

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2012

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Bureaucratic Language in the Correspondence between Pliny and Trajan^{*}

KATHLEEN M. COLEMAN

Harvard University

SUMMARY: This article identifies and analyzes bureaucratic features in the language employed by Pliny and Trajan in *Epistles* 10 as an example of communication between two officials of senior but unequal status who were engaged in managing provincial affairs in the Roman empire.

1. INTRODUCTION

AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE BRITISH TREASURY COMMISSIONED SIR Ernest Gowers, a senior civil servant, to help improve the standard of official English. The fruit of his efforts, *The Complete Plain Words* (1954), is still in print on both sides of the Atlantic.¹ His aim was to teach public servants to

^{*} This paper was composed for the Annual Meeting of the APA, January 7th, 2012. I have quoted Pliny's letters from the *OCT* (Mynors 1963). The Penguin translation by Betty Radice (Radice 1963), re-published in the Loeb Classical Library, seems to me to capture the essence of Pliny better than any other version, so the translations below are closely based on hers, adapted, where necessary, for consistent treatment of the bureaucratic features. Translations not credited to another source are mine. The abbreviation *CPL* represents Cavenaile 1958. A capital letter at the beginning of a quotation from Book 10 indicates the opening of a letter. This project has benefitted immeasurably from the generosity, learning, and encouragement of J. N. Adams, who has contributed suggestions and bibliography from the outset, provided invaluable feedback on a draft, and allowed me to quote from his own forthcoming publications. I am also very grateful to Richard Rutherford for helpful comments on a copy of the original paper, to Eleanor Dickey for showing me an article of hers in advance of publication, and to Katharina Volk for combining the editorial qualities of patience and decisiveness in perfect equilibrium.

¹ Gowers 1986.

express themselves clearly, concisely, and with precision in communicating with each other and, especially, the public (i.e., for both internal and external purposes). Since 1979, the cause has been taken up by the Plain English Campaign, a movement that began when its founder, Chrissie Maher, “publicly shredded hundreds of official documents in Parliament Square, London,” an *action* commemorated on its web site.² Since then, the Campaign has helped thousands of organizations, both in and outside government, to communicate efficiently. But, in addition to hampering communication, the ambiguity or obfuscation of bureaucratic language can also give rise to expensive lawsuits. Examples have been analyzed by the American linguist Roger Shuy to demonstrate the need for a crusade to prevent bureaucratese from proliferating in business and industry, as well as in government.³

Bureaucratic language, like any jargon, marks out the “in-group” that uses it. It comes to represent a comfort-zone in which it is easier to fall back on familiar but imprecise expressions than to find a way to say exactly what needs to be said; this is why bureaucratic language is so catching. Its restricted lexicon arises because of the repetitive nature of bureaucratic procedures; phrases fossilize. Because bureaucracies are hierarchical, internal communication is usually between officials of unequal status. This promotes another characteristic feature of bureaucratic language, inflated and obsequious modes of address. Simultaneously, alongside the shrunken lexicon, bureaucratic language also tends to become bloated with pleonasm, partly out of the urge to assert authority and sound important, but also, paradoxically, in an effort—particularly in legal contexts—to avoid ambiguity. Every bureaucracy develops its own form of bureaucratic language. Ancient Rome did.

Book 10 of Pliny’s letters is a perfect laboratory for investigating the bureaucratic language of the Roman empire, as employed for internal purposes. It comprises a sustained correspondence between a senior official and the emperor, in two categories. The first fourteen letters were written before Pliny took up his post as governor of Bithynia on the southern shores of the Black Sea and, like a few of his subsequent letters from the province, they concern personal matters: salutation of the emperor on formal occasions,⁴ requests for privileges for associates of Pliny’s and for himself,⁵ and expressions of

² <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>.

³ Shuy 1998.

⁴ Pliny greets Trajan on his accession (10.1) and congratulates him on a military victory (10.14).

⁵ Pliny requests and receives reassurance that, despite an official exemption, he may allow his name to be included on the ballot for advocates (10.3A–B); requests senatorial

thanks.⁶ The rest of the letters show Pliny trying to deal with issues of governance in Bithynia. More than two-thirds of his letters receive a reply from Trajan,⁷ and one enclosure has survived (10.58), containing a verbose edict of Nerva, along with one of his letters and two by Domitian. The collection is also special because we can compare Pliny's side of the correspondence with the nine books of letters to private addressees, where his consummate skill as a stylist is everywhere apparent.⁸ Bureaucratic expressions, however, are not excluded from Books 1–9; if a bureaucratic term is the *mot juste*, Pliny will use it.⁹

Various features of the bureaucratic language of Book 10 have attracted attention since the surge of philological scholarship in Germany from the late nineteenth century onwards that launched the *Archiv für Lateinische Lexikographie*, the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, the *Vocabularium Iurisprudentiae Romanae*, and detailed studies of the language of Roman law and government.¹⁰ Also in Germany, in the 1930s, a wave of interest in the leadership styles of individual Roman emperors prompted a close philological study of the letters from Trajan, in an attempt to distinguish the chancellery language of his secretaries from Trajan's own contributions.¹¹ How Pliny and Trajan address each other and refer to third parties has attracted special interest.¹² Commentaries, including those with a historical focus, have contributed many acute observations on linguistic features.¹³ The topic was set on a new footing in 1972 by the work of Eva Odelman, who compared the “administrative style” of Julius Caesar with that of other sources, including Pliny.¹⁴ In the renaiss-

rank for Voconius Romanus (10.4); requests, and is granted, Roman and Alexandrian citizenship for his doctor, Harpocras (10.5–7); requests leave and is granted it (10.8–9); requests Roman citizenship for a number of acquaintances (10.10), a praetorship for Attius Sura (10.12), and a priesthood for himself (10.13).

⁶ Pliny thanks Trajan for the *ius trium liberorum* (10.2) and for granting Roman and Alexandrian citizenship to Harpocras (10.6, 10).

⁷ Trajan's replies: 10.3B, 7, 9, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 53, 55, 57, 60, 62, 66, 69, 71, 73, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113, 115, 117, 119, 121.

⁸ The raw material for a stylistic comparison is usefully collected and tabulated by Gamberini 1983. For Pliny's stylistic qualities, see Keeline 2012 (forthcoming).

⁹ E.g., *paedagogium*, “slave-quarters” (7.27.13): see Tomlin 2008: 209.

¹⁰ E.g., Kalb 1884, Kalb 1912, Wilcken 1920.

¹¹ Hennemann 1935. For a nuanced reaction to this approach, see Sherwin-White 1962, most of whose arguments are subsumed in Sherwin-White 1985: 536–55.

¹² Instinsky 1969, Vidman 1981, Jones 1991.

¹³ Hardy 1889, Williams 1990, and especially Sherwin-White 1985.

¹⁴ Odelman 1972.

sance of Plinian studies during the last twenty years, however, bureaucratic language has been neglected, even though it is relevant to a topic of current interest, the status of Book 10 within Pliny's published correspondence. To get the full bureaucratic flavor of the exchange between Pliny and Trajan it is necessary to read it all the way through, and to do justice to all its linguistic features would require an entire monograph. What follows sketches some of the most characteristic features, to show how the language of the imperial bureaucracy worked.

Pliny was a cultivated senator with long experience in the Roman administration: he had risen to be prefect of the Treasury of Saturn, suffect consul, curator of the Tiber, and augur.¹⁵ In Book 10, he employs the conventional language of the Roman bureaucracy. I do not think that it matters whether an imperial secretary composed some of Trajan's replies; they are composed in the *persona* of the emperor, and that is the *persona* to which Pliny consistently addresses himself. Whether Trajan wrote them or not, this is what an emperor was supposed to sound like. Book 10 is the only sustained exchange of this nature that has survived, but there are other corpora of bureaucratic reports and letters with which to compare it, including Caesar's *commentarii*; Cicero's official dispatches from Cilicia; a letter from a fourth-century governor quoted in full by Lactantius; archives preserved on papyrus from the Fayum, Dura-Europos, and elsewhere; and documents such as the ostraca from the customs post at Bu Njem in Roman Africa. Recently, our information has increased significantly with the discovery of the partially contemporary and constantly increasing trove of letters from Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall.¹⁶ Furthermore, as one would expect, the *Digest* and other legal sources supply abundant parallels for the bureaucratic locutions in Book 10: the provincial administration was as concerned with clarity, disambiguation, and definition as the lawyers were.

A pair of letters about the Bithynian habit of using public slaves as prison-warders will provide an example of the bureaucratic flavor of the correspondence. Soon after Pliny arrived in Bithynia on September 17 in approximately 109 C.E. to take up his post as *legatus Augusti*, he wrote a short letter to Trajan about the situation:

¹⁵ *PIR*² P490, Sherwin-White 1985: 72–82.

¹⁶ Vol. I = Bowman and Thomas 1983 = *T.Vindol.* 1–117. All the tablets from Vol. I are re-numbered, and most of them re-published, in Vol. II = Bowman and Thomas 1994 = *T.Vindol.* 118–573 (with indexes). Vol. III = Bowman and Thomas 2003 = *T.Vindol.* 574–853 (with corrigenda to Vols. I–II, and indexes). Vol. IV, Pt. 1 = Bowman, Thomas, and Tomlin 2010 = *T.Vindol.* 574–853. Vol. IV, Pt. 2 = Bowman, Thomas, and Tomlin 2011 = *T.Vindol.* 854–889 (with indexes to Vol. IV).

Rogo, domine, consilio me regas haesitantem, utrum per publicos civitatum servos, quod usque adhuc factum, an per milites adservare custodias debeam. vereor enim, ne et per publicos parum fideliter custodiantur, et non exiguum militum numerum haec cura distringat. interim publicis servis paucos milites addidi. video tamen periculum esse, ne id ipsum utrisque neglegentiae causa sit, dum communem culpam hi in illos, illi in hos regerere posse confidunt. (10.19)

Please, sir, direct me in my indecision as to whether I ought to continue using the public slaves in the various cities as prison guards, which is what has happened until now, or use soldiers instead. I am afraid that the public slaves will not keep guard very conscientiously, but this job would occupy no small number of soldiers. In the meantime, I have added a few soldiers to the public slaves. But I can see that there is a risk that that very fact may cause both parties to slack off, when each side can blame on the other something for which they are both at fault.

This is typical of the kind of problem that Pliny had to refer to Trajan. It is clear that, where matters of security were concerned, the emperor had to take the decision; only one person in the empire had his finger on the button. And the way in which the problem and its solution were handled is typical, too. Pliny writes politely to Trajan (*Rogo, domine ... me regas*, “Please, sir, direct me”). He admits that he does not know what to do: *me haesitantem*. *Haesito* and *haesitatio* are used seven times in the correspondence to describe Pliny’s uncertainty, four more times by Pliny himself (10.31.2, 45.1, 79.5, 96.2) and twice by Trajan (10.73.1, 115), not picking up an expression from the letter of Pliny that he is replying to, but independently. *Haesito* is evidently a bureaucratic euphemism for “I (or you) don’t know what to do.” *Haesitatio* occurs in the sense of “uncertainty” also in the edict of Nerva that is quoted by Pliny: *ne ... aliquam gaudiis publicis adferat haesitationem* (10.58.8: “to prevent your public rejoicing being marred by uncertainty”).

Trajan’s reply to Pliny’s query reflects his language closely:

Nihil opus sit, mi Secunde carissime, ad continendas custodias plures commilitones converti. perseveremus in ea consuetudine, quae isti provinciae est, ut per publicos servos custodiantur. etenim, ut fideliter hoc faciant, in tua severitate ac diligentia positum est. in primis enim, sicut scribis, verendum est, ne, si permisceantur servis publicis milites, mutua inter se fiducia neglegentiores sint; sed et illud haereat nobis, quam paucissimos a signis avocandos esse. (10.20)

There is no need, my dear Pliny, for more soldiers to be transferred to guard-duty in the prisons. We should continue the custom of the province and use public slaves as warders. Their reliability depends on your watchfulness and discipline. For, as you say in your letter, if we mix soldiers with public slaves the

chief danger is that both sides will become careless by relying on each other. Let us also keep to the general rule that as few soldiers as possible should be called away from active service.

Pliny first expresses the possible consequences of employing public slaves in the prisons as a fear, *vereor enim*—so does Trajan, *verendum est*, picking up, as is common, phrasing from Pliny’s original request¹⁷—and then, as is also common, he expresses it as a risk: *video tamen periculum esse*. Trajan does not echo this phrase in his reply, but it is perhaps worth noting how commonly situations requiring legal intervention are framed by the jurists in terms of *periculum*.¹⁸ Trajan adopts tones of familiarity towards Pliny: *mi Secunde carissime*. He avoids a blunt prohibition, using instead a generalized expression of need (*nihil opus sit*), and, equally, he avoids a blunt instruction, using instead the oblique strategies of an impersonal passive (*in tua severitate et diligentia positum est*) and a jussive subjunctive with a plural pronoun (*illud haereat nobis*). He uses the standard formulation in Book 10 for an expression of purpose: *ad* with a gerundive phrase in the accusative (*ad continendas custodias*).¹⁹ He stresses the *consuetudo provinciae*, and he includes a cross-reference to Pliny’s letter (*sicut scribis*). Neither he nor Pliny uses the salutatory formula *salutem dare* anywhere in the correspondence; nor does either of them include a valediction. The absence of the salutatory and valedictory formulae raises the question whether the correspondence was edited for publication, to which I shall return briefly at the end. For the moment, suffice it to say that, whether edited or not, the bureaucratic cast was preserved, and that is what is so revealing about the entire epistolary exchange.

2. “YOU” AND “ME”

In any hierarchical system, the most glaring problem for the bureaucrat is how to say “you” to his superior. Pliny addresses Trajan four times as *imperator* in the first fourteen letters of Book 10.²⁰ The rest of the time, his default address is the polite vocative *domine*, “sir,” sometimes postponed to the end, or tucked into the middle, and sometimes occurring twice in the same letter. In the whole of the first nine books, on the other hand, he only uses a vocative

¹⁷ Examples at Peter 1901: 124.

¹⁸ Kalb 1912: 36–37.

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., Trajan: 10.34.2: *ad coercendos ignes*; Pliny: 10.41.4: *ad colligendum umorem ... ad committendum ... lacum*, 43.3: *ad eum ... salutandum*, 96.7: *ad capiendum cibum*.

