comm. in Ti. 256).
41 On the question of Calcidius’ sources, see Blum 1936:58; Waszink 1941; and Kessels 1969:401-11. For an overview of issues relating to Cicero’s sources in the first book of De divinatione, see Wardle 2006:28-36.
42 Div. 1.121 (= Theiler F376): ut igitur qui se tradidit quieti praeparato animo cum bonis cognitionibus tum rebus ad tranquillitatem accommodatis, certa et vera cernit in somnis, sic castus animus purusque vigilantis et ad astrorum et ad avium reliquorumque signorum et ad extorum veritatem est parator. Cf. Div. 1.60.
Based on these Platonic/Stoic ideas, it makes sense that Medea’s disposition before sleep could have primed her for a non-prophetic dream.\textsuperscript{43}

The idea that the passions inhibit predictive dreaming is taken over by a number of later authors who stood in a similar tradition of Stoic dream theory and embody Stoic ideas.\textsuperscript{44} For the purposes of the present discussion, the most important author who was influenced by this idea was the famous dream interpreter Artemidorus of Daldis (fl. 2nd century CE).\textsuperscript{45} Artemidorus primarily provided practical instructions for dream interpretation but also made a couple of comments that reflect his theoretical understanding of the causes of dreams. Artemidorus had three categories of predictive dreams and two categories of non-predictive dreams.\textsuperscript{46} He expresses disregard for the causes of predictive dreams, but does make some comments about the causes of non-predictive dreams.\textsuperscript{47} In contrast to predictive dreams (ὅντα), Artemidorus explains that a non-predictive dream (ἐνόπλον) can be caused by a disturbance relating to the soul or the body. A dream relating to the body may refer, for example, to hunger or a surfeit of food, which may cause someone to dream of eating or of vomiting. An ἐνόπλον with a psychic

\textsuperscript{43} Giangrande 2000:113-14; 2002:353-54 argues that the idea expressed in the Posidonian fragment suggests that one who goes to sleep with disturbing thoughts may have predictive dreams, but they are also likely to be distorted. In other words, Medea’s dream contains elements of truth and falsehood since it is a predictive dream that has been negatively affected by her irrational disposition.

\textsuperscript{44} Philo of Alexandria (fl. 1st century CE) thought that the clarity of one’s prophetic visions was proportional to one’s disposition as a virtuous person (Somn. 2.20). For Philo’s tripartite classification system, see Somn. 1.1-2 and 2.1-4. On the close relationship between Philo and Posidonius in terms of dream classification, see Blum 1936:65-67 and Kessels 1969:396-97. Iamblichus (De mysteriis 3.3.107) says that dream visions will be purer depending on the proximity of the intellectual part of the soul to the divine powers. Synesius (Insomn. sections 5, 1292b-1293a and 10, esp. 1309b) stresses the importance of virtue and moderation for prophetic dreaming. See Pfeffer 1976:81-83 on the relation of these two authors to the Posidonian tradition of dream classification.

\textsuperscript{45} See Blum 1936:52-71 on Artemidorus’ Stoic affiliations. Blum attributes the Stoic influence more to a philosophical koine than to a strict philosophical allegiance, but thinks that his classification system ultimately derived from Posidonius. Cf. Pfeffer 1976:84-88; Kessels 1969:391-96.

\textsuperscript{46} On the specific passages in Artemidorus where these categories are defined, see Blum 1936:53-56. On the development of this specific terminology to describe categories of dreaming, see Behr 1968:176-77.

\textsuperscript{47} Artemidorus (1.6 = Pack 1963:16, lines 10-12) explains that unlike Aristotle, he is not interested in whether the origin of godsent dreams is internal or external to the dreamer.
basis refers, for example, to the experience of dreaming that one is with one’s lover, or of seeing that of which one is afraid.\textsuperscript{48} In a related passage, Artemidorus explicitly relates the effect of the passions and moral virtue to prophetic dreaming:

\begin{quote}
μέμνησο δὲ ὅτι τὸ ἐνυπνήσῃ χρωμένοις ἀγαθῇ καὶ ἐνυπνήσῃ ἄνισοι ὁ δὲ ἐνυπνήσῃ ἄνισοι ἀλλαὶ τῶν ἀλογων φαντασίαι, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἄνευροι καὶ ὃς ἐπί τὸ πλεῖςτον θεωρηματικόν ὁ γὰρ ἐπιθυμοῦσαι αὐτῶν ἢ ψυχῇ ὀυτε φόβος ὀυτε ἔλπίς, καὶ μέντοι καὶ τῶν τῶν σώματος ἡδονῶν ἁρχοῦσι."\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

Remember that for those who lead a good and moral way of life, there are no non-predictive dreams nor any other irrational fantasies, but their dreams are completely predictive and for the most part theorematic.\textsuperscript{50} For their soul does not become turbid because of fears or hopes and indeed they have control even over the pleasures of the body.\textsuperscript{51}

Medea’s dream fits Artemidorus’ concept of non-predictive dreams in that it is the product of psychological and emotional disturbances.\textsuperscript{52} The specific reference to hopes and fears affecting one’s dreams is particularly relevant since, as I have emphasized before, Medea’s dream seems to paradoxically embody her desire for Jason and her anxiety about the potential consequences of pursuing that desire.

