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SOME INTELLECTUALS IN TACITUS AND PLINY THE YOUNGER

ABSTRACT: The paper provides a (far from exhaustive) overview of references found in Tacitus' historical works (*Annales*, *Historiae*, *Agricola*) and in Pliny the Younger's *Epistulae* to people who may be defined as "intellectuals", notably to orators, historians and philosophers. The historian Tacitus is, in general terms, somewhat uninterested in those people in their capacity as men of letters; his focus is, rather, on their involvement in Roman politics (but he makes some interesting side-comments on their intellectual activity). Pliny, on the other hand, is more inclined to emphasize their mental pursuits and, also, to praise their achievements. However, a closer reading of passages devoted to such intellectuals in the *Epistulae* reveals that he uses them to promote his own image as an ideal Roman, devoted not only to *studia* but also to *officia publica* and *officia amicorum*, and an upholder of *humanitas*.

KEYWORDS: Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, intellectuals, Roman Empire, historiography, epistolography

Were there *any* intellectuals at Rome? An answer to this question depends, to be sure, on how we define the word. If intellectuals are those for whom purely mental pursuits, with no external purpose, are the very core of their lives, we will probably be inclined to answer in the negative. Or, even if we are able to name some Romans for whom this definition applies, it will soon become clear that these are

just isolated cases and it is unwise to speak about “the intellectuals” of Rome in terms of a professional group or a social class.¹

Yet, on the other hand, mental pursuits undoubtedly were an important part of Roman life. Rich evidence from just one period of Rome’s history has been collected and discussed by Elizabeth Rawson in her fine book on *Intellectual life in the late Roman republic*. Two chapters of this book are actually entitled *Intellectuals in Rome*; the first deals with grammarians, rhetors and philosophers, while the second with those specializing in other subjects such as medicine, law, historiography or antiquarian matters (Rawson 1985: 66-99). However, two prominent examples from this period will be enough to show our problem. First, Terentius Varro. If any Roman of this generation deserves the name of a true intellectual it is, beyond any doubt, him. But Varro had other priorities apart from his books; if he had not, he would never have fought, in his late sixties,² in the civil war under Pompey’s orders. And, more importantly, his books were not *l’art pour l’art*; they were written with a purpose – namely, to uphold traditional Roman values and customs against the social and political forces of his day which he believed were threatening them. Second, Sallust. Any reader of the opening chapters of his first historical monograph is struck by the author’s insistence on his task – writing history rather than taking part in political life – being justifiable and even noble. But we should bear in mind that, when he was writing these chapters, Sallust was just over 40; for a senator of his age to retire from public affairs was in fact deemed highly unusual – and called for explanation. Particularly telling are his words “non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium conterere” (*Cat.* 4, 1), because bad sluggishness and good leisure are here put in sharp contrast. Sallust is pleading his case so he fails to mention that, in the

¹ See Bardon 1971. At the beginning of his paper he says: “L’intellectuelle existe: nous constatons sa présence dès la plus ancienne période républicaine” (p. 95), but, towards its end, he is much more sceptical: “Le véritable intellectuel, celui qui distingue l’exercice de l’esprit et l’utilitarisme de la culture, est un déclassé; et même, existe-t-il?” (p. 106).

² Compare Atticus (six years his younger), who, when the civil war broke out, “usus est aetatis vacatione neque se quoquam movit ex urbe” (*Nep. Att.* 7, 1). Of course we should remember that Atticus was an equestrian and that, throughout his life, he abstained from party politics.

Rome of his days, *otium* was not necessarily regarded as *bonum*; on the contrary, it was quite often looked with suspicion.³ *Otium litterarium* was allowed, but only when certain conditions were met; Sallust's case (retiring from public affairs for good in the prime of life) was something entirely different. And here we come to the heart of the matter: *otium* is, from the semantic point of view, roughly tantamount to Greek σχολή – but for the Greeks, at least from the time of Aristotle onwards, leisure devoted to intellectual pursuits was hardly suspicious, and did not demand any excuse (Stocks 1936).

Thus it would be better to adopt a wider definition of intellectuals as those who engage in intellectual activity, but not necessarily for its own sake, and not necessarily regarding this activity as the only or even central aim of their lives. Almost all “intellectuals” whom we meet in Tacitus and Pliny the Younger fit only this broad and, admittedly, not particularly clear-cut definition. And we should never forget that the modern concept of the intellectual, owing its origin mainly to the social changes of the nineteenth-century industrial societies, cannot be applied to ancient Rome or to antiquity in general.

I.

In this section I will limit myself to Tacitus' two major works, the *Historiae* and *Annales*, although it would seem natural to discuss first and foremost his *Dialogus de oratoribus*, a work featuring four intellectuals (Curiatius Maternus, Marcus Aper, Iulius Secundus and Valerius Messala), talking about intellectual matters (the decline of eloquence and its reasons) and citing many examples of both contemporary and earlier *homines litterati*, mainly orators but also poets

³ At least by more traditionally minded Romans. Cato the Elder's opinion, expressed at the beginning of his *Origines*, is significant: “clarorum hominum atque magnorum non minus otii quam negotii rationem exstare oportere” (fr. 2 Peter, quoted approvingly by Cic. *Planc.* 66). In a letter to Cato the Younger Cicero says that for both of them philosophy is closely associated with public activity: “nos philosophiam veram illam et antiquam, quae quibusdam otii esse ac desidia videretur, in forum atque in rem publicam atque in ipsam aciem paene deduximus” (Cic. *Fam.* 15, 4, 16; note that *otium* is here linked with *desidia*). For a history of the Roman concept of *otium*, see André 1966.

and philosophers. The *Dialogus* is Tacitus' most controversial piece of writing,⁴ but its many conflicting interpretations notwithstanding, one thing seems uncontested, the historian's keen interest in oratory and its representatives. Of course Tacitus was himself an orator and, as we may judge from Pliny the Younger's letters, he was quite successful in this field.⁵ In his historical works he not only makes his characters deliver speeches (which he himself has composed – this was, to be sure, a standard practice in ancient historiography), but he also passes judgements on individual orators qua orators, discussing not what they said but how they said it. The best-known example is perhaps a short digression on the emperors as public speakers, introduced after mentioning Seneca as Nero's ghost-writer (*Ann.* 13, 3, 2),⁶ but such judgements are found also in reference to less important figures. Tacitus' estimate of Quintus Haterius' (*suff.* 5 BC) manner of speaking is particularly interesting (*Ann.* 4, 61):

Fine anni [AD 26] excessere insignes viri Asinius Agrippa, claris maioribus quam vetustis vitaeque non degener, et Q. Haterius, familia senatoria, eloquentiae, quoad vixit, celebratae: monumenta ingeni eius haud perinde retinentur. Scilicet impetu magis quam cura vigebat; utque aliorum meditatio et labor in posterum valescit, sic Haterii canorum illud et profluens cum ipso simul exstinctum est.

