Storytelling in Late Antique Epic:

A study of the narrator in Nonnus of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca*

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This thesis is a narratological study of Nonnus of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca*, focussing on the figure of the narrator whose interventions reveal much about his relationship to his predecessors and his own conception of story-telling. Although he presents himself as a follower of Homer, whom he mentions by name in his poem, the *Dionysiaca* are clearly influenced by a much wider range of sources of inspiration. The study of narratological interventions brings to light the narrator's relationship with Homer, between imitation and innovation. The way he renews and transforms epic narratorial devices attests to his literary skills as he strives for ποικιλία in his poem. His interventions hint at sources of inspiration other than Homer, such as lyric poetry, historiography, and didactic epic.

Another innovation is the way the narrator intervenes not to draw the narratee's attention to the contents of his text, but to underline his own role as story-teller. Some interventions signal a change in tone or the integration of another genre; the expected proems and invocations to the Muse become spaces for a display of ingeniousness, a discussion of the sources and a reflection on the role of the poet.

The efforts made by the Nonnian narrator to renew well known devices also denotes his mindfulness of his narratee, whom he involves in the story through metaleptic devices, or by drawing on a shared cultural background to enhance the narrative with allusions to extradiegetic references.

The study of narratorial interventions proves that the *Dionysiaca* were not written only in an attempt to recreate a Homeric epic, but are a compendium of influences, genres, and myths, encompassing the influence of a thousand years of Greek literature.

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Introduction

The figure of Nonnus of Panopolis as we know it is one of contrasts, mainly on account of the variety of the subject matter of his works and of the discrepancy of reactions accompanying their reception. Although he left us two long poems devoid of significant *lacunae*, the *Dionysiaca* being to date the longest extant Greek epic, almost nothing is known about his life, beyond his having been born in Panopolis in Egypt in the fifth century A.D., and writing the *Dionysiaca* in Alexandria.[1] The very nature of the works he left us poses another problem, that of his religious beliefs: the *Dionysiaca* is based on Classical mythology while his *Paraphrase* of St John's Gospel stems from a Christian background. Critics have been trying to tilt the scales in favour of his being a pagan or a Christian, but the recent trend is to acknowledge the impossibility of deciding one way or another, given the cohabitation of both religious milieux in Alexandria in his time, and the presence of Christian elements in the *Dionysiaca* as well as pagan ones in the *Paraphrase*.[2]

The reception of the *Dionysiaca* is another source of contrasts; it has varied greatly through time.[3] In Late Antiquity,[4] this epic met with a favourable reception and the Nonnian style, itself greatly influenced by Homeric verse, became a model for subsequent writers. R. Shorrock[5] mentions among others Colluthus and Musaeus, authors of *epyllia*, and comments about the 'tradition in earlier criticism to talk about a "school" of Nonnus'. He goes on to list evidence of Nonnus' popularity up to the nineteenth century. However, the exuberance and the apparently loose structure of the *Dionysiaca* caused a wave of contempt among modern critics. J.B. Hainsworth notes that "survival is not a sure guide to quality. The loss of … Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* would be no great cause for lamentation"

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[1] See Vian 1976:ix-x; Chamberlayne 1916:40-1.

[2] See Vian 1976:xi-xiv; Hopkinson (ed.) 1994:4-7; Shorrock 2011 is entirely concerned with these issues.

[3] In the words of Chamberlayne (1916:40): "Perhaps there is no other Greek poet in whose case the extremes of praise and condemnation have been further apart than have been the estimates of Nonnus, the author of the *Dionysiaca*."

[4] I use this phrase as the most convenient since it is the one commonly used to refer to the early centuries A.D., although it has shortcomings on the level of periodisation, presenting these centuries as an afterthought, as it were, of the classical period. R. Shorrock (2011:13) also notes that it does not take into account the Christianisation of the world.

[5] 2001:1.

and that Nonnus' "lush verbiage would turn all but the strongest stomach".[6] H.J. Rose, even in his "Mythological introduction" to the *Loeb* edition of the *Dionysiaca*, presents the potential reader with a very disheartening account of what awaits him, lamenting that Nonnus had not proved "a more consistent thinker and more of a poet".[7] Yet in the last few decades, interest has been rekindled in literature from the late antique period, and Nonnus is receiving his share of it, especially with works shedding new light on the question of the *Dionysiaca*'s structure and allusive method.[8]

When one considers the length of the *Dionysiaca* and the complexity of its narrative, one wonders at Nonnus' intended audience. N. Hopkinson underlines the variety of poetry, genres and styles in Imperial Greek verse but adds that "not enough evidence exists for us to be able to discern trends or developments in Imperial poetry, or to know about the nature and demands of the reading public and private patrons."[9] Yet from the *Dionysiaca* it is possible to infer some elements concerning the late antique reader, or at least of the reader Nonnus had in mind when he wrote his epic. The abundance of mythological parallels, most of them in very short allusions, points to a reader well versed in the myths of the classical age and their characters. The amount of intertextual interaction with Homeric, classical and Hellenistic literature is meant for a scholarly reader familiar with the literary works of the past over a period of more than a thousand years:

> Panopolis, together with Heliopolis, Gaza, and other intellectual centres, contained a flourishing group of pagans…. It is this small number of intellectuals in Panopolis, Alexandria, and elsewhere, who must have been the intended audience for the *Dionysiaca*.[10]

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[6] Hainsworth 1991:9 and 136. Hugh Trevor-Roper presents Nonnus as one of the reasons he abandoned classics for history: "It was in my second year at Oxford, when I was reading the inexpressibly tedious Greek epic poem of Nonnus, that I decided to change my subject from classics to history. By now, I said to myself, I had read all classical literature worth reading, and much that was not. Why scrape the bottom of the barrel? Nonnus, it seemed to me, was very near the bottom." (Lloyd-Jones, Pearl & Worden, 1981:358.)

[7] 1940:xvi. Also xii: "He gives us … a faded and overcrowded tapestry, moving a little now and then as the breath of his sickly and unwholesome fancy stirs it. His Dionysus is an utterly detestable character, or would be if it were possible to believe in him for one moment…"

[8] Shorrock 2001, Giraudet 2010.

[9] Hopkinson 1994:9.

[10] Hopkinson 1994:4. He adds that Christians also educated their children in the classical authors, so that pagans are not the only intended audience of Nonnus.

As for the contents of the poem, Dionysiac themes were *en vogue* from the second century A.D., with numerous poems on Dionysus now lost, and the practice of Dionysiac cults.[11] The impressive literary knowledge manifested through the intertextual allusions indicates that Nonnus must have had access to texts in Alexandria or elsewhere and that literary culture was easily accessible.[12] The question of whether Nonnus knew Latin and could have had access to Latin text remains in suspense – some passages of the *Dionysiaca* could be interpreted as allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, although scholars now tend to think it unlikely, and to explain similarities by positing common Hellenistic sources.[13]

Indeed a striking characteristic of the *Dionysiaca* is its wealth of secondary stories and mythological allusions, which poses the question of how they are inserted in the main narrative. One of the ways to approach this question is to turn to narratology, to the study of story-telling, in order to examine how the links between the mythological parallels and the main narrative are created by the narrator. From a wider angle, the voice of the narrator is one of the structuring elements in a narrative. Thus the purpose of this study is to explore the storytelling techniques employed in the *Dionysiaca* to highlight the role of the narrator in establishing a narratorial setting which guides the narratee through the reception of the narrative, and to examine how this narratorial voice is contributing to, or drawing upon, the aesthetics of the late antique period.

Narratology was first applied to Greek literature by I. de Jong with her narratological study of the *Iliad*.[14] Her recent volumes span Greek epic poetry from Homer to Hellenistic times[15] but do not yet stretch to Late Antiquity.

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[11] Hopkinson (ed.) 1994:1-2; Jaccottet 2003.

[12] Hopkinson (ed.) 1994:2. Jeffreys (2006:137) comments on the richness of literary production at the time of, or slightly later than, Nonnus: "At the turn of the fifth to the sixth century late Roman – or early Byzantine – literary culture could tolerate a wide range of tastes, styles and attitudes; … writers could move between traditional genres and innovative ones."

[13] Hopkinson (ed.) 1994:3: "As the evidence stands at present, … it seems unlikely that Nonnus would have been well enough read in Latin poetry to have been able to use or allude to it extensively." Hollis 2006:141-2, note 3: "I have become increasingly doubtful whether later Greek poets were significantly influenced by earlier Latin poets; perhaps (as some older scholars thought) similarities between Nonnus and Catullus (or Ovid) should rather be explained by common use of Hellenistic models."

[14] 2004; first edition 1987.

[15] De Jong, Nünlist & Bowie 2004; De Jong, Nünlist 2007.

Narratological concepts provide ways to analyse texts according to the prominence of a narrative voice or narrator, and to the role of this narrator in the presentation of the story, the organisation of time and rhythm as well as space. This study will be focussed on the narrator of the *Dionysiaca* and his interaction with his narratee. Both narrator and narratee are literary abstract concepts, used to avoid talking about author and reader/listener – who are, or were, real people and about whom our knowledge is more, or less, complete. As such, narrator and narratee have strictly speaking no gender, but will be referred as "he" in this study for simplicity's sake.

Another essential concept in a narratological study is the concept of diegetic or narratological levels. The first and most accessible level is that of the text, written by the author and received by the reader or listener. The narrator and narratee exist on the second level, the level of the enunciation or narrating, where the voice of the narrator emerges, addressing himself to his narratee. The third level is that of the *diegesis* or narrated, that is, the virtual world in which the characters evolve.

The text itself is the result of processes achieved in the passage from each level to the next. To the third level – the *diegesis* - belong the raw events as they exist in the virtual world in which they happened. This sequence of events is called the *fabula*. These events are turned into a story by the narrator, who is the one to select and organise them. The story is therefore the narrator's rendering of the *fabula*'s events to his narratee. This story is then turned into a text by the author, the text being the medium, so to speak, through which the reader accesses the story.[16]

With the help of these narratological concepts, it is possible to investigate the degree of narratorial presence in the narrative and the occasions for these eruptions of the narratorial voice. I. de Jong's aim in her study of the *Iliad* was to shed a new light on Homeric narrative style, commonly described as objective and impersonal, by showing that it was in fact informed by narratorial interventions, often imperceptible to a receiver analysing the text without using narratological tools. We shall see that the narrator of the *Dionysiaca* does also manifest himself in the course of his narrative, and that his interventions underline certain characteristics of his style.

The first part of this thesis is concerned with the evidence for the narrator's presence in its most obvious manifestations. A narrator of epic, he complies with the

[16] See glossary for definitions and an explanatory diagram.

demands of the genre's tradition in proems and Muse-invocations, where his appropriation of epic devices, and his relationship with his self-appointed model Homer as well as with some of his predecessors, all become visible. The course of the poem offers more examples of narratorial intervention which complement the analysis of the Nonnian narrator's conception of narrating.

In the second part of the thesis I turn to metaleptic narratorial devices. A *metalepsis* occurs when the limits between the levels of enunciation are breached, and when the entities found at each level intervene on a level which is not their own. There are therefore two main types of *metalepsis*, as defined by I. de Jong: "the narrator enters ("shares") the universe of the characters or, conversely, a character enters ("shares") the universe of the narrator." [17] Such transfers between the narratological levels are effected through narratorial interventions such as direct and indirect addresses to the narratee and to the characters.

The third and final part deals with narratorial interventions depending on the cultural kinship between narrator and narratee. These interventions – comparisons, gnomic utterances, semi-counterfactual presentations of events – rely on the affinities between narrator and narratee; in them, the narrator resorts to images and devices which depend on the narratee's understanding to make sense in the narrative. They constitute attempts by the narrator to elicit specific reactions from the narratee, which are based upon the narrator's own knowledge, or anticipation, of his narratee's acquaintance with the world they share and with previous literary works. These interventions reveal an understanding between narrator and narratee, or rather, they betray what the narrator expects his narratee to be familiar with in order to make full sense of the story. Although textual signals make it possible to detect these interventions, their full meaning and intended impact will often be lost to the modern reader, on account of the loss of many ancient texts indispensable to the understanding of allusions and literary imitations.

This study proceeds largely from a comparative approach, looking at earlier epic poems alongside the *Dionysiaca*, starting from Homer of course, and moving through time with Apollonius and Quintus, the two other main landmarks in the evolution of epic. But other influences are at work in the *Dionysiaca*, and parallels with Callimachus will be recurrent as well. I have also included in this study the *epyllia* of Moschus, Triphiodorus,

[17] De Jong, 2009:89. The concept was first developed by Genette, *Discours du récit* (2) 2007:243ff.

Colluthus and Musaeus; if they are not comparable to the *Dionysiaca* as to length, they are in terms of narrative strategies. Finally I have also turned to didactic epic for narratorial parallels, *i.e.* Hesiod, Aratus, Dionysius Periegetes, Nicander, and both Oppians, and occasionally to other genres such as lyric poetry and historiography. From this wide field of research emerge elements of the evolution of storytelling techniques from Homer, with Nonnus bringing up the rear and subsuming all these influences in his long poem.

The text of the *Dionysiaca* used here is, unless otherwise stated, the text from the Loeb edition (Rouse 1940), which reproduces Ludwich's (Teubner, 1909-11). The translations of ancient texts quoted are from the editions listed in part II of the bibliography, unless indicated otherwise.

GLOSSARY[18]

Analepsis: The narration of an event which took place before the point in the story where we find ourselves. (J.a)

An anachrony going back to the past with respect to the 'present' moment; an evocation of one or more events that occurred before the 'present' moment (...); a retrospection; a flashback. (P)

Character-text (speeches): The external primary narrator-focalizer embeds in his narrator-text a character-text, presented by a character. (J)

Covert narrator: An effaced narrator (…); a narrator presenting situations and events with a minimum amount of narratorial mediation. (P)

***Diegesis*:** The fictional world in which the situations and events narrated occur. (P)

Diegetic level: The level at which an existent, event, or act of recounting is situated with regards to a given *diegesis*. (P)

Enunciation: The act (and its contextual dimensions) of generating a discourse. (P)

Extradiegetic / External narrator: External to (not part of) any *diegesis*. (P)

Fabula: A chronological series of events caused or experienced by characters in a fictional world. (J)

All the events which are recounted in the story, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order. (J.a)

The set of narrated situations and events in their chronological sequence; the basic *story* material. (P)

[18] I provide here definitions of the narratological concepts I have used in my thesis. For each concept the definitions are from (J) De Jong 2004:xxvii; (J.a) De Jong 2004a:xi-xix and (P) Prince 2003. More definitions will be provided in the relevant chapters.

Intradiegetic / Internal narrator: Pertaining to or part of the *diegesis*. (P)

Metalepsis: The intrusion into one *diegesis* of a being from another *diegesis*; the mingling of two distinct diegetic levels. Should an extradiegetic narrator suddenly enter the world of the situations and events recounted, for instance, a metalepsis obtains. (P)

Narratee(s): The representatives of the hearers/readers in the text. They are the addressees of the narrator (in full: the primary narratees-focalizees). (J.a)
The one who is narrated to, as inscribed in the text. There is at least one (more or less overtly represented) narratee per narrative, located at the same diegetic level as the narrator addressing him or her. (P)[19]

Narrator: The representative of the author in the text (in full: the primary narrator-focalizer). (J.a)
The one who narrates, as inscribed in the text. There is at least one narrator per narrative, located at the same diegetic level as the narratee he or she is addressing. (P)

Narrator-text: Those parts of the text which are presented by the narrator, i.e., the parts between the speeches. We may further distinguish between simple narrator-text (when the narrator presents his own focalization) and embedded focalization (when the narrator presents the focalization of a character). (P)

Overt narrator: A narrator presenting situations and events with more than a minimum of narratorial mediation; an intrusive narrator. (P)

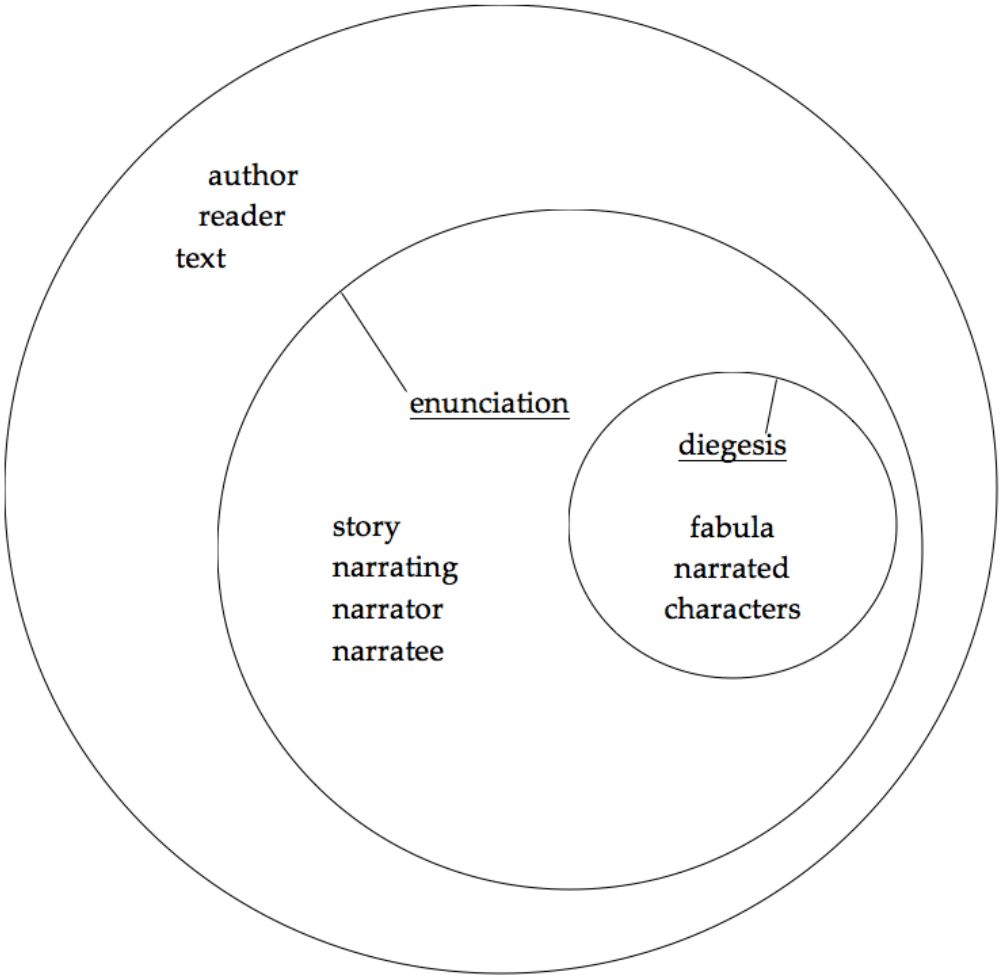
Prolepsis: The narration of an event which will take place later than the point in the story where we find ourselves. (J.a)
An anachrony going forward to the future with respect to the 'present' moment; an evocation of one or more events that will occur after the 'present' moment (...); an anticipation, a flashforward, a prospection. (P)

[19] See also chapter 5.I.1.

Story: The elements of the fabula (events, characters, space, time) as perceived, ordered and interpreted by a focalizer. (J)

The events of the fabula as dispositioned and ordered in the text. The story consists of the main story and embedded stories. In comparison with the fabula, the events in the story may differ in *frequency* (they may be told more than once, as in the case of repeating analepses and prolepses), rhythm (they may be told at great length or quickly), or *order* (the chronological order may be changed, see analepsis and prolepsis). (J.a)

To sum up: a diagram of the narratological levels.



PART ONE:

INTRODUCING THE NONNIAN NARRATOR

Chapter 1. The proem: introducing the *Dionysiaca*

Greek epics are narratives. Therefore they are told by a narrator, who can be external or internal, overt or covert.[1] In Greek epics the proem is often one of the passages in which the narrator is the most conspicuous, as he operates "the transition from the real world to the story world".[2] The Nonnian narrator is no exception: he is present in the proem of the *Dionysiaca* in which he asserts his choices and his place at the end of the line of epic narrators since Homer.

From what remains available to us of late antique epic, it appears that Nonnus wrote at a time when a variety of narratorial *personae* were in use. Quintus chose not to introduce his narrator in a proem because he intended to write the direct sequel to the *Iliad*; therefore his narrator is supposed to be the same as the Iliadic one. The *Argonautica Orphica* are narrated by an internal first person narrator. Colluthus' and Musaeus' narrators do not appear to present any significant difference from the Homeric narrator.

With 20,426 lines, the *Dionysiaca* also stands out as the longest extant Greek epic poem. Whereas the Nonnian narrator does not comment on this question of length, the narrator of the *Taking of Ilios* did: he asked the Muse to be brief, to leave aside many words, πολὺν μύθον ἀνεῖσα (4) and to deliver a short narrative, ταχείῃ ἀοιδῇ (6). He presents himself as hasty as he presses the Muse on, μοι σπεύδοντι (4). However, this is going from one extreme to the other.

Unsurprisingly, the *Dionysiaca*'s proem is also the longest among the proems of Greek epics, with its forty-five lines.[3] It can be divided into five parts, each of which complements and helps define the *persona* of the narrator as well as the subject of his poem. In the first part (l.1-10), he introduces the main subject of the poem, before asking the Muses for support in the second part (l.11-15). The third part (l.16-33) asserts the poetical preference for ποικιλία while the fourth (l.34-44) reaffirms his choice of the

[1] De Jong, 2004b, pp.1-3. Mieke Bal uses the terms 'perceptible' and 'non-perceptible'.
[2] De Jong, 2004a, p. 5.
[3] *Iliad*: 7 lines. *Odyssey*: 10 lines. Hesiod's *Works and Days*: 10 lines. Apollonius' *Argonautica*: 22 lines. Triphiodorus' *Taking of Ilios*: 6 lines. Colluthus' *Rape of Helen*: 17 lines. Musaeus' *Hero and Leander*: 15 lines. *Argonautica Orphica*: 11 lines. Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica* have no proem, so as to create a continuity with the last lines of the *Iliad*. The narrator is also meant to be the same as the Iliadic narrator. - This proem of the *Dionysiaca* is the first of two: book 25 begins with a second proem: see chapter 2.

Dionysiac subject and patronage. The fifth part (l.45) effects the transition between the proem and the beginning of the narrative. The proem thus follows the principle of ring composition: part 1 and 5 announce the subject, part 2 and 4 are appeals to deities, part 3 is a stylistic and thematic programme.

I. Relationship between the narrator and his source of inspiration

The narrator of the *Dionysiaca* is external – he does not appear as a character in the events he is going to narrate – and primary: his voice is the first to be heard and there is no reason to postulate the existence of another – suppressed – primary narrator.[4] He addresses an anonymous narratee, a potential reader/listener.

However, as in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*,[5] the ways the narrator makes his presence manifest in the *Dionysiaca* vary between the proem and the rest of the epic, in which the narrator, although not entirely covert, makes himself less conspicuous. But proems stand out as propitious passages for the emergence of the narrator's voice; in the *Dionysiaca*'s proem, the Nonnian narrator is overt as he intervenes regularly in the first person. He addresses several deities, in the Homeric tradition, to ask them for support and inspiration as he starts telling his tale. In a subtle evolution of how, and to whom, the addresses are formulated, our narrator asserts both his desire to follow Homer's example and his determination to remain in control of the narration.

1) A shifting source of inspiration

The Nonnian epic starts with an invocation to a deity, following, like other epics before and after him, the example set by Homer. At first it appears to be the same as the *Iliad*'s: she is called θεά. As early as the first verse, the narrator asserts his Homeric allegiance by, seemingly, placing himself under the patronage of the same deity. But the formula 'εἰπέ, θεά' broadens the field of reminiscences to Hellenistic and bucolic poetry: it was used by Callimachus and Theocritus[6] in the body of their poems. By choosing to

[4] De Jong, 2004b, p. 8.
[5] De Jong, 2004c, p.13-24.
[6] Call. *Dian.*, 186. Theoc. *Ep.*, 22, 116.

use this formula in the first verse of the poem, the narrator shows straightaway that he will look to both epic and bucolic poetry as potential models for his narrative.

The second part of the proem starts with a new and more precise invocation, to the Muses, Μοῦσαι. This change of appellation is still, at least partly, in keeping with Homeric inspiration as it mirrors the opening of the *Odyssey*, with, however, a variation in number, since the Homeric narrator used the singular Μοῦσα. According to G. Kirk, in the *Iliad*: "Muse or Muses are used with little distinction in such cases."[7] But the situation here is different from that in the *Iliad*: the variation is significant as it prepares for the transformation of the Muses into a group of Bacchants. It might also be a reminiscence of Apollonius' *Argonautica*. The Apollonian narrator's main addressee in the proem is Phoebus, but the concluding line contains an apostrophe to the Muses, Μοῦσαι, in the plural.[8] Finally, the fourth part introduces a new and rather unusual apostrophe to the Mimallons, Μιμαλλόνες, i.e., the Bacchants:[9] the Homeric Muse has gradually been transformed into a group of Dionysiac followers. It is one of the devices, and a very subtle one, that are set up in this proem by a narrator anxious to underline the subject of the following narrative. From the Iliadic singular θεά, the transition to the Odyssean Μοῦσα might have been expected; but the use of a plural is a hint of the independence of the Nonnian narrator from his Homeric model, while it illustrates at the same time his desire to be considered as part of a long epic tradition by the possible allusion to the Hellenistic epic of Apollonius. Finally it plays a part in the transition to the Mimallones by introducing a group of addressees instead of a single one; the transformation thus takes place gradually, in two stages, first affecting the numbers, and then the identity, of the source of the narrator's inspiration. When the Μιμαλλόνες are invoked at last, their entrance is not such a surprise any more since, as we will see, the Dionysiac theme has already been introduced in the proem.

An early parallel for the Muses in Dionysiac guise can be found in Philodamus:

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[7] G. Kirk, 1985, *ad* 1-7, p.51.

[8] A.R., 1.22.

[9] l.34; "Mimallones" was considered as a Macedonian name of the Bacchants. Its earliest appearance is found in the Hellenistic poet Euphorion (*SH*, 418.37): the context makes clear that the Mimallones can be assimilated to the Bacchants; they are wearing fawnskins. This appellation also appears in Lycophron's *Alexandra*, to qualify the frenzied Cassandra (1464) and in Strabo's list of Dionysiac followers (10, 3, 10, 22). Plutarch (*Alex.* 2, 7, 4), Polyaenus (4, 1, 1, 16) and Athenaeus (*Deipnosophists*, V 198e) give "Mimallones" as the name of the women who celebrate the rites of Dionysus.

Μοῦσαι [δ'] αὐτίκα παρθένοι
κ[ισσῷ] στε[ψ]άμεναι κύκλῳ σε πᾶσαι
μ[έλψαν]

> The chaste Muses at once, crowned with ivy, celebrate you, all of them, dancing in a circle.[10]

From this it appears that the idea of the Muses adapting themselves to their subject is an old one; but the Nonnian narrator goes further in transforming them altogether into Bacchants.

Finally, the concluding line brings back the vocative θεά, as a way for the narrator to signal the proper beginning of the narrative, and to show that he does not completely forsake the Homeric model, by closing the proem in the same manner as in the proem of the *Odyssey*, in which the last line was also a final invocation to the θεά.[11]

2) A narrator at the service of Dionysus

Compared to other proems, the *Dionysiaca*'s proem contains a lot of imperative verbs aimed at the narrator's addressee. The traditional εἰπέ occurs twice in the first part (lines 1 and 3); verbs of saying are the most common in epic proems: "only [*Iliad*] 1.1. (ἄειδε, θεά) seems to suggest that the poet is a mere mouthpiece of the Muse, who is the real author of the poem."[12] The choice of εἰπέ instead of the Iliadic ἄειδε underlines the fact that the narrator claims the poetic merits of the epic as his own: the goddess only tells the story, the narrator turns it into poetry.[13]

The second part opens with a string of more unusual imperatives: ἄξατέ μοι, τινάξατε (11), δότε (12) and στήσατέ μοι (14). These verbs mark the beginning of the

[10] *Paean in Dionysum*, 58-60 Powell.

[11] Triphiodorus and Colluthus, the two main (because their works reached us in their entirety) Greek epic authors contemporary with Nonnus, showed less attachment to the Homeric model. The narrator of *The Taking of Ilios* makes only one invocation, rather late in the text, line 5. He calls directly upon Calliopea, the Muse of Epic, using her name. In *The Rape of Helen*, although the invocation does come first, at the very beginning of the first line, it is nevertheless not addressed to a Muse but to the nymphs of Troy, νύμφαι Τρωιάδες, as witnesses of the visit of the goddesses to Paris.

[12] Hainsworth, 1993, *ad*. 11. 218-21, p. 248.

[13] See chapter 3 on the Muse-invocations. What is true of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is also true of other epics: the Muse seems never again to sing, and always to tell. Hes. *Op*.: ἐννέπετε (2), Tryph.: ἔννεπε (4), Coluth.: εἴπατέ (7), Musae.: Εἰπέ, θεά (1). Musaeus is said by P. Orsini (1968:vii) to have been a disciple of Nonnus. Apollonius' narrator asks the Muses to 'be the inspirers of [his] song', Μοῦσαι δ᾽ ὑποφήτορες εἶεν ἀοιδῆς (22), but does not invoke them in the second person; it is not clear whether they sing or speak.

transformation of the narrator into a Dionysiac follower, as he asks the Muses for Bacchic attributes: the fennel, νάρθηκα, the thyrsus, θύρσον. He also wishes the Muses themselves to join him in his transformation by playing the cymbals, κύμβαλα. Finally the Nonnian narrator asks for the company of Proteus, a request which has important metapoetic implications as a symbol of ποικιλία and is in keeping with the Dionysiac background: like Proteus, Dionysus and the Bacchants are able to metamorphose into animals.[14] The use of these imperatives establishes the *persona* of a narrator-worshipper; the subject of his poem becomes pregnant enough to be reflected even in his own person. It also underlines his familiarity with the Muses: he gives them many injunctions and makes them change their attributes and even their identity to conform better to his subject. In doing so he asserts his independence without, however, spurning their support.

In addition, these imperative verbs suggest the preparations made by the poet in order to achieve his purpose. They are reminiscent of similar imperative verbs in hymnic poetry, where the enunciation is such as appears to take place in the context of an unfolding ritual: the narrator addresses human attendants as if in the environment of a live performance. D. Furley and J. Bremer[15] suggest that by following the example set by the divinity, humans can identify with the god they are praising:

> It is not simply that the gods (…) provide a divine precedent for human celebrations in their honour; an additional aspect to be considered is that humans, in performing worship which they believe imitative of a divine precedent, feel subsumed into divine company for the brief span of their celebration. This is the purpose of the various aspects of *mimesis* in religious ceremonial (…); the congregation sing the words which they trust will fall on receptive ears: the god's name, pedigree, areas of power and heroic deeds.

In this perspective, these imperative verbs not only underline the wish of the Nonnian narrator to present himself as a Bacchic follower, so that he can assimilate himself with the god he intends to celebrate, but also suggest that the *Dionysiaca* will follow the structure of a hymn – and indeed it has been shown how the *Dionysiaca* follows, on the whole, the pattern of the *basilikos logos*, itself very close to the elements of hymns listed in the quote above.[16]

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[14] See 36.313-18 and 32.249-254.

[15] 2001:i16, with examples from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and Pindar's *Dithyramb to Heracles.*

[16] See Vian 1976:xx-xxi and Miguelez-Cavero 2010:23-4.

Finally, N. Hopkinson writes, about the imperative opening Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*: "The opening hortatory imperative to choir or participants is standard in cult-hymns",[17] confirming the hymn-like character of the *Dionysiaca*'s proem.

By the beginning of the fourth part of the proem, the Muses equipped with Bacchic attributes have become proper Bacchants, as is underlined by the repetition of the apostrophe ἄξατέ μοι νάρθηκα (34), no longer followed by Μοῦσαι but by Μιμαλλόνες. The narrator asks them for a few more items: νεβρίδα (...) σφίγξατέ μοι στέρνοισι (35-36) and εὐιά μοι δότε ῥόπτρα καὶ αἰγίδας (39), so that he now exactly resembles a Dionysiac follower. These requests highlight the relationship between the poet and his source of inspiration, be it the Muses or the Mimallones: the narrator seems both familiar with, and independent from, them. He asks the rather abstract "goddess" to "tell the story" in the somehow conventional opening line, and he then turns to the group of Muses/Mimallones whom he addresses repeatedly in the imperative so that they will make him enter the Bacchic circle. They appear as mediators between the narrator and Dionysus rather than authorities to whom the narrator refers for inspiration and knowledge of the events that he is going to sing. Although he does not address him directly, Dionysus is present in the background as the ultimate referent of the narrator who places himself under his patronage.

But the very assimilation of the Muses to the Dionysiac context is also a sign that the narrator really is the one in charge of the poem, since he transforms his alleged sources of inspiration according to his wishes. So, while the narratee could overlook this gradual transformation of the Muse-invocation into a Mimallones-invocation, the narrator is in fact building a coherent narratorial setting by introducing as sources of inspiration figures that are the best suited for this setting and the ensuing poem.[18] The Nonnian

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[17] 1994:78. See for example Call. *Ap.*: μολπήν τε καὶ ἐς χορὸν ἐντύνεσθε, l.8; εὐφημεῖτ', l.17. *Lav.Pall.:* ἔξιτε l. 1 and 2, σοῦσθε twice line 3, ἴτε l.13, μὴ οἴσετε l.15-7 and 31; κομίξατε l.29. *Cer.*: ἐπιφθέγξασθε, l.1; θασεῖσθε, l.3. Homeric Hymns have invocations to the Muse rather than addresses to human attendants. N. Hopkinson also notes the "vivid deictic use of the definite article" preceding the names of objects used for the rituals, which "reinforce[s] and effect of mimesis." This use has not been taken up by the Nonnian narrator.

[18] Apollonius invokes the traditional Muse throughout his *Argonautica*, except at the beginning of book III, where he calls on Erato, who is the one in charge of poetry about love (Pl. *Phdr*. 259d); this is appropriate since book III relates the love story between Jason and Medea. Dionysius Periegetes, who writes during the 2nd century A.D., transformed his Muses into wandering Muses in keeping with his geographical poem (l.651). – In late antique epics focussing on Homeric themes, the narrators tend to invoke the traditional Muse: in Triphiodorus' *Taking of Ilios*, the narrator invokes

narrator uses this device in an attempt to follow, and renew, the Homeric tradition: by invoking a deity, but not a Muse, the narrator underlines that his epic will not be about a Homeric theme.

II. Introducing the subject and the narrative *persona*

1. *Dionysiaca*

One of the narrator's aims in a proem is to give his narratees an idea of what the subsequent story is going to be about, as was recommended by Aristotle:

> δεῖγμά ἐστιν τοῦ λόγου, ἵνα προειδῶσι περὶ οὗ ἦ ὁ λόγος καὶ μὴ κρέμηται ἡ διάνοια· τὸ γὰρ ἀόριστον πλανᾷ· ὁ δοὺς οὖν ὥσπερ εἰς τὴν χεῖρα τὴν ἀρχὴν ποιεῖ ἐχόμενον ἀκολουθεῖν τῷ λόγῳ.
>
> The exordia provide a sample of the subject, in order that the hearers may know beforehand what it is about, and that the mind may not be kept in suspense, for that which is undefined leads astray; so then he who puts the beginning, so to say, into the hearer's hand, enables him, if he holds fast to it, to follow the story.[19]

In the first part of the proem, the central points of the story are mentioned as complements of the two injunctions εἰπέ: the union of Zeus with Semele and the birth of Dionysus (1-7). Lines 3 to 5 each introduce a member of the triad: Semele, Bacchus, Zeus. However they are not the starting point of the narrative, since the proem is immediately followed by the story of the journeys of Cadmus, Semele's father, as is announced by the concluding line of the proem: Ἀλλά, θεά, μαστῆρος ἀλήμονος ἄρχεο Κάδμου (45). This beginning might seem disconnected to someone who might not remember that Cadmos is the father of Semele, and the brother of Europa, whose rape by Zeus is the actual opening event of the narrative; the narrator relies on his narratee's knowledge and does not provide this information in the prologue – a Hellenistic trait.

Calliopea, considered by that time as the first of the Muses and the incarnation of poetry (*Anthologia Palatina*, 11.373: πάντων μουσοπόλων ἡ Καλλιόπη θεός ἐστιν.). She was also seen as the mother of Homer: Καλλιόπη πολύμυθε μελισσοβότου Ἑλικῶνος, τίκτε μοι ἄλλον Ὅμηρον (*Anthologia Palatina*, 9, 523). Quintus' narrator invokes the Μοῦσαι at 12, 306. About two centuries later, the narrator of Colluthus' *Rape of Helen* is more innovative as he does not invoke the Muses, but the Trojan Nymphs, who witnessed the events he is going to narrate.

[19] *Rhetoric* 3.1415a 12ff.

The second part of the proem is filled with allusions to various episodes of the life of Dionysus, presented in parallel with an evocation of Proteus whom the narrator introduces as an *alter ego*.

2. A scholarly narrator

a/ The Homeric background

The Muse-invocations are not the only traces of the narrator's Homeric inspiration. Line 7, πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ is a set phrase recurrent in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*; the narrator is innovative in using it to refer to a single person, Zeus, assuming the role of both parents as he sews Dionysus in his thigh-womb.[20] Line 14, the choice of the adjective πολύτροπον as an epithet of Proteus cannot but call to mind the opening line of the *Odyssey*, so that it is not only the companionship of Proteus that the narrator is asking for, but also that of Odysseus as a symbol of cleverness and ingenuity.[21] Proteus himself (l. 14), the evocation of his transformations (17-33) and of his capture by Menelaos (l. 37-38), are allusions to book 4 of the *Odyssey*. However this Homeric background is not exclusively used as a basis for imitation by the narrator, as was shown by his transformation of the Homeric Muse. The very name of Homer appears in line 38, but in a passage where the narrator is overtly refusing to make use of the Homeric version of the myth of Proteus. As was the case where the Muses/Mimallons were concerned, his posture towards the Homeric model is ambivalent: he seeks to imitate him and probably wishes his narratee to hear him with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in mind, but he also claims his autonomy from this background and strives to be recognised as a poet in his own right.

[20] *Il.* 6.414, 429, 471; 9.561; 11.452; 13.430; 19.291; 22.239, 341; *Od.* 6.30, 154; 15.385; 19.462. It refers to one person at *Il.* 6.429, in the speech of Andromache to Hector, but in a figurative sense.

[21] The cause for the references to characters from the *Odyssey* in this proem seems only to be the qualities which these characters symbolise, namely versatility and cleverness – as will be discussed below about Proteus. From the other narratorial interventions found in the *Dionysiaca*, it does not appear that the narrator is favouring either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* as his source of inspiration.

b/ Digressions

Judging by the number of digressions told, or at least alluded to in the *Dionysiaca*, we can assume that – if the "θεά" stood by the narrator's request to tell the story of Dionysus' life only[22] and if, therefore, all of these digressions should be ascribed to the narrator – this narrator is indeed very knowledgeable and well versed in mythology, and always ready to draw parallels between the main story and any myth that comes to his mind as he narrates.

This is made clear as early as line 8 of the proem: as the narrator asks the Muse to tell how Zeus carried Dionysus in his thigh, he is reminded of the story of Athena's birth in which Zeus had also been both father and mother. The digression itself is short and does not occasion a fully developed narrative of the episode; the narrator only alludes to it, *en passant*. This narrative technique of telling, or rather, of not telling a story, is reminiscent of the Pindaric narrator. Pindaric odes celebrate an athlete by associating him with heroes taken from myths well known to the audience, so that the narrator can allow himself "to be fascinatingly economical in [his] way of forging the fabula into a story"[23]. The earliest account of the birth of Athena is found in Hesiod's *Theogony*[24] and takes up fifteen lines. When Pindar alludes to it in *Olympian* 7, he does it in only three lines,[25] linked to the preceding theme by a temporal relation of simultaneity (*ἀνίκα*). In the *Dionysiaca*, the transition between the myth of Dionysus' birth and that of Athena's is achieved by the participle εἰδώς: it justifies the digression by presenting it as what Zeus had in mind as he was making ready to carry one of his children in a makeshift womb for the second time.[26] The story is then alluded to in three lines. The narrator will never come

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[22] Which is already broader than was actually requested in the proem: Dionysus' conception and birth (1-7).

[23] Pfeijffer, 2004:220.

[24] l. 886-900.

[25] l.35-7:

ἀνίχ᾽ Ἀφαίστου τέχναισιν
χαλκελάτῳ πελέκει πατέρος Ἀθαναία κορυφὰν κατ᾽ ἄκραν
ἀνορούσαις᾽ ἀλάλαξεν ὑπερμάκει βοᾷ·

… when, by the skills of Hephaistos with the stroke of a bronze-forged axe, Athena sprang forth on the top of her father's head and shouted a prodigious battle cry.

[26] The narrator's omniscient status is established here: he has access to the thoughts and memories of the characters of his narrative. Furthermore, the participial phrase εὖ εἰδὼς introducing a temporal clause in ἐπεί appears as a Nonnian originality: such temporal clauses introducing analeptic elements are common in epic in narrator-text, but usually originate directly from the

back to it in the course of the epic, so that its presence does not fulfil one of the proem's functions, i.e. to introduce to the narratee what will be the content of the subsequent narrative. The use of the participle εἰδώς blurs the limit between the two stories by including the second in the first under the cover of reporting a thought of one of the characters, and therefore justifies its presence on the level of the fabula. This absence of clear marking for the beginning of a new narrative is another of the Nonnian narrator's Pindaric traits[27]. It remains that the inclusion of this short narrative in the main frame is not justified otherwise; it is not necessary to the comprehension of the story by the narratee, and it will not have any influence on the following events. But Dionysus is absent from Homer: although his name appears three times,[28] he does not intervene in the narrative as a character. With the insertion of the myth of the birth of Athena in the proem, the narrator equates the birth of Dionysus with that of Athena, as if to say that the fact that Homer did not mention him does not mean that he is not a character suitable for an epic poem. Through this Pindaric allusive style appears the *persona* of the learned Callimachean scholar who enjoys drawing links between myths and reminding his audience of more or less famous stories. It is most likely this Callimachean *persona* who chose the name "Mimallones" instead of the better-known "Bacchants" as he referred, for the first time in his epic, to Dionysus' followers. One of the implications of this choice concerns the narratee, who is clearly expected to be learned and knowledgeable as well, at least about the famous myths, to be able to supply the details about which the narrator keeps silent.

All of this results in a multi-faceted Nonnian narrator, who borrows traits from narrators of different genres and times. This is in keeping with the image he wishes to give of himself as he calls upon Proteus to be his companion.

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narrator rather than being presented through character focalisation. See for example *Il.* 4.476; Pi. *O.* 1.26, 10.26, or *P.* 9.80, 11.33, *N.* 1.35. (Even more commonly introduced by ὅτε or ὁππότε. For example: *Il.* 2.743, 782; Pi. *O.* 20, *I.* 6-9; Call. *Aet.* fr.67.1, 75.68 Pf.)

[27] [The narrators] "very rarely provide explicit signals marking off the narrative from its surroundings. On the contrary, their usual practice is to obscure the boundary between the narrative and what precedes it. Often they use a relative pronoun, camouflaging the narrative as a mere afterthought to what proceeded". Pfeijffer, 2004:214.

[28] *Il*. 6.132 and 14.325; *Od.* 11.325.

3. Proteus as an *alter ego*

At the beginning of the second part of the proem, the narrator asked the Muses to provide him with a companion for his Bacchic dance in the person of the sea-god Proteus, famous for his metamorphoses. In doing so he asserts his choice of an aesthetic of ποικιλία, of diversity of tones, of themes, of genres, for his epic. He wishes his song to be as changeable as Proteus: ποικίλον εἶδος ἔχων, ὅτι ποικίλον ὕμνον ἀράσσω.[29] It is also remarkable that ποικιλία is an attribute of the Dionysiac world itself, as R. Shorrock writes:

> In the *Dionysiaca* the vine shares a similar association with the quality of *poikilia*: at 5.279 we learn how "the ripening wine grows in dappled clusters (ποικιλόβοτρυς)"; at 27.284, Dionysus is himself described as having dappled clusters (ποικιλόβοτρυς) [of grapes]". For the *Dionysiaca*, the word does not function 'simply' as a descriptive adjective, but takes on an important programmatic significance.[30]

The character of Proteus himself is also of significance, as far as the composition of the epic is concerned. The evocation of Proteus' changeability, and of his capacity to take on animal shapes gives the narrator an opportunity to list a few of the episodes of Dionysus' life that are going to be included in his epic. From line 16 to line 33, he uses the list of shapes presented by Homer in the *Odyssey*, linking to each shape the Dionysiac episode best related to the animal or element. The order (snake, lion, leopard, boar, water, tree) respects the one set up in the *Odyssey*,[31] except for the first two animals. However, the Dionysian episodes presented in parallel with Proteus' shapes are not mentioned in the order in which they are going to appear in the epic: the fight against the snake-haired Giants takes place in book 48; the raising of Dionysus by Rheia, in book 9; the mention of the Bacchic army riding leopards against Indians is recurrent from book 14 to 36; the story of Aura takes up the main part of book 48; Dionysus, chased by Lycurgos, hides in the sea in book 20; Icarios is a character from book 47. If the narrator confirms his allegiance to the Homeric model by keeping the order of the list almost intact, he also asserts his ability

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[29] l.15. This appeal to Proteus as an image of variety in literature is neither a conceit of Nonnus nor of epic poetry, but seems to have been a common image, found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Himerius and Philostratus to describe varied speeches. See Giraudet 2009:313-19 and Gigli Picardi 1993. She notes that Proteus is called in Plato "τὸν Αἰγύπτιον σοφιστήν" (*Euthd.* 288B), "preso come esempio per illustrare gli illusionismi verbali di chi gira intorno all'argomento senza arrivare mai al dunque" (p.231-2), already making of Proteus a symbol of variety and multiplicity.

[30] Shorrock 2011:73.

[31] 4.456-8.

to renew Homeric themes by associating them closely with episodes of the Dionysiac cycle. The order of the episodes is not insignificant. By inverting the first two Protean shapes, warlike episodes (Gigantomachy, Indian war, war against Lycurgos) alternate with peaceful ones (childhood of Dionysus, story of Aura, story of Icarios – even though these last two episodes have unpleasant, to say the least, conclusions). Thus the Nonnian narrator "affirme d'emblée sa préférence pour l'antithèse formelle au détriment de la succession chronologique."[32] The *Dionysiaca* should be read according to the concept of "spatial form": the epic is structured more by the interplay of analogies and correspondences than by a definite timeline, and a thematic structure is often preferred to the more common, chronological one.[33]

Another allusion to Proteus is made in the third part of the proem, as the narrator refuses Homer's and Eidothea's seal-skins (37-38) in favour of the Bacchic fawnskin: he refers to the seal-skins Eidothea had given to Menelaos and his companions to wear so that they could deceive Proteus and catch him.[34] But the Nonnian narrator does not want to deceive or do violence to Proteus; he wants him to be his companion in the Bacchic dances, that is, to assist him in his attempt at a changing, variable style while he praises Dionysus.

Another aspect of Proteus is that of the prophet, a figure whose speech is sought by others. Menelaos and his companions needed to catch him so that he might tell them of a way to sail away from Pharos.[35] Outside of the proem, Proteus appears three times in situations where his speech is of importance. At 21.144 and 39.106-8, he is called μαντιπόλος Πρωτεύς, "the prophet Proteus". At 21.289 ff., he tells Dionysus about what has happened in the war while he was under the sea. Therefore, Proteus also appears as a warrant for the accuracy of the narrator's speech.

In an echo of the allusion made in the proem, Proteus takes part in the fight against Poseidon in book 47[36], during which fight he has to metamorphose as he did in the *Odyssey*. Whereas the narrator had shown his independence towards the Homeric model

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[32] Vian 1976:9.

[33] This idea has been developed by V. Giraudet in his thesis (2010), p.353 and 24-5.

[34] *Od.* 4.435-46.

[35] He then performed his transformations in an attempt to escape. The Nonnian narrator seeks a peaceful relationship, in which the transformation will occur as part of the dance.

[36] l.231 ff. He is also wearing a sealskin (l.225) reminiscent of the Homeric episode, and of the Nonnian proem.

in the proem, by choosing the fawnskin over the sealskin, he comes back to it at the end of his epic, confirming the oscillation between independence from, and reverence for, the model, as he inserts his own scene of Protean metamorphoses into his epic.[37] Moreover, in this new apparition of Proteus, the narrator gives, through his choice of vocabulary, a clue relating to his narratorial technique, to how the events of his story are arranged; namely, the metaphor μελέεσι τύπον μιμηλὸν ὑφαίνων, "weaving his limbs into mimic images".[38] The metaphor of weaving is common to refer to the art of the story-teller – a story is made of events woven together; here it is not applied directly to the work of the narrator, but to Proteus' metamorphoses, that is to say, to a more concrete and visual object. Proteus has been used to embody a literary quality, *i.e.* the narrator's stylistic choice of ποικιλία; this image is here complemented by a metaphor which illustrates the narrator's choices regarding composition. Indeed the metaphor seems to imply that the narrator will weave together images rather than events, which brings us back once again to the concept of spatial form.[39] Daria Gigli Piccardi links this metaphor with the large diffusion of ornamented fabrics in Egypt between the 4th and 7th centuries A.D. These fabrics or tapestries were decorated with patterns encircling animals, plants, or various scenes with men.[40] This analogy underlines the importance of the 'visual' aspect of his poem: the story should be read as one looks at a picture. The comparison with Coptic tapestries and their recurring patterns and motifs is, in that sense, very relevant for the *Dionysiaca*. As a picture cannot represent the passing of time, in the same way, time appears secondary in the *Dionysiaca*, where the events are linked together rather by analogical or thematic relations.

Finally, the allusion to Pharos as the homeland of Proteus gives us an indication as to the place where the Nonnian narrator lives. He calls Pharos γείτονι νήσῳ which makes him an inhabitant of Egypt. Although he does not actually name Egypt, the parallel with

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[37] His independence also appears through the choice of a very different order for the list (even though he keeps the same animals and elements), whereas he had kept the Homeric order almost intact in the proem, and through his use of κάπρος instead of σῦς.

[38] 43.231. This metaphor is also used for Dionysus' metamorphoses at 36.313.

[39] The metaphor of painting is also recurrent in the *Dionysiaca*, even more than that of weaving, which underlines the visual aspect of the narrative as built by the Nonnian narrator.

[40] Gigli-Piccardi, 1985, p.152-3. "Vale la pena di sottolineare questa possibile allusione, come una spiraglio sulla vita e l'arte contemporanea all'autore, data la scarsità nelle Dionisiache di un tale tipo di rimandi alla cultura dell'epoca." See Du Bourget, 1964.

the *Odyssey* removes all doubt: Proteus had been said to live on Pharos, an island close to Egypt, Αἰγύπτου προπάροιθε.[41]

Thus, even though Proteus will not be one of the main characters in the *Dionysiaca*, he plays an important part in the proem as the narrator's self-chosen *alter ego*. He embodies the ποικιλία to which the narrator aspires,[42] and allows him to start, as early as in the proem, to play with Homeric references, between reverence and distance.

III. Conclusion

The Nonnian narrator in the proem of the *Dionysiaca* is external, primary, and overt. The proem answers the main expected functions: it makes clear what the subject of the song will be and indicates its starting point. It introduces the *persona* of the narrator, or rather, the narrator introduces himself to us through the way he presents his subject and reuses the most traditional element in a proem, the Muse-invocation.

Three main characteristics of the Nonnian narrator are highlighted in the proem: his two-fold relationship to Homer whom he claims as his model at the same time as he asserts his independence from him and his own poetical skills, his many-faceted – Protean – poetical *persona* which takes after the Homeric epic poet, the Pindaric singer, the Callimachean scholar, and his aim for a varied and changeable style, symbolised by the call to Proteus to accompany him in the Bacchic dance. The fulfilment of this wish is already underway in the proem, as appears through allusions to Homeric epic, bucolic poetry, Pindaric odes, Callimachean hymns, Theocritean idylls and Alexandrian *epyllia*. The narratee is made to understand that he may expect to come across all of these styles in the *Dionysiaca*.

[41] 4.354-5.

[42] The theme is recurrent in the proem with, apart from the figure of Proteus and line 15, πολύτροπον (14), πολυδαίδαλον (23), ποικιλόνωτον (35).

Chapter 2. The second proem: introducing the relationship with Homer

The main function of the proem is, according to Aristotle, to announce the contents of the following narrative; the narrator becomes more overt as he draws attention to the act of narrating itself, as he tells, in a *mise en abyme*, how the story will be told. We saw how the proem of book 1 fulfilled these expository and programmatic functions.

The *Dionysiaca* contains a second proem at the beginning of book 25, that is to say at the beginning of the second half of the epic. This second proem lasts for no less than two hundred and seventy lines, which include a lengthy *syncrisis* between Dionysus and other sons of Zeus from line 31 to line 252. This *syncrisis*, in spite of the fact that it does not fulfil the functions of the proem mentioned above, can be considered as part of it both because it is an important element in one of the proem's purposes – i.e. proving the superiority of the Dionysian myths over other myths as the subject of an epic – and because it is a passage where the narrator's presence, as in the proem proper, is predominant in the text. In this section I shall focus on the parts of the proem framing the *syncrisis*, namely lines 1-30 and 253-270,[1] whose content is very rich regarding the two functions: exposing the contents of the next books of the epic – as well as, here, justifying the choice of these contents – and asserting the narrator's literary inspiration in terms of style.

The first line opens with a Muse-invocation, as is to be expected in a proem, which introduces the narrator's request to keep telling, since the Indian war is not over. In the second movement of the proem starting at line 11, the narrator explains that Thebes is going to be a central element of the following books, before going back to the subject of the Indian war and of its superiority to other stories from line 22 to line 30. The second part[1] of the proem starts with an invocation to Homer; in lines 253-263 the narrator compares the merits of the Dionysiac myths with those of the story of the Trojan war chosen by Homer. The section concluding the proem (264-70) returns to the subject of the Indian war after a last Muse-invocation.

[1] From now on, in this section, "the second proem" designates the assemblage of 1-30 + 253-270, leaving aside the *syncrisis*, which will be discussed in chapter 4. I will refer to lines 1-30 as "the first part" and to lines 253-270 as "the second part" of the second proem.

This overview throws into relief the repetitive nature of this proem, every alternate section of which announces the telling of the Indian war story. But this apparent emphasising of the expository aim actually serves the development of the programmatic import, which is the central focus of this proem: the multiple announcements of the narrative of the Indian war are as many occasions for the narrator to assert his choices regarding the events of the story, the influence of his predecessors and his involvement in the narrative itself, elements which the other parts of the proem develop and confirm.

I. The frame of the Muse-invocations: innovations of a narrator-character

This second proem opens with an invocation to the Muse, Μοῦσα. This is in keeping with the Homeric pattern: the first twenty-four books of the *Dionysiaca* opened with an invocation to a θεά like the *Iliad*; and the last twenty-four books start with the same Μοῦσα as the *Odyssey*. Another invocation at line 18 calls to the Μοῦσαι in the plural, following the same movement as in the first proem, although here no transformation into Bacchants will follow; finally, the proem ends with the conclusive invocation to the θεά line 264, imitating again – as in the first proem – the conclusion of the *Odyssey*'s proem. The narrator reuses here the same tight Homeric frame as he had done in the first proem, the inside of which he turns into a space for his own innovations and the assertion of his literary aims. A first hint is the invocation to the Muses in the plural, introducing the narrator's claim to literary antecedents other than Homer – a claim to which we will come back. Muses do not appear in the plural in the Homeric proems, which the Nonnian narrator underlines in his address to Homer, when he mentions "your [Homer's] Muse", Μοῦσα τεή, in the singular.[2]

Three requests are made to the Muses, in rather unusual terms, at the beginning, middle, and end of the proem.[3] The middle invocation is the most traditional one, requesting the Muse to tell, although the verb form chosen by the Nonnian narrator, εἴπατε, is not found in epic but in one of Callimachus' *Hymns*, another example of how the narrator makes his various sources of inspiration cohabit in the poem.[4] The other two

[2] 25.258.
[3] 25.1, 18, and 264.
[4] 25.18. See Call. *Del.*, 4.82: Ἐμαὶ θεαί, εἴπατε, Μοῦσαι…

requests are much more unexpected. The invocation opening the proem likens poetry to fighting:

> Μοῦσα, πάλιν πολέμιζε σοφὸν μόθον ἔμφρονι θύρσῳ·
>
> O Muse, once more fight the learned war with the clever thyrsus.[5]

The Muse is asked to fight instead of sing, which does not fit the traditional image of the Muse.[6] But the context of the proem does not call for the use of πολέμιζε: in fact the narrator is playing on the blurring of the narratological levels, as is also indicated by the two hypallages, σοφὸν μόθον and ἔμφρονι θύρσῳ, attributing qualities of the Muses to the war and the thyrsus. This opening line creates a sophisticated image based on the assimilation of poetry with its object: the Muse is asked not to sing of the war, but to fight it, in her own way, by supplying knowledge and literary skill. The narrated and the narrating are made one in this line, and the insistence on the narrating prepares one of the points which the narrator will be particularly keen on making in this proem, namely stating his stylistic and narratological choices, although they are still, in this first line, associated with the Muse.

The concluding invocation is equally innovative, and furthers the blending of the levels of the enunciation and of the diegesis by involving the narrator in it:

> Ἀλλά, θεά, με κόμιζε τὸ δεύτερον εἰς μέσον Ἰνδῶν,
> ἔμπνοον ἔγχος ἔχοντα καὶ ἀσπίδα πατρὸς Ὁμήρου,
> μαρνάμενον Μορρῆι καὶ ἄφρονι Δηριαδῆι
> σὺν Διὶ καὶ Βρομίῳ κεκορυθμένον· ἐν δὲ κυδοιμοῖς
> Βακχιάδος σύριγγος ἀγέστρατον ἦχον ἀκούσω
> καὶ κτύπον οὐ λήγοντα σοφῆς σάλπιγγος Ὁμήρου,
> ὄφρα κατακτείνω νοερῷ δορὶ λείψανον Ἰνδῶν.
>
> Then bring me, O goddess, into the midst of the Indians again, holding the inspired spear and shield of father Homer, while I attack Morrheus and the folly of Deriades, armed by the side of Zeus and Bromios! Let me hear the host-leading ring of Bacchos' syrinx and the ceaseless sound of Homer's learned war-trumpet, that I may destroy what is left of the Indians with my intellectual spear.[7]

With this request to the Muse, the narrator transfers himself to the level of the *diegesis* and becomes for a few lines one of the characters of his own story, interacting with the other characters, fighting at Dionysus and Zeus' side against the Indians. Here the narrator

[5] 25.1. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

[6] See chapter 3 on the invocation to warrior Muses at 21.73.

[7] 25.264-70. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

seems to have been carried away in his enthusiasm, since Zeus will not take part directly in the Indian war; but Zeus, just as he ordered and supports the war waged by Dionysus, must approve at the same time of the narrator's undertaking to narrate this war. Two verbs in the first person, ἀκούσω and κατακτείνω, complete the transformation of the narrator into a character as he describes his own sensations and actions during the fight.

As far as poetical skill is concerned, the narrator has taken over from the Muse since the beginning of the proem: he is now the one to wield the νοερὸν δόρυ, the equivalent of the Muse's ἔμφρων θύρσος earlier, just as he is the one to fight, μαρνάμενον, instead of the Muse who was requested to do so in the opening invocation. The transfer of the fighting activity from the Muse to the narrator has been prepared for with the central invocation to the Muses, which is followed by a verb in the first person plural:

> ἀλλὰ πάλιν κτείνωμεν Ἐρυθραίων γένος Ἰνδῶν·
>
> Once more let us slay the race of Erythraian Indians.[8]

Although the plural here could be an emphatic plural designating the narrator only, the proximity of the Muse-invocation makes it likely that it rather refers to the narrator and the Muses together. Moreover it is a convenient device to operate the reversal of the roles between the Muses and the narrator: while the Muse only had been transferred to the level of the diegesis in the opening invocation, the narrator joins them in the fight halfway through the proem to become the main fighter at the end, where the Muse's role is only to accompany him to the battle scene – με κόμιζε.[9]

The final lines of the proem also accumulate symbols for inspiration which sum up the claims made in the passage: the spear and shield of Homer stand for the inspiration necessary to tell the narrative of a war. What is more, the inspired spear, ἔμπνοον ἔγχος, is another parallel to the Muse's clever thyrsus and the narrator's intellectual spear, all

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[8] 25.22.

[9] A similar possible association of the narrator with his source of inspiration occurs in Opp. *C.* 3.5-6:

νῦν ἄγε καρχαρόδοντα, θεά, φράζωμεν ὅμιλον
σαρκοφάγων θηρῶν καὶ χαυλιόδοντα γένεθλα.

> But now, Muse, let us tell of the sharp-teethed throngs of the carnivorous beasts and the species with tusks. (I translate.)

This same poem also provides an example for the distanciation between the narrator and the Muse, the narrator taking the upper hand in the choice of the contents, with a request for the Muse to not sing about certain kinds of animals at 2.570-71.

three metaphors standing for the poetical skill, the wit, the sharpness of mind required from the storyteller. The visual elements – the battle, the weapons – are followed by sounds in this very lively passage: the sound of Bacchus' syrinx, Βακχιάδος σύριγγος, which stands for the contents of the poem, alluded to also in the adjective ἀγέστρατον, and of Homer's war-trumpet, σάλπιγγος Ὁμήρου, which stands for the style and the poetical skill, as hinted at in the adjective σοφῆς. The narrator claims that the Homeric model will guide him through his entire poem; in that respect the sound of Homer's trumpet is ceaseless – οὐ λήγοντα. The last line presents all of these weapons and incentives as necessary for the narrator to kill the Indians, both on the levels of the *diegesis* and of the enunciation: the narrator-character will kill them with his spear, and the narrator proper, with his poetical skills, when he successfully draws his narrative to a close with the victory of Dionysus.

Finally the predominance of the narrator's role is also made visible through the number of verbs in the first person and the lexical field to which they belong. The second proem contains no fewer than sixteen such verbs, to which must be added seven participles and one infinitive referring to the narrator. These numbers alone are a clear indication of the important amount of narratorial presence. Ten of these twenty-four verbs refer to the narrator's activity, in particular singing: ἀείσω, ὑμνήσω, κεράσω μέλος, μέλπειν, and μέλπων;[10] but also τελέσας, to compose; βοήσω, to proclaim; μνήσομαι, to remind, and finally χαράξω, to engrave, *i.e.* to write,[11] an interesting mention with which the narrator depicts himself as a writer in addition to the traditional image of the singer conveyed by all the verbs of singing. Six more verbs present his activity as a researcher, all referring to the various comparisons he draws between Dionysus and other heroes: ἀναστήσω, to present; κρίνων, to judge; νοήσω, to know; ἐίσκω, to compare.[12] Finally, ἐρίζων, to rival, underlines his relationship with other narrators, and δεύομαι, to need, introduces his wish to possess a speech as beautiful as Homer's because his own speech does not enable him to do justice – ἀμαλδύνω, I conceal – to Dionysus' deeds.[13] All these verbs clearly intimate that the narrator is in control of the narrative, that he is the one

[10] 25.6, 9, 11, 14, and 262.
[11] Respectively lines 8, 16, 255, and 10.
[12] Lines 28, 29, 29 and 255.
[13] Lines 27 and 262-3. All the other verbs refer to his activity as narrator-character: ἀίω, 18; οἶδα, 20; κτείνωμεν, 22; ἔχοντα, 265; μαρνάμενον, 266; κεκορυθμένον, 267; ἀκούσω, 268; κατακτείνω, 270.

singing and telling, as well as the one organising the material, drawing comparisons, choosing an appropriate tone. This emphasised narratorial presence carries on in the *syncrisis* placed between the two parts of the proem.[14]

Thus this second proem gradually causes the narrator to enter the narrative and to take the Muses' place. The assimilation of the subject, the war, to the poem itself through the extended metaphor strongly underlines the claim of the narrator to mastery over both subject and style, the Muses gradually fading into the background as the relation of dependence between the Muse and the narrator switches to the advantage of the latter. [15]

II. Second proems and the emergence of the narrator's voice

The decreasing importance of the Muse's role in the *Dionysiaca*'s second proem is not a Nonnian innovation: second proems appeared in epic at a relatively late date, when a need arose for the narrator to justify and explain his poetical choices. G.B. Conte explains that the transformation of the context of poetical performance in the Hellenistic era, when the public became a specialised, learned audience in courts, libraries or schools, transformed at the same time what was expected of the poets:

> Literature is no longer something obvious: whoever practises it must say what he is doing, because everyone does it differently. The result is not merely marginal asseverations, but literary professions of faith, ambitious and all-embracing. *Programmgedichte* like Theocritus' *Thalysia*, Herodas' *Mimiamb* 8 (the Dream), Callimachus' *Epigram* 28, and especially the prologue to his *Aetia*, are manifestos of the new poetry, (...) so that the public will know not only the object, the *quid*, of the incipient poem, but also and above all its individual artistic character —its *quale*.[16]

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[14] The *syncrisis* is studied in chapter 4, section V.

[15] Incidentally, the relationship between narrator and Muses in the *Argonautica* follows the opposite evolution. The narrator presents himself as the one in charge of the story in the proem, with an emphatic pronoun: ἐγὼ μυθησαίμην (l.20); the Muses are referred to as ὑποφήτορες, "suggesters, interpreters" (See Gonzalez, 2000:270ff). However, by the end of book 4, he says that he is obeying the Muses, ἐγὼ δ' ὑπακουὸς ἀείδω / Πιερίδων (l.1381-2). See Hunter, 1993:105: "Books 1, 3 and 4 open with addresses to the Muses or a Muse, and the role assigned to them by the poet grows larger as the poem goes on; whereas at the head of book 3 the poet asks the Muse to stand beside him, at the head of book 4 he professes that he has lost control of his narrative which must therefore be handed over completely to the Muse. The brash, 'modern' self-confidence of the opening proem now retreats for safety to an archaic dependence upon the Muse", and Morrison, 2007:286-7: "There is a linear development of the relationship throughout the epic (...), and it is inextricably linked to the use of various other intrusive techniques, these forming what amounts to another narrative running alongside that of the quest for the Golden Fleece – a picture of the narrator's progressive 'loss of confidence' in his own abilities to tell the story of the Argonauts."

[16] Conte, 2007:221-2.

This new situation resulted in the creation of a new type of proem, so that "the ancient proem of contents and the programmatic proem, Alexandrian and modern"[17] started to coexist. G.B. Conte explains how Latin poets, in particular Ennius and Virgil, assigned as *locus* for the second type of proem the middle of the work:

> To speak in the middle is also to assign an appropriate place (a secondary position) to a function which must remain secondary with respect to the effort to perform an unmediated utterance, not a self-reflective discourse. (...) But they could no longer ignore their self-reflective consciousness. What they had to do was confine it to a position of lesser conspicuousness—of concealed conspicuousness.[18]

Such seems to be the case in the *Dionysiaca*, although, as we saw, the first proem already contained some programmatic elements. Yet these elements were stated in metaphorical terms, far less conspicuously than the statements that are made in the second proem, which is the truly programmatic one. The *Dionysiaca* seems to be the epic in which this device of the second proem is most exploited. In Greek epic, it is, to our knowledge, the only example of such a proem: the *Argonautica* has a short proem at the beginning of book 3, but it is only five lines long and seems more of an expository Muse-invocation. As for the *Aeneid*'s second proem, it is much shorter and fulfils its programmatic function through non-explicit allusions to other authors which are left for the reader to recognise.[19] Therefore the *Dionysiaca*'s second proem seems closer to programmatic passages found in Hellenistic or Latin non-epic poetry.[20]

III. The Nonnian narrator's appropriation of the Homeric model as a template

1. Homeric sparrows and the length of the war

The aim of the first ten lines of the proems is to justify the ellipsis in the narrative between book 24 and book 25. After a first sally of the Indian troops who prepare to ambush the Dionysiac army at the end of book 21,[21] they are pushed back inside their city over book 22 and 23, the latter being the account of the crossing of river Hydaspes. Book

[17] Conte, 2007:228.
[18] Conte, 2007:229.
[19] Verg. *A.* 7.37-45. See Conte 2007:225 for an analysis of this proem.
[20] See Conte, 2007:221-2.
[21] 21.315 ff.

24 tells how the Indians retreated inside their wall, deciding to wait until the morning to attack again,[22] and ends with an account of the lamentations of the Indian women in the city and the preparations of the Dionysiac troops striking camp for the night. The beginning of book 25 gives to understand that the Indian war lasted for seven years, six being spent in the siege of the city:

> Μοῦσα, πάλιν πολέμιζε σοφὸν μόθον ἔμφρονι θύρσῳ·
> οὔ πω γὰρ γόνυ δοῦλον ὑποκλίνων Διονύσῳ
> φύλοπιν ἑπταέτηρον Ἑώιος εὔνασεν Ἄρης·
> … οὐ μὲν ἀείσω
> πρώτους ἓξ λυκάβαντας, ὅτε στρατὸς ἔνδοθι πύργων
> Ἰνδὸς ἔην·
>
> O Muse, once more fight the poet's war with your thyrsus-wand of the mind: for Eastern Ares has not yet calmed the sevenyear conflict, bending a servile knee to Dionysus. ... I will not sing the first six lichtgangs, while the Indian army remained behind walls;[23]

The narrative of the war is not over, which is emphasised by οὔ πω before the metaphor of Ares bending his knee. Then a precise length of time is given: ἑπταέτηρον. The narrator states in the first person his choice of not singing the first six years, which he justifies in a very condensed summary of the events of these six years: they were six years of siege. As for the choice of a seven-year war, it is explained by F. Vian who remarks that seven is a number not only recurrent in the *Dionysiaca*, but also significant against the wider Dionysian background.[24]

But the ellipsis of the first six years finds another justification in the Homeric model:

> ἀλλὰ δρακοντείοιο τεθηπότες ἄκρα γενείου
> Ἰνδῴης πλατάνοιο πάλιν κλάζουσι νεοσσοί,
> Βακχείου πολέμοιο προμάντιες.

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[22] 24.168-78.

[23] 25.1-3 and 6-8. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

[24] Vian 1990:12 and notes 1, 2, 3 p.12. He lists sevenfold elements in the *Dionysiaca*: the gates of Thebes, the zones of the heavens and the planets, with references in note 1. He adds that Nonnus probably did not invent the length of the war, but that is was a traditional one, and that Alexander celebrated his triumph over the Indians for seven days, like Dionysus – according to Quintus Curtius 9, 10, 24-9. Finally, he explains that seven is a Dionysiac number because of the links between Apollo and Dionysus in Delphi, according to neo-platonic traditions (note 3 p.12). In particular, both Apollo and Dionysus were born on the seventh month (Dionysus: *s.v.* Ἠλιτόμηνος, in the *Etymologicum Gudianum* (242.30-31): ὁ Διόνυσος. σημαίνει δὲ τὸ ἑπταμηνιαῖον γεννηθὲν παιδίον. Apollo: scholion 251 to Callim. *Hymn 4*: ἑπταμηνιαῖος γὰρ ἐτέχθη ὁ Ἀπόλλων.)

