

Rhetoric and Power: how imperial panegyric allowed civilian elites to access power in the fourth century

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Since Sabine MacCormack wrote her seminal *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* in 1981, interest in panegyric as a historical source has blossomed. Once discounted as “expressing stylized and calculated flattery, repetitiously asserting loyalty, and (one regretfully concludes) delighting their audiences,” panegyrics are now recognised as an invaluable window onto imperial politics and the last thirty years have seen a series of important studies that explore the ways in which panegyric communicated imperial ideology to a wide audience.¹ Less, however, has been done to consider panegyric from the point of view of the orator.² This article is an attempt to address this imbalance and examine panegyrics solely from the perspective of those who created them. Who were they? Why did they compose their speeches? And how did they use panegyric to interact with imperial power?

THE ORATORS AND THEIR SPEECHES

The fourth century, broadly defined, provides fruitful ground for such a study. Thanks largely to accidents of survival (though also to the multiplication of emperors and the increased itinerancy of the imperial court, which greatly increased the opportunity for the emperor to formally interact with his subjects), the period 289–404 provides a corpus of imperial panegyrics, the size and variety of which is unrivalled at any other point in imperial history. Fifty-one speeches survive in total, a rate of nearly one every two years. Though only a small fraction of the thousands that must have been delivered in the period, this is an impressive volume. The majority of the speeches in the surviving corpus are the products of some of the most significant writers of the age: Libanius, Themistius, Julian, Symmachus, Ausonius, and Claudian.³ But to complement these luminaries there also exists the Gallic corpus of the

¹ Quote from Matthews 1990, 228. For modern studies that employ panegyric as a source, see especially: MacCormack 1975 and 1981; Nixon 1983 and 1993; Mause 1994; Rees 2002 and 2012; Humphries 2008; Flower 2013, 33–44.

² Notable exceptions are Brown 1992 and Heath 2004.

³ Thirteen of Libanius’ *Orationes*, written between the period 344–349 and 388 to four emperors (Constantius II, Constans, Julian, and Theodosius), may be considered imperial panegyrics (though note that many were never actually delivered: cf. Malosse 2014). Themistius has left us eighteen imperial *Orationes*, delivered between 350 and 384 to five emperors (Constantius II, Jovian, Valentinian, Valens, and Theodosius). We know he also delivered an oration to Julian that does not survive (it is mentioned in a letter from Libanius to the philosopher: Lib. *Ep.* 818.3; Vanderspoel (1995, 128–34) suggests that this text is actually preserved, through Arabic, as the

Panegyrici Latini, a style guide made up of eleven late antique speeches composed by authors of whom we know little that the speeches themselves do not tell us and headed by a silver Latin *exemplum*, written by Pliny.⁴ These speeches are the work of a minimum of five authors and are more probably the work of ten or even eleven individuals.⁵

The range of this surviving material allows us to draw conclusions about the individuals who delivered panegyrics in the later Roman Empire. What these men all shared in common was an education founded on the fundamentals of grammar and rhetoric and grounded in an intimate familiarity with the greats of the Empire's two languages, authors such as Vergil and Cicero, Homer and Demosthenes. The composition of a panegyric required an ability to deploy a florid and archaising language, to manipulate *topoi*, and to deploy relevant *exempla* from the cannon of Graeco-Roman literature.⁶ It is little wonder, therefore, that, of the surviving corpus of orators, virtually all had at some point been teachers of rhetoric, grammar, or philosophy. Ausonius, Libanius, and Themistius had all had teaching careers.⁷ Of the *Panegyrici Latini* authors, four of the eleven explicitly mention in their speeches that they were, or had been, professional teachers, and the close association of the collection to the schools of Gaul would suggest that they all were.⁸ Augustine, who addressed Valentinian II on at least one occasion (lamentably, the speech does not survive), seems to have been qualified to speak by virtue of his position as a professor of rhetoric at Milan.⁹ Of the remaining authors, though they had not held official teaching positions, nonetheless what we know of their lives speaks to the quality of their education. Julian had received the very best schooling in Constantinople, Nicomedia, and Athens, and had intended to devote his life to the study of philosophy;¹⁰ Symmachus, in keeping with the status of his family and its traditional, senatorial ambitions, received a superb education;¹¹ and though we know nothing

