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NONNUS AND IMPERIAL GREEK POETRY

Calum Alasdair Maciver

1 Introduction

Nonnus is traditionally viewed as standing at the end of a tradition in the Imperial period of traditional, cyclical-type epic,¹ and, in particular, is marked out as one who creates his own type of poetics and literary aesthetics in contrast to the set parameters found in earlier Imperial Greek epic—to the extent that he spawns a whole school of imitators, the so-called school of Nonnus.² Like the earlier poets of the Imperial age, Nonnus writes what is avowedly Homeric poetry, but in contrast he marks out his own epic as a new mode of Homeric reception, an epic that admits, programmatically, this (inevitable) indebtedness but at the same time points to emulation of Homer, a leaving behind of the skin of the dead seal (used to characterize Homeric poetry) in favour of the endlessly transforming protean guise used to characterize his *Dionysiaca*.³ Nonnus blazes a new trail, and often this novelty obscures any notion that the poet writes within a previous tradition of an evolving series of (rather more modest) innovations.⁴

Some recent studies have gone some way to point to similarities between earlier Imperial Greek epics and Nonnus, especially in reference to the influence of rhetoric in education (especially *ethopoeia*),⁵ but the most important study is still Whitby's analysis of the evolution of style from Moschus through to Nonnus.⁶ Whitby has shown that in metrical tendencies (especially in the greater use of dactyls), positioning of monosyllabic words, neo-formulaic variations and aspects of style, both Oppians, Quintus and (to much lesser extent) Triphiodorus all have a part to

¹ I would like to thank Domenico Accorinti for the invitation to contribute to this volume, and for his success in bringing Nonnus to the Brill companion series—surely an indication of Nonnus' integration within the classical canon at last. Translation of Nonnus is from Rouse (1940), occasionally modified; all other translations are my own.

² On the inaccuracy of this term, see Miguelez Caverio (2008) *passim* and esp. chapter 1. On Nonnus as at the end of a tradition and beginning of a new one, see Whitby (1994) 122–123 (but note her caution).

³ *Dion.* 1.11–44 with Vian (1976) 7–10. On Nonnus and Homer see Bannert/Kroll in this volume.

⁴ But write within a tradition he nevertheless did, as Whitby (1994) has demonstrated. Cf. Shorrock (2001) 19–20.

⁵ Above all Miguelez Caverio (2008) esp. 316–339.

⁶ Whitby (1994).

play in the slow evolution towards the metrical and stylistic innovations of Nonnus.⁷ In contrast to Latin poetry of a similar period, however, Nonnus and his Imperial Greek predecessors do not name each other.⁸ The fount and centerpiece of inspiration and lineage is always Homer, whether named or not, and each poet avoids explicitly acknowledging post-Homeric poets. Thus Triphiodorus may allude to Quintus Smyrnaeus, but he does not name him:⁹ in the same way Nonnus may allude, for example, to Oppian, but such allusion is tucked hidden away within overt Homeric engagement. If someone without intimate knowledge of Imperial Greek poetry were to pick up Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, they could, with reason, assume that Nonnus had not read any of them.

In this chapter I will provide a brief survey of the pre-Nonnian hexameter poetry, concentrating on Oppian, Quintus Smyrnaeus and Triphiodorus,¹⁰ and the problems entailed in seeking to establish a coherent (and transparent) relationship between the *Dionysiaca* and its Imperial epic forbears. I will then analyse some key Imperial epic intertexts from these authors in some of the programmatic passages in Nonnus, which demonstrate that Nonnus integrates the earlier poetics of Imperial Greek poetry within the macrostructure of naming the overshadowing figures of Homer, Hesiod and Pindar. In contrast to most previous studies on the development of epic poetry in the Imperial period, up to Nonnus, I will seek to establish poetic and aesthetic interactions between Nonnus and his chronologically closer predecessors, beyond similarities in metre, diction and style.

2 Bridging the Divides

In the introduction to a collection of essays on Later Greek hexameter poetry from 2008,¹¹ Carvounis and Hunter emphasize the difficulty of bringing these epics together within a uniform template of poetics or even of arguing for intertextual relationships between the texts (though they do concede that Triphiodorus and Quintus Smyrnaeus have close and clear verbal interactions). The temporal and

⁷ One marked difference between Nonnus and his epic predecessors is the deployment of the long simile, which is in markedly short supply in the *Dionysiaca*. On Nonnus' metrical 'revolution' see Magnelli in this volume.

⁸ On the Latin side, Sidonius Apollinaris is especially fond of naming his predecessors.

⁹ On the relationship and dates of Quintus Smyrnaeus and Triphiodorus, see Maciver (2012) 3.

¹⁰ An useful exercise would be to cast the net more widely to include Dionysius Periegetes, the *Bassarica*, Claudian and the *Blémyomachia*, but unfortunately outside the range of this essay. See, still, Whitby (1994) 106–109 and 123–129.

¹¹ *Signs of Life: Studies in Later Greek Hexameter Poetry* (Carvounis/Hunter 2008).

geographical separations between texts, it is argued, are so vast that it is unsurprising that there are fewer intertexts from Imperial epic than we should expect.¹² Vian, in his introduction to volume 1 of the Bude Nonnus, lists the number of Imperial Greek poetic influences found in the *Dionysiaca*,¹³ and throughout the other volumes of the Bude commentary, in the notes, echoes to earlier Greek poetry, especially Quintus and Oppian, are given. Yet in a poem of the vast size of the *Dionysiaca*, it is rather Hellenistic poetry, a lens through which Homer is so often refracted by Nonnus, which is the more pervasive presence.¹⁴ It is no coincidence, in that connection, that Oppian, of all of the pre-Nonnian Imperial hexameter poets a text that is prevalently Alexandrian in its style within its Homeric template, seems to be alluded to most in the *Dionysiaca*.

The closest surviving epic predecessor of Nonnus is Triphiodorus, and a number of pregnant intertexts are found in the *Dionysiaca*, some of which I discuss below.¹⁵ Quintus Smyrnaeus, probably pre-dating Triphiodorus by about a century,¹⁶ and the largest surviving Imperial Greek text before Nonnus, seems to have had less of an influence on the *Dionysiaca*. In his 2001 monograph on Nonnus, Shorrock adduces and discusses parallels from Quintus only in five short footnotes,¹⁷ an oblique indication, surely, of the exclusion of Quintean aesthetics in Nonnus' programme of allusive engagement. Quintus is the most Homeric of Imperial poets, in language, style and subject matter, to the extent that he begins with no proem but seamlessly manufactures an opening to the poem which continues the end of the narrative of *Iliad* 24.¹⁸ Similarly, the Quintean intertexts which Shorrock discusses in his 2007 article on Nonnus and Quintus are far from convincing, many of which

¹² It should be remembered too that much of the literary material does not survive, including the vast epic of Peisander of Laranda. Even with that in mind, Shorrock (2001) 19–20 notes that 'it seems difficult to pretend that Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* did not stand like a colossus above the works of Triphiodorus and Colluthus, Olympiodorus, Pamphrepius and their ilk.'

