

LITERARY IMMORTALITY IN PLINY THE YOUNGER'S *LETTERS I-IX*

by

NATALIE FORT

(Under the Direction of T. Keith Dix)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the letters in the first nine books of Pliny the Younger that focus on poetry, oratory, and history. Through his letters, Pliny creates his identity as a writer in each genre. His letters also portray the writing process and reveal the impact of recitations and literary friendships on a writer's work and career. Pliny believes that writers should work to achieve fame in their lifetimes and immortality after their deaths. Pliny's letters reveal ways to improve, promote, and celebrate emerging and established authors, while providing a tribute to Pliny himself. In addition to serving as a vehicle of communication and encouragement for writers, letters become another genre through which writers can aspire to fame.

INDEX WORDS: Pliny the Younger, Roman letters, Genre, Immortality, Fame

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## INTRODUCTION

Gaius Caecilius Secundus was born to a wealthy family in 61 or 62 C.E. at Comum. After his maternal uncle, Gaius Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder) adopted him following his father's death, he took his uncle's name and became Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (Pliny the Younger).<sup>1</sup> Quintilian and Nicetes Sacerdos, a Greek rhetorician of the Asianist school, instructed him at Rome.<sup>2</sup> At eighteen years old, he started his career as advocate by joining one of twenty lots in the Vigintivirate, which were appointed by the emperor.<sup>3</sup> Through this office, he ascended to a body of ten that judged civil cases at the Centumviral Court.<sup>4</sup> Because of Pliny's success within the court as an advocate, the *princeps* appointed him to one of twenty quaestorships, without an election.<sup>5</sup> Through his quaestorship, Pliny entered the *cursus honorum* and served as tribune of the plebs, praetor, and prefect of the treasury of Saturn by 98 C.E.<sup>6</sup> In 100 C.E., Pliny wrote and delivered his *Panegyricus* in Trajan's honor to express Pliny's gratitude for the office of *consul suffectus*.<sup>7</sup> Trajan appointed Pliny to his last governmental

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<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *Natural History: Praefatio, Libri I, II*, trans. H. Rackham, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 1979): vii.

<sup>2</sup> G.B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, trans. J.B. Solodow, rev. D. Fowler and G.W. Most (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994): 525.

<sup>3</sup> Pliny, *Complete Letters*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Conte, 525.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



appointment, governor of Bithynia-Pontus, between 109 and 111 C.E.<sup>8</sup> Pliny seems to have died shortly afterwards, probably in 113 C.E.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout his lifetime, Pliny the Younger was a prolific author of speeches and letters. The first nine books of Pliny's *Letters* date between 97 and 108 C.E., and they were most likely published by Pliny himself.<sup>10</sup> His letters possess a certain elegance that shows his careful attention and organization, although he insists (*Ep.* 1.1) that he did not organize his letters in chronological order. Pliny selected letters for publication that cover various topics, which he addressed to certain friends, although he did not include his friends' initial letters or replies. The letters in the tenth book recount Pliny's term as governor in Bithynia-Pontus, include his letters and Trajan's replies, and were probably published posthumously.

This thesis examines the letters of Pliny in the first nine books that focus on poetry, oratory, and history, and considers how he portrays himself as a prominent literary figure. It also considers Pliny's construction of his identity as a writer and how he advises his addressees and the readers of his epistolary collection about the process of becoming a writer. Pliny had earned some renown as an orator by the time he wrote the majority of his letters. He uses his letters as a vehicle to offer and receive praise, encouragement, and advice for and from his friends and to depict his own literary compositions. Fame and immortality are two of the highest goals that Pliny aspires to reach through his writing. His letters portray a writing process through which a writer constantly works, improves, gains recognition, recites, and publishes, a process which guarantees his survival even after he dies.

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<sup>8</sup> Walsh, trans., xv.

<sup>9</sup> Conte, 525.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Scholarship on letters and, specifically, on the letters of Pliny the Younger, has increased in the past fifteen years. Ebbeler (2010), Morello and Morrison (2007), and Trapp (2003) provide comprehensive backgrounds to ancient letter writing and its prominent authors. They focus on the conventions that created certain kinds of letters, the implicit and explicit aims of letters, and their authors. Two important characteristics are the purposes for a letter's construction and the creation of the author's identity in its composition. Letters can possess an entirely non-fiction nature; they transfer news and opinions from their writer to an addressee over a certain distance that prevents or eliminates other means of communication between them. Other letters, such as Horace's *Epistles* or Ovid's *Heroides*, possess an entirely literary nature and adopt only the format of a letter. Because a letter serves as a tangible artifact of the person who writes it, his letter's words convey his self. As Trapp points out:

Consciously or unconsciously, letter-writers select what they are going to say and what they are not going to say, and choose how they are going to slant what they do say, and thus construct a personalized version of the reality they are referring to. Similarly, in writing, letter-writers construct and project a persona which may bear all kinds of relationship (including a very slender one) to their character as perceived by others than their correspondent of the moment.<sup>11</sup>

This general observation applies to the letters of Pliny the Younger. Trapp notes that because Pliny was living when most of his letters were published, their careful composition and order construct and depict certain identities in which he takes personal pride: friend, husband, benefactor, patron, litterateur, and governor.<sup>12</sup> Letters, like all other literary crafts, open themselves to a certain degree of manipulation by their authors in order to satisfy their authors' wishes. Pliny used his letters to create a certain image of himself that reflects not only the living Pliny, but also preserves after his death the image that he created. Sherwin-White's commentary

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<sup>11</sup> M. Trapp, *Greek and Latin Letters: An Anthology with Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Trapp, 14. Cf. p. 2 of this thesis on Pliny's *Letters X*.

provides historical and cultural background and details referred to in Pliny's letters. Marchesi (2008) examines Pliny's interaction with poetry and history and Ash (2003), Augoustakis (2005), and Traub (1955) especially focus on Pliny's history-themed letters. Henderson's work (2002) looks at Pliny's letters as a self-created monument; although he touches on Pliny's aspirations for fame and immortality through his writings, he also closely examines Pliny's references to art, particularly statues. My thesis adds to Henderson's discussion by looking at Pliny's views on fame and immortality, but particularly focuses on Pliny's discussions of the literary rather than the visual arts as a means to acquire both.

The first chapter focuses on letters that combine poetry and a writer's aspirations to write it well enough to gain recognition, fame, and immortality. Pliny sets up a conflict between *otium* and *negotium* that allows or limits a writer's ability to write poetry. Homer, Vergil, and contemporary poets serve as models or inspirations for Pliny and his addressees. Pliny provides a glimpse into the recitations and social networking that provide poets the leverage to ascend from poet-in-leisure to poet-by-profession. He also depicts the difference between poets who acquire fame in their lifetime and poets who acquire immortality and become models after their death. Pliny uses his letters to preserve the memory of certain poets in his attempt to immortalize them.

The second chapter looks at oratory, the genre that Pliny feels most comfortable writing. Many of his letters on oratory possess a didactic tone. Pliny admits his ease with oratory, which enables and motivates him to instruct his addressees to deliver, write, and publish their best speeches. He portrays oratorical opposites, such as short versus long speeches, spoken versus written speeches, young versus older orators, and newer versus older styles of oratorical compositions. As in his letters featuring poetry, Pliny touches on the recitations of speeches;

however, speeches were not as well established in the realm of recitations as poetry or history. Demosthenes, Aeschines, and Cicero serve as models whom Pliny wishes to imitate and in whose renown Pliny wishes to share. Pliny provides a snapshot of his friendship with Cornelius Tacitus and of their aspirations that their works, such as Pliny's *Panegyricus* and Tacitus' *Dialogus*, will survive them.

The third and final chapter concentrates on history. Pliny writes abbreviated versions of historical narratives in his letters. He admits that he does not possess enough time to write and revise his speeches and a historical work, but he uses his letters to write using the conventions for historical compositions. Pliny wants his letters to inspire his addressees and to serve as a model to them in respect to subject or style. Notable figures, prominent events, and the act of writing history are the three principal topics of Pliny's letters that feature history as their main theme.

## CHAPTER 1

### POETRY

The letters of Pliny that focus on poetry illuminate a writing process of planning, reciting, and revising. Pliny practices and encourages certain literary activities and shows his addressees how he writes poetry and how they can do the same. Pliny believes a writer can acquire fame and immortality by following his writing process. Poetic composition requires *otium*, particularly retirement, and considerable wealth, either inherited or received from a patron or friends. An aspiring poet needs wealth to acquire an education, which familiarizes him with canonical Greek and Roman poets. Wealth also provides the writer with social connections; it affords him opportunities to meet other men with similar education as well as with the *otium* to read his or to listen to others' work in recitations. Poets sought advantages, such as social visibility, material support, or literary support, from wealthy friends such as Pliny.<sup>13</sup>

Pliny's letters document not only his knowledge of renowned poets from the past, but also of contemporary poets. In *Ep.* 7.4 and 7.9, Pliny embeds his own poetry in order to share it and invite criticism on it. He frequently refers to his lack of talent when he writes and shares his poetry. His letters contain another common thread – the desire for fame for the living poet and immortality for the dead poet. By embedding his poetry in his letters, Pliny tries to ensure that if his poetry does not survive to posterity on its own, it may survive through his letters. Pliny

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<sup>13</sup> P. White, "Amicitia and the Profession of Poetry in Early Imperial Rome," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978): 74.

hopes to ensure that he, like the poets that he discusses in his letters, will receive fame and immortality.

### *OTIUM VERSUS NEGOTIUM*

Pliny's letter to Caninius Rufus (*Ep.* 2.8) shows that an aspiring poet needs *otium*, and he uses metaphors to compare poetic composition to other leisure activities. He uses Rufus as an example of a writer who possesses time. Pliny asks Rufus, who lives in well-funded retirement in Comum:

*Studes an piscaris an venaris an simul omnia? Possunt enim omnia simul fieri ad Larium nostrum. Nam lacus piscem, feras silvae quibus lacus cingitur, studia altissimus iste secessus adfatim suggerunt. (Ep. 2.8.1)*<sup>14</sup>

Are you studying or fishing or hunting or everything all together? For all are able to happen together at Larium. For the lake supplies fish, the forest by which the lake is surrounded supplies wild animals, and that highest retreat abundantly supplies studies.

Pliny writes *Ep.* 2.8 poetically; he uses metaphor and imagery to talk about writing and reading poetry. Caninius Rufus received many of Pliny's 'literary' letters, letters that focus on literary topics or use certain genres to inspire the letter itself. *Otium* allows Pliny and his retired friends to indulge in writing poetry and completely counter-balances *negotium*, time spent on official duties.<sup>15</sup> As Gamberini observes, "Study is placed on the same level as hunting: just as the one activity serves to exercise the body, so study features as a post-*negotium* activity which freshens the mind."<sup>16</sup> Pliny's *negotium* includes his duties as legal advocate, magistrate, and member of the senate, and he acquires and cultivates his public and political reputation from these

<sup>14</sup> All the following translations are my own. For the wealth and retirement of Caninius Rufus, see Walsh, trans., 287.

<sup>15</sup> M. Roller, "Pliny's Catullus: The Politics of Literary Appropriation," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 128 (1998): 265.

<sup>16</sup> F. Gamberini, *Stylistic Theory and Practice in the Younger Pliny* (Hildesheim: Olms – Weidmann, 1983), 106.

activities.<sup>17</sup> Sherwin-White dates this letter between 98 and 100 C.E., when Pliny could not leave Rome for as long as a half-day or more unless he obtained official leave.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, he aspires to use his *otium* to enhance his public reputation through literary and private means to become a famous poet.<sup>19</sup>

Unlike Caninius Rufus, Pomponius Mamilianus and Pliny do not possess as much *otium* to read or write. Mamilianus served as suffect consul in 100 C.E., the same year in which Pliny served as suffect consul, although they did not serve at the same time. Pliny prods Mamilianus:

*Querere de turba castrensium negotiorum et, tamquam summo otio perfruire, lusus et ineptias nostras legis amas flagitas, meque ad similia condenda non mediocriter incitas.*  
(*Ep.* 9.25.1-2)

You complain about the commotion of camp duties, and as if you enjoy the greatest leisure, you read and love and demand our games and trifles, and you ardently incite me to write similar things.

Not only does the writer need *otium* to compose poetry, but he also needs it to read poetry. A great deal of poetry is exchanged between writer and reader with a when-will-he-be-free-to-read-them mentality.<sup>20</sup> Pliny's use of *nostras*, a first person plural instead of a singular, follows a tradition in Latin prose and poetry that allows the first person plural to stand for a first person singular form. His use of *nostras* elevates his letter to the same level as conventional Latin literature.

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<sup>17</sup> Roller, 265.

<sup>18</sup> A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 156.

<sup>19</sup> Roller, 265.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

Pliny links his *lusus* and *ineptiae* to leisure-time literature that one reads during *otium*. He plays on Mamilianus' work ethic and professionalism with *quereris*, which he counter-balances with *legis*, *amas*, and *flagitas* without conjunctions. The lack of conjunctions shows Mamilianus' willingness to devote his attention to Pliny's poetry rather than his own occupations, and Pliny uses this willingness to his advantage. Pliny's poetry not only provides a respite from the troubles of Mamilianus' occupation, but the quality of his poetry makes Mamilianus more eager to engage with it.

Pliny especially respects Catullus as a model for his poetic compositions.<sup>21</sup> The language Pliny uses to describe his literary works parallels that of Catullus who calls his own poetry *nugae*, *hendecasyllabi*, or *ineptiae*. *Nugae* appears in Catullus' first poem: *namque tu solebas meas esse aliquid putare nugas* ("For you were accustomed to think my trifles were worth something"). In this context, Catullus uses *nugae* to represent his poetic works, which are light in nature. Catullus says *Si qui forte mearum ineptiarum lectores eritis* ("If any of you by chance will be readers of my frivolities") (Catull. 14B). He insinuates that readers of serious poetry are unlikely to read his poetry because of its lack of seriousness and its novelty in comparison to epic poetry.

Pliny specifies his poetry's type with *lusus* and *ineptiae*, but he also plays with ideas that further and more specifically classify his work. He promises Mamilianus:

*aliquid earundem Camenarum in istum benignissimum sinum mittam. Tu passerculis et columbulis nostris inter aquilas vestras dabis pennas, si tamen et tibi placebunt; si tantum sibi, continendos cavea nidove curabis. (Ep. 9.25.3)*

I shall send something of the same Camenae into that most welcoming bosom. You will give wings to our little sparrows and little doves among your eagles, if only they will

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 267.



please you also. If they please only themselves, you will take care that they are contained in a cage or pigeon-hole.

*Aliquid* vaguely represents the concrete work that Pliny plans to send. Muses, *Camenae*, inspire Pliny's work. *Camenae*, an infrequently used term, also appears in Sulpicia's poetry as a source of her poetic inspiration. She writes *exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum* ("Cythera, having been won over by my *Camenae*, brought and placed that man in my bosom") ([Tib.] 3.13.3-4). *Camenae* represents her inspiration to write poetry, which sways *Cytherea*, Venus, to deposit a man, vaguely indicated with *illum*, into her bosom. Sulpicia and Pliny use *Camenae* to represent their poetry as well as their sources of inspiration. *Camenae* represents a Roman counterpart to the Greek Muses. Because Sulpicia's and Pliny's verses are written in the Latin language, a Latinate inspiration better suits their work. Livius Andronicus' translation of Homer's *Odyssey* is the earliest surviving source for *Camenae*.<sup>22</sup> Andronicus localized the Greek Muses to Rome by adapting the *Camenae*, goddesses closely connected to two topographical features, a *fons* and *lucus*, at Rome. Roman poets such as Vergil (*G.* 2.175), Horace (*Carm.* 1.26.6 and 3.4.25), Martial (4.31.5), and Statius (*Achil.* 1.9) use *fons* to allude to the spring of the Muses on Mount Helicon. *Camenae* indicate a *fons* located in Rome similar to their Greek counterparts. The *Camenae* are connected to a spring and grove near the *porta Capena*.<sup>23</sup> Sulpicia and Pliny speak of *sinus* as the place which will receive their poetry; Sulpicia receives love poetry into her own bosom and Pliny promises to send his light verse into Mamilius' *istum benignissimum sinum*.

Pliny's use of *passerculi* parallels Catullus' use of the sparrow (Catull. 2a, 3), but Pliny uses the term in the diminutive form, as if to imply that his poems contain a sweeter tone or

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<sup>22</sup> *OCD*, s.v. *Camenae*.

<sup>23</sup> F. Coarelli, 'Camenae,' in Steinby, *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, vol. X, 216.

possess brevity and lightness, typical characteristics of elegiac poetry. Sappho's speaks of sparrows as sacred to Aphrodite (*Lyrica* [Sapph. 1.10]). The appearance of *columbuli*, *passerculi*, and *aquilae* provide associations to genres with love or war as their main motifs. Doves frequently appear in Latin poetry as symbols of Venus, as in Catullus (29.8) and Propertius (3.3). Pliny is the only Roman author to use the diminutive form for dove, *columbulus*, which has associations with Venus.<sup>24</sup> Catullus (29.8) compares a man to an *albulus columbus* who visits frequently to spread love; perhaps Pliny uses the diminutive form for dove to symbolize his elegiac verses. If Pliny's elegiac verses are small and about love, his "little doves" visit his friends who appreciate reading them. Pliny also expands his friend-reader base through his love poetry. Propertius sets up an opposition between doves and eagles (3.3). He creates a direct connection of doves to Venus and in the same image as the nine Muses, who inspire the arts and poetry:

*et Veneris dominae volucres, mea turba, columbae*  
*tingunt Gorgoneo punica rostra lacu;*  
*diversaeque novem sortitae iura Puellae*  
*exercent teneras in sua dona manus. (3.3.31-34)*

And the swift doves of the mistress Venus, my crowd, dye their red beaks at the Gorgon's pool, and the various nine girls chosen by lot exercise their slender hands on their own gifts.

In the same poem, Propertius says *quibus in campis Mariano proelia signo/ stent* ("the prizes remain in those camps under the Marian standard") (3.3.43-4). *Mariano signo* suggests an eagle's form, which appears on Roman military standards, without using the term for eagle (3.3.43). Pliny mentions *aquilae*, completing the opposition of genres represented through birds:

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<sup>24</sup> OLD s.v. *columbus*.

the sparrows and doves of love poetry oppose the eagles of epic. Through birds, Pliny personifies his poetry and separates it from the poetic types that Mamilianus identifies with in his occupation, his *turba castrensiū negotiorum*. In *Ep.* 2.8, Pliny describes not only the literal activities of hunting and fishing as a part of *otium*, but he uses these activities to represent the process of writing. In *Ep.* 9.25, he uses sparrows, doves, and eagles to represent different types of poetry and that his love poetry prevails over epic. When Pliny discusses writing poetry and alludes to the types of poetry that he writes, he uses metaphors to describe his activities, just as poets use metaphors to craft their poetry. Through this method, Pliny combines the composition of poetry with the compositions of his letters that focus on poetry.

Pliny shows that he enjoys Mamilianus' companionship and their similar interest in poetry; Pliny writes, and Mamilianus reads and critiques. Pliny shares his aspirations to compose entertaining verses, but also to acquire renown for them. Pliny reflects on the quality of his friend and his criticism, as well as posing a hope:

*Incipio enim ex hoc genere studiorum non solum oblectationem verum etiam gloriam petere, post iudicium tuum viri eruditissimi gravissimi ac super ista verissimi. (Ep. 9.25.2-3)*

For I begin to seek from this kind of studies not only amusement indeed, but even glory, after your opinion, characteristic of a most educated, serious, and above these qualities, a most honest man.

Pliny refers to his verse compositions as *hoc genere studiorum*, which means that they are not only writings, but they also require a great deal of study and motivation to write them. *Hoc genere* serves as the closest term for genre in this letter, which Pliny already defines metaphorically through the symbols of sparrows, doves, and eagles and through the terms *ineptiae* and *lusus*. He seeks two results from his poetry, besides satisfying Mamilianus – *oblectatio* and *gloria*. Pliny builds up to *gloria* with *verum etiam*. He gains *oblectatio* from his

writing, but whether his writing wins him fame depends upon his readers, such as Mamilianus. *Oblectatio*, an action or quality that bestows delight, possesses a personal and intimate quality that Pliny can easily satisfy for himself and his close friends, particularly Mamilianus, who asks Pliny for more of his poems. Acquiring *gloria* requires a universal and far-reaching approval from many persons and a vast number of literary works, which requires time. The author needs adequate time to build social connections and to write, especially to write well. Pliny relies on his friends' ability to share their opinions with him, and he reminds Mamilianus of this by saying *post iudicium tuum*. His use of *iudicium* means any formal or authoritative decision, similar to a criterion, an opinion, particularly a favorable opinion, or a judgment based on one's taste. Pliny praises Mamilianus and gives his readers a portrayal of the sort of friend a poet, such as himself, needs if he aspires to fame.

*Eruditissimi, gravissimi, super ista verissimi* in their superlative forms flatter Mamilianus and imply Pliny's gratitude while the basic meaning of each word portrays favorable qualities in friends who help friends write. *Eruditus* means well-instructed, accomplished, or learned, which relates to a man's education, but also to the ways he puts his education to work during his *negotium* or *otium*. *Gravis*, when applied to persons, describe someone who is serious, earnest, or thoughtful. Serious, earnest, or thoughtful connotations of *gravis* depict a friend who balances honesty with kindness in his criticisms, genuinely cares for his friend's literary aspirations, and helps him towards his goals. The quick succession of Mamilianus' actions in response to Pliny's writings points strongly to his friend's honesty and earnestness with *super ista verissimi*. This phrase and *gravissimi* indicate Mamilianus' ability to give blunt criticism. *Verus*, when applied to persons, means honest, upright, and showing integrity. Pliny selects Mamilianus to read and evaluate his poetry because he feels that if his poetry fails to please, Mamilianus will not allow

this embarrassment to travel outside of their friendship. His praises for Mamilianus show that Pliny wants and implicitly expects favorable criticism from him. *Gloria* is Pliny's ultimate aspiration, which he masks by emphasizing his immediate goals, to satisfy and receive encouraging feedback from his friend. Pliny wishes to reach contemporary and future readers through the popularity and acclaim that he already observes Mamilianus bestowing upon him.

When Pliny does not ask for critique of his work, he most often offers his advice, sometimes obviously solicited and sometimes not, to his writer-friends. Pliny writes Caninius Rufus, who plans to write an epic about the Dacian War, and he contributes his thoughts about Rufus' selection of topic and encourages him to begin writing (*Ep.* 8.4).<sup>25</sup> Pliny writes:

*Nam quae tam recens tam copiosa tam elata, quae denique tam poetica et quamquam in verissimis rebus tam fabulosa materia? Dices immissa terris nova flumina, novos pontes fluminibus iniectos, insessa castris montium abrupta, pulsum regia pulsum etiam vita regem nihil desperantem; super haec actos bis triumphos, quorum alter ex invicta gente primus, alter novissimus fuit. (Ep. 8.4.1-3)*

For what material is so recent, so abundant, so elevated, what material then is so poetic and so legendary, although it is based in the most truthful circumstances? You will talk about new rivers having flowed through the lands, new bridges cast over the rivers, the precipices of the mountains occupied with camps, a king driven from a kingdom, even driven from life, despairing not at all. Above these things, you will talk about two triumphs performed, one of which was the first from an unconquered race, the other was the latest.

*Copiosa*, *poetica*, *verissimis rebus*, and *fabulosa materia* express Pliny's opinion of his friend's subject matter. A theme that gives a wide scope for argument typically picks up the term *copiosa*. Pliny contrasts *verissimi res*, which means affairs consistent in fact, with *fabulosa materia*, which means a work resembling an invented tale. Geographical features, descriptions of the Roman war camp and its activities, and Rome's eventual victory in battle parallel elements

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<sup>25</sup> Possible sources for Rufus' work include Trajan's written account, which no longer survives, and his column, a pictorial monument depicting the events of the Dacian Wars. See Sherwin-White, 451.

in historical accounts, such as the bridge across the Rhine River in Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, and in epic, such as Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. Rufus wishes to write a historical, poetic work, which suggests epic poetry or possibly a new genre of poetry that accomplishes similar goals to historiography. The combination of war and *poetica* explicitly links topic and genre to epic poetry. Pliny reinforces this assumption when he discusses Homer and his contractions, lengthening, and modifications of certain vowels and syllables of barbarian names in the Greek language for the purposes of meter. As Pliny's mention of Homer shows, "The author's technique is evolved from study and imitation of approved models and is motivated by a desire to win acclaim by emulation of these models."<sup>26</sup> Another meaning of *verus* is anything consistent to a calculation or rule, which accords well with Pliny's discussion of meter and Rufus' ambition to write an epic, which fits historical facts into verse rather than prose.

Pliny encourages Rufus to begin writing his epic by evoking certain characteristics commonly associated with epic poetry:

*Proinde iure vatium invocatis dis, et inter deos ipso, cuius res opera consilia dicturus es, immitte rudentes, pande vela ac, si quando alias, toto ingenio vehere. Cur enim non ego quoque poetice cum poeta? (Ep. 8.4.5-6)*

Consequently, by the law of bards, you pray to the gods, and among the gods to him, whose affairs, efforts, and plans you are about to speak. Cast off the ropes, spread the sails, and if ever, convey it with your entire talent. For why do I not also speak poetically with a poet?

*Iure vatium, invocatis, toto ingenio vehere* portray aspects of the poet. Sherwin-White notes that Vergil (*G.* 1.24) and Horace (*Carm.* 3.5.2) hail Augustus as a deity and established a tradition that Rufus can use to praise Trajan.<sup>27</sup> Rufus serves as a *vates*, who follows or obeys a certain *ius*,

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<sup>26</sup> A. Carleton, "Pliny the Younger, Conformist," *The Classical Journal* 34, no.3 (Dec.1938): 149.

<sup>27</sup> Sherwin-White, 452.

a tradition, model, or set of rules to which poets adhere. A *vates* is a prophet or seer who serves as a divinely-inspired bard or a human vehicle for a deity. Pliny uses the Vergilian interpretation of *vates* as a “master of truth,” (*Ecl.* 7.28 and 9.34), rather than its pejorative meaning, which Ennius employed as an insult to his poetic predecessors (*Ann.* fr. 207).<sup>28</sup> This term fits Rufus because the length and complexity of epic merits multiple invocations to the gods to ensure the success and completion of the work. *Ius* is a little odd because most of its meanings relate to legal matters, laws or one’s rights and powers. Pliny stretches *ius* to signify a code or tradition to which Rufus adheres when writing his poetry, rather than any absolute and fixed rules. He may use this term because of his own immersion in the law courts. Rufus invokes the gods, which most epic poets include at the beginnings of their works. *Toto ingenio vehere* indicates a poet’s talent and ability to produce an epic, which is poetry on a monumental scale and of monumental seriousness.

Because Rufus selects a contemporary event as his subject matter, his work possesses a relevance and importance that requires him to write well. Pliny, as a self-proclaimed litterateur, is eager to bestow his advice and encouragement. He shows his excitement for Rufus’ work by asking, “*Cur enim non ego quoque poetice cum poeta,*” which explicitly labels Rufus as a *poeta*, and Pliny places himself in the same role through his actions. *Invocatis dis, inter deos ipso, immitte rudentes,* and *pande vela* evoke epic. Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* begin with invocations to the gods and Muses, and they portray the intricate relationships between the gods and a man, *inter deos ipso*. Radice translates *ipso* as “hero,” and she reflects that Pliny encourages Rufus with language relating to an epic poet and his writing as well as the epic genre and its

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<sup>28</sup> *OCD*, s.v. *vates*.

conventions.<sup>29</sup> *Immitte rudentes* and *pande vela* provide strong connections to sailing and maritime journeys, other components of Homer's *Odyssey* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. When Pliny attempts to encourage his friends to write in certain genres, he not only instructs them in the typical conventions of the genre, but he also writes parts of his letters as if the genre at hand inspires them. Pliny's letter not only serves as a model of itself, a letter, but it also passes into the genre under discussion. Aside from the creativity Pliny brings to his letters, he also teaches and encourages his friends to write according to the traditions and models of the particular genre under discussion. In *Ep.* 8.4, Pliny ensures that Rufus writes within the norms of the epic genre.

After Pliny discusses the topic and genre with Rufus, he turns to providing criticism and support, and provides a close-up look at peer review. Pliny encourages his friend:

*prima quaeque ut absolveris mittito, immo etiam ante quam absolvas, sicut erunt recentia et rudia et adhuc similia nascentibus. Respondebis non posse perinde carptim ut contexta, perinde incohata placere ut effecta. Scio. Itaque et a me aestimabuntur ut coepta, spectabuntur ut membra, extremamque limam tuam opperientur in scrinio nostro. Patere hoc me super cetera habere amoris tui pignus, ut ea quoque norim quae nosse neminem velles. (Ep. 8.4.6-8)*

Send the first writings, whichever ones that you have finished, on the contrary, send them even before you finish them, just as they will be recent and rough and to a greater degree, similar to things being born. You will respond that it is not possible, just as works at various points are not able to please like continuous works, just as unfinished works are not able to please like finished works. I know. Therefore, they will be judged by me as things begun, they will be seen as limbs, and they will await your final revision in my letter case. Allow me to possess a pledge of your affection above the rest, so that you also wish that I will know these things, which you wish no one to know.