document called the *Risâlat*). Julian composed two *Orationes* to Constantius II, dating from 356 and 358 respectively (Bowersock 1978, 37 and 43; Tougher 2007). Three fragmentary imperial *Orationes* of Symmachus' survive, dating from winter 367/8 (*Or.* I and III) and 1st Jan 370 (*Or.* II) and addressing Valentinian and Gratian, to which may also be added a number of speeches that we know were delivered but which do not survive (Sogno 2006, 2). Ausonius' *gratiarum actio* for his consulship in 379 was delivered to Gratian. Finally Claudian delivered three speeches in honour of Honorius' third, fourth, and sixth consulships, in 396, 398, and 404 respectively.

⁴ On the collection, see Galletier 1949–1955; MacCormack 1975; Nixon and Rodgers 1994; Rees 2012.

⁵ Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 3–10.

⁶ On the education of orators, see Brown 1992, 41–7; Russell 1998.

⁷ For their teaching careers: Libanius: Norman 1992, Wintjes 2005, and Criboire 2007 and 2013; Ausonius: Sivan 1993, esp. 76–9; Themistius: Vanderspoel 1995, 42–49, and Heather and Moncur 2001, 1–3.

⁸ The four are *Pan. Lat.* VIII (1.2), IX (1.1, 2.2–5, 6.2), VI (23.2), and V (1.2). The author of *Pan. Lat.* IV is known to have been a rhetor from extra-textual references (*Aus. Prof.* 14; Jerome, *Chon.* s.a. 324); cf. Nixon 1983.

⁹ *Aug. Conf.* VI.6.

¹⁰ Bowersock 1978, 21–32; Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 13–51; Tougher 2007, 12–21.

¹¹ Matthews 1990, 86; Heather 2005, 16ff.

directly of Claudian's upbringing, his astounding facility with Latin, which, as a native of Egypt, was certainly not his mother tongue, is testament to the quality of his education.¹²

All these men were civilians, with no direct experience of the continual warfare that characterised the late Empire. The only example that we possess of panegyrics composed by a soldier are those of Julian, who was a soldier only by default, having been requisitioned from his schooling to imperial power by his cousin Constantius.¹³ The bifurcation of the civilian and military hierarchies in the fourth century meant that the military was increasingly staffed with men of limited education, men who might receive panegyrics but would not give them.¹⁴ Emperors, too, often rose to their position by virtue of their military and not their educational qualifications. But the value of panegyric to them and to their regime was evidently always appreciated. Emperors received panegyrics to mark their important victories and anniversaries. They received them when they visited their cities or when they were visited by delegations from such. They received them when they assumed the consulship or when they awarded consulships to others.¹⁵ Emperors even sat to listen to panegyrics when they were delivered in languages of which they had little grasp.¹⁶ Panegyrics were a way for the emperor to communicate to the cultural elite upon which he depended for the smooth operation of his government in terms that paid due reverence to the cultural heritage that united them and of which they saw themselves as guardians.¹⁷

Beyond their education and their civilian background, however, the orators provide a varied picture. Some, like Libanius and Augustine (before Christianity drew him to another life), were career academics, who composed panegyric to the emperor in the course of their duties. Others were habitués of the court, who delivered speeches to the emperor by virtue of their close connections to him; such were the *gratiarum actiones* of Mamertinus and Ausonius, delivered for consulships awarded in 362 and 379 respectively, or the officially commissioned works of a tame orator like Claudian.¹⁸ Some, like Symmachus and Julian, were men who by birth were already well placed to take hold of positions of importance, but who nevertheless used panegyric to consolidate their positions and to help secure the favour of the emperors that they served. Yet still others were men of relatively humble status, teachers and men of local distinction, who used panegyric to display their culture and learning

¹² Cameron 1970, 1–29.

¹³ Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 44ff; Tougher 2007, 26ff.

¹⁴ On the division of civil and military, see Liebeschuetz 1990, esp. 7–85, and Lee 2007, esp. 153–63. Mennen 2011 provides valuable historical context for the developments of the later third and fourth centuries.

¹⁵ Nixon 1983, 89.

¹⁶ Russell 1998, 44.

