## 1. Imperial Panegyric from Diocletian to Honorius

*Adrastos Omissi & Alan J. Ross*

> Whereas praising disgraceful things purely for the sake of pleasing is a sign of flattery, winning over those in power for people's advantage is a sign of political intelligence.[1]
>
> Sopater, *Letter to Himerius* 54

The editors of this volume once attended a conference together at the Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen, Germany. On the first morning of the conference, one of the senior academics of our host institution offered to take us on a short tour of this beautiful, sleepy little German town. We thus found ourselves outside the imposing neoclassical Assembly Hall of the university, a ceremonial space used for concerts, graduations, and the like. Within its impressive edifice, we knew, was a large and beautifully decorated nineteenth century auditorium, capable of seating more than five hundred people. The door, however, was locked. Our only option, therefore, was one by one to peer in at this room through the keyhole, which afforded us only a very sharply circumscribed view of this monumental space. As one of our colleagues (whom we won't embarrass by naming) wryly observed, one could hardly think of a more fitting metaphor for the study of classical history.

Those who study the ancient world are used to a simple but frustrating problem: there is not nearly as much evidence as we would like. The literary and physical testament that the ancients have left to us is a fiercely attenuated one, and within a given genre, or a given time period, the evidence with which we must work is frustratingly scant: Cicero's corpus is the sole witness to the Republican epistolary tradition; Petronius and Apuleius are isolated (and in the former case, fragmentary) testaments to the Roman novel; and, Ammianus, perhaps the last great author of Latin history in the classical tradition, is separated from his last known predecessor, Tacitus, by almost three centuries.[2] One could go on.

Imperial panegyric is different, however. Between the accession of the emperor Diocletian in 284 and the death of the emperor Honorius in 423, there survive panegyrical texts addressed to emperors written by as many as 21[3] separate individuals who between them authored a body of more than 70 extant panegyrics. These authors praised an impressive

[1] Ἐπεὶ κολακείας μὲν τὰ φαῦλα ἐπαινεῖν αὐτῆς ἕνεκα μόνης τῆς ἀρεσκείας, πολιτικῆς δὲ φρονήσεως τοὶς ἐν δυνάμει καθομιλεῖν πρὸς ὠφέλειαν ἀνθρώπων. (Preserved in Stobaeus 4.5.54).

[2] For Cicero's *Letters*, see Shackleton-Bailey 1965-70, 1977 and 1980, and Hutchinson 1998. The Roman Novel: Hanson 1989, Harrison 1999, Schmeling 1998 and 2011. Ammianus: Seyfarth 1978 and Kelly 2008.

[3] In a somewhat chronological order, these are the (potentially) eleven authors of the *Panegyrici Latini*, the enigmatic Optatian, the bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, Libanius, Themistius, the emperor Julian, Himerius, Symmachus, Ausonius, Claudian, and the perplexingly forthright Synesius of Cyrene. For a full list of these authors and their works, see the Appendix.

roster of emperors, with panegyrics to Maximian (285-305; 306-8; 310),[4] Constantius I (293-306), Constantine I (306-37), Constantius II (324-61), Constans (333-50), Julian (355-63), Jovian (363-64), Valentinian I (364-75), Valens (364-78), Gratian (367-83), Theodosius I (379-95), Arcadius (383-408), and Honorius (393-423). In addition to these, Diocletian (284-305), Crispus (Caesar from 317-26), Constantine II (317-40), and Valentinian II (375-92) find mention in panegyrics not directed at them. We thus find in the panegyrics a continuous — if uneven — record of the four great dynasties of the later Roman Empire.

It is not, however, merely their honorands that single the speeches out. In them, we hear from western and eastern consuls, provincial teachers from Gaul or from Antioch, confidants of the emperor and men meeting him for the first time, Roman senators of ancient families and Constantinopolitan senators on the rise; we hear from Christians and from pagans, from old men and from young men, from people delighting in triumph or hiding the shame of defeat; we hear senior emperors and junior emperors praised; we hear men praising soldiers, men praising children, men praising women (and even, if only the speech survived, we would hear women praising men).[5] In short — and within the narrow confines of the Empire's highest elite — these panegyrics represent the literary testament of a perhaps unrivalled cross-section of late Roman society.

Given the size of this corpus, it is little wonder that it is rarely considered and talked about in its entirety. Yet the potential profit from such an exercise is considerable, for in panegyric we view a developed and mature public culture, we view one of the most important literatures of the late Roman period, and we have a chance to better understand both emperors and orators. This volume aims to be an early shot in what we hope will eventually become a veritable salvo directed at the panegyrical culture of the late Roman world. Its primary virtue is that, unlike much previous work on this topic, it takes a consciously comparative approach to a panegyric. Each of our contributors draws upon evidence taken from multiple authors or from different kinds of panegyric in order to explore both the communal and the particular in this most idiosyncratic of media. A comparative approach lies at the heart of our project, and through it we seek to explore questions that always take a broader view of panegyrical culture in the late Roman period.

