

THE AUTOPSY OF C. ASINIUS POLLIO*

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The historical record of the Roman civil wars gives an unusual prominence to C. Asinius Pollio (76 B.C.–A.D. 4). There is more than one reason for the anomaly, not the least being that Pollio was himself largely responsible for creating that record in the form of his celebrated *Historiae* of the civil wars. It was this work which provided the authors we read — Appian, Dio, Plutarch, and Suetonius — with their major source for the period, and a characteristic feature of the work, as these later texts attest, was the emphasis which Pollio placed on his presence on the scene and immediate, eyewitness knowledge of much of the historical material he narrated.

And yet Pollio had earned for himself at least a small place in history, independently of his historiographical activity. After the death of Caesar he played an important role in the manoeuvring which brought Mark Antony to power (three letters to Cicero survive from the period), and held the consulship in 40 B.C. (cf. *Ecl.* 4.1–17). Whilst consul he acted as co-sponsor of the pact of Brundisium between Antony and Octavian, and subsequently celebrated a triumph over the Parthini, a Balkan tribe. He stood equally high in the arts, honoured by C. Helvius Cinna, whose *Propempticon* was addressed to him, acquainted with Catullus (12.6–9) and C. Cornelius Gallus (Cic., *Fam.* 10.32.5), and rescued from serious injury by C. Licinius Calvus during his prosecution of C. Cato in 54 (Sen., *Contr.* 7.4.7).¹ Virgil's *Eclogues* seem, in some early instantiation, to have benefited from his patronage, and he is mentioned there and in Horace's *Satires* as both a tragedian and a literary connoisseur (*Ecl.* 3.84–9, 8.6–13; *Serm.* 1.10.42, 85). Most familiarly, the first poem of the second book of Horace's *Odes* honours him for the *Historiae* (and in the process for his non-literary achievements). His dedication of the first public library in Rome, organization of the *recitatio*, and magnificent (public) art collection will concern us later. But the general picture is clear: a 'remarkably versatile figure',² a Renaissance man. Appropriately, Pollio was the first recipient of the compliment which, when applied by Erasmus to Thomas More, would be translated 'a man for all seasons'.³ He enjoyed a well-earned reputation as a particularly accomplished and rounded individual, comfortable in any context.

Pollio, or rather 'Pollio', will be the main focus of this article: the ways in which this paradigmatic member of the ruling élite (itself an interesting self-image for the grandson of a rebel leader in the Social War) constructed himself in response to the revolution in Roman political culture through which he lived. Particular attention will be paid to the ideally trustworthy eyewitness and narrator which Pollio made of himself in his *Histories*, and to the new cultural role which he sought to forge for himself in the adverse conditions of the early Principate. But the article will start, and end, with a refraction of Pollio and his *Histories* in another author entirely. (I shall suggest later that

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¹ This Cato is not, of course, M. Cato 'Uticensis', *pace* J. Henderson, 'Polishing off the politics: Horace's ode to Pollio, 2, 1', *MD* 37 (1997), 59–136, at 104 n. 89. In the revised version of this article the misidentification is promoted to the main text: *Fighting for Rome: Poets and Caesars, History and Civil War* (1998), 108–62, at 139. For a discussion of this trial see E. S. Gruen, 'Cicero and Licinius Calvus', *HSCP* 71 (1966), 215–33, at 222–4.

² P. M. Brown, *Horace, Satires 1* (1993), *ad Serm.* 1.10.42–3.

³ The expression 'omnium horarum homo' was used of Thomas More by Erasmus in the prefatory letter to his *Praise of Folly* (1511). Its origin and meaning had been explained in Erasmus' *Adages* (1500). In Robert Whittington's *Vulgaria* (1520), a Latin schoolbook, 'uir omnium horarum' was given as the translation of 'a man for all seasons', again in a eulogy of More. As Erasmus explains in the *Adages*, the origin of the expression is Quintilian, who at *Inst.* 6.3.110 provides an example of a properly 'urbane' saying: 'de Pollione Asinio seriis iocisque pariter accommodato dictum est esse eum omnium horarum', 'it was said of Asinius Pollio, who was equally suited to seriousness and frivolity, that he was "a man for all occasions"'. The phrase 'a man for all seasons' of course gained renewed currency with the play (1960) and film (1966) of that name by Robert Bolt. Examples of Pollio's wit are preserved in Seneca's *Controversiae*.

the treatment of Pollio in Augustan literature is quite as informative as other, more orthodox forms of evidence about the impact of the new regime.) The most familiar secondary account of Pollio's history is *Odes* 2.1, and it is a text to which this article will refer repeatedly. But its version of Pollio's *Histories* has just recently enjoyed very thorough analysis indeed, by Henderson in particular.⁴ My starting point will be another first-century text where Pollio's presence has not, until recently, been felt, but which I shall suggest is quite as suggestive as Horace's ode about the work and its cultural significance.

I. VIRGIL'S PRIAM, POLLIO'S POMPEY

A short note by John Moles has demonstrated that in one instance at least we can tell that Pollio's *Histories* were familiar to Virgil, and that the poet was thinking about them during his composition of the *Aeneid* in the 20s B.C.⁵ At *Aen.* 2.554–8 Aeneas, addressing Dido, reviews Priam's life and tragic death:

haec finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum
sorte tulit Troiam incensam et prolapsa uidentem
Pergama, tot quondam populis terrisque superbum
regnatorem Asiae. iacet ingens litore truncus,
auulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus.

This was the end of Priam's fates, this the death which by lot carried him off. He who had once been the proud ruler of so many peoples and lands of Asia died seeing Troy burnt and Pergama in ruins. The great trunk lies on the shore, head torn from shoulders and body without a name.

Servius famously commented at 557 that this passage 'Pompei tangit historiam', 'alludes to the story of Pompey', and this is a Servian gloss to which modern criticism is for once generally sympathetic. Hinds, for example, has recently used this passage, along with a passage of Lucan concerning Pompey which alludes to it (1.685–6), to reach conclusions about the nature of Lucanian allusion and allusion in general.⁶ The nature of Virgil's allusion is not the focus of Hinds' interest, and it is left in his account as an allusion to something like historical fact. But the point which Moles allows us to appreciate is that Virgil's allusion was not so much to the death of Pompey *as it actually happened* as to an earlier, literary *account* of that death — precisely, in fact, the kind of thing about which Hinds' book has such interesting things to say.

The basis of Moles' argument consists in the close similarities which exist between the five surviving accounts of Pompey's death, in Velleius, Lucan (8. 698–711), Plutarch, Appian, and Cassius Dio. Such unanimity about an event in the civil wars is, as I shall suggest later, remarkable, and clearly implies a single common source. This source, as Moles argues, must be Pollio's *Histories*, since Pollio is known to be the main source for Plutarch and Appian in their accounts of the civil wars, the ultimate authority (via Livy) of much of the civil war material in Dio and Velleius, and an important resource also for Lucan's *De Bello Civili*. Moles goes on to argue, convincingly, that the main features of Pollio's account can be reconstructed from these later authors, and they correspond point after point with Virgil's account of Priam's corpse: a *hic exitus* formula (or something similar), followed by a disquisition on the great *peripeteia* experienced by the victim; a headless, nameless, improperly buried corpse on the shore, and so on. 'It seems clear,' Moles concludes, 'that when Virgil wrote the whole passage 2.554–8, he was influenced by the account of, and the reflections on, the death of Pompey the Great to be found in the *Histories* of his friend and former patron Asinius Pollio' (288).

⁴ Henderson, art. cit. (n. 1); cf. M. Lowrie, *Horace's Narrative Odes* (1997), 175–86.

⁵ J. L. Moles, 'Virgil, Pompey and the *Histories* of Asinius Pollio', *CW* 76 (1982–3), 287–8.

⁶ S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (1998), 8–10, 100; cf. E. Narducci, 'Il tronco di Pompeo', *Maia* 25 (1973), 317–25.

This was an exemplary piece of *Quellenforschung* on Moles' part. But it is worth considering whether his insight might not be taken rather further. For Moles, Virgil's dependence on Pollio tells us about Virgil's process of composition, not about his techniques of allusion. Virgil had read Pollio's *Histories* and was influenced by Pollio's account or else *had it in mind*: in other words this text was, as it happened, where he got his information from. But this account fails to capture the full sophistication of the trope. This is an *allusion* to another text, designed by its very nature to be apprehended as such, as Hinds has suggested.⁷ And in this instance Virgil annotates and advertises his allusion to a piece of historiography very emphatically indeed. For a start, his passage is pointedly, self-consciously, historiographical. Seneca the Elder regards the kind of summary of a great man's life which Aeneas provides here as typical of historiographical method.⁸ In addition, as Austin notes, *hic exitus* (554) is a characteristically historiographical formula,⁹ as is Virgil's 'moralizing on a notable περιπέτεια': 'any Roman reader', Austin writes, 'would recognize in Virgil's lines the ethos of history in an epic guise.'¹⁰ Bowie suggests that the striking narrative dislocation of 557 — at the main caesura Priam is suddenly and for no apparent reason relocated from the altar where he has died to the shore—has the effect of 'drawing attention to the sudden irruption of the historical Pompey into the mythical narrative'.¹¹ We are, as it were, jolted into recognizing that something other than conventional epic narrative is going on (though it is in fact *another* form of narrative, rather than the historical reality which Bowie has in mind). Virgil is alerting the reader that Aeneas' account to Dido is becoming, briefly, historiographical, and that Aeneas himself is assuming the voice of one writer of history in particular, C. Asinius Pollio. Virgil's allusion is thus not to history but to historiography, and the allusion is to historiography *as* historiography. We are meant to recognize, and contemplate, the object of the allusion.¹²

There is one further respect in which Virgil 'annotates' his allusion to Pollio's *Histories*, and it is here that we shall encounter the issue of autopsy. But first it is worth considering the implications of this literary *jeu d'esprit* just a little further. Virgil's Priam reflects Pompey in some degree, that is clear, but at the same time Virgil's and Aeneas' account of Priam shades into Pollio's *Histories*. The death and 'obituary' of Priam is a highly significant moment in the account of the fall of Troy. Austin (*ad* 554–8) refers to these five lines as 'the climax of the Sack of Troy as Virgil conceived it'. It corresponds to a moment in Pollio's work which was also, necessarily, a critical moment — quite possibly *the* critical moment — in a history of the civil wars: the death of Pompey, an event which marked for many the end of senatorial government. The equation at this

⁷ Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 10.