²⁰ 10.1.1: *imperator sanctissime ... imperator optime* (congratulations on Trajan’s accession); 10.4.1: *imperator optime* (a request for senatorial rank for Voconius Romanus); 10.14: *optime imperator* (congratulations on a military victory).

twice (excluding examples in quoted speech).²¹ In five letters in Book 10 he does not call Trajan anything at all.²² The absence of direct address is less odd than it may appear, however, given that each letter will have been prefaced by a salutatory formula that has not been preserved. When Pliny employs the personal pronoun *tu* of Trajan, it is usually to set up a contrast between Trajan and himself, *ego*. But the use of the polite third person by substituting abstract qualities associated with the Great Man who is being addressed (the “Your Majesty” formula) can already be glimpsed in near-contemporary society.²³ One of the freedmen at the *cena Trimalchionis* addresses the higher-status Eumolpus with a combination of this oblique form of address and the substitution of a future tense instead of a blunt imperative: *ignoscet mihi genius tuus* (Petron. *Sat.* 37.3).²⁴ Statius addresses the preface to the fourth book of the *Silvae* to his young senatorial friend, Vitorius Marcellus, substituting his *pietas* for a personal pronoun: *Inveni librum, Marcelle carissime, quem pietati tuae dedicarem* (*Silv.* 4 *Praef.*: “I have contrived a book, my dearest Marcellus, that I could dedicate to your caring affection”).²⁵

Pliny sometimes employs *indulgentia* as a surrogate for addressing the emperor himself, a habit that proliferates in the Late Empire.²⁶ *Indulgentia vestra* at the beginning of the third letter comprises the graciousness of Nerva and Trajan that secured Pliny’s promotion to prefect of the treasury of Saturn—in other words, the emperors themselves, current and previous: *Ut primum me, domine, indulgentia vestra promovit ad praefecturam aerarii Saturni, omnibus advocacionibus . . . renuntiavi* (10.3A.1: “When the graciousness of your father and yourself, sir, promoted me to take charge of the Treasury of Saturn, I gave up my practice in the courts”). Of all the numerous abstractions in which Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan is clothed, the emperor’s *indulgentia* is the most ubiquitous, replacing the terminology of friendship with that of

²¹ Jones 1991: 151.

²² At 59, 64, and 102 (all short notes occupying five printed lines or fewer), and at 41 (containing a lacuna that may hide a vocative) and 116; a sixth instance without an address (86B) was mutilated in transmission, and the beginning, where a direct address was probably included, is lost (see Section 13).

²³ Svennung 1958: 68–85.

²⁴ Schmeling 2011 ad loc.

²⁵ Trans. Coleman 1988. The contemporary parallels suggest that Jones 1991: 152n8 is being over-cautious in suggesting that such expressions “have not yet reached the status of third person substitutes for direct address (*ex hypothesi* an extremely unassuming and humble mode in terms of address and of name use) but are related.”

²⁶ Bulhart 1943: 1247.48–59.

favor.²⁷ The language of graciousness is all over the correspondence; *indulgeo* is the word for granting the request of Trajan's loyal servant Iulius Servianus in the second letter: *quamvis enim Iuli Serviani, optimi viri tuique amantissimi, precibus indulseris* (10.2.1: "although you granted this at the request of your worthy and devoted servant, Julius Servianus"), and it occurs frequently elsewhere. The use of *indulgentia* as synecdoche for the emperor shows how the emphasis on this quality offers a suitably deferential alternative to the bluntness of direct address.

The inflation of this habit, both in direct address and with reference to a third party, is visible in Greek papyri and inscriptions from the beginning of the third century.²⁸ The archive of Aurelius Isidorus, an illiterate farmer in Egypt in the late third/early fourth century, is rich in examples, for example, *P.Cair.Isid.* 66.3–4 (to the prefect Aelius Publius, 299 C.E.): τ[ὰ] παράνομα τῶ[ν] πραγμάτων, ἡγεμῶ[ν] δέσποτα, ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἄλλου | ἀνακόπ[τ]εται εἰ μὴ ὑ[πο] τῆς σῆς ἀνδ[ρ]ειας ("unlawful conduct, my lord prefect, is suppressed by none other than your Worthiness"); 76.17–18 (to the *praeses* of Herculia Aegyptus, Valerius Ziper, 318 C.E.): τούτου ἔνε[κ]εν καταλαμβάνω τὴν σὴν ἀν[δ]ρ[ει]αν δεόμενος [καὶ παρακ]αλῶν ("for this reason I resort to your Worthiness, begging and beseeching you").²⁹ The community of Skaptopara in Thrace addressed itself to the godhead of Gordian III: *SIG* 888.11: ἔννομον ἱκεσίαν | τῇ θειότητι σου προσκομι[ζ]ομεν, "we convey a proper supplication to your Divinity." These pompous circumlocutions are also extended in reference to a third party, for example, *SEG* 13.625.22 (quoting a letter to the inhabitants of two villages involved in a dispute, from a lesser bureaucrat, Aurelius Symphoros, referring to his superior, the procurator of Phrygia c. 200 C.E.³⁰) ἔδοχεν αὐτοῦ τῇ μεγαλιότητι ("it pleased His Greatness").

In Latin this habit is clear from two documents dating from the first half of the fourth century. The first is a petition on papyrus from Abbinaeus, chief of a military escort on an embassy to Constantinople, addressing the emperors Constantius II and Constans as *pietas vestra* (*P.Abinn.* 1 *recto*, ll. 5–6): *directus ... | ... ducere Bleḡniorum gentis refuga[s] ad sacra vesti<gi>a pietatis vestrae Constantinopolim* ("directed ... to conduct refugees of the people of the Blemyes to the sacred feet of your Piety at Constantinople").³¹ Abbinaeus

²⁷ Cotton 1984b.

²⁸ Svennung 1958: 85–86, MacMullen 1962: 372 = 1990: 71–72.

²⁹ Trans. Boak and Youtie 1960, with the substitution of "Worthiness" for "Nobility" in the second example, for the sake of consistency (ἀνδρεία being a quality that accommodates a variety of equivalents in English).

³⁰ Frensd 1956: 49n4.

³¹ Trans. Bell et al. 1962.

goes on to say that *divinitas vestra* gave him orders (8: *me ... divinitas vestra ... iussit*), *clementia vestra* vouchsafed to promote him (10–11: [*promo*] *vere me clementia ... vestra dignata est*), and so on. The other document is a letter of Constantine and Licinius to the governor of Bithynia in 333 c.e., quoted by Lactantius in *De mortibus persecutorum* 48.2–12, in which the governor is addressed as *dicatio tua* (*De mort. pers.* 48.4: *quare scire dicationem tuam convenit placuisse nobis*, “for this reason we wish your Devotedness to know”) and *sollicitudo tua* (48.5: *quae sollicitudini tuae plenissime significanda esse credidimus*, “we thought that this should be very fully communicated to your Solicitude”) and then *dicatio tua* again (48.6: *quod cum isdem a nobis indultum esse pervideas, intellegit dicatio tua etiam aliis religionis suae vel observantiae potestatem similiter apertam et liberam pro quiete temporis nostri <esse> concessam*, “and when you perceive that this indulgence has been accorded to us by these people, your Devotion understands that others too have been granted a similarly open and free permission to follow their own religion and worship as befits the peacefulness of our times”).³² The letter continues in this vein. Presumably these oblique abstractions are an example of military force wrapping its wishes in the language of courtly respect. This habit becomes the default mode of epistolary address in Christian society down to the sixth century, with a strict hierarchy of abstractions appropriate to the laity and to different ranks within the clergy.³³

More or less contemporary with Pliny, in the far north-west of the empire, a petition addressed to *domine* employs the locutions *tuam maiestatem* and *tuam misericordiam* to avoid saying *te* (*T. Vindol.* 344.4–5, 13–14): *tuam maiestatem* | [*t*] *atem imploro ... [tu]am misericord[ia]m* | *imploro* (“I beg your Majesty ... and your Mercy”). The editors point out that someone possessing *maiestas* is not likely to be below the rank of provincial governor³⁴; in Christian letters it is rare, and applied only to the emperor.³⁵ Another abstraction that negotiates the formal distance between a subordinate and his superior is *bonitas*, a word that is not attested in the first nine books; in Book 10, significantly, it occurs exclusively in requests for privilege, since it belongs to the diction of favors rather than responsibilities. Compare 10.2.3 (expressing thanks to Trajan for granting Pliny the *ius trium liberorum*): *sed di melius, qui omnia integra bonitati tuae reservarunt* (“the gods knew better when they reserved my entire prospects for your goodness”); 10.4.2 (a request for senatorial sta-

³² Trans. Creed 1984.

³³ O’Brien 1930.

³⁴ Bowman and Thomas 1994: 330.

³⁵ O’Brien 1930: 15–16.

tus for Pliny's friend Voconius Romanus): *sed hoc votum meum bonitati tuae reservatum est* ("I await your goodness for my wish to be granted"); 10.8.5 (asking for leave to get a temple built at Tifernum in which statues of emperors, including Trajan, would be displayed): *non est autem simplicitatis meae dissimulare apud bonitatem tuam obiter te plurimum collaturum utilitatibus rei familiaris meae* ("but I should fail in sincerity if I concealed from your goodness the fact that my personal affairs will incidentally benefit very much"); 10.11.1 (Pliny will be able to repay his doctor, Postumius Marinus, if he and his associates are granted Roman citizenship; the diction here includes the term *indulgeo*): *si precibus meis ex consuetudine bonitatis tuae indulseris* ("if you will grant my petition with your usual goodness"); 10.94.2 (a request for the *ius trium liberorum* for Suetonius): *impetrandumque a bonitate tua per nos habet quod illi fortunae malignitas denegavit* ("he can only look to your goodness, at my suggestion, for the benefits which the cruelty of fortune has denied him"). Again, *bonitas* turns up at Vindolanda. The first instance is associated with *indulgeo* (*T.Vindol.* 719): *indulgentia tua [...] | . . bonitas quae* ("your graciousness (and?) goodness, which"). Recently two more instances have come to light in what may be two drafts of the same letter: *T.Vindol.* 880, Side A: [*peto do*]mine de *bon[itate | tua ut mihi con[| hospitium quod* [("I ask of your goodness, my lord, that you acquire for me lodging"); and on Side B: *do*]mine de *bon[itate |] nobis praestes 'accipi{s}as'* | [*id ho*]spitium quod est | [*ad ca*]stra inquilinum ("I ask of your goodness, my lord, that you provide [accept] for us that lodging which is local to the fort").

Sherwin-White, who was writing before the examples at Vindolanda were discovered, calls *bonitas* a "courtly" word.³⁶ Perhaps "courtly" is not quite right; rather, the language of *politesse*, delivered by a subordinate to his superior, who is politely addressed as *domine*. Trajan, on the other hand, addresses Pliny as *mi Secunde carissime* fourteen times, *Secunde carissime* five times, and *mi Secunde* once, the inclusion of *mi* being typical of positive politeness in an epistolary context and, possibly, a specifically elite feature by this period.³⁷ In 31 of his letters, however, including the three from him in the fourteen "private" letters at the beginning, he does not call Pliny anything at all.³⁸ This is in marked contrast to the five (or, at most, six) instances, mentioned above, in which

³⁶ Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.2.3.

³⁷ *Mi Secunde carissime*: 10.16, 20.1, 36, 50, 53, 55, 60.2, 62, 80, 82.1, 89, 95, 99, 101; *Secunde carissime*: 10.18.2, 44, 91, 115, 121; *mi Secunde*: 10.97.1. On *mi* in Trajan's letters, see Dickey 2002: 217–20.

³⁸ Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.16. There is no address at 10.3B, 7, 9, 22, 24, 28, 30, 32, 34, 38, 40, 42, 46, 48, 57, 66, 69, 71, 73, 76, 78, 84, 93, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113, 117, 119.

Pliny fails to call Trajan anything. It is remarkable, however, that Pliny never uses *mi* to any of his correspondents, Trajan included, this omission being evidence of what has been called “negative politeness,” the avoidance of a form of address towards a social superior that connotes inappropriate familiarity.³⁹

The emperor has greater flexibility in the use of polite formulae, even down to discarding them altogether, but the familiarity of *mi Secunde carissime* and its variants should not be confused with intimacy; rather, it conveys “the familiarity which the great allow themselves.”⁴⁰ Notably, the superlative *carissime* may be less enthusiastic than one might assume; Eleanor Dickey has demonstrated that, in direct address in classical Latin prose, positive adjectives are far less common than superlatives, and are used more frequently in more intimate relationships (i.e., to relatives, spouses, and lovers), whereas *carissime* is used mainly of friends and acquaintances; by comparison with *care* or another adjective in the positive degree, Trajan’s phrase (*mi*) *Secunde carissime* is therefore an “unemotional and rather formulaic superlative.”⁴¹ The inclusion of the pronoun is a form of “positive politeness,” meant to be gratifying to the addressee, but to our ears—although presumably not to Pliny’s—slightly condescending.⁴² If bureaucrats try to avoid saying “you” to their superiors, the superiors say “we” rather than “I” (a “classical precaution of all civil servants,” as Sherwin-White observes): when Trajan swaps from the first person plural to singular in the same letter, this may be an indication of personal interest, Trajan wresting the pen, as it were, from his secretary’s hand.⁴³

3. “PLEASE” AND “THANK YOU”

Of the four main ways to say “please” in Classical Latin (*rogo*, *peto*, *quaeso*, and *velim*), in the first nine books, excluding reported speech, Pliny uses *rogo* twenty times (six referring to favors on behalf of other people); *peto* five times (one of which occurs later in a letter in which he has already used *rogo* [4.28.3], and two of which refer to favors for others), *velim* eight times (once requesting a favor that is then repeated later in the same letter in the formula *rogo oro* [6.8.8–9]), and *quaeso* not at all.⁴⁴ Eleanor Dickey argues that *rogo* and *peto* are

³⁹ Dickey 2002: 17.

⁴⁰ Jones 1991: 158.

⁴¹ Dickey 2002: 127–47 (quotation at p. 141).

⁴² Adams 1995b: 119.

⁴³ Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.78.2.

⁴⁴ *Rogo* (favors asterisked): 1.2.1, 1.8.3, 1.20.24, *1.24.1, 2.5.2, *2.13.10, *3.2.6, 3.10.5, *4.4.2, 4.13.10, *4.28.3, 5.19.8, 6.4.5, 6.6.1, *6.8.5, 6.12.5, 7.14.2, 7.23.1, 7.27.15, 8.17.6. *Peto*: 4.4.10, *4.28.3, 5.8.14, *6.8.9, 8.14.10. *Velim*: 1.4.3, 3.13.2, 3.19.9, 5.7.4, 5.12.4, *6.8.8, 8.24.10, 9.39.4.

the more forceful ways to say “please,” demonstrating that in Cicero’s letters *rogo* is the most common expression requesting a favor on behalf of a friend (54 instances out of a total of 115), closely followed by *peto* (46 instances), with *velim* (fourteen times) and *quaeso* (once) trailing far behind.⁴⁵ Pliny’s usage in requests for favors in Books 1–9 therefore matches Cicero’s quite closely. In Book 10, however, the picture is somewhat different. Here “please” is exclusively expressed by *rogo* and a final clause (see 10.19, discussed in Section 1 above), sometimes introduced by *ut*; both forms, with and without *ut*, are employed in the Vindolanda Tablets and the non-literary papyrus letters.⁴⁶ Of twenty-five instances of *rogo* in Book 10, twelve are requests for favors for others, one is a request for a fresh honor for Pliny himself, and the other twelve cover requests for guidance or endorsement.⁴⁷ *Peto* does not occur at all in the sense of “please,” nor does Pliny use *quaeso* or *velim* (discounting his quotation of a letter of Domitian containing the phrase *commendatum habebas velim* [10.58.6], an idiom to be discussed in Section 5).

Two features of Pliny’s use of *rogo* in Book 10 stand out. One is the formulation *rogo (ut) digneris*, “please see fit to ...,” which is attested six times.⁴⁸ Of these six instances, two occur in the context of requests for a favor, one for a praetorship for Pliny’s friend Attius Sura (10.12.1) and the other Pliny’s request for an honor for himself (10.13). The same context is attested also at Vindolanda (*T. Vindol.* 250.10–11: *rogo ut eum commen* | [*dare*] *digneris*, “I ask that you think fit to commend him”). The other four instances from Book 10 are requests for guidance or endorsement: on limiting the expenses for envoys from Byzantium (10.43.4: *rogo ut quid sentias rescribendo aut consilium meum confirmare aut errorem emendare digneris*, “please see fit to write back with

⁴⁵ Dickey 2012.