…
τελέσας δὲ τύπον μιμηλὸν Ὁμήρου
ὕστατον ὑμνήσω πολέμων ἔτος, ἑβδομάτης δὲ
ὑσμίνην ἰσάριθμον ἐμῆς στρουθοῖο χαράξω.

In awe, at the dragon's jaw point, the nestlings of the Indian planetree are screaming again, foretellers of Bacchos' war. ... I will make my pattern like Homer's and sing the last year of warfare, I will describe that which has the number of my seventh sparrow.[25]

The narrator remembers here book 3 of the *Iliad*, where Odysseus reminds the Greeks about the sign of the eight sparrows and their mother eaten by a snake, a sign interpreted by Calchas as indicating victory for the Greeks in the tenth year.[26] The allusion is clear enough, with the use of the Homeric words for the snake, δράκων, the sparrow, στρουθός, the plane-tree, πλάτανος (πλατάνιστος in Homer); the use of νεοσσοί, "young birds", delays the direct allusion to the Homeric sparrows. The allusion itself exemplifies the way the narrator intends to appropriate the Homeric model: as a τύπος. An interesting word, τύπος refers to a mould, a pattern able to create exact repetitions of the same things, but also to an outline, a general idea or sketch, a basis for the repetition of a thing leaving space for modifications. This is precisely what the narrator is doing here as he appropriates the Iliadic story of the sparrows.

Having set the backbone, so to speak, of the allusion, by using the same words and the same event, he can make his own adjustments to it. Firstly, in the *Iliad*, the story is told in full: how the snake ate the nestlings first, how the mother was flying around in a panic before being caught in her turn. The Nonnian version only mentions the nestlings before the snake has eaten them, in which case they cannot really be called Βακχείου πολέμοιο προμάντιες,[27] since it is the very fact that they are eaten which constitutes, in the *Iliad*, the indication of the length of the war. Secondly, the allusion is not part of the narrative in the *Dionysiaca* as it is in the *Iliad*. F. Vian writes:

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[25] 25.4-6 and 8-10. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

[26] *Il.* 3.308-30.

[27] Except for a fragment of Euphorion (48 Powell, Ζηνὸς Χαονίοιο προμάντιες ηὐδάξαντο), the word πρόμαντις is not found in epic outside of Nonnus (who uses it at 3.199 and 7.179 to refer to the Seasons, and at 46.73, in character-text, about the Fates). It is more common in tragedy (S. *El.* 475; E. *Ion* 681; *Andr.* 1072; *Hel.* 338; *Or.* 1445), and in Herodotus (1.182.7, 2.55.1, 6.66.7ff.; 7.111.8; 7.141.11; 8.135.9), to refer to people able to prophesy rather than to the portents themselves. In addition, this Nonnian use concerning the birds is the only one where the person, or here, being, is referred to as a portent in a proleptic way – the birds have not fulfilled their role as a sign yet.

> La fable homérique prend une valeur purement symbolique. Les oisillons s'adressent au poète (d'où le présent κλάζουσι) au lieu d'être intégrés à la narration épique.[28]

This treatment of the motif underlines how the narrator integrates it here as an allusion to Homer. Finally, the number of years is changed: the Trojan war lasted ten years, because the nine sparrows really stand for every year that the Greeks were unsuccessful. In the *Dionysiaca*, the seven sparrows represent the total number of years of the war, the seventh being the year of the victory. The narrator sings the year which corresponds to the seventh sparrow, whereas the Homeric narrator really sang the year which corresponded to the fact that there was no sparrow left. But the Nonnian narrator does claim his originality by referring to [his] sparrow, ἐμῆς στρουθοῖο.

2. Differentiation of the sources of inspiration: the mention of Homer

The beginning of this proem is also remarkable for its direct mention of Homer: the Nonnian narrator seems to be the only epic narrator to mention another poet's name. Only one parallel can be made, with Statius' *Thebaid*, where, in the epilogue, the narrator acknowledges his imitation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, as he addresses his own work:

> *vive, precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta,*
> *sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora.*
>
> Live, I pray! may you not rival the divine Aeneid, but follow at a distance and forever venerate its footsteps.[29]

This is not, however, as bold a statement as the one made by the Nonnian narrator: it does not contain the name of Virgil, it expresses reverence rather than competition, and it occurs in the very last lines, so that the choice of this Virgilian inspiration is made explicit to the narratee only at the end.

Two more examples can be found in didactic epic: the first in Nicander, who calls himself Homeric, Ὁμηρείοιο … Νικάνδροιο at the very end of the *Theriaca*.[30] As in Statius, this mention only occurs in the *sphragis* of the poem and the Homeric precedent is not repeatedly made explicit as in the *Dionysiaca*. The second example is that of Lucretius,

[28] Vian 1990:239, *ad.* 25.4-10.
[29] *Thebaid* 12.816-7, (I translate).
[30] Nic. *Th.* 957.

who identifies Epicurus as his model and calls him by name,[31] this time with reference to the contents only, since it is his aim to adapt Epicurus' system in Latin verse.

Allusion to a predecessor is, according to M. Fantuzzi, a device which developed in the Hellenistic period, to supplement the Muse as source of inspiration:

> Another figure takes his place beside the divine inspirer, or at times substitutes him in the rôle of 'guarantor' of the origin of the work. The conventional rôle of acting as a source of inspiration may well be left to the Muse, but now an illustrious predecessor often steps in to teach the new poet the ropes, and how to proceed to construct the work he has undertaken. ... In practice, in their combination of these two series of figures – the Muses and the poetic masters or models – it is as if Hellenistic poets turned to their advantage the distinction between inspiration by the poetic divinities, on the one hand, and the primacy of 'craft', *technè*, on the other; the two now formed a powerful unit, no longer a pair of opposed possibilities.[32]

This is what is happening in this proem: the narrator turns to the Muses for inspiration regarding the contents, and to Homer for the style. This also helps to account for how the leading role was transferred by the narrator from the Muses to himself: ultimately, he will deal with the contents that they disclose in the way that he sees fit, that is to say according to the style of narrating he assigned himself to follow, that of Homer.

The name of Homer already appeared earlier, accompanying a Muse-invocation about all the different deities (Bacchants, satyrs, centaurs) and peoples who joined Dionysus on his expedition to India:

> ... εἴπατε Μοῦσαι·
> οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ τόσα φῦλα δέκα γλώσσῃσιν ἀείσω
> οὐδὲ δέκα στομάτεσσι χέων χαλκόθροον ἠχώ,
> ὁππόσα Βάκχος ἄγειρε δορυσσόος, ἀλλὰ λιγαίνων
> ἡγεμόνας καὶ Ὅμηρον ἀοσσητῆρα καλέσσω
> εὐεπίης ὅλον ὅρμον, ἐπεὶ πλωτῆρες ἀλῆται
> πλαγκτοσύνης καλέουσιν ἀρηγόνα κυανοχαίτην.
>
> Do you sing me of these, ... Muses! For I will not tell so many peoples with ten tongues, nor with ten mouths pouring a voice of brass, all those which Bacchos gathered for his spearchasing; but while I loudly name their leaders, and I will call to my aid Homer, the one great harbour of language undefiled, since mariners lost astray call on Seabluehair to save them from their wandering ways.[33]

[31] *De Rerum Natura*, 3.1042.

[32] Fantuzzi-Hunter 2004:1.

[33] 13.47-53. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

This is the first direct call for Homer's help[34] as the narrator claims that he has chosen him to be his ἀοσσητήρ, his helper, that is to say, to inspire in him a Homeric style as he begins a catalogue, in a rather Homeric manner indeed, with Muse-invocation and *aporia* motif. In the *Iliad*, ἀοσσητήρ appears twice in character-text, in the mouths of Apollo and Achilles, who present themselves as the assistants of Hector and Patroclus;[35] the Nonnian narrator ensures for himself the help of Homer, creating a powerful relationship parallel to the one existing between the Iliadic characters. As for the comparison with a sailor, F. Vian indicates that it is "une image familière: le poète est comparé à un marin et son poème à un navire". He adds that the idea might be a reminiscence of Claudian's Greek *Gigantomachy* in the proem of which the narrator invokes Apollo so that he may help him sing, after having recounted how sea gods, μακάρεσσιν... εἰναλίοισι, helped him survive a shipwreck.[36]

The two lines following the invocation constitute the Nonnian version of the Homeric *aporia* motif found in the *Iliad*:

> οὐδ᾽ εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ᾽ εἶεν,
> φωνὴ δ᾽ ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη
>
> [I could not tell over the multitude of them nor name them,]
> not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, not if I had
> a voice never to be broken and a heart of bronze within me.[37]

Although the two lines are very similar, with the images of the ten tongues, the ten mouths, and the bronze – moved from the heart to the voice in the Nonnian version –, their implications are very different. The Homeric narrator speaks in the conditional: "I could not sing their names, even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths [if the Muses were not helping me]", whereas the Nonnian narrator reuses the images listed above to negate them: "I will not tell these peoples with ten tongues, nor with ten mouths." These multiple tongues and mouths, in Homer, stand for the ability to memorise and recite elements so numerous that the poet would not be able to do it without the support of the Muses, who provide him the contents. A. Ford writes:

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[34] The very first mention of Homer occurs at 1.37, but in a passage where the narrator rejects the Homeric model.
[35] *Il.* 15.254 and 22.333.
[36] Vian 1995:214, *ad.* 13.43-52, with examples from Pindar and Bacchylides.
[37] *Il.* 2.489-90.

> Homer proposes to name the Greek leaders and tell who they were, and he asks the all-knowing Muses to inform him. But as for naming the entire host, that would be beyond his physical powers. (…) Even if he had superhuman physical stamina to go on naming forever, even if he were some kind of sounding bronze, he would still require the Muses to bring the names to mind.[38]

But the Nonnian narrator is not asking for the Muses' help, and therefore does not make the same wish as the Homeric narrator. Rather, he asks the help of Homer himself, a human inspirer, whose poetry he will endeavour to emulate. In the *Iliad* the narrator implies that the catalogue is made possible by the Muses, on whom depend the very existence of the poem, since the narrator presents his task as far greater than he is able to handle – hence the *adynaton*-like wish. This is not the issue for the Nonnian narrator: to him, singing is always possible, and indeed he shows himself as asking Homer for help *while* he sings – a nuance carried by the present participle λιγαίνων. The question is not of the existence of the poetry, but of its form, and while the narrator implies that he is indeed able to sing, he still requests Homer to guide him, since, given his admiration for his predecessor, he cannot but consider the Iliadic catalogue as the template for any other catalogue. Therefore, while the Homeric narrator's request referred to the contents as well as the form, only the latter matters to the Nonnian narrator in those lines.

3. A Homer-invocation

The proem follows a ring composition pattern visible in the layout of the themes and claims made by the Nonnian narrator: ring A is concerned with the relationship between the narrator and the Muse, ring B, with the imitation of the Homeric style, and ring C, with the imitation of the Homeric topics.

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[38] Ford 1992:73. He goes on to explain that in this intervention the narrator is also stating the necessity for him to be selective in his narrative. I. de Jong (2004a:102-3) notes that the *aporia* motif is recurrent in character-text at the beginning of embedded narratives: the secondary narrator warns his audience that he will not be able to "tell all" (for example *Od.* 4.240, 7.241-2, 11.517-8). See also Curtius 1953:159-60.
The motif reappears at *Il.* 12.176-7:
ἄλλοι δ᾽ ἀμφ᾽ ἄλλῃσι μάχην ἐμάχοντο πύλῃσιν·
ἀργαλέον δέ με ταῦτα θεὸν ὡς πάντ᾽ ἀγορεῦσαι·
And now at the various gates various men fought each other.
It were too much toil for me, as if I were a god, to tell all this...
Bakker 1997:54-5 emphasises "the mismatch between human limitations and the vastness of a given subject about to be presented."

- A. - 1: Muse invocation. The poet urges her to fight (literarily): Μοῦσα, πάλιν πολέμιζε…

  - 2-3: A god is prolonging the war: Ἑώιος Ἄρης (even though the use of Ares' name is metaphorical).

- B - 4-10: The narrator will imitate Homer and sing only the last year of the war: τελέσας δὲ τύπον μιμηλὸν Ὁμήρου… .

- C - 11-17: Announcement of the subject of the following books: Thebes, a non-Homeric topic.

  - 18-19: Invocation to a Muse introducing the mention of a non-Homeric source of inspiration: Pindar.

  - 20-7[1]: There has been no war like the Indian war, even the Trojan war.

  (- 27[2]- 30: Introduction of the syncrisis.)

- C' - 253-6: The narrator does not want to imitate Homer where the subject of his poem is concerned.

  - 256-259[1]: Mention of the Homeric Muse, implying that she may not have been the best source of inspiration.

  - 259[2]-260[1]: The Dionysiac war was more worth singing about that the Trojan one.

- B' - 260[2]-263: The narrator asks Homer to inspire him with his eloquence, εὐεπίη, so that he may be able to imitate his elevated tone in the narrative of Dionysus' war.

- A' - 264-270: Muse invocation. The poet asks her to bring him into the fight: θεά, με κόμιζε… .

  - Gods are taking part in the war: σὺν Διὶ καὶ Βρομίῳ.

This pattern throws the issue of the role of the narrator into sharp relief: we saw how the beginning and end of the proem are two Muse-invocations building on the theme of the fight against the Indians, with the Muse of lines 1-3 replaced by the narrator as the opponent of Deriades in lines 264-70. An inner ring takes up the issue of Homeric

inspiration, with the image of the sparrows in lines 4 to 10, to which corresponds a Homer-invocation at 260²-263. Whereas, as we saw, the motif of the sparrows supported the Nonnian narrator's claim to the similarity of his "pattern", τύπον, with Homer's in the first passage, the second is an outright wish to possess the Homeric voice:

> ἀλλὰ λιγαίνειν
> πνεῦσον ἐμοὶ τεὸν ἄσθμα θεόσσυτον· ὑμετέρης γὰρ
> δεύομαι εὐεπίης, ὅτι τηλίκον Ἄρεα μέλπων
> Ἰνδοφόνους ἱδρῶτας ἀμαλδύνω Διονύσου.
>
> But breathe into me your inspired breath to sing my lay; for I need your lovely speech, since I make nothing of the sweat of Dionysos, the fatal foe of India, when I hymn so great a war.[39]

The narrator alleges his poor ability to exalt Dionysus as a reason for his request to Homer. The epithet θεόσσυτον underlines Homer's fame, as though he had a privileged connection with the gods, *i.e.* with the Muses. But we saw that the Nonnian narrator does not wish to rely on the Muses exclusively and indeed it is to Homer that this request is addressed; the two personal pronouns in the second person underline the object of this request, namely Homer's eloquence, which will enable the narrator to celebrate Dionysus properly. The emphasis is put on λιγαίνειν at the end of the line; the choice of this verb is yet another signal of the claim to originality. Although it exists in early and classical Greek[40], it is more frequent in later literature: in Apollonius it is applied to Amphion, to describe how his lyre enchants rocks, a reference which complements the allusion to that same story by the Nonnian narrator earlier in this proem.[41] Another echo, with the verb in the same *sedes*, is found in Bion's *Idylls*, which confirms that epic is not the only style the Nonnian narrator aims to reproduce.[42] Finally, in the *Dionsyiaca*, it is used for a number of

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[39] 25.260-3.

[40] It occurs at *Il.* 11.685 and A. *Th.* 874.

[41] A.R. 1.740-1:

Ἀμφίων δ' ἐπὶ οἱ χρυσέῃ φόρμιγγι λιγαίνων
ἤιε, δὶς τόσση δὲ μετ' ἴχνια νίσσετο πέτρη.

> ... but after him came Amphion, playing loudly on his golden lyre, and a boulder twice as big followed in his footsteps.

[42] Bion, *Epithalamium of Achilles and Deidameia*, 1-3.

Λῆς νύ τί μοι, Λυκίδα, Σικελὸν μέλος ἁδὺ λιγαίνειν,
ἱμερόεν γλυκύθυμον ἐρωτικόν, οἷον ὁ Κύκλωψ
ἄεισεν Πολύφαμος ἐπ' ἠόνι τᾷ Γαλατείᾳ;

> Will you, my Lycidas, now sing for me
> A soothing sweet Sicilian melody —
> A love-song, such as once the Cyclops young

heroes and deities, creating advantageous parallels for the narrator: Cadmos playing his pipes to trick Typhon; Dionysus himself, lamenting Ampelos' death; Galateia, singing songs for Beroe's wedding; Pan rejoicing as Dionysus discovers Ariadne.[43]

What is more, these lines are introduced by a Homer-invocation, in the form of a periphrasis: παμφαὲς υἱὲ Μέλητος, "brilliant son of Meles",[44] where Meles could refer either to Homer's father or to the river near which Homer is said to have been born, in the area of Smyrna.[45] Another significant occurrence of the epithet παμφαές in the *Dionysiaca* refers to Heracles, in the hymn-like speech addressed by Dionysus to Heracles Astrochitôn.[46] The parallel between these two occurrences underlines both the tone of reverence which the narrator means to use towards Homer, and the primacy of the narrator's own role, since he only allows his main character to use the same vocabulary as he does, implying that he is to the level of the narrating what Dionysus is to the level of the narrative.

With these lines, the Nonnian narrator pays homage to Homer as the one whose style is the most appropriate to his own narrative, at the same time making explicit his stylistic aims for his narratee. However, it has recurrently appeared in the analysis of the passages using Homeric devices as backbone, that the "pattern" is only a point of departure: the contents of the Nonnian narrator's epic stand out, as is claimed in this second proem, by their independence from the Homeric precedent.

IV. A template for the telling of a new story. The question of the contents: the limits of Homeric inspiration

The Homeric narrator's relationship to sources of inspiration illustrates very well the points made by G. Conte and M. Fantuzzi: the Muses have become a conventional element in epic story-telling, and inspiration is rather sought in famous predecessors and

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On the sea-shore to Galatea sung ?

[43] Cadmos: 1.388, 503, 522; Dionysus: 12.120; Galateia: 43.392; Pan: 47.291. It also occurs in the passage from book 13 quoted above, about the narrator himself.

[44] 25.253.

[45] The two versions appear in the various *Vitae Homeri*; for example *Vitae Homeri* <*Plutarchi*> 2.13-5: υἱὸς δ' ὑπ' ἐνίων λέγεται Μαίονος καὶ Κριθηίδος, ὑπὸ δέ τινων Μέλητος τοῦ ποταμοῦ. See also Allen, 1913:22-26.

[46] 40.379.

aimed at style rather than at contents. Indeed in this second proem the narrator states rather strongly his refusal to tell about the Trojan War and the superiority of the Dionysiac theme as subject of an epic, while keeping to the pattern of ring composition: inside the ring requesting Homeric inspiration, an inner ring addresses the issue of the contents. In the first part of the proem the narrator explains that he is going to tell stories related to Thebes from lines 11 to 30, and in the second part he reproaches Homer for not having chosen to sing of the Indian war at 253-60[1].

1. Thebes and mount Cithairon: how to sing the Pentheus episode

Thebes and mount Cithairon are personified, so that they can be shown interacting with the narrator and justify his choices of contents. Thebes introduces the story of Pentheus:

> Θήβη δ᾽ ἑπταπύλῳ κεράσω μέλος, ὅττι καὶ αὐτὴ
> ἀμφ᾽ ἐμὲ βακχευθεῖσα περιτρέχει, οἷα δὲ νύμφη
> μαζὸν ἑὸν γύμνωσε κατηφέος ὑψόθι πέπλου,
> μνησαμένη Πενθῆος·
>
> For sevengate Thebes I will brew my song, for she also dances bacchant-like around me, baring her breast like a nymph over her sorrowful robe while she remembers Pentheus.[47]

The seven gates operate the transition from the preceding passage about the seven sparrows. Thebes is presented as a mother lamenting for her son: emphasis is put on the sorrowful robe, κατηφέος πέπλου, in yet another hypallage. Furthermore Thebes makes the same gesture as Hecuba before Hector's death in the *Iliad*, and as Agaue herself, who scratches her bare breasts, ἀσκέπεων μαζῶν, in sorrow, parallels which aim at arousing the narratee's pity for Pentheus.[48] This image is preceded by that of the dancing Bacchant, following the episodes of the Pentheus story, who was first dismembered by the women in their Bacchant-like frenzy, and then lamented by these same women. Through this personification of Thebes, the narrator asserts his choice by diverting the responsibility of it to the character of Thebes who, like a mother mourning for her son, wishes him to be remembered in songs. This choice is also revealing of his own point of view, that

[47] 25.11-14[1]. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.
[48] *Il.* 22.80 and *Dionysiaca* 46.279.

Pentheus is to be pitied, a surprising stance when one considers that the aim of the *Dionysiaca* is to magnify Dionysus.[49]

The narrator then brings Mount Cithairon to the foreground under the traits of an old man to anticipate a question of why, of all the myths related to Thebes, he chose the story of Pentheus:

> ἐποτρύνων δέ με μέλπειν
> πενθαλέην ἕο χεῖρα γέρων ὄρεξε Κιθαιρὼν
> αἰδόμενος, μὴ λέκτρον ἀθέσμιον ἠὲ βοήσω
> πατροφόνον πόσιν υἷα παρευνάζοντα τεκούσῃ.
>
> Old Cithairon urges me to sing, stretching out his mourning hand, fearing lest I proclaim the unhallowed bed or the father-slaying husband, the son who lay beside her who bore him.[50]

The elaborate periphrasis in the last line refers obviously to Oedipus: through the point of view of Cithairon, the narrator seems to imply that the story of Pentheus is more acceptable, or less shameful, than that of Oedipus; and yet Cithairon does not seem to enjoy the former more than the latter, being presented as "mourning" in this passage, and moaning and crying during the Pentheus episode.[51] While this apparently incoherent intervention of Cithairon might be ascribed to the scholarly *persona* of the narrator, who seizes the mention of Thebes as an opportunity of referring, in the sophisticated periphrasis, to a parallel myth which he does not wish to include in full in his epic, it might also aim at justifying further the inclusion of the story of Pentheus in a poem which is supposed to praise Dionysus: as in the case of Thebes, the narrator implies that he has been made to tell this story by Cithairon.

This elaborate *recusatio* appears as one of its kind in epic. It constitutes a metalepsis – since the narrator finds himself as the same level of the characters he sings of, here old Cithairon – in which the narrator is advised on the topic of his narrative by the characters themselves. In that respect, this narratorial intervention is somewhat similar to hymnic priamels: they rely on *metalepsis* too – the narrator addressing the god he praises in the second person, but they are deliberative, and ultimately the choice lies with the narrator

[49] The ambiguity of the narrator's point of view on Dionysus will be the object of further study in chapter 4.
[50] 25.14²-17. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.
[51] 46. 265-6.

himself. In the Nonnian example, the narrator emphasises that his decision has been made under the influence of personified Cithairon.[52]

Finally, a mention of Pindar gives a further justification to the importance of Thebes. The metaphor κεράσω μέλος at line 11 was already a hint towards the Pindaric influence, as it is reminiscent of a Pindaric image.[53] The thread of references started with Thebes and Pindar is carried on with Amphion:

> Ἀονίης ἀίω κιθάρης κτύπον· εἴπατε, Μοῦσαι,
> τίς πάλιν Ἀμφίων λίθον ἄπνοον εἰς δρόμον ἕλκει;
> οἶδα, πόθεν κτύπος οὗτος· ἀειδομένη τάχα Θήβη
> Πινδαρέης φόρμιγγος ἐπέκτυπε Δώριος ἠχώ.
>
> I hear the twang of the Aonian lyre; tell me, Muses, what new Amphion is pulling breathless stones to a run? I know where that sound comes from: surely it is the Dorian tune of Pindar's lyre sounding to sing Thebes.[54]

Pindar appears therefore as one of the narrator's sources of inspiration; a secondary one, Homer occupying the first place, which is reflected in the fact that Pindar's name only appears in an adjective and is not directly quoted.[55] The first proem already included Pindaric allusions; this time the connection is made clear, with an expansion of the Pindaric phrase Δωρίαν ... φόρμιγγα[56] in the last line. The new Amphion is Pindar himself; the periphrasis conveys the narrator's admiration. Indeed those four lines are particularly lively and reflect the narrator's enthusiasm as he mentions Pindar: the new Muse-invocation, although formulated with the traditional εἴπατε, is not about the poem's contents, but about Pindar. The question following this invocation underlines the wonder of the moving stones, before the narrator puts himself forwards with the verb οἶδα to emphasise his admiration. Finally the accumulation of words referring to sounds (κτύπος twice, ἠχώ), to the production of music (ἀείδω, ἐπικτύπω), to musical

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[52] See for example *h.Ap.* 19 ff. and 207 ff.: πῶς τ' ἄρ' σ''ὑμνήσω… followed by a number of possible stories between which the narrator hesitates.

[53] Pi. *I.* 6.1-3: θάλλοντος ἀνδρῶν ὡς ὅτε συμποσίου / δεύτερον κρητῆρα Μοισαίων μελέων / κίρναμεν Λάμπωνος εὐάθλου γενεᾶς ὕπερ·

> As when a drinking party of men is thriving, so we are mixing a second bowl of the Muses' songs in honor of Lampon's prize-winning offspring.

[54] 25.18-21.

[55] Call. *Fr.* fr.64.9 Pf. refers to Simonides as "the Ceian man", Κήϊον ἄνδρα. Theocritus, 16.44, as the Ceian singer, ἀοιδὸς ὁ Κήιος.

[56] Pi. *O.* 1.17.

instruments (κιθάρης, φόρμιγγος), in those four lines strongly put into relief the beauty of Pindaric poetry and the height of the goal that the Nonnian narrator sets himself.

Therefore as the text moves on, Thebes and Cithairon give way to Pindar, in a subtle device which enables the Nonnian narrator to bring about the mention of his second poetical model, while justifying along the way his choice of the Theban stories by showing himself influenced by the personifications of Thebes and of mount Cithairon. But giving reasons for the choice of particular elements of the Dionysiac geste is not the only aim of this second proem: the narrator has a wider purpose, namely to state the reasons which account for the entire contents of the *Dionysiaca*.

2. The superiority of the Indian war over the Trojan war as an epic subject

The narrator also has to answer another possible objection from his narratee: why does he not follow Homeric inspiration for the contents also, and sing of the Trojan war, when he claims Homer as a model so forcefully? The narrator answers very clearly in this second proem: he chose to sing of Dionysus because he is by far superior to other Greek demigods and heroes, and because the Indian War reached a scale far greater than the Trojan War.

In the last lines of the first part of the proem, he adopts an omniscient point of view to state that there never was so great a war, nor will there ever be one again:

> οὔ ποτε γὰρ μόθον ἄλλον ὁμοίιον ἔδρακεν αἰὼν
> Ἠώου πρὸ μόθοιο, καὶ οὐ μετὰ φύλοπιν Ἰνδῶν
> ἄλλην ὀψιτέλεστον ἰσόρροπον εἶδεν Ἐνυώ,
> οὐδὲ τόσος στρατὸς ἦλθεν ἐς Ἴλιον, οὐ στόλος ἀνδρῶν
> τηλίκος.
>
> For Time never saw before another struggle like the Eastern War, nor after the Indian War in later days has Enyo seen its equal. No such army came to Ilion, no such host of men.[57]

The idea of time is put into relief by putting together in the same line πρὸ and μετά, with a chiastic presentation of the Indian war, at each end, referred to by two different expressions. After this assertion of the superiority of the Indian war through time, the first explicit hint of a rivalry with Homer and the story of the Trojan war appears. The

[57] 25.23-27.

severance is marked by the use of στόλος, a non-Homeric word. Following these lines, the narrator announces the insertion of the *syncrisis*, in which he is going to weigh Dionysus' merits against those of Heracles, Perseus and Minos, other sons of Zeus. The question is not one of finding out which of the four heroes is the most praiseworthy, but who among the last three is Dionysus' equal, a rather biased introduction for a passage with heavy narratorial presence; the narrator makes himself very overt in the *syncrisis* to convince his narratee of the superiority of Dionysus partly by disparaging and ridiculing the other heroes.[58]

After the end of the *syncrisis*, the second part of the proem takes up again the vindication of the choice of the Indian war with an apostrophe to Homer's books:

> ἱλήκοι σέο βίβλος ὁμόχρονος ἠριγενείῃ·
> Τρῳάδος ὑσμίνης οὐ μνήσομαι· οὐ γὰρ ἐίσκω
> Αἰακίδῃ Διόνυσον ἢ Ἕκτορι Δηριαδῆα.
> ὑμνήσειν μὲν ὄφελλε τόσον καὶ τοῖον ἀγῶνα
> Μοῦσα τεὴ καὶ Βάκχον ἀκοντιστῆρα Γιγάντων,
> ἄλλοις δ᾽ ὑμνοπόλοισι πόνους Ἀχιλῆος ἐᾶσαι,
> εἰ μὴ τοῦτο Θέτις γέρας ἥρπασεν.
>
> May your book pardon me, immortal as the Dawn! I will not speak of the Trojan War; for I do not compare Dionysos to Aiacides, or Deriades to Hector. Your Muse ought to have hymned so great and mighty a struggle, how Bacchos brought low the Giants, and ought to have left the labours of Achilles to other bards, had not Thetis stolen that glory from you.[59]

The narrator starts out by showing great reverence to Homer's books with the verb ἱλήκω, "to be gracious", which is mainly used by narrators to ask for the protection of gods,[60] and, in two examples, to ask gods for forgiveness, a use which is closer to the Nonnian one here: in Aratus' *Phaenomena*, the narrator asks Artemis to forgive him as he is about to recount how Orion was disrespectful to her, and in Colluthus' *Rape of Helen*, it is addressed to Dionysus, after the narrator has stated that Paris was more handsome than him.[61] Indeed the Nonnian narrator boldly explains that Dionysus, Deriades, and the whole of the Indian war are truly worthy of being sung, unlike Achilles, Hector, and the

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[58] This *syncrisis* is the subject chapter 4, section V.

[59] 25.254-60.

[60] It is used in addresses to Apollo by the narrators of the *Orbis Descriptio* (l.447) and of the *Argonautica* (2.708); in addresses to Poseidon and the Sea in the *Halieutica*, and to Nereus, the Nereids and the Cryads in the *Cynegetica*.

[61] Arat. *Phaenomena* 1.637; Coluth. 252. The only other occurrence of this verb in narrator-text in the *Dionysiaca* is found in the *syncrisis* about Iolaos.

Trojan war. However the reproaches remain somewhat indirect, being addressed to Homer's Muse and then to Thetis, that is to say to deities which are further and further away from the poet himself if one considers the levels of narration: the Muses, like the narrator, belong to the level of the enunciation, Thetis, to the *diegesis*. The narrator reveals another aspect of his conception of the Muses and of inspiration, by talking about Homer's Muse, as if each poet had its own Muse; be that as it may, this conception also shows the Muse as responsible only for the contents, which, in the case of Homer, she did not chose wisely, making him sing about stories just good enough for "other poets".

Reproaches made by the Nonnian narrator to Homer do not concern the general contents of their respective works only; later in the *Dionysiaca*, he corrects Homer on a point of detail and openly disagrees with the Homeric version, as he describes Dionysus looking for Beroe and tirelessly waiting for her in the forest:

> πάντων γὰρ κόρος ἐστὶ παρ᾽ ἀνδράσιν, ἡδέος ὕπνου
> μολπῆς τ᾽ εὐκελάδοιο καὶ ὁππότε κάμπτεται ἀνὴρ
> εἰς δρόμον ὀρχηστῆρα· γυναιμανέοντι δὲ μούνῳ
> οὐ κόρος ἐστὶ πόθων· ἐψεύσατο βίβλος Ὁμήρου.
>
> For men can have enough of all things, of sweet sleep and melodious song, and when one turns in the moving dance – but only the man mad for love never has enough of his longing; Homer's book did not tell the truth![62]

The narrator is particularly overt in this passage where he comments on a Homeric gnomic utterance, which is *eo ipso* a sign of the narrator's presence, stepping out of the fabula for a while to enunciate a truth whose validity is not limited to this specific fabula.[63] The last line refers to a passage of the *Iliad* in which Menelaus, having overcome a Trojan, reflects on his enemies warmongering attitude:

> πάντων μὲν κόρος ἐστὶ καὶ ὕπνου καὶ φιλότητος
> μολπῆς τε γλυκερῆς καὶ ἀμύμονος ὀρχηθμοῖο,
> τῶν πέρ τις καὶ μᾶλλον ἐέλδεται ἐξ ἔρον εἶναι
> ἢ πολέμου· Τρῶες δὲ μάχης ἀκόρητοι ἔασιν.
>
> Since there is satiety in all things, in sleep, and love-making,
> in the loveliness of singing and the innocent dance. In all these
> things a man will strive sooner to win satisfaction
> than in war; but in this the Trojans cannot be glutted.[64]

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[62] 42.178-81.

[63] See chapter 8 on gnomic utterances.

[64] 13.636-9.

This is another example of the twofold relationship of the Nonnian narrator with his chosen model, Homer. On the one hand, he strives to imitate him, as shown here by the use of the same priamel structure; he modifies it as little as possible so that the beginning of the first two lines is identical to the Iliadic text. On the other hand, his admiration does not prevent him from discussing Homer's choices: here he expresses his disagreement on the subject of love, that Homer had listed among the things of which men can have enough. While he had used the same words for all the other elements of the list – ὕπνου, μολπῆς, ὀρχηστῆρα/ὀρχηθμοῖο – he chose πόθων instead of φιλότητος to refer to love, so as to underline his disagreement, and to make it more adapted to his narrative, since πόθος refers to unrequited love more than φιλότης which implies an exchange.[65] The example of Dionysus proves "the book of Homer" to be lying: although Beroe keeps escaping him and leading him here and there in the forest, Dionysus does not give up, belying indeed the Homeric line.

It is possible that this controversy is a traditional one, since it can also be found in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, written in the 4th century, where one of the characters makes the same reproach to Homer: Calasiris is telling a long love story to Cnemon, and is surprised that Cnemon is not weary of listening. Cnemon replies:

> Ἐγὼ καὶ Ὁμήρῳ μέμφομαι, ὦ πάτερ, ἄλλων τε καὶ φιλότητος κόρον εἶναι φήσαντι, πράγματος ὃ κατ' ἐμὲ κριτὴν οὐδεμίαν φέρει πλησμονὴν οὔτε καθ' ἡδονὴν ἀνυόμενον οὔτε εἰς ἀκοὴν ἐρχόμενον·
>
> 'I think Homer was wrong,' said Cnemon, 'when he said of all things there is satiety, even of love. In my opinion a man can never be weary thereof, either if he be in love himself, or hear the tale of other lovers.[66]

The narrator of the *Aethiopica* seizes the opportunity to add a metapoetical turn to the criticism of Homer, since Cnemon's remark on Calasiris' story is most likely also meant to apply to the narrator's. Although this addition is absent from the Nonnian version, the Nonnian narrator also asserts his place by taking upon himself the reproach made to Homer rather than delegating it to character-text. In any case, there seems to have been a trend of criticism of this passage of Homer in Late Antiquity, so that with his remark, the

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[65] Taillardat (1982) develops the idea of reciprocity contained in the word φιλότης in literature through time, starting from Homer. Adkins (1963, especially pp.34-5) shows that this word is used in Homer for the association of two individuals of similar rank for cooperation. Nagy (1976:197) shows that the word implies the same reciprocal relationship in iambic poetry.

[66] Hld. 4.4.3. See also the forthcoming thesis of B. Verhelst, University of Ghent.

Nonnian narrator engages in a discussion not only with the Homeric narrator, but with narrators of other times and genres.

V. Conclusion

The second proem of the *Dionysiaca* complements the first proem in that it goes into much more depth into the issue of inspiration and the relationship to predecessors. The Muse-invocation here becomes rather conventional and allows Homer to become the main character, as the self-chosen model of the Nonnian narrator as far as style and form are concerned. The Muses themselves are allowed to play only a lesser role, instead of being addressed as the inspirers of the contents of the poem; the narrator states his choice and vehemently justifies it by submitting it to a direct comparison to the contents of the *Iliad*. This pre-eminence of the role of the narrator is underlined further by the *syncrisis* which makes up the central and main part of this proem, in which, as we shall see, his presence reaches a degree unusual for an epic, with multiple verbs in the first person and addresses to the narratee. Finally, although the Muses seem to be neglected and put aside as an outdated epic conceit in both proems – the first proem transforming them into Mimallones, the second spurning them to the benefit of Homer – they are not completely ignored by the narrator, who calls upon them in invocations interspersed in the course of the books, in which the narrator appropriates and renews the device to the advantage of his own story-telling.

Chapter 3. The Nonnian Narrator and the Muses

Muse-invocations started being a feature of Greek epic poems in Archaic times; they appear in the proem and sometimes in the course of the work; they have various implications as to the kind of knowledge the Muse provides to the poet, and sometimes the poet might even invoke a deity other than a Muse. In any case, they constitute passages where the narrator becomes overt as he builds up his own relationship to the Muses. By the time of Nonnus, Muse-invocations have become a literary conceit; by taking it up, the narrator ranks himself among other epic narrators, and the way he adapts this device to his text underlines his own characteristics and choices, according to the position he adopts towards the issue of inspiration, and to the intertextual links he creates with other texts and other invocations.[1]

The study of the proems has already highlighted some characteristics of the relationship between the Nonnian narrator and the Muses; but the proems are not the only places in the *Dionysiaca* which contain Muse-invocations. Indeed, seven other invocations occur in narrator-text in the course of the poem, which stand out by the variety of the deities to whom they are addressed and their role in the composition of the narrative.

The *Dionysiaca* being considered as the last of the antique Greek epics, the study of these invocations is also the study of the last stage of the journey of the Muses since Homer, and will highlight the evolution of their role as source of inspiration and of their relationship with a variety of narrators, as well as the work of the Nonnian narrator and the position he adopts towards the long lasting tradition of Muse-invocations.

I. The addressees of the Nonnian Muse-invocations

The most obvious originality of the Nonnian narrator's invocations is the variety of deities to whom they are addressed: the Muses are no longer the only source of the narrator's inspiration. Nonetheless they are present, as expected, as required even, in an

[1] See Wheeler 2002, in particular 37 ff. where he discusses the conventional aspect of introits. Shorrock, 2011:14-15 gives an account of the relationship between poets and Muses through time.

epic poem. In the proems of books 1 and 25, we saw that they are called upon in the Homeric manner as θεά at 1.1, 1.45 and 25.264 and as Μοῦσα or Μοῦσαι at 1.11, 25.1 and 25.18. But elsewhere in the *Dionysiaca*, the narrator asserts his originality insofar as he also turns to more unusual deities: the following are invoked in addition to the Homeric Muses, the Mimallons, Μιμαλλόνες (1.34), the "breaths of Phoebus", Φοιβάδες αὖραι (14.16), the Fates, Μοῖραι (30.213), the Oreiad Nymphs, Ὀρειάδες Νύμφαι (42.62), as well as a number of specific Muses, characterised by adjectives giving precision on their personality: μαχήμονες (21.73); on their origin: Λιβανηίδες (41.11); on their allegiance to Rheia: Κορυβαντίδες (13.47) or to Homer: Ὁμηρίδες (32.184). Finally, as we saw, Homer himself is invoked in the proem with the periphrasis "brilliant son of Meles", παμφαὲς υἱὲ Μέλητος.[2]

Invoking a Muse, or the Muses in general, is a constant in epic poetry, but the creation of categories of Muses is rarer. Indeed, apart from Homer, the vocatives θεά and Μοῦσα or Μοῦσαι are found in Apollonius, Aratus, Dionysius Periegetes, both Oppians, Quintus and Musaeus.[3] Although the vocative is sometimes accompanied by an adjective, the qualification is never restrictive as in the *Dionysiaca*. In these authors the Muse(s) is/are: the daughter of Zeus, θύγατερ Δίος / Διὸς τέκος, in Homer, Apollonius and Dionysius; the sweetest, μειλίχιαι, in Aratus; venerable, πότνα, in both Oppians; strong-voiced, πολύθροε, sweet sounding, λιγεῖα, and dear [to the poet] φίλη, in the younger Oppian.[4] The narrators in Apollonius and Triphiodorus choose to address a particular Muse, respectively Erato and Calliope, which the Nonnian narrator does not do.[5] In any case, the attribution of a geographic origin to the Muses in the *Dionysiaca* is rather innovative, since they have been clearly presented in the *Iliad* as inhabitants of Olympus: Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχουσαι.[6] This might point to the Hesiodic influence, since the narrator of the *Theogony* begins his poem with an invocation to local Muses, μουσάων Ἑλικωνιάδων; but the reasons behind this choice, as we shall see, are not relevant in the

[2] 25.253.

[3] θεά: Hom. *Il.* 1.1, A.R. 4.1, Opp. *H.* 78, Opp. *C.* 3.5 and 4.21, Musae. 1. - θεαί: A.R. 4.552. - Μοῦσα: Hom. *Il.* 2.762, *Od.* 1.1, A.R. 4.2, D. P. 447, Opp. *C.* 2.570 and 3.461. - Μοῦσαι: A.R. 4.984; Aratus 16, D.P. 60 and 651, Q.S. 12.306.

[4] θύγατερ Δίος, Hom. *Od. 1.10;* Μοῦσα, Διὸς τέκος, A.R. 4.2; Διός Μοῦσα, D.P. 447; Μοῦσαι μειλίχιαι μάλα πᾶσαι, *Phaenomena* 16-7; πότνα θεά, Opp. *H.* 76 and *C.* 4.21; πολύθροε Μοῦσα λιγεῖα, Opp. *C.* 3.461; Μοῦσα φίλη, Opp. *C.* 2.570.

[5] A.R. 3.1, Tryph. 4.

[6] Hom. *Il.* 2.484, 11.218, 14.105, 16.112.

Nonnian case. Indeed the narrator of the *Theogony* calls upon the Heliconian Muses because he depicts himself guarding his sheep on the slopes on mount Helicon when the Muses came to him to teach him how to sing;[7] the Heliconian Muses are part of the creation of the identity of the Hesiodic narrator by himself. As we shall see, the local Muses in the *Dionysiaca* plays a different part. The reasons for the characterisation of the Muses and for the invocation of deities other than the Muses are the result, as well as the indication, of the evolution of the relationship between the narrator and the Muses.[8]

II. The shorter invocations: innovations on a well-known theme

1. Overview

When a narrator invokes a Muse, it is, in the greater majority of cases, to ask her to tell him the story which the narratee is going to receive; thus the Muses became the symbol for divine inspiration, a conception strengthened by Plato's portrayal of the epic poet writing while in a sort of trance which puts him out of his own mind, as the Muse takes possession of him and sings through him.

> κοῦφον γὰρ χρῆμα ποιητής ἐστιν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν, καὶ οὐ πρότερον οἷός τε ποιεῖν πρὶν ἂν ἔνθεός τε γένηται καὶ ἔκφρων καὶ ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ.
>
> For a poet is a light and winged and sacred thing, and is unable ever to indite until he has been inspired and put out of his senses, and his mind is no longer in him.[9]
>
> ποιητής, ὁπόταν ἐν τῷ τρίποδι τῆς Μούσης καθίζηται, τότε οὐκ ἔμφρων ἐστίν.
>
> Whenever a poet is seated on the Muses' tripod, he is not in his senses.[10]

This depiction assimilates the poet and the oracle, and denies the poet any conscious part in the production of his narrative. This is however a rather idealised depiction. The

[7] Hes. *Th.* 1 and 22-23.

[8] Another local denomination for the Muses is that of "Pimpleides", from the name of a fountain in Pieria sacred to them. It appears in the Palatine Anthology (5.206.3, Μούσαις Πιμπληίσι), and otherwise, as a periphrasis to designate the beauty of a song pleasing to the Muses in the *Cynegetica* (2.157, ἐρατῇ Πιμπληΐδι μολπῇ), and as a place name referring to the dwelling place of the Muses, in Call. *Del.* 7. Virgil has Libethrian Muses at *Eclogues* 7.21, and Sicelian ones at 4.1.

[9] Pl. *Ion* 534b.

[10] Pl. *Laws* 719c.

question of the relationship between the poet and the Muse has amply been addressed, in particular about Homer. On the one hand, the poet asking "Tell me, Muse" might be ranking himself among the narratees, implying that the voice which is heard throughout the poem is that of the Muse, or maybe his own, as he becomes a mouthpiece of the Muse speaking through him. This implication is strongest at the beginning of the *Iliad* with the request "Sing, Muse", which seems to indicate that the poem is in fact the actual 'song' of the Muse – while the later invocations asking her to "tell" are requests for information without the implication that what follows is a mediation of her own words. On the other hand, he may be asking the Muse to prompt him so that he will be able to repeat the story to his addressees himself. I. de Jong lists a number of studies supporting one view or the other;[11] she herself chooses the second one, and argues that the Homeric narrator really is the one

> who takes the initiative, demands (with an imperative) the goddess to sing about a theme he has chosen and for which he sets the tone, indicating also the starting-point of the story.[12]

She states that the narrator

> is not so much dependent on the Muses, but rather uses them to recommend his own activity as (primary) narrator.[13]

By invoking the Muse, the narrator places himself under her divine protection, so that his narrative acquires unquestionable reliability. A. Morrison insists on the omniscience which the narrator gains from his association with the Muse: although "wholly dependent on her for his knowledge of the events in the story", he nevertheless "plays an active role in the telling of the narrative".[14] He bases his analysis on the way the singer Demodocus portrays himself in the *Odyssey*, underlining the fact that he is αὐτοδίδακτος[15] in his art: he is the one who makes poetry out of the events brought to his knowledge by the Muses.

The proem of the *Dionysiaca* contains all the elements listed by I. de Jong as signs of the narrator's control over his narrative,[16] which would be proof enough of the idea that the narrator is really the one who tells the story if such a proof was still needed: by the

[11] De Jong, 2004:45-6.
[12] De Jong, 2004:47.
[13] De Jong, 2004: 46. See also page 52, as well as 2004a:6.
[14] Morrison, 2007:73-4.
[15] Hom. *Od.* 22.347.
[16] See chapter 1, section II.

time the *Dionysiaca* is composed, the questions which had arisen with Plato,[17] of a genuine belief in, and possession of the poet by, the Muses does not seem relevant anymore, as hinted by P. Murray in an overview of the status of Muse-invocations in early epic poems:

> Undoubtedly ancient poets use invocations to establish their authority, to guarantee the truth of their words, and to focus the attention of the audience at strategic points. But the invocations also express the poet's belief in divine inspiration. The point at which the appeal ceases to be genuine is, of course, problematic.[18]

The issue of a religious belief in the Muses becomes even more problematic by the Hellenistic age, when the relationship between the Muse and the poet has evolved, and the usage of invoking the Muse in the proem does not originate from the same sentiments. G. Wheeler explains that

> the force of convention may have underlain even bards' use of introits: the burden of the past would certainly have weighed upon later poets, who may also have written introits purely as a literary conceit. ... It must also be taken into consideration that at that time, the possible issue of an actual belief in the Muses, if there had been such a belief in the Archaic period, is most probably not relevant anymore.[19]

It is therefore reasonable to consider that Muse-invocations in Late Antiquity are no more than literary conceits; yet, as an expected feature of an epic, they provide the narrator with a most convenient occasion to assert his own personality and views of epic story-telling by offering his own version of this inescapable element of the literary genre he has chosen.

One issue is the reliability of the Muses. The Nonnian narrator chooses specific Muses to tell stories which might require a particular knowledge, or even invokes other deities when they seem more appropriate than Muses. This question of the reliability of the Muses has been latent since they asserted, in Hesiod's *Theogony*, that they were able to lie as well as to tell the truth:

> ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
> ἴδμεν δ᾽, εὖτ᾽ ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

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[17] Plato's theories, although very influential, were not necessarily what the Homeric narrator had in mind. This idea goes back, as far as we know, to Democritus: ποιητὴς δὲ ἅσσα μὲν ἂν γράφει μετ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ ἱεροῦ πνεύματος, καλὰ κάρτα ἐστίν… (Fr. 18 Diels-Kranz), "the works which the poet writes under the influence of divine possession and of a sacred inspiration, these are truly beautiful."

[18] Murray, 1981:90.

[19] Wheeler, 2002:37.

> We know how to say many things similar to genuine ones, but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things.[20]

P. Murray writes:

> The knowledge which Homer's Muses grant is primarily knowledge of the past – that is, knowledge as opposed to ignorance. Hesiod's Muses, on the other hand, are responsible for both truth and falsehood: what they give Hesiod is true knowledge as opposed to false.[21]

This issue of truthfulness is in keeping with the didactic tone of the Hesiodic works, even though it is striking that the narrator should refer to Muses which might be mendacious in such a poem as the *Theogony*. Nevertheless, the narrator relies on the Muses as sources, and this is probably what allows him to claim in the *Work and Days*: ἐγὼ δέ κε, Πέρση, ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην, "And, Perses, I would tell of true things."[22] This invocation emphasising the truthfulness of the Muse is also a first clue of the shifting nature of this Muse, of the ability to adapt to the poems which she is expected to inspire, or rather, as seen from the other side, of the importance for the narrator to depict a source of inspiration which will be best suited to the purport of his poem: it is important for the narrator of a didactic epic to invoke a trustworthy Muse.

Callimachus' *Aetia* offer an innovative narratorial situation in which the Muses and the narrator have a conversation – even though it happens in a dream in which the narrator sees himself meeting the Muses on mount Helicon and asking questions to them. Thus both the Muses and the narrator in the dream can be considered as secondary narrators:[23] they both possess knowledge and tell stories to each other in a dialogue. Through this dialogue the narrator acquires his *persona* of learned scholar, since he is able to converse with the Muses, even though they will always be more knowledgeable than he is, as M. Harder explains:

> In fr. 43.28–55 the catalogue of Sicilian cities and the subsequent question creates the impression that the young scholar-poet has learned a great deal from his researches, but the fact that in the end only the Muses are truly omniscient is brought to our attention when they have to supply additional information about the ritual at Zancle.[24]

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[20] Hes. *Th.* 27-8.
[21] Murray, 1981:91.
[22] Hes. *Op.* 10.
[23] The primary narrator being the dreaming Callimachus: see Harder, in De Jong, Nünlist &, Bowie, 2004:68. The context of the dream makes it possible for the Muses to speak directly in their own voice, since they are placed on the same narrative level as the secondary narrator himself; and the primary narrator reports their speech in the direct form as he recounts his dream.
[24] Harder, in De Jong, Nünlist & Bowie, 2004:80.

This situation of a dialogue between the Muse and the poet is also used by Ovid in the *Fasti*. The Muse there does not appear any more as a very reliable source, using expressions such as *ferunt*, "they say"; *mira, sed et scaena testificata loquar*, "I am telling a strange story, but it is attested by the stage"; *lacte mero veteres usi narrantur et herbis*, "ancient people are said to have lived on pure milk and herbs".[25] Ovid goes further than Callimachus in the reversal of the relationship between the poet and the Muse: far from being the omniscient source of the poet's knowledge, she uses here the same verbs as a human narrator, and even feels the need to refer to the existence of a scenic re-enactment of the myth she describes as a proof of the veracity of her narrative.

2. The specificity of the Nonnian Muses

Thus it is possible that by the time of Nonnus the Muse-invocation had become so much of a cliché that the narrator of the *Dionysiaca* felt the need to invoke specific Muses to ask them to tell specific stories. Callimachus, in the *Aitia*, had already done this to some extent: he makes Calliope intervene to tell about an epic episode included in the story of the Argonauts, and Clio, in her turn, to present a historiographical account of the origins of the habitants of Sicily's cities. We saw that in the *Dionysiaca*'s proems the Muses had been gradually transformed into Mimallones by the narrator, so that his sources of inspiration will be closely related to the Dionysian world.[26] In a rather similar way, the narrator invokes, in four more places in the course of the poem, Muses whose characteristics match with the passage in which they intervene. These four invocations consist of an unexceptional request in the form of an aorist imperative, εἴπατε, "tell", which separates the name of the Muses and the adjective which modifies it. The *Dionysiaca* is the only epic where these four adjectives – Κορυβαντίδες, μαχήμονες, Λιβανηίδες, Ὁμηρίδες – ever qualify the Muses.

[25] Ov. *Fast.* 4. 258, 4.236 and 4.369. J.F. Miller (1992:23) notes also that at 2.359, the Muse is invoked by Ovid to provide information on Latin elements – as opposed to foreign practices: Ovid's Muses therefore do not seem to be omniscient as other Muses are. Miller also remarks that Ovid often provides several explanations without choosing firmly any one of them.
[26] 1.34.

a/ Corybantic Muses

The first example is that of the Corybantic Muses:

> ἀλλά πολυσπερέων προμάχων ἡρωίδα φύτλην
> καὶ λασίων Σατύρων, Κενταυρίδος αἷμα γενέθλης,
> Σειληνῶν τε φάλαγγα δασυκνήμοιο γεραιοῦ
> καὶ στίχα Βασσαρίδων Κορυβαντίδες εἴπατε Μοῦσαι·
> οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ τόσα φῦλα δέκα γλώσσῃσιν ἀείσω
> οὐδὲ δέκα στομάτεσσι χέων χαλκόθροον ἠχώ,
> ὁππόσα Βάκχος ἄγειρε δορυσσόος·
>
> But the heroic breed of farscattered champions, the hairy Satyrs, the blood of the Centaur tribe, the bushyknee ancient and his phalanx of the Seilenoi, the regiment of Bassarids – do you sing me these, O Corybantic Muses! For I could not tell so many peoples with ten tongues, not if I had ten mouths pouring a voice of brass, all those which Bacchos gathered for his spearchasing.[27]

This is the only example, to our knowledge, of an invocation to Corybantic Muses. This choice can be explained by looking back at some of the preceding lines, in which the narrator tells how Rheia was the one to initiate the gathering of the troops when Dionysus, who was then under her care, was notified by Iris the messenger of Zeus that it was time for him to start the conquest of the Indians. Therefore Rheia sent her own messenger, Pyrrhichos[28] – a personification of the dance executed by the worshippers of Rheia, the Corybants – to warn all the creatures listed in the above passage. In this context heavily coloured by the presence of Rheia, who has been the guardian of Dionysus since Hermes brought him to her as a baby to keep him safe from Hera's jealousy,[29] Corybantian Muses, that is to say Muses who are themselves followers of Rheia, are likely to be the most trustworthy.[30]

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[27] 13.43-49.

[28] 13. 35-8.

[29] 9. 145-8.

[30] The exact identity of the Corybants is rather unclear. J. Harrison (1909: 309) quotes Strabo (fr.51) explaining that although the Corybants are often assimilated to other deities, such as Satyrs, Curetes, Dactyloi or Kabeiroi, no one can tell exactly who they are. According to this fragment from Strabo, they inhabit Samothrace, but from the myth of Zeus' birth in particular, it appears that they are linked to Rhea, dwelling with her in Cretan mountains. Diodorus Siculus explains that they were transported there by Rhea as colonists (3.55.8). They are male deities, like all the others mentioned above, as appears from pictorial representations on terracotta reliefs (Harrison 1909:320 and 335). This is also confirmed by Diodorus Siculus in the same passage: he writes that they are the sons of Rhea, τοὺς ἑαυτῆς υἱοὺς τοὺς ὀνομαζομένους Κορύβαντας. They are partly warriors and they dance the ritual dance in arms (pp.326-7). However, from the use the Nonnian narrator

And if the narrator choose to invoke the Muses at all in this passage, it is undoubtedly because it is customary to invoke them at the beginning of a catalogue since the Homeric narrator did it in the *Iliad*;[31] before the Nonnian narrator, catalogues have been introduced by a Muse-invocation in Dionysius' *Orbis descriptio* and in Quintus' *Posthomerica* – where this invocation is the only one in the entire epic.[32] In neither work are the Muses characterised by an epithet in the catalogue-introduction, but the manner of the invocation made by the narrator of the *Orbis Descriptio* does hint at the geographical nature of the epic: Μοῦσαι δ' ἰθύντατον ἴχνος ἄγοιεν, "May the Muses make my feet go as straight as possible", effecting here also the assimilation of the Muses to the genre of the epic.

The Nonnian narrator conforms further to the Homeric model in that his invocation is followed by an *aporia* motif "I could not tell..." in which he makes the connexion most obvious by the way he reuses images from the *Iliad*: the comparison between the Nonnian version:

> οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ τόσα φῦλα δέκα γλώσσῃσιν ἀείσω
> οὐδὲ δέκα στομάτεσσι χέων χαλκόθροον ἠχώ,

and the Homeric one:

> οὐδ᾽ εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ᾽ εἶεν,
> φωνὴ δ᾽ ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη, [33]

highlights the appropriation by the Nonnian narrator of the image of the ten tongues and ten mouths as well as the idea of bronze, although it is moved from the heart to the voice. Dionysius Periegetes also integrated the *aporia* motif in his poem close to a pre-catalogue invocation, without, however, any allusion to the Homeric wording,[34] probably due to the difference of content, since his epic is didactic and geographic. But the *aporia* motif and the invocation are disconnected: the *aporia* motif is the conclusion of a description of mount

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makes of the adjective Κορυβαντίς, it does not ensue that there is a gender problem in calling the Muses "Corybantian". Indeed the narrator qualifies as such any person or any thing in any way related to Rhea, for example the weapons or shouts of warriors who are part of the troops gathered by her (28.312, 30.56 and 141), or the Cretan mountains Ida and Dicte (3.325 and 8.114). The dwellings of Rhea are called "Corybantian courtyards" (14.247), and one of the Bassarids, coming from the Samothracian caves like the Cabeiroi, plays a "Corybantian tune" (43.311-13).

[31] *Il.* 2. 484-93.

[32] D.P. 651; Q.S. 12.306.

[33] *Il.* 2.488-90: "I could not tell over the multitude of them nor name them, not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, not if I had a voice never to be broken and a heart of bronze within me."

[34] D.P. 646: τίς ἂν πάντων ὄνομ' εἴποι; "Who could tell the names of all of them?"

Taurus, from which so many rivers flow that it is impossible to name them all, while the Muse-invocation introduces the following section and introduces a list of the people living on the slopes of mount Taurus. This seems to indicate that the narrator is aware that the epic genre has certain requirements following the Homeric example, and agrees to play by the established rules, even though he distances himself from mythological epic when he modifies the Homeric elements he integrates. These examples from the *Dionysiaca* and from the *Orbis Descriptio* illustrate how epic authors all feel the inescapable connexion to Homer and respond to it with their own original treatment.

Be that as it may, the Nonnian innovation does not reside in the composition of his introduction to the catalogue, but in the uniqueness of his source of inspiration: the Corybantic Muses are not the Homeric ones, who might not have been knowledgeable on the subject of the catalogue of Dionysus' troops since Homeric epic did not include these stories. Indeed, as a result of this specialisation, the part of the Homeric introduction to the catalogue which asserted the omniscience of the Muses is left out of the Nonnian version as well as, obviously, their being invoked as inhabitants of Olympus.[35] Thus the Nonnian narrator appropriates the literary device of the Muse-invocation only to interpret it in his own way, which means, as in the proem, making it more closely linked to the contents of his epic.

b/ Warrior Muses

The next of these four invocations is addressed to warrior Muses, in the account of the attack of the Bacchant women against Lycurgos:

> γαστέρι δ᾽ ἀντιβίου μανιώδεα χεῖρα βαλοῦσα,
> ἁπτομένη θώρηκος, ἀνέσπασεν ἅρπαγι παλμῷ,
> χωομένη δ᾽ ἔρρηξε—μαχήμονες, εἴπατε, Μοῦσαι,
> οἷον ἔην τότε θαῦμα δαϊζομένοιο χιτῶνος
> θηλυτέροις ὀνύχεσσι, σιδηρείου περ ἐόντος—·

[35] 2. 484-6:
ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχουσαι·
ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε πάρεστέ τε ἴστέ τε πάντα,
ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἷον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν
"Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos. For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things and we have heard only the rumour of it and know nothing."
Nowhere in the *Dionysiaca* are the Muses ever connected with mount Olympus.

> (Polyxo threw herself upon the head of the raving man, and tore out long locks of hair by the roots.) She laid a furious hand on the belly of her foe, seized the corselet, wrenched it off with predatory force, burst it in her rage – declare, O warrior Muses! What a wonder that a woman's nails should tear apart this gear, made of steel though it was![36]

Nowhere else do such Muses appear, and the idea of warrior Muses is rather contradictory to the usual image of the Muses as artists. It is as if there was such a thing as Muses specialised in the telling of warlike stories, and indeed the invocation is followed by a short catalogue listing in fourteen lines the deeds of eight Bacchants as they rush at Lycurgos and strike and torment him. Here again the transformation of the Muses fits the context of the passage, with two implications: the accuracy of the story reported by the narrator is increased by its having been told by Muses especially versed in warlike themes, and the intensity of the fight is highlighted by the warlike character of the Muses themselves. The presence of the narrator is visible not only in the invocation, but also in the two lines following it, an exclamation which seems to be aimed at the narratee as well as at the Muses: amazement is conveyed through the exclamatory pronoun οἷον, the word θαῦμα, and the concessive participle strengthened by the particle περ. What is more, θαῦμα is reminiscent of Homeric epic and of Hesiod, where it is recurrent in the expression θαῦμα ἴδεσθαι. I. de Jong notes that its use in the *Iliad* – both in narrator-text and in character-text – marks the admiration of a human narrator/speaker for a divine object.[37] It also occurs in the *Odyssey* and in the *Homeric Hymns*,[38] although it does not always refer to divine objects, and in Hesiod's *Theogony* about the ornaments made by the gods for Pandora, as well as in *The Shield*, about the details on the shield or the shield itself.[39] Although in the Nonnian invocation the word does not refer to an object but to an action, it calls to the mind of the supposedly learned narratee of the *Dionysiaca* the epic background, strongly underlining the extraordinary aspect of a scene in which not only

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[36] 21. 71-5.

[37] De Jong, 2004:49. The phrase refers to Hera's chariot at 5.725; to Rhesus' armour, which would be fit for a god to wear, at 10.439; to Achilles' armour at 18.83; to the tripods wrought by Hephaistos at 18.377.

[38] *Odyssey*: about divine objects at 8.366: Aphrodite's clothes; 13.108: the purple yarn that the Nymphs weave. Also about how queen Arete, Nausicaa's mother, is spinning some purple yarn, at 6.306, and about the walls of the city of the Phaeacians at 7.45. In the *Hymn to Demeter*, about the flowers which Persephone was gathering (l.427) and in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, about her golden dress (l.90).

[39] Hes. *Th.* 575 and 581: Pandora's veil and crown. Hes. *Sc.* 140 and 224: the shield itself and the representation of the bag containing the Gorgon's head.

women, but unarmed women attack an armoured man and still get the upper hand, thanks to the Dionysiac influence which gives them supernatural powers. The interruption created by the invocation breaks the illusion of the narrative, forcing the narratee to step back from the level of the *diegesis* and think of what he has just heard, the exclamation of the narrator guiding his reaction of surprise and admiration. The following catalogue illustrates the exclamation by giving examples of fighting Bacchants, so that the Muse-invocation here plays a rather complex role: it breaks the narrative's illusion to emphasise the intervention of the narrator and the extraordinary character of the scene, and it indirectly introduces the catalogue which is both an answer to the narrator's request – εἴπατε – and an illustration of the point made in the exclamation about the might of the Bacchants.

c/ Lebanese Muses

The device of adapting the Muses to the context next applies to the qualification of the Muses as Lebanese, yet again a Nonnian invention:

> ἀλλὰ θεμιστοπόλου Βερόης παρὰ γείτονι πέζῃ
> ὕμνον Ἀμυμώνης, Λιβανηίδες εἴπατε Μοῦσαι,
> καὶ βυθίου Κρονίδαο καὶ εὐύμνοιο Λυαίου
> Ἄρεα κυματόεντα καὶ ἀμπελόεσσαν Ἐνυώ.
>
> Come now, ye Muses of Lebanon on the neighbouring land of Beroë, that handmaiden of law! recite the lay of Amymone, the war between Cronides of the deep and well-sung Lyaios, the war of waters and the strife of the vine.[40]

This invocation, unlike all the Homeric invocations occurring in the course of the poem[41] and the two Nonnian invocations already analysed, is not inserted in the narrative of a battle, but marks the transition between the narrative of the arrival of Dionysus in Lebanon with the introduction of the vine to the land, and the story of Amymone/Beroe. Occurring in the first few lines of the book, it can be considered as a short proem with a request to the Muses and a summary of what they are asked to sing. What is more, this seems to be the only example of a request for the Muses to sing a "lay", rather than a request for precise elements as in previous epic poems. Such a phrasing as ὕμνον …

[40] 41.10-13.
[41] 2. 284, 2.762, 11.218, 14.508, 16.112. See De Jong, 2004:49 ff.

εἴπατε is reminiscent of the way the singers' poems, introduced in the *Odyssey* as embedded narratives, are introduced or referred to. Thus, Penelope asks Phemios to sing "one of the deeds" of men or gods, τῶν [ἔργων] ἕν ἄειδε.[42] With this invocation, the Muse appears as subordinated to the narrator who can summon her up and ask her to sing a song. But two versions of the story of Beroe follow the invocation: the first has no connection with Dionysus, while the second consists of the elements announced by it. This is the only instance in the *Dionysiaca* where the narrator introduces an episode with a proem-like Muse-invocation; however, it is curious that the first version to be presented should be the one not announced in the proem. This first version can be considered not only as a digression, since Dionysus plays no part in it, but also as a pause in the rhythm of the story since it is more descriptive than narrative. Is it possible that the narrator used this proem-like innovation to reassure the narratee that the story of Amymone would indeed appear at some point? Although the narratee might become impatient at the first version – because of its descriptive nature and of the absence of Dionysus in it – the Muse invocation reassures him by allowing him to expect an actual narrative: the story of the battle between Dionysus and Poseidon for the love of Beroe will be told, but not before the narrator has described Beroe the city, its population and its creation, and its link with Aphrodite. The narrator plays on the wording of the invocation: the emphasis is seemingly put on the "tale of Amymone", ὕμνον Ἀμυμώνης, but in fact it is the location of the Lebanese Muses, "on the neighbouring land of Beroe", Βερόης παρὰ γείτονι πέζῃ, which is the basis of the following passage. The narrator starts with the evocation of this land of Beroe, before giving the key to the trick at the end of the apostrophe to Beroe the city: ἥν περ Ἀμυμώνην ἐπεφήμισαν, "[Beroe] the same they named Amymone".[43] All along, the narrator has been playing on the confusion between Beroe the city and Beroe the girl: this last line in the apostrophe reveals to the narratee that the Muse-invocation, when it announced the story of Amymone, might have announced the story of the city as much as that of the girl, and that the first version is not so much a digression as might have been supposed at first. The battle between Dionysus and Poseidon announced in the

[42] *Od.* 1.339. Similarly, in the *Argonautica*, the Argonauts "sing a song" (ὕμνον ἄειδον, 2.161) accompanied by Orpheus, although the topic is not mentioned. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the girls of Delos sing a song for Apollo, ὕμνον ἀείδουσιν (161).This phrase is also used by the narrator about himself, for example in Hes. *Op.* 662: Μοῦσαι γάρ μ' ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀείδειν, "the Muses have taught me to sing a marvellous song."
[43] 41.153.

last lines of the invocation is finally recounted at length in the second version,[44] in which, however, the name of Amymone is completely left aside and replaced by Beroe.

Therefore there may be two reasons for the presence of a proem-like invocation here: first, it promises a story to the narratee in order to sustain his attention during the digression following the invocation; second, it announces somehow the rupture in style – a great part of the story of Amymone draws on lyric and elegiac themes and literary devices[45] – by pretending that a new narrative is starting within the main one.

Finally, with the invocation, the narrator brings back his own voice to the fore; it introduces, on the narratological level, the description of the city, which supposes an increased narratorial presence as the narrator directs the narratee's eye over the city – and the city of Beroe seems to be particularly important for the narrator, as shown by the lengthy litany-like apostrophe which concludes its description by praising her as the land of justice. [46]

d/ Homeric Muses

The last invocation to an unusual group of Muses is a direct allusion to Homeric poetry:

> συμμιγέες δὲ φάλαγγες ὁμοζήλοιο κυδοιμοῦ
> Βασσαρίδων στίχα πᾶσαν ἐμιτρώσαντο σιδήρῳ,
> καὶ πολέες φεύγοντες ἐνὶ κτείνοντο φονῆι,
> θεινόμενοι ξιφέεσσιν. Ὁμηρίδες, εἴπατε, Μοῦσαι,
> τίς θάνε, τίς δούπησεν ὑπ᾽ ἔγχεϊ Δηριαδῆος·
>
> So the mingled battalions fighting with one common ardour girded the whole company of Bassarids with a ring of steel; many were slain by one slayer in their flight, smitten by swords. O ye Muses of Homer! Tell me who died, who fell to the spear of Deriades![47]

Once more this invocation is an innovation of the Nonnian narrator, who, as was made plain in the proem, composes his *Dionysiaca* with the Homeric background in view. This time he makes a point of calling on the very Muses who inspired Homer as he is

[44] It starts at 41.155 and lasts until the end of book 43.
[45] See also chapter 7.
[46] 41.143-54. See Bajoni 2003: 198-9, on the encomiastic elements in the passage, and p.200, "Le mythe de l'origine de Beyrouth était justifié pour glorifier la ville."
[47] 32.181-5.

recounting a battle scene. The insertion of an invocation here draws the narratee's attention to this particular battle, a most decisive one since it takes place while Dionysus, turned mad by a Fury while Hera used the same trick as in the *Iliad* to distract Zeus,[48] is wandering on the mountains away from the war. Another reason for the presence of the invocation is that it is part of the Homeric combination of an invocation with a request to name warriors taking part in a certain action, even though in the Homeric model, the questions are about characters who have the upper hand in the fight, whereas the Nonnian narrator asks about the names of the dead,[49] an inversion in keeping with the relation of imitation and innovation which is that of the Nonnian narrator towards the Homeric model.

Thus it seems, as far as the Muses are concerned, that the plain Homeric Muses are not enough for the Nonnian narrator. Whenever he calls upon them in the course of the poem, he always calls upon specific Muses whose characteristics fit best the context in which they are invoked. One idea behind this innovation might be that these Muses will be the most reliable since they will also be the most knowledgeable on the subject the narrator asks them to tell about. But the interplay with the tradition of Muse-intervention goes further. I. de Jong hypothesises that the function of the four Homeric Muse-invocations occurring during battle scenes is to emphasise the superlative they contain;[50] such is not the function of the Nonnian invocations: they each play a different role in the composition of the text and draw the attention of the narratee not so much to an important event in the narrative as to narratorial interventions such as an imitation of the Homeric *aporia* motif, the expression of the narrator's own surprise that he wishes his narratee to share, the complex construction of the double episode of Beroe and the partiality of the narrator for it, and the importance of the Homeric model.

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[48] 32.98-118.

[49] *Il.* 2.762, 11.218-9, 14.508-10, 16.112-13.

[50] See the list of invocations in the preceding note. De Jong, 2004:50-1: "All four invocations contain a superlative, which in the most cases returns in the answer. ... I suggest that the appeal to the Muses increases the inherent force of the superlative."

