INTERTEXTUALITY IN PLINY'S *EPISTLES*

Pliny's *Epistles* are full of literary artistry. This volume of essays by an impressive international team of scholars showcases this by exploring the intertextual, interdiscursive and also intermedial character of the collection. It provides a contribution to the recent scholarly interest in Latin prose intertextuality and in the literary and cultural interactions of the Imperial period. Focusing on the whole collection as well as on single books and selected letters, it investigates Pliny's strategies of incorporating literary models and genres into his epistolary oeuvre, thus creating a kind of 'super-genre' himself. In addition to displaying Pliny's literary techniques, the volume also serves as an advanced introduction to Latin prose poetics.

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CHAPTER 5

Again on Corinthian Bronzes and Vases and on the Use of Cicero's Verrine Orations *in Pliny's Works*

Stefano Rocchi

In the first half of the second century BC, Cato the Censor lamented in his oration against Q. Sulpicius (*orat.* fr. 181 Sbl.): *quotiens vidi trull<e>os, nassiternas pertusos, aqualis matellas sine ansis!* ('How many times have I seen wash basins and pots with holes in, water pots without handles!'). The fragment is usually interpreted as a moralistic eulogy of the old virtue of *parsimonia* – probably also on display in the houses of the upper class which were not ashamed of showing vases used for practical purposes, even if they were in bad condition – and as a tirade against luxury items possibly owned and displayed by Q. Sulpicius.[1]

The degeneration in traditional values induced by imported *luxuria* was already in progress, according to the moralising periodisation of Roman history proposed by Pliny the Elder in the section on silver in Book 33 of his *Natural History*:[2] 148 *Asia primum devicta luxuriam misit in Italiam* (189 BC) ('It was the conquest of Asia that first introduced luxury into Italy'; see also *HN* 34.34); 148 *at eadem Asia donata multo etiam gravius adflixit mores* (133 BC) ('but receiving Asia also as a gift dealt a much more serious blow to our morals'); 149–50 *inmenso et Achaicae victoriae momento ad inpellendos mores*; . . . *ne quid deesset, pariter quoque luxuria nata est et Carthago sublata* (146 BC) ('An impetus having also been given to manners by the enormous shock of the conquest of Achaia; . . . so that nothing might be lacking, luxury came into being simultaneously, with the downfall of Carthage').[3] Afterwards, no Roman aristocrat would have paraded the old simplicity

[1] See Sblendorio Cugusi (1982) ad loc. and (2001) 384–5, with a different translation: 'tutte le volte che vedo . . .' ('every time I see . . .'). For my interpretation of *quotiens vidi* cf. Long (1901) 25. See also a fragment concerning Cato's own *parsimonia* (*orat.* fr. 218a Sbl.): *neque mihi aedificatio neque vasum . . . est manupretiosum* ('I neither possess any luxurious building nor any precious vase').

[2] The theme goes back at least to Polybius (31.25.3 ff.) and L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (Calp. *hist.* 36 and 40 Cornell), but has its most famous codifications in Sall. *Cat.* 10–11 and Liv. 39.6.7–9.

[3] Transl. Rackham. On Pliny's periodisation, see Citroni Marchetti (1991) esp. 185–7; Isager (1998) 70–3.

probably longed for by Cato. However, the public discourse on luxury had certainly not come to an end, as is shown, for example, by a fragment on everyday vases from Varro's *De vita populi Romani*, where the author, clearly assuming the typical role of the *laudator temporis acti*, compares the strict modesty of passed ages with contemporary *luxuria* (Varro *De vita populi Romani* fr. 41 P. = Non. p. 547.5): *itaque ea sibi modo ponere ac suspendere, quae utilitas postularet – trulleum, matellionem, pelvim, nassiternam –, non quae luxuriae causa esse<nt> parata* ('. . . and therefore to place and hang for their personal use only what utility demanded – a wash basin, a bowl, a basin, a water pot –, not what had been acquired for luxury').[4]

More than two centuries later than Cato and a good century after Varro, Pliny the Younger described Vestricius Spurinna's table in these terms (*Ep.* 3.1.9): *adponitur cena non minus nitida quam frugi, in argento puro et antiquo; sunt in usu et Corinthia, quibus* ***delectatur nec adficitur*** ('Dinner is served in antique plain silver, a meal that was no less elegant than simple; Corinthian vases are also in use, by which he is delighted, not obsessed'). The old general and *consularis* Spurinna is one of Pliny's models and in the idealised portrait offered by the epistolographer he is characterised as a living testimony of the past (3.1.6 *quam pulchrum illud . . . quantum ibi antiquitatis!* ('there is a special sort of pleasure in being . . . given the entry into a bygone age', transl. Radice)).[5] Spurinna owns a silver plate, which is *purum*, meaning 'not chiseled',[6] and *antiquum* because probably inherited

[4] I modify the traditional interpunction of the fragment as given in Müller's, Lindsay's, and Gatti's editions, which is misleading (*quae utilitas postularet: trulleum, . . . nassiternam, non quae luxuriae causa esse<nt> parata*), in order to present with greater graphical evidence the list of vases as a parenthesis, which makes the content of *ea . . . quae utilitas postularet* more explicit. On the moralistic tones in the *de vita populi Romani* and in the fragment itself, see the thorough commentary by Pittà (2015) 11–12, 192–5.