¹⁷ Kaster 1988, esp. 15–31.

¹⁸ *Pan. Lat.* III; *Aus. Grat. Act.*; *Claud. de III con. Hon., de IV con. Hon., de VI con. Hon.*

to emperors and thereby to secure their patronage, rising higher than they could possibly have hoped otherwise.

What makes panegyric so intriguing is that, within the confines of the genre, orators were capable of huge inventiveness. It is true, style guides existed that offered, in intricate detail, guidance as to how to compose an imperial panegyric. Such guides, like the *Basilikos Logos* of Menander Rhetor, offered their readers step-by-step instruction on how to structure their speeches, giving pointers on overall shape and on the construction of individual phrases, garnished with such unsentimental advice as “if it is possible to invent, and to do this convincingly, do not hesitate.”¹⁹ Yet the existence of such style guides ought to alert us only to the popularity of the genre, not to its creative bankruptcy.²⁰ Whilst orators might use these guides when composing their own speeches, they were not constrained to do so.²¹ Panegyrics varied greatly in length, content, and form, and even the compositions of an individual orator might vary greatly from one another.²² As the rest of this article will show, the topoi of panegyric were deployed with considerable creativity by their authors. Orators used their speech – the moment they stood before an ordinarily unreachable emperor and in command of his attention – to advance individual agendas that are woven through the speeches like golden thread.

SPEAKING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Agendas there were many. The orations that we have preserved to us were, almost without exception, occasioned by the rhythms of the imperial calendar and their content was likewise dictated by the needs of the emperor and reflected his own propaganda.²³ Yet despite all this, the speeches were personal creations. Orators spoke in the first person and addressed emperors in the second. Orators often gave details of their own lives and they recalled to the emperors the cities that had sent them. Many orators, indeed, came before the emperor not solely as an individual, but as the representative of a wider community. This might be a city

¹⁹ Men. Rhet. *Bas. Log.* (tr. Russell and Wilson 1981, 83). For a more general introduction to handbooks of rhetoric, see the introduction to Russell and Wilson 1981; also Russell 1998.

²⁰ So popular, indeed, was panegyric, that we possess numerous examples of speeches ostensibly delivered to emperors but which were in fact delivered *in absentia* (though often before a crowd of local notables) and were then forwarded on to the court, the demand for imperial attention far outstripping its supply: cf. *Pan. Lat.* IV; *Them. Or.* II and IV; *Jul. Or.* I and II; *Lib. Or.* XV and LIX. If a prefect in Egypt could receive 1.804 petitions in just three days, the volume of panegyrics flowing into the court from the provinces should easily be imagined in comparable terms (Connolly 2010, 24).

²¹ Examples of panegyrics that do adhere closely to the structure advised by Menander are *Pan. Lat.* X; *Lib. Or.* LIX and *Jul. Or.* I.

²² For examples of distinct panegyric, see *Jul. Or.* II and commentary in Curta 1995; *Them. Or.* VII and commentary in Vanderspoel 1995, 161–7; Lenski 2002, 68–115 and Omissi 2013, 205–227.

²³ See n. 1. Also Omissi 2013, *passim*.

that the emperor was visiting, as when Libanius spoke before Julian at Antioch in July 362.²⁴ More commonly, however, orators would travel to the emperor bearing official salutations on behalf of the community that sent them. In both 310 and 311, orators from Autun in central Gaul came to Trier to address Constantine on behalf of their communities. The first speaker (*Pan. Lat.* VI) came to give thanks for the anniversary of Trier's founding and to congratulate the emperor for having defeated his late father-in-law, Maximian, the second (*Pan. Lat.* V) to celebrate Constantine's *quinquennalia* and deliver a *gratiarum actio* on behalf of Autun for tax concessions that the emperor had granted.²⁵ In 357, Themistius undertook the significant journey from Constantinople to Rome in order personally to give thanks to Constantius on behalf of the entire Constantinopolitan senate for the emperor's twenty year reign and his recent victories over Magnentius, Vetranio and Silvanus.²⁶ Indeed, after having risen to a position of considerable power in the Constantinople's senate, Themistius frequently represented the city in official delegations to the emperor.²⁷ Symmachus came likewise to Trier, when still a relatively young man, to offer thanksgiving for the *quinquennalia* of Valentinian in the winter of 367/8.²⁸ Such delegations often bore official gifts; both Themistius and Symmachus came bringing large gifts of "crown gold," *aurum coronarium*, on behalf of their respective senates.²⁹ Their orations thus served to further advertise and individualise the tribute paid by their communities, expressing their loyalty.

