

# Quaderni

7



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COMITATO SCIENTIFICO

Andrea Giorgi (coordinatore)  
Giuseppe Albertoni  
Fulvia de Luise  
Sandra Pietrini

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Direttore: Andrea Giorgi

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e-mail: [editoria@lett.unitn.it](mailto:editoria@lett.unitn.it)

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Conflict in Communities.  
Forward-looking Memories  
in Classical Athens

edited by Elena Franchi and Giorgia Proietti

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <i>Acknowledgements</i>   | 7   |
| <i>Introduction</i> by Elena Franchi, Giorgia Proietti  | 9   |
| JAN ZACHARIAS VAN ROOKHUIJZEN, Where Aglauros<br>Once Fell Down. The Memory Landscape of the<br>Persian Siege of the Acropolis              | 27  |
| GIORGIA PROIETTI, Fare i conti con la guerra. Forme<br>del discorso civico ad Atene nel V secolo (con<br>uno sguardo all'età contemporanea) | 69  |
| BERND STEINBOCK, The Contested Memory of<br>Nicias after the Sicilian Expedition  | 109 |
| MIRKO CANEVARO, La memoria, gli oratori e il<br>pubblico nell'Atene del IV secolo a.C.  | 171 |
| MATTEO BARBATO, Using the Past to Shape the<br>Future: Ancestors, Institutions and Ideology in<br>Aeschin. 2.74-78                          | 213 |
| ELENA FRANCHI, La pace di Filocrate e l'enigma<br>della clausola focidese   | 255 |
| <i>Contributors</i>   | 289 |
| <i>Index of Ancient Sources</i>   | 293 |
| <i>General Index</i>  | 299 |

ELENA FRANCHI - GIORGIA PROIETTI

INTRODUCTION\*

1. *Remembering the Past, with an Eye to the Future: War Memorials, Inscriptions, and the Monumental Landscape*

That the future represents an important component of the Greeks' concept of *temporality* – viewed, according to its use in the social sciences, as the social conception and organization of time – emerges from several hints. The ancient Greeks turned to a variety of means to know the future, from astrology to oneiromancy, from ornithomancy to hieromancy, from dreams to oracles. Rites performed for the war dead – a social practice which had a striking importance in the Greek world – did not only represent an act of commemoration, but also an action for the future, meant to assuage the souls of the deceased. The same holds for the sacrifices dedicated to heroes and gods, which had the goal to achieve their future benevolence. The concern for the *post-mortem* fate of the dead is widely documented, as it gave rise to a variety of eschatological images and concepts. War memorials, political monuments, inscriptions, honorific decrees, public speeches such as the *logoi epitaphioi*, evoking the memory of the past, clearly conveyed messages which spoke to the future visitor, reader or listener.<sup>1</sup> There are even cases where

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\* Section 1 was written by Giorgia Proietti, section 2 by Elena Franchi. We wish to thank Bernd Steinbock for his valuable comments.

## 2. *Plotting the Future in the Forensic and Deliberative Arena*

In investigating the relevance of mediatic frameworks of memory on the one hand, and of the remembrance of war on the other,<sup>10</sup> I came across a speech given on July 3, 1982 by Margaret Thatcher at a Conservative Rally in Cheltenham in the aftermath of the Falklands War (a ten-week war between Argentina and the United Kingdom over two British overseas territories in the South Atlantic). I quote the most relevant passages:

Today we meet in the aftermath of the Falklands Battle. Our country has won a great victory and we are entitled to be proud. This nation had the resolution to do what it knew had to be done- to do what it knew was right. [...] Now that it is all over, things cannot be the same again for we have learned something about ourselves- a lesson which we desperately needed to learn. [...] The lesson of the Falklands is that Britain has not changed and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history. This generation can match their fathers and grandfathers in ability, in courage, and in resolution. We have not changed. When the demands of war and the dangers to our own people call us to arms – then we British are as we have always been: competent, courageous and resolute. [...] That is the Falklands Factor. We have proved ourselves to ourselves. It is a lesson we must not now forget. Indeed it is a lesson which we must apply to peace just as we have learned it in war. The faltering and the self-doubt has given way to achievement and pride. We have the confidence and we must use it. [...] All over Britain, men and women are asking – why can't we achieve in peace what we can do so well in war? [...] During this past week, I have read again a little known speech of Winston Churchill, made just after the last war. This is what he said: “We must find the means and the method of working together not only in times of war, and mortal anguish, but in times of peace, with all its bewilderments and clamour and clatter of tongues.”<sup>11</sup>

