

*The education of orphans: a reassessment  
of the evidence of Libanius*

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How should I rate my orphan state? I would have been so glad to see my father in his old age, but I know this for certain, that if my father had reached a ripe old age, I would now be engaged upon a different life path.

So says Libanius in the first part of his *Autobiography* (*Or.* 1.6), in which he attempted to appraise the positive and negative influence of certain events on his life.<sup>1</sup> The loss of his father when he was an eleven-year-old boy apparently was not a catastrophe that shattered his life. The sophist's regret at being deprived of the comfort of a fatherly presence was counterbalanced by his realization that the event had unforeseen positive consequences. His father would not have allowed him the many years of study he enjoyed but instead would have prevented his academic career and made sure that he engaged in local politics, the law courts, or the imperial administration. Paradoxically, therefore, his personal loss allowed Libanius a degree of freedom from parental control that permitted him to follow his calling.

Libanius' orations, and particularly the narrative of his life, reveal circumstances that might temper the harshness of an orphan state and which allowed him to become an acclaimed sophist and teacher in fourth-century Antioch.<sup>2</sup> The letters of Libanius, too, introduce to the reader many of the students who attended his school of rhetoric – almost 200 young men, of

<sup>1</sup> For the text of Libanius, see Förster 1903–27. Translations of his orations appear in Norman 1965; 1969–77; and 1992, and translations of his letters in Bradbury 2004 and Cribiore 2007a, 233–321. Fortune is the subject of *Or.* 1.1–155, composed as a complete oration with a guiding theme. The rest of this speech (156–285) is an ensemble of memoirs that was appended in a disorderly fashion after Libanius' death. The people appearing in this chapter are identified either according to the prosopography of Seeck 1906 or according to the listing in *PLRE* 1. Seeck listed those who appear in Libanius' letters with their names followed by Roman numerals. Most of the students and members of their families need to be cited according to this prosopography because they were not of such a status as to be included in *PLRE*. The names of those who are included in the latter prosopography are followed by Arabic numbers.

<sup>2</sup> He was born in 314 CE and died c. 393 CE. On Libanius as teacher of rhetoric, see most recently Cribiore 2007a.

whom 134 can be placed in a period of fifteen school years.<sup>3</sup> Many of these letters are sent to students' fathers and address their concerns regarding their sons' academic progress and behavior. In late antiquity fathers closely controlled their sons' education and apparently determined its duration, sometimes withdrawing the young men from school so that they might embark on economically advantageous careers. But the fact that at least a quarter of the students of Libanius appear to have lost their fathers before or during their attendance at his school<sup>4</sup> shows the effect on late antique society of high mortality and comparatively late male marriage. These data are in full agreement with what one would expect from demographic tables if one takes into account that it is quite likely that the orphan state of some students escapes us.<sup>5</sup> Libanius did not dwell on every student's life story but mentioned most of them in passing. Libanius' writings, therefore, offer strong test cases for the issue I am considering, that is, the influence of an orphan state on advanced education. Bearing in mind the sophist's own experience, it is possible to evaluate the factors that affected the education of the fatherless young men who figure in his writings. A recent, thorough study of the condition of widows and orphans in the Roman period considered the works of Libanius among other late antique evidence. Krause concluded that orphans had great difficulty in paying for their studies and that fatherless boys at the age of fourteen or fifteen (that is, at the start of their education in rhetoric) were underrepresented among the sophist's students because of the obstacles they encountered.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter I revisit the orations and letters of Libanius to see if Krause's conclusions can be fully validated.

The data derived from Libanius' writings pertain to individuals who belonged to the upper levels of society and could afford an education in rhetoric.<sup>7</sup> Though we do not know precisely the cost of higher education, the general consensus based on the ancient sources is that teachers derived a large part of their income from their pupils' tuition and gifts. Financial compensation of teachers and the maintenance of students who lived away

<sup>3</sup> See Petit 1956: 60–1. These are students who attended in the periods 354–65 and 388–93.

<sup>4</sup> See the table of orphan students in Petit 1956: 138, which is incomplete. To these one should add Eusebius xx; Iamblichus 2; the sons of Hestiaeus; the brother of Philoxenus, Thalassius 2 (*Ep.* 330); John Chrysostom, and Basil the Great.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Scheidel (this volume). Since Libanius often alludes in passing to his students without enlarging on their lives, it is possible that even more orphans attended his classes.

<sup>6</sup> See Krause 1994–5: III, 182–3. Some students joined the school at a younger age, as for example the fifteen-year-old in *Or.* 34.3, who was already capable of declaiming at that age and must have entered the school quite young.

<sup>7</sup> On the attitudes of the elite classes toward education, see Watts 2006: 6–19.

from home were often a burden on their families.<sup>8</sup> Besides a few sons of teachers or of minor decurions,<sup>9</sup> the vast majority of Libanius' students came from propertied classes with traditions of culture and education. Libanius taught not only pagan but also some Christian youths, but his letters disclose the religion of an addressee very rarely. This is not a hindrance to my study because, as Nathan argues in this volume, Christianity per se had a limited impact on support for elite children.

