

*Pliny, Man of Many Parts (Lucretius, Cicero,
Valerius Maximus, Tacitus)*

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This chapter has a simple argument: Pliny's *Epistles* is a work of many intertextual parts.¹ Neither beholden to Cicero's *Epistles*, its professed generic forebear, nor privileging 'poetic memory' over prose, it integrates a broad range of predecessors, old and new, verse and prose. In a larger study of Plinian intertextuality, I have argued that Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* is its unsuspected protagonist, with Tacitus' *Dialogus* tightly caught up in the same weave.² I won't rehearse those claims here, and space precludes discussion of the many other underestimated players on this stage: Sallust, for instance, Livy and Seneca the Elder.³ Instead I have chosen four authors and three letters (*Epistles* 4.3, 5.16, and 7.1). With this handful of examples, I aim to exemplify some modes and norms of Plinian *imitatio*, to demonstrate that Lucretius, Cicero (*rhetorica*), Valerius Maximus and Tacitus (*Agricola*) all have a role in his pages, and to underline, therefore, the breadth of ambition inherent to Pliny's generic self-positioning. We'll also repeatedly see exemplified 'the remarkable Roman capacity for seeing one individual in terms of another'⁴ – which

¹ I keenly regret that I couldn't accept the kind invitation of Spyridon Tzounakas and Margot Neger to their conference on 'Pliny's epistolary intertextuality', and thank them all the more for inviting this contribution afterwards. I wrote it in June 2018.

² See Whitton (2019), to which I refer for substantiation of many claims here, for a survey of the field and for justification of my preferred term 'imitation'. I extend the story elsewhere to Tacitus' *Historiae*, another large and unnoticed presence in the *Epistles*, and for that matter the *Panegyricus* (Whitton forthcoming).

³ Sallust is a frequent presence, above all the proem of *Bellum Catilinae* (as notably in *Ep.* 9.3; see Whitton (2019), index loc.). Livian cameos include *Ep.* 5.21.4 (obsequies for Julius Avitus) – Livy 3.12.2 (obsequies for Cincinnatus' son Caeso) and *Ep.* 7.27.5 (the ghost) – Livy 2.23.3–4 (the tortured debtor of 495 BC); see also Gibson, p. 52 in this volume. For Seneca the Elder, start with *Ep.* 1.5.1 *non minora commiserat quam . . . sed tectiora* (~ *Con.* 1.pr.15 *non minor est quam . . . sed occultior*) together with *Ep.* 1.5.12 *nec sum contentus eloquentia saeculi nostri* etc. (~ *Con.* 1.pr.6 *non contenti exemplis saeculi vestri* etc.).

⁴ Woodman and Martin (1996) 85.

is to say, this is also an occasion to recall the all-encompassing import of exemplarity in the *Epistles* (and thus in Roman culture).⁵

I *Epistles* 4.3, with Cicero and Lucretius

Epistles 4.3 is the first of three letters complimenting the old senator Arrius Antoninus on his poetry.⁶ It starts with his splendid political career, then gets to the point: the peerless quality of his Latin and, above all, his marvellous Greek epigrams and mimiamb. A pair of hyperbolic accolades constitutes the climax:⁷

Hominemne Romanum tam Graece loqui? **Non** medius fidius **ipsas Athenas tam Atticas** dixerim. Quid multa? Invideo Graecis quod illorum lingua scribere maluisti. Neque enim coniectura eget quid sermone patrio exprimere possis, cum hoc insiticio et inducto tam praeclara opera perfeceris. Vale. (*Ep.* 4.3.5)

To think that someone Roman could speak so Greek! I do declare that I wouldn't say Athens herself was so Attic! In a word, I envy the Greeks that you have chosen to write in their tongue: it takes no conjecture what you could express in your native language, when you have produced such splendid works in this grafted and imported one.

Yours, Pliny

These compliments gain depth from the fragmentary integration of two canonical texts. The first is the *Orator*, Cicero's late treatise on oratorical style. Defending himself against charges of 'Asianist' bombast levelled by self-proclaimed Atticists, he advises his critics to measure their definition of Atticism against the greatest orator of all, Demosthenes:

Itaque nobis monendi sunt ei quorum sermo imperitus increbuit, qui aut dici se desiderant Atticos aut ipsi Attice volunt dicere, ut mirentur hunc maxime, quo **ne Athenas quidem ipsas magis** credo fuisse **Atticas**: quid enim sit Atticum discant eloquentiamque ipsius viribus, non imbecillitate sua metiantur. (Cic. *Orat.* 23)

And so we must advise those whose naïve talk has been bandied about, who either say they want to be called Attic or want to speak Attic [*i.e.* in the

⁵ On Plinian exemplarity see first Gazich (2003).

⁶ The miniature *Ep.* 4.18 and 5.15 complete this little cycle; he is also mentioned in *Ep.* 4.27.5, another letter on poetry (a major theme introduced in Book 4). *Cos. suff.* 69, II *suff.* 97 (Eck, *BNP* 'Arrius II, 1'), Antoninus was among Pliny's most senior addressees.

⁷ Latin texts are cited after Mynors (1963) or relevant Oxford texts, with occasional changes to spelling and punctuation. Translations are mine.

Attic style] themselves, to admire this man [*i.e.* Demosthenes] most of all, a man than whom I believe not even Athens herself was more Attic: let them learn what Attic is and measure their eloquence by his strength, not their own weakness.

Pliny's praise for Antoninus reworks Cicero's for Demosthenes.⁸ The imitation is clear formally, with the three key terms (*ipsas, Athenas, Atticas*) reprised in the same case and almost the same order; other elements are varied.⁹ It is also clear semantically. Athens 'was no more Attic' than Demosthenes, 'was not so Attic' as Antoninus: each epigram compares a man to a city, and invokes a (mannered) scale of Atticity.¹⁰ Pliny shifts the context and drops a rhetorical technicality: Cicero writes about oratorical style and raises Athens in the specific context of the 'Atticist/Asianist' *querelle*; Pliny writes about a poet and uses Athens more broadly, as the definitive home of good Greek.

As this little encounter exemplifies, Pliny was a far more attentive and productive reader of Cicero's rhetorical treatises than recent scholarship has allowed (he returns several times to this early portion of the *Orator*).¹¹ The imitation is characteristic in its brevity, in its nonchalance, and in its interpretative potential: readers are welcome to pass over it, but those with eyes to see (or ears to hear) will find that Pliny's praise extends beyond literal hyperbole to encompass implicit comparison with the orator whom he and others uphold as the greatest model of all.¹² I will venture a step further to speculate that he lights upon Cicero by way of an obvious 'associative bridge', as talk of Antoninus' pure Greek prompts and invites recall of Cicero on Demosthenes' pure Attic.¹³

Characteristic too is the speed with which Pliny moves to another model. Look again at how he follows up the 'Athens' line –

⁸ Seen long ago by Buchner (1644) *notae* p.30. As with most of Pliny's intertextuality, readers relying on twentieth-century commentaries will hear little of it (Trisoglio 1973 ad loc. has a non-committal 'cf.').

