HOMER AND THE GOOD RULER

The Reception of Homeric Epic as Princes' Mirror through the Ages

20-22 May 2015, University of Ghent

Invited speakers

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Venue: KANTL, Koningstraat 18, GHENT
Admission: € 25,-

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Homer and the Good Ruler:  
the Reception of Homeric Epic as Princes’ Mirror through the Ages  
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Wednesday 20 May

9.00-9.30  Registration

Chair: Kristoffel Demoen, University of Ghent

9.30-9.45  Welcome

9.45-10.30  The Birth of the Prince’s Mirror in Homer  
Irene de Jong, University of Amsterdam

10.30-11.15  Zeus’s Politics in the Iliad  
Jenny Strauss Clay, University of Virginia

11.15-11.45  Coffee break

11.45-12.30  Educating Kings through Travel: the Wanderings of Odysseus as an Exemplum  
Maria Gerolemou, University of Cyprus

12.30-13.15  Plato’s Homer as ‘the Educator of Hellas’  
Patrick Lake, The Hill School

13.15-14.15  Lunch break

Chair: Tine Scheijnen, University of Ghent

14.15-15.00  Kallimachos on Homer’s Best King  
Michael Brumbaugh, Tulane University

15.00-15.45  Philodemus on a Ruler’s Management of Reputation  
Jeffrey Fish, Baylor University

15.45-16.15  Tea break

16.15-17.00  Eumaeus, Evander and Augustus: Homeric Humbleness and the Good Ruler in Dionysius and Virgil  
Casper de Jonge, Leiden University

17.00-17.45  Homeric Ideals vs. Roman Realities? Tyranny, Autocracy and the Reception of Homer in Silius Italicus’ Punica  
Elina Pyy, University of Helsinki
Thursday 21 May

Chair: Marco Formisano, University of Ghent

9.00-9.45 Between Mortals and Gods: the Piety of the Homeric King
William Desmond, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

9.45-10.30 A Speaker of Words and Doer of Deeds. The Cultural Reception of
Phoenix’ Words
Jacqueline Klooster, University of Ghent / University of Groningen

10.30-11.15 Speaking Homer to Power: Anecdotes of Greek Intellectuals and their
Rulers in Plutarch’s Symposia
David Driscoll, Stanford University

11.15-11.45 Coffee break

11.45-12.30 Dio Chrysostom’s Second Kingship Oration: Homeric Exegesis and
Narrative Dialogue
Lawrence Kim, Trinity University

12.30-13.15 The Problem with Agamemnon: Conflicting Political Qualities in the
Homer Questions
Elsa Bouchard, University of Montreal

13.15-14.15 Lunch break

Chair: Koen De Temmerman, University of Ghent

14.15-15.00 Age and Ambition: Maximus of Tyre, the Homeric Heroes and Elite
Political Philosophy
Jeroen Lauwers, Catholic University of Leuven

15.00-15.45 Constantine in Homeric Fashion. Homeric Themes and Echoes in
Eusebius’ Vita Constantini
Michele Lucchesi, Theology Faculty of Turin

15.45-16.15 Tea break

16.15-17.00 Homer in the ‘Age of Rhetorie’: Eustathios of Thessalonike on
Excellent Oratory
Baukje van den Berg, University of Amsterdam

17.00-17.45 ‘Impeccably Hellenic Garb’? Homeric Panegyrist in Twelfth Century
Byzantium
Eric Cullhed, Uppsala University

Friday 22 May

Chair: Luc van der Stockt, Catholic University of Leuven

9.00-9.45  On the Good Ruler according to Homer: a Sixteenth-century Treatise by Christophoros Kondoleon Filippomaria Pontani, Ca’Foscari University Venice

9.45-10.30  Machiavelli’s Homer: Memory, the Ethics of Emulation and the Prince Zina Giannopoulou, University of California Irvine

10.30-11.00  Coffee break

11.00-11.45  The Iliad as Prince’s Mirror in George Chapman’s Seaven Bookes of the Iliades and Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida Seth Schein, University of California, Davis

11.45-12.30  ‘Within the Walls of the New Illyria’: the Homeric Mirror for Princes in Albanian Dissident Poetry under Communism Adam Goldwyn, North Dakota State University

12.30-12.45  Concluding remarks

12.45-13.15  Lunch break
The Birth of the Prince’s Mirror in Homer
Irene de Jong, University of Amsterdam

Numerous Homeric characters in the course of time have been interpreted as prince’s mirrors (especially Achilles and Odysseus), and this phenomenon is part of the larger trend in antiquity to consider Homer ‘the educator of the Greeks’ (Verdenius 1970) in all aspects of human life. It can be asked whether such an educational reception always tallies with Homer’s own intentions. In the case of Homeric characters functioning as models, however, there seems to be positive evidence that Homer may have intended this. This can be deduced from the way in which he himself makes his characters hold up/look at persons as models.

