

Pindar, Perseus, and the θρῆνος πουλυκάρηνος in Nonnus of Panopolis

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INTERTEXTUAL INVESTIGATIONS on Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* have led to great satisfaction.¹ Not only is Nonnus' 'Late-Greek baroque' poetry² consciously presented as variegated in nature from the very start of the *Dionysiaca*,³ but his phraseology also draws from different literary genres.⁴ Among others,

¹ See e.g. M. Paschalis, "Ovidian Metamorphosis and Nonnian *poikilon eidos*," in K. Spanoudakis (ed.), *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context* (Berlin 2014) 97–122; D. Gigli Piccardi, "Nonnus and Pindar," in H. Bannert et al. (eds.), *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context II* (Leiden 2018) 255–270; S. Bär et al. (eds.), *Narrative, Narratology and Intertextuality: New Perspectives on Greek Epic from Homer to Nonnus* (London 2019).

² On the concept of 'Late-Greek baroque' see G. Braden, *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven 1978) 55–78, and the seminal study of G. D'Ippolito, *Studi nonniani. L'epillio nelle Dionisiache* (Palermo 1987).

³ *Dion.* 1.13–15 Μούσαι στήσατέ μοι Πρωτῆα πολύτροπον, ὄφρα φανείη ποικίλον εἶδος ἔχων, ὅτι ποικίλον ὕμνον ἀράσσω, "Muses, put on my side Proteus of many turns, so that he may appear with a variegated aspect, since I strike (on my harp) a variegated hymn." As showcased by Gigli Piccardi, in *Nonnus and Pindar* 258–259, the collocation ποικίλον ὕμνον is Pindaric (*Ol.* 6.87, *Nem.* 5.42). As a further comparandum cf. *Ol.* 3.4–9 Μοῖσα δ' οὕτω ποι παρέστα μοι νεοσίγαλον εὐρόντι τρόπον [...] φόρμιγγά τε ποικιλόγαρυν καὶ βοᾶν αὐλῶν ἐπέων τε θέσιν [...] συμμίξαι, "Muse, so stand by me as I invent a brand new song [... it is my due] to mix the *phorminx* of variegated voice, the sound of the *auloi* and the arrangement of words."

⁴ Cf. A. M. Lasek, "Nonnus and the Play of Genres," in D. Accorinti (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Nonnus of Panopolis* (Leiden 2016) 402–421, who shows how some passages of Nonnus draw from bucolic, epigrammatic, and

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Pindar is one of Nonnus' models.⁵ The supreme lyric poet makes an appearance in the proem of *Dion.* 25, the content of which can be summed up as follows.⁶

The Muse-Maenad is invoked to sing the war of Dionysus in India (25.1–6). However, the poet will “make his pattern like Homer’s” (8 τελέσας δὲ τύπον μιμηλὸν Ὅμηρου) and only focus on the last year of the conflict (9 ὕστατον ὑμνήσω πολέμων ἔτος). He will also mix his song with Thebes (11 Θήβη δ’ ἑπταπύλω κεράσω μέλος). After a brief mention of two well-known Theban myths (11–14 Pentheus, 15–17 Oedipus), the city is identified as the homeland of Pindar (18–21):

Ἀονίης αἰώ κιθάρης κτύπον· εἴπατε, Μοῦσαι,
τίς πάλιν Ἀμφίων λίθον ἄπνοον εἰς δρόμον ἔλκει;
οἶδα, πόθεν κτύπος οὗτος· ἀειδομένη τάχα Θήβη
Πινδαρέης φόρμιγγος ἐπέκτυπε Δώριος ἠχώ.

I hear the twang of the Aonian lyre. Tell me, Muses, what Amphion is pulling dead stones to a run anew? I know where that sound comes from: surely it is the Dorian tune of Pindar’s lyre for Thebes celebrated in song.⁷

hymnic poetry. According to her analysis, Nonnus’ epic responds to “intentional compositional strategy” subordinated to the principles of *poikilia* or diversity, as “Nonnus shapes his text so as to evoke in the reader associations with traditional literary genres” (404), depending on the degree of education of the reader.

⁵ For reasons of space and convenience, I limit my analysis to a selection of passages in which the *Dionysiaca* draws on Pindar. Pindaric intertextual references have been identified in other late antique authors, such as Triphiodorus, cf. Cannatà Fera, “Pindaro in Trifiodoro,” in F. Benedetti et al. (eds.), *Studi di filologia e tradizione greca in memoria di Aristide Colonna I* (Perugia 2003) 193–198.

⁶ Editions used: F. Vian, *Nonnos de Panopolis, Les Dionysiaques IX* (Paris 1990); B. Simon, *Nonnos de Panopolis, Les Dionysiaques XIV* (Paris 1999); B. Snell and H. Maehler, *Pindari Carmina cum fragmentis* (Leipzig 1987).

⁷ Transl. W. H. D. Rouse, *Nonnos. Dionysiaca* (Cambridge [Mass. 1940]), slightly modified. The same mythological tradition on Thebes’ foundation is referred to in *Dion.* 25.413–428, in the description of the shield of Dionysus,

In reiterating his intention to celebrate Dionysus' deeds in India (22–30), Nonnus argues that the accomplishments of the god are unrivaled. Neither the deeds of Perseus (31–147) nor those of Minos (148–173) or Heracles (174–252) can stand comparison. At 253 the poet refuses to compare Dionysus to the heroes of the Trojan war. A second address to the Muse (264–270) shifts the focus to the Indian conflict, the narration of which occupies 271–572 of *Dion.* 25 and further extends up to 40.250, intercalated by the *epyllia* of Morrheus and Chalcomede (33.35–222), and Phaethon (38.108–434).⁸

Given this set of subject(s), the short evocation of Pindar at *Dion.* 25.18–21 is enigmatic to modern readers. In this paper, I argue that the missing link between Pindar and the topic of the *Dionysiaca* is his association with elements of the Perseus myth:

(i) Episodes from the saga of Perseus are a prelude to the account of Dionysus' Indian war (25.31–147). As some of these subjects were treated in Pindar's victory odes and dithyrambs, it is possible to recognize thematic and phraseological Pindaric echoes in Nonnus' text.

(ii) The *aition* of the θρήνος πολυκάρηνος (40.224–233) was connected to Perseus' battle against the Gorgons and relies upon a Pindaric model (*Pyth.* 12). Specifically, in *Dion.* 40 the θρήνος πολυκάρηνος is performed to honor the dead of Dionysus' army, right after the paean of victory. The θρήνος πολυκάρηνος thus entails a 'memorial' and a celebrative dimension. According to *Pyth.* 12.6–24, Athena invented the "tune of many heads" by imitating the lament of the Gorgons over Medusa. However, the same νόμος is also said to be a μναστήρ ἀγώνων (24). The use of the term μναστήρ opens to a variety of inter-

on which see K. Spanoudakis, "The Shield of Salvation: Dionysus' Shield in Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 25.380–572," in *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context* 333–371.

⁸ On the *epyllia* in the *Dionysiaca* cf. D'Ippolito, *Studi nonniani*, and G. Agosti, "L'epillio nelle Dionisiache? Strutture dell'epica nonniana e contesto culturale," *Aitia* 6 (2016): <https://journals.openedition.org/aitia/1579?lang=it#text> (last accessed 14 Feb. 2023).

pretative scenarios. Identifying a ‘celebrative’ component in the Pindaric νόμος κεφαλῶν πολλῶν ultimately depends on how one interprets Pindar’s text (see §3 for my proposal).

I begin by recapitulating the structure of the *synkrisis* between Perseus and Dionysus in *Dion.* 25 (§1); I focus on the identification of possible Pindaric echoes in 25.31–84 (§2). I then move on to the analysis of the Pindaric innuendos in 40.215–233 (§3) and sum up my conclusions on Nonnus’ ποικίλος ὕμνος (§4).

