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Pliny's other country

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In his *Tacitus*, Sir Ronald Syme first drew attention to what he called the "Pliny country", a theme which he developed in several subsequent papers, and most fully in his review of Sherwin-White's commentary on Pliny's letters, "People in Pliny".¹ He insisted that the area which Pliny called *regio mea* (7.22.2) had clear boundaries. It was not all of Italia Transpadana, nor even all of *Regio XI*, in which lay his beloved Comum. As Syme defined it, Pliny's country²

comprises the eastern zone of 'Regio XI', according to the Augustan demarcation In a ring around Mediolanum stand Comum, Bergomum, Laus Pompeia, Ticinum, Novaria. Westwards from Novaria that 'Pliny country' goes only so far as Vercellae. To the East it passes into 'Regio X', embracing Brixia and Verona, but it appears to stop before Vicetia.

This area Syme defined prosopographically. That is, drawing on his immense knowledge of both epigraphy and literature, he essentially plotted Pliny's friendships on the ground, looking to the origins both of his correspondents and of other friends and acquaintances mentioned in the letters. It was a virtuoso performance.

In defining what we might call the geography of friendship, Syme left much for others to fill in. In a use of the word common in the England of the 18th and 19th c., this could be termed the area of Pliny's "interest". That is, it was the land of Pliny's ancestors and his estates, a land where he relaxed in private and made public appearances, where above all he exercised influence, be it through *gratia* with friends and connections or through patronage of individuals, groups, and communities. Syme never defined what the region meant to Pliny, but the Roman consul's affection for his homeland beyond the Po and for his countrymen and women is palpable. The beauty of Comum, his care for his estates, his many benefactions, his close ties with the people: all are repeated subjects. The passion for his native land is established in the lyrical third epistle of the first book — 'How is our darling Comum doing?' — and runs throughout the letters: 'I am always eager to promote our *patria* in every way I can' (7.32.1). A great part of that passion is shared with close local friends. Of a visit there he writes: 'I was with my wife's grandfather and her aunt, and with friends whom I had missed for so long' (5.14.8). Thus, a notable feature of the letters is that, among the glittering social, political, and literary elite whom Pliny parades before us, we find a disproportionate number of more or less obscure friends from *regio mea*.³ And some of these receive so many letters and are mentioned so often — men such as the irascible Calpurnius Fabatus, or Calvisius Rufus, or Caninius Rufus, all from Comum — that we can grasp the character of friendships based (respectively) on family ties, or business dealings, or the common pursuit of literature.

With his sketch map of the "Pliny country", Syme cast brilliant, enduring light on the correspondence. Nevertheless, it prompts two further observations. One is that the 9 books of Pliny's correspondence are a consummate work of art, a fastidiously composed autobiography in mosaic.⁴ When he came to polish, rewrite, and publish his letters, he omitted details and indeed whole sections which detracted from the main point of each letter, and in compiling the books he artfully chose certain themes which wind in and out of the careful *variatio* of the whole. One of the self-images which he wished to promote was that of Pliny the native son, the brilliantly successful local boy who never forgot his roots in *illa nostra Italia* (1.4.4) and in the *patria* which he loved and which loved him so. But the corollary is that so much is left out

1 Syme 1958, 86; id. 1968, 135-37 = 1979, 694-98. Numerous references to "Pliny country" in the indices to Syme 1988, 752 and id. 1991, 695.

2 Syme 1985, 343 = 1988, 460.

3 Syme, 1985 343-44 = 1988, 460-61 for many examples of relative nonentities from *regio mea*.

4 On the nature and purpose of the correspondence, see Champlin 1982.

of the correspondence, material which was irrelevant either to individual letters or to the self-portrait he was painting, or which was already known to his friends but is lost to us.⁵ This is not to deny the reality and the depth of his feelings for Comum: it is to suggest that his love for the town and his sense of artistic unity may obscure the significance of other places for him.