## What is imperial panegyric?

Though 'the panegyrical' leeches into many different genres in the late Roman period — into history, hagiography, biography, and other forms of rhetoric, to name but a few — we are concerned here only with examples of what we might call true panegyric, that is the record of

[4] Dates include Caesarships (if held), during which some emperors were the recipients of praise directly or indirectly (e.g. Constantius I in *Pan. Lat.* VIII[4] and Julian in Them. *Or.* 2).
[5] The lost female author is the poetess Faltonia Betitia Proba who composed a poem entitled *The War of Constantius against Magnentius* (*Constantini* [sic] *bellum contra Magentium*) which may have been of a panegyrical nature (cf. Matthews 1992).

speeches given in public in honour of the imperial person.[6] A central question, therefore, is to define what is and what is not a panegyric. It may be noted that the numbers we quoted above — both of authors and of texts — were decidedly vague, caged round with the somewhat defensive 'as many as' and 'more than'. This is because the boundaries of the genre, ostensibly so clearly defined, grow hazier and hazier the closer one examines them.[7]

As our first contributor, Laurent Pernot, points out in his chapter 'What is a "Panegyric"?', the Greek term πανηγυρικός and its Latin equivalent *panegyricus* were employed with comparative infrequency in the late Roman period. Latin orators preferred the term *laudes* ('praises'), whereas Greeks employed either a generic word for praise ἐγκώμιον, or else more specialised terms to denote particular addressees or occasions, such as στεφανωτικός for crown-gold speech (e.g. Themistius *Or.* 3) or προσφωνητικός (e.g. Libanius *Or.* 12).[8] Technically, a Greek speech of praise to an emperor, without a more specific occasion or purpose, was simply a βασιλικὸς λόγος, a 'royal oration', perhaps implying that to address the emperor would necessarily entail praise.[9] Latin had certainly borrowed and Latinized πανηγυρικός as *panegyricus*, but Roger Rees has identified in the few occurrences of *panegyricus* by late Latin authors a recognition (sometimes derisive) of the term's Greek origins that may explain their unwillingness apply the it to their own speeches.[10] The good Roman term for the genre, as we have seen, was *laudes*.[11]

This confusing picture is complicated further by the fact that, in addition to a baffling array of ancient terms (of which the above touches on the most common), modern scholarship has arbitrarily employed one of these several ancient terms — panegyric — in a sense far broader than that which ancient authors intended. We use panegyric today to describe, in a general way, *all* public orations of praise, whether those be praise of a city (as, for examples, the *Antiochikos* of Libanius), of an institution (as are Eumenius' panegyric on the schools, *Pan. Lat.* IX[5], or Eusebius of Caesarea's panegyric on the building of the churches, at *HE* 10.4.3-72), or of an individual. And though many if not most of the individuals whom we see praised in the surviving speeches are emperors, nonetheless, 'private' orations (in particular by Themistius and Libanius), together with the extant and fragmentary speeches of Himerius, hint at a lost world of non-imperial praise-giving.[12] The

[6] On the panegyrical in other genres, see for example its use in history: Ammianus' praise of Julian, which Ammianus himself declares verges upon the panegyrical (Amm. 16.1.3) or Aurelius Victor on the emperor Constantius II (*Caes.* 42.17-25). The panegyrical also found its place in the genre of hagiography: Rapp 1998; Hinterberger 2014.

[7] A key observation of both Whitby 1998 and Hägg and Rousseau 2000.

[8] Authors of the *Panegyrici Latini* frequently and self-reflexively designate their speeches as *laudes* during their opening proem. Most explicit is Nazarius, whose opening line reads 'I am about to utter the most majestic praises of Constantine' (*dicturus Constantini augustissimas laudes*, *Pan. Lat.* IV[10]1.1). Cf. X(2)1.1, XI(3)1.1, VI(7)1.5; V(8)1.2; IV(10) 3.1, 3.2; III(11)2.5; II(12)2.2. Symmachus *Or.* 4.1

[9] Men. Rh. II.368.3, Soc. 5.14.6.

[10] Rees 2010, 14-21; an example: Symm. *Ep.* 2.31 (postscript).

[11] The only other term used with any frequency is *gratiarum actio*, the speech of thanks. Murray 2018: 220.

[12] For Himerius, see Barnes 1987 and Penella 2007.

field of formal praise-giving possesses a diversity that the modern 'panegyric' can easily elide.

Within this broader set of 'the panegyrical', imperial panegyric seems, at least at first, an easy subset to define by occasion and function, if not by original title. Imperial panegyrics are texts that represent the written record of a formal speech made in public before the emperor and his court, a speech in which the emperor is praised using the techniques set out by, among others, Aristotle, in his foundational treatise on the art of *Rhetoric*.[13] Many texts slot themselves unproblematically into this category. When, in Trier, the panegyrist of 311 declares to Constantine: 'Now, therefore, since the whole retinue of your friends, and all the apparatus of empire, stands at your side in this city which still enjoys, more than the rest, your continuous presence,'[14] we can read in this the record of a genuine moment of direct address, when orator and emperor regarded one another across a crowded audience chamber in a performative moment, with orator speaking to emperor directly. The texts of these speeches are such that we feel confident in saying that they were not reworked for later publication, but represent a more-or-less faithful record of what was said on a given occasion.