[5] This *antiquitas* is of course to be interpreted according to an axiological, not a chronological dimension: the 'good old times' represented by Spurinna, whose chronological frame is blurred and undefined, are obviously not the same as the ones regretted by Cato; Pliny is simply alluding to the positive value of the past, which was widely recognised among the Romans. In other words, one might also say that the 'good old times' Pliny is referring to never really existed (on the chronological and axiological dimension of the 'antiquity' see Rocchi and Mussini 2017, 6–9). On Spurinna as a living testimony to the *vetustas*, see also Lefèvre (2009) 45–6. On the letter 3.1 in general, cf. Pausch (2004) 114–29.

[6] Cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.49, where the *argentum . . . purum* is set against *pocula . . . cum emblemate*: (Verres) *cenabat apud eum*, scil. Eupolemum Calactinum; *argentum ille ceterum purum adposuerat, ne purus ipse relinqueretur, duo pocula non magna, verum tamen cum emblemate. Hic*, scil. Verres, . . . *emblemata evellenda curavit* ('He was dining at this man's house: most of the silver put on table was bare of embossed work, since Eupolemus did not wish to be stripped bare himself; but there were two cups, of no great size, but with embossed work upon them. Our friend here . . . had the embossed work torn off', transl. Greenwood). That Cicero's passage could possibly have caught the attention of the readers is demonstrated also by an intertextual reference in the first of the two

from his ancestors.[7] Spurinna also possesses vases of Corinthian bronze,[8] but Pliny immediately specifies that he is delighted by them, though *nec adficitur*: in other words, he has no immoderate passion for his precious tableware – which would be unsuitable for the moral 'portrait' Pliny is sketching of him.[9] The apparently unnecessary remark on the pleasure Spurinna derives from his Corinthian vases can be better understood if we consider the place that Corinthian bronzes held in the late-republican and contemporary discourse on luxury, as reflected in two well-known passages by Pliny the Elder (*HN* 34.6–7 and 48 respectively):

> Ex illa autem antiqua gloria Corinthium maxime laudatur. Hoc casus miscuit Corintho, cum caperetur, incensa, mireque circa id multorum *adfectatio furit*, quippe cum tradatur non alia de causa Verrem, quem M. Cicero damnaverat, proscriptum cum eo ab Antonio, quoniam Corinthiis cessurum se ei negavisset. Ac mihi maior pars eorum simulare eam scientiam videtur ad segregandos sese a ceteris magis quam intellegere aliquid ibi suptilius; et hoc paucis docebo. 7 Corinthus capta est olympiadis CLVIII anno tertio, nostrae urbis DCVIII, cum ante haec saecula fictores nobiles esse desissent, quorum *isti* omnia signa hodie Corinthia appellant. Quapropter ad coarguendos eos ponemus artificum aetates; nam urbis nostrae annos ex supra dicta comparatione olympiadum colligere facile erit. *Sunt ergo vasa tantum Corinthia, quae isti elegantiores modo ad esculenta transferunt, modo in lucernas aut trulleos nullo munditiarum dispectu*.
>
> Of the bronze which was renowned in early days, the Corinthian bronze is the most highly praised. This is a compound that was produced by accident, when Corinth was burned down at the time of its capture; and there has been a wonderful mania among many people for possessing this metal — in fact it is recorded that Verres, whose conviction Marcus Cicero had procured, was together with Cicero, proscribed by Antony for no other

ekphrastic epigrams *de scutellis* by Ennodius (*carm.* 2.101 (232 Vogel), 2–3 *argenti pretium est facinus retinere vetustum*, | *ne purum superet, quod furtis Iuppiter egit*).

[7] T. Vestricius Spurinna could have also boasted of Etruscan forefathers, as his onomastics clearly betray (on the *Vestricii* and on the *Spurinnae* see Torelli (2017) 704 ff., esp. 707).

[8] The history of what is known as Corinthian bronze could be taken as a subject for an independent contribution and it is impossible to review the entire topic comprehensively here (for an overview, see Giumlia-Mair and Craddock 1993), also because the fascination for the purported *aition*, which was the origin of the wondrous alloy – the fire which destroyed Corinth after the sacking by Mummius –, was not confined to Antiquity, but was still recalled in Late Antiquity (for instance, Oros. 5.3.7 and Isid. *Etym.* 16.20.4) and through its texts in the Middle Ages (see Frechulfus, *Historiae*, I 6.3; Rabanus Maurus, *De universo*, XVII 14; Landolfus Sagax, *Historia Romana*, IV 14; Frutolfus, *Chronica*, 628^{C}).