The overall aim of the study is to show how Nonnus closely interacts with Pindar’s phraseology and themes. In doing so, I wish to contribute to clarifying Nonnus’ methods of ‘artistic translation’.⁹ Needless to say, by isolating the Pindaric *matrix/matrices* in Nonnus’ text, I do not mean to deny that other models exist. On the contrary, the aim of my study is to spotlight the rich intertextual dimension of the *Dionysiaca*, by using Greek choral lyric as an additional filter to approach Nonnus’ poem. In a complementary way, I must stress that, as far as this paper is concerned, my analysis of Pindaric echoes is far from exhaustive, for Pindar appears to be a promising intertextual *comparandum* for further passages of the *Dionysiaca*,¹⁰ a matter which I hope to explore further in other venues.

1. *Nonnus’ Perseus*

Before focusing on possible Pindaric influences on the episode, I recapitulate the structure and themes of *Dion.* 25.31–147. Unlike other passages, in which Perseus’ and Dionysus’ heroism are explicitly paired or compared by a certain character, i.e. through his/her point of view (cf. Athena’s speech at 30.258–277), in 25.31–147 the poet talks to the audience without any fictional intermediary, with all his own bias. Perseus’

⁹ On this concept see G. B. Conte, *Dell’imitazione: furto e originalità* (Pisa 2014).

¹⁰ The passages analyzed by Gigli Piccardi, in *Nonnus and Pindar* 255–270, which mostly differ from those taken into account here, count as a precious scientific input to further in-depth intertextual investigations.

deeds are mocked¹¹ and belittled in order to exalt Dionysus' accomplishments. The rhetorical strategy of the passage is as follows:

31–79: Perseus' 'fight' against the Gorgon is compared to Dionysus' war against the army of Deriades. In a chiasmic way, Nonnus first tells us what Perseus did and did not do (31–60), then what Dionysus did not do and did (61–79). The contrast between the two characters is realized by means of a variety of lexical reprises throughout.¹²

¹¹ In this mockery, Nonnus seems to play with a variety of literary references. For example, εἰ ἔτεόν πεπότητο "if he has really ever flown [at all!]" (25.33) seems a skeptical comment on [Hes.] *Sc.* 222 ὃ δ' ὡς τε νόημι' ἐποτᾶτο Perseus "flew like a thought." Note also that Perseus is ὠκυπέδιλος "swift-shoed" (cf. 54 ὠκυτέρω ... ἀνηώρητο πεδίλω), not "swift-footed," like the Homeric heroes (e.g. ποδάς ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς, *Il.* 1.58). The poet repeatedly stresses that Perseus fought only one enemy who was a woman (38 μιῆς ἤμησε Μεδούσης, 85 μία Γοργώ, 121 Περσῆα μίαν κτείναντα γυναῖκα). It is tantalizing to link this emphatic "one" to Hes. *Theog.* 277–278 ἢ μὲν ἔην θνητή, αἱ δ' ἀθάνατοι καὶ ἀγήρω, αἱ δύο· τῇ δὲ μιῇ παρελέξατο Κυανοχαίτης, Medusa "was mortal, the other two were immortal and un-aging; but the Kyanokhaites (i.e. Poseidon) had intercourse only with that one."

¹² E.g. at 38 Perseus is said to have "harvested" (ἀμάω) Medusa's head (ὄγμον ἐχιδνήεντα μιῆς ἤμησε Μεδούσης; for ὄγμον ... ἀμάω cf. *Il.* 11.67–68 οἱ δ', ὡς τ' ἀμητήρες ἐναντίοι ἀλλήλοισιν ὄγμον ἐλαύνωσιν ἀνδρὸς μάκαρος κατ' ἄρουραν). The choice of ἀμάω (cf. *Dion.* 30.277, and also Lycoph. 840, in which Perseus is called θηριστήρ) might be taken as an implicit reference to Perseus' weapon, the sickle, ἄρπη (*Dion.* 8.100; 25.41, 55, 130; 30.274; 31.12; 47.541) or δρεπάνη (25.108; 30.271; 31.20; 47.504, 522, 538, 584, 618). Significantly, at 25.70–71 the massacre of the Indians is compared to a rich harvest, πολὺς δ' ἐπὶ μητέρι Γαίῃ ὑψηλόφων ἀκάρηνος ἐτυμβεῦθη στάχυσ Ἴνδῶν, "Great was the harvest of high-crested Indians buried headless in mother earth"; and at 87 ἀμάω applies to Dionysus. On harvest metaphors as a recurrent trait of Nonnus' poem, as they are intimately connected with the nature of Dionysus, god of wine, but also of war since the Homeric poems, see D. Gigli Piccardi, *Metafora e poetica in Nonno di Panopoli* (Florence 1985) 125–128. The recurrent use of these metaphors, especially applying to a variety of contexts, contributes towards creating the effect of estrangement (τὸ ξενικόν), that is, the alteration of the predictability of discourse,

31–60: Perseus reached Libya, robbed the Graeae of their eye, killed *only* Medusa, and ran off. He did not slaughter an entire army of people, but only one pregnant female. In a nutshell, he resembles a thief more than a warrior.

61–79: By contrast, Dionysus is no “sneaking champion” (62 *δολόεις πρόμος*). Indeed, he massacred a huge army of enemies. The bloodshed was such that changed the color of the sea.

80–97: Perseus’ petrification of the *κῆτος* (Andromeda’s episode) and that of the inhabitants of Seriphos are compared to Dionysus’ battle against Porphyryon, Enceladus, and Alcyoneus. Once again, Nonnus contrasts what Perseus did with what Dionysus did not do (85–86 *οὐ μία Γοργώ, οὐ λίθος ἠερόφοιτος ἀλίκτηπος ἢ Πολυδέκτης*)¹³ and did (87 *ἀλλὰ δρακοντοκόμων καλάμην ἤμησε Γιγάντων Βάκχος*).¹⁴

98–112: Perseus’ and Dionysus’ deeds are judged on the basis of their witnesses’ reactions: Helios, who was shocked by Dionysus’ triumph over the Indian army (100 *ἠέλιος θάμβησεν*), Selene, who saw Perseus while flying away (101 *Περσῆα τανύπτερον εἶδε Σελήνη*), and the river Inachus, who saw both actions as well as Perseus unintentionally killing Ariadne in his retreat (on the episode cf. 47.665–667, in which she is said to be petrified).

113–122: Perseus is judged as inferior to Dionysus on the basis of his birth: Danae was not raised to Olympus (114 *οὐ Δανάη ἐκόμισσεν ἐς οὐρανὸν ὑέτιος Ζεύς*),¹⁵ while Semele was.¹⁶

which G. D’Ippolito, “Straniamento ossimorico e mitopoiesi nel barocco letterario tardo-greco,” in *Mito, storia e società* (Palermo 1987) 347–357, identifies as a distinctive feature of the late antique baroque.

¹³ “The terrible exploits of Bacchus were not one Gorgon, not an air-soaring sea-beaten cliff, not a Polydectes.”

¹⁴ “No, Bacchus reaped the stubble of snake-haired giants, a conquering hero with a tiny man-breaking wand.”

¹⁵ “But rainy Zeus did not raise Danae to heaven.”

¹⁶ On the *synkriseis* of the *Dionysiaca* involving Semele see L. Miguélez Caveró, *Poems in Context: Greek Poetry in the Egyptian Thebaid 200–600 AD*

123–147: Perseus is judged as inferior to Dionysus because he caused unhappiness to Andromeda after her καταστερισμός (124 ἀλλὰ πάλιν μογέει καὶ ἐν αἰθέρι).¹⁷ Andromeda’s complaint contrasts with the result of the καταστερισμός of Ariadne (47.700–704).

