

Robert J. Penella, ed., *Rhetorical Exercises from Late Antiquity: A Translation of Choricus of Gaza's Preliminary Talks and Declamations*. Cambridge University Press, 2009). Pp. xii, 323. ISBN 978-0-521-84873-2.

Recent years have seen the publication of many new editions and translations of late-antique Greek rhetorical treatises, collections of rhetorical exercises, and speeches putting rhetorical training into practice. Robert Penella (hereafter P.) has long been an acknowledged leader in the field, with translations of Themistius (2000) and Himerius (2007) already to his credit. In the volume under review, P. has organized a group of British and American experts (M. Heath, G.A. Kennedy, T.L. Papillon, W.W. Reader, D.A. Russell, and S. Swain) to produce the first translation of the rhetorical works of the sixth-century sophist Choricus of Gaza. As this volume admirably demonstrates, translation by a group of scholars works well for a large collection of separate texts for which a uniformity of translation style is unnecessary.

P.'s introduction sets out a clear and detailed picture of the School of Gaza ("a marked flowering of rhetorical, literary, and intellectual Greek culture," p. 2) and its members, many of whom had studied in Alexandria and were Christians. P. shows that the sophists' traditional engagement in civic life, so well attested for Greek sophists of earlier centuries, continued in late fifth- and sixth-century Gaza. There follows a good, basic account of declamation, its place in ancient education, its goal of "inculcat[ing] approved values in the minds of those who would succeed their fathers as elite males" (p. 12), and its performance and publication. The introduction includes a detailed discussion and summary of Choricus' declamations (pp. 16–26) and preliminary talks (pp. 26–32).

Choricus' declamations offer two features not regularly found in other Greek declamations. First, all but one has an "explanatory comment" (*theoria* or *protheoria*) in which Choricus discusses the speaker's argument, character, and audience. These introductions, which Choricus addresses to his audience, can help scholars of rhetoric more closely connect the theory of the classroom with the finished product of the stage and better understand the carefully negotiated relationships between sophists and their audiences. Second, for most of Choricus' declamations we have the "preliminary talks" (*dialexeis*) that introduced them. P. summarizes the ancient theory of these informal little texts, which sophists delivered while seated before standing to deliver a formal oration or declamation; they were often disconnected from the topic of the speech that followed, and they aimed at charm, sweetness, and delicacy. It is a particular pleasure to have P.'s translation of Choricus' twenty-three *dialexeis*, which one may hope will serve his stated goal "to draw attention to and encourage study of this rhetorical genre (or subgenre)" (p. 27). A chart on p. 28 shows which preliminary talks precede which declamations. Declamations 1–2, 11, and 12 each have one *dialexis*; Declamations 4–10 each have two. A second talk often introduced the second half of a speech after an intermission, which could be as short as a lunch break or as long as twenty-four hours.

To turn to Choricus' declamations, mythological themes are represented by Declamations 1, 2, and 10. Declamations 1–2 are a pair spoken by Polydamas and Priam on whether to accept Achilles' offer to become their ally in exchange for Polyxena's hand in marriage. Declamation 10 portrays Patroclus trying to persuade Achilles to return to battle. Themes featuring stock characters (war-heroes, tyrannicides, tyrants, and misers) are found in Declamations 5–7, 9, 11, and 12. Declamations 5–6 involve a war-hero requesting as his prize the hand of a poor but beautiful woman in marriage, against the wishes of his wealthy miser father. Declamation 12 features an orator claiming the prize intended for war-heroes (i.e. actual fighters) on grounds that he ended the war by persuading the enemy to withdraw. Declamation 7 is delivered by a man who killed a tyrant's son; in his grief the tyrant then killed himself, and now the speaker seeks a modest prize for tyrannicide. Another tyrant figures in Declamation 9: a tyrant besieges a city because a father refuses to give him his daughter's hand in marriage; the father kills the girl and the enemy retreats, but then a young man who loved her kills himself; now the boy's father prosecutes the girl's father for his son's death. Historical themes are represented by Declamations 3 (a theme involving Cyrus and the Lydians; see below) and 4 (in which Miltiades defends himself on a charge of treason after withdrawing from Paros). Scholars of ancient gender and sexuality will find much of interest in Declamations 3, 8, and 11. In 3, the Lydians ironically oppose Cyrus' offer to rearm them after forcing them to dress and behave as women. In 8, a Spartan speaks against accepting a statue of Aphrodite that resembles the courtesan Phryne; the statue had been commissioned from Praxiteles to appease an angry Aphrodite and thereby stop the birth of ugly female babies in Sparta. In 11, a general defeats the enemy by dressing as a woman; unfortunately, there is a law that victorious generals must be depicted in a painting in the clothing they were wearing at the time.

Eugenio Amato's epilogue on the later reception of Choricus rounds out the volume. Little is known of Choricus' contemporary reception, but in the later Byzantine period, his works "were rediscovered, searched through by avid readers of maxims, imitated if not actually plagiarized, and transmitted to posterity" (p. 263). Amato provides a detailed account of the complex interrelationships of florilegia containing moralizing *sententiae*, the judgments of Byzantine scholars, and the manuscript tradition of Choricus.

This is an attractively produced and well-edited volume with accurate translations, useful notes, and an ample, current bibliography. I recommend it without reservation to any student or scholar of late-antique or Byzantine rhetoric.

CRAIG A. GIBSON
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
(craig-gibson@uiowa.edu)