⁸ Sen., *Suas.* 6.21: 'quotiens magni alicuius uiri mors ab historicis narrata est, totiens fere consummatio totius uitae et quasi funebris laudatio redditur', 'whenever the death of a great man is recounted by historians, they almost always give a recapitulation of his whole life and a kind of funeral eulogy'. Seneca proceeds to supply us with, amongst other things, our oldest example of such a life-summary in Roman historiography, one of Cicero by Asinius Pollio (*Suas.* 6.24; fr. 5 Peter).

⁹ cf. H. MacL. Currie, 'An obituary formula in the historians (with a Platonic connection?)', *Latomus* 48 (1989), 346–53, who argues for 'the prevalence, and indeed . . . the virtual constancy, of the use of the noun *exitus* (not *excessus*, or *mors*, or *obitus*, or some such other word) in the brief obituary notices inserted by Roman historians in their work from time to time'

(353). Note Pollio's use of *exitus* at the end of his 'obituary notice' for Cicero (see previous note): intriguingly, the historiographical *ego* talks of Cicero's *exitus*, but the real historical figure Cicero himself (*ipse*) of his *mors*.

¹⁰ R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Secundus* (1964), *ad* 554; cf. A. M. Bowie, 'The death of Priam: allegory and history in the *Aeneid*', *CQ* 40 (1990), 470–81, at 472. Austin's comments are also noted by Moles, *art. cit.* (n. 5).

¹¹ Bowie, *art. cit.* (n. 10), 474.

¹² cf. A. J. Woodman, 'Virgil the historian: *Aeneid* 8.626–62 and Livy', in J. Diggle, J. B. Hall and H. D. Jocelyn (eds), *Studies in Latin Literature and its Tradition in Honour of C. O. Brink*, *PCPhS* Supp. 15 (1989), 132–45, at 134: 'Moreover, by introducing his description in "historical" terms . . . he wished his readers to recognise what he was doing.'

emphatic moment of the *Aeneid* with Pollio's pessimistic¹³ account of the recent civil wars is of just as much significance for our interpretation of the poem as the identification of Priam with the most notable victim of those wars.¹⁴ It is a very strong indication of the centrality of the theme of civil war to this poem that Aeneas, in the course of describing the fall of Troy, an event exemplified in the death of Priam, is seen to mimic an author who described, in Horace's words, the 'ruina Hesperiae', 'collapse of Italy', during the civil wars (*Carm.* 2.1.32).¹⁵

But as I have suggested, there is another level of 'annotation' to Virgil's allusion entirely. Kornemann identified what he calls 'das Vordrängen der eigenen Persönlichkeit' as a characteristic feature of Pollio's *Histories*.¹⁶ What he is referring to is a persistent tendency on Pollio's part to advert to his first-hand, eyewitness knowledge of material recounted in his history. The *Histories* took as their starting point 60 B.C., as Horace famously informs us in the first line of *Carm.* 2.1.¹⁷ The terminus of the work is disputed, some placing it at Philippi in 42 B.C., some later, even as late as Actium, and this remains a moot question.¹⁸ But on any view, for most of the period of the civil wars which Pollio was describing he was himself immediately involved as a participant — fighting under Julius Caesar during his invasion of Italy in 49; in the same year in Sicily against M. Cato and in Curio's catastrophic campaign in Africa; then at Pharsalus (48), Thapsus (46), and Munda (45); and after Caesar's death for Antony.¹⁹ We know so much about Pollio's military career because he wrote it all down: the historians who followed

¹³ It obviously follows from its subject that Pollio's work was sombre in tone. It is striking, though natural, how prominent the description of death is in the outline of the *Histories* which is all that we are now in a position to see: the deaths of Pompey, Cato, Cicero, Verres, Brutus, and Cassius were all apparently dwelt upon. In *Odes* 2.1 Horace seems to suggest 'an affinity between Pollio's tragedies and his histories': R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace, Odes Book II* (1978), 9; cf. B. L. Ullman, 'History and tragedy', *TAPhA* 73 (1942), 25–53, at 50–1. Virgil's passage also seems to gesture at the tragic tone of the *Histories*. Austin *ad* 2.554–8 notes the resemblance between these lines and the conclusion of a tragic 'messenger speech': cf. R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik*⁵ (1915), 44 n. 1. There had been links between historiography and tragedy from the beginning, links developed in interesting ways during the Hellenistic period: on the issue of Hellenistic 'tragic history' see, succinctly, M. Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement* (1997), 30–40. The aspiration towards vivid representation of events in history might bring it into particularly close proximity with the performance of tragedy. Manilius, intriguingly, chooses a convincing reenactment of the death of Priam as an example of the power of the actor: 'cogetque uidere/ praesentem Troiam Priamumque ante ora cadentem', 'and he will make you see the actual Troy, and Priam falling before your eyes' (5.484–5). Cf. n. 22 below.

¹⁴ cf. Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 13.

¹⁵ For a parallel cf. Servius *ad* 2.486, who states that Virgil's account is derived from 'the razing of Alba', presumably as described by Ennius: as Austin notes *ad loc.*, Virgil's passage has affinities with Livy's account of the fall of Alba (1.29), best explained by a shared source. The destruction by Rome of its kin city Alba had much of the character of civil war (Livy calls it 'ciuili simillimum bello'), and Virgil's allusion imparts these associations to the sack of Troy. The pattern of a Rome-like city destroyed in order that Rome be founded is a recurrent theme of the *Aeneid*, and central to its extended reflections on the recent civil wars.

¹⁶ E. Kornemann, *Die historische Schriftstellerei des C. Asinius Pollio*, *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* Supp. 22 (1896), 555–692, at 601.

¹⁷ See Henderson, *art. cit.* (n. 1), 59–65 for further implications of the expression 'motum ex Metello consule ciuicum'. For Pollio's belief that the source of the wars lay in the formation of the First Triumvirate see also J. André, *La Vie et l'oeuvre d'Asinius Pollio* (1949), 47 on Plut., *Caes.* 13.3, and B. Haller, *C. Asinius Pollio als Politiker und zeitkritischer Historiker* (1967), 97 on Hor., *Carm.* 2.1.3–4 ('grauisque principum amicitias').

¹⁸ André, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 47–51 favours Philippi: accounts of the death of Cicero and Verres (Sen., *Suas.* 6.24) date to 43, and a post-mortem eulogy of Brutus and Cassius to 42 (Tac., *Ann.* 4.34.4), but Appian's extremely tangential reference to Pollio's campaign against the Parthini in 39 (*BC* 5.75), and his failure to attribute the campaign to Pollio at all, leads André to conclude that he no longer had Pollio's history to follow: cf. E. Badian, 'Appian and Asinius Pollio', *CR NS* 8 (1958), 161–2. On the other hand, Haller, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 96–105 and C. B. R. Pelling, 'Plutarch's method of work in the Roman Lives', *JHS* 99 (1979), 74–96 (at 84 n. 73) argue, with some force, that parallels between Dio, Plutarch, and Appian — which persist beyond Philippi — prove that Pollio, as their common source, must also have continued beyond 42. This cannot always apply, however: the various accounts of the death of Cicero, for example, display close similarities (see esp. Plut., *Cic.* 48.4–49.1; *Ant.* 20.2; App., *BC* 4.20; Dio 47.8.2–3) but show no sign of the *malignitas* which Seneca (*Suas.* 6.24) attributed to Pollio's account of his death. Not every correspondence need go back to Pollio, and other possible sources suggest themselves for the period after Philippi, for example the memoirs of M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, origin of the information shared between Plut., *Brut.* 45 and App., *BC* 4.112 (*HRR* fr. 3). On balance 42 B.C. still has the edge.

¹⁹ This personal involvement allows G. Lieberg, *Poeta Creator. Studien zu einer Figur der antiken Dichtung* (1982), 71–81, to make of Hor., *Carm.* 2.1 a special instance of the poetic figure according to which the author is made to participate in the activity he is describing. Pollio really was both author and participant.

his *Histories* repeatedly refer to Pollio's own presence at events described (his 'autopsy'), and obviously found the information in their source. A striking, and representative, example of this procedure is Pollio's account of the crossing of the Rubicon. Plutarch mentions Caesar's anguished discussions with his friends, 'amongst whom was Asinius Pollio', before his decision to cross (*Caes.* 32.4–6). Caesar's exclamation 'let the die be cast' thus entered currency with Pollio's *Histories*, as Horace helps to confirm by his expression 'plenum opus aleae' (*Carm.* 2.1.6), and Pollio recorded the remark at first hand.²⁰ There are, as we shall see, numerous other examples where Pollio has a prominence in historical events which can only be explained if he himself had spoken of himself as an eyewitness.

Assertions of autopsy were thus an important and recurrent feature of Pollio's *Histories*. Now Pollio was not alone amongst Roman historians in this, but he does seem to have exploited the strategy to a greater degree than anyone else;²¹ and this is one more respect in which Aeneas assumes the appearance of Pollio during his narrative to Dido. Repeatedly during his account of the fall of Troy Aeneas emphasizes his status as an eyewitness of the events he describes. Thus at 2.5–6 he says he will recount 'quaeque ipse miserrima uidi/ et quorum pars magna fui', 'the terrible things which I myself saw and of which I was no small part', on which Austin comments, 'The whole Book is a personal narrative, an eyewitness account of the fall of Troy, told by a survivor'. This emphasis on personal testimony is particularly apparent during the Priam episode, when Aeneas ceases to describe his own actions and behaviour during the fall and, perched on the roof of Priam's palace (458), acts as a witness of the events inside. Great emphasis is placed on Aeneas' autopsy of Priam's death: 'uidi ipse . . . uidi' (499–501), 'obstipui . . . uidi . . . respicio . . . lustrō' (560–4).²² We cannot be sure how far Virgil's allusion to Pollio extends in Book 2, but at the climactic moment of Priam's death it would appear that Aeneas mimics Pollio's historiographical persona even down to his status as a historical eyewitness to the catastrophe of the civil wars.²³

II. HISTORIOGRAPHY IN CIVIL WAR

The remainder of this article will set out to investigate further the significance of this core strategy of Pollio's *Historiae*. Autopsy, as I have suggested, can guide us to

²⁰ On the *possible* origin of the expression in Menander see A. W. Gomme and F. H. Sandbach, *Menander, A Commentary* (1973), 690–1.

