

IPHIAS: APOLLONIUS RHODIUS, *ARGONAUTICA* 1.311–16¹

As an Apollo-like (1.307–9)² Jason leaves home to start the long journey in quest of the Golden Fleece a strange incident occurs:

τῷ δὲ ξύμβλητο γεραιή
'Ιφιάς 'Αρτέμιδος πολυόχου ἀρήτιρα,
καί μιν δεξιτερῆς χειρὸς κύσεν· οὐδέ τι φάσθαι
ἔμπης ἰεμένη δύνατο προθέοντος ὁμίλου,
ἀλλ' ἥ μὲν λίπετ' αὐτὴ παρακλιδόν, οἷα γεραιή
ὀπλοτέρων, ὃ δὲ πολλὸν ἀποπλαγχθεὶς ἐλιάσθη.

(1.311–16)

The first thing to be said about this scene is that it is almost certainly an invention of Apollonius Rhodius.³ Iphias appears in no other version of the Argonautic saga and suggestions that Apollonius had a model in a lost tragedy⁴ are based on no good evidence.⁵ As for the incident itself, it is the silence of the old woman which has attracted the attention of scholars. Wilamowitz⁶ stated that Iphias was unable to speak because of emotion but there is nothing in the text to support this view.⁷ Nor is there any textual authority for Fusillo's argument⁸ that Jason's beauty 'provoca l'affollamento' in Iphias. Apollonius simply says that the aged priestess of Artemis kissed Jason's right hand⁹ and tried to speak to him but was unable to do so because of the onward rush of the crowd. The ancient scholia (ad 1.311–12b) explain the significance of the meeting as follows:

τοῦτο σύμβολον πρὸς τὸ καταγωνίσασθαι τὸν ἄθλον, ὅτι τε πρεσβυτέρα καὶ ὅτι ἰέρεια.

The figure of the priest or priestess was highly respected in Greek religious thought¹⁰ and so such a meeting, such a σύμβολος,¹¹ could easily be considered a good omen.¹²

¹ I would like to thank A. M. Wilson, J. L. Moles and D. C. Feeney for much advice and encouragement. It should not be assumed that they agree with everything I have written. The faults which remain in this article are entirely my own responsibility.

² Unless stated otherwise all references are to the *Argonautica*.

³ See P. Händel, *Beobachtungen zur epischen Technik des Apollonios Rhodios*, *Zetemata* 7 (Munich, 1954), p. 46; M. Fusillo, *Il Tempo delle Argonautiche*, *Filologia e Critica* 49 (Rome, 1985), p. 270.

⁴ See F. Stoessl, *Apollonios Rhodios, Interpretationen zur Erzählungskunst und Quellenverwertung* (Bern/Leipzig, 1941), pp. 61–70 on a hypothetical Aeschylean model.

⁵ See H. Herter, 'Bericht über die Literatur zur hellenistischen Dichtung seit dem Jahre 1921, II. Teil: Apollonios von Rhodos', *JAW* 285 (1944–55), 341; S. Radt, *TrGF*, iii (Göttingen, 1985), p. 135.

⁶ *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* (Berlin, 1924), ii.219.

⁷ See Herter, art. cit. (n. 5), 342.

⁸ Fusillo, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 270.

⁹ This act is interpreted as a gesture of farewell by C. Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig, 1890), p. 166 n. 11 and F. Grajew, *Untersuchungen über die Bedeutung der Gebärden in der griechischen Epik*, Diss. Freiburg i. Br. (Berlin, 1934), p. 46.

¹⁰ See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, MA, 1985), p. 97 = *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 161.

¹¹ See Burkert, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 112 and p. 392 n. 23 = op. cit., p. 182 on the way in which such an encounter could be taken as an omen.

¹² The statement of the scholiast is echoed by F. Vian and E. Delage, *Apollonios de Rhodes, Argonautiques* (Paris, 1975–81), i.13, where the Iphias scene is 'l'annonce des signes favorables qui marqueront le départ'.

Apollonius, however, concentrates on the fact that Iphias fails to make verbal contact with Jason. The obvious question is, what did she want to say?

