A Curious Case: Pliny Does Not Write History (*Ep.* 5.8)

Jonathan J. Price

Pliny the Younger admired historians and historical writing. In his letters he praises History's virtues, values a freedman who can read history well, and above all, feels unbounded esteem for his friend Tacitus, who had gained fame while still alive for his published historical researches.[1] Pliny's most elaborate appreciation of historiography is contained in *Ep*. 5.8, a letter of 105-106 CE[2] addressed to Titinius Capito, who had urged Pliny to write history himself. Pliny responds to Capito by lauding history-writing as the surest means to fame and affirming his desire to take up the task, but his convoluted and confusing explanation of the reasons for his delay amount to a decisive rejection of ever writing history. The letter has been variously understood as a serious contemplation on historiography, a document of angst about his status in Rome's literary world, a bid to make himself the subject of history, an urbane 'polite refusal' to write history.[3] This paper, offered in honor of my friend and colleague Hannah Cotton,[4] will argue that the letter is a subtle but demonstrative rejection of history-writing which both reflects and comments on the state of Roman historiography in Pliny's generation.

Pliny's correspondent, the equestrian Cn. Octavius Titinius Capito, was a generous literary patron and the host of a well-known salon, apparently an arbiter of taste in Rome in the early second century CE.[5] After a military career, he served as *procurator ab*

---

* I would like to thank Werner Eck for helpful criticism.

1 Admiration for good history: *Ep*. 1.16.4 (Pompeius Saturninus), 7.33, 9.27, cf. 2.1, 7.9. The correspondence with Tacitus, with further praises of history: *Ep.* 1.6, 20; 4.13; 6.16, 20; 7.20, 33; 8.7; 9.10, 14, 23; on Tacitus and Pliny, see Griffin (1999) and Marchesi (2008), 97-206. Pliny's freedman: *Ep*. 5.19.3.

2 Sherwin-White (1966), 34-5.

3 The most extensive treatment of the letter is now Marchesi (2008), 144-71; other noteworthy interpretations include Sherwin-White (1966), 333-5; Traub (1955); Leeman (1963), 333-6; Gamberini (1983) 58-81; Oliva (1993); Morello (2003), 202-6; Ash (2003); Tzounakas (2007); Baier (2003), concluding that *Ep*. 5.8 is an 'Ablehnung der Historiographie'; further bibliography in Marchesi (2008). The phrase 'polite refusal' is Gamberini's; compare Syme's ([1958], 117) memorable phrase, 'proud humility'.

4 The brief discussion at the end of this paper on the decline of Roman historiography was presented in fuller form in 2007 at the Classics seminar in the Hebrew University, at the invitation of Hannah Cotton. She expressed skepticism then on many points; whether or not this paper shall persuade her, it is offered with respect and affection.

5 Career: *PIR* 5.3 O 62; Syme (1958), 92-3, is harsh. Salon: Plin. *Ep*. 8.12.1: *vir est optimus et inter praecipua saeculi ornamenta numerandus. Colit studia, studiosus amat, fovet, provehit, multorum qui aliqua componunt portus sinus gremium, omnium exemplum, ipsarum denique litterarum iam senescentium reductor ac reformator*; cf. *Ep*. 1.17.1. See Eck (2005), 57-61, 69-70, who asks searching questions about Capito's actions under Domitian.

epistulis et a patrimonio under Domitian, and continued in the post of *ab epistulis* under Nerva and Trajan. In addition to encouraging literary talents, he himself wrote a work within a certain sub-genre of history popular at the time, *Exitus illustrium virorum* (*Ep*. 1.17; 8.12.4). This was not historical narrative *per se*: a similar work by Gaius Fannius is described by Pliny, interestingly, as *inter sermonem historiamque medios* (*Ep*. 5.5.3), and Pliny equated Capito's sketches with *funebres laudationes*, i.e., they were closer to oratory and philosophy than historiography.[6] Fannius' preference for biographical moments to sustained narrative was imitated by another friend and correspondent of Pliny, and (eventual) literary *ab epistulis*, namely Suetonius, who is credited with a *De viris illustribus* of his own, which included lives of historians.

There were recent momentous events to write about when Pliny and Capito exchanged letters, and Pliny mentions that others had also suggested he write history (*et suades non solus: multi hoc me saepe monuerunt*). But it does not seem that Capito had a specific subject in mind for him, for at the end of the letter Pliny deliberates — albeit in a posturing manner (see below) — what kind of history he *would* write if or when he gets around to it, and asks Capito's help in deciding. Thus it seems that Capito's invitation was motivated by respect for Pliny's abilities or a desire to flatter a susceptible ego.

Pliny's response[7] opens with a declaration of his desire to write history — *ego volo* — for two reasons, the unparalleled fame it will bring, which he anticipates will be greater than, and unlike, the kind of fame he can expect from his oratory, and a certain family obligation arising from his uncle's accomplishments as a historian (*Ep.* 5.8.1-5).[8] Pliny then makes an abrupt turn and expatiates on his reasons for *postponing* history-writing: he has to edit and publish his speeches, and he cannot do both at once because of the different rhetorical skills and style required by oratory and history (6-11). By the end of this mini-disquisition, postponement has morphed into outright refusal (*veniam advocandi peto*), but then Pliny makes another abrupt turn and asks for Capito's assistance in choosing the topic and material for the history which he *would* write if he ever runs out of excuses for not doing so (12-13).

The body of the letter is in essence a subversion of the opening declaration *ego volo*. This subversion is accomplished by conspicuous omissions, by a peculiarly negative assessment of different types of history, by freighted poetic allusions and by an odd and ambiguous comparison of History and Oratory. We do not know what kind of reader (or writer) Capito was, but presumably, given his long service as *ab epistulis* under three emperors and private literary patronage, he understood subtlety.

---

6 The genre seems to have Hellenistic origins: Ronconi (1996); U. Eichler, 'Exitus illustrium virorum' in *Brill's New Pauly*, Brill Online, 2014, s.v.; Sherwin-White (1966), 126, 460. On the connection between the *cursus honorum* and *laudatio funebris*, see Eck (2005), 55.

7 The text used here is Mynors (1963).

8 On Pliny's 'anxiety' about fame and reputation, see Hoffer (1999), 40-2.

Omissions and Negative Assessment

A serious, straightforward deliberation on writing history would perforce involve the standard themes and justifications of historiography which had developed into *topoi* from the first Greek historians to Pliny's time. But *Ep*. 5.8 contains not even a perfunctory gesture toward the most significant of these conventions. No hint of seeking a worthy subject whose greatness and importance would justify the labor of research and writing. No mention of the moral and ethical benefits of learning history, or history's usefulness to individuals and states through the recovery and elaboration of good and bad *exempla*, or philosophical insight gained from understanding complex synchronous events. History is not hailed as the only sure bulwark against time, an eternal monument of people and things *worth remembering*. There is no affirmation, routine or otherwise, of the historian's selfless and disinterested commitment to truth, which became perhaps the most-repeated requirement of the profession.[9]

These *topoi* were repeated routinely not only by historians in their introductions and other programmatic statements to justify their work and methods, but also by orators and philosophers speaking about history. Cicero, Pliny's epistolary model, while exhorting the historian and senator Lucceius Albinus to write about the most worthy subject he knows, i.e. Cicero's own accomplishments, pays lip service to the 'laws of history' (*leges historiae*) requiring truth-telling and freedom from personal bias.[10] Cicero's letter would have been known and remembered by Capito and any reader with a suitable education in Latin literature. In a calmer text, Cicero explains that the 'law of history' requires utter devotion to the truth as a fundamental principle.[11] On the Greek side, reflecting the cultural and literary norms of Pliny's world, Lucian's satire of contemporary historiography (under the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus) covers all the usual themes expected in serious history — truth-telling, worthiness of subject,

---

9 Programmatic statements by historians are extensively analyzed by Marincola (1997), *passim*; cf. esp. Chapter One, 'The Call to History', 34-57; see also Pitcher (2009), 1-45, 113-63; Näf (2010), 71-91 (81-2 on Plin. *Ep*. 5.8). Marchesi (2008), 151, is mistaken that 'Roman historiography is obsessed with one idea, the attainment of immortality'; its preoccupations are far greater; and despite echoes of Sallust in *Ep*. 5.8, the letter is marked more by the *topoi* it ignores than by those it mentions.

