

DEMOSTHENES AND THE LANGUAGE OF INVECTIVE

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Summary: This article compares the vocabulary of invective used by Demosthenes with that used by other orators. Demosthenes had a reputation in antiquity for using very abusive language and a study of his speeches shows that he often uses words or expressions either not used by other orators or used only sparingly. Demosthenes also employs exclamations with the names of gods and aggressive addresses to opponents more frequently than other orators. The final part of the essay examines the personality of Demosthenes to explain why his invective is more harsh than other orators'.

τὰ μίᾱρὰ καὶ ἀπίθᾱνα ῥήματα (Aeschines 3.166)

In 346 BCE Aeschines, Demosthenes and eight other Athenians with one representative of the Second Athenian League were elected as ambassadors to negotiate a peace treaty with Philip II the king of Macedonia.¹ They brought back a proposal from Philip, which was ratified by the Assembly on 19 Elaphebolion (Aeschin. 2.61, 65; Dem. 19.57). The same ambassadors went back to Macedonia to take the oaths from Philip and returned to Athens in Skirophorion (Dem. 19.57-58). During this second embassy, Aeschines and Demosthenes had a serious disagreement. As a result, Demosthenes and another politician named Timarchus brought charges against Aeschines when he rendered his accounts (*euthynai*). Aeschines brought a charge against Timarchus in late 346 and won a conviction (Aeschin. 1; Dem. 19.2, 257, 284-285, 287). This discouraged Demosthenes from bringing his case to court until 343.² In the speech he delivered at the trial, Demosthenes accused Aeschines of mistreating an Olynthian woman, who had been enslaved when Philip's troops captured the city in 348. The account of the incident given by Demosthenes (19.196-198) is very explicit:

1 For an account of the First and Second Embassy in 346 see Harris 1995: 50-77.

2 For the date of the speech see Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Amm.* 1.4.

κληθέντες γὰρ οὗτοι πρὸς Ξενόφρονα τὸν υἱὸν τὸν Φαιδίμου, τοῦ τῶν τριάκοντα, ὥχοντο· ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ ἐπορεύθην. ἐπειδὴ δ' ἤκον εἰς τὸ πίνειν, εἰσάγει τιν' Ὀλυνθίαν γυναῖκα, εὐπρεπῇ μὲν, ἐλευθέραν δὲ καὶ σώφρονα, ὡς τὸ ἔργον ἐδήλωσεν. ταύτην τὸ μὲν πρῶτον οὕτωςι πίνειν ἡσυχῇ καὶ τρώγειν ἠνάγκαζον οὗτοί μοι δοκεῖ, ὡς διηγεῖτ' Ἰατροκλῆς ἐμοὶ τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ· ὡς δὲ προῆει τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ διεθερμαίνοντο, κατακλίνεσθαι καὶ τι καὶ ᾄδειν ἐκέλευον. ἀδημονούσης δὲ τῆς ἀνθρώπου καὶ οὗτ' ἐθελούσης οὗτ' ἐπισταμένης, ὕβριν τὸ πρᾶγμ' ἔφασαν οὕτοσι καὶ ὁ Φρύνων καὶ οὐκ ἀνεκτὸν εἶναι, τῶν θεοῖς ἐχθρῶν, τῶν ἀλειτηρίων Ὀλυνθίων αἰχμάλωτον οὖσαν τρυφᾶν· καὶ 'κάλει παῖδα', καὶ 'ἱμᾶντά τις φερέτω.' ἦκεν οἰκέτης ἔχων ῥυτῆρα, καὶ πεπωκότων, οἶμαι, καὶ μικρῶν ὄντων τῶν παροξυνόντων, εἰπούσης τι καὶ δακρυσάσης ἐκείνης περιρρήξας τὸν χιτωνίσκον ὁ οἰκέτης ξαίνει κατὰ τοῦ νώτου πολλὰς. ἔξω δ' αὐτῆς οὖς' ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ καὶ τοῦ πράγματος ἡ γυνή, ἀναπηδήσασα προσπίπτει πρὸς τὰ γόνατα τῷ Ἰατροκλεῖ, καὶ τὴν τράπεζαν ἀνατρέπει. καὶ εἰ μὴ 'κεῖνος ἀφείλετο, ἀπώλετ' ἂν παροινουμένη· καὶ γὰρ ἡ παροινία τοῦ καθάρματος τουτουὶ δεινὴ.

When they were invited to the house of Xenophron, the son of Phaedimus, who was one of the Thirty, they went, but I did not go. After they got to drinking, he brought in an Olynthian woman, good-looking on the one hand, yet also free born and modest, as her conduct revealed. At first, they apparently forced her only to drink in a leisurely way and to eat, as Iatrocles related to me the next day. But as the event went on and they were getting warmed up, they ordered her to sit down and also to sing something. The slave woman got upset; she did not wish to sit down and did not know how to sing. This man here and Phrynon declared that she was arrogant and that it was unbearable for one of the god-forsaken, damned Olynthians, and a captive taken in war at that, to give herself airs. And shouted 'Call the slave boy in' and 'let him bring a whip.' A slave came with a strap (ἱμᾶντά); they were drinking, I think, and minor things were getting them stirred up. When she protested and burst into tears, the slave tore off her short *chiton* and thrashed (ξαίνει) her on the back many

times. The woman was out of her mind with her suffering and this treatment and jumping up fell at the knees of Iatrocles, pushing over the table. If that man had not taken her away, she would have been killed from their drunken violence. The drunken abuse of this scumbag (καθάρματος) here is appalling. (My translation)

The vocabulary in this passage is very unusual for extant speeches written for delivery in Athenian courts.³ This is the only passage in Attic oratory where we find the words νότου (“back”), ἱμᾶντά (“whip”), ῥυτῆρα (“leather bridle”), διεθερμαίνοντο (“they were getting warmed up”), and ξάίνει, which I have translated as “thrash”. The last term is interesting; it is used to describe carding wool and evokes an image of a sharp object cutting into soft material. Demosthenes could have used a more neutral term to describe the whipping, but he chose one that conveyed the image of the shape while lacerating the woman’s flesh. The word ῥυτῆρα can be used to denote a bridle for a horse, which would have been humiliating for a human being. The word χιτωνίσκος is also rare in court speeches and is associated with slaves (Dem. 36.14). Demosthenes (21.216) describes himself as almost naked when his *himation* was pulled off and he was wearing only his *chitoniskos*. Other words and phrases are also striking and unusual in Attic Oratory. The expression “enemies of the gods” is never found in other court speeches except those written by Demosthenes (see below) and the adjective κατάρατος is found only in Demosthenes and Dinarchus, who is probably imitating Demosthenes (see below). The word κάθαρμα is also very strong: when Meidias is quoted using the term to insult people, Demosthenes (21.185) provides this as evidence of his abusive personality. The word is never found in other orators except Aeschines (3.211) and Dinarchus (1.16), who use it only about Demosthenes possibly as an implicit criticism for his choice of words.⁴

3 The analysis of the language in this passage is taken from Harris 2017: 234–35 with some modifications and additions. Spatharas 2019: 109–16 misrepresents my analysis of the passage. Daix 2023: 583–85 does not comment on the unusual vocabulary of Demosthenes in this passage. Daix 2023: 287 translates οἰκέτης as “serviteur.” For the correct translation see Lewis 2018: 295–306.

