The Roman Family in the *Letters* of the Younger Pliny

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores conceptualizations of Roman family life as represented in the *Letters* of the Younger Pliny. Its object is to disclose the contribution Pliny's evidence makes to the current debate on the nature of the Roman family. In the new studies of the Roman family that have characterized Roman social history in the last decade or so, Pliny's evidence has not hitherto been fully exploited.

The first chapter provides an introduction to the field of family history, outlining the various approaches of both modern and ancient social historians, and detailing current views on the Roman family. It makes clear that the view of the Roman family as primarily a nuclear construct (a conjugal couple and their unmarried offspring) will be tested throughout the thesis. The second chapter examines Pliny and his *Letters*. The nature of the correspondence is discussed so that its value as historical evidence can be assessed, and Pliny's own life, career, family, and social circle are examined. The essentially upper-class nature of Pliny's evidence is brought out.

Chapter three investigates the evidence on Pliny's residences in the *Letters*, considering such issues as household composition, spatial definition (with regard to public and private space), and room function. The conclusion is reached that in nature, composition and function, Pliny's residences were distinct from the stereotypical house and home of the modern nuclear family. Chapter four examines Pliny's evidence on Roman marriage, including betrothal and matchmaking processes and questions of marital love and sentiment. It is shown that matchmaking was the concern of the widespread kin group, not simply the principals of the marriage. Pliny's society was committed firmly to marriage by arrangement, though Pliny

himself felt that companionate love was to be part of the fabric of a union, at least after marriage had come into being. Chapter five investigates Pliny's views of children, discussing the value he placed on the young and various issues of childrearing. Pliny, it emerges, had a very pragmatic view of children, and was interested in them solely to the extent that they perpetuated the family name, traditions, and fortune. Chapter six explores Pliny's portrayal of the elderly and their role within the family, and concludes that the aged were a focus of family devotion who played an advisory role in family affairs.

In sum, it follows, as the conclusion maintains, that Pliny's evidence does not support the notion that nuclear attachments were primary in Roman conceptualization of the family, but that Roman mentality was dominated by a much larger symbiotic construct that is best described as the "extensive family".

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My final thanks goes to my computer which never let me down, despite what people say about it.

DEDICATION

To my family:

my mother and father, my brother, and my grandmother.

ONE

Introduction

The Origin of Modern Interest in the Roman Family

The Roman family first received concentrated attention in the early part of the twentieth century from the school of Roman historians associated with prosopography. Prosopography, "the study of society based on careers and connections of individuals",[1] was the fruit of two German scholars' industry, M. Gelzer and F. Münzer; its methodology, however, is perhaps better known to English readers through the monumental work of Sir Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution.*[2] In keeping with the style of history being written at the time, this approach was concerned with the ruling class. The élite focus was boldly asserted:

> ...Roman history, Republican or Imperial, is the history of the governing class.[3]

The image of the Roman family that prevailed at this time was also heavily indebted to a close study of the surviving Roman legal texts. The far reaching powers of a Roman father (*paterfamilias*) and the rules of inheritance on intestancy were seen as keys to unlocking the nature of the Roman family. But recently scholarly interest, dissatisfied with the élite focus and looking to exploit other primary source material, has turned from prosopography and legal texts. As discussions of the Roman family move into new areas a more complete, but complicated, picture of the Roman family emerges. The silence of childhood, servitude and womanhood is being dispelled as academic interest in their roles in the family has overcome the difficulty of the evidence.

Modern Approaches to Family History

Michael Anderson, in *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914*, concisely outlines the principal approaches to the study of the family employed by modern social historians. He begins with the demographic approach, which he defines as "the statistical study of population", which "embraces all aspects of population movement that are capable of numerical measurement."[4] Stressing the unreliability and the elitist nature of literary evidence, demographers compile statistical information to reconstruct detailed aspects of a society. The fruits of their labor enable us to provide lineage reconstructions, marriage rates, ages at marriage, patterns of childbirth, the size of average households, and mortality rates. Though the conclusions are undeniably important, the findings are essentially skeletal and do little to flesh out the social aspects of daily life.

The fleshing out process so absent in the demographic camp is precisely the concern of the second approach, the sentiments approach. Advocates of this method such as Philip Ariès, Alan Macfarlane, and Lawrence Stone[5] concern themselves with the emotional aspects of relationships, concentrating on the changing meaning of the family over time rather than its structural variation, which is left to the historical demographers. Discerning the nature of life within the family is their primary concern. In seeking to define the purpose of the family, they explore the relationship between the household and the community, the emotional climate within the household, attitudes towards children and towards sex.

The sentimentalists' artillery is diverse. Exhaustive use is made of the literature of the day, yet the approach does not confine itself to formal literature such as novels and plays but includes written work which was not intended for public viewing such as diaries and letters. Frequent recourse is also made to archaeology and

art history, engaging such subjects as domestic architecture. But adherents to this approach face the criticism that their methodology is somewhat contrived:

> These sentiments writers began with a set of questions about the ideas associated with family behavior and were then faced with the problem of finding suitable source material to throw light on such ideas.[6]

There is also a risk of oversimplification for the sake of a tidy conclusion. Attitudes, in fact, change slowly and not necessarily in a linear manner; indeed, trends of conduct may co-exist before one actually replaces another. However, with a little caution this danger can be avoided.[7] It has also been noticed that the evidence is almost exclusively mined from an aristocratic literate minority which places a strikingly élite bias on the conclusions reached. But if this fact is flagged, and the shortcomings of being so dependent on the literate are recognized, or are balanced out with evidence which sheds light on the lower classes, the threat pales.

The final approach is the household economics approach, which "seeks to interpret households and families above all in the context of the economic behavior of their members."[8] At the heart of this approach is the belief that processes of economic exchange between family members and non-family members result in constraints and power structures which help mold the family form and explain behavioral patterns between the family members. The sources for this approach are documents illustrating ownership or transmission of property, budgets sheets, employment records, and wills which are employed to recreate the internal and external economic life of the family.

Roman family history owes much to the endeavors of mediaeval and modern historians of the family and has cultivated an interest in the same three approaches

briefly outlined above. Keith Hopkins, for example, well represents the demographic camp for ancient family history. His articles on the probable age structure of the Roman population and the age of Roman girls at marriage reveal his proclivity towards a statistical approach.[9] But a camp to which almost all scholars owe their allegiance, at least temporarily, is the sentimental approach, though at present its more ardent adherents are K.R. Bradley, Suzanne Dixon, and Susan Treggiari.[10] The economic approach can be found in Peter Garnsey's contribution to the book he co-authored with Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture*.

The tri-partite division of the approaches to the family is, however, somewhat superficial since the ancient historian is obliged to adopt various methodologies (and their accompanying sources), due to the relative paucity of evidence for Roman family history. Beryl Rawson warned ancient historians: "family studies must proceed on the basis of all the evidence available to us and all the skills and approaches available to analyse that evidence."[11] That is to say, because of the sparse amount of primary material, Roman family historians must remain adaptable, not only by welcoming rival approaches to their work but also by borrowing from, and trusting in, those who have more evidence at their disposal, and more complete models with which to work. Comparative studies are thus tempting to scholars of all persuasions (economic, demographic, or sentimental), though this method of analysis certainly has its critics. The benefits from a comparative approach are well delineated in the opening words of *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 BC-70 BC*, where the author begins by parrying an anticipated strike:

> This unconventional point of departure has been chosen in the belief that since the institution of slavery has not limited itself historically to any one place or time, understanding of any one of its manifestations might benefit from comparison with any other. In fact, because

> Roman slavery forms part of an historical continuum that has extended well into the modern era, it would be excessively myopic and parochial to pretend that the various phases of the continuum have no points of overlap that might be properly observed; and for present purposes especially, when the surviving evidence has so many inherent shortcomings, the resistance to slavery represented by the Roman slave wars might well become more comprehensible than it has been in the past once juxtaposed with the better documented resistance activities of slaves elsewhere.[12]

As Hopkins remarked, "the use of comparative evidence seems more profitable than naked assertion."[13]

Given the prevalence of comparative approaches in Roman social history--rooted in the belief that history itself is a coherent continuum-- it is not surprising that a similarity of argumentative trends exists between Roman and modern family historians. Lawrence Stone, for example, finds a shift in the English family (1500-1800) from a cold to a warm emotional climate, which he describes as the growth of affective individualism. Paul Veyne similarly argues that a gradual growth of affection and intimacy between husband and wife, parent and child, emerged as Republic gave way to Empire.[14] Stone's antagonist, Alan Macfarlane, prefers a non-linear approach, rejecting Stone's theory in favor of an interpretation which involves little change over time in the emotional climate within the family. Parallel to this are P. Garnsey and R. Saller, assailants of P. Veyne, who dismiss any growth of affective individualism in the classical Roman family, but rather affirm, as does Macfarlane, a non-linear interpretation.[15]

Defining the Roman Family (200 BC-AD 200)[16]

This advertisment recently appeared in a popular magazine.[17] The owner of the resort, with just two words, *family rates*, sends out a signal welcoming a social unit which is familiar and meaningful to the reader. In modern clinical terms we would say that it is the *nuclear family* (that is, a conjugal couple and their unmarried offspring)[18] which is being invited. Yet far more important is the fact that both the writer and the modern reader instinctively know what is meant by *family*. The communication is clear and complete, for a common understanding of the constitution of the Western family are part of our shared cultural knowledge.

Yet, when considered more carefully the word *family* becomes more difficult to define. By itself the word encompasses a widening spectrum of meanings: in its narrowest sense, parent(s) and their children, and, in its broadest sense, a kin group related by blood and/or marriage. It is the context that aids in the understanding of the word, as in the advertisement above. No-one would phone the proprietor to ask if the discount offered would apply to a 'family re-union'. Clearly, that is not what is meant by family in the advertisement. However the owner would agree to provide a rebate for any of the families within the family re-union. The term *family* is elastic. It can encompass a much broader social group than merely the *nuclear family*, though only the context will clarify which definition is meant.

There is significant overlap between the modern family and its Roman counterpart.[19] To begin with, the Latin words for family, *familia* or *domus* or simply *mei* ('my people'), can also connote either a broad or a specific group of relatives, requiring a context for clarification. Without a context, the most opaque of the three is certainly the plural possessive adjective *mei*, embodying everything from slaves and freedmen, children and spouse. Similarly flexible is *familia*. In its most diffuse sense, *familia* includes all agnatic relations (those from the same house who are

related through male blood only); and all those sharing a common nomen (i.e. the Aemilii, as in Lucius Aemilius Paullus); and finally, all slaves and freedmen belonging to, or dependent upon, the household. *Domus*, often translated as 'household' or even 'home', can encompass all this, but is even more expansive as it also includes persons related through female blood. In fact, Saller argues that imperial literature employs *domus* significantly more often than *familia* as the concern for maternal relatives came to equal that for agnatic lineage. He explains:

> This development coincided with the rapid turnover of membership in the Roman aristocracy under the emperors: since most Roman aristocrats could no longer lay claim to an agnatic lineage going back generations that would be recognized by their peers from other regions of the empire, the emphasis shifted to the respectability of the new man's circle of relatives, paternal, maternal or by marriage.[20]

However, both *familia* and *domus* sometimes had a far narrower sense, one that has often been said to be an equivalent of the modern *nuclear family*. (This view will promptly be explored.) Thus the Latin vocabulary utilized to designate the family, *familia* and *domus*, shares the modern ambiguity of our word 'family'.

The Roman Family: a Nuclear Family

Influenced by sociology, ancient historians have discerned the nuclear family as the pulse of the Roman *familia*, replacing the traditional view of a three generation agnatic household.[21] The work of Richard Saller and Brent Shaw was primarily responsible for this revision. Noting that Roman legal sources suggest that the deceased's commemorator would most likely be the heir or someone bound by the strongest duty, Saller and Shaw decided to examine the commemorative inscriptions on Roman tombstones to discover what were the strongest ties within the Roman family.[22] In 75 to 90 per cent of the cases studied, they found that the commemorator

was a member of the nuclear family. This discovery was itself reinforced by Saller's further work with the same inscriptional evidence. This time using computer-produced simulations of the Roman population (obtained by collaborating with the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Society) Saller put to question the traditional view of the Roman household as a multi-generational household with an aged *paterfamilias* (patriarch, or father of the family) at its head since, according to his findings, most children of twenty would not have a living father, let alone a living grandfather.[23] Articles and books on the Roman family since the publication of the articles have been significantly influenced by these findings. It would be fair to say that most scholars are still persuaded by Saller's and Shaw's discovery of the Roman nuclear family. However, some modern scholars have recently expressed their dissatisfaction with the term 'nuclear family', and caution against its over-use:

> ...the phrase *nuclear family* is so overloaded with modern connotations that it is misleading to take the concept as the key to understanding Roman familial behaviour.[24]

Due to high mortality,[25] serial marriages[26] and adoptions,[27] the composition of the Roman family was fluid and reconstitution frequent. Holes in the family fabric, caused by death or divorce, were readily mended, and additions, through child-birth or adoption, were made as needed: the Republican statesman App. Claudius Pulcher, who had no offspring himself, adopted at least one of C. Claudius Pulcher's sons: "Romans over many centuries used adoption as a method of continuing the family when no natural son had been born of a marriage and survived to adulthood."[28] The stepdaughter of Sulla, Aemelia, though pregnant by her husband, was forced into divorce so that she might marry Pompey and thus

consolidate a political alliance between the two men: among the élite, "marriage was not for sex but for alliance."[29] Plutarch informs us that Sulla allegedly divorced his third wife for her infertility: "That one of the purposes of marriage, indeed the primary purpose, was to produce children is frequently attested in the ancient sources."[30] As can be inferred, there was a wide horizon of possibilities for familial constitution among the upper-class, many of which would seem quite extraordinary to us. To cite an extreme instance, Cicero's second wife, Publilia, was half the age of his daughter, Tullia, who was from his previous marriage; a situation that would be awkward today, though perhaps not altogether uncommon in antiquity.

The perpetuation of the family among the élite contained an element of consciousness and utility that would now be judged unpalatable. To be fair, the interest that the extended family took in its constituent parts was very real:

> The family was the basic social unit through which wealth and status were transmitted. As such, the perpetuation of the aristocracy, the possibilities for social mobility, the distribution of landed wealth, and other matters depended fundamentally on patterns of family behavior.[31]

As Saller here clearly states, the larger kin unit advocated a single strategy: each conjugal pair was but a part of an overall strategy aimed at the preservation and perpetuation of the wealth and name of the extended family. With this observation in mind, it is appropriate to examine the *Letters* of the Younger Pliny with a view to discovering whether the term *nuclear family* is in fact what Pliny had in mind when he spoke of his family.

Conclusion

As a focus for detailed study the Roman family is instructive since it involves economic, legal, domestic, and political considerations, which are all the major aspects and institutions of Roman society. As a contained microcosm of the larger whole the Roman family is a valuable focus of study, though requiring, for this same reason, some sort of fluency in several disciplines. Indeed it is no longer desirable to approach the Roman family solely from a prosopographical perspective or a legal perspective. The study of the Roman family, as the varied nature of the evidence thus far presented has shown, requires an all-inclusive approach. Coupled with this inclusive approach is a new focus which is characterized by a shift in emphasis from an interest simply in the external political/historical impact of the family to an interest in the internal relations between its members. In keeping with this interest this thesis, in its study of the Roman family and the household from the evidence of one man, will primarily adopt what has been referred to as the sentimental approach to social history. Our source for the inquiry will be the correspondence of the Younger Pliny, a source which has been insufficiently exploited by Roman social historians.

NOTES

1 Treggiari (1975), 149-164. The article provides a good introduction to the evolution of Roman Social history; though the bibliography is now dated, it can be thoroughly supplemented by those compiled by Rawson and Binkowski (1986): 259-72; and Rawson (1991a).

2 Matthias Gelzer, *Die Nobilität der römischen Republik* (1912); Friedrich Münzer, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (1920); Syme (1939).

3 Syme (1939), 7.

4 Hollingsworth (1969), 14.

5 Ariès (1972). Macfarlane (1986). Stone (1977).

6 Anderson (1980), 40.

7 Lawrence Stone, though of sentimental persuasion, is well aware that attitudes change slowly and that trends of conduct may co-exist, and cautiously works both these facts into his conclusions. Stone (1977), 416.

8 Anderson (1980), 65.

9 Hopkins (1965); (1966); (1974).

10 Bradley (1991); and Dixon (1991), (1992) are good examples of this approach. A recent critic of this approach, as used by Roman social historians, is Peter Garnsey (1991).

11 Rawson (1986a).

12 Bradley (1989), xiii.

13 Hopkins (1966), 248.

14 Veyne (1978). Expanded on and developed into a working methodology in Veyne (1987).

15 Garnsey and Saller (1987), 133.

16 The period mentioned, 200 BC-AD 200, is what is known as the central period of Roman history from which the vast majority of our evidence comes.

17 *The Atlantic*, (1992) vol. 269, No. 4: 118.

18 For a complete citation of the various forms of the household see Laslett (1972).

19 For a thorough introduction to the Roman family see Rawson (1986b); Garnsey and Saller (1987), 126-47; Bradley (1991), 3-12; and most recently Dixon (1992), 1-35.

20 Garnsey and Saller (1987), 129. On an aristocracy which failed to reproduce itself see Hopkins (1983).

21 The sociological instigator: Laslett, and Wall, eds. (1972). Working with the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Society, Laslett suggested the pervasiveness of the *nuclear family* throughout history-- a notion which was well received.

22 Saller and Shaw (1984).

23 Saller (1987).

24 Bradley (1991), 6.

25 Saller, from his collaborative work with Shaw on computer generated population studies for Roman antiquity, found that at the age of twenty a Roman was only 40% likely to have a living father. Saller (1987), 33.

26 Remarriage was normative among the Roman élite. Bradley argues for high rates of remarriage in the central period (200 BC- AD 200) from a study of 59 consular families which suggested that at least 47% of marriages included one spouse who had been remarried. Bradley (1991), 156-76.

27 Among the élite, adoption, frequently attested between 100 BC - AD 100, was part of the familial strategy for survival "linked," as Mireille Corbier notes, "to the politics of succession and transmission." Corbier (1991), 63.

