

Light and Darkness in Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica* 2*

ANDREI GOȚIA

Francis Vian, in the Notice which precedes his translation of book 2, mentioned the common structure of the first two books, a sign, according to him, of the intention of the poet to show their unity.¹ I will analyze attentively the character of Memnon and the role that light and darkness, on the one hand, and colors, on the other, play in his fashioning, making frequent reference to Penthesileia.

Book 1 finished with the expectation of Dawn (see Q.S. 1.830). Book 2 begins with the light of the sun which marks the new day, a day of joy for the Danaans, but a day of sorrow for the Trojans:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κορυφὰς ὀρέων ὑπὲρ ἠχρήντων
λαμπρὸν ὑπὲρ φάος ἦλθεν ἀτειρέος ἡελίοιο,
οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐν κλισίῃσιν Ἀχαιῶν ὄβριμοι υἱες
γῆθεον ἀκαμάτῳ μέγ' ἐπευχόμενοι Ἀχιλῆϊ·
Τρῶες δ' αὖ μύροντο κατὰ πτόλιν, ἀμφὶ δὲ πύργους 5
ἑζόμενοι σκοπιάζον. (...) (Q.S. 2.1-6)²

When o'er the crest of the far-echoing hills
The splendour of the tireless-racing sun
Poured o'er the land, still in their tents rejoiced
Achaea's stalwart sons, and still acclaimed
Achilles the resistless. But in Troy [5]
Still mourned her people, still from all her towers
Seaward they strained their gaze. (...) ³

Penthesileia came to succour the Trojans in a difficult moment; the poet had chosen a direct description to introduce his heroine (see 1.18-61). At the beginning of book 2, the situation has not bettered, on the contrary. The tension grew,

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1 See Vian (1963) 47.

2 The Greek text is that established by Vian (1963).

3 The translation is that of Way (1913). The numbers in brackets are mine, according, as much as possible, to the lines of the Greek text.

for the end of Troy seems near: now that the Amazons are dead, the city needs a defender. Quintus, however, is in no rush to introduce the new hope of the Trojans, Memnon; he only arrives in verse 100, but his arrival is prepared, in a dramatic crescendo, by the discourse of Priam which begins with verse 27:

ὦ φίλος ἦδ' ἄλλοι Τρῶες σθυναροί τ' ἐπίκουροι,
μή νύ τι δειμαίνοντες ἐῆς χαζώμεθα πάτρης,
μηδ' ἔτι δυσμενέεσσι μαχώμεθα τῆλε πόληος,
ἀλλά που ἐκ πύργων καὶ τείχεος, εἰς ὃ κεν ἔλθῃ
Μέμνων ὀβριμόθυμος ἄγων ἀπερείσια φῦλα
λαῶν οἱ ναίουσι μελάμβροτον Αἰθιοπείαν. (Q.S. 2.27-32)

Nay, friend [Thymoetes], and all ye other sons of Troy,
And ye our strong war-helpers, flinch we not
Faint-hearted from defence of fatherland!
Yet let us go not forth the city-gates
To battle with yon foe. Nay, from our towers
And from our ramparts let us make defence,
Till our new champion come, the stormy heart
Of Memnon. Lo, he cometh, leading on
Hosts numberless, Aethiopia's swarthy sons.

Verses 31-32 present a Memnon who will arrive as lord of the black Ethiopians, but they do not indicate whether he is black or white. Vian shows there has been an oscillation in the representation of the son of Dawn, the archaic antiquity choosing white, while Virgil, for example, saw him as his subjects, black.⁴

After the violent dialogue between Paris and Polydamas, behold there comes Memnon:

τοῖσι δ' ἄρ' οὐ μετὰ δηρὸν ἀρήιος ἦλυθε Μέμνων,
Μέμνων κυανέοισι μετ' Αἰθιοπέσιν ἀνάσσω,
ὃς κίε λαὸν ἄγων ἀπερείσιον. ἀμφὶ δὲ Τρῶες
γηθόσυνοί μιν ἴδοντο κατὰ πτόλιν, ἥν τε ναῦται
χείματος ἐξ ὀλοοῖο δι' αἰθέρος ἀθρήσωσιν
ἤδη τειρόμενοι Ἑλίκης περιγέος αἶγλην·
ὥς λαοὶ κεχάροντο περισταδόν, ἔξοχα δ' ἄλλων
Λαομεντιάδης. (...) (Q.S. 2.100-107)

But no long time thereafter came to them
Memnon the warrior-king, and brought with him
A countless host of swarthy Aethiops.
From all the streets of Troy the Trojans flocked
Glad-eyed to gaze on him, as seafarers,
With ruining tempest utterly forspent,

4 See Vian (1963) 165 n. 5.

See through wide-parting clouds the radiance [105]
 Of the eternal-wheeling Northern Wain;
 So joyed the Troyfolk as they thronged around,
 And more than all Laomedon's son. (...)

The first comparison which marked the excellence of Penthesileia likened her to the moon among the stars after a tempest (see 1.37-41). One is tempted to see if the parallels between the two heroes, Memnon and Penthesileia, can be followed in detail or not. A first means to make Memnon stand out among his soldiers is to repeat his name, at the end of verse 100 and at the beginning of verse 101; then, he is the one who leads them, as it is underlined by the participles in line 101, ἀνάσσω and 102, ἄγων. Like Penthesileia, who was a ray of light for the πένθος (grief, sorrow) of the Trojans (see 1.16-26), Memnon is perceived as bringing hope to the Trojans, who rejoice at his sight as seafarers at the view of the *nocturnal* light of the Wain, αἴγλην (2.105). If χεῖμα (tempest, 2.104) which oppresses the Trojans here corresponds to the πένθος in book 1, one can think that the night which renders the background contrast stronger is the countless host of the Ethiopians, λαὸν ἄγων ἀπερείσιον (2.102), described as “swarthy”, κυάνεοισι (2.101).⁵ Would it be then too far fetched to think that Memnon had to be white, so that he could be compared to the shining light which stands out in the night?

Both heroes begin their last day under the auspices of Dawn: Penthesileia, after a direct comparison (see 1.48-53), is implicitly compared to Dawn (see 1.138-141), while Memnon is the son of the goddess:

ἦμος δ' ἡλιβάτων ὀρέων ὑπερέσσυται ἄκρας
 λαμπρὸς ἄν' οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν Ἑωσφόρος, ὅς τ' ἐπὶ ἔργον
 ἦδ' ὁ μάλα κνώσσοντας ἀμαλλοδετήρας ἐγείρει, 185
 τῆμος ἀρήιον υἷα φασφόρου Ἥριγενείης
 ὕστατος ὕπνος ἀνήκεν· ὃ δ' ἐν φρεσὶ κάρτος ἀέξων
 ἦδη δυσμενέεσσι λιλαίετο δηριάσθαι·
 Ἥως δ' οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἀνήιεν οὐκ ἐθέλουσα. (Q.S. 2.183-189)

When o'er precipitous crests of mountain-walls
 Leapt up broad heaven the bright morning-star
 Who rouseth to their toils from slumber sweet [185]
 The binders of the sheaf, then his last sleep
 Unclasped the warrior-son of her who brings
 Light to the world, the Child of Mists of Night.
 Now swelled his mighty heart with eagerness

5 The fact that the poet uses now the adjective κυάνεος for the Ethiopians shows that he does not want to mark any difference between this word and μέλας, employed before (see 2.32 μελάμβροτον).

To battle with the foe forthright. And Dawn
With most reluctant feet began to climb
Heaven's broad highway.