⁹ P. Ø - C. *quo*; P. *non* - C. *ne* . . . *quidem*; P. *medius fidius* - C. *credo* (each an avowal); P. Ø (*sc. esse*) - C. *fuisse*; P. *tam* - C. *magis* (making 'Atticity' a scale).

¹⁰ In the idea of 'speaking more Attic, in a more Attic way' (not quite the same as 'speaking Attic better' or 'sounding more Attic').

¹¹ Some or all of *Ep.* 1.20.4 (*Orat.* 26), 1.20.19 (- *Orat.* 29), 1.20.21 (- *Orat.* 23), 2.14.13 (- *Orat.* 27), 9.26.9 (- *Orat.* 26), and 5.20.5 (- *Orat.* 18): Whitton (2019), index loc. Pliny also looks frequently to *De oratore*, and occasionally to the *Brutus*; he also makes productive use of Cicero's other dialogues, not least *De senectute* (Whitton 2019, index loc.). 'Recent scholarship': summarised by Marchesi (2008) 252–7.

¹² Whitton (2013a) 101.

¹³ *Assoziationsbrücke* conventionally denotes an involuntary cognitive process. The crafted *imitatio* of Pliny (and many writers besides), I would say, involves a complex blend of the involuntary (an idea presents itself) and the voluntary (it is worked through with application).

Quid multa? Invideo **Graecis** quod *illorum linguā scribere*^A maluisti. *Neque enim coniectura eget quid sermone patrio*^B **exprimere** possis,^C cum hoc *insiticio* et inducto tam praeclara opera perfeceris. (*Ep.* 4.3.5)

– and compare a familiar passage from Lucretius’ first book:

Nunc et Anaxagorae scrutemur homoeomerian
quam **Grai** memorant nec *nostra dicere linguā*^A
concedit nobis **patrii sermonis**^B egestas;
sed tamen ipsam rem facilest **exponere verbis**.^C (Lucretius, *DRN* 1.830–3)

Now let us consider too Anaxagoras’ *homoeomeria*, as the Greeks call it and which the destitution of our native language does not allow us to say in our own tongue; but it is easy nonetheless to set out the thing itself in words.

Lucretius is talking about Anaxagoras’ theory of ‘like parts’ and the challenge of translating philosophy into Latin: a far cry from Antoninus and his epigrams. But there can be little doubt that Pliny has imported these lines into his letter. The formal core of the liaison is *patrius sermo*. That isn’t rare enough to prove anything on its own¹⁴ (or so you might assume),¹⁵ but the further similarities tell a clear tale.¹⁶ It’s an imitative

¹⁴ The phrase is extant seven times between Lucretius and Pliny (Cic. *Fin.* 1.4; Verg. *Aen.* 12.834; Hor. *Ars P.* 57; three times in Curt. 6.9–10; Sil. *Pun.* 2.440).

¹⁵ ‘Extant seven times’ is the truth, but not the whole truth: only three of them refer to Latin, and only one of those at most is independent of Lucretius. (i) Hor. *Ars P.* 56–8 *cum lingua Catonis et Enni | sermonem patrium ditaverit et nova rerum | nomina protulerit* is a sure imitation, combining *DRN* 1.830 *patrii sermonis egestas* (~ *sermonem patrium ditaverit*, with *lingua - linguā* in the preceding line) with its anticipation at *DRN* 1.139 *propter egestatem linguae et rerum novitatem | (~ et nova rerum |)*. (No comment in Brink (1971) ad loc. or Hardie (2009) 41–64, but the latter establishes Lucretius’ importance to Horace more broadly.) (ii) Despite the silence of Tarrant (2012) and others ad loc., it’s a good bet that Vergil (*Aen.* 12.834 *sermonem Ausonii patrium moresque tenebunt*) does too, given his next line (*utque est nomen erit: commixto corpore tanto* - *DRN* 1.859 *sive cibos omnis commixto corpore dicent*, less than thirty lines on from *DRN* 1.830; cf. also *G.* 2.325); again Hardie (2009), though he doesn’t mention this passage, firmly establishes Vergil’s close and productive reading of Lucretius. That leaves (iii) Cic. *Fin.* 1.4 *sermo patrius*, in Cicero’s biggest set-piece defence of his practice of writing philosophy in Latin. If he has Lucretius in mind, he takes remarkably little trouble to show it, either here or in *Fin.* 1.10 *Latinam linguam non modo non inopem, ut vulgo putarent, sed locupletiolem etiam esse quam Graecam*; cf. *Caec.* 51 *nostra lingua, quae dicitur esse inops, antedating DRN*). All of which is to say: it is rash to take a statement like the one in my previous note at face value when weighing up the probability of imitation.

¹⁶ *Exprimere possis* echoes *exponere verbis* (and turns the hexameter ending into a prose clausula, resolved cretic plus spondee). *Graecis* [second word] . . . *nostra dicere lingua* echoes and varies *Grai* [second word] . . . *illorum linguā scribere*. The six emboldened elements appear in the same sequence. All this is strong reason, too, to privilege these lines of Book 1 over the references to *patrius sermo* at *DRN* 1.136–9 (n. 15) and 3.260 *abstrahit invitum patrii sermonis egestas*. Pliny’s *tam praeclara opera* may also have a Lucretian origin: cf. *DRN* 1.729–32 (of Empedocles) *praeclarius . . . exponunt praeclara reperta* (likewise a neut. pl. object), nearby in the text, and easily associated with *DRN* 1.833 through *exponere*.

pattern found all over the *Epistles* (and not special to Pliny): a lexical hub (*sermone patrio* – *patrii sermonis*), only moderately distinct as diction, varied, and accompanied by more subtle reflexes.¹⁷ Again, meaning plays no lesser a part. At one level, Pliny and Lucretius are on the same page: both compare Greek and Latin; both stake a claim about the ease of writing Latin. At another, they are talking about two different things altogether. Lucretius tells us that Latin is lexically inadequate for his task, but affirms that this will cause him no difficulty. Pliny writes about poetry, and produces an argument *a fortiori* which leans on the idea of ‘native’ in *patrius*: if Antoninus can write so marvellously in a foreign language, just think how he’ll get on in his native tongue. Again, it’s a typical outcome: the idea is in one way the same (making another clear associative bridge), in others thoroughly transformed.¹⁸

As with Cicero, so with Lucretius: Pliny has been attentive in reading, minute in adapting – and by no means furtive in his *imitatio*. For one thing, it’s a fair bet that these lines were as famous in his day as they are in ours.¹⁹ For another, the formal adaptation hardly covers its tracks. For a third, there are the hints of wry self-reflexivity. When Pliny describes Greek with the extremely rare adjective *insiticius* (‘grafted on’),²⁰ he vindicates – *pace* Lucretius – the ability of Latin to innovate lexically. We might also toy with reading the same word as delicate annotation of his own textual act, as he grafts a Lucretian sprig into his prose. Certainly we should recognise the irony when Pliny says, ‘it takes no conjecture . . .’. *Coniectura* is not a Lucretian word, and we naturally take it, in the (faux-)casual context of a letter, to mean ‘guess’. But it is also a standard technical term of logic (‘conjecture’) – strangely familiar from Quintilian’s *Institutio*²¹ – making, then, a suitable garnish to this briefest of forays into philosophy.