10 Cic. *Fam*. 5.12. Cicero's letter is a kind of mirror reflection of Pliny's, for Cicero, offering himself as a worthy historical subject, appeals to the historian to extend his own fame by confirming Cicero's unshakable claim to immortality, while Pliny imagines extending his own fame by himself narrating the deeds of unnamed others who deserve immortality (*aliorumque famam cum sua extendere*). In fact, Cicero exhorts Lucceius to *break* the laws of history in order to glorify his real achievements (*Fam*. 5.12.3). On the letter see Shackleton-Bailey (1977) I, 318-22; Woodman (1988), 70-4; Leeman (1963), 168–74; Hall (1998); Fox (2007), 256-63 (with bibliography), concentrating usefully on Cicero's self-presentation. On the influence of Cicero on Pliny, see Nutting (1926), Weische (1989), Riggsby (1995), Lefèvre (1997); Hoffer (1999), 22-4; Morello (2003); Marchesi (2008), 207-40; and now Gibson-Morello (2012), 74-103.

11 *De Or*. 2.62-3; cf. also Cic. *Leg*. 1.5. This passage has stimulated much discussion, *inter alia* Leeman (1985); Woodman (1988), 74-116; Fantham (2004), 149-52; Northwood (2008).

instructive purpose, avoidance of partiality, prudent *mimesis*, effective style, and so forth.[12]

Pliny knows the program, of course. In his letter to Tacitus, providing unsolicited material about an incident involving Herennius Senecio, one of Domitian's eventual victims, he declares: *Nam nec historia debet egredi veritatem, et honeste factis veritas sufficit* (*Ep*. 7.33.10). And in a letter recounting an anonymous historian's public reading which deeply upset the audience (see discussion below), he writes grandly: *Quanta potestas, quanta dignitas, quanta maiestas, quantum denique numen sit historiae* (*Ep*. 9.27.1). There is no denying, given the politically delicate situation of each letter, that Pliny meant what he said in both, making the absence of high principle in *Ep*. 5.8, where he pretends to consider writing history, even more strongly felt.

Far from seeking a great topic worthy of an historian, Pliny first describes — practically dismisses — the matter of history as trivial gossip (*sermunculis etiam fabellisque*, *Ep*. 5.8.4), but he seems to reverse this judgment further on in the letter, in a highly opaque passage (*omnia recondita splendida excelsa*, 9). The confusion about the proper material for historiography belies his alleged commitment (see below). Moreover, the trivialization of History in section 4 further contravenes historians' standard presentation of self and subject, or as Marchesi puts it: ' [Pliny's] language goes against the grain of every theory of historiography from antiquity'.[13]

At the end of the letter, in a deliberation of the different types of history he could write, Pliny considers not the different virtues or benefits of different types of history — distant vs. recent history, one of Greek historiography's oldest deliberations — but their relative *disadvantages*, in an inversion of the artistic and scientific process of history-writing (*Ep.* 5.8.12-13). He asks, which kind of history would be *least troublesome* to write: ancient history has already been dealt with by others and in any case would involve laborious assemblage of materials (*onerosa collatio*); recent history is untouched (*intacta*) but offers *graves offensae, levis gratia*, thus will please no contemporary reader (so much for a would-be historian thinking about his *future* reputation!). Pliny frames the question around which kind of history to flee, not which to embrace. He is so bothered by the choice between the tedium of composing ancient history and the offense caused by recounting contemporary events that he asks Capito himself to choose the period to be covered (*cogita quae potissimum tempora aggrediar*), thus outsourcing the historian's first and primary creative decision. The historian's second main decision is delegated in the last sentence of the letter: prepare the subject and choose the material, Pliny beseeches Capito (*illud peto praesternas ad quod hortaris, eligasque materiam*, 14). The reason for this shifting of the burden is a feeble joke: lest, when ready to write, he not find another excuse for delay and postponement (*ne mihi iam scribere parato alia rursus cunctationis et morae iusta ratio nascatur*). Once Capito has chosen the period, topic

12 Lucian, *Hist. conscr.*, esp. 38-61, the "serious" part of the essay; and cf. Avenarius (1956), and the commentaries on those chapters in Homeyer (1965) and Hurst (2010). Diod. Sic. 1.1-1.4.1 is another trove of *topoi*. On the matter of historiographical "truth" see Avenarius (1956), 40-6; and now Marincola (2007).

13 Marchesi (2008), 161.

and materials, Pliny would have only to apply to the narrative his self-confident oratorical abilities and final polish.

Pliny does say, it is true, that one should not consign to oblivion 'those who are worthy of eternal memory' (*quibus aeternitas debeatur*), but to this is immediately joined his own desire for his fame to be carried on the vehicle of his subject's fame (*aliorumque famam cum sua extendere*).[14] The fame he will earn from historiography piggybacks on someone else's fame, and is based on form, not content. Pliny presents himself as single-mindedly focused on his own reputation. This obsession compromises Pliny's invocation of his uncle's historiographical accomplishment as a further incentive for him to write history. For what educated Latin reader would not know that Pliny the Elder had, in the preface to his *Naturalis Historia*, criticized Livy for expressing concern, veiled in modesty, for his own reputation? Livy, the Elder Pliny admonished, should have written history for 'love of the task' and for the benefit of the Roman people, 'not himself'.[15]

It is true that, like Livy, Sallust also revealed anxiety about his reputation in the preface to his first work (*Cat.* 1.3-4; 3.1). Yet Pliny the Elder's crankiness notwithstanding, both Livy and Sallust sideline their personal concern for reputation in different ways, Sallust by stressing his main preoccupation with *virtus* and Livy by a show of humility and expressed willingness to let the greatness of his topic overshadow his own name. In the first century, Josephus had condemned contemporary historians (albeit Greek) for seeking fame at the expense of truth.[16] This may have been an extreme and partisan view, and the desire for fame may have been common to all literature, as Quintilian pointed out (*Inst.* 12.1.8); but as Marincola concludes from his survey of all such statements by historians concerned about their reputation, 'no tradition of claiming glory or renown within the history itself (much less putting it forward as a reason to write history) seems to have developed as it had in poetry'.[17]

By ignoring historiographical tradition and also by contravening his uncle's prescription of the best reasons to write history, engaging instead in the kind of solipsism his uncle rebuked, Pliny found one strategy for avoiding the whole enterprise. There were others.

