

SELF-PRAISE AND ENVY: FROM RHETORIC TO THE ATHENIAN COURTS*

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In memory of Douglas MacDowell

He that is proud eats up himself; pride / is his own glass,
his own trumpet, his own / chronicle; and whatever praises
itself but in the deed, devours the / deed in the praise.

Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida*

equality is what does not exist among equals
e e cummings

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Three years ago, Jonah Goldberg, the author of *Liberal Fascism*, published an article under the title “Ego-Bama Swallow Some of That Pride” (*New York Post*, July 13, 2008). In his article, Goldberg called Obama an “adulation junkie” and commented on his decision to give his nomination acceptance speech at Mile High Stadium in Denver with the following words: “Only a man with an Olympian’s sense of entitlement to mass worship could describe such a choreographed descent upon a place called ‘Mile High’ as an effort to bond with the common man. A demigod, it seems,

* I would like to thank warmly the audience of the Classical Association Conference (Glasgow, 2009) for their comments. One of the distinguished members of that audience was Douglas MacDowell. The dedication of this paper to his memory is just a small recognition of my several debts to him. I would also like to express my gratitude to the anonymous referees of the journal for their criticism. Many thanks to Dr. Ross Cowan for proofreading my paper.

is never so tall as when he stoops to bask in the adoration of the little people.” Although I suspect that Goldberg would have been less sarcastic with Isocrates,¹ a strong candidate for the label of “adulation junkie” in antiquity, his acrimonious language clearly illustrates the dangers involved in self-gratulatory rhetoric.

Ancient authorities seem to have an unfavorable view of self-praise (περιαντολογία).² Rhetorical treatises and the speeches of the orators include a great range of words to designate the psychological pressures placed upon listeners to self-eulogizing speakers. Self-praise is thus described as something ἐπαχθές (“burdensome”), or φορτικόν (“vulgar”), or λυπηρόν (“troublesome”). However these terms of condemnation concerning the *decorum* of public speaking reflect only the surface appearance of the problem³ because they can be seen as ways of rationalizing and therefore masking a “shamefaced” emotion (de La Rochefoucauld 2007.11) rarely admitted even to oneself, but still an emotion that figures in every rhetorical treatment of self-praise, namely envy.

Aristotle discusses envy in his *Rhetoric* and elsewhere, and in recent years, scholarly work has significantly enhanced our understanding of this emotion.⁴ My aim is to discuss the rhetoric of self-praise and, especially, the discursive or other techniques that speakers employ or are advised to employ in order to forestall the (existing or perceived) envy of their listeners. I also suggest that the examination of περιαντολογία can provide a deeper understanding of envy in the political environment of classical Athens.

II. SELF-PRAISE AND ENVY

In his work *How to Praise Oneself Inoffensively*, Plutarch (539D–E) points out that περιαντολογία entraps listeners in an embarrassing situation

1 On envy in the work of Isocrates, see Saïd 2003 and section III below.

2 Pernot 1998.102 n. 2 shows that the first attested occurrence of the term περιαντολογία appears in Philodemus; Pernot also provides a full list of those sources employing it.

3 These terms are conveniently discussed by Pernot 1998.107–08. Although Pernot’s treatment of the topic is exhaustive, in my view he does not pay due attention to the social implications of envy.

4 Envy figures prominently among the emotions that Aristotle considered to be of persuasive value (cp., esp., *Rh.* 1387b 22–30). Recent treatments of Aristotle’s discussion of envy include Elster 1999.182–92, Ben Ze’ev 2003, Konstan 2006.111–28. Cairns 2003 and Fisher 2003 offer sophisticated discussions of the politics of envy in classical Athens and thus extend the work of such scholars as Ober 1989.205–06, Cohen 1995.81–85, and, of course, Walcot 1978.

because to respond with silence to a self-praising speaker may be interpreted as a sign of envy, while enthusiastic approval of boasting indicates servile flattery and therefore compromises the listeners' honor (τιμή).⁵

τρίτον ἢ σιωπῶντες ἄχθεσθαι καὶ φθονεῖν δοκοῦμεν, ἢ τοῦτο δεδοικότες ἀναγκαζόμεθα συνεφάπτεσθαι παρὰ γνώμην τῶν ἐπαίνων καὶ συνεπιμαρτυρεῖν, πρᾶγμα κολακεία μᾶλλον ἀνελευθέρω προσήκον ἢ τιμῇ τὸ ἐπαινεῖν παρόντας ὑπομένοντες.

And in the third place if we listen in silence we appear disgruntled and envious, while if we shy at this we are forced to join in the eulogies and confirm them against our better judgement, thus submitting to a thing more in keeping with unmanly flattery than with the showing of esteem—the praise of a man to his face (Loeb trans.).

According to Aristotle, envy is a painful emotion arising from the prosperity of a person who is “similar” to us; envy therefore requires an unfavorable comparison with someone who seems to possess something that we lack.⁶ For this reason, public expression of feelings of envy is commensurate with recognition of one's own inferiority. As Plutarch says: “Among the disorders of human mind, envy is the only unmentionable” (ἀπόρητον, *Mor.* 537E).⁷

5 It is therefore always advisable to have others praise you; on this point, see *Ar. Rh.* 1418b 23–27 adducing the example of Isocrates' “friend” in the *Antidosis* (Isocr. 15.141–46). In this connection, it is worth noting that Plutarch explains Xenophon's pseudonymous publication of the *Anabasis* as being due to the self-referentiality of the work (*Mor.* 345E). On self-praise and the historians, see Marincola 1997.175–81.

