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édités par

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HOMMAGES

SILENT ORATORS: ON WITHHOLDING ELOQUENCE IN THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

Abstract: This paper examines a number of late ancient texts in which orators, asked to speak, refuse and explain why. It sketches out a preliminary typology of the withholding of eloquence in late antiquity. Apart from circumstances beyond the orator's control that fully prevented or curtailed a display of eloquence, an orator refrained from speaking because he was rusty in basic ways, unprepared for a specific theme and unwilling to speak extempore; because his audience was unqualified to hear him with appreciation; to prevent the audience from becoming sated with his skill, or to punish an unappreciative audience or specific individuals requesting an oration at whom he was angry. He may have refrained from speaking or curtailed his oration so as not to overtax an audience. Refusing to speak entailed a display of power, as did speaking itself; and in so refusing, the orator could make a statement about himself or his audience.

Keywords: Aelius Aristides, Cassiodorus, Choricius, Cicero, declamation, extempore speech, Himerius, late ancient Gaza, Libanius, prolalia, Themistius.

In the course of my studies of late ancient rhetorical texts, my attention has been drawn to what might be called a topos of oratorical behavior. In its full form, an orator is asked to speak, refuses, and explains why. I examine the topos here in a number of late ancient texts. Other texts, from the classical to the high Byzantine period, are brought in for assistance. There is doubtless more evidence to be found, but it is not easy to net in. Meanwhile, I offer a preliminary typology of the withholding of eloquence in late antiquity.

i. Himerius, *Oration* 19, and Choricius, *Dialexis* 16 [XXVII]

Himerius's *Oration* 19 Colonna survives only in ten short fragments from Photius, *Bibliotheca* cod. 243, which is a collection of Himerian excerpts, and from a fourteenth-century Neapolitan manuscript[1]. The title of the oration given in the

[1] See R. J. PENELLA (trans.), *Man and the Word: The Orations of Himerius*, Berkeley-Los Angeles

Neapolitan manuscript and in Photius, *Bibliotheca* cod. 165, a Himerian bibliography, is "Fine things are rare things" (ὅτι σπάνια τὰ καλά) and that title is echoed in frag. 5 of the oration, "for it is proper that things held in honor be rare" (σπάνια γὰρ εἶναι καθήκει τὰ τίμια). The oration gave various examples of that principle: things that are distant and not regularly seen (*e.g.*, the pyramids of Egypt) have a higher repute than what we can see routinely (frag. 6; cf. 10); the blooming of the rose and the coming of the harvest are so pleasing precisely because we do not have them all the time (7); and, conversely, the constant sounding of the gong of Dodona and a persistently hot sun are unpleasant because they last too long (8, 9). A group of very short fragments from this oration on Persian skill in archery (1-5; cf. 6) must have come from a passage in which the point was made that this skill was so highly regarded precisely because it was rare[2]. As fragment 8 remarks, "for familiarity has the power to breed a sense of satiety (κόρον) and by arrogance (ὕβρει) to sully what is available to us"; and, again, in fragment 10: "Familiarity breeds satiety (κόρον) … Through arrogance (δι᾽ ὕβριν) it often shoots its arrows even at lovers. I heard this once in a proverb".

What does any of this have to do with oratory? We would have had no reason to make any connection with oratory were it not for the explanation of the occasion of this Himerian oration provided both in cod. 165 and in cod. 243 of Photius's *Bibliotheca*:

> Phot., *Bibl.* cod. 165 [108a]: ὅτε ἀναβαλλόμενος εἰπεῖν ἀξιούμενος εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο διείλεκται, ὅτι σπάνια τὰ καλά ("when, postponing speaking when asked to do so, he [finally] addressed himself to the proposition that fine things are rare things").

> Phot., *Bibl.* cod. 243 [373a]: ὅτε τὴν ἐπίδειξιν ἀξιούμενος ἀνεβάλλετο, εἶτα εἶπεν ("when, asked for a rhetorical display, he postponed speaking, and then spoke").

It is not clear how long he held off, but in the end he did yield, to a student audience (10, ὦ παῖδες). And when he did finally speak, his chief point was that eloquence is appreciated more when displays of it are limited in frequency. He draws on an ancient Hellenic doctrine, one he calls proverbial, that associates

2007, pp.73-74, 78-80; cf. H. VÖLKER (trans.), *Himerios, Reden und Fragmente: Einführung, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Wiesbaden 2003, pp. 198-199. I use my own translations of Himerius, Themistius's private orations [n. 23], and Choricius's preliminary *dialexeis* [n. 4], with occasional adjustments.

[2] For the text of frag. 3, see PENELLA, *Man and the Word* [n. 1], p. 79, n. 30.