Let us look at the different means used by the poet to foreshadow the outcome of events for Penthesileia and for Memnon: the queen of the Amazons, while she dreams about vanquishing Achilles (see 1.123-137), is called "fool" by Quintus (1.96, 134 νηπίη). The dream sent by Pallas to fool her is "deceitful" (1.125 δολόεντος), "pitiable" (1.134 οἰζυρῶ),⁶ it "beguiles" (1.136 θέλγει) the people it appears to. As to Memnon, he is surrounded by light: the bright Dawn-bearer (2.184 λαμπρὸς [...] Ἑωσφόρος) is present, his mother is the light-carrying Dawn (2.186 φαεσφόρου Ἡριγενείης); he does not dream, he is Ares-like (2.186 ἀρήιον), full of force and of the desire to fight (see 2.187-188), but his sleep is his last (2.187 ὕστατος), and his mother is reluctant (2.189 οὐκ ἐθέλousα) to go up into the sky. The differences between Penthesileia and Memnon show the author's favor for the latter, who is a true match for Achilles, even if the son of Dawn will be also killed by the son of Peleus.

Ares' daughter was compared to a dark sky before the battle (see 1.63-73); the poet uses a similar image for the soldiers of Ilium, Trojans and Ethiopians:

καὶ τότε Τρῶες ἔσαντο περὶ χροὶ δῆια τεύχη, 190
τοῖσι δ' ἄμ' Αἰθίοπες τε καὶ ὀππόσα φῦλα πέλοντο
ἀμφὶ βίην Πριάμοιο συναγρομένων ἐπικούρων,
πανσυδίη· μάλα δ' ὤκα πρὸ τείχεος ἐσσεύοντο
κυανέοις νεφέεσσιν ἐοικότες, οἷα Κρονίων
χείματος ὀρνυμένοιο κατ' ἥερα πουλὺν ἀγείρει. (Q.S. 2.190-195)

Then did the Trojans gird [190]
Their battle-harness on; then armed themselves
The Aethiop men, and all the mingled tribes
Of those war-helpers that from many lands
To Priam's aid were gathered. Forth the gates
Swiftly they rushed, like darkly lowering clouds
Which Cronos' Son, when storm is rolling up, [195]
Herdeth together through the welkin wide.

The terrible, dark side of Penthesileia (see 1.57 ἄμφω σμερδαλέον τε καὶ ἄγλαον εἶδος) was due to her being a warrior. The image of the black clouds (2.194 κυανέοις νεφέεσσιν ἐοικότες) given to the Trojan army here, by the association with the power of nature, is forceful and is strengthened by the words

6 Way (1913) 13 does not translate this attribute of Sleep.

“cloud” (2.198 νέφος) and “dust” (2.201 κόνιη), even if it is but a passing image compared to the force of the light shed by Achilles:

Ἄργεῖοι δ' ἀπάνευθεν ἐθάμβεον, εὖτ' ἐσίδοντο
 ἐσσυμένους· εἶθαρ δὲ περὶ χροὶ χαλκὸν ἔσαντο
 κάρτεϊ Πηλεΐδαο πεποιθότες, ὃς δ' ἐνὶ μέσσοις
 ἦε Τιτῆνεςσι πολυσθενέεσσιν εἰκῶς, 205
 κυδιόων ἵπποισι καὶ ἄρμασι· τοῦ δ' ἄρα τεύχη
 πάντη μαρμαίρεσκον ἀλίγκιον ἀστεροπησιν.
 οἷος δ' ἐκ περάτων γαιήχου Ὠκεανοῖο
 ἔρχεται Ἥελιος φαεσίμβροτος οὐρανὸν εἴσω
 παμφανόων, τραφερὴ δὲ γελᾷ περὶ γαῖα καὶ αἰθήρ· 210
 τοῖος ἐν Ἀργείοισι τότε ἔσσυτο Πηλέος υἱός.
 ὥς δὲ καὶ ἐν Τρώεσσιν ἀρήιος ἦε Μέμνων
 Ἄρεϊ μαιμώωντι πανείκελος, ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ
 προφρονέως ἐφέποντο παρεσσυμένοι βασιλῆι. (Q.S. 2.202-214)

From far the Argives gazed, and marvelling saw
 Their onrush, but with speed arrayed their limbs
 In brass, and in the might of Peleus' son
 Put their glad trust. Amidst them rode he on [205]
 Like to a giant Titan, glorying
 In steeds and chariot, while his armour flashed
 Splendour around in sudden lighting-gleams.
 It was as when the sun from utmost bounds
 Of earth-encompassing ocean comes, and brings
 Light to the world, and flings his splendour wide
 Through heaven, and earth and air laugh all around. [210]
 So glorious, mid the Argives Peleus' son
 Rode onward. Mid the Trojans rode the while
 Memnon the hero, even such to see
 As Ares furious-hearted. Onward swept
 The eager host arrayed about their lord.

One would expect that this explosion of light would be a description of Memnon, surrounded by his soldiers. On the contrary, he seems to disappear in front of his adversary, despite his repeated comparison with Ares (2.212 ἀρήιος, 213 Ἄρεϊ μαιμώωντι πανείκελος). The son of Dawn is the commander of the army, and yet it is around the force of Priam (2.192 ἀμφὶ βίην Πριάμοιο) that the troops are gathered. The counterpart verse is “in the might of Peleus' son / Put their glad trust” (2.204 κάρτεϊ Πηλεΐδαο πεποιθότες), which, by opposition, clarifies the fact that, even if Memnon is Priam's nephew, he does not fight as a Trojan, but as an auxiliary who cannot change the inexorable destiny of the Trojans.

Why does Quintus then introduce Achilles here as a source of light? As he killed Penthesileia, Peleus' son showed himself “the Danaans' light of safety, but

a woe / To Trojans” (1.650 Δαναοῖσι φάος μέγα, Τρῳσὶ δὲ πῆμα). His brightness here recalls then his victory over the Amazon; on the other hand, the strongest opposition to the dark clouds of the Trojan army is the sun of the Greeks: “[It was as when] the sun [from outmost bounds / Of earth-encompassing ocean] comes, and brings / Light to the world, and flings his splendour wide / Through heaven” (2.209-210 ἔρχεται Ἥλιος φαεσίμβροτος οὐρανὸν εἴσω / παμφανόων).

After having described the army of the Trojans and Ethiopians as clouds, the poet does not hesitate to extend the comparison to include the Danaans, all together engaged in a battle illumined by the flashes of their weapons:

ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἐρίγδουποι ποταμοὶ μεγάλα στενάχωνσιν
εἰς ἄλλα χευόμενοι, ὅτε λαβρότατος πέλει ὄμβρος
ἐκ Διός, εἶτ' ἀλίσστον ἐπὶ νέφεα κτυπέωσι
θηγόμεν' ἀλλήλοισι, πυρὸς δ' ἐξέσσυτ' ἀντημή / (...) (Q.S. 2.221-224)

As when down-thundering torrents shout and rave
On-pouring seaward, when the madding rains
Stream from God's cisterns, when the huddling clouds
Are hurled against each other ceaselessly,
And leaps their fiery breath in flashes forth; / (...)

Quintus does not repeat the chromatic-luminous attribute of the clouds, because it is evident that they are dark storm clouds. It is convenient not to distinguish now by chromatic attributes the parties involved in the battle, because, at the present moment, what matters is to see how the warriors are united in their desire to kill one another. The distinction, even chromatic, will be made between the combat which opposes Memnon to Achilles.

