

# ERGA-LOGOI

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e culture dell'antichità

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RECENSIONI

REVIEWS

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G. Boffa, *Il giuramento dei fondatori di Cirene (SEG IX,3). Riflessioni e spunti per un inquadramento storico e culturale* (2021) 189

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A. Kapellos (ed.), *The Orators and Their Treatment of the Recent Past* (2023) 191

This volume examines the classical Athenian orators' treatment of the recent past, which the volume's editor defines as roughly the past twenty years (p. 4). While much scholarship has been done on the orators' use of past events, this is the first work to focus specifically on the recent past, a topic that raises its own set of considerations. At least in the case of recent events in the public eye, everyone in the audience would have had some memory of these events, making total fabrication on the part of the orator impossible – though as the contributors to this volume amply demonstrate, this did not mean that orators did not take liberties with the truth! In this way, this book has particular relevance for us today, when 'fake news' is rampant and we are able to witness in real time the rewriting of even very recent history (one thinks, for instance, of the complete falsehoods propagated only days after the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol).

In the book's introduction, Kapellos begins by pointing out that there is a 'trichotomy' of pasts referred to in the orators: the distant past, the middling past, and the recent past, though as he points out correctly, the distinction between these is not hard and fast. He then lays out the issues the volume as a whole tackles, including the deviations between recent events as presented in the orators and other historical sources. In what follows, I summarize the volume's remaining chapters, which move through the orators chronologically. Each chapter treats an event or events in one or more orators, with two exceptions: the first chapter (after the introduction) is more methodological in orientation, and the last (slightly incongruously) treats a rhetorical handbook.

Blank argues, in contrast to earlier scholarship, that the distortion of historical fact in oratory is not (necessarily) deceitful but instead presents us with a different kind of truth, one that reflects society's varied views on and memories of (in this case, recent) events and the other circumstances the orator had to take into account when shaping his historical narrative. Gagarin's short chapter explores the only historical events mentioned in Antiphon, namely in Antiph. V, where the speaker defends his father's actions in the recent Mytilenean revolt and briefly narrates, as a warning to the jury not to convict him hastily, three (slightly more remote) events in which hasty decisions had bad consequences. Rhodes examines [Lys.] XX, the defense of Polystratus regarding his role in the

coup of 411, arguing that its details generally align with what we find in Thucydides and the *Atb. Pol.*, but that the speaker is misleading about the (probable) relationship between Polystratus and Phrynichus.

Pownall studies Andoc. III 10-11, in which the orator elides Sparta's role in installing the Thirty Tyrants, arguing that this elision reflects Andocides' (moderately oligarchic) ideology and in particular his attempt to strike a balance between radical democracy and the violence of the Thirty. Harris examines and deems accurate the (generally brief) statements about the recent past in Demosthenes' Assembly speeches. He also asserts that Andoc. III is a forgery (cf. Pownall, this volume), since it contains details contradicted by the Greek historians and other sources, and (according to Harris) it would not have been possible to misrepresent the recent past in an Assembly speech.

Bearzot argues that Lys. XXXIV, a fragmentary Assembly speech written for a prominent democratic politician against a proposal to restrict citizen rights, presents the recent past in such a way as to remind the Assembly of their recent misfortunes and thereby to show that democracy remains at risk if the Athenians repeat their past mistakes. Piovon demonstrates from passages of Lys. II about the events of 405-403 BCE that Lysias redeploys pre-existing (aristocratic) themes and keywords in the service of promoting democratic values. Zimmermann explores how Lys. XIV presents a negative picture of the senior Alcibiades' participation in the events of the Peloponnesian War – and one that deviates from our historical sources – as a way of discrediting the defendant, Alcibiades the Younger.

Kapellos examines Socrates' near silence in Plato's *Menexenus* on the aftermath of the Battles of Arginusae and Aegospotomi, comparing this to the accounts of these events in the historians and other funeral orations. He argues that Socrates' omissions reflect not a lack of knowledge about these events but the Athenians' desire to forget that they were defeated because of their own mistakes. Whitehead looks at Isocrates' rhetorical treatment of the Peloponnesian War in his early forensic speeches and in his epideictic works, in particular the terminology that Isocrates uses to refer to the war, the specific events and people he mentions, and his feelings about his own experiences of the war. Too argues that Isocrates uses both remote and recent past as a template for present and future Athens, treating history as malleable (i.e. with blurred temporal distinctions) while simultaneously insisting that the past is immutable.