With *prima . . . mittito, immo . . . absolvas, recentia, rudia, and adhuc similia nascentibus*, Pliny creates a picture of the rough draft – something rude, something turned out and sent quickly to others for review. Because Rufus attempts an especially large project, Pliny senses Rufus'

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<sup>29</sup> Pliny, *Letters and Panegyricus*, trans. B. Radice (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press, 1969), vol. 2, 11.



resistance to his command to send his work in pieces. Pliny also perceives that Rufus believes that Pliny-as-reader will not enjoy reading and commenting on his writing unless it is complete; Pliny attempts to dispel Rufus' fear. He assures Rufus that he will await *extremam limam tuam*, his final-most revision, placing the other drafts *in scrinio nostro*, where Pliny writes, but also where he reads and comments on his friends' drafts in the writing process. Pliny says *spectabuntur ut membra* to emphasize that smaller excerpts completed and sent to him are central to his focus and advice. *Membra* typically means body parts, but when this term appears in a discussion of literary works, *membra* means small section of a larger literary work. The conclusion of Pliny's comment is particularly interesting: *patere hoc me super cetera habere amoris tui pignus, ut ea quoque norim quae nosse neminem velles*. Pliny wants Rufus to give him a pledge of exclusive affection above Rufus' other friends, a certain *hoc* and *ea* that Rufus wishes no one else but Pliny to know. The vagueness of these terms allows them to represent anything – Rufus' writing, secrets, wealth, or many other things. The use of *noscere* implies that Pliny wants Rufus' intellectual property; wealth or writings have a tangible quality and could have a more concrete terminology.

While Pliny talks about topic selection, he also touches on one hoped-for final result of writing: fame. He does not mention fame out-right; he suggests it through his compliments to and aspirations for Rufus. Pliny's allusion to fame baits Rufus to begin writing his epic. Because of epic's length, complexity, and seriousness, he encourages Rufus to send small drafts. He remarks:

*Una sed maxima difficultas, quod haec aequare dicendo arduum immensum, etiam tuo ingenio, quamquam altissime adsurgat et amplissimis operibus increseat. (Ep. 8.4.3)*

But there is one very great difficulty; that to equal these things in speaking is immensely difficult, even with your talent, although it rises most loftily and swells with the vastest efforts.

Pliny portrays Rufus' proposal as *maxima difficultas* and *arduum immensum*. *Arduum* contains two meanings in its neuter singular form; it indicates either a high or steep location such as uphill, in the heavens, or high into the air and it also means a hard task or difficulty, like *difficultas*.

With *arduum*, Pliny portrays not only the difficulty of Rufus' endeavor, but also the payoff he may receive from his epic. He reverses the tone of his statement by saying in spite of the difficulties that Rufus places upon himself, he possesses a potential to rise to the top, *altissime adsurgat*, and to increase his abilities through the vastest works, *amplissimis operibus increseat*. Pliny's use of the superlatives, *altissime* and *amplissimis*, as well as verbs that portray a rising or an increase, *adsurgat* and *increseat*, shows his confidence in Rufus' ability to overcome his obstacles in writing a work as large and detailed as an epic. Nowhere in this letter does Pliny use the word *fama* to describe to Rufus the goal to which he aspires. Pliny expresses Rufus' potential literary greatness by alluding to his *ingenium*, his genius or talent. He has no need to mention fame explicitly because Rufus begins to work his way to literary prominence by selecting epic, the loftiest kind of poetry, to portray a recent historical event. Pliny points out that Rufus is also predisposed to writing well through his *otium* and *ingenium*.

## POETS

In *Ep.* 2.10 to Octavius Rufus, Pliny portrays the connection between friends, fame, immortality, and writing poetry. When discussing the etiquette between friends who write and help each other with their writing, Pliny points out the ways Rufus violates the pact between them. Pliny writes:

*Dices, ut soles: Amici mei viderint. Opto equidem amicos tibi tam fideles tam eruditos tam laboriosos, ut tantum curae intentionisque suscipere et possint et velint, sed dispice ne sit parum providum, sperare ex aliis quod tibi ipse non praestes. (Ep. 2.10.5-6)*

You will say, as you are accustomed: ‘Friends of mine will have seen to it.’ I hope that your friends are so truly trustworthy, educated, and hardworking, that they are both able and willing to take up so great a care and intention; but see clearly that it is not too prudent to hope from them what you yourself would not offer.

He chastises Rufus by putting words into his mouth and criticizing his expectations that his friends will transfer his work through literary and social circles, guaranteeing its survival and success. White provides some background on the services that friends might provide to their writer-friends:

Poets depended on well-to-do *amici* to sponsor their recitations, to praise and circulate their books, and to acquaint them with other useful friends. . . it was an essential function, and the ancient writer’s concern to exploit the friendships of his friends in finding readers is often apparent.<sup>30</sup>

Pliny’s accusations show the ways that Rufus fails to act or prevents his friends from helping him in the writing process, and Pliny tries to nudge Rufus out of these habits. Pliny hopes that Rufus’ friends are *tam fideles, eruditi, and laboriosi*, and that they function with *cura* and *intentio*. Through these terms, Pliny implies that these friends await Rufus’ writings, and they support him in the writing process with timely and honest criticism and encouragement. Pliny reinforces Rufus’ lack of reciprocity by saying that Rufus hopes to acquire something from his friends, something which Pliny does not name here, which he does not provide to his friends in return.

Pliny spurs Rufus on by saying some of his verses gain renown in spite of his attempts to hide them: *Enotuerunt quidam tui versus, et invito te claustra sua refrugerunt* (“Certain verses of yours have become known and they have broken their locks with you, unwilling”) (*Ep. 2.10.3*).

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<sup>30</sup> White, “Amicitia,” 85.

A wider audience's knowledge of Rufus' verses indicates that his renown - good or bad - begins to develop, which could eventually lead to fame. Because an audience knows Rufus' poetry in spite of his efforts to hide it, Pliny tries to show Rufus that he nevertheless acquires success and fame. To bolster his attempts, Pliny gives Rufus a taste of the satisfaction a writer gets when he shares his work publicly:

*Imagino enim qui concursus quae admiratio te, qui clamor quod etiam silentium maneat; quo ego, cum dico vel recito, non minus quam clamore delector, sit modo silentium acre et intentum, et cupidum ulteriora audiendi. (Ep. 2.10.7-8)*

For I imagine what assemblies, what admiration, what applause, even what silence awaits you; by which I, when I speak or recite, am delighted no less than by applause, let there be keen and intent silence, and desirous for hearing more recent things.

Pliny entices Rufus with *admiratio*, *clamor*, *silentium*, and the crowd's *silentium cupidum ulteriora audiendi*, which represent positive aspects from a recitation. Recitations could go successfully or unsuccessfully: Rufus' hesitation implies the seriousness that poetic recitations possessed for their readers.

Throughout this letter, Pliny maintains a positive and encouraging tone. He mentions to Rufus:

*Quousque et tibi et nobis invidetis, tibi maxima laude, nobis voluptate? Sine per ora hominum ferantur isdemque quibus lingua Romana spatiis pervagantur. (Ep. 2.10.2)*

How long will you begrudge both you and I, you of the greatest praise, me of the greatest pleasure? Let them be carried through the mouths of men and wander through the same spaces as the Latin language.

Two other enticements for Rufus to engage in recitation include *maxima laus* and *voluptas*. He also pin-points *lingua Romana*, which shows the language Rufus writes in, but it also implies that he can serve as a model for Roman literature. If people know his poetry without Rufus or

his friends actively advancing it, Rufus' poetry must possess some merit. Pliny includes the possibility of fame to encourage Rufus to put his poetry into public view.

He also depicts the negative aspects of Rufus' silence to show him the consequence that he fears may result:

*Hoc fructu tanto tam parato desine studia tua infinita ista cunctatione fraudare; quae cum modum excedit, verendum est ne inertiae et desidiae vel etiam timiditatis nomen accipiat. (Ep. 2.10.8)*

With so great a reward prepared, stop cheating your unceasing studies with this hesitation, which when it goes too far, it should be feared that the name it may receive is either ignorance, laziness, or even timidity.

Pliny uses terms that criticize Rufus – *inertia*, *desidia*, and *timiditas*, which hinder the writing process and ultimately, the writer's ability to acquire fame. To strengthen his point, he reminds Rufus of his mortality:

*Habe ante oculos mortalitatem, a qua adserere te hoc uno monimento potes; nam cetera fragilia et caduca non minus quam ipsi homines occidunt desinuntque. (Ep. 2.10.4)*

Hold mortality before your eyes, from which you are able to protect yourself by this one monument, for other fragile and perishable things fail and die no less than men themselves.

Pliny describes mortality in concrete terms, as if Rufus' eyes are able to see it. He does not specify the kind of monument, but considering that he encourages Rufus to make his poetry public through recitation or by sharing his poetry more openly with his friends, this monument represents publication, which leaves behind an actual artifact. *Cetera fragilia* and *caduca* are in the neuter, nominative plural forms. Considering that Pliny places other objects related to written works in the same gender and uses the substantive adjective forms, these pieces represent Rufus' poetry. *Fragilia* and *caduca* symbolize tangible objects that are fragile, easy-to-break and perishable. Pliny implies that the monument lasts longer, perhaps forever, preserving a part

of its creator, and he implies that its material and quality withstand time. If Rufus does not care for preserving his memory or his profession, Pliny takes great care to persuade him otherwise and preserves him and his poetic talent through his letter.

Pliny writes to Caninius Rufus about the death of Silius Italicus. Italicus was named consul as a reward for political services; he wrote the *Punica*, the longest surviving poem in Classical Latin, which shows the influences of Livy and Vergil, around 80 C.E.<sup>31</sup> He portrays Silius Italicus:

*Scribebat carmina maiore cura quam ingenio, non numquam iudicia hominum recitationibus experiebatur. (Ep. 3.7.5-6)*

He was writing poems with greater care than talent, sometimes, he was testing the opinions of men through recitations.

In Pliny's opinion, Italicus' *cura* surpassed his *ingenium* to compose verse. He also reveals that Italicus publicly submitted his work to recitations for men's judgment, *iudicia . . . recitationibus experiebatur*, which tested his work's quality, to decide if it should be published depending on its reception. Pliny portrays Italicus as a well-read man and a connoisseur of fine arts, which overlaps with Pliny's interests. He recalls in many of Italicus' homes:

*Multum ubique librorum, multum statuarum, multum imaginum, quas non habebat modo, verum etiam venerabatur, Vergili ante omnes, cuius natalem religiosius quam suum celebrabat, Neapoli maxime, ubi monimentum eius adire ut templum solebat. (Ep. 3.7.8-9)*

Everywhere there were many books, many statues, many busts, which he not only possessed, but also worshipped, of Vergil before all, whose birthday Italicus celebrated more devoutly than his own, especially at Naples, where he was accustomed to approach his monument as if a temple.

Italicus' deep reverence for Vergil catches Pliny's attention because this reverence helps him spiritually with his poetic endeavors, and it shows the relationship between poet and model,

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<sup>31</sup> Walsh, trans., 313, Sherwin-White, 227, and *OCD* s.v. *Silius Italicus*, *Tiberius Catius Asconius*.

which includes a commonly known, accepted, and read author. The way that Pliny portrays the relationship between two epic poets leads the addressee and other readers to place them in close comparison. Italicus' homage to Vergil, his model for the *Punica*, his *cura* when he writes, as well as his willingness to take public criticism for his work show ways he slowly ascends to Vergil's status. Carleton notices that Pliny attributes the success and fame of many writers to their ability to conform to genres through reading and imitating accepted models, particularly if the authors under discussion belong to Pliny's favorite and most frequently occurring authors throughout his letters.<sup>32</sup> Pliny also includes a reference to Italicus' statuary; one of the greatest honors for any Roman male is to be the subject of a statue, which shows Vergil's renown and transfers status to Italicus for owning it. Although Pliny does not say whether Italicus gained sufficient honor to become the subject of a statue, it matters little; Pliny memorializes Italicus through the written word of his letter.

Pliny turns the conversation from Italicus to his addressee and himself. He says:

*Sed tanto magis hoc, quidquid est temporis futile et caduci, si non datur factis (nam horum materia in aliena manu), certe studiis proferamus, et quatenus nobis denegatur diu vivere, relinquamus aliquid, quo nos vixisse testemur. Scio te stimulis non egere: me tamen tui caritas evocat, ut currentem quoque instigem, sicut tu soles me. ἀγαθὴ δ' ἔρις cum invicem se mutuis exhortationibus amici ad amorem immortalitatis exacuunt. (Ep. 3.7.14-15)*

But all the more this, whatever there is of futile and perishable time, if it is not given to deeds (for the material of these things is in another's hand), certainly we should extend by studies, and to what extent it is denied to us to live a long time, we should leave something behind, through which we show that we have lived. I know that you do not lack goads; however, care for you calls me, to encourage you also as you run, just as you are accustomed to encourage me. 'Rivalry is good' when friends alternately stimulate themselves with mutual encouragement to a love of immortality.

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<sup>32</sup> "To him the supreme literary achievement was to equal or surpass the ancients in their own style and milieu," Carleton, 147.

Pliny refers to time as *futilis* and *caduci*, and his aside contains *horum materia*. As in *Ep.* 8.4, Pliny uses *materia* as the material for a written work. *Certe studiis proferamus* provides a contrast to *factis*; if Pliny and his addressee do not make themselves memorable through deeds, they will through words. Pliny continues to emphasize life's brevity and exhorts *relinquamus aliquid* – “let us leave something behind.” The *aliquid*, like *horum* in this letter and *hoc* and *ea* in *Ep.* 8.4, represents their written work, and it remains a flexible word – Pliny does not limit himself or his friend to writing poetry, speeches, or histories, but they must write something to leave behind for posterity and to extend their lives beyond their short duration. Not only do Pliny and his addressee agree to help each other write and write well, but their mutual encouragement and activities to produce the *aliquid* creates a third witness. Pliny's *caritas* for his friend *evocat*, commands him, to encourage his friend to write, using Italicus' death as an example of life's brevity. *Evocat* bears a close similarity to *invocatis*, which he uses in *Ep.* 8.4. Poets invoke gods, but their inner emotions, like Pliny's *caritas*, obligate them to help their friends. Pliny communicates this obligation through the last line of his letter (*sicut tu soles me. ἀγαθὴ δ' ἔπις cum invicem se mutuis exhortationibus amici ad amorem immortalitatis exacuunt*), not only shows the reciprocity between friends who write and critique each other's works, but it also shows their drive and goal, *amor immortalitatis*. Noticing a connection between writing, poetry, love, and immortality, Gunderson remarks:

Hence every letter is a love letter in a philosophical sense: it is predicated on lack and absence and it would use the word to effect this originary non-being form which it emerges: the letter desires a recuperation of being. The letter passes between two individuals as an agent that would communicate the one to the other. It seeks to install a presence in the place of an absence and to exchange for a desire predicated on lack of love based in language and the community of letters.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> E. Gunderson, “Catullus, Pliny, and Love-Letters,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 127 (1997): 202.



Pliny applies *amor immortalitatis* to himself and his friend, but throughout the letter, he talks about Italicus' life and this theme taken with the whole letter hints that Italicus achieved literary greatness similar to Vergil's in spite of his lack of *ingenium*. Not only does Pliny spur his friend to write, but he spurs himself on as well so they can aspire to be like Vergil or Silius Italicus. Besides encouragement, Pliny also cites and supports the competition between friends who write and seek fame from their work and captures this by quoting another renowned poet, Hesiod. *ἀγαθὴ δ' ἔρις*, 'rivalry is good,' comes from Hesiod's *Works and Days* (24) and fits appropriately in this letter because Pliny forcefully makes the point that poets, particularly prolific poets, transcend time, if not through body, through their work. Because Greek poetry influences Latin poetry, Pliny provides variety by including Hesiod, a Greek didactic poet, to show that the poetic tradition and legacy extends much further than contemporary poets. Hesiod's inclusion proves Pliny's education in Greek, and he uses this quotation knowing full well his addressee, more likely than not, recognizes and understands the meanings of this quotation.

Pliny's letter *Ep.* 3.21, which features Martial's death, compares closely with *Ep.* 3.7, which mourns the death of Silius Italicus. While speaking about Martial, Pliny largely speaks about himself, and he does this to preserve Martial and his poetry, but furthermore to aggrandize himself and link himself to Martial's success, since he feels that he secures little to none of his own from publishing his poetry. Pliny's commemoration of Martial stems from their friendship, which represents a sliver of the sort of relationships between writers and other men in literary circles from which both parties benefitted. White observes, "*Amicus* and *amicitia*, together with

*amor* and *amare*, are favoured over all other words for describing an attachment between persons.”<sup>34</sup> On the relationships between poets and patrons, White observes,

[Poets] invoked in their poems the names of friends, circulated unpublished drafts among them, sounded them out at recitations, appealed to their support in literary feuds. To wealthy and influential patrons, they owed the popularization of their work, material encouragement, and, sometimes, their themes.<sup>35</sup>

In *Ep.* 3.21, Pliny provides evidence for this kind of relationship; but Pliny preserves Martial’s poetry only because Martial wrote in commemoration of Pliny. By preserving Martial’s literary work, Pliny also preserves himself, which demonstrates their literary cultivation through *amicitia*. Pliny describes his *amicitia* with Martial:

*Prosecutus eram viatico secedentem; dederam hoc amicitiae, dederam etiam versiculis quos de me composuit. Fuit moris antiqui, eos qui vel singulorum laudes vel urbium scripserant, aut honoribus aut pecunia ornare; nostris vero temporibus ut alia speciosa et egregia, ita hoc in primis exolevit. Nam postquam desimus facere laudanda, laudari quoque ineptum putamus. Quaeris, qui sint versiculi quibus gratiam rettuli? (Ep. 3.21.2-4)*

I bestowed a travel allowance upon him as he departed; I had given this thing for friendship, I had also given this for the little verses which he composed about me. It was characteristic of an old custom, to adorn those men who had written either praises of individual men or praises of cities, with either honors or money; truly as other beautiful and illustrious things in our times, so this custom faded among the first ones. For after we ceased to create things to be praised, we also think it unsuitable to be praised. Do you ask what the little verses are with which I showed thanks?

Pliny justifies his gift-giving to Martial in two ways: for their friendship, but also for *versiculi*, little verses, which Martial wrote especially for Pliny. *Hoc* stands for two things here: the monetary gift that he provides for Martial’s retirement, but also the written letter itself. As with other written pieces, Pliny describes it with a generic neuter term. He provides a little bit of background to the gift giving – that it was an old, *speciosa*, and *egregia* practice. His use of

<sup>34</sup> White, “Amicitia,” 80.

<sup>35</sup> White, “The Friends of Martial, Statius, and Pliny, and the Dispersal of Patronage,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 79 (1975): 265.

*ineptum* here is interesting: whereas he usually applies this term to elegiac or “light” poetry, here, he marks a transition that occurred when poets did not continue to praise things that did not merit or deserve praise. Pliny places a question in his addressee’s mouth, which provides him the chance to insert the poem that Martial wrote about Pliny. In this way, Pliny not only guarantees Martial’s survival, but he also guarantees the remembrance of his hand in Martial’s success, or at least a man who contributed significantly to the arts, if not through his own literary talent, through his wealth and generosity.

Pliny includes this excerpt of the poem, which comes from Martial 10.19:

*Adloquitur Musam, mandat ut domum meam Esquilis quaerat, adeat reverenter:*

*Sed ne tempore non tuo disertam / pulses ebria ianuam, videto. / Totos dat tetricae dies  
Minervae, / dum centum studet auribus virorum / hoc, quod saecula posterique possint /  
Arpinis quoque comparare chartis. / Seras tutior ibis ad lucernas: / haec hora est tua,  
cum furit Lyaeus, / cum regnat rosa, cum madent capilli. / Tunc me vel rigidi legant  
Catones. (Ep. 3.21.5)*

He invokes the Muse, he orders that she seek my home on the Esquiline Hill, that she go reverently: But see to it that you do not beat the learned door as a drunken woman at a time not fitting to you. He gives entire days to stern Minerva, while he prepares this for the ears of a hundred men, which the centuries and future men are also able to compare to the Arpine papers. You will go more safely at the evening lamps: this is your hour, when Lyaeus rages, the rose rules, the hair drips. Then, even the stern men, like Cato, will read me.

The type of Muse that visits Pliny appears to be the Muse of poetry, particularly that of elegiac poetry, because Martial instructs her not to come drunk. In many other elegiac poems, such as Propertius 1.3 and 1.16, the drunken lover serves as a recurring motif. He invites the Muse to Pliny’s home only at night when he engages in *otium*, dining and drinking, which is expressed poetically through Bacchus, *Lyaeus*. His literal use of hair perfume and rose adornment indicate luxury and love that frequently appear in love poetry. Martial insinuates that certain men like Cato, a figurehead for Roman oratory and Republican conservatism, ought to relax through the

‘lighter’ verses that he writes. Pliny appreciates Cato; however, Marchesi suggests that “Martial’s hint surely suggests that Pliny enjoys the anti-Catonian poetry *par excellence*.”<sup>36</sup>

Once the Muse visits, however, she provides them with relaxation. As Davies observes:

“This [the composition or inspiration of poetry] is the respectable pastime of composing light poetry, uncommitted to any political or ideological standpoint: its justification rests merely in the fact that it affords refined amusement to the people who practice it and to those who listen to it.”<sup>37</sup>

As Caninius Rufus’ retirement provides him with time for leisure activities and relaxation in *Ep.*

2.8, Pliny earns his free time to write whatever he wishes, free from any concern for his public image.

Because Martial has died, Pliny certainly touches upon fame, but he emphasizes immortality. Pliny’s summation of Martial and his abilities is as follows:

*Dedit enim mihi quantum maximum potuit, daturus amplius si potuisset. Tametsi quid homini potest dari maius, quam gloria et laus et aeternitas? At non erunt aeterna quae scripsit: non erunt fortasse, ille tamen scripsit tamquam essent future. (Ep. 3.21.6)*

For he gave me the greatest amount he was able, he was about to give even more if he had been able. Although, what more is able to be given to a man than glory and praise and eternity? But the things that he wrote will not be eternal: perhaps they will not exist, but nevertheless, he wrote them as if they were going to exist.

*Gloria, laus, and aeternitas* which can be given to a *homo* obscures the meaning: Does Pliny mean that the fame, praise, and immortality that he gives to Martial and his poetry through his letter are the greatest gifts, or does he mean the fame, praise, and immortality that Martial has given to him through his poetry are the greatest gifts? Sherwin-White says that as in the letter about Silius Italicus, *at non erunt aeterna* demonstrates the belief of Pliny and his friend that this

<sup>36</sup> I. Marchesi, *The Art of Pliny’s Letters: A Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 66.

<sup>37</sup> C. Davies, “Poetry in the ‘Circle’ of Messalla,” *Greece and Rome* 20, no. 1 (Apr. 1973): 31.

poet perhaps will not survive generations; however, Pliny disproves this through his actions – his letter writing.

## EMBEDDED POETRY

Pliny embeds his own poetry in his letters, just as he embeds Martial's poetry in *Ep.* 3.21. Out of the nine books of his letters, two letters preserve some of Pliny's poetry. Pliny addresses letter *Ep.* 7.4 to Pontius Allifanus, who shares an interest in literature. He reflects on a string of inspiration for his poetry – he says he wrote a Greek tragedy at the age of fourteen, an epic, some elegiac verses, and in *Ep.* 7.4, he includes his hendecasyllables for Allifanus' review. Pliny boasts to Allifanus that he writes with ease, but also mentions that he does not write poetry often:

*Intendi animum contraque opinionem meam post longam desuetudinem perquam exiguo temporis momento id ipsum, quod me ad scribendum sollicitaverat, his versibus exaravi. (Ep. 7.4.5)*

I focused my mind and contrary to my opinion, after long disuse, in a very short amount of time, I wrote in these verses that very thing that had provoked me to writing.

He embeds this poem in his letter:

*Cum libros Galli legerem, quibus ille parenti / ausus de Cicerone dare est palmamque decusque, / lascivum inveni lusum Ciceronis et illo / spectandum ingenio, quo seria condidit et quo / humanis salibus multo varioque lepore / magnorum ostendit mentes gaudere virorum. / Nam queritur quod fraude mala frustratus amantem / paucula cenato sibi debita savia Tiro / tempore nocturno subtraxerit. His ego lectis / "cur post haec" inquam "nostros celamus amores / nullumque in medium timidi damus atque fatemur / Tironisque dolos, Tironis nosse fugaces / blanditias et furta novas addentia flammas?" (Ep. 7.4.6)*

When I was reading books of Gallus, in which he himself had dared to give both palm and glory to his parent over Cicero, I discovered the wanton play of Cicero and to be esteemed from that talent, with which he put aside serious matters and with which he showed that the minds of great men rejoice in human wit with much and various delight. For he complains that Tiro, having deceived a lover with evil trickery, having dined at night time, took back the tiny little kisses promised to him. I ask, having read these things, "Why after these things, do we hide our passions and timidly give nothing in

public and confess to knowing Tiro's tricks and fleeting charms and thefts, adding new flames?"

Radice observes that Pliny misidentifies his hexameters as hendecasyllables, and the homoerotic relationship that Pliny creates between Cicero and Tiro appears in no other source.<sup>38</sup> As Pliny continues talking about his embedded poetry, he mentions that the Greeks who learned Latin read, copy, and set his poetry to music (*Ep.* 7.4.9-10). The Greeks to whom Pliny refers were most likely slaves and therefore had no choice. Marchesi explains, "Pliny reaches the pinnacle of self-praise with the outrageous claim that his poetry has reversed the mainstream cultural metaphor of Rome's subservience to Greece," through his boast that Greeks love and sing his poetry.<sup>39</sup> Educated slaves who read and write for their masters would not only have worked with Pliny's works, but also with the works of numerous contemporary and past authors. Rather than openly name the fame or immortality that Pliny seeks, he implies this goal by calling it posterity, which creates a similar element to the monument he urges Rufus to create for himself in letter *Ep.* 2.10. Pliny mentions and wishes:

*Sed quid ego tam gloriose? Quamquam poetis furere concessum est. Et tamen non de meo sed de aliorum iudicio loquor; qui sive iudicant sive errant, me delectat. Unum precor, ut posteri quoque aut errent similiter aut iudicent. (Ep. 7.4.10)*

But why am I so boastful? Although it is allowed for poets to carry on. But nevertheless, I do not speak from my own opinion but from the opinion of others; whether they judge rightly or are mistaken, it delights me. I pray only one thing, that those in the future also either are mistaken in a similar way or judge rightly.

Pliny plays – he mentions that he does not want to boast, but that he merely quotes others' praise for his work. He acknowledges that they may be right or wrong in their opinions; Pliny uses this to demonstrate mock humility. He believes that his poetry is wonderful and with the support of

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<sup>38</sup> Radice, trans., vol. 1, 492.

<sup>39</sup> Marchesi, 85.

his friends, he believes it will survive to posterity because of its quality. If Pliny's poetry does not survive to posterity on its own, his poetry may survive through his letter. Because Pliny is one of the earliest authors to compile his letters purposefully for publication, he may have stretched this new genre as a way to extend himself in other, well-established genres such as poetry.

In *Ep.* 7.9, Pliny embeds another poetic composition for Fuscus Salinator, one of his young admirers whom he helps following the Roman tradition of *praeceptio*.<sup>40</sup> This letter contains many similarities to the vocabulary and advice of Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.5.6).<sup>41</sup> Pliny includes advice about the kinds of activities that Salinator should practice in *otium*:

*Quo genere exercitationis proprietas splendorque verborum, copia figurarum, vis explicandi, praeterea imitatione optimorum similia inveniendi facultas paratur; simul quae legentem fefellissent, transferentem fugere non possunt. Intellegentia ex hoc et iudicium acquiritur. (Ep. 7.9.2-3)*

From this kind of exercise, the proper meaning and luster of words, a supply of figures of speech, and a strength of exposition are prepared; moreover, the ability to invent similar arguments is prepared through imitation of the best authors; at the same time those things which escaped him as he read, cannot flee from him as he translates. Understanding and judgment are acquired from this exercise.

The outcomes from such a practice include *proprietas*, *splendor verborum*, *copia figuratum*, and *vis explicandi*, to develop an experienced and strong writer. Pliny also asserts that ease of writing arises when one imitates the works of *optimi*, the best men or more likely, the best writers. He also cites the sort of deep reading a translator does in order to translate a work that is above and beyond the kind of reading a reader accomplishes. From the exercise of translation, a reader develops not only his intelligence, but he also acquires *iudicium* that he uses to evaluate written works.

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<sup>40</sup> Sherwin-White, 412.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Pliny then turns to the composition of poetry and the reasons why Salinator should undertake poetry. Pliny says:

*Fas est et carmine remitti, non dico continuo et longo (id enim perfici nisi in otio non potest), sed hoc arguto et brevi, quod apte quantas libet occupationes curasque distinguit. Lusus vocantur; sed hi lusus non minorem interdum gloriam quam seria consequuntur. Atque adeo (cur enim te ad versus non versibus adhorter?) (Ep. 7.9.9-10)*

It is right to relax with a poem, I am not speaking of a long and continuous one (for that cannot be done except in leisure), but through this witty and brief one, which suitably punctuates occupation and cares, however many they may be. They are called games, but these games sometimes achieve no less glory than serious poetry. And so (for why should I not urge you to verses through verses?)

Epic is an activity only for one who possesses true *otium*, that is, retirement. Pliny presents light poetry, which serves as a creative writing exercise without the pressures of time and ability, as the kind of poetry one with *negotium* can practice. He brings fame into the conversation by pointing out that even those that compose non-serious pieces, or pieces that stray from old, traditional genres (such as epic), can win fame. Then, Pliny inserts a playful statement, which builds up to the poem, which he inserts within the letter.

