DETECTING INVECTIVE IN HERODOTOS'S *HISTORIES*

By Donald Lateiner

Summary: Invective is rather unwieldy and elastic for analysis. Greek and Roman insult poetry and oratory constitute recognizable invective – extended personal attack. Herodotos first exhibits it in prose. His invectives, relatively primitive, exist in two forms: character speech and author text. The historian presents an historical person denigrating an adversary and his position for an adjudicating presider or presiding body (triangulation). For example, the debate between Demaratos and Achaimenes after Thermopylai. Otherwise, the historian presents his own views that contravene previous traditions, contemporary (oral) authorities, or specific publics. He thus critiques Hekataios, theorist-geographers, Ionians' views of Lade, Alkmaionid treason at Marathon, and most post-war Hellenes refuting Athenian liberationist claims. Invective essentials in poetry and contemporary oratory influenced Herodotos's composition, since he resided in Athens, central for developments in Aegean speech-making. Herodotos features invective situations: political status and rivalrous decision-making (characters) and defects of other historians and publics (author text).

Invective differs from insult

Insults populate many genres of ancient Greek literature, beginning with the Homeric epics. Achilleus directs his Iliadic barrage of 'dogface' and 'people-eater' insults – Athene authorized but dishonoring Agamemnon's *basileutatos* status (*Il.* 1.69, 210-45). Laodamos, the scion of the Skherian king, chides his guest's non-participation when, disguised as a shipwrecked sailor, Odysseus declines his invitations to compete (*Od.* 8.145-64). Odysseus responds with more direct abuse while on the playing fields (8.152-85, esp. 166, 175-79). Back in Ithaka, however, as a beggar Odysseus must slyly affront his wife's Ithakan suitors. Eurymachos and Antinoos are taunting, teasing, and assaulting him (*Od.* 17.444-80, 18.346-93). He lands indirect, 'kernelled' aggressions, insults nestled inside flattery that confound and anger his supposed betters. Archilochos' short

Donald Lateiner: 'Detecting Invective in Herodotos's *Histories*' C&M Supplementum 3 (2025) 1-33.

and extended sexual iambs savage named opponents. Aristophanes' comedies multiply verbal and nonverbal character ridicule in short scenes and satirize live contemporaries such as Kleon, Sokrates, and Euripides, and targeted Athenian institutions such as the assembly and the law-courts. Lysias' dicanic oratory (3, 12, 13, 24) and Demosthenes' prosecutions and defenses (e.g., Dem. 21, 54) document vivid, brief insults and the latter produces lengthier invectives. The orators illuminate Athenian street-life and nightlife. Ariston reports that while strolling he suffered insult and injury (*aikeia*, *hybris*) at the hands of a bully, Konon, his sons, and his gang (Dem. 54). They accosted him, crowed over him, stomped him lying prostrate in the street's mud. Choice red-figured pots illustrate fifth-century physical violence and strongly suggest that insults accompanied the acts, verbal violence.[1]

Thus, surviving literary records of everyday 'street-talk', obscene gestural hand-talk, insults in traditional confrontations, and informal social ostracisms produce an implicit poetics of Hellenic abuse that predate Herodotos' prose records or his compositions of Hellenic and barbarian dissociative activities.[2] This paper focuses on Herodotos' text, both received data and testimony and his own authorial development of ancient invective in his examples of direct speech, a significant subset of aggressive, insulting, and unforgivable verbal interaction.

The subordinate status of invective in the broad category of hostile speech becomes clear from the realization that Greek has many words for insulting verbal and nonverbal acts (*v. infra*) but not any word at all restricted to invective, as now defined. Invective is a subset of insult describing extended and elaborated verbal assault. Both Latin-derived words – certainly overlapping – describe related forms of destructive social interaction – methods and strategies that reduce your opponent's

1 E.g., Onesimos' *krater* depicts brawlers, brutal street-fighting men (ca. 490, St. Petersburg Hermitage 651). Latin varieties of crude abuse suffuse Catullus' invective poems (Lateiner 1977) and the prose of Petronius and Apuleius (Lateiner 2013). Disgusting details feature smells, unnatural and prostituted sex, excrement, and so forth. Kamen 2020 surveys insults in classical Athens, Opelt 1992 lists the logographers' kakologistics, and Lateiner 2013 examines the vocabulary of gendered insults in Latin.

2 Lateiner 1995, 2004, 2015, 2017.

standing and self-regard. The semantic difference recognizes that invective is restricted to sustained, multi-faceted verbal aggressions, while the more common and less artful insult typically produces a snapshot-like sting whether others are present. Insulters do not require a third-party audience separate from the target, as invective does, although insulters enjoy appreciative bystanders.[3] Insults can be verbal or gestural, or even physical attacks – all of them components of the peculiar Athenian crime known as *hybris* (Fisher 1992). In Ariston's report of Konon's assault, one observes multi-channeled redundancy of words, gestures (crowing), and battery – attack, strip, trip, punch, and stomp. Both forms of denigration, however, can be triangulated, social situations where rival speakers perform in the presence of third parties – an individual, small groups, or crowds.

The term 'invective' smells archaic now,[4] and has rarely enjoyed a positive reputation, while 'insult' saturates parlance and practice, both now – and long ago. The classical Attic vocabulary describing *insult* is rich and varied, as Deborah Kamen (2020: 10), *inter alios/alias*, catalogues it – *skommata, aischrologia, loidorein, blasphemein, komoidein, diabole, kakegoria, hybris* – but vocabulary specific to invective had barely emerged when Herodotos wrote and read out his *Histories* to others. Similarly, pottery had long since illustrated insulting actions, but invective is impossible to draw.

Recent books collect 'Insults Ancient & Modern', but only a few modern titles collect invectives.[5] Book *titles* abound, such as *The Wittiest and*

3 The sociolinguist Bill Labov's 1972 study of techniques of strategic African-American one-upmanship includes 'the Dozens', 'Signifying', and 'Sounding.' He provides insight into distinct methods and rhythm for certain types of contemporary invective, sustained insult.

4 Public figures today prefer to claim victimhood rather than macho slam-downs, although the U.S. President Donald Trump illustrates both performative postures. He repeats incessantly that he is the target of 'witch-hunts', that is, of baseless campaigns to find non-existent malefactors, while maligning opponents with alliterative nicknames and labels such as witch-hunts, frauds, and 'crooked.'

5 E.g., Nancy McPhee *The Book of Insults*, New York 1978; Gary Dexter, *Poisoned Pens. Literary Invective from Amis to Zola,* London 2009. Compare titles such as *The Insult Dictionary*; *Surrounded by Idiots*, *Insults and Comebacks; Scorn. The Wittiest and Wickedest Insults in Human History*.

Wickedest Insults in Human History, but hardly any for invective, except for Petrarch's Ciceronian 'imitations' and modern drama and music criticism. Cicero's Second *Philippic* relentlessly 'invectivates', inveighs against, Mark Antony, his person, his mind and body, his family and ancestry, and his former allegiances and future policies. Cicero's *Philippics,* contrived, repetitive, and distasteful – today they are hard to sit through.[6] Scholars reputed wise[7] in the study of malicious scolding, be-

6 Denniston 1926/1982, Kennedy 1972: 268-83. The Antonine Anecdotalist Aulus Gellius refers to Cicero's speeches against Caesar's lieutenant as *Antonianae orationes* (*NA* 1.22.17, 13.22.6). At 7.11, Gellius counsels against descending into *convicia* and *maledicta* because you sink to your enemy's level when you accuse opponents of what they say of you: *dum paria et consimilia dicas atque audis*. He cites Q. Metellus Numidicus (cos. 109) who referred to C. Manlius the Tribune, his invectivizer, as a man "unfit to be ill-spoken of by the upright," *ne idoneum quidem cui a probis maledicatur*.

