Nonnus, Quintus and the Sack of Troy*

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In book 40 of the *Dionysiaca*, Nonnus brings his detailed and highly imaginative rescripting of the Trojan War to an end. Nonnus was an Egyptian poet writing in Greek under the later Roman Empire (mid-late fifth century A.D.). His 48 book epic, the *Dionysiaca*, charts the struggles of Dionysus to earn a place for himself in heaven. It begins before his birth with the story of his grandfather Cadmus and concludes with his triumphant entry into heaven in book 48.¹ Following a seven-year siege, an unnamed city in Indian territory falls at last into the hands of Dionysus. The pivotal moment in the fall of the city is the death of the great Indian warrior Deriades – a scene that closely mirrors the death of Hector in *Iliad* 22:

δαίμων δ' ἀμπελόεις ταμεσίχροα θύρσον ἰάλλων
ἀκρότατον χροά μούνον ἐπέγραφε Δηριαδῆος.
αὐτὰρ ὁ κισσήεντι τυπὲς φθισήνορι θαλλῶ
πατρῷω προκάρηνος ἐπωλίσθησε ῥεέθρῳ,
μηκεδανοῖς μελέεσσι γεφυρώσας ὅλον ὕδωρ 95
αὐτόματος. χρονίην δὲ θεοὶ μετὰ φύλοπιν Ἴνδῶν
σὺν Διὶ παμμεδέοντι πάλιν νόστησαν Ὀλύμπῳ.
Βάκχοι δ' ἀμφαλάλαζον ἀδηρίτου Διονύσου
δῆριν ἀνευάζοντες, ἀολλίζοντο δὲ πολλοὶ
ἔγχεσιν οὐτάζοντες ὅλον χροά Δηριαδῆος. (Nonn. *D.* 40.91-100)

There the vine-deity cast his fleshcutting thyrsus and just grazed the skin of Deriades. Struck with the mandestroying ivy bunch he slipt headfirst into his father's flood, and bridged all that water himself with his long frame. Now the long Indian War was ended, the gods returned again to Olympus with Zeus the Lord of all; the Bacchants cheered in triumph around Dionysus the invincible, crying Euoi for the conflict, and many thronged round Deriades piercing him everywhere with their spears.²

* I would like to thank the three editors of this volume for their detailed and valuable comments on this paper, and the contributors to the original conference for their stimulating questions.

1 For a brief introduction see Shorrock (2005).

2 Translations taken from Rouse (1940) for Nonnus; James (2004) for Quintus.

With a simple flick of his thyrsus Dionysus puts an end both to the Indian leader and the whole Indian War. At the same time, Nonnus has presented his readers with a moment of disconcerting narrative abridgement. No sooner has the description of Deriades' death been completed in line 96, than the gods hurry away to Olympus, without so much as waiting for the start of a new hexameter line. As Hopkinson has well observed, "[t]he perfunctoriness with which Deriades is pursued, killed, and posthumously mutilated stands in surprising contrast to Nonnus' habitual volubility, and provides a grotesquely disproportionate climax to the more than twenty-four books of conflict".³

The decision to equate the death of the Indian chieftain with the fall of the city takes an obvious cue from Homer. The *Iliad* leaves us in no doubt that Hector's death will lead inevitably to the fall of the city of Troy (see, for example, the laments in *Il.* 24.718-775).⁴ Here then is a striking end to Nonnus' detailed engagement with Homer's *Iliad*, part of Nonnus' "ostentatiously varied emulation of Homer".⁵ However, Nonnus' narrative of the Indian War was no 'simple' replay of the *Iliad*. His re-staging of the Trojan War began in book 13, and an elaborate narrative is needed to fill out the years of the war that Homer did not describe. A significant part of this material comes, in fact, straight out of Homer. Nonnus recasts material that Homer had artfully compressed into the narrative of the final year of the war (see, for example, the catalogue of ships that is now 'restored' to the start of the Indian War in book 13) and fashions a linear narrative by restoring Homeric analepses and prolepses to their 'true' chronological sequence.