This is an obituary notice, and Tacitus' characteristic practice in such notices is to put two or three deceased men together, for comparison and contrast (usually, as in this case, only implied).⁷ It is clear from the historian's description that Haterius relied too much upon his

⁴ For a recent book-length study of the work, see van den Berg 2014.

⁵ Plin. *Epist.* 2, 1, 6 (“laudator eloquentissimus”); 2, 11, 17 (“respondit Cornelius Tacitus eloquentissime”); 4, 13, 10 (“ex copia studiosorum, quae ad te ex admiratione ingenii tui convenit”).

⁶ “Adnotabant seniores [...] primum ex iis, qui rerum potiti essent, Neronem alienae facundiae eguisse”. We may compare Suetonius' biographical rubric on his emperors' *genus eloquendi*. Interestingly, Tacitus starts his overview with Julius Caesar, not with Augustus.

⁷ Here, Tacitus fails to mention that the two were related: Haterius married a daughter of Marcus Agrippa, Asinius' grandfather. For Tacitean obituaries, see Syme 1958; Pomeroy 1991: 192-225.

ingenium and neglected *ars* (or *cura*);⁸ this was enough to secure him renown during his lifetime, but not enough to immortalize him. The use of tenses in this passage deserves attention, especially the contrast between the present *valescit* and the perfect *extinctum est* (which picks up *excessere* from the beginning of the chapter). The sentence “*monimenta [...] haud [...] retinentur*” is, in a sense, paradoxical: since they are not preserved, they are no *monimenta* at all.⁹ The noun calls to mind Horace’s *exegi monumentum*; we may note that the “*dum* formula” of this poem¹⁰ is matched in Tacitus by “*quoad vixit*”: Haterius, evidently, could not have said about himself “*non omnis moriar*”.

But there is more to this obituary than meets the eye. Tacitus’ comment on Asinius Agrippa, “*vitaque non degener*”, deserves attention¹¹ – and invites a comparison to Haterius. Yes, the historian compares the two men’s lineage (“*claris maioribus quam vetustis*” ~ “*familia senatoria*”), but there is nothing here about Haterius’ moral standards. Yet Tacitus does not have to be explicit. In the preceding book he made a castigatory comment on Haterius’ flattering motion during a senatorial debate on the bestowal of *tribunicia potestas* on the emperor’s son: “at Q. Haterius cum eius diei senatus consulta aureis litteris figenda in

⁸ See two contrasting estimates of poets, “*Ennius ingenio maximus, arte rudis*” (Ov. *Trist.* 2, 423) and “*scribebat carmina maiore cura quam ingenio*” (on Silius Italicus, Plin. *Epist.* 3, 7, 5). Tacitus’ appraisal of Haterius’ oratorical style closely resembles the judgement on it by Seneca the Elder, *Contr.* 4 *praef.*, 7-11 (*velocitas, impetus, flueret*). “*Canorum illud et profluens*” is an echo of Cicero, *De orat.* 3, 28 (the favourable appraisal of Gaius Carbo); for an interpretation of this allusion, see Formicola 2013: 217. See also, for Tacitus’ use in this chapter of Callimachean aesthetic vocabulary, Martin, Woodman 1989: 231-232.

⁹ Tacitus uses *monimentum/monumentum* mainly in reference to buildings and similar objects, but there are four instances of it being used of literary works. See Shannon 2012 (esp. 752-753).

¹⁰ On which see Pöschl 1991: 257, n. 14 (“*die Solange-als-Formel*”). Cf. Critias fr. 8 Gentili-Prato (ap. Athen. 13, 600 d-e); Posidippus 122 Austin-Bastianini; Verg. *Aen.* 9, 446-449; Ov. *Am.* 1, 15, 9-30.

¹¹ Compare Tacitus’ comment on the brave death of Sempronius Gracchus (a descendant of the famous Gracchi and a disgraceful lover of Augustus’ daughter Julia): “*constantia mortis haud indignus Sempronio nomine: vita degeneraverat*”. The family of Asinius Agrippa was not so noble (he was a grandson of Marcus Agrippa and Asinius Pollio, both *novi homines*), but his honest life matched the (relative) *claritas* of his lineage. Unlike Haterius (as Tacitus subtly implies).

curia censuisset, deridiculo fuit, senex foedissimae adulationis tantum infamia usurus” (3, 57, 2). The noun *infamia* reappears a few chapters later, in the famous programmatic statement about Tacitus’ principles of selecting his senatorial material: “exsequi sententias haud institui nisi insignes per honestum aut notabili dedecore, quod praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne virtutes sileantur utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit” (3, 65, 1). Thus, if we combine these three passages, it becomes clear that there was something in Haterius which outlived him – his *infamia*. We may say, paraphrasing Tacitus’ formulation in the obituary, “infamia in posterum valescit”; note that *posteritas* is invoked at 3, 65, 1 (and the *Annales* themselves, written some ninety years after Haterius’ death, bear witness to the durability of his disgrace).¹²

Thus Haterius fares badly on both counts, in his oratory and in his moral standards. Another senatorial orator, Domitius Afer (*suff.* AD 39), receives a slightly better assessment, both when he is mentioned for the first time (*Ann.* 4, 52, 4: “prosperiore eloquentiae quam morum fama fuit”) and when he is given an obituary notice in the Neronian books of the *Annales*. Tacitus, once again, uses his technique of double obituary (14, 19):

Sequuntur virorum inlustrium mortes, Domitii Afri et M. Servilii, qui summis honoribus et multa eloquentia viguerant, ille orando causas, Servilius diu foro, mox tradendis rebus Romanis celebris et elegantia vitae, quam clariorem effecit, ut par ingenio, ita morum diversus.

It is highly probable that, when Tacitus was writing this obituary, he had in mind his first mention of Afer. Note not only the contrasting pair *eloquentia* (or *ingenium*)¹³ and *mores*, but also the use of gerund/gerundive forms (in two instances preceded by *mox*) in both passages: “mox capessendis accusationibus aut reos tutando” in Book 4 and

¹² For “history as deterrent”, see Luce 1991 (esp. 2911-2914).

