

‘NONNUS IN CONTEXT’, FIFTEEN YEARS ON: CURRENT TRENDS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2026

**HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
5 THOLOU STREET, PLAKA**

9.00 Registration

9.30 Welcome remarks / Introduction

10.00 Session 1: *Greek & Latin Paraphrases*

MICHAEL PASCHALIS (University of Crete), ‘Christ in bonds: Juvencus to Sedulius, to Nonnus’
Paraphrase’

Through the narrative of Virgil’s *Aeneid* the literary character of Sinon acquired notoriety in later Latin poetry as the cunning and deceitful character, whose lies, faked stories and tears brought about the capture and destruction of Troy, the mythical fatherland of the Romans. Gaius Vettius Aquilinus Juvencus, the author of the first Christian Latin Epic entitled *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor*, chose to represent Christ standing trial before Jewish and Roman authorities as another Sinon, with hands bound behind his back and the crowds jeering at him. Juvencus’ portrayal of Jesus as Sinon reflects the complex intertextual relations between his epic and the poetry of his pagan predecessors (often naively characterized as *Kontrastimitation*), at a time when readers were obliged to balance the authority of the Bible against the authority of the *Aeneid*. Sedulius, author of the *Carmen Paschale* written some one hundred years later, must have disapproved of the way Juvencus handled the Virgilian intertext in the narrative of the passion of Christ and proceeded to ‘correct’ it. Specifically, he meticulously excised all traces of the association between Christ and Sinon found in *ELQ*. He furthermore amplified Matthew’s narrative in a manner directly opposite to Juvencus’, that is by highlighting aspects of it relating to Judas’ betrayal and death as well as to the conspiracy of the Jewish leadership to capture and kill Christ and by providing a theological commentary on these events. Sedulius wrote at a time when the first ecumenical councils and upsurge of theological writings had begun to bear their hermeneutical fruit by drawing a red line between Christian and pagan ideas and values. In chapters 18 and 19 of his *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* Nonnus recaptured the powerful depiction of Christ in *ELQ* but in a novel and striking way that reflects the viewpoint of his captors and judges: Christ is metaphorically portrayed as an animal / beast that represents a deadly threat to his enemies and has to be “hunted down” and “tamed”, and kept “tightly bound” from the moment he is “caught” to the very moment he is “tied” to the cross. Going beyond the interaction (Juvencus) and the contrast (Sedulius) of Christian and pagan ideas and values, Nonnus employed poetic metaphors to depict the old order of Judaism as fiercely defending itself against the radically superior character of Christ’s teachings which they viewed as an existential threat.

QIBEI CHEN (University of Cambridge), ‘Paraphrasing the Gospel: Nonnus and Juvencus in comparison’

Recent Nonnian scholarship has been interested in Nonnus’ relationship to the Latin tradition – both that of the Augustan period, particularly Vergil and Ovid (cf. Carvounis and Papaioannou 2021; Hardie 2022) and that of Late Antiquity, especially Juvencus (cf. Paschale 2020; Miguélez-Cavero 2022). This paper will make further comparisons between Nonnus’ *Paraphrase of St John’s Gospel* and its closest Latin counterpart, Juvencus’ *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor* – closest in terms of their reliance on the biblical prototype (cf. Whitby 2016). This paper aims to develop the comparison in two ways. First, it will attend to the paraphrastic

techniques employed by Nonnus and Juvenecus. How far does Nonnus paraphrase the gospel using methods already present in Juvenecus? What aspects does Nonnus emphasize that Juvenecus omits, and vice versa? How do the literary limits of paraphrasis in Greek compare with those in Latin? Second, while it is true that Nonnus had access to much more patristic exegetical and homiletic material in the fifth century than Juvenecus did in the Constantinian period, this paper analyses the ways in which both poets integrate pagan epic traditions and biblical exegesis. How, for example, does Juvenecus' reuse of Vergil's Aeneas as a model for Jesus shape the gospel narrative differently from Nonnus' reuse of Dionysus for Jesus? How far is the blending of the gospel with pagan elements from the Latin epic tradition in Juvenecus distinct from that of Nonnus in the Greek tradition? To what extent is Juvenecus' gospel narrative dependent on the Latin epic tradition (for example, in terms of plot structure) in comparison with Nonnus' dependence on the Greek tradition?

CLARE PRYOR (University of Cambridge), 'The sublime in biblical paraphrase: Sedulius and Nonnus'

My proposed paper will compare the sublime (ὑψος/*sublimitas*) in Nonnus's paraphrase of John with sublimity in Sedulius's Latin gospel paraphrase, the *Carmen Paschale*. Comparative analysis of Greek and Latin late antique texts is a growing, and crucial, avenue of enquiry (Carvounis et al., 2022; Verhelst and Scheijnen, 2022), with recent scholarship putting Nonnus in conversation with Latin biblical epic (Hardie 2022; Miguélez-Cavero 2022). I know of no scholarly treatment of the sublime in either Sedulius or Nonnus. My discussion of Sedulian sublimity will concentrate on the reception of Ovidian sublime aspirations. As is well-recognised (Green 2006, 168; Hardie 2019, 10–11), Sedulius alludes three times to Ovid's Phaethon story: in Elijah's ascent (*CP* 1.180, cf. *Met.* 2.133), the wilderness temptation (*CP* 2.189, cf. *Met.* 2.45), and the crucifixion (*CP* 5.185–6, cf. *Met.* 2.98–9). A persuasive explanation for Sedulius's sustained interest in this intertext has hitherto been lacking. Drawing on existing discussions of the Ovidian sublime (Schiesaro 2014; Hannay 2016), I will argue that Sedulius engages with the Ovidian thematisation of the boundary between human and divine, and the danger of mortal aspirations to transcend that divide. Sedulius's Jesus contrasts with Ovid's Phaethon in his ability to successfully negotiate that boundary due to his twofold nature (human and divine). My analysis of Nonnus's paraphrase of John will examine the use of key words such as ὑψος and its cognates in an attempt to reevaluate Nonnus's contribution to the Christian notions of the sublime. Though the question of direct influence of Ovid on Nonnus remains difficult (Paschalis 2014, 97; Carvounis and Papaioannou 2022; Lovatt 2022 on Phaethon in the *Dionysiaca*), Nonnus, like Sedulius, is a highly Ovidian poet (Hardie 2022). Building on these scholarly discussions, I will also investigate whether, like Sedulius, Nonnus evinces a reception of the Ovidian sublime.

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11.30–12.00 COFFEE BREAK

12.00 Session 2: *Deception and the Dionysiaka*

PETER BING (University of Munich), 'The *kestos* of Aphrodite: The fortunes of a moveable object from Homer in Nonnus'

Aphrodite's *κεστός ἱμάς*, her "embroidered strap" (*Il.*14.214), which grants its wearer the power to accomplish her desires, appears only once in early epic, in the episode of Hera's deception of Zeus, the *Dios Apate*. It had, however, a long literary life thereafter, and nowhere is it more prominent than in Nonnus' *Dionysiaka*, where *κεστός* proliferates wildly, appearing 41 times. As this paper will demonstrate, the 5th century poet of Egyptian Panopolis at times follows closely in Homer's footsteps in his deployment of this prop but he also innovates exuberantly. That innovation is evident from his epic's very start. In Homer and other authors, the characteristic powers of the *κεστός* may be described (with Faraone, "Aphrodite's *kestos*", *Phoenix* 44.3 [1990] 222) as follows: "1) they were carried or worn by a woman; 2) they enhanced her attractiveness; 3) the *κεστός* alone could be used to diminish anger between a woman and her husband; and 4) they could... be used to seduce and captivate a male." But from its very first appearance in the *Dionysiaka* (1.80), Nonnus signals that he is putting a different spin on Homeric tradition: he depicts a *male* god, Eros, carrying the *kestos*. And rather than putting it on, the love-god brandishes it, using it as a switch to drive on Zeus as bull carrying off Europa. Here poet marks his innovation, and justifies it, inasmuch as he plays on the ancient etymology of *κεστός* from *κεντέω*, to "prick" (cf. *Suda* s.v.). This novel first appearance of the *κεστός* on the epic's stage signals to readers the more elaborate and varied part it plays in the *Dionysiaka*, examples of which I trace in this paper.

CLAIRE RACHEL JACKSON (University of Ghent), 'Novel receptions in Nonnus' *Dionysiaka*: Morrheus, Chalcomede, and *Callirhoe*'

The influence of the Greek novel on Nonnus' *Dionysiaka* has long been acknowledged. Although recognised as early as the nineteenth-century, the recent work of Laura Miguélez-Cavero and Hélène Frangoulis in particular has demonstrated the extent to which novelistic themes and erotic ideologies inspire the epic throughout. Such arguments, however, often prioritise either identifying generalised parallels between perceived generic conventions, or else spotting close allusions to Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* specifically as Nonnus' primary novelistic model. Given this, is the Greek novel's influence on the *Dionysiaka* rooted in awareness of the corpus as a whole, or a single novel which is understood to represent the genre? What is at stake in these perceived novelistic allusions and what do they reveal about Nonnus' attitude to and engagement with the Greek novels as individual texts rather than just generic exemplars? This paper offers a fresh perspective on this familiar topic by not just uncovering hitherto unexplored connections between the

Dionysiaka and earlier novelistic traditions, but also offering a more nuanced analysis of how and, crucially, why, different novels are cited in the epic. Taking the episode of Chalcomede and Morrheus in books 33-35 as a paradigmatic site of novelistic reception, which has even been labelled “le roman de Morrheus et de Chalcomédé,” (Gerlaud 2005, 15, following Vian), I demonstrate that Nonnus alludes more directly to Chariton’s *Callirhoe* in this narrative than previously assumed. I then argue that the contrast between the references to *Callirhoe* and those to Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon* constructs a more varied model of novelistic *eros* which challenges any monolithic views of the novel genre in Nonnus’ epic. In this way, my paper offers fresh insight into the long-recognised interaction between Greek novel and the *Dionysiaka*, and sheds new light on Nonnus’ engagement with earlier literary traditions.