¹⁷ Examples in Whitton (2019) ch. 3 and *passim*.

¹⁸ At the risk of trying your patience, I refer again to the examples scattered in Whitton (2019).

¹⁹ Explicit citation and quotation of Lucretius is surprisingly rare between his death and Pliny’s day (Butterfield (2013) 47–54; Gatzemeier (2013)), and comments on *patrius sermo* tend to be situated by scholars in a ‘poverty topos’ (Fögen (2000); Farrell (2001) 28–51). But imitation is a different matter (n. 15; a case in point is Sen. *Ep.* 58.1 *Quanta verborum nobis paupertas, immo egestas sit – DRN* 1.132 *concedit nobis patrii sermonis egestas*, surely not just ‘topos’ but imitation). Lucretius’ canonicity is clear from explicit mentions by e.g. Nep. *Att.* 12.4, Vit. *9.pr.* 17, Ov. *Am.* 1.15.23 and *Tr.* 2.425, Vell. 2.36.2, Sen. *Tranq.* 2.14 (etc.) and Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.87.

²⁰ Hence the glossing doublet *inductus*. Far rarer than *insitivus*, it is attested twice in Varro, once in ps.-Sall. *Ad Caes. sen.* (date uncertain) and once in Sen. *Helv.* (conjectural); after Pliny, once each in Apuleius (text uncertain) and Sidonius (probably from Pliny). Details in *TLL* s.v.

²¹ Early in his chapter on conjecture, Quintilian writes that facts relating to the present *non egent coniectura, ut si apud Lacedaemonios quaeratur an Athenis muri fiant* (‘do not need conjecture, for instance if it is asked in Sparta whether walls are being built at Athens’, *Inst.* 7.2.4). The phrasing closely and uniquely matches Pliny’s *neque enim coniectura eget*. The technical *Inst.* 7 is not a book

Here, then, is a sure case of Lucretius being imitated in the *Epistles*,²² significant both for what it says about Pliny's intertexture and as a neglected trace of *De Rerum Natura*.²³ But I also offer it as a characteristic example of Plinian intertextuality: subtle (but not sneaky) in form, extensive in adaptation, and accompanied by more than one sign of wit. Even the choice of target text is typically off-beat: Lucretius, perhaps, makes a more predictable source than Cicero, for this parting touch in a letter to a poet; but neither his argument nor his genre speaks directly to Antoninus' miniatures or Pliny's compliment on them.

Pliny's second letter to Antoninus, by the way, comes later in the same book, and begins like this:

Quemadmodum magis approbare tibi possum quantopere mirer epigrammata tua Graeca, quam quod quaedam Latine aemulari et exprimere temptavi? In deterius tamen. Accidit hoc primum imbecillitate ingeni mei, deinde inopia ac potius, **ut Lucretius ait, egestate patrii sermonis.** (*Ep.* 4.18.1)

How can I better prove to you how much I admire your Greek epigrams than by the fact that I have tried to emulate and express some of them in Latin? For the worse, though. This happens first through the weakness of my talent, then through the poverty or rather, as Lucretius says, the destitution of our native language.

This is the only time Pliny quotes Lucretius and the first recorded citation of his line on *patrius sermo* – freely quoted, to be sure (modified for word-order, syntax, and rhythm),²⁴ but it could hardly be more explicit.²⁵ As often, he draws our attention to a detail in the original easily passed over, that *egestas* is not just poverty, but severe poverty.²⁶ It also confirms (if you

that features heavily in *Ep.* (I have noticed no other instance; cf. Whitton (2019) 36–7), but I doubt coincidence here, given (i) that Pliny imitates Quintilian scores of times in the *Epistles* and (ii) that both mention Athens in the same breath.

²² Some other suggestions in Gigante (1979) 350 and 355–7 (on *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20; add e.g. *Ep.* 6.16.9 *crassiore caligine* – *DRN* 6.461 *caligine crassa*); Marchesi (2008) 129–31 (*Ep.* 1.6).

²³ Likewise Horace and Vergil in n. 15.

²⁴ Which consideration came first is hard to say, but the variations integrate the phrase into Pliny's syntax and avoid a heroic clausula. His own rhythm is a rare choice for him, whether we call it a dispondeo (the lumpiest of prose clausulae) or a resolved cretic plus molossus. Either way, the four long syllables (*-is* is *brevis in longo*) could constitute a lightly raised eyebrow at Pliny's *non-versiness*. A different thought in Butterfield (2013) 52 ('perhaps ... distancing himself from ... a poet he seemingly did not hold in high esteem'). On Pliny's sensitivity to rhythm see Whitton (2013a) 28–32, with Whitton (2019) 307 on some imitations of Catullan prosody.

²⁵ Similar phrases with *ut ait* at *Ep.* 4.7.6, 5.8.11 (again freely adapted), 7.32.2.

²⁶ Hence the 'correction', *inopia ac potius ... egestate*, à la Sen. *Ep.* 58.1 *Quanta verborum nobis paupertas, immo egestas sit.*

needed confirmation) that he knows Lucretius' comment about *patrius sermo*. But more than that: these lines are a clearly signalled sequel to *Epistles* 4.3, picking up the theme of Antoninus' Greek poems²⁷ and the contrast of Greek and Latin with which that letter ended; it can hardly be accident, then, that Pliny quotes here the passage he imitated there. This looks, in other words, like belated revelation,²⁸ confirming – for alert readers – that the earlier echoes were planned, not accidental.

I draw three conclusions from that. First, the liaison with Lucretius that I identified in *Epistles* 4.3 is no fantasy, nor the result (if you had been wondering) of sub- or semiconscious repetition. Second, we have confirmation of the self-reflexivity I suggested identifying there. In some measure, at least, this imitation is a game: Pliny is planting trails, and looking over his shoulder to see whether we follow. Third, and arising from both of those: the *Epistles* roves widely as it forages for literary *elegantia* and generic roughage – inviting us to try to keep up with the diverse ingredients being mixed into Pliny's omnigenic blend.