To inspire his addressee, Pliny incorporates his own poetry into his letter:

*ut laus est cerae, mollis cedensque sequatur / si doctos digitos iussaue fiat opus / et nunc informet Martem castamve Minervam, / nunc Venerem effingat, nunc Veneris puerum; utque sacri fontes non sola incendia sistunt, / saepe etiam flores vernaue prata iuvant, / sic hominum ingenium flecti ducique per artes / non rigidas docta mobilitate decet. (Ep. 7.9.11)*

As there is praise for wax, if soft and pliant it follows learned fingers and ordered, it now becomes a work of art and now it forms Mars or chaste Minerva, now it forms Venus, now the son of Venus; and as the sacred fountains not only stop flames, they also often delight flowers and the pastures of spring, so it is fitting that the native ability of men be bent and led through the plastic arts with a learned mobility.

Within this poem, Pliny mentions traditional and prominent Roman gods and goddesses, Mars, Minerva, Venus, and Cupid, which shows tension between the gods of war and love. Through *Ep. 3.21* and Martial's *10.19*, Minerva possesses a connection to Pliny stemming from his work



at the law courts. Minerva's opposition to Venus and Cupid is easy to understand not only through her connection to warfare, but also through her association with fights in the political realm. References to love, writing, and wisdom serve as the largest qualities and traits. Pliny places concrete symbols of writing as well as inspirations for writing in his letter.

Pliny concludes:

*Itaque summi oratores, summi etiam viri sic se aut exercebant aut delectabant, immo delectabant exercebantque. Nam mirum est ut his opusculis animus intendatur remittatur. Recipiunt enim amores odia iras misericordiam urbanitatem, omnia denique quae in vita atque etiam in foro causisque versantur. Inest his quoque eadem quae aliis carminibus utilitas, quod metri necessitate devincti soluta oratione laetamur, et quod facilius esse comparatio ostendit, libentius scribimus. (Ep. 7.9.12-14)*

Therefore the greatest orators, even the greatest men were either training or amusing themselves, or rather they were amusing and training themselves. For it is miraculous that the mind is extended and relaxed through these small works. For they keep passions, dislikes, angers, and urbanity in restraint, and finally, all things that happen in life and even in the forum and in court. There is in these also the same utility which is in other kinds of poems, since bound by the requirements of meter we rejoice in loosened language and we write more freely what comparison shows to be easier.

After introducing and providing an example, in fact, his own example about the pleasure of writing short, light, and polished poetry, he concludes that even the greatest orators practice this exercise to help them strengthen their prose. This is an interesting point for Pliny to make, especially because he works and sees himself primarily as an orator. Paired with an actual excerpt of his own poetry, Pliny wants the reader to identify Pliny as one of the best orators. Because Pliny believes that he writes better as an orator than a poet, he attempts to preserve a certain degree of his fame as a poet by embedding his poetry in his letter and justifying it by saying it helps him with his oratorical work.

Pliny knows he is not a poet equal to Homer or Vergil, although he possesses an expansive interest in poetry and shares this interest with friends and poets alike. He uses his

letters to discuss poetry and to demonstrate how it influences him. Pliny also shows how he hopes to influence poetry. If he does not change or create innovations within the genre of poetry itself, Pliny at least talks about the writing process associated with it to assist men who are more predisposed to writing and being successful through poetry.

## CHAPTER 2

### ORATORY

Although Pliny liked and frequently wrote about poetry and history, he wrote the most about oratory. He felt more capable of writing speeches and with time, effort, and feedback from friends, he felt that he could ensure and acquire fame, perhaps immortality. Various topics related to oratorical compositions appear in Pliny's epistolary discussions: short versus long speeches, spoken versus written speeches, young versus older orators, new versus older styles of oratory, and Atticist versus Asianist styles. Through recitations of his speeches, Pliny expands the scope of recitations to include rhetorical works in addition to poetry and history. Some of Pliny's letters serve as cover letters for an attached speech that he sends to friends who could not attend his reading. Through publication, Pliny enhances his renown and aspires to the same literary greatness earned by Demosthenes, Aeschines, and Cicero. He quotes more Greek in his letters on oratory than in those letters on poetry and history, showing his attentiveness to Greek oratorical models. Deane observes that Pliny took his profession of law and public oratory seriously and he zealously studied Greek orators and Cicero to advance his career.<sup>42</sup> Recurring themes in his letters on oratory are self-aggrandizement, praise, and artistic or nautical imagery. His letters illustrate a writing process used by Pliny and his addressees to deliver, write, and publish their best speeches. Pliny's letters about his *Panegyricus* show this writing process. Because Pliny is a well-established writer in the genre of oratory, fewer of his letters on oratory

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<sup>42</sup> S.N. Deane, "Greek in Pliny's Letters (Concluded)," *The Classical Weekly* 12, no. 7 (Dec. 2, 1918): 54.

show his anxiety over fame and immortality, although he shows a concern for the quality of his and his friends' oratorical works.

Pliny writes to Valerius Paulinus in *Ep.* 4.16 about an aspiring orator and the ultimate goal of orators. He recalls a young man's determination to listen to the entirety of Pliny's speech, emphasizing the dedication that he feels orators should possess in crafting their speeches. As in *Ep.* 2.14, he hints that this young man listens attentively in spite of the general decline in devoted listeners in court and recitations halls. To counteract the decline in listeners and their lack of attention, Pliny advises his friend that orators need to craft pieces to get and keep the attention of listeners. An orator's efforts to deliver and write well increase a speech's value and the more effort its creator puts in, the more he receives in the form of listeners. Speeches have three forms: written, delivered, and published versions. Many themes that Pliny describes in *Ep.* 4.16 repeat themselves in his other letters on oratory, but this letter explicitly describes the orator's goal – to write and deliver speeches to attract a primary and a secondary audience. The primary audience includes those who are able to attend the initial delivery of a speech and the secondary audience takes into account an absent or future audience, which reads the written speeches.

#### YOUNG VERSUS OLDER ORATORS

One recurring thread in his letters is differences and disparities between young and older orators (*Ep.* 2.14, 4.16, and 6.11). Pliny depicts declining standards in oratory. He addresses *Ep.* 2.14 to Maximus; while scholars are uncertain of his identity, Novius Maximus is a recurring suggestion.<sup>43</sup> As Sherwin-White points out, "Novius is a man of letters, probably a senator, and

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<sup>43</sup> Both Sherwin-White (180) and Walsh (305) are unsure about the addressee of *Ep.* 2.14.

possibly the brother of the consular Novius Priscus.”<sup>44</sup> Pliny laments that young men do not uphold the oratorical standards of Pliny and his contemporaries and Pliny says that he is looking forward to retirement. He presents contemporary oratory and its associated practices as a destructive force against older, classic, and “correct” forms of oratory, as found in Demosthenes and Cicero. Through this letter, as well as *Ep.* 4.16 and 6.11, Pliny tries to revive older and approved oratorical styles and practices. Bernstein points out that Pliny lacked children and heirs; but he constructed paternal relationships with unrelated and younger men that were stronger than kinship ties.<sup>45</sup> In *Ep.* 2.14, Pliny shows a negative side of mentorship:

*Ad hoc pauci cum quibus iuuet dicere; ceteri audaces atque etiam magna ex parte adulescentuli obscuri ad declamandum huc transierunt, tam inreverenter et temere, ut mihi Atilius noster expresse dixisse videatur, sic in foro pueros a centumviralibus causis auspicari, ut ab Homero in scholis. Nam hic quoque ut illic primum coepit esse quod maximum est. At hercule ante memoriam meam (ita maiores natu solent dicere), ne nobilissimis quidem adulescentibus locus erat nisi aliquo consulari producente: tanta veneratione pulcherrimum opus colebatur. (Ep. 2.14.2-3)*

There are a few men with whom it is pleasing to speak. The others are rash and, in great part, even unknown young men who have crossed to this place for the purpose of declaiming, so disrespectfully and rashly, that our friend Atilius seems to have said clearly to me that boys enter the forum from Centumviral cases just like they do from Homer in schools. For here also, as in that place, there first begins to be what is most important. But by Hercules, before my memory (elders are accustomed to speak in this way), this place was not even for the noblest young men, unless with some consular leading him forth: with so much reverence, the most beautiful work was cultivated.

Pliny pits *audaces* and *obscuri adulescentuli* against *pauci*, those men he finds pleasing when they appear in the Centumviral court. Although Pliny does not describe those few men as older nor more famous than the young men, whom he describes with the diminutive form for emphasis, he creates an opposition between young and older, more experienced orators. He compares the

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<sup>44</sup> Sherwin-White, 180.

<sup>45</sup> N.W. Bernstein, “Each Man’s Father Served as his Teacher: Constructing Relatedness in Pliny’s Letters: In Loving Memory of Harry Bernstein,” *Classical Antiquity* 27, no. 2 (Oct. 2008): 203.

attempts of these younger men to tackle the highest, most difficult forms of oratory to their work with Homer, one of the most prominent epic poets in their school environment. Tacitus (*Dial.* 35.1) calls schools of rhetoric, *ludi impudentiae*, a term coined by Cicero, to which Pliny seems to refer in his complaints about the kinds of boys that those schools produce.<sup>46</sup> Sherwin-White points out that Pliny's teacher, Quintilian, approves of the custom, although he discourages students from starting a rhetorical education too early because of *impudentia* (*Inst.* 1.8, 12.6.2).

Pliny began court practice at age eighteen, and he frequently guided young men in court.<sup>47</sup> Pliny's observation about the custom of a consular presenting a young man in court may reflect his own participation in the mentor-mentee system.<sup>48</sup> Through his complaint, Pliny implicitly presents himself as a young, talented prodigy and the noblest example of an up-and-coming orator, as opposed to the younger orators he observes. If a young man earns praise from his eloquence in the courtroom, praise also goes to the mentor who supported him, which gives Pliny a very good reason to participate as a mentor.<sup>49</sup>

Pliny not only complains about the young men who frustrate traditional oratorical practices, but also about the decline in standards, both in quality of its performance and audience. He writes Maximus:

*Pudet referre quae quam fracta pronuntiatione dicantur, quibus quam teneris clamoribus excipiantur. Plausus tantum ac potius sola cymbala et tympana illis canticis desunt: ululatus quidem (neque enim alio vocabulo potest exprimi theatri quoque indecora laudatio) large supersunt. Nos tamen adhuc et utilitas amicorum et ratio aetatis moratur*

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<sup>46</sup> Sherwin-White, 181.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Syme observes that "It was Pliny's amiable habit to encourage young men of taste and talent to salute with warm enthusiasm the early flowering of their eloquence, to follow with affection or solicitude their progress on the path of honours" in the political sphere: "Pliny's Less Successful Friends," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 9, no. 3, (Jul. 1960): 378.

*ac retinet; veremur enim ne forte non has indignitates reliquisse, sed laborem fugisse videamur. Sumus tamen solito rariores, quod initium est gradatim desinendi.* (Ep. 2.14.12-14)

It is shameful to recount what things are spoken, with how broken a delivery, with what weak applauses they are received. Only clapping is lacking from those songs, or rather only cymbals and drums: indeed the howls are abundantly excessive (for the commendation inappropriate even for the theater is able to be expressed through no other term). Nevertheless both the usefulness of friends and the reason of age delay and restrain us: for we fear not that we seem to have left these nuisances behind, but perhaps to have avoided work. Still, we appear more rarely than accustomed, which is a start for gradually retiring.

*Fracta pronuntiatio* is the only criticism directly connected to the presentation of the speech itself – its fractured discourse. In this letter, Pliny does not outline elements of a good speech or its presentation, but points out the severity of the *fracta pronuntiatio*. He implies its negative aspect with *pudet*.

Unsatisfactory speeches receive only a *tener clamor*, tender (that is, effeminate) applause.

Markus notices in the realm of speech performance:

The young listener's character-building depends upon his ability to see through the theatrical elements in a speech. Not only the manner of delivery and the voice modulation of the performer, but also the young audience's engagement with the public recitals/speeches/performances, emerge as significant components in the practice of social skills and in the fashioning of a male persona as distinct from the female persona.<sup>50</sup>

A young orator and his audience should make a good presentation of themselves to prove not only their seriousness, but also their masculinity. Pliny talks about *cliques*, groups of men who are hired to clap for their speakers. He includes the terms that define them: Greeks call them *Σοφοκλεῖς*, “bravo-callers,” and Romans call them *Laudiceni*, “dinner-clappers” (Ep. 2.14.5-6). He points out that the sounds of cymbals, drums, and instruments common to musical, theatrical, and religious ceremonies, such as Bacchic or Cybelic rituals, surpass appropriate applauses,

<sup>50</sup> D.D. Markus, “Performing the Book: The Recital of Epic in First-Century C.E. Rome,” *Classical Antiquity* 19, no. 1 (Apr. 2000): 149-50.

which are offered infrequently or not at all (*desunt*). Pliny presents himself and his friend Maximus as devoted participants who remain out of a sense of personal, intellectual, and civic duty, and as models of traditional and accepted oratory.

Pliny does not want to withdraw completely from the Centumviral court because he fears that others will see him as lazy or apathetic. He does not want to stay because he feels that he colludes in or tolerates bad behavior through his continued appearances in court. By staying, Pliny and Maximus show their continuous participation in court, but by appearing less frequently, they also distance themselves from orators, audiences, and oratory of which they disapprove. Despite numerous examples of bad mentorship and oratory, Pliny and Maximus appear in court as models to younger orators. As much as Pliny desires to acquire the *otium* possessed by his elders, he realizes he is too young to give up his private practice while working at the prefecture of Saturn.<sup>51</sup> Throughout many of his letters, *otium* stands for a promise of time when Pliny, like so many gentlemen he admires, can read, write, recite, and publish his written work. Because Pliny spends most of his efforts writing and delivering his speeches, he eagerly anticipates *otium*.

In *Ep.* 4.16, addressed to Valerius Paulinus, Pliny introduces an anonymous audience member who serves as an example of a proper listener. He presents himself as a model orator, who produces a work worthy of his listeners' attention and especially the attention of one dedicated young man whom he does not name. In Pliny's view, the ultimate goal of orators is to craft valuable speeches for a future audience. He recounts the situation:

*Ad hoc quidam ornatus adulescens scissis tunicis, ut in frequentia solet fieri, sola velatus toga perstitit et quidem horis septem. Nam tam diu dixi magno cum labore, maiore cum fructu. Studeamus ergo nec desidiae nostrae praetendamus alienam. Sunt qui audiant,*

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<sup>51</sup> The phrase *sumus . . . solito rariores* refers to this concept. Sherwin-White, 184.



*sunt qui legant, nos modo dignum aliquid auribus dignum chartis elaboremus.* (*Ep.* 4.16.2-3)

At this time, a certain distinguished young man with a torn tunic, as is accustomed to happen in a crowded assembly, clothed in his toga alone, persevered and indeed for seven hours. For I spoke for such a long time with great effort, with a greater return. Consequently, let us busy ourselves and not offer another's laziness as an excuse for our own. There are those who hear, there are those who read. Let us only produce something worthy for the ears, worthy for the books.

Sherwin-White suggests that Pliny's several-hour speech was a *quadruplex iudicium*, a rare and complicated case in which the four panels of the Centumviral court sat concurrently and together.<sup>52</sup> Pliny emphasizes the young man's dedication by pointing out his willingness to stay through the entire length of his speech in spite of his torn clothing. He recalls his ability and endurance to speak for a long time and praises his speech's quality by recalling this exemplary audience member who valued hearing his entire speech. *Ep.* 2.14 counteracts *Ep.* 4.16: the audience in *Ep.* 2.14 consists of a hired clique rather than an audience of politically-engaged men taking an interest in speaking and listening as appear in *Ep.* 4.16.<sup>53</sup> Pliny cautions Paulinus against apathy towards writing and reciting speeches inspired by declining interest. He places more responsibility on the writer by affirming the existence of interested listeners and readers. Pliny encourages Paulinus to give well-delivered speeches to an interested audience and to craft well-written speeches for future audiences of readers.

From *Ep.* 2.14, to *Ep.* 4.16 and *Ep.* 6.11, Pliny shifts from finding young orators problematic to viewing them as speakers and writers with great potential. Addressing *Ep.* 6.11 to Maximus, Pliny highlights the performances of two young men: Fuscus Salinator and Ummidius Quadratus.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 293 and 302.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

*Adhibitus in consilium a praefecto urbis audiui ex diverso agentes summae spei summae indolis iuvenes, Fuscum Salinatorem et Ummidium Quadratum, egregium par nec modo temporibus nostris sed litteris ipsis ornamento futurum. (Ep. 6.11.1-2)*

After I had been called in for advice by the prefect of the city, I heard Fuscus Salinator and Ummidius Quadratus, young men of the greatest hope and the greatest talent, pleading on opposite sides, a distinguished pair not only in our times but about to become an ornament to literature itself.

He includes two time spans in his predictions to indicate when he believes that the young men's talents will bring them to the forefront of the political sphere. *Litteris ipsis ornamentum* symbolizes their potential renown and value in literature. Salinator and Quadratus exist for the audience of their contemporaries and Pliny, but Pliny believes that they will gain acknowledgement and appreciation from a future audience. By including their names, Pliny records up-and-coming models of oratory and promotes them explicitly through literary means, his letter. If the works of Salinator and Quadratus do not survive for posterity in the way that he predicts, his letter preserves a record of their talent.

In addition to naming them in his letter, Pliny preserves the memory of Salinator and Quadratus by listing their favorable traits to create an image of each man, which make them potential models for Roman oratory. Through these two young men's adoption of Pliny as a model, Pliny includes himself as an oratorical model. Many of Pliny's letters show the influence of Quintilian and his works, which present literary models from the past. Pliny uses letters such as *Ep. 6.11* to describe men that he believes will ascend to the level of older, commonly accepted literary models. He lists the traits of Salinator and Quadratus:

*Mira utrique probitas, constantia salva, decorus habitus, os Latinum, vox virilis, tenax memoria, magnum ingenium, iudicium aequale; quae singula mihi voluptati fuerunt, atque inter haec illud, quod et ipsi me ut rectorem, ut magistrum intuebantur, et iis qui audiebant me aemulari, meis instare vestigiis videbantur. (Ep. 6.11.2-3)*

Both show wonderful honesty, sound perseverance, appropriate appearance, Latin speech, manly voice, a firm memory, great talent, and level judgment; these individual things

were a delight to me, and among these things, the fact that they were both looking at me as a guide, as a teacher, and that for those who were listening, they seemed to emulate me, to follow in my footsteps.

Pliny turns their positive traits back upon himself when he says that each man wants to imitate him. By praising their personal and literary characteristics, Pliny also praises himself. This list of praiseworthy traits is an easy guide for those searching for characteristics of talented orators. Pliny separates this list of traits from his claim that they model themselves after him, as if to make these characteristics uniquely personal to Salinator and Quadratus. They look to Pliny as *rector* and *magister*, which places Pliny in a leadership position for both young men and in an intermediary position between renowned model and youthful prodigy. *Rector* has a political connotation as well as an educational one: Pliny serves as tutor or guide or as a commander, who inspires and promotes younger orators in the realm of political oratory. *Magister*, like *rector*, can indicate a leader in the political or military field; the term also describes an expert at the summit of his profession: a teacher, trainer, or model who should be imitated. Pliny features himself as a preeminent orator in so many letters that he extends his distinctions to terms belonging to educational, political, and military spheres, in order to demonstrate his control and talent in the genre of oratory.

Pliny demonstrates his happiness that Salinator and Quadratus select him as a model, and he praises himself through them. Fame is another element in his letter, not only for himself, but also for the young men. He says,

*Quid enim aut publice laetius quam clarissimos iuvenes nomen et famam ex studiis petere, aut mihi optatius quam me ad recta tendentibus quasi exemplar esse propositum? Quod gaudium ut perpetuo capiam deos oro; ab isdem teste te peto, ut omnes qui me imitari tanti putabant meliores esse quam me velint. (Ep. 6.11.3-4)*

For what is happier for the state than for the most illustrious young men to seek a name and fame from their studies, or more desirable for me than to have been put forward as a model to those reaching for the right things? I ask the gods that I receive this joy

perpetually. With you as a witness I ask from the same gods that everyone who thought it so important to imitate me should wish to be better than me.

The first part of his comparison focuses on the young men's ambition to create names for themselves and, in so doing, earn fame and build their reputation in the public sphere. The second part of the comparison shows the credit that Pliny gives to himself by recounting the young men's aspirations to reach Pliny's position and to extend themselves after *recta*, proper ambitions. Pliny, like Cicero, was a *novus homo*; through his talent and dedication to Roman politics, he climbed to a higher social status. Through Salinator and Quadratus, Pliny recognizes himself and Cicero, as well as a shift in Roman politics. This new shift allowed men born outside the nobility to participate in public life.<sup>54</sup> Pliny uses *exemplar* to describe the way that he believes Salinator and Quadratus perceive him. His uses of *rector* and *magister* designate persons responsible and authoritative over others; Pliny uses these professions to describe his activities as an orator. *Exemplar* indicates an example, pattern, model, or copy for imitation; Pliny uses *exemplar* to describe himself, but it can also describe an inanimate object such as his written or oral work, which Salinator and Quadratus aspire to imitate. Pliny wishes for perpetual joy through ambitious young men using him as a model; however, he diminishes his boast by demonstrating an unconvincing modesty that his imitators be better men than he. His use of *esse* conveys that Pliny wishes his imitators be better men than he, but its vagueness also leaves the verb's scope open to include men's actions that form and convey their character. Pliny's wish also demonstrates a recurring principle: writers aspire to follow and imitate literary models and they hope to surpass their models in order to create fame which will transcend mortal life.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 368.

## ATTICIST VERSUS ASIANIST ORATORY

Another discussion of opposites in Pliny's letters about oratory involves short, concisely-written speeches in the Atticist style versus long, elaborately-written speeches in the Asianist style.<sup>55</sup> Pliny's *Ep.* 1.20 best illustrates his discussion of the two subgenres, Atticist and Asianist oratory. This letter is to Cornelius Tacitus, who was probably writing his *Dialogus*.<sup>56</sup> Tacitus argues for the brief speech and Pliny tries to convince him of the merits of the long speech. This letter provides an example of the playful, written friendship between fellow authors Tacitus and Pliny.

Pliny begins, *Frequens mihi disputatio est cum quodam docto homine et perito, cui nihil aequae in causis agendis ut brevitatis placet*, ("I have a frequent debate with a certain learned and experienced man, for whom nothing is as pleasing in pleading cases as brevity") (*Ep.* 1.20.1-2). Although Pliny does not name the man, the sort of man with whom he debates possesses an education and has equal experience and talent in the courtroom.

Pliny expands on the Greek and Roman models in the unknown orator's arguments and provides counter-arguments. After naming models in favor of long speeches, Pliny compares the literary art of long speeches to large works of visual art. Pliny says,

*Hic ille mecum auctoritatibus agit ac mihi ex Graecis orationes Lysiae ostentat, ex nostris Gracchorum Catonisque, quorum sane plurimae sunt circumcisae et breves: ego Lysiae Demosthenen Aeschinen Hyperiden multosque praeterea, Gracchis et Catoni Pollionem Caesarem Caelium, in primis M. Tullium oppono, cuius oratio optima fertur, esse quae maxima. Et hercule ut aliae bonae res ita bonus liber melior est quisque quo maior. Vides ut statuas signa picturas, hominum denique multorumque animalium*

<sup>55</sup> Sherwin-White (135) points out that while Pliny highlights the key elements of Atticist and Asianist oratory, *Ep.* 1.20 shows that "At heart he is Asianist."

<sup>56</sup> Radice, 56.

*formas, arborum etiam, si modo sint decorae, nihil magis quam amplitudo commendat. Idem orationibus evenit; quin etiam voluminibus ipsis auctoritatem quandam et pulchritudinem adicit magnitudo. (Ep. 1.20.4-5)*

Here, he argues with me with authorities and he shows to me from the Greeks the orations of Lysias, from our authors speeches of the Gracchi and Cato, most of whose speeches are quite abridged and brief: I oppose Lysias with Demosthenes, Aeschines, Hyperides, and many other orators besides them, I oppose the Gracchi and Cato with Pollio, Caesar, Caelius, and in particular with Marcus Tullius, whose best oration is said to be that which is the longest. And by Hercules, as with other good things, thus each good book is better by as much as it is larger. You see how statues, busts, paintings, finally the forms of men and many animals, even of trees, provided that they are beautiful, nothing commends them more than size. The same thing happens to orations – indeed, magnitude adds a certain authority and beauty to those very scrolls.

He lists Lysias, the Gracchi, and Cato as models of Atticist oratory and provides at least one direct counter-example to each author, providing a longer list of Asianist authors to outstrip his contender's list. When Pliny refers to Cicero's longest speech, he means *Pro Cluentio*.<sup>57</sup> Pliny only uses *maxima* to describe the size and quality of large speeches, but uses *circumcisa* and *brevis* to describe Atticist-styled speeches. These adjectives connote short length without any additional terms that imply the works' quality. He switches his discussion from speeches to books and works of art to justify his ideas that bigger or longer equals better with *melior*, *maior*, *decora*, and *amplitudo*. When Pliny ends the comparison, he talks about the speech in physical form, which possesses beauty and authority through its immense scroll size, *volumen*. The fact that Pliny mentions a published form of a speech as opposed to a spoken one implies its grandeur; a speech would not have been published unless it was of good quality and possessed adequate funding.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 58.

## WRITTEN VERSUS SPOKEN SPEECHES

While Pliny presents the difference between Atticist and Asianist oratory, he also discusses the characteristics of a good oration, the written speech, versus a good delivery, the recitation of a speech. Pliny's opponent, an anonymous man, charges that Pliny's published speeches are much longer than his delivered speeches, but Pliny disagrees. Pliny believes that an especially good orator starts with a well-written speech and as he presents it, he adapts it according to his circumstances. He concludes his assertions by quoting an example from Cicero's speech *In Verrem* (2.4.3):<sup>58</sup>

*At aliud est actio bona, aliud oratio. Scio nonnullis ita videri, sed ego (forsitan fallar) persuasum habeo posse fieri ut sit actio bona quae non sit bona oratio, non posse non bonam actionem esse quae sit bona oratio. Est enim oratio actionis exemplar et quasi ἀρχέτυπον. Ideo in optima quaque mille figuras extemporales invenimus, in iis etiam quas tantum editas scimus, ut in Verrem: 'artificem quem? quemnam? recte admones; Polyclitum esse dicebant. (Ep.1.20.9-10)*

But good delivery is one thing, a published speech is another. I know that it is seen this way by some men, but I myself am convinced (perhaps I am misled) that it can happen that what is a good published speech cannot but be a good delivery. For a published speech is a copy of the delivery and almost an archetype. Therefore, in every very good speech we discover a thousand spur-of-the-moment figures, even in those speeches which we know were only published, as the speech against Verres: 'Who is the artist? Indeed, who is it? You remind me correctly: they said it was Polyclitus.'

*Actio* describes the action of an orator, the actual progress he makes in delivering or putting together his speech. *Oratio*, while it too indicates the action of delivering or crafting a speech, possesses a stronger tie to a speech's literary qualities. This *oratio* stands for either the speech written before its delivery or the revised speech after the orator delivers it and gauges the reaction of his audience. Pliny says an *oratio* serves as an archetype, model, and an *exemplar* to the delivered version, which can change extemporaneously in the course of its delivery. Just as certain renowned authors provide a model for aspiring writers and orators to follow, an *oratio*

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 60.

provides a solid foundation on which an orator builds a well-delivered speech, which can be revised to create well-written speeches for posterity. Through his interpretations of *actio* and *oratio* and a quotation from Cicero's *In Verrem*, Pliny shows a general literary process behind speeches.

The clearest indication that Tacitus may be Pliny's unnamed opponent comes from the conclusion of *Ep.* 1.20, when Pliny challenges him to write a short letter if he agrees or a very long letter, explaining his disagreement. If Tacitus is the man who is pleased by the briefest speeches and who insists that they are the best kind, Pliny playfully exhorts him to prepare a long letter to win the debate. If Tacitus agrees with Pliny, then Pliny allows Tacitus to write as he wishes: concisely. Pliny negotiates with Tacitus:

*Haec est adhuc sententia mea, quam mutabo si dissenseris tu; sed plane cur dissentias explices rogo. Quamvis enim cedere auctoritati tuae debeam, rectius tamen arbitror in tanta re ratione quam auctoritate superari. Proinde, si non errare videor, id ipsum quam voles brevi epistula, sed tamen scribe (confirmabis enim iudicium meum); si erraro, longissimam para. Num corrumpe te, qui tibi si mihi accederes brevis epistulae necessitatem, si dissentires longissimae imposui? (Ep. 1.20.24-25)*

Until now, this is my opinion; which I will change if you disagree. But I ask that you explain plainly why you disagree. For although I ought to yield to your authority, nevertheless, I think it is more right in such a matter, to be overcome by reason rather than by authority. Consequently, if I do not seem to err, write that very thing in a letter as short as you wish, but nevertheless, write (for you will confirm my opinion); if I have erred, prepare a very long letter. I haven't bribed you, have I, who has imposed on you the necessity of a short letter if you agree with me, a very long letter if you disagree?

