



**27th Latin Summer School**  
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**Class 3 a iii**

**Tutor:**

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## **Pliny the Elder, *Historia Nātūrālis***

Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79) was a Roman author and naturalist, mostly known for his encyclopedic *Natural History*, which comprised 37 books on a wide variety of topics, including astronomy, geography, anthropology, botany, art history, and mineralogy. He died in the eruption of Vesuvius.



**Book VIII:33 – Concerning the basilisk snake**

eadem et basiliscī serpentis est vīs. Cyrenāica hunc generat prōvincia, duodecim nōn amplius digitōrum magnitūdine, candidā in capite maculā ut quōdam diademate īnsignem. sībilō omnēs fugat serpentēs nec flexū multiplicī, ut reliquae, corpus inpellit, sed celsus et ērēctus in mediō incēdēns. necat fruticēs, nōn contactōs modo, vērūm et adflātōs; exūrit herbās; rumpit saxa: tālis vīs malō est.

crēditum quondam ex equō occīsum hastā et per eam subeunte vī nōn equitem modo, sed equum quoque absūmptum. atque huīc tālī mōnstrō — saepe enim ēnectum concupivēre rēgēs vidēre — mūstēlārūm vīrus exitiō est: adeō natūrae nihil placuit esse sine pare. īnferciunt hās cavernīs facile cognitīs sōlī tābe. necant illae simul odōre moriunturque, et natūrae pugna cōnficitur.

**Notes**

- ***eadem***: “the same” (agreeing with *vīs*, which refers back to the power of the “catoblepas” in the previous section, a creature which is said to be deadly if you look at its eyes)
- ***Cyrenāica***: “of Cyrene”
- ***amplius***: “more”
- ***magnitūdine***: ablative of description – “with a length”
- ***īnsignem***: agrees with *hunc*
- ***fugat***: from *fugāre*, not *fugere*
- ***flexū multiplicī***: ablative of manner
- ***malō***: dative of purpose = “for evil”
- ***crēditum***: supply *est* – this is impersonal (“it is believed”), beginning an indirect statement
- ***occīsum***: supply *esse* – “that one [a basilisk] was killed” (also supply *esse* for *absūmptum*)
- ***eam***: antecedent is *hastā*
- ***subeunte***: “coming/going up”
- ***enim***: “we know this because”
- ***ēnectum***: “a dead one”
- ***concupivēre***: short for *concupivērunt*
- ***vīrus***: here means “smell” or “odour”
- ***exitiō***: predicative dative = “a source of destruction” = “destructive”
- ***īnferciunt***: subject is generalised “they” (i.e. people who want to kill basilisks)
- ***sōlī***: from *solum*, -ī, n.

## Book VIII: 34, Part I – Incredulity regarding werewolves

hominēs in lūpōs vertī rūsusque restituī sibi falsum esse cōfidenter exīstimāre dēbēmus aut crēdere omnia quae fābulōsa tot saeculīs conperimus. unde tamen ista vulgō īnfixa sit fāma in tantum, ut in maledictīs “versipellēs” habeat, indicābitur.

Euanthēs, inter auctōrēs Graeciae nōn sprētus, scrībit Arcadās trādere ex gente Anthī cuiusdam sorte familiae lēctum ad stagnum quoddam regiōnis eius dūcī, vestitūque in quercū suspēnsō trānāre atque abīre in dēserta trānsfigūrārīque in lūpum et cum cēterīs eiusdem generis congregārī per annōs VIII. quō in tempore sī homine sē abstinerit, revertī ad idem stagnum et, cum trānāverit, effigiem recipere, ad pristīnum habitum additō novem annōrum seniō. id quoque adicit, eandem recipere vestem.

### Notes

- ***hominēs in lūpōs vertī***: indirect statement – start your translation with “That”
- ***aut***: “or else”
- ***fābulōsa***: supply *esse* to complete an indirect statement dependent on *conperimus* (perfect tense)
- ***unde***: introduces an indirect question, dependent on *indicābitur* (at the end of the sentence)
- ***vulgō***: “in the popular imagination”
- ***in tantum, ut***: “to such an extent that”
- ***habeat***: subject is implied *vulgus*
- ***trādere***: “hand down the story” / “relate” / “say” – infinitive because it’s in an indirect statement, and itself introduces another indirect statement that lasts nearly to the end of the paragraph.
- ***lēctum***: “[a man] chosen”
- ***homine***: ablative of separation with *sē abstinerit* (subjunctive in a subordinate clause in *Orātiō Oblīqua*)
- ***habitum***: “appearance”
- ***id***: “the following” (neuter because it refers to the indirect statement that follows)

## Book VIII: 34, Part II – An even less credible werewolf story

mīrum est quō prōcēdat Graeca crēdulitās! nullum tam inpudēns mendācium est, ut teste cāreat. item Apollās, quī Olympiōnicās scrīpsit, nārrat Demaenētum Parrhāsium in sacrificiō, quod Arcadēs Iovī Lycaeō hūmānā etiamtum hostiā faciēbant, immolātī puerī exta dēgustāsse et in lūpum sē convertisse, eundem X annō restitūtum athleticae sē exercuisse in pugilātū victōremque Olympiā reversum.

### Notes

- **quō**: “how far”
- **crēdulitās**: “gullibility”
- **Apollās**: a Greek name (nominative case) – some manuscripts have the name as Agriopas, Acopas, Scopas or Copas
- **Olympiōnicās**: “The Annals of Olympic Victors”
- **Demaenētum**: nominative form is *Demaenētus*; the story is also told by the Greek geographer Pausanias, but he calls the man Damarchus
- **Parrhāsium**: “the Parrhasian” (Parrhasia was a region in southern Arcadia, in Greece)
- **Arcadēs**: “the Arcadians”
- **Iovī Lycaeō**: “Lycaean Zeus” (an epithet meaning “Wolf-Zeus”, mentioned only in connection with his worship on Mount Lykaion in Arcadia, in a secret and apparently horrifying ritual)
- **dēgustāsse**: syncopated form of *dēgustāvisse*
- **eundem**: “[and that] the same man”
- **athleticae**: “for/in athletics” (dative of purpose)
- **reversum**: supply *esse*; from *revertor*, which is an alternative deponent version of *revertō*

## Book XV:20, Part I – Cato the Elder brings a fig into the Senate

pernīciālī odiō Carthāginis flagrāns nepōtumque secūrītātis ānxius, cum clāmāret omnī senātū Carthāginem dēlendā, adtulit quōdam diē in cūriam praecōcem ex eā provinciā fīcum ostendēnsque patribus: “interrogō vōs,” inquit, “quandō hanc pōmum dēmptam putētis ex arbore.” cum inter omnēs recentem esse cōstāret: “atquī tertium,” inquit, “ante diem scītōte dēcerptam Carthāgine. tam prope ā moerīs habēmus hostem!”