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13.00 Keynote 1

TIM WHITMARSH (University of Cambridge), ‘A world of signs: Nonnus, Musaeus and the archaeology of pagan thought’

13.45–15.30 LUNCH BREAK

15.30 Session 3: Nonnian Contexts

ALEXANDRA MADELA (University College Dublin / University College Cork), ‘Nonnus the Homeric scholar in context’

Nonnus engages with Homer in various ways, from emulating him to a rejecting Homeric poetics in the proem of the *Dionysiaka*. However, Nonnus also responds to Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* indirectly, namely via ancient philological scholarship on Homer. In this, he is not isolated, but rather part of a broader trend among late antique epic poets. In my paper, I will illustrate this by showing how Nonnus employs rare Homeric vocabulary whose meaning was debated by ancient philologists. I begin with the word *λυκάβας*, which ancient scholars interpreted as ‘year’. I show that, following a unique interpretation by Heraclitus the Allegorist (*All.* 7.11), Nonnus uses it in the specific sense ‘zodiacal year’, similarly as Quintus of Smyrna and John of Gaza. Secondly, I demonstrate how Nonnus responds to the ancient debate whether the Dawn is called *ἡριγένεια* because she is born from the daybreak, or because she gives birth to the daybreak. Again, I put Nonnus’ usage into context, comparing it with the employment of the word in Ps-Orpheus’ *Argonautica* and John of Gaza’s *Tabula Mundi*. Finally, I will discuss how Nonnus describes ‘daybreak smashing the shadow-leaving darkness’ (*ἐχάραξε λιπόσκιον ὄρθρος ὁμίχλην*, *D.* 18.167; *P.* 6.85). I argue that with this verse, the poet is responding to scholarly discussions about the Homeric phrase *ἀμφιλύκη νύξ*, often interpreted as ‘the brightness of the coming day encroaching upon the ending night’. In doing so, he follows a tradition begun by Apollonius, who in his Hellenistic *Argonautica* provided a definition of the disputed *ἀμφιλύκη* (A.R. 2.669-671).

XAVIER LAFONTAINE (Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne), ‘Nonnus and images: On a christological formula reused from the *Sibylline Oracles*’

Nonnus appears to reuse a formula attested only in the *Sibylline Oracles* (Books 1 and 8), ἀντίτυπον μίμημα φέρον. In the Sibylline poems, this formula applies to the creation of humanity in the image of God (*Or. Sib.* 1.33) and, above all, to the action of the figure of Jesus at the moment of his death and resurrection (*Or. Sib.* 8.270 ≈ *Or. Sib.* 1.333; cf. Lightfoot 2007, 429; Lafontaine 2023, 282f.). It is therefore a formula that is heavily connoted from a Christological perspective. The same formula appears verbatim (*Dion.* 40.507) or in slightly modified form (*Dion.* 40.78; *Par.* 11.135) in Nonnus, but diverted and applied to the action of divine figures in their transformation of reality: the fulfillment of Heracles' prophecy concerning Tyre (*Dion.* 40.507), a deceptive illusion sent by Athena (*Dion.* 40.78), and, more surprisingly, the stone sealing access to the tomb of Lazarus (*Par.* 11.135; cf. Spanoudakis 2015, 259 ff.). This paper aims, on the one hand, to examine the possibility of contact between the corpus of the *Oracula Sibyllina* and Nonnian poetry, and, on the other, to integrate this contrastive reuse into Nonnus' broader reflection on appearances and their manipulation, for good or ill (cf. Fauth 1981; Agosti 1996; Cavero 2009). In doing so, it seeks both to contribute to the study of Nonnian poetics (in the wake of Newbold 2010) and to engage with theological debates on the notion of image and divine likeness (Vassiliu 2018; Thomas 2019).

GUY WALKER (Trinity College, Dublin), 'Neoplatonic reading strategies and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*'

The influence of philosophy on Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* remains an open question. In the last forty years, it has been addressed by individual chapters of larger monographs (e.g., Gigli Piccardi 1985), conference proceedings, and edited volumes (e.g., Hernández de la Fuente 2014; 2022; Gigli Piccardi 2016). However, the topic did not receive a dedicated chapter in *Brill's Companion to Nonnus of Panopolis*, and recent contributions only scratch the surface of what is otherwise the longest extant poem from Antiquity. This paper seeks to establish a new framework for analysing the philosophical influences on Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, and offer new perspectives on Nonnus' engagement with philosophical material, particularly from the Neoplatonic School. I hypothesise that pre-existent reading strategies that were popular in Late Antiquity may have influenced Nonnus' compositional strategies, and would have offered Nonnus' audience with ready-made symbolic schemas and hermeneutic tools for understanding his *Dionysiaca*. My paper starts with a brief overview of how Nonnus uses the *On the Cave of the Nymphs of Odysseus 13*, which was written by Porphyry of Tyre, a Neoplatonist and student of Plotinus who was writing in the 3rd century CE. I proceed to show how other mystic exegeses and reading strategies that were applied to the *Odyssey* in Late Antiquity can be readily applied to the *Dionysiaca*. I explore how these strategies would have shaped the expectations and reading experience of Nonnus' audience; and how this may reshape our own perspectives of this monumental epic.

Keywords: Nonnus; Neoplatonism; Philosophy; Allegory; Late Antiquity

17.00–17.30 COFFEE BREAK

17.30 Digital Posters (I): *Further Nonnian Contexts*

ANASTASIA MEINTANI (Independent Scholar), 'Amid Virgin Athena and Virgin Mary. Reinventing Erichthonius' myth'

In two short passages in the *Dionysiaca* Nonnus provides us with his own unique variation of one of the most important Athenian myths, that is the birth of Erichthonius. A short reference to the story is to be found for the first time in the *Iliad*. In its fully-fledged form it appears in the 5th c. BC with the Attidographers. Since then, numerous versions have come down to us. Nonnus offers the reader an unprecedented account. He omits essential to other authors parts, while he introduces novel elements. Of much importance is his rendering of the goddess Athena as a nursing figure comparable to Virgin Mary. These peculiarities should not be understood as a degenerate Greek myth in its final stage. On the contrary, we should make sense of them against the completely different socio-historical, geographical and cultural context in which Nonnus lived as

well as against his ability to produce both secular and religious poetry. He had a considerable knowledge of classical mythology and at the same time a Christian perception of life. Of equal importance to us are also the versions of the myth penned by his contemporary as well as later Church Fathers. Many Church Fathers were versed in Greek literature. Nonetheless, they used the myth to serve their own purposes and agendas assuming a polemical stance.

YORGHOS PIKRAKIS (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), ‘Aphrodite Virgin Mary? Contextualizing divine body-making in *Dionysiaca* 24.230–329’

The present article explores the religious aspects of the goddess Aphrodite as manifested in Leucus’ song (Nonnus, *D.* 24.230–329). Aphrodite—usually associated exclusively with love affairs—appears here once as φιληλάκατος, “fond of the spindle.” This cultic epithet is wholly unfamiliar to the goddess’s customary idiosyncrasy, while the reference to weaving and the loom evokes well-known mythological paradigms, such as Penelope’s private loom and the massive stone looms of the Homeric Cave of the Nymphs (*Odyssey* 13.107–108). Late Neoplatonists interpreted the description of the Homeric cave and its contents as an allegory of the cosmos and of the soul’s descent into, and return from, the sensible world (e.g. Porphyry, *De antro nymphaeum*). Within this framework, the loom was subsequently incorporated into Neoplatonic poetics as a literary and philosophical *topos*, signifying the incarnation of the soul and its corporeal entrapment in the sublunary realm (e.g. Proclus’ commentaries on the *Cratylus*, the *Republic*, and the *Alcibiades*). The year 431 proved crucial for the establishment of the Virgin Mary’s position in Christian theology, owing to her official recognition as *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, at the Council of Ephesus. This doctrinal development is likely to be the aftermath of the empress Pulcheria’s theological views, conveyed to the Council of Ephesus by her entrusted clerical adviser, Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople (see Constan 1995 and 2003). The same development entailed the formal acceptance of Christ’s human nature and of his dual nature unified within a single hypostasis. From this point onward, Christ’s humanity came increasingly to be articulated through the imagery of cloth and clothing, while the Virgin Mary was officially venerated as the weaver of the Son of God’s carnal vestment (see the *Protoevangelium of James*; cf. also the early Christian exegetical literature on clothing). My aim is to highlight possible points of affinity between two contemporary and structurally analogous depictions: on the one hand, a goddess presiding over love and fertility, and on the other, a divine virgin Mother of God—both operating under the symbolic office of weaving. To this end, I shall provide parallel examples drawn both from the religiously hybrid *Dionysiaca* itself and from biblical and early Christian exegetical literature.