4 On this term see Wankel 1976: 683–84 and MacDowell 1990: 399–400, who do not observe that the other orators never use the term or only in relation to Demosthenes.

In his reply as defendant at his trial in 343, Aeschines (2.157) summarises these accusations and corrects two details.⁵ What is revealing is that Aeschines (2.158) criticizes Demosthenes' charges not only for being false but also for being shameful (αἰσχραῖς), that is, for exceeding the bounds of decorum usually expected in court.⁶ He clearly alludes to the style of his account by recalling how Demosthenes strained his voice. Apparently, Aeschines was not the only one to find Demosthenes' language offensive. At the beginning of his speech, Aeschines (2.4) says that he was beside himself and was very hurt when Demosthenes accused him of this abuse. But Aeschines then rejoiced when the judges rejected (ἐξεβάλλετε) this charge, which apparently indicates that they shouted him down for this breach of etiquette and did not allow him to continue. Later in the speech Aeschines (2.153) returns to this incident and the reaction of the court and says that Demosthenes was "thrown out" (ἐξεπρίφη) by the judges in the middle of speaking. These are not the only passages in which Aeschines objects to Demosthenes' style and choice of vocabulary. In *Against Ctesiphon* Aeschines objects to his "filthy and incredible words" (τὰ μισρὰ καὶ ἀπίθανα ῥήματα) and to his "harsh and strange words" (πικρῶν καὶ περιέργων).⁷ Other contemporaries also found his style harsh. According to Plutarch (*Demosthenes* 4.5), Demosthenes had the nickname Argas because his manners were savage and

5 Aeschines says that Xenodocus, one of Philip's Macedonian companions, was their host, and that Xenodocus was providing a feast, not a *symposion*.

6 Fisher 2024: 123 claims that "the 'shameful charges' (αἰσχραῖς αἰτίαις) must be 'shameful' for Aeschines the intended victim" but fails to observe that the judges and other onlookers expressed their disapproval of Demosthenes, not Aeschines. See Aeschines 2.4, which is ignored by Fisher and shows that the charges were shameful for Demosthenes. Note also that Demosthenes (18.130) worries that his language may be "unbecoming" to himself (οὐ προσήκοντας ἑμαυτῷ), which shows that the orator was aware that his choice of language might reflect badly on his reputation.

7 Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosthenes* 55 attempts to defend the orator against Aeschines' criticisms by claiming that his language is harsh only when the occasion required harshness to make the judges strict in enforcing the law. This indicates that Dionysius also found Demosthenes' language harsh, but he does not compare his vocabulary with that of the other Attic orators. In the same essay (57) Dionysius claims that even though fifty or sixty thousand lines of Demosthenes' speeches survive, he has not been able to find any vulgar or unpleasant words (φορτικά καὶ ἀηδῆ ὀνόματα). As this essay will show, this judgment is wildly inaccurate.

harsh (θηριώδη καὶ πικρόν) or because his way of speaking annoyed (ἀνιῶντα) his audience.⁸ Argas was known for his vile and irritating songs (νόμων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀργαλέων).

In this article I will show that Demosthenes' vocabulary for his court speeches and especially those delivered in public cases differs significantly from other speeches written for delivery in Athenian courts. Some of the language Demosthenes uses to attack his opponents is similar to that used by other orators, but in several cases Demosthenes's choice of words is distinctive and unusual. This topic has not received much attention from scholars writing about the style of Demosthenes. In his *Die attische Beredsamkeit*, F. Blass has a few pages on Demosthenes' choice of vocabulary but does not compare him with other Attic orators.⁹ In his book *Demosthenes the Orator* D.M. MacDowell does not discuss the topic at all in the chapter on Demosthenes' style¹⁰ and in his commentaries on *Against Meidias* and *On the False Embassy* has little to say about Demosthenes' unusual vocabulary.¹¹ In their books on invective, Worman and Kamen do not observe how Demosthenes' choice of vocabulary differs from that of other orators.¹²

8 On the harshness of Demosthenes's style cf. Plutarch *Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero* 3 (πικρίας τοῦ τρόπου καὶ συγγνώτητος).

9 Blass 1887-1898.3.1: 65-225. Blass 1887-1898.3.1: 92-95 does note the unusual vocabulary ("den durch ihre Ungewöhnheit harten Worten") in *On the Crown*.

10 MacDowell 2009: 398-407.

11 MacDowell 1990 and MacDowell 2000. The same is true of Ronnet 1951.

12 Worman 2008 and Kamen 2020. On the latter see the review of Filonik 2024, who shows that her analysis of the legal charge in Demosthenes' *Against Meidias* is unconvincing. Fisher 2024: 105 n. 11 claims that different passages point in different directions about the procedure, but has not read Dem. 21.25-28 carefully, which he misrepresents. On the procedure see now Harris 2025.

Terms of Abuse

Two of Demosthenes' favourite words are the adjective βδελυρός ('disgusting') and the noun βδελυρία.¹³ The adjective is not found in Andocides, Antiphon, Lysias, Isaeus, Isocrates, Dinarchus, Hyperides or Lycurgus. Aeschines (1.41, 95, 192) uses the adjective four times in *Against Timarchus* because of the unusual subject matter but never in *On the False Embassy* and only once in *Against Ctesiphon* (3.246) when alluding to Demosthenes. The noun is also rarely used outside of Demosthenes: Lysias, Antiphon, Lycurgus, Isocrates, Hyperides, and Dinarchus never use the noun, and Andocides (1.122) and Isaeus (8.42) each use it only once. Not surprisingly Aeschines (1.26, 54, 60, 70, 88, 105, 107, 189, 192) employs the noun several times in *Against Timarchus* in which the nature of the legal charge makes it appropriate but not at all in his other two speeches. The adjective is one of Demosthenes' preferred verbal weapons in *Against Meidias* where it occurs seven times (21.2, 19, 98, 107, 123, 143, 151).¹⁴ He flings the noun twice at Androtion (22.52, 59) and the adjective once (22.66). In *On the False Embassy* Demosthenes (19.287) uses the adjective to construct a derogatory nickname for one of Aeschines' brothers-in-law and twice for Aeschines (19.175, 309 [superlative]) and three times for Philocrates (19.206 [superlative], 291, 309 [adverb]).¹⁵ In one passage Demosthenes (19.208) uses the superlative against Philocrates and Aeschines together. In *For Phormio* he links the adjective to the term *sykophantes* (36.58). The contrast with the other orators is striking.¹⁶

