Histos 15 (2021) XLI–LII

REVIEW–DISCUSSION

APPROACHES TO ANCIENT ETHNOGRAPHIC *TOPOI*

Michael Zerjadtke, ed., *Der ethnographische Topos in der Alten Geschichte: Annäherungen an ein omnipräsentes Phänomen*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2020. Pp. 164. Paperback, €40.00/£38.00. ISBN 978-3-515-12870-4.

This collection of articles, edited by Michael Zerjadtke (Helmut-Schmidt-Universität der Bundeswehr, Hamburg) is based on papers given at the University of Hamburg workshop 'Der Toposbegriff in der Alten Geschichte: Annäherung an ein omnipräsentes Phänomen' on 14 and 15 September 2018, organised by Zerjadtke. All but one of the papers of the workshop programme are included in the edited volume: the missing one is Holger Müller's 'Keltentopoi in Antike und Gegenwart'. As a whole, the collection has perhaps a somewhat tentative feel—but this may in the end be one of its strengths. As already anticipated in the introduction (e.g., 26; cf. 135), the volume cannot completely solve the problem of *topoi* in ancient history, but this is arguably something that no single volume could accomplish. Yet it goes a good way towards offering a varied sample of case studies that allow us to better distinguish some of the ways in which inherited, ethnographically framed details were handled in historiography, and how to judge their status as *topoi*. Of particular value is the volume's call for more rigorous contextualisation of inherited elements before declaring them 'topoi'. Before delving into the actual contents of the book, I would like to note a few issues of balance. Firstly, while the volume has taken very comprehensively into account the German side of scholarship and demonstrates a clear familiarity with Anglophone scholarship, one would have expected to see broader engagement with Francophone scholars. Another issue of representativeness: all the contributors of the volume are men, as were the original nine contributors to the Hamburg workshop.

As Zerjadtke notes in his introduction, 'Thematische Einführung: der Problemkomplex "Topos" und seine Facetten' (11–26), in scholarly parlance 'topos' is frequently used synonymously with 'stereotype', while 'cliché' is occasionally added to these or used in an overlapping way (21). His thematic introduction provides a review of the principal previous scholarly contributions on the topic, but it is also interested in pointing out that the dynamics of

ISSN: 2046-5963 2 June 2021

topoi have often been taken for granted in much of the previous scholarship on ancient ethnography—the 'storytelling about peoples' that had neither a name nor an independent generic existence in antiquity, but which can be detected as a register woven with equal ease into historiographical, geographical, and technical writing. Zerjadtke argues that the *topoi* have not been studied in a comprehensive way as a modality deserving attention in its own right. This is no mere straw man. To breezily call a repeatedly met theme a *topos* and assume that this is enough to account for its communicative function in each separate attestation is, naturally, quite insufficient.

What we call 'ancient ethnography' was, however, more than just a register allied to historiography and technical writing. It derived much of its power from its ability to use rhetorical forms to give utterance to the things that ancient audiences thought they knew about population groups—both their own and others'. Thus, the rhetoric of ethnography is of crucial importance, and accordingly Zerjadtke sets off from Aristotle's definition of *topos*, expanding the discussion to the broader use of *loci communes* in ancient rhetoric (14–18). Taking a wide and inclusive view at this point seems very judicious: gnomic and other forms of proverbial knowledge are demonstrated to be quite relevant to the epistemological processes of which *topoi* were also a part. A gnomic or aphoristic statement would often begin with a syllogism based on common knowledge, although it would usually proceed from this to introduce a counterintuitive element (15). In addition to the Aristotelian *endoxa*, enthymemes are also relevant to these processes, as they were explicitly advocated by Aristotle as forms of argument easily assimilable to 'unlearned' audiences and based on common knowledge.[1] The role of enthymeme in the ethnographic register of writing is still a largely unexplored question, but this volume will hold out many useful pointers in this direction, too. Introducing tensions into easily recognised *topoi* through the introduction of counter-intuitive details comes across as a favoured technique for engaging with their audience's expectations in many ethnographical descriptions.

