Final Scenes in Quintus of Smyrna, *Posthomerica* 14*

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Introduction

This paper will focus on three scenes at the end of *Posthomerica* 14 as the home-ward journey of the victorious Achaeans is interrupted with the narrator's move to the divine plane. The first scene is that between Athena and Zeus (14.419-448): this is a turning-point in *Posthomerica* 14 with catastrophic effects for the Greeks, as Athena requests permission to implement her vengeance against them, on account of the outrage committed by the Locrian Ajax against Cassandra in Athena's temple during the sack of Troy. The second scene to be discussed here describes the punishment of Ajax following Zeus' approval of Athena's request: Ajax is braving the waves amid falling thunderbolts; he utters a boast to the gods, which invites Poseidon's intervention and leads to his own death (14.548-589). In the final scene of the *Posthomerica* the gods destroy the Achaean wall in Troy, while the surviving Greeks disperse in different directions (14.632-654).

These final scenes in the *Posthomerica* relate to themes in the literary tradition that point to the end of an era and the establishment of order. In what follows, I shall discuss how these themes are used in Quintus' narrative to mark the end of the Trojan War as a landmark in the history of mankind. I shall argue that Athena's introduction in her speech to Zeus evokes elements of decline associated with the Hesiodic myth of the races. In the light of Athena's rhetoric, I shall then explore Quintus' representation of Ajax as an enemy of the gods, whose death is described in terms of a Gigantomachy or Titanomachy illustrating the extent of the impiety mentioned by Athena. With the destruction of the Achaean wall at the

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end of the epic, the physical remains of the Achaean expedition are obliterated while the gods restate their power over the mortals, and the Trojan War becomes an event of the past.

1. Athena and Zeus (Q.S. 14.419-448)

Ζεῦ πάτερ, οὐκέτ' ἀνεκτὰ θεοῖς ἐπιμηχανόωνται
 ἄνερες, οὐκ ἀλέγοντες ἀνὰ φρένας οὔτε σεῦ αὐτοῦ
 οὔτ' ἄλλων μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἦ τίσις οὐκέτ' ὀπηδεῖ
 ἀνδράσι λευγαλέοισι, κακοῦ δ' ἄρα πολλάκις ἐσθλός 430
 συμφέρειτ' ἄλγεσι μάλλον, ἔχει δ' ἄλληκτον οἰζύν.
 τοῦνεκ' ἄρ' οὔτε δίκην τις ἔθ' ἄζεται, οὐδέ τις αἰδώς
 ἔστι παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν. ἔγωγε μὲν οὔτ' ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ
 ἔσσομαι οὔτ' ἔτι σεῖο κεκλήσομαι, εἰ μὴ Ἀχαιῶν
 τίσομ' ἄτασθαλίην, ἐπεὶ ἦ νύ μοι ἔνδοθι νηοῦ 435
 υἱὸς Ὀϊλῆος μέγ' ἐνήλιτεν, οὐδ' ἐλέαιρε
 Κασσάνδρην ὀρέγουσαν ἀκηδέας εἰς ἐμὲ χεῖρας
 πολλάκις, οὐδ' ἔδδειςεν ἐμὸν μένος, οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
 ῥέδεσατ' ἀθανάτην, ἀλλ' ἄσχετον ἔργον ἔρεξε.
 τῷ νύ μοι ἀμβροσίησι περὶ φρεσὶ μή τι μεγήρης 440
 ῥέξαι ὅπως μοι θυμὸς ἐέλδεται, ὄφρα καὶ ἄλλοι
 αἰζηοὶ τρομέωσι θεῶν ἀρίδηλον ὁμοκλήν. (Q.S. 14.427-442)

Father Zeus, unbearable now are men's offenses
 Against the gods. They don't respect either you yourself
 Or the other deities, since punishment no longer attends
 Those who are wicked. Often the good man is involved 430
 In suffering more than the bad and has no end of woe.
 That's why there's no more respect for justice and men
 Have lost all sense of shame. I shall not stay on Olympus
 Or any longer be called your daughter, unless I can punish
 The sacrilege of the Achaeans. Inside my very temple 435
 The son of Oileus offended me gravely by showing no mercy
 When Cassandra raised her innocent hands to me
 Repeatedly. He had no fear of my power, no respect
 For my divinity, but did an intolerable deed.
 Let not, therefore, your immortal will refuse 440
 To carry out my heart's desire, in order that other
 People may tremble when gods display their displeasure.¹

1 The text of the *Posthomerica* used here and throughout this paper is based on Vian (1969); for other ancient authors I cite from the most recent critical editions unless otherwise stated. The translation of Q.S. 14.427-442 cited here is from James (2004). All other translations are my own unless otherwise acknowledged.

This is an important scene in Quintus' *Posthomerica*: it is the last direct exchange in the epic and it seals the fate of the victorious Greeks. Athena's lengthy outburst and Zeus' assent are not dramatised in detail in the extant literary tradition before the *Posthomerica*. A mythological framework for this episode is already established in early hexameter poetry, as the *Odyssey* refers to divine anger directed against the Greeks on their homeward journey from Troy. The cause of Athena's anger is not given in the *Odyssey*, but her role in planning the destruction of the Greeks is mentioned in Phemius' song to the suitors (*Od.* 1.326-327), Nestor's narrative of the *nostoi* (3.130-200), the account of Ajax's death (4.499-511), and Hermes' speech to Calypso (5.108-109).

According to Proclus' summary of the *Iliupersis*, Ajax drags Cassandra by force (πρὸς βίαν ἀποσπῶν) and pulls Athena's wooden statue along with her.² The Greeks consider stoning Ajax to death, but he takes refuge at the goddess' altar and saves himself; however, when the Greeks sail away, Athena plots destruction at sea. This was related in Agias' now lost *Nostoi* together with the death of Ajax, for which Proclus offers the following summary: εἶθ' ὁ περὶ τὰς Καφηρίδας πέτρας δηλοῦται χειμῶν καὶ ἡ Αἴαντος φθορὰ τοῦ Λοκροῦ ("then the storm around the Capheraean rocks is set forth and the death of the Locrian Ajax").³ Pseudo-Apollodorus mentions an open co-operation between divine forces against the Achaeans, whereby "Athena requested from Zeus to send a storm against the Greeks and many ships sank" (Ἀθηνᾶ γὰρ ἐδεήθη Διὸς τοῖς Ἑλλήσι χειμῶνα ἐπιπέμψαι. καὶ πολλὰ νῆες βυθίζονται, [Apollod.] 6.5). This is the tradition referred to in Euripides' prologue to the *Troades*, where Athena tells Poseidon that Zeus will send rain, hail and stormy blasts (*Tr.* 78-79) and that he says that he will give her the thunderbolt to strike the Achaeans and burn their ships (80-81).

