***Ἀγκυλομήτης* Versus *Μῆτις*: What is Bent *Μῆτις*?**

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*Iliad* 23.315-318[[1]](#footnote-1)

**μήτι** τοι δρυτόμος μέγ’ ἀμείνων ἠὲ βίηφι·

**μήτι** δ’ αὖτε κυβερνήτης ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ

νῆα θοὴν ἰθύνει ἐρεχθομένην ἀνέμοισι·

**μήτι** δ’ ἡνίοχος περιγίγνεται ἡνιόχοιο.

By **μῆτις** the wood-cutter is far better than by force. And again by **μῆτις** the helmsman guides a swift ship on the wine-dark sea though it is buffeted by winds. And by **μῆτις** a chariot-driver overcomes a chariot-driver.[[2]](#footnote-2)

*Iliad* 23.322-325

**ὃς δέ κε κέρδεα εἰδῇ** ἐλαύνων ἥσσονας ἵππους,

αἰεὶ τέρμ’ ὁρόων στρέφει ἐγγύθεν, οὐδέ ἑ λήθει

ὅππως τὸ πρῶτον τανύσῃ βοέοισιν ἱμᾶσιν,

ἀλλ’ ἔχει ἀσφαλέως καὶ τὸν προὔχοντα **δοκεύει**.

**But he who knows cunning arts**, although driving inferior horses, wheels his horses near to the turning post, always keeping his eye on it. Nor does he forget how to keep his reins tight from the beginning, but he keeps a straight course and **keeps a close watch** on the one racing in front of him.

*Odyssey* 9.408

‘ὦ φίλοι, Οὖτίς με κτείνει **δόλῳ** οὐδὲ βίηφιν.’

Oh friends, “Nobody” is killing me by **trickery** and not by force.

*Odyssey* 9.453-454

[…] τὸν **ἀνὴρ κακὸς** ἐξαλάωσε

σὺν λυγροῖσ’ ἑτάροισι, δαμασσάμενος φρένας οἴνῳ […]

An **evil man** blinded it (my eye) with his wretched companions, having subdued my wits with wine.

*Theogony* 899-900

ἀλλ’ ἄρα μιν Ζεὺς πρόσθεν ἑὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν,

ὥς οἱ συμφράσσαιτο θεὰ **ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε**.

But then Zeus placed her in his belly first, so that the goddess might contrive with him **both good and evil**.

*Theogony* 159-160

[…] ἡ δ’ ἐντὸς στοναχίζετο Γαῖα πελώρη

στεινομένη, **δολίην** δὲ **κακὴν** ἐπεφράσσατο **τέχνην**.

But monstrous Gaia, stuffed (with her children) groaned within, and she devised a **deceitful and wicked craft**.

*Theogony* 466-467

τῷ ὅ γ’ ἄρ’ οὐκ ἀλαοσκοπιὴν ἔχεν, ἀλλὰ **δοκεύων**

παῖδας ἑοὺς κατέπινε […]

Therefore, at any rate, he did not keep a blind watch, but, **keeping a close watch**, he swallowed his children.

*Theogony* 468-473

ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ Δί’ ἔμελλε θεῶν πατέρ’ ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν

τέξεσθαι, τότ’ ἔπειτα φίλους λιτάνευε τοκῆας

τοὺς αὐτῆς, Γαῖάν τε καὶ Οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,

**μῆτιν συμφράσσασθαι**, ὅπως λελάθοιτο τεκοῦσα

παῖδα φίλον, τείσαιτο δ’ ἐρινῦς πατρὸς ἑοῖο

παίδων θ’ οὓς κατέπινε μέγας Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης.

But when indeed she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods and men, then she entreated her dear parents, Gaia and starry Ouranos, to **contrive a μῆτις** **with her** so that she might escape (Kronos’) notice when she bore her dear child and so that retribution for his father and the children whom he, great Kronos ἀγκυλομήτης, swallowed might be exacted.

*Theogony* 494-496

Γαίης ἐννεσίῃσι πολυφραδέεσσι **δολωθείς**,

ὃν γόνον ἂψ ἀνέηκε μέγας Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης,

**νικηθεὶς τέχνῃσι** βίηφί τε παιδὸς ἑοῖο.

**Beguiled** by the eloquent promptings of Gaia, great Kronos ἀγκυλομήτης spat out his offspring, **having been conquered by the craft** and might of his child.

*Theogony* 553-555

χώσατο δὲ φρένας ἀμφί, χόλος δέ μιν ἵκετο θυμόν,

ὡς ἴδεν ὀστέα λευκὰ βοὸς **δολίῃ** ἐπὶ **τέχνῃ**.

And he was angry about his wits, and anger came upon his heart when he saw the white bones of the ox [laid out] with **deceitful craft**.

*Theogony* 570, 589

αὐτίκα δ’ ἀντὶ πυρὸς τεῦξεν **κακὸν** ἀνθρώποισι

[…]

θαῦμα δ’ ἔχ’ ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητούς τ’ ἀνθρώπους,

ὡς εἶδον **δόλον αἰπύν**, ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισιν.

But straightaway in return for fire he fashioned an **evil** for men […] And wonder held both the immortal gods and mortal men when they saw the shear **work of trickery**, not to be managed by men.

"Crooked of counsel” 🡺 (Montanari, 2015)

“One who possesses wily cunning” 🡺 (Detienne and Vernant, 1978)

“One who thinks crooked thoughts” 🡺 (Beekes, 2009)

*Theogony* 886, 889-890

Ζεὺς δὲ θεῶν βασιλεὺς πρώτην ἄλοχον θέτο Μῆτιν

[…]

τότ’ ἔπειτα δόλῳ φρένας ἐξαπατήσας

αἱμυλίοισι λόγοισιν ἑὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν […]

And Zeus king of the gods took Μῆτις as his first wife […] then, having deceived her wits with trickery, he put her in his belly with wily words.

*Iliad* 18.429-431

Ἥφαιστ’, ἦ ἄρα δή τις, ὅσαι θεαί εἰσ’ ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ,

τοσσάδ’ ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ᾗσιν ἀνέσχετο κήδεα λυγρὰ (430)

ὅσσ’ ἐμοὶ ἐκ πασέων Κρονίδης Ζεὺς ἄλγε’ ἔδωκεν;

Hephaistos, truly then, is there anyone of all the goddesses, as many as are on Olympus, who has endured the sorts of wretched woes in her wits which Zeus son of Kronos gave to me?

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1. I draw on (Detienne and Vernant, 1978) heavily for many of my observations on μῆτις in *Iliad* 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. All translations are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)