Nonnus' own narrative may be closely involved with the narrative of the *Iliad*, yet it has ambitions that reach far beyond it: the traditional cycle of Greek mythology that moves from the age of the Titans through the Argonautic and Trojan Cycles is adapted by Nonnus to form a broad and overarching framework to support the specific narrative of the hero Dionysus.⁶ Nonnus' engagement with this mythological framework, in particular his rewriting of the entire Trojan War from the assembly of the troops in book 13 up to the death of the enemy hero in book 40, creates a natural expectation that his narrative will now advance into the territory of the Posthomeric traditions about the city of Troy. In fact, Nonnus devotes little more than 200 lines to the period from the death of the enemy hero

3 Hopkinson (1994c) 27; he continues: "Similar brevity in other passages suggests that narrative truncation is characteristic of Nonnus. [...] the assumption of Dionysus to Olympus, the climax and conclusion of the whole epic, is described in a mere five lines (48.974-8) whose starkness contrasts markedly with the leisurely lubricity of preceding episodes."

4 See Shorrock (2001) 88.

5 Hopkinson (1994c) 27.

6 See Shorrock (2001) 25-111.

to the end of the war. Within this brief section (40.101-297) the leading Indian women lament the fate of their city, the dead are buried, the city receives a new governor, a communal banquet is celebrated, the spoils are divided and the army disperse to their various homes. Any expectations of a 'traditional' end to Nonnus' Trojan War complete with wooden horse and set-piece description of the sack of the city are therefore clearly frustrated.

In such an expansive work, one that has dealt at such length with the mythological narratives that preceded the story of Troy, Nonnus' failure to provide an equivalent version of the Posthomeric tradition is, to say the least, surprising. Hopkinson explains the sudden end to the war narrative with reference to Pindar and Nonnus' self-consciously Hellenistic temperament.⁷ Yet there are inevitable and far-reaching implications generated by this general 'aesthetic' of narrative brevity that have not yet been seriously addressed. By equating the death of the Indian hero Deriades with the fall of the city Nonnus has effectively erased the entire tradition of Posthomeric narratives, as exemplified by his most distinguished literary predecessors, Quintus and Triphiodorus.⁸ A story that Quintus had fleshed out to an epic length has now been reduced by an act of narrative abbreviation to the slightest of episodes.⁹ The specific question remains as to what this may mean for our understanding both of the Nonnus' epic ambitions and for the later reception of the Posthomeric tradition.

Within the context of an edited volume on Quintus, it is hardly heretical to assert the importance of Quintus for the later literary tradition. The simple invitation to contribute to such a volume presupposes some sort of relationship between Nonnus and Quintus. Such a presupposition rests primarily on the fact that so little hexameter poetry survives from the centuries between Quintus and Nonnus – there is an inevitable tendency therefore to construct a clear generic lineage and direct relationship between the two poets. Secondly there is the profound influence of the distinguished French scholar: Francis Vian (behind whom stands the similarly distinguished German scholar, Rudolf Keydell). It is Vian's work, first on Quintus, and latterly on Nonnus, that has more than anything else consolidated the relationship between these two authors.¹⁰ In fact, the established connections

7 Hopkinson (1994c) 27: "Such sudden curtailments are familiar first from the allusive narratives of Pindar; from lyric the technique was adapted by Hellenistic writers. The cursory conclusion is thus to be seen as part of the self-proclaimed Pindaricism of Nonnus, or of his Alexandrianising tendencies."

8 For a recent literary-critical rehabilitation of Triphiodorus see Paschalis (2005b).

9 As Manuel Baumbach points out, Quintus himself exploits techniques of narrative abbreviation in his own truncated account of the actual fall of Troy in *Posthomeric* 13; but where Quintus abbreviates one episode, Nonnus abbreviates the whole of his Posthomeric account.

10 See, e.g., Vian (1959a).

between Nonnus and Quintus are not as obvious as these ‘historical’ factors might lead one to presume.