⁴⁶ Halla-aho 2009: 81–85.

⁴⁷ Favors for others: 10.4.6, 5.2 (twice), 6.2, 10.2 (twice), 11.2 (twice), 12.1, 26.2, 26.3, 104. Favor for Pliny: 10.13. Guidance or endorsement: 10.8.4, 19.1, 27, 29.2, 43.4, 45, 47.3, 56.1, 81.8, 108, 116, 118.3.

⁴⁸ Halla-aho 2010 is surely right that the choice whether to include *ut* is not primarily a matter of register, although the sole example of *rogo digneris* without *ut* in Book 10 undermines her theory that the choice is determined by the distance between the governing and subordinate verbs, since in this case fourteen words intervene (10.13: *rogo dignitati, ad quam me provexit indulgentia tua, vel auguratum vel septemviratum, quia vacant, adicere digneris, ut iure sacerdotii precari deos pro te publice possim*, “please see fit to add to the honors to which your Graciousness has raised me appointment as an augur or a member of the septemvirate, as both positions have a vacancy, so that by virtue of my priesthood I can then add official prayers on your behalf”). In this instance the omission may be stylistic, since a purpose clause introduced by *ut* follows.

your opinion and either confirm my decision or correct me if I am at fault”), submitting the accounts from Apamea to Trajan for inspection (10.47.3: *te rogo ut mihi praeire digneris, quid me putes observare debere*, “please see fit to instruct me how you think I ought to act”), dealing with a *cause célèbre* at Prusa involving Dio Chrysostom, financial corruption, and a statue of the emperor (10.81.8: *te, domine, rogo ut me ... regere digneris*, “please, sir, see fit to guide me”), and distributing awards to athletes in eiselastic games (10.118.3: *rogo ergo, ut dubitationem meam regere ... ipse digneris*, “so please see fit to resolve my difficulties yourself”). Comparable instances (without *ut*) occur in two papyri (*P.Mich.* 8.472 = *CPL* 255.11–12: *rogo domine digne | r[i]s mihi rescribere*, “I ask, sir, that you think fit to write back to me”; *PSI* 9.1026 = *CPL* 117A.7–8: *petimus et | rogamus digneris nobis adfirmare*, “we request and ask that you think fit to confirm to us”).⁴⁹ It therefore appears that *rogo ut digneris* + infinitive was the regular bureaucratic formula for seeking advice or confirmation.

The other noteworthy feature of the use of *rogo* in Book 10 is the frequency with which Pliny explicitly requests an answer (i.e., using the formula *rogo/velim (ut) (re)scribas*): five times out of twenty-five requests. In the first nine books, on the other hand, he never explicitly requests a reply from any of his correspondents, although the expectation that they will answer is often expressed in other ways. In Book 10, none of the expressions for “please write back” occurs in the context of the thirteen requests for a favor, whereas in requests for guidance Pliny asks Trajan for a reply nearly half the time (five instances out of twelve). These requests are all expressed by the phrase *rogo (re)scribas* governing an indirect question. This is evidently how a Roman bureaucrat summarized—and therefore emphasized (tactfully)—the need for his superior to write back with the solution to a problem. It is noteworthy that the Michigan papyrus quoted in the previous paragraph employs the bureaucratic circumlocution *rogo ut ... digneris* to express the request for a reply.

On one occasion, however, again to do with public slaves, this time the kind of punishment to which they should be subject, Pliny prefaces his request with an elaborate periphrasis: *Salva magnitudine tua, domine, descendas oportet ad meas curas, cum ius mihi dederis referendi ad te, de quibus dubito* (10.31.1: “You may stoop when necessary, sir, to give ear to my problems, without prejudice to your eminent position, seeing that I have your authority to refer to you when in doubt”). The reason for this oblique approach may be a certain anxiety on Pliny’s part about raising another matter to do with

⁴⁹Cugusi 1983: 99, Halla-aho 2009: 83n73 (“undoubtedly idiomatic”).

a problematic category on which he had already consulted Trajan. In other contexts, however, namely appeal for preferment for a protégé, a request is clothed in the language of reciprocal obligation. Compare 10.6.2 (a request to confer Alexandrian citizenship on the doctor Harpocras): *de qua ignorantia mea non queror, per quam stetit ut tibi pro eodem homine saepius obligarer. rogo itaque, ut beneficio tuo legitime frui possim* (“I shall not regret my ignorance if it means that I can be further obligated to you on behalf of the same person; I ask you, therefore, to make it possible for me lawfully to enjoy the favor you have conferred”); 10.11.1: *Proxima infirmitas mea, domine, obligavit me Postumio Marino medico; cui parem gratiam referre beneficio tuo possum, si precibus meis ex consuetudine bonitatis tuae indulseris* (“My recent illness, sir, put me under an obligation to my doctor, Postumius Marinus, to whom I can make an adequate return with your favor, if you will grant my petition with your usual kindness”); 10.26.1: *Rosianum Geminum, domine, artissimo vinculo mecum tua in me beneficia iunxerunt* (“Your generosity towards me, sir, bound Rosianus Geminus to me with the closest of bonds”). These elaborate instances offset the direct simplicity of *rogo* in bureaucratic contexts.

It is noteworthy that most of Pliny’s requests to Trajan from Bithynia (other than letters of recommendation) concern the seeking of advice, rather than some material benefit, and he has various polite formulae to express the request: “consider whether,” “please advise me,” “please write and tell me what course I should follow.” He frequently has to ask Trajan to consider a particular issue; the term he invariably uses is *dispicere*, for example, 10.54.2: *dispice ergo, domine, numquid minuendam usuram ... putes* (“see, sir, whether you think that the rate of interest should be lowered”).⁵⁰ Trajan picks this up once in his reply: *Et ipse non aliud remedium dispicio, mi Secunde carissime, quam ut quantitas usurarum minuat* (10.55: “neither can I see any other solution myself, my dear Pliny, unless the rate of interest on loans is lowered”). Once he uses it in a rare imperative issuing an instruction to Pliny (an aspect to be discussed below, in Section 9): *quid ergo potissimum ad perpetuitatem memoriae eius faciat ... ipse dispice et quod optimum existimaveris, id sequere* (10.76: “see what is most suitable for perpetuating his memory and do what you think best”).

When Pliny asks for some material benefit, however, the request is phrased quite differently, via an expression of compulsion in the case of the disastrous building projects at Nicaea, where the theater and gymnasium are unstable,

⁵⁰The *TLL* article notes that, although *dispicio* is attested at all periods, the only authors who use it frequently are Cicero, Seneca in his philosophical works, Pliny in his letters, and Tertullian: Gudeman 1915: 1415.21–23.

and at Claudiopolis, where the public bath is half finished.⁵¹ Pliny urgently needs an architect to tell him whether these projects are salvageable:

ergo cum timeam ne illic publica pecunia, hic, quod est omni pecunia pretiosius, munus tuum male collocetur, cogor petere a te non solum ob theatrum, verum etiam ob haec balinea mittas architectum, dispecturum utrum sit utilius post sumptum qui factus est quoquo modo consummare opera, ut incohata sunt, an quae videntur emendanda corrigere, quae transferenda transferre, ne dum servare volumus quod impensum est, male impendamus quod addendum est. (10.39.6)

So I am afraid there is misapplication of public funds at Nicaea and abuse of your generosity at Claudiopolis, though this should be valued above any money. I am therefore compelled to ask you to send out an architect to inspect both theater and bath and decide whether it will be more practicable, in view of what has already been spent, to keep to the original plans and finish both buildings as best we can, or to make any necessary alterations and changes of site so that we not lay out a waste of money in an attempt to make some use of the original outlay.

Trajan replies to this particular demand by recommending that Pliny solicit donors at Nicaea, when Pliny had himself suggested approaching donors at Claudiopolis; he ignores Pliny's point that the local architects, being involved in the civic factions, are unreliable (39.4: *architectus, sane aemulus eius a quo opus incohatum est*, "an architect—admittedly a rival of the one who drew up the designs"); and he then simply denies Pliny's request⁵²: *architecti tibi deesse non possunt. nulla provincia non et peritos et ingeniosos homines habet; modo ne existimes brevius esse ab urbe mitti, cum ex Graecia etiam ad nos venire soliti sint* (10.40.3: "you can't have a shortage of architects: no province lacks skilled men with the requisite training; you're not to think that it's quicker to send them from Rome, when they get here from Greece in the first place"). Pliny's request is constructed as one limpid period, balancing gerundives and infinitives (*emendanda corrigere ... transferenda transferre*), and contrasting different moods and voices of the same verb in parallel clauses (*quod impensum est, male impendamus*), skillfully incorporating the tones of the bureaucracy in the Greek term for "architect" and the economical future participle *dispecturum* in place of a purpose clause. The rhetoric, including the drastic substitution

⁵¹ Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.39.5.

⁵² Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc., noting that Trajan similarly misunderstands Pliny's request for advice concerning the removal of burials at 10.68 and replies (69) that there is no point in applying to the college of pontiffs, which is not what Pliny had suggested.

of a phrase of compulsion for a conventional expression meaning “please,” is carefully orchestrated to convey the urgency of Pliny’s request. Trajan’s reply, by contrast, is brief and workmanlike, a series of short clauses with their verbs in the bureaucratic final position and a single subordinate clause at the end; and he, like Pliny in this book and Caesar in his *commentarii*, always uses the prosaic *possum*, never *queo*.⁵³

Requests for guidance are commonly phrased as requests for permission, for example, 10.8.1: *petii ab eo* [sc. *Nerva*], *ut statuas principum ... permetteret in municipium transferre* (“I asked his permission to transfer the statues of former emperors ... to the town”); 10.98.2: *quod fiet si permiseris* (“with your permission this shall be done”). Pliny has to be especially careful to ask for the emperor’s permission when he is putting forward a suggestion of his own, as in the problem of where to locate the bathhouse that the locals want to build at Prusa (10.70.3: *ego, si permiseris, cogito in area vacua balineum collocare*, “with your permission, I am thinking about building the bath on an open space”), or the issue of what to do about the stinking sewer that runs down the main street at Amastris (10.98.2: *non minus salubritatis quam decoris interest eam contegi; quod fiet si permiseris curantibus nobis*, “the right thing is for it to be covered over, no less in the interests of health than of aesthetics; with your permission, we will see to it that this shall be done”).

There is one notable exception, where Pliny *prefaces* a request for guidance with an elaborate expression of thanks to Trajan in terms reminiscent of his request to him to “stoop” to his concerns (10.31.1: *descendas*, cited above). This is in a letter concerning, first, a group of miscreants who, despite having been sentenced to three years’ banishment, are still in town, and, secondly, a complicated case in which a man who had been banished for life by a governor whose actions were subsequently annulled was still in town but had not lodged an appeal within the statutory two years. Before he gives the background to either of these cases, Pliny starts off by saying: *Summas, domine, gratias ago, quod inter maximas occupationes <in> iis, de quibus te consului, me quoque regere dignatus es; quod nunc quoque facias rogo* (10.56.1: “May I express my deepest gratitude, sir, that in the midst of your important preoccupations you have seen fit to direct me on matters on which I have sought your advice; I pray that you will do so once again”). It is not quite clear why Pliny prefaces this letter with this elaborate expression of thanks, coupled with his new request, but it may have to do with the fact that the request involves not only a sentence passed on a group of people, but also a further sentence passed on

⁵³ Odelman 1972: 23, with a table showing the distribution of (*ne*)*queo* at p. 81.

a single individual; it seems that requests on behalf of single individuals have to be marked by recognition that it imposes a special burden on the emperor to have to deal with these individual cases one by one.

We have already seen how to confess that one does not know what to do: *haesitare*. There also appears to be a formula for requesting guidance that is predicated on a frank confession of uncertainty, expressed via an indirect question with *velle* and the infinitive *observare*, “tell me what course you want me to follow.” Pliny needs to know what size of military escort to give to Trajan’s procurator: *Diplomata, domine, quorum dies praeterit, an omnino observari et quam diu velis, rogo scribas meque haesitatione liberares* (10.45: “Would you like permits to use the Imperial Post to be honored after their date has expired, and, if so, for how long? I pray you, sir, write back and settle my uncertainty”). He can find no precedent to follow when a previous governor has passed a sentence of banishment and then allegedly revoked it: *ideo tu, domine, consulendus fuisti, quid observare me velles* (10.56.3: “consequently, sir, I felt I must ask you, what course you wish me to follow”). He turns to Trajan when he cannot find a precedent for the treatment of ἑρέπτοι, i.e., foundlings: *consulendum te existimavi, quid observari velles* (10.65.2: “so I decided I must ask you what course you wanted me to follow”); Trajan hesitantly suggests one: *epistulae sane sunt Domitiani ... quae fortasse debeant observari* (10.66.2: “there are letters of Domitian ... which perhaps ought to be followed”). When the Apameans claim that their status as a Roman colony exempts them from showing Pliny the city’s accounts, he substitutes *putare* for *velle*, perhaps using a more emphatic phrase to signal the urgency, given that his brief was specifically to set Bithynia’s finances straight: *te rogo ut mihi praeire digneris, quid me putes observare debere* (47.3: “please see fit to tell me what course you think I ought to follow”). There are at least four more examples.⁵⁴

This locution seems to be a variation of the technical term for expressing a resolution of the senate: *quid (de ea re) fieri placeret, de ea re tam censuerunt* (“they decided what they wished done about the matter”).⁵⁵ In the first nine books, there is an instance where Pliny reports a decision of the emperor and senate by a very similar locution. The situation concerns his acquaintance Egnatius Marcellinus, who had in his possession the salary owed to his slave, recently deceased; and since he did not know what to do with it, he referred the matter to the emperor, who referred it to the senate: *itaque reversus Caesarem, deinde Caesare auctore senatum consuluit, quid fieri de salario vellet*

⁵⁴ 10.27, 68, 72, 79.5.

⁵⁵ E.g., *SC de ludis saecularibus* I 55 = II 61 = III 2, Odelman 1972: 189nn24–25.