2. Nonnus’ and Pindar’s Perseus

Pindar mentions episodes from the Perseus myths on a variety of occasions (*Pyth.* 10.30–48, 12.7–27, *Nem.* 10.4, *Ol.* 13.63, fr.70a [*Dith.* 1] and 70d [*Dith.* 4]).¹⁸ The most complete accounts and/or references concern the slaying of the Gorgon and the events adjacent to it (travel to the land of the Hyperboreans,¹⁹ petrification of Polydectes, Pegasus’ birth). The conflict between Perseus and Dionysus (treated in *Dion.* 47–48) was the object of Pindar’s *Dithyramb* 1,²⁰ but the text is incomplete. As a consequence, we do not know any Pindaric version of the Andromeda episode. Therefore, in this paper, possible com-

(Berlin 2006) 364.

¹⁷ “But she is unhappy still even in the sky.”

¹⁸ [Apollod.] 2.4.2 confirms that Pindar and Hesiod were the reference works for the episode of the Gorgons in antiquity: Πίνδαρος δὲ καὶ Ἡσίοδος ἐν Ἀσπίδι ἐπὶ τοῦ Περσέως. On the topic see L. Miguélez Cavero, *Triphiodorus, the Sack of Troy* (Berlin 2013) 56–57, who discusses Pindaric and Hesiodic influences in Triphiodorus, pointing out that they are not limited to phraseological reprises, but may involve entire scenes. This paper shows that the same applies to Nonnus, see §3.

¹⁹ The order in which these two events occur in *Pyth.* 10 has been the subject of debate since Antiquity, cf. schol. *Pyth.* 10.72b Drachmann. On the different hypotheses formulated see P. Angeli Bernardini, “Pitica X. Introduzione. Commento,” in B. Gentili (ed.), *Pindaro. Le Pitiche. Introduzione, testo critico e traduzione* (Milan 1995) 263–269, 621–646, at 638.

²⁰ See S. Lavecchia, *Pindari Dithyramborum fragmenta* (Rome 2000) 43–61, 231–253, for text and comment. Cf. G. B. D’Alessio, “Argo e l’Argolide nei canti culturali di Pindaro,” in P. Angeli Bernardini (ed.), *La città di Argo: Mito, storia, tradizioni poetiche* (Rome 2004) 107–125, at 122–125, who proposes that ὄσπ]ασίως (conjectured by Grenfell and Hunt) in fr.70a.31 (*Dith.* 1) refers to the reconciliation between Dionysus and Perseus.

parisons between *Dion.* 25.31ff. and Pindar's poems will be limited to 25.31–84.

Dion. 25.31–34

Περσεὺς μὲν ταχύγουνος, εὐπτερον ἵχνος ἐλίσσω,
ἀγχινεφῆ δρόμον εἶχεν ἐν ἠέρι πεζὸς ὀδίτης,
εἰ ἔτεδὸν πεπότητο. τί δὲ πλέον, εἰ σφυρὰ πάλλων
ξείνην εἰρεσίην ἀνεμώδει νήχετο ταρσῶ;

Nimbleknee Perseus, waving his winged feet, held his course near the clouds, a wayfarer pacing through the air, if he really did fly. But what was the good if he swung his ankles and swam the winds with that strange oarage of legs?

An explicit reference to Perseus' winged sandals is attested, among other sources, in [Hes.] *Sc.* 220 (ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶν ἔχεν πεπερόντα πέδιλα), but may also be found, though only in an implicit form, in Pindar:

Pyth. 10.30–33

ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰών κεν εὔροις
ἔς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν.
παρ' οἷς ποτε Περσεὺς ἐδαίσατο λαγέτας,
δώματ' ἐσελθών...

Neither by ship nor on foot could you find the marvelous road to the meeting-place of the Hyperboreans—once Perseus, the leader of his people, entered their homes and feasted among them...

As noted by Barkhuizen and Köhnken,²¹ by excluding the sea and the earth as paths which lead to the land of the Hyperboreans, Pindar implicitly opens to the possibility that Perseus arrived there through the air.

Dion. 25.38–44

ὄμμον ἐχιδνήεντα μῆς ἤμησε Μεδούσης,
ἧς ἔτι κυμαίνουσα γοναῖς ἐθλίβετο γαστήρ

²¹ J. H. Barkhuizen, "Une note sur Pindare, *Pyth.* X, 28–31," *AClass* 12 (1969) 169–170; A. Köhnken, *Die Funktion des Mythos bei Pindar* (Berlin 1971) 176, 182.

Πήγασον ὠδίνουσα, καὶ ἔγκυον ἀυχένα νύμφης
 Γοργόνος Εἰλείθυια μογοστόκος ἔθρισεν ἄρπη,
 ἀυχένος ἵπποτόκοιο θαλύσιον; ἀπτολέμου δέ
 Περσεὺς ὠκυπέδιλος ἐκούφισε σύμβολα νίκης
 ἄπνοα, Γοργεῖης ὀφιώδεα λήια χαίτης,

Then (Perseus) shore off the snaky swathe of only one Medusa,²² while her womb was still burdened and swollen with young, still in foal of Pegasus; what good if the sickle played the part of childbirth Eileithyia, and reaped the neck of the pregnant Gorgon, firstfruits of a horse-breeding neck? There was no battle when swiftshoe Perseus lifted the lifeless token of victory, the snaky sheaf of Gorgon hair.

By pathetically mentioning the birth of Pegasus Nonnus stresses how defenseless the enemy of Perseus was. Pegasus' birth is briefly touched upon in Pindar's *Ol.* 13 in connection with the Bellerophon myth:

Ol. 13.63–64

ὄς τᾶς ὀφιώδεος σί-
 ὄν ποτε Γοργόνος ἦ πόλλ' ἀμφὶ κρουνοῖς
 Πάγασον ζευῆσαι ποθέων ἔπαθεν.

(Bellerophon) who once suffered much indeed in his yearning to yoke Pegasus, the snaky Gorgon's son, beside the spring.²³

From the phraseological point of view, it is noteworthy that the adjective ὀφιώδης “snaky” is applied to the “sheaf of Gorgon hair” in *Dion.* 25.44 and to the Gorgon in *Ol.* 13.63.

Dion. 25.53–59

ἀλλὰ δρακοντείης τρομέων συριγμὸν ἐθείρης
 Σθεννοῦς μαινομένης πτερόεις ἐλελίζετο Περσεύς,
 καὶ κύνεην Αἶδαο φέρων καὶ Παλλάδος ἄρπην,
 καὶ πτερόν Ἑρμάωνος ἔχων καὶ Ζῆνα τοκῆα,
 ὠκυτέρῳ φύξηλις ἀνηώρητο πεδίλῳ,
 Εὐρύαλης μύκημα καὶ οὐ σάλπιγγος ἀκούων,

²² On the uses of ἀμάω and μία in this verse cf. nn.11 and 12 above.

²³ On the folk-etymology of Pegasus cf. Hes. *Theog.* 281–283, which Pindar might be following here.

συλήσας Λιβύης ὀλίγον σπέος·

Perseus fled with flickering wings trembling at the hiss of mad Sthenno's hairy snakes, although he bore the cap of Hades and the sickle of Pallas, with Hermes' wings and though Zeus was his father; he sailed a fugitive on swiftest shoes, listening for no trumpet but Euryale's bellowing—having despoiled a little Libyan hole!

This passage may contain more than one Pindaric echo. Nonnus insists on Perseus' fear, τρομέων (53), ἐλελίζετο (54), as well as on his flight, ὠκυτέρῳ φύξηλις ἀνηώρητο πεδίλω (57). Certainly, Perseus' escape is a common iconographic and literary motif.²⁴ For instance, according to Ps.-Hesiod, a running Perseus, the winged sandals on his feet, was represented on Heracles' shield.²⁵ Nevertheless, the use of φύξηλις (“cowardly,” etymologically related to φεύγω) is noteworthy. Pindar's *Dith.* 1 may indeed preserve the same flight-image: fr.70a.15–17

λέγοντι δὲ βροτοὶ

[]α φυγόντα νιν καὶ μέλαν ἔρκος ἄλμας
κορᾶνι Φόρκοιο

I agree with D'Alessio and Lavecchia,²⁶ who propose that here is a reference to the Gorgons episode,²⁷ and translate:

²⁴ L. Jones Roccas, “Perseus,” *LIMC* VII (1994) 340–342 (§§139, 142, 154, 158, etc.).

