
The twelve papers in this volume, in Italian (mainly), French, and Spanish, and varying in scope and depth, are the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Nantes in June 2014. They are grouped into four sections: « Retorica e società a Gaza », « Retorica e poesia », « Le declamazioni coriciane », and « Tradizione manoscritta ». Two of the four papers of section one, in advance of section three, already concern themselves with declamation. Simona Lupi exploits ancient editorial notes, prothepoieis, and preliminary dialexeis to recover information about the occasions, audiences, and other features of the declamations’ performance. Even if he cannot definitively prove the direct influence of Dio Chrysostom on Decl. 8 [XXIX], Gianluca Ventrella has attractively developed an earlier scholar’s suggestion that this declamation, set in classical Sparta, alludes to the disputed contemporary Christian debate over the veneration of icons. Aldo Corcella discusses the serious (semnolites) and the charming/witty (asteïsmos) in Choricius and the sophist’s conviction that they can be blended successfully. The few biblical quotes and allusions in Choricius that were already uncovered in the standard edition by R. Foerster and E. Richtsteig (1929) and most of which occur in the ekphrasis of church paintings in Or. 1 [I] are commented on by Angel Narro Sanchez. He is under the bizarre misconception that Or. 1 [I] and 2 [II], in honor of Bishop Marcianus, are two parts of a funeral oration. In section two, in a taste of a larger project she hopes to pursue in the future, Delphine Lauritzen discusses some poetic references (to Aristophanes, Theocritus, and Homer) in Or. 1 [I]. Section two also includes two nicely elaborated pieces by Onofrio Vox and Chiara Telesca. Vox discusses the influence of poetry on Gazan and other late ancient rhetors, and he shows how the Platonic remark οὗ γὰρ ἐμί ποιητικὸς (Rep. 393d) became something of a commonplace in imperial sophistic. (To the passages he cites, add Procopius of Gaza, Epp. 54, ἀλλ’ εἰ μὲν ἢ τις ποιητικὸς.) Telesca’s subject is a Pindaric metaphor in Dialex. 7 [XIII].14, χρυσίου πληγαῖς ἀτρωτὸς, that is found in other authors as well, and in the process of discussing it she also defends the transmitted text (πληγῆς and possibly χρυσέου) against the Foerster-Richtsteig emendations. In a highly technical piece that builds on earlier scholarship, Naudine Sauterel minutely examines the prose rhythm of Dialex. 7 [XIII]. The attention paid by Choricius to prose rhythm emerges as stunning. Sauterel argues for the relevance of the rhythms to the rhetorical and literary understanding of the piece. Section three of this book has three contributions on Choricius’s declamations, each in its own way a helpful introduction to the declamation in question. Matteo Deroma examines the content and structure (the latter in considerable detail) of Decl. 10 [XXXVIII], "Patroclus," as well as the two preliminary dialexeis that accompany it, for which he
provides a first Italian translation. Carlo Manzione also clarifies the structure, this time of Decl. 12 [XLII], “The Rhetor,” but he is more interested in the declamation’s use of a traditional theme (a contested prize, in this case claimed for bringing about a state of peace through verbal persuasion) and its pitting of the use of verbal persuasion against that of military force. I am not as confident as Manzione that we need to invoke Christianity in connection with Choricius’ pacific and moderate inclinations. Finally, Gianluigi Tomassi writes on Decl. 7 [XXVI], “The Tyrannicide,” attempting to tease out both Choricius’ own emphases and innovations in this very traditional declamatory topic and features of the declamation that might have had an especially contemporary appeal. He even suggests that the tyrant of this piece was meant obliquely to refer to Justinian; this is possible, but we must proceed with caution here because tyrants and tyrannicides were such a standard part of the declamatory repertoire. The last section of this book consists of a single study by Paola D’Alessio, in which she continues her work on the manuscripts of Choricius. Five are described, studied, and text-critically edited here. Looking at the contributions to this volume as a whole, one notes both the recurring interest in the impact of poetry on rhetorical prose and the considerable attention given to Choricius’s declamations. In contrast to the latter feature, little attention has been paid to the declamations of Libanius. This is understandable in light of the great historical importance of Libanius’ orations and letters; but ignoring a sophist’s declamations shrouds a key part of his activity. In any case, scholarly interest in declamation (and rhetoric in general) has been on the rise in recent decades. It is also worth noting that several contributors (Ventrella, Manzione, Tomassi) challenge the too simple distinction between “fictitious” declamations and “real-life” civic oratory: declamations can sometimes have consciously intended allusions to real-life issues. It will be helpful to keep this possibility in mind. All of the contributions to this volume are part of a wave of scholarship on the School of Gaza that in recent years has come mainly out of Italy and France, largely under the leadership of Eugenio Amato, the senior editor of the volume under review. More is forthcoming, including the first Italian translation of the whole corpus of Choricius and a new critical edition of Choricius for the « Collection des Universités de France ». The School of Gaza merits the attention of students of late ancient intellectual and cultural history as well as of rhetoric and is being made more and more accessible by recent scholarship.

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