TRAJAN THE PANEGYRIST: PLINY, *PAN*. 69-75[[1]](#footnote-1)•

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*Introduction: Trajanic Praise*

We do not associate the emperor Trajan with powers of oratory. Trajan is a recipient, rather than a giver, of praise. Praise of Trajan is offered in its most lavish and extensive form in Pliny’s *Panegyricus*,[[2]](#footnote-2) which paradoxically at the same time offers the briefest but punchiest instantiation of praise in Pliny’s own shorthand for Trajan in that speech as *optimus*.[[3]](#footnote-3) *Optimus*, indeed, finds its most striking echo in Eutropius (*Breviarium* viii 5, 3), who notes how emperors were acclaimed as being more fortunate than Augustus and better than Trajan (*felicior Augusto, melior Traiano*), implying that Trajan had real virtues as a ruler whereas Augustus was merely fortunate.[[4]](#footnote-4) Trajan is the figure who had to sit through not just Pliny’s own almost endless exploration of laudation in the *Panegyricus*, but also, doubtless, countless other speeches from other consular orators,[[5]](#footnote-5) speeches of the kind which, as Fronto remarks, would usually find a decent oblivion in the records of the *acta senatus* (*Ad M. Caesarem* ii 4 van den Hout).

The little evidence we do have that relates to Trajan as an orator is not wholly flattering. Julian in the *Caesars*, admittedly a text which might be felt to have an agenda in its handling of the merits and vices of emperors, records the detail that Trajan did have ability in this sphere but through indolence entrusted the composition of his speeches to L. Licinius Sura (*Caes*. 327a-c):[[6]](#footnote-6)

Δίδοται μετὰ τοῦτον τῷ Τραϊανῷ τοῦ λέγειν ἐξουσία. ὁ δέ, καίπερ δυνάμενος λέγειν, ὑπὸ ῥᾳθυμίας· ἐπιτρέπειν γὰρ εἰώθει τὰ πολλὰ τῷ Σούρᾳ γράφειν ὑπὲρ αὑτοῦ· φθεγγόμενος μᾶλλον ἢ λέγων, ἐπεδείκνυεν αὐτοῖς τό τε Γετικὸν καὶ τὸ Παρθικὸν τρόπαιον. ᾐτιᾶτο δὲ τὸ γῆρας ὡς οὐκ ἐπιτρέψαν αὐτῷ τοῖς Παρθικοῖς πράγμασιν ἐπεξελθεῖν. καὶ ὁ Σειληνός, Ἀλλ᾿, ὧ μάταιε, ἔφη, εἴκοσι βεβασίλευκας ἔτη, Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ οὑτοσὶ δώδεκα. τί οὖν ἀφεὶς αἰτιᾶσθαι τὴν σαυτοῦ τρυφὴν τὴν τοῦ χρόνου μέμφῃ στενότητα; παροξυνθεὶς οὖν ὑπὸ τοῦ σκώμματος, οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν ἔξω τοῦ δύνασθαι ῥητορεύειν, ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς φιλοποσίας ἀμβλύτερος ἑαυτοῦ πολλάκις ἦν, Ἐγὼ δέ, εἶπεν …

Trajan was allowed to speak next. Though he had some talent for oratory he was so lazy that he had been in the habit of letting Sura write most of his speeches for him; so he shouted rather than spoke, and, meanwhile displayed to the gods his Getic and Parthian trophies, while he accused his old age of not having allowed him to extend his Parthian conquests. “You cannot take us in,” said Silenus; “you reigned twenty years and Alexander here only twelve. Why then do you not put it down to your own love of ease, instead of complaining of your short allowance of time?” Stung by the taunt, since he was not deficient in eloquence, though intemperance often made him seem more stupid than he was, Trajan began again: “I, … (trans. W.C. Wright, Loeb)

From Cassius Dio lxviii 7, 4 we obtain a slightly more nuanced verdict: παιδείας μὲν γὰρ ἀκριβοῦς, ὅση ἐν λόγοις, οὐ μετέσχε, τό γε μὴν ἔργον αὐτῆς καὶ ἠπίστατο καὶ ἐποίει. οὐδὲ ἔστιν ὅ τι οὐκ ἄριστον εἶχε, «Education in the strict sense he lacked, when it came to speaking, but its substance he both knew and applied; and there was no quality which he did not possess in a high degree» (trans. E. Cary, Loeb).

Pliny himself, however, when giving a first set-piece overview of Trajan’s qualities early on in the speech, does not mention ability as a speaker when enumerating other virtues, such as his serious but mild character and his physical qualities (*Pan*. 4, 6-7). The absence of praise for Trajan as a speaker here is all the more striking given that Pliny indicates that Trajan possesses a combination of all possible virtues: *at principi nostro quanta concordia quantusque concentus omnium laudum omnisque gloriae contigit*, «But, in the case of our emperor, how great a concord and how great a harmony of every kind of praise and every kind of glory has accrued to him!» (*Pan*. 4, 6).[[7]](#footnote-7)

Nevertheless, Pliny’s speech does express an interest in Trajan as a giver of praise, in spite of the way in which the speech is formally concerned with praising Trajan. A small example occurs in *Pan*. 13, 1-2 where Trajan is represented as praising his enemies in the thick of battle (*Pan*. 13, 2 *laudabas quippe ferientes, hortabarisque ut auderent, et audebant*, «for you would praise those that hit you, and you would encourage them to dare to do this, and they would dare»), so that they fight more determinedly against him, but this obviously cannot be seen as the conventional terrain of panegyric. A more telling example, however, is *Pan*. 15, 5, from a chapter where Pliny recalls Trajan’s time as a military tribune. After enumerating his achievements and promise in the military sphere,[[8]](#footnote-8) Pliny remarks how Trajan is accustomed to give praise to his men on the basis of having served with them previously:

*inde est, quod prope omnes nomine adpellas, quod singulorum fortia facta commemoras, nec habent adnumeranda tibi pro re publica uulnera, quibus statim laudator et testis contigisti.*

It is because of this [*sc.* your previous service together], that you address virtually everyone by name, that you recall the brave deeds of individuals, and they do not have to list to you their wounds on behalf of the republic, for which you were immediately present as a witness and as the giver of praise.

While the idea that a commander might praise his soldiers for their brave deeds is not to be seen as unusual, this passage serves to underline how Trajan is conscious of the good deeds of others. He moreover has a close knowledge of his men, including familiarity with their names, and has accumulated a sense of all their various achievements; a good near-contemporary parallel is the speech of Hannibal in Silius xvii 295-356, where Hannibal is imagined as addressing his men and pointing out their individual achievements.[[9]](#footnote-9) The detail that the soldiers do not have to provide Trajan with a list of the wounds they have incurred (*nec habent adnumeranda tibi pro re publica uulnera*) underlines that he is already present as a giver of praise (*laudator*) and as a witness (*testis*); a pairing of words which points to another aspect of Trajan’s praise for his men, the fact that it is grounded in truth as he has been a witness to what they have done;[[10]](#footnote-10) the same idea recurs later on, but with different wording, at *Pan*. 19, 4 where the soldiers do not have to rely on intermediaries to convey their loyalty and hard work to Trajan as he himself sees it.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The presentation of Trajan as a giver of praise to his men in military contexts finds its counterpart in various ways during the course of the speech. Not all of them are strictly concerned with what we might necessarily regard as utterances of formal praise: thus at *Pan*. 23, 1, Trajan greets members of the senate and members of the equestrian order and even some of his clients. This is mentioned by Pliny as a way of praising Trajan, to be sure, but there is also a sense here of Trajan as an emperor who is able to behave in ways which confer respect and even honour on those who are around him. Similarly, at *Pan*. 36, 5, Pliny remarks on how Trajan makes good choices in his appointments as procurators of the imperial treasury (*maius illud quod eos procuratores habes, ut plerumque ciues tui non alios iudices malint*, «and greater still is that fact that you have such men as procurators that most of the time your citizens would not prefer to have others as their judges»).[[12]](#footnote-12) Though this is not a matter of Pliny recording verbal praise, there is nevertheless a sense here that Trajan is a wise arbiter of good conduct, which can lead to preferment. This, as we shall see, is something which recurs in contexts alongside praise given by Trajan.

