Introduction

πόλιν οὐ τὴν ἐπὶ προγόνων τὴν ναυμάχον,
ἀλλὰ γραῦν σανδάλια ὑποδεδεμένην
καὶ πτισάνην ῥοφῶσαν.
[Athens], no longer the city of our ancestors,
ready for sea-battles, but an old hag, wearing slippers
and gulping her broth.

Demades, fr. 18[1]

The language of insult has a long and far-flung history of lampooning the oral behaviors that polite society carefully regulates, especially as the main fare of comic invective. Scornful analogies with low-status demeanors may serve to denigrate entire cities, as in the quotation above, or particular players on the public stage. This study charts abuse in classical Athenian literature that centers on the mouth and its activities: especially talking, eating, drinking, and sexual practices. The patterns of imagery that it illuminates dominate ancient invective and pervade insulting talk in western cultures. Students of Roman satire will find this use of the ignoble body familiar, as will readers of Rabelais and modern picaresque novels.[2] I aim to supplement the burgeoning interest in both abusive speech genres and the representation of the body, by demonstrating that in the classical period public mockery of professional speakers forges an iambic discourse that isolates the intemperate mouth as a visible emblem of behaviors pilloried in the democratic arena.

[1] The fragments of the fourth-century orator Demades are collected in de Falco 1954. This one is quoted by Demetrius and attributed to Demades, as an example of "vibrancy" (*deinotēs*) in style (*de Eloc.* 282, 285).

[2] On comic imagery and the grotesque, see Edwards 1993 and Platter 1993; on Roman satire, see Henderson 1999, as well as the special edition of *Arethusa* entitled *Vile Bodies* (1998). Most of these articles respond in one way or another to Bakhtin's famous monograph on Rabelais (1984). On the mouth as a site of impurity in Roman literature more generally, see Richlin 1983 [1992]: 99; Corbeill 1996: 101–24, and further below.

While in recent years scholars have increasingly paid attention to how Athenian drama and oratory respond to each other, they have not noticed the consistent patterns that shape defamation in these genres.[3] Dramatic and rhetorical works from the classical period that depict popular orators and teachers often focus on oral behaviors, revealing how the feminized or vulgar appetites of these figures match their speaking styles and render them worthy of abuse. Old comedy, the satyr play, Platonic dialogue, and oratorical invective portray figures such as the sophists, Socrates, Cleon, and Alcibiades as ranging from loud-mouthed, crude, and rapacious to chattering, effeminate, and fastidious, as do the barbed exchanges of Aeschines and Demosthenes. This scheme plays upon Athenian attitudes toward the appetites and in turn influences them, in some instances even affecting public policy by means of open ridicule.

My discussion thus charts a crucial conjunction between the body as a social entity and ancient political discourse. Athenian writers contrast speaking in the courts and assembly with other traditional spaces for exercising oral activities, most notably the symposium and the agora. In these arenas insulting depictions highlight the speaker's style in a broad sense (including vocal tone, dress, and deportment), focusing in on the concrete visibility of the talking citizen in a public setting and often connecting other physical attributes to oral techniques.[4] The critique of professional speakers is a whole-body affair, with the mouth serving as a central indicator of various types of behavioral excess. This abuse of the speaker in action emerges from types of pointedly offensive speech performance in archaic society, namely heroic invective and the insult poetry (iambos) of the aristocratic symposium.[5] When defamation spawned in elite settings infiltrates the arenas for public speaking that are central to the administration of the democratic city, the mouth emerges as a dominant metonymy for behaviors and attitudes that menace the well-being of Athens.

[3] Regarding the intersection of drama and oratory, see, e.g., Ober and Strauss 1990; Worthington (ed.) 1994; Hall 1995; Goldhill and Osborne (eds.) 1999. Both Ussher 1960 (on Theophrastus) and Rowe 1966 (on Demosthenes) point to Aristophanic influence, but they do not make any claims about the larger discursive development.

[4] See Worman 2002a on ancient ideas about style and oral performance; also Gleason 1995 on professional speakers' visible character traits.

[5] By heroic invective I mean the exchange of insults that typically precedes hand-to-hand combat between prominent warriors in Homer. Cf. Martin 1989: 67–75. What is known about iambic poetry indicates that it was often agonistic and insulting, whether this functioned as an apotropaic device in fertility rituals or bawdy entertainment at symposia. See West 1974: 22–39; Nagy 1979: 222–52; Bowie 1986; Gentili 1988: 107–14; Bartol 1993: 61–74; Stehle 1997: 213–27; Ford 2002: 25–45, and further below.

