



From Achilles to Theagenes and vice-versa: Epidectic topics and commonplace in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* and beyond¹

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Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo es comparar la representación de Teágenes como descendiente de Aquiles de Heliodoro *Aethiopica*, 2.35.1 con varios retratos acerca del héroe épico contenidos en textos en prosa, los cuales provienen de una tradición que puede remontarse hasta el siglo II d.C.: Filóstrato *Heroicus*, 48.1–4; Dictis Cretense *Ephemeris Belli Troiani*, 1.14; Dares Frigio *De excidio Troiae historia*, 13; Isaac Commeno, 81 (Hinck). Un análisis retórico de la estrecha correspondencia entre estos cinco retratos sugiere que los respectivos autores utilizan el mismo marco de tópicos epidecticos, remodelando así las prácticas de la *ἔκφρασις* y de la narración (*διήγημα*), lo que en cierto sentido excede a los *Progymnasmata*. Dicha remodelación tiene probablemente como propósito colmar una brecha con Homero, puesto que éste no proveyó a su audiencia de descripciones físicas detalladas sobre sus propios personajes. De este modo, las herramientas fisionómicas permiten articular el tópico epidectico del cuerpo con el del alma, lo que parece culminar tanto en una re-interpretación, como en una complementación de la *Iliada*. Este uso común de los mismos dispositivos retóricos origina un «lugar común» en el sentido moderno de la palabra, pero cada avatar merece ser recolocado en su contexto discursivo. En el caso de la *Aethiopica*, Heliodoro modela a Teágenes a partir de interpretaciones antiguas del Aquiles iliaco como un personaje siempre inmaduro a pesar de su extraordinaria valentía y que, por tanto, ofrece un paradigma complejo sobre el joven héroe al inicio de la novela.

Palabras clave: Aquiles, Teágenes, Heliodoro, lugar común, fisonomía

Abstract: The article compares the depiction of Theagenes as the descendant of Achilles in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, 2.35.1 with several portraits of the epic hero in prose texts belonging to a tradition that can be traced back to the 2nd century AD: Philostratus' *Heroicus*, 48.1–4; Dictys Cretensis *Ephemeris Belli Troiani*, 1.14; Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia*, 13; Isaac Comnenus, 81 (Hinck). A rhetorical analysis of the close correspondences between these five portrayals suggests that their respective authors use the same framework of epidectic topics, remodelling the exercises of narration (*διήγημα*) and description (*ἔκφρασις*) of a person's body and character in a way that goes beyond the *Progymnasmata*. Their purpose is perhaps to bridge a gap, given that Homer did not provide his audience with detailed physical descriptions of his own characters: physiognomic tools help reinterpreting and supplementing the *Iliad*. This common use of the same rhetorical devices generates a «commonplace» in the modern sense of the word, but each avatar deserves to be analysed within its own discursive context. In the specific case of the *Aethiopica*, I argue that Heliodorus models Theagenes on ancient interpretations of the Iliadic Achilles as a

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character who is still immature despite his extraordinary bravery, and who therefore provides a complex paradigm for the young hero at the beginning of the novel.

Keywords: Achilles, Teagenes, Heliodorus, commonplace, physiognomy

Although the notion of *topos* has often been defined as a traditional theme or formula in literature, in ancient rhetorical theories and practice it operated as a «place» where an orator could find an argument or the starting point of the argumentation.² The modern conception of *topos* as «commonplace» therefore simplifies a complex framework for which it is difficult to find a clear and precise definition.³ The present article aims at confronting these two meanings by examining the depiction of Teagenes as Achilles in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* in comparison with several portraits of Achilles from the imperial period, which share many common points although they are by no means identical, among which that in Philostratus' *Heroikos* holds a special place.

Given that several authors use the same rhetorical framework to depict the same hero, we can start by analysing their discursive techniques in the light of the *progymnasmata*, the preparatory exercises that formed the starting point of the curriculum of every intellectual (*παιδευμένος*).⁴ In line with the methodological framework defined by De Temmerman (2010: 24–28), emphasis will be put on the epideictic topics as tools for crafting a character modelled on Homeric poetry, beyond alleged borders between narration (*διήγημα*) and *ἔκφρασις*.⁵ More broadly, analysing Heliodorus' writing techniques in relation to non-novelistic texts may shed light on the discursive modes shaping prose narratives, beyond any underlying assumptions about their respective literary genericity.⁶

1. Teagenes as Achilles: epideictic topics, *ekphrasis* and narration

The starting point of our analysis is the depiction of Teagenes by Calasiris in book 2 of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* addressed to Cnemon. The Egyptian priest describes a sacred procession in honour of Neoptolemus by the Thessalians at which he was present. Teagenes, the leader of the procession, was a descendant of Achilles and, according to Calasiris, he shared his ancestor's physical characteristics:⁷

εἰσῆλθεν ὁ νεανίσκος Ἀχιλλεῖον τι τῷ ὄντι πνέων καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον τὸ βλέμμα καὶ τὸ φρόνημα ἀναφέρων· ὀρθὸς τὸν αὐχένα καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ μετώπου τὴν κόμην πρὸς τὸ ὄρθιον ἀναχαιτίζων, ἡ ρὶς ἐν ἐπαγγελίᾳ θυμοῦ καὶ οἱ μυκτῆρες ἐλευθέρως τὸν ἀέρα εἰσπνέοντες, ὀφθαλμὸς οὐπω μὲν χαροπὸς χαροπώτερον δὲ μελαινόμενος σοβαρόν τε ἅμα καὶ οὐκ ἀνέραστον βλέπων, οἶον θαλάσσης ἀπὸ κύματος εἰς γαλήνην ἄρτι λεαινομένης.

The young man entered, who really exhaled something Achillean and was related to him in sight and spirit. Having a straight neck and a mane of hair rising up from the forehead, his nose holds⁸ promises of ardour as well as his nostrils inhaling air with nobility. His eyes are not quite dark blue, but

² Pernot (1986: 254–256).

³ For the sake of clarity, I use the word «commonplace» in its modern sense, as differentiated from «common topics» (*κοινὸς τόπος*), which attack a criminal by amplifying his faults: see Pernot (1986: 271–278). For further discussions of its definitions in the *Progymnasmata*, see Gibson (2008: 141–142); Patillon (2009: lxx–lxxiv); Berardi (2017: 189–202).

⁴ On the traditional curriculum, see Webb (2017: 141–150). The teaching handbooks from the 1st to the 5th century AD provide definitions that were widespread apart from a few minor details. Given their consensual nature, they have been used by scholars as a hermeneutical tool for the analysis of narratives including, but not limited to, ancient novels: see Capiluppo (2006) and Malosse (2012: 91–95). For other uses of this method, see Kim (2008: 617–620) on Dio's sixty-first oration and Piedrabuena (2017: 89–121) on the discursive modes of Plutarch.

⁵ On the fluidity between the two, see Fowler (1991: 26–31) and Webb (2009: 49–50).

⁶ Cf. Whitmarsh (2005: 605) who infers from a close study of novel titles «that genres are not fixed by genetic inheritance; they are, rather, flexible matrices of convention at the service of the author in question».

⁷ All translations are mine.

