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I PACATUS DREPANIUS

Some 1,600 years have passed since the death of Latin[i]us Pacatus Drepanius, and he remains an important but shadowy figure in what we know about literary culture in the western Empire in the late fourth century.¹ The full name is preserved in manuscripts of the panegyric that is the subject of this book;² in most other ancient references he is known severally as ‘Pacatus’ or ‘Drepanius’, but the names are rare enough and the contexts plausible enough for most moderns to accept that they denote the same man;³ crucially, Ausonius twice connects the two names Drepanius and Pacatus.⁴ In modern scholarship he has generally been known simply as ‘Pacatus’.⁵ From letters we have, we know that he was an acquaintance of Symmachus, the consul of 391, although the nature of their association and their dates elude us;⁶ and from literary dedications in works by Ausonius (consul in 379) we know that he was a friend of that Gallic poet and

¹ On the *-ius* suffix in nomenclature, see Salway 1994: 131; Sarullo 2013: 540.

² See below ad loc.

³ He is *Pacatus* at Aus. *Technop. Praef.*, 5.2 and 16.2, although there are MSS variants (see Green 1991: 596; Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 54–8); *Drepanius* at Sid. *Ep.* 8.11.1–2 and both *CTh* 9.2.4 and 9.42.13; *Pacatus* in the salutation to Symm. *Ep.* 8.12; 9.61; 64; *PLRE* 1.272. Valpy 1828: 1550.

⁴ *Pacatus* at Aus. *Praef. Var.* 4.13, prefaced *Ausonius Drepanio filio*; and *Lud. Sep. Sap.*, prefaced *Ausonius consul Drepanio proconsuli sal.*, has the vocatives *Drepani* (2) and *Pacate* (5).

⁵ Baehrens 1921; Hanslik 1942; Cameron 2011: 228, following the practice of Étienne (1962) and Turcan-Verkerk (2003), notes that he should be called ‘Drepanius’.

⁶ Symm. *Ep.* 8.12 is dated by Callu 1995: 118 to 397; 9.61 and 64 are dated by Callu 2002: 39–40 to 390 (?); cf. Sogno 2006: 69.

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teacher of rhetoric;⁷ some have surmised that Ausonius was his former teacher.⁸

Pacatus Drepanius addressed his prose panegyric to the emperor Theodosius in Rome, in the summer of 389.⁹ In the panegyric to Theodosius, the orator identifies himself unequivocally as Gallic: he opens by apologising for the roughness of his *Transalpinus sermo* ('transalpine speech', 1.3); describes his journey to Rome *ab ultimo Galliarum recessu, qua litus Oceani cadentem excipit solem* ('from the furthest recess of Gaul, where the shore of Ocean receives the setting sun', 2.1); uses the first-person plural of *Galli* (23.1, 24.6, 25.1); refers to Gaul as *mea Gallia* (24.4); and foresees his own reception back in the cities of Gaul after his delegation to Rome (*quae reuersus urbibus Galliarum dispensabo miracula!*, 'what wonders I will dispense to the cities of Gaul when I get back!', 47.5).¹⁰ A passing remark in a letter from Sidonius in the mid-fifth century allows for further narrowing-down – he connects 'Drepanius' to the Nitiobriges, a people from the Agen (Aginium) region of the Garonne.¹¹ Although it has found much support, more vulnerable is the conjecture that he was a professor of rhetoric at Bordeaux (see below, §5).

If the evidence of names is accepted, soon after he addressed Theodosius in Rome, Pacatus Drepanius was Proconsul of Africa in 390 (*CTh* 9.2.4, 4 February 390).¹² Again, if we accept the evidence of names, some time before the summer of 393 he

⁷ See above, n. 3.

⁸ Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 9–51, 149; Cameron 2011: 229; McGill 2017: 269–75.

⁹ See below, §3.

¹⁰ Rees 2014.

¹¹ *Ep.* 8.11.1–2 – see below. Valpy 1828: 1551. McGill 2017: 274 n. 93 identifies Pacatus Drepanius' home as the 'south of France'.

¹² That his predecessor in that office, Felix Iunioris Polemius, was Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Illyricum by 16 January 390 (*CTh* 15.1.26) suggests Pacatus Drepanius was *Proconsul Africae* by then, perhaps even late 389; *PLRE* 1.710, Matthews 1971: 1078. *ILT* 619 Pacat[o Drepanio]. Ausonius *Technop.* and *Ludus Sept. Sap.* identify Pacatus Drepanius as proconsul.