6 Aristotle defines envy (1386b 18–20) as λύπη μὲν γὰρ ταραχώδης καὶ ὁ φθόνος ἐστὶν καὶ ἐπὶ εὐπραγίᾳ, ἀλλ' οὐ τοῦ ἀναξίου ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἴσου καὶ ὁμοίου, “both agitated pain and directed at success, but of an equal and a like rather than of someone who is unworthy” (trans. Kennedy).

7 The full passage from Plutarch runs as follows: “For it is a kind of extreme of baseness to be hateful to the best men. But men deny that they envy as well; and if you show that they do, they allege any number of excuses and say they are angry with the fellow or fear or hate him, cloaking and concealing their envy with whatever other name occurs to them for their passion, implying that among the disorders of the soul it is alone unmentionable” (trans. Loeb); also *de Invidia* 537E. For the view that envy is an emotion never admitted to oneself or to others and that enviers commonly transmute their feelings, see Foster 1972.165–66 and Elster 1999.164, 167–69, 183, 351–53;

In an article that appeared in 1989, Glenn Most concludes that in pre-Hellenistic literature, all the passages that include self-presentation in front of strangers relate a story of misfortune or mistreatment. This, according to Most, is a way of mitigating the consequences of imposition upon listeners, especially in a culture where individuals “were preoccupied with preserving their integrity” (127). As we shall see, modern anthropological material from various cultures shows that appeals to misfortune are commonly employed by people who fear, and thus wish to forestall, the envy of others. It is therefore not a matter of mere coincidence that most of the extant autobiographies of the classical period derive from the Attic orators, and especially from speeches of defense dealing with real or imaginary legal attacks.⁸

Let us examine briefly some relevant passages. In Gorgias’s *Defense of Palamedes* (28), which, so far as I can see, offers the earliest surviving piece of self-praise, Palamedes claims that it was the false accusation brought against him by Odysseus that forced him to display his benefactions to humanity, even at the cost of triggering his listeners’ envy:

πρὸς δ’ ὑμᾶς ὧ ἄνδρες κριταὶ περὶ ἐμοῦ βούλομαι εἰπεῖν
ἐπίφθονον μὲν ἀληθὲς δέ, μὴ κατηγορημένῳ μὲν οὐκ
ἀνεκτά, κατηγορουμένῳ δὲ προσήκοντα. νῦν γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν
εὐθύνας καὶ λόγον ὑπέχω τοῦ παροισχυμένου βίου. δέομαι
οὖν ὑμῶν, ἂν ὑμᾶς ὑπομνήσω τῶν τι ἐμοὶ πεπραγμένων
καλῶν, μηδένα φθονῆσαι τοῖς λεγομένοις, ἀλλ’ ἀναγκαῖον
ἡγήσασθαι κατηγορημένον δεινὰ καὶ ψευδῇ καὶ τι τῶν
ἀληθῶν ἀγαθῶν εἰπεῖν ἐν εἰδόσιν ὑμῖν.

As for you judges, I wish to say something invidious, but true about myself; this would be intolerable for someone not accused but is fitting for an accused man. I am now

cp. François de La Rochefoucauld 2007.11: “We often pride ourselves on our passions, even the most criminal ones; but envy is a timid, shamefaced passion, which we never dare to acknowledge.” Contrast, however, the careful comments of Cairns 2003.237–38, who rightly observes that there are cases in which “transmuted” envy is the righteous indignation of the masses appropriately manipulated by the elites. On envy and inferiority, see Ben Ze’ev 1992.

⁸ On this point, see Momigliano 1971.57 and Most 1989.124, who also explains in detail why the use of “I” in other literary genres, such as lyric poetry or historiography, cannot be interpreted as autobiographical.

before you undergoing a scrutiny and giving an account of my past life. So I ask this of you: if I remind you of some of the fine things I have done, do not resent what I say. Please understand that since I am falsely accused of terrible crimes, it is necessary for me to mention some good things [about me] to you who already know the truth (trans. Gagarin and Woodruff).

For lack of a real opponent, Isocrates invents one in order to make his self-eulogizing *Antidosis* palatable (Isocr. 15.8):

εἰ μὲν οὖν ἐπαινεῖν ἑμαυτὸν ἐπιχειροῖην, ἑώρων οὔτε περιλαβεῖν ἅπαντα περὶ ὧν διελθεῖν προηρούμην οἷός τε γενησόμενος, οὔτ' ἐπιχαρίτως οὐδ' ἀνεπιφθόνως εἰπεῖν περὶ αὐτῶν δυνησόμενος· εἰ δ' ὑποθείμην ἄγωνα μὲν καὶ κίνδυνόν τινα περὶ ἑμὲ γιγνόμενον . . . ἑμαυτὸν δ' ἐν ἀπολογίᾳ σχήματι τοὺς λόγους ποιοῦμενον, οὕτως ἂν ἐκγενέσθαι μοι μάλιστα διαλεχθῆναι περὶ ἀπάντων ὧν τυγχάνω βουλόμενος.

I saw that, if I were to attempt a eulogy of myself, I would not be able to include everything I chose to cover or speak in an acceptable manner without arousing envy. But I saw that I could treat all the topics I wanted if I invented a lawsuit that threatened me . . . and then composed my arguments after the fashion of a legal defense (trans. Mirhady and Too).

Finally, in his speech *On the Crown*,⁹ Demosthenes puts the blame for embarking on a detailed account of his own career and achievements on his opponent (ἀναγκασθήσομαι, ἀναγκάζη, 4) and frequently in the speech expresses his awareness, albeit with extreme circumspection, that his words may create feelings of envy (Dem. 18.4):¹⁰

9 Yunis 2001.109 claims that “Demosthenes’ mastery of this [sc. self-praise] rhetorical problem became a touchstone for later rhetorical criticism in which self-praise was understood as a problem of decorum.”