⁸ Better than «held», even though the main verb is in the aorist: see below.

blackened with a tinge of dark blue, looking all at once overwhelming and not unlovely, just as when the sea has just become smooth from flood to serenity. (Hld. 2.35.1)

Given that recent scholarship has extensively focused on ἔκφρασις, it is not necessary to prove that the vivid depiction of Theagenes is in line with the definitions given by the *Progymnasmata*, as «a descriptive speech (λόγος περιηγηματικός), bringing what is portrayed clearly before the sight» (ἐναργῶς ὑπ’ ὄψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον).⁹ Calasiris’ speech is indeed περιηγηματικός, not only in the sense that it is «descriptive», but also in that the speech shows the reader a way around the appearance of the hero, in the original meaning of περιήγησις, letting the object be revealed, shown and known.¹⁰ One’s mind «zigzags» through the mental image of Theagenes’ face, detail after detail, starting from the neck, climbing up to his hair, heading down towards his nose before finally «zooming» on his eyes. Besides, apart from the introductory verb εἰσῆλθεν, the absence of any conjugated form and the recurrence of present participles (πνέων, ἀναφέρων, ἀναχατίζων, εἰσπνέοντες) throughout the depiction give the impression that it is written in the present tense and that Theagenes is actually «present» here and now. The reader therefore becomes a spectator, in a process imitated within the *Aethiopica* by the dialogic structure of the first books.¹¹ A little later in the novel, Cnemon, as an internal listener of Calasiris, indeed feels he sees Theagenes and Chariclea as if they were at his side (3.4.7).¹²

On another level, the content of the depiction inherits from the numerous lists of «epideictic topics» catalogued in many treatises and providing a framework for praise and blame.¹³ They comprise among others: origin (γένος), nature (φύσις) –i.e., natural qualities of the soul (ψυχή), character (ἦθος) and body (σῶμα)– and age (ἡλικία).¹⁴ First, Theagenes is defined by the epideictic topic of «noble origin» (εὐγένεια), divided in two: city (πόλις) / people (ἔθνος) –in our case, Thessaly– and ancestors (γονεῖς) –Achilles, being a Thessalian.¹⁵ Secondly, as we will explore in further detail below, the natural qualities of Theagenes’ body (σῶμα) reflect those of his character (ἦθος), correlated to his origins: in accordance with the guidelines found in the rhetorical handbooks, the persuasive force of the speech depends in part on the harmony between the two topics.¹⁶ In many respects then, Calasiris provides a praise of the hero.

Besides, the depiction of Theagenes as the descendant of Achilles plays a programmatic role in the overall structure of the *Aethiopica*.¹⁷ It prepares the narrative situation of book 4, where the characterization of the hero is grounded again in the Achillean model. Heliodorus inherits from a rhetorical background where epideictic topics were fluid and provided a framework for other exercises, including that of narration (διήγημα).¹⁸ The person (πρόσωπον) and the attributes attached to him or her are part of the lists of περιστάσεις, «constitutive parts of the situation», or στοιχεῖα, «components» / «elements», commonly divided into six:¹⁹ the person (πρόσωπον) appears first in the list, being the core component of the

⁹ Theon, *Prog.* 7.118.7–8; Ps.–Hermog. *Prog.* 10.1; Aphth. *Prog.* 12.1; cf. Nicol. *Prog.* 68.8–9; Quint. 6.2.29–32; Ps.–Lgn. *Subl.* 15.9–11. On the different definitions of it in ancient treatises, see Webb (2009: 51–53) and Berardi (2017: 126–133). See also Aygon (1994: 42–47); Elsner (2002: 1–2); Goldhill (2007: 3–8); Zeitlin (2013: 17–18).

¹⁰ Ravenna (2006: 22–23); Webb (2009: 74–75); Berardi (2017: 126–127).

¹¹ Bartsch (1989: 120–122); Morgan (1991: 99); González Equihua (2014: 153).

¹² For further analysis of this passage, see Hardie (1998: 26–27); Webb (2009: 184–185) and Grethlein (2017: 108–113). For an intertextual interpretation of the ἔκφρασις in the opening scene of the novel, see Zanetto (2018: 212–215). For more general discussions on the ἔκφρασις in the *Aethiopica*, see Fernández Garrido (2015: 123–130).

¹³ Theon, *Prog.* 9.109.29–110.11; Hermog. *Stat.* 1.7 and 3.8; Ps.–Hermog. *Prog.* 7.5–10; Aphth. *Prog.* 8.3; Nicol. *Prog.* 50.1–53.19. Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1.1360b–1362a; Cic. *Inv.* 1.34–46; Quint. 5.10.23–31. See Pernot (1993: 140–142); de Temmerman (2010: 46–48).

¹⁴ Theon, *Prog.* 5.78.25–27.

¹⁵ Theon, *Prog.* 9.110.2–4; Ps.–Hermog. *Prog.* 7.5; Aphth. *Prog.* 8.3; Nicol. *Prog.* 50.13–51.1; Lib. *Prog.* 8.1.2; 8.2.2; 8.3.2; 8.5.2.

¹⁶ Ps.–Hermog. *Prog.* 7.6. See Pernot (1993: 159–161 and 166–167); de Temmerman (2010: 24–28).

¹⁷ On the relationship between ἔκφρασις and διήγημα in the ancient novel, see Fernández Delgado and Pordomingo (2016: 699–700). For further discussions on the function of ἔκφρασις beyond aesthetics, see Cunningham (2007: 60–61) and Goldhill (2007: 1).

¹⁸ Theon, *Prog.* 5.78.25–27; cf. 8.115.23–116.6: speech in character (προσωποποιῖα / ἠθοποιῖα). For further definitions of the narration, cf. Theon, *Prog.* 5.78.16–79.19; Ps.–Hermog. *Prog.* 2.1; Aphth. *Prog.* 2.3; Nicol. *Prog.* 13.14–14.3.

¹⁹ The matter (ἄλη) is added by some rhetoricians as a seventh topic (Nicol. *Prog.* 13.19–14.3); for further discussion, see Pernot (1986: 263n45); Berardi (2017: 85); Piedrabuena (2017: 82).

narrative as the author of the act (πρᾶγμα), complemented by four circumstances, place (τόπος), time (χρόνος), manner (τρόπος) and cause (αἰτία).²⁰ These categories were not strictly speaking called τόποι but they operated in the same way, as heuristic «places» for the composition of a speech.²¹

First, Calasiris himself reiterates Theagenes' affiliation to Achilles when the hero competes in a running race for earning Chariclea's love (4.3.3):²² the «spectacle» (θέαμα) of the hero on the start line was «like when Homer presents Achilles engaging the fight against the Scamander» (οἷον Ὅμηρος τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα τὴν ἐπὶ Σκαμάνδρῳ μάχην ἀθλοῦντα παρίστησιν). Calasiris thus re-appropriates current interpretations of the *Iliad* 21 where, as the scholia put it, the poet «presents an admirable mental image» (θαυμαστήν τινα τὴν φαντασίαν ὑποτίθεται).²³ He also amplifies this representation, since Achilles is in constant motion when fighting the river Scamander,²⁴ while Theagenes has not yet begun to run. Besides, keeping the previous depiction (2.35.1) in mind, the promise of ardour (θύμος) visible in the nose of the hero, linking the topics of body (σῶμα) and moral qualities (ἦθος), is put into action (πρᾶγμα) through variations on the Achillean model. Heliodorus' narrative techniques are thus in accordance with the rhetorical principle that the words and deeds accounted must conform with the attributes of the person.²⁵ Theagenes also seems to be already more mature than in book 2: in his previous physical description, the shape of his nose was said to hold promises (ἐπαγγελία) of his ardour, which is made effective here. Heliodorus therefore applies the rhetorical rules in practice in a way that goes far beyond the educational framework of the *Progymnasmata*. In many regards, then, the novel appears to be an extended elaboration of the exercise of narration (διήγημα).

