

BOOK REVIEW

Latin Panegyric. Edited by ROGER REES. Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xvi + 430. Hardcover, £76.00/\$150.00. ISBN 978-0-19-957671-5. Paper, £29.50/\$55.00. ISBN 978-0-19-957672-2.

Edited by Roger Rees, this volume contains sixteen previously published essays spanning a century of international scholarship on the “Twelve Panegyrics”: Pliny’s *gratiarum actio* to Trajan and eleven *Panegyrici* for emperors from Maximilian to Theodosius. Rees provides a valuable resource for newcomers and veterans alike by threading together essential readings on imperial praise.

The volume consists of “Introductions” (three chapters, 3–74), “Pliny’s *Panegyricus*” (six chapters, 77–220), and “Gallic *Panegyrici*” (eight chapters, 223–386). These are followed by a bibliography (387–423) and a brief index (427–30). Words and phrases in the ancient and modern languages are translated, while numbers in brackets throughout indicate the original pagination of the essays.

The rich editorial introduction traces panegyric from Pindar and Thucydides to Mamertinus and Venatius Fortunatus, and surveys ancient and modern responses to praise-giving in various contexts (epinician, funerary, forensic, philosophical, etc). From the discovery of the *XII Panegyrici Latini* manuscript in 1433 to the present, recurrent research themes include the Classical, Hellenistic, and Republican models of the speeches, their intended audiences, the divergences between their original delivery and their written version, the relationship between panegyrist and emperor, and the panegyrist’s professed “sincerity.” Rees discerns a dominant, moralizing approach to panegyric and maps it onto shifting political landscapes and social sensibilities. A striking such example is the contrast between the enthusiastic reception of Pliny’s *Panegyricus* in early European royal courts and its condemnation by twentieth century criticism (15–16).

Rees’ introduction is followed by Mynors’ 1964 preface to the OCT edition of the *XII Panegyrici*, which clarifies and has since authorized the manuscript tradition. Pichon (1906) responds to the German scholarship of the late-

nineteenth century, which postulated a single author for the unattributed *Panegyrici*. Drawing on paleography, stylistics, and autobiographical references in the speeches, Pichon establishes the *Panegyrici* as the product of diverse Gallic authors.

Section II, on the *Panegyricus*, variously explores Pliny's laudatory ethics. Radice (1968) hesitantly endorses Pliny's innovation in elaborating and publishing "stock themes," and she claims the speech as a source for Pliny supplementary to his *Letters*. Braund (1998) identifies Cicero's praise of Pompey and Caesar as nascent panegyrics influencing Seneca's *de Clementia* and Pliny's *Panegyricus*. Braund also underlines the normative function of Ciceronian and Senecan praise, now a guiding principle for reading Pliny and his Late Antique successors. Fantham (1999) detects in the speech oral formulae transmitting the oaths exchanged between Trajan, the senate, and the consuls; through ritualistic language Pliny solemnizes and authorizes his praise. Morford (1992) defends the respectability of the *Panegyricus* qua political contract; through hortatory eulogy, he argues, Pliny circumscribes imperial conduct and proposes a "working relationship" between emperor and senate. Bartsch (1994) shows that Pliny preempts senatorial criticism of his sincerity by declaring the coalescence of private and public "scripts," by announcing the end of political role-playing, and by re-signifying formerly eviscerated political terminology. Hoffer (2006) illustrates how Pliny exploits the notional oxymoron of the "fortunate fall" in the *Panegyricus* and his letters to Trajan, to negotiate the transitional moment of Nerva's death; human wisdom and divine providence collaboratively transform Trajan from subject into emperor, while he maintains both self-agency and no control over the succession. From Radice's call to canonize the speech, to Braund's calibrating its balance between affirmation and exhortation, to Hoffer's non-judgmental appreciation of Pliny's "Accession Propaganda," the loosening of the moralistic stranglehold yields ever more sophisticated conversation on the *Panegyricus*.

Section III, on the Gallic speeches, is inevitably circumscribed by several unknowns. For most *Panegyrici*, authorship, chronological sequence, audience, and the role of the panegyrist in the imperial court are still matters of debate, and the controversy privileges historicizing rather than literary readings. These unknowns, however, also discourage the preoccupation with earnestness (or lack thereof) which shadows Pliny's speech. Consequently, appreciation of the *Panegyrici* long predates the recognition of the *Panegyricus* as aesthetically and ideologically respectable.

In the earliest of these essays, Maguiness (1933) performs a combined stylistic–thematic analysis of select excerpts to surface their rhetorical skill. His essay is refreshingly unconcerned with the panegyrists’ honesty and even reveals, among others, in their “ubiquitous tendency ... to reconcile opposing actions or statements” (266). Verreke (1975) criticizes top-down views of the *Panegyrici* as either derivative from earlier Latin prose or as following Greek rhetorical precepts such as Menander Rhetor’s *Basilikos Logos*. For him, commitment to either approach dismisses the *Panegyrici* as imitative of “models” and of each other. MacCormack (1975) aligns oratorical and visual *ekphrases* of grandeur as they appear in motifs of imperial arrival (*adventus*), accession, and funerals. Lippold (1968), Blockley (1972), and Warmington (1974) examine speeches addressed to Theodosius, Julian, and Constantine respectively, all focusing on oratory as responding to immediate circumstances: Warmington compares Constantinian speeches to contemporary coinage as mutual reinforcements of ideology; Blockley tends to Mamertinus’ delicate negotiation of Julian’s predecessor; Lippold shows Pacatus’ renewal of traditional laudatory language in his praise of Theodosius. Along similar contextualizing lines, Nixon (1983) rejects the *Panegyrici* as bluntly propagandistic. He emphasizes instead their oral qualities and circumstantial nature, which belie their speculative function as imperial mouthpieces; the panegyrists and the court, Nixon argues, are more subtly connected through the Schools of Rhetoric at Gaul. Saylor-Rodgers (1986) defines the thematic significance of religious vocabulary for imperial portraiture; she traces continuities and permutations of this vocabulary across speeches, but she justly rejects an overarching linguistic “system” of divine attributes.

With their thematic variety, their chronological and geographical range, and their disparate methodologies, these wisely chosen essays highlight perennial questions emerging from a monarch’s praise and illustrate versatile and evolving responses to these questions. As for quibbles, a longer index tracing more than proper names across essays would have enabled readers to pursue thematic connections among the *Panegyrici* and their continuity with Pliny. Neither this nor the single typo I found (“emphasized,” 11), however, weaken what is surely an indispensable volume on Roman imperial *laudatio*.

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