---

14 Compare Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.6: 'Nor am I myself so foolish as to ask any author to immortalize my name but one who in so doing will gain glory for his own genius' (trans. Shackleton Bailey). Marchesi (2008), 154, points out the allusion to *famam extendere factis* in Verg. *Aen.* 10.467-9.

15 *NH* Praef. 16: *profecto enim populi gentium victoris et Romani nominis gloriae, non suae, composuisse illa decuit. maius meritum esset operis amore, non animi causa, perseverasse et hoc populo Romano praestitisse, non sibi*; Gibson (2011).

16 Joseph. *AJ* 1.2; *Ap.* 1.23-5.

17 Marincola (1997), 61. On echoes of Sallust in Plin. *Ep.* 5.8, see Marchesi (2008), 151-2.

Literary allusions

Pliny quotes Vergil twice in *Ep*. 5.8,[18] in truncated lines from the *Georgics* and *Aeneid* whose quoted portions fit the immediate need of the textual surface, but whose fuller settings make a different statement. He writes (2-3):

> *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'; 'quamquam o': sed hoc satis est, quod prope sola historia polliceri videtur.*
>
> So night and day I wonder if 'I too may rise from earth'; that would answer my prayer, for 'to hover in triumph on the lips of man' is too much to hope. 'Yet O if I could —', but I must rest content with what history alone seems able to guarantee. (trans. B. Radice)

Pliny's sentence, connecting quotations from Vergil in a continuous stream of thought, seems to mean: in my pursuit of immortal fame, I will be satisfied to rise above the common level (*tollere humo*), but do not over-reach for too-great fame (*victorque etc.*); even the plain form of renown which only history can bring will be enough for me, just so long as I don't finish last (*quamquam o …*). A closer look at the contexts of the two literary references reveals a different meaning.

Vergil opens Georgics III by expressing his desire to avoid hackneyed themes, an intention which could well describe any history Pliny would (hypothetically) write. Then Vergil continues (Ver. *G*. 3.8-14):

> *Temptanda via est, qua me quoque possim*
> *tollere humo victorque virum volitare per ora.*
> *Primus ego in patriam mecum, modo vita supersit,*
> *Aonio rediens deducam vertice Musas;*
> *primus Idumaeas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas,*
> *et viridi in campo templum de marmore ponam*
> *propter aquam ...*
>
> I must try a path, by which I too
> can rise from the earth and fly, victorious, from men's lips.
> If life lasts, I'll be the first to return to my country,
> bringing the Muses with me from the Aonian peak:
> I'll be the first, Mantua, to bring you Idumaean palms,
> and I'll set up a temple of marble by the water … (trans. A.S. Kline)

The poet is indulging a fantasy of wild success with a different project, when he will build a temple for Augustus and stage a magnificent triumphal procession with sacrifices and gifts, including *ekphraseis* of Roman triumphs throughout the world etched on the sanctuary's doors and columns. Vergil does not, however, in the current poem, carry out that visionary plan but instead he calls on Maecenas to 'break off my lazy procrastination' (*segnis / rumpe moras*, *G*. 3.42-3). But like Pliny's procrastination, Vergil does not succeed in breaking his, since the poem transitions abruptly from these lofty visions of self-glory and magnification of the emperor to a long discourse on animal

18 On what follows, see Kasser (1993), Baier (2003), and Marchesi (2008), 155-7.

husbandry, ending with a horrifying description of plague. The poem itself — like Pliny's letter! — is the procrastination.[19] The reader is left to wonder whether the postponement arose from the poet's doubts about his own capacity, or the inherent uncertainty in such a celebration of imperial power, to which the poet's own fame would be linked.

By quoting from the preface of the poem, Pliny evokes similar uncertainties about writing history: like Vergil's temple and procession, linking his own fame to that of others of more glorious accomplishment, Pliny's history-writing shall remain in the safer realm of dream and vision, future plans deferred. Like Vergil, he can make extravagant promises which will not be fulfilled. Thus the full context of the poetic quotation transfers history-writing to the realm of fantasized glory. But unlike Vergil, Pliny will not even dare to dream of being *victor virum volitare per ora*[20] — this false modesty is a cloak for the caution against rising too high, lest he expose himself to the dangers which frank and factual history can bring on an author (see below). Pliny can imagine the glorious monument of historical writing which would bring him glory; but unlike Vergil, he need not produce it.

The second quotation from Vergil reinforces Pliny's decision, expressed cleverly in the first quotation, to settle for less. The full setting of *quamquam o-* is the boat race in the funeral games in *Aeneid* V. One of the competitors, Mnesthus, is falling behind and exhorts his crew (*Aen*. 5.194-7):

> *Non iam prima peto Mnestheus, neque vincere certo;*
> *quamquam O!—sed superent, quibus hoc, Neptune, dedisti;*
> *extremos pudeat rediisse; hoc vincite, cives,*
> *et prohibete nefas.*
>
> Now I, Mnesthus, do not seek to be first or try to win —
> let those conquer whom you have granted to do so, Neptune —
> but oh, it would be shameful to return last: achieve this for us,
> countrymen, and prevent our disgrace. (trans. A.S. Kline)

Mnesthus despairs of being first, and expresses the wish simply not to finish last. Pliny exploits Mnesthus' sentiment to express that he will be satisfied with ordinary fame (*hoc satis est*). Presumably this ordinary kind of fame is achieved by relating the truly glorious achievements of others (*aliorumque famam cum sua extendere*). But since he

---

19 The temple and ceremony envisioned in the opening of *Georgics* III are usually and with good reason thought to refer to the *Aeneid*, which at the time of composition of this poem, however, was still no more than an inchoate idea. The interpretation of *Georgics* III as a *recusatio*, therefore, is compelling, and especially pertinent to its quotation in Pliny's letter as expressing an ambition of grandiose accomplishment remaining in the realm of fantasy; cf. Baier (2003), 69: "eine urbane *recusatio*". For a summary of interpretations of *Georgics* III, see Thomas (1988) 36-7, who believes however that 'the proem is if anything an "anti-*recusatio*"'; Mynors (1990), 178-88 is cautious; and now Baier (2003), 70. Far from ending in glory and triumph, the poem closes with wholesale death of beasts, domestic and wild. The last lines are gruesome.

20 This in itself is an allusion to Ennius: *volito vivus per ora virum*, quoted by Cic. *Tusc.* 1.15.34.

has already consigned history-writing to the realm of fantasized monuments, this ordinary fame will not be gained through historiography. Thus he shall, in Vergil's (unquoted) words, 'prevent the unspeakable' *prohibere nefas* — an expression susceptible of more than one interpretation under the Principate. He has purposefully given up the palm of history.