10 Other instances of envy in the speech occur in paragraphs 13, 279, 305, 315.

ἐὰν δ' ἐφ' ἃ καὶ πεποίηκα καὶ πεπολίτευμαι βαδίζω,
πολλάκις λέγειν ἀναγκασθήσομαι περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ.
πειράσομαι μὲν οὖν ὥς μετριώτατα τοῦτο ποιεῖν· ὅτι δ'
ἂν τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτ' ἀναγκάζῃ, τούτου τὴν αἰτίαν οὐτός
ἐστί δίκαιος ἔχειν ὁ τοιοῦτον ἀγων' ἐνστησάμενος.

While if I embark on an account of my political achievements, I shall be forced to make many references to myself. Therefore I shall try to do this as modestly as I can; but what I am forced to do by the case itself is fairly to be blamed upon the person who set this prosecution in train—my opponent (trans. Usher).

Notably in his speech of prosecution, Aeschines had attempted to prejudice the judges against Demosthenes by comparing the psychological effects of his opponent's insufferable boastfulness to the distress caused by the defeat of the city at Chaeronea (Aeschin. 3.241).¹¹

οὗτος δ' ἀναβὰς [sc. Δημοσθένης] ἐαυτὸν ἐγκωμιάσει,
βαρύτερον τῶν ἔργων ὧν πεπόνθαμεν τὸ ἀκρόαμα
γίγνεται. ὅπου γὰρ τοὺς μὲν ὄντως ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς οἷς
πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ σύνισμεν ἔργα, τοὺς καθ' ἐαυτῶν
ἐπαίνους ἐὰν λέγῳσιν οὐ φέρομεν· ὅταν δὲ ἄνθρωπος
αἰσχύνῃ τῆς πόλεως γεγωνὼς ἐαυτὸν ἐγκωμιάζῃ, τίς ἂν
τὰ τοιαῦτα καρτερήσειεν ἀκούων;

If Demosthenes has the nerve to take the stand and speak in praise of himself, listening to him is more infuriating than our actual misfortunes. For we refuse to accept it when men of real worth, whose many fine achievements we know, speak in their own praise; so when a person who has been a disgrace to the city speaks in praise of himself, who could endure listening to this kind of thing? (trans. Carey).

11 Note that in the first part of this *a fortiori* argument, Aeschines takes it for granted that self-praise is intolerable, even in cases where a speaker's devotion to the city's well-being is beyond doubt.

In later rhetorical theory, *περιανυτολογία* receives due attention. Plutarch's moralizing treatise on *How to Praise Oneself Inoffensively* includes the most exhaustive (and at some points exhausting) treatment of the topic, supported by numerous examples. Plutarch offers to prospective self-praising speakers no fewer than nine (mostly discursive) devices that enable speakers to pre-empt listeners' envy, and most of these devices recur in other treatments of the topic.¹² In what follows, I wish to examine these devices in comparison with modern anthropological material that I draw from G. M. Foster's work on envy (1972). This comparison shows not only that the discursive or other techniques suggested by rhetoricians are still recognizable methods of avoiding envy, but also that the rhetoric of *περιανυτολογία* can enhance our understanding of the role of envy in the frame of democratic Athens.

III. SELF-PRAISE AND ENVY AVOIDANCE

Foster gathers together material from various cultures to show that people who fear the envy of others employ four different cultural strategies to forestall it. These strategies are (a) concealment, (b) denial, (c) sop (that is, "symbolic sharing"), and (d) true sharing.¹³ Concealment means that someone who fears the envy of others will never be boastful, nor will she attempt to display enviable possessions. "Denial of reason to be envied takes the form of both verbal protestations and symbolic acts" (Foster 1972.176) and commonly consists of highlighting one's own sufferings or exaggerating a misfortune. Sop, that is a symbolic sharing or offer to share, is a device that aims to buy off the envy of others, as is the case when drinks or food are offered to celebrate a success. Finally, true sharing is "significant sharing going well beyond symbolic sop levels" (Foster 1972.179), associated particularly with institutions such as taxation.

Foster's system is exclusive in that the four forms of action that he isolates are the only ones available. Furthermore, as Foster says, these cultural strategies "fall along a continuum of preferred choices, in the order that I cite them" (175). This means that someone will employ denial

12 Aelius Aristides' *Concerning a Remark in Passing*, a work composed to justify an earlier self-gratulatory point made by its author, abounds with examples from earlier literature that also appear in Plutarch's treatise on self-praise. According to Rutherford 1995.201, these similarities are suggestive of a common source.

13 For a different typology of envy avoidance behavior, see Elster 1999.178–79.

only when concealment is impossible and so on. In practice, however, as his examples show, concealment and denial are not easily distinguishable.

A close examination of the sources concerning *περιαντολογία* indicates that the devices suggested to self-praising speakers in ancient authorities fall within one or more of Foster's cultural strategies. Before I proceed to classify them following Foster, it is important to note that Plutarch is not always a reliable source concerning the historical context in which the speeches under study were composed, while his moralizing discussion of envy sometimes blurs the social implications of this emotion. Be it enough here to mention that in the first half of his treatise *On Envy and Hate*, he postulates, following Aristotle, that envy targets the prosperous (τοῖς εὖ πράττειν δοκοῦσιν, 537A), while in the second half of this work, envy chases the virtuous (τοῖς μᾶλλον ἐπ' ἀρετῇ προιέναι δοκοῦσι, 537F).¹⁴ I therefore use Plutarch only insofar as his advice on envy avoidance practices corresponds to relevant material from other rhetorical treatises.