²⁵ [Hes.] *Sc.* 229–231: αὐτὸς δὲ σπεύδοντι καὶ ἐρρίγοντι εἰκῶς Περσεὺς Δαναΐδης ἐτιταίνετο. ταὶ δὲ μετ' αὐτὸν Γοργόνες ἄπλητοὶ τε καὶ οὐ φαταὶ ἐρρώοντο ἰέμεναι μαπέειν, “Perseus himself, the son of Danae, was at full stretch, like one who hurries and shudders with horror. And after him rushed the Gorgons, unapproachable and unspeakable, longing to seize him.”

²⁶ G. B. D'Alessio, review of M. J. H. Weiden, *The Dithyrambs of Pindar* (Amsterdam 1991), *JEA* 81 (1995) 270–273, at 271; Lavecchia, *Pindari Dithyramborum fragmenta* 103.

²⁷ Pace Weiden, *The Dithyrambs of Pindar*, who restores Περσεῖα in 16 and translates “the mortals say that [Perseus] escaped to him [Acrisius] and to the dark brine-enclosure,” arguing that the passage alludes to the story of

The mortals say that he (Perseus) having also fled the black brine-enclosure of the maidens(?) of Phorcus...²⁸

A second significant trait of *Dion.* 25.53–58 is the reference to Sthenno and Euryale. While in [Hes.] *Sc.* 229–231 both Gorgons chase Perseus (note the plural at 229–230 ταὶ δὲ μετ’ αὐτὸν Γοργόνες ἄπλητοὶ τε καὶ οὐ φαταὶ ἐρρώοντο), in our passage Sthenno and Euryale are singled out. Perseus’ flight seems to be connected with “the hissing of the hair of mad Sthenno” (53–54 συριγμὸν ἐθείρης Σθεννοῦς μαινομένης), while Euryale utters a μύκημα (58). The reference to the acoustic dimension of the Gorgons is reminiscent of the Gorgons’ sounds in Pindar’s *Pyth.* 12 (see §3 on lines 5–27). In this poem, Athena recreates the “tune of many heads,” as she hears the sounds “poured forth” from “under the unapproachable heads of the maidens and the snakes” (*Pyth.* 12.9 τὸν παρθενίους ὑπὸ τ’ ἀπλάτοις ὀφίων κεφαλαῖς). Moreover, at 20–21 Pindar states that Euryale’s lament is “high-screaming,” i.e. loud, τὸν Εὐρυάλας ... ἐρικλάγκταν γόον “the loud lament (sc. from the jaws) of Euryale.” The emphasis Nonnus puts on the different sounds emitted by the Gorgons may be a Pindaric echo, since Pindar too specifies that a loud γόος is uttered by Euryale.²⁹

Finally, the occurrence of συλέω at 25.59 is noteworthy. The verb applies to the stripping of the weapons from the dead in traditional hexameter poetry (*Il.* 4.446 and elsewhere). Here, once again, Nonnus is emphasizing the thieving nature of Perseus’ accomplishment. Significantly, in *Pyth.* 12 συλάω applies to Perseus (12.16 κρᾶτα συλάσαις Μεδοῖσας, “as he took out the head of Medusa”). It is also significant that συλάσαις is an

Danae and Perseus’ chest.

²⁸ Οἱ φυγόντα ... ἔρκος ἄλμας as reminiscent of Hom. φύγεν ἔρκος ὀδόντων see L. Massetti, *Pindar’s Pythian Twelve: A Linguistic Commentary and a Comparative Study* (forthcoming).

²⁹ Indeed, Nonnus’ phraseology itself confirms that γόος is a synonym of μύκημα: φρικτὸν ἐμυκήσαντο Λίβυν γόον, on which see §3 below.

emendation proposed by Heyne in 1824, while most manuscripts give συλήσας (G, *Gottling.phil.* 29, 13th cent.) or συλήσαις (B, *Vat.gr.* 1312, 12th cent.).³⁰ It is thus tantalizing to think that Nonnus in fact read συλήσα(ι)ς in *Pythian* 12 and used the verb to consciously create a Pindaric innuendo. But even if Nonnus' version of Pindar displayed συλάσαις, the formal resemblance to συλήσας (and συλήσαις) is such that 59 συλήσας Λιβύης ὀλίγον σπέος echoes *Pyth.* 12.16 κρᾶτα συλάσαις Μεδοίσας.³¹

Dion. 25.61–65

ἀλλ' οὐ τοίος ἔην Βρομίου μόθος· οὐ ποσὶν ἔρπων
 Βάκχος ἐθωρήχθη δολόεις πρόμος, οὐδὲ λοχήσας
 φρουρὸν ἀκοιμήτοιο μετήλυδα κύκλον ὀπωπῆς
 Φορκίδος ἀλλοπρόσαλλον ἀμειβομένης πτερὸν Ὕπνου
 ἦνυσε θῆλλον ἄεθλον ἀθωρήκτοιο Μεδούσης·

Far other was the struggle of Bromius. For Bacchus was no sneaking champion, crawling along in his armor; he laid no ambush for the sentinel eye of Phorcis, the ball of the sleepless eye that passed from hand to hand, giving each her share under the wing of sleep in turn; he won no womanish match over a Medusa unarmed.

The expression ἦνυσε θῆλλον ἄεθλον may be connected to *Pyth.*

³⁰ Cf. B. Forssman, *Untersuchungen zur Sprache Pindars* (Wiesbaden 1966) 157–158. I concur with C. G. Heyne, *Pindari Carmina* (London 1773), in reading συλάσαις and align with W. H. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin 1969) s.v. συλάω, according to whom the verb means “to take out” (cf. *Il.* 4.105). Differently, R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes. Essays in Interpretation* (Oxford 1962) 29–30, C. O. Pavese, “Αὔω 3^ο τὸ ξηραίνω: un nuovo verbo nella *Pitica* XII di Pindaro, in Simonide e in Alcmane,” *Lexis* 7–8 (1991) 73–97, at 90, and C. Segal, “Perseus and the Gorgon: Pindar, *Pythian* 12.9–12 Reconsidered,” *AJP* 116 (1995) 7–17, at 13 n.14, argue that συλάω here means “behead.” This interpretation is supported by Theon's commentary on the passage (*P.Oxy.* XXXI 2536, cf. P. Angeli Bernardini, “Il banchetto di Polidette in Pindaro, *Pyth.* 12,14 e il nuovo scolio papiraceo di Teone,” *QUCC* 11 [1971] 99–101).

³¹ Note also the resonance between the myth of *Pythian* 12 and the mention of Euryale's μύκημα in the passage of Nonnus.

12.11 Περσεὺς ὅποτε τρίτον ἄνυσεν κασιγνητῶν μέρος, “when Perseus shouted (in triumph) against the third part of the sisters.” Schol. *Pyth.* 12.19b has ἄνυσε “he finished/killed” as an alternative reading for ἄνυσεν,³² which is preserved in all Pindaric manuscripts except Φ (*Athous Iber.* 161, ca. 1300). If we imagine that Nonnus was somehow familiar with this variant, ἦνυσε θῆλυν ἄεθλον may be an allusion to τρίτον ἄνυσεν κασιγνητῶν μέρος. In this scenario, Nonnus might be referring to Pindar’s text (if he read ἄνυσεν) or to a part of the ancient Pindaric exegesis (if he read ἄνυσεν, but knew the variant ἄνυσε).