Ferrucci shows that references to past events in Isaeus, although few and brief, are employed to demonstrate the character of the plaintiffs, especially in their relations with the city. Siron argues that Apollodorus

in Dem. XXXVI plays with time in his narrative in order to manipulate the details – and possibly to invent the existence – of an earlier *eisangelia* (impeachment) against Timotheus, even calling upon the jury as witnesses to this alleged event. Cook contends that Demosthenes' depictions of his household (including his father, mother, sister, and slaves) in his inheritance speeches should not be taken at face value but should read as portraits selectively crafted to serve his rhetorical purposes.

Martin explores the ways in which Diodorus' attacks on Androtion's recent political activity differ in two speeches delivered two years apart (Dem. XXII and XXIV), arguing that while the substance remains mainly the same, the speaker adjusts his focus and level of detail to suit a new context (i.e. a different type of lawsuit, a different defendant, etc.). Trevett looks at the strategic ways that Demosthenes (in Dem. XX) presents the career of the Athenian general Chabrias as especially admirable: namely, by assuming the jurors' knowledge of Chabrias' early victories, dwelling at length on the Athenians' success under Chabrias at the Battle of Naxos, and downplaying their recent defeat at Chios (and any responsibility Chabrias had for it) in favor of eulogizing the general who died in battle. Crick draws on the work of Kenneth Burke and Jacques Ellul to argue that Demosthenes, in his funeral oration for those who died at Chaeronea (Dem. LX), uses a 'rhetoric of deflection' and 'sociological propaganda' to reframe the Athenians' defeat as a victory.

Brun shows by comparison with other contemporary sources that Demosthenes (in Dem. XVIII and XIX) reinvented recent history to claim that he had always opposed the Peace of Philocrates and that he had been responsible for the military alliance with Thebes. Brun argues further that these kinds of omissions and lies, while accepted by the Athenians, were partly to blame for the collapse of the democracy. O'Connell explores two ways in which Demosthenes bolsters his version of events in Dem. XIX – namely, treating the second embassy as if it were in the distant past and making his audience vividly imagine a violent symposium in Pella – and shows that similar strategies can also be seen in Dem. XVIII, Aeschin. II, and Aeschin. III. Bajnok examines the presentation of the Peace of Philocrates and the Battle of Chaeronea in Aeschin. III, showing that Aeschines argues for his version of events by downplaying his own role in the embassies, painting Philip as friendly and humane, and turning Demosthenes into a scapegoat for all of Athens' misfortunes.

Roisman argues that in *Against Leocrates*, Lycurgus uses the recent past (in particular Chaeronea and its aftermath) in inventive ways, both to establish precedents for giving Leocrates the death penalty and to inspire adherence to traditional Athenian values. Cooper explores how

Hyperides in his forensic speeches uses Chaeronea rhetorically as a 'critical moment' (*kairos*) against which his (and his clients') opponents' loyalty to Athens could be measured. Kucharski shows through a close reading of Hyperides' newly discovered speech *Against Diondas* that the orator distorts recent events in order to depict the ascendant politician Demades (and possibly also the defendant Diondas) as a traitor and a flatterer. Wang argues that while the anti-Macedonian Hegisippus, like Demosthenes, manipulates recent events in favor of Athens, he differs from Demosthenes in his portrayal of Philip and in his greater concern for establishing proof than for advocating action.

Worthington shows through a study of Din. I (alongside Lysurg. I and Aeschin. III) that Dinarchus uses less fabrication when discussing the 'very recent past' (itself fresh in the jurors' minds) than he did the (less) recent past. Nudell argues that the orators' attempts (in Isocr. XV, Dem. XV, Din. I and III) to frame Timotheus' conquest of Samos as liberation were not fully successful in reshaping collective memory of this event, which was remembered (especially outside of Athens) as a violation of interstate norms. Sickinger demonstrates that, unlike their citation of older inscriptions as models of behavior, the orators cite recent inscriptions as evidence to bolster the specific arguments of their cases. And Chiron examines the very sparse traces of contemporary and recent events in the *Rhetoric to Alexander*, suggesting a number of possible hypotheses (e.g. textual, philosophical, political) for this near silence. The book concludes with a general index and index locorum.

Finally, a few quibbles. This volume would have benefited from proofreading: there are typos throughout, and the descriptions of the chapters presented in the introduction (pp. 9-19) are repeated nearly verbatim as abstracts at the start of each chapter. I was also struck by the fact that of the 28 contributors to the volume, only three are identifiably female (based on the pronouns they use in their author bios); this kind of gender imbalance should be avoided whenever possible. But overall, this volume is to be commended for its thoroughness – none of the orators are left untouched! – and a number of chapters (standouts include Pownall, Crick, and O'Connell) serve as models for innovative ways to approach the thorny question of how the orators creatively manipulate the recent past for their own rhetorical and political purposes.

DEBORAH KAMEN  
*University of Washington, Seattle*  
dkamen@uw.edu