²¹ Statements of autopsy in historiography are discussed by J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (1997), esp. 63–86. Eyewitness knowledge of events was highly valued in all periods. Polybius thus remarks that 'Ephorus says that if it were possible to be present in person at all events, such knowledge would be superior to any other' (12.27.7). Important partial precedents for Pollio's approach include Fabius Pictor (*FGrHist* F 19b); Cato the Censor, whose *Origines* in the later books (5–7) seems to have become 'personal *apologia*' (Marincola 195); Sempronius Asellio (*HRR* F 1–2); and amongst Greek historians Thucydides in particular. In the civil war period we see something of an explosion of apparently eyewitness accounts: for example Q. Dellius' account of Antony's Parthian war, Munatius Rufus' life of Cato, C. Oppius' life of Caesar, M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus' autobiography, and P. Volumnius' work on (apparently) the Battle of Philippi; not to mention Caesar's own *Commentaries*. Most of these works are discussed in Pelling, art. cit. (n. 18), but none of them is properly comparable to Pollio's *Histories*: they recount not the entire war but discrete sections of it, or else in the case of Messalla were explicitly personal memoirs of their

author's experiences, rather than general histories which exploited the historian's immediate knowledge. The nature of Messalla's work is proved by *Pan. Mess.* 5–6, cf. H. Tränkle, *Appendix Tibulliana* (1990), *ad loc.* Caesar's account of course eschewed first-person narrative entirely. Polybius' combination of 'a largely unobtrusive narrative of the deeds with a highly intrusive explicator of that narrative' (Marincola, 10) is different again: Polybius foregrounds his own person in his text, but generally as an interpreting historian rather than as a participant. The relation of Thucydides to Pollio will be returned to later (see below, Section III). But as far as we can tell, there does not seem to be any full parallel to Pollio's apparently constant assertion of his autopsy throughout the core period of a full-scale historical, as opposed to autobiographical, account. The 'standard form' for such assertion was, as Marincola writes (80), 'one basic claim at the outset', as in Thucydides.

²² In 'uidi ipse' there is also an allusion to Ennius' tragedy *Andromacha*. See Austin *ad loc.*, and n. 13 above.

²³ We must assume that Pollio used the first person when describing his presence at historical events. It is hard to imagine how the source passage of, for example, Plut., *Pomp.* 72 and App., *BC* 2.82 could have expressed his presence on the ground otherwise.

other insights about Pollio and his circumstances. I shall concentrate on two particular areas. The first concerns what it involved to write history which would be *believed* about the Roman civil wars, a notoriously contested series of events. Secondly, I want to relate Pollio's autopsy to debates about the political stance of this prominent Roman senator at the dawn of the Principate: I shall suggest that autopsy is also an interesting *sociological* phenomenon which dovetails neatly with other evidence about Pollio suggesting that the traditional approaches to an interpretation of his conduct require qualification. The link between these two issues — the narrowly historiographical and the sociological — is provided by the question of Pollio's models in literature and lifestyle. In conclusion, I shall return to *Aeneid* 2 and a final suggestion regarding what we might term the socio-political implications of Virgil's allusion to Pollio's *Histories*.

In Roman historiography, as in oratory, to which it was closely related ('unum hoc oratorium maxime', Cic., *Leg.* 1.5), it was essential for authors to establish their reputation as respectable and credible reporters of events. Kennedy draws a general contrast between Greek and Roman orators: 'a Greek orator tends to argue his audience into believing something; a Roman by his authority convinces the audience that something should be believed because he says so.'²⁴ As Wheeldon writes, the same broadly applies to historiography: 'much depended on a writer's ability to establish the kind of authority to which readers were accustomed; unless a writer fulfilled this condition of the genre, an audience would be less predisposed to believe his version of events.'²⁵ Fornara clarifies the point: 'The requirement for writing the "deeds of the Roman people" was *auctoritas*, the authority of offices held, of armies commanded.'²⁶ Pollio, by the time he wrote his history, was a consular, *triumphator*, 'the most eminent Roman art collector of the first century B.C.',²⁷ the very model of a senatorial achiever: it is no coincidence that public qualifications such as these are remarked upon by Horace in the fourth stanza of his ode to Pollio, *before* he begins his version of Pollio's *Histories* in stanza five and following.²⁸ These were the prerequisites, and as far as a Roman audience was concerned Pollio would have possessed all the requisite *auctoritas* — under normal circumstances. But the theme Pollio chose to write about posed special problems of credibility. The dominant impression of the Roman civil wars is of a frenzied attempt by each of the various contending parties to assert the truth of its version of events. For a contemporary, what actually happened on any particular occasion was liable to be lost in a welter of partisan claims and counterclaims. An example which can stand for the whole period is the controversy surrounding the reputation of M. Cato after his suicide in 46: a flurry of panegyrics by Cicero, M. Brutus, and M. Fabius Gallus was countered by denunciations from Aulus Hirtius and Caesar in his *Anticato*.²⁹ Pollio made his own contribution to the debate, describing his own, face-to-face conversations with Cato in Sicily in 49 (App., *BC* 2.40; Plut., *Cat. min.* 53.1–3), and returning to him at Thapsus, as Horace's 'atrox animus Catonis' (*Carm.* 2.1.24) implies. The problem of credibility was thus acute. How *does* one provide an objective, definitive account of civil war, an event by its very nature almost infinitely narratable?

Pollio's primary strategy was autopsy. The emphasis which Pollio placed on his presence on the spot was interpreted by Kornemann as a laughably vain attempt to promote his role in these events (it is 'geradezu komisch'),³⁰ but it was in fact first and foremost, as André appreciated, a guarantee of the veracity of the information he

²⁴ G. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (1972), 42.

²⁵ M. J. Wheeldon, "'True stories": the reception of historiography in antiquity', in A. Cameron (ed.), *History as Text: the Writing of Ancient History* (1989), 33–63, at 41.

²⁶ C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Greece and Rome* (1983), 54.

²⁷ J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (1986), 163.

²⁸ Henderson, art. cit. (n. 1), 87–8, notes that the stanza confines itself to the kind of honourable

achievement associated with traditional aristocratic activity, and pointedly avoids mention of his activities in the civil wars.

²⁹ H. E. Butler, M. Cary and G. B. Townend, *Suetonius, Divus Julius* (1982), ad 56.5; cf. A. Afzelius, 'Die politische Bedeutung des jüngeren Cato', *Class et Med* 4 (1941), 100–203, at 198–203, and R. J. Goar, *The Legend of Cato Uticensis from the First Century BC to the Fifth Century AD* (1987), ch. 2, for the continuation of this debate into the Principate.

³⁰ Kornemann, op. cit. (n. 16), 601.

purveyed: on any particular occasion 'Pollion pouvait dire: "J'étais là"'.³¹ Thus from App., *BC* 2.82 and Plut., *Pomp.* 72 it is clear that Pollio used his presence on the battlefield of Pharsalus to authenticate his estimate of the number of Pompeian dead (six thousand).³² This authenticating function cannot be clearly distinguished from another effect generated by such an emphasis on eyewitness knowledge. Woodman talks of 'one of the standard ways of achieving vividness . . . by way of reference to the original spectators of an event, with whom the reader is invited implicitly to identify himself'.³³ It was the lifelike quality and immediacy, the ἐνάργεια, which Horace claimed to find particularly engaging about the *Histories*,³⁴ and even at second hand some of the narratives in which Pollio was involved and which he recounted are extremely compelling: in his account of the disaster met by Curio's army in Africa in 49 B.C. Pollio described in detail his own difficult escape with a few troops from Curio's doomed army to Utica, and his subsequent attempt to organize the rescue by sea of Caesarian soldiers abandoned in the city (App., *BC* 2.45–6). Similar is the passage in Plutarch derived from Pollio which describes an event before Thapsus: Caesar's cavalry are caught unawares by Numidian forces because they are absorbed in the spectacle of a Libyan who can dance and play the flute simultaneously (Plut., *Caes.* 52.4–6). The situation is only saved when Caesar, Pollio with him (Καίσαρ αὐτός, ἕμα δὲ Καίσαρι Πολλίων Ἀσίννιος), comes to their aid. Pollio's presence, corroborated by the vivid detail, authenticated his account, made it carry conviction; but it also potentially allowed the reader access to events with the minimum of mediation.³⁵ Another incident in Appian allows us to expand this preliminary picture a little. As we shall see later, Pollio's methodology in his history, whilst privileging his own autopsy, also encompassed the reports of other eyewitnesses. App., *BC* 2.89 describes Caesar's composure on his arrival in Alexandria in 48 with insufficient forces: 'he received all and sundry in a friendly way, toured the city and admired its beauty, and stood in the crowd to listen to the philosophers.' If this anecdote derives from Pollio, as Rawson suspects,³⁶ it shares the same character of an eyewitness report, and the same quality of immediacy through detail, but will have done so at one further remove, since Pollio did not follow Caesar to Alexandria.³⁷

A narrative of civil war thus by its very nature posed acute problems of credibility. Pollio's stance of, as it were, *prediscursive*, immediate knowledge was *his* means of cutting through the jungle of conflicting claims to the actuality. Pollio constructed himself as a paradigmatic interpreter of events *at first hand* through whose eyes (quite

³¹ André, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 62. For the various uses of autopsy in historiography see Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 80–5.

³² G. Zecchini, 'Asinio Pollione: dall'attività politica alla riflessione storiografica', *ANRW* 2.30.2 (1982), 1265–96, at 1267, interprets Pollio's statements about the river Rhine (Strab. 4.3.3) as also based on first-hand knowledge gained whilst serving with Caesar in Gaul, and if so their inaccuracy (the Rhine has more than two mouths) is telling. Assertion of autopsy is a powerful rhetorical device for commanding belief, but it *is* a device. It does not in reality guarantee accuracy: see A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (1988), 15–23.

³³ Woodman, *art. cit.* (n. 12), 140.

³⁴ Nisbet and Hubbard, *op. cit.* (n. 13), *ad* 2.1.17. Cf. Porphyrio *ad loc.*

³⁵ cf. Quint., *Inst.* 9.2.40 on techniques for producing ἐνάργεια (*evidentia*): 'Illa uero, ut ait Cicero, sub oculos subiectio tum fieri solet cum res non gesta indicatur sed ut sit gesta ostenditur, nec uniuersa sed per partes', 'As for the figure which Cicero calls "presentation to view", this is achieved not when it is asserted that something was done but when it is shown how it was done, and not just in general terms but in detail'. Cf. Demetr., *Eloc.* 209. On Thucydidean *enargeia* through precise detail see Plut., *Mor.* 347a–c.

