More “Parfit Gentil Knyght”¹ than “Hyrcanian Beast”:² The Reception of Neoptolemos in Quintus Smyrnaeus’ *Posthomerica*

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The Knight’s martial prowess and reputation receive most attention.
Unexpectedly united with these, and so individualizing him,
are his gentle demeanour and true piety which had incited him
to fulfill his vow of a pilgrimage without delay.³

‘Neoptolemos’⁴

The son of Achilleus is a far more amiable fellow in Quintus than previous mythological accounts would lead us to expect. In fact, the prevalent tendency in the *Posthomerica* is for Neoptolemos to be portrayed against type in a positive light.⁵ Quintus manipulates the narrative and the characterization of Neoptolemos, and those involved with him in some way, to achieve this effect. Initially, I will consider this tendency in the *Posthomerica* in general. Then, I will focus on a specific instance which highlights this point; the killing of Priam, and the ‘substitute’ scenes: the killings of Ilioneos and Astyanax.⁶ Finally, to avoid oversimplifying Quintus’ treatment of the young hero, I will consider the rather more ambiguous portrayal, the Polyxena sacrifice episode, followed by a brief biography of Neoptolemos’ post-Troy narrative. Through making extensive use of inter-

1 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales – The General Prologue*, 72.

2 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 2.2.446. For “Hyrcanian”, read “wild” / “savage”. See Jenkins (1982) 263 n. 446.

3 Hodgson (1969) 75, on Chaucer’s *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*.

4 I use inverted commas to draw the reader’s attention to the characterization of Quintus’ Neoptolemos.

5 See especially Calero (1998), who has also explored Quintus’ tendency to idealize Neoptolemos. My study differs, however, as I extend the scope of the focus by considering the effects of the reception as they impact upon the character of Neoptolemos.

6 See especially Gärtner (2005). As with Calero, elements of my study coincide, although my main focus is Neoptolemos and the dynamics of the intertext as they impact upon his portrayal.

textual readings, I aim to illustrate how Quintus portrays a Neoptolemos who differs markedly from more traditional representations.

1. The General Tendency to Portray Neoptolemos in a Positive Light in the *Posthomerica*

Neoptolemos is not the typical major hero we would have expected in Quintus' epic; where excessive physicality (often in the form of extreme violence), is central to the characterization. Though frequently associated with Achilles (as relatively excessive use of his patronymic indicates),⁷ and, it seems, equally adroit in battle, Neoptolemos is more complex than his Posthomeric father. The young hero also expresses an awareness of others, sensitivity and wisdom that sets him apart from his Posthomeric peers, Homeric heroes, and his own traditional portrayal in ancient epic (Greek and Roman).

Untypical of the more traditional epic hero, too, Neoptolemos exercises his restraint when in full *aristeia*. Automedon notes that he has spied Deiphobos and his troops. Instead of immediately seeking out a marked foe, Neoptolemos first bids him to drive the horses faster, and rescue the dying Greeks (Q.S. 9.231-232).⁸ This contrasts with Achilles' response in the *Iliad* (and in the *Posthomerica*), where Achilles seems more inclined to harm his enemies, than help his 'friends'.⁹

The similarity of the Posthomeric episode between Neoptolemos and Deiphobos (Q.S. 9.238-263), and the Iliadic episodes involving, first, Achilles with Aeneas, and then with Hektor,¹⁰ invite such comparison; linking elements include debating with oneself whether to flee from Neoptolemos / Achilles; lion-similes to characterize Neoptolemos / Achilles;¹¹ the divine whisking away of the hero,

7 In the *Posthomerica*, Neoptolemos is so named seventeen times; however, he is 'son of Achilles' sixty-one times; this contrasts with the Iliadic Achilles, where the pattern is reversed: Achilles is so named three-hundred and one times, as opposed to his patronymic, 'son of Peleus' (110). This is but one example of the great impact Achilles has on Neoptolemos' characterization in the *Posthomerica*. This, and further points regarding Neoptolemos' characterization, and its relationship with Achilles, is discussed in more detail in the fourth chapter of my research on Quintus' reception of the hero and heroism (of which the present paper forms one part) (*Epic Journeys: The Reception of the Hero and Heroism in Quintus Smyrnaeus' Posthomerica*).

8 I use Vian's edition for Quintus' text (1963; 1966; 1969). Unless otherwise indicated, I follow James' translation (2004).

9 *Il.* 19.423; 20.2, etc.; Q.S. 1 and 2; on which, see Blundell (1989) 26-59.

10 *Il.* 20.164-339 (Aeneas); *Il.* 20.243-254, as James (2004) 316-317 n. 255-263; *Il.* 20.22 (Hektor).

11 I discuss in detail Quintus' use of lion similes, with reference to Neoptolemos (and Achilles), in chapter 4 of my thesis (cf. n. 7).

and divine mist, to avoid slaughter by Neoptolemos / Achilles. In the Iliadic examples, though, Achilles' rage drives his actions.¹² One could say the same of the Posthomerica model, where Achilles' bellicosity dominates; for instance, when hearing of Penthesileia, Achilles (and Aias) are ἄμφω ἐπειγόμενοι δηῖων ἀπὸ λαὸν ὀλέσσαι "both impatient to destroy the hostile host" (Q.S. 1.522).

Other positive characteristics play a significant part in Neoptolemos' portrayal. Unlike most heroes from ancient epic, and Quintus' own, particularly, Neoptolemos' world is less a world of bloody war alone. When Nestor volunteers for the Horse (Q.S. 12.271-273), Neoptolemos diplomatically dissuades the old hero by first noting his intellectual pre-eminence, and then that he is now too old to engage in heroic acts (12.275-280). Such consideration for a *geron* has obvious precedents, as can be seen with reference to his Iliadic father;¹³ using similar rhetoric, Achilles had offered an honour-prize to Nestor in the Funeral Games for Patroklos.¹⁴ Nestor too recognizes and notes such qualities: ἐσσι πατρὸς κείνοιο βίη καὶ ἐύφρονι μύθῳ / ἀντιθέου Ἀχιλλῆος "in strength as well as wise words you are the son of your father godlike Achilles" (Q.S. 12.287-288);¹⁵ the Iliadic Achilles seems to be a far more influential parent than the Posthomerica one. Where the earlier model exhibits great complexity of character drawing, as is evident in his multi-faceted nature, Quintus' Achilles is predominantly characterized by his penchant for excessive violence, even whilst dying.¹⁶

(...) σοὶ δέ μ' ἔπεμπε γέρων ἱππηλάτα Πηλεὺς
 ἥματι τῷ ὅτε σ' ἐκ Φθίης Ἀγαμέμνωνι πέμπε
 νήπιον, οὗ πω εἰδὸθ' ὁμοίου πολέμοιο, 440
 οὐδ' ἀγορέων, ἵνα τ' ἄνδρες ἀριπρεπέες τελέθουσι.
 τοῦνεκά με προέηκε διδασκόμεναι τάδε πάντα,
 μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων. (Il. 9.438-443)

12 One could add to these examples, especially, Achilles' slaughter of the Trojans *en masse* (including, famously, his merciless rejection of Lykaon's supplication), *Il.* 21.20-135. See Kneebone in this present volume.

13 Italicized to distinguish the qualities present in Homer's model as opposed to those of Quintus' Achilles. See following.

14 *Il.* 23.618-623; perhaps one should also consider in his Iliadic relationship with Phoenix (*Iliad* 9) significant indications of concern for others, as it impacts upon Quintus' Neoptolemos.

15 See following for discussion of Neoptolemos' speech.

16 For Achilles' Posthomerica death-scene, see 3.62-185; I discuss this in detail in the second chapter of my thesis (cf. n. 7). However, an opposite characterization features occasionally, as when Achilles' ghost offers 'Stoic' advice to his son (Q.S. 14.185-222), and, perhaps, in his feelings for Penthesileia (Q.S. 1.671-674; note too Thersites' rebuke, 1.723-740). King (1987) 138 sums it up nicely, when commenting of Quintus' Achilles (the ghostly rhetoric and characterization in general): "The abrasive juxtaposition of Stoic philosophy and murderous passion adds no depth to Achilles' character but rather creates a character that has two halves but no whole, one that is more confusing than complex."

With you the old horseman Peleus sent me on the day when he sent you out from Phthia to Agamemnon, a mere child, knowing nothing as yet of evil war, nor of assemblies in which men become preeminent. For this reason he sent me to instruct you in all these things, to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds.¹⁷

So Phoenix informs Achilles at the assembly. In both respects, being a speaker of words, and a doer of deeds, the Iliadic model proves his competence.¹⁸ Not so, Quintus' Achilles, whose amplified bellicosity is countered by his diminished rhetoric.¹⁹ In contrast, Quintus' Neoptolemos is more like his Iliadic father; greatly skilled in both areas. It is apparent, however, that Neoptolemos' speech is taut.²⁰

The brevity of Neoptolemos' speech is marked,²¹ even in an epic which reduces rhetoric to approximately half that of its Homeric predecessor.²² And, this factor gives further clues as to the type of hero Quintus wants his Neoptolemos to be. In *Iliad* 3, the primary narrator locates a heroic divide: the Trojan elders watch from Troy's high wall, awaiting Menelaos' duel with Paris. We are told they were now too old for battle, but were good speakers; in fact, like cicadas with lily-like voices.²³ Thus, speech compensates for the diminished physical ability of the aged hero;²⁴ sometimes for the younger would-be hero, too.

As with his physical prowess, it is immediately evident that Neoptolemos already possesses the rhetoric of a hero. In his Posthomeric debut, Neoptolemos already practises war (Q.S. 7.170-175);²⁵ and he welcomes the Greeks sent to recruit him (led by Odysseus and Diomedes) with the confidence Telemachos shows at his best moments (Q.S. 7.179-181; cf. *Od.* 1.123-124). In many of Telemachos' speeches, however, it is evident that he is not yet prepared for the

17 I follow Murray / Wyatt's (1999) translation.

18 Achilles shows that he is a 'speaker of words' in his response to Odysseus' appeal in the embassy, *Il.* 9.307-431; he shows that he is a 'doer of deeds' in his mass slaughter of the Trojans, *Il.* 21.17-26.

19 Achilles continues to kill on mass scale even when dying, and his rhetoric is brief, but in-keeping with his violence, Q.S. 3.138-169.

20 The term 'lofty orator' (ὕψαλόρη) cannot be applied to Neoptolemos, as it is to Telemachos in the *Odyssey*, albeit by one of the leading (and most disreputable) suitors, Antinoos; *Od.* 2.85, 303; 17.406; see too *Od.* 1.385. The term is only applied to Telemachos; see Heubeck / West / Hainsworth (1988) 122 n. 384-385.

21 I would like to thank both Dr. M. Cuyppers and Professor A. James for suggesting consideration of the brevity of Neoptolemos' speeches in the *Posthomeric*.

22 See James / Lee (2000) 16: "Speeches constitute a markedly smaller proportion of the whole *PH.* (24 per cent) than they do of the *Iliad* (44 per cent) and the *Odyssey* (56 per cent)."

