

PLINY, TACITUS AND THE MONUMENTS OF PALLAS*

ABSTRACT

This article is a discussion of Plin. Ep. 7.29 and Ep. 8.6, in which he presents his reaction to seeing the grave monument of Marcus Antonius Pallas, the freedman and minister of the Emperor Claudius, beside the Via Tiburtina. The monument records a senatorial vote of thanks to Pallas, and Pliny expresses intense indignation at the Senate's subservience and at the power and influence wielded by a freedman. This article compares Pliny's letters with Tacitus' account of the senatorial vote of thanks to Pallas at Ann. 12.52–3 and explores the differences between the ways in which the two authors encourage readers to relate to past events. It is noted that the Pallas letters are unusual amongst Pliny's letters for their treatment of material unconnected with the life and career of Pliny and his friends, and argued that in Ep. 7.29 Pliny uses language and attitudes drawn from satire to evoke the past. Ep. 8.6 is read as an idiosyncratic piece of historical enquiry, considering Pliny's use of citation and his anonymization of historical individuals. Both letters are considered in the context of the surrounding letters, and a hypothesis is offered regarding the identity of their addressee Montanus, considering evidence from Tacitus' Histories and Annals. Discussion of Tac. Ann. 12.52–3 focusses on the use of irony. Pliny's evocation of enargeia ('vividness') is compared with that of Tacitus. The article concludes with comparison of the historical accounts offered by Pliny and Tacitus through reflection on Juvenal, Satire 1.

Keywords: Pliny the Younger; Tacitus; Marcus Antonius Pallas; Claudius; Juvenal; epistolography; satire; *indignatio*

In two letters, *Ep. 7.29* and *Ep. 8.6*, Pliny the Younger records his reaction to reading an inscription on the tomb of Claudius' freedman Marcus Antonius Pallas beside the Via Tiburtina.¹ In both letters Pliny cites the monument's record of a senatorial vote of thanks to Pallas, presenting in the former a short denunciation of Pallas' arrogance, and in the latter a much longer commentary on those events, based on passages cited from the *acta senatus*.² The two letters, with their expressions of intense resentment at the power wielded by a freedman, have been treated by scholars for the light they shed on Roman social hierarchies, exemplarity and epigraphic memorials.³ The present

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¹ On Pallas, see *PIR*² A 858.

² On the Senate's record-keeping in the *acta*, see R.J.A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton, 1984), 308–37.

³ *Ep. 7.29* and *Ep. 8.6* are treated by A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford, 1966), 438–9, 453–5. H. Pavis-D'Escurac, 'Pline le Jeune et l'affranchi Pallas (*Ep. 7.29*; *8.6*)', *Index* 13 (1985), 313–25 discusses these two letters in terms of Pliny's attitude

article argues that illuminating comparisons can be drawn with Tacitus' contemporary work, the *Histories*, and, later, with his brief treatment of the honouring of Pallas in the *Annals* (12.52.3–53.3). In particular, it will be argued that the two authors invite their readers to develop quite different relationships with the past.

I: PLINY'S LETTERS ON THE MONUMENT OF PALLAS

Plin. *Ep.* 7.29:

C. PLINIVS MONTANO SVO S.

Ridebis, deinde indignaberis, deinde ridebis, si legeris, quod nisi legeris non potes credere. [2] est uia Tiburtina intra primum lapidem (proxime adnotauit) monimentum Pallantis ita inscriptum: *Huic senatus ob fidem pietatemque erga patronos ornamenta praetoria decreuit et sestertium centies quinquagies, cuius honore contentus fuit.* [3] equidem numquam sum miratus quae saepius a fortuna quam a iudicio proficiscerentur; maxime tamen hic me titulus admonuit, quam essent mimica et inepta, quae interdum in hoc caenum, in has sordes abicerentur, quae denique ille furcifer et recipere ausus est et recusare, atque etiam ut moderationis exemplum posteris prodere. [4] sed quid indignor? ridere satius, ne se magnum aliquid adeptos putent, qui huc felicitate perueniunt ut rideantur. uale.

Dear Montanus,

You will laugh, then you will be outraged, then you will laugh, if you read what you won't believe unless you've read it. [2] Just short of the first milestone on the Via Tiburtina (I noticed it just now) there stands a monument to Pallas with the following inscription: *To this man, for his loyalty and duty towards his patrons, the Senate decreed praetorian insignia and fifteen million sesterces; of these, he was content with the honour.* [3] For my part, I have never admired those things that come more often from fortune than from wisdom; this inscription, however, made it particularly clear to me how farcical and ridiculous were the distinctions that from time to time were wasted on this filth, this trash, distinctions which that scumbag had the audacity to take and to refuse, and even to display as a model of modesty to posterity. [4] But why am I getting worked up? It is better to laugh, so that people don't think they have attained anything great, when they are so blessed as to be laughed at. Farewell.

towards a social climber. E. Leach, 'Pliny's epistolary re-inscription: writing the tombs of Verginius Rufus and Pallas the Claudian secretary "a rationibus"', *SyllClass* 24 (2013), 125–44 discusses Pliny's literary reframing of inscriptions in *Ep.* 7.29 and 8.6 with reference also to *Ep.* 6.10 and 9.19 on the unfinished tomb of Verginius Rufus. M.B. Roller, *Constructing Autocracy: Aristocrats and Emperors in Julio-Claudian Rome* (Princeton, 2001), 271–2 treats *Ep.* 8.6 as 'the fullest and most rhetorically sustained expression of elite resentment at powerful imperial freedmen'. J. Henderson, 'Down the pan: historical exemplarity in the *Panegyricus*', in P.A. Roche (ed.), *Pliny's Praise: The Panegyricus in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 2011), 142–74, at 164–5 and R. Morello, 'Traditional exempla and Nerva's new modernity: making Fabricius take the cash', in A. König and C. Whitton (edd.), *Roman Literature under Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian: Literary Interactions A.D. 96–138* (Cambridge, 2018), 146–86 offer important insights into Pliny's use of *exempla* at *Ep.* 8.6.2. The present article owes much to C. Whitton, 'Pliny, *Epistles* 8.14: Senate, slavery and the *Agricola*', *JRS* 100 (2010), 118–39, a rich exploration of major themes in *Ep.* 8.14, which identifies *Ep.* 8.6 as the second most important letter in Book 8, linked to *Ep.* 8.14, and C. Whitton, '"Let us tread our path together": Tacitus and the Younger Pliny', in V.E. Pagán (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus* (Chichester, 2012), 345–68; also to R. Morello, 'Pliny Book 8: two viewpoints and the pedestrian reader', in I. Marchesi (ed.), *Pliny the Book-Maker: Betting on Posterity in the Epistles* (Oxford, 2015), 146–87 with its subtle interlinked readings of the first half of Book 8, and to R. Gibson, 'Not dark yet ... reading to the end of Pliny's nine-book collection', in I. Marchesi (ed.), *Pliny the Book-Maker: Betting on Posterity in the Epistles* (Oxford, 2015), 187–225 for its challenge to readings of Plinian optimism in *Letters* 7 to 9. The major work on Pliny's intertextual technique is C. Whitton, *The Arts of Imitation in Latin Prose: Pliny's Epistles/Quintilian in Brief* (Cambridge, 2019).

Letter 7.29 begins with a prediction of how Montanus will react to Pliny's report: 'You will laugh, then you will be outraged, then you will laugh' (7.29.1).⁴ Pliny shows his own emotional and moral response following this trajectory; indeed, the shifting emotional tenor of the letter dramatizes the sequence. At first, Pallas' distinctions, or the Senate's role in granting them, might be regarded in a comical light as 'farical and ridiculous' (*mimica et inepta*).⁵ The invocation of comic acting might bring to mind the stock characters of the *seruus callidus* and his duped master—figures that might well accord with critical views of Pallas' relationship to Claudius or, here, his manipulation of the Senate. The possibility of light amusement gives way, however, when Pliny calls Pallas *caenum* ... *sordes* ... *furcifer*. The tricolon culminates in a word that has resonances of comic invective but also of slave punishment.⁶ Finally, Pliny returns to laughter, as the letter ends on the same verb with which it began, this time employed transitively (*ridebis* ... *rideantur*). At the outset of the letter, laughter appears to represent surprise and disbelief at a monument representing an era so different from the present that it must at first seem ridiculous; what Pliny settles upon, however, is a deliberate choice to laugh *at* Pallas. Surprise turns to indignation and finally to scornful ridicule: laughter as a weapon. Pliny's confidence in the agreement of his addressee is supposed to amplify the sense that Pallas' message has become ridiculous before posterity.⁷

Ridicule is underpinned by the letter's invocation of language and material drawing on the tradition of verse satire.⁸ Furthermore, Pliny's chosen subject matter is ripe for satirical treatment. While Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* is the most concentrated and exuberant expression of ridicule for Claudius' subservience to his wives and freedmen, Tacitus later weaves a consistent strand of comic ridicule into his depiction of Claudius' reign in the *Annals*.⁹ Here, and in *Ep.* 8.6, Pliny adds his own contribution to the

⁴ It is a commonplace of funerary epigraphy to address and bid farewell to a passer-by, so Pliny's letter may be regarded as a way of taking up the invitation to read and reflect upon the inscription. For an intertext with *Ep.* 1.6, addressed to Tacitus, which begins *ridebis*, see Part IV below.

⁵ Theatrical comedy is suggested by the combination of *mimicus* (an adjective relating to actors) and *ineptus* (with its sense of the ridiculous).

⁶ *TLL* 6.1.1611.4–9, citing Isid. *Etym.* 10.109 and *Schol. Ter.* page 88.11. The word *furcifer* is used only here by Pliny, and of its thirty-two literary attestations fifteen are in Plautus and four in Terence. Plautus thrice uses the intensified *trifurcifer*. In *Ep.* 8.6 Pliny explores the metaphor of the Senate's enslavement and calls Pallas, hyperbolically, *seruus* (§4, immediately juxtaposed with the same word applied to the Senate) and *mancipium* (§14). A. Richlin, *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic: Plautus and Popular Comedy* (Cambridge, 2019) explores ways in which comedy expresses perspectives and desires of slaves and ex-slaves; by contrast, Pliny draws on language reminiscent of comedy to reinforce hierarchies.