A MAN'S, MAN'S WORLD

Given the likelihood that iambos originated in the agonistic, manly, and drunken setting of the archaic symposium, it should come as little surprise that the formalities that govern ritualized insult tend to foster a rude, masculine verbal style that lampoons weak and feminizing habits.[6] In social spaces devoted to talking and eating, the voice of invective may be concertedly crude and reviled as much as it reviles, but it is almost never unmanly. Speakers sometimes ventriloquize women, as they do other low-status types, but this imposture merely isolates certain figures as targets for abuse. Indeed, women, with their vulnerable, soft bodies, serve in abusive talk as the predominant negative measure in the regulation of male behaviors, especially those involving the appetites. Demetrius, for example, explains that Demades' image of Athens as a "hag" (γραῦν) indicates that it is "weak and already fading" (ἀσθενῆ καῖ ἐξίτηλον ἤδη), while the details of her dress and table manners point to a city "amused by feasts and banquets" (ἐν κρεανομίαις τότε καὶ πανδαισίαις διάγουσαν) (*de Eloc.* 286).[7]

As such metaphors indicate, in abusive public speech the female body may represent figuratively the weakness and indulgence that mark male social practices (e.g., the feasts and banquets). A number of scholars have noticed that female characters play a facilitating or mediating role in Greek literature,[8] and the material explored in this study often reveals an anxious calibration of "female" appetites. While it consists largely of instances in which male speakers direct abuse at male targets, its imagery is underpinned by fundamental social tensions – those structured by class and perhaps most importantly by gender. In fact, the contrasts that organize the oral images discussed here arise from perceived distinctions between male and female behaviors, while aspects of class reinforce these basic differences. Thus Aristophanes depicts the sophist as a louche, effeminate chatterer, while the demagogue is a tough guy with a big mouth. Classicists have largely overlooked the centrality of this opposition to both ancient democratic thought and the larger literary tradition, but it constitutes a persistent scheme in western expression. Indeed, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu points out that in popular French usage the gaping maw (*la gueule*) of the loud-mouthed,

[6] Cf. further discussion in ch. 1. See Bowie 1986; Schmitt-Pantel 1992: 32–38; Bartol 1993: 51–74; also Ford 2002: 25–39.

[7] Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 9: βοσκημάτων δίκην κάτω ἀεὶ βλέποντες καὶ κεκυφότες εἰς γῆν καὶ εἰς τραπέζας βόσκονται χορταζόμενοι καὶ ὀχεύοντες (586a7–8).

[8] See especially Zeitlin 1990; also Loraux 1995; Wohl 1998; Foley 2001.

greedy, manly speaker operates in the realm of lowbrow insults and physical violence. The prim, feminized *bouche*, on the other hand, is allied with polite bourgeois utterance.[9]

Elite genres, then, traditionally figure the language of insult as male and lower-class, so that those who insult usually engage in a form of imposture, being themselves elite male participants in symposia and festivals.[10] This abuse also focuses on the body and its parts, forging a rude, voracious discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin has famously emphasized that popular, abusive language effectively cannibalizes the body and reveals a particularly crude palate; such speech "is flooded with genitals, bellies, defecations, urine, disease, noses, mouths, and dismembered parts."[11] Insulting talk centers on the open mouth, which like the Gorgon's maw in ancient depiction elicits both fascination and revulsion.[12] This oral fixation also has a sustained presence in western literature, most notably in ancient satire and the genre that it helped to spawn: the modern novel. Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* manifests a gleeful absorption in the workings of the mouth and other bodily apertures, and its proto-novelistic form allows for the confrontation of competing attitudes toward the appetites.

Indeed, one could trace an arc of aggressively masculine lampoon centered on these appetites that runs effectively from Aristophanic comedy, the poetry of Catullus and Martial, Roman satire, and the "novel" of Petronius on one end, to the satirical verses of Ben Jonson, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, Robert Herrick, and John Donne, or contemporary American writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Philip Roth, and Charles Bukowski, on the other. While these clearly constitute only a few of many such arcs, my point is that this imagery has very broad significance. It forges a dominant strain in western literature that situates the body in ignoble and sometimes obscene postures and often highlights the mouth as a metonymy for excess.[13]

[9] Bourdieu 1991: 86–87.