Pliny playfully bribes Tacitus to agree with his literary preferences, as if his friend's agreement brings literary success closer. He questions Tacitus' literary authority, which shows his respect for it and places his own literary experience, particularly that of oratory, on an equal level to Tacitus.' Pliny's *Ep.* 1.20 demonstrates a literary debate, Atticist versus Asianist speeches, spoken versus written speeches, and long versus short replies, through literary means – the



transmission of letters. *Ep.* 1.20 preserves a literary record of his arguments concerning literary matters with another aspiring literary figure: Cornelius Tacitus.

Pliny addresses *Ep.* 5.20 to Cornelius Ursus, and similar to *Ep.* 1.20, he elaborates on the differences between spoken and written speeches. He recounts the case the Bithynians brought against Julius Bassus and later, Rufus Varenus, who, with Pliny, originally defended the Bithynians against Bassus. Pliny defended Varenus and he wants to write and revise the court speech to preserve the case and its merit.

Oratory sets up a natural dichotomy between the delivered and written speech. Similar to *Ep.* 1.20, Pliny re-presents the inherent difference between *actio* and *oratio* in *Ep.* 5.20. He states this simple observation:

*In actionibus enim utramque in partem fortuna dominatur: multum commendationis et detrahit et adfert memoria vox gestus tempus ipsum, postremo vel amor vel odium rei; liber offensis, liber gratia, liber et secundis casibus et adversis caret. (Ep. 5.20.3-4)*

For in deliveries, chance dominates in both parts: the memory, the voice, the gestures, and the occasion itself both withdraw and deliver much of approval, finally either love or hatred of the business; the volume is free from offenses, from thanks, and the volume is free from both favorable and unfavorable outcomes.

*Fortuna*, as much as the orator's memory, voice, gestures and the occasion of his speech control the success and survival of his speech. Pliny refers to the double-edged nature of *tempus*, which depicts an emotional extreme such as a situation that inspires love or hate. If the *tempus* does not create a strong reaction, its failure seems imminent.

*Liber* represents the medium through which a published speech exists. Unlike a recited speech, Pliny believes an unpublished volume lacks the ability to offend, accept thanks, or to suffer favorable or unfavorable events whereas the animate orator is subject to all of these consequences. Through his conception of the volume's inability to be harmed versus the orator's

vulnerability, Pliny crafts the idea that a writer strives to publish, and through publishing, gains safety and simply continues to exist no matter if he acquires favor or disfavor.

Rather than continue to talk about his speech in his letter, Pliny teases his friend and keeps the speech partly removed as a topic. He only summarizes its contents in great detail.

Pliny says,

*Quare iustam, non sum epistula exsecuturus, ut desideres actionem. Nam si verum est Homericum illud: τὴν γὰρ ᾠοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι, ἢ τις ἀκούοντεςσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται providendum est mihi, ne gratiam novitatis et florem, quae oratiunculam illam vel maxime commendat, epistulae loquacitate praecerpam. (Ep. 5.20.7)*

Why it is just, I am not going to say in a letter, in order that you long for the speech. For if that Homeric statement is true: 'For men praise the song more, which flows the newest to those hearing it,' care must be taken by me, lest I pluck the grace and bloom of novelty, which especially recommends that little speech, by the talkativeness of the letter.

*Gratia* and *flos* represent the published version of Pliny's speech, which he worries he will spoil by revealing too much of its contents. He says that the *novitas* of the speech recommends it to readers. The diminutive form, *oratiuncula*, conveys Pliny's attachment to his written work and particularly this speech. He also shows off his attempt to write shorter, more polished speeches rather than the long kinds a few of his friends criticize. Pliny gives his letter a voice with *epistulae loquacitas*, as if his letter vicariously speaks for Pliny-the-orator, but suddenly ends his discussion to allow his speech to remain separate from the letter. By forcing his addressee to read the publication, Pliny intensifies his addressee's interest in the speech itself. His letter possesses an intermediary position between orator and published speech; it possesses an orator's talkativeness, but also a written and published format like a published speech.

PLINY'S *PANEGYRICUS*

In *Ep.* 3.13 and 3.18, Pliny talks about the dichotomies of oratory as well as his publication, the *Panegyricus*, which is his largest surviving publication. He addresses *Ep.* 3.13 to Voconius Romanus following delivery of the *Panegyricus* in September of 100 C.E., but before his recitation of the finished, elaborated version, in *Ep.* 3.18.<sup>59</sup> Pliny delivered the speech in a Senate meeting following a special injunction that a public vote of thanks be given to Trajan.<sup>60</sup> In *Ep.* 3.13, he talks about the difficulties surrounding the composition of the *Panegyricus* as well as characteristics particular to this speech through a comparison to fine arts; a picture needs both lights and darks to portray form and detail. Pliny asks his addressee only for criticisms, believing anything unchallenged should remain unchanged. Pliny creates a snapshot of his progress on the *Panegyricus*:

*Atque utinam ordo saltem et transitus et figurae simul spectarentur! Nam invenire praeclare, enuntiare magnifice interdum etiam barbari solent, disponere apte, figurare varie nisi eruditus negatum est. Nec vero adfectanda sunt semper elata et excelsa. Nam ut in pictura lumen non alia res magis quam umbra commendat, ita orationem tam summittere quam attollere decet. Sed quid ego haec doctissimo viro? Quin potius illud: adnota, quae putaveris corrigenda. Ita enim magis credam cetera tibi placere, si quaedam displicuisse cognovero. (Ep. 3.13.3-5)*

And if only the order at least and the transitions and the figures were seen together! For even barbarians are accustomed to discover brilliantly and to speak magnificently on occasion, but to arrange aptly, to create variously, is denied except to learned men. The elevated and eminent truly are not always to be sought. For as in a painting, no other thing than shadow sets the light off more. Thus, it befits to lower the oration as much as to raise it. But why do I say these things to a very learned man? But rather that thing: comment on the things which you thought should be improved. For thus, I will believe that the remaining things please you more, if I will have learned that some things displeased you.

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<sup>59</sup> Sherwin-White, 245.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

*Ordo*, *transitus*, and *figura* serve as structural components of Pliny's *Panegyricus*. He asserts that only Roman, educated, and experienced writers can create well-structured pieces most of the time with *invenire praeclare* and *enuntiare magnifice*. In making this statement, Pliny implies that he exemplifies such an orator and writer. He implies that writers seek *elata* and *excelsa* subjects for their writing, but says that not everything should contain elevation or importance because insignificant portions or background provide balance and coherence. Pliny demonstrates this advice through a comparison to fine arts, a painting, with light and dark that together portray form and detail.<sup>61</sup> Pliny's assertions possess a didactic tone, which he suddenly reverses when he asks Romanus for criticism of a part of the *Panegyricus*, which he sends in *Ep.* 3.3. Pliny acts as a teacher of oratory, but he invites Romanus to reciprocate, placing Pliny in the position of Romanus' student. Pliny presents himself as an educated man who writes well, describing the actions of an experienced writer, and he extends the same praise to Romanus, calling him *doctissimus*. Pliny baits Romanus with flattery to read his work and creates himself and his addressee as models to aspiring writers and orators who read this letter.

Pliny continues to develop ideas about his *Panegyricus* in a letter to Vibius Severus (*Ep.* 3.18). He delivered the speech before the Senate, now he wants to enlarge and elaborate a written version of the speech.<sup>62</sup> He presents his reasons for working on a *volumen* of his *Panegyricus*:

*Quod ego in senatu cum ad rationem et loci et temporis ex more fecissem, bono civi convenientissimum credidi eadem illa spatiosius et uberius volumine amplecti, primum ut imperatori nostro virtutes suae veris laudibus commendarentur, deinde ut futuri*

<sup>61</sup> Sherwin-White encourages caution when examining Pliny's allusion to art: "The observation about light was obvious to anyone who knew Hellenistic painting, and implies no deep knowledge of theory," 246.

<sup>62</sup> Radice (222 and 223) believes that Pliny speaks of his *Panegyricus* in its existing form and hypothesizes that it would take three sessions of one and a half or two hours to read the entire speech.

*principes non quasi a magistro sed tamen sub exemplo praemonerentur, qua potissimum via possent ad eandem gloriam niti. (Ep. 3.18.1-2)*

When I had done this in the Senate according to custom, in accordance with the nature both of the place and of the occasion, I believed that it was most agreeable as a good citizen to embrace those same things, at greater length and more fully in a volume, first, in order that the virtues of our emperor be entrusted to true praises, then that future emperors be forewarned not as if by a teacher but nevertheless by an example, especially by what path they can advance to the same glory.

Pliny places emphasis on *locus*, *tempus*, and *mos* to establish his *Panegyricus*' credibility, which follows an appropriate tradition at the right time and in the right place. He establishes his character's worth through his desire to act as a *bonus civis*. Pliny focuses on his *volumen* and the ways, *spatiosius* and *uberius*, he wants to create it to enhance his value as a literary orator. Pliny hopes that Trajan and his virtues will last as examples to future leaders through his *Panegyricus*.<sup>63</sup> Sherwin-White observes, "He himself evidently attempted more than was usual, but the Panegyric is factual and practical, very different from essays on the art of government such as Dio Chrysostom's speeches *de regno*, or Musonius Rufus' shorter sermon on kingly duty."<sup>64</sup>

In *Ep.* 6.11, Pliny refers to young men who look up to him as a *magister*, but in *Ep.* 3.18, he wants future leaders to observe an *exemplum* of good authority such as Trajan. Pliny directs their focus towards an *exemplum*, to inspire them to acquire *gloria*. In *Ep.* 1.20, Pliny presents the benefits of a *volumen*, an inanimate and written speech, over the greater vulnerability and brevity of an orator's spoken speech. Pliny believes this *exemplum*, like a *volumen*, possesses durability and longevity. The *exemplum* represents the content of Pliny's *volumen* that he wishes to last for generations, particularly those of leaders, to look back in tribute to Trajan and his glory and Pliny and his literary glory. Manolaraki observes that "By assimilating Trajan's

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<sup>63</sup> Through this wish, he alludes to contemporary political philosophers and senatorial admirers: Sherwin-White, 251.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

imperial accomplishment to his own rhetorical product, Pliny claims immortality for both.”<sup>65</sup>

Pliny also claims immortality for himself and Trajan through the composition of his letter.

Because *gloria* is defined through certain actions that give its recipients fame, Pliny does not define who earns *gloria* or the kind of *gloria* that an individual can earn.

Pliny establishes status for himself as an author and for his *Panegyricus*. Through his friends’ support and praises, Pliny shows a false sense of modesty. He relates his happiness for the success of his written work, although he also restrains it to avoid appearing arrogant. Pliny yearns for his work to transcend his mortal life, but he wants to use modesty to mask his self-congratulatory wishes. He uses *Ep.* 3.18 to talk about his second, polished recitation of his *Panegyricus*:

*Cepi autem non mediocrem voluptatem, quod hunc librum cum amicis recitare voluissem, non per codicillos, non per libellos, sed ‘si commodum’ et ‘si valde vacaret’ admoniti (numquam porro aut valde vacat Romae aut commodum est audire recitantem), foedissimis insuper tempestatibus per biduum convenerunt, cumque modestia mea finem recitationi facere voluisset, ut adicerem tertium diem exegerunt. Mihi hunc honorem habitum putem an studiis? studiis malo, quae prope extincta refoventur. (Ep. 3.18.4-6)*

Moreover, I seized no mediocre pleasure, because when I had wished to recite this book to friends, advised not through notes nor tiny books, but “If it is convenient,” and “if there really is free time” (but never at Rome is there really free time nor is it convenient to hear reciting), but besides that, they came together for two days in the foulest weather, and when my modesty had wanted to make an end to the reading, they demanded that I add a third day. Should I think that this honor was rendered to me or my studies? I prefer it for my studies, which are refreshed, nearly having been destroyed.

Pliny uses litotes, *non mediocrem*, to show his delight in the recitation and gathering of his friends, but in a subdued manner. He refers to the contemporary disrespect for recitations because of their length. Sherwin-White points out that this was probably Pliny’s second or third

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<sup>65</sup> E. Manolaraki, “Political and Rhetorical Seascapes in Pliny’s *Panegyricus*,” *Classical Philology* 103, no. 4 (Oct. 2008): 375.

recitation, and his speech was quite unusual for recitation, which worked against him.<sup>66</sup> Pliny lists negations, *non . . . codicilli* and *non . . . libelli*, and quotes himself inviting his friends to his recitation, pointing out his adequate warning that it would consume their time. He adds that terrible weather was added to other negative circumstances. His recitation extended to a third day because his friends demanded it, although Pliny blames his *modestia* for his desire to end the reading on the second, appointed day. This moment in Pliny's anecdote turns his recollected expectations in reverse, but Pliny still doubts its validity. Pliny separates the reasons behind his friends' support; they either support him or his literary endeavor. He unashamedly states his preference, but places emphasis on *quae prope extincta refoventur* to acknowledge the likelihood his recitation would not have turned out as well as it did, referring to other norms concerning recitations. By presenting the odds against him, the moment he dispels them calls more attention to his shortly stated evidence of success.

Pliny discusses the mechanics and genre of his *Panegyricus*. He mentions the way the *Panegyricus*, which records praise of the emperor, became popular in spite of the previous unpopularity of the genre. He continues to present the likelihood that his speech will be disapproved by his audience. Pliny also presents the way that he undertook this kind of speech in spite of current and predicted circumstances and the ways that he acquired success from his endeavor.

*Accedet ergo hoc quoque laudibus principis nostri, quod res antea tam invisum quam falsa, nunc ut vera ita amabilis facta est. Sed ego cum studium audientium tum iudicium mire probavi: animadverti enim severissima quaeque vel maxime satisfacere. Memini quidem me non multis recitasse quod omnibus scripsi, nihilo minus tamen, tamquam sit eadem omnium futura sententia, hac severitate aurium laetor, ac sicut olim theatra male musicos canere docuerunt, ita nunc in spem adducor posse fieri, ut eadem theatra bene canere musicos doceant. Omnes enim, qui placendi causa scribunt, qualia placere*

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<sup>66</sup> Sherwin-White, 251.

*viderint scribent. Ac mihi quidem confido in hoc genere materiae laetioris stili constare rationem, cum ea potius quae pressius et adstrictius, quam illa quae hilarius et quasi exsultantius scripsi, possint videri accersita et inducta. (Ep. 3.18.7-10)*

Therefore, this also will be added to our emperor's praises, because a matter formerly as hated as false, now has become so attractive as true. But I commended both the eagerness of those listening, then their judgment, with wonder: for I noticed the most unadorned things especially gave satisfaction. Indeed, I remembered that I recited for not many men, what I had written for everyone; but nevertheless, I rejoice in this severity of ears as if there will be the same opinion from all, and just as the theaters once taught singers to sing badly, so now I am led into hope that it can be that the same theaters teach singers to sing well. For everyone, who writes for the sake of pleasing, will write the sorts of things that seemed to please. And indeed, I am confident for myself that in this kind of material the method of a richer style is established, since those things which have been written more concisely and tersely than those things which I wrote more cheerfully and more exultantly so to speak can seem forced and strange.

One of the main transitions from *Ep.* 3.13 to *Ep.* 3.18 is that Pliny hopes the combined richness of language in certain passages with contrasting passages in a restrained style will lead him to success – and it does.<sup>67</sup> Two parts that make Pliny's reading seem like a success to Pliny are the presence of an audience and the style of writing that Pliny prefers. Pliny picks out the *studium* and the *iudicium* of his audience members, who possess critical powers and dedication, *severitas aurium*, for listening to literary recitations, particularly Pliny's recitation. Through an analogy to theatrical performances and their audiences, Pliny's perspective reflects that an audience serves a vital purpose to the author in teaching him how to perform well or write worthy works. He introduces his second point by presenting a maxim on writing: *Omnes enim, qui placendi causa scribunt, qualia placere viderint scribent.* In Pliny's view, writers write the sorts of things that please themselves, but more importantly, please their audience, which serves as a changeable and renewable resource. He talks about the few audience members who spared their time to hear a part of his *Panegyricus*, but once he commits it to writing, an absent audience can also read and perhaps gain pleasure from his speech. An audience of readers replenishes itself more readily

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.



than an audience of listeners, and the written work can transcend time to meet younger generations of listeners. Pliny claims that the florid style in which he writes doubles as a literary style that appeals to his audience, but also as the style he prefers to write, describing his treatment as *hilarius* and *exsultantius*. He justifies his style by predicting negative results, *accersita* and *inducta*, had he written in a terse and concise manner. Because he writes a genre that has popularity and accords with his own preferences, he ascribes and builds up the story of his oratorical success through changing circumstances, an attentive audience, and ultimately, himself as an experienced writer. Marchesi pairs Pliny's oratorical craft with history. Pliny especially points out that he does not want to write his speech in a concise and short manner; knowing the importance of history as a genre, perhaps he explored this option, as well:

By first offering his oratorical masterpiece for the enjoyment of a friend, Vibius Severus, and then completing his correspondence with him with a meditation on the mimetic power of images, Pliny also presents his readers with an alternative to the work of the historian. Endowed with the same power of producing and preserving exemplary portraits offered for imitation, oratory emerges in the end as Pliny's chosen means of inscribing himself into the permanent record of history.<sup>68</sup>

In case his *Panegyricus* does not survive to posterity, the fact that Pliny crafted and recited such a speech may survive to posterity through his letters.

#### COMPOSITION, REVISION, AND DELIVERY

Many of Pliny's letters display the processes of recitations, sharing criticism, and publication that a writer, particularly an orator, undertakes to acquire success, fame, and immortality. Pompeius Saturninus receives *Ep.* 1.8, which provides details about the process of reading and revising Pliny's speech commemorating the public library at Comum. Pliny discusses the speech's controversial subject matter, which congratulates him and his family for

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<sup>68</sup> Marchesi, 150.

providing the funds to build and dedicate the library. As in *Ep.* 3.18, Pliny acknowledges public self-aggrandizement is not well received by the public although silent, inscribed dedications receive praise. In spite of public taste, Pliny is eager to preserve his generosity in a speech, but in confessing his anxieties concerning its eventual delivery, he uses *Ep.* 1.8 as a literary artifact of his generosity and his other literary effort, his oratory, to display it. He distinguishes the gift's quality - he does not follow the contemporary vogue to fund public gladiatorial combats, but his public library contributes intellectually and continually to his hometown by housing and providing access to literature.

Pliny discusses revising and publishing his speech, and he provides a glimpse of the etiquette of asking for and receiving criticism of his written work from friends. Specifically, Pliny asks Pompeius Saturninus to review his speech, *rursus*, again, which suggests that Saturninus has seen the speech before and can comment on improvements since its first draft. Pliny already cautions his peer reviewer that he has not added any changes to his speech from neglect:

*Addidisti ergo calcaria sponte currenti, pariterque et tibi veniam recusandi laboris et mihi exigendi verecundiam sustulisti. Nam nec me timide uti decet eo quod oblatum est, nec te gravari quod depoposcisti. Non est tamen quod ab homine desidioso aliquid novi operis exspectes. Petiturus sum enim ut rursus vaces sermoni quem apud municipales meos habui bibliothecam dedicaturus. (Ep. 1.8.1-3)*

So you have increased the stimuli for one running of his own accord, and in like manner you have removed an excuse for yourself for refusing work and disgrace for me for demanding it. For it is fitting that I, not afraid, use what is offered, nor is it fitting that you object to what you have demanded. However, it is not that you should anticipate something of a new work from an idle man. For I am about to ask that again you spare time for a speech which I delivered to my fellow townsmen as I was going to dedicate a library.

Sherwin-White observes that Pliny takes literary cooperation from his older friends for granted.<sup>69</sup> Pliny plays with the notion that Saturninus offers to reread his speech, which spares him from receiving Saturninus' rejections as well as from asking him again. He immediately takes advantage of Saturninus' offer, which shows Pliny's eagerness to share and receive criticism on his work. Not only does Pliny make his work known to another friend, but he also wants to communicate about his work to better its quality. Pliny tells Saturninus not to expect a new work, with *aliquid* representing a literary work, and he tells him he is resubmitting his dedicatory speech. Not only will Saturninus not feel burdened by reading Pliny's speech because he asks for it himself, but also because he still remembers and possesses familiarity with this particular work. Pliny's confession of resubmission portrays his willingness to share, improve, and re-share his work with his friends to create the best literary work possible.

Pliny considers publication of his written work after revisions, recitations, and more revisions have produced the best possible work. He mentions the general conventions of revisions, but presents the major difference of his dedicatory speech from his other literary crafts. His speech's subject serves as its major obstacle to publication rather than his literary, artistic license. Pliny mentions:

*Erit enim et post emendationem liberum nobis vel publicare vel continere. Quin immo fortasse hanc ipsam cunctationem nostram in alterutram sententiam emendationis ratio deducet, quae aut indignum editione dum saepius retractat inveniet, aut dignum dum id ipsum experitur efficiet. Quamquam huius cunctationis meae causae non tam in scriptis quam in ipso materiae genere consistunt: est enim paulo quasi gloriosius et elatius. (Ep. 1.8.3-5)*

For even after emendation it will be free for us either to publish it or to hold it back. In fact, more precisely, perhaps the method of emendation will lead this very hesitation of ours into a different opinion, which will find either that while revising it more often, it is unworthy of publication, or it will make it worthy while that very same thing is attempted.

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<sup>69</sup> Sherwin-White, 103.

Although my reasons for this hesitation consist not so much in the writings as in the very kind of subject matter: for it is, so to speak, a little too boastful and elevated.

Pliny describes his revisions as *emendatio* and *editio* as well as an action, *saepius retractare*. He mentions two things in a literary work that revisions reveal to its author; either the work improves enough for publication or requires even more attention. The problem in his speech concerns *ipsum materiae genus* rather than the ways he writes. *Paulo* emphasizes *gloriosius* and *elatius* to reveal that Pliny hesitates to admit exactly why and how certain elements of his speech might predispose readers to a certain level of disfavor and discomfort. Because his speech devotes too much praise with *gloriosius* and *elatius*, these terms serve as the very qualities that Pliny needs to change in order to improve his speech for publication.

He develops the reasons why his speech has the potential to irritate his audience. Pliny reveals these maxims:

*Etenim si alienae quoque laudes parum aequis auribus accipi solent, quam difficile est obtinere, ne molesta videatur oratio de se aut de suis disserentis! Nam cum ipsi honestatum aliquanto magis gloriae eius praedicationique invidemus, atque ea demum recte facta minus detorquemus et carpimus, quae in obscuritate et silentio reponuntur. (Ep. 1.8.6)*

For even if praises from others are accustomed to be received as unsatisfactory by impartial ears, how difficult it is to obtain that a speech from someone speaking about himself or about his relatives not seem annoying! For when we hate both honesty itself and rather more its glory and publication and finally we distort and criticize less things done correctly, which are laid in obscurity and silence.

Pliny uses the metonymy of *aequi aures* to describe a discerning audience. He asserts that his topic would displease even a fair-minded audience. If his audience possesses the kind of men who are inclined to argue, differ, or act disagreeably, Pliny predicts his speech's failure. Pride in a publication creates ostentation and haughtiness that makes the audience uneasy because it becomes publicly accessible, tangible, and durable for posterity. Unspoken and unpublished

deeds that merit praise but do not receive it, escape misconstruction and criticism and exist as they truly are: praiseworthy deeds.

Other letters that show the process of delivering speeches involve his proceedings in court or the Senate. Pliny addresses *Ep.* 2.11 to Maturus Arrianus, a wealthy and retired man who participated in and still maintains an interest in the proceedings of the Senate. This letter is an update on Pliny's progress and demonstrates the attention he received from the emperor, which shows his dedication to delivering his speeches. As Pliny recalls:

*Utrumque tamen animum cogitationemque collegi, coepi dicere non minore audientium adsensu quam sollicitudine mea. Dixi horis paene quinque; nam duodecim clepsydris, quas spatiosissimas acceperam, sunt additae quattuor. Adeo illa ipsa, quae dura et adversa dicturo videbantur, secunda dicenti fuerunt. Caesar quidem tantum mihi studium, tantam etiam curam (nimium est enim dicere sollicitudinem) praestitit, ut libertum meum post me stantem saepius admoneret voci laterique consulerem, cum me vehementius putaret intendi, quam gracilitas mea perpeti posset. (Ep. 2.11.14-15)*

Nevertheless, when I collected my mind and thoughts, I began to speak with no less approval of those listening than my worry. I spoke for nearly five hours: for to the twelve water clocks of the largest kind, which I had received, four were added. So those very things, which seemed harsh and adverse for one about to speak, were favorable for him when speaking. Indeed, the emperor offered such great goodwill to me, even such great concern (for it is too much to call it anxiety), that he again and again advised my freedman standing behind me that I look after my voice and lungs since he thought that I exerted myself more forcefully than my thinness can permit.

Initially, Pliny presents and negates his anxieties concerning his success as an orator with *non minore audientium adsensu quam sollicitudine mea*. By using litotes, he emphasizes the audience's goodwill towards him and acceptance of his work. Pliny includes the length of his speech to show his endurance. The additional water clocks permitted for his speech portrays him not only as an overachiever who perseveres through the long hours of his oration but also an orator who acquires additional time as his special privilege. A typical prosecution was six hours

long: Pliny may have received an extra hour to deal with extra complications.<sup>70</sup> Pliny's self-praise, *Adeo illa ipsa, quae dura et adversa dicturo videbantur, secunda dicenti fuerunt* increases the magnitude of his success by suggesting the obstacles which he overcame and the likelihood of his disappointment. He speaks generically of his audience's goodwill, *audientium adsensus*, but specifically of the emperor's *studium* and *cura* for Pliny's well-being, because the emperor's approval is one of the highest forms of approval for a writer. *Gracilitas mea* is the only reference to Pliny's physique; when he was in good health, he was capable of speaking for seven hours without a break.<sup>71</sup> Not only does the emperor allow Pliny to use the maximum time to present his argument and even additional time, but he also seeks to preserve Pliny and his oratorical abilities by allowing him to rest.

Pliny addresses *Ep.* 2.19 to Cerialis to discuss the differences between originally delivered speeches and recited speeches. Pliny's purpose in this letter is to ask Cerialis whether he should recite his speech. Pliny uses his friend's support to justify recitation of the speech outside the courtroom where he gave its original presentation.<sup>72</sup> He uses this letter to argue for its support and he persuades Cerialis to support his innovation in literary performance. Sherwin-White comments, "The case against recitation could hardly be better put than in this letter. Later Pliny found that the recital satisfied his passion for criticism and revision, and made increasing

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> "Public readings of speeches were evidently less common at this time than readings of history, drama, and poetry," Radice, 146.

use of it for prose and verse.”<sup>73</sup> Pliny demonstrates the conventions of originally-delivered speeches and speech recitations:

*Neque enim me praeterit actiones, quae recitantur, impetum omnem caloremque ac prope nomen suum perdere, ut quas soleant commendare simul et accendere iudicum consessus, celebritas advocatorum, exspectatio eventus, fama non unius actoris, diductumque in partes audientium studium, ad hoc dicentis gestus incessus, discursus etiam omnibusque motibus animi consentaneus vigor corporis. Unde accidit ut ii qui sedentes agunt, quamvis illis maxima ex parte supersint eadem illa quae stantibus, tamen hoc quod sedent quasi debilitentur et deprimantur. Recitantium vero praecipua pronuntiationis adiumenta, oculi manus, praepediuntur. Quo minus mirum est, si auditorum intentio relanguescit, nullis extrinsecus aut blandimentis capta aut aculeis excitata. (Ep. 2.19.2-5)*

For it does not pass me by that speeches which are recited lose their entire attack and heat and nearly their own name, as those which the agreements of judges, the fame of supporters, the anticipation of the outcome, the reputation of not one participant, and the enthusiasm of the listeners split into factions are accustomed to recommend and ignite at the same time, in addition the gestures of the speaker, his advances also the running about and the vigor of the body agreeing with every movement of the mind. Whence it happens that those men who act while sitting, although for the most part those same things remain for them which exist for them standing nevertheless because they sit – they are so to speak weakened and weighed down. Truly, the particular aids of delivery, the eyes and hands of those reciting are hindered. On this account it is less amazing, if the attention of listeners diminishes, captured by no charms from outside or excited by no barbs.

*Actiones* designate originally delivered speeches, while *actiones, quae recitantur*, are speeches performed as literature rather than in their original setting, delivered in the Senate or court. One of the major differences is that a recitation focuses the audience’s attention on the author’s eyes and hands while the speech delivered in court shows an orator’s spirit and character as well as the other elements of the court such as its magistrates, advocates, various speakers, public audience, and judge’s verdict. Pliny focuses most of his attention on the actual orator; he points out the importance of his expression through his movements, gestures, character, and enthusiasm. Because the attention of the audience is more likely to waver during a recitation than during a

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<sup>73</sup> Sherwin-White, 201.

courtroom speech, Pliny implies that an orator needs to devote heightened attention to the recited speech.

In *Ep.* 5.12, addressed to Terentius Scaurus, Pliny shows the literary progression from recitation to publication. One important element in this particular letter is the type of audience that attended a recitation. At the particular recitation Pliny recalls, he selected his audience members from his circle of friends who shared literary interests. He selected a group large enough for a literary recitation, but also small enough to give Pliny criticism on his work. Pliny reveals balance not only in his audience, but also in his purpose for reciting his work. He says:

*Nam mihi duplex ratio recitandi, una ut sollicitudine intendar, altera ut admonear, si quid forte me ut meum fallit. Tuli quod petebam: inveni qui mihi copiam consilii sui facerent, ipse praeterea quaedam emendanda adnotavi. Emendavi librum, quem misi tibi.*  
(*Ep.* 5.12.1-3)

For there is a double reason for me for reciting, one so that I am urged on by uneasiness, the other so that I am corrected, if by chance any of my own things escapes me. I received what I was seeking: I found those men who made an abundance of their advice for me, I myself observed certain things to be changed besides. I have revised the book, which I sent to you.