I now proceed to classify Plutarch's suggestions according to Foster's scheme, though I exclude discussion of "true sharing" because it is irrelevant to *περιαντολογία*.

(a) *Concealment*. All ancient authorities agree in principle that self-praise should be avoided, even as they accept that its opportune use is helpful.¹⁵ Since *περιαντολογία* is by definition a public display of one's own merits, concealment is *prima facie* loosely related to it. However, Plutarch allows for the possibility that the display of supreme fortune forestalls envy as effectively as a great misfortune (538A).¹⁶ This assumption depends on the "neighborhood theory" that underlies Aristotle's discussion of envy.¹⁷ According to this theory, envy targets those similar to us and, therefore, when the distance between the envier and the envied increases, envy is

14 Desert is a recurring theme in recent discussions of envy; most notably, Ben Ze'ev 1992.563 postulates that envy presupposes undeserved inferiority. On envy and desert in Greece, see Konstan 2006.120–21.

15 For an inclusive discussion of the moral restrictions surrounding *περιαντολογία* in ancient rhetorical treatises, see Pernot 1998.117–20.

16 This line of argument is taken by Isocrates when he suggests that envy is never at work in monarchies because of the great distance separating the ruler from his subjects (Isocr. 3.18); on this point, see Saïd 2003.223. Cairns 2003.239, though, shows convincingly that envy is also a top-down emotion (cp. Ar. *Rh.* 1387b 29, *Pol.* 1295b 21–23, and Hdt. 3.80, with Elster 1999.186–87).

17 On Aristotle and the "neighbourhood theory," see Elster 1999.170.

removed from the agent of this emotion. This, Plutarch says, explains why many people hated, but did not envy, Alexander (538B).¹⁸ Consequently, Plutarch suggests that self-praise is a useful tool in the hands of distinguished speakers who aim to humble headstrong listeners (544F; cp. also 540D).

(b) *Denial* takes the form of verbal protestations or symbolic acts. As Foster's examples show, this device commonly involves assertion or exaggeration of a misfortune¹⁹ and responding to compliments with expressions of modesty. As we saw, self-praising speakers as early as Gorgias mitigate self-gratulatory accounts through appeals to unwarranted accusations. Plutarch, who makes opportune occasion (καιρός) a condition for embarking on περιαντολογία, emphasizes the appropriate *état d'être* of self-praising speakers. He thus claims that περιαντολογία is advisable when one has been falsely accused (ἀπολογούμενος, 540C)²⁰ or is the victim of misfortune (δυστυχούσι, 541A) or has suffered an injustice (ἀδικουμένῳ, 541C).²¹ As is clear, the headings "false accusation" and "injustice" can be classified under "misfortune." The reason why misfortunes assuage envy is revealed in a context where Plutarch draws heavily on Aristotle. "Misfortunes," he says, "put an end to envy" and "those who envy take the greatest delight in pitying" (538B–C). Appeals to misfortune mitigate envy, or even transform it into pity, because the appropriate feeling towards undeserved suffering is pity, not envy.²² It is therefore the case that listeners prone to envy, comforted by the speakers' misfortunes,

18 As far as I can see, Foster does not discuss this type of aggressive exploitation of envy. On Isocrates' "aggressive rhetoric of envy" in the *Antidosis* (cp., esp., Isocr. 15.13), see Saïd 2003.225.

19 On the importance of misfortunes in autobiographical accounts, see Most 1989.

20 For similar views, see Quintilian 11.1.16, 11.1.22 (on Demosthenes' *On the Crown*), Ps.-Dionysius (*On Figured Speeches* 1.8) on Plato's *Apology*, Ps.-Aristides *On Political Language* (2.506.8–20), and Ps.-Hermogenes *On the Method of Power* 442.6ff.

21 Cp. Dionysius's criticism (Thuc. 45) of Pericles' speech in Thucydides (2.45): "It would be remarkable if Pericles, the greatest orator of his day, did not know what every man of average intelligence must have known, that while in all orations speakers who praise their own virtues without restraint invariably exasperate their audiences (οἱ μὴ τεταμειυμένως ἐπαινοῦντες τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἀρετὰς ἐπαχθεῖς τοῖς ἀκούουσι φαίνονται), this is especially so when they are on trial in the law-courts or in the assembly, where they face the prospect not of loss of prestige but of actual punishment. In such circumstances they not only annoy others but also bring misfortune upon themselves by evoking the hatred of the populace (ἐκκαλούμενοι τὸν παρὰ τῶν πολλῶν φθόνον)" (Loeb trans.). Plutarch cites the same example approvingly (540C), because, as he claims, Pericles defends himself against wrongful accusations.

22 On pity and envy in Aristotle, see Ben Ze'ev 2003 and Konstan 2006.128.

are much likelier to lend a favorable ear to self-glorification. Consequently, appeals to misfortune enable self-praisers to have their cake and eat it too, especially in the context of Athenian courts of law, where appeals to pity indicate the speakers' respectful recognition of the power handed over to the jurors by the *demos*.²³

In addition to considerations of opportunity, rhetorical theory proposes discursive devices corresponding to "denial." Plutarch suggests that references to unimportant shortcomings or mistakes can effectively mitigate the splendor of excessive glorification (543F). Furthermore, he advises speakers to shift the load of their glory to God or chance, given that good fortune dispels concerns about undeserved inferiority (542E).²⁴ Since Plutarch addresses his advice to virtuous statesmen, he not only takes it for granted that the listeners are usually morally inferior to the speakers, but also that the masses lose sight of their inferiority as soon as speakers pretend to be their equals.