The legal issues regarding orphans are known already.<sup>10</sup> When a father died without officially nominating a *tutor* for his son who was still a minor (that is, younger than fourteen years old), close male kin (older brothers, uncles, and grandfathers) might become guardians of an orphan or, in the absence of suitable male guardians in the family, a magistrate could choose one or more guardians (ἐπίτροποι). On reaching the age of fourteen, boys were free of legal authority, yet sometimes curators were appointed to help young men younger than twenty-five to administer their properties.<sup>11</sup> Mothers were not always trusted with the property of a fatherless child, especially if they remarried; if they decided not to marry again, they could act as legal guardians of their children.<sup>12</sup>

Though Libanius does not explicitly say so, this appears to have been the role of his mother, who did not remarry and chose to be "everything" (τὰ πάντα) for her children. According to her son, "she feared the baseness of guardians and the inevitable necessity to go to court" that arose from their excesses.<sup>13</sup> This apparently indulgent woman provided for Libanius' schooling but was far from stern in his first years when he was a lazy, "sleeping" student. Nor did she interfere when Libanius became enamored of rhetoric at the age of fifteen and dedicated all his time to this passion. Yet, it is notable that years later when he declared his intention to leave Antioch to continue his studies in Athens, his loving and protective mother strongly opposed this wish, even though her powers were by then greatly curtailed. Unable to deter him, she turned to her brothers to prevent him from

<sup>8</sup> See Crihiore 2007a: 183–91.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., the son of the unimportant decurion (*curialis*) Cratinus, *Ep.* 93 and Silvanus, the son of the teacher Gaudentius *Ep.* 87 and *Or.* 38.

<sup>10</sup> See Saller 1994: 181–200.

<sup>11</sup> Such curators were called κούρατωρ or κηδεμών in the legal sources. Libanius was not particularly inclined to use legal terms in a proper way. He never used the first term and employed the suggestive word κηδεμών to indicate various functions, most often that of a pedagogue (see, e.g., *Epp.* 41 and 456).

<sup>12</sup> See Evans Grubbs 2002: 236–60 and especially 254–7. On the customs and laws regulating widows who remarried, see also Krause 1994–5: III, 157–91.

<sup>13</sup> See *Or.* 1.4. As a rule, Libanius uses the term ἐπίτροπος to indicate an orphan's guardian (e.g. *Epp.* 1172 and 1273). Only once (*Ep.* 319) does he employ this word to indicate overseers of land.

leaving, and their intervention was decisive. His older uncle told the young man to give up because he would never give his consent. It was only after this disapproving uncle died that Libanius was allowed to leave. His younger uncle in fact was on his side and persuaded his resisting mother.<sup>14</sup> The mother of Letoius, a student of Libanius, might also have had the same legal responsibility as a *tutor*.<sup>15</sup> This woman, who elicited the sophist's admiration because of her determination not to remarry even though she had only one child, wished to enroll her son in the school in Antioch and accompanied him on the long and difficult journey from Armenia to make sure that he had a smooth start. The letters concerning this student, however, show that she also relied on an uncle and a family friend who were involved in protecting and helping the family. They tried "to aid an orphan and not turn him over to those who wish to plunder him."<sup>16</sup> The evidence from Libanius apparently indicates that the authority of an uncle over a youth depended on his status, culture, and closeness to the sophist. If a maternal uncle was better positioned than a paternal one, he took control of the situation in protecting the young man and making sure that he was accepted in the school of Antioch.

The above cases exemplify the troubles encountered by widows in antiquity when they chose to maintain better control over their children by not remarrying. They had to rely on a circle of relatives and friends, provided these people were trustworthy. John Chrysostom, who belonged to a well-off family in which his father died after his birth and his young mother did not remarry, remarked that young widows had to discourage the claims of some relatives on their children's patrimony. They also found it difficult to maintain control over their households and to be obeyed by slaves.<sup>17</sup> Libanius confirms that the death of the head of the family might provide an opportunity for base slaves to harm the interests of the dead master's survivors.<sup>18</sup> Women who had lost their husbands supposedly had some trouble retaining a strong influence over pedagogues as well. As a rule, pedagogues assisted wealthy students *in loco parentis*. They represented the family, and their functions consisted of supervision of their wards' moral behavior and study habits and of practical help with academic difficulties

<sup>14</sup> *Or.* 1.11–13; his uncle told the tearful mother that the separation would not be of long duration and that education in Athens would bear much fruit. Both uncles, in any case, did not have legal power over young Libanius.

<sup>15</sup> Letoius iv. In this case we have to suppose that Letoius was not yet fourteen years old.

<sup>16</sup> See Libanius, *Ep.* 285 and 104. It is impossible to know if this uncle was paternal or maternal.

<sup>17</sup> Jo. Chrys. *De sacerdotio* 1.5 (Migne, *PG* 48.624); cf. Clark 1993: 61.