### Notes

- ***pernīciālī***: “fatal/deadly/destructive”
- ***cum***: “[at the time] when”
- ***dēlendā***: *esse* is implied to complete the indirect statement
- ***patribus***: this is short for *patribus cōnscrīptīs* (“Conscript Fathers”), another word for “senators”
- ***dēmptam***: *esse* is implied to complete the indirect statement
- ***scītōte***: archaic imperative form: “know ye!”; *scīre* always uses the archaic form for the singular (*scītō*), possibly because *scī* sounds a bit silly, but the plural archaic form is unusual, and has a nice ring
- ***dēcerptam***: *esse* is implied to complete the indirect statement
- ***prope ā***: we say, “near to”, but Latin says, “near from”
- ***moerīs***: alternative spelling for *mūrīs*

## Book XV:20, Part II – The surprising effects of the fig

statimque sūmptum est Pūnicum tertium bellum, quō Carthāgō dēlēta est, quamquam Catōne annō sequente raptō. quid prīmum in eō mīrēmur, cūram ingenī an occāsionem fortuitam, celeritātemque cursūs an vehementiam virī? super omnia est, quō nihil equidem dūcō mīrābilius, tantam illam urbem et dē terrārum orbe per CXX annōs aemulam ūnīus pōmī argūmentō ēversam, quod nōn Trebia aut Trasimēnus, nōn Cannae bustō Rōmānī nōminis perficere potuēre, nōn castra Pūnica ad tertium lapidem vallāta portaeque Collīnae adequitāns ipse Hannibal. tantō propius Carthāginem pōmō Catō admōvit!

### Notes

- **quamquam**: this word is, strictly speaking, unnecessary; it tells you that the ablative absolute means “although...”.
- **eō**: “that [event/story]”
- **mīrēmur**: note the subjunctive – can you see why it’s there?
- **cūram ingenī**: could be “the anxiety of his mind”, “the attention paid [to it] by his intellect”, “the zeal of his personality”, or even “the care devoted to the trick” (*ingenī* = *ingenī*)
- **est**: “is the fact” (i.e. the entire indirect statement that follows)
- **quō**: ablative of comparison, referring to “the fact”
- **dūcō**: “I consider/regard as” (as in Catullus VIII)
- **aemulam**: “our rival” – agrees with *urbem*
- **ēversam**: *esse* is implied to complete the indirect statement
- **quod**: “[a deed] which”
- **Trebia**: the Trebia River in northern Italy, where Hannibal inflicted a defeat on the Romans
- **Trasimēnus**: Lake Trasimenus in Etruria, where Hannibal inflicted a defeat on the Romans
- **Cannae**: Cannae village in Apulia, where Hannibal inflicted a defeat on the Romans
- **bustō**: literally “by the tomb”, but better “by the destruction/ruin”
- **potuēre**: syncopated form of *potuērunt*
- **ad tertium lapidem**: “at the third milestone [from Rome]”
- **portaeque Collīnae**: the Porta Collina was one of the gates of Rome

## **Martial, *Epigrammata***

C. Valerius Martialis (c. AD40 - 103) wrote 14 books of short, mostly humorous, poems, called epigrams. They are generally (as are all but one of these) written in either elegiac couplets or hendecasyllables, and usually have a “sting” or punchline at the end.





### I:10 The eager suitor

Petit Gemellus nūptiās Maronillae

et cupit et īnstat et precātur et dōnat.

Adeōne pulchra est? Immo foedius nīl est.

Quid ergo in illā petitur et placet? Tussit.

- This epigram is in limping iambs
- **Adeōne**: = *Adeō* + *-ne*
- **tussit**: “she coughs”, i.e. she has an illness, probably tuberculosis, and will soon die and leave her money to her husband

### I:19 The perils of coughing

Sī meminī, fuert tibi quattuor, Aelia, dentēs:

expulit ūna duōs tussis et ūna duōs.

Iam secūra potes totīs tussire diēbus:

nīl istīc quod agat tertia tussis habet.

- **fuert tibi**: possessive dative – “you had had” / “in your possession there had been”
- **duōs**: agrees with *dentēs*
- **istīc**: “there” / “in that matter”
- **quod agat**: “that it could do”

### I:28 Stinking drunk

Hesternō fētēre merō quī crēdit Acerram,

fallitur: in lūcem semper Acerra bibit.

- **fētēre**: alternative spelling of *foetēre*
- **quī**: “he who” / “whoever”
- **in lūcem**: “until dawn”

### I:32 “I do not like thee”

Nōn amō tē, Sabidī, nec possum dīcere quārē;

hoc tantum possum dīcere: nōn amō tē.

- Look up the title of this one to find a mildly amusing story!

## II:26 Another cougher

Quod querulum spīrat, quod acerbum Naevia tussit,

inque tuōs mittit spūta subinde sinūs,

iam tē rem factam, Bithynice, crēdis habēre.

Errās: blandītur Naevia, nōn moritur.

- **querulum**: “with difficulty” (literally “a complaining thing” – neuter adjective used as adverb)
- **acerbum**: “harshly” (adj. as adv.)
- **inque**: = *et in*
- **rem factam**: “a done deal” (i.e. like Maronilla in I.10, Naevia will soon die and leave her money to her husband)
- **Bithynice**: vocative, addressing the man who’s courting Naevia

## III:34 What’s in a name?

Digna tuō cūr sīs indignaque nōmine, dīcam.