[9] And thus in the Flavian period the possession of luxury items, an object of moral rebuke from the republican authors down to Seneca the Younger and Pliny the Elder, begins to be regarded as a sign of distinction and good taste – a phenomenon we can observe in Martial, Statius, and Pliny the Younger himself.

reason than because he had refused to give up to Antony some pieces of Corinthian ware; and to me the majority of these collectors seem only to make a pretence of being connoisseurs, so as to separate themselves from the multitude, rather than to have any exceptionally refined insight in this matter; and this I will briefly show. Corinth was taken in the third year of the 158th Olympiad, which was the 608th year of our city, when for ages there had no longer been any famous artists in metalwork; yet these persons designate all the specimens of their work as Corinthian bronzes. In order therefore to refute them we will state the periods to which these artists belong; of course it will be easy to turn the Olympiads into the years since the foundation of our city by referring to the two corresponding dates given above [transl. Rackham]. *Therefore (genuine) Corinthian (bronzes) are only the vases, which these connoisseurs sometimes convert into dishes for food and sometimes into lamps or washing basins, with no regard for cleanliness* [my own transl.].[10]

Signis, quae vocant Corinthia, plerique in tantum capiuntur, ut secum circumferant, sicut Hortensius orator sphingem Verri reo ablatam, propter quam Cicero illo iudicio in altercatione neganti ei, aenigmata se intellegere, respondit debere, quoniam sphingem domi haberet. Circumtulit et Nero princeps Amazonem, de qua dicemus, et paulo ante C. Cestius consularis signum, quod secum etiam in proelio habuit. Alexandri quoque Magni tabernaculum sustinere traduntur solitae statuae, ex quibus duae ante Martis Ultoris aedem dicatae sunt, totidem ante regiam.

Owners of the signa *called Corinthian are usually so enamoured of them that they carry them with them* [my own transl.]; for instance the orator Hortensius was never parted from the sphinx which he had got out of Verres when on trial; this explains Cicero's retort when Hortensius in the course of an altercation at the trial in question said he was not good at riddles. 'You ought to be,' said Cicero, 'as you keep a sphinx in your pocket.' The Emperor Nero also used to carry about with him an Amazon which we shall describe later, and a little before Nero, the ex-consul Gaius Cestius used to go about with a figurine, which he had with him even on the battlefield. It is also said that the tent of Alexander the Great was regularly erected with four statues as tent-poles, two of which have now been dedicated to stand in front of the temple of Mars the Avenger and two in front of the Royal Palace [transl. Rackham].

For the purpose of this paper it is useful to point out the moral/ideological criticism attached in both passages to the precious Corinthian bronze: this

[10] For this new interpretation of the passage, see Rocchi (2021) 217 and 220; Darab (2012) 155–7; Ead. (2015) 3–4.

finds a close parallel, with its moralising tone, in the section on the use of silver at the end of Book 33. Pliny condemns the immoderate and sick passion of these purported connoisseurs for goods made of that material, which they desperately look for (34.6 *circa id multorum adfectatio furit*).[11] and from which they cannot part (34.48 *in tantum capiuntur ut secum circumferant*).[12] The naturalist also condemns the affectation (*simulare*) of a knowledge (*scientia*), that moreover – as he states – turns out to be false, as demonstrated by inaccuracy of language (34.7 *omnia signa hodie Corinthia appellant*; 34.48 *signis, quae vocant Corinthia*, etc.) and ignorance of chronology (34.6–7). Furthermore, Pliny indicates the possibility of a sort of 'redemption' of private luxury by its destination or restitution to public use. The so-called *signa Corinthia* are collected and hoarded by private individuals from Alexander to Verres, Antony, Cestius, and Nero, but in Pliny's time some of them are accessible to everyone, for example the tent-poles of Alexander the Great, which had been displayed by Augustus outside the *regia* and the temple of Mars Ultor (34.48). In the same way Vespasian, who had succeeded Cestius in the conduct of the Jewish War, is said by Pliny to have newly dedicated in the Temple of Peace and other buildings many famous statues raided by Nero in Greece and first displayed in the *domus aurea* (34.84).[13]

I would now like to propose a passage from Cicero's fourth oration (*De signis*) of the second pleading against Verres (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.97–8), which I think both Pliny the Elder and Younger may have had in mind when they were discussing Corinthian bronzes.[14] Cicero speaks of the Corinthian bronzes raided by Verres from the temple of the *Magna Mater* at *Engyum*, where they had been dedicated by no one less than Scipio Africanus (4.97 *idem ille Scipio . . . posuerat et suum nomen inscripserat*; ('the great Scipio . . . placed there, with an inscription containing his own name', transl. Greenwood)) (*Verr.* 2.4.98):