Dion. 25.82–84

τί πλέον, εἰ φονίης δεδοκημένος ὄμμα Μεδούσης
ἀνδρομέων μελέων ἑτερότροπον εἶδος ἀμείψας
εἰς λίθον ἀντοτέλεστον ἐμορφώθη Πολυδέκτης;

What was the good, if Polydectes, looking upon deadly Medusa’s eye, changed his human limbs to another kind and transformed himself into stone?

Polydectes’ petrification is found in Pindar’s poems too:

Pyth. 10.47–48

ἦλυθε νασιώταις
λίθινον θάνατον φέρων.

(Perseus) came to the islanders, bringing them stony death.

fr.70d.39–41 (*Dith.* 4)

τὸ μὲν ἔλευσεν· ἴδον τ’ ἄποπτα
... .]· ἦ γὰρ [α]ὐτῶν μετὰστασιν ἄκραν[.
.. θη]κε· πέτραι δ’ [ἔφ]α[ν]θὲν ἀντ[ι] φωτῶν

He brought it, and they saw things not to be seen. Truly he(?) made their transformation extreme(?); and they became stones instead of humans.

Although only λίθινον θάνατον (*Pyth.* 10.48) may be echoed

³² As T. Phillips, *Pindar’s Library: Performance Poetry and Material Texts* (Oxford 2016) 268–269 n.80, points out, ἄνυσε is a textual variant, since the scholion uses διχῶς, which in the Pindaric scholia explicitly refers to alternative meanings or readings.

through εἰς λίθον ἀντοτέλεστον ἔμορφώθη (*Dion.* 25.84), the mythological episode is a Pindaric subject.³³

The intertextual dissection of *Dion.* 25.31–84 under a Pindaric lens proves that some themes and lexical options chosen by Nonnus parallel those found in Pindar's passages on Perseus. However, the function of Perseus' myth in *Dion.* 25 transcends the use of the myth in Pindar's poetry. To use G. Nagy's words, in Pindaric victory odes the difference between Panhellenic heroes and Panhellenic winners collapses.³⁴ Conversely, in the *Dionysiaca's synkrisis* (25.29–30 κρίνων ἠγορέην τεκέων Διός, ὄφρα νοήσω, τίς κάμε τοῖον ἀγῶνα, 98 ἀλλά, φίλοι, κρίνωμεν),³⁵ the accomplishments of Perseus (as well as those of Minos and Heracles) are judged inferior to those of Dionysus. The myth is thus a *terminus comparationis* to exalt Dionysus, whose greatness transcends that of other sons of Zeus.³⁶

3. *Dion.* 40.215–233 and *Pythian* 12

The other end of Nonnus' Indian epic's frame is found in

³³ I do not discuss a possible comparison between 25.113–122 (Danae and Perseus' birth) and *Pyth.* 12.17 υἱὸς Δανάας· τὸν ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ φαμὲν ἀντοπότου, because the only word the two passages have in common is "gold/golden." Therefore I consider this phraseological match a trivial one.

³⁴ G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer. The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore 1990) 146: "just as the Games, as ritual, momentarily collapse the distinction between hero and athlete, so too does epinician lyric poetry."

³⁵ On the concept of σύγκρισις see H. Erbse, "Die Bedeutung der Synkrisis in den Parallelbiographien Plutarchs," *Hermes* 4 (1956) 398–424. On the σύγκρισις as a constituent element of the encomia cf. L. Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain* (Paris 1993) 691–698. On the ways of σύγκρισις in the *Dionysiaca* see T. Duc, "La question de la cohérence dans les Dionysiaques de Nonnos de Panopolis," *RPhil* 64 (1990) 181–191.

³⁶ As L. Miguélez Cavero, *Poems in Context* 362–365, points out, the *synkrisis* of Book 25, "one of the most notorious elements of the *encomium* [...] is multi-purpose." It aims at showing not only Dionysus' supremacy over all gods, but also the superiority of the *Indiad* over the *Iliad*, that of Dionysus over Achilles, and ultimately "implies Nonnus' superiority over Homer and the modern poets" (363).

Dionysiaca 40. Here Dionysus defeats Deriades, chief of the Indian army. The Bacchoi first celebrate Dionysus' victory with a paean. Immediately after that, they perform a θρήνος πολυκάρηνος to honor their dead. Although the reference to the “many-headed tune” strictly involves only 40.224–233, I want to present the passage together with its preceding sequence (215–223), since it contains some relevant information.

Dion. 40.215–233

Βάκχοι δ' ἐκροτάλιζον ἀπορρίψαντες Ἐνυῶ,
 τοῖον ἔπος βοόωντες ὁμογλώσσω ἀπὸ λαიმῶν·
 “Ἡράμεθα μέγα κῦδος· ἐπέφνομεν ὄρχαμον Ἴνδῶν.”
 καὶ γελῶν Διόνυσος ἐπάλλετο χάσματι νίκης,
 ἀμπνεύσας δὲ πόνοιο καὶ αἱματόεντος ἀγῶνος
 πρῶτα μὲν ἐκτερείξεν ἀτυμβεύτων στίχα νεκρῶν,
 δωμήσας ἓνα τύμβον ἀπείριτον εὐρέι κόλπῳ
 ἄκριτον ἀμφὶ πυρὴν ἑκατόμπεδον· ἀμφὶ δὲ νεκροῖς
 Μυγδονίς αἰολόμολπος ἐπέκτυπεν αἴλινα σύριγξ,
 καὶ Φρύγες ἀύλητῆρες ἀνέπλεκον ἄρσενα μολπῆν
 πενθαλέοις στομάτεσσιν, ἐπαρχήσαντο δὲ Βάκχα
 ἄβρᾶ μελιζομένοιο Γανύκτορος Εὐάδι φωνῆ·
 καὶ Κλεόχου Βερέκυντες ὑπὸ στόμα δίζυγες αὐλοῖ
 φρικτὸν ἐμυκήσαντο Λίβυν γόνον, ὃν πάρος ἄμφω
 Σθεννώ τ' Εὐρυάλη τε μιῆ πολυδειράδι φωνῆ
 ἀρτιτόμῳ³⁷ ροιζηδὸν ἐπεκλαύσαντο Μεδούση
 φθεγγομένων κεφαλῆσι διηκοσίησι δρακόντων,
 ὧν ἄπο μυρομένων σκολιὸν σύριγμα κομάων
 θρήνον πουλυκάρηνον ἐφημίξαντο Μεδούσης.

The Bacchoi played the cymbals, sending out an *enuō*-cry, shouting this word from their throats, which spoke with the same tongue: “We obtained great glory! We killed the leader of the Indians!” And Dionysus laughing exulted for the joy of victory, enjoying a respite from the trouble and the gory battle. Firstly he honored the ranks of unburied dead by building a

³⁷ Cf. Ap. Rhod. 4.1515 Γοργόνος ἀρτίτομον κεφαλὴν “the newly-cut head of the Gorgon.”

single huge mound with a wide bottom around a 100-foot common pyre. The Mygdonian syrinx,³⁸ of modulated song, resounded a funeral lament and the Phrygian auletes braided a male song with their sorrowful lips, the Bacchae danced on that, while Ganytor delicately sang with the *euoë*-voice. And under the mouth of Cleochus the Berecynian pipes, with twofold yoke, mooded the awful Libyan wail, which once both Sthenno and Euryale with one many-throated voice, rushing cried on newly-beheaded Medusa, while screamed two hundred heads of serpents, from whose heads, which were wailing a sinister hissing, they uttered a many-headed *thrēnos* for Medusa.

As pointed out by Simon and Gigli Piccardi,³⁹ one can assume that this passage is based on Pindar's *Pythian* 12. While accounts of Athena's invention of the *aulos* abound,⁴⁰ no other archaic or classical source preserves the same etiology of the "tune of many heads" as Pindar and Nonnus. Indeed, this is the myth of this ode, dedicated to the Acragantine *aulos*-player Midas (490 BCE).⁴¹ Athena is said to have invented the "tune of many

³⁸ Phrygian: see A. Frey, "Mygdon," *Brill's New Pauly* Suppl. 1 (Leiden 2007). On the use of this and other geographical terms in this passage see P. Chuvin, *Mythologie et géographie dionysiaques* (Clermond-Ferrand 1991) 100.