Frīgida es et nigra es: nōn es et es Chionē.

- **digna**: note that this adjective requires an ablative
- **sīs**: subjunctive in indirect question introduced by *dīcam*
- **dīcam**: probably future, but could be subjunctive – “let me tell you”
- **Chionē**: a Greek woman’s name, derived from the word χιών, which means “snow”

## IV: 87 The baby-cuddler’s secret

Īnfantem sēcum semper tua Bassa, Fabulle,

collocat et lūsūs dēliciāsque vocat,

et, quō mīrēris magis, īfantāria nōn est.

Ergo quid in causā est? Pēdere Bassa solet.

- **lūsūs dēliciāsque**: two words for “darling” (*dēliciae* only appears in plural, by the way)
- **quō**: “at which” (ablative of cause)
- **mīrēris**: potential subjunctive
- **īfantāria**: “a baby-lover”, “fond of babies” (*īfantāria*, -ae, f.)
- **pēdō, pēdere, pepēdī, pēditum**: “to fart”

### V:34 A little girl's epitaph

Hanc tibi, Fronto pater, genetrīx Flaccilla, puellam

ōscula commendō dēliciāsque meās,

parvola nē nigrās horrēscat Erōtion umbrās

ōraque Tartareī prōdigiōsa canis.

Implētūra fuit sextae modo frīgora brūmae, 5

vīxisset totidem nī minus illa diēs.

Inter tam veterēs lūdat lascīva patrōnōs

et nōmen blaesō garriat ōre meum.

Mollia nōn rīgidus caespes tegat ossa nec illī,

terra, gravis fuerīs: nōn fuit illa tibi. 10

#### Notes

- **Fronto, Flaccilla**: Possibly Martial's own parents
- **ōscula dēliciāsque**: in apposition to *puellam*, and both to be translated as endearments in the singular
- **parvola**: alternative spelling of *parvula*, and agreeing with *Erōtion*
- **Erōtion**: her name literally means “Little Love” – this is a Greek diminutive of *Erōs*
- **Tartareī**: adjective agreeing with *canis*
- **modo**: modifies *Implētūra* – “just about to...”
- **totidem**: “the same number” (i.e. six)
- **nī**: “if not for the fact that...”
- **illa**: antecedent is *Erōtion*
- **tam veterēs patrōnōs**: i.e. Fronto and Flaccilla
- **lascīva**: from *lascīvus*, -a, -um: “playful” / “frisky”
- **nōn rīgidus**: Asking the earth to lie lightly upon the dead was a common prayer; here it's the turf as well
- **terra**: vocative, as shown by *fuerīs* (perfect subjunctive for a polite request)

## V:49 A useful hairstyle

Vīdissem modo forte cum sedentem

solum, tē, Labiēne, trēs putāvī.

Calvae mē numerus tuae fefellit:

sunt illinc tibi, sunt et hinc capillī

quālēs vel puerum decēre possunt; 5

nūdum est in mediō caput nec ullus

in longā pilus āreā nōtatur.

Hic error tibi prōfuit Decembrī,

tunc cum prandia mīsīt Imperātor:

cum pānāriolīs tribus redistī. 10

Tālem Gēryonem fuisse crēdō.

Vītēs cēnseō porticum Philippī:

sī tē viderit Herculēs, peristī.

- This epigram is in hendecasyllables
- **cum**: temporal
- **tē**: is both the object of *Vīdissem*, and the subject of the ind. statement introduced by *putāvī*
- **trēs**: short for *trēs virōs esse*
- **Calvae numerus tuae**: “the quantity/style of your baldness”
- **sunt tibi**: “you have” (possessive dative)
- **vel**: “even”
- **Decembrī**: i.e. at the traditionally generous time of Saturnalia
- **mīsīt**: “gave out”
- **Imperātor**: “the Emperor” (lit. “[triumphant] general”, a title arrogated by the Emperors)
- **pānāriolīs**: from *pānāriolum*, a small breadbasket
- **Gēryonem**: Geryon, a 3-bodied giant killed by Hercules (who had a temple at the colonnade of Philippus)
- **Vītēs**: subjunctive in an indirect command with *cēnseō*, but without an *ut*
- **peristī**: short for *periistī*

## IX:15 An honest woman

Inscrīpsit tumulīs septem scelerāta virōrum

‘sē fēcisse’ Chloē. Quid pote simplicius?

- **sē fēcisse**: It was common for the inscription on a tomb to read *X fēcit*, where X was the deceased’s widow, parent, child, *vel sim.* who had put up the monument. Here Martial implies that it was not the tomb that Chloe had made, but the necessity for it.
- **pote**: “could possibly be” (this is an indeclinable adjective)

### IX:68 A noisy schoolteacher

Quid tibi nōbiscum est, lūdī scelerāte magister,

invīsum puerīs virginibusque caput?

nōndum cristātī rūpēre silentia gallī:

murmure iam saevō verberibusque tonās.

tam grave percussīs incūdibus aera resultant,

causidicum mediō cum faber aptat equō:

mītor in magnō clāmō furit amphitheātrō,

vincentī parmae cum sua turba favet.

vīcīnī somnum – nōn tōtā nocte – rogāmus:

nam vigilāre leve est, pervigilāre grave est.

discipulōs dīmitte tuōs. Vīs, garrule, quantum

accipis ut clāmēs, accipere ut taceās?

5

10

- **caput**: = *vir* (this was a disdainful way to refer to someone)
- **rūpēre**: syncopated form of *rūpērunt*
- **incūdibus**: look under *incūs*
- **aera**: plural of *aes, aeris*, n., not *āēr, āeris*, m. (notice the long vowel at the start of the latter, which means you can scan to work out which one you're looking at, if your text doesn't have macra)
- **causidicum... equō**: this clause refers to the practice of setting up equestrian statues after successful lawsuits (*causidicus* is a slightly disrespectful word for "lawyer")
- **parmae**: synecdoche for *gladiatōrī*

### XI:99 A tight squeeze

Dē cathedrā quotiēns surgis – iam saepe notāvī –

pēdicant miserae, Lesbia, tē tunicae.

