

REVIEW

ACTIO IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Isabel Moreno and Roberto Nicolai, edd., *La representación de la actio en la historiografía griega y latina*. SemRom: Seminari romani di cultura greca. Quaderni 21. Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2016. Pp. 169. Paperback, €31.00. ISBN 978-88-7140-695-4.

This volume is the noteworthy outcome of a project conceived at Salamanca: it is a collection of essays focusing on the representation of *actio* mainly in, but not limited to, Greek and Latin historiography. Needless to say, the importance of this aspect of the genre, stressed by both Greek and Latin rhetorical treatises, attracted the attention of a range of scholars who have devoted their study to shedding light on this topic in different fields of ancient literature.¹ In his concise Introduction, David Konstan (9–13) outlines the current research trends relating to speech performance emerging from Greek and Latin writings, underlining the relevant results reached so far with regard to delivery in Greek and Latin drama, oratory, and poetry. The main aim of this book is, therefore, to fill the gap left by scholars as far as the performance of speech in historiography is concerned. The articles collected in this volume explore the role of delivery mostly in Greek and Latin historiographical works written from the classical period of Greece down to the fourth century AD and try to reconstruct the ways in which the words of politicians, generals, and emperors were accompanied by gestures, facial expressions, and even bodily movements.

In the first article of the volume ('Narrative Settings and *actio* in Greek Historiography: The Thucydidean Model', 15–28), Juan Carlos Iglesias-Zoido shows how important the role of narrative settings in Thucydides' *History* is in providing the reader with clues about the *actio* of the speeches given by some of its main characters. After defining the term 'setting' as those words or phrases used by Thucydides to introduce and close a discourse, Iglesias-Zoido explores the information about the speech that the setting is able to give. For instance, it appears as a useful tool for the writer to specify the context in which the speech is given, to describe the most relevant personal qualities of the orator, as well as the objectives he wants to reach by means of his words, and, above all, to clarify the way in which the speech is delivered. Firstly, Iglesias-Zoido underlines the importance of the verbs

¹ Cf. Roberto Nicolai's concluding considerations to this volume (147–50).

employed to introduce the discourse—above all λέγω, παραινέω, and παρακελεύω. Despite the modern tendency to classify the speeches by genre according to the different ideas conveyed by each of these verbs, Iglesias-Zoido recommends avoiding this anachronistic approach, emphasising instead the context in which the speech is executed. He gives several examples to back up his statement, successfully demonstrating that, although some speeches belong to the same genre, they may correspond to a completely different oratorical context, as can be seen by comparing the two passages at 2.86.6 and 2.88.3. Further information given by Thucydides in some instances is also useful to make the reader aware not only of the tone of the speech, but also of the movement and the intensity of the voice of the orators. Iglesias-Zoido draws attention to two types of military harangues: those delivered in the midst of battle (especially in 4.11.4 and 7.70.7) and during the *epipólesis* (4.95, 6.68, 7.69.2, and 7.77). Finally, he clarifies that in some cases the setting allows Thucydides to make clever allusions to Homeric heroes in order to present as ideal a character particularly appreciated by the historian for his military virtues, as can be seen, for example, at 4.12.1. Besides elucidating the functions of the particular setting in Thucydides' *History*, the main merit of Iglesias-Zoido's study is in its demonstration of the importance of these Thucydidean sections as far as delivery features are concerned and, therefore, of the contribution they can give us to help visualise and reconstruct, to some extent, the *actio* of these speeches.

Directing his gaze towards another historian, Roberto Nicolai's study ('Solone sulla tribuna: le testimonianze degli oratori e di Plutarco', 29–44) intends to cast light on the way in which Solon performed his speeches in front of an audience, and tries to highlight some features of his *actio* by means of data drawn from sources which were all written, unfortunately, at least two centuries after Solon's death. However, before focusing on the main topic, Nicolai devotes the first part of his contribution to outlining the character as he was represented by Plutarch in his *Life of Solon*, paying most attention to episodes where the importance of gestures in both Solon's private and public life clearly emerges. Nonetheless, none of these is related to an oratorical context, which is the focus of the second section of Nicolai's study. Indeed, taking into account a passage from Aeschines' *Contra Timarchum* (1.25–6) and another from Demosthenes' *De falsa legatione* (19.251–2), Nicolai shows how ancient orators were imagined (whether or not accurately) while giving a speech by their fourth-century BC colleagues. After a third section focused on some of the most representative fifth-century Athenian politicians' *actio*, reconstructed mostly through Plutarch's biography, Nicolai goes back to Solon and, in particular, to his 'Salamis' elegy. The question as to whether Solon performed this poem in the ἀγορά or in a

symposium is the crucial aspect of the last section of the article, although the worthy attempt to sketch a draft of the statesman's way of performing a speech in public encounters some difficulties in achieving the author's goal due to the inadequacy of the sources on which we can rely.