Such paradigmatic stories have been amply studied in Homeric scholarship and my paper will mainly have an introductory character. I will offer an overview of the various types of characters which function as prince’s mirror (fathers: Tydeus, Peleus, Menoetius, Odysseus; a younger self: Nestor; and heroes or heroines from the past: Meleager, Niobe, Orestes), and distil from their presentation in the text and from the interpretations by scholars those aspects that are most pertinent to their role as prince’s mirror. Discussion of these miniature prince’s mirrors within the Homeric epics may thus offer a fruitful springboard for the ‘mirror’ readings of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* themselves by later generations, which are the topic of this conference.

W.J. Verdenius, *Homer, the Educator of the Greeks*, Amsterdam 1970
C.P. Vetten, *Das mythische Vorbild in der Ilias*, diss. Bonn 1990
Zeus’s Politics in the Iliad
Jenny Strauss Clay, University of Virginia

‘Zeus’s Politics’ will focus on Zeus’s leadership in his interactions with the other gods in the Iliad. It will examine how the Olympian integrates his immediate and long term goals, how he manages to accomplish those goals in the face of opposition, how he deals with dissent and ‘public opinion’, and, finally, how he uses or threatens the use of force. I will also show how the poem offers both negative and positive examples of leadership through comparisons with the mortal leadership of Agamemnon and, to a lesser extent, Odysseus.
**Educating Kings through Travel: the Wanderings of Odysseus as an Exemplum**

Maria Gerolemou, University of Cyprus

In contrast to the tradition represented for example by the *Cypria* displaying Odysseus using *dolos* in order to avoid travelling away from home to Troy, the *Homeric Epics* and especially the *Odyssey* stress the importance of the journey of the ruler as a vital component of his hegemony: traveling functions as a means for the king to obtain prestige and political power since it enables the ruler to gather wealth, to build relationships with third parties via hosting network and to gain fame (*Od. 4. 78ff.*).

It is however less well-recognized that travelling also seems to contain an educational capacity that is crucial for the formation of kingship.\(^1\) This is best summarized in the figure of Odysseus and his travel endeavours.

In my paper, I propose to study Odysseus’ wanderings: first, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus as the one who gained knowledge through his travels (1.3, *πολλῶν δ’ ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω*), in comparison with the *ex negativo* example of the suitors who stay at home in Ithaca. He becomes the benefactor, fair and gentle king with rhetorical skills, which are used not to deceive but to help the community to resolve disputes through dialogue (8. 143ff.).

In the second part, I shall examine the importance of the motif of the *πολυπλαχθής* king as this is rediscovered in the Hellenistic period. In this period, the notion of travelling is essential as an advertisement tool of the universally beneficial output of the king (cf. Alexander the Great). However, it seems that at the same time it is employed in order to prove the necessity of spatial orientation as an essential parameter of a good rulership.\(^2\) Thus, Polybius recognizes Odysseus as τὸν ἡγεμονικῶτατον ἄνδρα (9.16.1) due to his wanderings (12.27.10). Strabo in emphasizing the benefits of geography for rulers also uses the Odyssean wanderings as an *exemplum* (1.1.19). Finally, the scientific benefit from the ruler’s voyage as depicted in the persona of Odysseus is also confirmed by Heraclitus in his Homeric *Allegoriae* (70-3) and by Ps.-Scymnus in his *Ad Nicomedem regem*.\(^3\)

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1. Cf. also travelling as a *Reifeprozess* for young leaders e.g. Achilles and Telemachus.
2. The paper is not interested in the philosophical output of the Odyssean wanderings.
3. Cf. same in Lycophron’s *Alexandra* 1242-5.
Plato’s Homer as ‘the Educator of Hellas’
Patrick Lake, The Hill School

Socrates famously refers to Homer in Book 10 of the Republic as ‘the educator of Hellas’ (Rep. 10.606e2-3). The context in which these words appear, however, is seldom noted. Socrates is advising Glaucon to pity, in effect, those who value Homer too highly, those who uncritically accept Homer as their guide in life. He urges Glaucon to ‘welcome these people and treat them as friends, since they’re as good as they’re capable of being’ (Rep. 10.607a1-2).

In this paper, we shall examine how Plato’s Socrates dramatizes how easy it is to derive incorrect positions on the most important matters, specifically justice, if one blindly accepts the authority and sophia of Homer rather than actively engaging the poet in philosophical dialogue. At Rep. 1.334b3-5, Homer appears for the first time in the Republic. Here Socrates argues that the poet, given his praise of Autolycus (Od. 19.395-6), must have viewed justice as ‘some sort of craft of stealing, one that benefits friends and harms enemies.’ Now, Socrates is being somewhat playful here in deriving such an extreme position from a quotation taken out of context, and indeed he more or less acquits Homer of this base view shortly thereafter at Rep. 1.336a5-7. But, as usual, Socrates’ play has a serious purpose. Socrates means to demonstrate to his interlocutor Polemarchus (and Plato to his reader) the ease with which Homer’s words may be misinterpreted. The larger point is that Homer is ill-suited to guide the state’s production of wise and good leaders, if his poetry is not consumed in a philosophical way: interpreted, in some case revised or even censored, so that it supports philosophical aims, values, and positions.