Keywords: weaving, textile-loom, incarnation, cloth, Aphrodite, Virgin Mary, *Dionysiaca*, Mariology.

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18.00 Session 4: *Dionysiaca* – Performance & Reception

BELÉN ALEJANDRA MAIDANA (Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, Argentina & Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET)), 'Performativity and context in the combat speeches of the *Dionysiaca* by Nonnus of Panopolis'

This paper seeks to define combat speeches in the *Dionysiaca* as a distinct analytical category and to examine their role within the poem. These speeches are not merely preparatory segments of military action, but exhibit a specific formal and functional configuration (Verhelst, 2017) that warrants examination in its own right. Rather than simple military exhortations, they constitute spaces of discursive confrontation, in which leaders interpret the conflict, legitimize their claims to power, construct images for themselves and their opponents, and anticipate the confrontation of the battlefield. My analysis focuses on the primacy of the spoken word, systematically articulated through direct speech (Verhelst, 2017), as well as on its agonistic and performative dimensions (Agosti, 2012; Carvounis, 2014). In Nonnian poetics, the construction of leadership and hierarchical pre-eminence largely shifts from the sphere of action to that of enunciation (Hadjittofi, 2014; Miguélez-Cavero, 2021). The *agon* thus emerges as a form of discursive confrontation in which words anticipate, direct, and symbolically legitimize the battle. The paper will also examine the narrative locus of combat speeches, with particular attention to their position before decisive moments, which highlights their structural significance (Geisz, 2018). More specifically, I will analyse the paired speeches delivered by Deriades and Dionysus in *Dion.* 27.22–135 and 27.167–220, as well as in *Dion.* 39.33–73 and 39.78–122, in order to explore how variations in narrative context shape the construction of authority, the self-representation of the leaders, and the strategies of discursive confrontation. These case studies make it possible to identify a relatively stable pattern in the interventions of military leaders, located between pragmatic function and contextual determination, thereby allowing combat speeches to be defined as spaces of discursive *agon* whose performative force depends both on their formal features and on the narrative context in which they are embedded.

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LAURA MIGUÉLEZ-CAVERO (Complutense University of Madrid), 'The *Dionysiaca* in the context of late antique Dionysiac performances'

Although the *Dionysiaca* opens with the poet joining the Dionysiac chorus of the Muses (1.11–15, 34–44) and one of the god's most important traditional spheres of action is that of performance (esp. the theatrical performances he presided over in Classical Athens), the *Dionysiaca* has not been systematically read as evidence for late antique perceptions of the theatre and performance. Previous work has focused on the textual influence of Euripides *Bacchae* on the Pentheid (books 44–46 – cf. Simon 2004) and on tragic figures such as the theomach (cf. the excellent Benchikh-Lehocine 2025) or the Aristophanic Hyssakos (*D.* 34.21–88). The importance of the pantomime (performances are narrated in 19.118–286 – analysis in Gerbeau – Vian 1992, 85–110) has also been noted. This paper seeks to map what the *Dionysiaca* reveals about Nonnus' understanding of the performances presided by Dionysus in his concrete late antique context. I draw inspiration from F. Hadjittofi's contribution to the proceedings of *Nonnus in Context V*, where she draws parallels between the text of the *Dionysiaca* and possible interpretations of a number of Egyptian textiles. Extant textiles featuring what looks like pantomimic representations will be key to the argumentation.

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GEORGIOS TSOMIS (Democritus University of Thrace), 'From late antique ekphrasis to baroque spectacle: Giambattista Marino's *Europa* (1607) as a creative reading of Nonnus' poetics'

The seventeenth century marks the decisive "great entrance" of Nonnus of Panopolis into early modern European literature, a process catalysed above all by Eilhard Lubin's Latin translation of the *Dionysiaca* (1605). Read through the prism of Baroque aesthetics, Nonnus came to be perceived as a poet *avant la lettre*, whose luxuriant imagery, visual density, and rhetorical exuberance resonated powerfully with the Baroque taste for *meraviglia*, spectacle, and sensuous excess. Giambattista Marino (1569–1625) is among the poets most deeply and creatively engaged with Nonnus; his idyll *Europa* (1607), together with *L'Adone* (1605–1623) and *Atteone* (1608), provides a privileged locus of Nonnian reception and transformation. This paper examines Marino's *Europa* in close dialogue with its principal model (*Dionysiaca* 1.45–136), arguing that Marino's Baroque reconfiguration of the myth does not merely constitute imitation but functions as a historically situated reading of Nonnus' poetics. Through a comparative analysis, the paper focuses on three interrelated features that structure both texts: the dominance of ekphrasis and visual composition, the centrality of spectatorship and rhetorical speech, and the deliberate suspension of linear narrative in favour of episodic tableaux. Marino's Baroque amplification of these elements—through hyperbolic description, dramatic staging, and sensuous imagery—brings into sharper relief aesthetic and narrative strategies already intrinsic to Nonnus' late-antique poem. By reading Marino's *Europa* back into Nonnus, the paper proposes early modern reception as a productive interpretive lens for reassessing Nonnus' position within Late Antiquity. Far from a marginal or "decadent" epic poet, Nonnus emerges as a sophisticated experimenter who negotiates tradition, visual imagination, and rhetorical display at a crucial cultural threshold—thereby explaining both his late-antique coherence and his powerful appeal to Baroque literature and art.

TOUR OF THE MUSEUM OF THE OLD UNIVERSITY & CONFERENCE RECEPTION

THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2026

HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
5 THOLOU STREET, PLAKA

9.00 Session 5: *Paraphrasis and Exegesis*

JOSHUA WERRETT (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), ‘*Noûς* reconfigured: A case study of Hermetic influence on Nonnus’ theology’

Despite Hermeticism playing a central role in the religio-philosophical landscape of Late Antique Egypt – and particularly that of Panopolis – the tradition is strikingly marginal in scholarship on Nonnus’ context. This paper argues that Hermetic language and motif, especially surrounding the concept of *νοῦς*, provide a useful framework for understanding aspects of the theological poetics of the *Paraphrase*. Two examples of apparent Nonnian engagement with Hermeticism are examined: one which permeates the *Paraphrase*, and one which zooms into a single episode. In terms of the former, this paper analyses the conceptual parallel between the Nonnian *Logos* and the Hermetic *Nous*, arguing that this alignment acts as a theoretical framework through which Nonnus articulates the nature of Christ as *Logos*. Christ and *Nous* share a range of fundamental qualities – e.g., timeless, spaceless, ineffable, cosmically creative: programmatic adjectives which appear early in *Par.* 1 – as Nonnus seems to draw upon a shared Late Antique vocabulary of divine intellect throughout his Christian epic. A more concentrated example appears in Nonnus’ reworking of Christ’s baptismal power. Although John the Baptist introduces Christ as one who baptises not in water, but in the Holy Spirit (*Jn.* 1:33), Nonnus transforms this common Biblical motif into a baptism involving an intellectual spirit of God (πνεῦμα θεοῦ νοερόν, *Par.* 1.125). The motif of a baptism in “intellectual spirit”, or *Nous*, finds its closest parallel not in the Christian tradition, but in Hermetic literature, as Hermes Trismegistus uses this exact terminology in his descriptions both of God’s first creation (*CH* 3.1) and of the gnostic baptismal *krater* which God sends to Earth (*CH* 4.4). By providing a snapshot of Nonnus’ place within a Hermetic context, this paper aims to reposition the tradition from a peripheral curiosity in Nonnian scholarship to a fascinating linguistic and imagistic influence on his theological poetics.

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ANNA LEFTERATOU (University of Cambridge), ‘From Nonnus to Erasmus: Paraphrasis between Gospel and exegesis’

Every retelling of a story is a *paraphrasis*, if not plagiarism (Stemplinger 1912; Marksches 2015; McGill 2012). The question of biblical paraphrase, however, is more challenging, as the Bible—the Word of God—ought to be infallible. Yet the Synoptic Gospels display significant similarities, as if they were amplifications

of one another (Coogan 2022). Moreover, the less synoptic “Spiritual Gospel” was paraphrased both by Nonnus and Erasmus, who, a millennium later (1523), composed a prose *Paraphrase* of John (Bloemendal 2016; Richards 2019); Nonnus’ work also received a commentary by Aristarchus Sacer (1627), evidence of the popularity of this work. This paper will discuss two issues:

(a) the difficulties John’s Gospel may have posed for the paraphrast because of its style and theology. Erasmus, for example, complains about John’s style: “he [John] strings his words together ... sometimes by linking like with like, sometimes by repeating the same thing several times, so that these elegances of style cannot be reproduced in a paraphrase” (Erasmus, *Dedicatory Letter to Ferdinand*, 4). This is not an issue for the late antique poet, who is capable of stringing together even more complex verbal structures, as any reader of the Nonnian *Paraphrase* will have noticed (e.g. *Par.* 1.1; Ypsilanti et al. 2020; De Stefani 2002). What, then, was the influence of Nonnus’ *Paraphrase* on Erasmus, and to what extent did Erasmus consider Nonnus an “exegete,” given their radically different styles?