In chapter 44, Pliny explains once again that Trajan is the fount of preferment, with his willingness to reward those who have done well with honours and offices such as priesthoods and appointments to provinces (*Pan*. 44, 6-7). Pliny then comments on how Trajan chooses his friends from those who are the best (*ex optimis*, *Pan*. 45, 3), using language which of course recalls the key word which Pliny associates with Trajan himself throughout the *Panegyricus*. It is such figures of genuine quality that Trajan presents as models of conduct (*hos ergo prouehis et ostentas quasi specimen et exemplar, quae tibi secta uitae, quod hominum genus placeat*, «these men you therefore put forward and show as a conspicuous example of what mode of life, what kind of man you find pleasing», *Pan*. 45, 4). Here, we cannot be sure that Pliny is referring precisely to actual oratory on the part of Trajan, but the passage nevertheless shows Trajan presenting his best subjects as models for others to imitate. This, indeed, mirrors the broader way in which Pliny presents Trajan as a model for other emperors, as for example at *Pan*.63, 1 *comitiis tuis interfuisti candidatus, non consulatus tantum sed immortalitatis et gloriae, et exempli quod sequerentur boni principes, mali mirarentur*, «you were present at your own election as a candidate, not just for the consulship but for immortality and glory, and to be an example which good emperors might follow, while bad ones might be amazed by it», where Trajan is an example to be held up to future emperors, whether good or bad.

*Chapters 69-75: The electoral process and the next generation of* optimi

Trajan, however, is not just a model for future emperors to imitate. Pliny also presents Trajan as a model for the conduct of young men seeking office. At *Pan*. 69, 2-3 Pliny notes how the emperor enjoined the young men of Rome to imitate him:

*nec ideo segnius iuuenes nostros exhortatus es, senatum circumirent, senatui supplicarent, atque ita a principe sperarent honores, si a senatu petissent. quo quidem in loco, si quibus opus exemplo, adiecisti ut te imitarentur. arduum, Caesar, exemplum, et quod imitari non magis quisquam candidatorum quam principum possit.*

And thus no less sluggishly did you encourage our young men that they should canvass the support of the senate, that they should humbly entreat the senate, and on this basis should they hope for honours from the *princeps*, if they had sought them from the senate. In this place, certainly, if anyone had need of an example, you added the provision that they should imitate you. Difficult, Caesar, was your example, and one that no more could any candidate imitate than any emperor.

Chapters 69-75 are an important section of the speech which deals with how Trajan is involved not only in encouraging young men to seek office, but also in commending their candidacies for office.[[13]](#footnote-13) Some brief words on Pliny’s presentation of the process of election and appointment are in order here. In *Pan*. 69, 1, Pliny talks of how Trajan was present (*praesens*) in the senate, on the day when he took care for the anxiety and sense of modesty of the candidates, so that no one’s sadness at not being appointed should disturb the delight of others. The second half of chapter 69 and chapter 70 are then concerned with Trajan’s support for those of distinguished ancestry,[[14]](#footnote-14) combined with his willingness to help those of more modest backgrounds, illustrated in chapter 70 with the example of a quaestor of humbler family who had done well in his command,[[15]](#footnote-15) leading Trajan to believe that this conduct should be drawn to the attention of the senate in relation to his candidacy for further office (*Pan*. 70, 1, *hoc senatui adlegandum putasti*, «this you thought should be put before the senate»).[[16]](#footnote-16)

In chapter 71, however, Pliny refers to Trajan’s actual presence in the senate and his personal greeting of the candidates for office. After acclamation by the senate of Trajan for his willingness to stand alongside the candidates (*Pan*. 71, 3-4), there is then a reference to an *oratio* of Trajan’s (71, 6, *orationi*), which seems to be a discourse of praise and commendation of the candidates (see further below). Pliny rounds off chapter 71 (*Pan*. 71, 7) by commenting on how Trajan’s praise of the candidates was also felt to be flattering of the senate, before mentioning Trajan’s prayers for the state and the senate’s approval (chapter 72), which is followed by more discussion of the senate’s enthusiastic applause for Trajan and his emotional response to this praise in chapters 73-5.

The conduct of elections represents an area of interest for Pliny, who praises Trajan’s presence in the *comitia* when Pliny himself was a candidate (*Pan*. 92, 3), just as he praises Trajan for attending the *comitia* on the occasion of his third consulship and for taking the oath of office from the presiding consul (*Pan*. 63-4). Under the empire, the *comitia* were still entrusted with the role of ratifying the results of elections, though the process of election itself was in this period in the hands of the senate. Moreover, elections under the empire, which might be assumed to be something of little consequence, do attract attention in one of Pliny’s contemporaries: thus Tacitus in the *Annals* notes how Tiberius on his accession transferred the right to hold elections for magistracies from the people to the senate (*Ann*. i 15).[[17]](#footnote-17) Tacitus also comments on elections in *Ann*. i 81, in a particularly charged passage on how Tiberius conducted himself in the matter of consular elections:[[18]](#footnote-18)

*De comitiis consularibus, quae tum primum illo principe ac deinceps fuere, uix quicquam firmare ausim: adeo diuersa non modo apud auctores, sed in ipsius orationibus reperiuntur. modo subtractis candidatorum nominibus originem cuiusque et uitam et stipendia descripsit ut qui forent intellegeretur; aliquando ea quoque significatione subtracta candidatos hortatus ne ambitu comitia turbarent, suam ad id curam pollicitus est. plerumque eos tantum apud se professos disseruit, quorum nomina consulibus edidisset; posse et alios profiteri, si gratiae aut meritis confiderent: speciosa uerbis, re inania aut subdola, quantoque maiore libertatis imagine tegebantur, tanto eruptura ad infensius seruitium.*

Concerning the consular elections which occurred then for the first time in his principate and thereafter, I would dare to vouch for scarcely anything: such is the diversity discovered not only among authors but in the man’s own speeches. Sometimes, having removed candidates’ names, he described each man’s origin, life, and military service, so that it might be understood what sort of men they were. At other times, having removed even that form of suggestion, he urged candidates not to disrupt the elections by canvassing and guaranteed that he would give the matter his personal attention. Generally he announced that only those had registered with him whose names he had given to the consuls; others too could register, if they felt confidence in their favor or merits – yet this was mere verbal display, empty of substance (or deceptive) and, the more impressive its covering in the image of freedom, poised to erupt in an all the more ferocious servitude.