arrogance with satiety[3]. If an audience hears too much eloquent speaking or too much of a single speaker's eloquence, it will become sated, arrogantly taking the speaker's art for granted and failing to give it the attention and respect it deserves. Thus a speaker should refrain from orating too frequently. We hear exactly the same injunction in the sixth century from the sophist Choricius of Gaza. It occurs in one of his preliminary *dialexeis* or *prolaliai* (*Dialex.* 16 [XXVII] Foerster-Richtsteig). The *prolalia* was a very short talk that immediately preceded an oration; this one is only two pages long in the standard Teubner edition. The Chorician oration that the *prolalia* in question introduced is the extant *Declamation* 8 [XXIX]. A *prolalia* may or may not refer to the upcoming oration. The orator may use it to convey any message he wants, or simply to say something that will amuse and win the good will of the audience[4]. In the *prolalia* in question, Choricius's message, again to students (ὦ νέοι), is that, if he gives rhetorical displays too frequently, he will dull the pleasure audiences derive from them. But this does not stop him from orating on this occasion; he goes right on to deliver *Declamation* 8, just as Himerius spoke in the end. Rather, he is using the *prolalia* to announce a general policy that presumably will affect the frequency of his rhetorical displays in the future. He gives three examples of how limited exposure to a pleasant experience sustains enthusiasm for it. First, when a person's favorite horse is withdrawn from a horse race, he actually becomes more enthusiastic about the sport and his withdrawn horse. Secondly, the city-dweller experiences more delight over the country than the country-dweller does because the former sees the country much less frequently. This is similar to Himerius's statement in *Oration* 19, 10 that "the seaman thinks that the farmer is lucky, and the man at the plow has the opposite view". But Choricius's major example, the elaboration of which occupies most of his *prolalia*, is the well-known story of Arion and the dolphin, drawn, he tells us, from Herodotus (1, 23-24). It will be recalled from Herodotus that Arion of Methymna, a distinguished musician and associate of the Corinthian tyrant Periander, decided to go to Italy and Sicily to make money. He did this, and, on his return sea-journey, the ship's crew plotted to throw him overboard and take his money. In the end, he jumped into the sea himself after singing and playing the lyre and was carried off to safety by a dolphin. Choricius gives a peculiar explanation of why Arion went to Italy and Sicily: not to make money, as Herodotus maintains, but "because the strings of his instrument would

[3] Sol. 6, 3; Thgn. 153-154; D. L. 1, 59. Arist., frag. 57 Rose, calls "τίκτει κόρος ὕβριν" proverbial; cf. *Corpus paroemiographorum graecorum* 1, 308.

[4] See R. J. PENELLA (ed.), *Rhetorical Exercises from Late Antiquity: A Translation of Choricius of Gaza's* Preliminary Talks *and* Declamations, Cambridge 2009, pp. 26-32, 48-49.

cause [Periander] to feel sated (οἱ τὰς χόρδας κόρον ἐμβάλλειν) if he performed too often [in Corinth]". According to Choricius, Arion "claimed that he was going [to the West] to make a lot of money, but he really went so that Corinth would miss him more, him and his lyre".

ii. Libanius, *Oration* 3

Himerius and Choricius, then, canvass the idea of intermittently withholding displays of eloquence, at least in a single location, as a prophylactic device, to prevent their audiences from becoming sated. In his *Oration* 3 Libanius testifies to another reason for withholding eloquence: to punish an unappreciative audience[5]. The fourth-century Antiochene sophist is addressing his students in *Oration* 3. The title of the oration is "To his young [students], On the oration" (Πρὸς τοὺς νέους, Περὶ τοῦ λόγου). The oration referred to in this title is the display of eloquence that Libanius traditionally gave at the end of the academic year[6]. But in the academic year in question, most of Libanius's students had misbehaved during his winter and spring displays of eloquence; they do not love his rhetorical displays, he says, or even know what he is all about (3, 10, οὐχ … ἐρῶντας τῶν ἐπιδείξεων, οὐδὲ εἰδότας ὅ τι ἐστὶ τὸ ἡμέτερον). He is therefore refusing to deliver the usual end-of-year oration, despite their demand that he do so (3, 1). He promises them that he will resume this custom the following academic year if they show improvement in their behavior. Their misbehavior had consisted of inattention to Libanius's winter and spring orations, combined with perennial student antics (3, 10-18; cf. Plu., *recta rat. aud.* 45c-d). The elderly Libanius, who authored *Oration* 3 after the Antiochene riots of 387, must have been genuinely annoyed by such behavior, and he remembers better behaved students from the past. Still, there seem to be some humorously intended touches in the oration; student misbehavior can, at the same time, both amuse and annoy a teacher[7]. We may take Libanius at his word that it is not student fail-

[5] I rely especially on J. MARTIN (ed.), *Libanios. Discours, Tome II, Discours II-X*, Paris 1988, and A. F. NORMAN, trans., *Antioch as a Centre of Hellenic Culture as Observed by Libanius*, Liverpool 2000. A. J. FESTUGIÈRE translated *Or.* 3 into French in *Antioche païenne et chrétienne: Libanius, Chrysostome et les moines de Syrie*, Paris 1959, pp. 446-452, and P. WOLF into German in *Libanios. Autobiographische Schriften*, Zürich-Stuttgart 1967, pp. 143-153.

[6] MARTIN, *Libanios. Discours, Tome II* [n. 5], pp. 83; 94, n. 5. Members of the adult public were invited to these special display orations (Lib., *Or.* 3, 19, 30).

[7] Date of *Or.* 3: MARTIN, *Libanios. Discours, Tome II* [n. 5], p. 84. Humor: NORMAN, *Antioch* [n. 5], p. 184.

ure to pay tuition that is causing him to withhold the end-of-year oration (3, 6-9). But he is upset that students are disloyal to him, will not stand up for him, and are abandoning him and encouraging their peers to abandon him for the study of law and Latin[8]; and this has added to his irritation over their inattentiveness to his winter and spring orations. He probably delivered *Oration* 3, or perhaps only circulated a written text of it, towards the end of the academic year, before the usual time for his end-of-year oration. It has been suggested, though, that *Oration* 3 *was* his end-of-year oration for the academic year in question: in this case, he will have given a display of eloquence on why he was not giving a display of eloquence. This may well be the case. But I suspect that what the student audience was expecting was a declamation; instead, they got a speech of reprimand[9]. So he was giving a display of eloquence on why he was not giving a different kind of display of eloquence.

