

# Greek oratory and rhetoric with a selection of original texts: from Homer's oral culture of rhetoric to the conceptualised rhetoric of Aristotle

## Summary

The title of the book suggests that the author deals with rhetoric perceived as art (*techne*) as well as the history of Ancient Greek oratory, starting from the rhetoric culture contained in Homer's epics up to the Ancient Athenian orators of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. The book is divided into three parts. In part one the author analyses the development of Ancient Greek rhetoric and she locates there the orators presented by Homer with a reservation that in this kind of epic, rhetoric is not yet conceived of as the art of argument, i.e. *techne*, which requires standardized formulae and rules that are taught at school and then followed in practice. The author argues that rhetoric evolved from the oral tradition and is characterized by the prohibition on withdrawing beyond the 'living' word. Moreover, Homer's epics constitute the key link, without which the conceptualisation of rhetoric in the classic period would be almost unthinkable.

The aim of the first chapter is to present rhetoric as art and as it was conceived above all by Aristotle, who was then followed by the whole antiquity of the Greek and Roman period. The author describes the three main cornerstones of rhetoric understood as art, i.e. *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* and highlights their different functions within a particular oratory (speech). In analysing the definition of rhetoric formulated by Aristotle, the author also draws references to the relationships between rhetoric and dialectics as well as links with ethical studies that Aristotle referred to as politics. A broad perspective on Aristotle's rhetoric is applied and three types of speech are characterised, i.e. deliberative, forensic and epideictic.

The author points to the process through which oral culture gives way to the literate culture, which paves the way for the conceptualization of rhetoric. She also makes references to the art of improvisation, whose proponents shared their principles in written form. With reference to rhetoric as *techne*, the author is interested in the speeches of ancient Greek orators which have survived up to the present and the compendia similar to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, as well as introductory exercises, called *progymnasmata*. The part devoted to the scope of the notion "rhetoric" also includes an attempt to define the role of rhetoric in contemporary culture. The author argues

that rhetoric is a means of describing the world through the use of language. But it is also an attempt at working out a social understanding, i.e. a *consensus*, which is a guarantee of adherence to social norms, and a great achievement of European culture.

Chapter Two serves a different purpose, i.e. it chronicles the development of Greek oratory, starting from the rhetoric practice on Sicily and argument from probability that was invented at that time, *eikos*, through the sophists' contribution to the development of rhetorical argumentation, especially the evolution of the artistic prose of Gorgias. It finally covers the peak of Ancient Greek oratorical art in three rhetorical types: the forensic speech of Lysias, the deliberative speech of Demosthenes and Isocrates' genre, a combination of epideictic and deliberative speech. The presentation of the Attic orators finishes with those lesser known, e.g. Aeschines, Hypereides, Lycurgus, Dinarchus and Isaeus, who belong to the so-called Attic Orators. The author claims that in literate culture, the orator replaced the *aoidos* (a singer), retaining all the privileges endowed on the person who was engaged in the art of oral poetry. Oratory was the tool of influence over the psyche of the audience, which found its expression in the term *psychagogics*.

Since oratory dominated social and political life in ancient Athens, it also became the subject of Plato and Aristotle's works. In Chapter Three, the author discusses Plato's critique of Sophists' rhetoric and at the same time presents his own attempts at rhetoric skill in the form of *The Apology of Socrates* (forensic speech) and *Menexenus* (epideictic speech). In the case of Plato what becomes clear to the reader is the clash of oral culture with literacy and Socrates' important role in creating the notions thanks to which rhetoric could finally be conceptualized as art, i.e. *techné* by Aristotle, who was Plato's student. With regard to Aristotle, the author discusses all three means of persuasion, ethical i.e. *ethos*, emotional, *pathos* and logical, *logos* in all the three kinds of rhetoric. In the case of logos, the author discusses two types of argument: exemplification, i.e. inductive proof and enthymeme, i.e. rhetorical syllogism (deductive proof). The structure of Aristotle's work is also presented together with both the differences and points of convergence in the way that Plato and Aristotle treat rhetoric. The author highlights the fact that rhetoric, which is strongly antagonistic, engaged a new technology, i.e. writing, and in this way turned itself into art and provided the foundations upon which to build an mysterious edifice of stylistic means and sculpt the *topoi* (common places). However, it never withdrew completely from the culture of speech; on the contrary, by virtue of its using memory techniques, it turned back towards the culture of speech.

In Part Two the author discusses the five canons of rhetoric, known in Latin as *partes artis*: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. The first three belong to the architecture of expression, with the sequence being of significance – from invention to dressing the words in elocution. However, the culture of speech is connected with the technique of memory and the art of delivery, which engages non-verbal means such as facial expressions, voice gestures, modulation and the acting skills of the orator.

The canon of invention deals with what the Romans conveyed by *res* (*things*), while the canon of elocution refers to *verba*, *the words*. The section on arrangement contains an in-depth discussion of the syntax and the construction of the four fundamental parts of dialogue: narration, presenting the background and facts, proof of the conten-

tion of the speaker and conclusion. The section on style includes a discussion of the fundamental stylistic tools, tropes and rhetorical figures and also the three means of persuasion distinguished by Aristotle.

Part Three comprises examples of Gorgias and Isocrates' four Greek dialogues. They represent forensic, epideictic, oratory, and precisely paraenetic. All translations into Polish are those of the author, Krystyna Tuszyńska.

The book closes with an index of the terminology used by the author in relating the history of rhetoric and the practice of oratory.