

The epic of Apollonius is concerned with issues of Greek identity and Hellenistic cultural reproduction. In the fourth book of the *Argonautica*, as I will argue, Apollonius explores these issues in a previously unnoticed way, by depicting the development of a Hellenic society, complete with foundational sacrifice and civic rituals. One marker of this new society is the relationships between the previously male-only Argonauts and the shipmates brought aboard in Book 4, Medea and her handmaids.

Work on Apollonius has not previously focused on the complex of homosocial and heterosocial interactions in his epic. Scholarship on colonialist features of Alexandrian literature (Stephens 2003) and on homosociality in classical literature (Rabinowitz and Auanger 2002, King 2006) form an important background to my argument. My goal is to provide a new reading of Book 4 that uncovers its transformation of the Argonauts from homosocial band to a functioning microcosm of Greek society.

Apollonius initially constructs his Argonauts as an all-male crew, a *Männerbund* (for the concept, see recently Bremmer 1990). He specifically excludes Atalanta from the journey because desire for her could cause strife among the heroes (1.769–773). In the first book, therefore, from the journey's inception to the end of Jason's contest against Aeetes, the Argonauts function as a homosocial group, mostly separate from interactions with women. The major exception to this assessment is the episode of the Lemnian women (1.608–910); but this episode is aberrant and impermanent, and it takes place away from the ship, whose all-male society is maintained by Heracles and the other sailors with him.

In the fourth book of the epic, however, the social dynamics change. When Medea comes aboard the *Argo*, the environment changes from male homosocial companionship and competition to heterosocial interaction and, I argue, the *Argo* becomes the scene for the creation of a Hellenic society over the course of the final book. With Medea on the ship, Apollonius has created a social situation that features marriage (that of Medea and Jason, a ceremony important to the progression of Book 4) and kinship (Medea's nephews are on board with her)—and, because of her leadership during the Talos episode, Medea is integrated as an active member of the *Argo*'s crew.

When the Argonauts are stranded on the sands of Libya (4.1128–1316), they abandon themselves to their fate in a markedly antisocial way: the men separate from Medea, her handmaids, and even from each other as they go off to die. After they are saved from death by the Libyan ἠρῶσσαί (1309, 1323), though, the passengers of the *Argo* act more and more as a society: they conduct a proper funeral (including ritual mourning by the women) for the seer Mopsus (1502–1536), they conduct a proper sacrifice to Apollo (1714–1720), and they perform an aetiological ritual on Anaphe that integrates the women through their *aiskhrologia* (1720–1730).

This significant shift in perception, from a band of heroes to heterosocial society, is further noteworthy because it is characterized as Hellenic, not Colchian. Medea's handmaids are Greek, and are gifts from Arete, whom Apollonius depicts as a very Greek queen. Medea's nephews, too, are half-Greek. And the rituals that the company of the *Argo* performs—as well as the aetiological traditions they found (e.g., 4.1767–1772)—are also Greek. As women are incorporated with the Argonauts, non-Greek is assimilated by Greek (cf. Stephens 2003: 174) in a project of (literal) cultural foundation.

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