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The Thrill of Defeat

Classicism and the Ancient Reception of Cicero's and Demosthenes' *Philippics*

The final year of Cicero's life—and especially his conflict with Antony, the topic of the *Philippics*—has played a constitutive role in his reception. This was especially true in Antiquity, when Roman students honed their rhetorical skills by advising Cicero on the conflict or fictitiously prosecuting the man Antony sent to kill him. In fact, the *Philippics* were so dominant in Cicero's early reception that aspects of his career at odds with their portrait quickly fell by the wayside: his poetry, whose mockery by Antony is recalled at *Philippic* 2.20, was a notable casualty of this process.¹ Furthermore, the imperial view of Cicero as an icon of eloquence silenced by tyranny—and in this sense an allegory of sorts for the end of the Republic—relied almost entirely on his self-presentation in the *Philippics*, which were thought to be the cause of his proscription.² As the definitive end to Cicero's corpus, and the apparent reason for Cicero's own end, the *Philippics* offer a perspective on Cicero's life and especially on his death that readers have found hard to resist.

In fact, to tie Cicero's death to the *Philippics*, as both ancient and modern readers have done, is to make their persuasive power self-proving: Cicero must have accurately depicted Antony's tyrannical behavior in them or he would not have been killed. Juvenal expresses this idea well when he claims that "that hand and neck were cut off because of talent—the rostra never dripped with the blood of a petty pleader" (ingenio manus est et ceruix caesa, nec umquam | sanguine causidici maduerunt rostra pusilli, Juv. 10.120 – 121). If Cicero had been less eloquent, a mere causidicus, Antony would have had no reason to add him to the proscription list. His death, then, must have been a direct result of the nearly divine talent on display in his *Philippics*.

This interpretation of the end of Cicero's life has long been considered plausible, but an examination of the facts of 44 and 43 BCE exposes it for the ideological construction that it is. Even setting aside the valid questions that can be

¹ As discussed in Bishop 2018.

² For Cicero's allegorical role, see Gowing 2005; Keeline 2018 discusses the key role of his death in this tradition.

³ All translations are mine.

⁴ The text is that of Clausen 1959.

raised about the role of the *Philippics* in Cicero's death,⁵ it is manifestly odd that these speeches have been taken as evidence for Cicero's persuasive power, since any historical accounting of the period would underscore their distinct failure to persuade a number of figures: Octavian, Lepidus, frequently even the Senate itself. The primary group these speeches have persuaded, in fact, has been later readers, and by describing the *Philippics* as the final, fateful instantiation of Cicero's godlike eloquence, 6 they have situated a paradox at the center of his reception: immortal success directly linked to fatal failure.

In this chapter, I will argue that Cicero's *Philippics* have been so central to his reception not in spite of this paradox but because of it, in much the same way that Cicero's model for this collection of speeches, Demosthenes, was lionized for his eloquence despite (and likely also because of) his political failure, which also proved fatal. I do not think this is a coincidence. In fact, I believe that Cicero was fully aware of the role Demosthenes' failure had played in his reception, and that it led him to draw attention in his own collection of Demosthenic speeches to the possibilities for failure inherent in his dispute with Antony—a theme that later readers happily took up.

But before I consider the centrality of the theme of failure to the reception of both men's Philippics, it will be worth considering why this paradox—which makes transitory failure in some sense the price of permanent success—has proven so seductive to later readers. The answer, I will contend, is that this idea is a cornerstone of a specific strain of classicism, an ideology that exerted a powerful influence in Antiquity, and is still very much alive today.

Classicism, failure, and success

The reading and study of the 'classics' entails the acceptance of many preconceived notions, but one of the most notable is a sense of decline from a glorious past, whose distance can only be bridged by continued engagement with the literary artifacts of that past. As Mary Beard puts it,

one of the most important aspects of the symbolic register of the classics [is] that sense of imminent loss, the terrifying fragility of our connections with distant antiquity (always in danger of rupture), the fear of the barbarians at the gates [...] tracts on the decline of the

⁵ On which see Keeline in this volume.

⁶ For the *Philippics* as Cicero's 'Spätwerk' and the implications of it, see the introduction to this volume and Pieper in this volume. The term and its significance for Roman literature is discussed by Scheidegger Lämmle 2016.

classics are not commentaries upon it, they are debates within it: they are in part the expressions of the loss and longing and the nostalgia that have always tinged classical studies.⁷

Beard, though describing modern classical studies, could just as easily be describing classical Antiquity itself. Greeks and Romans alike subscribed to the idea of a golden age followed by decline, a concept that already suffuses the earliest Greek literature, which presents itself as a memorial to and connection with that lost era: we might note, for example, the narrator's asides on the weakness of modern men in the *Iliad*, or the myth of the Ages of Man in the *Works and Days*. Later Greeks (and Romans) located this golden age not in the mythic past but in an historical time and place: classical Athens, and eventually, for the Romans, the late Republican and Augustan periods. The desire to reenact this vanished classical age was strong, and in periods like the Second Sophistic profoundly shaped intellectual life.

For the effect of this sort of thinking on Cicero and Demosthenes' reception, we need only look to an elegiac passage in Plutarch:

Δημοσθένην γὰρ Κικέρωνα τὸν αὐτὸν ἔοικε πλάττων ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ δαίμων πολλὰς μὲν ἐμβα-λεῖν εἰς τὴν φύσιν αὐτῶν τῶν ὁμοιοτήτων, ὥσπερ τὸ φιλότιμον καὶ φιλελεύθερον ἐν τῷ πολιτείᾳ, πρὸς δὲ κινδύνους καὶ πολέμους ἄτολμον, πολλὰ δ' ἀναμεῖξαι καὶ τῶν τυχηρῶν. Δύο γὰρ ἐτέρους οὐκ ἂν εὐρεθῆναι δοκῶ [...] προσκρούσαντας δὲ βασιλεῦσι καὶ τυράννοις [...] ἀποδράντας δ' αὖθις καὶ ληφθέντας ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων, ἄμα δὲ παυσαμένῃ τῷ τῶν πολιτῶν ἐλευθερίᾳ τὸν βίον συγκαταστρέψαντας.9

As for Demosthenes and Cicero, divine will would seem to have shaped them in the same way from the beginning, inserting many similarities in their natures (such as ambition, love of freedom in political affairs, and cowardice for dangers and wars) and also combining many similarities of fortune. In fact, I do not think two other orators could be found [...] who collided with kings and tyrants [...] and who, after fleeing again and being captured by their enemies, brought their lives to an end together with the end of political freedom.