(4.12.3: “he consulted the emperor on his return, and with his permission the senate, to know what was to be done with the salary”). It is noteworthy that, in Pliny’s query about the $\theta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\pi\tau\omicron\iota$ (10.65.2), this locution is combined with the “consultation formula” *consulendum existimare*, which is a hallmark of the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan.⁵⁶

The corollary to “please” is “thank you.” Once again, it is in requests for preferment that Pliny goes overboard; otherwise, he expresses thanks by *gratias agere*, if at all. From the first fourteen letters, there are two instances of groveling gratitude, 10.2.1 (Pliny’s thanks for the grant of *ius trium liberorum* from Trajan): *Exprimere, domine, verbis non possum, quantum mihi gaudium attuleris, quod me dignum putasti iure trium liberorum* (“I cannot find words to express, sir, how much pleasure you have given me by thinking me fit for the privileges granted to parents of three children”), and 10.10.1 (Harpocras’s Alexandrian citizenship has been granted): *Exprimere, domine, verbis non possum, quanto me gaudio adfecerint epistulae tuae, ex quibus cognovi te Arpocrati, iatraliptae meo, et Alexandrinam civitatem tribuisse, quamvis secundum institutionem principum non temere eam dare proposuisses* (“I cannot find words to express, sir, how much pleasure your letter has brought me from which I learned that you have given my therapist Harpocras the additional grant of Alexandrian citizenship, although you had intended to follow the rule of your predecessors and grant it only in special cases”); and, from Bithynia, 10.51.1 (on the transfer of Caelius Clemens, a relative of Pliny’s mother-in-law, to Bithynia): *Difficile est, domine, exprimere verbis, quantam perceperim laetitiam, quod et mihi et socrui meae praestitisti, ut ad finem eius Caelium Clementem in hanc provinciam transferres* (“It is difficult, sir, to find words to express how happy you have made me by your kindness to my mother-in-law and myself in transferring her relative Caelius Clemens to this province”). In other words, being governor is irrelevant when it comes to requesting personal favors. Pliny’s position vis-à-vis the emperor does not come into it; personal privileges require prostrate thanks, whatever rank the petitioner may occupy.

4. REPORTING AN INITIATIVE

The bureaucratic formula for reporting an initiative employs a verb of thinking (*existimare*, *putare*, or, rarely, *arbitrari*), followed by a gerundive. This is comparable to the use of the technical term *adnotare* + gerundive for the

⁵⁶ 10.33.3; 54.2; 56.5; 59; 67.2 ~ 68; 75.2; 77.2; 81.5 ~ 82.1; 92; 110.2; 114.2–3, Odelman 1972: 111–12. The expression is also attested in a rescript of Trajan preserved in the *Digest* (*Dig.* 29.1.1 Ulpian): *simplicitati eorum consulendum existimavi* (“I thought that their inexperience should be taken into account”), Hennemann 1935: 3.

registration of an official decision.⁵⁷ Pliny's query about the Christians conveniently illustrates both these locutions: *fuert alii similis amentiae, quos, quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos ... qui negabant esse se Christianos aut fuisse ... dimittendos putavi* (10.96.4–5: "There have been others similarly fanatical who are Roman citizens. I have entered them on the list of persons to be sent to Rome for trial ... I considered that I should dismiss ... any who denied that they were or ever had been Christians"). Roman citizens had to be referred to Rome; those who recanted he thought should be let off.⁵⁸ This formula, which is common in Caesar, probably started with *censeo*, and then spread to other verbs with a similar meaning.⁵⁹ It goes all the way back to the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* = *CIL* 1².581.2: *ita exdecendum censuere* ("they have resolved that it be announced as follows"), 25: *eis rem capitalem faciendam censuere* ("they have resolved that they be tried for a capital offense"). It belongs to the register that Cicero employs in his despatches to the senate from Cilicia: *quae ad me delata essent scribenda ad vos putavi* (*Fam.* 15.1.1 = 104 Shackleton Bailey: "I thought I should write to you what had been reported to me"); *iter mihi faciendum ... arbitratus sum* (15.2.1 = 105 Shackleton Bailey: "I thought I should travel"); *tempus eius tridui ... in magno officio et necessario mihi ponendum putavi* (15.2.3 = 105 Shackleton Bailey: "I thought I should devote that three-day period to important and essential business"). It is far more common in Book 10 of Pliny's letters than in the other nine books⁶⁰; and in Book 10 it is used by Trajan, as well as Pliny.

5. SUPPLYING AND ACQUIRING INFORMATION

In reporting a matter to Trajan, Pliny uses two formulae that are well attested in bureaucratic Latin from across the empire: *in notitiam perferre* and *notum facere*. *In notitiam perferre* seems to be a formal and dignified expression, employed to and by exalted ranks. Pliny uses it twice of bringing things to Trajan's notice: *haec in notitiam tuam perferenda existimavi* (10.67: "I thought these things should be brought to your notice"); *quod in notitiam tuam perferendum existimavi* (75.2: "which I thought should be brought to your notice"). Trajan uses it twice of things being brought to his own notice,

⁵⁷ Cf. Hardy 1889 on 10.96.4, quoting *Dig.* 28.17.1.

⁵⁸ Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc., quoting Modestinus, *Dig.* 48.1.12: *innoxios dimittant*.

⁵⁹ Odelman 1972: 109–14.

⁶⁰ Tacitus doubtless appreciated Pliny's use of the locution in passing judgment on a book that Tacitus had sent him to critique (7.20.1): *Librum tuum legi et ... adnotavi quae commutanda, quae eximenda arbitraver* ("I have read your book, and marked the passages that I thought should be altered or removed").

once in a letter to Pliny (10.38: *perfer in notitiam meam*, “bring to my notice”) and once in a rescript preserved in the *Digest* (*Dig.* 29.1.1: *cum in notitiam meam prolatum* [edd. : *praelatum* codd.] *sit*, “since it has been brought to my notice”); but he never uses it of bringing things to Pliny’s notice. There are two interesting parallels in the Vindolanda Tablets. The first is by a certain Iustinus, probably an equestrian officer, to Flavius Cerealis, prefect of the Ninth Cohort of Batavians, in which he says: *iñ nō[ti | tiam tuam lūbentīssi | me perfero* (*T.Vindol.* 260.2–4: “it is with the greatest pleasure that I bring to your notice”), but what he brought to Cerealis’s notice is lost. The other is by Haterius Nepos, an equestrian officer who later became prefect of Egypt, to Flavius Genialis, who was probably Cerealis’s predecessor as prefect of the Ninth Cohort, saying: *de . . . debitoribus suis | quod in notitiam tuam | sicut debui perituli* (*T.Vindol.* 611.1a.1–3: “... his debtors which I have brought to your notice just as I ought”). In all these instances the person informed is a distinct superior; this is the way bureaucrats respectfully draw things to their superiors’ attention.⁶¹

Notum facere, “to make known,” “to inform about something,” is particularly interesting, because it occurs only twelve times in literary Latin down to Apuleius, eight of them in Pliny’s letters.⁶² All except one of Pliny’s usages occur in the context of a senatorial meeting or a trial; the exception, a report to his friend Novius Maximus on a book that Maximus has sent him to critique, seems to mimic the context of judgment: *Quid senserim de singulis tuis libris, notum tibi ut quemque perlegeram feci* (4.20.1: “I made known to you my views on each section of your book as I finished reading it”). The instances in other authors are similarly official or legalistic, including a passage in Ovid, which, as Adams notes, seems to mimic the language employed in announcing a military attack: *fecerat haec notum, Graias, cum milite forti | adventare rates* (*Met.* 12.64–65: “she [Rumor] had made known that the Greek ships were approaching with a strong military force”). Recently two non-literary usages have come to light. One, on the Vindolanda Tablets, is a report from a certain Maior to a certain Maritimus: *scribit mihi ut ei no | tum faciam quid gesserō* (*T.Vindol.* 645: “he is writing to me so that I can make known to him what I have done”). The other, an ostrakon from Bu Njem, is apparently a formal report to a commanding officer: *notum ti[bi fa | cio* (*O.BuNjem* 91: “I make known to you”).

⁶¹ Adams 2005: 197, Halla-aho 2009: 55–56.

⁶² *Ov. Met.* 12.64–65, *Suet. Aug.* 65.2, Hyginus Gromaticus 97.5, *Fronto* 75.6 van den Hout, *Plin. Ep.* 2.11.1, 3.5.2, 4.20.1, 6.19.3, 10.7 (Trajan), 10.21.1, 10.59, 10.78.3 (Trajan), Adams 2003: 557–58.

The corresponding phrase seems to be *notum habere*, “to have (something) known, to be in possession of information, to be informed.”⁶³ Formulations composed of *habere* + past participle are attested in many different registers in Latin.⁶⁴ There are two fundamental categories: the type in which *habeo* means “hold, keep,” and the type denoting material or mental acquisition.⁶⁵ *Notum habere* falls into the second category, and in a purpose clause it is virtually formulaic in letters, especially in correspondence from a bureaucratic context, in which it is equivalent to our fixed phrase “for your information,” as when Trajan sends Pliny a copy of a reply he had made to a query from the prefect of the *ora Pontica* about getting extra troops: *cui quae rescripsissem, ut notum haberes, his litteris subici iussi* (10.22.1: “for your information, I have appended to this letter what I wrote to him in reply”).⁶⁶ It is similarly attested in a letter of Domitian from 82 c.e. about a quarrel over *subsiciva* between two adjacent communities in Picenum, Firmum Picenum and Falerio: *quid constituerim de subsicivis cognita causa | inter vos et Firmanos, ut notum haberetis, | huic epistulae subici iussi* (CIL 9.5420 = FIRA I 75 = *Epistula ad Falerienses* 6–8: “for your information, I have appended to this letter what I decided about the sub-divisions, after hearing the case between you and the inhabitants of Firmum”). It is also found in a Hadrianic inscription from Ain-el-Dschemala: *exemplum epistulae scrip | tae nobis a Tutilio Pudente, egregio viro, | ut notum haberes, et it, quod subiectum est, | [c]eleberrimis locis propone* (FIRA I 101 = *Sermo procuratorum* 4.2–5: “For your information, appended is a copy of a letter written to us by that distinguished man, Tutilius Pudens. See that you display it in prominent places”). Apart from phonetic spelling elsewhere in the letter (*scrib-* for *scripserim*), a clerk at Dura in c. 208 c.e. copied *et* for *ut* in this formula: *quid scribserim Minicio Martiali proc(uratori) Aug(ustorum)*

⁶³ Cugusi 1983: 236.

⁶⁴ Scholars have long been preoccupied by the question whether these formulations foreshadow the periphrastic form of the perfect tense in the Romance languages (Fr. *j’ai compris*, It. *ho capito*, etc.). The classic collection of material is by Thielmann 1885. The analysis by Benveniste 1962 is clearer.

⁶⁵ Benveniste 1962: 41–65. The latter type is often interpreted as a periphrastic perfect tense, and has recently been discussed in the context of the development of *habere* as a future and perfect tense auxiliary by Pinkster 1987, but Adams 2013 (forthcoming), Ch. 24 argues that in a very large number of these instances *habere* was “still felt to be strongly possessive and free-standing,” including many instances in legal texts, which amply attest this formulation from the Twelve Tables onwards. For this feature of “linguaggio giuridico,” see De Meo 1986: 99.

⁶⁶ Thielmann 1885: 523–24, Odelman 1972: 119–30.

n(ostrorum) | et notum haberetis adplicui (*P.Dura* 60B.2–3: “I have appended for your information what I have written to Minicius Martialis, procurator of our two Augusti”).⁶⁷

The first category (*habere* = “hold, keep”) is also characteristic of legal language and is attested in texts such as Cicero’s *Laws*, in a section drafted in an avowedly legal style, *legum verba ... paulo antiquiora*: [sc. *sacerdotes*] *urbemque et agros et templa liberata et effata habento* (2.21: “[the priests] shall keep the city and the countryside and their ancestral fields of observation mapped out and unobstructed”).⁶⁸ In the second category, however (material or mental acquisition), it is also part of the bureau-speak of Caesar’s *commentarii*, describing (for example) how he collected cavalry from throughout the province: *equitatum ... quem ex omni provincia ... coactum habebat* (*B Gall.* 1.15.1: “cavalry which he had in his possession, collected from the whole province”). Domitian uses it in a letter of recommendation that is quoted by Pliny in a context rife with formulae: *Archippum philosophum ... commendatum habeas velim* (10.58.6: “I wish you to consider the philosopher Archippus commended to your notice”).⁶⁹ The same formula is attested in papyri, for example, *P.Ryl.* 4.608 = *CPL* 248.4–6: *servum hominem mei | domesticum et carum rogo | domine commendatum hab[eas]*, “please, sir, consider this slave, a member of my household and dear to me, commended to your notice.” Trajan uses *habere* with a different participle, *provisus*, to express how much forethought Pliny had taken in connection with a hydraulic problem, one of his favorite topics: he says approvingly, *cum tam multa provisa habeas* (10.62: “since you have so many details thought through in advance”). And he uses it with *suspectus* in referring to Pliny’s anxieties about the feasibility of constructing an aqueduct at Sinope, *explora diligenter, an locus ille quem suspectum habes sustinere opus aquae ductus possit* (10.91: “find out whether the ground you consider suspect can support the weight of an aqueduct”).

6. PRECEDENTS, DEFINITIONS, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Precedents—*exempla* and *consuetudines*—are another bureaucratic preoccupation, amply attested in Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan, since the absence of a precedent is what requires him to refer a matter to the emperor in the first place. He puts it clearly in a letter concerning two military recruits who have been discovered to be slaves; they have already taken the military oath,

⁶⁷ Trans. Welles, Fink, and Gilliam 1959.

⁶⁸ Trans. Rudd 1998.

⁶⁹ Cotton 1984a.

but not yet been assigned to the ranks: *quid ergo debeam sequi rogo, domine, scribas, praesertim cum pertineat ad exemplum* (10.29.2: “I therefore ask you, sir, to tell me what course to follow, especially as the decision is likely to be concerned with a precedent”). The following of precedent *secundum exemplum* is a prominent phrase, sometimes also appearing as *secundum consuetudinem*.⁷⁰

Pertinere is a feature of the previous example that is widely attested in Book 10, occurring also in the series of “private” exchanges at the beginning.⁷¹ It is commonly used in the present participle + *ad* + accusative to define the scope of a topic. This is a legal expression used twice by Pliny to Trajan: *recitabatur ... edictum ... ad Andaniam pertinens* (10.65.3: “an edict relevant to Andania was read aloud”); *respexi ad senatus consultum pertinens ad eadem genera causarum* (10.72: “I referred to the decree of the senate relevant to those sorts of cases”).⁷² It was employed in contemporary legal documents (cf. *Lex Irnitana* 10B1: *senatus ... consultis ... ad it kaput legis pertinentibus*, “decrees of the senate relevant to that chapter of the law”) and it characterizes the bureaucratic register employed by the fourth-century governor whose letter is quoted by Lactantius (*De mort. pers.* 48.9: *loca ... alia ... ad ius corporis ... pertinentia*, “other property relevant to the rights of their community”).⁷³ It occurs also in a markedly formulaic letter, probably written at the turn of the first century (i.e., contemporary with Pliny) at Oxyrhynchus, by an architect recommending an imperial slave to an imperial procurator: *quid | quid at dignitatem eius pert[i] | nens praestiteris* (*P.Ryl.* 4.608 = *CPL* 248.8–10: “whatever you provide relevant to his position”).⁷⁴

Cognovi litteris tuis, with or without *libenter*, is a common phrase for acknowledging receipt of a letter; it comes at the end of a very short note

⁷⁰ 10.34.1 (Trajan): *secundum exempla complurium* (“in accordance with the precedent of several others”); 10.68 (Pliny): *secundum exemplum proconsulum* (“in accordance with the precedent of the proconsuls”); 10.72 (Pliny): *secundum epistulam Domitiani ... et secundum exempla proconsulum* (“in accordance with a letter of Domitian ... and the precedents of the proconsuls”); 10.78.1 (Trajan): *secundum consuetudinem praecedentium temporum* (“in accordance with the precedent of former times”).