Pliny uses recitations to decrease his anxiety and familiarize himself with his audience. As an orator, Pliny recognizes the importance of engagement with the audience whom he must persuade in court. Because Pliny aspires to become a literary orator in addition to his profession as a public orator, he realizes that he must cultivate the audience at his recitations as carefully as he cultivates his audience in the court or Senate.

The other audience of which Pliny remains constantly aware are the friends to whom he sends his written work. In *Ep.* 5.12, Pliny shares his written speech post-recitation with Scaurus, aspiring but still unsure of its publication. Pliny tells Scaurus:



*Tu velim quid de universo, quid de partibus sentias, scribas mihi. Ero enim vel cautior in continendo vel constantior in edendo, si huc vel illuc auctoritas tua accesserit. (Ep. 5.12.4)*

Please write something to me about the whole, please write something about how you feel about its parts. For I will be either more careful in holding it back or more persistent in publishing it, if your authority will have approached this or that.

He not only exposes his work to Scaurus' honest criticism, but he also gives him the authority to advise Pliny whether to publish. Here, Pliny gives equal weight to retaining or publishing a work by describing them both with a gerund, *continendo* and *edendo*. He does not force his wishes to publish his attached speech by placing the verb for publication after the verb for retaining the work; in this way, he allows Scaurus to suggest revisions to Pliny's work with an eventual, not immediate, goal of the work's publication.

The speeches that Pliny sends to friends for revision include his major court cases. Pliny writes *Ep. 6.33* to Voconius Romanus about the case of Attia Viriola. He opens the letter with a quote from the *Aeneid* (8.439):

*'Tollite cuncta' inquit 'coeptosque auferte labores!' Seu scribis aliquid seu legis, tolli auferri iube et accipe orationem meam ut illa arma divinam (num superbius potui?), re vera ut inter meas pulchram; nam mihi satis est certare mecum. (Ep. 6.33.1-2)*

'Lift away everything,' he said 'and remove the undertaken works!' Whether you write or read something, command that it be lifted and removed and receive my speech, divine like those arms (for was I able to speak more proudly?), beautiful like those among my own in fact; for it is enough for me to compete with myself.

By quoting Vergil, not only does Pliny show off his literary knowledge, but he also borrows Vergil's literary grandeur to suggest the grandeur and attention that Pliny's work deserves from Romanus. The comparison between Pliny's speech and arms likens his literary craft to that of a metal-smith's and places the speech on the same level as epic. It seems that Pliny is able to aspire to Vergil's fame, especially when he asks, *num superbius potui?* Pliny acknowledges his

pride by intermingling quotations from Vergil with a small introduction to his work to draw Romanus' attention.

Pliny provides background to his attached speech so that Romanus can easily understand Pliny's speech. By providing background, Pliny records the historical moment and uniqueness of the trial of Attia Viriola, as well as his speech. In case one part does not survive, Pliny relies on the other to preserve a record of his deeds. He tells Romanus:

*Haec tibi exposui, primum ut ex epistula scires, quae ex oratione non poteris, deinde (nam detegam artes) ut orationem libentius legeres, si non legere tibi sed interesse iudicio videris; quam sit licet magna, non despero gratiam brevissimae impetraturam.* (Ep. 6.33.7-8)

I explained these things to you, first so that you know from the letter, what you were not able to know from the oration, then, (for I will expose the arts) so that you read the oration more willingly, if you seem to yourself not to read it but to be at the trial; although it is long, I do not despair that it will obtain the favor of a very short one.

One interesting aspect of Pliny's speech is his attempt to recreate reality through the literary medium; he expresses the difference between the silence of his written speech and the oral delivery of the speech he presented in court. Pliny seems to favor his original speech, from which Romanus must have been absent; this absence intensifies Pliny's wish and goal to write his speech in such a way that when Romanus reads it, the speech will equal or rival its original performance. Because the original performances of speeches garner the audience's attention more easily, Pliny wants to create his written speeches in such a way that they too harness the audience's, or in this case, Romanus' attention.

As he opened his letter, Pliny ends *Ep.* 6.33 with allusions to epic. He also refers to Demosthenes, one of Pliny's favorite and most cited models of perfect oratory. He uses similar imagery of epic in his letter to convey the rewarding challenge of oratorical compositions, particularly in his speech for Attia Viriola. He says:

*Dedimus vela indignationi, dedimus irae, dedimus dolori, et in amplissima causa quasi magno mari pluribus ventis sumus vecti. In summa solent quidam ex contubernalibus nostris existimare hanc orationem (iterum dicam) ut inter meas ὑπὲρ Κτησιφῶντος esse: an vere, tu facillime iudicabis, qui tam memoriter tenes omnes, ut conferre cum hac dum hanc legis possis. (Ep. 6.33.10-11)*

We gave the sails to indignation, anger, grief, and in the most honorable case, we were carried as if on the great sea by the many winds. In sum, some of my colleagues are accustomed to consider this oration (I shall say again) as the *On the Crown* among my speeches: whether correctly, you will most easily judge, you who hold them all so well in memory, that while you are reading this you are able to compare with that.

*Vela*, like *arma*, concretely portrays key elements of epic, such as war, as in Homer's *Iliad*, and sea voyage, as in Homer's *Odyssey*. The attached speech, in Pliny's eyes, preserves a historical moment. By comparing his speech to Demosthenes' *On the Crown*, Pliny places the quality of his speech on the same level as Demosthenes' speech. Through writing his speech as vividly as he presented it at court, the use of vocabulary appropriate to epic, and the inclusion of his friends' comparison of Pliny's speech to one of Demosthenes' most famous speeches, Pliny baits Romanus' interest in reading and offering (favorable) criticism of his speech.

Most of the speeches Pliny prefers to write are long speeches, but in *Ep. 7.12*, he sends a shorter speech to Minicius Fundanus for criticism. Just as Pliny poked fun at Tacitus and his oratorical preferences, Pliny does the same to Fundanus, but Pliny acquiesces in Fundanus' preferences while he challenges Tacitus to meet his own. Along with *Ep. 1.20* and *9.26*, this letter provides an example of Pliny's discussions of oratorical style and provides details of his opinion about Atticist oratory.<sup>74</sup> Sherwin-White believes that the *libellus* in this letter differs from the sort Pliny sends to Fabius Justus in *Ep. 7.2*, which contains his poetry, and that this *libellus* is a work of or about rhetoric.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

Pliny reveals that his addressee asked for his work. Pliny proudly thrusts his work under Fundanus' nose:

*Libellum formatum a me, sicut exegeras, quo amicus tuus, immo noster (quid enim non commune nobis?), si res posceret uteretur, nisi tibi ideo tardius ne tempus emendandi eum, id est disperdendi, haberes. Habebis tamen, an emendandi nescio, utique disperdendi. Ὑμεῖς γὰρ οἱ εὖζηλοὶ optima quaeque detrahitis. (Ep. 7.12.1-3)*

The little book produced by me, just as you had demanded, which your friend, or rather our friend (for what is not mutual between us?), may use if circumstances demand. I sent it to you slower on that account so that you would not have time for correcting it, that is, for ruining it. Nevertheless, you will have time, whether for correcting I do not know, at any rate for ruining it. “For you men of good style,” you remove whatever parts are the best.

Despite sending the *libellus*, as requested by Fundanus, Pliny hopes that Fundanus will not correct or, in Pliny's words, ruin his work. Pliny jokes about money in this letter to Fundanus. His jokes reveal that not only did Pliny calculate a price for sending his letter, but also on sending his literary work. Because he believes that Fundanus will overcorrect his work, Pliny believes that he can get back at Fundanus by making him pay for the messenger who conveyed his little oratorical volume. Pliny hopes that if his work does not earn Fundanus' approval, at least he will humor him:

*Haec ut inter istas occupationes aliquid aliquando rideres, illud serio: vide ut mihi viaticum reddas, quod impendi data opera cursore dimisso. Ne tu, cum hoc legeris, non partes libelli, sed totum libellum improbabis, negabisque ullius pretii esse, cuius pretium reposcaris. (Ep. 7.12.5-6)*

I said these things in order that you would laugh a little amidst those occupations of yours, but I say the following seriously: see that you pay the travel money to me, which I spent for a letter-carrier sent out with the assigned task. When you have read this, you will not reject parts of the small book, but you will reject the entire book, and you will deny that it is worth any price, the price of which you will be demanded to pay back.

Because both men cultivate literary interests while balancing their public lives and duties, Pliny and Fundanus negotiate sending, receiving, and paying for the transmission and revision of their literary works.

One of Pliny's most significant letters is about the composition of oratory is *Ep.* 9.26, to Lupercus. Pliny discusses the orator and his goals in general, and the letter looks back to *Ep.* 2.5 and *Ep.* 1.20 and seems to allude to Horace's *Ars Poetica* (28). Like *Ep.* 1.20, *Ep.* 9.26 alludes to Greek literary models, which Pliny aspires to imitate and acquire a similar fame, but within the scope of Latin oratory. Pliny supports Asianist over Atticist oratory, but he does not support extreme Asianist oratory. He favors the 'middle way' that his tutor Quintilian seems to support.<sup>76</sup> Pliny creates a certain degree of suspense by speaking of an unnamed orator:

*Dixi de quodam oratore saeculi nostri recto quidem et sano, sed parum grandi et ornato, ut opinor, apte: 'Nihil peccat, nisi quod nihil peccat.'* (*Ep.* 9.26.1)

About a certain orator of our times, correct and sensible, but insufficiently grand and splendid, I said aptly, as I think: 'He has no faults, except for the fact that he has no faults.'

*Saeculum nostrum* explicitly portrays the scope of contemporary literature, specifically oratory, to which the anonymous orator contributes and which Pliny aspires to influence. With the adjectives *rectus*, *sanus*, *grandis*, and *ornatus*, Pliny conveys his respect for this fellow orator; he depicts his frustration with him with *Nihil peccat, nisi quod nihil peccat*. Pliny seems to believe that this orator is an example of faultless oratory; throughout the rest of the letter, Pliny points out that faultless oratory does not make the best, most notable or everlasting orator or writer of rhetoric.

Pliny points out the advantages of risk-taking by constructing comparisons between the orator and the helmsman. He says:

*Nam ut quasdam artes ita eloquentiam nihil magis quam ancipitia commendant. . . Ideo nequaquam par gubernatoris est virtus, cum placido et cum turbato mari vehitur: tunc admirante nullo, inlaudatus inglorius subit portum, at cum stridunt funes curvatur arbor gubernacula gemunt, tunc ille clarus et dis maris proximus.* (*Ep.* 9.26.3-4)

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

For as with certain arts, nothing recommends eloquence more than its dangers. . . . Therefore by no means is the excellence of the steersman the same, when he is carried on a calm sea and when on a disturbed sea: then, with no one admiring him, he goes into port unpraised inglorious, but when the ropes scream, the mast is bent, the helms groan, then he is illustrious and most like the gods of the sea.

Through his allusion to sailing on the sea, Pliny shows how the helmsman who endures danger acquires fame while the helmsman who remains safe goes unnoticed. Pliny implies that an aspiring orator, in order to acquire eloquence, must attempt various styles and consider various perspectives. He exemplifies this suggestion through his willingness to share his work and to receive criticism, but also through his enthusiasm to deliver his works in recitations. The nautical imagery also implicitly refers to epic, which demonstrates Pliny's high opinion and respect for oratory as an art similar to epic in its seriousness and grandeur.

As in the opening of the letter, Pliny reasserts his frustration with the unnamed and seemingly faultless orator. Perhaps the unnamed orator is Lupercus himself, Pliny's addressee in this letter. Pliny openly tells Lupercus:

*Exspecto, ut quaedam ex hac epistula ut illud 'gubernacula gemunt' et 'dis maris proximus' isdem notis quibus ea, de quibus scribo, confodias; intellego enim me, dum veniam prioribus peto, in illa ipsa quae adnotaveras incidisse. Sed confodias licet, dum modo iam nunc destines diem, quo et de illis et de his coram exigere possimus. Aut enim tu me timidum aut ego te temerarium faciam. (Ep. 9.26.13)*

I anticipate that you will cross out certain things from this letter like that phrase, 'the helms groan' and 'most like the gods of the sea,' with the same marks with which you cross out those things about which I write; for I understand that I, while I seek pardon for earlier mistakes, have fallen into those very things which you had censured. But it is permitted for you to cross things out, provided only that now you determine the day, on which we are able to consider both those things and these things face to face. For you shall either make me a cautious man or I shall make you a rash man.

Pliny does not seem to take Lupercus' harsh criticisms well, given the way he tells him exactly the parts that Lupercus will edit out of the speech or his letter. He also does not want to receive Lupercus' criticisms solely via an exchange of letters, but he prefers that they meet and discuss

their differences in opinion in person. One of the most important parts of the revision process is the learning and teaching between the writer and his reviewer: *Aut enim tu me timidum aut ego te temerarium faciam*. In recalling the introduction to *Ep.* 9.26, the conclusion of this letter seems to identify Lupercus as the perfect orator admired by Pliny.

Pliny expresses his concern about acquiring fame and glory through the genre of oratory in *Ep.* 3.10 and *Ep.* 1.22. He sends *Ep.* 3.10 to two addressees, Vestricius Spurinna and Cottia. In *Ep.* 3.10, Pliny talks about his recitation, which he crafts in Cottius' honor as a literary monument for his family. Pliny describes the many decisions a writer, particularly one crafting a funeral oration, must make, such as what portions he can share with the family and fellow writers in order to receive criticism. Additions, alterations, and omissions are key elements in developing an appropriate and honorable funeral speech. As in *Ep.* 3.13, Pliny talks about his literary work in terms related to creating a work of literary art; he expresses his desire to create a lasting form of his work just as artists create a lasting work of art. Sherwin-White proposes that the specific work of literature is not a funeral oration, but a short biography of a recently deceased man.<sup>77</sup> Short lives of the recently dead, such as Tacitus' *Agricola*, became a popular genre during the Flavian-Trajanic period, and Pliny, more likely than not, wishes to follow popular as well as traditional genres.<sup>78</sup> Given the seemingly close friendship depicted throughout his letters, it seems likely that Pliny and Tacitus receive inspiration from one another, which motivates Pliny to write a work commemorating Cottius. Pliny discusses the conventions of writing this commemorative piece:

*Nunc quoque paulisper haesitavi, id solum, quod recitavi, mitterem exigentibus vobis, an adicerem quae in aliud volumen cogito reservare. Neque enim adfectibus meis uno*

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

*libello carissimam mihi et sanctissimam memoriam prosequi satis est, cuius fama latius consuletur, si dispensata et digesta fuerit. Verum haesitanti mihi, omnia quae iam composui vobis exhiberem, an adhuc aliqua differrem, simplicius et amicus visum est omnia, praecipue cum adfirmetis intra vos futura, donec placeat emittere. (Ep. 3.10.2-5)*

Even now I have hesitated for a little while, should I send only that part, which I recited, to you demanding it, or should I add what I plan to hold back for another volume. For it is not enough for my affections to present my dearest and most sacred memory in one book, whose fame will be considered more widely, if it has been disbursed and distributed. Truly it seemed more honest and friendlier to me, hesitating whether I should deliver everything I wrote to you now, or should I still separate out the other parts, to send out everything, especially when you confirm that it will be among yourselves, until it pleases me to publish.

When Pliny speaks of a *volumen*, he means a scroll rather than another book, and he only intends to enlarge his first draft.<sup>79</sup> This letter demonstrates the difference between parts Pliny writes and recites, and parts he wishes to write in addition. Pliny's care over revisions and additions reflects the respect for Spurinna and Cottia which inspires him to write well, but he also cares how these immediate readers and future readers receive his work. When Pliny mentions *fama*, he connects it to Cottius; he actively preserves his memory through his affections, intangible elements, and a book, a tangible work that has the potential to outlast Pliny. Because Pliny is the reason Cottius metaphorically survives, Pliny also guarantees his own survival. Pliny does not elaborate this point because he wants Cottius and the preservation of his memory to serve as his main focus rather than his desire for fame from his literary works. He does not attach a personal pronoun to *placeat* to allow the family to hope for publication if they wish, although he aspires to see his work published.

Pliny maintains his analogy to artwork throughout this letter to demonstrate the similarities between artists and himself, who wishes to write, recite, and publish a written work that is as accurate, attractive, and complete as a painting or sculpture of a deceased family

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.



member. He advises Spurinna and Cottia how to advise him while he creates his literary work: he needs them to tell him the details to add, alter, or omit to help him create Cottius' immortal image, and through Cottius, his own. Not only does Pliny place responsibility on himself to earn his immortality through Cottius' commemoration, but he also places the responsibility on Spurinna and Cottia to help him in this literary endeavor. Pliny asks Spurinna and Cottia:

*Quod superest, rogo ut pari simplicitate, si qua existimabitis addenda commutanda omittenda, indicetis mihi. Difficile est huc usque intendere animum in dolore; difficile, sed tamen, ut sculptorem, ut pictorem, qui filii vestri imaginem faceret, admoneretis, quid exprimere quid emendare deberet, ita me quoque formate regite, qui non fragilem et caducam, sed immortalam, ut vos putatis, effigiem conor efficere: quae hoc diuturnior erit, quo verior melior absolutior fuerit. (Ep. 3.10.5-6)*

What remains, I ask with equal simplicity that you show me if there are any things you feel that must be added, altered, or omitted. So far, it is difficult to direct your mind here in grief, it is difficult, but nevertheless, you should advise, like you would advise a sculptor or a painter, who would create an image of your son, what he ought to portray, what he ought to correct, thus also instruct me, guide me, I who tries to construct an effigy, not a fragile and transitory one, but an immortal one, as you all imagine him: This one will be longer lasting, in this way, it will be more truthful, better, and more complete.

Pliny uses the immortal image that he hopes to create for Cottius as a cloak over his own desires to acquire fame through his writing. As long as art lasts, its creator lasts. By using the subjunctive mood, which conveys his politeness, *indicetis* and *admoneretis*, he also encourages Spurinna and Cottia to serve as guides. To emphasize the importance of creating a tangible memory of Cottius and assuring their immortality as models, Pliny uses the imperatives, *formate* and *regite*. The most basic meanings of *imago* and *effigies* represent a physical and concrete likeness of an actual object without it being the object; each term also has connotations of a model or object worthy of imitation. Reconsidering Sherwin-White's observation that short lives gained popularity as a genre during this period, perhaps Pliny creates a commemoration of

Cottius, similar to Tacitus' commemoration of Agricola, which presents and immortalizes its main characters and their deeds.<sup>80</sup>

Pliny addresses *Ep.* 1.22 to Catilius Severus about his worries for Titius Aristo. Titius Aristo was one of the greatest advocates of Pliny's time, a pupil of Cassius Longinus, a judicial adviser to Trajan, and correspondent of Neratius Priscus and Juventius Celsus, Aristo's rivals.<sup>81</sup>

Pliny contemplates the threats to Aristo but also to society:

*Nihil est enim illo gravius sanctius doctius, ut mihi non unus homo sed litterae ipsae omnesque bonae artes in uno homine summum periculum adire videantur. Quam peritus ille et privati iuris et publici! Quantum rerum, quantum exemplorum, quantum antiquitatis tenet! Nihil est quod discere velis quod ille docere non possit; mihi certe quotiens aliquid abditum quaero, ille thesaurus est. Iam quanta sermonibus eius fides, quanta auctoritas, quam pressa et decora cunctatio! (Ep. 1.22.1-3)*

For nothing is more serious, more sacred, or more learned than that man, so it seemed to me that not one man but literature itself and all good arts approach the greatest danger in one man. How experienced that man is both in private and public law! How much he knows about affairs, examples, and history! There is nothing you want to learn that he is not able to teach. Certainly for me, as often as I search for something abstruse, that man is a treasury. Now how much faith there is in his conversations, how much authority, how concise and beautiful is his pause!

As in *Ep.* 6.11, Pliny lists several good traits to describe Aristo's character. He connects *litterae*, literature, and *artes*, fine arts, to Aristo to create an image of a notable cultured figure and virtuous man. His intense worry and praise for Aristo suggests that Pliny looks up to Aristo as a model, in the same way that Salinator and Quadratus look up to Pliny, although Pliny does not identify define him as a model. Aristo's knowledge of public and private law especially attracts Pliny, who acknowledges that his talents lie in the courtroom and in oratory. Pliny especially praises Aristo's intellectual attributes, such as his knowledge of public affairs, precedents, and

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Sherwin-White (136-37) proposes that Aristo served as *jurisprudens*: "The work of the Roman Bar was divided between the *jurisprudentes*, who gave legal advice to the parties or sat as assessors to the civil *iudex*, and the advocates who represented the parties in court."

history, and he also focuses on his ability to speak, which includes honesty, authority, and conciseness and beauty in his rhetorical pauses. Aristo, in Pliny's opinion, is an especially talented orator like Pliny himself, but he extends and magnifies Aristo's talent to include art and literature. To be a good orator means to serve, understand, and contribute to the Roman cultural realm; Pliny's obsession with Aristo's health not only shows his attempt to preserve a model of Roman literary talent, but his presence at Aristo's side marks him as Aristo's equal in the following generation. Pliny's use of *thesaurus* to describe and praise Aristo depicts his worth, as priceless as the precious metals used to mint money. By using this concrete term as well as connecting Aristo to literature and the fine arts, Pliny suggests the worth and contributions of renowned literary figures to Roman culture. Pliny may include this letter to protect those, including himself, whom he sees as treasures among Roman orators.

Oratory is the largest subject in Pliny's letters on literature; Pliny possesses more talent and authority in oratory because of his service in the Centumviral court and Senate. He aspires to transcend the duration of his own life through his oratory and his influence on renowned and aspiring writers alike who are his addressees. While his speeches do not survive, his letters are records or notes bearing helpful advice on how he worked as a writer and how that those who aspire to write speeches can learn from him.

## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORY

History is another genre that Pliny believes helps writers acquire fame. Topics that lend themselves to history generally lend themselves to poetry, too; Pliny compares poetry to history more frequently than to oratory. Rather than writing about key events in a work of history, Pliny uses the composition of his letters to serve as letters *and* as abbreviated historical accounts.

While Pliny admits he does not possess adequate time to write a history, he hopes his historical letter provides inspiration for his addressee to write about it, preferably borrowing from Pliny as an influential model for either the topic or his style. He employs three topics in discussing the genre of history: those who write or appear in historical works, prominent events, and the act of writing history. In *Ep.* 1.16, 2.1, and 9.19, Pliny writes about living versus dead historians. He also writes about notable figures that a historian selects to preserve through his work. Pliny preserves certain events in his letters, such as Domitian's reign and the crimes that Domitian committed (*Ep.* 4.11), although he wishes to inspire another writer to write about these events. Traub notes that one of Pliny's goals of writing history in his letters was to satisfy his desire to write history, although he possessed limited leisure to do so, and to write about topics, such as the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, that aroused his interest and the interest of his addressee.<sup>82</sup> The

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<sup>82</sup> H. Traub, "Pliny's Treatment of History in Epistolary Form," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 86, (1955): 224.

third significant group of Pliny's history-centered letters includes his descriptions of the writing process of history and its various parts and stages, particularly in *Ep.* 9.33 and 5.8.

Other letters that focus on history and its composition ponder the fame and immortality that a writer can gain through writing or publicly reading his historical composition. As Marchesi observes, "Roman historiography is obsessed with one idea, the attainment of immortality. Eternal fame, general wisdom agrees, may be achieved in two ways: either by doing something that is worthy of being remembered, or by writing about it."<sup>83</sup> *Ep.* 7.33 especially shows that the fame of historians goes hand-in-hand with the fame of the notable figures and events that appear in their works. Pliny combines historical events, prominent writers, and friendly discussions about the composition of history in letters to his most frequent addressee, Cornelius Tacitus, with his musings on the fame and immortality that a historian can strive to gain.

#### HISTORIANS AND HISTORICAL FIGURES

*Ep.* 1.16 describes the literary talents of Pompeius Saturninus, an otherwise unknown advocate and writer of poetry and history.<sup>84</sup> Pliny admires Saturninus' performance in court, his shadowing of older and respected poets and orators, and his development and use of vocabulary. Saturninus looks up to Catullus and Calvus as poetic models, but Pliny names only himself as Saturninus' oratorical model. Pliny vaguely indicates the orators imitated by Saturninus with the words *veterum, quorum est aemulus* (*Ep.* 1.16.3). He probably does not know Saturninus well enough to know his oratorical models, although he sees and believes that Saturninus performs

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<sup>83</sup> Marchesi, 151.

<sup>84</sup> Sherwin-White, 755.

well in the courtroom. He assumes or knows that other writers and literary enthusiasts follow older, accepted models and assumes that Saturninus does the same, although he does not name any examples. Sherwin-White points out that the phrase *nunc vero totum me tenet habet possidet*, (“now, he truly grasps, holds, and possesses me entirely”) shows that friendship between Pliny and Saturninus has begun to develop (*Ep.* 1.16.1).<sup>85</sup> Pliny implies that Saturninus makes himself a professional poet, orator, and historian through his literary efforts and character traits.

Pliny discusses particular traits that make Saturninus a talented poet, but Pliny also emphasizes Saturninus’ ability to write history and oratory. Just as Pliny lists Saturninus’ poetic traits, he also describes Saturninus’ historical writings. By using several adjectives, Pliny creates a sort of easy-to-understand list for an aspiring poet or historian to follow. Pliny says:

*Idem tamen in historia magis satisfaciet vel brevitare vel luce vel suavitate vel splendore etiam et sublimitate narrandi. Nam in contionibus eadem quae in orationibus vis est, pressior tantum et circumscriptior et adductior* (*Ep.* 1.16.4-5)

Nevertheless, the same man will satisfy more in his history either through its brevity or clarity or charm or splendor and also through loftiness of storytelling. For the same vigor which is present in his speeches is present in his public speeches, only more compressed and restrained and terse.

One reading of *magis satisfacere* is that Saturninus’ historical writing can be more satisfying to read than his poetry, or that Saturninus’ composition of history is more satisfying than other authors’ compositions. Pliny especially notes Saturninus’ *brevitas*, *lux*, *suavitas*, *splendor*, and *sublimitas narrandi*, which make his way of telling a story attractive. When Pliny speaks of *brevitas*, he indicates the brevity of the work, not any lack in its style.<sup>86</sup> Two significant words

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Sherwin-White (755) says, “These paragraphs might be a description of Tacitus. The whole letter illuminates the milieu in which Tacitus formed his historical style.”

are *lux* and *sublimitas*; both connote light and loftiness similar to fame and immortality, which refer to the immense heights that a writer's talent and status can reach.

Pliny also focuses on Saturninus' oratory to illuminate further the quality of this writer and his work. He points out that Saturninus uses a certain *vis* in two different kinds of oratorical composition: *contio*, a public speech, and *oratio*, a literary speech composed and delivered to a specialized audience. An *oratio* has the potential for inclusion in a historical narrative, while *contio* and *actio* refer more to the speakers, performances, and environments of speeches. On *contio*, Sherwin-White notes, "In the speeches inserted into the narrative he showed the Atticist virtues which he did not fully exercise in his forensic speeches. Saturninus adapted his style to the theme, as recommended by Quintilian."<sup>87</sup> The list that Pliny creates to describe Saturninus' oratory uses the comparative adjectives *pressior*, *circumscripior*, and *adductior*. Although Pliny praises certain elements of Saturninus' historical composition, his attention largely focuses upon Saturninus as an orator rather than a historian.

Sherwin-White points out that Pliny approves of Saturninus' full, historical style, and both men seem to prefer Asianist oratory over Atticist oratory, which favors eloquence.<sup>88</sup> Given Saturninus' use of archaisms, it seems that Atticist oratory would have better fit his preferences; however, as Sherwin-White says,

[Archaisms] are not necessarily a mark of Atticism, since the new rhetoric of the Principate, which was mainly Asian in affiliation, searched them out for its own purposes. . . Saturninus is an early representative of the new archaizing movement in Latin literature, best known from Aulus Gellius and Fronto, that revived the study of the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 123. Quintilian 12.10.69-70: *utetur enim, ut res exiget, omnibus, nec pro causa modo sed pro partibus causae* ("For [an orator] will use, as the situation will demand, everything, not only for the case but for the parts of the case.")

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 122.

pre-Ciceronian orators and writers, such as Gaius Gracchus and even Cato, as a quarry of vocabulary.<sup>89</sup>

Saturninus is not only a versatile writer, but with Sherwin-White's information in mind, an innovative writer, too. Pliny, like Saturninus, followed traditional genres and models; however, he innovates upon these genres by crossing them with an umbrella-genre from which to acquire fame: letter writing. He refers to Saturninus' ability to write well in three genres, especially alluding to his innovations in the genre of oratory. Pliny hopes to gain fame through writing well in each genre, too, but he also aspires to offer his letters as a contribution to the literature of his age.