The second observation to be made about Syme's "Pliny country" is that not all of the evidence for it is of equal weight: as Syme observed elsewhere, prosopography is an art rather than a science. Some identifications of the friends in his letters are absolutely clear from the letters themselves or from inscriptions, either of the person or of his or her family; some are rendered highly probable from distributions of particular *nomina*, *cognomina*, or combinations of the two. But some are deduced obliquely from the contents of the letters or from less clearly relevant epigraphical material, especially where very indistinctive names are involved, and in one or two cases the deductions may be incorrect. This is not to deny the validity of Syme's insight: it is to suggest that it may not be the whole story.

For Pliny also had deep roots in another area of Italy. Indeed, he had another "country", the region of what he calls his Tuscan estates near the Umbrian town of Tifernum Tiberinum, on the border between Etruria and Umbria.⁶ It is clear from his loving description of the villa there that the place stood second in his heart only to Comum. It could be reached in easy stages from Rome (1.4.1), and we gain a far more vivid picture of life at the Tuscan estates than at Comum. He wonders whether to buy an adjoining property whose land is fertile, rich, and well-watered, and which consists of fields, vineyards, and woods; he knows its history well (3.19). He worries about damage by hail to his Tuscan lands (4.6.1); he hunts there (5.18.2); his studies are interrupted by requests for his services as judge or arbiter, by the complaints of his rustic tenants, and by the pressing need to rent his farms (7.30.3-4); he sells his grape harvest and commiserates with a neighbor about the problems of the vintage (8.2, 8.15); he listens again to the complaints of his tenants and rides around the estate (9.15); he harvests the grapes (9.16, 9.20, 9.28.2); yet again he hears tenants' complaints, rides (9.36), and leases his farms in person (9.37); and he elaborately rebuilds a temple of Ceres on his property (9.39). That is, we have the strong sense of a much closer personal involvement in the life and management of his estates at Tifernum on the Tiber than of those at distant Comum; indeed, for all of his love of his *patria*, he found time for only one visit there over the whole course of the correspondence.

What also comes through, despite routine complaints about his lack of *otium* at Tifernum, is a real love of the place. In his great set piece on the villa (5.6) he first describes the healthy climate of the area, cold in winter but moderate and breezy in the summer, and then the *regionis forma pulcherrima*, an immense natural amphitheater surrounded by ancient woods with excellent hunting and with hills as rich as the plains, vineyards on every slope, fertile fields and well-watered meadows, all composing a scene of extraordinary beauty and the perfect setting for his jewel of a villa. For him it is the site of great refreshment, a theme carried forward in his later letter describing a perfect summer day *in Tuscis*. That is to say, not only was he deeply involved in the running of his property there, he loved it.

What we miss at first is that strong pull of local roots which he feels in the letters whenever Comum crops up. Yet the roots are there. First, we can deduce that his ties with Tifernum were inherited and that the estate was a family property, for the town chose him as *patronus* when he was 'little more than a boy' (4.1.4). Primarily because of its preponderant economic importance to him, Duncan-Jones and others have assumed that he acquired the estate from his uncle, whose heir he was, and it may be added that the 17-year-old Pliny was indeed *paene adhuc puerum* when the Elder Pliny died.⁷ The ruins of a villa, some 10 km north of

5 E.g., the unknown identity of his first and second wives, or details of his official career known only from epigraphy, or the tenor of his public life under Domitian.