[10] Although there are abusive female characters in iambic poetry and Attic comedy, these ventriloquisms are largely employed, as far as I can determine, as reference points for shaping male insult, a strategy that also marks iambic discourse in later prose. To say this is to make no claims about forms of abuse that may have been originally female (e.g, *gephurismos*, the "bridge insult" of Eleusinian ritual; cf. Ar. *Ran*. 391ff., *Plut*. 1014; and see O'Higgins 2003: 20, 57). See further in ch. 1.

[11] Bakhtin 1984: 319.

[12] On the Gorgon as an apotropaic device that exorcizes internal demons, see Frontisi-Ducroux 1984: 152–55. Frontisi-Ducroux argues more generally that the frontal gaze in Greek art confronts the viewer with his own mortality; as such the Gorgon's open-mouthed grin serves as a fundamental metonymy for the human condition. Cf. also Vernant 1991: 111–25.

[13] As ch. 5 explores, this scheme extends not only to comic or satirical texts but also to oratorical invective. Demosthenes' mocking of his opponents' appetites has its most grotesque extension in Cicero's *Second Philippic* (esp. 62–75), which depicts his opponent Antony as all mouth – a bawling, drunken, blood-sucking Charybdis. Although Corbeill (1996: 104–24) does not address sufficiently Cicero's depiction of Antony, he does emphasize the importance of mouth imagery in Cicero's

Catullus, for instance, employs an infamously crude means of silencing his critics in *carmen* 16, which begins *pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo* ("I'll bugger you and shove it in your mouths") – a wielding of the authorial phallus unparalleled in ancient literature. This gesture aims at chastening those who read him (i.e., "Catullus") as "bad at being a man" (*male me marem*, 16.13) for writing "softie" little verses (cf. the diminutives *versiculis* and *molliculi*, 16.3–4). This and other poems chart the bodily schemes by which Catullus mocks the weaknesses of his fellow elite Romans, as well as those of his poetic *ego*. The body emerges as a site of degradation in which appetitive vulnerabilities run from mouth to anus (e.g., 15, 21) and the narrator sometimes himself submits to the aggressions of others (e.g., 11, 28).[14]

Horace's *Epodes* make a similar use of the ignoble body, situating the collection of poems as a vitriolic confrontation between the poet and his alter ego, the bitter witch Canidia, who – like women more generally – threatens to sap the phallic energies of the poet and thereby elicits abuse in defense of both his poetry and his manhood.[15] The *Satires* also depose the male body in comically weak and challenged postures. When, for instance, Horace depicts the journey to an important diplomatic meeting as his body's debasement through dyspepsia and masturbation (*Serm*. 1.5), his discomfort, fastidiousness, and disappointment effectively upstage the momentous political event. The scene of Trimalchio's dinner in Petronius' *Satyricon*, during which the host stuffs his mouth with food and verbiage and fondles boys at table, emerges as a gross extension of the satirist's wry warnings about the body's weaknesses. The dinner is a seemingly endless round of oral excesses, with the host's lowbrow crudity resulting in a profligate jumble of outré delicacies, boastful misquotations, and purging from both ends.[16]

This ancient relationship between satire and the picaresque, in which the latter paints in florid detail what the former bitingly denigrates, has

invective. Focusing on Cicero's attacks on Verres (e.g., *Verr*. 2.3.5, 2.3.23) and Clodius (e.g., *Dom*. 25, 47, 104), Corbeill directs attention especially to the implications of sexual "degradation" (e.g., cunnilingus) as well as drunkenness. Following Richlin 1983 [1992]: 99, he argues that the "impure mouth" (*os impurum*) has class implications. See further in the epilogue.

[14] Fitzgerald (1995: 72) recognizes that in Roman culture the mouth "was the most important site of purity and contamination"; cf. Richlin 1983 [1992]: 99; Henderson 1999: 69–72; also Corbeill 1996: 104–05. Although Adams 1982 does not have an entry for *os*, this may suggest the paucity of its metaphorical uses in Latin (versus the "tainting" of the orifice itself by association, juxtaposition, innuendo, etc.).

