

## HOW (NOT) TO COMMEMORATE CICERO: ASINIUS POLLIO IN SENECA’S SIXTH *SUASORIA*\*

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*Abstract.* The article examines the three references to Asinius Pollio in Seneca the Elder’s sixth *Suasoria*. It reads them as an authorial meta-reflexion about the interplay between cultural memory and literary or rhetorical emulation. While attempting to canonise Cicero as a cultural and political icon, Seneca invites his readers to participate in this canonisation by imitating both Cicero’s own works and earlier declaimers and historians who have written about him. Asinius Pollio is a key figure for this programme in the *Suasoria*, in that he does not participate in this game and therefore acts as a negative exemplar for Seneca’s readers.

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### 1. Introduction

Seneca the Elder’s *Oratorum et rhetorum sententiae divisiones colores* have found substantial treatment in recent scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Studies have, among other aspects, shown his deeply conservative, classicistic spirit, which is grounded in his love for Cicero, and the didactic aims of his collection, which according to Emanuele Berti wants to offer examples of good and bad eloquence to his readers.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, researchers have not always paid enough attention to Seneca’s interests and aims when interpreting the fragments of early imperial declamation and historiography which he transmits. This is also the case when they have been dealing with the reception of Cicero in an Augustan and Tiberian declamatory context. The fundamental importance of rhetorical teaching and declamation for the canonisation of Cicero in Roman imperial literature has been the theme of two recent studies.<sup>3</sup> Among the sources for the earliest history of this development, Seneca the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially the rich monographs by Fairweather (1981) and Berti (2007). The text of Seneca is quoted according to Håkanson’s *editio Teubneriana*. All translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Berti (2007) 22.

<sup>3</sup> See esp. Keeline (2018) and La Bua (2019). See also Bishop (2019) 216–17.

Elder takes pride of place. His *Oratorum et rhetorum sententiae divisiones colores* transmit a rich array of fragments that deal with Cicero's role within the schools of rhetoric. Additionally, the sixth *Suasoria* famously contains the fragments of Roman historians who wrote about Cicero's death. While the value of the transmitted fragments cannot be overestimated, the evaluations Seneca adds to them are more problematic. Scholars tend to take them at face value and use Seneca as if he were an objective container of the previous material. Thus when he reports that Asinius Pollio 'alone narrated Cicero's death in a malicious way' (*Suas.* 6.24), this has remained almost unchallenged by modern researchers.<sup>4</sup>

This article focuses on Seneca's treatment of Asinius Pollio in the sixth *Suasoria*. It argues that Seneca is not an objective source for the few negative judgements about Cicero in the historiography of the early Empire, but rather that he comments on his material persuasively in order to influence his readers' attitude towards Cicero. I will argue that Seneca advocates a model of interaction between imitation/emulation and cultural memory (Part 2). Consequently, I will show that Asinius Pollio is a key figure for this in that he does not participate in this emulative game of commemorating Cicero and therefore acts as a negative exemplar for Seneca's readers (Part 3).

## 2. The Interaction of *Imitatio* and *Memoria* in Seneca's Work

One of the most-read passages of Seneca the Elder's *Oratorum et rhetorum sententiae divisiones colores* is the second half of the sixth *Suasoria* in which he reports how several historians and poets have described Cicero's death and how they evaluated his personality and historical importance. The material is at first sight so different from what Seneca collects in the rest of his work that it has led Luciano Canfora to speculate that the digression could in reality be the notes Seneca took for use in his own treatment of the event in his *Historiae*.<sup>5</sup> Although I doubt that this speculation alone could explain the nature of the excursus, it seems obvious that Seneca's interest in and experience with historiography must be considered when analysing the passage. The passage is clearly defined as a digression.<sup>6</sup> Being a renowned historian himself, Seneca

<sup>4</sup> See below, n. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Canfora (2000) 168.

<sup>6</sup> It starts in *Suas.* 6.14, where the transition from rhetorical to historiographical material is pointed out and where Seneca stresses that what will follow (the *historici*) is not unfitting (*alienum*) to his general theme (the *suasoria*) as the unifying topic, the *memoria Ciceronis*, unites the two parts (*Suas.* 6.14). After having quoted another instance of a rhetorical text, in *Suas.* 6.16 he finally turns to the historians and explicitly addresses the transition again, both with the verb *transeo* and the invitation to his sons—who represent any ideal reader of the collection—not to be disappointed (*contristari*) with the excursus, but to accept it as salutary

knew that a digression is a good place for more general and meta-textual reflections on methodology and on the aims of the work.<sup>7</sup> It is improbable that Seneca believed that his sons, raised in the house of a historian, would indeed find historiography so boring as not to read it. The reference to their disappointment or unwillingness to continue their reading seems therefore ironical, meant to stress something else, namely that what Seneca has to offer them in this section is indeed very worthwhile to read. In a way, he offers the readers a lesson for their future life that might in the end be more important than the strictly rhetorical material.<sup>8</sup>