This passage suggests how central the theme of failure was to both orators' reception; for Plutarch, in fact, their failures are what link them. But even more importantly, it demonstrates the way in which these two men had become classics, because it is shot through with the sense of an irrecoverable past, when men who loved political freedom and free speech could thrive. For Plutarch, that time is gone: it ended for Greeks with Demosthenes' death and for Romans

⁷ Beard 2012.

⁸ Porter 2006, 54-57 discusses classicism in early Greek literature.

⁹ Dem. 3.3. The text of Plutarch is Perrin 1919.

¹⁰ On Plutarch and the classical past, see Gabba 1982, 62-64 and Porter 2006, 30-31.

with Cicero's. Cicero and Demosthenes' failure was thus in part a failure to preserve classical glory for later Greeks and Romans; to think of them is to be reminded of a space and time now unattainable.

If, as Plutarch suggests, Demosthenes and Cicero put later readers in mind of Greece and Rome's respective 'golden ages', then a large part of their appeal may have actually stemmed from their inability to preserve those golden ages, an idea with which some epigonal Greeks and Romans would have strongly identified. Crucially, both Cicero and Demosthenes admit to this possibility in some of their best known works. Such admissions are particularly noticeable in Demosthenes, whose political speeches (and On the Crown) alternate between chastising and comforting his fellow citizens for their failure to imitate their most glorious ancestors: the men who had won the Persian Wars and founded an Empire that was already the subject of a proto-classicizing veneration.¹¹ In the case of Cicero (who had at one point in his life been quite optimistic about Rome's ability to achieve lasting classical glory), it is primarily in his final collection of speeches, the *Philippics*, that an elegiac—if still defiant—tone is struck.¹² In these speeches Cicero, while urging his fellow citizens to resist Antony's tyrannical machinations, nonetheless foregrounds the possibility of failure and lays out in detail what it would look like. 13 It is a quintessentially Demosthenic move, and I contend that Cicero made it because he understood the success that Demosthenes had had with his failure.

Demosthenes: classicizing failure, classical success

The possibility of failing to maintain Athens' classical reputation first appears in Demosthenes' collection of speeches on Philip, where he presents the Macedonian king as a threat that should be dealt with using the same stratagems that had made Athens dominant a century earlier. In the Third Olynthiac, for example, Demosthenes advises the Athenians to resist Philip so as not to "retire from that glorious post your ancestors acquired through many noble trials and bequeathed

¹¹ For the relevant passages, see the section "Demosthenes: classicizing failure, classical success" below p. 40 – 42.

¹² Cicero's optimism that he, and Romans in general, could enact a sort of Golden Age worthy of later classical veneration is explored at length in Bishop 2019.

¹³ Relevant passages are cited below (p. 49-52) in the section "Cicero: classical success in failure".

to you" (μὴ παραχωρεῖν [...] τῆς τάξεως, ἣν ὑμῖν οἱ πρόγονοι τῆς ἀρετῆς μετὰ πολλῶν καὶ καλῶν κινδύνων κτησάμενοι κατέλιπον. 3.36).14 In the Second Philippic he claims that Philip himself is familiar with this aspect of the city's identity: he knows that Athens "would not betray the common rights of the Greeks at any price" (μηδενὸς ἂν κέρδους τὰ κοινὰ δίκαια τῶν Ἑλλήνων προέσθαι, 6.10), because "he not only looks to present circumstances, but also takes into account the past" (ού μόνον εἰς τὰ παρόνθ' ὁρῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ πρὸ τούτων λογιζόμενος, ibid.); namely, Athens' actions in the Persian Wars (6.11). And in the Third Philippic, in language almost identical to the Third Olynthiac from at least seven years earlier, Demosthenes avers that fortifying the Chersonese against Philip "falls to you because of the reputation this city has" (ταῦτ' ἐστὶν πόλεως άξίωμ' ἐχούσης ἡλίκον ὑμῖν ὑπάρχει, 9.73), which "your ancestors acquired and bequeathed to you through many great trials" (ὑμῖν οἱ πρόγονοι τοῦτο τὸ γέρας ἐκτήσαντο καὶ κατέλιπον μετὰ πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων κινδύνων, 9.74).¹⁵ This near repetition is a sign of just how persuasive Demosthenes considered the invocation of Athens' glorious past to be.16

Unfortunately, Demosthenes' success in persuading the Athenians to resist Philip did not translate into military success, and his close association with a policy of aggression towards Macedonia opened him up to liability for the disastrous outcome of the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE; it was his role in this defeat that led in part to Aeschines' prosecution of Demosthenes' ally Ctesiphon, the case for which On the Crown serves as the defense.

One of this speech's more fascinating aspects is that instead of abandoning the strategy of his Philippic speeches, Demosthenes doubles down on it, arguing that the glory of the early fifth century demanded modern emulation, and that failure was an acceptable price to pay for ideological purity. As he puts it,

Οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἡμάρτετ, ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀπάντων ἐλευθερίας καὶ σωτηρίας κίνδυνον ἀράμενοι, μὰ τοὺς Μαραθῶνι προκινδυνεύσαντας τῶν προγόνων, καὶ τοὺς ἐν Πλαταιαῖς παραταξαμένους, καὶ τοὺς ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ναυμαχήσαντας καὶ τοὺς ἐπ' Ἀρτεμισίω. ¹⁷

¹⁴ Text of Demosthenes' speeches is Butcher 1903.

¹⁵ Cf. Dem. 2.12, 24; 3.21–31, 36; 4.3; 6.8–11; 8.41–42, 60, 66–67; 9.24–25, 36–41, 73–74; 10.13 - 14, 46 - 47, 62; 11.16, 21 - 22.