⁷¹ 10.15 (Pliny): *ad curam tuam pertinere* (“is relevant to your concerns”); 16 (Trajan): *pertinet ... ad animum meum* (“is relevant to my peace of mind”).

⁷² A rescript quoted in indirect speech in the *Digest* shows that Trajan used this expression himself (as a finite verb): *Dig.* 49.14.13 = Paulus 7 *ad leg. Iul. et Pap.*, Hennemann 1935: 4–5.

⁷³ Also as a finite verb: Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 48.2: *cum ... universa quae ad commoda et securitatem publicam pertinerent in tractatu haberemus* (“when we were dealing with everything that was relevant to the public interest and safety”).

⁷⁴ Cotton 1981: 28–31.

of acknowledgment from Trajan: *Solvise vota dis immortalibus te praeunte pro mea incolumitate commilitones cum provincialibus laetissimo consensu et in futurum nuncupasse libenter, mi Secunde carissime, cognovi litteris tuis* (10.101: “I was glad to hear from your letter, my dear Pliny, that the soldiers and provincials, amidst general rejoicing, have discharged under your direction their vows to the immortal gods for my safety, and have renewed them for the coming year”). Another example concludes an even briefer note: *Diem imperii mei debita laetitia et religione commilitonibus et provincialibus praeunte te celebratum libenter cognovi litteris tuis* (10.103: “I was glad to hear from your letter that the day of my accession was celebrated under your direction by the soldiers and provincials, with due rejoicing and solemnity”). Cross-references are ubiquitous in bureaucratic documents: when Pliny has to repeat an earlier statement, he says *ut ante praedixi*, “as I said before” (10.67.2).

7. ENCLOSURES AND ATTACHMENTS

Pliny and Trajan were constantly coping with attachments: *huic epistulae subici iussi*, attested in Domitian’s letter about *subsiciva* mentioned in Section 5 above (CIL 9.5420.7), is the phrase used by the emperor, who has a secretary; *his litteris subieci* is what Pliny says, presumably because he did the attaching himself.⁷⁵ This is clearly a fossilized idiom, because in other contexts in Book 10 the word for “letter” is the common word *epistula*.⁷⁶ When Trajan refers to an enclosure of Pliny’s, he refers to Pliny’s letter as *epistula*, even when Pliny himself had used the formula *his litteris subieci*, as in his query about clubs (ἔρανοι) at Amisus: *libellum ad ἐράνους pertinentem his litteris subieci* (10.92: “I have appended to this letter a petition about the clubs”), to which Trajan replies at some length (93): *Amisenos, quorum libellum epistulae tuae iunxeras* (10.93: “the people of Amisus, whose petition you appended to your letter”).⁷⁷ *His litteris subieci* implies that the attachment is copied underneath (cf. Greek ὑπόκειμαι, attested in documents from the third century B.C.E. onwards, for example, from 243 B.C.E. PCair.Zen. 59355.122: κατὰ τὴν ... συγγραφῆν, ἧς τὸ ἀντίγραφον ὑπόκειται, “according to the contract, a copy of which lies below”), whereas in the case of petitions supplied by a third party the verb is *iungere*,

⁷⁵ Trajan: 10.22.1. Pliny: 10.56.5, 58.4, 79.5, 114.3. *Subicere* also occurs in this context in administrative papyri: P.Oxy. 7.1022 = CPL 111: *huic epistulae subieci*; P.Dura 56B: [ecos ... quo]rum ἱ[onismos subic]i iussi; 58: *subici ius[si]* (discussed in Section 13); 64A: *quid mihi scriber[et] ... Antonius Seleucus ... ut scires subieci* (repeated on the verso, 64B).

⁷⁶ Adams 1977: 77. Cf. P.Oxy. 7.1022 (cf. previous note).

⁷⁷ Cf. (Trajan) 10.48.1: *Libellus ... quem epistulae tuae iunxeras* (“the petition which you appended to your letter”); 60.2: *libellos ... quos alteri epistulae tuae iunxeras legi* (“I have read the petitions which you appended to your second letter”).

implying that the original will be glued to the end of the letter (the Greek term, ὑποκολλάω, “glue underneath,” although not attested before the third century C.E., is explicit: e.g., *P.Hamb.* 18); a third alternative, *mittere*, can be used in either context. The substitution of *epistulae iungere* for *litteris subicere* in the exchange about the clubs at Amisus suggests that Trajan’s secretariat observed this distinction more scrupulously than Pliny.⁷⁸

An interesting example occurs in a letter referring to a petition from the inhabitants of Nicaea: *Rogatus, domine, a Nicaeensibus publice per ea, quae mihi et sunt et debent esse sanctissima, id est per aeternitatem tuam salutemque, ut preces suas ad te perferrem, fas non putavi negare acceptumque ab iis libellum huic epistulae iunxi* (10.83: “The people of Nicaea, sir, have officially charged me by your most immortal name and prosperity, which I must ever hold more sacred, to forward their petition to you. I felt that I could not rightly refuse, and so it has been handed to me to append to this letter”). Pliny does not state in his letter what the petition is about, but Trajan does so in his reply:

Nicaeensibus, qui intestatorum civium suorum concessam vindicationem bonorum a divo Augusto adfirmant, debetis vacare contractis omnibus personis ad idem negotium pertinentibus, adhibitis Viridio Gemellino et Epimacho liberto meo procuratoribus, ut aestimatis etiam iis, quae contra dicuntur, quod optimum credideritis, statuatis. (10.84)

The Nicaeans state that they have the right granted by the deified emperor Augustus to claim the property of any of the citizens of Nicaea who die intestate. You must therefore examine this assertion with care, summon all the persons concerned, and call on the procurators Virdus Gemellinus and Epimachus, my freedman, to help you; so that, after weighing their arguments against those on the other side, you can reach the best decision.

Evidently the petition was sealed when Pliny received it, and so Trajan needs to tell him what was in it, so that he can act in accordance with Trajan’s instructions and, when the correspondence is archived, there will be no need to consult supporting documents to make sense of it. There are two other details here that are typical. One is the pair of ablative absolutes in Trajan’s reply (characteristic of the economy of bureaucratic language, well known from Caesar’s *commentarii*, and attested elsewhere in Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan).⁷⁹ *Adhibeo* is the official word for summoning someone to act

⁷⁸ Wilcken 1920: 25n2, Vidman 1960: 36–37, Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.22.1. For help with the corresponding Greek terminology, I am grateful to David Ratzan.

⁷⁹ Odelman 1972: 130–34 (without discussion of Pliny). Other ablative absolute constructions in Book 10 employed by Pliny: 8.1; 33.1; 39.5; 65.2; 72; 87.2; 96.4, 5, 9; 100; 110.1; 120.2. Employed by Trajan: 78.1; 82.2; 84; 101.

as an assessor, and it is one of the technical terms that appear in the letters describing legal proceedings in the first nine books of Pliny's correspondence.⁸⁰ In the ablative absolute it is a bureaucratic formula: *CIL* 5.5050 = *ILS* 206 = *Tabula Clesiana* (a decision by Claudius in 46 c.e. to grant citizenship to populations adjacent to Tridentum in the Italian Alps): *adhibitis procuratoribus meis* ("having summoned my procurators"); *CIL* 9.5420 = *FIRA* I 75.13–14 (Domitian's letter to the Falerians): *adhibitis utriusque ordinis splen | didis viris* ("having summoned illustrious men of both orders").

Sometimes, instead of sending an attachment, Pliny apparently paraphrases a *petitio* from a local community, providing a Latin summary of what would presumably have been in Greek in the original. *Petitiones* generally follow a fixed order: *inscriptio* (address), *exordium* (rhetorical introduction serving as a *captatio benevolentiae*), *narratio* (the background to the request), and *preces* (the request itself).⁸¹ A recent analysis of Pliny's letter asking Trajan to send a legionary centurion to Iuliopolis, just as he has recently done for Byzantium (10.77), has demonstrated that the letter contains the same components (except for the *inscriptio*, which was obviously unnecessary), but in the order *exordium*, *preces*, *narratio*; the insertion of the *preces* immediately after the *exordium* both emphasizes the request and links it directly to the precedent at Byzantium.⁸² This order may have been present in the original *petitio*, but it seems likely that Pliny rearranged the material himself (doubtless eliminating much flowery verbiage in the process) to enable Trajan to see the point straight away. Trajan's answer, unfortunately for Iuliopolis, was "no" (10.78), giving us a rare glimpse of the likely outcome of a very large percentage of such petitions, to counterbalance the impression to be gained from the proud copies of positive responses that are such a prominent feature in the epigraphic record from the eastern half of the empire.⁸³

8. IDENTIFICATION OF THIRD PARTIES

Another noteworthy feature of 10.84 concerns the names that Trajan includes: in Book 10, Roman citizens are always given gentile name, *cognomen*, and job-description, while freedmen get a single name and job-description. At first sight, it seems as though Pliny contradicts the former rule in letter 27, where he uses the *cognomen* Gemellinus by itself: *Maximus libertus et procura-*

⁸⁰ 5.1.5; 6.11.1; 15.3–4; Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.84.2.

⁸¹ Hauken 1998.

⁸² Brélaz 2002: 88–93. I am very grateful to Jocelyne Nelis-Clément for alerting me to this discussion.

⁸³ Brélaz 2002: 93–95

tor tuus, domine, praeter decem beneficiarios, quos adsignari a me Gemellino optimo viro iussisti, sibi quoque confirmat necessarios esse milites sex (10.27: “Your freedman and procurator Maximus assures me, sir, that he too must have six soldiers, in addition to the ten picked men whom I had assigned, in accordance with your instructions, to that excellent official Gemellinus”). But Pliny is quoting from Trajan’s *mandata* (cf. *iussisti*); and in his reply Trajan is scrupulous about using both Gemellinus’s names, and in defining his own *libertus* by job-description as well as name, as was customary⁸⁴:

Nunc quidem proficiscentem ad comparationem frumentorum Maximum libertum meum recte militibus instruxisti. fungebatur enim et ipse extraordinario munere. cum ad pristinum actum reversus fuerit, sufficient illi duo a te dati milites et totidem a Viridio Gemellino procuratore meo, quem adiuvat. (10.28)

You did quite right to supply my freedman Maximus with soldiers for his present requirements, when he was setting out to procure grain and so acting on a special mission. When he has returned to his former post, the two soldiers you have assigned him should be enough, plus another two from Viridius Gemellinus, the procurator under whom he serves.

Trajan (or, I concede, his secretary) knew how to do things properly.

9. ISSUING INSTRUCTIONS

This is an appropriate moment to think about how Trajan phrases his instructions to Pliny. The impersonal *res huius modi prohibenda est* about the clubs, ἔρανοι (10.93), generalizes from the particular; a precedent is set. Precisely this formulation had been invited by Pliny’s request: *ut tu, domine, dispiceres quid et quatenus aut permittendum aut prohibendum putares* (10.92: “so that you, sir, may decide whether and to what extent these clubs are to be permitted or forbidden”). This is clearly a legalistic formula; *quid et quatenus* recurs in the opening to Pliny’s letter about the Christians, very forcefully worded, putting the ball firmly in Trajan’s court right at the beginning, and then following up with a clear statement of *aporia* (*nescio*) before the customary *haesitavi*:

Sollemne est mihi, domine, omnia de quibus dubito ad te referre. quis enim potest melius vel cunctationem meam regere vel ignorantiam instruere? cognitionibus de Christianis interfui numquam: ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat aut quaeri. nec mediocriter haesitavi, sitne aliquod discrimen aetatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differant. (10.96.1)

⁸⁴ Instinsky 1969: 388–89.

It is my custom to refer all my difficulties to you, sir, for no one is better able to resolve my doubts and to inform my ignorance. I have never been present at an examination of Christians. So I do not know the nature or the extent of the punishments usually meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed. And I have experienced no small hesitation, as to whether any distinction should be made between them on the grounds of age, or if young people and adults should be treated alike.

The impersonal way of giving instructions both establishes a generalizing precedent and also avoids the bluntness of a direct imperative. Sometimes, as in the letter about the prison guards (10.20, cited above in Section 1), Trajan uses an oblique periphrasis (*nihil opus sit*), followed by a hortatory subjunctive in the plural that involves himself in following out the instructions (*perseveremus*), and ends with an impersonal jussive subjunctive (*illud haereat nobis*). The gerundive of obligation enables Trajan to express instructions in a similarly inclusive way elsewhere, as in his admission that the troops he assigned to Gavius Bassus, *praefectus orae Ponticae*, were inadequate: *nobis autem utilitas demum spectanda est, et, quantum fieri potest, curandum ne milites a signis absint* (22.2: “the public interest must be our sole concern, and as far as possible we should keep to the rule that soldiers must not be withdrawn from active service”).

Verbs conveying obligation are also a way of issuing instructions. The bureaucratic term is *oportet*; it is all over the jurists and the documents collected in *FIRA*, as well as, notably, Caesar, especially Book 1 of the *De bello Gallico*.⁸⁵ But the common way of saying “ought” is *debeo*, and this verb starts to become prominent in late juridical sources, although *oportet* still dominates in fixed formulae derived from laws. The correspondence between Pliny and Trajan seems to reflect the differing characters of both these expressions. Pliny almost invariably says *debeo* to Trajan; he says *oportet* only once, and that, significantly, is in the phrase appealing to Trajan’s duty to respond to his governor’s requests for advice: *Salva magnitudine tua, domine, descendas oportet ad meas curas* (10.31.1; above, Section 3: “You may stoop when necessary, sir, to give ear to my problems”). But Trajan says *oportet* to Pliny seven times,⁸⁶ including two instances when he is responding to a *debeo* from Pliny. The first concerns the problem of recruits who turn out to be slaves, when Pliny says: *quid ergo debeam sequi rogo, domine, scribas, praesertim cum pertineat ad exemplum* (10.29.2: “please, sir, write and tell me what course to follow, especially as

⁸⁵ Odelman 1972: 24–35, with a table showing the distribution of *oportet* by author at p. 82.

⁸⁶ 10.30.1; 32.2; 40.1, 2; 109; 111; 115.

the decision is likely to provide a precedent”), and Trajan replies: *Secundum mandata mea fecit Sempronius Caelianus mittendo ad te eos, de quibus cognosci oportebit, an capitale supplicium meruisse videantur* (10.30.1: “Sempronius Caelianus was following my instructions in sending you the slaves. Whether they deserve capital punishment will need investigation”). The second instance concerns the similar problem of condemned miscreants who are performing the duties of public slaves instead of serving their sentences in the mines or the arena, when Pliny says: *quod ego cum audissem, diu multumque haesitavi, quid facere deberem* (10.31.2: “since this was told me I have been long debating what to do”), and Trajan answers (10.32.2): *hos oportebit poenae suae reddi* (“these men must be sent back to work out their sentences”). Pliny employs common speech, Trajan the formal locutions of the bureaucracy.