Quās cum cōnāta es dextrā, cōnāta sinistrā

vellere, cum lacrimīs eximis et gemitū:

sīc cōstringuntur geminā Symplēgade cūlī

et nimiās intrant Cyaneāsque natīs.

Ēmendāre cupis vitium dēforme? docēbō:

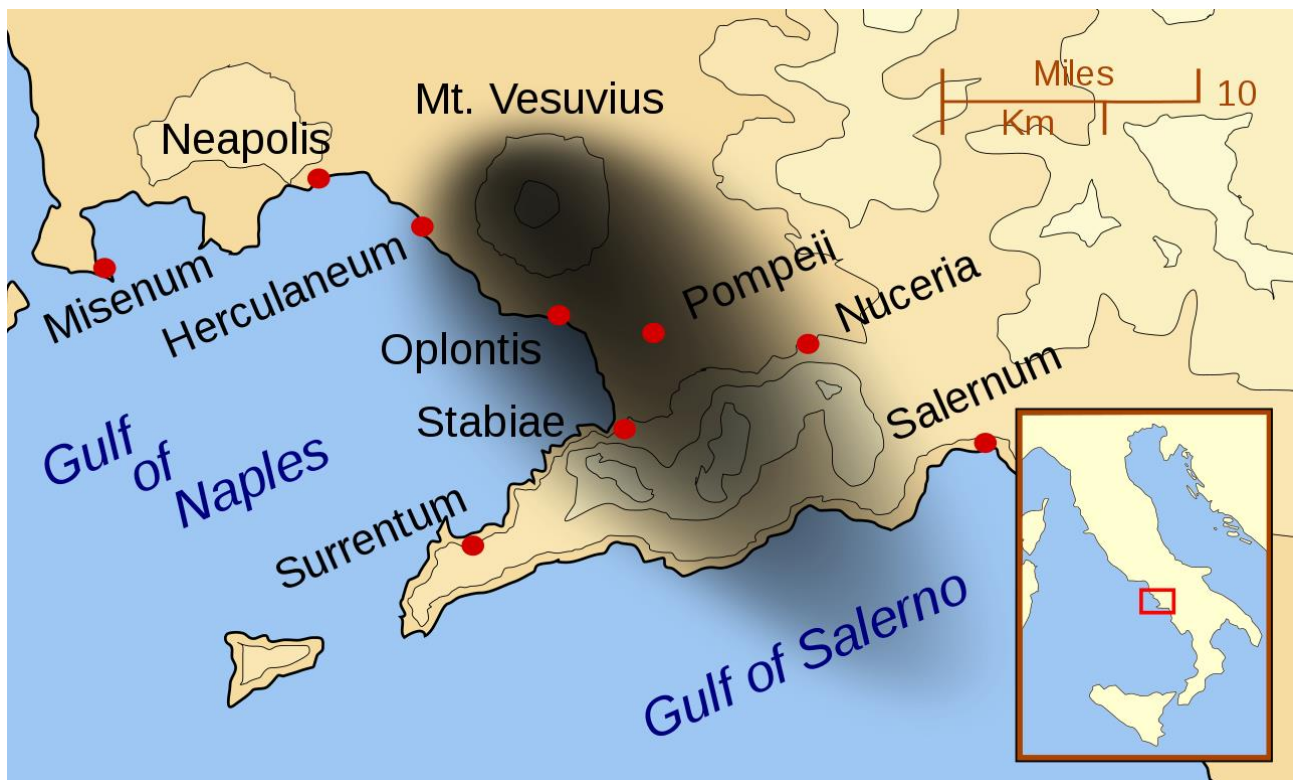
Lesbia, nec surgās cēnseō nec sedeās.

5

- **pēdicant**: from *pēdicō -āre*, best translated here as "to give a wedgie to" (the literal meaning is obscene)
- **tunicae**: these are plural for singular throughout, or perhaps Lesbia is wearing several layers
- **dextra, sinistra**: "with your right hand, with your left hand" – humorously epic style to describe a very prosaic action
- **eximis**: from *eximō -ere*
- **Symplēgade**: the Clashing Rocks of mythology (singular here for the sake of the metre)
- **Cyaneās**: "Cyanean" (adjective derived from another name for the Symplegades)

## Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*

C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus (AD 61 - c. AD 112) was the nephew of Pliny the Elder. He was a lawyer and statesman, but is best known for his letters to various people, including emperors. This letter (VI.16) was written to Tacitus at the latter's request; it describes the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, in which the elder Pliny died. Sadly, if Tacitus did end up including the eruption in one of his works, it has been lost.



By MapMaster - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2912359>  
*Note that this map shows modern coastlines; in AD 79, Pompeii overlooked the shore and had a port*

## Section I – Pliny is glad that his uncle will be immortalised in Tacitus’ history

## C. PLĪNIUS TACITŌ SUŌ S.

Petis ut tibi avunculī meī exitum scribam, quō v̄rius trādere posterīs possīs. Grātiās agō; nam videō mortī eius, sī celebrētur ā tē, immortalē glōriam esse prōpositam. Quamvīs enim pulcherrimārum clāde terrārum, ut populī, ut urbēs, memorābilī cāsū, quasi semper vīctūrus occiderit, quamvīs ipse plūrima opera et mānsūra condiderit, multum tamen perpetuitātī eius scriptōrum tuōrum aeternitās addet. Equidem beātōs putō, quibus deōrum mūnere datum est aut facere scribenda aut scribere legenda, beātissimōs v̄rō quibus utrumque. Hōrum in numerō avunculus meus et suīs librīs et tuīs erit. Quō libentius suscipiō, dēposcō etiam quod iniungis.