6 On which see de Neeve 1990, with earlier bibliography at 401-2.

7 Duncan-Jones 1982, 19.

Tifernum (mod. Città di Castello) and in a setting which corresponds precisely with Pliny's description in 5.6,⁸ has yielded roof-tiles stamped with the letters C P C S —Pliny's initials — as well as tiles with the name of M. Granius Marcellus which are dated to A.D. 7 and 15.⁹ In 10.8.1, Pliny requests of Trajan permission to transfer to the town statues of former *principes* which had been handed down to him in his distant estates through several generations of inheritance (*per plures successiones*), and which he kept there as he had received them. It would appear likely, then, that he inherited the estate from the Augustan senator M. Granius Marcellus, proconsul of Bithynia in 14/15; if that is so, his social connections at Tifernum are even more impressive than those at Comum.¹⁰

It follows that Pliny's ties with the people of the area were close. During his prefecture of the Aerarium Saturni, in 98 or 99, he obtained leave from the emperor to travel to Tifernum to start work there on a *publicum opus*, a temple to be erected at his own expense in which he intended to house the statues of the emperors (3.4.2; 10.8.9). The local decurions were delighted by the project, and he celebrated its dedication in person with a public feast (4.1). Not unnaturally, the people of Tifernum, who had adopted him as patron while hardly more than a boy, 'always celebrate my arrivals, regret my departures and rejoice in my honors.' The locals called on him repeatedly as judge and arbiter (7.30.2), and he would listen avidly to the tales of past times told by the local elders (5.6.2). The *regio tota* praised his manner of refunding money to buyers who had paid too much for the grape harvest (8.2). And he enlarged and improved a temple of Ceres on his estate, rebuilding the shrine with fine marble, replacing the cult statue, and adding porticoes: the existing shrine had been too old, too small, and too exposed to the weather for the large crowds which gathered on his estate from *regio tota* to celebrate the festival of the goddess each September (9.39).

Thus far the people of the area, mentioned in passing in his letters; but as with the roof-tiles from his villa which reveal the unexpected family connection, epigraphy adds unexpected color. First, a tiny fragment of what must have been Pliny's senatorial *cursus honorum* turned up in Tifernum itself. Its precise provenance is unknown, but it suggests his patronage, perhaps posthumous, in the form of another public building.¹¹ More surprising are the 4 fragmentary lines that survive from an inscription at Hispellum, several miles to the south in Umbria, CIL XI 5272. As Bormann saw and Mommsen agreed, the senatorial *cursus honorum* there presented in the nominative must have been that of Pliny the Younger. The lines concluded with the words *testamento fieri iussit*. Since Pliny was surely not buried here, this cannot be his tomb. It should follow that some sort of public building is again involved, paid for posthumously — indeed, a monumental public building, since the original marble tablet must

8 As the late W. de Neeve put it (1990, 368), "anyone taking the trouble to visit Città di Castello, as ancient Tifernum is now called, could see for himself that Pliny's letter is even now a perfect detailed description of the countryside as a whole — Pliny's words could be used with only slight adaptation by the local Azienda Promozione Turistica as an advertisement of the surroundings."

9 CIL XI 6689.43, 171 (CPCS), 118 (M. Grani Marcelli), 119 (Grani). There can be no doubt that this was Pliny's villa: the same site produced the ex-voto of a Plinia Chreste, CIL XI 5930.

10 In the light of this passage, a fragmentary inscription now in Verona, and an anonymous Vita of the Elder Pliny, Gamurrini 1900 argued that the Pliny the procurator's mother was a daughter of Granius Marcellus. Andermahr 1998, 286 n.7 pointed out the falsity of the genealogy, based on a misunderstanding of the inscription. In fact no less an authority than F. Münzer (1900) demolished the reconstruction a century ago. Nevertheless, Gamurrini must be right in positing inheritance from Granius Marcellus, as the proper reading of 10.8.1 indicates. He was also right to note that Marcellus had been accused and condemned for *maiestas* in 15 precisely in connection with his abuse of statues of the emperors in his possession: Tac., *Ann.* 1.74, cf. Suet., *Tib.* 58. In thus requesting permission of Trajan (and Nerva before him) to transfer the notorious statues to Tifernum, Pliny elaborately draws attention to his own *pietas*.