The paper will conclude with a discussion on how Plato carries out his ‘philosophical revision’ of Homer to make him a suitable ally of philosophy in the training of philosopher kings. We will examine some specific quotations of the poet to see how Plato models for his reader the appropriate use and interpretation of Homeric poetry (e. g. Rep. 2.263b4-c2 on Od. 19.109, 111-114, et al.).
Philodemos’ first century CE treatment of Homeric political thought is among the most exciting texts dealing with kingship theory to survive from the Hellenistic period. In addition to providing a window onto contemporary political thought, it also demonstrates a way in which one ancient reader of Homer interpreted the political dimensions of the epics as having relevance to contemporary affairs and thus lends credence to the spirit, if not the veracity, of the anecdote about Alexander the Great’s affinity for the Iliad (Plut. Alex. 8.2). In his Hymns Kallimachos anticipates Philodemos, engaging with Homeric epic in an effort to open up a discourse on power and kingship that stretches back to the origins of the Greek literary tradition.

Kallimachos’ first hymn praises Zeus as the ideal instantiation of the good king whose kingship serves as a model for all mortal rulers, including Ptolemy, to imitate. Stressing the importance of both force and intellect in Zeus’ kingship, Kallimachos derides the myth of the lottery told by ancient poets on the grounds that it would be foolish to leave the partition of the kosmos up to chance when one has the capacity to take the choicest realm by force. The poet explains that as Zeus was neither foolish nor lacking in capacity it is not likely (eikos) that he came to power in this way. What Kallimachos leaves implicit is the relationship, highlighted by numerous verbal echoes, between this claim and the dissent voiced by Poseidon in Iliad 15, the locus classicus for the lottery myth. This intertext allows the hellenistic poet to leverage Homeric political thought and thereby take considerably wider latitude to engage in a discourse on kingship than would have otherwise been available within the encomiastic constraints of the hymn. My paper examines this instance of Mythenkorrekturen in the Hymn to Zeus and argues that it serves not as a rebuke to Homer, but rather a jumping off point for a discussion between poets across the literary tradition about the origins and nature of Zeus’ political regime.
Philodemus on a Ruler’s Management of Reputation
Jeffrey Fish, Baylor University

In this paper I present a new reconstruction of a column of Philodemus’ *On the Good King According to Homer* (col. 41 Dorandi = 96 Fish). In the column, Philodemus presents practical advice for his addressee, Calpurnius Piso, on ways of cultivating a good reputation. In addition to providing a corrective to Homeric glory seeking, which I suggest is directly relevant to Virgil’s characterization of Aeneas, Philodemus shows how important it is for a ruler to have the right spokespersons. He illustrates this principle with examples of Odysseus and Telemachus cultivating bards and prophets in the *Odyssey*, not because such figures are ‘trustworthy’ (a misreading on the part of former editors) but simply because they are ‘trusted’ by people and should therefore be won over as supporters. Here as in many places the treatise shows itself to be an important source ancient readings of the *Odyssey* in particular. New readings have shown that Oswyn Murray was very likely correct in reading some of the column as being self-referential, i.e. Philodemus presenting himself as a viable spokesman for Piso. This scenario would fit well with a body of recent research (e.g. David Braund) which has argued on the basis of other passages that the treatise was presented to Piso during his governorship of Macedon.
The Augustan critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus cites many passages from Homer in his treatise *On Composition*. His favourite examples of beautiful word arrangement (*sunthesis*) include those scenes in the *Odyssey* that portray the swineherd Eumaeus hosting Odysseus in his modest dwelling. The passage in which the two characters are preparing a simple breakfast (*Od. 16.1-16*) is cited as an example of enchanting composition (*Comp. 3.8*). Dionysius observes that these ‘minor happenings of everyday life’ are in striking contrast with the sublime composition of the Homeric lines. This paper will argue that Dionysius’ interest in the humble character of Eumaeus has a moral dimension, which resonates with the literary, cultural and political discourse of Augustan Rome.

The obvious parallel for the character of Eumaeus in Latin epic is king Evander, the legendary founder and good ruler of Pallantium. In Virgil’s *Aeneid* book 8, composed when Dionysius of Halicarnassus was active in Rome, Evander invites Aeneas in his humble house on the Palatine, which recalls Eumaeus’ hut in Ithaca. Interestingly, king Evander also plays a central role in Dionysius’ *History of Early Rome*. Like Virgil, Dionysius contrasts the humble beginnings of Rome with the glorious age of Augustus.

The audiences of both Dionysius and Virgil may well have seen a link between Evander’s hut on the Palatine and Augustus’ dwelling on the same hill. The modest proportions of the emperor’s house were regarded as typical for his temperate lifestyle, as we learn from Suetonius. In drawing a line between Eumaeus, Evander and Augustus, this paper will suggest that the reception of Homer’s *Odyssey* in Augustan Rome has a direct relevance to the presentation and perception of Augustus’ leadership. The ideal of a humble lifestyle connects Greek literary criticism, Latin epic poetry and the self-fashioning of Augustus as a good and modest ruler.
Homeric Ideals vs. Roman Realities?

