‘Conventions’ in/as Performance: Addressing the Audience in Selected Public Speeches of Demosthenes

Andreas Serafim

Introduction

In this chapter, I intend to explore the use and the performative dimension of addresses to the audience in selected public speeches of Demosthenes (18: *On the Crown*; 19: *On the False Embassy*; and 24: *Against Timocrates*). Fundamentally, the chapter seeks to answer an important question: why does the speaker address the judges in some places, but the Athenians in general (judges and audience) in other places? Despite a few studies related to this issue, the use, form and purpose of addresses to the audience have not been widely appreciated by scholars. This omission is unfortunate since, as will be argued here, addresses to the audience can be more than merely a matter of convention. The insertion of addresses reminds us that speeches were intended for oral delivery and that a fundamental aspect of law-court performance was the interaction between speaker and audience. When a speaker addressed the audience in an Athenian court, it was unlikely to be without meaning; he had specific purposes to achieve: to engage the hearers/viewers, to create a certain disposition in them towards the litigants and to affect the verdict of the judges.

1 Addressing the Audience: Forms and Performative Value

Before proceeding to the examination of the use and purpose of addresses in D. 18, 19 and 24, a brief discussion of the forms of address that the speaker had at his disposal and their performative dimension may be useful. The frequency,

---

1 Wolpert (2003) 537–555; Martin (2006) 75–88 tried to detect the factors that influence the choice of addresses in selected public and private speeches, but still without examining thoroughly their linguistic and pragmatic features and without placing emphasis on their performative dimension.
position and form of addresses to the audience are not inevitable. The flexibility in this respect is underlined by the fact that the speakers had at their disposal a choice between three styles of addresses: civic (ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι) which is used in political speeches; judicial (ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί) which is appropriate only in a forensic speech; and descriptive (ὦ ἄνδρες) which could be used for any audience of adult men. The diversity of the options available to the speakers for addressing the audience serves to highlight as unusual the high frequency of the use of a specific address, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, in Demosthenes’ corpus of speeches: he uses this address more than his contemporaries do, at least on the basis of the limited evidence available to us. This may be, to some extent, a matter of convention: it has rightly been argued that the nature of the case—public or private—affect ed, at least to some extent, the options available to the speakers in terms of the content of their speech, their arguments and the rhetorical strategies they employed. Addresses to the audience are another area where the approach used was influenced, at least sometimes, by the nature of the case: the civic address, for example, is normally more appropriate in public than in private speeches. There are some exceptions to the pattern that civic addresses are more usual in public than in private cases. In private speeches, for example, civic addresses to the audience are used in the following sections: 55.1, 3, 7, 8, 9 (two instances), 12, 14, 15; 56.37, 44, 47, 48. In these two speeches, there are also many references to the Athenians as being wronged by the plaintiff’s opponent. This variation in using civic addresses in private speeches, however, does not invalidate the overall conclusion that civic addresses are more appropriate in a public than in a private speech. The boundaries between public and private speeches may have been less strict for

---

2 Dickey (1996) 178–181. Dickey classifies ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι as an “ethnic” mode of address, but I prefer Martin’s term “civic”; Martin (2006) 79. Dickey also calls the address ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί “occupational”, but I prefer the term “judicial”. I thank Brenda Griffith-Williams for help on this point. It should be noted that there are also variations in the use of these three “standard” addresses, such as ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι instead of ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι and ὦ δικασταί instead of ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, especially in Hyperides’ papyrus. For Martin (2006) 76 n. 8, these variations are due to mistakes made by scribes.

3 According to some rough calculations after a search through the online Thesaurus Linguae Graecae database, there is no occurrence of the civic address in Antiphon, Hyperides or Isaios. It is used only twice in Isocrates; 7 times in Lycurgus, 24 in Andokides, 36 in Lysias, 59 in Dinarchus, 99 times in Aeschines, and 406 in Demosthenes’ public speeches. It is worth mentioning that Demosthenes never uses the descriptive ὦ ἄνδρες.