⁷ Here, and in my reading of *Ep.* 8.6, I place greater emphasis than other commentators on Pliny's insistence that Montanus will agree with him in every respect: cf. G. Woolf, 'Monumental writing and the expansion of Roman society in the Early Empire', *JRS* 86 (1996), 22–39, at 26: 'Pliny offers his correspondent a *choice* of responses ... and the tone of the letter *vacillates* between these two positions' (my emphasis—I find that Pliny's responses appear carefully judged rather than uncertain, and that he prescribes the same responses to his addressee). Leach (n. 3), 131–2 sees an invitation for Montanus to be Pliny's 'research partner'; I see no invitation for Montanus to think independently of Pliny on any point of interpretation.

⁸ I. Marchesi, *The Art of Pliny's Letters: A Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence* (Cambridge, 2008) provides extensive arguments for the relevance of verse genres to Pliny's letter collection. Nevertheless, my argument aims to show the importance in the Pallas letters of a genre generally considered marginal in Pliny's literary life, for which see G. Woolf, 'The city of letters', in C. Edwards and G. Woolf (edd.), *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge, 2003), 203–21, at 213 n. 30.

⁹ S.K. Dickson, 'Claudius *Saturnalicus princeps*', *Latomus* 36 (1977), 634–47 provides a detailed discussion of this feature of the Claudian *Annals*, noting also that Suetonius (*Claud.* 29.1) seems to

satirizing of Claudian Rome by directing attention primarily towards the role of the Senate, though the emperor's role in overseeing the proper functioning of government is of course in focus as well. Programmatic remarks frame the letter, emphasizing its satirical character. The statement *ridebis, deinde indignaberis, deinde ridebis* calls for a combination of emotions that belongs to the tradition of verse satire dating back to Lucilius, as well as finding powerful expression in the *Apocolocyntosis*, where Claudius is cast as the subservient *Saturnalicus princeps* (*Apoc.* 8).¹⁰ The expression *satiatus* in Pliny's conclusion reiterates the concern with proportion and appropriateness that is motivated by the inscription itself, with its claim to moderation. The decision to settle on ridicule, in the phrase *ridere satius*, also implies the letter's role as satire, punning on the programmatic significance of sufficiency and satiety that animates much of the Roman satirical tradition.¹¹ The tonal and emotional variety that is expressed within the letter, as Pliny tests out amusement and outrage, before settling on ridicule, may reflect the character of satire as the *lanx satura*, the mixed platter.¹² Finally, with caustic irony, the final words *ut rideantur* fall into the pattern of dactyl and trochee that marks the end of a dactylic hexameter.¹³ In Pliny's prose this so-called heroic clausula is generally avoided, and it seems significant to find it in such an emphatic position at the end of a letter.¹⁴ Pliny nods to the metre of verse satire as he states his determination to deflate Pallas' boast.

It soon emerges that the brief treatment given to Pallas' inscription in *Ep.* 7.29 is not sufficient. A second letter (*Ep.* 8.6) arrives unsolicited in the next book, announcing that Pliny has felt compelled to look up the senatorial records, the *acta senatus*, to find out what the senators themselves said on the occasion of the honours voted to Pallas. As in *Ep.* 7.29, the question of proportion and excess is central to the rhetoric of *Ep.* 8.6: Pliny finds it 'worth his while' (*pretium operae*) to look up the *acta*, in which he finds the record of the senators' speeches to be *tam copiosum et effusum, ut ille superbissimus titulus modicus atque etiam demissus uideretur* ('so fulsome and overblown language that even that exceedingly arrogant inscription [*sc.* of Pallas] seemed modest—even humble', *Ep.* 8.6.2).

Pliny's investigation into the events has struck readers as reminiscent of a historian's work.¹⁵ Unlike historiography, however, the episode cites speeches from the senatorial

draw upon a similar tradition without integrating it entirely into the portrait of Claudius (at 646). For Saturnalian carnival as a model for understanding the ridicule of imperial verse satire, cf. P.A. Miller, 'Imperial satire as Saturnalia', in S.M. Braund (ed.), *A Companion to Persius and Juvenal* (Chichester, 2014), 312–33.

¹⁰ Whitton (n. 3 [2010]), 137–8 n. 124 suggests a passing thought of the *Saturnalicus princeps* in *Ep.* 8.7. Morello (n. 3 [2018]), 325 remarks on the Pallas letters in light of the Saturnalian reference in *Ep.* 8.7: 'This inversion of the status of all parties is a public and political version of the temporary social upheaval of the Saturnalia.' For the likely influence of Lucilius on Seneca's Menippean satire, cf. P.T. Eden, *Seneca Apocolocyntosis* (Cambridge, 1984), 16–17.

¹¹ On the continuing concern with proportion and moderation in *Ep.* 8.6, see below. For the prominence of satiety and abundance as programmatic for Roman *satura*, cf. E. Gowers, *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature* (Oxford, 1992), 219 and S.M. Braund, *Juvenal Satires Book I* (Cambridge, 1996), 5.

¹² That variety is further developed when Pliny returns to Pallas in *Ep.* 8.6.

¹³ On Pliny's artful use of rhythmic clausulae, see C. Whitton, *Pliny the Younger Epistles Book II* (Cambridge, 2013), 28–32.

¹⁴ On the avoidance of the heroic clausula in Pliny's prose: Whitton (n. 13), 29 n. 170.

¹⁵ Morello (n. 3 [2018]), 324 refers to the 'historian's effort' made by Pliny. Cf. Pavis-D'Escurac (n. 3), 313. Between *Ep.* 7.29 and *Ep.* 8.6, Pliny addresses Tacitus in a letter that narrates his own role in the prosecution of Baebius Massa: *quamquam diligentiam tuam fugere non possit, cum sit in*

acta verbatim.¹⁶ Rhetorically, the impression that Pliny seeks to create is that the members of the Claudian Senate are damned by their own words. *Ep.* 8.6 might then seem to relate to the past in a different way from the satirical *Ep.* 7.29: in this letter, there is less room for satire, since the words handed down from the past are framed as being so excessive that they elicit indignation in their own right. In this letter, a considerably amplified sequel to *Ep.* 7.29 both in length and in rhetorical intensity, laughter plays a less prominent role. Nevertheless, as will be discussed, Pliny is ever present as commentator and interpretative guide. Rather than allowing historical ironies to emerge directly from the cited speeches, Pliny directs attention to particular lines of irony and obscures others.

Excess is central to Pliny's criticism of the *senatus consultum* (*Ep.* 8.6.2):

inueni tam copiosum et effusum, ut ille superbissimus titulus modicus atque etiam demissus uideretur. conferant se misceantque, non dico illi ueteres, Africani Achaici Numantini, sed hi proximi Marii Sullae Pompei (nolo progredi longius): infra Pallantis laudes iacebunt.

I found it so fulsome and overblown that even that exceedingly arrogant inscription seemed modest—even humble. If you were to gather and combine—I don't mean those ancient men like Africanus, Achaicus and Numantinus, but these recent ones of the ilk of Marius, Sulla and Pompey (I refuse to go any further), they will be buried beneath the praises of Pallas.

Pliny claims that Pallas was praised in language surpassing what was accorded to heroes of the Republic.¹⁷ As Pliny goes on to say, Pallas' tomb was not the only monument attesting to the transactions in the Senate: a bronze inscription had been placed in the forum recording the emperor's words of praise and the Senate's decisions (*Ep.* 8.6.13–14).¹⁸ Pallas himself attains exemplary status, with his own place in Rome's 'constitutional topography'.¹⁹ When Pliny divides the names of his exemplary points of reference into two groups of three, he appears to set off heroes of impeccable senatorial credentials against power-hungry Late Republican figures. His refusal to

publicis actis (*Ep.* 7.33.3). Cf. Leach (n. 3), 131, who finds a reference to Livy's preface in the letter's programmatic use of *pretium operae*. For the prominence of material relating to the writing of history and the commemoration of the past in the letters before and after the Pallas letters, see below, and for detailed reflection on the effects of reading between letters in close proximity in Book 8, see Morello (n. 3 [2015]).

¹⁶ Pliny famously states that his collection is not a history in the publication letter to Septicius Clarus (*Ep.* 1.1.1); the invited comparison is supplemented by the extended correspondence with Tacitus, the individual most frequently addressed in Books 1–9. R. Ash, '*Aliud est enim epistulam, aliud historiam ... scribere*' (*Epistles* 6.16.22): Pliny the historian?', *Arethusa* 36 (2003), 211–25, at 224 offers a sound basis for approaching elements of history in Pliny's letters: 'It seems that despite Pliny's initial protests, he 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.'

¹⁷ The use of traditional *exempla* enhances the sense that Pliny is expanding the genre of epistolography: Morello (n. 3 [2018]), 309, with reference also to Cicero and Seneca, notes that epistolography is not 'a natural haven for classic Republican *exempla*', which 'seem, perhaps, too formal for the genre'.

¹⁸ It is notable that in his effort to fashion an *exemplum* for posterity Pliny chooses to record the existence of a monument that has presumably disappeared by the time of the *Letters* (cf. *Ep.* 6.10 and 9.19), both reporting an epitaph for Verginius Rufus and making public an as yet unfinished monument. M. Corbier, 'Pallas et la statue de César. Affichage et espace public à Rome', *Revue Numismatique* 152 (1997), 11–40 investigates the possible location of the bronze inscription.

¹⁹ The expression is that of F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Ann Arbor, 1998), 56, 158. For the effect of monuments in inscribing history onto Rome's urban centre, cf. A.M. Gowing, *Empire and Memory: The Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), 132–59.

cite any further *exempla* ostentatiously avoids mentioning Julius Caesar or the emperors. Though hardly subtle, the *recusatio* leaves it suggestively open to interpretation whether the omission is tactful or pointed. Henderson notes the elliptic effect: Marius and Sulla are paired, but Pompey's presumable complement, Caesar, is conspicuously absent.²⁰ Morello reads an implied teleology: Republican heroes are followed by self-aggrandizing generals, but instead of Caesarism being the next step, the letter presents Pallas, a jarring punchline that sardonically reflects on the poverty of modern *exempla*.²¹ It seems to me that Pliny remains intensely interested in exemplarity, but in order to offer an *exemplum* he finds it necessary to control interpretation rigorously. When Pliny looks further into the past for historical comparisons to illuminate the Pallas episode, he refuses either to make comparisons with more recent times or to draw lessons about the Principate more broadly. This selection of comparable *exempla* simultaneously suggests interpretative possibilities and refuses to provide them with any substance. The Pallas letters are exceptional in Pliny's collection for the historically distant subject matter, being both focussed on events from before Pliny's lifetime and unconnected with recent news or the life of Pliny's friends.²² Pliny's strategy of directing his, and our, glance further into the past is a way of distancing the events of Claudius' time from his own experience.

