

## Pacatus on the mnemonic capabilities of republican political figures

F.X. RYAN (LOS ANGELES)

John J. Kamerick  
*nonagenario*  
*viro et bono et innocenti*  
*et summa senectute memoria praestanti*

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses a passage of Pacatus wherein he adverts to the recollective powers of Hortensius, Lucullus and Caesar; its aim is to trace the route by which this knowledge traversed the intervening four centuries.

In his speech to Theodosius I before the Roman senate in AD 389 the orator Pacatus praises the emperor, peculiarly, not just for keeping his manifold promises, but for being able to remember them. He begins by asking the emperor to tell whence he knows what he has promised to whom (§18.1: *velim tamen dicas unde, cum tantis promissa persolvas, quid cui promiseris scias...*). Two alternatives are set out a moment later when he asks the emperor whether he reminds himself unaided or some divine force serves him (§18.4: *utrum tamen ipse te admones an ... tibi aliqua vis divina subservit...?*). He places the imperial memory on a level with the imperial benevolence by assuring the emperor that he wondered at both qualities (§18.3: *solamne me, imperator, benevolentiam tuam mirari putas? at ego miror etiam memoriam*). Political figures of the late republic renowned for their ready recollection are then adjudged inferior by comparison (§18.3: *nam cui Hortensio Lucullove vel Caesari tam parata umquam adfuit recordatio quam tibi sacra mens tua loco momentoque quo iusseris reddit omne depositum?*).

The historical parallels adduced are not commonplaces of late antique panegyric.<sup>1</sup> Both Galletier and Nixon cite as being confirmatory passages of Cicero mentioning L. Lucullus and Q. Hortensius together (*Lucull.* 2) or Hortensius alone (*Brut.* 301) and a passage of the elder Plinius (*NH* 7.91) treating of Caesar, but they do not aver that Pacatus himself directly consulted any of the sources in question.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the panegyrist mentions both Hortensius and Lucullus would lead one to conclude, however, that the *Lucullus* was at the very least consulted indirectly. But it is hardly daring to suppose that the Gallic orator was familiar with the *Brutus*, a history of Roman republican orators written by no less an orator than Cicero himself, and some indication of this may be provided by

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Lippold, 'Herrscherideal und Traditionsverbundenheit im Panegyricus des Pacatus' *Historia* 17 (1968) 228-50, at 242 n.86: 'Hortensius und Lucullus werden bei den Paneg. Lat. sonst gar nicht erwähnt, Caesar gelegentlich, aber nicht wegen seines guten Gedächtnisses.' Pacatus does however imagine *Catonem ipsos et Tullios et Hortensios* (§1.4) as being present at his speech.

<sup>2</sup> E. Galletier, *Panegyriques Latins* (Paris 1955) *ad loc.*; C.E.V. Nixon in C.E.V. Nixon and B.S. Rodgers *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley 1994) *ad loc.*

the order of names in our text: here Hortensius precedes Lucullus, and there we learn that Cicero never came across a memory more powerful than that of Hortensius (*Brut.* 301: *memoria tanta quantam in nullo cognovisse me arbitror*); one would expect to see Lucullus named first if only the dialogue named after him had been consulted (*Lucull.* 2: *habuit enim divinam quandam memoriam rerum, verborum maiorem Hortensius*), as one would otherwise, since he was the older man<sup>3</sup> and had reached the consulship earlier. One might object that Pacatus, being an orator, would have given precedence to Hortensius for his preeminence in that field of endeavor, but the same predilection for oratory and rhetoric would have led him to have a copy of the *Brutus* to hand.

The dictator Caesar, according to information at the disposal of the elder Plinius, was wont to write or read and at the same time to dictate or listen, indeed, to dictate four letters on weighty matters to copyists at the same time, or seven, if doing nothing else (*NH* 7.91: *scribere aut legere, simul dictare aut audire solitum accepimus, epistulas vero tantarum rerum quaternas pariter dictare librariis aut, si nihil aliud ageret, septenas*). Although Plinius had been discussing *memoria* in the preceding chapters, passing from instances of extraordinary memory (§§88-89) to cases of amnesia and memory lapses (§90), he introduces Caesar under the rubric ‘the one excelling most in the liveliness of his intellect’ (§91: *animi vigore praestantissimum*), by which he seems to have meant mental energy and a capacity for quick thinking (§91: *proprium vigorem celeritatemque quodam igne volucrem*). Nowhere in the chapter does Plinius use the word *memoria* or any semantically related noun or verb. One could argue that the simultaneous dictations presuppose a good memory, since Caesar had in every case to remember where he had stopped before continuing, but the fact that Plinius does not present them as a memory feat certainly lessens the probability that Pacatus would have regarded them as such. Nor is there any other information in the speech—to judge from the notes to the translation of Nixon—which must have or is likely to have been taken from Plinius.

