

## Homeric *Aēr* in Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*

Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica* is a Homericizing, imperial-era Greek epic in hexameters which situates itself as the continuation of the epic cycle, positioning itself as a sequel to the *Iliad* and as a prequel to the *Odyssey* (Greensmith 2020). The author implicitly takes on the persona of Homer (Maciver 2018), adopts Homeric characters, such as Achilles, and fills in the narrative gap between in Homer's epics. Scholars have also demonstrated how the poet engages with Homeric language (Bambauch and Bär 2007, Greensmith 2021) and scenes (James and Lee 2017, Vian 2001). However, scholars have missed how Quintus also adopts a narrative device of Homer, *aēr*, as a tool for negotiating significant moments of tension in the plot (Folitt-Weinberg 2023). I will demonstrate a hitherto overlooked form of Homericizing in the *Posthomerica* in which Quintus employs a Homeric definition for the word *aēr* and deploys *aēr* for its Homeric narrative purpose. I argue that Quintus adopts this otherwise discontinued Homeric use of *aēr* in significant moments across the poem.

I organize this argument in the following manner: First, I address Homeric *aēr*, by discussing both its meaning as a kind of mist with divine, perception-blocking properties and how Homer uses *aēr* as a device to solve narrative dilemmas. Second, I address the subsequent development of *aēr*, illustrating that the meaning of *aēr* had already changed by the time of Plato (Louis 1948) and Apollonius' epic *Argonautica* (Campbell 1981) to instead describe mundane air or the sky, lacking any narrative function. I also contextualize Quintus' peculiarity in anachronistically adopting the Homeric use of *aēr* by using Nonnus' *Dionysica*, a similarly Homericizing (Geisz 2017) imperial-era epic poem as a control—I demonstrate that it does not employ a Homeric definition or usage of *aēr*.

Third, as the core of my argument, I examine *aēr* in Quintus' *Posthomerica*. Quintus himself mostly employs a non-Homeric definition for *aēr* across the poem, which makes the moments in which he does employ the Homeric *aēr* all the more striking. I elucidate that in narratively significant occasions, Quintus unambiguously uses a Homeric meaning for *aēr*, such that translating the word in an un-Homeric sense would disrupt the meaning of the text. In such moments, Quintus uses *aēr* for its ability to solve narrative dilemmas in the manner of Homer. I portray Quintus' use of Homeric *aēr* through the example of *Posthomerica* 6.644-5, in which the Trojan hero Eurypylos is prevented from destroying the Greek fleet by means of *aēr*. In this passage, Quintus employs the Homeric meaning of *aēr* in a manner that lacks a clear episodic parallel in Homer's epics, thereby demonstrating his conscious employment of the Homeric narrative device rather than by accidental use through allusion. In conclusion, I suggest that Quintus' use of Homer's *aēr* as a narrative device constitutes an underappreciated type of intertextual engagement, which may prove productive as an avenue of approach into reception studies across the field of Classics.

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