2 *Epistles* 7.1, with Lucretius and Valerius Maximus

Epistles 7 opens with a brief sermon on *temperantia*.²⁹ Geminus is suffering a long illness;³⁰ Pliny urges him to constancy by recalling his own fortitude under duress, demonstrated in two stages. First he reports the standing instruction he gives his slaves: if he is ever ill and demands something the doctors disapprove of, they must refuse it. Second, he provides a specific *exemplum* to crown the letter:

Quin etiam cum perustus ardentissima febre tandem remissus unctusque acciperem a medico potionem, porrexi manum utque tangeret dixi, admodumque iam labris poculum reddidi. (5) Postea cum vicensimo valetudinis die balineo praepararer mussantesque medicos repente vidissem, causam requisivi. Responderunt posse me tuto lavari, non tamen omnino sine aliqua suspicione. (6) 'Quid,' inquam, 'necesse est?' Atque ita spe balinei, cui iam videbar inferri, placide leniterque dimissa, ad abstinentiam rursus, non secus ac modo ad balineum, animum vultumque composui. (7) Quae

²⁷ Loudly (*Ep.* 4.18.1 *epigrammata tua Graeca* - 4.3.3 *Graeca epigrammata tua*), and discreetly (*Ep.* 4.18.1 *exprimere temptavi* - 4.3.5 *exprimere possis*).

²⁸ Otherwise called '*e sequentibus praecedentia*', the technique 'whereby a later passage explains an earlier' (Woodman (2014) 77). It is tempting to see *aemulari et exprimere* as intertextual annotation too. Antoninus' third and final letter (*Ep.* 5.15) is again thick with talk of imitation, and precedes one of Pliny's most remarkable epistolary acts of *imitatio* (*Ep.* 5.16, part of which I consider below).

²⁹ The theme is signalled with a framing repetition: *Ep.* 7.1.1 *temperantissimum . . . 7 temperantia*.

³⁰ On Rosianus Geminus, addressed six times, see Sherwin-White (1966) ad loc. and Birley (2000) s.v.

tibi scripsi, primum ut te non sine exemplo monerem, deinde ut in posterum ipse ad eandem temperantiam astringerer, cum me hac epistula quasi pignore obligavissem.³¹ Vale. (*Ep.* 7.1.4–7)

Once, in fact, I was racked with a fiercely burning fever. When at last it had abated and I had had a rub-down, the doctor was giving me a drink; I held out my hand and told him to touch it [*i.e.* take my pulse], and I gave back the cup that I had already lifted to my lips. (5) Later, on the twentieth day of my illness, when I was being prepared for the baths, I suddenly saw the doctors muttering, and asked the reason. They replied that I could bathe safely, but not altogether without some concerns. (6) ‘What,’ I said, ‘is it necessary?’ And so I calmly and mildly abandoned hope of the baths that I thought I was already being carried into, and I fixed my mind and countenance, as I had a moment before on bathing, back on abstinence. (7) I have written this to you, first so as not to give you advice without an example, and then so that I myself might be obligated to the same temperance, having bound myself over with this letter as if with a surety. Yours, Pliny

A drink and the baths (probably a steam rather than a dip) are the two things a sick man longs for;³² Pliny sets out his steadfastness in refusing both.

Two very different texts are folded into this exemplary scene, again one prose, one verse. Let me start this time with the verse (Lucretius again). Compare Pliny and his doctors –

Postea cum vicensimo valetudinis die balineo praepararer **mussantesque medicos** repente vidissem, causam requisivi. (*Ep.* 7.1.5)

– with Lucretius’ apocalyptic vision of the Athenian plague:

Nec requies erat ulla mali: defessa iacebant
corpora. **Mussabat** tacito **medicina** timore . . . (*DRN* 6.1178–9)

And there was no respite from the trouble: their bodies lay exhausted. Medicine muttered with silent fear . . .

³¹ Guillemin (1953–62) ad loc. reasonably compares Cic. *Fam.* 5.8.12 *Has litteras velim existimes foederis habituras esse vim, non epistulae* . . . and the legal metaphor in *Ep.* 3.1.12 *idque iam nunc apud te subsigno* . . .

³² *Ep.* 7.26.2 *balinea imaginatur et fontes*. ‘Steam’: *balineum* is the whole complex of rooms in a Roman bath-house. Here (as e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 14.64.2) the hot and humid *caldarium* is probably in mind.

Pliny's doctors mutter, concerned about the wisdom of taking a bath but nervous of telling him so.³³ Lucretius describes 'medicine' (i.e. doctors) muttering, fearful and impotent in the face of an epidemic. The expression is distinctive, and unparalleled.³⁴ In formal terms, the muttering doctors are more isolated than the liaison with *patrius sermo*, but they too, judging from the further parallels of situation and sequence, aren't isolated or cut free of their context: Lucretius has just described the Athenians plunging their 'burning limbs' (*ardentia . . . membra*) into rivers (1172–3), their desperate thirst (1174–7), and Athens' unceasing plight (1178); Pliny has just described his 'fiercely burning fever' (*ardentissima febre*), his impressive refusal of a drink, and an illness lasting three weeks or more. Once again difference and similarity are finely balanced: three elements which are in essence the same, but with very significant *mutata* in the transformation from death-dealing pandemic to individual discomfort.

Strange to tell, Pliny's whole little scene is subtended by Lucretius' plague. Why? One possibility is inadvertence: Lucretius' *mussabat medicina* had lodged in Pliny's mind and now resurfaces – along with its context – without his realising it.³⁵ Such cognitive questions are as fascinating as they are elusive,³⁶ but I am inclined to credit Pliny with very considerable control over his expression, given the minutely attentive detail that attends so much of his *imitatio*.

A second answer concerns aggrandisement, of a particular sort. Taken at face value, this is a quotidian tale of an ordinary (elite) man in his sickroom. But within it resonates one of the great works of poetic therapy. Pliny's handling of his plight acquires grand, we might say epic, dimensions through implicit comparison with the great plague of 430 BC. For unsympathetic readers, that may teeter on the brink of the absurd. Others may identify, rather, an ethical lesson: each struggle with your soul, be it ever so petty, is a tiny part and replica of humanity's greatest trials. A purportedly mundane *exemplum* reveals new ambition and depth.