7 Contrast "Wikidiff" (consulted 12/1/2022), a web guide for the perplexed. "The difference between invective and insult" as nouns is: "invective is an expression which inveighs or rails against a person while insult is an action or form of speech deliberately intended to be rude." On 1/22/2025, Wikidiff AI improved its distinctions: "insult" is a more general term for a single, disrespectful remark, while "invective" implies a more forceful, sustained verbal attack often filled with anger and intended to severely criticize or discredit someone, usually with strong rhetorical flair; essentially, "invective" is a more intense and elaborate form of insult. This internet distinction still misses the general crudeness of insult and the public nature of invective. Kamen 2020 explores insult but see Lateiner's 2022 review. Koster 1980 concentrates on Roman not Greek authors, and those Romans seem more comfortable than the Athenians, at least, in launching invectives, even if Cicero's dubbing his invectives against Antony "*Philippica*" seems to dignify his defensive offense by reference to a distinguished Hellenic antecedent. See Cic. *Ad Brut*. 2.4; Antony's furious response, *ad Fam*. 12.2.1: *vomere, non dicere* [Antonius]. The *De cor.* aligns more closely as a parallel defense and invective against an opponent (cf. Denniston 1926: xvii). In the assembly, social constraints frowned on personal attacks, and Athenian law supposedly provided guard-rails against extreme invectives and penalized them. To be sure, speakers found ways to inject it, as democratic limits to *parrhesia* grew weaker. See chapter 5 of Filonik (forthcoming) for clarification of this variety of political speech as a privilege (that the assembly granted) and an obligation to speak frankly for the city's benefit – not "freedom of speech" as the North Atlantic community often understands it. The Athenian courts, however, permitted greater freedom to accuse opponents of bribery, dishonesty, and other *topoi* of deception than the *ekklesia* (Carey 2005: 78). See below, n. 13.

rating, contemptuous words, and slander – students of relentless denunciation, poetic and prosaic – offered assistance for this research.[8]

Colleagues suggested that, while no hard and stable difference distinguishes between the two terms, 'invective describes a sustained, literary, thematically coherent outpouring of multiple insults' (Judith Hallett). Or 'invective as a subset of insults implies the 'words as weapons' metaphor. Verbal invective can 'slice and dice' an opponent like a sharp sword or knife. Horace *Sat.* 2.1.39-44 uses this knife metaphor in his *Sermones*' (Ralph Rosen). 'Words used as weapons or fists ..., *voilà,* formalized, performed invective!' (*idem*). Invective remains a judgment call, and a judgment that varies depending on class, epoch, context, and culture. The vehement wit and insulting 'put-downs' that sufficed for Themistokles' verbal triumphs (Hdt. 8.59,* 61, 125.2*)[9] were doubled in the age of Aischines, and squared for Cicero's audiences. Political invective aims to erase the civic identity of the target, producing social death. Fifth-century Attic parameters apparently devolved to ever nastier fourth-century forms of invective. The Romans had fewer taboos, to judge by Cicero (see Appendix 2 below).

Insult often carries a threat of violence ready at hand, while invective may hope to incite it. Insult, legal *hybris*, often with no pretensions to rhetorical complexity, whether witty or not, filled the urban 'street' – places like the Athenian agora's barbershops, workshops, homes, and alleys (Lys. 23.3, Dem. 54.1-12, e.g.). In nearby gymnasia, where men young

8 Papaioannou & Serafim 2021: 8-12 summarize modern theories of invective. Slander, false allegations of bad behavior and thinking, accelerate on the slippery slope of vicious hostility to one's opponent. Unlike the first *Philippic,* Cicero never delivered this pseudo-speech, the second *Philippic* at all. No audience exerted potential controls of vocal and paravocalic objection (sounds, not words, such as hoots, hissing, or cheers) or noisy foot-stomping interjection. See Denniston 1926: v, Kennedy 1972: 268-74. Cicero's second *Philippic* was a lengthy, and largely ineffective, pamphlet, a reply to Antony's attack on Cicero (*ad Fam.* 12.2.1) with scurrilous but not thereby untrue attacks on Antony (cf. *Phil.* 2. 44-48, 63-70, 103-5). The title 'Philippic', although first suggested by Cicero (*ad Brut.* 2.4), does not seem to have been seriously intended. Kennedy (1972: 270) regards the second *Philippic* as an unbridled, tasteless, and unattractive attack on character, deploying disparaging lies, deceit, and sophistry and spuriously justified by the cause for which it was used.

9 An asterisk indicates speech reported directly (*oratio recta*), following Powell's 1938 *Lexicon to Herodotus*.

and old gathered for exercises physical and verbal, Sokrates found fertile spaces for putting down anyone claiming to know anything. He developed his performative long faces, smiles, glances, ironic flattery, and arguments in extra-institutional performance venues and later boasted of his absence from institutional spaces. His modest persona avoided direct insult or invective, unlike some of those that his embarrassed targets such as Thrasymachos and Kallikles deployed. Invective, however, surfaced in, or at least survives from, institutionalized spaces – in the agora's *dikasteria*, and *bouleuterion*, in *ekklesiai* on the Pnyx, and in the *demos*' tax-supported comic theater on the Acropolis' south slope (Gottesman 2014: 1-23).

Later Greek rhetoricians, centuries afterwards (and long after Aristotle), flourished *kakologia, diabole,* and *psogos* (Latin *vituperatio*) as technical terms for invective. These rhetoricians cursorily discuss techniques of invective and their *topoi* (Usher 1999: 62n.28), but Carey (2004: 20) argues, rightly I think, that invective *per se* was under-developed in theory. Reasons for this include, first, invective remained rather disreputable – nothing to boast about, or teach, although speakers commonly manipulated it in practice, in extant speeches.[10] Second, *diabole*, eventually the closest Greek term, is itself slippery, ambiguous, polyvalent, and eventually 'diabolical.'[11]

Attacking one's opponent's character (*ethos*) is one form of self-defense and retaliation – both respectable Athenian actions, modes of self-presentation in everyday Attic life. Invective's bad reputation, however, and third, arises from its association with non-negotiable character assassination – something that '*you* do, not what I do' (Carey 2004: 6, citing Lys. 30.7). Yet, in ancient Hellenic contexts, litigation and diplomacy, denigrations of persons irrelevant to the immediate charge were common and deemed informative.

10 Carey 2004 mentions Thucydides' use of *diabole* in passing – how the Lakedaimonians used the Alkmaionid 'curse' to 'set the Athenians at variance' with Perikles (1.127.2 with 2.13.1, and cf. the verb at 4.22.3: the Spartans' strategy with the Athenian assembly (*to plethos*), not willing to risk a double-cross, μὴ ἐς τοὺς ξυμμάχους διαβληθῶσιν εἰπόντες καὶ οὐ τυχόντες). Fifteen occurrences of the noun appear in Thucydides, more of the verb, but Carey disregards the evidence of the verb and noun in Herodotos. See below.

11 Pelling 2007: 182-85 helpfully anatomizes the word and its developed metaphorical meaning.

Polyainos, Lysias' soldier-client, for instance, defends himself against his prosecutors' malicious, negative characterizations (*diabal-/diabol-*: Lys. 9.1, 2, 3, 18,19) that have no relevance to his life but – he alleges – apply rather to their own habits.[12] He spins his charges against his opponents. A man's habits and manners were deemed admissible evidence for many charges in Attic courts, even when they had no relation to the asserted violation of law. In Polyainos' case, utilizing a defendant's common move, the dirty pot is calling the kettle black, while claiming his kettle is shiny clean.

Since invective remains an amorphous, ill-defined category, it does not qualify as a figure of speech or a recognized genre of speech in extant ancient Greek handbooks. Hellenic invective rather constitutes the forensic equivalent of an operatic aria, an intensified segment of verbal violence in a longer presentation directed at diminishing a fellow citizen or a foreigner, a group or city.[13]

Stephen Usher emphasizes how preserved early speeches provided the basis of later oratorical theory,[14] specifically citing Lysias' devious and indirect skills for invective (cf. Voegelin 1943).[15] This paper addresses the prose of an author prior to extant logography, Herodotos, an older contemporary of speechwriter Lysias. Herodotos, the oldest surviving prose 'kakologist', produced the earliest examples.[16] Both writers mastered character portrayal, combative speechwriting, and narratives of past events, in fact-relating, praising, and mud-slinging modes.

12 Lys. 9.18: λοιδοροῦσι, τοῖς μὲν ἐμοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν οὐ προσηκούσας διαβολὰς ἐπιφέροντες, τοῖς δὲ αὐτῶν τρόποις τὰς οἰκείας καὶ συνήθεις.

13 The Athenians admitted suits for defamation (δίκη κακηγορίας, see Lys. 10; cf. Todd 1993: 258-62). A statute prohibited the use of taboo words (*aporrheta*) in public speech. The truth of the charge, contrary to modern law, was not a defense (e.g., 'patricide', 'shield-dropper'), a signal of noteworthy different thinking.

14 '... later theory had its origins in the earliest practice' (Usher 1999: 62, referring to Lys. 12).

15 Lavency (1964: 164-69) addresses, but inadequately, 'l'aspect théâtral de la logographie.' Invective and gestures are absent from his index.

16 Herodotos and Lysias were non-Athenian writers who admired Periklean Athens and its institutions. Both found success in Athens and joined the Periklean experimental foundation of Italian Thurioi. Admittedly, a few passages of extended prose prior to Herodotos survive. Hekataios F1 (*FGrHist* 1) provides a proto-invective against competitors' narratives (*logoi*) – whether of the past or present is not clear.

Herodotos' speeches and evaluations betray familiarity with techniques of civic praise and blame that contemporary Attic writers were presumably employing in Athenian public speech. Herodotos had heard Attic orators speak – Perikles, Kimon, and Antiphon, perhaps the rising logographer Lysias. These speakers addressed past politics, present court cases sometimes involving family vendettas,[17] and they strategized present and future *polis* policies. They prepared speeches in many of the varied modes that Herodotos presents. Proposed dates for the composition and dissemination of the *Histories*, in parts or the whole, have hovered between 435 and 415, when Attic speech-making flourished.[18] Herodotos probably performed *logoi*, chapters, before and between, those dates. His *logoi* when finally assembled, had to be copied, then and thus 'published', an *apodeixis* of his investigations.