<sup>18</sup> *Or.* 18.290.

and health problems.<sup>19</sup> According to Libanius, their authority seems to have derived mainly from the student's father, who supervised in order to ensure that the process of education functioned well. Widows, who struggled to maintain mastery of their households, had limited power over them. When Libanius was studying in Antioch, people marveled at his self-control and serious engagement with grammar and rhetoric, to the point that some approached his uncles to offer their daughters to him in matrimony.<sup>20</sup> Libanius did not accept but agreed that he had been "incorruptible, and not because of the fearful vigilance of a pedagogue." He remarked that a pedagogue was powerless since he was an orphan, and Fortune had helped him with her providence.<sup>21</sup> Whereas the authority of an orphaned youth's pedagogue was generally impaired because he was unable to rely on a father's support, there were exceptions to the rule. Thus Libanius related the example of an attendant who had been able to become an orphan boy's guardian (ἐπίτροπος) and who was such a solicitous caregiver that his ward was not conscious of being bereft of a father.<sup>22</sup>

The assistance of an extended, caring family and especially the supervision of grandfathers and uncles contributed greatly to an orphan's success.<sup>23</sup> Bernstein in this volume shows the impact of paternal surrogates in assuring the success of some prominent orphans in the western Roman Empire. The larger evidence that Libanius offers for the Eastern world refers to surrogate parents within the family. Libanius sent two letters to the grandfather of a student who bore the name Libanius in his honor. The old man had brought young Libanius to school in lieu of the youth's father, Antiochus, who had attended the same school but was now dead.<sup>24</sup> The death of this father might have slowed down his son's application, since Libanius remarked that "albeit late, finally" he had this student.<sup>25</sup> Antiochus, who "should have lived to bring his son to us, just as an athlete brings his son to the same trainer," is an important presence in these letters. The sophist rejoiced at the physical resemblance between father and son (they had the same face and

<sup>19</sup> See Criboire 2001: 47–50.

<sup>20</sup> *Or.* 1.12. Of course we have no way of testing the veracity of his report.

<sup>21</sup> We are in the dark about the status of pedagogues of orphans. They apparently continued their services, but it is unclear to whom they had to respond.

<sup>22</sup> *Or.* 58.11. We do not know how old this boy was but he must have been under fourteen years of age because Libanius uses the expression "lawful guardian."

<sup>23</sup> Krause 1994–5: III, 49–77. Cf. in this volume Harders on the role of Augustus as uncle in raising Anthony's children.

<sup>24</sup> *Epp.* 1020 and 1034.

<sup>25</sup> Yet this expression is not unique. The sophist was always impatient to receive the scions of the best families.

voice!) and confessed that he often had the impression that Antiochus himself was at the school, telling him about his child "the sort of things that a father says about his son." But it is the conduct of the grandfather that attracts attention since he stepped fully into the role as primary caregiver. He kept up a correspondence with his grandson, communicated with Libanius by letter, and sent him a large quantity of wine as compensation for or in appreciation of his services. The sophist highly esteemed his writing style, which far from being weak and uninspired (as the old man feared) showed "a man in his prime," and he strongly encouraged him to continue writing to his grandson. Young Libanius was learning to compose well-wrought, rhetorical letters by being exposed to the letters of the ancient writers and could benefit from the masterful letters of his grandfather as well.<sup>26</sup>

The chances of a father's outliving his adult son were naturally less than the opposite. Only one other grandfather who was involved in his grandson's education emerges from Libanius' correspondence.<sup>27</sup> Usually uncles (on both the mother's and the father's side) assisted widows in the upbringing of their children. The evidence provided by the family of the wealthy Agesilaus of Ancyra in Galatia permits us to see the various mechanisms set into motion when the head of the family died before his time.<sup>28</sup> Before Libanius started to teach in Antioch he had met Agesilaus in Galatia. Since Agesilaus wanted to make sure that both of his sons, Strategius and Albanus, learned rhetoric with the sophist, he personally took them to Antioch in 355, where they soon were numbered among Libanius' favorite students in spite of their short attendance. Strategius, who may have been exposed to rhetoric before, remained in Antioch for only one year, but his irreproachable performance allowed Libanius to consider him one of his "sons." In writing a letter of recommendation for him,<sup>29</sup> the sophist remarked to the addressee:

You will surely not be cross with me because I call a student this. He was one of the many who studied with me but was one of the few above reproach, and yet, he was always with me, studying and sharing my table, the afternoon work, and all the other things that befit a young man who is trusted because of his character.

<sup>26</sup> On practicing epistolary skills at the school of the grammarian, see Criore 2001: 215–19; and on writing letters in rhetorical school, see Criore 2007a: 169–73.

<sup>27</sup> The grandfather of the student Diophantus was also interested in his education when the boy's father was still alive, cf. *Epp.* 465 and 601 from the years 355 to 357. It is possible, however, that the latter was dead when Libanius sent the grandfather a last letter (*Ep.* 766) in the year 362.