Though Vian’s 1976 commentary on books 1-2 of the *Dionysiaca* does allude to Nonnus’ use of Quintus, it does so only in the vaguest of terms.¹¹ For Vian, Quintus was clearly just one out of a literary cast of thousands employed by Nonnus in the construction of his vast epic.¹² Mary Whitby has recently gone a long way towards fleshing out the relationship between Nonnus and Quintus, revealing through a detailed metrical analysis, a common ‘genetic code’, that links the two authors and serves to “establish Quintus as a precursor of Nonnus”.¹³ Her conclusions about the relationship between the two poets remain tentative, however: “[O]ne may say that while Quintus’ metrical features, some aspects of his narrative technique, and linguistic devices such as preference for long epithets and use of participles, point the way towards Nonnian usages, Nonnus did not find much in him to imitate.”¹⁴

Nonnus’ use of Quintus, then, is most commonly described in terms of general stylistic and metrical influence rather than in terms of explicit and meaningful intertextuality. It would be easy to infer from this that there is simply no explicit link between the two poets and that metrical and stylistic parallels are the result of an engagement with a shared epic tradition (including lost common sources). This inference would, however, make for a very short paper and fail to do justice to these two rich texts. In what follows, therefore, I want to explore further the possibility of a relationship between Quintus and Nonnus. Although it is my personal contention that the *Dionysiaca* engages directly with Quintus’ epic in a playful and creative manner, my primary concern is not to ‘prove’ a direct link between the two texts. To attempt such a proof would be to undervalue the complex strategies of intertextuality and to misunderstand the ways that texts ‘communicate’.¹⁵ Rather, by setting Quintus alongside Nonnus through the brief section of the *Dionysiaca* that is devoted to the end of the Indian war, I hope to illuminate some of the narrative strategies and epic ambitions of both poets, and to throw light more generally on the workings of the later tradition of Greek epic.¹⁶

11 Vian (1976) XLV.

12 Vian (1976).

13 Whitby (1994) 114.

14 Whitby (1994) 118; she continues: “This is scarcely surprising, since Quintus consciously sought to create a Homeric flavour in a poem designed to form a bridge between the Homeric poems, whereas Nonnus’ objective was novelty.” As Manuel Baumbach suggests, the suggestion that Nonnus found little in Quintus to imitate hints at a critical view of Quintus as a minor poet.

15 For a now classic introduction to intertextuality see Hinds (1998).

16 For the Latin tradition see Hardie (1993).

1. The End of a Hero; the End of a War

After the death of the Indian leader Deriades, a series of laments from the leading women of the city (following the laments in *Iliad* 22 and 24) underscores the sense that the Indian city has not just lost its greatest hero, but has also lost the war. This is followed by an emphatic celebration by the soldiers of Dionysus which makes the point again in no uncertain terms:

Βάκχοι δ' ἐκροτάλιζον ἀπορρίψαντες ἐννῶ,
τοῖον ἔπος βοῶντες ὁμογλώσσων ἀπὸ λαϊμῶν·
“ἡράμεθα μέγα κῦδος· ἐπέφνομεν ὄρχαμον Ἴνδῶν.” (Nonn. *D.* 40.215-217)

But the Bacchoi rattled their cymbals, having now made an end of warring, and they cried with one voice: “We have won great glory! We have slain the Indian chieftain!”

The allusion goes back to Homer’s *Iliad* where Achilles cries out exultantly to his comrades following the death of Hector:

ἡράμεθα μέγα κῦδος· ἐπέφνομεν Ἑκτορα δῖον. (*Il.* 22.393)

We have won great glory! We have slain the noble Hector.

Nonnus’ reworking of this link may well pick up on a debate in the Homeric scholia. The A scholia supported the athetizing of this line because the boast did not accord with Achilles’ dignity; an alternative interpretation ‘solved’ the problem of Achilles’ dignity by giving the line to the Greek soldiers to utter as a paean.¹⁷ Nonnus appears to take an active stance on this debate by placing the boast not in the mouth of a substitute Achilles, but by giving the words to the collective Bacchic forces. There is, however, another contribution to the debate over the Homeric line that should be taken into account. In *Posthomerica* 14, Quintus recast this same line, placing it in the mouths of the Greek army at the very end of the Trojan War:

(...) ἀλλήλοισι διηνεκέως ἐνέποντες·
“ἡνύσαμεν πολέμοιο μακρὸν τέλος· ἡράμεθ’ εὐρὸν
κῦδος ὁμῶς δηίοισι μέγα πτολίεθρον ἐλόντες,” (Q.S. 14.116-118)

(...) They repeated the following words to one another:
“We have reached the goal of this long war, won glory
Far and wide by destroying our foes and their great city.”

17 See Leaf (²1902) *ad loc.* In the lines immediately preceding the celebratory vaunt Achilles urged his men to join him in singing a paean (*Il.* 22.391-392).