[15] Old women serve as dominant targets in the *Epodes* (e.g., 3, 5, 8, 12, 17), with Canidia as their most prominent member. They are a doggish, disgusting group (Oliensis 1991; also Henderson 1999: 93–113 on *Ep*. 8). Cf. the seventeenth-century poet Robert Herrick's offering: "The staffe is now greas'd,/ And very well pleas'd,/ She cockes out her Arse at the parting,/ To an old Ram Goat,/ That rattles i'th'throat,/ Halfe choakt at the stink of her farting" ("The Hagg," 1648 [1963]: 441).

[16] On the "palate" of Roman satire (including Petronius), see Gowers 1993.

an enduring afterlife. Witness, for instance, Ben Johnson's 118th epigram, "On Gut":

> GUT eats all day and letchers all the night,
> So all his meat he tasteth over twice;
> And striving so to double his delight,
> He makes himself a thorough-fare of vice.
> Thus, in his belly, can he change a sin,
> Lust it comes out, that gluttony went in.[17]

The English satirist charts a confluence of appetites in which modern avatars of the picaresque gleefully wallow. Think of Alexander Portnoy, the roguish self-abusing hero of Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, who inhabits precisely this confluence in his relationship with a piece of liver: "My first piece I had in the privacy of my own home, rolled round my cock at three-thirty – and then again on the end of my fork, at five-thirty, along with the other members of that poor innocent family of mine." Since the novel is staged as one long riotous therapy session, Portnoy also offers his "analyst" the obscene conclusion to this transgression: "So. Now you know the worst thing I have ever done. I fucked my own family's dinner."[18]

Portnoy's Complaint focuses its bawdy abjection on the hero's controlling mother, whose looming presence impinges on his teenage fantasies and adult relationships alike. Although Roth's novel, like so much of Bukowski's writing, careens from one appetite to another, sexual desire serves as the anxious strain that runs through its outrageous rants. Consider in this light Bukowski's poem "the sniveler," in which a female interlocutor says over the phone to the narrator (who is pining for another woman), "oh my god, you're impossible, you big soft/ baby's ass!" He responds, "suck me off and maybe I can forget, help me/ forget." They hang up and the narrator considers his options:

> I thought, well, I can masturbate, I can look at television,
> and then there's suicide.
> having already masturbated twice that day
> I had two choices left and
> being a big soft baby's ass I
> switched on the tv.[19]

[17] Johnson 1616 [1947]: 76. Cf. also John Donne, who in one of his satirical poems envisions the rival writer as a plagiarizing "glutton": "But hee is worst,/ Who beggarly doth chaw/ Others wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw/ Rankly digested dost those things out-spue,/ As his owne things; and they are his owne, 'tis true,/ For if one eate my meat, though it be knowne,/ The meat was mine, th' excrement is his owne" (1601 [1952]: 94).

[18] Roth, *Portnoy's Complaint* 1967 [1994]: 134.

[19] Bukowski 1981: 192–93.

Sex, for these aggressively male, heterosexual writers, means women, and with women come anxieties about the very maleness they so rudely and self-mockingly celebrate. Much of ancient abuse exhibits a similar unease, which also fosters male posturing and obsession with the phallus.

Something rather different happens when the protagonist is a woman, a difference revealing for the equations drawn among talk, food, and the female body familiar (in more obscene forms) from ancient comedies that feature "women on top."[20] In Margaret Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman*, the increasingly fastidious Marian observes her fellow workers at a Christmas party: "She looked around the room at all the women there, at the mouths opening and shutting, to talk or to eat."[21] Her fear of food, which grows apace with her discomfort with her conventional life, generates an internal commentary bearing many features of ancient abuse. Hers is a rebellious idiom; and although it remains carefully cordoned off from the polite talk of social interaction, much like Attic old comedy and the satyr play it relentlessly dismantles the "natural" coherences of social life into its detritus, focusing on the debased body and especially on the organ most difficult to control: the open mouth. Thus Marian sits silently in the middle of the party and says to herself, "What peculiar creatures they were; and the continual flux between the outside and the inside, taking things in, giving them out, chewing, words, potato-chips, burps, grease, hair, babies, milk, excrement, cookies, vomit, coffee, tomato juice, blood, tea, sweat, liquor, tears, and garbage."[22]