Obscurity

The freighted quotations from Vergil are followed by an obscure, even bizarre, comparison between Oratory and History. This comparison is perhaps the strongest statement of Pliny's negative intention. The passage is as follows (*Ep.* 5.8.9-11):

> *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, 'ktêma' sit an 'agônisma'; quorum alterum oratio, alterum historia est.*
>
> It is true that oratory and history have much in common, but they differ in many of the points where they seem alike. Both employ narrative, but with a difference: oratory deals largely with humble and trivial incidents of everyday life, history is concerned with profound truths and the glory of great deeds. The bare bones of narrative and a nervous energy distinguish the one, a fullness and a certain freedom of style the other. Oratory succeeds by its vigour and severity of attack, history by the ease and grace with which it develops its theme. Finally, they differ in vocabulary, rhythm and period-structure, for, as Thucydides says, there is all the difference between a 'lasting possession' and a 'prize essay'; the former is history, the latter oratory. (trans. B. Radice)

The first peculiarity here involves the confusion of antecedents, so that different readers have understood *illa-illi-illam* and *haec-huic-hanc* in opposite ways.[21] In standard Latin, *hic* refers to the latter and *ille* to former element in a pair (as in proper use of *hoc/illud* in *Ep.* 5.8.13), which means that *illa* should properly refer to Oratory and *haec* to History.[22] The profession described by *haec* is inferior to and less appealing than the one represented by *illa*, and not only has Pliny conceded, up to this point, that History is the nobler profession offering more lasting fame, but right after this comparison of History

---

21 Syme, Cova, Baier and Morello think *haec* is History, whereas Leeman, Gamberini, Trisoglio, Oliva, Traub, Sherwin-White, Ash (and others *non vidi* cited by Baier [2003], 75) attribute *haec* to Oratory. Marchesi (2008), 164-9, is non-committal, acknowledging that the confusing syntax 'causes the reader, who sees the usual syntactical order reversed, to waver momentarily between the two options'. As Gamberini points out, the *haec/illa* problem should not be pushed too far, since the grammatical "rule" (formulated after the fact) is broken elsewhere in Pliny's letters and Latin literature.

22 Although the confusion begins when Pliny reverses the order of the two demonstrative pronouns in moving from *narrat illa narrat haec* to the actual comparison, where *haec* precedes *illa*.

and Oratory he invokes Thucydides' famous comparison of his History, as a κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί to an ἀγώνισμα, whereby the nobler and more respectable profession represented by *illa* must be the Thucydidean lasting possession.[23] The similarity of Quintilian's comparison of History and Oratory (*Inst.* 10.1.31) would reinforce interpreting *illa* as History.[24] Now it could be, as Gamberini has argued, that by describing Oratory in this way, Pliny was really making a sly comment on the wretched state of oratory in his day, at least in the judicial sphere.[25] But if that is the case, then his forfeiture of History is even more poignant and significant: a literary genre in which he could have made a mark and secured lasting influence yields to one of relatively trivial importance and uncertain duration.

It is true that resolving the *haec-illa* problem in this way, making the subject of History profound, noble, exalted (*recondita splendida excelsa*), contradicts an earlier statement in the letter, where Pliny says that the subject of History is trivial and fabulous (*sermunculis etiam fabellisque*, *Ep.* 5.8.4), and *nuda rerum cognitio*, requiring no ornament to attract an audience. But this contradiction merely enhances the ambivalence of the letter, and further subverts Pliny's initial *ego volo*: a planted confusion leading the reader surely to Pliny's unstated conclusion.

But the graver problem involves the substance of the comparison. The qualities assigned both to Oratory and History are not only not standard, but would hardly be accepted by practicing historians or by active orators, including Pliny himself. Even if the description of Oratory here applies only to forensic rhetoric,[26] it is an undue restriction required only to make the peculiar comparison work. In other letters, Pliny's description of his own speeches of all types, especially epideictic, self-assuredly boasts of a more expansive, flexible, pleasing and powerful style.[27] He would hardly describe his own speeches as 'bare-bones, muscular, nervous'[28] in style, or devoted to 'lowly and sordid and common' topics. Moreover, the qualities which Pliny assigns to historiographical style — tumescent, ample, expansive, pleasant, sweet — are hardly the qualities by which Thucydides, who is presently invoked as a model, or Pliny's admired friend Tacitus, would use to describe their own styles, and is as far from practicing historians' own self-presentation as is Pliny's reduction of historiography to

---

23 *Contra* Baier (2003), 75-7, and Morello (2003), 204-6; cf. Oliva (1993), Marchesi (2008), 167-8. Weische (1989) believes that Pliny simply misunderstood the term *agōnisma*, but see Morello.

24 On Pliny and Quintilian, see Cova (2003). Compare also Pliny's own pronouncements at *Ep.* 1.16.2-4, and 2.5.5-6, and see Plut. *De Glor. Ath.* 347a.

25 Gamberini (1983), 70-1.

26 Sherwin-White (1966) *ad* 5.8.6.

27 Compare esp. *Ep.* 1.8; 2.5, on a speech composed for a varied audience; 7.9.8, *saepe in oratione quoque non historica modo sed prope poetica descriptionum necessitas incidit*; 9.26. Other letters containing significant and self-satisfied references to his own oratory: 1.2; 2.19; 3.13, 18; 4.9, 19, 21, 26; 5.12; 6.33; 7.2, 12, 17; 8.3, 13, 15, 19, 21; 9.4, 11, 13, 18, 20, 28. He mentions his verse in: 4.14, 19; 5.3, 10, 15; 7.4; 9.25, 34. Mayer (2003) argues that Pliny's letters as a corpus reveal his real hope for *gloria* in his oratory.

28 See Gamberini (1983), 60-5.

unornamented trivia in section 4 of the letter.[29] Nor does Pliny elsewhere praise historiography for these qualities.[30] A learned and alert reader might laugh from this comparison, as from a sophisticated joke, but would not accept it as a serious insight into Oratory or History.

No reader has doubted that Ep. 5.8 expresses a real hesitation to write history, but there is no agreement about the actual reasons. The letters' omissions, contradictions, obscurities, freighted poetic allusions and subverted meanings cannot be dismissed as mere 'polite deference' to Titinius Capito's invitation.[31] Pliny was concerned about more than just clearing his head to edit and publish his speeches. He is saying that he has no intention of *ever* writing history. He may crave the greater fame accruing from history, but he shall be satisfied with the more tenuous hope (*tenuis spes*) of reputation from oratory.

There is no evidence in the Plinian corpus that Titinius Capito responded to the "request" for recommending which kind of history to write. Perhaps there was none: he understood Pliny's real intention.

Latin Historiography in the Second Century

There may a clue in Pliny's letter to his reason for avoiding history, which reflects the circumstances of his generation rather than personal predilections or limitations. In the second sentence of the letter, avowing and justifying his passionate desire for eternal fame, he adds that such a desire is *res homine dignissima, eo praesertim qui nullius sibi conscius culpae posteritatis memoriam non reformidet*. This statement, at least, is not conventional among historians. Pliny and his friends had come through a dark period. They had lost distinguished friends in Domitian's purges. Juvenal wrote of Domitian's reign as a period *cum iam semianimum laceraret Flavius orbem / ultimus* (*Sat.* 4.37-8). The period following Domitian's tyranny has appropriately been called, 'after the silence'.[32] Both Pliny and Tacitus wrote as if they had been delivered from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light. Just two years after Domitian's demise, Tacitus had written, '*Our* hands hauled Helvidius to prison …' (*nostrae duxere Helvidium in carcerem manus, Agr*. 45), and this sentiment was still raw, as a rare disclosure of the kind of guilt of which Pliny here insists he is innocent (*qui nullius sibi conscius culpae*).

29 It is true that some theoretical works on oratory ascribe similar characteristics to History, see Gamberini (1983), 65-9.

