Sinon and Laocoon in Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*: A Rewriting and De-Romanization of Vergil's *Aeneid*?

1 Introduction

The *Posthomerica* (*PH*) by Quintus of Smyrna is a Greek epic about the final days of the city of Troy, written during the time of the Second Sophistic, probably in the third (or perhaps late second) century A.D.[1] For a long time, scholarship on the *PH* was dominated by the *quaestio Latina*, that is, the question of whether Quintus had access to Latin epics such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and, in particular, Vergil's *Aeneid*, and whether he used these texts as sources for the composition of his own epic. In the twentieth century, this question was a matter of major dispute between Rudolf Keydell and Francis Vian – the former arguing in favour of Latin influence on the *PH*, the latter arguing against it.[2] The latest comprehensive study on this topic was that by Ursula Gärtner from 2005, who examined all passages in the *PH* where a potential parallel to the *Aeneid* could be suspected. Yet, the final statement in her conclusion is fairly cautious: 'It cannot be entirely denied that the poet of the *Posthomerica* may have had knowledge of, and adopted or transformed, single motifs or scenes from the Roman national epic, and that he may have dealt with [the *Aeneid*] at a certain level' (Gärtner 2005, 287).[3] Likewise, Alan W. James, whose chapter from 2007 was written independently of Gärtner's study, solely discusses issues relating to direct vs indirect influence and dependence, although he laudably attempts to dismantle 'prejudice concerning Quintus' general quality as a poet, which has led too many to discount originality in his use of sources' (James 2007, 149).

The main problem with all existing studies on the *quaestio Latina* is that they (explicitly or implicitly) follow a positivistic idea of source criticism, according to which similarities between two texts must be explained either as the result of direct dependence (the Keydell model) or as the result of a lost common source (the Vian model). It seems evident

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[1] On Quintus the poet and the dating of the *PH*, see James/Lee 2000, 1–9; James 2004, xvii–xxi; Baumbach/Bär 2007, 1–8; Bär 2009, 11–23; Maciver 2012a, 1–6; Scheijnen 2018, 1–4. The textual editions used in this chapter are that by Vian 1963/-66/-69 for the *PH* and Mynors 1969 for the *Aeneid.* Translations are my own.

[2] See Keydell 1949/50; Keydell 1954; Keydell 1961, 279–282; Vian 1959, 95–101; Vian 1963, xxxiv. On the further history of the debate, see Gärtner 2005, 30–37 (with detailed further references); James 2007, 145–149.

[3] My translation. German original: 'Kenntnis aber sowie Übernahme und Umsetzung einzelner Motive oder Szenen wie auch eine gewisse Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalepos der Römer wird man dem Dichter der Posthomerica nicht gänzlich absprechen können.'

that such a unidirectional approach is hugely outdated and that there is no need for ample justification to reject it. Therefore, a different approach is taken in this chapter. The insight that Vergil's *Aeneid* was known and read in the Roman East during the second and third centuries A.D. is taken as a tenet to claim that a contemporary reader was likely to have read the *PH* through the prism of Vergil's national epic. Based on these premises, the episodes of Sinon and Laocoon are analysed, two characters who stand at the beginning of the events that lead to the fall of Troy and who were part of the epic tradition from the archaic Greek period onwards. Methodologically, a narratological approach is chosen (narratological approaches to the *PH* having as of yet remained vastly under-exploited). It is demonstrated that the Post-homeric[4] version is characterized by a number of contrasts and inversions as compared to the Vergilian account, and it is argued that Quintus to a large degree removes the specific *Romanitas* from this famous Vergilian scene and in so doing raises a claim for Greek authority in literary and cultural terms, communicated through a Homeric voice with corresponding weight.

2 *Romanitas* and Vergil in the Second Sophistic

Issues relating to Greek identity and self-consciousness in the Second Sophistic, to 'being Greek under Rome',[5] have been much debated. For several decades, a major focus has been on how the sophists and their public declamations should be understood in relation to the Roman Empire and its power. Traditionally, there have been two schools of explanation. One argues that mastery and performance of Greek rhetoric was a first step (maybe even a necessary requirement) for Greeks towards a career in the Roman administration on a supra-regional level (the career model).[6] Another school claims essentially the opposite, namely, that the obsession with the language and the culture of a bygone past provided the Greeks with a mental escape from (or even active resistance to) the realities of Roman supremacy (the escapist model).[7] In the event, however, probably neither the first nor the second school is entirely right or wrong – and indeed, models of combining both approaches have been suggested more recently.[8] As Lieve Van Hoof aptly puts it, 'Greek literature under the Roman

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[4] The term 'Posthomeric' is used in this chapter solely to refer to Quintus' *PH*.

[5] The phrase 'being Greek under Rome' stems from the title of a collected volume by Goldhill 2001.

[6] See e.g. Bowersock 1969; Schmitz 1997; Puech 2002.

[7] See e.g. Bowie 1970; Swain 1996; Whitmarsh 2001.

[8] See e.g. Eshleman 2012, who proposes a novel way of understanding identity construction in the Second Sophistic. However, the fact that there is not one straightforward model does not entail the necessity to deny the existence of the Second Sophistic and its cultural primacy, as Tim Whitmarsh does in the introduction to his

Empire was an extremely powerful locus for taking a stance on contemporary issues, allowing people both to construct their own […] identity, and to negotiate (with those in) power' (Van Hoof 2010, 215).