23 *Il.* 3.150-153; see Kirk (1985) 283-284 n. 150-153, n. 152.

24 The Posthomeric Nestor proves a notable exception (Q.S. 2.368-369), as I discuss in the third chapter of my thesis (cf. n. 7), on heroic representations of age. On old age in Homer, see Falkner in Falkner / de Luce (1989) 21-67.

25 I discuss Neoptolemos' 'preparedness' in greater detail in my thesis chapter on Neoptolemos.

role thrust upon him – to be the young hero. This does not apply to Neoptolemos, whose preparedness is reinforced by his short speeches.

Neoptolemos never bursts into tears of frustration (this, as with his relatively long speeches, is, as the *gerontes* of *Iliad* 3, the only way Telemachos can express himself, initially),²⁶ and his rhetoric is never ridiculed.²⁷ Furthermore, Neoptolemos does not ask for advice;²⁸ nor is he shown to speak inappropriately.²⁹ This is not to say, however, that Neoptolemos' speech is reduced to such an extent that he appears, like his Posthomeric father, more just a doer of (violent) deeds.

Instead, Neoptolemos' speech is measured: he speaks when he needs to speak, and in that, says what he needs to say. After a grandiose welcome by Phoenix (Q.S. 7.642-666), wherein Neoptolemos is likened to Achilles, his reply is noticeably brief:

ὦ γέρον, ἡμετέρην ἀρετὴν ἀνὰ δημοτῆτα
Αἴσα διακρινέει κρατερὴ καὶ ὑπέρβιος Ἄρης. (Q.S. 7.668-669)

Old fellow, the judges of my prowess in battle
Will be almighty Fate and the powerful god of war.³⁰

Such a rare show of heroic humility follows similar eulogy from Agamemnon. Neoptolemos' response is, again, very brief:

εἶθέ μιν, ὦ Ἀγάμεμνον, ἔτι ζῶοντα κίχανον,
ὄφρα καὶ αὐτὸς ἄθρησεν ἐὼν θυμήρεα παῖδα
οὐ τι καταισχύνοντα βίην πατρός, ὥς περ οἶω
ἔσσεσθ', ἦν με σώωσιν ἀκηδέες Οὐρανίωνες. (Q.S. 7.701-704)

Agamemnon, I wish I had found him still alive,
So that he could see for himself the son he loved
Bringing no shame on his mighty father, as I trust
Will happen if I am preserved by the carefree gods in heaven.

The primary narrator's comment which immediately follows reinforces the emerging impression of *this* Neoptolemos:

26 Cf. Telemachos in *Od.* 2.81.

27 See ὑπαγόρη above (n. 20).

28 Cf. both Telemachos and Odysseus, in the *Odyssey*.

29 Compare Telemachos who makes foolish claims about what is and is not possible (even with the gods' help, *Od.* 3.225-238); and Odysseus, whose bragging at Polyphemos costs him dear (*Od.* 9.492-536).

30 Such humility also recalls Memnon at Q.S. 2.148-155; though, cf. Penthesileia (Q.S. 1.93-95), who promises to subdue Achilles; the primary narrator (Q.S. 1.96-97) and Andromache (Q.S. 1.100-103) note her misguided confidence.

ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη πινυτῆσιν ἀρηρέμενος φρεσὶ θυμόν·
λαοὶ δ' ἀμφιέποντες ἐθάμβεον ἀνέρα δῖον. (Q.S. 7.705-706)

So he spoke in wisdom [*pinutesin*],³¹ expressing the restraint in his heart.³²
The people round him marvelled at his noble manhood.³³

(As noted above) Neoptolemos' interchange with Nestor, regarding his (the *geron*'s) involvement in the Horse ruse follows suit; the old man noting Neoptolemos' 'wise words' (ἐύφρονι μύθῳ, 12.287) (as his prowess) matching Achilles'. And, again, Neoptolemos' reply takes into account their ultimate subservience, noting, philosophically, εἰ δ' ἑτέρως ἐθέλουσι θεοί, καὶ τοῦτο τετύχθω "if the gods choose otherwise, so be it" (Q.S. 12.300).³⁴

Neoptolemos is, then, what his speech indicates: the complete hero, *also* with an air of sophistication, represented by his humility. Furthermore, the brevity of his rhetoric also represents his temperance. He is restrained, fully in control of himself, as his words; compare the longer rantings of Athene-maddened Aias (Q.S. 5.451-481), and the overly bellicose Achilles in his death-scene with Apollo (Q.S. 3.45-52). By appropriate speech (in terms of content and context), Neoptolemos can proceed with battle, and, as his foes shall find, get to his point, quickly.³⁵

It is significant in the Horse ruse passage that Nestor had just kissed Neoptolemos (both his hands and his head), following the young hero's volunteering to enter the Horse,³⁶ and for his kind words (Q.S. 12.282). Kissing (κυνέω, φιλέω; here, ἔκυσσε, and its other forms, including ἀμφικύσας)³⁷ is more frequently associated with Neoptolemos than any other character, man, woman, child or god in the *Posthomeric*, and gives us another clue as to the type of hero Quintus wants him to be.

31 Compare πεπνυμένος frequently applied to the 'wise' Telemachos, just before he is about to speak; e.g. *Od.* 1.213, 367, 388, etc.

32 My translation.

33 It is true that Telemachos' speech is admired similarly, even by the suitors (*Od.* 1.381-382), but, as mentioned, Neoptolemos' rhetoric, much more brief, is never mocked.

34 Compare Achilles with Apollo, noted below.

35 See Friedrich / Redfield (1999) on speech as a personality symbol, with reference to Achilles, especially, 243, on 'poetic directness': "Sometimes this reduces to a simplicity, as in his response to his dream of Patroclus (XXIII.103-7). But this same simplicity becomes a strength when it enables him to go straight to the hard facts."

36 Neoptolemos is, in fact, true to his word, and more, as he is *first* to enter the Horse (Q.S. 12.314-315). This 'pole position' further enhances Neoptolemos' positive characterization. The number of Greeks, order in which they enter, and names of those involved is by no means set. See Gantz (1993) 649.

37 See below (p. 313) for ἀμφικύσας, Q.S. 7.328. See Vian / Battegay (1984) s.v. for all thirteen *kuneo* references. – I thank C. Maciver for the important question regarding this discussion: "What's in a kiss?"

Neoptolemos is kissed on five occasions (this figure includes Deidameia, who lavishes Neoptolemos' spear, and any other of his possessions, with kisses, φιλέεσκε, 7.342), and kisses twice (Deidameia, 7.328, and Achilles' tomb-stone, 9.47).³⁸ Those kissing Neoptolemos also include Nestor, Phoenix, Lykomedes (his grandfather, and Deidameia's father), and Achilles (in the form of a ghost).³⁹ The list, with the exception of Nestor, really constitutes Neoptolemos' family – Phoenix being 'surrogate' father (again).⁴⁰ His kissing of Deidameia is especially marked. He kisses her μάλα μυρία (Q.S. 7.328), more than could be counted; the infinite, or the excessive, in Quintus, is more usually associated with the hero's killing or size,⁴¹ than with affection shown toward or by him.

In the Homeric epics, kissing (κυνέω) occurs eighteen times in the *Odyssey*, and on three occasions only in the *Iliad*;⁴² this frequency, and the nature of the scenes in which kissing occurs, is an important factor, and (though the context of the *Posthomerica* is superficially closer to the Iliadic world [conflict] than that of the *Odyssey* [reunion]) somewhat reduces the centrality of the *Iliad* on Neoptolemos' epic characterization. Of its Odyssean instances, it applies to Telemachos four times,⁴³ and Odysseus thirteen times. With reference to Telemachos, he is kissed on each of these occasions. He never kisses.⁴⁴ This is significant as it helps to portray the young Odyssean hero as a more passive or vulnerable figure in the epic, as say opposed to Quintus' Neoptolemos, who, as above, occasionally returns the favour. However, there are obvious similarities in the high association of kissing with the hero's (Odysseus' or Achilles') young son.

Eumaios' kissing Telemachos (*Od.* 16.15-21) somewhat anticipates the kissing of Quintus' Neoptolemos by Phoenix (Q.S. 7.640), where he is kissed on his head and chest, and that of Nestor with Neoptolemos (Q.S. 12.282; both hands and head). Here (Eumaios / Phoenix), the intertext is especially marked as the *geron* shows affection to the son of the absent father he so adored, and was instrumental in his upbringing. Telemachos' kissing by his father, Odysseus (*Od.* 16.190), is a more restrained reunion than that of its Posthomeric counterpart. Odysseus merely kisses Telemachos. Quintus' Achilles kisses Neoptolemos' neck and sparkling (φάεα) eyes (Q.S. 14.183). This more emotive welcome recalls Penelope's for Telemachos (*Od.* 17.39), as she too kisses his *sparkling*

38 See below for those kissed by Neoptolemos.

39 Q.S. 12.282 (Nestor); 7.640 (Phoenix); 7.312 (Lykomedes); 14.183 (Achilleus).

40 See *Iliad* 9.

41 E.g., the number of men Neoptolemos kills is beyond counting (μυρία, Q.S. 8.230); Achilles' corpse is gigantic (Q.S. 3.725).

42 See Cunliffe (1924) s.v. κυνέω.

43 *Od.* 16.15, 21, 190; 17.39.

44 In contrast, Odysseus is kissed eight times (*Od.* 17.35; 19.417; 21.224, 225; 22.499; 23.87, 208; 24.398), and kisses on five occasions (*Od.* 5.463; 13.354; 14.279; 24.236, 320).

eyes, and head;⁴⁵ again, the mother's embrace, as in Quintus, influences our reception of the young hero.

On each of these occasions in the *Odyssey*, the characters kiss the young man because they are delighted at his return. Similar expressions of delight at the arrival (rather debut than return)⁴⁶ of Neoptolemos therefore invite comparison with the epic antecedent. (Deidameia's kissing, however, instead forms part of her lament at Neoptolemos' departure; although, this still conveys the same: affection for the young hero.)

The use of *κυνέω* is marked in the *Iliad*, when Hektor kisses his small son, Astyanax (6.474), following the young child's tears at the sight of his father in his helmet; again, the scene is a tender one, between familiars, often involving father / father-figures. The association of such affectionate actions with Neoptolemos, then, recall emotive representations from the ancient epics, and distance him slightly from the brutal world of battle, and, especially, his particularly brutal previous characterizations and narratives.

Traditionally, Neoptolemos' biography is a most violent one.⁴⁷ In brief, (after killing Eurypylos and, presumably, many Trojans) he kills Priam who had fled to Zeus' altar for safety, takes it upon himself to dispatch the child Astyanax, sacrifices Polyxena, and is killed, for his *hubris*, on his return at Delphi. Thus, Quintus had certain pre-mapped mythic parameters in which to work. However, he was very creative in the way he manoeuvred Neoptolemos so as to depict him in the most positive light.