(b) the use of biblical paraphrase as a hermeneutical tool and the exegetical appeal of classical paraphrase in the Early Modern period because of Humanism. Are modern biblical paraphrases akin to commentary (Cottier 2012), or to epic poetry (Czapla 2013)? Are they rewritings of the Gospels *qua* evangelia of a kind (e.g. Hadjittofi 2020)? And in what ways has the Early Modern perception of such poems filtered and biased our understanding of Late Antique paraphrases such as that of Nonnus?

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10.00 Session 6: Nonnian Narratives

STEVEN D. SMITH (Boston University), ‘The man in the bath: Masculine vulnerability and immersive pleasure in Nonnos and John of Gaza’

Nonnos’ *Dionysiaka* fixates on the vulnerability of bathing women, but in the Morrheus-Chalkomede episode (35.155–160, 185–203) a bathing male body becomes the object of a woman’s gaze. This inversion may be parodic (Geisz 2021: 185–186) but it also resonates with the epic’s obsessive interest in male effeminacy and with wider cultural anxieties about the body and sensual pleasure. Nonnos’ *Paraphrase* and John of Gaza’s

Ekphrasis respond with parallel bathing scenes that stage masculinity's vulnerability in the face of feminizing pleasure. In the *Paraphrase*, Nonnos transforms the bath into a site of Christ's triumph over the infirmity of the male body. At the Bethesda pool, a man's chronic pain makes him feminine: he needs another man's arms to immerse him in the water and he watches with frustration and longing as younger men race to the bath ahead of him (5.21–28). Aphrodite and Dionysus lurk here: the bath receives the bodies of younger men when it “spews out high-soaring foam” (ἀφρόν ἀερσιπότητον ἐρευγομένης, 28), and the “frenzied spring” (πηγῆς θυιάδος, 22–23) connotes maenadic ecstasy. Despite its supposedly miraculous power to heal, the bath's erotic allure signals enervation and impotence. Christ's intervention alone makes the sickly man's body heroic. John of Gaza positions his own body as a mediating presence in the bath: objectified by the scrutinizing gaze of the *theatron* (20), he turns possession by the Muses into masculine authority: theirs is a “manly goad” (ἄρσενι κέντρῳ, 28) and his heroic verse a “manly meter” (ἄρσενι μέτρῳ, 51). Invoking Christ's paternal favor wards off impotence (49), but clouds of steam expose male decrepitude and shame in the image of Ouranos (70–71), whose castration betokens Aphrodite's ascendance (224, 390–395, 457–465, and 660–671). In the end, this poet of the bath harmonizes masculine and feminine *and* claims victory over man's irrational nature (711–722).

JAKE SAWYER (University of Toronto), ‘Double vision: Intervisuality and the Resurrection of Lazarus in the *Paraphrase*’

Although much excellent work has been done on Nonnus' engagement with visual culture and his ekphrastic techniques, no study has yet treated the interaction between intertextuality and specific visual motifs within the framework of intervisuality. Intervisuality, recently applied to ancient literature in a volume by Capra and Floridi, provides a helpful new methodology to connect the creation of mental images, a common request in ancient ekphrasis, with corresponding visual models from the physical arts. In an analysis of Lazarus' resurrection in Book 11 of the *Paraphrase*, I argue that a comparison to wall paintings of Lazarus illuminates the demands of visualization in Nonnus' ekphrasis. In paintings found within the Catacomb of Callixtus at Rome, two different typologies of Lazarus emerge. One emphasizes the movement of Lazarus rushing from the tomb, another his stillness and mummification. Nonnus exploits references to *both* image types simultaneously to reflect the inherent paradox of the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection, as suggested also in Cyril's *Commentary to John*. In this case, Nonnus does not create ambiguity through vague language, but rather invokes two vivid images which fight each other for interpretation in an agonistic, unresolved dialectic. Lazarus swiftly escapes from the tomb of his own volition, even as he is hindered by the tight constraint of the burial wrapping. When taken together, these two images produce a paradoxical combination that remains difficult, if not impossible to resolve logically. This polyvalent visualization suggests a Christian adaptation of the effects of ekphrasis to depict miracles as something beyond simple comprehension. The poet suggests internally conflicting images which cause the reader to vacillate between imaginative possibilities, depending on which linguistic details guide their focus. Ultimately, I argue that this ekphrasis of paradox may be applicable to similar miraculous scenes through Nonnus' work, including the *Dionysiaca*.

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11.00 Digital Posters (II): *Narrative and the Dionysiaca*

JULIA HOMBRE IGLESIAS (University of Santiago de Compostela), '*All this, Old Time was to accomplish much later: The omens and oracles' fulfilment in Nonnus' Dionysiaca.*'

Many are the studies focused on the countless layers of the *poikilia* of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, yet one of its core points –Nonnus' particular use of mantic elements to anticipate the events of the poem– is often overlooked. However, in the *Dionysiaca* the presence of these omens and oracles is relevant as both the nature and subsequent fulfilment of some of them turns out to be unusual: their outcome happens outside the internal narrative time of the poem. This makes us question when does Nonnus introduce mantic elements and why – or why not– they're fulfilled, either in the internal narrative time or outside of it. Through a comparative analysis of the many types of omens and oracles included in the poem we aim to explore new perspectives on the study of mantic in the *Dionysiaca*. What type of omens and oracles have more relevance in the narration? Do the mantic episodes of a specific group of characters receive more attention than others? We also question if the fulfilment –or lack of it– of these omens and oracles comes from a conscious decision by Nonnus in which he assumes that the reader has prior knowledge of the outcome of said mantic elements, or if there are other reasons to account for it. Therefore, with this contribution we seek to shed some light on the topic of mantic in Nonnus' epic poem and further understand the presence of the omens and oracles through the narration of Dionysus' heroic deeds.

AGORITSA-IOANNA PELEKANOU (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), '*Zeus' deception and the making of Dionysus: Divine strategy in Nonnus' Dionysiaca*'

While scholarship has often focused on Dionysus' agency or Hera's hostility, the role of Zeus' deception (*Dios Apate*) has not been sufficiently explored as a sustained strategy rather than a series of isolated ruses. This paper examines the narrative and theological mechanisms through which Zeus actively facilitates the ascent of Dionysus to the Olympian pantheon in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, suggesting that deception functions as a mode of divine governance through which Dionysus' divinity is shaped, mediated, and ultimately authorized. The discussion first situates Dionysus' emergence within the pre-Dionysian framework of Zeus' rule, focusing on the Typhon episode in *Dionysiaca* 1–2 and the deployment of concealed means – such as hidden weapons and disguised agents like Cadmus – as instruments of controlled power. Within this framework, Dionysus himself emerges as an Olympian agent whose actions are carefully orchestrated within Zeus' broader strategy. The paper then turns to Hera, whose hostility paradoxically acquires a pedagogical dimension: through the experience of madness imposed upon Dionysus, she enables the god to internalize the logic of punitive action that will later define his authority. Attention is given to the figures of Lycurgus and Pentheus as narrative markers before and after Dionysus' experience of madness. Lycurgus' madness, inflicted directly by Zeus, represents a pre-Dionysian exercise of Olympian justice, whereas Pentheus' punishment constitutes the first fully legitimized application of Dionysian power. Finally, the paper gestures toward later episodes in the epic in which Zeus' logic of legitimation continues to inform the exercise of Dionysus' authority. By tracing these interconnected episodes, the paper argues that Dionysus' apotheosis is structurally produced through Zeus' deception, revealing it as an organizing principle of Olympian authority in Nonnus' epic.

Keywords: Zeus, divine deception (*Dios Apate*), Dionysus, madness, Olympian authority

11.30–12.00 COFFEE BREAK

12.00 Session 7: *From a specialist's perspective: Building on landmarks in Nonnian scholarship*

DOMENICO ACCORINTI (IIS Galilei-Pacinotti, Pisa), 'Is there still room for research on Nonnus? An overview of the last fifteen years, together with some proposals and desiderata for the next years'

KONSTANTINOS SPANOUDAKIS (University of Crete), 'Christian Nonnus in retrospection'

LAURA MIGUÉLEZ-CAVERO (Complutense University of Madrid), 'From *progymnasmata* to visual culture towards cultural history'

MARY WHITBY (University of Oxford), 'Dancing around the *Dionysiaca*: From Nonnus to George of Pisidia'

GIANFRANCO AGOSTI (University of Pisa), 'Rethinking Nonnus and late antique cultural production'

BERENICE VERHELST (University of Amsterdam), 'Narratology and the Digital Humanities. Quantifying stylistic properties of narrative and speech in the *Dionysiaca*'

14.30–16.00 LUNCH BREAK

16.00 Session 8: *Desire and the Female in the Dionysiaca*

ISOBEL HIGGINS (University of Cambridge), 'Dynamic fluids: Milk and breastfeeding in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*'

In the *Dionysiaca* milk is constantly gushing out from unexpected places and, indeed, people. Milk flows abundantly from the chests of men and women, mothers and virgins, feeding children, animals and in some cases fully-grown adults. Nonnus' fascination with milk, female breasts and breastfeeding has been addressed from a psychoanalytic perspective (Newbold 2000), in terms of ancient medical literature (Lasek 2018) and in relation to the role of milk in cult (Deonna 1955; McClay 2023). In this paper, I seek to draw out the significance of Christian discourses around milk for Nonnus' depiction of two scenes of adult breastfeeding – Eerie's feeding of her father Tectaphos (26.101–42 and 30.127–86) and Hera's reluctant suckling of Dionysus (35.279–340) – and argue that they offer contrasting ways of presenting the relationship between divine and human. In classical literature and cult, milk features as a medicinal and nourishing liquid; in the case of divine milk, its consumption can symbolise adoption, initiation and even resurrection. In early Christian writing, milk becomes a site of theological and epistemological contestation, following 1 Corinthians 3.1–3, as authors argue over the possibility of acquiring divine knowledge through dietary metaphors (Penniman 2017): can they ascend to solid food (i.e. true knowledge of God) or must the Christian remain in a perpetual state of intellectual infancy, drinking only the milk of simplified sermons? Nonnus' scenes of adult breastfeeding, which do not feature in narrative form elsewhere in Greek literature, reflect this contemporary discourse. The Eerie and Tectaphos and Hera and Dionysus episodes both present breastfeeding as a means of negotiating mortality: Tectaphos is brought back to life from the brink of death, and Dionysus has divine status conferred upon him. However, the ultimately ambivalent outcomes of both tales demonstrate Nonnus' pessimistic intervention into the question of human access to divine knowledge.