¹³ Vian (1976) xli–l gives a full excursus on Nonnus' sources (including Latin authors).

¹⁴ Cf. Hopkinson (1994d) 2 ('Introduction'): Nonnus is 'firmly in the Alexandrian tradition.' On Nonnus and Hellenistic poetry, the piece by Hollis (1994) is still instructive. Vian (1976) xlvi points to the clear influence of Hellenistic poetry and especially Callimachus, but plays down any direct connection between the two authors in favour instead of knowledge through the indirect, scholiastic and rhetorical, tradition (an unlikely scenario). Hopkinson (1994c) 15 notes that Nonnus balks the trend in the Imperial period of including widespread Homeric *hapax legomena* within his poem—contrast Quintus, for example, whose overall vocabulary contains a remarkable ratio of 1:10 for Homeric *hapaxes*.

¹⁵ On Nonnus and the *Orphic Argonautica*, see most recently the cogent essay of Livrea (2014a) who settles for a pre-Nonnian date for the text, *contra* Vian.

¹⁶ See Gerlaud (1982) 8 and Maciver (2012) 3, and for a contrary view, Gartner (2005) 25.

¹⁷ Shorrock (2001) 88 n. 179, 90 n. 188, 99 n. 208, 99 n. 209 and 163 n. 184.

¹⁸ On the Homeric nature of the *Posthomerica*, and for discussion of the meta-poetics of the proem, see Maciver (2012) 27–38.

seem to derive rather from the *Iliad* than via the *Posthomerica*.¹⁹ Nonnus' epic is a neo-Homeric experiment in contrast to Quintus' more conservative approach to Homeric reception,²⁰ in that whereas Quintus' epic is designed to be 'still the *Iliad*', Nonnus' poem projects itself as an alternative epic, the one Homer should have composed.²¹ As Whitby has so succinctly put it, 'Nonnus did not find much in him to imitate. 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.'²² It is no accident that of the Imperial epic poets predating Nonnus, only Oppian, in the *Halieutica*, has the adjective *poikilos*. Nonnus has deployed one of the few Homeric terms that is entirely absent from the 14-book *Posthomerica* of Quintus Smyrnaeus.²³

The closest Nonnus comes to naming his Imperial epic predecessors is in the second proem of Book 25, at line 27, where he prefaces his catalogue of heroes who cannot rival the prowess of his hero Dionysus: νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων ('in rivalry with both new and ancient [sc. poets]').²⁴ The expression follows on from Nonnus' assertion that the forces he will describe are far greater than those that came to Troy (οὐδὲ τόσος στρατὸς ἦλθεν ἐς Ἴλιον, 26). ἐρίζω conjures up the contests and wrangling of the *Iliad*, from *Iliad* 1.6 onwards, including in rivalry over speech-making (one thinks of Odysseus at 3.223, or general statements about flyting such as that at 15.284). The primacy of the forces and battles Nonnus will describe refers not simply to the size and nature of the forces, or to the prowess of Dionysus, who are far beyond the prowess of Homer's heroes (*Dion.* 25.255–260—Homer sang the wrong song, in fact). Nonnus will outclass the other poets in how he sings, in the nature of his song, both those who have tried more recently to describe epic battle, and even Homer himself (though the Nonnian narrator requires Homer's

¹⁹ Shorrock (2007).

²⁰ That is not to say that within this type of reception Quintus does not attempt something new: as I have tried to show elsewhere (2012), Quintus' task is much more difficult in that he must construct his own poetic identity under a mask of traditional Homericism. For the mix of philosophical and poetic voices in the *Posthomerica*, see Maciver (2012) esp. chapter 3.

²¹ *Dion.* 25.253–263. For recent discussion of the programmatic Book 25, see Chuvin (2014) 5–7 and Gigli Piccardi in this volume.

²² Whitby (1994) 118.

²³ It occurs twice in Oppian, *Halieutica*, at 3.173 and 4.443, but both are descriptors of specific fish. Vian (1976) xlv quotes the *Suda* in attributing the adjective as a descriptor of Peisander of Laranda's vast epic yet we have no evidence that Peisander used the adjective in his poem.

²⁴ I follow Vian (1990) 239–240 in that this statement points to poets modern and ancient, and not heroes. See also Agosti (2004c) 74 (on *Dion.* 25.27).

divinely sent inspiration: 25.261 ἄσθμα θεόσσυτον).²⁵ Quintus had tried his hand at recreating Homeric battle, and first Penthesileia, then Memnon and then finally Eurypylus came to Troy with great forces to defeat the Greeks:²⁶ Nonnus' forces, and his poetic representations of them, are superior to those *neoi* narratives, too. Nonnus' epic is one which is superior to the original, Homer, and to the later imitations.

3 Thundering Epic

Despite the relative paucity of Imperial epic intertexts in the 48 books of the poem, those that do exist crop up in crucial parts of the text. To set the tone for the rest of this essay, I will begin by analyzing two analogous passages in Nonnus and Triphiodorus, first identified (without further discussion) by Shorrock.²⁷ In Book 1, Typhon attempts to overthrow cosmic order, against the forces of Zeus and Cadmus. He attempts two-handedly to wield the thunderbolts of two-handed Zeus, but eventually must give up (*Dion.* 1.294–320). Shorrock has shown, rightly, that this misfiring attempt to wield the thunderbolts signifies the dangers of taking on the thundering of epic, and failing. Not for Nonnus is this dangerous path of Typhon, but rather the Cadmean way of the alternate, pastoral song which succeeds in overcoming the monstrous Typhon.²⁸ This pastoral mode has dangers of its own though, in bewitching all hearers, and thus Nonnus (and his reader) must be careful to plot a path between the thunder of epic and the alluring byways of non-heroic verse, the Scylla and Charybdis lying in wait of wayward poetic construction.²⁹

The monster's inability, as a *nothos* Zeus, to wield the lightning bolts (which personified miss the touch of their true master) is compared to that of an untaught stranger who tries to control a horse which, missing its trained rider, resists and rears out of control (*Dion.* 1.310–320):

Ἵς δ' ὅτε τις πλήξιππος ἀποππουστήρα χαλινοῦ
 ξεῖνος ἀνήρ ἀδίδακτος ἀπειθέα πῶλον ἰμάσσω
 πυκνὰ μάτην μογέεσκεν, ὁ δὲ θρασὺς ἔμφροني θυμῷ

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²⁵ Θεόσσυτος is found elsewhere in the *Dionysiaca* only at 47.610, referring to Hera's fire in battle, where she (clearly) tries to recreate Zeus' fire against Semele, but this time to destroy the fire-born offspring.