<sup>28</sup> On the letters that regard the various members of this family, see Festugière 1959: 153–9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ep.* 287.2. The addressee was then the governor of Armenia and Strategius wanted to have a position.

Albanus, the younger brother, would have liked to continue his studies beyond the two years he was allowed to with Libanius and in fact showed great promise of becoming a scholar. His brief training in rhetoric permitted him to produce work that aroused the admiration of an eminent rhetor, particularly when he delivered a panegyric on Domitius Modestus, the powerful *comes orientis* (Count of the East) who was stationed in Antioch.<sup>30</sup> Libanius nurtured the hope that the boy would follow his example and embark on an academic career, but in vain. Parents considered some training in rhetoric useful, but often found the lengthy training necessary to become a sophist superfluous and counterproductive. Early involvement in practical activities and employment in the administration were more desirable even when financial need was not an issue. The death of a father might complicate the scenario. When Albanus' father died, his mother was responsible for pulling him out of school. She did not have the legal power to do it, but her son responded to emotional pressure, "her crying and begging."<sup>31</sup> Albanus entered public service and became part of the retinue of the governor of Galatia as a rhetor: by 363 he was already wealthy in his own right.<sup>32</sup>

A few years later Libanius again dealt with the same powerful family and confronted the educational needs of an orphan one more time. The sister of Strategius and Albanus was married and had a son, Eusebius, whom Libanius had held in his arms as a baby when he passed through Galatia years before.<sup>33</sup> Being part of such a family, this boy was destined to become a student of the sophist. When his father died in 364, Eusebius' maternal uncles brought him to Antioch to introduce him to their former teacher.<sup>34</sup> They would have probably done so even had his father been alive, since Libanius does not seem to have been well acquainted with his old students' brother-in-law. But in addition to the welcome visit, Libanius also received a letter of recommendation from the boy's paternal uncle, who did not know the sophist but made sure to exhort him to take care of Eusebius.<sup>35</sup> One more letter, from a former teacher of rhetoric, to whom Libanius responded with impeccable *savoir faire*, completed this student's application.<sup>36</sup> Not so many people were involved when other students applied to the school in Antioch because letters from their fathers were deemed

<sup>30</sup> Modestus 2. <sup>31</sup> *Ep.* 1444.2.

<sup>32</sup> See *Ep.* 834, sent to this governor. Since the sophist was always afraid of critics who suggested that he had very few successful students, he encouraged the governor to be very stern with Albanus and other young men who were his former students and not to let them slacken.

<sup>33</sup> The youth was Eusebius xx; his father was Eusebius xix.

<sup>34</sup> See *Ep.* 1240.

<sup>35</sup> See *Ep.* 1241, sent to Olympius viii where Libanius reminded him of all his debts toward the family.

<sup>36</sup> See *Ep.* 1242. Androcles, a local sophist from Ancyra, had given the rudiments of the art to the boy.

sufficient,<sup>37</sup> and thus one might conclude that the application of an orphan set into motion a longer chain of contacts. Yet, besides that, the loss of his father apparently had no repercussions on Eusebius' education.

Was this student an exception? Other young men who lost their fathers before embarking on higher studies or at the beginning of their attendance do not seem to have encountered excessive difficulty in acquiring an education.<sup>38</sup> Students who belonged to wealthy families had at their disposal an effective support system according to which surviving members of the family endeavored to help them pursue the education which their rank demanded. The world of rhetoric was a man's world. Some women who came from prominent families with traditions of *paideia* attended the school of the grammarian (the second stage of education) but did not have access to a rhetorical school, which served the needs of those destined for public life. Thus the women to whom Libanius wrote are few and are exceptional in their achievements.<sup>39</sup> Unlike fathers, therefore, mothers did not directly approach the sophist with letters of recommendation for their sons, yet they could facilitate their acceptance, and their voices reached Libanius in other ways. Widows were active behind the scenes in soliciting the help of relatives and friends and expressing through them their concerns for Libanius to hear and heed.

A family that figures prominently in Libanius' correspondence, for example, is that of the poet and rhetor Acacius, who lived in Cilicia. His son and son-in-law attended Libanius' school.<sup>40</sup> In 358 a third member of the family joined them, the orphan Philoxenus, and the sophist wrote to Acacius, "I trust that Philoxenus, too, will do what is worthy of the family."<sup>41</sup> When he sent his friend a report of the boy's progress at the end of the following school year,

<sup>37</sup> On letters of application to Libanius' school, see Cribiore 2007a: 112–17.