Tyranny, Autocracy and the Reception of Homer in Silius Italicus’ *Punica*

Elina Pyy, University of Helsinki

In studies of ancient epic, Roman epics of the Flavian period have usually been examined in the light of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Although Virgil’s role in the continuum of ancient epic cannot be underestimated, the Roman epics of the late first century also reflect the Homeric style more directly than has usually been observed.

The question of good governance has a central place in Silius Italicus’ *Punica*. This Flavian epic has a strong contemporary tone; through a depiction of the past, Silius discusses issues that were current in his own days. In particular, he addresses the problem of autocracy and leadership, reflecting the anxieties of the High Empire. Silius exploits the reader’s familiarity with the problematic Homeric heroes to create a series of Roman leaders that steer the narrative. The ultimate example of a Roman ruler is young Scipio Africanus, whose character is throughout the *Punica* assessed in terms of Homeric *exempla*. Silius pays homage to Homer’s moral code, but implies that the imperial leadership requires different standards of virtue than the legendary heroic past. While Silius’ Scipio occasionally exceeds in virtue his Homeric paragons, he also embodies many characteristically ‘Roman’ weaknesses – imperial greed and the drive for civil strife – that the poet stresses by comparing them with the Homeric *exempla*. In my paper, I examine Silius’ use of Homer in his discussion of leadership in the *Punica*. I indicate how the moral overtones of the poem are designed to be read in respect of the *Iliad* – and as a pointed critique of the poet’s contemporary society. Thus, the *Punica* reveals the continuity of the appropriations of Homer in Roman poetry. It exploits the Homeric ideas concerning good governance, and shapes them to respond to the needs of the Flavian period.
Between Mortals and Gods: the Piety of the Homeric King
William Desmond, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

A common function of the king is to lead a community’s religious life, and in the specific context of Greek polytheism, this primarily ensured that the king was often the leader of the community’s sacrifices. This is true too of Homeric figures such as Agamemnon, Achilles, and Nestor: many passages in the Iliad and Odyssey may have inspired Aristotle to generalize that the heroic, Homeric kings were ‘lords of the sacrifices’ (Pol. 1285b9-11), as well as generals and judges. There are other ways in which the Homeric king mediated between human and divine realms, and while not a priest, prophet or bard, he was expected to respect their independent expertise, and in exceptional cases, might appropriate their religious authority under his own, more encompassing power. Indeed, through the outstanding figures of Achilles and Odysseus, the poet seems to insist that the ideal leader is almost defined by a decisive, personal relationship with the divine. While this does not amount to a generalizing praise of ‘piety’ as the most important kingly ‘virtue,’ there is much material in the Homeric poems that parallels and anticipates this most prominent theme of the ‘Mirror of Princes’ genre. More particularly, there is much in Homer’s Achilles, ‘best of the Achaeans,’ that inspired two ardent readers of Homer—Alexander and Julian—in their own kingly practice as mediators between mortals and gods.
A Speaker of Words and Doer of Deeds. The Cultural Reception of Phoenix’ Words
Jacqueline Klooster, University of Ghent / University of Groningen

This paper traces the cultural reception of the Homeric phrase ‘to be a speaker of words and a
doer of deeds’ (the educational ideal expressed by the elderly Phoenix with regard to his pupil
Achilles, Il. 9. 389-90) from the contemporary context until the fourth century AD. After
briefly reviewing the attitude towards speaking and action in the epic itself, I turn to the
Homeric scholia, where the phrase is identified with the male virtues tout court, and the
question whether they can be taught is posed. Phoenix’ words are also picked up in more
specific contexts, remarkably often in the context of Alexander the Great (in Plutarch and Dio
Chrysostom), but of course in treatises about statecraft (Plutarch) and rhetorical treatises as
well, particularly in cases where a defence of rhetoric is needed (Aelius Aristides, Against
Plato about Rhetoric). The combination of words and deeds becomes shorthand for ‘the
complete—and completely virtuous—ruler’, i.e. the philosopher king.

Finally I discuss how the phrase turns up repeatedly in the context of panegyrics, in particular
the ones addressed to the Christian emperor Theodosius by the fourth century orator
Themistius, a fact that demonstrates that the old Homeric idea of the hero who was both a
forceful speaker (or ‘man of letters and philosophy’, as it was notably interpreted in later eras)
and a successful man of war retained currency in thinking about an ideal imperial profile to
that era. The image of Alexander the Great played an important intermediary role in this; the
panegyrist who identified himself with the Homeric Phoenix, by citing his words, had the
added benefit of complimenting his addressee as an Achilles and Alexander in one.
This paper argues that a Second Sophistic anecdotal tradition where Greeks quote canonical poetry to rulers serves to assure Greek intellectuals of the value of their paideia.