3. The invocations to other deities[51]

Invocation of deities other than the Muses is less specific to the *Dionysiaca* than the invocation of particular Muses; some parallels to it can be found in Hellenistic and late antique epic, providing a new range of background for the Nonnian narrator's use of invocations, and highlighting at the same time how his epic resonates with other epic poems of all periods of Greek literature.

a/ The breaths of Phoebus

Three such invocations occur in the *Dionysiaca*; the first is addressed to the "breaths of Phoebus":

> ἀλλὰ μετὰ βροτέην προμάχων ἡρωίδα φύτλην
> καὶ στρατιὴν ζαθέην με διδάξατε, Φοιβάδες αὖραι.
>
> Now once more, ye breaths of Phoibos, after the tale of mortal heroes and warriors teach me also the host divine![52]

The choice of this addressee is rather unexpected; the invocation occurs at the beginning of book 14, just at the end of the catalogue of the Dionysian troops gathered by Rheia, which takes up all the preceding book. The narrator had invoked the Corybantic Muses at the beginning of the catalogue of book 13 because of the link with Rheia; but how does Phoebus-Apollo fit in this context, and why is he invoked at the beginning of this second catalogue instead of a deity linked to Rheia? He certainly is a deity fit for an invocation, having been associated with the Muses as early as in Homeric Hymns:

> ἐκ γὰρ Μουσάων καὶ ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
> ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ καὶ κιθαρισταί
>
> It is through the Muses and Apollo that there are singers upon the earth and players upon the lyre.[53]

and Plato presents him as the leader of the Muses.[54] Indeed the narrator of Apollonius' *Argonautica* chose him as his addressee instead of the Muses in the first lines of the proem

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[51] I do not include here the invocation to Homer, which has been studied in the previous chapter.
[52] 14.15-6.
[53] *Hymn to the Muses and Apollo* 25.2-3.
[54] Pl. *Laws* 653d: μούσας Ἀπόλλωνά τε μουσηγέτην

of his epic, and the Nonnian narrator referred to him in his proem as well.[55] As for the expression Φοιβάδες αὖραι, B. Gerlaud tentatively states that "la périphrase semble désigner les Muses";[56] it could also, in a more literal sense, designate inspiration itself. In any case, this invocation is the most difficult to account for, mainly because the context does not give a justification for it. The explanation might reside in the length of the catalogue – one and a half books – which causes the end of the catalogue not to coincide with the end of a book. In this situation the invocation signals to the narratee that the catalogue is still going on, and revives the interest at the beginning of the new book. The narrator is obviously aiming at ποικιλία in this invocation, with the unexpected addressee, the "breaths of Phoebus", and the use of a new verb, διδάξατε, not a traditional verb for Muse-invocations, which insists on the narrator's effort to narrate accurately: he is not simply told the facts, he is made to learn them, a guarantee for the narrator that he is particularly reliable.

b/ Nymph-invocations

The Nonnian narrator next invokes Nymphs during the account of Dionysus' pursuit of Beroe. Eros has smitten both Dionysus and Poseidon with his arrows; in the following passage,[57] Poseidon went away, so that Dionysus is left as the only suitor, watching Beroe in the forest from afar:

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[55] *Argonautica* 1.1-2: ἀρχόμενος σέο, Φοῖβε, παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν / μνήσομαι
"Beginning with thee, O Phoebus, I will recount the famous deeds of men of old."
Unlike in earlier epics, these first lines contain no invocation, but rather emphasise the narrator's role, in particular with the verb in the first person and the participle which refers to its subject. The Muses are replaced by Apollo; it has been argued that the explanation for it lies in the fact that Apollonius himself is named after this god, which is another way of underlining the presence of the narrator. It would imply that the narrator himself is called Apollonius and therefore is a projection of the author. On this, and on the resemblance of this proem to the proems of Homeric Hymns, see Cuypers in De Jong, Nünlist & Bowie, 2004:43 and 35ff. Also *Dionysiaca* 1.40-1: ἄλλῳ δίθροον αὐλὸν ὀπάσσατε, μὴ καὶ ὀρίνω / Φοῖβον ἐμόν· δονάκων γὰρ ἀναίνεται ἔμπνοον ἠχώ, "But leave for another the double-sounding pipe with its melodious sweetness, or I may offend my own Apollo."

[56] Gerlaud 1994:174, *ad.* 14.15-6. He notes that Oppian already used the term αὖρη metaphorically in the *Halieutica*, 4.114: αὖρῃ ... φιλοτησίῃ, a "breath of love", which emanates from female fishes to attract the males. - This periphrasis reappears at 41.224 in the context of the education of young Beroe.

[57] 42.55 ff.

καὶ γλυκερῆς ἀκόρητος ἔσω Λιβανηίδος ὕλης
οἰώθη Διόνυσος ἐρημαίῃ παρὰ νύμφῃ,
οἰώθη Διόνυσος. Ὀρειάδες εἴπατε Νύμφαι,
τί πλέον ἤθελεν ἄλλο φιλαίτερον, ἢ χρόα κούρης
μοῦνος ἰδεῖν δυσέρωτος ἐλεύθερος ἐννοσιγαίου;

Unsated, in the delicious forests of Lebanon, Dionysos was left alone beside the lonely girl. Dionysos was left alone! Tell me, Oreiad Nymphs, what could he wish for more lovely than to see the maiden's flesh, alone, and free from lovesick Earthshaker?[58]

The replacement of the Muses by Nymphs is justified by the lyric and bucolic context of this passage: of all invocations, it is the only one not to be linked to a warlike episode: the Nymphs are asked for information which is not related to the war, but to the theme of love in a natural setting of forest and mountains. Indeed the invocation is followed by a passage strongly reminiscent of lyric and elegiac poetry. Firstly the setting of the love pursuit, in the hills and forest, calls to mind Sappho's simile:

Ἔρος δ' ἐτίναξέ μοι
φρένας, ὠς ἄνεμος κὰτ' ὄρος δρύσιν ἐμπέτων.

Love shook my heart, like the wind falling on oaks on a mountain.[59]

The theme of the unattainable beloved is recurrent in lyric poetry, both Greek[60] and Latin, although here Dionysus seems content to follow her and admire her from afar, without indulging in the lamentations of the disappointed lover, unlike, for example, the shepherd Corydon in Virgil's Eclogue:

Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexim,
delicias domini, nec, quid speraret, habebat;
tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos
adsidue veniebat. Ibi haec incondita solus
montibus et silvis studio iactabat inani:
O crudelis Alexi, nihil mea carmina curas?
Nil nostri miserere? Mori me denique coges.

Corydon, the shepherd, was aflame for the fair Alexis, his master's pet, nor knew he what to hope. As his one solace, he could day by day come among the thick beeches with their shady summits, and there alone in fruitless passion fling these

[58] 42.60-4.
[59] Fr 47 Page & Lobel.
[60] *e.g.* Thgn. 2.1299-300: Ὦ παῖ, μέχρι τίνος με προφεύξεαι; ὥς σε διώκων / δίζημ'· "Boy, for how long will you flee away from me? How I chase and seek you!"

> artless strains to the hills and woods: "O cruel Alexis, care you naught for my songs? Have you no pity for me? You will drive me at last to death."[61]

Dionysus' admiration for Beroe's feet[62] also draws on lyric and elegiac themes: the admiration for the mistress' body parts is a conceit of elegiac poetry. In late antique Greek poetry, it can be found in one of Philostratus' letters:

> μηδὲν ἤτω σοι μεταξὺ τῆς γῆς καὶ τοῦ ποδός. μὴ φοβηθῇς· δέξεται τὴν βάσιν ἡ κόνις ὡς πόαν. ὦ ῥυθμοὶ ποδῶν φιλτάτων, ὦ καινὰ ἄνθη, ὦ γῆς φυτεύματα, ὦ φιλήματα ἐρηρεισμένα.
>
> Let nothing come between the earth and your foot. Do not be afraid: the dust will receive your tread as if it were grass. O shape of most beloved feet! O flowers of a new kind! O plants grown from earth! O kisses firmly imprinted![63]

Finally the Nonnian narrator emphasises, through the point of view of Dionysus, the natural beauty of Beroe - κάλλος, ὅ περ φύσις εὗρε,[64] who makes no use of make-up or mirrors. This is one of the reproaches made by the narrator of Propertius' elegies to Cynthia:

> *… quid Orontea crinis perfundere murra,*
> *teque peregrinis vendere muneribus,*
> *naturaeque decus mercato perdere cultu,*
> *nec sinere in propriis membra nitere bonis?*
> *crede mihi, non ulla tuae est medicina figurae:*
> *nudus Amor formae non amat artificem.*
>
> Why do you drench your hair in Orontean myrrh
> and sell yourself with foreign enticements?
> You lose your natural charm with storebought sophistication,
> you don't allow your limbs their native splendor.
> Believe me, there's no way to improve your figure:
> nude Love doesn't love artifice in beauty.[65]

The choice of the Nymphs is also fitting for the erotic context as well as for the setting of the scene in hills and forest: Nymphs are the companions of Aphrodite and Eros on the

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[61] Virgil, *Eclogue 2* 1-7.

[62] 42.71-3:

καὶ κύσε νηρίθμοισι φιλήμασι λάθριος ἕρπων
χῶρον, ὅπη πόδα θῆκε, καὶ ἣν ἐπάτησε κονίην
παρθενικὴ ῥοδόεντι καταυγάζουσα πεδίλῳ·

> He kissed with a million kisses the place where she set her foot, creeping up secretly, and kissed the dust where the maiden had trod making it bright with her shoes of roses.

[63] Philostratus, *Epistulae et dialexeis*, 1.18.18-22. I translate. A list of passages from Greek and Latin poetry on the theme of the admiration of feet can be found in Hodkinson 2007:3 ff (first section).

[64] 42.76 The whole passage is 42.74-85.

[65] Prop. 1.2.2-7.

mountains according to Anacreon,[66] and in one of Theocritus' *Idylls*, the narrator explains how he has learnt a song from the Nymphs on the hills and invokes them at the end of the poem.[67] Unlike the Muses, it is common for Nymphs to be referred to with a detail about the kind of landscape they inhabit;[68] the adjective Ὀρειάδες, "of the hills", enhances the bucolic tone of the passage. The other example of a Nymph-invocation in non-lyric poetry is found in Colluthus' epyllion *The Rape of Helen*, an even bolder choice of the narrator since this invocation occurs at the very first line of the proem,[69] ousting the Muses from this poem altogether. The reason for this change is once again the contents of the narrative: the entire first half of the *Rape of Helen* takes place in a bucolic landscape under one of the peaks of mount Ida, where the three goddesses come to subject themselves to Paris' judgement as he is shepherding his sheep there. In such a context it is likely that the Homeric Muse appears too much linked to warlike epic to be the best source of inspiration. Thus this invocation is another example of how the Nonnian narrator plays with genres and is able to incorporate various tones in his epic; the transition is effected by the invocation to the Nymphs, with, in addition, the clue contained in the question, which is not a proper request but rather a rhetorical question. It indicates that knowledge of facts is not what is at stake in the invocation, but rather style and the form in which the story is going to be told.

Another invocation to Nymphs occurs in character-text in the *Dionysiaca*, which also signals a parallel with bucolic poetry. Actaeon's dogs lament, in a directly reported speech, the loss of their master:

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[66] Fragment 357 Campbell (12 Page), l.1-5. The poem is addressed to Dionysus:
ὦναξ, ὧι δαμάλης Ἔρως
καὶ Νύμφαι κυανώπιδες
πορφυρῆ τ' Ἀφροδίτη
συμπαίζουσιν, ἐπιστρέφεαι
δ' ὑψηλὰς ὀρέων κορυφάς·
Lord, with whom Love the subdue and the blue-eyed Nymphs and radiant Aphrodite play, as you haunt the lofty mountain peaks...

[67] *Idyll* 7.91-3: πολλὰ μὲν ἄλλα / Νύμφαι κὴμὲ δίδαξαν ἀν' ὤρεα βουκολέοντα / ἐσθλά, "Afield with my herds on the hills I also have learnt of the Nymphs ... many a good song" and 148: Νύμφαι Κασταλίδες Παρνάσιον αἶπος ἔχοισαι, "O ye Castalian Nymphs that dwell on Parnassus' height…"

[68] See the extensive list given by Ballentine, 1904:110. Coleman 1977:101: "Like Pan [the Nymphs] not only protect the herdsmen but also inspire their music, and so become indistinguishable from the Muses." See also pp.212-3, where he refers also to the *Boukolikai Mousai* of Theocritus' *Id.* 9.28.

[69] Line 1: Νύμφαι Τρωιάδες, ποταμοῦ Ξάνθοιο γενέθλη, "Ye Nymphs of Troy, children of the river Xanthus."

σήμερον Ἀκταίωνά τις ἥρπασεν, εἴπατε, πέτραι,
πῇ δρόμον ἀμφιέπει κεμαδοσσόον, εἴπατε, Νύμφαι·

Today someone has stolen Actaion: tell us, Rocks, whither he plies his pricketchasing course? Tell us, Nymphs![70]

In the same landscape of woods and hills, the narrator creates a scene that is pathetic – as well as parodic, probably, in that it lends speech to animals. It finds a parallel in a lamentation to the Nymphs in Bion's *Lament for Adonis*, in a similar episode where the death of the young hunter is also a matter of grief for his dogs:

τῆνον μὲν περὶ παῖδα φίλοι κύνες ὠρύονται
καὶ Νύμφαι κλαίουσιν Ὀρειάδες· ἁ δ' Ἀφροδίτα
λυσαμένα πλοκαμῖδας ἀνὰ δρυμὼς ἀλάληται

His own dogs were howling around the young man, and the Nymphs of the hills are weeping; Aphrodite wanders the woods with unkempt hair.[71]

Thus it appears that the Nymphs are fitting addressees for invocations occurring in lyric and bucolic passages, as was also exemplified in the opening invocation of Colluthus' epyllion. In the *Dionysiaca*, they still signal the narrator's experimentations with genres, here as he introduces a lyric passage in his epic: they introduce a few lines where ποικιλία is predominant in the narrator's composition of the poem.

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[70] 5.459-460.

[71] *Lament for Adonis* 18-20. I translate. Interestingly, the parallel with the Bacchants which can be seen in the detail of the unkempt hair is pursued in the following lines which describe how her feet are torn by the rocks and thorns as she wanders in her grief: in the *Dionysiaca* it is one of the particularities of the Bacchants that they can walk barefoot without being wounded. Nymphs are also linked to the story of a hunter in Nicander; however in this story the hunter does not die, and the Nymphs take their name from him:

ἅσσα τ' Ἰωνιάδες Νύμφαι στέφος ἁγνὸν Ἴωνι
Πισαίοις ποθέσασαι ἐνὶ κλήροισιν ὄρεξαν.
ἤνυσε γὰρ χλούνηνδε μετεσσύμενος σκυλάκεσσιν,
Ἀλφειῷ καὶ λύθρον ἑῶν ἐπλύνατο γυίων
ἑσπέριος, Νύμφησιν Ἰαονίδεσσι νυχεύσων.

[The second kind of gilliflowers are] those which the Ioniad Nymphs proffered in their yearning as a pure chaplet to Ion in the lands of Pisa; for, pursuing a wild boar with his hounds, he had overtaken it, and in Alpheus' stream he washed the bloodstains from his limbs at eve before passing the night with the Ioniad Nymphs. (Fragment 74 Gow&Scholfield 4-8).

c/ Fates and rocks in character-text

Two more invocations appear in character text. First, Cheirobie requests the Fates for information as she laments the death of Morrheus:

> εἴπατε, Μοῖραι·
> τίς φθόνος Ἰνδῴην πόλιν ἔπραθε; τίς φθόνος ἄφνω
> ἔχραεν ἀμφοτέρῃσι θυγατράσι Δηριαδῆος;
>
> Tell me, Fates; what jealousy destroyed the Indian city? What jealousy came down suddenly upon both daughters of Deriades?[72]

Not being a primary-narrator, she has no reason to invoke the Muses; the Moirai fit best in the context of mourning as they are the personification of fate. The other difference with invocations made by the primary-narrator is that this one is purely rhetorical and part of the pathetic tone of the speech, since Cheirobie's request will not be fulfilled. This is made even more clearly in the second invocation, which takes place in the course of Ariadne's lamentations as she realises that Theseus has gone away:

> εἴπατε πέτραι,
> εἴπατέ μοι δυσέρωτι· τίς ἥρπασεν ἀστὸν Ἀθήνης ;
>
> Tell me, ye rocks, tell the unhappy lover – who stole the man of Athens ?[73]

Of course this request will not be fulfilled either.

Finally, Cheirobie's invocation to the Fates is mirrored by an apostrophe from the primary narrator, which, although it is not an invocation, is worth mentioning here as an address from the narrator to an entity external to the *diegesis*:

> ἵλατε, Μοῖραι,
> οὐ πλοκάμους ἐλέαιρε μαραινομένοιο καρήνου,
> οὐ ῥοδέην ἀκτῖνα κονιομένοιο προσώπου·
>
> [But furious Morrheus was not content with slaying Alcimache...]. Forgive me, ye Fates! He had no pity for the tresses of that head which was soon to wither, none for the rosy glow of that face soiled in the dust.[74]

The narrator does not ask for help with the telling of his narrative, but is asking for the Fates' benevolence as he is about to tell a narrative which might anger them. Such appeals to the benevolence of the deities are not specific to the Nonnian narrator. The narrator of

[72] 40.170-2.
[73] 47.336-7.
[74] 30.213-5.

the *Argonautica* apostrophises the Muses in a similar way[75] in a polemical passage to which we shall come back in chapter 4.

Like the Muses, the Fates are external to the *diegesis*, and exist on the level of the narrating, in the situation of enunciation created by the narrator. Therefore they too could have an influence on the composition of the narrative; although in this passage, the point is that they do not: in spite of them, the narrator recounts the battle in all its violence, and seems to imply that the Bacchants killed by Deriades met an inappropriate fate, dying while young and pretty, and that Deriades is forcing the Fates' hand as he is causing the death of the Bacchants, as if the Fates failed in keeping them alive until their time had come, until they had fulfilled their expected due of fate.

III. Rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions are another device belonging to the category of narratorial interventions concerned with inspiration and traditional ways of asking for it. Although the Nonnian occurrences are not accompanied by a Muse invocation, I will study them in this chapter because of their kinship with their Homeric precedent. The Nonnian narrator employs this device twice:[76]

(1) 22.187-90. Oiagros, king of Thrace and the father of Orpheus, is fighting on Dionysus' side:

> ἔνθα τίνα πρῶτον, τίνα δ᾽ ὕστατον Ἄιδι πέμπων
> Βιστονίης Οἴαγρος ἀπέθρισεν ἀστὸς ἀρούρης,
> κτείνων ἄλλοθεν ἄλλον, ἑῆς ἀλόχοιο τελέσσας
> ἔργα φατιζομένης ἐπιδευέα Καλλιοπείης;
>
> Here whom first, whom last did Oiagros send to Hades, as the man of Bistonia sliced them down, killing one after another, doing deeds that needed Calliopeia his consort, to tell them!

(2) 30.296-7. Athena has just given a long speech of encouragement to Dionysus.

> ἔνθα τίνα πρῶτον, τίνα δ᾽ ὕστατον ἔκτανε Βάκχος,
> ὁππότε μιν θάρσυνε μόθων ἀκόρητος Ἀθήνη;

[75] A.R. 4.984: ἴλατε Μοῦσαι.

[76] There are three more rhetorical questions in the *Dionysiaca*, but they are interrogative gnomic utterances rather than requests for information. See chapter 8.

> Now whom first, whom last did Bacchos slay, when Athena insatiate of battle made him brave?

The phrasing of the questions, "whom first, whom last", is directly copied from Homer, who uses it several times in the *Iliad*.[77] I. de Jong interprets these occurrences as questions "posed", to which no answer is expected. She adds: "although here an answer follows, the illocutionary force of the question-form is not so much a request for information as an expressive statement",[78] and she considers that the function of these questions is to enhance a scene or the deeds of a fighter. She then goes on to analyse four short Muse-invocations[79] requesting names of outstanding characters, which all contain a superlative: "Tell me, Muse, who was the first / the best…". In this light, I would like to interpret the "whom first, whom last" questions as a form of Muse invocation, although the Muse is not present in them. For whom is the narrator addressing? These questions are not of the same type as questions directed to the characters,[80] nor can it be considered that they are addressed to the narratee whose knowledge is naturally assumed to be inferior to the narrator's. Thus it seems that they can only be addressed to an inspiring deity. True, they function as markers of added emphasis, but they are disguised as requests for information. These questions do have answers, which are given immediately in the form of short catalogues of names – unlike proper rhetorical questions, to which the answer is obvious; for example *Iliad* 17.260 ff: "Who could recount the name of [so many] others… ?" to which the implied answer is, "Nobody".

This applies to the two Nonnian occurrences as well. Although I. de Jong distinguished between these short questions according to whether they contained a Muse-invocation or not, this cannot be done in the *Dionysiaca* since the first category is non-existent.

Here again the game of imitation and variation on Homeric devices is played by the Nonnian narrator. Instead of providing lists of names, he provides lists of anonymous

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[77] 5.703 and 11.299 about Hector, and 16.692 about Patroclus (in the second person).

[78] De Jong 2004:49. She refers to Lyons 1977:755: "When we pose a question, we merely give expression to, or externalize, our doubt." But it seems that De Jong's interpretation uses a wider definition of question "posed", as a reinforced illocutionary statement: the questions referred to here seem to be more than merely the expression of the narrator's doubt, since they are followed by an answer in the shape of a catalogue of names.

[79] 2.761-2, 11.218-20, 14.508-10 and 16.112-13.

[80] See chapter 7.

characters, referred to through indefinite pronouns, focussing, in the case of Oiagros, on the wounds inflicted, in a catalogue reminiscent of the Homeric ones, and, in the case of Dionysus, on the numbers of the slain rather than on their identity – ἑκατοντάδα, πολλοῖς, at 30.298-9. Then are some names mentioned, but the list is much less dense than the Homeric ones, as it also includes much detail on the wounds and the manner of death of Dionysus' enemies.[81] This is no doubt meant to emphasise the almost magical powers of Dionysus, killing men with vine leaves or with his thyrsus.

We noted that, as in Homer, these Nonnian questions do not contain a Muse-invocation, but this is not completely true of the first occurrence, where an indirect, so to speak, invocation appears, as the narrator remarks that Oiagros' deeds would require Calliopeia's skills to be told. The narrator here engages in yet another game of scholarly knowledge, both on the level of the form and of the contents of his poem. One the one hand, he creates this variant of a Muse-invocation, addressed to a specific Muse, which he introduces by the rhetorical question pointing at the presence of inspiring deities. On the other hand, he brings out his mythological knowledge and reminds the narratee that Oiagros is best known for having been the partner of the Muse Calliopeia, and the father of Orpheus.[82] This narratorial intervention is cleverly contrived so as to show off the narrator's skills both in organising his subject matter and in appropriating traditional devices.[83]

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[81] 30. 298-326.

[82] See for example A.R. 1.23-5.

[83] Apart from the rhetorical questions which I will study in chapter 8, the *Dionysiaca* offers one more occurrence of a rhetorical question, which appears as a genuine "posed" question – to which no answer is expected – concerning Cadmos arriving in Greece at the end of his travels at 4.252-9. The question creates a comparison between the influences of Danaos and Cadmos, and underlines the uselessness of the contributions of the former:

ἔνθα Πανελλήνεσσι νεώτερα δῶρα τιταίνων
ἀρχεκάκου Δαναοῖο φερέσβιον ἔκρυφε τέχνην,
ὑδροφόρου Δαναοῖο· τί γὰρ πλέον εὗρεν Ἀχαιοῖς,
εἴ ποτε χαλκείῃσι πεδοσκαφέεσσι μακέλλαις
χάσματος οὐδαίοιο χυτὸν κενεῶνα κολάψας
δίψιον Ἄργος ἔπαυσε, κονιομένοις δὲ πολίταις
ὑγρὰ ποδῶν ἐπίβαθρα πόρεν, ξεινήιον ὕδωρ,
ἐκ βυθίων λαγόνων ὀλίγον ῥόον;

> There he was to present newer gifts to all Hellenes, and to make them forget the lifebringing art of Danaos the master-mischiefmaker, Danaos the water bringer: for what good did he do for the Achaians, if once he had dug the ground with his brazen pickaxes, and pecking at the flooded hollow of the gaping earth quenched the thirst of Argos? if he made wet the steppings

IV. Conclusion

Invocations to Muses and to other deities in the *Dionysiaca* emphasise narratorial choices and highlight the role of the narrator in the composition of his poem. They underline narratorial interventions such as a play with the Homeric model, the insertion of a passage important for the narrator, or a change in the style of the poem. While these invocations draw the *Dionysiaca* into the circle of traditional epics, their use is renewed by the narrator who turns them into key elements for the understanding of the composition of certain episodes of the story. Muses invocations as such had been almost abandoned by previous narrators, who preferred to call upon one specific Muse, or on another deity; but the Nonnian narrator devised a way of returning to the well-known group of Muses, even though he gave them in turn some unexpected traits, which themselves are part of his desire for *poikilia* and of his appropriation of the traditional epic devices.

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of their feet for dusty people, and brought up a streamlet from the deep caves – the stranger's gift of water? (But Cadmos brought gifts of voice and thought for Hellas...)

Chapter 4. The Nonnian narrator's conception of narrating

According to Mieke Bal's system, the narrator's focalization is responsible for the transformation of the fabula into a story.[1] But although the primary narrator-focalizer is not a character in the story, his focalization is not imperceptible: he is a distinct, if rather abstract, focalizer, and the story is the result of his point of view.

The work of the narrator can be perceptible through the story, in which case the narrator is overt, or imperceptible, in which case he is covert. In the proems of the *Dionysiaca*, the narrator is overt, which was to be expected since it is his task to operate there the transition between the real world and the fictitious one in which the fabula is set.

In the rest of the poem, the Nonnian narrator is less conspicuously and less constantly overt, since he is external, and therefore does not take part in the events. However, he regularly intervenes in the narrative in the first person; such passages provide information on the identity of the narrator and on his attitude towards his poem.

These interventions prevent the Nonnian narrator from becoming an abstract entity who gives the impression that the story "tells itself";[2] on the contrary, he makes himself perceptible, not only through comments on the story, but also by reflecting on the act of story-telling itself. He is therefore a self-conscious narrator, a concept that I. de Jong defines as "a narrator who is aware of and reflects on his own role as narrator, against narrators 'who seem unaware that they are writing, thinking, speaking, or reflecting' a literary work."[3] Indeed the narrator of the *Dionysiaca* regularly makes his voice directly heard in various comments about the story and its variants, about his knowledge and sources, to inform his narratee of the existence of other versions, or to explain his choices.

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[1] Bal, 1985:5-6.

[2] Lubbock, 1921:113.

[3] De Jong, 1987:46-7. She quotes Booth 1961:155.

I. The Nonnian narrator in space and time

From a narratological point of view, author and narrator are two distinct entities. The author of the *Dionysiaca* is Nonnus, about whom we do not know much; he does not refer to himself, so that the *Dionysiaca* contains no biographical information about him. The narrator is a "function consisting of the verbal presentation of the story"[4]: he is the entity who builds the story out of the events of the fabula. The Nonnian narrator, being external to the fabula, has no name and strictly speaking no physical existence; however, on the level of the enunciation, he does have a voice and a personality which were first brought to light in the proem, and reappear from time to time through his interventions in the story.

The narration in the *Dionysiaca* takes place after the events it relates, as is usual for epic poems and in fact for the greatest majority of narratives. G. Genette calls it "narration *ultérieure*, … position classique du récit au passé, sans doute de très loin la plus fréquente."[5] The narrator gives indications as to the relative chronology of the events he narrates. In book 13 he explains that the battle against Typhon happened long before the Indian war:

> ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν προτέροισιν ἐν ἀνδράσιν ἤγαγεν αἰών.
> τοὺς δὲ λίγα κροτέοντας ὑπ' εὐρύθμῳ χθόνα ταρσῷ
> καὶ Στάβιος καὶ Στάμνος ἐπὶ κλόνον ὥπλισαν Ἰνδῶν.
>
> But all this was done in time gone by, among men of a more ancient generation. Here were men armed for the Indian tumult by Stabios and Stamnos, loudly rattling on the ground in drilled step.[6]

τὰ μέν refers to an analepsis recounting in the previous lines the battle of Zeus against Typhon. It is clearly opposed to τοὺς δέ designating the men taking part in the Indian war. The expression προτέροισιν ἀνδράσιν αἰών establishes a clear separation between the men of those times, of a different generation, and both the characters taking part in the Indian war and the narrator himself. But the characters and the narrator are not contemporaneous, as shown in this comment on the wrestling competition during the games given for Opheltes:

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[4] De Jong, 1987:xxvii.
[5] Genette, 1972:224.
[6] 13.498-500

> οὐ γὰρ ἔην τότε θεσμὸς ὁμοίιος, ὃν πάρος αὐτοὶ
> ὀψίγονοι φράσσαντο, τιταινομένων ὅτε δεσμῶν
> αὐχενίων πνικτήρι πόνῳ βεβαρημένος ἀνὴρ,
> νίκην ἀντιπάλου μνηστεύεται ἔμφρονι σιγῇ,
> ἀνέρα νικήσαντα κατηφέι χειρὶ πατάξας.
>
> For there was then no such law as in latter days their successors invented, for the case when a man overwhelmed by the suffocating pain of a noose round the neck testifies the victory of his adversary with significant silence, by tapping the victor with submissive hand.[7]

Here τότε does not refer to a specific event in the story, but is used to create an opposition between *then* and *now*; the narrator stands back from the time of the fabula to comment on a change that occurred between this time and his own time. Therefore the narration takes place after the time of the men who decreed this law, which he presents as well established as he speaks; these men themselves lived after the characters of the fabula. These indications place the fabula in a mythical past, but in the same world as that of the narrator and narratee.

Finally the narrator positions himself in time in relation to Homer, with whom he has a rather complex relationship, as was shown by the study of the proem; he calls on him six times in all,[8] to ask for inspiration.

A few passages in the narrator-text make it possible to determine the approximate place from which the narrator writes: in the proem, he hints at Egypt, near the island of Pharos, Φάρῳ παρὰ γείτονι νήσῳ; another clear hint is ἐμοῦ Νείλοιο in book 26.[9] In that respect, although we shall not try to go too deep into "the always thorny topic of the relations between narrator and author"[10], the persona of the narrator is rather close to the identity of the author. The archetypal model of the encounter of a poet with the Muses is found in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the narrator tells how the Muses came to inspire him as he was shepherding his sheep on the slopes of Helicon.[11] This scene is remembered by authors throughout the centuries: in the *Aitia*, mount Helicon appears as a privileged location for the communication between poet and Muses, as the Callimachean narrator presents himself as a shepherd watching over his sheep (ποιμένι μῆλα νέμοντι) near the

[7] 37.605-9.
[8] 1.37, 13.50, 25.8, 25.265, 25.269, 42.181.
[9] 1.13 and 26.238.
[10] Genette, 1991, p.69.
[11] Hes. *Th.* 22-5.

spring Hippocrene (παρ' ἴχνιον ὀξέος ἵππου, "near the swift horse's footprint").[12] In doing so he takes on

> "the guise of the archaic poet by becoming (in his dream) a youth on Helicon. However, he locates his poetic persona and his aesthetic in Libya or Egypt."[13]

In Quintus' *Posthomerica*, it is also the figure of the shepherd that the narrator remembers, as he tells of his encounter with the Muses:

> ὑμεῖς γὰρ πᾶσάν μοι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θήκατ' ἀοιδήν,
> πρίν μοι ἔτ' ἀμφὶ παρειὰ κατασκίδνασθαι ἴουλον,
> Σμύρνης ἐν δαπέδοισι περικλυτὰ μῆλα νέμοντι
>
> You were the ones who filled my mind with poetry,
> Even before the down was spread across my cheeks,
> When I was tending my noble sheep in the land of Smyrna.[14]

However, in these two cases, the narrator does not show himself as narrating from mount Helicon, but from places corresponding to the actual location of the author. Therefore the Hesiodic model is more and more left aside: it is dream material in Callimachus, and provides the figure of the shepherd in Quintus, but does not appear any more in the *Dionysiaca*, where the Nonnian narrator did not choose to assume any characteristic of the *persona* of the archaic poet; he is no shepherd and, as far as location is concerned, only speaks of Egypt. In doing so, he built a narratorial *persona* that is close to the author himself, or rather, the poet Nonnus innovates as he does not try to make his narrator correspond to a poetical *topos*, but rather gives him a *persona* reminiscent of his own identity. This is in keeping with the relationship to the Muses as exemplified in the proem: while he does want to be part of the epic tradition and to comply with the genre's requirements, he also claims his independence, here by building a narratorial figure that is less reminiscent of earlier narrators than of the poet Nonnus himself.[15]

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[12] *Aitia*, fr.2 Pf. line 1.

[13] Acosta-Hughes & Stephens, 2002:249-50. See also Harder, 2012 vol.2: 99.

[14] Q.S. 12.308-10. F. Vian (1969 *ad* 12.312) lists the parallels with Hesiod and Callimachus in these lines.

[15] Indeed evidence from the *Dionysiaca* fits with the very little information about Nonnus that can be gathered from external sources, namely, that he was from Panopolis and wrote the *Dionysiaca* and the *Paraphrase*. See also Chamberlayne, 1916:40-41.
Anthologia Graeca 9.198 – probably an allusion to the Gigantomachies of the *Dionsyiaca*, if we consider that this might have been the *sphragis* for this work. (See *Brill's New Pauly* vol.9, *s.v.* Nonnos.):
Νόννος ἐγώ· Πανὸς μὲν ἐμὴ πόλις, ἐν Φαρίῃ δὲ
ἔγχεϊ φωνήεντι γονὰς ἤμησα Γιγάντων.

II. Self-conscious narrating: the reference to sources

1. References to anonymous sources through impersonal verbs, in conformity with epic precedents

The narrator's presence is also made perceptible by his interventions within, and about, the story. When it comes to inserting secondary myths or knowledge, he sometimes refers to external and anonymous sources to establish the link with the main story. Thus, he relies on hearsay when he has to deal with information concerning events from distant times or places, for example as he describes the Indus: he does not present the facts as first-hand, and compares the Indus to the Nile, better known by his narratee.

> τοῖα μὲν ἑπταπόροιο φατίζεται εἴκελα Νείλου,
> Ἰνδῴου ποταμοῖο φέρειν γένος.
>
> Such are said to be the doings of the mighty Indian river like sevenmouth Nile.[16]

He exerts the same caution in referring to events having happened in a mythical, distant past, when he compares the meal Brongos prepared for Dionysus to the one Molorcos provided for Heracles on his way to fight the lion: οἷα Κλεωναίοιο φατίζεται ἀμφὶ Μολόρκου, when he recounts the story of Cadmos and Harmonia in Libya: κεῖθι καί, ὡς ἐνέπουσι, παρὰ Τριτωνίδι λίμνῃ / Ἁρμονίῃ παρέλεκτο ... Κάδμος, and when he describes Dionysus' horns by comparing them to the horns of Acheloös: ὡς κερόεις

"I am Nonnos; Panopolis is my city, and in Pharos I mowed down the race of Giants with bloody sword."

Agathias quotes lines 42 and 43 of book 1 of the *Dionysiaca* in a paragraph where he discusses the punishment of flaying: *Historiae* 4.23.5.

ὧν δὴ καὶ Νόννος, ὁ ἐκ τῆς Πανὸς τῆς Αἰγυπτίας γεγενημένος, ἔν τινι τῶν οἰκείων ποιημάτων, ἅπερ αὐτῷ Διονυσιακὰ ἐπωνόμασται, οὐκ οἶδα ἐφ' ὅτῳ ὀλίγα ἄττα τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος πέρι ἀφηγησάμενος (οὐ γὰρ δὴ τῶν προηγουμένων ἐπῶν ἐπιμέμνημαι) εἶτα ἐπάγει·

Ἐξότε Μαρσύαο θεημάχον αὐλὸν ἐλέγξας
Δέρμα παρηώρησε φυτῷ κολπούμενον αὔραις.

"On this subject Nonnos, from Panopolis in Egypt, in one of his own poems, which is called by him *Dionysiaca*, after having said I don't know what little something about Apollo (indeed I do not remember the preceding words), adds then: ..."

The Suda has a reference to Nonnos, *s.v.* Νόνναι:

ἰστέον δὲ ὡς ἔστι καὶ Νόννος κύριον, Πανοπολίτης, ἐξ Αἰγύπτου, λογιώτατος· ὁ καὶ τὸν παρθένον Θεολόγον παραφράσας δι' ἐπῶν.

"Note that there is a name "Nonnos", [one from] Panopolis in Egypt, most learned; even he who paraphrased the chaste Theologian in epic style."

[16] 26.245-6.

Ἀχελῷος ἀείδεται.[17] These references to hearsay are consistent with the spatial and temporal situation of the narrator. He gives himself the *persona* of a scholarly narrator, who possesses the knowledge needed to tell his story, but who also did research on specific details. Although he made it clear in the proem that he was not going to be a mere mouthpiece of the Muses, yet he does not shy away from appearing as a medium when he has to ensure the transmission of details, of additional facts he has learned from hearsay.

This usage of impersonal verbs in the third person is rather common in epic literature. The verb φασι is used in Homer, Apollonius and Quintus when the narrator wants to indicate that he has obtained his knowledge from an external source.[18] The Nonnian narrator uses ἐνέπουσι and φατίζεται, verbs that do not occur in that particular inflectional form in Homeric epic, but rather in the later works of Apollonius, Quintus, and Dionysus Perigetes.[19] He also uses once ἀείδεται,[20] which does not occur in epic, but in Pindar,[21] where it implies not only the transmission of a story, but also the transmission with the aim to praise. It is also found in prose to introduce narratives of myths;[22] if the context of praise is absent in such cases, the verb still marks a transition from reality to myth, signalling well-known, respectable stories. It seems therefore that the narrator chooses his verbs according to the context of his intervention: to recount details from myths, he uses φατίζεται, comparable to the Apollonian narrator's use of this verb about Orpheus' mother: τόν ... / Καλλιόπη Θρήικι φατίζεται εὐνηθεῖσα / Οἰάγρῳ ... τεκέσθαι.[23] To give precision on a geographical detail, introduced by κεῖθι, he uses ἐνέπουσι, which, among epic narrators, is most used by the narrator of the *Orbis descriptio*, who makes a point of differentiating such geographic details from mythological ones by introducing them differently, using ἐνέπουσι for the former, and μῦθος or φάτις (ἐστι) for the latter.[24] Finally, he reports the comparison about Dionysus' horns with

[17] 17.52, 13.349-50, 17.238.
[18] *Il.* 2.783; 17.674. *Od.* 6.42. A.R. 2.977; 3.845. Q.S. 3.534; 5.625; 9.385; 13.551.
[19] ἐνέπουσι: A.R. 1.26; 2.905. Q.S. 13.545. D.P. 105, 111, 287, 562, 788, 993.
φατίζεται: A.R.1.24.
[20] 17.238.
[21] ἀείδεται: Pi. *P.* 8.25; *N.* 7.8.
[22] In prose: in Pausanias 8.20.2 and 4 about the myth of Daphne, and in Aelianus, *On the Nature of Animals*, 2.38, about Perseus. See Lightfoot 1999:471.
[23] A.R. 1.24.
[24] For ἐνέπουσι, see note above. μῦθος: 144, 197. φάτις: 545. The exception to this is 788, where ἐνέπουσι introduces the *aition* of the creation of the evils on earth, from the spit of Cerberus; this occurrence stands alone, the ones introduced by μῦθος or φάτις not being *aitia*.

ἀείδεται so as to give the line the tone of ode and praise linked with Pindar since it is dealing with Dionysus himself. The choice of this verb, in keeping with its usage in prose, establishes a parallel between the story of Dionysus and a well-known myth to underline that Dionysus is worthy of having songs written about him too.[25] Thus the Nonnian narrator conforms to the epic genre in signalling details coming from hearsay through impersonal verbs in the third person; still, in doing so, he is able to adapt his intervention to the contents of the passages, assuming in turn the *persona* of a narrator of epic, of geographical *didaxis*, and of victory odes, a particularity which highlights the shifting nature of his personality as well as his ability to extend the characteristic ποικιλία to his own role as storyteller.

He also uses the verb καλέουσι to provide an alternative designation for someone or something he has just mentioned. Narrators in Homer, Apollonius, Dionysius Periegetes, Quintus and Colluthus also use this verb in the same manner.[26] Examples of this usage are as follows: an epiclesis of Zeus, Βρόμβιον ὃν καλέουσιν; the name of the Centaurs born of the Naiads, ἃς Ὑάδας καλέουσι; the name of a military formation, ἣν καλέουσι μαχηταὶ μιμηλὴν ... χελώνην; and a designation of the star Sirius, ὃν καλέουσιν ὀπωρινόν.[27] According to I. de Jong, this verb is used to introduce "alternative names" by "invok[ing] anonymous spokesmen".[28] The introduction of these names can be meant as an explanation, a way of helping the narratee picture the scene or recognise a character, a function which is most clear in the example of the military formation of the turtle. I. de Jong explains that when alternative names "are supposed to function as clarifications, they must refer to names familiar to the [primary narratee-focalizee], in

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[25] J. L. Lightfoot (1999:471) explains that the verb ἀείδειν "need not refer to a poetic treatment", and is also found in prose texts, to introduce myths (with the exception of Philo, *Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, 131). This very use seems to underline the "singing" aspect of the retelling and to link it with the tradition of *aoidoi*, acknowledging the myths' antiquity and respectability. In that case, it also fits in the context of Philo's text, where it is used to introduce a "secret" (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις) about the powers of God: it would there underline the solemn and profound meaning of what will follow.

[26] *Il.* 1.403, 5.306 and 342, 10.305, 12.61, 14.279, 18.487, 20.74, 22.29, 24.316; *Od.* 5.273, 13.104 and 348; A.R. 1.941, 1068 and 1221, 2.506, 671 and 910, 4.147 and 312; D.P. 153, 402, 435; Q.S. 2.560 and 646; Coluth. 91. Epic narrators also use other verbs to provide additional names, such as ἐφήμισαν, κικλήσκουσι, κλείουσι or ἐπικλείουσι: ἐφήμισαν: Opp 4.659. κικλήσκουσι: *Il.* 14.291; *Od.* 4.355; Opp. *H.* 3.82, 5.536; *C.* 3.30 and 304; D.P. 205. κλείουσι: Call. *Jov.* 51; A.R. 1.217; Nic. *Alex.* 22 and 539; D.P. 151. ἐπικλείουσι: A.R. 4.571; Opp. *H.* 1.157; D.P. 181; Q.S. 4.11.

[27] 13.544, 14.147, 22.180 and 47.261. The epithet Brombios is a Nonnian hapax. M. Langdon (1976:84 note 30) suggests that it is "surely a scribal error for Ombrios", although it is not clear why Zeus should be called "Rainy" in that particular passage.

[28] De Jong, 2004:95.

short to knowledge shared."[29] Therefore with these interventions, the narrator can be considered as referring to a source wholly external to himself and the narratees, *i.e.* to the level of the narrating, or as including his narratee in the anonymous source and thus seeking out his knowledge to make a more precise mental image of the narrative. The choice between these alternatives depends on whether the information is actually new for the narratee or not. Finally, because they are expressed in the present, these occurrences of καλέουσι stand out in the fictitious time of the narrative: they indicate to the narratee that the information added is "omnitemporal"[30], at least for both the times of the diegesis and of the enunciation, and create a bridge between the real world and the fictitious one.

In all of the cases mentioned above, the narrator is only putting side by side two possible appellations for one person or thing; but in certain cases, such passages have a didactic import, either because an explanation is given for the alternative appellation – the explanation being introduced by οὕνεκα / εἵνεκα or γάρ[31] – or because this alternative appellation is presented as the consequence of a particularity of the thing mentioned – with the expression τῷ καί μιν ἐφήμισαν in Callimachus and Oppian.[32] This latter situation appears twice in the *Dionysiaca*, although the narrator chooses both a different verb and a different introductory pronoun, as he tells the story of Morrheus:

> ὅθεν Κιλίκων ἐνὶ γαίῃ
> Σάνδης Ἡρακλέης κικλήσκεται εἰσέτι Μορρεύς,
>
> and for that reason in the Cilician land Morrheus is still called Heracles Sandes.[33]

and the birth of Aura's twins:

> ὅθεν διδύμων ἀπὸ παίδων
> Δίνδυμον ὑψικάρηνον ὄρος κικλήσκετο Ῥείης.
>
> therefore from those twins the highpeaked mountain of Rheia was called Dindymon.[34]

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[29] De Jong, 2004:95.
[30] A term from De Jong, 2004a:138.
[31] With καλέουσι : D.P. 544 and 899. With ἐφήμισαν: Opp. *H.* 1.158; D.P. 33. With κικλήσκουσι: Hes. *Th.* 197. With κλείουσι: Nic. *Alex.* 36. With ἐπικλείουσι: D.P. 1151; Arat. 1.92.
[32] Call. *Aet.* fr. Pfeiffer 75.58, about the origin of an island: Ὑδροῦσσαν τῷ καί μιν ἐφήμισαν. Opp. *H.* 5.70, about a kind of fish which guides the whales in the ocean: τῷ καί μιν ἐφήμισαν Ἡγητῆρα; and 5.632: τῷ καί μιν ἐφήμισαν ἱερὸν ἰχθύν, a fish which lives in peaceful waters.
[33] 34.191-2.
[34] 48.854-5.

In the first of these occurrences, the Nonnian narrator imitates the narrator of the *Orbis Descriptio* in that he specifies that the usage of the alternative name is restricted to a geographical area; similarly, narrators in Apollonius, Callimachus and Nicander attributed some alternative names to specific people, namely oxherds and travellers.[35] Here again, the Nonnian narrator assumes the *persona* of a narrator of didactic epic.

2. A Nonnian conceit: references to sources through verbs in the first person

Through the use of impersonal verbs, the Nonnian narrator shows that he is aware of the Homeric usages and able to imitate them, and goes further by borrowing verbs and constructions belonging to later epic, in particular didactic epic. But he innovates even more by using also, alongside these impersonal verbs, verbs in the first person, which other epic narrators do not do.[36]

The verb ἀκούω in the first person occurs three times in book 13. The narrator lists Dionysus' allies and their cities of origin, and adds a comment about three of them, firstly about one of the Beotian cities:

> Κώπας τ', ἀγλαὸν οὖδας, ὅπῃ περίπυστον ἀκούω
> ἐγχελύων θρέπτειραν ἐπώνυμον εἰσέτι λίμνην
>
> and the glorious soil of Copai, where I hear still remains the famous lake of that name, the nurse of eels.[37]

This is the only mention of the city of Copai in the *Dionysiaca*. The addition about eels would have to be ascribed to an encyclopaedic aim of the narrator; it plays no part in the rest of the epic, and appears as a reminiscence of a well-known fact.[38] The city of Copai is mentioned in Homer's catalogue of the Greek and Trojan troops, which is clearly the *Dionysiaca*'s source of inspiration for the catalogue in book 13, although the Nonnian narrator, as is his usual style, expands and lengthens his model with "a colourful riot of

[35] D.P. 32, 37, 38, 165, 459 and 1093. A.R. 3.277. Call. *Hec.* fr. 301 Pf. = 117 Hollis. Nic. *Th.* 230 and 554; *Alex.* 346. A. Hollis (1990:304) notes that "the pattern 'which a particular group of people call such and such' is especially popular in Hellenistic poetry." M. Campbell (1983:25) insists on the technical aspect of such interventions which "which amount to 'called in the trade…'."

[36] This is not to say that these narrators never use verbs in the first person: they do, as well as the Nonnian narrator, in proems, when speaking about their own poem.

[37] 13.64-5.

[38] Aristophanes also mentions Copaic eels, a dish particularly liked by the Athenians, in *Acharnians* 880, *Lysistrata* 36 and 702, and *Peace* 1006.

adjectives and imaginative detail".[39] As for the name of the lake, the verb ἀκούω indicates an external source and underlines the narrator's previous research, as opposed to an attempt to present an invention as an authoritative fact: indeed this detail about how the lake came to be called by the same name as the city does not originate from the narrator's imagination since it is already mentioned by Strabo in his *Geography*.[40]

The second example concerns the city of Hyampolis.

> οἳ Κυπαρίσσου
> εἶχον ἕδος καὶ γαῖαν Ὑάμπολιν, ἥν περ ἀκούω
> Ἀονίης ὑὸς οὖδας ἐπώνυμον, ἣ περὶ μορφῆς
> αὐχένα γαῦρον ἄειρε καὶ ἤρισε Τριτογενείῃ·
>
> [The allies were joined by] those who held the settlement of Cyparissos and the land of Hyampolis, taking its name as I hear from the Aonian sow, which lifted a proud neck and challenged Tritogeneia to a beauty match.[41]

Here the narrator refers to a proverb to explain the name of the city. Pindar has the oldest mention of the phrase Βοιωτίαν ὗν, which he presents as "an old insult", ἀρχαῖον ὄνειδος.[42] Plutarch explains that the Boeotians are famous for their gluttony and narrates how the orator Demades used this insult against Demosthenes,[43] although in this anecdote the issue is intelligence rather than beauty.

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[39] Shorrock, 2011:59, about the *Paraphrase*, which he compares with St John's *Gospel*. The parallel for the list of warriors is *Il.* 2.494-510. The Nonnian version is longer and more exuberant (*Iliad*: 17 lines, *Dionysiaca*: 66 lines), while faithful to its source: out of the twenty-nine place names mentioned in the Iliadic parallel, twenty-two are present in the Nonnian list.

[40] 9.2.27 περὶ μὲν οὖν Κωπῶν εἴρηται· προσάρκτιος δέ ἐστιν ἐπὶ τῇ Κωπαΐδι λίμνῃ (...). καὶ τό γε παλαιὸν οὐκ ἦν τῆς λίμνης κοινὸν ὄνομα, ἀλλὰ καθ᾽ ἑκάστην πρὸς αὐτῇ κατοικίαν ἐκείνης ἐπώνυμος ἐλέγετο, Κωπαΐς μὲν τῶν Κωπῶν, Ἁλιαρτὶς δὲ Ἁλιάρτου, καὶ οὕτως ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ὕστερον δ᾽ ἡ πᾶσα Κωπαΐς ἐλέχθη κατ᾽ ἐπικράτειαν· κοιλότατον γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ χωρίον.

> "Concerning Copae I have already spoken. It lies towards the north on Lake Copais (...). In early times, at least, the lake had no common name, but was called by different names corresponding to the several settlements lying on it, as, for instance, Copais from Copae, Haliartis from Haliartus, and so in the case of the rest of the settlements; but later the whole lake was called Copais, this name prevailing over all others; for the region of Copae forms the deepest recess of the lake."

[41] 13.123-6.

[42] Pi. *Ol.* 6.87-90.

> Ὄτρυνον νῦν ἑταίρους,
> Αἰνέα, πρῶτον μὲν Ἥραν Παρθενίαν κελαδῆσαι,
> γνῶναί τ᾽ ἔπειτ᾽, ἀρχαῖον ὄνειδος ἀλαθέσιν
> λόγοις εἰ φεύγομεν, Βοιωτίαν ὗν.
>
> Now, Aineas, urge your companions first to celebrate Hera the Maiden and then to know if by our truthful words we escape the age-old taunt of "Boiotian pig."

[43] *Of the eating of flesh*, 995e: τοὺς γὰρ Βοιωτοὺς ἡμᾶς οἱ Ἀττικοὶ καὶ παχεῖς καὶ ἀναισθήτους καὶ ἠλιθίους, "It is a fact that the Athenians used to call us Boeotians beef-witted and insensitive and

Finally ἀκούω introduces a geographical detail:

> ἃς ἐπὶ γείτονι πόντῳ
> Ἀτραπιτοὺς βυθίοιο Ποσειδάωνος ἀκούω.
>
> (There were others who lived) in Atrapitoi which I hear of on the neighbouring shore of deepsea Poseidon. [44]

These examples show the narrator becoming perceptible in the text to link details to external sources, although he does not name them. In doing so, he makes the world of the fabula more accessible to his narratee, who is referred to elements he might have heard of elsewhere.

Thus, the use of verbs in the first person, a particular trait of the Nonnian narrator, is particularly meaningful in the construction of his narratorial *persona*. He might not intervene very often, but when he does so, he makes himself quite conspicuous by choosing to say "I hear" rather than "it is said", which is also a way of underlining his own activity in the research of sources. Moreover, not only does it show a departure from the epic tradition, but it even shifts his *persona* towards the *persona* of a historical narrator: if ἀκούω cannot be found in epic, it occurs in the historical narratives of Herodotus and Xenophon when they wish to distance themselves from the reported facts to make them appear as external truths.[45] The choice of ἀκούω and of the historical *persona* is also fitting in the context of the three passages where the verb occurs: they present geographical information which contains no element of myth – the mention of Poseidon in the above quote being part of a periphrasis designating the sea – and the accuracy of which, for two of the passages, is attested by other authors, although it is not possible to determine whether these authors have been the actual source of the Nonnian narrator's knowledge. True, the intervention signalled by ἐνέπουσι was also about geography, but it included the myth of Cadmos and Harmonia, and had therefore a truly epic tone, which the Nonnian narrator reflects in the use of the impersonal third person, while still choosing a verb appearing in Dionysius Periegetes' epic to fit the geographical content. Be that as it

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foolish"; he refers to Pindar in the next line. *Life of Demosthenes* 11.5. Δημάδου μὲν γὰρ εἰπόντος „ἐμὲ Δημοσθένης; ἡ ὗς τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν", „αὕτη" εἶπεν „ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ πρώην ἐν Κολλυτῷ μοιχεύουσα ἐλήφθη." "For instance, when Demades said: 'Demosthenes teach me! As well might the sow teach Athena.' 'It was this Athena,' said Demosthenes, 'that was lately found playing the harlot in Collytus.'".

[44] 13.404-5. This allusion is more difficult to trace back, since it seems that it is used as place name only in the *Dionysiaca*.

[45] Hdt. 9.85.3, X. *An.* 1.9.28.

may, these occurrences of ἀκούω confirm the detachment of the Nonnian narrator from the Muses' inspiration: although he is writing an epic and conforms on the whole to the demands of the genre, these narratorial interventions underline strongly the work of the narrator himself in putting together the story. The use of ἀκούω makes it comparable to the work of historians, from whom much more accuracy and actual research are expected. Through this peculiarity of the Nonnian narrator, the story of Dionysus is given a stronger link to the "real world", so that the distance between the world of the narrated and that of the narratee is decreased.

One last occurrence of ἀκούω in book 4 develops the narrator's portrait by underlining his characteristic narratorial technique, that of telling stories little by little and of inviting the reader to go back and forth in the poem and to draw parallels between episodes of a same narrative scattered through the books. Book 4 recounts the wanderings of Cadmos:

> Παρνησσοῦ δὲ κάρηνα λιπὼν μετανάστιος ἀνήρ
> Δαυλίδος ἔστιχεν οὔδας ὁμούριον, ἔνθεν ἀκούω
> σιγαλέης λάλον εἶμα δυσηλακάτου Φιλομήλης
>
> Then the wanderer left the heads of Parnassos and trod the neighbouring soil of Daulis, whence I hear comes the tell-tale garment of the dumb woespinner Philomela.[46]

The next ten lines contain a digression to the story of Philomela. There are in all five allusions to this character in the *Dionysiaca*, all attached to the main storyline by various means. This passage from book 4 is brought about by a place name, Daulis; it is also the longest of these allusions. The reference to an external source justifies the insertion of the story: the digression is not caused by mere mental association; rather it appears as the mark of a scrupulous narrator, who does research on the stories, characters, and names, and who makes a point of reporting what he heard to his narratee.[47] Finally, by making a point of reporting the origin of the story rather than the story itself, which is briefly and partially summarised in the next nine lines, the narrator seems to be assuming that the story is famous and that his narratee, already knowing it, will take interest in learning from where it comes.

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[46] 4.319-21. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

[47] Other versions of this myth are found in Apollodorus 3.14.8, and in Hyginus, *Fabulae* 45 and Ovid, *Met.* 6, 424-674. Apollodorus is the only one to mention the flight of Philomela and Procne to Daulis.

However, it would be unlike the Nonnian narrator not to tell a story when there is an opportunity for it; and indeed his treatment of the story of Philomela illustrates further his narrative technique and his expectations about his narratee. None of the five allusions consists of the story in full, and some of them are very cryptic: clearly the narrator supposes his narratee to be familiar with the story, although he does not leave him completely in the dark: the five allusions taken together complement each other so that the story can be gradually reconstructed. Elements of the story are presented successively as follows:

(a) 2.131: Philomela was turned into a bird.

(b) 4.321-30: Philomela has a talking dress, λάλον εἶμα; she was raped by Tereus; her tongue was cut.

(c) 12.75-8: Philomela was turned into a bird; she was a keen weaver; she wove her secret on a robe.

(d) 44.265-9: Philomela helped Procne kill her son Itylos; Itylos was served as a meal for his father Tereus.

(e) 47.30-1: Birds remember the story of Philomela and Itylos.

(a) was a very short allusion and might be easily overlooked among the countless short mythological allusions in the *Dionysiaca*; it plays the role of an introduction to the story. Philomela reappears in (b), where the narratee is told a few more facts about her, among them the curious detail of the "talking dress". From this passage on, the keenness of the narratee is called upon to link facts together and reconstruct the story. (c) establishes clear links with the two preceding allusions: the transformation into a bird and the mention of the dress. By adding this to the facts given in (b), the narratee should be able to understand that the embroidered dress had been made by Philomela herself as a way of revealing what she had suffered from Tereus. The story is resumed thirty-two books later; in (d), Philomela takes part in what might look like a different story, until Tereus' relationship with Itylos and Procne is revealed in the last line of this allusion. This second part of the story had been announced with the mention of Procne at 2.136-7, four lines after the allusion (a) to Philomela. (e) closes the circle by returning to the idea of birds, and by bringing together characters from the two parts of the story, Philomela and Itylos,

as a variation from Philomela and Procne in book 2.[48] Thus the narrator engages and challenges the attentiveness of the narratee by breaking up the story into episodes which gradually appear in the course of the main storyline. Like the stories of Agaue and Autonoe, this episode addresses the subject of the relationship between mother and child. The link with the main story of the *Dionysiaca* is made in book 48, where Aura is compared with Procne: she contemplates killing her child to punish its father, as Procne did.

> καὶ νοέειν μενέαινεν ἑὸν πόσιν, ὄφρα καὶ αὐτὴ
> υἱέα δαιτρεύσειεν ἀναινομένῳ παρακοίτῃ,
> αὐτὴ παιδοφόνος καὶ ὁμευνέτις, ὄφρά τις εἴπῃ·
> ‘ Πρόκνη παιδολέτειρα νέη πέλε δύσγαμος Αὔρη.’
>
> She longed to know her husband, that she might dish up her own son to her loathing husband childslayer and paramour alike, that men might say: "Aura, unhappy bride, has killed her child like another Procne".[49]

The narrator underlines the similarity of the two stories by ascribing the comment to an anonymous τις, a hint for the narratee to remember the digressions about Procne; the narrator expects him to make the connection between the two women himself.

The vocabulary also plays a part in linking together these stories of murderous mothers. At 44.267, Procne is described as θυμολέαινα, "with a lioness heart", as Agaue had been assimilated to a "wild lioness", ἀγροτέρη λέαινα, when she dismembered her son at 44.66. Aura, although not compared to a lioness herself, laid her children in the den of a lioness for her to eat them at 48.910. In addition, B. Simon points out a parallel between Procne and Medea who also killed her children as a means of taking revenge upon an unfaithful husband: the adjectives μιαιφόνος which describes the knife Procne used to kill Itylos at 44.266 and παιδολέτειρα referring to Procne at 48.748 both appear in Euripides' play to qualify Medea.[50]

This distinctive handling of the story of Philomela shows that the narrator does not expect his narratee to read or listen to the poem only once, but rather encourages him to flip through it, to go back and forth, draw parallels and put together the passages concerning the same characters which have been sprinkled over the main story. It also

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[48] This reconstruction leaves aside the fact that Philomela and Procne were sisters.
[49] 48.745-8
[50] Simon (2004) *ad*. 44.266. – E. *Med.* 1346 and 850. The latter is also used about Medea in the *Anthologia Graeca*, 16.138.

puts into sharp relief the importance of the thematic organisation and connections in the *Dionysiaca*: if the digressions on Philomela and Procne could have seemed but loosely tied to the context in which they appeared, they are nonetheless closely related to the theme of the relationship between mother and son, here in its most violent variation, namely the killing of the son by the mother. It parallels, and announces, the story of Pentheus and Agaue; like Pentheus, Itylos was killed by his mother and his mother's sister.[51]

A similar technique appears in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, about the story of Ariadne, which is told in three different places.

(1) 3. 997-1003: Ariadne helped Theseus, left with him on his ship. Her crown was turned into the constellation by the gods, who loved her.

(2) 3. 1096-1101: Minos was well disposed towards Theseus for Ariadne's sake and let her go with him without holding a grudge.

(3) 4.430-434: Theseus abandoned Ariadne on the island of Dia, and she became the lover of Dionysus.

The main difference from the Nonnian text is that here (1) and (2) do not belong to narrator-text but to character-text: Jason compares his situation to Theseus' in (1) and (2), which accounts for the omission of the detail about Theseus abandoning Ariadne; a detail which the narrator restores in book 4, finding the opportunity to supply (3) as he

[51] The similarity is even more striking in Ovid's version at *Met.* 6.636-45: "... She dragged Itys away, as a tigress drags a suckling fawn through the dark woods on Ganges' banks. And when they reached a remote part of the great house, while the boy stretched out pleading hands as he saw his fate, and screamed "Mother! mother!" and sought to throw his arms around her neck, Procne smote him with a knife between breast and side – and with no change of face. This one stroke sufficed to slay the lad; but Philomela cut the throat also, and they cut up the body still warm and quivering with life." Compare *Dionysiaca* 46.190-218: both Pentheus and Itylos address supplications to their mothers before they are dismembered; both Agaue and Procne are helped by their sisters.
In Ovid's version, Procne, having learned her sister's fate thanks to the embroidered robe, uses Bacchic celebrations as a pretext to leave Tereus' palace to go find Philomela (6.587-600), rather as Agaue runs to the mountain in her Bacchic frenzy in the *Dionysiaca*: "It was the time when the Thracian matrons were wont to celebrate the biennal festival of Bacchus. Night was in their secret; by night Mount Rhodope would resound with the shrill clash of brazen cymbals; so by night the queen goes forth from her house, equips herself for the rites of the god and dons the array of frenzy; her head was wreathed with trailing vines, a deer-skin hung from her left side, a light spear rested on her shoulder. Swift she goes through the woods with an attendant throng of her companions, and driven on by the madness of grief, Procne, terrific in her rage, mimics thy madness, O Bacchus! She comes to the secluded lodge at last, shrieks aloud and cries "Euhoe!", breaks down the doors, seizes her sister, arrays her in the trappings of a Bacchante, hides her face with ivy-leaves, and, dragging her along in amazement, leads her within her own walls."

mentions the cloak Hypsipyle gave to Jason, having herself received it from her father Thoas, Dionysus' son. As in the *Dionysiaca*, the insertion of this story provides a parallel for the events of the main narrative, an illustration of the theme of love between a Greek hero and a foreign woman; but the link is made very visible since Jason himself establishes the comparison, whereas the parallel between Philomela and Agaue is made harder for the narratee to grasp, since the story of Philomela is much more fragmented than the story of Ariadne, and because the allusions to Philomela are less tightly integrated into the passages where they occur: in (a), a Hamadryad threatened by Typhon threatens to turn into a bird like Philomela to escape him. (b) is justified by the mention of Daulis, and (d) by that of an object: a Fury joins the battle armed with the knife that killed Itylos; but why the Fury happens to have this knife is not made clear. (c) occurs in a "reported tablet", holding a list of prophecies made by Harmonia. The mention of Philomela is only one item of the list among others. Finally (e) takes place in the description of the celebrations held for the arrival of Dionysus in Attica: the nightingale sings in his honour and remembers Procne. Therefore it appears that this technique of scattering episodes requires less focus from the Apollonian narratee that from the Nonnian one; moreover, it seems that in the case of Ariadne, the deconstruction of the story is the result of the change of narrators, Jason as a secondary narrator having selected only the details that suited his purpose, namely obtaining help from Medea. The presentation of the story of Philomela by the Nonnian narrator supposes more activity from the narratee, since the allusions are more numerous, shorter, and more loosely attached to the main narrative.

Thus, by using ἀκούω in the first allusion made to the story of Philomela in the narrator-text, the narrator justifies the digression and draws the narratee's attention to this story which illustrates the importance of thematic connections in the narratological construction of the *Dionysiaca*: the myths do not have to be told all at once nor once and for all, but can be divided into episodes appearing at intervals in the story. In addition, these secondary myths, however unrelated they might seem to the specific context in which they appear, might turn out to be thematically linked to the main storyline when considered from a wider angle. Thus the use of verbs in the first person by the Nonnian narrator is innovative not only because it is a precedent in epic narrative, but also because

it is made in such a way that it underlines both the narrator's presence and his stylistic methods.

III. Self-confident narrating: looking for variants and for truth

The use of ἀκούω by the Nonnian narrator has proved to be very meaningful both in the characterization of the narrator's *persona* and in the identification of one of his narratorial techniques. While ἀκούω refers to elements obtained from hearsay which are included in the epic as additional details, other narratorial interventions introduce variants to the story. These variants confirm to the narratee that the narrator's research has been exhaustive. Their influence on the unfolding of the narrative varies greatly from one to another: they can provide information on a specific point only as a matter of interest, *en passant*, or they can be necessary to the continuation of the narrative. The first example is that of the alternative genealogy of Deriades, whose mother Astris had been presented as the daughter of Helios and Clymene; however,

φάτις δέ τις, ὅττι ἑ μήτηρ
Νηιὰς Ὠκεανοῖο γένος τεκνώσατο Κητώ

Men say that her mother was Ceto, a Naiad daughter of Oceanos. [52]

This variant does not supply elements that are essential for the story, and the narrator does not refer to it again anywhere else in the poem. Apart from being an additional piece of mythological knowledge brought to the narratee, this φάτις enhances the noble origins of Deriades and his relation to cosmic entities: in the first case he is descended from the Sun, in the second, from the Ocean. Such variants which only supply additional information without having further impact on the narrative signal the scholarly *persona* of the Nonnian narrator. Before the *Dionysiaca*, Deriades only appears in Dionysius' fragmentary *Bassarica*, where nothing concerning his parentage has been preserved, so

[52] 26.354-5. The first genealogy of Deriades appears at 17.280-2, in a speech of Orontes to Helios:
εἰ δὲ τεῆς Κλυμένης μιμνήσκεαι εἰσέτι λέκτρων,
ῥύεο Δηριαδῆα, τεῆς βλάστημα γενέθλης,
Ἀστρίδος αἷμα φέροντα φατιζομένης σέο κούρης.
"And if you have not forgotten your Clymene's bed, protect Deriades, a sprout of your own stock, who has in him the blood of Astris said to be your daughter."

that it is impossible to say whether there was a polemical aim in the insertion of this variant.

The variant is referred to by the word φάτις, a word which has no pejorative overtone; it will appear again in two other passages discussing variants which are acceptable to the narrator. It is found with the same function in other epics, introducing variants with which the narrator agrees, or at least does not wish to reject altogether, for example in the following passage of Dionysius Periegetes' *Orbis Descriptio*:

> ἔστι δέ τις καὶ σκαιὸν ὑπὲρ πόρον Εὐξείνοιο
> ἄντα Βορυσθένεος μεγαλώνυμος εἰν ἁλὶ νῆσος
> ἡρώων· Λευκὴν μιν ἐπωνυμίην καλέουσιν,
> οὕνεκά οἱ τάπερ ἔστι κινώπετα λευκὰ τέτυκται·
> κεῖθι δ' Ἀχιλλῆός τε καὶ ἡρώων φάτις ἄλλων
> ψυχὰς εἰλίσσεσθαι ἐρημαίας ἀνὰ βήσσας·
> τοῦτο δ' ἀριστήεσσι Διὸς πάρα δῶρον ὀπηδεῖ
> ἀντ' ἀρετῆς· ἀρετὴ γὰρ ἀκήρατον ἔλλαχε τιμήν.
>
> And to the left of the Euxine strait, there is in the sea, facing Borysthenos, the famous island of heroes; they call it by the name of Leuke, because the white reptiles live there. There, the story goes, the ghosts of Achilles and of the other heroes spend their time in solitary glens. This is the lot of the brave, by gift of Zeus, in return for valour. For virtue always receives undefiled honour.[53]

The narrator here combines two sayings about the island, introduced by καλέουσιν and by φάτις. He does not give his preference to a particular version but he endorses the variant introduced by φάτις by complementing it with a proverb. The same word is used in Apollonius' *Argonautica* in a passage where, discussing two explanations of the name of the island of Drepane, he clearly favours one side of the alternative, calling φάτις his preferred variant.[54] The Nonnian narrator follows this trend, as he chooses this word too to refer to variants which seem acceptable, or at least worth mentioning.

But not all variants in the *Dionysiaca* are simply additional pieces of information; some even have an impact on the narrative itself, which is an innovative use of the juxtaposition of versions: twice in the poem variants introduce elements on which the continuation of the narrative depends and therefore they have an important part to play in the ordering of the sequence of events. Such is the treatment of the variant concerning the discovery of wine. The story of Ampelos has been developed over two books; after

[53] 541-8. I translate.
[54] 4.984. See below for a more detailed discussion of the passage.

Ampelos' death, Fate ordains that he be changed into the vine,[55] and Dionysus made wine for the first time from this new plant's fruits. But the narrator intervenes:

> καὶ τὰ μὲν ἀμπελόεντος ἀείδεται ἀμφὶ κορύμβου,
> πῶς πέλεν ἡβητῆρος ἐπώνυμος. ὑμνοπόλων δὲ
> ἄλλη πρεσβυτέρη πέλεται φάτις,
>
> That is the song they sing about the grape-cluster, how it got its name from the young man. But the poets have another and older legend ...[56]

According to this legend, wine fell from the sky in the form of an "Olympian ichor" which grew into a plant; and Dionysus, seeing a snake drinking from the plant's fruits, found out how to make wine. The book ends with Dionysus, having celebrated and revelled with the Satyrs, going to the halls of Rheia:

> δύσατο κυδιόων Κυβεληίδος ἄντρα θεαίνης,
> κλήματα βοτρυόεντα φιλανθέι χειρὶ τιταίνων
>
> He proudly entered the cave of Cybeleïd goddess Rheia, waving bunches of grapes in his flowerloving hand.

where Zeus sends Iris to enjoin him to start the war against the Indians:

> Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ προέηκεν ἐς αὔλια θέσκελα Ῥείης
> Ἶριν ἀπαγγέλλουσαν ἐγερσιμόθῳ Διονύσῳ
>
> Father Zeus sent Iris to the divine halls of Rheia, to inform wakethefray Dionysus...[57]

Thus the narrator, instead of going back to the first variant and resuming the narrative from there, makes the continuation of the narrative, and even the Indian war, the central element of the epic, depend on this version of the discovery of wine. The second variant is not presented as a parenthesis but becomes fully part of the narrative. F. Vian writes:

> Nonnos oublie aussitôt qu'il rapporte une simple variante, car c'est à ce second récit que se raccorde le chant XIII. La raison de cette anomalie est contenue dans l'expression πρεσβυτέρη... φάτις (294): Nonnos apprend par là à son lecteur que c'est par goût pour la nouveauté qu'il a donné la préférence à une version locale moins répandue, celle d'Ampelos.[58]

[55] 12.173 ff.
[56] 12.292-4.
[57] 12. 395-6 and 13.1-2.
[58] Vian 1995:202-3 *ad*. 12.294.