¹⁶ As Grethlein 2014 notes, Athenian orators were selective in mining the past for exempla, only choosing past events their audience considered relevant as standards for present-day behavior. Demosthenes' frequent invocation of the period long considered the 'Golden Age' of Athens thus suggests that emulation of this period exerted a powerful pull in his day.

¹⁷ Dem. 18.208.

It cannot be that you were mistaken to take a risk for the liberty and safety of all [Greece]—I swear it by our ancestors in the front lines at Marathon, and by those who stood side by side at Plataea, and by those who fought by sea at Salamis and Artemisium.

The city's obligation to emulate its classical ancestors was so strong, Demosthenes insists, that modern Athenians would not have acted any differently even if they had foreseen the battle's outcome (18.199 – 208). 18 As he puts it in a memorable passage:

Εί γὰρ ἦν ἄπασι πρόδηλα τὰ μέλλοντα γενήσεσθαι καὶ προήδεσαν πάντες [...] οὐδ' οὕτως άποστατέον τῆ πόλει τούτων ἦν, εἴπερ ἢ δόξης ἢ προγόνων ἢ τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος εἶχε λόγον. Νῦν μέν γ' ἀποτυχεῖν δοκεῖ τῶν πραγμάτων, ὁ πᾶσι κοινόν ἐστιν ἀνθρώποις όταν τῶ θεῶ ταῦτα δοκῆ: τότε δ' ἀξιοῦσα προεστάναι τῶν ἄλλων, εἶτ' ἀποστᾶσα τούτου Φιλίππω, προδεδωκέναι πάντας αν ἔσχεν αἰτίαν. Εἰ γὰρ ταῦτα προεῖτ' ἀκονιτεί, περὶ ὧν οὐδένα κίνδυνον ὅντιν' οὐχ ὑπέμειναν οἱ πρόγονοι, τίς οὐχὶ κατέπτυσεν ἂν σοῦ;19

If the future had been clear to everyone and everyone had had advance knowledge of the outcome [...] even so the city could not have abandoned its approach, if it thought of its reputation or its ancestors or the ages to come. Now all that is said is that we have failed in our aims, and failure is a common human occurrence whenever God wills it. But if then our city, having claimed to be set above the others, had withdrawn, it would have been held guilty of betraying all the rest to Philip. If we had abandoned without a fight those things for which our ancestors endured every danger, who is there who would not have spat in your face?

Demosthenes' seemingly counterintuitive embrace of Athens' failure at Chaeronea undoubtedly represents a sort of protoclassicism. Modern Athenians had been expected to maintain the classical reputation of their city-it was not their fault that divine will had not been on their side. Any shame they felt about their failure should be offset by the pride inherent in the attempt: classical emulation was worth celebrating in and of itself, regardless of the outcome.

The resounding victory Demosthenes achieved with On the Crown suggests that this strategy was as successful after Chaeronea as it had been before. Furthermore, this aspect of the speech clearly contributed to Demosthenes' canonical success, in large part because many readers of later generations saw their own attitudes towards the classical past reflected in his reverence for the glorious fifth century.²⁰ In other words, Demosthenes become so beloved in part because as a classicizer, he was a failure, and because in On the Crown he both acknowledged that failure and valorized the compulsion to try.

¹⁸ Cf. also Dem. 18.66 – 72, 95 – 101, 238, and 293.

¹⁹ Dem. 18.199 - 200.

²⁰ Thus too Bowie 1970, 28 and Porter 2006 passim.

In fact, the failure it evokes played a large role in establishing *On the Crown* as Demosthenes' masterpiece. The resonance of this aspect of the speech with certain classically-minded readers is expressed nicely by Jebb:

Two thousand years have challenged a tradition which lives, and will always live, wherever there is left a sense for the grandest music which an exquisite language could yield to a sublime enthusiasm—that, when Demosthenes ceased, those who had come from all parts of Greece to hear, that day, the epitaph of the freedom which they had lost, and a defence of the honour which they could still leave to their children, had listened to the masterpiece of the old world's oratory, perhaps to the supreme achievement of human eloquence.²¹

Jebb's language here is suffused with the vocabulary of classicism, and it is the paradox of classicism that explains how works that position themselves as failures of classicism can themselves become classics: because they model the same attitudes towards an irrecoverable classical past that many of their readers possess.²²

Ancient readers, at least, agreed with Jebb about *On the Crown*; of Demosthenes' speeches, it was by far the most praised, most cited, and most copied (judging by papyrus evidence).²³ Likewise, among Greek declamations on historical subjects, it was absolutely dominant: Demosthenes plays a role in 125 of the 350 historical themes collected by Kohl, and more than three quarters of these are concerned with the battle of Chaeronea and its aftermath, the topic vividly recalled in *On the Crown*.

Since declamation was a stage of rhetorical education through which all elite young men passed and one that instilled traditional social and political values in them, declamatory topics can tell us a great deal about what exercised the culture that set them, and what particularly exercised Greek declaimers about Demosthenes is the failure evoked in *On the Crown*. In several declamations (e.g., 291b, 291d, 292 Kohl), Demosthenes is prosecuted because he advised the battle at Chaeronea; in one theme, Aeschines is the prosecutor (294), while in another, Demosthenes actually turns himself in (293). These themes clearly recapitulate the case that inspired *On the Crown*, and would have allowed for similar arguments. The centrality of failure is also on display in another set of

²¹ Jebb 1876, 416.

²² On this, see Porter 2006, 57-60.

²³ For the speech's ancient popularity, see Weische 1972, 125–127. Jebb's reference to sublimity also has ancient analogues: Demosthenes' failure played a large role in Longinus' attribution of sublimity to him, as De Jonge/Nijk 2019, 787–788 show.

