CHAPTER FOUR

APOLLONIUS OF RHODES

J.J.H. KLOOSTER

Introduction. Time awareness in the Argonautica

It has been amply recognized that time is of the essence to Apollonius' epic narration of the Argonautic journey.¹ The proem of the *Argonautica* begins with a reference to the deeds of 'men born long ago' (1.1), thus placing its subject in a distant legendary past, as indeed we would expect in an epic. Near the end of the proem the narrator asserts that the construction of the Argo is the subject of 'earlier singers', of an unspecified antiquity, whose works still celebrate it (*hoi prosthen eti kleiousin aoidoi*, 1.18–19).² He adds that therefore he will now recount the names and genealogies of the heroes instead. The reference to earlier singers creates a distinct layer of time between the present of the narration and the past of the Argonauts. We are dealing with a remote past that is yet accessible through literary sources. This points to the continuing impact of the Argonautic journey while distancing at the same time the actual event. The intervening lines 1.5–17 allusively recount the pre-history of the Argonautic quest: the oracle that king Pelias received, and the reason of Hera's anger at Pelias.

In sum, in the compass of circa twenty lines, we bridge a distance from early times (before the Argo), through a legendary past (the voyage of the Argo itself), to a closer, historical past (the earlier singers who recount the Argo's construction). Finally the present of the overt narrator is brought emphatically to our attention.³ Over these events

¹ Cf. Mehmél 1940; Fränkel 1968: 32; Fusillo 1985, whose book, entitled *Il tempo delle Argonautiche*, provides an extensive narratological treatment of time in the *Argonautica*. For a discussion of time as a literary motif, cf. also Hunter 1993: 162–169; Clauss 2000.

² The phrasing points to oral sources, but this is probably not a reflection of reality, cf. *SAGN* 1:51.

³ Although some would argue that the narrator is on another, extradiegetical, level

towers the quasi-eternal figure of the god Apollo, from whom the narrator ‘begins’ (*arkhomenos*, 1.1). This god, through his oracles, was the cause of the Argo’s voyage and is now invoked to inspire the epic about that voyage.⁴ He is a pivotal point connecting past exploits and their present narration, also pointing to the *continuity* of the past rather than to its being ‘absolutely walled off’ from the present.⁵ Apollo was revered by the Argonauts as well as by the Hellenistic narratees and narrator of the *Argonautica*.⁶

In the recounting of the journey, the narrator shows considerable accuracy regarding the passing of time. It is related to seasonal phenomena like the Etesian winds,⁷ or kept track of by the conscientious recording of daybreak and nightfall (→ Homer). We may thus calculate that the journey takes one sailing season, that is, from spring to autumn. An exception to the general accuracy is found in the Lemnian episode, 1.609–910. It is kept deliberately unclear how long exactly the Argonauts linger with the Lemnian women. Instead we find a summary: ‘... and the sailing was ever delayed from one day to another ...’ (861–862). The vagueness may well indicate that the time awareness of the Argonauts themselves is somewhat lacking at this point, because they are amusing themselves so well. Alternatively, it may reflect the mounting irritation of Heracles, who eventually points out the danger of their dalliance, after which the Argo departs and the narrator’s counting promptly resumes.

Day-endings and beginnings, and sometimes other significant moments of a drawn-out day, are often elaborately described, frequently in terms of agricultural labour, that is, of an omnitemporal world distinct from the heroic exploits of the Argonauts (→ Homer):⁸ ‘Now at the

of the narrative, the fact that he intrudes so emphatically in his own poem seems to justify taking his own ‘present’ as a time-category to be reckoned with here.

⁴ Cf. González 2000: 272–290; Wheeler 2002.

⁵ Cf. Bakhtin 1981: 16, for the idea of the ‘epic world of the absolute past’.

⁶ Cf. 2.707–709; in a hymn to Apollo sung by Orpheus the narrator appears to break in to correct the phrase ‘with locks *still* unshorn’: ‘be gracious, *ever*, o Lord, are your locks unshorn, *ever* unravaged’. According to Margolies DeForest 1994: 82, the ever-growing locks of Apollo serve as ‘a visual image’ of the continuity from the time of the heroes to the present of the narrator. Cf. also the apostrophes of Eros (4.445–449) and Zeus (4.1673–1677), who both function within the narrative and are gods to be reckoned with in the present of the narrator (→ Homeric hymns).

⁷ 2.498–526, discussed in an exceptionally long digression, probably to evoke the long delay (forty days) they cause the Argonauts.

⁸ E.g. 1.450–453; 2.164–165 (agriculture); 4.109–114 (hunting). *Argonautica* 3.1340–1344, when Jason is ploughing the field of Ares, is different: here the agricultural vehicle

hour when from the field some deliver or ploughman goes gladly home to his hut, longing for his evening meal, and there on the threshold, all squalid with dust, bows his wearied knees, and, beholding his hands worn with toil, with many a curse reviles his belly; at that hour the heroes reached the homes of the Cician land ...' (1.1172–1177).⁹

The first and second books both end at daybreak; the third book with nightfall.¹⁰ The last book ends with the disembarkation of the Argonauts back at Iolcus, giving a distinct sense of closure.¹¹

Time span of the fabula and the story

It is not so easy to decide what the *fabula*, as opposed to the *story*, of the *Argonautica* is. Hermann Fränkel claims that Apollonius has quite rigorously delimited the main *story* of his epic. 'He has cut out the material for his narrative out of the gigantic colourful tapestry of Greek Myth, as if with a sharp cutting knife, severing sharply at the edges, there where the theme begins and where it ends, without caring about the resulting fragmentation of intricately knit cohesions stretching out beyond, both in the past and in the future.'¹²