Trajan uses imperatives very sparingly, reserving them for contexts where he wants to lavish praise on Pliny: *Manifestum, mi Secunde carissime, nec prudentiam nec diligentiam tibi defuisse circa istum lacum, cum tam multa provisiva habeas, per quae nec periclitetur exhauriri et magis in usu nobis futurus sit. elige igitur id quod praecipue res ipsa suaserit* (10.62: “I can see, my dear Pliny, that you are applying all your energy and intelligence to your lake; you have worked out so many ways of avoiding the danger of its water draining away, and so increasing its usefulness to us in future. So choose the way which best suits the situation”). Trajan then goes on to talk about getting an engineer. Similarly, he commends Pliny’s good sense as the basis on which a local magnate, Julius Largus, chose him to administer his will, and goes on to give him free rein in its administration via a pair of imperatives: *Iulius Largus fidem tuam quasi te bene nosset elegit. quid ergo potissimum ad perpetuitatem memoriae eius faciat, secundum cuiusque loci condicionem ipse dispice et quod optimum existimaveris, id sequere* (10.76: “Julius Largus chose you for your sense of duty as if he had known you personally. Consider what will best perpetuate his memory and suit the conditions of both places, and adopt whichever plan you think best”). And when Pliny proposes a plan for building an aqueduct at Sinope (mentioned above, Section 5), Trajan approves it enthusiastically with an imperative in the first sentence, followed by a strong endorsement of its usefulness:

Ut coepisti, Secunde carissime, explora diligenter, an locus ille quem suspectum habes sustinere opus aquae ductus possit. neque dubitandum puto, quin aqua perducenda sit in coloniam Sinopensem, si modo et viribus suis adsequi potest, cum plurimum ea res et salubritati et voluptati eius collatura sit. (10.91)

See that the survey you have begun is thoroughly carried out, my dear Pliny, and find out whether the ground you consider suspect can support the weight

of an aqueduct. There can be no doubt, I think, that Sinope must be provided with a water supply, so long as the town can meet the expense out of its own resources. It will contribute a great deal to the health and happiness of the people.

Trajan's brisk imperative contrasts with the pleonasm in *opus aquae ductus*, where *opus* + defining genitive = *aquae ductum*. This is comparable to the redundancy employed by a surveyor describing the excavation of a tunnel as *perforatio operis cuniculi* (CIL 8.2728 = 18122 = ILS 5795); such circumlocutions (noun + genitive) are typical also of professionals in the medical field, veterinarians as well as doctors, who regularly employ expressions like *vitium tussis*, meaning no more than *tussis*, "cough."⁸⁷

10. SUFFICIENCY AND EMPHASIS

Other bureaucratic idioms involve the concept of sufficiency, corresponding to a standard determined by the emperor himself.⁸⁸ Demanding more soldiers from Pliny, Gavius Bassus, *praefectus orae Ponticae*, has written directly to Trajan, who reports the gist of his message as: *non sufficere sibi eum militum numerum* (10.22.1: "that number of soldiers was not enough for him"). Trajan's freedman and procurator, Maximus, also asked for extra soldiers; Trajan is prepared to grant them for a special expedition, but after that he lays down the maximum: *sufficiens illi duo ... milites* (10.28: "two soldiers will be enough for him"). In replying to Pliny's description of the unfinished state of the theater at Nicaea, Trajan declares: *mihi sufficet indicari, cui sententiae accesseris* (10.40.1: "it will be enough for me if you let me know your decision"). Later in the same letter, concerning the Nicaeans' ambition for a gymnasium, he says that they need to be content with sufficiency: *oportet illos eo contentos esse, quod possit illis sufficere* (10.40.2: "they have to be content with what is enough for their needs"). And he considers it insufficient to restore the former sentence of a man who had neither performed it nor sought an appeal: *neque enim sufficit eum poenae suae restitui, quam contumacia elusit* (10.57.2: "it is not sufficient to restore his former sentence when he evaded it by contempt of court"). The language of sufficiency pervades the legal sources also, e.g., Gai. *Inst.* 1.188: *hoc solum tantisper sufficit admonuisse* ("it is enough to observe the following").

⁸⁷ Adams 1995a: 357, Langslow 2000: 223, Adams (forthcoming).

⁸⁸ Hence the application of this criterion in letters of recommendation, e.g., 10.87.3 (Pliny to Trajan, describing the centurion Nymphidius Lupus): *suffecturum indulgentiae tuae* ("equal to your favor"); 10.95 (Trajan to Pliny, stating his policy of limiting grants of privilege): *cum etiam in senatu adfirmare soleam non excessisse me numerum, quem apud amplissimum ordinem suffecturum mihi professus sum* ("seeing that I have often stated in the senate that I have not exceeded the number which I said would meet my wishes when I first addressed its distinguished members").

In the context of an empire run on the principle of sufficiency, exaggeration clearly has no place in the language of bureaucracy; the one means of emphasis that Pliny employs is the adverb *maxime*, also favored in Cicero's official despatches from Cilicia⁸⁹ and in legal sources, as in the highly legalistic letter about the Christians, where Pliny is particularly anxious to consult Trajan because of the number of people at risk, *maxime propter periclitantium numerum* (10.96.9).⁹⁰ The usage at 10.51.2 is especially significant, thanking Trajan for transferring a relative of Pliny's mother-in-law to Bithynia (*cui referre gratiam parem ne audeo quidem, quamvis maxime possim*, "I could not repay your generosity, no matter how great my ability to do so might be"), because it reflects the common habit of the jurists, who reinforce various conjunctions with the adverb *maxime*. A similar tendency concerns the legal habit of flagging a conjunction with a preceding adverb.⁹¹ This habit is visible in a letter of Trajan (which also, incidentally, displays the same redundant *maxime*): *Meminerimus idcirco te in istam provinciam missum, quoniam multa in ea emendanda adparuerint. erit autem vel hoc maxime corrigendum* (10.32.1: "Let us not forget that you were sent for this very reason to your province, because a lot of mismanagement there needed to be sorted out. This particularly stands in need of correction"). Pliny does this too, in a passage from the private correspondence that is strongly legalistic in character, concerning the alimentary scheme that he has set up at Comum, which concludes as follows: *per hoc enim et rei publicae sors in tuto nec reditus incertus, et ager ipse propter id quod vectigal large supercurrit, semper dominum a quo exerceatur inveniet* (7.18.3: "by this means the principal is secured for the town, the interest is certain, and the property will always find a tenant to cultivate it, for the reason because its value greatly exceeds the rent charged").

⁸⁹E.g., *Fam.* 15.2.1 = 105 Shackleton Bailey (including the bureaucratic phrase *pertinere ad + acc.*): *maxime convenire officio meo reique publicae conducere putavi parare ea quae ad exercitum quaeque ad rem militarem pertinerent ... erat enim magna suspicio ... iter eo[s] per Cappadociam, quod ea maxime pateret, esse facturos* ("I thought it particularly appropriate to my office and the public interest for me to provide what was necessary for the army and military security ... for there was a lively suspicion that they would march through Cappadocia, which was particularly accessible"); 15.2.2: *castra ... locavi ut ... Deiotarum ... maxime coniunctum haberem* ("I pitched camp so as to have Deiotarus particularly close by").

⁹⁰Cf. Gai. *Inst.* 1.78: *sed hoc maxime casu necessaria lex Minicia* ("in this situation in particular the *lex Minicia* is applicable"), Hofmann 1965: 673, Nelson and David 1981: 404.

⁹¹Hofmann 1965: 628, Wiese 1934: 175.71–176.2.

11. SYNONYMS, DIMINUTIVES, AND GRECISMS

With the nine books of private letters available for comparison, it is possible to ascribe intention to patterns of word-choice. The word for “river” is a case in point.⁹² In Books 1–9 Pliny uses *amnis* half as often as *flumen*, and *fluvius* not at all; but in Book 10 he does not use *amnis* at all either, only *flumen*. Caesar, too, in his *commentarii* uses *flumen* exclusively, even of rivers that are called *fluvius* or *amnis* by other authors. In Book 10 Pliny uses *flumen* ten times. Seven of these instances occur in a single letter, 10.61, his second one about the lake at Nicomedia, which he and Trajan had already discussed in letters 41 and 42. The private letters would call for elegant *variatio*; but in the correspondence with Trajan bureaucratic propriety trumps literary features, at least in contexts where bureaucratic terminology is established; it is noteworthy that, in the jurists, *flumen* is the default term.

This discriminating tendency is visible in many areas of the lexicon. Caesar prefers the neutral term *mulier* for “woman,” and so do the jurists—more than 1,200 instances of *mulier*, as opposed to 165 of *femina*.⁹³ Pliny only says “woman” twice in Book 10, and Trajan never does. Both Pliny’s instances, from the “private” letters to Trajan at the beginning of the book, concern his request for a grant of Roman citizenship to the freedwomen of his friend Antonia Maximilla. Both times he refers to her by the respectful term *femina*, which in the first instance is emphasized (as is usual) by the addition of a laudatory epithet⁹⁴: *item rogo des ius Quiritium libertis Antoniae Maximillae, ornatissimae feminae, Hediae et Antoniae Harmeridi* (10.5.2: “please also grant full Roman citizenship to my Hedia and Antonia Harmeris, the freedwomen of the noble lady Antonia Maximilla”); *Ago gratias, domine, quod et ius Quiritium libertis necessariae mihi feminae ... sine mora indulxisti* (10.6.1: “Thank you, sir, for your promptitude in granting full citizenship to the freedwomen of the lady associated with me”).

A particularly interesting usage concerns *locus* instead of *civitas*, which Trajan uses three times, each time in conjunction with the pronoun *quisque* (10.76, 80, 111).⁹⁵ It is a legal term, going back to the Republic (*CIL* 1¹.205, 1².592, 11.1146 = *FIRA* I 19 = *Lex de Gallia Cisalpina* 1.40–43): *dum Ilvir* |

⁹² Odelman 1972: 48–50. For the predominance of *flumen* over *fluvius* and *amnis* in prose from the first century B.C.E., see van der Heyde 1932.

⁹³ Neutral term: Adams 1972; distribution in Caesar and the jurists: Odelman 1972: 44–47.

⁹⁴ Adams 1972: 236.

⁹⁵ Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.76.

IIIvir ... ius ita deicat curetve, utei ea no | mina et municipium colonia locus in eo iudicio ... includ<a>ntur, concipiantur (“provided that a IIvir or IIIvir ... administer justice in such a way (that) or see that those names and that *municipium*, colony or place ... be included and expressed in that trial-procedure”).⁹⁶

Similarly fine is the distinction to be made in describing a promise: *polliceor* means making a spontaneous promise, a gesture of free will; *promittere* responds to a requirement.⁹⁷ For dealing with the lake near Nicomedia Pliny badly needs the engineer that Trajan has promised him: *librator, quem plane, domine, debes mittere, ut polliceris* (10.61.5: “the engineer whom you really ought to send, sir, as you promised”). And the citizens of Nicaea are all the more blameworthy, because they have run up debts by defaulting on promises freely made: *huic theatro ex privatorum pollicitationibus multa debentur* (10.39.3: “there are many amenities owing to this theater from pledges made by private individuals”). It is noticeable and praiseworthy that Pliny is eminently restrained in what he says about the inhabitants of the cities of Bithynia whose finances are in such turmoil; to say “these feckless provincials” would not have been becoming to a loyal servant of the empire and its emperor. But here his choice of the *mot juste* condemns them with bureaucratic objectivity; the Nicaeans had promised contributions, freely and spontaneously, and they have not paid.

It is noteworthy that Trajan, replying to this very letter, allows himself what sounds like a condescending remark about Pliny’s provincial subjects: *gymnasiis indulgent Graeculi; ideo forsitan Nicaeenses maiore animo constructionem eius adgressi sunt* (10.40.2: “the poor little Greeks love a gymnasium; so maybe the Nicaeans were excessively ambitious in tackling that construction of theirs”). Apart from standard locutions like *libellus*, diminutives are few in Book 10, though Pliny’s fondness for them surfaces in phrases like *febriculis vexatus* (10.17A.1), of his fever en route to Bithynia,⁹⁸ and the position of this one, reversing Trajan’s standard order of subject-object-verb (*gymnasiis indulgent Graeculi*), draws attention to it. Perhaps this is a rare instance of an emperor letting his impartial mask slip, and displaying the attitude of the colonizing power towards the colonials; it is noteworthy that one of the Vindolanda Tablets refers to *Brittones* and *Brittunculi* in successive clauses (*T.Vindol.* 164): *nenu ... [.] n. Brittones | nimium multi equites | gladis non utuntur equi | tes nec resident | Brittunculi ut iaculos | mittant* (*T.Vindol.* 164:

⁹⁶ Trans. Crawford 1996.

⁹⁷ Odelman 1972: 178–79.

⁹⁸ Vidman 1960: 7.

“... the Britons are unprotected by armour (?). There are very many cavalry. The cavalry do not use swords nor do the wretched Britons mount in order to throw javelins”).⁹⁹

The use of the Greek lexicon by Pliny and Trajan shows subtle variation. The unreliability of manuscripts sometimes makes it hard to decide whether a Latin author had used Greek or Latin script for a Greek term, but we have one incontestable instance in Book 10 where Pliny most definitely Latinized βουλή and ἐκκλησία, because he employs them in the phrase *bule et ecclesia consentiente* (110.1), where *consentiente* proves that he is rendering in a Latin ablative absolute a phrase that is twice attested in Greek in the epigraphic record from, precisely, Claudiopolis in Bithynia (*IGRom* 3.74–75): κατὰ τὸ κρίμα (δῶγμα) τῆς βουλῆς καὶ τοῦ δήμου (“according to the decree of the council and people”). Βουλή and ἐκκλησία are, of course, readily recognizable. But there is some evidence that Pliny used the Greek terminology of his province where Trajan preferred a definition in Latin. This concerns the word θρεπτοί, which Pliny specifies as the local term: *Magna, domine, et ad totam provinciam pertinens quaestio est de condicione et alimentis eorum, quos vocant θρεπτούς* (10.65.1: “A serious problem, sir, which affects the whole province, concerns the status and cost of maintenance of the persons generally known as ‘foundlings’”). In his reply, Trajan avoids the Greek term in favor of a Latin definition: *Quaestio ista, quae pertinet ad eos qui liberi nati expositi, deinde sublata a quibusdam et in servitute educati sunt, saepe tractata est* (10.66.1: “The question you raise of free persons who were exposed at birth, then brought up in slavery by those who rescued them, has often been discussed”). On the other hand, insofar as one can trust the evidence of the manuscripts, Pliny’s Greek term ἐράνουσ, “clubs” (10.92), Trajan simply reduces to Latinized transliteration, *eranum* (10.93).

12. STATISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Bureaucrats have to work with facts, statistics, and qualifications. Age qualifications are common. Pliny states the rule established by Pompey in Bithynia: *Cautum est, domine, Pompeia lege quae Bithynis data est, ne quis capiat magistratum neve sit in senatu minor annorum triginta* (10.79.1: “Under the code of law, sir, which Pompey drew up for Bithynia, it was laid down that no one could hold civil office or sit in the senate under the age of thirty”). Here, alongside the case usages of classical Latin, we see the genitive after a comparative, which had already come into chancellery language at the end of

⁹⁹Trans. Bowman and Thomas 1994.

the Republic; it is attested, for example, in the colonial charter from Urso, in Spain, concerning exemption from construction work for anyone *qui minor annor(um) XIII | aut maior annor(um) LX natus erit* (CIL 2.5439 = FIRA I 21 = *Lex Ursonensis* 98: “who is less than fourteen years old or more than sixty years old”).¹⁰⁰ Since it seems unlikely for the language of a Republican charter to have been influenced by a Greek genitive of comparison, this usage is probably derived from a genitive of quality, with *quam* suppressed.¹⁰¹ A passage from the *Lex Malacitana*, under Domitian, supports this interpretation, because the expressions with and without *quam* stand side by side: *dum ne cuius comi | tis rationem habeat, qui Ilviratum pe | tet <<et>>, qui minor annorum XXV erit, qui | ve intra quinquennium in eo honore | fuerint; item qui aedilitatem quaesturam | ve petet, qui minor quam annor(um) XXV erit* (CIL 2.1964 = FIRA I 24 = *Lex Malacitana* col. 1.60–65: “provided that he accept the candidature of no person at the comitia, in the case of candidates for the duovirate, who is less than twenty-five years of age, or who has held that office within five years; in the case of candidates for the aedileship or the quaestorship he shall accept no person who is less than twenty-five years of age”).¹⁰² Architecture being another field concerned with statistics and measurements, comparative + genitive is also part of the technical language employed by Vitruvius, for example, *ergo si natura nascentium ita postulat, recte est constitutum et altitudinibus et crassitudinibus superiora inferiorum fieri contractiora* (Vitr. 5.1.3: “if the nature of growing things has so required it, then it has also been correctly decided that the upper components of a building be more reduced in their height and thickness than the lower”).¹⁰³

Bureaucrats also have to use limiting expressions: *dumtaxat* is prominent in Book 10. On the subject of forming a group of fire-fighters, Pliny says: *tu, domine, dispice an instituendum putes collegium fabrorum dumtaxat hominum cl* (10.33.3: “consider, sir, whether you think a company of firemen might be formed, limited to 150 members”). Concerning the man who had been banished for life by a governor whose actions were subsequently annulled (above, Section 3), Pliny speaks of his right to a new trial, so long as he appeals within

¹⁰⁰ Kalb 1912: 39.

¹⁰¹ Wölfflin 1892: 118–19, Hofmann 1965: 70.

¹⁰² Trans. Hardy 1912.

¹⁰³ Trans. Rowland 1999. For genitive + comparative in Vitruvius, see Wistrand 1933: 96–97 (arguing at 96n1, against Morgan 1906: 493, that in this example there is no need to understand brachylogy involving the repetition of *altitudinibus et crassitudinibus superiora inferiorum*). For the old interpretation that Vitruvius was influenced by the Greek genitive of comparison, see Wölfflin 1892: 118.

two years (10.56.4: *ius ... ex integro agendi, dumtaxat per biennium*). Speaking of an embassy from King Sauromates of the Bosphorus, Pliny says that none has come, at least not to the city where he is at the moment (10.63: *et legatio quidem, dumtaxat in eam civitatem, in qua ipse sum, nulla adhuc venit*); and, on the subject of fees to enter the local senate, he says: *Anicius deinde Maximus proconsul eos etiam, qui a censoribus legerentur, dumtaxat in paucissimis civitatibus aliud aliis iussit inferre* (10.112.2: “subsequently the governor, Anicius Maximus, made it a rule—though only in a very few places—that people elected by the censors should also pay a fee”).

13. REDUNDANCY, POLARITY, AND ROUTINE FORMULAE

The bureaucrat’s struggle to be explicit leads, as is well known, to redundancy. An interesting case in Latin concerns the repetition of a noun in conjunction with a demonstrative pronoun, especially *is*. This is characteristic of legal language, for example, from 49 B.C.E., *CIL* 1¹.205, 1².592, 11.1146 = *FIRA* I 19 = *Lex de Gallia Cisalpina* 2.2–12: *a quoquomq(ue) pecunia certa credita ... petetur ... sei is eam pecuniam ... d(are) o(portere) debereve confessus | erit ... tum de eo a quo ea pecunia peteita erit, deque eo, quoi eam | pecuniam d(arei) o(portebit)*, etc. (“From whomever a definite amount of money lent shall be sued for ... if he [the defendant] shall have admitted ... that it is appropriate for him to give or that he owes that money ... concerning the person from whom that money shall have been sued for and concerning the person to whom it shall be appropriate for that money to be given,” etc.).¹⁰⁴ This habit is very marked in Caesar, who uses it with words specifying time and place (*dies* and *locus*), topographical features, and military installations, offices, and operations.¹⁰⁵ Trajan does this in one place with *provincia*: *sed ego ideo prudentiam tuam elegi, ut formandis istius provinciae moribus ipse moderareris et ea constitueres, quae ad perpetuam eius provinciae quietem essent profutura* (10.117: “but I made you my choice so that you could use your good judgment in exercising a moderating influence on the behavior of the people in that province of yours and make your own decisions in the interests of the peace

¹⁰⁴ Trans. Crawford 1996. For the ubiquity of anaphoric pronouns in the jurist Gaius, see Kalb 1884: 84; for their spread from legal texts to bureaucracy and the church, Norberg 1944: 70–75. From an analysis of non-bureaucratic texts, including a passage of Cato extolling the healing properties of, *specifically* (via repeated anaphora of *is*), the urine of a person who has eaten cabbage (*Agr.* 157.10), Adams 2013 (forthcoming) argues that this habit is “characteristic of technical style in general or of imitations of that, that is of writings or contexts where a show of precision was called for.”

¹⁰⁵ Odelman 1972: 152–59.

and security of that province"). Surprisingly, however, there is no trace of the comparable habit of repeating the antecedent inside the relative clause, which is very frequent in laws and quite common in Caesar and Cicero, where it sometimes carries legalistic overtones.¹⁰⁶ The lawyer's urge to leave no loophole also leads to the pairing of alternatives such as *culpa* and *error*: for example, *Cod. Iust.* 10.32.33: *sub qualibet culpa vel erroris offensa* ("through a crime committed by fault or error"). Pliny's report of the Christians' self-defense includes this language: *adfirmabant ... hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suae vel erroris* (10.96.7: "they declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this").¹⁰⁷

Bureaucrats tend to like polarities; it keeps things clean. So Trajan, responding to an inquiry from Pliny about requiring provincials to appeal to the pontiffs in Rome, if they want to move the remains of their deceased relatives to a new burial place: *sequenda ergo potius tibi exempla sunt eorum, qui isti provinciae praefuerunt, et ut causa cuique, ita aut permittendum aut negandum* (10.69: "I think it would be best to follow the example of former governors of your province and grant or refuse permission on the merits of each individual case"). This, of course, looks neat and tidy (either A or B), but it must have been deeply unhelpful to Pliny, because it failed to give him a rule to follow and meant that he had to come up with a separate ruling every time. Other polarities become virtual clichés: public versus private (*publice/privatim*), general versus specific (*proprium/universale*); Trajan does not fall back on these polarities, but Pliny does.¹⁰⁸

We have already seen how the letters of recommendation, both those written before Pliny's provincial appointment and those written from Bithynia, display elevated language; but a series of testimonials written in his capacity as governor display striking brevity and a routine concluding formula, *ea fide quam tibi debeo*. They are grouped sequentially in the corpus, which may suggest that they were filed together in the archive of Pliny's correspondence.¹⁰⁹ The first concerns Trajan's freedman Maximus (see above, Section 8): *Maximum libertum et procuratorem tuum, domine, per omne tempus, quo fuimus una, probum et industrium et diligentem ac sicut rei tuae amantissimum ita disciplinae tenacissimum expertus, libenter apud te testimonio prosequor,*

¹⁰⁶ Odelman 1972: 148–52, noting the absence of this habit in the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan (at p. 151).

¹⁰⁷ Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc.

¹⁰⁸ Public versus private: 10.1.2; 13; 54.1; 86B (and 58.9, quoting an edict of Nerva). General versus specific: 10.26.1; 65.2.

¹⁰⁹ Sherwin-White 1985 on 10.85.

ea fide quam tibi debeo (10.85: “Your freedman and procurator Maximus, throughout the time we have been associated, has always proved honest, hard-working, and conscientious, as devoted to your interests, sir, as he is a strict maintainer of discipline. I gladly give you this testimonial on his behalf, in all good faith, as demanded by my duty to you”). The second letter is even more succinct: *Gavius Bassus, domine, praefectum orae Ponticae integrum probum industrium atque inter ista reverentissimum mei expertus, voto pariter et suffragio prosequor, ea fide quam tibi debeo* (10.86A: “Gavius Bassus, sir, the prefect of the Pontic Shore, has always proved high-principled, honest, and hard-working in his official duties, and has shown me every respect. I give him my full support and recommendation, in all good faith, as demanded by my duty to you”).

The manuscripts present the third letter as a continuation of the second, glued together by the inclusion of some inept phrasing, but the presence of the concluding formula at the end of 86A makes it clear that 86B is a separate letter, and that the mutilated beginning originally identified the subject of the testimonial; hence, *exempli gratia*, I print below the reading of the first edition by Cataneus in 1506¹¹⁰:

Fabium Valentem <domine> instructum commilitio tuo valde probo, cuius disciplinae debet, quod indulgentia tua dignus est. apud me et milites et pagani, a quibus iustitia eius et humanitas penitus inspecta est, certatim ei qua privatim qua publice testimonium perhibuerunt. quod in notitiam tuam perfero, ea fide quam tibi debeo.

Fabium Valentem <domine *Sherwin-White*> instructum commilitio tuo valde probo *Cataneus*:
quam ea quae speret instructum A

I warmly recommend Fabius Valens, sir. He has served in the army under you, and to this training he owes any claim he has on your graciousness. While I have been here both soldiers and civilians, who have had close experience of his justice and humanity, have vied with each other to pay personal and public tribute to him. I bring these facts to your notice in all good faith, as demanded by my duty to you.

It is clear that none of these are instances where Pliny is promoting a protégé out of personal interest; rather, the first two, at least, are routine testimonials composed on behalf of government officials, bland and brisk. In addition to the public/private cliché, the last one stands out for the inclusion of the

¹¹⁰ See the succinct discussion by Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc. (p. 682).

bureaucratic phrase *quod in notitiam tuam perfero*, discussed above (Section 5), which may suggest that this letter is “a special citation for merit.”¹¹¹

Legal vocabulary is predictably frequent in Trajan’s responses, including his sole neologism, the verb *intribuere* in 10.24, where he replies to Pliny’s request that the inhabitants of Prusa be allowed to rebuild their bath: *Si instructio novi balinei oneratura vires Prusensium non est, possumus desiderio eorum indulgere, modo ne quid ideo aut intribuatur aut minus illis in posterum fiat ad necessarias erogationes* (“If building a new bath at Prusa will not strain the city’s finances, there is no reason why we should not grant their petition; provided that no new tax is imposed and there is no further diversion of funds of theirs intended for essential services”).¹¹² There is one later attestation, by Ulpian (*Dig.* 14.4.9.2: *qui id egit, ne intribuaret*), and the derivative *intributio* is a legal term cited eight times in the *Digest*.¹¹³ Finance was Pliny’s specialty, including the legal terminology pertaining to financial matters.

Concerning two slaves who had illegally enlisted in the army, Pliny uses the expression *per numeros distribui* (10.29.2: *nondum distributi in numeros erant*), which Trajan picks up in his reply: *neque enim multum interest, quod nondum per numeros distributi sunt. ille enim dies, quo primum probatu sunt, veritatem ab iis originis suae exegit* (10.30.2: “the fact that they were not yet drafted into the ranks is immaterial, for the truth about their origin should have come out on the actual day that their enlistment was approved.”) Both *in/per numeros* + passive verb and *probare* belong to the terminology of military recruitment, as is clear from the letter from a prefect of Egypt at Oxyrhynchus mentioned above¹¹⁴: *tirones sexs probatos a me in | coh(orte) cui praees in nume | ros referri iube* (*P.Oxy.* 7.1022 = *CPL* 111: “give instructions that the six recruits whose enlistment I have approved be drafted into the ranks in the cohort under your command”).¹¹⁵ The same formula (albeit misspelled) concerning a recruit whose enlistment has been approved, *tiro probitus*, is attested in an inscription from Aquileia (*CIL* 5.8278 = *ILS* 2333). The commander’s approval was evidently required also for soldiers’ mounts, and these details were to be filed under the commander’s decisions: *ecum quadrimum ... probatum a me Iulio Basso eq(uiti) coh(ortis) XX Pal(myrenorum) ... in act[a] u[t] mos refer* (*P.Dura* 56A.5–8: “enter in the records according to the regular procedure a horse, four years old, approved by me for Julius Bassus, a cavalryman of

¹¹¹ Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc. (p. 683).

¹¹² Bardon 1940: 352.

¹¹³ Hiltbrunner 1956. For other legal terms in Trajan’s responses, see Bardon 1940: 352.

¹¹⁴ See n75 above.

¹¹⁵ Cugusi 1983: 237, Vidman 1960: 57.

the Twentieth Palmyrene Cohort”); *ęę[um Ca]ppado[cem] ... pr[oba]tum a me Halathe |Marin[i] eq[uiti].coh[ortis] [XX P]al[myrenorum] ... in [acta ut] mo[s] [refer]* (56C.3–6: “enter in the records according to the regular procedure ... a horse, a Cappadocian ... approved by me for Halatha son of Marinus, a cavalryman of the Twentieth Palmyrene Cohort”); *subici ius[si p]rob[atos] a me eq[uitibus] coh[ortis] XX [Palmyrenorum | in [acta ut] mo[s] refer* (58.3–4: “enter in the records according to the regular procedure ... [horses, the descriptions of which] I have ordered to be appended, approved by me for the cavalry of the Twentieth Palmyrene Cohort”).¹¹⁶ In the case of privileges granted by the emperor, the filing instruction uses the same formula, with the substitution of *commentarii* for *acta*: *dedisse me ius trium liberorum Suetonio Tranquillo ea condicione, qua adsuevi, referri in commentarios meos iussi* (10.95: “I have issued instructions that it is to be officially recorded that I have conferred on Suetonius Tranquillus the privileges granted to parents of three children, on the usual terms”); *iis interim, quibus nunc petisti, dedisse me ius Quiritium referri in commentarios meos iussi* (10.105: “in the meantime I have issued instructions that it is to be officially recorded that I have granted full Roman citizenship to the persons on whose behalf you asked for it”).¹¹⁷

14. THE PERSONAL VOICE

Amid this plethora of bureaucratic expressions, what distinguishes Pliny from Trajan—or, indeed, any other Roman bureaucrat? One thing is length of discourse¹¹⁸: Pliny’s letters are almost always significantly longer than Trajan’s, because he had to give the background. One of the exceptions we have already looked at, where Trajan had to summarize the contents of a sealed *libellus* that Pliny had simply enclosed without being able to read it (10.84, discussed above, Section 7); in this instance, it is Trajan who has to spend words on the background, so that his letter ends up slightly longer than Pliny’s (40 words, to Pliny’s 38). The contrast is more dramatic in Trajan’s response to Pliny’s request on behalf of Iuliopolis (also discussed in Section 7), in which Trajan first explains his action at Byzantium, which Pliny had quoted as a precedent, in order to justify refusing the same treatment at Iuliopolis. Trajan’s answer (10.78: 95 words) is nearly twice as long as Pliny’s request (10.77: 57 words).

Another feature that is particularly striking in Trajan’s answers is the lack of variety in word order. Not only in subordinate clauses, where the verb tends to

¹¹⁶ Trans. Welles, Fink, and Gilliam 1959 (supplemented).

¹¹⁷ Cugusi 1983: 98–99.