Before we can turn to the digression itself and especially to the role that Seneca attributes to Asinius Pollio in it, some remarks on Seneca's general aims are necessary. It has long been acknowledged that one of the great themes in his collection is imitation.<sup>9</sup> His collection of fragments of early imperial declamation is meant to inspire his readers to compete with their predecessors when engaging in declamation themselves. In a famous passage in the preface to the programmatic first book of *Controversiae* Seneca advises his dedicatees (his three sons) not to imitate one author only: *non est unus, quamvis praecipuus sit, imitandus, quia numquam par fit imitator auctori* ('one must not imitate just one, even if he is extraordinary, because an imitator will never become the same as an author', *Contr.* 1 *pr.* 6). The context of the passage, however, shows that this claim is not as straightforward as it seems. On the one hand Seneca favours the broadest possible imitation for didactic reasons.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, it is obvious that even when imitation is as broad as possible, it centres around an ideal nucleus and derives its legitimation from it. This reference point is the republican ideal of *eloquentia* as the combination of moral, political, and

medicine (*velut salutarem daturus pueris potionem*). The end of the digression is then marked in a similarly explicit way in *Suas.* 6.27, this time with the verb *recedo*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. on historiographical digressions now concisely Woodman (2018) 172–3, and Laird (2009) 208–9 ('prefaces and digressions and asides in historical texts where the authors explicitly claim *in propria voce* the enduring value or current pertinence of their subject').

<sup>8</sup> It seems that Seneca explicitly says something similar in *Suas.* 6.16 where he defines the aim (*propositum*) of the digression (I follow the text of Müller (1887) here): 'I will perhaps obtain that you, after having read these judgements that are so steady and so full of truth, will abandon the teachers of rhetoric' (*fortasse efficiam ut his sententiis lectis solidis et verum habentibus <a scholasticis> recedatis*). But this interpretation rests heavily on the assumption that Bursian's addition *a scholasticis* (which he proposed in 1869) is correct. Others have supplied the lacuna differently, e.g., Håkanson (1989) prints *solida et verum habentia recipiatis*. I mainly follow the arguments by Feddern (2013) 432, who discusses the passage thoroughly.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Berti (2007) 251–64; Gunderson (2003) 34–5; Fairweather (1981) 28; Sussman (1978) 63–4.

<sup>10</sup> Berti (2007) 263 labels this kind of *imitatio* 'rhetorical' and distinguishes it from (potentially less all-encompassing) literary imitation. The first aims at developing the imitator's own style, the second at hidden allusion and thus at intertextual enrichment.

rhetorical excellence (in *Contr.* 1 *pr.* 9 it is captured in the Catonian formula of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, ‘a good man, experienced in speaking’). For Seneca, as for many other authors of early imperial times,<sup>11</sup> such an ideal can be associated with one iconic figure: Cicero. In *Contr.* 1 *pr.* 6, in contrast to his instigation to imitate as broadly as possible, he therefore introduces a strict canon for which Cicero serves as a temporal reference: *quidquid Romana facundia habet, quod insolenti Graeciae aut opponat aut praeferat, circa Ciceronem effloruit* (‘everything which Roman eloquence possesses and with which she can rival or surpass the bold Greece, flourished around Cicero’s time’). So next to educating a new generation of potential declaimers, the second aim of Seneca’s collection seems more conservative: keeping a tradition alive that is represented by Cicero as its utmost exemplary figure.<sup>12</sup>

As Erik Gunderson has astutely observed, Seneca himself ‘imitates all rather than one ... in order to recapture one vital lost object: the good man experienced at speaking’.<sup>13</sup> He then specifies this ‘object’ as ‘oratory as a whole, oratory as noble, oratory as the efflorescence of genius, and the social world that supported such a pursuit before luxury, gain, and perverse honours overwhelmed it’. But one could also easily identify it with Cicero, Seneca’s alleged hero of ‘the last generation of the Roman republic’.<sup>14</sup> In the same preface, he recalls that as a young man he might still have heard Cicero’s *viva vox*, had the turmoil of civil wars not hindered him from coming to Rome. The almost religious tone with which Cicero is described stresses that he is seen as the major champion of oratory, far beyond the reach of the other orators of all times (*Contr.* 1 *pr.* 11):<sup>15</sup>

ne Ciceronem quidem aetas mihi eripuerat sed bellorum civilium furor, qui tunc orbem totum pervagabatur, intra coloniam meam me continuit; alioqui in illo atrio, in quo duos grandes praetextatos<sup>16</sup> ait secum declamare, potui adesse illudque ingenium, quod solum populus Romanus par imperio suo habuit, cognoscere et, quod vulgo aliquando dici solet sed in illo proprie debet, potui vivam vocem audire.

<sup>11</sup> For Cicero’s reception in the early Empire see Winterbottom (1981), Degl’Innocenti Pierini (2002), and recently the impressive study by Keeline (2018).

<sup>12</sup> On Seneca’s admiration for Cicero, see now Wilson (2008) 316 n. 23 with references.