²⁶ Emphasized at Q.S. 1.18–20, 33–37 (Penthesileia), 2.100–102 (Memnon) and 6.119–120 (Eurypylus).

²⁷ Shorrock (2001) 122. Brief discussion and further intertexts for the passage at Vian (1976) 154–155.

²⁸ Shorrock (2001) 121–125, who persuasively argues for Typhon as an anti-type to Nonnus, not a doublet.

²⁹ On the tension see, above all, Harries (1994) esp. 68–69.

χεῖρα νόθην γίνωσκεν ἀήθεος ἠνιοχῆος,
 οἰστρηθεὶς δ' ἀνέπαλτο, καὶ ὄρθιος ὑπόσε βαίνων,
 στηρίξας ἀτίνακτον ὀπισθιδίου ποδὸς ὀπλήν, 315
 προσθιδίους προβλήτας ἐκούφισε γούνατα κάμπτων,
 καὶ λόφον ἠώρησεν, ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων δέ οἱ ὤμων
 ἀμφιλαφῆς δεδόνητο παρήγορος αὐχέني χαίτη·
 ὧς ὃ γε χερσὶν ἔκαμνεν ἀμοιβαίησιν ἀείρων
 μαρμαρυγὴν φύξηλιν ἀλωμένοιο κεραυνοῦ. 320

As a man beats a horse that loathes the bit,—some stranger, a novice untaught, flogging a restive nag, as he tries again and again in vain, and the defiant beast knows by instinct the changeling hand of an unfamiliar driver, leaping madly, rearing straight into the air with hind-hooves planted immoveable, lifting the forelegs and bending its knees, raising the neck till the mane is shaken abroad over both shoulders at once: so the monster laboured with this hand or that to lift the fugitive flashing of the roving thunderbolt.

Typhon's fumbling attempts to control the thunderbolts of Zeus represent the threats to the *Dionysiaca*, as the poem struggles to prevent itself from becoming a *Typhoniaca*.³⁰ Typhon's failure is compared to that of an untaught rider, a *nothos* figure as Typhon is called a bastard Zeus, trying to control what is not his.

Triphiodorus includes a very similar passage as his programmatic ending to his *Sack of Troy* (664–667), but this particular horse is very much controlled:

Πᾶσαν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἔγωγε μόθου χύσιν ἀείσαιμι
 κρινάμενος τὰ ἕκαστα καὶ ἄλγεα νυκτὸς ἐκείνης. 665
 Μουσῶν ὄδε μόχθος· ἐγὼ δ' ἄπερ ἵππον ἐλάσσω
 τέρματος ἀμφιέλισσαν ἐπιψαύουσιν ἀοιδῆν.

I for one would not sing the whole gushing forth of battle, judging each and every sorrow of that night. This is the burdensome task of the Muses; but I shall drive, like a horse, my wavering song as it touches the finishing post.

In Triphiodorus the horse is explicitly compared to the poem that Triphiodorus has sung, an equivalence strung out throughout the narrative.³¹ The narrator's song/horse has reached its *τέρμα* (667), the desired stopping point—the rest of the tale, what happened in the aftermath of the sack of Troy, is not his task, but is rather the wearisome toil of the Muses (666)—a task—a gushing forth (*χύσιν*, 664) he

³⁰ Shorrock (2001) 123.

³¹ See Miguelez Caverio (2013c) 128–129, 462–465. I discuss at length the poetics of the horse in a forthcoming article on Triphiodorus.

would not perform.³² Unlike epic predecessors such as Quintus, Triphiodorus has chosen only to choose a segment of the war, not the μόχθος (666). In his proem the narrator points to the poem's conclusion with the very first word: *Τέρμα* πολυκμήτιο μεταχρόνιον πολέμοιο, line 1 (the postponed end of the war which brought great weariness) was the aim, specifically the horsedrawn work of Argive Athena (line 2: Ἀργείης ἵππῆλατον ἔργον Ἀθήνης). The wooden horse is the centre-piece of the poem, its construction and description taking up over 50 lines, and the debates and narrative of its entry into Troy more than 250 lines.³³ This focus as the *τέρμα*, underlined by the echo of ἵππῆλατον (2) in the programmatic ending of the poem (ἵππον ἐλάσσω | *τέρματος*, 666–667) is also what the narrator states is the song which he is directing past the finishing post, as in a chariot race.³⁴ Nonnus' horse and rider simile, and this passage in Triphiodorus, both implicitly refer back to Callimachus' poetics of the narrow path, at *Aet.* fr. 1.25–27 Pfeiffer (*do not drive your chariot on the same paths of others*).³⁵ Triphiodorus avoided the large-scale, cyclic epic which Callimachus so railed against in epigram 28, but still choose an epic theme from the Trojan War without singing of the whole War,³⁶ within a typically Hellenistic frame, the epyllion form.³⁷ Nonnus's epic is 48 books long,³⁸ and cannot be said to conform to the strict parameters of Callimachean literary form,³⁹ but he can write his epic according to Callimachean aesthetics, especially given that his epic is essentially a series of little epics and episodes.

As mentioned above, Shorrock goes on to argue that Typhon's attempt to steal Zeus' thunder symbolizes the danger of trying epic, basing his case on the famous Callimachean passage at *Aet.* fr. 1.20 Pfeiffer ('thundering is not for me, but Zeus').⁴⁰ More recently, Philip Hardie has constructed a more subtle reading which sees Typhon less as a monster out of control with his task but rather an equal

³² Nonnus too refers to the poetic toil of the Muses, at 25.1: πολέμιζε σοφὸν μόθον; cf. 1.2 μογοστόκον ἄσθμα.

³³ Construction of the wooden horse: 57–107, debates among Greeks and then Trojans and then final entry into Troy: 108–357. See Miguelez Caveró (2013c) 10–11 for an outline of the general design of the poem.

³⁴ For the finishing post and the relevant intertexts, see Miguelez Caveró (2013c) 464.

³⁵ Further, brief, discussion at Shorrock (2001) 122.

³⁶ Cf. *Dion.* 25.6–9—in imitation of Homer, the narrator states, he will not sing of the first six years of the war while the Indians remained within the walls, but rather of the last year.