## Notes

- **S.:** short for *Salūtem [dīcit]* – “[sends] greetings” (literally “speaks health”) – the standard beginning for a letter
- **Petis:** presumably this refers to a previous letter from Tacitus
- **avunculī:** one’s *avunculus* was the brother of one’s mother, and traditionally the indulgent uncle – hence the English derivative “avuncular” – whereas one’s *patruus* (father’s brother) was stricter
- **exitum:** object of *scribam*; we would say “write about/of”, but Romans just said “write”
- **quō:** “so that” – *quō* plus a comparative is a way of creating a purpose clause
- **trādere:** object is implied *eum*, referring to *exitum*
- **mortī:** dative with *esse prōpositam*
- **clāde:** ablative of cause; we would probably translate using “in”
- **ut:** “like” / “along with”
- **quasi semper vīctūrus:** i.e. because he will be remembered along with the historic catastrophe in which he died; *vīctūrus* is from *vīvō*, not *vincō*
- **beātōs:** supply *eōs [hominēs] esse*
- **datum est:** “it is given” (neuter because it agrees with the infinitive following)
- **scribenda:** “things worth writing about”
- **Quō libentius:** unlike the previous *quō* + comparative, this *quō* just means “all the more”
- **dēposcō etiam:** “indeed, I demand”
- **quod:** “that which” / “the task which”

## Section II – An ominous cloud

Erat Misēnī classemque imperiō praesēns regēbat. Nōnum Kal. Septembrēs hōrā ferē septimā māter mea indicat eī apparēre nūbem inūsitātā et magnitudīne et speciē. Ūsus ille sōle, mox frīgidā, gustāverat iacēns studēbatque; poscit soleās, ascendit locum ex quō maximē mīrāculum illud cōspici poterat. Nūbēs – incertum procul intuentibus ex quō monte; Vesuvium fuisse postea cognitum est – oriēbātur, cuius similitudinē et formam nōn alia magis arbor quam pīnus expresserit. Nam longissimō velut truncō ēlāta in altum quibusdam rāmis diffundēbātur, crēdō quia recentī spīritū ēvecta, dein senēscēte eō dēstitūta aut etiam pondere suō victa in lātitudinē vānēscēbat, candida interdum, interdum sordida et maculōsa prout terram cineremve sustulerat.

### Notes

- **Erat**: subject is “he”, i.e. Pliny the Elder
- **Misēnī**: locative case; see the map on the Pliny title page for the location of Misenum
- **imperiō praesēns regēbat**: “was officially commanding in person”
- **Nonum Kal. Septembrēs**: “on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August” (lit. “on the 9<sup>th</sup> [day before] the Kalends (1<sup>st</sup>) of September” – count back 9 days from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September); but some manuscripts, as well as archaeological evidence, indicate that the eruption actually occurred in October
- **hōrā ferē septimā**: “just before noon”
- **indicat**: historic present (Pliny moves in and out of this throughout – try to keep track!)
- **inūsitātā**: agrees with *magnitudīne* and *speciē*; why are these words in the ablative case?
- **Ūsus ille sōle**: “He, having sunbathed” (lit. “having made use of the sun” – *ūtor* takes abl.)
- **frīgidā**: supply *aquā* (this is also ablative because of *ūsus*) – “having had a cold bath”
- **iacēns**: he was having a lazy day – you didn’t usually recline at meals other than dinner
- **incertum**: supply *erat*
- **procul intuentibus**: “to us/those [who/since we/they were] observing it from a distance”
- **magis expresserit**: “could have portrayed/imitated more [effectively]” (potential subjunctive, in the perfect tense because the cloud is no longer in existence)
- **pīnus**: look up an image of an Italian pine tree and you will understand this simile
- **velut, quibusdam**: these words make the description vaguer – use phrases like “something like”, “sort of”, “as it were”, “so to speak”, etc.
- **ēlāta**: agrees with *nūbēs* (as do *ēvecta*, *dēstitūta*, *victa*, *candida*, *sordida*, and *maculōsa*)
- **in altum**: often *altum* = “the deep sea”, but this means “upwards”; cf. *in lātitudinē* below
- **senēscēte eō**: ablative absolute, with *eō* referring to *spīritū*



### Section III – Pliny the Elder decides to investigate

Magnum propiusque nōscendum ut ērudītissimō virō vīsum. Iubet liburnicam aptārī; mihi sī venīre ūnā vellem facit cōpiam; respondī studēre mē malle, et forte ipse quod scrīberem dederat. Ēgrediēbātur domō; accipit codicillōs Rectīnae Tascī imminentī perīculō exterritae – nam vīlla eius subiacēbat, nec ulla nisi nāvibus fuga –: ut sē tantō discrīminī ēriperet ōrābat. Vertit ille cōnsilium et quod studiōsō animō incohāverat obit maximō. Dēdūcit quadrirēmēs, ascendit ipse nōn Rectīnae modo sed multīs – erat enim frequēns amoenitās ōrae – lātūrus auxilium. Properat illūc unde alīi fugiunt, rēctumque cursum rēctā gubernāculā in perīculum tenet adeō solūtus metū, ut omnēs illius malī mōtūs, omnēs figūrās, ut dēprēnderat oculīs, dictāret ēnōtāretque.

#### Notes

- **ut ērudītissimō virō**: “to a most educated man [as he was]”
- **vīsum**: “it seemed” (supply *est*); neuter referring to the phenomenon, not only the cloud
- **liburnicam**: “a Liburnian” – a type of light, fast bireme (a ship with two sets of oars)
- **vellem**: subjunctive paraphrasing what Pliny the Elder said (“*sī venīre ūnā vīs*”)
- **facit cōpiam**: “gives/offers the opportunity” (literally “makes the resource”)
- **quod scrīberem**: relative purpose clause
- **Rectīnae Tascī**: “Rectina, wife of Tascus” – the text is not clear, and Rectina and her husband are otherwise unknown (unless *Tascī* should be *Bassī*, in which case it refers to Caesius Bassus, a poet who may have died in this eruption), but this is scholars’ best guess
- **subiacēbat**: supply *montī Vesuviō*
- **nec ulla nisi nāvibus fuga**: supply *erat*
- **quod studiōsō animō incohāverat obit maximō**: “[the task] which he had begun in a scientific frame of mind, he approaches in a heroic one” (*magnanimus* = “great-souled”)
- **quadrirēmēs**: the larger quadriremes (two sets of oars, but two oarsmen per oar) were better for a rescue mission than the Liburnian he had originally ordered for his own trip
- **Rectīnae, multīs**: dative, indirect objects of *lātūrus*
- **amoenitās ōrae**: “the pleasant coast” (lit. “the coast’s pleasantness”)
- **metū**: abl. of separation with *solūtus*
- **illius malī**: refers to the eruption
- **dēprēnderat**: short for *dēprehenderat*; indicative because the *ut* is temporal

## Section IV – The danger increases

Iam nāvibus cinis incidēbat, quō propius accēderent, calidior et dēnsior; iam pūmicēs etiam nigrīque et ambūstī et frāctī igne lapidēs; iam vadum subitum ruīnāque montis lītora obstantia. Cunctātus paulum an retrō flecteret, mox gubernātōrī ut ita faceret monentī “Fortēs” inquit “Fortūna iuvat: Pompōniānum pete.”

