

Defending Defeat: Chaeronea in *De Corona*

I argue that in *De Corona* Demosthenes defended his role in Chaeronea by using arguments first deployed in his funeral oration. This self-reference not only adds support to the arguments that the funeral oration is genuine, but the prosecution and defense speeches also provide important insights into the continuing importance of Chaeronea, Demosthenes, and the effectiveness of his funeral oration.

Although the trial was ostensibly about the legality of granting a crown to Demosthenes, it was at its core a political referendum centering on Demosthenes and Chaeronea. When Aeschines explains Demosthenes' role in the events leading up to Chaeronea (3.106-158), he accepts that the defeat at Chaeronea was due to divine fortune. Aeschines argues that the divine fortune that caused Athens' defeat is a sign of the unsuitableness of Demosthenes. This line of argument culminates with a quotation from Hesiod's *Works and Days*, where the wickedness of a single man is the cause of the destruction of a whole city (3.134-6). In this way, Aeschines implies that Demosthenes' personal qualities functioned like a miasma on the state, a fact he implies is proved by the defeat at Chaeronea (Parker 1983, 268). As Yunis has shown, Aeschines relies on a "success-oriented" model that had a long tradition at Athens (2000: 102-3). Surprisingly, Demosthenes refutes Aeschines by insisting on the importance of intention precisely because the divine causality is beyond human understanding. Yunis has demonstrated how this refutation relies on a view of the individual found in Athenian tragedy and epic (2000). I argue that Yunis' individualistic ideology is mediated through the ideology of the funeral oration in general and tied to Demosthenes' specific treatment of divine fate in his funeral oration.

Demosthenes' funeral oration insisted that the outcome of the battle was due to a divinity and fate, but that a true evaluation of the participants was due to their intentional choice to emulate Athenian excellence (60.19-21). This same reasoning informs his refutation of Aeschines. Demosthenes insists upon the importance of divine fate, which he supports with general tropes of the funeral oration (18. 200-5). A defeat frequently and sometimes insistently raises the question of its cause, a question Aeschines tried to exploit to undermine his political rival. In response, Demosthenes' rhetoric of defeat established a way to evaluate military outcomes independently of victory or defeat. True victory is the excellence (*aretē*) displayed by the soldier who fought and the politicians who directed the policy of the city. True victory is in the excellence of the city itself that produced the citizens who fought nobly.

Demosthenes won his case spectacularly. Aeschines received less than one-fifth of the votes and was penalized for frivolous prosecution. This result is due in part to the whole masterful rhetorical performance Demosthenes put on. A key element of that performance relied strongly on the ideology of the funeral oration and particularly on Demosthenes' own oration for the dead at Chaeronea, which adapted the tropes of the funeral oration to reframe the defeat as a species of victory. The Athenian jury was apparently still sympathetic to Demosthenes' rhetoric of defeat. It seems to be likely that his funeral oration, delivered eight years earlier, was just as successful with his audience and continued to set the terms in which the defeat and Demosthenes' role was evaluated.

Bibliography

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