Related to Pliny's attempt to control the potential ramifications of exemplarity is his appropriation of a role in determining where irony is acceptable in a reading of the *acta*. Pliny, the author of the satirical reaction to Pallas' monument in *Ep.* 7.29, brooks no competition from those who are his targets in *Ep.* 8.6: he is anxious to deny the Claudian Senate any credit for witty or satirical use of language on their own initiative (*Ep.* 8.6.3):

urbanos qui illa censuerunt putem an miseros? dicerem urbanos, si senatum deceret urbanitas; miseros, sed nemo tam miser est ut illa cogatur.

Should I consider those who passed the decree witty or wretched? I would say witty, if wit were appropriate for the Senate; wretched, except that nobody is so wretched that he is forced to speak like this.

Pliny considers, then immediately rejects, a reading of the *senatus consultum* that understands wit or irony in the senators' words. His stated reason is unwillingness to read the *senatus consultum* in a manner he considers inappropriate to the Senate's dignity.²³ Conversely, he resumes the use of comic diction to reinforce his own role as the narrator of the black comedy (*Ep.* 8.6.13):

finem existimas? mane dum et maiora accipe.

Do you think this is the limit? Stay and hear something greater still.

²⁰ Henderson (n. 3), 165.

²¹ Morello (n. 3 [2018]), 326.

²² H.W. Traub, 'Pliny's treatment of history in epistolary form', *TAPhA* 86 (1955), 213–32, at 224. For further discussion of the treatment of historical material, see below.

²³ At *Ep.* 4.25 Pliny complains of *multa iocularia atque etiam foeda dictu* (§1) written on secret ballots. Pliny's outrage is in line with the general senatorial response (*excanduit senatus*, §2). The scurrilous writer's vice is seen as private self-indulgence, allowed to flourish by the anonymity of the ballot. As in *Ep.* 8.6, Pliny uses a comparison with farce in *Ep.* 4.25 (*ista ludibria scaena et pulpito digna*, §4) and finds it inappropriate that one should be *omnino in senatu dicax et urbanus et bellus* (§3). Comparison with Tacitus (see below) will show *ludibrium* in a different light, pervading the whole of the episode and characterizing the speech of all parties.

Comic levity amplifies the expression of outrage: the particle *dum* following the imperative is an archaizing touch, attested primarily in the language of Plautus: the tone here may momentarily be reminiscent of a comic conversation about off-stage events.²⁴ Pliny reserves the right to employ comical language and ridicule, while refusing to read *urbanitas* in the senatorial votes of thanks to Pallas.²⁵ Though a disobedient reader himself, one who transforms Pallas' inscription into a satire upon its own author, Pliny seeks to control the scope of irony within the world of the *Letters*. At some level, this is to attempt the impossible: to protect his own work from the kind of ironic reading to which he has subjected the words of Pallas.²⁶ What I would like to focus on, however, is the way in which Pliny attempts to involve his readers in or dissuade them from interpretation of the past.

The motivations of Claudius, the senators and Pallas could be variously interpreted, but even where Pliny apparently stops short of offering a judgement, the ellipsis leaves the reader in no doubt about the lesson that he draws from this *exemplum*, since he immediately offers an interpretation (*Ep.* 8.6.15):

tanta principis, tanta senatus, tanta Pallantis ipsius—quid dicam nescio, ut uellent in oculis omnium figi Pallas insolentiam suam, patientiam Caesar, humilitatem senatus.

The emperor, the Senate, Pallas himself, displayed such—I do not know what to call it—that Pallas wanted to display a public record of his audacity, Caesar of his submissiveness, and the Senate of its debasement.

Pliny is particularly concerned in the latter part of the letter (following *Ep.* 8.6.13 *maiora accipe*) with the exemplary implications of the commemorative inscription decreed by the Senate, which Pallas' tomb itself reflects. Pavis-D'Esurac suggests that the rewards offered to Pallas are themselves open to various interpretation: while praetorian honours offered Pallas a significant rise in status, the inclusion of a large sum of money cast him as a useful servant receiving a bonus from his master.²⁷ Pallas' refusal of the money could then appear as a claim to noble condescension, cast in terms of traditional Roman virtue.²⁸ Indeed, in his final analysis of the *exemplum*, Pliny overwrites the significance of Pallas' refusal, by depicting the readers of the commemorative inscription being inspired to chase after those rewards that Pallas had received: *inueniebantur tamen honesto loco nati, qui peterent cuperentque quod dari liberto promitti seruis uidebant* (*Ep.* 8.6.16). The notion of an irreconcilable social divide between senators and imperial freedmen, and the danger that the boundary might be blurred are the basis for Pliny's intense expression of indignation.

²⁴ *TLL* 5.1.2199.53–2235.3, especially 5.1.2201.8–25. All the other extant instances of *mane dum* are in Plautus, and apart from the commonly attested fixed usage *agedum*, the postpositive *dum* to strengthen an imperative is overwhelmingly attested in earlier, or archaizing, texts (e.g. *agite dum*, only in Livy, seven times in Books 1–5, once in Book 21). I can find no other examples of an imperative followed by *dum*, a conjunction and another imperative: Pliny's language, as he proposes to restage the events of the past, departs from contemporary usage, and the appearance of a grammatical form at home in Early Latin, notably Plautine comedy, may recall the references to farce at *Ep.* 7.29.3.

²⁵ Leach (n. 3), 133 suspects, I think rightly, a note of burlesque in the circularity of Pliny's language at *Ep.* 8.6.5: *nomine Pallantis senatus (nec expiata postea curia est) Pallantis nomine senatus gratias agit Caesar*.

²⁶ Pliny does acknowledge that it is possible to read the speeches differently from the way he has chosen, and it is the task of his extended commentary upon them to persuade the reader to adopt his interpretation.

²⁷ Pavis-D'Esurac (n. 3), 314–15. Cf., more briefly, Leach (n. 3), 129.

²⁸ Roller (n. 3), 270–1.

There can be no correct behaviour on Pallas' part: to have accepted the monstrous reward would merely have been the other side of the same coin.²⁹ Pliny's reinterpretation of the events and of the inscriptions belittles Pallas' effort to preserve his name in monumental form through recourse to the notion of literature as *aere perennius* (Hor. *Od.* 3.30.1), though, unlike the poetic claim to hold an advantage over kings, Pliny's defiance is aimed at reinforcing a traditional hierarchy.³⁰ Pliny's appropriation of the literary commonplace in this instance serves a similar role to his use of satirical language in *Ep.* 7.29, discussed above, where the suggestion of a quasi-Saturnalian overturning of hierarchies aims rather at reinforcing the role of elites.

The letters on the monument of Pallas are notable for their treatment of events from the relatively distant past, and for the casual manner of their introduction.³¹ Traub notes that Pliny always introduces historical accounts in the *Letters* through a connection with current events or with the life or work of a personal acquaintance.³² Although the framing of a historical narrative with 'news' is elsewhere employed as a somewhat transparent conceit, as in *Ep.* 4.11 with the *recens nuntius* of Valerius Licinianus' lectures in Sicily, the link in *Ep.* 7.29 is especially tenuous—reading the inscription on a roadside tomb during an unspecified recent (*proxime*, *Ep.* 7.29.2) journey—and the period concerned, the reign of Claudius, is elsewhere mentioned only in *Ep.* 3.16, where a connection with personal friends provides the link.³³ None of the senators involved in the honouring of Pallas is named, and, unlike those historical letters that relate to Pliny's own career or the lives of his friends, letters 7.29 and 8.6 do not provide a back-story for Pliny or his social circle. Instead, the events are narrated in order to provide an anonymous (or anonymized) reflection on senatorial subservience in a period that is framed as relatively distant from Pliny's own time. The senators who speak in the passages Pliny cites go unnamed, as Pliny assigns them a simplified collective identity. The historical and satirical threads in letters 7.29 and 8.6 throw Pliny's anonymizing strategy into relief, since both history and satire are substantially concerned with the actions of named individuals. Pallas and Pliny are sharply in focus in the foreground of both letters, supported by their retiring offsidiers Claudius and Montanus respectively. The Senate, meanwhile, appears only as an indistinct collective, as Pliny seeks to restrict the implications of his letter to those he sets out in the scripted reactions of Montanus.

Pliny expresses his sympathy with the past, while asserting a divide from the present day in which the *Letters*, as ostensibly current literature, are situated. To this end, he deploys an inverted topos of consolation (*Ep.* 8.6.17):

quam iuuat quod in tempora illa non incidi, quorum sic me tamquam illis uixerim pudet! non dubito similiter adfici te.

²⁹ Woolf (n. 7), 26.

³⁰ Woolf (n. 7), 26 notes how the form of Pallas' memorialization, whether in the public bronze tribute or the tomb inscription, is regarded as part of the overturning of traditional hierarchy.

³¹ Henderson (n. 3), 164 notes the exceptional character of these letters: 'It was with the sermonizing topic of the "inscribed monument" that Pliny stretched his humdrum epistolary corpus to support that "history of the present"'s solitary showcase for historical *exempla*.' He also remarks on the way in which Pliny justifies its inclusion: 'excused and accommodated as involuntary outrage expressed through sarcasm'.

³² Traub (n. 22), 224.

³³ Pliny's friendship with Arria, the wife of Thrasea Paetus, provides him with an anecdote about her mother in the time of Claudius. Elsewhere, Pliny's friendship with Verginius Rufus brings up the events of the year 69 (*Ep.* 6.10, 9.19). By including letters that dwell on events in the past, Pliny enters territory untrodden by Cicero, whose letters are always current, as noted by Traub (n. 22), 218.

