



The Cypria in Homer's *Iliad*, Quintus of Smyrna, and the Greek Dramatists

Due Date: No later than Monday, 9 May 2011.

Assignment Type: Extra-credit graded essay.

Length: No maximum page requirement; 3 pages minimum for consideration.

Submission: Electronically (e-mail attachment) in pdf.

Value: 10 points possible.



All of the authors that we are reading in this course presume that their audience is familiar with the general details of the Cypria, the first part of the Epic Cycle of Troy. Frequently, they refer to narrative details and personalities from the Cypria, and their purpose in doing so is usually to remind their audience of information that is necessary to an understanding of the events or dialogue that they are presenting. However, we might reasonably expect authors to reshape or add to the traditional details of the Cypria in order to make the events or dialogue that they are presenting more meaningful, and it is, in fact, more or less obvious that they do this when they present us with the actual words or thoughts of characters within the Cypria, other minor details that we would not expect tradition to preserve, or when two or more authors represent the details of the Cypria differently.

Since no full text of the Cypria is now extant, we are left to piece together its narrative details and the personalities involved by consulting various classical sources. The earliest sources *may* be most valuable, as it is possible that they reveal the most prominent traditions of their time; however, this should not be assumed. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that the tradition itself is fluid—that is, it is altered over time. The most conscientious historians attempted to place the various details in a logically consistent sequence, as well as to add, omit, or move details as seemed necessary in order to arrive at the most logically consistent or reasonable narrative. Eventually, a few sources, such as those by Homer, attained authoritative status. Even so, not even Homer was considered infallible or inerrant by the Greek dramatists.

This extra-credit assignment asks you to engage in the historical and literary work of compiling details from the sources you have read in the course (with the exception of "The Cypria"—the required reading assignment at the very beginning of this course) in order to arrive at the most complete narrative of the Cypria that is possible *from those texts alone*. Since your task is to re-create a narrative, rather than to argue a thesis, your essay should be arranged chronologically, providing as complete a retelling of the Cypria as is possible from your sources. In order to arrange the events of the Cypria chronologically, you will have to use processes of inference and deduction. You may not rely upon exterior sources in order to determine the narrative position of events. In other words, you must engage the texts as an investigative detective, attempting—from the *Iliad*, Quintus of Smyrna's *Trojan Epic*, and the Greek dramas that you have read in this course—to reconstruct the Cypria as fully as possible, to note contradictions or opposing traditions, and to note those narrative details that cannot be assigned a definite place in the chronology. If you can, with limited certainty, infer a position for these latter details, you should present your reasons for doing so.

It is *essential* that *every* detail of your essay be cited and appropriately documented. Not only is this proper academic practice, but it is by your citation and documentation of sources that I, your instructor, will be able to evaluate how well you have made use of the sources read in this course and to ensure that your details have been gathered from those sources alone.

Do not make the mistake of assuming that, because you are working with a limited number of texts, that this task is not important. Although the Cypria that you are able to reconstruct will not be complete, the work that you are engaged in for this assignment is crucial in any endeavour *towards* a reconstruction of the Cypria.