With reference to Neoptolemos' dispatch of Priam, the young hero had a particularly nasty reputation.⁴⁸ Commenting on Polygnotos' murals at Delphi, and their relationship to the epic sources, Pausanias notes:

Πρίαμον δὲ οὐκ ἀποθανεῖν ἔφη Λέσχεως ἐπὶ τῇ ἐσχάρᾳ τοῦ Ἑρκείου, ἀλλὰ ἀποσπασθέντα ἀπὸ τοῦ βωμοῦ πάρεργον τῷ Νεοπτολέμῳ πρὸς ταῖς τῆς οἰκίας γενέσθαι θύραις (...) (*Ilias mikra* fr. 25 West [2003])

Lescheos says he [Priam] was not killed at the hearth [*Herkeios*] altar of Zeus [...] but was pulled away from the altar and dealt with in passing by Neoptolemos at the doors of the house (...) ⁴⁹

45 Telemachos' fifth kiss is from Odysseus' maids, including Eurykleia (*Od.* 17.33-35; head and shoulders). Similarly, Odysseus' grandmother, Amphithea, kisses Odysseus (*Od.* 14.417).

46 As I discuss in more detail in the fourth chapter on Neoptolemos, of my thesis (cf. n. 7).

47 See discussion following. On the sources and alternative versions for those killed by Neoptolemos see Gantz (1993) 640-641, 650-659; for his Trojan War 'afterlife' (including his being killed), see Gantz (1993) 687-694; Scherf (2000).

48 See Gantz (1993) 650ff.

49 Unless otherwise stated, I follow West's *Greek Epic Fragments* (2003), and translations.

In Proklos' summary of Arktinos' *Iliupersis*, Priam had again fled to Zeus' altar, but, this time, it is by the hearth itself that Neoptolemos kills him.⁵⁰

In art, Gantz notes, the death of Priam is linked again and again with the death of a child usually taken to be Astyanax;⁵¹ for instance, on a sixth century B.C. Black-Figure lekythos, where Neoptolemos holds the child over a corpse prostrated on an altar, threatening him with a sword (Syracuse 21894).⁵² The scene becomes more grotesque, and Neoptolemos' characterization more violent, as in Lydos' (c. 550) painting: "The pose found there (child brandished above head like a club) is now combined with the old man on the altar, so that Neoptolemos appears to be dashing the child down upon the body of Priam (Louvre F29; so too Berlin: CH F3988, a tripod kothon)."⁵³

Virgil's first-century B.C. portrayal of the episode is equally unambiguous as to the savagery of Achilles' son in his treatment of Priam.⁵⁴ The pathos of the scene is heightened by emphasizing Priam's vulnerability, and Neoptolemos' / Pyrrhus' mockery and brutality (words and deeds). Neoptolemos slaughters Polites, Priam's son, in front of the decrepit king. Priam offers pathetic physical resistance, and chides Neoptolemos for his wickedness (*Aen.* 2.535-543). For witnessing this murder, Priam invokes the curse that foreshadows the traditional fate of Neoptolemos – punishment by the gods for such terrible deeds. Priam's juxtaposition of Achilles' integrity when they met (*Aen.* 2.540-543)⁵⁵ is itself juxtaposed with the few positive portrayals of his (Achilles') son, as in Sophocles, and Quintus.⁵⁶ Similarly, the crimes (*tristia facta*, *Aen.* 2.548) of Virgil's Neoptolemos make him almost unrecognizable as Achilles' son.⁵⁷ Of course, one could reasonably ask 'which Achilles?'. But for the purposes of dramatic effect, here as in certain episodes in Quintus, one can reasonably conclude, the one which most appropriately conveys the characteristics that fulfil the poet's requirements at this point.⁵⁸ Therefore, in *this* instance, the Iliadic Achilles, because of the compassion and respect he showed Priam in their meeting in book 24, is the most suitable model.

50 *Iliupersis (Iliou Persis)* arg. 2 West (2003). In the Polygnotos painting, Neoptolemos only is still killing at one point.

51 Gantz (1993) 655-657.

52 As Gantz (1993) 656.

53 Gantz (1993) 656.

54 On Priam's Virgilian death, see Austin (1964) 196-215. On the death of Virgil's and Quintus' Priam, see especially Gärtner (2005) 236-241; and 241-243 for Astyanax' killing.

55 And for the archetype, see the famous Iliadic meeting between the two (*Il.* 24.472-675). On which especially, Macleod (1982), and Richardson (1993) 320-347.

56 See below.

57 Again, see Neoptolemos in Sophocles, and Quintus, following.

58 This principle has universal significance for reception in general.

Neoptolemos' reply incorporates particularly vindictive rhetoric, as he announces that old Priam shall bear such news to his dead father (Achilleus), and, *illi mea tristia facta / degeneremque Neoptoleum narrare memento; / nunc morere* "be sure to tell him of my sorry deeds and his degenerate [*degenerem*, 2.549] Neoptolemus! Now die!" (*Aen.* 2.548-550).⁵⁹ Finally, Neoptolemos drags the trembling (*tremetem*, 2.550, and following)⁶⁰ Priam through Polites' blood, making his way specifically to the altar (*altaria*, 2.550) to kill the old man; as will be discussed, this shall be the traditional cause of his undoing in his post-Troy biography.⁶¹

Neoptolemos' dispatch of Priam is noticeably tactile, as he winds the old man's hair around his left hand (*laeva*, 2.552) just before decapitating him at the altar. As will be seen, Neoptolemos' killing of Priam in Quintus seems much less personal; for instance, the rhetoric of Quintus' Neoptolemos makes it clear that he is treating Priam as *any* enemy (i.e. Priam is not distinguished from other foes).⁶² In fact, Quintus' Neoptolemos *and* Priam do not engage in any vitriolic rhetoric directed against each other. And, physical contact is kept to the bare minimum.⁶³

Such a portrayal, with the focus on Neoptolemos' moral degeneration, contrasts markedly with Quintus' characterization of his Neoptolemos in book 12, when he opposes the Horse ruse suggested by Odysseus. As James notes, such opposition, from Neoptolemos and Philoktetes, is not attested elsewhere.⁶⁴ So, Quintus has again taken the opportunity to idealize the young hero. Neoptolemos tells Kalchas:

(...) δηίοισι καταντίον ἄλκιμοι ἄνδρες
 μάρνανται· τοὶ δ' ἐντὸς ἀλευάμενοι ἀπὸ πύργων
 οὔτιδανοὶ πονέονται, ὅσων φρένα δεῖμα χαλέπτει.
 τῷ νῦν μήτε δόλον φραζώμεθα, μήτε τι μῆχος
 ἄλλο· πόνῳ γὰρ ἔοικεν ἀριστεάς ἔμμεναι ἄνδρας
 καὶ δορί· θαρσαλέοι γὰρ ἀμείνονες ἐν δαὶ φῶτες. (Q.S. 12.67-72)

(...) Strong men stand and face their foes
 When they fight, while those who skulk inside and struggle
 Only on their walls are the worthless victims of fear.

59 I follow Fairclough's translation (²1999).

60 Note too the use of *tremetibus* at *Aen.* 2.509, with reference to Priam's aged shoulders. Austin gives "palsied" for 2.509, and notes, "Priam quavered from age, not from fear", for 2.550 ([1964] 199 n. 509ff., and 211 n. 550, respectively).

61 In Pindar's sixth *Paean* the death of Neoptolemos is directly linked to his killing of Priam.

62 Having said this, decapitation does mark the killing as slightly unusual, as it is not a common mode of death in epic (see following 2.2.); less so though in this episode, because traditionally, Priam loses his head; (as Virgil, and) see Servius on *Aen.* 2.506; see Austin (1964) 196-197.

63 See following.

64 James (2004) 329 n. 84-87.

Let us not, then, look for a trick or any kind 70
Of stratagem. Work with the spear is the one true test
Of champions. Brave men always prevail in battle.

This echoes Neoptolemos' illustrious father, who, having just been mortally wounded by Apollo's arrow, states:

τίς νύ μοι αἰνὸν οἶστὸν ἐπιπροέηκε κρυφιδόν;
τλήτω μευ κατέναντα καὶ εἰς ἀναφανδὸν ἰκέσθαι,
ὄφρα κέ οἱ μέλαν αἷμα καὶ ἔγκατα πάντα χυθείη 70
ἡμετέρῳ περὶ δουρί. (...) //

κρύβδα δ' ἀνάλκιδες αἰὲν ἀγαυότερους λοχόωσι· 76
τῷ μευ ἴτω κατέναντα. (...) (Q.S. 3.68-77)

Who was it shot a dreadful arrow at me by stealth?
Let him have the courage to face me openly,
To have his black⁶⁵ blood and all his bowels come gushing out 70
Around my spear. (...) //

Stealth is the weakling's way to snare a better man. 76
Just let him face me. (...)

Moral conviction of this type also clearly recalls that of the same character in Sophocles' *Philoktetes*, again in response to Odysseus' duplicitous contrivance.⁶⁶

ἐγὼ μὲν οὕς ἂν τῶν λόγων ἀλγῶ κλύων,
Λαερτίου παῖ, τοῦσδε καὶ πράσσειν στυγῶ·
ἔφυν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἐκ τέχνης πράσσειν κακῆς,
οὔτ' αὐτὸς οὔθ', ὥς φασιν, οὐκφύσας ἐμέ.
ἀλλ' εἴμ' ἐτοίμος πρὸς βίαν τὸν ἄνδρ' ἄγειν 90
καὶ μὴ δόλοισιν· οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ἐνὸς ποδὸς
ἡμᾶς τοσούσδε πρὸς βίαν χειρώσεται.
πεμφθεῖς γε μέντοι σοὶ ξυνεργάτης ὀκνῶ
προδότης καλεῖσθαι· βούλομαι δ', ἄναξ, καλῶς
δρῶν ἐξαμαρτεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ νικᾶν κακῶς. (Soph. *Ph.* 86-95)

Son of Laertes, things which it distresses me to hear spoken of are things which I hate to do. It is my nature to do nothing by treacherous plotting; that is my nature, and it was also my father's nature. But I am ready to take the man by force and not by cunning; with only one foot he will not get the better of us who are so many. I was sent to help you, but I am unwilling to be called a traitor: I had rather come to grief, my lord, while acting honestly than triumph by treachery.⁶⁷

65 James (2004) omits μέλαν.

66 See especially Bezantakos (1992); and on Neoptolemos' φύσις (nature), Blundell (1988).

67 I use Webster's edition of Sophocles' *Philoktetes* (1970), and follow Lloyd-Jones' translation (1994b).

With regard to Neoptolemos in the *Philoktetes*, Webster notes his ἔφυν γὰρ οὐδέν (88) is “the classic statement of the obligations of breed”;⁶⁸ the breed which Sophocles’ Odysseus had acknowledged earlier, when he states: ἔξοιδα, παῖ, φύσει σε μὴ πεφυκότα / τοιαῦτα φωνεῖν μηδὲ τεχνᾶσθαι κακά “I know, my son, that by nature [*phusei*, 79] you are not the sort of man to speak such words or to plot to harm others” (Soph. *Ph.* 79-80); the morality of Achilles being implied.

