dieval society for interpretations of religious drama. Chapter 6 applies insights derived from Richard Firth Green's work on medieval English legal history to dramatic adaptations of the Cain and Abel story, exploring the extent to which these plays register tensions between “folklaw” and royal, written law. Although less theoretically nuanced than previous chapters, these analyses are underpinned by a series of intricate close readings that bring into view further sites of opposition to dominant power structures.

Finally, in conclusion, Sturges investigates theories of performance and audience, notably Antonin Artaud's much-debated notion of a “theater of cruelty.” Citing previous work on this topic by Jean Duvignaud and others, Sturges seeks to understand the audience’s responses to events depicted in biblical drama in terms of affective piety and the violence of theater. What if spectators refused to subscribe fully to the essentially religious orientation of these dramas? What if the audience were itself a potential locus of resistance to Christian propaganda?

The rhetorical “what ifs” posed in the book’s final chapter echo a formulation in a 1997 article on cross-dressing in early drama by Robert L. A. Clark and Claire Sponsler, cited briefly in chapter 4, which speculates on the ability of medieval spectators to perceive “queer, discordant variations on the dominant tune.” Approaches derived from queer studies are, indeed, a major source of inspiration for Sturges, as laid out in his introduction. Appeals to temporal queerness by scholars such as Carolyn Dinshaw can usefully be taken up, he suggests, as a means of rendering our experience of the plays more directly meaningful.

These frameworks are not developed systematically, so that readers seeking a survey of queerness in early religious theater will come away disappointed. Intermittently, however, Sturges alludes to issues that touch a nerve in contemporary queer sensibility. Analyzing mothers’ laments, for instance, he concludes with an anecdotal reflection on a panel in the NAMES Project's AIDS memorial quilt; a passing reference to the incoherent status of same-sex marriage in modern America is used to frame the discussion of law in Cain and Abel dramas. These impassioned attempts to connect power relations in early religious drama with their putatively modern counterparts offer a key to unlocking the potential of texts to generate multiple meanings beyond what is often held up to be their “original context.” More such efforts to disrupt the business-as-usual of medieval cultural studies are eagerly awaited.

Robert Mills, University College London


When I was a new graduate student, a well-meaning professor asked me at a reception what I planned to research. When I told him “religious history,” he responded with a chuckle, “Well, whatever you do, don’t work on polemics!”

This only piqued my interest (and I did end up working on polemics, naturally), but I have always remembered this exchange as indicative of a general bias, one to which the editors refer in opening of this volume. Polemical arguments, in Jonathan Crew’s words, have a “bad name in the humanities academy” (quoted on 1). Why is this? Perhaps they are seen as formulaic and repetitive, certainly not literary, and their arguments are generally distasteful to modern sensibilities because they are premised on a unilateral and often violent imposition of authority. While the “religious turn” has led more scholars to mine polemical literature for markers of social and intellectual trends—religious polemics often read like manifestos for the “persecuting society” that developed in the twelfth century—polemical

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discourse is still kept to the margins, analyzed for its ideology but not read for its sophistication, subtlety, or style.

This volume thus stands out as a watershed because it approaches polemic—conceived very widely as a mode or tone rather than a genre—as a subject in itself that merits theorization and comparison. The book had its genesis in the interdisciplinary workshops organized at Somerville College, Oxford, by the Somerville Medievalist Research group. It is the second volume to come out of these fruitful meetings, the first being the collection *Aspects of the Performative in Medieval Culture* (Berlin, 2010), and seven of the eleven contributors to that volume have also offered papers here. Although the topics are very different, the shape of both collections is similar, including the same section structure and same number of papers.

Because the focus is on polemic as a discourse, the case studies range over various centuries, places, and genres, including Latin, German, French, Spanish, Church Slavonic, and English texts ranging from the seventh to the seventeenth centuries. The first section includes four papers. Francesca Southerden first looks at Petrarch’s Latin invectives to argue that “his polemicist persona mattered just as much as his lyric one” (18) in the construction of his authorial voice. Alastair Matthews then analyzes the polemical strategies of the opening verses of the fourteenth-century German poem *Lohengrin*. Sean Curran reads a twelfth-century French motet to argue that the dialogical nature of polyphonic song functioned to dramatize a polemical debate about clerical corruption. Emma Gatland takes up Spanish translations of Latin accounts of female martyrs to argue that they employed a polemical mode by dramatizing the skillful use of rhetoric by female saints as they were condemned, tortured, and killed.

