

Statius *Achilleid*: upbringing

“Here are no darts that have tasted human blood, no ash trees fractured in festive combats, nor mixing bowls shattered upon kindred foes, but innocent quivers and empty hides of wild beasts—these too of his salad days. For at this time unarmed his only labour was to know herbs that bring health to living things in doubtful case or to limn with his lyre the heroes of old for his pupil.” (*Ach.* 1.112-18, Chiron’s cave)

“I go not to alarm you further, but I shall tell the truth. His precocious force is brewing something big (my father’s omens do not deceive me), going beyond his scanty years. Once he would bear threats and eagerly hear commands, nor go far from my cave. Now Ossa does not contain him, nor huge Pelion, nor Pharsalian snows. The Centaurs themselves often complain to me of plundered homes and cattle carried off before their eyes and themselves driven from fields and rivers. They prepare ambush and war and make angry threats. In time gone by, when the pine of Thessaly carried Argo’s kings this way, I saw youthful Alcides and Theseus—but I am mum.” (Chiron to Thetis, *Ach.* 1.146-58)

“Willingly he [Achilles] sings mighty seeds of glory: how many commands of his proud stepdame Amphitryon’s son accomplished, with what a glove Pollux crushed cruel Bebryx, with how strong a grip the son of Aegeus encircled and broke the limbs of Minos’ bull, and finally his mother’s marriage bed and Pelion weighed down by the High Ones. Here Thetis’ anxious countenance yielded in a smile. Night draws to slumber. The huge Centaur collapses on stone and Achilles fondly twines himself about his shoulders, though his faithful mother is there, preferring the familiar bosom.” (*Ach.* 1.188-97)

“Achilles’ name they love, only Achilles demand against Hector, speak only of him as the doom of Teucrians and Priam. For who but he down in Haemonia’s valley grew up crawling in hollowed snow? Whose raw rudiments and tender years did the Centaur undertake and shape from birth?” (*Ach.* 1.473-9 (Greeks))

“Now he shows her the familiar lyre’s sweet strings, the slender measures and Chiron’s songs, guiding her hand and making her fingers strike the sounding instrument. Now he seizes her lips as she sings and twines embraces and praises her in a thousand kisses. Willingly she learns what peak is Pelion, who is Aeacides, wondering and wondering at the boy’s name and deeds as she hears them, and sings of Achilles to his face.” (*Ach.* 1.573-9 (disguised Achilles to Deidamia))

(after Achilles sees wife and son as he departs) “The hero son of Laërtes perceives his sorrow and essays to turn him with gentle speech: ‘Destined sacker of great Troy, demanded of the Danaan fleet and the oracles of the gods, awaited by War standing tall at his unbarred threshold, did your crafty mother defile you with woman’s apparel and commit so grand a cheat to that hiding place and hope the secret would be kept? Too fearful she, too much a mother! Was such valour to lie torpid in silent shade? Trumpet blast scarce heard, it fled Thetis and companions and passion suppressed. ’Tis not our doing that you come to arms and follow our entreaties. You would have come.’ Aeacus’ hero scion puts in: ‘’Twere long to set out the causes of my tarrying and my mother’s crime. By this sword shall Scyros and the unseemly habit be excused, reproach of destiny.” (*Ach.* 2.30-44)