Quintus has made two significant changes to the Homeric ‘original’. First, he has turned the words of Achilles into the words of the collective Greek army. Second, he has used the words as a way of drawing attention not to the death of a hero, but rather to the end of the war. Nonnus’ reworking of the same line follows Homer in preserving the context of the death of a hero, but follows Quintus’ lead in turning the line into a celebration of the end of the entire Indian war.

2. Burial of the Dead

The instant capitulation of the Indian city means that Deriades stands as the last casualty of the whole war. In place of further fighting and bloodshed, Dionysus right away sets about the building of a funeral pyre:

ἀμπνεύσας δὲ πόνοιο καὶ αἱματόεντος ἀγῶνος¹⁸
 πρῶτα μὲν ἐκτερείξεν ἀτυμβεύτων στίχα νεκρῶν,
 δομήσας ἓνα τύμβον ἀπείριτον εὐρεί κόλπῳ
 ἄκριτον ἀμφὶ πυρὴν ἐκατόμπεδον. (...) (Nonn. *D.* 40.219-222)

Now resting from his labours and the bloody contest, he first gave their due to the crowd of unburied dead. He built round the pyre one vast tomb for all alike, with a wide bosom, a hundred feet long. (...)

In Quintus too a funeral pyre is constructed following the sack of the city:

Τρώων δ’ ὅσσοι ἄλυξαν ἀνηλέος ἐκ πολέμοιο,
 ἀγρόμενοι κατὰ ἄστυ περὶ νέκυας πονέοντο
 θαπτόμεναι μεμαῶτες· ἄγεν δ’ ἀλεγεινὸν ἐς ἔργον
 Ἀντήνωρ· αὐτοὶ δὲ πυρὴν πολέεσσι τίθεντο. (Q.S. 14.399-402)

Such Trojans as had escaped the pitiless war
 Now gathered in the city, keen to busy themselves
 In burying the corpses. To this dismal task
 Antenor led them. Those few built a pyre for many.

The contrast with the Nonnian version is striking and throws the positive and humane actions of Dionysus into sharp relief. In Nonnus’ account, emphasis is placed on the fact that this is the first thing (πρῶτα) that Dionysus does after the capitulation of the city. This is an emphasis quite alien to the account of the victorious Greeks at the start of *Posthomerica* 14 where attention is focused on

¹⁸ Note Q.S. 14.72: Ξάνθος ἔθ’ αἱματόεντος ἀναπνείων ὀρυμαγδοῦ “Xanthus scarce drawing breath from bloody war” – Xanthus has undying grief for the loss of the city, immortal though he is.

captured booty and joyous feasting. In Quintus, it is the remnants of the defeated Trojans who are forced to look to the disposal of their own. By contrast, it is Dionysus himself as victor who arranges a funeral for the collective war dead, Indian and Dionysian without distinction (ἄκριτον).

The striking transformation of ‘traditional’ epic material into the new epic of Dionysus is further highlighted by the different approaches of Nonnus and Quintus to the commemoration of the dead. Quintus is silent about the rituals of mourning with which the Trojans might have commemorated their dead, supplying only the barest details about the building of the pyre. The commemoration of the dead by Dionysus is a grander affair by far:

(...) ἀμφὶ δὲ νεκροῖς
 Μυγδονὶς αἰολόμολπος ἐπέκτυπεν αἴλινα σύριγγ,
 καὶ Φρύγες αὐλητῆρες ἀνέπλεκον ἄρσενά μολπὴν
 πενθαλέοις στομάτεσσιν, ἐπωρχήσαντο δὲ Βάκχαι 225
 ἄβρὰ μελιζομένοιο Γανύκτορος εὐάδι φωνῇ. (Nonn. D. 40.222-226)

(...) Round about the bodies the melodious Mygdonian syrinx sounded their dirge and the Phrygian pipers wove their manly tune with mournful lips, while the Bacchant women danced and Ganyctor trolled his dainty song with Euian voice.