In dramatising in full the dialogue between Zeus and Athena mentioned by Euripides and Pseudo-Apollodorus, Quintus is drawing on Homeric scenes of slighted gods appealing to Zeus.⁴ A close model may be sought in Poseidon's

2 *Iliupersis* (*Ilii Excidium*) arg. 15-16 Bernabé. βία in this case need not necessarily imply rape; in Euripides' *Troades* Poseidon summarises Athena's complaint in similar terms (Αἴας εἴλκε Κασσάνδραν βίᾳ [ed. Diggle (1981)], "Ajax dragged Cassandra by force", *Tr.* 70), but Cassandra later on rids herself of her garlands while her body is still pure (ὡς ἔτ' οὐσα ἀγνή χροῶ, *Tr.* 453; see Mason [1959] 89 and Lee [1976] *ad loc.*). Later poets refer to this encounter between Ajax and Cassandra as rape: e.g. Lyc. 361-362 (cf. Ciaceri [1901] 185), Call. *Aet.* 1 fr. 35 Pfeiffer (= 39 Asper), Q.S. 13.421-429.

3 *Nostoi* arg. 12-13 Bernabé.

4 For an insightful discussion of Quintus' departure from his models in this scene see Wenglinsky (2002) 182-186, who notes that unlike Euripides' Athena and some important examples of slighted gods in the *Odyssey* (Poseidon in *Odyssey* 5 and Helios in *Odyssey* 12), Quintus' Athena underlines both the fact that she has been wronged and the consequences of not punishing impiety.

complaint to Zeus after the Phaeacians have taken Odysseus to Ithaca in *Od.* 13.128-158, as the god is concerned with possible implications arising from the fact that the Phaeacians did not honour him: Ζεῦ πάτερ, οὐκέτ' ἐγὼ γε μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι / τιμῆεις ἔσομαι, ὅτε με βροτοὶ οὐ τι τίουσιν ("Father Zeus, no longer among the immortal gods / shall I be honoured, when mortals do not honour me at all", 128-129). Zeus assures his brother that he may take vengeance (τίσις) afterwards if any mortal does not honour him and authorises him to act (144-145). To Poseidon's wish to wreck the Phaeacians' ship upon its return and cover their town with a mountain, Zeus replies by counter-suggesting that he turn the ship to stone ἵνα θαυμάζωσιν ἅπαντες / ἄνθρωποι ("so that all men may marvel", 157-158).

Unlike Poseidon, who begins by reflecting upon his own τιμή (*Od.* 13.128-129), Quintus' Athena introduces her appeal with general considerations on human irreverence. Men no longer pay heed to gods because the wicked are no longer punished; the good often suffer more than the bad; justice is no longer revered; and there is no shame among men. This introduction of a specific action through a generalisation is not unprecedented in the Homeric epics; Poseidon's complaint to Zeus in *Il.* 7.446-453, to which I shall return at the end of this paper, offers an important parallel, as Poseidon considers possible implications arising from the fact that the Achaeans built a wall without offering hecatombs to the gods.⁵ However, Athena's introduction to Zeus constitutes almost half of the entire speech (Q.S. 14.427-433),⁶ and her opening considerations on the human condition emphatically describe the present moment as a turning-point in the relationship between mortals and immortals. This relationship is in crisis, for men have overstepped the line: what they devise against the gods is no longer tolerable (οὐκέτ' ἀνεκτά, 427); punishment no longer falls upon the wicked (τίσις οὐκέτ' ὀπηδεῖ, 429), while nobody reveres justice any more (οὔτε δίκην τις ἔθ' ἄζεται, 432). Athena thus wishes to punish the recklessness (ἄτασθαλίην, 435)⁷ of the

5 Zeus' opening speech in the first divine council in *Od.* 1.32-43 and Athena's speech in the second divine council in *Od.* 5.7-20 provide further parallels for speeches beginning with a generalisation before focusing on a specific example.

6 This is not unparalleled in the *Posthomeric*: cf. Achilles' introduction in his speech to Neoptolemus in 14.185-222 and the discussion in Carvounis (2005) 184-201.

7 Quintus' Athena chooses here a pointed Homeric word for the Achaeans' fault: see n. 42 below on ἄτασθαλίη in the *Odyssey*. James (2004) 345 n. 430-433 points out that Athena's reference to "the demoralizing effects of the unjust suffering of good people" may seem inconsistent with her demand to punish the whole army, as Quintus' version of the departure does not clearly show that collective guilt has been incurred. Athena's collective punishment of the Achaeans because of one individual is recalled in Juno's abbreviated account of the death of Ajax at the beginning of *Aeneid* 1: see below. Cf. also Triph. 650: ἀνθ' ἑνὸς Ἀργεῖοισιν ἐχώσατο πᾶσιν Ἀθήνη ("for the sake of one man Athena was angered against all Argives"). Cf. also Rhodemann (1604) 122-123, who explains that Quintus' Athena approaches her father ὅφρ' ἀποτίσῃ / ἄνδρὸς ἑνὸς τάχα λαὸς ἅπας ἀλιτήριον ὕβριν ("that a whole people may soon pay in full the

Achaean and make an example for other men too: ὄφρα καὶ ἄλλοι / αἰζηοὶ τρομέωσι θεῶν ἀρίδηλον ὁμοκλήν (441-442). This statement recalls the closing words of Euripides' Athena in the *Troades*, where the goddess claims that she would punish the Greeks for not having punished the offender (*Tr.* 69-71)⁸ "so that the Achaeans learn to respect in the future / both [her] own shrines and the other gods" (ὡς ἂν τὸ λοιπὸν τᾶμ' ἀνάκτορ' εὐσεβεῖν / εἰδῶσ' Ἀχαιοὶ θεοὺς τε τοὺς ἄλλους σέβειν, *Tr.* 85-86).⁹ Quintus' Athena, on the other hand, claims that *other* men too will fear *the* gods: she will not merely teach the Greeks a lesson, as her Euripidean counterpart plans to do; she rather proposes to teach men in general to respect the gods and redress the current imbalance.

Athena's picture of mankind as it is now¹⁰ evokes a sense of decline in terms that recall the Hesiodic myth of the races in the *Works and Days*. The characteristics of the fifth and final generation of Iron are given in the future tense: there will be no respite from labour and sorrow, and gods will always give men troubles (*Op.* 176-178); family relationships and guest-friendships will be marred by discord, men will not know the wrath of gods (187), and hostility will extend to inter-communal relationships ([189] according to Solmsen / Merkelbach / West [31990]). There will be a reversal of values (190-194); justice will be in one's hands and there will be no shame (192-193),¹¹ while at the end of the Hesiodic description of the fifth generation the figures of Aidos and Nemesis will leave mankind to join the immortal gods (197-200). Although there is a clear sense of deterioration from the Golden to the Iron generation, decline does not follow a linear and straightforward path.¹² Already in the Silver age, men are prone to committing ὕβριν (...) ἀτάσθαλον ("reckless insolence") towards each other (134) and omitting their due to the gods (135-136). Moreover, the heroes who constitute a δικάϊότερον καὶ ἄρειον ("more just and better") race (158) are shown fighting in Troy or in Thebes, which attests to the breakdown of family relationships (161-165).¹³ This collapse of bonds between guest-friends and

offending outrage of one man"), which is rendered in Latin as *unius ob noxam de cunctis sumere poenas*. For structural mirroring with respect to the storm in *Aeneid* 1 in the Latin epic tradition see Hardie (1993) 13-14 on the end of Silius' *Punica* and Statius' *Thebaid*.