In this context, the question also arises as to what the position of the Latin language was in the Greek homeland under the rule of the Roman Empire.[9] The overall scope of proficiency and reading habits may be difficult to assess in its details, but it can be said with a fair amount of certainty that knowledge of Latin was a requirement for Greeks to make a career in the Roman administration, and that Vergil's *Aeneid* was a major school text that was used to teach and learn Latin.[10] It is also known that Greek translations of the *Aeneid* existed in the second and third centuries A.D.[11] We can conclude from such evidence that Vergil's national epic must have been read (or listened to on the occasion of recitals?) by an audience that was wider than the small group of those Greeks who needed knowledge of Latin for their professional career.

Therefore, to put it bluntly, from a reader-response perspective the *quaestio Latina* as such is futile, and both the Keydell model and the Vian model must be dismissed. We do not (and will never) know for sure whether Quintus read the *Aeneid* (and, if he did, whether he used the Latin original or a Greek translation) and/or whether he thought of the *Aeneid* when he composed the *PH*. However, as the *PH* was supposed to appeal to the intellectual elite of its time, the πεπαιδευμένοι (while it could also be appreciated by the general public, οἱ πολλοί),[12] we can say with a high degree of probability that at least some contemporary readers will have perceived the *PH* through the prism of Vergil's Roman epic and that therefore a 'de-Romanizing' interpretation of the *Aeneid* is a likely approach taken by a Greek reader of that time.

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collection of essays from 2013, claiming that the Second Sophistic was 'a modern fantasy projected back on to the ancient world' (Whitmarsh 2013, 3). This distorted view is the result of a misreading of Erwin Rohde's use of the term in *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (Rohde ³1914, 318–321).

[9] On this topic, see especially the studies by Adams 1982; Woolf 1994; Rochette 1997 (with a comprehensive bibliography); Gärtner 2005, 13–22 (with 13 [n. 4] for further references); Hidber 2006; Gärtner 2013, 93–94 (with 93–94 [n. 20] for further references).

[10] See Fisher 1982, 183–189; Irmscher 1985; Rochette 1997, 165–210; Gärtner 2005, 14–16 (with further references); Hidber 2006, 242–243; Gärtner 2013, 95–98 (with further references).

[11] See Reichmann 1943; Baldwin 1976; Baldwin 1982, 81–82; Fisher 1982, especially 176; Hidber 2006, 249–250. Vergil's works remained known in the Roman East as late as the sixth century (see Baldwin 1982).

[12] See Bär 2009, 85–91.

3 The Sinon and Laocoon episodes in the *Aeneid* and the *PH* compared

The stories of Sinon and Laocoon (S&L) stand at the beginning of the dramatic chain of events that lead to the fall of Troy, and they constitute the hinge between the preparations for the sack of Troy and the city's actual, final destruction. Both characters are first attested in the *Iliupersis* by Arctinus of Miletus (see test. 2 *EpGF* [p. 62]). Like all other poems from the Epic Cycle, the *Iliupersis* is for the most part lost, and therefore, the question of whether or not Vergil and, even more so, Quintus used it as a source is impossible to answer.[13] However, the simple fact is that both figures were traditional, transtextual characters inherited by a centuries-old stream of reception, and that they themselves were embedded in an even richer and more complex traditional narrative about the fall of Troy, a narrative which 'was a topic common to all the periods and genres of Greek literature known' to both authors (Horsfall 2008, xix).[14]

In the *Aeneid*, the episode constitutes the first part of Aeneas' intradiegetic narration of the fall of Troy at Dido's court in Book 2:[15]

> **A: 13–39:** In a compressed narrative, Aeneas mentions the building of the Horse and its function, the ascension of the Greek heroes,[16] the departure of the Greek fleet, and the first disagreements among the Trojans as to whether or not the Horse should be admitted into the city.
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> **B: 40–56:** First appearance of Laocoon. Laocoon warns against the Horse and speculates about several possible forms of ruse (direct speech: ll. 42–49). He hurls a spear at the Horse, but by divine destiny, the ambush is not revealed.
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> **C: 57–198:** The appearance of Sinon, almost all of which is taken up by his extended false speech (direct speech: ll. 69–72, 77–104, 108–144, 154–194), interrupted by a

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[13] On Vergil and the Epic Cycle, see Kopff 1981; Gärtner 2015. On Quintus and the Epic Cycle, see Bär/Baumbach 2015, 606–614.

[14] See Gärtner 2005, 133–160, on the existing textual sources about the fall of Troy before Quintus. On Arctinus' *Iliupersis*, see Finglass 2015 (with further references). On Laocoon before Vergil, see Zintzen 1979, 18–24; Horsfall 2008, 77–82 (with ample further references); Nesselrath 2009; Most 2010, 326–329. On Laocoon in the *PH*, see also Zintzen 1979, 27–48; Gärtner 2009.

[15] For the details of the scene and its structure, see the commentaries by Austin 1964, 27–116; Horsfall 2008, 45–221; Binder 2019, vol. 3, 96–126.

[16] I use the term 'Greek(s)' for the sake of convenience despite the terminological inaccuracy. Quintus calls them Ἀχαιοί, Ἀργεῖοι and Δαναοί by turns, following Homeric practice. In the *Aeneid*, they are sometimes called *Graii*, sometimes *Achivi*, but the most common term is *Danai* ('the name used most often by Virgil for the Greeks, and least often by Homer' according to Austin 1964, 29; see also Horsfall 2006, 101).

few comments by Aeneas and Priam's reassurance to grant Sinon asylum (direct speech: ll. 148–151). Sinon introduces himself as a relative of Palamedes who was bullied by Ulixes because he publicly called for Palamedes' rehabilitation. When Apollo demanded a human sacrifice prior to the departure of the Greeks, the seer Calchas (influenced by Ulixes) disclosed that Sinon should be chosen, but Sinon was able to escape and hide until the Greeks set sail. The Horse, in turn, was built in order to make amends for the theft of Minerva's Palladium by Ulixes and Diomedes.[17] Calchas gave instructions to build the Horse higher than the walls of Troy so that it could not unfold its protective function for the Trojans, but Sinon tricks the Trojans into destroying their city walls in order to admit the Horse.