28 Rawson (1986), 196.

29 Corbier (1991), 51.

30 Rawson (1991b), 9.

31 Garnsey and Saller (1987), 126.

TWO

Gaius Plinius Secundus

Pliny: His Times, His Work, His Life.

That Pliny's literary efforts provide information for a period needing documentation has been noted,[1] but the full impact of this assertion seems unrealized. Born in 61 or 62 AD he lived through both the Julio-Claudian and the Flavian dynasties, and even into the Antonine Age. That is, seven emperors came and went in his lifetime-- not counting the emperor under whom he was born, and the emperor under whom he died. Yet, it is not so much the length of the list of emperors as their diversity that incites interest. Nero, Vespasian, Domitian, and Trajan bring together a variety of personalities, domestic and foreign policies, and call to mind a full supply of anecdotes.

Pliny's coevals saw many emperors rise and fall during their lives. Consequently, those who spent their prime under one emperor carried their tastes into the rule of another. Ummidia Quadratilla, an associate of Pliny's, still accustomed to the frivolities of Nero's reign, enjoyed her draughts and mimes though such things were deprecated by Trajanic society; and yet, she forbade her grandson, growing up under her care during Trajan's reign, to view either of these activities in hope of preserving him from her antiquated flaws.[2] Such is the complex nature of Plinian society preserved in his work; it is a mixture of multiple generations interacting.

The Literary Efforts of Pliny

The Roman letter is "the letter of genuine intercourse",[3] though it is somewhat misleading to call it a genre since the examples that remain are indeed diverse. We

are strained to find strong similarities between, for example, the extensive correspondence between Cicero and his friends (not written with a view to publication), and Horace's poetic *Epistles* (characterised by their wandering style), and Pliny's *Letters* (characterised by their concentrated brevity and written, or at least edited, with a view to publication). Indeed, there is no one obvious influence we can identify for Pliny's *Letters*. Rather, scholars have discerned traces of many authors of many genres. The *Silvae* of Statius, "a collection of occasional pieces in verse", and the epigrams of Martial it is felt were two particularly influential sources.[4]

Pliny offers a large body of work: 247 personal letters to friends and family, all groomed for publication; well over a hundred official requests to the emperor Trajan (published posthumously); a lengthy panegyric to the same emperor all written between 96-112/113 AD. The first are belletristic, the second pragmatic, the third fine mannered. When considered together these three bodies of work adequately develop-- sometimes consciously, and sometimes not-- our picture of upper-class Plinian society.

The bulk of the evidence and the interest is contained in the nine books which make up Pliny's correspondence with friends and family.[5] Begun in the reign of Nerva and continued into Trajan's rule, these letters not only bridge an important period of time, but also cover a wide variety of topics. By simplifying, the letter types can be compressed to five categories: public affairs (*res gestae*), private affairs (*res domesticae*), natural science (*quaestio naturalis*), scenic beauty (*laus locorum*), and literature, all punctuated by brief courtesy notes.[6]

The Nature of the *Letters*

Rarely will a narrative build among Pliny's *Letters*: as a rule each letter, generally brief by nature, stands quite independent from its neighbors. An axiom of composition is at work: one letter, one issue, for one person.[7] However, occasionally a specific topic to a specific addressee does recur, providing a key to unlocking the tricky problem of the letters' organization.

A certain Montanus received a pair of letters of invective directed at the success of the imperial freedman Pallas. Curiously enough, rather than placing the missives together (since they are linked by subject) Pliny chose to keep them nine letters apart.[8] Tacitus also received a complementary pair on the eruption of Vesuvius;[9] yet, these, too, were kept separate by three intervening letters. Indeed, an internal arrangement of the letters by subject is an impossible conjecture when complementary missives are severed from each other. Perhaps a chronological ordering can still be pursued. The issue, unfortunately, only becomes more difficult:

> *Frequenter hortatus es ut epistulas, si quas paulo curatius scripsissem, colligerem publicaremque. Collegi* ***non serato temporis ordine*** *(neque enim historiam componebam), sed ut quaeque in manus venerat.*
>
> You often urged me to collect and publish any letters of mine which were composed with some care. I have now made a collection, **not keeping to the original order** as I was not writing history, but taking them as they came to my hand.[10]

Is this artistic modesty on Pliny's part, or is there really no order within the books, nor between the books? The riddle unraveled for modern scholars when it was suggested that all nine books were not published *en masse*, but were issued in installments; thus, no definite chronology within each book exists, but coherent temporal movement can be discerned from one book to another.[11]

The internal arrangement of each book is still perplexing. Consider another pair: Pliny wrote two missives to Sabinianus attempting to reconcile this man and his freedman.[12] Though the pair is not kept together-- but in fact two letters apart-- Pliny still chose to maintain an order which sense demands: the letter which advised reconciliation (*Ep.* 9.21) preceded a note congratulating Sabinianus on having taken Pliny's advice (*Ep.* 9.24). Logic is preserved. Some consideration of order, then, is apparent within each book.

One question still lingers: why are the pairs kept apart at all, even if only by a few letters, if chronology was not the guiding framework? Sherwin-White provides the answer:

> he (Pliny) has made variety of topic rather than chronology the guiding principle of the internal arrangement.[13]

Discussion of the internal organization has been a circuitous path to an obvious but crucial conclusion: the key function of the letters is to hold and entertain their readers.

The Deeper Design of the *Letters*

Pliny's letters are formal. Though undoubtedly rooted in authentic correspondence (since, for example, the epistles reveal traces of revisions),[14] the letters abound with stylized openings, teem with literary echoes, and are unabashedly paraded as missives crafted with more care than usual (*epistulae curatius scripta*).[15] The precept, as noted, which guided the correspondent's hand was one letter, one theme.

Though Pliny's expressed aim was to publish any of his letters that were "written with some care", a purpose within this purpose may be conjectured. After all, why not also publish the correspondence he received from his literary friends if eloquence was the sole criterion? Certainly any missives from his friend the great

historian Tacitus would have been at least as polished, and of no less interest as those crafted by Pliny, and yet they were excluded from Pliny's work. This absence of letters from friends is indeed conspicuous, and revealing. The spotlight belongs to Pliny and to no-one else. He soliloquizes; we listen, politely. There must be a reason why Pliny chose to include only his letters, but not those of his corespondents: that is, he must have had another purpose which remained unmentioned for modesty, and that went beyond the alleged goal of simply publishing his *epistulae curatius scriptae*. What was this other purpose?

Pliny, in his *Panegyricus*, elaborately flatters the emperor Trajan:

> *Habet hoc primum magna fortuna, quod nihil tectum, nihil occultum esse patitur; principum vero non domus modo sed cubicula ipsa intimosque secessus recludit, omniaque arcana noscenda famae proponit atque explicat. Sed tibi, Caesar, nihil accommodatius fuerit ad gloriam quam penitus inspici. Sunt quidem praeclara quae in publicum profers, sed non minora ea quae limine tenes. Est magnificum quod te ab omni contagione vitiorum reprimis ac revocas, sed magnificentius quod tuos; quanto enim magis arduum est alio praestare quam se, tanto laudabilius quod, cum ipse sis optimus, omnes circa te similes tui fecisti.*

> One of the chief features of high estate is that it permits no privacy, no concealment, and in the case of princes, it flings open the door not only to their homes but to their private apartments and deepest retreats; every secret is exposed and revealed to rumors listening ear. But in your case, Caesar, nothing could better redound to your credit than a searching inspection of this kind. Your public conduct is indeed remarkable, but no less so your private life. Splendid though it is to keep yourself thus unspotted by any form of vice, it is even more so to do the same for the members of your family, for the more difficult it is to vouch for others than oneself, the more honour is due to you for combining your own excellence with making all those around you reach the same high standard.[16]

This, to my mind, was Pliny's guiding principal of composition. His purpose: a portrait of himself, a man of "high estate", and of his associates in both the public and private life. The impeccable lifestyles of Pliny and his coevals was not only to be

admired but to be assumed. He created an idealized self-portrait, and portraits of friends, with a view to moralizing.

With this in mind, discern the genius of selecting the epistolary form. The reader of a private correspondence experiences what has been described as "the sensation of actual participation" through a "high degree of dramatic involvement."[17] That is, a bond of false intimacy, of unquestioned trust, is established between audience and author, caused by a feeling of involvement on a personal level. Such a bond of false intimacy between the author and his reader is insidious: it has the uncanny ability to assert the truthfulness of the author's words. The spontaneity and the honesty are to be discounted in Pliny's *Letters* since he selected, edited, and published the work himself well aware of his audience. We are reading a highly controlled autobiography under the guise of biography. *Caveat lector*: Pliny's presentation is not altogether honest, but contrives to deceive.

The Man and His Family

To uncover the details of a specific Roman's life is often difficult since the sparsity of the surviving evidence negates the possibility (and often the enthusiasm) of most attempts. However, the surviving evidence for Pliny's life is auspicious.[18] His parents were L. Caecilius Gaii filius Secundus and Plinia (?). Though not of senatorial descent, they were members of the municipal élite of Comum, whose wealth came from landownership. Since there is no mention of a brother or a sister in his correspondence, it is assumed that Lucius and Plinia produced only one child. That child's relatives remain obscure. Since the Caecilii and Plinii are not uncommon names in Comum it is surprising that very few relatives of Pliny can be identified with certainty: his maternal uncle, Pliny the Elder, is the only citable case; however, a

paternal aunt may also have existed-- if we can trust a fragmentary inscription[19] -- yet she receives no mention in the letters.

Both the Plinii and the Caecilii had their roots in the region and seemed content with playing the part of local royalty; however, this was not the case for Plinia's brother. More ambitious than his relatives, he left Comum to earn honors in a public life centered around the capital. C. Plinius Secundus, Pliny's maternal uncle, actively pursued an illustrious equestrian career, serving as an officer in Germany, as procurator of Africa and Hispania Tarraconensis, as prefect of the *classis Misenensis*, and as a personal adviser to the emperor Vespasian. His involvement in the public arena cleared a path to Rome for any willing, ambitious younger relative, such as his nephew Pliny.

Pliny was properly groomed from the start. Though he seems to have begun his education in Comum, he finished it in Rome, where he studied with the famed Quintilian and Nicetes of Sacerdos. Sometime before he reached fourteen his father died; consequently, the boy was left in the care of a tutor. Yet, his maternal uncle, the Elder Pliny, seems to have taken an interest in the boy's future, and perhaps became something of a surrogate father to him. Outside of the natural affection that occurred between uncles and nephews, the relationship between the two Plinys would have been encouraged by all concerned. After all, the Elder had achieved, through his successful literary and political endeavors, a firm hold in the capital that could well be capitalized on by the promising young Pliny. The father's death simply cemented the Elder's obligation to the Younger. The Elder Pliny may have offered his home to both Pliny and his mother, as they are found at his lodgings even during his posting in Misenum.[20]

In 79 AD, during this posting, the Elder Pliny was killed by his curiosity for the erupting Mount Vesuvius. The will not only revealed the Younger's testamentary adoption, but left the young man of seventeen everything he would need to continue his climb up the social ladder: wealth, status, and political connections. It may have been soon after this time that Pliny took his first wife, of whom we know nothing, not even her name. His second wife is only marginally less of a mystery: the one clue that remains is the name of her mother, Pompeia Celerina, with whom Pliny kept in touch even after her daughter's death and his own re-marriage. The name Pompeia Celerina suggests an affinity to the consular family of Pompeius Celer.[21] Pliny certainly had married well. However, his companion in the *Letters* was his third and final wife, Calpurnia, the granddaughter of a wealthy landowner in his hometown. This marriage was perhaps more suitable for his equestrian ancestry than a union with a woman of a consular family.

Although the Romans placed great value in familial continuation (by reproduction and/or adoption) Pliny, though married thrice, never produced any offspring, nor, so far as we know, did he adopt any promising young man, as he himself was adopted. Yet he explicitly mentions his desire for children, and expresses deep regret at his wife's miscarriage.[22] The miscarriage must have been a grave disappointment not only to Pliny and Calpurnia, but to their respective families. At the time of the *Letters*' composition Pliny probably had very few and distant blood relatives alive: there are no identifiable existing relatives addressed in the letters,[23] and so the very continuation of his proud ancestry was probably at stake during his marriages. Yet the childlessness was hard felt on Calpurnia's side also: as can be seen by the apologetic pair of missives sent to her family concerning her miscarriage. Why Pliny did not adopt is a conundrum. Should we doubt his sincerity to have

children (especially as expressed in *Ep.* 10.2), or was availability of adoptees limited? I prefer the latter, though I suspect the former.

The Friends of Pliny[24]

Let us switch the focus from the writer to the recipient: who, in terms of origin and status, were the friends who received Pliny's missives? Attesting to the authenticity of the correspondence, the gallery of comrades was diverse, and by no means confined to the illustrious. For various reasons Pliny's associates were not among the most eminent: he was not a member of the imperial entourage; he had few friends of extraordinary distinction, perhaps no friends of Republican nobility and Augustan consular houses (though he candidly admits to compensating the modest success of his friends with exaggerated praise).[25] His friends attest, by their origin and status, to being gathered from all Pliny's haunts: Comum, Rome, the law courts, literary assemblies, and the senate. The predominant origin of his correspondents was in 'Pliny country' (North Italy or, more accurately, Italia Transpadana), and the predominant status was equestrian (*eques*). Consequently, Pliny could not boast of an intimacy with the most prestigious of his society, though he could and did assert his friends' blameless lifestyle and genteel nature, and, as Aubrion pointed out, he could take comfort in his repartee with the emperor.[26]

There are those who receive no mention though their presence pervades the *Letters*. No doctors, no philosophers, no slaves, no freedmen, and few women received letters. Pliny unabashedly targeted an élite male audience to satisfy conventional tastes. He avoided correspondence with those who held vocations of dubious standing, and with those of inferior status and gender. Our man was not a revolutionary, but an adamant conservative.

The Career of Pliny

Our knowledge of the public life of Pliny, because of his correspondence, his *Panegyric*, three well preserved inscriptions, and what is known of the career structures in general, is complete, and has been described as "tolerably precise" and, in most respects, "extremely normal."[27] However, to describe any career as *normal* is somewhat misleading, considering that the career structure and pace of progress of any two senators was likely to vary considerably. No-one, regardless of ability, fortune, patronage or longevity, could hold all of the virtually innumerable offices available; in fact, many did not go beyond the quaestorship. The reconstruction of an individual's political career is, therefore, a somewhat personal-- not generic-- aspect of the upper-class Roman's life.

Though we need not go into Pliny's career in detail we can note a few of the highlights. If we are to pick out a talent that Pliny possessed and that his career would exploit it would be his administrative acumen. This is hardly surprising since the boy was brought up by an uncle, a veritable workaholic, who believed that any moment not spent in study was wasted.[28]

The success and longevity of Pliny's public career was assured, not simply because of his ability and work ethic but because he was surrounded by a formidable social garrison of ex-consuls: Corellius Rufus, Julius Frontinus, and Verginius Rufus. In such company Pliny could come to no harm.[29] The numerous offices he held show marked imperial favour. He became a senator in 90 AD, and at the young age of thirty-nine (100 AD) became suffect consul. Later, in 103 AD, he acquired a prestigious, life-long position in one of the priesthoods, the Augurate. His final office was held far from Rome in Bithynia and Pontus where he was provincial

governor, the *Legatus Augusti* (109 AD). Maintaining direct contact with the emperor Trajan, Pliny was to use his administrative skills to cut wasteful spending in the public sector, to supervise the finances for all the cities, and to perform the duties of the Roman governor whom he replaced. It is accepted that he died during the tenure of this post in 112 or 113 AD.

Though Pliny's impressive career was cultivated, and flourished in the inauspicious reign of Domitian (81-96 AD),[30] after this emperor's death, he missed few opportunities to malign the hand that had fed him, accusing him of depravity and wickedness in both his private and public conduct.[31] Pliny's invectives are in good company: not only did his contemporaries (Tacitus, Suetonius) loathe the memory of the son of Vespasian, but so did Cassius Dio, the Christian Church, and even relatively recent scholars, all sharing their disgust for the worst of emperors. However, sounder scholarship has recently prevailed.[32] Concerning the Domitianic reign, our primary sources are unreliable-- even Tacitus. A manipulation of the facts of Domitian's reign is the charge levied by modern historians against our ancient evidence.[33] Pliny was caught in a lie by modern scholars, and this further eroded the credulity placed in the primary sources concerning Domitian's character.

Concerning Domitian's reign of terror (93-96 AD), the *Letters* and *Panegyricus* suggest, without many specifics, that Pliny's conduct was subversive, at times heroic, and that as a result his own life was jeopardized:[34] he visited an exiled philosopher, and lent him money-- at cost (!);[35] he would have been brought to trial for undisclosed subversive activities had Domitian lived longer;[36] he stood amidst the flames of political turmoil of the times, and the thunderbolts of Domitian's displeasure grazed his head-- in fact, seven of *his* friends were exiled or banished.[37] When Pliny saw honest men being openly despised by Domitian he did not, he says,

go so far as to abandon his political career out of disgust, but he did stage a protest by halting his career's progress by pursuing the longer routes to high office.[38] This claim is patently false. The years 93-96 AD mark some of the high points of Pliny's career; his prefecture of the military treasury, acquired during this period, suggests eager pursuit of high offices. Pliny's 'white lie' would have been undetectable had it not been for the chance survival of inscriptions detailing his career.[39] His linear progress through the career hierarchy suggests imperial favor to the end of Domitian's life, and provides no evidence for any active or passive protest against the emperor.

Why did he obfuscate? One can only suspect that veracity was sacrificed to adulate Trajan. Yet perhaps a more complex reading is possible based on Roman senators' guilt. The source of their guilt: political ambition may have outweighed a concern for senatorial solidarity during Domitian's reign, allowing the less protected and incautious to be executed or, more commonly, exiled. However, as the exiles trickled home to be re-united with their senatorial comrades after the emperor's assassination, embarrassment ensued. It was obvious that senatorial solidarity was a myth. A charitable curtain was drawn over the situation, while history was tacitly-- but amazingly quickly-- re-written. History now justified senatorial inactivity during the 'reign of terror'. The lethargy of imperial favorites was now to be excused: it was revealed that their hands were, in fact, bound by imperial chains.[40] With this explanation, the myth of senatorial solidarity was preserved.