Stabiīs erat, dīremptus sinū mediō – nam sēnsim circumactīs curvātisque lītōribus mare īfunditur –; ibi quamquam nōndum perīculō appropinquante, cōspicuō tamen et cum crēsceret proximō, sarcinās contulerat in nāvēs, certus fugae sī contrārius ventus resēdisset. Quō tunc avunculus meus secundissimō invectus, complectitur trepidantem cōnsōlātur hortātur, utque timōrem eius suā sēcūritāte lēnīret, dēferrī in balineum iubet; lōtus accubat cēnat, aut hilaris aut – quod aequē magnum – similis hilarī.

### Notes

- **quō propius accēderent**: the *quō* matches an implied *eō* before *calidior et dēnsior*; this construction means “the \_\_\_er, the \_\_\_er”; *accēderent* is subjunctive with this causal idea
- **iam... obstantia**: “now [there were] sudden shallows and the shores obstructing [the ships] because of the collapse of the mountain” – the sea is filled with rocks from the eruption
- **Cunctātus**: refers to Pliny the Elder
- **an**: introduces an indirect deliberative question – *an*, which usually introduces the second half of a double question, indicates that he is considering an alternative to his original plan
- **ut**: begins an indirect command dependent on *monentī* (which agrees with *gubernātōrī*)
- **Pompōniānum**: it is unclear who this was
- **Stabiīs erat**: *Stabiīs* is locative (see map for Stabiae’s location); subject of *erat* is Pomponianus
- **dīremptus**: “cut off” or “separated”, referring to Pomponianus
- **īfunditur**: lit. “is poured in”, but better taken as “creates a bay” (within the larger bay)
- **perīculō**: abl. abs. with *appropinquante*, but also with *cōspicuō* and *proximō*
- **sī... resēdisset**: this conditional clause has a subjunctive because it reports Pomponianus’ thinking; pluperfect because that is the nearest Latin can get to a future perfect subjunctive
- **Quō**: i.e. *ventus* – the west wind is *contrārius* for Pomponianus, *secundissimus* for Pliny
- **complectitur... hortātur**: tricolon with asyndeton
- **utque**: introduces a purpose clause, with the main clause following
- **dēferrī**: supply *sē*
- **lōtus**: alternative spelling of *lautus* (PPP of *lavāre*)

## Section V – Pliny the Elder stays calm to reduce others’ panic

Interim ē Vesuviō monte plūribus locīs lātissimae flammae altaque incendia relūcēbant, quōrum fulgor et clāritās tenebrīs noctis excitābātur. Ille agrestium trepidātiōne ignēs relictōs dēsertāsque vīllās per solitūdinem ardēre in remedium formīdinis dictitābat. Tum sē quietī dedit et quiēvit vērissimō quidem somnō; nam meātus animae, quī illī propter amplitūdinem corporis gravior et sonantior erat, ab iīs quī līminī obversābantur audiēbātur. Sed ārea ex quā diaeta adībātur ita iam cinere mixtīsque pūmicibus opplēta surrēxerat, ut sī longior in cubiculō mora, exitus negārētur. Excitātus prōcēdit, sēque Pompōniāno cēterīsque quī pervigilāverant reddit. In commūne cōnsultant, intrā tēcta subsistant an in apertō vāgentur. Nam crēbrīs vastīsque tremōribus tēcta nūtābant, et quasi ēmōta sēdibus suīs nunc hūc nunc illūc abīre aut referrī vidēbantur. Sub diō rūrsus quamquam levium exēsōrumque pūmicum cāsus metuēbātur, quod tamen perīculōrum collātiō ēlēgit; et apud illum quidem ratiō ratiōnem, apud aliōs timōrem timor vīcīt.

### Notes

- **excitābātur**: “was emphasised” (singular because it is attracted to *clāritās*)
- **Ille**: this is the subject of *dictitābat*, introduces an indirect statement, and refers to Pliny
- **trepidātiōne**: ablative of cause
- **in remedium**: “as a cure”
- **meātus animae**: “his breathing”, i.e. his snoring (literally “the movement of his breath”)
- **ārea**: “the ground-level of the courtyard”
- **diaeta**: “his suite”
- **mora**: supply *esset*
- **cōnsultant**: leads into an indirect double deliberative question
- **Sub diō**: “Outside” – *dīum* (alternative spelling of *dīvum*) = lit. “the divine thing” = *caelum*
- **rūrsus**: “on the other hand”
- **quamquam**: modifies *levium* and *exēsōrum*, not *metuēbātur*
- **metuēbātur**: “was to be feared” (literally “was being feared”)
- **quod**: “which” – refers to going outside; neuter by attraction to the gender of *perīculōrum*
- **collātiō**: “comparison” – the subject of *ēlēgit*, but you may want to rephrase in English
- **apud illum**: “for him” / “with him” / “in his case”

## Section VI – The escape from the villa

Cervicālia capitibus imposita linteīs cōstringunt; id mūnīmentum adversus incidentia fuit. Iam diēs alibī, illīc nox omnibus noctibus nigrior dēnsiorque; quam tamen facēs multae variaque lūmina solvēbant. Placuit ēgredī in lītus, et ex proximō adspicere, ecquid iam mare admitteret; quod adhūc vastum et adversum permanēbat. Ibi super abiectum linteum recubāns semel atque iterum frīgidam aquam poposcit hausitque. Deinde flammae, flammārumque praenūntius odor sulphuris, aliōs in fugam vertunt, excitant illum. Innitēns servolīs duōbus assurrēxit et statim concidit, ut ego colligō, crassiōre cālīgine spīritū obstructō, clausōque stomachō quī illī natūrā invalidus et angustus et frequenter aestuāns erat. Ubi diēs redditus – is ab eō quem novissime vīderat tertius – corpus inventum integrum illaesum opertumque ut fuerat indūtus: habitus corporis quiēscētī quam dēfūctō similior.