It is also worth considering that although Quintus deviates from the more traditional narrative sequence (as Sophocles), where Neoptolemos is summoned from Skyros only *after* Philoktetes has been recruited (*Ilias mikra*: Philoktetes recruited [2]; Neoptolemos summoned [3]), he differs from Sophocles in not using Neoptolemos to recruit Philoktetes. Thus, Quintus offers a substitute episode (the Horse ruse), in which Neoptolemos can express these specific moral qualities: repugnance of deceit; nobility of Achilles. Though, ironically, in both instances, Neoptolemos ultimately goes along with the plan.

Quintus’ Neoptolemos, as Sophocles’, is morally opposed to deceit, especially Odyssean wiles, and in this one looks back a little further and recalls Achilles’ articulation in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 9.312-313): ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Ἀΐδαο πύλῃσιν / ὅς χ’ ἔτερον μὲν κεύθῃ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἴπῃ. “For hateful in my eyes as the gates of Hades is that man who hides one thing in his mind and says another.”

As will also be shown with reference to his handling of Neoptolemos’ sacrificing of Polyxena,⁶⁹ Quintus attempts to resolve the tension of this apparent statemate without discrediting Neoptolemos. Neoptolemos (and Philoktetes), though still uncomfortable with the Horse stratagem, continues to muster his troops for overt offensive, which, the primary narrator notes, would have been decisive (Q.S. 12.93ff.). However, Zeus’ displeasure at Neoptolemos’ initial rejection of Kalchas (whom, it is later noted, is the son of Zeus or Apollo, 12.102-103),⁷⁰ is expressed with earth tremors and the hurling of thunderbolts (12.93-98),⁷¹ checks Neoptolemos’ defiance of the stratagem. Thus, the compliance of the young hero is fully justified, and, unlike his Posthomeric father with Apollo,⁷² he reverently bows to the will of the gods.

68 Webster (1970) 75 n. 88; he translates “it is not in my nature”.

69 See section 3.

70 The omen of the hawk chasing the dove, as interpreted by the divinely gifted Kalchas (Q.S. 12.8-20).

71 See James (2004) 329 n. 94-99, who notes Iliadic echoes where Zeus’ thunderbolts deter Nestor and Diomedes (*Il.* 8.132-136).

72 Q.S. 3.40ff.

Regarding Neoptolemos' traditional *degeneration*, one recalls that even Sophocles' more noble Neoptolemos does not emerge entirely untainted; at least, the divine Herakles' cryptic foreshadowing implies this:

(...) τοῦτο δ' ἐννοεῖσθ', ὅταν
πορθῇτε γαῖαν, εὐσεβεῖν τὰ πρὸς θεούς·
ὥς τᾶλλα πάντα δεύτερ' ἡγεῖται πατὴρ
Ζεὺς. (...) (Soph. *Ph.* 1440-1443)

But remember when
you conquer the land to show reverence [*eusebein*, 1441] to the gods;
for all things come after this in the mind of Zeus my father.

With reference to these lines, Ussher notes: "[T]he injunction (though plural) is aimed at Neoptolemus, who would later, disregarding it, slay Priam impiously at Zeus' altar and himself be slain at Delphi by Apollo (Pi. *Pae.* 6.113-120)."⁷³

However, this is marked because the implication for divine retribution for sacrilege at Troy also applies to the lesser Aias, of whom Webster notes: "[A]nd [...] Ajax, son of Oileus, tried to rape Cassandra in the temple of Athena at Troy,⁷⁴ and in return the gods raised the storm which shattered the Greek fleet on the way to Greece."⁷⁵ In other words, Neoptolemos' degeneration, as Aias', is implied in the *Philoktetes*, even though the hero's portrayal is, on the whole, positive. Quintus appears to borrow from these positive aspects of Sophocles' Neoptolemos. Yet, although Aias' traditional degeneration is highlighted by his subsequent punishment (Q.S. 14.435ff.), Neoptolemos' is not.⁷⁶

73 Ussher (1990) 162 n. 1440-1441; so too Webster (1970) 158 n. 1441; and Blundell (1988) 146: "They [lines 1440-1443] thus provide an ominous coda to the theme of moral education. It seems that Achilles' son, whose first instinct was to use force against helpless Philoctetes, will turn once more from compassion to brutal violence."

74 In fact, Seneca's *Hecuba* notes (*Tro.* 44-48): *vidi execrandum regiae caedis nefas, / ipsasque ad aras maius admissum scelus / Aiace ausis, cum ferox, saeva manu / coma reflectens regium torta caput, / alto nefandum vulnere ferrum abdidit*. "I saw the accursed sacrilege of the king's murder, and a crime committed at the very altar greater than the outrage of Ajax, when the ferocious fellow [Pyrrhus], bending back the king's head by the hair twisted in his cruel hand, buried his wicked blade in a deep wound." I follow Fitch's translation (2002).

75 Webster (1970) 158 n. 1441.

76 See Carvounis in this book who deals with the depiction of the lesser Aias, Q.S. 14.

2. 'Euptolemos'⁷⁷

2.1. The Killing of Priam

In Quintus' handling of Priam's killing by Neoptolemos (Q.S. 13.220-250) the mood is very different from the traditional versions, where the young hero's negative portrayal had been far more marked. As in the early accounts of this episode, mention is made of Priam's physical relation to Zeus' altar ('Ερκείου ποτὶ βωμόν, 13.222); in this version, the action centres around it, although Priam has neither fled to nor from the monument; nor, in a hubristic act that will cause him trouble post-Troy, has Neoptolemos leapt onto the altar to kill the aged king⁷⁸ (the locale *is* still a haven, though – or, at least, should be –, although it is a motif that receives less attention than usual). These are significant. Furthermore, Priam offers no resistance to Neoptolemos, as he had in Virgil.⁷⁹ Also, it is not explicit, as in Virgil, that Priam actually witnesses Polites' killing (the most tragic sight for any father);⁸⁰ and the killing, when it does come in Quintus, is much lower profile, receiving less than a line.

Priam is portrayed particularly as a resigned figure throughout most of the *Posthomeric*, having suffered much.⁸¹ This prominent aspect of his character, which has been building as the narrative unfolds, reaches its peak in this scene where he *now* actually wishes to die.⁸² Immediately he tells this to Neoptolemos (13.227-236); this echoes focalization⁸³ of the same just preceding Priam's direct speech (13.223-224). In fact, Priam's resignation, as opposed to his Virgilian defiance, is frequently referred to by Priam throughout the scene:

77 This epithet does not feature in Homer. For full listing of its occurrences in Quintus, see Vian / Battegay (1984) s.v. The reference at Q.S. 7.183 is particularly telling. This is Neoptolemos' debut, and, in the same breath, Odysseus evokes the memory of Achilles as he addresses Neoptolemos.

78 As in Pindar's sixth *Paeon* (104-120).

79 See James (2004) 336 n. 220-250.

80 Verg. *Aen.* 2.531-539; Q.S. 12.214, and following. Compare Nestor at Q.S. 2.260-264, where he witnesses the death of his son, Antilochos, at the hand of Memnon. Homer's Priam is the prototype of a parent witnessing his son's death; cf. *Il.* 22.38-76; 24.253-264, 486-506.

81 πολύτλητος ("much-enduring"), features thirteen times in the *Posthomeric*. By far the character most frequently associated with this epithet is Priam; 8.411, 10.369, 13.544, 14.267. (This epithet is usually associated with the Odyssean Odysseus, see Cunliffe [1924] s.v.) Priam's pathetic state is also highlighted by the *hapax* of πολυδακρύτοιο ("much-weeping"), 14.348; so too Achilles to Priam, regarding Hektor (*Il.* 24.620). Apart from again applying to Priam, the choice of word is striking, as it also occurs only once in the *Iliad*.

82 As his hopes have been dashed: e.g., Penthesileia (Q.S. 1), Memnon (2), Eurypylos (8).

83 Quintus' Andromache is also eager to die because the Greeks killed her son, but instead she is led away into slavery; see Q.S. 13.272-273 and 13.290.

κτεῖνον μηδ' ἐλέαιρε δυσάμμορον· οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε
 τοῖα παθὼν καὶ τόσσα λιλαίομαι εἰσοράασθαι
 ἡελίοιο φάος πανδερκέος, ἀλλὰ που ἤδη
 φθεῖσθαι ὁμῶς τεκέεσσι καὶ ἐκλελαθέσθαι ἀνίης 230
 λευγαλέης ὁμάδου τε δυσηχέος, ὥς ὄφελόν με
 σείο πατὴρ κατέπεφνε, πρὶν αἰθομένην ἐσιδέσθαι
 Ἴλιον, ὁππότε ἄποινα περὶ κταμένοιο φέρεσκον
 Ἑκτορος, ὃν <περ> ἔπεφνε πατὴρ τεός, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν που
 Κῆρες ἐπεκλώσαντο· σὺ δ' ἡμετέροιο φόνοιο
 ἄσπον ὄβριμον ἄορ, ὅπως λελάθωμ' ὀδυνάων. (Q.S. 13.227-236)

Kill me without mercy in my misfortune. I certainly,
 After all that I've suffered, have no desire to see
 The light of the all-seeing sun. My one wish now
 Is to perish with my children and so to forget my grievous 230
 Pain and the ugly din of war. If only
 Your father had killed me before I had to see the burning
 Of Ilion,⁸⁴ as when I brought him a ransom for the body
 Of Hektor, after your father had slain him. But such is the thread
 The Fates have spun for me.⁸⁵ So glut your mighty sword 235
 By shedding my blood and letting me forget my anguish.

Priam's final words reiterate the above as he says (13.235-236): σὺ δ' ἡμετέροιο φόνοιο / ἄσπον ὄβριμον ἄορ, ὅπως λελάθωμ' ὀδυνάων. "So glut your mighty sword by shedding my blood and letting me forget my anguish."

The common features of Priam's rhetoric are that he is broken by his suffering, that he wishes to die, and that he wishes to forget (ἐκλελαθέσθαι, 13.230; λελάθωμ', 13.236; and the primary narrator's λήσατο, 13.250).⁸⁶ The repetition of λανθάνω is most telling, though, and the subjunctive at the end of Priam's speech takes us back to its beginning: Priam initially demands death (κτεῖνον, 13.227), and finally requests that he may be allowed to forget. Neoptolemos' action, then, is legitimized by Priam, too; perhaps, even more, almost merciful? – at least in effect, if not intent.⁸⁷ In this sense, as will be discussed with reference to Polyxena, too, the text itself almost provides a *deus ex machina*.

The heightened focus on Priam's resignation does not rob the scene of its pathos (it is equally tragic, but in a different way, to episodes where Priam offers

84 Had Neoptolemos' father been the Posthomeric Achilles in their meeting, Priam's wish probably would have been granted.

85 The rhetoric of these laments contain common Iliadic features of the same; on which, see Alexiou (1974).

86 λελάθωμ' (followed immediately by ὀδυνάων "pain") recalls the subjunctive at *Il.* 15.60, where Hera wishes Apollo to *make* Hektor forget his pain (λελάθῃ δ' ὀδυνάων).