Pliny encourages Erucius Clarus to read Saturninus, but he anticipates Clarus' opposition because Saturninus is a living author. When Pliny elaborates on this idea, he guesses that because Saturninus seems constantly present, potential listeners or readers of his work ignore him in favor of focusing on deceased authors, because they cannot create any more literary works. Pliny reverses this idea by saying that Saturninus deserves to be shown appreciation and affection while he lives in order to enjoy it, rather than receiving praise after his death when he will never know that the quality of his written work merits appreciation and praise. Pliny exhorts Clarus:

*Quod te quoque ut facias et hortor et moneo; neque enim debet operibus eius obesse quod vivit. An si inter eos quos numquam vidimus floruisset, non solum libros eius verum etiam imagines conquireremus, eiusdem nunc honor praesentis et gratia quasi satietate languescit? At hoc pravum malignumque est, non admirari hominem admiratione dignissimum, quia videre adloqui audire complecti, nec laudare tantum verum etiam amare contingit. (Ep. 1.16.8-9)*

I both encourage and advise you that you do this, nor is it fitting to be prejudiced against his works because he is alive. Or if he had flourished among those whom we never saw, not only would we collect his books, but also his portraits; now does honor and regard for

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 122-3.



the same living man diminish as if by satiety? But this is distorted and spiteful, that a man most worthy of admiration is not to be admired because it comes to pass to see, address, hear, embrace him, not only to praise him, but also to love him.

*Libri* and *imagines* are tangible items that represent a deceased author; it remains up to contemporary and future readers to preserve and promote his works. *Satietas* is one reason that a writer does not receive due honor and appreciation. Even though dead writers most often receive appreciation, Pliny suggests that living authors, especially the *dignissimi*, should receive an equal amount of admiration. Through appreciation for their written work in their lifetime, writers earn a small comfort that their work received recognition of some sort, or knowing that after they die, they may continue to extend their influence.

*Ep.* 2.1 and 9.19 feature Verginius Rufus, a prominent political figure and orator who served as Pliny's legal guardian and political patron.<sup>90</sup> Pliny laments the recent death of Verginius Rufus and preserves his memory through his letter. He also demonstrates how Rufus tries to preserve his own memory as a renowned figure and contributor to literature. Although Pliny emphasizes that Rufus was an orator, he says that Rufus is the type of figure to appear in poetry or history. *Ep.* 2.1 and 9.19 preserve and show figures responsible for preserving Rufus' memory, including not only Pliny himself, through his letters about Rufus, but also Cornelius Tacitus, through his eulogy.

Pliny writes to Voconius Romanus about the death and funeral of Verginius Rufus in *Ep.*

2.1. Pliny introduces Verginius Rufus:

*Post aliquot annos insigne atque etiam memorabile populi Romani oculis spectaculum exhibuit publicum funus Vergini Rufi, maximi et clarissimi civis, perinde felicitis. Triginta annis gloriae suae supervixit; legit scripta de se carmina, legit historias et posteritati suae interfuit. (Ep. 2.1.1-2)*

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 761.

After some years, the public funeral of Verginius Rufus, a very great and very famous citizen, and equally a lucky man, exhibited a distinguished and also memorable spectacle to the eyes of the Roman people. He outlived his glory by thirty years, he read poems written about himself, he read histories, and he took part in his own posterity.

Pliny stretches out the kind of funeral Rufus received; he places *insigne* and *memorable* before *spectaculum* and he qualifies it with *publicum funus*. Many of the words call attention to Rufus with the public nature and spectacle of his funeral and the adjectives that reveal the quality of Rufus' funeral. Pliny portrays the huge attendance at Rufus' funeral with *populi Romani oculis*; not only do the Roman people mourn Rufus as an entire body, but *oculis* also denotes the splendor and attention that Rufus has earned. Rufus' name appears at the end of the phrase for emphasis. Pliny slowly builds up Rufus' grandeur before naming him, and after he names him, he further explains his qualities with superlatives, *maximus* and *clarissimus civis*. Because *felix* has connotations of auspices and blessings, Pliny's use of *felix* implies that Rufus earns some kind of divine favor. *Triginta annis gloriae suae supervixit* refers to the revolt which Titus Iulius Vindex, governor of Gallia Lugdunensis, led against Nero, and which Rufus crushed while he served as legate in Upper Germany; although his troops offered the Principate to Rufus, he refused.<sup>91</sup> The way Pliny places *supervivere* and *gloria sua* together shows that Rufus performed an action that merited his achievement of *gloria*, but he also extended the span of his *gloria* beyond the deed and beyond his mortal life. *Posteritati suae interfuit* reveals that Rufus actively participated in the formation of his immortality: just as he lived past one of his greatest deeds, he shapes his immortality through the poetry and histories that he reads about himself.

Pliny recounts the beginnings of Rufus' death (*Ep.* 2.1.5):

*Nam cum vocem praepararet acturus in consulatu principi gratias, liber quem forte acceperat grandiozem, et seni et stanti ipso pondere elapsus est.*

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

For when he, about to give thanks to the emperor during his consulship, was preparing his speech, he had by chance picked up a book which was rather heavy; because of its weight, it had slipped from him, both an old man and standing.

Pliny provides a snapshot of the professional orator and he also refers to himself. As Pliny prepared his *Panegyricus* to thank Trajan for his consulship, he portrays Rufus preparing a speech of gratitude to the *princeps*. Pliny shows his deep respect for Rufus, because Pliny looks up to him as a model and appreciates that they perform similar activities.<sup>92</sup>

Pliny presents Rufus as a praiseworthy individual, a worthy subject of future poems and histories, and he implies that he and Tacitus exemplify praiseworthy individuals capable of outlasting their physical lives through writing about Rufus. He praises the present consul, Cornelius Tacitus, who recited Rufus' funeral oration.

*Laudatus est a consule Cornelio Tacito; nam hic supremus felicitati eius cumulus accessit, laudator eloquentissimus. (Ep. 2.1.6-7)*

He was praised by the consul Cornelius Tacitus, for this man, as a most eloquent panegyrist, happened to be the final addition to the good fortune of that man.

*Felicitas* connotes Rufus' good fortune, luck, and prosperity. *Cumulus* represents the highest achievable point, which Pliny strengthens with *supremus* to give the reader the clearest representation of the praise that Tacitus bestows upon Rufus in his funeral oration. Not only does Tacitus reach the highest point he can in his speech, but his subject matter, Rufus and his life, also achieve this glorification. *Laudator eloquentissimus* describes Tacitus, who praises Rufus as a most eloquent orator.

Pliny repeats the idea that Rufus becomes such a prominent man through his own actions as well as through the actions of others, such as Tacitus.

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. page 82 in this thesis about Pliny's connection to Verginius Rufus.

*Quibus ex causis necesse est tamquam immaturam mortem eius in sinu tuo defleam, si tamen fas est aut flere aut omnino mortem vocare, qua tanti viri mortalitas magis finita quam vita est. Vivit enim vivetque semper, atque etiam latius in memoria hominum et sermone versabitur, postquam ab oculis recessit. (Ep. 2.1.10-12)*

From these causes it is necessary that I lament in your bosom his death as if premature, if it is right either to weep or to call it death entirely, when the mortality of such a great man is finished more than his life. For he lives and he will always live, and he will also be considered more widely in the memory and in the speech of men, after he has receded from the sight of men.

Pliny presents two kinds of death. The first kind is the end of a man's physical life and the mourners' lamentations at his funeral. The other kind of death extends beyond his physical self to the self he has created and left behind to those still living. The kinds of things that die after the man has died include his memory or his legacy of tangible or intangible objects that he possessed during his life, which remain to his family and friends to preserve, and in so doing, keeping a man alive although he is not physically alive. In the same way as he started his letter, Pliny reemphasizes sight with *oculi* as one of the key elements that comes into contact with and remembers Rufus. He reinforces the idea that although Rufus has died, he can still live through other men who write about his life, with the words *memoria*, *sermo*, and *versare*. *Versare* especially connotes turning one's attention to something and retaining that attention especially through writings, reinforcing the idea that writers and subjects can reach immortality through written works.

Pliny writes *Ep. 9.19* to Cremutius Ruso as a supplementary letter to *Ep. 2.1*, preserving Verginius Rufus' memory. He discusses the epitaph that Verginius Rufus selected and mounted on his tomb. Pliny provides his general reflection on inscriptions as well as on a man's attempt to extend his life beyond his mortality.

*Omnes ego qui magnum aliquid memorandumque fecerunt, non modo venia verum etiam laude dignissimos iudico, si immortalitatem quam meruere sectantur, victurique nominis famam supremis etiam titulis prorogare nituntur. (Ep. 9.19.3)*

I judge that all who have created something great and to be remembered, are most deserving not only of pardon but also of praise, if they pursue an immortality which they have earned, and through their final inscriptions they strive to extend the fame of a name which is going to survive.

As in several of his other letters, Pliny identifies the written work of an author with the term *aliquid*, and he qualifies it with *magnum* and *memorandum*. An author can influence his readers' remembrance of him, particularly if he dies and is no longer able to produce new works. With Rufus as his primary example, Pliny creates a generalization that one of the last opportunities for men to extend their reputation and memory is through their funerary inscriptions, *supremi tituli*. Like a volume or a scroll, a funerary monument has the potential to last until it deteriorates from lack of physical care. As long as he creates objects of enough quality to ensure their durability and preservation, a man can extend his life beyond his mortality. Pliny presents this concept by using *tituli* as the object through which Rufus strives to extend his reputation.

In his letter to Ruso, Pliny recalls a discussion he had with Frontinus about Rufus' inscription. He quotes Frontinus briefly and follows with his own commentary:

*'Impensa monumenti supervacua est; memoria nostri durabit, si vita meruimus.'* An restrictius arbitraris per orbem terrarum legendum dare duraturam memoriam suam quam uno in loco duobus versiculis signare quod feceris? (*Ep.* 9.19.6-7)

'The expense of a monument is superfluous. The memory of us will last, if we have earned it in life.' Or do you think it more restrained to give something to be read throughout the world that one's memory will last, than to express in one place in two lines what you have done?

In Frontinus' view, *monumenta*, particularly expensive ones, do not provide a dead man remembrance; a dead man can only secure remembrance if he has performed actions that earn it. Pliny asks Frontinus whether a man can solidify his remembrance more by publishing widely than by leaving behind a monument in one location with only a couple of lines preserving the deeds of his life. In *Ep.* 2.1, Pliny demonstrates that other men as well as the man himself can

preserve his fame and immortality through written works; therefore, the memory of Rufus does not need to be preserved by Rufus alone. In *supremi tituli* in *Ep.* 9.19, Pliny stretches *supremi* to mean either the last and most final things a man can leave behind, or the greatest things that a man leaves behind. Even though Pliny does not explicitly convey his opinion, he implies that Frontinus' view is too strict. A published work, such as one that Frontinus seems to believe has more power to spread and maintain a man's fame, can be lost, hidden, or destroyed, particularly through censorship. Rufus' inscription exists for anyone passing by to see and read it and its brevity, as indicated in *duobus versiculis*, increases the likelihood that those passing it will notice and read it. Pliny impresses on Ruso that publishing is not enough to preserve a man's fame, but that monuments and fame through other authors' works can preserve a deceased man's fame and create his immortality. He shows that Rufus' fame extends beyond his life through Tacitus' eulogy and Pliny's letters, and Rufus leaves an epitaph on a tangible monument to extend his fame past his death.

*Ep.* 1.16, 2.1, and 9.19 demonstrate the differences in importance between living and deceased authors or historical figures. Living authors such as Pompeius Saturninus (*Ep.* 1.16) do not as easily earn the attention of readers as do deceased historians. Cornelius Tacitus and Pliny quickly memorialized Verginius Rufus through a eulogy and letters to preserve his life and reputation (*Ep.* 2.1). Pliny uses *Ep.* 9.19 not only to describe Rufus' funerary monument, but to preserve Rufus and his inscription in his letter. He records a notable figure, but Pliny also preserves an artifact, which preserves the same figure's life in a similarly written form.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Another recurring theme in Pliny's historical letters is the narration of past events such as occurrences in court, Roman politics, or natural events. Traub notices that some of the letters tell an event's story in epistolary format: "There are whole letters dedicated to the narration of past events, and composed in the highly literary manner of history for the delight of the readers and the fame of the author."<sup>93</sup> Pliny uses his letters not only to talk about contemporary and budding historians and historical figures, but he also creates historical compositions in the body of his letters. He addresses *Ep.* 4.11 to Cornelius Minicianus about Valerius Licinianus, whom Domitian cast out of the senate and exiled for alleged adultery with Cornelia, the chief Vestal Virgin. Pliny devotes significant attention to Domitian, Cornelia, and even Domitian's niece, in addition to providing an update on Licinianus. The entirety of the letter seems to serve as a historical composition by itself, recalling the terrors of Domitian's reign; Pliny cloaks this goal by tucking it into the format of a letter and maintaining a conversational tone appropriate for letter writing, especially the kind addressed to a friend. As Traub says,

If we consider the manner in which Pliny composed the letter dealing with the death of Cornelia, it becomes evident that he was quite conscious of the fact that it was not a natural function of the "private" letter to treat of material proper to formal history, and, therefore, has taken unusual pains to make his narration appear as something proceeding from the spontaneous disposition of a friend writing to a friend.<sup>94</sup>

Not only does Pliny use letters as vehicles to discuss historians and historical figures, as well as the conventions of historical writing, but he also composes miniature historical compositions in his letters.

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<sup>93</sup> Traub, 218.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

After Pliny introduces Licinianus, he recalls the events that led to his expulsion from the Senate, his exile, and his current profession as a teacher of rhetoric. Pliny quickly delves into the deeper circumstances that occurred at the same time as those involving Licinianus, to such an extent that he loses Licinianus as his main focus and adopts the deaths of Cornelia and Domitian's niece as the targets of his epistolary digression. By straying away from Licinianus and his stated goal, to provide an update about this figure in the form of a letter, Pliny allows the composition of his history to become the main focus and activity of *Ep.* 4.11.

*Dices tristia et miseranda, dignum tamen illum qui haec ipsa studia incesti scelere macularit. Confessus est quidem incestum, sed incertum utrum quia verum erat, an quia graviora metuebat si negasset. Fremebat enim Domitianus aestuabatque in ingenti invidia destitutus. Nam cum Corneliam Vestalium maximam defodere vivam concupisset, ut qui inlustrari saeculum suum eiusmodi exemplis arbitraretur, pontificis maximi iure, seu potius immanitate tyranni licentia domini, reliquos pontifices non in Regiam sed in Albanam villam convocavit. Nec minore scelere quam quod ulcisci videbatur, absentem inauditamque damnavit incesti, cum ipse fratris filiam incesto non polluisset solum verum etiam occidisset; nam vidua abortu periit. (Ep. 4.11.4-7)*

You will say that these are sad and pitiable things; nevertheless you will say that man was deserving who dishonored these very studies with the unclean crime of incest. Indeed, he confessed the incest, but it is uncertain whether because it was true or because he feared harsher things if he denied it. For Domitian was clamoring angrily and was boiling, destitute in enormous hatred. For when he wished to bury Cornelia, chief of the Vestal Virgins, alive, as one who thought to make his age famous by examples of this kind, by the right of the *pontifex maximus*, or rather by the cruelty of a tyrant or the license of a master, he called together the other pontiffs not into the Regia, but into his villa at Alba. With no less of a crime than that one he seemed to punish, he condemned her, absent and unheard, of unchastity, when he himself had not only polluted the daughter of his brother with incest, but he had also killed her, for the widow perished by an abortion.

Pliny begins the discussion with Minicianus by recalling his previous assertions with *dicere*, but he begins to offer his own perspective. His connection of *incertum* with *verum* and his posing another possibility with *an* and *si* demonstrate Pliny's desire to express an accurate dimension to the circumstances, just as a historian consciously asserts the truth and accuracy of his account. He follows up Domitian's behavior that may have caused Licinianus' confession with many



words that portray Domitian pejoratively: *fremere*, *aestuare*, *invidia*, and *destitutus*. The way that Pliny combines these actions and images blames Domitian more than Licinianus, who admits to an undoubtedly wicked crime, *incesti scelus*, but probably under extreme pressure from the emperor.

When he shifts his attention from Licinianus to Cornelia, Pliny does not focus on Cornelia so much as he maintains a continued focus on Domitian, who strives to *inlustrari saeculum suum*, to create an *exemplum*, and to use his office as chief *pontifex* to condemn her. To intensify the severity that Domitian uses against Cornelia as well as his overall villainy, Pliny adds that Domitian condemned Cornelia absent and unheard. Pliny first asserts Domitian's *immanitas tyranni* and *licentia domini*, and he follows through with an explanation from Cornelia's execution and Domitian's affair with his niece.

Pliny's portrayal of Domitian's wickedness against Cornelia and his niece, who seems hidden in historical memory because of her age and kinship to Domitian, creates a climax and irony. Domitian executed Cornelia on a charge of adultery; however, he committed incest with his niece. Because Domitian's niece is not a prominent figure, Pliny heightens Domitian's wickedness by showing a crime he committed against one of his family members. Cornelia is a Vestal Virgin, an office symbolic of chastity, and Domitian's niece also represents chastity through her position in his family. Because the niece was born into an aristocratic family, she needed to maintain her chastity until marriage, and in her marriage, she needed to maintain fidelity to her husband to preserve her family's image. Domitian destroys chastity not only by executing Cornelia, the figurehead of Roman chastity among women, but also by raping, impregnating, and murdering his niece.

In the composition of his letter, Pliny attempts to prove the innocence of Licinianus, Cornelia, and the niece through their victimization by Domitian.<sup>95</sup> Because two of Domitian's victims died and the other victim lost his public face through his expulsion from the Senate and exile, Pliny expresses his perspective on the events and attempts to write on each person's behalf. Pliny uses his letter to portray Domitian's villainy and to suggest that the victims were truly victims, not criminals who deserved punishment or execution. He attempts to change Minicianus' perspective through his letter, but Pliny also writes a considerate account that replaces any account that Domitian's totalitarian regime attempted to promote as the sole image and testimony of his reign. Domitian's sole motivation in punishing Cornelia by live inhumation was to create an incident to make his reign outstanding, although Pliny charges that Domitian's *crudelitas* and *iniquitas* drove him to commit those acts.<sup>96</sup>

Pliny provides a small piece of Minicianus' opinion through *dices*, which shows Pliny's recollection of Minicianus' words, but Pliny and his addressee are not the only quasi-historians who offer accounts of Licinianus, Cornelia, and Domitian's niece. As does Cornelius Tacitus, Suetonius receives many letters from Pliny, although he does not receive many of Pliny's historically-themed letters. Like Pliny's letters, Suetonius' writings, specifically his biography of Domitian, explicate the situations of Licinianus, Cornelia, and Domitian's niece.

Through his letters to Suetonius, Pliny certainly wanted to foster and shape Suetonius, particularly in his educational and professional career. Suetonius did not rise to become the jurist that Pliny was; however, he preserved history through his biographies of emperors. Through his education, his status as an *eques*, his ability to write, and his appointment to an

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 214 and 215.

imperial post under Hadrian, Suetonius resembles the image Pliny created for himself as a writer and participant in politics.<sup>97</sup> In his biography of Domitian, Suetonius may have used Pliny's *Ep.* 4.11 as a model, but he also innovated upon it by including factual details in an objective manner. Just as Pliny contends with Tacitus in his letters, Suetonius may contend with Pliny in his compositions, recalling Cornelia and Domitian's niece. In Traub's view, Suetonius' biography of Domitian and Pliny's *Ep.* 4.11 provide "an excellent example of the difference between an account purely factual and a narration mainly rhetorical or literary."<sup>98</sup>

Suetonius writes about these two women in separate sections of his biography of Domitian, and he presents the account on Cornelia first.

*Nam cum Oculatis sororibus, item Varronillae liberum mortis permisisset arbitrium corruptoresque earum relegasset, mox Corneliam maximam virginem absolutam olim, dein longo intervallo repetitam atque convictam defodi imperavit stupratoresque virgis in Comitio ad necem caedi, excepto praetorio viro, cui, dubia etiam tum causa et incertis quaestionibus atque tormentis de semet professo, exsilium indulsit.* (Suet. *Dom.* 8.4-5)

For when he had allowed a free choice of death to the Oculata sisters, likewise to Varronilla, and he exiled their corrupters, he soon ordered that Cornelia, the chief Vestal Virgin, having been absolved once before, then after a long while prosecuted and convicted, be buried, and he ordered the rapists of the virgin to be beaten to death in the Comitium, with a man of praetorian rank excepted, to whom, with the case in doubt even then and with uncertain interrogations and tortures having confessed about himself, he granted him exile.

One striking characteristic of this passage involves not only Cornelia, but the Oculata sisters and Varronilla, three other Vestal Virgins whom Domitian executed, although Domitian allowed all three to choose the manner of their execution. Pliny selects Cornelia as the only Vestal Virgin that Domitian singles out for punishment. Suetonius includes that Cornelia had been absolved of previous suspicions with *olim*. Traub notices the way that Suetonius' account focuses on the

<sup>97</sup> W. McDermott, "Pliny the Younger and Inscriptions," *The Classical World* 65, no. 3 (Nov., 1971): 93.

<sup>98</sup> Traub, 216.

facts about Cornelia's execution; Suetonius, unlike Pliny, mentions the fact that Cornelia had been tried twice.<sup>99</sup> Pliny does not acknowledge that Cornelia was accused of unchaste conduct before Domitian's accusation. Suetonius includes the women and the men, *stupratores*, who suffered punishment. Like Pliny, he emphasizes the women that Domitian attacks by giving their names in his written source while he leaves the men anonymous, including the praetor, most likely Licinianus as indicated in Pliny's *Ep.* 4.11. As in Pliny's letter, Suetonius includes doubts about the praetor's confession. Perhaps because of the doubt concerning the praetor's guilt, Suetonius does not include his name. No matter if the praetorian is innocent or guilty, his name does not possess an association with the crime; or perhaps Suetonius leaves his name out because he does not know it.

Suetonius, like Pliny, also provides an account of Domitian's niece. He provides more details to create a fuller picture not only of the niece, but also of the evil nature of Domitian. Pliny uses the niece as a way to top off his list of Domitian's wrong-doings, while Suetonius uses the niece to continue his narration of Domitian's life and activities. Suetonius begins:

*Fratris filiam adhuc virginem oblatam in matrimonium sibi cum devinctus Domitiae nuptiis pertinacissime recusasset, non multo post alii conlocatam corrumpit ultro et quidem vivo etiam tum Tito; mox patre ac viro orbatam ardentissime palamque dilexit, ut etiam causa mortis exstiterit coactae conceptum a se abigere. (Suet. Dom. 22)*

The daughter of his brother, still a virgin, having been offered to him in marriage although he, having been tied to Domitia by marriage vows, had stubbornly refused her, he raped her willingly not long after she had been given in marriage to another and indeed, while Titus was still alive. Soon, he loved her, having been deprived of her father and husband, ardently and openly, so that he even appeared as the cause of her death, having been ordered to get rid of the fetus by him.

Through his imperial office under Hadrian, Suetonius possessed more access to materials than did Pliny. Suetonius describes how Domitian waited to rape his niece until after she married

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

another man. Not only does this detail reveal Domitian's capriciousness, but it also shows that Domitian's cruelty missed no one. Once his niece lacked the protection of her husband and father, Domitian completely overtook her eventually to become, in Suetonius' view, the reason of her death through the abortion that he ordered her to undergo. The way that Suetonius portrays Domitian as a *causa* parallels a historical methodology developed by Thucydides, in which the causes and results of individuals' actions ultimately culminate in larger historical events. Suetonius recounts historical details of Domitian's reign similar to (and perhaps influenced by) those in Pliny's *Ep.* 4.11.

The conclusion of *Ep.* 4.11 no longer discusses events from Domitian's reign, but the composition of letters. Pliny turns his focus back to his addressee, Minicianus:

*Summam enim rerum nuntiat fama non ordinem. Mereor ut vicissim, quid in oppido tuo, quid in finitimis agatur (solent enim quaedam notabilia incidere) perscribas, denique quidquid voles dum modo non minus longa epistula nuntia. Ego non paginas tantum sed versus etiam syllabasque numerabo. (Ep. 4.11.15-16)*

For rumor declares the gist, not the order, of affairs. I deserve in turn that you write about what is done in your town and what is done in the neighboring towns (for certain notable things are accustomed to happen), finally, report whatever you wish provided that the letter is no less long. I will count not only the pages, but also the lines and syllables.

As in *Ep.* 1.1, in which he confesses that his letters do not follow strict chronological order in the volumes of letters, Pliny says in *Ep.* 4.11 that his embedded historical composition may not present specific events in their correct order. He asserts that *fama* reports *summa*, the entirety, the sense of affairs, or high points, rather than following a precise order (*ordo*). Throughout his letters, Pliny uses the adjective *summus* more frequently than the noun *summa*; however, he allows for both meanings. Pliny encourages his friend to write back with a similar letter that reports events, particularly those that are *notabilia*. He not only makes his friend practice letter-writing, but he also motivates him to embed a historical piece. Most of all, Pliny wants his

addressee to write back, with a vague *quidquid* to represent the written product. He may wish that his friend write him a letter, a historical composition embedded in a letter, or perhaps a historical composition; he leaves the choice up to his addressee. Pliny jokes with him about the specific length of his letter; he wants it to equal his own in pages, lines, and even syllables. He almost always prefers the longest, most elaborate compositions of poetry and speeches, and he extends this personal preference to his letters and their contents in *Ep.* 4.11.

In *Ep.* 9.33 and 5.8, Pliny provides details about writing historical compositions. Pliny talks about a potential subject matter for a poem or historical work with Caninius Rufus in *Ep.* 9.33, and he discusses, compares, and contrasts the components of oratory and history in *Ep.* 5.8. These two letters portray elements conducive or essential to understanding and writing historical works.

Pliny writes *Ep.* 9.33 to the poet Caninius Rufus about a story that he heard over dinner about a dolphin and its interaction with humans. He ponders whether the topic suits a poetic or historic composition. While discussing the details of the story, he focuses on a few key elements and uses a vocabulary that implies the story is suitable for historical writing. One thing Pliny does not mention in his letter is that Pliny the Elder records the same story in his *Historia*

*Naturalis:*

*Alius intra hos annos Africo litore Hipponis Diarruti simili modo ex hominum manu vescens praebensque se tractandum et adludens nantibus impositosque portans unguento perunctus a Flaviano proconsule Africae et sopitus, ut apparuit, odoris novitiate fluctuatusque similis exanimi caruit hominum conversatione ut iniuria fugatus per aliquot menses; mox reversus in eodem miraculo fuit. Iniuriae potestatum in hospitales ad visendum venientium Hipponenses in necem eius compulerunt. (Plin. H.N. 9.8.26)*

Another dolphin during these years on the African coast of Hippo Diarrhytus, feeding from the hand of men in a similar way and allowing himself to be petted and playing with swimmers and carrying those placed on his back, thoroughly drenched with oil by the proconsul of Africa, Flavianus, and put to sleep, as it appeared, by the novelty of the odor

and floating similar to a lifeless body, he kept away from the discourse of men as having fled from injury for some months. Soon, he was turned into a certain spectacle. The damages from those magistrates coming as guests to see him compelled the people of Hippo to his murder.

Although the *Historia Naturalis* records events in nature, Pliny the Younger places this story on a similar level to a conventional history that records notable people and events, because of the human interactions with the dolphin and the dolphin's impact on the community of Hippo Diarrhytus. Pliny describes the exact same details as appear in his uncle's account.

He comments on the same story that he heard at dinner:

*Incidit in materiam veram sed simillimam fictae, dignamque isto laetissimo altissimo planeque poetico ingenio; incidi autem, dum super cenam varia miracula hinc inde referuntur. Magna auctori fides: tametsi quid poetae cum fide? Is tamen auctor, cui bene vel historiam scripturus credidisses. (Ep. 9.33.1-2)*

I came unexpectedly on true subject matter, but it is very similar to material that has been made up, and it is worthy of that most abundant, highest, clearly poetic talent of yours. However, I came unexpectedly on it while various wonders are told over dinner from here and from there. There is great faith in this source: Although, what is there for a poet with trust? Nevertheless, this is the source, in whom you would have believed well even if about to write history.

Pliny's use of *incidere* to describe the circumstances in which he acquired the subject matter of his letter does not seem entirely genuine. Pliny the Elder wrote his natural histories before his death in 79 C.E. (the circumstances of which Pliny records in *Ep.* 6.16.19-20). It seems unlikely that this same story is completely new to Pliny. Pliny says that the story came up during a dinner conversation; he mentions the trustworthiness of his source (*magna auctori fides*) without naming the *auctor*. If the *auctor* is Pliny's own uncle, this letter reads not only as a conversation about a topic, but a letter in praise of Pliny the Elder. Pliny emphasizes that, although the story is true, its details parallel those in fictional stories. He says that the story's narrator possessed an *ingenium* predisposed to poetry and poetic qualities, using the adjectives *laetissimus*, *altissimus*, and *poeticus*. Pliny also points out that the *fides*, *vera materia*, and the source's credibility make

this work attractive for a historian like Rufus. Through the vocabulary and specific components of the story, Pliny demonstrates that it can be elaborated by a poet or a historian.

One of the underlying purposes of *Ep.* 9.33 is to encourage Rufus to write about the topic. Because Pliny has described Rufus as *historiam scripturus*, he seems to encourage Rufus to write a historical work, although he also writes poetry. Pliny imagines how Rufus will write the story:

*Haec tu qua miseratione, qua copia deflebis ornabis attolles! Quamquam non est opus adfingas aliquid aut adstruas; sufficit ne ea quae sunt vera minuantur. (Ep. 9.33.11)*

You will lament, you will honor, and you will exalt these things with such compassion, with such abundance! Although it is not necessary that you form or create anything. It is sufficient that these things, which are true, should not be diminished.

