FOREWORD

The "Art of Violence," the first part of the title of this special issue, is a reference to invective as it manifests itself in the genres, texts, and contexts of ancient Greek literature. If we pin down the definitions of invective that have been proposed not only in classical studies, but also in interdisciplinary theory, we find that one characteristic appears again and again: violence. Invective is fundamentally violent, polemical, and immeasurably aggressive. Much has been written about invective in the study of antiquity and several attempts have been made to define the term. At core, these works, which are presented and discussed in the articles in this issue, agree that invective is any form of violent attack against a person's identity, an attempt to portray the 'other' – whoever that may be, rivals in court, political opponents, foreigners, people accused of religious offences, even antagonists of playwrights – in the worst possible way. It is a deliberate attempt by one person to undermine, diminish, stigmatize, and destroy the perception that others have of another person.

The contribution of an ambitious, large-scale, transcultural, and intertextual project funded by the National Science Centre of Poland (grant number 2021/41/B/HS2/00755) and carried out at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń by Rafał Toczko in collaboration with Andreas Serafim (2022-2024) and Sławomir Poloczek (2024-present) is that invectives are redefined as a cultural phenomenon. Invective derives its meaning from the general cultural context (i.e., moral, legal, aesthetic, socio-economic, political, religious, etc.) of the epochs, across a wide range of surviving verse and prose texts, fragments, and scholia from Homer to early Christian literature up to the fifth century AD. In other words, the project considers invective as a cultural phenomenon, not merely a literary technique. It existed in society before it was incorporated into texts, and it was valorized and embellished by sophisticated modes of argumentation according to the etiquette of certain genres and texts.

This special issue is a good excerpt from a series of seminars on invective organized by Rafał Toczko and Andreas Serafim as part of the re-

search activities of the Toruń project. It focuses specifically on verbal invective in ancient Greek: the use of language that serves the purpose of invective, i.e. attacking an individual or collective target, diminishing one's credibility, discrediting the *ethos*, and achieving all kinds of authorial, literary, and contextual ends. In the courtroom, for example, the speaker aims to turn the audience, especially the judges, against the target of criticism and urge them to vote against him.

Work has been done to discuss the language of abuse. Explicit examples of invective (ranging from accusations of personal mismanagement and unethical behaviour to the use of expletives, profane language, offensive nicknames, and sexual insults), comic abuse, and attacks, articulated through references to nonverbal communication, as in the forthcoming volume *'Embodied Invective' and Identity Construction in Ancient Literature*, edited by Dennis Pausch, Rafal Toczko, and Andreas Serafim, are among the topics discussed in classical scholarship. The contributions to this issue offer a new way of thinking about the way verbal attacks are made. (1) They shed light on the most interesting but under-researched topics: the differences between genres that affect the way invectives are articulated and the limits of their expression in texts and perhaps in society. (2) They will address controversial issues (e.g., *hybris* in Attic law) to explore how invective reflects socio-cultural norms, values and institutions in the ancient world. (3) They utilize interdisciplinary theories and research tools to better and more comprehensively understand verbal invective in ancient literature. (4) They shed welcome new light on the under-researched use of indirect forms of verbal abuse, i.e., irony, insinuations, ambiguous statements, and taboos. And (5) they discuss texts from a 'microscopic' angle by examining the lexical markers of invective in texts, e.g., superlatives, diminutives, questions, and hyperboles.

Nielsen and Dr George Hinge, for the professional work and effort they put into the preparation of this special issue.

Andreas Serafim and Rafał Toczko
(Changchun and Toruń in July 2025)