

**University of Crete**  
**Department of Philology –Division of Classical Studies**

Virtual workshop

*Narratives and characterization in the courts of classical Athens*

September 30, 2022

**ABSTRACTS**

**Myrto Aloumpi, *Hubris*, storytelling, and the untold story of Meidias' offence (Demosthenes 21)**

This paper offers an interpretation of Demosthenes' rhetorical strategy in *Against Meidias* from a storytelling point of view. Most of us, familiar with courtroom TV series or movies, would agree that a trial must give to the audience a credible story of the disputed events (Ferguson, 1996: 85). A similar line of thinking is expected to pervade Athenian trials too, even though in Athenian courts the borders of a legal story might seem to have been much broader. Contrary to our expectations, however, Demosthenes does not tell the dikasts a story of what happened during the incident that triggered the trial at hand. The specific incident that took place at the Dionysia of 348 is never described and this is what makes *Against Meidias* a very interesting case study from a storytelling point of view. As we will see, Demosthenes organises his narrative around the broader category to which he wants the dikasts to relate the alleged offence, that is, around the specific theme of hubris. The aim of this 'greater narrative' of hubris is to set hubris as the solid frame of the case within which the image of 'Meidias the hubristēs' emerges. In this framework, as we will see, the Dionysia incident is treated as yet another story of hubris and, in fact, an untold story

which the dikasts are called to reconstruct relying on their normative expectations about hubris. This paper argues that the main aim of this rhetorical strategy is to register Meidias in the mind of the dikasts as a habitual hubristēs and therefore as an individual that is expected to have acted hubristically yet another time, that is, at the Dionysia of 348.

### **Mike Edwards, Narrative and Characterisation in the Speeches of Isaios**

In this paper, I shall attempt to examine a range of narratives in the fourth-century orator Isaios, who specialised in inheritance cases. Isaios' basic method in these complex speeches, contrary to the standard theoretical approach to narrative found in authors such as Aristotle as a discrete section of the speech, was to divide up his narratives into shorter units, in order to ensure that the jurors followed his arguments clearly. Characterisation (ethopoiia) played a key part in Isaios' approach, with respect to both his client and his opponent, and often other associated figures: his client is naturally portrayed as a worthy and legitimate inheritor of the estate (as in Isaios 7, where the formalities of an adoption had not been completed, also 9), whereas the opponent was a scoundrel who was unfit to inherit (as in Isaios 5) or not even legally entitled to do so (as in Isaios 4, 10, 11), but often had made a claim to an estate because he was prompted into doing so by shady characters who were his associates (as in Isaios 6, 8). As a general indication, I shall address several of the topics of discussion in the call for papers, including the use of narrative to construct idealised figures (usually the deceased owner of the estate, as in Isaios 2), stereotyping of the opponents and projecting emotional traits on them (e.g. Isaios 3, 4 and 5), and construction of the self as worthy of inheriting the estate even in the face of a will to the contrary (Isaios 1).

**Athanassios Efstathiou**, "Demosthenes' characterization through Aeschines' narratives"

### **Ifigeneia Giannadaki, Metics in the Athenian courts**

The legal status of metics has attracted some attention in recent years (cf. Kamen 2013, Lape 2010), while metic ideology was the subject of a seminal study by Whitehead (1977). Yet Greek oratory and particularly the Demosthenic orations have received only limited consideration in modern scholarship with regard to rhetorical constructions of metic ethos and identity. This study (part of a larger project on metics in Athens), focusing on key forensic orations from the Demosthenic corpus explores the ambivalent and complex Athenian ideology on metics, by shedding light on the construction of ethos and conduct of metics on trial, in lively and colourful forensic narratives designed to persuade Athenian dikastai. Metic ethos and identity were variously constructed and could be positive, comparable to citizen's morality and ideology, both for metic men and women. Simultaneously, the ad hoc socio-economic position of metics in Athens and their diverse experiences in manufacturing, commerce, or the sex industry could result in negative representations of individuals or 'ethnic' groups. Accordingly, the notorious prostitute Neaira, a metic cohabiting with an Athenian citizen, is masterfully presented as an existential threat to citizen women, to the Athenian family, and the institutions of the city. Similarly, Lakritos' personal attributes, 'ethnicity' and undemocratic conduct shape the identity of a 'typical' Phasilites: 'ethnic identity' constructs the worst type of an 'outsider'.

Therefore, this analysis of ethos of metics on trial, as developed in core forensic narratives, challenges modern conceptualisations of non-permeable social, political, and cultural divides between citizens and metics in Athenian society. Ideological considerations emerging from rhetorical representations of metic ethos and conduct in these forensic orations are especially timely and relevant to contemporary arguments and debates on immigration, and comparable with the ambivalent citizen ideology towards non-citizens in modern democracies, partly arising from prejudice or fears of the alien, the 'outsider', the 'other'.