Herodotean invective

The recent *Herodotus Encyclopedia* (Chr. Baron (ed.) 2021) provides no entry for 'invective', elaborated and clever language intended to cause offense and to diminish an enemy. 'Insult' gains entry (M. Lloyd), and rightly so. Speakers in Herodotos, nevertheless, on occasion sustain character assassination in the presence of, or behind the back of, their competitors in both Greek and barbarian venues. They 'diabolize' enemies in *de facto* judicial situations, legislative debates, and less formal but still agonistic situations.

17 Attic litigants often appear to wish to perpetuate rather than resolve their conflicts (Todd 1993: 261). This behavior is found in the present as well.

18 Fornara (1971) downdated the publication of the completed *Histories* from ca. 431 to 415 BCE, modifying the *communis opinio,* but the argument had to be based on several unprovable assumptions. Herodotos refers explicitly and implicitly to events of the Peloponnesian War (e.g., 6.91, 7.133-37, 7.233, 9.73, and probably elsewhere, where we cannot recognize the allusion). The issue is not a 'pseudo-problem' (Hornblower 1996: 28), although no solution can be proven, but such *aporia* often distresses students of ancient history. We cannot say, for example, who first brought all Herodotos' *logoi* together in one manuscript, or when.

First, however, let us establish a distinction between two types of historiographical invective for Herodotos and for his historiographical successors, since two quite separate lanes of Herodotos' *Inquiries* traffic in invective. The first lane consists of *character* speeches. Here, his narrative presents two or more parties in conflict. Each party wishes to persuade a judge that its position is most just or prudent or persuade peers that his or their proposed policy is the best available, all the while insinuating that competing parties are selfishly motivated and/or they present inferior or misleading arguments. Who, then, among Herodotos' historical figures 'invectivates' – looks for politically acceptable ways to denigrate another man's acts, plans, and character without descending into mere abuse or snark (*loidoria*)? When speakers A and B address an audience or judge, how do they manage to appear to address issues while they actually detour into their opponent's shady record, disreputable family and life, questionable loyalties, or even criminal acts?

For a good preview example of Herodotean character invective, consider Artabanos, the King's uncle, when he chooses words carefully in Royal Conclave, because he contradicts his King's wildly overly optimistic expectations for his proposed Hellenic conquests (7.10*, 46*).[19] Despite Artabanos' explicit and prudent caution, Xerxes inveighs against this prudent (if *a posteriori*) evaluation as cowardly, even womanly (see below).

The second lane of ancient Greek historical invective consists of the *author's* speech or text *in propria persona***.** The historian criticizes earlier authorities often, but he sometimes inveighs against competing ethnog-

19 Sokles the Korinthian likewise (5.93*) entered dangerous territory, despite wide disfavor among Sparta's allies for a planned attack on Attika, when he 'spoke freely.' He stopped the Spartans from employing their Peloponnesian juggernaut to attack – unjustifiably, παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον – the new Athenian government, now a proto-democracy. After the successful coup against the Magos, the false Smerdis, the Persian conspirators allegedly assembled for their discussion of how to organize the future Persian state (3.80-83). They inveigh in turn against various regimes – monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy – but decorously they do not inveigh against the persons who propose them.

raphers, 'philosophers', logographers, poets, and/or at locally or ethnically biased, contemporary patriots.[20] These authorities claim to provide an historical accuracy that Herodotos denies.[21] His own invectives or anti-invectives (see below) step beyond disagreement to attack competitors' methods, motives, or even personality. Revisionist from the start (remember the dismissed Persian *logioi* of 1.1-5: περὶ μὲν τούτων οὐκ ἔρχομαι ἐρέων ὡς οὕτως ἢ ἄλλως κως ταῦτα ἐγένετο...), Herodotos employs several verbal weapons that his characters exhibit.

20 Greek historians differ in the frequency of invectives of both types. Thucydides presents little, and nearly none in character speech**,** condemning individuals, although many speakers inveigh against *poleis*, especially against Athens. The historian inveighs against Perikles' successors (2.65.6-11) and certain policies that he considered disastrous, for example in connection with the General Alkibiades. He also criticizes previous historians (1.97.2: Hellanikos of Lesbos; Herodotos only implicitly (e.g., 1.18.3, cf. Hdt. 6.57, 9.53)), and public beliefs about the past and present (e.g., 1.9.1, 10.1, 20.2-3, 21.1, 6.53.3-60.1). The prudent (*sophrones*), presumably aristocratic men, scorn Kleon's family and promises and burst out laughing at him in the *ekklesia* (4.28.5). Thus, they openly *insult* a prominent democrat, but Aristophanes and the 'Old Oligarch' mount the sustained invectives, the thorough condemnations of the individual and his ilk (*Knights*, Ps.-Xen. *Ath. pol.* 2.17-19). Nikias' case against unnamed Alkibiades' youth, personal expenses, ambition, and strategic folly (6.12-13*), and Alkibiades' reply about unadventurous elderly statesmen (naming Nikias, 6.16-18*) may qualify as invective. Appendix 1 below explores the earliest known *antilogy* of personal invective speeches in a historian, Xenophon's treatment of Kritias and Theramenes in *Hellenika* II. Historiographical invective grew more acceptable, perhaps from Herodotos' example. Polybios (Book 12) largely consists of invective – especially authorial speech. Polybios condemns predecessor historians such as Timaios, Aristotle, Kallisthenes, Democharas, and Agathokles. He evaluates them as childish, deficient in judgment, gullible (12.3), among other things, although his severe criticisms (12.11a) calumniate them also for their invectives – faultfinding and pedantry similar to his own.

21 Lateiner (1989: 104-8) supplies an inventory of such Herodotean polemic with discussion of how and why Hellenic historiographers argued against other historians and local *logioi*. The chapter does not analyze their rhetoric, catch-phrases, *topoi* and emotion-laden, derogatory vocabulary.

Antilogies, opposed speeches, especially competing speeches, populate the *agones* of Greek tragedy and comedy, public oratory,[22] and sophistic educational performances such as those parodied in Plato's acidulous dialogues.[23] These exploiters of polar differences contributed to the combative historiographer's development of forms for presenting arguments in *his* new genre. When Herodotos' historical figures invectivate, their words reflect styles, purposes, and ends of predecessors and contemporaries' attacks in analogous public and private locales.[24] Political figures in life and in Herodotos' text create disdain and prejudice against opponents for a third party to decide – character invective.[25] The second lane, author invective, exhibits Herodotos himself criticizing (a)

22 Especially dicanic/forensic for obvious reasons, but also bouleutic – Thucydides' assembly debates in Books 3 and 6 in Athens and beyond. The implicit antilogies of Spartan and Athenian commanders before battles who could not have heard each other argue for the inferior skills and/or character of opponents. Even epideictic addresses can import invective – Perikles' Epitaphios features a running contrast between Athens' and Sparta's *politeiai*, one that suggests contempt for the latter's compulsory way of life.

23 Medico-philosophic texts in the Hippocratic corpus, such as *Ancient Medicine*, contemporary with Herodotos, favor certain approaches to illness and trauma while they inveigh and dismiss other methods of practice and theory. Thomas (2000: 203-4, 240, *et passim*) and Kingsley (2024: 17, etc.) emphasize Herodotos' intellectual links, investigative and rhetorical, to Presocratic thinkers, scientific medicine, and arts of persuasion.

24 This paper leaves aside gossip and innuendo, the sort of shady word-mongering that Herodotos associates with *logopoioi,* like the dismissed opinions of Hekataios and Aisop (Hdt. 2.143, 5.36, 5.125, 2.134; Isokr. 15.136-37). As Gottesman shows (2014: 20, 83-85, 149), the word differs from *logographos*, but identifies busy-bodies and 'spin-doctors', men influencing public opinion. Hunter (1994) *passim* discusses the manipulation of Athenian opinion.

25 Carey's 2004 essay incisively examines the place of *diabole* in the Attic orators and the rhetoricians. Voegelin marches his dissertation on Lysias (1943) through the standard *topoi* of invectives (see his helpful chart 170-71), specifying where he discusses each *topos* in each speech. Failure to serve in the military, sycophancy, and religious misbehavior are the most common accusations. The noun *diabole* appears five times in Herodotos' text, but see also Powell's *Lexicon,* s.v. διαβάλλω. The Attic orators' clients shillyshally about inveighing against neighbors (e.g., Lys. 3) but do it. The speaker acknowledges that *nomos* (law/custom) prohibits arguments and evidence beyond the matter in a court dispute, but he then delves into just such questionable invective (3.44-45: παρ' ὑμῖν οὐ νόμιμόν ἐστιν ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος λέγειν (cf. *Ath. Pol.* 67.1). He will leave unmentioned trespasses of his opponent, τὰ μέν ἄλλα ἐάσω, except for one matter!

other researchers for faulty methods and motives, (b) communities and (c) historical individuals for mistaken, ill-conceived, and/or one-sided, because self-serving, opinions. Not every disagreement or criticism requires or offers invective, to be sure, but the manner and content of negative characterization in Herodotos' speeches, narratives, and judgments parallel and illuminate earlier Greek forms of disputation: arguments, insults, and invective – sustained disputation and character assassination. Below, readers will find examples of the two lanes of invective.