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JACOB BERNITZKI (Universität Bonn), 'The language of desire – Nonnus' metaleptic gods'

In the *Dionysiaca*, scenes of passion and frenzied desire occur much more often and with a degree of intensity that is unrivalled in the (extant) Greek epic tradition: the whole 42nd book, for example, is simply one continuous account of the (unfulfilled) desire of Dionysus and Poseidon for the nymph Beroë. The imagery points to a distorted perception on the characters' part and the narrator himself indulges in depicting them suffering. Due to the subject matter of the work, a good portion of these instances have the gods as protagonists, and the proposed presentation aims at comparing these episodes to those with humans heavily desiring (Hymnus, Morpheus). What are the differences in imagery, expression and narratorial evaluation, and, conversely, if there are none: what does that tell us about the gods' place in Nonnos's poetics? Special attention shall be paid to generalising statements the narrator inserts sometimes to reflect on and convey the characters' feelings. A fitting example would be the following reflection on Dionysus's (!) desire: "ἡιθέφ' γὰρ/ κάλλος ὀπιπεύοντι καὶ ἥλικος ὄμματα κούρης/ Κυπριδίων ἐλάχεια παραίφασίς ἐστιν ἐρώτων./ For beauty and the eyes of a girl of his own age have little consolation to a lad who gazes at her for the loves which the Cyprian sends." (42.135–137, tr.: Rouse). They have been identified as markers of intertextual engagement with the Greek Novel, but beyond this, they possess a strikingly metaleptic function, as they explicitly relate the inner workings of the characters, especially the gods, to (supposed) fundamental experiences of the readers. This gives rise to the notion of the gods as a means to transport very human experiences, although in a somewhat hypertrophied manner: They are, in a way, even more human than the humans.

MARÍA AGUSTINA ALDAVEZ (Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, Argentina), 'Virginity and erotic conflict in the episode of Pallene (*D.* 48.90–237)'

This proposal offers a new reading of the episode of Pallene (*D.* 48.90–237), a passage that has received relatively limited attention in recent scholarship on the poem. Earlier approaches have taken into account this episode in relation to the motif of erotic combat (the combat between Dionysus and Pallene is similar to those in the episode of Ampelus, *D.* 10.330–377), to Dionysus' strategies to conquer new territories and defeat masculine and feminine enemies, and as the poor relative of Nicaea and Aura, the hunting virgins raped by Dionysus. There is so far no systematic analysis of the episode other than the relevant volume in the Belles Lettres edition (2003). In particular, a specific analysis of the discursive construction of the female protagonist and her relationship with Eros is a desideratum. I will first focus on the lexical configuration of Pallene (κούρη, πάρθενος, but not explicitly φηγόδεμνος maiden), her characterisation (her description in relation to other characters in the *Dionysiaca* and other mythological figures, such as Atalanta), and the construction of the setting of the erotic struggle that makes it possible to include her within the group of Nonnian maidens characterized by their overt resistance to desire. This reading will highlight continuities in the representation of the feminine within the poem and make it possible to identify a narrative pattern that situates virginity as one of the central thematic axes of the poem, key to understand its socio-cultural context of creation, and its relationship to the *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John*.

17.30 Digital Posters (III): *Beroe, Dionysus, Poseidon*

DANTE MINUTILLO (Princeton University), 'Beroe, Justice, and the decline of Dionysus: *Dionysiaca* 41 in context'

Books 40-48 of the *Dionysiaca* are a problem, with their seemingly random assortment of scenes foiling prior attempts to fit them into their structural, intertextual, or narrative context (Shorrock 2001, 9–12 and 106ff.). Yet scholarship often overlooks (despite Winkler 1974, 153) the extent of Dionysus’s weakness here: the gods twice force him to retreat; he abandons the Gigantomachy; he needs Selene’s help to drive Pentheus mad; he fails to give Athens wine or save Ariadne. This paper starts by seeing his failures as a key to the structural problems: Dionysus is in decline, and no longer creating coherent meaning in the world or the poem. I show the political relevance of this decline through a reading of the Beroe episode in *Dionysiaca* 41. Nonnus deploys the ever-pervasive theme of cyclical time on a larger scale to represent arbitrary Dionysiac/“mythological” justice being replaced by a new universalizing power for a new era: human-made Roman law. This theme appears through a network of mythological symbolism and linguistic motifs. For instance, θεσμός, which in Nonnus refers to divine decrees or eye-for-an-eye justice, comes to refer to regularized human laws in this book; meanwhile κόσμος, previously referring to a boundless, divine universe, now reflects the extent of Rome’s empire. Dionysus thus emerges as the figurehead of an era that must decline before a new, better era can replace it. This nuances readings of Book 41 where Dionysus reflects principles removed from cyclical time (Hernández de la Fuente 2008) or sets the stage for Rome quasi-teleologically (Chuvín 2014). Crucially, unlike teleological time, cyclicity hints at a similar decline for Late Antique Rome. Rome is “unbreakable” (ἄλυτος, *D.* 3.199), but on the human level cyclical time can break even “unbreakable marriage” (*D.* 7.45-47). Was it Rome’s turn to yield to a new era?

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RUTH MITCHELL-FOX (University of Oxford), ‘Bloody brine: Saltwater and ambiguous theology in Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca*’

The ocean in the *Dionysiaca* is paradoxical: it is boundless and peripheral, a refuge and a battlefield. Nevertheless, discussion of the ocean in Nonnus’ poetry has been relegated to a small role in the treatment of water imagery more generally (e.g., Franchi 2018, Newbold 2001). This paper thus centres saltwater, situating it within its contemporary theological context. Indeed, the symbolic significances of the sea in late antique

theology are often overlooked despite being fraught with variation (cf., McGinn 1994, Della Dora 2016). I illustrate how the sea, as an ambiguous Christian symbol, shapes the *Dionysiaca*'s metaphysical landscape. Firstly, concern is with conflicting depictions of the sea as a symbol for divine apophaticism and human materiality. I interrogate resonances between the naval battle of the Indians and Dionysus' band in Book 39 and sea-faring peril in Gregory Nazianzus and John Chrysostom (e.g., *Carm.* II.1.11.14–17, *Ad Theod.* II). Emphasis in both instances falls on the inundation of an apophatically boundless sea with objects, fragments and liquids. Secondly, focus shifts to the Incarnate body as a site of blood and water's intermingling (e.g., Cyril of Alexandria, *In John.* XII, Weidemann 2019). I suggest reading this against Nonnus' antithetical depictions of saltwater and freshwater. When freshwater, blood and wine intermingle, one liquid is invariably elided: wine stains the river in Book 15 rather than the Indian's blood (e.g., *Dion.* 15.11–14). The blood-soaked ocean in Book 39, however, seems to generate new matter which mingles with the bodies of its victims (e.g., *Dion.* 39.236–238). If freshwater conflates materials, saltwater generates material and meaning. I suggest that the sea is crucial in the construction of the *Dionysiaca* as a narrative of 'tangible realities' (Miguélez-Cavero 2013: 358), but also that it becomes a productive site of interaction between Nonnus' epic and the ambiguities in Christian symbolic frameworks.

18.00–18.30 COFFEE BREAK

18.30 Session 9: *Dionysiaca* and Wine

SASKIA SCHOMBER (University of Munich), 'Living together in the *thiasos*. Elective families and the myth of filiation in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*'

Filial succession and tropes of paternity have been on the forefront of many poetological readings of the *Dionysiaca*, aligning Nonnus' relationship to Homer with Dionysus' rivalry with Zeus. Yet, Dionysus' own lineage is a story of multiplied origins, interruptions and elective, sometimes decidedly queer kinships. From the god's various nurses in infancy to his *thiasos*, the poem persistently unsettles genealogical continuity and foregrounds chosen families. The Pentheus episode, in particular, showcases the *thiasos*' power to displace, even to sever traditional family structures. My paper argues that such Dionysian modes of living together form an undercurrent to the *Dionysiaca*'s succession narrative that is both aesthetically and poetologically relevant to the poem. As an example, I discuss the aftermath of king Staphylus' death in Book 19. By drawing Methe (who calls the god her father, son, and husband) and the young Botrys into his *thiasos*, Dionysus replaces the royal bloodline with a non-genealogical community. Rather than reading this episode solely as a paradigmatic instance of Nonnus' filial poetics, I suggest that it also challenges what Roland Barthes has called "the myth of filiation." Alternative models of kinship point toward the unruly poetics of a poem that frequently upends the expected relationship of original and copy. Beyond the looming emulation of 'father Homer,' Nonnus' engagement with literary tradition resembles that of an elective family: he asserts his ability to choose whom to emulate and complicates clear lines of succession, turning the *Dionysiaca*'s intertextual archive into a question of affiliation rather than inheritance.