## **Kostas Kapparis, Narratives and Characterization of Gender and Sexuality in the Attic Orators**

Some of the most popular Attic forensic speeches contain memorable narratives of characters who are remarkable because of their gender and/or their improper conduct in matters of sexuality. These characters may or may not bear a close resemblance to the actual persons involved in the legal proceedings. The minimum standard to be met here would be that the characters which the orator created were credible enough to support his case, and sufficiently believable to persuade a majority of the jury. Whether they had or had not done what the litigant claims was far less important compared to what characters like the ones portrayed by the litigant would be expected to have done, and this is why building characters capable of convincing a judge was probably more important than actually telling the plain truth, and definitely more important when the orator had planned to misrepresent the facts in order to suit his argument. Neaira, the aging hetaira who had violated the citizenship and immigration laws of the city, Timarchos, the politician-whore, Plangon, the ruthless hetaira, the unnamed wife of Euphiletos, who had been cheating on him with the young Eratosthenes for a long time, or the angry and persistent Simon who sued the speaker in Lys. 3, for deliberate injuries, after a protracted quarrel over the young Plataian prostitute Theodotos, are all very memorable characters not necessarily because they had done the things which litigants allege that they had done, but because litigants had successfully built the characters with ἐνάργεια, pathos, dramatic intensity **and above all a very human face with flaws and strengths**, which gave them their persuasive qualities. More importantly, such characters have been built around common gender stereotypes, with which an audience can relate. These stereotypes function as the universal language which conveys readily recognizable features of someone's character. Overall, I am convinced that in most cases the real persons involved had done nothing, or had done very little of what is alleged, and the conviction of the prominent politician Timarchos, who beyond reasonable doubt had never been a male prostitute, stands as indisputable proof of the fact that successful, persuasive ἠθοποιία could weigh more in the judgment of a jury than the truth itself.

## **Eleni Mosiou, How to create an enemy: Characterisation strategies in Demosthenes 24**

The speech *Against Timocrates* -one of Demosthenes' early forensic speeches concerning political matters- was written for a certain Diodorus who appears to be the prosecutor in a trial against an inexpedient law. Given the nature of the case, the speech is largely based on legal argumentation. The main narrative section comprises only a tiny portion of the extensive text and recounts the story which allegedly lies behind the enactment of Timocrates' law: the speaker claims that the defendant proposed his law with a view to favouring three people, Androtion, Glaucetes, and Melanopus, who were at that time public debtors. However, the second part of the speech incorporates a number of mini narratives which illustrate selected incidents of Timocrates' and mainly Androtion's previous political activity, thus providing the speaker with the opportunity to shape the opponents' *ēthos*. In my presentation, I wish to underscore the importance of the narratives in this speech and explore the various strategies which the orator employs in order to portray the character of the defendant and his allies particularly in contrast with the polis' character. It may be noted that the orator's characterisation techniques are based on some main thematic principles: the use of the past, the discourse of deception and conspiracy, and the rhetoric of the law and the lawgiver. By examining the orator's strategies, I will attempt to demonstrate that the attack on the opponents' *ēthos* aims at creating an alliance between the speaker and the dicasts by presenting Timocrates and his associates as their common enemy and as a threat to the city and its institutions.

## **Peter O'Connell, Calculating Character**

My paper will consider the role that numbers and calculations play in the stories that Athenian litigants tell about themselves. As Robert Sing has recently shown, numbers can contribute to a speaker's *ēthos* by presenting him as committed to transparency, a fundamental democratic value. While public counting lies at the center of Athenian democratic accountability, speakers can also use numbers and accounts to offer their judges a tantalizing peek into domestic life. They are evidence of a sort, but they are also a narrative detail. The characters speakers create for themselves disclose the

details of contracts, loans, and receipts that would normally stay hidden within families. It is likely that not all judges could follow every calculation they heard in court, and, indeed, speakers may not have wanted them to check all their arithmetic. Part of the rhetorical power of numbers lies in their dual status as both written symbols in records or inscriptions and visible, tactile counters to be manipulated on abacuses. Numbers could appeal to an Athenian audience's imagination, reminding them of the look, feel, and sound of counters and encouraging them to experience a calculation along with a speaker. This special kind of *enargeia* helps to create a bond between judges and the honest, trustworthy character they seem to be encountering in the speech. I will focus primarily on Lysias' *On the Estate of Aristophanes* and Demosthenes' *First Speech Against Aphobus*.

#### **Eleni Volonaki, Characterization of slaves in forensic narratives**

Slaves play an important role to the rhetorical strategies and argumentation in forensic speeches; they are often used as key-figures in the presentation of a story telling in court, particularly in the narrative sections. This paper explores the portrayal of slaves used for the dramatic characterization of litigants or as a narrative technique. As will be shown, slaves can play a protagonist role through their words, deeds and total behaviour, aiming at the persuasion of the judges in favour of the speaker. Forensic narratives, and, particularly those involving private cases, depict the status and role of slaves in the space of the Athenian *oikos*, wherefrom examples will be mostly taken. The aim of the present paper is to illustrate the rhetorical persona of a slave as it is manipulated and articulated in forensic narrative sections.