After killing Antilochos (2.258-259), the son of Dawn has a moment of glory, just as Penthesileia had hers after her victory over Podarces (1.238-243).⁷ As it was previously the case for the queen of the Amazons (1.353-356), the king of the Ethiopians is compared to a storm:

ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἀπὸ μεγάλων ὀρέων ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης	345
καχλάζων φορέηται ἀπειρεσίῳ ὀρυμαγδῷ,	
ὁππότε συννεφὲς ἡμᾶρ ἐπ' ἀνθρώποισι τανύσση	
Ζεὺς κλονέων μέγα χεῖμα, περικτυπέουσι δὲ πάντη	
βρονταὶ ὁμῶς στεροπῆσιν ἄδην νεφέων συνιόντων	
θεσπεσιῶν, κοῖλαι δὲ περικλύζονται ἄρουραι	350

7 Sainte-Beuve (1857) 365 writes the following: “Antiloque joue un grand rôle dans l'épisode ou le chant de Memnon: c'est un Patrocle immolé par ce nouvel Hector, et qui, en périssant, va également susciter la douleur et la vengeance d'Achille.”

ὄμβρου ἐπεσσυμένοιο δυσηχέος, ἀμφὶ δὲ μακραί
 σμερδαλέον βοόωσι κατ' οὐρεα πάντα χαράδραι·
 ὥς Μέμνων σέυεσκεν ἐπ' ἥϊονας Ἑλλησπόντου
 Ἀργείους, μετόπισθε δ' ἐπισπόμενος κεράϊζε. (Q.S. 2.345-354)

As when from mountains high [345]
 A shouting river with wide-echoing din
 Sweeps down its fathomless whirlpools through the gloom,
 When God with tumult of a mighty storm
 Hath pallid the sky in cloud from verge to verge,
 When thunders crash all round, when thick and fast
 Gleam lightnings from the huddling clouds, when fields [350]
 Are flooded as the hissing rains descends,
 And all the air is filled with awful roar
 Of torrents pouring down the hill-ravines;
 So Memnon toward the shores of Hellespont
 Before him hurled the Argives, following hard
 Behind them, slaughtering ever.

This description is more complex than that of Penthesileia, where the terms were mostly visual and contributed to underline the impetuosity of the Amazon (see 1.354-356). Here, without discarding the visual elements (2.347 συννεφεὶς ἡμαρ, 349 βρονταὶ ὁμῶς στεροπῇσιν ἄδην νεφέων συνιόντων), the poet adds abundantly sound elements (2.346 καχλάζων φορέηται ἀπειρεσίῳ ὀρυμαγδῶ, 348 περικτυπέουσιν, 352 σμερδαλέον βοόωσι); the result is an almost terrifying image of nature turned loose.

But, like Ares' daughter, the son of Dawn is only a transient hope for the Trojans, despite his ambitious plans:

(...) ὃ δ' οὐκ ἀπέλγηε κυδοιμοῦ·
 ἔλπετο γὰρ Τρώεσσι φάος, Δαναοῖσι δὲ πῆμα
 ἔσσεσθ'· ἀλλὰ ἐ Μοῖρα πολύστονος ἠπερόπευεν
 ἐγγύθεν ἱσταμένη καὶ ἐπὶ κλόνον ὀτρύνουσα. (Q.S. 2.359-362)

And still from fight refrained he not; he hoped
 To be a light of safety unto Troy
 And bane to Danaans. But all the while
 Stood baleful Doom beside him, and spurred on
 To strife, with flattering smile.

Penthesileia, during the scene I just mentioned, was described as “so aweless-daring, who is clad / In splendour-flashing arms” (1.364 αὐτως θαρσαλέην τε καὶ ἀγλαὰ τεύχε' ἔχουσιν), the image of the queen seen by a Trojan, a good expression of the antonymous couple φάος-πῆμα. It is interesting to notice that in the triad Penthesileia-Memnon-Achilles the only one to affirm vigorously that he

is a great light for his own people and a pest for the others is Peleus' son (see 1.650 Δαναοῖσι φάος μέγα, Τρωσὶ δὲ πῆμα), while the Amazon seems to be it (see the impression she makes on Priam, 1.74-85), without ever expressing it this way, and while Memnon hopes it (2.360-361); the first two in the triad will be the victims of the third.

The verbal duel which precedes the combat between Achilles and Memnon opposes their two mothers, an opposition which Dawn will take up again at the death of her son:

ἥ μὲν γὰρ μακάρεσσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι φαίνει,
τῇ ἐπὶ πάντα τελεῖται ἀτειρέος ἔνδον Ὀλύμπου
ἔσθλα τε καὶ κλυτὰ ἔργα τὰ τ' ἀνδράσι γίνετ' ὄνειαρ· 425
ἥ δ' ἐν ἀλὸς κευθμῶσι καθημένη ἀτρυγέτοισι
ναίει ὁμῶς κήτεσσι μετ' ἰχθύσι κυδιώσα
ἄπρηκτος καὶ ἄιστος. ἐγὼ δέ μιν οὐκ ἀλεγίζω
οὐδέ μιν ἀθανάτησιν ἐπουρανίησιν εἶσκω. (Q.S. 2.423-429)

To Gods and men my mother bringeth light;
On her depends the issue of all things,
Works great and glorious in Olympus wrought [425]
Whereof comes blessing unto men. But thine –
She sits in barren crypts of brine: she dwells
Glorying mid dumb sea-monsters and mid fish,
Deedless, unseen! Nothing I reckon of her,
Nor rank her with the immortal Heavenly Ones.

It is only natural that the son of *Dawn*, who is speaking in this excerpt, should highlight the essential role of light. As Vian noticed, Dawn seems to supplant here the sun as the only source of light.⁸ Thanks to this substitution, more important at the end of the book, the sorrow of the goddess at the death of her son can take, according to the expression of Vian, the character of a “drame cosmique”,⁹ which would have lacked force if Dawn had been confined to her place in the natural cosmology.

In the description of Memnon, his mother unites under the indestructible Olympus (2.424 ἀτειρέος ἔνδον Ὀλύμπου) immortals and humans who are all the beneficiaries of the light she dispenses (2.423 φαίνει); Achilles' mother, on the contrary, dwells in the caves of the sea and she has the marine monsters and fish for her company (2.427 ὁμῶς κήτεσσι μετ' ἰχθύσι). Dawn is useful, bringing to completion everything (2.424 τελεῖται), she is in charge of the noble human work (2.425 ἔσθλα τε καὶ κλυτὰ ἔργα), of what is profitable to them (2.425 τὰ

8 Vian (1963) 72 n. 1.

9 Vian (1963) 55.

τ' ἀνδράσι γίνετ' ὄνειρα). As for Thetis, she does not perform anything practical, dynamic, but she only shows off (2.427 κυδιόωσα); everything concerning her is defective, without external brilliance: the caves she inhabits are sterile (2.426 ἀτρυγέτοισι), her cohabitation with the creatures of the sea makes her unprofitable and she remains without renown (2.428 ἄπρηκτος καὶ ἄιστος). It is noteworthy that light is considered here as the proper means for human activities and that consequently the obscurity of the sea, a space inaccessible to humans, is indirectly opposed to it; if the light of Dawn unites gods and men, in the insolent speech of Memnon the sea of Thetis keeps the goddess away from the humans.