¹³ *Ingenium* figures earlier in the passage from Book 4 (“Afer primoribus oratorum additus, divulgato ingenio et secuta adseveratione Caesaris, qua suo iure disertum eum appellavit”). Domitius Afer’s rhetorical abilities are extolled by Quintilian, who calls him “longe omnium, quos mihi cognoscere contigit, summum oratorem” (*Inst.* 12, 11, 3; cf. 5, 7, 7; 10, 1, 118 and *passim*). Afer is mentioned twice in the *Dialogus de oratoribus* (13, 3; 15, 3).

“orando causas” (of Afer) as well as “mox tradendis rebus Romanis celebris” (of Servilius) in Book 14. In this obituary, unlike in that discussed above, the two men put together are overtly compared to each other; the contrast between them is finely underscored by the chiasmus and *variatio* of the concluding epigram. Relevant to our purpose is the fact that the two deceased are introduced as “intellectuals”. Interestingly, Servilius Nonianus (*ord.* AD 35) is one of a few historians who appear in the *Annales* as Tacitus’ characters (and not as his sources);¹⁴ the author points to Nonianus’ evolution as a writer from oratory to historiography (the same evolution, in fact, as in the case of Tacitus himself) and emphasizes his *elegantia vitae*, which distinguishes him sharply from Afer. It is perhaps not unwarranted to regard the Tacitean Nonianus as the author’s own *alter ego*.¹⁵

Let us look at two other historians mentioned in the *Annales*. First, Cremutius Cordus, the author of a contemporary history covering (most probably) the triumviral period and the early years of Augustus. He figures prominently at the beginning of the narrative of AD 25: Tacitus says that he was accused under the charge of *maiestas* for some statements in his historical work,¹⁶ he quotes a powerful speech which Cremutius delivered in the senate, in defence of the freedom of speech rather than of himself, and reports his suicide and the senate’s decree that his book be burnt. The Cremutius episode in the *Annales* has been discussed by many scholars (Suerbaum 1971; Cancik-Lindemaier, Cancik 1986; Moles 1998; Meier 2003) and there is no need to dwell on it here; what I would like to point to is the theme of *memoria*

¹⁴ In fact, he is mentioned only here and at 6, 31, 1 (but there only as the eponymous consul of AD 35). But he might have appeared in the lost books. On Nonianus, see Syme 1964.

¹⁵ Cf. Syme 1958: 89: “Like the speeches and the digressions, the obituaries may convey personal disclosures about Cornelius Tacitus, consul, orator, and historian. [...] Matched with the great Domitius Afer, Servilius Nonianus earns the primacy, an orator who passed on from eloquence to the writing of history: equal in talent to Afer, but a better man, and commended for grace of living”.

¹⁶ Namely for his laudatory assessment of Brutus and Cassius. But we know from Seneca (*Cons. ad Marc.* 22, 4) that the real cause of the accusation was that Cremutius had offended Sejanus “ob unum aut alterum liberius dictum”; his historical work probably figured as an official, advertised charge. Tacitus fails to mention this in order to present Cremutius as an example of a historian who paid with his life for his opinions.

and *posteritas* (already known to us from the obituary of Haterius), which plays an important role not only in the Cremutius chapters (4, 34-35), but also in the preceding digression on historiography (4, 32-33) and in the following episode on Tiberius' reaction to the request by the province Hispania Ulterior to erect a temple to him and Livia (4, 37-38).¹⁷ But, to limit oneself to Cremutius, he rounds off his speech as follows (4, 35, 3): “suum cuique decus posteritas rependit; nec derunt, si damnatio ingruit, qui non modo Cassii et Bruti, sed etiam mei meminerint”. Thus “they will remember me” are the last words spoken by Cremutius in his life (his *ultima verba* – of course composed, as the whole speech, by Tacitus) and the truthfulness of this assertion is confirmed by the very fact that the story of Cremutius' trial and death is told in the *Annales*, some ninety years afterwards. But Tacitus corroborates Cremutius' claim also by means of an authorial comment in which he denounces the futile efforts of those in power to crush intellectual achievements. He notes that, the senate's decree notwithstanding, Cremutius' books survived (“sed manserunt, occultati et editi”) and then proceeds to a more general reflection (4, 35, 5):

Quo magis socordiam eorum inridere libet, qui praesenti potentia credunt exstingui posse etiam sequentis aevi memoriam. Nam contra punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque aliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere.

This is a powerful statement, and Tacitus is seldom as explicit as here in exposing imperial power (note “qui eadem saevitia usi sunt”, coupled with “externi reges”) and vindicating the autonomy of intellect.¹⁸ The contrasting pairs of concepts play an important role in this passage; in particular *dedecus* / *gloria* (stressed by the chiasmus and even by the *clausula heroica*¹⁹), but also *potentia* / *auctoritas*; let us

¹⁷ On this episode, see (apart from Cancik-Lindemaier, Cancik 1986) Pelling 2010.

¹⁸ For a similar sentiment, cf. *Agr.* 2, 2 (on the book-burning under Domitian). Cf. also Vell. 2, 66, 5 (on Cicero proscribed by Antony); Sen. *Cons. ad Marc.* 1, 4 (on Cremutius and his persecutors).

¹⁹ The *clausula heroica* is condemned by rhetoricians (Quint. *Inst.* 9, 4, 102) and normally avoided by writers, but quite often used by Tacitus, especially in the *Annales*; see Brakman 1925 (esp. 181-182).

remember that *potentia* in Tacitus usually connotes oppression and illegitimacy.

Tacitus' second historian is Brutteditius Niger – and he appears in a much less favourable light than Cremutius. Remarkably, both are mentioned in a similar context (*maiestas* trials). However, Brutteditius does not figure as an innocent defendant, but as an accuser. Three senators jointly accused a former proconsul of Asia – Mamercus Scaurus, Iunius Otho and Brutteditius. Tacitus speaks in a castigatory manner of all three, but his criticism of Mamercus and Otho is more harsh.²⁰ Brutteditius comes as the last (*Ann.* 3, 66, 4):

Brutteditium artibus honestis copiosum et, si rectum iter pergeret, ad clarissima quaeque iturum festinatio exstimulabat, dum aequalis, dein superiores, postremo suasset ipse spes antire parat; quod multos etiam bonos pessum dedit, qui spretis quae tarda cum securitate, praematura vel cum exitio properant.

