

**DEMOSTHENIC STYLE
IN THE PRIVATE
ORATIONS, THESIS**

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Demosthenic Style in the Private Orations, Thesis by William Hamilton Kirk

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WILLIAM HAMILTON KIRK

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DEMOSTHENIC STYLE

IN THE

PRIVATE ORATIONS

THESIS

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DEMOSTHENIC STYLE IN THE PRIVATE ORATIONS.

I.—ESTABLISHMENT OF TESTS.

Of the sixty speeches which have been handed down to modern times under the name of Demosthenes, forty-two (Orr. 18-59) are pleadings before a court; and of these again twenty-nine (27-50, 52-56) are more nearly defined as *λόγοι ἰδιωτικοί*—a term which has no exact equivalent in English, and which, even in Greek, is not absolute in its definition, since Or. 51 (*περὶ τοῦ στεφ. τῆς τρηγοραρχ.*) in all manuscripts, and in some Orr. 57-9 (*πρὸς Εὐβοουλίδην, κατὰ Θεοκρίτου, κατὰ Νεαίρας*), appear in this class (Blass, *Att. Ber.* III 49-50).¹ This uncertainty is reflected in the pages of Blass, in whose index these four orations are entered under the heading *Privatrede*, although in his remarks on 58 and 59 (III 440, 476) he emphasizes the fact that they belong among the *δικαστικοὶ δημόσιοι*. Or. 57 he qualifies (III 429) as being in character, though not by strict construction, a private speech, and he seems half inclined to yield a like place to Or. 51 (III 215). But the latter was delivered before the Athenian Senate, and its theme is the claim to a public distinction; the former is addressed to an ordinary court, and, although connected with a public measure, deals with matters of an essentially private nature; I have therefore followed Blass in including it among the *ἰδιωτικοί*, while leaving 51 in the class to which it formally belongs.

The question how many of these speeches may be considered Demosthenean has been variously answered, and certainly with more reasonableness by Blass, who reckons fourteen (including 57) than by the more destructive among modern critics. The first speech against Stephanus, Or. 45, has been a great stumbling-block, and Arnold Schäfer's objections to its morality blinded him to the beauties of its style; but Blass has given a plausible

¹ Cited by the pages of the first edition.

reason for the advocacy of Apollodorus by Demosthenes, and stylistically the speech refuses to be excluded. Schäfer's arguments against the genuineness of the third speech against Aphobus, Or. 29, have been sufficiently, though not exhaustively, refuted by Blass; and his view, which was also that of Westermann, that this speech is the forgery of a late rhetorician, is wholly untenable, as well for this as for any other of the private orations. The most marked feature common to all, to the obviously spurious no less than to the admittedly genuine, is their character of reality. They deal with cases, and enter into details, such as no forger would have been at the pains to handle or invent; the poorest among them is instinct with that breath of life which literature draws only from contact with fact; and the purity of their Attic dialect gives final assurance that those which are not by Demosthenes himself must be attributed to contemporaries of his and to the best period of Attic oratory.

For distinguishing the genuine from the spurious, or for assigning certain of the latter to a possible common author, vocabulary is an aid to be used with much caution. Two influences conspired to keep the language of these brief compositions as nearly as might be on a level with the ordinary phraseology of educated Athenians: first, their intensely practical spirit and purpose; and secondly, the fact that at Athens a suitor usually pleaded his own case, and often did so in a speech prepared for his inexperience by some trained and practised orator. Dionysius of Halicarnassus dwells on the art with which Lysias assumed the layman; the stronger genius of Demosthenes showed an even more wonderful pliancy in this respect; and if inferior speech-writers¹ were incapable of achieving a like delicate perfection, they were certainly guided by the same general conception of fitness. Individuality of expression must have been further obscured by a rhetoric which prescribed stock arguments and reflections and allowed set formulas of introduction or conclusion; and when we remember how little remains out of an immense mass of oratory

¹ It is to be regretted that in English the word logographer should be employed, after Thuc. 1, 21, to denote writers of history. The Greek *λογγράφος* usually signifies one who wrote speeches for others to deliver; and we need both logograph and logography to express a practice which is never to be left out of sight in considering the forensic oratory of the Athenians, and which had much to do with its unrivalled excellence.

subjected to this rhetoric, we may hesitate to find evidence for individual authorship in the coincidence of phrases often essentially commonplace. In his attempt to show that one man was the author of the speeches against Macartatus, Euerghus and Olympiodorus, as well as of those in behalf of Apollodorus (excepting the first against Stephanus), Blass has not only laid undue stress (III 496, 500-1) on such coincidences, but has sometimes neglected to observe that expressions which he reckons distinctive are to be found in compositions of other authorship. Thus the predicative use of *ἐξ ἀνάγκης* can be paralleled from Isaeus, 2. 22 and 3. 65; for the combination of *εὐθύς* or *εὐθέως* with *παραχρήμα* compare 1. 11 and 3. 7. 48 of the same author and Dem. 29. 15; in Dem. 15. 7 and 39. 24 we find *ἀκόλουθος* in the sense in which Blass quotes it for 46. 17 and 48. 4, or, if he insists on an impersonal neuter, we can point to Ep. 3. 10, where, however, the construction is with the genitive, not the dative. That *ἔστι δὲ βραχὺς ὁ λόγος* is a mere formula is plain from the variations found in 3. 23, 21. 77. 160, 34. 3 (compare also 18. 196 and Lys. 24. 10, *ὁ πολλὸς ὁ λόγος*, sc. *ἔστι*); it can hardly be that the critic attaches importance to the particular form in which this trivial sentence is cast. The essential difference between the introductory sentences in 43. 31, 48. 33, and those in 27. 13, 29. 39, 54. 6 lies in the greater neatness and compactness of the Demosthenean formulas; but all are shaped on the same model, and it cannot surprise us that at a lower level of art there should be less variety of execution. Distinctions of style fade with a decrease in artistic power and refinement; and even if the common authorship for which Blass argues is not improbable, it cannot properly be maintained on the ground of stereotyped expressions or literary imperfections which may belong as easily to several inferior writers as to one alone. Even in larger spheres of comparison the importance of vocabulary as an index of style lies chiefly in the tone and spirit which words convey; otherwise, the difference between prose and poetry would be in the main a mechanical one, which, with the Greeks, it never was.

This protest against an occasional over-interpretation of unimportant phenomena does not affect the sense of obligation which I, in common with all students of Demosthenes, feel to the great work of Blass. The German critic has usually trodden a surer path and taken a broader sweep; that it is still possible to glean