²⁴ On this aspect of declamation, see Kaster 2001 and Corbeill 2007.

themes, in which Philip demands Demosthenes as a spoil of victory (297–300). Sometimes Philip offers a choice: the Athenians can ransom the men captured at Chaeronea in exchange for Demosthenes (296), or they can surrender either Demosthenes or their triremes (301–303). In several themes, the Athenians actually hand Demosthenes over: he is ripped away from the Altar of Eleos (305) and later, after his release by Philip, stripped of his citizenship (307–308). In a particularly vivid theme, found in Sopater (8.129 = 306 Kohl), "Philip sends a letter demanding Demosthenes. Hyperides advises that he not be handed over; but Aeschines persuades [the Athenians] to hand him over. Philip carries him off, cutting out his tongue, and Aeschines is prosecuted". 25 Less violent, but equally potent, is a theme from Apsines: "Philip gives the Athenians a choice: they must decide whether they prefer weapons or words. Demosthenes advises words, and in so saying he is defeated and prosecuted".²⁶

Themes such as these, which portray Demosthenes' absolute defeat at the hands of Philip, even to the point of mutilation, suggest that he and Philip became popular declamatory fodder because they could symbolize the interplay between oratorical free speech on the one hand and tyranny on the other. In a certain sense, then, they offered a specific take on one of the most popular declamatory topics: the tyrant and the (would be) tyrannicide.²⁷ It is notable, though, that declamations concerned with the generalized tyrant always considered him in his absence, as a figure who had been overthrown or whose rise could be prevented by the passage of the right laws; the city-state of these declamations was one where free speech and fair courts either still reigned or had been restored.²⁸ Demosthenes played a different symbolic role, representing not democratic triumph, but defeat. Yet his very longevity as a rhetorical model would also have reassured later Greeks that there was a way to obviate the failure to preserve a classical age: namely, through the continued reading and emulation of its classical models.

Demosthenes' embodiment of this aspect of classicism was already in play a generation after his death. In 281/280 BCE, the Athenians erected a statue to him

²⁵ Sopater 8.129 = 306 Kohl: "Επεμπε Φίλιππος έξαιτῶν τὸν Δημοσθένην· συνεβούλευσεν Ύπερίδης μὴ ἐκδοῦναι· ἔπεισεν Αἰσχίνης ἐκδοῦναι· λαβὼν Φίλιππος ἀπέτεμε τῆς γλώττης αὐτόν· καὶ κρίνεται Αἰσχίνης δημοσία. Text of all Greek historical declamations is Kohl 1915.

²⁶ Apsines 340 = 310 Kohl: Ὁ Φίλιππος ἔδωκεν αἵρεσιν τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, πότερον βούλονται ὄπλοις ἤ λόγοις δικάζεσθαι· ὁ Δημοσθένης συνεβούλευσε λόγοις· καὶ εἰπὼν αὐτὸς ἡττήθη καὶ κρίνεται.

²⁷ For the popularity of the tyrant in declamation, see Russell 1983 passim and Tommasi 2015. 28 Tommasi 2015, 250 notes that the declamatory tyrant is more often discussed in his absence than as a present figure.

whose inscription testified to his crystallization as a democratic martyr and figure of classical nostalgia: "if only you had had strength equal to your purpose. Demosthenes, Macedonian Ares would never have ruled the Greeks" (εἴπερ ἴσην ρώμην γνώμη, Δημόσθενες, εἶχες, | οὔποτ' ᾶν Ἑλλήνων ἦρξεν Ἄρης Μακεδών, Plut. Dem. 30.5).²⁹ He also quickly became a popular rhetorical model; he appears frequently in Demetrius' On Style (likely datable to the mid second century BCE), 30 and had also begun to feature in declamation: P.Berl. 9781 (third century BCE) preserves a controuersia cast as a response by Leptines to Demosthenes' canonical speech against him; it is steeped in Demosthenic language (largely drawn from On the Crown) and suggests his close study in rhetorical schools.³¹ Another papyrus of roughly the same date, P.Hibeh 15, a suasoria urging action against Macedonia after the death of Alexander, suggests keen interest in the final period of Athenian democracy from Demosthenes' perspective.³² Thus while most extant Greek declamation postdates Cicero, a declamatory tradition on Demosthenes clearly predated him, and there was much continuity in this tradition: it is worth noting, for example, that Aelius Aristides also composed paired speeches on the Leptines case (Or. 53 and 54) four hundred years after the author of P.Berl. 9781.

The Demosthenes Cicero encountered in his early rhetorical studies, then, was a figure freighted with classical significance in two ways. He was, of course, a classic in the traditional sense, having been enshrined in the canon of Attic orators. But the specific strain of classicism he embodied was as a classicizing failure, with his own nostalgia for and inability to reenact Athens' classical past emphatically part of his reception.³³ Whenever Cicero sharpened his oratorical skills by declaiming in Greek—an exercise he practiced throughout his life (*Brut.* 310)—he would have composed speeches on themes not unlike those declaimed by imperial Greek sophists: on the dread specter of tyranny and the civic virtue of the tyrannicide (as at *Inu. rhet.* 2.144), on Demosthenes as Athens' paradigmatic would-be defender of freedom, and on his failure to maintain that freedom that was the focus of *On the Crown*, a topic that became particularly pungent for Cicero during and after the civil war between Caesar and Pompey.³⁴

²⁹ On Demosthenes' meaning in the century after his death, see Shear 2017.

³⁰ For the date, see Innes 1995, 310 – 319.

³¹ Kremmydas 2007 discusses this speech.

³² On P.Hibeh as a rhetorical exercise, see Edwards 1929.

³³ For Cicero's early reception of Demosthenes, see Bishop 2019, 176-194.