One of the stronger terms Demosthenes uses to insult his opponents is *κατάπτυστος*, which literally means 'spat upon'. I translated the term as 'despicable', and MacDowell translated the term 'abominable' and notes that when Demosthenes uses the word about Meidias this is the

13 For the behaviour of the *bdelyros* see Theophrastus *Characters* 11. I owe this reference to Peter O'Connell.

14 MacDowell 1990: 437 does not list the term in the index of Greek words despite its prominence in the speech.

15 On the names of Aeschines' brothers-in-law see Harris 1986.

16 Other speeches in the Demosthenic corpus use the term less frequently: 8.68; 35.46; 36.58; 43.39; 47.81. The contrast between speeches in private cases and those in public cases is striking.

first time it is found in prose, earlier examples being found in tragedy.¹⁷ The adjective does not occur in Andocides, Antiphon, Aeschines, Isaeus, Isocrates, Lysias, Hyperides or Lycurgus. What is curious is that the only time when Dinarchus (1.15) uses the term he applies it to Demosthenes. He implies that the term is very strong because he admits that he “cannot control himself” (ἐξάγομαι), which indicates that the word is unusually harsh. MacDowell (1990: 355) plausibly suggests that the aim of Dinarchus is “to mock his [i.e. Demosthenes’] use of the word.”¹⁸ It is a very strong term and used by Apollo about the Furies (Aesch. *Eum.* 68) and by Hecuba about Helen (Eur. *Tro.* 1024). When Demosthenes flings the term at his enemies, he makes no apology (Dem. 18.33, 43, 196; 19.15; 21.137, 167, 171).¹⁹ Another strong term is ὀλεθρος, which MacDowell translates as ‘pest’ but this is too mild. I translated the word as ‘wretch’, which may also not do the word justice. Demosthenes uses it for Meidias (21.209), Aeschines (18.127), and Phrasierides and Polysthenes (23.202), who are also insulted as not even free men. The only other orator who uses this term as an insult is Andocides (1.53).²⁰ The next weapon in Demosthenes’ verbal arsenal is the term βάσκανος used either as a noun or an adjective with its related noun βασκανία and verb βασκαίνω. The verb has the sense of ‘begrudge’ (Dem. 20.24) or ‘malign’ (Dem. 8.19), which would suggest that the noun should be translated as ‘malice’ and the adjective ‘malicious.’²¹ The adjective occurs six times (Dem. 18.108, 119, 132, 139, 242, 317), the verb twice (Dem. 18.189, 307) and the noun once (Dem. 18.252) in *On the Crown* where it is well suited to describe Aeschines’ grudging attitude toward the honours proposed in Ctesiphon’s decree. These words occur rarely in Isocrates (5.11; 12.155; 15.62) and not at all

17 MacDowell 1990: 355 says it is found in tragedy and in Middle Comedy where it is paratragic: “Slightly old-fashioned and formal, not colloquial.”

18 Cf. Wankel 1976: 272: “Außer bei ihm kommt da Adjektiv in klassischer Prosa nur noch einmal bei Deinarch vor (1.15, was dessen Demosthenesimitation gehört).”

19 The term is used twice about the Megarians (Dem. 13.32; 23.212).

20 Cf. Isocrates 4.100, on the destruction of Skione; Lysias fr. 12 (Carey): “Ἐπεὶ εἰς ὀλεθρὸν τε καὶ Ἄβυδον. Wankel 1976: 678 does not see how other orators tend to avoid the term. Yunis 2001: 184 does not comment on the term.

21 MacDowell 1990: 414 considers this a term “of abuse with no very exact meaning,” but this is too pessimistic.

in Aeschines, Dinarchus, Lycurgus, Andocides, Lysias, Antiphon, or Hyperides.²²

The terms *hybris* and *hybrizein* are found in all the orators, but Demosthenes is unusual for often using the verb προπηλακίζειν and has the noun προπηλακισμός twice (Dem. 18.12, 316). The verb is derived from the noun πηλός ('mud') and can be translated 'spatter with mud' or 'thrust in the mud'. Other orators rarely use these terms and only once in a speech (Aeschin. 2.44; 3.258; Lys. 9.4; 15.6; Isaeus 2.47) or not at all (Dinarchus, Lycurgus, Isocrates, Antiphon and Hyperides). Not surprisingly, Demosthenes employs the verb eight times in *Against Meidias* (21.7, 61, 66, 72, 109, 131, 195, 219).²³ The verb and the noun are found four times in *On the Crown* (18.12, 47, 256, 316), three times in *Against Aristocrates* (23.89, 120, 201), and twice in *Against Androtion* (22.62, 58).²⁴ It is rarely found in private speeches (Dem. 36.47; 46.13).²⁵

Another pair of words found more frequently in Demosthenes than in other orators are the verb βλασφημεῖν and the noun βλασφημία. These words are found several times in the speeches of Isocrates but not in the court speeches. They are never found in Lysias, Lycurgus, Andocides, Antiphon, or Hyperides. Aeschines (1.122, 167, 180; 2.149, 167) has them five times, Dinarchus (1.5, 9, 12) three times and Isaeus (2.43) only once. These terms occur in all parts of the Demosthenic corpus usually only once or twice in a speech, but *On the Crown* stands out in that Demosthenes (18. 10, 22, 34, 95, 123, 126, 256, 272) uses these words eight times. By contrast, the verb διασύρειν, which means literally 'to rip apart' and acquires the sense of 'to disparage' or 'to ridicule', occurs once in Aeschines (1.32), three times in Isocrates (*Antid.* 199, 300; *In Lochitem* 5; see also *Ep.* 6.11) but never in Andocides, Antiphon, Lycurgus, Dinarchus, Hyperides, Lysias, or Isaeus. Demosthenes (18.27, 126, 180, 218, 299, 317, 323 (twice)) uses this rare verb eight times just in *On the Crown*, where it is well suited

22 See Wankel 1976: 585 ("sonst nicht bei den Rednern, abgesehen von dem Verbum bei Isokrates").

23 MacDowell 1990 does not comment on Demosthenes' use of the term.

24 Note the comment of Wankel 1976: 332-33: "Häufig ist das Verbum außer im Corp. Dem. nur bei Platon; bei Thuk. z.B. nur zweimal (...), nur einmal bei Xenophon."

25 The verb is found in several speeches by Apollodorus ([Dem.] 50.45; 59.35, 88, 93, 113). Note that the term is used by a slave to describe harsh physical abuse. See Harris 2006: 271-80.

to express Aeschines' attacks on his honours. Elsewhere it is found only once in *On the False Embassy* (Dem. 19. 313) and in one assembly speech (13.12).