How glad I am that my life did not fall in those times, of which I am ashamed just as if I lived then! I am sure you are similarly moved.

The commonplace usually involves advice to one who is lamenting the death of a loved one: the deceased has not had to suffer the sorrows of later times.³⁴ Pliny, instead, professes himself consoled because he had not yet been born; again, he takes it for granted that Montanus would feel the same. In Cicero, Seneca and Tacitus the consolatory topos has strong associations with political turmoil and a destructive break in historical and social continuity. A profound *mutatio temporum* for the better lies behind the historical viewpoint of *Ep.* 8.6.³⁵

The genre of epistolography *ad familiares* allows Pliny to posit a completely concordant response from a like-minded friend; unlike the technique of introducing the words of an interlocutor as practised by satirists, Pliny does not imagine his interlocutor challenging his understanding at any point. Pliny and his addressee are to be united in condemnation of a freedman, while comparing their own experience of senatorial politics with the conditions under Claudius' Principate. Pliny does not insist on his moral superiority: good fortune has allowed him to stand apart from the Claudian Senate. He is able to take his indignation to such lengths because he can stand apart from his targets: an unbridgeable divide in status separates him from Pallas, while the changed political conditions in Rome allow him to judge the Senate unequivocally, though not without first removing the identity of individual senators from the account. While sympathy stirs up his sense of shame 'as if he were there', it is always clear that his perspective is quite different from that of the Claudian Senate.³⁶ The technique of citation and commentary reinforces this effect. Pliny does not present a historical narrative of senatorial proceedings, nor does he engage in the historiographical convention of recomposing speeches in his own words. Instead, he does something alien to the genre of historiography, citing the senatorial decree verbatim and at length.³⁷ Pliny's satirical method is to insert his own commentary between passages of citation. At every point, it is clear who is speaking: Pallas, the (anonymized) Claudian Senate or Pliny. While insinuating that the historical texts effectively satirize themselves, Pliny surrounds them with commentary to direct the responses of readers. Pliny's own voice, insulated from criticism by his self-penned recipient and insulated from the past by his careful separation of citation and commentary, presents its own judgements to posterity unchallenged. Providing the actual words recorded in the *acta* makes the past literally present but allows Pliny to keep his distance.

³⁴ Famous instances include Cicero's consolation for the death of Crassus in *De oratore* (3.8), Seneca's discussion of Cremutius Cordus in the *Consolatio ad Marciam* (20.4–6) and Tacitus' *Agricola* (45). The preface to and the consolatory epilogue of the *Agricola* provide Pliny with a model for reflecting on his own experiences in 8.14. Further examples of this topos are discussed by B.J. Gibson, *Statius*, *Silvae* 5 (Oxford, 2006), 159, on *Stat. Silv.* 5.1.221, showing its application in genres as diverse as rhetorical dialogue and epic, but with numerous examples drawn from epistolography.

³⁵ I borrow the phrase *mutatio temporum* from Sen. *Ad Marc.* 1.3, where the death of Tiberius has allowed Marcia to restore the works of Cremutius to public circulation.

³⁶ There is occasional criticism of contemporary politics in Pliny's *Letters*, notably on the Senate's weak verdict against Hostilius Firminus (*Ep.* 2.12) and the evils of secret ballots in the Senate (*Ep.* 4.25); in both of these instances, the Senate itself is the target of Pliny's *indignatio*, while Trajan stays largely out of the picture, except as a quasi-divine influence for the good at *Ep.* 4.25.5.

³⁷ The citations include *oratio obliqua*, e.g. *Ep.* 8.6.8.

While the subject matter of the Pallas letters is unusually distant in the context of the *Letters*, *Ep.* 7.29, a brief, unsolicited note upon an apparently chance discovery, implies a degree of intimacy and easy communication between Pliny and his correspondent.³⁸ The letter is a notable example of Pliny's efforts to write a civil, literary society into being.³⁹ He provides his wider readership with the impression of an addressee, or first reader, whose willingness to react exactly the same way as Pliny is in stark contrast to Pliny's own determination to find different meanings in Pallas' inscription from those intended by its author. While Pallas' monument stands exposed to the ridicule of any passer-by, the *Letters* are embedded in a social setting, wrapped protectively in the sympathetic responses of Pliny's peers. The one-sided nature of the correspondence means that it is only possible to see Pliny's own constant predictions that Montanus' response will be in lockstep with his own.⁴⁰ The letter is more concerned with clearly marked types than with specifics: there is no room for nuance in the understanding of Pallas' actions, and the Senate appears as an anonymized collective. Montanus, in turn, may be seen to stand in for the kind of man who will find Pallas' monument offensive. Pliny's confidence in his addressee's agreement implies the broader context of the correspondence, a time in which the power wielded by Pallas appears out of place. Through a variety of techniques Pliny works to shut down complications in interpreting the passages he cites and to distance himself from the events of Claudius' time.

II: ADVOCACY, HISTORY AND THE PALLAS LETTERS

Pallas is an easy target, and Pliny is aware that his intense expressions of outrage may come across as disproportionate (8.6.17).⁴¹ The Pallas letters are linked with Pliny's project of revenge against Domitianic *delatores*, but sit somewhat oddly alongside them, since Pliny is elsewhere concerned with events and individuals with whom he has been personally involved.

Before proceeding to a comparison with Tacitus' account of the honouring of Pallas in the *Annals*, I shall discuss a possible connection with Tacitus' *Histories*. The letters following *Ep.* 7.29 and 8.6 bring historiography and Tacitus to mind. *Ep.* 7.30 to Julius Genitor mentions Pliny's speech avenging Helvidius Priscus.⁴² Immediately after the second Pallas letter, Pliny (*Ep.* 8.7) promises critique of a script sent by Tacitus, likely to be either the *Dialogus* or an instalment of the *Histories*.⁴³ Pliny feels no shyness since

³⁸ For the possible identity of Montanus, see below.

³⁹ As an instance of this widely held view, cf. W.A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities* (Oxford, 2010), 32–62.

⁴⁰ This approach, which appears at *Ep.* 7.29.1 with Pliny's prediction of Montanus' response, returns at the end of the longer letter (*Ep.* 8.6.17), where Pliny is sure that even the unusual extent of his epistolary indignation will appear modest to a man such as Montanus.

⁴¹ For the sense that the Pallas letters express disproportionate outrage, cf. N. Méthy, *Les Lettres de Pliny le Jeune. Une représentation de l'homme* (Paris, 2007), 155–6.

⁴² R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), 209 n. 4 compares *De Helvidi Vltione* with the oration of Curtius Montanus in the *Histories*, discussed below. For Pliny's care to advertise connections with Stoic martyrs and their families, cf. J. Shelton, 'Pliny's Letter 3.11. Rhetoric and autobiography', *C&M* 38 (1987), 121–39, at 126–33 and J.M. Carlon, *Pliny's Women: Constructing Virtue and Creating Identity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 2009), 68–99.

⁴³ Syme (n. 42), 153 favours the former, Sherwin-White (n. 3), 456 the latter. Whitton (n. 3 [2010]), 138 notes that, alongside *Ep.* 1.6, 7.20 and 9.14, 'This is one of four occasions when

he has sent nothing to Tacitus to be criticized in turn, although, for a reader of the *Letters*, *Ep.* 8.6—as a miniature exercise in both historical enquiry and oratorical *indignatio*—establishes Pliny's capabilities in that field. Whitton has traced a web of connections between Pliny and Tacitus relating to the question of revenge for Domitianic deaths, and notes proximity between letters to Tacitus and Plinian discussions of revenge throughout the collection.⁴⁴ Contextualizing the Pallas letters in this way threatens to complicate the comfortably distanced position that Pliny is careful to take up, while simultaneously throwing light on the role of these unusual pieces in the collection. A useful place to start is with the unresolved question of the identity of Pliny's addressee Montanus.

While it is generally agreed that *Ep.* 7.29 and 8.6 give the impression of being addressed to an equal, the identity of Montanus, addressed only here in the *Letters*, is harder to establish. I should like to argue that the subject of these letters and a web of suggestive connections link him with themes and persons in the senatorial narratives of *Histories* Book 4, which present the complex aftermath of regime change.⁴⁵ The oration of Curtius Montanus against the Neronian *delator* Aquilius Regulus (*Hist.* 4.42) is the most prominent senatorial oration in the extant books of the *Histories*. Martin found it to be the most notable example of Ciceronian style in Tacitus' historical works, pointing out the exceptional prevalence of Ciceronian clausulae and numerous allusions to Ciceronian speeches.⁴⁶ Martin and Whitton have argued that such an avowedly Ciceronian attack on Regulus may be a nod to Pliny the Younger—as Whitton puts it, 'It is here that Pliny makes his most striking appearance in all Tacitus' works.'⁴⁷ Whether or not Pliny's correspondent is the same man cannot be proved, but the name Montanus may in itself be evocative of Tacitus' set-piece in *Histories* Book 4.⁴⁸ There can be little certainty about the Curtius Montanus of *Histories* Book 4, but a young poet by that name is found in association with Thrasea Pactus, Helvidius Priscus and Paconius Agrippinus at *Ann.* 16.28.1 and again at 16.29.2; it is plausible that this is the same man as the senator in *Histories* Book 4, though it has been suggested, on account of his authoritative bearing, that the Montanus of the *Histories* may be the father of the young poet in the *Annals*.⁴⁹ In either case, the family's

Pliny places a note to Tacitus concerning literary composition immediately after a substantial letter featuring the tyranny of an earlier principate.'

⁴⁴ For instance, Pliny's fullest discussion of *De Helvidi Vltione* (*Ep.* 9.13) is followed by his last letter to Tacitus, a conjunction which links Pliny's revenge with thoughts of his and Tacitus' reputation with posterity, and links his oratory and Tacitus' historiography: Whitton (n. 3 [2012]), 355; Whitton (n. 3 [2019]), 415, 417–18, 420–1, 433–4, 441, 448–50, 468 n. 281.

⁴⁵ My approach is indebted to the work of those scholars who read intratexts between letters as pervasive structuring devices and nuanced ways of developing ideas. For instance, J. Henderson, *Pliny's Statue: The Letters, Self-Portraiture and Classical Art* (Exeter, 2002), Marchesi (n. 8), R.K. Gibson and R. Morello, *Reading the Letters of Pliny the Younger: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2012), Whitton (n. 13), Whitton (n. 3 [2019]).