An oration was not simply a pretty bow to wrap around the present of tribute, however. Panegyric offered a formal setting in which to present petitions for local causes; accompanied by tribute and by the fulsome praise of the speech itself, delivered publicly before the emperor and his court, such requests had a considerable chance of meeting with success. Eunapius records that, following Julian's proclamation as Augustus, embassies came from cities all over the Empire bearing crown gold and that Julian granted the requests with which they accompanied these gifts.³⁰ The orator from Autun who spoke at Trier in 310, mentioned above, had included in his address to the emperor a plea that Constantine visit his city: "This would be answer to my prayerful offering if you, led by your piety, were to see my fatherland, for it will at once be restored if you come to see it."³¹ When Constantine did, indeed, come to Autun during the following year, this orator would doubtless have boasted

²⁴ *Lib. Or.* XIII.

²⁵ *Pan. Lat.* VI.1.1; V.1.1–2. For both, see relevant sections in Nixon and Rodgers 1994.

²⁶ Vanderspoel 1995, 100–104; Heather and Moncur 2001, 114–25.

²⁷ *Them. Or.* XVII.214b. Vanderspoel 1995; Heather and Moncur 2001.

²⁸ Sogno 2006, 2–12.

²⁹ Klauser 1974; Ando 2000, 175–90.

³⁰ *Eun.*, fr. 24.

³¹ *Pan. Lat.* VI.21.7–22.7 (quote at 22.7).

that it was his words that had moved the emperor so to do, a boast made all the fuller by the fact that Constantine, during the visit, granted tax concessions to Autun and the remission of 7.000 *capita* for the future.³² It would be a source of considerable profit for an individual within their community to be able to claim responsibility for attracting such impressive and tangible manifestations of imperial favour.

Some of the most important and poignant of the panegyrics, however, were delivered by the representatives of communities coming not to give thanks but rather to beg forgiveness for their wrongdoing towards the emperor. In such situations, communities would often pick their embassies carefully, looking for individuals who would be acceptable to the emperor.³³ In the spring of 363, Libanius wrote an oration which he sent to Julian, then on his way toward Persia, to beg the emperor to forgive the behaviour of the Antiochenes, which had prompted Julian's confusing *Misopogon* and his irate promise that he would move the imperial residence to Tarsus when he returned from campaign: "What punishment more do you require of men consumed with grief?... Crown your victories with mercy, and do not reduce us alone to tears in this triumph in which all the world shares."³⁴ As with the requests mentioned above, such moments created the opportunity for the emperor to display his mercy, to be moved by eloquence, and to reverse a decision made in anger without losing face.³⁵

Panegyric was also a way in which orators might not only communicate pleas on behalf of the groups that sent them, but present to the emperor new ways of thinking about and engaging with these communities. In the winter of 366/7, Themistius addressed Valens as the representative of a Constantinopolitan senate that had supported the usurper Procopius (r. Sept 365–May 366) against Valens in a civil war.³⁶ Themistius was at pains to paint a picture of Constantinople enclosed by a siege from within, so that no news of the outside world could reach those trapped in the city by the tyrant.³⁷ Likewise, in the summer of 389, the orator Pacatus spoke before Theodosius in Rome as part of the celebrations engendered by his defeat of Magnus Maximus (r. 383–388) and his conquest of the West.³⁸ Pacatus came with full consciousness that he had lived in the territory of the man who had, whilst alive, been Theodosius' enemy and he was at pains to show the emperor that the Gauls had been unwilling participants in the government of Maximus: "...wretched men we were; we were forbidden to show our wretchedness but rather were compelled to feign joy and, when at home

³² Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 256.

³³ Sogno 2006, 3–5.

³⁴ *Lib. Or.* XV.75 (tr. Norman 1969); Bowersock 1978, 103–105; Elm, 2012, 332.

³⁵ Brown 1992, 44–7.