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REGINA HÖSCHELE (University of Munich), 'Mixing it up – The poetics of the *krater* in *Dionysiaca* 19'

As a mixing-vessel, the *kratêr* had not just a central practical function in the ancient symposium but could also stand emblematically for the drinking party itself, which constituted a space of multiple mixtures (Schlesinger 2016). As such it also lends itself to metapoetic usage, not least of all in the context of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* with its hybrid poetics, dazzling blend of genres and intertexts and figurative equation of poem and wine (Shorrock 2001: 114ff.). My paper takes a look at the two *kratêres* which Dionysus puts up as prizes in the dancing competition between the elder Maro and a younger Silenus (cf. Papaioannou 2022; Schlapbach 2018: 263–283): while the winner shall receive a vessel fashioned from gold and containing aged wine, the loser will be given a silver *kratêr* with a young, barely inebriating must. Through a close reading, I first illustrate the intertextual pedigree of these objects, in particular the Theocritean nature of the second vessel and its significant link with silver-producing Alybe, a place first mentioned by Homer, whose location was contested in Antiquity (a scholarly controversy to which, I argue, Nonnus alludes). In a second step, I explore the intricate mirroring effects of the dancers' mimic evocation of *kratêres* in their respective performances. Most notably, these include the re-enactment of a competition between Dionysus and Aristaeus that involves two *kratêres* and thus serves as a *mise-en-abyme* of Maro's and Silenus' competition for the prize of a *kratêr*. As if this doubling were not enough, Silenus' performance ultimately leads to his transformation into a river named *Kratêr* into whose waters the silver *kratêr* is thrown. This mindboggling amalgamation of physical object and medium, the absorption of a vessel holding liquids by a liquid named after the vessel, is, I submit, emblematic of Nonnus' aesthetics.

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19.30 Keynote 2

DAVID HERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE (Complutense University of Madrid), 'Nonnus' style between rhetoric and philosophy'

FRIDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2026

HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

5 THOLOU STREET, PLAKA

9.00 Session 10: *Nonnian Style & Aesthetics (I)*

TADEU DA COSTA ANDRADE (Instituto de Letras – Universidade Federal da Bahia), 'Moschus' and Nonnus' Europa: A stylistic contrast'

Nonnus of Panopolis's *Dionysiaca* (5th century CE) opens with a fantastical scene: Zeus, transformed into a bull, carries Europa across the sea from Phoenicia to Crete. The same episode forms the basis of Moschus's *Europa* (2nd century BCE). The parallels between them are numerous. Although we do not know all the models available to Nonnus for the composition of his epic, the first narrated episode of the work bears

striking similarities to Moschus's composition. Nonnus does not tell the encounter between Europa and the bull, which is quite detailed in Moschus. However, in the description of the divine bull's sea voyage, the parallels between the two poets are numerous. The similarities between the two passages are significant. However, as soon as we begin to compare Nonnus with Moschus, we notice how the *Dionysiaca* alters it. And in several ways. First, models are mixed. Another likely basis for Nonnus's scene is not epic, but prosaic: the description of Europa's portrait in the opening of *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius, a novel with which the *Dionysiaca* demonstrates other parallels. Secondly, the poets' styles are rather different: Nonnus chooses to omit, multiply and rephrase much of the material also found in *Europa*. The aim of this brief paper is to describe the way in which Nonnus appropriates an earlier epic work, and to contrast Nonnus' poetic style.

HALIMA BENCHIKH-LEHOCINE (Université Grenoble Alpes), 'The *poikilian* army of Dionysus against the Indians: A metaphor in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus' aesthetics?'

The army gathered under the banners of Dionysus to face the Indians – described, among other passages, in a lengthy catalogue that spans several hundred lines between books 13 and 14 of the *Dionysiaca* – is characterized by diversity and hybridity. It is heterogeneous, including both 'classical' soldiers, performing *aristiai* clad in the panoply of Iliadic heroes, and more unconventional troops. With this army, Nonnus brings non-warrior women, old men and hybrid beings straight out of the bucolic, the novelistic or comic worlds onto an epic battlefield. Moreover, these unconventional soldiers are armed with unconventional – even paradoxical, one might say – weapons. For this diverse quality, we propose to see the Dionysian army as the metonymic image of the entire poem, reflecting its *poikilian* aesthetics and the ways in which Nonnus engages with the earlier literary tradition. This concept of variation is illustrated and applied in a variety of ways by Nonnus, but we would like, in this paper, to focus on one of them in particular: the variety of literary genres. In fact, the multiple intertextualities with works belonging to other literary genres and the influences that these may have had on Nonnus in his lexical choices, his versification, his characterisation etc. have indeed been the subject of a number of studies, genre by genre and are still being closely examined by modern scholars, who are far from having exhausted the subject. This paper aims to contribute to this body of work by proposing a meta-poetic reading of the composition of the Dionysian army, into which Nonnus inserted characters belonging to – or at least referencing – other genres.

10.00 Keynote 3

FOTINI HADJITTOFI (University of Lisbon), 'Nonnus' weaving Aphrodite: Legend, metapoetry, and real-life weavers'

10.45–11.15 COFFEE BREAK

11.15 Session 11: *Nonnian Style & Aesthetics (II)*

JANE LIGHTFOOT (University of Oxford), 'Gesture and expression in Nonnus' *Paraphrasis*'

This paper will explore expression and gesture in Nonnus' *Paraphrasis*. (It thus complements Laura Miguélez-Cavero's stimulating essay 'Gesture and Gesturality in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, Volume 2, Number 2, Fall 2009, pp. 251–273). It will compare the *Paraphrasis* with the original Gospel in respect of words for body-parts, facial expressions, and actions, and consider how Nonnus has rendered what the Gospel offered him (especially words for hands, feet, eyes), but also what he has added to the original, and why. Such expressions may complement, or replace, speech. In many cases the purpose is that of expressive affectivity, in which case a contribution will be made to the growing field of the study of

emotion; sometimes there is also an element of theatricality or performativity (for instance, Nathaniel in 1.199 (~ John 1:50) striking his brow in amazement at Jesus' recognition of him). Can we decode the signals which are intended to be sent (for instance, what is meant by the curious action of Jesus tapping his nose with his finger in *P.* 4.130, Nonnus' only use of ῥίς)? Is there any carry-over in these expressions and gestures from the Homeric epics, or from Hellenistic poetry (as is the case with the favourite phrase ὄμματι ... λοξῶ), or is this a new set of conventions? What situations elicit such references, and how do they compare with the purposes that they serve, and the language in which they are couched, in the *Dionysiaca*? Can we draw parallels with the expressive repertoires in visual art, for instance with courtly culture or religious iconography? And to what extent can they be connected with the culture of performance (especially mime and pantomime) in the high imperial period?

CALUM MACIVER (University of Edinburgh), 'Crafting anew: Advertisement of innovation in Nonnus' *Paraphrase*'

Nonnus parades his innovation in his *Dionysiaca*, as has been well documented in the last few decades of scholarship on the epic. If we examine the frequency with which, in both works, Nonnus deploys one of his most characteristic poetic traits, namely the use of compound adjectives which have the prefix *neo-*, of the 121 occurrences in his whole poetic output, the *Paraphrase* has only nine. At first glance, this would seem to be indicative of a varying tendency for self-reflective novelty in the *Paraphrase*. In this paper I shall focus on the much-analysed sphragis at the end of Book 21. Building on the foundational work of Agosti (2001 and 2009) and Spanoudakis (2021), and the lucid analysis of Hadjitoffi (2020) of the *Paraphrase*'s narrator, I shall (re-)examine the closing lines by harnessing above all the intertextual implications of the adjective νεοτευχής, in order to offer some new conclusions on the narrator's projected identity.

MARIA YPSILANTI (University of Cyprus) & LAURA FRANCO (Università di Tor Vergata, Rome), 'Some metaphors illustrating emotions in the *Paraphrase*'

The paper explores the way in which Nonnus amplifies passages of the Gospel of John which convey metaphorical speech, using imagery and diction of the poetic tradition of the pagan past. Especially Christ's words often contain metaphors which are expanded and elaborated by the paraphrast so as to elevate the style to the register of epic and other poetry and also to allude to religious ideas developed by Christian authors. Notions often associated with dispositions of character and feelings, such as madness, faith, treason, sorrow, rage, are rhetorically embellished by means of the vocabulary of classical literature and thus acquire broader poetic dimensions. The investigation of the specific Nonnian metaphors will be not carried out in the context of an exhaustive or systematic study of the *Paraphrase*, but will rather focus on characteristic instances aiming to offer further insights to the author's paraphrastic technique.

