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

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\(^2\) 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. 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. Apollo was revered by the Argonauts as well as by the Hellenistic narratees and narrator of the Argonautica.

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, 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): ‘Now at the