³⁷ This is a complicated topic: I am not arguing that the Alexandrians invented epyllion, but certainly by the time of Triphiodorus *epyllion* was a signifier above all of Alexandrian epic innovations. Nor am I arguing that Triphiodorus follows all of the norms for Alexandrian epyllion—he has instead married the two traditions, traditional epic, and epyllion. For further discussion see Miguelez Caveró (2013c) 10 and the introduction in Baumbach/Bar (2012) ix–xvi.

³⁸ His narrator does state, of course, that he will not remember the Trojan War (25.255).

³⁹ I agree, *contra* Shorrock, with Hardie (2007) 117 that the size negates a close alliance between the *Dionysiaca* and the narrow, non-cyclical paths of Alexandrian form.

⁴⁰ Shorrock (2001) 122–123.

adversary of Zeus who is overcome only by guile, a manyguised figure who is made to mimic the protean variety promoted by Nonnus.⁴¹ Further Triphiodorean intertexts in Nonnus, however, go some way to rescue Shorrock's original interpretation. Triphiodorus closely links thunder with ease and effectiveness of speech, in particular the flashing of the wooden horse with the oratory of Odysseus, both through the inspiration of Athena. This is most clearly seen after the completion of the horse (103–119). The horse, high and wide, flashed (ἐξήστραπτε) with terror and great beauty (103–104)—it looked so realistic that Ares would have driven it (ἐλαυνέμεν, 105). As mentioned, the wooden horse is emblematic for the poem which Triphiodorus rides to the turning post, emphasized by the horse metaphor towards the end of the poem. At 111, Athena stands beside Odysseus and anoints his voice with honeyed nectar (μελίχροϊ νέκταρι, 113). In a passage very reminiscent of the famous *Iliad* 3 passage where Odysseus' oratorical style is described by Antenor,⁴² Odysseus is then described (115–119):

πρῶτα μὲν εἰστήκει κενεόφροني φωτὶ ἔοικῶς
 ὄμματος ἀστρέπτοιο βολὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἐρείσας,
 ἄφνω δ' ἀενάων ἐπέων ὠδῖνας ἀνοίξας
 δεινὸν ἀνεβρόντησε καὶ ἠερίης ἅ τε πηγῆς
 ἐξέχεεν μέγα λαῖτμα μελισταγέος νιφετοῖο. 115

He stood there first like an empty-headed man, training down towards the ground the gaze of his unturning eye, and suddenly giving birth to ever-flowing words thundered terribly and poured out as though from a spring in the air a great torrent of honey-dropping snow.

Odysseus is the counterpart creation of Athena, following so closely on from the description of the wooden horse. He in essence is its mouthpiece, as his head is filled with oratorical inspiration. Just as the horse thundered, Odysseus thunders terribly (118) and poured out not just words like snow this time, as in the *Iliad* 3 passage, but a torrent of honey-dropping snow (μελισταγέος νιφετοῖο, 119).⁴³ A few lines prior to the horse and rider simile in Nonnus, we are told (1.299–302) that the thunder sent out an empty sounding echo in the hands of the giant, and scarcely did

⁴¹ Hardie (2007) esp. 117–121.

⁴² *Iliad* 3.216–224.

⁴³ In a forthcoming article I discuss the potential Callimachean intertexts in this passage, in particular Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus* 28–32 with its reference both to birth-pangs and to the great flood of water which pours out of the rock, once struck. Similarly here Odysseus releases the *birth-pangs* of ever-flowing words and *pours* out his copious speech.

a drop of snow-dew drip down: 302 ἀσταγέος νιφετοῖο κατεῖβετο διψὰς ἔέρση.⁴⁴ ἀσταγέος νιφετοῖο picks up on μελισταγέος νιφετοῖο at Triphiodorus 119, and the intertext is strengthened by the similar placement (but contrasting states) of the air in the lines preceding each expression (Triphiodorus 118 ἠερίης ἅ τε πηγῆς ~ Nonnus, *Dion.* 1.301 ἠέρος αὐχμῶ).⁴⁵ Whereas Odysseus is an emblem of poetic dexterity and copiousness, in correlation to the wooden horse (and therefore poem as a whole), and pours forth a torrent resulting from his thundering, Typhon cannot get even a drop as he inexpertly wields the thunder of Zeus. Triphiodorus can do epic, and thunder like Zeus, when he keeps the compass small, and avoids the more arduous task of large-scale epic poetry. In contrast, Typhon, unhoneied and uninspired, is not in control and has no τέρμα even if he was able to reach it. Triphiodorus provides a key intertext for interpretation of this meta-poetic passage in *Dionysiaca* 1. Nonnus has posited allusions to two key, programmatic passages central to Triphiodorus' epic-come-epyllion. Even despite the contrasts in size between Nonnus and Triphiodorus, or even Nonnus and Callimachus, the aesthetics propounded in Triphiodorus, harnessing as they do the Alexandrian prescription for poetic construction, point to what Typhon does not do, and what therefore, by extension, Nonnus must avoid if he is to fulfil his poetic, protean project successfully.

4 The Poet's Didactic Art

Thus Nonnus employs earlier Imperial epic intertexts as a lens for refracting Hellenistic texts, just as he often does with Hellenistic poetry to refract Homer.⁴⁶ As is the case with Triphiodorus, Nonnus also applies Oppianic intertexts in critical textual locations. An important intertext from Oppian is included in the concluding narrative at the end of Nonnus' shield description at *Dion.* 25.563–567:

Τοῖα μὲν ἐργοπόνιοιο πολύτροπα δαίδαλα τέχνης
εἶχεν ἐνυαλίη πολυπίδακος ἀσπίς Ὀλύμπου

⁴⁴ This is the only occurrence of ἀσταγέος in Nonnus. It occurs in epic at Apollonius Rhodius 3.805, of Medea's tears, but is also found at Callimachus, *Hecale* fr. 317 Pfeiffer (= 124 Hollis 2009): ἀσταγέος ὕδωρ, which denotes abundance, in contrast to the privative *alpha* signification of Nonnus' application of the adjective. See the note of Hollis (2009) 307.

⁴⁵ μελισταγέος is used first by Triphiodorus, and imitated often by Nonnus, especially in relation to the river of honey transformed by Dionysus (14.434). Cf. too Nonnus, *Par.* 19.155 which strikingly resembles the Triphiodorean phrase.

⁴⁶ See Acosta-Hugues in this volume.

Βακχιάς, ἦν ὀρώωντες ἐθάμβειον ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλω,
καὶ σάκεος τροχόντος ἐκυκλώσαντο φορῆα,
ἔμπυρον αἰνήσαντες Ὀλύμπιον ἐσχαεῶνα.