Yet if the genre is to be defined by its relation to a previous speech act — in other words, if we are to understand much of panegyric's significance as its relationship to a moment of performative oratory — how then do we classify the significant minority of speeches that were either not delivered, or not delivered to the emperor? Julian's panegyrics to his cousin Constantius, for instance, cannot possibly have been delivered by the Caesar in his cousin's presence, for after their parting in northern Italy in the autumn of 355, they were never again in one another's company. One would hardly know this from the text of the two speeches, however, which addressed their imperial honorand directly in the second person throughout. This was hardly a unique conceit of Julian's. The orator of the speech delivered in the presence of the Caesar Constantius in 297 also addressed both Maximian and Diocletian directly, as if they were present, and Libanius' *Or.* 19 and 20, ostensibly given to Theodosius in the immediate wake of the riot of the statues, give little hint that they were in fact rhetorical exercises composed after the whole affair had been settled.[15]

Within its own boundaries, the genre was also capable of great stylistic variation, and two panegyrics might present very different faces to the world. In the first place, panegyrics were produced in both Latin and Greek, and authors from these two linguistic traditions very naturally drew on differing bodies of imagery and mythology. The pagan Roman senator Symmachus, as Robert Chenault eloquently demonstrates in his chapter in this volume, drew the themes and subtexts of his imperial addresses from Roman history itself and referred always to the greatness of the Roman Republic, whilst the Antiochene author, Libanius,

[13] Arist., *Rh.* 1.9.36; cf. *Rhet. Hen.* 1.2.2 and Quint., *Inst.* 3.4.

[14] *Nunc itaque cum in hac urbe, quae adhuc adsiduitate praesentiae tuae prae ceteris fruitur…totus tibi amicorum tuorum comitatus et omnis imperii apparatus adsistat. Pan. Lat.* V(8)2.1. Translations of the *Panegyrici Latini* are taken from Nixon and Saylor Rodgers 1994.

[15] *Pan. Lat.* VIII(4)21.1; for Libanius, see French 1998, 473-4. Libanius' conceit fooled Zosimus, writing only a century later, *New History* 4.41.3.

could show himself little interested with and little informed about Roman tradition.[16] Irrespective of these linguistic bounds, individual authors might approach a speech in utterly different ways. Themistius tended to shape his speeches around a clear philosophic theme, the illustration of which was entrusted to a combination of excurses into the deep well of Greek myth and history and of illustrations taken from the life of the emperor himself, whilst the writers of the *Panegyrici Latini* preferred snappy narrative pieces that deployed a rich and emotive vocabulary to conjure living scenes for their audiences.[17] Most panegyrics that survive to us were written in prose, yet we also have the corpus of Claudianic epic, where panegyric to the living was fused with the stylistic grandeur of Vergil and the mythological colour of Ovid.[18] These texts are as different from one another as the *Church History* of Eusebius is from the *Res gestae* of Ammianus. Helping to bring these questions of genre more fully to light is part of our mission in this work.

Panegyric's very flexibility permitted experimentation, and in the pages that follow we explore this. James Corke-Webster, in his chapter on Eusebius of Caesarea, examines how Christians began to colonise a genre whose pagan overtones were not only explicitly articulated through the evocation of myth (and in some cases philosophy, as Diederik Burgersdijk argues in his chapter), but also were implicitly associated with panegyric both by its use as a prop of the onetime pagan Roman imperial order and by panegyric's origins in and associations with the public festival of the pagan empire. How were Christian authors to colonise this foreign soil, and to Christianise public performative space? Questions of inventiveness, colonisation, and of genre also surface for another of our contributors, Belinda Washington, whose chapter explores the challenges posed to male orators writing in a male-dominated world who turned the eye of panegyric onto female members of the imperial household. Did the need to repurpose the imperial oration to a female honorand fundamentally change the norms of the genre, or merely reinforce them?

All these questions and complexities raise their heads in the pages that follow, as our contributors explore the broad and varied church that is imperial panegyric. Like many churches, when viewed from the outside it presents an image of apparent unity and homogeneity, but the new initiate will quickly discover that it is in fact the striking differences that make panegyric so fascinating.

## Panegyric in Modern Research

The last quarter century has witnessed a remarkable rehabilitation of imperial praise literature. Suffering from Aristotle's designation as the third branch of rhetoric after forensic and deliberative, epideictic has often been dismissed as staid, formulaic, and — when

[16] During his congratulatory address to the emperor Julian for his consulship of 362, for instance, he gives a highly attenuated account of the history of the consulship (*Or.* 12.8) that is more tipping the cap to Roman history when it cannot be ignored than it is genuine engagement with it.
[17] As, for instance, was his *Or.* 6 to Valens, which was constructed entirely around the idea of φιλανθρωπία, or brotherly affection.
[18] Ware 2012, 171-197.

directed towards emperors — servile flattery indicative of the worst aspects of imperial monarchy.[19] Two major works were instrumental in overturning these prejudices, and have enabled the rich flowering of studies on panegyric in recent decades, and from which we take our lead. Firstly, Pernot's *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain* (1993) combined literary and social-historical analysis to offer an exhaustive survey of the form, function, and social status of praise literature in the second and third centuries AD. By demonstrating how praise could be a means for communicating and reinforcing shared social values, Pernot freed encomium from that traditional criticism of empty flattery, and identified praise as a vibrant facet of Greek cultural life under Roman rule.