³⁶ Vanderspoel 1995, 161–7; Lenski 2002, 68–115; Matthews 1990, 191–203; Omissi 2013, 205–227.

³⁷ *Them. Or.* VII.90d–92a.

³⁸ Nixon 1987; Matthews 1990, 173–82 and 223–38; Lunn-Rockcliffe 2010; Omissi 2013, 238–72.

and in private we had confided our secret anguish to our wives and children only, we then proceeded in public with our faces showing nothing of our fortune.”³⁹

Delivered before the emperor, his court, and the Roman senate, the panegyric contained within it an important rereading of the past. Pacatus offered, woven within his praise of Theodosius, a way of imagining Gaul that saved face for both parties. As we shall discuss below, this presentation was clearly pleasing to Theodosius, for Pacatus himself was richly rewarded. Nor should we discount the power of such pageantry; it was the part of the role expected of an emperor to be moved by such charismatic appeals to his virtue. In 387, after tax rioting in Antioch which saw public buildings burned and statues of the emperor dragged through the streets, Bishop Flavian, who led the deputation sent to Theodosius to beg forgiveness for the city, was able to excite the emperor’s pity by employing the men who sang at the emperor’s table to sing laments for the Antiochenes.⁴⁰ Display and formal speechmaking was part of the business of accessing imperial government.⁴¹

SPEAKING FOR THEMSELVES

If orators (often) spoke on behalf of communities, however, they stood physically before the court and the emperor as individuals. Despite the formidable prospect that emperor and court must have presented, this was a rare and coveted opportunity, and men competed with one another for the opportunity to speak. Powerful friends would be employed to secure important commissions.⁴² Augustine’s increasing dissatisfaction with worldly honours may have led him to speak with great bitterness of the occasion on which he delivered a panegyric to Valentinian II, but nevertheless he had fought tooth and nail to gain the professorship at Milan that had qualified him for it.⁴³ A display of oratory before the emperor was a well-recognised method for advancement. The great Symmachus seems to have launched his career with the delivery of a pair of panegyrics, his (now fragmentary) *Or.* I and III in the winter of 367/8. Prior to this point, Symmachus had held only the trifling ranks of quaestor and praetor (standard rungs on the senatorial career ladder) and served as *corrector* of Lucania and Brutii.⁴⁴ But after traveling to the Rhine on behalf of the Roman senate to deliver words and gold to Valentinian and his young son, Gratian, Symmachus was raised high; he was awarded the rank of *comes* and he stayed with the court throughout 369, long enough to deliver a

³⁹ *Pan. Lat.* II.25.2.

⁴⁰ Sozomen, VII.23.3; Liebeschuetz 1972, 104–5, 225.

⁴¹ Connolly 2010, 22–39; Brown 1992, 48–70.

⁴² Cameron 1970, 36.

⁴³ *Aug. Conf.* VI.6.

⁴⁴ Cf. Matthews 1990, 13.

thanksgiving speech for Valentinian's third consulship on 1st January 370 (his *Or.* II). When we find him next, it is in November 373 as proconsul of Africa, one of the highest ranking positions in the Empire's civil hierarchy.⁴⁵ Later, of course, he reached the giddy height of prefect of Rome.⁴⁶

Symmachus' rise is striking, but not necessarily surprising. His was an established and powerful Roman family which, in combination with his own energy and erudition, would probably have led to advancement by whatever route he chose.⁴⁷ But others, not born so high, could also enjoy the fruits of oratory. Themistius, son of a notable but nevertheless politically irrelevant philosopher, entered onto the political stage with his first oration, delivered at Ancyra, probably in 350, and it is from here that a teaching career seems to have begun to yield to a political one.⁴⁸ He was made a senator of Constantinople in 355 and delivered further orations to Constantius, in 355 and 357, from which time his position of prominence appears to have been assured.⁴⁹ He was proconsul of Constantinople in 358–359 (the last man to hold this office before the urban prefecture of the city was created, an office he also held for some months in the period 383–385) and appears as a leading man in the senate throughout the period 355–384, in which he delivered a further fourteen imperial panegyrics (that survive) and served on ten official embassies from the senate to a reigning emperor.⁵⁰ The poet Claudian likewise made a career for himself upon the imperial stage through the careful deployment of his rhetorical skills. His debut in the Latin West was a panegyric to the consuls of 395, the brothers Olybrius and Probinus, scions of the house of the Anicii. His next panegyric would be to an imperial consul, Honorius, and through it he allied himself to Stilicho and ensured his future at the court.⁵¹