Later in the same speech, Thatcher contrasts the excellent performance of the soldiers with the rail workers' strikes. It seems quite clear that her speech represents the Falklands War

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<sup>10</sup> The results are forthcoming in Franchi 2018a and 2018b, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Thatcher 1982, *passim*.

by using the templates of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War in order to revive the national military myth and, furthermore, that this representation is used, in turn, to plot future scenarios in favour of the interests of the nation.<sup>12</sup> Recently, some pioneering studies have started investigating similar dynamics with reference to ancient historiographical, literary, epigraphical, and archaeological media.<sup>13</sup> Thatcher's discourse has led me to wonder if another valuable *milieu* where specific versions of the past and of past conflicts were articulated in order to plot some future scenarios is the forensic and deliberative arena- in ancient history, too.

The orator's attitude towards the past has been extensively investigated so far.<sup>14</sup> Recent studies have shown that by recalling past events orators always had their audiences' expectations in mind.<sup>15</sup> This does not imply that the Attic orations are to be dismissed as sources for history: indeed, they often are our only source for oral memories otherwise not available in written sources.<sup>16</sup> Yet, one has to take possible manipulations<sup>17</sup> into account and, more generally, the performative framework, which in turn influenced the orator's use of the past, both intentionally and unintentionally.<sup>18</sup> It is usually assumed that the orators using the past were well aware of the fact that their audience shared the memory they

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<sup>12</sup> See Danilova 2015, 20ff.

<sup>13</sup> Kullmann 1992; Ulf 2003; Holtoff-Howard 2006; Luraghi 2010; Kamash 2016. See above, n. 5.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Perlman 1961; Nouhaud 1982; Harding 1987; Thomas 1989, 101-102; Todd 1990; Worthington 1994; Milns 1995; Paulsen 1999; Bearzot 2008, 87; Clarke 2008, 245-303; Grethlein 2010, 132; Canevaro 2013; Steinbock 2013, 73; Franchi 2015; 2016, 138-168 and 252-268.

<sup>15</sup> Bearzot 2008, 87; Grethlein 2010, 132; Barbato and Canevaro in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Thomas 1989, 101-102; Clarke 2008, 245-303; Steinbock 2013, 73; Canevaro in this volume.

<sup>17</sup> Perlman 1961; Nouhaud 1982; Harding 1987; Worthington 1994; Milns 1995; Paulsen 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Harding 1987; Todd 1990.



conveyed.<sup>19</sup> What is more, according to latest research, the orators consider the extent to which a specific memory was shared and tried to make the best out of their knowledge of possible gaps between their own memory and that of their audience: this allowed them to better sustain specific present needs.<sup>20</sup> Three papers of this volume try to go further and investigate the way in which orators exploited this gap by playing not only with the past but also with their audience's expectations and fears for the future.<sup>21</sup>

Canevaro's essay discusses the Attic orators' allusion to shared cultural and historical memory. His point is that orators purport to be learned and acquainted with the cultural memory of the city because they were expected to be knowledgeable about the past as every Athenian citizen had to be: Aeschin. 1.141 and 3.135 on the memory of ancient poems by the community are particularly representative examples. This 'shared' memory partly explains the orators' specific attitude towards the past and the ways in which they frequently evoke past event. Yet – and this is the most stimulating part of the paper – this memory is not completely shared: there is a gap between the knowledge of the orator and the knowledge of his audience, one or more forgotten parts that are missing points in a shared memory landscape. By counting on this gap the orator pushed his way through in order to freely shape these black holes – they are in fact open plots! Canevaro discusses many passages supporting this view, all of them showing that by introducing a past event through expressions like “as you [Athenians] know” the orators recalls a past event which everyone remembers, albeit only superficially, and this allows them to invent details and sell them as truth and part of a

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas 1989; Ober 1989.

<sup>20</sup> See Clarke 2008, 245-303; Morstein-Marx 2004; Canevaro in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> To my knowledge the tendency of the orators to construct the past with an eye to the future was neglected so far (with few exceptions, see e.g. Hesk 2009 or Greenwood 2016, 88-91).

common understanding: D. 22.15 on a conflict against Sparta (374 BC?) and D. 15.9-10 on the liberation of Samos by Timotheus are particularly enlightening. But there is more. By filling open slots with invented details and fitting them into an alleged shared construction orators were able to heavily influence the community's future expectations. By recalling old events and commemoration practices regarding individuals such as Themistocles and Miltiades and their role in conflicts, Demosthenes (D. 23.196-210) evoked what Jonas Grethlein defined as the 'plupast', i.e. events which took place prior to their narrative's proper past (in this case, the affair of Aristocrates and Charidemus):<sup>22</sup> this 'plupast' had a specific function in Demosthenes' rhetorical strategy, i.e. to change future commemorative attitudes and expectations of war of the Athenians.