8 This statement departs from the tradition attested in Proclus' summary of the *Iliupersis* (see above). The Achaeans' neglect to punish Ajax also occurs in Alcaeus fr. 298 Voigt: see Burnett (1983) 198-205.

9 Wenglimsky (2002) 185 notes that for the Euripidean Athena the prospect that men will learn to respect the gods through punishment comes very late in her speech.

10 Note Athena's use of the present tense in ἐπιμηχανόωνται (Q.S. 14.427), ὀπηδεῖ (429), συμφέρετ' (...) ἔχει (431), ἔστι (433).

11 See n. 16 below.

12 See Most (1997) 108-113.

13 See West (1978) 192 on *Op.* 163 (μήλων ἔνεκ' Οἰδιπόδαο) for taking "Oedipus' flocks as standing for his whole estate, including the Theban throne".

between brothers is a characteristic especially prominent in the final generation: οὐδὲ ξείνος ξεινοδόκῳ καὶ ἐταῖρος ἐταίρῳ, / οὐδὲ κασίγνητος φίλος ἔσσεται, ὥς τὸ πάρος περ (“nor will guest be [in accord] with his host, nor comrade with comrade, / nor will brother be dear to brother as before”, 183-184).

Vian has suggested that the absence of δίκη and αἰδώς in Athena’s speech in Q.S. 14.432-433 recalls Hesiod’s description of Aidos and Nemesis leaving mankind (*Op.* 197-200), adding that Athena’s indefinite τις shows that Quintus’ αἰδώς is not personified.¹⁴ Wenglinsky further noted that Quintus’ Athena threatens to leave Olympus whereas Hesiod’s Aidos and Nemesis leave men.¹⁵ A pointed echo linking the goddess’ exposition to Hesiod’s description of the Iron race may be found in Athena’s statement οὔτε δίκην τις ἔθ’ ἄζεται, οὐδέ τις αἰδώς / ἔστι παρ’ ἀνθρώποισιν (Q.S. 14.432-433), which alludes to Hesiod’s statement δίκη δ’ ἐν χερσὶ καὶ αἰδώς / οὐκ ἔσται (“justice will be in one’s hands and there will be no shame”, *Op.* 192-193; ed. Solmsen / Merkelbach / West [³1990]).¹⁶ Two further observations made by Athena are also characteristic traits of the Hesiodic Iron race: the wicked are rewarded more than the good (Q.S. 14.430-431; cf. *Op.* 190-194), and men have no regard for the gods (οὐκ ἀλέγοντες ἀνὰ φρένας οὔτε σεῦ αὐτοῦ / οὔτ’ ἄλλων μακάρων, Q.S. 14.428-429; cf. *Op.* 187).¹⁷

Athena’s statement that justice is no longer revered and that there is no shame among men is followed by her threat to leave Olympus if men’s depravity goes unpunished. As was mentioned above, this threat reverses the final image in Hesiod’s description of Aidos and Nemesis leaving mankind to go to Olympus (*Op.* 197-200). Following the Hesiodic tradition, the flight of a divinity from earth becomes the ultimate marker of decline in the Greek and Latin tradition dealing with the myth of the races: Aratus’ Dike leaves the bronze generation to go to the sky (133-136); Ovid’s Astraeon virgin leaves the earth soaked with blood (*Met.* 1.149-150) – with shame, truth and faith having already fled (1.129) – and [Seneca]’s virgin Astraea in *Octavia* likewise flees the earth and the savage ways of men (*Oct.* 422-424). Athena’s reverse flight from Olympus if she is not

14 See Vian (1969) 193 n. 4 (= *notes complémentaires* p. 234) on Q.S. 14.432-433 as a “[s]ouvenir d’un célèbre passage d’Hésiode (*Travaux*, 197-200)”.

15 Wenglinsky (2002) 185.

16 West (1978) prints δίκη δ’ ἐν χερσὶ καὶ αἰδώς / ἔσσειται (“justice and shame will be in one’s hands”); see West (1978) 202-203. For objections to this emendation see Renehan (1980) 348 and Solmsen (1980) 217. δίκη and αἰδώς form a unit in various contexts from Hesiod onwards relating to the well-being of a community: e.g. *Pl. Prt.* 322 c1-3, *Dion.Hal.* 6.36, etc.

17 In Homer the participial phrase οὐκ ἀλέγ- occurs in the famous simile in *Il.* 16.387-388 that depicts Zeus pouring down rain, angry with men who abuse justice (θεῶν ὅπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες). Similar resonances are borne in Hes. *Op.* 251 (θεῶν ὅπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες); for οὐκ ἀλεγ- in the hexameter tradition to indicate irreverence towards the gods, cf. *h.Hom.* 3.279, *Call. Aet.* 3 fr. 75.65 Pfeiffer (= 87.65 Asper), *Dion.Perieg.* 210, *Triph.* 268.

allowed to act will indicate that justice is not respected among gods either. Moreover, her threat no longer to be called Zeus' daughter (Q.S. 14.434-435) is a threat to dissolve family ties on Olympus, thus evoking the decline described in the Hesiodic account.

At the end of the Trojan War Athena indicates that a line has been overstepped in the relationship between mortals and immortals and she draws attention to noteworthy characteristics of decline, which, as it has been argued here, are associated with the Hesiodic fifth race.¹⁸ The extent of impiety that Athena discerns in men becomes apparent in the death of Ajax, who is portrayed, as we shall see in the following section, as an enemy of the gods. If Athena's speech noted the fragility of cosmic order brought to the foreground through Ajax's transgression, Zeus' reply confirms his co-operation in stabilising this order by offering her his weapons with which he established order in Hesiod's *Theogony*. This is Zeus' only direct verbal engagement with another god in the epic and his second speech in the *Posthomerica* following his address to the gods before the duel between Memnon and Achilles (2.167-172).¹⁹ Zeus now offers to Athena his thunder – weapons “which the Cyclopes wrought in the past / with their tireless hands bringing honour to [him]” (τά μοι πάρος ἦρα φέροντες / χερσὶν ὑπ' ἀκαμάτοισιν ἐτεκτῆναντο Κύκλωπες, 14.445-446). This reference to the Cyclopes' gratitude alludes to Zeus' role in freeing them in Hesiod's *Theogony*: οἳ οἳ ἀπεμνήσαντο χάριν ἐυεργεσιάνων, / δῶκαν δὲ βροντὴν ἥδ' αἰθαλόεντα κεραυνόν / καὶ στεροπὴν (“they repaid him for his kindness, / and gave him thunder and blazing thunderbolt / and lightning”, *Th.* 503-505; cf. 139-141).²⁰ With these weapons Zeus rules over mortals and immortals (*Th.* 506), and he uses the thunderbolt soon afterwards to strike down the outrageous (ὕβριστήν) Menoetius (*Th.* 514). At this turning-point at the end of the *Posthomerica* Athena prepares to punish the Achaeans, and as she takes up Zeus' weapons to re-establish order, the narrator underlines the assimilation between father and daughter (14.459-465).²¹

18 At this point in Quintus' narrative, the heroes of the Trojan War are still alive and the decline that Athena describes here points to an age that features the wickedness and impiety that are characteristic of the Iron race.