Third, and not (I think) trivial: the sheer unpredictability of an imitation like this is witty. Readers are tested, challenged, even amused by the

³³ *Mussare* describes fearful muttering, as at *Ep.* 3.11.3 *mussantibus . . . amicis*, which describes not Pliny's friends, raising eyebrows in disapproval (Sherwin-White (1966) 242), but friends of Artemidorus who evade his requests out of fear (Scheffer (1675) 89).

³⁴ Missed by Plinian scholarship but registered by Bailey (1947) ad loc.

³⁵ For the principle see Cook (1901).

³⁶ And ripe for further study. Lyne (2016) is a bold attempt to bring cognitive studies and (Renaissance) intertextuality together.

unexpected invocation of Lucretius. Speaking of which, is it coincidence that these *mussantes medici* follow hard on Pliny's talk of raising a cup to his lips, or are some other, even more famous lines of Lucretius in mind?

cum . . . *acciperem a medico potionem*, porrexi manum utque tangeret dixi,
admotumque iam labris poculum reddidi. (*Ep.* 7.1.4)

sed veluti pueris *absinthia taetra medentes*
cum dare conantur, prius oras **pocula** circum
contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
ut puerorum aetas improvida ludificetur
laborum tenuis, interea perpetet amarum
absinthi laticem deceptaque non capiatur . . . (*DRN* 1.936–41 = 4.11–16)

But as doctors, when they are trying to give foul absinth to boys, first touch the cups around the rim with the sweet and yellow flow of honey, so that the boys' unsuspecting age can be played on as far as their lips, while it drinks deep of the bitter liquid of absinth and is deceived but not taken captive . . .

Scenes of doctors giving drink to the sick were presumably not rare, and 'cups' and 'lips' make a natural pair.³⁷ But we again find similarities both formal and conceptual.³⁸ Those similarities are less pressing and distinctive than the others we have seen so far, but the possibility of *imitatio* is worth entertaining: this celebrated poetological simile was well known in antiquity too, and surely familiar to Pliny;³⁹ and we have just seen Lucretius invoked in adjacent lines of his letter. More than that, this is the only other cameo for doctors in *De Rerum Natura*,⁴⁰ so that we might legitimately diagnose an 'analytical reading', as Pliny (characteristically) combines two related passages from a pre-text.⁴¹

³⁷ In fact, *pocula* and *labra* coincide quite rarely in extant Latin: otherwise before Pliny in Verg. *Ecl.* 3.44 and 47 *ne dum illis* [i.e. *poculis*] *labra admovi*, Prop. 2.27.10; Mart. 11.11.2–3, 11.26.4; next in Zeno.

³⁸ Three load-bearing words more or less the same and in sequence; an initial *cum*-clause for the doctors giving their drink; the idea of 'only as far as the lips' (only partly paralleled by Vergil and Propertius (previous n.), both also concerning cups not touching lips).

³⁹ 'Well known': Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.1.4 is the first to quote it (*DRN* 1.936–8 = 4.11–13), but he writes, *hac, ut est notum, similitudine utitur*; his other quotation of Lucretius also comes from this 'second proem' (*Inst.* 8.6.45, from *DRN* 1.926 = 4.1). 'Familiar to Pliny': (i) because he was a student and very close reader of Quintilian; (ii) because we have seen him working closely with the nearby *DRN* 1.830–3 (if you suppose, as I do, that the 'second proem' featured in Book 1 from the start; cf. Butterfield (2013) 50 n. 27).

⁴⁰ *Medens* only here and *medicus* nowhere; *medicina* also at *DRN* 3.510 and 521, but not personified as in Book 6.

⁴¹ As he often does (Whitton (2019) *passim*). For the principle see Farrell (1991) *passim* on Vergil.

If we agree that this *is* imitation, it produces a fascinating encounter: in the space of a couple of lines, *Epistles* 7.1 swallows up the first and last books of *De Rerum Natura*, its ‘second proem’ and its finale; alternatively, it tops and tails the second half, from the start of Book 4 to the end of Book 6.⁴² You might see the miniaturisation as amusing, aggressive and/or generically pointed, as the emphatically small-scale *Epistles* cuts a classic of the canon down to size. The technique is familiar from other corners of Latin literature, as when Vergil packs the Epic Cycle into Juno’s temple at Carthage, or Ovid trims Dido to just four lines,⁴³ and it isn’t foreign to Pliny:⁴⁴ his sense of wit, and of generic absorption, is more refined than many readers suspect.

But the ‘if’ at the start of that paragraph is a big one. I grant that *imitatio* of the ‘honeyed cups’ is hard to certify, not least because Lucretius isn’t the only ingredient in these lines. Here we turn to prose, and to another author rarely mentioned in the same breath as Pliny: Valerius Maximus.

Let me quote Pliny’s *exemplum* again –

Quin etiam **cum**^A perustus ardentissima febre tandem remissus unctusque **acciperem** a medico **potionem**,^C porrexi manum utque tangeret dixi, **admotumque iam labris poculum**^D reddidi. (5) Postea cum vicensimo valetudinis die balineo praepararer mussantesque medicos repente vidissem, causam requisivi. Responderunt posse me tuto lavari, non tamen omnino sine aliqua suspitione. (6) ‘**Quid, inquam, necesse est?**’^E Atque ita spe balinei, cui iam videbar inferri, placide leniterque dimissa, ad abstinentiam rursus, non secus ac modo ad balineum, **animum vultumque composui**.^B (*Ep.* 7.1.4–6)

– and compare now the death of Socrates, as recounted in Valerius’ *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*:

Idem, **cum**^A Atheniensium scelerata dementia tristem de capite eius sententiam tulisset **fortique animo et constanti vultu**,^B **potionem** veneni e manu carnificis **accepisset**,^C **admoto iam labris poculo**,^D uxore Xanthippe inter fletum et lamentationem vociferante innocentem eum periturum, ‘**Quid ergo, inquit, nocenti mihi mori satius esse duxisti?**’^E Immensam illam

⁴² Cf. n. 39. Either effect would be interesting at the start of Book 7, whether you see it as a prelude to a book Pliny originally planned as his last (Merwald (1964) 132–7), to Books 7–8 (Bodel (2015) 94–5), or (as I would prefer) to his own final triad.

⁴³ Verg. *Aen.* 1.453–94; Ov. *Met.* 14.78–81.

⁴⁴ Some comparable suggestions: *Ep.* 3.5 incorporating Uncle Pliny’s massive *Natural History* (Henderson (2002b) 80); *Ep.* 2.5 shrinking Quint. *Inst.* 1 into a letter (Whitton (2015a) 135); *Ep.* 1.21 shrinking *Inst.* 11 into an even shorter one and *Ep.* 1.24.4 topping and tailing the *Odyssey* in the twenty-fourth and final letter of Book 1 (Whitton (2019) 245–8).

sapientiam, quae ne in ipso quidem vitae excessu oblivisci sui potuit! (Val. Max. *FD* 7.2.ext.1)

Again, when the wicked madness of the Athenians had passed grim sentence on his life, and he had taken, with bold heart and resolved countenance, the poison drink from the executioner's hand, he had already lifted the cup to his lips when his wife, Xanthippe, weeping and wailing, cried out that he was going to die an innocent man. 'What then,' he said, 'did you think it would be better for me to die guilty?' What boundless wisdom, which even at the very moment of leaving life could not forget itself!