The re-casting of Domitian's reign was no difficult job. Senators *en masse* despised him, not because, as they alleged, he was a ruthless and depraved tyrant, which he probably was not, but because "he failed to gratify their self-importance"-- a serious miscalculation on his part.[41] For this he was hated, and from this, perhaps, came the rumors of his dissolute nature. His increasing unpopularity among the

senate eventually led to his assassination. The hatred probably increased after his death so as both to justify an unjustifiable deed, and to flatter Trajan as a resurrector of a golden age.

Pliny was, more than likely, a sycophant under both Domitian and Trajan. This was nothing to be ashamed of since in this respect he was very much like the rest of the senators who placed self-advancement before senatorial solidarity. In fact the more we probe, the more we find Pliny blended quite well with his surroundings. He was more successful than many, no doubt, but still well within the boundaries of his peers. He was not the most courageous politician, the best writer, nor the wealthiest man of his time. He was not the most distinguished, the most influential, nor of the best pedigree. And as a source for the modern historian his *Letters* cannot be used in the way that we use the private correspondence of Cicero, since Pliny was conscious of an audience. Yet, the *Letters* provide us with a sizeable and complete primary source from which we can reconstruct one aristocratic male's vision of the Roman family as he wished to present it to his social peers. To draw out Pliny's concept of the Roman family we will examine traditional topics of investigation for family history. After the Roman residence has been considered, the life course of the family will be followed by investigating marriage, children, and the elderly as depicted in the *Letters*.

NOTES

1 See Radice (1969), ix.

2 *Ep.* 7.24.

3 Sherwin-White (1969), 1.

4 Sherwin-White (1969), 2. Sherwin-White has been the source for all my information in this paragraph.

5 For the epistolary genre in antiquity see Shewin-White (1969), 1-3.

6 For the definitive categorization of the letters (upon which this one is based) see Sherwin-White (1966), 43-45.

7 Sherwin-White (1969), 77.

8 *Ep.* 7.29 and 8.6

9 *Ep.* 6.16 and 6.20.

10 *Ep.* 1.1.1. My emphasis.

11 See Sherwin-White (1966), 20-41; 52-56.

12 *Ep.* 9.21 and 9.24.

13 Sherwin-White (1966), 22.

14 Some of the letters, which are concerned with Pliny's buisiness and domestic affairs, are, as Sherwin White noted, "full of precise and particular details that can hardly have been invented"; yet these same letters show signs of having been edited. Sherwin-White uses the example of *Ep.* 9.39, a missive to an architect containing instructions for the planning and the purchasing of materials for a small shrine that Pliny wants built; however, the necessary precise measurements have been omitted for publication of the letter. Sherwin-White (1966), 12.

15 Pliny describes his letters also as *epistulae curiosius, diligentius scriptae*. (*Epp.* 1.1.1, 7.9.8, 9.2.3). For characteristics of the letters and authenticity of the correspondence see Sherwin-White (1966), 1-20.

16 *Pan.* 83.1-3.

17 Kearney (1968), 68, 84.

18 Besides the autobiographical nature of the *epistulae* themselves there are a number of extant inscriptions which provide further details about Pliny and his career: *CIL* v. 5262, *CIL* v. 5263, *CIL* v. 5667. Also, Pliny's maternal uncle was a prominent public and literary figure, and a few of his friends are known to us (eg. Martial, Suetonius, Tacitus).

19 *CIL v, Suppl. Italica I,* 745; see Sherwin-White (1966), 732.

20 *Ep.* 6.16.4. The details that the Younger Pliny knew of his uncle -- his daily routine for all the seasons, and his favorite sayings (*Ep.* 3.5)-- further suggests cohabitation.

21 For a fuller discussion of Pompeia Celerina and her connetion to a consular family see Sherwin-White (1966), 92; and Syme (1991), 509-510.

22 On Calpurnia's miscarriage: *Ep.* 8.10 is addressed to Calpurnia's grandfather, and *Ep.* 8.11 addressed to Calpurnia's aunt.

23 Syme believed that all the female correspondents in the *Letters* were in some way related to Pliny. Syme (1991a), 542.

24 The work of Sir Ronald Syme is of particular significance in this area. Syme, (1958), 75-99; (1979a); (1979); (1984); (1988a); and (1988). What ensues owes much to these works.

25 *Ep.* 7.28.

26 Aubrion (1989), 344.

27 Sherwin-White (1966), 72.

28 For the lifestyle of this paradigm of industry see *Ep.* 3.5.

29 As Syme remarked. Syme (1958), 71.

30 In fact, his career's progress lagged somewhat under Trajan: Syme (1958), 83, noting that Trajan could hardly refuse the consulship to this distinguished senator, suggests that the career of Pliny lacked its former fluidity since the orator "did not excite the enthusiasm of all military men". His evidence: both Pliny's priesthood and his provincial command do seem delayed, and he was having some trouble securing promotions for his friends.

31 Murderer of relatives *Pan.* 48.3; banisher of philosophers *Ep.* 3.11; executor of Vestal virgin *Ep.* 4.11.5; confiscator of property *Pan.* 50; coward *Pan.* 82; violator of his own niece *Ep.* 4.11.6.

32 Pleket (1961); Waters (1964); Jones (1973).

33 Waters (1964), 77.

34 Jo-Ann Shelton's article, "Pliny's letter 3.11: Rhetoric and Autobiography", is important, up to date, and influential when considering Pliny, his letters, and the final years of Domitian. Shelton (1986).

35 *Ep.* 3.11.2.

36 *Ep.* 7.27.14.

37 *Ep.* 3.11.2-3; *Ep.* 4.24.4-5; *Pan.* 90.5.

38 *Pan.* 95.4.

39 *CIL* 5.5262, 5667.

40 See Tacitus, *Agricola*, 3. To see this justification at its best read *Ep.* 3.11 in conjunction with Shelton (1986) who argues along these lines.

41 Waters (1964), 76.

THREE

Pliny on the Roman Residence

Why Study The Home When Studying The Family?

The study of the Western family must at some point intersect with considerations of the house since the house is where the family resides, acting as a principal point of departure and return. In modern Western society the house and the family are ideologically linked, and from this connection came our definition of 'home', a word which can refer to the place of residence or the social unit residing there, or both. For the Romans, too, the family and the domicile were intricately entwined: it is often impossible to tell whether when speaking of his *domus* a Roman meant his family and household, or the actual physical dwelling, or both.

The domicile is an important source for the study of family life. As the focal social context of the family, it is shaped to respond to the multifarious needs of the household-- that is, every aspect of a dwelling's use and construction reflects the nature of familial constitution and interaction. Here the object is to see what Pliny contributes to the understanding of "the rhythms of social life that underlie and are implicit in the physical remains."[1]

Introduction to Roman Villas and Villa Life

In his maturity Pliny owned a number of houses. Though nothing is known of Pliny's residence in the capital,[2] we are compensated by the extensive detailing of his rural retreats which are full enough to have persuaded many scholars to attempt reconstructions.[3] Pliny owned five or possibly six villas, mostly in the locale of his hometown,[4] but only a few of them could have been visited frequently: his

Laurentine villa, which was close enough to Rome to be accessible after a work day and provided a winter retreat, and his Tusculan villa, about 150 miles from Rome, which was where he spent his summer holidays.[5] The variety of locations reflects the variety of purposes that the villas served. Pliny's Tusculan villa was situated on agricultural lands whose income he depended upon.[6] In contrast to this *villa rustica* were luxury villas without estates, whose sole purpose was to bring the amenities of the city to the country.[7] Pliny's maritime *villa suburbana* at Laurentum could serve as an example. Yet, it is somewhat specious to simplify villa types into two extremes. After all, Pliny's Tusculan villa was certainly luxurious, being sumptuously decorated and equipped with numerous dining rooms, bed chambers, baths, a fountain, and a ball court; and his Laurentine villa did have herds and a valued *hortus*, which together may have produced enough to sustain the staff.[8] The point is that the qualities of what we might call the agricultural villa and the luxury villa often merged, making these terms of little value, and a definition of 'villa' difficult to achieve, as J. Percival noted.[9] However, regardless of the classification of villa types, we might imagine that villas, removed as they were from the urban bustle, would provide an opportunity for a strengthening of affective ties within the family.

Withdrawal to the villa did not bring absolute solitude since this concept, as well as the concept of cutting yourself off from the capital, was far more desired than practiced. The life-style which accompanied this retreat received Pliny's romanticized praise, though more mundane letters show that from the villa the affairs at the capital were constantly sought;[10] and his most frequented villa, the one at Laurentum, was well within reach of Rome (merely a few hours ride), with the added advantage that it was within view of a cluster of other villas.[11] Pliny could vacation in comfort since the news of the capital and his associates were at hand.

At his retreats Pliny received numerous visitors from the nearest town soliciting his attention and paying their respect (*venit ad me salutandum*),[12] though perhaps they came in smaller numbers when he was in Rome. The villas also acted as a resort for vacationing friends who might stop in as they made their way to their own villas, or who simply wanted to take advantage of the luxuries and location of another's villa.[13] The Roman villa was a locus of social activity-- not solitude, not privacy. The lavish accommodations were built to entertain and receive. That this public orientation of the house had serious repercussions for familial life cannot be doubted; perhaps it even precluded much of what we would call family life in return for the master's high visibility. Familial privacy (or what we might call 'quality family time') is missing from Pliny's sketch of his society. Leisure activities in the villa as Pliny reports them only once included the assembled family: Pliny says at night he will dine alone with his wife, or with friends, but in either case a book will be read during the meal.[14] However, Calpurnius Macer was considered fortunate by Pliny to have his wife and son with him on vacation, implying, perhaps, that he could for once enjoy their company; yet, it is only Vestricius Spurinna (not Calpurnius, not Pliny) who is ever actually seen enjoying the company of his wife while at his villa-- but he was retired from public life by this time, and this might make all the difference.[15] All told, the husband's and the family's activities were not represented as coinciding, a fact which will later become crucial in understanding the emotional climate of marriage as represented by Pliny.

Household Life Further Explored: Public and Private Aspects

Modern Western middle-class houses are characterized by their separation from public life, both keeping people in and keeping intervention out. The internal

space, though mildly graded, is thoroughly private: very few houses (and even fewer apartments) are constructed with any space set aside for less intimate gatherings. In most cases visitors will come in small numbers and can expect to share part of the private space. Connection with the outside world ends abruptly at the doorway. Beyond the private threshold is a mass of neutral space punctuated by public space (parks, beaches, community centers and so on) in which we conduct our public affairs, conscious of scrutiny.[16] There is in modern Western society a strict dichotomy between public and private space.

The Roman aristocratic house was conceived differently. Houses of the aristocracy combined elements of both public and private space. That is to say, the Roman upper-class dwelling was not expected to act as a refuge from work, and was not predicated on the assumption that private and public space were antithetical. The home for the influential was "a locus of public life",[17] a place to present oneself potently to clients and friends amid one's servants and freedmen. Concepts of public and private spheres as we understand them did not exist in antiquity; each sphere did not define itself by being what the other was not, but rather the house contained a sliding scale of both public and private kept distinct, as Wallace-Hadrill observed, by controled access to various rooms.[18]

As mentioned, for the prominent aristocrat there would be little chance to escape scrutiny. A daily swarm of clients came to greet their rich patron (*salutatio*) and receive their daily gift of money or food (*sportula*), into areas the first century AD architect Vitruvius labels "public places", into which "people, even uninvited, can by right enter."[19] That people could walk freely into the courtyard of an aristocratic house is unlikely, but the *salutatio* does show that public life moved comfortably into a private setting. Household composition itself, in fact, reflected and reinforced an

intermeshing of public and private space. Pliny's Laurentine villa had numerous rooms set aside for his slaves and freedmen (and their families).[20] These dependents were live-in attendants whose visibility within the aristocratic home was a fact of familial life. As salient features of the household, slaves and freedmen produced a communal atmosphere within the home; and this would suggest that the word 'houseful' rather than 'household' would be a more accurate description of a domicile that contained multiple nuclear families of varying social status.[21] If the master wanted solitude, as Pliny knew, it was he who had to remove himself from the body of the house.

Room Function

Conceptualizing the articulation of space in the Roman house is a major undertaking. Seemingly identifiable axes of public and private space become muddled upon closer inspection, due to the rooms' resistance to labelling. Even our previous assertion that there is a sliding scale of public and private space needs some qualification. To begin with, the tags given to rooms by Pliny, such as *cubiculum*, *triclinium*, *diaeta*, become misleading in translation. *Cubiculum*, for example, carried the standard meaning of bedroom, though the range of activities that Pliny's bedroom catered to cannot be accounted for with such a simple meaning which, overly replete with modern connotations, suggests privacy and single function. Pliny's *cubiculum*, in striking contrast, could serve as a dining room,[22] as a study,[23] as a place to give poetry readings to more intimate friends,[24] or even to conduct informal court hearings.[25] The room adapted to the needs of a senator or a man of letters, from hour to hour if need be. Since in Pliny's letters single room function is a non-existent concept, whether we are thinking of dining or studying, or public or private, we can

assert that rooms had multiple functions. The rooms themselves, therefore, remained somewhat impersonal, at least from our perspective: there was no room designated specifically as the master's or mistress' bedroom, though the *diaeta* was his room of preference; there was no room designated for the children (of slaves) to play or sleep in; and even the slaves' quarters themselves could be used to receive guests.[26] The cultural practice of occupying certain areas of the villa according to season is partially responsible for the curious adaptability of the Roman room;[27] but, the core of the answer lies in understanding the specific use of the house. Even the less public rooms (since there really is no room we can label private) happily adapted to more public functions. This suggests the overriding functional use of the home: it was ready to adapt to its public purpose.

The *diaetae* in Pliny's *Letters*[28]

One part of the house in particular merits special attention, especially since Pliny provides rare evidence for its uses. There was a place to which the master could withdraw for escape from the bustle of the household-- the *diaeta.* It was the most private of the public. The *diaetae* were suites of rooms located either in the main block of the house or somewhat segregated from it. It is the latter with which we are concerned. These *diaetae* could be made up of three or four bedrooms[29] surrounding, as at the Tusculan villa, a small outdoor court and having an informal dining room close by to entertain personal friends.[30] Emphasis in all cases, from all angles, is on views, whether it be of nature,[31] or of lavish wall paintings.[32] That atmosphere was to be relaxing to the occupant(s). The peace Pliny enjoys in these rooms is almost therapeutic:

> *In hanc ego diaetam cum me recepi, abesse mihi etiam a villa mea videor, magnamque eius voluptatem praecipue Saturnalibus capio, cum reliqua pars tecti licentia dierum festisque clamoribus personat; nam nec ipse meorum lusibus nec illi studiis meis obstrepunt.*
>
> When I retire to this suite I feel as if I have left my house altogether and much enjoy the sensation: especially during the Saturnalia when the rest of the roof resounds with festive cries in the holiday freedom, for I am not disturbing my household's merrymaking nor they my work.[33]

> *Est in hac diaeta dormitorium cubiculum quod diem clamorem sonum excludit, iunctaque ei cotidiana amicorumque cenatio.*
>
> In this suite is a bedroom which no daylight, voice, nor sound can penetrate, and next to it an informal dining room where I entertain more personal friends.[34]

His comments illustrate a need for privacy, a specific need for escape from the household so that he could work in peace, or entertain his more intimate friends in more intimate surroundings. The *diaeta* provided for these needs. It was the most personalized space in Pliny's villas, referred to affectionately by Pliny as *mei amores*, and its construction was overseen by the man himself.[35] The haven of the *diaeta* was certainly a luxury that Pliny delighted in.

Spatial Access

Spatial access, though to us a linking element in a house, played a key role in defining space within the Roman dwelling. At a dinner party Pliny attended, the best dishes were set only in front of the host and a few of his influential friends; with the stratified meal came three gradations of wine: the best for the influential, the mediocre for his lesser friends (*minoribus amicis*), and the dregs for all their freedmen.[36] Overt social discrimination was a hallmark of Roman society; upper-class Romans were shamelessly candid about their own, and others' social status. These types of distinctions could be boldly made within the home with the help of

controlled spatial access. The emperor Domitian made known his disregard for the senate by humiliating them when they came to pay their respect at the palace. Pliny bitterly resented the obstacles, the grades of entry, and the thousand doors that kept a senator from the emperor.[37] After all, these were senators, not just lowly *clientes*. Aristocratic homes too could speak to the visitor. When Pliny's antagonist, M. Aquilius Regulus, sought reconciliation with Pliny he had the sense to send on his behalf the revered aged consular Vestricius Spurinna to Pliny's home in the early hours.[38] Spurinna had the good humor to play along, and agreed to enjoy the role of the morning caller, the *cliens*, seeking *clementia* for another. Spurinna's slave announced his imminent arrival to a waking Pliny. The message: *Venio ad te* ("I'm coming to see you"). For the highly esteemed Spurinna to compete for Pliny's attention in the *atrium* with the morning crush of clients would have been disastrous; Pliny hurried to meet him outside the house, sending ahead a message that he was to halt his advance: *Immo ego ad te* ("I first to you"). They met at the colonnade of Livia. Pliny had successfully shown his respect for the socially superior Vestricius Spurinna.

Pliny's evidence on his houses may be compared with the following description of the formal house of seventeenth century England:

> The formal house was beautifully calculated as an instrument both to express etiquette and to back up negotiation. Since each room in the sequence of an apartment was more exclusive than the last, compliments to or from a visitor could be nicely gauged not only by how far he penetrated along the sequence, but also by how far the occupant of the apartment came along it-- and even beyond it-- to welcome him.[39]

In both cases the mentality was the same, though the Roman house lacked the strict organization of the English formal house. That such distinctions could be made in

private dwellings is confirmed by Pliny's praise of his literary friend Caninius Rufus' wondrous villa which had a distinct *triclinium* for public use, and another for private use (*illa popularia illa paucorum*).[40] To be invited into Pliny's *diaeta* to dine, and perhaps stay the night, would be indicative of his trust and intimacy with the visitor. Domestic architecture, therefore, spoke to the visitor: you knew who you were by where you were in the house.[41] What is evident then is that the Roman house in general, Pliny's houses in particular, were conceptualized in terms of accommodating different grades of visitors. That the pervasive purpose of the home was public is once again the conclusion.