Demosthenes is unique in calling his opponents 'savage' or 'harsh'. The adjective ὤμός, the adverb ὤμῳς and the noun ὤμότης are found in both public and private court speeches (Dem. 29.26, 68; 29.2; 33.34 – notably three times about his guardians) and in two assembly speeches (Dem. 9.26; 10.43). Demosthenes uses terms for harshness four times in *Against Meidias* (21.88 [noun and adverb], 97, 109),²⁶ where it effectively describes his opponent's abusive personality, and four times in *On the Crown* (18.212, 231, 275, 285)²⁷ and twice in *Against Timocrates* (24.24, 171). Aeschines (2.1) uses only the noun once and in reference to Demosthenes' savagery. These words are not found in Dinarchus, Lysias, Andocides, Lycurgus, Isaeus, Antiphon, or Hyperides, and the noun only six times in all the speeches of Isocrates. Less harsh but still insulting is the adjective ἀγνώμων, which means 'insensitive' or 'inconsiderate' and is used to describe Meidias (Dem. 21.97) and Aeschines (Dem. 18.289).²⁸ Demosthenes also chides Aeschines for his 'insensitivity' in *On the Crown* (18.252; at 207 he mentions the insensitivity of Fortune). Neither the adjective nor the noun are found in Aeschines, Lysias, Isaeus, Dinarchus, Hyperides, or Antiphon. The adjective is used once in the superlative by Lycurgus (1.54) when attempting to browbeat the judges into convicting Leocrates.

There are several terms or expressions in *On the False Embassy* without parallel in other orators. Demosthenes (19.199) is the only litigant in an extant court speech who claims that he is 'choked with rage' (ἀποπνίγομαι),²⁹ the only one to accuse his opponent of 'grovelling' (19.338: προῦκύλινδεῖτο), of "letting his cloak slip to his ankles" and "puffing his cheeks out" (19.314: θοῖμάτιον καθεὶς ἄχρι τῶν σφυρῶν... τὰς γνάθους φυσῶν), or of being hissed at by his audience (19.337:

26 MacDowell 1990 does not comment on its use.

27 Wankel 1976: 1374 does not list the word as one of Demosthenes' Schimpfwörter.

28 Twice in *Against Conon* – 54.16, 14.

29 The verb is used with the meaning 'drowned' at Dem. 32.6.

ἐξεσυρίττετε).³⁰ No other accuser suggests that the ancestors of the Athenians would approve if the defendants were stoned (Dem. 19.66: καταλεύσαντας).³¹ One should compare Demosthenes' claim in *On the Crown* (18.133) that the Athenians should have tortured and executed Aeschines, which is also without parallel in courtroom speeches.³² There are other unusual words and expressions in *On the Crown*. Demosthenes is unique in attacking his opponent for "jumbling the laws up and down" (111: ἄνω καὶ κάτω διακυκῶν) and in calling the arguments of his opponent the kind of ritual abuse uttered in religious processions (11: πομπείας and 122: ὥσπερ ἐξ ἀμάξης. Cf. 124: πομπεύειν) and "jokes" (15: σκώμματα).³³ When mocking his career as an actor, Demosthenes (18.242) calls Aeschines a "rustic (ἀρουραῖος) Oinomaos" and a "mumbler of iambs" (Dem. 18.139: ἰαμβειοφάγος)³⁴ and "deranged" (Dem. 18.242: ἐμβρόντητ'). Elsewhere Demosthenes calls his opponent a "beggar" or "scrounger" and "market-place loafer" (Dem. 18.127: σπερμολογός, περίτριμμα ἀγορᾶς),³⁵ compares him to a sprain or fracture (18.198: τὰ ῥήγματα καὶ τὰ σπάσματα) and a sorcerer (18.276: γόης; cf. 19.109). Demosthenes is replying to the use of the term by Aeschines (3.137, 207), calls Aeschines' comparison of their careers "rotten" (Dem. 18.227: σαθρόν),³⁶ and accuses him of "spitting on others" (Dem. 18.258:

30 As in the case of the Olynthian woman, Demosthenes is alone among the orators in naming parts of the body. Cf. Dem. 18.67 where he refers to the collar bone and leg of Philip.

31 Stoning was very rare and considered harsh and extreme. See Rosivach 1987. Forsdyke 2012: 144-70 claims that stoning without a trial was a legitimate form of popular justice, but see Harris 2019: 104-10 for detailed refutation.

32 Wankel 1976: 726-27 observes that torture is used for non-citizens but fails to note that Demosthenes is the only orator to propose torture for an opponent in court. Yunis 2001: 188 does not comment on Demosthenes' unparalleled demand.

33 Aeschines (1.126) uses the word for jokes told by Demosthenes but never in relation to the speeches of an opponent.

34 For discussion of the term and the readings of the manuscripts see Wankel 1976: 758-60.

35 On these terms see Wankel 1976: 677-78, who does not mention their absence from the other orators.

36 Cf. Wankel 1976: 1028 ("Diese Adjektiv findet sich bei den Rednern nur bei D.").

διαπτύων).³⁷ Demosthenes (18.209) mocks Aeschines' work as a secretary with the original insult "one hunched over records" (γραμματοκύφων).³⁸ Demosthenes (18.121) accuses Aeschines of insanity and urges him to "take hellebore" as a remedy. To crown all these insults, Demosthenes (18.242) calls Aeschines a "monkey" (πίθηκος). No other extant court speech contains such language.

Use of Religious Language

Demosthenes is also unlike the other orators in his use of insults related to religious offences like impiety and pollution.³⁹ Demosthenes is the only orator to call his opponents "enemies of the gods."⁴⁰ In *On the False Embassy* Demosthenes calls his fellow ambassadors (61, 223), Aeschines (95, 250), and traitors (268) enemies of the gods. In *On the Crown* Demosthenes uses the phrase about Philip's supporters (46, 61), Aeschines (119), and Philicides of Messene, whose sons Neon and Thrasylochus were traitors (295). He calls these and other traitors ἀλάστορες, those who deserve divine punishment (Dem. 18.296; cf. Aesch. *Eum.* 326; Soph. *Aj.* 374).⁴¹ The expression "enemy of the gods" is also applied to Meidias (Dem. 21.150, 197), Cotys (Dem. 23.119), politicians who propose dishonest honorary decrees (Dem. 23.201), and Androtion (Dem. 24.6; cf. Dem. 22.59: θεοισεχθρίαν).

Other litigants use the terms related to impiety (ἀσεβεία, ἀσέβημα, ἀσεβής, ἀσεβεῖν) only for actual religious offences as in the case of Andocides (Andoc. 1 *passim*) and his accuser (Lys. 6 *passim*) discussing the mutilation of the Herms and the parody of the Mysteries, or in the case of

37 Wankel 1976: 1129 notes that this compound occurs only here. Yunis 2001: 253 does not comment on the term.

38 Wankel 1976: 967 notes that the term is "eine original Bildung" of Demosthenes, which attracted the attention of lexicographers.