Such examples are striking but they are also unusual. The works of men like Symmachus, Themistius, and Claudian survive precisely because they were so famous and so do not necessarily provide an accurate guide to the career opportunities that panegyric

⁴⁵ *Cod. theod.* XII.1.73; Matthews 1990, 12–5; Sogno 2006, 5–8, 21–2.

⁴⁶ Barrow, 1973; Sogno 2006, 31–57.

⁴⁷ On Symmachus' family, see Cameron 1999.

⁴⁸ The date of Themistius' speech is contentious, with the dates offered ranging from 347–351. For various options see Seeck 1906, 293–4; Portmann 1992; Barnes 1993, 313, n. 21; Heather and Moncur 2001, 67–71. I offer some justification for 350 at Omissi 2013, 165–9.

⁴⁹ Nov/Dec 355: *Or.* II; 1 Jan 357: *Or.* IV; May 357: *Or.* III (cf. Vanderspoel 1995, 250). Themistius' rise occasioned considerable criticism and the charge of sophistry – the mere pretence of philosophical devotion in order to secure worldly gain – which it took him many years to shake off (Heather and Moncur 2001, 43–7, 101–7).

⁵⁰ *Or.* XVII.214b. Note that Themistius proconsulship has been denied (Heather and Moncur 2001, 45). Only under Julian, who took exception to Themistius' talent for spin, was this ascendancy ever challenged (Vanderspoel 1995, 118–34; Heather and Moncur 2001, 138–42). As Vanderspoel points out, however, even under Julian Themistius still occupied a position of importance, as his delivery of a panegyric indicates.

⁵¹ Cameron 1970, 30ff.

afforded. Yet, thanks to the *Panegyrici Latini* collection, a group of speeches collected not because of the fame of their authors, but because of the quality of their prose, it is clear that provincial authors could also use panegyric to attract imperial favour or enter imperial employ.⁵² The anonymous author of *Pan. Lat.* VIII, who spoke in the spring of 297 in praise of Constantius I after the defeat of the British Empire under Carausius, gives us a fascinating insight into his career. A former professor of rhetoric, he had come to the court of Maximian through the introduction of Constantius (in the days before the latter had been made an emperor). It was after he delivered a panegyric to Maximian, however, that his star truly began to rise. He was given an office (he does not tell us which one) and joined Constantius on campaign in the late 280s or early 290s. He was still serving with Constantius in 293, when the latter was made Caesar.⁵³ The author traditionally believed to be the compiler of the collection, Pacatus, author of *Pan. Lat.* II, delivered his monumental oration to Theodosius during the latter's triumphal visit to Rome after the fall of Magnus Maximus, that is sometime during the period 13th June–1st September 389.⁵⁴ Pacatus is unknown to us before the delivery of his speech and seems to have had no contact with any imperial court prior to this time. In February 390, however, we find him, like Symmachus, promoted to proconsul of Africa.⁵⁵ Three and a half years later he had climbed still higher, serving as *comes rei privatae*.⁵⁶ The author of *Pan. Lat.* XI likewise mentions an “honour” awarded as a reward for speaking, which may well have been an office.⁵⁷ Emperors were ready and willing to reward the men who stood up to praise them.

Nor were orators always content to wait passively for such honours. Throughout the panegyric corpus, we find examples of rhetors who felt able to speak directly to the emperor and to make clear requests of him. Libanius was no stranger to using oratory as a way to present requests to an emperor. To his plea that Julian return to Antioch, in *Or.* XV (above), may also be added his *Or.* XIV, a speech to the same emperor, written in order to reconcile him to their mutual friend, Aristophanes, and his *Or.* XIX, addressed to Theodosius to beg for mercy for Antioch after the riot of the statues.⁵⁸ Themistius ended his panegyric in honour of

⁵² On the growing desirability of imperial appointments over local, see Brown 1992, 21–3 (though note Brown's emphasis on the continued dependence of imperial officials on the cooperation of local elites for the smooth operation of local government); Sarris 2011, 25–32.