Orations where Greek philosophers speak to rulers assure their audiences that paideia is essential for good rule (esp. Whitmarsh 2001 on Dio’s Kingship Orations). Typically in these orations, the ruler himself must possess paideia, including expert knowledge of Greek poetry. I highlight, however, the existence of a genre of anecdotes that separate political power from paideia, found particularly in Plutarch’s sympotic works and Athenaeus. In contrast to Dio’s orations, where political and cultural power are combined in the ruler, in these anecdotes educated intellectuals quote poetry to rulers to produce real-world effects.

To assess the social value of these anecdotes, I analyze a hotbed of them in action, namely Plutarch’s Quaestiones Convivales 9.1.736F-737C, where Athenian teachers recount to one another a series of these anecdotes. In these, poetic quotation stops Alexander’s abusive behavior at a symposium and wins freedom for a slave’s family during Mummius’ sack of Corinth, among other things. I argue that these anecdotes assert the power of paideia as a political tool, such that rulers can be subdued or persuaded by it, and are especially at home in this particular symposium, which consists solely of middling elites whose only claim to power is their cultural capital.

The distinctiveness and exceptionality of this hotbed is suggested by the relative absence of such anecdotes in the remainder of Plutarch’s work, where characters generally avoid such anecdotes. If the Quaestiones Convivales show how the ideal symposium should operate through positive and negative exempla (Klotz 2007, König 2012), a good Plutarchan symposist could regard the anecdotes of 9.1 as too vainglorious.

Dio Chrysostom’s *Second Kingship Oration*: Homeric Exegesis and Narrative Dialogue

Lawrence Kim, Trinity University

Dio Chrysostom’s *Second Kingship Oration* (*Or. 2*) is a dialogue (albeit one introduced, concluded, and once interrupted by an anonymous narrator), between Philip II and a teenage Alexander, set sometime in the early 330s BCE. Their discussion is ‘about Homer…and about kingship’ (*Or. 2.1*), topics upon which Alexander expounds at length, while Philip plays the role of gentle devil’s advocate. As with Dio’s other *Kingship Orations*, the *Second* is assumed by most scholars to have been delivered to Trajan; appropriately enough, given the historical emperor’s penchant for Homer and Alexander. The dialogue has not suffered from scholarly neglect, and although the bulk of research has focused on its political, or, ‘kingship’ aspects (especially with regard to Trajan: Desideri 1978; Jones 1978; Moles 1990, 337-50; Whitmarsh 2001, 200-4; Sidebottom 2006; Gangloff 2009, 2011), there have been several good treatments of Dio’s Homeric interpretation and his depiction of Alexander as Homeric critic (Berardi 1997; Fornaro 2003; Gangloff 2006, 260-4). One curious ‘Homeric’ section of the work, however, has received relatively little attention: paragraphs 34-54, where Alexander discusses Homer’s ‘teaching’ on the proper home décor, diet, and dress for kings. In this paper, by comparing this section with similar material in the first book of Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophists* Book I (derived from Hellenistic critics), I show how Dio has adapted, somewhat incongruously, Homeric scholarship on heroic lifestyle to a new context—that of kingship—and how this changes our understanding of Alexander’s portrayal in the dialogue. I conclude with some remarks on two other problematic aspects of this speech: the circumstances of its performance, and its relation to other works by Dio that approach Homer in a similar way: *On Homer and Socrates* (*Or. 55*), *Agamemnon* (*Or. 56*), and *Nestor* (*Or. 57*).


Greek philosophers no less than other ancient readers have looked upon the work of Homer and found in it both models and anti-models of political prudence. Agamemnon is obviously a frequent topic in their discussions, not only because of his prominent position in the *Iliad* but also on account of his problematic character: this piquant Homeric figure is neither altogether wicked nor perfectly commendable, and this fallibility is repeatedly manifested in his role as leader of the Trojan expedition.

In this paper I want to explore the ambiguous features of the Homeric Agamemnon as they are delineated in the ancient tradition of literary *problèmes*. Most of the evidence for this tradition is preserved in the Homeric *scholia*, which notably contain the bulk of our fragments of Porphyry’s *Homeric Questions* – the latter being heavily dependent on Aristotle’s own treatise of the same name. These works obviously gave pride of place to problems of political and tactical nature. As it happens, Porphyry had composed a treatise *On the usefulness of Homer for kings* in ten books (cf. Suda s.v. Porphyry), while Aristotle’s ethical and political works make numerous references to Homer. In the context of Homeric *problèmes*, the questions surrounding Agamemnon center on two major aspects: his aptitude as a general and his moral character. As king and leader of the Greek army, Agamemnon sometimes benefits from a quasi-unconditional approval which is evinced by the ancient readers’ efforts to give a rationale to his behavior and to provide apologetic accounts when needed. This tendency is narrowly related to the epic association of kingship with divinity, which is stressed by Homer himself (in his comparison between Zeus and Agamemnon) and taken up by literary critics. But in certain contexts Agamemnon’s character traits are also submitted to an ethical evaluation from which he does not systematically come out blameless. It is no coincidence that this tension between political authority and moral weakness, which seems to summarize adequately the ancient reception of Homer’s Agamemnon, is in fact a central preoccupation in the ancient philosophical discourse on civic education.
Age and Ambition: Maximus of Tyre, the Homeric Heroes and Elite Political Philosophy
Jeroen Lauwers, Catholic University of Leuven