Indeed the only other narrative of Ampelos' death is found in Ovid's *Fasti*.[59] Ovid's version is a catasterism, not an explanation of the origin of wine, which might be why the Nonnian narrator, – if he knew of this variant – did not include it in his poem. The narrator's choice of ποικιλία and his style of narration which favours the repetition of themes and the creation of doublet scenes, as well as his desire to be exhaustive and his liking for new and lesser-known versions of myths, in keeping with his *persona* of the Hellenistic poet, explain the introduction of the story of Ampelos. In this passage, the second version takes over the first one not so much because it is older, but rather because it offers a convenient transition to the next episode in the story. The question of the age of the versions and of their consequent worth is not the main concern of the Nonnian narrator. It had certainly been for narrators of other epics, for example in the *Argonautica*, where the narrator gives variants concerning the name of the island of Drepane:[60] a first φάτις explains that Cronos' sickle is hidden under it; it is also the oldest version, προτέρων ἔπος. The second version links the name of the island to the sickle of Demeter. F.Vian explains that the Muse invocation in this passage ("O Muses, not willingly do I tell this tale of olden days", i.e. the first version) is polemical and that its irony is aimed at Callimachus, who chose the second, newer version;[61] the Apollonian narrator really gives preference to the older version, and distances himself from the second by the ironical

[59] 3.403-14: Ampelos fell over as he tried to reach grapes from a vine which had grown high into an elm's tree; and died. Dionysus turned him into a constellation.

[60] 4. 982-91:

ἔστι δέ τις πορθμοῖο παροιτέρη Ἰονίοιο
ἀμφιλαφὴς πίειρα Κεραυνίῃ εἰν ἁλὶ νῆσος,
ᾗ ὕπο δὴ κεῖσθαι δρέπανον φάτις - ἵλατε Μοῦσαι,
οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐνέπω προτέρων ἔπος - ᾧ ἀπὸ πατρὸς
μήδεα νηλειῶς ἔταμεν Κρόνος· οἱ δέ έ Δηοῦς
κλείουσι χθονίης καλαμητόμον ἔμμεναι ἅρπην.
Δηὼ γὰρ κείνῃ ἐνὶ δή ποτε νάσσατο γαίῃ,
Τιτῆνας δ᾽ ἔδαε στάχυν ὄμπνιον ἀμήσασθαι,
Μάκριδα φιλαμένη. Δρεπάνη τόθεν ἐκλήισται
οὔνομα,

"Fronting the Ionian gulf there lies an island in the Ceraunian sea, rich in soil, with a harbour on both sides, beneath which lies the sickle, as legend saith - grant me grace, O Muses, not willingly do I tell this tale of olden days - wherewith Cronos pitilessly mutilated his father; but others call it the reaping-hook of Demeter, goddess of the nether world. For Demeter once dwelt in that island, and taught the Titans to reap the ears of corn, all for the love of Macris. Whence it is called Drepane."

[61] Vian, 1981:35.

comment. The importance of recording older versions also appears in Callimachus' *Hecale*, here in a passage where the narrator, a crow, narrates Erichthonios' origins:

> γενεῇ δ' ὅθεν οὔτε νιν ἔγνων
> οὔτ' ἐδάην, φήμη δὲ κατ' ὠγυγίους εφαν[.]υται
> οἰωνούς, ὡς δῆθεν ὑφ' Ἡφαίστῳ τέκεν Αἶα.
>
> But I did not know from where he was born, nor did I learn it, but a report came among the primeval birds, saying how the earth conceived him from Hephaistos.[62]

The adjective ὠγυγίους confines the report to the past, and its importance is underlined by the way the narrator distances himself from the report – with the negatives οὔτε νιν ἔγνων and οὔτ' ἐδάην, and the expression ὡς δῆθεν. A last example of such a reverence for stories from the past is visible in Nicander's *Theriaca*, as he explains why serpents slough their skins by going back to the division of the world between the sons of Cronos:

> ὠγύγιος δ' ἄρα μῦθος ἐν αἰζηοῖσι φορεῖται.
>
> Indeed a primeval myth is repeated among men.[63]

In a similar manner, the Nonnian narrator makes a point of recording several versions and of giving precise specifications regarding their chronology, but the idea that older versions are to be preferred does not always prevail with him: in his narrative about Beroe, he chooses the newest variant as the one allowing the narrative to continue. In the first version, Beroe is the first of all gods, "twin sister of Time, coeval with the universe".[64] In the second, she is the daughter of Aphrodite.

> ἀλλά τις ὁπλοτέρη πέλεται φάτις, ὅττί μιν αὐτὴ
> ἀνδρομέης Κυθέρεια κυβερνήτειρα γενέθλης
> Ἀσσυρίῳ πάνλευκον Ἀδώνιδι γείνατο μήτηρ·
>
> But there is a younger legend, that her mother was Cythereia herself, the pilot of human life, who bore her all white to Assyrian Adonis.[65]

On this version of Beroe's birth, in spite of it being " ὁπλοτέρη ", depend the rest of book 41 as well as books 42 and 43. In book 41, Aphrodite consults Harmonia and her prophetic tablets concerning the future of her daughter; book 42 tells of the love of Dionysus for Beroe, his pursuit and his love pangs; and book 43 is the account of the battle between Dionysus and Poseidon, the outcome of which is to decide who will be Beroe's husband.

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[62] fr. 260 l.21-3 Pfeiffer (70.6-8 Hollis). I translate.
[63] Nic. *Th.* 434.
[64] 41.144. The story of Beroe starts at the beginning of book 41.
[65] 41.155-7.

Thus the narrator, with these interventions in the stories of Ampelos and Beroe, also illustrates his role in ordering the sequence of events. He pays attention to the different versions and reports them scrupulously, with details on their chronological order; but these details are merely informative since chronology is not a criterion in the choices he makes: the order of presentation of the variants is established according to whether or not they introduce events which will make the narrative move on. These two versions play the part of transitional episodes, which enable the story to keep unfolding seemingly rather smoothly: the narratee expects the variants to be parentheses in the main narrative, but as a consequence of their length, he ends up forgetting that they started as secondary versions, and when the narrative carries on by grafting itself at the end of the variants, the narratee has forgotten that they started out as such.

The narrator of Aratus' *Phaenomena* has a similar attitude towards a variant in his explanation of the myths concerning the constellation of the Virgin:

> Εἴτ' οὖν Ἀστραίου κείνη γένος, ὅν ῥά τέ φασιν
> ἄστρων ἀρχαῖοι πατέρ' ἔμμεναι, εἴτε τευ ἄλλου,
> εὔκηλος φορέοιτο. Λόγος γε μὲν ἐντρέχει ἄλλος
> ἀνθρώποις, ὡς δῆθεν ἐπιχθονίη πάρος ἦεν
>
> Whether she be daughter of Astraeus, who, men say, was of old the father of the stars, or child of other sire, untroubled be her course! But another tale is current among men, how of old she dwelt on earth... [66]

He reports two variants, using both φασιν and λόγος. He emphasises his doubts about the second variant through the expression ὡς δῆθεν,[67] which in its stronger meaning is ironical and implies that a statement is not true; but although he creates this distance, he does not choose between the two versions, and even records the second one at length in thirty-six lines: this attitude is in keeping with the didactic aim of the work, and the narrator, while stating his opinion, does not have a polemical approach to the versions he records. As the Nonnian narrator was not prevented by questions of chronology from including and expanding on two variants of the same myths, it appears here that even the narrator's doubts about a variant will not mean that the variant is left aside, if it is substantial and allows the narrative to be enriched by an additional episode.

[66] 1. 98-101.

[67] Hollis 1990:235 comments on the use of this expression.

However there is one instance where the Nonnian narrator wishes to reject a variant, as he recounts the story of Erigone's catasterism, in an attempt at restoring the truth about what the correct story is. The first version tells how Zeus changed Erigone, her father and her dog into constellations, respectively the Virgin, Bootes and Canis Minor. But since these constellations already were associated with specific myths, this version must be wrong:

> καὶ τὰ μὲν ἔπλασε μῦθος Ἀχαιικὸς ἠθάδα πειθὼ
> ψεύδεϊ συγκεράσας· τὸ δ᾽ ἐτήτυμον,
>
> Such is the fiction of the Achaian story, mingling as usual persuasion with falsehood: but the truth is...[68]

In the second version, Erigone, Icarios and the dog's souls are joined with the souls of the Virgin, the Plowman, and the Dog, so that all myths associated with these constellations are reconciled. The narrator does not say from where this second version comes, although he presents it explicitly as the truth, τὸ δ᾽ ἐτήτυμον, and his vehement disparaging of the Achaian version enforces his view. Moreover, the word φάτις, which has been used so far in all the variants introduced by the Nonnian narrator, is here replaced by μῦθος, a word whose meaning of "fable", "tale", fits well with the distance the narrator wishes to create. In a similar way, Pindar opposes "the language of truth" to "glittering … lies (μῦθοι)" about Pelops' ivory shoulder:

> ἦ θαυματὰ πολλά, καί πού τί καὶ βροτῶν φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον
> δεδαιδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι.
> Χάρις δ', ἅπερ ἅπαντα τεύχει τὰ μείλιχα θνατοῖς
> ἐπιφέροισα τιμὰν καὶ ἄπιστον ἐμήσατο πιστὸν
> ἔμμεναι τὸ πολλάκις·
> ἁμέραι δ' ἐπίλοιποι
> μάρτυρες σοφώτατοι.
>
> Yes, wonders are many, but then too, I think, in men's talk stories are embellished beyond the true account and deceive by means of elaborate lies. For Charis, who

[68] 47.256-7. Hyginus reports this version in his *Fabulae* (130): "By the will of the gods they were put among the stars. Erigone is the sign Virgo whom we call Justice; Icarius is called Arcturus among the stars, and the dog Maera is Canicula."; and in his *Astronomica* (2.4.): "And so many have called Icarus, Boötes, and Erigone, the Virgin." In *Astronomica* 2.25, Hyginus lists the mythological characters assimilated to the Virgin: Justice, Fortune, Ceres, Erigone, Parthenos. The assimilation of the Virgin with Justice was also in Aratus' *Phaenomena*, 1. 100-36.

> fashions all things pleasant to mortals, by bestowing honor makes even what is unbelievable often believed; yet days to come are the wisest witnesses.[69]

The Nonnian idea of the association between lies and persuasion echoes this passage, where the Pindaric ψεύδεσι, ἄπιστον and πιστὸν find parallels in the Nonnian ψεύδεϊ and πειθώ. As in Nonnus, not only is the term μῦθος associated with lies, but also with how easily men are deceived, and persuaded that these lies are the truth. Finally, the verb πλάσσω is, according to D. Gigli, "molto commune anche in prosa", with the meaning of "making up lies"; she also notes that this term belongs to the vocabulary of sculpture,[70] metaphorically here with the idea of the Achaians making up lies as they would a pleasing statue. The choice of this term is not surprising given the importance of visual connotations in the *Dionysiaca*.

The first variant is discredited further by the insistence on its Achaian origin, which implies that this variant is limited to a specific people. This device is also used by the Apollonian narrator on a version of the origin of amber, which he ascribes to the faraway Celts:

> Κελτοὶ δ᾽ ἐπὶ βάξιν ἔθεντο,
> ὡς ἄρ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος τάδε δάκρυα Λητοΐδαο
> ἐμφέρεται δίναις, ἅ τε μυρία χεῦε πάροιθεν,
> ...
> καὶ τὰ μὲν ὣς κείνοισι μετ᾽ ἀνδράσι κεκλήισται.

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[69] Pi. *O.* 1.28-34. The idea of distance is also the one which the narrator of the *Theriaca* picks up on in line 434, as he uses μῦθος to refer to the very old myth of the sharing of the world by the sons of Cronos, although in this occurrence, unlike in Pindar, the distance is only temporal and does not imply a judgement from the narrator. Like the Nonnian narrator, the narrator of Aratus' *Phaenomena* avoided using φάτις about a version on which he had doubts, and replaced it by λόγος, a word which can also be found in Euripides in a similar passage in *Helen*, 17-21:

> ἔστιν δὲ δὴ
> λόγος τις ὡς Ζεὺς μητέρ᾽ ἔπτατ᾽ εἰς ἐμὴν
> Λήδαν κύκνου μορφώματ᾽ ὄρνιθος λαβών,
> ὃς δόλιον εὐνὴν ἐξέπραξ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αἰετοῦ
> δίωγμα φεύγων, εἰ σαφὴς οὗτος λόγος.
>
> "There is a story that Zeus flew to my mother Leda in the shape of a swan [who was fleeing from an eagle and had his way with her by treachery, if that story is reliable]."

The detachment of the narrator towards her story is made clear by the conditional in the last line, and the tight framing between the repetition of the word λόγος.

[70] Gigli 1985:95. She refers to Hdt. 8.80, Isoc. *Panathenaikos* 25, Xen. *Mem.* 2.6.37, *An.* 2.6.26, where πλάσσω qualifies the fabrication of lies. Another example can be found in the *Dionysiaca* in the mouth of Hera at 20.208-9: she is trying to convince Lycurgos to resume fighting, arguing that Dionysus is not really Zeus' son, and that this is only a story invented by the Greeks: Ἑλλάδι φήμη… ἔπλασε μῦθος.

> But the Celts have attached this story to them, that these are the tears of Leto's son, Apollo, that are borne along by the eddies, the countless tears that he shed aforetime (...). And such is the story told among these men.[71]

The Apollonian narrator does not let this variant interfere with the main narrative: it is tightly framed between the expressions Κελτοὶ δ' ἐπὶ βάξιν ἔθεντο and καὶ τὰ μὲν ὥς κείνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσι κεκλήιται, in which the verb ἐπιτίθημι and the pronoun ἐκεῖνος also mark the refusal on the part of the narrator to subscribe to this βάξις, "saying".

In any case, these efforts made by the Nonnian narrator to disparage the Achaian version also underline his desire to reconcile the various myths about the constellations involved in the story of Erigone. This is representative of his own conception of story-telling: several characters can be seen in a constellation, just as several versions of a story can coexist. The Nonnian narrator chooses a combinatory approach where possible, and only rejects a version when it might prevent the coexistence of others.

Therefore in the case of the *Dionysiaca*, it is not always true that, as F. Vian writes in a note to the Ampelos variant: "logiquement une variante mérite un moindre credit"[72]. With one exception, the narrator does not create any differentiation between one variant or another. Like earlier authors, he uses φάτις with its neutral meaning for variants which he accepts, and keeps μῦθος to imply that a version is rejected as an unreliable tale. The matter of the antiquity of the versions seems not to matter to him, as he favours successively an older and a newer one; in the end, what matters to the Nonnian narrator, is that the narrative can keep flowing, and that the ποικιλία is sustained by the combination of different versions of the same myth.

IV. The narrator's opinion on his own story: a narrator-commentator

The narratorial interventions so far all draw upon epic usages. The reference to sources, the search and discussion of variants are not specific to the Nonnian narrator; yet it appears that he is on the whole more assertive than other epic narrators: when he does intervene, he tends to stress his activity and his role in telling the story. In a few passages, he even states his opinion about a character through verbs in the first person: his voice interrupts the narrative, and the level of the enunciation prevails for a short time. Like

[71] 4.611-12 and 18.
[72] Vian, 1995:202-3 *ad.* 12.294ff.

other epic narrators, he uses evaluative adjectives and apostrophes; but he also uses verbs in the first person, another evidence of his tendency to make himself apparent in his interventions.

1. Evaluative adjectives

I. de Jong lists evaluative adjectives as "subjective elements, *i.e.* elements which betray (in the narrator-text) the presence of the otherwise invisible poet."[73] But such adjectives do not reflect the opinion of the narrator when they occur in a passage where the narrator is adopting the point of view of one of the characters: "in analyzing the Iliad, or indeed any narrative text, it is useful to distinguish not only narrated parts (narrator-text) and speeches, but also a third category, viz. narrator-text in which the point of view of a character is represented."[74]

A well-known such adjective in Homeric epic is νήπιος, "childish, foolish", which signals the narrator's evaluation of a character's actions or thoughts, as illustrated, for example, by this occurrence, referring to Agamemnon, deceived by a dream sent by Zeus:

> φῆ γὰρ ὅ γ' αἱρήσειν Πριάμου πόλιν ἤματι κείνῳ
> νήπιος, οὐδὲ τὰ ἤδη ἅ ῥα Ζεὺς μήδετο ἔργα·
>
> For he thought that on that very day he would take Priam's city,
> fool, who knew nothing of all the things Zeus planned to accomplish.[75]

The narrator's omniscience, accounting for the prolepsis following these lines, which describes the plans of Zeus, enables him to comment on Agamemnon's deception by calling him νήπιος, thereby directing the narratee's opinion and inducing him to pity Agamemnon.

There is only one similar usage of νήπιος in the *Dionysiaca*:

> σβέσσαι γὰρ μενέαινε Γίγας θρασὺς αἰθέριον πῦρ,
> νήπιος· οὐδ' ἐνόησε, πυραυγέες ὅττι κεραυνοὶ
> καὶ στεροπαὶ γεγάασιν ἀπ' ὀμβροτόκων νεφελάων.
>
> Yes - to quench the ethereal fire was the bold Giant's plan, poor fool! he knew not that the fire-flaming thunderbolts and lightnings are the offspring of the clouds from whence the rain-showers come![76]

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[73] De Jong, 2004:18.
[74] De Jong, 1988:188.
[75] *Il.* 2.37-8. νήπιος occurs both in narrator-text and in character-text in Homer.

As in the *Iliad*, the adjective is followed by a negative which introduces a narratorial comment on the nature of thunderbolts, underlining a lack of knowledge in the character which makes him act like a fool. This is the only example of such a use of νήπιος in narrator-text; the five other occurrences with evaluative sense occur in character-text, and it is used ten times in narrator-text with the meaning of "infant".[77]

Two other lines stand out by the use of an evaluative adjective at their very beginning. The first concerns Morrheus, bathing in the sea to clean himself from the war before attempting to seduce the Bacchant Chalcomedeia:

> παρθενικὴν ἐδόκησεν ἔχειν βέλος ἶσον ἐρώτων,
> κοῦφος ἀνήρ·
>
> He thought she had in her heart a wound of maiden love like his own. Shallow man![78]

The narrator draws the narratee's attention to Morrheus' delusion and underlines the ridiculous character of this scene which he has contrived as a parody of the conventional bathing scenes narrated in the *Dionysiaca*.[79] The second concerns Ampelos, who has been persuaded by Ate to climb on the back of a wild bull, and sees his death coming when the bull gallops away, maddened by a fly. The narrator comments, after Ampelos has begged the bull to stop:

> τοῖον ἔπος ῥοδόεις νέος ἔννεπεν Ἄιδι γείτων
> δύσμορος·
>
> So spoke the rosy boy, so near to Hades, unhappy one![80]

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[76] 2.448-50. Rouse's expressive translation renders well the narratorial intervention in these lines.
[77] In character-text: 3.103, 19.316, 30.41, 37.404, 45.70. In narrator-text, meaning "infant": 3.396, 8.186, 9.50 and 56, 10.68, 13.138 and 431, 25.492, 42.171, 48.952.
[78] 33.205-6
[79] There are eight bathing scenes in the *Dionysiaca* (in addition to the Morrheus scene); they all follow the same general pattern: a chaste woman or goddess is bathing, but she is seen by a man, with various consequences, from the death of the man to the wedding of the two protagonists. In these scenes, emphasis is laid on the gleaming whiteness of the woman's skin: Artemis and Actaeon, 5.299-315 and 475-92; Persephone and Zeus, 5.586-621; Semele and Zeus, 7.215-24 and 256-79; Nicaia and Hymnos, 15.212-54; Nicaia and Dionysos, 16.1-19; Clymene and Helios, 38.108-29; Beroe, Dionysos and Poseidon, 42.40-8, 89-94 and 441-55; Artemis and Aura, 48.302-8 and 328-50. In the Morrheus and Chalcomedeia scene (35.155-60 and 185-203), the narrator plays with these standards to construct an inverted bathing scene: the genders are inverted (the man bathes, the woman watches); the watcher, Chalcomedeia, is in plain sight of the bather instead of hiding; she takes no pleasure in watching Morrheus bathe; Morrheus' skin in not gleaming white, but dark.
[80] 11.214-15.

By adding this adjective, the narrator makes it clear that Ampelos will not be saved and increases the pathos of the scene.

But in the *Dionysiaca*, the adjective which is the most often evaluative is δειλός, "miserable, wretched". Out of thirty-four uses by the Homeric narrator, only five are found in narrator text, among which three refer to Patroclus, one to mortals in general, and one to Crethon and Archilochus, two Greeks.[81] In the *Argonautica*, δειλός occurs only five times, in character-text. As for the Quintian narrator, he employs this adjective seventeen times in all: fifteen times in character-text, once in narrator-text with no evaluative sense, and another time in narrator-text to qualify the Trojans.[82] Therefore this adjective is not an obvious choice for the Nonnian narrator, yet he uses it seventeen times in narrator-text (and twenty-four times in character-text): he appropriates an epic device and makes it his own by the choice of a rarer word.

Among these seventeen occurrences, three are in the vocative: ἆ μέγα δειλή. They can be ascribed to the narrator himself, and not to a character whose focalization he would be assuming, since the vocative makes of them a form of address from the narrator to the character, even though the narrator does not go as far as using the second person in addition to the vocative. The first is addressed to Echo, submerged in the flood caused by the battle between Zeus and Typhon, and who has to swim to find shelter. The second takes place in the short "biography" of Alkimacheia following her death – a Homeric device: the narrator pities the Amazon Alkimacheia who, killed by Morrheus, is never to see her father Harpalion again. In the third, he pities Aura, who wished to remain a maiden, but who is about to give birth to twins after having been raped by Dionysus.[83] In these three instances, the narrator makes his voice particularly prominent: the vocative gives a particularly expressive tone to the adjective so as to direct more clearly the narratee's emotions. Only one of the fourteen other occurrences of the adjective, while

[81] Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο: 23.65, 23.105, 23.221 (and 223: δειλοὺς τοκῆας. Achilles mourning Patroclus is compared to the "hapless parents" of a newly wed son. Remarkably, δειλός qualifies Patroclus, the dead "son" and, in the comparison, the parents, the ones who are left behind. It suggests that Achilles and Patroclus are equally miserable, the former for having been killed, the latter for being deprived of his friend). δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν: 22.31. τὼ δειλώ: 5.574.

[82] Q.S. 4.2.

[83] Echo: 6.259, Alcimacheia: 30.207, Aura: 48.849.

evaluative, belongs to a passage where the narrator assumes a character's focalization.[84] As for the remaining thirteen occurrences, they all record the narrator's pity for his characters, in particular for Aura, who is the object of no fewer than three of these occurrences[85] – in addition to the one in the vocative recorded above, which makes of her the character upon whom the narrator's attention is the most focussed. This is both to be expected, since she is probably the female character who was the most wronged, in punishment for having mocked Artemis' breasts – Dionysus raped her and she suffered prolonged birth pains; and surprising, since it emphasises Dionysus' reprehensible conduct. By pitying her as he does, the narrator seems to imply that the punishment exceeded the crime, underlining successively the mercilessness of Adrasteia as she prepares Artemis' revenge, the baseness of Dionysus' trick, binding the drunken girl to rape her, and the cruelty of Artemis as she prevents the birth from taking place. It appears thus that the narrator is not always siding with Dionysus, but rather illustrates the ambiguity of the Dionysian world, where madness, wine, and Dionysus himself, can be both positive and negative. This ambiguity is further underlined by the occurrences concerning Icarios and his daughter:[86] Icarios, having been given the wine by Dionysus and shared it with his neighbours, is killed by the latter when they wake up from their drunkenness, assuming that Icarios tried to poison them. Icarios' shadow when it appears to his daughter, and his daughter herself, are both called δειλή by the narrator who here again encourages his narratee to pity these victims of the Dionysiac influence. The same applies to the δειλαί women of Argos and to Agaue:[87] when the people of Argos refused to welcome the Dionysiac troop in their city, Dionysus made the women mad so that they murdered their children, and Agaue was an indirect victim of Pentheus' disrespect for Dionysus and killed him in her madness. As with Aura, the narrator sides with the victims even if they committed – indirectly in the case of Agaue – an offence against

[84] At 9.299-301: the narrator tells of the anxiety of Mystis, the nurse to whom Ino entrusted Dionysus, while Ino has turned to flight, being maddened by the jealous Hera. δειλή transcribes Mystis' focalisation.

καὶ πλέον αἰολόμητις ἐδέχνυτο Μύστις ἀνάγκην,
εἶχε δὲ διπλόον ἄλγος ἀλωομένης ἔτι δειλῆς
Ἰνοῦς τλησιπόνοιο καὶ ἁρπαμένου Διονύσου.

"Most of all the inventive mind of Mystis felt the hard oppression, for she had a double grief, when unhappy Ino was still lost with all her troubles to bear, and Dionysus was stolen away."

[85] 48.459, 48.633 and 48.751.

[86] 47.151 and 47.158.

[87] 47.484 and 46.275.

Dionysus, rather than implying that they deserved their punishment – which is, here again quite disproportionate to the crime. A similar shift in the point of view of a pro-Dionysian narrator is visible in Euripides' *Bacchae*: as Agaue comes back from the forest carrying the head of her son, the chorus of Bacchants, who had been praising Dionysus without restrain so far, starts to pity Cadmos, another indirect victim of Dionysus' wrath against Pentheus, after a speech where he had been lamenting over the corpse of his grandson:

> Τὸ μὲν σὸν ἀλγῶ, Κάδμε· σὸς δ' ἔχει δίκην
> παῖς παιδὸς ἀξίαν μέν, ἀλγεινὴν δὲ σοί.
>
> I feel grief at your misfortune, Cadmus. As for your grand-son, he has received justice, however painful it is for you.[88]

While not denying the necessity, according to them, of the punishment, the chorus' pity and sympathy for Cadmos implies that they feel that the revenge of Dionysus has gone too far. Cadmos also exclaims, replying to Dionysus himself who has rather mercilessly asserted that it is too late to ask for forgiveness:

> Ἐγνώκαμεν ταῦτ'· ἀλλ' ἐπεξέρχῃ λίαν.
>
> We recognise this. But you chastise us too harshly.[89]

The sentiment is the same: although he recognises that Dionysus, being a god, can exercise his power as he pleases, he does complain that the god does not know limits to it. Thus this ambiguity seems inherent to the myth and indeed to the Dionysiac influence itself throughout their representations in time: the euphoria of madness, of inebriation, is twofold, and is underlined by the narrator of the *Dionysiaca* as it had been by the narrators that are the characters of Euripides' play.

A last example of a pejorative judgement made by the narrator on Dionysus' action can be found in Dionysius' *Bassarica*; Modaios, an Indian prisoner disguised as a deer by Dionysus's followers, is about to be sacrificed, when a female character rushes to Dionysius to alert him about it. Dionysus stops the sacrifice and makes the dire suggestion that the Indians should be made to dismember the prisoner and eat him raw, without knowing that he was one of theirs, since he has been disguised, or turned into, a deer – this is of course very reminiscent of the story of Pentheus, with the presence of the

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[88] 1327-8.

[89] 1346. See Grégoire & Meunier, 1973:299, *ad* 1350, for a discussion of this line sometimes attributed to Agaue. Both J. Diggle and D. Kovacs attribute this line to Cadmos.

motifs of διασπαραγμός and ὠμοφαγία, and the fact that the victim is killed by his own people. It has been suggested by A. Benaissa that the female character urging Dionysus to intervene is an embodiment of ὕβρις:

> ἡ δὲ Μεθυμναίοιο βαθύπτε[ρ]ον οὐλοος Ὕβ[ρις
> ἐς κλισίην ἵκετ' ἄρτι πε[ρ]ι[ζα]φελὲς βοοῶ[σα]
>
> Now destructive Hybris came with furious cries to the deep-winged tent of Methymnaios and found him lying in his bed.[90]

This reconstruction provides another instance where the narrator implies that Dionysus' punishment of his victims is excessive, here through the personification of Hybris, who is presented as the cause for the god's intervention; however the rest of the episode is lost, so that we do not know the final fate of Modaios.

In the rest of the passages from the *Dionysiaca*,[91] δειλή signals the sympathy of the narrator for other unhappy characters: Ino victim of Hera's jealousy, Hymnos killed by Nicaia, Hippodameia whom her father will not allow to marry, Andromeda chased by the sea monster even as a constellation, Ariadne abandoned by Theseus, and even the severed hand of a warrior who keeps rolling about on the battle field.

2. Verbs in the first person

On a few occasions, the Nonnian narrator also makes explicit his point of view on the characters' actions by using verbs in the first person singular. The first example concerns Autonoe, the mother of Actaeon who was changed into a stag by Artemis and killed by his own dogs. The narrator describes Autonoe looking for the remains of her son and failing to recognise him in the corpse of the stag that he became, and makes a comment at 5.395, using a verb in the first person and an evaluative adjective:

> δύσμορον Αὐτονόην οὐ μέμφομαι·
>
> I blame not unhappy Autonoe.

The very same words are repeated line 401. The narrator seems particularly moved as he recounts this story. In fact in the whole passage (5.388-411) he aims at conveying the ironic

[90] Ὕβ[ρις: Benaissa. *Bassarica*, fr. 19 Livrea verso, l.9-10. Translation A. Benaissa, forthcoming edition of the *Bassarica*.

[91] Ino: 10.81, Hymnos: 15.420, Hippodameia: 20.154, Andromeda: 25.124, Ariadne: 47.295, the hand: 28.138.

situation of the mother who sees her son but cannot recognise him, through the repetition of the structure "she saw... and did not know",[92] while the impressive range of words meaning "to see" or "to know", or their opposites, is the mark of the narrator's pursuit of ποικιλία by the repetition of the same under different shapes.[93] In addition to this work on the vocabulary, the passage is carefully organised in mirroring groups of lines, of 2 – 5 – 4 – 2 – 4 – 5 – 2 lines long; the first three clusters show Autonoe starting her search and discovering the body of the stag, building on the paradox of seeing without recognising, which culminates in the two almost similar central lines:

> λεπταλέους πόδας εἶδε καὶ οὐκ ἐφράσσατο ταρσούς,
> λεπταλέους πόδας εὗρε καὶ οὐκ ἴδε κύκλα πεδίλων.
>
> [She] found slim legs and did not trace his feet, saw slim legs and saw not the rounded boots.[94]

After this climax, she is shown leaving the death-scene and lamenting on the failure of her quest. The careful construction of the passage as well as the two interventions in the first person seem to indicate the special importance of this episode for the narrator. The theme of the relationship between mother and child is one of the main themes of the *Dionysiaca*, although the relationship is often one of rejection (Nicaia, Aura), or worse, a relationship ending in the death of the child (Pentheus, Itylos the son of Procne, one of Aura's twin boys). The relationship of Autonoe to Actaeon has none of these violent aspects so that the contrast makes Autonoe's grief all the more touching, and the narrator explicitly marks his empathy for her. She will appear again in book 46: as Agaue laments the death of Pentheus, Autonoe explains that she considers her own fate as the worst of the two, since she was not allowed to weep over the remains of her son, but had to bury the alien corpse of a stag. The *Dionysiaca* being a very visual poem, it is worth noting that this first-person intervention of the narrator is tightly linked to an issue of sight, more exactly of the impossibility of seeing what one is looking for.

These two occurrences of μέμφομαι in the first person in the narrator text have no parallel in epic narratives, but similar uses of this verb appear in Thucydides and

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[92] with the repetition of καὶ οὐ: l.390, 391, 393, 397, 398, 399, 400, 403.

[93] 5.390: εἶδε, γίνωσκεν, ἔδρακε; 391: ἴδεν, ὀπωπήν; 392: ἀγνώστοιο; 393: μάθεν; 394: ἰδεῖν; 396: ὄπωπεν; 397: ἐνόησε, ἴδε, ὀπωπῆς; 398 μάθε; 399: εἶδε; 400: ἴδε; 402: ἔδρακεν, ἴδε; 403: ἐνόησεν. The word μορφή, also related to vision, occurs at the end of lines 390, 394, 402. The entire passage is built on a network of repetitions of words and themes.

[94] 4.399-400.

Plutarch, as they provide their opinion about the characters, namely the Athenians and Cato, and about their reaction to events they relate.[95] With these interventions the Nonnian narrator assumes a much more directly judgmental *persona* than the Homeric one as he explicitly engages in an evaluation of Autonoe's actions as if she were a historical figure.

Thus the narrator underlines the importance of this side story by intervening in the first person in the story itself. He expresses his compassion towards Autonoe, in an episode which the narratee should remember, since it will be used in a comparison with the fate of Agaue, Pentheus' mother. It is also a sign of the narrator's interest in the theme of the relationship between mother and child, a recurrent theme in the *Dionysiaca*.

V. The *syncrisis* of book 25, 22-252: an innovative and assertive narratorial intervention

Book 25 stands out by the unusual amount of narratorial presence in it. It opens the second part of the epic and begins with a very long proem, half of which is a *syncrisis* between Dionysos and the heroes Perseus, Minos and Heracles. In this *syncrisis* the narrator tells the stories of the four characters side by side and engages in an active and impassioned confrontation between their respective labours, often addressing the narratee and answering his objections. The choice of the three heroes and their order of appearance is most likely inspired by the list of the consorts of Zeus in the *Iliad*,[96] which mentions successively Ixion's wife, Danae, Europe, Semele, Alcmene, Demeter and Leto. Danae, Europe and Alcmene's sons appear in the *syncrisis* in the same order as in the Iliadic list. However the *syncrisis* does not include the children of all these women: Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, is left out, as are Apollo and Artemis, Leto's children and deities who are not mainly known for their labours, and Peirithoos, the son of Dia, Ixion's wife, although he achieved notable deeds with Perseus which would have justified his

[95] Th. 4.61.5: καὶ τοὺς μὲν Ἀθηναίους ταῦτα πλεονεκτεῖν τε καὶ προνοεῖσθαι πολλὴ ξυγγνώμη, καὶ οὐ τοῖς ἄρχειν βουλομένοις μέμφομαι, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ὑπακούειν ἑτοιμοτέροις οὖσιν· "That the Athenians entertain these designs of aggrandisement is quite pardonable; and I have no word of blame for those who wish to rule, but only for those who are too ready to submit." Plu. *Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato*, 5.2: ἐγὼ δ᾽ οὐ μέμφομαι μὲν Κάτωνος τὸ μεγαλύνειν ἀεί ... "For my own part, I do not blame Cato for his constant boasting..."

[96] *Il.* 14. 315-28. See Vian 1990:16.

appearance in the *syncrisis*. In fact, the narrator seems to avoid mentioning Dia: she does not occur in the list of the arrows meant for Zeus by Eros either.[97]

Be that as it may, having chosen Perseus, Minos and Heracles to be Dionysus' counterpoints, the narrator clearly asserts Dionysus' superiority over the three of them in this *syncrisis* where he becomes particularly overt as he strives to convince his narratee. In doing so, he picks up on what seems to have been a very popular theme: the comparison between Dionysus and Heracles occurs in literature as well as in art,[98] and the narrator enhances this motif by adding Perseus and Minos to the *syncrisis*. In so doing, the narrator follows the rhetorical rules as laid out in the treatises of *Progymnasmata*, firstly, that *syncriseis* must be based on heroes of similar worth, as is recommended by Aelius Theon:

> πρῶτον δὲ διωρίσθω, ὅτι αἱ συγκρίσεις γίνονται οὐ τῶν μεγάλην πρὸς ἄλληλα διαφορὰν ἐχόντων· γελοῖος γὰρ ὁ ἀπορῶν, πότερον ἀνδρειότερος Ἀχιλλεὺς ἢ Θερσίτης, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῶν ὁμοίων, καὶ περὶ ὧν ἀμφισβητοῦμεν, πότερον δεῖ προθέσθαι, διὰ τὸ μηδεμίαν ὁρᾶν τοῦ ἑτέρου πρὸς τὸ ἕτερον ὑπεροχήν.
>
> First, let it be specified that *syncriseis* are not comparisons of things having a great difference between them; for someone wondering whether Achilles or Thersites was braver would be laughable. Comparison should be of likes and where we are in doubt which should be preferred because of no evident superiority of one to the other.[99]

As part of his strategy to demonstrate the superiority of Dionysus, the narrator even feigns to assume that the narratee is biased against Dionysus, as appears in some hypothetical interventions of the narratee, which will be studied below. As such, the aim

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[97] 7.117-28. The only mention of Ixion's wife in the *Dionysiaca* occurs in character-text at 16.240.

[98] See Foucher, 2000, for a list of works of art showing drinking contests between Dionysus and Heracles, in particular pp.203 ff, where Foucher studies recently discovered mosaics in which Dionysus is the winner of the contest.
See also *Anthology of Planudes*, 185:
Ἀμφότεροι Θήβηθε καὶ ἀμφότεροι πολεμισταὶ
κὴκ Διός· ὃς θύρσῳ δεινός, ὁ δὲ ῥοπάλῳ
ἀμφοῖν δὲ στῆλαι συντέρμονες· εἴκελα δ' ὅπλα,
νεβρὶς λειοντῇ, κύμβαλα δὲ πλαταγῇ.
Ἥρη δ' ἀμφοτέροις χαλεπὴ θεός· οἱ δ' ἀπὸ γαίης
ἦλθον ἐς ἀθανάτους ἐκ πυρὸς ἀμφότεροι.
Both from Thebes, both warriors and sons of Zeus; the one, terrible because of his thyrsus, the other, because of his club; thus are their statues next to each other. Their weapons are similar: the fawnskin to the lion skin, the cymbals to the rattle. Hera was cruel to both; they left the earth through fire to become immortal, both of them. (I translate.)

[99] Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, 112-113.

of the *syncrisis* is to show the superiority of the disadvantaged character; Hermogenes has advice concerning *syncriseis* of such a type:

> γίνεται δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον σύγκρισις, ἔνθα ἀγὼν τὸν ἐλάττονα ἴσον τῷ κρείττονι δεῖξαι, οἷον εἰ σύγκρισιν λέγοις Ἡρακλέους καὶ Ὀδυσσέως. ἀπαιτεῖ δὲ τὸ τοιοῦτο βίαιον ῥήτορα καὶ δεινότητα, δεῖται δὲ καὶ γοργότητος ἡ ἐργασία πανταχοῦ διὰ τὸ δεῖν ταχείας ποιεῖσθαι τὰς μεταβάσεις.
>
> There is also comparison with the better, where you bring in the lesser to show it is equal to the greater; for example, if you were to compare Odysseus to Heracles. This requires a vehement orator and the forceful style, and the working out requires rapidity everywhere because of the need of making quick changes back and forth from one to the other.[100]

And indeed the number of narratorial interventions in the *syncrisis* is striking. The narrator leaves aside temporarily the epic tone to engage in a more rhetorical discussion about the merits of Dionysus.

> Ἀλλὰ νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων,
> εὐκαμάτους ἱδρῶτας ἀναστήσω Διονύσου,
> κρίνων ἠνορέην τεκέων Διός, ὄφρα νοήσω,
> τίς κάμε τοῖον ἀγῶνα, τίς εἴκελος ἔπλετο Βάκχου.
>
> But I will set up the toils and sweat of Dionysos in rivalry with both old and new; I will judge the manhood of the sons of Zeus, and see who endured such an encounter, who was like unto Bacchos.[101]

This introduction to the *syncrisis* includes no fewer than four verbs referring to the activity of the narrator: two in the first person singular and two participles. It contrasts with the introductions to the *syncriseis* of historical figures by Plutarch, where the narrator prefers to use an indirect phrase or the first person plural in the majority of cases.[102] This is a clue about how forthright the Nonnian narrator is going to be, which is in keeping with the strong polemical tone of the *syncrisis*: where the narrator in Plutarch aims at objectivity and states the merits and the faults of the characters he compares, the Nonnian narrator gives the absolute superiority to Dionysus. Although it is not yet evident in the introduction, the number of first person verbs suggests that the narrator's voice – and

[100] Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*, 8.26-30.

[101] 25.27-30. I underline.

[102] Among the narratorial interventions introducing Plutarch's eighteen *syncriseis*, only one verb in the 1st person singular can be found (μοι δοκῶ, *Demosthenes and Cicero* I.1.). Otherwise, the narrator uses one verb in the 2nd person singular, three verbs with an indefinite subject, nine impersonal constructions of which three include a first person plural pronoun, and eight verbs in the first person plural.

opinion – will be predominant in the passage. The first person is then recurrent in this very subjective *syncrisis*; through it the narrator explicitly takes Dionysus' side. He even "appropriates" the god by an unparalleled use of the personal pronoun in epic, calling Dionysus ἐμὸς πρόμος, "my champion", and ἐμὸς Διόνυσος.[103]

1. The narrator takes sides: a partial *syncrisis*

The *syncrisis* is really the frame for an *encomium* of Dionysus, delivered directly and explicitly by the voice of the narrator himself. Verbs in the first person appear twice in the comparison with Perseus:

> καὶ Φαέθων ὅσον εὖχος ὑπέρτερον ἔλλαχε Μήνης
> τόσσον ἐγὼ Περσῆος ἀρείονα Βάκχον ἐνίψω.
>
> As much as Phaethon has glory above the Moon, so much better than Perseus I will declare Bacchos to be.
>
> οὐκ ἄγαμαι Περσῆα μίαν κτείναντα γυναίκα
> εἵμασι νυμφιδίοισιν ἔτι πνείουσαν Ἐρώτων.
>
> I do not admire Perseus for killing one woman, in her bridal dress still breathing of love. [104]

Through the double comparison in the first passage and the litotes in the second, the narrator gives the advantage to Dionysus; these two literary devices are clearly intended to influence the opinion of the narratee. The comparison uses mythological characters, as expected in an epic, as embodiments of the sun and the moon, the superiority of the former over the latter being considered as obvious, to reinforce the second comparison between Perseus and Dionysus. The chiastic composition creates an effect of *uariatio*. Dionysus' solar traits are made explicit in the mouth of Deriades as he replies sarcastically to the herald who came to ask the Indians to surrender:

> καὶ πυρόεις σέο Βάκχος ἀκούεται, ὅττι τεκούσης
> ἐκ λαγόνων ἀνέτελλε Διοβλήτοιο Θυώνες.
>
> Your Bacchos is called the fiery, because he rose from the flanks of his mother Thyone struck by Zeus.[105]

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[103] 25. 213 and 237. - L. Miguelez-Cavero (2010) discusses further the presence of encomiastic elements in the *Dionysiaca*.
[104] 25.103-4 and 111-12.
[105] 21.222-3.

But comparing a warrior to a solar deity is also a Homeric device, which is used most strikingly about Achilles as he joins the fight for the first time, wearing the armour that Hephaistos just made for him: Ἀχιλλεὺς / τεύχεσι παμφαίνων ὥς τ' ἠλέκτωρ Ὑπερίων, "Achilles gleaming in his armour like the bright Hyperion".[106] Comparisons of warriors with light and flame are recurrent in the *Iliad*:[107] the Nonnian narrator calls upon his narratee's epic imaginary to make the link between his solar qualification of Dionysus and the idea of prowess and of warlike valour that is conveyed in the Homeric poem. This occurrence of ἐνίψω is the only one in narrator-text – there are fourteen more in character text. It underlines the action of expressing an opinion in one's own name, all the more so here since it is accompanied by the pronoun ἐγώ.

As for the litotes οὐκ ἄγαμαι, it disparages Perseus with a sneer, underlining the opinion of the narrator. The verb ἄγαμαι occurs again during the fight between Dionysus and Perseus at the gates of Argos: in a direct reported speech, a Pelasgian man, watching the scene, gives his own *syncrisis* between Dionysus and Perseus, siding with the latter.[108] This passage in character-text provides an inverted parallel to the narrator's account in book 25, the latter running as follows:

a. Perseus fought against Medusa, a single woman, while Dionysus defeated the numberless Indians (31-79).

b. Perseus killed the sea monster only, while Dionysus killed many Giants (80-97).

c. In the fight against Dionysus, Perseus managed to kill Ariadne only (105-12).

d. Zeus did not bring Danae onto Olympus, but he brought Semele there (113-122).

e. Andromeda was turned into a constellation, but she is unhappy; and Ariadne's crown is also among the stars (123-147).

In book 47, the Pelasgian man replies to all of these points:

1. Dionysus treads grapes, Perseus treads the air (501-2).

2. Perseus with his sickle is as good in battle as Dionysus with his ivy (503-6).

3. Dionysus turned a ship into stone, Perseus turned a sea monster into stone (507-9).

4. Dionysus saved Ariadne asleep on a shore, Perseus freed Andromeda from her chains and from the sea-monster (510-3).

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[106] *Il.* 19.397-8. In the *Iliad* Homer joins the name Hyperion to the name of Helios to designate the sun-god. In the *Odyssey* and in the *Theogony* he appears as a Titan and the father of Helios.

[107] Many warriors are φλογὶ εἴκελος; κορυθαίολος is one of the adjectives qualifying Hector.

[108] 47.498-532.

5. Ariadne wedded Dionysus for Aphrodite's sake when she was in love with Theseus; Andromeda really loved Perseus (514-6).

6. Danae was not burned to ashes; she wedded a shower of gold, not a murdering fire (516-9).

(1) is a new argument. (2) replies to (a), on the issue of war prowess; (3) replies to (b), on the question of the ability to fight monsters; (4), to (c): the narrator implied that Perseus was only able to kill women, but the Pelasgian man shows that unlike Dionysus, Perseus is able to save a woman from a perilous situation. The last two arguments are inverted: (6) replies to (d), about the way Zeus did or did not show honour to Perseus and Dionysus' mothers, and (5) replies to (e), where the narrator argued that Perseus had let Andromeda down: the Pelasgian man underlines her love for Perseus. This reversal of the narrator's arguments is done using the same 1st person phrasing: the Pelasgian man exclaims about Dionysus: οὐκ ἄγαμαί ποτε τοῦτον ἐγὼ πρόμον,[109] where οὐκ ἄγαμαί is accompanied by the pronoun ἐγὼ as was ἐνίψω in narrator-text; πρόμον answers to the narrator's ἐμὸς πρόμος and therefore takes an ironic meaning. The Pelasgian man also uses the possessive pronoun: ἐμὸς Περσεύς.[110] By allowing this character's intervention in direct speech, the narrator provides the narratee with two opposite accounts and invites him to think on the merits of the two heroes; the distance between the two accounts in the epic is consistent with the narrator's aesthetic which favours the recurrence of the same themes in various places of the epic. By including these two forceful defences of both Dionysus and Perseus, he gives a rhetorical tone to his poem and shows a taste for discussion and arguing.

The verb ἄγαμαι occurs twice more in the last part of the *syncrisis*, where Heracles replaces Perseus. The two occurrences highlight one of the main arguments in the *syncrisis*, namely that Heracles is much less admirable than Dionysus because most of these labours are comparable to some of the Bacchants' deeds. Thus the narrator disparages Heracles' labour of the Nemean lion:

> λέοντι βραχίονα λοξὸν ἑλίξας
> εὐπαλάμῳ πήχυνε περίπλοκον αὐχένα δεσμῷ,
> πότμον ἄγων ἀσίδηρον, (...)
> οὐκ ἄγαμαι καὶ τοῦτο·

[109] 47.520.

[110] 47.509.

> He threw his arm from one side and circled the lion's neck entangled in mighty grip, and so without weapon brought death (...). I see nothing surprising in that.[111]

and his labour of the Cretan bull:

> οὐκ ἄγαμαί τινα ταῦρον, ὃν ἤλασεν, ὅττι τινάσσων
> τοσσατίην κορύνην ὀλίγην ἔτμηξε κεραίην·
> πολλάκι τοῦτο τέλεσσε γυνὴ μία, πολλάκι Βάκχη
> ἄσπετον εὐκεράων ἀγέλην δαιτρεύσατο ταύρων
>
> I cannot admire just a mad bull which he chased, and how shaking that great club he knocked off a little horn. One woman alone has often done as much, and a Bacchant woman has often butchered a vast herd of bulls.[112]

Those two labours consist of things that women and Bacchants are able to do and indeed are shown doing in the *Dionysiaca*. For the lion, the narrator takes in the following lines the example of Cyrene, Actaeon's grandmother, whose name is always accompanied by the adjective λεοντόφονος.[113] Elsewhere the Bacchants are depicted killing a lion in Dionysus' dream and one of them is able to ride a lioness.[114] The argument is the same about the bull: the narrator refuses to admire Heracles being able to kill one bull, when the Bacchants are able to do even more: two Bacchants kill and disembowel a bull in the forest, a group of Bacchants attack one of Poseidon's bulls and one of them kills it with a single touch (ἐφαπτομένη) before the other dismember it, and after having escaped from Pentheus' jail, a single Bacchant kills a whole herd of bulls:[115] Heracles is assimilated to a woman. Once more, by choosing this verb, the narrator departs from the *persona* of the epic poet: ἄγαμαι does not occur in epic in narrator-text.[116] However, it is used by the narrators of one of Plutarch's *syncriseis* and of Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities*, although the most significant occurrence – because the most similar to the Nonnian one – is found in Herodotus, as the narrator weighs the merits and faults of the Scythians, putting aside some of their contributions to civilisation to express his

[111] 25.176-8 and 180.
[112] 25.228-31. The only other occurrence of ἄγαμαι apart from the four quoted above is found in character-text at 43.147.
[113] 5.292, 13.300-1, 24.85, 27.263, 45.31, 46.238.
[114] 18.176-95 and 43.314.
[115] 14.377-81, 43.42-51 and 45.287-90. A Bacchant kills a camel at 14.370-6.
[116] It occurs in epic only the *Odyssey*, in character-text at 16.168 and 23.175.

admiration for one in particular;[117] this is in keeping with the *persona* of the historian which we saw the narrator assume elsewhere in the poem. An occurrence of οὐκ ἄγαμαι in character-text in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* occurs in a programmatic passage where the poet asserts his choice of short poetry by having Apollo refuting Envy as she says that she does not admire (οὐκ ἄγαμαι) poets who do not sing of numerous things.[118] Finally, an epigram by Gregory of Nazianzus illustrates the idea of strong rejection implied by this verb, especially there with an anadiplosis, as the narrator laments having obtained a tomb as heritage from his ancestors: Οὐκ ἄγαμ', οὐκ ἄγαμαι δῶρον τόδε·[119]

Therefore the narrator not only becomes particularly overt in the *syncrisis*, but does so with a purpose in view: to defend the merits of Dionysus against those of other demigods, in comparisons where his partiality is clearly voiced through first person verbs. But he is nonetheless aware that his opinion is only one side of the coin, as was shown by his insertion, later in the poem, of the point of view of the Pelasgian man, and as also appears in the *syncrisis* itself through two main devices: the use of the verb οἶδα and the insertion if imaginary objections from the narratee.

2. Anticipations of the narratee's objections: the narrator's awareness of his own bias

Indeed the narrator makes the most of the *syncrisis* to strengthen his *persona* of learned narrator as he uses the verb οἶδα to confirm that he knows about mythological stories other that those directly related to Dionysus. But in the context of the *syncrisis*, saying "I know about..." acquires in addition a polemical dimension: in these sentences, the narrator is anticipating hypothetical objections that the narratee would make to oppose his arguments. For example, having disparaged Perseus on the grounds that his mother, unlike Dionysus', had not been raised to the skies, he hastens to add:

οἶδα μὲν Ἀνδρομέδην, ὅτι φαίνεται ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου

[117] Plu. *Comparison of Pelopidas and Marcellus*, 3.1 and in D.H. 2.18.1. Hdt. 4, 46, 8: τὰ μέντοι ἄλλα οὐκ ἄγαμαι. Τὸ δὲ μέγιστον... "I do not praise the Scythians in all respects, but in this, the most important..."

[118] Call. *Ap.* 106: οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν ἀοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος ἀείδει. "I admire not the poet who singeth not things for number as the sea."

[119] Gregorius of Nazianzus, *Epigrams*, book 8, 90.

I know that Andromeda is to be seen in Olympos[120]

as though the narratee was about to retort that maybe Perseus' mother was not in the sky, but his consort was. The narrator concedes the argument only to turn it to his advantage, by explaining that Andromeda is unhappy because still threatened by the constellation of Cetus, and by adding that Dionysus' partner Ariadne, or at least her crown, has been granted the same favour: ergo, the argument that Perseus is greater than Dionysus because his spouse has been turned into a constellation is not valid.

The verb οἶδα is also recurrent in the part of the *syncrisis* concerning Heracles' labours. The Nonnian narrator only mentions six labours in the main part of his argument: the lion, the boar, the hydra, the doe, the Cretan bull and Geryon's bulls. His main argument for the superiority of Dionysus is that Dionysus too is able to fight wild beasts and monsters, and that he does so more easily than Heracles. Another argument, as we saw, is that these labours are more than within reach of the Bacchants' ability, which equals Heracles' worth to that of a woman.[121] But the ideas listed here are not the only means employed by the Nonnian narrator to convey his low opinion of Heracles. His temporary overtness allows him to intervene on the narratological level to strengthen his ideas. Two of the labours are introduced by the verb οἶδα in a positive clause:

οἶδα μέν, ὅττι λέοντι βραχίονα λοξὸν ἑλίξας
εὐπαλάμῳ πήχυνε περίπλοκον αὐχένα δεσμῷ

I know he threw his arm from one side and circled the lion's neck entangled in mighty grip.

οἶδα καὶ Ἀρκάδα κάπρον ὀρίδρομον

I know also the boar of the Arcadian mountains. [122]

The narrator then briefly recounts each labour, as though contemptuously acknowledging their existence while answering the possible objections of his narratee before turning the argument to the advantage of Dionysus.

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[120] 25.123. This part of the *syncrisis* appears again at 47.449-52 in Dionysus' wooing speech to Ariadne.

[121] F.Vian 1990:22-3 develops these arguments and establishes a parallel with Euripides' *Heracles* 151-64, where Lycos undertakes the same disparagement of Heracles' labours.

[122] 25.176-7 and 194.

Finally, in the passage of the *syncrisis* involving Minos, the narrator confirms that he is aware of this demigod's deeds before telling the episode in full: οἶδα μόθον Μίνωος, "I know also the war of Minos".[123] This time the verb marks the transition between the comparison with Perseus and the one with Minos, so that it does not refer to a hypothetical intervention from the narratee. The narrator also asserts his voice and impresses on his narratee the scope of his mythological knowledge.

These four uses of οἶδα without the negation are quite specific to the Nonnian narrator, and this verb does not occur in narrator-text in other mythological epics; the most significant parallel would be an occurrence of ὀΐω in the *Argonautica*:

τοῦ δ' οὔ τιν' ὑπέρτερον ἄλλον ὀΐω
νόσφιν γ' Ἡρακλῆος ἐπελθέμεν·

No other had come superior to him [Meleagrus], I ween, except Heracles.[124]

But although the narrator does use a first person verb, its meaning is far less assertive than the Nonnian οἶδα: the narrator offers an additional reflection which he presents as his opinion, but which commits only himself, without particularly aiming at convincing his narratee.[125]

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[123] 25.148.

[124] A.R. 1.196.

[125] In earlier poems, occurrences of οἶδα in narrator-text are rare. Only Callimachus uses it in his *Aetia*, although the peculiar narratological setting, where the poet reports his conversation with the Muse, results in this verb occurring in reported direct speech (43.43-52 Pf.):
οἶδα Γέλα ποταμοῦ κεφαλῇ ἔπι κείμενον ἄστυ
…
οἶδα Λεοντίνους…
… ἔχω δ' Εὔβοιαν ἐνισπεῖν
I know of the city lying at the mouth of the river Gelas,… I know of Leontini…; and I can speak of Euboea…
The assertive tone is clearly exemplified here, as the narrator presents himself as an authority as he presents "da pari a pari davanti alle sue Muse l'erudito catalogo delle città siciliane", in the words of G. Massimilla (1996:333). A. Harder (2012 vol.2:322) remarks that in most catalogues the emphasis is placed on the fictional characters rather than on the narrator's knowledge. She adds: "One gets the impression that Callimachus deliberately chose this way of presenting this catalogue here in order to create a picture of a young scholar-poet, whose abundant knowledge equalled that of the Muse." The lack of more occurrences in mythological epic may imply that the Nonnian narrator made a similarly deliberate choice in his *syncrisis*; however, a parallel can be made with didactic epic, where the assertive tone would indeed be pregnant, such as in Nicander's *Theriaca* at 805-11 (translation adapted from A.S. Gow):
Οἶδά γε μὴν φράσσασθαι ἀλέξια τοῖο βολάων,
…
Οἶδά γε μὴν καὶ ἴουλος ἃ μήδεται ἠδ' ὀλοὸς σφήξ…

In texts other than epic, the narrator of Herodotus' *Histories* makes the most frequent use of οἶδα, but in passages where he states a fact rather than where he aims at justifying his opinion.[126] It can also be found in the *Sibylline oracles* with the same purport.[127] However the aim of the narrator here is not to give facts, but to convince his narratee, and indeed οἶδα occurs in the works of orators such as Isocrates, Demosthenes, Aeschines or Andocides.[128] This parallel takes us rather far from the usual epic context, and underlines the multi-faceted character of the Nonnian narrator, who includes in his poem a polemical passage under his own voice, so that this passage of narrator-text stands out against the rest of the epic: the story-teller takes a break from his narration to address his audience more directly and influence its opinion about the story he has started to tell.

Οἶδα occurs one last time, in a negative clause, about the labour of the hydra:

ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ οἶδα γεραίρειν
οὐτιδανῇ δύο φῶτας ἐριδμαίνοντας ἐχίδνῃ·

I do not see how to praise two fellows fighting with a miserable viper... [129]

I know how to speak about the remedies to [the scorpion's] strokes … and I know too the devices of the woodlouse, and of the deadly wasp…

Similar occurrences can be found at 822 and 829. A. Harder (2012 vol.2:321) lists more verbs emphasising the narrator's knowledge in the *Theriaca*. Even though in the first line the issue is "knowing how" rather than "knowing that", as in Nonnus, the point here is nonetheless for the narrator to assert his knowledge and his being reliable, since his aim is to inform his narratee, Hermesianax, as accurately as possible. Similarly, the Nonnian narrator must be able to appear as a reliable figure in this *syncrisis*, so as better to convince his narratee of the superiority of Dionysus.

[126] Hdt. *e.g.* τὸν δὲ οἶδα αὐτὸς πρῶτον ὑπάρξαντα ἀδίκων ἔργων ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας, "But I shall identify the one who I myself know did the Greeks unjust deeds", 1.5.11; or: Μάγους μὲν γὰρ ἀτρεκέως οἶδα ταῦτα ποιεῦντας· "That this is the way of the Magi, I know for certain.", 1.140.5. Thucydides has one similar occurrence of οἶδα at 3.113.6.6.

[127] *Sibylline Oracles*, Book 8, 361-3:

Οἶδα δ' ἐγὼ ψάμμου τ' ἀριθμὸν καὶ μέτρα θαλάσσης,
οἶδα μυχοὺς γαίης καὶ Τάρταρον ἠερόεντα,
οἶδ' ἀριθμοὺς ἄστρων καὶ δένδρεα …

I, myself, know the number of the grains of sand and the size of the sea; I know the inside of the earth and the cloudy Tartaros; I know the number of the stars and trees...

and 375:

ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος οἶδα, ὃς οὐρανὸν ἔκτισα καὶ γῆν.

I know the beginning and the end, I who made heaven and earth. (I translate.)

[128] Isoc. *Panathenaicus* 29.4, 95.3, 248.3; *Busiris* 1.2. Demosthenes: *On the false embassy*, 88.1; *Against Meidias*, 29.1, 186.1. Aeschin. *Against Timarchus*, 92.6; *Against Ctesiphon*, 139.8; *On the embassy*, 44.8. And. *On the mysteries*, 10.6, 23.6, 64.3.

[129] 25.203-4.

The narrator is particularly insistent here on his lack of means to praise those who do not deserve it, underlined by the negation and the emphatic first person pronoun. This is parallel to three such occurrences of οὐκ οἶδα in Plutarch, the most relevant being in this comment about Phocion, in the form of a litotes:

> ὁ δ' εἰς πατρίδος ἀποκινδυνεύων σωτηρίαν, καὶ ταῦτα στρατηγὸς καὶ ἄρχων, οὐκ οἶδα μὴ μεῖζόν τι παραβαίνει καὶ πρεσβύτερον, τὸ πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας δίκαιον.
>
> But he who endangers his country's safety, and that, too, when he is her commanding general, I don't know that he is not transgressing something greater and more venerable, namely justice towards his fellow citizens.[130]

Here as in the *Dionysiaca*, it stresses the rest of the sentence more than it underlines the narrator's helplessness: the narrator trusts his narratee to grasp the irony contained in the litotes – which really conveys the stronger meaning of "I know it is so" in the case of Plutarch; it suggests that there is nothing to praise rather than the Nonnian narrator is lacking the skill to do it.

These strong manifestations of the presence of the narrator, of his wish to convey an idea and convince his narratee, rely on the speech-like character of the passage. We saw that the narrator had been answering hypothetical, unspoken arguments which could have been opposed to him – in a peculiar form of *prokatalepsis*, since the contrary argument remains unsaid and has to be supplied by the reader or listener; but this dialogical tone is also sustained by imaginary objections from the narratee inserted in the *syncrisis* by the narrator.

> ἀλλ' ἐρέεις ὅτι κῆτος ἁλίτροφον ἔκτανε Περσεύς.
> ὄμματι Γοργείῳ πετρώσατο θῆρα θαλάσσης.
>
> But you will say, "Perseus killed a monster born of the waves!"
> With the eye of the Gorgon he petrified a beast of the sea.[131]

The verb in the second person singular makes it clear that the first line reports the narratee's objection. However, commentators disagree about the second line. W. Rouse's translation implies that he considers the two lines to be attributed to the narratee,[132] but F.

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[130] Plut. *Phoc.* 32.7.3. (Translation adapted from B. Perrin.) Other occurrences in *Ages.* 33.1.1 and *Dio* 2.5.4.

[131] 25.80. I translate.

[132] But you will say, "Perseus killed a monster of the sea; with the Gorgon's eye he turned to stone a leviathan of the deep!"

Vian believes that the second line is the narrator's reply to the objection. To his arguments[133] could be added the choice of the vocabulary used by the Pelasgian man: κῆτος ὅλον περίμετρον ἐμὸς πετρώσατο Περσεύς, "My Perseus turned into stone a whole huge monster of the deep".[134] If we follow F. Vian, the narrator in book 25 vehemently corrects the assumption that it was Perseus who destroyed the sea-monster by petrifying it: it is Medusa, rather than him, who made this deed possible. The position of ὄμματι Γοργείῳ at the beginning of the line, with the *asyndeton* noted by F. Vian, sounds like a rather abrupt interruption of the narratee, at the very moment he attributes the killing to Perseus, at the end of the previous line. Therefore these two lines greatly add to the liveliness of the passage as the narrator creates an imaginary, brisk dialogue.

The other imaginary intervention is less direct:

εἰ δὲ γεραίρεις
Ἴναχον Ἡρακλῆος, ὅλον πόνον αὐτὸς ἐλέγξω.

If you boast of Heracles and the Inachos, I will examine all his labours.[135]

This sentence is used as a transition between the comparison with Minos and the comparison with Heracles. The narrator pretends that he is led to draw this latter comparison because the narratee might do it himself; that way, he is able to accumulate evidence of the superiority of Dionysus to Heracles while pretending that it was not his intention to do so. He announces that he will look at all the labours, ὅλον πόνον, to make his reply to the narratee more powerful. In fact, he only recounts six of them in detail in the main part of the comparison, and lists ten in his final summary.[136] F. Vian notes that this list is an imitation of epigrams which attempt to list the labours in as few lines as possible, and that the poet adapts this style to his text by referring to each labour by using a trivial word:[137] indeed the narrator makes his point more forcefully by this adaptation of the epigrammatic style, as he proves to his narratee that each of the labours can be admired or ridiculed according to the point of view one adopts, and to what the labours are made to stand in comparison. This hypothetical objection creates a transition that is

[133] Vian 1990:243, *ad* 80.
[134] 47.509.
[135] 25.174-5.
[136] 25.176-241 and 242-52.
[137] Vian 1990:23.

based on the narratological situation created by a very overt and active narrator rather than on the contents, and underlines again the dialogue-like quality of the passage.

3. The dialogical setting: further marks of the presence of a narrator concerned about the liveliness and persuasive power of the *syncrisis*

More verbs in the second person are used to structure the *syncrisis* and to make it more lively. A verb in the first person plural – Ἀλλά, φίλοι, κρίνωμεν· "Let us compare them, friends."[138] – in the comparison with Perseus assumes an appearance of objectivity by suggesting that the comparison will be the result of the concerted opinion of both the narrator and his narratees. Two verbs in the first person singular signal *praeteritiones* on the part of the narrator: παρέρχομαι introduces the fight of Dionysus against the river Hydaspes[139] – the narratee has already heard this story in 23.192 - 24.6; and σιγήσω and χαλέψω form the seemingly reluctant introduction to the labour of the deer.[140]

Finally, imperative verbs in the second person singular further the relationship between the narrator and the narratee, as the narrator directs the narratee's thoughts and choice of arguments:

> μὴ τρομερῆς ἐλάφου μιμνήσκεο·
> Forget the timid deer.
> Κνώσσιον Ἡρακλῆος ἔα πόνον·
> Let pass the Cnossian labour of Heracles.
> κάλλιπε καὶ τριλόφοιο καρήατα Γηρυονῆος·
> Leave aside also the heads of threecrested Geryones.[141]

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[138] 25.98.

[139] 25.74-6: ἀνικήτο δὲ Λυαίῳ
ὕδασιν αἰχμάζοντος ἐγεσιμόθου ποταμοῖο
Ἄρεα κυματόεντα παρέρχομαι,
I pass by that billowy warfare, when the battlestirring river hurled his waves against invincible Lyaios.

[140] 25.223-4:
Σιγήσω κεμάδος χρύσεον κέρας, οὔ τι χαλέψω
τηλίκον Ἡρακλῆα μιῆς ἐλάφοιο φονῆα.
I will say nothing of the pricket with golden horns; I will not disparage great Heracles as the slayer of a single deer.

[141] 25.225, 227 and 236.

The first strengthens the *praeteritio* about the deer; the other two are a different form of *praeteritio* implying a greater level of interaction between the narrator and his narratee, since the choice of the imperative form makes it sound as if the narratee was about to express an argument, when the narrator cuts him short to state why this argument would not be valid.

One last address to the narratee tries to involve him in the debate by making him verify by himself the validity of the narrator's arguments:

> εἰ δέ καὶ Ἀνδρομέδης ἐπαγάλλεται ἄστρασι Περσεύς,
> δόχμιον ὄμμα τίταινε δι᾽ αἰθέρος, ἦχι φαείνει
> αἰγλήεις Ὀφιοῦχος Ὄφιν δινωτὸν ἀείρων,
> καὶ Στέφανον περίκυκλον ἐσαθρήσεις Ἀριάδνης
>
> And if Perseus is proud of Andromeda in the stars, do but cast your eye towards that side of the heavens, where the brilliant Ophiuchos is conspicuous holding up his encircling Serpent; and you will see the circlet of Ariadne's Crown.[142]

Whereas the other addresses from the narrator to the narratee invite the narratee to imagine himself to be part of the story and perceive, most of the time erroneously, what the narrator invites him to see,[143] the address here refers to the reality of the position of the constellation in the sky, a thing that the addressee of the speech-like *syncrisis* can see with his own eyes rather than with his imagination. Therefore this time the narratee, instead of being made to put himself in the place of one of the characters, is offered a way of verifying the narrator's arguments, so that the superiority of Dionysus – or rather here, the fact that he is at least equal to Perseus – will appear more striking since it is supported by real facts which the narratee can see for himself.

Two more literary devices are used in the *syncrisis* to increase its liveliness. First, three rhetorical questions, which reflect the oratorical tone of the passage.[144] The last one introduces Heracles' labour of the hydra, so that all six detailed accounts of the labours are introduced by some literary means which immediately throw ridicule on them. Secondly, an apostrophe to Iolaos:

> ἰλήκοις, Ἰόλαε· σὺ γὰρ δέμας ἔφλεγες ὕδρης,
> καὶ μόνος Ἡρακλέης, μόνος ἤπρασεν οὔνομα νίκης.

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[142] 25.142-5.

[143] See chapter 5.

[144] 25.33-4, 82-4 and 196-9. See other rhetorical questions in the chapter on the Muses.

> Forgive me, Iolaos, for you burnt the hydra's body, and Heracles, only Heracles, grabbed the name of victory.[145]

The verb ἱλήκοις occurs only one more time in narrator-text in the *Dionysiaca*.[146] Whereas we noted that the narrator, when he intervenes, likes in certain cases to choose verbs which belong to genres other than epic, it is not the case for this verb: it is used by the narrator of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, who asks for the forgiveness of Artemis as he is about to recount how she was assaulted by Orion, by the narrator of Apollonius' *Argonautica* adding his voice to that of the characters in a passage where they celebrate Apollo, and by the narrator of Colluthus' *Rape of Helen*, imploring Dionysus for pardon as he has just stated that Paris was more beautiful than him.[147] Another example in a supplication to Apollo and Artemis in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*[148] confirms the religious tinge of this verb, as does the fact that in all these texts it is only ever used to address deities, although the Nonnian narrator addresses Iolaos, Heracles' companion and nephew, who is not of divine origin. This occurrence of ἱλήκοις is remarkable for three reasons. First, although a rather epic-coloured word, the Nonnian narrator choose to include it in the *syncrisis*, the one passage in the *Dionysiaca* where he puts aside the epic tone to turn to a rhetorical debate, so that it is all the more striking how the Nonnian narrator, with his versatile personality, is here playing a game of adapting one style of speech to another: the tones intermingle, and this poetical and epic interjection appears in the middle of a structured argument. Second, the narrator is addressing both a character and the narratee at a few lines' interval: he seems to be playing on the boundaries between the worlds of the *diegesis*, of the enunciation, and the real world. The address to the narratee advising him to verify the narrator's allegations by looking at the stars had been blurring the line between the real world and the world of the enunciation; and although one might have thought that the newly assumed *persona* of the orator might have created a distance from the *diegesis*, thus making thicker the line between *diegesis* and enunciation – the narrator

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[145] 25.211-12.