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became *comes rei privatae* to Theodosius in Constantinople (*CTh* 9.42.13, 12 June 393).¹³ Short offices were quite standard in the late fourth century, at least in civilian administration – for example, from the reasonably complete lists of holders of the proconsulship of Africa between 357 and 417, it has been estimated that the average tenure of office was barely more than a year.¹⁴ Pacatus Drepanius' Gallic identity might have been a factor in his political appointments; John Matthews cited the examples of Claudius Lachanius, Flavius Rufinus and Marcellus as Gauls who found favour under Theodosius.¹⁵ What is less clear is what would have secured Pacatus Drepanius his appointment in Africa in 390. Again, later fourth-century parallels are illuminating: for example, Symmachus had held the proconsulship of Africa in 373, after he had been *quaestor*, *praetor* and *corrector Lucaniae et Brittiorum*;¹⁶ before he was appointed *Proconsul Africae* by Julian in 363, Clodius Octavianus had already held a priesthood and the vicariate at Rome.¹⁷ It might be the case that Pacatus Drepanius had held an administrative office before 389 and so gained suitable experience to be considered for the African proconsulship in 390¹⁸ – and from the autobiographical detail of his speech, we would assume such a post would have been held

¹³ Chadwick 1955: 29–30; Lippold 1968a: 228; Matthews 1971: 1078–82; Cameron 1985: 175; Nixon and Saylor Rodgers 1994: 439; Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 52–4, 149–52.

¹⁴ Jones 1964: 381: 'The general practice would then seem to have been to keep men in any given office for a brief spell only. This tendency was more marked in the civilian than in the military offices'; *PLRE* 1.1072–4; see also Kelly 2004: 37–40, 91–2.

¹⁵ Matthews 1971; see Kelly 2004: 173, 194.

¹⁶ *PLRE* 1.865–6; Sogno 2006: 6.

¹⁷ *PLRE* 1.637.

¹⁸ Nixon 1983 demonstrated how few panegyrists of the Tetrarchic and Constantinian periods were engaged in imperial service at the time they addressed their speeches – although some exceptions and the case of Claudius Mamertinus (see below, §4) prove there was considerable variety in this respect.

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in Gaul.¹⁹ But no such post is attested, and besides, comparison with other careers suggests that sometimes relevant experience or expertise were by no means necessary prerequisites in securing even major civilian appointments in the imperial administration. A. H. M. Jones observed: ‘A proconsul had little more work to do than any other provincial governor ... These offices were therefore in especial demand, particularly by members of the senatorial aristocracy who wished to maintain their prestige and precedence without an undue expenditure of effort.’²⁰ It seems impossible to pinpoint conclusively, therefore, what qualified Pacatus Drepanius for proconsular office, and much must be left to conjecture; but at the very least, it is clear that his panegyric did his career no harm, and it is tempting to posit a close and causal relationship between his presence in Rome in the summer of 389 and his appointment to the proconsulship of Africa some months later. His panegyric can be seen as part of his concerted – and successful – attempt to secure his own good standing in a new political landscape.²¹

¹⁹ For his references to Gaul, see above. Such a post would have been held under Magnus Maximus, and so would have necessitated some carefully handled representation after the usurper’s death (see below, §2): we might suspect that, rather like Pliny the Younger, who under Trajan had to deal with the success his career had enjoyed under Domitian, or like Symmachus, who under Theodosius offered a defence for a panegyric he had addressed to Magnus Maximus, Pacatus Drepanius felt the need to account for his activity in Gaul between 383 and 388. For Pliny, see Gibson and Morello 2012; for Symmachus, see Sogno 2006: 68–9.

²⁰ Jones 1964: 386. See also Marrou 1956: 310–12; Matthews 1975: 35–49, 107–15; Matthews 1989: 271–4, Sivan 1993: 79 and Kelly 2004: 44–5, 193–6. Zosimus 4.28.3 alleges that under Theodosius, provincial governorships were for sale.