Lane 1: Character texts in Herodotos

In Herodotos' composition about the Persian discussion of Xerxes' strategic alternatives (7.9.2-9γ*), the King's convocation of generals allegedly to determine whether he should invade Greece, Mardonios for thirty-eight *OCT* lines calumnizes all the Hellenes as inferior warriors. He decribes them as senseless, few, poor, cowardly, reckless and impetuous, stupid, destructive of their own property, and unstrategic.[26] Invective thrives on scattershot aggression – if one charge does not stick to the wall, another may, a *techne* that ambitious Mardonios applies here. Xerxes' uncle Artabanos (7.10η1-2*) in response deems that speech to be divisive, 'pushing between', invective, *diabole,* and analyzes the content of his (Greek) term. He asserts that Gobryas' son Mardonios has egged on Xerxes with excessive zeal (πᾶσα προθυμίη) and prejudice (διαβάλλων) against the Greeks in order to persuade Xerxes to attack and subdue them for Mardonius' own advantage.[27] He judges such *diabolai* as δεινότατον, 'the most terrible thing of all', for three reasons. Namely the traducer stretches truth or lies outright, his audience believes the lie(s) without investigation of their accuracy (ἀτρεκέως),[28] and the victim suffering the verbal attack (διαβληθείς) is adjudged bad, inadequate or

26 Konijnendijk 2016 damningly analyzes Mardonios' self-serving speech, persuasive invective for the intended audience of one who judges and can execute (in more than one sense of the word) the speakers.

27 His desire to command all or part of the force was known to all; cf. Artabanos' insinuation to this effect, *supra*.

28 Herodotos uses this word about his own effortful investigations repeatedly (Lateiner 1989: 10, 231n20 with bibl.).

guilty without recourse.[29] Here he refers to Mardonios, Xerxes, and the Greeks – although he himself is another victim of Mardonios' successful *diabole* that persuaded Xerxes. Artabanos' response is analysis based on experience (in Skythia with Dareios) and evidence, and it is not primarily personal attack. But both speeches constitute triangulated performance before a judge, and Artabanos' certainly casts shadows on Mardonios' reasoning and motives (7.10η*1-2: πᾶσα προθυμίη).[30]

Artabanos, after his careful opening and precautionary *captatio benevolentiae* to forfend retribution from his uncle (7.10α), analyzes and condemns Mardonios' *diabole*, his invective against the Hellenes. He risks his life and suffers severe consequences, saved from death only by his kinship with the King. He tries to dissuade Xerxes, his nephew, from this invasion, but the logic only enraged (θυμωθείς) the potentate. The new Great King's mind, despite his explicit words to the contrary (7.8δ2*), was set on stamping Persian history with his own imperial mark. Xerxes insults his uncle and adviser to his face and before his peers as foolish in his advice (ἐπέων ματαίων), and cowardly in his person (κακός τε καὶ ἄθυμος). The King insults him terribly. He orders him to stay behind in Persia with the females (ἀτιμίη ... μενεῖν ἅμα τῇσι γυναιξί) – he equates him with women.[31] The three speeches exemplify invective, anti-invective, and the judge's consequent insult. Xerxes proceeds to organize his massive invasion of Hellas.

29 Artabanos makes a case that fifth-century Athenians also made, disallowing defamation, slander, or open abuse.

30 Herodotos once employs *diabole* in his narrative when explaining a character's motivation. As the Persian King Kambyses lay dying, he summoned the leading Persians and revealed truthfully that he had ordered his brother Smerdis murdered, but now he beseeched these Persians not to enthrone a *Magos*, the false, non-royal Smerdis, after his early death. Truth-telling for once, Kambyses was ironically disbelieved (ἀπιστίη πολλή), as if he were trying to discredit/besmirch his living brother (3.66.3: ἐπὶ διαβολῇ). Pelling (2007: 183-85) insightfully analyzes this slippery stem (*diabal-*) for slippery speech.

31 One of his and other Persians' favorite gendered insults, cf. 8.88.3*, 9.20, and 107.1*. The patriarchal Greeks presumably seemed to Herodotos more respectful of women.

After the Persians' dubious victory at Thermopylai, Herodotos has Xerxes flourish the heretofore unknown (Greek) term *kakologie*.[32] This descriptive compound appears only here in *his* text. The sometimes, but not always 'Great', King refuses to hear any more *kakologie* abusing his Hellenic guest-friend. He defends his refugee advisor, ex-Spartan king Demaratos, against the invective of his own brother Achaimenes (7.236-237*). Achaimenes' invective indicts both Demaratos personally, Xerxes' guest-friend, and, resuming Mardonios' invective, he calumniates the Hellenic *ethnos*. Spartan Demaratos, like Artabanos, fears being candid (7.104*) before the autocrat Xerxes. The conquered enemy Kroisos, the paradigm of how to behave, or not, before despots, had exhibited similar and justified anxious qualms about speaking openly to autocrats before Kyros (1.88.2*; 207.1,* etc.).[33] After the behavior of the Spartans at the battle of Thermopylai, nevertheless, inexplicable to the Persian King, Demaratos explains their illogical choice of death and offers his best strategic advice for Xerxes' campaign of conquest. The Persian advisor Achaimenes responds; he inveighs against the alien interloper Demaratos, with the usual tropes of ethnic invective. Xerxes, the *de facto* and *de iure* Supreme Judge, however, condemns this undeserved invective. Herodotos presents here a different Greek word for 'invective.' He writes 'bad talk', *kakologie*.[34] Although Achaimenes' strategic advice

32 Thucydides never employs it, although he does like *kakopragia*. Herodotos never employs the word *psogos* but see Thuc. 1.70*, 2.45.2* – the latter concerning women's delicate reputations in Athens. *Kakologia* appears in Xen. *Cyr*. 1.2.6 (on a sound sort of education), and in Theophrastos *Char*. 28.1 where this person-type thrives on reviling the quick and the dead. His essential nature is bad-mouthing, whether one translates this type's tendency as slander or invective. The examples tend to be one-liners. The *Rh. Al.* 1440b5 applies the adjective κακολογικόν to the category opposite to eulogy. Arist. *Rh.* 1381b7: we don't like those who speak ill of others; Menander fr. 200.

33 Herodotos observes that the wise Athenian Solon did not condescend to flatter Tyrant Kroisos (1.30.3 with the Lydian autocrat's dismissive first reaction: 33). Kroisos' wise advice forced him to flee Kambyses' wrath (3.36).

34 One might expect invective in narratives where it never surfaces. The Athenian and Tegean commanders, for example, debate before the Spartan army as judges as to which of these two cities' soldiers deserves to hold the left wing in the upcoming battle of Plataiai against Xerxes' army (9.26-27*, 28). Legend vs. Legend boasts in the fracas leads the Athenians to their rhetorical trump cards. First, ancient history is irrelevant, παλαιῶν

seems superior to Xerxes, better than Demaratos', Xerxes rejects his character assassination directed at his *xeinos*. Achaimenes has imputed to Demaratos and the Greek *ethnos* envy of another person's success (φθόνος), also treachery (προδοσία), hatred of successful strength (τὸ κρέσσον στυγέουσι) – in sum, lack of loyalty to the Persian King and cause. Xerxes indicts the condemnation as *kakologie*, and Herodotos oddly ascribes this first (surviving) appearance of *kakologie* to his Persian Potentate. The word carries more technical Attic weight than translators seem to recognize, when they English it as 'slander', 'abuse', or, better, 'vituperation.' This term of art became one Greek *terminus technicus* for extended passages of censure and bad-mouthing, 'invective.'[35] The semantics of *kakologie* include personal and ethnic failures and consequent political disloyalty, as here, treason to the Persian cause and to Demaratos' imperial protector. Xerxes, nevertheless, rejects Achaimenes' violent attack on Demaratos' person and views as inappropriate invective.[36]

In an earlier Persian succession crisis, the confused inflection point after Kambyses' death and successor, Herodotos places the so-called 'Constitutional Debate', what sort of government should follow the fall of the false King Smerdis (3. 91, 73.2*). Whether some discussion actually occurred, as Herodotos insists (3.80.1, cf. 6.43.3) to contemporary and subsequent disbelief, or whether it was a Greek Sophist's later fictional invention to tart up a disquisition on regimes, Otanes, one of the seven conspirators before, and subsequently exempt from Dareios' rule and

μέν νυν ἔργων ἄλις ἔστω; and second, Marathon proved the Athenians 'alone' could defeat 'forty-six nations' marshalled by Persia's empire. Neither debating team 'descends' into personal or civic acrimony, invective. Herodotos' sources perhaps left out arguments *contra* the other city, or even invective arguments anticipated (*prolepsis* or *prokatalepsis* – a Demosthenic specialty) that the opposing party might use – true, spurious, or irrelevant.

35 See Koster 1980; Süss 1910: 245-67; Usher 1999: 62. Dem. 18.126-31 eviscerates the κάθαρμα Aischines, compounding indignation with ridicule and irony.