In contrast to Iunius Otho, Brutteditius' "professional" interests are not explicitly stated, but "artibus honestis copiosum" evidently points to some kind of intellectual activity. We know from Seneca the Elder that he was a rhetorician and that he also wrote a historical work, of which only one fragment survives.²¹ It seems probable that some sympathy towards Brutteditius which is noticeable in this passage comes from his being a historian, Tacitus' much less famous colleague. Of course, this sympathy is countered by what Tacitus says about Brutteditius' uncontrollable ambition – but our author's vocabulary is curiously restrained, with no trace of *obprobrium*, *infamis*, *impudens*, *propolluere*. The last words most probably hint at Brutteditius' violent death in the aftermath of the fall of Sejanus; Tacitus' narrative of these events

²⁰ Mamercus: "proavum suum obprobrium maiorum Mamercus infami opera dehonestabat" (once again the theme of "descendants (not) living up to their ancestors"). Otho: "Iunio Othoni litterarium ludum exercere vetus ars fuit; mox Seiani potentia senator obscura initia impudentibus ausis propolluebat". Note that Tacitus' vocabulary in his assessment of Brutteditius picks up words used by him to characterize Mamercus and Otho: *dehonestabat* ~ *honestis*; *ars* ~ *artibus*.

²¹ Sen. *Contr.* 2, 1, 35-36 (rhetorical declamations); *Suas.* 6, 20-21 (historical work). The fragment (preserved by Seneca) deals with the death of Cicero. For an analysis, see Pigoñ (forthcoming).

is lost, but it may be supplemented by a passage from Juvenal's tenth satire (10, 81-85).

For Tacitus, as for other ancient historians, history is about politics and military matters. Cultural events, intellectual or artistic achievements do not interest him – or at least are not regarded important enough to merit a mention in his work.²² Thus literary texts are reported only when they have become historically relevant, as for instance Cremutius' *Annales* or MamerCUS Scaurus' tragedy, some lines of which were interpreted as containing criticism of Tiberius and used in court as evidence against the author (*Ann.* 6, 29, 3).²³ For this reason Tacitus is reticent about the literary output of Petronius (*Ann.* 16, 18-19) or Curtius Rufus (*Ann.* 11, 20-21)²⁴ and gives no obituary of Ovid or even his fellow historian Livy (both died AD 17). Bearing this in mind, we have to appreciate his comment on the aftermath of Pomponius Secundus' (*suff.* 44) military action against the Chatti in AD 50: "decretusque Pomponio triumphalis honos, modica pars famae eius apud posteros, in quis carminum gloria praecellit" (*Ann.* 12, 28, 2). From the traditional Roman standpoint, the comment is highly paradoxical, because *carmina* were no match at all for *triumphalis honos*. Horace's presentation in *Carmina* 3, 30 of his poetic achievement in terms of a military victory and triumph (*deduxisse*, the laurel wreath, perhaps also the Capitoline Hill) was something quite bold – and Horace was a "professional"

²² Velleius Paterculus' inclusion of cultural items in his history is rather exceptional; see Starr 1981: 168-169, 173.

²³ *Ann.* 6, 29, 3: "detuleratque argumentum tragoediae a Scauro scriptae, additis versibus qui in Tiberium flecterentur". But even here Tacitus does not deem it important to inform his readers about the subject of the tragedy, although, as we may judge from Cassius Dio (58, 24, 4), this information was clearly in his sources. Dio says that the play's title was *Atreus*, that it contained a passage advising one of the subjects to endure the folly of the monarch, and that Tiberius himself came to the conclusion that the tragedy was, in fact, about himself (in Tacitus, this interpretation is suggested to the emperor by MamerCUS' accuser). See, for the question of detecting/inventing political allusions in literary works of the imperial period, Bartsch 1994: 63-97 (esp. 86-87 for MamerCUS' *Atreus*).

²⁴ Admittedly, it is possible that they are not identical with the authors of (respectively) the *Satyrica* and *Historia Alexandri Magni*, although this seems less probable than the opposing option. Be that as it may, it is wrong to adduce the silence of Tacitus as an argument against the identification.

poet who could not boast about any real military victories.²⁵ Here, the phrase *carminum gloria* seems particularly striking, given the fact that *gloria* was traditionally associated with political and above all military sphere (Knoche 1934). But perhaps a darker interpretation of the passage is justified. Tacitus may imply that, under the emperors, it is almost impossible for Roman aristocrats to gain glory in war, fighting the enemies of Rome. What remains are areas which do not fall under the imperial sway, such as writing poetry.²⁶ Interestingly, the poetic activity of Pomponius is mentioned earlier in the *Annales* in connection with Claudius' edicts of AD 47, rebuking "theatrallem populi lasciviam"; Tacitus explains that people gathered in the theatre hurled insults at Pomponius and high-born women and adds *à propos* of the former, "is carmina scaenae dabat" (11, 13, 1). The audience, evidently, did not enjoy the performance.²⁷

A few words, at the end of this section, about philosophers. A good starting point may be a passage from Tacitus' biography of his father-in-law about Agricola's early youth (*Agr.* 4, 3):

Memoria teneo solitum ipsum narrare se prima in iuventa studium philosophiae acrius, ultra quam concessum Romano ac senatori, hausisse,

²⁵ For triumphal undertones in Hor. *Carm.* 3, 30, see Borzsák 1964 (esp. 145); also, Pöschl 1991: 260 (the laurel wreath). For this kind of imagery, cf. Verg. *Georg.* 3, 8-18; *Prop.* 3, 1, 9-12.

²⁶ Cf. Corbulo's reaction to Claudius' decision not to wage war on the Chauci: "beatos quondam duces Romanos", as well as Tacitus' own sarcastic comment: "insigne tamen triumphi indulsit Caesar, quamvis bellum negavisset" (*Ann.* 11, 20). Pliny emphasizes the need to prolong one's fame by means of remarkable achievements: "si non datur factis (nam horum materia in aliena manu), certe studiis proferamus" (*Epist.* 3, 7, 14).

²⁷ Quintilian's opinion of Pomponius Secundus as a tragic poet is very high, but he adds that he was criticized ("eorum quos viderim longe princeps Pomponius Secundus, quem senes parum tragicum putabant, eruditione ac nitore praestare confitebantur", *Inst.* 10, 1, 98). It may be doubted whether such aesthetic considerations were at play in the audience's response to the performance of AD 47. Pomponius' biography was written by Pliny the Elder (*Plin. Epist.* 3, 5, 3) and it is likely that he contributed to the consular's fame as a poet (at *Nat.* 7, 80 he refers to him as *consularis poeta* and at 14, 56 he speaks about his biography as *vita Pomponii Secundi vatis*). Apart from the two passages cited above, Tacitus mentions him also twice in the Tiberian books where he notes his *multa morum elegantia* (5, 8, 2), a quality closely resembling Nonianus' *elegantia vitae*.

ni prudentia matris incensum ac flagrantem animum coercuisset. Scilicet sublimē et erectum ingenium pulchritudinem ac speciem magnae excelsaeque gloriae vehementius quam caute appetebat. Mox mitigavit ratio et aetas, retinuitque (quod est difficillimum), ex sapientia modum.