Furthermore, a little later (4.5.5–6), Chariclea who does not understand the nature of her love, asks Calasiris about Theagenes' ancestors. The Egyptian priest depicts the hero again, but this time as an internal character within his own narration, not as a main narrator talking to Cnemon. This change of status may explain the differences between the two portraits. Calasiris insists on the moral virtues of Theagenes,²⁶ who closely resembles his ancestor, «except only that he is neither arrogant nor haughty, but he softens the majesty of his spirit by his sweetness» (πλὴν ὅσον οὐχ ὑπέρφρων οὐδὲ ἀγήνωρ κατ' ἐκεῖνον ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας τὸν ὄγκον ἠδύτητι καταπραΰνων). This rhetorical strategy is directly inherited from the exercise of parallel (σύγκρισις): in this more elaborate form of encomium and invective, epideictic topics are the means by which common features and / or differences can be found.²⁷ Achilles himself was frequently subject to this exercise, since his characterization in the *Iliad* belonged to a shared culture.²⁸ Calasiris' invective of the epic hero in comparison with an encomium of Theagenes brings to mind the parallel, in Libanius' model exercises, between Achilles and Diomedes: the hybris and intemperance of the former is criticised and contrasted with the latter's ability to control his behaviour and not to get angry over a captive, Briseis.²⁹

Yet, Calasiris' speech goes beyond this framework: after praising Theagenes, he blames him for «having bewitched» (καταβασκήνας) Chariclea by the sense of «sight» (τῆ θεία). Homeric references are thus a dynamic way to fashion a new kind of hero and their relationship with early myths make them

²⁰ Berardi (2017: 80–87).

²¹ See Pernot (1986: 263–265), who notes that, since they are relatively easy to handle, they provide a basic rhetorical framework for composing a narration.

²² For further analysis of the narrative dynamics in this passage, see Grethlein (2017: 116–117).

²³ Scholia bT ad Il. 21.3. On the φαντασία as a «mental image» in the scholia, see Nünlist (2009: 154); in the rhetorical treatises, see Webb (2009: 107–130) and Berardi (2017: 280–282).

²⁴ Hom. Il. 21.233–271.

²⁵ For further discussions on this rule, see Patillon (1997: xlvii–xlviii) and Berardi (2017: 85–87).

²⁶ On Theagenes' ability to control his sexual impulses in the first three books of the *Aethiopia*, see Bird (2017: 197–201).

²⁷ Theon, *Prog.* 10.113.3–25; Ps. –Hermog. *Prog.* 8.3–4; Aphth. *Prog.* 10.1–3; Nicol. *Prog.* 59.1–60.15. See Berardi (2017: 263–273).

²⁸ Aphth. *Prog.* 10.4–8 (parallel between Achilles and Hector, both of whom are praised for their respective bravery); Lib. *Prog.* 10.1 (parallel between Achilles and Diomedes); 10.2 (parallel between Achilles and Ajax); cf. also Theon, *Prog.* 10.112.31–33.

²⁹ Lib. *Prog.* 10.1.7–8, referring to Hom. Il. 1.54–305. The same argument, grounded in the topic of moral vices, is used in a similar way in the parallel between Achilles and Ajax (Lib. *Prog.* 10.1.6–7) and has already occurred in an invective of Achilles (Lib. *Prog.* 9.1.8) preparing the σύγκρισις.

problematic:³⁰ the Iliadic paradigm of Achillean hybris has no place in a romance and gives way to another «vice», inspiring love, even though Eros remains the chief culprit for that situation.³¹

2. Portraying Achilles in prose: commonplaces and variations

On a broader level, the depiction of Theagenes as Achilles (and vice versa) is a «topos» in the modern sense of the word: in a metapoetic twist, the text inherits from a network of «Achillean» portrayals remodelled by Heliodorus, just as the novelistic hero is a physical, though not identical, duplication of his ancestor.

The closest to the *Aethiopica* 2.35.1 in terms of content, chronology and intellectual context is Philostratus' *Heroikos* (early 3rd century).³² This work consists in a dialogue between an anonymous winemaker and a Phoenician sailor, that takes place in the sanctuary of Protesilaus. The winemaker claims that Protesilaus frequently comes back to life as a ghost and has revealed to him the true story of the Trojan War. The last part of the text is dedicated to Achilles, with a detailed description of his appearance (εἶδος):

Φοῖνιξ, ἦ καὶ δεῖξεις αὐτόν, ἀμπελουργέ, καὶ ἀναγράψεις ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους;
 Ἀμπελουργός. Τί δὲ οὐ μέλλω φιληκόου γέ σου τυγχάνων; τὴν μὲν δὴ κόμην ἀμφιλαφῆ αὐτῷ φησὶν εἶναι καὶ χρυσοῦ ἠδὲ καὶ εὐσχήμονα, ὅπῃ καὶ ὅπως κινοίη αὐτήν ἢ ἄνεμος ἢ αὐτός, τὴν δὲ ῥίνα οὐπω γρυπτήν ἀλλ' οἷον μέλλουσαν, τὴν δὲ ὄφρυν μνησοειδῆ, τὸν θυμόν δὲ τὸν ἐν τοῖς ὄμμασι χαροποῖς οὖσιν ἡσυχάζοντος μὲν ἀναβάλλεσθαι τινα ὀρμήν, ὀρμήσαντος δὲ συνεκπηδᾶν τῇ γνώμῃ, τοῖς τε ἐρώσιν³³ ἠδὲ αὐτὸν φαίνεσθαι. πεπονθέναι γὰρ τι τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς πρὸς αὐτὸν οἷόν τι πρὸς τοὺς ἀλκίμους τῶν λεόντων· ἀσπαζόμενοι γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ, μᾶλλον αὐτοῖς χαίρομεν ἐπὶν θυμοῦ ὑποπλησθέντες ἐπὶ σὺν ὀρμήσῳσιν ἢ ταῦρον ἢ τι τῶν μαχίμων θηρίων. τὸ δὲ λῆμα τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως δηλοῦσθαί φησι³⁴ καὶ παρὰ τοῦ αὐχένος· εἶναι γὰρ δὴ ὀρθὸν καὶ ἀνεστηκότα.

Phoenician: Will you also show him, winemaker, and give a description of his appearance?

Winemaker: Why won't I since I find in you an active listener? He [Protesilaus] says that his hair is bushy, more pleasant than gold, good-looking no matter where and how it is shaken by the wind or by itself. His nose is not quite aquiline, but seemingly destined to be so; his brow is crescent-shaped; the ardour in his eyes, which are dark blue, brings out some eagerness when he is at rest, but when he is eager, it springs out along with his resolution and appears more charming to his lovers. For the Achaeans have the same feelings towards him as towards brave lions: although we cherish them when they are at rest, we are even more rejoiced by them whenever, filled with ardour, they rush headlong at a boar or a bull or some other warrior animal. He [Protesilaus] says that Achilles' high spirit is also discernible in his neck, for it is straight and erect. (Philostr. *Her.* 48.1–4)

The great number of correspondences between the two texts has been interpreted as proof that Heliodorus used the *Heroikos* to compose the *Aethiopica*.³⁵ From a methodological standpoint, however, an

³⁰ For other illustrations of this phenomenon in ancient Greek novels, see de Temmerman and Demoen (2011). Cf. the problematic function of the Achillean paradigm in *Charit.* 1.4.6 (= *Hom. Il.* 18.22–24): see de Temmerman (2014: 92–94) and Romieux–Brun (2017: 187–190). See also the complete list of quotations in Greek novels provided by Robiano (2000: 512–514), who distinguishes between quotations attributed to a character and those used by the narrator.

³¹ Cf. *Hld.* 4.1.1.

³² Whether Heliodorus lived in the middle of the third century AD as Bowie (1989: 228–229) has suggested, or in the second half of the fourth century as Morgan (1996: 417–421) has argued does not matter here: in any case, the *Heroikos* was surely written before the *Aethiopica*.