(c) *Sop-sharing*. Sop expenditure has received much scholarly discussion recently, especially in studies focusing on the significance of envy in the social tension between the elite and the masses in classical Athens. Although I would agree with Douglas Cairns (2003.248) on the complications of accepting that envy avoidance was the *only* motivation for the elite's "sop expenditure,"²⁵ symbolic sharing is prominent in every discussion of *περιαντολογία*. Sop in the relevant literature most commonly takes the form of either mingling self-praise with praise of the listeners²⁶ or, most importantly, stressing one's own commitment to cooperative values and services to the city (543A–B), thereby avoiding the appearance of self-importance. As Plutarch says, when people praise you for your wealth or power, it is advisable that you employ *correctio* (ἐπ'ανόρθωσις) and protest that you should rather be praised for being "virtuous" (χρηστός) or "harmless" (ἄβλαβής), or "useful" (ὠφέλιμος).²⁷

23 On the implications of pity in Athenian courtrooms, see Johnstone 1999.122–25. On pity and Athenian politics, see Konstan 2005.

24 On luck and desert, see Ben Ze'ev 2003.110.

25 For a discussion of liturgies in the frame of the tension between the Athenian masses and members of the elite, see also Fisher 2003.

26 Plutarch praises Demosthenes for his masterful use of this technique in *de Corona*; for a good example from this speech, cp. Dem. 18.304–05.

27 Cp. also Anaximenes *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 36.5–6: δεῖ δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐκ τούτων ἐπαινεῖν, ὧν μάλιστα μέτεστι τοῖς ἀκούουσι, λέγω δὲ φιλόπολιν φιλέταιρον <εὐχάριστον> ἐλεήμονα τὰ τοιαῦτα, τὸν δ' ἐναντίον κακολογεῖν ἐκ τούτων, ἐφ' οἷς οἱ ἀκούοντες

In the next section, I adduce examples from the orators illustrating how self-praising speakers appeal to cooperative values²⁸ or emphasize their concern for the common good to pre-empt the consequences of their isolation from the rest of the citizens.

IV. SELF-PRAISE AND COOPERATION IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

The discussion so far has shown that rhetorical manipulation of *περιαντολογία* goes hand-in-hand with envy avoidance devices. However, it would be wrong to conclude that envy has only negative connotations in self-laudatory discourse. For to claim that people may envy you implies that you are someone to be envied. As Sophocles puts it in *Ajax*: “It is on the powerful that envy creeps” (157, trans. Jebb).²⁹ It is therefore a common practice of self-praising speakers to extol their merits by claiming that legal action against them was ignited by their opponents’ maliciousness. Demosthenes, for instance, describes Aeschines’ legal attempt to deprive him of the crown as a *δίκη φθόνου* (Dem. 18.121). At the same time, to stress that you are the victim of envy in a political environment like that of classical Athens is an aggressive assertion of superiority that may jeopardize your bonds with the deliberating body of citizens.³⁰

ὀργιούνται, ταῦτα δέ ἐστι μισόπολιν μισόφιλον ἀχάριστον ἀνελεήμονα τὰ τοιαῦτα; Alexander de *Figuris* 16.6 (discussing a specific type of *correctio*); Ps.-Aristides *On Political Language* 2.506.8–20. Examples from the orators include Dem. 18.299 and *Ep.* 2.24, stressing that his loyalty to the city is enough to remove envy from his readers. On cooperative values, and especially *εὐνοία*, see Whitehead 1993, Ober 2005.138–41; on the relationship of the “middling” citizen (*μέτριος*), a pivotal notion in Demosthenes’ *On the Crown*, with these values, see Morris 1996.

28 On the forensic uses of the cooperative values, see Lanni 2006.27–31.

29 It is this assumption that makes envy a prominent theme in encomiastic contexts, especially funeral speeches and epinician poetry. On envy and the delicate manipulation of it in epinician poetry, see Eitrem 1951–53, Kirkwood 1984, Vallozza 1989, Bulman 1992, Most 2003. Examples from the funeral speeches include Gorgias frag. 6, Pl. *Menex.* 242a, and Dem. 60.23. Cp. also Isocr. 9.39, 10.30.

30 Political speakers belonged to the Athenian elite and frequently professed to possess expert knowledge on public affairs; symbolic sharing can therefore be viewed as a means of manipulating audiences’ responses to perceived inequalities in a context where political equality was of the foremost importance. On the tensions between public speakers and audiences in classical Athens, see Ober 1989, chap. 3, esp. 112–18. On envy and political/social equality (with criticism of the “politics of envy” in modern Britain), see the excellent discussion by Cairns 2003. In her speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 13 October 1978, Margaret Thatcher argued that the “spirit of envy is aimed not only

In Gorgias's *Defense of Palamedes* that we looked at earlier, the mythical hero displays his benefactions to humanity in a context that alludes to the εὐθυνα, the public officials' account of their conduct. Gorgias thus invests Palamedes with the qualities of an Athenian litigant who presents his services to the state.³¹ The emphasis that Palamedes places on his benefactions not only draws a clear line of distinction between his own altruistic resourcefulness and Odysseus's self-serving type of wisdom, but also prepares the ground for his declaration of commitment to such cooperative values as those that we find in Gorgias's *Funeral Oration*, thereby underscoring the importance of his inventiveness for the common good.