[146] In the 3rd person, an invocation to Homer at 25.254. It is found nine times in character-text, in the 2nd and 3rd person.

[147] Arat. 1.637; A.R. 2.708; Coluth. 252. Like Aratus, Nonnus uses this verb to apologise for risking to offend his addressee, rather than to call for his favour as Apollonius did; and yet he places the verb in the same *sedes* as Apollonius. Orsini 1969:23 sees in Colluthus' appeal to Dionysus an homage to Nonnus, "de la part d'un disciple malgré tout respectueux."

[148] *h.Ap.* 165.

becoming a speaker exposing his ideas about mythology to his addressee – the narrator makes sure that this does not happen by including one of the characters from the *diegesis* in his speech and addressing him directly. Thus the allusion to the real world of the narratee, which might have drawn him outside of the fictional world all the more easily since the passage is not even epic in tone, is counteracted by this address to a character: narratee and characters are placed on the same level. Third, by using for a human hero a verb kept for deities by other narrators, the Nonnian narrator underlines his indignation at the contempt with which he considers that Iolaos is usually treated, and attempts to make up for it and show him honour by the choice of this verb. Therefore, through this occurrence of ἱλήκοις, the narrator seems to be asking for Iolaos' favour not towards himself, since he is acknowledging Iolaos' deed, but towards other narrators who have not done justice to Iolaos' role in the slaying of the Hydra. And indeed, after this wish, the Nonnian narrator confirms Iolaos' crucial importance in this episode through the opening σὺ γάρ, and by the repetition of μόνος in the second line. Therefore, with this apostrophe, the narrator creates an original and unexpected narratorial situation in the *syncrisis*, where the epic tone re-emerges to underline the narrator's indignation.

Lastly, the *syncrisis* stands out by the irony and the humour that the narrator displays in it. D. Gigli[149] studied the humorous presentation of Perseus, which relies on the knowledge of the Perseus stories by the narratee to deride the hero, for example by comparing his flying to swimming, with legs like "a strange oarage", ξείνην εἰρισίην.[150] The comparison with Heracles is made in the same tone, the main device being to minimise Heracles' labour, in particular in the concluding catalogue:

> οὐ κεμάς, οὐ βοέης ἀγέλης στίχες, οὐ λάσιος σῦς,
> οὐδὲ κύων, ἢ ταῦρος, ἢ αὐτόπρεμνος ὀπώρη
> χρυσοφαής, ἢ κόπρος, ἢ ἄστατος ὄρνις ἀλήτης
> οὐτιδανὴν ἀσίδηρον ἔχων πτερόεσσαν ἀκωκήν,
> ἢ γένυς ἱππείη ξεινοκτόνος, οὐ μία μίτρη
> Ἱππολύτης ἐλάχεια·
>
> [The exploits of Bacchos] were not a deer, no herds of oxen, no shaggy boar, no dog or bull, no goldglinting fruit and its roots, no dung, no random wandering bird with silly wing-shafts not made of steel, no horse's murderous teeth, no little belt alone of Hippolyta.[151]

[149] 1981.

[150] 25.35.

[151] 25.246-51. (Translation adapted from Rouse.)

F. Vian comments on this list and notes the choice of trivial words to designate the monstrous animals, as well as the commonplace adjectives such as χρυσοφαής, which erase the marvellous out of the story to replace it by more realistic traits.[152] E. Lasky comments on how Dionysus' alleged effeminacy is transferred to Heracles by the constant denigration of Heracles' labours, with "humorous results", as we saw earlier.[153] All these elements lead to the conclusion that there is more to the *syncrisis* than the exaltation of Dionysus. In fact, this *syncrisis* meets, from the beginning, an obstacle in the understandable expectation, on the part of the narratee, that it will be in favour of Dionysus: the interest is not to find out what the outcome of the comparison will be, but rather how the narrator is going to tackle it in an original way. From a mythological point of view, D. Gigli's observations show how the frame of the *syncrisis* is used to build an entertaining literary passage, where the narratee is invited to rethink the well-known Perseus and Heracles myths in the new humorous light shed upon them here by the narrator. Where genre is concerned, the humorous tone partly turns the *syncrisis* and the *encomium* into parodies of these genres themselves, which, according to F. Vian, is proved by the fact that the disparaging of Heracles and Perseus are limited to this passage of book 25:

> "Cette dépréciation systématique d'Héraclès est la règle du jeu dans une *syncrisis* plus ou moins parodique; mais, comme dans le cas de Persée, ce jugement est corrigé dans les restes de l'épopée, où les allusions à la geste d'Héraclès interviennent presque exclusivement comme termes de comparaison."[154]

Indeed the regular comparisons between Heracles and Dionysus aiming at establishing the superiority of Dionysus would not be very convincing if Heracles was always presented as weak and worthless, and by including the speech of the Pelasgian man which offers the opposite view from that of the *syncrisis*, the narrator confirms that this genre is above all a rhetorical exercise and that arguments can be found to support all point of views. His awareness of this issue leads the narrator to his whimsical adaptation of the genre. E. Lasky writes:

> "The want of seriousness which Nonnus displays toward Dionysus is due to the very nature of the encomium as it had evolved since Isocrates. If it is one of the assumptions of the art that its practice will involve a certain amount of exaggeration, then the attention

[152] Vian 1990:23-4.

[153] Lasky, 1978: 373-4.

[154] Vian, 1990:24.

> necessarily shifts from the subject itself to the framer of praise. (...) The fundamental witticism of the poem is that by occasionally making fun of his hero, Nonnus satirizes the very genre in which he works."[155]

This is probably the clue for the unexpectedly prominent presence of the narrator in this passage: well aware that he is lending himself to a play on the genre of *syncrisis* and *encomium*, he shifts his *persona* to that of a very assertive orator seeking to draw the attention to himself and to the form of his speech in order to persuade his audience.

In book 25, the narrator renews the contact with his narratee as the second part of the epic begins, a suitable time for establishing for good the superiority of Dionysus, not only by comparing him to Perseus and Heracles, but also by directly taking part in the debate. This passage is a very decisive moment in the construction of the *personae* of the Nonnian narrator. Not only does he make himself overt, but he does so in a very self-assertive way, assuming the *persona* of an orator and a rhetorician and therefore creating a strong interactive relationship with the narratee whom he undertakes to convince of the superiority of Dionysus. The number of verbs in the first and second person and the various devices employed to tip the scales towards Dionysus create a lively dialogic passage which contrasts with the mainly narrative and descriptive tone of the rest of the epic, as do the humour and wit displayed in the *syncrisis*. On another level, this temporary new tone is an example of the versatility of the narrator who is able to incorporate different genres in his epic; he has decided here to play on the encomiastic genre, and does so while being aware that his narratee will pay particular attention to how he is going to pull through the exercise he has set himself. By creating a parodic *encomium* inside a parodic *syncrisis*, the narrator presents his narratee with an entertaining and original passage, having made the most of this temporary overtness to exemplify his ability to appropriate different genres and to contribute to the overall ποικιλία of his poem.

[155] Lasky, 1978:375-6. This last sentence refers to Lasky's article main theory, namely that the *Dionysiaca* follow Menander's scheme of a βασιλικὸς λόγος, centred on Dionysus. But the idea of the sentence pertains on the narrower scale of the *syncrisis* as well.

VI. Conclusion

In comparison to the length of the *Dionysiaca*, the amount of direct interventions by the narrator is not large. But the purport of these interventions is enough to make of this narrator an, on the whole, rather overt narrator. They strongly emphasise his role as organiser of the narrative, and sometimes as medium between versions or details and his narratee. This is made quite clear by his choice, in certain instances, of the first person instead of the impersonal third. He makes sure his narratee knows what is a main version and what is not; he chooses which version of a myth will be most favourable to the further development of his narrative. He guides his narratee where misleading versions are concerned, and defends his point of view against that of the Homeric narrator. The example of the story of Philomela showcases his composition technique and draws attention, as in the episode of Acteaon, on the pregnant theme of the mother/son relationship in its various developments. The original opening of book 25, with his parody both of the genres of *syncrisis* and *encomium*, asserts the narrator's ability to be innovative and to enrich his poem by drawing from a great variety of sources; the dialogic nature of this passages calls on the participation of the narratee to acknowledge Dionysus' greatness as well as the narrator's ingenuity and wit.

The Homeric narrator never intervenes in the first person outside of Muse-invocations; in that respect he is much more covert than the Nonnian narrator. While still conforming to the epic tradition and its expected traits, the Nonnian narrator reveals his originality in the construction of his *persona* and in his conception of story-telling: in more than one place, his *persona* inclines towards the *persona* of a historical narrator; the *syncrisis* gives him the *persona* of the orator; he is also able to integrate elements from geographical or didactic epic, which makes of the *Dionysiaca* a rather malleable narrative, as far as the range of influences is concerned, a tendency to be related to the open-mindedness of its narrator. It seems therefore that by the time of Nonnus, Aristotle's advice according to which "αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν"[156] in epic poems has ceased to prevail.

[156] Arist. *Po.* 1460a "For the poet should say as little as possible in his own voice."

PART TWO:

METALEPSIS: CROSSING THE LIMITS BETWEEN THE NARRATOLOGICAL LEVELS

Chapter 5. Direct Addresses from the Narrator to the Narratee

I. Preliminary considerations

1. The narratological concept of "narratee"

The primary narratee of the *Dionysiaca* is, like the primary narrator, external. He is mostly covert, although he sometimes appears in the narrative under the form of a second person pronoun, which constitutes "the only reference to a narrative audience"[1], since the narrator never refers to him as a reader or listener, nor gives any further indication on his narratee's identity – although it can be inferred that the narrator had certain expectations about his narratee's knowledge of myths. The presence of these second person pronouns is a sign of the relationship between the narrator of the narratee, which, since both narrator and narratee are external, takes place on an extradiegetic level, *i.e.* the level of the enunciation, defined by Prince as "the traces in a discourse of the act generating that discourse"[2]. In the addresses, the narrator leaves the level of the narrated, of the *diegesis*[3], to intervene for a short time in the world of the narrating, of the enunciation. Such signs confirm that the Nonnian narrator is a "self-conscious narrator, *i.e.* a narrator who is aware of and reflects on his own role as narrator"[4], as he addresses his narratee to influence or guide his reception of the narrative. These addresses allow some information about the narratee to be inferred: although he is anonymous and the narrator does not mention where and when he is supposed to have lived, the fact that the narrator can interact with him implies that they are from the same area and the same time period.

The narratee is a "purely textual construct" and "must be distinguished from the reader or receiver"[5], as the narrator must be distinguished from the author. He is an ideal entity, which the narrator has in mind as he tells the story. As such, the narratee plays a part on the level of the reception of the text by the real reader: his function is "to mediate,

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[1] Prince, 1982:17.
[2] Prince, 2003: *s.v.* enunciation. See also Byre, 1991:226, who defines the world of the enunciation as the "world shared by the narrator and the narratee."
[3] "the world in which the situation and events narrated occur". Prince, 2003: *s.v. diegesis*.
[4] De Jong, 2004:46. See also Booth, 1991:155.
[5] Prince, 2003: *s.v.* narratee.

(...) to provide the hearer/reader with clues as to how to interpret the events presented."[6] This is true of both primary and secondary narratee: I. de Jong gives the example of *Iliad* 1.413, where Thetis, the (secondary) narratee of Achilles, starts crying: "we are invited – though not compelled – to share her emotion and pity Achilles".[7] The primary narratee fulfils this function of intermediary even better because, like the reader, he is external to the world of the diegesis; Genette writes: "Le narrateur extradiégétique (...) ne peut viser qu'un narrataire extradiégétique, qui se confond ici avec le lecteur virtuel, et auquel chaque lecteur réel peut s'identifier."[8]

In fact this function is explained in the treaty *On the Sublime* as early as the 1st century A.D., although the distinction between narratee and real reader is not made:

> ὁρᾷς, ὦ ἑταῖρε, ὡς παραλαβών σου τὴν ψυχὴν διὰ τῶν τόπων ἄγει τὴν ἀκοὴν ὄψιν ποιῶν; πάντα δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα πρὸς αὐτὰ ἀπερειδόμενα τὰ πρόσωπα ἐπ᾽ αὐτῶν ἵστησι τὸν ἀκροατὴν τῶν ἐνεργουμένων. καὶ ὅταν ὡς οὐ πρὸς ἅπαντας, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς πρὸς μόνον τινὰ λαλῇς, (...) ἐμπαθέστερόν τε αὐτὸν ἅμα καὶ προσεκτικώτερον καὶ ἀγῶνος ἔμπλεων ἀποτελέσεις, ταῖς εἰς ἑαυτὸν προσφωνήσεσιν ἐξεγειρόμενον.
>
> You see, friend, how he takes you along through the country and turns hearing into sight. All such passages with a direct personal address set the hearer in the centre of the action. By appearing to address not the whole audience but a single individual … you will move him more and make him more attentive and full of active interest, if you rouse him by these personal appeals.[9]

Therefore the addresses of the narrator to the narratee in the *Dionysiaca* will also modify the reception of the text by the real reader. In the *Dionysiaca*, twelve such addresses can be found; ten occur in narrator-text, two in character-text, that is, as we shall see below, slightly more than in earlier epic poems.

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[6] De Jong, 2004:53.

[7] De Jong, 2004:53.

[8] Genette, 2007:272-3. He disagrees with De Jong about the secondary narratee, with whom he thinks the reader cannot identify: "Nous, lecteurs, ne pouvons pas plus nous identifier à ces narrataires fictifs que ces narrateurs intradiégétiques ne peuvent s'adresser à nous." p.272.

[9] 26.2-3, translation adapted from W. Fyfe. This advice disregards Aristotle's recommendations in the *Poetics* (1460a), αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν, because it disrupts the μίμησις, the representation/imitation of the fictitious world.

2. Grammatical structure of the addresses

The addresses are of the form (ἦ τάχα) φαίης accompanied by a verb of seeing or hearing in the infinitive or in the participle, except two, introduced by ἴδοις and λέξειας. The perception reported in the subordinate clauses constitutes the hypothetical reaction of the narratee to what the narrator has just said. The hypothesis is in the aorist optative, without ἄν.[10] The omission of ἄν occurs in Homer - as noted by Smyth: "The potential optative which in Attic regularly takes ἄν is occasionally found in Homer and in later poetry in an earlier form, without that particle" - and is in keeping with the stylistic choices of the Nonnian narrator: "the omission [of ἄν] gives an archaic tone."[11]

The overall meaning of these addresses is as follows : "You, narratee, seeing/hearing this, would have said that you saw/heard... (if you had yourself been there at that time)". The narratee is hypothetically – and temporarily – transferred into the time frame of the *diegesis* by the intervention of the narrator. However, C. Byre specifies that these optatives could also refer to the present: "You, narratee, if you were to see/hear this...".[12] Therefore, with these interventions, the narrator brings into focus both the past of the diegesis and the present of the enunciation, both the story and the storytelling.

The verb in the optative can be modified by τάχα and/or ἦ. These two adverbs modify the force of the potential in the direction of strong probability (ἦ, "without a doubt") or of doubt (τάχα, "perhaps"). These adverbs are used neither by Homer, Apollonius nor Quintus in addresses to the narratee.

3. Addresses to the narratee in Homer, Apollonius, Quintus, and didactic epic.

The narratological device of the addresses from the narrator to the narratee is not specific to Nonnus, nor even to the epic genre. A survey of such addresses in Homeric epic, in Apollonius, and in Quintus, is worth conducting for comparison purposes.

[10] Russell, 1964:144 writes, in a note to Longinus 26, that the "imaginary second person… seems to be confined to potentials (past or present) and futures. Futures occur especially in travel narratives."

[11] Smyth, 1920: § 1821 and 1767.

[12] Byre, 1991:217, quoting Goodwin, 1893:162.

Homer has nine occurrences of second person optative aorists addressed to the narratee, among which five occur in narrator-text – *Iliad* 4.223-5, 4.429-31, 5.85-6, 15.697-8 and 16.36-7 – and four in character-text – *Iliad* 3.220, 3.392-4, 14.58-60; *Odyssey* 3.124. They all occur in narrative passages, except the one in the *Odyssey*, which takes place in a non-narrative speech. Three different verbs are found: ἴδοις, γνοίης, φαίης, almost always accompanied by a negation (except in two addresses). I. de Jong analyses the addresses made by the primary narrator as "you certainly would (not) have seen/thought/said x (if you had been yourself present at that moment and at that place", the negation creating a litotes which underlines certain traits of the event concerned by the address.[13] She sums up her study of the addresses as follows:

> The function of these anonymously focalized passages is to involve the [narratee] more directly into the story: he is made to listen, see for himself and even to 'visit' the actual battlefield. At the same time he is instructed as to how to react emotionally to what is told.[14]

The narrator of the *Argonautica* addresses his narratee eight times: 1.725-6, 1.765-7, 2.171b-4, 3.1265-7, 4.238b-40, 4.428b-9, 4.927b-8a, 4.997b. No addresses are made in character-text. The main difference from Homer is that only three of these addresses occur in narrative passages; of the remaining five, two take place in ekphraseis, one in a geographical digression, one in a historical digression, and the last one in a description. The Apollonian narrator uses a greater variety of verbs: βάλοις, ἀκέοις ψεύδοιό τε, ἐμπλήσειας, ἔδρακες, φαίης. The preference is nonetheless given to φαίης, the most Homeric of these verbs, used four times. Negations are less frequent, appearing in only half the addresses. They are not all in the aorist optative: ἔδρακες signals a past counterfactual system, to be expected in an address which is part of an analepsis.[15] Thus the Apollonian narrator attributes more hypothetical reactions to his narratee, attaching more importance to the enunciation and the relationship with the narratee. C. Byre notes that the narrator of the *Argonautica* often draws the focus to himself by narratorial intrusions such as these addresses, "continually calling attention to the *énonciation*", and that this is

[13] For a detailed analysis of these addresses, see De Jong, 2004:54-7.
[14] De Jong, 2004:60. – It is remarkable that the verb γνοίης is not used in addresses to the narratee after Homer.
[15] For a detailed analysis of these addresses, see Byre, 1991.

> Apollonius' chief innovation in epic narrative, for [his interventions] transform the epic into a work that is revealed in the process of becoming and that reduces the distance between the past of the mythic story and the present of its composition.[16]

Quintus does not keep up the Apollonian trend of innovation, but chooses a closer imitation of the Homeric model. The nine addresses – 1.216, 2.517, 2.565, 3.556, 5.13, 9.544, 10.134, 11.199, 14.473 – to the narratee are all in the aorist optative, and all use the verb φαίης. Among these, one occurs in character-text, and one in non-narrative narrator-text, in an *ekphrasis*. Only one includes a negation. As in the two previous examples, the function of these addresses is to guide the narratee's imagination and to uphold his interest in the story by making him hypothetically take part in it.[17]

II. Addresses from the narrator to the narratee in the *Dionysiaca*.

1. The corpus of occurrences

Twelve addresses from the narrator to the narratee can be found in the *Dionysiaca*. They present similarities with the innovations of both the Apollonian and Quintian narrators. The latter restricted himself to a verb found in Homer, but abandoned the use of the negation; like him, the Nonnian narrator uses no negation and only verbs present in Homer (φαίης, ten times, and ἴδοις, once), with the exception of one occurrence of λέξειας, a verb which cannot be found in any other epic. The absence of negation reduces even more the distance between the narratee and the *diegesis*: whereas in Homer the narratee was made not to say something and remains silent even though the narrator mentions his reaction, in Quintus and Nonnus, the narratee is made to be heard, and somehow to intervene on the level of the enunciation, even if his words remain

[16] Byre, 1991:227. He refers to Fusillo, 1985:382-3.

[17] Addresses to the narratee using the Homeric verbs φαίης and ἴδοις also appear in didactic epic. φαίης is found once in Aratus' *Phaenomena* (l.196), and is a favourite of the Oppians – eleven occurrences in the *Halieutica* (1.194, 2.111, 2.303, 2.594, 3.299, 5.210, 5.245, 5.487, 5.511, 5.553; with a negation at 2.59), and six in the *Cynegetica* (2.87, 2.364, 2.516, 3.77, 3.218, 3.402). As for ἴδοις, it is found five times in Dionysius' *Periegesis* (l.156, 390, 487, 923 and 1075), once in Nicander's *Theriaca* (l.209) and in the *Cynegetica* (3.359). Didactic epic, because of its very nature, offers a much wider range of verbs used in addresses to the narratee, which in many cases are not meant to have the same effect on the narratee as the addresses found in mythological epic. We discuss these issues below.

hypothetical and reported by the narrator. The Nonnian narrator also resembles the Apollonian narrator in that he places his addresses in passages of various types, and not only in narrative passages: of his twelve addresses, seven occur in narrative passages (with variations regarding whether the narratee is the only witness of the scene), two in ekphraseis, one in a digression about a species of bird. Two occur in character-text, among which one is in a non-narrative speech. The Nonnian narrator makes innovations of his own in the systematic use of a participle or infinitive after the verb in the optative to state clearly what kind of perception is involved: the image becomes more vivid as it is more explicitly ascribed to the narratee's senses (the statement "I see the full moon shining." denotes a deeper involvement of the speaker than the statement "This is the full moon shining."), and as it results in the narratee commenting on his own perception, on the process that makes him react as he does. The Nonnian narrator does not address the narratee's imagination only, but his senses as well, which, like the absence of negation, reduces the distance between the narratee and the world of the diegesis by giving the former a more direct grasp of the latter.

The occurrences of addresses to the narratee in the *Dionysiaca* are as follows:

(1) 1.57-9. The bull is swimming away with Europa on his back.

ἰδὼν δέ μιν ἦ τάχα φαίης
ἢ Θέτιν ἢ Γαλάτειαν ἢ εὐνέτιν ἐννοσιγαίου
ἢ λοφιῇ Τρίτωνος ἐφεζομένην Ἀφροδίτην.

If you saw her you would think it was Thetis perhaps, or Galateia, or Earthshaker's bedfellow, or Aphrodite seated on a Triton's neck.

(2) 4.18-19. Electra leads Harmonia into a room to tell her that Zeus intends her to marry Cadmos.

καὶ τάχα φαίης
Ἥβην χειρὸς ἔχουσαν ἰδεῖν λευκώλενον Ἥρην.

You might almost say that you saw white-armed Hera holding Hebe's hand.

(3) 5.186-8. Ekphrasis of Harmonia's necklace (144-189).

καὶ χορὸς ὀρνίθων ἑτερόχροος, ὧν τάχα φαίης
ἱπταμένων πτερύγων ἀνεμώδεα δοῦπον ἀκούειν ...
ὁρμὸν ἐπεὶ Κυθέρεια γέρας δωρήσατο κούρῃ

[On the necklace were fashioned] flocks of many-coloured birds – you might almost think you heard the windy beat of their flapping wings, when Cythereia gave the glorious necklace to her girl.

(4) 5.487-8. Actaeon appears to his father and tells him the story of his death. He describes how he saw Artemis bathing and how he was dazzled by the shiny whiteness of her skin.

φαίης δ', ὡς παρὰ χεῦμα παλίμπορον Ὠκεανοῖο
ἑσπερίη σελάγιζε δι' ὕδατος ὄμπνια Μήνη.

You might have said the full moon of evening was flashing through the water near the refluent stream of Oceanos.

(5) 13.501-3. Dionysus' allies in the Indian war are gathering.

καὶ στρατὸν ὀρχηστῆρα περισκαίροντα δοκεύων
τοῖον ἔπος λέξειας, ὅτι πρόμος ἡγεμονεύει
εἰς χορόν, οὐκ ἐπὶ δῆριν, ἐνόπλιον ἄνδρα κομίζων·

And if you could see the whole host prancing and leaping, you might be inclined to say that the captain was leading them to a dance rather than to a war, bringing a detachment of armour-dancers.

(6) 17.13-14. After the Indians have been made drunk and taken prisoner, Dionysus marches out to meet Deriades' challenge, surrounded by his warriors.

ἰδὼν δέ μιν ἦ τάχα φαίης
Ἠέλιον πυρόεντα πολυσπερέων μέσον ἄστρων.

[In beauty he threw all into the shade:] to see him you might have said it was fiery Helios in the midst of farscattered stars.

(7) 25.421-8. Ekphrasis of Dionysus' shield, made by Hephaistos. One of the scenes depicts Amphion building the walls of Thebes by playing his lyre.

καὶ τάχα φαίης …
ποιητήν περ ἐοῦσαν, ὅτι σκιρτήματι παίζων
κοῦφος ἀκινήτης ἐλελίζετο παλμὸς ἐρίπνης·
σιγαλέῃ δὲ λύρῃ μεμελημένον ἄνδρα δοκεύων,
κραιπνὸν ἀνακρούοντα μέλος ψευδήμονι νευρῇ,
ἀγχιμολεῖν ἔσπευδες, ὅπως τεὸν οὖας ἐρείσας
πυργοδόμῳ φόρμιγγι καὶ ὑμετέρην φρένα τέρψῃς,
μολπῆς ἑπτατόνοιο λιθοσσόον ἦχον ἀκούων.

It was only a work of art, but you might have said, the immovable rock went lightly skipping and tripping along! When you saw the man busy with his silent harp, striking up a quick tune on his make-believe strings, you would quickly

come closer to stretch your ear and delight your own heart with that harp which could build a wall, to hear the music of seven strings which could make the stones move.

(8) 26.209-11. Deriades gathers his army, including troops from Arizanteia. The narrator gives information about this region and the birds that can be found there, including the catreus.

ἦ τάχα φαίης,
μελπομένου κατρῆος ἑώιον ὕμνον ἀκούων,
ὄρθριον αἰολόδειρον ἀηδόνα κῶμον ὑφαίνειν.

If you hear the catreus singing his early hymn, you might almost say it was the nightingale pouring her morning music from her changeful throat.

(9) 29.18-19. A battle scene: the aristeia of Hymenaios.

ἀγλαΐῃ δ' ἤστραπτεν· ἴδοις δέ μιν εἰς μέσον Ἰνδῶν
Φωσφόρον αἰγλήεντα δυσειδέι σύνδρομον ὄρφνῃ·

He blazed in radiance: you might see him in the midst of the Indians, like the bright morning star against ugly darkness.

(10) 37.291-3. Chariot race, during the games organised for the funeral of Arestor. Scelmis is first, Erechtheus second.

καί οἱ ὁμαρτήσας ἐπεμάστιεν ἵππον Ἐρεχθεὺς
ἀγχιφανής, καὶ δίφρον ὀπισθοπόρον τάχα φαίης
εἰναλίου Τελχῖνος ἰδεῖν ἐπιβήτορα δίφρων·

Erechtheus was close upon him whipping up his team, and you might almost say you saw the second car ready to climb aboard the car of the maritime Telchis.

(11) 46.123-4. Pentheus has dressed as a Bacchant and is dancing and playing the cymbals.

ἦ τάχα φαίης
ἄγρια κωμάζουσαν ἰδεῖν λυσσώδεα βάκχην.

You might fairly say you saw a wild Bacchant madly rollicking.

(12) 48.364-6. Aura is mocking Artemis while they are bathing together.

δέρκεο, πῶς σφριγόωσι βραχίονες· ἠνίδε μαζοὺς
ὄμφακας οἰδαίνοντας ἀθήλεας· ἦ τάχα φαίης,
ὅττι τεοὶ γλαγόεσσαν ἀναβλύζουσιν ἐέρσην·

> See the muscles upon my arms, look at my breasts, round and unripe, not like a woman. You might almost say that yours are swelling with drops of milk!

2. The contents of the addresses: comparisons or misperceptions?

With addresses calling upon the narratee's sight, a problem arises as to the nature of the content of the address. They are of the form: "If you were to see this, you would say you are seeing [something else]". At first sight, it seems that the narratee compares what he sees with what he thinks he sees. This is how C. Beye interprets the addresses in the *Argonautica*: "[Apollonius] encourages the reader to formulate a simile" by being "insistent upon a reader's imaginative capacities".[18] But this interpretation does not result from a narratological study; indeed Beye uses the words "Apollonius" and "reader". The analysis of C. Byre, conducted form a narratological point of view, contradicts Beye's interpretation: "It is one thing to say that something is like something else, quite another to say that it is something other than it in fact is"[19]: he concludes that such addresses are not similes, but misperceptions. H. Fränkel is of the same opinion: "φαίης κεν führt niemals einen bloβem Vergleich ein, sondern stellt einen täuschenden Anschein fest."[20] This "deceptive appearance" originates from the narrator speculating on the mental images produced in the narratee's mind by the story he is being told. For example in (1), he assumes that the idea of a woman carried across the sea by an animal will bring to mind the divinities listed in the address.

The content of the misperceptions reveals that the narrator, as he creates them, pays attention to what it is reasonable to expect the narratee to be able to imagine. The best examples are (1) and (2) in which characters are assimilated to other characters. These addresses are the result of what the narrator expects will come to the narratee's mind as he receives the scene: if he is not familiar with the characters of the scene, he will be reminded of better-known characters (thus Europa on the bull will in all likelihood, if he were not able to recognise her immediately, make him think of Thetis or of a sea-nymph). In consequence the contents of such addresses seem to originate from the narratee's mind more than from the narrator's.

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[18] Beye, 1982:25.
[19] Byre, 1991: 221.
[20] Fränkel, 1968: 473.

This adaptation of the contents of the address to the mind of the narratee creates an important difference between the Homeric addresses and those of his successors. C. Byre notices it about the *Argonautica*: "unlike the perceptions embedded in the addresses in Homer, the narratee's perceptions of the situation are incorrect."[21] While the Homeric narrator guided the reaction of his narratee by underlining a situation through a litotes which did not result in a misperception, the narrators in Apollonius, Quintus and Nonnus create misperceptions to help the narratee picture the scene more accurately, by reminding him of more familiar characters or by giving him points of comparison; which, ultimately, also influences his reception of the story.

This applies, in didactic epic, to the addresses made by the narrators of the *Halieutica* and of the *Cynegetica*, who help the narratee picture an animal or its behaviour by assimilating it, in the address, to something with which the narratee is supposed to be familiar, for example:

> φαίης κεν ἰδὼν ἐλέφαντα
> ἢ κορυφὴν ὄρεος παναπείριτον ἢ νέφος αἰνὸν
>
> Seeing an elephant thou wouldst say a huge mountain peak or a dread cloud. [22]

However, in didactic epic, the addresses to the narratee are not all meant to introduce comparisons or misperceptions guiding the narratee's reception of the story. This is exemplified first by Aratus' use of the verb σκέπτοιο: the effect of this address underlines the didactic character of the poem, giving instructions to the narratee in order to help him follow the unfolding of the narrator's explanations. The narrator uses it to direct the gaze of his narratee in the sky, as he describes the layout of the constellations:

> Ἀμφοτέροισι δὲ ποσσὶν ὕπο σκέπτοιο Βοώτεω
> Παρθένον,
>
> Beneath both feet of Boötes, mark the Maiden…[23]

In this adaptation of the device to a non-narrative text, the narrator pretends that his narratee is watching the sky as he reads/listens to the poem, and as such gives him

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[21] Byre, 1991:221.

[22] Opp. *C.* 2.516-7.

[23] Arat. 96. The narrator of the *Phaenomena* also uses φαίης once, as he describes the constellation of Cassiopeia and her stretched form, l.196: φαίης κεν ἀνιάζειν ἐπὶ παιδί, "you would say that she was sorrowing over her daughter." (Translation A.W. Mair.) This occurrence is closer to the Homeric ones since it does not result in a misperception, but is intended as a vivid suggestion of how the narratee should interpret the shape of the constellation.

directions to find the constellation. This amounts to directing the mind's eye of the narratee in a virtual session of star-gazing.[24]

While σκέπτοιο is not a verb found in mythological epic, the optative ἴδοις, which occurs in Homer and Nonnus, can be found in didactic epic in addresses introducing directions to the narratee rather than comparisons or misperceptions. The narrator of Dionysius' *Periegesis* uses it five times to direct the gaze of the virtual traveller from a geographical element which has just been described, to the next (l.156, ἐκ τοῦ; l.923, τῆς προτέρω), once even referring to the virtual motion of the narratee (l.478, προτέρωσε περήσας) or to a remarkable monument or feature of the landscape (l.390, Cadmos and Harmonia's tomb; l.1075, agates on a river's bank). Through these addresses, the narratee is drawn into space to the place described by the narrator, instead of into the *diegesis* as is the case for narratees of mythological epic. The didactic import is also emphasised in Nicander's *Theriaca*: Εὖ δ' ἄν ἴδοις, "Take a good look [at the different forms of vipers]" (l.209). The narrator emphasises the importance of observation, with this verb also encouraging the narratee, on the level of the enunciation, to keep reading the poem.[25]

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[24] Erren 1967:128. "In der zweiten Person scheint also des Leser als Mitbetrachtender angesprochen, den immer wieder zur Betrachtung aufgefordert wird und dem der Dichter immer wieder zeigt, was er als nächstes ins Auge fassen soll oder wie er das Bild, das der Dichter als nächstes betrachten will, finden kann." He discusses the relationship between narrator and narratee further pp.126-34.

[25] The range of different verbs found in addresses to the narratee in didactic epic is much wider than in mythological epic, since the very tone of the poem causes the didactic narrator to give directions or advice to his narratee. In addition to φαίης and ἴδοις can be found verbs of thinking and imagining like δοκέοις (Opp. *C.* 2.362), φράζεο (D.P. 130, 331, 762, 884, 1080, 1128) but also more concrete verbs directly linked to the contents of the poem: ῥεῖα οὐκ ἂν ἕλοις, "you could not easily catch it" (about a type of fish, Opp. *C.* 3.360). Verbs of motion in the *Periegesis* are used as directions for the virtual journey in much longer addresses, for example at 587-92:

ἀλλ' ὁπόταν Σκυθικοῖο βαθὺν πόρον Ὠκεανοῖο
νηΐ τάμῃς, ἑτέρην δὲ πρὸς ἠῶ ἄλα κάμψῃς,
Χρυσείην τοι νῆσον ἄγει πόρος, …
κεῖθεν δὲ στρεφθεὶς νοτίης προπάροιθε κολώνης,
αἶψά κε Κωλιάδος μεγάλης ἐπὶ νῆσον ἵκοιο·

> But when you proceed on your ship on the wide paths of the Scythian ocean, and move towards another eastern sea, you are led to the Golden Island… From there, turning your ship to face the watery hills of the sea, you would swiftly reach the island of great Kolias… (I translate.)

Verbs in the second person are very common in Nicander, as he gives directions to his narratee about the making of medicinal mixtures and the way of using them, for example, at *Theriaca* 106-12:

τὰ δ' ἐν περιηγέι γάστρῃ
θάλπε κατασπέρχων ….
ἔπειτα δὲ λάζεο τυκτήν
εὐεργῆ λάκτιν, τὰ δὲ μυρία πάντα ταράσσειν

III. Analysis of the corpus of addresses

All twelve addresses occur in passages of different natures. (4) and (12) take place in character-text, and are therefore addressed to a secondary narratee who is also a character; (4) belongs to an embedded narrative, (12) to a non-narrative speech. The rest of the addresses occur in narrator-text, so that the "you" refers to the primary narratee, an abstract, narratological, entity. Among these addresses, (1), (2), (5), (6), (9), (10) and (11) belong to passages of narrative proper; inside this group, distinctions can be made according to how the narratee stands among the - or the absence of - characters witnessing the scene. The remaining three are found in non-narrative passages: (8) in a digression about natural science, (3) and (7) in *ekphraseis*.

1. Addresses found in narrator- text

a/ Addresses in passages of narrative proper

Among the nine occurrences of addresses made by the primary narrator to the primary narratee, six occur in passages of narrative proper: (1), (2), (6), (9), (10) and (11). This context implies that the address refers to events or people remote from the world of the narratee, since he is external; he is transported, as it were, into the world of the fabula and hypothetically becomes an onlooker on the events on the same level as the characters. The narrator insists on this dimension: all these occurrences contain a verb of seeing. The effect of these addresses varies according to whether or not the narratee is the only witness of the scene he is seeing.

συμφύρδην ὀφίεσσιν· ἑκὰς δ' ἀπόερσον ἀκάνθας

…

γυῖα δὲ πάντα λίπαζε …

These you must quickly heat in a round, bellying pot… Next, take a shaped, well-made pestle and pound up these many ingredients in a mixture with the snakes; but cast aside the vertebrae… Then anoint all your limbs…

• Scenes in which the presence of other spectators is implied. The narratee's role of medium between the *diegesis* and the reader stands out at its best.

In (6) and (10), no character is explicitly said to be seeing the event the narratee is made to see through the address because these events are shows, and therefore are meant to be seen, so that there is no need for the narrator to mention the spectator-characters. The sheer nature of these events implies the presence of an audience, of which the narratee becomes a member through the narrator's address.

(6) occurs at the beginning of book 17, as Dionysus travels from city to city with his troops, on their way to meet Deriades in battle. At line 32, ἐκ πόλιος δὲ πόληα μετήιεν allows us to infer that the procession was seen by the inhabitants of the cities Dionysus went through. Through the participle ἰδὼν, the narratee becomes one of these spectators, and his reaction to the scene is hypothetically reported by the narrator: if the narratee saw the procession, he would say that he was seeing Helios among the stars; this misperception in which the narratee mistakes Dionysus for Helios, is rather close to a comparison, since Helios does not so much stand as a character as an embodiment of light and brightness; Dionysus is therefore implicitly compared with the sun. The meaningfulness of this address is increased by its resulting in an *adynaton*: it is not possible to see at the same time the sun and the other stars. The narrator suggests that the beauty of the scene was such that the narratee would have been dazzled and amazed to the point of uttering this slightly incoherent comment. Be that as it may, it strongly underlines the majesty of Dionysus, as announced by the first half of line 13: κάλλεϊ δ᾽ ἔκρυφε πάντας, "in beauty he threw all into the shade", as well as that, although comparatively insignificant, of his warriors.

A similar occurrence, as far as the situation of the narratee as a spectator is concerned, is (10): the narrator's address places the narratee among the spectators of the chariot race. The narrator did not think it worthwhile to mention the spectator-characters, because the chariot race, like the procession, is a show. Here the excitement of the race is conveyed to the reader not by one of the characters but by the narratee himself and by his hypothetical reaction – triggered by sight again - ἰδεῖν.

In these two addresses, the narrator has the narratee comment on the situation rather than a spectator-character, which shows that the narrator is aware of the narratee's

role of medium between the story and the reader: the effect of the scene upon those watching is reported by the narratee who has been transported into the diegesis and made to see for himself. Turning him, although hypothetically, into the source of the comments generated by the vision of the event makes these comments more forceful, as they stand out of the fabula to become part of the world of the enunciation, instead of simply being, in the mouth of the characters, one element of the fabula among others. In addition, it is easier for the reader to identify with the narratee than with a character, since the narratee, like the reader, is the recipient of the story told by the narrator. Whereas characters are entirely part of the *diegesis*, the extradiegetic narratee finds himself most of the time in a position similar to that of the reader.

Thus these addresses function on two levels: on the level of the relationship between the narrator and the narratee, where the narrator invites the narratee to imagine the scenes, and helps him to do so by suggesting to him what his reaction would be; and on the level of the reception of the story by the reader, where the narratee becomes a means to convey more vividly to the reader the remarkable features of the scenes, namely here the astonishing beauty of Dionysus, and the speed and danger of the race.

• Scenes where the presence of other witnesses is mentioned and where the opinion of the narratee is not the only one to reach the reader. The narratee's involvement in the world of the *diegesis* is made even greater by his being put on par with the characters.

Sometimes the scene to which the attention of the narratee is called upon by the narrator's address is not designed to be a show, although its unusual and striking features attract the gaze of several characters, who may or may not express their own opinion about what they see. Thus the narratee becomes an onlooker among a group of other onlookers, and his hypothetical remark is not put into as sharp a relief as was the case in the preceding examples, since he is no longer the only one to comment on the scene. At the same time, the narratee's experience of the *diegesis* is enhanced, as it were, by his sharing it with the characters.

In (1), a succession of characters witnesses the kidnapping of Europa by bull-shaped Zeus: Poseidon (l.60), Triton (l.61), Nereus and Doris (l.64), Pallas (l.84) and an

Achaian seaman, who delivers a lengthy monologue expressing his astonishment (l.90-124). But before them all comes the narratee and his hypothetical reaction to the scene he sees – "ἰδὼν δέ μιν ἦ τάχα φαίης…". The narrator has the narratee assimilate, rather relevantly, Europa to a number of marine deities: the Nereid Thetis, the sea-nymph Galateia, Amphitrite the "bedfellow of the Earthshaker", and Aphrodite born of the sea. This misperception results from the narrator's expectations about which images are likely to be familiar to his narratee: the image of a woman on a swimming animal is likely to remind him first of well-known deities like Thetis. In this passage, the effect of the address of the narrator to the narratee is threefold.

First it reveals what the narrator expects the narratee to know about mythology, what he supposes will come to the narratee's mind when presented with certain scenes, which will inform his perception of the said scenes. Being aware of this, the narrator can help the narratee picture the scene better precisely by relying upon these images.

Secondly, the address draws the attention of the narratee, and therefore of the reader, to this event, which is the first to be narrated to him after the proem of the epic. As explained in chapter 1, the epic starts rather unexpectedly: while the proem did not mention Cadmos at all, the final address to the Muse asks her to tell about his wanderings; and although this request has been made, the narrator starts the poem by telling about the kidnapping of Europa by Zeus for ninety-two lines; Cadmos finally appears at line 137. Of course the Nonnian narratee, well-versed in mythology as he seems to be, must know that Europa is the sister of Cadmos, himself the grandfather of Dionysus, so that he is able to link this apparently irrelevant beginning with the story of Dionysus announced in the proem. However, by choosing to include these elements of the fabula in the story while not mentioning this choice in the prologue, the narrator surprises the narratee and creates a strong suspense - of considerable duration, Dionysus being born only in book 7. With this address to the narratee occurring so soon after the end of the proem, the narrator asserts his presence and the fact that he does have control over the story: although this event might seem unrelated to expectations created by the proem, the story has not gone out of hand, and the narrator is still present and guides the narratee into the story by suggesting what his reaction to the event should be.

Thirdly, this address is a subtle means for the narrator to support his choice of a subject unrelated to the Homeric myths. The list of deities listed in the address goes from

minor deities (Thetis and Galateia, respectively a Nereid and a sea-nymph; they are minor in the sense that they are not goddesses, nevertheless they are not unimportant: Thetis brings to mind Homer and Achilles; Galateia is a secondary character in the *Dionysiaca*)[26] to the goddesses of increasing importance: Amphitrite, referred to as the "bedfellow of the Earthshaker", and finally Aphrodite. The fact that Europa brings to mind such deities and goddesses confirms that the story of Europa, too, is appropriate material for an epic. And by placing the assimilation in the mouth of the narratee, the narrator distances himself from it and thereby makes it more valid, since it appears that the narratee himself is able to see the relation between Europa and major deities.

But the narratee is not the only one to express his opinion (however hypothetically) about Europa's kidnapping. The number of spectator-characters makes the whole scene very busy and lively, as each character focuses on, and therefore underlines, one aspect of it: Poseidon marvels at the swimming bull (l.60), Triton sounds a wedding note on his conch (l.61-3), Nereus and Doris underline the wonder and fear of Europa (l.63-5). Boreas blows into Europa's robes, revealing her beauty (l.69-71), Eros urges Zeus on (l.79-80), Pallas is ashamed to see Zeus thus lowering himself (l.83-5). This accumulation of characters, each drawing the attention of the narratee towards a particular aspect of the scene, support the narratee's reaction of surprise, while the sheer number of onlookers strongly emphasises the wonderful aspect of the scene. By including the narratee among these onlookers, the narrator reduces the distance between the narratee, and therefore the reader, and the scene, since not only characters are expressing their amazement, but also the narratee himself. But most interesting is the lengthy intervention of the Achaian seaman (l.90-126). Although he is an anonymous character and here makes his only appearance in the entire poem, he delivers a long speech (l.93-124) reported in direct discourse. This seaman plays a paradoxically important role in this scene; and indeed he can be considered as the equivalent, on the level of the *diegesis*, to what the narratee is on the level of the enunciation. Like the narratee, he is anonymous, and sees the scene from afar. He is only temporarily brought into the story (περίφοιτος Ἀχαιικὸς ναύτης, "passing by; wandering about" l.92) as the narratee was temporarily

[26] She appears ten times in the other books of the *Dionysiaca*; alongside Thetis: 9.81, 34.80, 48.196; as the beloved of Polyphemus: 6.300, 14.64-6, 39.35, 40.553, 43.267, 43.390. She belongs to the family of Nereus: 43.104-7.

brought into the level of the enunciation by the narrator's address. His reaction, like the narratee's, is triggered by sight - εἰσορόων... τοῖον ἔπος ἴαχε[27] - and at the beginning of his speech he insists heavily on this idea: Ὀφθαλμοί, τί τὸ θαῦμα;[28] And, most importantly, he assimilates Europa to the same array of deities as the narratee: Selene (l.97), Thetis (l.99), a Nereid (l.103), Demeter (l.104) and wonders if he is seeing Poseidon ravishing a girl (l.120). His intervention being much longer than that of the narratee, he mentions more deities; but among them, and in the same order, appear Thetis and a Nereid (the narratee's list comprised Galateia, who is a Nereid); his mention of Poseidon corresponds to the mention of Amphitrite, referred to as "the bedfellow of Poseidon" by the narratee. Thus the Achaian seaman appears as a character-version of the narratee, whose perception of the scene he develops in character-text, making the same hypotheses as the narratee, and even adding a few more. In this opening scene, the narrator has built an elaborate narratorial situation, involving the narratee as well as the characters. The fact that the Achaian seaman makes the same hypotheses as the narratee supports the reaction of the latter: even the characters are confused by what they see. This complex narratorial situation also results in the narratee - and the reader - being presented twice with the same comments about the scene: the first time, the narratee is invited to imagine what his own reaction would be – his imagination being directed by the narrator's address, while the second time the comments occur in character-text. As it turns out that the narratee's reaction is the same as that of the characters, it will be very easy for the narratee to identify with the Achaian seaman (all the more since his comments are reported in direct speech and since he is an anonymous character), an ordinary human, and not one of the deities and gods mentioned before him. Through this repetition of the same comments, a transition is being effected, with the help of the narrator, from the world of the enunciation to the world of the *diegesis*, as the reader is invited to identify with the narratee, who in turn is invited to identify with the character of the seaman.

Similar to (1) is (11) in which the narratee also becomes part of a group of onlookers. This time they are looking at Pentheus dressed up as a Bacchant and behaving like one, dancing, clapping his hands and playing the cymbals. The address insists on sight as the trigger for the assimilation (ἰδεῖν): seeing Pentheus, the narratee would say he

[27] 1.90-2.
[28] 1.93.

is seeing a Bacchant, a misperception underlining the complete transformation of Pentheus, and consequently the power of Dionysus, as well as the confusing aspect of the scene. In making this address, the narrator also assumes that the narratee knows what a frenzied Bacchant looks like, which, at this point of the epic, is more than likely considering the number of scenes involving Bacchants in the forty-five preceding books. The lines following the address insists on the spectacular aspect of the event by describing the onlookers themselves: they surround Pentheus (l.128), some climb on mounds of earth or on rocks (l.129), one leans on his neighbour and stands on tiptoe (l.130-1), another steps on an elevation of the ground (l.132), while some climbed to the top of bastions (l.133), ramparts (l.134), or pillars (l.135-6). This time the reaction of the characters is not reported in speech, but the fact that they are gathering and making such efforts to catch a glimpse of Pentheus confirms that a spectacular transformation took place, and justifies the misperception attributed to the narratee. But this long list also makes clear that the onlookers are themselves part of the event, which was not as obvious in the scene of the kidnapping of Europa because the onlookers did not need specific vantage points and were engaged in activities other than watching, whereas here, watching is the characters' main activity, and they need to find spots enabling them to do so. The proximity of this description of the onlookers and of the narrator's address creates a reduplication of the figure of the narratee who is made to look upon himself as he is looking at the scene.

In these two addresses, the fact that the narratee is not the only one whose reaction to the scene is reported by the narrator adds a new dimension to the reception of the story by the narratee, a dimension residing in the fact that the narratee is made to see himself as a character among others. As in (6) and (10), the narrator guides the narratee's imagination by prompting him as to what his reaction to the scene should be, and the narratee acts as a medium between the story and the reader as he underlines by his hypothetical reaction the most striking aspects of the scenes. But in (1) and (11), the narratee is placed on the same level as the characters, with whom he almost interacts, since they, like him, react to the scene in a similar manner. Not only is the narratee invited to step into the narrative, as it were, to imagine how he would react to the scene that is being narrated, but also, because these two examples make clear that the onlookers themselves are part of the scene, he is made to see himself in the act of stepping into the story, which considerably reduces the distance between the story and its receivers.

Finally, these two addresses reflect the expectations of the narrator as regards the mythological knowledge of his narratee. By having the narratee misperceive a scene, the narrator both underlines the striking aspects of the scene, and helps the narratee picture it by referring him to images that are supposed to be familiar to him.

• Scenes of which the narratee is the only spectator. The narratee is placed at a privileged vantage point so as to increase the aesthetic or pathetic aspect of the scenes.

In these four addresses, the narratee was one onlooker among a crowd of spectator-characters, be they mentioned or not, and the event either was a show, or became one by the number of characters looking at it. In (2), (5) and (9), the event is not a show, and the narratee appears as the only spectator, occupying a privileged vantage point. (2) is a moving scene between a mother and her daughter: Electra takes Harmonia aside in a chamber to talk to her about her wedding, and shuts the door with many bolts, πολυσφρήτιστον ὀχῆα (4.14). (5) and (9) are battle scenes, where no characters other than fighters are mentioned, so that the narratee appears as the only passive onlooker, which was not the case in the passages mentioned in the previous section.

In (9), the narratee's attention is drawn towards Hymenaios fighting against the Indians. The address assimilates him to Φωσφόρος, "the morning star",[29] and the Indians to δυσειδέι ὄρφνη, "ugly darkness". Instead of the usual introduction with φαίης + ἰδών/ἰδεῖν, "you would say you saw", the optative ἴδοις, "you might see", is used, directly laying the emphasis on sight, without the transitional φαίης which, in the other addresses, achieves the transfer of the narratee into the world of the diegesis. And sight is of importance in this occurrence which plays on the opposition between light and darkness,[30] which has been introduced in the preceding line with the opposition of Hymenaios' "rosy hand", ῥοδοειδέι χειρὶ, against the "black Indians", Ἰνδοὺς κυανέους.[31]

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[29] This is all the more appropriate since the morning star usually refers to the planet Venus, and Hymenaios is, as his name implies, an incarnation of marriage.

[30] Fauth 1981:26 elaborates on this opposition, linking it to the opposition between love and death, an opposition represented by Hymenaios, the incarnation of marriage, shown fighting and killing Indians.

[31] l.17. The opposition is emphasised further by the similarity of the words ῥοδοειδέι, "rosy" (l.17), and δυσειδέι, "ugly" (l.19).

Hymenaios is the main character in the first half of book 29 and is singled out during his *aristeia* in these first few lines by way of introduction. The mechanism of the address is similar to the previous cases: the narratee is transported into the *diegesis*, here on the battle field, and placed far enough away from the fight as to be able to have an overview of the whole scene. Hymenaios therefore becomes all the more conspicuous against the dark background of his opponents. This address is reminiscent of (6) as far as the contents are concerned; the main difference is that the narratee this time is not part of the scene since there is no crowd of onlookers for him to blend in. He is given his own vantage point so that the emphasis can be made, from a distance, on one character who becomes the focal point of the scene as he is going to be the central character of the first half of the book.

(5) occurs in the catalogue of Dionysus' allies, and refers to the Lydian troops. It is part of a larger intervention of the narrator: having just finished an analepsis about the battle against Typhon, he recalls his narratee to the time of the *diegesis*[32] before introducing this address. As in (9), the narratee is made to stand back so that he has a general, privileged view of the army, στρατὸν δοκεύων, an army that he misperceives as a troop of dancers because of its "prancing and leaping", ὀρχηστῆρα περικαίροντα. The next lines provide an additional reason for this misperception: the Lydians march accompanied by music, to the sound of lutes, flutes, pipes and drums.[33] This time the gap between the object and its perception by the narratee is smaller, but it nonetheless underlines the idea of the dance, an important aspect of the Dionysiac world: it is part of the Bacchic frenzy, and is often paralleled to fighting in the *Dionysiaca*. It appears in one of Dionysus' speeches, in which he encourages his troops: Βασσαρίδες, καὶ δεῦρο χορεύσατε, δυσμενέων δὲ / κτείνατε βάρβαρα φῦλα.[34] The narrator promotes the assimilation by encouraging his narratee to see dancers in warriors who are not specifically followers of Dionysus, but only tribes fighting on his side. Interestingly, one of the addresses in the *Iliad* also deals with the theme of dance:

οὐδέ κε φαίης
ἀνδρί μαχεσσάμενον τόν γ' ἐλθεῖν, ἀλλὰ χορόνδε
ἔρχεσθ', ἠὲ χοροῖο νέον λήγοντα καθίζειν.

[32] See 13.498: ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν προτέροισιν ἐν ἀνδράσιν ἤγαγεν αἰών.
[33] 13.504-10.
[34] 27.167-8. "Dance here also, you Bassarids! Slay the barbarian tribes of your enemies..."

You would not think
that he came from fighting against a man; you would think he was going
rather to a dance, or rested and had been dancing lately.[35]

This is how Aphrodite describes Paris to Helen, trying to excite her admiration by underlining how fresh he looks although he is just coming back from the battlefield, or rather, although he has just been snatched away from his duel with Menelaus by Aphrodite herself. The narratee perceives the irony of this comment: Paris does not really shine by his fighting prowess and is described as rather effeminate next to his brother Hector. The Nonnian narrator seems to engage in a play with the parallel between Dionysus and Paris in more than one passage: we saw how Dionysus' solar aspect has been emphasised by interventions from the narrator, first in the comparison with Perseus,[36] and a second time in address (6), and how this solar characteristic of the warrior was recurrent in the *Iliad*, in particular about Achilles. But the expression τεύχεσι παμφαίνων ὥς τ' ἠλέκτωρ used about Achilles at 19.395 is used one other time in the *Iliad* at 6.513, this time about Paris; however, while Achilles' comparison was completed by the formidable image of Hyperion, calling to mind Helios, the sun himself, or his father, Titan Hyperion, the comparison in the case of Paris has a much lighter tone, Paris being furthermore described as καγχαλόων, "rejoicing", as he has just come out of Helen's bower and is walking to war next to his brother Hector. He seems to be shining from mere good looks and prettiness. Indeed it seems that both these aspects of the sun comparisons are meant by the Nonnian narrator to be part of the characterization of Dionysus: he is formidable like Achilles and dazzles his enemies by his martial prowess, but, this prowess being the consequence of the Dionysiac frenzy, he is also, to a certain extent, rather carefree like Paris, not because he underestimates the demands of war, but because he can trust in his powers to master his enemies completely and in an unexpected way, while dancing and wielding thyrsi and ivy garlands.

Thus the parallel between the Nonnian address and the Homeric one emphasises the paradoxical character of the Dionysian troops: they fight with sticks and plants, and yet are invulnerable; they go to war dancing, and come back victorious. The rules of warfare in the Dionysian world are very different from the rules of the Iliadic world:

[35] 3.392-4.
[36] 25.103-4.

when fighting for Dionysus, a festive appearance, dancing, music, are synonymous of victory, while it was not at all the case at Troy.[37]

This address also stands out by the way the reaction of the narratee is introduced: τοῖον ἔπος λέξειας. It is the only time the address consists of a verb which does not appear in Homer nor in any other epic; as for τοῖον ἔπος, it is a very common phrase in the *Dionysiaca*, used as a transition between narrator-text and character-text, both to introduce and cap the characters' speeches.[38] The use of this expression is another means of drawing the narratee among the characters: although his intervention is only hypothetical, his speech is introduced in the very same way the speeches of the characters are introduced.

It is worthy of notice that among all the addresses to the narratee in the *Dionysiaca*, the only two that are not introduced by the most common φαίης happen to be those dealing with battle scenes, in a play with the Homeric references which all take place during battle scenes and are for the majority of them introduced by φαίης.

This preferential treatment of the narratee which makes him a privileged spectator is even more striking in the case of (2). In this scene, Electra takes her daughter Harmonia into a room to tell her how Zeus has planned for her to marry Cadmos. The address results in a misperception similar to (2): the narratee mistakes Electra and Harmonia for Hera and Hebe, a misperception induced by the mention of the whiteness of Electra's hands, παλάμη χιονώδεϊ (l.18), calling to mind Hera as described by Homer, λευκώλενος Ἥρη.[39] Again the narrator builds on the mental image he expects to be created in the mind of his narratee by the mention of white arms – another hint that the Nonnian narratee is well versed in Homeric mythology. What is more, the assimilation is relevant and in keeping with the large number of Homeric expressions used at the beginning of book 4; both scenes involve a mother and her daughter, and the mothers' feelings towards the future husbands of their daughters are quite similar: Hera's animosity towards Heracles is well-known, and Electra, although she is not really hostile to Cadmos, laments having to give up her daughter to him, a wanderer and a stranger; as

[37] As is explicit from one of Hector's speeches: Δύσπαρι εἶδος ἄριστε (...) οὐκ ἄν τοι χραίσμη κίθαρις τά τε δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης / ἥ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος ὅτ' ἐν κονίῃσι μιγείης. (3. 39 and 54-5) "Evil Paris, beautiful, (...) The lyre would not help you then, nor the favours of Aphrodite, nor your locks, when you rolled in the dust, nor all your beauty."

[38] It occurs twenty-four times as introductory formula and twenty-nine times as capping formula.

[39] *Il.* 1.55, 195, 195, 208, 572, to mention only occurrences from book 1.

a result of this assimilation, Cadmos is put on par with Heracles. As for the narratee, it is the only time in the *Dionysiaca* he is placed in such a privileged position, as the address makes him go through the very heavily bolted door - πολυσφρήγιστον ὀχῆα, the bolt with many seals, l.14 - and draws his attention on the fact that he is witnessing a scene that no other character is seeing. This intrusion upon the characters' privacy intensifies the pathetic tone of the scene which is going to take place, with Harmonia's distress and Electra's tears.

These three addresses, by placing the narratee in a privileged position which enables him to see a whole scene from a favourable vantage point, or to witness a private meeting between two characters, guide the narratee in his reception of the story at times where he has no characters with whom to identify, or to share reactions. His transfer into the *diegesis* is not as thorough as in the previous addresses since he is offered a vantage point that is inaccessible to characters; these addresses' main aim is to increase the aesthetic aspect of the *aristeia* of Hymenaios, the paradoxical means of Dionysiac warfare, and the affective effect of the meeting of Harmonia and Electra, so that the narratee is invited to share the emotions and react to the scenes all the same.

- **Summary**

These addresses made by the narrator in the course of the narrative shed light on the process of storytelling as well as on the relationship between the narrator and the narratee and on the relationship of the narratee to the story itself. In certain cases they draw the focus on the story as they bring the narratee into the fictional world so that he almost becomes one of the characters, with whom he hypothetically shares the same spatial and temporal point of view of the events. In other cases his extradiegetic position becomes noticeable again, as it enables him to witness a scene in a way other characters could not.

The presence, in each case, of a form of a verb of seeing, almost always accompanied by details about light and colour, complements the process of metalepsis and reduces the distance between him and the events by pretending that he is able to perceive them directly through sight, and that the interference of the narrator has been removed. But at the same time, the introductory verbs in the second person are,

paradoxically, a reminder of the storytelling itself and of the fact that all of this is only happening on the level of the enunciation, between the narrator and the narratee, and that if the narratee does see anything, it will really be only in his mind's eye.

However all these addresses are signs that the narrator not only is conscious of the presence of his narratee, but that he is even not indifferent to him, since he takes care to guide him into the story and to help him imagine it; the addresses all result in the creation of vivid images, by means of hypothetical misperceptions on the part of the narratee, which, far from being misleading or confusing, emphasise the main traits of the scenes and make the story more familiar by associating it with well-known figures or myths.

b/ Addresses in passages other than of narrative.

The following three addresses belong to passages in which the narrator's activity is more conspicuous, as he complements the story with extradiegetic information or descriptions which create pauses in the narrative.

- **Digression on natural science.**

Book 26 consists of a list of Deriades' allies, coming in troops from various oriental tribes. Each group is introduced by the narrator along with additional information on the customs of the tribes, on their equipment for war, and with side stories about some of the characters. Address (8) occurs in the context of the troops from Arizanteia: the narrator reports botanical and zoological facts on this region, and describes two species of birds, the ὡρίων (201-6) and the κατρεύς (212-211). At the end of both descriptions, the birds' songs are assimilated to sounds that are familiar to the narratee: in a simile, the ὡρίων's song is compared to a wedding hymn played on a string instrument, and the song of the κατρεύς is identified with the song of the nightingale through a misperception attributed to the narratee. In both cases, the narrator helps the narratee imagine the sounds of birds from foreign countries by likening them to other, better known, sounds; he has the narratee intervene only in the second case, in which the connection (between two bird's songs) is more obvious than in the first case (between a bird's song and a musical instrument), so that it is plausible for the narratee to make it himself.

In this address, the narrator calls upon the hearing of his narratee instead of upon his sight. The address is introduced by the usual φαίης this time followed by ἀκούων. This device had not been used by the Homeric narrator; it complements the level of implication of the narratee into the story. The narrator sustains the interest of his narratee in a descriptive passage by making him hypothetically hear a bird song. This time the aim of this address is less to emphasise an aspect of what he is talking about than to give the narratee an extra detail and to help him picture it in his mind as accurately as possible; this is in keeping with the encyclopaedic design of the Nonnian narrator, who likes to compile facts as well as myths and side stories.

• ***Ekphraseis***

Two more addresses can be found in the *Dionysiaca* outside of narrative passages: (3) and (7) occur in *ekphraseis*, and therefore do not refer to an event of the story but to the descriptions of objects.

(3) forms the conclusion of the *ekphrasis* of Harmonia's necklace (l.144-185), which particularly underlines how colourful the necklace is.[40] However (3) does not emphasise a visual trait of the necklace, but draws the narratee's attention on a sound: in keeping with the principles of the *ekphrasis*, the narrator depicts the necklace in such a way that he seems to be describing real animals rather than the representations of animals visible on the necklace; hence the mention of movement through the "flapping wings", ἱπταμένων πτερύγων, of the birds. The address to the narratee makes two assumptions: firstly that the birds produce a sound – a "windy beat", ἀνεμώδεα δοῦπον – and, secondly, that the narratee would be able to hear the sound were he to see the necklace, which emphasise the effect of the *ekphrasis* by explicitly referring to the narratee's reaction to it. The hypothesis that a sound can be heard makes the *ekphrasis* more forceful in that it fulfils its design of describing a work of art as if it were the real thing, and more striking for the narratee whose hearing is involved in the description. In fact the *ekphrasis* puts the narratee on par with the other characters: like anyone seeing the necklace, he would think

[40] χρύσειος, golden, 159; ξανθὸς ἴασπις, yellow jasper 162; Σελήνης λίθον πάνλευκον, white moonstone, 162-3; μάρφαρον φαεσφόρον, shining pearly white, 167; σέλας ὑγρόν [ἀχάτου] the liquid light of the agate, 170; λυχνίδες, red rubies, 175; γλαυκῆς χλοάουσα μαράγδου, grass-green emerald, 178; κρύσταλλον εἴκελον ἀφρῷ, foam-white crystal, 179; χρυσοφαῆ, golden, 182.

that the birds look so real that one could hear them fly. The address also influences the narratee on the level of the enunciation: the process of enunciation itself causes the sound to exist because it is mentioned by the narrator. Even if there is really no sound in the fabula, there is one in the enunciation, because the narrator made his narratee imagine one; on that level, the narratee is made to hear a sound that does not exists in the fabula.

Address (7) also occurs in an *ekphrasis*, that of Dionysus' shield; it is the most elaborate of all the addresses to the narratee found in the *Dionysiaca*: it is the longest (seven and a half lines) and relies both upon the narratee's sight (δοκεύων) and hearing (ἀκούων). More importantly, it is carefully built by the narrator through a succession of paradoxes and oppositions, so that it is constantly on the borderline between description and narrative. As early as the first line of the address, the paradox of the *ekphrasis*, i.e. to describe an object as if it were a scene or an event, to make a narrative out of a description, is underlined by ποιητήν περ ἐοῦσαν, "although it was a work of art", in which the particle περ underlines the concessive force of the phrase. The paradox of a moving work of art had already been expressed in the previous line, describing the stones moving and dancing καὶ ἐν ἀσπίδι, "even on the shield". The address is introduced by the usual καὶ τάχα φαίης, followed by a ὅτι clause which implies a misperception on the part of the narratee: he would say that the rocks are moving. The misperception is double, since rocks are usually immobile, and that even if they were moving, the narratee is supposed to look at an image, not at actual movement. The paradox is underlined by the word order in which contrary words are put side by side in one line: κοῦφος and ἀκινήτης, παλμός and ἐρίπνης – incidentally, a golden line. After this clause, the participle δοκεύων introduces the description of the shield further, always emphasising the paradox by the use of oxymora such as σιγαλέῃ λύρῃ, "a silent lyre". As for the expression ψευδήμονι νευρῇ, "make-believe strings", it clearly refers to how the scene is happening not on the level of the fabula, but on that of the enunciation. In the last lines the address becomes more complex as more verbs in the second person appear, whereas φαίης usually is the only one; from line 426 on, the narratee becomes the main character of a scene, as he moves and reacts to the images on the shield. His reaction is a desire to hear the music of the "silent harp", which makes him come closer (ἄγχι μολεῖν ἔσπευδες), stretch his ear (τεὸν οὖας ἐρεῖσας) with the hope to delight his heart (ὑμετέρην φρένα τέρψῃς) with the music present throughout the three lines in the words φόρμιγγι,

μολπῆς, ἦχον and ἀκούων. As in the other addresses, a transfer does occur, but in the opposite direction: the shield is transferred from the *diegesis* into the enunciation, as appears in the use of the indicative (l.426): the hypothetical address has turned into a short narrative taking place in the "world" of the narratee who is its main character. This address to the Nonnian narratee is rather similar to an address to the narratee of Apollonius' *Argonautica* occurring in the *ekphrasis* of Jason's coat: the narratee looks at it in the hope of hearing the ram talking to Phrixus.[41] C. Byre writes:

> It is as though the mantle is suddenly translated from the fictional world of the epic events into a hypothetical world occupied only by the mantle and the narratee; or, more accurately, perhaps, from the world of the *énoncé* to the world of the *énonciation*, the world shared by the narrator and the narratee.[42]

Both addresses feature the narratee engaged in looking at a work of art and wishing to hearing sound from it. However the experience is different for the two narratees. In the *Argonautica*, the narratee admires the coat and hopes to hear the ram talking; but the use of the word ἐλπίς betrays that the narrator, and therefore the narratee too, know that there is nothing to be heard. In the *Dionysiaca*, the narratee's reaction is not confined to a hope; the phrasing used by the Nonnian narrator causes a transition from a potential to a positive, so that the narratee becomes part of a story where coming closer to the shield actually enables him to hear the music, and not only hope that he will hear it. Thus this lengthy address to the Nonnian narratee strongly highlights the enunciation which becomes the frame of a very short fabula about the shield and the narratee. By involving the narratee in the reception of the *ekphrasis*, the narrator makes it more vivid and more narrative-like, and upholds the attention of the narratee in passages which constitute pauses in the story.

- **Summary.**

The importance of hearing and sound in addresses occurring in passages other than narrative is worthy of notice. In narrative, the aim of the addresses is to make the

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[41] 1.765-7: Κείνους κ' εἰσορόων ἀκέοις ψεύδειό τε θυμόν, / ἐλπόμενος πυκινήν τιν' ἀπὸ σφείων ἐσακοῦσαι / βάξιν, ὅτευ καὶ δηρὸν ἐπ' ἐλπίδι θηήσαιο. " When looking at them, you would fall silent and be deceived in your heart, expecting to hear some wise pronouncement from them; and so you would gaze for a long time in that expectation."
[42] Byre, 1991:226

narratee see the scene, by bringing him, in imagination, into the diegesis among the characters. In the last three addresses, no event takes place, no story unfolds, but the narrator makes up for the lack of action by emphasizing sounds so as to make the experience more complete for the narratee. The mention of foreign birds is made easier to grasp by the reference to a familiar bird song; the necklace and the shield, visual objects in the fabula, become the occasions for scenes, however short, in which the narratee assumes particular importance.

2. Addresses found in character-text

Only (4) and (12) remain, which occur in character-text. As such, they originate from a secondary narrator and are intended for a secondary narratee, both characters.

a/ Address in a passage of narrative proper

(4) occurs in a speech delivered by the ghost of Actaeon to his father Aristaios, in which he narrates the story of his death. This address constitutes Actaeon's version of 5.303-7, five lines where the primary narrator told how Actaeon had been watching Artemis bathing, from the top of an oak tree. Actaeon's thoughts had not been reported by the primary narrator, but they appear here in Actaeon's own version (l.484-8). He insists on the whiteness of Artemis' skin, and how it "dazzled his eyes" (ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀμάρυσσεν ἐμούς), before resorting to an address to his narratee, namely his father. The gleaming whiteness of the goddess in underlined by contrast: he compares her to the moon while the scene takes place during the hottest part of the day, "in the fiery vapour of the heat" (πυραυγέι καύματος ἀτμῷ, l.482).[43] Aristaios, as he tells his story, also tries to justify himself to his father for having committed the sacrilegious action which caused his death, by emphasising the dazzling aspect of Artemis' beauty, and by implying, through the address in the second person, that his father would have had the same reaction as he did. The use of the second person invites the secondary narratee to share the secondary narrator's thoughts and to be more understanding of the narrator's reaction; of course, the

[43] A contrast already initiated in the preceding line, where he says she was "shooting snowy rays" (χιονέας ἀκτῖνας ἀκοντίζουσα); the idea of snow follows that of extreme heat very closely.

primary narratee receives character-text just as he does narrator-text, so that this second person, even though it is meant by the secondary narrator for the secondary narratee only, encompasses the primary narratee as well and invites him to be sympathetic to Actaeon's reaction to the sight of the goddess.

