This innovative study illuminates the role of polemical literature in the political life of the Roman empire by examining the earliest surviving invectives directed against a living emperor. Written by three bishops (Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, Lucifer of Cagliari), these texts attacked Constantius II (337–61) for his vicious and tyrannical behaviour, as well as his heretical religious beliefs. This book explores the strategies employed by these authors to present themselves as fearless champions of liberty and guardians of faith, as they sought to bolster their authority at a time when they were out of step with the prevailing imperial view of Christian orthodoxy. By analysing this fascinating collection of writings alongside late-antique panegyrics and ceremonial, this study also rehabilitates anti-imperial polemic as a serious political activity and restores it to its proper place in the complex web of presentations and perceptions that underpinned late Roman power relationships.

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For my grandmother, Hilda Flower
who knew a thing or two about invective
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Abbreviations

All journal abbreviations follow L'Année philologique.

CCSL  Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Turnhout, 1967–.
CSEL  Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vienna, 1866–.
GCS  Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Leipzig and Berlin, 1897–.
RIC  H. Mattingly et al. (eds.), The Roman Imperial Coinage, 10 vols., London, 1923–94.

Ancient Texts

Unless noted here, all abbreviations follow OLD, LSJ and A. H. M. Jones (1964) 111 394–406.

Ad Const.  Hilary of Poitiers, Liber II ad Constantium
Ad Ep. Aeg. Athanasius of Alexandria, Epistula ad Episcopos Aegypti et Libyae

Adu. Val. et Ursac. Hilary of Poitiers, Adversus Valentem et Ursacium
(= Collectanea Antiariana Parisina)

Altercatio Heracliani Altercatio Heracliani laici cum Germino, episcopo Sirmiensi

Aphth. Prog. Aphthonius, Progymnasmata

Apol. c. Ar. Athanasius of Alexandria, Apologia contra Arianos (= Apologia secunda)

Apol. Const. Athanasius of Alexandria, Apologia ad Constantium

Ath. De synodis Athanasius of Alexandria, De synodis Arimini et Seleuciae

Ath. V. Ant. Athanasius of Alexandria, Vita Antonii

Chron. Pasch. Chronicon Paschale
L. Dindorf (ed.), Chronicon Paschale, Bonn, 1832.

Contra Arianos 1–111 Athanasius of Alexandria, Orationes III contra Arianos
List of abbreviations

Contra Auxentium
Hilary of Poitiers, Contra Arianos uel Auxentium Mediolanensem

Cyprian, Ep.
Cyprian of Carthage, Epistulae

[Cyprian], Laus Mart.
[Cyprian of Carthage], On the Glory of Martyrdom

De Ath. I
Lucifer of Cagliari, Quia absentem nemo debet iudicare nec damnare siue De Athanasio Liber I

De Ath. II
Lucifer of Cagliari, Quia absentem nemo debet iudicare nec damnare siue De Athanasio Liber II

De decr.
Athanasius of Alexandria, De decretis Nicaenae synodi

De fuga
Athanasius of Alexandria, Apologia de fuga sua

De morte Arii
Athanasius of Alexandria, Ad Serapionem de morte Arri
List of abbreviations

De non conu. Lucifer of Cagliari, De non conueniendo cum haereticis

De non parc. Lucifer of Cagliari, De non parcendo in Deum delinquentibus

De regibus Lucifer of Cagliari, De regibus apostaticis

Dio Chrys. Or. Dio Chrysostom, Orationes

Ep. Enc. Athanasius of Alexandria, Epistula Encyclica

Ep. Lucif., Pan. et Hil. Epistula Luciferi Pancratii Hilarii ad Eusebium episcopum

Epiphanius, Panarion Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion

Epistula Liberii Epistula Liberii papae ad Eusebium, Dionysium et Luciferum in exilio constituutos (= Adu. Val. et Ursac. b. vii.2)

Eus. HE Eusebius of Caesarea, Historia ecclesiastica

Eus. LC Eusebius of Caesarea, Laus Constantini
List of abbreviations


Eus. SC Eusebius of Caesarea, *De sepulcro Christi*

Eus. V. Const. Eusebius of Caesarea, *De Vita Constantini*


Eutrop. Eutropius, *Breuiarium ab urbe condita*

Greg. Naz. Or. 21 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio 21*

Herm. Prog. Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*

Hilary, De synodis Hilary of Poitiers, *De synodis*


Hist. Ar. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Historia Arianorum*

In Const. Hilary of Poitiers, *Liber In Constantium*

Iren. Haer. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses*
List of abbreviations


Lact. Diu. Inst. Lactantius, Diuinae institutiones


Lact. Mort. pers. Lactantius, De mortibus persecutorum


Lib. Prog. Libanius, Progymnasmata


Moriundum Lucifer of Cagliari, Moriundum esse pro dei filio


Olymp. Olympiodorus, Fragments


Pan. Lat. Panegyrici Latini


Philostorgius Philostorgius, Historia ecclesiastica


Quint. Inst. Or. Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria

List of abbreviations

Rh. Al. Rhetorica ad Alexandrum

Sent. Dion. Athanasius of Alexandria, De sententia Dionysii

Sententiae episcoporum Sententiae episcoporum numero LXXXVII de haereticis baptizandis

Soc. HE Socrates, Historia ecclesiastica

Soz. HE Sozomen, Historia ecclesiastica

Syn. De regno Synesius of Cyrene, Oratio de regno

Theod. HE Theodoret, Historia ecclesiastica

Theon, Prog. Aelius Theon, Progymnasmata

Zos. Zosimus, Historia nova