⁴⁶ R.H. Martin, 'The speech of Curtius Montanus: Tacitus, *Histories* IV, 42', *JRS* 57 (1967), 109–14. The speech is the longest extant senatorial oration in the *Histories*, presented emphatically in *oratio recta*.

⁴⁷ Whitton (n. 3 [2012]), 361. Pliny was a self-confessed emulator of Cicero and his *Letters* present him as an enemy of Domitianic *delatores*, most notably Regulus; cf. Martin (n. 46), 112–13.

⁴⁸ Sherwin-White (n. 3), 438 and 453 proposes Junius Montanus the consul of A.D. 81, presumably on the basis of comparable age and status with Pliny. R. Syme, 'People in Pliny', *JRS* 58 (1968), 135–51, at 150 adds another younger candidate, L. Venuleius Montanus Apronianus (*cos. suff.* A.D. 92).

⁴⁹ *RE* IV.2 1867.67–1868.24 in opposition to *PIR*² C 1615 and 1616. A.R. Birley, *Onomasticon to the Younger Pliny: Letters and Panegyric* (Munich, 2000), 74 objects to Sherwin-White's identification of Pliny's addressee, and suggests that he is the Montanus prosecuted in *Annals* Book 16.

connection with the Neronian Stoic opposition is clear from the Tacitean passages cited. By the time of Books 7 and 8 of the *Letters*, Tacitus seems to have finished *Histories* Book 4, since *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20 refer to his work on the year 79, and Pliny may well have read the early books of the *Histories* in draft or heard them in recitations. In addressing letters 7.29 and 8.6 to a friend called Montanus, it is possible that Pliny is evoking the attack on his erstwhile enemy Regulus carried out by Curtius Montanus and offering a reminder of Tacitus' own association of Pliny with that event.

The significance of any connection between present and past in *Histories* Book 4 is a matter of considerable disagreement amongst scholars. The debate has some bearing on the Pallas letters. The predominant view is that Montanus' speech is an outstanding example of conscientious oratory, unfortunately undercut by the personal intervention of a man of integrity on Regulus' behalf: his stepbrother, Vipstanus Messalla.⁵⁰ Messalla's successful, and widely praised, intervention, however, is a reminder that it is difficult to draw clear factional lines at the end of the year of the four emperors, and that Tacitus is ambivalent about the consequences of both revenge and amnesty. The episode follows soon after the encounter between Helvidius Priscus and Eprius Marcellus (*Hist.* 4.6–8), in which the good sense spoken by the odious Marcellus makes a strong case against a widespread policy of revenge threatened by Helvidius, a man of renowned integrity. Whitton has argued for an ongoing dialogue between Tacitus and Pliny on the subject of revenge, describing Tacitus' powerful opposition to *delatio* in his historical narratives as a strikingly different, yet complementary, project harmonizing with Pliny's interest in *ultio*, both enacted and recorded in published speeches and histories.⁵¹ If Pliny's Pallas letters are regarded as part of such a literary conversation, certain peculiarities stand out, notably Pliny's concentration on events before his own lifetime and his decision to name and shame Pallas but not the senators who humiliated themselves before him. The fine oration that Tacitus accords to Curtius Montanus certainly reflects well on him—and perhaps, if the arguments of Martin and Whitton are followed, on Pliny—but it is embedded in a narrative that must give rise to a more nuanced, and more ambivalent, attitude towards the politics of revenge. This is not to say that Tacitus undercuts a naïve Pliny, since Pliny's attacks on *delatores* are carefully circumscribed and he is aware that a thoroughgoing policy of revenge is not tenable.⁵²

Pliny aims at providing posterity with distinct negative *exempla* for the behaviour of Senate and freedmen. Pliny himself, the only other prominent name in *Ep.* 8.6, takes on the positive exemplary role, which he resumes in *Ep.* 8.14 and in the letter immediately before, where he congratulates Genialis on an ideal education by *exempla*: reading under the supervision of his excellent father (*optimum et coniunctissimum exemplar*, 8.13.2), and having Pliny as his reading material.⁵³ Pliny's fashioning of *exempla* in the Pallas

⁵⁰ Identified as a man of noble character (*egregius*) and a unique representative of *bonae artes* (cultivation or good conduct) amidst the civil wars (*Hist.* 3.9.3). A contrary view has recently been voiced by V.E. Pagán, *Tacitus* (London, 2017), 113, though I am inclined to think that this reading understates the impressiveness of Curtius' oration and authorial reinforcement of his regret that malefactors cannot be brought to justice, but the room for ambivalence must be acknowledged.

⁵¹ Whitton (n. 3 [2012]), 355–62.

⁵² Most notably in his account of a conversation at Nerva's table, where it is taken for granted that a notorious *delator* is part of the company (*Ep.* 4.22); cf. T.E. Strunk, 'Pliny the pessimist', *G&R* 59 (2012), 178–92, at 191–2.

⁵³ Livy had presented his work as a source of *exempla* to be followed or avoided (Livy 1 pr. 10). J.D. Chaplin, *Livy's Exemplary History* (Oxford, 2000) shows the extent to which Livy's *exempla* are

letters chimes with Curtius Montanus' speech.⁵⁴ Pragmatic acknowledgement that it is not possible to give every *delator* his comeuppance is not necessarily inconsistent with a commitment to promoting honourable conduct. There is nothing to be feared from Vespasian, Montanus says, whose age and innate *moderatio* make him completely unlike Nero; nevertheless, in targeting Regulus, Montanus has his eye on a matter of principle: *diutius durant exempla quam mores* (*Hist.* 4.42.6). Whitton has read Montanus' final sardonic remarks, culminating in the *sententia optimus est post malum principem dies primus* (*Hist.* 4.42.6) as a defiant challenge to the Senate's resolve,⁵⁵ while Martin emphasizes a note of regret more applicable to historical hindsight—and thus to Tacitus' own time—than to the situation at hand. For Martin, Montanus' speech is 'a palinode to what Tacitus had written in *Agricola* 3'.⁵⁶ Whether one senses regret or defiance in Montanus' speech, it is clear that its value for a reader of the *Histories*, with the knowledge of subsequent Domitianic tyranny, is different from its value as a piece of persuasion within the text. Montanus can still stand as an admirable, and even prescient, exemplar even if his speech is immediately undermined by the complexities of personal loyalty and political expediency.⁵⁷

Whitton remarks that the inverted relationship between Senate and freedman in *Ep.* 7.29 and 8.6 has a reassuring pendant in *Ep.* 8.14, where Pliny offers himself as an *exemplum* for his role in ensuring the proper handling of a sentencing vote. The workings of the Trajanic Senate show that 'When the Senate legislates over freedmen under Trajan it is not to fawn on them, but to determine their fate. Power is back where it belongs.'⁵⁸ Beyond the Pallas letters, Pliny advertises the idea that the Trajanic dispensation will allow no freedmen to gain the power that some had attained in the Julio-Claudian Age, as at *Ep.* 6.31.9, where Trajan asserts of the freedman Eurhythmus *nec ille Polyclitus est nec ego Nero* ('He is not Polyclitus, nor am I Nero'). Despite Trajan's *dictum*, Pliny's letter overtly takes on Curtius Montanus' principle: *diutius durant exempla quam mores* (*Hist.* 4.42.6).

Pliny's evident efforts to control the implications of his *exempla* may, however, suggest a less comfortable relationship with contemporary politics.⁵⁹ Comparison of the Pallas letters with a pair of linked letters that interact with Tacitus' *Dialogus* may open up an alternative perspective on Pliny's use of levity to aim indirectly at serious questions. *Ep.* 1.6 and 9.10 have attracted extensive attention from scholars, focussing on correspondences between the letters and on intertexts that link them with Tacitus' *Dialogus*.⁶⁰ In each of these short pieces Pliny portrays himself in the countryside. In

open to complex interpretation; by contrast, Pliny shows an interest in setting down a fixed interpretation to override the objectionable exemplarity claimed by Pallas. C.S. Kraus and A.J. Woodman, *Latin Historians* (Oxford, 1997), 55–6 emphasize Livy's interest in making the past vividly present (*enargeia*; see Part III below), and the idea 'that reader and historian must cooperate: the latter serves as a guide and a teacher, the former not passively absorbing lessons but as an active learner'.

⁵⁴ Morello (n. 3 [2015]), 166–70, 179–81 notes the recurring interest in exemplarity in Book 8.

⁵⁵ Whitton (n. 3 [2012]), 359.

⁵⁶ Martin (n. 46), 114.

⁵⁷ At *Ep.* 5.8.12, Pliny associates writing recent history with *graves offensae, levis gratia*. Furthermore, *Ep.* 9.27 recounts a recitation at which a historian is asked to leave out a passage narrating the offences of some audience members. Though many readers have suspected the historian may be Tacitus, it is notable that all those involved in the incident are rendered anonymous.

⁵⁸ Whitton (n. 3 [2010]), 138. For a more pessimistic reading of *Ep.* 8.14, cf. Gibson (n. 3), 221.

⁵⁹ For exceptions to Pliny's general optimism about the present, cf. Strunk (n. 52).