The ancestors' ideological weight is also Barbato's subject. The orators' trend to exhort their audience to imitate their forefathers' deeds and follow their example runs the risk of making Athenians' future policies constantly re-enact past decisions and deeds that were glorious but sometimes also wrong. Yet orators were themselves able to avoid this risk and to evoke the 'plupast' as a reservoir of both positive and negative examples. One of Barbato's case-studies is Aeschines' speech *On the embassy*. A seminal article by Bernd Steinbock highlighted how Aeschines here in fact launched a memory of the past competing with the prevalent one. Barbato goes further and draws attention to the institutional context of the speech. In both the assembly and the law courts the past was instrumental in guiding future choices and behaviour; to be effective, the representation of the past had to reflect, at least in part, the discursive parameters of this specific venue. By counter charging Demosthenes who portrayed his opponent as challenging the past glory of Athens (19.15-16) Aeschines pointed out that he not only encouraged the Athenians to

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<sup>22</sup> Grethlein-Krebs 2012, 2ff.

emulate their ancestors' *eubolia*, but also warned them not to imitate their mistakes and untimely *philonikia* (2.74-78). Whereas the victory against the Persians and Tolmides' march into the Peloponnese were positive examples, the Sicilian expedition and the refusal of Sparta's peace terms were negative ones – both the orator and his audience know the negative aftermaths of these last events – they are a shared knowledge of futures past in Grethlein's sense.<sup>23</sup> both orator and audience evaluated these events in the light of later events still anterior to them. A representation of the past mixing positive and negative examples is likely to be familiar to the assembly where it was not unusual to discuss past mistakes (Barbato cites D. 1.8-9 and 3.5) that were perceived as a lesson for the future and therefore influenced policy-making.

The speeches *On the False Embassy* and *On the Embassy* are also Franchi's focus. She mostly concentrates on Demosthenes' speech and investigates how he tried to influence Athenian future policies regarding the Macedonians by shaping the memory of the negotiations leading to the Peace of Philocrates and the fate of the Phocians. Scholarship is divided about the inclusion of the Phocians, which according to some were explicitly excluded with a specific clause. Franchi reconsiders the whole question by taking into account the historical, legal, performative and memorial context of the peace negotiations. According to Demosthenes, the Phocian question was discussed in different contexts: the embassies, the council and the assembly. The two most important audiences addressed by the orator were the assembly, where he pleaded for the Phocians (346), and a selection of *dikastai* (343), whom he reminded of his plea for the Phocians and charged Aeschines of having deceived both the Phocians and the Athenians. These two different debate contexts of the Phocian question trigger different modes of remembering and thus lead to the

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<sup>23</sup> Grethlein 2013, 1-2 (and, for the concept, Koselleck 2004); Grethlein 2014; 2016.

construction of memories which were shared on different levels and with different degrees of familiarity. The clause *πλήν Ἀλέων καὶ Φωκέων* is likely to have been debated in the assembly in 346, whose members may coincide with the *dikastai* of the 343-trial in the context of a typical *euthynai* proceeding and therefore can remember what was debated and what was not. But other Phocian clauses quoted by Demosthenes as being surreptitiously added by Philocrates and Aeschines during the embassy, were invented in order to get Aeschines into trouble and to promote Demosthenes' own policy. By exaggerating the mistreatment and alleged deceit of the Phocians, Demosthenes shaped the past in order to instil fear of the future, esp. of future wars, in the Athenians, who ran the risk of being deceived in the same way as the Phocians had been. The same recurrent phrases, applied both to the Phocians and to the Athenians, provided the Athenians with a useful frame of reference and featured their way to plot their future in a way that *mutatis mutandis* is similar to the one highlighted by Ulf in the Homeric epos or by Luraghi in Greek honorary decrees of the Hellenistic Age.<sup>24</sup> Again, the construction of narratives of the past shows itself to be shaped by expectations of the future.

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<sup>24</sup> Ulf 2003, esp. 279ff; Luraghi 2010 (see above, n. 5). See also Kullmann 1992, who however concentrates on the future's awareness of the events in the epic plot, and Chaniotis 2013 (on the adhortative function in inscriptions).

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