11 CIL XI 5934. Since the inscription mentions his legateship of Pontus-Bithynia (109-111 or 110-112), this building should not be the temple which he dedicated in 104 (*Ep.* 4.1.5).

have been some 5 m in length, as Alföldy has shown. Yet the people of Hispellum appear only once in Pliny's correspondence, and tangentially at that, with no hint of any personal interest in them (8.8.6). There is a whole fabric of unknown social ties represented here, one which Pliny did not choose to present in his letters. Hispellum, nowhere near the distant "Pliny country" across the Po, is very much within the region of Tifernum Tiberinum.¹²

Thus, despite his concentration on Comum in the letters, we can discern that Pliny had both deep roots and strong ties with the area of Tifernum. Similarly, when we search for his individual friends there, it must be with the understanding that he may not have chosen to recall their Umbrian connections any more than he mentioned the bonds of family and patronage in the region. That they existed could hardly be doubted. In the delightful description of his summer days in *Tuscis*, he writes of dinner at his villa there with his wife or a few friends, listening to a book being read and afterwards to a comedy or a song (9.36.4, cf. 5.6.21 and 30). Even better, he writes elsewhere how friends come to visit from neighboring towns to claim part of his day, often providing a welcome interruption when he is tired from his labors (9.36.5). Who might these friends from neighboring towns be? Two suggestive groupings emerge.

The first is introduced by the *splendidus eques Romanus*, Passennus Paulus, a man of great learning, according to Pliny, who wrote elegiac verses. This, Pliny comments, must be an inherited trait, for Paulus is a fellow-townsmen of Propertius and counts the great poet among his ancestors (6.15.1). An inscription from Asisium neatly confirms the man's full name: C. Passennus C.f. Serg. Paullus Propertius Blaesus.¹³ Pliny records an embarrassing incident at a public reading of Passennus' verse, involving the great jurist, Iavolenus Priscus. Despite his social gaffe, Iavolenus was *Paulo amicissimus*, and a fellow Umbrian, hailing from the neighboring town of Iguvium, thus neatly embodying the nexus between geography and literature.¹⁴ Passennus Paulus of Asisium also appears in a later letter, where his survival of a serious illness gives Pliny a chance to congratulate literature itself on the preservation of a descendant of Propertius who was *nostri amantissimus* (9.22).

Next to him stands Terentius Iunior, the subject of a delightful letter, 7.25. Formerly procurator of Narbonensis, he had retired to cultivate his estates. When invited by him for a visit, Pliny expected to see a good *paterfamilias* and a diligent farmer; what he found to his astonishment was a man of tremendous learning, good taste, and lively literary talk, so that you would think he lived in Athens, not a country villa. In 8.15 Pliny sends Terentius some books and commiserates on the poor grape harvest which both are suffering, while in 9.12 he offers advice on the how fathers should treat sons. As commentators have seen, the locale for grape harvests and literary talk should be Tifernum, not Comum. On his visits there Pliny would stay at his mother-in-law's villa near Perusia (which was not on the road to Comum). An inscription conveniently records the *fundus* of a C. Terentius Iunior near Perusia.¹⁵

Thirdly, perhaps, Atilius Crescens, a friend valued for his learning and his wit. Two epistles quote *bon mots* of Atilius *noster*, 1.9.8 (to Minicius Fundanus) and 2.14.2 (to a Maximus). 6.8 is addressed to a Priscus, with Atilius Crescens as the subject, 'whom you know and love, as does everyone of any eminence.' It emerges that Atilius is not rich, for he pursues the studies at which he excels not for money, but only for the pleasure and renown that they bring him (6.8.6). Pliny has loved him dearly since they were boys, and their towns were a mere one-day's

12 Alföldy 1999a offers a brilliant new reconstruction of the inscription, especially (for our purposes) at 223-25 and 229-33.

13 ILS 2925.

14 Thus, splendidly, Syme 1968, 148 = 1979, 717: "By his full style 'C. Octavius Tadius Tossianus L. Iavolenus Priscus' (suff. 86). The *gentilicia* 'Iavolenus' and 'Tadius' together enjoin a precise localization. In *CIL* XI the former occurs only at Iguvium (5805-6), likewise the latter (5901-3; 5922)." Another Iavolenus, perhaps a freedman of the jurist, has turned up at Iguvium: AE 1995 no. 469.