It is also worthwhile noting that the second line of the address (5.488) is repeated word for word at 38.124, in the same narratological situation and in the same context: Hermes, a secondary narrator, tells the story of Helios and Clymene to Dionysus, the secondary narratee. Helios was struck by Clymene's shining whiteness as she was bathing in the Ocean. It is in keeping with the choice of the narrator to repeat variations of the same scenes – and it is only used in character-text, although there are eight more bathing scenes in narrator-text.

b/ Address in a dialogue

As for (12), it takes place in a speech from Aura to Artemis, in which she mocks the goddess and compares her beauty to her own; the address does not occur in a narrative, which means that it does not refer to the remote events or people of a story, but to the present situation between the two characters and even to their own body: Aura mocks Artemis for having too "feminine" breasts, whereas her own are muscular and more appropriate for a huntress. φαίης has obviously a more abstract and indefinite range than in the other addresses: the second person cannot refer to Artemis, since she will not share Aura's opinion that her breasts look as if they are swelling with milk; it is more likely an indefinite "you" similar to "one". Unlike all other addresses, the "you" here does not really attempt to indicate that the contents of the address originate from the narratee's point of view, since it is obvious that Artemis cannot have such an opinion about herself. As in (4), the address to the secondary narratee also reaches the primary narratee, underlining Aura's effrontery, as she assumes, through the use of φαίης, that anyone will share her opinion.

c/ Summary

These two addresses' greatest difference from addresses occurring in narrator-text is that they contain no verb of seeing or hearing, nothing to invite the narratee's senses to take part in the experience of the narrator. The main function of the addresses made by the primary narrator is to rouse his narratee's attention and to invite him to see, or hear, although only in imagination, what the narrator describes; addresses taking place in character-text do not function the same way, because they are themselves already part of the fabula, and refer to events belonging to the fabula, so that no transfer of the narratee can be achieved. Therefore it is more important for the secondary narrator to make sure that his narratee's attention is focussed on what he is saying, than to try and make him experience what he says through his senses. However, an address to the secondary narratee also reaches the primary narratee and invites him to share in the feelings of the character uttering the address as well as to imagine the scene in accordance with the contents of the address.

IV. Conclusion

Compared to the length of the *Dionysiaca*, the number of times when the narrator addresses his narratee is relatively small. But each of the twelve addresses aims to establish the contact with the narratee firmly through the use of verbs in the second person and by each time involving the narratee's senses. The narrator seeks his narratee's participation in a variety of forms. When sight is concerned, the narratee can be preferred to the spectator-characters to report the effect of a scene because his voice reaches the reader more directly than that of the characters; or he can be given a privileged vantage point so that the effect of the scene is increased through his vision. When he is transferred among the crowd of characters, he is invited to see himself even as he intervenes, in his own way, in the story. The emphasis laid on the idea of sight is in keeping with the visual aspect of the *Dionysiaca*; it is remarkable how almost all of the addresses dealing with sight contain details about colours, whiteness, brightness. The narrator also calls upon his narratee's hearing, in non-narrative passages, as a way to sustain his attention while the narrative comes to a pause, as well as to provide him with more accurate information, or,

in the case of the *ekphrasis* of Dionysus' shield, to give extra force to a literary device while the narrator manages to turn the narratological situation in such a way that the narratee himself becomes the centre of a very short narrative.

The Nonnian narrator deploys his creativity to make his story as vivid as possible when it comes to involve the narratee in it. On that point, he tries out more experiments than the Homeric, and Quintian narrators, following the lead of the Apollonian narrator, whom he surpasses also where the use of addresses in narrative passages is concerned.

Chapter 6. Indirect metaleptic devices aimed at the narratee

In addition to these addresses in the second person, the narrator of the *Dionysiaca* seeks out his narratee by means of other expressions which, although they are impersonal and do not explicitly rely upon the imaginary transfer of the narratee among the characters, still include the narratee in the comment made by the narrator about a character or an action, so as to convey or emphasise sensations or feelings.

I. ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι: an inconspicuous way of drawing attention to Dionysus

To make an image more striking, the narrator uses ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι, "it was possible to perceive/to see", which presents the image as universally perceptible: the impersonal phrasing invites the narratee to consider himself as among the ones able to perceive what the narrator is about to describe. It appears as a less direct variant of the "you would have seen" passages studied in the previous chapter. This expression is found seven times, always in the same *sedes*, at the end of the line; a variant occurs once, using the verb εἰσορῶ at the beginning of a line. It never occurs in character-text; the narrator reserves this expression for his own voice and, to our knowledge, he is the only narrator to make use of it.[1] The occurrences are as follows:

(1) 5.119-20. Celebrations after the founding of Thebes.

> καὶ Θήβη χορὸς ἦεν Ὀλύμπιος· ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι
> Κάδμον ὁμοῦ καὶ Ζῆνα μιῆς ψαύοντα τραπέζης.
>
> So Thebes was the Olympian dancing-place; and one might see Cadmos and Zeus touching the same table!

(2) 8.403-4. Zeus has shown himself to Semele in his divine form.

> ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι
> Ἵμερον, Εἰλείθυιαν, Ἐρινύας εἰν ἑνὶ παστῷ.
>
> In one bridal chamber could be seen Love, Eileithyia, and the Avengers together.

[1] In the infinitive. As we have shown in the previous chapter, the variant in the second person is common in epic poetry.

(3) 14.381-5. Troops of Bacchants are rushing at the enemy during the first battle against the Indians.

ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι
παρθένον ἀκρήδεμνον ἀσάμβαλον ὑψόθι πέτρης
τρηχαλέῳ πρηῶνι περισκαίρουσαν ἐρίπνης·
οὐ σκοπιὴν δ' ἔφριξε δυσέμβατον, οὐ πόδα κούρης
ὀξυπαγὴς ἀπέδιλον ὄνυξ ἐχάραξε κολώνης.

You might have seen a girl unveiled, unshod, leaping about on the jagged rocks above a precipice; no fear had she of the sheer fall, no sharp point of stone scratched the girl's naked foot.

(4) 18.147-8. Methe, Staphylos and Botrys are dancing after having had wine for the first time.

ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι
τερπωλὴν τριέλικτον ὁμοπλέκτοιο χορείης.

There was a sight to see, the triple-entwined delight of a close-embracing dance!

(5) 35.81-2. Indian women, including Protonoe, Orontes' widow, attack the Bacchants.

ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι
ἄλλην ἀντιάνειραν Ἐρυθραίην Ἀταλάντην.

And one might have thought her another manlike Atalante among the Erythraians.

(6) 37.23-5. Dionysus' followers come and go in the forest, felling trees for Opheltes' funeral.

ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι
ὑψιφανῆ προβλῆτα κατήλυδα λοξὸν ὁδίτην
ποσσὶ πολυπλανέεσσιν.

One saw them up aloft, out in front, coming down, crossing over, with feet wandering in all directions.

(7) 45.40-1. Agaue and the Theban women, turned into Bacchants, run to the mountains, dancing and singing.

ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι
δένδρεα κωμάζοντα καὶ αὐδήεσσαν ἐρίπνην.

One could see trees making merry, and hear voices from the rocks.

(8) 39.324-5. Dionysus' troops fight the Indians in a naval combat.

> ἦν δ᾽ ἐσιδεῖν κατὰ πόντον ἐύπτερον ἰὸν ἀλήτην
> πουλύποδος σκολιοῖο περιπλεχθέντα κορύμβοις·
>
> You could see a winged arrow fly and skim over the sea, then embraced in the feelers of a curling squid.

It is worthy of notice that Rouse translates this expression as he did those in the optative; yet from a narratological point of view, the addressees are not the same. The aim of these narratorial interventions is widened by the impersonal construction, which can be addressed to (a) other characters, possible witnesses to the scenes, although none is ever mentioned, nor are the passages attributable to secondary focalisation; (b) the narrator himself, who becomes momentarily an internal narrator perceiving from the level of the *diegesis*, and states what he was able to see; and (c), the narratee, of course, in a way similar to the addresses studied in the previous chapter. In that case, the presence of the narratee on the level of the diegesis is implied, instead of the explicit verb of perception which accompanied the addresses in the optative.

This wider range of addressees is mainly due to the difference between these expressions and those in the optative: the latter introduced a comparison or misperception which was attributed by the narrator to the narratee, while the former simply introduce a perception, the description of which originates from the narrator himself – with the exception of (5), which introduces a comparison. Groups of characters are thus put into focus in half of the occurrences (1, 2, 4 and 7), as well as one character from a group in 3, 5 and 6; and an object in 8. Thus the narrator creates images in the text, so to speak, by insisting on the visual aspect of a character's action, and by giving it a universal dimension through the impersonal form, unlike addresses in the second person which only corresponded to the narratee's misperceptions.

Among the occurrences describing groups, three underline events of great importance in the story of Dionysus: the foundation of Thebes by Dionysus' grandfather in (1), the city which will be the setting of the Pentheus episode; Dionysus' first birth in (2); and the spreading of wine in (4), the episode of Dionysus' visit to Staphylos being highly symbolical since all the inhabitants of Staphylos' palace stand for elements related to wine (thus Methe, "drunkenness", Botrys, "grapes"). As for (7), which occurs at the

beginning of the Pentheus episode, it underlines the power of the Dionysiac influence which also affects natural elements such as trees and rocks, a recurrent motif.[2]

The same goes for (3), which exemplifies the fearlessness of the Bacchant and how she is made invulnerable by the Dionysiac influence; but (6) signals a feature of the narrating, rather than of the narrative, as it introduces the imitation of a Homeric line: the accumulation of four spatial adjectives is a variation on the four adverbs found in the *Iliad* in the same context:

> πολλὰ δ᾽ ἄναντα κάταντα πάραντά τε δόχμιά τ᾽ ἦλθον·
>
> They went many ways, uphill, downhill, sidehill and slantwise.[3]

Finally the visual aspect of the battle is emphasised by (8), with the octopus caught in the spear. These seven examples draw the narratee's attention to an image by inviting him to see it in his imagination as it is, without the shift in perception which occurred in the occurrences in the optative. Here the insistence on visualisation is part of the creation of vignettes, almost like paintings in the text – the banquet in Thebes, the dance of Staphylos' family... – which are in keeping with the visual aspect of the *Dionysiaca*.

Occurrence (5) stands out in that it introduces a comparison: Protonoe is perceived as similar to Atalante. The comparison is implied: "it was possible to see [in her] another Atalante", and originates from the narrator, since the expression is impersonal; but as such, it includes also the narratee, who is invited to make the parallel himself and picture Protonoe accordingly. The image of Atalante, the female hunter who took part in the hunt of the Calydonian boar, is well in tune with this passage recording the deeds of the Indian women in the war; it is developed by the epithet ἀντιάνειρα, used in the *Iliad* about the Amazons.[4] After Protonoe, Orsiboe is compared to Deianeira, herself compared to an Amazon too;[5] the allusion contained in the epithet ἀντιάνειρα helps to make the Amazons the central theme of the passage and to convey the alien and redoubtable character of the Indian women turned warriors to avenge their husbands. Finally, ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι is part of the varied style and of the ποικιλία of the passage since it is one of three different expressions used to introduce short vignettes comparing an Indian woman and a mythological character.

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[2] See also 14.274, 15.390, 16.225 and 291.
[3] *Il.* 23.116.
[4] *Il.* 3.189, 6.186.
[5] 35.88-91.

Although they are less insistent in their solicitation of the narratee than the interventions in the optative, these eight occurrences call upon the narratee's attention as the narrator draws the focus on a visual element corresponding to a significant moment in the story or to a narratorial intervention in the style of the poem, with an intertextual reference and variations on the introduction of comparisons. By using this expression instead of the direct one in the optative in passages (1) and (2) in particular, the narrator chooses to remain rather inconspicuous although one could assume that the crucial character of these episodes of the story would make them privileged spaces for strong narratorial interventions. In the previous chapters it appeared that the Nonnian narrator, like the Homeric one, does not time his interventions according to the development of the story to mark out crucial episodes,[6] but sprinkles them along the text at unpredictable moments to keep the interest of the narratee awake. Yet, these eight occurrences of ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι all refer to Dionysus in some way, underlining a key moment of his life or the power of his influence on his followers – except for (5). Finally, examples (5) and (6), are very characteristic of the Nonnian narrator, in that they are interventions which draw the focus onto the narrating as much as onto the narrative.

II. ἆ μέγα θαῦμα: an original appropriation by the Nonnian narrator

This exclamatory phrase is used by the narrator in passages where he wishes to increase the admiration that the narratee ought to feel at what is told. The combination μέγα θᾶυμα only appears in the *Dionysiaca* in this expression, preceded by the interjection ἆ. Unlike ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι, it is not an innovation of the Nonnian narrator, and can be found in Greek literature of all genres, first, of course, in Homer, in the formula:

> ὢ πόποι ἦ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῶμαι·
>
> Oh for shame! Here is a great strange thing I see with my on eyes...[7]

[6] De Jong, 2004:50 makes that point about Muse-invocations, remarking that the interpretation which explains them as markers of a particularly important moment of the story is made invalid by the number of equally important moments which are not introduced by Muse-invocations.

[7] *Il.* 13.99, 15.286, 20.344, 21.54; see also *h.Merc.* 219; and with a variant at *Od.* 19.36: ὦ πάτερ, ἦ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῶμαι.

The Nonnian narrator remains close to the Homeric example in his use of the exclamation, unlike all the other narrators who turn μέγα θαῦμα into an apposition – with the exception of one occurrence in Oppian's *Halieutica*.[8]

ἆ μέγα θαῦμα is found ten times in the *Dionysiaca*; twice in narrator-text, eight times in character-text. Before the *Dionysiaca*, all the exclamations – again, with the exception of Oppian's *Halieutica* – occurred in character-text, and all the appositions in narrator-text. The two Nonnian occurrences found in narrator-text are therefore notable innovations of the narrator who makes a decided intervention through which his voice can be heard in the narrative in a manner reserved so far to characters. Indeed in character-text, the expression is used to express surprise or admiration for an action or an event, by characters who wish to underline the strength of their feelings, sometimes to convince another character to act: in book 14, the Indian who drinks wine for the first time uses ἆ μέγα θαῦμα to stress how delightful this new drink is;[9] in book 4, Aphrodite, disguised as Persuasion, uses the same expression to make Harmonia willing to marry Cadmos:[10]

> ἆ μέγα θαῦμα,
> λάθριος Ἠλέκτρην νυμφεύσατο μητίετα Ζεύς,
> ἀμφαδὸν Ἁρμονίην μνηστεύεται αὐτὸς Ἀπόλλων·
>
> Here is a great marvel! Zeus Allwise wedded Electra in secret – Apollo himself woos Harmonia in the light!

The Nonnian narrator is the first to take this expression out of character-text to use it with his own voice. He is of course not trying to convince his narratee to do anything, but is making a marked attempt at conveying admiration for a scene in a lively way – all the more since the expression is an exclamation – on two occasions:

(1) 4.436: The Sown men spring out of the earth in armour.

> ἆ μέγα θαῦμα,
> ὥπλισεν Εἰλείθυια, τὸν οὐ μαιώσατο μήτηρ·

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[8] Opp. *H.* 4.270. μέγα θαῦμα as an apposition can also be found at *h.Cer.* 403; *h.Ap.* 156 and 415; *h.Merc.* 270; Hes. *Sc.* 218; A.R. 1.943; D.P. 65; Mosch. *Europa* 38; Arat. 1.15 and 46; Q.S. 1.299, 7.200, 14.351; Opp. *C.* 3.430 and 483, 4.148.

[9] 14.427.

[10] 4.93-5. The other occurrences of ἆ μέγα θαῦμα in character-text are at 2.226, 4.54, 6.359, 8.256, 9.218, 27.308.

O what a great miracle! Eileithyia armed him whom the mother had not yet spawned!

(2) 42.142: Dionysus falls in love with Beroe.

ἆ μέγα θαῦμα,
παρθένον ἔτρεμε Βάκχος, ὃν ἔτρεμε φῦλα Γιγάντων·
Γηγενέων ὀλετῆρα φόβος νίκησεν Ἐρώτων·
τοσσατίων δ᾽ ἤμησεν ἀρειμανέων γένος Ἰνδῶν,
καὶ μίαν ἱμερόεσσαν ἀνάλκιδα δείδιε κούρην,
δείδιε θηλυτέρην ἁπαλόχροον·

See a great miracle – Bacchos trembling before a maid, Bacchos before whom the tribes of the giants trembled! Love's fear has conquered the destroyer of giants. He mowed down all that warmad nation of the Indians, and he fears one weak lovely girl, fears a tender woman.

The first occurrence, referring to the men born from the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmos, is found in an animated passage describing the birth of these men by focussing on one at a time in turns, an enumeration which brings to the narratee's imagination a number of colourful images;[11] they are followed by this exclamation which underlines the marvel of men born with their armour, a marvel reminiscent of the very short allusion to Athena in the proem, born from Zeus "τεύχεσιν ἀστράπτουσαν", "all scintillating in armour",[12] another example of the repetition of the same ideas or images which is part of the compositional principle of the *Dionysiaca*. Liveliness also accounts for the occurrence from book 42: the narrator becomes very overt in the preceding lines and directly apostrophises Dionysus with a series of rhetorical questions,[13] which put into relief Dionysus' respectful fear for Beroe which prevents him from speaking to her, a way of increasing the importance of Beroe in the story for a narrator who, as we saw, has a particular liking for this character/city. In the lines following our exclamation, he builds a series of paradoxes with the oppositions between παρθένον and φῦλα Γιγάντων, and Γηγενέων and Ἰνδῶν, conspicuous at each end of the lines. He plays on the difference of numbers (τοσσατίων / μίαν) and the marvel that is Dionysus' fear before a single girl, a fear emphasised in the repetition of the verb δείδιε. This belittling of Dionysus before Beroe increases, of course, her greatness, which is what the Nonnian narrator aims at; the

[11] 4.428-36.
[12] 1.10.
[13] 42.139-42.

exclamation in that context is a strong appeal to the narratee to focus on this extraordinary paradox and as such participates in this aim.

Therefore this exclamation is yet another device for the narrator to grasp his narratee's attention and direct its focus onto an important element of the story. Whereas ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι was striking because specific to this narrator, ἃ μέγα θαῦμα is much more common and goes back to Homer,[14] but the Nonnian narrator renews it by allowing himself to use it twice, both expressing his own admiration and inviting the narratee to share of it.[15]

III. ὄφρα τις εἴπῃ: an invitation for the narratee to connect myths together

The phrase ὄφρα τις εἴπῃ, "so that someone may say", is a form of *metalepsis* in which the characters move to the level of the narration, as they exhibit the unexpected consciousness of being the object of a narrative, and act so as to be remembered as such. I. de Jong considers this kind of *metalepsis*

> as more or less the reverse of apostrophe, where it is not the narrator who turns to one of his characters and, as it were, enters the narrated world, but one of the characters who enters the world of narration.[16]

The narrator uses it of Aura in book 48, the last of fifteen such phrases, and the only one to occur in narrator-text. We saw that one of its functions is to underline the last allusion to the story of Procne and Philomela and its parallel to the Aura episode:

> καὶ νοέειν μενέαινεν ἑὸν πόσιν, ὄφρα καὶ αὐτὴ
> υἱέα δαιτρεύσειεν ἀναινομένῳ παρακοίτῃ,
> αὐτὴ παιδοφόνος καὶ ὁμευνέτις, ὄφρα τις εἴπῃ·
> ‘Πρόκνη παιδολέτειρα νέη πέλε δύσγαμος Αὔρη.’

[14] By the time of Late Antiquity, it was also rather common, at least in its attributive form, in Christian authors like Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzenus, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom; see also the *Apocalypse of John*, 17.6.4.

[15] The variant θάμβος ἰδεῖν can be found at 43.358. Although it does reflect the feelings of the narrator, is not as overt an intervention as ἃ μέγα θαῦμα, an exclamation which causes an interruption of the narrative. θάμβος ἰδεῖν is to be considered as an evaluative word, a rather elastic category of narratorial intervention which will not be studied in this thesis. See I. de Jong's discussion of the matter, 2004:137.

[16] 2009:98. See also, pp.98-9, her list of passages in which characters claim to act so as to become the subject of songs.

> She longed to know her husband, that she might dish up her own son to her loathing husband, childslayer and paramour alike, that men might say: 'Aura, unhappy bride, has killed her child like another Procne.'[17]

The conjunction ὅφρα, "that, in order that", makes it ambiguous whether the aim, *i.e.* the cause of Aura's action, should be attributed to the character. It can mean that she is aware of the fact that such an action would make her comparable to Procne, and therefore acts with this very purpose, namely to cause her entourage to establish the parallel; but it might simply indicate that she acted in such a way that it is now possible for those who come to know about it to utter these words. In that latter case, the parallel is created by the narrator only and not by the character; in other words the parallel exists on the level of the enunciation only.

The other fourteen occurrences of this phrase belong to character-text, where they create comparisons, establish parallels, make comments which are to be ascribed to the character;[18] this particularity of the fourteen first occurrences weighs on the narrator's one, which comes last, inviting the narratee to see in it the reflection of the character's thoughts, as if Aura was herself conscious that she establishes herself as a new Procne. In doing so, she emphasises the fact that she is killing her children out of sheer cruelty and madness, but for the same reasons as Procne: to punish the father of these children – although it is the primary narrator who takes it upon himself to utter the comparison.

Because of the indefinite pronoun it contains, this expression can be interpreted as being aimed both at the levels of the *diegesis* and of the enunciation. In character-text, this expression of course refers to other characters, referred to through τις, but also to the narratee – since the pronoun is indefinite. However, in narrator-text, τις can refer either to other characters who, if they came to know what Aura did, might be inclined to utter the words reported by the narrator in direct speech, or to the narratees, who are invited to make the same remark as they draw the parallel between the stories of Aura and Procne.

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[17] 48.745-8.

[18] In 2.303, 8.249, and 42.471, the speaker establishes a parallel between himself and another mythological character to emphasise his own importance. In 15.285, 46.174, and 48.26, the speaker establishes a parallel between his addressee and another mythological character in order to convince the former to do something. 15.346, 21.39, 29.42, 30.184, 33.261, and 48.548 adopt a funerary tone in a comment on the speaker's own death or the death of another character, to arouse pity from his addressees and, at the same time, from the primary narratee. In 20.316, Lycurgos mocks Dionysus by alluding to what men will remember of his expedition, and in 28.147, an Athenian warrior who lost his hand takes courage by imagining the fame his bravery will bring to Athens.

The verb εἴπῃ supposes an active reaction from the hypothetical witness of the scene; it is another means, for the narrator, to involve his narratee in the narration. The process is rather similar to that of the addresses in φαίης, with the difference that the scope here is wider: the narrator is not addressing his narratee directly, but utters a general comment to which the narratee, but also any hypothetical witness of the scene, are supposed to be able to relate.

The use of this phrase by the Nonnian narrator most likely follows the example of the *Iliad* – the only other epic poem in which it can be found. It appears there twice, in the mouth of Hector and Sarpedon,[19] both imagining what their actions will cause men to say afterwards, Hector as he proposes to Ajax to put an end to their duel and exchange gifts, Sarpedon as he advises his cousin Glaucus to fight with him in the first ranks of the Lycians. However, in both cases, the scope of the indefinite pronoun τις is limited by a complement in the genitive: to the Acheans and the Trojans, Ἀχαιῶν τε Τρώων τε, in the case of Hector, and to the thickly armoured Lycians, Λυκίων πύκα θωρηκτάων, in the case of Sarpedon. The Nonnian narrator widens the range of the pronoun by not

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[19] 7.299-302, Hector to Ajax:
δῶρα δ᾽ ἄγ᾽ ἀλλήλοισι περικλυτὰ δώομεν ἄμφω,
ὄφρά τις ὧδ᾽ εἴπησιν Ἀχαιῶν τε Τρώων τε·
ἠμὲν ἐμαρνάσθην ἔριδος πέρι θυμοβόροιο,
ἠδ᾽ αὖτ᾽ ἐν φιλότητι διέτμαγεν ἀρθμήσαντε.
Come then, let us give each other glorious presents,
so that any of the Achaians or Trojans may say of us:
'These two fought each other in heart-consuming hate, then
joined with each other in close friendship, before they were parted."
12.315-21, Sarpedon to Glaucus:
τὼ νῦν χρὴ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισιν ἐόντας
ἑστάμεν ἠδὲ μάχης καυστείρης ἀντιβολῆσαι,
ὄφρά τις ὧδ᾽ εἴπῃ Λυκίων πύκα θωρηκτάων·
οὐ μὰν ἀκλεέες Λυκίην κάτα κοιρανέουσιν
ἡμέτεροι βασιλῆες, ἔδουσί τε πίονα μῆλα
οἶνόν τ᾽ ἔξαιτον μελιηδέα: ἀλλ᾽ ἄρα καὶ ἶς
ἐσθλή, ἐπεὶ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισι μάχονται.
Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians
to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle,
so that a man of the close-armoured Lykians may say of us:
"Indeed, these are no ignoble men who are lords of Lykia,
these kings of ours, who feed upon the fat sheep appointed,
and drink the exquisite sweet wine, since indeed there is strength
of valour in them, since they fight in the forefront of the Lykians."
For a general study of *tis*-speeches in the *Iliad*, see De Jong (1987) (pp.77-80 for the two examples quoted above). See also the forthcoming thesis of B. Verhelst.

restricting its meaning and proposes new themes, taken from mythological parallels, in the contents of the hypothetical reported speech introduced by this pronoun which includes other characters and different tones. In any case, the Homeric precedent shows that the idea that characters can be allowed to utter speeches which show that they are aware of being watched, so to speak, of being part of a story that men will know and compare with other stories, is not new: the epic characters of Homer and Nonnus are endowed with some consciousness of their "epic-ness".

Yet this consciousness springs from different motives in Homer and Nonnus. In the *Iliad*, Hector and Sarpedon wish to act in conformity to socially approved behaviour,[20] so that they seem to be consciously aiming at presenting themselves as examples for posterity; and indeed the hypothetical speech expresses admiration at how these two characters embody epic qualities. But in Nonnus, the contents of the hypothetical speech are more varied. Only two characters underline their action, or the action they wish another carried out, as being what is expected of them according to the standards laid out by their social usages: the Athenian who had both arms cut in the fight still rushes unarmed at his enemy hoping that men will recognise the bravery of the Athenian soldiers, and Hymnos hopes that Nicaia will give funeral honours to his own grave so that men will be able to see how much she loved him.[21] Two other characters use this device to boast of the warlike feats they hope to accomplish: Lycurgos his massacre of the Bassarids, Ambrosia her fighting Lycurgos even after she was turned into a plant.[22] In the rest of the occurrences, the hypothetical speech consists of a comparison, like the one found in narrator-text, or of a parallel between two similar situations; either the comparanda or parallel element is intradiegetic and invites the narratee to draw links between elements of the *Dionysiaca*, or taken from very well-known myths, another way for the narrator to introduce allusions to other stories in his poem.[23] In this latter use of the

[20] See Wilson 1979:1-2: "in Homer these speeches express public opinion, as voiced by an anonymous *tis*". He goes on to study the moral import of sentences introduced by this phrase in Homer ans later literature, in particular tragedies.
[21] 28.146-9 and 15.342-7.
[22] 20.316-8 and 21.39-40.
[23] Intradiegetic comparanda and parallels: 8.247-50, 29.40-4, 30.183-5, 33.259-62, 39.142-4, 46.172-5 and 48.25-30.
Elements from other myths: 2.301-4, 15.283-6, 42.471-4 and 48.545-9.

device, the hypothetical speech invites the narratee to think on literary issues rather than moral or social.

Be it in narrator-text or in character-text, these expressions are remarkable in that they seem to reach out of the *diegesis* to create parallels with external elements, as if the characters reached a certain amount of omniscience, enough for them to be aware that their behaviour, or the behaviour of their addressee, is liable to elicit some comments from hypothetical witnesses of their actions. Therefore it is quite surprising that the majority of the occurrences should be found in character-text: it seems that the primary narrator's voice would be more appropriate to utter such comments which imply a detachment towards the *diegesis* that is more to be expected from him than from the characters themselves. However, the narrator is the source of only one of them; it underlines how, in the *Dionysiaca*, character-text is another occasion for the addition of secondary stories to the main narrative, since the characters tend to compare themselves to other characters, both extradiegetic and intradiegetic. Therefore, in his single utterance of ὄφρα τις εἴπῃ, the narrator confirms that τις, in the occurrences from character-text, does not refer to intradiegetic characters only, but is also addressed to the primary narratee who is expected, in the case of the *Dionysiaca*, to be always attentive to echoes and parallels.

Finally, it is worth noting that the sentences introduced by ὄφρα τις εἴπῃ resemble epigrams;[24] as such, their insertion is an element to add to the importance of the theme of writing in the *Dionysiaca*, which recurs in the mentions of Cadmos as one who gave Greece an alphabet,[25] and in the several "reported texts" which the narrator inserts in his poem directly in the same manner as directly reported speech, as if he were copying the

[24] F. Vian, in a note to 30.184 (1997:123), qualifies ὄφρα τις εἴπῃ as a "tour habituel pour introduire une épigramme." P. Collart (1913) lists epigrams found in the *Dionysiaca*. He writes: "D'où vient qu'il ait pu, lui, le poète épique, réputé prolixe, grandiloquent, violent, se laisser séduire à ce point par une forme de poésie dont la brièveté, la finesse, la grâce sont les qualités essentielles ? C'est sans doute parce que son génie, éloigné du naturel, ami de la recherche, est moins opposé qu'il ne paraît d'abord à un genre où tout est artificiel: sentiments et expression. C'est aussi et surtout, semble-t-il, une question de mode." (141). I would add that it is also part of the experimentation in genre carried out in the *Dionysiaca*, in which the narrator strives to adapt other poetic forms to epic.
[25] 4.267-9 and 41.381-2.

words, instead of reporting them indirectly by only giving out their substance.[26] V. Giraudet also signals "l'omniprésence de verbes signifiant "tracer, marquer, graver".[27]

IV. οὐ νέμεσις: justifications for elements in the story.

This last example of an impersonal narratorial intervention aims at underlining a piece of evidence, a fact that should be taken for granted by the narratee. It is found four times in character-text in Homer, with the meaning "there is no shame / blame for someone to do something", as a character justifies his own actions or those of another character. The evidence of the statement introduced by οὐ νέμεσις can be confirmed in the following lines in two ways: either by the reminder of a fact internal to the *diegesis* with which the addressees of the speaker should be familiar, or by a general comment or gnomic utterance which constitutes an authoritative argument. Two examples belong to the first category: for the leaders of the Trojans, the fact that Helen is as beautiful as a goddess justifies the war so that the Trojans and the Achaeans are not to blame; and for Agelaus, Telemachus is not to blame for restraining the wooers of Penelope, because it is well-known that he was hoping for his father's return.[28] The second category also comprises two examples: while the Trojans have the upper hand, Agamemnon tries to convince Nestor that it would not be a shame to put the ships to sea and escape, because flight is better than defeat:

> οὐ γάρ τις νέμεσις φυγέειν κακόν, οὐδ' ἀνὰ νύκτα.
> βέλτερον ὃς φεύγων προφύγῃ κακὸν ἠὲ ἁλώῃ.
>
> There is no shame in running, even by night, from disaster.
> The man does better who runs from disaster than he who is caught by it.[29]

and Telemachus explains to his mother, who is angry at Phemius for singing about the return of the Achaeans from Troy, that the singer is not to blame, since he is only conforming to the taste of his audience for novelties:

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[26] Such reported texts are: Harmonia's prophetic tablets, 12.70-89, 97-102, 110-113; the list of victims engraved on Eros' quiver, 7.117-128; Orontes' epitaph, 17.313-4; Deriades' message to Dionysus, 21.277; Opheltes' epitaph, 37.101-2; Ophion's prophetic tablets, 41.364-7, 389-98; and Eros' message to Dionysus, 48. 619-620.
[27] Giraudet, 2010:18.
[28] *Il.* 3.156-60; *Od.* 20.328-32.
[29] *Il.* 14.80-1.

τούτῳ δ' οὐ νέμεσις Δαναῶν κακὸν οἶτον ἀείδειν·
τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι,
ἥ τις ἀϊόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται.

With this man no one can be wroth if he sings of the evil doom of the Danaans; for men praise that song the most which comes the newest to their ears. [30]

The expression next occurs in narrator-text in Callimachus, there also followed by a general comment or a gnomic utterance: in the *Hymn to Artemis*, the narrator explains that it is no shame for the Nereids not to be able to look at the Cyclopes since not even the goddesses can do so without shuddering; and οὐ νέμεσις is also followed by a proverb in one of the epigrams.[31]

In the *Dionysiaca*, οὐ νέμεσις occurs eleven times, to which must be added three occurrences of the interrogative variant τίς νέμεσις.[32] Unlike the Homeric narrator, the Nonnian narrator does not reserve this expression for character-text but uses it four times in narrator-text; and whereas half of the occurrences introduce a general comment or gnomic utterance in Homer, and all of them in Callimachus, only two do so in the *Dionysiaca*. In character-text, it is found when a character wishes to justify his own actions or the actions of another character, or a situation that he witnesses, through the parallel, as in Homer, with a general fact or an internal one.[33]

In narrator-text, the expression occurs only in the negative form, to explain or justify an element of the narrative:

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[30] *Od.* 1.350-2. One last occurrence of νέμεσις can be found in the singular and in a hypothetical clause, as Telemachus explains that there would be blame from him if he sent his mother back to her father at 2.134-7.

[31] Call. *Dian.* 62-5 and Epigram 21 Pfeiffer = 23 Mair lines 4-6:

ὁ δ' ἤεισεν κρέσσονα βασκανίης.
οὐ νέμεσις· Μοῦσαι γὰρ ὅσους ἴδον ὄμματι παῖδας
μὴ λοξῷ πολιοὺς οὐκ ἀπέθεντο φίλους.

... the other sang songs beyond the reach of envy. Naught in this is there to surprise: for on whom as children the Muses look with no sidelong glance, those they do not reject as friends when their heads are grey.

[32] 43.104, 44.315 and 48.846, all three in character-text in rhetorical questions so that the effect is the same as that of the negative form.

[33] To justify one's own actions of perceptions, with a general comment at 4.238 and 34.324; with a fact at 35.141 and 46.77. To justify the actions of someone else, with a fact: 43.104 and 44.315. To justify one's expectations, with a proverb: 48.291. To explain what happens to someone else, with a fact: 19.343, 46.75 and 48.846.

(1) 5.290-2: About Actaeon's becoming a hunter.

οὐ νέμεσις δὲ
δύσμορον Ἀκταίωνα μαθεῖν μελεδήματα θήρης
υἱωνὸν γεγαῶτα λεοντοφόνοιο Κυρήνης.

No wonder that illfated Actaeon learnt the practice of the chase, when he was born grandson to lionslaying Cyrene!

(2) 19.134-5: During the games organised at Staphylos' funeral, Dionysus sets as second prize for the dancing contest a silver bowl full of newly pressed wine.

οὐ νέμεσις γὰρ
ἀνέρα νικηθέντα πιεῖν ἀμέθυστον ἐέρσην.

For it is not surprising that a defeated man should drink a dew which cannot inebriate.[34]

(3) 40.419-21: Dionysus eats at Heracles Astrochiton's table:

αὐτὰρ ὁ θυμὸν ἔτερπεν ἀδαιτρεύτῳ παρὰ δείπνῳ
ψαύων ἀμβροσίης καὶ νέκταρος· οὐ νέμεσις δέ,
εἰ γλυκὺ νέκταρ ἔπινε μετὰ γλάγος ἄμβροτον Ἥρης·

He enjoyed a feast without meatcarving, and touched nectar and ambrosia: why not indeed, if he did drink sweet nectar, after the immortal milk of Hera ?

(4) 41.258-62: Description of Beroe.

λευκοὶ δὲ παρὰ σφυρὰ νείατα κούρης
πορφυρέοις μελέεσσιν ἐφοινίσσοντο χιτῶνες.
οὐ νέμεσίς ποτε τοῦτο, καὶ εἰ πλέον ἥλικος ἥβης
τηλίκον ἔλλαχεν εἶδος, ἐπεί νύ οἱ ἀμφὶ προσώπῳ
κάλλεα διχθαδίων ἀμαρύσσετο φαιδρὰ τοκήων.

Her white robes falling down to the girl's feet showed the blush of her rosy limbs. There is no wonder in that, even if she had such fairness beyond her young yearsmates, since bright over her countenance sparkled the beauties of both her parents.

The narrator tries to draw the narratee's attention to elements of the narrative by giving an explanation for it, unless his intervention be made to anticipate a possible objection. His use of the device seems to be reminiscent of Callimachus more than of Homer: in Homer, in character-text, it introduces a justification accounting for actions which could

[34] Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

be seen as objectionable or shameful by other characters as well as by the narratee, whereas in Callimachus and Nonnus, this device provides an explanation to a curious fact, to anticipate a question from the narratee.

The only time the Nonnian narrator resorts to a general comment is in (2), to explain why the gift consists of new wine instead of mature wine: it is fit for the loser of the contest to receive only new wine, whereas the winner is awarded a bowl full of four-year-old wine.[35] This is an answer to the hypothetical objection which could arise from the fact that it is strange for Dionysus himself to give someone wine which lacks the Dionysiac power of inebriation; however, in the context of the game, the necessity of ranking the contestants justifies it.

The other three examples remind the narratee of a previous element of the *diegesis* which acquires an explanatory quality. At the very beginning of the first portrait of Actaeon, (1) accounts for his liking for hunting by reminding the narratee of his descent, which the narrator has mentioned a few lines earlier:[36] he takes after his grandmother Cyrene, whom the narratee is expected to know to be a huntress nymph. This is not the first time that the narrator underlines the story of Actaeon by intervening in it;[37] and one of the occurrences of οὐ νέμεσις in character-text was using the family relationship between him and Cyrene as a justification of the idea that it should not be impossible for Artemis to have children.[38] The story of Actaeon is important in the *Dionysiaca* for several reasons;[39] therefore the narrator points out the character of Actaeon to the narratee as soon

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[35] 19.122.

[36] 5.216: Aristaios, αἷμα σοφοῦ Φοίβοιο καὶ εὐπαλάμοιο Κυρήνης.

[37] About his comments on Autonoe's grief, see chapter 4, section II.2.

[38] 44.315-18.

[39] The importance of this story in the *Dionysiaca* can be explained on several levels: on the level of the *diegesis*, Actaeon is Dionysus' cousin, and it is not surprising that the narrator should include him in his poem when he went back all the way to the titanomachy and Cadmos as part of the story of Dionysus – of Dionysus' origins. On the level of the narrative, this story has many elements susceptible of creating fruitful parallels with other myths: it contains a bathing scene, one of nine in the *Dionysiaca* – see chapter 4, note 76; a scene of diasparagmos which announces, to some extent, Pentheus' diasparagmos – true, Actaeon fell victim to dogs, and not humans, but these dogs were his companions and were supposed to "know" him; the pattern is inverted: whereas the dogs did not recognise Actaeon because his shape was changed, the Theban women did not recognise Pentheus because their own minds were upset. In addition, one of the main characters in the story of Actaeon is Artemis, one of the many virgins in the poem; like Nicaia with Hymnos, she punishes violently the man whom she sees as a threat. Chalcomedeia and Ambrosia are other examples of women who have to be protected against a man, in their cases by the intervention of natural forces. These characters have for counterpoint other women whose

as he first appears in the poem, as the central character in a story which will enrich and complement the themes the narrator wishes to develop in the *Dionysiaca*.

As for (3), it anticipates a possible objection concerning the divinity of Dionysus by recalling a preceding episode. When he visits Heracles Astrochiton, his apotheosis has not taken place yet, so that he should not be allowed to eat nectar and drink ambrosia; but the narrator reminds his narratee that Dionysus drank of Hera's milk, which had been referred to as ambrosia, a few books earlier.[40] Thus it is made clear for the narratee that Dionysus has not been deified yet, but only shares Heracles Astrochiton's meal, which he should be allowed to do since he has already tasted of a divine drink anyway. His apotheosis takes place in due course at the end of the poem, where Dionysus sits at his father's table; this time the transition to divine food is made for good:

> καὶ βροτέην μετὰ δαῖτα, μετὰ προτέρην χύσιν οἴνου
> οὐράνιον πίε νέκταρ ἀρειοτέροισι κυπέλλοις.
>
> After the banquets of mortals, after the wine once poured out, he quaffed heavenly nectar from nobler goblets.[41]

Finally οὐ νέμεσις in (4) underlines Beroe's beauty rather than justifies it, since the statement of the fact that she is beautiful is rather unlikely to surprise or raise objections. This time the narrator feigns to answer someone who would doubt that Beroe had "fairness beyond her young yearsmates" by alluding to the beauty of her parents, without naming them, leaving it for the narratee to remember that she is the daughter of Aphrodite and Adonis, a fact mentioned earlier.[42]

Thus the Nonnian narrator makes a diversified use of this expression which achieves a range of effects that it did not reach in character-text, be it in Homer or in the *Dionysiaca*. Through it, he points out to the narratee a most meaningful episode in the global composition of the poem, he helps him keep track of the story and reminds him of

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virginity is not respected – by Dionysus -, namely Nicaia and Aura. Finally the story of Actaeon draws upon the theme of hunting and forest scenes, pregnant themes in the Dionysiac world, the Bacchants being often shown revelling in the forest and taming or killing wild animals. (See for example 35.99, 45.36-41; Bacchants and wild animals: 15.159, 24.137-8, 43.314, 348 and 350; Bacchants hunting: 24.134-42, 25.225-6.)

[40] 35.325-7. In his note to 40.421 Rouse appears to understand the line to refer to Heracles, and explains that Heracles is allowed to have ambrosia and nectar because he once drank of Hera's milk as well. But it seems to me that the line refers to Dionysus instead, since in that context Heracles is so deified that it is not surprising that he should have the food of the gods.

[41] 48.976-7.

[42] At 41.156-7.

elements which can be necessary for the *diegesis* to remain plausible, and he emphasises a detail by playing on the possibility of interacting with the narratee; every time revealing his acute awareness of his role as story-teller.

V. Conclusion

The analysis of these four types of narratorial intervention enriches the understanding of the Nonnian's narrator work and of his conception of his role. He shows that he is aware of the use of certain expressions in earlier epic and does not hesitate to make them his own and use them in his own voice when they might have been confined to character-text in earlier poems. With these interventions, narrator-text is made livelier and the relationship with the narratee tighter, although the impersonal phrasing of these interventions makes them rather discreet and inconspicuous, the mark of a narrator who does not wish to become too overt either, without however slackening his hold on the narrative. In this manner he points out key elements to the narratee and helps him link myths together, a device which is most important in an epic where everything is the occasion to draw parallels inviting the narratee to look at one story in the light of another and, possibly, to exert his own imagination to find others.

Chapter 7. Apostrophes to characters

It has been amply illustrated in the previous analyses that the enunciative space of a narrative makes it possible for the narrator to interact with his narratee by addressing him both directly and indirectly, in order to guide and influence his reception of the narrative and his reactions towards the characters and events narrated. But the narrator can also achieve this *metalepsis* by addressing the characters themselves, in another use of the possible blending of the narratological levels: we saw that direct addresses create the illusion of the transfer of the narratee from the level of the enunciation to that of the *diegesis*; in apostrophes to characters, the narrator himself is transferred and addresses the characters as if he were one of them.[1] However this transfer is only partial and the interaction only one-way: the characters never address the narrator nor reply to him.

I. Apostrophes in Homer and Apollonius

Apostrophes are one of the main forms of intervention for the Homeric narrator; they are used nineteen times in the *Iliad* and fifteen times in the *Odyssey*[2] and have been the object of numerous interpretations. First of all, according to the scholia, they are the expression of the narrator's compassion for the characters;[3] M. Henry develops this idea by establishing a parallel with "the form of speech used in the ritual of the dead", since, he remarks, Patroclus and Menelaos are the main addresses of the apostrophes in the *Iliad* (respectively eight and seven).[4] This interpretation is also the one adopted by J. Culler in his more general study of apostrophes in poetry.[5] A now outdated view maintained that apostrophes were used by the poet for metrical reasons.[6] A. Parry shows that Patroclus, Menelaos, and Eumaeus, who are apostrophised the most often, are especially

[1] "A relatively straightforward example of *metalepsis*", according to I. de Jong, 2009:93.
[2] See the classification by M. Henry, 1905:7-8.
[3] See De Jong 2004:13, Henry 1905:8 and Hutchinson, 2010:96-7.
[4] Henry, 1905:9. However, as he acknowledges himself, this explanation is not valid for the apostrophes from the *Odyssey*, all directed at Eumaeus in a formulaic line.
[5] Culler, 1981:138. "Apostrophe… is a figure spontaneously adopted by passion, and it signifies, metonymically, the passion that caused it." See also Fontanier, *Figures du discours*, 1968:372.
[6] Bonner, 1905; A. Parry 1972:9-10 refutes this view.

characterized in the poems as kind, liable to be moved to pity, and compassionate, qualities which are underlined by the apostrophes – this follows the idea of a special liking of the narrator for these characters.[7] According to E. Mackay, the apostrophes are meant to signal "crisis points" or "turning points" in the narrative.[8] Finally E. Block, whose approach is the most narratological, explains that

> apostrophe, overtly verbalizing emotion toward either a real or imagined object, thus asks the audience to respond, ideally, as the narrator responds to the situations or evaluations that he introduces.[9]

Therefore apostrophes are not only openings on the feelings of the narrator himself, but are meant to have an effect on the narratee as well: by thus making his compassion overt and perceptible, the narrator is attempting to arouse the same feeling in the narratee. This is made possible by the a-temporal character of apostrophes, which cause the addressee to be present in the time of the enunciation: the apostrophes' "*now* is not a moment in a temporal sequence but a *now* of discourse, of writing."[10]

E. Block focuses on Menelaos, Patroclus, and Eumaios, and underlines their particular relationships with Agamemnon, Achilles and Odysseus to explain why the narrator should direct his sympathy to the two former characters: by encouraging the narratee to be moved by the fates of the characters apostrophised, the narrator causes him to understand better the reactions of Achilles and Agamemnon, the main characters to their secondary counterparts:

> Those so addressed - Menelaos, Patroklos, Eumaios – exhibit characteristic traits of vulnerability, loyalty, and a vague but poetically essential weakness. All three furthermore define, negatively or positively, by possessing these traits, the protective qualities of the main characters to whom they are complementary – Agamemnon, Achilles, Odysseus.[11]

She then takes the example of Patroclus to illustrate further the Homeric use of apostrophes:

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[7] Parry, 1972:10-22. Bakker (1997:173) also sees in the use of apostrophes a way of singling out a character by pulling him out of the narrative, since an apostrophe effects a metalepsis: "Patroklos is not a normal hero, and the direct address does not *effect* an epiphany, it *presupposes* one: Patroklos is already present in the performance for the performer to address him. Patroklos, the Iliadic character who is most out of touch with the first action of the *Iliad*, enjoys a special status in its secondary action: he is a listener in the performance like ourselves."

[8] Mackay, 2001:10-11. However, I. de Jong (2009:94) argues that "this interpretation works in most but not all instances."

[9] Block, 1982:9.

[10] Culler 1981:152.

[11] Block, 1982:16.

> In order to make vivid the metamorphosis of Achilles' emotions, the overwhelming sorrow of Patroklos' death, and thus the force of Achilles' final acceptance of his own mortality, the narrator shows a sympathy for Patroklos, which develops and confirms an answering sympathy in the audience. ... Because the narrator articulates and thereby encourages the audience's sympathy for Patroklos, the audience apprehends the depth of the conflict that Achilles feels both before and after Patroklos' death, not by judging it, but through direct involvement. This pervasive and empathic sympathy for Patroklos thus characterizes Achilles more finely than direct narration, for in sharing rather than judging it the audience shares in Achilles' choice, and tragedy.[12]

Thus, in Homer, apostrophes seem to be centred on specific characters whom the narrator especially wants the narratee to pity, be it for themselves because they stand out by their compassionate nature, as in the case of Menelaus, or for the sake of their counterparts, whose choices in the narrative could seem clearer to a narratee who has been made to feel as they themselves do.

Eight apostrophes are found in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. They are directed to gods – twice to Apollo, and to Eros, Hera, and Zeus[13] – to the Lemnian women, to the Argonauts, and to Canthus.[14] Their use differs greatly from the Homeric use. Not only are they each addressed to a different character, but each of these characters holds a different status in the story: the Argonauts are main characters, Canthus, one of the Argonauts, is rather secondary to the main plot, and the rest of the addressees are gods, who intervene in the episodes but are not situated on the same level as the characters themselves, since they "exist", so to speak, in the narrator's world too, insofar as he is a religious man. In addition, two of these apostrophes to gods – to Eros and to Zeus – convey a digressive reaction of the narrator to his own story: whereas in the other apostrophes, the narrator's reaction is confined to what the character is experiencing, as is the case in Homer, the Apollonian narrator, in those two instances, provides a general comment on his contemporary world, on men, including himself, so that, in the words of R. Hunter, this "direct authorial intrusion … brings the scene out of the past into the present."[15] These

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[12] Block, 1982:16-7.

[13] 2.708 and 4.1706, 4.445, 4.1199, 4.1673.

[14] 1.616, 4.1383 and 4. 1485.

[15] Hunter, 1993:166. Thus the apostrophe to Eros (4.445-7):

σχέτλι᾽ Ἔρως, μέγα πῆμα, μέγα στύγος ἀνθρώποισιν,
ἐκ σέθεν οὐλόμεναί τ᾽ ἔριδες στοναχαί τε γόοι τε,
ἄλγεά τ᾽ ἄλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ἀπείρονα τετρήχασιν.

> Cruel Love, great affliction, great abomination for humans; from you come deadly quarrels and groans and laments, and countless other pains beside these are stirred up.

and the apostrophe to Zeus, (4.1673-5):

differences are in keeping with the characterisation of the Apollonian narrator who, according to B. Hainsworth, is not as neutral as the Homeric narrator and "readily moves between the heroic world (where Homer always remained) and his own."[16] And indeed these two apostrophes do not specifically refer to the story. True, Eros is addressed in a passage concerning love and the schemes of Medea; however he does not intervene himself in this passage as a character; as for Zeus, he is invoked as a result of the narrator's awe at his own narrative of Medea's magic powers: "Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ μέγα δή μοι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θάμβος ἄηται", although he was not present himself in that episode. F. Vian comments: "Comme en 4.445-9, l'action est retardée par une intervention dans laquelle Apollonios exprime son pessimisme concernant la fragilité de la condition humaine."[17] These two apostrophes do not create a metalepsis as the others, and the Homeric ones, did. They remain on the level of the enunciation, as comments made by the narrator on his own narrative, and appear to be of hymnic, rather than of Homeric, inspiration. In the first apostrophe to Apollo, the narrator wishes for his hair to remain ever long, a characteristic which recurs twice in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*;[18] and like hymnic invocations, the Apollonian ones do not underline an action of the god in the narrative, but aim to praise and recall permanent qualities of the gods, existing outside of the context of the narrative.[19] Thus the Apollonian apostrophes to gods do not seek out the narratee as much as the Homeric ones did: their general import makes it seem as if the narrator was expressing an idea which was common to himself and his narratee rather than trying to arouse a reaction inexistent so far in the narratee.

Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ μέγα δή μοι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θάμβος ἄηται,
εἰ δὴ μὴ νούσοισι τυπῇσί τε μοῦνον ὄλεθρος
ἀντιάει, καὶ δή τις ἀπόπροθεν ἄμμε χαλέπτει.

Truly, Father Zeus, great astonishment confounds my mind, if in fact death comes not only through disease and wounds, but even from afar someone can harm us...

[16] Hainsworth, 1991:69.

[17] Vian, 1981:141 note 3 to 4.1673. See Effe, 2004:29-30, for an analysis of the irony contained in these interventions.

[18] 134 and 450

[19] See Harder, 2012 vol.1: 35-6. She comments on passages in the second person in Callimachus' *Aitia*, and notes that such features are characteristic of hymnic literature rather than narrative: "This is an element of the cult-hymn addressed to a god, which outside of a hymnic context is unusual from the point of view of narrative technique, because when the narrator addresses his character he seems to be crossing the border between his world and the world of his characters." See also A. Miller, 1986:2. "The 'cult' hymn formally presupposes but a single hearer, the god himself, who is addressed in the second person." Some passages in the second person in Callimachus' *Aitia* are ambiguous, since they might be part of the dialogic presentation (see Harder *et al.* 1998:109).

A. Grillo asserts that " l'apostrofe apolloniana è piu originale e pateticamente più efficace (…) per la sua natura parentetica";[20] and indeed, by their detachment from the story, they include the sufferings of the characters in the wider human condition, shared by the narrator himself and the narratee. Furthermore, some Apollonian occurrences resemble tragic choral commentaries, which is best illustrated by the apostrophe to Eros, in which the narrator appeals to the deity as a calamity, πῆμα, and as an object of hatred, στῦγος, for men; the chorus of Euripides' *Hippolytus* make a similar wish that Eros may never bring them to harm.[21] An apostrophe similar to the Apollonian one is found in Theognis' elegiac poetry, beginning with the same Σχέτλι᾽ Ἔρως, in which the poet comments on how Eros brought Troy, Theseus, and the lesser Aias to ruin.[22] Such parallels underline the wider significance of the Apollonian apostrophes, which are not supposed to be meaningful only in the context in which they appear. At the same time, this very detachment from the narrative also creates a momentary distance between the narratee and the narrative, as the narratee is invited to reflect upon himself on the basis of the story he has just heard.

There are no apostrophes in narrator-text in the *Posthomerica*.

II. Nonnian apostrophes draw the focus onto the main character

The *Dionysiaca* presents seven apostrophes, and we will see that the reasons given to account for the Homeric and Apollonian apostrophes are not especially relevant when it comes to the Nonnian ones. Two of these seven addresses do not occur in narrative passages: an address to Iolaos is part of the *syncrisis* of book 25, a passage of particular narratorial overtness in which it contributes to the lively tone adopted by the narrator there;[23] and an address to Beroe opens a twelve line litany-like invocation, a vocative to which are connected the long series of appellations that follow. The narrator expresses his particular liking for Beroe, at the beginning of the three books dedicated to this episode.[24]

[20] Grillo, 1988:44.
[21] A.R. 4.445, E. *Hipp.* 525-9.
[22] Theognis, 1231-4.
[23] 25.211.
[24] 41.143-54. P. Chuvin and M.-C. Fayant (2006:3) underline the importance of Dionysus' visit to Beroe the city, a visit of both erotic and political dimensions.

The other five apostrophes, occurring in passages of narrative proper, are directed to Actaeon, Persephone, and Dionysus; unlike in Homer, the majority of them – three – are addressed to the main character, Dionysus:

(1) 5.316-25, to Actaeon.

> Ἀκταίων βαρύποτμε, σε μὲν λίπεν αὐτίκα μορφὴ
> ἀνδρομέη, πισύρων δὲ ποδῶν ἐδιχάζετο χηλή,
> καὶ τανααὶ γναθμοῖσιν ἐμηκύνοντο παρειαί,
> κνῆμαι ἐλεπτύνοντο, καὶ ἀγκύλα δοιὰ μετώπῳ
> φύετο μακρὰ κόρυμβα τανυπτόρθοιο κεραίης,
> καὶ στικτοῖς μελέεσσι νόθη ποικίλλετο μορφή,
> καὶ λάσιον δέμας εἶχεν· ἀελλήεντι δὲ νεβρῷ
> εἰσέτι μοῦνος ἔην νόος ἔμπεδος·
>
> Actaion heavy-fated! At once your manly shape was gone – four feet had cloven hooves – long cheeks drew out on your jawbones – your legs became thinner – two long bunches of widebranching antlers curved over your forehead – a borrowed shape, its body all covered with hair, dappled every limb with motley spots – a windswift fawn had nothing of you left but the mind!

(2) 6.155-9, to Persephone.

> παρθένε Περσεφόνεια, σὺ δ᾽ οὐ γάμον εὗρες ἀλύξαι,
> ἀλλὰ δρακοντείοισιν ἐνυμφεύθης ὑμεναίοις,
> Ζεὺς ὅτε πουλυέλικτος ἀμειβομένοιο προσώπου
> νυμφίος ἱμερόεντι δράκων κυκλούμενος ὁλκῷ
> εἰς μυχὸν ὀρφναίοιο διέστιχε παρθενεῶνος
>
> Ah, maiden Persephoneia! You could not find how to escape your mating! No, a dragon was your mate, when Zeus changed his face and came, rolling in many a loving coil through the dark to the corner of the maiden chamber.

(3) 20.182-7, to Dionysus.

> Οὐδ᾽ ἔλαθες, Διόνυσε, δολορραφέος φθόνον Ἥρης·
> ἀλλὰ πάλιν κοτέουσα τεῇ θεόπαιδι γενέθλῃ
> ἄγγελον Ἶριν ἔπεμπε δυσάγγελον, ὄφρα σε θέλξῃ
> κλεψινόῳ κεράσασα δόλῳ ψευδήμονα πειθώ·
> δῶκε δέ οἱ βουπλῆγα θεημάχον, ὄφρα κομίσσῃ
> Ἀραβίης μεδέοντι, Δρυαντιάδῃ Λυκοόργῳ.
>
> But you, Dionysus, did not escape the jealousy of trickstitching Hera. Still resentful of your divine birth, she sent her messenger Iris on an evil errand, mingling treacherous persuasion with craft, to bewitch you and deceive your mind; and she gave her an impious poleaxe, that she might hand it to the king of Arabia, Lycurgos Dryas' son.

(4) 29.278-81, to Dionysus.

> καί τις ἀμερσινόοιο κατάσχετος ἄλματι λύσσης
> Βασσαρὶς Ἰνδὸν Ἄρηα μετέστιχε θυιὰς Ἐνυώ,
> ἀμφὶ σέ, Λύδιε δαῖμον· ἀπὸ πλοκάμοιο δὲ Βάκχης
> ἀφλεγέος σελάγιζε κατ᾽ αὐχένος αὐτόματον πῦρ.
>
> One wild Bassarid, possessed by the throes of sense-robbing madness, was harrying the Indians in the conflict, for thy honour, O Lydian god! and from the Bacchant's hair shone a spontaneous flame about her neck, which burnt her not.

(5) 42.138-42: to Dionysus.

> καὶ Βερόης σχεδὸν ἦλθε καὶ ἤθελε μῦθον ἐνίψαι,
> ἀλλὰ φόβῳ πεπέδητο· φιλεύιε, πῆ σέο θύρσοι
> ἀνδροφόνοι; πῆ φρικτὰ κεράατα; πῆ σέο χαίτη
> γλαυκὰ πεδοτρεφέων ὀφιώδεα δεσμὰ δρακόντων;
> πῆ στομάτων μύκημα βαρύβρομον; ἆ μέγα θαῦμα,
>
> He came near to Beroe and would have spoken a word, but fear held him fast. God of jubilation, where is your manslaying thyrsus? Where your frightful horns? Where the green snaky ropes of earthfed serpents in your hair? Where is your heavy-booming bellow? See a great miracle ...

1. Actaeon and Persephone: eliciting pity

Apostrophes (1) and (2), to Actaeon and Persephone, are the first two in the poem and follow the Homeric usage in that they aim at arousing compassion for the characters as they reach crucial moments of their existence: Actaeon is being changed into a stag, which will lead him to his death, and Persephone is about to be made pregnant with Zagreus. The sad fate of Actaeon is strongly underlined by the epithet βαρύποτμε, a fairly rare word which does not occur in epic before Nonnus, and is always used of a character on the verge of dying. It is found in the vocative only in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, in a strophe from the chorus pitying Philoctetes who believes that he will never be able to escape from the island and will die there,[25] and in the *Dionysiaca* in Eerie's lamentation for her father Tectaphos who just died in the war.[26] In addition, Creon deplores his ξυμφορᾶς βαρυποτμωτάτας in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* after he has learnt of the death of Eteocles and Polynices,[27] and the Nonnian narrator calls Orontes βαρύποτμος when he

[25] S. *Ph.* 1095.
[26] 30.167.
[27] E. *Ph.*1345.

commits suicide as well as an Indian drowning in the Hydaspes.[28] By apostrophising Ἀκταίων βαρύποτμε, the narrator underlines the sad fate of his character by choosing a word that he will only apply to dead characters after that, and whose tragic overtones fit well with the situation of Actaeon who will pay with his death for an unintentional offence to Artemis. The apostrophe is followed by the enumeration of the metamorphoses of Actaeon's body parts, so that the process of the transformation is slowed down for the narratee, leaving more time for compassion over the disfigured young man. P. Chuvin notes that the liveliness of this passage "contraste avec la période solennelle de la scène de bain", the mark of a narrator "soucieux de varier les tons".[29]

As for Persephone, she is called παρθένε at the very moment that she is about to be a virgin no more, so that her transformation into the mother of Zagreus is put into focus. It is the only use of this word in the vocative in narrator-text in the *Dionysiaca*; in character-text, it refers to Harmonia, Nicaia, Chalcomede, Beroe, Ariadne, Pallene, Aura, *i.e.* only characters who wish to remain virgins – with the exception of Ariadne – but who may or may not be able to do so.[30] The Nonnian narrator invites the narratee to pity Persephone not because she is made pregnant with Zagreus by Zeus, but because, being omniscient, the narrator knows that Zagreus' life will not be long, so that Persephone will have lost her virginity, so to speak, in vain. And although compassion is implied in the line because of the negative turn σὺ δ᾽ οὐ γάμον εὕρες ἀλύξαι, the rest of the episode has no negative overtone, and this apostrophe does not aim only at inviting pity, but also admiration for the mother of Zagreus; it makes the moment more solemn.

It remains to be examined whether a reason can be found for the choice of these two characters as the addresses of the apostrophe by the narrator: Actaeon is the first of Cadmos' grandchildren to fall victim to a god's wrath; he will be followed by Learchos and Melicertes, and later by Pentheus. Persephone, although her part in the epic is short, is nevertheless the mother of the first Dionysus, before Semele and then Aura. Thus Actaeon and Persephone do stand out among the characters at the beginning of the epic as the first in series of characters related to Dionysus and who endure the same fate.

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[28] 17.288; 23.104.

[29] Chuvin 1976:184, note to 5.322.

[30] Harmonia, 4.92, 114 and 119; Nicaia, 15.264, 277 and 343, 16.145, 296, 298 and 299; Chalcomede, 34.334; Beroe 42.114, 297, 363, 369 and 468; Ariadne, 47.428; Pallene, 48.205 and 206; Aura 48.765, 832 and 859. A single other occurrence of this vocative is found in epic, in Tryphiodorus' *Taking of Ilion*, in a speech of Priam to his daughter Cassandra (433).

Apostrophes to secondary characters will not occur in the rest of the epic: after Dionysus' birth, the poem truly has a main character, who is, from this moment on, the only one to be apostrophised by the narrator in the course of his narration.

2. Apostrophes to Dionysus: the narrator's presentation of his main character

Thus Dionysus is the addressee of the next apostrophes. In (3), the narrator uses this address to emphasise the theme, common in epic, of Hera's dislike of the main character: here she is arming Lycurgos against Dionysus and sends Iris to deceive him by letting him know that Lycurgos will give him a friendly welcome. The ensuing battle turns to such disadvantage for Dionysus and his troops that he has to go and hide in the sea with Thetis and Nereus.[31] But this intervention also announces book 32, in which Hera's bewitching of Dionysus' mind will be such as to make him mad and unable to take part in the war as long as his madness lasts.[32] This apostrophe, in addition to being a mark of the narrator's pity for Dionysus who is about to suffer his first drawback in the war because of the schemes of Hera, also results in a strong suspense for the narratee, who is warned by the narrator that something is going to happen to the hero, and who is also invited to wonder how the narrator will deal with this well-known theme of Hera's dislike for the sons of Zeus.

In focussing the apostrophes on his main character, the Nonnian narrator strays from the Homeric model; but, what is more, the three apostrophes directed at Dionysus do not all aim at arousing the narratee's compassion. (4) even occurs in a sentence of which he is not the subject,[33] but which describes a Bacchant's frenzy in the war and the wonder of the flame shining on her hair and neck; however the context makes it rather clear that this evocation of the Bacchant is meant to illustrate the power of the Dionysiac

[31] 20.352-6.

[32] 32.90-118. The narrator plays on the Iliadic episode of the seduction of Zeus by Hera in book 14, who then takes advantage of her husband being asleep to interfere in the war.

[33] In Homer, the character apostrophised can either be the subject or the object of the verb, although it does not seem to make a difference to the aim of the apostrophe. Eumaeus is the subject of all the apostrophes of the *Odyssey*, whereas in the *Iliad*, the character apostrophised is the subject in 7 occurrences, and the object in 12 – according to my observations based on R. Henry's list, 1905:7-8. Only in one of the Apollonian occurrences does the character apostrophised appear as an object, see below.

influence. It follows a passage in which Dionysus is shown tending the Bacchants' wounds before returning to the fight:

> ἀλλ' ὅτε Βασσαρίδων ὀδύνας πρηΰνατο τέχνῃ
> θυρσομανὴς Διόνυσος, ἐμάρνατο μείζονι χάρμῃ.
>
> But after he had soothed the pains of the Bassarids by his art, Dionysus thyrsus-mad fought with still greater fury.[34]

These two lines are followed directly by those quoted in (4). The absence of transition between the mention of Dionysus and that of the Bacchants suggests the direct possession of the Bacchants by the Dionysiac influence, as if Dionysus was himself fighting through them. Indeed this passage emphasises the marvellous aspect of this influence: madness is an obvious element of it, ἀμερσινόοιο ... λύσσης suggesting that the Bacchant, as it were, is not herself any more, her mind having been taken over by Dionysus; as for the motif of the flaming hair, it is the attribute of the warrior who obtained his strength from a god since the *Iliad*: Athena makes a flame burn on Diomedes' helmet and shield so that he is able to send him in the thick of the fight:

> δαΐέ οἱ ἐκ κόρυθός τε καὶ ἀσπίδος ἀκάματον πῦρ
> ἀστέρ' ὀπωρινῷ ἐναλίγκιον, ὅς τε μάλιστα
> λαμπρὸν παμφαίνῃσι λελουμένος ὠκεανοῖο·
> τοῖόν οἱ πῦρ δαῖεν ἀπὸ κρατός τε καὶ ὤμων,
> ὦρσε δέ μιν κατὰ μέσσον ὅθι πλεῖστοι κλονέοντο.
>
> She made weariless fire blaze from his shield and helmet
> like that star of the waning summer who beyond all stars
> rises bathed in the ocean stream to glitter in brilliance.
> Such was the fire she made blaze from his head and his shoulders
> und urged him into the middle fighting, where most were struggling.[35]

The Iliadic inspiration is made clear in the parallel between the Homeric expression καὶ ἀσπίδος ἀκάματον πῦρ and the Nonnian κατ' αὐχένος αὐτόματον πῦρ, reused in the second passage mentioning the marvel of the Bacchants' flaming hair during the battle between Dionysus and Poseidon:

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[34] 29.276-7.

[35] *Il.* 5.4-8. This motif also appears in Euripides' *Bacchae*, 757-8, where a messenger says that he saw the Bacchants causing havoc in the forest while "upon the hair of their heads they carried fire, and it did not burn them.", ἐπὶ δὲ βοστρύχοις / πῦρ ἔφερον, οὐδ' ἔκαιεν.

ἀπὸ πλοκάμοιο δὲ νύμφης
ἀφλεγέος σελάγιζε κατ' αὐχένος αὐτόματον πῦρ,

From her hair blazed fire selfkindled over her neck and burnt it not.[36]

although in this context the influence of Dionysus is not indicated as clearly as in (4), where the flame appears as a consequence of the presence of Dionysus among the Bacchants after he has healed them; the apostrophe, preceded by ἀμφί σε, "for your sake", underlines the closeness of the relationship between Dionysus and his Bacchants – "around you" is another possible translation, which underlines spatial closeness; but even so, Dionysus would still be at the centre of the Bacchants' activity. As for the appellation itself, it does not seem to have a particular significance, but is only one of the ways the narrator refers to Dionysus.[37] In any case, the apostrophe here does not result from the narrator's compassion, but rather from his admiration and respect, as he is about to describe the marvels achieved by Dionysus' influence on the Bacchants.

The Apollonian apostrophe to Hera follows the same syntactical pattern, with Hera as the grammatical object of the address.

ἄλλοτε δ᾽ αὖτε
οἰόθεν οἷαι ἄειδον ἑλισσόμεναι περὶ κύκλον,
Ἥρη, σεῖο ἕκητι·

And at times again they [Nymphs] sang alone as they circled in the dance, Hera, in thy honour.[38]

The choice of the preposition is unambiguous and can only mean "for your sake", which supports a similar translation in the Nonnian passage, both the Nymphs and the Bacchants celebrating, in a way, the influence on them of the god apostrophised – the Nymphs here are expressing their joy as they remember the wedding of Medea and Jason,

[36] 43.356-7. νύμφη refers here to a Bassarid.
[37] Dionysus and a number of other deities are called δαίμων in the *Dionysiaca*, although in the case of Dionysus this word is usually accompanied by an epithet linking him to plants and in particular the vine: φυτηκόμος δαίμων: 47.66; δαίμονος ἀμπελόεντος: 7.133, 46.144; δαίμονι βοτρυόεντι: 14.251, 40.75, 47.462; δαίμονα βοτρυόεντα: 16.377, 42.16. It is also not surprising that he should be called Lydian: in Euripides' *Bacchae* he presents himself as having come from Lydia (line 14), and in the *Dionysiaca* this is a recurrent element: he has Lydian chariot, Λύδιον ἅρμα, at 17.10; he is called Λύδιε Βάκχε by Poseidon at 43.172. The "hill-ranging Bassarids" are also Lydian: Λύδια Βασσαρίδων ὀρεσίδρομα φῦλα, 35.99; and Agaue in her frenzy asks for "Lydian drums" Λύδιά ῥόπτρα at 45.18.
[38] A.R. 4.1197-9.

Hera being the protector of wedded love. In both passages the narrator intervenes to praise a god.[39]

The last apostrophe in (5) expresses yet another relationship between the narrator and his character. Occurring at the beginning of the Beroe episode, it draws the focus onto Dionysus as, for the first time in the *Dionysiaca*, he is shy before a girl. The address emphasises his helplessness and draws a surprising picture of Dionysus, having newly won the Indian war, trembling before a girl. The vocative φιλεύιε underlines the paradox since it refers to the exuberant, joyful character of the god; the same vocative form occurs only one other time in the epic, in character-text: Methe asks Διόνυσε φιλεύιε to give her wine so that she will forget her sorrow at the death of her husband Staphylos,[40] an example in which this adjective supports her request by alluding to the happiness, the insouciance which are both characteristics of Dionysus and of drunkenness – and indeed she dances and rejoices after Dionysus has granted her her wish. On the contrary, when facing Beroe, Dionysus becomes silent and shy, no longer revelling or shouting; he is so cowed that he is no more himself at all, which the narrator describes in a series of rhetorical questions following the apostrophe: he has no more thyrsus nor horns nor snakes in his hair and does not shout any more; the choice of rhetorical questions to note these changes is another way of illustrating his helplessness, since such questions, by definition, expect no answer, and the tone here implies that even if they did, Dionysus would not be able to give a satisfactory one.

These few lines of narratorial intervention create a rather humorous scene in which the narratee is invited to picture the narrator interrogating a child-like Dionysus who has lost his attributes because he was afraid of a girl; this scene is made even more striking by the following exclamation ἆ μέγα θαῦμα, followed by a development of the paradox of Dionysus able to fight and defeat giants and Indians but unable to speak to a

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[39] The prepositions ἀμφί and ἔκητι appear in apostrophes in hymns, with a locative sense. Two occurrences of ἀμφί σε accompanying an apostrophe can be found in the *Iliad*: Achilles is the addressee of the first, at 20.1-2:

ὣς οἳ μὲν παρὰ νηυσὶ κορωνίσι θωρήσσοντο
ἀμφὶ σὲ Πηλέος υἱὲ μάχης ἀκόρητον Ἀχαιοί

So these now, the Achaians, beside the curved ships were arming
around you, son of Peleus, insatiate of battle...

and Apollo the addressee of the second at 20.152, when the gods, having taken the Trojans' side sit on the hill of Callicolone, "ἀμφί σε, ἤιε Φοῖβε, καὶ Ἄρηα πτολίπορθον." In both cases the meaning of the preposition is most likely to be "around you".