<sup>13</sup> Gunderson (2003) 35.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Sillett (2016) 274, who compares Cicero to Cato and Pompey in Seneca’s work.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. on the encomiastic tone of the passage Berti (2007) 214, who connects it to the formation of the almost mythical renown of Cicero, and Degl’Innocenti Pierini (2002) 20–1. Seneca’s viewpoint has often been connected to the imperial discussion about the so-called ‘decline of oratory’; see, e.g., the recent summary in Keeline (2018) 90–3 and, still important, Heldmann (1982) 92–7 on the preface to the *Controversiae*.

<sup>16</sup> Suet. *Rhet.* 25.3 identifies these two as Hirtius and Pansa; cf. Berti (2007) 129 n. 1.

Even Cicero was not taken away from me by my age, but by the frenzy of civil wars, which, as then raging throughout the whole world, kept me in my native colony. Otherwise I could have been present in the little atrium, where he says that he declaimed with two famous *praetextati*; I could have got to know the genius, the only one which the Roman people considered equal to their empire, and (something one commonly used to say sometimes, but which should rather be said about him) I could have heard the living voice.

If we take together the two aspects highlighted so far, it becomes clear that for Seneca, imitation is the means to reappraise the hero(es) of the past. The concept serves as a means to re-create the past and keep it alive for the present and the future. This double directedness, orientated backwards and forwards at the same time, closely connects it to memory, which has often been identified as a second crucial theme of Seneca's collection as a whole.<sup>17</sup> It is also introduced in the preface to the first book of *Controversiae*, in which Seneca declares that his book is about conserving memory.<sup>18</sup> Whereas Seneca's individual memory looks back in time, the book he is actually writing for his sons (and implicitly for other readers in the future) can also be described in terms of modern theories of collective memory,<sup>19</sup> which always has an orientation towards the future. Seneca, by recording his memories, has codified them and thus attributed an authority to them that is typical of what Jan Assmann has famously called cultural memory (in contrast to the less

<sup>17</sup> Gunderson (2003) 30–1. On historiographical memory which was 'preoccupied with the present and the future as well as the past', see Laird (2009) 209–10 and recently also the case studies in Galinsky (2014). The combination of imitation and memory I propose here is different from Conte's poetic memory in that it is less orientated towards allusion and intertext, which lead to broadening the meaning of the text in most cases, but closer to what Conte himself refers to as one of his major inspirations, Pasquali's 'allusive art' that refers 'to cases where the allusion stands primarily in a relationship of "aemulatio", of competition with and improvement of the original' (Conte (1986) 26). For a critical evaluation of Conte's concept of poetic memory and similar approaches cf. Riesenweber (2018). What I propose here, instead, is imitation as a means to construct a shared and thus (ideally) relatively stable memory.

<sup>18</sup> In fact, it is even a case of last-minute conservation. The longer Seneca waits to write down his memories, the fewer there will be left, because memory, he explains, is the most fragile part of a human body and the first to be affected by old age (*memoria est res ex omnibus animi partibus maxime delicata et fragilis*, *Contr.* 1 *pr.* 2); cf. Berti (2007) 19–21, with further references. See now also Krebs (2018) for an intriguing reading of Caesar's discussion of the Druids, where according to Krebs the theme of 'writing' is introduced with intertextual links to Plato's *Phaedrus* in order to negotiate the *memoria Platonis* in implicit discussion with Cicero's *de Oratore* (I owe this reference to Rhiannon Ash).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Gunderson (2003) 31, and Guérin (2010) 147–8 and 155.

regularised, and thus also less hierarchical, communicative phase).<sup>20</sup> However—as I will argue below with regard to the memory of Cicero—in order to keep it active, the dedicatees and all readers will have to react continuously to it and negotiate about its relevance—a kind of intertextuality (understood in a rather broad way) that helps to make ‘the past an integral part of the present’ and at the same time ‘transform[s] [it] as it generates new meaning in the present’.<sup>21</sup> Thus, even if Assmann’s concept supposes that cultural memory is a second, post-communicative phase, it can only be saved from becoming passive, archival memory through continued communication.<sup>22</sup> Such communicative commemoration, in Seneca’s view, finds its ideal infrastructure within the imitative rhetorical and literary culture he envisages. In other words, imitative or even emulative competition is healthy for a society’s cultural memory.

### 3. Asinius Pollio in the Sixth *Suasoria*

In the following discussion, I will use this double focus on imitation and memory when turning to Seneca’s treatment of Asinius Pollio in the sixth *Suasoria*. He is an exceptional figure for two reasons. First, according to Seneca’s explicit evaluation, Pollio is the only critical voice within the choir of Cicero’s admirers—‘he alone narrated Cicero’s death in a malicious way’ (*Ciceronis mortem solus ex omnibus maligne narrat*, *Suas.* 6.24).<sup>23</sup> Second, he is the only author who is mentioned in three different contexts in *Suas.* 6.14–27. I will argue that Seneca uses him in this section of his work in order to reflect on the mechanism of *imitatio* and *memoria* with respect to the commemoration of Cicero; his special focus is on the need to engage with Cicero’s own works and to enter in an emulative dialogue with the writers of the recent past.