In his essay (“Premièrement l'*actio*, deuxièmement l'*actio*, troisièmement l'*actio*”. Sur la réception d'une formule prêtée à Démosthène', 45–63), Laurent Pernot directs the reader's attention to an expression traditionally attributed to Demosthenes, though not found in any of his writings, in which the orator clearly highlights the overwhelming importance of the *actio* when performing a speech. Beginning with the episode found in Cicero's *de Oratore*, in which Crassus refers to the authoritative Demosthenic ideal according to which the *actio* ‘has the first, the second, and the third place’ in oratory (*de Orat.* 3.213), Pernot tries, on the one hand, to retrace the stages of transmission and reception of this saying and, on the other, to bring out the real meaning and structure of this sentence. His study stands out both for the quality of the essay itself and for the accuracy in selecting the sources used to reconstruct the context in which this expression would have been pronounced, taking into account texts from Cicero's time up to Late Antiquity, and even to the sixteenth century. Furthermore, two appendices at the end of the article are especially useful. Indeed, one of these contains all the references on which Pernot focused for this study, embracing a temporal frame of seventeen centuries (from the first century BC to the sixteenth century AD), while the second appendix provides the reader with a brief overview of the structure of the sentence itself as it has been differently quoted by the authors.

Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas' chapter (*Actio y oratoria en la Antegüedad tardía y práctica de la retórica performativa*, 65–76) is particularly enlightening, casting light on the practice of *actio* and its cultural implications in Late Antiquity. It pays close attention to the fourth century as a period of transition not only from a historical point of view, but also as far as religion and culture are concerned. Indeed, passing from worshipping many gods to monotheist practice had consequences that went beyond merely the religious, influencing in fact nearly all aspects of culture, including oratory. The orator of the Classical Age, in fact, is no longer suitable in the renewed socio-political environment, and there is thus a need to re-engineer an oratory which meets the new audience's tastes and expectations. Puertas' investigation is based on fourth-century texts containing episodes of speech deliveries, in order to prove that the *actio* turned into a powerful catalyst, which enables us to enquire into the cultural and political rivalries of that time as well as providing us with the opportunity to perceive the slow conforming process of oratory to the cultural and religious orthodoxy. Initially, Quiroga Puertas focuses on the work of Libanius of Antioch, where

the sophist outlines the main features of his own oratory, emphasising the role of gestural expressiveness and bodily movements when delivering a speech (*Or.* 1.76; 64.74). He then draws attention to the revolutionary approach of some of the most prominent exponents of Christianity, such as Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo, whose contributions were very influential on the practice of *actio*. In keeping with the principle of *simplicitas* that characterises Christ's evangelical message, they proposed an oratory intent on teaching rather than entertaining. Clearly, not all Christians welcomed this suggestion and persisted in acting their speeches according to traditional precepts, causing them to be labelled as sophists or as heretics, as happened, for example, to Paul of Samosata. Through the study of this transformation from traditional *rhetor* to *orator Christianus*, Quiroga Puertas manages to outline the radical change which occurred in a cultural code that had looked to the oratory of a bygone time, a time which was now considered unsuitable to the new religious and, by extension, cultural values.

Seemingly detached from the main topic of this volume, Guillermo Aprile ('Lo spettacolo della diplomazia: narrazioni di ambascerie in Oriente nella storiografia latina di epoca imperiale', 77–90) focuses on episodes of embassies in the East which are found in the Latin historiography of the Early and Late Empire. Aprile's choice is in fact very much in line with the spirit of the book, considering that one of the most important features of embassies was precisely a spectacular oratorical performance, especially for those that took place in the Eastern part of the Empire. After all, as a diplomatic orator, the ambassador used to deliver his speech following the pattern of the traditional *actio*. Of the texts in which accounts of diplomatic missions occur, Aprile draws on passages from the historiographical works of Livy (32.32.10–16; 35.31–2; 45.20.4–5), Curtius Rufus (*Hist.* 7.8–12), and Ammianus Marcellinus (*RG* 30.6). Although few passages are taken into account in this contribution, Aprile manages to provide the reader with a detailed outline of the issue. For instance, the ambassador had to worry about the *pronuntiatio* of his speech to the same extent as any orator, and, for this reason, he needed also to make sure that his toga, his shoes, and even his hairstyle were appropriate for his role. It is clear that the brevity of the article does not allow the overall topic to be treated comprehensively. Nonetheless, Aprile's contribution can by all means be considered a spur to re-reading texts that contain reports of embassies, in order to enrich what it is already known about rhetorical *actio*.