<sup>38</sup> A list of these students includes (besides Libanius iv and Eusebius xx): the orphan of *Or.* 34.3; Calycius (*Ep.* 26); Chrysogonus (*Ep.* 1273); the nephew of Demetrius (*Ep.* 23); Dionysius (*Ep.* 426); the grandson of Megethius (*Ep.* 1101); the sons of Hestiaeus (*Ep.* 144); Philoxenus (*Ep.* 26) and his brother (*Ep.* 148); the sons of Urbitius (*Ep.* 1160); Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Libanius himself. We do not know whether other students who are simply referred to as orphans were in this condition when they started to attend or lost their fathers later; see, e.g., Dianius (*Ep.* 376); Eusebius 25 (*Ep.* 885) who was adopted by his paternal uncle; Julianus xv (who lost his mother during schooling and his father before); Parnasius (*Ep.* 912). The evidence above shows that relatively young orphans are amply present among Libanius' students, contrary to what Krause (1994–5: III, 183) maintained.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Alexandra the wife of his friend Seleucus (*Ep.* 734), who was the daughter and sister of grammarians, had an excellent education, and exchanged books with Libanius. Women of this sort who could feel at ease in writing to such a prominent sophist were very rare. Cf. the vast majority of the women who sent letters in Greco-Roman Egypt in Bagnall and Cribiore 2006. On women who appear in Libanius' works, cf. Schouler 1985.

<sup>40</sup> Acacius 7; his son was Titianus, and Calycius married his daughter.

<sup>41</sup> See *Ep.* 26.2. It is unclear how Acacius was related to this boy.



Libanius reiterated that Philoxenus had been "worthy of your family in all respects": his academic progress was entirely satisfactory and his behavior was impeccable even though Acacius had warned the teacher that the boy liked to fight.<sup>42</sup> Another letter indicates that Philoxenus' mother operated in the background and tried to secure the goodwill of other people in order to encourage Libanius to pay special attention to her son and to know how he was doing in school. This woman's brother, who had been a fellow student of Libanius in Athens, was the most suitable person on whom she could rely for news, but apparently Libanius' uncle was another source of information for her, since she was on friendly terms with his wife.<sup>43</sup> Thus Philoxenus' mother succeeded in her intent to communicate, albeit indirectly, with the teacher. Libanius in fact enjoined her brother to inform her that "god willing, her son will be such as to satisfy her: he has a willing disposition and a capable nature." He sent another indirect message to her when Philoxenus' brother had also become a student and, after a vacation at home, this widow tried to keep both boys in Cilicia: after all, her relative Acacius was a superb rhetor who was willing at times to teach his own son and the two orphans.<sup>44</sup> Since this mother used the pretext that the weather in Cilicia was better than in Antioch, Libanius wrote stiffly to Acacius: "tell the mother of the two boys that it is summer here too, and a moderate wind blows." Acacius was often traveling to Antioch to be in contact with Libanius so that it was the maternal uncle of Philoxenus who received his excellent final report of progress after two years of attendance.<sup>45</sup>

Other examples of students who enjoyed the support of caring relatives and whose mothers were still alive<sup>46</sup> confirm that families felt the responsibility to help orphans secure some higher education. The life story of Libanius himself is exemplary in this respect. Exceptions to this social convention need to be considered with care. Thus the orphan nephew of the renowned sophist and governor Demetrius of Tarsus apparently encountered such financial difficulties in pursuing his education in Antioch that Libanius had to plead with members of his family on his behalf.<sup>47</sup> It is unnecessary, however, to infer from this example that orphans had particular trouble in financing their studies.<sup>48</sup> A correct reading of the situation revealed by the letters concerning this youth must take into account that he had run away from his relatives,

<sup>42</sup> According to *Ep.* 60, Acacius had said jokingly that the boy might be useful to Libanius by participating on his side in the fist fights that were apparently common between students of rival sophists; see, e.g., Eunap. 9.1.6.483-9.2.21.485 and Himer. *Or.* 4.9 and 19.

<sup>43</sup> See *Ep.* 45 written to Ecdicius ii, the maternal uncle of the boy.

<sup>44</sup> See *Ep.* 148 written to Acacius. <sup>45</sup> See *Ep.* 147 of the year 359/60.

<sup>46</sup> It is likely that these women had not remarried. <sup>47</sup> Demetrius 2. *Epp.* 23 and 24.

<sup>48</sup> Krause (1994-5: III, 182) uses this as an example of the economic straits orphans encountered when they wished to study rhetoric.

who would have preferred that he pursue his studies in his own country. In spite of Libanius' remark on the nobility of the young man's search for rhetoric ("he ran away from you in noble flight, the only kind of flight that is praiseworthy"), the family and the mother of this young man were probably justified in their anger and failure to provide financial support.<sup>49</sup> Libanius, who had a weakness for studious boys, also had a vested interest in wishing to keep this student with him.