A relatively understudied figure from the Imperial era is the second-century philosophical orator Maximus of Tyre. Studying him in the context of this conference is particularly apt, as he reserves a very important place for Homer in his philosophical system and seems to instruct a young upper-class audience in search of basic philosophical instruction.

I wish to explore how Homer’s example is turned into concrete advice concerning the relation between the active and the contemplative life on the one hand, and the young and the old age on the other. In Maximus’ fifteenth and sixteenth oration, the author discusses both sides of the dilemma whether the active or the contemplative is preferable, eventually reaching the conclusion that each age has its proper course of action.

Pseudo-Longinus already pointed out how Homer himself illustrates the evolution from young to old age in his shift of interest from the war episodes in the Iliad to the more restrained story-telling in the Odyssey. Maximus’ interpretation does not depart from Homer’s biography as much as from his literary characters. We receive references to Achilles, Nestor, and Odysseus, corroborating the overall thesis that there is a certain kairos for an active or contemplative life.

The issue of old age and activity is not without its parallels in Imperial literature. In the essay An seni, Plutarch ascertains, with a peculiar interpretation of the figure of Nestor, that older men should remain somewhat active in public, if only because they have shrugged off the pernicious temper that characterizes the young guns in politics. Maximus’ and Plutarch’s discourse seem to fulfil a self-legitimating function, in that the – probably – older speaking philosopher instructs the younger ones to display political responsibility. Their texts also seem to interact with the political reality of the Roman Empire. Through their reception in influential circles of the Roman Empire, discourses like that of Maximus and Plutarch, themselves influenced by Homeric poetry, may have been a source of inspiration for the Emperors’ philosophical self-fashioning in the Antonine period.
In Late Antiquity, the Homeric poems were viewed as extremely important sources of ethical principles and human wisdom, to which Christian authors too could refer so as to support their theological and philosophical theories. In particular, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* offered positive and negative examples of kings’ behaviour, which constituted a paradigm for Christian rulers. In my paper, I would like to explore this topic by examining the emperor Constantine and the way in which Eusebius portrayed him in the *Vita Constantini*.

Constantine was regarded by Christians as the champion of Christianity, who put an end to persecutions and promoted Christianity as the true religion. Eusebius adopted this perspective not only in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* but also in the *VC*. In this respect, in the four books of his biography Eusebius seems to have written an epic of the Christian emperor, his conversion, and his fight against the pagan gods and their supporters. Indeed, the prophet Moses was the primary model with whom Eusebius explicitly compared Constantine. Yet several aspects of the *VC* also recall the Homeric poems. For instance, just as in the case of Homeric heroes, Constantine had exceptional physical beauty and strength, which distinguished him from all the other men (1.19.2, 3.10.4). Similarly, God’s constant intervention in Constantine’s life took the form of well-known motifs, which were recurrent in Homeric poetry: divine signs (the cross, 1.28), dreams (1.29), theophanies (1.47.2-3), etc.

Constantine’s epic, however, did not mainly concern war deeds but religion, as Eusebius clarified at VC 11. This implies that typical epic scenes such as councils, *ekphraseis*, or the catalogue of characters were reinterpreted so as to fit into a different context and assume a different meaning (cf. *VC* 1.40, 3.3, 3.7-9, etc.). Analogously, Constantine’s behaviour, characterised by superior skills, morality, and faith inspired by God, resembles that of various Homeric characters, although these echoes and allusions were adapted to shape the image of the perfect Christian emperor: e.g. Agamemnon leading the battle at *Il.* book 4 (cf. *VC* 2.16-17); Patroclus wearing Achilles’ armour, which made the enemy retreat in terror (cf. *VC*: Constantine’s use of the trophy in battle); Nestor, who tried to preserve the unity of the Greek army (cf. *VC* 3.23); etc. In Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini*, therefore, Homer appears to have been an important source for portraying Constantine as the good ruler.
The idea of Homeric poetry as a princes’ mirror in terms of rhetorical instruction had a rich history by the time Eustathios of Thessalonike (c. 1115-1195) wrote his *Commentary on the Iliad*. In the proem of this commentary, Eustathios claims to have composed the work especially for the sake of writers of rhetorical prose. Just as ancient critics projected their own didactical programme on Homer, so too does Eustathios see the rhetorical lessons he wishes to teach reflected in Homeric poetry. In other words, he presents Homer as a model orator for twelfth-century orators and Homeric poetry as displaying the qualities that were appreciated in twelfth-century rhetorical prose.