This is partly true. The main *story* of the *Argonautica* is exactly what is outlined in 1.20–22: 'the long sea-journey and all they did while wandering', that is, the Argo's roundtrip Iolcus—Colchis and back. We might say that the *fabula* comprises this period, plus the prehistory leading up to it, that is, Pelias' reception of the oracle (1.5–17). Yet, due to the narrator's emphatic attempts to link the Argo's quest to countless other events in the (legendary) history of the Greek world, even up to his own time, we might doubt whether the limits of the *fabula* should be determined so rigidly. Where does the tale of the Argonauts really begin? For example, what led up to Pelias' reception of the oracle in

gains contextual relevance. Some similes (e.g. 4.1280–1287) and gnomic utterances (e.g. 2.541–542; 4.1165–1167) also contain such references to an omnitemporal world.

⁹ All translations are adapted from Seaton 1912, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰ This may symbolize the fact that in the first two books the Argonauts are on the outward journey towards the East, the land of the Sunrise, while in the third book their journey home towards the west (the *Abendland*) already begins.

¹¹ Cf. *SAGN* 1:45. *eisapebēte*, the *Argonautica*'s final word, may have connotations of 'ending' in general. Thus, it echoes the opening word *arkhomenos* 'to begin': the path of the Argo is coterminous with the path of Apollonius' song. Cf. also Clare 2002.

¹² Fränkel 1968: 21, my translation.

the first place? And at what point does the Argo's tale really end, if its effects are, as the narrator continuously claims, still visible?

In this perspective, the large chronological scope of the *Argonautica's* proem could be considered programmatic.¹³ The narrative includes a great number of heterodiegetic external analepses and prolepses (mainly aetiological digressions) that actually span the period from the beginnings of the cosmos up to the times of the narrator, and link the story of the Argonauts to past and present. Reflecting the chronological structure of the proem, the narrator broadly speaking refers to four different periods: (1) the times before the Argo sailed, that is, from the beginning of the cosmos up to the construction of the Argo; (2) the time when the Argo sailed, the actual *story* of the epic; (3) times in the past, after the Argo sailed, but before the time of the narrator's present; (4) the present of the narrator.

We might even say that the gradual evolution of primeval cosmos into the present world as third century BC Greeks knew it constitutes the most sweeping aetiology of the narrative as a whole.¹⁴ This 'great aetiology of the world' begins with the actorial analepsis in the form of the cosmogonical song of Orpheus (presented in indirect speech), preceding the departure from Iolcus (1.496–511).¹⁵ He sings of the creation of the world from chaos. Orpheus' song ends when Zeus is still a baby, that is, just before the reign of the Olympian gods in which the exploits of the Argonauts fall.¹⁶ Throughout the epic, we receive frequent indications as to the relative chronology of the birth of Zeus and the journey of the Argo. For instance, we hear how Chiron, the old centaur who has been the tutor of Jason (1.33), and who figures in the epic as the babysitter of Achilles (1.554), was begotten by Cronus and Philyra at the time when Zeus was still an infant (4.812). The fact that this same Chiron (Zeus' near coeval) is still alive, although he is now old, shows that the Olympian order under the reign of Zeus must be relatively young.¹⁷ At the same time, the fact that Chiron's ward Achilles is still

¹³ Clauss 2000: 11.

¹⁴ Clauss 2000: 25.

¹⁵ Clauss 2000: 12–13. Cf. the more geographically and historically oriented excursus by Argus, son of Phrixus in 4.261–293, who speaks of a time 'when the stars ... were not yet, nor ... the sacred race of the Danaï'.

¹⁶ Part of the ekphrasis of Jason's mantle (1.730–734) picks up the final image of Orpheus' song, viz. the Cyclopes (1.510–511) forging Zeus' thunderbolts.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. the reference to Zeus' childhood toy (a ball resembling the cosmos) promised by Aphrodite to Eros (3.132–142). Clauss 2000: 28 suggests that the fact

a baby also positions the *Argonautica* in relation to another focal point in Greek mythical chronology: its events are situated one generation before the *Iliad*.¹⁸ In this way, the narrator continuously scatters clues to connect the *story* of his epic to the much larger '*fabula*' of world history. Returning to Fränkel's quote, we see that, although Apollonius indeed focuses on a small patch of the great tapestry of Greek myth, he makes sure that the threads connecting it to the rest of the textile are clearly visible.

Order

Like a cyclic epic or a work of historiography, the main story of the *Argonautica* proceeds chronologically from a given starting point (embarkation) to an established ending (disembarkation); the stops underway become episodes that are related chronologically rather than causally. In this sense, the epic apparently goes against Aristotle's injunctions (*Po.* 1451a16–30) concerning poetical unity.¹⁹ The episodic, linear narrative, however, is often sidetracked by digressions latched onto every object, landmark or person the Argo encounters or leaves behind. Thus a pattern is created in which, on the one hand, items are discussed in brief (heterodiegetic) aetiological digressions explaining their provenance (external analepsis).²⁰ On the other hand, the Argo itself leaves in its wake cults, topographical names, and sanctuaries (external prolepsis), which are often 'still there to be seen', 'even now' ('reference to the narrator's own time' motif).²¹ The Argo traces a path through time, linking past and present.