³⁴ Declamations on tyranny and tyrannicides were popular at Rome; see Tabacco 1985 and Corbeill 2001, 73–77. For the theme in *De inventione*, see Bonner 1949, 27–28. Seneca also includes several declamations on tyrants (*Controu.* 1.6, 1.7, 2.5, 3.6, 4.7, 5.8, 6.6, 9.4), which are discussed by

Cicero: classical success in failure

In the period of civil strife that roiled Rome in the 40s BCE, Cicero began to see his Greek rhetorical training—and Demosthenes, one of its principal figures—as directly applicable to his present situation. An unusual letter to Atticus written in March 49 draws directly on the Greek rhetorical tradition, and the figure of the tyrant within it, for inspiration in the growing crisis.³⁵ Cicero begins the letter by informing Atticus that "I have taken up certain propositions (theses) [...] so that I can relieve my mind from its complaints and exercise it in the very thing about which it is agitated" (sumpsi mihi quasdam tamquam θέσεις [...] ut et abducam animum a querelis et in eo ipso de quo agitur exercear, Att. 9.4.1).36 The propositions that Cicero has taken up are declamatory themes, and the goal, about which he is quite explicit, is to determine what actions he should take in the coming war. Intriguingly, these propositions are posed in Greek, and concern the figure of the tyrant. "Should one remain in one's homeland under a tyrant?" is the first question; the next two are, "should one work to put down the tyranny in every possible way, even if the city is likely to be endangered by this? Or should one instead beware the one putting [the tyranny] down in case he rise too high himself?" (Εἰ μενετέον ἐν τῆ πατρίδι τυραννουμένης αὐτῆς. Εἰ παντὶ τρόπω τυραννίδος κατάλυσιν πραγματευτέον, κἂν μέλλη διὰ τοῦτο περὶ τῶν όλων ἡ πόλις κινδυνεύσειν. Εἰ εὐλαβητέον τὸν καταλύοντα μἡ αὐτὸς αἴρηται, Att. 9.4.2). It is clear that the tyrant Cicero has in mind is Caesar, and that his years spent declaiming on the nefarious deeds of the Greek tyrant are now meant to shed practical light on his present conundrum.³⁷

But it was not just Greek declamations on the generalized tyrant that Cicero saw as an analogue to his situation; Demosthenes' denunciation of a very specific tyrant—and his failure to put down that tyrant—was also on his mind. In his two oratorical treatises of 46, Brutus and Orator, Demosthenes is explicitly presented as a parallel for Cicero, still smarting from his failures in the civil war: a great orator who had also failed politically, but whose position in the Greek oratorical canon had brought him enduring success.³⁸ This Demosthenes,

Yoshida 2017. Several of the minor declamations ascribed to Quintilian also focus on tyrants (253, 261, 267, 269, 274, 282, 288, 293, 322, 329, 345, 351, 352, 374, 382).

³⁵ For this letter as a piece of declamation, see Tabacco 1985, 81 n. 215 and Gunderson 2003, 104-110; Gildenhard 2006 discusses Cicero's interest in the Greek tyrant in this period.

³⁶ Text of Cicero's letters is Shackleton Bailey 1968.

³⁷ Cicero had already referred to Caesar as a tyrannus in February of this year at Att. 7.20.2.

³⁸ For Demosthenes' appearance in these treatises, see Bishop 2016.

very much an image of the paradox of classicism mentioned above (p. 38-40), was now the sort of model Cicero wished to imitate.

After Caesar's death, Cicero's thoughts turned even more to Greek analogues. Rome now fully resembled the imaginary city of Greek declamations, populated with tyrants and tyrannicides, or indeed the real classical Greek city on which it was based: Athens, where Demosthenes had inveighed against Philip.³⁹ Indeed, after Rome's tyrant met the end prescribed for him in declamation, his tyrannicide, Brutus, sent Cicero a copy of his speech delivered in the wake of the assassination, asking for comments. Cicero found the speech too passionless, he tells Atticus (*Att.* 15.1A), adding that Brutus had neglected the proper model for persuasive denunciations of tyranny: Demosthenes, whose "thunderbolts" (*fulmina*) would have more effectively celebrated a tyrant's demise.

Once matters came to a head with Antony in autumn 44, Cicero must have realized that he could now fully embody the figures of resistance to tyranny familiar to him from his rhetorical training—both the anonymous tyrannicide and his most famous real-life counterpart. His speeches against Antony, the *Philippics*, are steeped in the sense that he has become the Roman counterpart to both: while Demosthenes' influence on the *Philippics* is more noticeable, the cruel tyrant of declamation also makes several appearances.⁴⁰ Cicero calls Caesar a tyrannus twice (Phil. 2.90, 13.17) and, when speaking of Deiotarus' actions after Caesar's death, poses what is essentially a declamatory controuersia on the legal ramifications of tyrannicide: "as a wise man, [Deiotarus] knew that this has always been the law—that whatever property tyrants have seized, those from whom they were taken can recover them when the tyrant has been killed" (sciebat homo sapiens ius semper hoc fuisse ut, quae tyranni eripuissent, ea tyrannis interfectis ei quibus erepta essent recuperarent, 2.96).⁴¹ Furthermore, Caesar's death, Cicero adds, gave Romans a chance to see in real life the glory that accrues to the tyrannicide—a prospect that should worry Antony (2.117). In *Philippic* 13 he elaborates on this idea, calling Antony himself a tyrannus, and contending that he is now worse than Caesar in this regard, worse even than any historical tyrant: "in what barbarian city was there ever so foul, so cruel a tyrant as Antony acts in this city, surrounded by armed barbarians?"

³⁹ For Cicero's viewing of Rome in Greek terms in this period, see Wooten 1983.

⁴⁰ For Demosthenes in the *Philippics*, see Taddeo 1971; Weische 1972; Stroh 1982, 1983, and 2000; Wooten 1983; and Manuwald 2007.

⁴¹ Text for the *Philippics* is Clark 1918.

(qua enim in barbaria quisquam tam taeter, tam crudelis tyrannus quam in hac urbe armis barbarorum stipatus Antonius?, Phil. 13,18).42

If Antony is equivalent to the cruel tyrant of declamation, then he will be subjected to the justice of tyrannicide, like Caesar was. But if he is Philip, the cruel tyrant of Cicero's historical model, no such just fate awaits him; despite its memorable 'thunderbolts', after all, Demosthenes' opposition of Philip ultimately failed. Yet it is clear that Cicero considered Demosthenes a useful model in large part because he had achieved canonical success in the face of failure. I do not, of course, think that Cicero intended his *Philippics* to fail; presumably he hoped that their combination of Demosthenes' fiery (but failed) denunciations of tyranny with the imaginary (but successful) expulsion of the tyrant of Greek declamation would prove persuasive. But when the *Philippics* were subsequently published as a collection, it is my contention that one criterion for inclusion in that collection was whether the speech in question had raised the possibility of failure. Perhaps this was because Cicero's cause had already failed, or perhaps it was because embedding the potential for failure would ensure the collection survived if circumstances forced him to imitate Demosthenes' results as well as his aims.