Imperial panegyric formed just one part of an extensive range of subjects and situations of praise during the second sophistic, and Pernot could draw upon a range of extant speeches that celebrated cities, festivals, and anniversaries during the second and third centuries.[20] Extant epideictic speeches from the period that is the subject of this volume, however, are overwhelmingly directed towards an imperial honorand. The second major publication mentioned above appeared a year after Pernot's, when Nixon and Saylor Rodgers gave the Anglophone world its first complete translation and historical commentary of the eleven imperial panegyrics that, together with Pliny's, make up the collection now known as the *XII Panegyrici Latini*.[21] If Pernot had demonstrated the importance of sensitive literary readings of epideictic in the second and early third centuries, then Nixon and Saylor Rodgers offered an important rehabilitation of late third and fourth century imperial panegyric for the historian of imperial politics and of the interaction between provincial elites and the imperial court.[22]

Although very different in their approaches and subject matter, Pernot and Nixon & Saylor Rodgers both employed a more positive and constructive attitude to praise literature as both a rhetorical genre and a historical source. They also marked the beginning of a period of intense study of imperial panegyric in Anglophone scholarship that was often structured around individual authors or the corpus of the *Panegyrici Latini.* Themistius received competing treatments from Vanderspoel (1995), who argued for the orator's relative independence from his imperial addressees, and Heather and Moncur (2000), who conversely saw him as a tenacious mouthpiece of successive regimes. Both, nonetheless, used the panegyrics to investigate Themistius as a historical actor more so than a literary author. Treating a different corpus of speeches, Rees' 2002 monograph provided the first literary study of the five Tetrarchic *Panegyrici Latini*, examining rhetorical constructions of

[19] Alan Cameron's view is typical of its time: 'So conventional (not to say trite), and so divorced from anything so mundane as mere facts are most of the themes of most of the panegyrists that it is hard to believe that they could have had much influence on the conduct or beliefs of either Emperor or subjects.' Cameron 1970, 37.

[20] Dio Chrysotom and Aelius Aristides most prominently.

[21] Nixon and Saylor Rodgers 1994.

[22] The volume otherwise exhibits an undecided attitude to the role of literary criticism as either a complement to or integral part of historical analysis. The Introduction includes a section on 'Language and Literary Character' but frequently in the commentary that follows the editors express frustration with what they label as the orators' 'vagueness' and 'imprecision', which, nonetheless, must be a conscious part of the orators' style.

provincial loyalty. Two collections of essays from the same period began to expand the focus on Late Antique panegyric outwards in different directions. Setting late antique panegyric in a longer continuum of imperial praise, Mary Whitby's *The Propaganda of Power* (1998) gathered a series of essays that mostly studied individual Latin and Western speeches from the first to the seventh centuries AD.[23] The chapters in Hägg and Rousseau's *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (2000) left formal, imperial encomium behind in order to investigate the generic fluidity of the panegyrical (as opposed to formal panegyric) in Greek literature of the third to fifth centuries, and especially the generic interplay between praise and biography (albeit with a greater focus on the panegyrical in formal biography, than biographic elements in formal panegyric). Between them, these two collections demonstrated the pervasiveness of encomiastic style throughout Late Antiquity, yet they also illustrate a tendency in scholarship to treat Latin and Greek, Western and Eastern texts independently (as do the monographs of same period).

The appearance of so many ground-breaking works within such a short space of time has been testament to the vitality of study on late antique praise, but it also meant that several of these publications were not in a position to draw upon the conclusions of the others. One aim of this volume, then, is to narrow our focus onto imperial panegyric of the 'long' fourth century particularly, and yet to do so in an explicitly comparative frame that will allow us to put Greek and Latin, Eastern and Western panegyric into dialogue. To do so ought not to be considered a frivolous or unnecessary enterprise, but rather as something that addresses the fundamental nature of late Roman imperial culture. It is axiomatic to point out, as one of our contributors did memorably in 2002, that 'In Late Antiquity, emperors were everywhere,' and just as emperors moved about the Empire, so did the cultural world that surrounded their court.[24] In 357, the eastern senator, Themistius, appeared in the western capital of Rome to deliver a Greek oration before a onetime eastern emperor, Constantius II. Less than five years later, in 362, a western praetorian prefect appeared in the Eastern capital of Constantinople to deliver a Latin oration to a onetime western emperor, Julian. Imperial culture criss-crossed imperial territory. The fourth century was a period of unprecedented mobility of individuals, not just the emperor, and saw a significant development of the institution of emperorship and the methods of government, from the reorganisation of administrative divisions under Diocletian, to the emergence of a new senate in Constantinople and the development a trans-imperial senatorial class, all while local populations and governing classes sought to negotiate their relationships with the ever-moving imperial centre(s).[25] The theme of comparison, then, is intrinsic to our volume and occurs within individual chapters.

### **What is panegyric source material for**?

[23] This preponderance of Latin, Western texts (*Panegyrici Latini*, Claudian, Sidonius Apollinaris, Venantius Fortunatus), were joined by a few Greek texts (by Julian and George of Pisidia). Each ancient author received a separate chapter.

[24] Rees 2002, 1.

[25] These phenomena are ably explored in many of the chapters of Wienand 2015, particularly Weisweiler 2015 and Kulikowski 2015. For senators between East and West, see now Moser 2018.

Part of the motivation for the boom in studies of panegyric that has taken place in the last decades stems from the fact that panegyric was, for a long time, largely neglected as a valuable source for the study of the later Empire. It was perhaps with an eye on the apparent candour and historicity of the oratory — largely Ciceronian — that survives to us from the Republic that scholars so frequently turned away in (often explicit) disgust at the toadying and obeisance to be found in the panegyrics.[26] Certainly, when they are approached in the hope that they will yield the raw material of empiricist historical narrative, the panegyrics often prove disappointing. Approached more obliquely, however, their texts can be rewarding.