The connection between wisdom and old age is a commonplace of Greek thought.¹³ In the *Argonautica* itself, for example, the aged Polyxo advises the Lemnian women (1.668–96) and the old prophet Phineus gives invaluable advice to the Argonauts (2.178–425)¹⁴. The aged Iphias is certainly comparable¹⁵ and the parallel suggests that she too is capable of giving prophetic advice. The wider narrative context in which the Iphias scene is set contains many references to prophecy, as is natural prior to the setting out on such a great venture. The women of Iolcus in general and Alcimedea in particular foresee nothing but disaster from the expedition but Jason recalls the favourable oracles given by Apollo at Pytho (1.301–2; cf. 1.208–10; 412–13) and tells his mother not to be ‘a bird of ill-omen for the ship’ (1.304). Immediately after speaking these words he is compared to Apollo on his way, among other places, to Pytho (1.308). Soon after, the prophet Idmon foretells the eventual success of the expedition, naming Apollo as the source of his knowledge (1.439–41). It is thus in no way out of keeping with the overall tenor of this section of the poem to see Iphias as a priestess capable of advising Jason about what lies ahead of him. Indeed, as the priestess of Artemis ‘protectress of the city’ (1.312) she might well be expected to play a protective role towards the young citizen just as he is about to leave the πόλις (1.317ff.). Furthermore, the words used to describe the meeting with Jason contain a significant Homeric reference. Apollonius’ τῷ δὲ ξύμβλητο γεραιή | Ἰφιδῆς... (1.311–12) alludes to *Il.* 14.39–40 where Nestor meets Diomedes, Agamemnon and Odysseus, ὁ δὲ ξύμβλητο γεραιός | Νέστωρ...¹⁶ Nestor is the archetypal figure of the aged counsellor in Greek literature¹⁷ and such is his role from early on in the *Iliad*.¹⁸ The allusion strongly supports the view that Iphias should be considered as one of this group of aged counsellors, despite the fact that she fails to give the advice she wanted to transmit.

The fact that Iphias does not utter a single word makes it difficult to go further than this in trying to answer the question, what did she want to say? Would she, as priestess of Artemis, have given powerful support to the favourable signs already given by Apollo? Perhaps. Or would she, like Alcimedea, have been a pessimistic bird of ill-omen for the expedition? Probably not, given that Artemis is explicitly named as ‘protectress of the city’. Advice, however, can be both helpful and unwelcome. Idmon soon after (1.440–2), predicts eventual success for the expedition but only after countless trials. The prophecy of Phineus in book two is certainly most helpful but Jason’s immediate reaction to it is to fall into deep depression (2.408–18). Would Iphias’ words have had a similarly two-edged effect? It is impossible to say but the important fact is that the way in which Apollonius describes the incident involving Jason and Iphias concentrates all the attention on the fact that there is no

¹³ See J. G. F. Powell, *Cicero, Cato Maior de Senectute*, Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 28 (Cambridge, 1988), p. 147.

¹⁴ Polyxo and Phineus are compared by P. A. Hübscher, *Die Charakteristik der Personen in Apollonios’ Argonautika* (Diss. Freiburg, Schweiz, 1940), pp. 69–70.

¹⁵ Various features of the descriptions of old age in all three of these characters are compared by G. Huber, *Lebensschilderung und Kleinmalerei im Hellenistischen Epos*, Diss. Basel (Solothurn, 1926), pp. 72–3 and G. Zanker, *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry: a Literature and its Audience* (London, 1987), pp. 71; 208.

¹⁶ The imitation is noted by A. Ardizzoni, *Le Argonautiche, Libro I* (Rome, 1967), ad loc.; cf. M. Campbell, *Echoes and Imitations of Early Epic in Apollonius Rhodius*, Mnemosyne Suppl. 72 (Leiden, 1981), p. 6.

¹⁷ See *RE* xvii. 1 col. 120.

¹⁸ See G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad, A Commentary, Books 1–4* (Cambridge, 1985), ad *Il.* 1.247.

communication between them. The way in which the little scene unfolds thus forces the reader to ask what Iphias might have said in an attempt to fill the gap left by her silence. The crucial moment of departure is thus marked by uncertainty and doubt as well as by the brilliant image of Jason as Apollo and the appearance of the priestess of 'Artemis protectress of the city'. The hero is compared to Apollo, the god of prophecy, just at the moment when he fails to receive prophetic advice from Iphias.

Just at the moment of his departure from home, therefore, Jason is approached by a priestess who tries to give him some words of advice but is unable to do so. As with the question concerning the nature of Iphias' unspoken prophecy, that is, would it have been optimistic, pessimistic, or both, there are different ways of interpreting Jason's role in this scene. It can be argued that Apollonius here takes care to absolve Jason of any suspicion of blame for ignoring the priestess by emphasizing the movement of the crowd (*προθέοντος όμύλου*, 1.314) and by using the passive *ἀποπλᾶγχθεις* (1.316) to describe him being led away.¹⁹ F. Vian's translation of line 316 expresses this: 'et lui, entraîné au loin, se trouva séparé d'elle'. On the other hand, it might also be argued that Jason, as the leader of the crowd, unhesitatingly passes by an old woman who tries to speak to him and who makes what may be seen as an act of reverence²⁰ or even as a supplicatory gesture²¹ by kissing his hand. The generalising remark of lines 315–16, that Iphias is left behind 'as the old are by the young' can easily be read as being critical of brash youth in general and Jason in particular, as the hero fails to pay due attention to an aged priestess and passes on his way leaving her in the wake of his headlong march. The verb *ἀποπλᾶγχθεις* can also have an active sense of 'wandering away from' (cf. *Od.* 8.573; 15.382) and R. Seaton's translation²² of line 316, 'and he passed on and was gone', which brings out the active role of Jason, is just as valid as Vian's rendering. In fact, on the three occasions on which Apollonius employs this verb in the passive voice²³ the sense is that of 'going away from' or 'leaving behind' (*Arg.* 1.1325; 2.774, 957). This reading would cohere nicely with Idas' dismissal of Idmon soon after, when another prophet receives ill-treatment from an over-confident crew-member (1.485–91). As before, the doubt and ambiguity are surely deliberate on Apollonius' part.²⁴ Just as he gives no information about exactly what Iphias wanted to say, so he leaves open the question of Jason's responsibility for the lack of communication with the old woman. The strongest impression left on the reader remains that of an opportunity missed, of what might have been. The scene does indeed have a strangely touching,²⁵ melancholic²⁶ quality as the apparent optimism of the departure scene is tarnished by the unresolved questions raised by the silence of Iphias.