Light and darkness reappear in the battle between the Ethiopians and the Danaans:

εὖτ' ὁμίχλη κατ' ὄρεσφιν ὀρινομένου ὑετοῖο,
 ὅππότε δὴ κελάδοντες ἐνιπλήθονται ἔναυλοι
 ὕδατος ἐσσυμένοιο, βρέμει δ' ἄρα πᾶσα χαράδρη
 ἄσπετον, οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπιτρομέουσι νομῆες
 χειμάρρους ὁμίχλην τε φίλην ὀλοοῖσι λύκοισιν 475
 ἢ δ' ἄλλοις θήρεσσιν ὅσους τρέφει ἄσπετος ὕλη·
 ὥς τῶν ἀμφὶ πόδεσσι κόνις πεπότητ' ἀλεγεινή,
 ἥ ῥά τε καὶ φῶς ἦν κατέκρυφεν ἡελίοιο
 αἰθέρ' ἐπισκιάουσα· κακὴ δ' ὑπεδάμνατ' οἰζὺς
 λαοὺς ἐν κονίῃ τε καὶ αἰνομόρῳ ὕσμίνῃ. 480
 καὶ τὴν μὲν μακάρων τις ἀπώσατο δηιοτήτος
 ἐσσυμένως· ὀλοαὶ δὲ θοὰς ἐκάτερθε φάλαγγας
 Κῆρες ἐποτρύνεσκον ἀπειρέσιον πονέεσθαι
 δῆριν ἀνὰ στονόεσαν· Ἄρης δ' οὐ λῆγε φόνοιο
 λευγαλέου, πάντῃ δὲ πέριξ ἐφορύνετο γαῖα 485
 αἵματος ἐκχυμένοιο· μέλας δ' ἐπετέρπετ' Ὀλεθρος. (Q.S. 2.471-486)

As when a mist enshrouds the hills, what time
 Roll up the rain-clouds, and the torrent-beds
 Roar as they fill with rushing floods, and howls
 Each gorge with fearful voices; shepherds quake
 To see the waters' downrush and the mist,
 Screen dear to wolves¹⁰ and all the wild fierce things [475]
 Nursed in the wide arms of the forest; so
 Around the fighters' feet the choking dust
 Hung, hiding the fair splendour of the sun
 And darkening all the heaven. Sore distressed
 With dust and deadly conflict were the folk. [480]
 Then with a sudden hand some Blessed One
 Swept the dust-pall aside; and the Gods saw
 The deadly Fates hurling the charging lines

10 The original has "deadly wolves", ὀλοοῖσι λύκοισιν (2.475), an attribute missing from the translation.

Together, in the unending wrestle locked
 Of that grim conflict, saw where never ceased
 Ares from hideous slaughter, saw the earth [485]
 Crimsoned all around with rushing streams of blood,
 Saw where dark Havoc gloated o'er the scene.

Vian traces this comparison back to book 3 of the *Iliad*.¹¹ But the beginning of the text of Quintus has an image which is absent from the Homeric poet who writes:

εὐτ' ὄρεος κορυφῇσι Νότος κατέχευεν ὁμίχλην,
 ποιμέσιν οὐ τι φίλην, κλέπτῃ δέ τε νυκτὸς ἀμείνω,
 τόσσον τίς τ' ἐπιλεύσσει ὅσσον τ' ἐπὶ λᾶαν ἴησιν. (*Il.* 3.10-12)¹²

As on the peaks of a mountain the south wind scatters the thick mist,
 no friend to the shepherd, but better than night for the robber,
 and a man can see before him only so far as a stone cast.¹³

The “deadly wolves” do not come from this passage of the *Iliad*, but probably from a different one:

οὔτοι ἄρ' ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν ἔλον ἄνδρα ἕκαστος.
 ὥς δὲ λύκοι ἄρνεσσιν ἐπέχραον ἢ ἐρίφοισι
 σίνται (...) (*Il.* 16.351-353)

So these lords of the Danaans killed each his own man.
 They as wolves make havoc among lambs or young goats in their fury (...)

However one finds in Virgil a closer image to Quintus:

*sic animis iuuenum furor additus. inde, lupi ceu
 raptores atra in nebula, quos improba uentris
 exegit caecos rabies catulique relictī
 (...) (Verg. Aen. 2.355-357)¹⁴*

The desperate odds doubled their fighting spirit:
 From that time on, like predatory wolves
 In fog and darkness, when a savage hunger
 Drives them blindly on, and cubs in lairs¹⁵
 (...)

¹¹ See Vian (1963) 74 n. 1.

¹² The text is that of Monro / Allen (1920).

¹³ The translation is that of Lattimore (1951).

¹⁴ The text is that of Mynors (1969).

¹⁵ The translation is that Fitzgerald (1983).

It is evident that Virgil takes his comparison from the Homeric poet (*Il.* 16.352-353 and 3.10-12):¹⁶ the Homeric mist which is not dear to the shepherds but which, on the contrary, is dearer to the robber than night, is given the chromatic attribute "black" (*Aen.* 2.356 *atra*), keeping thus an implicit reference to the night, and the robbers who are the enemies of the shepherds are identified with the wolves, *lupi ceu / raptores* (*Aen.* 2.355-356).

The following possibilities are placed in front of the reader: either Quintus created himself the image of the wolves and the mist, or he took it from a less known Greek author,¹⁷ or he merged creatively the Homeric texts from the *Iliad* (*Il.* 3.10-12, 16.352-353), or he used *both* images from his models, the Homeric poet *and* Virgil.¹⁸

I think the last possibility is the most appealing.¹⁹ The ὁμίχλη of the Homeric poet was not dear to the shepherds, but it was dearer than night to the robber; Virgil abandons the shepherds and individualizes the robbers and their preference for the mist. Quintus develops the image as a master. He keeps the shepherds who tremble in front of the mist (2.474-475 οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπιτρομέουσι νομῆς / χειμάρρους ὁμίχλην τε) and then links the deadly wolves to it: ὁμίχλην τε φίλην ὀλοοῖσι λύκοισιν. The author of the *Posthomerica* does not keep the Virgilian attribute of the wolves, *raptores*, but he replaces it with a stronger one, of Homeric inspiration (ὀλόος), maybe in order to underline the deadly character of the battle, since Death itself is present in the same excerpt (2.486 Ὀλεθρος).

At least for this text, it seems that Quintus did read Virgil in the original and that he was capable of happily using both Virgil and the Homeric poet.²⁰

But let us return to the text. This mist which seems to envelop everything is accompanied, like before, by strong noises (2.472 κελάδοντες, 473 βρέμει). The poet enjoys placing intensive accents in his text by repetitions: the thickness of the mist is suggested by the double mention of the word (see 2.471, 475); with this unleashing of natural forces the reader is dumb stricken, first in front of the roaring of the torrents (2.474 ἄσπετον), then when faced with the fecundity of the forest capable to nourish beasts like the deadly wolves (2.476 ἄσπετος ὕλη).

In this comparison, κόνις corresponds to ὁμίχλη. If it is very natural that the mist fall from the sky and envelop everything, one needs to imagine a battle of

16 For a verse to verse parallel between Homer and Virgil supporting this, see Knauer (1964) 380, 473.

17 See Vian (1963) XXXII-XXXV for the ignored Greek sources of Quintus.

18 Vian (1963) IX is not convinced Quintus read Latin authors in the original: "La formation latine de Quintus serait mieux établie si l'on parvenait à démontrer qu'il lisait des œuvres latines dans le texte original: on l'a souvent affirmé, mais les arguments avancés ne semblent pas décisifs."

19 For an analysis of the *real* influence of Virgil on Quintus, see James in this volume.

20 Gärtner (2005), the authoress of the fullest and most recent treatment of the subject, does not mention this.

singular intensity for the dust to rise and cloud the sky, hiding the light of the sun. Like its correspondent, κόνις / κονίη is repeated (2.477, 480); in verse 477, there are similar elements to the beginning of book 1, when Ares' daughter arrived: πένθος ἀνιηρόν πεπότητο (1.16). The poet uses the same verb, πεπότητο, which makes the painful dust, ἀλεγεινή, as previously the sorrow, a menacing presence.