⁵³ *Pan. Lat.* VIII.1.1–3.1. Galletier 1949–55, I, 71–2; Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 104–5.

⁵⁴ Date: Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 443–4. For the evidence for Pacatus' role in composing the collection, see Pichon 1906, 285–91; Galletier 1949–55, I, xv–xvi; Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 6–7; Rees 2002, 20–2.

⁵⁵ *Cod. theod.* IX.2.4.

⁵⁶ *Cod. theod.* IX.42.13; cf. Matthews (1990, 86) who also mentions one Latinus Alcimus, another orator who had won fame through a panegyric.

⁵⁷ *Pan. Lat.* XI.1.1–2, with Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 81, n. 3.

⁵⁸ *Or.* XV, we know, was not actually delivered, as it had not reached Julian by the time of his death (Norman 1969, I, xxxii). For the oration on behalf of Aristophanes, see Sandwell 2005, 102–3; Flower 2013, 34–5. *Or.*

Jovian's consulship (*Or. V*), delivered 1st January 364, with a request that Jovian's infant son, Varronianus (Jovian's colleague in the consulship) be sent to Themistius to be tutored when he came of age: "Pray send to me meantime the light bearer, the consul in arms, who has already imbibed his father's qualities at the breast, to be so courageous, so imperturbable like one about to address the multitude."⁵⁹ The author of *Pan. Lat. X* likewise expressed his hopes to Maximian that the emperor would send him his young son, Maxentius, for tutelage.⁶⁰ The anonymous author of *Pan. Lat. VI*, delivered before Constantine in 310, declared that he had worked for the imperial administration before and sought imperial patronage for his children and further employment for himself as an orator at the court.⁶¹ *Pan. Lat. IX*, strictly speaking a panegyric to an (unknown) local governor rather than an emperor, was an extended plea that its author, Eumenius, be allowed to contribute his (enormous) salary to rebuilding the school of rhetoric at Autun, and that the governor write to the emperor to secure this.⁶²

The oration was thus a chance for an unknown man to be seen, for a waning career to be revived, or simply for a powerful orator to reaffirm his loyalty to his emperor and patron. Orators were, of course, not always people outside the court circle looking to be admitted. Eumenius, whom we have just mentioned, had been *magister sacrae memoriae* at some point before speaking.⁶³ Mamertinus, who addressed Julian in 362 to give thanks for the consulship the emperor had granted him, had served as *comes sacrarum largitionum* and then praetorian prefect of Illyricum in the preceding year.⁶⁴ Likewise, Themistius and Symmachus may have been relative unknowns when they first spoke but they hardly remained so, and the patronage of the court ensured future occasions to speak. Orators who could do so took evident delight in expressing their personal familiarity with the emperor.⁶⁵ When a particularly delicate situation presented itself, it is clear that communities looked carefully for the correct person to represent them, choosing individuals who would find favour with the emperor.⁶⁶ But in other

XIX is clearly a rhetorical exercise, rather than an actual plea to Theodosius (Malosse 2014, 85). Sadly, we do not have evidence for what was said by the official delegation sent to the emperor and led by Bishop Flavian.

⁵⁹ *Them. Or. V.71b* (tr. Heather and Moncur 2001).

⁶⁰ *Pan. Lat. X.14.1*; the request is indirect but clear.

⁶¹ *Pan. Lat. VI.23.1–3*.

⁶² *Pan. Lat. IX, passim* (esp. 3.4, 11.1–3, 16.3–5, 20.1–2). The governor is likely the governor of Lugdunensis I (cf. Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 147–8). There is dispute over whether Eumenius' salary was paid by the people of Autun, the Aedui, or by the imperial government; Woolfe (1998, 1–3) assumes the former, Nixon and Rodgers (1994, 149) the latter. Either way, Eumenius' speech amounts to a request to direct large amounts of public money (whether local or central) toward a pet project, albeit in a laudable manner.

⁶³ *Pan. Lat. IX.11.2*.