So far, no convincing answer has been given as to why Seneca has emphasised Pollio’s negative voice in the section. Obviously, Pollio’s critical and partly biased remarks about Cicero do not correspond to the overall aim

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Assmann (1992) 48–56.

<sup>21</sup> O’Gorman (2009) 242.

<sup>22</sup> For a less productive reading of Seneca’s preface see Sussman (1978) 68, who links Seneca’s hint at his deteriorating memory to the lament about the younger generation’s lack of interest in the past in *Contr.* 1 *pr.* 10. For the distinction between ‘canon’ as active, discursive (and collective) remembering and ‘archive’ as passive, accumulative storage of memories, see Assmann (2010) 99–104.

<sup>23</sup> Already Zielinski (1912) 353 treats Pollio under the heading ‘Cicerokarikatur’ as the inventor of a distorted image of Cicero. His arguments are affirmed in the classic article by Gabba (1957) 324–5, and more recently by Massa (2006) 451–8. For the expression *solus ex omnibus*, see *Contr.* 7.2.13 about Hispo Romanus, the ‘only negative *declaimer*’ about Cicero, with Keeline (2018) 113 (who tends to read Seneca’s testimony as objective *hoc loco*).

of the passage, namely to bring together very positive records of Cicero's last hours in order to write a kind of collective *encomium Ciceronis*. The careful structure of the passage, which is organised climactically with respect to dramatic *evidentia*, makes it obvious that Seneca did not simply lump together all material available to him, but rather arranged it according to his own interests.<sup>24</sup> The first question is why Seneca mentions Pollio at all instead of passing over his remarks in silence. One obvious answer is that Pollio's rhetorical and literary qualities were simply too highly appreciated to be omitted.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Seneca is quite favourable towards Pollio in other parts of his work, especially in the elaborate and balanced appraisal in the preface to *Controversiae* 4.<sup>26</sup> Convincing as this explanation surely is, it cannot explain the emphasis Seneca places on Pollio in the passage.<sup>27</sup>

Most interpreters have used the three passages in which Pollio is quoted to reconstruct Pollio's view of Cicero,<sup>28</sup> but such an approach ignores Seneca's guiding hand, although it has been recognised that in other sections he acts as a kind of arch-declamer who selects and organises his material according to

<sup>24</sup> One can only speculate as to whether other historians or poets might have described Cicero's death in less eulogistic tones as well. Migliario (2007) 149 sees in Seneca's selectivity the proof that more negative versions of Cicero's life and death must have circulated in the first decades of the Augustan regime than Seneca is willing to admit (André (1949) 97 has already argued similarly). Within the *Suasoria*, Seneca's evaluating voice is heard regularly, e.g., in the case of Cremutius Cordus' *laudatio* of Cicero, which is heavily abbreviated because Seneca does not like it ('it is not worthwhile quoting it', *non est operae pretium referre*, 6.23). For other examples with regard to Pollio, see below. This means that Seneca had his 'own agenda' (Wilson (2008) 316), namely to counter criticism of Cicero and highlight that his deeds are irreproachable. On the success of Seneca's canonical image in later ages see Roller (1997) 124 (with n. 39 for some examples from different genres). For a similar observation with respect to the relative disregard of contemporary declaimers see Bloomer (1998) 204–5, who argues that Seneca's pretended lacunae of memory help him to exclude declaimers who do not fit his picture.

<sup>25</sup> One of the most balanced accounts of Pollio's working method and political personality is found in Morgan (2000).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Berti (2007) 132–9, who shows that Seneca portrays Pollio less as a declaimer than as an orator; Morgan (2000) 67–8 connects Seneca's remark on Pollio's *floridior* style in declamation in *Contr.* 4 *pr.* 3 to his preference for *recitatio* over *oratio* which, according to Morgan, was typical of the early imperial time in which free speech lost importance and *recitationes* filled the vacuum, offering the authors a 'virtual *libertas*' (68).

<sup>27</sup> See for a contrast Livy, whose work was surely not less renowned, but who is dealt with in a much more straightforward way: he is quoted twice, always according to chronology, whereas the threefold mentioning of Pollio is marked (see below).

<sup>28</sup> Cf., e.g., the otherwise excellent treatments by Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2003) 8–11, Sillett (2016) 148–61, and Keeline (2018) 130–40 (whose relativising 'Seneca the Elder was clearly a lover of Cicero' is only found in a footnote, 133 n. 78). A partial exception is Wilson (2008): see below, n. 35.

persuasive categories.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, it has been convincingly demonstrated that one should not read the declamatory fragments quoted by Seneca as demonstrating an interest in historical accuracy; rather, they construct history as literary and rhetorical evidence.<sup>30</sup> The same scepticism with regard to historicity should also be applied to Seneca as a historical compiler. Therefore, it seems unlikely that Seneca, who obviously makes use of effective arrangement and explicit evaluation as rhetorical strategies, has presented Pollio's attitude towards Cicero in an unrhetoical and 'objective' way.