The end of the excerpt culminates in the presentation of Death: μέλας δ' ἐπετέρπετ' Ὀλεθρος (2.486). Only *black* Death can be master of this battle scene where the sunlight is made invisible by the fighting of the soldiers. The chromatic attribute could have been applied to the earth²¹ or to the blood, which are usually described by it. But if the poet reserves it for Ὀλεθρος, it is because he wants to deepen in various ways the weight that Death has in the context of the end of the Trojan war: between the deadly wolves and the black Death there are the Fates who animate the phalanges (2.482-483 ὀλοαὶ δὲ θοᾶς ἐκάτερθε φάλαγγας / Κῆρες ἐποτρύνεσκον); additionally, Death is made more frightening when it "gloates", ἐπετέρπετο.

The text continues a dozen of verses later with the attitude of the mothers of the two heroes and the important scene of the weighing of the souls by Zeus:

(...) περιτρομέοντο δὲ πᾶσαι
 ἄμφι Θέτιν Νηρήος ὑπερθύμοιο θύγατρει
 ὀβρίμου ἄμφ' Ἀχιλλῆος ἰδ' ἄσπετα δειμαίνοντο.
 δείδιε δ' Ἑριγένεια φίλῳ περὶ παιδὶ καὶ αὐτῇ 500
 ἵπποις ἐμβεβαυῖα δι' αἰθέρος· αἱ δέ οἱ ἄγχι
 Ἥελίοιο θύγατρει ἐθάμβεον ἐστηυῖαι
 θεσπέσιον περὶ κύκλον, ὃν Ἥελίῳ ἀκάμαντι
 Ζεὺς πόρην εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν ἐνν δρόμον, ᾧ περὶ πάντα 505
 ζῶει τε φθινύθει τε περιπλομένοιο κατ' ἡμάρ
 νωλεμέως αἰῶνος ἐλισσομένων ἐνιαυτῶν.
 καὶ νῦν κε δὴ μακάρεσσιν ἀμείλιχος ἔμπεσε δῆρις,
 εἰ μὴ ὑπ' ἐννεσίῃσι Διὸς μεγαλοβρεμέταο
 δοῖαι ἄρ' ἀμφοτέροισι θοᾶς ἐκάτερθε παρέσταν 510
 Κῆρες· ἐρεμναίῃ μὲν ἔβη ποτὶ Μέμνονος ἦτορ,
 φαιδρῇ δ' ἄμφ' Ἀχιλλῆα δαΐφρονα· τοὶ δ' ἐσιδόντες
 ἀθάνατοι μέγ' ἄυσαν, ἄφαρ δ' ἔλε τοὺς μὲν ἀνίη
 λευγαλέη, τοὺς δ' ἦν καὶ ἀγλαὸν ἔλλαβε χάρμα. (Q.S. 2.497-513)

(...) [A]nd quaked
 Proud Nereus' daughters all round Thetis thronged
 In grievous fear for mighty Achilles' sake;
 And trembled for her son the Child of the Mist [500]
 As in her chariot through the sky she rode.
 marvelled the daughters of the Sun, who stood

21 See 2.496: κυανέη (...) γαῖα.

Near her, around that wondrous splendour-ring
 Traced for the race-course of the tireless sun
 By Zeus, the limit of all Nature's life
 And death, the daily round that maketh up [505]
 The eternal circuit of the rolling years.
 And now amongst the Blessed bitter feud
 Had broken out; but by behest of Zeus
 The twin Fates suddenly stood beside these twain,
 One dark – her shadow fell on Memnon's heart; [510]
 One bright – her radiance haloed Peleus' son.
 And with a great cry the Immortals saw,
 And filled with sorrow they of the one part were,
 They of the other with triumphant joy.

The central moment of the excerpt is when the two Κῆρες take their position by the two heroes. They do not do anything, it is just their color, or, more precisely, their luminous value that distinguishes them: the one which stands by Memnon is “black, dark” (2.510 ἐρεμνάϊη), an attribute which leaves no doubt as to the end of the son of Dawn, if one thinks of the cognate Ἑρεβος.²² The one by the side of Achilles is “luminous, shining” (2.511 φαίδρη). The words of Memnon analyzed previously, according to which he, the son of Dawn, should enjoy the attributes of his mother, particularly her brilliance (see 2.423 φαείναι), are ironically pitched against this dark end of the king.²³

As for Peleus' son, the luminosity of his destiny had been announced by the simile of Achilles to the Sun.²⁴ In this text, the Sun is mentioned twice (see 2.502, 503) and, if one wanted to apply the attributes of the Sun to Thetis' son on the basis of the previous text, one would be presented with a hyperbolic Achilles: the Sun is the reference point for life and death (2.504-505 ὃ περὶ πάντα / ζῶει τε φθινύθει τε) and, for the Trojans, Achilles seems to be the same, as one sees it clearly from the beginning of this book which starts with the evocation of the light of the invincible Sun (2.2 λαμπρὸν ὑπὲρ φάος ἦλθεν ἀτειρέος ἡελίοιο) and continues with the praises of the indefatigable Achilles (see 2.3-4).²⁵

The unequivocal clarity of the symbolism of the two Κῆρες is demonstrated again²⁶ by the reaction of the gods who understand it: some are taken with a wretched pain (2.512-513 ἀνίη / λευγαλέη), while the others feel a “shining joy” (2.513 ἀγλαὸν [...] χάρμα).

22 See Capelle (1889) s.v. ἐρεμνός.

23 For an analysis of the two Κῆρες, see Gärtner in this volume.

24 See 2.202-214, analyzed here above.

25 See ἀκαμάτῳ (...) Ἀχιλῆϊ (2.4) and Ἥελίῳ ἀκάμαντι (2.503).

26 See Κῆρες ἐρεμναί (1.651) among the words addressed by Achilles to dead Penthesileia.

The scene is inaccessible to the heroes, either because the Κῆρες are invisible to humans, or because Memnon and Achilles are too concentrated on the combat to give attention to their Destinies (2.515 οὐδέ τι Κῆρας ἐποιοχόμενας ἐνόησαν). In this latter case, the scene would be extraordinary: what seems to matter to these true warriors is the combat, not so much the victory. One can imagine that nothing would change if Memnon and Achilles could see the Κῆρες.

The funereal symbolism will be deepened in the rest of the text till the end of the book. The frame which prepares the death of Memnon is that of the generalized presence of death, associated with the shadows:

(...) κεκάλυπτο δὲ γαῖα νέκυσσιν,
οὐρανὸς ὥς νεφέεσσιν ἐς Αἰγοκερῆα κίοντος
ἡελίου, ὅτε πόντον ὑποτρομέει μέγα ναύτης. (Q.S. 2.532-534)

(...) [A]nd earth was hidden with the dead,
As heaven is hidden with clouds when meets the sun
The Goat-star, and the shipman dreads the deep.

There is often a correspondence between the earth and the sky in the first two books of the *Posthomeric*. This text connects the earth, the sky and the sea, united by the absence of the sun, which is replaced by the shadows of death and by clouds. The fear and the trembling (2.534 ὑποτρομέει) are the natural reaction. This impersonal ‘cosmic drama’ is a prelude to the personal cosmic drama of Dawn at the death of her son.