In my paper I discuss some of these appreciated qualities and the techniques by means of which Homer, according to Eustathios, displays them in his poetry. In doing so I take Eustathios’ praise of a real ruler and orator, emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180), as my starting point. In his *epitaphios* or funeral oration for the late emperor, Eustathios celebrates Manuel’s rhetorical skill mainly for three reasons: firstly, the emperor successfully combines attractive style and deep content, thereby appealing to both educated and uneducated audiences; secondly, his orations never fail to display novelty; thirdly, he expresses the rich and dense content of his orations with remarkable clarity of style.

I explore how Eustathios projects each of these three qualities of excellent oratory on the poetry of Homer and discusses these rather general ideas in more concrete terms in his *Commentary on the Iliad*: How does Homer, the ideal orator, combine attractive style and deep content? What does it mean for an orator to be novel? And how does the *Iliad* serve as an example of density of content and clarity of expression?
The Homeric epics saw a decided increase in cultural significance during the twelfth century, as Byzantine encomiasts searched for a suitable literary mode in which to celebrate the military ethos of the rising Comnenian aristocracy. When the poet Theodore Prodromos (c. 1100–1170) chose to praise the Eastern campaign of Isaac II Komnenos with Homeric meter and language, the emperor’s triumph was broadcast not as the return of a bloodstained frontiersman with parallels in medieval legend, but as that of an Achilles, Ajax or Odysseus who finally tasted his sweet nostos after magnificent adventures in faraway lands. Eustathios (c. 1115–1195), archbishop of Thessalonike and before that an immensely successful orator in Constantinople during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, was arguably the most important figure in the next stage of this development. His prominent student, Michael Choniates, would later look back on his teacher’s panegyrical performances as the works of a Homeric bard: ‘He sang (aeide) the glories (klea) of emperors, doers of great deeds, and high-throned patriarchs’. Like most high style oratory of his day, Eustathios’ performances rang with polished and well-timed allusions to the Bible and the Fathers, as well as to various masterpieces of pagan literature and predominantly to Homer. But Eustathios was also the leading Homeric scholar of his day, and his Parekbolai on the Iliad and Odyssey reveal his acute awareness of the more thorny sides of the heroic traditions in which he so often placed his patrons. Not only could he find negative stories, but there was also the general issue of the proverbial primitive lifestyle of the heroes, which Eustathios felt to be closer to that of the ‘barbarians’ on the Italian peninsula than the civilized Byzantines. In this paper I will examine the function of this insight in Eustathios’ vision of Homer as the ideal rhetorician and a mirror of his own position as an accomplished panegyrist and businessman of logos. Just as Homer had clothed his virtuously frugal Achaean heroes not in material fabrics but in the immaterial, non-corrupting garb of epic verse, so did Eustathios adorn the lordship of his patrons – frugal Christian warriors like Digenis Akritis – not with gold and emeralds but with the rhythms, tropes and figures of epic.
While the relevance of Homer for the behaviour and the education of the ‘good ruler’ is a well attested phenomenon throughout ancient Greek and Byzantine literature, few texts tackle the issue in a systematic way (with the remarkable exception of Philodemus’ treatise, if modern reconstructions are correct). However, two hitherto unpublished and almost totally unknown works written in Italy by a minor Greek humanist towards the middle of the 16th century provide a rather detailed treatment of the paradigmatic value of the Homeric epics as a model of virtue for kings and rulers in general, and for military leaders in particular: while not particularly exciting and mostly very pedantic and homogeneous, these texts - of which some excerpts (edited by Marta Piasentin) will be presented and discussed - may elicit some thoughts about their place and sources in the Greek literary tradition (with a specific focus on their relationship to ancient exegetical literature), as well as about their possible goals and intended readership, also in view of the author’s personality. It will thus be possible to speculate about a remarkable instance of Homer’s Nachleben as a paradigm of behaviour in opposition to 16th-century alleged moral decline.
Niccolò Machiavelli, the sixteenth-century Florentine political thinker, has been vilified and extolled in almost equal measures. He has been called everything from a proto-Nazi and a ‘teacher of evil’ to a misogynist, while also being seen as the reviver of republican ideals, a supreme satirist of political folly, and a pragmatist who appreciated the relativity of human values. A chameleon whose name often serves as a metaphor for self-serving ‘cunning’ and ‘duplicity,’ he has inspired *inter alios* Cromwell, Hobbes, Bacon, Rousseau, Voltaire, Marx, Nietzsche, and Adam Smith, entered popular culture and the media, and been an object of study in history, art, politics, philosophy, and literature.