The majority of scholars who have employed panegyric as a source in recent years have used it as either a companion to more traditional narrative texts or as a window onto political culture.[27] This, certainly, is one of the most obvious employments to be granted to a body of sources so overtly political and so richly saturated in the hyperbolic language of late Roman court ceremony. Panegyric has also more recently been studied as a medial and communicative genre that help establish imperial authority, sustain ideology, and reflecting societal attitudes to Roman monarchy.[28]

A further promising avenue of enquiry has been the growing awareness that imperial panegyric played an important role as primary source material when ancient authors set about writing historical narrative. Much to ancient historians' chagrin, panegyric had an edge upon historiography and several other genres that discussed imperial affairs, in terms of both temporal primacy and proximity to their subject.[29] Panegyric often offered extensive narration of recent political and military events, informed by the participants of those same events — just the sort of material that interested ancient historians, who scrupulously waited for the demise of an emperor before penning their account of his reign. Several of the chapters in Burgerdijk and Ross' recent *Imagining Emperors in the Later Roman Empire* chart the ways that panegyric acts as an agenda-setting genre for historiography, often establishing a literary depiction for a single emperor that would be the subject of subsequent debate, revision, reproduction or attack by historians, but acted as an unavoidable foundation nonetheless.

Many of the contributions to this volume develop these themes. Shaun Tougher, for example, focuses on Julianic panegyrics to investigate the careful reshaping of the memory of Constantius II, Julian's predecessor, to fit the contemporary political needs of the new reign (all the more important a task when we consider the importance of Julianic panegyric to the

[26] Cf. Cameron, quoted in note 19 above.

[27] Of the former group, one might cite, in particular, Timothy Barnes, who has made detailed use of (particularly) the Constantinian panegyrics in order to build a richer narrative of that emperor's life and reign. Of the later, Roger Rees (a contributor to this volume) ought particularly to be mentioned. Rees' work on the tetrarchic panegyrics has done much to enrich our understanding of the world of the tetrarchy and the political culture that the tetrarchs attempted to create throughout the Empire.

[28] Omissi 2018 and the special edition of the *Journal of Late Antiquity* edited by Meaghan McEvoy and Jan Willem Drijvers entitled 'Envisioning the Late Roman Emperor'.

[29] Burgersdijk and Ross 2018, 12-15. For historians' attempts to distance their genre from panegyric see Paschoud 2005.

subsequent construction of Ammianus' historical narrative of the 350s and 360s).[30] Robert Chenault and Robert Stone both look at the importance of advertising the depictions of groups — traditional Romans and barbarians respectively — to further the aims of either panegyrist or emperor. Adrastos Omissi, in his chapter, explores the creation of in-group and out-group in the panegyrical recollection of civil war and communal violence, and how those narratives in turn shaped the events that gave birth to them.

Direct contributions to late Roman political narrative are an important aspect of panegyric studies, but the texts themselves have other stories to tell. We are now, as a discipline, all increasingly familiar with and alert to what Guy Sabbah called *communication ascendante* and *communication descendante*, a two-way discourse effected by panegyric in which messages travelled both 'down from' the emperor and his court, in the form of the panegyrist's repetition and reproduction of central propaganda messages, but also 'up to' the imperial audience, in the forms of subtle reinterpretations of core themes, or even outright requests for patronage and favour. Such upward communication could involve carefully calibrated attempts to repackage the emperor in clothing suitable to the communities that sought to praise him.

Nor should we approach these two poles with a view to finding either one or the other.[31] Nor even are these the only forms of communication available, for though the orator often took his role in order to act as a communicant between a political community and the emperor who was that community's summit, the orator too was a player in this drama, and his own motives might form a third vertex of communication. Thus it is a recurrent feature of *gratiarum actiones*, the panegyrics delivered by incoming consuls in thanksgiving for the office, that one of their core themes is the advertisement to the audience of the orator's own close relationship to the emperor. Examples of these survive in Latin, in both Mamertinus' *Pan. Lat.* III(11) for his consulship in the year 362 and Ausonius' *gratiarum actio* for his consulship in the year 379. In these contexts, the true target of panegyrical praise often becomes obscured; in the course of praising Gratian, Ausonius was able to heap fairly fulsome praise upon himself as well, bathing himself in the reflected light of the emperor with whom (as he was at considerable pains to remind his audience) he enjoyed an enviably close relationship.[32] A fourth participant in the drama of the panegyric, and one often forgotten, was the audience itself. Based on what we know both of late Roman ceremonial and of the Roman court, we think it reasonable to believe that panegyrics would have been delivered before crowds numbering in the hundred or even thousands.[33] In the final chapter,

[30] For which see Ross 2016.

[31] For example, Ware 2018 explores the orator's choices of emphasis and elaboration in in *Pan. Lat.* VI(7) to identify the mingling of *communication ascendante* and *descendante* between Constantine and the population of Trier.

[32] For which, see now Gibson 2018.

[33] Rees (2002, 10) imagines a much smaller audience for the *Pan. Lat.* than we might suppose. Libanius, however, suggests that the bigger the audience the more effective the praise (and the glory for the orator): *Or.* 1.129. Certainly panegyrics delivered before bodies of (roughly) known size, like the senates of Rome (*Pan. Lat.* IV and II) and Constantinople (*Pan. Lat.* III) would have had audiences numbering in the hundreds, and such clues as panegyrics themselves provide (e.g. *Pan. Lat.* V[8].2.1) suggest large numbers, as do the size of the audience chambers that might hold them

Alan Ross explores the role of these audiences in the delivery of a given speech, and the way in which our extant speeches show that authors were anticipating and even presecribing the reactions of the crowd and treating those who listened as participants in the performance of the panegyric.