³³ Manuscripts provide us with variant readings. I follow de Lannoy's edition of the text (1977), while Follet (2017: 253n9), along with previous editors, opts for the lectio ὀρώσιν («viewers», «spectators»). As de Lannoy (1975: 644) argued, the variant ἐρώσιν probably belongs to a previous version of the *Heroikos*, since ὀρώσιν mainly occurs in the recension of Planudes (13th–14th century) who tended to normalize the text. Besides, the erotic dimension is more consistent with the participle ἀσπαζόμενοι used below. The adjective ἀνέραστος in the *Aethiopica*, 2.35.1, corroborates de Lannoy's demonstration: assuming that Heliodorus knew the *Heroikos* well (see below), he might have read an early version of the text in which ἐρώσιν occurred.

³⁴ Here too, the manuscripts hesitate between φησι («he says») and φασι («they say»). The first lectio is more consistent with the beginning of the passage, where Protesilaus is obviously the subject of the verb φησιν (Follet 2017: 110n12).

³⁵ Grossardt (2006a: 136–137); Follet (2017: 253 n.8).

intertextual reading does no justice to the fact that Philostratus and Heliodorus were drawing on the same shared culture.³⁶

First, both authors reflect explicitly upon the effect of an ἔκφρασις on its audience which was a current theme in Greek prose texts and novels in the Imperial period.³⁷ In the *Heroikos* too, the portrayal is oral: the dialogue allows the Phoenician (cf. Cnemon) to be an internal spectator of the speech told by the winemaker (cf. Calasiris) through the eyes of Protesilaus.³⁸ The Phoenician wants his interlocutor to «show» him the appearance of Achilles³⁹ and has already claimed previously in the text to have seen other heroes thanks to the descriptions.⁴⁰ Besides, the infinitive subordinate clauses achieve the same effect as the present participles in Heliodorus: by means of temporal ambiguities, an object of the past becomes present.

What is more, widespread representations of Achilles were common in the Imperial period. Before analysing further and comparing the two texts, it is worth presenting other depictions of Achilles in Imperial Greek prose literature and beyond, in order to better understand the recurrent pattern which underlines the commonplace, grounded in the same epideictic topics.

The earliest instance of such depictions is provided in the *Ephemeris belli Troiani*, a fake memoir assigned to Dictys Cretensis, who presents himself as a Greek companion of Idomeneus and who witnessed the Trojan War. Apart from four papyrus fragments dating Hermog and 3rd centuries, the text is known to us in a late Latin translation by Septimius.⁴¹ At the beginning of the diary, the narrator gives a short description of Achilles not preserved in the papyri:

Hic in primis adulescentiae annis, procerus, decora facie, studio rerum bellicarum omnes iam tum uirtuteque et gloria superabat.

He was in the first years of his youth, tall, with a beautiful face, a passion for military activity and at that time he already surpassed everybody in bravery and fame. (Dict. 1.14)

At this point, solving the *Quellenforschung* is already a difficult task on its own. It has been argued that the *Ephemeris* might have been one among many other sources for the composition of Philostratus' *Heroikos*.⁴² That the later text was the intermediary source between the *Ephemeris* and the *Aethiopica* is a strong assumption: we could hypothesize as well that Heliodorus knew both and / or remodelled a depiction of Achilles that was commonplace in lost sources.

To further complicate matters, two similar portraits are found in later sources that inherit from the same prosopographical tradition. First, Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia*, the Trojan counterpart of Dictys' Greek-centred testimony, contains a catalogue of the Trojans and the Greeks where he gives a short description of each hero and woman he mentions.⁴³ The text is known to us through a Latin version

³⁶ For another example of this phenomenon, see the comparative analysis of Philostr. VA 1.22 and Hld. 2.22.4 by Peigney (2017: 304–306).

³⁷ See Zeitlin (2013: 23–29) and Holzmeister (2014).

³⁸ Miles (2018: 33).

³⁹ Cf. Philostr. *Her.* 10.1: «Will you describe him, and share with me what you have seen?» (Ἡ καὶ διαγράψεις μοι αὐτὸν καὶ κοινωνήσεις τοῦ εἶδους;). The verb κοινωνεῖν implies the transmission of sight: once the hero has been described, both the Phoenician and the winemaker will share something common, which is Protesilaus' appearance. Cf. also Philostr. *Her.* 33.38: «Is it possible to see Palamedes as I did with Nestor, Diomedes and Sthenelus?» (Ἔστι καὶ τὸν Παλαμῆδη ἰδεῖν, ἀμπελουργέ, καθάπερ καὶ τὸν Νέστορα εἶδον καὶ τὸν Διομήδη καὶ τὸν Σθένηλον... ;).

⁴⁰ Cf. Philostr. *Her.* 10.5, right after the depiction of Protesilaus: «I have seen the youth, vinedresser, and I am in awe of your friend» (Ἐἶδον τὸν νεανίαν, ἀμπελουργέ, καὶ ἀγαμαί σε τοῦ ἑταίρου). For further analysis, see Zeitlin (2001: 214); Grossardt (2006a: 123–124); Mestre (2007: 539–542); Whitmarsh (2009: 225–226).

⁴¹ For recent states of the art, see Ruta (2018: 23–29) and Gómez Peinado (2018: 53–55).

⁴² Several correspondences in terms of content have been identified between the two (Philostr. *Her.* 26.10 = Dict. 1.13; Philostr. *Her.* 48.17 = Dict. 3.15; Philostr. *Her.* 51 = Dict. 5.13), but they are not decisive: for discussion, see Merkle (1989: 245–259); Grossardt (2006a: 71–72); Kim (2010: 179–181). Yet, the winemaker claims that Idomeneus did not join in the Trojan war (Philostr. *Her.* 30.1). We may hypothesize that he thus nullifies Dictys' pseudo-documentary testimony: see Huhn and Bethe (1917: 618–619); Merkle (1994: 193–194); Dowden (2009: 162).

⁴³ In that order: Helen, Priamus, Hector, Deiphobus and Helenus, Troilus, Paris Alexander, Aeneas, Antenor, Hecuba, Andromache, Cassandra, Polyxena (12); Agamemnon, Menelaus, Achilles, Patroclus, Ajax the son of Oïlleus, Ajax the son of Telamon, Odysseus, Diomedes, Nestor, Protesilaus, Neoptolemus, Palamedes, Podalirius, Machaon, Merion, Briseis (13).

written between the 4th and 6th centuries. The depiction of Achilles, seen through the eyes of Dares himself whose eyewitness account reminds us of the status of Calasiris in the *Aethiopica* and Protesilaus in the *Heroikos*, runs as follows:

[Dares ait se vidisse] *Achillem pectorosum, ore uenusto, membris ualentibus et magnis, bene crispatum, clementem, in armis acerrimum, uultu hilari, dapsilem, capillo myrteo.*

[Dares says he saw] Achilles having a strong chest, a lovely figure, robust and big limbs, beautiful curly hair; he was gentle, very impetuous under arms; his face was jovial; he was rich (?); his hair had the colour of the myrtle. (Dar. 13)

Contrary to Dictys' *Ephemeris*, no papyrus fragment of a Greek original has been discovered, although prose writers from the 2nd century AD mention a Trojan Iliad written by a Dares supposedly before the Homeric poems.⁴⁴ The relationship between the Latin text and the references to a (perhaps fake) Trojan Iliad has long been subject to discussion, as well as the existence of a Greek original itself.⁴⁵ In any case, Malalas' *Chronographia* (6th century) contains a catalogue of Achaean and Trojan men and women that is remarkably similar to that of Dares in terms of content.⁴⁶ It has been argued that the Greek version of the *De excidio Troiae historia* was Malalas' source, which may prove that an earlier Greek original did in fact exist.⁴⁷ Yet, the argument can be reversed if we are to assume that Malalas was the source for the composition of the Latin text, if it was in fact written later.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, the first section of Malalas' catalogue, portraying Achilles among other Achaean leaders, has not been preserved.⁴⁹ In Thurn's edition (2000: 75–79), the Greek text is a retroversion based on a treatise by Isaac Comnenus (12th century), entitled *On the peculiarities and characteristics of the Greeks and Trojans who were in Troy* (Περὶ ιδιότητος καὶ χαρακτήρων τῶν ἐν Τροίᾳ Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ Τρώων).⁵⁰

Ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς εὖστηθος, μέγας τὸν ὄγκον τοῦ σώματος, μακρόσκελος, σπανός, ξανθός, εὐπρόσωπος, οἰνοπαής, γοργοὺς ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, πολύθριξ, μακρόρριν, τοὺς πόδας ὠκὺς καὶ τοῖς ἄλμασι δόκιμος, δεινὸς πολεμιστής, εὐχαρὶς, φιλήδονος, μεγαλόψυχος καὶ καλλίφωνος. ταῦτα τούτου τὰ ιδιώματα, τὰ μὲν τὴν τούτου δραστηρίαν ἐνέργειαν τεκμαιρόμενα, τὰ δὲ τοῦ φυσικοῦ θυμοῦ καὶ προαιρετικοῦ τὴν ὀξύτητα.