Women at a tea party: to Marian this appears as one of life's greatest grotesqueries, the very propriety of the sweet food and trivial talk catalyzing her bitterly hilarious response. In this pivotal scene Atwood appropriates for her biting protagonist the familiar elements of abusive speech – the focus on the permeable female body, the insulting outsider's voice with its omnivorous palate, and the social setting that both generates the derisive talk and serves as its target. That the speaker is a woman and the invective internalized ironically signals the protagonist's alienation from her own body, as opposed to the gleeful indulgence that often characterizes male discourses. Both factors also throw into especially sharp relief the overt, masculine antagonism of ancient invective, which parades conflicts in public spaces that tend in modern bourgeois idioms to be confined to internalized rants in domestic settings. Greek comedy, for instance, may isolate its mockery as ritual abuse in a formal arena, but it nevertheless frequently constitutes

[20] See further in ch. 2. [21] Atwood 1969 [1998]: 180.
[22] Atwood 1969 [1998]: 181. Cf. Bukowski's depiction of his father: "pork chops, said my father, I love/ porkchops!/ and I watched him slide the grease into his mouth" ("retired," 1986: 17).

a direct attack on public figures before a mass audience, much like the slandering of opponents in oratory.

Ancient insult does, however, confirm a tension between polite ritual and rude critique comparable to that of Roth's dinner-table travesty or Atwood's monstrous tea party. Further, ancient poets and prose writers similarly appropriate abusive talk as a means of passing judgment on their own kind. Although classical invective probably originated in the elite setting of the aristocratic symposium, the setting itself subsequently emerges either as a potentially enervating sphere in contrast to the vulgar but vigorous marketplace (i.e., the Athenian agora) or, conversely, as a forum for fostering the proper educational training of the elite citizen.[23] Perhaps because of the tensions that developed around class status in the democratic city-state, the iambic speaker may occupy a complex position in relation to his audience and his own usage. The patent imposture of low-status figures isolates crude talk as derisive quotation, but at the same time it signals to elite listeners the wit and wisdom of the (male) ventriloquist. This imposture thus implicitly promotes aristocratic sentiments by means of lowbrow critique, as is the case with archaic iambos. Think of the commonplace chat of Socrates, whose arguments foster antidemocratic ideas; or Demosthenes' arch and colorful invective, which often denigrates opponents as low-class habitués of the agora.

IAMBOS AND IAMBIC DISCOURSE

A consideration of the archaic background of iambic poetry (*iambos*), which I take up at greater length in chapter 1, reveals the adumbrated origins of abusive themes and vocabulary. The texts focused on here span the comedies of Aristophanes in the 420s to the sketches of Theophrastus in the 320s, but the iambic tradition that fosters this phenomenon extends back to Homer. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* it surfaces intermittently as the insulting talk of "low-status" figures (i.e., characters assigned non-heroic status, whether actual or assumed) who embody a threat to epic discourse and its heroes.[24] The blaming function of iambos in this "high" or praise genre suggests that it was first formulated as invective (*psogos*), typically with high-status figures as its targets. As a genre, however, iambos is oddly elusive: it is not metrically

[23] Bowie (1997:3) argues that actual symposiasts were probably exclusively upper-class; Schmitt-Pantel 1992: 222–31 and Fisher 2000 have contested this. *Wasps* indicates that the symposium might involve playful imitation of upper-class habits and conceits. See also Wycherly 1956, Wilkins 2000a on the character of the agora.

[24] Cf. Nagy 1979. I consider this aspect of iambos in ch. 1.

uniform; nor does it necessarily involve blaming speech.[25] The two most famous proponents of this mode, Archilochus and Hipponax, wrote in a number of meters (e.g., trimeters, tetrameters, epodes) and about topics that range from desire and erotic contest to soldiering and the brevity of life. We might note that these are subjects typical of the symposium, and the fragments that remain share features that reflect this drunken setting: a focus on the concrete needs of the body; an irreverent, deprecating tone; and a concertedly crude sensibility.

In fact, it is significant for this discussion that the origins and generic boundaries of iambos are rather obscure. While Ewen Bowie and others are concerned with determining the parameters of this "network of poetic types,"[26] I would call attention instead to the discursive nature of abusive speech. Many broad features of abuse traverse generic boundaries, while showing a remarkable consistency of tone (irreverent), subject matter (commonplace), and speaker's fictive status (usually low). In addition, like iambos, the discourse that develops in the fifth century around professional speakers often focuses on "vulgar" activities, especially eating and sex.[27] Like iambos, it sometimes includes elements of animal fables (*ainoi*) as well as the communal street revels (*kōmoi*) from which Attic comedy is thought to have developed.[28] Further, this discourse often seems aimed, like the *ainos*, at education of the young: witness the ephebic satyr chorus, the plot of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, and Socrates' youthful audiences in Plato.[29] It also sustains across genres more precise elements such as vocabulary and imagery, so that a reprehensible figure like the sophistic butcher (*mageiros*)

[25] Cf. West 1974; Rosen 1988a: 12–14; Bowie 2001.