As for Zerjadtke's declared need for a stricter delineation between 'topos', 'stereotype', and 'cliché', useful observations are offered in the introduction but the reader is still left feeling somewhat unsure, largely due to the comprehensive entanglement of these terms. 'Cliché', for instance, might have needed discussion in relation to 'topos' rather than 'stereotype' (22), even though Zerjadtke is surely right in discouraging its use when speaking about ancient ethnographical writing (26). Despite Walter Lippmann's coinage of the word 'stereotype' on the basis of a printing-press analogy, his own use made it clear

[1] Arist. *Rh.* 1357a16ff., 1295b22–6, 1419a18–19; related to his recommendation to use 'notions possessed by everybody' as modes of persuasion (1355a30).

that these mental constructs were features of opinion, not written communication.[2] This has been maintained fairly consistently in subsequent scholarship. 'Topos', on the other hand, is perhaps better suited as a term when discussing the written expressions of stereotypical thinking, as it has not been adopted into the toolkit of social psychology. But this still leaves out the question of whether 'ethnography' can be used in discussing both the ancient mental imagery about groups of people and the textual register of writing about them. Some scholars, such as Anthony Kaldellis, have distinguished between 'ethnography' and 'ethnology', where the former is the literary expression of the latter, the latter itself being a broader set of ideas, assumptions, and culturally shared knowledge about human groups.[3] Along similar lines, Christopher Krebs has used the term 'borealism' in the context of ancient literature when discussing the ideological and theoretical underpinnings that explained Greek and Roman ideas about northern peoples.[4] Ethnographical expressions of this assemblage of images and causative explanations are often—though not exclusively—literary, and in these cases *topoi* were commonly used to give utterance to (and take advantage of) the pre-existing iconosphere.

Another important facet of the question is how ancient elites, brought up with the literary classics and with worldviews that were undoubtedly shaped by *topoi* and other rhetorical devices they imbibed through their *paideia*, also looked at the surrounding world through these conventional patterns. The interaction flowed, it seems, both ways. Zerjadtke's delving into the social psychology of stereotyping does, like the studies of a handful of other scholars of ancient ethnography, demonstrate how comparisons and results from the field of social psychology can be of particular help in approaching the question of the usefulness of communicative shorthands about other population groups. Identity-formation processes affecting ingroup and outgroup categorisation are certainly relevant to the questions of this volume, as it relocates stereotypes into their place as mental and social artefacts. *Topoi* are the literary manifestations of such speech acts. Zerjadtke argues that this makes *topoi* partly based on real cultural differences between groups of people. But perceptions of difference are every bit as important as actual lived differences, and clichéd perceptions no doubt formed mutually reinforcing links with literary clichés in ancient ingroup communication. From this it seems to follow that the 'reality' (as a quality of referring to the conditions in the physical world, as opposed to the social world of the mind) of *topoi* is less amenable to Zerjadtke's call for verification than the 'reality' of stereotypes.

[2] Lippmann (1922).

[3] Kaldellis (2013) vii.

[4] Krebs (2011).

To put this another way: a literary *topos* found in, for instance, a historiographical text refers to the social reality of stereotypical perceptions, which in turn have a complex and often far from clear relationship with the experiential reality. For a *topos* to fulfil its communicative role, a shared stereotypical component is a necessity, but there is no strict need for knowledge of—or a connection with—the realities on the ground (as opposed to social realities in the sense of commonly known and culturally shared opinions). This can be seen from the cases where Greco-Roman ethnographic *topoi* have been borrowed by other traditions such as Syriac or Jewish ones.[5] The transferability of ethnographic stock-descriptions and *topoi* is certainly one of the most striking aspects of the tradition. When established and predictable stereotypical content existed about a given outgroup, even the mere mention of an ethnonym—say, *Poeni*—could be used to trigger a set of ethnically formulated associations in the minds of an ancient audience: this often comes very close to a *topos*, such as *fides Punica*.