15 ILS 6120; cf. Pflaum 1960, 163-64.

journey apart (*oppida nostra unius diei itinere dirimuntur*: 6.8.2). Syme accordingly suggested that the man came from Bergomum or Mediolanum, noting that Atilius was one of the most common *nomina* in CIL V.¹⁶ However, *oppidum* could refer to Tifernum (4.1.4) as well as to Comum (7.32.2), and Atilii are likewise common in Umbria, notably at Pisaurum, where we find a 4th-c. knight, magistrate and patron of the colony, T. Caedius T.f. Cam. Atilius Crescens: a town in the territory of Pisaurum could indeed lie within a day's journey of Tifernum.¹⁷ If the learned Atilius Crescens may be assigned to Umbria, not to Transpadana, with him should probably go the otherwise unknown Atilius Scaurus, *amicus meus*, who parted company with the knight Robustus at Umbrian Ocriculum, after which Robustus disappeared (6.25).

A hypothesis can be proposed: that Tifernum and its region were important to Pliny as a stimulus to literary endeavor and literary friendship. There is a clear contrast between Comum and Tifernum as presented in the letters. Comum elicits *pietas*, for (in Pliny's words, about a forensic speech) it gives one great pleasure to adorn and enlarge one's *patria* while at the same time defending its interests and bringing it glory (2.5.3). Thus, with Comum, he repeatedly plays the *public* man, the eager friend and benefactor. We know little of his properties there, and with one exception *studia* play no particular rôle in Pliny's relations with the town or with individuals in *regio mea* which, no matter how much he loved from afar, he so rarely visited.¹⁸ Tifernum, on the other hand, is the place for *otium*, and the town itself is of less interest than the estates. Business and the affairs of patronage interfere, or are presented as interfering, with *private* relaxations. Like most Roman aristocrats, Pliny would withdraw to his suburban villa at Laurentum to write and study, but it was a refuge after a hard day's work in Rome (2.17.2); it was in *Tuscos* that he withdrew for serious relaxation, and it was there that he spent his summers (5.6.1, 9.36.1).¹⁹ He repeatedly mentions his literary work there, the composition and revision of speeches and poems, frequently interrupted by his duties as

16 Syme 1968, 143 = 1979, 708; cf., on the frequency of the *nomen* Syme 1985, 342 = 1988, 459. Possibly from Bergomum rather than Milan: Syme 1985, 336-37 = 1988, 453. It must be noted that Syme's concern for "Pliny country" in Transpadana led later to some very fragile inferences. In a late and elliptical paper (Syme 1985 = 1988), he tried to weave a Transpadane nexus with the friends involved in these letters, arguing that the Maximus who received 2.14 was the same as *Maximus noster quem et ipse amo sed coniunctius tu* whose help he sought from Priscus on behalf of Atilius in 6.8, and that both were likely to be Novius Maximus (of 4.20, 5.5, and possibly other letters), for whom "a Transpadane origin will become plausible" (449 [references are to the 1988 version]); that Atilius came from Bergomum, if not Milan (as above, 453); that the Priscus who received *Ep.* 6.8 held a special commission from the emperor in Transpadana (for which there is no evidence at all) and may even have been Transpadane himself (454-55); and that Minicius Fundanus, the recipient of 1.9, came from Ticinum (462). Only the last claim is likely, and Syme's identifications of the various Maximi and the Prisci in Pliny's letters are uncertain in the extreme. Earlier, in fact, he had identified the Priscus of 6.8 as Iavolenus Priscus (Syme 1958, 632; in 1985, "that action is now abrogated"). He likewise observed in 1985 that "Novii, it is a strange fact, are of extremest rarity in Italia Transpadana", citing in the footnote the two epigraphical attestations, far to the east of Pliny country. As it happens, a Novius can be found at Iguvium (CIL XI 5839), the home of Iavolenus Priscus. All of this suggests caution.