²¹ See below, §§ 3 and 5. Jones 1964: 388: ‘Literary distinction was also very highly prized.’ Sogno 2006: 69 suggests that Ausonius recommended Pacatus Drepanius for the delivery of the speech; see also Sivan 1994: 591. See Gillett 2012: 267 on the rewards a panegyrist might hope to receive. Claudian is an instructive parallel, a panegyric poet and also tribune and notary in imperial service, *CIL* 6.1710, Ware 2012: 1–5, 30–1.

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With these details of his biography and career, his birth can hardly be thought to have been later than 355.²² No epigraphic or documentary references to Pacatus Drepanius can be dated after 393, but the scholarly consensus is that, like other western provincials who held administrative office in the East, he returned to Gaul, perhaps in 395.²³

It seems, then, that Pacatus Drepanius was well respected in his own community, well connected outside it, and a man of power and influence beyond his immediate circles. But in his lifetime and later in antiquity, Pacatus Drepanius' principal reputation was as a poet. In a prefatory poem, Ausonius paid him a very estimable compliment:²⁴

hoc nullus mihi carior meorum
 quem pluris faciunt nouem sorores
 quam cunctos alios Marone dempto.
 'Pacatum haud dubie, poeta, dicis?'
 ipse est.

'None of my own family is dearer to me than the man whom the Nine Sister Muses bless more than all the others, Vergil excepted. "Surely you speak of Pacatus, o poet?" That's him.' (*Praef. Var. 4.10–14*)²⁵

Later, in the middle of the fifth century, in a letter already mentioned, the Gallic poet Sidonius Apollinaris wrote of him in terms that characterise him as a poet: the context is a quarrel between two Gallic peoples, the Nitiobriges (from the Agen

²² Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 51–4 puts his birth at 350–5.

²³ Although on the dating of Symmachus' letters, see n. 5. Matthews 1971: 1088, Delmaire 1989: 127, Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 58, 151–2. In part this dating is based on identification of echoes of Pacatus Drepanius' panegyric in Claudian and Ammianus Marcellinus, each writing in the 390s; Kehding 1899: 28–53; Cameron 1970: 106, 254, 383; Ware 2012: 5–10, 26; Sabbah 1978: 323–7. See below, §5.

²⁴ Rees 2013a: 253–4; McGill 2017: 269–75.

²⁵ See also *Technop. 1 Praef.* and *Ludus sept. sap.* 1–18, where Pacatus Drepanius' reaction to Ausonius' poetry is invited.

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region) and the Vesunnici (modern Périgueux), both claiming Lupus as their kinsman, and Sidonius addresses Lupus; *tu uero utriusque praesentiam tuam disposite uicissimque partitus nunc Drepanium illis, modo istis restituis Anthedium. et si a te instructio rhetorica poscatur, hi Paulinum illi Alcimum non requirunt* ('In fact you split your time fairly between them in turn, now giving Drepanius back to the former, now Anthedius back to the latter. And if rhetorical instruction is demanded of you, the latter don't miss Paulinus, nor the former Alcimus', *Ep.* 8.11.1–2²⁶). The references assume the reader's easy identification of Drepanius and Anthedius as poets, and Paulinus and Alcimus as rhetors.²⁷

Ausonius opens his poem with a verbatim quotation of Catullus 1.1 *cui dono lepidum nouum libellum?* ('To whom do I give this smart new pamphlet?'), so aligning himself with the Veronese poet, and, by extension, his dedicatee Pacatus Drepanius with Catullus', Cornelius Nepos.²⁸ This provides the basis for characterisation of Pacatus Drepanius as 'no less learned and more kind than he whom Gaul offered to Catullus' (*nec doctum minus et magis benignum | quam quem Gallia praebuit Catullo*, 8–9).²⁹ In the verse preface to the *Ludus septem sapientum*, dedicated to him as proconsul and so dated to 390, Pacatus Drepanius is again characterised as *doctus* ('learned', 16).

²⁶ Rees 2013a: 253–4.

²⁷ For Anthedius, Sid. *Carm.* 9.311–12, 22.pr.2–3, *PLRE* 2.93; for Paulinus *PLRE* 2.846; for Latinus Alcimus Alethius, Aus. *Prof. Burd.* 2, Jer. *Chron.* 354, *PLRE* 1.136–8.

²⁸ McGill 2017: 273–4.