Conclusion

Numerous suggestions have been made about the occupants of an aristocratic home and its spatial use as Pliny presents it: the house contained not a 'household' but a 'houseful'; the modern concept of private space was notably absent-- some areas were simply less public than others; single room function was a non-existent concept. In sum, all aspects of Pliny's houses catered to a familial life that did not depend upon a strict separation of public and private. As for how we are to envisage the day-to-day life of Pliny's houses, the evidence suggests that, with resident attendants and the nearly constant public life, the domicile can be visualized as having bustled with activity. Clearly the Romans were not committed to our vision of domestic life and of the conjugal family.

The very use of resident attendants created a high degree of observability within the household, producing in turn a high degree of social control based on the axiom that "behavior is influenced by accountability to others."[42] Virginia Woolf found meaning in Jane Austen's letters, which mentioned how Austen was careful to

hide her manuscript from servants and visitors, and was grateful for a creaking door, as if "there was something discreditable in writing *Pride and Prejudice*."[43] The point is well taken: without a room Jane Austen could call her own, escape from prescribed roles of behavior was impossible. Though this perhaps is an extreme negative consequence of social control due to high observability, it does nonetheless prevent us from underestimating its potency. Roman communal life, and the nearly incessant public life within the houses of the aristocracy, must have had repercussions along these lines. The only identifiable retreat available to the master was the *diaeta*, which was often physically removed from the bustle of the house, and made up of enough rooms to be semi-independent from the main body. Though Pliny insists that he conducted himself similarly in the open and in seclusion,[44] his enthusiasm for the seclusion and privacy of his *diaeta* suggests that he too savored escape from public scrutiny.

Everything thus far mentioned points to one simple conclusion: the intimacy and privacy that pervades our home life is not in evidence in Pliny's discussion of his houses; the very tone of Roman 'home life', as depicted, is much cooler. There is no sense that 'family life' is confined to, or characteristic of, the home.

NOTES

1 Wallace-Hadrill (1988), 48-9.

2 The sole reference to it is *Ep.* 3.21.5, mentioning that it is on the Esquiline hill.

3 E.g. H. Tanzer (1924).

4 See Duncan-Jones (1982), 23 for the enumeration of the villas.

5 *Epp.* 2.17.2 and 9.40.1.

6 The farms Pliny owned in the Tifernum district brought in over 400,000 sesterces per year; Pliny makes it clear in *Ep.* 10.8.5 that he could not afford to give them anything but his personal attention. As for the importance of agriculture in general to the Romans of the Empire, Duncan-Jones asserts that it was their main source of wealth. Duncan-Jones (1982), 33.

7 This is the sole purpose of villas in the fashionable Bay of Naples area. See D'Arms (1970) for a discussion, based for the most part on our literary evidence, of the villas and their owners in this area in both Republican and Imperial times.

8 *Epp.* 2.17.8 and 4.6.

9 Percival (1970), 13-15, 57.

10 *Ep.* 1.9 vs. *Ep.* 9.15.

11 *Ep.* 2.17.27.

12 *Ep.* 4.13.3.

13 Pliny himself frequently stayed with friends: *Epp.* 6.14.28, 7.16.2.

14 *Ep.* 9.36.4.

15 *Ep.* 3.1.5.

16 I am indebted to M.J. Daunton's article on public and private space for helping me to conceptualize the nature of our dwellings and its relations to its surroundings. M.J. Daunton (1983), 213-33. See also Y. Thébert (1987), 353-82.

17 Wallace-Hadrill (1988), 46.

18 Wallace-Hadrill (1988), 81.

19 Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 6.5.1-2.

20 *Ep.* 2.17.9.

21 Though the household/ houseful distinction was first made by Peter Laslett. It was applied, with consequence, to antiquity by Wallace-Hadrill. Wallace-Hadrill (1991), 191-227. For rooms specifically assigned to slaves and freedmen see *Ep.* 2.17.9. See also Bradley (1991), 90 ff.

22 *Ep.* 2.17.10.

23 *Ep.* 3.1.7.

24 *Ep.* 5.3.11.

25 *Ep.* 5.1.5.

26 *Ep.* 2.17.9.

27 Sherwin-White (1966), 191: "The Romans attached great importance to the correct seasonal orientation of rooms and houses since warmth depended... much more upon aspect than upon the inadequate heating system." Not all rooms in a villa could benefit from the sun's natural heat; so, room migration according to season was logical. Pliny says that he provides his staff with a separate winter quarters (a gymnasium during the warmer months) which captures "the concentrated warmth of the sun". *Ep.* 2.17.7.

28 The term *diaetae* appears infrequently in our primary sources so it should be made clear that all conclusions with regards to this term apply solely to Pliny's evidence.

29 *Ep.* 5.6.31.

30 *Ep.* 5.6.20-.21

31 *Ep.* 2.17.20.

32 *Ep.* 5.16.22.

33 *Ep.* 2.17.24.

34 *Ep.* 5.6.21.

35 Pliny takes pride in having designed the *diaeta* in his Laurentine villa. *Ep.* 2.17.20.

36 *Ep.* 2.6.

37 *Pan.* 47.5.

38 *Ep.* 1.5.

39 Mark Girouard (1978), 145.

40 *Ep.* 1.3.1.

41 Dorothy Smith, examining the modern house and its correlation to familial organization, noted that cultures which do not distinguish rooms by function, distinguish them by status-- and this is precisely our point. Smith (1971), 53-78.

42 Barbara Laslett (1974), 94.

43 Virginia Woolf (1929), 74.

44 Pliny to a certain Ausidius Curianus: *Respondebam non convenire moribus meis aliud palam aliud agere secreto.* "I replied that it was not my custom to do one thing in public and another in private." *Ep.* 5.1.3.

FOUR

Love and Marriage

The Roman Age at First Marriage and Marriage[1]

Under the emperor Augustus, the minimum age for marriage was set at the unripened age of twelve for girls, and fourteen for boys. Keith Hopkins found, however, that 8% of the inscriptions he observed testified to marriages occurring at the age of 11 or even 10 for some girls. Yet, the probable arithmetic mean has girls marrying in their late teens and young men in their early twenties.[2] The formative years of an aristocratic girl's life before marriage were substantially briefer than they are now, and in some instances, plans for marriage came suprisingly early for both sexes.[3]

That marriage came at an early age testifies to the importance it played in Roman society. The late Republican scholar Varro wrote:

> Scaevola (consul in 95 BC) tells us that it used to be the custom for boys not to use their *praenomen* before they put on the adult toga, and for girls not before they were married.[4]

With the assumption of the *praenomen* childhood and irresponsibility were cast aside for individuality and the responsibility of adulthood. Scaevola's words imply that marriage completed the identity of a young woman, just as the assumption of the *toga virilis* fulfilled the identity of a young man. Though the custom Scaevola reports may not have survived, the underlying thinking did. Marriage remained the pivotal point in the establishment of a Roman girl's identity:

> *collocare filiam*, giving a daughter in marriage and establishing her in life: it was the equivalent of launching a son on a career.[5]

However, marriage did little to define upper-class men. Rather, it fashioned important alliances with other families which would contribute to their public careers, and to the prestige of their families. However, marriage shared one thing in common for both men and women: it was a familial and societal duty.[6]

Writing to Aefulanus Marcellinus, Pliny relates the sad news of the death of Minicius Fundanus' daughter, Minicia Marcella. The event was particularly tragic since the girl, only 12 years and 11 months old, was about to marry. Her wedding day had been fixed, the invitations sent; she was about to cross over into that second stage of life. Pliny laments:

> *Nondum annos XIIII impleverat, et iam illi anilis prudentia, matronalis gravitas erat et tamen suavitas puellaris cum virginali verecundia.*
>
> She had not yet reached the age of fourteen, and yet she combined the wisdom of age and dignity of womanhood with the sweetness and modesty of youth and innocence.[7]

The description is curious. Minicia oddly possessed both the *prudentia* of an experienced woman and the amiable *suavitas* of a young girl: her virtues were an enigmatic combination of those of a young girl, and those of a more mature woman. This Roman preference for mature qualities in children has been appropriately labelled the *puer senex*, or 'old child', phenomenon.[8] The exhibition of mental (not physical) signs of womanhood suggested that Minicia was ripe for matrimony. That childhood was being rushed is painfully obvious, particularly when Pliny pairs up conflicting qualities: Minicia not only applied herself to her books but was moderate and restrained in her play. Though modern scholarship has recognized childhood as a distinct phase of life in antiquity, the *puer senex* motif, in evidence in Pliny's *Letters*, confirms an impatience for the child to cross over into the next phase of life. Minicia, whose first signs of maturity coincided with her matrimony, tempts us to assert that

childhood was but an anticipatory stage for adulthood which was to be traversed as fast as biologically possible.[9]

The *puer senex* way of thinking may have played a real role in preparing a girl for matrimony. For example, the mimicking of married elders' conduct might well have aided mental fortitude during the early stages of matrimony, particularly if the marriage had occurred at a delicate age. Imitation of maturity would substitute, as it were, for life-experience. Perhaps it made the transition from childhood to marriage more congenial for a girl or for a young woman who previously had had minimal contact with males who were, more often than not, significantly older than she.[10]

Betrothal

The law was quite clear concerning betrothal:

> A marriage cannot exist unless everyone consents, that is, those who come together and those under whose control they are.[11]

Jurisprudence leaves no doubt that Roman marriage was not simply the concern of the prospective couple, though their will was respected.[12] However, Pliny's evidence suggests a similar definition, but a different emphasis. Letters 1.10, 1.14, 6.26 confront the issue of who was responsible for the betrothal of a girl as follows:

I. Concerning Euphrates the philosopher, 1.10.8

> *Socer Pompeius Iulianus, cum cetera vita tum vel hoc uno magnus et clarus, quod ipse provinciae princeps inter altissimas condiciones generum non honoribus principem, sed sapientia elegit.*
>
> His father-in-law, Pompeius Julianus, who has had a career of great distinction as a leading citizen of his province, has particularly to his credit the fact that from among many excellent offers he chose a son-in-law who was outstanding rather for his learning than for any official position.

II. Junius Mauricus seeks a husband for his niece, 1.14.1

> *Petis ut fratris tui filiae prospiciam maritum; quod merito mihi potissimum iniungis.*

> You ask me to look out for a husband for your brother's daughter, a responsibility which I feel is very rightly mine.

III. Pliny congratulates Julius Servianus, 6.26.1

Gaudeo et gratulor, quod Fusco Salinatori filiam tuam destinasti.

> I am glad to hear that your daughter is to marry Fuscus Salinator, and must congratulate you on your choice.

Selection was clearly a key component to Pliny's view of a marital arrangement, though the bride and groom have no role in the affair. The marriage was arranged for a prospective couple. The duty of selecting a husband for a daughter was a matter of importance, and, in Pliny's mind, a male preserve. If the father was deceased (as could well be the case),[13] or unavailable, the duty belonged to the nearest male relative, as in the case of Junius Mauricus who, with the help of a friend, sought a husband for his fatherless niece. However, women could, if the situation demanded it, be responsible for the selection of a spouse for their daughters. Calpurnia Hispulla, Calpurnia's aunt, is styled by Pliny as the father whom his wife had lost, and in this role she gave Calpurnia to Pliny as his bride. But there was a marked preference for this being the duty of the father.[14] We should however avoid the assumption that one individual was solely responsible for marital decisions. Family members, says Treggiari, were "bound by convention to consult a council before taking any important action, committee decisions are rife."[15] Nor was the source of advice limited to family. It came too from influential friends, as it did from Pliny for Junius Mauricus.

Familial blending through marriage was a serious matter, far too serious to be left to personal inclination.[16] Marriage affected the perpetuation of the larger kin group since the transmission of name and property was involved. The extended kin group was greatly concerned; either their advice or approval would be sought before an alliance was made.

As a case study for the matchmaking process let us examine in detail a letter that has already been of substantial use: the letter in which Pliny responds to Junius Mauricus' request for aid in finding a spouse for his niece. Recently back in Rome from four years of exile,[17] Junius Mauricus was out of touch with the social *milieu* and sought Pliny's help in locating an eligible bachelor for his fatherless niece. Pliny recommended Minicius Acilianus, a friend, since he felt that there were many things Junius would find appealing about this man. He lists Minicius' virtues: he is of fine pedigree, of good character, advanced in his political career (saving Junius the trouble of canvassing on his behalf), he has the noble countenance of a senator, and, Pliny coyly adds, he is very financially secure.

There were four individuals visibly involved in this matchmaking scenario: there were the prospective bride and groom, who were not party to this discussion and seem to have had no direct contact with each other; and, Junius and Pliny, the one representing his niece, the other his friend; both men were third parties acting as prime movers in the initial choice and negotiations.[18] Junius, as the nearest available male relative, took the initiative to find a suitable match for his niece by sending out 'feelers'. The niece herself remained nameless, and far in the background. Pliny, whose help was enlisted by Junius, acted as an amateur matchmaker, being the 'go between' for the two interested parties.

The usefulness of a matchmaker has been well delineated by David Noy. In a society such as the Romans', where a rigid hierarchy forbids the free association of the young and family pride is an omnipresent concern, matchmakers are indispensable. Indirect negotiations between families allowed for a level of candor otherwise impossible, and prevented possible hostilities and future ill-will if the negotiations fell through. The matchmakers also extended the range of spouses

available since they had contacts with different families in, perhaps, different geographic regions.[19] As for Minicius, he probably also consulted Pliny, or at least made it clear that he was available.

Minicius' *curriculum vitae*, presented by Pliny, is meant to impress; he is well qualified for a marital position. We can imagine Junius looking over the qualifications carefully, weighing out the advantages (and disadvantages) of the suggested match. (We must also imagine that Junius had a number of eligibles in mind, for in another letter it was said that the philosopher Artimedorus was chosen from among many suitors to be the son-in-law of Gaius Musonius).[20] In the *Letters*, what determined the suitability of a match was not physical attraction, or the potential compatibility of the prospective couple, but qualities which would benefit the extended kin group: pedigree, political ambition, and wealth. Certain qualities were sought, and even negotiated for-- for example, equestrian wealth for a senatorial name. Quintillianus, lauded as a man rich in intellectual gifts though of little means, gave his daughter in marriage to Nonius Celer, though his family's wealth far surpassed the wealth of Quintillianus' family.[21] Certainly the girl had other attractions, perhaps good character and unusual comeliness which combined were enough of a dowry even for the rich, according to the second century novelist Apuleius.[22] As mentioned, the use of amateur matchmakers allowed negotiations to be overtly candid: good looks, Pliny says, are a fair return for a bride's virginity.[23] It must be made perfectly clear that the qualities presented were meant to be attractive to the family, and not simply to the individual: that is, the fact that Minicius Acilianus looked the part of a senator held no interest for the potential bride, but indeed was meant to inform the Maurici that his political success was all but assured.[24] The impetus for a Roman marriage was not to be something so personal as love. Cicero's

former wife Terentia accused him of marrying his new wife for love: but his freedman Tiro came to the defense; *au contraire*, he had married her for her money.[25]

Still, the role of the prospective bride and bridegroom in the marital arrangement is worth examining. The bride's or bridegroom's say in the matrimonial arrangement would depend on their age, status, and position in society and the family.[26] Most of all, it would depend upon whether they were under *patria potestas*. According to Saller's findings, this was unlikely to be the case for most men by the time of marriage.[27] There was, for example, no one but Pliny to control his marital destiny when he married Calpurnia: his father, mother, and uncle were deceased by this time.

Independence for women came with age and distinction. A nameless woman of "high birth and blameless character, who was no longer young, had borne children in the past and long been widowed", could not be prevented by public and familial criticism from marrying the rich invalid Domitius Tullus.[28] Perhaps romantic love here triumphed over seemly familial alliances; if so, it was a rare victory, and one not cherished by Pliny. Both Minicia Marcella and Pliny's wife Calpurnia in all likelihood had little, if any, say in the selection of their husbands, a consequence of their tender age. In fact, prospective brides and newly wed females, like children, remain anonymous in Pliny's *Letters* and are defined through their relatives, particularly their male relatives: for example, Pliny speaks of Helvidius' daughter's who died in childbirth, and of Calpurnia's brother's daughter who has proved herself worthy of her father, her grandfather, and her aunt in her marriage to him.[29] In the *Letters* a young women before, or even during, her first marriage was clearly subordinate to her older relatives, and had yet to earn the privilege of her own identity.

Pliny's matchmaking procedure occurred in a vacuum. Any courting, if it did take place, was veiled. Any complicating elements, such as love or fastidious individual will, were ignored. There was an understanding between Pliny and his reader that familial obligation was the overriding factor in spousal selection. At the end of the process the individuals involved were expected to be grateful and marvel at the wisdom of their superiors' decision. It was as if you chose us for each other, Pliny appreciatively writes to Calpurnia Hispulla shortly after his marriage to her niece.[30]

Though love was never a factor considered by Pliny in matchmaking, "we may, though the text fails us, wonder if Roman sons, and even daughters, were not able sometimes to bring emotional pressure to bear against the legal, moral and economic persuasions of their fathers."[31] And, we are aware that Romans could become smitten with each other: the Republican dictator Lucius Cornellius Sulla became infatuated with a young woman who brushed up against him at a gladiatorial show; Sulla, very interested, quickly inquired into her family history, and, satisfied, exchanged glances, smiles and later marriage vows with her.[32] Not exactly what Pliny had in mind when it came to matchmaking.