17 CIL XI 6362. Other Atilii there: 6332 (a senator), 6405, 6439. Pisaurum may also have been the home, or the *ultima origo*, of Pliny's friend Suetonius Tranquillus. A L. Hatilius L. f. Pom. Crescens appears at Rome (AE 1987 no. 167), but Hatilius can be a *nomen* distinct from Atilius.

18 *Studia* do preoccupy the letters to the would-be poet Caninius Rufus: 1.3 (urging him to write), 3.7 (on the death of Silius Italicus, and urging Caninius to write), 6.21 (on the recitation of a work which Pliny will send to Caninius), 7.25 (on Terentius Junior), 8.4 (encouraging Caninius to write his proposed poem on the Dacian War, and offering to read sections as they appear). (There is no good reason to assign 9.33 or 9.38 to Caninius.) But Caninius is more a receptacle for Pliny's literary conceits than a partner in study; he finds it hard to publish, and Pliny never sends him his own work for criticism. Otherwise *studia* surface in the context of Comum only as part of Pliny's benefactions to the town.

19 Throughout the correspondence he withdraws to Laurentum to write and to study (1.9.5, 1.22.11, 2.17.24, 4.6, 7.4.3, 9.40), though curiously he nowhere mentions companions there. On the suburb as the locus of *otium litteratum*, see Champlin 1982 [1985].

landowner and patron (4.13, 5.18, 7.30, 8.1, 8.15, 9.15, 9.16, 9.20, 9.36).²⁰ *Otium litteratum*, it goes without saying, was a social activity. Even were they not attested, friendships with literarily inclined neighbors like Passennus Paullus and Terentius Junior, and perhaps Atilius Crescens, could easily be assumed.

We should also look to the region for hints of other friends who share an interest in literature but are not clearly Transpadane. One such would be Octavius Rufus, casually signaled as a poet at 1.7.5, urged to publish his verses at 2.10, and perhaps the published poet of 9.28. As Syme pointed out, the name Octavius Rufus (which is admittedly very indistinctive) is found only once in Transpadana, but *CIL* XI can produce in Umbria a knight and *duomvir*, L. Octavius L. f. Cam. Rufus at Suasa, and a *quattuorvir* C. Octavius C. f. Clu. Rufus at Carsulae, where Pliny's mother-in-law had another villa.²¹

Similarly, Pompeius Saturninus, another colorless name: although difficult to disentangle from other Saturnini in the letters, in those which surely refer to him he emerges as another literary man of various talents. He criticizes Pliny's speeches (1.8), is eulogized by him at length as an orator, historian, poet and epistolographer (1.16); gives a reading in Rome (5.21); and praises the work of a mutual friend, the poet Rufus (9.38). His origin is a mystery. Syme assigned him for no reason to the Pliny country, while acknowledging that he did not come from Comum itself, since Pliny writes to him of *municipes meos* there, not *nostri* (1.8.2).²² Why not Umbria? The letter praising his accomplishments is addressed to the father of C. Erucius Clarus, a young senatorial friend of Pliny, who refers to Pompeius Saturninus as *hunc dico nostrum*. As Syme pointed out, the *nomen* Erucius appears only once in a Transpadane inscription, at Aquileia (far from Pliny country), whereas its single appearance in *CIL* XI is in the magistrate C. Erucius C. f., *quattuorvir* at Spolegium in Umbria.²³