Opinions are divided on whether Cicero had a hand in the *Philippics*' publication, but I agree with scholars who contend he did.43 Chief among these is Stroh, who has argued that Cicero published twelve of the extant fourteen speeches (Phil. 3-14) on the model of the twelve items that circulated in Demosthenes' 'Philippic' collection. 44 If Stroh is correct, then *Philippics* 1 and 2 would have been added by a later editor: while Cicero did intend to circulate *Philippic* 2 as a pamphlet, in two letters from October/November 44, he suggests that its publication must wait until things are more settled (Att. 15.13.1, 16.11.1), and it is of course of a different nature than the other speeches, since it was never delivered.

There are numerous pieces of evidence that point towards Cicero's involvement with the collection. One is a letter exchange with Brutus from April 43, where the speeches against Antony are referred to as Philippici by Brutus (Ad

⁴² Cf. Phil. 2.112. Dunkle 1971, 13-14 discusses declamatory influence on this passage. Tommasi 2015, 252 notes the close association of armed bodyguards with the rhetorical tyrant.

⁴³ It should be noted that in his contribution to this volume Keeline takes a more skeptical view on Cicero's role in publishing the *Philippics*. We are in agreement, however, on the fact that Cicero's contemporaries, including Antony, would not have been familiar with the collection as it stands today. I tend to suspect that although planned at the end of Cicero's life, the collection was first circulated posthumously by a close associate like Tiro or Atticus.

⁴⁴ Stroh 1982, 1983, and 2000.

Brut. 2.3.4) and *Philippicae* (*orationes*) by Cicero (*Ad Brut.* 2.4.2): both men's use of the plural suggests that Cicero was already thinking of a unified collection along the lines of Demosthenes' Philippic collection. In fact, Cicero had already produced such a collection twenty years earlier, when he published twelve speeches given during his consular year in imitation of the twelve items in Demosthenes' Philippic collection (*Att.* 2.1).⁴⁵ It is also significant that we know of several speeches against Antony that were delivered but never published, implying that extant speeches were carefully chosen for unity and coherence.⁴⁶ Furthermore, suppression of some speeches and publication of others suggests a project primarily directed at future readers, in a bid to make Cicero's account of the conflict canonical.⁴⁷

This fact can help us interpret Cicero's evocations of failure in these speeches, a theme that responds not so much to Demosthenes' *Philippics* as to *On the Crown*, his most canonical speech.⁴⁸ Demosthenes' *Philippics* largely remind the Athenians of their glorious past so that they will emulate it; there is little room for the possibility of failure. But Cicero's *Philippics* frequently envision the consequences should he and the Senate fail to stop Antony—much as Demosthenes reckons in *On the Crown* with his and his city's failure to halt Philip.

Furthermore, it is notable that neither *Philippic* 1 nor *Philippic* 2 raise the possibility of failure, but that it is very much foregrounded in *Philippic* 3, which Stroh considers the first of Cicero's properly 'Philippic' speeches. The peroration of this speech includes an impassioned plea to act decisively against Antony no matter the cost:

Hanc igitur occasionem oblatam tenete [...] quod si iam—quod di omen auertant!—fatum extremum rei publicae uenit, quod gladiatores nobiles faciunt ut honeste decumbant, faciamus nos [...] ut cum dignitate potius cadamus quam cum ignominia seruiamus. Nihil est detestabilius dedecore, nihil foedius seruitute. Ad decus et ad libertatem nati sumus: aut haec teneamus aut cum dignitate moriamur.⁴⁹

Seize, therefore, this proffered opportunity [...] and if now, god forbid, the last day of the Republic has arrived, let us at least act like noble gladiators, who fall honorably. [...] Let us meet our end with dignity rather than suffer slavery in disgrace. Nothing is more detest-

⁴⁵ For the publication of the consular speeches, see Manuwald 2007, 75–77, and Kelly 2008, 24–25. Cf. also *Eph. Tull. ad loc*.

⁴⁶ Manuwald 2007, 69-75 discusses the unpublished Philippics; see too Crawford 1984.

⁴⁷ Selective publication and suppression was standard practice for Cicero with his speeches: see Steel 2005, 21-28.

⁴⁸ For the importance of *On the Crown* to the *Philippics*, see Taddeo 1971, 32–66; Wooten 1977, 41 and 1983, 53–57; Stroh 1982, 4–5 and 1983, 35–36; Dugan 2005, 338–339; Manuwald 2007, 135. **49** *Phil.* 3.34–36.

able than dishonor, nothing fouler than slavery. We were born to honor and to liberty: let us either hold onto them or die with dignity.50

Cicero's language here is not entirely without parallel in Demosthenes' Philippics. Demosthenes claims that resisting Philip is preferable to being his slave, for example (Dem. 4.10, 6.25, 8.51, 8.59-60, 9.70, 10.62), and twice mentions death as an alternative: in On the Chersonesus he says he would rather die than advocate slavery for the Athenians (8.51), while in *Philippic 3* he proclaims that it is "better to die ten thousand times than do anything out of flattery for Philip" (τεθνάναι δὲ μυριάκις κρεῖττον ἢ κολακεία τι ποιῆσαι Φιλίππου, 9.65).51 But these are both passing comments, and Demosthenes does not reckon specifically with the potential failure of his recommendations. Nor, for that matter, does Cicero in Philippic 2, whose peroration mentions death as the possible end of his feud with Antony, but with a very different valence:

Mihi uero, patres conscripti, iam etiam optanda mors est, perfuncto rebus eis quas adeptus sum quasque gessi. Duo modo haec opto, unum ut moriens populum Romanum liberum relinquam [...] alterum ut ita cuique eueniat ut de re publica quisque mereatur.⁵²

Now, in fact, death ought even to be desired by me after all the honors I have obtained and all the deeds I have done. I only hope for these two things: one, that in dying I might leave the Roman people free [...] and two, that each man will get exactly what he deserves based on his actions towards the Republic.