In view of the apparent source for his knowledge of Hortensius and Lucullus it is natural to wonder whether Pacatus might not also owe his information on Caesar to Cicero. Two relevant texts can be found, both speeches. In the second of his Philippic orations Cicero compiled a short list of qualities or characteristics possessed by Caesar, but lacking in Antonius: *fuit in illo ingenium, ratio, memoria, litterae, cura, cogitatio, diligentia* (*Cic. Phil.* 2.116). In the speech he delivered on behalf of Q. Ligarius before Caesar himself Cicero found occasion to recall that T. Ligarius, the brother of the accused, had as urban quaestor been well disposed toward Caesar, who at that time was proconsul of the two Galliae and Illyricum: *memoria teneo qualis T. Ligarius quaestor urbanus fuerit erga te et dignitatem tuam* (*Cic. Lig.* 35). The advocate also then expressed the hope that the man benefited by these good offices would remember them by describing his auditor as someone accustomed to forget nothing except wrongs done to himself, thereby praising at once both the superior memory of Caesar and his signature

---

<sup>3</sup> Hortensius was born in the period June-December 114 BC: v. G.V. Sumner, *The Orators in Cicero's Brutus: Prosopography and Chronology* (Toronto 1973) 122-3; L. Lucullus was born in 118 BC: v. F.X. Ryan, ‘Ten ill-starred aediles’ *Klio* 78 (1996) 68-86, at 80-1.

clemency: *sed parum est me hoc meminisse: spero etiam te, qui oblivisci nihil soles nisi iniurias, quoniam hoc est animi, quoniam etiam ingenii tui, te aliquid de huius illo quaestorio officio etiam de aliis quibusdam quaestoribus reminiscentem recordari* (Lig. 35).<sup>4</sup> Since Cicero attested to the *memoria* of Caesar even after his death, no suspicion of flattery attaches to his ascription of this quality to the dictator when speaking in the presence of the latter.

But we are less concerned with the sincerity of Cicero than with the reception of his statements. Pacatus would have read both of these speeches early on in his study of oratory, but it seems unlikely that the brief praise of Caesar in the second Philippic, mingled as it was with some criticism (*Phil.* 2.116: *res bello gesserat quamvis rei publicae calamitosas, at tamen magnas; multos annos regnare meditatus magno labore, magnis periculis, quod cogitarat, effecerat*), would have left much of an impression on him, and still less likely that the presence of the bare word *memoria* in the short list of qualities *in illo* would have stood out in his mind; he admitted, or pretended, that his own memory was not phenomenal, since he and his associates had to combine efforts in order to keep track of the imperial *beneficia* (Pacat. 18.2: *ne singulis insidietur oblivio, cum altero quisque conferimus*).<sup>5</sup> The speech for Ligarius, on the other hand, is one that Pacatus might well have chosen to reread when assigned the task of praising Theodosius. Although Caesar was on this occasion both judge and jury, one cannot classify the defense as a court speech (*genus iudiciale*) in contradistinction to a display speech (*genus demonstrativum*). It was both, and modern scholars have not only long regarded the Caesarian speeches as panegyric,<sup>6</sup> but also long recognized that ‘Cicero’s three command performances in honor of Caesar’ were seen by the late antique panegyrists themselves as ‘all useful references for one who would praise a ruler’s civic arrangements, especially after some internal disruption’.<sup>7</sup> That was,

<sup>4</sup> The phrase *aliis quibusdam quaestoribus* must refer to pro-Caesarian quaestors, among whom the prosecutor of Q. Ligarius, Q. Aelius Tubero, might have numbered; Cicero in this passage fairly clearly is responding to a prosecution argument. *Vide* F.X. Ryan, ‘The Quaestorships of T. Ligarius and Q. Aelius Tubero’ *AC* 68 (1999) 243-5, at 244-5.

<sup>5</sup> Cicero for his part leaves us proof of the fallibility of his memory in the speech for Ligarius; the extant text (§33) still names L. Corfidius among the supporters of Ligarius in attendance, although Cicero, having been informed by T. Ligarius that this was an error inasmuch as Corfidius was already dead by that time, attempted to have copyists remove the name from all the exemplars (Cic. *Att.* 13.44.3). Since the correction was not made in at least one, ‘some textual instability must have ensued’: so S. Gurd, ‘Cicero and editorial revision’ *ClAnt* 26 (2007) 49-80, at 50 and n.3. The mistake was possible since Cicero would not have been able to include these names in any notes he made prior to the trial. *Vide* M.C. Alexander, *The Case for the Prosecution in the Ciceronian Era* (Ann Arbor 2002) 19: ‘As he delivered his speech for Ligarius, Cicero had listed supporters of the defendant who were present at the trial. It is very likely that he did so extemporaneously, since he would not have known in advance who would appear. But when he edited the speech for publication, his memory played a trick on him...’