Many examples of this pattern of digressions are found in the 'catalogue of heroes' (1.23–233) preceding the actual departure of the Argo.

that Eros is still a child, as Zeus has so emphatically been, may imply that another Olympian monarch is in the making.

¹⁸ And the *Odyssey*, of course, as is implied by the many 'Odyssean' adventures in book 4, for example the visit to Circe, the Sirens, and the (as yet childless) Phaeacian royal couple Alcinoüs and Arete.

¹⁹ Cf. *SAGN* 1:45 and the discussion in Hunter 1993: 190–195.

²⁰ For example, the explanation of the foul-smelling waters of the Eridanus, where Phaethon, crashed to earth, burnt (4.597–602).

²¹ For example, the tombs of Idmon and Tiphys, in Heraclea Pontica, 2.852 (*eti sēmata phainetai*). Although the question remains whether the majority of these landmarks that are supposedly 'still there to be seen' would in actuality have been *seen* by the readers of the *Argonautica*. Cf. *SAGN* 1:50–51.

It functions as a kind of list of *dramatis personae*, furnishing each hero with a genealogy and a ‘CV’, as in the introduction of Orpheus:

First, then, let us name Orpheus, whom *once* Calliope bore, *it is said*, wedded to Thracian Oeagrus, near the Pimpleian height. *Men say* that he by the music of his songs charmed the stubborn rocks upon the mountains and the course of rivers. And the wild oak trees *to this day*, *tokens* of that magic strain, that grow at Zone on the Thracian shore, stand in ordered ranks close together, the same which under the charm of his lyre he led down from Pieria. Such then was Orpheus, whom Aeson’s son welcomed to share his toils, *in obedience to the behest of Chiron*, Orpheus, ruler of Bistonian Pieria. (1.23–34)

Orpheus’ introduction begins with his genealogical background (external analepsis), introduced by means of a relative phrase (*ton ... pote*; → Homer, → Pindar). It is unclear who furnishes the information regarding Orpheus’ birth, and when, but it is likely that the information (‘it is said’) dates from a moment later than Orpheus’ birth; the ‘earlier singers’ of 1.18–19 come to mind.²² This also applies to the next fact related about Orpheus (*enepousi*), viz. that he charmed nature. This particular ability is then backed up by a reference to the wild oak trees at Cape Zone that *to this day* grow in orderly ranks (‘reference to the narrator’s own time’ motif). The material nature of the evidence apparently serves to substantiate the claims about Orpheus’ powers, while the passage also provides an explanation (*aition*) for the remarkable growth of the oaks at Zone—in reality, this is of course a hermeneutical circle. Finally, it becomes clear why this analepsis regarding Orpheus’ nature was inserted: his musical abilities are adduced as the reason why Chiron advised Jason to take Orpheus along. With that, we return to the time just before the present of the *story*.

Paradoxically, these aetiological digressions, which make for a fragmentary narrative, imply a kind of unity on a cosmic scale at the same time, suggesting as they do that an intricate web of causal relations keeps the history of the world together.²³ Characters themselves are often also explicitly aware of events from the (far) past (e.g. Orpheus,

²² The vague source reference (‘it is said’) is particularly strange as the Muses, of whom Orpheus is said to be the progeny, have been invoked only two lines earlier. Compare the frequent occurrence of expressions like *kaleousi*, *kiklēs-kousi*, (*meta*)*kleioudi*, *kleizetai*, *phasi kaleesthai*, *pephatai*, *phatizetai*, *pephatistai*, *hudeontai*, etc. In all likelihood, these serve to acknowledge the literary and historical sources Apollonius used, *SAGN* 1:50.

²³ Compare the remarks of Hardie 1986: 66 concerning the unity we find in Theogonic accounts of the world, as quoted by Clauss 2000: 13.

1.496–511; Argus, 4.261–293)²⁴ and the future (note the numerous seers and prophesying deities in the *Argonautica*, for example Phineus, Mopsus, Idmon, Glaucus, Triton, the Libyan Herossae).²⁵ This implies that history is, theoretically at least, ultimately a knowable continuum, stretching from the beginnings of the cosmos to the present of the quasi-omniscient narrator.²⁶

Simultaneity and parallel storylines

The larger part of the narrative consists of a single storyline (the journey of the Argo). Yet occasionally the narrative divides up into two simultaneous storylines, when individual members (e.g. Heracles and Hylas, 1.1198–1272) wander off or the Argonauts meet important antagonists (e.g. the Lemnian women, 1.609–910).

The use of parallel storylines is particularly conspicuous when the Argonauts start to interact with the inhabitants of Colchis (book 3). Their actions then coincide with that of the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite scheming on Olympus, Aeetes anxiously ruminating about the plans of the Argonauts, and Medea falling in love with Jason. The switching of storylines is signalled by means of the temporal adverbs *tophra* and *teiōs*, or with correlative *men ... de*.²⁷ The simultaneity adds to the atmosphere of duplicitous action, where one party is unaware of the actions or schemes of the other. As in Homer (→), one storyline is usually stationary, or at least no important action takes place, at the moment the other is foregrounded; for example, the Argonauts leave the palace of Aeetes (3.448)—Medea despairs of her love for Jason (3.451–471)—‘But when [the Argonauts] had gone forth ...’ (3.472). If important action does occur, the narrator retraces his steps: the Boreads pursue the Harpies, until Iris stops them and they

²⁴ Characters, too, frequently describe the provenance of objects, names or customs (*aitia*): for example, *Argonautica* 2.703–710 (Orpheus’ hymn to Apollo) explains the name of Delphi from Delphyne, the monster that Apollo slew, and the refrain *hiēpaiēon* from the cry the nymphs uttered at that occasion.