B': 199–231: Second appearance of Laocoon. Laocoon and his two sons are killed by two giant snakes which approach them coming from the isle of Tenedos (extended description of the snakes and of the agony of Laocoon and his sons). Subsequently, the snakes seek shelter at the feet of Minerva's statue, which the Trojans misunderstand as a punishment by Minerva for Laocoon's sacrilege against the Horse.

A': 232–249: In another compressed narrative, Aeneas recounts the destruction of the city walls, the fetching of the Horse and Cassandra's warnings, which are ignored.

The rest of Book 2 is taken up by Aeneas' narration of the fall of Troy, the encounter with his mother Venus, the loss of his wife Creusa, and the flight from Troy. In the *PH*, in turn, the S&L episode constitutes the second half of Book 12 (the first part of the Book is occupied by a debate about the further course of action and the subsequent construction of the Horse, followed by an in-text proem in which the author stages himself as a Homeric figure, and a catalogue of the Greek warriors who enter the Horse):[18]

A: 353–388: The Trojans find the Horse and Sinon on the beach. First they interrogate Sinon, but then they torture him cruelly. Sinon, however, insists on his version of the story: he claims that the Greeks have set sail and left the Horse behind in order to avoid Athene's wrath, and that he had been chosen as a human sacrifice, but been able to escape (direct speech: ll. 375–386).

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[17] The Palladium was a talisman-like image of Pallas Athene that should guarantee the protection of Troy. Its theft was a prerequisite for the city to be sacked (see Horsfall 2008, 162–163; Binder 2019, vol. 3, 117; see also n. 27 below).

[18] For the details of the scene and its structure, see the commentaries by Vian 1969, 102–111, 218–224; Campbell 1981, 115–194; James 2004, 331–333.

B: 389–417: First appearance and first punishment of Laocoon. There is disagreement among the Trojans as to whether or not Sinon should be trusted. Laocoon, who is among those who distrust Sinon, warns against the Horse and is struck with blindness by Athene for punishment (extended description of the process of his going blind).

A': 418–443: The Trojans misunderstand Laocoon's blindness as a punishment for his sacrilege against Athene (the sacrilege being his warning). They feel remorse about having mistreated Sinon and admit the Horse into the city.

B': 444–480: Second appearance and second punishment of Laocoon. As Laocoon continues to warn the Trojans against the Horse, Athene sends two giant snakes coming from the isle of Kalydna which kill Laocoon's sons (but not Laocoon). All other Trojans flee in panic and watch the scene from afar.

C: 480–499: The narrator reports about a cenotaph that the Trojans erected for Laocoon's two sons, and how it was lamented by Laocoon and his wife.

B": 500–524: Appearance of *omina*. Numerous fateful *omina* appear that warn the Trojans against the Horse, but the Trojans are blind to them (unlike Laocoon, who was able to recognize the truth despite his blindness).

B"': 525–585: Appearance of Cassandra. Cassandra warns the Trojans against the Horse (direct speech: ll. 540–551), but is only met with scorn and mockery (direct speech of an unnamed Trojan: ll. 553–561). She attempts to destroy the Horse with fire and an axe, but is prevented from doing so.

Several detailed source-critical comparisons of the two episodes exist, and there is no need to provide excerpts or summaries of them here.[19] On the other hand, the main differences in the overarching narrative composition and, along with them, the implications of the wider picture have hardly been considered. The total length of both S&L episodes is equal (*Aeneid*: 237 ll.; *PH*: 233 ll.), and thus the Posthomeric version calls for a comparison with its Vergilian counterpart. However, there are fundamental differences in focalization. The Vergilian account is part of Aeneas' intradiegetic narration at Dido's court; Aeneas is thus a secondary narrator with a subjective perspective. His point of view is that of a Trojan; it is limited, 'non-total', and retrospective – and thus prone to distortion. This limitation is obvious at the beginning where Aeneas compresses the events leading up to the S&L episode into a total of 27 lines, and his specific focalization becomes apparent when he comments that 'we *reckoned*

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[19] See especially Kehmptzow 1891, 68–69; Noack 1892, 785–787, 795–800; Becker 1913, 80–86; Heinze ³1915, 64–71; Kleinknecht 1944; Vian 1959, 55–71, 95–101; Vian 1969, 78–84; Zintzen 1979, 27–48; Campbell 1981, 115–194; Gärtner 2005, 161–226 (with detailed further references); James 2007, 149–150, 153–157.

that they'd left and were on their way to Mycenae on a [good] wind' (*nos abiisse rati et vento petiisse Mycenas*, l. 25). In contrast, the corresponding Posthomeric account occupies as much as half of Book 12, including a detailed debate about the envisaged course of action (ll. 1–103), an equally thorough description of the construction process of the Horse (ll. 104–156), instructions to the Greek warriors and Sinon (ll. 217–305), and a catalogue of the heroes who enter the Horse (ll. 314–352). In other words, the primary narrator of the *PH* supplements those pieces of information that the Trojan Aeneas as a secondary narrator did not have in sufficient detail. The principal difference between the two versions thus lies not mainly in the contrast between a Trojan and a Greek perspective, but, primarily, in the difference between a homodiegetic (and thus limited) and a heterodiegetic (and hence omniscient) narrator. The voice of the Posthomeric account can be tied back to the preceding in-text proem in which the author stages himself as a Homeric figure with a Hesiodic and a Callimachean touch (ll. 306–313; interrupted by the catalogue of the heroes in the Horse, ll. 314–352). This is the only passage in the entire *PH* where Quintus makes an explicitly authorial 'first-person' intervention. In doing so, he also evokes the homodiegetic voice of his 'anti-model', Vergil's *Aeneid* Book 2, and at the same time virtually claims Homeric authority for his own version.