 (Tac. *Ann*. i 81, trans. A.J. Woodman)

This passage shows the possibility of the emperor (in this case Tiberius) playing a part in the process, by speaking about the candidates for office. Tacitus here reports that Tiberius’ speeches show different approaches: on occasion he would talk of the candidates without referring to them by name, but nevertheless speaking of them with enough personal details that they might be recognised; at other times, he would not even offer such information, while on other occasions he would indicate that there had been no other candidates other than those who had presented themselves to him, offering the suggestion that those of quality should put themselves forward, which Tacitus regards as an insincere invitation.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Pliny himself comments on changing electoral practice in *Epist*. iii 20.[[20]](#footnote-20) In this letter Pliny remarks on the dramatic effects of the introduction of the secret ballot. In the past candidates would speak about their own qualities, with support from their seniors with whom they had served in various junior roles, and they would on occasion speak about their rivals (*Epist*. iii 20, 5-6). Pliny explains the change to secret ballots as a response to the extensive role played by personal favour. This moment points intriguingly to the part that might have been played by self-praise on the part of the candidates. Pliny also returns to the topic of the secret ballots in another letter, *Epist*. iv 25,[[21]](#footnote-21) where he comments that one problem that has arisen with the secret ballot is that people are accustomed to write inappropriate comments, which might be scurrilous, or even the names of the supporters of the candidates (*suffragatores*) rather than the names of the candidates themselves.

These two letters by Pliny, and the two passages from the first book of Tacitus’ *Annals* represent a striking contrast to Pliny’s presentation of the electoral process in the *Panegyricus*. The potential to see elections in a negative light is something which Pliny is, for obvious reasons, keen to avoid in the course of his praise of Trajan. Pliny entirely circumvents the possibility of anything like the negative detail in *Epist*. iv 25 that on occasion the names of a supporter might be written in, emphasising instead how Trajan can provide genuine praise, attesting the true qualities of the recipients.

A key part of Trajan’s approach to those seeking office in Rome is the effect that his praise has on them. The passage at the opening of chapter 70 on the young man of more modest background (on his likely identity, see above, n. 14) who had nevertheless done well as a quaestor illustrates this clearly (*Pan*. 70, 1-4):

*Praefuerat prouinciae quaestor unus ex candidatis inque ea ciuitatis amplissimae reditus egregia constitutione fundauerat. hoc senatui adlegandum putasti. cur enim te principe, qui generis tui claritatem uirtute superasti, deterior esset condicio eorum qui posteros habere nobiles mererentur, quam eorum qui parentes habuissent? o te dignum qui de magistratibus nostris semper haec nunties, nec poenis malorum sed bonorum praemiis bonos facias! accensa est iuuentus erexitque animos ad aemulandum quod laudari uidebat, nec fuit quisquam quem non haec cogitatio subiret, cum sciret quidquid a quoque in prouinciis bene fieret, omnia te scire. utile est, Caesar, et salutare praesidibus prouinciarum hanc habere fiduciam, paratum esse sanctitati industriae suae maximum praemium, iudicium principis suffragium principis.*

One of the candidates had been assigned to a province and in that province he had set on a firm basis the revenues of a most significant city through outstanding governance. This you thought should be put before the senate. For why, when you are the *princeps*, who have surpassed the fame of your lineage with your virtue, should the condition of those who deserve to have their descendants be ennobled be worse than that of those had parents who were ennobled? O, how worthy of you this was, you who always announce these kind of things about our magistrates, and make people good not through punishments for the wicked but through rewards for the good. Our young men were set aflame and they raised their spirits to emulation of what they saw was praised, and there was no one to whom this thought did not occur, when each one knew that, whatever was well done by anyone in a province, you know everything. It is useful, Caesar, and healthy, that the guardians of the provinces should have this confidence, that the greatest reward is being prepared for their purity and industriousness, the good opinion of the *princeps*, and the support of the *princeps*.

When Pliny explains that Trajan believed that the good deeds of the young man in his province should be made known in the senate, this highlights the importance of the emperor’s own contribution of praise. Without the emperor’s bestowal of public approval, the young quaestor might not have been able to circumvent the effects of his less distinguished background. Pliny makes clear that the emperor is repeatedly heralding the achievements of those who have done well (*Pan*. 70, 2), underlining Trajan’s capacity to mould good individuals, not by the punishment of those who are bad, but by rewards offered to those who are good.[[22]](#footnote-22) What those rewards are is then made very clear in *Pan*. 70, 3, where Pliny notes that the young men of Rome are spurred on to imitate *quod laudari uidebat*. Pliny emphasises how Trajan knows everything that is happening, *omnia te scire*,[[23]](#footnote-23) pointing to the emperor’s ability to have everything under his gaze. This is beneficial not just for the candidates but also for the provinces. As chapter 70 develops, Pliny reflects on the old perception that emperors had no interest in the conduct of affairs in the provinces, so that it therefore did not matter how officials behaved. In *Pan*. 70, 5-7, Pliny even imagines someone voicing the idea that the emperor would either not be aware of good conduct, or, even if he were to be aware, he would take no notice of it. But with Trajan, however, Pliny notes there is now a shift towards appropriate reward for conduct that deserves praise, and candidates might henceforth even be able to benefit from the testimonies of those they have governed (70, 8-9).[[24]](#footnote-24)

In chapter 71, Pliny describes how Trajan behaved towards the candidates for office in the senate. In contrast to the remote conduct of previous emperors who would not leave their curule seats,[[25]](#footnote-25) Trajan greets each candidate and welcomes them as if he were one of those congratulating them, leading to spontaneous applause from the senate and reflections on Trajan’s humility (71, 1-5).[[26]](#footnote-26) Pliny then gives more indications of what Trajan’s praise of the candidates were like in the following sections (71, 5-7):

*mihi quidem non tam humanitas tua quam intentio eius admirabilis uidebatur. quippe cum orationi oculos uocem manum commodares, ut si alii eadem ista mandasses, omnes comitatis numeros obibas. atque etiam, cum suffragatorum nomina honore quo solent exciperentur, tu quoque inter excipientes eras, et ex ore Caesaris ille senatorius adsensus audiebatur, quodque apud principem perhibere testimonium merentibus gaudebamus, perhibebatur a principe. faciebas ergo, cum diceres optimos; nec ipsorum modo uita a te sed iudicium senatus comprobabatur, ornarique se, non illos magis quos laudabas, laetabatur.*

For me, certainly, it was not so much your human qualities as their intention that seemed admirable. Of course when you were accommodating to your speech your eyes, voice and your hand gestures, as if you had entrusted those same tasks to someone else, you went through all the stages of graciousness. And it was even the case, when the names of the candidates’ supporters were received with the honour with which they are accustomed, you too were amongst those receiving them, and from the lips of Caesar that senatorial approval was heard, and the testimony for good character which we used to rejoice in providing for those who deserved it in the presence of the *princeps*, was provided by the *princeps*. You were making them the best, when you were saying they were, therefore; and not only was their life but also the good opinion of the senate being approved by you; and it rejoiced that it was being honoured, and those whom you were praising were not being honoured more.