I propose an alternative scenario, namely that Seneca carefully stages Pollio's negative voice as an exemplar of how *not* to deal with Cicero's memory.<sup>31</sup> As I have mentioned earlier, Seneca refers to him three times in the sixth *Suasoria*, with all references having prominent positions: two function as a kind of frame for the digression, one at its beginning, right between the double announcement of the digression (see above), and one at its end (6.14–15 and 6.27). The third mention of Pollio is within the collection of passages praising Cicero, but not where one would chronologically expect Pollio's assessment (it should be the first in the series as Pollio is the earliest historian); instead, it is quoted at the end of the section, immediately before the climactic praise of Cicero in hexameters by Cornelius Severus. This conspicuous arrangement marks Pollio as a figure deserving special attention from the reader.

The first passage introduces him as a man 'who remained most hostile towards Cicero's reputation' (*qui infestissimus famae Ciceronis permansit*, *Suas.* 6.14). Its position is awkward: in the preceding sentence Seneca has explicitly opened his digression with the transition from declamation to historiography; however, the reference is not to Pollio's historiographical work, but to one of his speeches. His *Pro Lamia* (delivered in close chronological proximity to Cicero's death) is mentioned for having attacked Cicero's lack of courage towards Mark Antony. Seneca's criticism of such an assertion is harsh: 'He added more disgraceful things than this so that it was clearly evident that all he had said was so wrong that even Pollio himself did not dare to integrate it into his *Historiae*' (<ad>*iecerat his alia sordidiora multo ut ibi facile liqueret hoc totum adeo falsum esse, ut ne ipse quidem Pollio in historiis suis ponere ausus sit*, *Suas.* 6.15). Even if Pollio did not dare to include the fiercest attacks in his historiographical writings, Seneca nevertheless stresses Pollio's consistently negative attitude towards

<sup>29</sup> Bloomer (1998) 214 defines Seneca's role in his work as that of 'the arch-declamer'.

<sup>30</sup> See especially the ground-breaking article by Roller (1997) for this process of making history through writing it; and Kaster (1998) for the reduction and transformation of Cicero into an emblematic figure in declamation; cf. now also Sillett (2016) esp. 205, and Wright (2001).

<sup>31</sup> André (1949) 97 fittingly describes Seneca's (and Quintilian's) tactic in dealing with Pollio's negative attitude towards Cicero 'presque comme un scandale'.



Cicero throughout his life. The verb *permansit* carries a heavy meaning here: Seneca's readers must have known that there were critics of Cicero directly after his death, but here the text implies that the others had later changed their attitude. Thus Seneca criticises Pollio not only for having dared to pronounce negative judgements on Cicero, but also for having remained hostile and not having changed his attitude. An additional problem is that his negative judgement has triggered a declamatory tradition of its own (which Seneca treats immediately afterwards in *Suas.* 7): 'still, he offered the opportunity for another *Suasoria* to those who attend the schools of rhetoric' (*is etiam occasionem scholasticis alterius suasoriae dedit, Suas.* 6.14).<sup>32</sup> Hence, Pollio's enmity to Cicero's afterlife has not remained isolated, but has survived and even been discussed through imitative repetition, a process which at the end has again helped Cicero's renown. Indeed, if one looks at Seneca's seventh *Suasoria*, one immediately sees that the declaimers he quotes have not followed Pollio's negative route, but show a very sympathetic attitude towards Cicero.<sup>33</sup> Readers who subscribe to Seneca's admiration for Cicero can obviously profit even from Pollio's negative *exemplum*: they can counter his negative voice in an emulative spirit and thus demonstrate that they have learnt the lesson of imitation and commemoration which Seneca advocates.

The second mention of Pollio is in the section in which Seneca collects what he calls the *consummatio totius vitae et quasi funebris laudatio* ('the sum of his whole life and almost a funeral oration') of Cicero (*Suas.* 6.21). Pollio is absent from the previous part that contains the actual descriptions of Cicero's death. We first learn in 6.24 that he was the only historian to have narrated Cicero's death in an unfriendly way (*Ciceronis mortem solus ex omnibus maligne narrat*), a remark that closely relates the passage to the previous one in 6.14. Also there, Seneca had referred to Pollio's negative judgement of Cicero, and he also had referred to Pollio's *Historiae*, but, as we have seen, only by mentioning what the historian had *not* included in his actual description of Cicero's last hours. A similar thing happens in 6.24. Seneca only summarises the tone of Pollio's passage about Cicero's death (*maligne*), but does not quote it. Thus in both passages Seneca emphasises the lacuna he has created. This technique of mentioning and not quoting can be connected to recent scholarship on active 'forgetting'. Seneca suppresses Pollio's account, but only to place an extra spotlight on what surprisingly follows: a long quotation of—Pollio's *Historiae*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Migliario (2007) 139.

<sup>33</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer of this journal for having made this suggestion.

