

Real Women in the Scholia on Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*

Thirty examples of misogynistic comments found in *Iliad* scholia, primarily the bT-scholia, praise the verisimilitude of passages that depict female characters (usually Hera during her quarrels with Zeus) as selfish, untrustworthy, suspicious, and argumentative (de Jong 1991). Such generalizing misogynistic stereotypes about the γυναῖκεῖον ἦθος are largely absent from the scholia *vetera* on the *Odyssey* as well as Attic tragedy (largely limited to glosses of what, for example, Eteocles means in his rant against these particular Theban women). However, as I will show in this paper, several *Argonautica* scholia adopt a moralizing tone that is similar to that of the Homeric scholia. Such judgments are much less common in the *Argonautica* scholia for a number of possible reasons, not least being the blurring of lines between scholarship and poetry in the Hellenistic period: the narrator's condemnation (*Argon.* 1.616) of the women of Lemnos no doubt simulates and possibly anticipates the judgments of a scholarly audience (Goldhill 1991, Morrison 2007). However, the *Argonautica* scholia do not, like the narrator, condemn the exceptionally bad behavior of female characters. Rather, they follow the *Iliad* scholia in that they (1) look beyond the poem, praising the poet for accurately depicting “what is typical of women” and (2) limit condemnation to what are described as normative weaknesses: women of Iolkos and Lemnos are said to be superstitious, excessively religious, and fond of trivial things (schol. *Argon.* 1.247—49a; 1.721—22; 1.885).

Most of the bT or so-called exegetical scholia to the *Iliad* apparently date to the end of the Hellenistic period and the first two centuries after, and are thus roughly contemporaneous with the *Argonautica* scholia. These commentaries are enlightening inasmuch as they respond to problems of textual criticism, lexicography, and grammatical usage as well as a wide range of topics in science, geography, history, and so forth. They represent not only what a relatively

contemporary audience might wish to know or be expected to ask about a passage, but also the subjective biases of an audience professionally defined and implicitly constructed as knowledgeable. Nünlist 2009 examines the scholiasts' sensitivity to distinctions that are also the concern of modern literary criticism, such as levels of focalization (narrator-text vs. speeches), embedded focalization (a character's view represented in the narrator text). He shows that the scholia are marked not only by a strong concern with moral questions and commonsensical argumentation, but also by conservatism, Greek chauvinism, and misogyny (13-14). Certain actions and statements are said to be "typical of women," without regard for other significant characteristics whether general (ethnicity, age, health, wealth, social standing) or particular (this one figure at this one time). Such gaps between specific narrative contexts and what is typified as universal behavior are very much of interest to me not simply as proof of misogynistic tendencies but as evidence of how such analysis contributed to the scholarly institution of poetic interpretation.

The focus in both *Argonautica* and the *Iliad* scholia on epic verisimilitude, here defined as consistency with what is seen as true in general (in contrast to what is true but atypical or anomalous) also parallels and is perhaps an exegetical extension of the Alexandrian interest in analogy and grammatical patterns. The atypical and anomalous does not entirely escape censure, of course, but such criticism is not moral but rather addresses rhetorical figures that miss the normative mark (schol. *Argon.* 1.879-83d).

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