³⁶ E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (1985), 109 n. 59.

³⁷ André, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 15. A further refinement of autopsy, perhaps, is the direct quotation of major historical figures, which Pollio apparently favoured. Besides 'alea iacta est<o>' we owe to Pollio Caesar's statement after the Battle of Pharsalus regarding the Pompeian dead, 'hoc uoluerunt; tantis rebus gestis Gaius Caesar condemnatus essem, nisi ab exercitu auxilium petissem' (Suet., *Jul.* 30.4; cf. Plut., *Caes.* 46.1–2), and an account of a conversation between Pollio and M. Cato in 49 (App. 2.40; Plut., *Cat. min.* 53.1–3). This element of Pollio's history can incidentally lend support to the MSS reading 'audire' at Hor., *Carm.* 2.1.21. Porphyrio *ad loc.* suggests that in 'audire magnos iam uideor duces' Horace may either be referring to Pollio's description of generals haranguing their troops, or else to 'Pollionem de ducibus narrantem', perhaps 'a passing allusion to the *recitatio* by invitation', an innovation of Pollio's (see Section IV below): D. West, *Horace, Odes II: Vatis Amici* (1998), 8. There is no pressing need to choose between these options; but it is tempting to see Horace's odd form of words, generally neutralized by emendation, as a reflection of a peculiarity of Pollio's text.

literally) his readership had necessarily to see the war. To a degree this is something he shares with all historians, but the difficulty of achieving credibility is that much harder for a chronicler of civil war, and it was natural that under these circumstances Pollio 'steps out of the mimetic narrative'³⁸ and exposes to view his authorial self, the source of his credibility, so much more often than usual. This narrative — of civil war — was constantly in need of verification.

What made Pollio's task particularly difficult, however, was a problem bound up with the very nature of autopsy. Consistently his readers were asked to believe his account in preference to others because he had been on the scene, but the difficulty was that any participant in the civil wars was an inherently untrustworthy witness. Caesar had faced the same problem in even greater degree, and had sought to overcome it by the simple but brilliant stratagem of relating his own actions in the third person, thereby dissociating the narrative voice of the *Commentaries* from the Caesar who was their protagonist. Pollio too had been an active participant, and his stance during the civil wars which he was describing had been emphatically partisan: Velleius describes him (2.63.3) as 'firmus proposito et Iulianis partibus fidus, Pompeianis aduersus', 'steadfast in his decision and loyal to the Caesarian side, opposed to the Pompeian'. Unsurprisingly, then, Pollio seems to have expended great effort in his history impressing upon his reader his independence of mind. A strategy he particularly favoured was polemical criticism of anybody else who wrote on the subject he was addressing, a familiar one in historiographical circles,³⁹ but again one which Pollio seems to have carried to extremes. Certainly Strabo found it tiresome. At *Geographies* 4.3.3, discussing the Rhine, he takes issue with Pollio's account of the river: 'Asinius states that its length is six thousand stades, but he is wrong,' and a little later, 'he also states that it has two mouths, after finding fault with those who say it has more.' Here there are interesting parallels between Pollio's historiographical procedure and his 'real' behaviour. Woodman points out that remarks attributed to Pollio by our sources tend to be aggressively critical,⁴⁰ an indication of the proximity of Pollio's independent-minded historiographical persona and the traditionally assertive and opinionated ethos of the ruling élite which Pollio strove so hard to embody. In the hands of a writer like Pollio, as we shall see, historiography could constitute an alternative, semi-public form of élite self-assertion; and any clear distinction between literature and life is consequently hard to draw.

In the case of the civil wars, however, there was one account in particular which Pollio's *Histories*, in its aspiration to be authoritative, needed to supersede, and that was Caesar's *Commentaries*. Caesar's version of events, and in particular the *Commentaries* in which he presented his version most fully, can be shown repeatedly to be the object of Pollio's implied or direct criticism. Pollio's estimate of the Pompeian dead at Pharsalus (App., *BC* 2.82; Plut., *Caes.* 46.2), for example, differs substantially from Caesar's (*BC* 3.99.4); and his account of the crossing of the Rubicon (App., *BC* 2.35; Plut., *Caes.* 32.4; Suet., *Jul.* 32), with all Caesar's doubts and anxieties, could hardly contrast more with Caesar's notoriously laconic 'he set out with his legion to Ariminum' (*BC* 1.8.1), which suppresses his illegal crossing of the river entirely.⁴¹ His censure of authors who claim more than two mouths for the Rhine also targeted Caesar (*BG* 4.10), amongst others, and Pollio's assertion that a speech *Apud milites in Hispania* attributed to Caesar at Munda in 45 was spurious (Suet., *Jul.* 55.4) may also have been a criticism of accounts provided by Caesar. But a quite explicit critique of the *Commentaries* by Pollio also survives. It is a precious piece of evidence, since Pollio's strictures against his predecessor in obvious ways constitute a programmatic statement of his own historical method (Suet., *Jul.* 56.4):

Pollio Asinius parum diligenter parumque integra veritate compositos putat, cum Caesar pleraque et quae per alios erant gesta temere crediderit et quae per se, uel consulto uel etiam memoria lapsus perperam ediderit; existimatque rescripturum et correcturum fuisse.

³⁸ Marincola, op. cit. (n. 21), 82.

³⁹ Marincola, op. cit. (n. 21), 218–36.

⁴⁰ Woodman, op. cit. (n. 32), 150 n. 45. Cf. Tacitus' comment on Pollio's *ferocia* (*Ann.* 1.12), Seneca's on

his *contumacia* (*Contr.* 4 *praef.* 2), and Pliny's on his *uehementia* (*HN* 36.33).

⁴¹ André, op. cit. (n. 17), 58.

Asinius Pollio thinks they were composed with too little care and with an insufficiently strict adherence to truth, since in the main Caesar was too ready to give credence to deeds done by others and gave an inaccurate account, deliberately or perhaps out of forgetfulness, of his own deeds; and he thinks that he would have rewritten and corrected them.

The *Commentaries*, Pollio claims, were composed without sufficient regard for truth, and this because Caesar was too uncritical of others' reports of what they had done,⁴² and too inaccurate about his own actions. The terms bear a significant resemblance to Thucydides' methodological remarks at 1.22.2–3. There the Greek historian claims to be basing his account of the Peloponnesian War 'on his own eyewitness and the reports of others who were also eyewitnesses'.⁴³ The author's autopsy, and the eyewitness evidence of others questioned by Thucydides, provides the raw material, but is corroborated by rigorous investigation (ἀκριβεία περι ἐκάστου ἐπεξεληθών), a task complicated by the partisanship of witnesses or poor memory. Pollio's critique of Caesar, similarly, insists on the fundamental importance of eyewitness accounts, by the author and by his informants, and their careful investigation by the historian ('parum diligenter parumque integra uirtute'). Caesar is too ready to believe ('temere crediderit' contrasts with οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἠξίωσα γράφειν οὐδ' ὡς ἐμὰ ἐδόκει), and his account of his own actions is vitiated either by bias or by weakness of memory (cf. ὡς ἐκατέρων τις εὐνοίας ἢ μνήμης ἔχει).

This is stern criticism of Caesar by Pollio, and only slightly softened by the conciliatory final sentence. It has a number of functions, presenting a sophisticated methodology of eyewitness-based history, and associating Pollio's undertaking with Thucydides (a point I shall develop later), but also effectively distancing Pollio the historian from the general for whom he actually fought. The boldness of the statement should not be underestimated, written as it was in the context of the complete victory of the Caesarian party. Hirtius' preface to *de bello Gallico* 8 provides an instructive contrast. This former lieutenant, in contrast to Pollio, fulsomely praises the accuracy and flawlessness of Caesar's writings, and displays profound anxiety throughout the preface that he may appear to be trying to emulate Caesar's writings (contrast the passing implication of Pollio that he is doing what Caesar would have done had he lived). Whereas Pollio aims at an impression of muscular independence, and a concomitantly sharply defined authorial persona, Hirtius' preface is a fascinating exercise in authorial self-effacement. In one respect, however, Hirtius and Pollio are in agreement, and that is on the importance of autopsy. Hirtius is unequal to the task set him, he says, because 'mihi ne illud quidem accidit ut Alexandrino atque Africano bello interessem', 'I myself never even had the luck to take part in the Alexandrian and African wars' (8).

Marincola talks about the historiographical ideal of the 'lonely historian', the 'isolated' seeker after truth, alone able to penetrate to the actuality. Pollio's emphasis on his independent autopsy, his denigration of predecessors (Caesar in particular), and his assertive style in general, are exemplary instances of this historiographical self-construction as self-sufficient, authoritative historian.⁴⁴ The Virgilian image of Aeneas on the roof seems to hit off perfectly the ethos of the historian present on the scene, yet also isolated in his independent appreciation of the events he recounts. And Pollio's consistent intrusion of his person into his narrative is not limited to eyewitness reportage. In his account of Cicero's death he was literally 'isolated', according to Seneca the Elder (*Suas.* 6.24), 'uniquely' ('solus ex omnibus') describing Cicero's death in unfavourable terms ('maligne'), and by contrast giving a very favourable account of the death of Verres (of all people) in the same proscriptions: in this context Tacitus' general observation that 'malignitati falsa species libertatis inest', 'hostility gives a false impression of frankness' (*Hist.* 1.1.2) has some force. Pollio's *consummatio* of Cicero's career preserved by Seneca, the only extended verbatim passage surviving from the *Histories*, also exemplifies in its way the authorial assertiveness which characterized the

⁴² The natural interpretation of 'quae per alios erant gesta', cf. J. F. Gardner, *Caesar, The Civil War* (1967), 28–9.

⁴³ Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 67

⁴⁴ Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 217–18.

whole work. It concludes, 'atque ego ne miserandi quidem exitus eum fuisse iudicarem, nisi ipse tam miseram mortem putasset', 'And indeed *I* would not judge that his death was even worthy of pity, if Cicero himself had not thought death so pitiful' (*Suas.* 6.24). It is of course perfectly normal historiographical practice for authorial judgements to be couched in the first person, but the prominence given the author here by clauses balanced between his own view and that of his subject Cicero is still unusual. A comparison with Livy's epitaph for Cicero (*Sen.*, *Suas.* 6.22), which comes to essentially the same conclusions about the orator, shows up sharp differences in their methods. Livy has a tendency to defer (at least ostensibly) to the judgement of the reader,⁴⁵ and in Livy's epitaph the text's conclusions are subtly dissociated from the authorial voice and imputed to reader-like figures: 'he who judges truthfully' ('uere aestimans') and 'whoever has weighed his qualities against his faults' ('si quis . . . uirtutibus uitia pensarit'). What differentiates the two historians is Pollio's firm, and explicit, determination personally to guide his readers' interpretation of events. Pollio, it would seem, sought to resolve the radical indeterminacies of the Roman civil war into one authoritative account guaranteed by his own independence and self-sufficiency.