Tacitus' usually takes care to avoid Greek loanwords and, as a rule, he uses *sapientia* and *sapiens* for, respectively, *philosophia* and *philosophus*.²⁸ Here however, he does not shun the “un-Roman” noun – and this has its point. Young Agricola's interest was in pure, undiluted “Greek-style” philosophy, not in Roman “wisdom”. This was, as rightly noticed by his mother, unacceptable. *Philosophia* had to become *sapientia* (cf. “retinuitque [...] ex sapientia modum”). And note that, apart from *philosophia* and *sapientia*, we have in this passage also *prudentia*, a distinctly un-philosophic counterpart of “wisdom” (although *prudētia*/fronh;siv is also one of the four virtues of Greek philosophy).

This passage epitomizes, in a sense, Tacitus' attitude to philosophy and philosophers. Yes, it may be good, but you have to be on your guard, and you must know the limits. Some did not. For instance, the Stoic Musonius Rufus, who in December 69, during the last episode of the civil war between the Flavians and Vitellius, attempted to deliver a sermon to the soldiers on the advantages of peace and the evils of war: “coeptabatque permixtus manipulis, bona pacis ac belli discrimina disserens, armatos monere” (*Hist.* 3, 81, 1). It is not difficult to imagine the soldiers' reaction; eventually, under the threat of physical assault, Musonius gave up “his untimely wisdom” (“omisisset intempestivam sapientiam”).²⁹ There is a marked contrast between the historian's disdainful treatment of Musonius and what he says in the preceding chapter about Arulenus Rusticus, who as a pupil and admirer of Thræsa Paetus was also close to the teachings of the Porch. But Arulenus (who was wounded by the soldiers, a fact which elicits Tacitus' angry comment) came there not on his own initiative, but as a representative of the senate – he was then praetor, and a member of the senatorial embassy

²⁸ Apart from the *Dialogus*, *philosophia* occurs twice (*Agr.* 4, 3 and *Hist.* 3, 81, 1 – on which passage see next note) and *philosophus* once (*Ann.* 13, 42, 4).

²⁹ Earlier, the historian speaks about Musonius' emulation of “studium philosophiae et placita Stoicorum”; also *Stoicus* is very rare in his works (here and *Ann.* 14, 57, 3; 16, 32, 3). On the Musonius episode, see Bellardi 1974: 131-132; Williams 2012: 222-231.

to the Flavian troops. Musonius, on the other hand, was of equestrian status, and he mingled with the embassy (“miscuerat se legatis”), so he was, certainly, a wrong person in a wrong place at a wrong time.³⁰

Tacitus is usually rather sparse in his praise of historical characters. There are, however, exceptions and, in the *Historiae*, the most noticeable exception is his portrait of Helvidius Priscus (*Hist.* 4, 5-6). The historian does not leave unsaid his philosophical interests but, significantly, he does not use the “suspicious” words *philosophia* or *Stoicus*.³¹ More importantly, he explains why Helvidius started to study philosophy in the first place: “non, ut plerique, ut nomine magnifico segne otium velaret, sed quo firmior adversus fortuita rem publicam capesseret”. This was, for the more traditionally-minded among the Romans, the only admissible reason for engaging in philosophical pursuits; we may refer to Cicero’s words from his letter to Cato the Younger (*Fam.* 15, 4, 16; quoted in note 3 above). Helvidius Priscus was, like other members of his political group, especially his father-in-law Thrasea Paetus (condemned to death under Nero in AD 66), close to Stoicism, but certainly not a “professional” philosopher; and the circle’s political opinions and activity, although to some extent influenced by the teachings of the Stoa, were certainly not the direct result of their philosophical creed.³²

Tacitus mentions also, in both the *Historiae* and *Annales*, a “professional” philosopher, but the picture of him is the very opposite of what he says about Helvidius. Even Musonius comes off much better. The man is called Egnatius Celer and he made his appearance as a witness for the prosecution during the *maiestas* trial of his aristocratic patron Barea Soranus in AD 66 (*Ann.* 16, 32, 3):

³⁰ See Williams 2012: 227: “Musonius’ counterpart [...] illustrates that Stoics who behave as senators or envoys instead of as Stoic martyrs certainly can serve as honorable citizens”.

³¹ But he makes it clear, by means of a periphrasis, that Helvidius was a follower of Stoicism.

³² Thus it is wrong to use the label “the Stoic opposition” (as does, e.g., Carlon 2009: 21 and *passim*). The best treatment of the question remains that of Wirszubski (1950: 138-149). As he writes about Thrasea, “he acted primarily as a courageous and upright Roman senator who held Stoic views, not as a Stoic philosopher who happened to be a senator at Rome” (p. 138).

Cliens hic Sorani, et tunc emptus ad opprimendum amicum, auctoritatem Stoicae sectae praeferebat, habitu et ore ad exprimendam imaginem honesti exercitus, ceterum animo perfidiosus subdolos, avaritiam ac libidinem occultans; quae postquam pecunia reclusa sunt, dedit exemplum praecavendi, quo modo fraudibus involutos aut flagitiis commaculatos, sic specie bonarum artium falsos et amicitiae fallaces.³³

Of course it would be wrong to generalize from this particular instance and to maintain that, in the historian's eyes, all professional philosophers were wicked. Tacitus does not share the enmity towards them of his later Greek colleague Cassius Dio, or the deep suspicion of his putative teacher Quintilian. However, also in the *Annales* his message seems to be roughly the same as that evoked in the *Agricola* passage from which we began: "be on your guard!".³⁴

II.

The quest for intellectuals in Pliny the Younger is much easier – and, for this reason, this section will be rather brief. In his correspondence he professes, again and again, his admiration for people of talent and industry, both from the past and of his own age. As Helmut Krasser has noticed, the phrase "claros viros colere" (used to describe Titinius Capito's reverential attitude towards great men, 1, 17, 3)³⁵, may be regarded as epitomizing Pliny's own life project (Krasser 1993: 66). Of particular relevance to our subject are of course his "portrait letters", sometimes written to commemorate someone recently dead, sometimes to recommend a minor friend to a more influential one, sometimes for other reasons.³⁶ Most of them are laudatory; Pliny in his letters is much more inclined to praising people than Tacitus is in his historical works

³³ Cf. *Hist.* 4, 10: the trial of Publius Celer in AD 70 for his false testimony against Barea (with Musonius as his accuser). There is an interesting passage about Celer (not named) in Juvenal (3, 116-118).