Where literary pursuits may distinguish Tifernum from Comum, there is a separate grouping of connections which surprisingly binds the two together. This reflects the tendency of the Roman élite to have properties scattered over Italy. We can see it precisely first with Pliny's own relatives. His uncle and adoptive father, the Elder Pliny, owned property at both Comum and Tifernum. The grandfather of his third wife, L. Calpurnius Fabatus, likewise a knight of Comum and both magistrate and patron of the place, owned a property at Ameria in Umbria: Pliny made a tour of inspection for him, in the course of which he discovered the natural wonders of Lake Vadimon, with its floating islands (8.20.3).²⁴ Then there is Pliny's mother-in-law Pompeia Celerina, with whom he maintained a warm friendship long after the death of her daughter, his second wife. Her family came from Volsinii, just on the other side of the Tiber; some ancestors owned property at Interamna Nahars in Umbria; and she herself owned several Umbrian villas, at Otricoli, Narnia, Carsulae, and Perugia, which Pliny felt free to use as his own whenever he journeyed north (1.4.1). And she too had a connection with Pliny country in Transpadana, for she owned another villa at Alsium which had once belonged to Verginius Rufus (6.10.1), three times consul, Pliny's guardian, and a native of Milan. Since there were close ties between her family and Rufus, it can be assumed that she inherited rather

20 I include 4.13 without hesitation. In that letter, Pliny asks Tacitus to look out for a teacher for the youth of Comum. He wishes to stay where he is for a few days longer to finish polishing an *opusculum*. The manuscripts read *Ipse pauculis adhuc diebus in Tusculano commorabor*, but that is ridiculous; given that Pliny had no property in Tusculum (5.6.45), he would hardly refer to a "*Tusculanum (praedium)*" without naming the owner, and Tacitus would surely have been surprised that his friend could not find the time for a 15-mile jaunt to Rome. As Mommsen saw, the true reading must be *in Tuscano*.

21 *CIL* XI 6167 (= *ILS* 5673); 4505, with Syme 1985, 347 = 1988, 464. The man of Suasa is presumably too early, given the archaizing spellings in his inscription (*duomviro, uxsoribus, perpetuom*).

22 Syme 1985, 338 = 1988, 455.

23 Syme 1985, 344 = 1988, 461; Syme 1960, 374 = 1979, 489, referring to *CIL* XI 4800.

24 Fabatus from Comum: *ILS* 2721, with Pliny *passim*. He also owned a Villa Camilliana in Campania, which Pliny (6.30) likewise inspected.

than bought the property.²⁵ That is to say, there appears to be an élite connection between the Pliny country in Transpadana and the other Pliny country in Umbria.

With Calpurnius Fabatus and Pompeia Celerina the line between family and friendship is blurred. With Q. Corellius Rufus, *cos.* 78, it may be crossed. Corellius was a firm friend, like Verginius Rufus one of the grand old men who supported Pliny when he started his career, and the Corellii had close ties with Pliny's family. Their origin is not certain. Ateste produced a knight Corellius and some freedmen of a C. Corellius, but that was not in Pliny country, so Syme preferred an *origo* in Laus Pompeia, which boasted a decurion Q. Corellius Paulinus.²⁶ That is very plausible, and otherwise the *nomen* does not appear north of the Po. However, in the meager epigraphy of Hispellum we find two instances of the name, in C. Corellius C. l. l. Eros and Corellia T. f.²⁷ It might be that Corellius Rufus owned property there, and that would explain Pliny's otherwise inexplicable connection with, and patronage of the place. Pliny was very close to the family, and Corellius had a daughter and grandchildren but no sons. Was Pliny perhaps an heir?

The implication of these and similar ties is clear. Pliny had deep roots in Tifernum, and to restrict him and any other Roman aristocrat of his standing to a single *origo*, a single *patria*, a single *regio*, is to run the risk of overlooking a significant web, both broad and thick, of social connections. Despite his repeated description of his estate as *in Tuscis*, Pliny's other country is Umbrian, his connections stretching primarily to the south of Tifernum Tiberinum: Pisaurum, Iguvium, Perusia, Asisium,²⁸ Hispellum, Spoletium, Ameria, Carsulae, Narnia, Oriculum. As with the "Pliny country" across the Po, the borders are defined by absence: with the exception of Pompeia Celerina and her connection with nearby Volsinii, there is no sign of other