οἳ δὲ πού ἐν νεκύεσσι καὶ αἵματι δριμόωντο
νῆες μακάρων ἐρικυδέες οὐδ’ ἀπέλγηον
ἀλλήλοισι κοτέοντες. Ἔρις δ’ ἵθυνε τάλαντα 540
ὑσμίνης ἀλεγεινά. τὰ δ’ οὐκέτι ἴσα πέλοντο·
ἀλλ’ ἄρα Μέμνονα δῖον ὑπὸ στέρνοιο θέμεθλα
Πηλείδης οὔτησε, τὸ δ’ ἀντικρὺ μέλαν ἄορ
ἐξέθορε(ν). Τοῦ δ’ αἶψα λύθη πολυήρατος αἰών·
κάππεσε δ’ ἐς μέλαν αἶμα, βράχεν δέ οἱ ἄσπετα τεύχη, 545
γαῖα δ’ ὑπεσμαράγησε καὶ ἀμφοφόβηθεν ἐταῖροι.
τὸν δ’ ἄρα Μυρμιδόνες μὲν ἐσύλεον· ἀμφὶ δὲ Τρῶες
φεύγον, ὃ δ’ αἶψα δίωκε μένος μέγα λαίλαπι ἴσος.
Ἥως δὲ στονάχησε καλυψαμένη νεφέεσσιν,
ἠχλύνθη δ’ ἄρα γαῖα. (...) (Q.S. 2.538-550) 550

Still mid the corpses and the blood fought on
Those glorious sons of Gods, nor ever ceased
From wrath of fight. But Eris now inclined [540]
The fatal scales of battle, which no more
Were equal-poised. Beneath the breast-bone then
Of godlike Memnon plunged Achilles’ sword;

Clear through his body all the dark-blue blade
 Leapt: suddenly snapped the silver cord of life.
 Down in a pool of blood he fell, and clashed [545]
 His massy armour, and earth rang again.
 Then turned to flight his comrades panic-struck,
 And of his arms the Myrmidons stripped the dead,
 While fled the Trojans, and Achilles chased,
 As whirlwind swift and mighty to destroy.
 Then groaned the Dawn, and palled herself in clouds,
 And earth was darkened. (...) [550]

In the description of Penthesileia's death, which occupies almost the same place in book 1 as that of the death of Memnon in book 2, the poet uses almost the same words: οὐτάσσε δεξιτεροῖο, μέλαν δέ οἱ ἔρρεεν αἶμα (1.595). The verb which describes the action of Achilles is the same, only the noun whose attribute μέλαν is changes: the black sword here shows that the wound is mortal, for it is the blood that gives it the dark color. In verse 2.545, the Homeric formula is repeated exactly: κάππεσε δ' ἐς μέλαν αἶμα. This black blood in which Memnon falls could be his; in this case Quintus wants to underline the violence of the hero's death, which resulted in such an abundant blood-shedding. But if the poet has in mind the blood of the dead who surrounded the two warriors, then the dramatic character of the scene is highlighted: a duel among the dead will necessarily end in a terrible death. As with the queen of the Amazons, there is something which is broken: Penthesileia's death loosens the fatal duality between her feminine beauty and her masculine power (see 1.629 κατεκλάσθη δέ οἱ ἀλκή). As for the son of Dawn, it is his very dear life that is broken for ever: τοῦ δ' αἶψα λύθη πολυήρατος αἰών (2.544).

The end of Memnon is no surprise. The poet increased the tension by the dispersion of the Trojans at the hand of Achilles, who acts like a killing machine, not taking a moment's pause after this important victory. The scene is emptied to make room for Dawn.

The first reaction of Memnon's mother is an inarticulate groan of sorrow (2.549 στονάχησε). The mourning veil of the goddess of light are the clouds (2.549 καλυψαμένη νεφέεσσιν). The force of Quintus is not the novelty and the surprise, but the well constructed tension and the repetitions: before the description of the final combat between the two heroes, the poet showed the earth covered with corpses, just as the sky is covered by clouds during the Goat-star (see 2.532-534). Dawn is joined in her mourning by the earth, plunged into a mist (2.550 ἡχλύνθη δ' ἄρα γαῖα). In book 1, Priam, who lived to see the death of his children, was compared to a man who had lost his sight (see 1.74-85). He needs an irreproachable physician to un-veil his eyes (1.79 ὄμματ' ἀπαχλύσαντος) and he hopes that Penthesileia is the one (see 1.82-83). But Ares' daughter does not

live up to this hope: with her death, night covers her eyes (1.598 ὀφθαλμοὺς ἤχλυσε).

The Winds, the brothers of Memnon, form the funeral procession and carry their brother “through silver mists” (2.554 πολιοῖο δι’ ἠέρος). What is the chromatic value of this adjective which means “gray”? Mugler writes that the term is used “pour des êtres blancs ou transparents, tels que l’air ou l’atmosphère printanière.”²⁷ A dozen verses later, one encounters again the Winds who carry Memnon “palled about with night” (2.569 δνοφερῇ κεκαλυμμένον ὄρφνῃ). The two texts are very similar: the subject of φέρον (2.554) is θεοὶ (...) Ἀῆται (2.550) and the object is Ἡώιον υῖα (2.553). In verse 568 all these elements can be found: Ἡοῦς ὄβριμον υῖα θεοὶ φορέοντες Ἀῆται. On the basis of the two texts, one can wonder whether Quintus does not end paradoxically identifying πολιοῖος with δνοφερή and ἀήρ (in nature) with ὄρφνῃ (in the veil). If such is the case, one sees the poet here in a progressive revealing, which would correspond to the film technique of gradual zooming in the object one is looking at. At first, the poet wants the reader to identify the body of Memnon. In the general context of lack of light (see 2.549-550), the only means to illuminate the corpse is by introducing sources of light: such is πολιοῖος, a feeble white, without brilliance. Then, once the reader got used to the darkness, the corpse can be given the real color of death, a dark black, δνοφερῇ ὄρφνῃ, darker than the mist which covers the earth. But if one wants to avoid the paradox, πολιοῖος ἀήρ would be the means by which the shroud of Memnon (δνοφερῇ ὄρφνῃ), similar to his mother’s veil, stands out more clearly by contrast.

In the case of Penthesileia, the poet had insisted on the unity of the group of Amazons (see 1.33-36). United before the battle by their beauty and their common desire for war, the companions of Ares’ daughter precede her all in the journey to death. The soldiers of Memnon who had not yet died follow their king: his brothers are compared to his companions (2.577 ἐταῖροι), and the soldiers to the dogs (2.578 κύνες) who follow faithfully their lord killed during a hunt. Memnon is “palled about with night” (see 2.569); his soldiers are covered by a miraculous mist (2.582 ἀχλύι θεσπεσίῃ κεκαλυμμένοι), a kind of symbolic death which likens them to their king and foreshadows their changing into birds (see 2.643-655). What is miraculous about this mist is that it is sufficiently consistent to show the sorrow of those covered by it, but not impenetrable enough to hide them to the sight of the Danaans and Trojans who wonder at this procession (see 2.582-583).

Towards the end of the book, Dawn gives a dramatic verbal expression to her previously inarticulate pain:

²⁷ Mugler (1964) s.v. πολιοῖος.