> tu videlicet solus *vasis Corinthiis delectaris*, tu illius aeris temperationem, tu operum liniamenta sollertissime perspicis! Haec Scipio ille non intellegebat, homo doctissimus atque humanissimus, tu sine ulla bona arte, sine

[11] The increase in demand for Corinthian bronzes in the early empire made prices rise to such a point that Tiberius proposed to place a limit on household furniture (Suet. *Tib.* 34.1), most probably without particular success (see also Sen. *Brev.* 12.2 *Corinthia paucorum furore pretiosa* ('Corinthian bronzes, that the mania of a few makes costly', transl. Basore)).

[12] On this topic, see in particular Citroni Marchetti (1991) 234 and n. 51.

[13] Cf. Gros (1978) 302–3 on Vespasian's restitution of the statues to public display. The Emperor Titus displayed Polycletus' *astragalizontes* in the atrium of his *domus* (Plin. *HN* 34.55) – also a public place, since it was accessible to callers from the *salutatio* onwards.

[14] Cf. also Darab (2015) 5 and 6–7.

> humanitate, sine ingenio, sine litteris, intellegis et iudicas! Vide ne ille non solum temperantia, sed etiam intellegentia te atque *istos qui se elegantis dici volunt* vicerit. Nam quia quam pulchra essent intellegebat, idcirco existimabat ea *non ad hominum luxuriem, sed ad ornatum fanorum atque oppidorum esse facta*, †ut posteris nostris monumenta religiosa esse videantur†.
>
> It would appear that you are the one person to whom Corinthian bronzes can appeal, and who has an expert's appreciation of the fine temper of the metal and the craftsmanship of the design; that an educated and cultivated man like Scipio had no understanding of such things, whereas an utter savage like yourself, uncivilised and stupid and illiterate, can understand and appreciate them. Ask yourself if Scipio was not superior, in understanding as well as in temper, to you and to those friends of yours who aspire to be considered men of taste. He did understand how beautiful those things were, and for that very reason regarded them as meant not for the luxurious enjoyment of individuals, but for the adornment of temples and cities, and to be hallowed memorials in the sight of future generations [transl. Greenwood].

It seems possible that Pliny the Elder took inspiration from the Ciceronian phrase *istos qui se elegantis dici volunt* for his expression *isti elegantiores.* However, even if Pliny did not have Cicero's passage in mind when he wrote his own account of Corinthian bronzes, it is nevertheless certain that in both authors the tone of *elegantis* and *elegantiores* has to be taken as scornful and sarcastic.[15]

In the light of Cicero's and Pliny the Elder's passages we may perhaps read Pliny the Younger's letter on Spurinna from a new perspective. Spurinna is not an *elegans* like Cicero's Verres, because he is not a fanatical collector, nor is he one of Pliny's *elegantiores*, because his Corinthian bronzes are only for the table and not misused as lamps or washing basins. Moreover, we notice an interesting shift in the concept of the delight that one can derive from works of art: whilst the sick, fetishistic delight of Verres is sarcastically attacked by Cicero (*tu videlicet solus vasis Cortinthiis delectaris*), Pliny re-uses the Ciceronian phrase, but purifies it of the moral rebuke contained in the original context, since Spurinna has no immoderate attachment to his tableware. Furthermore, the Ciceronian passage from the Verrinian oration *De signis* provides an interpretative key to (re-) reading some passages of Pliny's famous letter on the Corinthian figurine he had purchased thanks to a legacy (3.6).

[15] On Cicero's irony in the passage quoted see Baldo (2004) ad loc. and Lazzeretti (2006) ad loc.

After affecting a lack of expertise in recognising craftsmanship in works of art, Pliny nonetheless affirms that the figurine is such as to keep the attention of experts and delight amateurs. He furthermore states that he has not bought the bronze to keep it in his house – he points out that he has not yet allowed himself such a luxury for private use – but in order to dedicate it as an ornament to his home town, Comum, and to its temple of Jupiter, on a base inscribed with his name (3.6.1 and 3–5):[16]