III. MODELS IN LITERATURE AND LIFESTYLE

The foregoing has primarily been concerned with the strictly historiographical implications of Pollio's claims to autopsy. But Pollio's historiographical project and its peculiar strategies demand, as I have suggested, to be placed in a broader context. At the time of his composition of the *Histories* Pollio can be seen to have been engaged in an energetic redefinition of his cultural role, a process from which his authorship of the *Histories* is at a fundamental level inseparable.

After a brief consulship in 40 B.C. Pollio took a proconsular command in Macedonia or Dalmatia or both.⁴⁶ On 25 October 39 or 38 (the *Fasti Capitolini* do not specify a year)⁴⁷ he celebrated a triumph for his pacification of the Parthini, and thenceforth took no further part in civil war politics, ostentatiously devoting himself to literary pursuits. Our main evidence for this 'neutrality' in the later stages of the civil wars comes from Velleius (2.86.3):

non praetereatur Asinii Pollionis factum et dictum mirabile: namque cum se post Brundisiam pacem continuisset in Italia neque aut uidisset umquam reginam aut post eneuatum amore eius Antonii animum partibus eius se miscuisset, rogante Caesare ut secum ad bellum proficisceretur Actiacum, 'mea' inquit 'in Antonium maiora merita sunt, illius in me beneficia notiora; itaque discrimini uestro me subtraham et ero praeda uictoris'.

The remarkable conduct and statement of Asinius Pollio should not be passed over without mention. Although he had confined himself to Italy after the peace of Brundisium and had never seen the queen or involved himself in Antony's faction after the latter became demoralized by his love for her, when Caesar asked him to accompany him to the war at Actium he replied, 'My services to Antony are too great and his kindnesses to me too well known; accordingly I shall dissociate myself from your quarrel and shall be the prize of the victor'.

Pollio's neutrality was to all appearances precarious. Velleius tells his anecdote in the context of his assertion of the great *clementia* shown by Augustus subsequent to his victory over Antony;⁴⁸ and Pollio appears as a beneficiary of Augustus' *clementia* again

⁴⁵ C. S. Kraus and A. J. Woodman, *Latin Historians* (1997), 73.

⁴⁶ For the controversy — 'The Battle of Bosworth', Henderson, art. cit. (n. 1), 87 n. 45 — as to which side of the boundary between Octavian's and Antony's jurisdiction Pollio was operating see A. B. Bosworth, 'Asinius Pollio and Augustus', *Historia* 21 (1972), 441–73, 463–8, and A. J. Woodman, *Velleius*

Paterculus: the Caesarian and Augustan Narrative (2.41–93) (1983), ad 78.2. Haller, op. cit. (n. 17), 72–6, plausibly interprets Pollio's activity during his provincial command on both sides of the border as a post-Brundisium 'Garant der Einigung der Triumvirn'.

⁴⁷ Bosworth, art. cit. (n. 46), 466.

⁴⁸ Woodman, op. cit. (n. 46), ad loc.

at Sen., *Clem.* 1.10.1. He thus, *pace* Bosworth,⁴⁹ continued to be associated with the Antonian camp even after his 'retirement'. A famous anecdote recorded by Macrobius (*Sat.* 2.4.21) is hard to date, but gives a sense of the antipathy between Octavian and Pollio before the pact of Brundisium, which will hardly have evaporated immediately afterwards: 'temporibus triumviralibus Pollio cum Fescenninos in eum Augustus scripsisset ait, "at ego taceo. non est enim facile in eum scribere qui potest proscribere."' 'When Augustus attacked Pollio in abusive verse during the triumvirate Pollio said, "I say nothing. It is not easy to write an attack against someone who can proscribe you.'" And yet he also kept his distance from Antony, for which Antony seems to have criticized him. Charisius records a pamphlet *contra maledicta Antonii* written by Pollio (p. 80, 2K) which must have been a defence against such criticism. Again, though, when Pollio referred to the peril of his situation in his *Histories* there is an element of active *construction* apparent in his stance of courageous independence. At *Carm.* 2.1.6–8, in his emphasis on the danger of Pollio's undertaking, 'Horace', as Nisbet and Hubbard comment on line 6,⁵⁰ 'must be echoing Pollio':

Certainly when the poet exaggerates the political danger of the undertaking . . . he would be guilty of unaccustomed indiscretion if the thought were original; he must be echoing Pollio's own *captatio benevolentiae*.⁵¹

As Velleius appreciated, Pollio's neutrality in the latter stages of the civil wars was a 'remarkable' gesture: Pollio was one of very few senators who remained neutral during the Actium campaign.⁵² It can be interpreted in a number of ways, but what it clearly embodies is an assertion of independence from the various factions vying for control of Rome. Here, once again, the self-images promoted by Pollio in his work of history and in his everyday life are closely approximate: naturally so, since both are components of what seems to have been Pollio's overarching project: the continued assertion of his autonomy and self-sufficiency in the very adverse conditions which pertained during the triumvirate.

That Pollio's *Histories* were an integral part of this bigger project is clear from the chronology of their composition. What evidence there is suggests that Pollio turned to historiography more or less immediately after his triumph. According to Suetonius (*Gram.* 10.6), the grammarian L. Ateius Philologus helped both Sallust and Pollio in their writing of history, the latter after Sallust's death, which probably occurred in 35.⁵³ The advice which Ateius provided to Pollio was strictly stylistic. The typical process of composing history, as described by Lucian (*Hist. conscr.* 48), involved the collection of facts, followed by the composition of a 'draft', ὑπόμνημα, α σώμα . . . ἀκαλλῆς ἔτι καὶ ἀδιόρθωτον, 'a body of material as yet unembellished and uncoordinated', which was only then couched in the desired literary style.⁵⁴ If we can assume that earlier practice was comparable with Lucian's, it is clear that Pollio would have started his collation of material some time before seeking Ateius' advice on style in 35, and that consequently the composition of his authoritative account of the civil wars must have been a primary concern from the moment he ceased to take any part in politics in 39 or 38 — if not before.

The nature of the *sociological* aspirations embodied in the *Histories* will become clearer with an analysis of his historiographical models, an issue best approached through his preferences in the matter of prose style. On the basis of the fragment on Cicero (Sen., *Suas.* 6.24) André concluded that Pollio was an extreme 'Atticist' who modelled himself on the compression and imbalance of Thucydides in much the same way as Sallust did.⁵⁵ Woodman shows that this is at best a partial analysis, and points to examples of Ciceronian amplitude and rhythm in the passage. Nevertheless the Ciceronian stylistic elements of the passage can be explained away, as Woodman

⁴⁹ Bosworth, art. cit. (n. 46).

⁵⁰ Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 13), ad 2.1.6.

⁵¹ Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 13), 9.

⁵² R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939), 291; Bosworth, art. cit. (n. 46), 447.

⁵³ R. Syme, *Sallust* (1964), 13–14.

⁵⁴ See the discussion of G. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung* (1956), 85–104; Pelling, art. cit. (n. 18), 94–5.

⁵⁵ André, op. cit. (n. 17), 108–9.

suggests, by its content: Pollio's summary of Cicero's life evokes its subject by imitating his style, a subtle touch; and it is significant also that in quoting the passage Seneca the Elder implies that it was distinctly *uncharacteristic* of Pollio's style in the *Histories*.⁵⁶ Woodman's point is confirmed by a careful reading of Seneca's obscure concluding remark on the *Histories* (*Suas.* 6.25): 'nec hoc deterrendi causa dico ne historias eius legere concupiscatis; concupiscite — et poenas Ciceroni dabitur,' 'I do not say this to deter you from a longing to read his *Histories*. Do so — and you will pay the penalty to Cicero.' What has made the remark seem obscure is a failure to appreciate that Seneca is being ironic: his real view is that the style of the *Histories* is rebarbative and that consequently nobody should bother to read them. Seneca approves of the style of Cicero, and approves of Pollio's when it approaches Ciceronian style, as it does in his *consummatio* of Cicero's life ('there is nothing more eloquent in his *Histories* than this passage,' he says). But as for the rest of the *Histories*, their arduousness will be Cicero's punishment for reading the work of his great detractor.⁵⁷

Thucydides still looks a likely candidate for his dominant stylistic model, then, and accounts of the style Pollio adopted in his speeches, at any rate, strongly suggest a commitment to Atticism. Woodman compares Seneca's description of Pollio's style (*Ep.* 100.7), 'compositio . . . salebrosa et exsiliens et ubi minime exspectes relictura', 'a choppy and jerky style which leaves off when you least expect it', with Cicero's account of what is for him the ideal historical style, the Herodotean, which 'sine ullis salebris quasi sedatus amnis fluit', 'flows like a calm stream without any choppiness' (*Or.* 39), evidently in implied contrast to Thucydides.⁵⁸ As Woodman points out, Seneca's description of Pollio's style closely resembles his account of Sallust's (*Ep.* 114.17) and Dionysius' description of Thucydides himself (*Thuc.* 24). Comparable also is Cicero's description of the style affected by imitators of Thucydides (*Or.* 32).

Any such stylistic debt to Thucydides would, of course, be unsurprising. We have already mentioned the Greek historian in the context of Pollio's critique of Caesar's historical methodology, which offered, by implication, a formulation of Pollio's own methodology, one closely akin to Thucydides'; and there are other points of resemblance between the two. Kornemann believed he had unearthed an actual allusion to Thucydides in Pollio's (reconstructed) text. Plutarch's account of Caesar 'weighing up what great misfortunes for all mankind his crossing (*scil.* of the Rubicon) would inaugurate' (*Caes.* 32) and Appian's quotation of Caesar's actual words at the time ('Friends, to refrain from this crossing will be the beginning of misfortunes for me, but to cross for all mankind,' *BC* 2.35) evidently originate in Pollio. But that source passage in turn, Kornemann argued, echoed an equally critical moment in Thucydides' history. In 431, just before King Archidamus' first invasion of Attica, a Spartan ambassador, Melesippus, was sent to Athens in a final attempt to persuade the Athenians to come to terms, but was refused entry to the city and escorted out of the country, remarking as he crossed the border, 'This day will be the beginning of great misfortunes for the Greeks' (2.12.3).⁵⁹ The predilection for obituary notices can also be seen as a Thucydidean trait,⁶⁰ and there are obvious broader parallels between Pollio's and Thucydides' projects. Thucydides, like Pollio, concentrated on a single war,⁶¹ which as a conflict between Greek and Greek, and often effectively between oligarch and democrat, shared many of the characteristics of the Roman civil wars: Thucydidean style and ethos were thus a natural choice for Sallust's accounts of Roman civil conflict. Crucially, also, Thucydides was personally involved in the war he recounted, and on the basis of this privileged knowledge could claim to be presenting an accurate version of events: παντι

⁵⁶ Woodman, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 150–1.