Achilles has a strong chest, is massive in body size, long-legged, beardless, auburn, with a lovely figure, wine-coloured, having fierce eyes, with much hair, long-nosed, with «swift feet» and esteemed for his ability to leap; he is also a tremendous soldier, gracious, fond of pleasure, high-souled and with a beautiful voice. Those are his characteristics, some of which give a clue of his active energy, others of how sharp his natural eagerness and will is. (Isaac Comnenus, 81 Hinck)

Surprisingly, in the conclusion of his treatise, Isaac Comnenus claims that Dictys Cretensis was his source, although the Latin *Ephemeris* only provides a description of Achilles.⁵¹ Assuming that the original Greek version of the *Ephemeris* contained other portraits that have not been preserved in its Latin translation, Dictys might have been a source for Malalas' *Chronographia*, and consequently Isaac Comnenus' catalogue.⁵²

⁴⁴ Ptol. Chenn. in Phot. Bibl. 190, 147a; Ael. VH 11.2.

⁴⁵ For further bibliography, see Garbugino (2018: 75).

⁴⁶ Mal. Chr. 5.9–10.

⁴⁷ Schissel von Fleschenberg (1908: 96–124).

⁴⁸ Garbugino (2018: 80–95).

⁴⁹ The extant catalogue starts in the middle of a description of Palamedes, followed in that order by Merion, Idomeneus, Philoctetes, Ajax the son of Oileus, Pyrrhus alias Neoptolemus, Calchas (9.10); Priam, Hector, Deiphobus, Helenus, Troilus, Paris Alexander, Aeneas, Antenor, Hecuba, Andromache, Cassandra, Polyxena (9.11).

⁵⁰ While Thurn's reconstruction is commonly used for discussing Malalas (cf. Garbugino 2018: 81–82), Pralon (2015: 240) remains cautious about its accuracy, since Isaac Comnenus adds details absent from the extant part of the *Chronographia*.

⁵¹ Isaac Comnenus, 88 (Hinck).

⁵² Grossardt (2006b: 449–457).

Far from trying to solve these issues, I will adopt a comparative approach in my analysis of the source material and thus deconstruct their discursive strategies. In each instance, the different components of Achilles' nature (φύσις) are closely articulated, with a central focus on the epideictic topic of the body (σῶμα): the physiognomy of the hero is the mirror image of his soul (ψυχή) and character (ἦθος), in accordance with the instructions given in the rhetorical treatises. What we would be inclined to interpret as a «commonplace» originates from a common use of the same rhetorical devices and topics.

More precisely, the portrayal of Achilles as a mix between gentleness and boldness is a recurrent pattern re-elaborated in various ways. In their respective catalogue of attributes, Dictys (1.14), Dares (13) and Isaac Comnenus (81 Hinck) juxtapose these characteristics without using any coordinating conjunctions, which creates a contrast between the two. Achilles' «beautiful face» (*decora facies*) in Dictys' words and «lovely figure» near the beginning of the two other lists (*os uenustum* / εὐπρόσωπος) suggest a sense of kindness, made explicit by Dares (*clemens*). This physical embodiment of gentleness counteracts Achilles' passion for military activity and impetuosity at war: *studium rerum bellicarum* in Dictys; in *armis acerrimus* in Dares; and δεινὸς πολεμιστῆς in Isaac Comnenus, who introduces the adjective εὐχαρις (as a development of εὐπρόσωπος) after and not before the motif of the terrifying and skilled warrior.

The most elaborate version of it is the depiction of Achilles in Philostratus' *Heroikos*, 48.2, in which the two aspects intertwine in a chiasmatic structure: first, the hero is presented «at rest» (ἡσυχάζοντος), an image which is immediately contrasted by the eagerness (ὄρμη) that his eyes give off *even* in quietness; second, he is portrayed «when he is eager» (ὄρμήσαντος), but only to reveal the charm that appeals to his lovers (τοῖς τε ἐρῶσιν).⁵³ In this regard, Heliodorus' Theagenes (2.35.1) is closer to Philostratus' Achilles. Emphasis is placed on the impressions conveyed by his eyes (βλέπων), as a mix between an impetuous, overwhelming look (σοβαρός) and an erotic charm (ἀνέραστος), that will effectively seduce Chariclea in the subsequent episodes (cf. 4.5.5). Yet, Heliodorus is much more concise than Philostratus, since he summarizes the contrast with one logical connector (τε ἄμα καί): in that respect, he continues the tradition initiated by Dictys.

3. Achilles' body and soul: filling in the gaps in Homeric poetry

Before examining Achilles' attributes in further detail, we must go back to his representation in the *Iliad*, the main ancient source about him. One aim of the prosopographical tradition may well have been to bridge a gap, considering that Homer did not provide his readers / listeners with detailed physical descriptions of his own characters. In the *Iliad*, the main physical characteristic of Achilles is being the fastest of the Achaeans, as illustrated by the common epithets he receives: «swift» (ὠκύς),⁵⁴ «with swift feet» in two words (πόδας ὠκύς)⁵⁵ or «swift-footed» in one (ποδώκης),⁵⁶ and more intensively «self-reliant on his feet» / «succouring with the feet» (ποδάρκης).⁵⁷ Sometimes, the poet mentions very precise details depending on the narrative context, such as Achilles' blond or auburn mane (ξανθὴ κόμη / χαιτή) mentioned twice: first, in book 1, when Athena takes hold of Achilles' hair in order to calm him down; secondly, in book 23, when Achilles decides to dedicate his hair to Patroclus.⁵⁸ When Achilles hesitates to kill Agamemnon again in book 1, the poet focuses on his «hairy chest» (στήθεσσι λασίοισι) as the seat of his rage.⁵⁹

When we compare the scarce details provided by Homer with the complete descriptions of the hero and that of Theagenes in the other texts mentioned, it seems quite clear that each prose writer tries to fill in a

⁵³ Erotic desire can be communicated to the readership as an effect of ἔκφρασις; see Whitmarsh (2009: 220) and Platt (2011: 247).

⁵⁴ Hom. Il. 19.295; 19.419; 21.211; 22.14; 22.188; 22.229; 23.218; 24.621.

⁵⁵ Hom. Il. 1.58; 1.84; 1.148; 1.215; 1.364; 1.489; 9.196; 9.307; 9.606; 9.643; 9.112; 9.607; 16.48; 18.78; 18.97; 18.187; 19.55; 19.145; 19.198; 22.260; 22.344; 23.93; 23.776; 24.138; 24.559; 24.751.