30 Contrast e.g. *Ep*. 1.16.4 and 9.27, and his letters to Tacitus 6.16 and 7.33

31 Gamberini (1983), 73, 75, mentioning others who have offered this interpretation. Even less acceptable is Gamberini's suggestion that the confusions and contradictions in the letter arise from the casual, non-serious nature of it, Pliny having been 'guided by the pleasure of conversing about the topic, setting down his thoughts as they first occurred to him' (76).

32 Wilson (2003); Lefèvre (2009), 49-109; Griffin (1999); Hoffer (1999), 55-91 (indeed, one of the 'anxieties' of Pliny and his generation); Syme (1983). On the recent revisionist trend regarding Domitian's reign, see T.P. Wiseman (1996) and now M. Wilson's (2003) sharp answer to B.W. Jones, P. Southern and E.S. Ramage.

Pliny published his letter on historiography not ten years after Domitian's assassination, when a devastated generation was still taking stock.[33]

Men of that age had perforce learned a certain circumspect, indirect way of speaking. Informers everywhere impeded even normal forms of conversation: *Adempto per inquisitiones etiam loquendi audiendique commercio* (Tac. *Agr*. 2). As Quintilian, who also lived through the Domitianic terrors, wrote:

> For you can speak with success against those declamation tyrants as openly as you please, so long as what you say can be given a different interpretation, because it is only the risk of conviction, not also offence that has to be avoided. If this danger can be eluded by an ambiguous remark, everybody is in favour of the trick.[34]

But the emperor Domitian was a sensitive reader. He scrutinized the works of poets, philosophers — and historians. He executed one historian, Hermogenes of Tarsus, along with the copyists of the work, for mere allusions, *propter in historia figuras* (Suet. *Dom*. 10.1). He is reported to have seen criticism of himself in a critique of Nero.

The devastation of artistic talent and free expression wreaked by the Principate in general, and the cruelest emperors in particular, claimed historiography as one of its victims. This was Tacitus' preoccupation from his earliest work. His monograph on his father-in-law Agricola opens with a horrified lament over the decline of Roman historiography during the previous century and a half (*Agr*. 1-3):

> In days gone by, as there was a greater inclination and a more open path to the achievement of memorable actions, so the man of highest genius was led by the simple reward of a good conscience to hand on without partiality or self-seeking the remembrance of greatness. … We should have lost memory as well as voice, had it been as easy to forget as to keep silence. Now at last our spirit is returning. … still, from the necessary condition of human frailty, the remedy works less quickly than the disease. As our bodies grow but slowly, perish in a moment, so it is easier to crush than to revive genius and its pursuits. Besides, the charm of indolence steals over us, and the idleness which at first we loathed we afterwards love. (trans. A.J. Church and W.J. Brodribb)

Tacitus reiterates this concern at the opening of his subsequent two major works of narrative history, the *Historiae* and *Annales*:

> After the conflict at Actium, and when it became essential to peace, that all power should be centered in one man, these great intellects (*magna ingenia*) passed away. Then too the truthfulness of history (*veritas*) was impaired in many ways; at first, through men's ignorance of public affairs, which were now wholly strange to them, then, through their passion for flattery, or, on the other hand, their hatred of their masters. And so between the enmity of the one and the servility of the other, neither had any regard for posterity. (*Hist*. 1.1, trans. Church and Brodribb)

---

33 *Ep*. 9.13 offers a somewhat chilling glimpse of the confusion and incriminations following Domitian's death. The later Pliny, however, like the later Tacitus, reveals a certain recurring pessimism, what Gibson (2013) calls a 'darker Pliny'. Eck (2005) notes that the two inscriptions recording Titinius Capito's *cursus honorum* omit Domitian's name from his three appointments as *ab epistulis*; Nerva and Trajan are named.

34 *Inst.* 9.2.67-68 (trans. D.A. Russell).

> The successes and reverses of the old Roman people have been recorded by famous historians (*claris scriptoribus*); and fine intellects (*decora ingenia*) were not wanting to describe the times of Augustus, till growing sycophancy scared them away. The histories of Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, and Nero, while they were in power, were falsified through terror, and after their death were written under the irritation of a recent hatred. (*Ann*. 1.1, trans. Church and Brodribb)

Tacitus was consistent in his judgment that Roman historiography had suffered a disastrous decline during the previous century and a half, from the foundation of the Principate.[35] Tacitus found three reasons for the deterioration of the quality of historical writing: flattery and hatred, i.e. careerism and fear; and the fact that the greatest talents, the *magna ingenia*, stopped writing history altogether. These statements are sometimes dismissed as *topoi*, but not only is the part concerning the disappearance of the real literary talents from the field not a *topos*, Tacitus is describing a real and, from his perspective, alarming phenomenon affecting all fields of creative endeavor, but especially devastating to historiography.

It should be observed, first, that historians had in fact been targets, along with philosophers and poets, of previous emperors. Augustus had become displeased with the historian Timagenes and driven him from the palace; the satirist Cassius Severus was exiled and his books burnt;[36] and according to Dio Cassius (56.27.1-3), in 12 CE Augustus tracked down certain βίβλια ἄττα, burned them and punished (ἐκόλασε) their authors (not necessarily historians). The historians' lives were not in danger, apparently, but they were exposed to legal action or social confinement. Although there was no systematic curtailment of freedom of expression, those with talent and appetite for history, as Tacitus observed, chose less and less to write about recent events.

The first historian who paid for his writing with his life was Cremutius Cordus.[37] His incrimination and death under Tiberius for praising Brutus and Cassius — i.e. *allusions*, not direct critique of the emperor — was deemed a *novum crimen* by Tacitus,[38] who provided ample space in the *Annales*, including a speech in direct discourse by Cordus before his forced suicide, to stress the emblematic value of the historian's demise: with the "new charge", the *decora ingenia* would become even more hesitant and cautious. We have to accept Tacitus' determination that Cremutius Cordus was the first. Tiberius' reign also claimed Titus Labienus, a fiercely independent orator and historian, known for his Pompeian sympathies; his books were ordered burnt by the Senate, and he committed

---

35 The discrepancy between *Historiae* and *Annales* concerns *when* the decline began, not whether one occurred. I am not convinced by Marincola's attempt (1999) to resolve the apparent contradiction; he remonstrates (p. 403), that an 'objective evaluation' of Tacitus' predecessors would be 'unique in ancient historiography' — indeed it was.

36 Timagenes: Sen. *Contr*. 10.5.2; Bowersock (1965), 109-10, 125-6. Cassius Severus: Tac. *Ann*, 1.72.4. On Augustus' persecutions of literary figures, Syme (1939), 486-9. See excellent discussion by Toher (1990): that 'intimidation and suppression of history began under Augustus' is 'undeniable, based on extant evidence' (p. 141).

37 Tac. *Ann*. 34-5; Suet. *Tib*. 61.3; Cass. Dio 57.24.2-3; Sen. *Suas*. 6.19. Martin-Woodman (1989), 176-84; Syme (1958), 337-8.