FILIP DOROSZEWSKI (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń), 'Encircling the King: Nonnus on Jesus' scourging and the dethronement of Zagreus (Sinai Palimpsest Ar NF 66)'

In paraphrasing Jesus' scourging, Nonnus draws not only on the Gospel of John—source of the scourging, the crown of thorns, the purple cloak, and the blows—but also on the Synoptic Gospels, from which he takes the soldiers' mocking homage. As in other theologically charged scenes, he uses **amplificatio**, sharpening and expanding key motifs. The result is a stronger emphasis on Jesus' royal dignity. Where the Gospel narrative only hints at kingship through derisive ritual, Nonnus articulates it more directly, foreshadowing resurrection and the triumph of the Son of God. Christ's kingship as ruler of the world is widely treated by the Church Fathers, whose writings Nonnus knew and which likely shaped his scourging scene. Nonnus also likes to place Jesus in allusive proximity to Dionysus—often styled “king” in the *Dionysiaca*. In Orphic myth, the episode that most readily recalls Jesus' scourging (and killing) is the assault on Zagreus: both figures are isolated, encircled by enemies, and driven through torments toward death. Nonnus' *Paraphrase* renders the scourging

in ways especially close to the recently identified Sinai Palimpsest Ar NF 66, where Zagreus is surrounded by a hostile ring. In both texts, encirclement structures the violence, while royal markers are imposed on the body in a way that weaponizes kingship: crowning becomes inverted enthronement, and the surrounding chorus turns gesture and speech into instruments of domination. This shared configuration—encirclement, coerced regalia, performative hostility—creates a striking family resemblance between Christian epic and Orphic narrative. In my paper I will comment on these convergences and reflect on their significance for reading Nonnus’ scourging poetics.

13.20 Digital Posters (IV): *Diction & Style*

LOTTE KNIJN (University of Amsterdam), ‘Golden lines in late antique Greek epic: A computational, diachronic approach’

A known feature of Nonnus’ poetry is his predilection for golden lines, commonly defined as lines ‘containing two nouns and two adjectives, in hyperbaton and separated by a verbal form’.¹ Not only is it typical of Nonnian style, it is also ‘almost non-existent in the poets contemporary with him’,² as discussed by Miguélez-Cavero. It is a stylistic feature closely associated with the hexameter poetry of Latin neoteric poets such as Catullus, as well as with Ovid and Virgil. Their work shows an increase in golden lines compared to their Latin predecessors composing hexameter poetry.³ Given this, the question what happened in the centuries between the composition of works such as Catullus 64, the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses* on the one hand and Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca* on the other arises.⁴ If golden lines were uncommon in late antique Greek epic, did Nonnus directly transfer what the first-century BCE Latin authors did to his own Greek poem with the same frequency relative to the number of lines? Or were there, in fact, golden lines or variations of them in Greek epic works written prior to the *Dionysiaca*? A large-scale, diachronic analysis of the use of golden lines in Greek epic can shed light on connections between the stylistics of Nonnus and his Latin epic predecessors, while also providing insight into how innovative the Panopolitan poet’s incorporation of golden lines in his *Dionysiaca* was. A computational approach is suitable for this type of research: using a Python program, golden lines can be mined from a diachronic, bilingual corpus of epic poetry. A ‘sliding scale’ can be created to experiment with varying criteria for golden lines. Such a computational method will also extract lines structured in ways that resemble golden lines but fall outside of the standard definition.

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EDWYN MAUCHERAT (Université de Lille), ‘Reddening, darkening, whitening: A case of intervisuality between Nonnus and Apollonius Rhodius’

Any reader of Nonnus of Panopolis’ *Dionysiaca* has encountered images of dark waters ‘whitened’ by movement⁵ or ‘reddening’ on contact with the eroticised body of a character;⁶ snowy peaks ‘darkened’ by

¹ Dainotti 2015: 239.

² Miguélez-Cavero 2008: 122.

³ Dainotti 2015: 240.

⁴ Heikkinen 2015 discusses the use of golden lines in later Latin poetry. I will limit myself to comparing Catullus, Ovid and Virgil to Greek authors, namely Oppian, Quintus and Nonnus.

⁵ See for instance *Dion.* II, 14 (under the strike of oars); XVII, 35 (of their own movement).

⁶ See for instance *Dion.* VII, 222 (Semele bathing).

thunderbolts,⁷ saffron-tinted tunics ‘whitened’ by froth⁸ or ‘reddened’ by blood⁹... among many others. If we limit analysis to the five verbs *leukaino* (to whiten), *melaino* (to darken) and *eruthaino* /*porphuro* /*phoinisso* (to redden), the poem features 142 instances of this coloration phenomenon.¹⁰ Passages of this type appear to gesture toward a visual conception of poetic composition whereby the technical means of poetry emulate those of visual arts, summoning up vivid, dynamic images. Nonnus establishes a recurrent chromatic interaction: a first colour serves as a ground for a second to bleed over, and the poet seems particularly interested in evoking colour change *in process*. A part at least of this visual pattern seems actually to be inherited from earlier literary tradition. It echoes specifically Apollonius Rhodius’ *Argonautica*, a poem noted for its interest in techniques that rival the visual arts,¹¹ with a particular focus on the figuration of contrast and brilliance.¹² I thus propose to trace back the coloration motif and try to define the type of reading that Nonnus made of Apollonius, analysing it as a case of *intervisuality* between the two poetic works. Specifically, the examples in Apollonius’ poem¹³ provide an incomplete version of the visual schema found in Nonnus’ work. The *Dionysiaca* derive, displace and amplify the pictorial characteristics of the visualisation evoked by the *Argonautica*. Brilliance and light become tools for figuration among others, whilst chromatic interactions are represented not only in regard to contrast, but also to the notion of *chromatic bleed* and spillover.

MARINA LOZANO SAIZ (Complutense University of Madrid), ‘*Poikilia* and *oikonomia*: Sensory alternation as a structural principle in late antique epic’

This paper examines the function of *poikilia* (variation) and *oikonomia* (narrative economy) in late antique epic poetry by analyzing the structural and aesthetic role of sensory alternation, specifically between light and darkness and between noise and silence, focusing on Triphiodorus’ *The Sack of Troy* and Colluthus’ *The Abduction of Helen*. In dialogue with the epic tradition culminating in Nonnus of Panopolis, it argues that these sensory contrasts are not merely decorative but fundamental to narrative organization, characterization, and thematic development. In Triphiodorus, the dazzling yet deceptive luminosity of the Trojan Horse and the Greeks’ strategic silence function as structural markers that orchestrate the transition from illusory victory to catastrophic revelation. In Colluthus, the intrusion of discordant sound and artificial light into an initially harmonious pastoral setting mirrors the ethical and narrative rupture brought about by the Judgment of Paris and Helen’s abduction. Both poets consciously engage with Homeric models while adapting the principle of *poikilia* to the poetic demands of late antiquity. Their works offer a significant point of comparison with Nonnus’ more systematic use of sensory and stylistic variation in the *Dionysiaca* and the *Paraphrase of St. John’s Gospel*. By tracing how sensory alternation structures narrative and guides perception across these texts, this paper illuminates continuities and innovations in Late Antique epic poetics, positioning Triphiodorus and Colluthus as key voices in the evolution of what has been termed the “jeweled style” and in the renegotiation of the epic tradition within a changing cultural context.

14.00–15.30 LUNCH BREAK

15.30 Session 12: *Nonnian Comparativisms*

Nonnus lived in a junctural era, when the New Rome was pulling ahead of the Old, when ‘paganism’ was beginning to be consigned to the past. Past and present, pagan and Christian are set side-by-side in his paired

⁷ See *Dion.* I, 150; reverse image in *Dion.* II, 523 (Typhon’s burnt face covered with snow).

⁸ See *Dion.* IX, 48.

⁹ See for instance *Dion.* XVII, 329.

¹⁰ Among which occurrences of the verb *phoinisso* are strikingly predominant (67) followed by *leukaino* (23) and *porphuro* (22).

¹¹ See Phinney, 1967; Webster, 1964. More recently, see Prioux, 2013.

¹² For a detailed analysis on the subject see Wolff, 2018.

¹³ *Argonautica* I, 536-546 (dark/white); IV, 167-173 (golden/red); IV, 471-474 (white/red); IV, 1573-1574 (dark/white).

epic masterpieces, which describe a quasi-Dionysiac Christ and a quasi-Christianised Dionysus. Even at the macro-level, then, comparison is priced into the hermeneutics he invites: we cannot but compare Jesus to Dionysus and *vice versa*. This panel builds on this cue to explore comparativism more generally as a strategy for reading Nonnus. As a self-consciously late poet, for example, he demands to be read against earlier Greek writers. Comparison is also invited by the poems' narrative texture: within the *Dionysiaca*, he creates startling narrative juxtapositions, whether telling the same story twice or supplying alternative aetiologies for the same phenomenon. More than this, he exploits the traditional parabolic resources of the epic simile dramatically, to compare, merge and reassemble different ontologies. Comparison — what the Greeks recognised and theorised as σύγκρισις — turns out to a crucial methodological point of entry into Nonnus' poetry and the liminal culture he inhabited.

EMMA GREENSMITH (University of Oxford), "Two things can be true at once': Nonnus' comparative aetiology'

In Book 12 of the *Dionysiaca*, Nonnus gives two different accounts of the origin of wine: the post-mortem transformation of Ampelus into a vine, and the older story of the unnoticed plant suckled by a serpent and then cultivated by Dionysus and the satyrs. These versions stand in startling apposition. They are narrated sequentially, at considerable length, and with full Nonnian gusto and vividness; but their manifest contradictions receive no explicit explanation or comment. This paper takes this sequence as a starting point for exploring Nonnus' plays with comparative, even competitive, origins across his epic. I begin by close reading these parallel wine stories, and show how Nonnus encourages the reader actively to compare them: we are drawn to provide the *synkrisis* which the narrative leaves opaque. I then suggest how this same hermeneutical impulse is activated in other moments of double causation within and across the Nonnian poems. Drawing upon a range of models from Herodotus to Hesiod to the Alexandrian poets and Ovid, Nonnus creates a new blend of aetiological poetics, which bends temporal linearity and tears apart any monocausality of explanation, be that mythological, literary or even divine.