There are other features of these few lines which deserve rather more attention than they have so far received from readers of the *Argonautica*. Apart from the fact that she is old, the only other thing we are told about Iphias is that she is 'a priestess of Artemis protectress of the city'. This mention of Artemis is of particular interest and

¹⁹ For this passive usage see Empedocles, fr. 22.3, DK (=fr. 25, Wright).

²⁰ See Sittl, op. cit. (n. 9), p. 41.

²¹ For the kissing of the hand as an act of supplication see *Il.* 24.478; 506 and J. Gould, 'Hiketeia', *JHS* 93 (1973), 77; 96; cf. Euripides, *H.F.* 1206–10, *I.A.* 909; Plutarch, *Brut.* 17.2.

²² Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1912).

²³ Apollonius is in fact the only writer to use the verb in the active voice. See Ardizzoni, op. cit. (n. 16), ad *Arg.* 1.1220.

²⁴ Not for the last time in the poem. On Apollonius' ambiguous presentation of Jason see the pertinent remarks of R. Hunter, 'Short on Heroics: Jason in the *Argonautica*', *CQ* 38 (1988), 443–4.

²⁵ See Zanker, op. cit. (n. 15), p. 71.

²⁶ C. R. Beye, 'Jason as Love-Hero in Apollonius' *Argonautica*', *GRBS* 10 (1969), 41–2, notes the sadness of the scene.

assumes considerable importance simply from the fact that it is one of only two facts about Iphias given by the poet. It is of interest to ask why Artemis in particular should be named here, keeping in mind that the scene in question is almost certainly an invention of Apollonius²⁷ and so the choice of goddess is likely to have been made carefully for special reasons and with particular associations in mind, rather than being simply a name drawn at random from the heavenly pantheon.

One detail concerning this 'Artemis protectress of the city' (1.312) can be easily explained. The city in question is, of course, Iolcus. The point is made explicitly soon after when, as the Argo sails out of the gulf of Pagasae, past Cape Artemision,²⁸ Orpheus sings a hymn in honour of Artemis ἥ κείνας σκοπιάς ἄλως ἀμφιέπεσκεν | ῥυομένη καὶ γαίαν Ἰωλκίδα (1.571–2).²⁹ A priestess of Artemis approaches Jason in order to attempt to give him some advice just as he leaves home and Orpheus hymns Artemis as the ship sails away from Pagasae. The goddess is thus intimately associated with the departure of the Argonauts. It is of course striking that Orpheus invokes that very goddess whose priestess tried to help earlier. Artemis is named as 'protectress of the city' and Νηοσσόον,³⁰ and there is an obviously beneficent air about her presence,³¹ but no help or protection is actually received by the Argonauts.

There are further ways of looking at the function of Artemis in the Iphias scene. It is noteworthy that the priestess of 'Artemis protectress of the city' appears when Jason is about to leave the πόλιος εὐδμήτους ... ἀγνιάς (1.317). Artemis is closely associated with this liminal stage between the city and the land outside it³² and in leaving the city Jason enters the realm of Artemis, the land beyond the city where the huntress roams. This movement, this transition, marks a most important point in the adventure of Jason. The young man here leaves his home and parents behind, departs from his city and sets off on a long and dangerous journey into unknown territories. This is clearly a vital stage in his life, a moment when he leaves the maternal protection represented by Alcimedē (1.261–305) and assumes certain responsibilities on his own account. As he leaves his aged parents and immediately after by-passes Iphias³³ and sets off to meet his youthful companions near the ship there is a clear division between the young who set out and the old who are left behind. This tension

²⁷ It is a common motif in folklore that the hero receives help from an old woman (see S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Copenhagen, 1955–8), N. 825.3) and so the Iphias scene might possibly be seen in this context since she tries to help Jason. There is the possibility, therefore, that an early version of the Argonautic saga contained a scene or scenes in which an old woman helped Jason to win the Fleece. Whether such a model was available to Apollonius is at least doubtful and this whole area is such a vague and poorly documented one that it is wise not to indulge in speculation. For all practical purposes it can almost certainly be assumed that the Iphias scene as we have it originated in the mind of Apollonius.