[40] 19.15.

girl; the exclamation confirms to the narratee that something unusual and worthy of notice is being narrated.[41] The narrator makes these lines very lively with the apostrophe and the short questions, a light tone which fits well with the attitude he takes up here towards his character, as he draws the narratee's attention onto the comical aspect of the scene and the ridiculous behaviour of Dionysus. This last apostrophe in the *Dionysiaca* is the most different from the Homeric ones: it feeds the comical rather than the pathetic.

What is more, with this humorous apostrophe, the narrator plays on the narratological levels of the poem, and presents himself, as far as the enunciation of the apostrophe goes, as the equivalent to a character in the story, by adopting both a theme and devices only found in character-text so far. Indeed the theme of the comical weakness of Dionysus when facing girls appeared earlier in the poem in the mouth of a Nymph, during the Nicaia episode:

> ἡδὺς ὁ δειμαίνων ἁπαλόχροον ἄζυγα κούρην·
> Βάκχος ὁ τολμήεις ἱκέτης πέλε λάτρις Ἐρώτων·
> Ἰνδοφόνοις παλάμῃσιν ἀνάλκιδα λίσσετο κούρην.
>
> Here's a nice fellow to be in fear of a soft skinned maiden girl! Bacchos the bold, bowing and scraping like a lackey to the loves! lifts in prayer to a weakling girl the hands that butchered the Indians![42]

This parallel underlines the figure of the narrator as a facetious one, ready to underline the ridiculous behaviour of Dionysus and to point it out to the narratee in his own voice. In addition, the structure of the lines following the apostrophe, made of a succession of rhetorical questions is, as F. Vian writes, "[l'inversion d'] un schema rhétorique d'identification fréquent dans le poème: ("X est-il la divinité Y, puisque qu'il lui ressemble par la caractéristique A ? – Non, car il lui manque l'attribut B")."[43] Instead of trying to recognise a character by eliminating all the deities he/she cannot be, because of the lack of a certain characteristic, Dionysus is here deprived of all the elements which make him recognisable. Thus the narrator himself plays the game which he has depicted many characters to have played before him, with an inversion which emphasises the comical situation in which Dionysus finds himself.

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[41] See chapter 6, section II.
[42] 16.233-5. F. Vian (1976:140 *ad* 1.92) provides a list of these monologues, along with precedents for the device, in Pindar, Euripides, Moschus, and Lucian.
[43] Vian 1995:60.

III. Conclusion

Apostrophes in the *Dionysiaca* are therefore quite innovative in comparison to the Homeric ones. Firstly, they do not become a formulaic device as they did in the *Odyssey*. Secondly, the proportions between the number of apostrophes and the number of characters to whom they are directed are very different: we have in Homer thirty-six apostrophes addressed to only six characters; in the *Dionysiaca*, seven apostrophes are directed to five characters. Whereas the Homeric narrator used a high number of apostrophes aimed at a small number of characters to underline their exceptional personality as well as the emotion of their counterparts in the story, the Nonnian narrator makes the most of a few apostrophes to achieve a variety of effects. He imitates Homer when he uses them to point out the misfortunes of Actaeon and Persephone and to call for the narratee's pity for them; but he then lets go of the Homeric model when he addresses three apostrophes to his main character, apostrophes which encourage the narratee to share not only in his compassion for Dionysus, but also in his admiration and even his amusement at him.

I. de Jong concludes her analysis of apostrophes in Homer with the statement that their effect is "not 'comical', but, on the contrary, adds to the authenticity of the story and the admiration for the semi-divine heroes, which is inherent in that story".[44] This effect is not the only one the Nonnian narrator means his apostrophes to have: they also show to the narratee that he is not expected to have a single attitude towards the same character, but that he is allowed to laugh even at Dionysus; such a use also proves that the Nonnian Dionysus is not flat nor cast in one piece, but changes with the episodes of the epic, being in turns persecuted and scared, generous and admirable, or shy and comical.

As for the Apollonian precedent, it is imitated in the choice of not reserving apostrophes for secondary characters; however in Nonnus the number of characters apostrophised is decreased, the tones employed in the apostrophes themselves are more varied, since the Apollonian narrator had aimed, in all eight cases, at expressing the greatness of gods, the awe of men in front of them, and at underlining the valour of his narrative's heroes.

[44] De Jong, 2009:97.

Finally, J. Culler makes the point that apostrophes in poetry are made in front of an audience, namely for our purpose here, the narratee. Therefore in some cases they "work less to establish an *I-Thou* relation between him and the absent (…) than to dramatize or constitute an image of self."[45] In that respect, the apostrophes in the *Dionysiaca* can be seen as the mark of a facetious narrator, who plays with his characters and invites his narratee to see the comical side in the narrative; indeed the Nonnian Dionysus is not always a serious nor even respectable deity; and the relationship that the apostrophes thus create between the Nonnian narrator and Dionysus highlights the versatility and the humour which are a recurring tone in the *Dionysiaca*. In that respect, the Nonnian narrator appears to be particularly close to his narratee, regularly rekindling the connivance regarding some ironical aspects of the story, and apostrophes are a device most useful for this, as I. de Jong shows when she insists on the liveliness and immediacy resulting from their use:

> Looking at the apostrophe in terms of metalepsis leads me to the following interpretation. Taking all the instances together, the sum effect of the apostrophe is to add to that vital characteristic of Homeric epic, *enargeia*: the events are presented in such a way that they seem to take place before the eyes of the narratees. Addressing characters directly is as 'enargetic' as the many speeches, when the narratees seem to actually hear the characters, impersonated by the narrator. Moreover, the metaleptic apostrophe also leads to the authority of the Homeric narrator's story: his characters are real, since they can be addressed.[46]

It is indeed remarkable that in the *Dionysiaca*, apostrophes are often accompanied by other kinds of narratorial interventions; in such passages, the distance between narrator, narratee, and character is the smallest.

[45] Culler, 1981:142.

[46] De Jong, 2009:85. She refers to Ford, 1992:54-6. "The awe that the rhapsode provokes (…) is the uncanny effect of the power of language to represent a hidden world merely by the accumulation of statements." (pp.54-5).

PART THREE:

NARRATORIAL INTERVENTIONS DRAWING FROM THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN NARRATOR AND NARRATEE

Chapter 8. Gnomic utterances and rhetorical questions

A gnomic utterance is, according to Aristotle, a general statement concerning "the objects of human actions, and … what should be chosen or avoided with reference to them".[1] In their literary form, they can be found both in narrator- and in character-text. When they belong to character-text, they consist in a general truth which is, according to the character uttering it, applicable to his world, the world of the *diegesis*; but, although they are addressed to another character, their general import invites the narratee to take in their meaning as transferable to the world of the enunciation. When they occur in narrator-text, they create a strong narratorial intervention, since the narrator is taking a step back from the narrative to make a general comment on an element of it, in the shape of a saying which is supposed to be shared and recognised as true by both the narrator and the narratee. With gnomic utterances, the narrator provides his narratee with a supposedly familiar basis to analyse and understand the *diegesis*, while directing his reaction to it, according to the tone of the *gnome*. C. Maciver writes: "*Gnomai* manipulate listener (or reader) response because they create empathy, and therefore gain the desired reaction. … *Gnomai* demand reader-participation with the text to achieve their full force."[2]

I. Overview. Gnomic utterances in epic poetry before Nonnus

Gnomic utterances are a common feature in epic since Homer. A. Lardinois[3] identified 154 *gnomai* in the *Iliad*, and 153 in the *Odyssey*, but they almost all belong to character-text, except three in the *Iliad* and two in the *Odyssey*.[4] In each epic, they are centred around a common topic: the issue of "man's limited ability with regard to the divine" in the *Iliad* and the "the recognisability of the gods" in the *Odyssey*.[5] A. Lardinois notes that although these five *gnomai* in narrator-text refer to a singular character, they refer to men in the plural; he suggests that this might be a way of emphasising the general

[1] Arist. *Rh.*1394a21.
[2] Maciver, 2012:88.
[3] Lardinois, 1995:42 and 1997:215.
[4] *Il.* 16.688-90, applied to Patroclus; 20.264-6, to Aeneas; 21.264, to Achilles. *Od.* 5.79-80, applied to Calypso being able to recognise Hermes, and 16.161, to Telemachus unable to recognise Athena.
[5] Lardinois 1997:232. He conducts a thorough study of these *gnomai* pp. 230-3.

import of these *gnomai*, and of inviting the narratee to recognise himself in it: the narrator "is making a move similar to that of Nestor in *Iliad* 4.320, who manipulates the grammatical number of the personal topic of his *gnome* in order to match it with the number of the intended referents."[6] It appears therefore that the Homeric primary narrator makes very little use of *gnomai*, and only on specific, solemn topics pertaining to the relationship between mortals and gods. A. Morrison writes:

> *Gnomai* on the human condition, for example, are rare in the mouth of the Homeric narrator. When these appear, … it is to heighten the pathos of a scene and emphasise the narrator's emotional involvement.[7]

It is the scarcity of such *gnomai* "emphasis[ing] the narrator's involvement" that makes them all the more striking. The Homeric narrator seems to shy from addressing comments with "a moralistic or at least an evaluative flavour"[8] directly to his narratee, so that the exceptions to his unobtrusiveness carry out their point more forcefully. But the narratee's involvement in the narrative does not rest unsolicited in Homeric epic: although the majority of the *gnomai*, occurring in character-text, are directed in the first instance to characters, they include nonetheless the narratee in their meaning.

Gnomai in Apollonius' *Argonautica* are characteristic of the Apollonian narrator's more conspicuous presence in his narrative. Six *gnomai* are presented through his voice,[9] that is, in proportion, slightly more than in Homer; but the main difference resides in the use of the first person plural instead of the third in two of these *gnomai*,[10] in keeping with the general tone of Apollonian epic which allocates, according to R. Hunter, "a far greater

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[6] Lardinois, 1997:230-1. Nestor, replying to a comment of Agamemnon on old age, says he wishes he were young again, but "ἀλλ᾽ οὔ πως ἅμα πάντα θεοὶ δόσαν ἀνθρώποισιν".

[7] Morrison, 2007:91. In the *Iliad*, they are induced by Patroclus' death, by the fear Aeneas' blows cause to Achilles, and by Achilles' attempt at fleeing from the wrath of Scamander. The two *gnomai* in the *Odyssey* do no seem to fit in so well with this statement.

[8] De Jong, 2004a:188.

[9] As per M. Cuypers' list (2004:53): 1.82, 458-9 and 1035-6; 2.541-2; 4.1165-7 and 1504.

[10] 2. 541-2, in a comparison:
ὡς δ᾽ ὅτε τις πάτρηθεν ἀλώμενος, οἷά τε πολλὰ
πλαζόμεθ᾽ ἄνθρωποι τετληότες,
"...as when a man roams from his homeland – as we suffering humans often must wander."
and 4.1165-7, about Medea and Jason's wedding:
ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὔποτε φῦλα δυηπαθέων ἀνθρώπων
τερπωλῆς ἐπέβημεν ὅλῳ ποδί· σὺν δέ τις αἰεὶ
πικρὴ παρμέμβλωκεν ἐυφροσύνησιν ἀνίη.
"But so it is: we tribes of woeful humans never enter upon enjoyment with a sure foot, but always alongside our happiness marches some bitter pain."

prominence for the poet's person, the narrating *ego*, than is found in Homer."[11] It has been shown that the Homeric narrator made a particular point of giving his *gnomai* the widest meaning possible through verbs in the third person plural, but he himself remained in the background; on the contrary, the Apollonian narrator, according to his more perceptible *persona*, sometimes includes himself in the *gnomai*, so that their universality is made even more striking. What is more, like the *gnomai* belonging to Homeric narrator-text, these six *gnomai* have a common theme, namely the hardships of human fate; as M. Cuypers writes: "these [*gnomai*] all breathe a pessimistic spirit".[12]

Based on the examples provided by these two narrators, *gnomai* appear as a privileged space for the narrator's personality, or at least for ideas on topics reaching beyond the narrative itself. It is remarkable that the small number of narrator-*gnomai* should all be tightly focussed on deep and meaningful themes such as the relationship to the gods or the harshness of human life. Unlike the majority of other narratorial interventions, they do not apply only to the world of the *diegesis*, but are also comments on the world shared by the narrator and his narratee; therefore, in spite of their scarcity, *gnomai* can be considered as the kind of narratorial intervention which reveals the most about the *ethos* which the narrator is constructing for his literary work.

The number of *gnomai* in narrator-text is considerably larger in Quintus' *Posthomerica*. C. Maciver counted 132 in all, and argues that, since Quintus' epic is only "slightly more than half as long as the *Iliad*", the proportion of *gnomai* is therefore greater. A reason for this may be that "Quintus attempts to emulate a typical Homeric feature by outdoing Homer in frequency and placement of the device";[13] but the imitation does not encompass the repartition between narrator-text and character-text nor the limitation of topic: the narrator of the *Posthomerica* utters no less than thirty-three *gnomai* which can be distributed into seven categories[14] - they are all focussed, nonetheless, on elevated, sometimes moralising subjects as in earlier epic. This has lead G. Paschal to talk about Quintus as "a pious poet, a preacher of morality to the young",[15] and indeed the higher concentration of *gnomai* in narrator-text originates from a narratorial *persona* much more

[11] Hunter, 2005:106.
[12] Cuypers, 2004:53.
[13] Maciver, 2012:91.
[14] According to C. Maciver, 2012:92. See note 28 for the different categories: "Fate/furies, bravery v cowardice/flight, death, the gods or related matters, *kudos* through *ponos*, social status, and age."
[15] Paschal, 1904:43.

conspicuous than the Homeric one, and whose moralising attempts cover a wider ground than the Apollonian one. C. Maciver writes:

> This amount of 'wisdom-text' has an unavoidable control on the ethical themes of the poem. In this way, *gnomai* behave as a thematic unifier of the *Posthomerica*, and bearer of Posthomeric ethics.[16]

Thus the narrator of the *Posthomerica* stands out by his determination to convey moral sentences himself rather than through character-text, being on that score much more overt than previous narrators.

II. The Nonnian *gnomai*

These analyses highlight the increasing number of gnomic utterances in epic narrator-text through time, a tendency characteristic of more and more overt narrators, whose voice breaks through the narrative to reflect, or even to moralise, on the great issues of the human condition. If M. Campbell is to be believed, this evolution is not interrupted by Nonnus:

> Gnomic elements of any substance rarely penetrate the narrative of Homer or of Apollonius … but confront the reader of Quintus at every turn from 1.73-4 onwards. Sententious verbiage (in the vein of late oratory and romance) is characteristic of Nonnos … and of Musaeus… and is carried to absurd lengths in the Ὁμηρόκεντρα of Patricius/Eudocia.[17]

And yet I have counted only 45 *gnomai* in the *Dionysiaca*, a considerable backward step in comparison to Quintus, not only in number but even more so in proportion, if one considers the length of the *Dionysiaca*. What is more, these 45 occurrences are almost evenly distributed between narrator-text (24) and character-text (21), so that neither of the two really has precedence.[18] In other words, the narrator does not leave it to characters to utter general considerations which refer to their world primarily, but which the narratee can apply to himself, like the Homeric narrator; nor does he mean for all the moralising contents to be uttered through his voice as in Quintus. We will see that one reason for this

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[16] Maciver, 2012:92.

[17] M. Campbell, 1981:132, note to 12.388. He provides four references to gnomic utterances in Nonnus.

[18] Narrator-text: 3.224-5; 6.31-2; 7.6-7 and 279; 8.118; 10.249; 11.101-2; 28.321; 30.130-2; 33.114-16 and 363-5; 38.53-4; 42.30-2, 42-3, 84-8, 135-7, 171-4, 178-81, 325-32, 352-4 and 433-7; 48.284-6 and 481-2.
Character-text: 3.249-56 and 328-30; 4.188; 7.41-54 and 74-5, 10.90; 11.358-62, 17.188; 20.94-6; 21.224; 25.340; 31.122-3; 34.32-3 and 96-7; 35.137-8; 42.209-16, 265-6 and 381-2; 45.82-4; 47.53-5 and 694.

repartition can be found in the disparity of the views expressed by *gnomai* from narrator-text and character-text on the same subject.

Another departure from the trend set by previous narrators lies in the variety of both referents and themes of the *gnomai*. The number of referents is increased: *gnomai* in earlier epics were made as general as possible through verbs in the plural which included the narratee and even in certain cases the narrator. Only about one fifth of the *gnomai* in the *Dionysiaca* refer to men in general,[19] while a large number of them is aimed at specific categories of people: women, lovers, young men are recurrent both in narrator-text and in character-text, and kings, parents, Cretans, Corybants and "the citizens of ancient Athens" each appear once in narrator-text.[20] Therefore not all of the *gnomai* are intended for the narratee to recognise himself in them; their role can be to add a piece of general information – αἰεὶ δὲ θεορρήτων περὶ μύθων / Ἀτθίδος ἀρχαίης φιλοπευθέες εἰσὶ πολῖται[21] – or to strengthen the relationship with the narratee by an allusion to shared knowledge, for example about the Cretans, with an implied joke on Hera: τερπομένη Κρήτεσσιν, ἐπεὶ πέλον ἠπεροπῆες.[22]

The Nonnian *gnomai* also cover a greater variety of themes. Narrator-text *gnomai* deal with the following topics:

- recognisability of the eyes of kings: 3.224-5.
- relationship between parents and children: 6.31-2.
- fate and the human condition: 7.6-7 and 30.130-2.
- comfort found in oracles: 6.56-7.
- love: 7.279, 10.249, 11.101-2, 33.263-5, 42.30-2, 42-3, 84-8, 135-7, 171-4, 178-81, 352-4, and 433-7, 48.284-6 and 481-2.

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[19] 3.249-56 and 328-30, 7.6-7, 42-54 and 74-5, 30.130-2, 42.178-81 and 325-32, 45.82-4.

[20] Women, 17.188, 34.32-3, 35.137-8, 42.209-16, 265-6 and 381-2, 48.481-2; lovers, 11.101-2 and 358-62, 31.122-3, 33.263-5, 42.30-2, 42-3, 84-8, 135-7, 171-4, 352-4 and 433-7, 48.284-6 and 481-2; young men, 10.249, 33.114-16, 42.30-2. Kings, 3.224-5; parents, 6.31-2; Cretans, 8.118; Corybants, 28.321; Athenians, 38.53-4. The rest of the *gnomai* do not have an explicit referent. For example, 6.56-7:

μαντοσύναι γὰρ
ἐλπίσιν ἐσσομένῃσιν ὑποκλέπτουσιν ἀνίας.

"For divinations can steal away the anxieties by means of hopes to come."

[21] 38.53-4: "Always the citizens of ancient Athens are ready to hear discourses concerning the gods."

[22] 8.118: "She was fond of the Cretans because they are always liars." Callimachus uses this proverb in the *Hymn to Zeus* (8): the Cretans claim to be able to show the tomb of Zeus. It is also found in St Paul, *Titus* 1.12 and Aratus alludes to it at *Phaenomena* 30, according to A. Mair (1921:37) in a note to Call. *Jov.* 8.

- Cretans as liars: 8.118.
- death of Corybants: 28.321.
- appeal of stories to young people: 33.114-16, and to Athenians: 38.53-4.
- influence of wine on young people: 42.30-2.
- dreams: 42.325-32.

More themes are introduced in character-text *gnomai*.[23]

The traditional contemplation of the human condition and its subjection to fate and death occupies only two narrator-text *gnomai*, complemented by seven more in character-text, a departure from the Apollonian example where this theme was reserved to narrator-text. The Nonnian narrator is clearly more interested in the theme of love, by far the most represented in these *gnomai*, with thirteen occurrences in narrator text, to which must be added ten found character text. The only other theme shared between narrator- and character- text is that of the influence of wine, with two occurrences in character-text.[24]

Love and the human condition appear therefore as the major themes in the Nonnian *gnomai*, and we shall see how the approach varies according to who utters them, and what they reveal about both the worlds of the *diegesis* and the enunciation.

1. The traditional topics of fate and the human condition

The two narrator-text *gnomai* dealing with these topics present a rather traditional view of the subject, first when describing the state of the world before Dionysus' birth:

> ἀλλὰ βίον μερόπων ἑτερότροπος εἶχεν ἀνίη
> ἀρχόμενον καμάτοιο καὶ οὐ λήγοντα μερίμνης.
>
> But sorrow in many forms possessed the life of men, which begins with labour and never sees the end of care.[25]

[23] • the sea/the power of water: 4.188 and 21.224.
• inflexibility of the gods: 25.340.

[24] • fate and the human condition, in character-text: 3.249-56 and 328-30, 7.41-54 and 74-5, 10.90, 20.94-6 and 47.694.
• love, in character-text: 11.358-62, 17.188, 31.122-3, 34.32-3 and 96-7, 35.137-8, 42.209-16, 265-6 and 381-2, and 45.83.
• the influence of wine, in character-text: 45.82-4 and 47.53-5.

[25] 7.6-7.

and then about Tectaphos' death during the Indian war:

> ἐν γὰρ ἀνάγκη
> τίς δύναταί ποτε πότμον ἀπ᾽ ἀνέρος ἐχθρὸν ἐρύκειν,
> νηλὴς πανδαμάτειρα θανεῖν ὅτε Μοῖρα κελεύει;
>
> For when necessity comes, who can save a man from cruel destiny, when hard allvanquishing Fate bids him die?[26]

Both *gnomai* are rather commonplace. The first calls to mind a *gnome* used ominously by the Apollonian narrator about Medea and Jason's wedding:

> ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὔποτε φῦλα δυσπαθέων ἀνθρώπων
> τερπωλῆς ἐπέβημεν ὅλῳ ποδί, σὺν δέ τις αἰεί
> πικρὴ παρμέμβλωκεν ἐυφροσύνῃσιν ἀνίη·
>
> For never in truth do we tribes of woe-stricken mortals tread the path of delight with sure foot; but still some bitter affliction keeps pace with our joy.[27]

For once, the Nonnian narrator does not expand the idea and his *gnome* is rather shorter than Apollonius', but the continuity of the thought is made clear by the use of ἀνίη. The second *gnome* comments on the unyielding character of Fate, well-known since even Zeus was unable to protect his son Sarpedon from being killed by Patroclus,[28] although here the narrator does not include the gods in his statement. The adjective πανδαμάτειρα is rarely found outside of the *Dionysiaca* in the feminine. The Nonnian narrator uses it to refer personifications of inflexible forces such as Nemesis and Eros[29], underlining the weakness of mortal men.

These ideas are developed in the character-text *gnomai*. The idea that men live a life of sorrow had been voiced by Electra to Cadmos: οὕτω γὰρ μερόπων φέρεται βίος ἄλλον ἐπ᾽ ἄλλῳ / μόχθον ἔχων, "For this is the way men's life runs on, bringing trouble upon trouble."[30] The referent is the same μερόπων βίος, but while Electra focuses on the quantity of the troubles affecting men, the narrator insists on the variety of their forms too - ἑτερότροπος, and makes this shift of focus visible in the text by replacing the single

[26] 30.130-2.
[27] A.R. 4.1165-7.
[28] *Il.* 16.426-57.
[29] Nemesis: 48.381; Eros: 33.182. It is also used about Hera at 47.609, as she scares the Bacchants with lightning and throws her flashing spear at Dionysus, but this occurrence is followed by a contemptuous speech of Dionysus who laughs at her and boasts that she cannot scare him. In this context it seems that the adjective πανδαμάτειρα is ironic.
[30] 3.328-9.

μόχθον from Electra's *gnome* by no fewer than three nouns referring to distress, toil, trouble: ἀνίη, καμάτος and μερίμνη. Another *gnome*, uttered by Discord in one of Dionysus' dreams, applies the idea to Dionysus himself, as a way to rouse him from his laziness: without toil – νόσφι πόνων – he will not be able to reach the heavens.[31] Dionysus will have to behave like a human to be allowed to take his place among the gods; ironically, for the mortals, no reward is to be expected in return for the toils.

The second narrator *gnome* on Fate and its unchangeable decrees is also complemented by character *gnomai*. This topic was already present in Electra's speech: ὅτι πάντες, ὅσους βροτέη τέκε γαστήρ, / Μοιριδίου κλωστῆρος ἐδουλώθησαν ἀνάγκῃ, "since all that are born of mortal womb are slaves by necessity to Fate the Spinner."[32] with the same association between Μοῖρα and ἀνάγκη. Like the narrator, Electra does not include the gods in the category of people subjected to fate, although the periphrasis "those born of mortal womb" widens the range to demigods – but indeed she is addressing Cadmos, whose grandfather is Poseidon. This power of Fate is next mentioned by Time as one of the reasons why he pities men. He uses the word πότμος, "what is given by fate", namely death.[33] Indeed the association between Fate and death is the rule for all *gnomai*: it appears again in the mouth of Ino facing death with her son Melicertes: τέκνον, Ἀναγκαίη μεγάλη θεός, and in Hermes' consolation for Dionysus after Ariadne's death: οὐ λίνα Μοιράων ἐπιπείθεται, "the Fates' threads obey no persuasion."[34] Like Electra, he uses the traditional image of the threads of Fate, while the narrator preferred to replace this image by a strong and more original adjective.[35]

Finally, a group of character-text *gnomai* adds to those in narrator-text the idea of the shortness of men's lives. This group includes the first *gnome* of all character-text, in Cadmos' speech to Electra, comparing the generations of men to leaves falling and growing, a comparison imitated from Glaucus' speech to Diomedes in the *Iliad*:

> ὠκυμόρων μερόπων γενεὴν φύλλοισιν ἐίσκω·
> φύλλα τὰ μὲν κατέχευαν ἐπὶ χθονὶ θυιάδες αὖραι
> ὥρης ἱσταμένης φθινοπωρίδος, ἄλλα δὲ καιρῷ
> εἰαρινῷ κομέουσι τεθηλότα δενδράδες ὕλαι·

[31] 20.94-6.
[32] 3.329-30.
[33] 7.45-7.
[34] 10.90 and 47.694.
[35] In Homer too, the image of the thread is found only in character-text, in the *Iliad* in the mouth of Hera at 20.128, of Hecabe at 24.210, and in the *Odyssey*, in the mouth of Alcinous at 7.197-8.

ὣς βροτέη γενεὴ μινυώριος ἡ μὲν ὀλέθρῳ
δάμναται ἱππεύσασα βίου δρόμον, ἡ δ᾽ ἔτι θάλλει,
ἄλλη ὅπως εἴξειεν· ἐπεὶ παλινάγρετος ἕρπων
εἰς νέον ἐκ πολιοῖο ῥέει μορφούμενος αἰών.

> I liken the swift-passing generations of mortal man to the leaves. Some leaves the wild wind scatters over the earth when autumn season comes; others the woodland trees grow on their bushy heads in spring-time. Such are the generations of men, short-lived: one rides life's course, until death brings it low; one still flourishes, only to give place to another: for time moves ever back upon itself, changing form as it flows from hoary age to youth.[36]

P. Chuvin notes that "Homère cite deux générations, Nonnos, trois, ce qui s'accorde avec sa conception d'un temps cyclique toujours recommencé."[37] Indeed the three generations mirror the three Dionysi and the idea of cyclical time with a repetition of new beginnings. The *Posthomerica* also take up this image in the speech of Achilles' shadow to his son: the variation there is in the comparing element, grass instead of leaves, but the number of generations is the same as in Homer, which underlines the innovative nature of the Nonnian version.[38] What is more, the Nonnian narrator expands the Iliadic image of the leaves by adding to it the metaphors of the horse race, emphasising the rapidity with which the generations follow each other, and of time as a snake, through the verb ἕρπω which, accompanied by the epithet παλινάγρετος, confirms P. Chuvin's description of the cyclical time of the *Dionysiaca*.[39]

Cadmos' point of view is paralleled in Time's complaint to Zeus: either old age comes too soon and makes men helpless, or their lives are cut short by an untimely death, causing sorrow for the dead person's agemates, annihilating the life-bringing prospects of weddings, and destroying love.[40] To this complaint Zeus replies with a *gnome* too:

μὴ νεμέσα· βροτέη γὰρ ἀώριος οὔ ποτε λήγει
πληθομένη μινύθουσα φύσις, μίμημα σελήνης.

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[36] 3.249-56. See *Il.* 6.146-9.

[37] Chuvin, 1976:144, *ad* 3.249. Aratus also mentions three generations (123-4), although he is making a different point – the degradation of each generation compared to the preceding one. Horace (*Odes* 3.6.46-8) has four generations, on the same theme as Aratus'.

[38] Q.S. 14.207-8.

[39] This is in keeping with the late antique conception of Aion as a snake biting his tail as a symbol of cyclic time. Servius writes in his commentary to *Aen.* 5.85: *annus secundum Aegyptios indicabatur ante inventas litteras picto dracone caudam suam mordente, quia in se recurrit*, "According to the Egyptians, before the alphabet was invented, the year was represented by the image of a snake biting his own tail, because it returns back on itself."

[40] 7.41-54.

> Be not angry, for human nature, waxing and waning like the moon, never comes to an untimely end.[41]

This *gnome* possibly alludes to the theory that Zeus made the Trojan war happen as a way to depopulate the overpopulated earth;[42] the focalisation is clearly that of a god, who has an overview of the human race and of its fate. From the human point of view, this is not reassuring; Zeus knows about the mortals' sufferings, but only considers doing something to alleviate them because Time begs him to do so.

Analysis of the gnomic utterances concerned with the topic of human fate shows how *gnomai* in character-text develop the two uttered by the narrator, adding to the themes of the hardships of human life and of the inflexibility of fate that of the shortness of life. The narrator sets himself a very limited role in the presentation of this theme, taking on that respect a very different stance from previous narrators, who either confined themselves to this theme – in Homer – or allowed themselves far more interventions – in the *Argonautica* and the *Posthomerica*. Indeed, what seems to be of most interest for the Nonnian narrator is the theme of love.

2. A pessimistic depiction of love and its influence on men

Twenty-four *gnomai* in all are concerned with love, that is to say more than half of the total number of gnomai in the *Dionysiaca*. Fourteen of these appear in narrator-text: it means that the narrator considers it of importance that comments on his topic should be conveyed in this own voice. We shall see how character-text *gnomai* complement the narrator-text ones to deliver an alternative conception of the sufferings of lovers.

Most of the twenty-four *gnomai* deal with three aspects of the general theme of love, as follows: the importance of sight in the increasing of the passion, the shame and pain caused to a man by unrequited love, and the sufferings of modest women. The passages in which these *gnomai* occur stand out in the epic context, within both the *Dionysiaca* and epic poetry in general, by their tone drawn from genres such as novel or lyric poetry. The Nonnian narrator departs from his choice of Homer as a model to carry out his wish for *poikilia* even in his sources of inspiration.

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[41] 7.74-5. I translate.

[42] See for exemple in the *Cypria*, fr.3 Evelyn-White. (Allen 1912 *Cypria*)

a/ The importance of sight as an incentive for love:[43]

(1) 7.278-9: Zeus and Semele.

καὶ Σεμέλης δεδόνητο πόθου φρενοθελγέι κέντρῳ
θάμβος ἔχων· φιλίῳ γὰρ ἔρως πέλε θαύματι γείτων.

The god was shaken by the heartbewitching sting of desire for Semele, in amazement: for love is near neighbour to admiration.

(2) 11.101-2: Dionysus and Ampelos.

καί μιν ἰδὼν ἔτι Βάκχος ἐτέρπετο· καὶ γὰρ ὀπωπαὶ
οὔ ποτε δερκομένοισι κόρον τίκτουσιν ἐρώτων.

Bacchos still delighted to look at him; for loving eyes are never sated with looking.

(3) 42.42-3: Dionysus and Beroe.

ἀρχομένων δὲ
ὀφθαλμὸς προκέλευθος ἐγίνετο πορθμὸς Ἐρώτων.

For the eye is the channel and the vessel of newborn love.[44]

(4) 42.84-8: Beroe does not use make-up.

ἀλλὰ γυναιμανέοντα πολὺ πλέον ὀξέι κέντρῳ
ἀγλαΐαι κλονέουσιν ἀκηδέστοιο προσώπου,
καὶ πλόκαμοι ῥυπόωντες ἀκοσμήτοιο καρήνου
ἁβρότεροι γεγάασιν, ὅτ᾽ ἀπλεκέες καὶ ἀλῆται
χιονέῳ στιχόωσι παρήοροι ἀμφὶ προσώπῳ.

But the natural beauties of a face confound the desperate lover with far sharper sting, and the untidy tresses of an unbedizened head are all the more dainty, when they stray unbraided down the sides of a snow-white face.

(5) 42.135-7: Dionysus watches Beroe with caution lest she goes away.

ἠιθέῳ γὰρ
κάλλος ὀπιπεύοντι καὶ ἥλικος ὄμματα κούρης
Κυπριδίων ἐλάχεια παραίφασίς ἐστιν Ἐρώτων.

For, to the youth who watches her, beauty and the eyes of a girl his own age are a little consolation for the Cyprian loves.[45]

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[43] Numbers in the list indicate narrator-text *gnomai*, letters, character-text ones.

[44] My translation, adapted from W. Rouse.

[45] My translation, adapted from W. Rouse.

(6) 42.352-4: Dionysus watches Beroe, but she covers her cheeks with her robe.

καὶ πλέον ἔφλεγε Βάκχον, ὅτι δρηστῆρες Ἐρώτων
αἰδομένας ἔτι μᾶλλον ὀπιπεύουσι γυναῖκας,
καὶ πλέον ἱμείρουσι καλυπτομένοιο προσώπου.

She made him burn all the more, since the servants of love watch shamefast women more closely, and desire more strongly the covered countenance.

(a) 17.188: Orontes mocks Dionysus' feminine appearance, especially his long hair.

ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐταὶ
κάλλεϊ τοξεύουσι καὶ οὐ βελέεσσι γυναῖκες.

The women do just the same – pretty looks are the shafts in their quiver.

The importance of sight here is part of Nonnus' visual poetry: not only does the narrator, while he is telling the story, invite his narratee to see what he is describing, through a wealth of details and adjectives in keeping with the *enargeia* of the scenes, but he also develops this theme inside the *diegesis*, by making it of importance in the relationship between the characters themselves. *Gnome* (1) occurs during the crucial episode narrating how Zeus fell in love with Semele, and presents love as the consequence of sight and admiration for beauty, a *topos* of Greek novel: τὸ θαῦμα λανθάνον εἰς ἐρωτικὸν πάθος αὐτὸν κατέφερε.[46] Dionysus finds himself in the same situation in (3). Again the accent is put on the idea of the insatiable desire to watch, in particular with the repetition of the expression ὄμμα τιταίνων after the bucolic caesura at lines 40 and 45. Both Zeus and Dionysus have previously been hit by one of Eros' arrows, so that sight appears as the means through which Eros strikes his victims, in addition to his arrow. This is probably not so much a rationalisation, by the narrator, of Eros' mythical arrow, as it is a convenient way of developing the theme of sight – which is so pregnant in the *Dionysiaca* – and of introducing passages of lyric inspiration. In addition, the idea that love is linked to sight does not originate from the Nonnian narrator, but is a *topos* of lyric poetry and novel, genres in which the link between the two is explained in more detail. Sappho describes the consequences of a glance to her beloved:

[46] Hld. *Aethiopica*, 7.15.3, "The marvel, without his notice, caused him to fall in love." (See Chuvin 1992:180 *ad* 7.279). See also Chuvin & Fayant 2006:53: they comment on the importance of the link between sight and love.

ὡς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε' ὤς με φώναι-
σ' οὐδ' ἒν ἔτ' εἴκει,
ἀλλ' ἄκαν μὲν γλῶσσα †ἔαγε λέπτον
δ' αὔτικα χρῶι πῦρ ὐπαδεδρόμηκεν,
ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδ' ἒν ὄρημμ', ἐπιρρόμ-
βεισι δ' ἄκουαι,

> For when I look at you for a moment, then it is no longer possible for me to speak; my tongue has snapped, at once a subtle fire has stolen beneath my flesh, I see nothing with my eyes, my ears hum…[47]

The narrator of Achilles Tatius describes the mechanism of the relationship between sight and love:

> ἡ δὲ τῆς θέας ἡδονὴ διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων εἰσρέουσα τοῖς στέρνοις ἐγκάθηται· ἕλκουσα δὲ τοῦ ἐρωμένου τὸ εἴδωλον ἀεί, ἐναπομάττεται τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς κατόπτρῳ καὶ ἀναπλάττει τὴν μορφήν· ἡ δὲ τοῦ κάλλους ἀπορροὴ δι' ἀφανῶν ἀκτίνων ἐπὶ τὴν ἐρωτικὴν ἑλκομένη καρδίαν ἐναποσφραγίζει κάτω τὴν σκιάν.
>
> The pleasure which comes from vision enters by the eyes and makes its home in the breast; bearing with it ever the image of the beloved, it impresses it upon the mirror of the soul and leaves there its image; the emanation given off by beauty travels by invisible rays to the lovesick heart and imprints upon it its photograph.[48]

In the *Dionysiaca*, the link between love and sight is developed further in (5) and (6): according to the former, sight can alleviate longing. It seems to me more appropriate to translate "ἐλάχεια παραίφασίς" as "a slight consolation", with a positive meaning, rather than, like W. Rouse, "beauty… have little consolation", where it has the more negative implication of a lack, the consolation being not sufficient. The care which Dionysus employs to remain hidden from Beroe indicates that he is willing to accept this consolation for now, however little it is. The idea that it is a consolation, little though it be, is moreover supported by another use of "ἐλάχεια παραίφασίς" in narrator-text in the Aura episode: Dionysus is consumed by his love for Aura, but has no hope of winning her, and there is "not even a small consolation for him", οὐ γὰρ ἔην ἐλάχεια παραίφασις,[49] and indeed in this episode his longing is not alleviated by the ability to

[47] Sappho, fr. 31.7-12 *Page & Lobel*.
[48] Ach. Tat. *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 5.13.4. For emanations coming from the beloved, see Pindar fr. 123.2-5, "rays flashing from Thexenos' eyes", τὰς δὲ Θεοξένου ἀκτῖνας πρὸς ὄσσων / μαρμαρυζοίσας δρακείς . Sappho, fr.16.18, "the radiance coming from her face", κἀμάρυχα λάμπρον… προσώπω.
[49] 48.475.

watch and admire his beloved as much as in the case of Beroe, and he considers himself happy when he can catch "a glimpse of a thigh" if the wind lifts Aura's tunic.[50]

The word παραίφασις is not very common in literature. It is worth noting that, outside of Nonnus, its major appearances are found in *gnomai*. It occurs in the gnomic verse of Naumachius, also with the meaning of "consolation": ἀνδρὶ γὰρ ἀσχαλόωντι παραίφασίς ἐστιν ἄκοιτις,[51] and twice in the *Iliad*, in the character-text *gnome* ἀγαθὴ δὲ παραίφασίς ἐστιν ἑταίρου, both times in reference to Patroclus,[52] but meaning here "persuasion", a meaning which, if it still occurred to the mind of the 5th century audience of Nonnus, is not out of place in the context of the influence of Aphrodite on lovers.

Finally, (6) asserts the alleviating power of sight by showing that thwarted sight is an even stronger incentive for love: whereas in (1), Zeus was watching Semele bathing, which aroused his admiration and desire for her, in (6), Beroe is pulling her veil over her cheeks to avert Dionysus' gaze, while he has joined her and her father Adonis for a hunt.

But sight does not accompany love only during the first stages. (2) shows that Dionysus cannot have enough of watching Ampelos even after he has decided to spend less time with him, because he has become aware that the young satyr is fated to an early death. However, the narrator confirms here that lovers can never have enough of watching, in a *gnome* that announces the one, in book 42, refuting the Homeric assertion that men can have enough of all things, by invoking the lover's longing as a counter-example.[53] This *gnome* had been put in the mouth of Menelaus, but it is no longer in character-text in the *Dionysiaca*. The Nonnian narrator decides to assert his own view on this point by explicitly contradicting Homer, and doing so through the same literary device.

In (4), the narrator takes up the elegiac topic of the natural beauty of a face devoid of make-up, underlining that the intensity of love resulting from the action of seeing depends on other circumstances. This *topos* is found in Latin elegy.[54] Line 86 is repeated

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[50] 48.485-6.

[51] Naumachius, *Fragmentum* l.18. E. Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. 1, 2nd edn. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963. M. Whitby (2008:85-7) signals a similar *gnome* in Gregory of Nazianzus, and underlines how the use of παραίφασις in this author is reminiscent of the Iliadic precedent.

[52] 11.793 and 15.404.

[53] *Dion.* 42.178-81; *Il.* 13.636-9. See chapter 2.

[54] See chapter 3.

twice in the poem, about Ampelos and Aura,[55] both times in the context of the alleviation of longing through sight. This confirms the generalisation operated by the inclusion in a gnomic utterance.

Finally, this relationship between sight and love is presented as consciously used by women against men in (a), a character-text *gnome*. Narrator-text *gnomai* illustrated the masculine side of the subject, presenting the effect on masculine characters of their watching women; the idea that women could be aware of this power of their looks on men is reserved for character-text, as if the narrator did not wish to endorse it.[56] Orontes is taunting Dionysus and laughing at his long wavy hair, inappropriate for a fighter; he compares him to a woman using her charms to weaken men. The comparison between Dionysus and a woman in not uncommon. It appears in Euripides *Bacchants*, in character-text too:

> πλόκαμός τε γάρ σου ταναός, οὐ πάλης ὕπο,
> γένυν παρ᾽ αὐτὴν κεχυμένος, πόθου πλέως·
>
> Your hair is long – no wrestler you – and it comes tumbling down all the way to your cheeks: how full of desire it is![57]

However Pentheus here implies that Dionysus is not fit for fighting because of his feminine looks, whereas Orontes goes further in the comparison and argues that Dionysus is indeed able to fight, but in the manner of a women, namely by conquering through his looks. By saying so through a *gnome*, Orontes uses the generalisation to shame Dionysus even more, by underlining that not only does he look like a woman, but behaves like one according to well known standards.

The assimilation between women's looks and weapons is not a Nonnian conceit. A similar idea is expressed in one of Anacreon's poem listing Nature's gifts to various creatures: horns to bulls, jaws to lions, and to women:

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[55] 10.272 and 48.149.

[56] The only *gnome* dealing with sight in the case of women is found in character-text, and is not to women's advantage. Hyssacos, Morrheus' guardian, seeing the latter's dejected countenance, asks him whether his wife Cheirobie is angry at him (34.32-3):
καὶ γὰρ ὅτ᾽ εἰσορόωσιν ἐρωμανέοντας ἀκοίτας,
κρυπταδίην διὰ Κύπριν ἀεὶ φθονέουσι γυναῖκες.
"For when women see their partners wild with love, they are always jealous of some secret intrigue."

[57] E. *Ba.* 455-6.

δίδωσι κάλλος
ἀντ' ἀσπίδων ἁπασῶν
ἀντ' ἐγχέων ἁπάντων.[58]

... she gives beauty instead of all shields and spears.

Orontes' comparison with arrows replaces Anacreon's shield and sword, with a double implication. Arrows bring to mind Eros' weapon, more appropriate in the context of Orontes' speech, whose point is to emphasise Dionysus' use of his charms, whereas Anacreon, listing the strength of Nature's creatures, focuses more on the ability to fight and defend oneself, and this is better illustrated by a comparison with close fighting. Another idea implied in Orontes' image of the arrow is that of cowardice, since the bow enables someone to avoid taking part of the mêlée – which fits the contemptuous tone of the speech.

The idea that love needs no weapons had also been developed in Late Antiquity by Claudian in his *Gigantomachy*, with much detail:

Κύπρις δ' οὔτε βέλος φέρεν οὔθ' ὅπλον, ἀλλ' ἐκόμιζεν
ἀγλαΐην·
… εἶχε γὰρ αὐτὴ
πλέγμα κόρυν, δόρυ μαζόν, ὀφρῦν βέλος, ἀσπίδα κάλλος,
ὅπλα μέλη, θέλγητρον ἐν ἄλγεσιν. εἰ δέ τις αὐτῇ
ὄμμα βάλοι, δέδμητο, βέλος δ' ἀπὸ χειρὸς ἐάσας
ὡς Ἄρεως αἰχμῇ τῇ Κύπριδος ὄλλυτο μορφῇ.

Cypris was bearing no shaft nor weapon, but brought her beauty. … For she had plaits as helmet, her breasts as spear, her brow as shaft, her beauty as shield, her limbs as weapons, and charm in the pain she caused. If one laid eyes on her, he was overpowered, and, letting go his shafts from his hand, he was defeated by Cypris' figure as if by Ares' spear.[59]

[58] Anacreon, 24.9-11 (West). I translate.

[59] *Gigantomachy* 43-4 and 50-4. I translate. The Nonnian narrator uses a very similar expression about a dying Bacchant: βέλος δέ οἱ ἔπλετο μορφή, at 35.24, followed by an list of body parts as weapons. See also 35.39-43 and 168-73.

b/ Unrequited love is both painful and shameful for a man

These *gnomai* thus develop the theme of longing and sight, the former being both increased, and somehow alleviated, by the latter. But another series of gnomic utterances go further in the exploration of this topic,

(7) 42.171-[170-]172-4: Dionysus and Beroe.

καὶ ἤθελεν, ὄφρα δαείη
οἶστρον ἑὸν βαρύμοχθον, ἐπισταμένης ὅτι κούρης
ὄψιμος ἠιθέῳ περιλείπεται ἐλπὶς Ἐρώτων
ἐσσομένης φιλότητος, ἐπᾶ ἀπρήκτῳ δὲ μενοινῇ
ἀνέρες ἱμείρουσιν, ὅτᾶ ἀγνώσσουσι γυναῖκες.

He wished she might learn his own overpowering passion, since when the girl knows, there is always hope for the lad that love will come at last, but when women do not notice, man's desire is only a fruitless anxiety.

(8) 42.433-7: Dionysus and Beroe.

τί κύντερόν ἐστιν Ἐρώτων,
ἢ ὅτε θυμοβόροιο πόθου λυσσώδεϊ κέντρῳ
ἀνέρας ἱμείροντας ἀλυσκάζουσι γυναῖκες
καὶ πλέον οἶστρον ἄγουσι σαόφρονες; ἐνδόμυχος δὲ
διπλόος ἐστὶν ἔρως, ὅτε παρθένος ἀνέρα φεύγει.

What is more shameless than love, or when women avoid men who yearn with the heart-eating maddening urge of desire, and only make them more passionate by their modesty? The love within them is doubled when a maiden flees from a man.

(9) 48.481-2: Dionysus is tormented by his love for Aura.

τί κύντερον, ἢ ὅτε μοῦνοι
ἀνέρες ἱμείρουσι, καὶ οὐ ποθέουσι γυναῖκες;

What is more shameless, than when men only crave, and women do not desire?

These three *gnomai* apply to Dionysus, describing the hopelessness of his situation, since he loves women who are not aware that he does, or who will not love him back. The narrator makes his point strongly by repeating it three times in very similar *gnomai*: they each contain a chiastic line starting with ἀνέρες and a form of the verb ἱμείρω, followed by a negative verb referring to γυναῖκες. The position of ἀνέρες and γυναῖκες at each end of the line underlines the separation from which the lover suffers. What is more, two

of these gnomic utterances begin in the same manner: τί κύντερον, the rhetorical question emphasising the narratorial intervention by directing the gnomic utterance more directly to the attention of the narratee. These are the only two occurrences of κύντερον in the *Dionysiaca*. This adjective conveys the idea that men in such a situation suffer pains from their longing and emphasises how regrettable this all is. One other gnomic use of the word can be found in Oppian's *Halieutica*, after a description of the lobster's attachment to its lair:

> οὐδ᾽ ἄρα μούνοις
> πατρὶς ἐφημερίοισι πέλει γλυκερώτατον ἄλλων·
> οὐδ᾽ ἀλεγεινότερον καὶ κύντερον, ὅς κεν ἀνάγκῃ
> φυξίπολιν πάτρης τελέσῃ βίον ἀλγινόεντα,
> ξεῖνος ἐν ἀλλοδαποῖσιν ἀτιμίης ζυγὸν ἕλκων.
>
> It is not to mortal men only that their fatherland is dearest of all; and there is nothing more painful or more terrible than when a man perforce lives the grievous life of an exile from his native land, a stranger among aliens bearing the yoke of dishonour.[60]

This darker aspect of love is further developed in (8) with the phrase λυσσώδεϊ κέντρῳ, whose only other occurrence in the poem concerns Ampelos' death, when the bull which Ate had convinced him to ride, was turned mad by the "maddening sting" of a

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[60] Opp. *H.* 1.275-9. Other, non-gnomic, examples in epic poems underline various kinds of pain: A.R. 1.1064, about Cyzicus' wife committing suicide after his death; Opp. *H.* 2.426, about the pain inflicted by the scolopendra's bite; Q.S. 12.447, about Athena's punishment of Laocoon's children; 14.272, about Hecuba's pain seeing her children die; and 14.625, about the shipwrecked Achaeans. This word is also found in two gnomic utterances in Homer, with the additional meaning of shamelessness: the speaker is implying that the person whose actions have been κύντερον should be ashamed and feel self-reproach. *Od.* 7.216-8:

οὐ γάρ τι στυγερῇ ἐπὶ γαστέρι κύντερον ἄλλο
ἔπλετο, ἥ τ᾽ ἐκέλευσεν ἕο μνήσασθαι ἀνάγκῃ
καὶ μάλα τειρόμενον καὶ ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔχοντα

> There is nothing more shameless than a hateful belly, which bids a man perforce take thought thereof, be he never so sore distressed and laden with grief at heart.

and 11.427-8:

ὣς οὐκ αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο γυναικός,
ἥ τις δὴ τοιαῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶν ἔργα βάληται·
οἷον δὴ καὶ κείνη ἐμήσατο ἔργον ἀεικές,
κουριδίῳ τεύξασα πόσει φόνον.

> So true is it that there is nothing more dread or more shameless than a woman who puts into her heart such deeds, even as she too devised a monstrous thing, contriving death for her wedded husband.

See also, in non-gnomic passages, *Il.* 8.482 and *Od.* 20.18.

gadfly.[61] This implied comparison puts into relief the situation of men harried by love and driven to madness, as it were, another ominous hint.

Therefore, by underlining the suffering of Dionysus in gnomic utterances, the narrator's voice breaks through the narrative to make a stronger appeal to the narratee's compassion. Men are presented as the victims of women: in (8), they are the subject of the verbs, emphasising how their actions contribute to men's misery. And indeed the idea that not returning love is an injustice is a lyric *topos*. E. Urios-Aparisi writes:

> The ideal relationship with a lover implies a reciprocity of desire. This implication is seen as a 'just' answer to the request made. It is implied by Anacreon in 402b PMG (120 Gent.): καλὸν εἶναι τῷ Ἔρωτι τὰ δίκαιά φησιν and as Gentili comments: "elsewhere in Anacreon the beautiful and the just (dikaion), a general principle also formulated in Greek gnomai, is applied specifically to the relationship between lover and beloved: 'the beautiful (in love) is the just'. And the realization of what is just involves … the reciprocity and irrefusability of love".[62]

The knowledge of such *gnomai* by the narratee is most likely presupposed by the narrator. B. Gentili also quotes Theognis: "κάλλιστον τὸ δικαιότατον".[63] In the context of Dionysus' erotic misfortunes, it emphasises the pathetic aspect of the scene, as well as, very possibly, its humorous undertone; we saw how the narrator laughs at the surprising helplessness of Dionysus when women are involved, although he has proved his might and worth in fighting the Indians and the Giants.[64] Therefore, the Nonnian narrator, in these three interventions, presents the sufferings of men under a rather original light – P. Chuvin calls these *gnomai* "réflexions personnelles" –, since he draws from a well-known topic to apply it rather facetiously to Dionysus. We saw how the sight of his beloved could somehow alleviate his torment; the narrator suggests another source of consolation in dreams:

> ὄναρ δέ οἱ ἔπλετο κούρη
> εἴματι νυμφιδίῳ πεπυκασμένη. ἀντίτυπον γάρ
> ἔργον, ὅ περ τελέει τις ἐν ἤματι, νυκτὶ δοκεύει·
> βουκόλος ὑπνώων κεραοὺς βόας εἰς νομὸν ἕλκει·
> δίκτυα θηρητῆρι φαείνεται ὄψις ὀνείρου·
> γειοπόνοι δ᾽ εὕδοντες ἀροτρεύουσιν ἀρούρας,
> αὔλακα δὲ σπείρουσι φερέσταχυν· ἁζαλέῃ δὲ
> ἄνδρα μεσημβρίζοντα κατάσχετον αἴθοπι δίψῃ
> εἰς ῥόον, εἰς ἀμάρην ἀπατήλιος ὕπνος ἐλαύνει.

[61] 11.194.

[62] Urios-Aparisi, 1993:58. He quotes Gentili, 1988:91.

[63] Gentili, 1988:265: Theognis 255. See also Arist. *Eth. Nicom.* 1. 1099a, *Eth. Eud.* 1.1214a.

[64] See chapter 7 on apostrophes to the characters.

> And he saw the girl in a dream decked out in bridal array. For what a man does in the day, the image of that he sees in the night; the herdsman sleeping takes his horned cattle to pasture; the huntsman sees nets in the vision of a dream; men who work on the land plow the fields in sleep and sow the furrow with corn; a man parched at midday and possessed with fiery thirst is driven by deceiving sleep to a river, to a channel of water.[65]

Firstly, it is remarkable how Dionysus is a much more respectable character in his dreams: whereas his waking relationships with women often involve violence and rape, here he dreams of Beroe in wedding clothes, which implies, as noted by P. Chuvin, that she must be veiled from head to foot, denying him even the relief of sight.[66] The dream is explained by the narrator in the *gnome*: the preoccupations of the day recur at night in dreams. However, the narrator prolongs his intervention by a series of comparisons which lead to the conclusion of the dream: σκιεποῖσι γάμοισιν ὁμίλεεν, "he was joined to her in a wedding of shadow."[67] Indeed, between the comparison to a herdsman, calling to mind the bucolic and lyric context, and that of the parched man mirroring Dionysus' insatiable longing, are inserted comparisons with a huntsman, alluding to the *topos* of love as a hunt between man and woman, and with men ploughing a field, a common sexual metaphor. Dionysus' dream, therefore, is that Beroe would come to him of her own will: indeed in most cases he has the misfortune of falling in love with women who will not have him, with the exception of Ariadne.

Finally, the idea that unrequited love makes men helpless and despicable is complemented by a character-text *gnome*: Hera wants Iris to promise Pasithea to Sleep in exchange for his help:

> οὔ σε διδάξω,
> ὅττι γυναιμανέων τις ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι πάντα τελέσσει.

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[65] 42.324-332. This happens to be a *topos* of Latin literature, found in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* at 4.962-72, with different examples (a pleader, a general, the narrator himself). Commentators on this passage (Merrill 1907, Ernout & Robin 1962) provide other instances in Latin literature: Accius, *Praetexta* 29; Petronius, fr.30; Fronto, *De feriis Alsiensibus* 3, Claudian, *Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti, Praefatio* 1-10. Only Fronto and Claudian provides examples: in Fronto, an actor; in Claudian, a hunter, a judge, a lover, a merchant, a miser, and a thirsty man. This is, so far, the only element which would indicate that Nonnus was influenced by Latin literature, unless this *topos* had passed into Greek literature unavailable to us. What is more, both Nonnus and Claudian mention the hunter and the thirsty man; might this indicate a common source? But Claudian does not help solve the question, since we know he was able to write in Greek as well as in Latin.

[66] Chuvin & Fayant, 2006:64.

[67] 42.335.

I need not tell you that one lovesick will do anything for hope.[68]

From these narrator-text *gnomai*, it seems that the narrator of the *Dionysiaca*, speaking from a masculine point of view – Dionysus' point of view, if not his own – follows a traditional depreciative depiction of the cruelty of women and of their being the cause of evil for men.[69] However, a series of character-text *gnomai* cast a different light on that issue.

c/ Does love make women suffer as much as men?

(b) 35.137-8: Chalcomedeia to Morrheus.

κάμνον ἐγὼ κρύπτουσα τεὸν πόθον· οὐ γὰρ ἀκοίτην
παρθένος αἰδομένη προκαλίζεται εἰς Ἀφροδίτην.

I suffer, as I hide my longing for you - for a modest maiden does not invite a man to be her lover.

(c) 42.209-216: Pan to Dionysus.

πᾶσα γυνὴ ποθέει πλέον ἀνέρος, αἰδομένη δὲ
κεύθει κέντρον Ἔρωτος ἐρωμανέουσα καὶ αὐτή,
καὶ μογέει πολὺ μᾶλλον, ἐπεὶ σπινθῆρες Ἐρώτων
θερμότεροι γεγάασιν, ὅτε κρύπτουσι γυναῖκες
ἐνδόμυχον πραπίδεσσι πεπαρμένον ἰὸν Ἐρώτων.
καὶ γὰρ ὅτ᾽ ἀλλήλῃσι πόθων ἐνέπουσιν ἀνάγκην,
λυσιπόνοις ὀάροισιν ὑποκλέπτουσι μερίμνας
Κυπριδίας.

Every woman has greater desire than the man, but shamefast she hides the sting of love, though mad for love herself; and she suffers much more, since the sparks of love become hotter when women conceal in their bosoms the piercing arrow of love. Indeed, when they tell each other the force of desire, their gossip is meant to soothe the pain and deceive their voluptuous longings.

(d) 42.381-2: Dionysus advises Beroe to obey the Loves to elude their anger.

νηλέες εἰσὶν Ἔρωτες, ὅτε χρέος, ὁππότε ποινὴν
ἀπρήκτου φιλότητος ἀπαιτίζουσι γυναῖκας·

[68] 31.122-3.

[69] Morgan, 2007:107: "Gnomologies on papyrus are almost universally negative about women. … When you want to take a wife, the ugly ones disgusts you and the beautiful ones make you fear adultery, and choke you with simultaneous grief and desire."

> Harsh are the Loves when there's need, when they exact from women the penalty for love unfulfilled.

The previous group of *gnomai* suggested that love was a source of pain and sorrow for men only; since they originated from a masculine point of view, they did not take into account the feminine side of the theme. But these three *gnomai* seemingly make up for that lack, although their context makes their import somewhat ambiguous. Indeed (b) and (c) state that women suffer too, because they cannot allow their love to be visible for fear of being considered improper and immodest, while (d) asserts that the loves will punish a women who refuses to acknowledge them. The whole situation is therefore quite hopeless, since as long as women feel that they must hide their love, they will suffer, and make men suffer at the same time. Through these *gnomai*, the *Dionysiaca* offers a rather dark and disenchanted image of love.

But the context in which these three character-text *gnomai* are uttered must be taken into account, and, as it happens, it makes the interpretation of these *gnomai* even more difficult. All three characters use these *gnomai* for specific reasons which depend on what they are trying to achieve through their speech. In (b), Chalcomedeia is doing her best to fool Morrheus and convince him that she loves him to keep him out of the fight for a while. Therefore the *gnome* is one of the devices she uses in her rhetoric of persuasion, which suggests that it should not be to be taken at face value by the narratee who is aware of her stratagem, but by Morrheus only. What is at least certain is that Chalcomedeia only applies the *gnome* to herself insofar as she is playing the part of a woman in love; the narratee knows that she is not herself suffering. She could even have made up the *gnome* herself, only to serve her purpose.

However, in (c), Pan's general speech shows that the idea that hidden love makes women suffer is true in the world of the *diegesis*. In this passage, he takes up the role of advisor to Dionysus who came to him for help as he is trying to win Beroe over, and offers him what H. Frangoulis calls "un exposé de psychologie féminine"[70] in the shape of an imitation of the didactic genre of the *ars amatoria*. The *gnome* is part of the required elements in the imitation of this genre: it aims at providing Dionysus with a set of useful

[70] See Frangoulis & Gerlaud 2006:127 *ad* 35.137-8. Pan's speech goes from 42.205 to 42.273.

guidelines which will enable him to understand women and their reactions. G. Conte and G. Most write:

> Always the discourse founds its legitimacy upon the principle of "usefulness"; the student will be able to test in practice the value of the precepts imparted to him. To the claim of "usefulness" and "truthfulness" corresponds the tendency by which the language of didactic poetry loves to adopt the form of maxims or to take refuge in proverbs; it thereby becomes not only authoritative but also more memorable.[71]

And yet, the question of whether Pan endorses his own *gnome* poses itself. He might use fallacious arguments in order to comfort Dionysus, and he acknowledges that he himself suffers from unrequited love, so that he might well be talking out of spite and bitterness. The very last line of the speech is maybe a clearer hint: Pan suggests that he is himself clueless as how to win Echo over and asks Dionysus for advice, which confirms that most of his speech was theoretical and has not been proved useful in practice, at least not by himself.[72] The theoretical character of his speech does not allow the narratee to determine very clearly whether or not he genuinely believes in his own advice. And when Dionysus reuses this advice in (d), he also has an agenda, *i.e.* convincing Beroe by threatening her with the wrath of love: according to what Pan said, she will be burnt by the "sparks of love" if she keeps them inside her. This *gnome* is followed in Dionysus's speech by examples of two women punished for their wish to remain virgins by being changed into trees, comparisons meant by Dionysus to emphasise the threat conveyed by the *gnome*: he presents the metamorphosis as a punishment, although one could argue that it did not appear so to the women concerned.[73]

Thus it happens that these three *gnomai* referring to the sufferings of women, in addition to being consigned to character-text, are undermined by the context in which they appear, which lends them even less authority, in spite of their being *gnomai*. Unlike

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[71] Conte & Most, 1998:457.

[72] 42.273: ἀλλά με καὶ σὺ δίδαξον ἐμῆς θελκτήριον Ἠχους, "Now you tell me something to charm my Echo." At the beginning of his speech (42.205-7), he claims to be in the same painful situation as Dionysus. See also, for example, 15.306-7. Pan's speech contains another *gnome* at 265-6, which supports his advice to sing a love story to Beroe which will make her cry:

οὐδὲ γέλως πέλε τοῖος, ἐπεὶ πλέον οἴνοπι μορφῇ
ἱμερταὶ γεγάασιν, ὅτε στενάχουσι γυναῖκες.

> No laugh was ever like that, since women become more desirable with that ruddy flush when they mourn.

However, this *gnome* adds to the uncertainty of Pan's usefulness in advice, since it concerns the man's desire, and not a way of lessening it. But the general idea is that by listening to stories of couples in love, the woman will be more inclined to imitate them and accede to the man's request.

[73] 42.383-390.

narrator-text *gnomai*, which were meant as illustrations of a point and therefore could be taken at face value by the narratee, the character-text *gnomai* always have a performative function which twists the impact that they have on the narratee: since the latter is aware of the context, he cannot receive them as genuine general sayings as the characters are meant to do. Indeed they are used to deceive, to convince and to threaten, and, in the speech of Pan, they appear as part of the narrator's play on the genre of didactic love poetry. The only one uttered by a female character is used fallaciously as part of a deceiving speech. The counterpoint which they seemed to offer to narrator-text *gnomai* is only a pretence; in reality, they do not affirm clearly that women suffer as much as men. It seems that Nonnian narrator is more interested in the masculine, than in the feminine, perspective on love matters.

d/ Love, an irresistible force

The rest of the *Dionysiaca*'s gnomic utterances concerning love underline what an inescapable force it is. Although we saw that the question of whether men or women are the most affected by love sufferings does not receive a straightforward answer, the narrator does assert that both men and women are preyed upon by Eros. When Aura dreams that, in the shape of a lioness, she is made to bow before Aphrodite, the narrator comments:

> οὐδὲ μάτην πρὸς Ἔρωτας ἔην ὄναρ, ὅττι καὶ αὐτοὶ
> εἰς λίνον ἄνδρα φέρουσι καὶ ἀγρώσσουσι γυναῖκα.
>
> Nor was it vain for the loves, since they themselves bring a man into the net and hunt a woman.[74]

What is a dream to Aura is not actually unreal as far as love is concerned. The *gnome* underlines not only the universal reach of love's power, but also the prophetic aspect of the dream. Because of this, Dionysus is afraid to let Ampelos be in the company of the other Satyrs, lest another fall in love with him:

> ἀρτιθαλὴς ἅτε κοῦρος ὁμόχρονον ἥλικα τέρπων.
>
> as a freshblooming boy might well charm a comrade of his own age.[75]

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[74] 48.285-6. This *gnome* draws on the traditional metaphor of love as a hunt; see Gigli Piccardi 1985:34-5, and Buffière 1994:lvii, "L'archer Éros, au fond, est un chasseur. Et justement la chasse et la pêche fournissent aux poètes de l'amour un assez bon lot de metaphores."

Furthermore, a narrator-text *gnome* asserts that love is stronger than sleep, through the example of Morrheus, whose love for Chalcomedeia prevents from sleeping:

> πολυφλοίσβῳ δὲ μερίμνῃ
> τήκετο Χαλκομέδης μεμνημένος· ἐν γὰρ ὀμίχλῃ
> θερμότεροι γεγάασιν ἀεὶ σπινθῆρες Ἐρώτων.
>
> He melted in the resounding flood of care when he thought of Chalcomede: for in the darkness the sparks of the loves are always hotter.[76]

It is as if night was the space for a contest between sleep and love, the latter having here the upper hand. Sleep was called πανδαμάτωρ both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*,[77] an appellation to which an allusion is made in Iris' speech, when, in the shape of Night, she comes to attempt to convince him to overcome Zeus, on the order of Hera: Ὕπνε, τί πανδαμάτωρ κικλήσκεαι;[78] But in the *Dionysiaca*, Love is clearly a rival of Sleep, as Iris herself at the end of her speech to Sleep:

> πανδαμάτωρ θεὸς ἄλλος ὁμόπτερος, εἴκελος Ὕπνῳ,
> βαιὸς Ἔρως, Κρονίδην ὀλίγῳ νίκησε βελέμνῳ.
>
> Another allvanquishing god, winged like sleep, little love, conquered Cronides with a tiny dart.[79]

The other occurrences of the adjective πανδαμάτωρ, except one, refer to Eros, confirming his superiority, and Iris' question seems to contest Homer's appellation, implying that this adjective is not best applied to Sleep.[80]

A character-text *gnome* states that not even time is stronger than love:

> παλαιοτέροιο γὰρ αἰεὶ
> φάρμακόν ἐστιν ἔρωτος ἔρως νέος· οὐ γὰρ ὀλέσσαι
> ὁ χρόνος οἶδεν ἔρωτα, καὶ εἰ μάθε πάντα καλύπτειν.
> … πόθος πόθον οἶδε μαραίνειν.

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[75] 10.249.

[76] 33.263-5.

[77] *Il.* 24.5, *Od.* 9.373.

[78] 31.143, repeated at 158.

[79] 31.171-2.

[80] πανδάματωρ is only used in character-text: Zeus, Victory and Aglaia about Eros: 1.404, 2.223 and 33.109; Hyssacos about Desire, 34.34. Orontes applies it to Dionysus ironically at 17.252. A character-text *gnome* develops this idea of the superiority of Love over Sleep by showing that love can be felt even in dreams, *i.e.* during sleep, at 34.96-7 (Morrheus dreams about Chalcomedeia):
ἔστι καὶ ὑπναλέοιο γάμου χάρις, ἔστι καὶ αὐτῶν
ἱμερόεις γλυκὺς οἶστρος ὀνειρείων ὑμεναίων.
Even in sleep marriage has its charm, even in dreams it has a passion of sweet desire.

> For new love is ever the physic of older love, since old time knows not how to destroy love even if he has learnt to hide all things. … Fancy can wither fancy.[81]

Love being an inescapable necessity, it can only be replaced by itself, as is underlined by the *polyptota* "ἔρωτος ἔρως" and "πόθος πόθον".[82]

According to the *Dionysiaca*, the only force possibly able to match love's power is wine. In the Beroe episode, the narrator adds a *gnome* explaining that wine and love stir up each other, which is why Dionysus is liable to feel love most acutely:

> καὶ πλέον ἔφλεγε Βάκχον, ἐπεὶ νόον οἶνος ἐγείρει
> εἰς πόθον, ὁπλοτέρων δὲ πολὺ πλέον ἄφρονι κέντρῳ
> θελγομένην ἀχάλινον ἔχων πειθήνιον ἵβην.
>
> [Eros] set Bacchos more in a flame, since wine excites the mind for desire, and wine finds unbridled youth much more obedient to the rein when it is charmed with the prick of unreason.[83]

A character-text *gnome* complements this narratorial intervention, in Pentheus' speech to Tiresias:

> ἀλλ᾽ ἐρέεις, ὅτι Βάκχος ἐποίνιον εὗρεν ὀπώρην·
> οἶνος ἀεὶ μεθύοντας ἐφέλκεται εἰς Ἀφροδίτην,
> εἰς φόνον ἀσταθέος νόον ἀνέρος οἶνος ἐγείρει.
>
> But you will say, Bacchos has invented the wine-fruit. Yes, and what wine always does is to drag drunken men into lust; what wine does is excite an unstable man's mind to murder.[84]

Although this *gnome* does state that it is possible for wine to induce love, it also presents such love as comparable to murder, since it originates when the mind has been made "unstable", ἀσταθής, by wine. The narrator leaves it to character-text to emphasise the

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[81] 11.358-62. Eros advises Dionysus to forget Ampelos and find another lover.

[82] This idea is also found in Ach. Tat. 6.17.4.

παλαιὸν γὰρ ἔρωτα μαραίνει νέος ἔρως· γυνὴ δὲ μάλιστα τὸ παρὸν φιλεῖ, τοῦ δὲ ἀπόντος, ἕως καινὸν οὐχ εὗρε, μνημονεύει· προσλαβοῦσα δὲ ἕτερον, τὸν πρότερον τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπήλειψε.

> A new love makes an old passion wither away; a woman is best pleased with things present before her, and only remembers the absent as long as she has failed to find something new. When she takes a new lover, she wipes off the impression of the old from her heart.

and in Ovid, *Remedia amoris* 483-4, about Agamemnon:

Dixit, et hanc habuit solacia magna prioris,
Et posita est cura cura repulsa nova.

> He spoke, and had from [Briseis] much comfort for the loss of the first one, and his love was left aside, sent away by the new love. (I translate.)

[83] 42.30-32.

[84] 45.82-4.

dangerous aspect of wine and, therefore, of Dionysus, in gnomic utterances. Nonetheless these two *gnomai* claim that wine has some power over love.

III. Conclusion

Gnomic utterances are rather unobtrusive narratorial interventions; if they interrupt the narrative, they do not add elements of another narrative to it – unlike in that respect comparisons and similes, but rather they develop an idea to give an explanation or to argue a point. However they are quite revealing as to the frame of mind of the narrator. The Nonnian narrator is not attempting to moralise as the Quintian one does, but some notions do shine through his gnomic utterances and underline the importance of the theme of love in the contents of his epic, and of lyric poetry as far as the ποικιλία of genres is concerned.