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Such were the varied scenes depicted by the artist's clever hand upon the warshield, brought for Lyaïos from Olympos with its becks and brooks. All thronged about to see the bearer of the round shield, admiring each in turn, and praising the fiery Olympian forge.

The conclusion of the ekphrasis echoes, in ring-composition, the preliminary description of the shield: multitudes gathered to look at the shield's art (ποικίλα παπταίνοντες Ὀλύμπια θαύματα τέχνης, 385), just as, after the ekphrasis, one after another gather to marvel at the shield (ἦν ὀρώωντες ἐθάμβειον ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλω, 565); similarly, the *polydaidalos* nature of the artifact (σάκος . . . πολυδαίδαλον, 383) is echoed by πολύτροπα (563) and πολυπίδακος (564).⁴⁷ There are a number of meta-poetic aspects to these passages. As Shorrock has noted,⁴⁸ 25.563 πολύτροπα δαίδαλα leads the reader back to the first proem, in Book 1 (especially when one brings too the echoed πολυδαίδαλον from 25.383), where Proteus and his tendency to variation are described both as πολύτροπον (1.15) and πολυδαίδαλον (1.23). With this framing narrative around the ekphrasis, Nonnus conjures up in the reader's mind his own poetic art, and harmonizes the shield of Dionysus with his own poem: the one art-form is emblematic of the other art-form,⁴⁹ and against the proem's invocation but also emulation of Homer, this shield description is to be seen as a Homeric inheritance, but essentially a new art-form for all to wonder at in astonishment at its innovations.⁵⁰ This is all the more the case given Nonnus' deployment of τέχνη, which points especially to the chief artificer, the poet, and his skill in devising this poetic creation, shield (as/and) poem.⁵¹

Oppian adds an extra dimension. 25.563, πολύτροπα δαίδαλα τέχνης, alludes to the proem of the *Halieutica* (1.6–9):

⁴⁷ On πολυδαίδαλος see Shorrock (2001) 174 n. 218, esp. for its Homeric pedigree.

⁴⁸ Shorrock (2001) 175 n. 221.

⁴⁹ Cf. Miguelez Caverio (2008) 298. I argue for something similar for the shield of Achilles in *Posthomerica* 5—the innovation and distancing from Homer, but through the framework of Homeric imitation, is symbolic of the whole poem's innovations within the Homeric framework which constitutes the *Posthomerica*: see Maciver (2012) 39–48.

⁵⁰ Cf. Shorrock (2001) 174–175: 'Readers of the *Dionysiaca* are presented with an opportunity to marvel at the τέχνη of Nonnus in his handling not just of the Homeric set-piece, but of the epic as a whole.' For the 'hidden meaning' of the shield of Dionysus see Spanoudakis (2014b).

⁵¹ Cf. Hopkinson (1994c) 24: '[I]n a telling variation of 385, the scenes are called πολύτροπα δαίδαλα τέχνης (562). The τέχνη is equally that of the artificer poet, who, though he might brandish the shield of Homer in singing the Indian defeat, contrives to forge a quite different shield with which symbolically to arm his hero.'

καὶ βίον ἰχθυόεντα καὶ ἔχθεα καὶ φιλότητας
καὶ βουλὰς, ἀλίης τε πολύτροπα δήνεα τέχνης
κερδαλέης, ὅσα φῶτες ἐπ' ἰχθύσι μητίσαντο
ἀφράστοις.

And the life of fish, their hates, their loves and their desires, and the crafty devices of the cunning fisherman's art, as many things as they have devised against the incomprehensible fish.

πολύτροπα δήνεα τέχνης (1.7) is what Nonnus is leading the reader to with his reference to the skill displayed in the production of the shield. Oppian begins his poem with a promise to explicate the unknown: the emperor Antoninus, the dedicatee of the poem, may be lord of the earth, but Oppian, in control of the realms of the sea ("Ἐθνεὰ τοι πόντοιο, 1.1) has the task of elucidating the incomprehensible fish (ἀφράστοις, 1.9). No one has ever arrived at the *τέρμα* of the sea, and so myriad are the tribes of fish in the depths, that no one could list them accurately (1.80–82). No mortal can accurately speak of things unseen and hidden (85). In the passage quoted above, Oppian promises to speak of the fisherman's cunning art to catch the fish that they cannot see (1.7–8). The fisherman's task mimics that of the poet, or rather, vice versa: Oppian must deploy strategies of the type that the fishermen use to catch their unseen adversaries. Their *τέχνη* correlates with the poet's own art, and is of the sort which characterized the wiles of Odysseus. This is the only occurrence of *πολύτροπος*, -ον in Oppian, and occurring as it does in the proem is of pronounced poetological value. The narrator promises to make known the unknown, and the Odyssean adjective used in conjunction with *τέχνη* both means that Oppian writes a Homeric type of narrative, but also implies that he as poet will write a text that is Odysseus-like in its cunning, and which demands of the reader, therefore, a similar outlook.⁵²

Nonnus' poetics of ekphrasis is characterized by parallel attributes: his protean poem contains a protean ekphrasis, of many turns and wiles, all of which collude to define Nonnus' *τέχνη*.⁵³ It is of consequence that Nonnus has appropriated an Imperial poem which is designedly didactic to close his ekphrasis of the shield. Homer's shield of Achilles throughout antiquity was interpreted as an allegorical

⁵² The best discussion of Oppian's didactic art is the thorough article of Kneebone (2008), though she does not discuss this passage. Rebuffat (2001) 147–158 discusses the didactic and rhetorical nature of the *Haliëutica*.

⁵³ See the chapter by Faber in this volume.

representation of the cosmos at large. Not only did allegorists write about the shield in this way, but later poets, in their ekphrastic descriptions (especially shield descriptions) built in allegorical readings of the original Homeric shield.⁵⁴ The famous scholion on Aratus describes the Homeric shield as a κόσμου μίμημα,⁵⁵ and unsurprisingly Nonnus acknowledges his debt to the original ekphrasis by inscribing Homer into the first words of his own shield description (ἐν μὲν γὰρ ἄν ἔτευξε, 25.388). The opening of the ekphrasis in Nonnus, as in Quintus' re-description of Achilles' shield, begins with a cosmological opening which essentially inscribes the allegorists' reception of the shield, such as that found in Ps.-Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*:⁵⁶ where Homer (*Il.* 18.483–489) summarizes the shield by dividing the whole into the categories earth, heaven (including the constellations and the sun and moon) and sea, Quintus at 5.6–10 similarly digests what will follow in his ekphrasis by outlining the categories of heavens, earth and sea, and all of the constellations in the heavens.⁵⁷ Nonnus goes further and expands specifically the astronomical aspects of the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.485–489) into 23 lines (389–412), repeating some of the astrological figures of the Homeric shield (the Wagons and Bears constellations) but adding others. Hardie has noted that in other references to the shield in Book 25 it is the 'cosmological and astronomical content that is stressed'.⁵⁸ at 337 Attis describes the shield as having the sea with the land and the heavens and the chorus of stars; more significantly, at 352, Attis describes the apotropaic qualities of this starry shield (ἀστερόεσσαν ἀνούτατον ἀσπίδα).⁵⁹

Why has Nonnus chosen to emphasize the astrological aspects of the shield of Achilles in his own shield of Dionysus? Hardie is right to underline the fact that the shield reflects the wearer, and, following Stegemann, suggests the astrological nature of the shield as implying the power of the god.⁶⁰ Dionysus himself, in Book 46, retorts to Pentheus that his home is in the sky, with its seven zones surpassing the

⁵⁴ For a full and scholarly survey of cosmic interpretations of the shield of Achilles, see Hardie (1985).