Pliny not only predicts how Rufus will write about the account, but he also suggests that he not change any of the story's details, using his letter as the story's vehicle. Pliny the Elder's account may serve as the unacknowledged model for Pliny's letter; Pliny offers his letter to Rufus as a model for whatever work, poetry or history, Rufus wishes to write. Not only would Rufus preserve the story for a longer time by offering his written account as another version, but he also preserves those who wrote about the same story before him, such as Pliny with his letter and perhaps Pliny the Elder. As in many letters that discuss literary composition, Pliny represents the finished, written product with a neuter noun to allow his descriptions to fit whatever work Rufus decides to write.

Pliny writes *Ep.* 5.8 to Titinius Capito in response to his suggestions in previous communications that Pliny undertake historical composition. He agrees with the principle behind Capito's suggestions: a man writes so that when he dies and is no longer able to write, he will still live and exist in men's minds. Pliny says that he revises his speeches so that when he



dies, they will not die with him (*Ep.* 5.8.6-7). The revisions improve his speeches to such an extent that not only Pliny feels proud of and finished with them, but also that others will want to and will preserve his writings. In sections 7 and 8, Pliny points out the immense dedication that historical writing demands of its author, and he expresses his doubts about writing and revising his speeches as well as writing and revising a historical composition simultaneously. Ash points out that the specific genre of history to which Pliny and Capito refer is monumental history, like the kind Livy wrote or the volumes of natural history his uncle wrote.<sup>100</sup> As with epic within the genre of Roman poetry, monumental history represents the highest and most difficult genre within the larger genre of Roman historical writing. Three chapters of *Ep.* 5.8 include Pliny's discussion of the conventions of historiography, similarities and differences between oratory and history, and Pliny's approach to historical writing.

Pliny talks about the conventions of historical writing, but he also provides a glimpse of his desire for fame and immortality.

*et ego volo, non quia commode facturum esse confidam (id enim temere credas nisi expertus), sed quia mihi pulchrum in primis videtur non pati occidere, quibus aeternitas debeatur, aliorumque famam cum sua extendere. Me autem nihil aeque ac diuturnitatis amor et cupido sollicitat, res homine dignissima, eo praesertim qui nullius sibi conscius culpa posteritatis memoriam non reformidet. Itaque diebus ac noctibus cogito, si "qua me quoque possim tollere humo;" id enim voto meo sufficit, illud supra votum "victorque virum volitare per ora;"<sup>101</sup> "quamquam o-:"<sup>102</sup> sed hoc satis est, quod prope sola*

<sup>100</sup> Ash says, "If in *Epistle* 5.8, Pliny is evoking Livy in his description of the style appropriate for a historical narrative, then it may also be that what he is rejecting in this letter is (by extension) monumental history. His uncle's historical works were, after all, on a grand scale, even if they did not quite match the ambitious project of Livy in terms of length. This hint is, of course, rhetorically useful in the immediate context, since by hinting at monumental Livian historiography, Pliny reinforces his decision not to embark on such a grand project before he has finished revising his speeches." R. Ash, "'Aliud Est Enim Epistulam, Aliud Historiam. . . Scribere,'" (Epistles 6.16.22): Pliny the Historian?," *Arethusa* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 221.

<sup>101</sup> Both quotations come from Verg. *G.* 3.8-9.

<sup>102</sup> Verg. *A.* 5.195.

*historia polliceri videtur. Orationi enim et carmine parva gratia, nisi eloquentia est summa: historia quoquo modo scripta delectat. Sunt enim homines natura curiosi, et quamlibet nuda rerum cognitione capiuntur, ut qui sermunculis etiam fabellisque ducantur. (Ep. 5.8.1-4)*

And I wish it, not because I believe I am going to do it properly (for you would believe it is rashly done unless having experienced it), but because it seems especially beautiful to me not to allow them to die, to whom eternity is owed, and to extend the fame of other men with his own fame. However, nothing moves me equally as love and desire for longevity, the thing most worthy of a man, particularly for that man who aware of no crime does not dread the memory of posterity. Therefore, I think through days and nights, if “there is any way I am also able to lift myself from the earth,” for that is sufficient to my prayer; that is above my vow, “and as victor to fly through the mouths of men,” “although, o-:” but this is enough, which history alone seems to promise. For there is little favor for speech and poem, unless there is the greatest eloquence: history, in whatever way it is written, pleases. For men are curious by nature and they are captured so much by simple knowledge of events, as those who are led even by small talk and small tales.

Pliny begins to ponder with false modesty Capito’s suggestion that he should write a history; he suggests that he would not do it properly, although he fully approves of histories and their aims.

The composition of history is a beautiful thing, *pulchrum*, a neuter form of the adjective that stands substantively for the written work. Pliny believes history does not allow men to die to whom *aeternitas* is due. With *aliorumque famam cum sua extendere*, Pliny believes that historians not only illuminate the lives of deserving men, but also glorify their own lives with such a noble undertaking. He aspires to gain fame of epic proportion, which he demonstrates by quoting the most prominent Roman epic poet, Vergil. The imagery of lifting off the earth and the word *victor* suggest that Pliny aspires to be heroic and as widely-known as Aeneas.

Gamberini believes that *prope sola* indicates Pliny’s contentment with sufficient glory to ‘raise him from the earth.’<sup>103</sup> In Pliny’s perspective, only history promises its writer and his subject the possibility of fame and immortality. Poetry and oratory are able to offer a man only *parva gratia*, unless the work is of the finest and highest quality. Although Pliny does not use

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<sup>103</sup> F. Gamberini, *Stylistic Theory and Practice in the Younger Pliny*, (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1983), 73.

*immortalitas*, he still alludes to it with *non pati occidere*. Pliny asserts that history pleases because it suits man's curiosity; it maintains honesty and simplicity (*nuda cognitio*) and meticulousness and brevity (*sermunculi* and *fabelli*).

Pliny focuses on a few key differences that set history apart from poetry and oratory. To explain to Capito why he does not want to write a history, Pliny talks about his pet genre, oratory. Pliny does not pursue his comparison clearly:

*Habet quidem oratio et historia multa communia, sed plura diversa in his ipsis, quae communia videntur. Narrat illa narrat haec, sed aliter; huic pleraque humilia et sordida et ex medio petita, illi omnia recondita splendida excelsa conveniunt; hanc saepius ossa musculi nervi, illam tori quidam et quasi iubae decent; haec vel maxime vi amaritudine instantia, illa tractu et suavitate atque etiam dulcedine placet; postremo alia verba alius sonus alia constructio. Nam plurimum refert, ut Thucydides ait, κτήμα sit an ἀγώνισμα; quorum alterum oratio, alterum historia est. His ex causis non adducor ut duo dissimilia et hoc ipso diversa, quo maxima, confundam misceamque, ne tanta quasi colluvione turbatur ibi faciam quod hic debeo; ideoque interim veniam, ut ne a meis verbis recedam, advocandi peto. (Ep. 5.8.9-12)*

Indeed, oratory and history possess many commonalities, but there are many different things in these very things, which seem common things. That one narrates, this one also narrates, but in a different way. And to this one there are very many humble and dirty things sought from the middle of things, to that one, everything profound, splendid, and lofty is suitable. More often, the bones, muscles, and nerves befit this one; some bulging muscles and crests so to speak befit that one. This pleases especially with force, with bitterness and earnestness, that one with movement and charm and even sweetness. Finally, other words, another sound, and another arrangement. For it is of most importance, as Thucydides says, whether it is a "possession" or a "contest piece:" of which the oration is one, and history is the other. From these causes, I am not persuaded that I should blend and mingle two dissimilar things and things especially different in this very thing, lest disturbed by so great a polluted mixture, as it were, I do there what I ought to do here. Therefore, in the meantime, so that I do not withdraw from my words, I seek permission for an adjournment.

One of the most complex parts of reading this passage is discerning the difference between *haec* and *illa*. Gamberini believes that *hic* refers to the second item Pliny mentions in the previous clause, which is *historia*.<sup>104</sup> "Pliny was not writing a doctrinal treatise but merely presenting

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 59.

some literary reflections in the form of a courteous communication; hence strict coherence of the ideas expressed is not to be expected.”<sup>105</sup> One reason for Pliny’s vagueness in using *haec* and *illa* to describe the genres of oratory and history may be his lack of concern for their nuances.<sup>106</sup> I believe that by blurring *oratio* and *historia* through his use of *haec* and *illa*, Pliny emphasizes the ways they share more *communia* than *diversa*. Pliny makes expansive use of metaphor throughout this letter; *ossa* particularly refer to either the style or structure of an oration.<sup>107</sup> In Tacitus’ *Dialogus* (21.8), Aper uses parts of the human body, *tori*, *venae*, *ossa*, and *nervi* to describe an ideal oratorical style, but Pliny’s intentions with the same terms remain uncertain.<sup>108</sup> If Pliny applies these terms to oratory as Aper does in the *Dialogus*, *haec* represents oratory rather than *historia*, opposing Gamberini’s suggestion.<sup>109</sup> Pliny frequently overlaps genres in his letters; he not only discusses certain genres, but he also embeds pieces of a different genre in his letters. As Pliny talks about keeping oratory as well as immersing himself in historical composition, he blurs distinctions between the two genres to a confusing extent. He shows Capito that the responsibility of attempting to write pieces of both genres places too many demands on him as a writer; however, letter writing, with its casual tone and dialogue, allows Pliny to intertwine another genre in his letters with clarity and ease.

Pliny’s teacher, Quintilian, also presents nuances among poetry, oratory, and history; however, he clearly identifies characteristics of each genre. Like Pliny, he points out ways a

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 74-5.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 60.

genre can cross-over and assist one's approach to another genre, but he keeps all the genre terms close to their descriptions. Quintilian says:

*Historia quoque alere oratorem quodam uberi iucundoque suco potest. Verum et ipsa sic est legenda ut sciamus plerasque eius virtutes oratori esse vitandas. Est enim proxima poetis, et quodam modo carmen solutum est, et scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum, totumque opus non ad actum rei pugnamque praesentem sed ad memoriam posteritatis et ingenii famam componitur. (Quint. Inst. Orat. 10.1.31)*

History is also able to nourish an orator with a certain rich and pleasant sap. But history itself is to be read in this way that we know that its very many virtues are to be avoided by the orator. For it is closest to poets, and in a certain way it is a freed poem, and it is written for the purpose of narration, not for proving a point, and the whole work is composed not for the immediate outcome and battle of the affair, but for the memory of posterity and the fame of talent.

In Quintilian's perspective, poetry, like history, preserves memory and the reputation of its author. Both poetry and history, in his view, share a narration, while oratory argues to prove and persuade its listeners of a certain point. Looking at *Ep.* 9.33, Pliny may have had Quintilian's perspective in mind as he advised Rufus that the dolphin story well suited either a poetic or historical composition.

Although Pliny tells Capito his reasons for not wanting to write history, Pliny still wants Capito to answer his questions about the kind and characteristics his historical composition should include. Pliny offers two options and points out advantages and disadvantages of each option. Pliny turns his attention back to his addressee:

*Tu tamen iam nunc cogita quae potissimum tempora adgrediar. Vetera et scripta aliis? Parata inquisitio, sed onerosa collatio. Intacta et nova? Graves offensae levis gratia. Nam praeter id, quod in tantis vitiis hominum plura culpanda sunt quam laudanda, tum si laudaveris parvus, si culpaveris nimius fuisse dicaris, quamvis illud plenissime, hoc restrictissime feceris. Sed haec me non retardant; est enim mihi pro fide satis animi: illud peto praesternas ad quod hortaris, eligasque materiam, ne mihi iam scribere parato alia rursus cunctationis et morae iusta ratio nascatur. (Ep. 5.8.12-14)*

Consider what time period I am best able to address now. Ancient times and things written by others? The inquiry has been prepared, but collection is onerous. Or an

untouched and new period? The offenses are serious and the appreciation is scant. For in addition to the fact that in such great defects of men there are more things to be blamed than praised, then, if you have praised, you are said to be thrifty, if you have blamed, you are said to have been excessive, although that you did most fully, and this you did most sparingly. But these things do not slow me down: for I have enough courage for honesty. I ask that you prepare that thing to which you encourage me, and you choose the material, lest another just cause for hesitation and delay again rise for me, now prepared to write.

The major question that Pliny wants Capito to answer is about what time period Pliny should write. Pliny questions whether he should focus on ancient or recent events, and he demonstrates the general problems associated with each time period. If Pliny writes an ancient history, he feels obligated to sift through an enormous corpus of works about that time period. A problem with the composition of a history of contemporary events is that such a composition wins little appreciation from readers. No praise from an author praises its subject sufficiently and any criticism offends or disapproves too harshly. Although he does not bring up Domitian or his reign in this letter, Pliny does not portray that time positively. Trajan represents such a positive and different example from Domitian and his authority, that any praise by Pliny would seem insufficient.

With *sed haec me non retardant*, Pliny demonstrates his confidence despite all his doubts. Pliny's willingness to try even a difficult genre, while maintaining his other responsibilities, such as polishing his speeches, shows that Pliny portrays himself as a prolific, although also aspiring, writer. He elaborates on this point with *est enim mihi pro fide satis animi*, further demonstrating Pliny's confidence in his ability to write in any genre. Pliny asks Capito many questions in the last part of *Ep.* 5.8 to prompt him to write another response, continuing their discussion of the genre of history. He forces Capito to make decisions for him, as he places himself in a subordinate position to Capito. Because Pliny gently compels Capito to write him a letter in response to his questions, Pliny also promises to continue writing Capito

with *ne mihi iam scribere parato alia rursus cunctationis et morae iusta ratio nascatur*. If Pliny has any more arguments and questions about writing a history on his own, he seeks and respects Capito's literary guidance and encouragement.

Letters that focus on history and the acquisition of fame through its composition provide background on historians, pivotal events in Pliny's life, and the aspirations of Pliny and Cornelius Tacitus and their relationship. Pliny introduces three other historians, an anonymous author, Titinius Capito, and Gaius Fannius, to discuss certain conventions of the genre, demonstrating how written and published works last beyond the author's lifetime and provide evidence for prominent figures from the past, their actions, and related events (*Ep.* 9.27, 8.12, and 5.5). Two letters showing the relationship between historical compositions and offers of fame and literary immortality, *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20, recount the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. *Ep.* 7.20 and 7.33 provide deeper portrayals of one historian, Cornelius Tacitus.

Pliny not only discusses significant events in his life and career, but he also talks about prominent historians whose works have the potential to survive for generations of readers. *Ep.* 4.14, addressed to Plinius Paternus, is about a volume of poetry that Pliny sends to him for criticism.<sup>110</sup> Pliny sends *Ep.* 9.27 to Plinius Paternus to continue a discussion about literature, specifically history. This letter adds to Pliny's views of history and its duty to preserve truthful accounts, as in *Ep.* 5.8 and *Ep.* 7.33, and it also provides a glimpse of the existence of serial recitations, as in *Ep.* 3.18.<sup>111</sup> He recalls a recitation of a historical work by an unnamed author:

*Quanta potestas, quanta dignitas, quanta maiestas, quantum denique numen sit historiae, cum frequenter alias tum proxime sensi. Recitaverat quidam verissimum librum,*

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<sup>110</sup> Sherwin-White, 509.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

*partemque eius in alium diem reservaverat. Ecce amici cuiusdam orantes obsecrantesque, ne reliqua recitaret. Tantus audiendi quae fecerint pudor, quibus nullus faciendi quae audire erubescunt. Et ille quidem praestitit quod rogabatur (sinebat fides); liber tamen ut factum ipsum manet manebit legeturque semper, tanto magis quia non statim. Incitantur enim homines ad noscenda quae differuntur. (Ep. 9.27.1-2)*

I felt how great the power, how great the distinction, how great the authority, and finally, how great the divine will of history is, both on other occasions and most recently. A certain man had recited the most honest book, and he reserved part of his work for another day. Look, friends of a certain man prayed and entreated that he not recite its remaining parts. Such is the shame of hearing what they had done, for whom there was no shame of doing what they blush to hear. And that man indeed fulfilled what was asked (good faith allowed); nevertheless the book will remain as the deed itself remains and it will always be read, all the more because it was not read immediately. For men are incited to knowing things that are withheld.

The entire body of Pliny's letter recalls the particular event and the author's reaction. Pliny leaves out many specific details of the incident from this letter; Paternus probably heard of the event from others, or Pliny in this letter implicitly encourages Paternus to ask specific questions that Pliny intends to answer in another letter that he did not include among his published letters. Sherwin-White notes that this is not the only letter in which Pliny remains cautiously silent; *Ep.* 8.22 and *Ep.* 2.6 also demonstrate Pliny's restraint.<sup>112</sup> Pliny names neither the historian nor the listeners, *amici* of a certain man, who begged the author not to read the remainder of his work. Syme thinks the anonymous historian is Cornelius Tacitus, but Tacitus was not the only historian at that time.<sup>113</sup> *Ep.* 5.8.12 implies that Tacitus was one of the only historians writing between 105 to 107 C.E. about events during the Flavian regime.<sup>114</sup> One work of Tacitus that does not survive is a book from his *Annals*, which discussed Domitian's reign and crimes in significant detail. If the anonymous historian of *Ep.* 9.27 is Tacitus, not only do the friends prevent him from reading his work, but they also may have destroyed his work to preserve the obscurity of

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 510.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 509-10.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*



the *factum* and to hide their embarrassment. Pliny portrays this anonymous historian as fulfilling his duty as an authoritative and conventional historical author, to preserve the truth of historical events through writing and reciting, and although Pliny does not mention it here, publishing his works.

The sincerity of the anonymous historian stands out as another key element: Pliny shows that the historian adheres to the conventions of the relationships of *amici*. Because the historian relies on his friends' participation as readers and listeners, and perhaps as sources of funding to publish his work, he has an obligation to please them. If his friends object to a certain part of his work, he is obligated to change or destroy it. Pliny's letter provides details about the historian's suppression of his work during a recitation, and he preserves the evidence that the historian had more to offer in his recitation had his "friends" not prevented him from sharing it.

In *Ep.* 8.12 and 5.5, Pliny provides the authors' names with their works to create a fuller picture of those he noticed and wished to recognize. Pliny acknowledges Titinius Capito in *Ep.* 8.12 as a historian who writes about famous men and their deeds. He also presents him as a model for future generations of historians and readers. He introduces Capito to Cornelius Minicianus:

*Hunc solum diem excuso: recitaturus est Titinius Capito, quem ego audire nescio magis debeam an cupiam. Vir est optimus et inter praecipua saeculi ornamenta numerandus. Colit studia, studiosos amat fovet provehit, multorum qui aliqua component portus sinus gremium, omnium exemplum, ipsarum denique litterarum iam senescentium redactor ac reformator. (Ep. 8.12.1-2)*

I except this one day only: Titinius Capito is about to recite, whom I do not know whether I am more obliged or more eager to hear. He is the best man and one to be numbered among the outstanding ornaments of the age. He cultivates his studies; he loves, nurtures, and promotes studious men, he is the harbor, bosom, and lap of many men who write other things, an example for all men. Finally, he is a restorer and reformer of those kinds of literature now becoming weak.

Pliny emphasizes Capito's importance through his intent to attend Capito's recitation and his desire to do so (*cupere*). Pliny mentions that Capito hosts readings in his home and always attends Pliny's readings when he is in Rome. Pliny demonstrates that not only does his interest in Capito's work excite him to attend his reading, but also Capito's interest and support of Pliny obligates him to do so (*debere*). He elaborates on several of Capito's characteristics that earn his attention and respect, such as his persistence in his studies and the guidance that he offers to other men who pursue studies. Pliny portrays Capito as a safe harbor and nurturing bosom and lap, a gentle and parental example to younger and aspiring writers. Not only is Capito a contemporary model for writers, but Pliny elevates him to the same status as older, renowned literary models (*praecipua saeculi ornamenta*). In Pliny's view, Capito is an author who exists for the moment as an *omnium exemplum*, but he also has the potential to exist throughout others' lives (*saeculum*). In contrast to this image, he calls Capito *redactor* and *reformator*, portraying Capito's active efforts to maintain and improve literature by reciting his own as an example. As with his feelings about oratory, Pliny implies that literature in a broader context begins to decline simultaneously with social etiquette (*litterae*) and implicitly, with those who write it.

Pliny elaborates on the other traits that attract him to Capito's upcoming recitation.

*Quod si illi nullam vicem nulla quasi mutua officia deberem, sollicitarer tamen vel ingenio hominis pulcherrimo et maximo et in summa severitate dulcissimo, vel honestate materiae. Scribit exitus inlustrium virorum, in his quorundam mihi carissimorum. Videor ergo fungi pio munere, quorumque exsequias celebrare non licuit, horum quasi funebribus laudationibus seris quidem sed tanto magis veris interesse. (Ep. 8.12.4-5)*

But if I owed nothing in turn to that man, no mutual duties, as it were; nevertheless, I would be tempted either by the most beautiful and greatest, and sweetest talent of the man, even in the highest severity, or by the honesty of his material. He writes about the deaths of famous men, among these certain men most dear to me. Consequently, I seem to perform a pious duty, and those whose funerals it was not permitted to celebrate, to be present at their funerals as if with funereal eulogies, late indeed but so much the more genuine.

Pliny reiterates his sense of obligation to Capito (*debere, mutua official*), but he emphasizes that Capito's *pulcherrimum et maximum et dulcissimum ingenium* and his *summa severitas* also earn his respect, which he shows by attending Capito's recitation. With *honestas materiae*, Pliny attributes Capito's success to his literary works. He does not explicitly call Capito's works histories, but when he speaks about the compositions of history, he frequently says that they preserve the lives of notable men. Capito writes about the deaths of famous men, some of whom were close to Pliny (*carissimi*). These men were not permitted funerals for reasons left unmentioned in his letter, but he sees Capito's recitation as a second opportunity to honor men whom he reveres. Pliny wants to attend Capito's recitation to show his respect for him as a man and as a writer, and to show respect for the figures who appear in his work. Although Pliny honors the figures much later than their deaths, Pliny offers his genuine honor and praises to those men. The truth of Pliny's praises equals the truth that Capito uses to construct his historical accounts, which extend the memory of the men's lives past their deaths that occurred years prior to his recitation.

*Ep. 5.5* describes the death of Gaius Fannius, who wrote about Nero's reign, particularly focusing on his banished or executed victims. Pliny describes Fannius' work:

*iam tres libros absolverat subtiles et diligentes et Latinos atque inter sermonem historiamque medios, ac tanto magis reliquos perficere cupiebat, quanto frequentius hi lectitabantur. (Ep. 5.5.3-4)*

Now, he had completed three precise and diligent and Latin books and halfway between conversation and history, and he was desiring to finish the remaining books so much the more, as much as these books were read more frequently.

He laments the death of Fannius to the addressee, Novius Maximus, because Fannius' history, his finest in Pliny's opinion, was interrupted and remains unfinished. Pliny emphasizes Fannius' unfinished literary work more than his unrevised will because he believes that Fannius'

incomplete histories present a greater threat to Fannius' memory (*Ep.* 5.5.2). Pliny's prioritization seems odd because he works in court and attributes great significance to political and legal duties over the sorts of work, such as literary works, that belong to *otium*. Fannius' dedication to his histories while working on a speech and another history, as well as the quality of his volumes (*subtiles, diligentes, Latini*), caught Pliny's notice. That Fannius wanted to publish his completed histories makes Pliny grieve even more, because Fannius did not live long enough to fulfill his wish or see his wish fulfilled by someone else. By writing this obituary letter for Fannius, Pliny attempts to preserve Fannius and the works he completed.

Pliny reflects generally on Fannius' state, but he includes the state of many writers who aspire to gain acknowledgement, particularly for poetry or, in Fannius' case, for his history.

Death is an obstacle that a writer must plan to overcome while he lives:

*Mihi autem videtur acerba semper et immature mors eorum, qui immortale aliquid parant. Nam qui voluptatibus dediti quasi in diem vivunt, vivendi causas cotidie finiunt; qui vero posteros cogitant, et memoriam sui operibus extendunt, his nulla mors non repentina est, ut quae semper incohatum aliquid abrumpat. (Ep. 5.5.4-5)*

Moreover, the death of those men, who prepare something immortal, always seems to me untimely and premature. For those who, given over to pleasures, live as by the day daily finish their reasons for living. Those who truly think about those following them, and extend the memory of themselves through their works, for these no death is not sudden, so that it always cuts short some unfinished work.

Pliny uses *aliquid* to represent the composition, but in this letter, he uses *immortale* to describe it. With death, a writer's *aliquid*, like Fannius' work, becomes *incohatum* if he does not write accordingly. He sets up a key difference between two kinds of men, by which he really means writers. One kind plans only on a day-by-day basis, while the other man plans for the present but also thinks about the future. Because the latter man realizes his life is short compared to the expanse of time, he uses *opera* as a means to extend his *memoria*. The former man, just as he lives *cotidie*, dies the exact same way.

After Pliny finishes a maxim about writers, he relates his general view to Fannius, but also to himself. Pliny frequently obsesses about his own writings as well as those of his friends, and in *Ep.* 5.5, he portrays the *immortale aliquid* as the ultimate goal of a Roman writer. Pliny shows how death provides motivation for a writer to compose and complete his work. Pliny laments:

*Quod me recordantem miseratio subit, quantum vigiliarum quantum laboris exhausserit frustra. Occursant animo mea mortalitas mea scripta. Nec dubito te quoque eadem cogitatione terreri, pro istis quae inter manus habes. Proinde, dum suppetit vita, enitamur ut mors quam paucissima quae abolere possit inueniat. (Ep. 5.5.7-8)*

Pity attacks me recalling that he had exhausted so many wakeful nights and so much labor in vain. My mortality, my writings come to mind. I do not doubt that you too are frightened by the same thought for those things which you have in your hands. Therefore, while life is available, let us struggle, so that death finds the fewest things possible that it can destroy.

Pliny portrays an opposition between *mortalitas* and *scripta*. Because *scripta* represent the writer who created them, although a writer dies, he can still enjoy life vicariously through his writings. The *miseratio* felt by Pliny compels him to remember Fannius' hard work, which he fears is wasted or will not gain appreciation.

Two of Pliny's most famous historically-focused letters are *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20, with details of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. *Ep.* 6.16 begins a written conversation that Pliny resumes and concludes in *Ep.* 6.20. Ash notes that in many of Pliny's history letters, especially in the letters devoted to Mount Vesuvius, Pliny "allows elements of historiography to infiltrate his letters, taking up what he considers important but abandoning the constraints of the genre so that he can best serve posterity. No doubt he would have enjoyed the irony that those episodes which he described to Tacitus for inclusion in the *Histories* have only survived through his

letters.”<sup>115</sup> Sherwin-White observes, “Both letters are a remarkable testimony to the solid factual element that underlies the much adorned historical and biographical products of this age.”<sup>116</sup>

Although *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20 are letters, which lend themselves to manipulation by their author to create a certain image, Pliny crafts these letters as accurately as if he were writing histories.

Marchesi notices that Pliny’s letters about the deaths of certain men are among his historical letters; she selects *Ep.* 6.16 as an example.<sup>117</sup> In addition to including short biographies in his history letters, Pliny often includes details of natural events, such as the volcanic eruption, that reveal a curiosity perhaps inherited from his uncle. Pliny begins his conversation with Cornelius Tacitus, who asked him to write about his uncle’s death for inclusion in one of his historical compositions:

*Petis ut tibi avunculi mei exitum scribam, quo verius tradere posteris possis. Gratias ago; nam video morti eius si celebretur a te immortalam gloriam esse propositam. Quamvis enim pulcherrimarum clade terrarum, ut populi ut urbes memorabili casu, quasi semper victurus occiderit, quamvis ipse plurima opera et mansura condiderit, multum tamen perpetuitati eius scriptorum tuorum aeternitas addet. Equidem beatos puto, quibus deorum munere datum est aut facere scribenda aut scribere legenda, beatissimos vero quibus utrumque. Horum in numero avunculus meus et suis libris et tuis erit. Quo libentius suscipio, deosco etiam quod iniungis. (Ep. 6.16.1-4)*

You ask that I write to you about the death of my uncle, in order that you be able to hand down more truthfully to those in the future. I offer thanks, for I see that if an account of his death is published by you, everlasting glory has been set forth. Although with the disaster of the most beautiful lands, as peoples as cities in a memorable catastrophe, as if he had died to live forever, although he had composed very many works and works going to last, nevertheless the eternity of your writings will add a lot to his perpetuity. Truly I think they are blessed, to whom by a gift of the gods it has been given either to do things which are to be written or to write things which are to be read, truly the most blessed are those to whom both have been given. My uncle will be among these, both in his own books and in yours. The more willingly I take up, I even demand that which you impose.

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<sup>115</sup> Ash, 224.

<sup>116</sup> Sherwin-White, 374.

<sup>117</sup> Marchesi, 170-1.

Pliny portrays Tacitus as transmitting history to another age (*tradere posteris*). If Tacitus commits his uncle's death to writing, Tacitus can grant him an immortal glory. One fact about his uncle that Pliny wants Tacitus and anyone who reads this letter to remember is that Pliny the Elder wrote several works, which Pliny the Younger believes will become everlasting by themselves or through Tacitus' and Pliny's recollection of them. Pliny predicts that Tacitus' writings will become everlasting, and through them, Pliny the Elder will survive (*multum tamen perpetuitati eius scriptorum tuorum aeternitas addet*). The kinds of men who become famous through the genre of history include men who do things that are worthy of being written down (*facere scribenda*), or men who write things that are worthy of being read (*scribere legenda*). He expresses the extent of his uncle's fame by referring to Tacitus and other authors who will memorialize Pliny the Elder in their books. When Pliny portrays his uncle's continued existence through published books by many authors including Tacitus, Pliny solidifies the concept that through writing, a deceased man can aspire to immortality.

