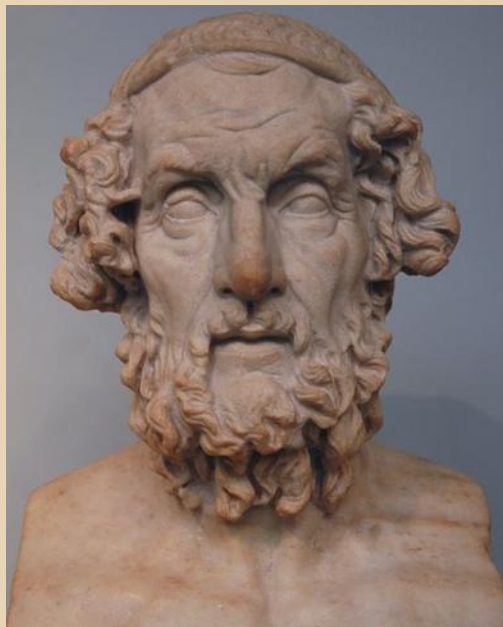


Statius' *Achilleid* and Homer etc



one intertext =Homer's *Iliad*

(various articles/books in passing) e.g. H. Juhnke, *Homerisches in römischer Epik flavischer Zeit. Untersuchungen zu Szennenaachbildungen und Strukturentsprechungen in Statius' Thebais und Achilleis und in Silius' Punica* (Zetemata 53) (Beck, Munich, 1972); Taisne, A.M., "Presence d'Homere dans l'*Achilleide* de Stace," *Vita Latina* 178 (2008): 94-103)

Ripoll, F. 'Ulysses as an inter (and meta-) textual hero in the Achilleid of Statius' in Coffee, Forstall, Milič and Nelis (edd.), *Intertextuality in Flavian Epic Poetry* (2020) e.g. Odysseus plays the part of the epic consciousness of Achilles, removing him from the comico-elegaic temptation of the life at Scyros and sending him back to his 'natural' epic destiny (248: 2020)

Homer

“And the sententia of Ulysses about the sterile old age of the one who misses the occasion for glory (1.800-2) is an obvious allusion to the homeric theme of the two paths opened to Achilles: the one of a long and obscure life and the one of a short but glorious existence (Il. 9.410-16). So this Ulysses seems to have a good “intuitive” knowledge of Achilles literary biography” (Ripoll 2020: 249)

“Throughout *Achilleid* 1, Statius weaves a network of allusive connections between the unhomeric episode of the reception at Scyros and some passages of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* in order to prefigure the forthcoming adventures of Ulysses, sometimes with anticipative irony. The aim is to convey to the reader the pleasure of recognizing the future hero of the Homeric poems, so as to make the *Achilleid* look like a ‘prequel’ of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.”
e.g. design of ambassadors (*Ach.* 1.536-59) based on the model of the Dolonia (*Il.* 10.218-52) seems to be, retrospectively, a precedent for the engagement of Ulysses and Diomedes in the nocturnal expedition at Troy. If we read Homer after Statius, we may rebuild a kind of psychological coherence between the two different images of Ulysses, the reluctant hero of *Achilleid* 1 and the daring one of *Iliad* 10 (doesn’t hesitate to volunteer because previously successful)

Homeric?

- proem claims will go beyond events in *Iliad*.
- engagement with *Iliad* in way events foreshadowed (e.g. Sperchios *Ach.* 2.143-53 and Scamander)

also themes (bestial/divine/human)

Achilles as a lion in both (*Il.* x 5; *Ach.* 1.858-63 with McNelis, C. ‘Similes and gender in the *Achilleid*, in *Brill’s Companion to Statius*, 2015: 204)

(though lion motif possibly looks to Alexander the Great: see Barchiesi, A. (2021) ‘Di Achille, Alessandro Magno, e tirsi in abbondanza (Stazio, *Achilleide* 1, 150–1; 615–8; 855–6’, in S. Beta, and S. Romani (edd.) *Tirsi per Dioniso: A Giulio Guidorizzi*, Alessandria: 17–22

anger (but more key in *Iliad*)

Homeric?



absence from war (Hom. *Iliad* 1.169ff.> Book 18)

Homeric catalogue drawn on (Parkes 2008)

language e.g. *Iliad* uses patronymic for Achilles

Hinds (1998: 96) for Thetis' supplication of Neptune as “prequel” to her supplication of Zeus in *Iliad* 1



Homeric?

- at times there is a plot “fit” between *Iliad* and *Achilleid*

(e.g. *Iliad*.19.326-7 Achilles unsure if son Neptolemus, on Scyros, is alive; *Il.* 18.429-35 Thetis unhappy about marriage)

but also contradiction e.g. *Il.* 24.59-62 Hera claims to have arranged marriage (though hints of alternative tradition): in *Ach.*, Jupiter didn't want greater son

Homeric?