We cannot take leave of Libanius, *Oration* 3, without considering the second-century rhetor Aelius Aristides—he insisted on calling himself a rhetor, using "sophist" as a derogatory term[10]—specifically his *Oration* 33 Keil, "To those who criticize him because he does not deliver declamations" (Πρὸς τοὺς αἰτιωμένους ὅτι μὴ μελετᾷ). Libanius admired and vied with Aristides, and in his *Oration* 3 he doubtless intended to allude to Aristides, *Oration* 33[11]. Codex *Laurentianus* LVII, 44 of Libanius, *Oration* 3, has the variant title "To those who accuse him because he does not deliver declamations" (Πρὸς τοὺς ἐγκαλοῦντας ὅτι μὴ μελετᾷ) instead of the title found in the other manuscripts ("To his young [students], On the oration"); and this variant, whatever its origin, would seem to be intended as an acknowledgment of Libanius's allusion to Aristides. (Let it be noted, incidentally, that the variant title assumes that what Libanius withheld from his students was, in fact, a declamation.) Aristides's oration was surely addressed to the general public of Smyrna and not, like Libanius's *Oration* 3, to a student audience[12]. There are no positive indications in Aristides's

[8] *Or.* 3, 21-26 with the comments of MARTIN, *Libanios. Discours, Tome II* [n. 5].

[9] MARTIN, *Libanios. Discours, Tome II* [n. 5], p. 84. Libanius refers to his special display orations by the generic term *epideixis* (*Or.* 3, 10, 14, 30).

[10] See C. A. BEHR, «Studies on the Biography of Aelius Aristides», *ANRW* II, 34/2, 1994, pp. 1163-1177, with pp. 1200-1203. To Philostratus, though, Aristides was a sophist (*VS* 583, 585).

[11] See R. CRIBIORE, *Vying with Aristides in the Fourth Century: Libanius and His Friends*, in W. V. HARRIS – B. HOLMES (eds.), *Aelius Aristides between Greece, Rome, and the Gods*, Leiden-Boston 2008, pp. 263-278; D. JOHNSON, *Libanius's* Monody for Daphne (Oration 60) *and the* Eleusinios Logos *of Aelius Aristides*, in T. SCHMIDT – P. FLEURY (eds.), *Perceptions of the Second Sophistic and Its Times – Regards sur la Seconde Sophistique et son époque*, Toronto 2011, pp. 199-215. I am using C. A. BEHR's translation of Aristides, *P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works,* 2 vols., Leiden 1981-1986, with some adjustments.

[12] To the general public: apparently A. BOULANGER, *Aelius Aristide et la sophistique dans la*

oration that he is addressing students, and the allusions to his auditors better fit a general adult public audience. He refers to his frequent public appearances (32, 22, παρόδους … εἰς τὸ δημόσιον πλείστας). "In what national festival or in what assembly," he asks, "have we neglected to honor our city" (33, 22; cf. 33, 5)? He refers to his opponents among the Smyrnaean populace who persuade young and old alike not to attend rhetors' performances. His oration alludes to the adult taste, common in the Roman Empire, for hearing rhetors deliver declamations[13]. Of course, there may have been some students present in such general audiences.

The charge that Aristides is answering is that he does not declaim frequently enough (*Or.* 33, 4, τὰς μελέτας τῶν λόγων οὐ συνεχεῖς ποιούμενον). So, as with Libanius's students, the complaint is that eloquence is being withheld. Charles Behr dates Aristides's *Oration* 33 to the end of the summer of 166; Aristides was "in retirement on his Estate [in Mysia]", and the oration's purpose was "to justify his lengthy absence from Smyrna, and apparent inactivity"[14]. Aristides objects to the implication that he has been remiss—the word is *rhathumein* (33, 6, 16). So, too, it is *rhathumia*, a long-established term of disapprobation[15], that Libanius insists should not be ascribed to him in *Oration* 3, 4. Aristides says that he has made more public appearances as an orator at Smyrna than anyone else (33, 22). He has devoted himself to studies and oratory "except when I was prevented by the requirements of health or by periods bringing misfortunes which were too great for the life which I had chosen" (33, 18). So if there had been any reduction in his rhetorical displays, it was only for these reasons, beyond his control.

province d'Asie au IIe siècle de notre ère, Paris 1923, pp. 271, 272, 444, 450; CRIBIORE in HARRIS and HOLMES, *Aelius Aristides* [n. 11], p. 275. To a student audience: E. MENSCHING, « Zu Aelius Aristides' 33. Rede », *Mnemosyne* 18, 1965, pp. 57-63; BEHR [n. 10], p. 1169, n. 124; Č. MILOVANOVIČ, « Sailing to *Sophistopolis*: Gregory of Nazianzus and Greek Declamation», *JECS* 13, 2005, pp. 195-196. J.-L. VIX, *L'histoire au service de l'éloge et du blâme: l'exemple d'Aelius Aristide (or. 30-34)*, in P.-L. MALOSSE *et al.* (eds.), *Clio sous le regard d'Hermès*, Alessandria 2010, pp. 136-139, thinks primarily of a student audience; cf. J.-L. VIX, *L'enseignement de la rhétorique au II*e *siècle ap. J.-C. à travers les discours 30-34 d'Aelius Aristide*, Turnhout 2010, pp. 85-86.

[13] Note μελετώῃ in the title and τὰς μελέτας τῶν λόγων at *Or.* 33, 4. At *Or.* 33, 7 Aristides has τὰς μελέτας καὶ τὰς ἀκροάσεις.

[14] C. A. BEHR, *Aelius Aristides and* The Sacred Tales, Amsterdam 1968, p. 102. Cf. BEHR, *P. Aelius Aristides* [n. 11], vol. 2, p. 396.

[15] See, *e.g.*, Pl., *R.* 6, 504c; D., *IV Phil.* 7, 25, 29, 71; Isoc., *Antid.* 286, 289, 305. See also I. SANDWELL, *John Chrysostom's Audiences and His Accusations of Religious Laxity*, in D. M. GWYNN – S. BANGERT (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity,* Leiden-Boston 2010, pp. 525, 530-533; A. J. QUIROGA PUERTAS, « Ῥαθυμία, A Leitmotif in Greek Imperial Oratory », in F. G. HERNÁNDEZ MUÑOZ (ed.), *La tradición y la transmisión de los oradores y rétores griegos*, Berlin 2012, pp. 263-270.