³⁹ Simon, *Les Dionysiaques* XIV 273; Gigli Piccardi, in *Nonnus and Pindar* 268–269.

⁴⁰ According to the version of this story that is likely of Athenian origin (T. Spinedi, "Music Legends and ἀλλητική in Boeotia" [2016], https://www.academia.edu/104616800/Music_legends_and_%CE%B1%E1%BD%90%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE_in_Boeotia_Editare_Commentare_Interpretare_Approcci_multiformi_al_testo_letterario_Urbino_23_24_giugno_2016), Athena invented the *aulos* but threw it away, disgusted by her face deformed by the musical performance. So the instrument accidentally fell into the hands of Marsyas, cf. Telestes fr.805–806 *PMG*, Melanippides fr.758 *PMG*, [Apollod.] 1.24, *Ov. Fast.* 6.697–706, *Diod.* 5.49.1, *Hyg. Fab.* 165, *Plut. De cohib. ir.* 456B (Aesch. *TrGF* II 381). For Athena playing the *aulos* or associated with Marsyas see P. Demargne, "Athena," *LIMC* II (1984) 1014–1015.

⁴¹ For a recent comment on the poem see Angeli Bernardini, *QUCC* 11 (1971) 99–101.

heads”⁴² by reenacting,⁴³ on the *aulos*, the sounds she heard after Medusa was killed:

Pyth. 12.5–27

δέξαι στεφάνωμα τόδ' ἐκ Πυθῶνος εὐδόξω Μίδα,	5
αὐτόν τέ νιν Ἑλλάδα νικάσαντα τέχνα, τάν ποτε	
Παλλάς ἐφεῦρε θρασειᾶν <Γοργόνων>	
οὔλιον θρήνον διαπλέξαισ' Ἀθάνᾶ·	
τὸν παρθενίους ὑπό τ' ἀπλάτοις ὀφίων κεφαλαῖς	
ἄιε λειβόμενον δυσπενθείϊ σὺν καμάτῳ,	10
Περσεὺς ὁπότε τρίτον ἄυσεν κασιγνητᾶν μέρος	
εἰναλία Σερίφῳ λαοῖσί τε μοῖραν ἄγων.	
ἦτοι τό τε θεσπέσιον Φόρκοι' ἀμαύρωσεν γένος	
λυγρόν τ' ἔρανον Πολυδέκτα θῆκε ματρός τ' ἔμπεδον	
δουλοσύναν τό τ' ἀναγκαῖον λέχος,	15
εὐπαράου κρᾶτα συλάσαις Μεδοίσας	
υἱὸς Δανάας· τὸν ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ φαμὲν αὐτορῦτου	
ἔμμεναι. ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ τούτων φίλον ἄνδρα πόνων	
ἐρρύσατο, παρθένος αὐλῶν τεύχε πάμφωνον μέλος,	
ὄφρα τὸν Εὐρυάλας ἐκ καρπαλιμᾶν γενύων	20
χριμφθέντα σὺν ἔντεσι μιμήσαιτ' ἐρικλάγκταν γόον.	
εὗρεν θεός· ἀλλά νιν εὐροῖσ' ἀνδράσι θνατοῖς ἔχειν,	
ὠνύμασεν κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν νόμον,	
εὐκλέα λαοσσόων μναστῆρ' ἀγώνων,	

⁴² We have little information on this *nomos*: its invention is credited to Crates or Olympus (cf. Pind. fr.157), who was also believed to have invented the *nomos Pythikos* (cf. Pratinas fr.713 *PMG*, [Plut.] *Mus.* 1133D–E). T. Phillips, “Epinician Variations: Music and Text in Pindar, *Pythians* 2 and 12,” *CQ* 63 (2013) 37–56, proposes to identify the “*nomos* of many heads” of *Pyth.* 12 as the “Athena *nomos*,” which however is mentioned by [Plut.] *Mus.* 1143C as a different *nomos*.

⁴³ I translate μιμήσαιτ(ο) (21) as “reenact” as per G. Nagy, “The Delian Maidens and their Relevance to Choral Mimesis in Classical Drama,” in R. Gagné et al. (eds.), *Choral Mediations in Greek Tragedy* (New York 2013) 227–256. The verb denotes the artistic creation in which a sound which does not have a precise intonation is reenacted. In our case, the γόος (“wail”) of the Gorgons is artistically transformed into a θρήνος.

λεπτοῦ διανισόμενον χαλκοῦ θαμὰ καὶ δονάκων,
 τοὶ παρὰ καλλίχορον ναίοισι πόλιν Χαρίτων.
 Καφισίδος ἐν τεμένει, πιστοὶ χορευτῶν μάρτυρες.

7 Γοργόνων suppl. Tricl. e schol. 11 ἄσεν pler. codd.: ἄνυσεν
 ΦΣ^b v.l.: ἄνυσεν Boe.

Welcome (sc. Acragas) this crown from Pytho for Midas of good fame and him himself, who beat Hellas in the art which Pallas Athena once invented by braiding the mournful *thrēnos* of the fierce Gorgons.

She heard it being poured forth from under the unapproachable snaky heads of the maidens, with sorrowful pain, when Perseus shouted (in triumph) to the third part of the sisters, bringing doom to maritime Seriphos and its people. Yes, he weakened the monstrous race of Phorcus and made repentful the feast for Polydeutes, the constant bondage of his mother, and her enforced bed, as he took out the head of strong-cheeked Medusa—the son of Danae, who, we say, was born of self-flowing gold.

But when she had rescued the man dear (to her) from those troubles, the maiden built a melody with all the voices of the *aulos*, so that she might reenact with instruments the loud lament extracted from the trembling jaws of Euryale. The goddess invented it, but invented it for mortal men to have, and called it the tune of many heads, a glory-making memento of the contests that stir people, (a tune) that often passes through the thin bronze and the reeds which dwell by the Graces' city of beautiful dancing places, in the precinct of Cephisis, as faithful witnesses of dancers.

In Nonnus' poem, the Gorgons' lament and the νόμος κεφαλῶν πολλῶν are mentioned more than once.⁴⁴ In contrast to Pindar, who seems to be reticent about the Gorgons' location,⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The motif of the νόμος πολυκέφαλος recurs in *Dion.* 24.35–38 and 30.264–267. On both passages see L. Massetti, *Pindar's Pythian Twelve*.

⁴⁵ In *Pyth.* 10.44–48 Perseus' slaying of Medusa seems to happen close in time to his visit to the land of the Hyperboreans (the order in which these events occur is debated: A. Palaiogeorgou, "Pindar's *Pythian* 10: The Case of the Myth," *Δωδώνη* 31 [2002] 279–289; L. van den Berge, "Mythical Chronology in the *Odes* of Pindar: The Cases of *Pythian* 10 and *Olympian* 3," in R. J. Allan et al. [eds.], *The Language of Literature: Linguistic Approaches to Classical*

Nonnus situates the killing of Medusa and the creation of the many-headed Gorgon in different but fixed geographic areas: the Carian mountain range, the city of Mycale-Mycalessos,⁴⁶ and Libya. In *Dion.* 13 we read that the place-name Μυκαλησσός “bears as a name the reenactment of Euryle’s throat” (77–78 Μυκαλησσοῦ Εὐρυάλης μίμημα φερόνυμον ἀνθιερεῶνος).⁴⁷

In any case, *Dion.* 40.224–233 is the longest passage about the θρήνος πολυκάρηνος in Nonnus’ poem. At first glance, 215–218 are a variation on the typical scene of the victorious

Texts [Leiden 2007] 29–41; Angeli Bernardini, in *Pindaro. Le Pitiche* 638–639). *Ol.* 13.63–64 mentions that the yoking of Pegasus by Bellerophon happened in the vicinity of a water-spring, but this does not guarantee that this happened right after Medusa was killed. If we restore γ[ύ]αλα μι[ν]υῶν in fr.70d.9, as proposed by Lavecchia, *Pindari Dithyramborum fragmenta* 231 (differently Lobel: γ[ύ]αλα μι[δ]έα), the dithyramb may have contained a reference to the region of Cyrene.