⁵⁷ With this interpretation cf. A. J. Pomeroy, *The Appropriate Comment: Death Notices in the Ancient Historians* (1991), 144–5 and n. 38.

⁵⁸ Woodman, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 127–8 (cf. 45–7).

⁵⁹ E. Kornemann, 'Thukydides und die römische Historiographie', *Philologus* 63 (1904), 148–53, at 148–9. He also notes a similar remark attributed to

Pompey before the battle of Pharsalus by Appian (*BC* 2.69).

⁶⁰ Woodman, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 147 n. 5, and n. 13 above.

⁶¹ Dion. Hal., *Thuc.* 6, ἓνα προχειρισάμενος πόλεμον, ὃν ἐπολέμησαν Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Πελοποννήσιοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, τοῦτον ἐσπούδασεν ἀναγράψαι.

τῷ πολέμῳ παραγένετο, as Dionysius put it (*Pomp.* 3).⁶² The only difference was that, whilst Thucydides based his claim to accuracy on first- or second-hand reports rigorously checked by the author, he none the less only rarely intrudes himself into the mimetic narrative. Pollio, on the other hand, seems persistently to have introduced himself into the narrative — insisting on betraying it as an authored narrative — and I have suggested that this reflects, in addition to certain cultural differences between Greece and Rome, the peculiar difficulties associated with commanding belief on the topic he had chosen.

Ultimately, of course, style and content are not distinguishable, and Pollio's Thucydidean style in effect entailed a certain type of narrative, the realistic and disillusioned description of internecine conflict. Pollio's prose style, like Thucydides', was the appropriate vehicle for the honest, unvarnished truth which he purported to be purveying: 'A plain, hard, and broken style seemed to convey a serious guarantee of incorruptible veracity.'⁶³ According to Suetonius (*Gram.* 10.6) it was unpretentious ('notus ciuilisque et proprius sermo'), carefully developed with the help of L. Ateius Philologus to give the impression of artlessness.⁶⁴ A comparison of Quint., *Inst.* 10.17, which describes the imitators of Pollio as 'tristes ac ieiuni', and Cicero's comment on the *annales maximi* ('nihil potest esse ieiunius') suggests that Pollio's style was designed to evoke the kind of unembellished, warts-and-all objectivity, and supposed faithfulness to reality, associated with annalistic history. This lack of 'Asiatic' embellishment also made it the right mode for a history of catastrophic civil discord, 'harsh and disillusioned', apt for 'the melancholy fate of Rome and the Republic'.⁶⁵

Pollio's retirement can only corroborate this kinship with Thucydides. Thucydides was unavoidably absent from the Athenian political scene from 424 onwards, exiled for his military failures in Thrace. But he manages to make of this setback further grounds for historiographical authority (5.26.5). The Roman Thucydides (Sen., *Contr.* 9.1.13; Vell. 2.36.2; Quint., *Inst.* 10.1.101), Sallust, succeeded in turning disgrace to his historiographical advantage in a similar fashion.⁶⁶ Charged with malpractice after his service in Africa in 46 B.C. he withdrew from politics. But rendered 'procul a re publica' (*Jug.* 4.3) by circumstances, Sallust was able to claim that he was writing 'quam uerissime' (*Cat.* 4.3), 'eo magis quod mihi a spe metu partibus rei publicae animus liber erat', 'all the more because I was free of the hope, fear and prejudice associated with politics'. Pollio's alienation from contemporary politics was deliberate and self-inflicted, but had the potential to bring him similar advantages. Assertion of neutrality offered him, amongst other things, the scope to construct a Thucydidean historical persona, a man of action deeply involved and knowledgeable about recent events but possessing a neutral distance and reliability because 'a re publica remotus', as Cicero describes Thucydides (*De Orat.* 2.56). Prose style and lifestyle thus conspired together to associate Pollio with Thucydides, a figure renowned for his independence of mind and truthfulness, Cicero's 'rerum gestarum pronuntiator sincerus' (*Brut.* 287).⁶⁷

There is one more model of 'retirement' to be considered, and this will serve to locate Pollio's literary aspirations more clearly in the broader context of his élite self-fashioning. A name coupled with Thucydides more than once in discussions of prose style is Cato the Elder. Cic., *Brut.* 66 associates the two as historians given to an abrupt and abbreviated style of writing, an 'understandable but highly audacious connection'

⁶² Thucydides' autopsy of events was valued, for the accuracy it guaranteed. Cicero makes an instructive mistake at *Brutus* 47, talking about Antiphon of Rhamnus, 'quo neminem umquam melius ullam orauisse capitis causam, cum se ipse defenderet, se audiente locuples auctor scripsit Thucydides', 'concerning whom we have the reliable evidence of Thucydides that no one ever pleaded a capital case better, when Antiphon conducted his own defence in Thucydides' hearing'. Cicero is referring to Thuc. 8.68.2. But Thucydides *cannot* have heard Antiphon's speech (which defended his role in the oligarchic coup of 411) since he was in exile from Athens at the time. He himself, as usual, is inexplicit as to the source of

his knowledge for the speech. But Cicero's inaccuracy is telling. The essence of Thucydides' authority as a historian resides in the impression that he had immediate, first-hand knowledge of the events he described.

⁶³ R. Syme, *Tacitus* (1958), 135.

⁶⁴ Stylistics (in the broadest sense) may also be at the bottom of Pollio's obscure remark about Livy's *Pataunitas*, if the interpretation of Syme, op. cit. (n. 48), 485–6 is correct.

⁶⁵ Syme, op. cit. (n. 49), 56.

⁶⁶ Woodman, op. cit. (n. 32), 127.

⁶⁷ cf. Marcellinus, *Vita Thuc.* 26, according to whom Thucydides was φιλαλήθης.

which 'largely determined the later course of Roman historiography', according to Leeman.⁶⁸ Certainly Cato and Thucydides constituted Sallust's two main models, and subsequently Tacitus'.⁶⁹ Cato's 'old-fashioned manner'⁷⁰ gave Sallust a model of Latin style broadly comparable to Thucydides, but also associated the later historian with a stern moralist from the Roman past: Cato's prose style was considered to reflect his way of life (Cic., *Rep.* 2.1). Like Sallust, Pollio also cultivated an 'archaizing' style (Quint., *Inst.* 10.1.113; Tac., *Dial.* 21), despite his criticism of Sallust on these very grounds (Suet., *Gram.* 10),⁷¹ and an aphorism promoting a plain and factual style — 'male Hercule eueniat uerbis, nisi rem sequuntur' (Porphyrio *ad* Hor., *AP* 311) — closely recalls Cato's famous 'rem tene, uerba sequuntur':⁷² Cato's remark guaranteed an uncomplicated access via language to the truth, and Pollio's version, similarly, seems to promise that textual transparency which, as we have seen, his *Histories* aspired in various ways to provide. Once again, however, such transparency has the effect of exposing the author starkly to view. It was consistently the individual *auctoritas* of the figure of Pollio which underwrote the credibility of his narrative.

But in no respect does Pollio more resemble the Catonian model than in his retreat from active involvement in current events. Cato's *Origines*, the first work of Latin historiography, was the product of his old age (Nepos, *Cato* 3). *HRR* fr. 2, from the proem, talks of the importance for 'renowned and great men' that 'a satisfactory account be given of their leisure [*otium*] no less than of their active lives [*negotium*]'. Combined with Cic., *Sen.* 38, this can naturally be taken to imply that the *Origines* were a product of the period after Cato's completion of his formal political career. In this, as in other respects, Cato set a pattern for Roman historiography: 'the writing of history was frequently begun in retirement as a suitable activity for a statesman.'⁷³ In a sense, then, Pollio's withdrawal from active politics in 39 or 38 — like Cato he continued to attend the Senate (Hor., *Carm.* 2.1.14; Suet., *Aug.* 43.2), but not to engage in any more formal political activity — was a very conventional gesture, sanctioned by Roman tradition. Pollio also, it might be said, had attained the summit of the *cursus honorum*, a consulship and triumph: what more was there to do?

But a conventional gesture in abnormal circumstances obviously ceases to be conventional, and a moment's reflection reveals the inherent awkwardness of the Catonian model as applied to Asinius Pollio. When Pollio 'retired', in 39 or 38, he was only thirty-seven or thirty-eight years old, still far too young, constitutionally, to have been consul in the first place: the *otium* he was embarking upon would constitute not the twilight of his life but the greater part of it. These were revolutionary times, and a withdrawal from a civil war in which the very future of Rome was at stake was very different from the circumstances in which Cato found the time to compose his *Origines*. In fact Pollio seems to be engaged in an activity familiar from Sallust — anxiously squaring his own anomalous circumstances with the tradition of Roman historiography. Marincola's comment on this aspect of the prefaces of the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* is suggestive:

Sallust's prefaces, though atypical, may provide some useful perspective, since in both prefaces there is a constant concern with the relation of history-writing to public life, that is, of *otium* to *negotium*, and whatever Greek influence we allow on these prefaces, this particular concern is not in evidence among any Greek historians. Sallust is here making reference to Roman expectations, since unlike most of his predecessors, he was not writing a history at the close of a successful career of service in which he had earned a justifiable *otium*. He was in a sense attempting at mid-life what was not usually earned until later life. To justify his abandonment of the *res publica* he must portray it as a corrupt and dangerous arena . . .⁷⁴

⁶⁸ A. D. Leeman, *Orationis ratio* (1963), 72; cf. Kraus and Woodman, *op. cit.* (n. 45), 42 n. 19.

⁶⁹ R. H. Martin, *Tacitus* (1981), 24–5; Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 252–3.