39 On religious discourse in Demosthenes' forensic speeches see Serafim 2021: 41–45.

40 Cf. Wankel 1976: 327 ("nicht bei den übrigen Rednern"). Yunis 2001: 136 does not observe the contrast with other orators. In general, Martin 2009 does not note the difference between Demosthenes and other orators in their use of religious language.

41 Wankel 1976: 1297 notes that this is the first time the term is found in prose.

Aeschines (1.190; 2.176, 224; 2.176; 3.106, 107, 115, 118, 121, 224) discussing crimes of The Thirty and those of the Amphisians.⁴² But Demosthenes stretches the meaning of these terms and applies them to offences not normally considered examples of impiety. When Leptines eliminated exemptions from religious duties, Demosthenes (20.126) charged him with banning honorands from rituals and calls this action “most impious” (ἄσεβέστατον). The alleged attempt of Aristocrates in his decree for Charidemus to remove one of the protections for those convicted of involuntary homicide is denounced as an act of impiety (Dem. 23.79). When Androtion had inscriptions praising Athens removed from dedications and replaced with others, Demosthenes (22.72; 24.180) calls the new ones “impious”. When Androtion melted down crowns, Demosthenes (22.69 = 24.177) labels this “impiety.” With characteristic hyperbole, Demosthenes (22.69; 24.177) also goes so far as to call this “temple robbery” (ἱεροσυλία) even though it was a routine matter.⁴³ Because Meidias called Aristarchus a murderer, then denied doing so, Demosthenes (21.114) says that he is impious. Insults to a *choregos* performing his duties are also called “impiety” (Dem. 21.55). When Meidias charged Demosthenes with the murder of Aristarchus, then allowed him to conduct rituals for the Council, this too makes his opponent impious (Dem. 21.114).⁴⁴ Demosthenes also denounces Aeschines and his opponents for being ἄλειπῆριος, a term related to religious offences (Dem. 18.159; 19.259)⁴⁵ and charges Aeschines with being κακοδαίμων (Dem. 19.115) and ἀκάθαρτος “ritually unclean” (Dem. 19.199), a term not found in other orators.

Demosthenes is almost alone for calling his opponents “accursed” or “damned” (κατάρατος).⁴⁶ In *On the Crown* Demosthenes (18.209, 244, 290) addresses Aeschines with the vocative three times. Demosthenes (18.212)

42 Aeschines (106, 221) charges Demosthenes with impiety only in relation to this offense and for having Anaxinos executed after he dined with him (Aeschin. 3.224).

43 See D. Harris 1995: 31–36. The term is found in Lys. 30.21.

44 On the other hand, his charge that Meidias committed an offence against the festival uses the term impiety in its normal sense. See Dem. 21.199, 227, etc.

45 Lys. 6.53; Andoc. 1.130–31; Aeschin. 3.133–57.

46 Note that τρισκατάρατος is found at [Dem.] 25.82, a Hellenistic forgery (see Harris 2018: 193–229) and not in the rest of the Demosthenic corpus or in the rest of Attic oratory.

indignantly asks “who could be more savage and accursed than this malicious accuser (*sykophantes*)?” In this speech Demosthenes (18.287) also uses the adjective to construct the insulting nickname “damned Cyrebio” for one of Aeschines’ brothers-in-law. In the speech Demosthenes (24.107, 198) wrote for Diodorus, Timocrates is addressed twice with the vocative of the adjective. In *Against Aristocrates* those who propose honours for those who do not deserve them are “damned *rhetoires*” (Dem. 23.201) and the Euboeans are also said to be accursed (Dem. 23.212). In *On the False Embassy* the Euboeans are accused of deserting the Athenians (Dem. 19.75), and so is Aeschines (Dem. 19.70). Meidias is also called “damned” (Dem. 21.164). It is striking that the term is not found in Demosthenes’ private speeches.⁴⁷ The only other orator who uses the adjective is Dinarchus (1.47; cf. 2.4 and 15 about Aristogeiton), who uses it twice about Demosthenes and may be paying him back in his own coin.⁴⁸

Another one of Demosthenes’ favourite terms of abuse is *μιαρός*, which is derived from the noun meaning *μίασμα*, religious pollution.⁴⁹ This term is very popular with Aristophanes for comic abuse. As Dickey observes, “*μιαρέ* was a low-register insult in classical Attic: the orators used it when they were willing to descend to a lower register for effect, Plato used it only as a joke but never in earnest, and no other classical prose author was willing to use it at all.”⁵⁰ It may be that the religious connotations of the term may have faded over time, but the religious element is certainly present in the speech of Lysias *Against Agoratus* (13.77) where the accuser charges the defendant with murder and asks, who could be more polluted (*μιαρώτερος*) than Agoratus? The term also oc-

47 The word is also found at Dem. 13.32, but this speech may not be authentic. In general, there is less religious discourse in the private speeches of Demosthenes. See Serafim 2021: 69–71.

48 Cf. Wankel 1976: 967: “Von den übrigen Rednern hat es nur Deinarch (1.47; 4.4.15, aber nicht im Vokativ.” Wankel does not observe that Dinarchus uses the term about Demosthenes.

49 It is interesting that the author of the forgery *Against Aristogeiton* who tried his best to imitate the style of Demosthenes, uses the term seven times ([Dem.] 25.28, 32, 54, 58, 62, 79, 81).

50 Dickey 1996: 167, who does not observe that Demosthenes uses the adjective more than other orators.

curs in a passage about pollution for homicide in the *First Tetralogy* of Antiphon (2.1.10).⁵¹ The word does not occur in the other speeches of the *corpus Lysiacum*, Andocides, Lysurgus, or Isocrates. The term appears in the speech Dinarchus composed for the accuser at Demosthenes' trial in 323 (1.18, 21, 24, 50, 92, 95; cf. 3.18 about Philocles), and one gets the impression that Dinarchus is turning one of Demosthenes' favourite words against him. At the same trial Hyperides (5.15, 21) uses the same word against his former ally but not in other speeches. In *Against Ctesiphon*, Aeschines (3.79, 101, 212) employs it against Demosthenes, but Aeschines (1.42, 54) also applies it to Timarchus when recalling his debauchery. It is telling that Aeschines (3.166) uses the adjective to describe Demosthenes' choice of words (τὰ μίαν καὶ ἀπίθανα ῥήματα). The term was clearly associated with Demosthenes and viewed as characteristic of his unusual style. In *Against Meidias* Demosthenes hurls the adjective at his opponent eight times and once at one of his associates (Dem. 21.19, 69 [adverb], 103, 114, 117, 135, 195, 216, 227 [the very last section of the speech]). One starts to wonder who the real victim of abuse at this trial was. The word is found three times in *On the False Embassy* (Dem. 19.13, 113, 230), twice about Philocrates and once about the Athenian ambassador Phrynnon. In *On the Crown* (18.134, 141, 289, 296) Demosthenes uses the word three times about Aeschines and once about traitors in Greece. It is curious to note that the term does not occur in the public speeches (*Against Androtion*, *Against Aristocrates*, and *Against Timocrates*) that Demosthenes wrote for others to deliver and not in *Against Leptines*, which is notable for its absence of personal attacks. Perhaps his clients in these cases exercised a restraining influence. In the private speeches in the Demosthenic corpus it is found only once or twice in a few speeches (Dem. 36.58; 37.48; 43.6, 83; 45.70; 57.38; 58.43, 49, 56 [note that scholars agree that this speech was not written by Demosthenes]).⁵²

51 Parker 1983: 126 claims that fears about pollution for homicide were diminishing by the late fifth century, but this view is not convincing. See Harris 2015 and Harris 2019.