### Notes

- **capitibus**: dative with compound verb *imposita*, or ablative of place where
- **variaque lūmina**: other light-sources such as lamps, or light from the fires and the eruption
- **ecquid**: begins an ind. question; *ecquid* is strong– “anything at all”, i.e. even a small boat
- **quod**: “but it” (literally “which” – connecting relative)
- **recubāns**: refers to Pliny the Elder
- **servolīs**: alternative spelling for *servulīs*
- **ut ego colligō**: from *colligere*, not *colligāre*; Pliny the Younger, not having been there, must work from what he has been told
- **crassiōre cālīgine**: “by the too-thick/unusually-thick fumes” (*cālīgō* usually means “mist” or “darkness”) – the accumulation of fumes, dust, and ash, or the arrival of the eruption’s sixth and final pyroclastic surge, of which only the diluted outer edge reached Stabiae
- **stomachō**: here refers to the windpipe – Pliny the Younger’s anatomy knowledge is not the best! The description here has led many to suggest that Pliny the Elder had asthma
- **illī**: dative of interest with body part
- **is... tertius**: supply *diēs*; the 26<sup>th</sup> of August (or October)
- **integrum illaesum**: possibly included to refute a rumour mentioned by Suetonius that Pliny had been killed by his slave after begging for death because he could go no further
- **ut fuerat indūtus**: the masculine adjective thinks back to when he had been alive
- **quiēscētī quam dēfūctō similior**: a pathos-inducing image

## Section VII – Meanwhile...

Interim Misēnī ego et māter – sed nihil ad historiam, nec tū aliud quam dē exitū eius scīre voluistī. Fīnem ergō faciam. Ūnum adiciam, omnia mē quibus interfueram quaeque statim, cum maximē vēra memorantur, audieram, persecūtum. Tū potissima excerpēs; aliud est enim epistulam aliud historiam, aliud amīcō aliud omnibus scrībere. Valē.

### Notes

- *sed nihil ad historiam*: “but that has nothing to do with/is no use for history” – a clever use of aposiopesis (breaking off in the middle of a thought), encouraging the reader to want more
- *Ūnum adiciam*: introduces an indirect statement (for which you must supply an *esse*)
- *interfueram*: not part of the indirect statement, thus not subjunctive (likewise *memorantur* and *audieram*)
- *cum maximē vēra memorantur*: i.e. before memories have had time to fade
- *potissima*: “the most important parts”

## **Bonus – Two more letters from Pliny the Younger**

(Translator: J.B. Firth)

### **VI:20 – To Tacitus**

You say that the letter which I wrote to you at your request, describing the death of my uncle, has made you anxious to know not only the terrors, but also the distress I suffered while I remained behind at Misenum. I had indeed started to tell you of these, but then broke off. Well, “though my mind shudders at the recollection, I will essay the task”. [N.B. this is a quote from the *Aeneid* (Book II, lines 12-13).]

After my uncle had set out I employed the remainder of the time with my studies, for I had stayed behind for that very purpose. Afterwards I had a bath, dined, and then took a brief and restless sleep. For many days previous there had been slight shocks of earthquake, which were not particularly alarming, because they are common enough in Campania. But on that night the shocks were so intense that everything round us seemed not only to be disturbed, but to be tottering to its fall. My mother rushed into my bedchamber, just as I myself was getting up in order to arouse her if she was still sleeping. We sat down in the courtyard of the house, which was of smallish size and lay between the sea and the buildings. I don't know whether my behaviour should be called courageous or rash – for I was only in my eighteenth year – but I called for a volume of Titus Livius, and read it, as though I were perfectly at my ease, and went on making my usual extracts. Then a friend of my uncle's, who had but a little time before come to join him from Spain, on seeing my mother and myself sitting there and me reading, upbraided her for her patience and me for my indifference, but I paid no heed, and pored over my book.

It was now the first hour of the day, but the light was still faint and weak. The buildings all round us were beginning to totter, and, though we were in the open, the courtyard was so narrow that we were greatly afraid, and indeed sure of being overwhelmed by their fall. So that decided us to leave the town. We were followed by a distracted crowd, which, when in a panic, always prefers someone else's judgment to its own as the most prudent course to adopt, and when we set out these people came crowding in masses upon us, and pressed and urged us forward. We came to a halt when we had passed beyond the buildings, and underwent there many wonderful experiences and terrors. For although the ground was perfectly level, the vehicles which we had ordered to be brought with us began to sway to and fro, and though they were wedged with stones, we could not keep them still in their places. Moreover, we saw the sea drawn back upon itself, and, as it were, repelled by the quaking of the earth. The shore certainly was greatly widened, and many marine creatures were stranded on the dry sands. On the other side, the black, fearsome cloud of fiery vapour burst into long, twisting, zigzag flames and gaped asunder, the flames resembling lightning flashes, only they were of greater size. Then indeed my uncle's Spanish friend exclaimed sharply, and with an air of command, to my mother and me, “If your brother and your uncle is still alive, he will be anxious for you to save yourselves; if he is dead, I am sure he wished you to survive him. Come, why do you hesitate to quit this place?” We replied that we could not think of looking after our own safety while we were uncertain of his. He then waited no longer, but tore away as fast as he could and got clear of danger.