⁵⁶ Hom. Il. 2.860; 2.874; 8.474; 16.165; 16.281; 16.865; 17.388; 17.486; 18.234; 18.261; 18.267; 20.27; 20.45; 20.89; 22.193; 23.28; 23.35; 23.249; 23.793; 24.458; cf. Od. 9.471; 9.538

⁵⁷ As defined in the scholia bT Il. 1.121 and by Eust., ad Il. 1.121 (vol. 1, 102.21–103.27 Valk). Cf. Hom. Il. 1.121; 2.688; 6.423; 9.599; 16.5; 18.181; 20.177; 20.413; 20.445; 21.49; 21.149; 21.265; 22.376; 23.140; 23.193; 23.333; 23.534; 23.555; 23.828; 23.889; 24.668; cf. also 22.138: «relying on his swift feet» (ποσὶ κραιπνοῖσι πεποιθώς).

⁵⁸ Hom. Il. 1.197 and 23.141.

⁵⁹ Hom. Il. 1.189.

blank in the Homeric poem. That is unquestionably the intention of Isaac Comnenus who, in the prologue on his treatise, claims to have written it «so that the readers of the [Homeric] texts can get some refreshment from these discourses.» (ἵνα κάκ τούτων παραψυχῆν τινα λόγων οἱ τοῖς γράμμασιν ἐντυγχάνοντες ἐρανίζοντο).⁶⁰ Isaac Comnenus explicitly spells out an implicit purpose in the previous tradition. He is indeed the only one who borrows from the *Iliad* the auburn (ξανθός) colour of the hair⁶¹ and who refers to one of Achilles' epithets: «with 'swift feet' and esteemed for his ability to leap» (τοὺς πόδας ὠκύς καὶ τοῖς ἄλμασι δόκιμος). He thus combines textual quotations of the *Iliad* with the long tradition he inherits from, being aware that the portraits the Imperial period onwards complement the Homeric model.

Nonetheless, this statement must be nuanced since the function of the epideictic topics was twofold in the school curriculum: they served as tools both for interpreting canonical texts and for modelling a speech on the devices identified in the literary material from the past. An example of this attitude can be found in the second *Essay on the life and poetry of Homer* attributed to Plutarch, which reflects a higher level of education than those provided by the *Progymnasmata* and gives us an idea of the common knowledge intellectuals (πεπαιδευμένοι) of the 2nd-3rd centuries had of Homer.⁶² In a chapter on the different types of «narration» (διηγήσεις),⁶³ the author of the treatise shows that Homer already handled the «constitutive parts of the situation» (περιστάσεις).⁶⁴ The attributes of the person (πρόσωπον) are illustrated by a quotation of the beginning of *Iliad* 5: «There was among the Trojans a certain Dares, wealthy, blameless, | priest of Hephaestus; he had two sons | Phegeus and Idaios, acquainted with every sort of fight» (ἦν δέ τις ἐν Τρώεσσι Δάρης ἀφνειός, ἀμύμων, | ἱεὺς Ἡφαίστιοιο, δύω δέ οἱ υἱέες ἦσθη, | Φηγεὺς Ἰδαῖός τε, μάχησιν εὖ εἶδότε πάσης).⁶⁵ The treatise does not provide any further analysis of the lines, but with the attributes of the person in mind, we easily understand the illustrative function of the quotation: the poet introduces in that order the origin of the man (γένος: a Trojan), his proper name (ὄνομα: Dares), his social condition (τύχη: wealthy or rich), the natural virtues of his character (ἦθος: blameless, noble), his activities or profession (ἐπιτηδεύματα: priest of Hephaestus) and the blessing of children (εὐτεκνία), another current topic in an encomium.⁶⁶

The *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* also gives us a better insight into the relationship between ἔκφρασις and διήγημα in the scope of epideictic topics. In the *Progymnasmata*, the two Homeric figures used to exemplify the ἔκφρασις of person are Thersites in the *Iliad* and Eurybates in the *Odyssey*.⁶⁷ Pseudo-Plutarch goes one step further, since he puts on the same level general considerations on the attributes of the character and the lines «in which he [Homer] depicts the appearances of some, as in the case of Thersites» (ἐν οἷς εἶδη τινῶν διαγράφει, ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ Θερσίτου): the epideictic topics constitute tools for achieving either διήγημα or ἔκφρασις.⁶⁸

In the case of Achilles, some very precise details in the *Iliad* may have had an important influence on the five portrayals at stake. In particular, in book 19, the poet depicts his rage when dressing himself with the armour crafted by Hephaestus: «From his teeth a gnashing came; his two eyes | were shining like the gleam of fire; and into his heart | plunged an unbearable pain» (τοῦ καὶ ὀδόντων μὲν καναχὴ πέλε, τῷ δέ οἱ ὄσσε | λαμπέσθη ὡς εἴ τε πυρὸς σέλας, ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ | δῦν' ἄχος ἄτλητον).⁶⁹ According to the exegetic

⁶⁰ Isaac Comnenus, 80 (Hinck). See Pralon (2015, 242-243) for further analysis.

⁶¹ This feature constitutes a significant difference between the five portraits. Neither Dictys nor Heliodorus mention the hair colour. Philostratus magnifies the detail of auburn hair, depicting it as «more pleasant than gold» (χρυσοῦ ἡδίω, *Her.* 48.2; cf. Philostr. *Im.* 2.5.4). By contrast, Dares (13) modifies it, obscurely depicting an Achilles whose «hair had the colour of the myrtle» (*capillo myrteo*).

⁶² Keaney and Lamberton (1996: 9-30); Morgan (1998: 148-149).

⁶³ In this context, διήγησις is synonymous with διήγημα, in line with Theon who uses the terms interchangeably (Theon, *Prog.* 5.78.16-25). In other handbooks, διήγησις stands for the narrative as a whole and διήγημα corresponds to an isolated episode (Ps.-Hermog. *Prog.* 2.2; Aphth. *Prog.* 1.2; cf. Nicol. *Prog.* 11.16-12.6 for more elaborated definitions). See Berardi (2017: 80-81) and Piedrabuena (2017: 83-84).

⁶⁴ Ps.-Plu. *Vit.Hom.* 2.74; see Keaney and Lamberton (1996: 141n1) for further analysis.

⁶⁵ *Hom. Il.* 5.9-11 = Ps.-Plu. *Vit.Hom.* 2.75.

⁶⁶ Cf. Theon, *Prog.* 9.110.6.

⁶⁷ *Hom. Il.* 2.217-219 = Theon, *Prog.* 7.118.13-14; Ps.-Hermog., *Prog.* 10.2; Nicol. *Prog.* 68.15-16. *Hom. Od.* 19.246 = Theon, *Prog.* 7.118.10-12; Aphth. *Prog.* 12.1.

⁶⁸ Ps.-Plu. *Vit.Hom.* 2.75.

⁶⁹ *Hom. Il.* 19.365-367.

scholia, «after vivid portrayals of the body, he [Homer] then shows the disposition of the soul» (μετὰ τὰς τοῦ σώματος ἐκφράσεις εἶτα καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν διάθεσιν δηλοῖ)⁷⁰. The scholiast therefore identifies a strong complementarity between the external, physical signs and the psychological interiority, linking the topics of body and of soul in order to show how the poet provides a vivid image of the character. Besides, we can notice that the very precise detail of the hairy chest in *Iliad* 1 has been read in the light of physiognomy. The scholia give a medical interpretation of it: «this is the sign of impetuous men, for the heat is the cause of the growth of hair» (σημαίνει δὲ καὶ τοῖς θερμοῖς· ἡ θέρμη γὰρ αἰτία τῆς ἐκφύσεως τῶν τριχῶν).⁷¹

Readers of Homer from the Imperial period and beyond, therefore, tried to make connections between the different topics occasionally identified in some lines, associating external elements to them, for instance by proposing a medical interpretation of one verse. The four portraits of Achilles and the depiction of Theagenes are further elaborations of this approach.