⁵⁵ Scholion on Aratus, *Phaen.* 26 (quoted in Hardie 1985, 15).

⁵⁶ On which see the succinct discussion of Hardie (1985) 15.

⁵⁷ Πρῶτα μὲν εὔησκητο θεοκμήτω ἐπὶ ἔργω | οὐρανὸς ἦδ' αἰθήρ· γαίη δ' ἄμα κείτο θάλασσα. | Ἐν δ' ἄνεμοι νεφέλαι τε σελήνη τ' ἠελιός τε | κεκριμέν' ἄλλυδις ἄλλα· τέτυκτο δὲ τείρεα πάντα | ὀππῶσα δινήεντα κατ' οὐρανὸν ἀμφιφέρονται. On this opening as an allegorical epitome of the Homeric shield, see Maciver (2012) 41.

⁵⁸ Hardie (1985) 28.

⁵⁹ It seems that Nonnus extracts one of the specific features of shield designs in the *Iliad*, namely, astrological. See Hardie (1985) 11–13, and in particular the description of the θώρηξ of Achilles at 16.133–134, where the breastplate is described as ποικίλον ἀστερόεντα.

⁶⁰ Hardie (1985) 28 following Stegemann (1930) 85. On astrology in Nonnus, see too Feraboli (1985); Shorrock (2001) 13–14; Komorowska (2004).

seven-gated Thebes (46.64, 67).⁶¹ Astrology has a large part to play too elsewhere in the *Dionysiaca*.⁶² The tablets of Harmonia in Book 12 with their astrological designs, for example, have been subject to a variety of interpretations as to their place within the overall plan of the *Dionysiaca*,⁶³ but one can at least admit that their interlinked patterns, and the clear allegory of the seasons have a further cosmological impact on how we as readers are to approach the cosmological and didactic significations of the *Dionysiaca* as a whole. The season autumn reads these tablets, especially tablet three (12.64–89) with its heavenly connections to earthly tales of metamorphosis told in Nonnus' poem;⁶⁴ a goddess is taught from the depictions of myths. The cosmological personifications learn from stories of the sort told in the *Dionysiaca*: the corollary is that the reader can attain greater understanding of cosmology through reading the interwoven tales of Nonnus' poem, with Dionysus as its centerpiece, the god who symbolically carries the astrological designs on the back of his shield.⁶⁵

To return to the original intertext from Oppian, Nonnus appropriates the didacticism from the proem of the *Halieutica* to reflect the didactic tenor of his ekphrasis of the shield. Just as Oppian implies that he will reveal the hidden secrets of the sea, Nonnus' cosmological shield description reveals the secrets of the heavens, to the extent that it is an emulation of the original shield of Achilles, but now a protean, multi-faceted poetic object, markedly astrological in its focus. Oppian may control the sea and have the guile to trap the fish and their habits for the sake of his readership, but Nonnus too can elaborate the signs of the heavens, just as he has the privileged knowledge to sing truly of the deeds of Dionysus. Nonnus has taken the cunning used by Oppian (δῆνεα) and replaced it with a near-synonym for cunning but one which belongs by rights to ekphrastic description, because of its use at *Iliad* 18.482 (ποιεῖ δαίδαλα πολλὰ ἰδυίησι πραπίδεσσιν). This shield of Dionysus is ornate and intricate, but instructive too.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Dionysus, on visiting Tyre, also calls upon the star-clad Heracles, and prays to the celestial bodies, in the ancestral origins of Thebes (40.369–391).

⁶² See, too, the attachment ('Planisphere celeste') as an appendix to Vian (1976) with the sketch of the constellations which occur in the *Dionysiaca*.

⁶³ Arguments summarized by Vian (1995) 55–65. He sums up the difficulty of assigning a specific purpose to the tablets with (59): 'Nonnos ne donne de ces tables qu'une idee assez vague.' See also Lightfoot in this volume.

⁶⁴ See Vian (1995) 63–64.

⁶⁵ Cf. Shorrock (2001) 14 who adopts a more tentative stance: 'Nonnus' epic does preserve traces of an astrological system, which alludes to some extent to a new phase of cosmic world order, inaugurated by the saviour god Dionysus.'

⁶⁶ Cf. the 'Final Remarks' in Spanoudakis (2014b) 369–371.

5 Poetic Continuity

Nonnus fosters the paradigm of son and father to denote his relationship with Homer. At 25.265 ἔμπνοον ἔγχος ἔχοντα καὶ ἀσπίδα πατρός Ὅμηρου Nonnus asks for inspiration from the Muses as he holds the inspired spear and shield of father Homer. Nonnus acknowledges his profound indebtedness, even if he more than any of his predecessors breaks free from Homer.⁶⁷ The reception and transformation of what started with Homer is how Nonnus most consistently characterizes this succession, but elsewhere in his epic poetic continuity despite chronological separation is sometimes implicitly stressed. In Book 40, when Dionysus arrives in the city of Tyre, the ancestral origin of Thebes, through Cadmus, Dionysus surveys the scenes before him (353–365), and thinks of his own forefather Cadmus, and even visiting the once ill-guarded house of Europa (357) reminds him of his own (horned) father Zeus (359). Then his attention switches to something still more wonderful (359–362):

ἀρχεγόνους δὲ
πηγὰς θάμβειε μᾶλλον, ὄπη χθονίου διὰ κόλπου
νάματος ἐκχυμένου παλινάγρετον εἰς μίαν ὥρην
χεύμασιν αὐτογόνοισι πολυτρεφὲς ἔβλυεν ὕδωρ·

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Still more he wondered at those primeval fountains, where a stream comes pouring out through the bosom of the earth, and after one hour plenty of water bubbles up again with flood self-produced.