A comparison of the actual content of the S&L episodes further reveals two major differences, namely, a difference in narrative speed (viz., compression vs extension) and a difference in narrative sequence (viz., the arrangement of the narrative units). Let us consider narrative speed first. The total length of both S&L episodes is, as said, equal; yet, in the Vergilian version, the Sinon episode is in the centre, and its major part is occupied by Sinon's false speech – reported in direct speech by Aeneas in a total of 110 lines (ll. 69–72, 77–104, 108–144, 154–194) – whereas Sinon's speech in the *PH* is restricted to 12 lines (ll. 375–386). In contrast, the Posthomeric narrator provides his reader with a detailed and graphic description of Sinon's torture (ll. 363–373),[20] which is something that the Vergilian account lacks completely. In fact, Aeneas only mentions that Sinon had 'his hands tied behind his back' (*manus [...] post terga revinctum*, l. 57) when he was taken before Priam, but that afterwards 'we granted him his life and pitied him' (*vitam damus et miserescimus*, l. 145) and that 'Priam ordered the bonds to be taken off' (*levari / vincla iubet Priamus*, l. 146–147). Many scholars have pointed out that the Vergilian Sinon is treated surprisingly kindly by the Trojans, whereas the Trojans in the Posthomeric version mistreat him with atrocious cruelty; and that Vergil puts all his emphasis on the deviousness and falsehood of Sinon and his

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[20] The visual senses are also of great importance in the *PH* elsewhere: see Ozbek 2007; Argyrouli 2017; Kauffman 2019.

tongue, while Quintus highlights Sinon's integrity and perseverance, but does not equip him with rhetorical skills.[21] It has even been suggested that the 'endurance under torture' by the Posthomeric Sinon be read as 'an exhibition of Stoic qualities' (Maciver 2012a, 109).[22] True though this may be, the main point here too lies in the different narratorial focalization. It appears that the primary narrator of the *PH* supplements those pieces of information that the secondary narrator of the *Aeneid* may have suppressed. Sinon's torture – cruel as it is – is motivated by the Trojans' desire for absolute certainty about the truth (in antiquity, torture was a common means to find the truth in legal contexts, and by the time of Quintus, not only slaves, but also free men could be subjected to it).[23] In turn, Aeneas' remark that they 'pitied' Sinon (*miserescimus*, l. 145) may be re-read, from the Posthomeric perspective, as a subtle allusion to torture. In other words, the Posthomeric account makes the reader re-interpret Aeneas' account in a new light; Quintus exposes in his narration what the Vergilian Aeneas may be hiding.[24]

The Posthomeric narrator adds information where Aeneas has omitted it – and vice versa. The fact that the speech by the Posthomeric Sinon is considerably shorter than that of his Vergilian counterpart cannot only be interpreted as a way of transforming a double-tongued liar into an upright Stoic, but what we can see here is again (narratologically speaking) an inversion of compression and extension. The concision of Sinon's speech has been interpreted differently, and there has been disagreement as to whether Sinon should be imagined as having been silent in the beginning or whether his brief speech is a repetition of

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[21] See e.g. Heinze [3]1915, 65–66; Campbell 1981, 119–121; Clausen 1987, 35; Gärtner 2005, 189–191; Hadjittofi 2007, 365–370; Binder 2019, vol. 3, 105. On Vergil's Sinon, see Manuwald 1985; further references: Horsfall 2008, 93–95; Binder 2019, vol. 3, 106.

[22] Maciver (*eo loco*) refers to the narratorial comment at *PH* 12.387–388 to support this interpretation: ὣς φάτο κερδοσύνῃσι καὶ οὐ κάμεν ἄλγεσι θυμόν· / ἀνδρὸς γὰρ κρατεροῖο κακὴν ὑποτλῆναι ἀνάγκην. ('So he spoke, and he did not languish in his mind: / For, [it is a sign] of a strong man to endure gruesome violence.') See also Maciver 2007, 273 (n. 63).

[23] See e.g. Harries 1999, 122–134.

[24] Binder's claim that 'the motivation for the torture is unclear' is misguided, and calling the Trojans 'warmhearted' is exaggerated ('die Motivation der Folter ist unklar'; 'die warmherzigen Trojaner', Binder 2019, vol. 3, 105). After all, Aeneas mentions that Sinon is being mocked in the beginning (*Troiana iuventus / circumfusa ruit certantque inludere capto*, 'the Trojan youth / comes forward in a crowd and they compete [with each other] in mocking the captive', ll. 63–64).

what he already said under torture.[25] However, this question distracts from the actual point, namely, that Sinon's speech is in parts unintelligible by and of itself and that it leaves several textual gaps (*Leerstellen*). Let us look at the full speech (*PH* 12.375–386):