²⁹ Nepos was from Cisalpine Gaul (Pliny the Elder *NH* 3.127); his literary output included the *Chronicles* and some poetry (Pliny *Ep.* 5.3.6); his kindness to Catullus is implicit in Cat. 1.3–4, his learning in 6–7. Assimilation of Pacatus Drepanius with Nepos via Cat. continues in the first preface to the *Technopaegnon* (dated to 390 by the dedication *Pacato proconsuli*), *tu facies ut sint aliquid* ('you will bring it about that [the poems] are something'), recalling Cat.1.3–4 *solebas | meas esse aliquid putare nugas* ('you were accustomed to think my poetic trifles were something').

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For centuries readers were unable to test Ausonius' or Sidonius' estimation of Pacatus Drepanius as a poet³⁰ – until 2003, that is, when a radical reattribution of a poem entitled *De Cereo Paschali* identified its author as Pacatus Drepanius. The poem had been long since and erroneously known (and largely neglected) as a work of a ninth-century author, Florus of Lyons.³¹ But Anne-Marie Turcan-Verkerk reattributed the poem to Pacatus Drepanius, the thesis hanging on two different arguments.³² First is the name Drepanius: as is the case for the literary, epigraphic and documentary sources discussed above, the very rarity of the name encourages its identification with the panegyricist.³³ Secondly, an aggregation of lexical parallels between the panegyric and the poem urges the case for common authorship (see below at 2.1, 3.2, 4.2, 4.3, 5.3, 8.3, 10.1, 20.3, 22.2, 23.1, 27.5).³⁴ Turcan-Verkerk's thesis and its ramifications were welcomed in review and reaction.³⁵

Perhaps the most sensational feature of the reattribution of *De Cereo Paschali* to Pacatus Drepanius is that it characterises him as a Christian.³⁶ The poem opens with an invocation, *alme deus rerum* ('nourishing God of nature', 1), then moves to a catalogue of natural phenomena under God's sway (2–14); God is called to look kindly on those celebrating the single divinity under its triple name, who unlike other cults, in pure prayer, honour God and his son, born of a virgin mother (15–30); a crowd of worshippers bring candles to the altars to illuminate their rite (31–9); the whole world is said to confess Christ, whose name and praises will be sung for ever (40–50). The rite may be unclear, but

³⁰ See, for example, Scheffer in Valpy 1828: 1552–3.

³¹ Scheffer, for example, denied any connection between 'Drepanius Florus', a hymn-writer, and Pacatus Drepanius (in Valpy 1828: 1553).

³² Turcan-Verkerk 2003.

³³ Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 16–17, 36–7; Cameron 2011: 229 'this unusual name'.

³⁴ Turcan-Verkerk (ad locc. 72–80) also claims some thematic and stylistic parallels.

³⁵ E.g. Nixon 2006; Cameron 2011: 227–30.

³⁶ Liebeschuetz 1981: 396–97.

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the vocative *Christe* (45) and the reference to the Trinity (18) unequivocally cast the poem as Christian. Alan Cameron seized on this to juxtapose the poem with Pacatus Drepanius' panegyric: the poem is Christian, the speech, according to Cameron, pagan (on religion in the panegyric, see below, §6).³⁷ Cameron used this as a tidy illustration of moderns' inclination to distinguish too rigorously between pagan and Christian in late antiquity; in Cameron's view, Pacatus Drepanius showed how an adept literary figure could conform to the demands of genre without embarrassment. In fact, Turcan-Verkerk had suggested that *De Cereo Paschali* can be dated with a fair degree of confidence to 393–6, and therefore, that Pacatus Drepanius might have converted to Christianity after 389 (the date of his panegyric) and before writing the poem.³⁸ She also concluded that he was a layperson rather than a cleric.³⁹

The date of Pacatus Drepanius' death is not attested, but building on her reattribution, Turcan-Verkerk identifies him as 'Pacatus', the author of a Christian tract against Porphyry, dating to the second decade of the fifth century, and known (only) for its citation by Victor of Capua;⁴⁰ and also as the addressee – again, named Pacatus – of a letter dated to 431, written by Uranius, presbyter to Paulinus of Nola.⁴¹ In the letter, Uranius discloses that Pacatus was preparing to write in verse a life of Paulinus, recently deceased. It is probable that Paulinus, who had been a student and correspondent of Ausonius in Bordeaux, knew Symmachus too;⁴² such a circle of acquaintances could quite plausibly have included Pacatus Drepanius, perhaps in

³⁷ Cameron 2011: 227–30.