As has been noted, Artemidorus’ description of hope and fear causing non-predictive dreams is particularly reminiscent of the Stoic concept of the

\begin{itemize}
\item[48] Artemidorus, 1.1 (= Pack 1963:3-4, lines 9-24 and 1-9).
\item[50] By ‘theorematic’, Artemidorus refers to predictive dreams which correspond literally and exactly to their predictions.
\item[51] Artemidorus may use the term ὄνευροι to refer either specifically to the first class of dreams, or to refer generally to any predictive dream. In the same way, he may use ἐνυπνίην to refer either specifically to the fourth class of dreams, or generally to non-predictive dreams. My translation reflects my understanding that he is here referring generally to predictive and non-predictive dreams.
\item[52] Walde 2001:179 n. 13 incorrectly argues that Medea’s dream cannot be designated an ἐνυπνίην because the dream has too much significance in the context of Book 3 to be a meaningless fantasy. However, as has been shown, an ἐνυπνίην – although it is considered non-predictive – can be caused by one’s physical or emotional disposition. In this way, there is no reason why Medea’s dream cannot be both non-predictive and relate directly to events taking place in her life which have an effect on her emotional state.
\end{itemize}
wise person. According to the Stoics, the one who is truly wise is an embodiment of perfect reason and should be free from the passions. Instead, the wise person should only experience the good emotions (ἐυπάθεια): joy (χαρά), well-wishing (βούλευσίσ), and caution (εὐλάβεια). Interestingly, two of the passions from which the wise person should be free are fear (φόβος) and desire (ἐπιθυμία). The relevance of this to Medea’s dream is obvious in that her dream seems to be particularly marked by the paradoxical combination of her desire for Jason and her fear regarding the possible consequences. Moreover, the combination of these two passions in Medea’s dream may gain further significance from the fact that the Stoics considered desire and fear to be both conflicting and complementary. Desire was understood as an inclination toward some future good and fear as an avoidance of some future evil. By depicting a Medea who displays characteristics contrary to those of the wise person, her irrational disposition is emphasized.

The idea that Medea embodies qualities that are particularly uncharacteristic of the Stoic wise person is not new with Apollonius. Chrysippus actually used Euripides’ depiction of Medea as an example of a disposition antithetical to Stoicism, and it may be that Apollonius was aware of this. In order to explain the seemingly unheroic persona of Jason throughout the Argonautica, it has been suggested that his apparent shortcomings are actually meant to reflect Stoic virtues, which in many ways run counter to Homeric virtue. In the same way, it may be that Medea is intended to contrast with Jason by embodying characteristics that are emphatically non-Stoic. As a manifestation of the irrational passions of desire and fear, her dream contributes to this characterization.

53 Blum 1936:60-62 also specifically connects Artemidorus’ reference above to hope and fear to Plato’s passage (Rep. 571c-72c).
57 Williams 1996 has discussed at great length the ways in which Jason is an embodiment of Stoic virtue and that this helps explain his putative weaknesses when comparing him to Homeric heroes. See esp. pp. 25-28 on the ways in which Jason controls his emotions in the manner of a good Stoic.
58 See Williams 1996:37-39 for a brief discussion of Medea as the anti-Stoic. However, Williams does not mention Medea’s dream.
Conclusion

Although Nausicaa’s dream has the same narrative function as Medea’s dream, Apollonius used Medea’s dream to illustrate an emotional conflict more similar to that experienced by Penelope. This results in a literary conflation in which Penelope is the primary psychological model for Medea’s dream. However, the idea that a dream can illustrate emotional conflict was foreign to the Homeric epics. Whereas Penelope’s frustrations only caused her grief while awake in bed, Medea has a dream which is caused by her frustrations and actually embodies her specific concerns. Apollonius’ ability to represent an emotional conflict in the form of a dream is a product of later developments in dream theory, which suggested that an irrational disposition could cause non-predictive dreams.

Taking into consideration Apollonius’ adaptation of Homeric motifs as well as the relevance of ancient dream theory, there is no need to assume that Medea’s dream is sent from the gods in the strict sense. If it were sent from the gods, it should be a prediction or a command urging her to help Jason. It does contain some elements of prediction in the sense that Medea helps Jason and ends up choosing him over her parents. However, there are many elements which simply do not correspond to what actually happens, and there is nothing in the dream which could not have been foreseen by Medea, given her circumstances. Furthermore, if the dream is understood as coming from the gods at the instigation of Hera, it should be a dream encouraging Medea to help Jason, but this is not the case. If anything, one expects the dream to dissuade her from action considering the fear and grief it caused. Most importantly, considering the developments in ancient dream theory, there is no need for the gods to send a dream since they have already made her fall in love.

Consider the progression of events leading up to the dream. At the very beginning of Book 3, Hera explains to Aphrodite that she wants Eros to inspire Medea with desire so that she will help Jason, and there is, of course, no mention of a dream (84-89). Then, when Jason and the Argonauts arrive, Eros causes the flame of love to swell in Medea, and it is clear that the reader is to understand that she is completely overwhelmed with passion (275-98). After Jason agrees to meet the challenge posed by Aeetes, Medea’s mind is compared to a dream in the way it flutters after Jason (446-47).59 This comparison further suggests an irrational obsession on the part of Medea, which was likely to lead to a non-predictive dream. After the first monologue

59 Cf. 2.197 and 4.877 where similar similes are used. Kessels 1982:157 discusses the simile above in comparison with similar Homeric similes.
(464-70), Medea seeks comfort in a nap and experiences her dreadful dream in which she is confronted by her desire for Jason and fear of her parents’ reaction (616-35).

Within this sequence of events, the dream is best understood as a psychological by-product of Medea’s divinely inspired love for Jason. Therefore, I see no reason to assume that Hera is the cause of the dream. Apollonius’ psychological portrait is more complicated than that: Hera does not have to send the dream, because she caused the flame of love, which caused the irrational disposition, which, in turn, manifests as the dream.

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Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

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