²⁵ Duckworth [1933] 1966: 18 moreover notes the unusually high number of omens and portents in the *Argonautica*. Although it is less than half the length of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, it contains thirteen instances, as against fifteen in the *Iliad* and eleven in the *Odyssey*.

²⁶ However, in the recounting of events of the past, just as in prophecy, uncertainty remains in many cases; this is actually acknowledged by the narrator, cf. González 2000; *SAGN* 1:50–51.

²⁷ E.g. 3.275, 609, 807, 1246, 1314.

return (2.273–300)—‘Meanwhile’ (*tophra*), the heroes cleansed the old man Phineus—Phineus lengthily prophesies (2.301–426); with ‘meanwhile’ the narrator turns back in time.

Analepsis

The relation of the immediate causes of the Argo’s journey arguably constitutes the first *narratorial external* analepsis in the epic. After first outlining his subject, the Argo’s journey (1.1–4), the narrator goes backwards to the point where King Pelias received the oracle that he will be slain by Jason (1.5), the reason why he decides to send him on his dangerous mission. To choose an oracle that took place *before* the main story and prophesies an event that falls *after* it might be called remarkable: it is an external prolepsis wrapt in an external analepsis.²⁸ The choice once more brings home that the journey of the Argo is a necessary causal link between past and future events.

Some characters actually choose an earlier starting point as the cause (one might be tempted to say, *aition*) of the expedition of the Argo, viz. the flight of Phrixus and Helle on the back of the golden ram. For example, an anonymous woman, witnessing the departure of the heroes, says: ‘Would that the dark wave had overwhelmed Phrixus too with the ram when the maiden Helle perished; but no, the dire portent even sent forth a human voice, so that it might cause Alcimede [Jason’s mother] sorrow and countless pains thereafter’ (1.256–259).²⁹ The analepses concerning Helle and Phrixus are distributed piecemeal throughout the epic, they are sometimes found in the text of the narrator, sometimes in that of the characters. They help the narratees reconstruct both the history of the Golden Fleece and the complicated family ties connecting Jason to the sons of Phrixus, who will figure quite prominently in the epic later on (books 2–4).³⁰

²⁸ Cf. the completing actorial analepses in 1.300–302 and 1.360–362, where Jason refers back to the propitious oracles of Apollo regarding their journey; these too contain (internal) prolepses.

²⁹ Cf. 1.291, Alcimede referring to Phrixus’ flight as the beginning of her woe.

³⁰ On the completing character of these analepses see Fränkel 1968: 27. Cf. 1.730–764: the description of the speaking ram in the ekphrasis of Jason’s cloak; 2.1141–1151: the sons of Phrixus introduce themselves, mentioning the history of their father; 2.1193–1195: Jason refers to Phrixus’ intended sacrifice at the hands of Pelias; 3.190–191: Jason tells how Aeetes received Phrixus kindly; 3.330–339: the sons of Phrixus explain to Aeetes why Jason wants the Fleece, referring to the tale of Phrixus; 3.356–366:

Internal narratorial analepses are infrequent. An exceptional example may however be found in 2.1090–1092 (referring back to the prophecy of the seer Phineus at 2.388–389, which instructed the Argonauts to stop at the isle of Ares): ‘What then was the purpose of Phineus in bidding the divine band of heroes land there? Or what kind of help was about to meet their desire?’ This analepsis is actually a kind of (actorial) prolepsis in disguise, pointing forward to the meeting between the Argonauts and the sons of Phrixus; its function is to heighten the narratees’ anticipation. The narrator duly proceeds to recount this meeting, after first explaining in a long completing analepsis how the Phrixids came to be stranded on the isle (2.1093–1122).

Internal actorial analepses are mainly repeating, for example the brief summary of the Argonauts’ exploits as told by Jason to his host king Lycus (2.762–771, reported speech), which looks like an allusion to Odysseus’ *apologoi* (*Od.* 9–12).³¹ At 4.1319–1321, the Libyan Herossae, indigenous goddesses of the desert, even more briefly show they know all about the Argonauts’ exploits.

At first sight, some of the *external narratorial* analepses may seem hardly relevant to the context in which they appear, but on closer consideration there usually is some implicit connection. An illustrative example is the analepsis recounting the provenance of the mantle with which Medea and Jason lure Medea’s brother Apsyrtus, in order to kill him:

[They gave him] a sacred robe of Hypsipyle, of crimson hue. The Graces with their own hands had wrought it for Dionysus in sea-girt Dia, and he gave it to his son Thoas thereafter and Thoas left it to Hypsipyle. And she gave that fair-wrought guest-gift with many another marvel to Aeson’s son [Jason] to wear ... And from it a divine fragrance wafted from the time when the king of Nysa [Dionysus] himself lay to rest thereon, flushed with wine and nectar as he clasped the beauteous breast of the maiden daughter of Minos [Ariadne], whom once Theseus forsook on the island of Dia, when she had followed him from Cnossus.

(4.423–434)

The technique of sketching the history of an object in an external analepsis is already found in Homer (→), but in characteristic Hellenis-

the sons of Phrixus explain their tie of kinship with Jason through Athamas and Cretheus; 4.115–121: the description of the altar at which Phrixus once sacrificed the ram.