²⁸ On the geographical detail see the ancient scholia ed. C. Wendel (Berlin, 1934), ad 1.571 and H. Fränkel, *Noten zu den Argonautika des Apollonios Rhodios* (Munich, 1968), p. 87 n. 163.

²⁹ On the link between the two passages see H. de La Ville de Mirmont, *Apollonios de Rhodes et Virgile: La Mythologie et les Dieux dans les Argonautiques et dans l'Énéide* (Paris, 1894), pp. 534–6.

³⁰ On the meaning of this word see the scholia ad 1.570 and G. W. Mooney, *The Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius, Edited with Introduction and Commentary* (Dublin, 1912), ad loc. The parallel with πολυόχου favours the translation 'protectress of ships' rather than 'driver of ships', i.e. the word comes from σώζειν rather than σεύειν.

³¹ See R. Roux, *Le Problème des Argonautes* (Paris, 1949), pp. 140–1.

³² See Burkert, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 150 = op. cit., p. 235.

³³ On the links between the scenes involving Alcimedē and Iphias see A. Hurst, *Apollonios de Rhodes, Manière et Cohérence: Contribution à l'Etude de l'Esthétique Alexandrine*, *Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana* 8 (Rome, 1967), pp. 49–50; Vian, op. cit. (n. 12), i.13; Fusillo, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 270. The closeness of the two scenes involving Alcimedē and Iphias underlines the separation between Jason and the world of his elders.

between youth and age is a recurrent theme in the poem.³⁴ We have already seen how the old are associated with wisdom and the giving of advice, while the youthful Argonauts painfully attempt to win and return home with the Fleece. As far as Jason himself is concerned, it is obvious that he undergoes a process of education and maturation in Apollonius' version of the story.³⁵ The young man who passes by Iphias, is at least partly over-shadowed by Heracles, accidentally kills Cyzicus and who hesitantly makes his way towards Colchis is rather different from the figure who wins over Medea, who in the full flush of success rouses his companions to begin the journey home in a strong speech, who successfully and ruthlessly dupes Apsyrtus and returns safely with the Fleece. This departure scene is thus a highly significant moment in the poem.

So much can be gleaned from a careful reading of the *Argonautica* itself. It is tempting, however, to go a step further and to place these events in the wider context of certain cultural norms and religious practices of the Greek world. There is clear evidence to show that Artemis was intimately associated with initiation rites in Greek religious thought and that it was she who presided over the transition from childhood to maturity in both young boys and girls.³⁶ Given the significance, therefore, of the moment of Jason's departure from home as discussed above, it is surely no coincidence that the old woman who comes to meet him is a priestess of Artemis. As the young hero begins the journey³⁷ which will lead to the assumption of full manly and heroic achievement in the winning of the Golden Fleece it is the goddess who is most closely connected with the *rites de passage* undergone by young men and women between puberty and full entry into adulthood who is named.

It might seem misguided to try to interpret a passage of Apollonius' poem in terms of religious associations which were already ancient long before the poet was born. It is certainly to be stressed that initiation patterns represent no interpretative key to the study of the work as a whole and that the poem cannot be profitably approached exclusively from this angle. Nevertheless, both F. Graf³⁸ and R. Hunter³⁹ have

³⁴ See 1.269–75 where Alcimed embracing Jason is compared to a young girl embracing her aged nurse. The reversal of the narrative situation in the simile, with the old woman being compared to a *κούρη*, lays great emphasis on the problem of the relationship between the generations (see D. N. Levin, *Apollonius' Argonautica Re-examined: the Neglected First and Second Books*, Mnemosyne Suppl. 13 (Leiden, 1971), pp. 42–3). For a similarly bizarre mingling of youth and age compare the grey-haired virgins at 1.671–2. As well as the episodes involving Polyxo and Phineus already mentioned, see also the catalogue of the Argonauts where the youthfulness of the majority of the crew is an important aspect of the identity of the group as a whole (see Roux, op. cit. [n. 31], pp. 137–9; Herter, art. cit. [n. 5], 294; Fränkel, op. cit. [n. 28], p. 44; Vian, op. cit. [n. 12], i.10). Stress is laid on the youth of Cyzicus and Cleite and it is an important feature of their tragedy (1.971–9). Polydeuces' youthfulness is emphasized in the account of the fight with the older Amycus (2.43–4). Throughout books 3 and 4 the relationship between Medea and her father Aeetes is of the greatest importance.

³⁵ See G. Lawall, 'Apollonius' *Argonautica*: Jason as Anti-Hero,' *YCS* 19 (1966), 148–69.

³⁶ See *RE* ii.1 col. 1346; C. Calame, *Les Choeurs des jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque* (Rome, 1977), pp. 174–90; H. Lloyd-Jones, 'Artemis and Iphigeneia', *JHS* 103 (1983), 98–101; F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana 21 (Rome, 1985), p. 249; J.-P. Vernant, 'Artémis et le sacrifice préliminaire au combat', *REG* 101 (1988), 223; K. Dowden, *Death and the Maiden* (London, 1989), *passim*.