Chapter 9. Comparisons and similes

Among the considerable poetic and literary heritage passed down by Homer to his successors, comparisons and similes are one of the most recognisable devices.[1] Through them, the narrator invites his narratee to refer to a well-known image or theme as a parallel through which he will gain better understanding, or a more vivid view, of the narrative itself. As such, they play a significant role in the relationship between the narrator and the narratee, being, in the words of I. de Jong, "the most important group" of elements of "shared knowledge".[2] Indeed, through them, the narrator offers to his narratee an alternative image, supposed to be familiar to both of them, to illustrate a particular point of the narrative and achieve certain effects, through a short vignette which temporarily replaces the narrative. Finally, they provide the narratee with an insight into the narrator's imagination, since he is the one choosing the contents of the comparisons or similes so as to be most relevant in the context where they appear.

I. The use of comparisons and similes in Homer, Apollonius, Quintus, and Nonnus

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are characterised by the high number of comparative devices found in them – especially in the former. I. de Jong numbers 342 comparisons and similes in the *Iliad*, of which 303 occur in narrator text.[3] E. Wilkins finds 129 comparisons and similes in the *Odyssey*,[4] and 151 in the *Argonautica*.[5] About the latter poem, A. James writes:

> [Apollonius'] similes occur with a frequency close to that of the similes in the *Iliad*, but they are much more evenly spread through the poem and they avoid excessive repetition of theme. Although only a minority of his similes show substantial originality of theme, Apollonius studiously avoids anything like subservient dependence on Homer.[6]

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[1] In this section, I follow Coffey, 1957:113 ff (and De Jong 2004:123), in distinguishing between comparisons, a shorter device without a finite verb, and similes, longer and containing their own action presented through one or more finite verbs.
[2] De Jong, 2004:93.
[3] De Jong, 2004:124. E. Wilkins, 1920:147, agrees with this number, divided into 124 comparisons and 218 similes.
[4] Wilkins 1920:147. 76 comparisons and 53 similes.
[5] Wilkins 1921:163. 60 comparisons and 91 similes.
[6] James 1969:77.

As for Quintus, he makes an even more frequent use of the device than Homer: C. Maciver finds 305 comparisons and similes in the *Posthomerica*.[7] According to A. James,

> Of his very frequent similes the great majority are directly traceable to one or more Homeric models and his debt is also considerable to Apollonius' similes, although close verbal correspondence is for the most part studiously avoided, and he often varies a particular theme several times over in widely separated passages of his fourteen books.[8]

I have found 260 comparisons and similes in Nonnus, that is to say, in proportion, much fewer than in the *Iliad* and in the *Posthomerica* – where the narrator, in his project of writing a seamless sequel to the *Iliad*, even outdoes Homer. These 260 comparisons and similes are almost evenly divided between narrator-text – 153 occurrences – and character-text – 107 occurrences.

Like narrators of previous epics, and following the example set by the Homeric narrator, the Nonnian narrator uses several types of comparisons and similes. M. Coffey distinguishes two types of comparisons: a rarer type "based on the comparative of the adjective", and a more common one, "consist[ing] of an introductory word such as ὡς, followed by a noun which is often qualified by an adjective or a participle." He then distinguishes similes "in which one or more clauses containing a finite verb or verbs are attached to the original phrase of comparison", from "the long simile which consists of a separate sentence introduced by ὡς ὅτε or similar words".[9] I. de Jong gives a more detailed definition of the long simile:

> A situation or scene, usually drawn from nature or daily life, which is introduced by way of comparison (X did Y, *as when* . . ., thus X did Y). The scenes/situations are usually omnitemporal (epic τε, present tense, gnomic aorists) and peopled by anonymous persons. The point of contact (*tertium comparationis*) between simile and narrative context is usually 'advertised' by means of a verbal echo. The *tertium* points up the *primary function* of the

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[7] Maciver 2012: 126. 79 comparisons and 226 similes. James, 2004:xxv, notes "an unusual concentration in book I", with an average of one simile every 39.5 lines, when the *Iliad* has one simile every 76.2 lines.

[8] James 1969:78.

[9] Coffey 1957:113-14. His example for the first kind of simile is *Od.* 5.51 ff: λάρῳ ὄρνιθι ἐοικώς, / ὅς τε … δεύεται. An example for the second kind could be *Il.* 499-505, ὡς δ'… ὅτε… ὣς τοτε. Edwards, 1987:102, does not mention the first type of comparison: "One is the short simile of two or three words: 'like a god', … 'like man-slaying Ares'. These are common both in Homer and in some other kinds of epic poetry. … They add emphasis, but usually little or no significant description. Very different are the second kind, the long similes, which are almost unknown in other early epics. These presumably developed from the short simile, for one common type uses a short simile as jumping-off point. … Often however, there is a different form of the long simile, which begins as a separate entity in a new verse; after the picture is completed, a final verse rounds off the simile and returns to the narrative."

> simile, which is to illustrate a particular detail of the narrative context. Similes often have one or more *secondary functions* as well: to make clear a contrast, draw thematic lines, foreshadow later events, or engage the narratees by making them share the feelings of one of the characters.[10]

It could be added that another criterion for the definition of the long similes is that it contains its own short narrative.

As for other devices, the Nonnian narrator makes his own choices in adapting comparisons and similes to his narrative. The following study will focus on narrator-text occurrences and investigate the different ways he inserts some Homeric comparative devices in his poem while renewing them at the same time.

II. The Nonnian comparisons and similes

1. Contents

The contents of Homeric and Apollonian comparisons and similes have been classified by E. Wilkins.[11] Her main categories are: natural phenomena, the vegetable world, the animal world, human beings (their relations, activities and experiences), the objects and materials of civilised life, the gods, and mythological characters. This latter category is specific to Apollonius. C. Maciver provides a classification – of the long similes only – of the *Posthomerica*,

> under four very broad categories: similes with animals or hunters and animals as subject matter; elemental similes, that is, similes related to celestial elements, the sea, trees, plants and crops); mythological similes, that is, similes that have myths or gods as their subject matter; and I would then classify all other similes together.[12]

Below is my own classification of the Nonnian comparisons and similes found in narrator-text. I have not made a distinction between the two types of comparison defined by M. Coffey – comparisons based on a comparative adjective are rare. I have indicated short similes by underlining the reference, and long similes, comprising a short action, by putting the reference in bold font.

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[10] De Jong, 2004a:xviii.
[11] Wilkins 1920 and 1920a for Homer, 1921 for Apollonius.
[12] Maciver 2012:127-8.

I. NATURAL PHENOMENA

1. Celestial objects

a. The moon
- in the sky 1.215
- its radiance 10.186, 41.256
- its roundness 37.107
- the crescent moon 22.347

b. The stars
- their radiance 13.454
- scattered in the sky 14.239
- shooting star 7.198, 24.90
- shooting star with bright tail 42.6
- Phosphoros 21.311
- Hesperos 26.143

2. Atmospheric phenomena

a. The wind
- its speed 11.226, 22.161, 28.102, 28.150, 28.282,32.256
- a favourable wind at sea 28.252
- a storm 17.243
- a sea storm 32.153

b. Lightning
- its speed 47.610

c. A cloud
- obscuring the sky 28.191

3. The seasons
- autumn 2.640
- winter air **22.213**

4. Fire
- smoke 1.303, 8.107, 16.302, 47.148

5. Water

a. The sea
- its brightness 14.83
- its ever changing aspect 42.58
- the sound of waves 36.473
- foam 43.318

b. Rivers
- the Nile 22.3
- a torrent 22.171
- river Maiandros 25.405

6. Stone
- stones struck together, produce a spark 2.493
- rock 13.423
- a falling cliff 37.583
- mount Parnassus 40.83

II. THE ANIMAL WORLD

1. Birds
- a flight of birds 1.142
- a flight of cranes 14.331, 36.36
- speed of a wing 7.216, 14.6, 22.115, 32.37

2. Snakes
- an amphisbena 5.145

- a snake 15.102, 26.308
- a snake's skin 41.181

3. Fish
- fish upsetting a boat 36.367
- fish in a net 39.135

4. Cattle
- a mad bull 32.128, 33.2
- bellowing bull 17.215
- bellowing bulls 45.328
- oxen and sheep 20.178
- an ox stung by a gadfly **42.185**

5. Horses
- a colt 11.184, 28.25
- Pegasos 28.166, 37.266

6. Wild animals
- a wild beast 29.186
- a lion 30.55, 37.761
- a lioness with twins 3.387

III. HUMAN BEINGS, THEIR ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES

1. Agriculture, farming, crafting

a. Human activities
- a man taming a horse 1.310
- distance between a girl and her loom 10.410, 37.630
- threshing grain 12.348
- reaping corn 17.155
- a shepherd **20.333**
- a blacksmith **22.337**
- crushing olives 29.189
- shepherds gathering sheep **34.252**

b. Tools
- a torch 2.190, 24.94
- a knife 2.430
- steel 4.383
- a lamp 5.176
- hammers 17.155
- ships' hawsers 23.109
- an anvil 28.311

c. Products of human activity
- rafters 2.199, 37.592
- wine 11.93
- carved ivory 18.86
- a tower 22.305
- figjuice curdling milk **29.157**
- a wheel 48.388
- the statue of Hera 48.468

2. War
- an army preparing for battle 2.375
- an army of nine thousand shouting 17.227, 29.294, 32.176
- a victorious man **20.171**
- a soldier looking through his helmet **22.57**

- a fighting soldier 28.116
- an arrow 37.689
- a winner at Marathon 38.73
- a man of Marathon 39.213

3. Sports and games
- a ball 2.465
- an actor looking through his mask **22.57**
- the pyrrhic dance **28.292**
- a discus' throw 37.436
- a swimming girl 40.319
- a chariot driver in a race **43.270**
- a woman dancing 46.120

4. Other human activities

a. Thinking
- speed of thought 7.216, 14.6, 22.115, 32.37

b. Sleeping
- a man waking up 25.548
- a man dreaming of riches **35.245**
- a dream 48.639

c. Being in love
- a bridegroom 40.325
- a young man in love **1.525**

d. Grieving
- a sorrowful man 12.128
- tears 44.264

e. Other
- a sailor hearing a siren **2.11**
- a drunken man 37.540

5. Family ties
- a father and a son 29.34
- a mother chasing a fly 29.80

6. Mythological Characters

a. From the *Dionysiaca*
- a prophetess of the Bassarids 8.11
- Dionysus (Lyaios) 11.59
- Typhon 22.140

b. From Homeric epic
- Diomedes 15.165
- Glaucos 22.147
- Teucros and Ajax 28.61
- Iphiclos 28.284
- Otos 36.247
- Ephialtes 36.250

c. From Quintus
- Achilles and Penthesileia 35.27

d. Other mythological characters
- Nereid riding a dolphin **1.72**
- the Sirens 22.12
- Phoibos singing 3.167
- Hermes 19.236
- Oinomaos 20.154

- Polydeuces 28.256
- Phoibos and Atymnios 29.28
- Apollo and Hyacinthos **29.95**
- Heracles, his rattle 29.240
- Daphne 33.222
- Apollo 33.224
- Oinomaos, his chariot 37.428
- Deianeira 43.12
- Hippomenes and Atalanta **48.180**
- Selene **48.319**

7. Elements related to the human body
- a man's nail 22.292
- a ghost 26.140
- the shadow of a man **29.169**

8. Other
- a cone 2.165
- the inhabitants of the sea 26.281

The comparisons and similes are very unevenly spread between the books of the poem. According to my calculations, the average number of comparisons and similes by book is 3, and only six books contain 6 or more occurrences of these devices. It has been argued that the *Iliad* contains more comparisons and similes than the *Odyssey* because its narrative is more monotonous, and this monotony has to be relieved by the insertion of allusions to a world and activities other than those presented in the narrative, that is to say, not related to war and the battle field.[13] And indeed, these six books of the *Dionysiaca* which present the most comparative devices are books mainly concerned with fighting: the fight against Typhon in books 1 and 2, and the Indian war in books 22, 28 and 29. The exception is book 37, which contains the narrative of the games following the end of the war.

The Nonnian categories are very similar to those of his predecessors, although he uses no comparisons or similes drawn from the vegetal world,[14] nor from the theme of hunting, although it is a favourite of Homer and Quintus. The most important category is that related to human beings, and within it, to mythological characters, who do not appear in Homer – the Homeric narrator only uses comparisons to gods, 24 in all

[13] See Bowra, 1930:123, and Shorey, 1922:256: "In the general economy of the poem the simile adorns and relieves the monotony and the painful strain of uninterrupted fighting."
[14] This is not true of character-text, which has six occurrences of such comparisons and similes.

according to E. Wilkins.[15] Mythological characters are introduced by the Apollonian narrator in two occurrences,[16] and from C. Maciver's lists, it appears that the narrator of the *Posthomerica*, like the Homeric one, only uses gods in his comparative devices.[17] Therefore the numerous comparisons based on mythological characters appear as a Nonnian conceit, and probably result from the narrator expecting his narratee to be well-read, and to know many myths, so that he is able to see the link created in the comparisons and similes. The importance of mythological *comparanda* is also part of the Nonnian conception of story-telling, in which the main narrative is constantly supplemented with allusions to other myths.[18] It is remarkable that the only character mentioned twice, Oinomaos, is linked to a myth where a child is murdered by his parents, like Pentheus or Itylos: indeed Oinomaos' daughter Hippodameia becomes the wife of Pelops before the latter is dismembered by his father Tantalus – the theme of dismemberment is also very pregnant in the *Dionysiaca* through the characters of Pentheus and Actaion.[19]

Incidentally, it is remarkable that Ovid, who also has an interest in mythography, does not really rival the *Dionysiaca* where the proportion of mythological comparisons and similes is concerned. According to E. Wilkins' classification of the comparisons and similes found in Ovid,[20] 48 of the 560 devices listed are concerned with mythological characters, a proportion already lower than the *Dionysiaca*'s; but these numbers take into account all of Ovid's works. If one considers the *Metamorphoses* only, Ovid's work which is the closest to a mythological epic, only 8 of the 221 comparisons and similes are based on mythological characters, which confirms the Nonnian originality.[21]

Finally, the classification of Nonnian occurrences puts into relief a major difference between the Homeric and the Nonnian uses of comparisons and similes. In Homer, they

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[15] Wilkins 1920a:158-9.
[16] Wilkins 1921:166.
[17] Maciver 2012:143.
[18] This is even truer of character text, where 59 of the 107 comparisons and similes are drawn from mythological characters: characters are fond of comparing themselves to other characters placed in similar situations or predicaments.
[19] The story is told in character-text by Staphylos (18.20-33), who parallels Tantalus with Lycaon, who also served his own son as a meal to Zeus.
[20] E. Wilkins 1932 and 1932a.
[21] To sum up, the proportions of comparisons and similes based on mythological characters are the following (taking into account both narrator-text and chracter-text): *Argonautica*, 1,3%; *Metamorphoses*, 3,6% (Ovid's complete works, 8,6%); Nonnus, 32,3%.

are very often contrastive, in that they provide the narratee with images taken from a peaceful, everyday-like world, to illustrate with a pathetic effect the tragic and heroic scenes of the Trojan war.[22] But the preponderance of mythological *comparanda* and the fact that I had to create a section for comparisons and similes taken from the theme of war – such a section does not exist in E. Wilkins' classification – indicates that such is not the aim of the Nonnian narrator. Although he does provide glimpses of scenes from everyday life familiar to his narratee, he is less consistent than the Homeric narrator at recreating this contrasting parallel universe. In a considerable number of occurrences, the comparisons and similes are intended to complement the narrative by providing more mythological substance and to encourage the narratee to draw parallels between known myths.

2. Homeric inspiration: comparisons to Iliadic characters.

Homeric inspiration manifests itself in different ways in the Nonnian comparisons and similes. Firstly, the Nonnian narrator uses Homeric characters and situations as subject matter for comparisons and short similes, on six occasions. At 15.165, he compares Hymenaios' brilliance to Diomedes' after he has taken the arms of Glaucos: at *Iliad* 6.235-6, the narrator tells of the exchange of arms between Diomedes and Glaucos, underlining the costliness of Glaucos' arms, made of gold – χρύσεα – when Diomedes' were only made of bronze. However, Diomedes' radiance is made more conspicuous at 5.4, where Athena is said to cause a bright fire to shine from his shield and helmet. It seems that the Nonnian narrator is merging together two striking episodes depicting Diomedes, proceeding in this case much as he composes his own epic, that is, by putting together elements of myths which are most relevant together in a specific passage. Here, the comparison with Diomedes underlines Hymenaios' worth in the battle, Diomedes being,

[22] The characteristics of the world described in the simile are listed by M. Edwards (1987:103): "The world depicted in the similes is different from that of the heroic narrative. The time is the present, not the legendary past; the place is not the battlefield before Troy but the Greek home or countryside…, the people are ordinary men and women, not heroes, kings and deities, and the way of life is familiar, everyday, and humble. … The setting is the universal one of hills, sea, stars, rivers, storms, fires, and wild animals, and against it the lives of shepherds, plowmen, woodcutters, craftsmen, harvesters, donkeys, oxen, housewives, mothers, and children go on as they always have."

in the *Iliad*, the best embodiment of the heroic qualities and values. As for Glaucos, he is mentioned in a comparison at 22.147, in a depiction of a Lydian warrior's shining golden armour.

At 28.61-[60], the Indian Phlogios is compared to Teucros, as he takes refuge under his brother Agraios' shield, as Teucros did under his half-brother Ajax' shield. Teucros' method is described at *Iliad* 8.266-72. This Nonnian simile indicates that the narrator does not reserve Iliadic themes for the Dionysiac army, since the characters compared here are Indians. It also hints at how closely some of the Nonnian battle scenes are imitated from the *Iliad*. Not only does the narrator includes Homeric tactical elements in his poem, but he even indicates to his narratee that in has done so – in case the narratee was not aware of it – through the simile: he acknowledges his debt to Homer as well as underlines his own work in adapting these Homeric themes to his own poem.

The occurrence comparing an anonymous Indian warrior to Iphiclos at 28.284-7 achieves yet another effect:

> εἰς δρόμον Ἰφίκλῳ πανομοίιος, ὅς τις ἐπείγων
> ταρσὰ ποδῶν ἀβάτοιο κατέγραφεν ἄκρα γαλήνης,
> καὶ σταχύων ἐφύπερθε μετάρσιον εἶχε πορείην,
> ἀνθερίκων πάτον ἄκρον ἀκαμπέα ποσσὶν ὁδεύων.
>
> … as good a runner as Iphiclos, who used to skim the untrodden calm only touching the surface with the soles of his feet, and passed over a field of corn without bending the top of the ears with his travelling footsteps.

Iphiclos appears only once in the *Iliad*, at 23.636, in a speech where Nestor recounts the feats of his youth during the funeral games for king Amarynceus: he had won a race against Iphiclos. In mentioning this secondary character, the Nonnian narrator shows off his erudition, while ensuring originality by inserting the Homeric comparison taken from the context of sport into a passage about war. In addition, as F. Vian remarks,[23] the ability to run over the sea and over a field of corn which the Nonnian narrator lends to Iphiclos is another allusion to the *Iliad*, where these two qualities are attributed to the horses born of Erichthonios' mares and Boreas at 20.226-9. As is his custom, the Nonnian narrator imitates the contents but uses a different vocabulary: the Homeric narrator mentioned the "large back of the sea", εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης, and "the top of the white waves", ἄκρον ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνος ἁλὸς πολιοῖο. Rather than fields of corn, the Iliadic version speaks of the

[23] Vian 1990:329 *ad* 28.284-7.

more indefinite "fertile land", ἐπὶ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν. The two qualities are also presented in the opposite order by the Nonnian narrator – in Homer, running over the sea comes second. However, an echo is created by the use of the word ἄκρον in the last line of the comparison, referring to the top of the corn ears, while it referred to the crest of the waves in Homer.[24]

Finally, the giant Colletes is compared to Otos at 36.247, and to Ephialtes at 36.250. They were two giant brothers known for having tried to pile up mountains so as to attack Olympus. The Nonnian narrator alludes to their attempt to take away Artemis and Athena, a lesser known episode, according to his taste for erudition, and, following the Hellenistic example, for the rarer versions of myths.[25] At 36.253-4, he mentions their capture of Ares as another hint of Colletes' strength.[26]

Thus, these comparisons and similes referring to characters of the *Iliad* exemplify yet another way the Nonnian narrator includes and adapts elements from Homeric epic into his poem. As is his custom, he makes sure to vary the context so as to maintain the ποικιλία and the originality of his work, and by referring to rare characters or versions of myths, he shows himself off as a knowledgeable narrator, who expects his narratees to understand his allusions.

3. Nonnian adaptations of Homeric comparisons

The Nonnian narrator's Homeric inspiration also manifests itself in the adaptation of Homeric comparisons and similes to his own poem. The subject matter of many of the Nonnian occurrences can also be found in Homer. They are drawn from atemporal

[24] F. Vian adds in his note that these two qualities have been reused in epic before the *Dionysiaca*. Iphiclos was able to run over ears of wheat, ἐπὶ πυραμίνων ἀθέρων according to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of women* (fr.62 Merkelbach-West), and the Argonaut Euphemos could run over the fields according to Apollonius (*Argonautica* 1.182-4), who reuses the imperfect θέεσκεν, to run, already used by Homer in the plural. The narrator there also plays on the Homeric ἄκρον by mentioning the tip of the toes of the runner, ἄκροις ἴχνεσι. The Nonnian narrator offers a variant to this detail by referring to the soles of the feet, ταρσὰ ποδῶν. Finally, both qualities are attributed by the narrator of the *Aeneid* to the Amazon Camilla, in the Homeric order, at 7.808-11.

[25] Otos and Ephialtes trying to pile up mountains: *Od.* 11.315-7, *Aen.* 6.682-4, Hyginus 28.2. Only Apollodorus mentions that this effort was made in order to court Artemis, and Hera, instead of Athena in Nonnus. (*Library* 1.7.4).

[26] See *Il.* 5.385-6.

subjects meant to be familiar to the narratee, and which for the most part are also found in earlier epic poems.

Yet the Nonnian narrator does not content himself with the simple transfer of Homeric phrases into his poem. Although some of his comparisons and similes can be easily recognised as having been borrowed from Homeric epic, they are always transformed, varied in a number of ways indicative of the work of the Nonnian narrator upon them. He can apply the same comparison to a different element: he underlines the radiance of a person, Tectaphos, at 26.144, by comparing it to Hesperos, which had been mentioned to qualify the radiance of an object, namely Achilles' spear, at *Iliad* 22.318. He can also produce a variation in the overall image produced by the comparison, as in the case of the simile comparing wrestling men to the rafters of a house. At *Iliad* 23.711-13, Ajax and Odysseus grasp each other with their arms, like rafters in the shape of an upturned V:

> ἀγκὰς δ᾽ ἀλλήλων λαβέτην χερσὶ στιβαρῇσιν
> ὡς ὅτ᾽ ἀμείβοντες, τούς τε κλυτὸς ἤραρε τέκτων
> δώματος ὑψηλοῖο βίας ἀνέμων ἀλεείνων.
>
> And [they] grappled each other in the hook of their heavy arms, as when
> rafters lock, when a renowned architect has fitted them
> in the roof of a high house to keep out the force of the winds' spite.

In the Nonnian version at 37.590-3, Aiacos is lifting Aristaios off the ground, holding him by the middle with his two arms, this time like rafters in the shape of a T:

> ἀγκὰς ἔχων, οὐ νῶτον ἢ ὄρθιον αὐχένα κάμπτων,
> πήχεσιν ἀμφοτέροισι μεσαίτατον ἄνδρα κομίζων,
> ἶσον ἀμειβόντεσσιν ἔχων τύπον, οὕς κάμε τέκτων
> πρηῢνων ἀνέμοιο θυελλήεσσαν ἀνάγκην.
>
> He held the man in his arms, bending neither back nor upright neck carrying the man with both arms by the middle, so that they were like a couple of cross-rafters which some carpenters has made to calm the stormy compulsion of the wind.

The difference echoes the outcome of the wrestling match: in the *Iliad*, both wrestlers are of the same strength and the match ends without designating a winner, whereas in the *Dionysiaca*, Aiacos wins the first prize. The mention of the blowing wind underlines the equality of Ajax and Odysseus' strength, leaning against each other and forming an immovable structure in the Homeric version, and the superiority of Aiacos in the Nonnian one, carrying his adversary without wavering.

As can be observed from this example, the Nonnian narrator never repeats a comparison or simile verbatim, but rephrases it in his own words: the comparison of the distance between two runners with that between a girl and her loom at *Iliad* 23.760, is found twice in the *Dionysiaca* in the same context, each time with different wording. The same goes for the comparison of the distance between two chariots in the race with the distance of a discus' throw, at *Dionysiaca* 27.436-8 and *Iliad* 23.431-2: both use the word αἰζηός, "vigorous", to refer to the thrower, but it is an adjective in Homer and an substantive in Nonnus. Moreover, the Nonnian narrator transfers the stress from the idea of trying out one's youthful's strength – πειρώμενος ἥβης – to that of the strength of the hand – βριαρῇ παλάμῃ.

This device of changing the focus of the comparison or simile is often used by the Nonnian narrator to present the Homeric vignette from another angle and to complement the very short narrative begun in Homer, as happens with the simile of the mother chasing a fly from her sleeping child, which is used in the *Iliad* at 4.130-1 about Athena turning an arrow away from Menelaus and by the Nonnian narrator at 29.85-7 in the same context, but this time involving Aphrodite and Hymenaios. The Homeric simile focuses on the sleeping child, that is to say, on the helplessness of the warrior targeted by the arrow:

> ὡς ὅτε μήτηρ
> παιδὸς ἐέργῃ μυῖαν, ὅθ' ἡδέι λέξεται ὕπνῳ.
>
> as when a mother
> brushes a fly away from her child who is lying in sweet sleep.

whereas the Nonnian variant is concerned with the action of the mother:

> ὡς ὅτε μήτηρ
> παιδὸς ἔτι κνώσσοντος ἀλήμονα μυῖαν ἐλάσσῃ,
> ἠρέμα φάρεος ἄκρον ἐπαιθύσσουσα προσώπῳ.
>
> as when a mother drives off a vagrant fly from her sleeping child, fanning his face with a corner of her robe.

The Homeric image is complemented and the narratee is now shown how the mother chased the fly using her dress, a touching detail which adds to the everyday-like character of the scene. As is his custom, the Nonnian narrator develops the image by adding adjectives describing the fly and the child.

Following this tendency, he can also expand a Homeric short simile into a longer one. When Paion heals Ares' wound, his action is compared to that of the fig juice curdling milk at *Iliad* 5.902-4:

> ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ὀπὸς γάλα λευκὸν ἐπειγόμενος συνέπηξεν
> ὑγρὸν ἐόν, μάλα δ᾽ ὦκα περιτρέφεται κυκόωντι,
> ὣς ἄρα καρπαλίμως ἰήσατο θοῦρον Ἄρηα.
>
> As when the juice of the fig in white milk rapidly fixes
> that which was fluid before and curdles quickly for one who
> stirs it; in such speed as this he healed violent Ares.

The Nonnian narrator proposes his own version of this simile at 29.157-61:

> ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ὀπὸς ταχυεργός, ἐπειγόμενος γάλα πῆξαι,
> χιονέης κυκόων ἀπαμείρεται ὑγρὸν ἐέρσης,
> ὄφρά μιν ἐντύνειε πεπηγμένον αἰπόλος ἀνὴρ
> κυκλώσας ταλάροιο τύπῳ, τροχοειδέι ταρσῷ·
> ὣς ὅ γε φοίνιον ἕλκος ἀκέσσατο Φοιβάδι τέχνῃ·
>
> As the quickworking figjuice that curdles milk in a trice, mixes with the white liquid and takes away its wet, when a goatherd prepares to compress the stuff in the shape of a cheese-basket on a round mat, so quickly he made the bleeding wound whole by Phoibos' art.

Here he gives a much more precise image, mentioning the definite characters of the goatherd instead of the indefinite Homeric participle, and dwelling on the process of cheese-making at a length which draws the narratee's attention further away from the narrative.[27]

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[27] Incidentally, the focus on the preparation of food in this simile is reminiscent of the passage concerning the meal Brongos served to Dionysus at 17.57-8, with the following echoes: πεπηγμένον ~ νεοπηγέα, ταλάροιο ~ ταλάροις, τροχοειδέι ~ τροχόεντα. Brongos is compared to Molorchos, another mortal who served a meal to Heracles, a story told by Callimachus in book 3 of the *Aitia* (fr.55-59 Pfeiffer). In his note to *Dionysiaca* 17.52ff, B. Gerlaud (1994) lists similarities between the wording of the Nonnian Brongos scene and fragments of the *Aitia* and the *Hecale*, which indicate, according to him, the Nonnian narrator's wish to make conspicuous his Callimachean inspiration.
T. Gelzer (1958:177-8) writes: "The description of Theseus' visit to Hecale was considered very successful in Late Antiquity and often imitated by other poets … . The *Hecale* became very famous and was read, copied, paraphrased and commented on up to the thirteenth century A.D." It is likely that the Nonnian narrator is following this trend in the passages quoted above. Furthermore, the meal served by Philemon and Baucis to Jupiter and Mercury is described at length in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8.640-78), with only a short mention of cheese at 666: "lactis massa coacti". The Pseudo-Virgil's *Moretum* is another example poetry concerned with the preparation of a meal, although cheese appears there only as an ingredient.

Thus these examples illustrate how the Nonnian narrator adapts, rather than copies, Homeric similes as he inserts them in his own epic. A. James writes: "Whereas Nonnus has much greater genuine creativity than Quintus, he is less scrupulous about taking over phrases verbatim from Homer."[28] But rather than phrases, it is the subject matter which he borrows from Homer, before rewriting them in his own flowery style, and matching them to different characters or contexts, so as to create striking images for narratees unfamiliar with Homer, and a pleasant game of imitation and variation for those who are.

4. Nonnian originality in the treatment of natural elements

Finally, two cases of Nonnian originality stand out in book 2. In earlier epic and in the *Dionysiaca*, most of the comparisons and similes use elements of the cosmos as parallels for the more human elements: for example in the *Iliad*, a veil shines like stars 6.295, the spears of the sleeping warriors flash like thunderbolts at 10.154; many more examples could be given. However, in two occurrences, the Nonnian narrator creates comparisons which achieve the opposite effect, *i.e.* to describe elements of the cosmos through a parallel with human, everyday-like items. The first is at 2.188-90:

> καὶ πυρὰ πάντοθεν ἦεν, ἐπεὶ φλόγες αἴθοπες ἄστρων
> καὶ νύχιοι λαμπτῆρες ἀκοιμήτοιο Σελήνης
> ὡς δαΐδες σελάγιζον
>
> Watchfires were all around: for the blazing flames of the stars, and the nightly lamp of unresting Selene, sparkled like torches.

The second is at 2.199-200:

> καὶ δοκίδες μάρμαιρον ἐπήλυδες, οἷα δὲ μακροὶ
> ἠερόθεν τανύοντο δοκοὶ
>
> Stray meteors were also shining, like long rafters stretching across the sky.

By reducing stars and comets to torches and rafters, the narrator plays with the cosmic setting of the typhonomachy. In this nightly interruption of the fight, he shows the entire world as a great house, peopled with constellations and personified stars,[29] underlining

[28] James 1969:78.
[29] See 2.170-205.

how the battle between Zeus and Typhon is shaking the whole world as it could a house. In addition, the comparison of the fires with torches plays with the Homeric one at *Iliad* 8.555-6, which likens the camp fires of the Achaeans to stars. The Nonnian image is reversed: the sky mirrors the earth, rather than the earth the sky.

Another similar reversal occurs at 2.371-7, where Typhon is building fortifications by piling rocks and cliffs on one another:

> ἦν δὲ κορυσσομένης στρατιῆς τύπος
>
> It looked like an army preparing for battle. (375)

This echoes *Iliad* 16.212-15, where the ranks of the army close together as a man fortifies the walls of his house by lining it with rocks. The echo is underlined by the Nonnian narrator imitation of *Iliad* 16.215:

> ἀσπὶς ἄρ᾽ ἀσπίδ᾽ ἔρειδε, κόρυς κόρυν, ἀνέρα δ᾽ ἀνήρ·
>
> For shield leaned on shield, helmet on helmet, man against man.

at 2.375-6:

> ἀγχιφανὴς γὰρ
> ῥωγάδα ῥωγὰς ἔρειδε, λόφος λόφον, αὐχένα δ᾽ αὐχήν·
>
> For side by side bluff pressed hard on bluff, tor upon tor, ledge upon ledge.

This Homeric echo, here too, underlines the cosmic aspect of the fight, where even natural elements are made to take part in the fight. Geological vocabulary is used instead of names of arms and men, as the Nonnian narrator recreates the effect of the Homeric passage in the context of the typhonomachy.

But all the comparisons and similes of the *Dionysiaca* are not taken from Homer. They can also be drawn from the narrator and narratee's own world, as is the case of the simile likening an Indian peeping through bushes to an actor wearing a mask at 22.57-66, which, according to N. Hopkinson, "ferait allusion à une pratique de son temps, bien attestée surtout au VI^{ème} siècle: la declamation par un récitant unique d'un monologue ou d'un dialogue."[30] The same goes for the second half of the simile in which Morrheus herds Bacchants inside the city like shepherds encircling their sheep and joining hands to regroup them, "procédé pittoresque que Nonnus a pu observer."[31] Such similes are not

[30] Hopkinson & Vian 1994:232 *ad* 22.60-3.
[31] Gerlaud 2005:220 *ad* 34.255-8. He adds that large herds of sheep must have been numerous in Egypt and Asia Minor in the time of Nonnus.

omnitemporal – unlike the ones referring to the brightness of the moon or the swiftness of birds – since they are best understood by a narratee who would be contemporary, so to speak, to the narrator. This underlines how, in the *Dionysiaca*, the narrator cannot be completely separated from the poet: he is rooted in a specific time period, which seeps through the narrative through devices such as comparisons and similes.

III. Conclusion

This overview of the narrator-text comparisons and similes in the *Dionysiaca* shows how the Nonnian narrator appropriates the heritage from previous epic poems to create his own images and parallels. Although the originality of his comparisons and similes varies, he often makes up for occasional lack of invention in the subject matter by the cleverness with which he inserts them in his poem, so as to give the Homeric themes a new meaning in the different context. In doing so, he illustrates his narrative in a way which provides both the variety of vignettes taken from a world external to that of the *Dionysiaca*, and the pleasure of recognising elements taken from Homer and reworked in the Nonnian style.

Chapter 10. *If-not* situations in the *Dionysiaca*

I. The Homeric model

If-not situations constitute another group of narratorial interventions where the relationship between narrator and narratee is brought to the fore. I call *if-not* situations passages where the narrator indicates that something would have happened if it had not been prevented by somebody's action or by another event. I. de Jong describes these situations in the *Iliad* as "passages of the type: 'and now x would have happened, if somebody had not done y'."[1] She also notes that these passages resemble counterfactual sentences, or unreal conditional systems, except that the order is reversed – the *if* clause comes second – and that only the *if* clause is counterfactual, since the main clause describes the hypothetical event which could have taken place. In these interventions, the narrator chooses to mention an event that did not happen, an addition not necessary to the understanding of the fabula, but which influences the narratee's reception of the narrative. This is another example of a device which the Nonnian narrator, like others before him, borrows from Homer.

The *Dionysiaca* contains 25 such *if-not* situations, of which only one occurs in character-text. I. de Jong numbers 38 examples in the *Iliad* – 33 in narrator-text and 5 in character-text. She remarks that *if-not* situations "seem a congenial feature of story-telling",[2] from the observation that all five *if-not* situations from character-text occur in passages of reported narrative. This applies to the one example from the *Dionysiaca*. This remark is also supported by the absence of such passages from didactic epic: it is found neither in Dionysius Periegetes, nor in Nicander, nor in both Oppians. On the contrary, it occurs in the *Odyssey*, as well as in the *Argonautica* and in the *Posthomerica*. Finally, since it appears neither in Colluthus' nor Moschus' epyllia, is seems that only the narrators of longer texts are ready to resort to this device which offers to the narratee's imagination a potential alternative narrative, whereas shorter poems, more self-contained, keep to their

[1] De Jong, 2004:68.
[2] De Jong, 2004:78.

main narrative. An exception to this is Triphiodorus, with two *if-not* situations in the *Taking of Ilion*.[3]

The most frequent construction in the *Iliad* has καί νύ κε in the main clause, and εἰ μή in the subordinate clause. This is the case in 35 of the Iliadic examples; the last three are made of two independent clauses, with the first also starting with καί νύ κε, but the second introduced by ἀλλά. Unlike the Homeric narrator, the Nonnian narrator favours the second construction, with 15 occurrences against 10 of the εἰ μή construction. The ἀλλά clause causes the potential event to end sooner, because unlike the εἰ μή clause, it does not have any hypothetical meaning; in addition, the ἀλλά clause creates a more autonomous alternative event, with a more abrupt return to the actual narrative. Instead of closely linking the potential event to the reason it did not happen ("Hera would have killed Dionysus if Hermes had not carried him away."), it presents this reason as more fortuitous ("Hera would have killed Dionysus; but Hermes saved him…"), and therefore the potential event as more likely to happen. The stronger break between the two clauses creates a minute pause which can more easily become a suspenseful moment for the narratee. In addition, the overall passage is made more vivid by the particle νυ, which separates it from the rest of the narrative as a key moment worthy to be signalled as such.[4]

I. de Jong concludes that *if-not* situations "are yet another way for the [narrator] … to confirm his status as a reliable presentator [sic], a presentator of what really happened."[5] It is true that, by mentioning an alternative event, the narrator might be implying that someone unfamiliar with the story could narrate events which did not happen, and that he himself will do no such thing. But it seems to me, in particular because of the preponderance of the ἀλλά clauses, that the Nonnian narrator is also, if not mainly, aiming at creating suspense and tension in his narrative – although he uses ἀλλά clauses and εἰ μή clauses indifferently. The order of the clauses also points to that: the narratee is told first of an event which does not happen, so that some expectations, hopes, or fears, are created, which are then deceived in the second clause. The suspense created

[3] Lines 43 and 487, both in narrator-text.

[4] *If-not* situations are also found in Apollonius, Quintus, and Triphiodorus, with the same characteristics. A.R.: 1.493, 863, 1298; 2.284, 864, 985; 3.584,1015, 1142; 4.20, 903, 1305, 1651. Q.S.: 1.447, 689, 775; 2.507; 3.26, 366, 514, 571, 752; 4.301, 329, 563; 5.359; 6.503, 538, 542, 570, 644; 7.28, 142, 413, 626; 8.237, 341, 350, 427; 9.255, 403; 10.104; 11.25, 457; 12.93, 395; 13.387; 14.230, 419, 580. Tryph.: 43 and 587.

[5] De Jong, 2004:81.

would not be as strong if the main clause came second as it does in proper counterfactual systems. S. Bassett writes that *if-not* situations are markers of "the critical situation. … [It] concentrates the emotional tension and relieves it, all within the compass of two verses."[6]

II. Effect and subject matter of the Nonnian occurrences.

If-not situations can be of two main types: either the potential event presented by the καί νύ κε clause is not desirable, but it is avoided thanks to a character or an event, in which case the narratee is made to feel suspense, or the potential event is desirable, but someone or something makes it impossible to happen, which creates *pathos* and elicits the compassion of the narratee. According to I. de Jong's analyses, all the Iliadic occurrences belong to the first type. She distinguishes three categories of averted events: "the near death of a hero", "the near defeat of either Greeks or Trojans", and "less dramatic situations".[7]

1. Suspense.

Although all the Homeric occurrences belong to this first type, where the potential undesirable event is averted at the last minute, the kind of suspense created is of a specific type. Where *if-not* situations concern "the near death of a hero", or "the near defeat" of either side, they tend to present an alternative which is contrary to the Cyclic tradition, which the narratee was expected to know. With this choice, the Homeric narrator creates suspense bearing on his own act of storytelling, rather than on the event he is narrating: indeed, the narratee knows from the tradition that Hector does not set the ships on fire (*Iliad* 8.217-8), that Aeneas does not die before Troy falls (5.311-13 and 20.288-91), and that Hector is not killed by Teucer (15.459-64). By leading his narratee to understand that he will not be told the story he expects, the narrator sets up a game of brinkmanship which ends up in confirming his position of "reliable presentator", and demonstrating there his awareness of his own role of story-teller. In the *Dionysiaca*, apart from the occurrences

[6] Bassett, 1938:101.
[7] De Jong, 2004:70. She takes into account narrator-text occurrences only, and numbers eleven occurrences for each category. – The character-text occurrences also belong to the first type.

concerning the death of Dionysus and the end of the world, the narrator is not playing with the narratee's previous knowledge, since most *if-not* situations refer to events which are secondary in Dionysian lore. The suspense created plays on the fear or dismay that the narratee will feel at hearing that a certain undesirable event might take place in the story, rather than on his disappointment at not hearing the story he was expecting.

Out of the 25 Nonnian *if-not* situations, 13 belong to this first type. They include all seven passages where the death of a character, or of all the Bacchants, is averted by the action of another,[8] which correspond to the first of I. de Jong's categories. To the second corresponds the allusion to an Indian attack meant to surprise the Dionysian troops during their meal.[9] But not all the remaining ones concern "less dramatic situations": one of them hints at the destruction of the world.[10]

In these passages, the Nonnian narrator has several ways of increasing the suspense introduced by the *if-not* situation. A first way is to present the event in a short expression whose brevity may leave a more striking impression on the narratee; the clauses introduced by καί νύ κε are for the greatest majority one- or two-lines long, but one occurrence stands out as shorter:

> καί νύ κεν ἠμάλδυνε Διὸς γόνον· ἀλλά μιν Ἑρμῆς
> ἁρπάξας ἐκόμισσε Κυβηλίδος εἰς ῥάχιν ὕλης·
>
> Indeed [Hera] would have destroyed the son of Zeus; but Hermes caught him up, and carried him to the wooded ridge where Cybele dwelt.[11]

On the other hand, the narrator sometimes accumulates several hypothetical clauses which create a fuller vision of the possible disaster; such accumulation ends up in the creation of an alternative short narrative, comparable to the vignettes created by long similes. The narratee is taken out of the narrative and made to follow a different threads

[8] Death of Dionysus: 9.49-52 and 9.137-8; of Eurymedon and Alcon: 30.63-5; of Morrheus: 30.86-7; suicide of Chalcomedeia 33.347-8. Death of the Bacchants: 23.254-5 and 30.139-40.
[9] 22.82-5.
[10] 6.371-6. The other hypothetical events are: Erechtheus falling from his horse: 22.309-15; Chalcomedeia's rape by Morrheus: 35.207-11; Sleep's imprisonment by Zeus: 35.275-7; Dionysus sacking Argos, wounding Hera and killing Perseus: 47.668-75 – this is not a desirable event because if results from the death of Ariadne. Dionysus is acting out of a desire for revenge, and his reaction is excessive, as Hermes explains in a speech following our passage: the people of Argos are not responsible, Perseus was acting under Hera's orders, and Hera herself will cause more, and worse, trouble for Dionysus if he takes out his anger on her.
[11] 9.137-8.

of events, whose negative aspects contributes to the suspense the narrator is trying to create:

> καί νύ κεν Ἄργος ἔπερσε καὶ ἐπρήνιξε Μυκήνας
> καὶ Δαναῶν ἤμησεν ὅλην στίχα, καί νύ κεν αὐτὴν
> μαρναμένην ἄγνωστον ἀνούτατον οὔτασεν Ἥρην
> μάντιος ἀντιτύποιο νόθῃ βροτοειδέι μορφῇ,
> καί νύ κεν ὠκυπέδιλος ὑπὲρ μόρον ἔφθιτο Περσεύς,
> εἰ μή μιν κατόπισθε φανεὶς πτερόεντι πεδίλῳ
> χρυσείης πλοκαμῖδος ἑλὼν ἀνεσείρασεν Ἑρμῆς,
> καί μιν ἀλεξικάκῳ φιλίῳ μειλίξατο μύθῳ·
>
> [Bacchos was even more furious when he saw his bride all stone.] He would have sacked Argos and razed Mycenae to the ground and mowed down the whole host of Danaans, yes even wounded invulnerable Hera herself, who was fighting unrecognized in the false borrowed shape of a mortal, a seer, and Swiftshoe Perseus would have perished, fate or no fate, - but Hermes appeared behind him with winged shoes and pulled him back by his golden hair, and calmed him with friendly words to avert the ruin.[12]

Incidentally, this occurrence is the only one to contain the idea of fate: the death of Perseus would have happened in spite of fate, ὑπὲρ μόρον. The narrator here plays with the idea of a fixed story which cannot be changed: although the death of Perseus would have proved the fates wrong, the potential system in fact confirms their power, since indeed it did not happen. This expression occurs once in the *Odyssey* in a similar context.[13]

In these examples the suspense is strengthened by the idea that the potential outcome is only averted at the last minute. B. Fenik notes that in the *Iliad*, "it is a regular stylistic feature for a dangerous situation to be carried to the extreme, and the inevitable

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[12] 47.668-75. I underline. Translation adapted from W. Rouse. Another example of accumulation can be found at 6.371-6.

[13] *Od.* 5.436-7:

ἔνθα κε δὴ δύστηνος ὑπὲρ μόρον ὤλετ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
εἰ μὴ ἐπιφροσύνην δῶκε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη·

Then verily would hapless Odysseus have perished beyond his fate, had not flashing-eyed Athena given him prudence.

The other occurrences of ὑπὲρ μόρον in Homer are all found in character-text, and outside of *if-not* situations. In two passages, they do refer to the fear of a character for the future, so that they keep a hypothetical character: *Iliad* 20.30, Zeus fearing that Achilles might destroy the rampart; and 21.517, Achilles worrying that the Greeks might take Troy – although this passage is not direct character-text but an indirectly reported thought. It also occurs twice more in the *Odyssey*, without hypothetical meaning, in the mouth of Zeus to lament the blindness of men and the oldness of Aegisthus: *Odyssey* 1.34 and 35.

consequences then averted only by some intervention."[14] This is indeed the mark of narrators aware of being listened to or read, since they make sure to tell the story in a way that will cause the narratee to feel emotionally involved so as best to sustain his interest the narrative.

Three more *if-not* situations are to be added to these thirteen occurrences. They do create suspense although the stakes are lower: they concern the chariot race taking place during Opheltes' funeral in book 37.[15] They attempt at reproducing on the narratee the effect which the race would have on an actual spectator, depicting the horses about to spring forward if the driver did not hold them, or a driver reaching to grasp one of his opponents' horse's manes and prevented at the last minute by the other man pulling at the reins, or again, at the end of the race, showing the first two chariots running abreast to the finish line, when one of them, realising the situation, gives his horse a final push which gains him the victory. In these passages, the contents of the κε clause appear like the possible exclamations of the spectators in the excitement of the race, contradicted at the last minute as the race progresses.

2. *Pathos*

On the contrary, three *if-not* situations increase the pathetic character of an episode by presenting a desirable event as hypothetical, and eventually, not happening. The second clause, contradicting the hypothetical one, brings anguish instead of relief. The contents of these three occurrences are very diverse. The first example is the one occurring in character-text, in the story of Calamos and Carpos, narrated by Eros to Dionysus.

> καί νύ κεν ἐκ ῥοθίων ἐπεβήσατο Καρπὸς ἀρούρης,
> καὶ μετὰ χερσαίην ποταμηίδα δύσατο νίκην,
> ἀλλά μιν ἀντικέλευθος ἀνεστυφέλιξεν Ἀήτης
> καὶ γλυκὺν ἔκτανε κοῦρον ἀμείλιχος·

[14] Fenik, 1968:154. In just over half of the *Iliadic* occurrences, the undesirable event is prevented by the intervention of a god (see De Jong's lists 2004:70-8). In Nonnus also gods and deities intervene most often: Poseidon at 6.371-6, Hermes at 9.49-52, 9.137-8 and 47.667-75, a Nymph at 22.82-5, Dionysus at 23.254-6, the Hydaspes at 30.86-7, Thetis at 33.347-8, and Night a 35.275-7. Responsible for the other interventions are: Erechtheus, 22.309-15; Eurymedon, 30.63-5 and 30.139-40; a snake, 35.207-11.

[15] 37. 256-9, 297-302, 633-8.

> And now Carpos would have got out of the waves, and safe on the shore would have won the river-race as he won the land-race, but a contrary wind thrust him backwards, and drowned the dear boy without pity.[16]

Eros is trying to soothe Dionysus' sorrow for the death of Ampelos by telling him the story of another mourning lover. As he narrates the death of Calamos' beloved, he accumulates actions in the κε clause to underline what could have been, broken short by the second clause stating the death of Carpos, with the *ἀλλά* clause interrupting the ideal situation abruptly and emphasising the contrast between what could have happened and what really did.

The next occurrence describes how the Indians would have surrendered, giving victory to Dionysus, if Hera had not encouraged them to keep fighting.

> καί νύ κεν Ἰνδὸς ὅμιλος ἑλὼν ἀπὸ γείτονος ὄχθης
> μάρτυρον ἱκεσίης γλαυκόχροα θαλλὸν ἐλαίης
> αὐχένα δοῦλον ἔκαμψεν ἀδηρίτῳ Διονύσῳ·
> ἀλλὰ μεταλλάξασα δέμας πολυμήχανος Ἥρη
> δυσμενέας θάρσυνε

> And now the Indian host would have plucked from the neighbouring banks green shoots of olive in token of supplication, and bent a servile neck before Dionysus unconquerable. But Hera ever ready took another shape, and gave courage to the enemy... [17]

Here the narrator is calling for the narratee's compassion for Dionysus, who is made to prolong his effort and keep fighting: his ascension to Olympus is delayed. But he is also playing with his situation of story-teller, threatening, so to speak, the narratee with the possible end of the narrative – or at least the narrative concerning the war, which would end if the Indians surrendered now – and with the absence of a probably much awaited narrative of the final duel between the two leaders, Dionysus and Deriades.[18] Therefore the effect of this *if-not* situation is double: it plays on the expectations that the narratee will have contradictory wishes, namely to see Dionysus victorious, and to continue

[16] 11.422-5. Translation adapted from W. Rouse.

[17] 22.71-5.

[18] It finally takes place in book 40 (82-100), and even there the narrator plays with the narratee's expectations. Instead of a feat of arms of Dionysus, he only has his thyrsus "graze the skin of Deriades", ἀκρότατον χρόα μοῦνον ἐπέγραφε Δηριαδῆος. It is not said explicitly that Deriades is dead, only that he "slipped headfirst in his father's [the river Hydaspes] flood". The only hint is in the mention of the "manslaying bunch of ivy", κισσήεντι φθισήνορι θαλλῷ, that hit him.

enjoying the story. It seems to me that in such occurrences, the narrator is emphasising his power to stop narrating much more than his quality of "reliable presentator."[19]

The last of the three pathetic *if-not* situations is rather ironic at the same time: an Athenian soldier, whose right arm has been cut off in the fight, would have picked up his spear with the left, if his opponent had not cut this left arm too.[20]

Thus the subject matter of the *if-not* situations is chosen and presented by the narrator in such a way that it calls for a reaction from the narratee, by underlining the suspenseful or pathetic character of an event. But this device is not only used by the narrator to increase the involvement of the narratee in the story. It is also an occasion for him to put forward his own work as he tells this story.

III. *If-not* situations making apparent the role of the narrator as story-teller

The mention of the Indians' possible surrender was an example where an *if-not* situation liable to arouse the narratee's compassion was also an occasion for the narrator to play with his own position towards the narrative, that is to say with his power to do exactly what he wishes with it. A few more examples in the *Dionysiaca* can be found to have a similar function.

The narrator seems to be playing with an echo of Quintus' *Posthomerica* in an occurrence found in a battle scene. An Indian soldier has just killed a Bacchant woman:

> καί νύ κε νεκρὸν ἔχων πόθον ἄπνοον, ὥς περ Ἀχιλλεύς,
> ἄλλην Πενθεσίλειαν ὑπὲρ δαπέδοιο δοκεύων
> ψυχρὰ κονιομένης προσπτύξατο χείλεα νύμφης,
> εἰ μὴ Δηριαδῆος ἐδείδιεν ὄγκον ἀπειλῆς.
>
> Then he would have felt desire for a lifeless corpse, as Achilles did – seeing a new Penthesileia on the ground, he would have kissed the cold lips of the girl, prostrate in the dust, had he not feared the weight of the threat of Deriades.[21]

This *if-not* situation contains a mythological *comparandum* which seems to indicate that the narrator refuses to repeat in his narrative the story of Achilles falling in love with Penthesileia after he had killed her.[22] And yet, in the following lines, he tells how the

[19] See above, and De Jong, 2004:81.
[20] 28.131-5.
[21] 35.27-30. Deriades advises Morrheus not to fall in love with a Bacchant at 25.207-8.
[22] Q.S. 1.643-74.

warrior admires the body of the dead woman, and he reports the warrior's lamentations in a speech of forty-one lines. The *if-not* situation is in fact an *apophasis* which underlines the Nonnian narrator's own version of the episode and calls the narratee's attention to it, by falsely allowing him to understand that it will not take place. For indeed the desire felt by the man for his victim is more strongly emphasised in the Nonnian version. Whereas in Quintus, Achilles addresses a scornful speech to the dying Penthesileia, then removes her helmet and falls in love with her, in the *Dionysiaca* the warrior falls in love first, the Bacchant's body having been unveiled as she fell. He then expresses his admiration in a long address to her corpse. Another variation operated by the Nonnian narrator is his much less reserved description of the dead woman, whereas in Quintus the body of Penthesileia is never uncovered – and Triphiodorus does not even mention Achilles' love.[23] The *if-not* situation is therefore intended by the Nonnian narrator to be deceptive, pretending that he will not repeat a scene his narratee is probably familiar with, only to underline that he will indeed do it while bringing his own changes to it.

This is not the only time when an *if-not* situation indicates the narrator's adaptation of a previous version of an episode. In the occurrence quoted above about the sack of Mycenae and the death of Perseus,[24] the presence of the verb ἐπρήνιξε followed by the name of a city is, according to M.C. Fayant, a reminiscence of the Hellenistic poet Euphorion who narrated Dionysus' fight against Perseus and sacking of Argos. However, the Nonnian narrator keeps Argos safe in his version, possibly an original adaptation of the story.[25]

In another occurrence, the narrator is creating an echo of his own narrative. In this passage, Zeus considers whether he will become a bull again to carry away Beroe:

> καί νύ κε φόρτον Ἔρωτος ἔχων ταυρώπιδι μορφῇ
> ἀκροβαφὴς πεφόρητο δι' ὕδατος ἴχνος ἐρέσσων,
> κουφίζων ἀδίαντον ὑπὲρ νώτοιο γυναῖκα,
> εἰ μὴ μνῆστις ἔρυκε βοοκραίρων ὑμεναίων
> Σιδονίς, ἀστερόεν δὲ μέλος ζηλήμονι λαιμῷ
> νυμφίος Εὐρώπης μυκήσατο, Ταῦρος Ὀλύμπου,
> μὴ βοὸς ἰσοτύποιο δι' αἰθέρος εἰκόνα τεύχων
> ποντοπόρων στήσειε νεώτερον ἄστρον Ἐρώτων·

[23] He deals with the episode in two lines (38-9).
[24] 47.667-75.
[25] Fayant 2000:191 *ad* 47.668. She quotes Euphorion, fr. 18 Powell: ταῖς γυναικείαις τάξεσιν ἐγκελευσάμενος ἐπρήνιξε τὴν Ἠυρυμέδοντος πόλιν, τουτέστι τὸ Ἄργος.

> He would have carried the burden of love in bull's form again, skimming away with his legs in the water, paddling along, bearing the woman unwetted on his back, had he not been held back by the memory of that Sidonian bullhorned wedding, and had not the Bull of Olympos, Europa's bridegroom, bellowed from out the stars with jealous throat, to think that he might set up there a new star of seafaring amours and make the image of a rival bull in the sky.[26]

At first this passage seems to indicate that the development of the story is such that the narrator will not have an occasion of creating a variant to his own story of Zeus and Europa, which would suit his liking for the repetition of similar events scattered in his poem. In fact, by lengthening the κε clause – with three lines, it is among the longest ones – the narrator does allow himself to rewrite that episode, as a condensed form of 1.46-63, with precise echoes.[27]

A final example introduces the episode of Pallene:

> καί νύ κεν εἰς Φρυγίην ταχὺς ἔδραμεν ὠκέι ταρσῷ,
> ἀλλά μιν ἄλλος ἄεθλος ἐρήτυεν
>
> Then he would quickly have gone to Phrygia with speeding foot, but another task held him back...[28]

The task alluded to is that of killing Sithon, Pallene's father, who was murdering all of his daughter's suitors. The episode supposed to take place in Phrygia is that involving Aura, and it is indeed narrated after the Pallene one.[29] This short *if-not* situation illustrates how the narrator can pretend that he is only following the order prescribed by the story, when really he is the one in charge of the succession of the various episodes. This almost amounts to saying that he could have narrated the Aura episode straightaway, if he had not preferred to tell the Pallene one first, since the information contained in the ἀλλά clause is not necessary to the understanding of what is happening. The episode preceding this *if-not* situation is Dionysus' gigantomachia, which does not have to do with either Pallene or Aura, so that the connexion would be rather loose whatever the choice made by the narrator.

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[26] 41.239-46.
[27] Such as the repetition of ἀδίαντον, "unwetted", at 1.57 and 41.241.
[28] 48.90-1.
[29] From 48.238.

IV. Conclusion

These occurrences show how the narrator is able to use *if-not* situations to influence his narratee's reactions, by presenting the events in ways which will leave him in suspense for a few lines, or call for his compassion as his expectations are disappointed. Through this device, the narrator also indicates to his narratee the possible paths the narrative could have followed and to underline how he is making his own choices among the number of stories he could include in his narrative, as well as his choices concerning what version to present and how to organise these stories together. It seems that their aim is no longer to prove that the narrator is reliable and is telling the story as it should be; rather, it puts into sharp relief the fact that the narrative could take any shape the narrator wishes to give to it, and even show him in the act of shaping and organising all the elements at his disposal.[30]

[30] Only three *if-not* situations have not been mentioned in this study: at 12.373-5, a Satyr would have climbed in a tree to get a better look at a Nymph if Dionysus had not hold him back. At 12.378-9, a Satyr would have seized a swimming Naiad if she had not managed to slip away. At 48.87-9, Dionysus would have killed all the Giants if he had not remembered to leave some alive for Zeus to kill himself.

Conclusion

Narratorial interventions in the *Dionysiaca* make it possible to better understand the overall ambition of the Nonnian narrator, not to say of Nonnus himself, as well as the structure of certain parts of the poem. An overt narrator, he makes himself particularly clear as he lays out his stylistic choices and sources of inspiration. The proems are long; the Muse-invocations numerous; the references to Homer explicit. Some devices also betray his acute awareness of his role as storyteller and his efforts to sustain the attention of his narratee throughout his impressive "épopée-fleuve" meandering through, and around, the various episodes of Dionysus' story.

Although the amount of narratorial presence may seem thin when compared with the overall length of the *Dionysiaca*, the interventions are often less impersonal than in Homer, and the narratorial voice when it appears seems more decided and forceful, in particular in the use of first person verb in the course of the poem. This characteristic is reminiscent of narrators of didactic epic, a genre where the increased narratorial presence is to be expected, since the narrator is at the same time a teacher. In the *Dionysiaca*, it betrays the narrator's acute awareness of his role and of the presence of his narratee. Each kind of narratorial intervention exemplifies the Nonnian narrator's technique, between imitation and innovation.

An innovative and significant characteristic of the Nonnian narratorial interventions is the way they sometimes underline the narrator's activity in his own narrative, for example his adaptation of the Homeric model or his introduction within the epic of other literary genres. The most obvious example of this is the *syncrisis* in book 25, introducing a rhetorical passage, where the rupture with the narrative is the most visible, but other passages are also relevant. We saw how a Muse-invocation introduced the lyric episode of Beroe, how comparisons and similes underlined the play with Homeric references especially in fighting scenes, and how addresses to the narratee could be used to add general information about natural science in a didactic tone.

It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the intertextuality and play with other genres, in particular lyric poetry, epigram, or *epyllion*. B. Harries writes, about the integration of pastoral elements in the poem:

> In Nonnus we have a poet who shows us what he thinks 'pastoral' means and does not mean, why it is still (for him) important, how it can be integrated with other elements derived (with acknowledgement) from Homer and Pindar, what its limits are, and how to innovate in epic by using Alexandrian bucolic structures. This is more than simply a technical matter of compositional skill; there is an idea here which goes to the root of the poem's conception while also, in a more formal way, helping to create what at first appears to be its disconcertingly diffuse rhetoric.[1]

Indeed it is worth noting that book 42, which is entirely made up of the story of Dionysus' suit to Beroe, is the one containing the most narratorial interventions, with fifteen occurrences, all centred around the theme of love.[2] I have shown how gnomic utterances in particular drew on themes common in both Greek and Latin elegiac poetry. But many more elements in this book are part of this adoption of a lyric tone in the epic; first, the attention to the details of the setting, such as trees (130-3), including an elm, πτελέα, the same kind of tree as the one under which Thyrsis and the goatherd sit in Theocritus.[3] The recurrent presence of Nymphs and of Pan,[4] and in particular the latter's long speech on the ruses to win the affection of a girl, are among many pastoral elements not expected in an epic poem. B. Harries lists more examples, taken from other books as well; nonetheless book 42 stands out by the pre-eminence of the lyric tone. It is also the only time Dionysus appears in mortal guise, so that the parallel with lovers in lyric and elegiac poems is complete. Book 42 is one of the three books devoted to the Beroe episode; Dionysus' love for Beroe the girl undoubtedly mirrors the poet's admiration for Beroe the city, and exemplifies the technique of adaptation of other genres to epic by the Nonnian narrator, here with the adaptation of lyric poetry on the scale of a book.

Epigram is another occasion for Nonnian ποικιλία to express itself. The interventions introduced by "so that men may say" take the form of epigrams, on account of their brevity and striking phrasing. A. Hollis[5] lists examples of imitations of love

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[1] 1994:63.

[2] I count only interventions of the types studied in this thesis: the polemical allusion to Homer (178-81), the invocation to the mountain Nymphs (60-2), one occurrence of ἄ μέγα θαῦμα (142), one apostrophe to Dionysus (138-47), two long similes (6-12 and 185-95), seven gnomic utterances (30-2; 42-3; 84-8; 135-7; 171-4; 178-81; 325-32; 352-4), and one gnomic rhetorical question (433-7). The average number of narratorial interventions per book is 3.6. After book 42, book 48 has the most narratorial interventions (13), but it is almost twice as long as book 42.

[3] Theocritus 1.21. The goatherd promises to Thyrsis a vase in return for his song; at the bottom of the vase is pictured a woman courted by two men whom she both rejects (32-8), a singular parallel with Beroe, Dionysus and Poseidon.

[4] 42.62, 98 ff, with the Nymph's speech, 200ff with Pan's speech.

[5] 1994:53-4.

epigram and sepulchral epigram. It is striking that one of the Nonnian *gnomai*[6] is quoted as an epigram in the *Anthologia Graeca*; it is also remarkable that this is one of the *gnomai* about love, appearing in the pastoral context of the speech of Pan to Dionysus.

A. Hollis also considers some secondary episodes of the *Dionysiaca* to be the equivalent of *epyllia*:[7]

> Many episodes in the *Dionysiaca* reflect both the manner and matter of a Hellenistic *epyllion*, and the vast scale of Nonnus' undertaking allows some of them to be treated at considerable length. Examples: *Dion.* 5.212-551 (Aristaeus and Actaeon); 38.1-434 (Phaethon); 47.1-264 (Erigone); 17.37-86 (rustic hospitality of Brongus). The last mentioned imitates Callimachus' *Hecale* (and perhaps Eratosthenes' *Erigone*) and is explicitly compared to Callimachus' Molorcus (*Dion.* 17.52-4).

He adds that in the Nicaea *epyllion* (15.169-405), a lament is put in the mouth of a cow, which gives to the passage the tone of a parody. This is a reminder that the Nonnian narrator does not always take himself or his poem seriously. The apostrophe to Dionysus in book 42 established a comical figure of the shy god, but it seems that the Nonnian narrator expects that one of the traits of his narratee will be the ability to pick up on irony and his readiness to laugh at Nonnian ingeniousness. Again here it is probable that much of the humour of the *Dionysiaca* escapes us on account of our partial knowledge of Greek literature; but surely the number of literary allusions and imitations must have been meant partly as a scholarly game of hide and seek, inviting the narratee to recognise the narrator's sources behind the latter's reworking of them. Humour would probably profit from a more systematic study; it is obviously present in the *Dionysiaca* in scenes like the Morrheus bathing-scene.[8]

These remarks help us to understand further the technique of the Nonnian narrator. The sheer length of his poem is not so much empty "verbiage" as a requisite for a narrator anxious to include in his poems numerous elements, which all contribute to his aesthetic of ποικιλία, his allusive style, and his efforts to engage his narratee. The question of intertextuality in the *Dionysiaca* cannot but be of the widest scope, given the chronological place of this epic poem at the end of Greek literary epic production: Nonnus has a thousand years of Greek literature in which to look for inspiration, and it is obvious

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[6] 42.209-10: "Every woman has greater desire than the man, but shamefast she hides the sting of love, though mad for love herself." See *Anthologia Graeca* book 10, epigram 120.

[7] 2006:150-2.

[8] 35. 155-60 and 185-203.

that he did so. His debt to Homer alone is of course not limited to narratorial intervention. On this topic, N. Hopkinson wrote at the beginning of his volume on Nonnus:

> The subject is an enormous one, and deserves a book-length study which might compare more fully Nonnus' practices with those of other epic poets, both Greek and Latin, and investigate in greater detail the way in which he adopts and adapts Homeric vocabulary, plot-construction, narrative voice, heroic ethos, etc.[9]

This study has also raised in several places the issue of the visual aspect of the *Dionysiaca*, an aspect characteristic of late antique literature, according to M. Roberts:

> Comparisons between poetry and the visual arts were a commonplace of literary criticism in antiquity. … Certainly the literature of the period is full of descriptions of works of art. The poets were in the habit of observing closely and admiringly the work of late antique artists and architects. It is a plausible hypothesis that they strove to emulate in writing the qualities they admired in such artistic creations, that the visual arts were a model for the effects poets would convey in words…[10]

How does this manifest itself in the *Dionysiaca*? The Nonnian style, in accordance with late antique aesthetics, abounds in adjectives which underline the attention bestowed on detail, but also on the larger picture. It is important for the narrator both to describe people and things as accurately as possible, and to provide as much precision as possible on a landscape or situation, by means of adjectives, often compound ones, and frequently Nonnian hapaxes. An analysis of these adjectives, and in particular of the question of whether they must be read as belonging to narrator- or character- focalisation would provide additional insight into Nonnian narrative techniques. As for the *ekphraseis*, they constitute a form of lengthy narratorial intervention; those in the *Dionysiaca* have been studied by V. Giraudet,[11] who underlines the aesthetics of variation and repetition in them, as well as a Nonnian trait: the narrator likes to introduce narrative even inside the *ekphraseis*, so as to make even less clear the limit between narration and description: "En somme, Nonnos pratique l'interruption à un double degré : il interrompt la narration par une description, puis la description par une narration."[12]

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[9] 1994:2. It seems that several book-length studies will be necessary to develop all these issues.

[10] Roberts 1989:67. See also Plett 2012, Webb 2009, Dubel 1997, Elsner 2002, and 2007 on the topic or Ariadne. It is remarkable that the *Dionysiaca* opens with the story of Europa whose rape is described with much *enargeia*, just as Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* start with an *ekphrasis* of a painting depicting this same scene. See Reeves 2007.

[11] Giraudet 2010:276-99. Harmonia's tapestry, Dionysus' shield, the palaces of Electra and Staphylos, and Harmonia's necklace, which contains an address to the narratee and has been studied in chapter 5.

[12] Giraudet 2010:281-2.

The importance of vision in the *Dionysiaca* is also present on a narrower scale, in particular in the recurrence of the word τύπος – with more than a hundred occurrences in the poem. It is related to the context of visual arts for example in Libanius' *Progymnasmata* 11.11 which deals with art and painting: τύπος refers to the sketches made by the artist.[13] In the *Dionysiaca* it means pattern or shape, from the pattern followed by the narrator to structure the poem, to the shapes which the gods can assume.[14] One could also mention the curious device of reporting texts, where the narrator quotes as if from written documents; this does not occur in Homer, Apollonius, or Quintus, nor in the *epyllia*.[15] Finally, M. Roberts comments on the frequent analogy made between mosaic and poetic composition,[16] an analogy V. Giraudet employed in the title of his thesis on the *Dionysiaca*. The comparison is indeed very relevant for Nonnus, who adds elements of myths together in order to create a wider tableau.

I. de Jong claims that narratology has been, by now, "successfully and fruitfully absorbed by classical scholarship".[17] It has indeed proved a valuable tool in the study of the *Dionysiaca*, the analysis of narratorial presence providing an additional way to approach the question of the place of this poem within the epic genre and bringing to light Nonnian literary practices as a product of the poet's time and erudition. This analysis now would benefit from being complemented by a similar study of the narrator of the *Paraphrase* – does he also assume there the *persona* of an epic narrator? How does the Christian *ethos* manifest itself, if at all, in his interventions? Finally, if it has been possible to talk about a "school of Nonnus" regarding the style of some of his successors, did this "school" also take up Nonnian storytelling techniques? Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the *Dionysiaca* resonates with a distinctive voice, the voice of a bold scholarly narrator who at once establishes his own *persona*, revives a thousand years of Greek literature, and exemplifies the aesthetics of his time, between innovation and

[13] 11.11. 1.4, 3.2, 3.4, 3.10.
[14] For example 25.8 and 8.300.
[15] See chapter 6 note 25.
[16] Roberts 1989:70ff.
[17] De Jong, *Narratology and the Classics, A Practical Guide*, forthcoming.

reverence for the ancient models, a time which was, in the words of T.L. Peacock, "the second childhood of poetry".[18]

[18] Thomas Love Peacock, English novelist and poet and keen reader of Nonnus. From his essay entitled *The four ages of poetry*: "Then comes the age of brass, which, by rejecting the polish and the learning of the age of silver, and taking a retrograde stride to the barbarisms and rude traditions of the age of iron, professes to return to nature and revive the age of gold. This is the second childhood of poetry. To the comprehensive energy of the Homeric Muse, which, by giving at once the grand outline of things, presented to the mind a vivid picture in one or two verses, inimitable alike in simplicity and magnificence, is substituted a verbose and minutely-detailed description of thoughts, passions, actions, persons, and things. … To this age may be referred all the poets who flourished in the decline of the Roman Empire. The best specimen of it, though not the most generally known, is the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus. … The iron age of classical poetry may be called the bardic; the golden, the Homeric; the silver, the Virgilian; and the brass, the Nonnic."

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