Our speeches are just as valuable as sources for intellectual and literary history. Burgersdijk and Corke-Webster both explore to what extent contemporary metaphysical systems of thought and belief (Neoplatonism and Christianity, respectively) influenced the models of ideal kingship that served as the basis of praise for individual rulers. Ancient philosophers had often denigrated rhetoric as worldly and even antithetical to truth, and rhetoricians could hit back as vociferously against their critics,[34] a relationship which makes it all the more surprising to discover a muted but reasonably consistent Platonic system of virtues and cosmology at play in some Constantinian panegyrics. Taken together with Themistius' more explicit recourse to philosophy later in the fourth century, the Platonic elements of the *Panegyrici Latini* are witness to a late antique reconciliation between these two branches of literature. Yet, the challenge of uniting epideictic rhetoric and metaphysics was confronted far more head-on by the Christian Eusebius of Caesarea, for whom the subservience of a Christian emperor to God forced a radical rethinking of the form and expression of imperial panegyric, especially when construed by the mediating figure of a bishop, as Corke-Webster demonstrates.

This volume is deeply congenial to the aims of the Translated Texts for Historians series. In the first place, many of the speeches that constitute the corpus of the late Antique panegyrics have been translated into English — on occasion the only such translation — in TTH. (An Appendix of the major editions, translations, and commentaries of extant panegyrics appears at the end of the volume). But the aim of this volume is more than simply to add to the body of commentary that is to be found within these and other translations.[35] As we have been at repeated pains to stress, we hope here to point research on panegyric in a new direction, and to begin tying together some of the strands of an intellectual discipline that has, until now, been conducted in a relatively compartmentalised way.

## Theory and practice

Earlier we remarked that imperial panegyrics had once been dismissed as formulaic flattery. Formulaic in that context was of course used pejoratively, and it had seemed an obvious point to make because of the existence — almost unique among other genres of antique literature

(Omissi 2018, 60 n. 94, estimates the capacity of the imperial basilica in Trier as being *at a minimum* around 2,500 people).

[34] Best exemplified during the Second Sophistic by Sextus Empiricus *Against the Rhetoricians* and Aelius Aristides *To Plato, in Defence of Oratory*. Vickers 1988, 170-178; Murray 2018, 219-20 and 228-231. Such voluble polemic disguised that philosopher and rhetoricians in fact had much in common.

[35] For a list of speeches and their translations, see the Appendix.

— of what appears to be a manual for imperial panegyric.[36] A treatise, dated to the last quarter of third century and ascribed to Menander of Laodicea, provides a step-by step guide for how to compose an encomium of an emperor.[37] It is fair to say that the measuring up of extant panegyrics to the precepts of Menander has become an obsession of modern scholarship, and resulting conclusions are often used to imply the rigidity of the genre or the insincerity of individual panegyrists.[38] Often such studies rest upon assumptions about the aims of Menander's treatise, the sort of advice it imparts, and its availability to Latin authors in Gaul.

Before turning to the validity and import of these sorts of comparison, the existence of Menander's treatise itself deserves consideration. Ever since Aristotle, various commentators had discussed the place of epideictic within wider rhetorical theory.[39] Menander, however, is exclusively concerned with epideictic, and the *basilikos logos* ('the Imperial Oration') is just one among many types of celebratory speeches for which instructions are given ('Speech of arrival', 'Birthday speech' and the 'Funeral speech' to name just three of the sixteen topics covered in Treatise II[40]). Nonetheless, this is the first occasion in which we find a theoretical discussion of a speech of praise specifically addressed to an emperor. Furthermore, it seems the *basilikos logos* was given prominent place at the head of the treatise, and is certainly receives the longest set of instructions of any other type of epideictic.[41] Unlike earlier theorists such as Aristotle or Quintilian who sought to analyse epideictic's form and purpose in comparison to other branches of rhetoric, Menander deals only with epideictic and is explicitly didactic, often instructing his reader directly about what to include and why, and offering examples for imitation: 'after the prooemia, you will come to the topic of his native country',[42] or 'after "birth", you must say something about "nature", e.g. "straight from the labour of his mother's womb he shone forth radiant in beauty, dazzling the visible universe,

[36] It is worth remarking that the same charge has scarcely been applied to ancient historians who appear to follow the advice of Lucian's *How to Write History*.

[37] Men. Rh. II.368-377. For dating and attribution see Russell and Wilson 1981, xxxiv-xl. In this volume we follow Russell and Wilson's arguments that Treatises I and II were probably written by different individuals, or if by the same individual, then at different times. Nonetheless, for simplicity's sake, in what follows we use 'Menander Rhetor' to refer to the author of the second of the two extant treatises on epideictic, which contains instructions for an Imperial Oration (*basilikos logos*).

[38] Rees 2012, 41-42 for examples of comparisons of Menander Rhetor to the *Panegyrici Latini*. Readings of insincerity have been more common among Greek speeches: MacCormack 1981, 187 for Libanius' *Oration* 59, and Athanassiadi 1992, 61-2 for Julian *Oration* 1.

[39] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*. And for Latin, notably Cicero's *de Inventione*, and pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herrenium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*.