52 These passages show however that Martin 2009: 296 is wrong to claim that the term "is avoided almost absolutely in the rest of the private speeches" aside from *Against Makartatos*. He also does not contrast Demosthenes' use of the term with that of the other orators.

Another feature of Demosthenes' hyperbolic style is his use of exclamations with the particle *vῆ* followed by the name of a god. Other orators are more sparing with this exclamation: Dinarchus (2.8; 3.15) uses it twice in three speeches, Lycurgus (*Leocr.* 75, 140) twice in a long speech, Andocides (1.3, 15) in a long speech about religious matters, Isaeus (3.24, 73; 4.20; 6.61; 7.33) only five times in twelve speeches, Hyperides once in *Against Lycophron* (fr. 5) and three times in *Against Euxenippus* (4, 14, 27), and Isocrates never. In the speeches attributed to Antiphon (6.40) Zeus and all the gods are invoked only once. The only other orator to employ this exclamation many times in one speech is Aeschines (1.28, 73, 81, 88, 98, 108) in *Against Timarchus* in which he tries to create a solemn persona for himself when making his charges of prostitution against the defendant. In his other two speeches, Aeschines (2.130; 3.172, 217, 228) uses the exclamation four times. In cases on public charges, Demosthenes goes overboard: five times in *On the Crown* (18.101, 117, 129, 251, 294), twelve times in *On the False Embassy* (19.24, 46, 52, 149, 158, 188, 215, 222, 235, 262, 272, 285), eight times in *Against Leptines* (20.3, 20, 38, 56, 58, 75, 151, 161), thirteen times in *Against Meidias* (21.2, 3, 41, 88, 98, 99, 109, 149, 160, 198 (twice), 222), six times in *Against Aristocrates* (23.61, 64, 107, 124, 166, 194) and eight times in *Against Timocrates* (24.37, 94, 99, 121, 125, 126, 176, 202). These exclamations occur less frequently in the private speeches in the Demosthenic corpus with two exceptions. In most cases they are found only once or twice, which is partly but not entirely due to the shorter length of these speeches.⁵³ Demosthenes also uses the exclamation in speeches delivered to the assembly but in most cases less frequently. It is no accident that aside from Lycurgus (*Leocr.* 1-2) Demosthenes (18.1, 8) is the only orator to begin a court speech with a prayer to the gods (cf. 141-142, 324 where he also invokes the gods).⁵⁴

A similar expression is the particle *μὰ* followed by name of a god or the word 'gods'. This is never found in Antiphon, Andocides, Lycurgus,

53 Once in Dem. 31.10; 35.48; 38.11; 41.12; 45.11; 49.64; 52.26; 54.34; 58.64. Twice in Dem. 32.28; 33.25, 37; 37.27, 50; 40.26, 32; 42.6, 7; 55.6, 7. The only exceptions are Dem. 33.6, 39, 55, 61; 39.7, 9, 13, 14, 32; 44.33, 50, 55 (twice).

54 Cf. Wankel 1976: 105: "Doch auch ohne die Wiederholung und die ganze Proömium umgreifende Funktion wäre das Eingangsgebet ungewöhnlich. Von den erhaltenen attischen Reden beginnt nur noch Lykurgs *Leocrates* mit einem Gebet."

Hypereides, or Isocrates. The expression occurs in Dinarchus (1.40, 77; 2.3) only three times. In the Lysianic corpus (Lys. 6.7, 32, 38; 8.18) the expression is found three times in a speech about impiety, once in another speech and nowhere else. Aeschines (1.52, 55, 61, 69, 76, 88; 3.182, 212, 255) has the expression nine times in two speeches with six in *Against Timarchus* which, as noted above, is in keeping with its more solemn tone. Isaeus (3.25, 39, 49; 4.24; 8.29; 11.35, 36) has the expression in only four speeches. Once more, Demosthenes' use of the expression is much more frequent in his speeches for public cases, above all in *Against Meidias* where it occurs five times (18. 261, 307; 19.67, 141, 212, 285; 20.21; 21.25, 58, 139, 205, 207; 22.33; 23.48, 188; 24.28, 125, 157, 199). The expression is also found in speeches to the assembly and in fourteen private speeches in the Demosthenic corpus but not as frequently, often only once or twice. There is certainly a difference between Demosthenes and the other orators, but it is not as great as in the case of exclamations preceded by *μή*.

Addresses to Opponents

In his *On Types of Style* (255-264) Hermogenes discusses harshness (*trachytes*) and vehemence (*sphodrotes*) but admits that the diction that produces vehemence is like that which produces harshness. Hermogenes observes that "in a vehement passage one must make reproaches openly and clearly and in a straightforward manner without including in the passage any sentiments that tone down its severity." One of the figures that creates vehemence is apostrophe or direct address. To illustrate vehemence, Hermogenes quotes passages only from Demosthenes, including eight from *On the Crown*, and the speech *Against Aristogeiton*, which is a Hellenistic forgery but imitates Demosthenes' style, and from no other orator.⁵⁵

55 Cf. Ronnet 1951: 125: "La violence y éclate notamment quand l'apostrophe s'adresse, non à l'assemblée, mais à l'adversaire, dans les plaidoyers; c'est alors un cri de haine ou de mépris."

Demosthenes is not the only orator who uses apostrophe in forensic speeches, but he uses these addresses more frequently than other orators. Speakers in orations attributed to Lysias use them in *Against Andocides* (6.49), *On the Olive Stump* (7.20-22), *Against Theomnestus* (10.8-9; 12-14; 11.4, 6), and *Against Nicomachus* (30.5, 19). When questioning Eratosthenes Lysias (12.25-26) addresses him directly several times and concludes by using the superlative and the vocative to call him “the most wicked person in the world” (ὦ σχετλιώτατε πάντων).⁵⁶ This exclamation is unique in the *corpus Lysiacum* and is found only in a speech in which Lysias is accusing the defendant of responsibility for his brother’s death. Despite the severity of Eratosthenes’ crimes, Lysias (12.32, 34) addresses him only twice more in the rest of the speech. The accuser of Agoratus also addresses the defendant when questioning him (Lys. 13.32) and later addresses him when recounting his actions (Lys. 13.26-28, 53, 61). But this accuser never couples the vocative with an insulting adjective. It is striking that these addresses are found only in prosecutions for homicide (*Against Eratosthenes*, *Against Agoratus*), in a prosecution for slander about homicide (*Against Theomnestus*), in one case in which the defendant is threatened with very serious penalties (*On the Olive Stump*), and in two cases in which the defendant is charged with impiety (*Against Andocides*). This use of the apostrophe is not found in other kinds of speeches, especially in those where the charges are less serious. Even in the speeches containing these addresses, they do not take up much space. The speeches of Antiphon all concern trials for murder, but only one speaker addresses his opponents directly and very briefly (Antiph. 5.15-16).