19 Zeus remains silent after Hera's address in 4.49-55, while he takes action following Ganymede's request in 8.431-442 without verbal response.

20 Cf. Vian (1969) 194 n. 4 (= *notes complémentaires* p. 234). It is with these weapons that Zeus also defeats Typhoeus later in the Hesiodic *Theogony* (*Th.* 854). Note that ἀκάματος in the early hexameter tradition is applied to the noun χεῖρ in Hesiod's description of Atlas holding the world (ἀκαμάτῃσι χέρεσσι, *Th.* 519, 747). Hesiod's *Theogony* is thus further evoked through χερσὶν ὑπ' ἀκαμάτοισιν in Q.S. 14.446.

21 Athena requests Zeus' authorisation before proceeding with the punishment of Ajax, which has been anticipated from Q.S. 13.423-424, and Zeus offers her his weapons of his own accord

2. The Death of Ajax (Q.S. 14.548-589)

Ajax's outrage against Cassandra in this divine exchange is thus no longer regarded as an isolated offence against a god, but as a transgression with cosmic dimensions that must be dealt with accordingly. In the following section of this paper, I shall first present an overview of the main strands in the literary tradition relating to the death of Ajax before examining how Quintus colours his version of this episode to reflect Athena's view on the condition of mankind.

Narratives of the death of Ajax in the poetic tradition before Quintus are given by Proteus in *Odyssey* 4, Cassandra in Lycophron's *Alexandra*, Juno in *Aeneid* 1 and Eurybates' messenger-speech in Seneca's *Agamemnon*, while ancient evidence gives some information on Callimachus' version of the myth. In relating Proteus' narrative of the Achaean *nostoi* to Telemachus, Menelaus dwells on Ajax's fate in *Od.* 4.499-511: Athena raises a tempest for the returning Greeks and Poseidon saves Ajax from the sea by leading him to the Gyraean rocks. Notwithstanding Athena's enmity, Ajax would have thus been saved had he not boasted that he escaped the waves despite the gods. Poseidon uses his trident to break off the part of the rock where Ajax is sitting, and the hero falls into the sea and drowns. Proteus' tale emphasises that it is Ajax's own madness that deprives him of his *nostos* (μέγ' ἁόσθη, 503, 509), while also drawing attention to the fact that the same god who leads Ajax to safety also brings about his doom.

This sequence of events recurs with variations in the literary tradition dealing with the death of Ajax. According to the scholia (AD) on *Il.* 13.66, Callimachus' first book of the *Aetia* followed this sequence without Poseidon's role in saving the hero (*Aet.* 1 fr. 35 Pfeiffer [= 39 Asper]). The account in Pseudo-Apollodorus mentions that Athena hurls a thunderbolt against Ajax's ship ([Apollod.] 6.6). The rest of the story follows the outline familiar from the *Odyssey* and the *Aetia*: Ajax makes his way to a rock and utters his boast; Poseidon strikes the rock with his trident, while Ajax falls into the sea and dies. Athena's use of the thunderbolt against Ajax and the Greek fleet is an important feature in the literary tradition: as we saw earlier, this detail is mentioned in Euripides' *Troades* in the extant poetic tradition while Cassandra's vision in Lycophron's *Alexandra* records thunderbolts falling into the sea and Ajax seeking refuge on the Gyraean rocks; Poseidon with his trident strikes the boastful Locrian king and Ajax is thrown back into the sea (Lyc. 392-395).

In extant works in the Latin tradition, Athena's use of the thunderbolt is crucial in the Virgilian abbreviated account of the death of Ajax at the beginning

(14.443-465); in this respect, then, Zeus is still the overseer of order at the end of the *Posthomerica*. See Gärtner (this volume) for Zeus' power and his relationship to fate in Quintus' epic.

of the *Aeneid*.²² Frustrated at her inertia as the Trojans go unpunished in *Aeneid* 1, Juno briefly recalls how Pallas alone punished the entire Greek fleet because of one individual (*unius ob noxam*, *Aen.* 1.41): she pierced Ajax with the thunderbolt, caught him in a whirlwind and impaled him on a rock (1.44-45).²³ Eurybates in Seneca's *Agamemnon* offers a detailed account of the death of Ajax: he draws attention to Pallas armed with Jupiter's thunderbolt (*Ag.* 528-529) and to Ajax, who is grazed by the falling fire, while a second thunderbolt pierces him and his ship and carries away part of the ship and Ajax himself (*Ag.* 535-538).²⁴ He breaks the waves with his chest, grasps his ship and catches fire. From a rock he utters a lengthy boast, which is – uniquely here – given in direct speech. Neptune arises from the sea and breaks off with his trident the rock and dislodges the crag, which Ajax carries with him in his fall. Although Ajax himself boasted earlier that he had overcome the sea (*pelagus*, 545) and fire (*ignes*, 545), he is now killed by earth, fire and sea (*terraque et igne uictus et pelago iacet*, “and he lies conquered by earth and fire and sea”, 556).²⁵

Both the Virgilian and the Senecan accounts of the death of Ajax implicitly represent the hero in his downfall as a Giant subdued by the gods. Hardie has demonstrated through comparison with Lucretius' Etna in *De rerum natura* 6.639-640 that Juno's depiction of the stricken Ajax breathing out flames in *Aeneid* 1 shows the hero “blasted as an enemy of the gods” like the Giant under Etna.²⁶ Moreover, Vian has suggested that Seneca and Quintus are drawing on a Hellenistic Gigantomachy or Typhonomachy in composing the death of Ajax, and he singled out Ajax's boast in *Sen. Ag.* 545-552.²⁷ Ajax's boast may be evoking themes from Gigantomachy: the hero thunders in madness (*furibundum intonat*, *Ag.* 544) and his boast is a statement of victory over the natural elements in Jupiter's control, and over men and gods, whose father is Jupiter.²⁸ He ends the

22 Ajax's boast is not mentioned in this abbreviated account; however, Tarrant (1976) on *Sen. Ag.* 544 takes *furias* (*Verg. Aen.* 1.41) to be an allusion to Ajax's boastfulness, whereas Austin (1971) on *Verg. Aen.* 1.41 argues for *furias* implying lust.

23 See n. 7 above. The use of the thunderbolt is also mentioned in Accius' *Clytemestra*; see Austin (1971) on *Verg. Aen.* 1.44.