> Ex hereditate quae mihi obvenit, emi proxime Corinthium signum, modicum quidem sed festivum et expressum, *quantum ego sapio, qui* fortasse in omni re, *in hac certe perquam exiguum sapio*: hoc tamen signum ego quoque intellego. ... Aes ipsum, quantum verus color indicat, vetus et antiquum; talia denique omnia, ut possint artificum oculos tenere, *delectare* imperitorum. Quod me *quamquam tirunculum* sollicitavit ad emendum. Emi autem non ut haberem domi (neque enim ullum adhuc Corinthium domi habeo), verum ut *in patria nostra celebri loco* ponerem, ac potissimum *in Iovis templo*; *videtur enim dignum templo, dignum deo donum*. Tu ergo ... *iube basim fieri*, ex quo voles marmore, *quae nomen meum honoresque capiat*, si hos quoque putabis addendos.
>
> Out of a sum of money I have inherited I have just bought a Corinthian bronze statue, only a small one, but an attractive and finished piece of work as far as I can judge – though in general maybe my judgement is limited, and certainly very much here. But this is a statue that I feel even I can appreciate ... The bronze appears to have the true colour of a genuine antique; in fact every detail is such as hold the attention of an artist as well as delight the amateur, and that is what persuaded me to buy it, novice though I am. However, my intention was not to keep it in my house (I have no Corinthian bronzes there yet) but to place it in some public position in my native town, preferably in the temple of Jupiter; it is clearly a gift well

[16] On the letter in general see Lehmann-Hartleben (1936) ad loc.; Becatti (1951) 256–8; Sherwin-White (1966) ad loc.; Henderson (2002b), esp. chapter 3; Carlon (2018) 64–5; Neger (2021) 306. This epistle constitutes a prime example of both intertextuality and intermediality – a concept developed to define the relationship between means of communication conventionally perceived as different (word, image, sound) and now applied by classical scholars too (see Dinter and Reitz-Joosse 2019; cf. also the discussion of intermediality in the Introduction to the present volume). In fact *Ep.* 3.6 implies a constellation of different media (texts, plastic art, voice) and materials (wooden tablets/papyrus, bronze, marble) potentially interacting in several ways after the publication of the epistolary corpus, too. Thanks to a detailed ekphrasis, an image of the bronze figurine bought by Pliny is conjured up in the minds of the recipient and future readers, and possibly also in that of a more immediate audience, since letters could of course be read aloud, shown, or handed round by the recipients to further people. But the epistolary text immediately envisages future interactions between the real bronze figurine and the epigraphical text inscribed on its marble base after display in a temple. It is not just a matter of pure speculation to suggest that the inscription in its turn could have been read aloud not only at the official dedication of the monument but also occasionally later by worshippers and passers-by. For further considerations on the letter, see below p. 127–8.

> worthy of a temple and a god. Will you … give immediate orders for a pedestal to be made? Choose what marble you like, and have it inscribed with my name and official titles if you think they should appear too. [transl. Radice].

Pliny follows the reading of Scipio's dedications as suggested by Cicero (*Verr.* 2.4.98): that works of art should be made *non ad hominum luxuriem, sed ad ornatum fanorum atque oppidorum.* Whilst a further possible echo from Cicero's *Actio Secunda* had already been detected in the letter,[17] Pliny's insisted lack of expertise in works of art seems furthermore to recall the similarly affected ignorance displayed by Cicero in the *Verrine orations*.[18]

As far as the structure of the book is concerned, we can first observe that, for the reader of the third book-roll of the letters, the exemplary representation which Pliny offers of himself has a *pendant* in the contrasting attitude of Silius Italicus, a voracious collector, in the letter immediately following (3.7.8): *erat* φιλόκαλος *usque ad emacitatis reprehensionem* … ('He was a great connoisseur; indeed he was critized for buying too much', transl. Radice).[19] Secondly, we can point out that the encomium of the exemplary Spurinna at the beginning of the volume (3.1) has a parallel in the praise of Pliny himself as a second Cicero in Martial's wording at the very end of the scroll (3.21.5 = Mart. 10.20[19].16–17).[20]

[17] Gesner (1770) 95 considered Pliny's passage … *in Iovis templo; videtur* … *dignum templo, dignum deo donum* as a reminiscence of Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.184 *nunc te, Iuppiter optime maxime, cuius iste* ***donum regale, dignum*** *tuo pulcherrimo* ***templo, dignum*** *Capitolio* …, ***dignum regio munere*** ('Hear me now, O almighty and most gracious Father Jove; thou whose royal offering, so worthy of thy glorious temple, of thy Capitoline hill … so worthy to be the gift of princes', transl. Greenwood); cf. also *Verr.* 2.4.65.