4. Physiognomy: depicting the body, interpreting the soul

The same physiognomic framework is applied in the five texts to connect the topics of body and soul, and thus provide the reader with a complete depiction of the hero as a complement to the *Iliadic* Achilles.

Under the Roman Empire, the most famous treatise on physiognomy was the one written by the sophist Polemon in the first half of the 2nd century AD.⁷² Philostratus, a direct inheritor of Polemon, makes explicit use of these theories.⁷³ In the *Heroikos*, 48.4, Protesilaus is depicted as an expert on physiognomy since he himself interprets the shape of the erect neck: «he says (φησι) that Achilles' high spirit is also discernible (δηλοῦσθαι) in his neck».⁷⁴ The use of the verb δηλοῦν in this context belongs to the vocabulary of technical literature, considering that a physical sign «clearly exhibits» the moral characteristics of an individual.⁷⁵ In the *Aethiopica*, 2.35.1, Calasiris also shows some physiognomic skills,⁷⁶ which is made explicit in 4.5.5, when he says about Theagenes: «he relates himself to Achilles as his ancestor and, to me, he seems to be telling the truth, if we are to judge by the stature and beauty of the young man, putting faith in his Achillean noble origin» (ἀναφέρει δὲ ἑαυτὸν εἰς Ἀχιλλέα πρόγονον καί μοι καὶ ἐπαληθεύειν ἔοικεν, εἰ δεῖ τῷ μεγέθει καὶ τῷ κάλλει τοῦ νεανίου τεκμαίρεσθαι, πιστουμένων τὴν Ἀχιλλεῖον εὐγένειαν). As an internal narrator linking the topics together like Protesilaus in the *Heroikos*, Calasiris induces the true nature of the hero from the physical signs he has depicted in book 2 (cf. the idea of «clue» being conveyed by the participle τεκμαιρόμενα in the final comment of Isaac Comnenus, 81 Hinck).

More precisely, the four representations of Achilles and Heliodorus' portrait of Theagenes can be compared to what the physiognomy handbooks define as the brave man, who overlaps with the type of the perfect Greek man in Polemon's theories.⁷⁷ According to the physiognomists, an upright and firm body signals manliness, courage, and fairness.⁷⁸ In various yet similar ways, the late Latin and Byzantine

⁷⁰ Scholia ad T Il. 19.366–367.

⁷¹ Scholia AbT ad Il. I, 189. Cf. Eust., ad Il. 1.189 (vol. 1, 124.30–31 Valk): «the Physiognomists show that the breast of the wicked and intelligent man is hairy» (εἶναι δὲ τὰ τῶν πανούργων καὶ συνετῶν στήθη λάσια δηλοῦσιν οἱ Φυσιογνώμονες); Eustathius interprets the same physical sign in another way, but his commentary is further evidence of the existence of physiognomic readings of the line.

⁷² Even though the original has not been preserved, its content is known to us partly through two late several sources: a Greek epitome by Adamantius the Sophist (first half of 4th century) and an anonymously written Latin treatise (second half of the same century); see André (1981: 31–34); Repath (2007a: 487–491; 2007b: 550–552). In the latter, Polemon's theories are compiled with those of previous texts, among which two pseudo-Aristotelian handbooks from the 3rd century BC: see Boys–Stones (2007: 57–75). Beyond Greek and Latin culture, Polemon's treatise was a model for the Islamic physiognomic tradition (Gherstet 2007: 309–319; Hoyland 2007a: 227–228) and exhaustively translated into Arabic in a Leiden manuscript from the 14th century (Hoyland 2007b: 329–332).

⁷³ See Miles (2018: 139–143); also Grossardt (2006a: 122–123) and Elsner (2007: 222–223).

⁷⁴ Consequently, the Phoenician himself becomes an interpreter of the portraits: see Platt (2011: 244–245) and Miles (2018: 164–165).

⁷⁵ Cf. Adam. *Phgn.* 1.3; 1.7; 1.9; 1.11; 1.15; 1.16; 1.17; 1.19; 1.21; 2.5; 2.8; 2.15; 2.19; 2.20; 2.21; 2.24; 2.28; 2.31; 2.35; 2.41.

⁷⁶ For further analysis of the complexity of Calasiris' skills, see Kim (2019: 230–232).

⁷⁷ Adam. *Phgn.* 2.31–32; Anon. Lat. *Phgn.* 9 and 79; Leiden Polem. 2.31.35^b–32.37^b. On the «racial» theories in ancient handbooks, see Boys–Stones (2007: 112–113) and Swain (2007: 125–201). For other representations of the pure Greek man in Imperial prose texts, see Stebnicka (2007).

⁷⁸ Ps.–Arist. *Phgn.* 2.6.811a; Adam. *Phgn.* 2.21; Anon. Lat. *Phgn.* 53; Leiden Polem. *Phgn.* 2.21.32^b.

sources depict a tall, strong, massive Achilles whose physical signs matches these characteristics.⁷⁹ In both the *Heroikos* (48.4) and the *Aethiopica* (2.35.1), we find more specific depictions, with an insistence on Achilles' «erect» (ὀρθός) neck (αὐχίην), which is the closest correspondence between the two.

Heliodorus differentiates himself from the commonplace by thematically and lexically linking the image of the erect neck to that of «a mane of hair rising up from the forehead» (ἀπὸ τοῦ μετώπου τὴν κόμην πρὸς τὸ ὄρθιον ἀναχαιτίζων). Yet, the motif is not elaborated from scratch. Indeed, the verb ἀναχαιτίζω we found in the *Aethiopica* is commonly used to characterize the mane of an animal. It recalls the «bushy» (ἀμφιλαφής) hair of Achilles in Philostratus' *Heroikos* (48.2)⁸⁰ and echoes the central simile to the lion (48.3). This network of images could also provide guidance on the meaning of the adjective *dapsilis* in Dares (13), which may correspond to the «rich», «abundant» hair of Achilles, as in Isaac Comnenus (πολύθριξ, 81 Hinck). In any case, this recurrent motif is extrapolated from the word χαιτή, used in a passage of the *Iliad* 23.141 quoted above, which stands for more profuse hair than κόμη (1.197).⁸¹

The noses of Philostratus' Achilles and Heliodorus' Theagenes are quite similar not in their shape itself, but from the perspective of a physiognomic interpretation: they are a sign of a bravery to be. By contrast, the «long-nosed» (μακρόρριν) Achilles in Isaac Comnenus denotes maturity and nobility.⁸² In the *Heroikos* (48.2), the nose of the hero «is not yet aquiline» (τὴν δὲ ῥίνα οὐπω γρυπτήν), «but seemingly destined to be so» (ἀλλ' οἷον μέλλουσιν). In the handbooks of physiognomy, a γρυπτός nose belongs to a man characterized by his high-mindedness (μεγαλοψυχία) or magnanimity (μεγαλόνοια).⁸³ Consequently, despite his natural predisposition for being a great hero, Achilles has not yet fully matured. This interpretation provides us with background elements for understanding why the nose of Theagenes in Heliodorus would proclaim his impetuosity (ἡ ῥίς ἐν ἐπαγγελία θυμοῦ). This sign embodies, in both senses of the word, his bravery to be.

Beyond the duality between fierceness and charm, the eyes of Achilles in the *Heroikos* are definitely dark blue (ἐν τοῖς ὄμμασι χαροποῖς οὖσιν):⁸⁴ this trait occurs neither in the *Iliad* nor in any other portrait of Achilles. Only those of Theagenes are not yet dark blue (χαροποί), but they soon will be of this precise colour (ὀφθαλμὸς οὐπω μὲν χαροπός). If we follow the handbooks of physiognomy, this eye colour means nothing in itself;⁸⁵ considered within a network of other physical signs however, it signals a brave, manly person,⁸⁶ and a perfect Greek man in Polemon's theories.⁸⁷ The young boy in Heliodorus is less mature than the Achilles in Philostratus.