Just as the multitudes wondered at the signs on the shield of Dionysus, an aesthetic reaction to artistry which symbolizes the reader's aesthetic reaction to Nonnus' poetic artistry, so too now does Dionysus marvel at this natural wonder in the origin of all Theban narratives, Tyre. Even his recollection of his father's exploits hints at the literary past, as he remembers Europa who *once upon a time* was abducted (ἀρπαμένης ποτὲ νύμφης, 357).⁶⁸ The ever recycled water which bubbles up again and again, set at the end of this survey of Dionysus of what is essentially the literary past, within which he himself is set, is almost certainly full of meta-poetic significance. This water, like the pure water at the end of Callimachus' *Hymn to*

⁶⁷ Cf. Hopkinson (1994c) 23, Miguelez Caverio (2008) 154–155, and above all Shorrock (2001) 117. See also the chapter by Bannert/Kroll in this volume.

⁶⁸ For a similar, pertinent, use of ποτε in this connection, cf. Moschus, *Europa* 1.

Apollo which is carried by the bees,⁶⁹ stands not only for poetry of quality, but poetry with literary pedigree, emphasized by Nonnus' πολυτρεφές, greatly fed (a *hapax*). Perhaps more significant is Nonnus' adjective for streams here: ἀρχεγόνους δέ | πηγὰς θάμβειε μάλλον. Dionysus' wonder is at streams born long ago, and therefore long ago in the literary tradition, in which Nonnus stands at the far end. As discussed above, Nonnus sets up rivalry between his new poetic creation and the heroic poetry both of more recent times *and* of ancient origin (νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων, 25.27). Dionysus, a *mise-en-abime* of the poet Nonnus, as discussed above, sees for himself the poetic process at work, one which never steps, but is an everrecycling of material first tried long ago, ποτε. Nonnus himself is a part of that epic continuum.

It is not only the ancient archetypes that Nonnus hints at in these types of passages. In the final book of the *Dionysiaca*, Artemis in rage against Aura goes to Nemesis to seek petrification of her insulter. Nemesis asks if Artemis' furious countenance is down to a slighting of the sort Niobe had dished out, and boasts that she can make the culprit a rock on Sipylus to weep beside her previous victim Niobe (48.406–408):

Εἰ δὲ γυνὴ πολύτεκνος ἀνιάζει σέο Λητώ,
ἄλλη λαϊνέη Νιόβη κλαύσειε γενέθλην·
τίς φθόνος, εἰ λίθον ἄλλον ὑπὲρ Σιπύλοιο τελέσσω;

If some prolific wife provokes your mother Leto, let her weep for her children,
another Niobe of stone. Why should not I make another stone on Sipylus?

Nonnus localizes the location of the Niobe rock to Sipylus, which is further verified by Artemis' answer to Nemesis at 428–429, affirming that Niobe *still* weeps (καὶ εἰσέτι δάκρυα λείβει | ὄμμασι πετραίοισιν, 'and she still weeps with stony eyes'). A new victim can be petrified and put on Sipylus: thus Nonnus, like Homer, can immortalize his poetry by setting it in the landscape to sit beside the *proof* of the Niobe story from *Iliad* 24. The *still* (εἰσέτι, 428) is a hint in the text that even in the time of Nonnus' contemporary readers this rock of Niobe still weeps and can be seen to do so. At 2.159–160, too, a mourning Hadryad nymph declares that such is her weeping that

⁶⁹ *Hymn to Apollo* 110–112 and the most recent discussion of Hunter (2006) 14–16, in connection with Propertius.

she will be a stony Niobe that passers-by (ὀδῖται) may pity her.⁷⁰ Nonnus' emphasis on the physical setting is found too in Quintus, within a vignette describing the death of Dresaeus struck down by Polypoetes (Q.S. 1.293–304):⁷¹

ὑπαῖ Σιπύλῳ νιφόεντι,
ἦχι θεοὶ Νιόβην λᾶαν θέσαν, ἦς ἔτι δάκρυ
πουλὸν μάλα στυφελῆς καταλείβεται ὑπόθε πέτρης, 295
καὶ οἱ συστοναχοῦσι ῥοαὶ πολυηχέος Ἑρμοῦ
καὶ κορυφαὶ Σιπύλου περιμήκεες ὧν καθύπερθεν
ἐχθρὴ μηλονόμοισιν ἀεὶ περιπέπτατ' ὀμίχλη·
ἦ δὲ πέλει μέγα θαῦμα παρεσσυμένοισι βροτοῖσιν,
οὔνεκ' ἔοικε γυναικὶ πολυστόνῳ ἢ τ' ἐπὶ λυγρῷ 300
πένθει μυρομένη μάλα μυρία δάκρυα χεύει·
καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀτρεκέως φῆς ἔμμεναι, ὀππότε ἄρ' αὐτὴν
τηλόθεν ἀθρήσειας· ἐπὴν δὲ οἱ ἐγγύς ἴκηαι,
φαίνεται αἰπήεσσα πέτρη Σιπύλοιό τ' ἀπορρώξ.

Under snowy Sipylus, where the gods turned Niobe into stone, whose great tear still flows out from the hard rock above, and the streams of resounding Hermes groan out in response and the broad peaks of Sipylus, down from above which a mist, hateful to shepherds, always flies about. And she is a great marvel to all mortals who pass that way, because like a woman in great grief she pours forth countless tears, mourning as she does in her bitter sorrow. And you would say that it truly was the case, were you at some point to view her from afar. But when you come close, the sheer rock of Sipylus, broken off, appears.

Quintus invites the reader to test his assertion (302): you, the reader would say it was real (καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀτρεκέως φῆς ἔμμεναι), if you looked at it afar off. This geographical feature is spoke of at Pausanias 1.21.3 in a very similar fashion. Quintus, and then Nonnus in imitation of him, verify what is only supposed in Homer by Achilles (νῦν δὲ *που* ἐν πέτρῃσιν, ἐν οὔρεσιν οἰοπόλοισιν, | ἐν Σιπύλῳ, 24.614–615), but Nonnus goes one step more than Quintus. Where Quintus verifies the Homeric story of Achilles, and, as Nonnus does, then asserts that she is still crying (ἔτι δάκρυ, 294), just as he is *still* writing Homeric narrative like Homer, about Niobe, Nonnus, through the mouth of Nemesis, asserts that he can create another figure to weep beside Niobe, and thus have a Homeric εἰκὼν and a Nonnian εἰκὼν sit side by

⁷⁰ The other references to Niobe are 12.79 (third tablet of Harmonia), and 12.131 (the breathless rock mourns heart-broken Dionysus).