Alexander Free's 'Bemerkungen zur Topik als unvermeidbarem Element antiker Geschichtsschreibung' (27–37) is a natural choice to serve as the next chapter of the volume, as it continues to highlight the importance of discursive knowledge for our understanding of the use of literary *topoi*. The feeling that literary *topoi* and observable reality are in a heuristic tension—which in turn needs to be 'solved'—has been a common feature in the study of inherited and commonplace elements in the ethnographical register, in particular. It is often useful to keep in mind how open-ended and comparatively flexible the ancient toolkit—comprised of the pre-existing ethnically framed information and the established *topoi*—actually was. As Greg Woolf has noted, ancient authors were masters of their tropes, not slaves to them: 'the descriptive range of their accounts was enlarged rather than confined by their use'.[6] This reminds us that the *topoi* were never produced for the benefit of modern scholars, but for literary communication in their own context. Free quite rightly addresses this question right at the beginning of his piece by discussing what P. J. Rhodes called the 'only a *topos*' fallacy[7]—the way that certain pronouncements of ancient historians have in some past scholarship been labelled as *topoi* and then excluded from consideration—while also noting the enduring contrast between positivistic and relativistic interpretations of ancient historiography.

But this heuristic tension does not need to occupy the centre ground in the study of ancient ethnographical *topoi*. Crucial to the practical deployment of *topoi* are the techniques, such as enthymeme (30), by which the author could tap into the already existing knowledge-base of their audience. A 'sufficient

[5] See Goldenberg (1998); Andrade (2020).

[6] Woolf (2011) 255.

[7] Rhodes (1994) 157.

truth' was enough, as Free also notes (28). Our cognitive processes tend to favour the retaining of pre-existing knowledge as opposed to overhauling it in any extensive manner; this leads in terms of our beliefs about outgroups—the essence of ethnography—to the way in which very strong formative pressures are needed in order to change a well-established set of ideas about an outgroup.[8] Free explores the way in which incorporating established ethnically framed elements into their texts was an economical way for ancient authors to increase their credibility. It could also furnish statements of belonging that would affirm the ingroup ties between the author and his intended target audience. In terms of historiographical causation, arguments based on discursive knowledge would probably have had a high degree of plausibility.

Free points out how we occasionally see historians repeating a commonplace or a *topos* in ways that clearly defer to the established opinion of their intended audience, even if they explicitly note their disagreement. The motivation for this, it is suggested, depends largely on the implicit (and sometimes explicit) competition between historians themselves (32–4); Free's reading of Arrian's Indographic writing, and in particular his treatment of the Herodotean detail of gold-digging ants, demonstrates well how the interaction between the need to establish one's authorial credentials and the willingness to gratify the audience's expectations can explain at least some of the persistence of the ethnographic *topoi*. In Free's view, Arrian would have been conscious of having to work on the basis of approximations, and of his audience's awareness of the commonplace of gold-digging ants in the Indographic tradition: he thus went on to include the detail while adding his authorial note of caution—in itself a Herodotean device.

Julian Degen's contribution, 'Herodot, Sisamnes und der Topos der grausamen persischen Monarchie' (39–55), studies the Herodotean episode of Sisamnes' flaying and its subsequent ancient reception as evidence for the often-quoted stereotype of the cruelty of Persian kings. The idea itself was illustrated through a variety of episodes from early on; they all banked on the Greek perceptions about autocratic regimes' characteristics. Added to these were the particular ideas about the character of not only Persian monarchy, but 'Oriental' peoples more broadly. The cruel and unusual punishments allegedly meted out by Eastern monarchs had by the early Roman Empire become a thoroughly essentialised and oft-repeated chain of utterances, where each new iteration could rely on the audience having been prepared by the widely dispersed imagery of torture. After Herodotus, Ctesias seems to have ramped up the intensity of torture descriptions localised in Persia; perhaps this reflects the sources and royal propaganda connected with Ctesias' 'court

[8] See n. 16 below.

historical' angle which he used in the construction of his own authority.[9] Degen is in line with the scholarly view that violent displays of power attributed to Persians should be understood at least partly as reflections of the Greek views on limitless royal power. The Sisamnes episode in Herodotus is also something that should probably be understood as an illustration of Cambyses' many failings as a monarch wielding this kind of power.