⁷⁰ Syme, *op. cit.* (n. 49), 56.

⁷¹ Woodman, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 151 n. 49.

⁷² Kornemann, *op. cit.* (n. 59), 150.

⁷³ Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 77; cf. Rawson, *op. cit.* (n. 36), 92. Cicero fondly imagines himself following the model at *Leg.* 1.10.

⁷⁴ Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 138–9.

Compared with Sallust, Pollio's career has at first sight a very orthodox shape: the *cursus honorum*, culminating in a consulship and a triumph, followed by well-earned *otium* which he spends recording his life and times, directing his instinct for self-promotion into the channels sanctioned by tradition for consulars and *triumphatores*. But it is in reality no less awkward a rapprochement with traditional patterns of behaviour than Sallust's had been: in extraordinary circumstances, it appears, Pollio insists on playing as close an approximation as possible to the traditional senatorial role.

IV. THE AUGUSTAN CONSULAR

A further implication of these last remarks on Cato the Elder is that to interpret Pollio's retirement as a straightforward withdrawal from the political scene is simplistic. Historiography 'to the Roman senator could be "a continuation of politics by other means"', as Martin puts it,⁷⁵ a means adopted by the Roman upper classes to control interpretation of the past; and consequently the historian, of all literary personae, had most in common with the ethos of the Roman élite. Republican historiography was thus, typically, in its very essence political, i.e. preoccupied with the *res publica*, even when the author was 'procul a re publica'. This is obviously the case with Pollio's history of the recent civil wars, as indeed Horace implies when he talks of Pollio in his *Histories* 'setting in order the affairs of the state', 'ubi publicas res ordinaris' (*Carm.* 2.1.10), locating historiography (in contrast to other genres like tragedy) in the public realm. As Nisbet and Hubbard comment *ad loc.*, 'Horace is pointedly using a phrase properly applicable to the statesman' in such a way as to 'catch the political tone of Pollio's writing'. Pollio is playing a complicated game, then, simultaneously asserting his apolitical neutrality and engaging in an activity — contemporary historiography — which bore the closest possible relationship to politics. In other words, what Pollio took up after his retirement in the early 30s was not the *negation* of politics but an *alternative* to politics.

In this Pollio the historian is a phenomenon representative of the dilemmas confronting the Roman ruling classes at the final demise of oligarchy and the onset of the Principate. The old forums (I choose my term advisedly) for élite self-assertion were less and less available. Traditional political life, in particular, had ceased to exist: 'the nobiles lost their *de facto* privilege of self-assertion in the conduct of public affairs'.⁷⁶ Pollio was also one of the most eminent orators of his day, but the scope for oratory was severely curtailed and he had to be content with oratory of a non-political or only mildly political nature.⁷⁷ 'Political oratory starved and dwindled in both law courts and Senate',⁷⁸ and Pollio was particularly disadvantaged by this process.⁷⁹ Nevertheless there is a problem with the assumptions underlying the persistent argument concerning Pollio's attitude to Augustus and his principate. Syme, despite his typically subtle understanding of the handicaps facing an Augustan senator, insisted on seeing in Pollio a steadfast opponent of the new regime,⁸⁰ a view in which he was followed by Williams, according to whom 'C. Asinius Pollio remained an intransigent Republican, hostile to Augustus . . .';⁸¹ Bosworth attempted to overturn the orthodoxy and prove that Pollio was in fact by the time of Actium a partisan of Augustus;⁸² Martin and Woodman, however, continue to agree with Syme that 'the great republican' Pollio 'remained hostile to Augustus throughout his life'.⁸³ But to define Pollio straightforwardly as a loyalist or a recusant is simplistic. The rough edges which are certainly evident in

⁷⁵ R. H. Martin, 'Tacitus and his predecessors', in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Tacitus* (1969), 117-47, at 119.

⁷⁶ Ch. Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome During the Late Republic and Early Principate* (1950), 122.

⁷⁷ cf. André, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 67: 'It eût abordé tous les genres de causes si les circonstances politiques ne lui eussent barré l'accès du Forum.'

⁷⁸ Syme, *op. cit.* (n. 48), 483.

⁷⁹ The diminished status of Augustan oratory rankled with him: see Sen., *Suas.* 6.27.

⁸⁰ *op. cit.* (n. 48), 482-6.

⁸¹ G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (1968), 82.

⁸² Bosworth, *art. cit.* (n. 46).

⁸³ R. H. Martin and A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus, Annals Book IV* (1989), ad 4.34.4.

Pollio's relationship with the Augustan regime are not so much a symptom of political dissidence as of the radically new socio-political conditions with which the Roman élite were having to come to terms.⁸⁴ He is not so much assuming a political stance as negotiating a new *cultural* stance, discovering the space to be a public figure in a world very different from the one in which the values of the Roman élite had been forged. Henderson's analysis is similar: 'Above all "Pollio" signified, and his work articulated, a route through the contradictions between loyalty to the *princeps* and to self-consistency which afflicted the entire ruling class.'⁸⁵

Traditional political *libertas* was now severely constrained; what Pollio sought to exploit above all was the possibility for free expression which persisted in literature. From the booty he had won in his campaign against the Parthini he established the first public library in Rome (Plin., *HN* 7.115, 35.10; Isid., *Orig.* 6.5.2; cf. Ov., *Tr.* 3.1.71-2), richly appointed with the statues of eminent authors. He located it in the Atrium Libertatis, which he also renovated (Suet., *Aug.* 29.5), and this was not an arbitrary choice: 'Collocando la sua biblioteca nazionale proprio lì, Polllione ha l'aria di aver compiuto una scelta ben meditata: la diffusione e la protezione delle lettere veniva posta nel segno di *Libertas* e della sua continuità.'⁸⁶ By this gesture Pollio powerfully asserted his commitment to the literary life and at a stroke gave himself great status in the literary world. But in the same process he also established a relationship between literature and *libertas*, in the sense of senatorial self-expression, which was also clearly embodied in his self-assertive and independent-minded *Histories*. Pollio's autopsy is an expression of Roman *libertas*, free speech: but in literature, not life. Pliny's comment on the foundation of the library (*HN* 35.10) captures the tension: Pollio 'primus bibliothecam dicando ingenia hominum rem publicam fecit', 'was the first by the dedication of a library to make human brilliance publicly available'. Pollio's move into literature can be interpreted as a retreat from public life, but it can also be seen as a turning of literature into an alternative form of public activity. If Purcell is right to identify the Atrium Libertatis with the so-called 'Tabularium', the very location of the library at the head of the Forum might carry similar implications.⁸⁷

This interpretation of Pollio's activities, a considerably more compromised stance than that attributed to him by Syme, finds corroboration elsewhere. In his discussion of the dilemmas of free speech in the Augustan Principate, and as they impacted upon Ovid in particular, Feeney takes as paradigmatic an anecdote about Pollio recorded by Seneca (*Ira* 3.23.7-8; cf. Sen., *Contr.* 10.5.22).⁸⁸ Timagenes, the Greek historian, had been barred from Augustus' house for persistent verbal attacks on himself and his family, and took up residence with Pollio. Seneca reports an exchange between Pollio and Augustus on the issue. Once again the issue is one of free speech, but Feeney's comment on the passage is insightful:

Syme praises his hero, Pollio, for his exercise of *libertas*, but one's doubts about Pollio's Republican freedom of speech are confirmed by a reading of Seneca's superb account of the conversation between Augustus and Pollio about the rabid historian Timagenes . . . In Seneca's passage one can sense the two men testing the ring of the circle within which they

⁸⁴ In many respects M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus provides an instructive parallel here. Consular, *triumphator*, patron of letters and author of an account of his actions in the civil wars, Messalla also represents a prominent senator outside the core power structure of the Augustan regime, and his relations with the *princeps* on occasion display an awkwardness reminiscent of Pollio's. The same man who controversially resigned the post of *praefectus urbi* in 25 (Tac., *Ann.* 6.11) also proposed that Augustus be awarded the title *pater patriae* in 2 B.C. (Suet., *Aug.* 58.2). Cf. the interesting analysis of (Nepos' account of) Atticus' precarious neutrality during the civil wars in F. G. B. Millar, 'Cornelius Nepos, "Atticus" and the Roman Revolution', *G&R* 35 (1988), 40-55.

⁸⁵ Henderson, art. cit. (n. 1), 93.

⁸⁶ A. Barchiesi, *Il poeta e il principe. Ovidio e il*

discorso augusteo (1994), 78. Cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 13), 8; P. Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (1987), 77, 'Schon die Wahl dieses Baus war im politischen Klima jener Jahre keine Loyalitätskundgebung für die Triumvirn'; and N. Purcell, 'Atrium Libertatis', *PBSR* 61 (1993), 125-55, at 144, 'a building known for its role in the definition of what was Roman'.

⁸⁷ Purcell, art. cit. (n. 86), esp. 149 on the 'magnificence of the site'; cf. D. Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (1996), 34: 'the Tabularium forms an impressive scenographic backdrop for the Forum Romanum.'

⁸⁸ D. C. Feeney, 'Si licet et fas est. Ovid's *Fasti* and the problem of free speech under the Principate', in A. Powell (ed.), *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus* (1992), 1-25, at 7-8.

must operate; the crucial point, however, is that Pollio does say that he will forbid Timagenes his house “if Augustus gives the order” (*si iubes, Caesar*).

So it is not a simple case of Pollio being an intransigent Republican (whatever, in fact, that may mean). Seneca’s anecdote dramatizes an anxious negotiation of the scope for free expression similar to what I have read into Pollio’s retreat from active politics towards (politicized) literature. It is noteworthy here again that this is a primarily *literary* matter (Timagenes, like Pollio, was a historian), albeit again with political overtones.⁸⁹

Here and elsewhere Pollio displays an acute awareness of the new limitations on élite activity. At *Contr.* 4. *praef.* 2 Seneca tells us of Pollio’s attitude to the rhetorical exercise of declamation. He refused to declaim ‘admissa multitudine’, ‘in front of a large audience’, and attracted criticism for it. Seneca’s preferred explanation of his reluctance is that ‘so great an orator considered this occupation unworthy of his talent, and whilst he was happy to use it as a training exercise, he was loath to derive pride (“gloriari”) from it’: in other words, declamation should not be confused with real oratory, and Pollio is sensitive to the damage it would do his *dignitas* to confuse the two.⁹⁰ In the same context Seneca refers to another characteristically imperial activity, the recitation, and here also there is corroboration of the picture of Pollio I am proposing, as a traditional senator labouring under adverse conditions, and forging alternative forums for élite self-assertion. Dupont has recently offered an analysis of the sociological significance of the *recitatio* in imperial Rome. She argues that ‘for the Roman nobleman, the opportunity to use language’ in public discourse, that is in public oratory, ‘is the essence of *libertas*’. But under the Principate ‘the spaces for performance of *oratio* disappear, together with the political context’. ‘The emperor monopolizes the power of political speech.’⁹¹ But another form of semi-public expression emerges to fill the cultural space, partially at any rate, of political oratory: *recitatio*, the recitation of literary works to an invited audience.

