

Sparta, scowling, style, and pretension in the speeches of Demosthenes

Ariston, the speaker of *Against Konon* (Dem.54.34), cites the hypocrisy of his enemies' Spartan-influenced dress and deportment. By day, Konon's sons wear the Spartan fashion (short cloaks, thin shoes, and grim faces), but by night they indulge in any hubristic mischief they please. Speakers in Athenian courts sometimes use an opponent's physical appearance to 'read' his moral failings, such as Aeschines' description of the raddled physique of Timarkhos or Demosthenes' report of the undisguised *hubris* evident in Meidias' countenance.¹ However, Ariston's moral commentary purports to reinterpret his opponents' intentional public self-fashioning. Ariston must 'debunk' the alleged artifice of Konon's sons' public performance of self, and substitute a subversive reading of their character. Unlike the interpretation of character in the unconscious or unfeigned visual cues on Timarkhos' body or Meidias' face, a speaker like Ariston who reads his opponent's consciously constructed style as a sign of his character must account for the social motivation behind his choice of style. Because the speaker naturally seeks to discredit his rival, he tends to attribute an element of deception to his rival's public persona, by reading the opponent's style as a demonstration of his unfounded moral and/or social pretensions.

In two passages from the Demosthenic corpus, *Against Konon* (Dem.54.34) and *Against Stephanos I* (Dem.45.68-9), the speakers give a hostile analysis and reinterpretation of their opponents' style - the conscious elements of his public self-fashioning. These two similar styles, Lakonian dress and a matching scowl, and an affected gait and grim countenance designed to show *sophrosune*, had the potential to render their wearers targets of criticism.² Yet the same fashions apparently served as a means by which an Athenian might show others a moral persona which he aspires to perform and embody, representing to all how he wished to be perceived. The conflicting meanings of style evident within the two passages reveal the tensions and contradictions in Athenians' moral evaluation of two similar fashions.

Ariston claims that he must destroy Konon's sons' righteous façade to show their true wanton violence beneath, because he expects his opponents' Lakonian-influenced style to work in their favor. Sparta had a certain moral authority at Athens, especially in matters of *sophrosune*.³ However, in light of mockery of Spartan-inspired style in comedy, Ariston's goal may be to paint a picture of his opponents mugging in pretentious costumes, implying that their only claim to sober conduct is this ludicrous conduct. In *Against Stephanos I* (Dem.45), the speaker Apollodoros accuses his opponent Stephanos of constructing his public persona to appear more possessed of *sophrosune* (self-control).⁴ Here, Stephanos' image is achieved through a style of countenance (again, a sober scowl) and gait, without the added illustrative benefit of clothing. The speaker must explain Stephanos' true motive as gratifying his antisocial tendencies, avoiding the approaches and appeals of his fellow Athenians. Despite the speaker's claim that Stephanos' style of deportment, his scowl and gait, are intimidating, the very fact that he

¹ Aeschin.1.26, Dem.21.72, Fisher 2001 p.55-6, Cairns 2005 p. 129-30.

² Ar. Av. 1283, *Ekk.* 74, Ephippus fr. 4, Carey and Reid 1985, p. 155-6.

³ Aeschin.1.180, Fisher 2001 p.327-330.

⁴ Hesk 1999, p. 220-226.

must explain away his opponent's personal gravity speaks for the credibility of performing *sophrosune* through facial expression and gait.

The two speakers respectively account for their opponents' choice of stylistic persona by 'revealing' them as fraudulent in their stylistic message, flaunting false moral pretensions. This extra layer of interpretation in the case of speakers' 'reading' the intentional self-fashioning of others has received insufficient attention in the existing scholarship.⁵ Demosthenes *Against Konon* (Dem.54) and *Against Stephanos I* (Dem.45) depict Athenian conceptions of style as a comprehensive performance of moral and social aspiration. Through coordinated deportment, facial expression and dress, the performer announces his intention to embody the values his chosen style represents. Style cannot exist in a vacuum, but must be invested with shared cultural meanings in order to be useful. Articulating the points of tension in the interpretation of style in 4th century Athens serves to illustrate the conflicts and contradictions in Athenian popular morality.

Bibliography:

Bremmer, Jan. "Walking, standing, and sitting in ancient Greek culture." In Bremmer and Roodenburg, A Cultural History of Gesture. Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1991).

Cairns, D.L. "Bullish looks and sidelong glances: social interaction and the eyes in Ancient Greek Culture." In Cairns, Body Language in the Greek and Roman Worlds. Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales (2005).

Carey, C. and Reid, R.A. Demosthenes: Selected Private Speeches. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1985).

Fisher, Nick. Aeschines Against Timarkhos: translated with introduction and commentary by Nick Fisher. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. (2001).

Geddes, A.G. "Rags and Riches: The Costume of Athenian Men in the Fifth Century." *CQ* vol. 37, no. 2 (1987), pp. 307-331.

Hesk, Jon. "The Rhetoric of Anti-Rhetoric in Athenian Oratory." In Goldhill and Osborne, Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1999).

⁵ Hesk, *ibid*; Fisher, *ibid*.