Partly due to Herodotus' influence, the *topos* of flaying became an often-repeated detail about a particularly Persian form of 'extreme violence'. Degen's chief argument is that the literary theme may nonetheless partly reflect the royal self-fashioning of Persian—or rather more broadly 'altorientalisch'—rulers (49–54). But even if the origins of the *topos* of flaying in the Persian monarchy can be demonstrated to lie in particular propagandistic displays of broadly 'Mesopotamian' societies, it is still left a bit hazy how this should inform our appreciation of the theme's later use among the Greeks and Romans. For them, the *topos* made sense not because of its attestations in the cuneiform sources or first millennium BCE practices, but because it tallied with and exemplified the kind of autocratic monarchy that they tended to regard as an 'Oriental' type of rulership. Hence we meet flaying as a detail also in the context of the emperor Valerian's fate in Persia after his capture: the concrete continuation into the Sassanid period is not demonstrated (53). It would be much more secure to consider the Roman historiographers' references to Valerian being skinned as continuing the venerable literary *topos* rather than a reflection of Persian royal propaganda using the same detail.

The components of the Persian iconosphere are further explored by Jan Köster in his chapter 'Postfaktisches bei Pausanias: Ruinen als Zeugnisse für (re)konstruierte Geschichte' (57–68). The term 'topos' skirts close to its other meaning of localisation in this piece, which is all about place-making and the creation of *lieux de mémoire*. Pausanias' ways of relating to the past and connecting with the formidable resource of Greek history have been extensively studied, but Köster's focus is squarely on the recurrent theme of a building (usually temple) sacked by the Persians. Pausanias even offered this explanation about several structures that other sources mention as unaffected by the Persian Wars: clearly, the trope was so attractive to Pausanias' historical (somewhat Athenocentric) retrospect that it was preferable to explanations featuring less dramatic ravages of time or Greek infighting. But is this *topos* an ethnographical one? It does seem related to the general idea of Persian lack of respect towards Greek sanctuaries, but in fact many (if not most) barbarian groups were seen as looters of sanctuaries. Pausanias' own time saw the Costoboci penetrate as far south as Eleusis, which could well have inspired

[9] E.g., Ctes. *FGrHist* 688 F 26 *ap.* Plut. *Artax.* 16; F 27 *ap.* Phot. *Bibl.* 72 p. 36a9–37a25; and many other stories. On Ctesias' posture, its implications for the contents of his work, and the 'Orientalist' imagery therein, see Llewellyn-Jones and Robson (2010) 84–5.

him to emphasise the story of the Galatian sack of Delphi the way he did in two separate books of his *Periegesis*. But be this as it may, Köster's chapter is a very useful exploration of juxtaposed literary and physical testimonies.

Falk Wackerow takes up an entrenched image of the enemy from the Roman tradition in his '"Weil die Römer geneigt waren, alles zu glauben, was ihnen über die Karthager zugetragen wurde" (Vell. 1,12,2): eine kritische Untersuchung dreier Aspekte des antiken Karthagerbildes' (69–90). The image he sketches of Romans consistently overstating Carthaginian power is a compelling one. They certainly did so, repeatedly, with their other traditional enemies, the Gauls: many comparatively minor defeats north of the Alps seem to have generated disproportionate responses in Italy and the imperial centre. Analogies could also be drawn with many later contexts. Wackerow demonstrates quite convincingly how the consolidation of the image of Carthage as a seaborne power went against the significant successes of its forces in land warfare (presented in tabulated form at 87–90). The 'Phoenicianness' of Carthage's representations in Roman sources may have had something to do with this—allowing them to tap into the Greek *topoi* about grasping, seafaring, and thus morally suspect Phoenicians.[10]

Wackerow's two other case-studies of *topoi* involve mercenaries in Carthaginian employment. Reliance on mercenaries was a cliché that the Roman sources attributed quite regularly to their Carthaginian foes. The *topos* of abandoning recalcitrant mercenaries on an island is an interesting one, since we also meet it in connection with Ptolemy II's quelling of a purported uprising by his Galatian mercenaries: they are left to starve on a Nilotic island in the Sebennytic branch. While Callimachus may be referring to exactly this uprising in his *Hymn to Delos*, the island detail in fact stems only from Pausanias,[11] and thus could be a relocation of the already existing *topos* that had by now been regularly attributed to the Carthaginians. Indeed, common knowledge of the Carthaginians' mercenary reliance may have had an influence on the narratives about other episodes, too, as Wackerow argues.