The details of this act of commemoration suggest parallels with the Trojan celebrations at Q.S. 13.1-4:

οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἀνὰ πτολίεθρον ἐδόρπεον· ἐν δ' ἄρα τοῖσιν
αὐλοὶ ὁμῶς σύριγγι μέγ' ἤπυον· ἀμφὶ δὲ πάντῃ
μολπῇ ἐπ' ὀρχηθμοῖσι καὶ ἄκριτος ἔσκεν αὐτῇ
 δαινυμένων, οἷα τε πέλει παρὰ δαιτὶ καὶ οῖνῳ. (Q.S. 13.1-4)

The Trojans were feasting throughout the city amid the mingled
 And strident sounds of oboes and panpipes. In every direction
 There was singing and dancing and a confusion
 Of diners' voices, such as goes with food and wine.

Though in many respects the parallels of dance and music may seem unexceptional, there is an interesting point of contact here between the two accounts. In the lines immediately following this description, at Q.S. 13.5-20, Quintus provides a vivid account of drink and its delusive effects.¹⁹ Given the central role played by wine in the *Dionysiaca*, it is possible here to conceive of a (playful and knowing) allusion to a rare account of drunkenness in Quintus' epic.

19 As Alan James points out to me, this is a rare description of drunkenness within the *Post-homerica*.

3. Ordering the City; Banquet

It is only after the burial of the dead that Dionysus turns his attention to the ordering of the city.

παυσάμενος δὲ πόνοιο,²⁰ καὶ ὕδατι γυῖα καθήρας,
ᾠπάσε λισσομένοισι θεουδέα κοίρανον Ἰνδοῖς,
κρινάμενος Μωδαῖον. (...) (Nonn. D. 40.234-236)

Now resting from his labours, he cleansed his body, and assigned a governor for the Indians, choosing the godfearing Modaius. (...)

His actions here appear to have no parallel in the Posthomeric tradition since the city of Troy is abandoned by the victorious Greeks as a smoking ruin. A more obvious parallel, refracted through the lens of Alexander the Great, comes from the more recent history of the Roman empire and the policies of Romanization, not only using force to win over hostile states, but waging a subtle psychological battle for hearts and minds.²¹ Again, the contrast with the Posthomeric tradition throws emphasis onto the role of Dionysus as a civilizing and humane epic hero. Intriguingly, the leader whom Dionysus appoints only appears at one other point in the epic (Nonn. D. 32.165-167), where he is described as a fierce warrior who enjoys bloodshed more than anyone else and prefers fighting to feasting.

Where the Greek victors in the *Posthomeric* throw themselves into festivities almost as soon as the city has fallen, it is only once that the dead have been respectfully dealt with, and the security of the city has been guaranteed by the appointment of a new (Indian) governor, that Dionysus at last celebrates his victory with a grand and predictably wine-soaked banquet:

(...) ἐπὶ ξυνῶ δὲ κυπέλλῳ
Βάκχοις δαινυμένοισι μιῆς ἥσαντο τραπέζης
ξανθὸν ὕδωρ πίνοντες ἀπ' οἰνοπόρου ποταμοῖο. (Nonn. D. 40.236-238)

(...) They touched one table with banqueting Bacchoi over a common bowl, and drank the yellow water from the winebreeding river.

20 Compare Q.S. 14.145: παυσάμενοι Δαναοὶ – with these words Quintus brings the celebratory feast of the Greeks to a close; in Nonnus' account the tag παυσάμενος δὲ πόνοιο marks the start of the celebrations. The verbal parallel between 40.219: ἀμπνεύσας δὲ πόνοιο and 40.234: παυσάμενος δὲ πόνοιο marks a clear distinction between the burial section and the section of celebration, carefully establishing Dionysus' priorities.

21 Cf. Accorinti (2004) *ad loc.*

As with the burial of the dead, the defining motif for the Dionysiac celebrations is one of communality. The Indians share a single (μῆς) table with their former enemies and drink from a communal (ξυνῶ) cup.