36 After Kambyses had died, Gobryas, Dareios' former spear-carrier (Behistun: DNc), caps the seven-person discussion convened to decide whether to attack the false (and earless) pretender, Smerdis. Gobryas repeats the Persians' earlier suspicion about why Kambyses had repudiated the *magos* 'Smerdis' as not his brother. They agreed that Kambyses had spoken in order to create bad feeling, ἐπὶ διαβολῇ, against his real brother. This accusation offers another level of discourse – a complaint against an invective not present in the text. I thank Rosaria Munson for this distinction.

whim, describes any and every autocrat as most ready to *accept as true* divisive speech, personal attacks, or invective (3.80.4*, διαβολὰς δὲ ἄριστος ἐνδέκεσθαι).[37] *Diabole* has usually been translated here as 'slander', but slanders need not constitute invective, and invective need not be slanderous. Herodotos, in any case, shows autocrats repeatedly receiving slanders and invectives as well as false projections predicting easy success for imperial ventures, which they occasionally reject.[38]

The first example above, Mardonios' fawning encouragement of Xerxes' egoistical dreams and his tirade against Hellenic skills and intelligence, constitutes an invective, as Artabanos states. His arguments go beyond casual insult to determined, extended verbal aggression, that is, invective. Thorough condemnations beyond possibility of compromise exceed casual street-dissing, or off-the-cuff insults.

Hellenic invective explains the Ionian rebels' disastrous failure to stay united after mustering their allied men and ships prior to the battle of Lade. They continually inveigh against their new admiral's discipline, as sailors do. Dionysios of little Phokaia kept them sweating, practicing naval ship maneuvers, rowing in the summer heat (6.12). For seven days, they followed orders, but then, in a once-for-all, collective invective against Dionysios, they wonder what *daimon* maddened them to follow this martinet's orders. They accuse him of being a braggart (ἀλάζων), of supplying a mere three ships, of insulting them and severely injuring

37 An unexpected, oxymoronic collocation of admirable and execrable value terms.

38 Translators into English incline to the 'slander' translation of *dia-bal-* stems (literally, 'setting apart'), influenced by its later notoriety in prose authors, especially orators and rhetoricians, and perhaps by the Christian scriptural uses of the term in non-political, small-group contexts (e.g., 1 Tim. 3:11, 2 Tim. 3:5, Titus 2:3). The verb in Herodotos' text sometimes denotes antagonism (e.g., 5.35.1, 5.97.1, 6.61.1, 6.64: two Spartan kings). More often *diabal-* indicates the maligning of competitors and enemies, whether at length or repeatedly (6.51, 61.1: φθόνῳ καὶ ἄγῃ [hapax], 7.10η* thrice) or once only (e.g., 7.22.3, 8.90.1 & 3: Phoinikian captains; 6.46.1: Thasos' neighbors; 9.17.4*: Thessalians bad-mouthing Phokians; 6. 133.1: a Parian had maligned Athenian Miltiades). Herodotos reports that Hippias and his family "diabolized" the democratic Athenians to the satrap Artaphernes and to the Persian court (5.96.1 & 97.1 resumptively; cf. 5.97.2 'deceive', still 'diabolizing' Athenians: 6.94.1). This was not mere 'slander' (Purvis transl., cf. Pelling 2007: 183-85) – false and mean accusations, but a continuing invective directed against those many Athenians who overthrew the Peisistratid regime. Macaulay's translation (1890) 'stir up enmity' catches the flavor.

them (λυμαίνεται λύμῃσι ἀνηκέστοισι), and of causing illnesses by his punishing regime (πολλοὶ ἐς νούσους πεπτώκασι). This invective succeeds in inflaming its audience: the Ionian sailors declare that they would prefer slavery (δουληίη), 'whatever that is', to further military exercises. They mutiny – they quit and lie idle in the shade. The lively collection in one paragraph of personal attack and complaints, the gist of their griping, produces a group invective against their unrelenting commander that persuaded their mates.

Hellenic envoys (7.157-62) come to seek alliance from the Syrakousan tyrant Gelon. Herodotos presents a contentious parley in 480 BCE. He records a more conversational interchange; both sides display angry emotions and inveigh against the other's position. Gelon inveighs (7.158.1 πολλὸς ἐνέκειτο) against the self-serving Hellenes who failed to help him defend the western Greeks against the Karthaginians. He accuses them of contemptuous indifference for Sicilian Greek autonomy, and they dishonored him (ἀτιμίης) as no better than a barbarian, but he will behave differently. He will supply, nevertheless, a huge army and navy, provided *only* that they appoint him commander of all Hellenic army and naval forces and the Hellenic leader (7.158.5*: τε στρατηγός τε καὶ ἡγεμών). Indignant at this non-negotiable demand, the Spartan representative Syagros speaks vehemently against the proposed sheer robbery (7.160: ἐπεστραμμένους, ἁπαραιρῆσθαι). Agamemnon would groan, he says, would turn over in his grave, if he heard Gelon's excessive demand (Homeric μέγα οἰμώξειε)! Gelon objects to the Spartan's insults and insolent behavior (7.160.1*: ὀνείδεα, ὑβρίσματα ἐν τῷ λόγῳ, ἀσχήμονα by implication), but he reduces his demand to 'only' command of the entire Hellenic fleet. Now the Athenian ambassadors (unnamed) furiously reject his reduced demand. Gelon then angrily orders all the mainland delegations to depart the island at once (7.162.1*: οὐκ ἂν φθάνοιτε τὴν τάχιστην ὀπίσω ἀπαλλασσάμενοι). The exchange of diplomatic invectives resembles earlier Ionic wrangling and scenes of conflict in Euripides' war tragedies. When the Greeks call Gelon 'King', they may merely mock the upstart son of nobody Deinomenes who rose to tyrannical power. When, however, the Spartan and anonymous Athenian cite Homer's poetry to support claims to hegemonical positions (a *topos* suggesting diplomatic desperation), Herodotos implies that

Gelon held the superior strategic hand and arguments in this diplomatic dust-up.[39]

Lane II: Author invective

Herodotos censures local views *and* other authors who provided orally or in writing accounts of *ta genomena*. As far back as Homer (2.23, 53, 82,120, etc.) and extending beyond his predecessor Hekataios (2.143, 6.137, etc.) to contemporary positions, Herodotos doubts, denounces, and sometimes renounces local Hellenic (2.178, 8.94), Panhellenic (6.43.3, 7.139, 214), and barbarian *logoi*, *logioi* (1.1-5, 4.46.1, 8.73.3), inscribed objects (5.54, 9.85), literary texts (4.36), and *polis*-authorized views in one community or another. For example, parochial festivals and inscriptions "naturally" praised their own originating and participating *poleis* and implicitly denigrated and excluded neighbors, expelled inhabitants, or oppressed classes (6.14, 105, 111; 9.85.3), but Herodotos reports little of this because it ran counter to his theme. His first-person denunciation, however, of an Aiginetan fraud and of other cities' copy-cat pretences witheringly critiques these *poleis*' construction of bogus cenotaphs long after the battle at Plataiai to honor fallen compatriots but really to hide their shame: ἐπαισχυνομένους τῇ ἀπεστοῖ τῆς μάχης ἑκάστους χώματα χῶσαι κεινὰ τῶν ἐπιγενομένων εἵνεκεν ἀνθρώπων). Hans-Joachim Gehrke (2023) and adherents describe this process of massaging or falsifying past historical events as 'intentional history', perhaps a cynical but accurate label for how contemporary and subsequent generations reconstruct to their own advantage both admirable and shameful past policies and actions or inaction.[40]

39 The Athenians reject Tegean mythico-historic arguments facing a jury of Spartan judges before the battle of Plataiai in 479 BCE (9.27*, n.34 supra). Spartan Sthenelaidas similarly rejects in advance (*prokatalepsis*) Athenian claims of military success in the more recent past (Thuc. 1.86*). This *topos* of diplomacy devalues past virtue when overshadowed by present vice.

40 This analysis does not adjudicate the truth or falsehood of Herodotos' damning charge. Apparent dependence on Athenian informants reveals an anti-Aiginetan bias.

Herodotos' authorial invectives attack predecessors for faulty method, suspect or deceitful motives, and personal defects (of intelligence and preparation, also character). Inadequate research into available sources, lack of autopsy, limited awareness of partiality, chronology, topography, and even local ecologies contribute to innocent incompetence. Personal gullibility, local *polis* and ethnic bias,[41] and personal pride also deprive accounts of credibility and dependability. Such invective against predecessors, caustic revisionism, became a regular and prominent feature of Hellenistic historiography,[42] and, as usual, Herodotos' critical but inclusive text inaugurates and anticipates these judgmental developments (2.99.1, 3.38, 7.152.3).