A highly interesting comparison between the *topoi* found in different source groups is mounted by Patrick Reinard, whose '"Eine Seuche, die die Welt bedroht?": Bemerkungen zu Judentopoi in ausgewählten literarischen und papyrologischen Quellen' (91–109) seeks to shed new light onto the much-studied question of ancient antisemitism by foregrounding papyrological sources in addition to literature. Egypt, naturally, is a crucial region both because of the survival of the papyrological sources and as an area where significant Jewish communities lived. It also allows us a glimpse into the discrimination directed against Jewish groups not only in historiography (from Tacitus

[10] See Quinn (2017).

[11] Callim. *Hymn* 4.175–87, with scholia; Paus. 1.7.2.

to a wide range of Late Antique historians) and religious polemics, but also in speech-acts carried out by groups sharing the lived space of Egyptian cities with Jews. Neither group of evidence was very likely to have extensively influenced the other at least directly, so in this case the 'topoi' are part of the everyday communication of the era: a pool of discriminatory images that was shared among different linguistic communities about Jews. Historiographers ended up echoing this imagery for a variety of reasons, ranging from ethnically essentialising causation to responding to audience expectations.

We do know that discursive or proverbial 'knowledge' about the supposed properties of different population groups of the Eastern Mediterranean was shared across literate social classes by the second century, and in some cases was adopted even outside Greek and Latin literature.[12] That this same dynamic continued into at least the end of the fourth century CE is borne out by the strikingly similar descriptions in Ammianus Marcellinus, the *Historia Augusta*, and the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* regarding stereotypical Egyptian physiognomies and the properties of the Alexandrian population.[13] This all reinforces Reinard's basic argument, which also stands out in the volume for its focus on the practical epistemic links between the culturally and communicatively shared stereotypes about population groups, and their manifestation as *topoi* in the written word. It also gives some indications about the vehemence of discriminatory sentiments that the Jewish inhabitants of Egypt, perhaps especially those in Alexandria, had to contend with—and which in turn would have motivated everyday alienation and outcasting, influenced the negotiation of identities and belonging, and fomented persecution and unrest (such as the destructive Kitos War of 115–17, the effects of which Reinard also discusses).

Michael Zerjadtke contributes a chapter on 'Topoi im antiken Germanenbild: Reale Beobachtung und fiktive Begründung' (111–34). It continues Zerjadtke's exploration in his previous research contributions of the recurring elements found in the ancient literary descriptions of *Germani*. In this piece he sets out to save the evidentiary value of certain *topoi* by exploring whether they were, in fact, based in varying degrees on real-life conditions. Yet this approach may sell short the power of the *topos*. The stereotypical height of the northerners' bodies, the first case study of the chapter, is arguably not simply reducible to whether it is based on real-life characteristics or not: its web of signification to the ancient audiences who thought through the *topos* was underpinned by several epistemic structures—principal among which was the ancient climatological template. Indeed, Zerjadtke concludes that anthropometric data from ancient skeletons beyond the Rhine shows that the *Germani*

[12] See n. 5 above.

[13] Cf. Amm. Marc. 22.16.17–23; SHA *Tyr. Trig.* 22.1–4, *Quadr.* 7–8; *ETMG* 34–6.

would not have been any taller than the inhabitants of the empire (a perhaps preferable term instead of speaking about homogeneous 'Romans', which surely is a needlessly broad category).[14] Even more generally, to posit a stark choice between 'reality' and 'topos' seems unnecessarily binary. An element can be both a *topos* and observable in empirical reality, but the latter is not necessarily an explanatory factor for the cultural life of either stereotypes or the *topoi* that use these perceptions.

The themes where Zerjadtke *does* find evidence of real-world differences between Germanic and 'Roman' practices, on the other hand, are not quite as clearly *topoi* as the northerners' height. In stereotype formation, similarities between the ingroup and outgroups tend to be ignored, while differences are usually inflated. Yet literary considerations would have affected the choice of *topoi* even when tapping into the ancient audiences' stereotypical image assemblages. Agricultural practices certainly were different, but whether this constitutes a literary *topos* is not obvious. Like the detail of height, however, the brave first rush and lack of staying power in close combat is often hazily attributed to a broad selection of northern groups. Both, in fact, are found first in connection with *Galli* and thus long predate the Roman engagements with peoples most commonly labelled with the ethnonym 'Germans'. This dearth of references to the deeper origins—and longer transmission—of many of the literary elements of the 'borealist' iconosphere, to use Christopher Krebs' term, is regrettable, but may partly derive from how the original workshop programme's paper on 'Keltentopoi' was omitted from the volume. A thematically similar replacement for it could have helped to emphasise the diachronic transmission of *topoi* from one outgroup to another.