38 Cremutius Cordus had read his work to Augustus: Suet. *Tib*. 61.3; Cass. Dio 57.24.3.

suicide afterwards.[39] Near the termination of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, Nero persecuted philosophers, poets, artists, intellectuals; no historians are known by name but may be assumed to have been among the victims — Lucan offended with an innovative, painful epic *poem* about recent history. While the death of Domitius Corbulo, who wrote a narrative of his own military accomplishments, was ordered for reasons other than literature,[40] it is to be noted that Pliny the Elder turned from history to a treatise on grammar under Nero, 'when the slavery of the times made it dangerous to write anything independent or inspired' (*cum omne studiorum genus paulo liberius et erectius periculosum servitus fecisset*, Plin. *Ep*. 3.5), and he postponed publication of his 31-book history of Nero's Principate and subsequent period until after his own death.[41] Domitian's persecutions included historians, as we have seen.

The growing trend of Roman literary talents' deciding not to write history was preceded by self-censorship in various forms, in accordance with Tacitus' observation. Livy is said to have waited to publish his last books until after Augustus' death.[42] Horace issued a poetic warning to Asinius Pollio (Od. 2.1) that his history of the civil war exposed him to peril — it was *periculosae plenum opus aleae* — and he encouraged Pollio to abandon the writing of history in favor of the safer and lighter subjects of verse.[43] The future emperor Claudius, writing history, was persuaded by his mother and grandmother to skip over the wars between Octavian and Antony because he could write 'neither freely nor accurately' (Suet. *Claud*. 41.2: *neque libere neque vere*). The Elder Seneca wrote a history *ab initio bellorum civilium, unde primum veritas retro abiit* (*Contr*. I, pr. 11). G. Fannius, haunted by a dream, did not finish his work on illustrious deaths under Nero.[44] Pliny the Elder's postponement of history under Nero has been noted above. Fronto wrote his *Principia Historiae* as a 'subtle refusal of the task' of composing the full history requested by the emperor.[45] Even Ammianus Marcellinus, who resumed the historical narrative from the point Tacitus left off, shunned certain subjects 'in order to avoid dangers connected with the truth'.[46]

While pitifully little of the historiography written in Latin during the Julio-Claudian period has survived, the number of historians' names known seems at first to belie Tacitus' claim of decline. He himself mentions several writers, sometimes admiringly,

---

39 Sen. *Contr*. 10 praef. 5-7 (note there similarity to Tacitus' language: *di melius, quod eo saeculo ista ingeniorum supplicia coeperunt, quo ingenia desierant*). According to Suet. *Cal*. 16, Caligula restored the banned books of Cremutius Cordus and Titus Labienus, but just to dissociate himself from Tiberius' crimes early in his reign; later he pondered suppressing the works of Homer, Vergil and Livy.

40 Tac. *Ann*. 15.16, cf. Syme (1958), 297.

41 *NH Praef*. 20.

42 According to a note appended to *Per*. CXXI, which Syme suggests has more than one interpretation: Syme (1959), 38-40.

43 See Marincola (1997), 157.

44 Plin. *Ep*. 5.5, who mentions that the addressee of that letter, Novius Maximus, has a similar work *inter manus*, which Syme thinks was like Fannius'. On Fannius' dream, and its relevance to Pliny's relation to Domitian, see now Baraz (2012).

45 Jones (1986), 65.

46 26.1.2: *ut et pericula declinentur veritati saepe contigua*. Cf. Momigliano (1977).

whose works he consulted for his own work.[47] Velleius Paterculus' Roman history probably represents the kind of sycophantic history which Tacitus condemned.[48] Yet the wretched rate of survival of Latin historiography obscures our view irreparably, and there is not enough evidence to contradict what Tacitus claims he saw, or even to charge him with exaggeration. And even from our disadvantaged viewpoint, there appears a steep drop in the number of historians known solely by name after Nero, so that the Flavian period seems relatively impoverished of historiography, and Rome seems almost barren of historians after Domitian.[49]

It should be noted that Tacitus was observing a breakdown in *Latin* historiography. Greek historiography continued to be written without break through the various stages of the Principate and Dominate and beyond the end of antiquity. In the second century, the premise of Lucian's satirical essay on historiography is that the world was flooded with Greek historians, and enough works, not to mention the names of historians whose works have been lost, have survived from the first centuries CE to show that Greek historiography did not suffer a decline comparable to that of Latin historiography.[50] Moreover, Roman history continued to be written *in Greek* by men of high rank, proximate to the emperor, like Cassius Dio.

The cessation of *ingenia magna* in Latin historiography had greater consequences than Tacitus could have imagined. After him, no original historiographical narrative was written in Latin for 200 years, when Ammianus Marcellinus resumed the narrative thread at 96 CE, continuing Tacitus' *Historiae*. In those two centuries, there labored only epitomizers and summarizers of earlier historical writing, no authors of new research.[51] Tacitus correctly noticed the mortality of Latin historical writing.

---

47 M. Servilius Nonianus, whom he praised (*Ann*. 14.19); Aufidius Bassus (*Dial*. 23, cf. Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.103); Cluvius Rufus (*Ann*. 13.20, 14.2, cf. Plin. *Ep*. 9.19); Fabius Rusticus, whom Tacitus compared to Livy (*Ann.* 13.20, 14.2); and the distinguished and highly accomplished Domitius Corbulo (*Ann.* 13-15 *passim*).

48 But he is enjoying something of a revival, cf. Cowan (2011).

49 Tac. *Hist*. 2.101.1, on Flavian historians; Bardon (1968), and esp. 294, on the relation between Vespasian and historians. Pomponius Saturninus is mentioned by Pliny (*Ep*. 1.16); Quintilian (*Inst*. 10.1.104) mentions one historian still alive *saeculorum memoria dignus*, his identity unknown to us, but Quintilian has only one to name. On literature under Trajan, and the dearth of historiography, see Syme (1958) 86-99, esp. 90-2; Matthews (2007).

50 See above, n. 12; Janiszewski (2006).

51 Epitomizers include Florus, Granius Licinianus, Justin, Lucius Ampelius, Festus. This gap in Latin historiography has been observed: 'Nor did any Roman annalist or political historian take up the inheritance of Tacitus' (Syme [1958], 503); 'In Latin no major historical writing is extant or known between Tacitus and the later fourth century …' (Matthews [2007], 294); etc. Kemezis (2010) has devoted a study to 'the absence of contemporary historiography under the Antonines'; the thesis is not entirely true, and it is crucial to distinguish between Latin and Greek. Sidebottom (2007), 73 n. 123, while entertaining the possibility that 'the strange death of Latin history writing might be at least partly an illusion', nonetheless gives three persuasive reasons why it is not. Toher (1990), 150-1, explains cogently why the decline began already in Augustus' Principate, as Tacitus had observed. Albrecht (1997) gives a briefer, unsatisfactory explanation, but see his survey

Historians had not been singled out by suspicious regimes. Philosophers and poets were persecuted, too, but their literary professions did not suffer the same demise as Latin historiography. Reasons may be speculated. History, first of all, had a formal duty to unvarnished, unveiled empirical truth,[52] unlike the allusive nature of poetry and the abstractions of philosophy; as Tacitus remarked, the *praecipuum munus* of history is to record *dicta factaque* (*Ann*. 3.65). Emperors from Augustus on invested considerable resources in constructing and controlling the presentation of their regimes. Stoic philosophers perished under Nero and Domitian because of displays of independence rather than subtle writing. Moreover, military and political affairs, the main subject of history, had come under the exclusive control of the emperor.[53] Finally, historians who wrote in Latin were largely senators, retired soldiers and statesmen, or men of wealth and leisure — in other words, the kind and rank of men by whom emperors felt most threatened.[54] For some reason, men of this caliber, like Cassius Dio, could still write contemporary history expansively in *Greek*, even as they stopped writing history in Latin altogether; this remains a puzzle. It is doubtful that any single work of written history could actually destabilize a regime, but emperors, even the more benign ones, easily translated open or veiled critique, or personal suspicion, into danger to the Roman state.