⁶⁰ For instance C.E. Murgia, 'Pliny's *Letters* and the *Dialogus*', *HSPH* 89 (1985), 171–206. For an overview of the scholarship on this intertextuality, cf. Whitton (n. 3 [2012]), 364.

the former, a boar-hunting trip produces the improbable side-result of literary work in the forest; in the latter, Pliny expresses dissatisfaction with his inability to produce poetry suited to his country retreat, and he bemoans the encroachment of oratorical work on his time in the country. In both *Ep.* 1.6 and 9.10 Pliny sets his literary efforts in the woods, toying with the topos of retreating from the city for inspiration. Tacitus' *Dialogus* represents this idea through the character of Curiatius Maternus, who considers devoting himself to poetry and abandoning his activities as an orator. When Pliny writes of catching boars in *Ep.* 1.6, readers have sensed a connection with the figure of Aper in the *Dialogus*, and through him to Regulus and to Domitianic *delatores*; the short, apparently casual letter is the literary product that stands in place of a prosecution of Regulus, who is labelled as 'hard to catch' (δυσκαθαίρετον) at *Ep.* 1.5.15.⁶¹ Regulus is Pliny's most prominent target for criticism in the *Letters*, but it is indicative of the sensibilities of the years immediately following the fall of Domitian that Pliny restricts himself to epistolary invective and not a prosecution. While he repeatedly indulges in *indignatio* on the subject of Regulus, *Ep.* 1.6 hints also at the need for indirect antagonism, its overtly light tone signalled by the opening phrase *ridebis, et licet rideas* (*Ep.* 1.6).⁶² Pliny's description of his literary efforts in the forests implies a kind of 'hunting' that is impossible in the city. Distance from the forensic blood-sports of the Roman forum is important for the suggestive language of *Ep.* 1.6 to work: Pliny can catch a boar or engage in literary composition in the forest, but he must hold back from saying what he would like in the forum. In Tacitus' *Dialogus* a similar thread runs through the words of Maternus, who extolls the value of withdrawal to the proverbial poet's grove in antithesis to the life of the orator, hemmed in by obligations and with his art sullied by blood and money (*Dial.* 12.1–4). In *Ep.* 9.10, escape from the city fails to provide Pliny with relief, as his country interlude is disturbed by the duties of his life in the city. *Ep.* 1.6 and 9.10 stage the topos of withdrawal for the purposes of inspiration, the former suggestively highlighting the limitations of urban *studia*, the latter expressing a pessimistic disaffection with the fruits of *secessus*.⁶³ A common preoccupation in *Ep.* 1.6 and 9.10 and the Pallas letters is Pliny's distanced relationship to his work as politician and orator. While letters 1.6 and 9.10 explore this psychological distance spatially, the Pallas letters explore it both spatially and temporally, as Pliny encounters Pallas' tomb on a journey out of the city, and subsequently delves uncharacteristically far into the past to explore the scope for *indignatio* when his subject matter offers him more freedom than that which is too close for comfort.

III: TACITUS' ACCOUNT OF THE HONOURS TO PALLAS

When Tacitus comes to handle the voting of honours to Pallas in the *Annals* (12.52–3), his highly compressed account presents a more open invitation to ironic interpretation

⁶¹ e.g. R. Edwards, 'Catching boars with Pliny and Tacitus', *CLAnt* 27 (2008), 35–58; Whitton (n. 3 [2012]), 356.

⁶² The form *ridebis* appears three times in the *Letters*: at *Ep.* 1.6 and 7.29, in both cases the first word of a letter, and at *Ep.* 8.8.7 as the last word. I suggest that the appearance of the word at the outset of *Ep.* 1.6 and 7.29 invites reflection on similar dynamics in these letters, as discussed below.

⁶³ For the idea that Pliny's *Letters* begin to express discomfort and disaffection with political conditions during Trajan's extended personal presence in Rome after the return from Dacia in A.D. 106–7, see Gibson (n. 3).

than Pliny's carefully directed commentary. Both author and reader are implicitly drawn into a closer relationship with the past, but interpretation becomes considerably more complicated from close at hand (Tac. *Ann.* 12.52.3–53.3):

[52.3] *laudati dehinc oratione principis qui ob angustias familiaris ordine senatorio sponte cederent, motique qui remanendo impudentiam paupertati adicerent.* [53] *inter quae refert ad patres de poena feminarum quae seruis coniungerentur; statuaturque ut ignaro domino ad id prolapsa<e> in seruitute, sin consensisset, pro libertis haberentur.* [53.2] *Pallanti, quem repertorem eius relationis ediderat Caesar, praetoria insignia et centies quinquagies sestertium censuit consul designatus Barea Soranus. additum a Scipione Cornelio grates publice agendas, quod regibus Arcadiae ortus ueterrimam nobilitatem usui publico postponeret seque inter ministros principis haberi sineret.* [53.3] *adseueravit Claudius contentum honore Pallantem intra priorem paupertatem subsistere. et fixum est <in aere> publico senatus consultum quo libertinus sestertii ter miliens possessor antiquae parsimoniae laudibus cumulabatur.* [54] *at non frater eius, cognomento Felix, pari moderatione agebat, iam pridem Iudaeae impositus et cuncta malefacta sibi impune ratus tanta potentia subnixo.*

[52.3] After this, there was a speech from the emperor praising those who chose to retire from the Senate owing to the poverty of their household, and demotion for those who, by remaining, were adding insolence to their poverty. [53] In the midst of this, the emperor proposed a motion to the fathers on punishments for women who married slaves, and it was decreed that those who had done so without the master's consent should be reduced to servile status, whereas, if he had consented, they should be regarded as freedwomen in status. [53.2] To Pallas, whom Caesar had named as the originator of the proposal, were voted praetorian insignia and fifteen million sesterces by the consul designate Barea Soranus. Scipio Cornelius added that a public vote of thanks should be given, since one who was descended from kings of Arcadia was subordinating such ancient noble lineage to public service and allowing himself to be regarded as one of the emperor's servants. [53.3] Claudius stated that Pallas was content with the honours and would continue in his earlier state of poverty. The senatorial decree was recorded, then, in a public plaque, which heaped praises upon a freedman, the possessor of 300 million sesterces, for his old-fashioned frugality. [54] But his brother, by the name of Felix, was not behaving with the same moderation; he had been governing Judaea for some time and thought he could commit any crime with impunity when he was supported by such power.

The inclusion of numerous details absent from Pliny's letter suggests that Tacitus himself consulted the *acta senatus*, selecting material according to his own criteria.⁶⁴ Tacitus' report of senatorial proceedings is ironically framed. The events draw on an 'insidiously comic' narrative undercurrent, predicated on inversions of status at Claudius' court. The emperor often appears as a slave to his wife and freedmen, or as the dupe of freedmen in a role reminiscent of *serui callidi*.⁶⁵ Claudius has just been demoting senators whose wealth is insufficient to retain their status; subsequent

⁶⁴ Although Tacitus only refers to consulting the *acta* once (*Ann.* 15.74.3), it is widely regarded as probable that he made extensive use of these records, as suggested by the presence of many details absent from other sources, including rejected proposals, as in the passage just mentioned, which would not have appeared in publicized decrees. The *senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*, which records an enacted decree, offers a useful test case. On the case for Tacitus' extensive use of the *acta*, see R. Syme, 'Tacitus: some sources of his information', *JRS* 72 (1982), 68–82 (especially 73–6) and Talbert (n. 2), 326–34. On the nature of the *acta senatus* more generally, see M. Coudry, 'Sénatus-consultes et *acta senatus*: rédaction, conservation et archivage des documents émanant du sénat, de l'époque de César à celle des Sévères', in S. Demougin (ed.), *La mémoire perdue: À la recherche des archives oubliées, publiques et privées, de la Rome antique* (Paris, 1994), 65–102, doi:10.4000/books.psrbonne.25068 (accessed 29/10/20), especially at paragraph 43. More recent scholarship has not tended to offer a strong challenge to the thesis that Tacitus used the *acta* extensively.

⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion of this element in the *Annals*, see Dickison (n. 9).

to that procedure, a bill is passed which is aimed at reinforcing class distinctions. Punishments are established for freeborn women who entered into relationships with slaves, with a more severe penalty when the situation arose *ignaro domino*—a reflection, perhaps, on Claudius' ignorance of Agrippina's involvement with Pallas.⁶⁶ Claudius reveals that the mastermind of the bill was Pallas, and the Senate's vote of thanks to the extraordinarily wealthy freedman ensues. Procedures based upon a fastidious commitment to social hierarchy are thus immediately followed by measures that make the superiority of the senatorial order appear hollow. After revealing the hypocritical boast of Pallas, Tacitus' transition to the next section of the narrative, telling of provincial mismanagement by Pallas' brother Felix, is ironically introduced with the remark that Felix had failed to show Pallas' sense of moderation. On this level, Tacitus can be seen as exposing the hypocrisy of Pallas and the humiliation of the Senate, but, when the briefly reported speeches are taken into account, Tacitus' implied commentary becomes considerably darker and more complex.

Unlike Pliny, Tacitus names the proponents of the main vote of thanks and its sequel. The names certainly make it more difficult to draw the straightforward message communicated by Pliny's anonymized report. The main motion is proposed by the consul designate Barea Soranus, and the additional motion, naming Pallas as the descendant of Arcadian royalty, by Cornelius Scipio. Soranus was a Stoic philosopher who later died in the same Neronian purge that killed Thrasea Paetus: Tacitus later pairs Soranus' name with that of Thrasea and describes them as 'virtue itself' *uirtus ipsa* (*Ann.* 16.21.1).⁶⁷ Scipio has already appeared as a long-suffering man of notable discretion: after the execution of his wife amidst the scheming of Messalina, Tacitus commends him for forbearance when he is forced, in an irretrievable situation, to vote on her guilt (*Ann.* 11.4.3). Pliny's anonymized commentary allows him to concentrate on the humiliating submissiveness of the Senate without the invidious naming of Soranus and Scipio. Tacitus, on the other hand, shows that those who spoke on this occasion were men capable of behaving honourably in exceedingly trying circumstances. It seems at least plausible that their speeches might be thought to reflect more on the emperor and the impossibility of speaking candidly than upon the speakers themselves, though Scipio's *sententia*, in particular, resists easy interpretation; Syme mentions the inclusion of Soranus' contribution here—the first time Soranus has appeared in the *Annals*—as one of a number of instances whereby figures more famous for acts of virtue are first introduced in less creditable circumstances, as part of Tacitus' wider scepticism of ideals of senatorial virtue.⁶⁸ In Tacitus' *Annals*, the bearers of ancient noble names frequently appear as mere shadows of their illustrious Republican forebears.⁶⁹ Here, the spectacle of a senator by the name of Cornelius

⁶⁶ K.P. Seif, *Die Claudiusbücher in den Annalen des Tacitus* (Mainz, 1973), 214.

⁶⁷ Soranus was a senior member of the circle that included the young poet Curtius Montanus (*Ann.* 16.21, 16.23, 16.30–2, with R. Syme, 'The historian Servilius Nonianus', *Hermes* 92 (1964), 408–24, at 412, 415–17, perhaps another awkward connection that Pliny has avoided by anonymizing the Senate in the letters to his friend Montanus).