The Youthful Wife

We have already noted that under Augustan law there was a small discrepancy between the ages at which Roman girls and boys could first marry.[33] It is indeed dangerous to link these numbers unnecessarily. Re-marriage, due to spousal death or divorce, was frequent.[34] Many marriages were not first marriages, and many marriages which were first marriages for one partner were not for the other. Girls in their teens were not always paired off with young men in their early 20s. When Pliny married Calpurnia, it was his third marriage, and by this time he was somewhere

between 38 and 43 years old; however, it was Calpurnia's first marriage, and she was still in her teens.[35] In fact marriages of *puellae* mentioned within the letters often occur with men described as *iuvenes*; that is, men between the ages of 20 and 40.[36] The aristocratic husband, often significantly older than his wife, witnessed her maturation and perhaps aided in the education of his young spouse. Erucius Clarus received this from Pliny on the progress of the wife of Pompeius Saturninus:

> *Legit mihi nuper epistulas; uxoris esse dicebat. Plautum vel Terentium metro solutum legi credidi. Quae sive uxoris sunt ut adfirmat, sive ipsius ut negat, pari gloria dignus, qui aut illa componat, aut uxorem quam virginem accepit, tam doctam politamque reddiderit.*
>
> He has recently read me some letters which he said were written by his wife, but sounded to me like Plautus or Terence being read in prose. Whether they are all really his wife's as he says, or his own (which he denies), one can only admire him either for what he writes or for the way he has cultivated and refined the taste of the girl he married.[37]

Indeed Pliny's own wife was similarly encouraged during the early stages of their marriage. She read and committed to memory copies of Pliny's work, and even concealed herself behind a curtain during his public readings to drink in every word.[38] The result, as Juvenal laments, was a well-read woman able to juxtapose Virgil and Homer over dinner.[39] The purpose of the education is worth inquiry: was it to fashion a 'companionate' marriage (a marriage in which companionship is stressed) from an 'arranged' one, so as to deepen the relationship through intellectual intimacy? For an answer we must inquire into the wife's role in marriage.

The Wife's Role in Marriage

Recently Jo-Ann Shelton characterized the marital relationship between Pliny and Calpurnia in this reductive way: "He is active, she is passive,"[40] arguing, as did a legendary law of Romulus,[41] that wives were required to conform to their husband's

personalities, at least in idyllic theory. Part of the conundrum that Shelton solved to arrive at her conclusion, and that we will re-examine, is the question of whether a young girl's subordination to the collective family interest ends after betrothal. Shelton's black/white distinction affirms that it did not. This is tempting since male dominance in antiquity goes without saying (at least in the public sector), though the simplicity of the view may not encapsulate the whole truth, even for Pliny.

Pliny realised that the selection of a 'good' wife was key for a successful public life, at least where the emperor was concerned:

> *Multis inlustribus dedecori fuit aut inconsultius uxor adsumpta aut retenta patientius; ita foris claros domestica destruebat infamia, et ne maximi cives haberentur, hoc efficiebatur, quod mariti minores erant.*
>
> Many distinguished men have been dishonored by an ill-considered choice of a wife or weakness in not getting rid of her; thus their fame abroad was damaged by their loss of reputation at home, and their relative failure as husbands denied them complete success as citizens.[42]

Her conduct can help secure her husband's celebrity,

> *Tibi uxor in decus et gloriam cedit.*
>
> But your own wife contributes to your honour and glory.[43]

or he can perish by her ill repute,

> *Sequenti die audita est Gallitta adulterii rea. Nupta haec tribuno militum honores petituro, et suam et mariti dignitatem centurionis amore maculaverat.*
>
> The case heard on the following day was that of Gallitta, charged with adultery. She was the wife of a military tribune who was just about to stand for civil office, and had brought disgrace on her own and her husband's position by an affair with a centurion.[44]

For the achievement of the highest honors in public life, for the advancement of the family name, it was the conduct of *both* husband and wife that must be impeccable.

Either spouse could ruin the dignity of the other. The former governor of Baetica, Caecilius Classicus, was tried for provincial mismanagement. Enquiries were made to see if there was sufficient evidence to implicate his wife on similar charges. No charges, it turned out, could be levied against her. Radice appended a comment to this story: "A governor's wife was often implicated in a charge made against her husband."[45] So, the wife was enough of a companion to her husband to be thought to have a hand in her husband's nefarious rulings, yet she was not so intertwined in his personality that she would be brought automatically before the courts if he was. Her independence is made even clearer when considering Pompeia Plotina, the wife of the emperor Trajan. She is to be praised for her lack of pomp and ceremony, following the lead of her husband, but "this would win her praise even if you (Trajan) did the opposite."[46] Neither in her public reputation, in which she may promote or ruin her spouse by her private conduct, nor in the eyes of jurisprudence, where she was seen capable of influence in public matters or capable of independence of her husband's actions, was a wife completely passive or parasitic.

However, the defining qualities of an ideal wife, as Shelton emphasises, are always in terms of the husband. Pliny praises Trajan's wife for modeling herself on, and learning her habits from, him.[47] Her renown was essentially achieved through obedience,[48] and her devotion to her husband and his public life evinced compliance to his authority. Such conclusions are the ideal, to be sure, but are they the reality? To answer this let us examine one of Pliny's letters in detail, *Ep.* 4.19. Dating the letter is crucial to understanding it: Sherwin-White, relying mostly on the content of the letter, dates the note to not much more than a year after Pliny's and Calpurnia's marriage.[49] This punctilious letter is an obligatory thank you note to Calpurnia Hispulla reporting that the marriage was off to a good start. At this point in their

(arranged) marriage we could expect the couple to have begun-- but only begun-- to have intimate knowledge of each other, but undeveloped affection. The content centers around Calpurnia's devotion to her husband with a view to assuring Pliny's aunt-in-law that all was as it was hoped to be, the match was successful. In this epistle Pliny says that his wife loves him, not for his age or person, but for his aspirations: their *concordia* would last forever. She loves him for what he loves. There is a subtle difference between this and simply loving what Pliny loves, or as Shelton calls it a "devotion to his interests",[50] and this difference is crucial. Her love was attributed to her husband's aspirations to further the family name for both her, her family, and him and his family. This sort of love was an attainable goal in an arranged marriage. The initial stages of an arranged marriage can only be measured a success by how well each spouse adapted to their public *persona* as husband and wife since there has not been enough time for their private roles to develop. What Pliny reported to his aunt was both Calpurnia's and his willingness to conduct themselves in a way that showed clearly that they respected the match arranged for them.

Arranged Marriages and Marital Love

Although we have noted that love was not a consideration when a spouse was chosen for a daughter, and that devotion to duty seemed to be more important in the initial stages of arranged marriage, love still had the opportunity to develop in the subsequent stages of the marriage. Before beginning, a re-consideration of arranged marriages may prove useful. For the moment let us assume the worst: Roman marriages among the upper-class were arranged without regard for the participants' feelings. Of course, no-one would expect the relationship to begin with love, since arranged marriages, from our perspective, are rather clinical, and essentially about

familial duty, not personal inclination. However, affective relations are not precluded for the later stages of the match. Lawrence Stone warns:

> In practice, as anthropologists have everywhere discovered, the arranged marriage works far less badly than those educated in a romantic culture would suppose, partly because the expectations of happiness from it are not set unrealistically high, and partly because it is a fact that sentiment can fairly easily adapt to social command. In any case, love is rarely blind, in the sense that it tends to be channelled along socially acceptable lines, towards persons of the other sex of similar background. This greatly increases the probability that an arranged marriage, provided it is not undertaken purely for mercenary considerations and that there is not too great a discrepancy in age, physical attractiveness or temperament, may well work out not too badly.[51]

Calpurnia and Pliny were indeed linked by a shared geographic region of upbringing, and by similar social standing; and though Pliny was probably twice her age when they married, such an age discrepancy between husband and wife was normative. Indeed, Calpurnia and Pliny were a promising pair for an arranged marriage. And though we have spoken of duty in regard to marriage, Roman matchmaking was not mercenary. The familial links established through marriage were supported emotionally and financially by the large social network that interacted with them. But the disparity between the married couples' ages poses a problem. What sort of relationship could a couple such as Pliny and Calpurnia have when the one was twice as old as the other? Such a large age discrepancy at marriage, though far from uncommon or unacceptable among the Romans, might still have retarded the potential for ardor until one party had matured. The relationship, in the meantime, would involve supervisory activity for the older partner. To us a supervisory role ought to preclude a sexual relationship, and that this state of affairs could blossom into a more mutual relationship seems impossible. Luckily we are not speaking of logic, but of cultural *mores*.

Sometime in 107, perhaps in the spring, Calpurnia became ill and withdrew from Rome to convalesce, as was Roman custom, in this case to Campania.[52] Though they had been married somewhere between three and seven years by this time,[53] this was the first time Pliny and Calpurnia had been apart: *non consuevimus abesse*.[54] The letters sent are indebted to literary form,[55] but their sentiments rings true:[56]

> *Equidem etiam fortem te non sine cura desiderarem; est enim suspensum et anxium de eo quem ardentissime diligas interdum nihil scire.*
>
> Indeed, I should worry when you are away even if you were well, for there are always anxious moments without news of anyone one loves dearly.[57]

> *Incredibile est quanto desiderio tui tenear. In causa amor primum, deinde quod non consuevimus abesse.*
>
> You cannot believe how much I miss you. I love you so much, and we are not used to separations.[58]

> *Scribis te absentia mea non mediocriter adfici unumque habere solacium, quod pro me libellos meos teneas, saepe etiam in vestigio meo colloces.*
>
> You say that you are feeling my absence very much, and your only comfort when I am not there is to hold my writings in your hand and often put them in my place by your side.[59]

> *nam cuius litterae tantum habent suavitatis, huius sermonibus quantum dulcedinis inest.*
>
> If your letters are so dear to me, you can imagine how I delight in your company.[60]

This is certainly a more tender relationship than the one reported some years earlier to Calpurnia Hispulla. The intervening time has allowed the two to grow together and become accustomed to, and dependent upon, each other's company. There can be no doubt that Pliny believes that love was part of the fabric of an

arranged marriage, but it is difficult to see how that part of the fabric came to be woven. The difficulty lies with his assertion that he and his wife are "not used to separations", an assertion that is quite challenging to verify. Calpurnia is but occasionally seen in the letters in Pliny's company, once in Bithynia[61] and another time while on vacation with him.[62] In the *Letters*, wives in general hardly come up as part of the daily life, perhaps testing the veracity of Pliny's tenderness to his own wife. But if wives do emerge from the *Letters* the picture can be quite favorable: Calpurnius Macer is in paradise, he is on vacation enjoying the pleasures of the sea, the streams, the woods, the fields, with his wife and son.[63] But all in all, the examples are few and far between. 'Abundant' well describes the number of letters that were sent out during Pliny's leisure time away from the capital, times when we might expect him to turn to the more mundane issues in life, such as what he and his wife did that day, or simply how she was. But, his holiday letters are filled with activities which excluded his wife. He hunted, listened to the complaints of his tenants, harvested his grapes, walked with a few of the more educated staff members, dictated letters, scribbled down a few things and entertained his guests.[64] Even if he and his wife had the chance to dine alone, opportunity for conversation was curbed:

> *Cenanti mihi, si cum uxore vel paucis, liber legitur.*
>
> If I am dining alone with my wife or with a few friends a book is read aloud.[65]

Yet perhaps we are cornering Pliny without cause. Perhaps the loving letters to his wife were not meant to be juxtaposed with the holiday letters. After all, their purposes may conflict due to the nature of the letters as Sherwin-White explains:

> Each letter is normally confined to a single theme. There are few exceptions to this rule.[66]

One theme may be adverse to contact with another. For example, the letters concerning his vacations can profitably be read as a goading to his fellow Romans to be industrious, even in their moments of leisure, a conclusion which excludes 'idle' time spent chatting lovingly with or about his wife. However, another more satisfying answer is possible. The husband and wife may have had segregated leisure time. Though together (that is, within the same building) meaningful contact was kept minimal by our standards. Each partner had numerous diversions which kept them occupied and separate. Stone, labelling such minimal contact between spouses a 'low affect' marriage, insists that this is a cornerstone to the success of an arranged marriage.[67] This theory is very appealing for a society that has specific gender roles, as did Roman society.

Marital Accountability

When Pliny writes to Calpurnia Hispulla reporting that his marriage to her niece was off to a good start, he was fulfilling an obligation to the person who had been primarily responsible for their union. He reports in detail how his wife was comfortably adapting to her new role, and how he had become a great man in the eyes of his wife, as Hispulla herself had always said he would.[68] That Pliny felt that such a curious letter needed to be sent is of note.

Some years later, an unfortunate incident occurred. Calpurnia miscarried. Pliny sends out two letters, distinct in tone: one to Calpurnia Fabatus asking him to look on the bright side, at least they now had proof of Calpurnia's fertility; and a less mercenary letter to Calpurnia Hispulla expressing relief that his wife had escaped with her life.[69] This is a rather sensitive and private issue that Pliny has decided to share with his extended family (and his audience), but we might well do the same

ourselves. But the tone of these letters varies substantially from any modern equivalent:

> *Quo magis cupis ex nobis pronepotes videre, hoc tristior audies neptem tuam abortum fecisse...Quem errorem magnis documentis expiavit, in summam periculum adducta. Igitur, ut necesse est graviter accipias senectutem tuam quasi paratis posteris destitutam, sic debes agere dis gratias...ut servarent neptem.*
>
> I know how anxious you are for us to give you a great-grandchild, so you will be all the more sorry to hear that your granddaughter has had a miscarriage. ...She has had a severe lesson, and paid for her mistake by seriously endangering her life; so that although you must inevitably feel it hard for your old age to be robbed of a descendant already on the way, you should thank the gods for sparing your granddaughter's life.[70]

This is not simply an attempt to elicit remorse from Calpurnius; rather, the passage suggests Pliny's accountability to his wife's grandfather concerning the progress of his marriage. What is revealed by a consideration of all three letters discussed here is that after Calpurnia and Pliny had married it is evident that they did not become independent (emotionally, economically, or otherwise) from their families. Those who had arranged their marriage looked to ensuring the match's continuing success and productivity. Such letters as these echo those of Cicero, who, like Calpurnia Hispulla and Calpurnius Fabatus, was very much involved in trying to ensure the success of his relatives' marriage.[71]

Conclusion

Marriage, in Pliny, is the concern of the extensive family. The matchmaking process was coordinated through the *paterfamilias*, or a male relative if the former was unavailable. The process itself held small regard for the prospective couple, particularly the potential bride. (However, a young man stood a fair chance of taking part in his marital destiny since he was likely to be free of his father's power, *patria*

potestas, by the time he married; nevertheless, he would still be obligated to act in his family's best interest and overlook personal inclination.) Yet even well after matrimony the couple was accountable to their kin group who tried to ensure the marriage's continuing success.

Despite the fact that marriages were arranged, Pliny felt that love was part of the fabric of a Roman marriage. We have noted that love could be maintained, paradoxically, through limited inter-spousal contact. Expectations for happiness in an arranged 'low affect' marriage were set at an achievable level.

Concerning the wife's role in marriage, it would be unfair to say that her personality was subsumed into her husband's (though, she may justly be described as a 'silent partner' in the marital arrangement). Roman society was thoroughly patriarchal. But, there was some mutuality and individuality to be found in marriage. After all, one of the high virtues of a good marriage was *concordia*, and this, by any definition, should allow for some sort of mutual striving, though the participants may be of unequal value.[72]

NOTES

1 A feature that is notably absent from Pliny's *Letters*, though believed to follow many Roman marriages, is divorce. Though divorce was always an option to an upper-class Roman it was, as Treggiari noted, *mores*-- and not *leges*-- which dictated the social custom. (Treggiari [1991b], 475). Pliny worked hard to silence what he must have felt to be an offensive aspect of Roman life.

2 Hopkins (1965), 313. His conclusion, that girls often married in their early or mid-teens, was reconsidered by Brent Shaw who concluded that the number ought to be revised upwards to a girl's late teens and early twenties; however, Richard Saller suggested that Hopkins' conclusion probably still holds for the aristocracy who tended to marry early. Shaw (1987), 30-46; Saller (1987), 21-34.

3 At the age of one the daughter of M. Vipsanius Agrippa was betrothed to the future emperor Tiberius, who was himself only seven years old.

4 Varro, *Grammaticae Romanae Fragmenta*, 3.6.

5 Treggiari (1984), 419.

6 On Roman marriage in general see, in particular, Treggiari (1991a) and (1991b), and Dixon (1992), 61-97.

7 *Ep.* 5.16.2. See Sherwin-White ([1966], 347) on the controversy over Minicia's age, with *ILS* 1030.

8 Carp (1980).

9 Finley (1981), 159.

10 Treggiari suggested that adult men had few occasions to meet sheltered young upper-class girls. Treggiari (1991a), 98.

11 *Dig.* 23.3.16.1.

12 Augustan marriage law prohibited the father from preventing his offsprings' marriage. *The Digest of Justinian* 23.2.19.

13 According to Saller, an aristocratic girl of 10 had a 69% chance of having a living father, a girl of 15 a 55% chance, a young women of 20 a 43% chance. Saller (1991), 37.

14 Noy (1990), 393.

15 Treggiari (1991b), 192.

16 For the mechanics of matchmaking see Treggiari (1984), Treggiari (1991a), and Dixon (1985).

17 Sherwin-White (1966), 117, 750.

18 This is an adaptation of Treggiari's definition of an arranged marriage. Treggiari (1991b), 190.

19 Noy (1990).

20 *Ep.* 3.11.7.

21 *Ep.* 6.32.

22 *Apol.* 92. I am indebted to Treggiari (1984), 432 for this reference.

23 *Ep.* 1.14.8.

24 *pace* Dixon (1992), 63.

25 Plutarch, *Life of Cicero*, 41.

26 Dixon (1992), 63.

27 Saller (1987), 32.

28 *Ep.* 8.18.

29 *Ep.* 4.19, 4.21.

30 *Ep.* 4.19.8.

31 Treggiari (1982), 44.

32 Plutarch, *Life of Sulla*, 35.

33 The age of 12 for girls and 14 for boys.

34 Treggiari (1991b), 473-82; 501-2. Treggiari feels social historians have exaggerated the divorce rate for antiquity.

35 Calpurnia's exact age is indeterminable. But, in *Epp.* 8.10 and 8.11 her miscarriage is attributed to her youth and inexperience. It is an assumption that this is her first pregnancy, but probably a safe one. Her age probably falls within Hopkins' framework: Calpurnia is somewhere in her teens.