Insisting that he has not been lax, Aristides turns the charge leveled against him onto his Smyrnaean public: it is they who are guilty of *rhathumia* (*Or.* 33, 3). His oration is a reprimand as well as a self-defense (33, 34). So, too, Libanius turns the charge of *rhathumia* onto his students (note his *Or.* 3, 15). I have already noted that Libanius's students were guilty of inattention to his rhetorical displays and of typical student antics. As for Aristides's Smyrnaean public, they fail to attend his display orations and then have the audacity to maintain that he does not declaim enough. They leave attendance to foreign visitors in the city, themselves distracted by unworthy activities such as bathing (33, 6, 7, 14, 24, 32)[16]. "Just as you think that I should wish to speak", Aristides tells the Smyrnaeans, "so exhort yourselves to make me wish to speak". He comes close here to saying that he will punish them by withholding his eloquence if they do not show appreciation for it. But then, unlike, Libanius, he takes a different turn: "but if [you do] not [change your behavior], each of us shall do what we do. For I shall not give up speaking as I do, so long as the god is propitious, but you shall always be ignorant" (33, 33). The reason for the different turns of Libanius and Aristides has much to do with their different audiences. Libanius was a teacher. It was expected that he might have to punish his students at times, and this will not have affected him negatively in any significant way. Nor, apparently, will a philosopher-sage like Apollonius of Tyana have been so affected by announcing that he was giving up discoursing (διαλεγόμενος) to the Greeks because, as he put it, they had become barbarized (*Epist.* 34). But if Aristides punished the Smyrnaeans by withholding eloquence from them, he might diminish his own status in the public arena by his absence from it—a consideration that we may assume crossed his mind, despite his insistence that his motives as an orator were entirely without self-interest (33, 19, 21)[17].

iii. Libanius, *Oration* 40, 17-28

If Libanius, *Oration* 3, shows an orator withholding eloquence because he was

[16] For the prominence of the bathing motif (33, 25-31), see J. DOWNIE, *Proper Pleasures: Bathing and Oratory in Aelius Aristides'* Hieros Logos I *and* Oration 33, in HARRIS – HOLMES, *Aelius Aristides* [n. 11], pp. 115-130.

[17] The suggestion made by MILOVANOVIČ, *Sailing to* Sophistopolis [n.12], pp. 195-204, that, *inter alia*, Aristides, *Or.* 33, and Libanius, *Or.* 3, are declamations rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of what declamation was, as even a glance at extant declamations and declamatory *hypotheseis* and titles would show. In declamations, the orator never speaks in his own person. He personifies a historical figure or an anonymous stock character.

irritated at a group of auditors, his *Oration* 40, 17-28 shows that irritation at a specific individual (or, in this case, two individuals) requesting an oration could also induce the orator to hold his tongue. When Eumolpius, the addressee of *Oration* 40, and his brother Domitius asked Libanius to deliver an encomium in praise of Domitius, he at first refused (40, 18, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον σιωπήσας ἀπῆλθον) out of irritation that Domitius had not chosen Libanius as his sons' teacher[18]. But the brothers got close friends of Libanius to prevail on him, and he relented on the understanding that no one would speak after him. When Eumolpius broke the agreement and told Libanius that a poet wanted to give an encomium in his brother's honor after Libanius, Libanius refused to speak (40, 19, ἐσίγων). The poet delivered his encomium. Sometime later the two brothers again begged Libanius to deliver his encomium, for Domitius would have felt disgraced if not publicly praised by the sophist. On the intercession of Libanius's secretary Thalassius the sophist relented: "when I heard [Thalassius] bidding me do it, I spoke, then I spoke again and a third time and a fourth time" (40, 22). What this means is not immediately clear—repeating the encomium in several venues or to several audiences, delivering it in four parts with intermissions between them, or giving encores are all possibilities[19]. In any case, Libanius's anger at the two brothers silenced him twice, even if not permanently.

iv. Choricius, *Dialexis* 5 [IX]

If Libanius withheld eloquence to punish an inattentive audience, Choricius considered doing so if an audience was not qualified to appreciate it. Choricius speaks to this issue in another of his *prolaliai*, *Dialexis* 5 [IX], which we know introduced his extant *Declamation* 1 [X]. This *prolalia* has the following title: "This preliminary talk will explain why, though [his] students often asked him to speak, he postponed doing so till now" (τῶν φοιτητῶν πολλάκις εἰπεῖν δεηθέντων τῆς μέχρι τοῦ παρόντος ἀναβολῆς διηγήσεται τὴν πρόφασιν). The information provided in this title, that Choricius's students had been pressing him repeatedly for a rhetorical display, helps us make sense of the text of the *prolalia*: the anecdote related there must refer to the last of a series of requests from them. Choricius was gathering a more mature audience, probably an adult

[18] See *PLRE* I, *s.vv.* «Domitius 1» and «Eumolpius». I am grateful to Raffaella Cribiore for allowing me to see her forthcoming English translation of *Oration* 40.