Boys who had lost both mother and father or whose mothers remarried, however, might require a wider network of support in order to attain their educational goals. A rich dossier of letters in Libanius' correspondence concerns a student by the name of Dionysius, who studied rhetoric in spite of being destitute.<sup>50</sup> When his father was murdered by robbers, Dionysius ran away, lost all his property at home, and was in dire straits. Meanwhile his mother and her new husband apparently lived in luxury.<sup>51</sup> All this notwithstanding, Dionysius succeeded in acquiring an education that lasted many years under the guidance of Libanius, was offered good positions, composed a masterly panegyric of a governor, and was able to write elegant, rhetorical letters that made his teacher rejoice. Most importantly, he gained back all his land with the help of the rhetoric he had learned, increasing the good reputation of the sophist.<sup>52</sup> Many factors contributed to the success of this orphan who had started with every possible disadvantage. Libanius solicited the help of a donor, possibly a governor, who offered the boy economic support by regularly providing goods from his properties.<sup>53</sup> When this subsidy was interrupted, the sophist wrote a masterful letter to get it restored without offending the eminent supporter. Another wealthy young man, moreover, came to the rescue of this fellow student. Libanius wrote to a governor that Julianus "took in this young man, shared his funds with him, and made many people think that they were brothers. One was so wealthy that both could have the benefit of it."<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Orphans, moreover, were not the only students in financial difficulties, see, e.g., Themistius 2 who studied with Libanius and later became governor of Lycia; his father did not give him money for books, *Ep.* 428.

<sup>50</sup> See *Epp.* 319, 426, 837, 1168–9, 1237–8, 1470, and 1501.

<sup>51</sup> There is no way of knowing why Dionysius ran away and whether the new husband of his mother was responsible for his troubles.

<sup>52</sup> Several letters of Libanius concern an accusation of rape or abduction that was brought against this young man, years after he left school. Since our knowledge of this affair and of Dionysius' motivations is limited, it is useless to speculate on the importance of his past on this matter. In any case, with the help of Libanius who enlisted the aid of several governors Dionysius was acquitted.

<sup>53</sup> *Ep.* 319 refers to a sort of scholarship with which Procopius 1, possibly governor of Cilicia, funded the boy's studies.

<sup>54</sup> See *Ep.* 1169, Julianus xv. We have to surmise, moreover, that Libanius exempted Dionysius from tuition. Such exemption was not exceptional. On Libanius' policy toward tuition, see Criore 2007a: 183–8.

One reason for the generous conduct of Julianus might be that he personally understood Dionysius' plight since he also was fatherless. Toward the end of his studies, moreover, he had to return home because his mother was murdered. Libanius wrote to the governor in charge of administering justice, saying that Julianus "should have gone home to see his mother for other reasons so that she might enjoy her son's excellence in her old age. But now he is going to shed tears on her tomb, mourning the woman who bore him both because she is dead and because of the way she died."<sup>55</sup> In any case, the loss of his father at the start of or during his schooling did not hamper this youth's academic progress at all. Julianus was a brilliant pupil. Libanius called him "the head of the chorus," that is, the most competent of all his students (*κορυφαῖος*). This title referred to a prestigious position, reserved for very few, that apparently existed in Athens and probably in other schools.<sup>56</sup> After leaving Antioch, Julianus continued to conduct himself in a commendable way, so that a year later his teacher congratulated him on the honors he had received from his native city.<sup>57</sup>

Painting the portrait of a very diligent orphan in a letter of recommendation, Libanius remarked on the "self-control and discipline of his everyday life, for anyone who is so attached to books keeps out of trouble."<sup>58</sup> The painstaking study of rhetoric helped young men fulfill the expectations of their families and status; gave them mastery of oral and written language; and also inculcated in them such precious qualities as hard work and tenacity. The latter two orphans do not provide the only examples of success among Libanius' students. The sophist wrote to a governor that Chrysogonus from Phoenicia "was left an orphan, but suffered a greater misfortune than being an orphan, that is, dishonest guardians, who made themselves masters of his property and suffered that he would go hungry."<sup>59</sup> His attendance at the school in Antioch, albeit not very long, allowed this student to oppose in court the people who had prevailed over him, recouping his possessions. Libanius continued to offer assistance in order that he become an advocate in the retinue of governors. The acquisition of some rhetorical skills not only gave young men the actual power to overcome their misfortunes but also secured the invaluable help of their teacher, who tirelessly pleaded on their behalf with eminent men. Besides the obvious affection Libanius felt for his students, their success in life increased his reputation.

<sup>55</sup> *Ep.* 835 to Entrechius 1.   <sup>56</sup> Cf. *Eunap.* 9.2.7, 483.

<sup>57</sup> See *Ep.* 1130.3, Julianus' city celebrated his return.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Ep.* 666; on the peerless Faustinus, see below.

<sup>59</sup> Chrysogonus 2, see *Epp.* 1273 and 1208, a letter to another governor. This student may have lost both parents.