<sup>34</sup> I refer to Flower (2006), esp. 277, for the three possibilities of actively forgetting memories by destroying, modifying, or erasing them. Cf. also Schulz (2018) for a slightly different tripartition: she distinguishes between 'Entfernen', 'Fokussieren', and 'Ersetzen'. According to both concepts, Seneca would first erase Pollio's narrative, but in fact modifies him by leaving out the description of the death and focusing only on his *encomium Ciceronis*.

It is not about Cicero's death, but is rather an evaluation of the man and the politician. Surprisingly for the reader who has followed Seneca's depiction of Pollio so far, Seneca labels the passage a 'thorough testimonial' (*testimonium ... plenum*, *Suas.* 6.24) and thus obviously gives credit for eulogy, while still adding a bit maliciously that Pollio wrote it almost 'against his own will' (*quamvis inuitus*, *ibid.*). Nonetheless, the fact that he quotes it at the end of the section of historians stresses its importance: it is immediately followed by Cornelius Severus' verses that are introduced as the greatest praise of Cicero.

The positioning of Pollio's fragment at the end of the section of prose eulogies has yet a different effect.<sup>35</sup> It invites us to read Pollio's assessment of Cicero, chronologically the earliest one quoted by Seneca, as if it were a reaction to previous eulogies of Cicero, almost as a case of chronologically inverted intertextuality. In the section on Cicero's death itself (*Suas.* 6.17–20), Seneca has arranged the fragments of Livy, Aufidius Bassus, Cremutius Cordus, and Bruttedius Niger in such a way as to emphasise intertextual bonds between the authors.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, he has chosen passages bearing allusions to texts by Cicero himself,<sup>37</sup> as if his voice were still present and narrating the events of his own death.<sup>38</sup> This last point also seems relevant for the evaluation

<sup>35</sup> Wilson (2008) 316–17 has already noted that the position is marked: 'Pollio's testimony on Cicero has been repackaged and recontextualized' in order to 'discredit Pollio's slur on Cicero's reputation'.

<sup>36</sup> One of the best treatments of intertextuality in the descriptions of Cicero's death is Narducci (2009) 3–17, but see also Roller (1997). Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2003) 27–8 gives a good overview of 'theme and variation' of one detail in different authors (the mutilated hands). Cf. also Dahlmann (1975) 106–8 for Cornelius Severus' version and its many pre- and post-texts.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Winterbottom (1981) 252: 'Ciceronian pastiche is rampant'. The most obvious passages are the alleged last words in Livy's report (*Suas.* 6.17: *moriar in partia saepe servata*) as an echo of a recurrent theme in the *Catilinarians* and the post-consular speeches, e.g., *Cic. Cat.* 3.1, 25; 4.20; *Sull.* 83; the Stoic presentation of his own neck to the assassins (e.g., *Suas.* 6.18: *se morti ... obtulerit*) which takes up Cicero's advice that every good man should be willing to die for the *patria* (*Off.* 1.57: *mortem oppetere*). For Aufidius Bassus' claim that Cicero was born for the *rei publicae salus* (*Suas.* 6.23) cf., among many similar passages, *Cic. Cat.* 3.26; for the phrase that Cicero always attacked or was attacked, cf. *Cic. Phil.* 2.1 (noted already by Edward (1928) 144–5). For Livy's phrase that one would need a Cicero to praise Cicero (*Suas.* 6.22), cf. the fragment of the *Cicero-vita* by Nepos (fr. 58 Marshall = *HRR* fr. 17 (II.40); not in *FRHist*) stating that Cicero was 'the only one who could and should have spoken about history with a worthy voice' (*unus qui potuerit et etiam debuerit historiam digna voce pronuntiare*, cf. Fairweather (1981) 65). Roller (1997) 117 suggests that much of the anti-Antony invective as displayed by the declaimers was established by Cicero himself in his *Philippics* with the help of which they 'vilify Antony and lionize Cicero'.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Seneca's remark with reference to Livy's *encomium*, 'one would need a Cicero as panegyrist to fully carry out his praise' (*in cuius laudes <ex>equendas Cicerone laudatore opus fuerit*, *Suas.* 6.22)

of Pollio's Ciceronian epitaph. The reason why Seneca is so impressed by it and why according to him it is the best Pollio ever wrote (*nihil ... disertius*), is that he engaged in an imitative *certamen* with the master's voice.<sup>39</sup> 'I can assure you that there is nothing more eloquent in his *Historiae* than this passage I quoted; it seems to me that at this very moment he did not praise Cicero, but competed with Cicero' (*adfirmare vobis possum nihil esse in historiis eius hoc quem rettuli loco disertius, ut mihi tunc non laudasse Ciceronem sed certasse cum Cicerone videatur*). Indeed, the passage is 'shot through with allusions to Ciceronian texts', as Andrew Sillett has convincingly argued.<sup>40</sup> Much has been written about the question of whether Pollio's eulogy is positive or critical on the level of content.<sup>41</sup> However, it is obvious that Seneca's main reason for liking it was not its content (which he characterised rather ambiguously in 6.24),<sup>42</sup> but its style: Pollio had done what Seneca wants his readers to achieve—he has imitated Cicero and thus done more justice to him than he initially intended, because by imitating Cicero's words and by engaging with other eulogists of Cicero, he had kept the memory fresh and alive.<sup>43</sup>