87 See below.

conventional resistance),⁸⁸ but it does impact upon the characterization of Neoptolemos. He is no longer the hero overpowering the old king against his will; no frantic movement is suggested (fleeing to or from Zeus' altar); and physical contact (including also the *χεῖρ ἐπὶ καρπῷ* "hand on the wrist"),⁸⁹ indicative of force, is kept to a minimum: he does not drag Priam through his son's blood, does not entwine the old man's grey hair around his (left) hand to deliver the death blow and, it seems, Quintus' Priam receives none of the foul treatment of the medieval reprobate – one blow is enough;⁹⁰ compare Virgil's Priam, who is first stabbed, then (presumably) decapitated.⁹¹

Furthermore, Quintus' Neoptolemos exhibits none of the mocking diatribe of his Virgilian self. Neoptolemos merely notes:

ὦ γέρον, ἐμμεμαῶτα καὶ ἐσσύμενόν περ ἀνώγεις·
οὐ γάρ σ' ἐχθρὸν ἔδοντα μετὰ ζωοῖσιν ἐάσω·
οὐ γάρ τι ψυχῆς πέλει ἀνδράσι φίλτερον ἄλλο. (Q.S. 13.238-240)

Old man [*geron*, 238], you are bidding one who is only too eager.
As you're my foe [*echthron*, 239] I shall not leave you among the living,⁹²
For nothing else is dearer to mortal men than life.

An interesting further possibility is that here Neoptolemos is reinstating the hero's traditional ethic.⁹³ By wishing to die, the old man, in a sense, is not playing fair; he is robbing Neoptolemos of his thunder: heroes are supposed to take life, rather than receive it. This could undermine Neoptolemos' heroism; so it is in his interest to remind the king, and his audience, of just how important life is, and that it is the hero's task to take it – even if it is given willingly (Achilleus' coarse [*ἀμείλικτον*]⁹⁴ rejection of Lykaon's plea, is a particularly vivid articulation of the more usual heroic take on enemy etiquette).⁹⁵ As discussed below, perhaps something similar applies to Neoptolemos in the Polyxena episode; although her obvious resistance reinforces Neoptolemos' role as 'hero'.

88 See following on Neoptolemos reinstating the hero's precept. I thank, particularly, Professor T. Schmitz for this suggestion.

89 Compare Polyxena, below.

90 Neoptolemos is no old 'hack', being a highly efficient killer.

91 No mention is made of the actual decapitation act, but the severed head is clear at Verg. *Aen.* 2.558.

92 Compare the 'courteous' Memnon with time-honoured Nestor (Q.S. 2.309-318); as I discuss in the third chapter of my thesis (cf. n. 7).

93 As noted, I would particularly like to thank Professor T. Schmitz for his suggestions regarding Neoptolemos reinstating the heroic *gravitas* of death.

94 *Il.* 21.98, and following; see following discussion on *μείλιχος*.

95 Cf. Aeneas with Turnus, at Verg. *Aen.* 12.938-952.

Even in the act of despatching Priam, Quintus emphasizes his lack of resistance – therefore reducing Neoptolemos' negative portrayal; Priam's head is cut off, ῥηδίδως, ὥς εἴ τις ἀπὸ στάχυν ἀμήσῃται “as easily as one reaps an ear of grain” (13.242).⁹⁶ This simile indicates the ease at which Neoptolemos despatches the old king, and speed of death (which is instantaneous). Yet, the μέγα μύζουσα “loud moan” which follows as Priam's head rolls along the ground *far* (νόσφ', 13.245) from his body (13.244-245), produces the effect of extending his death – ironically, as the head rolls, moaning, the life ebbs; and it rolls a significant distance;⁹⁷ perhaps, then, this suggests that Priam's suffering does not subside as quickly as he had wished. So, Quintus exploits the opportunity to heighten the pathos whilst not focusing on Neoptolemos' depravity.

With mention of Priam's decapitation, and, especially, his 'tragic' fall,⁹⁸ one is reminded of the same in Virgil. Yet, the final image is a defining one – for Neoptolemos as much as Priam. As the earlier model lies a huge trunk (*ingens* [...] *truncus*, Verg. *Aen.* 2.557),⁹⁹ Quintus' Priam, courtesy of Neoptolemos, has at last forgotten his many woes: κακῶν δ' ὅ γε λήσατο πολλῶν (13.250).¹⁰⁰

Traditionally, Neoptolemos must kill Priam; Zeus' altar usually features; but the reduced graphic description, and the portrayal of Priam (action – or lack of it – psychological state and rhetoric), combined with Neoptolemos' impersonal, cool response, greatly diminishes his negative portrayal, more usually associated with the character and, in particular, this scene.

2.2. Substitute Scenes: Ilioneos and Astyanax

However, Quintus does not disappoint his audience as aspects of Neoptolemos' more traditional biography are refracted throughout the text and other characters. The theme of the doomed *geron* not wishing to die is fulfilled in the scene immediately preceding Neoptolemos' killing of Priam, when Diomedes encounters old

96 On which see James (2004) 336 n. 241-245 and 242-243.

97 Similar features occur earlier in the *Posthomerica*, and in the *Iliad*: in the *Posthomerica*, a Greek decapitates the Trojan Pyrasos – the head rolls far away, still eager to speak (Q.S. 11.56-59); in the *Iliad*, Diomedes decapitates Dolon, and, φθεγγομένου δ' ἄρα τοῦ γε κάρη κονίησιν ἐμίχθη “while he was still speaking his head was mingled with the dust” (*Il.* 10.457). See James (2004) 336 n. 241-245, 323 n. 56-59.

98 E.g. loss of wealth, lineage, and numerous offspring, Q.S. 13.247; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.556-257. See Aristotle on such tragic characters, *Po.* 13.5 (1453a).

99 In keeping with the positive heroic portrayal of Priam, e.g. arming himself and attempting physical resistance.

100 In a sense, then, Neoptolemos is, like his father, gifted with Asclepian powers. See *Il.* 11.830-832; *Kypria* 7 West (2003). On Achilles as a leader, see King (1987) 7-10.

Ilioneos (13.181-207),¹⁰¹ James notes that Ilioneos may be a variation of Eioneos, killed by Neoptolemos in the *Ilias mikra* (*Ilias mikra* fr. 23 West [2003]).¹⁰² If this is so, again Quintus' Neoptolemos evades such negative portrayal. As Virgil's Priam, Ilioneos is killed against his will.

In contrast to the Neoptolemos / Priam scene, Ilioneos supplicates his would-be killer, asking for mercy, rather than death, and appealing to his heroic sense of shame (αἰδώς, 13.192); holding Diomedes' sword and knees (Q.S. 13.185), in much the same fashion as Lykaon supplicates to Achilles (grasping his knees and spear, *Il.* 21.70-72).¹⁰³ The intertext is also encouraged by the supplicants' openings: γουνοῦμαι ("I beg", Q.S. 13.191; *Il.* 21.74). But, while Lykaon begs for pity as a former suppliant, Ilioneos plays the *geron* card:

γουνοῦμαί σ', ὅ τις ἐσσι πολυσθενέων Ἀργείων,
αἰδεσσαι ἀμφὶ γερόντος [...] τεὰς χέρας ἀργαλέου τε¹⁰⁴
λῆγε χόλου· καὶ γάρ ῥα μακρὸν πέλει ἀνέρι κῦδος
ἄνδρα νέον κτείναντι καὶ ὄβριμον· ἦν δὲ γέροντα
κτείνης, οὗ νύ τοι αἴνος ἐφέψεται εἵνεκεν ἀλκῆς. 195
τοῦνεκ' ἐμεῦ ἀπὸ νόσφιν ἐς αἰζηοὺς τρέπε χεῖρας
ἐλπόμενός ποτε γῆρας ὁμοίον εἰσαφικέσθαι. (Q.S. 13.191-197)

I beg you, whoever you are of Argos' mighty men,
Respect these old [*gerontos*, 192] hands¹⁰⁵ which supplicate you and abate
Your frightful anger. Great is the glory [*kudos*, 193] that is won
By killing [*kteinanti*, 194] a man who is young and strong. But if you kill
[*kteines*, 195]¹⁰⁶
An old man [*geronta*, 194], no renown [*ainos*, 195] for prowess [*alkes*, 195] will
attend you.¹⁰⁷
So turn your hands away from me and aim at the young ones,
As you hope one day to reach an old age [*geras*, 197] like mine.

Diomedes' reply anticipates that of Neoptolemos, though the tone of the scene differs for the reasons noted above:

101 Ilioneos' 'biography' is a matter of interest. An Ilioneos is killed in the *Iliad* (14.489-492). Thus, the character could well be a creation of Quintus to fulfill the narrative expectation of the Neoptolemos / Priam scene; his name is also significant, 'son of Ilion' (as, indeed, is Astyanax, 'lord of the city'), as Troy's fall looms imminent; so Vian (1969) 135 n. 181. See too Paschalis (1997).

102 James (2004) 335 n. 181.

103 As Richardson (1993) 59 n. 72 notes on *Il.* 21.72, "This additional gesture of supplication shows Lykaon's terror"; also see Richardson (1993) 56-65.

104 See Vian (1969) 136 *ad loc.*: "post γέροντος lac. stat. Hermann".

105 My translation.

106 Cf. Priam's use of κτείνω, Q.S. 13.227 (above p. 321).

107 Again, compare Memnon with Nestor.

ὦ γέρον, ἔλπομ' ἔγωγ' ἐσθλὸν ποτὶ γῆρας ἰκέσθαι·
 ἀλλὰ μοι ἔως ἔτι κάρτος ἀέξεται, οὐ τιν' ἐάσω
 ἐχθρὸν ἐμῆς κεφαλῆς, ἀλλ' ἴδι πάντας ἰάψω,
 οὔνεκ' ἄρ' ἐσθλὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ δῆιον ἄνδρ' ἀπαμύνει. (Q.S. 13.199-202)

Old man [geron, 199], I certainly hope to reach old age [geras, 199].

But while my strength is undiminished I shall not spare

An enemy [echthron, 201] of my person; I'll hurl them all to Hades.

It is the brave [esthlos, 202] man's mark to avenge himself on his foes [deion, 202].

As Neoptolemos, Diomedes dispatches the old man straight after his (the younger hero's) heroic announcement. Although, less is made of Ilioneos' actual death (he is mortally wounded in the throat, so no melodramatic groaning, rolling head, nor reference to tragic fall; nor even a flourish of typical Posthomeric similes), and dealt with in fewer lines (Priam gets ten lines [13.241-250]; Ilioneos only five [13.203-207]), Diomedes' characterization is marked in the episode: *he* is referred to as δεινὸς ἀνὴρ ("terrible man", 13.204) by the primary narrator;¹⁰⁸ so too Ilioneos (unlike Priam) is portrayed as terrified at numerous points.¹⁰⁹ These factors must impact upon the scene between Neoptolemos and Priam that *immediately* follows, not only making Priam seem more resigned (willingly going to his death), but, also, Neoptolemos less barbaric.¹¹⁰ It is worth noting that Ilioneos does not recognize his would-be executioner (in contrast, Priam's immediate recognition of the man he has never seen before as Achilles' son reaffirms Neoptolemos' illustrious lineage); and unlike Neoptolemos with Priam in Quintus,¹¹¹ there is more a sense of the killer's vitriol, as Diomedes openly rejects his victim's plea.