Machiavelli’s thinking is indebted to the past. His views on religion, society, and state politics show his knowledge of ancient history (Egyptian, Babylonian, Phoenician, Greek, Hebrew, and Roman) and the classics, a deep appreciation of Homer, Ausonius, Apuleius, Plutarch, and Livy. This paper examines Homer’s influence on *Il Principe*, a treatise in which Machiavelli stipulates various criteria of princely virtue (*virtù*). Like Homeric *aretê*, Machiavellian *virtù* is the ability to discharge one’s role-related functions, the concoeries of qualities that make for success in political activities. Although most of the examples and illustrations of the treatise come from Roman history, Achilles receives mention as the hero imitated by Alexander the Great, who was in turn imitated by Caesar (*Il Principe*, 55). In fact, Machiavelli’s prince seems to be both an Achilles-like warrior, eager to fight wars and earn glory, and an Odysseus-like deceiver of others for personal gain. Machiavelli’s moral code rests on an ethic of emulation that is essentially Homeric: ethical paradigms from the past are called upon to shape the prince’s values and behavior in the present. Commemorating these paradigms is also a Homeric practice, an attempt to forge a *sensus communis* in the audience by recording the past. How is the appeal to Homer supposed to meet the political needs of Machiavelli’s time and to what use does Machiavelli put his archaic ethic of emulation and evocation of the past? Is an Achilles-cum- Odysseus prince a merely symbolic superhero or a political figure with real purchase on his contemporaries?
The Iliad as Prince’s Mirror in George Chapman’s Seaven Bookes of the Iliades and Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida

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George Chapman’s translation of Books 1, 2, and 7-11 of the Iliad, published in 1598 as Seaven Bookes of the Iliades, and William Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida (c. 1601-1602), illustrate how Homer’s Iliad could function both positively and negatively as a Princes’ Mirror in Renaissance England. That Chapman himself thought of his translation at least partly in these terms seems clear from his dedication of the work to Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex, whom he called ‘the now living instance of the Achillean virtues.’ Chapman’s work, however, can be seen more broadly as a Prince’s Mirror, because of its idealizing representation of Achilles and other noble heroes, in Platonic-Stoic or Christian moral language (and in accordance with sixteenth-century Italian poetic theory) as political leaders in rational command of their passions. By contrast, Chapman’s ignoble Agamemnon gives way to passion, ‘durst be so profane / To violate his sacred place,’ and ‘virtue’s general laws he shameless did infringe.’ In these two figures, Chapman models how a noble and virtuous prince should and should not behave.

In Troilus and Cressida, the war plot of which is drawn largely from the Seaven Bookes, Shakespeare represents both Greek and Trojan ‘heroes’ as consistently irrational and morally and spiritually ungoverned. They abuse their power, and give full rein (and reign) to their selfish appetites in the basest ways. War and love, traditionally the two main areas of noble action and value, are reduced to self-serving slaughter and decadent lust. Troilus and Cressida constitutes, in effect, a negative Mirror for Princes, offering any ruler—but especially King James I, who succeeded Elizabeth in 1603 and was the patron of Shakespeare’s own theater company, the King’s Men—a range of ‘ungoverned governors,’ princes ruled by their appetites who contravene humanistic and heroic values and prove to be weak and immoral political leaders. Together, Chapman’s translation and Shakespeare’s drama demonstrate the range and sophistication of English Renaissance receptions of the Iliad as a Mirror for Princes.
Within the Walls of the New Illyria:
the Homeric Mirror for Princes in Albanian Dissident Poetry under Communism
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This paper explores the use of the mirror for princes genre in post-World War II Albanian literature. Albania’s Communist government suppressed all forms of artistic dissent with imprisonment, exile and death. Lacking the capacity to thus directly criticize the government, dissident Albanian poets adopted to the same genre of oblique criticism as previous writers in the history of Homeric reception: the mirror for princes or, in their case, the mirror for communist dictators.

The development of Albanian national identity during the independence movement of the pre-war period made post-war Albania particularly fertile ground for this use of the Homeric corpus. After 1913, newly independent Albania sought to forge a European identity in opposition to its former Ottoman rulers. As part of this project, Albanians claimed the Western literary and cultural tradition as their own, a process which included Homer and his epics. It is during this period, for instance, that Naim Frashëri (the Greek educated national poet of Albania) published his translation of The Iliad, Gjergj Fishta published The Highland Lute, his Albanian epic modeled on Homer, and the government itself sought to anchor claims to a historic presence in the region with excavations at the ancient city of Butrint in southern Albania, which was associated with the Little Troy mentioned in Aen.3.350.

It was in this context that the mirror for princes genre was employed by dissident Albanian writers of the post-war period. For instance, during his exile in Greece in the late 1980s, Bardhyl Londo wrote a series of poems criticizing the government, comparing himself to wandering Odysseus, Albania to Ithaca and the dictator Enver Hoxha and his circle to the suitors wasting the country. At the same time, Visar Zhiti, convicted of ideologically impure poetry, was doing forced labor as a political prisoner in the copper mines of Spaç; in his poems, he compared himself to Homer, poor and oppressed. Fatos Arapi, living in the dictator’s precarious favor, wrote ‘I Hate Achilles,’ comparing himself to Hector and Hoxha to Achilles. The mirror for princes genre allowed these writers to criticize the government while still eluding its censors.
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