³⁷ Clearly relevant in this context is the comparison between Jason and Apollo, the model *κούρος*, and the choice of the word *ὀπλοτέρων* (1.316) for the youth on the way to full hoplite status. See Hunter, art. cit. (n. 24), 450–2.

³⁸ Orpheus: 'A Poet among Men', in J. Bremmer, *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London, 1987), pp. 95–9.

³⁹ Hunter, art. cit. (n. 24), 450–2; *Apollonius Rhodius, Argonautica Book Three* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 30–1.

recently persuasively argued that such initiation rituals in Greek religion are relevant to the understanding of individual characters and scenes in the poem and it is surely difficult to deny Apollonius any awareness of such religious customs and associations. The same is true of Pindar and his version of the story of the Argonauts. When he describes Jason's arrival in Iolcus as a young man and his appearance as he prepares to face Pelias, 'the whole scene takes on the character of a 'Reifeprüfung' or *rite de passage*', as one recent critic has written.⁴⁰ There is surely something to be said for seeing the Argonautic saga in this light at least on the limited level of certain selected points in the story.

This particular function of Artemis will be discussed again below in connection with the role of Medea in the third book. The erotic interest which there becomes central to the story is also relevant to our concerns here. At the moment of departure it is a priestess of Artemis who approaches Jason but as the story develops Jason will prove himself to be a 'love-hero',⁴¹ whose success depends on Aphrodite. This point is made by Phineus who says:

ἀλλὰ, φίλοι, φράζεσθε θεᾶς δολόεσσαν ἄρωγῇν
Κύπριδος, ἐν γὰρ τῇ κλυτὰ πείρατα κείται ἀέθλου. (2.423–4)

In book three these words will come often to mind (e.g. 3.548–54) and the role of Aphrodite there requires no elucidation here. The tension between the domains of Artemis and Aphrodite, best known from Euripides' *Hippolytus*, finds expression most clearly at three points in the poem. First of all at 1.769–73 when Apollonius says that Atalanta would have been one of the crew but for the fact that Jason feared that problems might arise *φιλότητος ἔκητι* (1.773). Here we find a woman who closely connected the Artemisian ideal of the virgin huntress and also the power of love as a destructive force. Soon after, in the Hylas episode, one nymph is struck by the power of Aphrodite (1.1232–3) while her sister-nymphs celebrate Artemis (1.1222–7).⁴² Finally, in the Medea–Artemis simile at 3.876–84 Apollonius imitates the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* in describing certain aspects of Artemis. As R. Hunter⁴³ remarks, the echo 'shows that there is more to Medea than just virginal beauty'. She is compared to Artemis while on her way to meet Jason with whom, thanks to the power of Aphrodite, she is deeply in love. At this crucial moment she seems to embody aspects of both goddesses. All this might seem to have little to do with Iphias but the old woman can be shown to be closely linked to Medea.

Iphias is an *ἀρήτειρα* (1.312). This rare word⁴⁴ occurs twice in the poem. At the moment when she makes her first real entry into the action of the poem⁴⁵ Medea is described as follows:

Ἐκάτης δὲ πανήμερος ἀμφεπονείτο
νηόν, ἐπεὶ ῥα θεῆς αὐτὴ πέλεν ἀρήτειρα (3.251–2)

⁴⁰ B. K. Braswell, *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar* (Berlin and New York, 1988), ad 83–5. Cf. Hunter, op. cit. (1988), p. 450.

⁴¹ See C. R. Beye, 'Jason as Love-Hero in Apollonius' *Argonautica*', *GRBS* 10 (1969), 31–55; G. Zanker, 'The Love Theme in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*', *WS* 13 (1979), 52–75.

⁴² See Levin, op. cit. (n. 34), p. 117. I intend to discuss the relevance of the Atalanta and Hylas episodes to the poem as a whole in a forthcoming article.

⁴³ op. cit. (n. 39), ad 883–4; cf. M. Campbell, *Studies in the Third Book of Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica*, *Altertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien* 9 (Hildesheim, 1983), pp. 58–9.

⁴⁴ See A. W. Bulloch, 'Callimachus' Erysichthon, Homer and Apollonius Rhodius', *AJP* 98 (1977), 103.

⁴⁵ Up to this point Medea has only been mentioned by name in the proem to book 3 and been talked about by Hera and Aphrodite (3.3, 27, 86, 142, 153).

Iphias being a priestess of Artemis, and Medea a priestess of Hecate, the two women are in a sense priestesses of the same goddess since Artemis and Hecate were identified as the same deity.⁴⁶ There is a hint of a suggestion here of a link between the two women.⁴⁷ Even if it is argued that the repetition of ἀρήτειρα, despite the rarity of the word, is not significant, the way in which Apollonius exploits the Hecate–Artemis syncretism later in book three raises the possibility that Iphias and Medea are in some way comparable. For further evidence it is necessary to turn to one of these later passages in the third book.