Noteworthy, too, is Quintus' preference for Diomedes' killing of Koroibos. This act is often associated with Neoptolemos.¹¹² It is also noteworthy that Quintus will still include the defiling of a holy altar, but not by Neoptolemos. Instead, Quintus follows tradition, here, with the famous outrage (the rape of Cassandra)

108 In the same episode such negative characterization is not unique: the primary narrator also refers to Diomedes as "man-slaying hero"* (ἀνδροφόνου ἥρωος, 13.186); his "terrible"* sword (αἰνόν, 13.182); Ilioneos, Diomedes' "frightful anger" (ἀργαλέου [...] χόλου, 13.192-193). (*My translations.)

109 Ilioneos collapses to the ground (κλάσθησαν, 13.183); he trembles all over (περιτρομέων, 13.184), as Hekabe does when she is led to captivity by Odysseus (Q.S. 14.23), and Iros, following the physical revelations of his 'beggar' fighting opponent (*Od.* 18.77). Also, as noted above, Ilioneos' physical gesture (holding Diomedes' knees, etc.) emphasizes his fear.

110 On decapitation in epic, see Hainsworth (1993) 241 n. 146-147.

111 Though cf. the same episode in Virgil.

112 Cf. Pausanias on Lesches (10.27.1), who does *not* choose the 'majority version' (ὥς μὲν ὁ πλείων λόγος), but favours Diomedes over Neoptolemos. See Gantz, too, (1993) 650.

committed by Lokrian Aias at Athene's image. However, the goddess, to emphasize the degeneracy of the act, averts her gaze (13.425-427).¹¹³

With reference to the killing of Astyanax as part of Neoptolemos' brutal biography, Quintus again manipulates the traditional strands.¹¹⁴ From Pausanias we learn that in Lesches' *Ilias mikra* Andromache's son's "end came when he was thrown from the fortifications, not by a decision of the Greeks but from a private desire of Neoptolemos to be his slayer" (τούτῳ Λέσχεως ῥιφέντι ἀπὸ τοῦ πύργου συμβῆναι λέγει τὴν τελευτήν, οὐ μὲν ὑπὸ δόγματός γε τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἀλλ' ἰδίᾳ Νεοπτόλεμον αὐτόχειρα ἐθελῆσαι γενέσθαι).¹¹⁵ So too Tzetzes' commentary on Lykophron, where Neoptolemos flings the child from the battlement.¹¹⁶ Quintus, however, avoids associating the hero with the act; the Greeks *en masse* perform the infanticide (Q.S. 13.251-257), in one of the fates Andromache had envisioned, and in the same manner and for the same reason –hurled from the battlements because of Hektor's prowess (*Il.* 24.734-739).

Thus, of the three significant killings of *Posthomerica* 13, one directly following the other, which stand out as mini episodes from the mass slaughter of the Trojan sacking, Priam's is the only one that is not against the victim's will (even if it is a subconscious will, as in the case of the ignorant child, Astyanax); instead of being imposed, it is welcomed. As noted, Neoptolemos is traditionally associated with his death, but the mood is fundamentally altered, e.g., by the amplification of Priam's wish to die, and the minimalization of negative aspects of Neoptolemos' portrayal here (word and deed). Furthermore, there is a case for arguing that Neoptolemos is implicated in earlier versions for the other two murders (if James' suggestion regarding Ilioneos is correct), certainly Astyanax'. Therefore, Quintus' Neoptolemos emerges less besmirched with gore than is typical. The implication of Quintus' Neoptolemos in Polyxena's sacrifice, however, raises interesting questions.

3. The Sacrifice of Polyxena

Proklos recounts in his summary of Arktinos' *Iliupersis* that Polyxena is sacrificed at Achilleus' tomb.¹¹⁷ It is not clear who is responsible, or indeed, even

113 E.g., see *Iliupersis (Iliou Persis)* arg. 3 West (2003); Paus. 10.26.3; Lyc. 357-364 etc., as James (2004) 338 n. 420-429 notes.

114 See Gärtner (2005) 241-243; also, above for discussion of artistic portrayals of the famous scene involving Neoptolemos' killing of Astyanax; and Gantz (1993) 650 on the literature.

115 *Ilias mikra* fr. 18 West (2003).

116 Tz. *ad Lyc.* 1268, see *Ilias mikra* fr. 29 West (2003); cf. *Iliupersis (Iliou Persis)* arg. 4 West (2003), where the act is attributed to Odysseus.

117 *Iliupersis (Iliou Persis)* arg. 4 West (2003).

involved in the sacrifice. In the *Kypria* (fr. 34 Bernabé), she dies from her wounds when Odysseus and Diomedes sack Troy. Neoptolemos, however, is traditionally associated with the sacrificial act.

As Gantz notes,¹¹⁸ a Tyrrhenian amphora (c. 570 B.C.) shows Polyxena, held horizontal by three Greeks,¹¹⁹ having her neck cut by Neoptolemos. A number of Greeks are in the background (including Diomedes and Nestor), but Phoenix' back is turned. This could indicate disgust at the act. This story emerges once only in Archaic literature: Ibykos (fr. 34 Bernabé), who notes Neoptolemos as the killer. Polyxena features in later fifth century plays by Sophocles and Euripides, and in the paintings of Polygnotos (Athenian Propylaea); on which Pausanias showed her to be killed by Achilles' tomb (1.22.6).¹²⁰ As with the versions above, no reason is given. Sophocles' Polyxena features a ghost, a sacrifice (to placate Athene), and dark foreshadowings for the Greeks, but again no cause is supplied.

The reason for sacrifice is provided in Euripides' extant *Hekabe*. Achilles' ghost has appeared above his tomb, demanding her sacrifice for the Greek's departure (35-44); honour for the dead hero is implied in the rhetoric of, for instance, Polydoros' ghost, Hekabe, and Odysseus.¹²¹ Neoptolemos' reported comments also convey the idea of blood offering to the dead (534-538).

In the *Posthomerica*, though choosing both to incorporate Polyxena's sacrifice, and having him as the executioner, Quintus again reduces many negative aspects of Neoptolemos' portrayal in this potentially unsavoury episode that could easily cast a dark shadow over the young hero's more favourable reception.

Firstly, we are left in no doubt as to the prime mover, with reference to the sacrifice. The ghostly Achilles, in *Posthomerica* 14,¹²² demands Polyxena in sacrifice to show that the Greeks remember all his labour (i.e., plundering, etc.; μέμνηνθ' [...] ἐμόγησα, 14.211); and, also, to appease his anger (which is even greater than that for Briseis, 14.215-216). As James notes, early precedents can be seen, with reference to the Iliadic Achilles' desire to sacrifice twelve Trojans for Patroklos (*Il.* 18.336-337);¹²³ although reference to the same anger as for Briseis is not a convincing reason. Further justification for Polyxena's sacrifice is supplied again; note Neoptolemos is nowhere implicated as a causal factor, so that Achilles does not stir the sea, and therefore ship-wreck the Greek chances of

118 Gantz (1993) 658-659.

119 Amphilochos, Antiphates, Aias (probably 'Lesser').

120 Gantz (1993) 658-659.

121 Eur. *Hec.* 40-41 (Polydoros); 93-95, 113-115 (Hekabe); 309-310 (Odysseus).

122 With marked reverberations of the Iliadic scene between the *imago* of Patroklos and Achilles (Q.S. 14.23).

123 James (2004) 342 n. 215-216.

return (14.216-220);¹²⁴ this contrasts with Ibykos' version, which makes Neoptolemos responsible for choosing to sacrifice Polyxena.¹²⁵

It is also a significant part of the portrayal of Neoptolemos that he alone is witness to Achilles' phantom. Traditionally, this is not the norm. Proklos notes that Achilles appears to Neoptolemos, but gives no more information.¹²⁶ In his summary of another lost Cyclic book, Proklos comments that Achilles' ghost appears to Agamemnon's party when preparing to sail away.¹²⁷ Achilles' appearance to Neoptolemos alone, not only has the effect of resolving the tension implied by the absent father for the young hero,¹²⁸ but it also locates Neoptolemos as the figurehead for the Greeks' departure, thus elevating his heroic status further,¹²⁹ and providing even more justification for the sacrificial act.

Neoptolemos moves smoothly into the guise of counsellor, as he sagely delays the progress of the Greeks, and addresses them, in what is perhaps the closest Quintus comes to echoing Homer's repetition technique.¹³⁰ He informs the Greeks of Achilles' words, above (14.235-245; cf. 14.185-222). The key features of both speeches are that: Achilles' divinity is beyond question (14.186; 14.238); the address is to be to the Greeks and Agamemnon (14.209-210; 14.239); εὖπεπλος ("well-dressed") Polyxena is to be brought to Achilles' τύμβος ("tomb") (14.213-214; 241); she is to be sacrificed (ῥέξωσιν; to appease him; 14.215; 242). However, as the wily Odysseus in *Iliad* 9, Neoptolemos omits or rephrases some rhetoric to accomplish his ends. Neoptolemos does not mention Achilles' anger for Briseis – which could have negative connotations. It is noteworthy, too, that nowhere does Neoptolemos express anger directed against his own comrades, as Achilles had against Agamemnon and the Greeks (*Iliad* 1; 9); only in book 12 is there clear conflict, but this is quickly resolved.¹³¹

Neoptolemos recounts that Achilles ordered (ἡνώγει, 14.239) Polyxena's sacrifice, as opposed to Achilles' actual words, which begin with a conditional εἰ (14.210). This removes any uncertainty about intent (and, Neoptolemos shows

124 Of course, this has interesting ironical implications, as the Greeks' ships are wrecked regardless (14.419ff.).

125 Fr. 26 Bernabé.

126 *Ilias mikra* arg. 3 West (2003).

127 *Nostoi* arg. 3 West (2003).

128 As early as book 3.

129 As James (2004) 343 n. 230-233 notes, in hindering the Greeks' departure, Neoptolemos performs the function of Euripides' Achilles in *Hekabe* (37-39).

130 For instance, Odysseus' near perfect repeat of Agamemnon's gifts for Achilles (*Il.* 9.122-157 [Agamemnon] ≈ 9.265-299 [Odysseus]). On these, see Hainsworth (2000) 98 n. 264-299.