[18] See, for instance, at the very beginning of the speech *De signis* (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.4): *erat apud Heium sacrarium* … *in aedibus* … *in quo signa pulcherrima quattuor* … ***quae non modo istum hominem ingeniosum*** *et intellegentem,* ***verum etiam quemvis nostrum****, quos iste idiotas appellat,* ***delectare possent****, unum Cupidinis marmoreum Praxiteli;* ***nimirum didici etiam****, dum in istum inquiro,* ***artificum nomina*** ('There was in this house of Heius a stately chapel …, in which stood four statues; … capable of giving pleasure not only to so highly gifted an expert as Verres, but also to any of us "outsiders", as he calls us. One was a marble Cupid by Praxiteles – I learnt the artist's names, you will understand, in the course of my investigations as prosecutor', transl. Greenwood). Perhaps even more interesting is Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.87 *capella quaedam est, ea quidem mire,* ***ut etiam nos qui rudes harum rerum sumus intellegere possumus****, scite facta et venuste. Haec et alia Scipio non neglegenter abiecerat, ut homo intellegens Verres auferre posset, sed* … ('There is … the figure of a she-goat, and this certainly is, as even we who know little of such things can tell, a wonderfully clever and charming bit of work. These and other such objects Scipio had not thrown carelessly aside for a connoisseur like Verres to appropriate, but …', transl. Greenwood). Cf. also *Verr.* 2.4.13, 4.94, and *infra* p. 124.

[19] On this letter see Tzounakas' (Chapter 8) contribution in this volume.

[20] In addition to this, Pliny lets us know elsewhere in the same book that Silius Proculus also compared him to Cicero, though in a less directly flattering manner (3.15.1): *petis ut libellos tuos … legam examinem, an editione sint digni; adhibes preces, adlegas exemplum: … adicis M. Tullium mira benignitate poetarum ingenia fovisse* ('You want me to read through some of your poems … to see if they are worth publishing, and, in begging me … you can cite a precedent

In order to anticipate a possible objection, it seems convenient to address very briefly another issue, namely Pliny's actual knowledge of the *Verrinae*. In the *Dialogus*, Aper makes fun of the excessive length of the *Verrinae*, while asking (*Dial.* 20.1): *quis quinque in Verrem libros expectabit?* ('Would anyone sit out the five orations against Verres?', transl. Peterson and Winterbottom). The character refers only to the *Actio Secunda*, apparently or deliberately ignoring that it had never been really delivered at the court. But did Pliny, who was certainly not scared of lengthy texts,[21] bother himself with the study or reading of the *Verrinae*? Did the work belong to 'the literary canon which he shared with his first readers'?[22] Of course it did, since the *Verrine orations* were a milestone of Roman oratory and, despite their length, one of Cicero's most read and quoted works. Educated Romans should have known (or studied at least) some passages by heart, otherwise such references as *nolo inridere . . . 'ius verrinum'* ('I don't want to make fun of . . . his "Boar's Sauce"', transl. Peterson and Winterbottom,) in the *Dialogus* – a phrase from the *Actio Secunda* (2.1.121) mocked by Aper in *Dial.* 2 –, would have been impossible.[23] More importantly further references to those speeches – in form of quotation, allusion or imitation – have been detected in Pliny's letters:

a) In *Ep.* 1.20.10 Pliny introduces one direct quotation from the book *De signis* as a good example of an apparently spontaneous rhetorical figure (*Verr.* 2.4.5): *ideo in optima quaque*, scil. oratione, *mille figuras extemporales invenimus, in iis etiam quas tantum editas scimus, ut in Verrem*: *'artificem quem? quemnam? recte admones; Polyclitum esse dicebant'* ('That is why we find so many rhetorical figures, apparently spontaneous, in any good written speech, even in those which we know were published without being delivered; for

to support your plea; Cicero, you say, was wonderfully generous about encouraging the talent of poets', transl. Radice). In a similar way, *Arrianus Maturus* drew a parallel to Cicero, while congratulating Pliny on being appointed augur (4.8.4): *te . . ., ut scribis, ob hoc maxime delectat auguratus meus, quod M. Tullius augur fuit* ('And you, as you say in your letter, are particularly pleased to see me an augur because Cicero held the same priesthood', transl. Radice).

[21] See for instance what he says in *Ep.* 1.20.4 most probably referring to the speech *Pro Cluentio*: *ego . . . Gracchis et Catoni Pollionem, Caesarem, Caelium, in primis M. Tullium oppono, cuius oratio optima fertur esse quae maxima* ('I counter . . . the Gracchi and Cato with Pollio, Caesar, Caelius, and above all Cicero, whose longest speech is generally considered his best', transl. Radice).

[22] Cf. Marchesi (2008) 243.