³⁴ My survey of Tacitean "intellectuals" is highly selective. I have purposefully left out the greatest egghead of them all, Seneca.

³⁵ All references to ancient sources in this section, unless stated otherwise, are to Pliny's *Epistulae*.

³⁶ On such letters, see Pausch 2004: 51-146.

(apart from the *Agricola*).³⁷ However, and this is the crucial issue, in almost all instances Pliny's praise of others implies his praise of himself: firstly, because he is so kind towards *magna ingenia*, so lacking any trace of envy; secondly, because we are invited to detect similarities between the object of the praise and the author.³⁸

It seems appropriate to begin our short survey of intellectuals in the *Epistulae* with Pliny the Elder. Apart from the Vesuvius letters (6, 16; 6, 20), he is the subject of a letter to Baebius Macer (3, 5), who asked Pliny to compile a list of all the works written by his uncle.³⁹ The list is given (§ 1-6), but it makes only a quarter of the whole letter. The rest is taken up by a description of the uncle's daily routine (§ 8-13), of his working habits while on holidays or on travel (§ 14-16) and a summing-up notice about the material result of his industry (apart from the books published and listed at the beginning), one hundred and sixty scrolls of his *electorum commentarii* (§ 17). There follow some more general reflections and a final address to Macer (§ 18-20). The recurring theme of the letter is the Elder's ability to make the most of the time available to him, in spite of his many other occupations.⁴⁰ This theme is firmly introduced immediately after the book list section (§ 7):

Miraris quod tot volumina multaque in his tam scrupulosa homo occupatus absolverit? Magis miraberis si scieris illum aliquamdiu causas actitasse, decessisse anno sexto et quinquagesimo, medium tempus distentum impeditumque qua officiis maximis qua amicitia principum egisse.

³⁷ There are exceptions, most notably the letters concerning Aquilius Regulus (1, 5; 2, 20; 4, 2; 4, 7; 6, 2) – although they are not “portrait letters” in the strict sense of the word. For Pliny's presentation of Regulus (who certainly may be called “intellectual”), see e.g. Hoffer 1999: 55-91.

³⁸ Cf. Krasser 1993: 68: “All das, was Plinius uns über Capito wissen läßt, gilt gleichermaßen für ihn selbst und hat programmatische Geltung”. Krasser's other example is 1, 16, a portrait of Pompeius Saturninus, an author of speeches, a historical work, light poetry and (probably) literary letters – thus almost the same genres as those practiced by Pliny.

³⁹ On this letter, see Henderson 2002; Lefèvre 2009: 123-126; Gibson, Morello 2012: 115-123.

⁴⁰ Henderson (2002: 270) notes that the keywords *tempus* and *studium* are used, respectively, six and eleven times in the letter; they are juxtaposed four times.

Towards the end of the letter⁴¹ Pliny observes that when one considers the amount of his uncle's reading and writing, one may come to the conclusion that he did not have any other duties ("nec in officiis ullis nec in amicitia principis fuisse"); on the other hand, when one learns how much effort he spent on study, one may conclude that he did not write or read sufficiently enough.⁴² This looks, at the first sight, as a criticism of the uncle, but the impression is of course wrong; the nephew immediately explains his point: "quid est enim quod non aut illae occupationes impedire aut haec instantia non possit efficere?" (§ 18).

And precisely here Pliny the Younger enters the scene (§ 19):

Itaque soleo ridere cum me quidam studiosum vocant, qui si comparer illi sum desidiosissimus. Ego autem tantum, quem partim publica partim amicorum officia distringunt? Quis ex istis, qui tota vita litteris adsident, collatus illi non quasi somno et inertiae deditus erubescat?

⁴¹ § 18 refers back to § 7. This is made clear not only by verbal echoes (*occupatus* ~ *occupationes*; *officiis maximis* ~ *officiis ullis*; *amicitia principum* ~ *amicitia principis*; *impeditumque* ~ *impedire*), but also by the fact that grammatical forms evoking the addressee, used for the last time at § 7 (*miraberis*), resume at § 18 (*tibi recordanti*); Macer is absent from the sections dealing with Pliny's daily routine and his working habits.

⁴² This is how I understand "rursus cum audis quid studiis laboris impenderit, (nonne videtur tibi) nec scripsisse satis nec legisse?" For another interpretation, see Lefèvre 2009: 125 with n. 44, who suggests that "das vor *laboris* überlieferte *studiis* entweder zu tilgen oder etwa durch *officiis* zu ersetzen ist" and paraphrases the sentence as follows: "Wenn man höre, wieviel Arbeit er in seinen Ämtern aufwendete, scheine er dann nicht zu wenig geschrieben und gelesen zu haben?" But, if we retain the transmitted text (and there is a strong reason to retain it, since Pliny seems to refer back to the concluding remark of the preceding section: "nam perire omne tempus arbitrabatur, quod studiis non impenderetur", § 16), its logic will not be upset: the author's point is that the man who devoted so much effort to his scholarly work (as though he had had no other occupations) would have been expected to have achieved more – in terms of books both written and read. But, of course, his other duties proved to be a tremendous impediment ("quid est enim quod non aut illae occupationes impedire..."). From the list given at the beginning of the letter we know that Pliny the Elder wrote 102 books, thus (assuming that his first work may be dated to ca. AD 50) some three books and a half per one year, on the average. If he had no other occupations (and of course this "if" is here of crucial importance) this ratio would not seem particularly impressive (compare Cicero in 46 and 45 BC or Varro's 490 books written before he finished 77). See also, against Lefèvre's reading, Evenpoel 1999.