Like Palamedes in Gorgias's model speech, real defendants in Athenian courtrooms frequently appeal to their past lives (πίστεις ἐκ τοῦ βίου) in order to convince the jurors of their innocence or warn them about the repercussions of a possible conviction. As is to be expected, the effectiveness of these accounts depends upon the appropriate adumbration of the speaker's ethos. Furthermore, these accounts are essentially arguments of probability because they seek to establish that it is not possible for a man who has lived an exemplary life to have committed the crimes that he is accused of.³² These accounts of the speakers' previous lives vary in length according to the nature of each individual case,³³ but in many speeches (especially those concerning a public scrutiny), we find extensive accounts of the defendants' achievements. In these self-eulogizing sections, defendants highlight their services to the city, thereby suggesting not only that a possible conviction would harm the city's interests and well-being, but also that the jurors, who are commonly taken to represent the body of citizens as a whole, must express their gratitude (χάρις) in

at those privileged by birth and inherited wealth . . . It is also directed against those who have got on by ability and effort" and accused her opponents of "pinning down the swift and the sure and the strong, as Gulliver was pinned down by the little people of Lilliput."

31 Gorgias's passage is the following (32): "I cause no pain to the old, am not unhelpful to the young, do not envy the fortunate, and have compassion for the unfortunate. I neither scorn poverty nor honor wealth above *arete*, but *arete* above wealth. I am not useless in councils or lazy in battles but carry out my assignment and obey those in charge. It is not my business to praise myself, but the present situation and the accusations made against me have compelled me to defend myself in every way" (trans. Gagarin and Woodruff).

32 See Lanni 2006.60–61, who rightly points out that the persuasiveness of these arguments depends on the assumption that character is "stable and unchanging" (60). See also Johnstone 1999.97–100.

33 As expected, these accounts appear more frequently in speeches of defense; on this point, see Lanni 2006.63 with further literature.

exchange for the costly public services offered to them by the wealthy members of the elite.³⁴

Paradoxically, the first example that I wish to discuss belongs to Alcibiades' famous speech in Thucydides (6.16.2–4). Alcibiades boasts about his costly liturgies and athletic achievements at Olympia and expresses explicitly his awareness that the brilliance of his public expenditure attracts the envy of Athenian citizens: καὶ ὅσα αὖ ἐν τῇ πόλει χορηγίαις ἢ ἄλλῳ τῷ λαμπρύνομαι, τοῖς μὲν ἀστοῖς φθονεῖται φύσει, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ξένους καὶ αὕτη ἰσχὺς φαίνεται, “And then again my sponsorship of productions and any other public duty on which I may ‘preen’ myself, though naturally exciting envy at home, does make its own contribution to the impression outsiders form of our strength” (trans. Hammond).

Alcibiades' attribution of feelings of envy to the masses in this context is in keeping with Thucydides' intention to adumbrate the general's extreme arrogance and eccentric lifestyle. Yet this passage offers useful comparative ground because it illustrates in the most effective way the type of self-praise that a speaker would have to avoid in an Athenian courtroom or in the *ecclesia*. It therefore comes as no surprise that nowhere in the extant forensic speeches do we find a speaker expressing himself in such high-flown and self-indulgent language. It is particularly worthy of note that a few lines later, Alcibiades seeks to establish not only that he is superior to the rest of the citizens but also that this inequality is legitimate.³⁵ As Douglas Cairns (2003.240) puts it: “If a claim to equality can be stigmatized as envy, then there is no genuine claim to be satisfied, and the inequality between patient and target which envy identifies may be legitimately maintained.”

With Alcibiades' example in mind, we may now proceed to examine some examples of *περιαντολογία* from the orators, where speakers address jurors who are very sensitive about equality and also ready to maintain it by casting their votes. In a speech by Lysias concerning a

34 The extent to which public expenditure was an appropriate way to buy off the masses' envy is a controversial topic that has received much scholarly discussion; see n. 25 above.

35 Alcibiades notably attributes the inequality between him and the agents of envy, namely his fellow citizens, to nature (φύσει). As Bourdieu claims (1984.24): “Aristocracies are essentialist. Regarding existence as an emanation of essence, [essentialists] set no intrinsic values on [their] deeds or misdeeds . . . They prize them only insofar as they manifest, in the nuances of their manner, that their one inspiration is the perpetuating and the celebrating of the essence by virtue of which they are accomplished.”

case of bribery (Lys. 21),³⁶ the speaker offers an extensive account of his past life. He advertises the liturgies that he undertook for the state and offers a long list of the victories that he won in athletic games and choral contests. The presentation of his liturgies reaches a climax when he says, albeit very circumspectly, that during an expedition, Alcibiades, who was very concerned about his own safety (and, indeed, a very generous liturgist himself), chose to travel on a trireme that he (i.e., the speaker) had lavishly equipped (21.7). Although it is the case that the speaker here seems to be unapologetic about presenting his achievements at length, it is important to bear in mind that he faces a charge of bribery, and, therefore, he has every reason to exaggerate his expensive liturgies, thus suggesting that he had no need to take bribes.³⁷ At the same time, his self-praise is so designed as to stress his commitment to such democratic values as decency and self-restraint (he is κόσμιος and σώφρων, 21.19),³⁸ and his concern for the common good that, as he says, he values ahead of his personal well-being and the safety of his family (21.23–24). Furthermore, when at some point he attempts to neutralize the opponents' attempt to make the jurors direct their feelings of envy against him, he warns them that a possible conviction would be equally harmful to them insofar as they will cease to have a share in his wealth. As he puts it in an elaborate reversal of the accusation that he is facing: "In my view, gentlemen of the jury—please do not be annoyed at this suggestion—it would be far more just for you to face an ἀπογραφή ("writ of confiscation") in front of the commission of investigators (ζητηταί) on a charge of possessing my property than for me now to be prosecuted for possessing property belonging to the Treasury" (21.16; trans. Todd).