Whilst Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* is taken into account by Aprile as one of the sources used for his article, Jesús Bartolomé's study ('La *actio* en las arengas de Livio: puesta en escena, representación y espectáculo', 91–101) gives it centre stage. In particular, Bartolomé pays attention to the passages where exhortation speeches are delivered by commanders to their armies shortly

before or during battle. *Actio* plays a crucial role in scenes in which theatricality appears as a crucial factor. The article consists of three well-defined sections, each of which is dedicated to a specific aspect of these passages. In the first part, Bartolomé examines the scenery frame in which the *actiones* of the commanders are inserted, mostly highlighting Livy's ability to provide the reader with an eidetic representation of the accounts. For instance, the *mise-en-scène* of most speeches seems to follow a regular pattern consisting of: a reference to the reason for the speech (e.g., soldiers' fear and worries); the place where the speech is given; the gesture of the speaker; and the reaction of the audience. The second section deals with references, whether extra-discursive or intra-discursive, to the presentation of the speech as a performance. Bartolomé takes as an example the speech delivered by Scipio Africanus to his army before the battle of Zama (30.32). Before letting the Roman general speak, Livy describes him physically and psychologically, emphasising the theatricality of Scipio's words. Thirdly, Bartolomé points out the strategies employed by Livian generals to produce vivid images—above all, of the forthcoming victory or of the glorious past of Rome—in their soldiers' minds, in order to push them bravely into battle. He thus focuses particularly on the *evidentia*, that is, the clearest feature of the military *actio* seen as a theatrical performance (10.39; 21.40, 43; 26.41; 38.17). In his conclusion, Bartolomé underlines how the theatricality of these Livian excerpts are very much in line with the essence of historiography itself, one of the main aims of which is, by dramatically representing them and their heroic feats, to inspire Roman readers to follow in their ancestors' footsteps.

The inclusion of 'Palabra, gesto y texto en la *Eneida*' by José Carlos Fernández Corte (103–16) in a volume otherwise entirely devoted to *actio* in Greek and Latin historiography may appear a bit of a stretch. Nevertheless, both the good quality of this article and the fact that the *Aeneid* can be considered as a quasi-historical poem justify its presence in this book. Starting from the aural dimension of the *Aeneid*, Fernández Corte's study shows the way in which pragmatic aspects related to communication have an impact on poetic exposition and allow, therefore, a new approach to considering the style of the text. With attention mostly on those sections where direct discourse is employed, the author focuses particularly on two passages from *Aen.* 6; namely, where Vergil passes the narrative baton on to some of the characters involved in the scene. The first passage considered is that in which Charon reacts aggressively once he sees Aeneas and the Sibyl wanting to cross the River Styx to visit the Underworld (6.384–416), while the other is the famous scene in which the Trojan hero encounters Dido's shade, who refuses to talk to him, and avoids even meeting his gaze (6.450–5, 465–76). Although differing in content, the two excerpts share some common traits concerning pragmatic communication. For instance, in both cases the

emotions show themselves through the words spoken by the characters, but would also have needed to be displayed plainly by their gesture and facial expressions. However, as Fernández Corte clearly underlines, unlike drama, the epic code does not allow the characters to enrich their speech with facial expressions and gestures while speaking. As a result, the poet gives information about his characters' *actio* directly before or after the speech itself. Considering the question from this point of view, Fernández Corte explains how the role of these explanatory sections is important in order to outline the manners, the intention, and sometimes even the identity of the speaking character who can also answer silently simply in their actions, as is eventually the case in Dido's episode.