Pliny, so it seems, could not have ended without any thought about himself.⁴³ Of course, he is modest (“si comparer illi”). But is he, really? “Partim publica partim amicorum officia” is here the crucial phrase, because it both sets the author apart from those who may devote all their lives to studies (it is them, in fact, who are *desidiosissimi*) and assimilates him to his uncle (cf. “qua officiis maximis qua amicitia principum”, § 7). But the similarity, in the field of *officia*, is only partial. Pliny does not have to be explicit, but the addressee (and the reader) knows that there is an important difference between the Younger’s and the Elder’s public responsibilities: whereas the latter was an equestrian, the former is a senator, and has just held the consulship.⁴⁴ Moreover, *amicorum officia* seem to be more time-consuming than the Elder’s friendship with Vespasian. Note that the uncle used to visit Vespasian before dawn, then went to *delegatum sibi officium*, but, after coming back home, he had still quite a large part of the day left for his studies (§ 9). And compare this with the nephew’s complaints about the daily grind of life in Rome in his letter to Minicius Fundanus: “officio togae virilis interfui, sponsalia aut nuptias frequentavi, ille me ad signandum testamentum, ille in advocacionem, ille in consilium rogavit” (1, 9, 2). Being a senior senator, the Younger simply cannot devote as much time to intellectual pursuits as the Elder did – however much he wants to.⁴⁵

Also in Book 3, there is a portrait of the poet Silius Italicus (3, 7). As the first sentence makes clear (“modo nuntiatus est Silius Italicus in Neapolitano suo inedia finisse vitam”), it is one of Pliny’s obituary

⁴³ Compare his intrusion of himself at the end of the first Vesuvius letter: “interim Miseni ego et mater – sed nihil ad historiam, nec tu aliud quam de exitu eius scire voluisti. Finem ergo faciam” (6, 16, 21) – which understandably elicits Tacitus’ second request, fulfilled in Pliny’s second letter (6, 20, 1). He uses the same rhetorical strategem as the Vergilian Sinon does in *Aeneid* 2, 100-104.

⁴⁴ He was *consul suffectus* in September 100. Book 3 was published ca. 103 (see Sherwin-White 1966: 31-32). Pliny’s consulship “is the understood context for much of Book 3” (thus Gibson, Morello 2012: 123).

⁴⁵ And it is possible that he does not want it that much. See Gibson, Morello 2012: 115-123, who finely compare Pliny’s other descriptions of the daily routine (3, 1: Vestricius Spurinna, *cos. iterum* AD 98; 9, 36 and 9, 40: Pliny himself while on holidays in his villas) and conclude that “[t]he consular Pliny must choose appropriate fellow consuls as his model, and not equestrian procurators who focused too narrowly on *studia*” (p. 123).

letters. Since Silius was a senior consular (*ord.* 68), in fact the latest of the Neronian consuls still alive in the early years of Trajan (he died ca. 102, in his 76th year), Pliny devotes a few lines of the letter to his political career. This belonged to the days long gone, and the distance of time is emphasized by the repeated use of the pluperfect (§ 3):

Laeserat famam suam sub Nerone (credebatur sponte accusasse), sed in Vitelli amicitia sapienter se et comiter gesserat, ex proconsulatu Asiae gloriam reportaverat, maculam veteris industriae laudabili otio abluerat.

Silius' proconsulship of Asia is dated to ca. 77/78, so the temporal span of this *curriculum vitae* is very short, just slightly more than ten years. Interestingly, Pliny does not record here his consulship under Nero (this piece of information is postponed until § 9, where it facilitates the transition from the first part of the letter to the second)⁴⁶, but he mentions a report – we are not told, true or false⁴⁷ – of his having been a voluntary informer in a, we may presume, political trial. Pliny may be suggesting that his consulship was a reward for his subservience to Nero,⁴⁸ but he takes care to contrast his earlier political engagement with his attitude under Vitellius and (not named) Vespasian; the contrast is underscored by the juxtaposition of *famam* and *gloriam* (*gloria* is a revered aristocratic concept, see Knoche 1934). There is another contrast, that between Silius' period under Nero and his life of leisure which followed his return from Asia (and we encounter here the third word pointing to fame or renown, *laudabili*). Pliny's choice of vocabulary is, from the traditional Roman point of view, paradoxical, because, in republican times, it was *otium* which was treated with suspicion and

⁴⁶ See Lefèvre 2009: 143. His discussion of the letter is on p. 142-145. See also Gibson, Morello 2012: 123-126, and, for a comparison between Pliny's and Martial's treatments of Silius Italicus, Vessey 1974.

⁴⁷ What is important is the public opinion's verdict on him, not the facts themselves. But it seems that *credebatur* refers logically to *sponte* (see next note), not to *accusasse*; his having brought an accusation was beyond dispute.

⁴⁸ Cf. Tac. *Hist.* 1, 2, 3: "nec minus praemia delatorum invisā quam scelera, cum alii sacerdotia et consulatus ut spolia adepti..." The important point about Silius acting as an informer is that he was believed to have brought an accusation on his own initiative; cf. Tac. *Hist.* 4, 42, 3; *Ann.* 6, 10, 3.

which might bring opprobrium on those who made wrong use of it; *industria*, on the other hand, was praiseworthy.⁴⁹

Because we know Silius Italicus first and foremost as the epic poet, the author of the *Punica*, we are inclined to assume that *laudabile otium* refers to his poetry. It turns out, however, that Pliny is very brief on this particular aspect of Silius' life of leisure: "scribebat carmina maiore cura quam ingenio, non numquam iudicia hominum recitationibus experiebatur" (§ 5). No mention of what kind of poetry he practiced, what poem(s) he wrote.⁵⁰ Instead, Pliny speaks about Silius' passion for collecting books, statues and even villas connected with great figures of Roman culture, Vergil in particular, who (we may presume) was his favourite poet (§ 8). Once again, Pliny has nothing to say about Silius the poet's imitation of Vergil (which is obvious to any reader of the *Punica*).⁵¹

Silius' *doctissimi sermones* (mentioned at § 4), if not his poetry, bear witness to his being an intellectual. Pliny is much more explicit in his portraits of Greek men of letters, the philosophers Euphrates and Artemidorus (1, 10 and 3, 11, respectively) and the rhetorician Isaeus (2, 3).⁵² This should not surprise us. It is much more natural to look for "true" intellectuals among the Greeks than among the Romans. No one will hesitate to regard Plutarch (one of Professor Korus' favourite authors) as an intellectual; to use the same term in reference to, say, Tacitus or Pliny the Younger will quite probably arouse some controversy.

⁴⁹ See e.g. Cic. *Sest.* 137; *Off.* 1, 122; Sall. *Cat.* 52, 21 (Cato's speech): "domi industria, foris iustum imperium". Cf. McDonnell 2006: 130.

⁵⁰ Contrast 3, 1, 7 on Vestricius Spurinna: "scribit enim et quidem utraque lingua lyrica doctissima...". Even in his first work, *De iaculatione equestri*, Pliny the Elder fares better than Silius: "pari ingenio curaque composuit" (3, 5, 3); see Gibson, Morello 2012: 126.