36 The age bracket which defines *iuvenes* is from Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, and is in accord with the use of *iuvenes* in Pliny's *Letters*, where the age is determinable. Pliny styles both himself and Minicius Acilianus as *iuvenes* (*Ep.* 1.14.3) though he was about 35 or 36 and Minicius was somewhere between 30 and 34 years old.

37 *Ep.* 1.16.6.

38 *Ep.* 4.19.2-3. Sherwin-White (1966), 296.

39 Juvenal, *The Satires*, VI, 434-38. Juvenal, a contemporary of Pliny (though in *mores* a polar opposite), was part of what Treggiari calls the anti-marriage tradition. Treggiari (1991b), 223-24.

40 Shelton, (1990), 168.

41 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant.* 2.25.4.

42 *Pan.* 83.4.

43 *Pan.* 83.4.

44 *Ep.* 6.31.4.

45 *Ep.* 3.9.19.

46 *Pan.* 83.8.

47 *Pan.* 83.7, and 84.5.

48 *Pan.* 83.7.

49 Sherwin-White (1966), 296.

50 Shelton, (1990), 167.

51 Stone (1977), 82.

52 For the date and the circumstance, as far as we can tell, see Sherwin-White (1966), 359.

53 Syme has the marriage between 101-102 AD. Syme (1991), 510.

54 *Ep.* 7.5.1.

55 Again see Sherwin-White (1966), 359.

56 Jo-Ann Shelton, discussing the authenticity of letter *Ep.* 7.5, writes: "The debate about whether Pliny's letters are real or fictitious has no objective solution: I can see nothing in letter 7.5 itself which would prove that it was not written for and sent to Calpurnia. As a 'real' letter, it would demonstrate Pliny's love and affection for his wife. But even a 'fictitious' letter would be valuable, since it would indicate that Pliny wanted his readers to believe that Pliny was both emotionally and physically satisfying. In other words, either he truly felt that his own marriage provided physical and emotional comfort, or he cherished an ideal that marriage could and should be so." Shelton (1990), 171.

57 *Ep.* 6.4.3.

58 *Ep.* 7.5.1.

59 *Ep.* 6.7.1.

60 *Ep.* 6.7.3.

61 *Ep.* 10.120.

62 *Ep.* 9.36.4.

63 *Ep.* 5.18.1.

64 A few letters sent from outside the capital: *Epp.* 1.6, 7.30, 9.10, 9.15, 9.16.

65 *Ep.* 9.36.4.

66 Sherwin-White (1966), 3.

67 Stone (1977), 82.

68 *Ep.* 4.19.

69 *Epp.* 8.10, 8.11.

70 *Ep.* 8.10.1-.2.

71 The marriage of his brother Quintus to Atticus' daughter Pomponia. *Letters to Atticus*, 1.2, 2.2, 6.5, 120.1. For details see Bradley (1991), 177-204.

72 For Pliny's use of *concordia* as an element of marriage which evinces its success see *Ep.* 4.19.5. For a discussion of the word, and the oddity of it being the measure of a successful marriage, read Bradley (1991), 6-8.

FIVE
Children

The Value of Children and the Issue of Childraising

Though childless himself, the Younger Pliny allows a personal view of upper-class children in his letters. The information he provides is not plentiful-- which is instructive in itself-- but when it is set in context, the material can be elucidated and surrounding issues opened up. By investigating the parental role in a child's upbringing, and the nature of the child's socialization, Pliny's conception of how the child fits into the family becomes clear.

There is no question that, in abstract terms, Pliny and the other Romans of his world valued children as an element of the family and its life. Pliny was very much, even overly, aware that the production of children was the express purpose of marriage; they were, in his words, "the prop and stay of the family."[1] It was, after all, the children who carried on the family name, contributing to (or taking from) its accumulating honor, and who were powerful playing pieces in the familial strategy for social advancement, or simply in familial survival.[2] Perhaps Roman parents (and grandparents) looked forward to their children looking after them in the way that Pliny saw to the well-being of his grandfather-in-law's estate.[3] Pliny indeed saw that children were the means by which, socially, one preserved familial integrity and, economically, the family's property.

Nonetheless, Pliny found the issue of childraising complex; the theoretical value of children was somewhat offset by the practical value of childlessness. Though Roman law encroached upon familial life, encouraging propagation among the affluent by, as Pliny says, "high rewards"[4] and "comparable penalties",[5] public

laws did not reflect private practice.[6] Pliny himself knew this all too well: his annual contribution to Comum for the material support of free-born children did not, he realized, elicit the same enthusiasm as funding for public or gladiatorial games would. Plinian society was realistic; childraising was expensive, even for the privileged. The wealth of potential partners was certainly to be reckoned with by the negotiating parties before marriage was sanctioned, especially, Pliny reasons, "if one thinks of the children of the marriage."[7]

Cost was not the only burden of childrearing. It was, Pliny says, difficult "to prevail upon anyone to submit to the tedium and hard work involved in bringing up children."[8] When Pliny made a contribution towards the maintenance of free-born children to his hometown, his generosity was of necessity accompanied by an explanation aiming at persuasion and sugaring a bitter pill: "My own special difficulty was to make the childless appreciate the benefits gained by parents."[9] The poor, who gained nothing from the governmental encouragements to procreate (the *Lex Papia Poppaea*, and *ius trium liberorum*), had only one inducement, reasoned Pliny, to have children-- a good emperor.[10] Such an enticement could hardly have been persuasive.[11] However, Pliny insisted that the political climate of the time was indeed a consideration in family planning for the upper-class-- though undoubtedly irrelevant to the underprivileged. He mentions to Trajan that though he desired children in "those evil days now past," that is, Domitian's reign, "now is the time I would wish to be a father, when my happiness need know no fear."[12] The fear was a tangible one for the élite, and is delineated in Pliny's words to Trajan in the *Panegyricus*:

> *Super omnia est tamen quod talis es, ut sub te liberos tollere libeat expediat. Nemo iam parens filio nisi fragilitatis humanae vices horret, nec inter insanabiles morbos principis ira numeratur.*

> Above all, you are a prince whose reign makes it both pleasure and profit to rear children. No father now need fear more for his son than the hazards of human frailty-- among fatal illnesses he need not count his emperor's wrath.[13]

The implication: a father, in an unwholesome political climate, may be obliged or advised to quell his child's aspirations in order to escape the sinister attention and the envy of the more powerful, which could result in the child's and the family's ruin. In such a situation childlessness could be advantageous. Indeed, Pliny was well aware that his pedigree, combined with his wife's, would make his child's road to office all too easy.[14]

However, nowhere in the *Letters* does Pliny advocate childlessness, despite any of its advantages. Societal expectations pointed firmly towards reproduction, particularly among the upper-class. The pressure on Pliny and Calpurnia to procreate was very real: they were the last hope for offspring of their families, for which Pliny's anxiety is as evident as that of Calpurnia's family.[15] The distress becomes manifest in two letters already extensively examined, those which announce that Calpurnia had miscarried.[16] The tone of these letters, particularly the one to his grandfather-in-law, is apologetic and very conscious of the disappointment that the news would bring. Rather than our modern day sentimentality on childraising, we receive from Pliny a more clinical approach, much concerned with social utility.

His clinical approach to the question of child raising naturally resulted in a frugal awareness of the special needs of childhood, though Plinian evidence can mislead. Pliny clearly disapproved of the children of Comum being sent to neighboring Milan for an education; he favoured, rather, an education that took place in their own home town:

> *Ubi enim aut iucundius morarentur quam in patria aut pudicius continerentur quam sub oculis parentum aut minore sumptu quam*

> *domi? ... Educentur hic qui hic nascuntur, statimque ab infantia natale solum amare frequentare consuescant.*
>
> Where can they live more happily than in their native place? Where can they be brought up more strictly than under a parent's eye or with less expense than at home. ...The children born here should be brought up on their native soil, so that from their earliest years they may learn to love it and choose to stay at home.[17]

The sentiments, however, lack sentimentality. The principal interests were expense, the assurance of children's future devotion to their hometown, and their proper moral upbringing. In a similar case, Pliny counseled Corellia Hispulla to allow her son's education to go beyond the house (*extra limen*) to a local school since the danger had passed; the boy was no longer so young that he needed someone to oversee all his actions.[18] Pliny's concern that young children be taught at home showed little interest for the special needs of the young *per se*; and his belief in their corruptibility hardly counts. These views harmonize well with his clinical approach to the subject in general: Pliny is concerned solely with issues of civic duty, economy, and the propagation of the family, and not with the sentimental treatment of children.

Children, according to Pliny, were functional family members whose potential and worth lay solely in their future, so much so that the ancients tended to praise their children for their adult-like qualities as if merely anticipating their value. As such, children required much direction. Consider Pliny's advice to a young admirer who had the good fortune in having a living father:

> *Vides quem sequi, cuius debeas implere vestigia. O te beatum, cui contigit unum atque idem optimum et coniunctissimum exemplar, qui denique eum potissimum imitandum habes, cui natura esse te simillimum voluit!*
>
> You have your model before you, in whose footsteps you should tread, and are fortunate indeed to be blessed with a living example who is both the best possible and your close relative: in short, to have for imitation the very man whom Nature intended you to resemble.[19]

Pliny urged the young man to become a carbon copy of his father, in the same way that he hoped that Helvidius' only surviving son would emulate his father and grandfather,[20] and that Corellia Hispulla's son would resemble not only his father and uncle but both his grandfathers.[21] Children were to be raised worthy of their illustrious lineage, particularly the male ancestors. In fact, children within the *Letters* are, with but one exception, nameless, and are defined through their closest male relative: we hear simply of "Fundanus' younger daughter", and "Regulus' son."[22] To Pliny children were familial pawns, whom he disturbingly, but frequently, left nameless and unidentifiable as they waited to be fashioned.

It seems to be the case that the Romans were less concerned with the very young than they were with older children, and this perhaps can be linked with the excessive infant mortality rates in antiquity:[23] Cicero said that the death of babies was not generally to be mourned;[24] M. Manson was the first to note that the Romans lacked a specific word for baby, while Hopkins discovered that children were under-represented on sepulchral inscriptions.[25] Given Pliny's interests in children thus far outlined, it comes as no surprise that his evidence pays little attention to the very young. The *Letters* contain notably few references to *infantes*, and those in evidence remain unembellished.[26] Any substantial reference made was to children who were in the middle of their education, like Genialis, or who were about to be married, like Minicia Marcella. A child had to survive the dangerous early years of its life to receive significant attention within Pliny's work, and within Pliny's world; he was interested only in children who had passed safely through the dangerous years of infancy, in whom the family could invest its hopes for the future.

Parental Role in a Child's Upbringing

Euphrates, a philosopher who enjoyed Pliny's esteem, had three children whom he raised with "the greatest of care";[27] Minicia Marcella, the daughter of Minicius Fundanus, was said to have resembled her father "in character no less than in face and expression", and was his "living image in a wonderful way";[28] tolerance is preached to a father who reprimands his son for over-spending: remember, Pliny warns, that you too were once a boy;[29] Genialis, a young student, is depicted enjoying "quality time" with his father, going over Pliny's speeches.[30] Within the *Letters* the role of the father in a child's upbringing is unquestionably presented as active and desirable, complementing the notion that children were to emulate their male ancestors. But was such contact among upper-class parents and their children really desired, or even possible? This is a difficult question. Arguments for parental indifference towards infants in Roman society seem easily established, when the practice of infant exposure is considered. As for children who were raised, emotional bonding with them might have been ill-advised given the high child mortality rates. Assignment to wet-nurses and other attendants for upbringing predominated, as a result of which emotional distancing, neglect, and perhaps even abuse from the parents may have followed.[31] Pliny himself found enough of a companion in his nurse during his childhood that he was later moved to provide her with a farm, and even ensured its maintenance in her declining years.[32] (But what in truth do we know of Pliny's parents' role during his childhood?) When the need for wet-nurses and pedagogues had expired and the child's formal education was imminent, he may well be sent away to a neighboring city for instruction, as were the children of Comum.

Childhood was also affected by the Roman familial glue's strong tendency to come undone. Saller, for example, estimating the average age distance between a father and his child at about forty years, argues that more than half the children were fatherless by their late teens and early twenties, resulting in a truncated family.[33] Pliny himself had lost his father and reminded the young Genialis of his good fortune in having one on whom to model himself;[34] Calpurnia's family was even more fragmented, consisting simply of her grandfather and her aunt;[35] Ummidius Quadratus, whose parents were dead, was raised by his grandmother Ummidia Quadratilla;[36] Helvidius Priscus' daughters both died in childbirth leaving the infants motherless.[37] Fractured families, as much a by-product of high divorce rates and serial marriages as death, were the norm.[38] The impact of the instability of the Roman family on the child cannot be measured.

What then might be the chance for emotional bonding between parent and child if the parent (who, in the first place, may or may not survive) was withdrawn to begin with, and then perhaps unavailable ever after? What sort of socialization was the child receiving, and who took responsibility for it? To begin an undertaking of these questions, we must modify the assault on Roman parental commitment to their offspring. To infer total indifference arising from high mortality and infanticide is specious, as recent research has shown.[39] Many parents in Pliny's world, despite the demographic realities, made emotional investments in their children (though perhaps not in their *infantes*) indistinguishable from modern care, revealing an expectation, or at least the hope, that their children would outlive them: Arria, the eminent wife of Caecina Paetus, was at her noblest when she repressed her grief and hid their son's death from her ailing husband so as not to devastate the poor man;[40] Silius Italicus enjoyed much happiness in his long life, except for the loss of his younger son;[41]

Regulus mourned wildly at the death of his son;[42] the death of Vestricius' and Cottia's son is described as a "tragic loss" causing a "time of sorrow";[43] Minicius Fundanus was crushed by his daughter's death.[44] There is every reason to believe that Pliny's peers hoped their families would perish in generational sequence, despite the fact that it did not often occur. So, the parental role in a child's upbringing is depicted as being active in the *Letters*, though the sparsity of references to the very young (*infans*) suggests that the family may resist investing hope during the dangerous years of infancy.

Socializing the Child

To socialize children is to introduce them gradually to the world around them, using media such as toys, and institutions such as schools. The purpose of socializing the child is to instil the values and the morals of his or her surrounding culture, thus allowing for a smooth transition from dependence to independence. Naturally, socialization requires a high degree of participation on the part of those around the child, especially, from a modern point of view, the parents. As for the Romans and socialization, though they cared for their children, they still were rather more physically removed from them than our modern ideals would allow. It is, in fact, more appropriate to examine adult-child relations rather than simply parent-child relations, since in antiquity child care was no single person's responsibility.[45] Nurses, attendants, and teachers played critical roles in children's upbringing, shaping their personality, and perhaps impeding (or even replacing) intimacy between parent and child. Though the non-kin influence can easily be underestimated, they were nonetheless not the only influence on the Roman child. Pliny's *Letters* suggest that the extended kin group played an active role in a child's socialization. Calvina, the

daughter of a relative of Pliny's, benefited immensely from Pliny's generosity, having received both her dowry from him and the discharging of all her deceased father's debts, allowing her to accept an inheritance that would have otherwise been burdensome. This final deed, described as "my duty as your relative", shows that a child could benefit from the strong inter-familial involvement of the extended family, and the overall large financial commitment to a maintained familiarity.[46] Emphasis must be placed on the fact that the cohesiveness of the extended family was part of the Roman familial survival strategy to counter-balance its demographic frailty; children played a key role in this. As already seen, the individual members of a Roman family did not regularly die in generational sequence-- hence the need for social mechanisms to deal with this reality. If a child's parent(s) died, the surviving relatives took upon themselves the duties of the absent parent(s). Thus, Pliny's wife Calpurnia, who had lost both parents, was tended by her aunt, Calpurnia Hispulla, and by her grandfather, Calpurnius Fabatus, who together took the place of her real parents; Pliny himself, whose father had died sometime before he had reached fourteen, was overseen by his adoptive father (his maternal uncle), and vividly remembered in later years his idiosyncrasies and his scoldings.[47] Again a maintained inter-familial cohesiveness must be a premise to this condition.

Pliny also depicted friends and neighbors participating in the child's upbringing in a meaningful way, showing that familial friends had a vested interest in securing the family's future. He remembered the wise councils received as a boy from Calpurnia Hispulla, his future wife's aunt,[48] and how Verginius Rufus, who owned adjoining lands to Pliny's, gave him a "parent's affection."[49] Of course Calpurnia's and Verginius' roles are left vague (what is, for example, 'a parent's affection'?) but whatever attention Pliny received from them had enough of an impact that it was

remembered well into adulthood. The roles that friends played becomes less opaque when seen through Pliny himself who as an adult enthusiastically oversaw the young around him. He was, for example, actively involved in the upbringing of Corellia Hispulla's the son, feeling it was his duty to help select a mentor and guardian who would ensure that the child would become worthy of his illustrious ancestors.[50] The man Pliny recommended was the austere Julius Genitor, whom we meet later in the *Letters* sneering in disgust at the mimes, clowns, and dancers that had replaced the noble entertainment of actors, musicians, and readers.[51] (Corellia's son seems uniquely unfortunate). Family friends took pleasure in the advancement of each other's offspring: the festivities celebrating Junius Avitus' receipt of the *latus clavus* were held not at his residence, nor that of his family, but at Pliny's house.[52] A child grew up within the protective shadow of the family friends whose job it was, so Pliny has it, to ensure that children followed in the footsteps of their illustrious ancestors.