[23] On the *Verrine orations* as one of Cicero's most read and quoted works in the West as well in the East of the empire, see Seider (1979) 104, 113–14; Rouse and Reeve (1983) 55; Pecere (1990) 372 and 374; De Paolis (2000) 40 n. 9–10, 43 n. 18, 44, 46–7, 60–1, 63 n. 73, 64; La Bua (2019) 87, 89–90, 93, 151, 154 n. 369, 155 n. 378, 156, 157 n. 398, 158, 174 n. 465, 205–7, 325.

example, in Cicero's speech against Verres: "an artist–now who was he? thank you for telling me; people said it was Polyclitus"', transl. Radice).

b) Reporting to a friend the trial of Caecilius Classicus in epistle 3.9, Pliny tells of a joke made by the *Baetici* in a similar way as Cicero presents a witticism on Verres by the Sicilians: *Ep.* 3.9.3 *inde dictum Baeticorum, ut plerumque dolor etiam venustos facit, non inlepidum ferebatur:* . . . ('hence the neat joke current among the Baetici – for exasperation often breaks out into wit – . . .', transl. Radice); *Verr.* 2.4.95 *Numquam tam male est Siculis quin aliquid facete et commode dicant, velut* . . . ('Sicilians are always ready with some appropriate jest, even under the most trying circumstances; thus . . .', transl. Greenwood).[24]

c) In the same epistle (3.9.9) *verebamur ne nos dies, ne vox, ne latera deficerent* ('It looked as though we should run short of time and lose our breath and voice', transl. Radice) is a 'particularly clear allusion' to *Verr.* 2.2.52 *me dies vox latera deficiant* ('time, voice, and lung would fail me', transl. Greenwood).[25]

d) At the letter 6.8.8, the description of Atilius Crescens' character – *non feret magnum et liberum ingenium cum contumelia damnum* ('his bold spirit of independence will not submit to loss coupled with insult', transl. Radice) – seems to owe something to, or could be an amalgamation of *Verr.* 2.3.60 (*damna . . . nulla tanta sunt quae non viri fortes ac magno et libero animo adfecti ferenda arbitrentur*; ('as for material injuries . . . none are so serious that a brave man, a man of high and generous disposition, finds them unendurable', transl. Greenwood))[26] and *Verr.* 2.3.228 (*etiamne haec tot . . . damna cum maximis iniuriis contumeliisque perferre?* ('and must they even submit to having all these forms of . . . loss accompanied by the most unjust and insulting treatment?', transl. Greenwood)).[27]

Of course, if we had the speeches composed for the trials *de repetundis* and delivered against Baebius Massa (7.33; trial: AD 93), Caecilius Classicus

[24] As far as I know, Gesner (1770) ad loc. was the first to notice the parallel. See also Mayor (1880) 139; Pflips (1973) 198–9; Neger (2021) 159–60 n. 179.

[25] Cf. Whitton (2013a) 175.

[26] This is the only other passage in the Latin corpus where the two adjectives *magn* et liber** occur together.

[27] Minos (1598) II 109 has already brought to attention the latter passage.

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(3.4; 3.9; trial: AD 99), Marius Priscus (2.11; trial: AD 100),[28] and in defence of Iulius Bassus (4.9; trial: AD 103), we could learn more on Pliny's possible sources of inspiration and on his use of the *Verrinae*. However, if we also take into account the *Panegyricus* there is at least one passage, in which a phrase originally intended to describe the rapacity of *Verres* is re-used by Pliny to set the good and honest management of the *aerarium* under Trajan against Domitian's rapacious enrichment of it in complicity with *delatores*.[29]

[28] See esp. *Ep.* 2.11.15, where, according to Whitton (2013a) 175, *voci laterique* ('voice and lungs') could come from *Verr.* 2.4.67 (***quae vox quae latera****, quae vires huius unius criminis querimoniam possunt sustinere?* ('Can any man's voice, or lungs, or bodily strength avail adequately to describe the heinousness of this single deed?', transl. Greenwood)).

[29] See *Verr.* 2.5.59 *illud tibi oppidum* ***receptaculum praedae*** *fuit, illi homines testes custodesque furtorum* ('this town was the receiving-station of your booty, this town's inhabitants were the witnesses and custodians of your thefts', transl. Greenwood); *Pan.* 36.1 *quam iuvat cernere aerarium silens et quietum, et quale ante delatores erat! Nunc templum illud nunc vere dei <sedes>, non spoliarum civium cruentarumque* ***praedarum*** *saevum* ***receptaculum*** ('It is a pleasure to see peace and quiet restored to the treasury, to see it as it was before the days of informers. Now it is a real temple and sanctuary of a god, not a mortuary of citizens and a grim depository for blood-soaked spoils', transl. Radice). The phrase *receptaculum praedae/arum*, which occurs only in these two passages in the Latin corpus, has been identified as a possible intertextual connection by Schuster (1958) ad loc. (see also the phrase *praedarum . . . receptrix* in *Verr.* 2.4.17, 4.150).