After much anguished indecision Medea finally decides to give Jason the all-important φάρμακα and she arranges a meeting at a temple of Hecate (3.737–9). While on her way to this meeting place Medea is compared to Artemis (3.876–84) in a simile which carries many layers of allusion and significance.⁴⁸ One important feature of the comparison is the recall of the Iphias scene. The Artemis simile occurs just as Medea is about to leave the city, as is clear from the continuation of the narrative at 3.887, αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόλιος μὲν εὐδμήτους λίπ' ἀγυιάς. This line repeats almost exactly 1.317 where, immediately after the Jason–Apollo simile and the Iphias scene, the narrative resumes, Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥα πόλῃος εὐδμήτους λίπ' ἀγυιάς. Such repetition is rare in the poem⁴⁹ and so all the more likely to be significant. Medea, a priestess of Hecate, leaves home, sets out on her way to the temple of Hecate to help Jason and is compared to Artemis. Through verbal repetition Apollonius casts the reader's mind back to an earlier scene in which Jason left home, was likened to Apollo (whose links with Artemis require no illustration) and failed to receive help from a priestess of Artemis.⁵⁰ The parallel throws into relief Iphias' failure to advise Jason as against the invaluable aid being carried by Medea. Iphias tried to help at the moment of departure but Jason failed to heed her. Now, upon arrival at his destination, he needs the help of another priestess of the same deity in order to succeed.⁵¹

The figure of Artemis is obviously central to this pattern of correspondences between the two different sections of narrative. On one level, it is once again possible to see events in the context of initiation patterns such as were discussed earlier. Medea here leaves home and parents to set off on a journey which takes her beyond the limits of the city to meet Jason, a journey which is described in terms reminiscent of wedding ritual⁵² and during which she is compared to the goddess who presides over all the important rites of passage in a woman's life.⁵³ As such, the scene exactly balances Jason's departure from home and parents earlier. It also expresses more clearly than

⁴⁶ See *RE* ii.i coll. 1356–7; L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek City States* (Oxford, 1896–1909), ii.601–2; H. Friis-Johansen & E. W. Whittle, *Aeschylus, The Suppliants* (Copenhagen, 1980), ad 676; on Apollonius' use of this syncretism in book three see Campbell, *op. cit.* (n. 43), pp. 57–8; Hunter, *op. cit.* (n. 39), ad 847; ad 876–86.

⁴⁷ For interesting discussion of links between maidens and aged priestesses in Greek religion see Dowden, *op. cit.* (n. 36), pp. 131–3.

⁴⁸ For excellent discussion see Campbell, *op. cit.* (n. 43), pp. 56–9; Hunter, *op. cit.* (n. 39), pp. 192–6.

⁴⁹ See G. W. Elderkin, 'Repetitions in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius', *AJP* 34 (1913), 198–201; Herter, *art. cit.* (n. 5), 325–6.

⁵⁰ See Hurst, *op. cit.* (n. 33), *passim* on the way in which Apollonius expects his reader to appreciate complex links between different sections of the poem.

⁵¹ The Iphias scene is thus indeed related to Jason's success but not quite in the way noted by the scholiast (see p. 96 above).

⁵² See Campbell, *op. cit.* (n. 43), pp. 58–9; Hunter, *op. cit.* (n. 39), ad 869–86.

⁵³ See conveniently Hunter, *op. cit.* (n. 39), ad 876–86, p. 194 and the bibliography cited in note 36 above.

before the relevance of the connections between Artemis and initiation patterns in Greek religion to Apollonius' poem. When the Artemis-like virgin here leaves home to go to meet Jason in a journey which is described in such a way as to evoke wedding ritual and which clearly recalls Jason's very similar departure from home earlier, this most obvious exploitation of the central *rite de passage* in a woman's life in ancient Greece supports the view that Jason's departure should also be seen in such terms.

It is also a question here of the different identities of Artemis. In the Iphias scene and, as shown above, in the description of the departure of the Argo, she is present as a beneficent divine power. In book three she is also responsible for the help given to Jason but this time it is the chthonic, Hecatean aspect of the goddess which is uppermost. Jason receives the magic charms in a temple of Hecate, he must sacrifice to the goddess before they can take effect (3.1026–41; 1192–224), the return journey begins with further sacrifice to her (4.246–52) and overall success depends on her powers. Even in the Artemis simile, despite its being modelled on the charming Nausicaa–Artemis simile of *Od.* 6.102–8, the Hecatean side intrudes as the animals cower and whimper at the passage of the deity (3.883–4).⁵⁴ This contrast between the two aspects of Artemis in the poem is brought out even more clearly in a third passage in which she is mentioned.

At 2.937–9 as the Argo sails past the mouth of the River Parthenius Apollonius explains:

ὥ ἐνι κούρῃ
 Λητωίς, ἄγρηθεν ὅτ' οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβαίνῃ,
 ὃν δέμας ἰμερτοῖσιν ἀναψύχει ὕδατεςσιν.