³¹ Cf. *SAGN* 1:57.

tic fashion the Apollonian passage also abounds in allusive analogies.³² In book 1, Jason himself arrives at Lemnos wearing another crimson robe woven by a goddess (Athena), which, at that point, symbolizes his erotic appeal, by which he seduces both Hypsipyle and Medea. Later, as he is *slaughtering* a sheep for Hecate in preparation for the trial with the bronze bulls, he wears a dark robe (*kuaneon pharos*), which was given to him by Hypsipyle, ‘a memorial of many a loving embrace’ (3.1206). The present mantle is also a gift from the Lemnian queen, whom Jason has loved and left, as he will love and eventually (beyond the scope of the *Argonautica*) leave Medea. The Lemnian women had treacherously killed their kinsmen, as Jason and Medea will treacherously kill her brother Apsyrtus. Jason has moreover wooed Medea by comparing their affair to that of Theseus and Ariadne (3.997–1006), leaving out, of course, the fact that Theseus eventually left Ariadne. Just as Theseus, the Greek hero, leaves Ariadne, the foreign princess, Greek Jason will eventually leave foreign Medea. The fact that Jason and Medea use this portentous robe to betray Medea’s brother Apsyrtus and slay him, as Medea will one day slay their own children and kill Jason’s bride with a poisonous robe (cf. Euripides’ *Medea*), confers yet another significance to the passage. Formally, this is a heterodiegetic analepsis, then, but it resonates with ironical analogies to the narrative in which it is embedded, pointing both backwards and forwards.

In another example of a thematically significant external analepsis (1.1211–1220), the narrator, about to tell the episode in which Heracles loses Hylas, launches into the story of Heracles’ violent confrontation, once upon a time, with Theodamas, Hylas’ father. Quite suddenly, the narrator cuts his tale short: ‘But these tales would lead me far astray from my song’ (1.1220). At this point, however, the narratees have already seen Heracles as a violent brute, which colours their appreciation of his love for his squire Hylas. Breaking-off formulas like this one are reminiscent of Pindar (→). In the *Argonautica*, they deliberately seem to invite the question why these particular digressions should be broken off, when so many other tales are told at length.³³

³² Hutchinson 1988: 28.

³³ Contrast 1.641–649, the digression about the herald Aethalides, of whom it is told that he enjoys undying memory, *even now*, in Hades (‘reference to the narrator’s own time’ motif). The story is cut short by the remark ‘But why need I tell at length tales of Aethalides?’ (1.649). The possible significance of this analepsis remains unclear.

*Prolepsis*³⁴

Internal narratorial prolepsis occurs at several points in the story, usually to introduce a new episode and thus to steer the narratees' expectations ('header'-technique).³⁵ At 4.1225–1226 the narrator announces, 'not yet was it ordained for the heroes to set foot on Achaea, until they had toiled even in the furthest bounds of Libya'.³⁶ This 'header'-technique, combined with the fact that the Argo's tale was well known, suggest that some of the interest of the poem depended on the learned narratees' awareness of the many choices to be made between the different variants of the Argonautic myth. It will have interested them which variant would be chosen by the narrator, how it would be developed and to what effect.³⁷ Added to this was in all likelihood the suspense created by the narratees' identification with the characters, who are largely unaware of their fates. This unawareness may be employed to create a pathetic effect, for example by means of the Homeric (→) device of referring to a character with the word *nēpios* or *skhetlios*.³⁸ On the other hand, the opposite, that is, a character's explicit awareness of the future in combination with an internal narratorial prolepsis, also creates a particularly pathetic effect, as in the introduction of the seer Idmon (1.139–141), who is said to be aware that he will die on the journey, being a prophet.³⁹

³⁴ For a seminal discussion of prolepsis in Apollonius see Duckworth [1933] 1966.

³⁵ The proem (1.1–4) also looks forward to some of the later parts of the narrative (→ Homer). It is not, however, strictly speaking a prolepsis, as the story proper has not begun yet.

³⁶ Cf. 1.1030–1031: 'the king of the Doliones was not to escape his fate and return from battle'; 2.851: 'who was the next that died?'; 4.450–451: 'how did Medea slay Apsyrtus?'; 4.552–556: the narrator asks the Muses why the Argonauts had to pass around Italy; he also emphasises the heroes' ignorance of their fated detour (4.561), thus heightening the anticipation of the readers, cf. Duckworth [1933] 1966: 41.

³⁷ These choices are often addressed in Muse invocations. In 4.1–5 the narrator wonders whether he must attribute Medea's flight to love or fear. Cf. 4.1381–1390: the phrase 'this is the tale of the Muses, and I sing obedient to the Pierides' refers to the fact that Pindar *Pythian* 4 describes the carrying of the Argo by the heroes, which therefore could not be ignored. Cf. also the Muse invocations addressing the (in later times wrongly identified) grave of Idmon (2.845–850) and Cronus' castration, a 'tale of olden days' (4.982–990).

³⁸ Cf. 2.65–66, the Bebrycians; 3.1133–1134, Medea. Cf. Duckworth [1933] 1966: 12–13.