⁶⁸ Syme (n. 42), 543–5. The senatorial episodes of *Histories* Book 4 provide a pertinent comparison. A highly plausible view of senatorial conduct in the wake of regime change comes from the notorious *delator* Epirus Marcellus (*Hist.* 4.8), while the efforts of Curtius Montanus to secure vengeance against Regulus are foiled by the personal intervention of Vipstanus Messalla, which was a praiseworthy act in itself (*Hist.* 4.42.1).

⁶⁹ Most strikingly, when the descendant of the great orator Hortensius Hortalus pleads with Tiberius for help to avoid demotion from the senatorial order during a census, he delivers his speech accompanied by his four sons before a line of *imagines* including that of his illustrious ancestor

Scipio congratulating an ex-slave upon his *ueterrima nobilitas* is surely expected to elicit the distaste of a senatorial readership.⁷⁰ The motion is particularly notable for a far-fetched mythical pedigree: Pallas' name is taken to connect him with the Arcadian kings said to have ruled Pallanteum on the site that would be Rome.⁷¹ There is no way to recover the tone of Scipio's original speech, but the inclusion of the mythical element comes across as surprising and fanciful.⁷² Such a speech, however, is not without parallel in the senatorial oratory of Claudius' reign. Indeed, Scipio's proposal accords with Claudius' own penchant for indulging in abstruse and even improbable antiquarianism in his scholarship and oratory. A similarly far-fetched mythical reference is presented by Claudius himself to recommend the claim of Cos to a remission of taxes: the god Aesculapius himself is said to have appeared on the island, initiating its tradition of medical expertise (*Ann.* 12.61.1).⁷³ In this light, Scipio's speech seems suited to the emperor's personal taste, and there is room for ironic reading. His call for the proposal to be disseminated publicly (*grates publice agendas*, *Ann.* 12.53.2) may support this view, as the absurd language of Claudian oratory is to be paraded before the whole city. Pliny raises and then dismisses the possibility that the senators were speaking wittily or ironically. Tacitus, by contrast, makes no attempt to clarify whether Scipio's speech is satirical or merely debased.⁷⁴

An even more complex problem arises with the emperor's words. Pliny quotes a passage from Pallas' inscription in both 7.29 and 8.6 (*Ep.* 7.29.2 = *Ep.* 8.6.1):

huic senatus ob fidem pietatemque erga patronos ornamenta praetoria decreuit et sestertium centies quinquagies, **cuius honore contentus fuit.**

To this man, for his loyalty and duty towards his patrons, the Senate decreed praetorian ornaments and fifteen million sesterces; **of these, he was content with the honour.**

(*Ann.* 2.37.1–2). On the prominence of *imagines* from the Republic in the early books of the *Annals*, see J.D. McNamara, 'Magna eloquentia in Tacitus: finding a role for oratory in the Principate' (Diss., University of Cambridge, 2014), 115–18.

⁷⁰ The same line of thought may have occurred to Pliny. His report from the *acta* omits Scipio's speech but compares the praises heaped upon Pallas with the more modest accolades gained by true heroes of the Republic; of the three earlier Republicans named by Pliny (*Ep.* 8.6.2), two (whom he calls Africanus and Numantinus) bore the name Cornelius Scipio. By creating an anonymized account, Pliny precludes a potential avenue of ironic interpretation.

⁷¹ E. Koestermann, *Annalen, III: Buch 11–13* (Heidelberg, 1967), 199 draws the connection with a progenitor of Evander named at Verg. *Aen.* 8.54.

⁷² Furthermore, the verb *sineret*, implying that Pallas' permission is required for events to take their course, may be regarded as pointed.

⁷³ Koestermann (n. 71), 214 identifies this as the only attestation of this myth. The young Nero's support for a Trojan embassy with a speech expatiating on Aeneas' Trojan origins *aliaque haud procul fabulis* (*Ann.* 12.58.1) is usually read as an early sign of Nero's poetic predilections, but it also appears consistent with Tacitus' depiction of fanciful speeches at Claudius' court.

⁷⁴ By considering how each author denies, privileges or leaves open various readings, I am considering the text in a different light from earlier commentators, such as Sherwin-White (n. 3), 453–5 (on Plin. *Ep.* 8.6.3), and from Koestermann (n. 71), 198–9 and M. Hausmann, *Die Leserlenkung durch Tacitus in den Tiberius- und Claudiusbüchern der 'Annalen'* (Berlin, 2009), 379–82 (on Tac. *Ann.* 12.53.2), who decide clearly in favour of reading satirical irony in the senators' speeches. It is notable that Tacitus does not show Soranus or Scipio being put under direct pressure, unlike Pliny the Elder, who remarks that the motion was proposed by Soranus *iubente Agrippina* (*HN* 35.201).

Tacitus, using the historian's technique of employing original vocabulary in a newly rendered speech, reports Claudius' response to the senatorial decree as follows (*Ann.* 12.53.3):

adseueravit Claudius **contentum honore Pallantem** intra priorem paupertatem subsistere.

Claudius stated that Pallas **was content with the honours** and would continue in his earlier state of poverty.

The emperor's response to the Senate on behalf of Pallas uses a form of words very similar to those recorded on the freedman's monument, though with the addition of *intra priorem paupertatem*, a more jarring expression than *contentum honore*.⁷⁵ Although the *oratio obliqua* represents a version of Claudius' words, the extent to which Claudius' response is his own, or a version of Pallas' words, remains doubtful.⁷⁶ While Pliny reserves the right to irony for himself, and attempts to forbid his readers from interpreting irony in the senatorial decree, Tacitus' account not only frames the senatorial proceedings ironically, but also allows irony to be read in Scipio's speech and in the emperor's response on Pallas' behalf. Put slightly differently, Tacitus allows the ironies of the situation to be as apparent to Scipio, Claudius and Pallas as they are to the historian himself. Tacitus claims the authority, as Pliny had done, to lay bare the hypocrisy of the Claudian Senate, but this authority stems from a more troubling source than that of Pliny: he understands the corrupt system not because he views it from a separate and privileged standpoint, but because he and his readers know how to speak the same language as the sophisticated hypocrites of his text.⁷⁷

All perspectives are left open to the reader of the *Annals*. By infusing the entire episode, speech and narrative, with dark irony, Tacitus blurs the boundaries between 'then' and 'now': the author and the historical figures whose words he reports are all capable of casting an ironic light on events. The hard realities of power lie behind a rhetorical mask, but a mask that can be seen as such by all concerned. Irony creates vividness, *enargeia*, as the past becomes present to the reader in a manner that reveals the common ground between the Julio-Claudian Principate, the time of composition and, in a manner that has fascinated Tacitus' modern readers, the time of reception. By contrast, Pliny's invocation of *enargeia* contributes to the separation of past and present (*Ep.* 8.6.11–12):

imaginare **Pallantem** uelut **intercedentem** senatus consulto **moderantemque** honores suos ...
imaginare **Caesarem** liberti precibus uel potius imperio coram senatu **obtemperantem** ...
imaginare **senatum** usquequaque **testantem** merito libenterque se ... decernere.

⁷⁵ Claudius' tactlessness and blindness are standard traits in the hostile historical and satirical tradition; see e.g. Suet. *Claud.* 39–40. If Claudius is thoughtlessly reporting Pallas' utterance, then the words might be seen to reflect his blindness; if the startling *intra priorem paupertatem* is an ironic joke before a Senate recently bereft of its impoverished members, then the remark might be considered tactless.

⁷⁶ The *senatus consultum* states that Claudius was passing on Pallas' refusal of the money: *cum princeps optimus parensque publicus rogatus a Pallante eam partem sententiae, quae pertinebat ad dandum ei ex aerario sestertium centies quinquagies, remitti uoluisset* (*Ep.* 8.6.10). Pliny then styles this into a scene in which Pallas protests directly: *imaginare Pallantem uelut intercedentem senatus consulto moderantemque honores suos* (*Ep.* 8.6.11).

⁷⁷ In correspondence, Christopher Whitton has suggested comparison with *Hist.* 1.85.3, *et priuato Othoni nuper atque eadem dicenti nota adulatio*. It is interesting to note that in the *Histories* passage Otho's recent senatorial status gives him an insight into the intricacies of senatorial *adulatio*, whereas the debate at *Ann.* 12.53 shows hypocrisy that is apparent to all. Pliny had written *nemo tam miser est ut illa cogatur* (*Ep.* 8.6.3), but in Tacitus the opposite might plausibly be seen to be the case.

Picture **Pallas protesting**, as it were, and **moderating** his honours ... picture **Caesar complying** with the pleas or rather the command of the freedman before the Senate ... picture the **Senate** continually **swearing** that its decrees are well deserved and willingly passed.

Pliny calls upon Montanus to visualize the scene, offering three extended images based around a noun qualified by a present participle, as printed in bold. Rhetorical vividness (*enargeia* or *demonstratio*), often a key strategy in passages of description (*ekphrasis*), is here made an explicit aim.⁷⁸ Generally, the purpose of *enargeia* is to make a scene more engaging by creating a virtual sense of presence. Pliny's overt call to visualization does not provide the kind of circumstantial or visual detail that would usually constitute descriptive vividness—the participles printed in bold do not serve this purpose.⁷⁹ As a result, like his use of verbatim citation and his expression of sympathy with the historical Senate, the apparent immediacy actually serves to distance him from the events in question.⁸⁰ Tacitus, in approaching the same events, omits the authorial ego as is his wont, while constructing a much closer relationship to his subject matter. While the historian famously claims a distanced and dispassionate stance towards events that predate his own career when he proposes to write *sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo* (*Ann.* 1.1.1), that claim is often seen to be in conflict with a sense that the narrator is powerfully engaged with his subject matter. In one of the rare instances when Tacitus expresses his own emotions, amidst the Neronian purge of *Annals* Book 16, the historian's mimetic purpose comes to the fore, as Tacitus predicts the same emotions of tedium, disgust and impatience in his readers as he experienced researching the events (*Ann.* 16.16.1–3). As Marincola puts it:

It is therefore part of Tacitus' way of getting across what it is like to live under an emperor ... The attempt to arouse weariness or disgust in the reader is done precisely to re-enact the experience of the participants at the time, and from the distance afforded by history, allow him to pass judgement on men and their actions.⁸¹

The ironies of Tacitus' account of the honours paid to Pallas appear to go even further than this in their conflation of past and present experience.⁸² As argued in Part I above, Pliny delves into the Claudian past in order to produce clear *exempla*, stripped of the complexity of subject matter with personal connections. For Tacitus, as Luce puts it, 'As noble, as clear, as convincing as certain ideas, themes and value may be when

⁷⁸ Elsewhere, Pliny engages in more subtle visual direction, as in his villa *ekphrasis* at *Ep.* 2.17, where verbs of seeing are transferred to parts of the house (*prospectat* and *respicit*, 2.17.5; *intuetur*, 2.17.6); see Whitton (n. 13), 230.

