

Declamation



Homer and rhetoric



Homer read in schools and could be viewed as rhetoric:

“[Homer] is the most eminent not only in the virtue of poetry but also in oratory. Not to mention his laudations, exhortations and consolations: does not the ninth book, which contains the embassy sent to Achilles, or the first in which the struggle between the leaders is described, or the second where opinions are delivered, explain all the arts of quarrelling and counselling?” (Quintilian 10.1.47)



Homer and rhetoric



“Quintilian stresses the passage referring to Achilles and the embassy from *Iliad* 9 as an important source for learning rhetoric, which is a plausible indication that it was discussed and used at schools.” (BJÖRK, M. 2016. *Ovid's Heroides and the Ethopoeia*. Diss: 61)

Rhetorical exercises could be drawn from Homer.

Achilles a popular figure in character-exercises for pupils

“The subjects of Libanius’ ethopoeiae include tragic themes, like Ajax or Medea, which weave quotations from the source text into a new speech, and feature variations of mythological subjects like the words of Chiron on hearing that Achilles was hidden among girls on Skyros. The process of composing an ethopoeia..., involved a combination of listening to models (drawn from classical literature or written by the teacher), reading out loud, and active imitation: students had to think themselves into their mythological role and situation.” (Greensmith 2017: 34, Cambridge diss, *Homer in the Perfect Tense*) (Libanius writing in Greek C4th CE, in Eastern Roman Empire)



Homer and rhetoric

Ach. 1.272-4 (Thetis trying to persuade Achilles to put on female clothing) “What purpose is in your eyes? Are you ashamed to soften in this dress? I swear to you, dear boy, by my kindred sea, Chiron shall not know of this”

“The audience members’ awareness of the declamatory curriculum means that they would likely be expected to notice when a popular theme has been deliberately deferred in Flavian epic. When Statius’ Thetis attempts to allay her son’s resentment at having to wear women’s clothes, for example, she appeals to his beloved teacher’s ignorance: ‘Are you ashamed to soften in this dress? I swear to you, dear boy, by my kindred sea, Chiron shall not know of this.’^[n40] According to the fourth-century rhetorical teacher Libanius, however, Chiron evidently did find out what had happened to his favourite student and had something to say about it. An ethopoeia from Libanius’ *Progymnasmata* provides a model answer to the question: “What words word Chiron say upon hearing that Achilles was in the women’s” (Bernstein 2013: 150)

>Statius avoids material found in the ethopoeic tradition about Chiron’s potential response to Achilles’ stay amongst women and hence actively plays with readerly expectations.

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Declamation part of educative practice in Greece and Rome for centuries

NB *suasoriae* of the Elder Seneca urging Alexander to travel across Ocean (*Suas.* 1) or to enter Babylon (*Suas.* 4)

Achilles:

Webb, R. 2006. 'Rhetorical and theatrical fictions in the Works of Chorikios of Gaza.' in *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity: Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism* ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (on Chorikios of Gaza, 5th/6th C AD)



Declamation



General/specific purpose? Thinking through dilemmas, government, how to address leaders; argumentation

Alexander's appearance in declamation: linked to issues of e.g. power/ (imperial) ambition /mortal achievement.



Juvenal



“Off you go, you maniac [Hannibal], zoom through the hostile Alps—to entertain schoolboys and **to be put into their speeches.**

One world is not enough for the young man from Pella. In discontent he seethes at the narrow limits of the universe as if confined on the rocks of Gyara or tiny Seriphus. But once he’s entered the city that’s fortified by potters, his coffin will be big enough. It’s only death that reveals the minuscule size of human bodies.” (Juvenal *Satires* 10.166-73)