³⁹ Cf. his own prophecy at 1.440–447, which moreover predicts that the Argonauts will return safely. Mopsus, another seer, is also fated to die on the journey (1.79–85). Cf. *Il.* 11.328–335: the seer Merops has foreseen the death of his two sons, and tries to keep

A more indirect way of foreshadowing future events is found in some of the similes (→ Homer). Thus, for instance, in the fight between Polydeuces and Amycus, the brutal king of the Bebrycians, we find the following simile (2.70–74): ‘Hereupon the Bebrycian king—as a fierce wave of the sea that rises in a crest against a swift ship, but she by the skill of the crafty pilot just escapes the shock when the billow is eager to break over the bulwark—so he followed up the son of Tyndareus ...’. This situation, where ‘the swift ship just escapes the shock of the wave by the skill of the crafty pilot’, will actually occur some hundred lines later (2.169–176), as the Argo is passing through the Bosphorus, having just left behind the land of the Bebrycians, and once more in 2.577–587, when it is about to pass through the Symplegades.⁴⁰

Internal actorial prolepses are usually connected with prophecy, dreams and omens, important motifs in the *Argonautica*. The most striking example is the prophecy of the seer Phineus. Zeus has punished him, because he would not refrain from revealing the entire divine plan to mankind (2.178–182). When the Argonauts encounter him, he is reduced to a skeletal state, plagued by Harpies that come and steal his food or defecate on it. In return for chasing away the Harpies, Phineus tells the Argonauts the route they must take, and how they may successfully pass the Symplegades and return with the Fleece. This lengthy prophecy (2.317–407, 420–425) is later repeated verbatim at several points by the narrator, as it is fulfilled. Through the exact fulfilment of Phineus’ prophecy, the voices of the omniscient prophet and the omniscient narrator as it were mutually enhance each other’s credibility.⁴¹ Heeding Zeus’ wrath, Phineus also utters predictions that are more implicit, for instance, that ‘Aphrodite will be the Argonauts’ divine helper’ once they arrive in Colchis (2.423–424).⁴² This points forward to the fact that Medea will fall in love with Jason and help him obtain the Fleece with her magic. Unlike the Argonauts, the primary

them from going to the war, in vain.

⁴⁰ Although no literal echoes occur, cf. Fränkel 1968: 159 n. 14. Furthermore, Amycus is compared to a wounded lion and a monstrous son of Typhoeus or Earth (2.26–29, 38–40), and Polydeuces to a shining star (2.20–42): this provides a strong indication of the outcome of their boxing match. Jason, appearing before Medea, is compared to Sirius, the baneful Dog Star (3.956–959; cf. Achilles at *Il.* 22.25–31), foreshadowing his eventual detrimental influence on her life. Cf. Duckworth [1933] 1966: 15.

⁴¹ *SAGV* 1:61. Cf. the advice of Circe and Tiresias to Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11 and 12.

⁴² Cf. 2.388–391, where he prophesies the encounter with the sons of Phrixus: ‘Now here an unspeakable help will come to you from the bitter sea ... but what need is there that I should sin yet again declaring everything to the end by my prophetic art?’

narratees will have understood this, although they may not have been prepared for the great elaboration of Medea's love, a theme new to epic.

An intriguing part of the prophecy is found when Phineus declines to reveal whether the Argonauts will be able to gain passage through the Symplegades (2.340–346). Despite this, he continues his prediction, telling at length what will be ahead if they *do* successfully gain passage. This creates the impression that Phineus is construing a deliberate proviso ('you may yet fail'): perhaps he does not dare to make a full prediction for fear of angering Zeus again. In reality, we know that the Argonauts *will* pass; otherwise, the rest of the prophecy (2.346–425) would have been unnecessary. Moreover, their successful passing has already been hinted at by the narrator in the proem (1.2–3).

External actorial prolepsis also occurs mostly in prophecy, for example when Hera tells Thetis that Medea will be wedded to Achilles (who is as yet a baby) in the Elysian Fields, in future times (4.811–815), or when Glaucus reveals to the Argonauts Heracles' future fate (1.1317–1320). These divine prolepses are reliable, but when Jason vows eternal marital love to Medea (3.1128–1130), the narratees know that this will be tragically refuted by their later fates.

In numerous *external narratorial* prolepses, we learn the future fate of individual heroes, though not of the main characters. Thus, the narrator tells that the sons of Boreas will in future times be killed by Heracles, because he believes they are the cause of his being left behind (1.1302–1309); or that the progeny of Euphemus will colonize Thera, born from the clod of earth he throws into the sea (4.1756–1765). As indicated, we also frequently learn the future fate of objects, locations or of cults left behind or instituted by the Argonauts. These may in later times (*metopisthen, opissō, vel sim.*) have been called so and so, are still (*eti nun*) there to be seen, called thus, practised in like fashion, etc.⁴³

In these external prolepses, which frequently turn into 'references to the narrator's own time', it may seem unclear what the immediate relevance to the main *story* of the Argonautic quest is. It would appear that often there is none, that is, none other than providing a 'proof' for

⁴³ Cf. 1.591, 955–960, 988, 1019, 1061, 1068, 1075–1077, 1138–1141, 1146–1149, 1301–1309, 1354–1357; 2.296, 526, 717, 746, 842, 853, 909–910, 929, 977; 3.203–209; 4.115, 249–250, 480–481, 515–521, 534–536, 596–618, 650, 657–658, 1153, 1216–1219, 1476, 1619–1622, 1727–1730, 1770–1772. The link to the present is often expressed in such cases by phrases such as (*eis*) *eti nun, exeti* (*keinou*), *ex hou, ek tou, es aiei/aen, kai opsigonoisi idesthai*, etc.