In Quintus, the sack of the city is framed by intoxicating and sleep-inducing banquets – both clearly differentiated: the one celebrated in ignorance by the Trojans that leads to their slaughter (Q.S. 13.1-29), the other by the Greeks on the evening before their own ill-fated attempts to sail away from Troy (Q.S. 14.101-148). In Nonnus' account, Indians and Bacchants enjoy a single banquet that results in no misfortune for either side. And where Quintus' banquets induce sleep, in Nonnus' account sleep is banished to make way for an energetic tumult of dancing:

καὶ χορὸς ἄσπετος ἔσκεν· ἐπεσκίρτησε δὲ πολλή
 Βασσαρὶς οἰστρήεντι πέδον κρούουσα πεδίλω, 240
 καὶ Σάτυρος βαρύδουπον ἐπὶ ρήσων χθόνα ταρσῶ
 λοξὰ κυβιστητῆρι ποδῶν βακχεύετο παλμῶ.
 πῆχυν ἐπικλίνων μανιώδεος ἀνένι Βάκχης
 καὶ πρυλέες Βρομίοιο συνωρχήσαντο βοεΐαις, 245
 καὶ τροχαλῆς κλονέοντες ἐνόπλια κύκλα χορείης
 ῥυθμὸν ἐμιμήσαντο φερεσσακέων Κορυβάντων·
 καὶ στρατὸς ἱππῶν κορυθαίολον εἰς χορὸν ἔστη
 νίκην πανδαμάτειραν ἀνευάζων Διόνυσου·
 οὐδέ τις ἄσφορος ἦεν· ὁμογλώσσω δ' ἀλαλητῶ
 εἰς πόλον ἐπτάζωνον ἀνέδραμεν εὖιος ἡχώ. (Nonn. D. 40.239-250)

There was dancing without end. Many a Bassarid skipt about, tapping the floor with wild slipper; many a Satyr stormed the resounding ground with heavy foot and revelled with side-trippings of his tumbling feet as he rested an arm on the neck of some maddened Bacchant. The foot-soldiers of Bromios danced round with their oxhides and mimicked the pattern of the shieldbearing Corybants, wildly circling in the quick dance under arms. The horsemen in their glancing helmets also stood up for the dance, acclaiming the allvanquishing victory of Dionysus. Not a soul was silent – the Euian tones went up to the sevenzone sky with shouts of triumph from every tongue.

One of the most striking things about this passage is the insistent emphasis that it places on warriors, armour and weaponry. It is as if in these celebrations we are witness to a noisy and bloodless enactment of the slaughter that never took place. Certainly, the accumulation of military vocabulary in a context of peaceful celebration reminds us once again of the distance and difference between the epic of Dionysus and the epics of the Trojan War.

4. Division of the Spoils; Nostoi

After the feast there comes the division of the spoils. Although the Indian City has been maintained by Dionysus' actions this does not prevent it from having been despoiled:

ἀλλ' ὅτε λυσιπόνοιο παρήλυθε κῶμος ἑορτῆς,
νίκης ληίδα παῖσαν ἐλὼν μετὰ φύλοπιν Ἰνδῶν
ἀρχαίης Διόνυσος ἔης ἐμνήσατο πάτρης,
λύσας ἐπταέτηρα θεμείλια δημοτῆτος.
καὶ δῆϊον ὄλον ὄλβον ἐληίζοντο μαχηταί. (Nonn. D. 40.251-255)

But when the revels of the carefree feast were over, and Dionysus had gathered all the spoil after his Indian War, he remembered the land of his ancient home, now he had swept away the foundations of that seven years' conflict. The whole wealth of the enemy was given to their army as their plunder.

Nonnus here clearly follows the Posthomeric narratives in laying emphasis on the claiming of all the spoils (ληίδα παῖσαν and ὄλον ὄλβον), the rightful prize for a victorious army; Quintus in his account similarly describes the Greeks leaving Troy carrying "all its wealth" (Q.S. 14.10 κτήματα πάντα). The wealth of the Indian city, in contrast with the city of Troy, resides in precious jewels, elephants, panthers, tigers and pearls. It appears for a moment as if Nonnus' narrative has removed the capture of women from his account. Yet although his epic does have a strikingly different ethical feel to it, disturbing and violent elements have not been entirely edited out.²²

The division of spoils leads directly to the dispersal of forces of Dionysus:

καὶ στρατῇ Διόνυσος ἐδάσσατο ληίδα χάρμης 275
λαὸν ὄλον συνάειθλον ὑπότροπον οἶκαδε πέμπων
Ἰνδῶν μετὰ δῆριν· ἀπεσσεύοντο δὲ λαοὶ
μάρμαρα κουφίζοντες ἐώια δῶρα θαλάσσης
ὄρνέα τ' αἰολόμορφα· παλιννόστω δὲ πορεῖη
κῶμον ἀνευάζοντες ἀνικήτῳ Διονύσῳ 280
πάντες ἐβακχεύοντο, πολυκμήτοιο λιπόντες
μνηστῖν ὄλην πολέμοιο, Βορείადι σύνδρομον αὔρη
σκιδναμένην· καὶ ἕκαστος ἔχων ἀναθήματα νίκης
ὄψιμον εἰς δόμον ἦλθε παλίνδρομος. (...) (Nonn. D. 40.275-284)