From these observations, it becomes clear that Achilles' twofold nature is partly due to his age (ἡλικία), another epideictic topic that determines the behaviour of the character.⁸⁸ In the beginning of Philostratus' *Heroikos* (12.2), the winemaker depicts him as a young man (νεανίας). Similarly, in the

⁷⁹ Cf. the strong chest (*pectorosus*, Dar. 13; εὐστηθος, Isaac Comnenus, 81 Hinck); the massive body and big limbs (*membris ualentibus et magnis*, Dar. 13; μέγας τὸν ὄγκον τοῦ σώματος, Isaac Comnenus, 81 Hinck); the great size in Dict. 1.14 (*procerus*), that recalls the image of a «long-legged» Achilles in Isaac Comnenus, 81 Hinck (μακρόσκελος).

⁸⁰ The same adjective is also used in the *Imagines* as an epithet of κόμη (cf. Philostr. *Im.* 1.23.5) and χαιτή (cf. Philostr. *Im.* 2.9.5; 2.18.3). In Polemon's handbook of physiognomy, it was the attribute of the hairy breast, signalling «hot-tempered and high-spirited» men (θερμοβοῦλοι καὶ εὐψύχοι, Adam. *Phgn.* 2.37; cf. Anon. Lat. *Phgn.* 14; Leiden Polem. *Phgn.* 2.37.39^a-40^a).

⁸¹ Cf. Apollon. *Soph.* s.v. χαιται (p. 116): αἱ κεχυμένα κόμαι.

⁸² This is also the physical characteristic of Nestor (Isaac Comnenus, 85 Hinck; cf. Mal. *Chr.* 5.10). The handbooks of physiognomy are of no help in this regard, since the chapters dedicated to the nose are grounded on a combinatory logic difficult to handle. Cf., for instance, Adam. *Phgn.* 2.25: if the point of the nose (ῥινὸς τὸ ἄκρον) is thick (ἄδρόν) among other features, it indicates bravery and high-mindedness (ἀνδρεία καὶ μεγαλοψυχία), while «a long and thin nose is very much bird-like» (ῥίς μακρὰ καὶ λεπτή πάνυ ὀρνιθῶδες), without any indication on what «bird-like» implies.

⁸³ Ps.-Arist. *Phgn.* 2.6.811a; Adam. *Phgn.* 2.25; Anon. Lat. *Phgn.* 51 (*magnanimitas*). It is difficult to determine what part of it is translated in the Arabic version of Polemon's treatise (Leiden Polem. *Phgn.* 2.25.34^a): for further discussion, see Hoyland (2007b: 417 n. 256).

⁸⁴ Philostr. *Her.* 48.2. I follow Repath (2007a: 492) who uses «dark blue» in his translation of Adamantius' *Physiognomy*.

⁸⁵ Adam. *Phgn.* 1.11; Anon. Lat. *Phgn.* 23 and 26; Leiden Polem. *Phgn.* 1.8.7^a-8^a. Cf. Philostr. *Gym.* 25.

⁸⁶ Ps.-Arist. *Phgn.* 1.3.807a-b; Anon. Lat. *Phgn.* 5 and 81.

⁸⁷ Adam. *Phgn.* 2.32; Leiden Polem. *Phgn.* 2.32.37^b. Cf. Philostr. *VS* 2.1.552. Achilles has «fierce eyes» (γοργὸς ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς) in Isaac Comnenus, 81 (Hinck), and beautiful curly hair in Dar. 13 (*bene crispatum*), two characteristics attributed by Adamantius to the archetype of the good Greek.

⁸⁸ Cf. Theon, *Prog.* 5.78.26; 8.115.25-27; Hermog. *Stat.* 3.8. See Patillon (2009: 121-122n5).

translation of Dictys' *Ephemeris* by Septimius (1.14), Achilles appears «in the first years of his youth» (in *primis adulescentiae annis*). As for Isaac Comnenus' depiction (81 Hinck), this attribute is embodied by the «beardless» (σπανός) face of the hero. As readers of the *Iliad*, the three of them describe its main character as a young man who has not reached maturity yet.

These texts help us understand why Heliodorus modelled Theagenes on Achilles and not on another figure of the Trojan Cycle: better than anybody, the latter serves as a perfect model for a hero who is still immature. The established codes of the ancient novel are thus intertwined with the Iliadic paradigm. More precisely, *adulescens* being synonymous with νεανίας, the expression «in the first years» is probably the Latin translation of a word like νεανίσκος in the original Greek text of the *Ephemeris*: it generally corresponds to an age group that is intermediate between the μερικάκιον and the νεανίας.⁸⁹ Even though these concepts are fluid,⁹⁰ the fact that Theagenes appears as a νεανίσκος (2.35.1) suggests that Heliodorus' depiction is closer to the *Ephemeris* than to the *Heroikos*. The choice of a younger variant of the epic hero makes sense in a context where the novelistic hero, modelled on the latter, is still in the early stage of his maturing. In any case, there will not be any further explicit references to Achilles beyond book 4 of the *Aethiopica*: through his travels, Theagenes will move beyond the original young Achillean paradigm.

5. Conclusions

From this analysis, we can reach three main conclusions. First, by adding physical characteristics not extant in Homer, prose writers of the Imperial and Byzantine periods use epideictic topics as a tool for interpreting the *Iliad* and rewriting it. On the one hand, these rhetorical «places» help them find links between several attributes of the Homeric Achilles that are not made explicit in the poem. On the other hand, these «places» are the starting point for reinventing their own depiction, version, and interpretation of the hero. Secondly, since ancient authors read the same epic model in the light of the same topics, it is no wonder that their respective portraits are remarkably similar: these depictions of Achilles give us an example of how τόποι produce a «commonplace» in the modern sense of the word, that deserves, though, to be placed within the individual discursive strategies of each text where it occurs. Thirdly, placing Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* in this rhetorical context and prosopographical tradition allows one to conclude that the relationship between Theagenes and Achilles goes far beyond the willingness to model the novelistic hero on an idealized Homeric hero, and even beyond a generic rivalry between the erotic novel and epic poetry: the epideictic topics crafting the character of Theagenes are adapted from those of Achilles in non-novelistic prose narratives, themselves adapted from a rhetorical reading of the *Iliad*.

Finally, returning to the original question of ἔκφρασις, Heliodorus shares with his predecessors and his successors the willingness to distinguish himself from the literal content of the *Iliad*, but in order to better imitate Homer's devices. Cnemon in the *Aethiopica*, the Phoenician in the *Heroikos*, even Dictys and Dares who claim to have witnessed the Trojan War, are put in the same position as Priam who, at the end of the *Iliad*, was amazed by Achilles (θαύμαζ' Ἀχιλλῆα) when he saw «how tall, how beautiful he was» (ὄσσοις ἔην οἴος τε).⁹¹ For his part, the reader of the *Heroikos*, the *Aethiopica* and other narratives is inclined to imitate the internal spectator of the hero, just like the audience of the *Iliad* was invited to share Priam's awe according to the scholia: «these elements [are introduced] in order to strike the listeners» (ταῦτα δὲ πρὸς ἔκπληξιν τῶν ἀκροατῶν).⁹² All of these prose writers complement the effects identified by ancient scholars and rhetoricians in Homeric poetry, thus producing striking and vivid pictures of their own.

⁸⁹ For further analysis on these notions in ancient Greek novels, see Lalanne (2006: 70–90).

⁹⁰ Theagenes is called νεανίας elsewhere (cf. 4.5.5 quoted below).

⁹¹ Hom. Il. 24.629–630.

⁹² Scholia bT ad Il. 24.630. On the «striking» effects (ἔκπληξις) of the *Iliad* identified in the scholia, see Nünlist (2009: 139–149).

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