

Noting similarities between patriotic *erōs* in the Periclean Funeral Oration (Th. 2.43.1) and erotically inflected *captatio benevolentiae* in *Knights* (“O Demos, I am your *erastēs*,” Ar. *Eq.* 1340–2; cf. 732–5), several scholars detect in the latter a snapshot of late fifth-century rhetorical practice—“flowers culled from the oratory of Cleon,” as some have put it (Connor *New Politicians* quoting Rogers). There is, however, reason for doubt. In the surviving corpus of Attic oratory and related evidence, we find but a single, rather unusual instance (Pl. *Ap.* 29d) of an emotional effusion at all like what *Knights* exemplifies—that is, one where a speaker professes a heartfelt attachment or partiality to his audience (“you”), or to the collectivity (*polis*, *dēmos*) to which that audience belongs. It is, then, a curious fact that speakers, though reluctant to employ such love talk in their *own* behalf, readily impute such love talk to *others*. But it would seem we are dealing with a red herring of sorts if matching instances of speakers actually saying such things in so many words fail to materialize in the expected contexts. I therefore posit an element of exaggeration, even distortion, for what I call the “demophilia topos” (“So-and-so claims to love you / the *dēmos* / the *polis*, but in fact does not”; cf., e.g., D. *Prooem.* 53.3). Key to its impact is the power of affective vocabulary to magnify and problematize an opponent’s professions of civic *eunoia* and the like (cf. Arist. *EN* 1166b30–4 on *eunoia* versus *philia*; D.H. *Th.* 45 and Plut. *Moralia* 540c–d on Pericles’ avowal of *polis*-love in Th. 2.60.5). But the problem was not *dēmos*-oriented *philia* as such, but the notional performance and betrayal of a love-bond between opponent and audience (“I love you” as Austinian speech-act). By “performing” *philia*, albeit at a mimetic remove, the topos would have excited a listener’s *thumos*, the psyche’s “spirited” dimension; the sense of *philia* betrayed would have then incited the *thumos* to anger (cf. Ar. *Pol.* 1327b40–1328a15). Thus we can view the “demophilic” politician as a rhetorical construct—a scare-figure playing on fears lest persuasive *logos*, though the very foundation of Athenian democracy, prove its undoing.