The socialization of the child, then, was the responsibility of a large and varied network comprised of family, attendants, neighbors, and friends. This network was willing to complete the upbringing of the child if it was impaired by the premature death of a parent. When, for example, Corellius Rufus was dying he made a point of telling his daughter whom she was now to rely upon: "I have made many friends for you in my long life, but none more devoted than Pliny and Cornutus."[53]

In the *Letters*, a child's upbringing was concerned primarily with the future of the family. The "parent's affection" that Pliny so cherished from Verginius Rufus was probably (given the nature of his interest in the son of Corellia) no more than moral and political guidance so that the child would live up to the reputation of his ancestors. In Pliny's *Letters*, as noted, there is no evidence of overt sentimentality in child raising. Parent-child and adult-child relations remain at a formal level. Formal

outings with an escort may have been depressingly common for the young upper-class. That is, supervision, in the form of social grooming and direction, was an axiom of a privileged upbringing. Boys were quickly snatched from the private domain to participate in the public arena. When Pliny was visiting his hometown, fellow citizens took advantage of his sojourn by bringing their young sons to meet the local man of influence: Pliny. One such meeting is reported between Pliny and the son of a local; the conversation appears in all respects very authentic, capturing all the awkwardness involved in the strained dialogue between a timid child and a punctilious childless adult. The boy's laconic replies frustrate Pliny's attempts at making casual conversation, a discussion all too similar to its modern counterpart: "'Do you go to school?' I asked. 'Yes,' he replied. 'Where?' 'In Mediolanum.' 'Why not here?'", and here the boy's father relieves the boy who had done enough for one-- perhaps his first-- outing.[54] Genialis, another young man (probably somewhat older than the former), begins what would normally be a gradual entry into public life with Pliny's aid. He is compelled (by his father, and perhaps by his own ambition) to write to the famed orator Pliny, reporting that his father and he were enjoying his speeches.[55] We are to envision a father helping his son cultivate an interest in forensic literature, though the boy was also being encouraged to try his hand at the type of epistle he could himself expect to write in his maturity, passing on his praise of his friends' literary works (in the manner that Pliny, for example, received Tacitus' books for comment)[56]. Pliny responded with encouragement, saying he had an excellent model before him in his father. Both boys were receiving a Roman education by being encouraged to test the waters of a public career-- this being an important function of 'family life' and 'parental affection' in the *Letters*. The influential, for their part, could expect such courting from their friends' children, and

from the offspring of those who had the right to an audience; and the dignitary would, as did Pliny, participate willingly in the child's upbinging. Pliny's clinical vision of parental attention has everything to do with directing the child into his vision of a successful adulthood.

So far there has been little to suggest that Pliny was sensitive to the distinct needs of children. Perhaps the picture would have been somewhat different if the man himself had had a child, but as it is he can only be aware of the more formal and public aspects of child-rearing. Yet the incidental Plinian evidence reveals a deeper awareness of childhood needs. Roman children, like all children, had some time to themselves, time away from a rigid exacting adult world. In a letter that relates a tale of a tame dolphin at the Roman colony of Hippo Diarrhytus, Pliny begins by mentioning a group of boys, probably from the lower classes, often found at the beach-- since boys, Pliny says, have plenty of time to play-- enjoying fishing, boating, and swimming; the absence of young girls from the picture is notable, and one can only suspect that their freedom may have been more restricted than that of young boys.[57] For the rich it is likely that their children were more isolated than the children depicted on the beaches of Hippo. If not involved in their studies, their leisure activities may well have confined them to the limits of their property. Regulus' boy, for example, possessed an array of extravagant diversions, Gallic ponies, dogs of all sizes, nightingales, parrots, and blackbirds, all of which would keep the prince envying the freedom of the pauper who had the whole city for his recreation.[58]

What emerges is at least some sensitivity to the condition of childhood as a phase of life distinct from that of adulthood, a phase which has its own particular needs. Words for 'play' appear a few times in the *Letters*: the verb *ludo* (to play)

appears with regard to the young Minicia's activities, and once the noun *lusus* (playing, or game) is used with regard to the activities of the boys on the beaches of Hippo Diarrhytus.[59] However, Pliny's enthusiasm for a child's education pushes these incidental references to child-oriented activities deep into the background.

The cases of the children of Euphrates, Minicia, the reproved son, and Genialis, however, concern only father-child relations, without mention of maternal influence. When children were born into a *cum* or *sine manus* marriage,[60] they were born into the father's family, they took the father's name, they were under his power, and were *sui heredes*. Though prevailing modern scholarship feels that the legal rights of the *paterfamilias* (such as the right of life and death over his children) are seldom invoked in the Roman imperial period,[61] with sympathy being a more fashionable child rearing methodology than severity, the father's power over his children remains unshaken in Pliny's letters-- though Pliny advises clemency (*Ep.* 9.12).[62] This is consistent with the formal conception of children as purely a legal continuation of the *paterfamilias*' family, which Pliny, as we have seen, supports. Unfortunately, Pliny under-represents both the attendants around the children and the maternal influence in favor of a traditional male perspective, for a conservative male audience. Yet there are a few incidental references concerning motherhood that are of interest. Pliny testifies to some of the pre-modern perils of child bearing: he was saddened by the death of Helvidius' daughters who both died during childbirth, and a miscarriage almost took the life of his own wife. Though Pliny seems to have taken the dangers of childbearing for granted, they could only have been particularly real to women. That it is not treated more fully is, perhaps, due to the limitation of the male perspective.

As for mother-child relations, the evidence is sparse. Ummidia Quadratilla, the acting mother for Ummidius Quadratus, would send the boy from the room when she would play with her draughts or watch her mimes.[63] The role of the mother was principally this: to act as a "firm disciplinarian" and as a "transmitter of traditional morality."[64] Yet, from Pliny's account of his and his mother's desperate flight from Misenum when Vesuvius was erupting, no one could deny that there was a bond of affection between them--even though Pliny's account of the event is rather over-done.[65]

Conclusion

What is missing in Pliny's *Letters* is evidence of how life in the household contributed to the child's upbringing; but what is present in abundance is the contribution that the public life made to a child's upbringing. Numerous times we have, with regards to children, labelled Pliny's approach 'clinical' since he was concerned with such things as civic duty, education, and socialization among the upper-class kin and non-kin members, but not with maternal influence and household life. This can only be explained in one way: public aspects of Roman life were Pliny's interests, and so he approached children from this angle. However, the premise to all the information provided is that Pliny's perspective on childhood and children was thoroughly an adult one. The value he saw in children was in their potential to become adults, and, thus, in their ability to perpetuate the family name and fortune. It is very much as Wiedemann pointed out: to Pliny children were "uninteresting in themselves."[66]

NOTES

1 *Ep.* 4.21.3.

2 For example: a certain Curtilius Mancia loathed his son-in-law Domitius Lucanus and so made Domitius' daughter his heiress solely on the condition that he release her from his power. Domitius' complied, but cunningly arranged for his brother, Domitius Tullus, to adopt her, and then he himself proceeded to adopt back his own biological daughter. Thus the purpose of the will was evaded and a large fortune was acquired by the ingenious brothers. The entire chicanery is related in detail in *Ep.* 8.18. See also Corbier (1991), 63-78; for the flexibility of the Roman legal toolkit that allowed for such complexities, see Saller (1991), 26-47.

3 *Ep.* 6.30.

4 The *ius trium liberorum*: "The *ius trium liberorum* removed bars on inheriting, permitted offices to be held before the statutory age, and allowed priority in holding office and being assigned a province." B. Radice's note for *Ep.* 2.13.8. Radice (1969).

5 The *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus*, 18 B.C., and *Lex Papia Poppaea*, A.D. 9: though the information is uncertain, the *Lex Julia* probably prevented senators from marrying freed women and punished adultery and fornication, while the *Lex Pappia Poppaea* rewarded legitimate offspring and penalized both unwed men between twenty-five and sixty and unwed women between twenty and fifty. Dixon (1992), 120. The laws seem to be a result of the society's awareness that the aristocracy were unable or unwilling to reproduce themselves (Hopkins, 1983).

6 *Pan.* 26.5.

7 *Ep.* 1.14.9.

8 *Ep.* 1.8.11.

9 *Ep.* 1.8.12.

10 *Pan.* 26.5

11 Those of modest means had a strong interest in having children, not appreciable to the privileged such as Pliny: children could help relieve the financial strain by being apprenticed in a handicraft, and could provide needed labor for the family itself. On this see Bradley (1991), 103-24.

12 *Ep.* 10.2.3.

13 *Pan.* 27.1.

14 *Ep.* 8.10.3.

15 *Ep.* 8.10.

16 *Epp.* 8.10, 8.11.

17 *Ep.* 4.13.3ff.

18 *Ep.* 3.3.3.

19 *Ep.* 8.13.2.

20 *Ep.* 4.21.4.

21 *Ep.* 3.3.1.

22 Except for Genialis, who was mentioned only in the salutation to the addressee, children are always left nameless. We are fortunate in having a sepulchral inscription which identifies Minicia Marcella (*ILS* 1030) who would otherwise be anonymous.

23 Bruce Frier has proposed a life table for the Roman population based on a similar table used for imperial taxation left to us by the jurist Ulpian. Frier's findings suggest that only 49% of children reached their fifth birthday, about what scholars had anticipated. Frier (1982), 213ff; and (1983), 328ff. See also Wiedemann (1989), 11-17.

24 *Disp. Tusc.* 1.93.4.

25 Manson (1983), 151-53; Hopkins (1983), 225.

26 Only three brief references occur: the babies of the daughters of Helvidus (*Ep.* 4.21.1); the babies who cried during the eruption of Vesuvius (*Ep.* 6.20.14); and the infant daughter of Junius Avitus (*Ep.* 8.23.7).

27 *Ep.* 1.10.8.

28 *Ep.* 5.16.9.

29 *Ep.* 9.12.

30 *Ep.* 8.13.

31 Bradley (1986), 220: "By driving a wedge between parent and child, wet-nursing fulfilled for the parent a self-protective function, diminishing the degree and impact of injury in the event of loss in a society where such loss was commonly experienced."

32 *Ep.* 6.3.

33 Garnsey and Saller (1987), 138.

34 *Ep.* 8.13

35 *Ep.* 4.19.

36 *Ep.* 7.24.

37 *Ep.* 4.21.

38 See Bradley (1991), 172-73. Bradley, though primarily examining the late Republic, does establish the prevalence of re-marriage in the early Empire.

39 Peter Garnsey's recent article on child rearing is the first to argue in detail for a more pragmatic view of exposure, deemphasising the importance of affective relationships to explore socioeconomic considerations: "The three most prevalent reasons for rejection of a baby were its poor fitness potential, inadequate parental resources, and illegitimacy." All three have little to do with indifference, and suggest rather that the process of exposure should be seen in most cases as a jettisoning for familial stability and survival. Mark Golden, who does not dismiss the importance of affective relationships as the key to the conundrum, is persuasive concerning the mind-set surrounding infanticide. Golden brilliantly equates the experience to the abortion issue, drawing from modern studies showing that many women who chose to abort still intend to have children in the future; and, when they do have children the "emotional atmosphere" they provide is indistinguishable from that of woman who have not had abortions. It seems, then, imprudent to equate Roman infanticide with emotional distancing, but rather it should be equated with a desire to provide better for existing or future children, as was the case for many of the women who participated in the study from which

Golden drew. Garnsey (1991), 65. Golden (1988), 155-58. Most recently comes J.K. Evans' work who not only believes in the presence of parent-child affection in antiquity, but suggests a source in the use of Greek attendants who were accustomed to sentimental relationships with their parents and later transmitted their beliefs to the Roman children they attended. Evans (1991), 198. This view, it seems to me, would be very difficult to prove.

40 *Ep.* 3.16.3.

41 *Ep.* 3.7.

42 *Ep.* 4.2; 4.7.

43 *Ep.* 3.10.2 and .6.

44 *Ep.* 5.32. Note that many of these examples contradict Dixon's claim that deep mourning for the death of children was strictly a maternal preserve in Roman society. Dixon (1988).

45 See Rawson (1991), 7-30. She too believes that the child's "social support system" goes beyond the conjugal family.

46 *Ep.* 2.4.

47 *Ep.* 3.5; and 3.5.16. See Sherwin-White (1966), 69-72.

48 *Ep.* 4.19.7.

49 *Ep.* 2.1.8.

50 *Ep.* 3.3.

51 *Ep.* 9.17.

52 *Ep.* 8.23.2 The tragedy of this young man's death touches Pliny deeply, confirming a long standing relationship.

53 *Ep.* 4.17.9 (my translation).

54 *Ep.* 4.13.3.

55 *Ep.* 8.13.

56 *Ep.* 7.20.

57 The word used is *pueri* which could mean children rather than simply boys but the context, in my view, would argue against this.

58 *Ep.* 4.2.3.

59 Minicia Marcella: *Ep.* 5.16.3; the boys of Hippo: *Ep.* 9.33.3.

60 For a brief synopsis of the two types of Roman marriage see Dixon (1992), 73ff.

61 On the power of the *paterfamilias* as mostly theoretical during the Empire see Saller (1986), 7-22; and most recently J.K. Evans who believes it was undermined even in the early Republic by men's absence from homes to participate in war. Evans (1991), 189.

62 *Patria potestas* is twice mentioned in the *Letters*: in *Ep.* 10.11.2 Pliny incidentally mentions that the two sons of a certain Chrysippus are beneath the *patria potestas* of their father; and again in *Ep.* 4.2.2 with regard to Regulus' son who was released from parental authority (*emancipavit*) to inherit his mother's estate.

63 *Ep.* 7.24.5.

64 Dixon (1988), 233.

65 *Ep.* 6.21.

66 Wiedemann (1989), 90.

SIX

The Elderly

Defining and Enumerating the Elderly in Antiquity

In conventional scholarship, old age, as a subject of investigation important to the understanding of Roman society, has been neglected.[1] The material has waited for an investigation: both Cicero and Seneca wrote sizeable treatises on old age, and there is no lack of incidental references throughout the ancient corpus with which to work. Here we will examine only what Pliny's correspondence provides in an attempt to discover the role of the old in the family.

What was regarded as old in antiquity? Who was a *senex* (old man) or an *anus* (old woman)? There is presently an advertisement on television which begins, "Twenty-eight was considered old in the Roman era."[2] This is patently untrue, and is symptomatic of what the historian Peter Stearns calls "a basic demographic confusion." Reacting against such misinformation about the elderly in Western preindustrial society, he remarks:

> Life expectancy has increased because, primarily, of the massive decline in infant mortality. If an ordinary person survived age two (before which his or her chances of dying were 50 percent) the prospect of living into the fifties, at least, were pretty good. ... The point is that the elderly were about, at all levels of society, and in considerable numbers. Attainment of one's sixties, while impressive, was hardly rare enough to call forth outpourings of awe.[3]

So we should not be surprised at the host of elderly people to be found within the *Letters* whose age is not paraded before the reader as something which should inspire awe.[4] As in today's society, old age in classical antiquity possessed no fixed limits by which it could be defined. The term 'old', as Dixon has remarked, was as vague and

elastic to the Romans as it is to us.[5] However, the age of sixty would not be an entirely arbitrary demarcation for old age since, for example, this was the age set for the retirement of a Roman senator.[6]

The Elderly's Manner of Life

The very existence of the words *senex* and *anus* demonstrates that the Romans regarded old age as a distinct phase of life-- a fact of which Pliny was particularly aware. In his mind, the *iuvenis* and the *senex* required antithetic modes of life:

> *Me autem ut certus siderum cursus ita vita hominum disposita delectat. Senum praesertim: nam iuvenes confusa adhuc quaedam et quasi turbata non indecent, senibus placida omnia et ordinata conveniunt, quibus industria sera turpis ambitio est.*
>
> A well-ordered life, especially where the old are concerned, gives me the same pleasure as the fixed course of the planets. A certain amount of irregularity and excitement is not unsuitable for the young, but their elders should lead a quiet and orderly existence, their time of public activity is over, and ambition only brings them into disrepute.[7]

Pliny felt that old age ought to have a particular character that comes close to an almost modern view of peaceful retirement. "It is our duty," he writes, "to give up our youth and manhood to our country, but our last years are our own."[8] This probably helped keep the distinction between *iuvenes* and *senes* crisp in the Roman mind, making old age have as much to do with *otium* as it did with withdrawing from *negotium.*

As they are now, 'the golden years' were principally defined by inactivity. Pliny himself looked forward to retirement and leisure *in altissima tranquillitate*,[9] enjoying the country villa, refreshing exercise, conversation, books, and a variety of entertainments while bathing in the glory of former public achievements.[10]

Pliny's Portrayal of the Elderly

The overall portrayal of the elderly within the *Letters* is sensitive, as we should expect, given Pliny's numerous aged acquaintances. Pliny came to have intimate knowledge of elderly people through the course of his adult life. With the death of Pliny's father (before 76 AD), and then of his mother (between 79 AD and AD 104) and his uncle (79 AD), the young man relied on the care of the family's friends. As seen in a previous chapter, two men in particular took him under their wings and guided him into public life: Verginius Rufus and Corellius Rufus, the one Pliny's senior by about forty-eight years, the other older by at least thirty years.[11] His intimacy with these men may partially account for the sensitive treatment the elderly receive in the *Letters*. For example, when he purchased a bronze statue of a nude old man, he confessed his fascination with the artist's attention to detail: the frailness, the wrinkles, the receding hair, the drooping shoulders and flat stomach.[12] That Plinian society should put value in the realism of such a work is instructive. The art is lauded for accurately reflecting life in its most pitiable form. Indeed, the qualities Pliny recognized in his statue he witnessed in his aged friends: he was aware of Corellius Rufus' deterioration and vulnerability to disease in his old age;[13] he remembered how Verginius Rufus' hands shook, and knew that this famed man's hip, fractured by what should have been a trivial fall, could no longer heal properly;[14] he was aware that some of the elderly, like the pitiable Domitius Tullus, were bedridden and unable even to eat or turn without aid;[15] he sympathized with the aged downtrodden senator Julius Bassus, "bent with the afflictions and poverty of his old age";[16] and he was touched by Lucius Piso's lugubrious remark that those whom he had called on as consul were not alive today.[17] Pliny's sympathetic treatment of old age is remarkable

for its sobriety: though savouring the prospect of a secure leisure- filled retirement, he was wise to the realities of longevity. Indeed, to have reached sixty in antiquity was something of an achievement, and the price could be high: Verginius Rufus died a slow and painful death; both Corellius Rufus and Silius Italicus opted for suicide rather than face their excruciating conditions of sickness any longer. And these men, we must remember, belonged to the privileged class which at least had the financial security that ensured professional attendants. But what of the poor? We can only imagine the horror of old age for them. Of their condition, Pliny seems altogether ignorant.