Ἀργεῖοι μὲν νηυσὶν ὑπὲρ πόντοιο φέβονται   375
μακρῷ ἀκηδήσαντες ἐπὶ πτολέμῳ καὶ ἀνίῃ.
Κάλχαντος δ᾽ ἰότητι δαΐφρονι Τριτογενείῃ
ἵππον ἐτεκτήναντο, θεῆς χόλον ὄφρ᾽ ἀλέωνται
πάγχυ κοτεσσαμένης Τρώων ὕπερ. ἀμφὶ δὲ νόστου
ἐννεσίη<ς> Ὀδυσῆος ἐμοὶ μενέαινον ὄλεθρον,   380
ὄφρα με δῃώσωσι δυσηχέος ἄγχι θαλάσσης
δαίμοσιν εἰναλίοις. ἐμὲ δ᾽ οὐ λάθον, ἀλλ᾽ ἀλεγεινὰς
σπονδάς τ᾽ οὐλοχύτας τε μάλ᾽ ἐσσυμένως ὑπαλύξας
ἀθανάτων βουλῇσι παραὶ ποσὶ κάππεσον ἵππου.
οἱ δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλοντες ἀναγκαίῃ μ᾽ ἐλίποντο   385
ἀζόμενοι μεγάλοιο Διὸς κρατερόφρονα κούρην.

The Argives have fled across the sea in their ships,   375
having been worn out by the long war and the distress.
By Calchas' instruction, for the war-minded Tritogeneia [= Athene]
they timbered the Horse, so as to avoid the goddess's wrath,
who was very angry on behalf of the Trojans. For the sake of their return,
on Odysseus' advice, they concocted my doom,   380
to slaughter me at the ill-sounding sea
to the deities of the ocean. Yet [the plan] did not escape me, but
I escaped from the pain-inflicting libations and the barley offerings at once,
and by the will of the immortals I threw myself down at the feet of the Horse.
And so they were forced to leave me behind although they didn't want to,   385
respecting the stouthearted daughter of the great Zeus.

Essentially, there are three textual gaps opened here. First, why does Sinon state that the Horse was built 'by Calchas' instruction' (l. 377), when it is Odysseus who recommends its

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[25] See Becker 1913, 82 ('spricht […] nicht eher, als bis seine Standhaftigkeit gebrochen ist') vs Heinze [3]1915, 66 ('[seine Festigkeit,] die ihn trotz aller Qualen auf seiner Aussage beharren läßt') and Gärtner 2005, 182 ('was er schon die ganze Zeit unter der Folter behauptete').

construction (ll. 25–45), and Calchas only supports and reinforces Odysseus' decision (ll. 51–65)? Secondly, the nature of Athene's wrath 'on behalf of the Trojans' (l. 379) remains unexplained. Thirdly, Sinon mentioning Odysseus as the driving force behind his purported sacrifice is not entirely congruent with Odysseus' instructions at the beginning of Book 12 that the chosen decoy should 'pretend to have escaped the haughty violence of the Achaeans' (ὑποκρίναιτο βίην ὑπέροπλον Ἀχαιῶν / […] ὑπαλύξαι, ll. 35–36): why does Sinon add this piece of information about Odysseus that does not seem to have any additional value? There has been ample discussion about how far these (seeming) inconsistences may be the result of Quintus having combined pieces from different sources.[26] However, they make perfect sense when Sinon's speech is regarded as a compression of its extensive Vergilian counterpart. There, it is Calchas who initiates the construction of the Horse (ll. 182–188); and the reason for Minerva's anger is explained at great length, namely, because of the theft of the Palladium (ll. 163–171, 183–184) – which is part of the horizon of expectation of the Posthomeric reader because it is mentioned in the internal prolepsis in Book 10, when Hera and the Four Seasons discuss the forthcoming events (ll. 353–360).[27] Similarly, Odysseus as the driving force behind Sinon's sacrifice becomes clear through the Vergilian account too, where Ulixes is said to have played a major role in making Calchas choose Sinon for the invidious task (ll. 97–100, 128–129). Thus, the purported inconsistencies in Sinon's speech turn out to be deliberate textual gaps that invite the reader to read the Posthomeric account of the S&L episode against that of the *Aeneid*.

That the Posthomeric Sinon should be read through the prism of his Vergilian counterpart is alluded to again in Book 14 when the feasting Greeks single him out as a particularly brave hero (ll. 105–111). There he is called Σίνωνα περικλυτόν by the primary narrator: 'the widely renowned Sinon' (l. 107). The adjective περικλυτός is also used in the *Dichterweihe* in Book 12 where the narrator recounts having tended to 'the widely renowned sheep', which is an allusion both to Hesiod's *Dichterweihe* (*Theog.* 22–28) and to Callimachus' dream about this Hesiodic passage (*Aet.* 1 fr. 2.1–2 Pf.).[28] In a similar vein, by applying the adjective περικλυτός to qualify Sinon, the Greeks do not only sing the praise of his

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[26] See the extensive discussion by Gärtner 2005, 182–188, with ample further references.

[27] On these lines, see Vian 1969, 208–209 (nn. 8–13); James 2004, 321; Tsomis 2018, 196–198; Greensmith, forthcoming.

[28] See Bär 2007, 45–51; Maciver 2012a, 34–38; Greensmith 2018, 272–273.

heroic deed, but they also (implicitly) provide an Alexandrian footnote that can be read as an allusion to the Vergilian account of Sinon's fame in literary history.[29]