This passage is recalled in the Medea–Artemis simile when the goddess is located *λιαροῖσιν ἐν ὕδασι Παρθενίῳ* (3.876), also after a hunt,⁵⁵ but with a vital distinction. In the former passage Artemis is about to return to the heavens, thus presenting the Olympian figure of the goddess. In the latter passage, the chthonic aspect predominates. Apollonius thus plays on the tension between the two different sides of Artemis and the Iphias scene plays a crucial role in this overall structure by presenting the beneficent, Olympian aspect of the goddess before Jason is forced to resort to the chthonic powers which will eventually bring him so much harm.⁵⁶

So much can be said about the Iphias scene and its links with the rest of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius. There are, however, further ramifications to these few lines as far as other versions of the Argonautic saga are concerned. Diodorus Siculus (4.51–52.2) preserves a version of the story in which, upon her arrival in Iolcus after the Argonauts' return from Colchis, Medea turns into an aged priestess of Artemis.

⁵⁴ See Campbell, *op. cit.* (n. 43), p. 57; Hunter, *op. cit.* (n. 39), ad 876–86, p. 194.

⁵⁵ See Campbell, *op. cit.* (n. 43), p. 57.

⁵⁶ Vian, *op. cit.* (n. 12), i.64 n. 3, may be right to suggest a reference in the Iphias scene to the Thessalian goddess Pheraia, assimilated to Artemis/Hecate. Pherae is situated close to Iolcus and mention of a Thessalian cult of Artemis might easily conjure up for the learned reader the reputation for Hecatean witchcraft of that region. In this case the figure of Iphias would subtly evoke this Hecatean background as well as the beneficent aspect of Artemis 'protectress of the city' in a way which would be quite in keeping with the ambiguous nature of the scene as a whole. Apollonius clearly has in mind here, however, Artemis *Ἰωλκία*, a goddess, as Vian himself notes (*loc. cit.*; see also Roscher, ii.1 col. 290), attested elsewhere and apparently quite distinct from Artemis Pheraia. It might be wise, therefore, to be doubtful about any allusion to the goddess of Pherae here, attractive as that would be, given the Hecatean associations of the deity (on which see T. Kraus, *Hecate*, Heidelberg *Kunstgeschichtliche Abhandlungen* (Heidelberg, 1960), pp. 77–83), to my argument that Iphias is intimately connected with the Hecatean Medea. On the theme of the struggle between Olympian and chthonic forces in the poem as a whole see Lawall, *art. cit.* (n. 35), 133 n. 21.

The source of the story is Dionysius Scytobrachion.⁵⁷ According to this version Medea fashions an image of Artemis and disguises herself as an old woman in order to cause the death of Pelias. Carrying the figure of the goddess and proclaiming the arrival of Artemis in the city she presents herself to the King.⁵⁸ She promises to rejuvenate Pelias and by throwing off her own disguise convinces his daughters that it is possible. As is well known, this leads to the death of the King at the hands of his daughters.⁵⁹

There is no evidence to suggest that this version of the story predates Dionysius Scytobrachion⁶⁰ and the work of J. Rusten has recently dated this obscure figure to the third century B.C., thus making him a contemporary of Apollonius Rhodius.⁶¹ R. Hunter⁶² has also recently recognized that 'the possibility that one influenced the other can hardly be excluded'. If it is assumed that Dionysius' version of the Medea story in his *Argonauts* predates Apollonius' poem there will be important effects on the reading of the Iphias scene. It has been argued above that Apollonius creates close links between Medea and the old priestess of Artemis, Iphias. But if the reader of Apollonius already knows a version of the same story in which Medea herself becomes an aged priestess of Artemis in Iolcus, in what amounts to an aition of the cult of Artemis 'Ιωλκία,⁶³ the understanding of the figure of Iphias, implicitly a priestess of Artemis 'Ιωλκία, becomes even more complex. She at once can be seen as closely related to both the Medea of Dionysius and the Apollonian Medea, the link with the former facilitating the appreciation of the similarities with the latter. The learned reader will appreciate the similarity with the figure of Medea in Iolcus in the *Argonauts* of Dionysius Scytobrachion while at the same time realising that the figure of Iphias foreshadows the role of Medea in Colchis in the poem of Apollonius.

It is, unfortunately, impossible to prove the priority of Dionysius Scytobrachion's work over that of Apollonius. It must be said, however, that it is easier to imagine Apollonius creating the figure of old Iphias in Iolcus on the existing model of Medea disguised as an aged priestess of Artemis in that city than to see Dionysius reading Apollonius' poem and getting from the description of Iphias the idea for the presentation of Medea upon her return to Iolcus. But such supposition cannot prove the priority of the *Argonauts* over the *Argonautica*.⁶⁴

Some further evidence may, however, be forthcoming. A priestess of Artemis called Iphias might reasonably be expected to call to mind another priestess of the goddess with a very similar name, Iphigeneia, Iphianassa, Iphis,⁶⁵ Iphimede.⁶⁶ This suggestion is in fact made by F. Vian.⁶⁷ Thus a figure, Iphias, who may reasonably be associated with Iphigeneia, becomes in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius a kind of doublet of Medea.