131 See discussion above on Neoptolemos' rejection of the Horse ruse. As with Philoktetes (recruitment, 9.403-405; and reconciliation, 9.518-522; cf. Sophocles' *Philoktetes*), Quintus' quick resolutions avoid narrative distractions.

none of the wavering of his Euripidean self).¹³² Neoptolemos, then, conveys the request as an order: the Greeks *must* sacrifice Polyxena. He also paraphrases that Polyxena shall be buried at a distance; again this differs from Achilles' actual words: εἰ (...) ἐθέλωσιν ("if they wish", i.e. the Greeks, 14.221). Neoptolemos' reduced account of Achilles' speech, even if considering just the rhetoric for the Greeks and Agamemnon (14.209-222), is less than half the original length, less again if taking just the demand itself (14.239-245). Neoptolemos is also a diplomat, then, who wants quick results.¹³³

However, both the episode and Polyxena's characterization are marked (Q.S. 14.256-328); these could affect the portrayal of Neoptolemos.¹³⁴ Polyxena does not go willingly to death as her Euripidean self (ἐκούσα θνήσκω, *Hec.* 548).¹³⁵ Instead, ἥ τε πόρτιν ἐς ἀθανάτοιο θυηλᾶς / μητρὸς ἀπειρύσαντες ἐνὶ ξυλόχοισι βοτῆρες, / ἥ δ' ἄρα μακρὰ βοῶσα κινύρεται ἀχνυμένη κῆρ "like a heifer¹³⁶ for sacrifice to a god, torn by herdsmen from its mother in the woods, which in its heart's distress calls loudly and pitifully" (14.258-260);¹³⁷ and she is dragged as under a weighty millstone the fruit of an olive tree pours out much oil, while men strain at the ropes (14.263-266).¹³⁸ Reference to Priam's daughter being dragged in this episode (Πριάμοιο [...] θυγατρὸς / ἐλκομένης, Q.S. 14.267-268) is also strongly reminiscent of his fears following Troy's fall: ἐλκηθείσας (...) θύγατρας (*Il.* 22.62).¹³⁹ In both, the use of the verb ἔλκω has very negative connotations.¹⁴⁰ This could create tension, and detract from the generally diminished negative portrayal of Neoptolemos in Quintus.

However, in Hekabe's response to the dragging away of Polyxena, she recalls the causal agent in the sacrifice (Achilleus, 14.298-299; thus implicitly distancing Neoptolemos from the deed), her devastated response at Polyxena's abduction forms a significant proportion of the episode (which, in itself, is a relatively large chunk of the book):¹⁴¹ of the seventy or so lines, from the taking of Polyxena, to

132 See below.

133 See discussion above on the brevity of Neoptolemos' rhetoric (pp. 310-312).

134 As well as Professor Carey, I would like to thank Professor P. Schubert for his helpful comments regarding this episode.

135 Though this is Talthybios' version to Hekabe (i.e. he wants to reduce her suffering), Polyxena herself makes her acquiescence clear (*Hec.* 346-347).

136 So Polyxena in *Hec.* 205-208; James (2004) 343 n. 258-260.

137 Cf. Q.S. 7.255-258, where Deidameia weeps as a cow searching for her calf. I thank Dr. A. Carvounis drawing my attention to this simile.

138 See James (2004) 343 n. 263-266, who notes this olive oil-like weeping of Polyxena, may echo that of the tears of the daughters of the sun god at A.R. 4.625-626.

139 Note too Hekabe herself being forcibly dragged (εἴλκε, 14.22) by Odysseus (Q.S. 14.21-22).

140 Sometimes, the verb is even associated with "ravishment", Cunliffe (1924) s.v.; e.g. *Il.* 22.65; see following also.

141 Book 14 is 658 lines; thus the episode accounts for over a tenth of the book.

the calm brought about by her death, that constitute the scene,¹⁴² Quintus allocates over thirty to Hekabe's response. Furthermore, unlike Euripides, Quintus does not alleviate Hekabe's suffering by either having Polyxena go willingly, or die heroically.¹⁴³

The manner of the actual sacrifice creates tension, as the left hand that had gripped Virgil's Priam since the first century B.C.,¹⁴⁴ now takes hold of his daughter (σκαίῃ, Q.S. 14.306). This so-called "forceful gesture known as χεῖρ ἐπὶ καρπῷ",¹⁴⁵ indicative of the "control of possession of one person by another",¹⁴⁶ is portrayed on the black-figure Tyrrhenian amphora by the Timiades Painter (c. 500 B.C.).¹⁴⁷ In keeping with her characterization in *Hekabe*, the gesture is symbolically rejected by Euripides' Polyxena; *she* will take control of her death; not so Quintus' model. Here, Neoptolemos is in charge; perhaps as he was with Priam, reasserting (his) heroism.

Yet, again, Neoptolemos' negative characterization is kept to a minimum – without diminishing the pathos of the scene. His father is referred to as ζαθέοιο ("deified", 14.304), and Neoptolemos, φίλος υἱός ("dear son", 14.305). Just before the sacrifice, Neoptolemos places his (right) hand on Achilles' tomb, offering prayer to appease his father. So, the context shifts from one of violence to one of pious ritual – unlike Euripides' Neoptolemos, Quintus' hero does not mention propitiatory blood.¹⁴⁸ Though the pathos of her death is heightened with the primary narrator's simile of a boar's red blood against the backdrop of snowy mountain (14.316-319), her Euripidean breast appears to remain covered.¹⁴⁹

Though we are told that the life she greatly loved (πολυήρατος, 14.314) left her, her death is immediate (αἶψα, 14.314), as is her return to the Trojans (αἶψα, 14.320). Neoptolemos' resolve has been fixed, showing no signs of his Euripidean dilemma ("shall I, shan't I [kill the girl]?", *Hec.* 566). There is no confusion over the return,¹⁵⁰ or treatment of her corpse;¹⁵¹ no lingering lament as in Euripides; Quintus (and Neoptolemos) has achieved 'closure'; and the narrative

142 See above.

143 See following.

144 See above.

145 Gregory (1999) 109 n. 523.

146 *Ibid.* Gregory cites Jenkins (1983) 140.

147 As referred to by Jenkins (1983); for an image of the vase-painting, see Boardman (1974) fig. 57.

148 Eur. *Hec.* 535-537.

149 Eur. *Hec.* 558-561.

150 Cf. Eur. *Hec.* 609-613; cf. 663-680.

151 In this sense, her death is clean; compare Euripides, where even necrophilia may be implied (*Hec.* 605-608); on which, see Gregory (1999) 119 n. 606. Such decent treatment of the slaughtered female (also by the Greek's number one), may also recall the etiquette of Achilles with Penthesileia (Q.S. 1); again, there is a whiff of necrophilia.

passes quickly to a new episode, equally concerned with speed (θοῶς, 14.329; αἶψα, 14.331; ἤδη, 14.340): because of Neoptolemos, the Greeks can now leave Troy.

Therefore, though Quintus exploits the drama of Polyxena's sacrifice, and its build-up, Neoptolemos' depravity is greatly reduced, even if inescapable because of the role he does play; and Quintus does much to resolve the tension between excessive idealization, and excessive pathos. The legitimization comes in the form of a number of characters, including Achilles, Polyxena, and the primary narrator.

In her commentary of Achilles' meeting with Neoptolemos in the final book of the *Posthomerica*, Carvounis notes on line 14.209: "μείλιχος.¹⁵² Divinities are generally described as 'implacable' or 'ruthless' (ἀμείλιχος / ἀμείλικτος) in the epic tradition, while Achilles is the single ἀμείλικτος hero in the *Posthomerica* [...]"¹⁵³

This has, however, further significance. In a scene which centres around reunion between father and son, and instruction therein (advice, which, technically, is not required for Neoptolemos had already exhibited the qualities of which Achilles speaks),¹⁵⁴ Achilles' advice to Neoptolemos to be "gentle" (μείλιχος) is hugely suggestive. This may recall Andromache's concerns for Astyanax' (ἀμειλίχου, "violent") future, following Hektor's death.¹⁵⁵ If viewed as a warning, though, as much as fatherly advice, Achilles' divine suggestion to be 'gentle' could be as allusively ominous in the *Posthomerica* as Herakles' tip to his 'piety' in Sophocles' *Philoktetes*. Furthermore, it could emphasize the contrast between multi-talented son and violent father (ἀμειλίκτου, 14.268). However, Quintus' particular choice of μείλιχος is hugely suggestive in another way. It evokes the defining characteristic of one epic character specifically.

νῦν τις ἐνηείης Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο
μνησάσθω· πᾶσιν γὰρ ἐπίστατο μείλιχος εἶναι
ζῶς ἑὸν· νῦν αὖ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κιχάνει. (Il. 17.670-672)

Now let each man remember the kindness of poor Patroclus;
for to all was he ever gentle [*meilichos*, 671]
while yet he lived, but now death and fate have come to him.

152 μείλιχος; "mild", "gentle", "kindly", as Cunliffe (1924) s.v. This footnote is my addition.

153 Carvounis (2005) 213. I would like to thank Dr. Carvounis for providing me with a copy of her (at the time of writing, unpublished) commentary, and paper on Achilles and Neoptolemos' meeting (Q.S. 14).

154 These points are discussed in detail in my thesis chapter (cf. n. 7) on Neoptolemos.

155 Il. 24.734, as Carvounis (2005) 213.

So too Briseis, on hearing of Patroklos' death:

τῷ σ' ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηότα, μείλιχον αἰεῖ. (*Il.* 19.300)

So I wail for you in your death and know no ceasing, for you were *always* [*aiei*]¹⁵⁶ kind [*meilichos*].

As Edwards comments, Patroklos is “the only person to whom μείλιχος is applied [...] Patroklos' gentleness is unique in the language of the poem [...]”¹⁵⁷ There are further instances where Quintus evokes the Iliadic Patroklos in Neoptolemos' characterization; for instance in Neoptolemos' wearing of, and fighting in, Achilles' arms, Q.S. 7.445-450; cf. *Il.* 16.130-144. There are, however, key differences. The ease with which Neoptolemos wears the divine massive armour,¹⁵⁸ and wields the massive spear, act as points of departure, as does Neoptolemos' battling ability, just like his father (and the frequent reference, from the primary narrator to secondary characters, of Neoptolemos' unmistakable likeness to Achilles); although both he and Patroklos are initially mistaken for Achilles.¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, in a sense the reference to μείλιχος in this context also frames this narrative, and impacts on Neoptolemos' character in the unsavoury sacrifice of Polyxena discussed above. Having executed Achilles' request (Polyxena's sacrifice), the divinity fulfils his promise. Nestor tells the Greeks:

ἤδη γὰρ νόστοιο πέλει θυμηδέος ὥρη. 340
 ἀλλ' ἴομεν· δὴ γάρ που Ἀχιλλέος ὄβριμον ἦτορ
 παύσατ' οἰζυροῖο χόλου, κατέρυξε δὲ κύμα
 ὄβριμον Ἐννοσίγαιος· ἐπιπνέουσιν δ' ἀῆται
 μείλιχοι οὐδ' ἔτι κύμα κορύσσεται. ἀλλ' ἄγε νῆας
 εἰς ἀλὸς οἶδμ' ἐρύσαντες ἀναμνησώμεθα νόστου. (Q.S. 14.340-345)

Now is the hour of heart's delight, the hour of return. 340
 Let's be off. It seems that Achilles' powerful spirit
 Has stopped its irksome anger and the heavy swell
 Has been stilled by the earthquake god. The breezes that blow
 Are gentle [*meilichoi*, 344]. So let us drag
 Our ships into the sea with thoughts fixed on return. 345

156 Here I prefer “always” to Murray / Wyatt's (1999) choice of “ever”.

157 Edwards (1991) 127 n. 669-673 (cf. *meilichos*' use with a negative at *Il.* 24.739, as Edwards *ibid.*; see too 270 n. 300).