According to tradition, a full course of rhetoric (which Libanius himself had followed) included learning both the theory of issues (σπᾶσις), which imparted a mastery of arguments, and the theory of the parts of speech. This thorough training, which took many years, was the only one that truly satisfied Libanius as an educator. He spoke generically of the necessity for students to learn "the whole" and never openly admitted that they could succeed with less. Students who were willing to dedicate so much time to the art, however, were rare. In the sophist's late years, one orphan, another Eusebius, again aroused his hope that a student would follow in his footsteps.<sup>60</sup> Eusebius had been adopted by his dead father's brother. He was entangled in an obscure legal affair and lost much of his wealth in spite of his uncle's and mother's support. Difficulties, however, did not keep him from higher education. On the contrary: he was the student who attended Libanius' school for the longest time. His commitment and inborn qualities convinced his teacher that an academic career was perfect for him. He was the head of the chorus (κορυφαῖος) and had the responsibility of teaching in emergencies, for example when Libanius was ill. Eusebius' family, however, had different plans even though he became an orator of the first quality. Civic service could bring a young man a good reputation, and Libanius tried to help his former student undertake a burden commensurate with his possessions. But Eusebius aimed higher and wished to be adlected into the Senate of Constantinople, a choice his teacher disapproved of because it might force him into great expenditures while diminishing his influence at home.<sup>61</sup> Libanius had witnessed the accomplishments and hard work of an influential senator, Domninus, who left an impoverished son at his death.<sup>62</sup> Yet against his better judgment Libanius assisted Eusebius by appealing to friends and acquaintances.

So far I have considered cases of orphans who abandoned rhetoric after a short training and of others whose loss did not prevent them from attending Libanius' classes for many years. A correct understanding of the average attendance of students in the school of Antioch is necessary to avoid the risk of misrepresenting the actual educational prospects of orphans by overrating the impact of their status on schooling. A few of Libanius' students prolonged their attendance for up to five years (or more), but the majority limited it to two or three years. The reasons why a young man quit his

<sup>60</sup> Eusebius 25; letters that concern him are 884-7.

<sup>61</sup> On the duties of members of the Great Senate, see Jones 1964: 1, 523-62. Libanius, however, approved of his students belonging to city councils and undertaking liturgies on behalf of their communities.

<sup>62</sup> Domninus 2; see *Epp.* 952-3; this youth was a student of Libanius.

studies were many.<sup>63</sup> Parents might hear rumors about the school and withdraw their sons;<sup>64</sup> fathers might take up new positions and change their residence;<sup>65</sup> or students might be forced to withdraw because of poor health.<sup>66</sup> But the chief reason why students in the fourth century were satisfied with just a few years of rhetorical education was that the discipline had lost some of its prestige. A relatively brief training was sufficient for success in the law courts as a "literary" advocate or as a prerequisite before moving on to the training in Latin and Roman law that made a young man more competitive on the job market.<sup>67</sup>

A father's death, therefore, was only one of the causes that might force a youth to interrupt his education, even when he had dedication and a predisposition to the art. One of these gifted students, for example, was Faustinus, whom Libanius called "the best of the Pisidians and of our students."<sup>68</sup> He did not share the nonchalant attitude of those of his schoolmates who dedicated much of their time to the theater, mimes, and chariot races but "were asleep" in class. He was so dedicated that Libanius anticipated that in time he would even surpass his teachers in ability. Yet, when his father died, Faustinus had to withdraw to tend to his patrimony and used his rhetorical knowledge in the law courts. His family could not adequately support him because his surviving grandfather was weak and "had yielded to old age." Faustinus had become the head of the family and could not afford to stay away from his home country.

A more distressing predicament compelled another student, Eudocius, to withdraw upon the death of his father Caesarius.<sup>69</sup> This notable from Armenia had enlisted the aid of several people to have his sons accepted. Since he had enrolled them first in another school, thereby incurring Libanius' displeasure,<sup>70</sup> he feared lest the sophist reject them or not give them the attention they needed. Thus a family friend and the governor of Armenia (in addition to Caesarius himself) had pleaded on behalf of Eudocius and his younger brother.<sup>71</sup> In his stiff responses to the recommenders, Libanius also

<sup>63</sup> On this, cf. Cribiore 2007a: 174–83 and 191–4 and Cribiore 2007b.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., *Epp.* 32, 41, and 129. <sup>65</sup> See *Ep.* 1250. <sup>66</sup> See *Epp.* 1245 and 1371.

<sup>67</sup> On rhetoric's rival studies (Latin and Roman law), see Liebeschuetz 1972: 242–55; on the actual relevance of rhetoric, see Heath 2004: 277–331. Cf. Libanius, *Epp.* 117, 653, 1394, and especially *Or.* 57 against his former student Severus, who quit after little more than a year to become a successful advocate.

<sup>68</sup> See *Ep.* 666.

<sup>69</sup> Eudocius i; his father was Caesarius ii and his brother was Caesarius iii.

<sup>70</sup> The school in question must have been in Antioch, too, with one of Libanius' rivals. Libanius would not feel offended by attendance in an Armenian school.

<sup>71</sup> See *Epp.* 248–50.

pointed to an added reason for acceptance, the fact that an uncle of these students had gone to school with him: bonds of friendship formed during schooling were long-lasting.<sup>72</sup> All the efforts of this father to foster his children's education, however, came to a halt when he died a few years later, and his older son had to leave rhetoric to take the reins of the household.

