

## SIMON GOLDHILL : **Preposterous Poetics and the Erotics of Death**

“Preposterous Poetics and the Erotics of Death” looks at two crucial issues of late antique poetics and the representation of gender through the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus. First, it discusses how Nonnus constructs a narrative which links mythic stories in a willfully confused chronological patterning, which allows events in the future of narrative time to bear on the current story-telling. This is explored both in its aesthetics of exemplarity and in its theological understanding of narrative time. “Preposterous” is understood thus in its etymological sense of the confusion of the “pre-” and the “post-”. Second, this article explores through such a model of poetics how Nonnus represents a bizarre and unparalleled scene of necrophiliac desire on the battle-field. On the one hand, this disturbing scene of corrupt erotic desire in action is expressed through the model of Achilles and Penthesileia (an event far in the future for the time of the *Dionysiaca*); on the other hand, it utilizes a strange narrative technique of the narrator describing the scene, followed immediately by the desire-stuck soldier also describing the scene from another perspective. The article explores how this doubled representation opens a question – a question that goes to the heart of late antique poetics – of what it means to repeat, to paraphrase, to rehearse the inherited language of classical, epic sexual desire in the new world of the Christian empire.

### **Mots-clés :**

Nonnus – necrophilia – poetics – late antiquity – desire – *Dionysiaca* – erotics – Achilles – Penthesileia – rhetoric of desire – repetition – theology – narrative – epic – paraphrase – late antique epic – transgression – Indian war – Deriades – Morrheus – Chalcomede