Tacitus' friend Pliny was a *decorum ingenium* who chose not to write history: he was a Roman senator with experience in imperial administration in Rome (and afterwards in the provinces), possessing proven oratorical skills and a literary bent; he was well-connected and could obtain access to private and public archives. Recent political upheavals and glorious victories provided fresh material. His refusal to write history in *Ep*. 5.8 was motivated by more than previous commitments, or laziness.[55] Syme suggested, after Mommsen, that Pliny did not write history because he was daunted by Tacitus' *Historiae*.[56] But Pliny explained the reason. He over-insisted that he had a clear conscience (*nullius sibi conscius culpae*). Like Mnesthenus in *Aeneid* 5, he was content *not* to be first, not to gain too much attention from his writing. Like Mnesthenus, he wished to 'prevent the unspeakable', *prohibere nefas*: this word carried heavy connotations for Pliny's generation. His uncle had written history *religiosissime* and had proceeded *recto itinere*. Tacitus was practically alone in choosing that brave path.

Recent scholarship on Pliny has argued persuasively that in his letters Pliny was transmuting epistolography into a kind of historiography.[57] He did not write history but

---

of related genres (1271-1434). On the transformations in Latin literature in general from the second century onward, see Dewar (2000).

52 See above, n. 13, on ancient notions of historical truth.

53 Note Tacitus' bitterness about his confined topics: *Ann*. 4.32, 13.31.

54 Syme (1939), 251.

55 Note *Ep*. 1.2.6 ironically on his *desidia*, on which see now Morello (2007), 172-3.

56 Syme (1958), 117.

57 Marchesi (2008), already Traub (1955); Beutel (2000), 163-5; Ash (2003); Augoustakis (2005); Tzounakas (2007), cf. 49 n. 32. *Ep*. 6.16.3: *Equidem beatos puto, quibus deorum munere datum est aut facere scribenda aut scribere legenda, beatissimos vero quibus utrumque*, on which see Marchesi (2008), 151-3, 171-89. Pliny probably noticed the same tendency in Cicero, see Fleck (1993). On the historiographical trend in Pliny, note esp. the

cheerfully experimented with historiographical style. His two accounts of the eruption of Vesuvius and death of his uncle, his accounts of Senate debates, etc., are fastidiously framed and written like historiographical narrative. Pliny had the historiographical impulse, it seems, if not Tacitus' courage and facility. 'For Pliny historiography is the subconscious of epistolography'.[58] His avoidance of history was deliberate and planned. This negative intention in fact appears at the head of his collection of letters, as if giving his work a title: *Collegi non servato temporis ordine (neque enim historiam componebam), sed ut quaeque in manus venerate* (*Ep*. 1.1).[59]

Pliny encouraged many writers in their projects, but rarely historians, with the notable exception of Tacitus. He attended public readings of poets and orators, but few historians.[60] At one such exceptional event, a historian reading his highly accurate account of recent events (*verissimum librum*)[61] was asked to stop because his audience found it too painful to hear the recitation of their own crimes and misdemeanors; the next day's reading was canceled (*Ep*. 9.27). Pliny's contemporaries preferred such monumental records of malfeasance and complicity to be buried (*tantus audiendi quae fecerint pudor, quibus nullus faciendi quae audire erubescunt*). The audience for accurate historical accounts of recent events was dwindling. Even fewer dared to write it.

Bibliography

Albrecht, M. von (1997). *A History of Roman Literature, From Livius Andronicus to Boethius* II, Leiden.

Ash, R. (2003). '*Aliud est enim epistulam, aliud historiam . . . scribere* (Epistles 6.16.22): Pliny the Historian?', *Arethusa* 36, 211–26.

Augoustakis, A. (2005). '*Nequaquam historia digna*? Plinian Style in *Ep*. 6.20', *CJ* 100, 265-73.

following letters: *Ep*. 1.1; 3.1, 14, 16, 20; 6.16, 6.20, 7.33 (to Tacitus); 6.27; 8.4, 14; 9.13, 14, 27. On historical figures in the letters, see Méthy (2003), Lefèvre (2009), 23-47.

58 Marchesi (2008), 145. Compare Syme (1958), 117: 'The consular orator (it appears) was hankering after history'.

59 Analyses of *Ep.* 1.1 by Marchesi (2008). 20-4; Hoffer (1999), 15-27; Ash (2003). Fitzgerald (2007) now makes a strong argument for Pliny having intended his letters as a lasting *oeuvre*.

60 In 1.10 Pliny enthuses: *urbs nostra liberalibus studiis floruit*, but history is hardly ever part of this (cf. *Ep*. 7.9; 7.17.3, with a hedge: *cur concedant [si concedunt tamen] historiam debere recitari …*). Poets and readings: 1.3, 17; 2.10; 3.15; 4.3 and 18; 5.17; 6.15; 8.13; 9.8, 22, 33, 38. Orators and others: 2.3; 4.20, 5.5; 6.21; 9.1.

61 Syme (1958), 120, intimates the historian was Tacitus, cf. Sherwin-White (1966), 509-10.

Avenarius, G. (1956). *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung*, Meisenheim am Glan.
Baier, Th. (2003). 'κτῆμα oder ἀγώνισμα: Plinius über historischen und rhetorischen Stil (*Epist*. 5, 8)', in L. Castagna and E. Lefèvre (eds.), *Plinius der Jüngere und seine Zeit*, Leipzig, 69-81.
Banchich, T.M. (2007). 'The Epitomizing Tradition in Late Antiquity', in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* I, Malden, MA, 305-11.
Baraz, Y. (2012). 'Pliny's Epistolary Dreams and the Ghost of Domitian', *TAPA* 142, 105-32.
Bardon, H. (1968). *Les empereurs et les lettres latines d'Auguste à Hadrien*, Paris.
Beutel, F. (2000). *Vergangenheit als Politik: Neue Aspekte im Werk des jüngeren Plinius*, Frankfurt am Main.
Bowersock, G. (1965). *Augustus and the Greek World*, Oxford.
Cova, P.V. (1966). *La critica letteraria di Plinio il Giovane*, Brescia.
(2003). 'Plinio il Giovane contra Quintiliano', in L. Castagna and E. Lefèvre (eds.), *Plinius der Jüngere und seine Zeit*, Leipzig, 85-94.
Cowan, E. (ed.) (2011). *Velleius Paterculus: Making History*, Swansea.
Dewar, M. (2000). 'Culture Wars: Latin Literature from the Second Century to the End of the Classical Era', in O. Taplin (ed.), *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective*, Oxford, 519-71.
Eck, W. (2005). 'Auf der Suche nach Personen und Persönlichkeiten: *Cursus honorum* und Biographie' in K. Vössing (ed.), *Biographie und Prosopographie. Internationales Kolloquium zum 65. Geburtstag von Anthony R. Birley. Historia Einzelschriften* 178, Stuttgart: 53-72.
Fantham, E. (2004). *The Roman World of Cicero's* De Oratore, Oxford.
Fitzgerald, W. (2007). 'The Letter's the Thing (in Pliny, Book 7)', in R. Morello and A.D. Morrison (eds.), *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*, Oxford, 191-210.
Fleck, M. (1993). *Cicero als Historiker*, Stuttgart.
Fox, M. (2007). *Cicero's Philosophy of History*, Oxford.
Gamberini, F. (1983). *Stylistic Theory and Practice in the Younger Pliny*, Hildesheim – Zürich – New York.
Gibson, R.K. (2011). 'Elder and Better: The *Naturalis Historia* and the *Letters* of the Younger Pliny', in R.K. Gibson and R. Morello (eds.), *Pliny the Elder: Themes and Contexts*, Leiden, 187-205.
—— (2013). 'A Darker Pliny', *Working Papers on Nervan, Trajanic and Hadrianic Literature*1.12:http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/literaryinteractions/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/A-DARKER-PLINY.pdf.
Gibson, R.K. and R. Morello (2012). *Reading the* Letters *of Pliny the Younger: An Introduction*, Cambridge.
Griffin, M. (1999). 'Pliny and Tacitus', *SCI* 18, 139-58.
Hall, J. (1998). 'Cicero to Lucceius (*Fam*. 5.12) in Its Social Context: *Valde Bella*?', *CPh* 93, 308-21.
Hoffer, S.E. (1999). *The Anxieties of Pliny the Younger*, Atlanta.
Homeyer, H. (1965). *Lukian, Wie man Geschichte schreiben soll*, Munich.
Huergon, J. (1969). 'Pline le Jeune tenté par l'histoire', *REL* 47, 345-54.
Hurst, A. (2010). *Lucien de Samosate, Comment Écrire L'histoire*, Paris.