Finally, Zerjadtke sums up the varied contributions in his final 'Synthese und Ausblick' (135–9). He proposes that in the context of the study of ancient ethnography 'topoi' should denote any generalising statements about an (ethnically labelled) individual, group, or area that claim to represent characteristics or behaviour; assessments of normativity are often present, and the reference to an already known property is able to trigger predictable further associations in the intended audience (137). This is a serviceable working definition, though at least to this reviewer it seems that what is being defined still frequently hovers somewhere between a 'stereotype' and a 'topos'. Several of the collection's contributions exhibit a tendency of wanting to read 'past' and 'behind' the ubiquitous *topoi* in order to distinguish real or actual events or phenomena that are seen as inspiring them. But this approach still sees *topoi* as a hindrance to be gotten round or through, rather than as evidence for shared perceptions; the frequent wavering between the *topoi* as literary elements and stereotypes as socially shared constructs is notable. The literary

[14] As argued by Lavan (2020).

topoi of historiography, for instance, needed the epistemic base that the stereotypes provided, but they also propagated and perpetuated the stereotypical perceptions of ethnicised groups. As Zerjadtke notes in his synthesis, beyond any formulaic indicators the decisive characteristic of a *topos* is its connection with other ideas (138), which can also be potentially used to exclude certain ethnically framed statements from being *topoi*.

As already noted above, an idea that flits in and out of the volume's contributions is that stereotypes (though often, one suspects, meaning *topoi*) are in some generalised way more 'accurate' than they have been given credit for. This strain of argument is supported by selected sociopsychological contributions such as Jussim, et. al. (2016), which roots its argument in a somewhat more polemical position than many other studies on the psychology of stereotypes, and should not be considered representative of the consensus.[15] While justifiably criticising certain studies from the 1980s that took it as their premise that stereotypes 'are both widely shared and generally invalid', Jussim, et al. vigorously propound their own argument about most descriptive stereotypes being 'in the main' (34) accurate. But this is not particularly helpful to those studying ancient historiography and its ethnicised *topoi*. Even in terms of stereotypes, the broader question is whether they can all be judged to be accurate through the same parameters; most importantly, stereotypes with normative and culturally relative content referring to ethnic groups are not verifiable. This is already the case with contemporary outgroup stereotypes, and when looking at past societies' representations of the world, the empirical 'confirmation' for the accuracy of stereotypes presents formidable challenges—heuristic circularity being just one of the more obvious ones.

In terms of the psychology of category formation, for a stereotype about the outside world to enjoy continued valence it only needs to be ever so slightly more convenient to retain than to overhaul. The cognitive efforts needed to eclipse or decisively reformulate an established stereotype are, in fact, fairly extensive—as demonstrated by many psychological studies.[16] This is also consistent with the way in which we see many ancient *topoi* about foreign groups being transferred to new, sufficiently similar, population groups, rather than completely abandoned.[17] Yet this does not necessarily mean that we can gravitate wholeheartedly towards a 'kernel of truth' hypothesis of stereotypes (cf. 23), particularly when we are dealing with a consciously literary use of *topoi* such as that in most ancient writers.[18] Zerjadtke pre-emptively invokes (25) the limitations of applying the results of modern studies such as Bordalo, et al.

[15] Jussim, et al. (2016).

[16] Schneider (2004), e.g., 134, 139, 143, 172, 210.

[17] Cf. Schadee (2008) 162 n. 19.

[18] On 'kernel of truth': see Bordalo, et al. (2016).