⁷¹ I discuss this passage from Quintus in a forthcoming essay in *Brill's Companion to Epic Continuations* (ed. by R. Simms).

side, as his *Dionysiaca* continues but complements or even rivals his original epic archetype.

6 Further Echoes

I have concentrated on thematic and meta-poetic aspects of Nonnus' engagement (or disengagement) with his Imperial epic predecessors. Within the short compass of the rest of this essay, I wish, briefly, to highlight another aspect of Nonnus' connection with his Imperial predecessors, namely how he adopts rare vocabulary peculiar to Imperial poetry; to do so I turn to another ekphrastic passage in Nonnus, the preamble to the description of the necklace made by Hephaestus (5.135–144; the extended ekphrasis of the object is found at 145–189). The associated ancestry and purpose of this necklace have an important place in the discourse about the *Dionysiaca*'s poetics and literary inheritance, but I will concentrate instead on the one adjective. Aphrodite gives Harmonia the necklace made for her by Hephestus (135–144):⁷²

Πολυφράδμων <δ'> Ἀφροδίτη 135
χρύσειον ὄρμον ἔχοντα λίθων πολυδαίδαλον αἴγλην
λευκὸν ἐρευθιόωντι συνήρμοσεν αὐχένι κούρης,
Ἥφαιστου σοφὸν ἔργον, ὃ περ κάμε Κυπρογενεΐη,
τοξευτήρος Ἔρωτος ὄπως ὀππτήριον εἶη.
Ἔλπετο γὰρ Κυθήρειαν ἀεὶ βαρύγουνος ἀκοίτης 140
υἷα τεκεῖν σκάζοντα, ποδῶν μίμημα τοκῆος·
ἀλλὰ μάτην ἐδόκησε, καὶ ἀρτίπον υἷα νοήσας
λαμπόμενον πτερύγεσσι ὁμοῖον υἱεὶ Μαίης
ποικίλον ὄρμον ἔτευξεν.

In the deep shrewdness of her mind, Aphrodite clasped a golden necklace showing pale about the girl's blushing neck, a clever work of Hephaistos set with sparkling gems in masterly refinement. This he had made for his Cyprian bride, a gift for his first glimpse of Archer Eros. For the heavy-knee bridegroom always expected that Cythereia would bear him a hobbling son, having the image of his father in his feet. But his thought was mistaken; and when he beheld a whole-footed son brilliant with wings like Maia's son Hermes, he made this magnificent necklace.

⁷² For my purposes, it is irrelevant whether the first half of line 135 (Ἄρεα κυδαίνουσα) belongs with this section or with the preceding sentence in which Hera is the subject. See Shorrock (2001) 53 for further discussion, and the note of Chuvin (1976) ad loc. (the latter's arguments are more convincing).

Dionysiaca 5 centres around the story of Actaeon, but begins with the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia.⁷³ The gods bestow wedding gifts on the bride, and Harmonia receives this necklace. Aphrodite is described as πολυφράδμων (135), which occurs only here in Nonnus,⁷⁴ is first used by Apollonius at *Argonautica* 1.1311, and is used elsewhere only by Oppian 4.28, Triphiodorus 455 (the latter two also of Aphrodite) and at *AP* 9.816. Shorrock has argued that the adjective emphasizes the goddess's cunning in that, in some traditions, Eros was in fact sired by Ares, not Hephaestus, and thus accounts for Eros' lack of lameness.⁷⁵ The pre-Nonnian uses of the adjective help to shed more light on the adjective's application in the *Dionysiaca*. Shorrock has already identified the intertext from Oppian *Halieutica* 4.28:⁷⁶ Oppian covers all bases in his invocation of Eros for his fourth Book on the amorous habits of fish—either Eros is the oldest of the gods, born from Chaos, or Aphrodite gave birth to him—the primordial account or the literary account of πολυφράδμων Aphrodite's wiles.

In Triphiodorus the adjective is applied to Aphrodite as she convinces Helen to call out the names of the heroes in the wooden horse, a reenactment of the tale told by Menelaus in *Odyssey* 4.⁷⁷ Her guile in getting Helen to carry out her wishes is emphasized by the adjective pairing as epithet for the goddess: ἦλθε δολοφρονέουσα πολυφράδμων Ἀφροδίτη (455). As Miguelez-Cavero has shown, in Homer it is usually Hera who is δολοφρονέουσα,⁷⁸ yet Triphiodorus applies the adjective to Aphrodite to highlight her scheming. The only occurrence of δολοφρονέουσα in the *Dionysiaca*, at 33.201, also an erotic context, describes the guile of Chalcomede as she lures the Indian Morrheus away from battle, Morrheus who has been shot by Eros (190–192). Nonnus then, twice in the *Dionysiaca* (4.68 and 32.1), combines δολοφρονέουσα and πολυφράδμων to coin δολοφράδμων, recognizing the singular characterization of Aphrodite in Triphiodorus at that juncture in the Trojan tale, but adopting it as a new Nonnian attribute when the narrative of the *Dionysiaca* requires.⁷⁹

⁷³ For a cogent, recent study of Peitho's role in Books 3 and 4, see Carvounis (2014).

⁷⁴ Cf. Shorrock (2001) 54, who also notes (without further discussion) the Oppian reference.

⁷⁵ Shorrock (2001) 54–55. Cf. too Hephaestus' trapping of Ares and Aphrodite, described at 5.581–582.

⁷⁶ Following Chuvin's note in his Bude commentary (1976).

⁷⁷ Further references and discussion in Miguelez Cavero (2013) 366.

⁷⁸ Miguelez Cavero (2013c) 365–366.

⁷⁹ The two uses of the Nonnian δολοφράδμων apply both to Aphrodite, and in each instance to her role in sexual activity. In the first (4.68), to convince bed-shy Harmonia (177) to forsake her home and follow Cadmus, and in the second (32.1) she lends her cestus-belt to Hera as the latter, as in *Iliad* 14, to trap Zeus.

7 Conclusions

In this chapter my intention was to go beyond the excellent studies on Nonnus' connection with his epic predecessors in style, metre and diction, and to highlight poetological interactions and contrasts with three poets in particular, Oppian, Quintus and Triphiodorus. Nonnus, in key programmatic sections of his poem, interweaves earlier, Imperial intertexts to vary reading of his poetic intentions. This is especially clear in his adoption of a section of the proem of the *Haliutica* at the end of his ekphrastic section on the shield of Dionysus. It remains to be stated that the net could be cast further: how does Nonnus appropriate developments in the construction of similes in poets such as Quintus? What function do intertexts from other poets, especially Dionysius Periegetes, have on our reading of the *Dionysiaca*? These, and other avenues, deserve further investigation to determine Nonnus' true debt to his Imperial poetic forbears.