Herodotos inveighs against scientific theorists, philosopher-scientists, who explain the origins of Egypt's land or Nile's flow (2.10-17: Ἴωνες οὐκ εὖ φρονέουσι, 20-27, 4.53.1). He inveighs scornfully against *a priori*, symmetrizing map-makers – many of them, but none working from phenomena but rather drawing Ocean with a compass (ὡς ἀπὸ τόρνου) and continents – whether two or three – equal in size (ἴση) to each other (4.36.2: γελῶ δὲ ὁρέων γῆς περιόδους γράψαντας πολλοὺς ἤδη καὶ οὐδένα νόον ἐχόντως ἐξηγασάμενον). Yet, Herodotos himself alleges that the rivers Nile and Danube mirror each other in length and course (2.33-34, cf. Thomas 2000: 78). This backsliding into theories not

41 Plutarch's *De malignitate Herodoti* provides a Roman imperial example. Kirkland (2022: 105-51) analyzes Plutarch's critique of Herodotos: a malicious, faulty, and deceitful person and author (e.g., *Mor*. 863d-e).

42 Polybios' demolition of Timaios and other virulent invectives against Ephoros, Demochares, Agathokles, and others, serve as textbook examples (12.1-28a, e.g.). These predecessors in his territory are guilty of naiveté, ignorance, intentional falsehoods, bias, scurrility in attacking their predecessors (12.25c, g-h). Thucydides briefly pillories Hellanikos – uniquely by name (1.97.1-2) – when justifying his account of the run-up to his war, the 'Pentakontaëtia.' He never names Herodotos, his obvious target in several polemics, but his decision to present critical revisions of Spartan *lochoi*, the Peisistratid tyranny, and his sophistical minification of the significance of the Persian Wars (1.20-21, 6. 54-59, 1.23.1) implicitly implicate this illustrious predecessor. His very choice to begin with 478 BCE, however, at Herodotos' endpoint, points to a grudging acceptance of Herodotos' account, at least as sufficient for antecedents to 'his' war. So Hornblower persuasively argues (1996: 17-38 with Annexes A and B: 122-45) that Thucydides presents independent views on some issues, follows his predecessor silently on more issues, and nowhere rejects him entirely.

supported by evidence is arguably attributable to his Plan B desire, when information fails, to explain the unknown by the known – τοῖσι ἐμφανέσι τὰ μὴ γινωσκόμενα τεκμαιρόμενος. He inveighs briefly against evidence-deficient histories composed by local or panhellenic patriotic poets.[43] While not all disagreement in historians, then or now, sinks into invective, these examples exhibit determined scorn for both claims and authors.

Herodotos also attacks boastful claims by *polis logioi*, Atthidographers and their ilk, compilers of *horoi*, local genealogists, boosters expressing favorable bias or prejudicial hostility to alien persons and neighboring groups – *polis* antipathies (2.178.3, 6.14.1, 6.121-24, 7.152, 8.73.3). After the battle of Lade, for example, all the Ionians blamed (and still inveigh against) each other: ἀλλήλους γὰρ καταιτιῶνται. In this case Herodotos prudently withholds judgment, as the various cities play the blame game and justify their own fight or flight actions. Elsewhere too, he inveighs against such self-serving local 'patriots' or local historians, of which the Atthidographers are the best preserved example – cf. Felix Jacoby's *Lokalgeschichten* (*FGrHist* IIIB).

Herodotos directs his most frequent, extended, and pointed authorial invective at Hekataios because he was his most prominent prose predecessor – indeed, the only prose author that *he* mentions by name (2.143, 6.137-38).[44] Herodotos' presentation of accounts of the indigenous Pelasgians' expulsion from Attika sets Hekataios against local Attic tradition, but Herodotos' apparent preference for that local tradition energizes his invective against this predecessor in geography and genealogical chronology. Herodotos ridicules Hekataios' vain claim in the Egyptian *logos*, in a mini-drama between the Milesian tourist and Egyptian *logioi* (temple priests), that he had descended from a god after only sixteen generations – not the Egyptians' 345! The revisited incident spotlights Hekataios' naive grasp of chronology and his inability to

43 Mostly attempts at epic. See 2.116-20: μάταιον λόγον λέγουσι οἱ Ἕλληνες; Lateiner 1989: 99-100, 106-7. While no booster for one community or alliance, Homer is Herodotos' most frequent foil – since he was the historian's pre-eminent predecessor and he wrote the first extended war narrative.

44 See Lateiner 1989, ch. 4, 'Disputation.' Herodotos, however, praises Hekataios' statecraft (5.36.2, 125).

absorb unwelcome counter-evidence. Herodotos' own process and method in this invective establishes his superiority. His frequent explicit admissions of ignorance, admiration for Egyptian record-keeping (2.3, 15.2, 19.1, 50.1, 77.1, 99.1, 143, etc.), and declarations of *non liquet* when and where evidence fail[45] argue for better methods.

In a significant polemic, however, placed in an Attic context (6.121-124; cf. supra), the investigator rebuts an enduring divisive invective (*diabole*) that accuses the Alkmaionidai clan of raising a shield to signal helpful information to the Persian invaders at Marathon. He counters the libelous charge against the Alkmaionidai of having medized, betrayed their city. This *diabole,*[46] a floating invective that accused the Alkmaionidai of having conspired with the expelled Peisistratid Hippias[47] and his Persian puppeteers (6.121.1), strikes him as absurd. He entertains 'an imaginary objection' (ἀλλὰ γάρ – *prolepsis*, or *prokatalepsis*) and counters it, 'on the contrary', in good oratorical style.[48] The hypothesis alleges that dishonor by the *polis* drove the family to collaborate, to commit treason against the Athenian democracy (6.124), but Herodotos answers that no family was more esteemed or honored by the democracy (δοκιμώτεροι), so no logical argument supports blaming them for the undenied, hillside shield-flash above the battlefield plain of Marathon. The polemic exhibits elements of the vocabulary and structures of contemporary Attic eristic and oratory, rhetorical moves that counter personal invective, thus an anti-invective.

Herodotos later (7.139) endorses an opinion, abominated/invidious/offensive for most men, but he is compelled to deliver the truth (ἀναγκαίῃ ἐξέργομαι γνώμην ἀποδέξασθαι ἐπίφθονον μὲν πρὸς τῶν

45 Dewald 2002 well analyzes this incident in which Hekataios comes off as naive, pompous, and self-deluded.

46 Carey 2004: 8 observes that *Rh. Al.* 15.4 discusses how to rebut, rather than create, *diabole* – just as Herodotos does here: θῶμα ὦν μοι καὶ οὐ προσίεμαι τὴν διαβολὴν, τούτους γε ἀναδέξαι ἀσπίδα.

47 This allegation is based in facts, as an archon list fragment mentioning Kleisthenes the Alkmaionid proves, Meiggs & Lewis (Oxford 1969) *Greek Historical Inscriptions* no. 6, new fgt.c.

48 Hornblower & Pelling 2017 ad loc. 124.1 cite Denniston 1966: 104, 475. Herodotos' rejection of an enduring *diabole* evokes a 'combative tone' in this polemic. Readers confront an anti-invective, indeed a eulogy of a generally anti-tyrannical clan.

πλεόνων ἀνθρώπων, ὅμως δέ, τῇ γέ μοι φαίνεται εἶναι ἀληθές, οὐκ ἐπισχήσω) to presumably non- and anti-Athenian audiences. He implicitly accuses the Hellenes en masse of unjustified invective against the Athenians that contradicts his better – and non self-inflating – historical record of their actions in 480 BCE. He declares that the Athenians' actions saved Hellenic freedom when faced with Hellas' critical moment choosing between autonomy and slavery. He addresses present, panhellenic hostility to Athens, and vituperation of their current, oppressive empire. He supports their claim to *have been* 'the saviors of Hellas' (τοὺς σωτῆρας γενέσθαι τῆς Ἑλλάδος). They had protected Hellenic autonomy, such as it was for various communities and classes, when Xerxes decided to invade mainland Greece. Here, while he implicitly sets aside later Athenian suppression of fellow Greeks' autonomy, their later justified negative reputation as oppressors of fellow Greeks is clear. Herodotos ends his entire narrative before the Athenians begin openly to exploit former 'allies', although they still chose to call them that.[49] He knows that his anti-invective will arouse hostility, because the Athenians' empire surely did extract men, money (league tribute), and local energies for their own benefit. It spawned widespread hatred of the Athenian suppressors of local autonomy and freedom (Thuc. 2.8.4). Cities incorporated willy-nilly into the 'Delian League' over the next six decades resented increasing loss of autonomy and forced participation in another city's expansion. Those *poleis* who still retained any autonomy or thought themselves 'free' *poleis* feared subjection in the near future.[50] Thucydidean speakers in Mytilene, Sicily,

49 Herodotos' accounts of Militiades and Themistokles' aggressions against Paros and Andros (6.133-35, 8.111-12) herald implicit charges of Athenian oppression. Herodotos pauses his own narrative (7.139) to rebut with discomfort this ubiquitous and substantial contemporary invective against the Athenians.