²² Amidst the catalogue of Indian treasures divided out among the army we read the following brutal description (Nonn. D. 40.269-271): πολλὴ δ' ἐκ θαλάμοιο σὺν ἀρτιγάμῳ παρακοίτῃ / ληιδίῃ πλοκάμων μελανόχροος εἴλκετο νύμφη, / δέσμιον αὐχένα δοῦλον ὑποζεύξασα λεπιδόνη. "Many a blackskin bride was dragged out of her chamber by her hair, her neck bound fast under the yoke of slavery, spoil of war along with her newly wedded husband."

So Dionysus distributed the spoils of battle among his followers, after the Indian War, and sent returning home the whole host who had shared his labours. The people made haste to go, laden with shining treasures of the Eastern sea and birds of many strange forms. Their return was a triumphal march with universal acclaim to Dionysus the invincible; all revelled, for they left behind them all memory of that toilsome war, to blow away with the north wind, and each came returning home at last with his thank-offerings for victory. (...)

The contrast with the end of Quintus' narrative could not be starker or more pointed.²³ In the Dionysiac narrative all of the troops get safely home with their treasures.²⁴ There is no storm to scatter and destroy them, no threat of divine displeasure. Ironically it is at this point that Nonnus' engagement with Quintus seems to be at its closest. At 40.281-282 the forces of Dionysus are described as having entirely forgotten about the war. These lines invite comparison with two lines from the final book of the *Posthomeric* where the Greeks, on the point of departure, are enchanted by the sight of Helen:

23 For a wider discussion of the implications of the ending of the *Posthomeric* see the contribution of A. Carvounis in this volume.

24 Nonnus details a single exception – an exception that emphasises all the more strongly just what a remarkable thing it is that all of the others returned safely home (Nonn. *D.* 40.284-291): ἀντὶ δὲ πάτρης / Ἀστερίου τότε μόνος ἀνιπτοπόδων σχεδὸν Ἄρκτων / Φάσιδος ἀμφὶ ῥέεθρον ἀθαλπεί νάσσατο γαίῃ / Μασσαγέτην παρὰ κόλπον, ἐοῦ γενέταο τοκῆος / ναίων ἀστερόεντος ὑπὸ σφυρὰ δύσνιφα Ταύρου, / φεύγων Κνώσσιον ἄστρῳ καὶ ἀρσενόπαιδα γενέθλην, / Πασιφάνην στυγέων καὶ ἐὼν Μίνωα τοκῆα, / καὶ Σκυδίην προβέβουλεν ἔης χθονός. “Asterios alone did not now return to his own country; instead he settled near the foot-unwashed Bears, about the river Phasis in a cold land by the Massagetic Gulf, where he dwelt under the snowburdened feet of his father’s father, Tauros the bull translated to the stars. He avoided the Cnossian city and the sons of his family, hating Pasiphae and his own father Minos, and preferring Scythia to his own country.” Chuvín (1991) 56-57 set this curious reference to Asterius in the context of an unusual interest that Nonnus exhibits towards Cretan material at a number of points in his epic. Vian (1998) further developed the idea by suggesting that Nonnus may well have had a specific intertext in mind for this wandering Cretan: the *Bassarica* of Dionysius. In the context of Nonnus’ adaptation of the Posthomeric narrative tradition proposed in this paper, however, it is tempting to speculate that Nonnus had another intertext in mind when he introduced the story of Asterius. Although Asterius has Cretan ancestry, he comes to reside in the Colchis region to the east of the Black Sea, on the river Phasis. Coastal towns including the city of Phasis were colonised by Greeks from Miletus from the sixth century B.C. As is well known, it was an epic poet from Miletus who was famed for his contribution to the Epic Cycle that included a poem about the sack of Troy: Arctinus. On its own this might be dismissed as a pleasant, yet irrelevant, coincidence; however, the reference to Ἄρκτων at the end of line 285 may well give one pause for thought. Is it possible that Nonnus has included a reference to one of the most famous sources for the story of the fall of Troy at the end of his own version? In such a case the use of μόνος to single out the story of Asterius might have been designed as an allusive marker, drawing specific attention to what is being described; it might also be possible to discern in the adjective ἀνιπτοπόδων a ‘Hellenistic’ allusion to the metrical feet of Arctinus’ poem, alongside the feet of the constellation of the Bear.