[19] The last two possibilities are suggested by Cribiore in her forthcoming translation. For the practice of dividing a speech into sections with intervals between them, see section vii below.

audience, to offer them a display of his eloquence. When he encountered young students (τοὺς νέους), apparently the same students alluded to in the title, who were trying to force him (βιαζομένους) to declaim for them, he told them that he was indeed about to declaim, but only for "men who are capable of listening" (ἀνδράσι δεινοῖς ἀκροᾶσθαι), only for "those knowledgeable about eloquence" (ἐπιστήμονας λόγων). He is saying that the young students were themselves not yet ready to hear him declaim with appreciation. To illustrate his position, he tells a story about the lyric poet Terpander[20]. The poet would not allow anyone who did not pass a lyre-playing test to hear him perform: "he demanded that each interested person play the lyre, getting the tune right, or depart because unfit to hear Terpander play". But Choricius's young students did not yield; they continued to demand that he allow them to hear him declaim. Then Choricius thought that he heard one of them mumble something about his being a coward. "Well", he said, "that stirred me up a bit, I admit. I was stung by the remark, and I reminded myself of your goodwill towards me in the past. So I announced that I was not afraid to strip for this contest". These words were spoken before the young students, just before Choricius delivered his *Declamation* 1. He had relented, letting them into the auditorium. There is some professorial leniency—and humor, as in Libanius, *Oration* 3—in all of this. Nonetheless, Choricius here articulates a position that is important to my discussion, that it was legitimate to withhold displays of eloquence from audiences that were not yet ready to appreciate them.

v. Cassiodorus, *Variae* 11, *praefatio*

The cases so far reviewed all involve the condition of the audience or of those requesting an oration. Let us now consider the condition of the speaker as a possible ground for withholding eloquence. A passage from Cassiodorus's *Variae*, from the sixth century, suggests that a scrupulous orator might entirely refrain from speaking if he felt that he was rusty in the basics of eloquence. In the preface to Book 11 of the *Variae*, Cassiodorus tells the following anecdote about Cicero: *ipse . . . fons eloquentiae, cum dicere peteretur, fertur excusasse se quod pridie non legisset* ("that font of eloquence, when he was asked to speak, is said to have excused himself because he had not read anything the day before"). What we have here is a *chreia*, probably one used in the western schools in Cassiodorus's

[20] The Chorician testimonium is missing from D. A. CAMPBELL (ed.), *Greek Lyric*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Mass.-London 1988, pp. 294-319, and from A. GOSTOLI, *Terpandro*, Roma 1990.

day. A *chreia* was an instructive saying, or the report of a simple action that is instructive in some way, or a combination of action and saying ascribed to an individual. In the Cassiodoran text in question, we have both an action (refraining from speaking) and a saying that explained the action taken. *Chreiai* were assigned in the schools as one of the progymnasmatic exercises, compositional exercises that preceded declamation. The assigned *chreia* would have been manipulated in various ways by the student, depending on his level of competence[21]. The Cassiodoran *chreia* presents us with the scenario—an extreme one—of an orator declining to speak because he had missed a day of reading and therefore felt unready to speak at his best. Reading here clearly means reading the canonical authors. Reading was what enabled mimesis of those authors in one's own compositions[22]. Cicero notes the importance of reading in his *De oratore* 1, 34 [158]; 3, 10 [39]. *Brutus* 89 [305] underscores the importance of writing, reading, and practicing every day (*cotidieque et scribens et legens et commentans*). The emperor Augustus's devotion to eloquence and liberal studies was said to have included reading, writing, and declaiming every day (Suet., *Aug.* 84, 1).

In Cassiodorus, we find, not a late-ancient orator declining to speak, but an anecdote about a canonical classical orator doing so; but the point is surely that such a move might still be advisable under similar circumstances in the sixth century. We find a similar memorializing of earlier examples of declining to speak in three passages of Plutarch:

Plu., *lib. educ.* 6d: ὁ Περικλῆς . . . καλούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου πολλάκις οὐχ ὑπήκουσε, λέγων ἀσύντακτος εἶναι. ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ Δημοσθένης . . . καλούντων αὐτὸν τῶν Ἀθηναίων σύμβουλον ἀντέβαινεν "οὐ συντέταγμαι" λέγων ("Pericles . . . though called upon by the people, oftentimes did not heed their summons, saying that he was unprepared. In like manner also Demosthenes … when the Athenians called upon him to give his counsel, resisted, saying, 'I have not prepared myself'", trans. F. C. Babbitt).

Plu., *Dem.* 8: ἀλλὰ καὶ καθήμενον ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ πολλάκις τοῦ δήμου καλοῦντος ὀνομαστὶ μὴ παρελθεῖν, εἰ μὴ τύχοι πεφροντικὼς καὶ παρεσκευασμένος ("but though the people often called upon [Demosthenes]

[21] See R. F. HOCK – E. N. O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, Vol. 1, *The Progymnasmata*, Atlanta 1986; C. A. GIBSON, *Libanius's* Progymnasmata*: Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Atlanta 2008, p. 43.

[22] See, *e.g.*, E. STEMPLINGER, *Das Plagiat in der griechischen Literatur*, Leipzig-Berlin 1912, pp. 107-18; J. BOMPAIRE, *Lucien écrivain: imitation et création*, Paris 1958, pp. 33-43.

by name as he sat in the assembly, he would not come forward unless he had given thought to the question and was prepared to speak upon it", trans. B. Perrin).

Plu., *Quaest. conviv.* 1, 1 [613a]: οὐδὲ γὰρ Ἰσοκράτη τὸν σοφιστὴν ὑπομεῖναι δεομένων εἰπεῖν τι παρ' οἶνον ἀλλ' ἢ τοσοῦτον· "ἐν οἷς μὲν ἐγὼ δεινός, οὐχ ὁ νῦν καιρός· ἐν οἷς δ' ὁ νῦν καιρός, οὐκ ἐγὼ δεινός" ("[they say that] not even Isocrates the sophist yielded to requests to speak at a drinking-party, except only to say: 'What I excel in suits not the present occasion; in what suits the present occasion, I do not excel'", trans. P. Clement and H. Hoffleit).