[40] The work is incomplete, and we might imagine that Menander also covered the 'festival speech (πανηγυρικός λόγος)' or the 'speech of thanks (χαριστήριος λόγος)'. Russell and Wilson 1981, xxxviii. On Greek titulature, see above and Pernot in Chapter 1.

[41] The order of the topoi in Treatise II is not secure, but two of the three manuscript families place the *basilikos logos* at their head. The only other *topos* to receive almost as much detail is the Address (προσφωνητικός). Russell and Wilson 1981, xliv-xlvi.

[42] μετὰ τὰ προοίμια ἐπὶ τὴν πατρίδα ἥξεις. (369.18)

rivalling the fairest star in the sky"'[43]. In this respect, Menander is far more similar to the *Progymnasmata* of Ps.-Hermogenes (21-27 Rabe) which briefly sets out some theoretical definitions of encomium before offering two short model examples (in praise of Wisdom and Thucydides).[44] But Ps-Hermogenes, like Nicolaus, Aphthonius and other authors of *Progymnasmata*, do not feel the need to offer specific guidance for how to address encomium to an emperor. Curiously, even Libanius, who composed several imperial panegyrics to Constans, Constantius, and Julian, confined his model encomia in his *Progymnasmata* to mythological characters or non-human subjects, with the sole exception of the long-dead orator Demosthenes.[45]

As we noted above, recent collections of essays have demonstrated malleability and even pervasiveness of panegyrical style in the close generic overlap between panegyric and a range of other genres: biography, historiography and even hagiography. But the existence of the first two chapters of Menander's second treatise provides important testimony that by the late third century, panegyric addressed to an emperor had emerged not just as a distinct form of encomium, which required specific guidance, but as the most important form of encomium that an orator might be expected to compose, and, we might well imagine, in the most high-stakes situation, before the emperor himself (not just as a school room exercise, as the *Progymnasmata*).

To return to our earlier question: how (and should) we use Menander as a yardstick to judge extant speeches? The answer depends partly on one's interpretation of Menander's position as prescriptive or descriptive of epideictic practice. Was he the sole, seminal creator of a set of rules that we should expect successive panegyrists to follow; or did he summarize and condense the practice of third-century orators into a handy set of guidelines? Most scholars recently have tended towards the latter interpretation, and thus we might then ascribe any similarities between Treatise II and later speeches to their shared tradition, rather than direct use of Menander: Menander serves as a useful witness to lost (Greek?) imperial panegyrics of the third century. Nonetheless, it is important to note how important a conduit Menander became for channelling and codifying epideictic practice. For example, a fifth-century papyrus from Egypt suggests he remained the go-to text when composing epideictic.[46] And the tenor of other later testimonia led Russell and Wilson to conclude 'that the "authority" on epideictic in Byzantine times was known to be Menander.'[47]

Despite the absence of testimonia to Greek speeches before the 340s, we find fourth-century panegyrists referring to the 'correct' form of imperial panegyric in their speeches. In the late 340s, and in one of our earliest extant Greek panegyrics, Libanius speaks of the 'custom' (ἦθος) of panegyrists to downplay their own abilities at the outset of their speeches.

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[43] μετὰ τὴν γένεσιν ἐρεῖς τι καὶ περὶ φύσεως, οἷον ὅτι ἐξέλαμψεν ἐξ ὠδίνων εὐειδὴς τῷ κάλλει καταλάμπων τὸ φαινόμενον ἀστέρι καλλίστῳ τῶν κατ' οὐρανὸν ἐφάμιλλος (371.15-17).

[44] Kennedy 2003.

[45] Praise of Demosthenes was a standard schoolroom topic (Theon 111; Aphthonius 21; Gibson 2008, 237-9).

[46] P.Berol. 21849, a letter in which one Victor asks for the urgent return of some books he had lent to a Theognostus, including 'Menander's "art" (Μενάνδρου τέχνην)'. Maehler speculates on the context: Victor's aim was 'to write a laudatory speech on some illustrious person, perhaps a prominent visitor to Hermupolis whose visit had been announced at short notice'. Maehler 1974, 311.

[47] Russell and Wilson 1981, xxxvi.

In the following decade, Julian in his first panegyric declares he follows the 'rule of panegyric' by mentioning Constantius' native land.[48] Both speeches conform by-and-large to the structure set out in Menander. Such references presuppose that the audience, as well as the orator, were *au fait* with the expected structure and style of imperial panegyric, perhaps even as codified in textbook form, such as by Menander.

Several of our chapters explore the relationship between theory (especially as illustrated by Menander) and practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is a Greek speech that seems to exhibit greatest affinity with Menander's text itself. Grammatiki Karla shows that in the same speech in which he mentions panegyrists' customs, Libanius uses several of the same examples and phrases as Menander recommends. The sort of intertextuality identified by Karla is of a different order to that often used to argue for the *Panegyrici Latini*'s adherence to Menander — rather than just structural similarity, Karla argues for precise lexical allusions that allow her to conclude Libanius had Menander's text at his side when he composed.[49] This is not to say that Libanius slavishly followed Menander as a model, however. Karla also traces when and where Libanius consciously breaks with Menander's prescriptions, to reveal a creative engagement with the 'norms' of imperial panegyric.

Menander is far from comprehensive in his advice, however, and is largely concerned with structure and what sort of material should be included, not how it should be used or developed. Belinda Washington explores how two authors, one Greek the other Latin, address praise to women. In the Greek case, Julian is at pains to discuss once more the 'norms' of panegyric, while composing praise for a subject not imagined by Menander. Not unlike Libanius, then, he largely follows the contours of Menander's *basilikos logos* at a macro-level, adapting them where necessary for a female subject.