In *On the Mysteries* Andocides (1.95, 99-100) addresses Epichares and calls him “a malicious accuser and a damned fox” (ὦ συκοφάντα καὶ ἐπίτριπτον κίναδος), but this passage is unique in the speech. When attacking the personal life of Callias (1.124-131) and the shady business

56 The second person singular of the personal pronoun is found in direct speech several times: Lys. 1. 16, 18, 21, 26; 12.14; 28.6; 32.13, 15, 16. Reiske proposed to emend the reading of the manuscripts τοιαύτας οἷας at Lys. 26.20 to τοσαῦτά σοι, but Carey retains the reading of the manuscript in the OCT.

deals of Agyrrhius (1.133-136), however, Andocides does not address them but refers to them in the third person singular.⁵⁷

Isaeus is sparing in his use of apostrophes which occur once or twice in only three of eleven speeches (5.43, 46; 6.25, 26; 11.4).⁵⁸ These are mostly in rhetorical questions. It is striking that Lycurgus never addresses Leocrates with the second person when accusing him of treason.

In *Against Timarchus* Aeschines (1.121-124, 127, 131, 157) addresses Timarchus twice and Demosthenes twice but in all but one case (121-124) very briefly. In *On the False Embassy* Aeschines addresses Demosthenes in around fifteen sections, about once every twelve sections, which is above the norm.⁵⁹ There are far fewer in *Against Ctesiphon*.⁶⁰

In most of his speeches Demosthenes is not very different from the other orators. In *Against Leptines* he addresses his opponent six times (20.63, 98, 102, 129, 144, 149 (someone else), 160), but in *Against Meidias* only in two sections (Dem. 21.133-135, 204; at 207 he addresses Eubulus) and in *Against Androtion* five times (Dem. 22.29, 54, 64, 66, 68). In *On the False Embassy* Demosthenes does not address Aeschines directly in the first part of the speech, but addresses him twenty times in the second part of the speech.⁶¹ In *On the Crown*, however, Demosthenes outdoes himself: in roughly three hundred sections of the speech Aeschines is di-

57 As in the *corpus Lysiacum* the second person singular of the personal pronoun is found in direct reported speech several times in *On the Mysteries*: 22, 41, 49, 50, 63, 116, 119, 120.

58 This excludes addresses to the clerk and to the judges. At Isae. 8.24 there is an address in direct speech.

59 2. 59, 78, 79, 96, 123, 138, 140, 142, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 163 (2x), 165-66. There are several addresses in reported direct speech and several addresses to the judges.

60 Aeschin. 3.131, 200 (Ctesiphon), 209-210, 239, 242 (Ctesiphon).

61 Dem. 19.189, 191, 199-200, 222, 237-38, 240, 241, 242, 243, 245, 250, 255, 290-93 (Eubulus), 335-36. In 20 sections, all concentrated in the second half of the speech – 20 out of 180.

rectly addressed in sixty-nine sections, that is, about once every 4.3 sections.⁶² This is without parallel in Attic oratory. *On the Crown* is the most aggressive speech in Attic oratory.⁶³

It is one thing to analyse Demosthenes' choice of vocabulary, but it is another to feel the emotional effect of this torrent of abuse. To give an impression of his style in action, I give a translation of a passage from *On the Crown* (18.129-130) about Aeschines' family. Scholars have studied these passages for their use of comic terms, but I cannot recall any scholar observing that one can find nothing similar to this abuse in the other orators.

I am at no loss for information about you and your family; but I am at a loss where to begin. Shall I relate how your father Tromes was a slave in the house of Elpias, who kept an elementary school near the Temple of Theseus, and how he wore shackles on his legs and a timber collar round his neck? or how your mother practised daylight nuptials in an outhouse next door to Heros the bone-setter, and so brought you up to act in tableaux vivants and to excel in minor parts on the stage? However, everybody knows that without being told by me. Shall I tell you how Phormio the boatswain, a slave of Dio of Phrearrii, uplifted her from that chaste profession? But I protest that, however well the story becomes you, I am afraid I may be thought to have chosen topics unbecoming to myself. I will pass by those early days and begin with his conduct of his own life; for indeed it has been no ordinary life, but such as is an abomination to free people. Only recently—recently, do I say? Why it was only the day before yesterday when he became simultaneously an Athenian and an orator, and, by the addition of two syllables, transformed his father from Tromes to Atrome-

62 18.11 (you are malicious), 41, 66 (I ask you), 69-70 (question), 73, 76, 82, 97, 113 (you sycophant), 120 (you are stupid), 121-22, 124-25, 128 (*katharma*), 129-31 (family), 140 (you will never wash out), 162 (*kinados*), 180 (you were useless), 191, 196-97, 199-200, 209, 217 (I would like to ask Aeschines a question), 222, 256-67, 270-73, 280-86, 289-90, 297-99, 309-13, 315-20. In 69 sections out of 324, but one has to deduct the documents.

63 This point is missed by Yunis 2001 and MacDowell 2009.

tus, and bestowed upon his mother the high sounding name of Glaucothea, although she was universally known as the Banshee, a nickname she owed to the pleasing diversity of her acts and experiences – it can have no other origin. (Trans. Vince & Vince 1926)

Demosthenes slanders Aeschines' father by calling him a slave, insinuates that his mother was a prostitute, and casts doubt on his rights to Athenian citizenship. The level of verbal violence is almost without parallel in Attic oratory. There are other terms I could discuss in Demosthenes' arsenal such as his accusations of using deception or his use of terms meaning 'to hire' (18.21) or the language of buying and selling (19.13, 16, 118, etc.), all used as metaphors for bribery and treason. As Wankel observes, "Als Schimpfwort der politischen Diabole findet sich μισθωτός in der klassischen Literatur außer bei D. (...) nur bei Deinarch, in Anlehnung an D.'s Stil."⁶⁴ Here too Demosthenes goes far beyond the other orators. But I hope that I have provided enough evidence to show that Demosthenes' style is unusual for its offensive vocabulary and aggressive tone.