vi. Themistius, *Oration* 25

If the Cassiodoran Cicero was worried about basic preparedness, a rhetor, of course, also had to worry about being prepared for the specific oration at hand; that was the concern of Pericles and Demosthenes in the Plutarchan passages quoted above. This takes us to the issue of extempore oratory and to the fourth-century Themistius's *Oration* 25. This piece, only forty lines long in the standard Teubner edition, is not an oration proper at all, but a preliminary *dialexis* or *prolalia*[23], like those of Choricius to which I have been referring. Its title is "In reply to one who asked for an extempore oration" (Πρὸς τὸν ἀξιώσαντα λέγειν ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα). The text reveals that the person who requested the oration was an *archōn*, an official, probably an emperor, possibly a lower official. The official has asked for a panegyric of himself. Themistius briefly praises the official, tells him that he is worthy to receive a full panegyric from a "Socratic [i.e., philosopher] portraitist" like himself, but refuses to produce one extempore. "Allow me the time I need", he says, "to fashion your image [in words]. I am not so clever and glib as to be able to improvise portraits at random, as the remarkable sophists do". Like Aelius Aristides, the rhetor Themistius uses the term "sophist" to refer to rhetors whose practices and motivations he disapproves of[24]. He rejects extempore oratory on principle, because it does not allow for a proper preparation of an oration. Like the sculptor Phidias, Themistius needs considerable time and leisure (χρόνου … καὶ σχολῆς πλείονος), much time and effort (οὐδὲ … ὀλίγου χρόνου καὶ πόνου) to produce his handiwork.

[23] I failed to identify it as such in *The Private Orations of Themistius*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 2000, pp. 24-28, 138-139, where one will find a translation of *Or.* 25 with introduction and notes.

[24] See n. 10 above.

He offers the official, instead of an extempore speech, one of his prepared orations, "selected from my hidden store", and what has traditionally been called his *Oration* 25 was the *prolalia* to that prepared oration. So in this case we see Themistius, not entirely refusing to speak, but refusing to speak in a certain mode. There may be a parallel here with Libanius, *Oration* 3. It will be recalled that, if that was Libanius's end-of-the-year oration, he too was not entirely refusing to speak, but only to speak in what probably was the expected declamatory mode[25].

Quintilian called extempore oratory "the greatest fruit of our studies, the richest harvest of our long labors". He was thinking, not of the display orator, but of the political and judicial orator. "It is hardly decent", he wrote, "for an honest man to promise help publicly which may fail in the very moment of danger". "My point", he concludes, "is not that [the orator] should *prefer* to speak extempore, but that he should *be able* to do so" (*Inst.* 10, 7, 1-4, trans. D. A. Russell). Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists* also displays high regard for extempore speaking, this time in declamations of the Second Sophistic that were delivered for display; the introduction to his *Lives* includes a discussion of the origins of extempore speaking (482-483)[26]. In the fourth century, Eunapius reacted to the extempore declamatory skill of his teacher Prohaeresius with the same enthusiasm that Philostratus had displayed in describing the extempore skill of his sophists (Eun., *VS* 10, 4, 5-5, 3 [488-489]; 10, 7, 7-8 [492] Giangrande). Extempore speakers could delight audiences with their bravado, inspiration, ready store of knowledge, and freshness[27]. Given the honor in which improvised oratory was held, it is no wonder that the insecure, the lazy, and the inept might try to misrepresent an oration prepared earlier as an extempore composition (Lucian, *Pseudol.* 5-7; Philostr., *VS* 579)[28]. Themistius, though, represents a dissenting position that rejects extempore oratory on principle[29]. It is, of course, possible that those who

[25] That declamation will have been prepared, not extempore (*Or.* 3, 5).

[26] Cf. G. ANDERSON, *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.*, London 1986, pp. 31-32; C. JONES, *The Survival of the Sophists*, in T. C. BRENNAN – H. I. FLOWER (eds.), *East and West: Papers in Ancient History Presented to Glen W. Bowersock*, Cambridge, Mass.-London 2008, p. 117, "[Philostratus] belonged to a tradition of public declamation, especially of the improvised kind".

[27] See PENELLA, *Private Orations* [n. 23], p. 26.

[28] Hermog., *Meth.* 17, p. 433 Rabe, though, recommends that the orator who has prepared his speech pretend that he is improvising in court, but not to obtain glory; rather, because, in Hermogenes's view, a judge will be suspicious of a prepared oration, believing that the orator had had plenty of time to pack every deceptive rhetorical device into it.

[29] Choricius may have that dissenting position of rhetoric in mind when he makes the speakers in his *Decl.* 3 [XIV], 5 insist that martial capability cannot be extemporized (αὐτοσχεδιάσαι τὴν ἀρετήν).

did not have a natural talent for improvised speaking might take the high moral ground of opposition on principle[30]. When Themistius says that "I am not so clever and glib as to be able to improvise portraits [i.e., panegyrics] at random, as the remarkable sophists do", he is taking a jab at the sophists, not confessing to his own limitations or admitting to a desire to be able to improvise. On the other hand, Aelius Aristides, or at least the Aristides of Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists* 582-583, 585, displays a perhaps not uncommon ambivalence about extempore speaking in a society in which it earned so much applause. Philostratus says that Aristides had no natural talent for extempore oratory and hence refrained from it. Aristides even disparaged it—yet he admired it and privately practiced it[31]. The emperor Augustus had the best of both worlds: according to Suetonius, he was *able* to speak extempore, but *chose* to prepare everything he said to the senate, the people, and the soldiers (*Aug.* 84, 1).