(2016) to the ancient stereotyping of ethnic groups, but does not elaborate on how it will be possible to concentrate only on the material content of stereotypes in the ancient sources. The emphasis on the emotional component of especially negative types of stereotypes—a similarly well-studied phenomenon and absolutely true in its own right—and the way in which this is seen as introducing 'cognitive errors' (26) that exaggerate group difference are again apt points regarding stereotypes, but their relation to literary *topoi* is left somewhat lightly defined, as is the applicability of this error-spotting to contexts where negative imagery or emotional content has been diluted through long transmission, lack of real-life referents, or other forms of epistemic distancing. It is true, as Zerjadtke notes (23), that the psychological studies of stereotyping have discovered a consistent exaggeration of group difference in terms of how outgroups are perceived, but proper contextualisation remains vital whenever we attempt to read genuine conditions in the external world from socially shared stereotypes—and this is even more significant when dealing with their literary manifestations, the *topoi*.

The lack of distinction between *topoi* and stereotypes in terms of their interaction and respective epistemic dynamics resurfaces repeatedly throughout the volume, undeniably hindering its overarching argument about the source value of *topoi*. Due to the literary and epistemic processes at play, an ethnographic *topos* was in antiquity liable to continue in use even beyond any recognisable existence of its originally associated population group—not to mention the actual conditions that may have given rise to it. It is worth repeating that many of the qualities that featured in ethnic stereotypes in antiquity are not things that can be quantified or verified, since they relate to perceived cultural and social values—or lack thereof. This is something that the contributors to the volume also explicitly acknowledge on several occasions. Phenomena such as the virulent stereotyping of Syrians and Egyptians as venal, cowardly, and money-grubbing[19] cannot be fully understood if we ignore the role played by these outgroup labels in Greek or Roman ingroup communication and boundary formation, as well as the knowledge templates—such as climatology, physiognomy, astrology—used to reify and buttress the prejudice. Overall, however, Zerjadtke's conclusion about how only a reasonably large pool of attestations about a given outgroup allows us to judge which elements constitute proper ethnographical *topoi* about them (138) seems judicious: with certain less significant, fleetingly glimpsed groups we simply have too little material to draw the distinction, whereas with the

[19] E.g., Anon. Lat. *De phgn*. 9, 14, 79.

peoples that loomed large in the mutually reinforcing iconosphere of stereotypes and the literary tradition, our capability for *topos*-spotting is much better. This volume ensures that we look at the old prey with more discerning eyes.

ANTTI LAMPINEN
Finnish Institute at Athens ajlamp@utu.fi

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrade, N. (2020) 'Bardaisan's Disciples and Ethnographic Knowledge in the Roman Empire', in König–Langlands–Uden (2020) 291–308.

Bordalo, P., et al. (2016) 'Stereotypes', *Quarerly Journal of Economics* 131: 1752–94.

Goldenberg, D. (1998) 'Scythian-Barbarian: The Permutations of a Classical *topos* in Jewish and Christian Texts of Late Antiquity', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49: 87–102.

Gruen, E. S., ed. (2011) *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles).

Jussim, L., et al. (2016) 'Stereotype Accuracy: One of the Largest and Most Replicable Effects in all of Social Psychology', in T. D. Nelson, ed., *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination* (New York) 31–63.

Kaldellis, A. (2013) *Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature* (Philadelphia).

König, A., R. Langlands, and J. Uden, edd. (2020) *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire, 96–235: Cross-Cultural Interactions* (Cambridge).

Krebs, C. (2011) 'Borealism: Caesar, Seneca, Tacitus and the Roman Concept of the North', in Gruen (2011) 202–21.

Lavan, M. (2020) 'Beyond Romans and Others: Identities in the Long Second Century', in König–Langlands–Uden (2020) 37–57.

Lippmann, W. (1922) *Public Opinion* (New York).

Llewellyn-Jones, L. and J. Robson (2010) *Ctesias' History of Persia: Tales of the Orient* (London and New York).

Quinn, J. (2017) *In Search of the Phoenicians* (Princeton).

Rhodes, P. J. (1994) 'In Defence of the Greek Historians', *G&R* 41: 156–71.

Schadee, H. (2008) 'Caesar's Construction of Northern Europe: Inquiry, Contact, and Corruption in *De Bello Gallico*', *CQ* 58: 158–80.

Schneider, D. J. (2004) *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York and London).

Woolf, G. (2011) 'Saving the Barbarian', in Gruen (2011) 255–71.