Janiszewski, P. (2006). *The Missing Link: Greek Pagan Historiography in the Second Half of the Third Century and in the Fourth Century A.D.*, Warsaw.
Jones, C.P. (1986). *Culture and Society in Lucian*, Cambridge, MA.
Kasser, H. (1993). '*extremos pudeat redisse* — Plinius im Wettstreit mit der Vergangenheit: Zu Vergilzitaten beuim jüngeren Plinius', *Antike und Abendland* 39, 144-54.
Kemezis, A.M. (2010). 'Lucian, Fronto, and the Absence of Contemporary Historiography under the Antonines', *AJP* 131, 285-325.
Leeman, A.D. (1963). *Orationis Ratio: The Stylistic Theories and Practice of the Roman Orators, Historians and Philosophers*, Amsterdam.
—— (1985). 'L'historiographie dans le De oratore de Cicéron', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 1985, 280-8.
Lefèvre, E. (1997). 'Plinius-Studien VII: Cicero das unerreichbare Vorbild (Ep. 1,2; 3,14; 4,8; 7,4; 9,2)', *Gymnasium* 103, 333-53.
—— (2009). *Von Römertum zum Ästhetizmus: Studien zu den Briefen des jüngeren Plinius*, Berlin-New York.
Marchesi, I. (2008). *The Art of Pliny's Letters: The Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence*, Cambridge.
Marincola, J. (1997), *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*, Cambridge.
—— (1999). 'Tacitus' Prefaces and the Decline of Imperial Historiography', *Latomus* 58, 391-404.
—— (2007). 'ἀλήθεια', *Lexicon historiographicum graecum et latinum*, fasc. 2, 7-29.
Martin, R.H. and A.J. Woodman (1989). *Tacitus, Annals Book IV*, Cambridge.
Matthews, J. (2007). 'The Emperor and his Historians', in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* I, Malden, MA, 290-304.
Mayer, R. (2003). 'Pliny and *Gloria Dicendi*', *Arethusa* 36, 227-34.
Méthy, N. (2003). 'Ad exemplar antiquitatis: Les grandes figures du passé dans la correspondance de Pline le jeune', *REL* 81, 200-14.
Momigliano, A. (1977). 'The Lonely Historian Ammianus Marcellinus', repr. in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography*, Middletown, CT, 127-40.
Morello, R. (2003). 'Pliny and the Art of Saying Nothing', *Arethusa* 36, 187-209.
—— (2007). 'Confidence, *Inuidia*, and Pliny's Epistolary Curriculum', in R. Morello and A.D. Morrison (eds.), *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*, Oxford, 169-89.
Mynors, R.A.B. (1963). *C. Plini Caecili Secundi Epistularum Libri Decem*, Oxford.
—— (1990). *Virgil, Georgics*, Oxford.
Näf, B. (2010). *Antike Geschichtsschreibung: Form, Leistung, Wirkung*, Stuttgart.
Northwood, S.J. (2008). 'Cicero de Oratore 2.51-64 and Rhetoric in Historiography', *Mnemosyne* 61, 228-44.
Nutting, H. C. (1926). 'Cicero and the Younger Pliny', *CJ* 21, 420-30.
Oliva, A. (1993). 'Plinio Ep. V,8 e Tucidide 1.22.4', *Athenaeum* 81, 279-83.
Pitcher, L. (2009). *Writing Ancient History*, London-New York.
Riggsby, A.M. (1995). 'Pliny on Cicero and Oratory: Self-Fashioning in the Public Eye', *AJP* 116, 123-35.
Ronconi, A. (1996). 'Exitus Illustrium Virorum, *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 6, 1258–68.

Shackleton Bailey, D.R. (1977). *Cicero: Epistulae ad Familiares*, Cambridge.
Sherwin-White, A.N. (1966). *The Letters of Pliny. A Historical and Social Commentary*, Oxford.
Sidebottom, H. (2007). 'Severan Historiography: Evidence, Patterns and Arguments', in S. Swain, S. Harrison and J. Elsner (eds.), *Severan Culture*, Cambridge, 52-82.
Strobel, K. (2003). 'Plinius und Domitian: Der willige Helfer eines Unrechtssytems?', in L. Castagna and E. Lefèvre (eds.), *Plinius der Jüngere und seine Zeit*, Leipzig, 303-14.
Syme, R. (1939). *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford.
—— (1958). *Tacitus* I-II, Oxford.
—— (1959). 'Livy and Augustus', *HSCP* 64, 27-87.
—— (1983). 'Domitian: The Last Years', *Chiron* 13, 121-46.
Thomas, R.F. (1988). *Virgil, Georgics. Volume 2: Books III-IV*, Cambridge.
Toher, M. (1990). 'Augustus and the Evolution of Roman Historiography', in K.A. Raaflaub and M. Toher (eds.), *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate*, Berkeley, 139-54.
Traub, H.W. (1955). 'Pliny's Treatment of History in Epistolary Form', *TAPA* 86, 213-32.
Trisoglio, F. (1972). *La personalità di Plinio il Giovane nei suoi rapporti con la politica, la società e la letteratura*, Torino.
Tzounakas, S. (2007). '*Neque enim historiam componebam*: Pliny's First Epistle and his Attitude towards Historiography', *Museum Helveticum* 64, 42-54.
Weische, A. (1989). 'Plinius d. J. und Cicero. Untersuchungen zur römischen Epistolographie in Republik und Kaiserzeit', *ANRW* 2.33.1, 375-86.
Wiseman, T.P. (1996). 'Domitian and the Dynamics of Terror in Classical Rome', *History Today* 46, 19- 24.

Tel Aviv University