City councils were always on the lookout for people of curial status who might be eligible for civic service. Their attempts to compel orphaned students of curial status to undertake liturgies were sometimes obviously misguided when the children were still minors, as in the case of the diligent sons of the decurion Urbicius, who were too young to be pulled out of school.<sup>73</sup> Eudocius, though, did not have the legitimate excuse of his age. Like the orphaned son of the Domninus mentioned above,<sup>74</sup> he was trapped and was burdened with a heavy liturgy. Yet an appeal to his foster father and teacher brought the desired results. Libanius intervened with Maximus, the governor of Armenia, who came to the rescue.<sup>75</sup> The sophist acknowledged the assistance by responding: "They say that Eudocius grieves for his father only a little, and that you are the reason for this, because you diminished his feelings of bereavement with many great deeds." When confronted with an unbearable liturgy, an impoverished orphan would sometimes literally run away. The mother of Dianius begged him to return to her and his city from Antioch, but while he did not want to disobey her and cared for his country, he was frightened "because of the necessity of undertaking liturgies, poor as he was." This time Libanius apparently did not have recourse to the usual authorities but pleaded with the philosopher Themistius to help this youth who was going to Constantinople to see him.<sup>76</sup> The philosopher was most qualified to help in this difficult situation, because he had power at court, was a teacher himself, and apparently regarded Libanius' students as his own.

Libanius declared in an oration that some orphans used their condition as an excuse for laziness, but those who had authentic "love" (ἔρως) for paideia found a way to achieve it and continued to "drink at the springs of

<sup>72</sup> To somewhat maintain his professorial authority, he also added that these students deserved to be admitted because of their talent. He apparently later also accepted Caesarius' son-in-law, *Ep.* 254.

<sup>73</sup> *Epp.* 1163 and 1172; see Petit 1956: 141.

<sup>74</sup> The son of Domninus was entrapped with a liturgy that his father owed to Constantinople.

<sup>75</sup> Maximus 19. *Ep.* 645 shows that the despondent Eudocius wrote timidly to his teacher to test the ground; *Ep.* 646 attests to the help he received from the governor through Libanius' mediation and the long letter he sent the sophist with regard to that. From *Ep.* 814 it appears that Eudocius was finally relieved from his duty.

<sup>76</sup> *Ep.* 376 to Themistius 1. The sophist told him among other things that Dianius had memorized many of the latter's discourses.

the Muses" with no other concerns.<sup>77</sup> This statement, which was influenced by the overall argument of the speech in question, is not entirely realistic and fair, particularly when the death of the head of the household threatened its financial ruin. And yet it should not be entirely discounted. A talented young man with a passion for rhetoric and born in an elite household had a strong ally against life's misfortune: Libanius himself who acted as surrogate father. The equivalence of teacher and father, which sometimes occurs in literature and particularly in writers of late antiquity, is far more than a cliché in his work.<sup>78</sup> Whereas Libanius considered all good students his sons because he nourished their talent for rhetoric, those who lost their fathers even more clearly fulfilled his need to beget real children of the intellect.

Returning now to the initial question that Libanius posed about himself, what can we conclude about the orphan state of his students? Was the education of these young men seriously compromised by this important loss? The evidence is large enough to warrant some general conclusions. It shows that other factors such as wealth and a supportive family were crucial in assuring that a young man entered school and remained on the right track. Undoubtedly the loss of a father might have repercussions on schooling, since it might delay his application or force him to withdraw from school to take care of the family's possessions or to undertake grievous financial burdens. Orphans, though, were not the only young men who were forced to make those choices and who had to shoulder responsibilities that were part of an adult life.<sup>79</sup> Most orphans of the upper class were able to acquire some rhetorical education in spite of some difficulties. A strong, close family where uncles and more rarely grandfathers took the place of the departed parent and a prosperous financial situation were the real determiners of success. Whereas a father's death might occasionally have a drastic effect on length of studies, the crucial factors that helped a young man go to and stay in school were family support, ability to pay for costly studies, lack of urgent need to earn a living, and personal motivation and talent.

<sup>77</sup> See *Or.* 55.14.

<sup>78</sup> See Cribiore 2007a: 138–41. Cf., e.g., *Epp.* 59, 300, 634, 782, 1071, and 1538. The image of a teacher as the father of a student (a father as important as the natural father) appears before late antiquity but in this period in particular is used to describe pedagogic relationships, see Kaster 1988: 67–9. Cf. *Himer. Or.* 9.30 and 24.20 and *Eunap.* 483. Libanius, moreover, was not an entirely happy natural father, which can partly explain his affection for his students. His son Cimon, who died at a relatively young age, was born of his relation with a woman of low condition so that the sophist had to wage many battles to be able to recognize him as legitimate.

<sup>79</sup> Sooner or later an individual of curial status had to undertake civil service that might increase his standing before his fellow citizens.

The information derived from Libanius, therefore, is generally optimistic with regard to orphans obtaining some higher education. It shows that a father's loss did not compromise irremediably a young man's chance to function in the future at the highest echelons of society. It is crucial, however, to keep in view that this evidence refers to elite social strata. The few impoverished but talented orphans who obtained the sophist's personal assistance were also born into elite families that had fallen into disgrace. As a rule, the relatives who acted as surrogate fathers were members of privileged milieus who felt responsible for the success of one of their own.