

“While she was drunk, many others had sex with her.”

Reexamining Violence in Dem. 19.196-98 and [Dem.] 59.33-35

In the late 340s BCE, Demosthenes and Apollodoros delivered separate prosecutions before the Athenian courts with divergent political aims, each recounting an instance where an enslaved or recently manumitted woman suffered abuse at the hands of citizen men. In *On the False Embassy*, Demosthenes describes a symposium filled with heavy drinking where his opponent, Aeschines, forced an enslaved Olynthian woman to recline and sing. When she refused, Aeschines ordered her dress torn and had her whipped by a slave (Dem. 19.196-98). In *Against Neaira*, on the other hand, Apollodoros recounts how the case’s defendant, Neaira, secured her manumission but remained in the control of Phrynion, a former client, who treated her “with insolence” (ἀσελγῶς, [Dem.] 59.33, 35), and—according to Neaira—*hubris* ([Dem.] 59.37). At one party that Phrynion and Neaira attended, Apollodoros details that after Phrynion had fallen asleep, multiple men had sex with the intoxicated Neaira, including even the slaves ([Dem.] 59.33).

These narratives preserve acts of physical and sexual violence against marginalized women in a society where such abuse was routinely passed over without comment. Modern scholarship continues to uphold this silence by minimizing the violence and diminishing the relevance of these passages to questions of social history. For example, because Demosthenes repeatedly labels the victim a *gunē* and attributes to her values associated with citizen women (Glazebrook forthcoming), modern scholars continue to analyze her as a free woman without fully considering her enslaved status (e.g. Roisman 2005: 146), and she is omitted from analysis in Hunter’s seminal work on the corporal punishment of slaves (see only 1994: 240n35). With regards to Neaira, scholars focus on Apollodoros’s rhetorical techniques to

show that such sex scenes helped Apollodoros paint Neaira as insatiable and deprived (Carey 1992: 103; Glazebrook 2005: 169-71, *contra* Kapparis 1999: 45-47). Others are quick to point out that the word choice (e.g. συνεγγίγοντο, [Dem.] 59.33) is not explicitly violent (Omitowoju 2016). Harmful assumptions also infiltrate analysis, with scholars even imagining that Neaira was “in rather high spirits, and perhaps flirting with the guests” before she “gave in to [their] advances” (Kapparis 1999: 240). Acknowledging the rhetorical strategies of both orators, I aim to contribute to this scholarship by reexamining these two narratives alongside one another as evidence for physical and sexual violence in the 4th century BCE.

I argue that though the Olynthian captive and Neaira were very different types of marginalized women, there are significant similarities in the violence they experienced that invite productive insight into the lives of enslaved and manumitted women in general. By comparing their narratives in Demosthenes’s *On the False Embassy* and Apollodoros’s *Against Neaira*, I assert that the accounts of violence in these speeches reflect the wider patterns of treatment that enslaved women endured in Athens in the Classical period. I first examine the primary differences between the two victims by outlining their legal status, the descriptions of the victims in their respective passages, and their experiences with prostitution. After establishing how the victims are unlike, I turn to the significant similarities between the two violent encounters by interrogating where and when the violence took place, focusing on the sympotic setting, drinking, and the timing of the attacks. I next consider who perpetrated the violence and what types of abuse occurred, looking at the use of whips and sexual assault as methods of slave control. Finally, I focus on how both victims respond in the passages, observing in particular the actions they take to reduce their violent circumstances and escape. In doing so, I demonstrate that despite the brevity of our sources, we can see that enslaved and

manumitted women, like the Olynthian and Neaira, experienced significant violence in their daily interactions. Furthermore, I assert that studies which do not highlight this reality risk further misrepresenting and silencing their histories.

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