the fact that the Argonauts actually passed this or that way, that their actions had lasting results, and that the past may therefore be used to explain the present. In reality, we may guess, the process is rather the other way round; the fact that a given cult on a given location is attributed to the passage of the Argo in some literary or historical sources is used by Apollonius to plot the journey of the Argonauts in his epic.⁴⁴ Omnitemporal digressions on geographical features are related to these external prolepses, since they imply a similar kind of continuity: in mythical times, the Syrtes (4.1235–1244) posed the same danger to ships as they still do.⁴⁵

One aspect of external prolepsis remains to be discussed. It has often been observed that the *Argonautica*, especially books 3 and 4, functions as a prequel to Euripides' *Medea*.⁴⁶ This is of course operative on the level of the actions, speeches and characterisation of the protagonists, for example the many threats Medea utters that she will visit Jason as an avenging fury if he will not keep his word to her. It also works on a more subtle level, as, for example, in the digression on the mantle of Hypsipyle discussed above, or in the time-marker at 3.747–748, where the narrator says that everyone sleeps, 'even some mother whose children are dead', but not Medea. This instantly triggers our association with Medea's future as the tragic murderess of her own children. Interestingly though, we never find any explicit mention of Medea's future fate as Jason's unhappy wife.

Rhythm

The abundance of temporal markers makes the rhythm of the *Argonautica* easy to determine. During the voyage, several episodes are worked out in detailed scenes, whereas the actual travelling and the uneventful periods of delay are usually dealt with in summaries. Thus, from the

⁴⁴ This may be seen most clearly in passages like 4.552–556: 'Now, Goddesses, say how it is that beyond this sea ... the mighty tracks of the ship Argo are clearly sung of? What great constraint and need brought the heroes so far? What breezes wafted them?' Cf. also 2.841–857, on which see *SAGN* 1:55. For the idea of the Muses as a trope for the narrator's interaction with his literary sources see e.g. *SAGN* 1:48–50.

⁴⁵ Cf. 1.935–941: the Isle of the Doliones; 2.729–745: Acherusian headland; 2.1002–1029: discussions of the customs of the Chalybes and Mossynoeci.

⁴⁶ E.g. Duckworth [1933] 1966: 33; Schmakeit-Bean 2003. For the prequel technique see Theocritus (→).

embarking at Iolcus to the arrival at Lemnos, seven days pass, of which only the first two days, comprising embarkation and sailing, are related in any detail.⁴⁷ Pauses are created by the manifold digressions, which together constitute more than half of the actual poem. They consist of aetiological explanations pointing backwards and forwards, (omnitemporal) descriptions of geographical or ethnographical phenomena, or of ekphraseis of objects, such as Jason's mantle.⁴⁸

The outward journey (books 1–2) is told in somewhat more detail than the journey back (4.211–end).⁴⁹ Book 3, the episode in Colchis, is the most scenic of all and the least sidetracked by digressions. It comprises three days, related in 1,407 lines. The scenic nature is of course mainly due to the great amount of direct speech.⁵⁰ An exceptional position in book 3, however, is taken occupied by the episode of Jason's ploughing the field of Ares with the fire-breathing bronze bulls, which fully concentrates on physical action rather than dialogue. The chronology of this passage (3.1278–1407) is clearly marked by elaborate time-markers (dawn, noon, dusk). The narrative is moreover continually interrupted by elaborate similes and comparisons (fifteen, in the compass of 129 lines), which have the effect of lengthening the narrative, as well as emphasising its miraculous nature.

A remarkable feature of the *Argonautica* is the use of explicit ellipsis. Several times, the narrator deliberately and explicitly passes over episodes in silence. In two cases, this is related to a claim of piety (→ Callimachus): he refuses to relate the initiation of the Argonauts into the secret mystery cults at the island of Electra (1.916–921) and the preparations of Medea for the cult of Hecate (4.247–250).⁵¹ The narra-

⁴⁷ Cf. four days journey from Lemnos to the land of the Doliones (1.910–935); three days spent in lamentation over Cyzicus (1.1057); twelve days keep Argonauts from sailing from the land of the Doliones (1.1078); twelve days and nights spent carrying the Argo through the Libyan desert (4.1386).

⁴⁸ We find the ekphrasis of Jason's mantle in 1.721–768, preceding his meeting with Hypsipyle, and thus creating retardation and suspense.

⁴⁹ On the organisation of the books see Fränkel 1968: 21–22.

⁵⁰ For example, the goddesses on Olympus scheming about Medea's love for Jason; the Argonauts pleading with Aeetes, and failing; the Argonauts planning to persuade Medea; Medea's frequent outbursts of despair; Medea's scheming with Chalciope; Jason's wooing of Medea. An exception is the remarkable lengthy indirect speech of Aeetes (3.579–608). A great amount of attention is moreover devoted to the psychological processes in Medea's mind (recounting of dreams, thoughts and feelings rather than actions). In general, the *Argonautica* contains less direct speech (29 percent) than the *Iliad* (45 percent) and the *Odyssey* (66 percent).

