

PLINY'S PRAISE

Pliny's *Panegyricus* (100 CE) survives as a unique example of senatorial rhetoric from the early Roman empire. It offers an eyewitness account of the last years of Domitian's principate, the reign of Nerva and Trajan's early years, and it communicates a detailed senatorial view on the behaviour expected of an emperor. It is an important document in the development of the ideals of imperial leadership, but it also contributes greatly to our understanding of imperial political culture more generally. This volume, the first ever devoted to the *Panegyricus*, contains expert studies of its key historical and rhetorical contexts, as well as important critical approaches to the published version of the speech and its influence in antiquity. It offers scholars of Roman history, literature and rhetoric an up-to-date overview of key approaches to the speech, and students and interested readers an authoritative introduction to this vital and under-appreciated speech.

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PLINY'S PRAISE
The Panegyricus in the Roman World

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-107-00905-9 — Pliny's Praise
 Paul Roche
 Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

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 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107009059

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First published 2011

First paperback edition 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Pliny's praise : the Panegyricus in the Roman world / edited by Paul Roche.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-1-107-00905-9

1. Pliny, the Younger. Panegyricus. 2. Pliny, the Younger – Literary style.
3. Speeches, addresses, etc., Latin – History and criticism. 4. Praise in literature.
5. Rome – Politics and government – 30 B.C.–284 A.D. – Historiography.
- I. Roche, Paul. II. Title: Panegyricus in the Roman world.

PA6640.Z5P58 2011

876'.01 – dc22 2011005727

ISBN 978-1-107-00905-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-52650-1 Paperback

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Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	page vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
1 Pliny's thanksgiving: an introduction to the <i>Panegyricus</i> <i>Paul Roche</i>	I
2 Self-fashioning in the <i>Panegyricus</i> <i>Carlos F. Noreña</i>	29
3 The <i>Panegyricus</i> and the monuments of Rome <i>Paul Roche</i>	45
4 The <i>Panegyricus</i> and rhetorical theory <i>D. C. Innes</i>	67
5 Ciceronian praise as a step towards Pliny's <i>Panegyricus</i> <i>Gesine Manuwald</i>	85
6 Contemporary contexts <i>Bruce Gibson</i>	104
7 Politics and the sublime in the <i>Panegyricus</i> <i>G. O. Hutchinson</i>	125
8 Down the Pan: historical exemplarity in the <i>Panegyricus</i> <i>John Henderson</i>	142
9 Afterwords of praise <i>Roger Rees</i>	175
<i>Bibliography</i>	189
<i>Index locorum</i>	204
<i>General index</i>	206

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Preface

This volume was conceived in the belief that Pliny's *Panegyricus* deserves and will reward more concentrated scholarly attention than it has traditionally received. Neglect is a natural *topos* in scholarly prefaces, but it has genuine substance here; in fact, neglect of the speech has not infrequently sharpened into antipathy, but neither is justified. A professed cultural disdain for formal praise threatens to alienate us from a speech whose survival makes it for us a unique specimen of early imperial senatorial oratory, whose multiple agendas so easily and obviously (indeed explicitly: *Pan.* 4.1) transcend the mere delivery of praise, and whose political outlook ranks it variously as a senatorial manifesto and a classic *locus* of imperial public-image making. But this same aversion would likewise alienate us from a vital witness to an emperor who self-consciously styled himself as a kind of epitome of imperial rule, who occupies in more ways than one a crucial liminal phase between the principates of the first and second centuries, and whose early years as emperor would otherwise be almost completely occluded to us. The *Panegyricus* is a key document in the evolution of imperial leadership ideals, but it is also a key text more generally for comprehending early imperial Rome.

The original idea for this volume was to have represented in one place examinations of the *Panegyricus*' various historical and rhetorical contexts, as well as studies offering critical engagement with the literary fabric of the Latin text as we have it. I am very grateful to all of the contributors to this volume: for agreeing to write for this project in the first place, for the outstanding quality and care invested in their chapters, and for their patience as the overall book took shape. I am equally grateful to Michael Sharp for his constant encouragement over the course of the book's development, from the initial proposal through to the final form of the manuscript. The two anonymous readers from the press offered a wealth of advice, observations and encouragement which have improved the quality and direction of the volume; it is a pleasure to thank them for

their careful reading of the manuscript. In production, both the book and the editor have benefited greatly from the assistance of Elizabeth Hanlon and that of Christina Sarigiannidou, who has been a wonderfully helpful production editor, and the acute copy-editing of Fiona Sewell, who has eliminated many errors from the typescript and sharpened its clarity and consistency throughout. Finally I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Sydney for their warmth, collegiality and good humour: to work with them here is a great pleasure.