Socrates drinking hemlock is a far cry from Pliny on his sickbed, but it would be hard to explain away all the similarities here. Each narrative starts with a long *cum*-clause (A) which ends in 'taking a drink' (C); each features a cup 'already (*iam*) brought to the lips' (D); each climaxes with a brief rhetorical question (E) displaying calmly rational thought, and an echo.⁴⁵ That makes four correspondences of lexis, syntax and argument, in order. In that light, the correspondence (B) between Socrates' resolve (*fortique animo et constanti vultu*) and Pliny's understated climax (*animum vultumque composui*) is unlikely to be inadvertent: he controls his mind and expression with – *mutatis mutandis* as ever – the same resolution as the great man himself.⁴⁶ Does Valerius even guide Pliny's pen in that first *cum*-clause, so concisely and periodically setting the scene?⁴⁷

As with *patrius sermo* earlier, we find an imitation centred on a hub (*admotumque iam labris poculum – admoto iam labris poculo*) which looks unremarkable enough: I have already said that 'cups' and 'lips' are an easy fit.⁴⁸ But the liaison is as good as certified by *iam* – a small but distinctive detail – and by the serial correspondences around it. Valerius' Socratic *exemplum* of wise words and deeds has been updated, and given an

⁴⁵ It is characteristic that Pliny's question (surely as staged as Socrates') is stripped to the severest brevity.

⁴⁶ Another possible ripple in Pliny's first piece of wisdom for Geminus: he instructs his slaves not to let him have anything he asks for against his doctors' advice, taking as his premise an implied generalisation, that ill people are prone to do just that (*Ep.* 7.1.3). Valerius' section on Socrates begins with his advice that we let the gods decide what is best for us; *nos autem plerumque id votis expeteremus quod non impetrasse melius fore*. The contexts are quite different (Valerius then inveighs against mortal greed for power and riches), and I see no formal echoes. But there is an essential likeness in the idea, and in the larger sequence of argument.

⁴⁷ A single clause establishes the story so far (his long fever), then sets the scene (*tandem remissus unctusque*), then focuses on the telling detail (the cup). Compare Valerius' corresponding *cum*-clause (Socrates' condemnation > his death scene > the cup), and his habit of setting up anecdotes with a densely periodic sentence.

⁴⁸ See n. 37, especially Verg. *Ecl.* 3 (surely the other most celebrated cups in Latin poetry besides Lucretius').

everyday twist, in Pliny's tale of personal temperance. How much (metaliterary) weight, then, attends the final verb of this scene, and of the letter 'proper' – *composui*?⁴⁹

This makes another interesting and exemplary transformation. First, it exemplifies once again the boundless Roman capacity for figuring one person in terms of another: as Antoninus was implicitly compared to Demosthenes, so Pliny is to Socrates. Second, here again is exemplary grandeur in imitation. Pliny sets his performance on the loftiest of stages: resisting the simple pleasures of a drink and a steam, he relives the ultimate *exitus*; the quotidian is tinged with the heroic. But the imitation is exemplary too in targetting Valerius Maximus. For one thing, it reaffirms that Pliny's range of resources for imitation extends well beyond verse, and beyond Cicero's letters. (Don't believe the myth that Valerius Maximus wrote only for 'middle-brow' readers: Pliny for one read him,⁵⁰ and – since I doubt he intended his filigree to evade all his readers' notice – assumed that others knew their *Facta et Dicta* too.)⁵¹ His choice of antecedent also sits comfortably with the exemplary drive of the *Epistles* itself.

Valerius catalogues exemplary anecdotes, pointedly told, from across Greek and Roman history. Pliny sketches a professedly simpler and more modern suite of portraits, pointed too in their way, featuring the exemplary person, life and circle of one individual: himself. Of course, the *Epistles* won't explicitly claim to be retailing 'memorable deeds and words', but that is precisely, in its way, what it does. If Valerius tends nowadays to

⁴⁹ A coda follows (*Ep.* 7.1.7 *Quae tibi scripsi . . .*). Pliny frequently sets the argumentative and imitative climax just before a coda (some instances in Whitton (2019) 189).

⁵⁰ Four other traces: (i) *Ep.* 4.25.3 *qui . . . tam serio tempore tam scurriliter ludat* (outrage at untimely wit in the senate) – *FD* 7.8.9 *Hoc ioco quid . . . intempestivius? . . . scurrili lusu* (outrage at untimely wit by a senator; *scurriliter* and *luderellusu* are paired only here). (ii) *Ep.* 8.14.4–6 – *FD* 2.1.9, two accounts of senatorial apprenticeship in olden times, both emphasising quasi-paternal didaxis and envisaging young men standing at the doors of the senate-house (P. *assistebant curiae foribus* – V. *affixi valvis expectabant*) learning the skills (P.)/stamina (V.) they would need as senators. (iii) *Ep.* 7.27, centred on the haunted house at Athens, repeatedly grazes *FD* 1.7.7, on the ghost seen by Cassius in Athens (Schwartz 1969: 673–4; Whitton forthcoming). (iv) *Ep.* 3.7.10 *Quod me recordantem fragilitatis humanae miseratio subit* seems to echo *FD* 9.12.8 *fragilitatis humanae ratio abstulit* (also ending a sentence, and concerned, like Pliny, with noble deaths), especially given another liaison nearby in both texts: *Ep.* 3.7.13 *oculis obisset, lacrimasse quod* – *FD* 9.13.ext.1 *eset obitura, profundere lacrimas* (both on Xerxes; Pliny is also engaged with Herodotus and Seneca, but his *oculis obisset* is unusual and striking). On that rich passage see also Tzounakas (Chapter 8) in this volume.