⁷⁹ Pliny's focus remains on his own judgements and his interpretation of motives and psychology. For the role of *enargeia* in creating the impression of virtual presence, cf., for instance, *Rhet. Her.* 4.54.68, Quint. *Inst.* 6.2.31–2.

⁸⁰ Pliny claims virtual presence in the inverted consolation topos at 8.6.17, as discussed above.

⁸¹ J. Marincola, 'Beyond pity and fear: the emotions of history', *Ancient Society* 33 (2003), 285–315, at 312–13.

⁸² C. Damon, 'The historian's presence, or, there and back again', in C.S. Kraus, J. Marincola and C. Pelling (edd.), *Ancient Historiography and its Contexts: Studies in Honour of A.J. Woodman* (Oxford, 2010), 353–63, especially 354–5 argues that Tacitus, while openly suspicious of fondness for spectacle (and thus of the visual and dramatic arts which provide the dominant metaphors for traditional rhetorical *enargeia*) invests heavily in an alternative metaphor, that of the historian's physical presence in the past. On the contrast between metaphors of presence and distance, cf. briefly A.J. Woodman, 'The preface to Tacitus' *Annals*: more Sallust?', *CQ* 42 (1992), 567–8.

considered abstractly, their appearance in real life is all too often compromised by the sad state of the human condition.⁸³ Even in his brief treatment of Pallas' honours, Tacitus invests more than Pliny in overcoming a sense of distance from Claudian Rome. While Pliny expresses sympathy with the past 'as if he were there', his empty invocation of textbook *enargeia* has quite the opposite effect from Tacitus' ironized version. Pliny's *exemplum* is finished, sealed and polished. He sets up a distanced and privileged standpoint for himself, his addressee and, by implication, a cooperative wider readership. His readers are to interpret the *ipsa uerba* of the past under his supervision. Tacitus creates a compelling fiction of presence, and in reading his text it is impossible to escape the twisted ironies of political language.⁸⁴ While Pliny expresses sympathy with the Claudian past, Tacitus writes as if he sees his own condition in it, but his ironic mode of presentation eschews prescribing to the reader how that condition should be judged.

IV: PLINY, TACITUS AND JUVENAL

I would like to conclude by returning to satire and to the perspectives on Pliny's and Tacitus' techniques that can be opened up through comparison with Juvenal's first *Satire*. By directing his *indignatio* at ashes resting beside the Latin road, Pliny is engaging in a satirical and grandly rhetorical project focussed on the past. This combination of elements later finds unchained expression in Juvenal's take on the post-Domitianic 'indignation industry' in the first *Satire*, which advertises its author's generically unconventional decision to concentrate on relatively outdated events, while building a powerful sense of authorial outrage.⁸⁵ The question of whether Juvenal alludes to Pliny is not central to my concerns here; instead, I would like to consider how Juvenal, Pliny and Tacitus engage in different evocations of *indignatio* with regard to historical material. Reference to Juvenal can throw further light on the passages that have been discussed in detail (*Sat.* 1.170–1):⁸⁶

... experiar quid concedatur in illos
quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina.

I shall try out what is permitted against those whose ashes are buried beneath the Flaminian and the Latin roads.

Choosing targets for his indignation, Juvenal names only those who are already dead.⁸⁷ In a genre that traditionally engaged in contemporary social critique, Juvenal presents a

⁸³ T.J. Luce, 'Tacitus' conception of historical change: the problem of discovering the historian's opinions', in I.S. Moxon, J.D. Smart and A.J. Woodman (edd.), *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1986), 143–57, at 157.

⁸⁴ For the role of interpretative difficulty in recreating the world of Julio-Claudian Rome, cf. E. O'Gorman, *Irony and Misreading in the Annals of Tacitus* (Cambridge, 2000), especially 1–22.

⁸⁵ On Juvenal's 'time-warp' and the indignation industry, cf. K. Freudenburg, *Satires of Rome: Threatening Poses from Lucilius to Juvenal* (Cambridge, 2001), 209–77.

⁸⁶ T. Geue, 'Forgetting the Juvenalien in our midst. Literary amnesia in the *Satires*', in A. König and C. Whitton (edd.), *Roman Literature under Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian: Literary Interactions A.D. 96–138* (Cambridge, 2018), 366–84 provides a survey of scholarship on the question of relationships between Juvenal, Tacitus and Pliny, and proposes paying broader attention to the authors' shared 'turf wars', beyond verbal allusion.

⁸⁷ A great many tombs lined both of the named roads: for examples, see J.E.B. Mayor, *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal* (Cambridge, 1872), 166–7; cf. T. Ashby and R.A.L. Fell, 'The Via Flaminia',

tendentious and enraged personal voice while targeting events and characters that are outdated by the standards of satiric tradition. In this regard, Juvenal's outrage can be regarded as a literary commentary on the postures taken up by Pliny. While Pliny presents himself as the impresario of the display, prescribing the proper mixture of laughter and indignation, Juvenal represents himself as totally carried away by his emotions: *si natura negat facit indignatio uersum*, 'If talent lets me down, outrage produces my verse' (*Sat.* 1.79).

At the same time, Juvenal's satire takes aim at the attitudes of a historian. Here, the satirist's ability to rely totally on outrage stands in stark contrast to the historian's need to profess impartiality. As suggested earlier, while Tacitus moves his own voice into the background of his treatment of the Pallas episode, his emotional *enargeia* subtly creates a more intimate relationship with the past for both author and reader, and reading Tacitus with Juvenal's first satire in mind makes this discrepancy apparent. Uden has recently argued that Juvenal's reluctance to engage in criticism of named individuals lends the first *Satire* the character of an 'open text' and implicates readers in the process of accusation.⁸⁸ While Pliny renders the senators who honoured Pallas anonymous, thereby avoiding *inuidia* from naming individuals, the anonymous Senate, carefully *not* compared with any recent *exempla*, might itself be taken as a readily transferable *exemplum*. Juvenal's techniques of absenting himself from the text, making himself anonymous or invisible, have lately been the subject of studies by Uden and Geue, who explore ways of reading such strategies as defensive manoeuvres.⁸⁹ In a similar vein, but to a slightly different end, Sailor has suggested that Tacitus constructs a biographical narrative of alienation as a way of claiming to speak independently and authoritatively.⁹⁰ Pliny, by contrast, generally goes to great lengths to show his participation in contemporary politics; alienation belongs, in Pliny's self-portrait, to the Domitianic past. In this respect, Juvenal's writing has more in common with Tacitus' ironic strategy in handling the honours paid to Pallas. Geue stresses the anonymity of the satirist himself as a self-defensive technique, simultaneously expressive of the anxieties attendant upon written criticism in Hadrian's era.⁹¹ In the case of both Juvenal and Tacitus, the author withdraws, leaving readers to draw the unspoken connections, though the withdrawal is of a different kind for each author.⁹² While Tacitus' class allegiances are quite clear, personal commitment to the subject of his work is expressed indirectly. Juvenal, on the other hand, is a highly elusive character in terms of external social markers, but his verse is predicated on the claim to direct emotional expression. Pliny, in contrast to both Juvenal and Tacitus, is a striking personal presence throughout the *Letters*, both in terms of his social allegiances and in terms of his personal emotional expression, and the Pallas letters are strong examples

JRS 11 (1921), 125–90, at 134. Some recent burials may be brought to mind: by the Flaminian road stood the tomb of the actor Paris (Mart. 11.13), famous in Domitian's time, and one of those Greek dissemblers in the firing line of *Satire* 3. Domitian himself was buried by the Latin road (Suet. *Dom.* 17.3), and within Book 1 he is at the centre of the fourth *Satire*.

⁸⁸ J. Uden, *The Invisible Satirist: Juvenal and Second-Century Rome* (Oxford, 2015).

⁸⁹ Uden (n. 88), 36–42. T. Geue, *Juvenal and the Poetics of Anonymity* (Cambridge, 2017).

⁹⁰ D. Sailor, *Writing and Empire in Tacitus* (Cambridge, 2008), 33–4, 71, 253, 274–5.

⁹¹ Geue (n. 89), 12.

⁹² Uden (n. 88), 42–50 has connected features of the first *Satire* with Tacitus' *Dialogus*, suggesting that Juvenal draws on Tacitus' exploration of poetry as a medium for social withdrawal and social critique, as well as the pervasive concern with *delatio*. For shared concerns in the Pallas letters and the *Dialogus*, cf. Part II above.

of this self-presentation. Of the three authors, Tacitus is the least inclined to prescribe emotional responses to his readers, Pliny the most. Juvenal's technique may be regarded as a commentary on the relationship to the past established by both Tacitus and Pliny. The former, with his immersive representations of the past, may not be so distant from his subject matter as his work implies. Meanwhile, Juvenal's technique of giving way to outrage and implying that his readers should join him parodies Pliny's constant concern with prescribing the emotional responses proper to polite society. While Pliny plays the role of the righteously enraged *uir bonus*, and Juvenal lampoons such righteous anger, Tacitus leaves no secure and uncorrupted standpoint from which such judgements can be passed. At *Ep.* 7.29.4, when Pliny ostensibly dismisses the subject of Pallas, remarking *ridere satius, ne se magnum aliquid adeptos putent* ('It is better to laugh, so that people don't think they have attained anything great'), in some sense the *magnum aliquid* that Pallas attains is yet to come, in the form of the indignant second letter; the question remains whether it is possible to regard Pliny's staging of sympathetic reception and his anxiety to control implications of his *exempla* as ironic in themselves.

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