The second section similarly contains four papers. Monika Otter’s fascinating piece, “Dissing the Teacher,” casts a wide net to offer examples of Latin texts from the seventh to the eleventh centuries depicting pupils attacking or insulting their teachers. Another of the high notes of the volume is Almut Suerbaum’s “Language as Violence,” which looks at the polemical rhetoric preserved in Berthold of Regensburg’s vernacular sermons. Annie Sutherland’s “Psalms as Polemic” considers early non-Wycliffite English tracts in defense of biblical vernacularization. Finally, C. M. MacRobert discusses Maximos the Greek, who was brought to trial in Muscovy in the sixteenth century for his Greek-to-Church Slavonic Bible translations.

The third and last section contains three papers. Benjamin Thompson argues that the writing of the English church in the early Reformation was a continuation of high medieval polemic reaching back at least to the Fourth Lateran Council. Natalia Nowakowska looks at the Polish anti-Lutheran polemic *De affictione ecclesiae* (1527) by Bishop Andzej Kryzcki to make the striking argument that the polemics against Luther were a stimulus, not a response, in Reformation discourse. “Rather than the Reformation giving birth to polemic, the opposite may be true” (226). In the last essay, George Southcombe considers the way that the “language of moderation” that dominated the seventeenth-century English church was in fact deeply polemical and “appeals to moderation served to drive division and partisanship” (251). The volume closes with a comprehensive bibliography.

While each of these well-written studies offers something of interest, the most valuable part of the volume is the introduction, coauthored by the three editors, which provides a sophisticated theoretical lens through which to read the individual chapters. The editors raise a number of important questions: To what extent can “polemic” be said to exist *avant la lettre*, before the term itself was coined in the sixteenth century? How can we distinguish between polemic as a genre of writing and polemic as a mode of discourse? How is polemic, which often took the shape of a formulaic and one-sided attack, linked to action, conflict, and real-world violence? And what do medieval and modern polemics have in common, if anything?

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To the first question, the editors insist that the term is not necessary for the phenomenon to exist, and that “pre-Reformation writers quite clearly use polemical modes of speech” (1). Their introduction of Michel Foucault’s characterization of polemic as inimical to dialogue, shutting down exchange in order to impose authority, sets a keynote for the volume, and numerous contributors return to his formulation. Nevertheless, the provocative introduction is necessarily brief; the volume can only manage to skim the surface of the questions it raises, and the individual chapters do not interact much to offer a larger consensus. The material covered in the chapters is eclectic and many familiar religious polemics are absent. Similarly, because polemic is conceived in such wide terms, the collective analysis risks being too broad to be meaningful, and related modes of discourse (apologetics, irenics) are not brought in for comparison. Nevertheless, the effort of these authors to broach an important topic in a new and capacious way is commendable and shows us that—pace the negative advice of my gentle professor—polemic is a rich discourse that deserves more attention from premodernists, not less.

Ryan Szpiech, University of Michigan


Johannes Taubert (1922–75) was one of the few professionals who, being trained as an art conservator, also possessed a PhD in art history. This fruitful combination enabled him to pose questions that touched the very foundations of both disciplines, emphasizing the need for a closer cooperation between the two fields. Due to his ethical and intellectual integrity he became a role model for conservators and art historians alike.

As he was equipped with skills to dominate and excel in both disciplines, the contributions Taubert has made in his field of expertise—namely, the study and conservation of polychrome sculpture, with a focus on medieval wooden sculpture—have been exceptional and have guaranteed that his studies will remain a point of reference for any new research within these respective areas. Taubert did not hesitate to approach controversial topics, such as the role of relics in medieval sculpture of the twelfth through sixteenth centuries (chapter 3). His impressive catalog of medieval crucifixes with movable arms (chapter 5) opened the way to future studies, and he was among the first to discuss from a theoretical perspective the role of polychromy in medieval sculpture (see chapters 1, 2, 4, 7, 12, and 13), including that of late Gothic so-called unpainted wooden sculpture (chapters 8, 9). He further recognized the late Gothic altarpiece as an elaborate *Gesamtkunstwerk* consisting of wooden and polychrome components (chapters 14, 15, 16), and studied the manufacturing and significance of pressed brocade, a technique of imitating brocade textiles and patterns (with Eike Oellermann, chapter 6). Equally important are his studies regarding the technical and esthetic characteristics of the highly illusionistic surfaces of baroque and rococo sculpture (chapters 10, 17).

First published posthumously in 1978 under the direction of his wife Gesine Taubert with the title *Farbige Skulpturen: Bedeutung, Fassung, Restaurierung*, this compilation of seventeen papers was immediately recognized as a seminal study, as demonstrated by the fact that it was well reviewed in several languages by both conservators and art historians, and by the issuing of a second edition in 1984. Over the years it attained the rank of a classic, at least among German-speaking specialists. Therefore an English translation to address a broader audience was overdue. Michele D. Marincola, Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor of Conservation at the Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts at New York Univer-

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