¹¹⁸ Bardon 1940: 354.

adopt the final position at all periods of Latin, but also in main clauses (with the exception of imperatives, which regularly come first in their clause), he postpones the verb to the end, just as Caesar does in his *commentarii*.¹¹⁹ This is a “key feature of official Latin,” rigidly observed, for example, throughout the *SC de Bacchanalibus*, with one single exception, in the consuls’ appendix, perhaps to emphasize the phrase that usurps the final position (*CIL* 1².581.30): *haice utei in coventionid exdeicatis ne minus trinum noundinum* (“you are to announce these measures at a public meeting on no fewer than three market days”).¹²⁰ Perhaps not surprisingly, given that his need to supply the background affords him more scope to shape a narrative, Pliny shows a little more flexibility than Trajan in employing such expedients as swapping subject and verb for effect, for example, 10.61.3 (on draining the lake at Nicomedia by connecting it to a nearby river by a canal): *praeterea per id spatium, per quod fossa fodienda est, incidunt rivi*, “in addition, in the area in which the canal is to be dug, there flow streams.” To what extent Pliny’s word order in Book 10 is less varied than in the first nine books is a topic for further investigation that might illuminate the way in which he phrases his letters to Trajan.

If the obstacle course of addressing the emperor requires inflated abstractions and periphrases, and the bureaucratic paraphernalia of enclosures, cross-references, filing, petitioning, and so on demands the use of fixed formulae, the only place where Pliny can use his own voice is in the narrative sections explaining the situation to Trajan. These are stylish; and they are very clear. It seems to be fashionable to imagine that Trajan found Pliny an indecisive bore, even though it has been definitively shown that the limits of Trajan’s *mandata* meant that, if the provincial archives supplied no precedent, Pliny’s hands were completely tied.¹²¹ But I expect that Trajan was relieved to hear from Pliny. Judging from some of the clumsy expressions surviving in papyri and the Vindolanda Tablets (composed, no doubt, by people with less education than Pliny), and from the pomposity of contemporary documents, such as the edict of Nerva that Pliny quotes,¹²² I cannot imagine that all the other officials wrote to him with such clarity and compression, let alone the embassies whose requests must have flooded his inbox round the clock. This is not to say, however, that Trajan did not get impatient sometimes.

¹¹⁹ The classic discussion of word order in Latin prose calls Caesar “Fanatiker der Endstellung” (Linde 1923: 154). For the tendency to place the verb last in a subordinate clause, see also Adams 1976: 93n61.

¹²⁰ Clackson and Horrocks 2007: 150.

¹²¹ Sherwin-White 1985: 546–55.

¹²² 10.58.7–9, awash with abstract nouns.

Trajan's own voice is, as one would expect, predominantly businesslike and authoritative, although we have already seen one instance where his impartial tone is compromised. This is in letter 40, about financial problems at Nicaea (above, Section 11), where he refers to the provincials by a diminutive, *Graeculi*, the tone of which sounds condescending.¹²³ Although diminutives are rare in Book 10, he uses another diminutive phrase to Pliny, responding to Pliny's report that he had arrived safely in Bithynia, despite some setbacks to his health on the way: *Cuperem sine querela corpusculi tui et tuorum pervenire in Bithyniam potuisses* (10.18.1: "I wish you could have reached Bithynia without your poor body, or those of your party, suffering any complaint"). The diminutive here sounds colloquial and familiar. It is attested in other epistolary contexts, including a letter from Pliny himself to his wife Calpurnia: *nunc enim praecipue simul esse cupiebam, ut oculis meis crederem quid viribus quid corpusculo adparares* (6.4.2: "this is a time when I particularly want to be with you, to see with my own eyes whether you are gaining in strength and weight"). But it may be more significant that other emperors use it, including Augustus in a letter to Horace: *sed tibi statura deest, corpusculum non deest* (*Ep.* 40 Malcovati = Suet. *Vita Hor.* 47.9–10 Reifferscheid: "it is height that you lack, not weight"); and Marcus Aurelius to Fronto: *haec obambulans dictavi. nam eum motum in praesentia ratio corpusculi desiderabat* (*Ep.* 5.62: "I dictated this while I was walking about, because the state of my poor body needs that exercise at the moment"); *et, si dicendum est, delector potius talem querellam corpusculi quam dolores aliquos intercessisse* (5.70.2: "and, if the truth be told, I am glad that the cause was a complaint suffered by your poor body rather than some other pains").¹²⁴ It is tempting to think that *corpusculum* had acquired a certain intertextual resonance in imperial correspondence addressed to cherished—but inevitably inferior—interlocutors.

Two letters before the one about the Greeklings and their gymnasium, Trajan, responding to similar troubles at Nicomedia, uses a rare oath. The whole letter is worth a look:

Curandum est, ut aqua in Nicomedensem civitatem perducatur. vere credo te ea, qua debebis, diligentia hoc opus adgressurum. sed medius fidius ad eandem diligentiam tuam pertinet inquirere, quorum vitio ad hoc tempus tantam pecuniam Nicomedenses perdiderint, ne, dum inter se gratificantur,

¹²³ Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc. ("patronizing").

¹²⁴ Cameron 1967: 421n1 assumes that Marcus is quoting Trajan's expression verbatim, having found it either "in the imperial files" or in an independently circulating copy of Book 10.

et incohaberint aquae ductus et reliquerint. quid itaque compereris, perfer in notitiam meam. (10.38)

Steps must be taken to provide Nicomedia with a water supply, and I am sure you will apply yourself to the task in the right way. But, God be my witness, apply yourself no less to finding out whose fault it is that Nicomedia has wasted so much money up to date. It may be that people have profited by this starting and abandoning of aqueducts. Let me know the result of your inquiry.

The emphatic asseveration *medius fidius* (or *me dius fidius*, or *mediusfidius*) is an archaic oath that belongs in the colloquial register, occurring most frequently in oratory, letters, and quoted speech. Pliny himself uses it to express his admiration for his friend Arrius Antoninus's Greek style: *hominemne Romanum tam Graece loqui? non medius fidius ipsas Athenas tam Atticas dixerim* (4.3.5: "Is such Greek possible for a Roman? God be my witness, Athens herself could not be so Attic"). Augustus used it twice in his personal correspondence, both times qualifying *desidero*. The first is addressed to Tiberius: *sive quid incidit de quo sit cogitandum diligentius, sive quid stomachor, valde medius fidius Tiberium meum desidero* (Aug. *Ep.* 14 Malcovati = Suet. *Tib.* 21.6: "if anything happens that requires more careful consideration, or I am cross about something, God be my witness, I really miss my dear Tiberius"). The second is to his grandson Caligula: *Ave, mi Gai, meus asellus iucundissimus, quem semper medius fidius desidero* (Aug. *Ep.* 22 Malcovati = Gell. 15.17.3: "Greetings, my dear Gaius, my most delightful little donkey, God be my witness, how I miss you all the time"). The expression undoubtedly breaks the bureaucratic mold, and is one of the few instances where we seem to hear Trajan's actual voice.¹²⁵

Finally, there is one signature feature of Pliny's style that is almost entirely absent from Book 10, and that is parenthesis, a colloquial and informal touch that he uses liberally throughout the first nine books to qualify, justify, or supplement what he is saying.¹²⁶ Identifying a parenthesis is to a certain extent a subjective exercise: in Books 1–9 the punctuation of the Teubner text flags 145 instances, the Oxford Classical Text 188; but in Book 10 there are

¹²⁵ Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc. speaks of Trajan's "characteristic outburst." For the oath, see Kaster 2006 on Cic. *Sest.* 20. The expression is used by men: Hofmann 2003: 139. Of the apparent exceptions in Petronius, *Sat.* 17.4 is put in the mouth of Quartilla, "a dominating woman," and the purported example at 129.6 is a copyist's misunderstanding of a reference to *medius*, "genital area" (Schmeling 2011 ad locc.).

¹²⁶ Häusler 2000: 216–18.

just four examples. In the first, the parenthesis comprises an authorial comment that not only apologizes for Pliny's hearsay report but also adds some drama and gesticulation to the scandal of the Nicaeans' irresponsibility in squandering funds on the theater¹²⁷: *Theatrum, domine, Nicaeae maxima iam parte constructum, imperfectum tamen, sestertium (ut audio; neque enim ratio operis excussa est) amplius centies hausit* (10.39.1: "The theater at Nicaea, sir, mostly built, though not yet finished, has swallowed up—so I hear, since the accounts have not yet been audited—more than ten million sesterces"). In articulating his wish to connect the lake near Nicomedia to the sea, he heaps up a compliment to Trajan at the end of the letter¹²⁸: *sed hoc ipso (feres enim me ambitiosum pro tua gloria) incitor et accendor, ut cupiam peragi a te quae tantum coeperant reges* (10.41.5: "I am spurred on and fired up by this—you'll see how ambitious I am for your reputation—so that I long for you to accomplish what kings could only attempt"). Still on the subject of the lake, he says: *quod ita fiet si necessitas coget, et (spero) non coget* (10.61.3: "this will happen if necessity forces it, and—I hope—it won't force it"). This kind of parenthesis is very natural in a bureaucratic context when plans are being made and wishes expressed; there is a nice—though somewhat less coherent—parallel from Vindolanda: *de rotulis quas spero cito ex | [pl]icabit* (*T.Vindol.* 648. ii.3–4: "about the wheels which, I hope, he will quickly sort out").¹²⁹ Finally, in connection with having been left in charge of a will by an entirely unknown person, Pliny tucks into a parenthesis an acknowledgment of the emperor's role, however indirect: *Iulius, domine, Largus ex Ponto nondum mihi visus ac ne auditus quidem (scilicet iudicio tuo credidit) dispensationem quandam mihi erga te pietatis suae ministeriumque mandavit* (10.75.1: "Julius Largus of Pontus, sir, whom I have never seen or heard of [he was relying, presumably on your opinion of me], has entrusted me with the duty of administering, so to speak, his loyal sentiments towards you").

15. CONCLUSION

A collection of letters is particularly vulnerable to excerpition. Of the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan we all know the letters about the Christians (10.96–97), and perhaps the pair about sending Pliny's wife back

¹²⁷ For "authorial comment" as one of the categories of the "subjective" parenthesis in the *Silvae* of Statius, see Coleman 2010: 305–6.

¹²⁸ For "expressions of loyalty" as a further category of the "subjective" parenthesis in the *Silvae*, see Coleman 2010: 309–11.

¹²⁹ Interpreted as a parenthesis by Adams 2003: 554. Less convincing is the explanation of parataxis after *verba sentiendi* by Halla-aho 2009: 78.

to Italy by official transport because of a family bereavement (10.120–21). But the collection is far more than the sum of its parts, not only in content, but in the remarkable evidence that it contains for the bureaucratic exchange between a conscientious emperor and his loyal servant, mutually engaged in “government by correspondence” (to borrow Fergus Millar’s felicitous phrase).¹³⁰ The repetitions and obscurities of the worst bureaucratic writing cannot be pinned on either Trajan or Pliny; the only example of turgid obscurity in the entire collection is in the edict of Nerva that has survived with it (10.58.7–9). But the accumulating parallels from Vindolanda and elsewhere, and the mannerisms of laws, decrees, and edicts that characterize the language of this collection, show with startling clarity that, along with the army and the educational system, one of the greatest unifying factors in the empire was its bureaucracy, sounding recognizably the same from one end of the Roman world to the other.

It has recently been suggested that, like Books 1–9, Book 10 is a carefully crafted collection edited and published by Pliny himself, a self-presentation of the ideal senator intimate with Trajan, providing a paradigm for just rule of the provinces in the age of the *optimus princeps*.¹³¹ Close attention to the bureaucratic cast of the correspondence, however, suggests a different interpretation. The Pliny of the first nine books is supremely competent in the legal and administrative sphere, the sole audible voice (we only hear third parties when he reports what they say), and a consummate stylist. In Book 10, on the other hand, Pliny controls neither administrative affairs, nor the discourse, nor the stylistic register: much of the time he is writing because he does not know what to do, nearly half the letters are from Trajan, and the language is the bureaucratic tool of officials whose job it was to put problems and their solutions in writing. Far from advertising “intimacy,” Pliny’s tone is “the suppliant voice of the humble official appealing even in matters within his domain to the *indulgentia* of his master.”¹³² If Pliny handles the language of the bureaucracy with greater clarity than other Roman bureaucrats whose efforts have survived, this does not put it on the same footing as the superbly crafted Latinity of the first nine books. The self-conscious shaping of style and *persona* for public consumption is replaced by the bureaucratic code and register suitable to a senior public official communicating with his superior in order to get a job done.

¹³⁰ Millar 2000.

¹³¹ Ideal senator: Woolf 2006. Intimate with Trajan: Noreña 2007. Just rule: Stadter 2006. This interpretation of Book 10 is followed by Gibson and Morello 2012: 251–63.

¹³² Cotton 1984b: 266.

The circumstances in which the collection came into circulation are not known, and several mutually exclusive hypotheses are possible. The most obvious one is that the “private” letters prefacing Book 10, and the presence, throughout the book, of letters of recommendation unrelated to Pliny’s staff in Bithynia, suggest that the collection represents the contents of a file labeled “Emperor,” and that it was added to Pliny’s published correspondence as a tenth book by someone else after his death. The correspondence is messy by comparison with the nine books of private letters: some of Trajan’s replies, and almost all the enclosures, are missing, and the collection ends abruptly.¹³³ Above all, Trajan occasionally sounds annoyed with Pliny, as with the problem at Prusa, described by Pliny at some length and mentioned above (Section 3), concerning the erection of a statue of Trajan in a building where the wife and son of Dio Chrysostom were buried (Dio seems to be suspected of financial corruption into the bargain), to which the emperor replies: *Potuiſti non haerere, mi Secunde cariffime, circa id de quo me conſulendum exiſtimati, cum propositum meum optime noſſeſ, non ex metu nec terrore hominum aut criminiſbus maeſtatiſ reverentiam nomini meo adq̄iri* (10.82.1: “You need not have got stuck, my dear Pliny, about the matter on which you thought it necessary to consult me. You know very well that it is my fixed rule not to gain respect for my name either from people’s fears and apprehensions or from charges of treason”). As Sherwin-White remarks, “Pliny is unlucky to be snubbed for consulting the emperor on a matter which any governor might have thought it wise to refer to him.”¹³⁴ But snubbed he was, and it seems entirely out of character for Pliny to have toppled himself off his own pedestal by putting such material into circulation.

Whereas the publication of the first nine books deliberately presents us with Pliny the private citizen on show for the reading public, the survival of Book 10 accidentally lets us glimpse the public official toiling in private for his absent manager. The correspondence between Pliny and Trajan lets us overhear two bureaucrats running the empire at an absolutely nuts-and-bolts level. To do so, they employ the bureaucratic register that was recognized and understood across the Roman world, characterized by a lack of variety in diction, the repetition of standard formulae, and, above all, self-conscious observance—on both sides—of the proper codes inflecting the relationship between a civil servant and his imperial master. This is not the image of the suave, confident, urbane Pliny that he was so careful to project in Books 1–9.

¹³³ Stadter 2006: 64–67 ascribes the “messiness” to deliberate editorial policy on Pliny’s part.

¹³⁴ Sherwin-White 1985 ad loc.

This is the fussy bureaucrat, trying to do things properly and not put a foot wrong. He seems to have died in the attempt.

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