The central idea, that Trajan’s approval reflects the wider approval of the senate (*et ex ore Caesaris ille senatorius adsensus audiebatur*, *Pan*. 71, 6), is clear enough, but this is a passage with some difficulties. The sentence beginning with *quippe cum orationi* has two significant problems: what is meant by *cum orationi oculos uocem manum commodares*, and what is implied by *ut si alii eadem ista mandasses*? With the first phrase, one would be strongly tempted to construe these words as referring to Trajan adapting his own expressions, voice and gestures to the performance of a speech of his own.[[27]](#footnote-27) However, Burnouf, in his edition and translation of the *Panegyricus* (the third edition of 1845) offers quite a different explanation:[[28]](#footnote-28)

Trajan employait avec les candidats des formes si polies, il mettait dans ses paroles tant d'action et de feu, que les rôles semblaient changés. On aurait cru, dit l'orateur, qu'au lieu d'adresser un compliment au candidat, vous le chargiez d'une commission. Vous lui parliez comme à un homme auquel vous auriez recommandé l'objet même dont il s'agissait entre vous, *eadem ista*. Voilà, je crois, le sens véritable d'une phrase que je ne trouve expliquée nulle part d'une manière satisfaisante. *Orationi* désigne, non pas le discours du prince au sénat (il ne faisait pas de discours en ce moment), mais les compliments qu'il adressait aux candidats. *Eadem ista* se rapporte aux choses qu'il leur disait, et non à *oculos, vocem, manum*.

On this understanding of the passage, Trajan’s *oratio* seems to refer only to compliments made to the candidates for office (indeed Burnouf remarks ‘il ne faisait pas de discours en ce moment’). Burnouf also canvasses the idea that, rather than addressing a compliment to the candidates, Trajan instead gave the appearance of entrusting them with a commission. Indeed, the meaning of *ut si alii eadem ista mandasses* is not at all straightforward. As the quotation from Burnouf shows, there are grounds for wondering what *eadem ista* might mean (I do not find his explanation convincing in this case), but we can also be troubled by *alii* here. On Burnouf’s explanation, ‘au lieu d'adresser un compliment au candidat, vous le chargiez d'une commission, it is impossible to see how the dative *alii* here would work with ‘vous le chargiez d’une commission’.

One might wonder what is a plausible sense of the passage. If we leave aside for the moment the precise meaning of *orationi*, the appropriate sense of the sentence might be that Trajan fitted his expression, voice and gestures to the *oratio*. There is then a comparison introduced by *ut si*, which one might take as ‘just as’. Burnouf’s rendering cannot work with dative *alii*, as we have seen. Durry’s edition and commentary cites Burnouf here,[[29]](#footnote-29) but his Budé of 1959 takes a different tack, «Tandis que tu mettais au service de tes paroles tes regards, ta voix, tes gestes, comme si tu avais confié ce mandate à un autre que toi».[[30]](#footnote-30) On this interpretation of the passage, one might then understand Durry’s translation as meaning that Trajan’s performance is just as polished as it would be if he had given the order to someone else. Very similar is the interpretation offered by Rosario Moreno Soldevila: «En efecto, cuando acomodabas tus ojos, tu voz y tu mano a las palabras, como si le hubieras encargado a otro esta misión, recorrías todas las formas de cortesía».[[31]](#footnote-31)

I confess a certain unease with this meaning. The first part of this sentence is clearly complimentary and gives the sense that Trajan performed well in matching his expression, his voice and his gestures to his words; the last part clearly means that Trajan achieved success in using every variety of *comitas* in his complimentary discourse.[[32]](#footnote-32) But what are we to make of the *ut si* clause here? If translated literally as «As if you had entrusted these very things to someone else», it is not clear what the underlying meaning would be. On the surface, it seems a strange kind of compliment to offer Trajan, telling him that his performance was excellent, just as if he had enjoined someone else to take on the task. One could almost be forgiven in such a context for thinking that the stories about Licinius Sura and Trajan’s speeches might have some truth to them. It would seem very strange if we are to suppose that Pliny’s speech contained a reference to this tradition about Trajan preferring not to write his own speeches.

If one was going to consider emendation here, on the grounds that the sense is unsatisfactory with the transmitted text, one approach might be to consider whether *alii* might be a possible location for corruption. As we have seen, it is hard to believe that there is a satisfactory way to construe *alii* if we accept, as I think we have to, that this is about what Trajan says to the candidates. I am tempted to wonder here whether one route might be to emend to *ut si alius eadem ista mandasset*, which would give the sense, «you harmonised your expressions, your voice and your gestures to your words, as if someone had commanded those very things». This would, it seems, allow for the possibility of some kind of compliment: the idea would be that Trajan (whose qualities as an orator are not something which are explored in any great depth in the speech) is able to produce the appropriate delivery for his words, as if someone had explicitly told him exactly what to do. Given that Pliny does not praise Trajan for his training as an orator, the idea would then be that Trajan is nevertheless able to respond to the candidate with words which show a sense of what is required. This might also help us to give some sense to the remark about Trajan covering all the *numeri* of *comitas*: the point would be that Trajan spontaneously is able to produce a discourse which goes through all the forms of courteous kindness.

Regardless of how one might deal with the transmitted *ut si alii eadem ista mandasses*, the question remains as how we are to understand *orationi*. The view that this refers to compliments offered to the candidates, as opposed to a formal speech, was advanced by Burnouf, as has been noted above. It is possible that there may have been brief compliments offered for each candidate, but the reference to *omnes comitatis numeros*, implying an element of depth and completeness, might be felt to point to something more substantial. The last section of chapter 71 (*Pan*. 71, 7) also sheds some light here:

*faciebas ergo, cum diceres optimos; nec ipsorum modo uita a te sed iudicium senatus comprobabatur, ornarique se, non illos magis quos laudabas, laetabatur.*

You were making them the best, when you were saying they were, therefore; and not only was their life but also the good opinion of the senate being approved by you; and it rejoiced that it was being honoured, and those whom you were praising were not being honoured more.

In this passage, a crucial moment is *faciebas ergo, cum diceres optimos*. Here, when Trajan describes the candidates as being *optimi*, this is the same thing as Trajan making them *optimi*: praise makes the recipient *optimus*. The presence of the word *laudabas* might also be considered as supporting the view that Trajan was actually offering some kind of speech of praise.

*From* optimi *to* optimus*: Trajan and Pliny*

Taken in the wider context of the speech as a whole, Trajan’s praise for candidates for office here opens the way to Trajan’s praise for Pliny himself later on in the work, as the speech draws to its close. This comes across most clearly in chapter 92, where Pliny declares Trajan’s support for his own candidacy for the consulship (*Pan*. 92, 3):

*tu comitiis nostris praesidere, tu nobis sanctissimum illud carmen praeire dignatus es; tuo iudicio consules facti, tua uoce renuntiati sumus, ut idem honoribus nostris suffragator in curia, in campo declarator exsisteres.*

You saw fit to be present at our election, you saw fit to pronounce that most holy performance; through your judgement we were made consuls, we were confirmed in office by your voice, so that you the same person who was our supporter in the senate might in the Campus be the person to announce our appointment.