Aligning herself with Corte's choice of extending the research beyond the strictly historiographical, Isabel Gómez Santamaría ('Príncipe y comunicación no verbal en el panegírico latino', 117–30) examines some passages drawn from the *Panegyrici Latini*, with the aim of casting light on the crucial role played by the non-verbal communication (NVC) of the *princeps* in this genre of texts. Her article is divided into three parts: the first discusses the methodology adopted to investigate this issue, while the second and third deal with dynamic and static NVC respectively. Borrowing from Ekman and Friesen² the definition of exteriorising, regulatory, and adapting gestures, Gómez Santamaría looks at the issues that mark a sharp difference between dynamic and static NVC. In the first case, the emperor's regulatory gestures are seen as able to influence the orator's performance to such an extent that the panegyric itself seems to be adjusted while being delivered by the speaker who looks carefully for the *princeps*' movements (particularly, at *Paneg.* 2(12).44.3, 6(7).14.1, and 8(5).4.4). Furthermore, Gómez Santamaría also shifts the focus to the emperor's regulatory gestures in different contexts, from public speech (*Plin. Pan.* 67.1) to the consul's oath-taking ceremony (*Plin. Pan.* 3(11).30.2; 64.2) and the *adoratio* (*Paneg.* 3(11).28.3; 5(8).1.3). She then deals with the *princeps*' adaption of gestures in semi-public contexts (such as those inserted in *Aus. Grat. Act.* 55 and in *Paneg.* 2(12)44.2). Moreover, for static NVC, the emperor's communicative signals are completely assigned to his posture and his facial expressions, as can be observed in *Paneg.* 6(7).17, 8(5).19.3, and 11(3).11. Considering the difficulties involved in trying exhaustively to outline the features of visual data in written texts, Gómez Santamaría's work has the great merit of clearly highlighting the relevance of the attention given by the orators to the emperor's NVC description in the panegyrics. For instance, far from being just a marginal detail in the development of oratorical performance, the reference to the *princeps*' NVC aims at creating a strongly ideologically marked image.

² P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, 'The Repertoire of Non-Verbal Behavior: Categories, Origins, Usage, and Codings', *Semiotica* 1 (1969) 49–98.

Isabel Moreno Ferrero introduces her study (*Actio* y alocuciones imperiales en las *Res Gestae* de Amiano', 131–46) with the awareness that Roman fourth-century historiography and, along with it, the features of public speeches found in this genre of texts, differ heavily from those written in Livy's or even in Tacitus' time, as a result of the well-known difference between the eras, mentioned above. In particular, she emphasises that in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus there are few discourses performed by some of the relevant characters, and the pattern of them overall is unvarying. Nevertheless, the emperor's *actio*—or, in many cases, his NVC—still plays a crucial role in assembling or disassembling the representation of the *princeps* himself. In fact, notwithstanding the scarcity and the monotony of the passages referring to *actiones* in the *RG*, Moreno Ferrero manages to cast new light on three relevant excerpts where emperors' words and gestures work together to build the image of the sovereign that Ammianus wanted to hand down to posterity. The first of them consists of two sections closely linked to each other (17.13 and 19.11), in which Constantius II is depicted giving a speech to his army and, all of a sudden, is interrupted by a barbarian who has thrown a shoe at him. The second passage deals with the *epipólesis* speech delivered by Julian to his soldiers before the battle against the Alamanni (16.12). In the third, Moreno Ferrero focuses more meticulously on the section of the *RG* where Valentinian makes a speech for his son's designation as Augustus (27.6). Although based on a different source, Ferrero's chapter is similar to Gómez Santamaría's study in that it clearly shows the extent to which the gesture, and along with it the *actio* more generally, contributes to the representation of emperors' behaviour or, at least, to the image of those *principes* whom the writer intends to present to posterity.

This volume is an inevitably partial, and yet very substantial, contribution to the study of delivery in Greek and Roman antiquity. In fact, the initial point of this work was a non-genre-specific approach by the contributors, who sought to overcome the barriers of literary genres by making use of evidence coming from non-historiographical texts (and thus with the aim of giving us a clear picture of the overall situation), and its results end up enriching our understanding of the performed word in Classical and Late Antiquity as a whole. Needless to say, considering both the intrinsic difficulties of the matter itself and the immense number of the historiographical writings that may be taken into account in a comprehensive investigation of this issue, this book cannot be considered exhaustive. However, as well as being an important contribution for its contents, the volume is undoubtedly

even worthier because of its pioneering spirit and its relevant methodological approach to the matter, which will hopefully encourage other scholars to continue the investigation of this difficult and fascinating theme.

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