Let us proceed to the other main compositional difference, the difference in narrative sequence. Richard Heinze, in his epoch-making study *Virgils epische Technik*, stated that Quintus' depiction of the fall of Troy 'consist[ed] of loose episodes […] which could be decreased or increased or rearranged without affecting the composition', whereas Vergil, in contrast, had 'successfully overcome the episodic effect that clings to such actions' (Heinze [3]1915, 444–445).[30] Some scholars even went so far as to reproach Quintus for his alleged clumsiness in handling his sources,[31] whereas Vergil's composition of the S&L episode has repeatedly been praised for its circular structure.[32] Leaving aside the fact that there is nothing inherently superior in a circular composition, the accusation of a lack of coherence and structure does not do justice to Quintus' composition. Rather, the Posthomeric version can be analyzed as a double dovetailing: the Sinon episode (ll. 353–388) is followed by Laocoon's first appearance and his first punishment (ll. 389–417); this scheme is repeated by a zooming back to Sinon (ll. 418–443), which then leads to Laocoon's second appearance and his second punishment (ll. 444–480).[33] Thereafter, Laocoon's second punishment is mirrored twice. First, the faithful *omina* that unsuccessfully warn the Trojans against the Horse invert the motif of the blind Laocoon who can see the truth despite his blindness (ll. 500–524), whereas the Trojans are blind to the *omina* despite their intact visual sense. Secondly, Cassandra reinforces Laocoon's warnings, but remains equally unsuccessful (ll. 525–585).[34] With regard to Cassandra, it may be noted that the Posthomeric account again constitutes an inversion of compression and extension, as Quintus gives Cassandra and her warnings considerably more room than Vergil does (ll. 245–246).

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[29] Along those lines, see also Carvounis 2019, 73. Further, see also Hadjittofi 2007, 369.

[30] Translation: Heinze 1993, 353. German original: '[Im übrigen hat Virgil mehrfach] das Episodische, das sol-chen Handlungen anhaftet, glücklich überwunden. In Episoden aufgelöst ist [z.B. die Iliupersis bei Quintus und Tryphiodor:] wir haben eine Fülle von Einzelereignissen vor uns, die beliebig verringert oder vermehrt oder um-gestellt werden können, ohne daß dies Einfluß auf die Komposition hätte.'

[31] See e.g. Heinze [3]1915, 66 (n. 1); Keydell 1931, 76; Gärtner 2005, 182, 213, 218.

[32] See e.g. Anderson 1969, 32; La Penna 2005, 328–332; Horsfall 2008, xv–xvi.

[33] A similar analysis is provided by Gärtner 2005, 218.

[34] On the similarity of the roles of Laocoon and Cassandra as unsuccessful warners, see Zintzen 1979, 40–41; Campbell 1981, 177–178; Clausen 2002, 67; Gärtner 2005, 221–225.

The *PH* and the *Aeneid* have in common that they distribute the appearance of Laocoon on two scenes. However, there are numerous differences in detail;[35] and there is one major difference and one major addition in the *PH*: for one, only Laocoon's sons, but not Laocoon himself, are killed (ll. 447–463), and, for another, the blinding of Laocoon (ll. 399–415) is added in the Posthomeric account (or, to be more precise, the blinding replaces Laocoon's death).[36] The Posthomeric narration contains several metapoetic signposts that suggest an authoritative claim for objectivity as compared to the subjective narration of Aeneas in the *Aeneid*. First, in the Vergilian account, the killing of Laocoon and his sons is (like the rest of the intradiegetic narration) recounted by, and thus focalized through, Aeneas. In the *PH*, on the other hand, we have a typical case of embedded focalization: the killing of Laocoon's son is told by the primary narrator, but focalized through the Trojans, who all flee and watch the gruesome scene from afar: 'and terrible flight overcame / the Trojans when they saw the dreadful monsters in the city' (κακὴ δ᾽ ἐπενίσετο φύζα / Τρῶας, ὅτ᾽ εἰσενόησαν ἀνὰ πτόλιν αἰνὰ πέλωρα, ll. 463–464).[37] By making the entire population of Troy his eyewitnesses, the Posthomeric narrator challenges the eyewitness perspective by a single individual (Aeneas) projected in the *Aeneid*, and hence, indirectly, the uncontested value of the Vergilian account of this event.

Secondly, the snakes are identified as descendants of Typhon, a creature that, according to Hesiod (*Theog.* 304–325), procreated numerous monsters together with Echidna.[38] Typhon is mentioned on two further occasions in the *PH*: at 5.485, Ajax's suicide is compared to Typhon's slaughter by Zeus, and at 6.260–262 (in the ecphrasis of Eurypylus' shield), he is mentioned as the father of the hellhound Cerberus.[39] Thus, the reference to Typhon at 12.452 does not only 'illustrate the menacing nature of the two snakes' (Bärtschi 2019, 329 [n. 299]),[40] but it also (first and foremost) inscribes the two snakes and their story into the context of the *PH* as a whole and – via the implied reference to Hesiod – also into the

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[35] See Vian 1959, 64–68; Zintzen 1979, 32–39; Gärtner 2005, 195–197, 205–218.

[36] On the different traditions as to who is killed (Laocoon and one of his two sons; both sons, but not Laocoon; all three), see Vian 1959, 66; Vian 1969, 81 (n. 3), 221 (n. 6); James 2004, 332. On the blinding of Laocoon, see van Krevelen 1964, 179; Vian 1969, 105–106, James 2004, 331; James 2007, 155–157; Ozbek 2007, 179–183.

[37] Embedded focalization, typically expressed via *verba videndi*, is very common in the *PH*; see Argyrouli 2017.

[38] The tradition of the two snakes being the offspring of Typhon is not attested elsewhere and may well be Quintus' invention.

[39] See also Bärtschi 2019, 328–329.