24 *Sen. Ag.* 537: *transit Aiace[m] et ratem* (ed. Zwielerlein [1986]). Tarrant (1976) prints *transit Aiaceis ratem*, which he defends on p. 277.

25 See Giomini (1956) 132. On Seneca's sources see Marcucci (1996) and Tarrant (1976) 8-23 (esp. 19-23).

26 Hardie (1986) 179.

27 Vian (1959a) 84. See Keydell (1961) 282 for a response to Vian.

28 There are textual problems in Ajax's boast (*Sen. Ag.* 545-546) and difficulties with the interpretation of 546 and 548: see Tarrant (1976) 278-279 and Hudson-Williams (1989) 193.

boast with a direct challenge to Jupiter himself: *quid si ipse mittat?* (“what if he himself should send [them]?”), 552).²⁹

In Quintus’ own version of the death of Ajax, the hero is explicitly likened to a Giant at the end of the scene.³⁰ Let us now look closely at Quintus’ version in the *Posthomeric*, noting the emphasis on Ajax’s hands and physical might and determination. Ajax goes through the waves on a ship’s plank and then “traverses the salty depths with his arms” (χειρέσσι διήνυεν ἄλμυρά βένθη, Q.S. 14.549), while he is likened to a “tireless Titan” in his “prodigious strength” (ἄκαμάτῳ Τιτῆνι βίην ὑπέροπλον εἰκώς, 550).³¹ The swell is “cleft by the sinewy arms / of the valiant hero” (κρατερῆσι χέρεσσιν / ἄνδρὸς ὑπερθύμοιο, 551-552),³² and the gods watch him and marvel at his strength and manliness. Ajax is carried up and down by the waves, but “he was not weary in his much-enduring arms” (οὐδ’ ὅ γε χεῖρας / κάμνε πολυτλήτους); thunderbolts crashing all around are quenched in the sea without killing him, for Athena wishes to prolong his death. Ajax then boasts that he would escape even if all the Olympians united should raise the entire sea. Poseidon sees him “with his hand taking hold of the rock” (ἐφαπτόμενον χερὶ πέτρης, 569): in anger, he causes an earthquake and cuts off into the sea the rock that Ajax “sought to clutch with his hands” (ἐαῖς ἐπεμαίετο χερσὶ, 575). Quintus dwells on Ajax’s efforts and pain as he tries to cling to that rock. He would have still escaped his doom had Poseidon not opened up the earth

29 Cf. Schindler (2000b) 145 for Ajax as a “Frevler *par excellence*”. The description of Neptune dislodging the rock (*rupem*, 573) and causing the crag to fall (*solutique montem*, 575) may initially lead one to think that Ajax will be buried underneath, which would evoke the death of a Giant. According to Pseudo-Apollodorus’ narrative of the Gigantomachy, Athena throws Sicily upon Enceladus and Poseidon hurls Nisyros, which he breaks off from Cos, upon Polybotes (1.6.1-2). The account in Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. Νίσυρος (referred to in Vian [1952] 202) is of special interest: the Giant Polybotes swims after having been struck by Zeus; Poseidon then aims his trident at him and misses, which leads to the creation of Nisyros: Πολυβώτης γὰρ εἷς τῶν Γιγάντων ὑπὸ Διὸς βληθεὶς ἐνήχετο, Ποσειδῶν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἀφείξ τὴν τρίαιναν τοῦ μὲν ἥμαρτε· γέγονε γὰρ νῆσος τὸ βληθὲν Νίσυρος (“for Polybotes, one of the Giants, kept swimming after he was struck by Zeus and Poseidon hurled his trident upon him and missed; but [the part that] had been struck became the island Nisyros”). Seneca’s narrative, however, continues with Ajax carrying the crag with him as he falls and does not explicitly mention that he is buried underneath. Cf. Tarrant (1976) on *Ag.* 575: “A distinction between *montem* here and *rupem* in 553 is not clearly drawn.”

30 The question of direct borrowing from Virgil or Seneca cannot be explored further within the confines of this paper; from among the scholars who have contributed to this discussion with respect to this particular episode, I shall only mention here Kakridis (1962) 129-131 (for Quintus’ dependence on Seneca) and Vian (1969) 171-173 (against direct dependence). For a thorough re-assessment of Quintus’ relationship with Latin sources in the storm-scene in *Posthomeric* 14 see Gärtner (2005) 261-272; see also James (this volume).

31 I have rendered βίην ὑπέροπλον as “prodigious strength” after James (2004) *ad loc.* The struggle of Zeus and the gods against the Titans is also described in Q.S. 5.103-109 and 8.461-469, and that against the Giants in 11.415-419. Cf. also Q.S. 2.517-518.

32 James (2004) *ad loc.*

below and hurled a mound on him³³ – just as Pallas once hurled Sicily on Enceladus, which still burns by the tireless Giant (ὑπ’ ἀκαμάτοιο Γίγαντος, 584) breathing fire below the ground.

Quintus offers the most detailed extant version of the death of Ajax in the literary tradition. Comparison with the versions outlined above indicates that he is adopting motifs dominant in this tradition, such as Athena’s use of the thunderbolt, Ajax’s struggle to reach the Gyraean rocks, his boast to the gods, and Poseidon’s subsequent intervention, while at the same time adapting the details within this tradition.³⁴ Through these adaptations Quintus represents Ajax as a larger-than-life hero by underlining his might, determination and physical effort. Arrogant and impious warriors like the Aeschylean Capaneus (*Th.* 423-425) are depicted as Giants fighting against the gods.³⁵ By opening and closing this episode with two similes that liken Ajax to a tireless Titan (Q.S. 14.550) and to tireless Enceladus (14.582-587) respectively, Quintus invites the reader to consider Ajax as a figure of extraordinary might that assumes threatening aspects. It is this representation of Ajax that I would like to explore here, as it permeates the entire episode between the two similes that frame it.

An important departure from earlier extant versions that underlines this representation is the detail that Quintus’ Athena hurls the thunderbolt against Ajax’s ship rather than against Ajax himself, who swims tirelessly through the sea amid falling thunderbolts, as she wishes to prolong his suffering (14.559-561).³⁶ Vian points to an interesting parallel in the description of a Typhonomachy deriving from Nicander’s *Metamorphoses*: Zeus first hurls a thunderbolt against Typhoeus; but as he hides and the flame is quenched in the sea, Zeus throws Aetna upon the usurper (Antoninus Liberalis 28).³⁷ The death of Ajax eventually occurs through a double divine intervention: whereas Poseidon’s shattering of the Gyraean rocks in *Odyssey* 4.506-510 and Neptune’s dislodging of the rock in Seneca’s *Agamemnon* 573-576 cause Ajax to fall into the sea and die, Quintus’ Ajax clings upon the

33 I follow here the text printed in Vian’s edition for Q.S. 14.580 (discussed in further detail in my commentary on *Posthomerica* 14 [in preparation]): εἰ μὴ ὁ γ’ [ὅ γ’ Vian : ἄρ’ codd.] αὐτῷ / ῥήξας γράϊαν [γαῖαν Spitzner : αἶαν codd.] ἔνερθεν ἐπιπρόεηκε κολώνην.