³⁸ Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 82–6, 140–8, 150.

³⁹ Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 110–12.

⁴⁰ Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 132–3, following Harnack 1921.

⁴¹ Turcan-Verkerk 2003: 135–7, quoting Uranius from *PL* 53, cols. 859ff.; the text, known as *De Obitu Paulini*, is translated into English in Trout 1999: 293–8.

⁴² Trout 1999: 36–8; Coneybeare 2000: 3–8.

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his late seventies by 431. Like the tract against Porphyry, the poem has not survived (if it was ever written). Although Turcan-Verkerk's evidence is circumstantial and depends very heavily on the reattribution of the poem to Pacatus Drepanius, the portrait of a long-lived and versatile Christian author is appealing.⁴³

Proud Gaul, friend to men of letters, orator in Rome, Christian poet, and high-ranking government official in Africa and the East – Latin[i]us Pacatus Drepanius seems to have been a brilliant and versatile man.⁴⁴ Even if he was unusually successful in several fields, in his *curriculum vitae* is a set of achievements whose interrelationships, although difficult to pinpoint, illuminate a particular time in Roman culture. So, although his speech now dominates what we know for sure about Pacatus Drepanius, he remains a valuable witness to relations between the provinces and capital, between the two capitals, between prose and poetry, and between paganism and Christianity.

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By the late fourth century Gaul already had a rich and eventful history as part of the Roman Empire.⁴⁵ Hundreds of years had passed since the consolidation of Republican Roman interest in Narbonensis; a rampant Julius Caesar had pushed further north, towards the Rhine and across the Channel to Britain; the following decades had seen various struggles, some more costly than others, but gradually a hard-won congruence of Roman

⁴³ See e.g. Pataroli 1708: 451 for diffidence about the attribution of Christian texts to Pacatus Drepanius; Baehrens 1921 was not convinced by Harnack 1921; on the possible assimilation, Trout 1999: 264 'surely not the Aquitanian orator'.

⁴⁴ See §5 below for the possibility that Pacatus Drepanius was also a literary editor and a professor of rhetoric.

⁴⁵ Jullian 1920–6: vols. 3 and 4; Woolf 1998: esp. 29–47. This section is deliberately painted with broad brushstrokes; for more detailed analysis of the military and political narratives as recorded by Pacatus Drepanius, see below, §6 and the commentary ad locc.

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and Gallic cultural practices and political interests had rendered violence less common. Veteran colonies had first appeared in Narbonensis, later in the Rhine region; along with others, many evolved into the centres of urbanised Roman Gaul. The infrastructure of road networks and organised water supply had transformed the landscape and economy; great cities like Narbonne, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lyons, Nîmes, Vienne and Clermont-Ferrand became the most enduring and conspicuous centres of human activity. Meanwhile, under the emperor Claudius, Gallic aristocrats had been granted the right to be admitted to the Senate – in effect, to participate in Roman governance. Cultural change was not without political upheaval: in the empire-wide confusion of the third century, a separatist ‘Gallic empire’ under Postumus had briefly held power around Trier, Cologne and Mainz, but it hardly represented a reaction to Roman culture and was soon brushed aside;⁴⁶ later, in the 280s, a people known as the Bagaudae had ravaged parts of Gaul, but were crushed by the emperor Maximian.⁴⁷ A few years later, Carausius had set up a short-lived separatist state in Britain and northern Gaul.⁴⁸ In the mid-fourth century Gaul had witnessed intermittent unrest, such as the usurpation of Magnentius, which ended in the Battle of Mons Seleucus against Constantius II in 353 CE, and a further attempt at usurpation two years later, by Claudius Silvanus. But perhaps more pressing than these isolated examples of crises in domestic government was the chronic threat of invasion from the Rhine frontier.⁴⁹ Strategically placed on the Mosel, Trier was an important base for military operations on the Rhine frontier, and as one of the provincial capitals patronised by the Dyarchy and Tetrarchy under Diocletian, was regularly home to the reigning Roman emperor during the late third and fourth centuries.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Drinkwater 1987.

⁴⁷ Thompson 1974; Lassandro 2000: 105–44.

⁴⁸ Casey 1994.

⁴⁹ Szidat 2015: 120.

⁵⁰ Wightman 1970: 58–62; Szidat 2015: 121–6.