<sup>6</sup> Cf. S.M. Braund, ‘Praise and protreptic in early imperial panegyric: Cicero, Seneca, Pliny’ in Mary Whitby (ed.) *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Mnemosyne Suppl. 183, Leiden 1998) 53-76, at 68, who calls the three speeches ‘the earliest Roman imperial panegyrics that survive’; R. Rees, ‘Panegyric’ in W. Dominik and J. Hall (ed.) *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* (Malden MA 2007) 136-48, at 141: ‘In each case, Cicero praises Caesar, essentially for his willingness to forgive his former opponents.’

<sup>7</sup> Nixon-Rodgers (n.2), ‘General Introduction’ 17.

of course, exactly the situation in which Pacatus found himself: Magnus Maximus, after holding sway in the West for five years, had been vanquished by Theodosius in the preceding year.

Just one instance of an allusion to the *pro Ligario* in the late Latin panegyrics was known to Nixon and Rodgers, and that from the panegyric of Constantinus I dating probably to 310.<sup>8</sup> But that Pacatus here modelled himself upon the Ligariana is scarcely to be doubted. There are, admittedly, no verbal echoes of Cicero in Pacatus, but circumstances prevented the latter from using the exact words of the former: whereas Caesar was always more or less ready to pardon those who had taken up arms against him and killed no opponent save on the field of battle, Magnus Maximus had died after capture by execution. Theodosius, as portrayed by Pacatus, was not merciless—indeed, in a later passage of the speech the orator adverts to the *clementia* of the emperor. But everything is relative: this virtue is illustrated by the claim that no one was slain after the war, at least no one after Maximus: *ita omnem cum armis iram deposivisti ut ceciderit nemo post bellum, certe nemo post Maximum* (§45.4).<sup>9</sup> Theodosius, then, was willing to forget some *iniuriae*, but not others, and it was not possible for Pacatus to make the blanket statement that the emperor forgot nothing *nisi iniurias*. Pacatus was compelled to divorce clemency from memory and praise each separately, but he did not on that account simply extol the memory of the emperor; instead, he intertwined memory with generosity, just as Cicero had intertwined memory with leniency. It might then seem that Pacatus was original in that he substituted generosity for leniency, but even here he was anticipated by Cicero who, as we have seen, expressed the hope that Caesar would remember the friendly service he had received from T. Ligarius in his capacity as quaestor (*illo quaestorio officio*), a hope which clearly implies that he considered Caesar certain to reciprocate. Cicero then expected Caesar both to remember kindnesses and to repay them, while Pacatus relates that Theodosius remembered to do them, numerous as they were (§18.1: *ipsa illa beneficiorum tuorum turba*). The originality of Pacatus lies

<sup>8</sup> Nixon-Rodgers (n.2) 17 n.61; in their introduction they attribute an allusion to the *pro Ligario* to *Pan.* VI(7) as a whole, but the speech for Ligarius is not mentioned again in the notes to the translation of the speech. A. Klotz, ‘Studien zu den Panegyrici Latini’ *RhM* 66 (1911) 513-72, at 552, had cited as an example of ‘Anlehnung an Ciceros Reden’ *nihil est enim tam perspicuum quam in pectore tuo bonitas* (*Pan.* VI[7].20.2), comparing it with the formulation *nihil est tam populare quam bonitas* (*Cic. Lig.* 37). — In a discussion of the proskynesis mentioned in the speech of thanks to Constantinus I dating probably to 311 (*Pan.* V[8].1.3: *stratum ante pedes tuos ordinem*), C. Ronning, *Herrscherpanegyrik unter Trajan und Konstantin* (Tübingen 2007) 268-9, cites the reference Cicero made to the practice in his defense of Ligarius (*Lig.* 13: *nos ... strati ad pedes* and again *nos iacentes ad pedes*) as a precedent, without however claiming that the later orator here consciously imitates the earlier.

<sup>9</sup> Although Nixon (n.2) renders *certe* in the passage quoted above ‘certainly’, Maximus is here regarded as having been killed after the cessation of hostilities and *certe* must therefore be translated ‘at least’ or, in French, with ‘du moins’, as Galletier (n.2) saw. — The translators of the passage and, before them, F. Grinda, *Der Panegyrikus des Pakatus auf Kaiser Theodosius* (Straßburg 1916) 75, point out that Pacatus passes over the murder of Victor, the young son of Maximus. Various sources mention the killing of the son after mentioning that of the father (*Oros.* 7.35.10; *Prosp.* 1191; *Hydat.* 17; *Zos.* 4.47.1), but only one is explicit about the order (*Cons. Constant.* a. 388: *post paucos dies*). Victor had been raised to the rank of Augustus, and his killing is perhaps for that reason here treated as a foregone conclusion.

principally in his phraseology. In sum, *pro Ligario* 35 is not merely the source from which Pacatus took his knowledge of the good memory of Caesar, but a source which he imitated as closely as possible in his own praise of Theodosius; in all probability it was also the source from which he learned that the memory of a ruler was a fit subject for praise.