⁵¹ As well he might have done. Valerius' *Facta et Dicta* is listed among the Elder Pliny's declared sources (*HN* 1.7, 1.33), cited by Plutarch (*Marc.* 30; *Brut.* 53), imitated by Quintilian (e.g. *Inst.* 4. pr.4–5 – *FD* 1.pr. with Whitton (2019) 361) and Frontinus, *Strat.* 4.1.31–2 (– *FD* 2.7.4–5, with Sinclair (1980) 204–5), and cited and imitated by Gellius 12.7–8 (– *FD* 8.1.amb.1–2, with Holford-Strevens (2001) 489–93); cf. Schanz and Hosius (1935) 591–4.

be sidelined as a lesser creature of the canon, he finds his sure place in Pliny's eclectic generic cocktail. Dare we even suspect a tongue in cheek – or something more serious – when Pliny's seventh book opens by reworking an *exemplum* from early in *Facta et Dicta* 7? A rash thought, perhaps, but let's not forget that Valerius too wrote a work in nine books.⁵² If so, here is another hint of the self-awareness, and potentially grand structural stakes, attending Plinian *imitatio*.

In *Epistles* 4.3, we saw Lucretius combined, arbitrarily enough, with Cicero. Here, he is woven together with Valerius Maximus: whether or not we see his honeyed cup in these lines (there's no problem in finding that mixed with Socratic hemlock), the 'muttering doctors' make his part in this little play as clear as Valerius'. We might again call it exemplary of Pliny's eclecticism, as he weaves prose and verse alike into his variegated intertextual fabric. But this particular combination is perhaps less arbitrary. In imitating Valerius and Lucretius, Pliny pairs two texts which look very different but find unity in their common goal of ethical didaxis. In combining Socrates' death with the Athenian plague, he brings together two historical events from the same city and the same age. And in playing Socrates while echoing Lucretius, he evinces the discreet but vaulting philosophical ambitions of the *Epistles*.⁵³

Later in the same book, in a partner-letter to *Epistles* 7.1,⁵⁴ Pliny is explicit about his ability to say *multum in parvo*:

Possum ergo quod plurimis verbis, plurimis etiam voluminibus philosophi docere conantur, ipse breviter tibi mihi que praecipere, ut tales esse sani perseveremus quales nos futuros profitemur infirmi. (*Ep.* 7.26.4)

What therefore philosophers try to teach in numerous words and numerous books, I can tell you and myself with a brief precept: when healthy we should persist in being the sort of men we promise to be when ill.

Epistles 7.1, we should recognise, makes the same point, just implicitly: Pliny is our Everyman philosopher, teaching with a soft touch – but passing on lessons from the best.

⁵² It seems to me beyond question that Pliny wrote the *Epistles* as a nine-book work. Despite recent interventions (see Whitton and Gibson (2016) 45–7), I doubt that he edited the correspondence with Trajan now called *Epistles* 10 (on which see also König, Chapter 3, in this volume), but that is in any case a distinct question. For some claims about his 'grand designs', see Whitton (2015a).

⁵³ Pliny claims to be no *sapiens* (*Ep.* 5.1.13), but clearly knew his stuff (Griffin (2007)). For some philosophers carefully handled (another matter again), see *Ep.* 1.10 and 1.22 with Hoffer (1999) 109–40 and Whitton (2019) 74–84.

⁵⁴ Again thematising the ethics of illness. Sherwin-White (1966) 402 and 435; Bodel (2015) 95.

3 *Epistles 5.16, with Tacitus*

Let me end with a word on consolation, and with one of Pliny's freshest *exempla* and imitative resources: the *Agricola*. *Epistles 5.16* meditates on the tragic death of a twelve-year-old girl whom we can identify as Minicia Marcella.⁵⁵ Discreet pride of place in its imitative texture goes not to Cicero's Tullia, but to Quintilian, whose powerful preface to *Institutio 6*, lamenting the loss of his nine-year-old son, serves as Pliny's running intertext.⁵⁶ But let me here pick out a few lines where we glimpse a more contemporary deuteragonist behind the stage.

The letter devotes its first half to a laudatory portrait of little Marcella in life and in death. The second half is given over to her father's grief and to questions of consolation. True to form, Pliny finds that grief exquisitely sad and eminently forgivable: at times like this, raw emotion trumps philosophy.

Est quidem ille eruditus et sapiens,^A ut qui se ab ineunte aetate altioribus studiis artibusque dederit; sed nunc omnia quae audit saepe, quae dixit aspernatur expulsisque virtutibus aliis pietatis est totus.^B (9) Ignosces, laudabis etiam, si cogitaveris quid amiserit: amisit enim filiam^C quae non minus mores^D eius quam os vultumque referebat,^E totumque^F patrem^G mira similitudine exscripserat.^H (*Ep.* 5.16.8–9)

He is a man of learning and wisdom, of course, having devoted himself since his first years to the more profound arts and studies; but now he spurns all the things he has often heard, often said: casting out the other virtues, he is all piety's. (9) You will forgive him, praise him even, if you think about his loss: he has lost a daughter who reflected his character no less than his face and countenance, and had reproduced her whole father with remarkable likeness.

These lines look to the end of the *Agricola*. Having described the death of his laudand, Tacitus closes with the family, and consolation.

⁵⁵ Recent discussion in Bodel (1995); Carlon (2009) 148–57; Klodt (2012); Shelton (2013) 277–82.

⁵⁶ Whitton (2019) 353–80. Tullia, whose death is so large a theme in Cicero's correspondence, would seem an obvious point of reference for this showpiece on the death of a daughter. But she occupies only a tiny place at best, if we recognise in *Ep.* 5.16.8 *expulsisque virtutibus aliis pietatis est totus* the epigram that ends Sulpicius' consolation to Cicero, *Fam.* 4.5.6 *ne ex omnibus virtutibus haec una* (i.e. fortitude) *tibi videatur deesse* (not obvious, but I make the case in Whitton (2019) 373 n. 89); another reflex of the same letter in *Ep.* 3.16.3 *non minus ob alia carus quam quod filius erat* (on a deceased son) – *Fam.* 4.5.2 *non minus quam liberi cara esse debent* (Whitton forthcoming). It is paradigmatic – and runs counter to the usual assumptions – that Pliny privileges the *Institutio* over Cicero's correspondence as intertextual target.

Si quis piorum manibus locus, si, ut **sapientibus**^A placet, non cum corpore extinguuntur magnae animae, placide quiescas . . . (2) Admiratione te potius et immortalibus laudibus et, si natura suppeditet, **similitudine** colamus:^H is verus honos, ea coniunctissimi cuiusque **pietas**.^B (3) Id **filiae**^C quoque uxori praeceperim, sic **patris**,^G sic mariti memoriam venerari ut omnia facta dictaque eius^F secum revolvant, formamque ac figuram animi magis quam corporis complectantur,^E . . . forma mentis aeterna, quam tenere et exprimere non per alienam materiam et artem, sed tuis ipse **moribus**^D possis. (4) Quicquid ex Agricola amavimus, . . . (Tac. Agr. 46.1–4)

If there is any place for the shades of the dutiful, if, as men of wisdom hold, great souls are not extinguished along with the body, may you rest in peace . . . (2) Let us honour you rather with admiration and undying praise and, if nature should allow, likeness: that is the true honour, the true piety of everyone who was closest to him. (3) To his daughter and wife too I would give this precept, that they venerate the memory of their father and husband by reflecting on all his words and deeds and embracing the form and shape of his mind rather than that of his body, . . . the form of the mind is everlasting, and something you can retain and reproduce not with external substance and art, but by your own character. (4) Whatever we loved in Agricola . . .