⁴⁶ Mycale is the name of a city and of a mountain range (corresponding to Dilek Dağı, cf. W. Blümel, and H. Lohmann, “Mycale [01/10/2006],” *Brill’s Neue Pauly*). According to *Il.* 2.869 Mycale was occupied by Carians. A. Herda, “Panionion-Melia, Mykalessos-Mykale, Perseus und Medusa: Überlegungen zur Besiedlungsgeschichte der Mykale in der frühen Eisenzeit,” *IstMitt* 56 (2006) 43–102, at 85–93, points out that, according to Eustathius (ad *Il.* 2.498), Perseus founded the temple of Zeus Mycalesius (dated around 700 BCE). Herda thus proposes that the Gorgons’ clash was linked to the city of Mycale by the end of eighth century BCE.

⁴⁷ This folk-etymology is a pun on μυκάομαι “bellow” (also “lament”), which Nonnus, Herodian, and the *Suda* apply to the Gorgons’ cry, cf. *Dion.* 30.266 Εὐρυάλης μυκόμενον ἀνθιερεῶνα, “the bellowing throat of Euryle” (also 40.228, on which see below): Hdn. *De Pros.* 3.2 Μυκάλη ... ἐκλήθη δὲ ἐπεὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ Γοργόνες ... μυκόμεναι τὴν κεφαλὴν Μεδούσης ἀνεκαλοῦντο, “Mycale ... was named (so) because the remaining Gorgons ... bellowed and called upon Medusa’s head” (cf. Steph. Byz. III 338 Billerbeck); *Suda* s.v. Μυκάλη καὶ Μυκαλησσός ... παρὰ τὸ ἐκεῖ μυκάσθαι τὰς Γοργόνας, “Mycale and Mycalesus ... (named) after the Gorgons bellowing there.” The *Ety.Magn.* s.v. preserves a connection with μυκάομαι but associates the “bellowing” with a different moment of Perseus’ endeavor, παρὰ τὸ ἐκεῖ μυκάσθαι τὰς Γοργόνας διωκούσας τὸν Περσέα, “because the Gorgons bellowed as they were pursuing Perseus.”

warrior boasting over the defeated enemy. In particular, 217 emulates *Il.* 22.393,⁴⁸ which, as Nagy highlights, virtually includes two verses of a paean:⁴⁹

<i>Il.</i> 22.393	<i>Dion.</i> 40.217	
Ἡράμεθα μέγα κῦδος	Ἡράμεθα μέγα κῦδος	— — — — —
ἐπέφνομεν Ἑκτορα δῖον	ἐπέφνομεν ὄρχαμον Ἴνδῶν	— — — — —

The sequence of events in Nonnus is similar to that in Pindar. The winner's triumph (*Dion.* 40.216 ἔπος βοόωντες / *Pyth.* 12.11 ὅποτε τρίτον ἄυσεν κασιγνητῶν μέρος) is followed by a funeral lament: Dionysus exults over Deriades in a similar way to Perseus exulting over the “third part of the sisters” (Medusa); the Bacchoi honor their dead with the *thrēnos*, through which Athena imitated the Gorgons' lament over Medusa. In this connection, the reference to the *timing* of the performance in *Dion.* 40.219–220 (ἀμπνεύσας δὲ πόνοιο ... πρῶτα μὲν ἐκτερέϊξεν ἀτυμβεύτων στίχα νεκρῶν) resembles that of Athena's composition in *Pyth.* 12.18–19 (ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ τούτων φίλον ἄνδρα πόνων ἐρρύσατο, παρθένος αὐλῶν τεύχε πάμφωνον μέλος): in both texts, the tune of many heads is performed *after* the heroes' πόνος.

The performance of the θρήνος πολυκάρηνος is linked to the honors bestowed upon the dead (see, again, *Dion.* 40.219–220). It is thus remarkable that in *Pyth.* 12.24 the newly-invented νόμος is said to be a “glory-making (εὐκλέα) memento of contests (μναστήρ' ἀγώνων).” μναστήρ is an agent noun based on the same root as μνάομαι “woo” and μμνήσκω “remember.” In principle, in *Pyth.* 12.24 the term might be taken as “inviter” (cf. μνάομαι) or “reminder”⁵⁰ (cf. μμνήσκω and schol. *Isth.* 2.1a

⁴⁸ On the similarities and discrepancies between this passage and *Il.* 22.395–472 see H. Bannert and N. Kröll, “Nonnus and the Homeric Poems,” in *Brill's Companion to Nonnos* 479–506, at 490–491.

⁴⁹ G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore 1979) 79.

⁵⁰ So W. H. Race, *Pindar. Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1997) 381.

τὴν μνήμην, hence my translation “memento”).⁵¹ By applying εὐκλεῆς to μναστήρ, Pindar stresses the indissoluble tie between “memory/thought” and the attainment of glory through poetry and music. The tune of many heads thus has a ‘memorial’ dimension. It recalls and bestows glory (εὐκλεῆς μναστήρ) on wars/contests (ἀγώνων) and the people who took part in them. The representation of the performance of the *nomos* in Nonnus matches its definition in *Pyth.* 12.24: the θρῆνος πολυκάρηνος bestows honor on the dead of Dionysus’ army, as such it is a glory-making memento of the warriors’ fight.

Nonnus’ passage differs from its Pindaric model in two crucial details. Although elsewhere Nonnus credits Athena with the invention of the double-piped *aulos* (24.35–38, 30.264–267), in 40.215–233 the goddess is somehow out of the picture. Moreover, Pindar’s word choice reflects a distinction between the unarticulated, animalistic γόος of the Gorgons and Athena’s artistically fashioned θρῆνος (21);⁵² conversely, Nonnus treats γόος and θρῆνος as synonyms (40.228, 223). But the phraseological comparison between *Dion.* 40.224–233 and *Pythian* 12 allows us to recognize several common traits:

224 ἀνέπλεκον ἄρσενα μολπήν : 8 θρῆνον διαπλέξαισ’ Ἀθήνα. Pindar does not identify Athena’s composition as male or female. That “male” (ἄρσενα) describes the melody woven by the Phrygian pipes is a reversal of what is found in traditional hexameter poetry, where lamenting and weaving are typical activities of women.⁵³

225 πενθαλέοις στομάτεσσιν : 10 δυσπενθέει σὺν καμάτῳ, 12 καρπαλιμῶν γενύων.

⁵¹ Pace Köhnken, *Die Funktion* 140, proposing “proclaimer” (“Künder”).

⁵² On the distinction between *thrēnos* and *goos* see D. Steiner, “The Gorgons’ Lament. Auletics, Poetics, and Choralities in Pindar’s *Pythian* 12,” *AJP* 134 (2013) 173–208, at 175–183.

⁵³ C. Bozzone, “Weaving Songs for the Dead in Indo-European: Women Poets, Funerary Laments, and the Ecology of *Rlégos,” in D. M. Goldstein et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 27th Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference* (Bremen 2016) 1–22.

227 δίζυγες αὐλοί : 21 διανισόμενον χαλκοῦ θαμὰ καὶ δονάκων. The opposition χαλκοῦ (sg.) vs. δονάκων (pl.) hints at the two-piped *aulos*.⁵⁴

228 φρικτὸν ἐμυκήσαντο ... γόον : 21 ἐρικλάγκταν γόον.

