

Stevenson, T. (ed.) 2022. *Polemic in Ancient Historiography, Literature, and Culture*. *Acta Classica Supplementum XI*. Pretoria: Classical Association of South Africa. Pp. xiv + 326. ISSN 0065-1141 / ISBN 978-0-620-98648-9. US\$32.00, £24.00 (international); ZAR460 (South Africa).

This impressive collection offers fresh insights into the important role played by polemic in shaping ancient historiography, literatures, and cultures across a wide range of historical periods and genres. Tom Stevenson's 'Introduction' (pp.1-10) outlines the volume's ambition to move beyond the conventional view of polemic as attacks *ad hominem*, traditionally viewed in the context of cultures which privileged controversy and competition, towards an understanding of polemic as a controversial technique possessing creative agency with the potential to perpetuate rather than terminate debates. In this regard, therefore, the collection may be judged to have successfully achieved its goal as the overarching impression of all its individual contributions is that polemic was the primary force responsible for generating new forms of knowing and knowledge, as well as influencing debates well beyond the end of antiquity. The volume is arranged into a number of sections according to literary genre and historical period and includes sections on polemic in Greek culture, Greek historiography, Republican Rome, Imperial Rome, and Late Antiquity. The overall impression is a well-produced volume offering a host of both general and specific insights into the very important role played by disputatious and controversial debate in the cultures of antiquity.

The opening chapters of the opening section ('Polemic in Greek culture') serve as the outliers for the volume in the sense that they deal with polemic's influence on ancient philosophy (Dougal Blyth, 'The uses of polemic in Ancient Philosophy', pp. 11-29) and on the sacred landscape of Greek religion (Michael Scott, 'Polemic in Greek Art and Architecture', pp. 30-44) rather than polemic in literature and historiography. Both chapters demonstrate with considerable effectiveness the creative, constructive role of polemic in shaping a range of ancient discourses, in the case of Blyth's chapter the role of polemic in legitimising philosophy as rational inquiry, and in the case of Scott's chapter the role of polemic in shaping the memorialisation of dedicatory parties' participation in the Persian Wars of 480-479 BCE at the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi.

The volume proceeds to offer three sections dealing with polemic in Greek and Roman historiography. The chapters in the first section ('Greek Historiography') by Tom Stevenson and Paul Burton offer detailed and thoughtful reflections on the response of Greek historians to the place of

polemic in historiographical narratives. Stevenson's chapter ('Polemic in Herodotus and Thucydides', pp. 45-59) on polemic in the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides presents a compelling argument for seeing polemic as central to the emergent genre of historiography, while Burton's contribution ('Polemic in Polybius', pp. 60-75) on Polybius' *Histories* performs a valuable role in evaluating both the author's use of polemic and the extent to which Polybius' polemic towards his rivals may be used to measure his own effectiveness as a historian.

Moving on to Roman historiography and literature, Stevenson's central contribution as both editor of the volume and contributor is further enhanced by his opening essay in the following section ('Republican Rome') where he performs a valuable service in revising traditional assumptions about the place of polemic in annalistic historiography, specifically in the work of Livy ('Polemic in Livy', pp. 76-93). Marcus Wilson's chapter ('Two polemics in want of a history: Sallust and Cicero', pp. 94-116) on the reciprocal invectives of Sallust and Cicero as the first essay in the section on 'Imperial Rome' offers an engaging discussion about the appeal of polemic to ancient audiences, specifically the 'fitness or unfitness' (p. 108) of polemic in Roman historiography. Lindsay Wilson and Pat Watson's chapter ('Literary Polemic in Martial', pp. 117-33) on polemic in Martial provides a series of fascinating insights into the role of polemic in epigrammatic poetry, specifically Martial's self-referential use of polemic to defend and promote his work and the genre to which it belonged. Arthur Pomeroy's chapter ('Polemic in Tacitus', pp. 134-49) assesses the place of polemic in the work of Tacitus. Pomeroy skilfully argues the case for Tacitus' strategic deployment of polemic against both the imperial elite and the senatorial class against the backdrop of a society plagued by the memories of civil conflict. Kathryn Welch ('Excavating Polemic? Cicero in Appian's *Civil Wars*' (pp. 150-64) contributes a valuable piece on the role of polemic in Appian's *Civil Wars* and demonstrates the plasticity of polemic in either defaming and/or rehabilitating notable individuals (in this case, Cicero) as demanded by the immediate circumstances of the author. Jesper Madsen's analysis ('Freedom from democracy: Cassius Dio's polemical tale of the horror Late Republican politics', pp. 165-82) of Cassius Dio's Severan-era *Roman History* brings this section to a close and contributes a very insightful discussion of Dio's manipulation of polemic in his portrayal of the senatorial class in the time of Octavian Augustus. Madsen's essay serves as a coda for the three historiographic sections of the volume since it draws attention clearly to the frequent role which polemic served in promoting, either openly or opaquely, an author's political agenda whilst also serving to promote the idea that their own contributions were authoritative and thereby definitive.