⁵¹ Associations, at the level of literary activity, between Silius and Vergil (and also Cicero) are pointed out, on the other hand, by Martial (7, 63; 11, 48 and 49). Interestingly, Pliny's Book 3 ends with another obituary of a poet – but, on this occasion, his (namely Martial's) poetry is the letter's main subject, and even one of his epigrams is quoted (10, 19, of course addressed to Pliny). The final reflection on "gloria et laus et aeternitas" (§ 6) resembles the closing of the Silius letter (§ 14 f.).

⁵² See Grimal 1955 (more concerned with the men themselves than with Pliny's picture of them); Pausch 2004: 129-141 (Euphrates and Isaeus). On Artemidorus see next note.

To limit oneself to Euphrates, it is remarkable how deftly Pliny brings in his own person, while (apparently) focusing attention on the Greek philosopher.⁵³ He first explains how he met Euphrates for the first time (long ago, when he was a military tribune in Syria in the early eighties) and, after a section devoted to the presentation of the man (§ 5-8), he complains about his being unable to listen to his lectures and enjoy learned conversations with him: “nam distringor officio [...] scribo plurimas sed inlitteratissimas litteras” (§ 9).⁵⁴ However, Euphrates himself views the situation in a different light (§ 10):

Soleo non numquam (nam id ipsum quando contingit!) de his occupationibus apud Euphraten queri. Ille me consolatur, adfirmat etiam esse hanc philosophiae et quidem pulcherrimam partem, agere negotium publicum, cognoscere iudicare, promere et exercere iustitiam, quaeque ipsi doceant in usu habere.

A fine paradox: Euphrates speaks as a true Roman of old might have spoken, pointing to the practical uses of philosophy; we may recall Cicero’s statement in his letter to Cato the Younger (see note 3 above) or Tacitus’ characterization of Helvidius Priscus.⁵⁵ And there is another paradox: the Roman senator Pliny is not convinced (“mihi tamen hoc unum non persuadet”, § 11).

Moreover, the very portrait of Euphrates seems to throw light on Pliny. The author emphasizes the serene humanity of the philosopher. Yes, he is stern (*multum severitatis*: we should bear in mind how very Roman virtue *severitas* is), but there is no trace in him of harshness (*nulla tristitia*), a trait sometimes associated with philosophers, especially of the Stoic school, and with enemies of emperors (Grassl 1975).

⁵³ The same authorial strategy is employed in the Artemidorus letter. Pliny’s aim is to advertise his courage displayed at the time when the philosopher had been banished from Rome by Domitian. See Shelton 1987.

⁵⁴ Note the verb *dstringo*, used also in the Pliny the Elder letter (3, 5, 19). For other passages in which this verb occurs in reference to Pliny’s non-literary occupations, see 2, 14, 1; 7, 15, 1; 9, 2, 1; 9, 25, 3.

⁵⁵ And cf. Quint. *Inst.* 12, 2, 30: “an fortitudinem, iustitiam, fidem, continentiam, frugalitatem, contemptum doloris ac mortis melius alii docebunt quam Fabricii, Curii, Reguli, Decii, Mucii alique innumerabiles? Quantum enim Graeci praeceptis valent, tantum Romani, quod est maius, exemplis”.

Moreover, Euphrates' *vitae sanctitas* is balanced with *comitas*; the consequence is that he "insectatur vitia non homines, nec castigat errantes sed emendat" (§ 7). This picture is highly reminiscent of the self-portrait Pliny draws, explicitly and implicitly, in almost every letter of his collection. Consider the following statement, emphatically placed at the beginning of a letter to Arrianus Maturus: "ut in vita sic in studiis pulcherrimum et humanissimum existimo severitatem comitatemque miscere, ne illa in tristitiam, haec in petulantiam excedat" (8, 21, 1). Or Thræsea Paetus' dictum, quoted approvingly in the next letter: "qui vitia odit, homines odit" (8, 22, 3). Or a letter from the same book (8, 16), in which he speaks about his compassion towards his sick and dying slaves, confesses that his humanity makes him feel weak ("debilitor et frangor eadem illa humanitate"), but he, nevertheless, does not want to adopt a harsh attitude towards such afflictions, advocated by some philosophers ("non ideo tamen velim durior fieri"). Thus, Euphrates seems to be, at least to some extent, the author's *alter ego*, rather like the historian Servilius Nonianus is in Tacitus' *Annales*.

So far, we have discussed only intellectuals of the male sex. Does Pliny, who speaks quite often and quite favourably about women,⁵⁶ mention also their intellectual pursuits and achievements? In 7, 19 he gives a moving and highly sympathetic picture of Fannia, Thræsea's daughter and Helvidius' widow, who saved copies of Herennius Senecio's biography of his husband (which had been banned by the senate's decree under Domitian); Pliny mentions her *castitas*, *sanctitas*, *gravitas* and *constantia*, her courageous behaviour during Senecio's trial – but there is nothing about her intellectual accomplishments (it is clear that she saved the biography as an act of devotion towards her dead husband). Similarly, it would be wrong to call another widow (of quite different demeanour), Ummidia Quadratilla, an intellectual, despite her artistic interests (she was fond of pantomime; 7, 24). In 1, 16 Pliny extols literary activity of Pompeius Saturninus. He dabbled in various genres, among them letters – of which he claimed they had been written by his wife. Pliny seems not quite convinced, but he adds that, even if Saturninus' wife were in fact their author, the credit would go

⁵⁶ There are two recent books on Pliny's presentation of women: Carlon 2009; Shelton 2012.

to her husband rather than to her, because he “uxorem quam virginem accepit tam doctam politamque reddiderit” (§ 7). Finally, there is a fine obituary of Minicius Fundanus’ teenage daughter (5, 16) in which Pliny draws attention not only to her outstanding moral qualities, but also to her intellectual prowess (“quam studiose, quam intellegenter lectitabat”, § 3); this is, however, not enough to call her an intellectual.⁵⁷

To conclude: most of the intellectuals we meet in Tacitus’ major historical works and in Pliny’s letters are men for whom mental accomplishments are important, but who, at the same time, are active in other fields, especially in politics. Tacitus is only seldom interested in their intellectual occupations (if so, mainly in oratory); for Pliny, such people are quite often a means of the author’s self-promotion, of presenting himself as a man of both action and letters, and as an example of *humanitas*.

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⁵⁷ See Hemelrijk 1999: 31-32 (Saturninus’ wife), 53 (Fannia), 60-62 (Fundanus’ daughter). Fundanus (*suff.* 107) was a friend of Plutarch, who dedicated to him the *De cohibenda ira*.

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