There is a subtle shift here: whereas in chapter 71 the electoral process involves not just Trajan’s approving the candidate but also the judgement of the senate, here the appointment of Pliny himself is emphatically associated with the *iudicium* of the emperor. We can also observe here how Trajan is figured in a sacral capacity as he pronounces the election of Pliny and his colleague Tertullus. The usage of *carmen* in this passage recalls the earlier passage on Trajan’s own candidacy for the consulship in *Pan*. 63, 2:

*perpessus es longum illud carmen comitiorum nec iam inridendam moram consulque sic factus es ut unus ex nobis, quos facis consules.*

You endured that lengthy performance of the elections and the delay that was no longer to be laughed at, and you were made a consul just like one of us, whom you make consuls.

Here *carmen* refers to the elaborate ritual of the conduct of the *comitia*.[[33]](#footnote-33) The earlier passage also refers to Trajan’s own ability to make consuls (*facis consules*), which is something which is echoed by Pliny describing his own elevation to the consulship in *Pan*. 92, 3: *tuo iudicio consules facti*.

Just before describing Trajan’s support for his candidacy in chapter 92, Pliny explicitly focuses on the possibility of Trajanic praise for himself in chapter 91.[[34]](#footnote-34) Here, Pliny explains that he and Tertullus had been holding the office of the prefecture of the *aerarium Saturni*, to which they had been appointed before the death of Nerva in AD 98, when Trajan offered them the consulship (*Pan*. 91, 1). After explaining that previous emperors, unlike Trajan, used to emphasise delays in conferrals of office, as a means of dealing with those with aspiration (*Pan*. 91, 2), Pliny then launches into an extraordinary passage where he affirms that he cannot report the praise that Trajan conferred on both of them (*Pan*. 91, 3-4):

*obstat uerecundia quo minus percenseamus, quo utrumque nostrum testimonio ornaris, ut amore recti amore rei publicae priscis illis consulibus aequaueris. merito necne, neutram in partem decernere audemus, quia nec fas est adfirmationi tuae derogare, et onerosum confiteri uera esse quae de nobis praesertim tam magnifica dixisti.*

A sense of modesty stands in the way of our going through the testimonial with which you honoured both of us, and how you made us equal to the consuls of old for our love of what is right and our love of the state. Whether you praised us deservedly or not, we do not dare to determine on either side, because neither is it right to deprecate your affirmation of us, and it is a burden to acknowledge that the words of such magnificence that you spoke specifically about us are true ones.

Coming at the end of an exhaustively complete, yet in some ways endless speech of praise for Trajan, this is an extraordinary move made by Pliny here. The *praeteritio* coyly declines to give Trajan’s words of praise, yet at the same time makes it abundantly clear how lavish that Trajanic testimony of praise was.[[35]](#footnote-35) Pliny and his colleague were likened by Trajan to the consuls of old (*priscis illis consulibus aequaueris*, *Pan*. 91, 3), which is a civic counterpart to Pliny’s own earlier military praise of Trajan, who is seen by Rome’s enemies as the equal of her hallowed generals from the past (*Pan*. 12, 1): *uident enim Romanum ducem unum ex illis ueteribus et priscis*, «for they see one Roman general from among those old and ancient ones». With a studied, but for us doubtless unconvincing declaration of modesty, Pliny explains that he and his colleague cannot say whether or not Trajan’s praise is deserved, since it would be wrong either to go against what Trajan has said, or, on the other hand, to affirm that what he has said is actually true. In this section, we can understand the implication as being that Trajan has uttered remarks which go beyond a mere statement of endorsement. Pliny’s words about Trajan’s praise, *nobis praesertim tam magnifica* would seem to imply a lavishness and loftiness of utterance about Pliny. For *magnificus* with kind of meaning, we can compare e.g. Quint. *Inst*. vi 1, 51-52, where Quintilian remarks on how the end of a speech is the place to give rein to grander language:

*at hic, si usquam, totos eloquentiae aperire fontes licet.* *nam et, si bene diximus reliqua, possidebimus iam iudicum animos, et e confragosis atque asperis euecti tota pandere possumus uela, et, cum sit maxima pars epilogi amplificatio, uerbis atque sententiis uti licet magnificis et ornatis.*

But here, if anywhere, we are allowed to release the whole flood of our eloquence. If we have spoken the rest well, we shall by now be in possession of the hearts of the judges; having escaped the reefs and shoals, we can spread our sails; and, as the main business of an Epilogue is Amplification, we can use grand and ornate words and thoughts. (trans. D.A.F.M. Russell, Loeb)

In this context, a striking contrast to Pliny’s approach to imperial praise here is afforded by Ausonius’ treatment of Gratian’s praise of him in his *Actio gratiarum*, a panegyric relating to Ausonius’ assumption of the consulship in AD 379.[[36]](#footnote-36) In this speech, Ausonius takes a very different approach, since he gives the actual text of Gratian’s words on why Ausonius was made a consul (*Gratiarum actio*, 9, 43):[[37]](#footnote-37)

*cum de consulibus in annum creandis solus mecum uolutarem, ut me nosti atque ut facere debui et uelle te sciui, consilium meum ad deum rettuli. eius auctoritati obsecutus te consulem designaui et declaraui et priorem nuncupaui.*

When I was alone and turning over with myself the matter of appointing consuls for the year, I referred my plan to God, as you know I do, and as I was obliged to do, and knew that you wanted me to. Following his authority, I have designated you as consul and have made this known and have declared you to be the first consul.

Far from Pliny’s seeming modesty in refraining to give Trajan’s words of praise for him, Ausonius’ approach is to cite Gratian’s letter to him *verbatim*. Ausonius even takes his audience through Gratian’s letter in detail, adding his comments on each phrase (*Gratiarum actio*, 10, 45-9). As the passage from 9, 43 shows, the decision to appoint Ausonius as consul in this passage is assigned to the deity: we are in rather different territory from Pliny’s refusal to give the words which Trajan used of him.

Pliny’s own exchange of letters with Trajan in *Epist*. x would of course be an intriguing point of comparison for the letter which Ausonius produces that Gratian had written to him. Indeed, Carlos Noreña in 2007 published an article on the way in which the exchange of correspondence showed Pliny’s artful representation of the relationship between the emperor and himself and how «the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan can be identified as a mutual investment in the projection of a positive public image».[[38]](#footnote-38) Nevertheless, for those searching the correspondence for Trajanic praise of Pliny, one is hard pushed to find anything substantial, beyond for instance affirmations of Pliny having done the right thing in dealing with whatever provincial issue has come up (see e.g. *Epist*. x 3B, x 44)[[39]](#footnote-39). There are even occasions where Trajan’s tone takes on a kind of controlled exasperation, such as *Epist.* x 39 where Pliny has asked Trajan to send him an architect from Rome to inspect the theatre at Claudiopolis and the theatre at Nicaea, which prompts the tart reply from Trajan in *Epist*.x 40 that architects were available in every province and did not need to be sent from Rome (*Epist*.x 40, 3). It is unsurprising that the lettersof *Epist*. x do contain Plinian praise of Trajan which could set his readers in mind of the *Panegyricus*, but there is not so much by way of return from Trajan. This does not of course detract from Noreña’s point about the representation of the relationship between Pliny and Trajan in the *Letters*: the issue is that Pliny has to make do with the letters from Trajan that he has, and indeed, he does as well as he can in presenting the emperor’s interactions with him as favourably (to both of them) as possible.