Here, Cicero's potential death is portrayed not as a failure, but an individual sacrifice necessary for freeing the Republic. In the peroration to *Philippic* 3, however, it is the entire Roman state that may have to make a sacrifice, and it will not result in freedom—its aim is merely the avoidance of impending slavery. Similar language recurs throughout *Philippics* 3-14, where the consequences of the Senate's failure to act against Antony are often drawn in stark terms: the result will be tyranny, and the death or slavery that will follow it.

For example, in *Philippic* 6 Cicero contends that "we have come to the ultimate crisis, and the decision is about freedom. Either you must win victory [...] or —anything other than slavery" (res in extremum est adducta discrimen; de libertate decernitur. Aut uincatis oportet [...] aut quiduis potius quam seruiatis, 6.19). In Philippic 7: "if we cannot [wrest away Antony's weapons], then—I will say what is worthy of a senator and a Roman citizen—let us die" (quod si non possumus fa-

⁵⁰ The *contio* speech of the same day includes similar language (4.12–13).

⁵¹ Cf. 1.11, 15; 3.16; 4.49 – 50; 5.11 – 12; 6.5 – 6, 16 – 18, 27, 33; 8.3, 13, 40 – 41, 51, 54, 59 – 61; 9.19.

⁵² Phil. 2.119.

cere—dicam quod dignum est et senatore et Romano homine—moriamur, 7.14),⁵³ In Philippic 10, he proclaims that no Roman should wish for immortality if it means a life without liberty (10.20). In *Philippic* 12, he insists that peace with Antony would be a pact of slavery (12.14) and that if it should be made, "we must depart and pursue a wretched and aimless life or give our necks over to these mercenaries and fall in our homeland" (abeamus, uitam inopem et uagam persequamur, aut ceruices latronibus dandae atque in patria cadendum est, 12.15)—making it clear that he prefers the latter. If his death is to come, he adds, let it at least come honorably, in a fight for his country's freedom (12,30). Here the contrast with the peroration of Philippic 2 is especially clear: Cicero makes no claims that his death would free the state, only that it would be a glorious contribution to the ongoing struggle. He returns to this idea in *Philippic* 13, where he says that should the Senate choose to fight, "we will either enjoy a victorious Republic, or we will be defeated—though not in spirit—and live on in the fame of our bravery" (fruemur uictrice re publica aut oppressi [...] si non spiritu, at uirtutis laude uiuemus, 13.7). He adds in the peroration that

optatissimum est uincere; secundum est nullum casum pro dignitate et libertate patriae non ferendum putare. Quod reliquum est, non est tertium, sed postremum omnium, maximam turpitudinem suscipere uitae cupiditate.⁵⁴

victory is most desirable. Second best is to think no misfortune unbearable on behalf of the dignity and freedom of the Republic. There is no third best, but there is a worst, and that is to incur the greatest dishonor out of a desire for life.

I contend that Cicero's use of this theme in the *Philippics* has two intended audiences. It was, of course, meant to resonate with his contemporaries: his evocations of the intolerability of life in an unfree state were designed to persuade an audience who had recently been freed of Caesar and were aware of the honor that had accrued to those who died resisting him, like Cato. But it is not just Cicero's contemporaries that such passages appear intended to persuade: it is also the posterity at which he aimed when he considered publishing the speeches as a group.

In fact, already within the *Philippics* Cicero seems so confident of a future readership that several times he suggests the conflict will be remembered primarily through his own portrayal (*Phil.* 5.17, 12.11–12). In *Philippic* 13, for example, while reading out an abusive letter from Antony, Cicero retorts: "he goes on flinging insults against me [...] but I will hand him down to the everlasting

⁵³ Cf. Phil. 7.27.

⁵⁴ Phil. 13.49.

memory of men branded with the most accurate marks of abuse" (pergit in me maledicta <dicere> [...] quem ego inustum uerissimis maledictorum notis tradam hominum memoriae sempiternae, 13.40). Thus, Cicero's detailed portrayal of the consequences of senatorial failure in the Philippics-loss of freedom and death, but a death linked to eternal praise for its valor—was probably intended not just to motivate his contemporaries, but also to guide his commemoration among posterity to the very praise he claims is his due for his brave resistance.⁵⁵ This would be very much of a piece with Cicero's authorial strategy in his final years, when he broadcast his contributions to the Roman state through the publication of a staggering number of works that presented him in the best possible light.56

Cicero, classicism, and failure among the Roman declaimers

The fact that Cicero was remembered after his death along the exact lines he lays out in the *Philippics* shows how vital these speeches were to his reception, and it is notable that, as Keeline remarks in his contribution to this volume, later readers imagined Antony reacting to the *Philippics* as a written collection—though obviously ahistorical, this fiction shows how important the collection was to their own understanding of the conflict.⁵⁷ The centrality of the *Philippics* to Cicero's early reception is particularly clear in the snippets of declamation preserved by Seneca the Elder, where we see a close engagement with the theme of failure in the *Philippics* that neatly parallels the Greek declamatory tradition on Demosthenes. Demosthenes' and Cicero's key role in declamation, in other words, was not to represent the successful exercise of free speech, but rather its failure to protect a free state from tyranny.58

Yet even as the declaimers linger over Demosthenes' and Cicero's failure, both men are also presented as the most successful speakers of all time, icons of divine eloquence. This is indeed what we would expect if the two were being transformed into classics, given that a prominent strain of classicism in

⁵⁵ On this see the suggestive comments of Butler 2002, 116–122.

⁵⁶ On Cicero's use of writing as a tool to memorialize his own achievements, see, e.g., Steel 2005, Dugan 2005, and Baraz 2012.

⁵⁷ Cf. Keeline in this volume, pp. 16–18.

⁵⁸ Kaster 1998, 262-263 argues that declamations on Cicero's defeat by Antony reflected perceived elite powerlessness under the imperial regime.