According to Seneca, this was not customary for Pollio. In the rest of his work he is not emulating Cicero, but writing such a different style that he almost seems to fight against him.<sup>44</sup> This becomes clear in the final scene of the sixth *Suasoria* that forms a kind of narrative vignette of the digression

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Keeline (2018) 135 ('an imitative rivalry that is the sincerest form of ancient flattery'). Generally, Pollio was rather no Ciceronian, but adhered to what Leeman (1955) 200 has labelled an archaistic or even 'primitivist' atticist style (with reference to Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.113; see, however, the nuancing remarks by Woodman (1988) 150–1).

<sup>40</sup> Sillett (2016) 151. At 151–3, he adduces four passages. Already Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2003) 9 had identified two of them, but she reads them more as hints of Pollio's 'stoccata maligna'. I add a fifth: Pollio's sentence that Cicero's consular successes were favoured by the gods (*magno munere deum*, *Suas.* 6.24) reminds one of, e.g., Cic. *Cat.* 3.1, 15, 18 (cf. Feddern (2013) 461).

<sup>41</sup> See Sillett (2016) 153–6 for a sound summary of the main *pro* and *contra* arguments, and 157 for his own take that it is wrong to 'read this obituary as either simply pro-Ciceronian or anti-Ciceronian'. *Contra*, Wilson (2008) 312, who stresses Pollio's negative view of Cicero everywhere in the sixth *Suasoria*.

<sup>42</sup> Keeline (2018) 135 finds Pollio's praise 'very grudging at best', but nevertheless concludes that Seneca approved of it because of its content.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. O'Gorman (2009) 241–2 (see above, n. 21).

<sup>44</sup> This is the background for Seneca's pun at the end of the quotation, where he dissuades his sons from reading more of Pollio's *Historiae*; if they still wanted to do so, they would be punished in Cicero's name (*nec hoc deterrendi causa dico, ne Historias eius legere concupiscatis; concupiscite et poenas Ciceroni dabit, Suas.* 6.25), i.e., they will be disappointed because the rest of Pollio's text is not as Ciceronian—and therefore less good—than this passage. See Feddern (2013) 464–5 on the notoriously difficult passage; he convincingly rejects previous readings which have read it as a compliment to Pollio.

(6.27).<sup>45</sup> It reports the recitation of the poet Sextilius Ena in the house of Messala with Asinius Pollio and the epic poet Cornelius Severus being present as well. One of Ena's verses is a hyperbolic lament on Cicero's death: 'One must bemoan Cicero <and> the silence of the Latin tongue' (*deflendus Cicero est Latiaequae silentia linguae*, *Suas.* 6.27 = fr. 202 Hollis). Pollio is reported to have disliked the verse. Likewise, Seneca himself had criticised the style of Ena's poetry which was (with a Ciceronian quotation) 'fat in sound and as if it were written by a foreigner' (<*pingue*> *quiddam sonantis atque peregrinum*, *Suas.* 6.27 = *Cic. Arch.* 26). But Pollio's criticism does not regard style, but content. He is angry that Ena's verse has marginalised Pollio's eloquence: 'Asinius Pollio could not bear that and said: "Messala, it is up to you what you accept in your own house; I will no longer listen to this person to whom I seem mute".' (*Pollio Asinius non aequo animo tulit et ait: 'Messala, tu quid tibi liberum sit in domo tua videris; ego istum auditurus non sum cui mutus videor.'*) As a consequence, he leaves the meeting rather abruptly.

Adrian Hollis has stressed the historicity of the event,<sup>46</sup> but that is not what makes it so interesting for my argument. Seneca uses it as closure of the *Suasoria* in order to reaffirm the initial impression the reader has got from Asinius Pollio: 'he remained most hostile towards Cicero's reputation' (*infestissimus famae Ciceronis permansit*). Instead of countering the bad verses with an alternative, Pollio leaves the room, thus depriving himself of any further negotiation about them. Cornelius Severus, on the other hand, is reported to have been inspired by this line at least; he used it as model for his famous and much more elegant verse, which Seneca had previously quoted and called the best memorial for Cicero so far: 'the eloquence of the Latin tongue was sad and fell silent' (*conticuit Latiae tristis facundia linguae*, *Suas.* 6.26.11 = fr. 13.11 Courtney = fr. 13.11 Blänsdorf = fr. 219.11 Hollis). Severus actually does two things: first, he explicitly emulates Ena and thus continues and improves the commemoration of Cicero's idealised image.<sup>47</sup> It is not by chance that Severus' verses are so highly acclaimed by Seneca ('no one of all these very eloquent men bemoaned Cicero's death better than Cornelius Severus', *nemo tamen ex tot disertissimis viris melius Ciceronis mortem deploravit quam Severus Cornelius*, *Suas.*

<sup>45</sup> Gambet (1963) 28 calls it a 'charming story'; Richlin (1999) 204–5 deals with it in the context of the fascination for speaking metaphorically about heads and tongues in early imperial literature.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Hollis (2007) 338 ('not later than AD 4') and 363 ('[Ovid] could well have been present at Ena's recitation').