We know from Eunapius that, in the fourth century, one might have quoted a saying of Aelius Aristides against extempore speaking that is found in Philostratus's *Lives* 583: "I am not one of those who vomit their orations; I am one of those who meticulously prepare them (οὐ γὰρ ἐσμὲν τῶν ἐμούντων, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀκριβούντων)"[32]. The so-called Aristides Prolegomena give a fuller version of the second part of this remark: "I am one of those who meticulously prepare orations and [thereby] satisfy [my audience] (τῶν ἀκριβούντων καὶ τῶν ἀρεσκόντων)". The classical rhetorician Alcidamas had already used the word *akribeia*, "meticulousness", and its cognates in his *On the Writers of Written Speeches* in reference to prepared, written-out orations, although he belittles this kind of *akribeia* and defends extempore speech instead[33]. He argues that extempore speakers *do* come to the speaker's platform with their own kind of preparedness, not a word-by-word readiness, but a readiness of general ideas and overall arrangement (33). Note that the fuller version of Aristides's saying mentions satisfying the audience: in other words, an unprepared orator does not do justice to his audience. It was a mark of respect for the people, Demosthenes used to say, to speak to them only if one were prepared (Plu., *Dem.* 8; cf. [Plut.], *Vitae decem or.* 848c)[34]. And a Latin panegyrist of late antiquity told Constantine that "nothing

[30] For envy of extempore skill, see PENELLA, *Private Orations* [n. 23], p. 26.

[31] Asclepius did not exclude the possibility of extempore oratory for Aristides: Aristid., *Or.* 50, 14-29 Keil.

[32] Eun., *VS* 10, 4, 7 [488]; F. W. LENZ, *The Aristides Prolegomena*, Leiden 1959, pp. 59-60, 113-114 (Treatise B 9).

[33] Critical text, Italian translation, and notes in G. AVEZZÙ (ed.), *Alcidamante. Orazioni e frammenti*, Roma 1982. For an English translation and commentary, see J. V. MUIR (ed.), *Alcidamas. The Works & Fragments*, London 2001.

[34] [Plu.], *Vitae decem or.* 848c, is at odds with itself: the text says that Demosthenes always pre-

should be brought to the ears of such a great divinity which has not been long in the writing and frequently revised. For he who extemporizes before an Emperor of the Roman people has no feeling for the greatness of the Empire" (*Paneg.* 6 [7], 1-2, trans. C. E. V. Nixon). One could easily imagine Themistius uttering something similar about the respect for one's audience that preparedness implies when he refused an *archōn*'s invitation to deliver an extempore panegyric.

vii. The Physical Effort of Speaking

The Cassiodoran Cicero and Themistius abstained from speaking because of lack of intellectual preparation. What about lack of physical resources—health, strength of voice—as grounds for not speaking? Such reasons for not speaking or for curtailing the length of one's oration were surely advanced on occasion. Libanius (*Or.* 1, 246) tells us that a bout of illness interfered with his speaking. His students demanded an oration (τῶν νέων βοαῖς τοῦτο ἀπαιτούντων, οἱ μὲν εἶχον ἀκροάσεως ἐλπίδας); but when he attempted to speak, he fell silent. Lysias had worried about the physical strength an orator needed in his oration against Eratosthenes (5 [12], 1); and this was an issue for Michael Psellos at the other end of the *longue durée* of Hellenism, who terminated a talk of seven Teubner pages in length because he had almost lost his voice (*Opusculum phil.* 3, p. 11 Duffy). Pliny the Younger and his co-advocate feared, in one case, that they would lose their voices and breath—*vox* and *latera*—if they tried to handle the whole case in one speech each (*Epist.* 3, 9, 9). In another case, though, presided over by the emperor, we know that Pliny spoke for nearly five hours. He believed that in a forensic speech one should err on the side of length rather than of brevity (1, 20). The emperor was concerned about Pliny's thin frame (*gracilitas*) and suggested that he take heed of his voice and breath (2, 11, 15). In yet another case, Pliny spoke for seven hours, *magno cum labore* (4, 16, 3). Not everyone will have had his endurance. Aelius Aristides occasionally had to abstain from declaiming "when I was prevented by the requirements of health" (*Or.* 33, 18). Augustine worried about his physical endurance at the beginning of his *Enarratio on Psalm* 50, and in his *Confessions* he notes that Ambrose's voice weakened very easily (6, 3, *facillime obtundebatur*). In his short *Sermo* 303 he tells his small audience to listen to his few words, which is all he is capable of because of his fatigue and the heat (*ergo pauci audite pauca, quia et nos in hac lassitudine corporis et aestibus non pos-*

pared his orations, and then, a few lines later, that he delivered most of his orations extempore and had a natural talent for this kind of speech.

sumus multa)[35]. Quintilian had urged that the speaker exercise his voice, lest he fall silent (*Inst.* 11, 3, 24, *nec silentio subsidat* [*vox*]*, sed firmetur consuetudine*).

The preliminary *dialexeis* or *prolaliai* of Choricius attest to a practice in sixth-century Gaza intended to alleviate the physical strain on a speaker. The important Chorician manuscript Matritensis 4641 unusually preserves both *prolaliai* and the full orations that they introduced. In eight cases, for seven declamations and the *De mimis*, Chorician orations are preceded by two *prolaliai*. This might have been a puzzling situation for us, but fortunately the *prolaliai* themselves explain why eight orations have two *prolaliai* each[36]. Apparently it was common in late ancient Gaza to have an intermission half way through an oration, with a second *prolalia* for the second part of the delivery (see *Dialex.* 11 [XIX], 13 [XXII], 15 [XXV], 17 [XXVIII], 19 [XXXI], 25 [XLI]). In preliminary *Dialexis* 17 Choricius explains that he had to stop half way through his oration because "my voice refused to minister to my zeal" (ἡ γάρ μοι φωνὴ οὐ διηκόνησε τῇ προθυμίᾳ). After all, wayfarers need to take a rest; consider Odysseus's stop at Phaeacia, Philippides's rest when returning to Athens, and Cyrus's pauses on the march (*Dialex.* 11, 13). And there was an intermission at Olympia, which "gave the athletes a rest from their competition and the audience from their intense enthusiasm" (*Dialex.* 11). Note Choricius's point here that the audience, as well as the speaker, should not be overtaxed. In classical Greece, Isocrates, commenting on the length of his *Antidosis*, worries about both his own and his audience's endurance (310). Pliny, too, worries that an excessively long oration might weary the judges in court (*Epist.* 3, 9, 9) as well as the speaker, and Michael Psellos sees his audience becoming tired of concentrating and taking notes (*Opusculum phil.* 3, p. 11 Duffy). As Pliny writes, what is written with effort is heard with effort, *ut ea quae scripsimus cum labore, cum labore etiam audiri putemus* (*Epist.* 2, 19, 6). With the pauses taken in Choricius's orations we may compare those taken in the recitations of the *Tabula mundi* by John of Gaza and of the ecphrasis of Hagia Sophia by Paul the Silentiary, both of the sixth century. Furthermore, the two iambic prologues that in both of these poems introduce each of the hexametrical segments correspond to the two *prolaliai* that we find in the divided Chorician orations[37]. And we may go back to Libanius and note that a long panegyric of his