ὥς Δαναοὶ περὶ πάντες ἐγήθειον· οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' αὐτοῖς
μνήστις ἦν καμάτοιο δυσαλγέος οὐδὲ κυδοιμοῦ.²⁵ (Q.S. 14.67-68)

Such was the joy of all the Danaans. They no longer
Recollected the toil and pain of warfare.

The joy of all the Greeks (πάντες) parallels the Bacchic revel of all the followers of Dionysus. At Q.S. 14.69 we learn that responsibility for the Greek joy lies not with Helen, but with the divinity Aphrodite; in the *Dionysiaca* it is, of course, the divinity Dionysus who is responsible for the joy of his followers. In both narratives it is explicitly ‘the memory of war’ that the soldiers put from their minds. If one recalls the passage from Quintus whilst reading the Nonnian account, it seems particularly appropriate that the intertext should hinge on the very word for memory (μνήστις). If the word for memory at *D.* 40.282 does indeed trigger a reminiscence of Quintus, then we are dealing not merely with an intertextual marker, but a marker that ironically comments on its own status as a *locus* for memory and recollection. The final irony is, of course, that this allusion to memory introduces the opposite theme of forgetfulness.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the two-hundred lines that make up Nonnus’ abbreviated rescripting of the Trojan War, from the death of Hector to the departure of the heroes. This paper has raised the possibilities of a significant intertextual relationship between Nonnus and Quintus. It has not been my concern to prove ‘beyond doubt’ that a direct relationship exists between the two texts (though that possibility remains open). I have been concerned instead to open up a dialogue between these two major texts of the later Greek hexameter tradition, to consider what happens when we attempt to read these poems side by side, using the tool of intertextuality. At every turn a consideration of Quintus and the traditional narrative of Troy has helped to throw Nonnus’ own narrative into sharp relief. The contrasts that we are invited to consider between the traditional epic accounts of the sack of Troy and Nonnus’ Dionysiac version – a city captured without violence and wholesale destruction and conflagration – place emphasis above all onto the new ethical dimension represented by the hero Dionysus. In Nonnus’ new epic, violence is mitigated (though not wholly eliminated) by the Dionysiac spirit. Dionysus is a hero who conquers with wine and so it is wine not blood that will flow throughout the streets of the conquered city; he displays a sense of pity

25 Nonn. *D.* 40.281-282 suggests a further correspondence with Q.S. 7.424: ἵομεν ἐς πολέμοιο πολυκμήτοιο κυδοιμόν. “Let us enter the turmoil of this devastating struggle.”

that is quite absent from his traditional portrayal, for example, in Euripides' *Bacchae* – and absent too from traditional accounts of the sack of Troy. As noted at the start of this paper, one of the most striking aspects of Nonnus' rewriting of the end of the Trojan War is his abbreviation of the Posthomeric narrative tradition. Nonnus' engagement with that tradition, as imagined through his relationship with Quintus, may be fitted into a broader picture of poetic ambition and rivalry. The brevity of Nonnus' engagement with the Posthomeric tradition invites interpretation as a deliberate response by the poet of Dionysus to the established 'world order'.²⁶ Nonnus' narrative strategy suggests a 'Bloomian misreading' – and radical reinterpretation – of the canonical role of the Posthomeric narrative in the history of epic poetry. In the new epic of Dionysus, the Posthomeric tradition is playfully reimagined as little more than a footnote in the great cycle of Greek literary history. This is itself part of a still wider discourse of poetic anxiety that takes us beyond Quintus and the Posthomeric tradition back to the figure whom no Greek epic poet could really resist, truncate or abbreviate however hard he might try: Homer.²⁷ But that, as they say, is a different story.

26 On metapoetics in Nonnus see Hardie (2005b).

27 Homer is famously invoked by Nonnus as his poetic father at *D.* 25.265.