34 These motifs are tabulated in Kakridis (1962) 129-131, who concludes with a strong statement on Quintus’ familiarity with Seneca’s version.

35 Vian / Moore (1988) 192. Prof. Philip Hardie draws my attention to the Gigantomachic imagery in the death of Statius’ Capaneus (*Theb.* 10.898-939): the gods marvel in silence (*taciti mirantur*, 10.920) after Capaneus has challenged Jupiter, who finally strikes him with thunder.

36 Vian (1969) 199 n. 1 compares a third century A.D. hymn to Dionysus on papyrus (ed. Heitsch [1961] LVI.26-28): κραίπνῳ δὲ μιν οὔτι μενοίνα / αἰρήσειν θανάτῳ, δο[λιχ]α[ῖ]ς δ’ ἄταισιν ἐρ[έχθ]ει[ν], / ἀργαλέην ἵνα τῖσιν ἔτι ζώων ἀποτίσῃ (“he did not desire at all to catch him with swift death, but to break him with prolonged destruction, so that he might repay a painful penalty while still alive”). See Page (1941) no. 129.

37 Vian (1959a) 84 n. 3.

rock. As the hero's death is deferred, attention is drawn to his excessive might and determination that render him a noteworthy opponent of the Olympians. Poseidon must intervene yet again to bury Ajax under a mound like a Giant.³⁸

Ajax's physical strength and effort are underlined throughout this struggle. As we have already seen, the first simile in this episode likened Ajax to a Titan with respect to his "prodigious strength" (βίην ὑπέροπλον, 14.550), and Ajax's hands are those of a "valiant man" (ἄνδρὸς ὑπερθύμοιο, 552); they are much-enduring and do not tire (556-557). The gods who are about to punish Ajax watch him and "marvel at his manliness and strength" (ἠνορέην καὶ κάρτος ἐδάμβειν, 553). At the crucial moment when Poseidon breaks off into the sea the rock that Ajax was grasping with his hand, Quintus emphasises the latter's struggle to hang on to the rock while the skin of his hands is torn off and blood runs under his nails. Even when buried under the rock, Ajax is described with characteristic might that stays with him even beyond his death: βάρυνε δὲ καρτερὸν ἄνδρα ("[it] weighed down upon the mighty hero", 587).

The focus on Ajax's strength in this context evokes the narrative of Hesiod's *Theogony*, which has already been alluded to in Zeus' reply to Athena (444-448). The Hesiodic hundred-handed allies of Zeus are described as being "both fearful and strong, having exceeding strength" (δεινοὶ τε κρατεροὶ τε, βίην ὑπέροπλον ἔχοντες, *Th.* 670) as they line up with the Olympians to fight against the Titans.³⁹ They have fifty heads and from their sturdy limbs spring a hundred hands (671-673). When Zeus addresses them to enlist their help in his battle against the Titans, he appeals to their "great (...) force" (μεγάλην [...] βίην) and "invincible hands" (χεῖρας ἀάπτους) (649-650). Kottos duly promises to offer their strength (662) and the battle with the Titans is one of physical might, as "both sides showed at the same time the work of their hands and their might" (χειρῶν τε βίης θ' ἅμα ἔργον ἔφαινον / ἀμφοτέροι, 677-678). In the end, the hundred-handers defeat with their hands the Titans ὑπερθύμους περ ἐόντας ("although they were valiant", 719).⁴⁰ As well as being the reason why Zeus summons them to war, the

38 Keydell (1949/50) 84: "Diese Version vom Tode des Aias ist singular." See n. 29 for Neptune's action in Seneca's account.

39 βίην ὑπέροπλ- also occurs in Hes. fr. 43a.59, Mimn. 9.3 West, [Theoc.] *Id.* 25.152 (Heracles) and A.R. 2.110 (Oreites, companion of ὑπεροπληέστατος Amycus [A.R. 2.4], who is likened in 2.38-39 to the offspring of Typhoeus or a child of Gaia's). Quintus uses this combination again for the one who will stay outside the Horse and tell the Trojans about the βίην ὑπέροπλον Ἀχαιῶν (12.35).

40 It is Hesiod's emphasis on *might* in the representation of the pre-Olympians that I would like to compare here to that of Quintus' in his representation of Ajax. The hundred-handers fought on Zeus' side in the Hesiodic *Theogony*. In *Il.* 1.402-404, Briareus, whose human name is Aegaeon, is enlisted by Thetis to help Zeus; the Virgilian simile in *Aen.* 10.565-570 shows the hundred-handed Aegaeon fighting against Jupiter; cf. also *Titanomachia* fr. 3 Bernabé, where Aegaeon is the son of Ge and Pontus and an ally of the Titans.

excessive force of the hundred-handers also caused their father to bind them up: ἡνορέην ὑπέροπλον ἀγώμενος ἡδὲ καὶ εἶδος / καὶ μέγεθος (“indignant at their prodigious manliness and form and size”, *Th.* 619-620).⁴¹ In the same poem ἡνορέη ὑπέροπλος is also a feature of Iapetus’ son Menoetius, who is struck by Zeus’ thunderbolt and sent to Erebus εἵνεκ’ ἀτασθαλίας τε καὶ ἡνορέης ὑπερόπλου (“because of recklessness and prodigious manliness”, 516). ἀτασθαλίη in the *Theogony* is only used again in the explanation of the Titans’ name, which is also linked with τίσις: τοὺς δὲ πατὴρ Τιτῆνας ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλέεσκε / παῖδας νεικεῖων μέγας Οὐρανὸς οὐς τέκεν αὐτός / φάσκε δὲ τιταίνοντας ἀτασθαλίη μέγα ῥέξαι / ἔργον, τοῖο δ’ ἔπειτα τίσιν μετόπισθεν ἔσσεσθαι (“and Heaven, their father, used to call in reproach those whom he bore ‘Titans’ [Τιτῆνας] by surname; and he used to say that they strained [τιταίνοντας] and through recklessness [ἀτασθαλίη] achieved a great deed, but that vengeance for it would come afterwards”, 207-210).⁴² By representing Ajax as one of the pre-Olympians, Quintus underlines the hero’s threatening might while pointing to the gods’ necessity to restore cosmic order.

This aspect of Ajax is conveyed in the hero’s boast, which amplifies the one related in the *Odyssey*: φῆ ῥ’ ἀέκητι θεῶν φυγέειν μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης (“he said that he escaped the great depth of the sea against the will of the gods”, *Od.* 4.504). Quintus’ Ajax, on the other hand, envisages all the Olympians together raising the entire sea against him: φῆ δέ, καὶ εἰ μάλα πάντες Ὀλύμπιοι εἰς ἔν ἴκωνται / χωόμενοι καὶ πᾶσαν ἀναστήσωσι θάλασσαν, / ἐκφυγέειν (“and he said that even if all the Olympians together should unite / in anger and raise the entire sea, / he would escape”, Q.S. 14.565-567). Ajax’s boast confirms, as it were, Athena’s earlier speech to Zeus regarding men’s disrespect towards the gods, as he openly challenges the power of the Olympians inviting them to unite against him.⁴³ Ajax’s boast provokes the intervention of Poseidon, who is introduced as ὑπέρβιος Ἐννοσίγαιος (568), which draws attention to the god’s

41 DGE s.v. ἀγαίομαι (3): “indignarse, encelarse, tener celos”. Note LSJ s.v. ἀγάομαι, where ἀγώμενος is glossed as “admiring” (with reference to Hes. *Th.* 619).