When Pliny closes his letter, he shifts his focus from narration back to Tacitus and what Tacitus asked for: information about Pliny's uncle. Pliny acknowledges his digression, and he refocuses on completing his letter:

*Interim Miseni ego et mater – sed nihil ad historiam, nec tu aliud quam de exitu eius scire voluisti. Finem ergo faciam. Unum adiciam, omnia me quibus interfueram quaeque statim, cum maxime vera memorantur, audieram, persecutum. Tu potissima excerpes; aliud est enim epistulam aliud historiam, aliud amico aliud omnibus scribere. (Ep. 6.16.21-22)*

Meanwhile my mother and I at Misenum - but that is nothing for history, nor did you wish to know anything other than about his death. Consequently, I shall make an end to it. I shall add one thing, that I related everything at which I was present and those things which I had heard immediately, when true things especially are recalled. You will gather the most potent things; for it is one thing to write a letter, it is another thing to write a history, it is one thing to write to a friend, it is another thing to write for everyone.

On section 21, Guillemin says:

Cette coupure du récit, contenant l'amorce d'une continuation, est destinée à piquer moins la curiosité de Tacite que celle des lecteurs anonymes pour lesquels Pline a écrit ce morceau, digne en effet de la postérité à laquelle il s'adresse.<sup>118</sup>

In Guillemin's view, Pliny seems to prepare Tacitus for *Ep.* 6.20, whether he wants it or not.

Pliny's decision, *sed nihil ad historiam*, teases Tacitus either to write about the events described by Pliny in his letter or to ask for more information via a letter, prompting Pliny to write another in response. Ash comments on the end of *Ep.* 6.16:

Pliny's sudden sensitivity to genre at the end of this letter is indeed both convenient and compelling: by breaking off his narrative so suddenly, Pliny immediately rouses our curiosity about what happened next, for which we must wait until *Epistole* 6.20.<sup>119</sup>

Pliny shows his awareness of genre in the final sentence: *Tu potissima excerptes; aliud est enim epistulam aliud historiam, aliud amico aliud omnibus scribere*. The *epistula* belongs to Pliny, who addresses Tacitus as an *amicus*. Tacitus, a renowned historian, composes histories for a wide audience. Pliny also combines their reflections; he engages Tacitus and encourages him to continue writing histories through his letter, which represents their friendship. He shows how the genres of letters and histories and two different writers come together as one through the simplest medium of writing with the goal of fame and immortality at its heart.

Pliny writes *Ep.* 6.20 to Cornelius Tacitus as a continuation of *Ep.* 6.16, adding additional information about his uncle and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Although Pliny assures Tacitus that his letter and its topic do not aspire to the grandeur of history, the language and drama make it appear as a historical account. The elevated language in *Ep.* 6.20 also parallels epic, particularly Vergil's *Aeneid*. In his letter's introduction, Pliny responds to Tacitus' inquiry

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<sup>118</sup> Guillemin in *Pline Le Jeune. Lettres: Livres IV-VI*, trans. and commentary by A-M. Guillemin. vol. 2 (Paris: Société d'Édition *Les Belles Lettres*, 1967), 118.

<sup>119</sup> Ash, 215.



seeking more information about his uncle and his death, as well as more information about Misenum's destruction. Pliny responds:

*Ais te adductum litteris quas exigenti tibi de morte avunculi mei scripsi, cupere cognoscere, quos ego Miseni relictus (id enim ingressus abruperam) non solum metus verum etiam casus pertulerim. (Ep. 6.20.1)*

You say that you were led by the letters which I wrote to you, asking about the death of my uncle, to desire to know not only what fears, but also what catastrophes I endured, left behind at Misenum (for having started it, I had interrupted it).

He uses this moment to introduce himself and his eyewitness account about Misenum's destruction into his continued narration and series about Mount Vesuvius' eruption. Pliny concludes his letter by quoting *Aeneid* 2.12: *Quamquam animus meminisse horret . . . incipiam* (Although the mind trembles to have remembered. . . I shall begin) (*Ep.* 6.20.1). His use of this quote places him on an equal level with the character who speaks it: Aeneas. Throughout *Ep.* 6.20, Pliny employs themes from the *Aeneid* to elevate his writing to the level of epic or history. He seems to favor history because he acknowledges that Tacitus plans to compose a historical account using the same topic. Augoustakis points out that Pliny not only refers to Vergil, but also to Livy, which does not seem coincidental in this letter, which serves as a historical account itself.<sup>120</sup>

Pliny crafts his account like an epic, the grandest and most difficult genre for a writer to attempt, for his own practice and to impress his addressee. By borrowing Aeneas' quote, Pliny presents himself as a hero who flees and survives Misenum, just as Aeneas fled Troy and Carthage. Pliny constructs the imagery in his letter in parallel to the *Aeneid* through certain moments recollected from his escape. As Aeneas urged Anchises to flee Troy despite his old age, Pliny refuses to leave his mother behind during the volcanic eruption. He recalls:

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<sup>120</sup> A. Augoustakis, "Nequaquam historia digna? Plinian Style in Ep. 6.20," *The Classical Journal* 100, no.3, (Feb.-Mar. 2005): 270.

*Tum mater orare hortari iubere, quoquo modo fugerem; posse enim iuvenem, se et annis et corpore gravem bene morituram, si mihi causa mortis non fuisset. Ego contra salvum me nisi una non futurum; dein manum eius amplexus addere gradum cogo. Paret aegre incusatque se, quod me moretur. (Ep. 6.20.12)*

Then, mother begging, encouraging, and ordering, that I flee in any way possible. For a young man can do this, but she was heavy in years and body, about to die well, as long as she was not the cause of death for me. I said on the other hand that I would not be safe unless together. Then I compel her, having taken her hand to hasten her step. She obeys reluctantly and blames herself because she delays me.

Pliny depicts himself as the dutiful son who saves his parent and encourages her in return. Even though Pliny's circumstances were especially dangerous, he refused to obey his mother in order to see her to safety. Pliny shows his willingness to give up his life for his mother, but also, he wants to ensure that someone from his family survives to carry on the family legacy through writing, either from his uncle or himself.

Pliny concludes his letter and tells Tacitus:

*Haec nequaquam historia digna non scripturus leges et tibi scilicet qui requisisti imputabis, si digna ne epistula quidem videbuntur. (Ep. 6.20.20)*

You will read these things by no means worthy of history, not to write them, and certainly you will blame yourself, who demanded it, if these things will not seem worthy even of a letter.

Pliny's statement stands in direct opposition to his aspirations that he or Tacitus creates *aliud omnibus scribere* in *Ep. 6.16*. Pliny wants everyone, including Tacitus, to read this letter, and his highest wish is that discerning readers notice his letter's historical style. He demonstrates false modesty by saying that Tacitus will not want to read his historical work, embedded within the letter's body, but he also will not read his letter, a written dialogue between friends and colleagues. *Historia digna* and *digna . . . epistula* indicate the quality of Pliny's letter as an example of a proper Roman letter and a valid historical piece. He fully intends to craft *Ep. 6.20* for Tacitus and others to read even though he masks this intent with doubt. As in other letters

addressed to Tacitus, Pliny teases him by reminding him of his original request and his intent to write a historical account about Mount Vesuvius and Pliny the Elder. Augoustakis believes that *scilicet* reflects Pliny's belief that Tacitus may include his work in his *Historiae*, although Pliny admits that he thinks that Tacitus may not.<sup>121</sup> The way that Pliny openly tells Tacitus that he will not think that his letter conforms to the standards of a letter or history tempts Tacitus to disprove him out of their friendship and similar interests.

One of the key differences between *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20 is the frequent use of the imperfect tense or the historic present tense, although in *Ep.* 6.20, Pliny uses the historical infinitive for verbs to elevate his work to the level of possible inclusion in Tacitus' *Historiae*.<sup>122</sup> Pliny adapts *Ep.* 6.20 to the stylistic demands that he believes historical writing requires through his use of historical infinitives.<sup>123</sup> Even though *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20 recall past events in short, conversational forms, Pliny writes these letters with an awareness that his narratives may contribute to the larger framework of Roman historical works either as themselves or as inclusions in the works of other historians.<sup>124</sup> Sherwin-White points out that Tacitus discusses themes fit for history and objects to mundane topics, such as natural phenomena, appearing in historical compositions, in *Annals* 13.31.<sup>125</sup> Sherwin-White believes it highly unlikely that Tacitus would have included Pliny's accounts in his histories.<sup>126</sup> Tacitus says:

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-8.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>125</sup> Sherwin-White, 380.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

*Nerone iterum L. Pisone consulibus pauca memoria digna evenere, nisi cui libeat laudandis fundamentis et trabibus, quis molem amphitheatri apud campum Martis Caesar extruxerat, volumina implere, cum ex dignitate populi Romani repertum sit res inlustres annalibus, talia diurnis urbis actis mandare.* (Ann. 13.31)

During the consulships of Nero, for a second time, and Lucius Piso, few things happened that are worthy of memory, except to him whom it is permitted to fill up volumes by praising foundations and timbers, on which Caesar had piled up the mass of the amphitheater near the Campus Martius, when it has been found in accordance with the dignity of the Roman people to entrust distinguished affairs to the annals, to entrust such things to the daily records of the city.

With this citation of *fundamenta* and *trabes*, Tacitus means that architectural details and materials, such as wooden beams, should not appear in a work recording major events and figures. Although the eruption of Mount Vesuvius is a natural disaster and Pliny provides many observations about it, the fact that it destroys surrounding cities and kills many citizens makes it a worthy subject for historical writing.

## COMPOSITION

*Ep.* 7.20 and 7.33 provide a picture of an aspiring historian, Cornelius Tacitus, and an aspiring writer in several genres, Pliny. In *Ep.* 7.20 to Tacitus, Pliny provides a snapshot of an author-to-author friendship and their mutual encouragement with hopes of attaining fame and literary immortality. Tacitus prepares a work that remains untitled, perhaps the *Histories* or *Dialogus*.<sup>127</sup> Sherwin-White believes that the unknown work is more likely to be Tacitus' *Histories*, because Pliny has the expertise to evaluate historical and oratorical works, and he elaborates on the similarities between history and oratory in *Ep.* 1.16, 5.5, 5.8, 8.12, and 9.27.<sup>128</sup> Although the *Dialogus* provides details about oratory, its content may have included philosophy

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

to such an extent that Pliny did not feel as comfortable commenting on it as he would have on Tacitus' *Histories*, according to Sherwin-White.

*Librum tuum legi et, quam diligentissime potui, adnotavi quae commutanda, quae eximenda arbitrarer. Nam et ego verum dicere adsuevi, et tu libenter audire. Neque enim ulli patientius reprehenduntur, quam qui maxime laudari merentur. Nunc a te librum meum cum adnotationibus tuis exspecto. O iucundas, o pulchras vices! Quam me delectate quod, si qua posteris cura nostri, usquequaque narrabitur, qua concordia simplicitate fide vixerimus! Erit rarum et insigne, duos homines aetate dignitate propemodum aequales, non nullius in litteris nominis (cogor enim de te quoque parcius dicere, quia de me simul dico), alterum alterius studia fovisse. Equidem adulescentulus, cum iam tu fama gloriaque floreres, te sequi, tibi "longo sed proximus intervallo" et esse et haberi concupiscebam. Et errant multa clarissima ingenia; sed tu mihi (ita similitudine naturae ferebat) maxime imitabilis, maxime imitandus videbaris. Quo magis gaude, quod si quis de studiis sermo, una nominamur, quod de te loquentibus statim occurro. Nec desunt qui utrique nostrum praeferantur. Sed nos, nihil interest mea quo loco, iungimur; nam mihi primus, qui a te proximus. . . . Quae omnia huc spectant, ut invicem ardentius diligamus, cum tot vinculis nos studia mores fama, suprema denique hominum iudicia constringant. (Ep. 7.20.1-7)*

I read your book, and most diligently as I was able, I marked the things that I thought should be changed and the things that I thought should be removed. For I have become accustomed to speak the truth, and you to listen freely. For no other men are criticized more patiently, than those men who deserve especially to be praised. Now I expect my book from you with your notations. O pleasant, o beautiful exchanges! How it delights me that, if there is any care for us for those in the future, it will be told everywhere that we lived with what harmony, simplicity and trust! It will be a rare and distinguished thing that two men, almost equals in age and dignity, not of no name in literature (for I am compelled to speak more briefly about you, too, because I speak about myself simultaneously), one warmed the studies of the other. Truly, as a wee young man, I followed you, when you were already blossoming in fame and glory, I desired both to be and to be considered, 'by a long interval, but close,' to you. There were many very shining talents, but you seemed especially imitable to me, especially to be imitated (thus the similarity of nature was leading). With how much more joy, that if there is any speech about studies, we are named together, that I come up immediately to those speaking about you. They are not lacking, who are preferred to both of us. But we are joined, it is of no interest to me in what place. For the first for me is who is next after you. . . . All of these things look to this, that we appreciate more ardently in turn, when our studies, habits, and fame, finally the highest judgements of men bind us with so many chains.

Pliny portrays two significant elements in *Ep. 7.20* about his relationship with Tacitus as a successful historian; he provides a glimpse into mutual criticism, and he anticipates their

continued success and recognition through their writings. Pliny reads and comments on Tacitus' book, and he hopes to receive his book back from Tacitus with the same attention to detail. Terms for offering a fellow writer criticism include *adnotare*, *commutanda*, *eximenda*, and *diligentissimus*, to describe writing that Pliny annotates, suggests for changes or omission, as well as the personalized attention he pays to Tacitus' work to improve its quality. Pliny provides a snapshot of the model writer: *Neque enim ulli patientius reprehenduntur, quam qui maxime laudari merentur*. Because he addresses this letter to Tacitus and includes it for publication with his other letters, he implies to general readers that this serves as one characteristic of a model writer and that Tacitus serves as this model.

Another major component of *Ep.* 7.20 is Pliny's awareness that Tacitus and he already possess some renown for their works. He proposes that as long as they continue to work together, they can encourage and help each other achieve even more success. Pliny does not name the *duo homines*, but he means himself and Tacitus, who he predicts will retain their fame into the future because of their personal and mutual virtues. With *adulescentulus*, Pliny invokes a tone of endearment in the manner he looks up to Tacitus, that now, through their mutual exchange of letters and other written works, he looks to him as an equal. Traub observes an element of rivalry on Pliny's part as well as his serious admiration for Tacitus. He summarizes the relationship between Pliny and Tacitus:

The fame and popularity of these works and especially the primacy of Tacitus must have aroused Pliny's attention and admiration. If Pliny was unable to compose a history that in sustained greatness might approach the grandeur of Tacitus, at least in his separate and select endeavors he could rival his friend even in certain feats where the historian shone most brightly.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Traub, 232.

The way that Pliny observes *quod de te loquentibus statim occurro*, he believes and defends that he is equal to Tacitus in literary achievement. *Vinculis* concretely portrays the closeness that Pliny shares with Tacitus through their success, acknowledgement, habits, and studies. *Mores* and *studia* represent the habits and customs that make them develop into good and lasting authors.

Pliny addresses *Ep.* 7.33 to Cornelius Tacitus to discuss Tacitus' methods and the renown related to his historical compositions and to ask Tacitus to write about Pliny's achievements. He recounts and glorifies the prosecution by Pliny and Herennius Senecio of Baebius Massa in 93 C.E., which placed Pliny's life in danger from Domitian. Pliny believes that historians acquire fame from their works, but they also provide fame to the men who appear in their histories. Syme notes, "The aspiration to fame being open, avowed, and honourable, it was no scandal if a Roman of consular rank insisted on a mention in books of history written by a friend and destined (it was clear) to undying renown."<sup>130</sup> As Traub observes on Pliny's *Ep.* 7.33:

The sincere expression, moreover, of strong desire that Tacitus include the episode in his *Histories* is also Pliny's artful excuse for narrating the account himself. In reality the narration of the incident has nothing to do with Tacitus' granting the petition. Pliny asks, moreover, that Tacitus amplify the whole account, but he himself has done a very good job of making into something glorious an action that seems to have entailed little or no danger.<sup>131</sup>

If Tacitus does not feature Pliny within his work, Pliny uses *Ep.* 7.33 to leave behind a tangible account of his actions and praises. One likely source of inspiration for Pliny comes from Cicero's letter to Lucceius (*Fam.* 5.12). Cicero tells Lucceius:

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<sup>130</sup> R. Syme, "The Friend of Tacitus," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 47, 1/2 (1957): 131.

<sup>131</sup> Traub, 228.

*genus enim scriptorum tuorum, etsi erat semper a me vehementer expectatum, tamen vicit opinionem meam meque ita vel cepit vel incendit ut cuperem quam celerrime res nostras monumentis commendari tuis. Neque enim me solum commemoratio posteritatis ac spes quaedam immortalitatis rapit sed etiam illa cupiditas ut vel auctoritate testimoni tui vel indicio benevolentiae vel suavitate ingeni vivi perfruamur. (Ad Fam. 5.12.1)*

For the style of your writings, although it was always eagerly awaited by me, nevertheless, surpasses my opinion and it especially seizes or inflames me so that I desired that our deeds be commended in your literary works as quickly as possible. For the recollection of posterity and a certain hope of immortality not only snatches me up, but also, that desire that we thoroughly enjoy either the authority of your witness or the judgment of benevolence or the charm of a thriving talent.

Cicero shows a strong emotional connection to his past actions that he wants to see praised and recorded in Luceius' work. Cicero's use of *monumenta* to represent Luceius' work stands for his literary works rather than its most basic meaning, monuments. His word choice creates the image of a historian and a notable figure working together to ensure their longevity. *Quam celerrime* depicts Cicero's sense of urgency to motivate Luceius, not only for his sake as a rising author, but also on his own behalf. Because Cicero always stands in the public eye, he acknowledges a sort of danger that he brings upon himself, whether it is political or physical danger. He hopes for and explicitly names two outcomes from Luceius' historical works: *commemoratio posteritatis* and *spes immortalitatis*. When Pliny writes about immortality and an existence into the future through the medium of a written work, he uses the terms *immortalitas*, *posteritas*, *fama*, and *gloria* to portray the goal of writers and characters in their writings. Cicero leaves his account up to Luceius' *benevolentia* and *suavitas*, just as Pliny leaves his account up to Tacitus' *modum* in the conclusion of *Ep.* 7.33.

Pliny provides a similar prediction to that in *Ep.* 7.20 about Tacitus' renown:

*Auguror nec me fallit augurium, historias tuas immortales futuras; quo magis illis (ingenue fatebor) inseri cupio. Nam si esse nobis curae solet ut facies nostra ab optimo quoque artifice exprimatur, nonne debemus optare, ut operibus nostris similis tui scriptor praedicatorque contingat? (Ep. 7.33.1-3)*



I predict nor does augury deceive me, that your histories will be immortal; so much the more I desire (I will admit frankly) to be included in them. For if it is accustomed to be a care for us that our visage is modeled by the best artist, surely we ought to hope that a writer and eulogist similar to you takes hold of our works?

Pliny predicts Tacitus' success to softly bend Tacitus to mention him in his works. *Auguror, fatebor*, and Pliny's description of Tacitus' histories as *futuras* and *immortales* reveal Pliny's hopes for Tacitus and himself in prophetic and religious language. He portrays Tacitus' works as a presentation of Pliny's image, which he wishes to inspire and control. If Tacitus' histories can create Pliny's image, Pliny's letters, as written documents, also create his image, specifically a self-portrait.

Pliny wishes to influence the event that Tacitus writes about him, and one of the events that Pliny selects is his prosecution of Baebius Massa. Pliny seizes upon a particular image of himself as a successful orator. He recalls:

*Quae vox et statim excepta, et postea multo sermone celebrata est. Divus quidem Nerva (nam privatus quoque attendebat his quae recte in publico fierent) missis ad me gravissimis litteris non mihi solum, verum etiam saeculo est gratulatus, cui exemplum (sic enim scripsit) simile antiquis contigisset. (Ep. 7.33.8-10)*

This statement had been both received immediately and celebrated afterwards with a lot of talk. Indeed, divine Nerva (for, as a private citizen, he was also noticing these things which were happening for the public good) in the most thoughtful letters sent to me congratulated not only me but also this age, which an example similar to those of the past had touched (for thus he wrote).

Pliny uses his own letters to praise and preserve certain men, in the same way that history can monumentalize a certain individual. He repeats the term *exemplum* to describe himself and his contributions as an orator, and he inserts *saeculum* to suggest that not only does he actively serve as example to younger men, but he will serve as an example to men of a different and future time.

When Pliny concludes his letter to Tacitus, he inserts a few wishes to help guide and focus Tacitus' writing. He also includes another element peculiar to history:

*Haec, utcumque se habent, notiora clariora maiora tu facies; quamquam non exigo ut excedas actae rei modum. Nam nec historia debet egredi veritatem, et honeste factis veritas sufficit. (Ep. 7.33.10)*

You will make these things, whatever they possess in themselves, better known, more illustrious, and greater; although I do not demand that you exceed the measure of the accomplishment. For history should not step outside of the truth, and honestly, truth is enough for deeds.

Pliny seems to encourage Tacitus to take the events that Pliny describes and make them *notiora*, *clariora*, and *maiora*, the better to guarantee Pliny's survival to posterity. Pliny seems to back off from his wish by telling Tacitus to stick closely to the truth, as the genre of history requires. He emphasizes truth at the end of his letter by using *veritas* twice and the adverb *honeste* to convey an element for Tacitus to keep in mind as he composes his *historiae*.

The third genre through which writers can aspire to achieve fame is history. In Pliny's view, those who write and those who are written about in histories can aspire to fame during their lives and immortality after they die. Two main branches of Pliny's history-focused letters are those that discuss history in general and those that include references to fame and immortality as consequences of historical writing. In his letters about historiography, Pliny portrays individuals who write histories, famous events that are suitable for historic compositions, and the conventions and goals of historical writing. When Pliny incorporates the themes of fame and immortality in his history letters, he discusses prominent and emerging authors of histories, notable events, and the composition of histories, particularly in his letters to Tacitus. Pliny practices writing history or about historians to transmit the aims and benefits of history writing through his letters.

## CONCLUSION

Because readers take an interest in the details of others' lives, particularly those in public view, the letters of Pliny the Younger have survived. His letters include a broad arrangement of topics, which allows them to appeal to a diverse audience. While Pliny's letters cannot provide his actual portrait or experience to his readers, the letters allow the readers to create pictures and experiences using their imaginations in harmony with his words. Trapp observes that readers "achieve a full appreciation of such letter-collections by taking seriously their claims to epistolarity, and by remembering that the letter is not a type of text devoid of formal, structural, and thematic connections with other types of text."<sup>132</sup> Even though Pliny controlled the presentation of his letters and his self in the first nine books of his letters, the fact that he left his letters as letters captures his audience's attention through their studied informality. His letters survived because he formed a new genre that a writer could perfect and publish, and his letters are one of the first, if not the first, collection of letters to be written and revised by their author, who intended them for publication.

Cicero's major corpus of letters preceded Pliny's; however, they did not reach the public until years after they were written and Cicero did not intend to publish them himself; he wrote his letters as private correspondence.<sup>133</sup> Because Pliny's tenth book includes his letters to and from his addressee, focuses on one theme, and was published posthumously, Pliny seems not to

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<sup>132</sup> Trapp, 16.

<sup>133</sup> J. Nicholson, "The Survival of Cicero's Letters," *Latomus* 9 (1998): 63-105.

have controlled its content, just as Cicero did not intend his letters for publication nor control their publication. Pliny wrote his letters carefully, but he did not entirely revise or select those in the tenth book for publication.

This thesis looked at how Pliny's literary and genre letters provide a guide to aspiring writers and portray the process behind the composition of poetry, oratory, and history. Through his nine books of letters, Pliny demonstrates that the genre of letters also provides a medium through which a writer can earn fame and survive to posterity with renown as their writer. Although Pliny explicitly calls himself a model to younger orators and portrays his models across the genres, he does not explicitly portray the way that his epistolary compositions and publications could survive as models in themselves.<sup>134</sup> The letters of Pliny demonstrate other factors that help aspiring writers achieve success, such as social networking, sharing praise, encouragement, and criticism, transmitting their work through recitations or publications, and preserving the memory of recently-deceased authors. In case the literary works of Pliny's contemporaries do not outlast the authors' lives, Pliny uses his letters as another chance to preserve their reputations as authors as well as the types of compositions that they wrote. As Morello observes, "No one is ever attacked in Pliny's world (except his one egregious enemy, Regulus) and few fail or even risk failure except Pliny himself. There are no bores in Pliny (not from his point of view, anyway) and no incompetent litterateurs."<sup>135</sup> Although Pliny writes about sending and receiving criticism throughout his letters, he writes optimistically about the

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<sup>134</sup> Some have assumed that Pliny's *Letters* influenced letter-writing among Christian political leaders of the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. Many would have known his letters, but whether or not they were influenced by or appreciated them is a different matter. A. Cameron deals with this issue in "The Fate of Pliny's Letters in the Late Empire," *The Classical Quarterly* 15, 2 (Nov., 1965): 289-98.

<sup>135</sup> R. Morello, "Confidence, Invidia, and Pliny's Epistolary Curriculum" in A.D. Morrison and R. Morello, *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 179.

literary endeavors of his friends and of himself. By writing to his friends and about their literary compositions in addition to his own, Pliny constructs his own literary circle that protects its participants from failure.<sup>136</sup>

When considering fame and immortality in Pliny's *Letters*, we might ask whether he acquired either through his writings. As Sherwin-White points out,

Pliny was not a fruitful writer in any category. He was a slow worker who devoted a great deal of time to polishing and editing, and was easily put off from literary work by any *occupatio*. The publication of at most fourteen or fifteen speeches, two short Lives, and two volumes of light verse, was no great effort for a period of about twelve years.<sup>137</sup>

In Sherwin-White's view, Pliny did not succeed through the writing process portrayed in his letters. Of the speeches certainly published by Pliny, only his *Panegyricus* survives, and not even that one in its entirety. Pliny was not as prolific as he says; for of the various types of works that he discusses in the broad genres of poetry, oratory, and history, not much evidence survives to prove his literary productivity. Not many authors refer to Pliny's work; if he produced as many works as he would like his readers to believe, those works did not survive. In particular, Pliny's esteem for his own oratorical abilities makes it seem odd that more of his work did not survive, either themselves or in references to them in other authors. Perhaps Pliny's speeches were not as carefully crafted and did not earn the same appreciation as those of his oratorical models such as Cicero and Cato. The literary means through which he carries on his discussions of poetry, oratory, and history, his letters, survived largely because of their unprecedented nature.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>137</sup> Sherwin-White, 51.

Even though Pliny was not successful in acquiring fame and immortality as a writer of poetry, oratory, or history, he survives to posterity as a letter-writer. Through his letters, he portrays himself succeeding in three major genres of Latin literature and advising younger writers. He shows his productivity in the nine volumes of letters that he revised and intended for publication. The tenth volume shows either that he wished them to be published or that someone else valued his letters enough to see them to their publication. Pliny aspires to acknowledgement as a dutiful orator, a supportive mentor, and a lover of learning and writing. In Sherwin-White's view, *negotium* and *occupatio* attracted Pliny's attention, leaving his literary endeavors to his infrequent indulgence of *otium*. Pliny uses his letters as short exercises in his *otium*, which allow him to express his views about poetry, oratory, and history. He expands the scope of a few of his letters to try his hand at writing in one of the three genres. The length of letters largely depends on their author's satisfaction, whereas other genres possess an established and expected length; Pliny wrote letters more easily in accord with his schedule than he could write other works. Letters have the flexibility to engage with any topic in any style, which made them suitable to Pliny's lifestyle.

Ash reveals another advantage that the conventions of composition provided to Pliny: "The advantage was that Pliny could simply keep on going: even if he died before his project was finished, the value and standing of his literary endeavor as a whole would not be undermined as a result."<sup>138</sup> Ash's comment also sheds light on Pliny's tenth volume of letters. Pliny did not revise and select them for publication as carefully as he did the first nine volumes; on the other hand, a finished work could be developed from the letters written by Pliny. Pliny became a literary innovator through the development of letter-writing as a genre that could be

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<sup>138</sup> Ash, 214.

composed and published by its author for a wide audience, just as poetry, oratory, and history were. By publishing his nine volumes of letters, Pliny left behind a tangible legacy of himself as a writer, but not in the three genres to which he originally aspired. As Marchesi points out:

His nine books of epistles did not so much reproduce a received paradigm as they contributed to shaping a tradition into one. By engaging in a constant dialogue with other literary texts and genres, Pliny imported into the confines of the still fluid practice of literary letter-writing principles of composition and organization drawn from more canonical neighboring traditions. In so doing, Pliny created a new form of literary epistolography at the same time as he inscribed himself into an established but eclectic literary tradition.<sup>139</sup>

Pliny uses what he knows will give fame and immortality to a writer in a traditional genre, and he applies the same principles to his letters. He experiments with different themes in his letters, but through his letters that focus on poetry, oratory, or history, he creates literary letters as a subgroup in the larger genre of letters. Through this innovation and by putting himself and his literary works in public view, Pliny acquired fame and immortality as a letter-writer.

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<sup>139</sup> Marchesi, 241.

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