50 Thucydides prefaces his war narrative by laying out the Athenian transformation of an alliance of the willing into an empire, commencing from the end of Herodotos' narrative. He surveys public opinion and its hostility to the Athenian imperial construct in 431 BCE, aroused or fomented by Spartan propaganda, itself a form of state invective (2.8). Many speeches delivered in various *polis* and league assemblies inveigh against, or justify, the Athenians' Empire. Thuc. 1.22.1 explicitly denies verbatim recollection or transcripts but alleges substantial accuracy 'gist' for his version of actual speeches. Some

or Ionia hostile to this oppression inveigh against the personified 'tyrant city', not against persons. Herodotos, before and during the Peloponnesian War, responds to these invectives; his text praises the Athenians' sacrifices for Greek autonomy in the Persian Wars – including abandoning their city and the Persian demolition of its holy shrines.[51]

Attic comedy and oratory weave together slur-rich *topoi* for invective.[52] They expatiate on non-citizen birth (such as slave or foreign parentage), non-aristocratic upbringing, poverty and/or banausic family occupations (such as cobbler, ass-keeper, leatherworker, carpenter, cook), physical defects (such as demeanor, deformities, disabilities), intellectual defects (such as not bright enough, not educated or exercising enough), and moral defects – degenerate sexual or family habits, lack of patriotism or enemy sympathies, insufficient self-control, duplicity – behaviors commonly demonstrated by cowardice, bribe-taking, tax-dodging, *hybris* or *pleonexia* (Christ 2006; Fisher 1992; Balot 2005). Other *topoi* leading to invective include failure in finance, embezzlement, tax-avoidance (e.g., liturgies), military deficiencies (desertion, cowardice), political activities (bribing or being bribed in state service), litigiousness, and

Thucydidean speeches – given at considerable distance from each other – respond to each other in ways impossible to imagine in reality (e.g., before the battle of Naupaktos, 2.86-89*). The speakers who condemn Athenian imperialism (but not the Spartan variants of oppression) offer damning invectives – sustained condemnation of the morals and policies of the 'tyrant *polis*.' Consider the words of the Korinthians, Mytileneans, even Perikles, (1.122.2-3,* 3.10-14*, 2.63,* etc.). This personification of a city as an oppressive, upstart autocrat (1.122.3*, 1.124.3*), even by its own politicos (2.63.2*, 3.37.2*, 6.83*, 85.1*), extends the idea of invective from persons to collectives.

51 Spartan Sthenelaidas nevertheless avers that if the Athenians will claim to have benefited Hellas earlier, all the worse of them to tyrannize over Hellenes now (1.86.1*) – a nice invective turn in which a plus becomes a minus.

52 Süss 1910 listed chief Roman *topoi* (as Corbeill 2002 Englishes them): 1. servile heritage; 2. barbarian (non-Roman) background; 3. having a non-elite occupation; 4. thievery; 5. non-standard sexual behavior; 6. estrangement from family and community; 7. melancholy disposition; 8. unusual appearance, clothing, or demeanor; 9. cowardice; 10. bankruptcy.

gender deviance (prostitution of self, overaged boy-chasing), and contempt for Attic social norms.[53] Even a man's repeated misfortunes are alleged to prove the disfavor of the gods. Herodotos' invectives deploy many such charges.[54]

Conclusions

The presentation of self among characters in Greek history and literature focalizes dramatic interactions from Agamemnon and Odysseus to Julian.[55] Every person needs to maintain face and create sympathy for her- or himself and distaste for immediate opponents – good will and bad will – when s/he speaks before third-party audiences, whether a royal judge, a law-court, an assembly of peers, casual acquaintances at a gym or dining together, or meeting strangers on dark streets or returning by the road from Delphi.

The creation of prejudice, negative characterization, or 'spin', as the shady business of Public Relations now calls it, has 'implicit ground rules' in official and unofficial contexts (Cary 2004: 12). The practice was common in ancient Hellenic dicanic and symbouleutic oratory, even in epideictic (Lys. 2.2, cited by Cary 2004: n. 3). Cary demonstrates that writers on rhetoric – Aristotle, Anaximenes, and later professors – are thoroughly aware of *diabole.* The word denoted a way to 'set at variance' before it developed a bad reputation, to 'slander', 'to speak falsely', or 'to

53 See Süss 1910; Voegelin 1943; Usher 1999 (e.g. 227-29); Roisman 2005; Christ 1998 and 2006, etc.

54 E.g., Alkmaionid blood-guilt and curse, foreign relatives (5.71), Alkmaionid medizing (6.124), the charges of imposter and tyrant laid against Dionysios of Phokaia (6.12), Hippokleides' lack of self-control in appetite and demeanor (6.127-29), Miltiades' deception, perhaps 'bad advice' or embezzlement (6.136: ἀπάτη), Hellenic stupidity and incompetence (Mardonios, 7.9*), Kleomenes' questioning of his rival Demaratos' royal, or even legitimate, birth in order to depose him from Spartan kingship (6.61, 65). Demaratos' Persian opponent inveighs against his alien race and his alleged traitorous sabotage of his patron and savior, Xerxes (7.236*).

55 Akhilleus' disregard of others' good opinion marks his social isolation from his warrior community, as his refusal to attend assemblies and remaining in his bivouac proxemically expresses his geographical self-isolation.

traduce.' The theorists never outright espouse it.[56] *Diabole* constituted the darkest technique of the dark art of rhetoric (paraphrasing Carey 2004: 9), a skill already sunk in bad repute in the fifth century because of the sophists' (such as Gorgias') pride in eristics. It sank further in the fourth century, after the rhetor of invective, Thrasymachus, made a name in *diabole* and Plato's Sokrates fashioned elenchic attacks on teachers of rhetoric such as Gorgias, Protagoras, Lysias, and others.[57] Akhilleus[58] and Odysseus' insults in disputation sanctified post-epical Hellenic efforts to destroy one's opponents' words and character, but Herodotos' rhetoric reflects fifth-century developments in the 'diabolical' arts of invective – its scope, appropriate contexts, vocabulary, and insidious tropes.

Appendix I: Kritias and Theramenes' invectives

Xenophon (*Hell.* 2.3.23-56, written ca. 380 BCE) produced and showcased the unexpectedly earliest (surviving) pair of Attic political invectives, those of Kritias prosecuting Theramenes for 'treason' against the oligarchic Thirty, in a special session of their loyal *boule* (late autumn 404 BCE), and the latter politician's aggressive defense. Xenophon was likely acquainted with older peers who had attended this pivotal session, some 'moderate' sympathizers participating in the revolutionary oligarchical regime, citizens who shared anti-democratic and pro-Theramenes, vaguely *patrios politeia* policies.[59] Theramenes was first subjected to a campaign of private, one-on-one repeated invective (ἰδίᾳ διέβαλλον), designed to soften up *bouleutai* sympathetic or otherwise. Subsequently,

56 Cicero considers invective to provide a useful tool to maintain the civic order. See Corbeill (2002: 197, 209, 218).

57 *Phdr.* 267c-d: allegedly Thrasymachos was διαβάλλειν τε καὶ ἀπολύσασθαι διαβολὰς ὁθενδὴ κράτιστος.

58 Achilleus' brazen insults against the Commander-in-Chief Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1 (122-231, e.g., φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων, ἀνειδείη ἐπιειμένη, κυνῶπε, κ.τ.λ., cf. ἔπεσιν ὀνείδισον, Athene's permission, and 304: the narrator describes their face-to-face verbal wrangling) develops into his massive verbal demolition of the Argive's sneaky and greedy – ignoble – character in *Iliad* 9 (308-429).

59 See Usher 1968: 128, 134-35.

Kritias convened the body and brought in young men with (poorly) concealed daggers. Athenians remembered the similar build-up to the Four Hundred's terror-regime take-over in 411 BCE (Thuc. 8.69.4). Kritias' speech (24-34), as Xenophon presents it, features many frequent *topoi* of earlier and subsequent character assassination. He mentions Theramenes' factional and class disloyalty, his scoundrel nature (πονηρός),[60] his primary dedication to self-preservation, and thus his fickle, undependable personality (εὐμετάβολος), and consequent nickname of side-switching 'Slipper' (κόθορνος). Besides name-calling, Kritias alleges his treasonable acts of 411 BCE and a traitorous psychic nature (φύσει προδότης ἐστίν). He claims that Theramenes was responsible for the most deaths of both aristocrats and democrats, when he brought about the demise of the Four Hundred later in 411 BCE and failed to save drowning sailors after the battle of Arginusai in 406 BCE (*Hell.* 1.6.22-35). Neither honor nor friendship motivates Theramenes but greedy self-advantage (πλεονεκτεῖν), so he has plotted against the oligarchical government. His execution will usefully discourage democratic opponents. Kritias has attacked Theramenes' words and deeds, his nature, intentions, and associations.

Theramenes defends himself – his entire career – and counter-accuses (35-49) Kritias. He throws back at him many of the same invective *topoi*. Kritias was unpatriotically absent from Athens at the time of the Arginusai disaster, in fact far off in Thessaly working to arm the *penestai* for a people's revolt and to install a democratic regime.[61]

He accuses Kritias of having diverged from good oligarchic policy when he started arresting and executing the καλοί κἀγαθοί – innocent, rich men and true, sympathetic to the regime like Leon, Nikeratos, and a

60 An oligarchic derogatory catchword for clever demagogues, an Aristophanic word of grudging admiration for oppressed 'little guys' who manage to overcome powerful opponents and institutions. David (2014) dissects the Four Hundred's euphemistic charades (411 BCE). The Thirty reprised their propaganda in 404 BCE with a thinner veneer of truth.