42 For ἀτασθαλίη in the *Odyssey* as a term commonly denoting behaviour for which men suffer deservedly see Heubeck / West / Hainsworth (1988) 72 on *Od.* 1.7. See Nagy (1979) 163 and Heubeck / West / Hainsworth (1988) 356 on *Od.* 8.166 for the association of ἀτασθαλίη with ὕβρις in the *Odyssey* (cf. also Hes. *Op.* 134, *Th.* 996). ἀτασθαλίη is also used by Quintus to describe Ajax’s attack against Cassandra in Q.S. 13.428-429: οὐδ’ ὅ (sc. Αἴας) γε λυγρῆς / λήγεν ἀτασθαλίας, ἐπεὶ ἡ φρένας ἄσσε Κύπρις (“nor did he cease / from baneful recklessness, since Cypris deluded his mind”).

43 Cf. Quintus’ description of the Titanomachy on Achilles’ helmet: περὶ δ’ ἀθάνατοι πονέοντο / Τιτῆνων ἐριδαινομένων Διὶ συμμογέοντες (“all around the immortals are toiling fighting together with Zeus against the competing Titans”, 5.104-105).

powers to cause earthquakes.⁴⁴ As we saw earlier, Poseidon intervenes twice to deal with Ajax: he first causes an earthquake (570-574) and cuts off the rock that Ajax is clutching (574-575), and he then opens the earth and buries Ajax under a hill. The divine co-operation that began with Athena's request from Zeus becomes increasingly more pointed as the narrator draws attention to the gods' supremacy and designated powers. As sea-god, Poseidon stirs the sea ἥρᾳ κασιγνήτοιο φέρων ἐρικυδέϊ κούρη ("bringing favour to his brother's glorious daughter", 508), while Zeus thunders κυδαίνων ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἐὼν τέκος ("intending to honour his child", 511) and he later on sends rain ἐπίηρᾳ φέρων ἐρικυδέϊ Ἐννοσιγαίῳ ("bringing honour to the glorious Earth-shaker", 638). By ending the *Posthomerica* with the storm at sea caused by Ajax's transgressive act that triggers the wrath of the gods, Quintus ends his epic with chaos and confusion on the human plane, and unity and collaboration on the divine plane, as the distance between mortals and immortals is gradually being restored.

3. The Achaean Wall (Q.S. 14.632-654)

This divine co-operation continues with the destruction of the wall that the Greek army built in the course of the war to protect themselves from Trojan attacks. This is the last episode in the *Posthomerica*, and Quintus' narrative here materialises Zeus' promise in *Iliad* 7 that the wall will be destroyed after the departure of the Achaeans (*Il.* 7.459-463). The promise was made following Poseidon's complaint that the Greeks built the wall without offering renowned hecatombs to the gods (οὐδὲ θεοῖσι δόσαν κλειτὰς ἐκατόμβας, *Il.* 7.450 = 12.6)⁴⁵ and that the fame of this wall would outshine that of the wall which Poseidon and Apollo built for Laomedon (*Il.* 7.446-453).⁴⁶ Poseidon introduced his complaint by drawing attention to the mortals' lack of communication with, and respect for, the gods that emerges from this act of neglect: Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἧ ῥά τίς ἐστι βροτῶν ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαίαν / ὅς τις ἔτ' ἀθανάτοισι νόον καὶ μῆτιν ἐνίψει; ("Father Zeus,

44 Cf. Vian (1969) 203 n. 3 (cited in n. 49 below). See Luppe / Poethke (1998) 211 for *PBerol.* 1970, col. 2.28-30 for Poseidon's epithets (2nd-3rd century A.D.): Ἐνοσίχθων κ[αὶ] Ἐνοσίγαιος: ὁ [Π]οσειδ[ῶν] ὁ / κ(ε)ινησίγαιο[ς], ἐπειδὴ οἱ σε[ι]σμοὶ ἐπ' α[ὐτὸν] / ἀναφέροντ[αι] ("Earth-shaker: Poseidon the earth-mover, since the earthquakes are referred to him"). Elsewhere in the *Posthomerica* Ἐννοσίγαιος underlines Poseidon's role as ruler of the sea (3.767, 5.89, 14.343), while it occurs once (8.394) in the context of the god's role in building the walls of Troy. The title Ἐνοσίχθων is used only once in the *Posthomerica* (9.300). When Apollo intervenes to destroy the wall of the Achaeans (14.639), he is referred to as Ἐκάεργος (only here in the *Posthomerica*).

45 See section 1 above. Note that West (1998) brackets *Il.* 12.6.

46 Ancient scholars regarded the exchange between Zeus and Poseidon in *Iliad* 7 as an interpolation (schol. vet. AT on *Il.* 7.443-464 Erbse); Kirk (1990) 288-289.

which mortal is there, then, on the boundless earth / who will still tell his mind and thought to immortals?”, *Il.* 7.446-447). Both Poseidon in *Iliad* 7 and Athena in *Posthomerica* 14 thus draw attention to the fact that men’s neglect of and irreverence towards gods threaten to close the fundamental gap that exists between mortals and immortals. At the end of Quintus’ *Posthomerica*, these two acts of mortal impiety that have hitherto gone unpunished, namely the Achaeans’ building of the wall and Ajax’s rape of Cassandra, are now being punished.

Quintus’ narrative of the destruction of the wall follows closely the account of this destruction envisaged in *Iliad* 12, where Poseidon and Apollo decide to sweep away the wall after the Argives have sailed to their fatherland having sacked Troy (*Il.* 12.13-35). Apollo turns against the wall the mouths of the rivers flowing from the Idaean mountains down to the sea; Zeus sends rain to cover the wall with water (ἀλίπλοα τέιχεα θείη, 12.26); Poseidon leads the operation and hurls into the sea the foundations built by the Achaeans.⁴⁷ In Quintus’ narrative the participle μεγάλρων (Q.S. 14.632) evokes Poseidon’s grudge in his complaint to Zeus in *Il.* 7.450, which was repeated by the narrator in *Il.* 12.6 (cited above). The same three gods that were involved in the prospective destruction of the wall in the *Iliad* are active in Quintus’ account of the actual destruction: Apollo directs the rivers against the wall (Q.S. 14.639-641; cf. *Il.* 12.24-25), Zeus sends rain from above (Q.S. 14.637-638; cf. *Il.* 12.25-26), and Poseidon destroys the wall’s foundations and covers the shore in sand (Q.S. 14.646-654; *Il.* 12.27-33). The Posthomeric Poseidon brings about destruction described in terms of an earthquake: designated as Ἐννοσίγαιος,⁴⁸ the god opens up the earth and shakes Sigaeum, while the fortress vanishes under the water and sinks into the earth (Q.S. 14.646-652).⁴⁹