[40] My translation. German original: '[Die Bezeichnung des Verwandtschaftsverhältnisses] illustriert [an dieser Stelle] die Bedrohlichkeit der beiden Schlangen […].'

wider context of Greek literary history. Additionally, the triple reference to the giant Typhon in the *PH* also harks back to the Gigantomachic element that plays a dominant role in the *Aeneid*.[41] That way, the primary narrator adds authority to his version as compared to that of Vergil's Aeneas. The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for the third point to be addressed here: the report about the cenotaph which the Trojans erect for Laocoon's two sons and which Laocoon and his wife beweep (ll. 480–499).[42] At the beginning of this digression, the primary narrator notes that 'their tomb is still / visible' (τῶν δ' ἔτι σῆμα / φαίνεθ', ll. 480–481). Through this remark, he anchors his version of the story in his own reality by suggesting that what happened in the Homeric past can still be verified now in the present.[43]

These metapoetic signposts, admittedly, do not establish a direct connection to the Vergilian account of the S&L episode, but they add authority and credibility to the primary narration of the *PH*. Thus, they invite the reader of the *PH* to juxtapose this high degree of authority with the subjective and limited narratorial perspective of the version from the *Aeneid*. Moreover, here too it must be recalled again that the S&L episode follows right after the in-text proem in which the author stages himself as a *Homerus novus* (ll. 306–313). By unveiling his identity as a Homeric figure, Quintus claims corresponding authority in his role as a poet – a poet who was inspired and nobilitated by none else than the Muses from Mount Helicon. This, in turn, entails that the following description of the fall of Troy, beginning with the S&L episode, comes with an enhanced claim for authority too: Quintus claims Homeric authority for his own version of the events and thus implicitly downgrades the analogous account by Vergil.

4 Conclusion: re-writing and de-Romanizing the *Aeneid* in the Second Sophistic?

In his commentary on *PH* 12, Malcolm Campbell comments on the *quaestio Latina* in relation to the S&L episode as follows (Campbell 1981, 117–118):

> It may be said at once that direct imitation is out of the question, unless Q[uintus] had
> a remarkably stubborn temperament – so stubborn that, having scanned what V[ergil]
> had to say on the building of the Horse, on Sinon, on Laocoon, on the introduction of
> the Horse, he promptly forgot or ignored almost every memorable detail and instead
> contented himself with reflecting, not always with precision, and sometimes in a spirit

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[41] See Hardy 1986, 85–156 on the Gigantomachy in the *Aeneid*.

[42] This detail of the story too is unattested elsewhere and may likewise be Quintus' own invention.

[43] A similar interpretation is offered by Tomasso 2010, 120–121. As Tomasso (*eo loco*) rightly observes, such anchoring signposts can be found in the Homeric epics too, e.g. the mention of Patroclus' tomb at *Il.* 24.16.

of blatant contradiction, the underlying structure, preferring to go elsewhere for a large variety of key elements in the saga.

On a literal level, this statement hardly deserves further attention. However, on a meta-level (which most certainly is not the level of comprehension intended by the author), it hits the nail on its head: for, indeed, the differences between Vergil's account of the S&L story and Quintus' treatment of the same episode are striking, both on the level of detail and with regard to its narrative embedding and narratorial focalization. Based on the insight that a contemporary reader would, in all likelihood, almost automatically have read the *PH* from the backdrop of the *Aeneid*, these differences must be understood as significant. Martine P. Cuypers was the first to suggest the hypothesis of a potential unwriting or silencing of the *Aeneid* by Quintus (Cuypers 2005, 607):

> We should […] entertain the possibility that the large discrepancies between Q[uintus] and Virgil in story matter, and the scant evidence for allusion, are not the result of ignorance but of a well-considered 'political' scheme to ignore the Romans' national epic and supplant it with a Greek account of the end of the Trojan war, viewed from the Greek perspective.

With regard to the Posthomeric Sinon, Fotini Hadjittofi has suggested a similar approach (Hadjittofi 2007, 366, 368):

> [Quintus] wanted to efface that very antipathetic picture of Greekness that defined the Roman version of this myth. […] Quintus' handling of the story of Sinon proves to be a systematic un-doing of the Virgilian version. […] If Quintus is indeed making a specific textual reference to the *Aeneid*, the effect he is creating is one of contrast; this is no longer just literary *imitatio* or *aemulatio*, but, rather, a case of politically motivated 'renegade' reading and re-writing.

Further, in a more recent study, Lee Fratantuono has taken a similar (yet unpolitical) stance in relation to the story of the Amazon queen Penthesileia in *PH* 1. Fratantuono suggests that this narrative be read as a reversal of the episode of the Amazon-like heroine Camilla in *Aeneid* 11, whereby *PH* 1 constitutes 'a complex hommage […] that highlights numerous aspects of its poetic commentary on the troubled heroine Camilla' (Fratantuono 2016, 230–231).

The *PH* is a sequel to the *Iliad* as well as a prequel to the *Odyssey*; hence, the implied author of the *PH* must be read as a Homeric figure in an almost pseudepigraphic sense.[44] Under these premises, ignoring, unwriting or silencing the *Aeneid* (or anything Roman, for that matter) appears to be a logical measure for such an author. However, the Roman allusions in the *PH* should not too easily be neglected – although there are few of them in absolute numbers. For one, there are two well-known Roman anachronisms: first, the allusion to beast fights and/or gladiatorial combats in a simile at 6.531–536; and, second, Calchas' prophecy of Aeneas' destiny as the founder of Rome after the fall of Troy at 13.336–341.[45] For another, two passages in the *PH* resemble their Vergilian counterpart to such an extent that it seems hard not to regard them as direct signs of *Romanitas*: first, the description of the typically Roman *testudo* technique at 11.358–375 (*Aen.* 9.503–524), and, second, the poppy simile at 4.423–429, which has a strikingly Vergilian colouring (*Aen.* 9.434–437).[46] All these passages should not be dismissed as casual traces or even slips of a seemingly careless poet, but, rather, as subtle (but deliberate) signposts of *Romanitas* that remind the reader of the *PH*'s broader cultural context and its anchoring in imperial Rome. They allow the reader to understand the *PH* as a Greek epic 'under Rome' despite its decidedly Homeric character.[47]