The final section of the volume examines polemic in a series of late antique-era authors. John Hilton's excellent chapter ('Greek literature in a time of conflict: the emperor Julian as a writer of polemic', pp. 183-204) surveys the writings of the emperor Julian, an author for whom polemic was central to the promotion of his literary and imperial personae. Hilton skilfully dissects the different forms of polemic utilised by Julian against a range of opponents, be they individuals with whom he *should* have shared a natural sympathy (Cynic philosophers), or against those he was squarely opposed to but with whom he tried to find common ground (Jews; Christians). A focus on the imperial legacy of Julian is continued by Ben Garstad who contributes a significant essay ('Polemic as history and Julian as Alexander in the *Chronicle* of Malalas', pp. 205-26) on the fifth-century CE *Chronicle* of John Malalas. Garstad reveals through an examination of Malalas' portrayal of Alexander of Macedon a Christian polemic about Julian and his legacy and in so doing demonstrates that the Alexandrian episode, which has been viewed as an instance of Malalas' historical errancy, is in truth an ingenious polemical slight against Julian. Michael Charles and Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides' study of Claudian's *In Eutropium* ('Polemical poetry in Late Antiquity: the rise of a eunuch consul in book 1 of Claudian's *In Eutropium*', pp. 227-44) revisits one of the most famous polemics of the period and contributes new insight into the philosophical polemic utilised by Claudian to portray the eunuch consul Eutropius as a monstrous figure. The authors intelligently situate this portrayal in the fragmented circumstances facing the later empire at the turn of the fifth century. Anna Lankina's chapter ('Heresy and polemic: reassessing the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians of Late Antiquity', pp. 245-64) offers a valuable discussion of the ecclesiastical histories of the Theodosian-era. Instead of classifying the histories of the period along sectarian lines (*i.e.* Christian vs. Pagan; Nicene vs. 'Arian'), Lankina brings the authors into dialogue with one another over a variety of topics, notably the destruction of religious sites. In this regard, the polemical concerns of these authors derived from shared concerns and commonly reached similar conclusions in spite of their well-known ideological differences. The political orientation of polemic is illustrated with considerable skill by Michael Edward Stewart in his chapter ('Bashing Belisarius: polemical characterizations in Procopius' *Secret History*', pp. 265-84) on the *Secret History* by Procopius. Stewart's close reading of the text demonstrates Procopius' mastery of polemic as a rhetorical and moralising tool, notably in the way that Procopius manipulated the reputations of key individuals (notably, Belisarius) but also his own authorial reputation. The final chapter in the late-antique section by Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos ('Crucifictions and pizza parlors: fragments of a polemic from Socrates of Constantinople's *Ecclesiastical History*', pp. 285-

304) traces the longevity of ancient polemic and demonstrates the political potency of polemical motifs from Late Antiquity in modern debates about politics and cultural identity. Falcasantos traces the appearance of the story of the Christian child crucified by Jews in Syrian Inmestar from Socrates of Constantinople's *Ecclesiastical History* through to its use in far-right social media propaganda during the 2016 US election cycle. Falcasantos expertly investigates the different historic circumstances underpinning the appearances of the story, whilst also reinforcing that the episode in Socrates' narrative was utilised primarily to promote an aggressive Christian hegemony over the Jewish communities of Late Antiquity.

To reiterate, therefore, this is a well-produced and deeply insightful collection of essays. It should prove to be of interest to all historians of antiquity and it is hoped that it will serve as one of the main points of entry into the study of polemic for many years to come.

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