SOPHIE SCHOESS (University of St Andrews), "The dead have the final word': Re-framing narrative through encounters with the dead in Nonnus, Lucian, and Philostratus'

In Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, the dead have a way of returning to the world of the living for a final say in their own stories. In the form of dream visions, they are able to speak to those who loved, betrayed, or harmed them one last time. Though they ostensibly return to address something unique to their individual stories, their words also bring closure to a narrative arc within the poem by reinforcing, complicating, or outright challenging the narrator's version of events. In Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, Homeric heroes discuss descriptions of their deeds and appearances in epic, reflecting on poetic conventions and authority. In Philostratus' *Heroicus*, the *daimōn* of Protesilaus has been telling his version of the Trojan War to a vinedresser who bases his own idiosyncratic *Homerkritik* on the hero's account. Much as in Nonnus, the dead in Lucian and Philostratus both reinforce and challenge epic narrative and tradition, laying claim to greater authority by dint of their first-hand experience. In this paper, I take a comparative approach in exploring how Nonnus, Lucian, and Philostratus use the voices of the dead to engage in dialogue with, and offer commentary on, epic traditions and scholarship. The Homeric dead in Lucian and Philostratus build their authority on both their presence in and their familiarity with the epic tradition, but ultimately exist and speak outside it. Nonnus's dead, by contrast, are drawn from a wider range of literary traditions, but engage with their internal and external narratives from within the epic. I suggest that, in all three authors, the dead's challenge to the literary tradition ultimately serves to foreground their fictionality and, by extension, the authorial power of those who give them a voice.

EMILY KNEEBONE (University of Nottingham), 'Mapping humans onto plants'

Extended similes are an iconic feature of Homeric epic diction, and a pivotal site for later epic poets' dextrous engagement with Homeric tradition. Nonnus too showcases his adaptation of classic Homeric similes at selected moments in the *Dionysiaca*, especially during scenes modelled closely on key Homeric precedents. Yet extended simile plays a more subdued role in this epic than we might overall expect, and features less frequently as a site of literary engagement than in many other Greek epic poems. This paper argues that the *Dionysiaca* instead destabilises and reveals the slippage between the ontological categories that underpin the very structure of a simile. Nonnus' Dionysiac epic presents its readers with a sliding, protean world not only of transformation and metamorphosis, but of sustained semantic overlap between different domains and forms of life. This paper takes as its focus the complex relationship between humans and plants in the *Dionysiaca*, exploring the multiple ways in which Nonnus teases out a key Homeric simile by dramatising, interrogating, and expanding radically upon its core assumptions about the consonance – and differences – between human and non-human life.

TIM WHITMARSH (University of Cambridge), 'Nonnus' parallel lives'

Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, as is well known, juxtapose famous figures of Greek and Roman history, often with an explicit *synkrisis* or comparison between the two. The syncritical mode draws out not just ethical comparisons between the two individuals, but also cultural and sociopolitical contrasts between the two systems they represent. Plutarchan scholarship has made significant advances over the years, demonstrating just how nuanced Plutarch is in his presentation of cultural difference (albeit within a generally Hellenocentric framework). This paper seeks to read Nonnus' 'parallel lives' of Jesus and Dionysus within the framework of ancient syncritical practice, focusing not just on the differences between Christian and 'pagan' but also on the subtler points of tension and friction. The wider aim, thus, is to explore options for new points of entry into the *quaestio Nonniana*, focusing on the literary and cultural resources available to Nonnus himself.

17.30–18.00 COFFEE BREAK

18.00 Session 13: *Narrative and Characters in the Dionysiaca*

CAMILLE GEISZ (Haberdashers' Monmouth School in Wales), 'Interjections in Nonnus of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca*'

Interjections are a rare commodity in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*. Apart from a few isolated examples, there are only four: ναί, ἤ, ὦ ποποῖ and ὦμοι. Their use is often formulaic, e.g. ναί almost always precedes λῖτομαι, and ἤ introduces the phrase 'ἤ μέγα θαῦμα / δειλή'. One could expect to recognize an inherent incompatibility between the crafted, artificial literary nature of hexametric speech, and the impulsive, realistic tone implied by an interjection; far from this, interjectional phrases act as markers of immediacy, of genuine emotion, and contribute fully to the poetic force of such speeches. When they occur in narrator-text, interjections contribute to the delineation of the overt, and innovative, persona of the Nonnian narrator. Interjections may also assume a conative function in speeches where they cease to be genuine markers of emotion to become tools of persuasion; goddesses attempting to manipulate mortals particularly resort to such interjections by exaggerating their feelings or even feigning to experience a feeling. Finally, due to the absence of real dialogue in the *Dionysiaca*, the phatic function of Nonnian interjections is often reflexive. Most character-text consists of the vocalisation of an internal monologue, even when it has an addressee on the level of the diegesis. As such, speakers may utter interjections to provide feedback on their own speech and confirm to themselves that their emotion has increased to an unbearable level of intensity. Indeed, characters with a tragic fate, such as Agave, Ariadne, Nicaia, or Hymnus, utter the most interjections in their monologues, highlighting the theatrical nature of these episodes.

ARIANNA MAGNOLO (Università degli Studi di Genova), ‘Digression and time in Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca*:
A comparative reading with Proust’

Although scholarship has convincingly demonstrated that digression in Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca* constitutes a deliberate and structurally functional device,¹⁴ its implications for narrative duration and the reader’s temporal experience remain underexplored. Most studies focus on compositional techniques or isolated manipulations of narrative order¹⁵ –such as *prolepsis* in the *loci amoeni*¹⁶– without situating these features within a coherent model of temporal articulation. This paper examines the *Dionysiaca*, the most “baroque” of Nonnus’ works, arguing that digression functions as a temporal and perceptual strategy. A comparative approach brings Nonnus into dialogue with Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*, used as an analytical lens to clarify narrative temporalization, without implying historical contact or influence. Proust is chosen as the modern author who most fully centers narrative on temporality, exploring its multiple dimensions through a digressive style. Selected passages –such as the descriptive sequences in the proem and the Europa myth (Book I)– show how metaphorical accumulation, syntactic hypertrophy and *variatio* produce a centrifugal narrative movement. In Nonnus, as in Proust, digression shapes the reader’s experience of narrative time: in Nonnus this effect is generated by style and structure rather than subjective memory, and meaning emerges through duration rather than sequential causality. By shifting attention from digression as a compositional device to its role in modulating narrative time, the paper offers a new perspective on late antique epic aesthetics and situates Nonnus’ poetics within a broader, transhistorical reflection on narrative form, perception and temporality.

KELLY A. MACFARLANE (University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada), “‘There are Erinyes for lovers too’” (*Dion.* 16.294): Erinyes and the rise of the Underworld in the *Dionysiaca*’

As is to be expected in an epic narrating the life and times of one of the Greek world’s most interesting gods, the *Dionysiaca* features a significant divine presence, with extended episodes of gods acting among themselves in the divine sphere and interacting with humans in the mortal world. In addition to this Olympian element, there is also a significant Underworld presence that has been largely unexplored. In the literature of the classical period, the Underworld is comparatively minor, acting as a holding place for the dead or a destination for *katabases*, with its gods largely confined to the myth of Hades’ abduction of Persephone. In the *Dionysiaca*, however, the Underworld, its gods, and entities have a significant presence as active agents in the worlds of the gods, the living, and the dead. An expanded role for the Underworld is particularly apparent in the role of the Erinyes. In the *Dionysiaca*, they are no longer the just chthonic Erinyes of the Classical Greek world, where they safeguard society by punishing those who spill kindred blood; instead, they have become active agents of the Underworld with a much broader mandate, inflicting madness on gods and mortals, for offences that include much more than just family bloodshed, with disastrous results for guilty and innocent alike. Nonnus’ enhanced role for the gods and entities of the Underworld is in keeping with their growing importance and changing role in Imperial literature. This analysis of the role of the Erinyes in the *Dionysiaca* will enhance our understanding of Nonnus’ relationship with his literary predecessors.

19.30 Concluding remarks

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. G. Agosti, *Poemi digressivi tardoantichi (e moderni)*, «Compar(a)ison» I (1995), 131-151.

¹⁵ Cf. recent narratological studies as C. Geisz, *A Study of the Narrator in Nonnus of Panopolis’ Dionysiaca: Storytelling in Late Antique Epic*, Leiden-Boston 2017 and B. Verhelst, “Breaking the Fourth Wall”. *On Literariness and Metalepsis in Nonnus’ Dionysiaca*, in F. Doroszewski-K. Jażdżewska (eds.), *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context III: Old Questions and New Perspectives*, Leiden-Boston 2020, 45-66.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. C. Minuto, *La tecnica della prolessi nei loci amoeni delle Dionisiache di Nonno di Panopoli*, «Maia» LXXII (2020), 105-116.