The Elderly Within the Family

A common privilege of old age is respect. The old in Pliny's era were valued as they are today for the direct link to the past that they provided. As Pliny himself says: "There is a special sort of pleasure in being... singled out and given the entry into a bygone age."[18] The elderly's experiences afforded them a special status. Verginius Rufus in his early eighties was revered by everyone, while Vestricius Spurinna, over seventy-seven, has gained wisdom from his years.[19] Within the family, respect for the eldest male had legal backing in the institution of *patria potestas*; for the eldest female, respect was based traditionally on her experience of maternity and matrimony, *materna auctoritas*. Yet, respect and reverence are dubious honours, far more real in principal than practice.

Being old, in Pliny's *Letters*, actually involved a certain amount of alienation, or liminal extrusion. That is, though there was a sensitivity to the physical condition of the old, Pliny and his peers do little more than pay lip service to their emotional needs. An unnamed woman, a widow who had borne children in a previous marriage,

was unsuccessfully dissuaded from remarrying Domitius Tullus. Some of the reasons why her family and the public found the match unsuitable are instructive: she was rather old for re-marriage (*aetate declivis*), she was a widow and had already had children (*diu vidua mater olim*).[20] That is to say, she had had her turn, and was now expected to slip into the more passive role that society had made ready for her-- social retirement. It was unacceptable that she would give up the elevated status of the widowed matron to debase herself by re-marriage, and re-marriage to an invalid no less. In another letter, but a similar scenario, Pliny harshly criticized his rival Regulus for considering re-marriage: "You will soon hear that the mourner is married, the old man is wed-- the one too early and the other too late (*quorum alterum immaturum alterum serum est*)."[21] The sentiment is clear. A man of Regulus' age had no right to participate in marriage, or at least he had no right stealing a potential bride from the younger generation. Anything which contributed to familial advancement or growth, such as marriage, was usually wholeheartedly encouraged. This was not the case for the elderly. It is notable that the seniority of both Regulus' and Domitius' wife worked to their advantage. It meant that no one could stop the former, and that no one did prevent the latter from re-marrying. But it did not stop those around them from disapproving.

Certainly late re-marriage could complicate existing familial strategies by introducing new (and perhaps undesirable) alliances at inopportune times. For example, when Attius Suburanus re-married at the age of eighty he saw fit to disinherit his own daughter in favour of his new wife, an act which Pliny represents as being perfidious.[22] After Suburanus' death, when the contents of the subversive will were disclosed, the daughter sued for her patrimony. Indeed, there might be good reason for society and family to discourage marriage at a late age. In this light

the nature of the respect we discussed earlier pales to condescension and restriction. Pliny's grandfather-in-law asks if Pliny could persuade a magistrate to travel to Comum since he wanted to formally manumit some of his slaves. (Roman law required a magistrate to be present for this). Pliny writes back saying that this could be arranged since his good friend Calestrius Tiro would soon be setting out for his province from Rome, and so would be in the area. Calpurnius accepts Pliny's offer and informs him that he will intercept Tiro at Mediolanum, some twenty-five miles as the crow flies from Comum, but Pliny will not hear of this "burden too heavy for your years"; the aged patriarch is instructed to wait indoors, in his bedroom for Tiro's arrival.[23] This sort of concern, though rooted in affection, certainly could have been restrictive, and only further reinforces the fact that condescension replaced respect, in real, specific circumstances. The elderly were to be passive recipients of familial attention, discouraged by family (and by society at large) from active participation.

Though sequestered, the elderly in Pliny's *Letters* do provide advice on familial affairs. Pliny shows us that he maintained an extensive and multifarious correspondence with Calpurnius Fabatus, the *paterfamilias* of his wife's family, and this correspondence is well worth examining. Calpurnius Fabatus, Calpurnia's grandfather, was anything but uninvolved in the direction of his granddaughter's marriage, as we have seen. When Calpurnia miscarried, Pliny felt obligated to apologize formally to him for having thus far failed to continue the family line for him.[24] The couple was obligated to report to the extended family on matters we would consider private, and an extra formality seems required when addressing the *paterfamilias* of that family.

The financial well-being of the extensive family was also his concern. When Pliny sold some land at a loss to the sister of his dear friend Corellius Rufus,

Calpurnius was quick to inquire about the prudence of the sale. Pliny answered the letter, and calmly explained the situation. It is clear that he felt such inquiries were quite justified when coming from the head of the family-- though he was at this time forty-five years old, and Calpurnius was not, in strict legal terms, his *paterfamilias*.[25] In another letter Calpurnius played an advisory role: he suggested that the family maintain its alliance with Bittius Priscus (who may even be related to Pliny) by having Pliny take up his case in the Centumviral Court.[26] Note how this letter to Calpurnius began:

> *Tu vero non debes suspensa manu commendare mihi quos tuendos putas. Nam et te decet multis prodesse et me suscipere quidquid ad curam tuam pertinet.*
>
> You are the last person who should hesitate to bring to my notice anyone you think needs assistance, for if helping many is your proper concern, taking on any case you have at heart is mine.[27]

Indeed, Pliny openly asserts that it was Fabatus' right to direct the familial allegiance, but his grandfather-in-law's previous letter was nonetheless somewhat apologetic. And further on in the letter Pliny says:

> *Epistularum, quas mihi ut ais "aperto pectore" scripsisti, oblivisci me iubes; at ego nullarum libentius memini...Proinde etiam atque etiam rogo, ut mihi semper eadem simplicitate, quotiens cessare videbor ("videbor" dico, numquam enim cessabo).*
>
> You bid me forget the letters which you call outspoken, but there are none I like better to remember. ...I do beg you then most earnestly to reprove me with the same frankness whenever I seem to fail in my duty (I say 'seem' because I shall never really fail).[28]

Again Pliny re-assures Calpurnius that his intervention is welcome. But for a moment reconsider the letter concerning the sale of the land to Corellia: though Pliny humbly responded to Calpurnius' inquiries, it sounds very much as if Pliny went ahead and completed the transaction without thought of consulting him; now couple

this with the obvious hesitation and apologetic tone that gave rise to the letter about Bittius Priscus and the conclusion is inescapable: Pliny advocates a tolerance of the *paterfamilias*' passive incursions, and does little to suggest that Calpurnius actually directs the familial affairs themselves. Clearly, the elderly's active role in society and in the family could only be undermined as they lost mobility, and as they lost touch with the public world. The younger family members actually had to take over what were really the duties of the elderly. Pliny, for example, was sent to check up on Fabatus' Campanian estate for him, and to pick a suitable manager for it.[29] Calpurnius, in his mid 70s at the time,[30] found it difficult to leave Comum and became so out of touch with public life that he relied on Pliny's social network to settle such affairs.

Wills

The transmission of wealth was of vital importance to the upper-class Romans, making the will a legal instrument of great significance.[31] The aristocratic elderly could amass a considerable fortune through receipt of familial legacies and legacies from friends[32]-- and this made their wills of particular consequence since it was one of the few powers they had. Disputes over wealth transmission were not uncommon and are well-represented in Pliny's *Letters*.[33] It becomes obvious that Roman society had certain expectations and attempted to guide the distribution of the legacy, but Roman custom allowed for some degree of individual choice in this matter.[34]

While alive, Domitius Tullus allowed himself to be attended to by legacy hunters (*captatores*) who hoped, by their servile flattery, to secure a piece of his fortune after his death. He, however, foiled their hopes having designated his

daughter as his principal heiress, and distributed the remainder of his fortune to his grandchildren and great-granddaughter. The will reflected a "family affection" and "honesty", and so earned Pliny's praise.[35] When Ummidia Quadratilla left two-thirds of her estate to a grandson and one-third to a grand-daughter, Pliny describes her will as "a most honorable will" (*honestissimo testamento*).[36] Clearly the heir of choice was to be within the extended family. Yet the old could not always be relied upon to make the right choice in such matters. The father of Attia Viriola is a case in point. At the age of eighty he had married for love (*amore captus*), always the wrong reason for marriage. What is more, not ten days later he disinherited his daughter in favour of the stepmother. The court trial where Attia, with Pliny's help, sought her patrimony was a sensation: fathers, daughters, and stepmothers were said to have all anxiously awaited the verdict.[37] The fear that the elderly would succumb to the artifices of legacy hunters or simply squander the family fortune on some new love is quite real in the *Letters*. There is a strong sense that the elderly were prone to irresponsibility and unpredictability, were infirm of mind as well as body. In real, specific circumstances they were not to be trusted.

Conclusion

The elderly were not discounted as part of the extended family. They retained potency in an advisory capacity long after their public careers had petered out. However, this advisory position was something of a sinecure: they were discouraged from active participation, even distrusted, in familial matters, despite the austerity of the institutions of *patria potestas* and *materna auctoritas*. Respect for the dignity of old age did prevent anyone from doing anything more than frowning, though delinquent wills could (and would) be contested. Though Pliny represented upper-

class society as adverse, condescendingly tolerant, and even, to some degree, distrustful of their judgement in public and familial matters, the elderly in antiquity did have enough independence and dignity to prevent their manipulation. I suspect that the source of this independence is tied up with the institution of slavery. It is the élite's use of attendants that would allow the elderly to continue to live on their own in the manner to which they were accustomed, precluding a need for retirement homes, and even preventing loneliness. They did not, that is to say, have to rely upon the emotional or even the financial charity of their families, as our elderly may. Nonetheless, Pliny saw the elderly's chief contributions to the family as preserving past honours, and transmitting both their virtues and money-- the one orally, the other through wills-- while they seem little more than a silent partner in substantive familial affairs.

NOTES

1 On children good material can now be found; for example, Wiedemann (1989); Beryl Rawson (1986), (1991). On the elderly the material is more sparse: Finley's seminal article (1981); Dixon provides a good but brief treatment (1992), 149-59; and an elementary article by Kebric (1983). A sad testament to our ignorance on the elderly in antiquity is that both Dixon and Kebric are indebted to an unpublished doctoral thesis written by L. Berelson in 1934-- the only work, I might add, that addresses the subject of old age in antiquity *in toto*.

2 The advertisement is for, oddly enough, Diet Coke.

3 Stearns (1977), 19.

4 For the incredulous, I append a sample:

Calpurnius Fabatus, Pliny's grandfather-in-law, died at age c. 82.
Silius Italicus, epic poet, died at age 76.
Ummidia Quadratilla, a friend of Pliny's, died at age 79.
Corellius Rufus, guardian and mentor of Pliny, died at age 67.
Verginius Rufus, guardian of Pliny, died at age 83.
Vestricius Spurinna, friend of Pliny's, alive at 78.

5 Dixon (1992), 150.

6 Talbert (1984), 152-54.

7 *Ep.* 3.1.2.

8 *Ep.* 4.23.3.

9 *Ep.* 2.1.4.

10 See *Epp.* 3.1, 4.23, 7.24.

11 Verginius Rufus died in 97 AD at the age of 83. Sherwin-White (1966), 142. Corellius Rufus died in 97 or 98 AD at the age of 67. Sherwin-White (1966), 111.
62-14

12 *Ep.* 3.4.2.

13 *Ep.* 1.12.5.

14 *Ep.* 2.1.4.

15 *Ep.* 8.18.9.

16 *Ep.* 4.9.22.

17 Due to the nature of Roman demography loneliness could have been even more of a recurrent factor among the elderly than it is today. However, Pliny does mention that those of remarkable longevity congregated in Tuscany to take advantage of the temperate summers, and, no doubt, to enjoy each others' company. *Ep.* 5.6.4.

18 *Ep.* 3.1.6. see also *Ep.* 3.20.5.; 5.6.6.

19 *Epp.* 2.1.4 and 3.1.10

20 *Ep.* 8.18.8.

21 *Ep.* 4.2.7.

22 *Ep.* 6.33.

23 *Epp.* 7.16 and 7.23.

24 *Ep.* 8.10.

25 *Ep.* 7.11.

26 *Ep.* 6.12. The suggestion that Priscus may be related to Pliny is made by Sherwin-White (1966), 368.

27 *Ep.* 6.12.1.

28 *Ep.* 6.12.3-5.

29 *Ep.* 6.30.

30 An approximate birth date of 30 AD for Calpurnius is suggested by Sherwin-White ([1966], 264), based, in part, on the surviving inscription documenting his political career (*ILS* 2721).

31 On the obligations to one's family in a Roman will see Champlin (1991), 103-30.

32 Through inheritances alone, in the slender fifteen years the letters cover, Pliny amassed well in access of HS 1,450,000. Duncan-Jones (1974), 27.

33 *Ep.* 7.6.8: A mother, whose son had died, charged his freedmen, who were the joint heirs with her, with poisoning their master and forging the will. *Ep.* 5.1: Asudius Curianus, disinherited by his mother, fought hard to retrieve some share of the inheritance. *Ep.* 6.33: Attia Viriola, disinherited by her father, sued her stepmother for her patrimony. Many of these examples are probably more a matter of pride and dignity than wealth.

34 On this last point see Saller (1991), 26-47, who shows that the legal instruments at a Roman's disposal created substantial legal flexibility so that the law could accommodate the demographic and changing cultural realities of Roman society.

35 *Ep.* 8.18.7.

36 *Ep.* 7.24.1.

37 *Ep.* 6.33.4.

SEVEN
Conclusion

Four topics concerning the Roman family have been addressed with regards to Pliny's *Letters*: the domicile, marriage, children, and the elderly. What remains is to show how the conclusions of each topic complement each other.

The purpose of examining Pliny's residences was to discern the composition of his household, and to establish a tone for Roman family life. As for household composition, it is quite clear that free and non-free attendants were a significant part of the *domus*, and that 'houseful' is a more accurate description than 'household' for the composition of any of Pliny's villas. As for tone, the pervasive public purpose of Pliny's houses rule out the possibility that they could be equated with the intimate private atmosphere of our homes. Both findings suggest that the phrase 'nuclear family' has limited use for us, since it will not recognize free and non-free attendants as part of the family, nor will it allow for the communal atmosphere which pervaded Pliny's houses.

Concerning matrimony, we found that Pliny felt this to be a concern of the existing extended kin group, not simply the couple involved. Marriages were to be arranged with the best interest of the larger family unit in mind; personal inclination had no part to play in this matter, and love was a post-nuptial emotion. The couple could expect to be accountable to their kin group throughout the marriage on many issues, even those we would consider private.

Children, the express purpose of marriage, were, as Pliny asserted, the "prop and stay" of the extended family. The identity of a child was to be fashioned in the likeness of his fathers and forefathers. For this reason children remain anonymous in

the *Letters*, and are referred to through their nearest male relative. If one parent or both parents were unavailable to guide the child into adulthood it was the responsibility of the extended family to provide surrogate parents from within the kin group. Children were the collective responsibility of the extended family.

As depicted by Pliny, the elderly were active in familial affairs, mostly in an advisory capacity. Pliny clearly felt that they were the familial point of reference and were to be revered. The elderly's potency was in the penning of a testament, and these wills were to reflect their devotion to their larger kin group.

As can be seen from this brief summation of our findings, Pliny's *Letters* do not support an interpretation of the Roman family as strictly a *nuclear family*: though the *nuclear family* was critical for reproductive purposes, and though Pliny depicts a strong and tender devotion between spouses, familial obligations and consideration clearly extended well beyond the conjugal couple and their unmarried offspring, and well beyond the domicile. To concentrate simply on the *nuclear family*, though indeed a very important component of the family, would give a limited sense of how an upper-class Roman family operated over the life-course of its members. The kin group Pliny had in mind when he thought of his obligations to his family was very inclusive (rather than exclusive). He sought out as many relatives as were available. There is no better example of this than Pliny's relationship with his ex-mother-in-law, Pompeia Celerina. Pliny stayed in close touch with her (she receives one missive, and numerous mentions throughout the *Letters*), and when he needed some extra money to purchase a farm he intimates confidently to a friend that he could rely on her capital "as freely as his own."[1] All this suggests that the phrase *extensive family*[2] would be an preferable replacement for the term *nuclear family*, at least in the *Letters* of Pliny.

Pliny's views are, without a doubt, austere and conservative, and perhaps harken back to Republican morality. In the *Letters*, for instance, the institution of *patria potestas* was alive and well, though modern scholars, for demographic reasons, argue that this is an impossibility (despite the fact that the second century jurist Gaius felt that *patria potestas* was an important concern for young men).[3] That Pliny's views sometimes did not accurately reflect reality is demonstrable. We saw in our examination of the elderly that the aged, though they were revered, were also distrusted and that in real, specific circumstances their opinions may not have been sought; and we saw that divorce is never mentioned within the *Letters* though we know it played a large part in upper-class Roman society. Yet, it would be imprudent to dismiss Pliny as a unreliable source for the Roman family. The *Letters*, for example, definitely reflect the real demographic frailty of the Roman family:[4] by 104 AD Pliny had lost his father, his mother, and his adoptive father; Calpurnia had no mother or father to see her married; the children of Helvidius' daughters were born motherless, as both women died in childbirth. The practicality of the extensive family in such a situation is undeniably enormous. An inclusive, expansive family unit is a logical adaptive strategy for familial survival that would counterbalance existing demographic realities. After all, a fatherless Roman son, in any period, would be totally incapable of establishing himself in a political career without the committed aid of an older male. And his success in that career was of the most benefit to the extended kin group. That is to say, the extensive family (and its variety of forms) found in the *Letters* of Pliny is the best and obvious solution to the Romans' demographic problem, and is certainly deeply rooted in reality.

NOTES

1 *Ep.* 3.19.8.

2 Mentioned by Bradley in a seminar on the Roman family (1992), and detailed in the final chapter of Bradley (1991), 177-204.

3 Saller (1986) and (1987) vs. Gaius, *Inst.* I.557 and II. 141.

4 Saller (1987).

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Abbreviations

CIL= *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, i-xvi. 1863-1936. Berlin.

ILS= Dessau, H. *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 1892-1916. Berlin.

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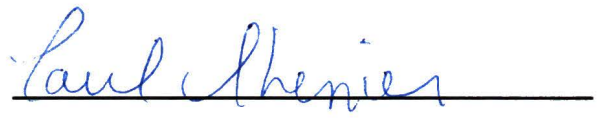
Author 

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