Washington shows how the entire structure of imperial panegyric might be adapted to an 'atypical' subject. Roger Rees focuses on one specific feature recommended by Menander — 'in-character' speech, or *prosopopeia*, in which an orator invokes the voice of another, imagined speaker — to demonstrate how it is applied inconsistently, albeit in distinct patterns across Latin and Greek speeches within our period. Perhaps curiously, it is Latin panegyric that offers more examples of *prosopopeia* than Greek, but even then, Rees detects later authors in the *Panegyrici Latini* collection taking inspiration from their predecessors, rather than necessarily from a textbook, and much less a Greek textbook such as Menander. As Rees concludes, 'rhetorical aesthetics in the *Panegyrici Latini* collection may have had its own, internal and relatively hermetic ecosystem'.[50]

One final chapter also speaks to some of these issues. Ross notes that Menander offers almost no advice on how an orator should engage an attendant audience beyond just the honorand, and argues that a distinct practice developed across Latin panegyric that was likely due to imitation of actual speeches, rather than textbook advice. From these four chapters, then, we can conclude that the *idea* that there could be a codified set of rules specifically for imperial panegyric was an important aspect especially for Greek panegyric, which often

[48] Ὁ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἐπαίνων νόμος (*Or.*1.5b).
[49] Cf. Veerecke 1975 for critiques of this sort of structural comparison between Menander and the *Panegyrici Latini.*
[50] P.x below.

advertised the existence of such rules in varying degrees of explicitness. In Latin panegyric we can observe the codification of practice occurring via imitation of earlier examples. In both cases, however, it is important to note that Menander Rhetor's advice is not a straightjacket for 'real' speeches, rather a creative impulse for imitation and adaptation.

## Structure

The chapters that follow are arranged thematically under four broad headings which provide a framework for the comparisons that underpin our study. These headings are based upon the major recurring structural and thematic elements that together help define fourth-century imperial panegyric, and aim to move discussions of imperial panegyric beyond purely technical discussions or commentary on the reigns of individual emperors.

**Panegyric: Theory and Practice**. The first section explores the theoretical foundations of the panegyrical genre, especially the extent to which rhetorical traditions and theoretical models shaped panegyrical practice during the fourth century. Beginning with an exploration of the terminology applied by contemporaries to panegyric that reveals a conceptual difference between Latins and Greeks (Pernot), two further chapters then explore how authors deployed a long-standing rhetorical strategy of *prosopopeia* to create new traditions (Rees) and how orators sought to apply panegyrical theory to actual practice (Karla).

**The Imperial Image**. Turning to perhaps *the* central concern of the imperial panegyrist's art — how to praise the emperor and to construct a message that served immediate political purposes — the two chapters in this section make a focussed study of the emperor Julian, who, uniquely among his contemporaries, was both subject and author of several panegyrics in both Latin and Greek. First Washington explores how Julian as Caesar moulds the relatively unusual panegyrical image of an empress by setting the image of Eusebius in *Oration* 2 against a wider tradition of public memorials of imperial women. Then Tougher considers how Julianic texts from before and after his usurpation, in both Latin and Greek, together create an intricate nexus, and especially how Julian's early praise of Constantius II conditions later praise of Julian.

**The Orator and Oratorial Identity**. Though structurally panegyric was orientated towards its honorand, individual orators bought their own strategies and preoccupation to their speeches, and identifying these authorial preoccupations is a vital part of understanding panegyric. The contributors to this section examine how the newly tolerated Christian Church began to colonise 'secular' panegyric (Corke-Webster), how despite long-standing animosity between philosophers and rhetoricians, panegyrists of the early fourth century could draw upon contemporary philosophical ideals to praise the emperor, albeit in an intentionally ambiguous way (Burgersdijk); and how different regional agendas manifested themselves in panegyric, especially between Rome — the traditional home of empire — and the new reality that power lay wherever the emperor was (Chenault).

**Outsiders within the Speech**. This final section examines how recurring figures that lie outside the binary relationship between the praise-giver and the praised were incorporated into the praise of the emperor. Such figures frequently play a role within the speech's

discourse and were given important rhetorical form, whether they were usurpers (Omissi), barbarians (Stone), or the (imagined or constructed) wider audience of the panegyrics themselves (Ross).

With these chapters, we aim to showcase the diverse richness as well as the commonality of panegyric across the long fourth century, though of course we cannot be exhaustive. Neither every possible approach or every possible panegyrical author (let alone every extant speech) is touched upon.[51] But we hope we demonstrate that only by examining imperial panegyrical culture across traditional divisions of Latin and Greek, East and West may we fully understand this fundamentally important aspect of political and literary culture during the last century of a unified Mediterranean world in antiquity.

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[51] It is worth stating explicitly here that we have omitted from this volume any consideration of the poem-panegyrics of Optatian, a series of thirty-one speeches written for (among others) the emperor Constantine in the 320s (the history and provenance of these speeches is complex: see Wienand 2017, esp. 132-5). As acrostic poems — that is poems in which hidden messages can be spelled out by reading individual letters from multiple lines — these poems were neither performed nor were they performable, as their genius is only appreciable on the page, putting them in a somewhat different category from the speech-oriented works that form the subject of this volume.

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