229 Σθεννὸ τ' Εὐρυάλη : 20 Εὐρυάλας.

229 μῆ πολυδειράδι φωνῆ recalls both 24 κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν νόμον (see below) and 19 αὐλῶν ... πάμφωνον μέλος.

231 κεφαλῆσι ... δρακόντων : 9 ὀφίων κεφαλαῖς. Furthermore, φθεγγομένων κεφαλῆσι διηκοσίησι δρακόντων is comparable to Pind. fr.70b.15 (*Dith.* 2) μυρίων φθογγάζεται κλαγγαῖς δρακόντων, (Athena's aegis) "screams of the cries of thousands of serpents."⁵⁵ The resemblance is even more significant because the serpents on Athena's aegis belong to Medusa's head.

232 ἄπο μυρομένων ... κομάων : 9–10 ὑπό τ' ἀπλάτοις ὀφίων κεφαλαῖς ... λειβόμενον, and λειβόμενον is supported by Hesychian glosses, which interpret μύρειν as "to cry": Hsch. μ 1837 μύρειν· ῥεῖν [ὑδωρ.] κλαίειν, θρηνεῖν.

233 θρήνον πουλυκάρηνον : 23 κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν νόμον.⁵⁶

From this analysis of *Dion.* 40.224–233 concerning the θρήνος πουλυκάρηνος, it is possible to deduce Nonnus' take on some debated aspects of *Pythian* 12:

(i) The fact that, in *Dion.* 40.216, ἔπος βοόωντες precedes the *thrēnos* section may parallel the sequence of mythological events, which we reconstruct for *Pythian* 12 by accepting the reading ἄσεν in line 11. This coincidence, however, cannot be considered decisive. The shouting of a battle- or triumph-cry over the defeated enemy is a *topos* of warfare accounts. Furthermore, Nonnus applies ἀνώω to Perseus' accomplishment (see 312 above), which may support the idea of Nonnus being aligned

⁵⁴ On the double-pipe *aulos* and its mouthpiece see now K. Wystucha and S. Hagel, "The Mouthpiece of the Aulos Revisited," *Greek and Roman Musical Studies* (2023) 1–46.

⁵⁵ This parallel is also identified by D. Accorinti, *Nonno di Panopoli. Le Dionisiache* IV (Milan 2004) 100, note ad loc.

⁵⁶ As Maria Cannatà Fera kindly points out to me and as remarked by D. Accorinti, πουλυκάρηνος is applied to the hydra in *Anth.Gr.* 16.19.

with the *varia lectio* ἄνυσεν (schol. *Pyth.* 12.19b). Consequently, there is no guarantee that Nonnus read ἄνυσεν or that *Dion.* 40.216 relies upon Pindar's *Pythian* 12.

(ii) The correspondence between ἀνέπλεκον ... μολπήν (40.224) and θρήνον διαπλέξαισ'(α) speaks in favor of διαπλέκω meaning "to weave," i.e. "to fashion,"⁵⁷ not "to interweave."⁵⁸

These numerous analogies support that *Pythian* 12 works as a thematic and phraseological model for line 224–233 of *Dion.* 40. Elements attached to Perseus' myths frame the narration of the Dionysian Indian epic: the *aition* of the θρήνος πολυκάρηνος, invented by Athena in connection with Perseus' slaying of the Gorgon, is found at the end of the narrative of Dionysus' Indian war; Perseus killing the Gorgon was placed before the Indian section.

4. Conclusions: Nonnus' ποικίλος ὕμνος

My study supports that the agonistic superiority of Dionysus to other great heroes, the foreshortened Pindaric subjects, and a variety of Pindaric phraseological innuendos contribute to make Nonnus' poem a ποικίλος ὕμνος (*Pind. Ol.* 6.87,⁵⁹ *Nem.* 5.42, and Nonnus *Dion.* 1.15): Dionysus wins both kinds of *agones*, namely *synkriseis* and war. Therefore, I propose that the presence of Pindar at *Dion.* 25.18–21 (21 Πινδαρέης φόρμιγγος ἐπέκτυπε Δώριος ἠχώ) makes sense for at least two reasons:

(i) Elements connected with the saga of Perseus, the archrival of Dionysus in Nonnus' poem, frame the Indian epic of the *Dionysiaca*. Indeed, the account of the Indian war opens (25.31–147), and closes (40.215–233) with references to: the fight against the Gorgons, the petrification of Polydectes, the

⁵⁷ As per G. F. Held, "Weaving and Triumphal Shouting in Pindar, *Pythian* 12.6–12," *CQ* 48 (1998) 380–388.

⁵⁸ As per J. Strauss Clay, "Pindar's Twelfth *Pythian*: Reed and Bronze," *AJP* 113 (1992) 519–525.

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that ποικίλον ὕμνον is the object of πλέκω in this Pindaric passage.

Andromeda episode, and Perseus' birth (25.31–147) and the *aition* of the tune of many heads (40.224–233). Pindaric echoes can be recognized at different levels in both extremities of the frame. In the beginning of the frame:

The portrayal of flying Perseus in *Dion.* 25.31–34 may be connected to Pind. *Pyth.* 10.30–33.

The birth of Pegasus, mentioned in 25.38–44, was mentioned by Pindar in *Ol.* 13.63–64. Significantly, both Nonnus and Pindar use the adjective ὀφιώδης with reference to the Gorgon or the Gorgon's hair (*Dion.* 25.44, *Ol.* 13.63).

The portrayal of Perseus' flight in 25.57 (φύξηλις) may be connected to Pind. fr.70a.15–17 (*Dith.* 1), in which Perseus is said to escape (φεύγω) from the brine-enclosure of Phorcus' daughters.

The singling out of Euryale and Sthenno in 25.53–59 further recalls the twofold reference to the Gorgons' utterances in *Pyth.* 12.9 and 20–21: in Pindar's and in Nonnus' texts, Euryale is connected with a (loud) lament (*Dion.* 25.58, *Pyth.* 12.20–21).

In both Nonnus and Pindar σνλέω/σνλλάω describes the Perseus episode (*Dion.* 25.59, *Pyth.* 12.16).

The use of ἀνύω in *Dion.* 25.65 may be noteworthy. According to a tradition found in the Pindaric scholia, a variant ἄνυσεν existed for ἄσεν (*Pyth.* 12.11). Nonnus may therefore be familiar with this *varia lectio*.

The petrification of Polydectes (*Dion.* 25.84) was a Pindaric subject, cf. *Pyth.* 10.47–48 and fr.70d.39–41 (*Dith.* 4).

(ii) As for the final end of the frame, in *Dion.* 40 the νόμος πολυκέφαλος is performed to honor the dead of Dionysus' army. In doing so:

The sequence *paean* (40.217) – *thrēnos* (40.224–233) matches the timing of Perseus' triumph and Euryale's γόος (and Athena's θρῆνος) in *Pythian* 12 (11, 8–9, and 20–21).

The θρῆνος πολυκάρηνος in 40.224–233 features a memorial song. Significantly, Pindar defines the νόμος κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν as a “glory-making memento of contests” (*Pyth.* 12.24): Nonnus' scene may be taken as a narrative, expanded interpre-

tation of the Pindaric verse.

Contrary to Pindar (*Pyth.* 12.8, 21), Nonnus makes no distinction between γόος and θρήνος (40.228, 233), but a variety of phraseological usages are similar or identical to those found in Pindar's *Pythian* 12. This poem works as a model for the *aition* of the θρήνος πολυκάρηνος in *Dion.* 40.224–233.

In conclusion, I hope to have shown some of the ways by which Nonnus artistically translates Pindar. My study certainly does not exhaust the possibilities of (Pindaric and non-Pindaric) intertextual analyses one can do on Nonnus' text. In any case, I hope to have provided an encouragement to future investigations on possible influences of Greek choral lyric on the text of the last Greek epic poet.⁶⁰

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