It is a selective series of little details – philosophy invoked (A), *pietas* underlined (B),⁵⁷ a daughter and a father (C, D), talk of *similitudo* (H), and so on – and in lexical terms the imitative hub (E) is the least revealing yet:

non minus *mores eius* **quam** *os vultumque* referebat, (Ep. 5.16.9)

formamque ac figuram animi magis **quam** *corporis* complectantur, (Agr. 46.3)

But we know how important ‘syntactic marking’ can be,⁵⁸ and the shared idea is distinctive: a filial resemblance which lies more (*or* no less) in character than in physique.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ As an all-consuming (P.)/climactic (T.) virtue, ending its sentence.

⁵⁸ Wills (1996) 20–1 and *passim* amply shows its importance in verse. Prose is no different, as here in *non minus . . . quam - magis quam* (varied, naturally). Further correspondences are the antithesis of inner character (*mores eius - formam . . . animi*, each acc. + gen.) and external appearance (*os vultumque - corporis*, cases varied) and their order; where Tacitus has a doublet (*formam . . . ac figuram*) Pliny has a single word, and *vice versa*.

⁵⁹ Contrast Mart. 6.27.3 *est tibi quae patria signatur imagine vultus*, cited in Marchesi’s contribution, ch. 14, amid stimulating reflections on physical and intertextual ‘dynamics of reproduction’. Pliny’s *mores* may find their origin in another little climax, just below in Tacitus (*tuis ipse moribus possis*).

When therefore Pliny continues to the densely mannered phrase *totumque patrem mira similitudine exscripserat*, it is tempting to see an origin both for the taut *totum patrem* in Tacitus' preceding clause (*omnia facta dictaque eius*), and for the phrase-end *similitudine exscripserat* in his phrase-end *similitudine colamus* just above.⁶⁰ This and the other similarities, in other words, appear to be not a series of accidents, but ripples around the core of the liaison.⁶¹ The transformations are as thorough as ever, with imitative variation extending from every detail of language to the single difference that it is now the daughter, not the father, who is dead.⁶² But that should come by now as no surprise. Pliny knew the *Agricola* intimately,⁶³ and the situational similarities once again make an easy associative bridge: as he describes a deceased daughter who (he claims) perfectly resembled her father, he has surely not forgotten Tacitus, urging a daughter that she should perfectly resemble her deceased father.⁶⁴

In *Epistles* 4.3, I suggested that imitation is accompanied by self-reflexive 'annotation'. We might suspect the same here, in the striking word *exscripserat*. It's one of those delicate moments of daring that dot Pliny's epistolary prose, as he takes the verb for 'copy out (*sc.* a text)' and applies it to a purely figurative reproduction.⁶⁵ But does it also double as a comment on his imitative work in this letter, as he maps Fundanus and his daughter onto *Agricola* and his daughter?⁶⁶ Like all metaliterary readings,

⁶⁰ This last claim is complicated by corruption in Tacitus' text, where *militum decoramus* is transmitted; I print the usual correction (supported in turn by Pliny's imitation, if you agree).

⁶¹ A couple of elements already perhaps in *Ep.* 5.16.3 *qua etiam constantia . . . tulit* - *Agr.* 45.3 *constans . . . excepisti (etiam) advertises constantia* as choice) and 5.16.5 *aut spatio valetudinis aut metu mortis* - *Agr.* 45.3 *assidere valetudini, fovere deficientem* (a surprisingly rare double-step).

⁶² And the excision of the wife/mother figure, extraneous in Marcella's case (her mother had predeceased her, as we can infer from *Ep.* 5.16.4 *sororem patrem adhortabatur*).

⁶³ Other significant encounters in *Ep.* 8.14 (Whitton (2010)) and *Ep.* 9.19 (König and Whitton (2018a) 23–5), as well as repeated and productive use in the *Panegyricus* (Mesk (1911) 91–4; Durry (1938) 60–1; Bruère (1954) 162–4; Whitton (2019): 418; Whitton forthcoming), including our passage in *Pan.* 55.11 (with *formam principis figuramque . . . exprimat teneatque*; Woodman (2014) ad loc.). *Agr.* 46 also resonates in *Ep.* 2.1.10–12 (Whitton (2013a) ad loc.) and *Ep.* 9.27 (*manet manebit legeturque semper* - *Agr.* 46.4 *manet mansurumque est . . . posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit*) amongst other spots; that last letter concerns the immortality of history, surely Tacitus' (Whitton (2012) 363–4).

⁶⁴ Much of the material may be 'topical' in consolations, but is it likely that quite so many details would correspond, and in sequence, by chance?

⁶⁵ He has already transferred it from copying text to copying a painting (*Ep.* 4.28.1), itself an innovation. The phrase here is imitated by Sidonius in his *Ep.* 7.13.5 *iucunda similitudine exscripsit*.

⁶⁶ I.e. as a form of intertextual annotation. Tacitus ends the *Agricola* with his own role in textualising his honorand (*Agr.* 46.4 *Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit*).

it can hardly be proved. But the rarity of the word, and a broader picture of Plinian practice, speak strongly for it.

The liking of the *Epistles* for contemporary *exempla* has been observed before.⁶⁷ This little encounter shows that it extends to intertextual *exempla* too – and to the text (and even wife) of his compeer Tacitus:⁶⁸ Pliny's page, like Roman life, freely mixes models past and present, dead and alive; contemporary texts mingle proudly with classics.⁶⁹ And it underlines once more the generic range of Plinian *imitatio*: however you prefer to label Tacitus' monograph, it joins the works of Cicero, Lucretius, Valerius and many besides on the broad and intensely varied shelf of Pliny's intertextual ingredients. This has been the most selective of tours, but serves, I hope, to make its point: the *Epistles* inscribes, literally, a man of many parts.

⁶⁷ Whitton (2013a) 9 with references.

⁶⁸ Though Pliny makes nothing of it, Agricola's daughter was also Tacitus' wife.

⁶⁹ The *Agricola* was presumed published in AD 98 (*Agr.* 3.1 and 44.5 with Woodman (2014)). Whether or not *Epistles* 5.16 actually dates from c. 105–6 (the 'book-date' of Sherwin-White (1966) 34–7; cf. Whitton (2013a) 18), we can safely put it well after 98.