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Preferred Panel: Greek and Roman Epic

Title: "In Bed with Hera: Intercession in Apollonius' *Argonautica*"

Apollonius revises the Homeric portrait of the Phaeacian monarchy in a number of important ways. Apollonius' Arete intercedes only privately on behalf of her favorites and does not engage, as does the Homeric Arete, in public oration. She is Alcinous' most trusted advisor, and their private conversation is the dramatic keystone of the episode. Both monarchs are praised for the resolution of the Colchian conflict, but for Apollonius, and perhaps for the early Ptolemies as well, the influence of an ideal queen is to be exercised from behind the throne, rather than openly in the manner of the Homeric Arete. The political force of this parallel between the Ptolemies and the Phaeacian monarchs is not entirely certain, but while the precise nature or extent of Arsinoë's power cannot be determined through an examination of epic poetry, Apollonius' portrait of Arete implies at the very least that Arsinoë's policies and recommendations were biased toward those who sought her favor, and that the *Argonautica* enlists a traditional Homeric episode in order to allude to channels of power in the Ptolemaic court.

This paper will argue that Arete's behavior in the *Argonautica* offers an idealized image of Arsinoë in much the same way that the portrait of Alcinous reflects Philadelphus' self-presentation as a pious and diplomatic king who resorts to force only as a last resort. The scholarly debate concerning the historical evidence for Arsinoë's political role serves as the foundation for a literary analysis of Arete's intervention in Book 4. I will focus on how Apollonius (in contrast to Homer) presents marriage as a constraint on the exercise of royal female power. Arete, at Hera's suggestion, is able to maneuver on behalf of her favorites, yet her influence is held in check by her marital status—much like that of Hera and, by extension, that of Arsinoë. This interpretation has implications for our understanding of Medea (in Apollonius and Euripides alike), who is, until Arete's intercession, dangerously knowledgeable, infatuated, and unmarried.

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