- pointed contradiction in plot details?

nb *Il* 9.667-8 slave-girl taken as booty when sacked Scyros.

BUT evoked as suppressed alternative tradition at *Ach.* 1.657-60:

“As for your father—Scyros shall lie razed by fire and sword and these walls be overturned and pass into swollen tempests before you shall expiate my nuptials by a cruel death. Not so in all things shall I obey my mother” (Achilles after rape)

Homeric?



“This is an example of an alternative mythical tradition at the very moment when he rules it out and chooses to follow a different version” (Heslin 2016. ‘Ovid’s Cynus and Homer’s Achilles Heel’ in *Repeat Performances: Ovidian repetition and the Metamorphoses* ed. Fulkerson and Stover, 91)

NB One myth has him visit Scyros x 2 (once in disguise; once to take city)



Styx

“It is self-evident that Thetis’ efforts to make her son immortal are a non-Homeric element included by Statius, but we can now see that this is a squarely anti-Homeric aspect of the narrative, insofar as a partially invulnerable Achilles would seriously undermine the seriousness of his heroism. Much speculation about the potential future trajectory of the *Achilleid* tends to assume that non-Homeric erotic episodes would be mixed with traditionally Homeric battle scenes in some proportion or other (see Heslin 2005: 83-86).

But if the allusions to the dipping in the Styx are also allusions to Ovid and to the link between Achilles and Cycnus, then we can contemplate the possibility that the battle scenes could, potentially, owe as much to Ovid’s essentially unserious Cycnus episode as to the *Iliad*.” (Heslin 2016: 94)

Homeric?

- focus on relationship with mother, more than in *Iliad* (though “in the *Iliad* ... he has an extremely close relationship with Thetis that emphasizes his position as a child (e.g. *Iliad*. 1.362, 1.414, 18.73)” (McNelis, C. ‘Similes and gender in the *Achilleid*, in *Brill’s Companion to Statius*, 2015: 192))

Homeric?

- more interest in gender (biological or culturally determined?) than Homer (Roman preoccupation with *vir?*), but nb potential to read Homeric Achilles in more feminine way?

“as Plato and other ancient critics noted, he continues to exhibit feminine behaviour even at Troy. The Platonic Socrates criticizes Achilles for weeping over Patroclus like a woman (Pl. *Resp.* 387e-388e; cf. 605D9-e1), and he also argues that fouling the body of an enemy by dragging it in the dust reflect a womanish mind (469d6-e2).” (McNelis 204)

McNelis argues his discussion of similes show masculine and feminine coexist not just at Troy but earliest moments of his development

Homeric?

- Achilles singing “deeds of men” when entertaining mother (but Heslin 2005: 93 on Achilles’ Alexandrianising tastes)
- also Catullus 64, which itself had the *Iliad* as an intertext (fleet-footed > Cat. 64.341 *flammea praevertet celeris vestigia cervae*: cf. *Ach.* 2.110ff with Hinds)

Ach. 2.32 *vastator* “conqueror” cf. Cat. 64.346 *vastabit* “he will conquer”

Neptune’s prophecy *Ach.* 1.84-9

See Mendelsohn 1990 ‘Empty Nest, Abandoned Cave: Maternal Anxiety in *Achilleid* I’, *Classical Antiquity* 9: 295-308; Ganiban 2015 ‘The Beginnings of the *Achilleid*’ in *Brill's Companion to Statius* (e.g. on Thetis in water); Hinds 1998

Intertexts: Ovid

- also Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (cf. e.g. *Ach.* 1.7 “deducere” with *Met.* 1.4 “deducite”, spin out). Some critics are uneasy with seeing it as Ovidian poem and dismiss as a digressive, prelude e.g. Cameron 2009 argues it wouldn't have carried on like that:

“I see no reason to believe that it was the *Metamorphoses* rather than the *Iliad* or *Aeneid* that he was hoping to rival- as indeed the evocation of Homer in the proem implies” (Cameron 2009:22)

See Heslin in reply, noting problematic assumption that dark moments are Homeric rather than Ovidian (some dark scenes like rape are very Ovidian)

Intertexts: Ovid also

Proem has Homeric (dragging corpse) and Ovidian allusions: see Heslin 2016: 92-3; first word *magnanimus* “great-hearted” is Homeric (*megathumos*) and Ovidian: *Met.* 13.299

Ovidian: stories that Homer didn’t cover include Odysseus’ trick to reveal Achilles (*Met.* 13.162-70: Odysseus’ defence)

Aims?

“The fact that these models would seem to be so fundamentally incompatible is part of its teasing appeal” (Heslin 2016: 93)

- Horace *Ars Poetica* 121 (on appropriate writing): Achilles must be “energetic, hot-tempered, relentless, fierce” (*impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer*) (Rosati’s Italian 1994 edition saw more “humane”, less martial Achilles in Statius)
- What is going on? provocative take on canon? Countering male poetic voice of Homer?