158 A further point of departure: this is Achilles' second set of arms, the superior one crafted by Hephaestus (Q.S. 7.447; *Il.* 18.614-19.12 and following), and not that set Hektor wins from Patroklos' corpse (*Il.* 17.125).

159 These points are discussed in detail in my thesis chapter (cf. n. 7) on Neoptolemos.

Neoptolemos is, then, not only to *be* gentle; he also serves the function of bringing calm. This directly affects the Greeks' prospects of return in a positive way.¹⁶⁰ His sacrificing of Polyxena immediately bears fruit for the Greeks; the greatest good for the greatest number – even if that 'good' necessarily involves some 'bad' (this also recalls Sophocles' Neoptolemos in *Philoktetes*).¹⁶¹ Of the four times that this very rare Homeric word features in Quintus, then, μέλιχος is very closely associated with Neoptolemos twice.¹⁶²

Surely, too, the function Neoptolemos performs here also invites comparison with that of Achilles in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, as obviously his *Hekabe* discussed above. Father and son are both instrumental in the beginning and end of the Trojan War. Achilles is used to win Iphigeneia for sacrifice, thus appeasing the gods, who provide the Greeks with the favourable wind to Troy; similar elements feature in the Polyxena episode, where Neoptolemos is instrumental in the Greeks' release. Perhaps one could also add that while in Sophocles' *Philoktetes* we are left with the ominous allusion to Neoptolemos' demise,¹⁶³ the last act which marks Neoptolemos in the *Posthomerica* is one that secures the well-being of his army: more an act of compassion, that requires brutal violence,¹⁶⁴ rather evolution, than degeneration.

4. Biography of Neoptolemos' Post-Troy Narrative

Traditionally Neoptolemos' post-Troy afterlife is also distinguished by its many negative associations. Though Neoptolemos' post-Troy biographies differ, he meets his death soon after leaving Troy.¹⁶⁵ Elements range from Pindar's sixth *Paean*, where Apollo kills Neoptolemos at Delphi as punishment for killing Priam, and Sophocles' lost *Hermione*,¹⁶⁶ where Neoptolemos is killed, again at

160 The storm that does follow is a result of the lesser Aias' sacrilege (Q.S. 14.435ff.).

161 On Neoptolemos' "great good" in Sophocles' *Philoktetes*, which involves "a little evil", see Bellinger (1939) 6.

162 Also, Q.S. 3.564; 7.90. Interestingly, Achilles is described by Thetis as μέλιχος αἰών ("sweetness of my life", Q.S. 3.564); cf. the primary narrator's rather inappropriate eulogy for Achilles (Q.S. 3.424-425), especially ἡπίου ("gentle", 3.424), which recalls the aforementioned eulogies for the Iliadic Patroklos, with the key difference that μέλιχος is avoided. Finally, at Q.S. 7.90, again the context is also suggestive of the Iliadic Patroklos: the grief-stricken Podaleirios laments a loved one's death; refuses to eat; contemplates suicide; notes their exceptionally close relationship; denounces life (7.21ff.); = Achilles for Patroklos (*Il.* 19ff.).

163 See above.

164 See Blundell (1988) 146 on Soph. *Ph.* 1440-1443, noted above (n. 73).

165 See Gantz (1993) 690-694.

166 The plot is preserved in the *Odyssey* scholia, and Eustathius (Gantz [1993] 690).

Delphi, by Machaireus,¹⁶⁷ to Euripides' *Andromache*, where Neoptolemos, having despoiled the shrine at Delphi, is killed by the Delphinians – at the instigation of Orestes, and Pacuvius' *Hermiona*, where Neoptolemos confronts Orestes in Delphi, and, as the *Andromache*, is killed by the locals.

As Gantz notes: “In all, we seem to have two separate strands of thought, the one blaming Neoptolemos for his rash challenge to Apollo and desecration of the latter's shrine, the other shifting much of the guilt to a jealous Orestes.”¹⁶⁸ Yet in the first case the greed of the shrine's priests is also sometimes a factor, and in the second Neoptolemos' usurpation of an already betrothed woman often the source of the trouble.”¹⁶⁹

One has to look hard and imaginatively to find any suggestion of Neoptolemos' negative afterlife in Quintus. Lykomedes' (Neoptolemos' grandfather) vague warnings at *Posthomerica* 7.294-311, concerning sea-travel, with reference to the shooter of arrows (βαλὼν [...] βελέμνων, 7.301), and the archer (τοξευτήν, 7.302), may be cryptically suggestive of Apollo and his involvement in Neoptolemos' post-Troy legendary life (death), and mention of Neoptolemos' prize, Andromache (14.21), could also foreshadow his darker future.¹⁷⁰ And, Achilles' ghostly advice to Neoptolemos to be ‘gentle’ could be loaded in the same way as Herakles' warning to the same character in Sophocles' *Philoktetes*;¹⁷¹ a key difference being that in the *Posthomerica* Neoptolemos has already killed Priam. The comment, though, may resonate, and evoke the more traditional model. Yet, no explicit indication is given of the unsavoury end that awaits the young hero. Overt reference to Neoptolemos' post-death state, is marked, however, as his apotheosis is foreshadowed (3.760-762). In this, not only does Quintus deviate from traditional handlings of Neoptolemos' biography,¹⁷² but Neoptolemos' elevated post-death status has very positive connotations.

Of other major heroes from Troy,¹⁷³ who have marked futures, Quintus is not silent.¹⁷⁴ Whilst the primary narrator's reference to Agamemnon's leading away

167 On the misattribution of *machaira* (murder weapon) for Machaireus (murderer) see Gantz (1993) 690-691.

168 My footnote: jealous because Neoptolemos' Hermione was betrothed to Orestes; e.g. Sophocles' *Hermione*.

169 Gantz (1993) 694; again the reference is to Hermione.

170 Who unwittingly causes him so many troubles with Hermione; e.g., Euripides' *Andromache*.

171 See discussion above.

172 (Though, cf. Pindar's seventh *Paean*) and epic theology; Quintus makes use of the same as regards Achilles too, Q.S. 3.771-774; see James (2004) 288 n. 771-774.

173 Note Antiphos, saved from Eurypylos, only for the Cyclops, after Troy (Q.S. 8.124-127); as in *Od.* 2.17-20, noted by James (2004) 312 n. 124-127.

174 On foreshadowing (and suspense) in Quintus, see Duckworth (1936), especially 68; on prolepsis (and analepsis) in Quintus, T. Schmitz in this present volume. In the third chapter of my thesis (cf. n. 7), I explore Quintus' use of prolepsis and analepsis (internal and external).

of Cassandra (Q.S. 14.20) may only be suggestive of his terrible fate at Argos,¹⁷⁵ the curse of the mad Aias has far stronger connotations:

(...) δοῖεν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοις Ἀργείοισιν
ὕσμινας ὀλοὰς καὶ πένθεα δακρυόεντα
αὐτῷ τ' Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι· μηδ' ὅ γ' ἀπήμων
ἔλθοι ἐὼν ποτὶ δῶμα λιλαϊόμενός περ ἰκέσθαι. (Q.S. 5.472-475)

(...) On the rest of the Argives may they¹⁷⁶ inflict
Disastrous battles and losses to make them weep,
On Atreus' son Agamemnon chiefly. May he not come
Unscathed to the home that he longs to see again.¹⁷⁷

Similarly, in the same passage, Aias' curse foreshadows Odysseus' tribulations:

(...) πάθοι γε μὲν ἄλγεα θυμῷ
ὀπὸς αἰ μὴ τιόωνται Ἑριννύες ἀνθρώποισιν
ἀργαλείοις. (...) (Q.S. 5.470-472)

(...) May his spirit suffer
All the torments that the spirits of vengeance devise
For evil men. (...)

As does Athene near the end of the epic:

(...) αὐτὰρ Ἀθήνη
ἄλλοτε μὲν ἄθυμῳ μέγ' ἐγήθηεν, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε
ἄχνητ' Ὀδυσσῆος πινυτόφρονος, οὔνεκ' ἔμελλε
πάσχειν ἄλγεα πολλὰ Ποσειδάωνος ὀμοκλή. (Q.S. 14.628-631)

(...) Athena, however,
Was torn between great joy in her heart and apprehension
On account of the prudent Odysseus, because he was destined
To suffer many woes through Poseidon's hostility.¹⁷⁸

Although Odysseus eventually overcomes his problems, such heavily pointed dark forebodings are something that do not apply to Neoptolemos. Thus, one could conclude that omission of reference to Neoptolemos' post-Troy, 'good' or

175 See Aischyl. *Ag.* 1431-1447; at least Cassandra is cited as partial reason for Agamemnon's dispatch.

176 The Erinnyes (Furies), carried forward from line 5.471.

177 This curse also recalls the same in Soph. *Aj.* 841-842; on which, see James (2004) 299 n. 465-481. See too James / Lee (2000) 131 n. 474-475.

178 See *Od.* 1.1-5 and 1.19-21, which, as the end of the *Iliad* to Quintus' opening, is anticipated in the *Posthomerica*'s close.

‘bad’, is fairly exceptional. The above extract also emphasises one of Quintus’ main artistic aims: to complete the missing book in Homer’s ‘trilogy’; of which, however, he has his Neoptolemos fill a substantial, significant, and largely idealized part.

Conclusion

Arguably, Quintus’ overriding tendency in the *Posthomerica* is to portray Neoptolemos in a positive fashion. Such a tendency is marked not only in his dealings with his fellow Greeks, such as Nestor, but also even in his engagement, or noticeable absence of it, in relation to the Trojans, too. Quintus renders his Neoptolemos different from his more traditional self, by excluding him from certain negative portrayals completely, such as the killing of Astyanax, and by diminishing his part in less favourable narratives; for instance, his killing of Priam, in which the old king’s demands for death fundamentally impact upon the characterization of the young hero. A further key tendency of Quintus, to exaggerate pathos in order to add greater drama to his narrative, creates tension, at points, particularly with reference to Neoptolemos. The hero cannot, at the same time, be characterized positively, when the role he performs in the narrative suggests otherwise. Quintus’ handling of Polyxena’s sacrifice and Neoptolemos’ involvement in it is perhaps one of the most pertinent cases in point, where this problematic is notably marked. Even here, though, Quintus does much, to reduce Neoptolemos’ negativity, albeit less successful than in other episodes. Diminished involvement in certain narratives, sometimes extending to complete omission, is also matched by Quintus’ silence on Neoptolemos’ post-Troy afterlife. So universally negative are the traditions of Neoptolemos’ afterlife that mere mention of them could cause Quintus’ ‘parfit knyght’ to buckle under the strain, and the old beast leap forth.

I have intended to show that while Quintus’ Neoptolemos is not characterized in a purely positive way (how could he be?), his more traditional negative depiction is reduced. As my title indicates: *more* ‘parfit gentil knyght’, *than* ‘Hyrcanian beast’.¹⁷⁹

179 I would like to take the opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the tireless help of my research supervisor, Professor Chris Carey, with this and numerous other drafts. I would also like to thank S. Bär, M. Baumbach and N. Dümmler for their many helpful suggestions.