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- 25 That is, following the common scholarly assumption that her father was L. Pompeius Vopiscus C. Arruntius Catellius Celer (*cos.* 77), the son by adoption of L. Pompeius Vopiscus (*cos.* 69), who was an old friend of Verginius Rufus and his colleague in his second consulship. This is unfortunately denied at *PIR*² P 663, citing Salomies 1992, 118-19. Salomies acutely pointed out that C. Arruntius Catellius Celer appears as such on inscriptions up to the time of his consulate in 77, only adding L. Pompeius Vopiscus in inscriptions of the 80s and 90s: therefore his adoption must have taken place in the late 70s, therefore Pompeia Celerina (whose name reflects elements of the adoptive name) must have been born no earlier than c.80, and therefore cannot have been the mother of Pliny's second wife. The reader might justifiably feel misgivings at the coincidences of two senatorial branches of the Pompeii by chance producing the same combination of *nomen* and *cognomen* (Celer) at the same time, and of Pompeia Celerina just happening to own a villa previously owned by Verginius Rufus, a friend of Pompeius Vopiscus so intimate that Otho appointed them to a joint consulship in 69. In fact, the received opinion can stand, and the entry in *PIR* must be revised. Neither in his remarks on Pompeia nor in those on the nomenclature of children of adoptees (pp. 55-57) does Salomies consider the legal consequences of the formal adoption of a man with children. Any child in the *patriapotestas* of a man *sui iuris* who was adrogated by another man automatically entered the *gens* and power of the adopter: assuming that Catellius Celer was adrogated by Pompeius Vopiscus, his daughter (Catellia) Celerina would automatically become Pompeia Celerina in law. One need look no further than the imperial house, where in A.D. 4 Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus became Germanicus Julius Caesar when his adoptive father Tiberius became Tiberius Julius Caesar. For senatorial C. Arruntii at Interamna: *CIL* XI 4179.
- 26 Syme 1968, 147 = 1979, 714, citing *CIL* V 6366, and possibly 6391, Annia Corelli f. Quintula. Further support from Alföldy 1999b, 355: Rufus' sister was married to Minucius Justus, and the Corellii of Laus Pompeia show links to the Minucii.
- 27 *CIL* XI 5309, 5310. Note also Q. Corellius Proculus, apparently a landowner over at Lucus Feroniae: *AE* 1978 no. 298.
- 28 Probably to be added to his friends in Asisium is Asudius Curianus, who left Pliny a welcome legacy (5.1). His mother had disinherited him and named Pliny one of her heirs, a difficult situation which Pliny handled well. Syme noted (1968, 146 = 1979, 712) that the name Asudius is found only once on an inscription, that of an Asudia C. l. Alethea at Asisium (*CIL* XI 5451). He also suggested that the mother, Pomponia Galla, was presumably related to the senator C. Pomponius Gallus Didius Rufus, proconsul of Crete and Cyrene in 88/89 (*AE* 1954 no. 188).

friendships anywhere to the West, across the Tiber in Etruria proper, in the Augustan *Regio VII*; similarly to the East, no faint sign of friendship in Picenum, *Regio V*.²⁹ The interest is purely Umbrian, in *Regio VI*; and, despite its muted presentation in the letters, it is just as significant to Pliny as his interest in Transpadana.

This paper started as a footnote offering a modest correction to an insight of Sir Ronald Syme. Its simple point is that a man can have family, friends, and warm admirers in more than one country.

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29 His friend Calestrius Tiro *might* come from Picenum or, just as easily, from further north (Syme 1968, 151 = 1979, 723), and they met in Rome as colleagues in office. Another friend or acquaintance, Saturius Firmus, otherwise unknown, *might* come from Picenum or he might not (id. 1960, 368 = 1979, 463), and he appears only as the brother-in-law of a young senator whom Pliny recommends (4.15.3). Pliny certainly had no connection with Firmum Picenum until a friend sought him to act for the town in court (6.18).