[26] This is Bowie's phrase (2001: 6). Cf. Bartol 1993: 30–41.

[27] I should note that the word "discourse" is particularly useful here, since it designates a linguistic arena with shared conventions and vocabulary that does not conform to any one genre, although it is usually fostered in a particular social context (cf. Foucault 1977). In this case the discourse develops in a number of formal literary settings that share a performative element (delivery before an audience), a general speech type (abusive), and a particular target (professional speakers).

[28] Aristotle, *Po*. 1448a35–36; see Rosen 1988a; Zanetto 2001. Aristotle also represents iambos as spawning comedy and treats both with some disdain, assigning these "low" genres to poets with base personalities (*Po*. 1448b24–1449a5). For the connection to *ainoi*, see Semonides 7 W and Archilochus frs. 182–87 W; cf. Nagy 1979: 222–41; Cole 1991: 48–49; Zanetto 2001; Ford 2002: 74–80. West (1974: 23–25) hypothesized that iambos developed in the context of the worship of Dionysus, whose cultic titles and modes (*dithyrambos*, *thriambos*, and *ithumbos*) suggest links with iambos, and also of Demeter, who was cheered by the "indecent" jokes of Iambe in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (cf. O'Higgins 2003 and further in chs. 1 and 2). Both ties would help to explain the transformation of iambos into comic performance, as well as its pervasive emphasis on the physical world and bodily need. Rosen (1988a: 15–16) has pointed to the association of iambos with physical pain, the verbal equivalent of a blow.

[29] See Degani 1984; Bartol 1993: 73–74; Steinrück 2000: 1–4, 82–86; Griffith 2002.

turns up in comedy, the satyr play, Platonic dialogue, and the sketches of Theophrastus.[30]

I thus do not employ the term "iambic" merely for purposes of economy, but because fifth- and fourth-century invective and its objects show clear ties to the poetry more strictly designated as iambos. While scholars have argued for the influences of iambic poetry on comic drama, I demonstrate that through the essential vehicle of comedy, iambic modes share features with the satyr play, shape oratorical defamation of character, and contribute to the Platonic depiction of Socrates. Indeed, I contend that over a century in which the public critique of professional speakers moved from the dramatic to the oratorical arena, these genres perpetuated iambic connections among abusive language, those who use it, and its targets. As comedy began to move away from the (frequently obscene) lampooning of public figures, orators appropriated abusive vocabulary from that genre, although in this politer context obscene characterizations were merely suggested rather than explicit.[31] This points additionally to the transformation during this period of public forums for social dialogue and critique, since the move of invective from the comic stage to the oratorical platform parallels the waning of the former and the burgeoning of the latter as a setting for civic self-articulation and analysis. My discussion thus innovates most importantly by tracing the trajectory of iambic language in conjunction with the development of oratory and Platonic dialogue out of dramatic forms, as well as the ways in which the shift in public arenas alters the effects of this language.

This transformation is evident in later rhetorical theory as well, which indicates the ongoing awareness of oratory's debt to comic language and its appropriation of the fiction of the low-status iambic speaker. Note, for example, that Demetrius cautions his reader against the rough style of Demades, who was famous in antiquity for his claim to be self-taught.[32] Demetrius regards Demades' language as "peculiar and eccentric" (ἴδιον καὶ ἄτοπον, 282), which is how Socrates' interlocutors often characterize his speech techniques.[33] Demetrius also warns that Demades' style is not without its danger (τι ἐπισφαλές) and is mixed with comedy (μικτὸν κωμῳδίας) (286). The crude orator, much like the mocking philosopher

[30] See further discussion below and in chs. 2, 3, and 6.

[31] This is not to make any claims about fourth-century audiences' actual exposure to comic insults and obscenities in particular plays, especially since the shift toward more restrained comic representation could indicate that the abusive and often obscene political plays may not have continued to be performed. Rather, I would argue that the comic vocabulary and characterizations that turn up later in oratory and rhetorical theory had become part of the common idiom, as is the nature of discursive language.

[32] Cf. de Falco 1954: 12–13 and further in ch. 5.

[33] See ch. 4.