One should not, however, assume that Pliny is not interested in the nature of Trajan’s praise in the *Panegyricus*. Indeed, there is more that can be said about Pliny’s choice of word in describing how Trajan praised him. *Magnificus* in *Pan*. 91, 4 can be understood as a Trajanic word: the word is on several occasions applied by Pliny himself to Trajan during the course of the speech. Thus in chapter 25, Pliny describes how Trajan made generous arrangements for the distribution of largess to the urban population, even to those who were detained from being able to receive it at the normal time, with Trajan allowing those far away to come at a time of their choice to collect it. This Pliny describes as being *magnificum, Caesar at tuum* (*Pan.* 25, 5):

*magnificum, Caesar, et tuum disiunctissimas terras munificentiae ingenio uelut admouere*

It is a splendid thing, Caesar, and it is your achievement to bring together, as it were, through the brilliance of your generosity places that are most separate from each other

Likewise, in chapter 51, Trajan is *magnificus* in his approach to public building: *at quam magnificus in publicum es*, «But how magnificent you are in the public sphere» (*Pan.* 51, 3). And in chapter 83, Trajan’s influence on his own family’s exemplary conduct is couched in similar terms (*Pan.* 83, 2-3):

*Est magnificum quod te ab omni contagione uitiorum reprimis ac reuocas, sed magnificentius quod tuos; quanto enim magis arduum est alios praestare quam se, tanto laudabilius quod, cum ipse sis optimus, omnes circa te similes tui fecisti.*

It is splendid that you keep yourself in check and call yourself back from every taint of vices, but more splendid is the fact that you do this with members of your own household; for just as it is more difficult to take responsibility[[40]](#footnote-40) for others than it is to do so for yourself, so too it is much more praiseworthy that you have made everyone around you similar to you, when you yourself are the best.

We can also note here the way in which Trajan’s effect on his family is the same as the effect that he has on those whom he appoints to office: *cum ipse sis optimus, omnes circa te similes tui fecisti*. Trajan’s excellence brings it about that members of his family also share that excellence.

To conclude, I would like briefly to highlight a couple of aspects of Trajan as a *laudator* and their ramifications for the speech more broadly. Representing Trajan as someone who gives praise has value from Pliny’s perspective. This is most clear in terms of Trajan’s praise – ironically, which cannot be reported – of Pliny himself towards the end of the speech, but we can also see a process whereby Trajan’s wider praise, which is identified with the quality of his good judgement, also reflects back favourably on Pliny as a giver of praise as well. The wisdom of Trajan in seeing who merits praise reflects Pliny’s good judgement in providing his praise of Trajan. Trajan has exhaustive knowledge of the soldiers who fought with him, and of the candidates for office who are coming forward. Similarly, Pliny has an exhaustive knowledge of all Trajan’s achievements. Plinian praise starts to look like Trajanic praise and vice versa. Not for nothing does Pliny emphasise how Trajan offered prayers to the gods at the elections in *Pan*. 72, 1 – since this creates a very welcome overlap with the way in which Pliny aligns his own panegyric of Trajan with prayer at the very beginning of the speech (*Pan*. 1, 1.).[[41]](#footnote-41) Pliny also conveys the difficulty for the senate of matching Trajan’s prayers with appropriate praise in *Pan*. 72, 4: *arduum erat has precationes tuas laudibus adaequare: adaequauimus tamen*, «It was difficult to match these prayers of yours with our praise; we did however match them».[[42]](#footnote-42) Here, the compliment to the senate for its ability to rise to the occasion is a compliment to the challenge set them by Trajan, but it more broadly implies a compliment to Pliny himself as a *laudator*; note that *arduum*, the word used here to convey the difficulty of matching praise to Trajan’s prayers, was also used by Pliny to convey the difficulty of imitating Trajan for Rome’s aspiring youth at *Pan*. 69, 3: *arduum, Caesar, exemplum, et quod imitari non magis quisquam candidatorum quam principum possit* (see the discussion above).

Significantly, Pliny goes on to explore the ingenuity and invention needed for praising Trajan in *Pan.* 72, 5-7,[[43]](#footnote-43) whilst his discussion of the senatorial acclamations in *Pan*. 73 returns to the theme of the contrast between sincere praise and flattery established as a key motif right at the speech’s beginning (*Pan*. 2-3).[[44]](#footnote-44) Trajan’s prayers are not only matched by praise, but they are then echoed by the senate’s prayers for Trajan in *Pan.* 74, 4-5, once more recalling the opening of the speech and Pliny’s discussion of prayer there.[[45]](#footnote-45) Significantly, the senate’s acclamatory prayers are also to be recorded in the official record and inscribed on bronze (*Pan*. 75, 1);[[46]](#footnote-46) but this also mimetically reflects, as John Henderson observes, the way in which «this speech is for keeps and not shy of telling us so».[[47]](#footnote-47) There is thus a triangulation of prayer and praise between Pliny, Trajan and the senate in this section of the speech, and its importance is underlined by the reassertion of the theme of sincerity: all three parties participate in giving sincere praise. Presenting Trajan as a giver of sincere praise as well as a recipient enhances Pliny’s own role as a panegyristand makes him an even worthier recipient of the approval of both emperor and senate.

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*Abstract*

This contribution looks at Pliny’s treatment of Trajan’s role in the senatorial processes for choosing candidates for office in chapters 69-75 of the *Panegyricus*. Although Pliny does not emphasise Trajan as an orator in his evocation of Trajan’s excellent qualities at the beginning of the speech, the account of senatorial business does give a sense of Trajan’s role in promoting and furthering the careers of those seeking office in Rome. Though he is in broad terms the object of Pliny’s praise across the whole speech, Pliny in this section of the speech presents Trajan himself as a giver of praise. Trajan’s good judgement in terms of whom he praises is matched by his affirmation of Pliny as consul at the end of the speech, and indeed by Pliny’s own role as a giver of judicious and appropriate praise to Trajan.

*Keywords*: Pliny, Trajan, *Panegyricus*, panegyric, praise, self-praise, elections, candidates, senate, emperor