Soon afterwards the cloud descended upon the earth, and covered the whole bay; it encircled Capri and hid it from sight, and we could no longer see the promontory of Misenum. Then my mother prayed, entreated, and commanded me to fly as best I could, saying that I was young and could escape, while she was old and infirm, and would not fear to die, if only she knew that she had not been the cause of my death. I replied that I would not save myself unless I could save her too, and so, after taking tight hold of her hand, I forced her to quicken her steps. She reluctantly obeyed, accusing herself for retarding my flight. Then the ashes began to

fall, but not thickly: I looked back, and a dense blackness was rolling up behind us, which spread itself over the ground and followed like a torrent. "Let us turn aside," I said, "while we can still see, lest we be thrown down in the road and trampled on in the darkness by the thronging crowd."

We were considering what to do, when the blackness of night overtook us, not that of a moonless or cloudy night, but the blackness of pent-up places which never see the light. You could hear the wailing of women, the screams of little children, and the shouts of men; some were trying to find their parents, others their children, others their wives, by calling for them and recognising them by their voices alone. Some were commiserating their own lot, others that of their relatives, while some again prayed for death in sheer terror of dying. Many were lifting up their hands to the gods, but more were declaring that now there were no more gods, and that this night would last for ever, and the end of all the world. Nor were there wanting those who added to the real perils by inventing new and false terrors, for some said that part of Misenum was in ruins and the rest in flames, and though the tale was untrue, it found ready believers.

A gleam of light now appeared, which seemed to us not so much daylight as a token of the approaching fire. The latter remained at a distance, but the darkness came on again, and the ashes once more fell thickly and heavily. We had to keep rising and shaking the latter off us, or we should have been buried by them and crushed by their weight. I might boast that not one groan or cowardly exclamation escaped my lips, despite these perils, had I not believed that I and the world were perishing together - a miserable consolation, indeed, yet one which a mortal creature finds very soothing. At length the blackness became less dense, and dissipated as it were into smoke and cloud; then came the real light of day, and the sun shone out, but as blood-red as it appears at its setting. Our still trembling eyes saw that everything had been transformed, and covered with a deep layer of ashes, like snow. Making our way back to Misenum, we refreshed our bodies as best we could, and passed an anxious, troubled night, hovering between hope and fear. But our fears were uppermost, for the shocks of earthquake still continued, and several persons, driven frantic by dreadful prophecies, made sport of their own calamities and those of others. For our own part, though we had already passed through perils, and expected still more to come, we had no idea even then of leaving the town until we got news of my uncle.

You will not read these details, which are not up to the dignity of history, as though you were about to incorporate them in your writings, and if they seem to you to be hardly worth being made the subject of a letter, you must take the blame yourself, inasmuch as you insisted on having them. Farewell.

### **X:96 – To the Emperor Trajan, concerning Christians, while Pliny was a provincial governor (c.112)**

It is my custom, Sir, to refer to you in all cases where I do not feel sure, for who can better direct my doubts or inform my ignorance? I have never been present at any legal examination of the Christians, and I do not know, therefore, what are the usual penalties passed upon them, or the limits of those penalties, or how searching an inquiry should be made. I have hesitated a great deal in considering whether any distinctions should be drawn according to the ages of the accused; whether the weak should be punished as severely as the more robust; whether if they renounce their faith they should be pardoned, or whether the man who has once been a Christian should gain nothing by recanting; whether the name itself, even though otherwise innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes that gather round it.

In the meantime, this is the plan which I have adopted in the case of those Christians who have been brought before me. I ask them whether they are Christians; if they say yes, then I

repeat the question a second and a third time, warning them of the penalties it entails, and if they still persist, I order them to be taken away to prison. For I do not doubt that, whatever the character of the crime may be which they confess, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy certainly ought to be punished. There were others who showed similar mad folly whom I reserved to be sent to Rome, as they were Roman citizens.

Subsequently, as is usually the way, the very fact of my taking up this question led to a great increase of accusations, and a variety of cases were brought before me. A pamphlet was issued anonymously, containing the names of a number of people. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians and called upon the gods in the usual formula, reciting the words after me, those who offered incense and wine before your image, which I had given orders to be brought forward for this purpose, together with the statues of the deities – all such I considered should be discharged, especially as they cursed the name of Christ, which, it is said, those who are really Christians cannot be induced to do. Others, whose names were given me by an informer, first said that they were Christians and afterwards denied it, declaring that they had been but were so no longer, some of them having recanted many years before, and more than one so long as twenty years back. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the deities, and cursed the name of Christ.

But they declared that the sum of their guilt or their error only amounted to this, that on a stated day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god, and that so far from binding themselves by oath to commit any crime, their oath was to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and from breach of faith, and not to deny trust money placed in their keeping when called upon to deliver it. When this ceremony was concluded, it had been their custom to depart and meet again to take food, but it was of no special character and quite harmless, and they had ceased this practice after the edict in which, in accordance with your orders, I had forbidden all secret societies. I thought it the more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in these statements by submitting two women, who were called deaconesses, to the torture, but I found nothing but a debased superstition carried to great lengths. So I postponed my examination, and immediately consulted you.

The matter seems to me worthy of your consideration, especially as there are so many people involved in the danger. Many persons of all ages, and of both sexes alike, are being brought into peril of their lives by their accusers, and the process will go on. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only through the free cities, but into the villages and the rural districts, and yet it seems to me that it can be checked and set right. It is beyond doubt that the temples, which have been almost deserted, are beginning again to be thronged with worshippers, that the sacred rites which have for a long time been allowed to lapse are now being renewed, and that the food for the sacrificial victims is once more finding a sale, whereas, up to recently, a buyer was hardly to be found. From this it is easy to infer what vast numbers of people might be reclaimed, if only they were given an opportunity of repentance.

### **X:97 – Trajan's reply**

You have adopted the proper course, my dear Pliny, in examining into the cases of those who have been denounced to you as Christians, for no hard and fast rule can be laid down to meet a question of such wide extent. The Christians are not to be hunted out; if they are brought before you and the offence is proved, they are to be punished, but with this reservation – that if any one denies that he is a Christian and makes it clear that he is not, by offering prayers to our deities, then he is to be pardoned because of his recantation, however suspicious his past conduct may have been. But pamphlets published anonymously must not carry any weight whatever, no matter what the charge may be, for they are not only a precedent of the very worst type, but they are not in consonance with the spirit of our age.