As illustrated above, the relation between Greece and Rome in the Second Sophistic was a complex one and therefore neither the career model nor the escapist model can do justice to the intricate realities of the time. In the Second Sophistic, Greek literature was a powerful, important and much-used means of constructing and negotiating Greek identity and self-consciousness 'under Rome' from various perspectives. Therefore, unlike Cuypers and Hadjittofi, I do not believe that the *PH* should primarily be understood as a text with a political, anti-Roman sense of mission. Rather, the overall message is that of Greek authority in literary and cultural terms, communicated through a Homeric voice with corresponding

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[44] The direct continuity from the *Iliad* to the *PH* is emphasized by the absence of a Muse invocation at the beginning, while the connection to the *Odyssey* is highlighted by a reference to the proem of the *Odyssey* at *PH* 14.630–631. On the metapoetics of the *PH*, see Bär 2007; Bär 2009, 69–78; Maciver 2012a, 27–38. On the emphatic lack of a beginning and a closure, see Gärtner 2017.

[45] See Vian 1963, viii–ix; James/Lee 2000; Cantilena 2001, 55–56; James 2004, xviii–xix; Gärtner 2005, 24; Tomasso 2010, 127–139, 146–157; Bärtschi, forthcoming.

[46] On the *testudo*, see Keydell 1954; James 2004, 326; James 2007, 151–152; Tomasso 2010, 140–146; Greensmith (this volume). On the poppy simile, see James 2004, 292; James 2007, 152 (oddly, the parallel is not mentioned by Gärtner 2005). See also Bärtschi, forthcoming.

[47] Along similar lines, see also Tomasso 2010, 158: 'I prefer to see the backgrounding of Rome as part of the overall narrative strategy of the *Posthomerica* to link the present more closely with the past.' Further, see also Avlamis 2019 and Greensmith (this volume).

weight.[48] The Posthomeric version of the S&L episode, with its salient contrasts, inversions, and (at times also) contradictions as compared to Vergil's *Aeneid*, ties in with this message. It is logical that the Trojan Aeneas should portray his own kin in a positive light, but that does not mean that the primary narrator of the *PH* automatically sends a political correction through his shift of perspective and focalization. The Trojans who torture Sinon are not cruel proto-Romans, nor is the brave Sinon who endures all the pains a Greek Stoic *avant la lettre*.[49] In fact, neither Sinon nor Laocoon are exclusively positive figures in the *PH*: Sinon, despite his much-praised bravery, is closely associated with Odysseus; yet the Posthomeric Odysseus is a highly ambivalent figure who displays clear traits of the villainous liar as inherited from the First Sophistic.[50] Laocoon, in turn, is presented as an ambivalent character through the focalization of his wife who 'bewailed the delusion / of her husband [inflicted] by his folly' (ἔστενε δ' ἄτην / ἀνέρος ἀφραδίῃ, ll. 487–488). On the other hand, Rome and the Roman Empire are positively connotated in the *PH* via the phrase ἱερὸν ἄστυ, which is used on several occasions to denote the city of Troy, and on one occasion to denote the city of Rome, by Calchas in his prophecy (13.338).[51] By calling Rome a ἱερὸν ἄστυ just like Troy, Calchas evokes the idea that Troy will live eternally through Rome despite its fall.[52] Thus, Quintus is not an anti-Roman author in a political sense, and he even occasionally reminds his readers of the real-life context of his Homeric epic.[53] Yet, with his own account of the S&L episode, Quintus removes the specific *Romanitas* from its famous Vergilian counterpart, and he redrafts the final days of Troy in a new, cleaned-up, and – so it seems – more objective

[48] I have argued elsewhere that the *PH* can (and should) be read as a response to the widespread revisionist tendencies against Homer in the Second Sophistic (Bär 2010; see already Baumbach/Bär 2007b, 8–15, and Bär 2009, 85–91). This view has been challenged by Maciver 2012a, 17–18, and Maciver 2012b. A middle position with a different angle is taken by Avlamis 2019.

[49] It has also been suggested that the Vergilian Sinon be read as an anti-Greek figure: see Stahl 1999, 257–267.

[50] See especially the verbal contest between Odysseus and Ajax at *PH* 5.180–316, where Odysseus resorts to a blatant lie in order to be awarded Achilles' armour (see Bär 2010, 297–310). The Vergilian Sinon with his rhetorical skills is a virtual copy of Ulixes (see e.g. Highet 1972, 247–248; for further references, see Horsfall 2008, 93–95).

[51] The phrase ἱερὸν ἄστυ is used five times by the primary narrator (at 2.242; 3.216; 3.284; 12.351; 13.558) and once by a secondary narrator (at 5.191, by the Greater Ajax) as a reference to Troy. Furthermore, it is used once by Odysseus with reference to Tenedos (at 12.235).

[52] I disagree with Hadjittofi's interpretation that the parallelism of Troy and Rome via this phrase should be 'suggestive of a Rome that is not eternal, but just as ephemeral as her predecessor' (Hadjittofi 2007, 364). On the widespread idea of Rome as a second Troy, see e.g. Henry 1989, 43–65.

[53] See also Greensmith (this volume) on the idea of reconciling the Roman and the Homeric contexts via using the *Odyssey* as an aetiological bridge.

manner. By rewriting and de-Romanizing parts of the *Aeneid*, Quintus claims literary authority for his own version with the help of his Homeric voice.[54]

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