⁵¹ It seems attractive to relate these pious silences of the narrator to Phineus' choice

tor's suggestion that he will pass over in silence the construction of the Argo (1.18–22), however, is in reality gainsaid by his frequent allusions to this building process, distributed over character-text and narrator-text, throughout the epic.⁵² His apparent refusal to relate this process may point to the fact that there were opposing traditions as to how it actually took place. Alternatively, we may want to relate it to the narrator's hesitancy throughout the poem to describe the interaction of humans with Olympian gods, since the Argo was traditionally said to have been built by Jason and Athena together.⁵³

The epic begins and ends on an elliptic note. In the proem, the causes leading up to the eventual departure are related quite allusively (→ Pindar), which seems to presuppose a great deal of prior knowledge on the part of the narratees. Some of this, however, is gradually filled in by the analepses relating to the story of Phrixus. At the end, the narrator takes his leave of the Argonauts saying that he has nothing more to tell about the Argo's journey 'since no adventure befell you as you came home from Aegina, and no tempest of winds opposed you ... and gladly did you step forth upon the beach of Pagasae' (4.1776–1781). We might of course also interpret this as an extreme summary. At any rate, it serves to make clear quite explicitly that the narrative goal of the *Argonautica*, that is, the relating of 'the famous deeds of men of old, their long journey and all they did while wandering' has been reached. The end of the adventures is also the end of the story of the *Argonautica*.

Frequency

The default mode of narrating is *singulative*, although sometimes, especially in the speeches of the characters, repetition does occur. Unlike the Homeric (→) epics however, the *Argonautica* makes no use of 'typical scenes', that is, of the repeated singulative recording of events that recur practically daily, such as eating and drinking or sleeping.

Simultaneous iterative narration is found in the many 'omnitemporal'

to remain elliptic in his prophecy for fear of angering the gods (cf. 2.311–316, 390–391), *SAGN* 1:60–61. We may also compare 4.984–987, where the narrator sees himself forced against his will, and, he fears, against the will of the Muses, to refer to the castration of Cronus by Zeus.

⁵² 1.110–115, 524–527, 721–724; 2.611–614, 1187–1189; 3.340–344; 4.580–583; cf. J. Murray 2005.

⁵³ Cf. Klooster forthcoming.

descriptions of geographical features, natural phenomena, customs or rituals (→ Homer, → Herodotus), for example ‘Circe’s plain’ in Colchis:

And there in line grow many willows, on whose topmost branches hang corpses bound with cords. For even now it is an abomination with the Colchians to burn dead men with fire, nor is it lawful to place them in the earth and raise a mound above, but to wrap them in untanned ox hides and suspend them from trees far from the city ..., for that is the custom of the land. (3.200–203)

Such omnitemporal passages, which point to the continuity between the mythic past and the present, also occur in similes and time-markers (→ Homer).

Repetition is occasionally exploited to corroborate or contradict statements of characters. In one case, an internal actorial prolepsis (the prediction of Phineus concerning the route east of the Argonauts) is echoed faithfully by the omniscient narrator at the time of its fulfilment, as we saw. The opposite is found in the Lemnian episode. When the Argonauts arrive at Lemnos, the narrator starts recounting what the Lemnian women have done to their husbands (external analepsis): ‘Here the whole of the male population had been slain ruthlessly through the transgressions of the women, in the year gone by’ (1.609–610). It is explained that this is the result of the Lemnian women’s neglect of Aphrodite. In her anger this goddess then caused their husbands to fall in love with slave girls, so that the jealous Lemnian women killed them all. However, on their arrival the Argonauts do not know what has happened, and are dependent on the information the Lemnian women provide. In 1.793–833 Hypsipyle presents a version of the story that leaves the Lemnian women free of blame. She claims that the men have left the island of their own free will. At the end of her lengthy speech, the narrator remarks: ‘she spoke, glossing over the murder that had been wrought upon the men’ (1.834). Later on, when the Argonauts arrive at the palace of king Lycus, Jason recounts everything the Argonauts have experienced so far, including the episode with the Lemnian women (2.761–771). The narrator merely summarizes Jason’s account (‘how they were welcomed by the Lemnian women’). Strictly speaking, then, we do not know what Jason’s version of the Lemnian women’s past is. But we may guess it is more like Hypsipyle’s account than like that of the narrator.

Conclusion

Although the *Argonautica* is an epic, like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, its treatment of time is quite different. Some of the devices we observe in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (such as foreshadowing through similes, internal prolepsis by characters, parallel storylines, external analepses describing objects) return in the *Argonautica*, but overall the differences are greater than the similarities. The narrator of the *Argonautica* does not choose to begin *in medias res* but chronologically recounts the story of the journey from beginning to end, while at the same time referring to events external to the story and heterodiegetic facts on a much larger scale than the Homeric epics do. Instead of indulging in many scenes, and allowing his characters to speak, the narrator includes many digressions and descriptions, which makes for a somewhat fragmentary narrative and draws attention to the process of narrating, rather than making the narrator 'disappear'.

A cosmic unity on a grander scale might however be sought precisely in the fact that the narrative of a single heroic journey is constantly connected chronologically and causally to events from the (mythical) history of the Greek world. Apollonius has a definite idea about the chronology of mythical times. As stated, he goes out of his way to connect these legendary times to his own time by means of aetiologies and omnitemporal ethnographical and geophysical asides. In this way he brings home his view that a strong *continuity with the past* pervades the Greek world. This continuity manifests itself in names, cults, objects and, most importantly, the stories that have been told and written down to explain these things, the ultimate sources for this learned epic. Collecting and combining the manifold historical, ethnographical and literary sources that refer to events somehow related to the Argo's journey, Apollonius turns this event into a pivotal point in Greek history.⁵⁴ In many respects, then, he seems indeed, as was argued in *SAGN* 1, a historiographer turned epic poet, or vice versa.

⁵⁴ Clauss 2000: 28.