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Appendix

As a last point I would like to add a few remarks on the *Corinthium signum* described in *Ep.* 3.6 as well as on the lost inscription commissioned as its plinth.[30] Pliny wanted to dedicate the work of art in a public place of his home town (*celebri loco*),[31] preferably as a gift for Jupiter in his temple.[32] Since he clearly states that the *signum* is *modicum*, also the base of the inscription must have been correspondingly small. Likewise the plinth erected by *L. Acilius Clodianus* – an *eques* who dedicated a now lost *signum* . . . *Corinthiu(m)* to Jupiter – is 73 × 31 × 31 cm, which furthermore means that his Corinthian bronze was relatively small too (*CIL* VI 36787).[33] The same seems to be true for the *imaginem Corintheam Traiani* ('a Corinthian bronze bust of Trajan') dedicated by Trajan's freedman *M. Ulpius Aeglus*, whose plinth is only 50 × 32 cm (*CIL* VI 8686).[34] Albeit

[30] For some considerations on the intermediality and intermateriality of this letter see also above p. 122.

[31] The expression *celebri loco* has an official, epigraphical sound: it is a variation of the epigraphical formula *loco celeberrimo* ('in a public place'; cf. also Plin. *Ep.* 2.7.7 *in celeberrimo loco*).

[32] According to Pliny's desire, the statue must have been exhibited in that temple, because it is not mentioned among the *beneficia* for the town and for its citizens recorded in the famous inscription erected in Comum after Pliny's death (see *CIL* V 5262 and Eck 2001 with further bibliography). See also *CIL* X 6, in which the heirs of *Ti. Bervenus Sabinus* recorded the long list of works of art, which *Sabinus* had left by testament to the citizens of *Regium Iulium*: they were displayed partly in the Prytaneion – among these a *pelbem aeream Corintheam* ('a Corinthian bronze basin') – and partly in the temple of Apollo.

[33] *CIL* VI 36787 (= *ILS* 9514) *L. Acilius Clodianus* | *eques roman(us)* | *decurialis pro reditu* | . . . | . . . *vo*| *to suscepto signum* | *Iovi Olumpio* | *Corinthiu(m)* | *consecravit cum fili(i)s*.

[34] *CIL* VI 8686 (= *ILS* 1577) *M. Ulpius* | *Aug(usti) l(ibertus) Aeglus* | *proc(urator) Mausol{a}ei* | *imaginem* |*Corintheam* | *Traiani Caesaris* | . . . | *d(onum) d(edit)*. It could be also interesting to observe that by so doing the freedman tries to get around the emperor's refusal of statues in precious materials like silver and gold, which aimed to stress the difference from Domitian's tyrannical excesses: see Plin. *Pan.* 52.3 *tuam statuam in vestibulo Iovis optimi maximi unam alteramve et hanc aeream cernimus. At paulo ante aditus omnes omnes gradus totaque area hinc auro hinc argento relucebat* ('of your statues, only one or two are to be seen in the vestibule of the temple of Jupiter Best and Highest, and these are made of bronze; whereas only recently every approach and step, every inch of the precinct was gleaming with silver and gold', transl. Radice) (cf. also *Pan.* 55.6, 55.11); Suet. *Dom.* 13.2 *statuas sibi in Capitolio nonnisi aureas et argenteas poni permisit ac ponderis certi* ('He suffered no statues to

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small the fine stone, which Annius Severus had to choose to have the pedestal made (*iube basim fieri, ex quo voles marmore*), must have offered enough space to accommodate not only Pliny's name, but also his titles, which the orator and politician certainly wanted on it despite his affectation of modesty (*basim … quae nomen meum honoresque capiat, si hos quoque putabis addendos*).[35] It has been observed that Pliny must have given advice to his agent about the size of the figurine as well as of the desired dimension of the pedestal; the omission of this technical information can be taken as a sign of reworking of the letter in view of publication.[36] The same could be assumed even for the text of the inscription. It is reasonable to think that Pliny would have not left the formulation of the *titulus* to his agent. He probably sent it to Annius Severus attached to the letter.[37] While adapting the epistle for a literary edition he later revised the passage in order to display exemplary modesty and to grant his correspondent more responsibility.

be set up in his honour in the Capitol, except of gold and silver and of a fixed weight', transl. Rolfe) (on statues in honour of Trajan and other emperors, see Cordes 2017 52–3 and Audano 2018 *passim*). As Corinthian bronze was considered more valuable than silver and quite as precious as gold (Plin. *HN* 34.1), we could regard this act of honouring the emperor with such a special bronze alloy as a cunning kind of obsequiousness.

[35] According to Sherwin-White (1966) 226 'Pliny reveals his true motive. He wants to make sure that his recent distinctions are publicly recorded at Comum. … This points to a date after his consulship when he entered the top class of the Senate' (see also Gibson 2020, 30 'a statue gifted by Pliny on the occasion of his consulship', 107, 155 n. 62, 179).

[36] Van Buren (1905) 446–7; Lehmann-Hartleben (1936) 70.

[37] It has been suggested that *CIL* v 5262, though displayed in a public place after Pliny's death, was actually composed by him himself (see Eck 2001, 231–2). For Pliny's interest in inscriptions, cf. also Pigoń's (Chapter 12) contribution in this volume.

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