<sup>47</sup> For a similar scene in which imitation leads to actual improvement see *Contr.* 9.1.13 where Arellius Fuscus is quoted for having said that he was not contending with the best *sententiae* in order to steal them (*surripere*), but to improve the previous author (*vincere*). Seneca then offers the example of Sallust re-writing Thucydides. Cf. on this passage Berti (2007) 252–3.

6.25)—they have achieved this because they engage in an emulative *certamen*. Second, he does so by rewriting Ena with the help of Cicero: as Hollis has observed, Severus ‘cleverly incorporated echoes of Cicero’s own *Brutus*’, i.e., the *laudatio funebris* of Hortensius.<sup>48</sup> It is indeed a clever allusion: on the one hand, the lament of dead Hortensius, a kind of literary *laudatio funebris* within the *Brutus* that has more than once been labelled the *laudatio funebris* of Roman eloquence,<sup>49</sup> emphatically evokes the context of collective commemoration that Seneca wants to convey. Second, in the *Brutus* Cicero’s lament for the end of the free republic is combined with his transformation into an idealised intellectual and (thereby also) a political leader, a role he claims for himself in the rhetorical-philosophical works of 46–43 BC. Thus, Severus’ Ciceronian allusion highlights what Seneca finds most memorable in Cicero: his words and his eloquence which also refer back to the heroic political agent of the Republic.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

This article has engaged with imitating and—through this imitative process—commemorating one of Seneca’s heroes: Cicero. It has argued that Seneca was well aware that collective memory, in order not to become archival, must continuously engage with the object of commemoration. He proposes literary imitation and emulation, both with Cicero himself and with those who have spoken about him previously, as a way to achieve such non-archival memory. Cornelius Severus, who according to Seneca bestowed the best eulogy on Cicero (so far), exactly shows the imitative spirit that Seneca also praises in Asinius Pollio’s *encomium Ciceronis* and that he has defined as crucial for his whole work in the preface to the first book of *Controversiae*.<sup>51</sup> However, at the

<sup>48</sup> Hollis (2007) 363 ad loc. refers to *Brut.* 19 (*conticuerunt tuae litterae*), 22 (*eloquentia obmutuit*), and 324 (*studium ... conticuit et obmutuit*). Cf. also Keeline (2018) 139–40, who stresses Severus’ ‘creative adaptation and refashioning’. Baraz (forthcoming) labels Seneca’s work a ‘*Brutus* in reverse’.

<sup>49</sup> The first modern scholar to claim that the *Brutus* could be read as *laudatio funebris* was Haenni (1905) 52; cf. Narducci (2009) 367.

<sup>50</sup> Cf., e.g., the beginning of Severus’ fragment: the dire image of Cicero’s mutilated corpse on the rostra (*rapti Ciceronis imago*) has this first immediate effect on the by-standers: ‘then the great deeds of the consul came back to the minds [of the spectators]’ (*tunc redeunt animis ingentia consulis acta*, *Suas.* 6.26.4 = fr. 13.4 Courtney = fr. 13.4 Blänsdorf = fr. 219.4 Hollis). Cf. for the success of Severus’ verses in later authors Degl’Innocenti Pierini (2003) 39.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Suas.* 6.19 for a similar parallel between the way Cicero had described the death of his contemporaries and the way his own death was described by later historians: Cremutius Cordus mentions the irony of fate that Cicero had saved so many in the forum (*multorum*

end of the sixth *Suasoria* Pollio refuses to play the imitative game, and thus also sabotages the collective project of keeping Cicero's memory alive, a memory that is so neatly connected to repeating his *viva vox*.<sup>52</sup> The prominent presence of Pollio in the sixth *Suasoria* can therefore be seen as a negative *exemplum* for the readers. It reminds them why continued effort is necessary, and it suggests how not to behave towards Cicero's afterlife: within the collective effort to keep Cicero's memory alive, readers are invited to follow the road of Cornelius Severus rather than that of Pollio.<sup>53</sup>

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*capita servaverat*) and now was exhibited exactly there; the same idea occurs in Cic. *de Orat.* 3.10 with reference to the death of M. Antonius orator (*multorum capita servata*).

<sup>52</sup> For the connection of remembering Cicero and remembering his voice, and for the role intertextuality plays in this process (next to rhythm and sound effects), see the chapter 'Amazing Grace' in Butler (2015) 161–95.

<sup>53</sup> For Seneca's wish to communicate his ideas to future generations, see Wilson (2008) 334 (my emphasis): '[I]t was vitally important to some of [Seneca's] generation to believe, and persuade the next generation to believe, that Cicero stood by his writings at the end.'

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