An important detail in the Homeric account of this planned destruction is that the narrator refers to those who fought at Troy as heroes of a bygone past. The list of rivers that will be directed against the wall concludes with Scamander and Simoeis, ὅθι πολλὰ βοάγρια καὶ τρυφάλειαι / κάππεσον ἐν κονίησι καὶ ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν (“where many shields of bull’s hide and helmets / fell in the dust, and the race of half-divine men”, *Il.* 12.22-23). This is a unique moment in the *Iliad* as the narrator comments on these events “from the standpoint of a

47 See Scodel (1982) 33-35 for some difficulties that arise in this passage.

48 See n. 44 above.

49 Vian (1969) 203 n. 3: “Dans les v. 634-654, Quintus est constamment tributaire de l’*Iliade* [...] Mais, si le merveilleux prédomine chez Homère, Quintus s’efforce au réalisme. L’intervention de Poséidon se transforme en une évocation fort exacte d’un cataclysme physique: nous assistons en fait à un tremblement de terre accompagné d’un raz de marée qui provoque des inondations dans la plaine troyenne en empêchant les fleuves de se déverser dans la mer.” For textual problems in these verses see Vian (1969) *ad loc.*

later age, from which the heroes may well have seemed half-divine”.⁵⁰ The term ἡμίθεοι is used in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* to describe the fourth race of men, which includes those who fought at Troy: ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος, οἱ καλέονται / ἡμίθεοι (“a god-like race of hero-men who are called demi-gods”, *Op.* 159-160).⁵¹ The term also occurs towards the end of the catalogue of Helen’s suitors in Hes. fr. 204.100 Merkelbach / West when Zeus plans to destroy the ψυχὰς ἡμιθέων (“souls of demi-gods”). Both here and in the Hesiodic myth of the races, the Trojan War marks the end of the ἡμίθεοι.⁵²

As the Achaean wall is demolished at the end of *Posthomerica* 14 in terms that vividly evoke the Iliadic narrative, the Trojan War and the heroes who fought therein become part of that distant past. The last direct words in Quintus’ epic underline the sense that the end of an era has been reached: after the death of Ajax and before the destruction of the wall, as the narrator describes the heavy rainfall, an anonymous Greek compares the present tempest to Deucalion’s flood: τάχα τοῖον ἐπέχραεν ἀνδράσι χεῖμα, / ὅππότε Δευκαλίωνος ἀθέσφατος ὑετὸς ἦλθε, / ποντώθῃ δ’ ἄρα γαῖα, βυθὸς δ’ ἐπεχέυατο πάντῃ (“perhaps such was the storm that struck men / when Deucalion’s awful rain came, / and land became sea and the depth of the sea was poured all over”, 14.602-604).⁵³ Deucalion’s flood punctuates the end of a generation and, through his own survival, the beginning of another.⁵⁴ This race is not altogether destroyed, and the narrator in *Posthomerica* 14 looks forward to the survival of some of the heroes who fought in the Trojan War:⁵⁵ attention is drawn both to Athena’s anxiety about Odysseus’ future, as “he was about / to suffer much grief because of Poseidon’s anger” (ἔμελλε / πάσχειν ἄλγεα πολλὰ Ποσειδάωνος ὁμοκλή, 14.630-631), and immediately after the destruction of the wall to the Achaeans who survived the tempest (14.655-656). With the destruction of the wall as the final scene of Quintus’ epic the transition

50 Hainsworth (1993) 320. See Scodel (1982) for the destruction of the Achaean wall in the *Iliad* and the context of myths of destruction.

51 The term ἡμίθεοι in early Greek hexameter poetry also occurs in *h.Hom.* 31.19 and 32.19 for those whose deeds have been sung by the Muses. See Scodel (1982) 35-36. Cf. West (1978) 191 on *Op.* 160 for ἡμίθεοι referring to “parentage rather than [...] semi-divine status”. Clay (2005) 30: “In early Greek poetry, the term *hemitheoi* always seems to convey not only their hybrid nature, but also a distancing perspective on the heroes that assigns them to a bygone era.”

52 Cf. *Cypria* fr.1 Bernabé, where Zeus brings about the Trojan War to reduce the number of men on earth and also (according to schol. D on *Il.* 1.5) because of men’s impiety. See Pontani (2000) for the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and the epilogue of Catullus, *Carmen* 64, and Hardie (2005a) 289-292 for the reception of the *Catalogue* in the Latin tradition.

53 For some detailed accounts in later works, see, e.g. [Apollod.] 1.7.2; Lucian *Syr.D.* 12-13; Ov. *Met.* 1.313-415. See Lightfoot (2003) 343-344 for reasons for divine anger linked to accounts of flood. See Caduff (1986) for ancient flood myths.

54 The flood does not mark a transition between ages in the Hesiodic myth, but it has this function elsewhere in the tradition; see West (1978) 187.

55 Cf. Clay (2005) 29 n. 17.

from one generation to another that was implied in Athena's speech to Zeus is brought to the foreground.

Conclusion

The final scenes in the *Posthomerica* have been discussed here in relation to themes they evoke from the literary tradition that refer to the end of an era, pointing to the end of the Trojan War as a major turning-point. As a prelude to the cosmic turbulence that will dominate the final scenes of the *Posthomerica*, the divine exchange between Athena and Zeus sets in motion the beginning of the end for the heroes who fought in Troy. With an emphatic assertion that a line has been crossed and through allusion to the Hesiodic myth of the races, Athena brings to Zeus' attention the wickedness and impiety of mortals, inviting divine reaction on a comparable scale. Zeus responds accordingly, evoking his own struggles for supremacy, while the imagery and narrative describing Ajax's struggle at sea underline the hero's portrayal as a threatening enemy, whom the gods, united, finally overpower. The gods intervene again to destroy the Achaean wall, and as this scene is narrated in terms that strongly evoke the destruction in *Iliad* 12, it materialises an event envisaged in the *Iliad* to take place at a later time; following Athena's warning and the punishment of Ajax, this time has now come, and the destruction of the wall assigns the Trojan War and the heroes who fought therein to the past.

A sequel to the *Iliad*, Quintus' epic does not end with the fall of Troy or with the individual fates of the Greek heroes who fought in the Trojan War;⁵⁶ the *Posthomerica* ends with the transition from the race of the heroes who fought in Troy to the following race already heralded in Athena's speech to Zeus. The final scenes of Quintus' *Posthomerica* thus show the process through which the Trojan War becomes an event of a bygone past that is celebrated in epic.

⁵⁶ According to Proclus' summary, Agias' *Nostoi* ended with Orestes' punishment following the death of Agamemnon (*Nostoi* arg. Bernabé).