1. • I am indebted to Spyridon Tzounakas for his comments on an earlier draft of this article, and to audiences in Cortona and in Liverpool for their comments and questions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. On the scale of the *Panegyricus*, and Pliny’s deployment of the idea of ‘endlessness’, see B. Gibson, *Unending praise: Pliny and ending panegyric*, in D.H. Berry - A. Erskine (eds.), *Form and Function in Roman Oratory*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 122-136. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On *optimus* as a motif in the speech, see e.g. R.D. Rees, *To be or not to be: Pliny’s paradoxical Trajan*, «Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies» 54 (2001), pp. 149-168, at pp. 160-162; G. Seelentag, *Taten und Tugenden Traians: Herrschaftsdarstellung im Principat*, Hermes Einzelschriften 91, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 240-247; Gibson, *Unending praise*, cit., pp. 130-133. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. R.R. Nauta, *Mali Principes. Domitian, Nero und die Geschichte eines Begriffes*, in S. Bönisch-Meyer - L. Cordes - V. Schulz - A. Wolsfeld - M. Ziegert (eds.), *Nero und Domitian. Mediale Diskurse der Herrscherrepräsentation*, Classica Monacensia 46, Tübingen 2014, pp. 25-40, at p. 32 n. 29 rightly notes the parallel between *melior Traiano* in Eutropius and Pliny’s *meliorem optimo* at *Pan*. 92, 4. On the fame of Trajan in late antiquity, see e.g. R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography. Studies in the Historia Augusta*, Oxford 1971, pp. 89-112, B. Gibson and R.D. Rees, *Introduction: Pliny the Younger in Late Antiquity*, «Arethusa» 46 (2013), pp. 141-165, at pp. 155-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. G. Seelentag, *Imperial Representation and Reciprocation: The Case of Trajan*, «Classical Journal» 107 (2011), pp. 73-97, at pp. 84-85 emphasises that the occasion of the delivery of Pliny’s *Panegyricus* on 1 September AD 100 was by no means a unique occasion: «Instead, it was only one manifestation of a political ritual that was carried out regularly» (p. 84). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. On this passage in Julian, see F.L. Müller, *Die beiden Satiren des Kaisers Julianus Apostata*, Stuttgart 1998, p. 206; cf. B. Baldwin, *The Caesares of Julian*, «Klio» 60 (1978), pp. 449-466, at p. 461. *SHA Hadrian* 3, 11 *et defuncto quidem Sura Traiani ei familiaritas creuit, causa praecipue orationum quas pro imperatore dictauerat* attributes to Hadrian a similar role for Trajan after Sura’s death. Compare the tart remark of Tacitus on Nero’s use of Seneca to compose a funeral oration for Claudius as setting a precedent for his successors to avail themselves of the skills and eloquence of others in their own speeches: *Ann*. xiii 3, 2 *adnotabant seniores, quibus otiosum est uetera et praesentia contendere, primum ex iis qui rerum potiti essent Neronem alienae facundiae eguisse*, and see further W.T. Avery, *Roman Ghost-Writers*, «Classical Journal» 54 (1959), pp. 167-169, C.P. Jones, *Nero Speaking*, «Harvard Studies in Classical Philology» 100 (2000), pp. 453-462. On Licinius Sura, see e.g. R. Syme, *Curtailed Tenures of Consular Legates*, «Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik» 59 (1985), pp. 265-279, at pp. 272-278 (= *Roman Papers, Vol. 5*, pp. 499-513, at pp. 506-512). Licinius Sura has even been associated with the composition of Trajan’s almost entirely lost *Dacica* (*FRH* 96), as noted by B.M. Levick and T.J. Cornell, *FRH* 1.589. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Though it is true that Pliny suggests in *Pan*. 4, 5 that emperors can win glory in times of peace and in war, there is no attempt to disambiguate the more specific qualities that might win glory in peacetime, and there is no mention of oratory at all. Cf. *Pan*. 2, 6 where some previous emperors might *inter alia* have won praise for *gestum … et uocem* («gestures and words»), but Trajan is again summed up in terms of his moral qualities. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For the military image of Trajan, see Seelentag, *Taten und Tugenden Traians*, cit., pp. 259-291, Galfré in this volume, p. 4 [000]. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. the words of Hannibal at Liv. xxi 43, 17 *non ego illud parui aestimo, milites, quod nemo est uestrum cuius non ante oculos ipse saepe militare aliquod ediderim facinus, cui non idem ego uirtutis spectator ac testis notata temporibus locisque referre sua possim decora*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Very similar is the language of Plin*. Epist*. iii 20, 5 (on how candidates used to behave in elections – on this letter, see further below) *explicabat uitam suam, testes et laudatores dabat uel eum sub quo militauerat, uel eum cui quaestor fuerat, uel utrumque si poterat*; iv 17, 6 *ille meus in petendis honoribus suffragator et testis*. For *testis* in a military context, cf. Liv. xxi 43, 17 (see n. 8 above), Tac. *Agr*. 22, 4 *seu centurio seu praefectus incorruptum facti testem habebat*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For the importance of the theme of Trajan’s visible presence in Pliny’s speech, see further Speriani in this volume; cf. Galfré in this volume, pp. 2-3 [000-000] on the sense of Trajan as *praesens*. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For praise of a leader for choosing good subordinates, cf. e.g Tac. *Ag*. 19, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For this section of the speech, see the discussion of J. Henderson, *Down the Pan: historical exemplarity in the Panegyricus*, in P. Roche (ed.), *Pliny’s Praise: The Panegyricus in the Roman World*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 142-174, at pp. 167-169. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For Trajan’s support for the nobility in *Pan*. 69, 5-6, see further A.M. Gowing, *Empire and Memory: The Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Culture*, Cambridge 2005, pp. 127-128. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The individual is generally taken to be Sex. Quinctilius Valerius Maximus (*PIR*2 M 399), on the basis of *ILS* 1018 (Alexandria Troas), which records his post as quaestor in Bithynia-Pontus: cf. Plin. *Epist*. viii 24, 8; R. Syme, *Correspondents of Pliny*, «Historia» 34 (1985), pp. 324-539, at pp. 329-331 (= *Roman Papers, Vol. 5*, pp. 440-477, at pp. 446-447), C.P. Jones, *A Decree of Thyatira in Lydia*, «Chiron» 29 (1999), pp. 1-21, at pp. 18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The meeting at which these events took place is likely to have taken place in early January of AD 100, soon after Trajan took up his own consulship on 1 January: see R.J.A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, Princeton 1984, p. 205, who suggests that the meeting is likely (on the basis that a person who had held the quaestorship was a candidate) to have included elections for praetors and aediles for AD 101, as well as the election of the suffect consuls (including Pliny) for the remainder of AD 100. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., pp. 205-207 goes on to suggest that the elections for the quaestorship would have been conducted on a different occasion, with the first, more important occasion for the election of the consuls and other higher magistracies perhaps taking place on 12 January. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. On this change made by Tiberius, itself a change to Augustus’ modification of the ancient practice of election by popular assemblies with the *Lex Valeria Cornelia* of AD 5 (which saw a key preliminary role for senators and *equites* in the *decuriae iudicum*), see Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., pp. 54, 341-342. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. On consular elections in the Principate, where emperors were accustomed to declare their support for as many candidates as there were vacancies, so that elections were in practice uncontested, see e.g. B.M. Levick, *Imperial Control of the Elections under the Early Principate: Commendatio, Suffragatio, and "Nominatio"*, «Historia» 16 (1967), pp. 207-230, Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., p. 342, F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, London 1992 (2nd edition), pp. 306-309. With elections for other offices, Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., p. 342 n. 10 notes that the *Lex de imperio Vespasiani* (*FIRA*2 I.15.10-13) «required the election» of those who had been commended by the emperor; see further Levick, *Imperial Control of the Elections under the Early Principate*, cit., pp. 210-214, P.S. Brunt, *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*, «Journal of Roman Studies» 67 (1977), pp. 95-116, at pp. 103-104, 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. On the question of the status of this passage in terms of evidence, and the debate about whether it relates to the broader question of whether Tacitus consulted the *acta senatus* on this material, see e.g. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., p. 327. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. On *Epist*. iii 20, see further R.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny. A Social and Historical* Commentary, Oxford 1966, pp. 259-262, Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., pp. 343-344, S. Page, *Der ideale Aristokrat. Plinius der Jüngere und das Sozialprofil der Senatoren in der Kaiserzeit*, Studien zur Alten Geschichte 24, Heidelberg 2015, pp. 105-106; see also n. 9 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. On *Epist*. iv 25, see Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny*, cit., pp. 304-305, Page, *Der ideale Aristokrat.*, cit., pp. 106-107; on the use of the secret ballot, see further Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., p. 344. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Cf. the similar approach taken by Agricola at Tac. *Ag*. 19, 3, with Woodman *ad loc*. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Cf. *omnia scire*, used of Agricola at Tac. *Ag*. 19, 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Provincials had been prevented from making official offerings of thanks to governors under Nero (see Tac. *Ann*. xv 20-2). Though there have been some suggestions that this prohibition was not taken seriously for long, see further the convincing arguments against this view offered by C.P. Jones, *A Decree of Thyatira in Lydia*, cit., pp. 16-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The emperor sat with the two consuls (*Pan*. 61, 1); on imperial seating arrangements in the senate, see further Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, cit., p. 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For Trajan behaving as a friend, cf. e.g. *Pan*. 85, with the discussion of G. Mazzoli, *«E il principe risponde»: tra Panegirico e l. X dell’Epistolario pliniano*, in L. Castagna - E. Lefèvre (eds.), *Plinius der Jüngere und seine Zeit*, Munich – Leipzig 2003, pp. 257-266, at p. 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Compare the way in which Pliny notes how some emperors won acclaim for their *gestum … et uocem* (*Pan.* 2, 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. J.L. Burnouf, *Pline le Jeune. Panégyrique de Trajan. Traduction Nouvelle*, Paris 1845 (3rd edition), pp. 223-224. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. M. Durry, *Pline le Jeune. Panégyrique de Trajan*, Paris 1938, p. 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. M, Durry, *Pline le Jeune. Tom. IV. Lettres. Livre X. Panégyrique de Trajan*, Paris 1959, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. R. Moreno Soldevila, *G. Plinio Cecilio Segundo. Plinio “el Joven”. Panegírico de Trajano*, Madrid 2010, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. For *comitas*, S.E. Hoffer, *The Anxieties of Pliny the Younger*, Atlanta 1999, p. 102 n. 21 describes it as «the imperial virtue of the good *princeps* who acts as if he were merely the equal of his upper-class colleagues» and compares *Epist*. vi 31, 2 (where the word appears in a list of imperial qualities). Cf. C.F. Noreña, *The Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues*, «Journal of Roman Studies» 91 (2001), pp. 146-168, at pp. 160-161 on Suet. *Nero* 10, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For this usage of *carmen*, see the examples of ‘sollemnia vitae publicae’ gathered in *TLL* 3.463.68-464.9. On the *comitia* and their role in ratification of elections under the principate, see further Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, cit., p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See further C.F. Noreña, *Self-fashioning in the Panegyricus*, in P. Roche (ed.), *Pliny’s Praise: The Panegyricus in the Roman World*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 28-44, esp. pp. 42-44 on *Pan*. 90-95. For self-fashioning in *Epist*., see e.g. R.K. Gibson, *Pliny and the art of (in)offensive self-praise*, «Arethusa» 36 (2003), pp. 235-254, S. Tzounakas, *Self-Presentation in Pliny’s Epistle 9.23*, in A. Gavrielatos (ed.), *Self-Presentation and Identity in the Roman World* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2017), pp. 82-92, and see esp. p. 83 n. 6 for further bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For *testimonium* here, cf. the usage of *testis* noted in n. 9 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Two recent studies of the speech are M. Lolli, *Ausonius: die “Gratiarum actio ad Gratianum imperatorem” und “De maiestatis laudibus”. Lobrede auf den Herrscher oder auf den Lehrer?*’, «Latomus» 65 (2006), pp. 707-726 and B. Gibson, *Gratitude to Gratian: Ausonius’ Thanksgiving for his Consulship*, in D. Burgersdijk - A. Ross (eds.), *Imagining Emperors in the Later Roman Empire*, Leiden – Boston 2018, pp. 270-288. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. On this section of Ausonius’ speech, see further Gibson, *Gratitude to Gratian*, cit., pp. 283-285. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. C.F. Noreña, *The Social Economy of Pliny’s Correspondence with Trajan*, «American Journal of Philology» 128 (2007), pp. 239-277, at p. 272. On *Epist*. x, see also Mazzoli, *«E il principe risponde»*, cit., F. Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East. Volume 2: Government, Society, and Culture in the Roman Empire*, Chapel Hill 2004, pp. 38-46, G. Woolf, *Pliny’s Province*, in T. Bekkes-Nielsen (ed.), *Rome and the Black Sea Region: Domination, Romanisation, Resistance*, Aarhus 2006, pp. 93-108, K.M. Coleman, *Bureaucratic Language in the Correspondence between Pliny and Trajan*, «Transactions of the American Philological Association» 142 (2012), pp. 189-238, M. Lavan, *Pliny Epistles 10 and Imperial Correspondence: The Empire of Letters*, in A. König - C. Whitton (eds.), *Roman Literature under Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian. Literary Interactions, AD 96-138*, Cambridge 2018, pp. 280-301. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. On *Epist*. x 3B, see further Mazzoli, *«E il principe risponde»*, cit., p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See *OLD* *s. v.* *praestare* 14a. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Cf. Pliny’s discussion in *Pan*. 67, 3-8 of how prayers for the well-being of the empire and Trajan have been modified to include a conditional statement, *«si bene rem publicam et ex utilitate omnium rexerit»* (*Pan*. 67, 4), and see further M. Sordi, *Plinio, Traiano e i Cristiani*, in L. Castagna - E. Lefèvre (eds.), *Plinius der Jüngere und seine Zeit*, Munich – Leipzig 2003, pp. 267-277, at p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. G.E. Gierig (ed.), *C. Plinii Caecilii Secundi Panegyricus*, Leipzig 1796, p. 226 compares Pliny’s wording here with Sallust, *Cat*. 3, 2 *quod facta dictis exaequenda sunt*, and with Pliny’s own *Epist*. viii 4, 3 *quod haec aequare dicendo arduum immensum*; on Pliny’s exploitation of Sallust in *Epist*. viii 4, 3, see C. Krebs, *The Imagery of “The Way” in the Proem of Sallust’s Bellum Catilinae*, «American Journal of Philology» 129 (2008), pp. 581-594, at pp. 587-588, and see further for Sallust and Pliny I. Marchesi, *The Art of Pliny’s Letters. A Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 115 n. 26, 151-152, 155, 170 n. 146, 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. On *Pan*. 72, 5-7, see further S. Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian*, Cambridge, MA 1994, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. On sincerity in the speech, the classic treatment is Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience*, cit., pp. 148-187. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Note also that prayer has a part to play at the end of the speech as well (*Pan*. 94): see further Gibson, *Unending praise*, cit., pp. 125-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. For the focus on memory in *Pan*. 75, see Gowing, *Empire and Memory*, cit., p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See Henderson, *Down the Pan*, cit., pp. 128-129 (the quotation is from p. 129). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)