

KAPELLOS, AGGELOS. THE ORATORS AND THEIR TREATMENT OF THE RECENT PAST. BERLIN, BOSTON: DE GRUYTER, 2023, 531P. ISBN: 9783110791815.

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The *corpus* of Attic orators constitutes a relevant source for understanding Athenian democracy during the 4th and 5th centuries BC. However, this was not always the case. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, orators were perceived with suspicion and studies highlighted the untruthfulness of their reports (Todd, 1990). The rehabilitation of orators as a source for understanding the past, such as Thucydides and Xenophon, is due to a change in the perception of rhetoric and history itself, seeking to understand the reasons that led the orator to include the account of the past in his speech (Worthington, 1994). Thus, the treatment of the past in speeches is subordinated to the orator's persuasive intentions. So, the historical account could contain verisimilitudes, distortions and even lies about the Greek past. It is essential to understand not only whether the orator said something true or false about the past, but how these narratives circulated in the political community and served to support projects for the future of the city. In this sense, the book *The Orators and Their Treatment of the Recent Past* (2023) is an invitation to urgent and necessary reflection for our own democracy, surrounded by Fakes News and historical denialism, whose past is mobilized for various political projects, some with excluding contours and violent lines.

The book organized by Aggelos Kapellos brings together 28 chapters written by rhetoric scholars who focus their analysis on the treatment of the recent past by Attic orators. It is one of the most complete materials on

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the subject which, throughout its more than 500 pages, encompass the entire canon of Attic orators, including those with few speeches such as Lysurgus, addressed by Joseph Roisman, and Dinarchus, by Ian Worthington. As for orators with a more extensive *corpus*, such as Demosthenes and Isocrates, more than one chapter is dedicated, which allows contact with different hypotheses that may or may not converge. Each chapter is accompanied by careful footnote work and an extensive current bibliography. This makes the book an interesting guide for specialists as well as for those who want to start their studies in the field of Attic rhetoric.

The book addresses the treatment of the past by the orators through a specific methodology. It focuses on the so-called recent past, which is within 30 years of the date of the speech. In this Introduction, Kapellos presents 3 categories to analyse the treatment of the past by orators: 1) distant past – which corresponds to events that the audience cannot remember, but knows hearsay; 2) middling past – an event that the older ones can remember and tell the younger ones; 3) recent past – events that every audience would remember because they happened a few years ago. The scholar warns that this division is artificial. However, it proves to be effective to understand the many ways in which the orators treatment the past.

The narrative of the past in rhetoric must be understood from the perspective of persuasion and the orator's relationship with his audience. In this way, lying is a risky act, because by seeing the speaker as a liar, the audience could vote against him. The recent past becomes even more difficult to manipulate since the audience would be able to more easily perceive this. However, this does not prevent the confrontation of narratives with the presentation of different versions of the facts, as well as different strategies to approach the past, as is the case of the Second Embassy and the Peace of Philocrates, a subject addressed in the chapters by Patrice Brun and by Peter A. O'Connell.

The accounts of the past used by the orators allow us to understand the consequences of the Peloponnesian War. Also recurrent in the reports of the orators are the oligarchic movement of 411 and 404 BCE, the amnesty process, the Mytilene revolt and the battle of Chaeronea. Furthermore, Joshua P. Nudell's chapter on the conquest of Samos in 366 BCE and the Athenians' perception of one of the excesses of the maritime imperialism stands out. Social issues are also addressed in chapters on matters relating to family and inheritance, such as Stefano Ferrucci's chapter on Isaeus and Brad L. Cook on speeches against Demosthenes' tutors.

Antiphon is approached by Michael Gagarin. Hyperides is the centre of reflection for Craig Cooper and Janek Kucharski. Andocides is the subject of chapters by Frances Powell and Edward M. Harris. In turn, Isocrates by David Whitehead and Yun Lee Too. Lysias is the object of reflection by Peter Rhodes, Cinzia Bearzot, Dino Piovan and Markus Zimmermann. The largest number of chapters are devoted to the *Corpus Demosthenicum*, the most extensive in the canon: Nicolas Siron deals with *Against Timotheus* attributed to Apollodorus; Gunther Martin, *Against Androtion* and *Against Timocrates*; Jeremy Trevett, *Against Leptines*. Nathan Crick analyses Demosthenes' funeral oration based on the concepts of the *rhetoric of defeat* and *rhetoric of deflection* to demonstrate the transformation of a military failure into a positive memory, reflecting on the medium and long-term impact of a funeral oration to mask the reality of a city. Aeschines is also covered in detail by Dániel Bajnok. Zhichao Wang dedicates his chapter to Hegesippus, an ardent anti-Macedonian.

In addition to the chapters whose central theme is the orators, the book also features a study by Thomas G. M. Blank on the court as an important space in Athenian democracy to reason about the past and from there create a memory. Using the concept of "mnemonic communities" (2023: 3), he points to the possibility of *demos* sharing various visions of the past. Agellos Kapellos, on the other hand, presents Plato's perspective, from *Menexenus*, on the events of the battle of Aegospotami and Arginousaia highlighting the possibility of the philosopher being a reader of Xenophon. James Sickinger provides an overview of orators' use of up to two decades-old inscriptions. This type of proof is not common in speeches, and we must consider that the orator had several proofs in their hands, choosing those that would have more and immediate impact - at this point testimonies should be preferable. The book ends with Pierre Chiron's chapter on *Rhetoric to Alexander* and how this brings several references to a context between the battle of Chaeronea and Lamiam War.

Therefore, the book organized by Kapellos allows us to understand the troubled scenario after the Peloponnesian War, the public debate between democracy and oligarchy and the various political projects under debate in Athens. One of the most important aspects of the book is the reflection on how these themes were received by the *demos* and how remarkable facts, such as the battle of Chaeronea, are moulded in the collective memory. When reading this book, it is inevitable to think about the present and the fierce use of history as an object of rhetorical manipulation in the current democratic field. Patrice Brun's conclusion is a wake-up call for us. According to the historian,

Lies, alternative facts, fake news, delivered from the *bema* at the Pnyx by orators keen on developing them had a detrimental impact on Athenian democracy: while they still believed that the *logos* was important in the democratic process, perhaps the Athenians came to see it as a dead end, precisely because the orators on the *bema* had misused it. The fall of democracy could not well be the sole result of the military process, even if it cannot be discarded of course. (2023: 319)

Recognizing the rhetorical use of the past in speeches is preventing lies from destroying our democracy, after all, *logos* is one of the most important pillars of this political regime.

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