61 Poor and landless native non-citizens tied to the farms of noblemen. Cf. Philostratos *VS* 1.16, 502: Kritias attacked democracy and the Athenians, inveighing against them (διαβάλλων).

trierarch named Antiphon.[62] Such executions and confiscations made well-off sympathizers suspicious or hostile to the imposed oligarchy. The Thirty also arrested and executed metics for their portable wealth, confiscated the arms of the *plethos* (people), and brought in a force of foreign (Peloponnesian) mercenaries to garrison the occupied *polis*. Kritias and his henchmen exiled some of the so-called 'good men' and drove many others, even respectable members of *to plethos*, to leave Attica. Some of them now serve as leaders of the democratic guerilla forces attacking the regime of the Thirty, such as Thrasyboulos and Anytos.[63]

The invective climaxes: Kritias' policies and acts please neither democrats nor oligarchs. 'You were the fiercest enemy of the people in the democracy and now in our oligarchy you have become the fiercest enemy of the "best citizens"' (μισοδημότατος and μισοχρηστότατος).[64] Kritias' goal is to establish a tyranny of the few, not Theramenes' oligarchy, a regime ruled by the 'good men', meaning, as he specifies, the cavalry and (some of) the hoplites.

Facts, at least as Xenophon presents them, favor Theramenes' defense speech even in a biased, one-off courtroom, the *boule* constituted by the Thirty. Xenophon records a *thorubos*, commotion or uproar, supporting Theramenes' case, flagging it as the more persuasive invective argument (50-56). Kritias had to improvise a way to success without polling the *de facto* jurors. He erased his opponent from the catalogue of the 3,000

62 Not to be confused with the long dead, oratorically gifted oligarch of the same name (Thuc. 8.68, 90).

63 Xenophon (*Hell.* 2.3.42) and the even more apologetic (because originating in apologetics of the Thirty) Aristotelian *Ath. Pol.* (37.1) disagree on the sequence of Theramenes' judicial execution and Thrasyboulos' gathering of opposition forces at Phyle; cf. Rhodes (1981/1993) 415-22.

64 *Hell.* 2.3.47. Perhaps these antithetical terms were once coined as catchwords in positive uses, 'enemies of the mob', and 'enemies of so-called "Best Men".' Kritias is condemned here in the adjectives' superlative forms in a balanced, oxymoronic piece of invective. Aristophanes' characters use the former term in pro-Kleon contexts (*Wasps* 474 and *Georgoi* (424-422 BCE) fr. 108 [Athen. 3.75a = *Aristophanes Fragments* (Loeb) fr. 110, OCT fr. 108, Kassel-Austin 108). G. Hermann had cleverly conjectured *misodemos* at *Wasps* 410 for *misopolis*. The orators also flourish this compound word (Opelt 1992): And. 4.16, Isoc. 4.151, Aeschin. 2.171.

(citizens), a tawdry preliminary necessary to condemn him to death. Springing to the Council's hearth, Theramenes the suppliant called on his fellow assembled oligarchs to reject this unilateral, pseudo-lawful, literal erasure of his name. The *boule* members kept quiet when they saw the room ringed by the troops and dagger-men of the Thirty. The Eleven, Athens' *de facto* police-force, dragged Theramenes out for execution by hemlock, then frog-marched him through the agora screaming against the outrage to law and his person (*Hell.* 2.3.55). But no cowed councilman dared to object.

Both parties, when they delivered these damning invectives, stress, as later Attic invective does, disloyalty to faction and the *polis*, and a character rotten to the core. Both mention undependable politics and ideologically suspect activities. They recall imprudent policies that had aided the regime's natural enemies and created new ones. Each accuses the other of greed and self-interest. Each demonstrates the dishonorable nature of his opponent. Kritias, however, had prepared his thugs, if invective alone could not win sufficient votes, as it did not.

In fifth-century Athens, anger and related strong emotions were suitable for jurymen or assemblymen to feel, but not for mild-mannered prosecutors or defendants to arrogate for themselves (Harris 2017: 236). Economic and social stresses of the later fourth century, and the rise of Macedon exacerbated *kakologia*. They legitimated Demosthenes, Aischines, Deinarchos, and others' virulent abuse in the Pnyx assembly and courtroom spaces. Invective lost its legitimacy and academic approval when democracy became only a name and by the time someone penned the late fourth-century *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* ([Arist.] 1421b9, b25, b38; cf. *Ad Herenn.* 3.15). Subsequently, the Hellenistic despots little needed any pungent rhetoric to enforce their will. Although τὸ ψεκτικόν (see citation above, < ψόγος) became one of seven academic elements (εἴδη) of symbouleutic and dicanic oratory, the handbooks counsel that it would be imprudent to resort to it. It detracts from creditable qualities and amplifies discreditable characteristics. Quintilian (see below) writing in an autocracy and often for school exercises reflects this later negative attitude towards invective. Powell (2007) argues that Cicero himself in the republic disapproved of invective practices. But disapproval does not equal dispensible.

Appendix 2: Roman invective: Limited or ubiquitous?

Students consider invective more a Roman habit and genre than Greek. The anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* (3.14-15), contemporary with Cicero and preserved among his works, defines *vituperatio* as censure, the converse of *laus*. The object of attack uniquely lacks self-control, presents serious defects of character (*vitia*), contrary to the cardinal virtues. He behaves *iniuste, immodeste, ignave, stulte*. J.G.F. Powell (2007), however, in a radical response to the *opinio communis* argues that invective was not a *genre* at all. Cicero has no word for extended and public open enmity in formal speech, whatever vituperation he spoke or wrote against Catilina, Clodius, Vatinius, Piso, and Antony. The word *invectio* itself has no lemma in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1982). Lewis & Short's *Latin Dictionary* (1879) provides no earlier citation than fourth-century Ammianus (21.10.7, 22.14.2, 28.1.20) and fifth-century Fulgentius (*Myth*. 1.15). Powell's opening chapter in *Cicero on the Attack* questions the basis, evidence, and arguments of the book's other chapters. The remaining authors also barely reference the *Catilinarians*.

Powell defines invective narrowly. Others cast a wider net for public declarations of enmity and direct attacks on persons, presenting targets as unprecedentedly foul in body, mind, and policies. Powell (2007: 1) rightly asked almost two decades ago: 'What exactly is invective … ?' Cicero had no word for it; *invehi* the verb from which it is derived means, before metaphorical accretions, 'to ride in to attack' against both persons and causes. Powell questioned the category altogether, and wished to limit the term, if at all useful, to direct personal attacks – and those not subtle or gentle ridicule but declarations of open emnity. He thus excluded (to reviewers' disbelief) Cicero's *First Catilinarian*, because the senatorial speech denounced a plot without describing Catilina's person (2). Vituperation, Powell argues (4-5), is rarer in Latin oratory than scholars commonly claim, although he acknowledges, reading Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.7.19-25), that the speeches against Piso, Clodius, and Curio contain severe criticisms of those persons, Cicero's competitors. How exceptional were these invective-filled speeches?[65] The evidence from

65 Nisbet 1961 cites Cic. *De or*. 2.240 discussing *mendaciuncula*. The *Pro Cluentio*'s attack on Sassia, the mother of the defendant, pulls no punches (see 17-18, 188, 192-94, 199).

other Roman orators, needed to decide, is now unavailable (10). Cicero may have been *sui generis*, offering much or little abuse of persons. The theorist decries the practice of invective, except as a threat (6), but no mentor would advise otherwise. In calmer, philosophical prose, Cicero (*De or.* 2.304) acknowledges that anger (*iracundia*) may harm an advocate's case. Better to maintain self-control (cf. *Pro Tull.* 51). However, the active advocate frequently deploys insults, *maledicta* (e.g., *Cael.* 6). Although such denigrating tactics do not themselves win legal disputes, Powell's dismissive position for Ciceronian invective seems extreme: absence of evidence does not constitute evidence of absence. Cicero's enemies smeared him with the unflattering epithet *consularis scurra* (Macr. *Sat.* 2.1.2, 'buffoon consul') after his vicious cross-examination of Vatinius, because, Powell improbably argues, its scurrility was *atypical* rather than unexpected from a litigator (12).

Quintilian, one hundred-fifty years later, alleges that only inferior advocates sink to *convicia* (*Inst.* 12.9.8-9). The client may pay twice by losing after securing an over aggressive attorney. Insults differ, however, from invective, as we saw above, and Quintilian was tutoring students aiming at success under despot Domitian. The rules of lawsuit advocacy had changed. Invective demonstrated anger and displayed hostility and courage to threatening high-stakes competitors in republican Rome. Then, pursuit of personal grudges was legitimate, indeed expected and required of public figures, and invective in poets and pleaders served to advance one's standing.[66]

66 I thank Andreas Serafim, Rafał Toczko, and the Nicolaus Copernicus University for inviting me to present this paper in a series of lectures on invective, first delivered remotely. Professors Daniel Levine and Jeff Rusten provided me with essential bibliographic assistance.

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