A Speculative Conclusion

At this point readers are probably asking themselves, what is wrong with this man? Why is he so angry? What is bothering him? We cannot explain this invective by saying that this was simply the way the Athenians spoke in court because most other litigants do not express themselves in this fashion. Like other populist politicians, Demosthenes took pleasure in breaking the rules or at a minimum pushing the envelope. To understand Demosthenes' style, we need to understand the personality of Demosthenes. The best place to start is with his statue, which was erected in Athens around 280 BCE and probably was the work of Polyeuktos, and exists in several copies, the best known being in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, which my wife and I visited in December 2023. Gisela Richter has very well described how the sculptor has brilliantly conveyed the personality of Demosthenes:⁶⁵

64 Wankel 1976: 290.

65 Richter 1984: 112-13. Cf. von den Hoff 2009 on the realism of the statue.

“The physiognomy in all the authentic portraits of Demosthenes is always the same. They show a man between 50 and 60 years old, with an oval face, becoming pointed below; lean and lined cheeks; hair carved in short, thick curls; a clipped beard; a high forehead marked by three horizontal, undulating furrows; a long, slightly curved nose; bushy, contracted eyebrows; several deep wrinkles above the bridge of the nose; deep-set eyes, placed rather close together; three crow’s feet at the outer corner of the eyes; a straight, thin-lipped, closed mouth, the lower lip drawn in, the upper covered by a thick moustache; ears protruding in their upper part. The expression is harsh, unhappy, determined – that of a noble fanatic, corresponding to what is known of Demosthenes’ appearance and life. And the nervous and dignified character is brought out also in the extant statues, with their simple, diffident pose, and the harmonious composition of the folds, suggestive of his nobility. In both these respects the statue of Aeschines forms an instructive contrast.”

About the portrait of Aeschines, Richter remarks:

“His placid expression is in marked contrast to the nervous, unhappy countenance of Demosthenes.”⁶⁶

To understand his personality, we need to examine his youth and background. Demosthenes was born in 385/4 into a wealthy family but not a prominent one.⁶⁷ He does not appear to have had famous ancestors, and his father was not politically well connected. His father died when Demosthenes was eight years old.⁶⁸ His father’s large estate – Demosthenes (27.9-11) estimates its value at fourteen talents – was placed in the control of three guardians, his father’s nephews Aphobus and Demophon, and his friend Therippides (Dem. 27.13-15; 29.45). When Demosthenes reached the age of eighteen in 367/6 and gained control of his inheritance, he discovered that the estate was worth only one tenth of its original value (Dem. 30.15-17). After two years study with Isaeus, he brought

66 Richter 1984: 74.

67 For his date of birth see Dem. 30.15, 17 with Harris 1989: 121.

68 On the family of Demosthenes see Davies 1971: 113-23.

a case against Aphobus and won a judgment for ten talents (Dem. 29.3). Aphobus tried to strike back by claiming that one of Demosthenes' witnesses submitted false testimony (Dem. 29). After losing again, Aphobus tried to defraud him of the award by disposing of his property and fleeing to Megara. Demosthenes then brought a case against Onetor, who he claimed was holding the property of Aphobus (Dem. 30, 31). In the middle of this Thrasylochus challenged him to an exchange of property for a liturgy, which Demosthenes then had to undertake to keep his estate (Dem. 28.17).⁶⁹

This legal ordeal must have been traumatic. Demosthenes was betrayed by members of his family and appears to have found little support. It also left him with several enemies, one of whom was connected with Meidias, an associate of the powerful politician Eubulus, who was in control of Athenian finances starting in the late 350s (Dem. 21.205-207). He then proceeded to make more enemies by helping to prosecute Cephisodotus in 359 (Dem. 19.180; 23.5, 167-168; Aeschin. 3.52) and in 355/4 to prosecute Leptines, who was defended by Leodamas, Aristophon, Cephisodotus, and Deinias (Dem. 20.146-153).⁷⁰ He also wrote speeches for clients attacking Charidemus (Dem. 23), Timocrates (Dem. 24), and Androtion (Dem. 22). By the year 350 Demosthenes had succeeded in alienating many important people. One can also see his isolation in his prosecution of Meidias in 346 where he admits that he could find no one to testify for him (Dem. 21.136-142). Demosthenes allied himself with Timarchus to attack Aeschines when he presented his accounts for the Second Embassy in 346, but Aeschines was able to convict Timarchus, who lost his rights as a citizen. When Demosthenes brought his case against Aeschines to court in 343, it is clear that he had the support of none of the other ambassadors who went to Macedon for the negotiations with Philip (Dem. 19.116-117). By contrast, Aeschines had the support of several prominent politicians such as Phocion, Nausicles and Eubulus (Aeschin. 2.170, 184). And perhaps the best evidence for Demosthenes' lack of confidence was the attack of nerves he had when addressing

69 Demosthenes (21.78-79) gave another version of the event in 346. One should not try to reconcile the two versions – see Harris 2008: 114 n. 132 (*pace* MacDowell 1990: 297).

70 On these politicians see Canevaro 2016: 409-14.

Philip during the First Embassy in 346, which is described by Aeschines (2.34-35).

At last came Demosthenes' turn to speak. All were intent, expecting to hear a masterpiece of eloquence. For, as we learned afterwards, his extravagant boasting had been reported to Philip and his court. So, when all were thus prepared to listen, this creature mouthed forth a proem – an obscure sort of thing and as dead as fright could make it; and getting on a little way into the subject he suddenly stopped speaking and stood helpless; finally, he collapsed completely. Philip saw his plight and bade him take courage, and not to think, as though he were an actor on the stage, that his collapse was an irreparable calamity, but to keep cool and try gradually to recall his speech, and speak it off as he had prepared it. But he, having been once upset, and having forgotten what he had written, was unable to recover himself; nay, on making a second attempt, he broke down again. Silence followed; then the herald bade us withdraw. (Trans. Adams 1919)

There is no reason to question his account, which is supported by the testimony of the eight other ambassadors present at the meeting (Aeschin. 2.44-46).⁷¹ Demosthenes was deeply insecure, and his political isolation only deepened his sense of paranoia. Demosthenes was also embarrassed by his weak voice, which Aeschines frequently mocked. As a result, Demosthenes was hyper-sensitive and prone to overreact emotionally. As Buffon wrote, “*le style, c'est tout l'homme*” – he saw that “*on peut connoître l'humeur d'une personne dans son stile.*” His paranoia also shaped his policy toward Philip of Macedon, which led to the disastrous defeat at Chaeronea. But a discussion of Demosthenes' policy errors and their consequences would take me far beyond my topic in this essay.⁷²

71 Pace Worthington 2013: 23-24, who tries to dismiss the account as ‘fake news’ and ignores the testimony of the other ambassadors.

72 An early version of this talk was given to an audience at the University of Katowice. I would like to thank Jakub Filonik and Peter O'Connell for reading a draft and offering very helpful comments.

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