[35] I owe my Augustinian references to F. VAN DER MEER, *Augustine the Bishop*, trans. B. BATTERSHAW and G. R. LAMB, London-New York 1961, p. 413.

[36] PENELLA, *Rhetorical Exercises* [n. 4], pp. 28-30. For *Matritensis* 4641, see C. TELESCA, «Sull'ordine e la composizione del *Corpus* di Coricio di Gaza», *Revue des études tardo-antiques* 1, 2011-2012, pp. 85-109.

[37] See D. WESTBERG, *Celebrating with Words: Studies in the Rhetorical Works of the Gaza School*, diss., Uppsala 2010, pp. 159-163.

was delivered in three sessions (*Or* 1, 112), the second half of another was postponed because of its length (*Or.* 1, 144), and his oration "On Genius" (Περὶ εὐφυίας) was delivered in two parts over two days (*Epist.* 405, 13)[38].

viii. Epilogue

We may sum up briefly: if we exclude circumstances beyond the ancient orator's control—poor health and other misfortunes or weakness of voice, which might have curtailed, if not fully prevented, a display of eloquence—we have noted scenarios in which the orator might have refrained from speaking because he was rusty in basic ways or unprepared for a specific theme (and opposed on principle to extempore speaking). He might have refrained from speaking because an audience was not qualified to appreciate his performance, or to prevent the audience from becoming sated with his skill, or to punish an unappreciative audience or specific individuals requesting an oration at whom he was angry. He might have curtailed his oration, if not fully refrained from speaking, so as not to overtax an audience. Both speaker and audience had to be in proper condition for the *logos* to be successful.

The advocacy of silence in antiquity tends to be associated with philosophical and religious contexts[39]. In contrast, we may tend to think of ancient orators as always eager and ready to speak. So, too, might the ancients have done: a correspondent of Choricius's teacher, the sophist Procopius of Gaza, told him that oratory is a sophist's life, that sophists are loquacious (λάλους), and that nothing stops them from babbling (οὐδὲν οὖν αὐτοὺς ἵστησι φλυαροῦντας)[40]. Of course, we move here quickly into the realm of stereotype. Ancient orators were surely capable of exercising discretion about their speaking. Apuleius asserts in *Florida* 17, 14 that "we should make use of [the voice] and exercise it frequently" (trans. J. Hilton); yet in *Florida* 15, 26-27 he also boasts that he has won as much praise from opportune silence as from timely words. It may be objected that this example is not well chosen because the praise of opportune silence in *Florida* 15

[38] Isoc., *Antid.* 12, had urged longer speeches to be absorbed in more than one sitting (or reading), lest the audience be overtaxed (ὅσον μὴ λυπήσει).

[39] See, *e.g.*, A. J. QUIROGA, *Quid est Gloria, si tacetur? Silence in Ambrose's De Officiis*, in C. DEROUX (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XV*, Bruxelles 2010, pp. 463-472. I have also benefited from QUIROGA's *Libanius' Horror Silentii*, in A. J. QUIROGA PUERTAS (ed.), *The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity*, Tübingen 2013, pp. 223-244.

[40] *Epist.* [169] in E. AMATO (ed.), *Rose di Gaza: Gli scritti retorico-sofistici e le* Epistole *di Procopio di Gaza*, *Hellenica* 35, Alessandria 2010, pp. 430-431.

comes precisely from the influence of philosophy on Apuleius: in that text, he calls Plato his master and discusses the Pythagorean silence. Consider again, then, the above-quoted anecdote about Isocrates in Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales* 1, 1 [613a]: when asked to speak at a drinking-party, he refused, saying that "what I excel in suits not the present occasion; in what suits the present occasion I do not excel" (cf. [Plu.], *Vitae decem or.* 838f; Isoc., *Demon.* 41). If there is power in eloquence, there is also power in withholding it[41]. The Lord who giveth is also the Lord who taketh away. In refusing to speak when asked, the ancient orator could say much, either about himself or about his audience[42].

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[41] Cf. the remark of S. MONTIGLIO, *Silence in the Land of Logos*, Princeton 2000, pp. 140-141, with reference to preterition: "For the statement 'I will not speak", as a declaration of intent, highlights the orator's mastery of his speaking, so that his silence could not be taken as a failure". Montiglio's interesting book focuses on archaic and classical Greece, with an inevitable Athenian emphasis. She examines different kinds of silence from the more narrowly defined one that is my interest here.

[42] I am grateful to Alberto Quiroga Puertas for his comments on an earlier version of this paper; to Raffaella Cribiore for letting me see her translation of Libanius, *Oration* 40; and to audiences at the University of Göteborg (May 2012) and at the University of Iowa (November 2013) for their comments.