In another speech by Lysias (16), the young speaker, a certain Mantitheus, defends himself in a δοκιμασία ("scrutiny") against the allegation that he served in the cavalry under the Thirty. The nature of this

36 This is the earliest extant example of a speaker presenting his liturgies; Lysias's client defends himself in an εὐθυνα (a public official's account of his conduct); for a convenient presentation of the speech, see Usher 1999.72–74.

37 Davies 1971.592–93 suggests that the speaker's father was involved in the oligarchy of the Four Hundred and, therefore, that his unusually expensive liturgies was a way of restoring his name.

38 According to the speaker's own words, to live with self-restraint and decency is the most painstaking liturgy; cp. the words of a client of Isaeus (frag. 131 Sauppe), according to whom the most important liturgy is to live decently and with self-restraint. On κόσμιος, see Cartledge 1998; on σωφροσύνη as a cooperative value, see Whitehead 1993; on the uses of σωφροσύνη by the orators, see Rademaker 2005.233–47 and Lanni 2006.26.

procedure, involving examination of a person's right to hold a public office or entitlement to a privilege, made it necessary for scrutinized speakers to provide jurors with rather elaborate accounts of their whole lives. Following a rhetorical *topos*,³⁹ Mantitheus expresses his gratitude to his accusers for giving him the opportunity to defend the whole of his life. In doing so, Mantitheus implies that his references to his own qualities and achievements are necessitated by the accuser's groundless accusation. Since Mantitheus is a young aristocrat and, indeed, one who, despite the amnesty of 403/2, is now accused of oligarchic predilections, he delivers a speech that seeks to establish that he is a man loyal to democracy and also a "middling" citizen (*μετρίως βεβιωκώς*, 16.3).⁴⁰ After some brief comments on his exemplary family life (16.10–11) that corroborate his self-presentation as a *μέτριος* citizen, Mantitheus refers to his bravery on military campaigns and his readiness to sacrifice his personal safety exhibited in his willingness to fight with the hoplites rather than the cavalry. In this context (16.14), Mantitheus also mentions in passing that before the battle at Haliartus, he gave thirty drachmas each to two of the soldiers. This gesture, he says, was meant to serve as an example for other wealthy citizens not as a display of his wealth. Having sketched his *ethos* in such democratic colors, towards the end of the speech, Mantitheus feels no hesitation in claiming that he is politically ambitious (*φιλοτίμως καὶ κοσμίως πολιτευομένους*, 16.18) and invites jurors to avoid interpreting his appearance as a sign of antidemocratic feelings.⁴¹ Mantitheus thus expresses his commitment to democratic *φιλοτιμία*, according to which the community bestowed honors on ambitious individuals in return for their pursuit of the common good, but at the same time, he emphasizes that his personal ambition is controlled by his sense of decency towards his fellow citizens.⁴²

39 Cp. Lys. 24.1, where the speaker is an invalid defending himself against the allegation that he is fraudulently receiving financial aid from the state; consequently, his expression of gratefulness to his accusers for giving him the opportunity to give an account of his past life sounds all the more absurd. It is also particularly noteworthy that the invalid attributes his opponent's decision to bring legal action against him to feelings of envy. On the nature of this speech, which is frequently interpreted as a parody or a *παίγνιον*, see Harding 1994.202–05 and Usher 1999.106; contrast, however, Carey 1990.

40 On the ideological assumptions surrounding the middling citizen, see Morris 1996.

41 The majority of scholars adopt Hamaker's ingenious emendation of *τολμᾶ* to *κομᾶ* ("wearing long hair") at 18. This habit was associated with the Spartans and could thus be interpreted as a sign of oligarchic sentiments.

42 On *φιλοτιμία*, see Whitehead 1983 and Wilson 2000.171–97. On *φιλοτιμία* in this passage, see Fisher 2003.192–93.

We may now move to a speech concerning a major political dispute. In his speech on the *False Embassy*, Demosthenes provides a denigrating description of Aeschines' conduct during which he calls his opponent a "splendid soldier" (113). In his speech of defense under the same title, Aeschines replies to this heavy sarcasm by offering a rather extensive list of his military services, including details about the expeditions in which he participated when he was still an ephebe and a list of the military campaigns on which he served. Aeschines also stresses that on one occasion the Athenians awarded him a crown for his bravery (167–71). In introducing the list of his military achievements, Aeschines expresses his awareness that his self-gratulatory account may kindle the listeners' envy (ἄνεπιφθονον) and therefore excuses himself for praising himself by appealing to the gravity of the accusations that he is facing (167). Furthermore, instead of praising himself directly, Aeschines mentions several occasions on which his fellow citizens sung his praises for his courage;⁴³ he attracts the jurors' attention to his military distinctions by brandishing in front of them the decree according to which the city offered him a crown in recognition of his bravery; he also invites witnesses to testify that after his first experience on the battlefield, he won the officers' praise. Thus Demosthenes' sarcastic point in the speech of prosecution offered Aeschines the appropriate pretext to include in his defense an account of his military achievements, on the basis of which he emphasizes his bravery and devotion to the safety of the city. This allows him to reach the conclusion that he is not an enemy of democracy, as Demosthenes spitefully alleges (171), but an enemy of the wicked.

The examination of the examples adduced so far shows that self-praising speakers emphasize the benefits that the city derived from their personal achievements, their willingness to undertake expensive liturgies, and their commitment to pivotal democratic values. Before I reach the end of this paper, I would like to discuss briefly two speeches that include extensive retrospective accounts of their authors' careers: Isocrates' *Antidosis* and Demosthenes' *On the Crown*.