ἦ δ' ἄρ' ἐνὶ μέσσησιν ἔῳ περὶ παιδὶ χυθεῖσα
 μακρὸν ἀνεστονάχησε πολύστονος Ἥριγένεια·
 “ὦλεό μοι, φίλε τέκνον, ἔῃ δ' ἄρα μητέρι πένθος
 ἀργαλέον περίηκας. ἐγὼ δ' οὐ σείο δαμέντος 610
 τλήσομαι ἀθανάτοισιν ἐπουρανίοισι φαεῖνιν·
 ἀλλὰ καταχθονίων ἐσδύσομαι αἰνὰ βέρεθρα,
 ψυχὴ ὅπου σέο νόσφιν ἀποφθιμένου <πε>πότῃται,
 πάντ' ἐπικιδναμένου χάος καὶ ἀεικέος ὄρφνης,
 ὅφρα τι καὶ Κρονίδαο περὶ φρένας ἄλγος ἵκηται. 615
 οὐ γὰρ ἀτιμότερη Νηρηίδος, ἐκ Διὸς αὐτοῦ
 πάντ' ἐπιδερκομένη, πάντ' ἐς τέλος ἄχρις ἄγουσα,
 μαγιδίως· ἦ γάρ κεν ἐμὸν φάος ὠπίσατο Ζεὺς.
 τοῦνεχ' ὑπὸ ζῶφον εἴμι· θέτιν δ' ἐς Ὀλυμπον ἀγέσθω
 ἐξ ἁλός, ὅφρα θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι φαεῖνιν· 620
 αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ στονόεσσα μετ' οὐρανὸν εὖαδεν ὄρφνη,
 μὴ δὴ σείο φονῇ φάος περὶ σῶμα βάλοιμι.”
 ὥς φαμένης ῥέε δάκρυ κατ' ἀμβροσίῳ προσώπου
 ἀενάῳ ποταμῷ ἐναλίγκιον, ἀμφὶ δὲ νεκρῷ
 δεῦτεο γαῖα μέλαινα· συνάχνυτο δ' ἀμβροσίῃ Νύξ 625
 παίδι φίλῃ καὶ πάντα κατέκρυφεν Οὐρανὸς ἄστρα
 ἀχλύϊ καὶ νεφέεσσι φέρων χάριν Ἥριγενεΐη. (Q.S. 2.607-627)

Ceaseless uprose the keen, and in their midst,
 Fallen on her son and clasping, wailed the Dawn;
 “Dead art thou, dear, dear child, and thou hast clad
 Thy mother with a pall of grief. Oh, I, 610
 Now thou art slain, will not endure to light
 The Immortal Heavenly Ones! No, I will plunge
 Down to the dread depths of the underworld,
 Where thy lone spirit flitteth to and fro,
 And will to blind night leave earth, sky, and sea,
 Till Chaos and formless darkness brood o'er all,
 That Cronos' Son may also learn what means 615
 Anguish of heart. For not less worship-worthy
 Than Nereus' Child, by Zeus' ordinance,
 Am I, who look on all things, I, who bring
 All to their consummation. Recklessly
 My light Zeus now despiseth! Therefore I
 Will pass into the darkness. Let him bring
 Up to Olympus Thetis from the sea
 To hold for him light forth to Gods and men! 620
 My sad soul loveth darkness more than day,
 Lest I pour light upon thy slayer's head.”
 Thus as she cried, the tears ran down her face
 Immortal, like a river brimming aye;
 Drenched was the dark earth round the corpse. The Night 625
 Grieved in her daughter's anguish, and the heaven

Drew over all his stars a veil of mist
And cloud, of love unto the Lady of Light.

The participle *χυθεῖσα*, frequently used for liquids, contains an implicit reference to tears and gives an impressive image of Dawn, who melts with sorrow. *ἀνεστονάχησε* (2.608), announced by *στονάχησε* (2.549), opens this text which comes from the depths of Dawn's motherly heart: it is natural that it begin with an interjection. The enclitic *μοι* (2.609) adds an accent on *ῥαλέο*, which gives more force, by prolongation, to the interjection. Verse 609 ends with *πένθος*, this word already so recurrent in the first two books of the *Posthomeric*,²⁸ which was there in Ares' lamentation over his dead daughter (of a much weaker expression nevertheless; see 1.675).²⁹

The context in which is placed this *θρήνος* is that of the setting of the sun, more precisely of his light (2.593 *δύσεται δ' ἡελίοιο φάος*). It is only then that Dawn descends from Olympus to mourn her son. She is accompanied by twelve beautiful girls, the Hours. Penthesileia and her twelve Amazons were likened to Dawn and the Hours (see 1.48-53) descending from Olympus. The simile was possible because the consecrated image of Memnon's mother was "Dawn, heart-exultant in her radiant steeds" (1.49 *Ἡὼς μαρμαρέοισιν ἀγαλλομένη φρένας ἵπποις*). Her face was shining (1.51 *ἀγλαὸν εἶδος*). The mother's sorrow that she experiences in this context stands out then more forcefully if one has in mind her habitual image.

In the excerpt which precedes Dawn's lamentation, the focus is on the Hours (see 2.595-606): they are the reference point for night, for dawn and for everything that happens by the will of Zeus (2.597 *ἐκ Διὸς [...] βουλῆς*). The picture is that of an orderly universe, almost mechanical, marked by the succession of years and seasons (see 2.599-602), where everything happens according to a plan, even the death of heroes: verse 597 recalls the famous line in the prologue of the *Iliad*, "the will of Zeus was accomplished" (*Il.* 1.5 *Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή*). This Homeric verse refers exactly to the heroes killed by Achilles and whose bodies will be thrown to the dogs and the birds.

The text is not very long, but it has a touching density. From the beginning, Memnon's mother makes a surprising declaration: *ἐγὼ δ' οὐ σεῖο δαμέντος / τλήσομαι ἀθανάτοισιν ἐπουρανίοισι φαίνειν* (2.610-611). What is surprising first is the verb *τλήσομαι*. With the infinitive, it means "to have the courage to, to dare" (see LSJ s.v. *τλάω*); it would be then the expression of the extreme frailty which Memnon's death produces in his mother (i.e. "I will not be able to suffer"). On the other hand, if one thinks of the cognate Homeric adjective *πολύτλας*

28 According to Vian / Battegay (1984), this word has 54 occurrences in the entire poem.

29 It is not without interest that the name of Πενθεσίλεια was believed to be derived from πένθος.

("much-suffering"), often said of Ulysses (e.g. *Od.* 5.171, 21.414), the verb would be then the expression of the revolt caused by excessive suffering (i.e. "I will not take it"). What is even more surprising is φαείνειν, the object of τλήσομαι. What Dawn threatens to do is to stop bringing light to the Olympian gods. In the context in which everything is submitted to the will of Zeus, where each element contributes to the functioning of the whole, where the function of Dawn is to bring light to the Olympians and to the humans, her refusal has something Titanic, because, if it were carried through, the result would be a capsized world, thrown into disorder.

As Vian remarked,³⁰ Quintus takes his inspiration from the episode in the *Odyssey* where the Sun threatens to take his light to the Netherworld unless Ulysses' companions, guilty for having killed his oxen, are punished:

εἰ δέ μοι οὐ τέισουσι βοῶν ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν,
δύσομαι εἰς Ἅϊδαο καὶ ἐν νεκύεσσι φαείνω. (*Od.* 12.382-383)³¹

Unless
these are made to give me just recompense for my cattle,
I will go down to Hades' and give my light to the dead men.

However the situation is not the same: the loss of the Sun cannot be compared to that of Dawn; what Helios wants is a just retribution for an offense to his authority (*Od.* 12.382 βοῶν ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν), which is unthinkable in the case of Dawn, for there is nothing that could replace her son.

Dawn's intended action is connected with her dead son: if she is going to descend in the terrible chasms of subterranean gods (see 2.612), it is especially because that is where Memnon's soul took flight to (see 2.613). In opposition to the Homeric model, where the Sun blackmails Zeus, the action of Dawn, which consists in withdrawing her light, is only negative; a possible illumination of the Netherworld is not mentioned. Even if the Sun seems to deliver a graver statement, one has the impression that with him things are confined to an area where negotiation is possible. The chaos and the shadows which cover everything³² in Quintus, on the contrary, are not aimed at re-establishing a balance, at making reparation, but at making Zeus "learn what means / Anguish of heart" (see 2.615). τι (...) ἄλγος, "some pain", expresses very well the idea that even as serious a result as the plunging of the world into darkness could not fathom the pain in

30 Vian (1963) 79 n. 1.

31 The text is that of von der Muehl (1962).

32 As Vian (1959a) 205 noticed, ἐπικτιδναμένου (2.614), being a participle, does not have an absolute temporal value, but a relative one; therefore its present indicates the simultaneity with ἐσδύσομαι.