⁵⁷ J. Rusten, *Dionysius Scytobrachion*, Papyrologia Coloniensis 10 (Opladen, 1982), fr. 36 = F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* 32 F 14.

⁵⁸ In the other more frequently attested version of the story Medea presents herself to Pelias as a suppliant. See *RE* xv.1 col. 40.

⁵⁹ Hyginus (24.2) relates a similar account with Medea as a priestess of Diana, but he makes no reference to her old age.

⁶⁰ See Rusten, op. cit. (n. 57), p. 100.

⁶¹ See Rusten, op. cit. (n. 57), pp. 85–92.

⁶² (1989), p. 20; cf. Rusten, op. cit. (n. 57), p. 93 n. 2.

⁶³ See M. Campbell, review of Rusten's *Dionysius Scytobrachion*, *CR* 33 (1983), 315.

⁶⁴ In later versions of the Medea story priestesses of Artemis/Diana proliferate, in a variety of roles. See Hyginus, 26.2, 27.3; Dracontius, *Medea* 303. These figures must be seen as variants of the old priestesses of Artemis described by Apollonius and Dionysius.

⁶⁵ On these names see *RE* ix.2 col. 2588.

⁶⁶ For this name see Hesiod, *Cat.* fr. 23 (a).15, 17. On the meaning of the Iphi- prefix see most recently Dowden, op. cit. (n. 36), p. 46.

⁶⁷ op. cit. (n. 12), i.64–5 n. 3.

In Dionysius Scytobrachion's version of the story of Medea much use is made of the myth of Iphigeneia. In this rationalising version Medea becomes a priestess in a temple of Artemis in Colchis with the task of sacrificing to the goddess all visiting strangers. The similarity with Iphigeneia in Tauris is obvious.⁶⁸ This assimilation of Medea and Iphigeneia finds echo elsewhere. Both women were said to have married Achilles.⁶⁹ Furthermore, if R. Janko⁷⁰ is correct in his supplementation of a fragmentary papyrus, the stories of the two women appeared in close proximity in a text that may be of archaic date.⁷¹ But there is no certain evidence that the version of the Medea story given by Dionysius is anything other than his own invention.⁷² Once again, therefore, let us assume for a moment the priority of Dionysius over Apollonius. The reader of the *Argonautica* thus knows a version of the story in which Medea is presented in terms highly reminiscent of Iphigeneia and is portrayed in her role as Tauric priestess of Artemis. The figure of Iphias once more becomes highly resonant and allusive, on one level as a reference to Dionysius' description of Medea, and on another as a foreshadowing of the role Medea will play in the third book. Once again also, it is easier to imagine Apollonius reworking Dionysius' conflation of Medea and Iphigeneia than to see Dionysius getting the idea of assimilating the two women simply from the figure of the Apollonian Iphias. I would suggest, therefore, that the *Argonauts* of Dionysius Scytobrachion predates the *Argonautica* of Apollonius and that in his description of Iphias and her links with Medea Apollonius was heavily influenced by this model.

Despite its brevity and apparent simplicity the Iphias scene is thus highly significant and shows just how carefully innocent-looking passages of Apollonius' poem must be studied. There remains one feature of the incident which deserves to be mentioned. When Jason comes across the old woman it might be remembered that on another occasion he met an old woman whom he did not pass by and who turned out to be Hera. As a result of this kindness he receives the help and protection of the goddess (3.66–74). Had he stopped to listen to Iphias would he have received equally important help? It should be remembered here that the Iphias scene is almost certainly an Apollonian invention and the Hera–Anaurus scene may well also be due to the originality of the poet.⁷³ This increases the likelihood that they are to be compared, Apollonius either creating both or creating the Iphias scene on the pre-existing model of a meeting with Hera disguised as an old woman. And if Jason had listened to the advice the old priestess of Artemis attempted to give him would he have had so much need of that priestess of Hecate who was finally to cause him so much suffering? Apollonius' complex and allusive text invites such questioning.

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⁶⁸ See *RE* xv.1 coll. 34–35.

⁶⁹ See Roscher, i.1 col. 56.

⁷⁰ See R. Janko, 'P. OXY: 2513: Hexameters on the Sacrifice of Iphigeneia?', *ZPE* 49 (1982), 25–9.

⁷¹ See M. W. Haslam, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 53 (London, 1986), p. 10. See, however, M. Davies, review of *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 53, *JHS* 109 (1989), 248.

⁷² See Rusten, op. cit. (n. 57), p. 100.

⁷³ See Herter, art. cit. (n. 5), 371; Campbell, op. cit. (n. 43), p. 99 n. 29; Hunter, op. cit. (n. 39), ad 66–75.