Antiquity was, as I have discussed, predicated not just on a failure to reenact the classical past, but also on the idea that literature is able to transcend that failure and bridge the gap between the vanished past and the present.

The declamations preserved by Seneca the Elder perfectly embody this paradox, since all three topics that concern Cicero focus not on his successes, but rather on his failure to stop Antony and subsequent death: *Controu.* 7.2 treats prosecutions of Cicero's supposed killer, Popillius, while *Suas.* 6 and 7 are persuasive speeches addressed to Cicero as he considers whether to beg Antony's pardon (*Suas.* 6) and whether to burn his writings for a reprieve (*Suas.* 7). All three topics are thus inspired by the *Philippics*, and the declaimers have frequent recourse to imagery from those speeches.⁵⁹

In other words, the declaimers were predisposed to draw on Cicero's preemptive depictions of failure in the *Philippics*, and this is indeed what they do. Much as Cicero portrays the consequences of failure as either slavery or a noble death, so too do the declaimers. And since their object is usually to persuade Cicero to die, they must remind him of his failure to save the Republic, and of what he had pledged to do if he failed. Quintus Haterius urges, "let posterity know that if the state was capable of being Antony's slave, Cicero was not" (sciant posteri potuisse Antonio seruire rem publicam, non potuisse Ciceronem, Sen. Suas. 6.1).⁶⁰ Cestius Pius advises Cicero to observe the "insults of fortune and the present plight of the Republic", which show that "you have lived too long" (si [sc. respicis] ad iniurias Fortunae et praesentem rei publicae statum, nimium diu uixisti, Suas. 6.4). 61 According to Arellius Fuscus, Cicero should accept death because he is "a survivor of the Republic" (rei publicae superstes, Suas. 6.6); he also begs Cicero to die "by the Republic-which, in case you should think you are leaving [Antony] anything you hold dear, has perished before you" (per rem publicam, quae, ne quid te putes carum illi relinquere, ante te perit, Suas. 7.9). Several declaimers remind Cicero of his comments in the peroration to *Philippic 2*, where he insists that death fighting Antony would not be untimely (Controu. 7.2.10, Suas. 6.12). But in that passage Cicero also names two things he hoped his death would effect: a free state and Antony's punishment. In urging Cicero to die by reusing this passage, then, the declaimers remind him even more starkly of his utter defeat.

Yet despite the declaimers' emphasis on Cicero's failure, they also consistently portray him as a figure of unparalleled success whose speeches will im-

⁵⁹ For the declaimers' engagement with the *Philippics*, see Roller 1997, Wilson 2008, and Keeline 2018 *passim*.

⁶⁰ Cf. Suas. 7.1, 7.3. I have used Winterbottom 1974 for the text of Seneca.

⁶¹ Cf. Suas. 6.3, 7.6.

mortalize him. In fact, this paradoxical view of Cicero serves as the underlying premise for Suasoria 7, whose remit is to advise him on whether he should burn his writings for a pardon. As a theme, it clearly does not occur on the plane of reality, as one of the declaimers even notes: many of Cicero's works had long since been published, so Antony could not have erased them from the record (Suas. 7.11). The reason for this theme's enduring popularity—both Ouintilian (Inst. 3.8.46–47) and Martial (5.69) mention it still being declaimed almost a century later—is that it allowed declaimers to explore the paradox they demanded of Cicero as a classic: failure as a politician, success as a writer. Its outcome was thus predetermined, a fact that Seneca makes clear when noting that no one ever argued the opposite side: "everyone worried about Cicero's books, no one about Cicero himself" (omnes pro libris Ciceronis solliciti fuerunt, nemo pro ipso, Suas. 7.10). To have denied staying power to Cicero's books would have been to deny the impulse that made him a topic for declamation in the first place.

Indeed, the ability of literary immortality to overcome Cicero's failure is a constant refrain in the declamations. The declaimers frequently assure Cicero of victory in defeat, since his speeches cataloguing Antony's crimes will survive. Cestius Pius tells him that "Antony has realized that so long as the products of Cicero's eloquence survive, Cicero cannot die" (intellexit Antonius saluis eloquentiae monumentis non posse Ciceronem mori, Suas. 7.2), and Publius Asprenas adds, "if you burn your writings, Antony promises you a year or two, but if you do not burn them, the Roman people promises you eternity" (<si> scripta combusseris, Antonius paucos annos tibi promittit; at, si non combusseris, [quam] populus Romanus omnes, Suas. 7.4). Argentarius, in a clear reference to Cicero's claim in Phil. 13 that he will eternally brand Antony, advises him to "let your genius survive you, to proscribe Antony forever" (sine durare post te ingenium tuum, perpetuam Antonii proscriptionem, Suas. 7.8). In a similar vein, Arellius Fuscus grandly proclaims:

Quoad humanum genus incolume manserit, quamdiu suus litteris honor, suum eloquentiae pretium erit, quamdiu rei publicae nostrae aut fortuna steterit aut memoria durauerit, admirabile posteris uigebit ingenium <tuum>, et uno proscriptus saeculo proscribes Antonium omnibus.62

As long as the human race remains, as long as there is honor for literature and value for eloquence, as long as either the fortune of our Republic stands or memory endures, your genius will thrive as a source of admiration for posterity, and though you will be proscribed for one generation, you will proscribe Antony for all time.

Conclusion

The declaimers' confident claims of Cicero's eternal value rest on the unquestioned assumption that literature will continue to bridge the gap between past and present: in other words, they assume the continued existence of classicism. The publication of the *Philippics* rested on the same calculus: circulating a carefully calibrated cross section of Cicero's speeches against Antony meant that win or lose, his reception could be shaped in a way that Antony could not control, just as Philip had been unable to prevent Demosthenes from eternally sullying his image. But this would be true only if Cicero, like Demosthenes, attracted readers who would continue to be persuaded by the portrait of noble failure these speeches depict: in other words, readers who read with the tenets of classicism in mind. To say that Cicero succeeded is an understatement; I doubt even he could have predicted such longevity. Whether classicism can survive another two thousand years is anyone's guess, but there can be no doubt that Cicero used his failure to achieve a nearly unrivaled success.