Dawn's heart. The fact that Memnon's mother directs her action against Zeus shows that she sees in him the one whose will is the reason of everything (see 2.597); as I mentioned previously, Dawn knows that in this world organized by cycles the absence of light produces chaos (see 2.614) and that it is the strongest means to make Zeus suffer. But, having said this, there is yet another difference between the Homeric text and Quintus': the possible change of residence for Helios seems to be a loss for the Olympians, but not for the Sun himself. Despite the gravity of her decision, Dawn is not ignorant that the chasms of the Netherworld are "dread" (2.612 αἰνά), that the chaos and the shadows which will follow her absence are "formless" (2.614 ἀεικέος). The special note brought by these attributes in the economy of the text is despair.

In Dawn's lament, the following five lines (2.616-620) are about Thetis, but always through Zeus: if Dawn sees everything and leads everything to completion (see 2.617), it is from the hands of Zeus himself that she received her mission; it is therefore his task to replace Memnon's mother by Achilles' if it so pleases him (see 2.619-620). Dawn interprets the death of her son as a failure in her mission: what she does is useless (2.618 μασιδίως), for otherwise Zeus would have appreciated Dawn's light (2.618 ἐμὸν φάος). The adverb, placed at the beginning of the verse and followed by a caesura in the meter, is thus well highlighted. In comparison to Memnon's description of Dawn (see 2.423-425), where the key-term was usefulness, the futility that the goddess avows now is an expression of her tragedy. Moreover, that Zeus would send the son of the goddess of light into the shadows is, besides the terrible loss by the hero's death, the most violent manner to show that he is not content with Dawn and her activity.

It seems therefore natural that she would leave Olympus: τοὔνεχ' ὑπὸ ζόφον εἶμι (2.619). In verse 612, the future of ἐσδύσομαι showed Dawn's intention to go to the Netherworld; in verse 619, it is convenient to take εἶμι as a present like Homer (see LSJ s.v. εἶμι), even if it is often understood in prose as a future. There would be thus a crescendo, as in the Homeric text, which would give Dawn's words more power, showing her intention as already materialized.

In verse 621, the sorrow of Memnon's mother seems to arrive at the peak of its expression: αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ σπονόεσσα μετ' οὐρανὸν εὖαδεν ὄρφνη. She, the goddess of light, is brought to say that darkness was pleasing to her, that she made up her mind for the night. But one does not see in these words the Sun's detachment; it is the afflicted mother that utters them, for whom ὄρφνη remains σπονόεσσα.

The last verse of the bewailing returns to the direct address of the mother to her son and explains the preceding verse: "Lest I pour light upon thy slayer's head" (2.622 μὴ δὴ σείο φονῆι φάος περὶ σῶμα βάλοιμι). A more precise translation should be "Lest I pour light even upon your slayer's body". In the Homeric

texts, σῶμα always means the inanimate body, the corpse.³³ If we give it the same meaning in this verse, what Dawn wants to say is that she would not want to bring light to Achilles, not even after his death. Thus one understands in all depth Dawn's decision for darkness, always motivated by her tremendous sorrow.

A last formal remark on this lament of Dawn: the words which indicate light alternate with those which indicate darkness – four words for the first category (2.611 φαίνειν, 618 φάος, 620 φαίνει, 622 φάος) and three for the second (2.614 ὄρφνης, 619 ζόφον, 621 ὄρφνη). It is interesting to notice that the words in the luminous vocabulary begin and end the text, but always in a negative manner (see 2.610-612 and 622).

The 'cosmic drama' mentioned already several times gains in depth by the participation of the other elements of the cosmos in Dawn's sorrow: the earth which receives the tears of the mother (see 2.623-625) is the same which had received the blood of the son (see 2.556-558); therefore it is described as black (2.625 γαῖα μέλαινα). Quintus brings also the Night, Dawn's mother,³⁴ to console her daughter (2.625 συνάχνυτο). Finally, the Sky shows its compassion for this Dawn who does not want to bring light to the gods and to the humans anymore by covering all the stars in mist and clouds (see 2.626-627).

Dawn's mourning illustrates how light and darkness are ambivalent or, even better, how their usual associations are flexible.

The following verses are like a summary of the outcry of sorrow of Memnon's mother:

παννυχίη δ' ἀλεγεινὸν ἀνεστενάχιζε γοῶσα
 Ἥως, ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ κέχυτο ζόφος· οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
 ἀντολῆς ἀλέγιζε, μέγαν δ' ἥχθηρεν Ὀλυμπον. (Q.S. 2.634-636)

All night in groans and sighs most pitiful
 The Dawn-queen lay: a sea of darkness moaned
 Around her. Of the dayspring nought she recked:
 She loathed Olympus' spaces.

The two luminous elements are doubled by two dark ones, in a structure that begins with παννυχίη (2.634), continues with Ἥως (2.635), which is followed in the same verse by ζόφος, to finish, again at the beginning of the verse, with ἀντολῆς (2.636), negated in the preceding line. The first of the four indicates at first the long time spent by Dawn in bewailing. But, in the light of the preceding

33 See LSJ s.v.

34 This filiation is not the most common: according to Howatson (²1989) s.v. Eos, she is the daughter of Hyperion and Theia. The filiation given by Quintus serves to give a different perspective on the relation between light and darkness, which are opposed, but connected by their succession.

verses, one can also see in it a reaffirmation of Dawn's origin, manifested in the obscurity in which she covers herself.

Nevertheless the mourning of the goddess cannot last forever: παννυχίη is also a limit. Zeus makes Dawn understand this by thundering fiercely (2.640 ἄμωτον βρόντησε). There is a difference to notice in regard to the Homeric text quoted previously: to Helios' menace Zeus answers in words, promising him the punishment of the culprits (see *Od.* 12.385-388). In Quintus' text Zeus does not reply verbally: since Dawn threatens to compromise the good functioning of the cosmos, the supreme god reminds her of her duty by manifesting exactly his function of keeper of the order of the universe, in which he is responsible for the lightning and thunder. Only then, frightened, Dawn, having established in the Memnonian birds a perpetual homage to her son, takes up again first her attribute (2.656 φαεσφόρου), her companions (2.658 ὁμῶς πολυαλδέσιν Ὠραῖς) and, finally, her activity (2.666 ἐκέδασσε δ' ἄρ' ἄχλύν).

Light and darkness are essential for the structure of this book, just as they were for book 1, present from the beginning to the end of the book. The mastery of Quintus lies not only in building up forceful contrasts, as for example, the two Fates – one dark, the other luminous – in the combat between Memnon and Achilles; the poet uses light and darkness very flexibly, so that, for example, the goddess of light, Dawn, after the death of her son, would choose darkness in her sorrow, abdicating her position in the universe. Quintus creates an antagonist couple, ὄαος-πῆμα, which can be said about Achilles, but also about Penthesileia or Memnon, in their relationship to their friends and to their enemies. This "black-and-white" technique is most fitting for the narration of the end of the last but one defender of Troy. Light and darkness are not restricted to the first two books, but they permeate like a *leitmotiv* the entire *Posthomerica*, in particular they articulate the description of the most important characters, like Achilles, Ajax, Eurypylos, Paris or Neoptolemos.³⁵

35 My forthcoming thesis looks at the role of light, darkness and colors in the entire *Posthomerica*.