⁶⁴ *Comes sacrarum largitionum*: *Pan. Lat. III.1.4, 22.2* (cf. *Amm. Marc. XXI.8.1*); praetorian prefect: *Pan. Lat. III.1.5, 15.5, 22.2* (*Amm. Marc. XXI.12.25*). He continued to serve as praetorian prefect until 365 (cf. *PLRE* "Claudius Mamertinus 2"). Mamertinus is probably the only author in the *Pan. Lat.* collection who was in imperial service at the time he delivered his speech, but five other authors seem to have held an imperial appointment at some time in their careers (Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 29).

⁶⁵ *Pan. Lat. XI.1, III.25–9*; *Symm. Or. II.3*; *Them. Or. II.25d–26a, XXXIV.14*.

⁶⁶ Sogno 2006, 3–5.

instances, opportunity was given to new men, unfamiliar with the speaker's platform. On the basis of the surviving evidence, it is impossible to estimate in what proportion the emperor was addressed by men known to him or by strangers, though evidently it was a mix of both.⁶⁷

For orators known to the emperor, however, panegyric was an excellent method by which to express their personal loyalty to their ruler. In moments of political tension, this was of particular importance. We have already seen that orators might seek forgiveness on behalf of their communities for wrongs committed against the emperor. Individuals, too, might seek to use panegyric to heal a rift between themselves and their ruler. In 356, Julian composed in Gaul a lengthy panegyric to Constantius that he forwarded to the court in the East.⁶⁸ Some commentators have argued that Julian's first panegyric was extorted from him almost as if by force.⁶⁹ Yet this is to view Julian's early career through the prism of his later writings and his open hostility to his deceased cousin. If, however, we imagine him as Caesar in Gaul, isolated, distrusted, and struggling to gain for himself some real power, it is clear that there would have been great expediency in his reaching out to Constantius with a voluntary display of loyalty. Symmachus, we know, addressed a panegyric to the emperor Theodosius in not dissimilar circumstances. Symmachus had, in late 387 or early 388, delivered a panegyric to the emperor Magnus Maximus. When Theodosius marched west in the spring of 388 and defeated Maximus, conquering the West for himself, Symmachus found himself thrust out into the political cold, where his widely known status as a *persona non grata* opened him to political and legal attacks. In desperation, the orator composed a speech to Theodosius, his *defensio panegyrici* (sadly now lost), in which he explained his behaviour and attempted to distance himself from the usurper to whom his speech had implicitly allied him.⁷⁰ Panegyric was, therefore, not simply empty verbiage, but entailed a political statement on the part of the orator, a statement for which he could be held to account. It united an orator to an emperor.

CONCLUSION

⁶⁷ Of the eleven late speeches in the *Pan. Lat.* collection, five writers reference that they had delivered panegyrics before or had some familiarity with the emperor: XI, VIII, VI, III, IX (though, in this last example, whilst Eumenius clearly knew the emperor, having served as *magister memoriae*, he claims he has not delivered a panegyric before: 1.1, 3.1).

⁶⁸ *Jul. Or.* I.

⁶⁹ Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 61.

⁷⁰ Matthews 1990, 228–31; Sogno 2006, 68–78. Libanius, in the years after the usurpation of Procopius, (d. May 366), was also dogged by accusations that he had composed a panegyric to the erstwhile emperor: *Lib. Or.* I.163–5. His correspondence from 363–365 is disordered and then ends almost entirely for the period 365–388, before resuming for 388–393, which has traditionally been taken as evidence that, in fear of being put on trial during this difficult time, he destroyed this portion of his letter collection (Norman 1992, 28–35). This hypothesis has been questioned (Cabouret 2009).

Imperial panegyric existed to flatter the emperor and to give ceremonial expression to his position as the supreme ruler of the Roman autocracy. Delivered to emperors in their hundreds and thousands, panegyrics gave urban communities a chance to speak to their (often distant) ruler. Orators used them as a way to offer thanks, to ask for favours, or to beg forgiveness. The orators that delivered them also provided a fertile recruiting ground for the imperial administration and for a well-educated man with ambitions beyond the local level they provided a golden ticket, a chance to stand before the ruler of the entire world, to say the right things, and to be rewarded for doing so. Panegyric was, therefore, a point of contact between ruler and ruled, a ritual to which both contributed and, importantly, from which both could draw considerable benefit.

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