Recitationes, according to Dupont, ‘constitute a private form of oratorical (or poetical) discourse, a discourse that bestows social prestige and thus substitutes, at least in part, for the traditional *oratio*’ (45).⁹² In certain respects the space for *recitatio* mimics political arenas: the audience, for example, is seated hierarchically, the most important on chairs at the front, the others at the back on benches, an arrangement which, as Dupont says ‘makes the *recitatio* look like a political gathering, such as the Senate’ (47). This strange, circumscribed version of free speech remains a tolerated venue for free expression under the Empire. Dupont notes in passing the originator of this characteristically imperial institution, C. Asinius Pollio, who according to Seneca the Elder (*Contr.* 4 *praef.* 2) ‘primus . . . omnium Romanorum aduocatis hominibus scripta sua recitauit’, ‘was the first Roman of all to recite his writings to an invited audience’. Pollio did not ‘invent’ recitation as such, but did apparently, as Dalzell argues, invest *recitatio* with the formal character it possessed under the Empire: perhaps these recitations took place in the Atrium Libertatis.⁹³ Far from disappearing, then, Pollio’s aspiration for prestige sought out alternative outlets. Seneca prefaces his statement about Pollio’s recitations with the remark ‘nec illi ambitio in studiis defuit’, ‘he did not lack artistic ambition’. ‘Ambitio in studiis’, with its tension between the language of *negotium* and *otium*, is a tag which can encapsulate Pollio’s trajectory after his retirement from active politics.

⁸⁹ For Timagenes’ status as a model of historiographical outspokenness (which made him a natural house guest of Pollio), see Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 255.

⁹⁰ The remark of Labienus cited by Seneca — ‘ille triumphalis senex ἀκρόασεις suas numquam populo commisit’ — does refer to declamations rather than recitations, despite the use of the standard Greek term for *recitatio*, ἀκρόασις. The (correct) gloss ‘tuas id est declamationes’ has entered the text after the Greek term.

⁹¹ F. Dupont, ‘*Recitatio* and the reorganization of the space of public discourse’, in T. Habinek and A. Schiesaro (eds), *The Roman Cultural Revolution* (1997), 44–59, at 44.

⁹² cf. Syme, *op. cit.* (n. 48), 483.

⁹³ A. Dalzell, ‘C. Asinius Pollio and the early history of public recitation at Rome,’ *Hermathena* 86 (1955), 20–8.

Also relevant in this context is a remark of Pliny (*HN* 36.33) about the *monumenta Asini Pollionis*, Pollio's art collection probably sited at the *horti Asiniani* (in the area later occupied by the Baths of Caracalla⁹⁴): 'Pollio Asinius, ut fuit acris uehementiae, sic quoque spectari monumenta sua uoluit', 'Asinius Pollio, being a man of vigour and energy, consequently wanted his collection to be seen'. This is an interesting indication of the relationship between elite values of self-assertion⁹⁵ and the art collecting in which Pollio currently led the field. As Isager writes, 'The display of famous Greek art in public squares and buildings imparts *honos* and *auctoritas* to . . . those who brought them to Rome.'⁹⁶ There is more than one way to gain status, and Pollio is energetically exploiting those still open to him. He aspired to be the consummate aristocrat; and public art collection — or, for that matter, his *Histories* — embodied a much-compromised realization of that aspiration under autocracy, each the action of a *nobilis* anxiously exploring the parameters of *nobilitas* in the prevailing circumstances.⁹⁷

But the distinction between these forms of self-assertion and traditional forms was necessarily slight. We might picture, in particular, Pollio reciting his eyewitness *Histories*, as he certainly will have done, to an invited audience, describing in his authoritative account what he saw *with his own eyes* at the crossing of the Rubicon or at Pharsalus or at Munda, *Histories* which conveyed events with such vividness that 'geri negotium et res ante oculos esse uideatur', 'action seems to be being carried out and events to be before our eyes' (*Rhet. Her.* 4.68, from a definition of *enargeia*). Within the confines of the *recitatio* Pollio was exercising the closest possible equivalent to traditional Roman self-expression. Oratory and history were always, as we have seen, intimately related practices. The performative context of the *recitatio* made the resemblance even closer. This was virtual *libertas*, and if the line which the Augustan regime sought to draw between the public realm and the literary realm (Suet., *Aug.* 51.3) was inevitably a line in the sand, it is no surprise that difficulties crystallized around that most politicized of literary activities, historiography. The collapse of the distinction in the reign of Tiberius is dramatized by Tiberius in the trial of Cremutius Cordus (*Ann.* 4.34–5), a historian who naturally cites as a precedent for his eulogy of Brutus and Cassius the favourable account of the two in Asinius Pollio's free-speaking *Histories*.⁹⁸

V. POLLIO AS AENEAS

The issue of the socio-political status of senatorial history can also be factored back into our reading of the allusion to Pollio's *Histories* with which this article began, and this is how I will close. The sociological implications of literary allusion are not something we are often in a position to judge. It is rare for ancient poets to allude to authors who are alive and about whose socio-cultural circumstances we possess any

⁹⁴ As argued by E. La Rocca, 'Artisti rodii negli *horti romani*', in M. Cima and E. La Rocca (eds), *Horti romani: atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 4–6 maggio 1995* (1998), 203–74, at 229–73; cf. J. Delaine, *The Baths of Caracalla: A Study in the Design, Construction, and Economics of Large-scale Building Projects in Imperial Rome*, *JRA Supp.* 25 (1997), 79. La Rocca points out that, although the Atrium Libertatis has been universally assumed to be the site of Pollio's art collection, the sources never actually equate the *monumenta Asini Pollionis* with the Atrium. Instead he argues from the presence of the Farnese Bull sculpture group in both Pollio's *monumenta* (Plin., *HN* 36.34) and the Baths of Caracalla (where it was rediscovered in the Renaissance) that the *horti Asiniani* are the more likely location. This unfortunately punctures the impressive conclusion of Henderson, art. cit. (n. 1), 134–6 (toned down in the revised version, 158–9).

⁹⁵ For *uehemens* and *acer* as terms of elite approbation see Gell. 10.3.1; Cic., *Brut.* 107; and cf. Cicero's

approving description of C. Pansa as a *uehementissimus et fortissimus consul* at *Phil.* 12.18. The aspiration that oneself or one's work be seen by others is of the very essence of the Roman notion of distinction.

⁹⁶ J. Isager, *Pliny on Art and Society: the Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art* (1991), 113; cf. 157–8.

⁹⁷ On art collecting in Rome see Rawson, op. cit. (n. 36), 193–200. There was a tradition of temporary public exhibition, typically by magistrates with a view to the prestige which would thereby accrue to their time in office. The permanent exhibition of Pollio, a private citizen, seems different. For the evidence see J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Rome, c. 753 BC to AD 337: Sources and Documents* (1966), 74–81.

⁹⁸ cf. Dupont, art. cit. (n. 91), 48, on Maternus' recitation of his play *Cato* (*Tac., Dial.* 2), which was said to have offended the court because Maternus threw himself so wholeheartedly into the role of his protagonist. It was the talk of the town, no longer contained within the confines of the *recitatio* venue.

useful knowledge. For once, though, this is an aspect of Pollio about which we have a relative wealth of information. So what might be the sociological significance of Pollio's momentary fusion with Aeneas in *Aeneid* 2? In the first place it is clearly honorific. The hero of this magnificent epic, as he witnesses the fall of Troy, no less (it is hard to think of a more elevated literary topic), assumes the sound and shape of Pollio contemplating civil war. The allusion, we might say, bestows *auctoritas* on the historian. But again it is a circumscribed glorification. The *Aeneid*, in Hardie's words, is 'a colossal exercise in definition' which seeks by its authority to explain and ground, once and for all, the Augustan interpretation of Rome.⁹⁹ In particular, I believe, it aspires to reinterpret the ghastly civil wars out of which the Augustan regime had emerged in a way conducive to Augustan ideology, (in other words) in such a way as to confirm the legitimacy of Augustus' dominance. The sack of Troy is an integral part of this argument. Troy is annihilated, and in its destruction is equated with the Rome of the civil wars, but the fall of Troy is according to Virgil's scheme a kind of sacrificial precondition for the rise of Rome, and a very Augustan Rome at that. Troy *must* fall if Rome is to be founded; and civil war becomes, by analogy, a necessary prerequisite of Augustus' new foundation of Rome. Pollio's *Histories* are implicated in this process. That narrative of civil war, token of Pollio's continued independence and self-sufficiency, finds itself part of a bigger argument, subsumed into Virgil's (ultimately) triumphant narrative of Augustan success.

The same point might be made in a different way. It is a familiar observation that Virgil exploits the ambiguity as to *whose* ancestor Aeneas was — the entire Roman race, or Augustus in particular — to make Aeneas simultaneously a reflection of Everyroman and of Augustus, thereby economically identifying the interests of Rome and the interests of the Augustan regime. Thus when Aeneas briefly takes on the likeness of Pollio he is done the honour of being associated with an ideal and archetypal Romanness. But looked at another way, this staunchly autonomous Roman senator is drafted into an emphatically Augustan definition of Romanness, metonymically figured in Aeneas. The ideology at work here, at once pluralistic and totalitarian, implying that Augustus was the consummation of all that was Roman, is familiar from the sculptural decoration of the Forum Augusti, which itself prefigured Augustus' funeral, where *imagines* 'of all Romans who had been prominent in any way' (Dio 56.34), as well as those of the Julian ancestors, were paraded.¹⁰⁰ The Augustan regime was rewriting history to its own design, and in Virgil's *Aeneid*, no less than in the three-dimensional forums he frequented, Pollio encountered the socio-political restrictions of the new autocracy.

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⁹⁹ P. R. Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil: A Study in the Dynamics of a Tradition* (1993), 1.

¹⁰⁰ Zanker, *op. cit.* (n. 86), 213–17.