Susanne Saïd has already devoted an article to envy and Isocrates; I therefore propose to restrict myself to the examination of just a few passages indicating the ways in which Isocrates reveals his awareness of the

43 The same method of self-praise is also followed by a speaker in Isaeus who mentions twice (2.18, 36) that his fellow demesmen commended him on the accomplishment of his duties to his family.

problems involved in self-gratulatory rhetoric and the methods that he employs in order to deal with these difficulties.⁴⁴

As we saw earlier, Isocrates informs his readers that he chose to give the account of his career the form of a forensic speech in order to make it more palatable and avoid the envy of his readers (Isocr. 15.8). By anticipating that his speech may cause feelings of envy, Isocrates not only points to the pressures put upon listeners by self-praise, but also capitalizes on their sensitivity in order to enhance his own encomiastic purposes. At 4, for instance, Isocrates says explicitly that his talent excites feelings of envy, while at 13, he provides a programmatic statement according to which his defense aims to restore his reputation, even as he knows that this may intensify the feelings of envy kindled by the display of his talent. Isocrates, however, does not employ this type of aggressive rhetoric throughout the speech. By contrast, a number of passages are so designed as to mitigate envy. He therefore claims that no sophist made a great fortune out of his teaching (155), and in the course of his speech, he stresses his willingness to undertake liturgies for the state (Isocr. 15.5, 145, 150, 158). In a significant passage that appears towards the end of the speech, Isocrates advises the jurors to abstain from envy and thus refrain from stripping distinguished rhetoricians of their prestige, because, as he claims, Athens owes her renown to them, not to ephemeral athletic achievements (15.302–03). Thus Isocrates stresses that the mass's envy is self-destructive, thereby implying that his own talent promotes the city's reputation and that it is in the interest of *hoi polloi* to realize that they have a share in it.

My last example derives from Demosthenes' *On the Crown*,⁴⁵ a speech that gave Demosthenes the opportunity to offer an account of his

44 See Saïd 2003; on Isocrates' treatment of the tension between public speakers and mass audiences in the *Antidosis*, see Ober 2001.264–68.

45 Demosthenes' handling of the possible consequences of self-praise in this speech is all the more impressive if we take into account the famous passage (Dem. 18.137) where he claims that, when the messenger brought the news that Elateia was taken by Philip, he was the only citizen to have the sangfroid and experience to address the Assembly (despite, of course, everyone's willingness to offer salvation to the city). As Slater 1998 points out, Demosthenes' description resembles that of a divine epiphany, but note how carefully he prepares the ground for this "epiphany" in the paragraphs that precede it (esp. 171–72) by stressing the loyalty of all Athenian citizens to the city: "Well, I was the man who came forth (ἐφάνην) on that day and addressed you; and I ask you to listen attentively to what I said . . . I, alone of the speakers and statesmen, did not desert my patriot's post (τὴν τῆς εὐνοίας τάξιν) in the hour of peril, but I was to be found there advocating and proposing the measures that your predicament required" (trans. Usher). For a detailed analysis of

political career and propound his patriotism and loyalty to the city. As we saw at the beginning of this paper, Demosthenes is well aware that his *apologia pro vita sua* may cause feelings of envy, and therefore he attempts to secure the goodwill of the jurors from the outset of his speech (4). He thus explains that the accusations that he is facing make περιαιτολογία inevitable and attempts to mitigate the effects of his self-praise by promising that he will speak as moderately as he can (μετριώτατα). Although self-praise in this speech deserves an individual study, I would like to focus my attention on a passage from the end of the speech where Demosthenes claims that the signs of a μέτριος (“middling”) citizen is his loyalty to the city and to maintaining the polis’ primacy (Dem. 18.320–21).⁴⁶ Laying claim to these qualities, he says, should not arouse the envy of his listeners (ἀνεπιφθονώτατον). Interestingly enough, this passage comes immediately after a dismissive reference to Aeschines’ horse breeding, which caps the contradistinctive characterization of his own patriotic feelings and Aeschines’ primacy in the world of Athenian traitors. The notion of “loyalty” (εὐνοία),⁴⁷ which appears no less than fourteen times in the speech, encapsulates Demosthenes’ attempt to consolidate the belief that his political career was one of a patriot who, despite the unfortunate defeat at Chaeronea, struggled by all possible means to sustain the city’s greatness.

V. CONCLUSION

Greek rhetorical treatises and the speeches of orators indicate that the major problem involved in self-praise concerns listeners’ envy. Envy that springs from self-glorification can be destructive because it isolates public speakers from the deliberating masses whom they seek to manipulate. In the egalitarian environment of classical Athens, speakers often, if not

this passage, see Yunis 1996.268–77, who shows that it presents interesting similarities with Pericles’ (self-referential) speech at Thucydides 2.60.5–6 (see n. 21 above).

46 The relevant passage (Dem. 18.321) runs as follows: “The responsible citizen (τὸν φύσει μέτριον πολίτην), men of Athens, should have two characteristics (for I may so describe myself as to give the least offence); when in power, the constant aim of his policy should be to preserve the dignity and primacy of his state (τὴν τοῦ γενναίου καὶ τοῦ πρωτείου τῇ πόλει προαίρεσιν διαφυλάττειν), and on every occasion and in every action, his own loyalty (τὴν εὐνοίαν). His nature controls this purpose, but his power and strength to implement it depend on other considerations” (trans. Usher). For a detailed commentary, see Wankel 1976 and Yunis 2001 ad loc.

47 On εὐνοία in this context, see Whitehead 1993.52–54, esp. 53.

always, attempt to pre-empt the repercussions of this individualization by emphasizing their adherence to cooperative values and their concern for the well-being of the city, on the basis of which they seek to reintegrate themselves into the community of equals. If my analysis is not mistaken, the rhetoric of περιαντολογία seems to corroborate recent scholarly work showing that social envy is an egalitarian emotion rather than an unspeakable psychic disease.

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